

Critical Cultures

Elective

Programme

Spring Trimester

Education year 2

25
NGAID

**The deadline to
sign up for an
elective is 4pm
Wednesday 22nd
January 2025**

**Confirmation of
your elective by
Monday 27th
January 2025**

**Classes start on
Wednesday 29th
January 2025**

An elective is an on-site 90-120 minute class offered by the Critical Cultures programme by the School of Visual Culture.

You will be sent a link to sign up for your Critical Cultures Elective.

If you have not received the link, please email visualculture@staff.ncad.ie

The invite to sign up is sent to your NCAD email address.

Education 2 students sign up for one elective.

Some electives will be over-subscribed. We cannot guarantee your first or second choice of elective but we will do our best.

Please do not sign up for an elective you have already studied before.

Details of times and summaries appear on the following pages.

The rooms will be announced later.

Times

Queering The Post-Natural
Jye Benjamin O'Sullivan
13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays

The Female City
Denis Kehoe
13.30 - 15.30 Wednesdays

**Systems and Network Ecologies:
The Aesthetics and Politics of Inter-
connection**
Francis Halsall
13.30 - 15.30 Wednesdays

Thinking About Photography
Fiona Loughnane
13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays

Profane Spaces
Vaari Claffey
13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays

Breaking the Rules
Larissa Vilhena
13.30-15.30 Wednesdays

Once Upon a Time in Cinema
Denis Kehoe
15.30-17.30 Wednesdays

Colour and Emotion
Silvia Loeffler
15.30-17.30 Wednesdays

Fashion and the Archive
Hilary O Kelly
15.30-17.30 Wednesdays

Radical Exhibition-Making
Sarah Pierce
15.30-17.30 Wednesdays

Queering The Post-Natural Jye Benjamin O'Sullivan 13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays

Queering The Post-Natural traces, the complex relationship between queer theory and discourses on the “Natural” and “Post-Natural” through a wide range of artistic, design-based, and theoretical practices. From European Shamanic practices as explored by Rick Dolphijn to the queer vampiric subject of artists such as Yong Xiang Li, this elective aims to firstly give participants a grounding in Queer Theory. Secondly, it aims to explore the way that the category of “Natural” has been formed in relation to Euromodernity. Finally, we will bring these two discourses together in a discussion of the post-natural, grounding participants in the discourses that contextualise contemporary Queer Ecological artistic practices.

By the end of the elective, participants will be not only familiar with contemporary discourses on the intersection between queer theory and the post-natural, but will also be equipped to use this intersection as a lens to analyse varying different mediums, including video, text, painting, installation, textiles and performance.



*Yong Xiang Li I'm Not in Love (How to Feed on Humans), 2020
single-channel video,*

The Female City Denis Kehoe 13.30 - 15.30 Wednesdays

This elective examines various intersections between females and the European city of the 19th and early 20th century. It explores the role of women (and girls) during the progress of modernity, and with respect to the expanding and changing city. The representation of figures such as the mother, the prostitute/sex worker, the suffragette, the woman of colour, the lesbian and the Jewish woman are all investigated and discussed.

The elective analyses both how these women's lives were represented during the period, as well as how they are represented today. A multi-disciplinary approach is taken, drawing on fiction, opera, cinema, TV, contemporary news, photography and painting. Ideas from feminist theory, urban theory, queer theory, Marxism and psychoanalysis, including the work of Elizabeth Wilson, Laura Elkin and Judith Walkowitz, are used in reading and understanding the different material under discussion.



Sylvia Pankhurst mural in Bow, East London (Jerome Davenport, 2018)

Systems and Network Ecologies: The Aesthetics and Politics of Interconnection

Francis Halsall
13.30 - 15.30 Wednesdays

We live in the "Century of the System" (Gawande). We are all significantly, inextricably, unavoidably, connected together by global systems that are: meteorological; technological; biological; informational; social and so on. From supply chains to online activities, our contemporary lifestyles would be impossible without systems and networks.

Perhaps the world system is a single entity. Within its networks various things are transmitted that include: people; money; information; ideas; memes and viruses. From networks of Social Media to the emerging Internet of Things; from health-care systems to furniture systems, air-conditioning systems, clothing systems and many others, systems and networks are embedded into our life, and us into them.

The aim of this elective is to consider the ecologies of these systems by considering the relationships between systems and their environments. We'll look at some definitions of key terms in the theories of these systems and networks and demonstrate how these can be applied to a wide variety of cultural and social practices including art and design. We will reflect on the aesthetics of digital and (so-called) new media alongside other implications of the applications of systems and networks as metaphors for complex forms of organisation.

We will consider how the systems and networks we live in are far from neutral but have social, political, epistemological and ethical consequences. They shape the way we all live and think.



