

## Seminar 1:

### CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

**LECTURER:** Caroline Miley

**TIME:** Wednesdays 2 pm-4 pm

**ROOM:** National Gallery of Victoria (meet at the Mousehole at the side of the Gallery in St Kilda Rd)

**NB:** Maximum Class size: 15

#### DESCRIPTION

Students will select an art work from those on display at the NGV (including those in temporary exhibitions) and make a detailed study of it. Factors such as the artist's background, motivating theories of art, material techniques and critical reception of the work are considered. The papers will be presented each week in front of the selected art work.

There is no general required reading, handouts or bibliographies. Each student will intensively research their own topic. I will work with each student to assist with resources relevant to your chosen topic.

#### ASSESSMENT:

A class presentation, written up as an essay of 2,500 words (2nd yr) or 3,000 words (3rd yr) and handed in the week after the presentation.

**NB** Students in this seminar will be eligible to re-present their papers in the NGV's 'Fresh Voices' public program.

Further information, including guidelines for presentations, is available on the online web page.

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## Seminar 2:

### ABSTRACT ENTITIES DISCUSSION SEMINAR

**Lecturer:** Caroline Miley

**Time:** Tuesdays 2 pm – 4 pm

**Room:** TBA

**NB** Class size limited to 15

#### Description:

'It is a basic art-world orthodoxy, echoed just about everywhere, that contemporary art is ungraspably complex and diverse.' (Julian Stallabrass)

That may or may not be true. However, theory and theoretical analysis of art is more prevalent today than it ever has been before. How necessary is it for artists? What is it? Will it help in understanding what art is and what's going on?

This course aims to provide an introduction to investigating leading theories of art useful for thinking about art practice today. A basic text for discussion will be Stallabrass' *Contemporary Art: a very short introduction* (OUP Oxford 2004)\*. Students will then select a topic or critic of their choice and present a paper showing the influence of this theory/critic in contemporary art.

The week before each presentation, the student will place online (forward to me as Word doc) a selected text of 2-3 pages as background to their presentation. All students will read this text as preparation for discussion.

A basic bibliography is available on the online web page and I will work with students on their individual topics.

**Assessment:** A class presentation, written up as an essay of 2,500 (2nd yr) or 3,000 words (3rd yr) and handed in the week after the presentation.

\* Stallabrass' *Contemporary Art: a very short introduction* (OUP Oxford 2004) is on reserve in the library. Please read as much of it as possible before the first class.

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**Seminar 3:**

## **CONCEPT GOD: CONTEMPORARY ART AND THE SPIRITUAL**

**Lecturer :** Norbert Loeffler

**Wednesday :** 10am – 12 noon

**Location :** Art Administration Room 1.03

**Class quota :** 20

**Classes start Wednesday 15 July**

In our materialistic and secular society consumption seems to have replaced the emphasis upon religious and otherworldly forms of comfort, or salvation found in earlier ages. Despite this, an increased interest in religious belief and spirituality can be observed in recent times. A common feeling of insecurity, threat and diffused fear of globalisation, technological change and economic breakdown has led to a surge of interest in belief, spirituality and transcendence by many people, including artists.

Believers or non-believers, we all live in a world profoundly influenced by religious beliefs and traditions. In recent times, many artists of different cultures have created new works that both involve and question religious forms,

narratives and transcendental experiences, and important exhibitions have addressed this development.

Assessment: A class presentation, to be presented as an essay of 3000 words (Third Year) or 2500 words (Second Year) by the last class of the semester.

A reader with key texts is available. Please buy it !

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**Seminar 4:**

## **MAKING FACES : THE FACES OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

**Lecturer :** Norbert Loeffler

**Tuesday :** 10am – 12 noon

**Location :** Art Administration Room 1.03

**Class quota :** 20

**Classes start Tuesday 14 July**

The project of portraying someone in his or her individual originality appears to have come to an end. Pictures of our fellow human beings have been stripped of all pretence to revelation, insight, or any but the most superficial emotional content. Today we are surrounded by a seemingly endless display of faces that encompass a domain far broader than what was suggested by the word "portrait". Many contemporary artists have made the face a key motif of their art, and because the face has become as strongly contested politically, economically and culturally, as the body was a decade or two ago, the face is displacing the narrow genre of the portrait just as the body displaced that of the nude.

The seminar will examine the various faces of contemporary art and the larger visual culture, and the relationship of these images to human identity.

Assessment: A class presentation, to be presented as an essay of 3000 words (Third Year) or 2500 words (Second Year) by the last class of the semester.

A reader with key texts is available. Please buy it!

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## Seminar 5:

# What is 'it'?

## The Power Words of Contemporary Art

**Quota: 20**

**Time: 4.30 - 6.30 pm Thursdays starting on Thursday 16th July.**

What is it that makes art effective? What makes it 'hot'? We examine the power words that drive the contemporary concepts of art. This is the critical vocabulary of art; what makes some art fashionable, inexplicable, or ineffable. Its 'X' factor. Can I explain 'it' to my grandparents? Does your art have 'it'?

Words of pleasure, desire, stimulation, effect, insight, mystique, value and significance. And words of censure, transgression, shock, vulgarity, and other elements such as camp, humour, the grotesque, the Carnavalesque, the 'real'. Each a different concept. You might bring your own words!

The ambition of this course is to publish the results and speculations of our research into the power words of 'it' in a 'mass-produced original' book that will require each of us to contribute the pages (part of the assessment tasks).

