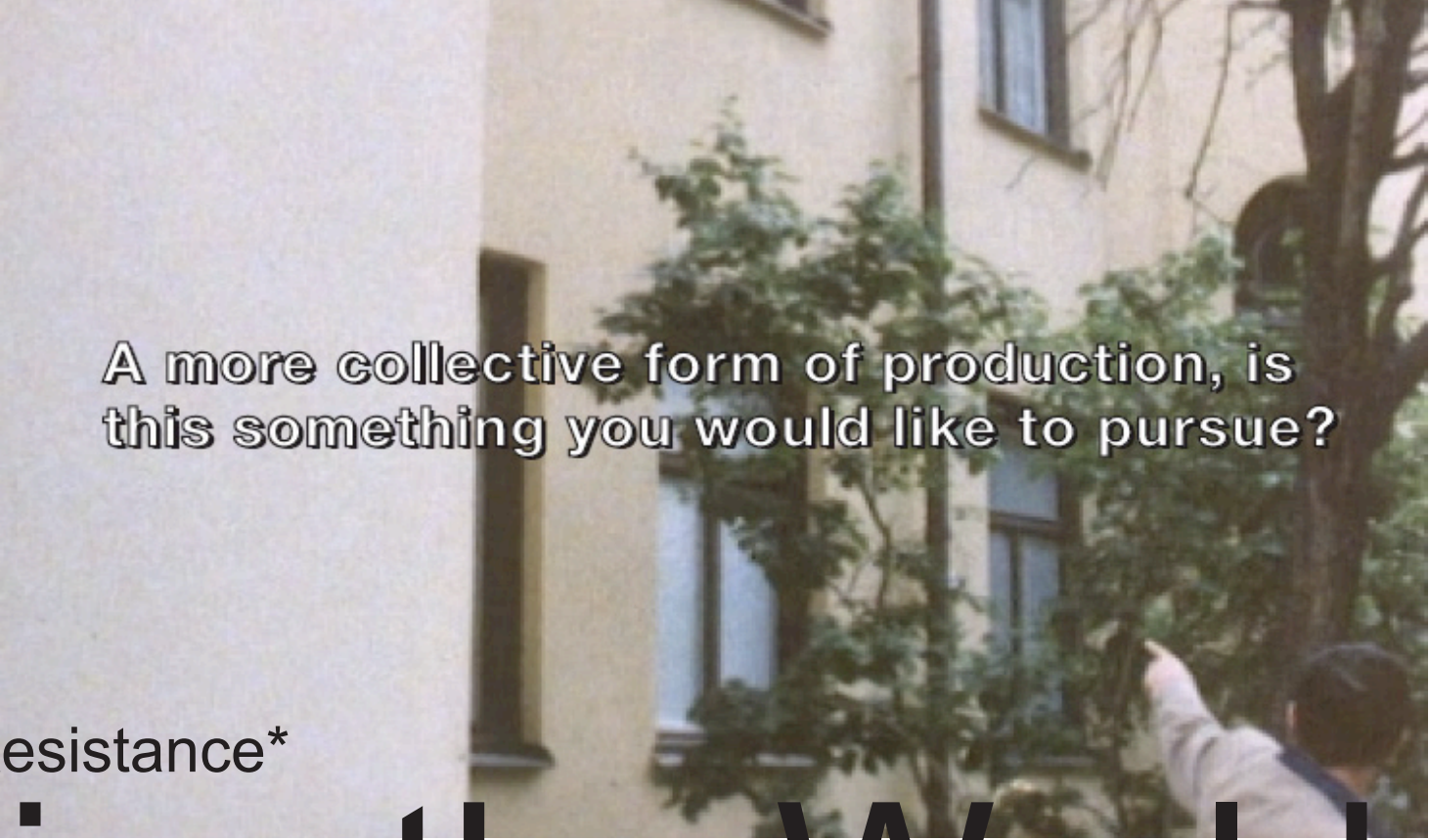


Reading the Word,

Birkbeck/ Goldsmiths' Art Department, University of London and The Field, New Cross
25th - 27th April 2016
Research Symposium

A photograph showing a person in the lower right corner, seen from behind, pointing their right hand towards a light-colored building. In the foreground, there is a large, leafy green tree. The building has several windows and a dark doorway. The overall scene is outdoors during the day.

