

Common Assembly

Decolonizing Architecture
Art Residency

Mar 19	Damir Arsenijevic Ammiel Alcalay Colette Daiute
Mar 21	Alessandro Angelini
Mar 21	Taoufik Ben-Amor Peter Hitchcock
Mar 22	Chandan Reddy
Mar 28	Einat Manoff
Mar 28	Carroll Dunham Miciah Hussey Ken Johnson Nicolas Langlitz
Apr 4	Toni Griffin
Apr 5	P. Adams Sitney
Apr 16	Alessandro Petti
Apr 17	Boris Groys
Apr 18	Shea McManus
Apr 24	Anselm Franke
Apr 28	Eyal Weizman Tom Keenan
May 2	Nancy Biberman Susan Saegert
May 3	Talal Asad
May 4	Ayça Çubukçu Anjuli Raza Kolb Shea McManus Amiel Melnick Kareem Rabie Jini Kim Watson
May 4	Patricia T. Clough Una Chung Steve Goodman May Joseph Randy Martin Luciana Parisi Craig Willse

Exhibition and Programs

Common Assembly
DAAR
Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency

The James Gallery
The Center for the Humanities
The Graduate Center, CUNY

365 Fifth Avenue at 35th Street
New York, NY 10016

centerforthehumanities.org/james-gallery

Free and Open to the Public
Tue to Thu, 12–7pm
Fri and Sat, 12–6pm

March 14–June 2, 2012



DAAR, *Palestinian Legislative Council, Abu-Dis-Jerusalem, 2011. Color photograph.*
Photo: Carina Otto

The project began with the discovery that—mistakenly or intentionally—the building of the Palestinian Parliament was constructed on Israel's unilaterally declared border of Jerusalem. The parliament is thus partly within territory defined as Israel and partly within Palestinian controlled lands—with a small strip, no wider than the border line itself, in a legal limbo, a small divisions. This is geopolitics on an architectural scale. The divided building corresponds to the multiplicity of spaces across which Palestinians are dispersed: "48 Palestine" (following the post 1948 redrawing of boundaries and mass exodus of Palestinians from their homeland), the occupied territories, and the extra territories of the diasporas. Following the methodology of DAAR—Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency, that attempts attempts to exploit opportunities found within colonial separations, this project seeks both to de-territorialize and re-activate this legal void.

Whatever the results of the political transformation that has begun throughout the Middle East will be, Palestinians must deal with a significant spatial problem: how can political participation be organised for a partially exiled—and therefore, geographically dispersed—people?

Where different revolutionary initiatives launched by Palestinian academics and various factions seek to address this problem on the political and institutional level, DAAR is committed to thinking through this problem on the architectural, territorial and (extra) territorial levels. The studio has been granted access to the Palestinian Parliament building in Abu Dis. It was constructed with international donations during the Oslo years but the project was abandoned before completion. Now the Wall cuts the building off from Jerusalem. The building stands as a monument to the collapsed peace process but this condition of local impossibility allows for a political imaginary to arise. Thus, the building becomes a starting point to imagine

new types of political assembly. DAAR decided to use the building both as a site of intervention as well as a site of architectural speculation. DAAR's goal is to work through an understanding of the relationships between territory, population and political representation. In Palestine, the population cannot be represented by a single parliament building, as it would serve only a people within imposed borders that fragment all those who see themselves as Palestinians; it must operate through disassociations in which the people, the building and the territory are categories in constant motion in relation to each other.

The Return to the Common

Territorially speaking, the common is different than both public and private. Both private and public lands are relations between people and things regulated by the state. The state guarantees private property and maintains the public one. Both private and public lands are territorial mechanisms for the governing of men and women. Sometimes this form of government operates by maintaining these distinctions and sometimes by blurring them. The endless privatization of public space, mirrored by the incessant intrusion of the public (as state agents/ police etc) into the private domain are both techniques of government control.

