

UCIrvine | Program in African American Studies

Decolonial Aesthetics in/and Performance Art: Perceptions, Affect, Empathy



Black Bullets, video still. Jeannette Ehlers 2012. Permission of the artist.

Speaker: Kathy-Ann Tan
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University of Tuebingen
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Date: Tuesday,
October 20th, 2015
Time: 2:00 - 3:30pm
Location: HG 3341

Free and open to the public

This talk extracts Bertrand Russell's model of the interplay between perception, desire/feeling and sensations/images in *The Analysis of Mind* (1921) from its original context in Continental philosophy and relocates it within the critical frameworks of decolonial aesthetics (Palermo 2009, Mignolo 2011) and American Performance art. Russell's theories on sensations/perception will provide a starting point for my critical analysis of how an aesthetics of encounter functions in practice, in the moment of experiential cognition when visual/performance art and viewer/audience come into contact, and explores the "actual sensations" (1921; 2004: 140) generated in that encounter. How does the transmission of affect take place from performance/performer to audience/viewer and vice versa? How do explorations of moments of discomfort, dis-ease, irritation or disconnect during the performance that mark the limits of empathy and identification demand a 'queering', a reading against the grain, and an "unlearning" (Halberstam 2012, 10) of intuitive interpretations and assumptions shaped by colonial and heteropatriarchal metanarratives? Works examined in this talk will include Kara Walker's film animation *Testimony: Narrative of a Negress Burdened by Good Intentions* (2004) and improvisation performance piece *8 Possible Beginnings* (2005), Coco Fusco's *a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert* (2004) and *Girl's* (Chitra Ganesh + Simone Leigh) Video installation, *My dreams, my works must wait till after hell* (2011).