A more collective form of production, is
this something you would like to pursue?

On Display:
The Aesthetics of Resistance*

Reading the World

Birkbeck/ Goldsmiths' Art Department,
University of London
and The Field, New Cross

Reading the Word, Reading the World

**On Display:
The Aesthetics of Resistance***

25th - 27th April 2016

Research Symposium organized by Claudia Firth (Cultural and Critical Studies, Birkbeck) and Achim Lengerer (Art Department, Goldsmiths) in collaboration with Kristien Van den Brande (Art Department, Goldsmiths), Cristina Ribas (Art Department, Goldsmiths) and Vera Wegmann (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, Nottingham University). The events will take place at both Goldsmiths and Birkbeck, with an informal workshop session to be hosted at The Field, an alternative community space in New Cross.

Taking Peter Weiss' historical novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance* as a loose starting point, the symposium will take a sideways glance at questions of how we might 'read' leftist historical narratives. While deferring an interrogation of the term resistance to a later point in time (and a further symposium in October at Birkbeck), we will follow a thread of collective learning and sharing knowledge and ask how subjectivity and politics might intersect through the process of 'reading' together. One of our questions will be: how are these processes of collective 'reading' organised and what can we draw from this collective experience for a contemporary artistic-activist praxis.

Events will include: debates on the cross-overs between work; education and workers' education from a historical and a contemporary perspective; the reading group as cultural, social and historical form in relation to *The Aesthetics of Resistance*; the historical essay as exhibition and films by Peter Weiss; reading groups as a practice outside or at the margins of institutions; the interrelations between collective reading and political praxis.

**Birkbeck Evening Session
Keynes Library, 43 Gordon Square**

**Monday 25th April
7 pm - 9 pm**

An evening panel on the changing nature of work, education and workers' education. The shift to Post Fordist modes of production and cultural and immaterial labour have changed our relationship to knowledge and how it is produced as well as changing the nature of work itself. With the increasing presence of work in education (for example through 'employability' training and work placements) it seems pertinent to ask questions regarding the relationship between work and education and the organization of higher education itself. How have these relationships changed? Are there models from the past that could be mobilised now? What might alternative models of organization have to offer? Birkbeck College itself comes from a history of Mechanics Institutes in the UK originally formed in the 19th century to provide adult education to working people seems the perfect setting in which to ask some of these questions.

Round table with Claudia Firth and Vera Wegmann and guests:

Stephen Shukaitis, lecturer at Essex University. His work includes writings on Autonomia, self-organisation, class (re)composition and cultural labour.

Mike Neary from the Social Science Centre, Lincoln, who currently provide free co-operative higher education. The SSC is run as a not-for-profit co-operative, and organised on the basis of democratic, non-hierarchical principles.

Richard Clarke, until 2012, was Senior Lecturer in Conservation at Birkbeck College and Director of the University of London Centre for European Protected Area Research.

**Goldsmiths Day Session
Seminar room, Studio A,
Barriedale Buildings, Goldsmiths,
New Cross, London SE 14 6NW**

**Tuesday 26th April
10 am - 6 pm**

10 - 11:30 am

Claudia Firth and Achim Lengerer. In *Collective Reading as Political Act?* Firth and Lengerer will introduce their shared research of various *Aesthetics of Resistance* reading groups in East and West Germany during the 1970s/1980s. They will explore the reading group as a social, cultural and semi-public form, what it means to read and learn collectively and what this might mean for critical knowledge production and subjectivity.

11:30 am - 1 pm

Carles Guerra. *1979: a Monument to Radical Instants* is the title of an exhibition Guerra curated in Barcelona in 2011 inspired by *The Aesthetics of Resistance* and Foucault's lectures on biopolitics. The exhibition was conceived as a kind of historical essay that operated through image and object to organise the temporal moment as monument. Choosing 1979, Guerra focussed the exhibition on a pivotal year for Spain and one that could be characterised as epitomising the birth of neoliberalism.

