The Art of Appropriation & Kurt Schwitters in England
Authenticity, Reproduction, Simulation

University of Chester
July 10/11, 2009
Conference Programme

The Art of Appropriation & Kurt Schwitters in England
Authenticity, Reproduction, Simulation
University of Chester

Friday July 10th

9.30 - 10.30 Registration
Beswick Building Foyer, University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester CH1 4BJ

10.30 Beswick Lecture Theatre
Keynote: Roger Cardinal, Kurt Schwitters and the Aesthetic of Clutter

11.30 Tea/coffee break CB001

First Session: Chair Cian Quayle

12.00 Dr Lucia Vodanovic, Failure and Sabotage within Schwittters’ Merzbau: A Critique of Appropriation

12.30 Dr Jeremy Turner University of Chester, Original Sin

1.00 Lee Triming, Yoko Ono was my Readymade

Lunch: 1.30 - 2.30pm Dining Room

Second session: Chair Elisa Oliver

2.30 Mike Pumford, University of Chester Magick, Immersive Installation and the Appropriation of the Mind

3.00 Mireille Fauchon & Catrin Morgan, Disengenuity

3.30 Michael Laird & Carina Gosselé, Intimate Grotesque: The Pervasive Nature of the Merzbau

4.00 - 4.20 Tea/coffee break CB001

4.30 Keynote: John Stezaker, Violation and Redemption in the Late Collages of Kurt Schwitters

7pm Exhibition Private View, wine reception and buffet CBK010
Binks Foyer Space, University of Chester
Saturday July 11th

Beswick Building
9.00 - 10.00 Registration

Beswick Lecture Theatre
10.00 - 11.00 Keynote: David Evans, 7 Types of Appropriation

Third session: Chair Cian Quayle
11.10 Dr Wiebke Leister, London College of Communication, The Impossibility of Neutrality and the Non-Likeness of Photographic Portraiture

11.40 Steve Carrick University of Chester, O What a Tangled Web We Weave…When Originals Pretend to be Copies.

12.00 (Special Guest) Dr Megan R. Luke, University of Chicago, Sculpture for the Hand: Kurt Schwitters in England

12.30 - 12.45 Tea/coffee break

12.45 Maru Ituarte, Mexican Ghoulash: Pattern Recognition

1.10 Dr Paul Thirkell & Steve Hoskins University of the West of England, Through the Glass Darkly – Appropriation, Remaking and Representation Through Print.

1.30 - 2.30 Lunch

Fourth Session: Chair Maggie Jackson
2.30 Dr Teemu Hupli, Description, Declaration or Something Else? Some Questions Regarding Appropriation

3.00 Dr Rina Arya University of Chester, Axiological Issues in Art

3.30 - 3.50 Tea/coffee break

3.50 Isabella Pitisci, ‘Dust breeding’ – From Nostalgia to Phenomenological Inquiry

4.20 Leo Fitzmaurice, Please Open Your Mind for a Simple Thing

4.50 Elisa Oliver Leeds Metropolitan University, The Appropriation of the 1970s teenage moment in British Visual Art from the 1990s.

Plenary Session: The Artists Roundtable
Chair: Dr Cian Quayle & Dr Ian Hunter

Conference closes
University of Chester
Binks Building Foyer Space
Exhibition Private View: Friday July 10th 7pm
Curated by Cian Quayle

John Stezaker
Michael Sandle
Leo Fitzmaurice
Steve Carrick
Paul Thirkell
Anu Turunen
Wiebke Leister
Isabella Pitisci
Jeremy Turner
Dave Penny
Mike Pumford
Lee Triming
John Renshaw
Tim Daly
Maru Ituarte
Michael Laird & Carina Gosselé
Cian Quayle
Keynote Speakers

John Stezaker has played a central role in a number of developments in contemporary art practice over the last three decades, from Conceptual Art and New Image Art in the 1970s, through to the recent resurgence of interest in collage. Stezaker first showed his work as part of the British Conceptual Art group in 'The New Art', 1972 (the first Hayward Annual exhibition). His interest in the conceptual later gave way to a long-term fascination with images themselves, and it is this interest which he has subsequently pursued through much of his work with found photographs and printed matter. John Stezaker lives and works in London and is Senior Tutor in Critical and Historical Studies at the Royal College of Art. Recent exhibitions include: Norwich Gallery, solo show; White Columns, New York; Tate Triennial, London; Time Lines, 2005, Kunstverein, Dusseldorf, Germany.

Roger Cardinal is Emeritus Professor of Literary & Visual Studies at the University of Kent. His writings in the fields of Dada and Surrealism began with Surrealism: Permanent Revelation (with Robert Stuart Short, 1970), and include essays on the writers André Breton, Joë Bousquet, René Char and Tristan Tzara, as well as on such artists as Alberto Giacometti, André Masson, Henry Moore, Paul Nash and Kurt Schwitters. He is also an authority on modern French poetry; and on Art Brut, which he introduced to an English audience with Outsider Art (1972).

