

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Experience the Modern through Literature and Art: A Symposium and Exhibit, Ryerson University, March 28, 2011

Toronto, March 2011 -- Award-winning *Toronto Star* urban affairs columnist Christopher Hume explores the interrelationship of modernity, community, and city building in his keynote address at the Literatures of Modernity Symposium at Ryerson on March 28. With special emphasis on Toronto, Hume looks at some architectural and urban sites, new and old, to tell a story of community building. Gregory Dandele, professor at the US Air Force Academy, looks at Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" for a critique of Le Corbusier's functional style of modern architecture; in "Howl," the modern city, "whose skyscrapers stand in the long streets like endless Jehovahs," is monstrous. Cheryl Epstein of Canada's National Ballet School considers the critique of technological progress in early 20th century Paris as seen in Jean Cocteau's 1921 ballet *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, in which the iconic Eiffel tower is the place for a surrealist wedding breakfast, which ends when "a child of the future" kills the guests. According to Cocteau, the ballet was about "Sunday vacuity; human beastliness, ready-made expressions, disassociation of ideas from flesh and bone, ferocity of childhood, the miraculous poetry of everyday life."

This day-long symposium, which takes place in Heaslip House, brings together 30 national and international scholars, students, and artists to engage critically and artistically in the experience of the modern through literature and art. The symposium panelists come from the University of Brighton, Temple University, the US Air Force Academy, Wichita State University, McGill, McMaster, the National Ballet School, Trent, Université du Québec à Montréal, Guelph, Ottawa, Toronto, Waterloo, York, Ryerson, and other institutions.

The symposium discussants also delve into the creative dimensions of modern technology. University of Toronto masters student Patrick Nickleson researches contemporary music composer Nico Muhly's musical inspiration through "google-thinking." Panelists also engage the tension of the old and the new by discussing modernity, secularity and spirituality. OCAD curator Charles Reeve examines visual artists' autobiographies to track "continuities and shifts in conceptions of the artist's subjectivity" from the Renaissance to the present. The round table discussion investigates the extent to which trauma and cognition are functions of our 21st-century sense of modernity, with discussions of post-9/11 trauma and the Holocaust in contemporary young adult literature.

The symposium is accompanied by a one-day exhibit showcasing new talent (see attached sample images). Reg Beatty, an internationally exhibited bookbinder and book artist, presents *Documents pour Artistes*, a digital book installation that examines the principles behind French photographer Eugène Atget's portrait of early 20th century Paris and re-imagines them for 21st century Toronto. Capturing tech-waste in pastoral space, Jeffrey Douglas' photographs explore abandoned farmhouses, dilapidated barns, and the back lots of rural estates to comment on how commodity culture has altered the configuration of these spaces. Toronto photographer Kimon

Kaketsis' project *Mitera* offers a photographic series that follows one woman throughout the span of her young life to explore the effects of nostalgia and technological mediation of the modern experience.

The symposium and exhibit are hosted by Ryerson University's Literatures of Modernity Graduate Program, and organized and curated by 10 MA candidates as part of the course *LM 8912: Modernity as a Public Event* under the mentorship of Dr. Irene Gammel, a professor of English and Canada Research Chair for Modern Literature and Culture. As Gammel explains: "Ryerson prides itself on providing a theoretical and professional education. This symposium is a prime example of combining theory and practice, as the students gain professional skills in organizing an international symposium and exhibit."

The graduate student organizers and curators are excited about being hosts to a large group of national and international scholars and artists. As one student puts it: "Organizing a symposium is an intense and exciting learning experience. We work in teams and learn from each other."

The symposium and exhibit take place at Ryerson University, 7th floor of Heaslip House, 297 Victoria Street, on Monday, March 28, 2011, as of 8:30 AM. Exhibits and sessions run throughout the day, followed by a closing reception at 7:15 PM. Christopher Hume's keynote address takes place at 1:15 PM.

The symposium (including keynote, exhibit, and evening reception) is open to the general public and is free of charge, though onsite registration is required.

This symposium and exhibit are sponsored by the Office of the Provost, the Vice Provost Student, the Literatures of Modernity Graduate Program, the Modern Literature and Culture Research Center, and the Faculty of Arts.

About the program: The Literatures of Modernity Program was launched in 2008 in Ryerson University's English Department and focuses on the salient features of modernity that remain pressing in today's world. Covering literatures from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries, the one-year program explores a wide variety of forms and theories while combining advanced literary studies, innovative research, and theoretical perspectives with hands-on involvement in professional literary fields.

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<http://lomsymposium.blog.ryerson.ca>;
<http://www.ryerson.ca/graduate/literatures>

SYMPOSIUM SESSION TITLES:

Modernity Exhibition: Installations in Photography, Painting, and New Media (on view all day)

Session 1: Self-Conceptions: Identity and Modernity

Session 2: The Conditions of Modernity/Reading Modernity

Session 3: Flight Out off Time: Modernity and Nostalgia

Keynote: Christopher Hume (*Toronto Star*), Modernity, Community and City Building

Session 4: Sites of Modernity: Architecture, Space, City

Session 5: Modernity, the Secular and The Spiritual

Session 6: Modernity and Technology

Round Table: Modernity, Cognition, Trauma

EXHIBITION IMAGES



Reg Beatty,
Cimetière, Paris, 2008



Reg Beatty, *Grate, Toronto, 2011*



Jeffrey Douglas, *Cold Pastoral*



Jeffrey Douglas, *A Final Aubade*



Kimon Kaketis, *Mitera*, 2010