

**Beyond the Frame: How and Why
Symposium, May 11, 2012**

Morgan Fisher's oeuvre is rooted in the context of structural film, and some of his earliest works in fact constitute paradigmatic examples of that genre. Its primary concern was a reflection on the medium itself, its specific qualities and mode of functioning, a general description that leads to a series of questions: How may the filmic apparatus, its components, or the constraints imposed by the film industry ever be fully exposed in a way that would produce more than just "yet another piece of film"? How may the medium be engaged so as to "expand" it, revealing its limits and limitations from the inside, as it were? How do Fisher's films operate with materials (found footage as well as pictures shot for the purpose) without lapsing into an aesthetic of composition? And finally, which precursors to a post-conceptual painterly and, more generally, image-producing practice may we discover in Fisher's early filmic works? Questions such as these mark the point of departure for the two-day symposium *Beyond the Frame: How and Why*; extensive discussions of individual aspects of his filmic oeuvre will chart approaches to his later, "non-filmic" works and open up perspectives on other cultural artifacts as well.

SCHEDULE

Friday, May 11, 2012, 4–8 p.m. (German and English)

4 p.m.

Welcome: Sabine Folie, Director and Curator, Generali Foundation

4:15 p.m.

Screening Room—Screening Time

A lecture by Rainer Bellenbaum (in German)

Morgan Fisher's film concept *Screening Room* has been re-implemented on several occasions in different places; each realization is site-specific—and yet it is always, as he says, the same film, as is particularly evident when the gaze of the camera held by the operator entering the movie theater falls upon, and is entirely taken up by, the empty (monochrome) screen, whose image and objective reality thus coincide in "existentialist" fashion. With Deleuze, however, we might read this moment as the transition from the movement-image to the time-image—from the "sensorimotor" recognition of going to the movies to a "stock-taking" of what there is in fact to see here. The lecture will address Fisher's decision to address this seeing to the bare screen in light of the fact that any time-image, as a legible or "thinking image" (Deleuze), cleaves to historic elements.

Rainer Bellenbaum is a media scholar, writer, and film and art critic based in Berlin and Vienna. Documentary and experimental shorts since 1983; camerawork, research, and reports for TV stations until 2005. In 2010 and 2011, he received a fellowship from the International Fellowship Program for Art and Theory at Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen in support of his book project on “Kinematografisches Handeln” (Cinematographic Action). He has written for art journals (*Texte zur Kunst*, *springerin*, *Camera Austria*) and contributed to «31»—*Das Magazin des Instituts für Theorie* (2007, with Sabeth Buchmann), *Katharina Sieverding in Austria 1964–2008. Vol. 1: Salzburg* (2008, with Sabeth Buchmann), *Film—Avantgarde—Biopolitik* (2009), *Katharina Sieverding. Testcuts. Projected Data Images* (2010), *Audiovisuology 1. See this Sound. An Interdisciplinary Compendium of Audiovisual Culture* (2010, with Sabeth Buchmann), and *Riss/Lücke/Scharnier A* (2010, with Sabeth Buchmann), among other publications.

5 p.m.

Positioning the Subject in Morgan Fisher's Films

A lecture by Gabriele Jutz (in German)

Many of Morgan Fisher's films examine the process of their own making. This lecture, however, will raise the question of how the “artistic subject” positions himself in the process of production, and on which model of artistic productivity Fisher's films are based. As Fisher has emphasized on more than one occasion, his works are about finding ways to avoid having to compose. The implementation of this anti-expressive artistic practice in his films relies on two exemplary methods: the ready-made and the found-footage film. The found objects in *Phi Phenomenon* and *The Wilkinson Household Fire Alarm* are still located on the profilmic side (an industrially manufactured clock and an alarm bell, respectively, both shown in a single uninterrupted shot); in *Standard Gauge* and *()*, by contrast, it is the footage itself that is found. Yet the practice of found-footage filmmaking is only one possible way of eliminating any trace of the artist within the product. Fisher's Expanded Cinema performances represent another variant: the act of realization is delegated, by means of precise instructions, to the projectionist (*Projection Instructions*) or a cameraman (*Screening Room*).

Gabriele Jutz is a film and media scholar. She has taught at the Universities of Salzburg, Graz, and Vienna since 1989, and contributed to the research cooperation between CNRS (Paris) and the University of Salzburg in the section on “cultural semiotics.” She has also implemented a research project of the Austrian Science Fund on “Gender and Film,” and taught as a visiting professor of film studies at the Free University of Berlin. Since 1993, she has taught history, theory, and aesthetics of film and media art at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. In 2009, she completed her postdoctoral thesis on *Cinéma brut. Eine alternative Genealogie der Filmavantgarde* (2010). In the 2010 fall term, she was a substitute professor of film studies at the Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main.

5:45–6 p.m.

Break

6 p.m.

