

Two-day Conference: *Modern Sensibilities*

A conference exploring modern sensibilities in art and literature as framing each other

Munch Museum, Oslo 23-24 March 2017

Open to all; booking required (fee NOK 300/ NOK 200)

Between the time of Flaubert's modern novel *Madame Bovary* and that of Munch's establishment as a modern artist, the social world saw drastic changes, leading to a culture that explored sensations previously unsaid and unheard, unseen and un-understood. Munch himself spoke of "the modern life of the soul" to describe the intense sensibilities that inspired but also hampered him in his quest for an art that would be able to address those. Hence, we can consider Munch a "conceptual artist of the senses" (Tøjner). This is where Munch's work meets Flaubert's novel.

Bringing thought and the senses together, Tøjner's formulation offers a starting point for a discussion of the issues brought up in the exhibition *Emma & Edvard – Love in the Time of Loneliness* (held at the Munch Museum from January 28 to April 17, 2017). Mieke Bal, the exhibition curator, has invited five scholars from a range of orientations and disciplines, who – from different national and historical contexts – will present Munch and Flaubert in a different light, relevant for today.

Programme

Thursday, 23 March 2017

17.00 - 17.30 **Registration** at the Munch Museum, Oslo

17.45 - 18.00 **Welcome:** Director Stein Olav Henrichsen (Munch Museum)

Introduction to Keynote: Jon-Ove Steihaug (Munch Museum)

18.00 - 19.00 **Keynote:** Mieke Bal, *Sensing the Present* (60 mins)

19.00 - 19.10 **Book presentation:** *Emma & Edvard Looking Sideways: Loneliness and the Cinematic* by Mieke Bal, presented by Rachel Burke (10 mins)

19.00 - 21.00 **Reception and free entrance to the exhibition**
Emma & Edvard – Love in the Time of Loneliness

Please note: The exhibition will be open from 10.00 until 21.00. Mieke Bal's documentary film *Hubert Damisch: Thinking Aloud* (2011, 20 mins), which is relevant for the exhibition and in particular for Friday's talk by Miguel Ángel Hernández Navarro, will be continually screened at the museum's cinema between 16.00 and 17.20.

Friday, 24 March 2017 – Chaired by Mieke Bal

08.30 - 09.00 **Registration and coffee**

09.00 - 10.00 Griselda Pollock, University of Leeds: *Staging subjectivity: Charlotte Salomon Reading Munch* (45 mins followed by discussion)

10.00 - 11.00 Ernst van Alphen, Leiden University: *Modernity as a Crisis of the Senses* (45 mins followed by discussion)

11.00 - 11.30 **Coffee break** (30 mins)

11.30 - 12.30 Miguel Ángel Hernández Navarro, University of Murcia: *Time for Emotions: Anachronism and Expansion in Flaubert / Bal & Williams Gamaker / Munch / Knausgård* (45 mins followed by discussion)

12.30 - 13.30 **Lunch break** (60 mins)

13.30 - 14.30 Kristin Gjesdal, Temple University and University of Oslo: *Acting Modern: Art and Love in Ibsen and Munch* (45 mins followed by discussion)

14.30 - 14.40 **Presentation** of *Kunst og Kultur's* special issue on Edvard Munch: "Close Viewing and Critical Distance", presented by Øystein Sjøstad (10 mins)

14.40 - 15.00 **Coffee break** (20 mins)

15.00 - 16.00 Jonathan Culler, Cornell University: *Flaubert's Provocation* (45 mins followed by discussion)

16.00 - 17.00 Round table discussion, chaired by Patricia Berman, Wellesley College

Please note the Munch Museum's programme for Saturday 25 March 2017:

12.00 - 13.00 Mieke Bal in dialogue with Jon-Ove Steihaug (Munch Museum)

13.30 - 15.45 Screening of four documentary films by Mieke Bal on the subject of migration, with introduction by Mieke Bal

The Munch Museum is grateful to Fritt Ord for sponsoring this event.

Contributors and abstracts of their contributions

in the order of the conference programme

Mieke Bal

Sensing the Present

Selecting a few topics and cases from the book *Emma & Edvard Looking Sideways: Loneliness and the Cinematic*, published by the Munch Museum in conjunction with the exhibition, in this lecture I will make the case for the sense of presentness on an affective and sensuous level in Munch's paintings and Flaubert's writing. It is this foregrounded presentness that not only produces the ongoing thematic relevance of these works, but more importantly, the sense-based conceptualism that declares art and life tightly bound together. If neither artist eliminated figuration in favour of abstraction, they had a good reason for that. Art is not a representation of life, but belongs to it, illuminates it, and helps us cope with it by sharpening our senses. As an example, a few paintings, a fragment of literature, will clarify what I mean by the noun-qualifier "cinematic" and how that aesthetic explains the production of loneliness.