In Palestine, the idea of the public is particularly toxic. Although prior to Israeli colonization there existed a wide multiplicity of collective lands, and collective uses of land—agricultural, religious, nomadic, etc—upon occupying the land and excluding its people, the state has flattened them all into one category—"state land" and seized control over it as the sovereign. This state land was a public space but only insofar as it was reserved to the only public that was acknowledged as legitimate—the Jewish-Israeli one. As a result, the contours of public land become the blueprint for colonization. This form of sovereignty was willing to acknowledge only Palestinian individual rights

and claims to private land. The mechanism of humanitarian balance adopted by the state could only tolerate Palestinian presence as individuals, thereby denying them a collective identity and existence. In many cases it also took this land. A fundamental question surfaces: if it is possible to conceive of a political collectivity beyond the idea of a state, then, from a spatial perspective, in which way is the common different from the public? The idea of common land in our context is a set of relations between people and things—organized by the principle of equality—that is not mediated by the state. This common exists today in the extraterritorial dimensions of the Palestinian refugee camps and is mirrored in the destroyed Palestinian villages of 1948. The camps are UN administrated areas carved out from state sovereignty (there is no private property in refugee camps) and the demolished villages of 1948 are suspended spaces, existing in the form of “absentee properties” managed temporarily by the state. After 60 years the memory of a single house is now equally shared by hundreds of families. In the camp the common is the shared history of displacement and the absence of private property. In this respect thinking the revolution as return is thinking a revolution in relation to property.

—DAAR, Summer 2011

Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency is an art and architecture collective and a residency program based in Beit Sahour, Palestine. Their work combines discourse, spatial intervention, education, collective learning, public meetings, and legal challenges.

Exhibition

What is this object that we see in the gallery space? It is not a metaphor, nor is it functional. It is a physical instantiation of a line on a map that slices through the amphitheater stair of an unfinished Palestinian Parliament building in Abu Dis-Jerusalem. Unilaterally declared by Israel in 1967, the line was meant to divide Israel from Palestine. From opposite sides of the gallery, the re-created terraced seats descend to share the space with the visitor. This common ground in turn activates the floor of the rest of the gallery as a platform for discussion, sharing stories, and debate. The film *Cleaning the Line*, shows the path of the same line in the building itself, made clear by cleaning away dust and debris. This act of transformation blends the physicality of the building (though unfinished and abandoned) with the political reality. Seen from the cultural realm, DAAR re-tunes structures to altered effect, like John Cage's prepared piano. Although their work echoes the playful chess moves of dadaist Marcel Duchamp, their rigorous process calls into question how we arrive at judgments and decisions. By including a multiplicity of individuals and organizations in this process, the work opens a collaborative 'arena of speculation' that combines discourse, spatial intervention, education, collective learning, public meetings and legal challenges. Ultimately, it is a challenge to the discipline and praxis of architecture itself.

—Katherine Carl

Exhibition Checklist

The Line, 2012

site-specific installation
concrete, mesh, plywood

Parliament in Exile, 2011

video
5:52 minutes

Cleaning the Parliament, 2011

film
6:05 minutes
Video Operator and Editor Cressida
Kocienski, Delfina Foundation Palestine
with Ghassan Bannoura

