

## Abstracts and Biographies

### Panel 5: Confrontations

**Panel Chair: Ana S González Rueda**

**Panel Chair: Ana S González Rueda** is an art historian, curator, and researcher. She obtained her PhD in Museum and Gallery Studies from the University of St Andrews with a thesis entitled 'Inherent Pedagogies: Critical Approaches to Exhibition Making in the 2000s' (2019). Her recent publications include: 'Disorienting the Gaze: Ngozi Onwurah's Early Films' (Decolonising Arts Institute, UAL, 2021); 'Decolonial Exhibition Making: *Mafavuke's Trial and Other Plant Stories*' in *Museums, Community Action and Decolonisation* (Paris: ICOM, ICOFOM, 2020); and 'Possessing Nature: The Mexican Pavilion as a Site of Critical Analysis' in the *Journal of Curatorial Studies* (2020). Ana has taught at the University of Essex and the University of St Andrews. She is currently working as Research Assistant at the School of Art History, University of St Andrews.

### **How To Make A Lesbian, Gay and Black Art Show On Almost Nothing A Year: *Ecstatic Antibodies*, 'Democratic Accountability', and artistic censorship in Thatcher's Britain** **Theo Gordon**

The exhibition *Ecstatic Antibodies: Resisting the AIDS Mythology* was due to open at the Viewpoint Gallery of Photography in Salford in October 1990, but was pulled that summer by the local council's Arts and Leisure Committee, allegedly because of the controversy surrounding its explicit depiction of sex upon its opening at Impressions Gallery of Photography in York. According to Jane Brake, Exhibitions Outreach Officer at Viewpoint, 'Section 28 was mentioned', as the gallery received local authority funding from Association of Greater Manchester Authorities.

Section 28 was one of many ways the Thatcher government in the later 1980s attempted to instill 'democratic accountability' in the use of local authority funds, the other most notorious being the community charge, or 'poll tax', replacement for the proportionate domestic rates. Viewpoint had been subject to critique from Conservative members of Salford's Labour majority council, as it had not been established as a commercial enterprise, apparently to the detriment of the ideological figure of 'the ratepayer'.

This paper provides an account of the development and censorship of *Ecstatic Antibodies*, attending to how curators Tessa Boffin and Sunil Gupta initiated a new model of grassroots exhibition organising in London, based on the coalescence of black, gay and lesbian artistic community around the issue of AIDS. Initially supported by Arts Council GB, the project found itself caught in Thatcher's fiscal choke of sexual minorities and reforms of the rates. The aims of this paper are threefold: to articulate the material implications of funding reform on the production and reception of *Ecstatic Antibodies*; to explore the extent to which the show's sexual aesthetics of 'race' contributed to its censorship in Salford; and to consider the particularity in British art history of the 1970s and 1980s of this moment of coalition between 'lesbian' 'gay' and 'black' artists.

**Theo Gordon** received his PhD from The Courtauld Institute of Art in 2018, on the subject of art, psychoanalysis and the ethics of destruction in the context of the American AIDS crisis. He has since held two postdoctoral fellowships, at The Courtauld and at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C., where he is working on a new project on sexuality, aesthetics and coalitions of lesbian and gay artists in the USA in the 1970s. He has published in *Art History*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *RA Magazine*, *Burlington Contemporary* and *The Conversation*.

## **Fall Down and Be Counted: Stephen Dwoskin and Disablement**

### **Henry K. Miller**

In 1981 the critic Allan T. Sutherland and the filmmaker Stephen Dwoskin programmed a season at the National Film Theatre called 'Carry On Cripple', a polemical survey of the cinematic representation of disablement – unprecedented in this country. In the same year Sutherland, author of a screenplay titled *Fall Down and Be Counted*, published his book *Disabled We Stand*, important in advancing the social model of disability, and Dwoskin premiered his autobiographical film *Outside In*, which is concerned with his experience of disablement since childhood.

As the programme notes stated, all the films 'were made by able-bodied film-makers for able-bodied audiences' except one, *Behindert* (1974), the film with which Dwoskin had 'come out' as disabled. It was conceived in isolation from any movement or organization; by the end of the decade, as Dwoskin's collaboration with Sutherland signifies, there were the beginnings of a change, and Dwoskin began to take on a more public role. The 'earliness' of this moment is suggested by the fact that he and Sutherland had to co-write an accessibility guide for the venue from scratch.

A decade later, in 1992, Dwoskin directed a personal compilation film, *Face of Our Fear*, that has its origins in 'Carry on Cripple'. Shown on the opening evening of Channel 4's 'Disabling World' season, it marks Dwoskin's partial inhabitation of the role of activist or spokesperson in a somewhat changed environment. The limits of that role were revealed by his next film but one, *Pain Is*, where Dwoskin's characteristic focus on sexuality made him a pariah among funding bodies and broadcasters. This talk explores Dwoskin's multifaceted engagement with disablement on film, in the sometimes uneasy intersection of grassroots movements and official initiatives, particularly within the cultural sector.

