

Métamatic Research Initiative

Amsterdam,
21 september 2011

The Métamatic Artists' Lectures Series

The Métamatic Research Initiative, in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts of VU University Amsterdam, presents a series of lectures by the artists commissioned by the Métamatic Research Initiative.

Location: Felix Meritis - European Centre for Arts, Culture and Science
Keizersgracht 324, Amsterdam

Time: 19:30 doors open, 20:00 lecture begins

Lectures are free to the public and will be presented in English

The Métamatic Research Initiative stimulates research into ideas stemming from the work and philosophy of the French-Swiss artist Jean Tinguely (1925-1991). Specifically, this research initiative focuses on Tinguely's exploration of the relationship between the artist, the art work, and the viewer as expressed in his Métamatic sculptures.

Eight artists have been awarded a commission from the Métamatic Research Initiative to undertake artistic research. This artistic research is fully imbedded in society and makes use of the systems and technologies available to us, just as Tinguely's works were a critique and reflection of the times in which he worked.

Each artist will speak in Amsterdam about his or her art and their commission during the autumn of 2011 and the spring of 2012.

Dates:	4 October 2011	Ranjit Bhatnagar (USA)
	6 December 2011	Brigitte Zieger (France)
	7 February 2012	Aleksandra Hirsfeld (Poland)
	6 March 2012	Olaf Breuning (USA)
	3 April 2012	João Simões (Portugal)
	1 May 2012	Pors & Rao (India)
	5 June 2012	John Bock (Germany)
	19 June 2012	Jon Kessler (USA)

To reserve a seat or for further information, please contact Paul Wullems at paul@allartinitiatives.org, or by telephone at +31205206016

The academic context for the events is facilitated by the Faculty of Arts, VU University, Amsterdam. In 2011 the VU University initiated a Visiting Professor Programme in partnership with the Métamatic Research Initiative.

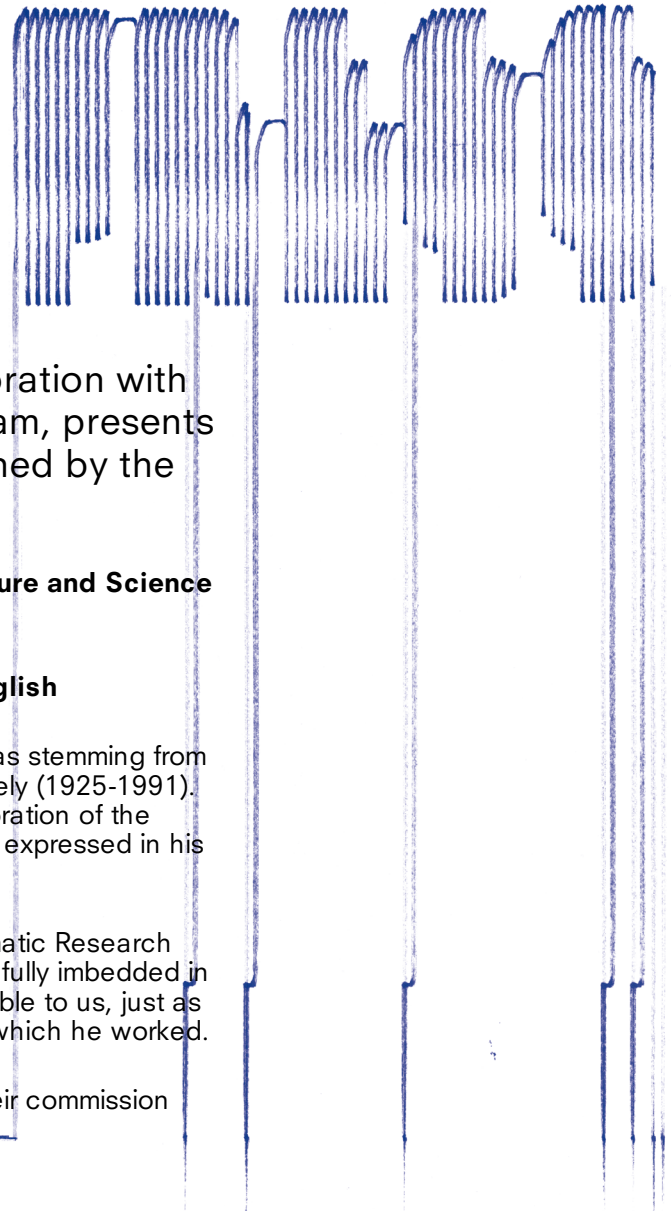
Jae Emerling, Assistant Professor of Modern & Contemporary Art at the School of Arts & Architecture of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, has been appointed the first Métamatic Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Arts of VU University Amsterdam. During his stay at the VU, Jae Emerling will teach the MA seminar 'Tinguely and Transmissibility'.

