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# **poetics & politics**

**documentary research symposium**  
**uc santa cruz    may 15—17, 2015**

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**POETICS AND POLITICS  
DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM**

May 15-15th, 2015  
University of California, Santa Cruz  
Digital Arts Research Center (DARC) 108 and 317

Free and open to the public

**Acknowledgments**

Organized by Irene Gustafson and Aparna Sharma

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Thank you:

Sabrina Eastwood and the Arts Event Office

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|------------------------|--------------------|
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## Poetics and Politics

Documentary is an inherently unstable practice. Its instability arises from the fact that documentaries are made by *being in the world*. To make and to view a documentary is, at some level, to engage with the world: to want to know it, to follow it, to question it, to respond to it, to interact with it, to change it. We must necessarily differ in our understandings of what constitutes the ‘world,’ as indeed, how many worlds there are around us; but the making and receiving of documentaries cannot be separated from *being in the world*. Documentary’s instability is its distinguishing feature and the basis of it being a source of epistemology.

The world(s) that documentaries engage are not stable, contained, easily apparent or even *visible*. Accordingly, documentary practice is more complex than a positivist translation of what lies before a camera. Documentary practice is even constitutive of our lived experiences. The most casual observer today cannot help but notice the expanding scope of documentary practice: mediated mediations on the material, cultural, political, affective and phantasmatic qualities of our worlds. The web, our personal technological devices, mainstream outlets such as television and film festival marketplaces, stadium-sized screens on the sides of buildings, are each vectors of documentary-based knowledges. We are voluntary and involuntary audiences to (and often producers of) the constant streaming *documentary ether* of our everyday. As documentary practices, materials and cultures continue to expand, they become, arguably, more conventionalized and de-territorialized.

Perhaps now, more than ever, we need to think about documentary.

The political stakes in documentary are high. The Indian art critic, Geeta Kapur, has offered a revisionist articulation of the role of documentary in our times. Taking the collapse of the Soviet Union as an anchor, Kapur argues

that documentary practice in fact constitutes a necessary anti-thesis to global political dysfunction. She asserts that it is now possible:

*'... to hypothesize, on the basis of a worldwide documentary upsurge, a common culture of the 'multitudes' with a 'be against' slogan in the manifestos of hope that the new global empire supposedly yields — in the form of a nemesis or, indeed, as a demonstration of a dialectic.'* (Kapur 2008: 51)

The somewhat overwhelming burden Kapur places on documentary aside, we can see that she situates documentary at the center of a new world-making. For her, documentary-making is a critical and open-ended practice for producing knowledge that through its making constitutes a counter-point, the necessary counter-point in a dialectic that would otherwise stand diluted in the aggressive march of unipolar, neo-liberal capital.

Recognizing the political value of documentary as emphasised by Kapur, we spent much time discussing the scope of documentary as a political project, but also as an aesthetic one. Traditionally in documentary, the political and the aesthetic have been thought of as mutually exclusive. When we brought this conference to the US from Finland, part of our curation was to interpret the title of this symposium. For us the 'Poetic' points to the centrality of aesthetics to questions of politics. We see the 'and' in the symposium title as a conjoiner, powerfully yoking politics to form and form to politics. We both had a very strong desire to frame documentary's political possibilities alongside its poetic ones.

The second focus of the symposium is the possible relation of theory to practice in documentary research. This is a problematic sequencing of words, for sure, burdened by assumptions about all sorts of meanings, values, methods and avenues. A simpler explanation of our purpose here is to think about *how we think with documentary*. This formulation allows us to ponder upon the relationship of our thoughts to our practices. Practices which are material, time-based, embodied, relational, routinized, performative, specific, unstable, happening and happened. Practice is a doing. At its most utopian, practice is an act of resistance to the impulse in documentary for ontological determinism or positivist recognition—its reduction to craft, to now-ness, to the indexical, to the real, to a set of conventions, or to a set of modes or iron-clad truisms. This pondering on the relationship of our thoughts to our practices is perhaps most instructive in how it reveals how thinking itself is a practice. Thinking is itself

already material, time-based, sensory, embodied and relational. This perspective on the relationship of thinking to making is one insight that this symposium offers to the body of knowledge about documentary. It's not a new insight but one that deserves, and necessitates, frequent reconsideration. For as Trinh T Minh has written almost fifteen years ago,

*There is no such thing as documentary — whether the term designates a category of material, a genre, an approach, or a set of techniques. This assertion — as old and as fundamental as the antagonism between names and reality — needs incessantly to be restated despite the very visible existence of a documentary tradition. In film, such a tradition, far from undergoing a crisis today, is likely to fortify itself through its very recurrence of declines and rebirths. The narratives that attempt to unify/purify its practices by positing evolution and continuity from one period to the next are numerous indeed, relying heavily on traditional historicist concepts of periodization... Concepts are no less practical than images or sound. But the link between the name and what is named is conventional, not phenomenal. Producing film theory (or rather, philosophizing with film), which is not making films, is also a practice—a related but different practice—for theory does have to be(de)constructed as it (de)construes its object of study. (Minh-ha 1991: 29-30)*

While disassembling the burden of facticity and truth with which documentary has been identified since an early stage in its development, Minh-ha's assertion that documentary is not exclusively a thing, but also a way of thinking, allows for a healthy proliferation of motivations, forms and approaches to documentary-making. Her project as a practitioner is to intervene not only in the history of representation but also into the very history of ideas and knowledge. The opening words of her 1995 film, *Ressamblage*, are an enactment of her critical stance. They mobilize cinematic-reflexivity as a critique of power, which in modern times has been inseparable from the narrative of capital that is in turn intertwined with colonialism. These opening words inaugurate her form of political documentary-making that privileges nearness over totality; a representation that maybe partial and incomplete, but is critically located, sensory and sensitive.

*Scarcely twenty years were enough to make two billion people define themselves as underdeveloped.  
I do not intend to speak about  
Just speak near by (Minh-ha 1992: 96)*

We can read in this poetic evocation of her own position as maker, a call for documentary as a reciprocal challenge to the categories of both theory and practice, or making and thinking.

As curators of this program, we have explicitly foregrounded these two issues: the relationship of the poetic to the political, and the relationship of thinking to making. Our goal is to deepen our understanding of what documentary practice research is and can be. We conceive documentary practice as encompassing multiple media and outcomes including moving image media, digital media, writing, photography, installation, performance, archiving and programming, among other forms, either as individual or hybrid practices in which more than a single medium are in dialogue.

This symposium hopes to expand our thinking on these issues as we are equally concerned with contexts and community. Spaces of creative criticality seem few and far between and we hope that our shared sense about the necessity of these spaces will guide us with purpose. We genuinely hope that this event, and others like it, become more commonplace and more productively useful in our attempts at thinking and doing, or doing thinking. Or making thinking. Or whatever awkward but useful neologisms we might devise to enable and summon the futures we want for ourselves and for the work of documentary.

Thank you and welcome to Poetics and Politics of Documentary Research Symposium, 2015!

-Irene Gustafson and Aparna Sharma

#### References:

- Kapur, G. 2008. 'A Cultural Conuncture in India: Art into Documentary', in, Smith, T., Enwezor, O. and Condee, N. (eds) *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, postmodernity, Contemporaneity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Minh-ha, T. T. 1991. *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Minh-ha, T. T. 1992. *Framer Framed*. New York and London: Routledge.

