PIECES: Stanford Film & Media Studies 2018 Symposium
Friday April 13, 2018 (Oshman Hall, McMurtry Building)

9 30 – 9 50 Coffee + breakfast

9 50 – 10 00 Opening remarks by Scott Bukatman (Stanford, Film & Media Studies)

10 00 – 11 15 Keynote 1
Lotte Hoek (University of Edinburgh), “Anthropology and the Cinematic Fragment in South Asia”
Respondent: Usha Iyer (Stanford, Film & Media Studies)

11 15 – 11 30 Coffee break

11 30 – 1 20 Panel 1
Srdan Keca (Stanford, Documentary Film & Video), “Generation Loss”
Heather Rastovac Akbarzadeh (Stanford, Dance Studies), “(Not) Just a Piece of Cloth: Sensorial
Performativity of the ‘Veil’ in Aisan Hoss’s Dance-Theater The Pleasant Pain”
Daniel Cohen (Stanford, Film & Media Studies), “Shunning the Sublime, Or Chinese Comedy and the
Postsocialist Art of Deflation”
Dustin Condren (Stanford, Slavic Languages and Literatures), “Notes Toward an Untimely Soviet
Comedy”
Respondent: Pavle Levi (Stanford, Film & Media Studies)

1 20 – 2 30 Lunch break

2 30 – 4 20 Panel 2
Terry Berlier (Stanford, Art Practice), TBA
Tiffany Naiman (Stanford, Thinking Matters), “Wandering Star: Memory, Meaning, and Fragmentation
in David Bowie’s Blackstar”
Henry Rownd (Stanford, Film & Media Studies), “I don’t like films on TV. They always cut them to
pieces’: Skidoo’s Uncertain Widescreen”
Max Suechting (Stanford, Modern Thought & Literature), “WORKINONIT: Fragments and Wholes in J
Dilla’s Donuts”
Respondent: Marci Kwon (Stanford, Art History)

4 20 – 4 30 Coffee break

4 30 – 5 45 Keynote 2
Steven Shaviro (Wayne State University), “Speculative Time”
Respondent: Shane Denson (Stanford, Film & Media Studies)

5 45 – 6 00 Closing remarks by Karla Oeler (Stanford, Film & Media Studies)
KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Anthropology and the Cinematic Fragment in South Asia
Lotte Hoek

This paper investigates film in pieces: modes and forms of filmmaking and viewing that rely on the breaking up of film texts, film audiences and film technologies to produce contingent and often idiosyncratic expressions of cinematic culture. I will take up different examples of short and fragmented forms of cinema that I have been studying anthropologically in Bangladesh: from short strips of celluloid pornography known as cut-pieces to the ‘amphibian cinema’ that occupied the bureaucratic imagination of 1950s East Pakistan. Taken together, these cinematic practices illustrate the centrality of fragmentation within film culture in South Asia and underscore how the anthropological study of cinema breaks up film methodologically and conceptually.

Lotte Hoek is a media anthropologist based at the University of Edinburgh. Her anthropological research investigates the life of the cinema in South Asia. She is the author of Cut-Pieces: Celluloid Obscenity and Popular Cinema in Bangladesh (2014, Columbia University Press) and co-editor of BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies (Sage).

Speculative Time
Steven Shaviro

“Pieces” is most obviously a spatial concept—extensive parts that are separate from one another, and do not necessarily add up to a closed and unified totality. But we need to consider the idea of pieces in terms of time as well. If time is heterogeneous and multiple, and if the future is open and unknowable, then our temporal experience can only exist in pieces and fragments. Even our presumed unity of consciousness only gives us sequential pieces of duration, incomplete in themselves but also resisting any larger synthesis. In this talk, I will consider such pieces of time in several registers: 1) the futurity contemplated or expressed in science fiction narratives; 2) the ways that time is captured and regulated in a political economy dominated by financialization and schedules of indebtedness; 3) the forms of rhythm generated in contemporary popular music and music videos.

Steven Shaviro is the DeRoy Professor of English at Wayne State University. He writes about science fiction, music videos, and the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. His most recent books are Discognition (2016) and Digital Music Videos (2017).
**PANELS**

**Panel 1:**

**Generation Loss**  
Srdan Keca

This work in progress centers around interventions on independently produced and homemade videographic records of the Bosnian War (1992–95). By studying the dissemination of these records, their spontaneous decay, as well as the deliberate erasure of images, it highlights the role the videos played in constructing historical narratives, and the tensions between the public and the private contained in them.

Srdan Keca has made documentaries, essay films and video installations in the space of his native former Yugoslavia, the UK, and the Middle East. His projects include *Mirage*, an experimental documentary exploring the marks of displacement and longing in the city of Dubai; *A Letter to Dad*, an essay-film about family, war and forgetting; and *Museum of the Revolution*, a multi-channel video installation on one of the most prominent architectural projects of socialist Yugoslavia, which never got built.

**(Not) Just a Piece of Cloth: Sensorial Performativity of the “Veil” in Aisan Hoss’s Dance-Theater**  
*The Pleasant Pain*  
Heather Rastovac Akbarzadeh

I analyze *The Pleasant Pain*, choreographed by female Iranian émigré Aisan Hoss, which draws from interviews with Iranian “new generation” immigrants (born post-1979 Revolution during the Iran-Iraq war). The performance enacts sensorial modes of memory and experience, disrupting Euro-American neoliberal and diasporic nationalist perspectives that construct this generation within frameworks of oppression/freedom. Specifically, dancers animate voluminous black skirts through touch, enacting sensorial performativity and unsettling visual-discursive regimes constructing the Islamic “veil.” Rather than what I call “savior spectatorship,” these enactments invite spectators to engage in “haptic visuality” that functions like touch (Marks, 2000), revealing the “veil” as a saturated site of projection.

