

The Screening Protest Symposium

a Global Media Café
at the Department of Media Studies, Karlavägen 104
JMK-salen, 4th floor
Thursday 8 November 2018



Welcome to a day of presentations about turbulent politics in troubled times and above all mediations of protest, designed to start a conversation with colleagues, students, interested members of the public and kindred spirits from abroad about the issues at the heart of the Screening Protest Project and to celebrate the publication of a project anthology.

9:00-10:30

Higher Seminar/Public lecture

From Cold War to Information War: RT and the global media environment

Professor Stephen Hutchings, University of Manchester

The theme of propaganda has dominated much media coverage of the Skripal spy poisoning scandal and recent interference in the elections of various Western countries, including Sweden in the autumn of 2018. In this context, a narrative has emerged which sets the Kremlin at the centre of a web of cyber-warriors and media machinery, all centrally coordinated to attach a single audience. At this seminar, Hutchings explains why the reality is much more complicated, and Russian media discourses are more complex than often presented. This matters, as such misrepresentations of Russian media strategies undermine efforts to tackle them, and feed spirals of mutual hostility.

Coffee & sandwiches, 10:30 - 11:00

11:00-12:30

Book Launch

Screening Protest. Visual Narratives of Dissent Across Time, Space and Genre

(Routledge 2018)

Introduction and overview of the book (Alexa Robertson)

While often overlooked in the excitement surrounding digital media, the screen provides a fruitful, analytical focus and brings together a range of scholarly perspectives on the study of protest mediations on television and in film. In this brief overview, Robertson explains how the book (and the project from which it emerged) explores how visual narratives of protest wander across borders - territorial, temporal and generic. Chapters compare coverage of major protests in recent history by global news channels and consider how geopolitical agendas, newsroom culture and the ubiquity of eyewitness footage shape the narration of global protest events. Twinned with the concept of screen, a focus on narrative makes it possible to compare such news stories with popular cultural depictions of the protester, in films and television series such as *The Hunger Games*, *Robin Hood* and *Suffragette*.

Protests on global television: visualizing newsworlds, violence and voice (Luiza-Silvia Chiroiu)

With the scholarly literature highlighting the increasingly transnational nature of contemporary protest, this presentation explores the extent to which protest is depicted as a 'global' issue on television news. It compares the depiction of protest between 2011 and 2018 in the newsworlds of four global news channels – BBC World (BBCW), CNN International, (CNNI) Al Jazeera English (AJE) and RT (formerly Russia Today) – each moored in a different cultural setting and with a different relation to political power, using visualization of quantitative data to clarify the complex interface between world politics in turbulent times and a rapidly evolving media landscape.

Whose 'voice' do we see? Images of protest in visual journalism on screen (Karin Becker)

In this contribution, Becker looks at still and moving images of protest on global news screens. Despite finding many visual themes in common, she argues that there are distinct contrasts that cannot be accounted for only by differences of medium. For the broadcast journalist, it has become common to film from street-level, jostled by the crowd and engulfed in teargas when the conflict turns violent. The visual style is participatory, and includes visual attributes similar to amateur footage. In contrast, still photographs from these protests often adhere to a style that is less 'documentary' and more 'expressionistic', to use Solaroli's distinction. She concludes by reflecting on these styles as representing different professional responses to user-generated content, and as visualizing different voices.

Militant Suffrage on Screen (Krista Cowman, University of Lincoln)

Against the backdrop of the centenary of 'Votes for Women' in the UK, Cowan explores the main screen representations of the British Women's Suffrage campaign. The flamboyant campaigns of the Women's Social and Political Union, the largest militant society, were at their height as public cinemas arrived in Britain. Cowman argues that the Union's large 'set piece' demonstrations as well as its smaller more violent actions proved irresistible to newsreel photographers while opponents of the campaign were able to enjoy comic feature films that ridiculed the potential of suffrage to disrupt gender roles. From century-old depictions of suffrage on screen, through *Fame is the Spur* (1947), *Mary Poppins* (1964), *Shoulder to Shoulder* (1974), and up to *Suffragette* (2015), she discusses why women's suffrage has struggled to come to screen as well as fruition.

