**The Real & The Fake**
Eighth Annual Festival of the Arts Art History Symposium
California State University, Sacramento

April 16, 2011
1-5 pm (with a coffee break and closing reception/book signing)
Mariposa Hall 1000
Free and open to the public

*The Real & the Fake*, the theme of the 2011 symposium, is inspired by the concurrent new media exhibition, *The Real/Fake*, on view in the University Library Gallery from March 31 to June 4, 2011. While the exhibition looks at contemporary artists’ use of virtual 3D computer graphics for avant-garde purposes, the art history symposium presents a range of papers that position this primary dialectic of art historically and a variety of artistic media.

**Speakers:**
- Keynote: Erkki Huhtamo, 'What's In the Box?': An Archaeological Approach to "Peep Media"
- Donna Gustafson, “Claes Oldenburg’ Bedroom Ensemble: Disruption and Transformation”
- David Schwarz, “A Double-Take on the Body (A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Body in Electronic Art”
- Carrie Robbins, “The Real and the Fake in Thomas Demand’s Trompe l’oeil Photography”
- Mark Levy, “Magritte and the Triumph of the Simulacrum”

**Erkki Huhtamo, 'What's In the Box?': An Archaeological Approach to "Peep Media"**

Media culture is often associated with a quest for widest possible visibility. The bigger the screen and the larger the audience, the better - so goes the logic. Yet media history also knows strands that have purported to hide images and to reveal them only within carefully calculated confines. From peep show boxes to optical toys, Mutoscopes and Kinetoscopes, subjects have over and over again been invited to marvel at hidden visual treasures beyond peepholes. Indeed, we could speak about "peep media," and related "peep practices." These have left behind countless traces, but they have rarely been excavated with the aim of profiling a general exposé of hidden media culture, the goal of this keynote.

Erkki Huhtamo holds a Ph. D. in Cultural History, and works as Professor of Media History and Theory at the University of California Los Angeles, Department of Design | Media Arts. He has published extensively on media archaeology and the media arts. Media archaeology is an emerging approach he has pioneered. It excavates forgotten, neglected and suppressed media-cultural
phenomena, helping us to penetrate beyond canonized accounts about media culture. Professor Huhtamo has applied this approach to phenomena like peep media, stereoscopy, the notion of the screen, electronic games, and mobile media. He has also written about the ways in which media artists have integrated media-archaeological elements into their works. Professor Huhtamo's most recent books are Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications (edited with Jussi Parikka, The University California Press, 2011) and a forthcoming monograph titled Illusions in Motion. A Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles.

Donna Gustafson, “Claes Oldenburg's Bedroom Ensemble: Disruption and Transformation”

The most striking elements of Claes Oldenburg's Bedroom Ensemble (1964) are his ironic celebration of the domestic, emphasis on the artificial, and deliberate distortions of single point perspective. A neglected but pivotal work in his oeuvre, the Bedroom (planned as a multiple in an edition of six) is a recreation of New York's Sidney Janis Gallery, a distillation of Southern Californian domesticity, an homage to Jackson Pollock, an interrogation of private and public space, and a purposeful disruption of the real in favor of the fake. While critics declared it a "disaster" (G.R. Swenson), a "nightmare" (Sidney Tillim), and "monstrous" (Lucy Lippard), Donald Judd praised the installation as “a thorough corruption of all its sources, even a corruption of the readymade aesthetic that seems to drive it.” The materials are indeed ersatz—formica and plastic surfaces, vinyl sheets, fake furs-- described by Briony Fer as a “dream map of commodity culture and its projected desires.” Oldenburg also hung what he described as fake Pollock patterned fabric on the walls and skewed the perspective of the room in order to falsify the clarity and geometry of the Renaissance system that made painting a window onto the world. I argue that Oldenburg's intentions in this provocative essay on the real and the fake (encompassing representations of the real in actual space and time, film, psychology, and advertising) create a liminal piece that is neither simply real nor fake, but a work whose multiple falsities and exaggerations disrupt the illusions of artistic and social conventions that are understood as realism and reality. Creating a three-dimensional space that only appears correct in photographs of the installation, the Bedroom questions both physical and visual experience. As Oldenburg admitted, “this is the kind of reality that if you intrude it vanishes.”