“Yes, but...”: Morgan Fisher’s (*Fate of Alien Modes*)

A lecture by Constanze Ruhm (in English)

The lecture endeavors to interweave three threads summarily suggested in its title. It first guides the listener through an exhibition—*Fate of Alien Modes* (Secession, Vienna, 2003)—that focused on the relationship between art and cinema with a view to spatial, narrative, theoretical, and production-aesthetic aspects, before explicating the concept of “alien modes,” which derives from the chapter “The Fate of Alien Modes” in Noël Burch’s 1978 book *To the Distant Observer*. In a next step, the lecture examines the key function of three works by Morgan Fisher (*Standard Gauge*, *Production Stills*, and *Photogenic Drawings*) shown in Vienna as part of that exhibition, pursuing the hypothesis that the abovementioned “alien modes” are operative in these works as well. The lecture closes with an attempt to explain why the diffident objection “Yes, but...” may be read both as a conceptual statement and as a point of departure on the level of content for Morgan Fisher’s art.

Constanze Ruhm is an artist, filmmaker, and curator. In 1996 and 1997, she was a visiting professor of visual communication at the Offenbach University of Art and Design; in 1998, she received a fellowship of the Schindler Fellowship Program at the MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles; and she was a member of the board of the Secession, Vienna, from 1999 to 2006, and its vice president from 1999 to 2001. She curated the exhibition *Fate of Alien Modes* at the Secession, Vienna (2003), and various projects as part of the haus.0 program at Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (in collaboration with Fareed Armaly), at the ZKM I Karlsruhe, and at Neue Galerie Graz. From 2004 to 2006, she was a professor of film and video at the Merz Akademie, Stuttgart, and since 2006, she has been professor of art and media at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Between 2008 and 2011, she was an adjunct professor at the Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University. Exhibitions, film festivals, projects in the public sphere, publications, and symposia in Austria and abroad. In her art, she engages the relationship between cinema, new media, and theatrical forms, and examines questions of female identity and representation. Her productions originate at the interface between installation, film, video, Web-based projects, and publications.

6:45 p.m.

Form as a Mode of Experience

A lecture by Sabeth Buchmann (in English)

As exemplary writings by artists and art reviews of the 1960s and 1970s demonstrate, the expansion of the media repertoire was only one reason why the heretofore dominant genres of painting and sculpture saw their status challenged by “avant-gardist” practices in photography, film and video, performance art, etc. No less significant was the spatialization and temporalization of traditional formats of the work. It was then no longer the aura and specific conventionality of a medium that was regarded as decisive, but instead its applicability to a “new mode of experience”: a criterion best met, it seemed, by (avant-garde) film with its position on the thresholds between art and cinema as well as between high and mass culture. As the lecture will discuss in the example of Morgan Fisher’s work, film also allowed for the elaboration and transformation of conceptions of form, something

painting no longer seemed capable of. The lecture will accordingly inquire into the potentials avant-garde film held for the repositioning of apparently obsolete conventions.

Sabeth Buchmann is an art historian and art critic. She is a professor of modern and postmodern art at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, where she is chair of the Institute of Art Theory and Cultural Studies. She frequently contributes to anthologies on the theory and practice of art, exhibition catalogues, and art journals. With Helmut Draxler, Clemens Krümmel, and Susanne Leeb, she co-edits *Polypen*, a book series on art criticism and political theory. Recent publications include *Wenn sonst nichts klappt: Wiederholung wiederholen in Kunst, Popkultur, Film, Musik, Alltag, Theory und Praxis* (2005, ed. with Alexander Mayer, Karolin Meunier, et al.), *Art After Conceptual Art* (2006, ed. with Alexander Alberro), *Denken gegen das Denken: Produktion—Technologie—Subjektivität bei Sol LeWitt, Hélio Oiticica und Yvonne Rainer* (2007), *Film—Avantgarde—Biopolitik* (2009, ed. with Helmut Draxler and Stephan Geene).

7:30 p.m.

Closing debate with Morgan Fisher and all participants.

The entire event will be moderated by **Christian Höller**.

Christian Höller is the editor and associate publisher of *springerin—Hefte für Gegenwartskunst*, a journal of contemporary art; since 1994 he has written extensively on art and cultural theory. He was a visiting professor at the École supérieure des beaux-arts in Geneva between 2002 and 2007. 2006–2007 scientific editor of *documenta 12 magazines*. Curator of the special program *Pop Unlimited?* (2010) and of the film series *No Wave 1976–84* (2010) at the 56th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen (also shown at the Austrian Film Museum, Vienna, 2010, and at Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin, 2011); subcurator of the exhibition *See This Sound* (Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz, 2009; exhibition section “Site.Sound.Industry”). He published the anthologies *Pop Unlimited?* (2001) and *Techno-Visionen* (2005) as well as the catalogue *Hans Weigand* (2005), and is author of the interview collection *Time Action Vision: Conversations in Cultural Studies, Theory, and Activism* (2010). In 2011, he co-curated the exhibition *Hauntings – Ghost Box Media* (Kunstverein Medienturm, Graz) as well as the accompanying concert series *Sonic Spectres* at steirischer herbst.

Due to illness, **Philippe-Alain Michaud**'s lecture has unfortunately been canceled.