For more information, visit:

www.metamaticresearch.info
www.let.vu.nl

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Information about the artists:

Ranjit Bhatnagar

Ranjit Bhatnagar works with sound sculpture, music machines, and handmade musical instruments. He is particularly interested in improvisation, not just in performance but in the creation of physical works. His installations have been exhibited across the United States and in Europe, and his instruments have been used in performances from New Jersey to Shanghai.

Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Ranjit received a BA from U.C. Berkeley and an MS from the University of Pennsylvania, and was certified carnie trash by the Coney Island Sideshow School in 2002. He lives in Brooklyn next to a big park.

Jury Comment

What struck us about Ranjit Bhatnagar's practice in general - and his current proposal in particular - was the merger of disciplines and reversal of viewerly roles that take place within the framework of a single project. In his proposed project for the Métamatic Commission, sculpture, sound and performance interlace, simultaneously placing the viewer in the role of interlocutor, instigator, operator and performer while at once remaining an active viewer and audience to the computer algorithm that listens and reinterprets his/her voice offering an instant and automatic feedback performance.

Brigitte Zieger

Brigitte Zieger is a Paris based German artist. Her work was previously shown at White Columns, New York ('Prop Fiction', 1996), at the Tate Gallery London ('Abracadabra', 1999) and at the Centre d'art Contemporain la Villa du Parc in Annemasse ('Fabulations et Vagabondages', 2005). Her work was exhibited at Solo Shows such as 'Avec les yeux largement fermés' (Galerie Odile Ouizeman, Paris, 2009), 'Dreams & Disaster' (Galerie Weigand, Karlsruhe, 2010), and with Kara Walker, 'Man is a Shadow's Dream' (l'Aître St. Maclou, Rouen, 2010) This year she participated in group exhibitions at various locations including the Grand Palais ('Utopia + Dystopia', Art Paris), the National Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei ('The Digital Hand') and the Museum of Pully ('Face au mur', with MUDAC Lausanne).

Jury Comment

Brigitte Zieger [...] seems to share a sensibility with both Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle, in her ability to 'take on' French culture and subvert it. Nothing could be more French than the toile de Jouy, from the decoration of the seediest hotels to the smartest Parisian salons which she uses for her 'Shooting Wallpaper' backgrounds. Toile de Jouy takes us back to the eighteenth century; its variety of motifs extend from the French pastoral to chinoiserie. Original wallpaper panoramas (Dufour et Cie) could involve vast vistas depicting colonised countries, with intimations of conquest, the exotic, endemic violence: the prefigurations, in fact of contemporary film. To take these early motifs and turn them into film creates a pleasing loop in time. Previous works using wallpaper involved army tanks bursting out of refined leafy glades, or suspicious mushroom clouds bursting out of scenes of childhood play. The Métamatic Research initiative project envisions a large interactive wallpaper/screen, respondent to the viewer's movement. A female figure emerges from a figurative vignette, points a gun at the spectator and shoots. Evidently the work recalls Niki de Saint Phalle's Tirs - yet here the spectator is the target. As with Niki, questions of gender are crucial, for the masculine spectator as target and object offers a quite different proposition from that of a female viewer for whom no mercy or complicité is on offer - indeed in this case the work may be self-

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referential. Zieger's proposition will make a light and elegant but piquant – potentially violent, critical complement to the more macho, machine-based or virtual projects of other successful Métamatic commissions. [...]