Strategic Narratives of Protest on Global Television News (Alexa Robertson & Stephen Hutchings)

In an encounter between the Screening Protest and Reframing Russia projects, the final presentation of the morning focuses on the role of mediations of dissent in the global information war. Robertson talks about the strategic use of speaking actors is compared across protests and newsroom discourses, as reported by five global broadcasters with different relations to geopolitical power - the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine, those that began in Ferguson in the US, and the Occupy Central or 'Umbrella' protests in Hong Kong - with a response by Hutchings.

Lunch break, 12:30 - 13:30

Symposium, 13:30 - 17:00

13:30 - 14:30

Creative Interruptions (presentation by Aditi Jaganathan, Brunel University London)

A member of the Creative Interruptions research team, Jaganathan will present a study that analyses how different generations of Black and Asian activists in the UK have mobilised screen media. A central concern is to better understand the motivations of those cultural activists, from the 1980s to the present day, who have selected either film or digital platforms as a space for resistance. Through a process of co-creation, different constituents involved in anti-racist screen activism (producers, archivists, campaigners) are brought together in the project, which seeks to reconceptualise creative screen production of the Black and Asian diaspora. In focus are the 'screen-based creative and artistic strategies' of creative activists.

[More about the Creative Interruptions Project](#)

Respondent: Nadja Schaetz

Coffee & fruit, 14:30 - 15:00

15:00 - 17:00

You Say You Want a Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966-70 - film screening & discussion (Victoria Broackes, Emily Harris, Geoffrey Marsh, V&A)

The exhibition with this title, that originated at London's V&A and is now on tour, explores how the years 1966-70 shook the foundations of post-WWII society and shaped the lives we live today. They set the agenda that is at the heart of the current fierce struggle between Western liberal values and Fundamentalism of all sorts, but also saw an optimistic idealism that motivated people to come together and question established power structures. Lines can be traced from the civil rights movement to multiculturalism, from the permissive society to feminism and gay liberation, from the hippie movement to environmentalism. The exhibition also documents how - somewhat contradictorily - the period heralded the commodification of sharing and led to surveillance culture and screen overload. The exhibition provokes visitors into questioning how far these revolutions have come and what still needs to be done, and serves as an impactful reminder of the power of protest and performance. A new film by award-winning director Emily Harris documents the interaction of the public with this past, and gives unprecedented access to behind-the-scenes stories from some of the key people who demonstrated, agitated, acted, organised and galvanised the revolutions of the late 1960s. It includes interviews with Yoko Ono, Michael Lang (organiser of the Woodstock festival), Jonas Mekas (godfather of American avant-garde cinema), Twiggy and others. As well as a screening of the film, the curators of the exhibition will give insights, at this session, into their curatorial process and share stories about the meeting between artefact and public, and between exhibition and screen.

[More about the V&A exhibition](#)

Respondent: Karin Becker

Sparkling Protest, from 17:00

bubbles and snacks to celebrate the publication of the book
and to stimulate continued conversation

Invited Speakers

- Krista Cowman Professor of History and Director of Research, University of Lincoln, previously from the School of Cultural Studies, Leeds Metropolitan University. She is a specialist on women and politics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the suffrage movement, and community campaigns in the inter-war era through which women attempted to shape and control their environments. She was a consultant on *Suffragette*, the film starring Carey Mulligan, Helena Bonham Carter and Meryl Streep.
- Victoria Broackes Senior Curator and
Geoffrey Marsh Director of London's V&A Department of Theatre and Performance. Broackes and Marsh were co-curators of the *David Bowie Is* and *You Say You Want a Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966-70* exhibitions.
- Emily Harris Film-maker whose awards include Best Director (for *Love is Thicker than Water*, Bracine Portugal), Best Feature Film (*Borges and I*, London Independent Film Festival) and Best Short Film (*Three Towers*, Raindance). She is Head of Digital Recording at the V&A Museum, where she creates film content for the Theatre and Performance Department.
- Stephen Hutchings Professor of Russian Studies at the University of Manchester, and formerly Professor of Cultural Studies and Russian at the University of Surrey. He is the director of the 'Reframing Russia' project, which takes as its starting point the radical reconfiguration of national identities and interests on the global stage by transformations in the global news media landscape. It explores the complex reality of RT, which is too often dismissed as a mouthpiece of the Putin regime, and the consequences of the mediatization of political conflict.
- Aditi Jaganathan PhD student at the Media, Culture and Communications at Brunel University London, who does work on Black British film and anti-racist activism. Aditi is a member of the Creative Interruptions project.