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**SCREENINGS** will take place in DARC 317. Program is repeated on both  
Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th

**9:00am**

***COMPANY LINE (Kevin Jerome Everson, 2009, 30 min)***

*A film about one of the first predominately Black neighborhoods in Mansfield Ohio. The title, Company Line, refers to the name historically used by residents to describe their neighborhood, located on the north side of town close to the old steel mill. The Company Line began during the post-war migration of Blacks from the south to the north in the late forties. The neighborhood was purchased in the early seventies and its residents were scattered throughout Mansfield. City employees and former residents of the Company Line narrate the film.*

**9:30am**

***ESTATE, A REVERIE (Andrea Luka Zimmerman. 2015, 83 min)***

*Filmed over seven years, Estate, a Reverie reveals and celebrates the resilience of residents who are profoundly overlooked by media representations and wider social responses. Interweaving intimate portraits with the residents' own historical re-enactments, landscape and architectural studies and dramatised scenes, Estate, a Reverie asks how we might resist being framed exclusively through class, gender, ability or disability, and even through geography.*

**12:30pm**

***OWNER BUILT (Larry Andrews, 2013, 49 min)***

*Hurricane Katrina and the ensuing aftermath destroyed Noel's community and home. He is rebuilding, and as he rebuilds, he evokes the past through the enlistment of his personal archives. His memories are complicated by the tragic events that occurred on the Danziger Bridge on September 4Th 2005. As Noel reflects back on what has been lost, the story that he tells about his neighborhood is affected by the story of innocent people gunned down while attempting to cross a bridge in search of safety, and for Noel their plight clarifies many things. Noel is performing his story, motivated by a collection of photographs that prompt him to recount events from his past and present. An implied author performs Noel who then performs others.*

**1:45pm**

**STREET KNOWLEDGE 2 COLLEGE excerpts (Jennifer Maytorena Taylor, 2013)**

*SK2C explores the lives of students and families at a unique, community-organized school in South Los Angeles. Run by the Youth Justice Coalition, FREE L.A. High School works to get youth off the school-to-jail track and engaged in community leadership – transforming their own lives and those of others. This original 15-part commissioned PBS.org web series was conceived and produced collaboratively with youth from the FREE L.A. High School community.*

**2:00pm**

**JUSTINE (Pratap Rughani, 2013, 28 min)**

Justine doesn't speak. She communicates through looking, gesture and the body language of her movement and interactions. This short documentary creates an intimate portrait of Justine's experience, observing the close rhythms of her days in the run-up to her milestone birthday and the new challenges of life in a changing welfare system.

**2:30pm**

**SKIN DESTINATION (Adrianna Trujillo, 2012, 10 min)**

*Skin Destination proposes a reflection to the state of emergency that Mexico lives in from the perspective of the body as an agent. Using found footage, Skin Destination elapses in a cross-border manner (as well as in the city of Tijuana) using different formats, narrative strategies and staging.*

**3:30pm**

**DOCUMENTATION OF THE POBOL PRISM ARTIST RESIDENCY BBC ROATH LOCK CARDIFFS (Inga Burrows, 2015, 45 min)**

*Since the mid-1960's, artist residencies have become a global phenomena. Supported by partnerships between the state and private organisations, taken up by public institutions, religious establishments, and charities, artists have occupied roles within sites of urban regeneration, taken their creative curiosity to isolated rural locations, been inspired by majestic architectural surroundings, or performed a quasi-comic position inhabiting wacky purpose-built constructions. The reciprocal benefits to organisation and to artist have legitimised the often maligned practice of the contemporary artist. For 6 months in 2014, Burrows documented participatory engagement as first artist-in-residence at the Welsh language Soap Pobol y Cwm (PyC).*



**5:00pm**

***MOTHERHOOD ARCHIVES (Irene Lusztig, 2013, 91 min)***

*Archival montage, science fiction, and an homage to 70s feminist filmmaking are woven together to form this lyrical essay film excavating hidden histories of childbirth in the twentieth century. Assembling an extraordinary archive of over 100 educational, industrial, and medical training films (including newly rediscovered Soviet and French childbirth films) the film inventively untangles the complex, sometimes surprising genealogies of maternal education.*



**PANELS** will take place in DARC 108

**FRIDAY MAY 15th**

**6:00- 6:30pm**

**WELCOME and OPENING REMARKS**

**6:30-8:00pm**

**PROVOCATIONS: THE EPISTEMOLOGIES OF PRACTICE**

**Sharon Daniel, Pratap Rughnai, and Hope Tucker**

This panel gathers practitioners whose documentary work provide key provocations for this symposium. Interrogating and problematizing how documentary epistemologies and meanings are constructed, this panel raises specific approaches for demystifying documentary-making as a practice of visible evidence. Questions considered by this panel include: the scope of documentary practice in the 'fourth world'; documentary materiality as a source for relaying narratives of unresolved environmental disaster; and the ethical (consent) and aesthetic/affective concerns in documentary-making processes that involve asymmetric power relations between makers and subjects. The panel offers pathways for understanding reflexive praxis as a source of competing historical and affective epistemologies, more than simply a move to deconstruct the documentary artefact. Through this, the panel situates how documentary-making as a socio-historical and psycho-social practice intervenes in contemporary geo-political scenarios.

**8:00-9:00pm**

**DRINKS and NIBBLES on the DARC 3rd floor balcony**

## **SATURDAY MAY 16th**

coffee and tea available in front of DARC 108 at 8:30am

**9am-10:30am**

### **WRITING WITH AND ON SCREEN**

**Alex Johnston, Alisa Lebow, Travis Wilkerson**

Online and digital platforms offer and enable compelling structures for documentary research. This panel presents two in-progress online sites: *Filming Revolution* (Lebow, forthcoming 2015) and *Now! A Journal of Urgent Praxis* (<http://www.nowjournal.com>). Both projects enact online documentary as a simultaneously creative, scholarly and political project wherein the role of production, curation and distribution is integral to a politically engaged documentary practice. In the case of *Filming Revolution*, an interactive meta-documentary surveying the field of independent documentary making in Egypt since the revolution, the website attempts “to match the open ended, counter-monumental, rhizomatic emergent structure of this revolution by placing it into a homologous platform (non-linear, non-hierarchical, spatially and temporally open-ended) that loosely parallels the sentiments and strategies expressed within without attempting to master or constrain them.” *Now! A Journal of Urgent Praxis* offers a platform for radical discussion of and response to contemporary events through the dissemination of politically engaged and formally experimental non-fiction media and critical writing.

**10:45am-12:15pm**

### **REVERBS, REPEATS, AND REENACTMENTS**

**Jenny Chio, David Rice, Tamara Vukov**

This panel examines how research processes and documentary-making, understood as a socially-engaged practice, inform and impact one another. The panel gathers practitioners who work in very specific cultural contexts and use their documentary-making to historicise the cultural experiences of subjects in their chosen field-sites. Plotting fractured, disjunct and even violent narratives of workers, women, refugees, displaced and disadvantaged peoples — their documentary-making confronts broader contradictions tied to the experiences of competing modernities and conceptions of modern-nationhood/s. These contradictions do not neatly lend themselves to linear or rational forms of documentary construction. The panelists will discuss the formal strategies they use for devising complex documentary forms that respond to cultural experiences that fall outside the dominant forms and narratives of western nationhood.

**12:15-1:45pm LUNCH** (catered for presenters)

**1:45-3:15pm**

### **THE AESTHETICS OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC**

**Samuel Anderson, Sarah Franzen, Cathy Greenhalgh**

Ethnographic filmmaking has received much consideration about its scope and status as a form of knowledge production, particularly following the reflexive turn in this field since the late-1980s. Yet, aesthetic issues and approaches of ethnographic filmmaking are seldom integrated into discussions about their epistemological values. Contesting stable categories of ethnographic films, this panel probes how aesthetic approaches to ethnographic documentary-making open avenues and forms of knowledge, hitherto unrecognized within the canon of ethnographic documentary. Working across contexts ranging from ritual to cotton trade, the panelists will share examples from works-in-progress to illustrate how formal approaches to documentation offer knowledge/s and epistemologies that exceed conventional categories of ethnographic data. The panel will focus on intersubjective forms of documentary-making, issues of duration and the uses of affective and tactile aesthetics in ethnographic documentary-making.

**3:30-5:00pm**

### **BODIES OF WORK**

**Julie Wyman and Lizzie Thynne**

The body is a tool of political and poetic practice. Galvanizing this understanding, this panel contests the Cartesian duality of body and mind. Panelists will share elements of their practice to illustrate how they are plotting narratives of the body/ies that exceed the institutionalized discourses and frameworks used for rationalizing bodily experiences and memories in relation to bodily discourses spanning a range of terms: size, ethnicity, class, body form, trauma, to name a few. Deriving from feminist thought and methodologies, the panelists will discuss their methods of research and making (specifically form) through which they seek to not only contest institutionalized and market-oriented approaches to the body, but more crucially, use their practice to create linkages between bodies that are either 'exceptional' or 'marginal', in society. This move to provoke linkages between bodies is rooted in disassembling conventional and institutionalized approaches to the body.