**Henry K. Miller** is a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Reading, working on the AHRC-supported Stephen Dwoskin project. In this capacity he is the co-editor with Rachel Garfield of the forthcoming *DWOSKINO* (working title), to be published by the LUX. He is also an honorary research associate at the Slade School of Fine Art, and co-director with Brigid Lowe of the Slade Film Project. He has taught film at the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University. His research has appeared in *Screen*, *Framework*, *MIRAJ*, and *Critical Quarterly*, and he is a contributor to *Sight and Sound*. In 2014 he edited *The Essential Raymond Durnat* for BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, and he is the author of *The First True Hitchcock*, to be published by University of California Press in 2022.

## **Mining 'Community': The Workshop Declaration and Tory Rule**

### **Ash Reid**

In 1982, an agreement known as the Workshop Declaration was set up between the British trade union ACTT, the BFI and the newly commissioned Channel 4 to fund groups of film and videomakers under a model of 'integrative practice.' Providing a regular and sustained source of income and equipment for several socially-engaged, community-led projects, the declaration would radically shift the output of national broadcasting throughout the decade, creating a network of production groups whose documentary, experimental and artist moving image works, taken together, provide a rich document of activism and organising work that sought to record and critically address the embodied effects of the Thatcher government's destructive austerity policies, policies that will eventually find them again unfunded by the end of the decade.

Focussing specifically on the Declaration's effect on the activities of two feminist collectives who came to operate under its terms, WITCH in Liverpool and the Sheffield Film Co-op, I want to ask with this paper what happens in these contradictory interactions with the state, particularly as we see once again the arts attempting to confront their inherent cultural, racial and economic biases with funding drives ultimately facilitated by an increasingly far-right oppressive ruling class. Exploring the implementation of 'community' in terms of policy frameworks, and how ideas of access have been used somewhat conversely to widen the scope of neoliberalist production models that dismantle the more radical forms of sociality they base themselves upon, this paper will address what remains in spite of and against such attempts to subsume these groups into value-driven forms of social reproduction.

**Ash Reid** is a MPhil/PhD candidate at Goldsmiths, University of London, researching the histories and presents of feminist film distributor Cinenova. She also makes music, video and performance work, often in conversation with others, with recent shows at Cafe OTO and Kunsthall Gent.

## **Beyond Monuments: The Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common as Feminist Heritage**

**Alexandra Kokoli**

The women's peace camp at Greenham Common (1981-2000), established in protest against the storage of nuclear warheads at a US Air Force base in the English countryside, hosted a range of visual and performative actions and famously transformed the perimeter fence of the airbase into an impromptu gallery of art and visual activism. The camp deployed visual and performative strategies knowingly, regularly, and with widely recognised impact, leaving behind a rich archive of documentation. Strangely, however, monuments to the peace camp commissioned during and after its closure, on and off site, stand in contrast to the thoroughly postmodernist, experimental, participatory, and often ephemeral aesthetics of the camp's actions: such monuments include a mother-and-child life-size statue by Anton Agius installed in Cardiff Town Hall, and *Broken Symmetry* by Michael Kenny, an abstract large-scale sculpture of two forms of different sizes. Executed by well-known male artists, these sculptural twosomes promote the alleged maternalism of pacifist movements while downplaying the alternative kinships and queer intimacies of the camp, explored in Nina Wakeford's multimedia performance *an apprenticeship in queer I believe it was* (2016-), among other contemporary artistic engagements with the unfinished histories of Greenham.

While this paper contributes to the preservation of feminist activist heritage, it also troubles cultural deployments of 'heritage' with the toolkit of feminist art history. It seeks to disentangle the collective work of activist transmission, often performed by artists and visual activists, from the compromised habit of memorialisation, showcasing specific alternatives to the commissioning of sculptural monuments. By exploring the tensions between Greenham's commissioned monuments and the aesthetics of its visual activism, contemporary art practices like Wakeford's are shown to complicate the aspiration of commemoration with the labour of reactivation. From the perspective of feminist transmission, artistic evocations of Greenham hold greater promise for nurturing its afterlife and evade the ideological pitfalls of public monuments.

**Alexandra Kokoli** is an art historian who researches aesthetic mobilisations of discomfort to political ends, focusing on art practices informed by and committed to feminism. She works as Senior Lecturer in Visual Culture at Middlesex University London, and Research Associate at VIAD, University of Johannesburg. Her research into the aesthetics of feminist anti-nuclear activism at Greenham Common is supported by the Paul Mellon Centre (2019) and the Leverhulme Trust (2020). She has published widely in *Art Journal*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *Women and Performance*, and *Hypatia*, among other journals. Her books include *The Provisional Texture of Reality*, a collection of texts by Susan Hiller (JRP Ringier 2008); the monograph *The Feminist Uncanny* (Bloomsbury, 2016); and, co-edited with Deborah Cherry, *Tracey Emin: Art into Life* (Bloomsbury, 2020).