"Their Gun, Our Gun" Graffiti on a wall in Cairo, Spring 2011

¡Revolution Now!!

20-21 June 2012, UCL

in cooperation with Open City Docs Fest

¡Documentary Now! 2012 is organised by Prof. Michael Chanan and Dr. Alisa Lebow

Conference Coordination and Open City Liaison: Lisya Yafet

Volunteer Support: Juanita Baquero, Carlo Ghidini, Panos Papafragkos, Alan Sennet, Caritta Thornton
The central issue for is what it has been for any docs from the outset. As Esfir Shub put it the better part of a century ago: ‘The whole problem is what we must film now. As soon as that is clear to us, then the terminology won’t matter — fiction or non-fiction.’ I want to suggest that her formulation remains correct but, for us, what is clear is that the technology — as well as the terminology — is what does not matter.

Specifically, the agenda of ethical concerns remains; and, for me, it does so in a political context. From the application of the Millian ‘harm principle’ (exacerbated by the pervasiveness persistence of cyber-image circulation) to questions of intellectual property to the vexed issue of impact, these are questions — in essence, ethical — still needing to be addressed if we are to answer Shub’s central exhortation: ‘what must we film now’. The question of the technology doesn’t matter from this perspective. This paper will address the ethical issues specifically, of the human rights agenda — what pluses, what minuses, what price naivety?

Holly Aylett, London Metropolitan University: In the Spirit of Marc Karlin

‘We have to work with images, to rework images, to find ourselves in front of the cinema, by going into the past...’ — Marc Karlin

On his premature death in 1999, Marc Karlin was described as Britain’s most significant, unknown film essayist. He was present in Paris around the events of May 1968 and inspired by the films of Chris Marker. Karlin then returned to London to become part of the newly formed independent film collectives. For three decades, he was a key member of the country’s radical filmmaker community urging his contemporaries to seek radical forms and themes to excavate the themes of history and personal memory played out in contemporary events and persona.

In For Memory, (1986), he outlined the dangers of cultural amnesia, which had helped contribute to the silencing of the left wing voice at the end of the 20th century. Defiantly resisting the supposed ‘death of Socialism’, Karlin then gave voice to its pluralistic principles in Utopias (1989) and its contradictions in Between Times (1993). He is ultimately concerned with our collective socio-political consciousness, exploring concepts of revolution, ideas of utopia, and even, uncomfortably, our complicity in the fantasy projections of Rupert Murdoch and the tabloid media, The Serpent (1997).

I wish to demonstrate, using clips from the documentaries, how this philosophical questioning, anchored in material realities, sets up a unique address to its audience, extending the basic definition of documentary practice described by Bill Nichols, as films with a particular status in relation to the historical world. Karlin’s films push the boundaries of fiction and documentary, using experimental forms to excavate the complex, hermetic codes held within images, to reveal the meanings they carry for us.

Tony Dowmunt, Goldsmiths College: ‘Satellite Shitstorm’: Tradition, Invention and Intervention in Central Australian Indigenous Media

Indigenous peoples in the central Australian desert have been making use of video, television, satellite and digital technologies for the last 30 years. As a UK based ‘community video’ activist in the 1980s I became fascinated by the (eventually successful) campaign by the indigenous media organisation CAAMA to win the television license for the AUSSAT Central Australian footprint - which (in theory) enabled indigenous communities to control how television was used and seen within this footprint: an apparent victory against European ‘cultural imperialism’, in favour of local, indigenous ‘cultural maintenance’. As a result, in the early 1990s, I went to Australia to co-produce (with CAAMA) a Channel 4 film, Satellite Dreaming, about Aboriginal uses of video and television.

In the end, the results of CAMMA’s victory have been much more nuanced than this simple ‘resistance model’ indicates. This paper is based on research I did in October/November 2011, exploring these nuances in more depth, twenty years on. In her description of the current tensions and conflicts around aesthetics and access to resources in Indigenous media circles, Ellie Rennie summed it up as, ‘not so much Satellite Dreaming as Satellite Shitstorm!’, a situation that is inflected by the different (and in many ways more reactionary) national political policies in relation to indigenous peoples in Australia, particularly in remote areas.

At the heart of these debates is the issue of the representation of traditional Aboriginal cultures in Australia, explored by Eric Michaels in the 1980s. This presentation will in part be a re-examination of Eric Michaels’ legacy: although Michaels’ reputation has fluctuated since his death in the 80’s his contribution is currently undergoing reassessment. My paper will consider this, and re-evaluate the ‘resistance model’ which I followed when we made Satellite Dreaming twenty years ago.
Haim Bresheeth, University of East London: London is Burning... again!
The Summer of 2011 saw a most bizarre series of riots take place in Britain, first in London and then spreading to other metropolitan centres. The government was quick to dub it ‘criminal’ and has done all it could to incarcerate over a thousand youngsters who took part in it. The rest of society, (excluding an excellent research project by the Guardian and LSE) have treated this as a nervous tick, a blip, seemingly best forgotten. The partakers were obviously not politically motivated in a way similar to the Occupy movement, the ISM, the Anti-Capitalist campaign in Athens and elsewhere, or the Arab Spring. They were an easy target for the right, and were ignored by the left in Britain.

This paper is based on my video installation-in-progress, London is Burning, to be premiered in April 2012 on 24 screens (in a single space...). The piece combines material available on the web, with contextualizing interviews with scholars and activists, and ventures to suggest some tenuous but interesting connections between the banking and credit crisis and the riots. Such connections were suggested in the Guardian reports before the end of 2011, and seem to uphold some assumptions made by Hardt and Negri (Empire and Multitude) but also to contradict their conclusions. The paper will include a short clip from the film.