**5:30-7:00pm**

**KEVIN JEROME EVERSON**

What do we see in the films of Kevin Jerome Everson? We see what cinema rarely, if ever, shows. We see the ordinary gestures of America's Black population, the gestures of work and sport, of the taxi driver, the trucker, the policeman, of the amateur and the champion. We see men and women talking into the filmmaker's microphone or that of a TV station, going and coming with the rhythm of works and days, but also with the rhythm of images that originate as waves: flux and reflux, broad day and lights out, visibility and invisibility, etc... We see them. We don't see them. We see them again. We see them in 16mm, Super-8, Mini-DV, Hi-Def... We see them in color here, there in black and white, or alternating between them. We see the colors of the outside, of nature (Cinnamon, Blind Huber). Above all we see the shadows of the inside, of the factory (Lead, A Week in the Hole). There is not a single film by Kevin Jerome Everson that doesn't return, at some point, to the black screen. This indicates the vast bedrock from which this cinema draws most of its images: America's archives, televised or private. The documentary effect functions identically whether the found footage is real or simulated. The black screen is the abyss where this cinema catches its breath: an annihilation, but also a reservoir of images, the neutral gear through which every film passes before starting up again. The blackness alternates readily, and to marvelous effect, with the snow covering the lawns, the windshield and the roads (Merger, Company Line). But just as the former is the blackness of the image, the latter evokes other granulations than the harsh winters of Ohio: the grain of images brought back from the past, souvenirs of the viewfinders of yesteryear, the pattering hail of an engine or a radio. Black and white aren't just colors—they are also emissions, temporalities, depths of images. They speak of a temporal conjunction, the encounter between historical time (the History of America, the History of Black people in America, the History of how that people has been represented) and the time of what has been torn from that History.

- Emmanuel Burdeau, from "Undefeated – Notes on KJE's films"



**7:30-10:00pm**

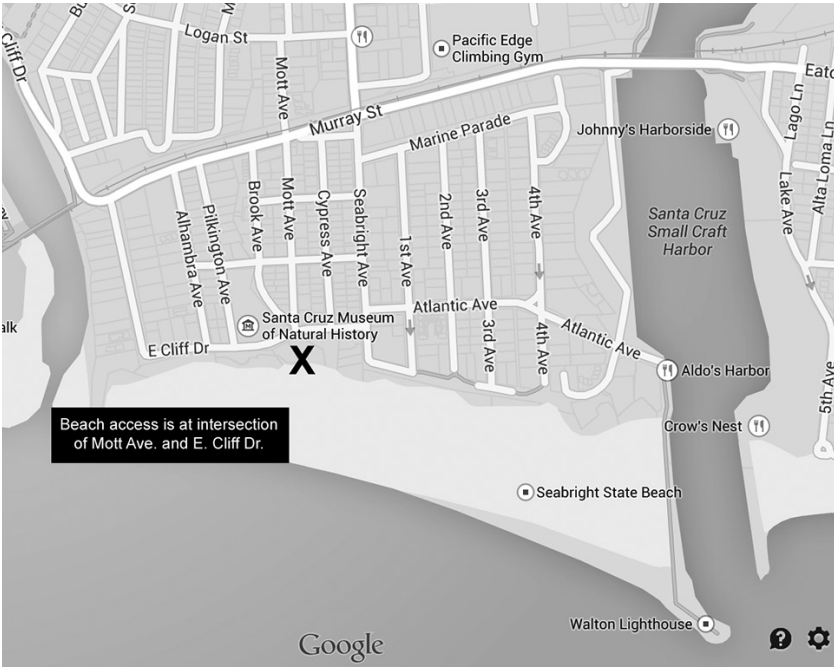
**BONFIRE AND PIZZA at SEABRIGHT STATE BEACH**

(catered for presenters)

A shuttle bus will transport participants from the DARC to Seabright State Beach, leaving campus at around 7:00pm and returning to the DARC at 10:30pm (if needed, the shuttle bus can drop participants back at the Dream Inn or on Mission Street)

Seabright State Beach is located at the intersection of Mott Avenue and E. Cliff Drive. Parking is available on the street. The beach is easily accessible by foot and there are public restrooms near by.

Pizza will be provided. Please bring layers to keep warm! Alcohol is prohibited on the beach



## **SUNDAY MAY 16th**

coffee and tea available in front of DARC 108 at 8:30am

**9:00-10:30am**

### **FIRE ALARMS: ON HISTORY**

**Fabiola Hanna, Omotayo Jolaosho, Katja Lautamatti**

Who writes history, using whose tools? This question has gained much currency following the digital revolution of our times. Ease of accessibility and operability have led to the permeation of media in our environments, offering prompt ways of recording and writing histories from the perspectives of those on whose bodies the motions of history are transacted. This panel examines the possibilities of archival documentary practices for writing, rewriting and contesting historical narratives. Working in Lebanon and South Africa, the panelists ask what kinds of knowledges can be devised from oral, aural and visual materials? More specifically, what understandings about political life-worlds can be derived from the sonic, spatial and kinesthetic knowledge contained in oral history and archival materials? Sharing examples from their practices-in-progress the panelists will illustrate how documentary-making can complicate understandings of archival materials by asserting them as 'composed', rather than objective and therefore omniscient bodies of data.

**10:45am-12:15pm**

### **IMAGES OF HARMONY AND RUPTURE**

**Jouko Aaltonen, Susanna Helke, Timo Korhonen**

Over the years, a tradition of social documentary has consolidated into something like a generic form. Crises and ruptures in the social fabric have been depicted through narratives of power and powerlessness. The gaze of the documentary film has most often been directed at the 'victims' of crisis, and occasionally, aimed at dismantling the structures power and privilege. The agenda of these films has been yoked to an agenda of social change wherein the subjects of the film are instrumentalized as witnesses. Societal problems are presented as something that happens, has a dramatic form, and can therefore unfold in front of the camera. This panel examines the social documentary in relation to the Scandinavian welfare state. Images of Harmony and Rupture is a practice-based research project group that aims to reimagine the social documentary form. Jouko Aaltonen's project focuses on the rhetoric of social and political documentary film in the context of representing the ethos and ruptures of the welfare state, Timo Korhonen discusses the ways the content and form of documentary films reflects the ethos of Scandinavian

society versus the fictions of southern European societies, and Susanna Helke discusses the use of poetic strategies in representing the political and the aesthetics of manifestation and provocation.

**12:15 - 1:45pm**

### **THE ESSAYISTIC**

**Erika Mijl, Fiamma Montezemolo, Paige Sarlin**

The documentary essay's power lies in its precise abilities to trouble and redefine our expectations of what constitutes media production and scholarship. It is a form of documentary which is difficult to describe or define for the exact reason why it remains so productively important – it makes and remakes forms, it reveals conventions as conventions, and beautifully asserts that testing and experimentation are fundamental modes of documentary inquiry. This panel collectively engages with essayistic practices through the staging of important questions: what determines the choice of formats? How do format choices bear on documentary research and outcomes? What constitutes the kernel of the documentary image? How do issues of place and history animate our practices, our aesthetics and our politics?

**1:45 - 2:45pm     LUNCH** (catered for presenters)

**2:45 - 4:15PM**

### **TIMELESS BASED**

**Jeanne Finley, Elias Grootaers, Jeffrey Skoller**

This panel ponders the status of time in relation to documentary practices. Elia Grootaers examines aphoristic writing and thinking and how such written words and thoughts can be conveyed in a spoken presentation. His subject is the notion of documentary film as a chain of citations of reality. Jeanne Finley and Jeffrey Skoller ask: what is the meaning of the “present” in documentary media? How can a document address the need to confront an event that is unfolding in the present moment, where its direction and outcome is not yet determined, in which the dynamics of the event is not yet understood or able to be narrated?

**4:30 -6:00PM**

### **REPERTOIRES OF ARCHIVES**

**Steve Anderson, Martin Lucas, Matt Soar**

What constitutes an archive in the field of moving image media? What are the functions of archives in moving image media generally, and documenta-



ry practice specifically? This panel gathers practitioners who are interested in contesting the limits and functions of archival materials in documentary practice. Each practitioner expresses their distinct approach to appreciating and working with archival materials. Questioning the stability of visual archives as neutral and total sources of data, their processes of work call up competing modalities for appreciating archival materials and using them on terms more complex than as evidence of a time gone past. Depictions of Hiroshima, the leaders at the start of a film and the evolution of computer technology through Hollywood cinema are the specific archival materials with which practitioners of this panel are working. The panelists will discuss the use of multiple media formats for articulating and disseminating their research.