Mieke Bal is a cultural theorist, critic, occasional curator and video artist. She works on feminism, migratory culture, psychoanalysis, and the critique of capitalism. Her books include a trilogy on political art: *Endless Andness* (on abstraction) and *Thinking in Film* (on video installation), both 2013, and *Of What One Cannot Speak* (2010, on sculpture) as well as *A Mieke Bal Reader* (2006). In 2016 she published *In Medias Res: Inside Nalini Malani's Shadow Plays* (Hatje Cantz), and in Spanish, *Tiempos trastornados* on the politics of visibility (AKAL 2016). Her video project, *Madame B*, with Michelle Williams Gamaker, is widely exhibited, in 2017 in Museum Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova in Turku, Finland, and combined with paintings by Munch in the Munch Museum in Oslo for which she curated the exhibition 'Emma & Edvard' (with a book). Her most recent film, *Reasonable Doubt*, on René Descartes and Queen Kristina, premiered in Kraków, Poland, on 23 April 2016. www.miekebal.org



Griselda Pollock

Staging subjectivity: Charlotte Salomon Reading Munch

In honour of the conversation between Emma and Edvard curated by Mieke Bal, my presentation will explore a conversation between Edvard Munch and Charlotte Salomon (1917-1943). What do we learn about artworks when subsequent artworks draw on their possibilities in radically different situations? Art-historical logic is typically based on the ideas of succession through influence. But why would artists imagine themselves creating merely in order to be located in such a structure of descent? Dissent must be the motor force. Artworks can function as readings of other artworks on many levels. Artworks as readings of what other artworks make possible become a means of avoiding biographical fixation while also enabling an analysis of aesthetic practice as a scene of subjectivity. Using this case-study of one of the painterly readers of *Munch*, Charlotte Salomon, who was an artist sharing a certain Nietzschean aesthetic with Munch, I shall place a feminist and psychoanalytical lens over the question *the scene of painting*.

Griselda Pollock is *Professor of Social and Critical Histories of Art* and *Director of the Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History (CENTRECATH)* at the University of Leeds. Committed to developing an international, postcolonial, queer feminist analysis of the visual arts, culture and cultural theory, she is currently researching issues of trauma and the aesthetic, Aby Warburg's concept of the pathos formula, and the concept of *concentrationary* memory in relation to the Arendtian critique of totalitarianism, class interpretations of Marilyn Monroe and cultural agency. Her most recent publications include *After-affects / After-images: Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation* (Manchester, 2013); *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance* (with Max Silverman, I B Tauris, 2013) and *Concentrationary Imaginaries: Tracing Totalitarian Violence in Popular Culture* (with Max Silverman, I B Tauris, 2015), *Art in the Time-Space of Memory and Migration* (Freud Museum and Wild Pansy Press, 2013). Her forthcoming books include *Charlotte Salomon: The Nameless in the Theatre of Memory* (Yale) and *Is Feminism a Bad Memory?* (Verso).



Ernst van Alphen

Modernity as a Crisis of the Senses

Particularly in the latter half of the nineteenth century sensorial experiences changed at breakneck speed. Social and technological developments of modernity like the industrial revolution, rapid urban expansion, the advance of capitalism and the invention of new technologies transformed the field of the senses. Instead of attentiveness, distraction became prevalent. Not only Baudelaire addressed these transformations in his poems, they can also be recognised in the works of novelist Gustave Flaubert and painter Edvard Munch.

By means of the work of William James, Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, and Georg Simmel the repercussions of this crisis of the senses for subjectivity will be discussed.

Ernst van Alphen is Professor of Literary Studies at Leiden University. His publications include *Francis Bacon and the Loss of Self* (Harvard UP 1992), *Caught By History: Holocaust Effects in Art, Literature, and Theory* (Stanford UP 1997), *Art In Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought* (University of Chicago Press 2005), *Staging the Archive: Art and Photography in Times of New Media* (Reaktion Books 2015).



Kristin Gjesdal

Acting Modern: Art and Love in Ibsen and Munch

Among Edvard Munch's portraits of Henrik Ibsen, the famous Norwegian dramatist and Munch's senior by a generation, one stands out. Large in scope and with a characteristic palette of roughly hewed gray blue, green, and yellow, the painted sketch carries the title "Geniuses" (1909). It shows Ibsen, who had died a few years earlier, in the company of Socrates and Nietzsche. The picture was a working sketch for a painting commissioned by the University of Kristiania. While Munch, in the end, chose a different motif for his commission, it is nonetheless significant that he found it appropriate to portray the Norwegian

dramatist in the company of key European philosophers, indeed the whole span of the European philosophical tradition from its early beginnings to its most controversial spokesman in the late 1800s. In my presentation, I seek to take seriously Munch's bold and original positioning of Ibsen in the company of philosophers. Focusing on *Hedda Gabler*—a play about love lost and lives unlived—I explore the aesthetic-philosophical ramifications of Ibsen's peculiar position between realism and modernism. This position, I suggest, is also reflected in Munch's sketches for the set design for Hermann Bahr's 1906 production of the play.