Axiological issues in art

In this paper I am going to discuss the axiological issues in contemporary art by tracing the shift of values from the pioneering readymades to the current day. In a quick-fix culture of sensation and hyper-consumerism does the original have more credence than the copy only in virtue of being the first of its kind? By extension, does the original possess qualities that are special (where 'special' means *significant and not just unique*?) If so, then how do we delineate this category of specialness? This shall be discussed with recourse to the auratic or the numinous. However, if no premium is placed on authenticity then what bearing does this have on the author, and the value of the artwork? One possible way of recovering meaning is through the experiential dimensions of viewing/consuming, and in the anti-commodification stance occupied by the work. The phenomenological aspects of viewing resist the fixity of meaning and interpretation is contingent and over-determined. Is this endless deferral of meaning one possible way of recouping the authenticity of the work?
Roger Cardinal

Kurt Schwitters and the Aesthetic of Clutter

Artmaking has traditionally involved formal procedures which confirm the boundary between its own special sphere and that of everyday life: a standard of orderliness and an aesthetic of regulated form have been dominant factors in Western art for centuries past. It fell to the early twentieth-century avant-garde to challenge the habits of the art establishment, and the Merz-based approach of Kurt Schwitters represents a distinctive mode of rebellion.

His collages and assemblages, together with his emblematic Merzbau, reflect an intriguing and highly original practice whereby trash, litter and waste elements are revalued and recycled, to become components of singular new entities that transcend their origins. These works exhibit various bizarre and even repellent characteristics: arbitrariness, disorderly proliferation, extreme irregularity and disharmony. As artistic statements, they often seem more like angry samplings extracted from a world out of kilter, documents of chaos and cultural collapse. Their relegation to the ‘genre’ of Degenerate Art by the Nazi cultural machine reflects one basic response to their impact. However, a more enlightened eye confirms that Schwitters was not simply a weak and capricious muckraker, but instead a sophisticated and highly motivated constructor of provocative works whose combinatorial and referential style marks a sharply judged, and visually thrilling, contribution to the developing discourse of Modernism. As a connoisseur of unsettling situations of various kinds – among his alternative public performances may be mentioned his recitations of weird sound-poems, and the occasion when his intervention consisted of barking like a dog – Schwitters pioneered an art of startling juxtaposition and mind-tingling transformation. His ‘aesthetic of clutter’ raises questions about the phenomena of rubbish and proliferation, and heralded the irruption into art history of a whole troupe of artists intent on salvaging things ruinous and windswept, from Jacques Villeglé to Tomoko Takahashi.
Steve Carrick  
University of Chester

Oh what a tangled web we weave...  
When originals pretend to be copies

Berger (Ways of Seeing, 1972) writes: “the uniqueness of the original now lies in its being the original of the reproduction.”

This paper, and the artworks associated with it, deal with the shift in status that occurs when original, manually produced artworks, coalesce with, and mimic the properties of printed copies that operate in the promotional apparatus (exhibition catalogues, posters and leaflets) that orbit the physical art object.

Despite everything Walter Benjamen says, the printed copy of an original artwork can have authority, and even perhaps aura, when it is placed in a context that we trust and value. Furthermore, by creating new artworks from these copies this authority or status can be infiltrated and disturbed.

We believe images printed in exhibition catalogues to be true representations of the original artworks as displayed in an exhibition and in that sense they have some authority and authenticity. However, in a stronger sense, the catalogue image (as well as those on exhibition posters and leaflets) has status and authority because of its historical proximity to the original – these printed, copied images are set in a context that is specific in time to a physical presentation (exhibition) of the original artworks. They are not simply copies produced at any time but are loaded with authority as evidence and relics of an event where the original was physically present for a specific period of time.

Artist's want to have posters, catalogues and leaflets made that contain images of their work – it makes them and their work seem important – this apparatus operates as a talisman for status and we all generally subscribe to this. The image in an exhibition catalogue is not simply a mute copy of the original – its context means that it is loaded with cultural significance regarding status and prestige.

Of course it is easy to create fake contents for a printed image so that nothing the image contains has any link to the real but even though we know that this is possible we still give credibility and status to the printed images found in exhibition catalogues, exhibition posters and leaflets – after all why would these not be true reflections of an exhibition?

However, it is altogether different to try and fake, not just the contents of the image, but also the visual appearance and quality of the printed image itself and if this is done through manual rather than mechanical means then a whole set of unusual relationships start to develop.

What happens when the image in the catalogue is not a reproduction but an appropriation of a reproduction and in its appropriation it adds physically to the printed image so that it mimics the physical look of the reproduction, absorbing or high-jacking its status or authority?
When I cover an image in an exhibition catalogue with marker pen the resulting ‘new’ image has the aura/authenticity/authority of an original drawing mixed with the weight of authority of the underlying printed image with which it can to a large degree coalesce. Under scrutiny it may stand out as a false intervention but there is always the casual glance that suggests that there is just one thing – a printed image and that the image is somehow true and therefore carries with it the prestige of the original image as its own prestige.

Also, in a bizarre reversal, the remade exhibition catalogue image, like a Baudrillard third order simulacrum, becomes the progenitor of the image it is supposed to represent. The apparent copy (the altered catalogue image) promotes the idea that there is an original (a painting in the exhibition that the catalogue refers to) that it was made from. However, of course, there is no original being referred to but rather the apparent copy (the altered catalogue image) is the original.

