

RADICAL THEORY FORUM (RTF)

Thursday 14th October; 11am until late at the 491 Gallery (491 Grove Green Road, Leytonstone, London E11) (www.491gallery.com)

Tube: Leytonstone (Central Line); two stops from Stratford (Central line/ Jubilee line);
Bus: 66, 145, 257, W13, W14, W16, W19; **Train:** Leytonstone High Road (Gospel Oak - Barking line) or Stratford (Richmond - North Woolwich line)

Entry: By donation

Summary: The Radical Theory Forum will host a series of daytime workshops/discussions on the theme of 'Radical theory: How can theory inform action?' followed by a party with film screenings, art installations, spoken word and damn good music.

PROGRAMME

11am:

Doors open for people to help to set up the space, listen to music, watch some activist films and browse around the ongoing gallery space.

Gallery: To be shaped by activist artists Guy Smallman, Julian Gibson and Christian da Souza.

WORKSHOPS

12.30pm:

Introduction – 'What is Radical Theory?'

1pm-2.30pm (Two parallel workshops run for 90min each):

1a) 'Beyond the Lecture Theatre: Subverting the Neoliberal Paradigm Through Popular Education' (facilitated by Emma Dowling)

* As the capitalist logic informs the management of schools and universities, its ideology hijacks the classroom - what role does free, popular education play in current activist projects and what new possibilities are there for virtual and face-to-face informal education?

1b) 'Who are "we"? Complexity and Social Movements: Theory and Practise' (facilitated by Alex Plows)

* One of the core elements of social movement theory is that for a social movement to 'be', it has to have a "collective identity" (Melucci 1996). Especially in the moment of action, that sense of "we", of "us and them", is notable- "we" are not the arms sellers at DSEI or the bullshitting warmongers - "we" are the people taking action against "them". Yet activists and theorists have long been problematising that sense of "we" in our movements. Not only is there great diversity and difference amongst "ourselves", our

personal identities and motivations (though also much we all hold in common), this complexity becomes more problematic when eg globalisation throws up 'strange bedfellows' in terms of other actor groups who oppose the same issues but often for different reasons. Is "our movement" fragmenting? Was it always fragmented? Is "my enemy's enemy is not my friend" a context-dependant thing? Why does any of this matter? Open discussion.

2.45-4.15pm (Two parallel workshops run for 90min each):

2a) '**Feminist Theory, Feminist Practice at the ESF/WSF**' (facilitated by Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca)

* This workshop will explore the contributions, limitations and possibilities of feminist activist and academic interventions in the ESF/WSF process. Although feminists succeeded in gaining a high profile at the last WSF, their presence in the ESF seems more marginal. Further, there has been little sustained analysis of the nature of their contribution. Indeed, while there exists a large body of feminist research critical of the impact of globalised capitalism, and analysis of feminist activism in that context, there has as yet been little theorisation of the place of feminism in the recent wave of anti-capitalist, anti-globalisation politics. This workshop seeks to bring together theoretical and activist concerns of feminists and fellow travellers involved in and studying the ESF/WSF. It will ask: what have feminists been doing, and what should they be doing, to engage with the ESF/WSF? What can feminist theory and practice offer the ESF/WSF and vice versa? How best can we research and theorise ESF/WSF politics in feminist ways? (Cate and Bice have confirmed they are running this)

2b) '**Are Other Worlds Possible? The Challenges and Possibilities of Pedagogical Open Spaces**' (facilitated by Vanessa Andreotti)

* The educational project Other Worlds was funded by DFID and hosted by Mundi. It proposes an approach to transnational (global/political) literacy based on 'reflexive ethics', in which participants are encouraged to engage critically with issues related to global and local contexts and think about how their way of seeing the world and acting in it are connected to justice and injustice. This approach is based on ideas related to critical and postcolonial pedagogies, as well as a constructivist understanding of the learning process. This workshop is divided into two parts. In the first part participants will be invited to experiment with the methodology and in the second part, the background of the project, three case studies and a research cluster proposal will be presented for discussion.