Kristin Gjesdal is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Temple University and Professor II of Philosophy at the University of Oslo. She is the author of *Gadamer and The Legacy of German Idealism* (Cambridge University Press 2009), *Herder's Hermeneutics: History, Poetry, Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press 2017), and a number of articles in the areas of aesthetics, hermeneutics, and nineteenth-century philosophy. Gjesdal also works in the philosophy of literature, with a special emphasis on Shakespeare and Ibsen, and is the editor of *Ibsen's Hedda Gabler: Philosophical Perspectives* (forthcoming with Oxford University Press). Her edited volumes include *The Oxford Handbook to German Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press 2015), *Key Debates in Nineteenth Century European Philosophy* (Routledge 2016), and the forthcoming *Cambridge Companion to Hermeneutics*.



Miguel Ángel Hernández Navarro

Time for Emotions: Anachronism and Expansion in Flaubert / Bal & Williams Gamaker / Munch / Knausgård

Quoting Flaubert through time, Mieke Bal and Michelle Williams Gamaker's *Madame B* brings *Madame Bovary's* reflections on love and emotions to the present day, in a productive anachronism. Their work produces an intertemporal space where the past is relevant for the present, and the present enables us to understand the past. Intimacy and routine are central in their exploration of

Flaubert's contemporaneity. Those issues are precisely one of the keys in Karl Ove Knausgård's project of literary autobiography, where he expands narration foreclosing the ellipsis and giving visibility to small things and emotions; a project with some resonances with Munch's crude-obscene uses of intimacy. This intervention will explore how both proposals, Bal & Williams Gamaker in film and Knausgård in literature, can serve us to connect present and past sensibilities and, more than that, demonstrate resistances to the hegemonic discourses of temporality.

Miguel Ángel Hernández Navarro is Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Murcia, Spain and formerly the director of the CENDEAC in Murcia.

He is the author of several books on art and visual culture including *Materializar el pasado. El artista como historiador benjaminiano* (2012), *Robert Morris* (2010), *2Move: Video Art Migration* (2008, with Mieke Bal),

La so(m)bra de lo real (2006) and co-editor of *Art and*

Visibility in Migratory Culture (with Mieke Bal, 2011). He is also a poet and a fiction writer, author of the novels *El instante de peligro* (Finalist Herralde Prize, 2015) and *Intento de escapada* (2013, translated into German, French, English and Italian).



Jonathan Culler

Flaubert's Provocation

It is scarcely obvious why Flaubert's tale of provincial adultery, whose heroine meets a sordid end, should have become one of the greatest novels of world literature, "the novel of all novels that the criticism of fiction cannot overlook," in the words of one celebrated critic. What is it that makes *Madame Bovary* so special – not only scandalous in its own day (it was brought to trial for outrage to public morals), but also stimulating for subsequent generations of writers and critics and provocative for artists working in other media, such as the remarkable film installation, *Madame B?* Examining the features of Flaubert's writing that made the novel especially distinctive and that pose interesting challenges for

translation into other media, this paper will reflect on the unexpected success of this ground-breaking modern novel.

Jonathan Culler, who holds a chair in English and Comparative Literature at Cornell University, took a B.A. in History and Literature at Harvard University and a B. Phil. in Comparative Literature and D. Phil. in Modern Languages at Oxford University. He was Fellow in French at Selwyn College, Cambridge, and University Lecturer in French at Oxford, before moving to Cornell. He has published widely on literary and cultural theory, including such works as *Structuralist Poetics*, *On Deconstruction*, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, and most recently, *Theory of the Lyric*. His *Flaubert: The Uses of Uncertainty* is a wide-ranging and iconoclastic study of this author's achievement.



Patricia G. Berman is the Theodora L. and Stanley H. Professor of Art at Wellesley College, US, where she teaches modern and contemporary art, the history of photography, and propaganda studies. Her publications include studies of Edvard Munch, James Ensor, Danish painting, midcentury art and politics, masculinity, studio technique, and self-portraiture.



Rachel Burke is a first-year MA candidate at the Williams Graduate Program in the History of Art offered in collaboration with the Clark Art Institute. She is interested in modern and contemporary digital and participatory art and currently works as a research assistant for the Clark's Research and Academic Program.

