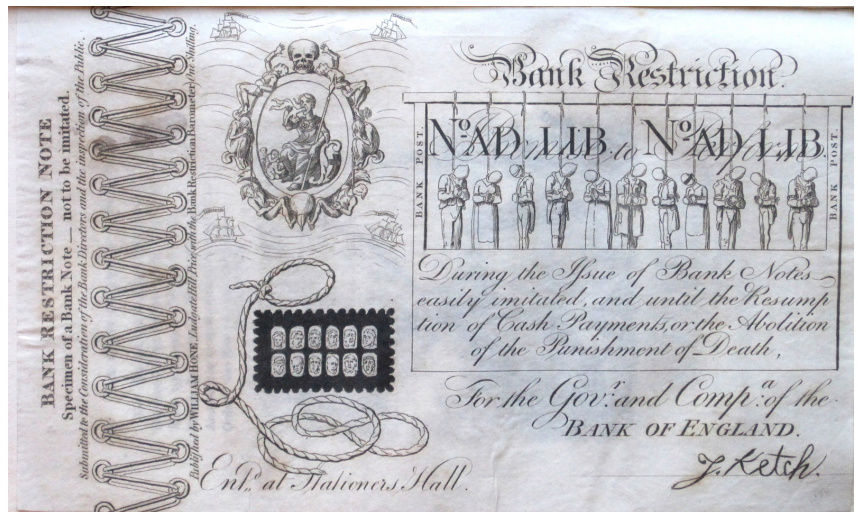


# RESEARCH SEMINARS 2015-16

All are welcome to join us for TVAD Talks, held regularly on the second Wednesday of each month during term in AA191 (Art and Design Building). Note that the 9<sup>th</sup> December session is in 1A159, exceptionally. We start at 12.45 with a buffet lunch for a 1 pm research presentation and discussion after.

**Weds 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015 – ‘The Comic Electric: A Digital Comics Symposium’ Convened by Daniel Merlin Goodbrey**, University of Hertfordshire’s School of Creative Arts and Dr Alison Gazzard, London Knowledge Lab at the UCL Institute of Education, this is a joint symposium between three of the School of Creative Art’s research groups; TVAD (Theorising Visual Arts and Design), G+VERL (Games and Visual Effects Research Lab) and The Media Research Group, in conjunction with the DARE (Digital Arts Research Education) research centre at the UCL Institute of Education.



**Weds 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015 – ‘Britannia at the Bank of England’, Dr Anne L. Murphy, Head of History**

The Bank of England adopted the symbol of Britannia at its foundation in 1694 and since that time she has appeared on all banknotes, on a variety of other documents issued by the Bank and in statuary and images within the Bank’s public spaces and on its external architecture. Britannia with her strong and warlike iconography and close associations with trade, industry and profit offered a clear statement of the Bank’s aims and, indeed, the goals of the British state during the long eighteenth century. She also provided a stark contrast with the vapid and vacillating ‘Lady Credit’ images generated during the early eighteenth century by writers such as Addison, Steele and Defoe. Arguably ‘Lady Credit’ represented the worst aspects of an economy becoming more and more reliant on credit, while Britannia represented the security offered by an institution which appeared to resist the temptation to speculate.

This talk will explore why and how the Bank of England used the symbol of Britannia. It will also consider how the public witnessed and understood Britannia as representative of the Bank’s role in underpinning the financial promises of the state.

Weds 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 – N.B. In room 1A159 - 'Inside Out: Dialogic Space in Contemporary Arts Education',  
Dr Rebecca Thomas, Programme Leader, Photography

This paper considers the metaphor and practice of the picnic as well as other staff-led responses to the increasing marketisation of higher education. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogical exchange as outlined in his seminal work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984), the piece reports on how Creative Arts staff at the University of Hertfordshire are working alongside students on a cross-discipline, collaborative book. As with the picnic-related excursions, this project emphasises the potential of working outside the University as an antidote to the market's corporate pressures, as well as the benefits gained when space is made for a genuinely creative approach.







