

The Film Effect: Moving Image Art in Context

In our 'mediatised' world the moving image has become one of the most important modes of representation. This course will explore some of the most significant and radical film practices, stretching from early Vaudeville cinema and conceptual practices of the 1970s, to the Super 8 movement of the punk era and contemporary film installations. Why are we so drawn to the cinema? What are the psychological and physical effects of cinema? And why do they impact on us so deeply? Since the digital expansion of the moving image in the private and public sphere, film has become a ubiquitous medium that affects our body and mind on a daily basis. Involving the visitor's physical body contemporary film and video art encourages a new form of thinking 'in time' (Deleuze) and 'through the body' (Sobchak). This phenomenological approach to moving image art involves a shift from the dominance of the text to a new focus on affect/effect. Examining the relationship between body and technology, optical and embodied modes of perception, this course explores the socio-cultural context of the 'film effect' through art historical, psychoanalytical and phenomenological theories, and a wide selection of film clips.

The first seminar will focus on Walter Benjamin's interpretation of DADA film as a 'visual shock', which "hit the spectator like a bullet". Benjamin's groundbreaking analysis of early cinema will help us to understand the experimental practices of the 1970s. Using repetition as a way of emptying out meaning, conceptual and structural films returned to Benjamin's notion of film as visual 'slap' (Verwoert) or contrarily produced a trance-like, psychedelic film experience (Franke). The following session examines the relationship between television, the nervous system and video art. David Cronenberg's apocalyptic view of the television screen 'made flesh' in his 1984 *Videodrome* and Rosalind Krauss' interpretation of video art as narcissistic mirror serve as a starting point for a discussion of the psychological ramifications of electricity. The physical impact of the 'film effect' is highly dependent on the use of sound. From the gritty D.I.Y. films of the punk era to the early days of MTV, music became paramount in postmodern film practices around 1980. Following this analysis we will investigate the relationship between Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection and the work of female and Black filmmakers. If the abject is that which cannot be contained under the pressure of ideology and state patriarchy, could we then argue that art is a form of abjection? The final session focuses on the recent phenomenon of immersive film installations. We will examine the contemporary condition and historical roots of the explosion of the moving image in the 'black box' of the mid 1990s, which turned film into a hyper-phenomenological experience.

This course will make use of film clips, online resources and will encourage the students to visit particular exhibitions and cinema screenings in London. Highlighting the relationship between meaning and material this course is based on a direct 'hands on' approach to moving image art, which is specifically designed for practising artists and those who would like to engage with film on a theoretical level.

- Week 1 Slapstick Cinema: DADA and the Birth of the Modern body**
- Week 2 Repetition around the Void: the Psychedelic Effect of Post-War Video Art**
- Week 3 Electronic Flesh: Television, Video Art and Psychology**
- Week 4 Sound Images: The Super 8 movement and Punk**
- Week 5 Bodies of Resistance: Abjection in/as film**
- Week 6 Immersion: Contemporary Film Installations**
- Week 7 Essay discussion**