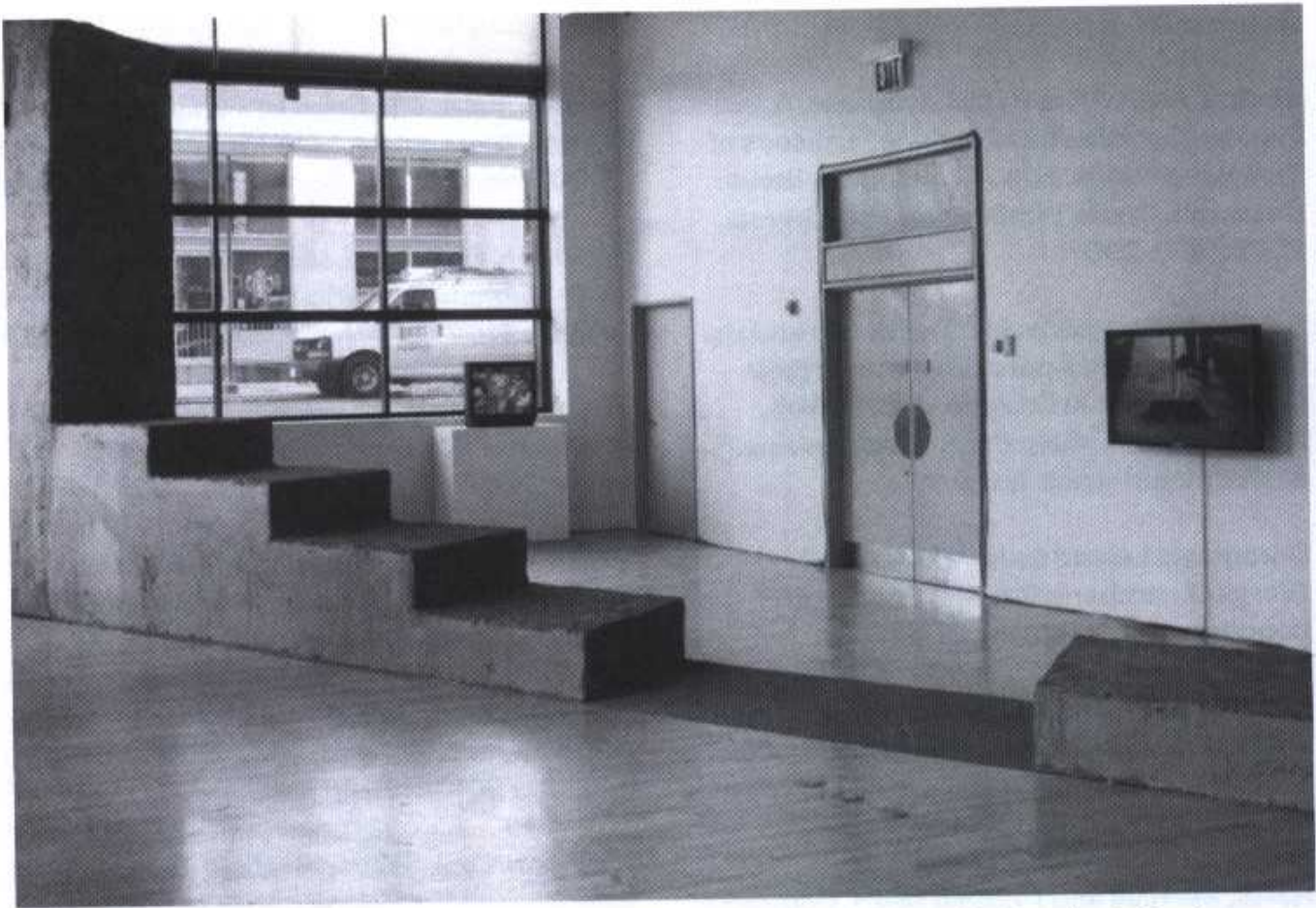
Assembling Voices, 2011

videos
Basem Al Masri, 12:40 minutes
Fajr Harb, 9:17 minutes
Karma Nabulsi, 8:15 minutes
Ahmad Qurei, 13:13 minutes
Khalil Tufakji, 6:52 minutes
Video Operator and Editor Cressida
Kocienski, Delfina Foundation Palestine
with Ghassan Bannoura

All works are created by and courtesy
of DAAR.