When I make a drawing over the surface of a catalogue image, to a large degree, the status and authority (and apparent authenticity and possibly therefore ‘aura’) of this work is derived not simply from it being an original drawing but rather this is amplified by its ability to mimic a printed copy in the given context. The marker pen drawing (together with the underlying substrate of the appropriated print) simulates: ‘the idea of the printed image representing another image’. Its status is raised as it becomes absorbed within the context of the catalogue and takes its (false) place within the machinery of the art institution and the validation processes of art history.

It proposes an original that is not really available; it absorbs the look of a reproduction but is really quite different. It attempts to remake all the implications of the mechanical reproduction whilst actually existing as an original hand made work. It does not declare its originality and it is not a copy of an original – it is not simply taking a copy and remaking it as an original but rather it is taking a copy and adding to it to make it look like the copy of a virtual original.

The apparent reproductions are mimics of reproductions, and furthermore mimics of reproductions of original artworks that don’t exist - they are tautological copies of themselves as originals.
Seven Types of Appropriation

The noun appropriation means taking possession of something, usually without authority. It has been a constant in all forms of imperialism, from ancient times to date, and in all forms of society in which one group dispossesses another of the products of its labour. Only recently has the noun been used as an adjective to characterize a certain type of contemporary art. In general, appropriation art is still assumed to refer to a certain time (late 1970s and 1980s); a certain place (New York); certain influential galleries (especially Metro Pictures and Sonnabend); certain artists (including Sherrie Levine or Richard Prince at Metro Pictures, and Peter Halley or Jeff Koons at Sonnabend); and certain ambitious debates around the Postmodern. The debates remain unresolved, but a radical – even revolutionary – frisson was initially generated by the frequent use of the word appropriation. The implication was that activities like Richard Prince’s ‘re-photographing’ of Marlboro advertisements involved appropriating the appropriators, and was a sophisticated, cultural equivalent to colonial resistance, the occupation of land by peasants, or the takeover of factories by workers.

Many of the more radical claims for the activities of the New York appropriationists have now been abandoned or seriously modified. In addition, the term appropriation art is no longer centred on one American city around 1980, and regularly crops up in the writings on very diverse topics, including Feminism, Post-colonialism and Post-communism. This bigger frame informs a paper that draws on my recent anthology Appropriation (Whitechapel Gallery / MIT Press, 2009).
Mireille Fauchon and Catrin Morgan

Disingenuity

In 2001 an interview with the graphic designer Ernst Bettler appeared in the periodical *Dot Dot Dot*. The interview was conducted by Christopher Wilson and covered Bettler’s career, it was illustrated with examples of Bettler’s work and in particular a project that he had undertaken for the Swiss pharmaceutical company Pfäfferli + Huber shortly after the Second World War. Bettler designed a series of commemorative posters to celebrate the company’s 50th anniversary. These posters look innocuous enough until placed alongside one another at which point the bodies of the models in the images can be seen to spell the word Nazi. Bettler was protesting against P+ H’s use of concentration camp workers during the war, his posters led to the company’s downfall.

In fact nothing in this article was true. Ernst Bettler, Pfäfferli + Huber, and even the town in which the events occurred are all fictions created by Wilson. Although this deception could be classified as a lie or a hoax, these terms are too general to accurately describe what is happening. It is more than a lie, it has the complexities of a piece of fiction. A hoax depends on the moment of revelation and whilst the truth was eventually revealed, there was no dramatic moment of exposure and Ernst Bettler persists. It is the story’s characteristics that interest us; it is a chunk of fiction, which for a time was appropriated into reality.

In May 2008 we conducted a conversation at the Royal College of Art with the artists Ryan Gander and Jamie Shovlin and a group of six students. The discussion covered the use of fictions by artists and the areas in which the distinctions between truths and half-truths become blurred. We found ourselves confronted by an area of artistic practice without the benefit of a name. Initially, we attempted to introduce an appropriated term, *disingenuity*, but along with words like lie or hoax this contains the implications of underhand dealing. The difficulty with all of these words is that they do not express an appropriate intention. The vehicles, vessels or conduits employed by Gander and Shovlin are far from the brash “hoax”, and the word “lying” is still too manipulative and negative in its connotations to be comfortable. The work described here does not seek to humiliate the audience for their misguided belief, nor is this belief used as entertainment. Not fully realised in its primary state, it is the engagement with the audience that brings such work to full term. Through their belief the audience enters into a relationship which breathes life into fiction allowing it into the realms of reality.

The transcript of this conversation has become the springboard for a text based art work which aims to dissemble the original event and use the resulting pieces to construct five new versions of what happened each one degree further from the truth than the last. The aim is to create an artwork, which appropriates the truth and then provides a range of alternatives.
Leo Fitzmaurice

Please Open Your Mind for a Simple Thing

My research is grounded within the ‘everyday’. Generally taking the form of a walk within an urban environment. Often materials, images and ideas are collected from these walks and then later considered within a studio environment. I tend to observe, either things that are overlooked and generally considered unworthy of investigation - below the threshold of recognition in a way, but nevertheless omnipresent- or the opposite – imagery or information that is designed, using every strategy available, to get into our heads; predominantly advertising and marketing. I see these two opposite inputs as different sides to the same idea.