**6:15 - 7:45**

### **GENTRIFICATION**

**Rebecca Gourevitch, Miriam Greenberg, Erin McElroy, Kristin Miller, Elsa Ramos, Samuuel Topiary**

Building upon a collaborative working research group at UCSC focusing on the history and political theories of urban gentrification and the ways in which gentrification and urban displacements have been represented and framed in documentary film, this panel will present a number of new documentary works and papers dealing with current Bay Area gentrification. The participants will present a number of short presentations on their work as academic researchers, political activists and documentarians. The topics will range from questions about urban and public policy, transportation and infrastructure, class struggle and technology, the ethnic and racial components of displacement, and environmentalism and sustainability. Following the short presentations and screenings, the panel will open into a discussion which will address central questions about the role of activism, and documentary film and media in influencing legislation, public policy, community attitudes, and economic conditions.

RESOURCES:

URL

a downloadable PDF version of this program is available: <http://poeticsandpolitics.ucsc.edu/symposium-schedule/>

Internet Access

WIFI

use the 'cruznet' wireless network and sign on as a 'guest'

Social Media Tags

#poeticsandpolitics2015

Maps

Campus Maps are available at: <http://maps.ucsc.edu/>

DARC floor plan



## Parking

The parking lots in front of the DARC are patrolled on the weekends. Metered parking is available in front of the DARC and nearby at Porter College.

## Coffee, Tea, and Food

Beverages and food are only provided for panel and screening participants.

If you are attending the symposium but not presenting, there are numerous places on campus to find food and drink. Closest to the DARC are:

Global Village Cafe in the Library

<http://library.ucsc.edu/global-village-cafe>

Friday 8am-7pm; Saturday 11am-6pm; Sunday 10am-8pm

Porter Slug Grill and Cafe at Porter College

<http://housing.ucsc.edu/dining/porter-cafe.html>

Friday: 7:00am - 4:00pm; Saturday and Sunday: 3:00pm - 10:00pm



## PARTICIPANTS and ABSTRACTS

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Aalto University of Arts, Design, and Architecture

Shared abstract with SUSANNA HELKE and TIMO KORHONEN

*Images of Harmony and Rupture – Documentary Film Reflecting Fractures in the Scandinavian Welfare State Ethos*

In the tradition of social documentary, different crises and ruptures in society have often been depicted through either the narratives of those who win or of those who lose. The gaze of documentary film has often been directed at the victims of crisis, and occasionally it has been aimed at dismantling the masks of power of the privileged ones. The social concern in documentary film is often tied to the agenda of change. The subjects of the films, the victims, are portrayed as witnesses the filmmaker uses to argue his/her case promoting the agenda of change. The use of crisis structure as a

prevalent narrative strategy stems from the ideals of the direct in documentary film.

Societal crises are presented as something that happens and has a dramatic form and can therefore unfold in front of the camera. Societal crises, defects and disparities are not necessarily manifesting themselves in a dramatic manner in the context of the Scandinavian welfare state. The core of the ongoing crisis is embedded in the ways the societal commitment to the ethos of the welfare state is being unraveled and in the paradoxes created when immaterial values are subjugated by material values. The acute challenge for documentary filmmakers is in making these rather invisible paradoxes visible and this is not necessarily possible by repeating the conventional strategies stemming from the tradition of social documentary: i.e. crisis structure, sentimental rhetoric of the victim motif, didactic persuasion in manifesting the agenda of change.

Images of Harmony and Rupture is a practice-based and artistic research project lead by the filmmaker-theorist Susanna Helke. Through theorizing and filmmaking, the project aims at challenging the conventions of social in documentary expression. Jouko Aaltonen's project focuses on the rhetoric of social and political documentary film in the context of representing the ethos and ruptures of the welfare state, Timo Korhonen discusses the ways the content and form of documentary films reflects the ethos of Scandinavian society versus the fictions of southern European societies, and Susanna Helke discusses the use of poetic strategies in representing the political and the aesthetics of manifestation and provocation.

SAMUEL ANDERSON (samuel.mark.anderson@gmail.com)

Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard

*The Tedium is the Message: The Laborious Extravagance of Theyyam*

Theyyam, the iconic rituals of South India's Malabar Coast, embody living deities as dazzling mobile shrines. These visual feasts arrest the attention of onlookers and offer their devotees potently visible access to the gods, while their sumptuous and otherworldly images pepper the landscape through icons, advertisements, tourist shows, and reality TV competitions. Yet Theyyam's practitioners recognize that divinity arises not only from extravagance but equally from exhaustive preparations. In the open view around the temple, Theyyam artists apply detailed makeup, strip and sculpt palm fronds, and sew elaborate fabrics over the course of hours. The divine impact of the ritual derives from the display of the meditative and redundant labor of its making.

The complexities of ritual labor are evident in the organization of Theyyam personnel; while the priests and sponsors are frequently from higher castes and communities, the performers themselves are low status. Their arduous exertions are thus contiguous with their day-to-day tasks as wage laborers, even as their emergence as gods precipitates an inversion of social hierarchies. Theyyam are considered champions of the poor and its spectacular labor finds parallels in the region's rigorous devotion to

Communist Party politics.

This presentation shares documentary work-in-progress by Neelima Jeychandran and Samuel Mark Anderson currently being prepared for an exhibition of Theyyam arts. Among the questions we seek to explore are the following:

- How does this research advance a long lineage of documentary engagements with possession rites that have blurred the distinction between cinematic and spiritual mediums?
- In what ways might museum video installations address ritual that self-contained documentary films cannot?
- How does a film or artwork, habitually oriented towards indulging its audience's attention, convey the experience of tedium, redundancy, and duration?
- How can visual research explicate specific, local correlations between religion, economics, politics, and art?

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*Documentary Revelations: The Technologies of Cinema Critical Media Archive*

Near the beginning of *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003), Thom Andersen explains his film's basic strategy: "If we can appreciate documentaries for their dramatic qualities, perhaps we can appreciate fiction films for their documentary revelations."

My project, *Technologies of Cinema*, undertakes a similar investigation, analyzing not representations of Los Angeles but depictions (and imaginings) of computer technology as they have appeared on the screens of Hollywood from 1950 to the present. The project is being realized in three forms: a print book, an annotated public media archive comprising hundreds of clips from American film and TV, and a series of video essays composed entirely from media contained in the archive.

This three-part structure could rightly be considered an instance of "trans-media" scholarship, but I prefer to think of it as simply taking advantage of the relative affordances of each mode of authoring. The more or less conventional, long-form critical argument presented in the print book is probably of least direct relevance to this symposium, however, I believe the critical archive and video essay components resonate productively with this event's focus on the poetics of documentary.

*Technologies of Cinema* offers a structural model for creating both a media archive using the fair use advocacy website Critical Commons <<http://www.criticalcommons.org>> and a richly mediated scholarly essay via the electronic authoring platform Scalar <<http://scalar.usc.edu>>.

LARRY ANDREWS (landrews@ucsc.edu)  
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Screening, *OWNER BUILT* (2013, 49 min)

INGA BURROWS (Inga.burrows@southwales.ac.uk)  
University of South Wales  
Screening *DOCUMENTATION OF THE POBOL PRISM ARTIST RESIDENCY BBC ROATH LOCK CARDIFFS* (2015, 45 min)

JENNY CHIO (jenny.chio@emory.edu)  
Emory University  
*The Ethnographer's (Visual) Archive: Returns to and Reconsiderations of Research Footage*

This research presentation discusses a digital video work-in-progress. Returning to footage shot in China one day in 2007 with an ethnic Miao woman from rural Guizhou who had migrated to Guangdong province to work in an electronics factory, I discuss the ethical and ethnographic questions implicit in crafting a documentary across temporalities of analysis, life stories, and research relationships. As I dig into my archive, my goal is twofold: to tell this woman's story as a young, ethnic migrant worker, and to reflect upon the uses of "old" footage in new documentary-based research, even when the story told ended long ago. The footage I will discuss was recorded during long-term ethnographic fieldwork, when I was engaged in research on ethnic tourism and rural social change in China. As such, this particular set of digital materials about one woman's experience as a migrant factory worker never made it into the longer film on rural tourism that I produced or into any of my writing on the topic. This was, in part, because at the time of research, her story did not "fit" into the larger narrative of my analysis – she returned to the village I was studying in 2008 and began participating again in the local tourism industry. However, as I have continued to visit and spend time with her over the years, I am drawn back to this earlier footage for a number of political and ethnographic reasons. First, as a researcher who has recorded aspects of this woman's life, I feel an obligation to tell the stories that she shared with me, whether or not they directly related to my research questions at the time. Second, as an ethnographic filmmaker, I believe her story provides an important look at social subjectivities and experiences of rural women in China today. Finally, this video project raises questions about the contradictions and possibilities emerging from the intersection of the practice of scholarly analysis, ideals of digital immediacy, and the role of visual materials in building, and sustaining, research relationships.