Aleksandra Hirszfeld

Artist, art critic, eternal student. Both practically and theoretically, she mainly explores the space of the new media, tracing veiled, underlying structures that govern the way images are constructed and made to work, as well as mechanisms that impact and trigger micro-activities in the socio-cultural tissue. She likes to contaminate and experiment with different media. She had several exhibitions, inter alia in Warsaw, Łódź, Milan and Berlin. Recently she finished writing a Ph.D. thesis at the Institute of Philosophy, University of Warsaw, devoted to the matter of repetition in audiovisual art. She also studies photography at the Polish National Film, Television and Theatre School in Łódź.

Jury Comment

[...] Relating to the legacy of Jean Tinguely, Hirszfeld draws on the mechanical intervention into unique authorship of the work by fracturing the work's 'content'. Standing in public space, inviting participation, 'The Information Absorber' simultaneously treats art and contemporary political experience. Hirszfeld presents a forceful statement on the diminishing possibilities of public expression and political agency on the part of the individual subject. But she expresses the precariousness of the artist's role as well; the question of whether artists can still effectively communicate within an ever-more dispersed and distorted field of commodified information distribution. The artist seems to ask: Is there still a valid public sphere, for anyone?

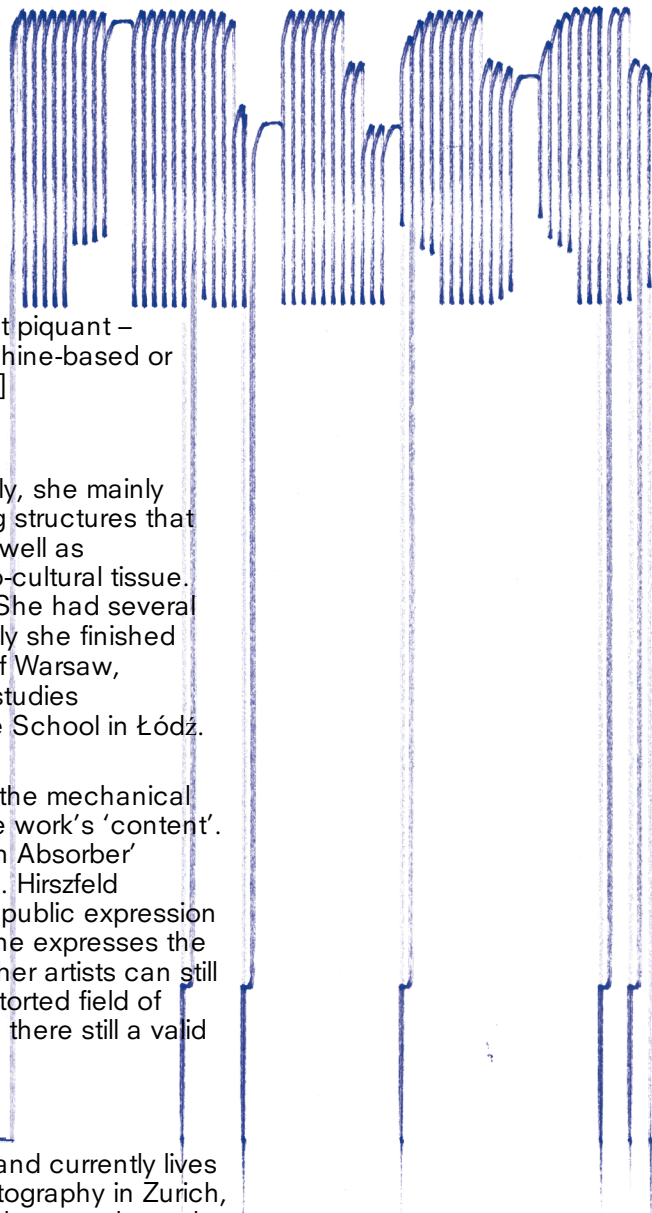
Olaf Breuning

Olaf Breuning was born in Schaffhausen, Switzerland in 1970 and currently lives and works in New York, NY. Breuning studied professional photography in Zurich, Switzerland and went on to complete postgraduate studies in photography at the HSFG Zurich. Breuning has had solo exhibitions in Metro Pictures, New York; Migros Museum, Zurich; Chisenhale, London; Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City; Magasin, Grenoble. He has also been included in several international group exhibitions, including Whitney Biennial 2008, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; 'Looking At Music' at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2008); 'All About Laughter' at Mori Art Museum, Japan (2007); 'Let's Entertain' at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Centre Georges Pompidou.

Directors' Comment

In the past years Breuning made a series of films based on collage and fragmentation, addressing delicate social issues and conventions. The way he combines a large dose of dark humour and a critical view with the autonomous references and interpretation of his themes shows a strong connection to Tinguely. As does his keen sense for present-day social misconceptions. In 'Home 2' for example, he ridicules the Western need to visit primitive cultures and the conviction that their authenticity and purity can save us from our cultural doom, or can at least make us feel better about ourselves.