In both cases I am interested in the physical nature of information – I guess no matter how far we advance with technology we always seem to be weighted down by a physical gravity.

I try to be aware of the overall, and changing, cultural/visual landscape this allows me to move the original meaning of my source material toward another area.

I use a range of tactics to respond to the two different ‘inputs’ – physically changing or moving material, by hand, or just being aware of the potency of found material in which significant changes have already been made, however unwittingly. An observation recorded as a photograph or written note may well be considered a finished work or if not finished, self sufficient some how. But another such note or photograph may lead to a project that can last over a decade such as Post Match which I am currently publishing with Locus Plus. Similarly a project such as Detourist started with simple observations but developed into an ongoing series of interventions that may well one day be shown as photographs or within some sort of book. One observation that I made about ten years ago. Namely – ‘what would that packaging look-like with the textual material removed’ is now an ongoing series of installations and models.
Dr Teemu Hupli

Description, Declaration or Something Else?: Some Questions regarding Appropriation

It is by now clear that the relationship between the Conceptual Art of the 1960s and ‘70s and preceding aesthetic theories is a debatable one. In its ‘early days’ Conceptual Art was (and still often is) seen as an anti-formalist and anti-aesthetic development. But more recent discussions have highlighted aspects and arguments that complicate this view somewhat. For example, in the 1990s Thierry de Duve pointed out possible connections between conceptual practices and Kant’s third Critique.¹ More recently, Frances Colpitt has argued that much of the anti-aesthetic rhetoric of, e.g., Joseph Kosuth is based on ill-founded views of the philosophical discipline it purports to criticise.² And, very importantly, in 2006³ Art & Language have mapped out the historical development from Greenbergian modernism through Minimalism to Conceptual Art as a trajectory where Conceptual Art in fact tried to salvage what they term the aspect of ‘virtuality’ of pictorial space from Minimalism’s literalisation of that space. My own present view of the situation is that Cold War artistic politics had a significant part to play in bringing about the anti-aesthetic sentiment after the politicisation of Abstract Expressionism following American artistic community’s disillusionment with Stalin’s cultural policies in the 1940s; but also that the connections between these politicised standpoints and the theories that were linked with them on all sides of the political divides are yet to be satisfactorily clarified and justified.

There are theoretical aspects to the discussion begun in the 1960s that still reverberate in contemporary debates on art and photography. That the opposition between ‘aesthetic’ viewpoints and other, arguably more conceptual/theoretical viewpoints is still alive can be seen, for example, in the recent rehabilitation of aesthetic emphases in public discussions; representatives of the ‘aesthetic’ contingency speak about a renewed necessity of acknowledging the visuality of artistic media, and representatives of the perhaps more established semiotic, conceptual contingency counter these arguments.⁴

But the theoretical terms used in these discussions are often less than clear. The paper proposed for the conference picks up some of these concepts to try to clarify some of their contents and to formulate some questions about them. Among these concepts are declaration and description. In debates concerned with photography and Fine Art, the concepts of describing (or pointing/ostension — the Peircean semiotic term index is also invoked) and performativity (declaration) are often used in

⁴ A very good example of this kind of discussion was the Dev/Stop/Fix think tank at the Photographers’ Gallery in March 2009, where writer Sarah James attempted to make the case for a clearer recognition of the ‘inherent visuality’ of photography in the face of the semiotic emphases of the last few decades.
tandem and almost as synonyms. Historically speaking, the philosophical roots of these concepts would seem to merit no such automatic equation/conflation. How should this conflation be understood? Does it mean that appropriative art practices can be seen as a peculiar, highly potent synthesis of a linguistically/philosophically formulated opposition? Or is the conflation simply an unwarranted one, a theoretical inaccuracy? What links, if any, are there between the concept of appropriation in art/photography and earlier philosophical theories? Do these links perhaps even take us back to the roots of aesthetics in the theory of sensibility and mathematics? Without aiming to be a purely art historical or philosophical paper, the proposed discussion will investigate what could loosely be called theoretical ideas. The paper will concentrate on the aforementioned Art & Language article as the basis of the discussion.
Maru Ituarte

Mexican Ghoulish: Pattern Recognition

In 2001, a box of Hi-8 video-tapes was found on the street in a residential area in Monterrey, Mexico. The cassettes ended up in my hands through a friend who thought I could use them to record over; I watched them instead. The tapes contained scenes filmed by and featuring different members of what seems to be a typically middle-class Mexican family in the 1990’s. The baptism of little Pablito, who smiles for the camera as he is presented with a set of dangling keys; a group of drunken men between 25 and 35 years at a bachelor’s party, as they slit a stray dog’s throat in front of the camera; an amateur football match at the Spanish Club in Mexico City; a visit to a home for handicapped children, a typical Sunday afternoon, a trip to Europe, a hidden camera in a hotel room...

Rather than with the rather remarkable content of the tapes themselves, I was fascinated by the role the camera plays on each scene: it sometimes features as a kind of spectator for which particular events are enacted; at others it serves as a witness to document events which take place independently of its presence. In both cases, it is clear that the footage is not meant to be seen by anyone outside the circle of its protagonists. I have nevertheless, used these images as found footage to create “Mexican Ghoulish” (2003), a 10-minute video-artwork that appropriates the content of the tapes to construct a prosodic interpretation of the contemporary Mexican society.