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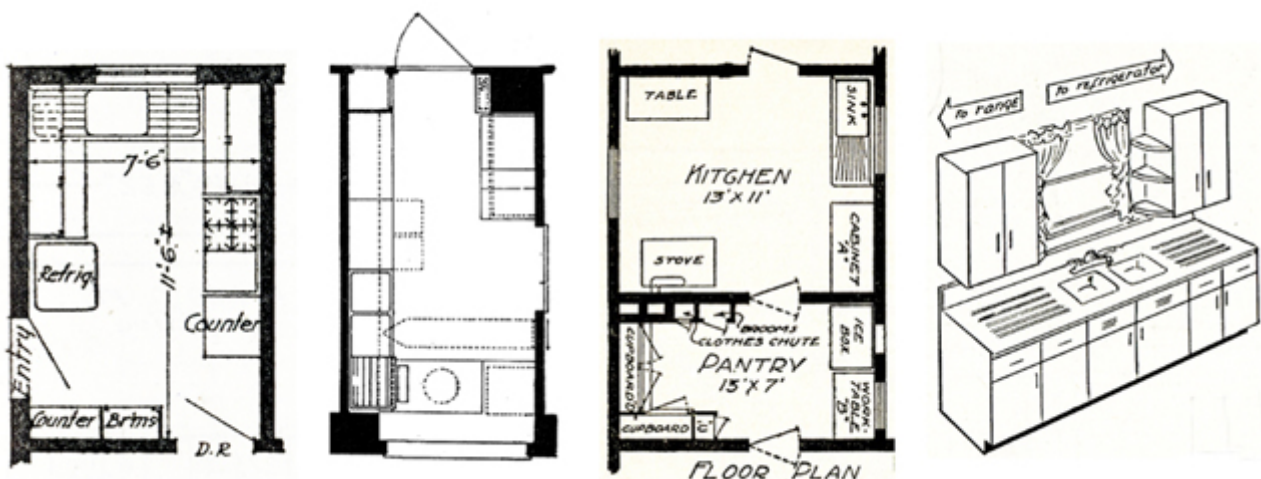
**Weds 13<sup>th</sup> January 2016 – ‘Not Mere Messengers or Window Dressers: Understanding Social Contexts for Graphic Design’, Dr Grace Lees-Maffei, Programme Director for DHeritage, the Professional Doctorate in Heritage and TVAD Research Group Leader**

Graphic designers are wrongly perceived as mere messengers, engaged in superficial ‘window dressing’, beautifying and delivering content for others, who are classed as originators. I aim to counter these unhelpful stereotypes by examining the work of graphic designers as a vital channel of discourse between individuals and society. My approach avoids aesthetic value judgments, and I do not set out to focus on the most beautiful, or iconic work in graphic design (although I have examined aesthetics and iconicity in design elsewhere). Rather, informed by cultural sociology and theories of semiotics and post-structuralism, and the work of designers and commentators on modernism, postmodernism and legibility, I ask: What kinds of messages are delivered through graphic design, how are they delivered, and why? I will analyse various graphic design media, from logo design to fashion magazines. This choice of examples will underline the ubiquity of graphic design in contemporary life and its social function. Historians of graphic design have dwelt, perhaps understandably, on the most arresting or innovative examples of work by celebrated designers. Yet, design is a complex social process involving design teams and input from clients and users. Following in the wake of recent work in design history and neighbouring fields which has countered a latently canonical approach by foregrounding everyday design, design failures and amateur design practices, I show how even the most demotic example of graphic design can be effective in performing social labour. A greetings card, which would be dismissed as schmaltzy in the art colleges and design studios populated by innovative and creative designers, can be just as effective in expressing the card giver’s care for its recipient as one which would garner their approval. By looking beyond the recognised aesthetic norms, and standard chronologies of graphic design, we can recognise graphic design as socially profound.

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**Weds 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016 – ‘You’re toast! What happened when modernist designers met subversive consumers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century kitchen’, Dr Susan Parham, Head of Urbanism, Centre for Sustainable Communities**

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century kitchens became highly contested territory, caught between designers’ certainties and users’ unruly responses to their architectural and technological design interventions. Drawing on design research documented in my recent book, *Food and Urbanism* (2015), in this talk I explore how the foodspace of the kitchen became a critical design site for fascinating battles about spatial behaviour and cultural meaning.



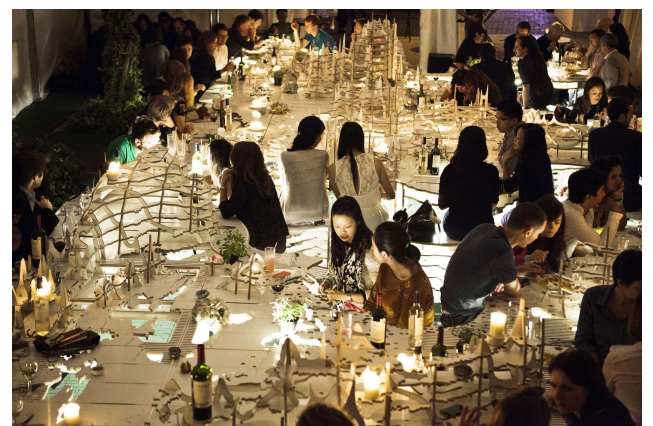
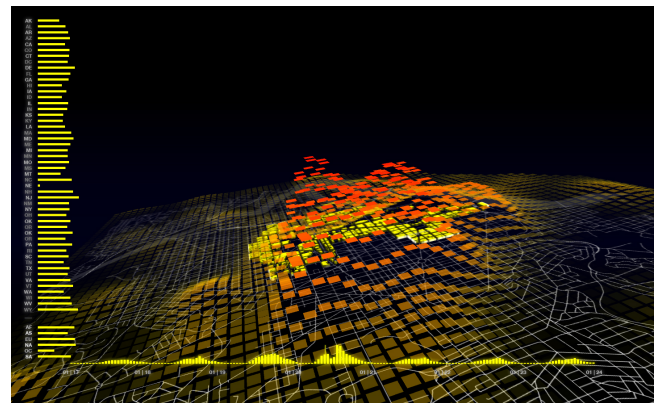
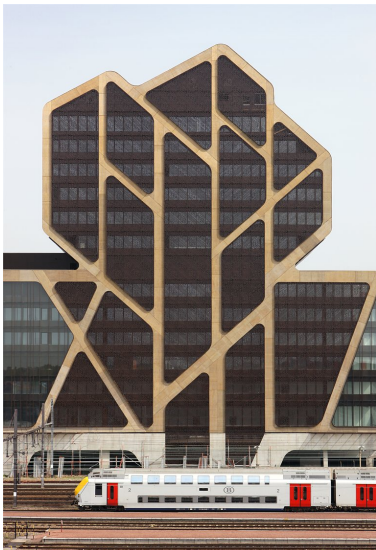