11.30 – 13.00
Panel 2A: Politics and Aesthetics: Filmmakers’ Practices
Venue: 25 Gordon Street E28, Harrie Massey Lecture Theatre
Chair: Holly Aylett

Sue Clayton, Independent Filmmaker: ‘The Road Home’ and the Road to Political Change
In winter 2009 I filmed Hamedullah Hassan, a young asylum-seeker, turning 18 and becoming at risk of deportation back to Afghanistan. I then supplied him with a video camera so he could film the story of his return. In this paper I present the independent film I have since completed and discuss some issues of representation that it raises.

These days, commissioned TV documentaries are discussed very much as fiction projects are – there must be an individual ‘hero’ or protagonist, a challenge, a development and then a shift – a cathartic moment that leads to a resolved ending. Film-makers may even be required to present this story arc as condition of commissioning, before the events have actually taken place. Commissioners and producers ‘cast’ their characters to make them more empathetic - easier for the viewer to invest in their journey. Thus the character, theme and even narrative ending fit into the kind of sub-Aristotelean storytelling model preached by Hollywood screenwriting manuals, designed to make us feel we know and understand the hero-subject and the structure of the journey they will take (be challenged, overcome obstacles, triumph at a cost).

Hamedullah: The Road Home does offer us an individual character, but the circumstances of his becoming the protagonist were quite arbitrary. I was requested to help another boy fight detention, and in the process met Hamedullah. He was just one of a group of boys any of whom might be removed. Throughout the process I also did not strive to make the audience believe him to be ‘good’ or ‘right’. For example I filmed him describing the events that led to him seeking asylum in the UK, but then decided not to include these in the final cut because it put us as audience in judgment over him for what he did or was forced to do or say as a child. By withholding those and many other empirical facts about Hamedullah’s case, the film forces the audience to respond to him on a different level – not as the hero-victim about to be wrongfully returned, nor as the anti-hero ‘bogus asylum seeker’ – but as someone with qualities above and beyond his status as a refugee. Hamedullah is simply a person who was living out his potential, and now is not.

After Hamedullah was deported and began filming himself and sending me footage, I almost unconsciously struggled to find the story arc, the rites-of-passage that would shape the material and generate a sense of ending or closure – both for him as a character and for us the audience. But his life story is conspicuous in that it does not have a conventional ending- no resolving event, no great climax or revelation – no sudden death, no cathartic reconciliation. Rather his footage exhibits a sort of circularity, a cycle of hope and despair that is the shadowy half-life of the returnee. In the end the challenge was to create a narrative from it that is not directly current affairs, but more an abstracted reflection on his life- the wanderer, the loner, moving through landscapes and sounds and seasons, winter and summer, drought and snow, crowds and silence, dark and light. I tried to achieve this whilst avoiding the stereotypes of timelessness, of over-universalising his story. He is still a real person in a real place, with pressing political problems. But what comes through is a sense of his own memories and dreams, his own identity, his own perspective, whether or not that is tidily wrapped up in a way we the Western audience find easy or appealing.

Jill Daniels, University of East London: Trauma and Silence: Strategies of Mediating Trauma and Silence in the Aftermath of Civil War
In this paper I will explore questions about the use of cinematic strategies in the representation of trauma and silence, with reference to my documentary film, Not Reconciled (2009). The film is set in Belchite, a medieval town in Northern Spain. In Spain there has been a long pact of silence, of forgetting the trauma of civil war and its violent aftermath. In recent years the pact has cracked but has not crumbled. Belchite is a site of contestation: two towns of the same name located literally side by side. The first, a medieval town ruined in the civil war and now uninhabited; the other, an inhabited town built by Republican prisoners after the war. The danger of utilising a documentary realist strategy to represent trauma is that the spectator momentarily feels they have shared the suffering represented but this does not allow them to make a connection with the present. Not Reconciled utilises strategies to rejoin memory and history to the present through the creative act of the imagination where: ‘the horror of looking is not necessarily
in the image but in the story the viewer provides to fill in what has been omitted. For each image we provide the other complementary one.’ (Hirsch) The film utilises performativity in its creation of fictional ghosts to bear ‘witness’: ‘the performative element within the framework of non-fiction is thereby, an alienating, distancing device, not one which actively promotes identification and a straightforward response to a film’s content.’ (Bruzzi). The film, however, holds in tension the effect of over-distanciation through combining performativity with a realistic strategy of observational filming of daily lives and brief conversations around remembering and forgetting, thus imaging the past as a continuing present.

Holly Giesman, Roehampton University: Eating Cultures: Documentary Film and the Authentic National Restaurant
This paper explores documentary authenticity and representation from a different perspective. I use examples from my own documentary filmmaking in London restaurants — part of a practice-based doctoral research project — to contribute to the ever-expanding discourse in this area of documentary scholarship.

Focusing on cross-cultural documentary and considering it broadly within the context of cultural globalization and authenticity scholarship across various disciplines, I highlight specific connections with tourism studies and the anthropology of food. Through a constructed metaphorical relationship between the cross-cultural documentary and the authentic foreign national restaurant, I explore mediated cross-cultural experience and how authenticity is understood. I use the notion of the ‘tourism of everyday life’ (Franklin 2003) to frame a comparison, regarding the documentary and the restaurant as part of Franklin’s ‘flows of global cultural materials’ that appeal to the culturally curious.

Just as film may provide sensory-rich exploration of difference and otherness, so too can the restaurant. Both might also be implicated in the exotization or essentialization of cultures. More abstractly, film and food can be considered as containers capable of holding and transporting culture, where time and space converge (Chan 2007, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004) in interesting ways. Yet, where fiction film and the fusion restaurant might freely explore these time-space convergences, documentary and the authentic restaurant are bound by claims and expectations of authenticity. How are the documentary and the restaurant facing similar challenges and existential dilemmas? Both engage in storytelling across cultural boundaries, yet they are charged with the accurate representation of an aspect of real life.