In 'Home 3', his proposal selected by the MRI directors, Breuning wants to further continue this method around the relation between modern man and his technological environment. Hoping for liberation from his tasks by (communication) technology, this human becomes more and more entangled in obligations and interaction.



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Joao Simoes

Born in 71, in Luanda, Angola, and since 2004 based in Lisbon and Brooklyn architect and artist Joao Simoes lived in Milano, Paris, Madrid and Barcelona. In 96, invited by David Medalla, shows for the first time at ARC Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. His work has been featured in Frieze, Artforum and Flash Art, among others.

Simoes shows at the Emily Harvey gallery, New York and today designs Jeff Perkins' house in Malibu, LA.

Jury Comment

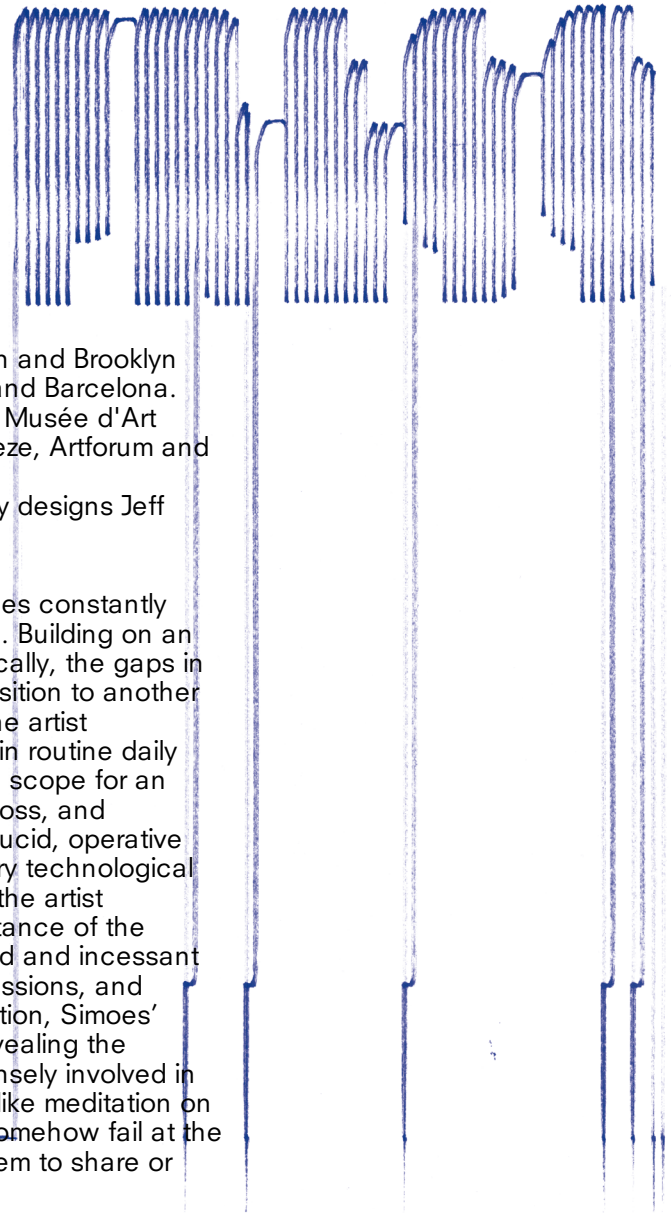
Joao Simoes' proposal is to investigate the spaces and slippages constantly occurring in the circuits of contemporary information exchange. Building on an initial concept regarding particular 'machine creations', specifically, the gaps in translation between different video systems from one global position to another (PAL for Europe and Asia, and NTSC for the US and Japan), the artist experimented with, and began to highlight, the quirks inherent in routine daily export and import of visual/digital data. He then recognized the scope for an artistic investigation of these registers of imperfect translation, loss, and misrecognition. The interest of Simoes' proposal starts with its lucid, operative focus on familiar but perhaps ignored functions of contemporary technological experience. With an impressive straightforwardness of means, the artist penetrates a profound slippage – arguably a contemporary instance of the famous Duchampian 'inframince' – ever-present in today's rapid and incessant information exchange. If input/output, file conversions, compressions, and translations, are the lingua franca of current digital communication, Simoes' contribution is to bring such operations into a radical focus, revealing the functions of that interstitial space as the work of art. While intensely involved in the technological present, Simoes' project evinces a Tinguely-like meditation on the machine equivalent of 'human error' as different systems somehow fail at the moment of our interaction with them, at the moment we use them to share or communicate information. [...]

