

CALL FOR PAPERS

Aesthetics in the 21st Century

University of Basel

September 13-15, 2012

Confirmed Speakers: Graham Harman, Iain Hamilton Grant, N. Katherine Hayles

Ever since the turn of the century aesthetics has steadily gained momentum as a central field of study across the disciplines. No longer sidelined, aesthetics has grown in confidence as evidenced by recent works by major contemporary thinkers such as Jean-Luc Nancy (*Muses II*), Jacques Rancière (*Dissensus; Aesthetics and its Discontents*) and Alain Badiou (*Handbook of Inaesthetics*). In this vein, aesthetics does not merely designate a discipline concerned with theories of art, but more fundamentally the primacy of sensation and sensual encounter itself.

Even though these recent developments return to the work of the canonical authors, some contemporary scholars reject the traditional focus on epistemology (Baumgarten, Kant) and theorize sensation and the sensual encounter in terms of ontology instead (Harman, Shaviro). It is according to this shift that speculative realists have proclaimed aesthetics as ‘first philosophy’ and as speculative in nature. With speculative realism sensual encounter becomes an event that even no longer necessarily implies human agents. This is in alignment with the general speculative realist framework for thinking all kinds of entities and objects as free from our all-pervasive anthropocentrism which states, always, that everything is “for us.”

In this speculative realism has several important twentieth-century precursors, most notably Heidegger, Whitehead, Deleuze and Badiou with their respective concepts of event, (aesthetic) experience and encounter. This conference explores the resonances between these twentieth-century thinkers and their concepts and the recently reawakened interest in aesthetics, especially in its speculative realist guise. Hosted by the University of Basel’s Department of English the

conference is particularly interested in the possible implications of what could be termed the new speculative aesthetics for literary and cultural studies. Thus, the conference aims at staging a three-fold encounter: between aesthetics and speculation, between speculative realism and its (possible) precursors, and between speculative realism and art and literature.

Please send your **300-word abstracts** and **150-word bios** to: aesthetics-englsem@unibas.ch.

The deadline for submissions is **December 5, 2011**. A selection of the papers given at the conference will be published as a special issue of *Speculations: Journal of Speculative Realism*.

Conference Organizers:

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