2 - 4 pm

Open conversation with protagonists of different reading groups: the *New Cross Commoners*, *The Litany Reading Group* (Nicola Guy, Katherine Jackson, Louisa Lee, Sophie Risner and Amy Tobin), and Katie Hare and Andrea Williamson, who are part of a group of 12 MFA candidates at Goldsmiths that are meeting on the self-selected theme of *love and politics*. These three self-organised reading groups will share their experiences as groups that have read together and reflect on the interrelations between reading and their particular social and political practices. The session is co-hosted by Kristien Van den Brande whose experience with reading groups range from memorising

books by heart, durational collective readings and self-organised recurrent reading sessions in and outside of academia.

4 - 6 pm

Screening and lecture by Florian Wüst. *This thinking in oppositions: Peter Weiss and the political self of the artist*. Looking at the period in which Peter Weiss shifted from film to theatre in the early 1960s, Florian Wüst elaborates on Weiss's growing efforts to examine the social, political and economic realities surrounding him. How to learn from the follies of history through art? How to activate societal change without dismissing intellectual critique and freedom? The screening will be followed by a conversation with Edgar Schmitz (Art, Goldsmiths).

**'Reading Group' Afternoon Session
The Field, 385 Queen's Rd, New Cross**

**Wednesday 27th April
Starts 1 pm**

This will be a practical workshop session in which participants are asked to bring fragments from their experiences of the previous two days' events. These could be words, things, dates, feelings or anything they might have taken away with them. Together, we will 'read' these fragments using a variety of methods and perspectives. Starting with discursive modes towards more affective registers to include the body, voice, rhythms and dynamics. This will be in collaboration with Cristina Ribas who proposes the title *Protocol to intersect vocabularies* for her intervention. The symposium finishes with an invitation to join us and the New Cross Commoners at the People's Kitchen at the Field for a communal meal.

** The title refers to Paulo Freire as well as to Harun Farocki's film On Display: Peter Weiss (Zur Ansicht: Peter Weiss), 1981. The image on the poster collages a subtitle as well as fragments of a still image from Farocki's film.*

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Claudia Firth: claudiaf at talktalk.net

Kristien Van den Brande is a Brussels-based artist who alternates between writing, editing and web design, curating, performing and dramaturgy. She is currently engaged in Ph.D research about chance supports at Goldsmiths University of London. Her experience with reading groups range from memorising books by heart (in *Time Has Fallen Asleep in the Afternoon Sunshine*, a performance project initiated by Mette Edvardsen), durational collective readings (such as a 24h reading of Spinoza's Ethics, initiated by Jonathan Lahey Dronsfield), self-organised recurrent reading sessions and one-time reading events in and outside of academia. She is interested in exchange and production of knowledge and meaning, but equally in the materiality of the page and the voice as carriers for reading.

Claudia Firth is currently a Cultural and Critical Studies Ph.D student at Birkbeck College, University of London writing a short non-linear history of three moments of economic and political crisis, inspired by Peter Weiss' novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance*. She was a founding member and regular contributor of Nyx, the journal for the Centre for Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has co-authored a forthcoming chapter for *The Embodiment of Resistance*, a publication produced by The Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths and is currently co-writing *The Force of Listening*, a new publication looking at the role of listening in contemporary conjunctions between art and activism, which will be published as part of the Doormats series by Errant Bodies Press.

Carles Guerra is currently director of the Tàpies foundation. He has a Ph.D in Fine Arts from the University of Barcelona and a Master in Media Studies from The New School for Social Research, New York. His professional career has developed in the fields of exhibition curation, art criticism, visual production, teaching and academic research. In 2004 he was appointed Director of the Primavera Fotogràfica de Catalunya. He was Director of the Virreina Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona,

from 2009 to 2011, and Chief Curator at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) from 2011 to 2013. His work and research investigates the dialogical aspects of artistic practice and the cultural policies of Post-Fordism. He is professor of Social Structures and Cultural Trends at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and has been a member of the Greenroom Project dedicated to the analysis of contemporary documentary practices at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York. He has been visiting lecturer at numerous universities and institutions.

