

## **Provocation II Abstracts**

**4<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

**Sallis Benney Theatre**

### **Kirsty McDougall**

#### **A Case Study for Innovation in Contemporary Tweed**

Under scrutiny is the debate between 'heritage' and 'technology' in menswear textiles in relation to the perceived divide between these two areas. Traditional menswear suiting fabrics have not embraced technological developments on the one hand, and there is a lack of traditional textile aesthetics and material qualities in the area of technical, smart or functional textiles on the other. Why is this so? Have functional and innovative textiles developed with regard to their particular technological properties at the expense of evolution of a more sophisticated set of fabric aesthetics?

The current ethos of heritage rejuvenation and nostalgia in fashion and textiles has brought into question whether fabrics that are a facsimile of fabrics gone by may only ever be real fakes reflective of a different time, if they are not transformed and transitioned by contemporary design innovation and technology, however subtle.

Have rapid developments in technology and the fears associated with it resulted in a textile culture which is pre-occupied by nostalgia and heritage and how has this impacted on the evolution of textile design?

This abstract will be explored through a series of interviews with Dashing Tweeds- menswear suiting brand and their contemporaries.

### **Gareth Neal**

Gareth Neal's furniture design practice was established in 2002 and is currently located in the creative heart of East London. Neal specializes in the production of unique pieces, which are exclusively designed to address his own open ended research question that investigates the space in-between design and craft with objects that explore whether our relationship with furniture is intrinsically and emotionally connected to methods of manufacture and the materials used within its construction.

He believes current audiences have had little contact with handmade objects and struggle to appreciate and understand hand processes. His pieces are intended to be hybrid vehicles, enabling a new generations to engage in a handmade aesthetic though the use of digital technology and traditional craftsmanship.

Gareth's practice pushes the boundaries questioning our perceptions of history and the contemporary whilst continually challenging himself, the materials and techniques. Gareth's furniture has gained critical acclaim, featuring in numerous publications and exhibitions, both in the UK and internationally. Selected exhibitions include '*Telling Tales*' & '*The Power of making*' at Victoria and Albert Museum, '*Collect*' at the Saatchi Gallery, London and '*The State of Things*' at The Design Museum, Holon, Israel.

**Dr Claire Wintle**

**The Commonwealth Institute and Decolonisation: are museums and exhibition spaces microcosms of political encounters?**

This paper examines the ways in which the material and visual world affects and reflects the political sphere. To do so, it explores the relationship between exhibition spaces and decolonisation between 1945 and 1970. Museums have been closely associated with the *formation* of empires in recent scholarship, but relations between museums, other exhibition spaces and the politics of *decolonisation* are not yet fully conceptualised. Traditionally, institutions displaying colonised cultures between 1945 and 1970 have been seen as static - paralysed by their embarrassing links to imperialism. But this paper builds upon recent scholarship highlighting visual culture's impact on decolonisation. The case is made that museums and other exhibition spaces were active agents in practices of identity formation, political negotiation and economic development during this period.

The Commonwealth Institute (London) is taken as a case study, to investigate how the Institute engaged with and directed processes of decolonisation, and to explore how it became a site for the articulation of anti-colonial resistance and the agency of the former colonies. Drawing upon government archives and the original exhibition designs for the Institute's ethnographic displays held in this University's Design Archives, new insights are gained into debates about the contested and Eurocentric nature of decolonisation, and the impact of museums and other display spaces on socio-political processes are queried. Can artists, curators and museum management impact on political agendas?

## **Rob Greens**

### **Screenwriter as auteur?**

Unlike the novel which generally has a single person credited as the author, a screenplay involves a large number of people in collaboration with a screenwriter to produce a script into a feature film. Today's screenwriters rarely begin their careers working on scripts they have written. Often a screenwriter is hired to create a story based on another person's idea or to rewrite another screenwriter's script under the direction of a producer and/or a director. This intricate process from script to screen can ignore the involvement of a screenwriter in a 'successful' film. However, if an audience dislikes a film it is often the screenwriter who is criticised in reviews.

For a long time a director's work in film and television has been studied as a collection, examining similarities and differences, the quality of the work, and possible connections back to the persona and background of the director. I am interested in applying this same study to screenwriters by studying a screenwriter's scripts as a collective body of work.

