

Sydney Seminar for the
Arts and Philosophy

Is there thought without language (in art)?

Seminar

The Sydney Seminar for the Arts and Philosophy

is an attempt to create a space in which academics, artists, journalists, arts advocates and the public can exchange ideas about what art is and what it can do.

What do we mean when we use the word 'thought'? For much of the 20th century there has been a tendency to largely discount notions that there can be thought outside language. Analytic philosophy and Structuralism, two of the most important 20th century critical movements, while otherwise divergent, have at their base theories of language. The term 'the linguistic turn' has been coined to describe this tendency. Yet, many questions arise because of it. Do animals think, for example? And can people have experiences 'outside' language?

There have been other approaches to the problem: the still influential 19th century semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce suggested that many things can work as signs to other things. More recently the philosopher Michel Serres has again turned to the ancient idea that the universe itself 'thinks'. For Serres, kinds of memory inhere in things other than people: the rings of trees hold memories of what have gone before, as do rock formations, accumulations of ice and soil, and words themselves through their etymology. Serres wants to ask why we believe only humans think.



On another front, cognitive science has begun to challenge the dominance language has held over questions of thought by suggesting that we think through the emotions and sensations as much as through language.

This is a many-sided problem. In this seminar four distinguished panellists: a novelist, a composer, a linguist, and a philosopher who takes a special interest in cognitive science, will each consider this question from their own perspective (each speaking for 15 minutes in accessible language). There will then be an equal amount of time for questions.

(Coordinator), Anthony Uhlmann (UWS); (Assistant coordinator), Gabrielle Carey (UWS); (co-convenor) Louise D’Arcens (Uni of Wollongong); (co-convenor) Robert Sinnerbrink (Macquarie Uni)

Patrons/Advisors:

Stephen Barker
Herbert Blau
Bruno Clément
J.M. Coetzee
Paula Latos-Valier
Terence Maloon
Wayne McKenna
Robyn Nevin
Paul Patton
Peggy Phelan
Andrew Riemer
Kathy Woodward

Seminar 2:

Saturday, August 21, 2004

5.00pm – 7.00pm

Rec Hall or Auditorium (depending on numbers),

Parramatta Campus

University of Western Sydney

<http://www.uws.edu.au/about/locations/parramatta>

Admission is Free, but it is essential to RSVP to book your place.

RSVP: 02 9852 4410

Is There Thought Without Language (in art)?

Convenor: Anthony Uhlmann (Humanities, UWS)

Panel: Anne Boyd (Composer, Professor of Music, Uni of Sydney)

J. M. Coetzee (Nobel Prize winning Novelist)

John Sutton (Philosopher, Macquarie Uni)

Anna Wierzbicka (Linguist, ANU)

Seminar Three will be 'Art and Allegory', Convened by Louise D'Arcens (Uni of Wollongong), at the Art Gallery of NSW, October, 2004.

www.uws.edu.au/sydneyseminar