

Aesthetics as Critique: From the Critique of Aesthetics to a Decolonial Perspective

Seminar at University of Paris 8
Fr. 6:00-8:00 pm (Paris time)
March 10 - May 12 (break on April 28 and May 5)
<https://grammarsoflistening.wordpress.com/>

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This seminar departs from a broad conception of aesthetics as the realm in which, through our senses, perceptions and desires, sense is (re)framed, (re)distributed, and either made intelligible or rendered imperceptible (invisible, inaudible, untouchable). That is, aesthetics is understood as always already political and, if taken up critically, as a political task. The seminar will begin by focusing on some of the philosophical foundations of aesthetics at the end of 18th century in Germany and the important turn, at the beginning of the 19th century, from aesthetics to philosophy of art. Special attention will be paid to F. Schiller as a thinker who, starting from Kant's critique of aesthetics, will move towards a conception of *aesthetics as critique*. As we will see, such a conception will prove influential for G.W.F. Hegel's approach to the philosophical and historical role of art, as well as for later aesthetical-political approaches to critique (and the critical potential of art) such as those of the Frankfurt School in the first half of 20th century. Examining some of these more contemporary approaches (with particular attention to W. Benjamin and H. Marcuse), we will then turn to their interpellations, critiques and creative appropriations by Latin American and Caribbean thinkers, in order to explore the possible (dis)connections between aesthetics understood as a historical-political critical task and a decolonial perspective. The reading list for this section will include readings by Eduard Glissant, Sylvia Wynter, Nelly Richard and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, accompanied by concrete examples of Latin American artistic and cultural interventions.

For updates on the seminar sessions, announcements, and discussion forums after the seminar, refer to <https://grammarsoflistening.wordpress.com/>. All the readings will be uploaded online in a google drive. To access the drive and subscribe to the seminar's email list please send your name, institutional affiliation (if any) and short description of your interests to acostaparisviiiiseminars@gmail.com

Sessions/Readings:

Session 1 (April 2): **From Aesthetics as Critique to Decolonial Aesthetics** (general introduction)

Session 2 (April 9): **The Resistance of the Beautiful** Main readings: Kant, I. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, tr. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P, 2000) “Analytic of the beautiful,” special attention will be given to §1-5, §10-14 and §18-19; and Schiller, F. “*Kallias* or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Körner”, in *Classic and Romantics German Aesthetics*, ed. Jay M. Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 145-184.

Session 3 (April 16): **Beauty as Suspension: the Time of the Beautiful** Main readings: Kant, I. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, tr. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P, 2000) “Analytic of the beautiful,” special attention will be given to §9; Schiller, F. “Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Humankind,” in *Essays*, ed. Walter Hinderer and Daniel Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 2001): 86-178. Recommended: Marcuse, H. “The Aesthetic Dimension” in *Eros and Civilization: a Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955): 172-196

Session 4 (April 23): **Towards Art as a Historico-Critical Standpoint** Main readings: Hegel, G.W.F., *Lectures on Fine Art*, tr. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), Introduction (1-81) and the “Dissolution of the Romantic Form of Art” (595-611). Recommended: Benjamin, W. “Critique of Violence” (SW1, 236-252) and “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” (Third Version) (SW 4, 251-270).

Session 5 (May 14): **“Protesting Everything that Beauty is Not”** Special guest: Miguel Gualdrón Ramírez (University of North Texas). Main readings: Glissant, È. “In Praise of the Different and of Difference,” *Callaloo* 36.4 (2013) 856–862; Glissant, È. and Chamoiseau, P. “When the Walls Fall,” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 22:2 (2018) 259-270. Recommended: Glissant, È. *Treatise on the Whole-World* (Liverpool University Press, 2020) (selections TBA).

Session 6 (May 21): **Deciphering Aesthetics and Disenchanting Discourse** Main readings: Wynter, S. “Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’: Notes towards a Deciphering Practice,” in *Ex-iles: essays on Caribbean Cinema* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992), 237-280; Wynter, S. “On Disenchanting Discourse: ‘Minority’ Literary Criticism and beyond,” *Cultural Critique* Fall: 7 (1987) 207-244. Recommended: “Fleshing Out the Image #2: Zakiyyah Iman Jackson in conversation with Denise Ferreira da Silva” (<https://vimeo.com/484448662>)

Session 7 (May 28): **Aesthetics of the Fragmentary and Damaged Scripts** Main readings: Richard, N. “Ruptures, Memory and Discontinuities” in *The Insubordination of Signs: Political Change, Cultural Transformation, and Poetics of the Crisis*, Duke University Press, 2004, 1-21; Acosta, M.R. “Memory and Fragility: Art’s Resistance to Oblivion (three Colombian cases),” *New Centennial Review* 14:1 (2014) 71-98. Recommended: Benjamin, W. “The Storyteller”, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (NY: Schocken, 1969): 83- 110.

Session 8 (June 4): **Cacophonies of Memory and Textures of the Now** Main readings: Rivera Cusicanqui, S. “Palabras mágicas: reflexiones sobre la crisis presente” y “Oralidad, mirada y memoria del cuerpo en los Andes”, *Un mundo ch’ixi es posible* (Buenos Aires: Tinta limón, 2018) 93-134. (No translation available, we’ll read in English “Sociology of the Image: A View from Colonial Andean History” in *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa: On Decolonising Practices and Discourses*, tr. Molly Geidel (Cambridge: Polity, 2020): 12-45.) Recommended: De la Cadena, M. “The Eventfulness of the Ahistorical,” *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds* (Duke, 2015) 117-152; Rivera, O. “Resistant Epistemologies from the Andes (A Contribution to Latin American Philosophy),” *Journal of World Philosophies* 5 (2020) 76-88; Vallega, A. “Latin America’s Living Anachronic Temporalities,” in *Latin American Philosophy from Identity to Radical Exteriority* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014) 99-119.