Press Play: Creative Interventions in Research and Practice

‘Press Play’ exhibition
March 29th - April 12th

In collaboration with NOS Visual Arts Production
Press Play fuses academic research, creative practice, and civic engagement in a combined conference and exhibition. The two-day conference is followed by a two-week exhibition at the British School at Rome featuring the multimedia installations of three contemporary artists: Katia Kameli, Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen, and Justin Randolph Thompson. Their work constitutes an interrogation of colonial and postcolonial histories and mobilities through critical and sensorial investigation. As researchers the artists challenge the conventional boundaries of disciplinary practice and invite researchers to devise new and more creative strategies for communication and dissemination. A public lecture by Professor Doris Sommer (Harvard) bridges the two halves of the event. Professor Sommer’s commitment to creativity as the motor of civic engagement is expressed through the international reach of her Cultural Agents project.

Press Play gestures towards technologies of cultural production but more importantly points to the playful, transformative work of the intercultural imagination.

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Justin Randolph Thompson is a new media artist, organizer and educator born in Peekskill, NY in ’79. Living between Italy and the US since 2001, Thompson is a Co-Founder and Director of Black History Month Florence, his work and scholarship engages local communities as living yet fleeting monuments. Thompson teaches art at several universities and develops strategies for the initiation of annual and biennial cultural projects of international collaboration. His art has been exhibited internationally in venues such as the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Reina Sofia, the American Academy in Rome and more. Thompson is the recipient of numerous awards including the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award, a Franklin Furnace Fund Grant and a Visual Artist Grant from the Marcelino Botín Foundation. Thompson teaches at SACI, SRISA and NYU Florence and is an Advisor to the Fellows at the American Academy of Rome since 2017. He has lectured at the Black Portraits Conference in Florence, Italy, at Harvard and in Palermo as well as at numerous other institutions in Italy and the United States of America. Later this year Thompson will have a solo project at the Galeria Carles Taché in Barcelona and be part of a group exhibition curated by Villa Romana at the IFA Gallery in Berlin.

Justin Randolph Thompson

‘You won’t be naming no building after me… to go down dilapidated’

Erykah Badu

www.justinrandolphthompson.com
The Algerian Novel, Chapter 1

The Algerian Novel, Chapter 1 is a video conceived as an immersion into Algeria's history, and collective memory. It takes place in Larbi Ben M'Hidi street, in Algiers, where Farouk Azzoug and his son own a nomad kiosk where they sell old postcards and reproductions of archival photographs.

Different images constitute this collection, going from the late 18th century to the 1980s. These include original postcards of genre scene or architecture, art deco commercials for the railways, and also photographic reproductions of important political figures from or coming to Algeria. This eclectic collection brings us into a colonial and postcolonial iconography. It appears to be classified randomly but it allows many associations, as a kind of Algerian Atlas Mnemosyne. Over the images of the kiosk and different locations in the city, we can hear the voices of inhabitants of Algiers, historians, writers, students, who explain their connections to these images and to the history of their country.

The Algerian Novel, Chapter 2

French philosopher Marie José Mondzain is reinterpreting The Algerian Novel, Chapter 1. This second chapter is built on the idea of a mise en abyme. The film's nested structure is a way to keep images and their symbolic load at a distance. It opens a new space of negotiation wherein new associations can be shaped. They function as a starting point for the writing of a history in movement and produce narratives which then become touchstones for a new kind of historicization. In the second part of the second chapter, Maris-José Mondzain is at her desk. She is facing another screen, a tablet. The camera is playing on field of vision and reverse angle. Mondzain is analysing another visual material: that of the rushes recorded during the shooting of Algerian Novel - Chapter 1.

These rushes could have been left invisible, or rather unseen - the same way some of Algeria's historical figures are not represented in the pictures of the kiosk. In her book, L'image peut-elle tuer ? (“Can images kill?”), Marie-José Mondzain defines the unseen as ‘what is waiting for meaning in the community debate’. The unseen would then be a sort of unexploited archive, waiting for the gaze to expand. Here, the tablet computer on which Mondzain is seeing the images is literally making their existence tangible. By showing these rushes to the philosopher’s eye, I am questioning the making of the archive and the necessity of a constant rereading as a way to reactivate the meanings of History.