Panel 28: 11.30 – 13.00

Actualising the Self

Venue: Medawar G01, Lankester Lecture Theatre
Chair: Tony Dowmunt

Tianqi Yu, University of Westminster: Producing the ‘Public Self: First Person Action Documentary Practice
This paper explores first person DV documentary practice in China that represents the individual self in public spaces. These first person films are growing out of the increasing amount of DV documentary practice, especially since the new millennium. Drawing on Chris Berry’s conceptualisation of ‘public spaces’, multiple sites where different power configurations and relations play out, I term these films as representations of a ‘public self’. I understand the individual self as an important agency that is negotiating with different internal and external forces and relations in the ‘public spaces’ in an era of globalization.

Through examining Ai Weiwei’s Laomatihua (2009) and films made by two young filmmakers Wu Haohao and Xue Jianqiang, this paper argues that the selves in the public spaces are not just passively shaped by the forces and relations in existing public spaces, but are challenging the socially defined conventional interpersonal relations, through actively filmmaking. Their filmmaking has some similarity with Japanese filmmaker Kazuo Hara’s ‘action documentary’. This practice is to further understand oneself in the social public spaces, but can also be seen as a form of provocative social participation in the era of ‘depoliticised politics’, that stimulates important individual critical thinking and helps to form a new kind of political subjectivity, and to reactivate the political space in China.

Heather Blackmore, University of Southern California: Collecting the Self: The YouTube Haul Video and Personal Documentary
Among the many large and popular sub-genres of videos found on YouTube, the ‘haul’ video, in which an individual shares their newly-acquired possessions with an audience of casual viewers and fellow haulers, remains one of the most mystifying to the uninitiated, scholars and the mainstream media alike. While haul videos are closely related to both product reviews and style tutorials, ‘hauls’ in the truest sense refer to videos that are primarily made up of a string of products, typically appearing right out of a shopping bag, shown to the camera one after the other, accompanied by very brief reflections about what attracted the purchaser to the product or how they might use it in the future. As the popularity of haul videos has risen over the past several years, the press has struggled to make sense of what exactly the videos are and what they mean as a trend. The responses range from cynicism about what is perceived to be the mere superficial conspicuous consumption of adolescent girls to drooling speculations by market analysts and retailers on ways to capitalize on this wealth of wildly profitable potential advertising.

Departing from the dominant discussions of hauling in the context of consumption, this paper is primarily concerned with the YouTube haul video sub-genre as a cultural practice and mode of media production. I argue that through the practice of collecting, cataloging and displaying goods to the larger hauling community, haulers construct and document personal identity narratives. This paper will engage with contemporary discourses on personal and autobiographical documentary and diary films in both traditional contexts and those focused on YouTube, as well as scholarship on collecting as a means of self-articulation and social advancement.
Brenda Hollweg, University of Leeds: Real Possibilities: the Ethics and Aesthetics of Falsified Truths in Dunye’s *The Watermelon Woman* and Solomon’s *Clara B.*

Personal video essays enjoy a growing popularity amongst artists and filmmakers. They come in many different forms – as cine-travelogues, video confessions, cine-poems or philosophical meditations. Documentary filmmakers, in particular, have embraced the personalized voice as a vehicle for experiments in self-discovery and a platform for broader socio-political interventions. One still developing variant of the personal video essay is the essayistic mockumentary. This paper offers a close reading of two such productions: Romanian Alexandru Solomon’s *Clara B.* (2006) and African American Cheryl Dunye’s *The Watermelon Woman* (1996), which tell the story of a personal quest to discover the hidden, fictional narrative behind a face found on a photograph. Mockumentaries have always questioned the documentary’s search for ‘objectivity’, ‘authority’ and ‘truth’. In Dunye’s and Solomon’s films knowledge or practical wisdom gained from what one has observed, encountered or undergone is presented as temporary, contingent and partial; their makers use brief re-enactments and work playfully with archive footage, newsreels and historical photographs to make the viewer aware of the artificial-illusionist character of cinema as well as the fictionality of documentary and memory work in general. As the subjects of the essayist’s quest – Clara B. or Fay Richards, ‘the Watermelon Woman’, respectively – are not manipulated through distortion or ‘wronged’ in any other way (both are, after all, fictional figures), ethical issues of falsification arise from the relationship that exists between the essayist and his or her audience. This paper will explore, among other things, issues of personal accountability and the power of critical self-reflexivity as a means to open up a dialogue between filmmaker and audience.

14.00 – 16.00  Weds. 20.06

Panel 3A: Fact, Fiction, Farce

Venue: 25 Gordon Street E28, Harrie Massey Lecture Theatre  
Chair: Haim Bresheeth


In Shlomi Elkabetz’s *Edut* (Israel, 2011) 24 Israeli actors read out, in Hebrew, testimonies of Palestinians living under the Israeli occupation and of a few Israeli soldiers who broke their silence after serving in the Occupied Territories. They are carefully positioned in front of a highly stylizing camera, looking straight to lens with a magnificent background – an undivided, uninhabited, Palestine/Israel.

*Edut* (‘testimony’ in Hebrew) consists of a compilation of carefully sutured monologues, creating one of the strongest contemporary cinematic pieces about the Israeli Occupation. It is also one of the most telling endeavors dealing with the conditions of speaking, seeing and listening in a society engulfed by a culture of occupation and, about the specifics of the documentary/fiction dialectics.

The testimonies are real ones, un-edited, the authentic words taken from Palestinians by the Human Rights organization B’Tselem and from Israeli soldiers by Breaking the Silence. They are anecdotal, free of the most shocking dramas of the occupation. Nevertheless, the film created a public stir right from the outset, in its premiere at Cinema South Film Festival in Sderot (in Israel) where Education Secretary, Limor Livnat, declared it to be biased, blind to the suffering of the victims of Terror attacks and the Kasam missiles falling in the south of Israel. The public debate around the film was drawn thereafter to the trivial and trivializing issues concerning balanced representation and freedom of speech.

