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Subscription to RAHL happens electronically. To subscribe, go to:

<http://mailman.depaul.edu/mailman/listinfo/rahl>

Provide the information requested and you will be automatically signed up. For questions, contact the list moderator, Paul Jaskot, at pjaskot@depaul.edu

Editorial: Change, Anyone?

It's difficult not to be both exhilarated and depressed all at once these days. Barack Obama's election is epochal for all the right reasons. It's brought a national legacy of racism and eight years of atrocity closer to a close than they might otherwise be. But how much good change Obama's administration will shepherd through remains to be seen. In the meantime, fewer and fewer of us have any change, good or bad, to spare.

RAC members have been conducting an important discussion over how, for what purposes, and in what form we can and should make our voice heard in what we are told will be a more receptive Washington.

CAA President (and RACer) Paul Jaskot and CAA Executive Director Linda Downs issued a letter on January 14, 2009 to the Obama transition team advocating increased arts funding and support in the new administration (for full text go to: <http://www.collegeart.org/news/category/advocacy/>).

Fred Lonidier, meanwhile, has drafted a resolution on public funding for the arts based on recent member conversations on our RAHL listserv. That resolution will be presented to the Service to the Artists Committee on Wednesday of the CAA conference, which will, in turn, make a recommendation to the CAA Board.

These advocacy attempts are crucial. But they are up

against stiff odds. Fortunately, the \$50 million for the NEA cut from the Senate version of the economic stimulus bill was returned and made part of the package that Obama signed into law on February 17. But arts organizations and institutions are nonetheless in various stages of freefall across the country.

At stake are jobs, livelihoods, critical and cultural dissent, and the continued misappropriation of funds for war and corporate welfare. Mike Alewitz and other RAC members made this plain in our recent RAHL listserv discussion. Under the circumstances, it is more important than ever that RAC keep its voice to the left. How, when, and where we do that continues to be up for discussion and action. If we don't impress on the Obama administration—and CAA—the 'root' of our current calamity and what social and economic justice demands regarding the arts, who will?

Barbara McCloskey

Thank You

Thanks to Greg Sholette's capitalist fundraising drive last year, RAC members, through annual dues and the good will of several extraordinarily generous benefactors (you know who you are!) plumped up our coffers to the tune of about \$1800. With that extra boost, we were able to offer RAC Scholar/Activist Grants for the first time to two of our panel speakers this year, RAC members Henrik

Lebuhn and Benjamin Gerdes. Theirs were among the many high-quality submissions sent in for our two panels, both organized and chaired by our RAC presidents, Kirsten Forkert and Karen Kurczynski. See below for a description of their timely sessions on "Migration Struggles and Migratory Aesthetics."

Other changes resulting from the capitalist fundraising drive have involved upgrades and updates to the RAC website, which now features PAYPAL in response to member requests (go the RAC website and click the "donate" link).

We are also hosting a reception at CAA this year (Thursday at 5:30-7:00pm, La Cienega Room, Westin Bonaventure Hotel). We hope to see you there. Please bring interested friends and colleagues along to help us celebrate Year One of the stimulus with a fiscally responsible array of (cheap) wine and cheese (cubes).

Libel and Self-Censorship

Last May, the CAA decided not to contest a British libel suit brought against it by the Israeli art historian Gannit Ankori. Ankori sued over Columbia University Associate Professor Joseph Massad's critical review published in the 2007 *Art Journal* of her recent book on Palestinian Art. In the settlement, the CAA agreed to pay Ankori \$75,000, to issue a public apology, and to

call upon the *Art Journal's* institutional subscribers to delete the offending text. The most recent *Art Journal* (Winter 2008) features CAA's apology.

Greg Sholette and Janet Koenig opened a discussion forum on this issue last August, calling on RAC members to consider action against such flagrant suppression of critical speech and CAA's self-censoring capitulation. That discussion forum can be accessed on the RAC website at:

<http://www.radicalartcaucus.org/forum.html>

RAC members are especially urged to attend the CAA Publishing Committee's Advocacy Session devoted to this controversy.

The Session, "International Law and the Visual Arts," will take place on Thursday, February 26, from 12:30-2:00pm in the West Hall Meeting Room 502AB, level 2, LA Convention Center. Paul Jaskot as CAA President and CAA Counsel, Jeffrey Cunard will chair the discussion.