Bio

Katia Kameli is French-Algerian artist. Following her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, she graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Bourges in 2000. She received a postgraduate degree in New Media in 2003 from the École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Marseille.

Kameli’s work is closely linked to her personal experience of dual identities, exploring multiplicity and the 'in-between'. Through video, photography, installation, she investigates intercultural spaces, intersecting identities and their construction. Thus, she positions herself as a hybrid, using a ‘third space’ that enables the emergence of other visions, forms and positions. This ‘third space’ questions historical accounts and can generate a critical stance that allows for the rewriting of hegemonic narratives.

Her work has found an audience and gained recognition on the international artistic and cinematographic scene. Her most recent solo-exhibitions include: À l'ombre de l'étoile et du croissant, CRP/ Centre régional de la photographie (2018); What Language Do You Speak Stranger, The Mosaic Rooms, London (2016); Futur, Artconnexion, Lille (2016); Taymou Grahe Gallery, New York (2014); 7 Acts of Love in 7 days of Boredom, Transpalette, Bourges (2012); Duty Free, Vídeochroniques, Marseille (2012). She participated in numerous groups shows that include: Biennale de Rennes (2018); Tous, des sang-mêlés, Mac Val, Paris (2017); Chers Amis, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2016); Made in Algeria, Mucem, Marseille (2016); Entry Prohibited to Foreigners, Havre Magasinet, Boden, Sweden (2015); Where we’re at, Bozar, Bruxelles (2014); Lubumbashi Biennale, Congo (2013); Pour un Monde Durable, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal (2013); Le Pont, Museum of Marseille (2013); Dak’art, Dakar Biennale (2012, 2018); Higher Atlas, Marrakech Biennale (2012); Bamako Biennale, Mali (2011).

In 2006 and 2011, Kameli directed and produced ‘Bledi in Progress’ and ‘Trans-Maghreb’ video platforms for young filmmakers from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia in Algiers.

Her work will be exhibited in a solo-exhibition at the Kunsthalle Münster in September 2019.

http://katiakameli.com
Nikolaj Larsen

Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen is an artist and filmmaker whose work addresses global issues. Larsen uses the micro to challenge the macro. For the past decade a substantial part of his research has been focussing on migration and issues arising from it. “I do not pretend to know how it feels to have been forced to flee war, famine, oppression or poverty, but my work seeks to place the viewer in a position where they are urged to confront their own attitudes or prejudices to migrants and migration. In the Global North today, a paradigm of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ is creating an unhelpfully negative tone in the debate about migration. I believe the nuances of human emotion and inclusivity that my work adds to today’s overwhelmingly negative discourse about the topic are relevant” Larsen says.

‘The Floating Series’, which is part of the ‘Press Play - Exhibition’ takes its departure in photographs taken in the Parisian neighbourhood of Stalingrad, which in 2016 saw some two thousand migrants living in the streets. For months Larsen went to speak with people living there. He took a series of photographs of people completely covered with blankets, and imagined that the moments where the migrants are able to sleep were the only parts of their daily routine where they could ease their exhausted minds and bodies and metaphorically float away from their exhausting and hopeless situation. The prints remove the people from their context in the street of Paris and places them to levitate in a void. The blankets are often adorned with patterns, words or symbols that contribute their own narratives to the images and perhaps to the people behind the covers. A person is sleeping under a Union Jack flag hinting at a desire to get to Britain, two people sharing a Spiderman sleeping bag make the western superhero appear deflated and deconstructed, another person’s sleeping bag has imagery of migrating penguins, while two people are sleeping under a blanket adorned with flowers - their positions make them resemble a butterfly in flight.

Bio


www.nbsl.info
Chris Caines and Malcolm Angelucci (Macro Asilo)

Ghosts is a sound work conceived as a displacement of the sound environment of the marginal, squatted contemporary art space MAAM - Museo dell’altro e dell’altrove di Metropoliz inside the institutionalised space of MACRO.

