



TORONTO FILM & MEDIA SEMINAR

SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY



This panel explores issues related to affect, aesthetics, and modes of knowing/observation in sensory ethnography, an emerging and increasingly influential trend within visual anthropology based on a rethinking of established ethnographic methods. While it has been in the anthropological field's spotlight and gained a momentum through the aid of digital technologies since the 1990s, sensory ethnography also took the documentary world by storm following the release and critical acclaim of Lucien Castaing-Taylor and V  r  na Paravel's film *Leviathan* in 2012. Contextualizing the trend 4 years later, **Joshua Neves's** paper, "Onlooking," will take up a set of questions regarding digital technologies, ethnography, and media studies. It will draw on research projects and collaborations with SEL filmmakers (such as JP Sniadecki's *The Iron Ministry*), as well as a new research initiative—the Global Emergent Media Lab—he is currently establishing at Concordia University. Taking SEL projects as a starting point, the talk will explore shifts or intensities in emergent media culture (including discourses of the non-participating observer, the rubbernecker, the onlooker, etc.). Finally, Joshua Neves will speculate about the possibilities of sensory or digital ethnography for doing media studies (ie: beyond the anthropological and fine arts contexts and questions). Shifting the focus from modes of looking to feeling, **Alanna Thain's** paper "Everyday Apparitions: Sensory Ethnography's Formal Feelings," will consider sensory ethnography in relation to the affective and temporal turns in cinema theory, specifically in relation to new questions of form provoked by digital media. The paper will ask: how does sensory ethnography as an ethic-aesthetical practice rely on forms of vagueness, ambiguity and intensity characteristic of affective modes of knowing?

Joshua Neves is Assistant Professor of Film Studies at Concordia University. His

research centers on global emergent media forms and practices, cultural and political theory, contemporary Chinese cinema and TV, urbanism, and anthropology of media. He is currently co-editing a collection examining Asian Video Cultures for Duke University Press, and completing a book manuscript exploring the role of media technologies in shaping urbanism, development, and political society in Olympic era China. His work has appeared in *Social Text*, *Discourse*, *Film Quarterly*, *Sarai*, *Cinema Journal*, and the *Media Fields Journal*, among others.

Alanna Thain is associate professor of English and World Cinemas at McGill University. She is also the director of the Moving Image Research Laboratory, devoted to the study of the body in relation to moving image media. Her first book, *Bodies in Time: Affect, Suspense, Cinema*, is forthcoming from University of Minnesota Press in 2015. Her current research explores intersections of dance and film in post-digital cinema and intermedial dance performance. Recent publications include “Sonic ethnographies: *Leviathan* and New Materialisms in Documentary,” with Selmin Kara in *Music and Sound in Documentary Film* and “Welcome to This Situation: Tino Sehgal’s Impersonal Ethics” with Toni Pape and Noemie Solomon in *Dance Research Journal* (December 2014).

Moderated by **Selmin Kara**, Assistant Professor of Film and New Media at OCAD University.

Friday 4 March 2016, 4pm (refreshments), 4:30 (presentations)
TIFF Bell Lightbox Learning Studios, 3rd floor
350 King St W, Toronto ON M5V 3X5