Pors & Rao

Aparna Rao (1978, India) and Søren Pors (1974, Denmark) crossed paths in 2002, during a two year research scholarship study in Italy. In 2004, the two began to work collaboratively, and have since developed a multi-disciplinary art practice involving mechanical and electronic engineering, programming and manufacturing processes. In 2009 they began showing their early works at 'The Expanded Box', ARCO Madrid, Spain; 'Indian Highway' at Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Norway and at the 4th Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan. Since then the duo has focused on developing new works, scheduled to be exhibited at their first solo show in January 2011 at Vadehra Art Gallery, India.

Jury Comment

The 'Nisse TV' proposal was amongst the few received that effectively and imaginatively looked at media and information as sites for intervention and inquiry. The duo, Pors & Rao propose to make real-time intrusions into the programming of a multi-channel television set; here equipment and software are imagined as a humanoid creature from Scandinavian folklore called 'nisse' who creates audiovisual commotion by mixing fragments of broadcast material and live recording of the viewer within the gallery space, interlacing meanings and context to create a cut-n-paste multimedia hodgepodge, an automated Dadaist infliction on data streams.



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John Bock

John Bock lives and works in Berlin

Jury Comment

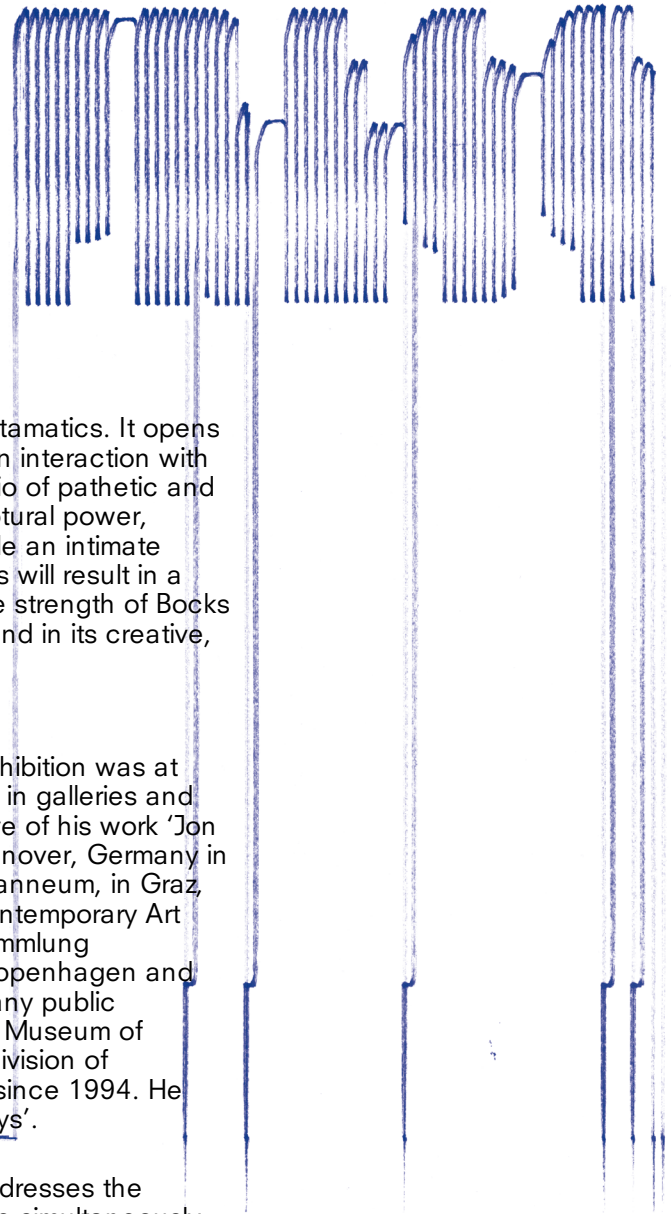
John Bock's proposal addresses central issues of Tinguely's Métamatics. It opens up a complex scenario through the setting of machine and man interaction with weird mechanisms of transmission to produce a surreal scenario of pathetic and intimate gestures in the 'concert' he intends to produce. Sculptural power, multiple kinetical issues, references to art history (as for example an intimate theatre of 'la mariée mise à nue...') and acoustical paraphrases will result in a showdown of exuberant beauty and disturbia (we hope...). The strength of Bock's approach to Métamatic lies as well in its literal understanding and in its creative, perpetual and spectacular transformation.