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**Weds 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016 – The Architecture of Information: Data, People and Public Space, Dr Silvio Carta, Programme Leader Architecture, Interior Architecture and Design**

The advent of digital information in design and architecture in the last thirty years has resulted in radical shifts across all facets of design. Today for the first time in history people have the possibility to be actively involved in the design of the public space, with their voice being heard, and their opinion being compiled, processed, and translated into physical transformation of the built environment. The current design arena –increasingly dominated by the presence of data- will likely allow a new generation of space and public realm which represents the future challenge for both architects and citizens in the coming years.

Albeit the current panorama is alluring, the architectural discipline is far from being utterly ready to the major shift that we are all facing, and that will be crucially important in the coming years. There still are large grey areas about methodologies to be employed, limits and potentials of the use of data to understand people and their use of space, legal, moral and ethical concerns in using and publishing data. The use of data needs to be cautiously considered in its objectivity, accuracy, context, accessibility, quantity and quality. How our buildings –traditionally characterised by robustness, solidity and long-spanning life are changing as consequence of the information era? How is the process of making in design -from jewellery and small objects to the scale of the territory- being dramatically modified by the use of data? How are designers changing their ways of working and thinking? How is the notion of “people” within the context of smart cities moving from a general and standardised group to a systematic ensemble of individuals? How do citizens perceive the public realm today through the multitude of social media and phone apps? How do they use it? What do they think of it? How is their contribution expressed in form of data actually changing –perhaps like never before- the way we see, think of and design our cities? Ultimately, how will the augmented public space of tomorrow look like?





**Weds 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016 – ‘Secret Cinema and the spatialisation of the filmic experience’, Kim Walden, Senior Lecturer in Film and Television Cultures in the School of Creative Arts**

In the light of changes to the way we view films today with the advent of small screens and solitary viewings, this presentation will look at the phenomena of Secret Cinema that turns films into live events at ‘secret’ locations across London. Focussing on a recent Secret Cinema event in the suburb of West Croydon in which a vacant 13 storey office block was transformed into the story world of Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil* (1985), this presentation will consider the consequences of the spatialisation of the film experience for the spectator.

To investigate the experience, three key strategies deployed by Secret Cinema will be explored: scaled up film props, in-event screenings and sound scapes. Then the presentation will go on to explore how the theories of Roland Barthes’ in *The Pleasure in the Text* (1973) and Espen Aarseth’s in *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (1997) can both be deployed to understand the audience experience of these events. Aarseth suggests these new media forms are as much ideological as anything else, constructed through their difference (and presumed superiority) to prior media experiences, but this presentation will conclude that secret cinema’s film event creates a sense of tmesis and disorientation for their audiences which is a far cry from Barthes’ promise of ‘textual bliss’.



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**Weds 11<sup>th</sup> May 2016 – ‘Technology and Heritage - predictions from the Millennium - what really happened next?’ Helen Casey, DHeritage, Professional Doctorate in Heritage**

At the turn of the millennium, when the internet was new, it seemed that, for heritage professionals, a shiny new dawn awaited. Technology would allow records to be digitised, artefacts to be experienced through virtual reality, and expertise to be shared worldwide at the touch of a button. Technology would democratise our heritage, allowing more people to access, experience and learn from it.

At the same time, there were warnings that the use of gaudy information screens in exhibitions would distract from the object, immersive technology allowing sensory perception would cheapen and simplify the visitor experience, and expensive technology used to digitise and share heritage would become obsolete within ten or even five years, wasting valuable resources and creating a ‘digital black hole’ where digitised artefacts would go to die.

So, what really happened next? And how can we plan ahead in a world of rapid and unpredictable technological change?