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The phrase “The Fourth World” alludes to a history of shared experiences among the indigenous communities of the world struggling for self-determination. The phrase was coined in 1974 by Shuswap Chief George Manuel in *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*. Unlike the First, Second and Third worlds, Manuel’s “Fourth World” is not spatially bounded. Its populations - nations of indigenous peoples living within or across state boundaries – are not identified by their citizenship in a specific nation-state and their lives are not motivated by imperialism or capitalism. “The Fourth World” is also commonly used to refer to sub-populations existing in a First World country, but with the living standards of a Third World country – precarious lives. Kivalina, Alaska, a remote Inupiat village above the Arctic Circle - where indigenous people live below the poverty line, without running water or toilets, adequate health care, quality education or access to employment - is “in the Fourth World.” I have recorded over 40 interviews with members of the native tribe of Kivalina in which they describe their political and social history, the nature of Inupiaq traditional knowledge, the subsistence lifestyle, the struggle to gain fair representation in a cash economy, and the effects of climate change personally observed and documented. These interviews will be part of an interactive online documentary, titled *In the Fourth World*, which will serve as a portal to a participatory community platform and open data archive containing approximately 100 years of textual, audio, video and photographic documentation - records that were, until recently, forgotten and buried in boxes in tribal and municipal government offices.

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California College of the Arts

Shared abstract with JEFFREY SKOLLER

*PRESENT-TIME: Against Storytelling in Documentary*

What is the meaning of the “present” in Documentary media? In the history of Modernism, “presence” is a materialist phenomenon, in which the artwork is created to produce a heightened awareness of the present moment as an aesthetic and intellectual experience, Now-Time as Walter Benjamin suggested. Unlike the Avant-garde, in traditional documentary forms, time is usually retrospective. Documentary film and photography are most often a looking back, reflecting, analyzing, reviewing, and an accounting of events. As document, the film becomes a historical record from which a story is built from the events—directing a specific understanding of events that have occurred in order that they make sense.

Implicit to the idea of traditional documentary storytelling is that the event has already occurred and can be understood through formal tropes of literary emplotment (Hayden White). For example, the contemporary dominant “character driven”

Documentary, employs a structure in which characters are always already understood to be significant, and the event's narrative is built around them. Such characters are constructed to create a place of identification for the viewer, making a story that seems coherent from the subject position of the character much like a fiction film or novel. Such formal rhetoric often creates a false sense of closure, that places the film's events neatly in a past and apprehensible. But what if the event is still occurring? What if it's too soon for the outcomes and meanings of an event to be understood? Such incomprehensibility of the present, often defies narration.

How can a document address the need to confront an event that is unfolding in the present moment, where its direction and outcome is not yet determined, in which the dynamics of the event is not yet understood or able to be narrated? Its present-ness is precisely the emergence of the event, and in the present moment it defies understanding and coherence. What kinds of problems for representation does this give rise to? What forms and approaches to documentary form are necessary to allow for the provisionality of the present to emerge? What does it mean to engage an event that defies form?

In this presentation we will explore works in both film and photography that present works—both our own and works of others—that take up the immediate present as an unfolding problem for representation incomplete, contingent, not yet able to be narrated.

SARAH FRANZEN ([sarfranzen@gmail.com](mailto:sarfranzen@gmail.com))  
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Ethnographic film has been a long practiced form of documentary film, evoking ongoing debates from anthropologists, filmmakers, and artists over the nature of knowledge and its relationship to art, science, and film. While many ethnographic filmmakers and critics have attempted to codify and defend the boundaries of what counts as ethnographic films, these same boundaries continue to be transgressed creating innovative forms of knowledge and expanding our horizons as to the nature and role of film within research. Rather than debate what counts as ethnographic film, it seems more useful to explore the construction of knowledge within films through investigating the epistemological, methodological, and analytical frameworks used in its production.

Through presenting works- in- progress from my current ethnographic research, this presentation will explore different methodological approaches used during my filmic research and examine the use of film as a form of knowledge production and knowledge dissemination. Ethnographic knowledge is constructed through three key moments in the production of ethnographic films: filming, editing, and screening. Each moment becomes a possible site for intersubjective knowledge production and therefore the shifting variables of each moment, such as who participated and for what purpose



the piece was filmed, edited or presented, become part of the visual argument. But does the knowledge become embedded within the material product itself, is it visible, and is it fixed?

At the same time, the film exists independent of these relations, communicating its own set of expressions. The ethnographic film is potentially multiple things at once, it is a material object, an archeological site, and a representational form of communication. But which aspects come to the fore, and are these under the control of the filmmaker? I investigate these questions through presenting clips from my research while taking into account how this presentation itself re-shapes the visual argument.

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Shared abstract with KRISTIN MILLER, REBECCA GOUREVITCH, ERIN MCELROY, ELSA RAMOS, SAMUAEL TOPIARY

#### *Gentrification*

Building upon a collaborative working research group at UCSC focusing on the history and political theories of urban gentrification and the ways in which gentrification and urban displacements have been represented and framed in documentary film, this panel will present a number of new documentary works and papers dealing with current Bay Area gentrification. The participants will present a number of short presentations on their work as academic researchers, political activists and documentarians. The topics will range from questions about urban and public policy, transportation and infrastructure, class struggle and technology, the ethnic and racial components of displacement, and environmentalism and sustainability. Following the short presentations and screenings, the panel will open into a discussion which will address central questions about the role of activism, and documentary film and media in influencing legislation, public policy, community attitudes, and economic conditions. Underlying our inquiries will also be a focus on the various temporalities at play, looking at the relationship between pre-defined or fixed and on-going time frames: for example, the tension between a documentary film production framework and the challenges of representing much longer-term policy and displacement effects as well as the challenge of representing on-going processes of change and flux.

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*Documentary and Cinematographic Praxis: Poetics and Poiesis in Teaching and Research*

The poietic, the art of making, is inextricably linked to the poetic and the political. Forms of approaching making documentary are bound to an aesthetics of action or

'organizational aesthetics' (Strati) and this aesthetics implies a positioning (Ranciere). Our students are introduced to many modes of moving image documentary from industrially prescribed formats to the personal essay and sensory ethnographic film; from using dramatic reconstruction and animation to varieties of production and distribution platforms. This paper is an exploration of how my teaching and filmmaking is influenced by many years working as a cinematographer (on fiction and documentary for television, cinema and gallery environments) and the development of a visual strategy philosophy which privileges sourcing sensory image experience as much as scripting and story-telling processes. This involves using open and reflexive forms, sensing the materiality and texture of events, temporality as much as space and environment. It is an improvisational aesthetics in which contemplation is sought and the tacit, silent and affective acknowledged. I will outline this philosophy with reference to my films *Aftermath* (2006), *Switch* (2012) and *Cottonopolis* (2015), as well my ethnography of cinematographers (1995-2015 ongoing). The theoretical infrastructure is underpinned by ecological concerns; (Bozak, Deger); work on creativity, teaching and diversity (John-Steiner, Irving and Moffat); and the overlaps between art, documentary and anthropology (Corrigan, Macdonald, McLaughlin and Pearce, Schneider and Pasqualino).

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My article 'To cite... in time', published in *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* last year, is a largely aphoristic text that emanates from several coagulations I recurrently have been confronted with in my artistic work. For me the practice of documentary filmmaking has always been a fertile ground for theoretical reflection. 'To cite... in time' touches upon several nodal points where such artistic and theoretical threads have intersected. This vignette seeks firstly to explore Walter Benjamin's radical concepts of citing and citation and his philosophy of time, and let them resonate within the context of documentary film. The second objective is to indirectly and obliquely contemplate the relation between contemporary (reflexive) ethnography and documentary film. Ethnography has always haunted documentary film: how to depict the other, the inescapably fragmented nature of a (documentary) relation with that other. Time is understood as the constituent element of this relation with the other.