RAC Calendar at CAA 2009

We hope to see you all at the following RAC sponsored events:

• **Thursday, February 26. RAC Reception, 5:30-7:30pm, La Cienega Room, Westin Bonaventure Hotel.**

• **Friday, February 27. RAC Business Meeting, 7:30-9:00am, Concourse Meeting Room 403B, Level 2, LA Convention Center**

• **Friday February 27. RAC Session I, 9:30am-12:00noon, Concourse Meeting Room 405, Level 2, LA Convention Center**

• **Saturday, February 28. RAC Session II, 12:30-2:00pm, Concourse Meeting Room 408B, Level 2, LA Convention Center**

CAA 2009: Panel Abstracts

Panels: Migration Struggles and Migratory Aesthetics, I and II

Co-chairs: Kirsten Forkert, Goldsmiths College, University of London; and Karen Kurczynski, Massachusetts College of Arts

This two-session panel addresses art and activism around issues of migration. Drawing on discussions of migration in the context of globalization, the panel asks how aesthetics and visual representations might influence our perceptions and response to the specific situation of the U.S./Mexico border (such as its one-sided framing by the US media as a struggle over "immigration"), or vice versa: how the border situation informs global struggles as well as political and aesthetic theory.

The concept of "Migratory Aesthetics," developed by Mieke Bal, theorizes an aesthetics that embodies the situation of migration. It addresses visual media which foreground the use of cuts, distortions of time, and other experimental formal strategies. This panel asks whether such strategies could push viewer/participants toward a uniquely powerful perception of the everyday realities of migration, or even reconfigure the very politics of migration. Or to what degree does the reception of such strategies depend on specialized knowledge and particular types of institutional framing, mediating their political effectiveness? Does it also risk abstracting the specific experiences of migration to general ideas of movement or flux?

Speaking broadly, we ask how political realities manifest in and are affected by aesthetics, and vice versa. What role do exhibitions and other art events produced by activists/artists/non-artists/migrants play in relation to migration struggles? How does the institutional context of museums, biennials and festivals versus self-organized or community-based contexts affect the work—given that, as George Yudice has argued, these contexts are themselves implicated in the very processes of globalization that artworks might challenge? Is it possible to bring aesthetics into the discussion without reinscribing the political autonomy of art? This session will develop networks among

artists/activists/critics/historians/theorists concerned with such issues as: the impact of Lewis Hine's representation of immigrants on Ellis Island or Krzysztof Wodiczko's recent project *If you see something...*; a documentary photography class exploring the conditions of workers in Southern California and Latin America; or an installation produced in collaboration with Chilean exiles in California. The discussion will also address recent legislative and activist developments: the European border regime, interventions into the mainstream media's representation of immigrants, and the effect of international students studying art in the US. These sessions aim to critique the romanticization of migration in contemporary theory and its conceptualization as a requirement of global subjectivity in neo-liberal discourse.

SESSION I

**Friday, February 27,
9:30am-12noon, Concourse
Meeting Room 405, Level 2,
LA Convention Center**

**• Carla Herrera-Prats,
California Institute of the
Arts:**

**'International Students:
Between Nomads and
Immigrants'**

In 2007, nearly 30,000 international students legally entered the United States to pursue artistic studies. This paper elaborates on the figure of the international student in relation to the nomadic artist, whose image romantically overshadows the condition of

the immigrant. Departing from the impact of academia in contemporary aesthetics and the crucial role United States MFA programs have provided, I will analyze three artists: Rubén Ortiz-Torres, Walid Raad, and Rirkrit Tiravanija. Born abroad, these artists studied in the US and are currently faculty members in reputable art programs in New York and California. My paper elaborates on the following questions: how can we compare the influence of these artists to the exodus of European artists and intellectuals after the Second World War? How can we relate their function to the identity politics of the 1980s in today's globalized condition? How does their teaching help construct an aesthetic of the immigrant?

**• Kathleen MacQueen,
Stony Brook University:**

**'The Inner Public of
Krzysztof Wodiczko's "If
you see something..."'**

In 2005, Krzysztof Wodiczko projected, on the walls of a Chelsea gallery, images of windows revealing pedestrians paused in casual conversation. Their dialogue, however, indicated far greater gravitas: stories of immigrants terrorized in the aftermath of September 11th and the Bush administration's campaign of fear. The visual haze of the windows determines the overall aesthetic of the work and establishes a protective barrier between viewer/spy and actor/participant. This lack of clarity suggests a weakness in the epistemological conditions of

witness: what it means not to see and what are the conditions of surveillance that democracy has accepted in proposing we can distinguish between citizens with rights and citizens without them. Wodiczko's *If you see something...* radically shifts focus away from the viewer's experience to that of the inner public of his participants, whose own act of bearing witness constitutes for the migratory individual not only open speech but also activism.