Bio: Dr. Donna Gustafson is the Andrew W. Mellon Liaison for the Mellon Program and Curator at the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Her areas of expertise are American and contemporary art. Previously, she was Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Art History, Rutgers; Director of Exhibitions at the Hunterdon Museum of Art in Clinton, New Jersey; and Chief Curator at the American Federation of Arts. Her publications and exhibitions projects include Ilene Sunshine: out of line, Kentler International Drawing Space, Brooklyn, NY, 2010; A Parallel Presence: National Association of Women Artists, 1889-2009, Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 2008; “Structuring Thought,” in Elizabeth Chapman, Ed Kerns: Word, City, Mind: A Universal Resonance, Muhlenberg College, PA, 2007; Almost Human: Dolls and Robots in Contemporary Art, Hunterdon Museum of Art, Clinton, NJ, 2005; Images from the World Between: the Circus in Twentieth-Century American Art, MIT Press, 2001; Thomas Moran: the Poetry of Place, American Federation of Arts and the Gilcrease Museum, 2001. Her recent exhibition, Water, an interdisciplinary project, was on view at the Zimmerli from September 1, 2010 to January 2, 2011. She has published reviews and articles on a variety of topics and presented papers at CAA, the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum; Lafayette College; Visual Arts Center of New Jersey; Wadsworth Athenaeum; Zimmerli Art Museum and other institutions. In 2012 she will co-chair a panel on Fluxus at CAA.
David Schwarz, “A Double-Take on the Body (A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Body in Electronic Art)”

In my talk, I’d like to discuss the body in recent electronic art, in the works themselves, and in discourses addressed to them. In writings on electronic art, artists and scholars mostly avoid defining what the body is and what the body isn’t; and descriptive, critical, speculative language that refers to the body is often underwritten by either humanist essentialism (Hansen) or pessimistic nihilism (Kittler). I will put forward a suggestion for how we can avoid simplistic binaries such as body / mind—an approach to the body based on extensions of the teachings of Jacques Lacan.

I think most of us would agree that western culture has moved well beyond postmodernism both as cultural moment and discursive practice. If postmodern culture and discourses can be reduced to the statement “all is representation,” then our post human, post Cartesian, post historical “present” would seem to have some abiding referent. What is it? To say that it is “reality” or “actuality” or “intuitive presence” is to fall into a simplistic binary that keeps us from grasping some of the new subjective structures that artists are already evoking in their work. I think that the art of this cultural moment requires that we move beyond simplistic binaries across the board.

As far as “reality” and the body to which my remarks will lead are concerned, the Lacanian Real can help. The Lacanian Real is that pulpy stuff that supports all socially-constructed meaning; or, if you could subtract all social conventions, all language, all ways of understanding ourselves, our social and private spaces, our history from experience, the Real would be what is left. We have no direct access to it, and no one interested in self preservation would wish to experience it. But from its thingness, its never fully-chartered territories, new structures are constantly emerging. The Real appears when the fabric of symbolic social space is under strain, and in our current culture, it is appearing quite a bit. The Real is surrounded by fluid thresholds to language, to visual, tactile, sonorous, and olfactory envelopes of identification out of which we develop as children. No simple binaries bind its discourses together; it offers us a unique read on current works of electronic art. In my talk, I will ground the body in the Lacanian Real, with reference to current works of electronic art, especially that of Claudia Hart.