Jon Kessler

Jon Kessler was born in Yonkers, New York in 1957. His first exhibition was at Artist's Space in 1983. Since that time he has exhibited widely in galleries and museums in the United States, Europe and Asia. A retrospective of his work 'Jon Kessler's Asia' was mounted at the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hannover, Germany in 1994 and travelled to the Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, in Graz, Austria. His exhibition, 'The Palace at 4 AM', began at PS1 Contemporary Art Center in 2005 and travelled to the Phoenix Kulturstiftung / Sammlung Falckenberg in Hamburg, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen and ZKM Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe. His works are in many public collections including The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art and MOCA. He is a Professor in the Visual Arts Division of Columbia University's School of the Arts where he has taught since 1994. He plays guitar for the rock band 'Barbara Sukowa and the X-Patsys'.

Jury Comment

[...] Jon Kessler's 'The Web' is an immersive installation that addresses the significance of the internet and mobile devices in our lives while simultaneously examining the role of the viewer in the installation. The idea for the piece came to the artist on a New York subway when he realized that at least half of the riders were speaking on their cell phones, sending text messages, playing video games, or otherwise immersing themselves into their networked mobile devices. It was a reminder that the boundaries between inside and outside, private and public, inclusion and exclusion, are no longer physically delineated, but porous and dislocated; immaterially determined. 'The Web' stages this experience for the viewer, acting as a surrogate for the interconnectivity of virtual space in which the dominant materials, blue yarn and electronic cables, become the material for the immaterial to flow. Through webcams and cell phone cameras, the installation absorbs the viewer's gaze and attention, and redirects them onto computer monitors and laptop screens embedded within the yarn/cable mesh. [...]



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