Resources

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- Weizman, Eyal. "Riprogettare la realtà palestinese / Redesigning Palestinian Reality." *Abitare* 483 (June 2008): 17-18.
- Palestinian Legislative Council, Abu Dis-Jerusalem, 2011*
color photograph
dimensions variable
photo: Carina Otto (DAAR)



DAAR, *Common Assembly*, 2012. Installation view, the James Gallery, the Graduate Center.
Photo: Luke Stettner

Programs

Lectures and Seminars

How do culture and geopolitics solidify into buildings and the design of territories and institutions? In turn, how are these creations interpreted as cultural symbols and even mobilized as evidence in legal investigations? If man-made and inanimate objects become infused with human values, will, and motivation, how do we adjust our tastes and the modes of judgment that inform humanistic action? The innovative practice of artists, architects, curators, philosophers, and literature scholars who will present their research brings diverse groups together to speculate on new futures.

Common Goods: Exploring Innovative Transitions Series

Join practitioners and researchers for one-hour lunchtime participatory discussions about the most current research and debates on processes for imagining and transforming cities. What are the roles of designers, planners, artists, and residents in international and local contexts? What is the effect of privatization and the work of international organizations? How can self-organization be part of this process? What is the role of memory and history in urban change?

Conversations and Conferences

Common Assembly at the James Gallery opens a forum for the discussion of an array of topics that resonate with the artistic, spatial and human concerns of the exhibition. The programs find their home in the context of *Common Assembly* for particular, though divergent reasons, making the space of the James Gallery a temporal lens through which to view modern and contemporary subjects of scholarly and artistic research. This spring scholars and artists will gather to discuss new models of law and justice; biopolitics; the interplay of consciousness, medicine and art; contemporary revolution in the Middle East; and cultural pilgrimage.

Mon Mar 19, 6:30pm
Conversation
Poetry After Genocide

Ammiel Alcalay, English, The Graduate Center and Queens College, CUNY; Damir Arsenijevic, poet and Fulbright scholar; Colette Daiute, Psychology, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

What is the meaning of poetry in the aftermath of irrational and unthinkable violence? Bosnian poet and cultural critic Damir Arsenijevic will discuss the public poetry he has worked on in Bosnia-Herzegovina, centered around memory and memorialization of the dead and missing at Srebrenica and other sites of genocidal massacre. He will be joined in conversation by Ammiel Alcalay and Colette Daiute. Poet and scholar Meena Alexander and Iraqi poet and translator Sinan Antoon will begin the evening by reading a poem in memory of Al-Mutanabbi Street.

Wed Mar 21, 12:00pm
Lecture
Common Goods: Exploring Innovative Transitions
Rio de Janeiro

Alessandro Angelini, Anthropology and Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

Morrinho or "little hill" on the edge of a favela in Rio de Janeiro is a small-scale model of the city of Rio built out of discarded bricks and scraps. The group of youth who built and maintain this diminutive urban tableau have been enacting dramas of everyday life for over thirteen years in an ongoing multiplayer role-playing game. Join Alessandro Angelini for a discussion of the implications of this site as both satire and archive of years of violent conflict between drug traffickers and police.

Wed Mar 21, 6:30pm
Conversation
Against all Odds: Ten Myths Shattered by the Tunisian Revolution

Taoufik Ben-Amor, Arabic Studies, Columbia University; Peter Hitchcock, English, Baruch College, CUNY.

A year after the fall of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali's government in Tunisia that sparked uprisings all over the Middle East, what is the status of democratic outcomes of the Tunisian revolution? As journalists still fight for freedom of the media and racketeering has erupted in the job market, join Taoufik Ben-Amor (Arabic Studies, Columbia University) as he speaks with Peter Hitchcock (Center for Place, Culture and Politics) about the cultural as well as political impact of this historic shift. This conversation finds its home in DAAR's *Common Assembly*, which opens a forum in the James Gallery for discussions of rejuvenation of contested sites.

Co-sponsored by the Center for Place, Culture and Politics

Thu Mar 22, 6:30pm

Lecture

On Freedom with Violence

Chandan Reddy, English, University of Washington.

