

Speak, body (Leeds, 21–23 Apr 17)

School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds, Apr 21–23, 2017

Deadline: Jan 30, 2017

Rose-Anne Gush, School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds

Speak, body: Art, the Reproduction of Capital and the Reproduction of Life

Keynote speakers (tbc)

Martha Rosler

Marina Vishmidt

Speak, body: Art, the Reproduction of Capital and the Reproduction of Life, will address the juncture of the “body” in art in relation to feminism(s) and capitalism, through the period 1960–1980. The “body” is taken to be a historically contingent concept, up for contestation. Today we are witnessing a massive conservative retrenchment in the political and legal spheres concerning images of the body, from anti-woman bans on images of female ejaculation in pornography to the far-right deployment of racist iconography in the mass media coverage of Brexit and the Trump campaign. We want to challenge the hyper-mediated landscape that has propelled the global right, by considering how a previous generation of artists, who focused on the body in their works, responded to dominant social conditions. Speak, body sets out to investigate artworks that emerged coincident with the crisis of capitalism in the 1960s and 1970s in order to consider what they can tell us about contemporary transformations in art and politics.

Through an intense and sustained period of engagement, the body was explored by artists such as VALIE EXPORT, Mona Hatoum, Ana Mendieta, Gina Pane, Adrian Piper, Yvonne Rainer, Ulrike Rosenbach, Martha Rosler, Carolee Schneeman, Jo Spence and Hannah Wilke among others. We are especially interested in artworks that counter the museal tendency to appropriate feminist art practices within conventional art-historical categories of movements, iconographies or styles; that is, we want to solicit papers that track the social implications of feminist investigation and critique conducted through a range of media (performance, photography, video, film, etc.). Speak, body aims to reconnect artistic practices with feminism as a historic social movement, and to query its consolidation into an academic “-ism”.

The idea of the body, connotes a number of tensions: between inside and outside; consumption and excretion; energy and depletion; life and death. At the same time, the body is produced historically through practices and discourses, and has figured as a key site for analysis in, for example, Karl Marx’s description of “labour-power”, Sigmund Freud’s account of sexual difference and bodily prosthesis, Michel Foucault’s theory of the “medical gaze”, Silvia Federici’s corrective historical

analysis of the female “rebel” body, and Juliet Mitchell’s foundational work on the woman as “sexual object”. By reading those artistic practices that have engaged a feminist politics – on psychic and social levels, through direct or indirect means – we hope to pursue a materialist analysis of art’s enduring imbrication in capitalist social relations, as well as its relative autonomy from these relations.

We invite papers that trace the conditions of production, rhetorics and effects that relate to the body in feminist-inflected artistic practice. In particular, we are interested in close readings of distinct works, as well as papers that explore this constellation through history and philosophy, aesthetics, and theories of race, gender and class.

Speak, Body will engage how art relates to the themes and concepts including but not limited to:

- health and illness
- the maternal body
- notions of violence in art
- mediation and materials
- human/non-human (cybernetics)
- gender and feminism(s)
- critical theories of race and antiracism
- hyper-masculinity
- art and labour
- resistance and subsumption
- materialist and psychoanalytic approaches to art
- (legacies of) performance and media art
- historical-philosophical conceptions of the body in contemporary art
- contextual histories and discourses and methods of art history that relate to this subject

Please send your abstract (max 300 words), title, and a short biography (100 words) to: speakbody2017@gmail.com by 30 January 2017.

Successful applicants will be notified by mid February 2017

This conference is organised by Rose-Anne Gush, Tom Hastings, Sophie Jones and Gill Park

Reference:

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