In this paper I attend to this groundbreaking film’s more profound challenges, exploring the use of sophisticated cinematic devices which serve as tools for dissent and transgression of the popular representations of the occupation, its victims, perpetrators and its territorial grounds. I demonstrate how the use of fiction filmmaking and its conventions serve to assert facts, to bear witness and to echo the political reality that is being suppressed and silenced in the current Israeli landscape.

Florian Mundhenke, University of Leipzig: The ‘Revolution’ from Bottom Up – The Grassroots Approach of Docu-Comedies

Among the various categories within the ongoing diversification of documentary forms (including docudramas, mock docs, animated documentaries, and conditional documentaries) there is one tendency that has not been evaluated in detail so far: the comical documentary, sometimes called docu-comedy. One would consider that the two approaches of documentary (a sober, fact-oriented ‘discourse of sobriety’) and comedy (a constant production of fun through actions, word plays, and a confrontation of inappropriate elements) are incompatible and mutually exclusive. But as Paul Ward noted (2005, 67- 81), there is a tendency to combine the depiction of the real with a comic voice, enactment or discourse. Despite some rather harmless early examples (such as *Cane Toads*, 1988, Mark Lewis), the combination of these two modes of reception (distributing knowledge vs. initiating laughter) has mostly been utilized to criticize recent developments of society. The films of Michael Moore may be one prominent example since mocking the interview partners and making fun of target agendas is always part of his strategy, but there are other cases where the approach of the commonality of laughter is more part of a grassroots appeal of protesting from bottom up to raise a voice against tendencies of exclusion and disguise. In *The Mark Thomas Comedy Product* (1998-2002, Channel 4) the host used a strategy of commenting incidents in a stand up comedy tradition that directly referred to problems in public culture or with endeavors of big companies that were fooled in stunts shown in between the talking parts. This is even taken further by Sasha Baron Cohen with characters like Borat. While his TV shows and films may not be rendered as documentaries in the first place, there is also a tendency of disguising and exposing the real people he
interviews in demobilizing their strategies of concealment and protection with the means of comic exaggeration. The paper wants to ask why comedy and the evocation of laughter are such powerful tools of criticism and disapproval within the project of documentary. According to that, the question of the discourse of those slightly revolutionary films will be posed. Is it a discourse of interference — with official opinions and received knowledge — or of inappropriateness — combining unrelated elements and using a strategy of making strange what seems familiar?

Nina Mickwitz, Anglia University: Frozen Frames: Representing the Real in Documentary Comics
While work by authors such as Joe Sacco, Guy Delisle, Emmanuel Guibert and Marjane Satrapi have tended to be described in literary terms such as journalism and auto/biography, aligning these texts with documentary allows an alternative perspective and space for examining the visual representation of lived experience. Using a selection of examples I intend to demonstrate how, through a combination of drawing (inherently and explicitly interpretive and subjectively inflected) and their static and spatial quality, comics as documentary proffer a corrective to ‘the paradigm of recording’ (Lelong, 1988, cited by Ricoeur, 2004: 162) and challenge a dominant cultural perception of photographic and filmic modality as a privileged representation of the real.

Drawing on Guerin and Hallas’ (2007) concept of secondary witnessing which enables a notion of documentary not limited to photographic and filmic modes, this paper proposes that comics and graphic novels can, and do, claim a relationship with the historical world congruent with that of documentary. Employing multimodal, conspicuously visual narrative strategies (as do documentaries in moving image media), non-fiction comics and graphic novels extend to readers a position which corresponds to that of a documentary audience.

Having established a foundation for considering comics as documentary, this paper proposes that the perception of reality as essentially ‘pro-filmic’ is destabilised in documentary graphic narrative in a number of ways. Following Jacques Rancière, I argue that the attendant implications of comics as documentary are political (beyond their immediate subject-matter and concern with wider socio-political issues) in ‘re-fram[ing] the given by inventing new ways of making sense of the sensible [and offering] new configurations between the visible and the invisible’ (Rancière, 2010: 139).

Panel 3B: 14.00 – 16.00

Aesthetics of Memory and Absence

Venue: Medawar G01 Lancaster Lecture Theatre

Chair: Alisa Lebow

Tim Schwab, Concordia University: Palestinian Cinema and the Politics of Absence: Two Case Studies
The theme of absence, of persons or things missing, has been a central theme of much of Palestinian film and literature, and the political implications of absence and non-existence have been a concern of Palestinian filmmaking throughout its modern history, epitomized by the title of Mustafa Abu-Alí’s classic newsreel documentary which is drawn from Golda Meir’s infamous quote regarding the Palestinians, They Do Not Exist. This presentation will explore the issue of absence in a political context by examining works by two Palestinian filmmakers who live outside Palestine, and who have both pursued this theme in individual works which operate on the border between documentary and experimental work. The presentation will feature analysis of Shadow of Absence by Nasri Hajjaj and Kings and Extras by Azza el-Hassan, and will include clips from the films and brief excerpts from interviews with both filmmakers taken from the forthcoming feature documentary Cinema Palestine.

Background:
Nasri Hajjaj was born to a Palestinian family living in Lebanon, and grew up in the refugee camps there before working as a journalist in Lebanon and England and as a media representative for the PLO in Tunis. His 2008 film Shadow of Absence is a personal and poetic examination of the predicament of Palestinians living in exile who wish to be buried after their death in the home villages they left behind, now in Israel and the occupied territories. Focusing on the stories of Palestinian intellectuals, political figures and resistance leaders who were refused the right of return even in death, the film interweaves the moving personal story of Hajjaj and his family and his own first visit, at 48 years of age, to the site of his family’s village, now a farmer’s field in Israel.

Azza el-Hassan is a Palestinian who grew up in Jordan, studied filmmaking in Scotland and lived for a time in Ramallah before returning to Amman. Her 2004 film Kings and Extras uses her trademark combination of personal experimental filmmaking and documentary to follow her search for the lost Palestinian archive, a now nearly-mythic collection of films and news footage compiled by the PLO Film and Photography Unit during the 1960’s and 1970’s which disappeared from the Red Crescent hospital in Acre, Israel under still unexplained circumstances in 1982. It has never been found again, but its fate has remained a subject of endless speculation, seldom more creatively handled than in El-Hassan’s film.