• **Sheila Pinkel, Pomona College:**

‘Worker Issues as Content in Photographic Documentary Courses’

The realities and dilemmas for workers in Southern California and in Latin American countries have been the subject of my documentary photography classes at Pomona College since the late 1980s. In this paper I will discuss the evolution of this photo documentary course including topics, theoretical and historical readings, assignments and individual and/or group final projects. I will also discuss special skills that students develop during the semester that enable them to make final image/text work reflecting their observations and the perspectives of people included in their study. Included will be approaches to laying groundwork for projects so that students can accomplish their own photographic investigations outside the confines of academia. Finally, a

discussion will be made of the dilemmas I have confronted in the process of trying to manifest these classes.

• **Lydia Nakashima Degarrod, California College of the Arts:**

‘Immigrants’ Eyes’

Immigrants interact regularly with their new communities, but also with their new landscapes. As newcomers they navigate their new locales using screens created by memories and emotions of similar places providing different foci to their surroundings. What happens when immigrants recognize and reveal these screens? How does the space inform immigrant's identities? What is the role of an art project in creating these types of awareness and forms of migratory aesthetics in the immigrants and the audience to the exhibit? To answer these questions, I will examine the making and exhibition of *Geographies of the Imagination*—a multimedia installation of maps and videos I created this year collaborating with 15 Chilean political exiles in California. This project was guided by the notion that the immigrants' experience of a place contains cultural and aesthetic moments in which the merging of cultures can be revealed, showing the visual dislocation of migration.

SESSION II

**Saturday, February 28,
12:30pm-2:00pm,
Concourse Meeting Room
408B, Level 2, LA
Convention Center**

• **Henrik Lebuhn, San Francisco Art Institute**

**‘Contested Borderspaces:
The New Border Regime
and Migration Struggles in
Europe’**

Since the mid-1980s, the European border-regime has undergone dramatic transformations. New institutions, actors, rules, and techniques have emerged on this political field. Borderspaces and territories are being reorganized, and the modes of border control and enforcement expanded and diversified. The dominant public discourse represents migrants as a threat to social order, and immigration as a problem of social integration. However, over the course of the 1990s and 2000s, border and immigration policies have also been targeted by important grassroots protests across Europe. New social movements and forms of protests have emerged and challenge the European border-regime. In our paper, we will first give an overview of the current changes of the European border-regime. Secondly, we will discuss a number of examples of local migration struggles from different European countries.

• **Benjamin Gerdes, SUNY Binghamton:**

‘The Global Within the Rural: Media Intervention and Migration’

In the United States, art and cultural activism addressing immigration and/or migration struggles has frequently located these issues along the U.S./Mexico border and in several prominent urban areas. In fact, significant immigrants' rights struggles have increasingly occurred in land-locked, non-border states. My paper focuses on the possibilities of aesthetic activism within this broader geographic context by offering a case study of a recent media intervention in rural Pennsylvania. By thinking through the ambivalent 'migratory' possibilities of media activism in relation to a commercial news media, this analysis offers a set of tactics for rural projects and campaigns which might situate them within the global framework of international activism.

• **Leslie J. Ureña, Northwestern University**

‘Teaching Race: Lewis Hine at Ellis Island’

The social documentary photographer Lewis W. Hine (1874-1940) went to the Ellis Island Immigration Station c. 1904 with the objective of photographing newcomers to the United States, supposedly so that he and his colleagues at the Ethical Culture School of Manhattan could instruct their students on the characteristics of newcomers. Although these photographs

were later used as illustrations in Progressive and ostensibly pro-immigrant journals, they also appeared in anti-foreigner publications that denigrated immigrant groups through an emphasis on race-based stereotypes. More recently, Hine's Ellis Island images have become the standard depictions of the history of American immigration. Through a focus on the original and current-day uses of Hine's earliest Ellis Island photographs, this paper will disentangle what may have been at stake in the Ethical Culture School project and examine the creation of our contemporary understanding of historical immigration and the figure of the "immigrant."





February 2009
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Funds collected from the membership will be used to continue our RAC Scholar/Activist Grant program, maintain our website
www.radicalartcaucus.org
and publish the next issue of the newsletter in February 2010.

Annual dues:

- \$5.00 students and underemployed
- \$20.00 faculty and employed

We now have PAYPAL! Go to the website and click the “donate” link.

Or, pay by check: make checks out to “RAC” and mail along with your completed questionnaire to:

Barbara McCloskey,
RAC Treasurer
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104 Frick Fine Arts
Pittsburgh PA 15260



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Please give serious thought to what contact information you want posted on the website—email addresses might be especially vulnerable to spam!

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