



**INSTITUTE OF  
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RESEARCH**

**SCHOOL OF  
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## **Memories of the Future 29-30 March 2019**

### **Keynote Speakers' Abstracts**

#### **Stephen Bann (Bristol)**

##### ***Back to the Avant-Garde?***

Embedded in the discourse of European Modernist art is the notion of the 'avant-garde'. Deriving initially from the momentum generated by the French Revolution, this term had almost lost its political signification by the end of the nineteenth century, but received in its place a broader cultural mission. Typified initially by the Italian Futurist movement, the 'advanced' art of the Western world ultimately abandoned its agitational character, but did not relinquish its claim to centrality. As late as 1970, Clement Greenberg could claim: 'the avant-garde is left alone with itself, and the full possession of the "scene"'. Yet precisely around that date the forward-looking rhetoric typical of the historical avant-garde encountered a challenge. Generally equated with a shift to 'Post-modernism', the new artistic idioms of the 1970s and 1980s were in effect increasingly engaged with historical themes and backward-looking postures that predated the hegemony of the 'avant-garde'. This was the case with rising American painters such as Marden and Twombly; new European movements like Italian Arte Povera (Kounellis and Paolini in particular); and the onset of new occasions for thinking 'outside the box', such as the exhibition, 'A New Spirit in Painting' (1981). Having myself contributed both to the rediscovery of the Modernist avant-garde in the 1960s/70s, and to the ensuing development of a 'post-modern' consensus, I will look again at the stakes involved in this confrontation.

#### **Maurizio Ferraris (Turin)**

##### ***Give me Stalin and St Paul. The realisation of Communism in documedia capitalism***

What if communism had come true? What if the difficulties faced by the left depended on a realisation instead of a failure? Despite what we might say and think, we are the closest society to communism that history has ever known. If so, we should, as intellectuals, change our tone and come up with something new, instead of repeating the same old story that capitalism is bad and we should all regret communism. Communism is already here, in the ongoing revolution. It is a matter of understanding it and conceptualizing it. The workers have control of the means of production, there is no more alienation and division of labour, the society is classless and stateless, there is a new international, there is a dictatorship of the proletariat: in short, all the characteristics that Marx attributed to communism are very common in many contemporary societies that believe themselves to be capitalist.

##### ***Biography***

Maurizio Ferraris is full Professor of Philosophy at the University of Turin, where he is the Deputy Rector for Humanities Research and the President of the LabOnt – Center for Ontology. Directeur de recherche at the Collège d'études mondiales (Paris) and advisory member of the Center for Advanced Studies of South East Europe (Rijeka) and of the Internationales Zentrum Für Philosophie NRW, he is doctor honoris causa in Humanities at the University of Flores (Buenos Aires) and at University of Pécs. He has been Fellow of Käte-

Hamburger Kolleg “Recht als Kultur” (Bonn) and Fellow of the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America (Columbia University, New York) and of the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung. He has also been Directeur d'études of the Collège International de Philosophie and Visiting Professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris) as well as other European and American Universities. He is columnist for 'La Repubblica', the Director of 'Rivista di Estetica', of 'Critique', of 'Círculo Hermenéutico editorial' and of the 'Revue francophone d'esthétique'. He wrote more than fifty books that have been translated into several languages. Among them, *History of Hermeneutics* (Humanities Press, 1996); *A Taste for the Secret* (with Jacques Derrida – Blackwell, 2001); *Documentality or Why it is Necessary to Leave Traces* (Fordham UP, 2012); *Goodbye Kant!* (SUNY UP, 2013); *Where Are You? An Ontology of the Cell Phone* (Fordham UP, 2014); *Manifesto of New Realism* (SUNY UP, 2014); *Introduction to New Realism* (Bloomsbury, 2014). Maurizio Ferraris has worked in the field of Aesthetics, Hermeneutics, and Social Ontology, attaching his name to the theory of Documentality and contemporary New Realism. New Realism, sharing significant similarities with Speculative Realism and Object Oriented Ontology, has been the subject of several debates and national and international conferences and has called for a series of publications that involve the concept of reality as a paradigm even in non-philosophical areas.

## **Anna Reading (King's College, London)**

### ***A Future Memory Manifesto***

In 1905 George Santayana wrote, 'those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it'. Yet, despite all our archiving, recording, witnessing, remembering, memorialising, commemorating, and studying of looking back, humankind seems condemned: humanity and the planet are riven with wars, genocides, forced migrations and the daily extinctions of global warming. What then is the future of Memory Studies? Can you imagine a future way of studying memory that makes a difference? Perhaps we are condemned not because we remember too little but because we have forgotten to imagine the future.

This keynote proposes a Future Memory Manifesto – as an honest provocation to dialogue – not as a prescription. I explore how understanding the political economy of memory – how mnemonic labour accrues as mnemonic capital – highlights the importance of understanding the labour of the imaginary and capital of the future. I argue for innovative ways in which memory scholars can and should make use of disruptive methods - the utopian method and arts-based methodologies. I argue for an uprooting of memory work and Memory Studies from the soil of neurotypical human normalcy to an approach that grows from the insights of mnemonic neurodiversity with an openness to the full range of human senses. I argue for an extension of the growing emphasis on socially engaged and collaborative activist memory work into peaceful memory work. I argue for decentring the canon through non-Western approaches to the study of memory; and I argue for recognition of memory beyond human memory, including the rights of memory for non-human persons. What would you include in a Future Memory Manifesto? And, importantly, what mnemonic language might you craft and put to work?

### ***Biography***

Anna Reading is Professor of Cultural and Creative Industries at King's College, London, UK. She is Director of the Arts and Humanities Research Institute and the REACH Space at King's. She is the author and editor of numerous books including *Gender and Memory in the Global Age* (2016), *Cultural Memories of Nonviolent Struggles* with Tamar Katriel (2015), *Save As...Digital Memories* with Andrew Hoskins and Joanne Garde-Hansen, *The Social Inheritance of the Holocaust: Gender, Culture and Memory* (2002), *Communism, Capitalism and the Mass Media* with Colin Sparks (1999), *The Media in Britain* (with Jane Stokes) (1999) and *Polish Women, Solidarity and Feminism* (1992). She is the author of seven plays produced in theatres in India, Poland, the UK and the US. She is the joint Managing Editor of the journal *Media, Culture and Society*. Some of her recent socially engaged memory work *Moving Hearts: Exploring the Right to Belong* can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/wVHFnnbFW1g>.