Marietta Kesting, Humboldt University: The Evidence of Things Not Seen: Visualising Deportation
2011 was the year of spectacular visibility of different protests, strikes, and even revolutions, yet many other events like the struggles of migrants to cross borders and withstand deportation were not documented. The field of public visibility, voice and agency is globally a space of constant re-negotiations, and conflicts. ‘illegaled’ migrants were not one of the groups that protested. This is hardly surprising, since illegaled migrants live in a field dominated by (mostly negative) hyper-visibility on the one hand and invisibility on the other. Staying invisible is often also a strategy to avoid deportation. Yet there is an ‘imperceptible politics’ (Tsianos et.al. 2008) enacted in these everyday practices against the control of the nation-state. Could this even be an ‘invisible revolution’ and in spite of its imperceptibility what attempts are there to visualize these events of control, resistance and subversion in the field of migration?

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What (counter-)practices can be observed in this field? This paper wants to examine how migration and deportation are visualized and what kind of politics and ethics this may imply.

If a TV crew is present, the act of deportation is often not carried out. Yet in the Netherlands in 2011 a new TV program was presented: *Weg van Nederland*. It used real asylum seekers whose petitions had been declined, awaiting deportation. The title had a double meaning and refers to both ‘Loving the Netherlands’ and ‘Away from the Netherlands.’ Already in 2000 Schiengensief’s controversial *Foreigners Out – Please Love Austria* project had realized a similar scenario. Schiengensief mocked the format of ‘Big Brother’ by putting asylum seekers into containers in a prominent location in Vienna’s first district. Their daily life was streamed over the internet, where the audience supposedly could vote one person per day out of the country. This political art project created enormous outrage, disgust, and protest.

Beyond the obvious charge of cynicism, I want to examine how these formats mirror the current migration regime around Europe’s borders and what they say about the state of the ‘political’ and the ‘documentary’ field(s) today. By now the differentiation documentary/fiction has been declared obsolete (Minh-ha 1993). Yet in modes of reception and production as new genres attest, the ‘real’ still possesses great power. Constellations of the ‘political’, hierarchy, force and visibility are negotiated here in new ways.

Dennis Rothermel, California State University: The Power of Reenactment in Quasi and Semi-documentary Films of Revolt

While shooting *The Plough and the Stars* in Ireland in 1936, John Ford was struck by the genuineness evident in the acting of locals hired on as extras, many of whom had lived through the events depicted in that film. They were, as well, able to suggest details to augment authenticity in the story, remarkably appreciated by a film-maker otherwise notoriously adverse to creative input.

Evident in Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), Herbert Biberman’s *Salt of the Earth* (1954), Lionel Rogosin’s *Come Back, Africa* (1960), and Mikhail Kalatozov’s *I Am Cuba* (1964) is a common intent to construct cinema aspiring to a re-enacted truth that avowedly isn’t strictly adherent to historical facts. These four films are richly indebted in detail to participatory experiences, much as John Ford witnessed, and, also very much like Ford’s cinema, freely engrossed in the lyricism of the art of cinema. In imitating or including documentary footage, these films traverse the boundary between fiction film and documentary – as if that boundary were nonexistent, or at least irrelevant.

The films depict revolt that captures how Deleuze and Guattari delineated their notion of a war machine. More interestingly, these films also capture how Deleuze and Guattari talked about becoming woman. One should be wary of initial suppositions about the meaning of these two terms – the war machine need not be associated with violence, and becoming woman need not fixate upon gender. More interesting still is how these films provide unanticipated ramifications of Deleuze’s discussion of the power of the false. For the films are palpably non-documentary, and yet they also blatantly flout fiction-film norms of verisimilitude. This may seem strange or perhaps fittingly innovative in a contemporary context where the bystander’s video capture of events is ubiquitous. It is the reenactment that comprises the genuine documentary content in these four films – we see the narrative as that of participants who reenact how they remember things.

16.30 – 18.00

**Panel 4A:** Documentary Data

**Venue:** 25 Gordon Street E28, Harrie Massey Lecture Theatre

**Chair:** Brian Winston

**Jon Dovey and Mandy Rose, University of West England: Documentary, Montage, and the Sea of Data**

‘There’s an industrial revolution of data coming. The power of data will change us as surely as the power of steam did a century ago.’ ––O’Reilly 2011

This paper is concerned with the social praxis of documentary in the sea of ‘ubiquitous data’ conjured (as above) by the marketeers of Web 2.0. The topic is given importance by the morphing of the character of video in the context of the latest web coding language, HTML5. Until now web video has been aloof from the networked character of its environment; reproducing the conditions of the TV screen in a hypermediated space (Bolter & Grusin 1999). Now existing databases and live, up to the moment, information drawn from social media can be connected to the documentary environment. This ocean of data offers opportunities for the production of new kinds of knowledge and application. What does this mean for documentary?

We discuss examples – from the innovative 2005 project *We Feel Fine* to recent experiments in ‘Semantic Documentary’ including *One Millionth Tower, 18 Days in Egypt* and our own work on *The Are you happy? Project* – a web documentary for which filmmakers around the world have re-visited Rouch & Morin’s seminal documentary *Chronique d’un été*.

The affordances of networked connectivity offer the potential to re-contextualise documentary material through mobilising the enormous co-creative potential of human discourse captured in the web. The challenge in these marriages of mass media form and rhizomatic network is to find new ways of shaping attention into a coherent experience. To do so we may have to re-invent the social praxis of documentary, creating new visual and
informational grammars. Our technological moment produces the need for a new generation of Kuleshovs and Eisensteins to develop montage aesthetics for the database.

