

Radio Temporaire

As the ninth session of the Ecole du Magasin, we have chosen to give priority to the nature of discourse within the context of contemporary art as our subject of study. Rather than simply understanding the institutions and disciplines of contemporary art as distributing and sustaining works of art, we wanted to begin with the fact that it is « discourse » which makes possible those disciplines and institutions, whose role in turn is to sustain and distribute the « discourse » that found them.

Having been invited to prepare a project within the context of the various events being planned to mark the turn of the century 1900-2000, Figures of Engagement at the Turn of the Century in Geneva, we thus felt it appropriate to develop an audio event. Working with the medium of sound has given us the possibility of a study tool (in so far as the recordings we have collected, solicited, or produced now form the material trace of this year study program) as much as it provides a formal support for our contribution to the events in Geneva. We felt it particularly pertinent to try to articulate our experience within, and as, an educational program with that of the public event towards which we are working.

In changing the perspective from the predominance of the visual and the textual to the aural or verbal within contemporary art our intention is not to question the visual or textual as such, but rather to enable ourselves to think of alternative means of present cultural production and interacting within the context of art. Thus we are less interested in the audio arts as a historical or contemporary form than with the audio as a means of exchange and diffusion opening up various spaces « between » different disciplinary boundaries and cultural practices. In this sense it has allowed us to approach a large range of cultural practices including film, cultural studies, music, political activism, sociology, feminism, urban planning, architecture, etc. This has given us the opportunity to look at the various ways in which these disciplines cohere and differ in making sense of our lived environment and collective and individual experiences.

As the six participants of this session, we all come from widely different parts of the globe ; thus, one of the subjects that we have treated during the session is the issue of « globalism ». We have discussed together the ways in which it is possible to come to terms with the contemporary nature of the world, as our understanding and perception changes, at the turn of the century, through the increased dominance and tangibility of global media and tele-technological advances. This has allowed us to treat the material we have gathered as a representation of our own attempts to map out an understanding of the social, cultural, and political context in which we live. Therefore we have aimed at highlighting the inevitable heterogeneity that governs the material we have gathered and produced, as a means of representing both our own successive dislocations and the inevitable incompleteness of any such project. Rather than attempting to produce a purportedly comprehensive and coherent narrative of our experience, we have chosen to accept the fragmentary and dispersed nature of our studies in the hope of creating a useful and provocative means of interpreting the present.

Thus the aim of our session has been to take into account the contemporary migration of ideas and to claim the constitution of contingent cultural identities produced in the context of a transnational artistic and cultural dialogue.

For these reasons we have invited Stuart Hall (one of the founders of the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies) to discuss these issues with us as a key moment in the development of our project (along with Gilane Tawadros, director of the Institute of International Visual Arts ; Sonia Boyce, artist ; Isaac Julien, film-maker ; Steve McQueen, artist ; and Sarat Maharaj, art historian/cultural theorist ; Liliane Schreier, theorist).

We have chosen to look at the various ways in which cultural studies, as an intellectual discipline, has constantly sought to redefine its methodologies in response to changing geographical and historical, political, institutional and intellectual conditions – in challenging the legitimacy of the existing disciplines including its own and constantly contextualizing and politicizing its understanding of cultural practices.

The event in Geneva will take place from 29 November to 5 December 1999 and will be divided between an exhibition at the Sous-Sol Gallery in **the Ecole Supérieure des Arts Visuels de Genève** and a one to two hour **radio broadcast**.

The open-ended nature of our project as it is presented at the Sous-Sol will be juxtaposed and contrasted with a professionally edited media event.

