

Acts of Appropriation

'Artists have always been magpies, stealing objects and images from the world around them and putting them to new use in their art. Not only attracted to the shiny and new, the magpie artist finds value and meaning in the detritus that popular culture has discarded: the obsolete, the out of date and the forgotten. Like subversive archivists, they reconfigure and re-contextualise their collections of fragments and remnants so that new meanings can surface, reflecting back the commercial and industrial culture from which these treasures were first pilfered, in new and sometimes disturbing ways.'

Artists' engagement with their material culture through the act of appropriation is now understood as a defining aspect of modern art practice, and a profound break with the art of the preceding centuries. But what were the underlying causes of this sudden attraction to everyday objects and images once deemed unworthy of art's attention? And how and why does this act of appropriation continue to provide inspiration and material for artists working today? This series of six seminars discusses the crucial role of the appropriated object and image in contemporary art, looking at how it has transformed our understanding of what can be considered art. These seminars will explore the different ways that artists have negotiated the infinite archive of material culture surrounding them, re-imagining and re-valuing its detritus into new and thought-provoking forms.

Week 1 The Disposable object

Week 2 The Severed Image

Week 3 Montage: The Film Fragment

Week 4 The Subversive Archive

Week 5 Re-enacting the Body

Week 6 Repetitions

Week 7 Essay discussion