“Mexican Ghoulish” presents an ethical dilemma: the one hand, the obviously controversial and violent acts which have taken place in front of the camera, and which the artist has exposed (the killing of a dog, the filming of a sexual act unacknowledged by one of its participants). But on the other hand, by exposing these particular forms of violence within the broader context of a family situation, the artist incurs in a severe violation herself: that of the protagonists’ privacy, of which the spectator, by watching, becomes a participant. Furthermore, the work raises not only issues of animal rights and the violation of privacy, but also ethical issues concerning authorship, authenticity and interpretation.

Maru Ituarte, b. 1977 in Monterrey, Mexico. Lives and works in Berlin. Her work has been shown in museums, galleries and festivals, in Mexico, USA, Germany, France, Spain and Canada.

“Mexican Ghoulish” has been screened among others in Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, Museo Ex-Teresa and Festival Transitio_MX 01 in Mexico City.
Michael Laird & Carina Gosselé

Intimate Grotesque: The Pervasive Nature of the Merzbau

In the fall of 2006, Carina Gosselé and I were invited to participate in Extra (sic) Factor, an exhibition in Antwerp marking the demise of Factor 44 – a legendary alternative art space – held in the then soon-to-be-demolished harbor warehouse where the original Extra City exhibition space was located. Seeing as there was an air of closure and destruction to this exhibition, our original plan was to create a blueprint on the warehouse floor of an ideal series of spaces concerned with memory and desire. Our focus, however, quickly shifted from what this imaginary space was intended for to playing around with the space itself. To this end, we “borrowed” Theo van Doesburg and Cornelis van Eesteren’s 1923 axonometric drawing of a plan for a house, pulled it apart and reassembled it along lines somewhere between Kurt Schwitters’ Merzbau constructions and El Lissitzky’s PROUN series. Shifting the pieces of van Doesburg and van Eesteren’s plan, we created a template and projected it in sections on five walls (approximately 4.5 meters at the highest point) and a section of floor in the Extra City warehouse, which we proceeded to cover with lines of black Tesa-4651 tape. This template was supplemented with architectural elements more or less made up on the spot, based on an illusionistic method of representing architectural space more familiar to us as visual artists than the axonometric strategy employed by van Doesburg and van Eesteren in their architectural rendering. Although these artists knew each other and at times collaborated on projects, by overlapping their high-modernist tactics – utopia as suggested by van Doesburg and De Stijl, Lissitzky’s Suprematist experiments with form and Schwitters’ Dada assemblage strategies – we created a work that was simultaneously clear and confusing, logical and impossible, where axonometric and illusionistic architectural spaces collide, interact, intersect, contradict and ignore each other, their simultaneous appearance deforming sequential movement through space.

This site-specific installation in the guise of a drawing (or drawing in the guise of an installation) was dubbed “Factoid,” subsequent versions of which were created for projects in Düsseldorf, Brussels and Ljubljana. For each location we worked in, recycled elements from the “original” project were expanded upon and reassembled to fit the areas covered (specific details about each version of Factoid are in the appendix).

In Factoid, we have used appropriation as a point of departure. Starting with a blueprint (literally) from two artists (van Doesburg and van Eesteren), we proceeded to “appropriate” the approach, if not the exact technique, of Kurt Schwitters in his Merzbau constructions, treating architecture as a sort of self-replicating bacteria – or fungus – that grows and spreads across a given architectural space for as long as conditions allow.
Dr Wiebke Leister  
London College of Communication

Imaginary Montage and the Non-Likeness of Photographic Portraiture

Starting from the Kuleshov-effect and 1920s Russian montage theory, this paper introduces both the blank face and its supposedly ‘neutral’ photograph to identify questions that have recently regained importance in the seemingly canonical debates about the Photographic and the Indexical in contemporary practice. At the same time magically attracted and undermined by their ambiguous significance, my paper tells stories of how in a process of imaginary montage the photographs discussed seem to absorb what we bring to them – turning the impassive face of the photograph into a performative encounter in itself.

Examining works by i.e. Helmar Lerski, Roni Horn, Jürgen Klauke, Roland Barthes, László Moholy-Nagy and Hannah Höch this paper explores different strategies of visual montage by stressing the separation between the photographic sign and its referent at the same time describing the triangle of signification between model, image and viewer.

This investigation stems from my ongoing, rather speculative research into a category within photographic portraying that works beyond the limits of individual likeness, rather constructing a third meaning from its separated elements. It is based on a research-by-practice model also outlining the background to my own collage series ‘Broken Promises’ (2004), included in the associated exhibition.
Dr Megan R. Luke
University of Chicago

Sculpture for the Hand: Kurt Schwitters in England

This paper introduces the late sculptures Schwitters produced during his years in England (1940-1948) and considers the reception of his art by the British art historian Herbert Read. These portable and polychromatic works place specific demands on the beholding body, eschew geometric regularity, and engage agitated surfaces of thick plaster and impasto. Schwitters incorporates found material and exaggerates the miniature size and hypertrophic bases of these objects in a radical departure from his early work in the medium and his famous Merzbau. His unprecedented attention to surface and mistrust of a form-giving center distinguishes these sculptures from that of contemporaries like Henry Moore, Naum Gabo, and Barbara Hepworth, and he offered a profound challenge to Read’s understanding of sculpture, one that would be sublimated in the historian’s survey of the medium after the war, The Art of Sculpture (1956).
Elisa Oliver  
Leeds Metropolitan University

Appropriating the 1970s: loss and redemption in the representation of the 1970s teenage experience in contemporary British art.