4.15-4.45pm

Coffee/tea/cake/drinks break

4.45-6.15pm (Two parallel workshops run for 90min each):

3a) '**Post-/Marxism in the 21st Century**' (facilitated by Jeremy Gilbert and Simon Tormey)

* What is the relevance, if any, of the Marxist tradition to the anti-capitalist movement? Does the idea of class have any relevance in a post-modern world? What use can be made of those ideas which have emerged from a sympathetic critique of orthodox Marxism in theory and practice - the 'post-Marxisms' of Deleuze & Guattari, Laclau & Mouffe, and

Hardt & Negri? Should the concepts of revolution and class struggle still be at the centre of our thinking, or should we be working to break down concentrations of power in more diffuse and heterogeneous ways? Is it true, as Leninist groups like Globalise Resistance maintain, that anarchist, libertarian, and radical democratic political currents are incapable of formulating effective political strategies? How do we make new kinds of political alliance on the complex terrain of 21st century life?

3b) **'Academia, Immaterial Labour and Cognitive Capital'** (facilitated by Rodrigo Nunes)

* What can it mean to be an academic activist? Can we conceptualise a form of activism specific to the academic, as a form of immaterial labour within certain institutional constraints? Could collective action around processes like the 'RAE' (re?)-radicalise the academy?

6.30-8pm (Three parallel workshops run for 90min each):

4a) **'The Organisation and Politics of the London ESF'** (facilitated by Steffen Bohm, with Oscar Reyes, Rodrigo Nunes, Emma Dowling and Jai Sen)

* Many of us have participated in organising this year's ESF, which has left many of us with a sense of frustration and sometimes anger. The process of getting 'horizontals' and 'verticals' into one room has often been painful. So, where do we go from here? This workshop starts with the premise that we need to go beyond our surface emotions and try to contextualise the organisational process of the London ESF within the wider historical sphere of the organisation of the British and international Left. What kind of theoretical trajectories can help us understand the current political confrontation between 'horizontals' and 'verticals'? What lessons can we learn for future political struggles in this country and beyond? How does the British experience compare to other processes of organising social forums (e.g. in India and Brazil?). In this workshop we seek to start to explore these questions, because we feel that they are absolutely crucial for the social forum movement.

4b) **'Building a European-wide Radical Media Distribution Network'** (facilitated by Sam Wild, with Chris Reeves and Zoe Young)

* Alternative media is finally hitting its target: Fahrenheit 911 is dragging Dubya's dodgy past into the spotlight and Supersize Me is denting the McDonalds' super armour. Critical voices are finding a platform and progressive ideas are reaching wider audiences. However the reality of making - and ultimately distributing - radical media content is still problematic for many people ... breaking out of the alternative media 'ghetto' is no small task! Looking at examples of successful radical media projects which have reached out to large numbers of people, this multimedia seminar aims to take inspiration and establish the foundations for an Internet-based European-wide radical media distribution network. The ESF - with representatives from across the world - provides a unique and timely opportunity to combine developments in digital technology with the established strengths of the massive global underground cinema and screening network ... maybe the revolution will be televised after all!

4c) **'Anti-consumerism'** (facilitated by Jo Littler and Nicola Kirkham)

* Exposing the social, cultural and environmental exploitation upon which everyday consumer brands depend has become an important part of contemporary activism and

popular culture - from culture jams and actions against BP and Starbucks, through downsizing and fairtrade to Supersize Me! and No Logo. Can anti-consumerism be both part of a late capitalist niche market and part of progressive social change? If anti-consumerism seeks to function 'outside' a corporate economy, then how can it move beyond 'enclave politics'? If it attempts to work alongside it to effect change (such as fairtrade being sold in Starbucks, or No Logo being published by a Murdoch-owned conglomerate) then what are the boundaries? When does co-operation become co-option? How do we deal with consumerism - and anti-consumerism's - complex relationships to gender, 'race' and class, desire and identity? Does 'anti-consumerism' offer exciting possibilities for new alliances or is it just too broad a strategy and term to be useful?

EVENING FUN

8.15pm-9.15pm:

Radical poetry/spoken word (by a handful of London's leading radical poets led by Yap, Whatshername and others)

9.30-10.30pm:

'Rebel Thinking / Rebel Visions': Activist film screenings co-ordinated by Zoe Young
* Form and content in radical film may - or may not - relect radical theories of social and ecological change. We'll show short videos we like (or don't), from 'riot porn' to 'expert exposition' via 'poetic license', 'cuts for the post MTV generation' and 'plain weird'. And if we feel like it, we'll pull them apart. There'll be no uptight film experts here, only film makers, film viewers and film users. So bring your favourite shorts (CD, DVD, DV or VHS PAL) and your most cutting critique. And we'll try and sort out some pop corn ☺

10.30pm-late:

Party with DJing by Nikki Lucas (Bitches Brew, The Shrine, Future Fusion)