How do we understand the relationship between freedom, violence and the state in neoliberal times? Who is seen to be in need of protection from what forms of violence? And, how does institutionalized violence become legitimated? In his new book, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality and the U.S. State*, Chandan Reddy proposes a new paradigm to understand the relationship between race, sexuality, and citizenship. Join him for a conversation with local organizers working on issues of institutionalized violence in queer communities of color. This a public program connected to "POLICED."

For further information on this and other Seminars in the Humanities, visit <http://centerforthehumanities.org/seminars>

Co-sponsored by the *POLICED Seminar, Revolutionizing American Studies, and QUNY*

Wed Mar 28, 12:00pm

Lecture

Common Goods: Exploring Innovative Transitions

Miska

Einat Manoff, Environmental Psychology, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

How might the method of counter-mapping, which diffuses the distinction between "researcher" and "subject," help envision a community of shared common space? Join Einat Manoff as she shares her critical mapping work with residents of the former town of Miska in Israel-Palestine to engage questions about how facts are represented on maps and in physical space. What are the new tools that are being developed by this work and what are the uses and outcomes of such dialogues?

Wed Mar 28, 6:30pm

Conversation

Are You Experienced? How Psychedelic Consciousness Transformed Modern Art

Carroll Dunham, artist; Ken Johnson, New York Times and Art in America; Nicolas Langlitz, Medical Anthropology, New School for Social Research; Moderator: Miciah Hussey, English, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

Join *New York Times* art critic Ken Johnson, artist Carroll Dunham and medical anthropologist and historian of science Nicolas Langlitz for a discussion moderated by Miciah Hussey about the enduring influence that the use of hallucinogens and the psychedelic experience has had on American culture. In his new book, *Are You Experienced?*, Johnson asserts that in the 1960's "some kind of awakening took place in art... and the creative and intellectual energies that were brought to life are still feeding the imaginations of artists today."

Co-sponsored by *Science & the Arts*

Wed Apr 4, 6:30pm

Lecture

Common Goods: Exploring Innovative Transitions

Opportunity in American Cities

Toni Griffin, Director, J. Max Bond Center, Spitzer School of Architecture, City College of New York, CUNY.

Across the United States, cities are shrinking—leaving behind crumbling and excessive infrastructure, concentrations of generational poverty, and weakened civic capacity. How can these transitions become opportunities, instead of nightmares, for residents? Join Toni Griffin for an investigation of new approaches to urban design and planning for the American city. She will share her insights from her work combining the practice of architecture, urban design, and planning with the execution of innovative, large-scale, mixed-use urban redevelopment projects.

Thur Apr 5, 6:30pm

Lecture

Markopoulos's Vision

P. Adams Sitney, Visual Arts, Princeton University.

Join us to explore the implications of American avant-garde filmmaker Gregory Markopoulos's final magnum opus, the 80-hour *Eniaios*, designed to be seen outdoors in the remote mountains of Greece. This summer, spectators from around the world will gather in the Peloponnese to see the most recently printed portion of this epic film. What does it mean for participants to make a cultural, not a religious, pilgrimage? This talk will take place in the context of DAAR's *Common Assembly* exhibition, which opens dialogue about ways to return contested sites to common use. The lecture is presented in conjunction with the April 4 screening of two of Markopoulos's films, *The Illiac Passion* and *Bliss*, at Anthology Film Archives.

Mon Apr 16, 6:30pm

Lecture

Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency

Alessandro Petti, Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency.