I’m an Associate Professor of Music at the College of Music, the University of North Texas, Denton, TX. I have two books (Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture Duke UP 97 and Listening Awry: Music and Alterity in German Culture Minnesota 06); I’m working on a book that will take a post-Lacanian take on Electronic Art. Here’s a link to my website with a full vita.
http://web3.unt.edu/dschwarz

Robert Stalker, “Screening the Real: The Films of Bruce Conner”

My films are the “real world.” It’s not a found object. This is the stuff that I see as the phenomena around me. At least that’s what I call the “real world.”
—Bruce Conner

California assemblage artist and experimental filmmaker Bruce Conner (1933-2008) was fascinated by the boundary between the real and the fake. He once sent out an invitation to his own exhibit announcing works by “the late Bruce Conner.” On more than one occasion, he arranged for an impostor to stand in for him to present his own films. He even went so far as to title an exhibit comprised solely of his own work “the Dennis Hopper One Man Show” (1970-1973). In his assemblage work from the late ‘fifties and early ‘sixties for which he has become justly renown, Conner deployed sordid and
violent “real life” material drawn from newspapers and tabloids (such as the infamous “Black Dahlia” murder case or the controversy surrounding the Caryl Chessman execution) in a highly fictional—or as he described it, “theatrical”—way to create works that, as Boswell writes, “curiously hover [. . . ] in a Neverland where fantasy and reality . . . dance hand in hand.”

Beginning in 1958, Conner carried this dialectic of the real and the fake into film, producing some of the most important—although, still underappreciated—avant-garde or experimental films of the post-war era. In this paper, I examine early Conner films such as A Movie (1958), Marilyn Times Five (1968), and, especially, his masterpiece Report (1963-1967) to explore how Conner’s films provocatively negotiate the borderland between the factual and the fantastic, the real and the fake. As I demonstrate, Conner’s preoccupation with the real and the fake emerges in his films as a complex interrogation of the impact of the mass media on historical representation.

In A Movie (1958), Conner combines and juxtaposes found footage from both documentary and fictional sources to achieve a complex interplay of the real and the fake, the horrific and the humorous. Conner’s Marilyn Times Five (1968-73) explicitly engages the boundary between the real and the fake by creating a film from a one-minute loop of a purportedly Marilyn Monroe dressed only in panties. While Conner’s stated intent was to take the found footage and rearrange it “to see if the quintessential ‘Marilyn’ could emerge,” some sources claim the footage is taken from a ‘40s stag film featuring Monroe look-alike Arlene Hunter, the film thus engaging quite provocatively the issues of the genuine and the counterfeit.

With Report, Conner carries his interest in the real and the fake into broader territory, tackling the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the media spectacle surrounding it. Immediately following the assassination, Conner began filming news reports directly from television. Later, when obtaining the Zapruder film and other filmic documents proved impossible, Conner bought the rights to the television footage, splicing it together along with television advertisements, footage of a bull fight, academy leader, and a “flicker film” to form one of the most complex and insightful aesthetic responses to the assassination and its aftermath. Together with its “sister film,” Television Assassination (1963-65/1995), concerning the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald, Conner’s Report represents, as this paper argues, a provocative interrogation of the impact of mass media on historical representation. As this paper demonstrates, Conner’s films provocatively confound the real and the fake in their efforts to highlight a crisis in historical representation.

Robert Stalker received his Ph.D. from Emory University in 2004 and works as an independent scholar specializing in post-war West Coast American art. He has presented scholarly papers such as “Shooting Blanks: Time as property in the Photo-books of Ed Ruscha,” “Panorama of the Everyday: Ed Ruscha and the Cinematic,” and “Auto,Body: L.A.’s Finish Fetish and the Vernacular Surreal” at academic conferences in the U.S. and abroad. A frequent contributor to The Art Section: An On-Line Journal of Art and Cultural Commentary, Stalker has published articles on Joseph Cornell, Mel Bochner, the films of William S. Burroughs, and Yves Klein among others. He is currently working on a project about L.A.’s Ferus Gallery.

Carrie Robbins, “The Real and the Fake in Thomas Demand’s Trompe l’œil Photography”

In what D.N. Rodowick calls a “paradox of ‘perceptual realism,’” digital image-making technology pursues the goals of “perfect photographic credibility” according to Lev Manovich or of “digital
mimicry” as Philip Rosen has it. According to these new media theorists, digital image production, a field imagined to be free of the constraints of reality, is thus (paradoxically) geared toward the “realist” conventions of photography’s linear perspective. Insofar as digital mimicry adopts the representational conventions of another medium, it pursues an illusionism not unlike that of trompe l’œil. Trompe l’œil is typically understood according to its trick, as an exact imitation that is also wholly dependent upon its failure. But I want to suggest that this staging and testing of representational verisimilitude allow a return of the real by reminding viewers of what is at stake in representation – our corporeal bodies and lived experience.