Something you can place under the heading 'Bibliography' in your CV! We will obtain an ISBN number and your work will then be in the National Gallery of Australia and the Victorian State Library!

### Assessment:

- 35% class discussion and discussion leadership through many short presentations, and assistance with publication of journal.
- 35% creative exercises for inclusion in book. Each of us must produce 40 'pages'! Never fear, this is the fun part!
- 30% short and succinct essay (900 words for 3<sup>rd</sup> years; 750 for 2<sup>nd</sup> years)

Full attendance is essential; you **MUST** attend the first class, and deadlines must be met.

**Note, owing to demand, you cannot take this Unit if you did so last year.  
Contribution to costs likely \$15.**

What follows is an image designed to draw your attention to this course and make you sign up in a hand shaking with excitement and anticipation:  
*(there is no image. there is but a dry sense of humour on a wet arvo.)*

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## Seminar 6:

## **DEMONISM: the artistic demon and the muse**

**Room:** L1.06, Art admin building

**Lecturer:** Edward Colless

**Tuesday:** 10am – 12noon

NB: please allow for occasional film screening times to extend toward 1pm.

It's been said that the most uncompromising works of art emerge when artists wrestle with their demons: with forces that haunt, inspire, compel and also obstruct the imagination. The demon is a term in little use now, outside of horror movies, but it can be transposed into a psychological idiom to refer to various aspects influencing creative acts: unconscious desires, neurotic compulsions, fetishism, the murmurs of libido, storms of guilt, the return of the repressed, erotic possession, ecstatic transport.

This course discusses concepts of demonism and demonic possession in theological and mythological as well as artistic terms, roughly in historical sequence. In this amended version of the course first offered in Semester 1, we look each week at a particular example of the demonic in a visual art, literature or cinema with weekly reading provided. Assessment is by essay with an optional, supplementary creative response.

### *PROGRAMME BY WEEK*

#### *Part 1: A season in Hell*

##### **1. Torments of Vision**

Demonizing the *daimon*: spirits, shamanism and visionary art.

##### **2. Pandemonium**

Intoxication and instinct: the Graeco-Roman *daimon*, furies, harpies and satyrs.

##### **3. Fallen Angel**

Judeo-Christian demoniacs: "my name is legion"; the heavenly host.

##### **4. Eros in Hell**

Lucifer, the bright morning star; Satan, the opponent.

#### *Part 2: Beside oneself*

##### **5. Demon lovers**

Ecstatic infusion and mystic suffusion: the baroque eroticism of the demon.

##### **6. Sinister Seduction**

Don Juan-Oedipus and the libertine: temptation and destiny.

## 7. The Incubus

From Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare* to Wes Craven's *Nightmare on Elm Street*.

## 8. Bad Infinity

Addiction, inspiration, mad love.

*Part 3: Dark night of the soul*

## 9. Obsession

The theatre of hysteria: Bonnard and Charcot

## 10. Possession, Persona

Acting like a man possessed.

## 11. The Unconscious Wish

Psychoanalysis and the *daimon*: *Dead of Night*

## 12. The Traffic Between Worlds

The perfect medium: art, séance, exorcism.

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Seminar 7:

## UNDEAD: the aesthetics of the underworld

Please note special class times:

**SCREENINGS:** 4.30pm – 6.30pm Thursdays, Auditorium. (First class meeting is Thursday 16 July)

### IMPORTANT!

**TUTORIALS:** Wednesdays (in week following each screening), Art admin L1.06.

**EITHER 2pm-3pm OR 3.30pm-4.30pm. (The course extends into Week 13.)**

**Lecturer: Edward Colless**

In Jean-Luc Godard's pop "sci-fi" movie *Alphaville* (1965), an interstellar hit-man by the name of Lemmy Caution (posing undercover as a journalist) is being interrogated by the city's all-powerful computer, Alpha60. "What," asks the computer, in a sequence of bewildering questions more appropriate to the inquisition of a religious heretic, "is the privilege of the dead?" Lemmy Caution responds, in an equally elusive poetry: "Not to die any longer."

This course asks a similar question to that of Alpha 60, although it asks it of those no longer dying: "What is the privilege of the undead?" What indeed are the undead? The "non-dead" would simply be those excluded from the dead, which would be the living. But the prefix "un" suggests a reversal: the dead that come back, or who lack an essential quality of the dead—

inactivity. Our most familiar, contemporary instances of these fantasms are vampires and zombies. Both are driven by inordinate hunger, with quite different temperaments and characters: vampires can, of course, be connoisseurs, aesthetes and eloquently seductive libertines whereas zombies are brute, dumb and ugly. But we should also consider revenants, poltergeists, ghostly apparitions and those creatures or objects that linger, like the Cheshire cat's smile, beyond their appropriate time or place.

Since the major traffic of the undead in modern and contemporary culture is through the cinema screen, and to an extent broadcast TV, we will be mainly concerned with these media. But please note: this will not be a course dealing with the overly familiar zombie hordes or teen vampires of USA cinema and TV. We will look at relatively obscure cinematic examples of vampirism, hauntings, revenants (from Jean Cocteau, Jean Rollin, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Andrei Tarkovsky, Carl Dreyer, Jacques Tourneur), as well as look into the challenging aesthetics, ethics and behavioural dispositions of the undead, and what these imply for those who continue living.

Assessment is by essay, based on a short presentation, with an optional, supplementary creative response.