On the occasion of DAAR's exhibition, *Common Assembly*, Alessandro Petti will explore new forms of political action and association—collective protests—in the Middle East and around the world. The term “Common Assembly” comes to name a radical form of political participation and collective actions being used from Cairo's Tahrir square to the stairs of St Paul's cathedral. Common Assemblies pop up in different slippages and cracks in property and land systems: a park whose jurisdiction is ambiguous, in the relative extraterritoriality of a church land within the extraterritorial frame of the city of London, public roundabouts in Cairo and Bahrain. Could we think of Palestinians camps not as places of refuge but rather as those of assembly? Spaces where political participation and representation are organized beyond the idea of nation-state? Join Architect Alessandro Petti as he explores the powerful potential for space and spatial construction to change the meaning of political categories such as “Common,” “Assembly,” and “Occupation.”

Tues Apr 17, 6:30pm

Lecture

Performing Theory

Boris Groys, Global Distinguished Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies at New York University, and Professor for Philosophy and Media Theory at the Academy for Design in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Join philosopher, art critic, curator, media theorist Boris Groys for a lecture on his current work as he examines options for contemporary art today. Although contemporary art operates under the influence of critical theory, critical theory rejects aesthetic contemplation in favor of action. Art can proceed in two different ways. One possibility is to adopt the perspective of theory and join its call for action—to become critical in the same sense in which theory is critical. The other possibility is to answer the call of theory and to perform the required action. Join Boris Groys as he explores both strategies and how they are practiced by contemporary art. A wide-ranging thinker, his recent publications include *History Becomes Form: Moscow Conceptualism* (2010), *Going Public* (2010), *Art Power* (2008), and *Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment* (2006).

Martin E. Segal Theater

Co-sponsored by the PhD Program in Art History

Wed Apr 18, 12:00pm

Common Goods: Exploring Innovative Transitions Lecture

Beirut

Shea McManus, Anthropology, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

According to what terms will the human and urban fabric of Beirut be reconstructed? Contemporary artists in Beirut have been made installations in the city that call attention to social reconstruction through political commentary. How are these projects creating a voice for local actors to formulate new proposals to international aid organizations and to self-organize to create new local non-governmental organizations? This lecture will investigate the fraught emotional landscape of Beirut and the opportunities for new models of transitional justice to emerge.

Tues Apr 24, 6:30pm

Lecture

On Animism

Anselm Franke, Curator, Taipei Biennial 2012.

Continuing the investigation of “things” after the exhibition *And Another Thing* last fall in the James Gallery, Anselm Franke will speak on animism in conjunction with his exhibition on view in April at e-flux. The modern understanding of the concept, which was closely associated with the colonial project, holds animism to be a pre-modern social and psychological mechanism by means of which nature and things were erroneously endowed with souls and agency. The modern separation between the animate and inanimate gave rise to other dichotomies characteristic of modernity, such as the opposition between nature and culture, the subjective and objective world, and the relation between fiction and reality so notorious to the arts. What if modernity’s conception of the boundary between life and non-life were to be re-thought?

Sat Apr 28, 11am-3:30pm

Seminar

The Least of All Possible Evils

Eyal Weizman, Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency; Respondent: Tom Keenan, Comparative Literature and Director, Human Rights Project, Bard College. Followed by a roundtable discussion with invited guests.

How do spatial and visual practices intersect critically with philosophical concerns for human rights and the discourse of humanitarianism? On the occasion of the exhibition *Common Assembly* by DAAR in the James Gallery and the publication of his book *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (Verso), Eyal Weizman will conduct a seminar in two parts. First, Weizman will lecture on Palestine and DAAR's practice, which proposes the subversion, reuse, profanation and recycling of the existing infrastructure of a colonial occupation. This will be followed by a conversation with Tom Keenan about how to think and act propositionally about human rights, right of return, and common claims, as well as sovereignty and territorialization today.

Co-sponsored by the Mellon Committee on the Study of Globalization and Social Change

Wed May 2, 12:00pm

Lecture

Common Goods: Exploring Innovative Transitions

New York

Nancy Biberman, Founder of WHEDco; Susan Saegert, Environmental Psychology, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Through conversation, Susan Saegert and Nancy Biberman will discuss the creation of affordable housing that Biberman has developed through her non-profit organization Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation, or WHEDco. What are the innovative processes that bring together residents, designers, social service providers to envision creative solutions for affordable urban dwelling systems? How do social service projects conceived in this way carve a new relationship with the humanities that may redefine the category of the humanities itself?