For the Poetics and Politics Documentary Research Symposium 2015 I wish to further reflect on this idea of aphoristic writing and thinking and how such written words and short thoughts can be conveyed in a spoken presentation. I wish to further focus on the idea of documentary film as a chain of citations of reality. Citations as fragments, cutouts, debris. Citing as decontextualizing and at the same time recontextualizing. Documentary film as a fragmented art: sounds and images that are left ajar. And at the same time: film may well be a two-dimensional rendition (reduction) of a three dimensional world, documentary film is always a three-dimensional gesture. Documentary film should always overflow the banks of the screen. What is that which makes it spherical makes it reach beyond the screen, fan out into the world?

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Shared abstract with MIRIAM GREENBERG and KRISTIN MILLER, ERIN MCELROY,  
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Based on growing criticism—in theory and practice—of documentary film as an informational tool for better decision-making, I propose an open and inconclusive archive that continuously and skillfully changes plot and form in order to imagine what

a history could look like. Participatory archives and/or Digital Storytelling projects are increasingly being produced, but I question their stated openness. I argue that these projects usually follow one of two trajectories: submitted content is highly curated thereby diminishing the value of an open archive, or submitted content is, on the contrary, not curated at all, where individual video documents lose importance and get lost amid large amounts of contributions.

My work-in-progress is the design of an open-ended oral history documentary about the history of Lebanon from 1943-ongoing present, within which a Narrative Intelligent (NI) agent sifts through submitted oral history testimonies and outputs automatically generated stories based on video transcripts. This allows viewers to hear all submitted content and perspectives for an event while creating links that were not present beforehand. In this manner, it allows for a truly open archive as stories change and are shaped by their own transcripts and newly submitted testimonies. The project is inconclusive in that it offers no one the possibility of having the last word by offering multiple versions of an event with the same pool of videos and by continually accepting new submissions. With authorship responsibilities placed in the care of the NI agent, I address issues related to authorship, agency, ownership and representation of stories, and finally, the epistemological value of an endless archive.

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Shared abstract with JOUKO AALTONEN and TIMO KORHONEN

KEVIN JEROME EVERSON (keverson77@mac.com)  
University of Virginia  
Keynote speaker and screening *COMPANY LINE* (2009, 30 min)

ALEX JOHNSTON (alwjohns@ucsc.edu)  
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Shared abstract with TRAVIS WILKERSON

This presentation will offer a reflection on the practice, poetics and politics of the recently launched online non-fiction media journal, *Now! A Journal of Urgent Praxis* (<http://www.nowjournal.com/>). Residing at a crossroads between film journal and radical newsreel, *Now!* was conceived of as a means of foregrounding films and writings made in rapid yet eloquent engagement with the here and now of political and cultural life. Operating in the space and time between the near-instant feedback of Twitter and the blogosphere, and the languorous pace of the academic journal, *Now!* seeks to make a place for a radical discussion of and response to contemporary events, through the dissemination of politically engaged and formally experimental media and critical writing.

In presenting the journal and examples of featured works, Travis and I would like to raise a number of questions about the intersection of documentary form and radical politics central to our vision of Now!, and about the new configurations possible in hosting a dialogue that spans multiple mediums. What role can formal experimentation play in cultivating new types of political discourse? How are the terms of discussion (and engagement) altered through a non-hierarchical presentation of critical writing and critical media? And how do we navigate questions of legibility in pushing for new forms of politically engaged documentary work? We would also like to offer Now! as a work-in-progress that compels a consideration of the role of curation and distribution, not apart from (and less than) the creation of documentary media, but as integral components of a politically engaged documentary practice.

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*The Freedom Sung Project: Towards a Multimodal Ethnography*

I would like to propose a work-in-progress presentation of "The Freedom Sung Project," an online interactive exhibit of video footage, photographs, and song recordings I collected during ethnographic research with South African activists. This collection includes about 1,200 photographs and 121 footage hours of unedited interviews and coverage of protests in the Johannesburg metropolitan area over 16 months between 2009 and 2010. The completed exhibit will convey the dynamism of these protests as well as the significance of the freedom songs that animated them.

Freedom songs and protest dances structured the potential chaos of mass rallies by synchronizing protesters' activities. They also served as avenues for emotional transmission, poignantly conveying protesters' sentiments particularly when words fell short. The profound associations activists had with these performances highlighted the limitation of language in conveying the depth of their experiences and the breadth of their practices. My video footage captured behaviors that escaped the verbal notice of activists including the geometric formations (e.g. concentric circles) that protesters adopted. I am therefore concerned with how the non-verbal elements of these performances (including body movement, the spatial configuration of protesters, musical structure, and sound textures) generate meaning in relation to and distinct from verbalized lyrics or activists' interpretations. My attention to the sonic, spatial, and kinesthetic dimensions of protest performance offer the rich challenge of conveying the significance of these elements to external audiences. A number of possibilities arise through virtual exhibition. For example, a non-linear format can encourage users to go beyond fixed meanings. Users can curate their own experiences, and create mashups recombining audio and visual elements towards their queries and interpretations. These possibilities are informed by a set of theoretical interventions on ethnographic hypermedia and my presentation

will consider how such theoretical intent intersect with practice in multimedia production.

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Shared abstract with JOUKO AALTONEN and SUSANNA HELKE

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*Filming Revolution* (Lebow, forthcoming 2015) is an interactive meta-documentary surveying the field of independent/documentary filmmaking in Egypt since the revolution. Comprised of extracts from over 30 interviews with filmmakers, activists, archivists, and artists, with linked extracts from their work, this project attempts to map out the range of filmic practices and approaches not only to filming revolution, but to thriving creatively in the current climate and context. Interviews conducted during two separate research trips (2013-14) have been edited based on searchable keywords.

Conceived as much as a scholarly research project as a creative digital one, *Filming Revolution* transitions film studies off the printed page and onto the (interactive) screen, exploiting the dynamic potential of Web 2.0 to bring a study of filmmaking practices and theories alive. Initiatives like Film Studies for Free and other online endeavors such as Senses of Cinema, Screenworks, or [In] Transition, have, of course, paved the way, as has the move toward the video essay championed by scholar/practitioners such as Adrian Martin, Catherine Grant, and Christian Keathley. Yet, one wonders why, in the age of digital interactive interfaces, more scholars and practitioners engaged in film studies, don't avail themselves of the resources that would make their work more interactive. *Filming Revolution* is a fully searchable resource comprised of edited interviews with practitioners who are first person actors in a major historical event of our time. The themes explored are of concern to any serious researcher on the subject of filmic representation in times of crisis and political upheaval, and the site is designed to foreground original analytical research while simultaneously serving as a valuable research tool and a historical document.

Further, in a move towards adequation of form and content, the *Filming Revolution* website attempts to match the open ended, counter-monumental, rhizomatic emergent structure of this revolution by translating it into an homologous platform (non-linear, non-hierarchical, spatially and temporally open-ended) that loosely parallels the sentiments and strategies expressed within it without attempting to master or constrain them. Thus *Filming Revolution* functions as creative project and creative resource simultaneously.

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In my research I am interested in how contemporary Lebanese art theory addresses the post war trauma and the altered experience of time and space.

It has been said that on the official and institutional level post war Lebanon suffers from amnesia. One example of the amnesia is the total negligence of film archives dating back to the time before civil war. Lebanese contemporary artists question the conventional use of documentary image and archival footage in acts of remembering. Instead, archiving methods are adopted into contemporary arts practices and several artists work with what could be called imaginary archives.

In his theory of “surpassing disaster,” Lebanese Jalal Toufic claims that tradition (and images which are important to the tradition) can be withdrawn and become inaccessible due to certain kinds of disaster. Toufic suggests that fiction is a necessary element of any art that hopes to address the symptoms of this cultural disaster. At the 2015 symposium I would like to discuss Jalal Toufic's idea of imaginary and the role of fiction in accessing the withdrawn culture and tradition. This will ultimately be the focus of the artistic part of my PhD thesis, a documentary film shot in Lebanon.

MARTIN LUCAS (mluc@hunter.cuny.edu)

Hunter College, City University of New York

I am currently working toward completing a 55 min film, *Hiroshima Bound*, a meditation on growing up in the shadow of Hiroshima, and an interrogation of the role of visual imagery in the development of America's collective memory (and corresponding collective amnesia) around the atomic bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The film goes beyond using archival sources to exploring the significance of the archive, even turning a camera on its actual space. Typically, archival research is ‘naturalized’ in documentary film production. Archival footage becomes a building block underpinning many a documentary project. But my proposed discussion will suggest it is a shaky foundation.