I plan to investigate possible themes in their work and through a close textual study of their writing highlight particular styles for other screenwriters to learn from. One aim is that other writers can learn, appreciate and implement in their own work how a professional screenwriter creates an emotional response in a reader/audience. I would like to interview the same screenwriters to examine thematic links between scripts and themselves, discussing the influences their background has had in their work. I will also discuss with them current working practices and the development process of selected screenplays from concept to cinematic release. My overall aim is to demonstrate the significance of screenwriters in the filmmaking process.

## **Dr Thor Magnusson**

### **The Whistling Weavrs: Musical Robots on the Blogosphere**

In recent years information overload has become a topic of great concern. Filter mechanisms for online media content are seen as both a necessary defence strategy as well as channels feeding personal interests. Concurrently, the phenomenon of "filter bubbles", where search engines such as Google provide different search results according to who is seeking the information, cause serious concerns of how the seemingly democratic online media operate. One response to this problem is to create unique filter bots, where users create their own online "infoids," who harvest online media according to the owner's interests and location. The Philter Phactory has come up with one such system, the Weavrs ([www.weavrs.com](http://www.weavrs.com) <<http://www.weavrs.com>> ), where online bots write about their excursions in networked social media through personal blog posts.

Dr. Thor Magnusson from University of Brighton's Faculty of Arts, has designed a system for the Philter Phactory, where these bots create music as part of their activities. Currently, they whistle about their interests and relationships with other online agents (both human and non-human). The bots upload the music to Soundcloud and embed the track in their blog post of the particular topic. It is predicted that there will be hundreds and thousands of bots composing music this way and populating the internet with music with Creative Commons licences ([www.creativecommons.cc](http://www.creativecommons.cc) <<http://www.creativecommons.cc>> ) that allow for free remixing and reappropriation. This project raises important questions about authorship, autonomy, the role of the human, of musical composition, and the commercial models of online media.

## **Ben Sweeting**

### **Architecture and machines**

Architects like to invoke machines and do so in numerous ways. This dates back not just to modernism's machine obsession but to Book X of Vitruvius while in recent times machines have become popular in architectural schools to the point of oversaturation. 'Machines' is an extremely elusive term and while there is abundant material on machines and architecture most focus on a single aspect and there is therefore a sense in which it has only been approached fragmentarily. Through the medium of a collaborative exhibition and catalogue, 7 others and I have been investigating what underlies the varied associations of architecture and machines. I will present here my initial provocation to my collaborators which was the framework for our subsequent conversations.

**Dr Ewan Kirkland**

**Little Big Planet, Videogames, and Colonialism**

This paper examines the racial politics of *Little Big Planet* in terms of game design, game play, and the process of level construction. This platform game involves players travelling through various levels themed around different continents and nations, collecting objects, and combining them to produce their own games which can be shared online with other players. *LBP*'s pre-designed levels can be criticised from the perspective of orientalism, as representing stereotypical images of India, Africa, South America and Japan. Gameplay involves collecting score bubbles containing the various ethnically-coded objects which define these spaces, reproducing a form of virtual colonialism evident across a range of game genres and titles. This process of collection allows the player to create their own worlds, a bricolage of symbols of other people's cultures, removed from any meaningful national or ethnic context. Moreover, the game exemplifies the implied white subjectivity which characterises much game culture, here entailing the appropriation, assembling, and public display of symbols of other cultures and ethnicities.

**Sally Miller**

**History, Memory and Zombies After 9/11**

Sarah Lauro and Karen Embry have argued that '[z]ombies, like all things that are feared, are the products of the culture that shapes them and bear within their myths the imprint of existing social conditions' (2008: 100). Thus, despite its varied incarnations – from the Communist sympathizer in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), to the capitalist drone in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), and viral contamination in *28 Days Later* (2002) – the function of the zombie has remained consistent: 'the zombie illuminates our own discomfort with various kinds of bodies' (ibid., 102). As part of my ongoing research into history, memory and trauma, this paper will address Shezad Dawood's 2008 zombie-cowboy film *Feature*. I am particularly interested in the way in which Dawood's restaging of the Battle of the Little Big Horn as a hybrid zombie-cowboy narrative uses the figure of the zombie to 'infect' the historical record of this event and thus provocatively asks us to recognise that history is not simply a factual record of events, but a shared narrative produced in the present that is vulnerable to personal fantasy and elaboration.