In via Prenestina, at the edges of the Raccordo Anulare, MAAM continues to be an attempt at making art and inhabiting a ‘mestizo’ space in which migrant, impoverished Italian citizens, Rom and Sinti from different backgrounds, political activists, artists and audience develop a complex dialogue that keeps afloat the occupation of the site, by giving it resonance both in the political and artistic arena.

During its almost 10 years, MAAM grew to become exemplar of an independent, engaged, relational way to do art in Rome; it also became the blueprint for the new project MACRO Asilo at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome. The agenda of MACRO was to replicate and develop the principles of MAAM in an institutionalised, publicly funded context, proposing a free, open and ‘horizontal’ idea of art.

Our project exhibits, engages with and problematises this shift from the periphery to the centre, from the ‘inhabited’ to the ‘empty’, from the ‘outlaw’ to the ‘institutional’. The sound piece will use the convolution reverb of one of the main rooms of MAAM, one in which, in 2014, we presented the durational performance ‘Portrait #1’. This will recreate inside the central, new MACRO, the sonic feeling of being in an industrial, peripheral space. Inside this environment, the audience will listen to two ‘ghost stories’ (in English and Italian): two uncanny texts that will play with the idea of specters, indirectly referring to the absence and yet presence of MAAM inside MACRO, with all its precariousness, its life, its politics, its struggle.

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Bios

Chris Caines is an artist who produces video, site specific installation and mobile/locative media as well as music. He founded the Media Object series at UTS ePress with designer Zoe Sadokierski where he edited Live AV in Australia by Grayson Cooke and coedited Voice/Presence/Absence with Malcolm Angelucci.

His work has been commissioned and collected by many major Festivals and Museums including ACMI, The Queensland Art Gallery, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Tate UK, the Art Gallery of NSW and the Berlin, Venice and Cannes media and film festivals. Production of this work has been supported by numerous art and research grants, public commissions and international arts and scholarly residencies including ones in Japan, the United States, the UK, France, Thailand and Spain. He has produced work for clients as diverse as the Nine Network, ABC Australia, SBS, Australia, The Museum of Sydney and Lend Lease. He is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Communications at the University of Technology, Sydney where he is the director of the Centre for Media Arts Innovation.

Malcolm Angelucci from the artist collective Illimine, is Cassamarca Lecturer in the School of Languages and Linguistics, The University of Melbourne. From 2001 to 2009, he completed research in the fields of stylistics, narratology, and genre, with a specific focus on 20th century Italian avant-garde poetics. Since 2009, he has worked and published in the area of voice studies, video art, aesthetics and performance studies. He has a particular interest in the nexus between voice, subjectivity, poetry, and technology in Italian and European case studies. This academic interest led to a series of artistic works with Illimine Collective, an international group of artists who create multimedia installations and durational performances. With Illimine, Malcolm exhibited and performed internationally (Australia, Italy, New Zealand), with recent commissions from MoreArt Festival and Immigration Museum (Melbourne) and Performance Arcade Festival (Wellington, NZ). He is author of the volume Words Against Words: on the Rhetoric of Carlo Michelstaedter (Troubadour, 2011), and co-editor with Chris Caines of Voice/Presence/Absence (UTS ePress, 2014).

https://illimine.com

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Let’s make “Cases for Culture.” We need them now that humanities programs and arts institutions grow limp from lack of commitments, a symptom of general indifference to culture. How do we safeguard the intrinsic value of the arts and humanities when the general public has lost a taste for the unhurried pleasures of doubt and discussion. Cases for culture might offer proactive responses to anxiety about the loss of taste, about exhausted patience, and the corollary waning of sociability. The case method is common in practically every field of academic research, except for the humanities where arts and culture would come into focus.

Doris Sommer is Ira and Jewell Williams Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University. She is also Director of the Cultural Agents Initiative, a network of academics, artists, educators, and organizations who develop recognition of the arts as resources for positive change. The initiative has sought to increase the impact of creative and scholarly practices by identifying artists, educators, and community leaders who have developed socially productive artistic practices, by reflecting on the role of art in building civil society, and by disseminating best practices through workshops and public forums. Their work rests on the belief that creativity is vital to the health of democracies and that it is critical to the development of ethical, resourceful citizens.