Thu May 3, 6:30pm

Keynote Lecture

**Just Law: Intervention, Reparation,
Emancipation**

Talal Asad, Anthropology, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

Fri May 4, 10:30am

Conference

**Just Law: Intervention, Reparation,
Emancipation**

Ayça Çubukçu, Social Studies, Harvard University; Anjuli Raza Kolb, English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University; Shea McManus, Anthropology, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Amiel Melnick, Anthropology, Columbia University; Kareem Rabie, Anthropology, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Jini Kim Watson, English, New York University.

“Just law” refers not just to law, but to the ambivalent relationship between law and justice. International law can be characterized as both constitutive of imperialism and a necessary context for certain forms of emancipatory political expression, a tension expressed through the contested claims for legal frameworks such as human rights, transitional justice, and just war. What do these concepts do and tell us about the status of sovereignty and legitimacy in our world today? Does international law simply reflect the expedient interests of world powers, or does it retain a degree of autonomy for thinking about alternative global futures? Join us as we consider claims from the past, interventions in the present, and orientations toward the future.

Co-sponsored by the Law, Justice, and Global Political Futures Seminar

Fri May 4, 6:00pm

Panel

Beyond Biopolitics: The Governance of Life and Death

Patricia T. Clough, Sociology and Women's Studies, The Graduate Center, CUNY; Una Chung, Global Studies, Sarah Lawrence; Steve Goodman, Music Culture, University of East London; May Joseph, Social Science and Cultural Studies, Pratt Institute; Randy Martin, Art and Public Policy, NYU; Luciana Parisi, Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London; Craig Willse, Sociology and Anthropology, College of Wooster.

Under the auspices of neoliberalism, technical systems of compliance and efficiency have come to underwrite a biopolitics of war, terror, and surveillance. Join an international panel of distinguished critical theorists, first convened at the Graduate Center in 2006, to discuss and reevaluate the concept of biopolitics in engaging the political, economic, and social issues of our day.

Co-sponsored by the POLICED Seminar, The Life of Things Seminar, PhD program in Sociology and Certificate Program in Women's Studies

Since 2007 Sandi Hilal Alessandro Petti and Eyal Weizman have been producing collaborative work as DAAR—Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency. The studio is directed by Alessandro Petti. The project *Common Assembly* has been produced with Nicola Perugini and in collaboration with Yazeed Anani, Nishat Awan, Ghassan Bannoura, Benoit Burquel, Suzy Harris-Brandts, Runa Johannssen, Cressida Kocienski, Lejla Odobasic, Carina Ottino, Elizabeth Paden, Sameena Sitabkhan, and Amy Zion. Legal advice: Ghiath Nasser. Video Operator and Editor: Cressida Kocienski, Delfina Foundation Palestine with Ghassan Bannoura.
www.decolonizing.ps

The Amie and Tony James Gallery catalyzes research and knowledge production in contemporary art, and joins the Center for the Humanities' mission to create dialogue across disciplines.

The Center for the Humanities at The Graduate Center, CUNY, was founded in 1993 as a forum for people who take ideas seriously inside and outside the academy. Through its public programs, seminars, conferences, publications and exhibitions, the Center puts CUNY students and faculty from various disciplines into dialogue with each other as well as with prominent journalists, artists, and civic leaders to promote the humanities and foster intellectual community across the city.

Special thanks to Kyle Smith, Joshua Schwartz, Danny Durtsche, Jeff Brown, Chip Hughes, Jennifer Wilkinson, Chris Lowery, Ray Ring, John Chianese, Cressida Kocienski, Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss, Thaddeus Pawlowski, Guy Zucker, Jeremy Leman, and Jason Harrell.