Shmulik Duvedevani, Tel Aviv University: ‘Life in a Day/ Day in a Life’ The Crowd Sourced Documentary and the Observational Mode
My presentation introduces two documentaries which most aptly refer to the term ‘cinematic calendar’. The first film is Life in a Day (Kevin Macdonald, 2011) which is a unique example of a documentary assembled from footage submitted to YouTube from camera people in 192 countries, all shot on the same date – July 24, 2010. The other documentary is Alexandre Goutman’s August 17 (2011) which chronicles a day in the life of a Russian prisoner who’s serving a life sentence for triple murder. Though the two films are aesthetically different, they both tackle the same issue – how to document a day, a date, and a singular timeframe that for one individual is only repetitive routine while for the other suggests dramatic changes and excitements.

While Life in a Day is a sort of ‘global bits’ that serves as a metaphor for 21st century’s experiencing life through the internet, August 17 is a distant observational film taking place mainly within the claustrophobic confines of a prison cell that become a metaphor – not radically different from that mentioned above – to the solitary of human existence.

Both films deal with similar contents and issues – the documentation of a single day as a metaphor for life, the way YouTube has become our way of experiencing the goings on in the world, communication vs. isolation, the different aesthetics of the diaristic mode, the meaning as well as the subjective definition of the extraordinary, and the way documentation turns the routinely into art and poetry. Through an introduction of these two extraordinary documentaries of ordinary life – my paper addresses these issues while at the same time will raise questions relating to the new aesthetics of personal documentation.

Agnieszka Zwiefka-Chwalek, University of Wroclaw: Real Fiction: Negotiating Reality in Interactive Documentary
Ignoring the origins of documentary filmmaking (e.g. Robert Flaherty’s Nanook of the North), documentary and mise en scène are often artificially opposed and the myth of ‘photographic truth’ is still exploited, forgetting that media can never make an unmediated copy of reality. In this paper I examine in which ways and with the use of which tools reality is mediated and negotiated – within the genre of documentary film as well as within interactive storytelling.

Even traditional, linear documentary is a negotiation between reality on one hand and image, interpretation and author’s vision on the other. Director’s actions often interrupt reality, interfere with events, but it is these actions that transform images into art, giving them a universal meaning. According to Bruzzi documentaries are ‘performative acts whose truth comes into being only at the moment of filming.’

In linear films, reality is negotiated through editing, the use of music, special effects, the choice and the order of scenes within the film. In case of interactive documentaries the negotiation of reality is even more visible and complex, multilayered. There are multiple ‘realities’ that may be extracted from a single event or situation, depending on who is telling the story. In case of The Journey to the End of Coal the user is asked to become an investigative reporter and try to find out the truth about the situation in Chinese coal mines. It’s up to him what part of reality he’s going to see and if he’s going to go into the coal mines or simply stay on the surface talking to the authorities. You might say that within one film we have at least 20 possible outcomes, 20 different stories and different realities – based on user’s choices.

Interactive documentaries don’t replay the conventions of traditional, linear documentary storytelling; they offer their own ways of playing with reality. The most complicated one being a docu-game, a new documentary genre, in which the viewer is asked not only to choose between many possible paths within the story, but also to create the reality by himself, just like in a video game. The Cat and the Coup is a docu-game in which users play the cat of Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh, the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran. They try to coax Mossadegh back through significant events of his life by knocking objects off of shelves, scattering his papers, jumping on his lap. The user is not only making choices, he’s creating the events within the docu-game. That’s why this new genre is very common among authors of socially engaged projects, the supporters of Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring being one of many examples. During my presentation I shall introduce examples of negotiating the reality in documentary films, including my own project – Albert Cinema, a work in progress and a community project, an interactive film about homeless filmmakers.

Panel 4B: 16.30 – 18.00  The Mobile Revolution

Venue: Medawar G01, Lancaster Lecture Theatre  Chair: Michael Chanan

Sylvie Prasad, University of East London: Documenting the Self: Mobile Phone Technology, Sociability and Belonging
This paper examines the content and form of two documentary films and poses the questions: why document, why tell stories, why use a mobile phone? What can you do with a mobile phone and what emerging narrative forms do these new technologies instigate?

Ordinary people can be at the front line of news gathering and some of the first images of newsworthy stories are taken from people using mobile camera phones. Pictures from 9/11, 7/7, the tsunami of 2004, the Japanese earthquake of 2011 and the more recent Arab Spring are amongst the most memorable images of the twenty-first century. Such images are immediate and have impact. Moreover, the size and scope of the technology means the
Interviews with four internal security officers assigned to crush the uprising. As they explain their role on the other stereotypes.

The most important attribute of the cellphone camera is its availability, as practically everyone has one on hand at all times. This specific detail contributes to a primordial aesthetic characteristic of the final product: the mobile phone film. Many early feature length films made with phone cameras (2006-2009) have a documentary perspective because of the attributes of this device transforming it into a sort of extension of the human body, like an eye in the hand. The phone camera is, thus, used to record moments of life and as the phone camera replaces the human eye, each digital file becomes a memory.

The immediacy of this filmmaking and the significant subjectivity of the device create a new film genre. This new documentary genre is based on a very different approach from that of mainstream media. The rushes, the material obtained, are the filmmaker’s recorded memories, which he will manipulate and edit like in any filmmaking process. However, in contrary to traditional filmmaking where one starts shooting from a script, here, the film originates in the rushes. This process is closer to other art forms (sculpting, painting, etc.) where the material is the starting point.

Although the elements mentioned in this paper highlight the particularities of mobile filmmaking and how the resulting images tend to present documentary characteristics due to the device itself, it also questions the objectivity of these documentaries. The study of the first feature films made on cell phones will help indicate how mobile phone filmmaking differs from mainstream filmmaking and define the documentary characteristics produced, justifying the increasing use of this device for testimonial purposes. Indeed, it is necessary to take note of the emerging use of camera phones to bear witness, and record, incidents like street crime. These videos have now found their way into courtrooms and have become elements of proof like eyewitness testimony.

