

# Conventions of Proximity in Art, Theatre and Performance

**Thursday 5 May, 1-6pm  
& Friday 6 May, 10am-6pm**



Co-hosted by **Birkbeck Centre for Contemporary Theatre** and **Birkbeck Interdisciplinary Research in Media and Culture**, and supported by **Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities** and **Birkbeck Institute for the Moving Image**.



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Immersive experience is increasingly celebrated in contemporary theatre, visual art and exhibition culture - promising to bring audiences into close and often interactive relationships with artistic work. What are the politics, possibilities and problems of such an eradication of distance and what other forms of proximity exist within contemporary and historic examples of cultural experience?

**Conventions of Proximity in Art, Theatre and Performance** investigates forms of nearness and distance from numerous perspectives: dramaturgical, curatorial, affective, social, conceptual, virtual, geographical. Over a day and a half, artists and writers will share their work on proximity as an idea and as a practice. From the early modern to the contemporary, in examples drawn from southeast Asia to the global north, the symposium explores proximity in relation to a diverse range of topics, including digital networks, architectural design, home, public space, cinema, loneliness, friendship, listening, darkness, museum display, and music.

On **Thursday 5 May**, researchers and practitioners will share their work in parallel panel presentations, from which attenders can make a selection.

On **Friday 6 May**, film screenings, panel presentations, workshops and a performance installation will run in parallel, from which attenders can make a selection.

**Throughout the symposium**, the Peltz Gallery hosts *First Edition - Identity* (2016), an exhibition by RELAPSE collective. Works by Vasiliki Antonopoulou, Nikolas Kasinos, Dimitros Michailidis and Penelope Koliopoulou will explore communication, selfhood, sexuality and fantasy. In the foyer, artist and Birkbeck PhD student Bruno Roubicek presents digital documentation of his performance *Man Digs Pond* (2013), a 24-hour durational work staged in the garden of La Comédie de Reims, presented as part of the festival Reims Scènes d'Europe 2013.

## Schedule

Select sessions require sign-up at registration – please see the info attached to each session below.

*Thursday 5 May*

**12.30-1pm Registration (outside Cinema)**

**1pm Introduction (Cinema)**

**1.30-3pm Parallel panels**

### **Performing proximities (Cinema)**

- Poppy Corbett (Royal Holloway, University of London), “When *Lady in Red* plays, dance with the person next to you”: loneliness and intimacy in Kim Noble’s *You’re Not Alone*’
- Sofia Apospori (Independent scholar), ‘Performative darkness and the “non-capitalist economy of the gift society”’
- Leah Sidi (Birkbeck College, University of London), ‘A dramaturgy of mind? Sarah Kane and alternative mental life’

*No sign-up required - first come, first seated.*

### **Curating relations (Keynes Library)**

- Deborah Schultz (Regent’s University, London), ‘Proximity and the viewer in contemporary curating practices’
- Efrosini Protopapa (University of Roehampton), ‘The Friend at Work’
- Je Yun Moon (Goldsmiths College, University of London), ‘A Proximity Event’

*As it contains an element of performance, this panel has a maximum capacity of 20 – first come, first seated.*

**3-3.30pm Coffee (outside Cinema)**

**3.30-5pm Parallel panels**

### **Everyday acts (Keynes Library)**

- Malcolm Ferris (Plymouth College of Art), ‘Pacts of proximity: embracing the call to a distant idea’
- Sue Wiseman (Birkbeck College, University of London), ‘Village stages? Early modern ‘local’ performances’
- Emma Bennett (Queen Mary, University of London), “‘People always say to me...’: funniness, citationality and trespass in Stewart Lee’s *90s Comedian*’

*No sign-up required - first come, first seated.*

### **Digital proximities (Cinema)**

- Jane Frances Dunlop (University of Brighton), ‘Care as proximity in internet-situated performance’
- Eirini Nedelkopoulou (York St. John University), ‘Reconsidering networks of proximity’
- William W. Lewis (University of Colorado, Boulder), ‘Performing “Post-Human” Spectatorship: Digital Proximity in Intermedial Narratives’

*No sign-up required - first come, first seated.*

**5-6pm Drinks at a local pub**

Friday 6 May

**9-9.45am                      Coffee (outside Cinema)**

**9.45-11am                      Opening plenary (Cinema)**

- Alison Green (Central Saint Martins) 'Home Bodies: Carolee Schneemann's Domestic Spaces'
- Nicholas Ridout (Queen Mary, University of London), 'I Love Stadium Seating': Ryan Trecartin, Lizzie Fitch and 'the Audience Revolution'
- Victoria Walsh (Royal College of Art), 'Spatial Paradoxes and Temporal Uncertainties in the Art Museum: *New Brutalist Image 1949-55*'

**11-11.30am                      Coffee (outside Cinema)**

*During the coffee break, Caroline Astell-Burt presents her two-minute piece 'Closer Encounters ("theatre for one")'. Find her adjacent to the coffee space.*

**11.30am-1pm                      First session (various spaces)**

**Proximity on Film (Cinema)**

- Guy Sherwin, *Messages* (1981-84) 16mm, black and white, silent, 36 minutes.
- Gunvor Nelson, *Red Shift* (1984) 16mm, black and white, sound, 50 minutes.

*No sign-up required - first come, first seated.*

**Dialogue on Darkness II: Theatre in the Dark in the 21st Century (G02) (11.30-12.30pm)**

- Liam Jarvis (University of Essex), with Adam Alston (University of Surrey) and Martin Welton (Queen Mary, University of London)

*No sign-up required - first come, first seated.*

**Panel: Object relations (G04)**

- Sadiyah Boonstra (Royal Holloway, University of London/British Museum), 'Absence of proximity: shadow theatre performance and exhibition practices'
- Silke Arnold de Simine (Birkbeck College, University of London), 'Too close for comfort? Challenging heritage in uncanny encounters'
- Fiona Candlin (Birkbeck College, University of London), 'Unsanctioned touch'

*No sign-up required - first come, first seated.*

**Workshop (G10)**

- Peadar Kirk & Teoma Jackson Naccarato, 'Intimate Listening'

*This workshop has a maximum capacity of 14. Sign up at the registration desk – first come, first served.*

**1-2.30pm                      Lunch**

**2.30-4pm                      Second session (various spaces)**

**Proximity on Film (Cinema)**

- Stephen Dwoskin, *Shadows from Light. The Photography of Bill Brandt* (1983) 16mm (transferred to BluRay), black and white, sound, 59 minutes.

*No sign-up required - first come, first seated.*

**Interactive installation (I12)**

- Sheila Ghelani, *Slow Story Slide Show*

*This installation is 15 minutes long for 10 participants at a time – drop in anytime.*

**Panel: Aural proximities (G04)**

- Ella Finer (Syracuse University London Program), 'Far Stretch: listening as long distance performance'

- Simon Smith (Queen's College, Oxford), 'Close harmony: locations for musical performance at Jacobean indoor playhouses'

*No sign-up required - first come, first seated.*

**Workshop (G10)**

- Fourthland, 'How far a way are we?'

*This workshop has a maximum capacity of 12. Sign up at the registration desk – first come, first served.*

**4-4.30pm                      Coffee (outside Cinema)**

*During the coffee break, Caroline Astell-Burt presents her two-minute piece 'Closer Encounters ("theatre for one")'. Find her adjacent to the coffee space.*

**4.30-5.30pm                      Keynote (Cinema)**

- Maaike Bleeker (University of Utrecht), 'So Close Yet So Far Away: the Proximity of the Universe'

**5.30-6.30pm                      Drinks (G10)**