Heather Rastovac Akbarzadeh is the Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Dance Studies at Stanford University. She earned her PhD in Performance Studies from UC Berkeley with a Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, and Sexuality. She researches racialized and gendered economies of Iranian performance in transnational art markets and among diasporic audiences.

**Shunning the Sublime, Or Chinese Comedy and the Postsocialist Art of Deflation**  
Daniel Cohen

Responding to the call to examine the function of the piece, this talk focus on the function of the eye in late 20th century comic performance in the Peoples Republic of China. Briefly tracing the evolution of the fixed, autonomous gaze in Chinese opera film following the founding of the PRC in 1949, this talk
examines how the fixed gaze off-screen became a prime locus of symbolic identification in the form of late-Maoist aesthetic production known as the “model opera” (yangban xi)—the dominant form of theatrical and cinematic output during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. Following the death of Mao in 1976 and the renunciation of the Cultural Revolution, I demonstrate through the reading of select body of post-Mao comic films how the re-appropriation and parody of the fixed gaze off-screen became the popular figuration of a border cultural tendency to “de-sublimate” the iconography and icons of socialism.

Daniel Cohen is a PhD candidate in Film & Media Studies in Stanford University’s Department of Art & Art History. He received his MA in Media Studies from New York University in 2012. His research explores the intersection of technology, aesthetics, and vernacular political movements in the Peoples Republic of China. He is currently completing a dissertation entitled Troubled Laughter: Comic Visions in Postsocialist China, which explores the evolution of the comic genre in late 20th century China.

Notes Toward an Untimely Soviet Comedy
Dustin Condren

In the increasingly repressive Soviet Union of 1932–33, filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein developed a comedic film scenario titled MMM. As a political caveat, the director prefaced his screenplay with an “Explanatory Note,” in which he emphasized the rhetorical space between comedic form and its ideological content. He writes, “A comic scenario is nothing more than a schema of buried landmines that will become on-screen bursts of laughter” and that the political theses beneath are better read later, in “living screen action.” This paper queries Eisenstein’s failsafe document for what it implies not only about the segmented nature of comedic form, but also about cinema’s inherent fragmentariness.

Dustin Condren writes on early Soviet cinema and theatre and is completing a dissertation on Sergei Eisenstein’s unfinished film projects. He is the English-language translator of two recent volumes of Eisenstein’s writing: Disney (2013) and The Primal Phenomenon: Art (2017), as well as of Leo Tolstoy’s The Gospel in Brief (2011).

Panel 2:

Artist Talk (Title TBA)
Terry Berlier

Wandering Star: Memory, Meaning, and Fragmentation in David Bowie’s Blackstar
Tiffanny Naiman

David Bowie’s musical works have always been accompanied by powerful visual components, whether carefully designed stage shows, eye-catching album covers, or videos that contribute additional meaning. This paper analyzes the song and video for Blackstar, considering how Bowie weaves auditory and visual pieces from his own career with sonic specters and allusory apparitions from other artists resulting in a new composition that allows for multivalent readings. Bowie utilizes the performative possibilities of
piecing together fragmented memories and enlists his audience in the construction of meaning related to his work, ultimately never allowing for closure.

Tiffany Naiman is currently a Thinking Matters Fellow at Stanford University. She received her PhD in Musicology from UCLA in 2017. She also holds master's degrees in African American Studies and Musicology, and a BA in American Literature and Culture, all from UCLA, and is a DJ, electronic music composer, and award winning documentary film producer.

“I don’t like films on TV. They always cut them to pieces”: *Skidoo’s Uncertain Widescreen*
Henry Rownd

*Skidoo* (Otto Preminger, 1968) is a strange movie. It seems to begin on a television screen in someone’s living room. Suddenly, the channel changes to a Senate hearing, a commercial, and eventually an earlier Preminger film, panned-and-scanned (cropped) to fit the dimensions of the television screen. Through a close reading of *Skidoo’s* opening sequence, I argue that film and television, media often considered distinct or even hostile to one another, become—in Preminger’s art—strangely continuous. Within the 1960s historical context of panning-and-scanning, I consider how Preminger’s widescreen aesthetics express *Skidoo’s* media uncertainty—a widescreen film that itself appears to be “cut to pieces” for TV.

Henry Rownd is a fifth-year PhD Candidate in the Department of Art & Art History at Stanford. He is currently working on a dissertation entitled *Preminger’s Doubt: An Uncertainty Tendency in the Late Period Films of Otto Preminger*.

**WORKINONIT: Fragments and Wholes in J Dilla’s Donuts**
Max Suechting

The writer and DJ Paul Miller described sampling as “a new way of doing something that’s been with us for a long time: creating with found objects.” In this paper, I examine the piece in the work of legendary producer J Dilla (James Yancey), focusing on Dilla’s deathbed masterpiece, *Donuts*. I locate the dialectic between piece and whole at several levels, including: in the primary technology used in the album’s production, the MPC-3000; in Yancey’s mastery of the musical technique of sampling; and in the record’s cut-up aesthetics. I argue that the fragmentary piece is the dominant compositional method of *Donuts*, and consider what this might suggest about the producer’s understanding of continuity, temporality, and creativity.