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Max Schleser, Massey University: From ‘Script to Screen’ to ‘Shoot n Share’

Over the last decade mobile documentary filmmaking evolved from an underground and art house into an egalitarian moving-image practice. In an international context, mobile-mentaries (mobile documentaries) can provide access to filmmaking for a new generation of filmmakers and for local communities mobile devices have potential to engage audiences globally.

This paper presents the work of the Mobile Innovation Network Aotearoa [MINA], which aims to explore the possibilities of interaction between people, content and the emerging mobile industry. With reference to the International Mobile Innovation Screening 2011, which took place in the Film Archive in Wellington (NZ), it explores the multiple vectors that drive the constant innovation process in mobile filmmaking. In particular this paper focuses on the development of mobile-mentary filmmaking towards a cultural practice, which will be illustrated through showcasing projects that were produced with local communities. I discuss also my current work-in-progress project 24 Frames 24 Hours (www.24frames24hours.org). The collaborative mobile-mentary explores the meaning of place and home in a series of mobile filmmaking workshops, which were conducted in Strasbourg, Paderborn, Wellington and New York last year. In the conceptualization of these mobile filmmaking workshops the notion of reflexivity in the creative process is central.

Moreover I review mobile and documentary projects that implement a community distribution network. In an international context one can point to more than a dozen projects (such as Aago, Bozza, Locast, M-Generations, Megaphone, Mobile Voices VozMob, Verbeterdebuurt, Voices Beyond Walls, Zeega) that draw upon the existing spectrum of emergent technologies. By means of discussing documentary projects utilizing mobile apps, mobile social networks and other innovative distribution mechanisms, this paper explores the changes not only in the making, showing and watching of documentaries, but also consider transformations in creativity. I conclude by positioning the contemporary ‘shoot and share’ approach in a continuum of serendipity, network media and documentary film.

19.30 Evening Screening Venue: Darwin Theatre


The screening will be followed by a Q+A with Filmmaker, Amr Salama

While the occupation of Tahrir Square is long over, Egyptians seem determined to maintain the insurgency until their demands are met. Tahrir 2011 is a laudable attempt to steer away from reportage and reflect on what historians will index as the first chapter of the uprising. Structured in three chapters, the film playfully debunks misconceptions and stereotypes. The Good, directed by Tamer Ezzat, gives voice to the everyday heroes from Tahrir Square. We encounter a group whose political, cultural and regional affiliations could not be more different, but who each embody the spirit of the millions who camped in Tahrir during the eighteen-day siege. The Bad, directed by Aytan Amin, features rare interviews with four internal security officers assigned to crush the uprising. As they explain their role on the other
side of the figurative trenches, their testimonials give chilling insight into Mubarak’s security apparatus when it came to silencing dissent. The Politician, directed by Amr Salama, offers a satirical take on ‘how to become a dictator in ten steps,’ and a smart deconstruction of Mubarak’s persona over his thirty-year rule. Salama interviews figures who have observed Mubarak closely, whether as trusted associates or outspoken opponents, such as Mohamed El Baradei. Also engaging are discussions with columnist/satirist Belal Fadl and internationally acclaimed novelist Alaa Al Aswany.

Thursday 21 June, Day 2

9.30 – 11.00

Panel 5A: Lessons from the Past

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<th>Venue: Roberts Building G06, Sir Ambrose Fleming Lecture Theatre</th>
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<td>Pat Holland, Bournemouth University: The Hornsey Film</td>
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<td>My film of the Hornsey College of Art sit in of 1968 certainly speaks of ‘revolution’, but documents more of the aftermath of that euphoric moment. It shows the participants’ real engagement with the actual structures of power in their effort to bring about real change. To my mind, too many of the representations of revolutionary moments reveal in the carnivalesque moment of the demonstration, rebellion or whatever, and the liberatory sensations that brings, and too little time addressing what happens next. So, although the title on the film is Revolution, Hornsey 1968 I became embarrassed with that, so it’s simply known as The Hornsey Film.</td>
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<td>Also at that time I had particular ideas about documentary making. It was the hey-day of cinéma-vérité, which at the time felt really new and fresh. But I thought it was inadequate for a film which wants to make a point, construct an argument, engage in a debate, as this film did. It was also conceived together with the participants, and designed to express the ideas they themselves wanted put across - so it’s built around reconstructions, debates and performances.</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Ramirez Sotto, University of Warwick: Weaving the Thread of the Invisible: Intergenerational Continuities in Chilean Contemporary Documentaries</td>
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<td>There is a certain consensus about the fact that Chilean documentary experienced a boom in the past decade, but little has been done to see these films in relation to the also extensive production that followed the military coup, notably in exile. In this paper I will seek to establish possible intergenerational continuities between the work of Chilean contemporary filmmakers, focusing particularly on films made by exilic directors working on the 80s and those being currently produced in the country by younger generations. I will refer to recently 'rediscovered' documentaries, mainly to the early filmic returns to Chile of directors like Angelina Vázquez, Raúl Ruiz and Claudio Sapiain, and the interconnections between these works and today’s blossoming production, focusing on that which deals with memories of the dictatorship. Their thematic connections such as the revision of the recent past, the interest on the intimate space, the uncanny experience of the city, as well as more formal ones such as the use of reflexivity, the use of the first person narrator, a fragmentary construction and the presence of different visual supports will be explored here. I would argue that these points of encounter suggest that it is feasible to ‘reconstruct the thread of the invisible’ as Chilean feminist Julieta Kirkwood puts it, and to rebuild the bridges once destroyed by the dictatorship.</td>
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Panel 5B: 9.30 – 11.00