A startling murmuration over Lough Ennell, Co. Westmeath. Picture: INPHO/James Crombie, The Irish Examiner, (13th Dec, 2023)

Thinking About Photography

Fiona Loughnane
13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays

Photography surrounds us. On a daily basis we take and view countless photographic images. But it's a slippery and fugitive medium, with constantly changing technologies and processes, allowing images to be widely circulated and reproduced in a bewildering range of contexts. Photography is part of a modern expansion of vision which opens the world to our view; but is also a means through which we ourselves are increasingly subject to the gaze of others. This elective will introduce critical ideas about photography drawing from key figures such as: Roland Barthes; John Szarkowski; Luigi Ghirri; Kaja Silverman; Ariella Azoulay and John Tagg.

The course will include both historic and contemporary forms, ranging from the carte de visite to Instagram. While the work of notable photographers – such as Lee Friedlander, Susan Meiselas, and Trevor Pagalen – will be discussed, the course will also engage with anonymous, vernacular and commercial practices. Ultimately, this elective will introduce debates about the essential characteristics of photography and its diverse functions and situations.



Erik Kessels, *24 hours in photos*, 2011

Profane Spaces

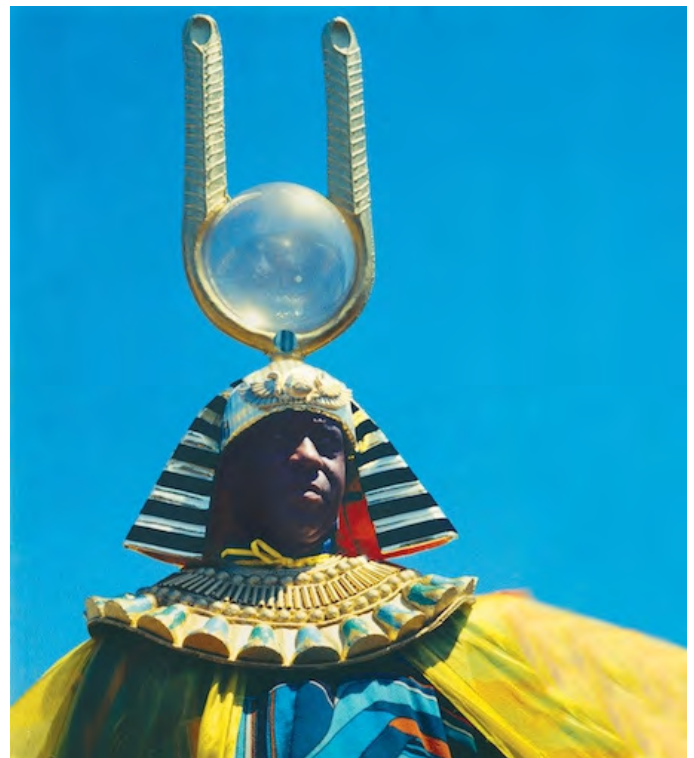
Vaari Claffey
13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays

This elective explores how artists, designers and architects 'make profane' those spaces, artefacts and materials that may hold some 'sacred' value in relation to historically dominant ideologies. It will also consider the reverse process, when objects or practices once regarded as profane are made 'sacred'.

The art and design worlds have long been invested in ascribing value and preciousness to steady objects: what is the potential of making materials and objects behave unexpectedly, changing their previous use and context?

The elective examines how artists and designers find strategies to break taboos, using materials and aesthetics to expose exclusionary tactics and suggest a re-ordering of hierarchies. In doing this, we will explore some of the claims that have been made for magic and spirituality in relation to both practice and reputation.

The work and histories explored include those of Jennifer Higgie, Karrabing Film Collective, Sun Ra, Magiciens de la Terre and Madonna.



Sun Ra invokes the Egyptian gods at the Pyramids - source unknown, 1971



Breaking the Rules

Larissa Vilhena

13.30-15.30 Wednesdays

Artists have always been known for being trailblazers, dismissing past styles and rejecting conventional approaches to art. The first examples of modern art emerge in the mid-19th century, giving rise to a succession of avant-garde movements that focused on a wide range of innovations in terms of subject matter, form and technique, among others.

This elective will examine the modern artist as a rule-breaker by tracing some of the key developments surrounding the rejection of academic values from the 1840s to the 1880s. At that point in Britain, a group of young artists, the Pre-Raphaelites, would unite in opposition to the Academy and discard its formulaic notions about drawing and painting in search of new sources of inspiration. This class will also look into other examples of 19th-century artistic groups that broke with tradition, such as the Realists and the Impressionists in France, and Gustav Klimt in Austria, and their non-conformist attitude towards art.

Finally, this elective aims to assess the legacy of those early avant-garde movements for artists in the 21st century.