Katie Hare and **Andrea Williamson** are part of a group of 12 MFA candidates at Goldsmiths College. They came together within the course's program of collaborative seminars, under the self-selected theme of "*love and politics*". In the run-up to conceptualising and organising a public event (forthcoming: May 21 @ The Showroom), they decided on a regular meeting schedule. This revolves around reading and discussion, questioning each others' approaches and viewpoints in order to intensify and put into practice an ethics of collaboration and research within artistic, educational and political practices.

Achim Lengerer works on political questions of speech and language that he thematizes in his performances, radio plays or spatializes within installations and publications. In the last years Lengerer founded different collaborative projects such as Freitagsküche in Frankfurt/Berlin and voiceoverhead, a collaboration with artist colleague Dani Gal. Since 2009 Lengerer runs the travelling showroom and publishing house Scriptings, currently based in Berlin. Scriptings functions as a discursive platform parallel and in addition to Lengerer's projects. Artists, writers, graphic designers, performers as well as publishers are invited – all of which are working with the formats of "script" and "text" within their processes of production. Achim is currently a Ph.D candidate at Goldsmiths' Art Department. www.scrippings.net

Litany Reading Group, founded in 2015 by five women working in the arts. The Litany Reading Group works through public and private readings, performances and workshops. Litany's current members are **Nicola Guy**, **Katherine Jackson**, **Louisa Lee**, **Sophie Risner** and **Amy Tobin**. Recent projects include *Recommended Reading* in Art Licks issue 18, *Online Sisterhood* at Flat Time House and *How to Read Together* at Five Years Gallery. www.thelitanyreadinggroup.tumblr.com/

The New Cross Commoners is an open collective, or better, a collective process in the New Cross area. They explore and experiment with what Silvia Federici and the Midnight Notes' collective call "commoning". That is, with everyday forms of collective organising around knowledge, food, housing, care, away from the private and profit-driven logic of the Market and from the hierarchies and centralisation of the State. <http://newxcommoners.wordpress.com/>

Cristina Ribas works as an artist, researcher and occasionally as a curator. She organizes the open platform Desarquivo.org (<http://www.desarquivo.org>). In 2014 Ribas developed the project *Political Vocabulary for Aesthetic Processes* in Brazil, a book of concept-tools written by more than 20 authors (<http://vocabpol.cristinaribas.org/editorialenglish/>). Ribas is also part of the network Conceptualismos del Sur. Ribas is currently a Ph.D candidate in the Art Department at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Edgar Schmitz is an artist and a lecturer in Critical Studies at Goldsmiths. He serves as the co-director of A Conversation in Many Parts, an international discursive platform for contemporary art and concepts. Recent exhibitions include *British Art Show 7 – In The Days of the Comet* at Hayward Gallery and touring (2010/11), *extra added bonus material*, Form-Content (2010), *Dictionary of War*, Steirischer Herbst Graz (2006); *A-C-A-D-E-M-Y*, Vanabbe-museum Eindhoven (2006); and *Liam Gillick: Edgar Schmitz*, ICA London (2005). Edgar

has also written extensively on contemporary art, with contributions to Kunstforum international, Texte zur Kunst and Artforum as well as Contemporary, Tema Celeste and numerous catalogue essays, including texts on Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Phil Collins, on Brian Jungen's animalities, on humour in Deleuze and Slominski, and on Sarah Morris' LA.

Vera Wegmann is currently doing her Ph.D at the University of Nottingham. Her thesis is entitled *The Employability Promise: The Cases of Unpaid Internships and Workfare in the UK* and funded by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. She has also been an activist in various groups and movements and recently helped to set up the grass-roots trade union, United Voices of the World (UVW), which is almost entirely comprised of migrant workers in London's low wage, service sector.

Florian Wüst is a Berlin based visual artist and independent film curator who frequently lectures and publishes on topics related to film and society. Over the past decade, he has been working on Peter Weiss in many ways: through written essays, video installations, and film programmes. Wüst is co-editor of the 2015 DVD edition *Die moderne Stadt*, which includes the last film of Weiss, *Bag de ens facader*, from 1961. www.fwuest.com