My desire in terms of a presentation and discussion is to acknowledge and highlight the instability of the archival base of documentary film, drawing particularly on the work of Jacques Derrida, who points out contradictions of trauma and repression that fissure the heart of the archive. I want to ask what it means to refuse to accept the archive as a neutral foundation underpinning history, a source of “stock footage” to be mined. For me, a refusal could offer documentary film practice a new autonomy, a freedom from both a dangerous nostalgia, and from the paranoia of conspiracy.

Many of the archives I visited were in the process of digitizing their material. It's worth noting that ideas developed by Derrida in *Archive Fever* take on specific meaning in relation to the rise of the internet. I wish to develop in discussion how the

creation of a global virtual archive means a proliferation of ghosts, of dead who re-emerge in new discussions. One filmic strategy I use to address this uncanny space involves oral “eyewitness” accounts that stress both the traumatic nature of historical memory and the way that the visual regimes of power (images of a mushroom cloud, for instance) are resisted through a practice of oral face-to-face testimony.

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Screening, *MOTHERHOOD ARCHIVES* (2013, 91 min)

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Screening, *STREET KNOWLEDGE 2 COLLEGE excerpts* (2013)

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What is the basic unit of the classical documentary project - what is the atom in that molecule? If it is the Fact, the Real, might we yet understand them better? Documentary, as a project of Knowing, preoccupies itself with the Real, with Fact - whether structurally, metaphorically, figuratively, or quite literally. In 2015, when the very notion of Fact has become amorphous, what can be built out of it? What forms - aesthetic, communicative, etc - continue to emerge to redefine our relationship to the factual?

Borrowing structurally from Susan Sontag's cultural critique in 'Notes on Camp', this presentation proposes an essayistic exploration of the histories and changing perspectives toward the curious, elusive nature of the Factual, and its contemporary relevance to a knowledge-producing endeavor such as the documentary.

A few Notes, to begin (and to be further elaborated):

1. Like Camp and irony did for much of the 20th century, the Factual and its deconstruction have a zeitgeist-defining relevance in the 21st. The Factual itself has a conceptual architecture, a history, an economy, and a shifting function - a poetics and a politics, in other words. The contemporary moment as regards Fact might be described as an existential crisis. Given persistent internet rumors, reality television, disbelief of science, and data surveillance, our relationship to Knowing is easily blurred into uncertainty.



2. The power of documentary as a form, of course, is not simply as an accretion of Facts but as a project of rhetoric, in itself nothing new. But the challenge for 21st century documentary makers is to make visible the complex nature of the factual itself: its production, its ambiguity, its dismantling. This is how the process of making fact-based work can function simultaneously as a manufacturing process, a rhetorical strategy, and a critical tool.

3. In this context, one could work toward a material history of fact-based works. If the product is information, who owns the means of production? Which facts are easiest to replicate? Which are cheap to produce? How many facts that roll off the line are mishaps of translation or duplication? Can facts be 3D printed at home?

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*Echo* is set in the border between Mexico and USA and it is an ethnographic research on the after life and “echoes” of 9 art works (by Gustavo Artigas, Christina Fernández, Silvia Gruner, Simparch, Thomas Glassford y José Parral, Itzel Martínez del Cañizo, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Javier Téllez, Marcos Ramírez Erre) that have been part of the two-decade old public art event called inSite. It highlights the procedures of intrusion at work in such a site as the US-Mexico border as well as the now canonical deployment of the emblematic figure of fieldwork. It teaches us that intrusion is an ontological dimension of intervention, at once anthropological, curatorial, and artistic. By revisiting the scenes of these curatorial and artistic interventions, “echo” emerges both as a concept and a practice that assembles the futures of art works beyond its expected ruins and remains. Each work/artist and afterlife/echo of those works -after the artists finish them and leave or focus on another work - raise different and enriching questions on social art, on its ethics, on the methods, on the people involved in the projects, on the city itself and its urban cycle, on the future of public sculpture. The assemblage of archival images and current reverberations, of text, voice over and interviews, of affects and representation has been a real challenge in this work. The result is that more questions were open after the initial ones. The conclusion is inconclusive: Narcissus (all of us working, representing, intervening on the border: anthropologists, artists, curators, etc.) and Echo (the context, the artists, the collaborators, the public sculptures, the objects, etc.) are part of the same scenario and they are both plural and problematic in their own way...

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This paper considers media and performance in the post-2005 annual historical reenactment of a 1946 lynching of two black couples in Georgia as an angle on unresolved questions of media indexicality in documentary theory. Film phenomenology fragmented the notion of an ideal spectator in cinema viewing. Laura Marks theory of "intercultural cinema," for instance, intimated the diasporic subject's capacity to observe everyday life in a host locale two ways at once, an insight into the performative nature of identity in hybrid cultural contexts. I extend this notion of dual subjectivity to analyze the accounts of performers who have played lynchers and lynched in the reenactment. In the midst of performance on the site of the original lynching, reenactors become the documentary evidence of subjects who once lived, though they retain a present-tense capacity to shape and interpret the historical events they portray. I consider the phenomenological experiences of two actors, one who played a male member of the lynch mob and a second who played a female victim, through their accounts of playing roles in this reenactment. I analyze the ways that this role-playing profoundly shaped their understandings of a traumatic, racially charged historical event, arguing that their cinematic reflections offer significant and underexplored questions for documentary film theory. I read the cinematic in this context both in the language that participants use to describe their experiences, and in the role of digital recording devices in framing and perpetuating the live reenactment over time. I consider the circuits of sensation, visibility, and power in these accounts with an eye toward theorizing cyclical time in digital culture.

PRATAP RUGHANI

University of Arts London

This presentation proposal examines the dynamics of ethics and aesthetics in a challenging documentary collaboration with a protagonist with advanced neurological disorder. At the heart of the documentarist-contributor relationship, what does 'consent' really mean when power relations are asymmetric and how best can we think about visualisation and the ethics of the documentary encounter in these circumstances?

Working with new practice-based documentary reflections through creating a film portrait of a young lady with advanced neurological disorder (Justine, UK, Lotus Films, screening at London short Film Festival, Jan 2015)

this presentation investigates filming dynamics and explores the possibilities of 'affect' whilst interrupting simple notions of identification through resonating identities. Drawing on a three year artists' film project on film and disability (with a framework of ethical enquiry, influenced by Levinas) this presentation asks: what are the parameters of working with someone who cannot express consent verbally and what are the maker's responsibilities? Reflecting on ethical and aesthetic choices in how to document a situation where consent itself is problematised, the presentation begs an examination of the ethics of working in challenging environments.

The presentation features reflexive practice-based reflections on the essential questions of what kind of work to make and whose interests are served in documentary practice which aspires to collaborative approaches. What kind of collaboration is possible within diverging organizational structures and what room does this leave for the documentarist's individual response to what unfolds? As Trinh T. Minh-ha writes:

"In the context of power relations, speaking for, about, and on behalf of is very different from speaking with and nearby... what has to be given up first and foremost is the voice of omniscient knowledge"

More here: <http://www.lotusfilms.co.uk/>

PAIGE SARLIN (p.sarlin@gmail.com)

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*Determining Formats: The Politics of Documentary-Based Research's Intermediality*

Working between and across different media has become something of a norm for documentary-based research, but what determines our choice of formats? How do we choose between preparing something for web-delivery, constructing an installation, publishing an article, or completing a full-length film? What's at stake when we decide whether a project should become an article and/or a film?

This presentation will argue that intermediality presents a determining question for documentary-based research, one that should be considered in relation to a) the changing contexts and resources for documentary media-making and circulation both inside and outside the academy and b) the ways in which we conceptualize "projects" and "research" as sites for the production of value and the mediation of social conditions.

I will discuss three of my projects that confront this challenge explicitly. The first concerns the making of *The Last Slide Projector*, a full-length documentary that takes the form of an essay film. The project generated two additional articles and I will discuss some of the mechanisms that shaped these different outcomes. The second is Democracy™, collaboration between Keith Brown, an anthropologist, and myself.

Over the course of the project, the differences between an ethnographic and documentary approach to field work and publication became apparent – evidenced in both the footage we acquired and in the difficulties we faced when attempting to turn our material into a film and a series of articles. The third is a current project on the history and theory of the interview which is taking shape as both a book-manuscript and a film.