From the 1990s British art demonstrates a pronounced preoccupation with the teenage experience of the 1970s and 80s. This return is not a purely nostalgic reflection on lost youth but appropriates this moment to negotiate the implications of a nexus of events, social, political, cultural that uniquely coalesce at this point for the 1960s born generation.

Artists reaching a consolidation of output in the 1990s had experienced significant social and technological shifts: the impact of 1960s feminism, the death of manufacturing industry and the effect on masculinity, the temporal dislocations resulting from changes to the working day, the unprecedented immersion in televisual and pop and radio culture, and post Thatcherism, a loss of collective identity to individual enterprise.

The appropriation of the teenage experience of this generation in work from the 1990s is a process of negotiating, elucidating and coming to terms with this experience. Appropriation in this work is facilitated through the qualities of stasis and oscillation that articulate points of departure and return but also parallels shifts in a perceptual engagement with the world, informed by the pervasive technologies of the period; the pause and rewind of the VCR and the tape recorder.

This paper will address this process of appropriation in the work of artists Paul Rooney and George Shaw and consider the effect on the construction of subjectivity that the appropriation of the temporal through the domestic technologies of the time produced and which subsequently also worked to articulate the sense of loss and rehabilitation of that moment.
Isabella Pitisci  
Suffolk New College / University Campus Suffolk

Dust Breeding – From Nostalgia to Phenomenological Inquiry

As an artist working with photography I am constantly faced with what is for me a real ethical problem: in a world saturated with images why carry on taking photographs? Add to this the horrifying realisation of the objectifying nature of photography and one doesn’t feel like taking photographs ever again.

It is within this philosophical framework that I started using found imagery, from institutional archives to collections of photographic memories salvaged from bins and other unwanted photographic materials bought on eBay. I soon developed a real collector’s obsession, which led me to view photographic images as objects. Surely, one can only appropriate, rescue or acquire a material “thing”; and such a huge amount of collected photographic material inevitably also generates, well, storage issues!

In turn, the surfaces of images are not transparent, and if images have meanings, they also occupy physical spaces and exhibit their own materiality. Barthes the semiotician doesn’t see the photograph, only the referent (‘a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see. In short, the referent adheres’); Barthes the grieving man cannot help noticing the blunted corners and faded sepia print of the Winter Garden photograph.

My work regularly attempts to collapse the boundaries between image and object. In a quest for material re-presentation and re-embodiment, and through a mix of appropriations and transformations, the work exhibits the objectness of both its apparatus and its image. A large part of my practice explores the way the materiality of the image and the apparatus can affect and contribute to the meaning of the work: from the material on which I print through to the positioning of the image in a three-dimensional space; from the physical traces and index of time, scratches and dust, through to the uncanny physical absence of the image itself.

The work is thematically and formally pensive and self-reflexive. The tropes it explores pertain to the archive and the presumed ontological nature of photography; and the form of a piece becomes a language describing an idea. Or rather, to be truer to the spirit of the work, it is through its very materiality that the work acquires meaning.

My work doesn’t reproduce very well and is best experienced when viewed in a physical space. The work indeed asks the viewer to be seduced into a phenomenological experience with the object, and to reconnect somehow with Benjamin’s lost aura, this ‘strange weave of space and time’.
Magick, Immersive Installation and the Appropriation of Mind

In 1984, a book was published which provided a complete set of symbolic ideas and a system with which to use them for the magical training of and spiritual enlightening of any reader with the persistence to practice its methods. The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magick by Israel Regarde is a collection of lectures, papers and systems translated and taught by the late 19th Century Hermetic Society, The Golden Dawn, whose members were taught what were known as the principles of occult science and the Magic of Hermes. The tablet of Hermes, or the Emerald Tablet, purports to reveal the secrets of the structure of the universe. It has many translations, all of which have slight differences apart from the second line of the text: “What is the above is from the below and the below is from the above”. This is the fundamental principle behind the psycho-spiritual system of psychology known as Magick. Throughout my relatively young Fine Art practice (8 years), a common theme throughout - irrespective of the form of the work - has been the notion of places outside of physical reality; a principle that is essential in the execution of all Magickal processes. Whereas this isn’t a new idea when considered scientifically, philosophically or psychologically through quantum theory, phenomenology, Foucault's Heterotopias, Freud's theory of archaic inheritance or for that matter conceptual art in itself, when we consider the notion in relation to the principles of Magick, these 'non-physical places' take on a completely different light.