Like digital image makers, Thomas Demand pursues the ‘perceptual realism’ of ‘perfect photographic credibility’ but through entirely analogue means. Demand reproduces in three-dimensional paper models the scene of a found photograph, only to re-photograph it. What initially seems to be a straightforward photograph is suddenly undone by a stray pencil mark – or other sign of handmade “digit”-alization. But his “digital” interventions return us to the body (his body) and to another capacity for the real. Like new media’s digital mimicry, his paper models are made to conform to the conventions of photographic realism; but our active recognition of this deceit returns us to our own bodies, as well as to the historical and ethical stakes of representing the real that motivated the initial photograph. Demand’s trompe l’œil strategy reinvests us in the stakes of recovering a real from representation’s inevitable fakery.

Carrie Robbins is a PhD Candidate in the Department of History of Art at Bryn Mawr College, specializing in Modern and Contemporary art with a focus on photography. She received her BA in Art History from Grinnell College in 2002 and her MA from Bryn Mawr College in 2008. She was a teaching assistant to Prof. Homay King in Bryn Mawr’s film department, a graduate assistant in Bryn Mawr's photography collection, and a research assistant to architectural historian, Prof. Barbara Miller Lane. Her Master's thesis engaged Michael Fried's recent work on contemporary photography, part of which grew into a paper, "Without Medium: A Consideration of Loss via Thomas Demand," that she presented at the Frick Collection in 2009. Carrie also co-chaired the 7th Biennial Graduate Student Symposium, "Thievery: The Anxiety of Influence and Appropriation," at Bryn Mawr in December 2009. She is beginning dissertation work advised by Prof. Steven Levine that reconsiders contemporary photographic strategies relative to trompe l’œil.

Mark Levy, “Magritte and the Triumph of the Simulacrum”

In “The Treason of Images” (1927-1928) Rene Magritte draws attention to the gap between image and reality. Here a painted image of a pipe is not a real pipe as the caption “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” affirms. In the words of the French linguistic philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) there is a difference between the “signifier” or sign or the “signified” or object. The signifier or sign is a simulacrum of the real thing. Of course, as Magritte demonstrates, the viewer often suspends disbelief in the reality of the signified and this is especially telling in” The Treason of Images” as the image of a pipe is simply a colored cartoon with modeling.

In the “Key of Dreams” (1930) Magritte also shows that words, the equivalent of images, are similarly arbitrary designations of things. An image of a glass, for example could just as easily be called,” L’Orage” which is usually designated to mean storm in French. As Saussure had already affirmed, signification is always determined by culture; there is no natural relation between the signifier and the

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signified. As I hope to demonstrate in this talk with examples from the work of Barbara Kruger and Vitaly Alex Komar and Melamid, Magritte’s paintings anticipate the Deconstructionist trope of adding or changing signifiers to bring out the hidden ideology behind so called natural signification. The reality of the signified is thus brought into question. Moreover, Magritte was a precursor of the free play of signifiers without signifieds that that is found in the postmodernist works of such artists as David Salle and Sigma Polke which I will also discuss in this talk. In beginning to pry loose the natural link between the signifier and the signified Magritte anticipates the triumph of the simulacrum and the erosion of the real in late 20th and early 21st century art and culture.

Mark Levy (Ph.D) has taught courses in modern European art, contemporary art, Asian art, and shamanism in art at Kenyon, College, The University of Nevada, Reno, John F. Kennedy University, and the San Francisco Art Institute. For the last twenty-eight years he has also taught at California State University, East Bay where is currently the senior Professor of Art History. He has written many reviews and articles for national and international publications and two books, Technicians of Ecstasy: Shamanism and the Modern Artist and Void/in Art, about the significance of emptiness in Eastern and Western art. He is currently finishing a new book Tantra, Art and Anarchy, and is designing a game for the IPod/IPad with graduate students from the multimedia department at California State University, East Bay based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead.