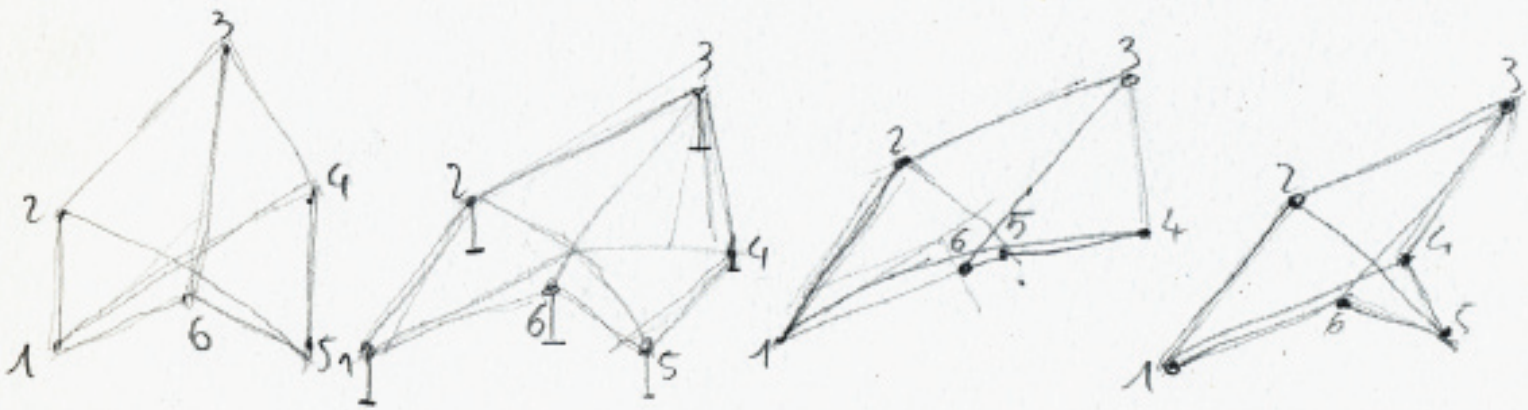


ROCKFLUID, INTERFACING WITH MEMORY

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Cambridge Science Festival, 17 March 2012, Screening and Workshops

How does technology affect our perception and memorization of place? And how do we recognize what we really remember from what might be the result of environmental interferences?

Involving a discussion and practical exercises, the activity will look at concepts of archives, temporalities and space as processed information, through a journey intersecting psychology, geometry and art, as well as the methods implied in crossing boundaries.

In this context Scientist Dr Lisa Saksida, will refer to aspects of recent findings in False Memory to open up the discussion to related phenomena, including induced memories, priming, created memories and the role of interference therein. Dr Cologni's artistic take on this will be to highlight the issue of interference. This will be done by referring to the current alienation of the individual induced by a technology dominant economy, and the consequential altered perception of time: subjective time in relation to our position in space. Dr Cologni and Dr Saksida shared interest lies in the experience of recollection, which happens in the present. The activity thus will try to awaken an awareness of our current condition/obsession over constantly documenting our lives, and yet failing to experience the very event we want to document. We become increasingly more detached from our proximities. The workshop will create possibilities to focus on our position in space in the present moment as -SPA(E)CIIOUS PRESENT.

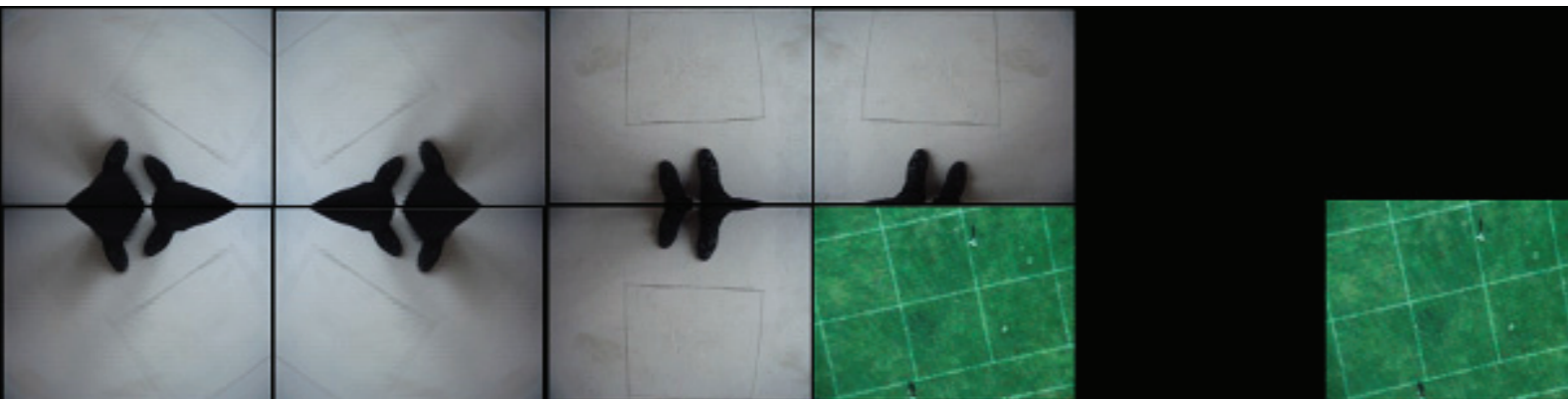
Dr Caterina Albano will prompt a discussion on the method, language and possibilities of interdisciplinary collaborations, such as this. Interdisciplinary collaborations in art and science stems from common questions and parallel processes of investigation. In this sense art is not a means to illustrate science, but rather an act of enquiry that purposely interacts with science questioning, challenging, broadening and bringing a different insight to the scientific investigation, as much as the latter informs and enhances the practice of art. This

does not mean, however, that art and science are the same, or that through collaborations such as one between Cologni and Saskida, the artist and psychologist are aware of the embedded differences between the disciplines. Interdisciplinary collaborations raise important questions concerning the methods that support both the processes of art and science, the language and modes of communication within the collaboration and to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and issues concerning the ways in which the collaboration and its outputs feed into the specificity of the artistic and scientific practices alike. In other words, what does science bring to art? And what does art bring to science? How a greater interchange and cross-fertilization between the two disciplines can be achieved?

"My experience is mainly in collaborations in bio-medical sciences, for which art provides perspectives and reflections on thorny ethical and social issues or concerns on subjectivity that are relevant to the current cultural panorama. To these issues art offers both intellectual and emotional insight, and investigate affective as well as cognitive responses. My role as a curator in interdisciplinary collaborations is often that of the initiator of a collaboration that is part of larger exhibition projects. Whether as the initiator or as in this case as an invited participant, I see my role as that of a mediator between the collaborators. Mediation and the instigation of reflection upon the broader cultural picture in which the research is located and its significance are key to the curator's role. This entails being receptive to the potentials of collaboration and to the many avenues that it opens, to facilitate the shaping up and unraveling of the collaboration, and to enable its outcomes to truly emerge by an interdisciplinary dialogue, but also to ensure that the collaboration remains focused and consistent".

Screening: *ROCKFLUID*, work in progress, March 2012

The purpose of the film is to share some aspects of the process involved in developing the ideas, including audience participation since March 2011. Also a short preview of how the artistic manifestations including video, drawing and moving overlap. The idea of interference in perception and re-enactment of memories in space are the driving elements. This links back to, and mirrors, the concept of blind spot, in physiology, but more importantly in the interpretation through the Kanitsa effect: we respond to gaps by filling them in with our experience.



Background

Artist Elena Cologni and Scientist Lisa Saskida have had a yearlong collaboration for this awarded project which explores the 'materiality' and 'spatiality' of memory through psychological and artistic tools. This collaboration, starting from shared issues in similar context, aims at attempting an exchange between Art and Neuro-Psychology based on the status of objects, time and space embodiment. This collaboration is based on the consideration of memory in its 'fluid' and 'solid' states, as Dr Saskida suggests referring to the recollection of events. Memory in its archival state would be solid, and, when in the process of resurfacing would be fluid. In this sense this transitional quality of memory can be a metaphor of Cologni's way of working, as she considers art in a similar way, neither only matter related, nor only ephemeral: its manifestations can vary and feed into each other. The final artistic outcomes of the project respond to our feeling (and fear) that we cannot document and fixed memory, and by proposing

that we can change our memories in the present by recollecting them, thus finding in this very quality of instability of memory our 'place'. Furthermore these manifestations attempt to create possibilities for encounters in shared physical spaces where we experience the environment through moving our body/mind in space, while re/enacting memories, and thus regain and define our places (psycho-geography, relational tactics). Dr Caterina Albano has been an advisor since the development of the proposal for the collaboration and project.

ROCKFLUID is awarded Grants for the Arts, Arts Council of England, within the Escalator Programme through Colchester Arts Centre, and is supported by Wysing Arts Centre and the University of Cambridge.

Biographies

Dr Caterina Albano is senior research fellow and curator for Artakt, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. Albano curates, lectures and publishes in the field of art and science, cultural theory, and cultural history of emotion, and on the theory of curating. She is the author of *Fear and Art* (Reaktion, forthcoming). Her recent work focuses on issues of memory, space and the moving image. She is the author of *Fear and Art* in the *Contemporary World* (Reaktion, 2012). Her work as curator includes: research of Artakt's two major exhibitions *Spectacular Bodies* (Hayward Gallery 2000) and *Seduced* (Barbican Art Gallery 2007). For the latter, she curated *The Voice of Sex*. She co-curated the exhibitions *Head On* (Science Museum/Wellcome Trust, 2002) and *The Genius of Genetics* (Mendel Museum, Brno 2002). She curated *Psychoanalysis: The Unconscious in Everyday Life* (Science Museum, Oct 2010-April 2011); *Crossing Over: art, science, and biotechnologies* (The Royal Institution of Great Britain, Oct. 2008, Wellcome Trust and Arts Council award) and was the curatorial consultant for the Wellcome Trust for the exhibition *Medicine and Art: Imagining a Future for Life and Love - Leonardo, Okyo, Damien Hirst* (Mori Museum, Tokyo, 28th Nov. 2009- 2010), and *First Time Out* (20th January-22nd August 2011).

Dr Elena Cologni's work is installation and performance grounded in conceptual art, and its tangible translations/manifestations. Cologni studied at the Academy of Art Brera in Milan, Leeds University (Bretton Hall), and has a PhD from the University of the Arts London, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, with the thesis: *The Artist's Performative Practice within the Anti-Ocularcentric Discourse*. Her post doc project 'Present Memory and Liveness in delivery and reception of video documentation during performance art events', received an AHRC Grant (2004-2006). In the outcome *Mnemonic Present, Un-Folding* series of 2005-2006, the use of 'live-recording' and 'prerecording' opened up questions on the involvement of the audience and their perception of what is present and represented, generating a form of 'mnemonic present'. She was Research Fellow at York Saint John University during which time she developed the project 'Experiential' (Creative Lab Residency at CCA in Glasgow 2006, Re-Moved 2008, CCA, Gi08 and Geomemos, Yorkshire Sculpture Park 2009). At this point she was engaging with site specificity and notions of memory as archival and removal in trying to enhance the audience's and her own experience of the self in any given moment. She is particularly active in the discussion on Art Research as Practice and Participatory Research methods, and she contributes to the Cambridge University, Faculty of Education, Mphil Arts course since 2008.

Dr Lisa Saskida completed an interdisciplinary PhD at the Centre for the Neural Basis of Cognition and the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University in 1999. She then held a Fogarty Fellowship at the National Institute of Mental Health, followed by a Pinsent Darwin Research Associateship at the University of Cambridge. She is now a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Newnham College. Her research focuses on the psychological processes underlying memory and perception, through a programme of theoretically-driven experimental research using several converging methods of enquiry including localised pharmacological methods, genetic models, and computational modelling.

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Do you want to join? The project was conceived by the artist with the scientist's support, and because of the methods implied it opens up to others as well. If you want collaborate, please get in touch. info@rockfluid.com
<http://rockfluid.com/>

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