In my recent work, I have attempted to translate these basic Magickal principles into immersive installations with the aim of immersing the non-physical attributes of participants as well as their physical. My initial attempts to delineate a process that could transfer the principles of Magick to immersive art grew from a combination of Marcel Duchamp’s notion of the readymade and his ideas about non-retinal art. At first glance, there seems little to link the art of appropriation with Magick, however, a closer examination reveals a clear dualism between the two: Both have a physical and a mental aspect that must be applied for each to be executed successfully. If we are to define appropriation as the act of: “taking possession” of something – as is the case for example in the appropriation of readymades - then there is just as much credence in applying this description to the non-physical as there is the physical. Whilst elaboration of the non-physical connotations associated to the word ‘possession’ is unnecessary, the distinction between the artist’s physical and non-physical involvement in the appropriation of readymades is necessary in order to establish the point at which Magick and appropriation meet.

There are perhaps three ideas behind readymades in their various guises:

- Firstly, a concern to challenge by example contemporary assumptions about the nature of artistic creation, especially the roles of conception, manual skill and accident or chance in the making of art. Secondly a desire to expose the role of institutions and social groups in defining what counts as art. Thirdly, a fascination

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with industrially manufactured, and therefore usually anonymously produced “objects of desire”.  

There is a necessary fourth concern to add to the list: The consideration of the non-physical essences of an object, how we imagine the object to be in our minds. It is important that such an act is not dismissed as being “just your imagination”, the time to test that as, Aleister Crowley points out, is later!

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6 Ades, D, Cox, N, Hopkins, D, Marcel Duchamp, Thanes and Hudson Ltd, London, 1999
John Stezaker

Violation and Redemption in the Late Collages of Kurt Schwitters

The paper is structured around a list of attributes of the found object, quoted from Breton by Maurice Blanchot: “Outmoded, fragmented, unusable, almost incomprehensible, perverse.” The paper takes each of these attributes in turn to look at the stages in the collage process by which objects and images are redeemed or, in Blanchot’s terms, “made visible”, in the processes of finding, collecting and collaging.

Some of the ideas developed by Georges Didi-Huberman in his essay “Image as Rend” will be applied to the collage process generally, but in particular will be used to look at the presence of photographs in the late collages of Kurt Schwitters, especially looking at two series of collage made in 1941-2 and 1947. The paper argues that the presence of photographs in these late works constitutes a rend in the hitherto modernist (cubist/constructivist) spatiality of the pre-war collages. I hope also, to begin to suggest why collage and Kurt Schwitters late work might be important to a new generation of artists.
This paper will examine the incidence of appropriation and re-representation that emerged in fine art image and object making during the early 20th century. It specifically aims to trace the role of emerging forms of technology in facilitating new ways of conceptualising, capturing and re-materialising found objects ranging from the initial late 19th century methods of low & high quality photographic, print and object reproduction to those of the present digitally mediated age. The presentation will examine how pioneering artists such as Duchamp, Schwitters and Ernst exploited the strengths, weaknesses and even aura of new technology as a means of conceptually mediating, creating and shaping an artwork.

The question of authenticity, original and reproduction in relation to such works has been an enduring one age, however, based on artists intention and the ever increasing expansiveness of technology available, new and essential dialogues have filtered from the avant-garde into the mainstream. The paper will present some of the possibilities afforded by the engagement, and indeed appropriation of different kinds of often industrially designed technology that has found its way into the artist's hand and reach. As well as examining the foundations of this technological engagement, reference will be made to a series of recent projects undertaken by the Centre for Fine Print Research in Bristol working with artists such as Leslie Dill (US), Richard Hamilton, Richard Slee and Joe Tilson and (UK) who have continued to engage with the tradition of appropriation. These examples range from the creation of new interactive artworks that fuse together poetry and photography (in the case of Leslie Dill), the transformation or 'transubstantiation' (as Duchamp termed the concept) of one artists work through another (in the case of Richard Hamilton's print ‘The Typo Topography of Marcel Duchamp’s Large Glass), the re-orientation of found objects (by Richard Slee) and the restoration of artworks to re-fulfil the initial aims of a work from the 60’s (in the case of Joe Tilson).

Throughout each of these case studies, the presentation will highlight the influences, and precedents set by, early 20th century avant - garde artists on our current engagement with new technology. This ranges from the way it can be used to animate new ideas through to the varying degrees in which existing ideas and objects can be re-animated. As well as 2D reproduction, the presentation will reveal the emerging possibilities of 3D digital capture, creation and output that have come about through object scanning and full colour rapid prototype output. The parameters of its ability to generate either a new aesthetic or simulate those of others will be assessed in relation to the current generation of technology available to the artist.
Lee Trimming

Yoko Ono Was My Readymade

Part of my current practice involves working with names. I’ve been making drawings of names, and am also planning to make video and sculptural work along similar lines. In the past I’ve worked with quotations, which seemed to slot quite neatly into the tradition of the readymade. I think of the more recent work with names as an extension of this.

I’m also interested in the idea of Platonic forms: triangles and squares and circles, which don’t tangibly exist, but are the formal building blocks of reality. Letters could also be thought of as ‘Platonic forms’ in this sense – they have no tangible existence, but are ideal forms, conceptual entities which exist free from any fixed empirical/phenomenological mould. There seems to be a relationship to the readymade here: in my drawings the idea of the name is held in mind while its form is nosed out and manifested on the paper. They aren’t readymades, but they are drawings of readymades.