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<td>Vinicius Navarro, Georgia Institute of Technology: The Ethics of Transience: Action and Responsibility in Contemporary Media Activism</td>
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<td>The past year has been described as ‘the year of protest.’ As events from Tahrir Square to Zuccotti Park helped reshape the world’s political landscape, new forms of media activism took hold of the public’s imagination. Technological innovation was quickly hailed both as a tool and a catalyst in various political movements, just to be subsequently disparaged as an instrument in the hands of the oppressors. Beyond this apparent fascination with the power of technology, however, the year of protest poses a number of relevant questions to contemporary media activists. How can the use of new media impact existing forms of political action? How might we now look at such concepts as representation and representativeness, or individual and collective agency? And what does it mean to act responsibly in these new media contexts?</td>
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<td>Drawing on themes that are familiar to the history of documentary cinema, this paper offers a specific framework to examine the notion of responsible action in new media activism. Contemporary activists operate in hybrid, networked environments, in which the divide between mediated and non-mediated experiences—between representation and reality—is often unclear. Moreover, in these environments, time-honored concepts such as ‘the people’ or ‘the masses’ seem less resonant than more flexible ones like ‘mobs’ or ‘multitudes.’ Political action itself comes to depend on ever-changing circumstances, rather than carefully designed programs. All this calls for new ways of assessing the impact of one’s actions on others. Inspired partly by the work of Baruch Spinoza, the paper tries to define an ethos built on the notions of shared creativity and transient encounters, in which connectivity and engagement serve as the basis for consequential political action.</td>
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Steve Presence, University of the West of England: Reel News: Radical Video Activism in Britain Today
The most recent book-length study of oppositional film in Britain, Margaret Dickinson’s *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain, 1945-90* (1999), ends by noting the emergence Undercurrents in 1994 as one of the groups continuing the tradition of disseminating radical audio-visual material. While somewhat different from their 1990s incarnation, Undercurrents remain a key part of the contemporary landscape of video-activism in Britain, along with a number of other groups. This paper explores that landscape, taking a closer look at some of the key players in the field, the problems they face and the solutions they are developing in the digital media environment. Focusing in particular on Reel News, one of the most militant and class-conscious of the video-activist groups, and VisionOnTV, a group developing a radically horizontal model of citizen-journalism, the paper sheds light on a key site of Britain’s contemporary audio-visual anti-capitalist culture.

Tina Askanius, Lund University: From Portapak to YouTube: Re-mediating the 8mm Activist Video Online
In the trajectory of academic interest in alternative media and social change, scholars have long shared visions of a global democratic communication infrastructure serving up political movements. In many ways, YouTube embodies the radical promise of access and voice and its army of amateur producers might be considered the fulfillment of the dreams of the Portapak revolution to make ‘people’s television’ (Boyle, 1997). However, reading YouTube against the goals and accomplishments of previous political movements using video for social change, YouTube have often been deemed a failed project seen to consolidate action to the video production and consumption of the individual rather than a community thus failing to unite the like-minded voices that are in fact present on the platform (see e.g. Juhasz 2008; Fuchs, 2009; Fenton and Barassi, 2011). Despite the conventionalizing standards poorly modeled for political purposes and the search algorithm - that relies upon the corporate imperative of attracting eyeballs to adds - this paper suggest that we there is a lively world to be found just underneath the surface on YouTube – the niche tube (Juhasz, 2008) - where past and present activist videos come together in a contemporary online environment.

Based on empirical insights derived from qualitative interviews with video activists in Europe and the US, this study places YouTube within the broader history of amateur video and visual activism. It links past theories of radical media to contemporary political practices, calling for a historically grounded conceptualization of YouTube and the term video activism and urges scholars and media practitioners to ‘reclaim what happened before YouTube’ (Jenkins, 2009: 125; Juhasz 2008; Lovink and Miles, 2011).

11.30 – 13.30 Thurs. 21.06

Roundtable Discussion: Filming Revolution
Venue: Roberts Building G06, Sir Ambrose Fleming Lecture Theatre
Participants: Amr Salama (Filmmaker, Cairo), Kay Dickinson(Goldsmiths College), Karen Mirza (Filmmaker, London), Alisa Lebow (Brunel University)

Never before, in the history of revolution, have unfolding events been documented as extensively in so many audio/visual formats. The ubiquity of recording devices, ready to hand in the form of compact dvcams, still cameras and mobile phones equipped with video capacity, etc., has meant that the archive of moving images of the current waves of insurrection and revolution is bulging beyond all previously imagined capacity. Social Networking too has had a role to play, from the iconic YouTube postings of the Iranian Green Movement, to the tweets and Facebook group formations, so alive for all to see. In this day of endless mediation, filming revolution has never been so accessible, yet the sheer magnitude of the archive, with so many unverifiable sources coming from indeterminately articulated positions, as well as the lightening fast demand to edit them into coherent narratives makes for a whole range of new challenges to representation. Documentary Now! will hold a roundtable discussion with filmmakers Amr Salama and Karen Mirza, and film scholars Kay Dickinson and Alisa Lebow, to discuss the challenges of filming revolution today.

14.00 – 16.00 Cinema of Me Book Launch Print Room Cafe, South Wing Building
Please join us for the launch of *The Cinema of Me: The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary* (Alisa Lebow, editor Wallflower Press).

When a filmmaker makes a film with herself as a subject, she is already divided as both the subject matter of the film and the subject making the film. The two senses of the word are immediately in play — the matter and the maker — thus the two ways of being subjectified as both subject and object. Subjectivity finds its filmic expression, not surprisingly, in very personal ways, yet it is nonetheless shaped by and in relation to collective expressions of identity, that can transform the cinema of ‘me’ into the cinema of ‘we’. Scholars and practitioners of first person film are brought together in *The Cinema of Me* to consider the theoretical, ideological, and aesthetic challenges wrought by this form of filmmaking in its diverse cultural, geographical and political contexts.
¡Documentary Now! and Wallflower Press invite you to the launch of the eagerly awaited book *The Cinema of Me: The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary* (Alisa Lebow, editor) at 14.00 on Thursday 21 June in the Print Room Cafe, South Wing Bldg, UCL. The editor and several of the authors will be present. Other Wallflower Press titles also available on discount. First 90 people to come will get a free drink!