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Shared abstract with JEANNE FINLEY

MATT SOAR (mattsoar@gmail.com)  
Concordia University  
*Film Leaders as Medium, Metaphor, and Metadata*

*Lost Leaders* is an ongoing project of poetic exploration, archival research, and documentation (aka 'research-creation') concerning film leaders, i.e. the few feet at the heads and tails of most film reels. Leaders contain a wealth of esoteric information, but have been largely overlooked in the literatures on film, cinema, and design. Some of this data is meant to be read by eye, frame by frame; some (i.e. the familiar count-down sequence) is designed to be viewed while being projected. In toto, leaders can be understood as a complex, 'paratextual' conversation between lab technicians and projectionists.

Tracing the emergence and development of SMPTE (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers) standards, from the Academy leader (1930s-1951), through the Society leader (1950s-1965), to the Universal leader (1965 onwards), *Lost Leaders* is both inventory and invention. The means adopted to date include: photomontage, lightpainting, animation; interactive 'sketch' films (with audio compositions by Jackie Gallant), and stained glass. The source material for these interventions has chiefly been found footage (35mm movie trailers) and archival discoveries from the Library of Congress and Library & Archives Canada.

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Shared abstract with MIRIAM GREENBERG, REBECCA GOUREVITCH, ERIN MCELROY, KRISTIN MILLER, ELSA RAMOS

LIZZIE THYNNE (l.thynne@sussex.ac.uk)

Sussex University

*Voices in Movement: Dramatizing Oral Histories*

This sound-led work draws on memories recorded for *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project* (archived at the British Library). Life history focuses on the lives of individuals, to study what these reveal and contribute to wider historical and cultural knowledge. 'Voices in Movement' explores how the extended individual narrations of the life story method may be combined and translated so as to highlight the connections to other women's experiences across class, ethnic and cultural divides. The project is an experiment in discovering both how the particular sound and narrative qualities of the life story interview might be translated into a sound installation/gallery work as well as how this translation can create new aural experiences and meanings.

Thynne discusses methods used including a 'relay,' where one speaker completes the sentence of another to suggest the collective political consciousness which underpins their analysis of their histories. Found home movie footage of generically stereotypical scenes appears intermittently on the screen but refuses to anchor the oral interview fragments, mimicking the process of memory itself and underlining how the voices themselves are detached in time and place from the visual scenes of 'family life.'

Vimeo link to record of work <https://vimeo.com/100939494> password: Twinkle1

ADRIANA TRUJILLO (adriana@polenaudiovisual.org)

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Screening *SKIN DESTINATION* (2012, 10 min)

HOPE TUCKER (htHA@hampshire.edu)

Hampshire College

Historic footage can be much more than a means of piecing together information or nodding to a past moment. Though it is frequently a filmmaker who determines the visual understanding we in the present have of the past, images are often presented without addressing questions such as, "Who filmed the material? How did the person behind the camera gain access to be able to look through the lens and then point it in a particular direction? How does an audience come to understand the limitations of a recording situation, if those limitations are invisible? What are the visual attributes of an image that define its moment in time, and how –through the use of image alone– can we teach audiences to identify and understand the significance and potential of these markers?" In 1966, an American B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons crashed in an agricultural village in Spain. Fifty years later, this village still has pockets of radioactive

soil. Palomares, an experimental documentary, installation, and publication in-progress, will connect the accident to the present by using modes of image acquisition and production that reveal uncanny narrative and material connections. Cyanotypes are blue and white images created through an alternative photographic process originally used for making blueprints. Because Prussian blue can both render images and serve as an antidote to counteract radiation poisoning, an animated sequence of cyanotypes can function as a visual, metaphorical act of reparation. In Palomares, I will use cyanotypes created from 16mm archival Navy footage from 1966 to relay the narrative of the unresolved environmental disaster, transforming documentation into reparation.

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Université de Montréal, Department of Communication

*Emerging dilemmas & illuminating fragments in the Tranzicija/Transition project*

As a documentary practitioner and media studies researcher undertaking a complex, durational expanded documentary project on multiple platforms (feature-length documentary, transmedia online documentary, and installation/performance formats), I would very much look forward to participating in the works-in-progress series of panels in order to discuss and explore the unique challenges that such hybrid researcher/practitioner positionings raise in the expanded field of documentary practice.

I am currently in the post-production phase of a long-term documentary film project (7 years in the making) entitled Tranzicija /Transition, an experimental, socially-engaged documentary that evokes the impacts of the recent neoliberal economic transition from socialism to capitalism in post-war Serbia on the lived experience and social struggles of those on the precarious side of workers, women, refugees, and displaced people. Threaded together by an experimental road trip in a Yugo car that ties the film together, key roadstops in the documentary include the decimated Zastava auto plant (Kragujevac) that once manufactured the celebrated Yugo, recently sold to Fiat; and Jugoremedija (Zrenjanin), the first factory in Serbia to have its privatization overturned and returned to worker control (predominantly women) following a nine-month factory occupation and three year strike by its workers. Many of those living the 'transition' from below draw upon and retain memories of the imperiled but nonetheless real commons that they participated in under Yugoslavia's former system of self-management, as well as the subsequent intense dispossession of this commons which is beginning to produce new struggles for fragile visions of a renewed commons in the post-socialist period.

Weaving together the diverse elements of this multiplatform, experimental documentary exploring the post-war context in Serbia fifteen years after the last round of military interventions in the region raises many resonant questions. How to speak to and of the disorientation of a context that has seen ten years of war, highly mediatized

nationalisms, and the much less visible violence of the current post-war neoliberal reconstruction? I am interested in discussing formal strategies that emerge from the struggle to imagine and address multiple audiences in a postconflict context fraught both locally and beyond by fragmentation and misrecognition. On a more practice-oriented level, I am also facing challenges in the postproduction process that those who are solely situated on one-side of the traditional researcher/practitioner divide or who produce for a more commercial markets do not. These range from the challenges of negotiating an editing process for long-form experimental documentary productions with editors experienced in more commercial modes of documentary production with traditional (rather than experimental) narrative structures, to the ways in which a research orientation to ones' subject matter shifts both our engagement in the field of production, as well as in the narrative construction and formal conventions of multiplatform documentary works. In these ways, the themes of the Poetics and Politics symposium are very resonant with the trajectory of this expanded documentary project in progress (as well as my broader work as an artist and academic researcher), and I would look forward to engaging in the discussions that emerge through the symposium.

TRAVIS WILKERSON (exlow@me.com)

Creative Agitation

Shared abstract with ALEXANDER JOHNSTON

JULIE WYMAN (jfwyman@ucdavis.edu)

University of California, Davis

*Flesh of My Flesh*

*Flesh of My Flesh* is the title of my current work-in-progress, an experimental, personal documentary about the phenomenology, the physical/ visceral experience, and the amorphous politics of body size. I propose to screen clips from the work in progress and to discuss the sometimes contradictory nature of making films that connect poetics to politics. In particular I am interested in the ways that the cinematic/ poetic mode functions – sometimes signifying the apolitical while also standing as political site where meaning is charged and contested.

I have devoted the past 20+ years to the production of documentaries that seek to expand mainstream culture's narrow range of bodily representations. With such films as *A Boy Named Sue* (2000), *Buoyant* (2005), and most recently *STRONG!* (2012), I have observed, and transmitted back onto the screen, the lives of my subjects. Currently, my filmmaking takes a self-reflective turn, directly focusing on the engine or animating force of my previous works: my own body and its difficult-to-categorize differences from the average-proportioned, thin body. I investigate my own body's proportions through genealogy / family history - conducting interviews with my father and

aunt whose proportions match my own; medicine and the study of Achondroplasia - (the condition that accounts for 70% of cases of dwarfism); mathematics /physics - exploring the history of the Golden Ratio, Leonardo DaVinci's ideally proportioned human form, and through the breeding history of dachshund, basset and other short-legged dogs.

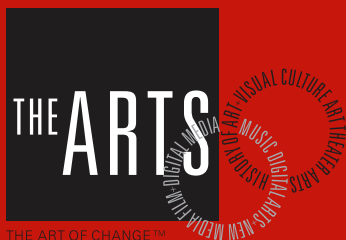
The work aligns with feminist and fat activist/ size acceptance goals of expanding the range and nature of representations of the body. But it also resists the modality of most political or social issue documentaries. Rather than a didactic or advocacy approach, it uses cinematic/ contemplative approach to allow viewers to behold bodies that defy scientific or medical logic.

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Fugitive Images

Screening *ESTATE, A REVERIE* (2015, 83 min.)





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