I’m also interested in the relationship of the readymade to the void. The employment of readymade articles in Schwitters and Duchamp is very different, but there is a reference to or intention towards meaninglessness in each.

I am asking myself questions like: must a readymade have corporeality? What is its relation to artifice? Is fixity a requirement, or can it exist in a state of flux? Can objects be emptied? How does the readymade relate to Minimalism? If a name is a readymade, what is its relationship to this idea of emptying out?

I don’t have an academic interest in defining the ground of The Readymade, but I am interested in the possibilities and liberations the advent of the readymade gave to artists, where one can be lifted out of the process of ‘creation’, give up responsibility for ‘making’, and have instead the space to observe, enjoy, and play with arrangements.
Dr Jeremy Turner  
University of Chester

Original Sin

Sculpture, more so than any other means by which art is made manifest, sits on a boundary that delineates our lived experience from a heightened art experience. Whilst this is in part a result of the frequent occupation of shared space it is also, increasingly, a result of the appropriation of processes and materials familiar (and unfamiliar) to us from other sources.

Just over fifty years ago, David Smith discussed the materials and methods by which sculpture came into being. “Modelling clay,” he says, “was a mystic mess which came from afar. How sculpture got into metal was so complex that it could be done only in Paris. The person who made sculpture was someone else, an ethereal poetic character divinely sent, who was scholar, aesthete, philosopher, Continental gentleman so sensitive he could unlock the crying vision from a log or a Galatea from a piece of imported marble. I now know that sculpture is made from rough externals by rough characters or men who have passed through all polish and are back to the rough again.”

Whilst Smith is primarily discussing the demystification of process, motive and context, he is also hinting at the egalitarian use, diversion and application of equipment, materials and processes which in his case, was originally the demand of an engineering imperative. As he continues, “the tools are at hand in garages and factories. Casting can be achieved in almost every town.”

This paper will concentrate on a number of those technical appropriations and their relationship to potential and ever refined means by which sculpture can be produced. It will in part raise the question of redundancy, and the sculptural abyss opened up by the adoption of systems and processes that have their root in other necessities.
Dr Lucia Vodanovic

Failure and Sabotage within Schwitters’ *Merzbau*: A Critique of Appropriation

In their essay “Balance-Sheet Program for Desiring Machines” (1995), Guattari and Deleuze name a series of art pieces, including Schwitters’ *Merzbau*, that would fall under the category of “desiring machines”, that is, machines which differ from mere tools. These machines are not a projection or representation but rather function within a whole and are able to communicate through different strategies. *Recurrence* is the word used by the authors to describe this method of operation, which could adopt the principle of parts within a multiplicity, or of a machine in relation to its residuals, or of an object that is constantly destroying itself; in this case, it is Schwitters’ machine-house, sabotaging and destroying itself. In the *Merzbau*, the materials are indeed connected as singularities and do not represent or interpret a different nature, but its operation is the mere and grand succession of false steps, the *failing* rather than the *functioning*, the constant doing and subsequent covering up. This is not an arbitrary procedure but rather an attempt to uphold those objects as contingent possibilities instead of placing them passively in a new context: each object gives something up in order to relate with the next one, in a very powerful disguise attached to the principle of evaluation through the actions of removing and connecting.

This paper addresses a series of current issues within the production and discourse of visual arts in general and photography in particular – notoriously, the importance given to the notion of *appropriation* and to a re-worked narrative of the found object – by paying attention to Schwitters’ building and un-building strategies within the *Merzbau*. It aims to offer a critique of the discourse of appropriation by arguing that Schwitters affirms a new relation between utility and production that challenges the standard narrative of the found object procedure. Unlike Bourriaud’s concept of *post-production*, for instance, the paper argues that Schwitters proposes a different understanding of the notion of value, which unlocks interesting perceptual issues because it joins dissimilar elements into a relationship that is not based on equivalence. Therefore, it is no longer Bourriaud’s model of the flea market (which provides the substance for the concept of *post-production*), where dissimilar cultural objects are joined together, waiting to be invested with a new value or given a new use (the old sewing machine base that is used as a kitchen table). In this other formulation singularities multiply, unfolding into a site for meditation through difference, through an intentional degradation of their matter.

This understanding proves useful to confront current modes of production within visual arts since it considers failure as an achievement: the widespread theoretical notion of appropriation, for instance, is not regarded as a simple transference from one system to another but as a procedure whereby objects undergo change and reconnect at different levels, a process that only starts to unfold (and does not end) when something is appropriated.
Acknowledgments

Conference & exhibition organised and coordinated by Cian Quayle

This event is supported by CPaRA & Research Capability Funding
Centre for Practice as Research in the Arts
University of Chester
www.cpara.co.uk

Thank you to the Department of Fine Art and CPaRA (Centre for Practice and Research in the Arts), University of Chester for support and assistance, in particular Sarah Buckle (Department Administrator), and the technical support staff Chris Millward, Rob Meighen, Chris Bebbington, Lucy Edwards and special thanks to Lyn Cunningham. Also thanks to the University of Chester Conference Office and Robin Gallie.

Cian Quayle