

Thinking with Art: Emotion, Memory, and the Body Symposium

Thursday 23 November, 1:30-3:30, SAA 227



Small Axe, *Lovers Rock*¹

Fission Fusion Imagination, Memory and Aesthetics (1:30-2:30)

Dr Miranda Anderson, University of Edinburgh

The mind is often thought of as equivalent to the brain: but it is just not as simple as that!

Instead, our minds and selves extend across brain, body and world. Fluctuating configurations of elements from across the domains of brain, body and world compose our minds and selves, in an infinite process I term 'fission-fusion'. This understanding invites a reorientation of ourselves across space and time. The term fission-fusion illuminates our capacity to extend beyond the confines of our own biologically-based cognitive horizons, as we perpetually fuse with and separate from elements of the ever-changing arrays constituting other minds, selves and the world around us.

This new understanding of the mind reveals the nature and value of a range of artworks, including literature, drama, film, music, dance, and visual, installation and performative artworks. Artworks widen and deepen our cognitive range not only in that moment, but in the future recalling, imagining and playing out of our lives.

The distributed cognition framework, sometimes termed 4E cognition, on which my concept of fission-fusion builds, covers Embodied, Embedded, Extended and Enactive Cognition. I also explore the relation between play and art, their cognitive consequences, and the role of predictive processes. I further make a case for the ethical effects of engaging with artworks through this exploration of the relationship between the imagination, memory and aesthetics.



Eglė Budvytytė with Marija Olšauskaitė and Julija Lukas Steponaitytė.
Still from 'Songs from the compost: mutating bodies, imploding stars'²

Bio: Dr Miranda Anderson is an [Honorary Fellow of the University of Edinburgh](#) and Associate Lecturer with the Open University. She believes in the mind-expanding value of engagement with the arts and humanities. Her research focuses on cognitive approaches to literature and culture. She has led the development of distributed cognition as a framework that illuminates our understanding of literature and culture. She is the author of *The Renaissance Extended Mind* (2015) and co-editor of *The Book of the Mirror* (2007) and four volumes on [Distributed Cognition between Classical Antiquity and Modernism](#) (2018-20). She is currently developing the [fission-fusion](#) concept of the mind and self through working on several articles about contemporary and historical literature and culture. (Contact: miranda.anderson@ed.ac.uk)

¹ 22/11/2020, BBC1 London, 70 mins, <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/176169CA?bcast=133278174> (Accessed 8 Mar 2023).

² 2020, 4K video, 28 min. [Lithuanian Culture Institute, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsL-u6CRWng](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsL-u6CRWng) (Accessed 30 October 2023).

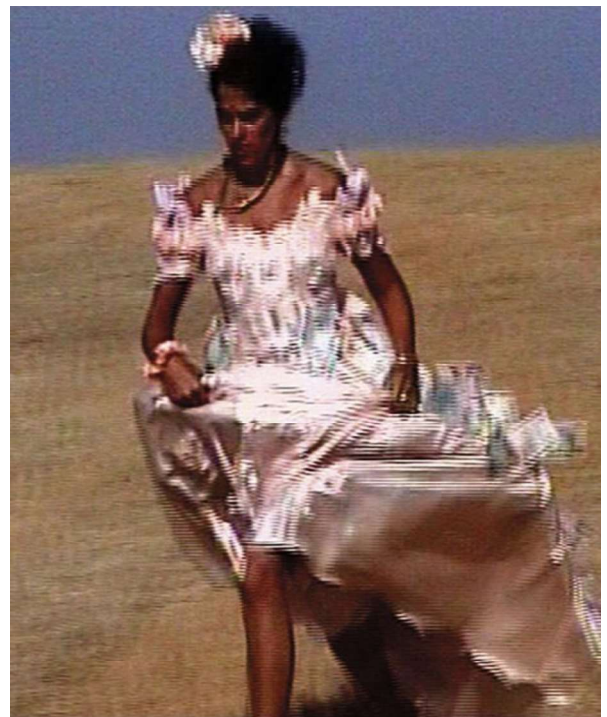
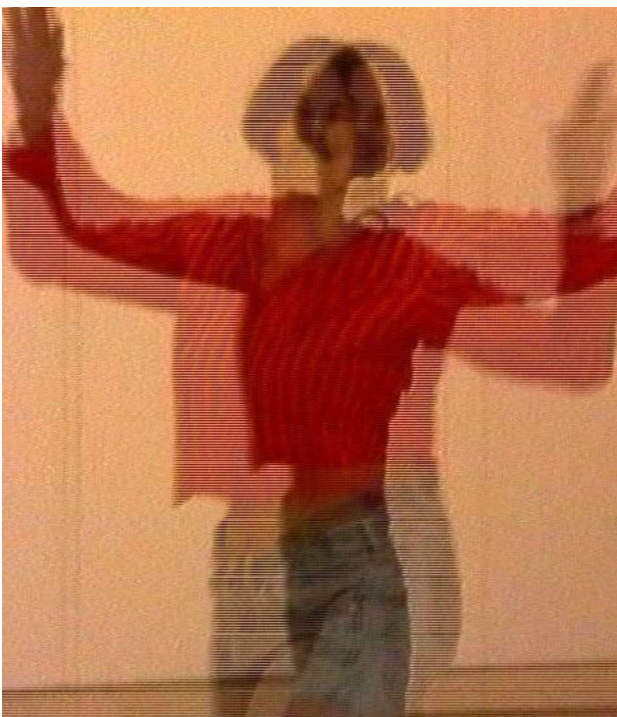
Rethinking Feminist Trauma Narratives through Enactive Cognition: Tracey Emin's Dance Artworks (2:40-3:00)

Dr Yasemin Hacıoglu, Volda University College

Confessional feminist artworks exploring trauma are often caught in a critical double-bind. Either they are deemed “inauthentic” by virtue of their artistry—an approach arguably informed by wider social narratives involving patriarchal suspicions over the truth and “authenticity” of emotions and traumatic experiences of women. Alternatively, the artwork is deemed limited by its “confessional” nature as a passive, uncontrolled response: in this approach, the artwork is not only unconstructive, but, like a passive feeling, it cannot have a narrative impact beyond repetition and exhausting itself.

In this presentation, I provide an alternative, narrative approach to the “confessional” feminist artwork.

I explore Tracey Emin's repetitions of dance across her video artworks, using perspectives from enactive cognition and narratology. As repetitive narratives, the artworks represent the potential to inhabit the self and the social environment in a radically new way. This paper aims to reframe emotions and repetitive bodily movements in such artworks as acts of agency.



Left: *Why I Never Became a Dancer*, 1995; Right: *Sometimes the Dress is Worth More Money than the Money*, 2000

Thinking with Art Workshop Session (3:00-3:30)

In a roundtable style discussion we will invite participants to reflect back on the ways in which the ideas and practises discussed resonate and diverge with their own approaches and specialised areas of research.

Dinner: Self-paying dinner booked at 4:30 pm at Brør.

Please e-mail yasemin.nurcan.hacioglu@hivolda.no by 13th November if you would like to join.

The symposium is open to all and no registration is required.

If you would like to receive optional readings related to the presentations, please e-mail: yasemin.nurcan.hacioglu@hivolda.no

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