



'Meme' by Ovidijus Talijunas

Shadowing the Scene: Negativity in Affects, Politics, Aesthetics

Interdisciplinary Conference on Affect and Visuality

September 26-27th, 2014, Vilnius, Center for Contemporary Art

Organized by the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute

A stalker of light, an ambiguous threshold, an imprint of the real: shadow is brought to give depth and texture to a sur-face, only to obscure it at next choice. It frightens, hides, protects, invites play, for animals, children, performers. A creative sublime or a perpetual negative: the grave of Capa's soldier, the homoerotic of Caravaggio's paint, film noir's pick of the obscene. The hideaway and the stage of the horrendous, traumatic, lurid. The metaphor and device for clandestine wars, unaccounted economies, illicit affairs. An extension of our bodies, far from a stable entity, it is always in ubiquitous inaction. "Life's but a walking shadow" is Macbeth's answer to the death of his sleepwalking queen – how do we respond to this?

Proposing to elaborate and extend on the indexical and metaphorical notion of *shadowing*, as active process rather than empirical state or static quality, this conference invites critical and creative interventions into the conceptual bases shared by affects, aesthetics, and negativity.

The so called "affective turn" in the humanities, that posited affect as the unsignifiable intersubjective intensity of bodily potentiality akin to but in excess of emotion, has recently been criticized for a hasty dismissal of language, loose interpretations of the neurosciences, and overemphasis on non-representability. Moreover, while affect theorists productively explored how neo-liberal affectual labor and micropolitics within cinema, art, photography and media work our bodies beyond discursive registers and through non-human agents, an affectual life was seen as a positive ontological force; constitutive of a post-human condition and the possibility of affirmative politics.

Taking into account these developments but deflecting from affirmative ontological and post-human assumptions, this conference centers the notion of

aesthetics on the idea of the distribution of the sensible; “delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience” (Rancière 2006). Inviting us to rethink the visual and the political at stake in *the shadowing* – the aesthetic and affectual work of the negative – it asks:

- How are the fatal, stigmatic, horrific, and abject, which emerge as particular affects of life, its shadows, subscribed and distributed by a neo-liberal regimes of representation? Or, how do the affects of the negative define or elide contemporary forms of visual representation?
- What is the relation between ‘non-representability’ and the affects of the negative – historically, conceptually, politically?
- What specific role does the interrelation between the affectual and the aesthetic play in the current political conditions and the simultaneous visual production of such, what after Crapanzano (2006) we call ‘the scene’ (e.g. political protests, hunger strikes, city riots, AIDS/HIV epidemics, marginal wars and crises)?
- How could the negative in aesthetics and affects be employed for a reconceptualization of zones of precarity, abandonment, and disability? And how could it be rethought or imagined for a critical political engagement vis-à-vis neo-liberal projects and normative ideologies?

We invite papers and visual presentations (in video art, photography, film) that critically explore these issues in relation to any theoretical, ethnographical, philosophical, artistic, and interdisciplinary contexts.

Keynote speaker: Dr. Yael Navaro-Yashin, University of Cambridge

Please send abstracts of up to 300 words or visual art works by 30th of June to Dr. Mantas Kvedaravicius, mantas.kvedaravicius@kf.vu.lt