Lauro, Sarah Juliet, and Karen Embry. "A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism." *Boundary 2* 35.1 (2008): 85-108.

## **Kate Cheyne**

### **Fabrikate**

Coming from a background in prefabricated buildings has led to an awareness of the need for the tailor-made within offsite construction that, whilst offering increased quality, speed of construction and affordability, can retain craft, individuality and the bespoke. Moving into academic research allows a forum, unconstrained by client and planning restrictions, to pursue innovations in adaptable materials that can read and respond to the ever-changing context of the environment and occupation of a building.

The research is commencing by taking innovations in textiles, both smart and technical, and applying them to the construction industry to form a malleable, layered building envelope. Cross-disciplinary teams made up of architects, woven and knitted textile designers and material engineers, including nano-technologies, electrical and computer sciences and structural engineers, are involved. It is currently split between two projects; the design of an intelligent textile that can be used for monitoring the structural integrity of a building; the scaling up of a pleated fabric that can take compression and tension so that it can hold multiple forms.

## **Gilly Smith**

### **THE WRITE RHYTHM**

In her action research entitled *The Write Rhythm*, Gilly Smith asks if grammar is in crisis and explores how kinaesthetic learning might inspire confidence and more creative writing among students. This presentation looks at the journey so far, and in particular how automatic writing and the dynamics of dance can loosen ideas and allow young people to get a glimpse of their own originality, creativity and expression, resulting in coherence, clarity and persuasion on the page.

**Vicky Margree**

**Feminist Gothic at the Fin de Siecle**

The 'gothic revival' of the late Victorian period is an area of continued interest both for cultural historians of the Victorian fin de siècle and for literary scholars of the gothic mode. Until recently, however, scholarship on fin de siècle gothic literatures had tended to be dominated by discussion of canonical authors, and in particular of four major texts: Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886); Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891); Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897); and Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). These novels, enormously popular in their day, have continued to be published and adapted throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, providing prototypes for modern producers of horror fiction. They have also come to typify, for much scholarly investigation, the notion of 'fin de siècle gothic'. However, the phenomenon of gothic's resurgence during this period extended far beyond these texts into novels and short stories authored by now-neglected practitioners of gothic. I am currently researching some of these fictions produced by four female writers from the period - Charlotte Riddell, Rosa Mulholland, Edith Nesbit and Clemence Housman - to explore how consideration of these and other texts might lead to a reconfiguration of our sense of the dominant characteristics and themes of fin de siècle gothic fiction. Might it be the case, for example, that reading these fictions reveals a previously unacknowledged 'maleness' about the conception of gothic fiction that has been derived from works by male authors? I will explore, in particular, the ways in which concerns over property, inheritance and the legal system function in the works of these four female writers, as well as how they exploited the possibilities of the short story, as opposed to the novel or novella, form.

**Tile Armoff,**

**A Plan for the Factory, Scientific Management and Modern Architecture**

This paper is part of my PhD research into the notion of the plan in the German speaking world in late 19th and early 20th century. My research investigates the paper plan as a specific medium and cultural technique that established a unique way of visualizing, theorizing, and managing various entities; from the city, to the factory, and the society.

This paper explores a set of plans for factories in Berlin and their role in thinking about and organizing the production process. The plans will not be seen as representations of but as essential to the management of industrial production.

My interest is in the connection between the manager's plan, that organises industrial production, and the architect's plan for the building of the factory. They are intricately linked in the attempt to lay out the shop floor. The factory allows me to draw out this double notion of the plan in capitalism, being a means to organize the division of labour and a specific form of architectural drawing concerned with spatial lay out.

Marx (1867) argued that the co-operation of wage-labourers in the manufacture and factory constituted the starting point of capitalist production. For him "the connexion existing between their various labours appears to them, ideally, in the shape of a preconceived plan of the capitalist." As a consequence one of the origins of the plan in capitalism would not be architecture but the factory.

In contrast to the established understanding by Smith (1993), Guillén (2006), and Gartman (2009), that architecture borrowed the principles of planning and standardization from engineering and scientific management and that modernism in architecture emerged as an aesthetic implementation of ideas developed by engineers and managers first, the paper will argue that it was in fact scientific management that borrowed the method of planning from architecture.