



CALL FOR PAPERS:

# AVANT-GARDE PEDAGOGIES

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2016

University of Westminster, London

Hosted by the **Higher Education and Theory (HEAT)** network, the **Institute for Modern and Contemporary Culture** (University of Westminster) and the **Philosophy of Education Research Centre** (University of Winchester)

**'BLAST ...British Academy' (*Blast1*)**

The conference is intended to provide an interdisciplinary forum for addressing how we might respond to the contemporary crisis or transformation of education without succumbing to conservative nostalgia for the past or an uncritical acquiescence to present forces in an increasingly corporately-driven agenda. The concept of the avant-garde will be used as a lens to focus these discussions.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a series of social, political, economic and technological upheavals that transformed aesthetics and contributed to a sense of the crisis of the arts and culture. While the technical developments of photography, radio and film, increasing commodification, the emergence of the culture industry and the rise of kitsch, mass and popular culture produced tensions within art that lead to a reactionary nostalgia for the culture of the past they also gave rise to a period of intense artistic innovation and experimentation that has come to be associated with modernism and the avant-garde. As Poggioli Renato puts it, avant-garde literature sought to be not a 'display case or a salesroom but a free, or least an open, laboratory'.

In his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger claimed the avant-garde turns against both 'the distribution apparatus on which the work of art depends, and the status of art in bourgeois society as defined by the concept of the autonomy'. If the publication of Bürger's book in 1974 perhaps marks the point of avant-garde art's exhausted collapse into postmodernism, Hannah Arendt was already in the 1950s anticipating an attendant 'crisis of education'. At the turn of the twenty-first century, a comparable series of transformations – the rise of the internet and new media, the dominance of the education industry, commodification and indebtedness, globalisation and the growth of mass and popular education – have lead teachers, scholars and activists to talk increasingly of a contemporary assault on education.

In response to these claims, this conference seeks to address these issues through the lens of the avant-garde. It seeks to recover an alternative perspective for theoretical approaches beyond the impasses designated by classical philosophies and postmodern theories of education. For the avant-garde is 'not that which is most historically advanced in the sense that it has most history behind it' but, as Peter Osborne suggests, that which 'disrupts the linear time-consciousness of progress in such a way as to enable us, like the child, to "discover the new anew" and, along with it, the possibility of a better future'. Or, as Jacques Rancière more succinctly claims, the avant-garde is 'the aesthetic anticipation of the future'.

A hundred years on from the frenetic flurry of movements and manifestoes that characterized the high point of modernism and the avant-garde in art, this conference asks where can we find the comparable experimentation in pedagogical theory and practice or the open laboratory of learning? How might such modernist or avant-garde impulses in the arts provide a framework for calling into question not merely traditional or bourgeois pedagogical ideas, techniques and the distribution apparatus upon which education depends, but perhaps also the dominance and assumed value of higher education itself within contemporary society?

**'The absolute rationalism that is still in vogue allows us to consider only facts relating directly to our experience ...Under the pretence of civilization and progress, we have managed to banish from the mind everything that may rightly or wrongly be termed superstition, or fancy; forbidden is any kind of search for truth which is not in conformance with accepted practices... We do not "learn," ...all we ever do is "relearn"'**

***(Manifesto of Surrealism)***

**Currently Confirmed Speakers:**

Alan Golding (English, Louisville, KY.), author of 'Isn't the avant-garde always pedagogical: Experimental Poetics and/as Pedagogy' (2006) and *From Outlaw to Classic: Canons in American Poetry* (1995).

Aislinn O'Donnell (Learning, Society and Religious Education, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick), author of 'Experimental Philosophy and Pedagogy' (2015) and 'Another Relationship to Failure: Reflections on Beckett, Failure and Education' (2014).

Gary Peters (Faculty of Arts, York St John University), author of 'Ignorant Students/Ignorant Teachers' (2010) and *Irony and Singularity: Aesthetic Education from Kant to Levinas* (2005).

Hannah Proctor (English and Humanities, Birkbeck, University of London), author of 'Synthetic Dreams: Gender, Modernity and Art Silk Stockings' (2015) and 'Neuronal Ideologies: Catherine Malabou's Explosive Plasticity in Light of the Marxist Psychology of A. R. Luria' (2011).

Peter Roberts (School of Educational Studies and Leadership, University of Canterbury, NZ), author of *Happiness, Hope, and Despair: Rethinking the Role of Education* (2016) and *Better Worlds: Education, Art, and Utopia* (2013).

Stephen Shukaitis (Centre for Work, Organization and Society, University of Essex), author of "Pedagogical Labor in an Age of Devalued Reproduction" (2016) and *The Composition of Movements to Come: Aesthetics & Cultural Labor After the Avant-Garde* (2016).

**Titles & abstracts to be sent to Matthew Charles by Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016: [M.Charles1@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:M.Charles1@westminster.ac.uk)**

**Possible Areas of Interest:**

- Aesthetic education: Dada, Fluxist, Futurist, Surrealist or Vorticist perspectives
- Avant-garde architecture and spaces of learning
- Avant-garde pedagogies and institutional critique: unschooling, unlearning
- Chance, spontaneity, the irrational and the unconscious: towards anti-constructivist theories of learning
- Cognitive capitalism and teaching in the creative industries
- Contradictions of contemporary pedagogy: education and anti-education
- "Dada means nothing": pedagogical pessimism, educational nihilism
- Ezra Pound as educator: teaching literature
- Feminism, modernism and education: Amy Lowell, H. D., May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf
- "Grand Pedagogy": Brecht's Didacticism
- Historic, Neo- and Post-Avant-gardes and education
- Kitsch, education and public policy
- Pedagogical experimentations and innovations: flipped, blended, hybrid learning and the avant-garde
- Queer Pedagogies/Queering Education
- The Academy and the avant-garde: dependence and resistance
- The poets, artists and pedagogues of the Black Mountain College
- The Russian avant-garde, biomechanics, Soviet psychology: historical, dialectical and anthropological materialist theories of education
- Torn-halves: elite education, the Educational Industry and Adorno
- Walter Benjamin on teaching in the age of digital reproducibility