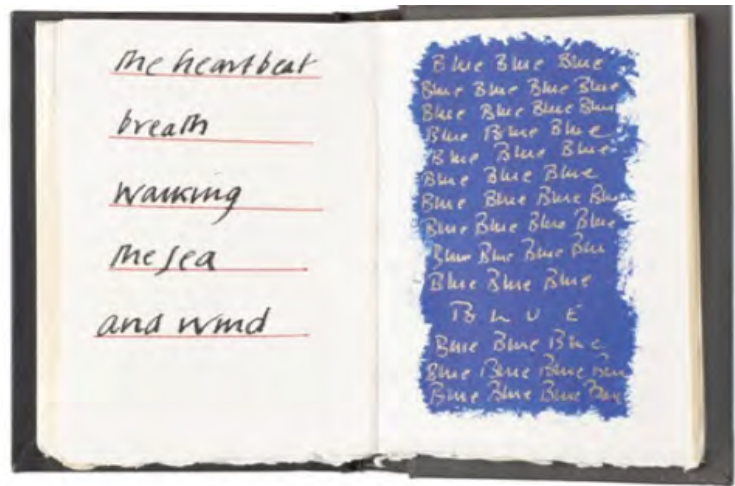
John Everett Millais, Ferdinand Lured by Ariel, 1850, oil on canvas, Makin collection..



Once Upon a Time in Cinema Denis Kehoe 15.30-17.30 Wednesdays

What is the role of the director in a film? How does the director put her or his imprint on their work? How do they construct a narrative in a way that is specific to them? How do the films they make represent wider social, political and historical issues and events? This elective series will explore the work of ten directors and how their films fit into the history of cinema.

Amongst the directors under discussion will be Quentin Tarantino, Sofia Coppola, Claire Denis, Jane Campion, Spike Lee and Alfred Hitchcock. The films of these directors will be examined using a variety of lenses including psychoanalysis, theories of gender and race, Marxism, postcolonialism and auteur theory. Connections will be drawn between their creations and the worlds of fashion, graphic design, architecture and music. This elective would be ideal for anybody who wants to deepen their knowledge of the history of cinema and investigate the various potentialities of the medium of film.



"Epitaph" in Derek Jarman's *Sketchbooks*, published by Thames & Hudson (2013)

Colour and Emotion Silvia Loeffler 15.30-17.30 Wednesdays

What feelings are being expressed when we feel blue, see red, or move between shadow and light? This elective explores a variety of conceptual, psychological and cultural meanings of colour in art, design and cinematography. We will elaborate on the language of colour in music, art, design, cinematography, and fabrics in various world cultures. Our journey will be guided by Derek Jarman's colour meditations in *Chroma*, which will be one of our key readings.

We will analyse historical and social shifts; cultural perceptions and expressions of grief and melancholia and joy and renewal; sacredness and controversy; ideology and ambivalence; claustrophobia and openness; and how the use of colour is the embodiment of emotions that shape our memories and dreams.

Fashion and the Archive

Hilary O Kelly

15.30-17.30 Wednesdays

Through exploring archives, we will analyse dress using objects, images and texts as evidence. Combining visual, material, historical and theoretical analysis, the aim of the elective is to develop skills essential to fashion studies. The aim is to study historical garments as a source for contemporary design and fashion thinking.

Today, students commonly claim Instagram and social media as sources for fashion research: this object and archive-based study will highlight the cultural riches of the real object and original sources. Evidence embedded in garments will be used to develop historical and cultural research and to support or contest received histories and theories of fashion.



Ricerca Mazzini Archive, a collaboration partner of Bologna University, Italy <http://www.archividiricercamazzeni.it>

Radical Exhibition-Making

Sarah Pierce

15.30-17.30 Wednesdays

This elective invites students to critically engage with processes of presenting, curating, and creating art that challenge traditional norms and conventions. By examining diverse media—from installation art and live performances to activist projects and archives—students will gain a deeper understanding of the exhibition as an artistic medium rooted in practice. Exhibitions often take place at sites of ideological and institutional power. They are socially charged, culturally disposed, and have the potential to reproduce, reinforce or disrupt dominant narratives.

We will look to radical exhibition-making as the material manifestation of a type of critical theory that supports other ways of knowing, seeing and thinking. Our weekly lectures will explore case studies and assigned texts that students are expected to read before class.

In addition, the elective will include site visits to local galleries where we will meet curators and consider exhibitions in real-world contexts. As we look beyond the artworks involved we will gain critical insight into some of the conditions, negotiations and circumstances that impact exhibition-making behind the scenes, and invoke exhibitions as radically optimistic propositions nonetheless.



Khaled Hourani and Rashid Masharawi Picasso in Palestine 2012 (unpacking the masterpiece)