



## **‘Beauty will save the world’<sup>\*</sup>: An Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Workshop on Art and Social Change**

**University of Bristol, 7-8 September 2010**

**Hosted by the Department of Politics and sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Studies and the Global Insecurities Centre, University of Bristol**

### **Confirmed Keynote Speakers:**

**Professor Alex Danchev (School of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham)**

**Dr Iain Biggs and Dr Victoria Walters (Faculty of Creative Arts, UWE)**

*How does art construct, resist and contest dominant identities and social practices? How does art open up possibilities for (re)creating the world? What are the relationships between art, aesthetics, and politics? What are the power relations involved in art? Whose art, and whose values are best placed to change the world? Can engaging with art help us develop new epistemologies and research methodologies? Can beauty ‘save’ the world?*

This two-day interdisciplinary postgraduate workshop is premised on the assumption that art actively constructs social ‘reality’, as opposed to merely reflecting it. Against dominant pronouncements privileging the centrality of rationalism and science as the legitimate avenues towards knowledge and social change, this workshop poses the question: what does the ‘serious’ pursuit of ‘progress’ miss out on when it disqualifies the artist’s imaginary as superfluous, lacking impact, unimportant?

The workshop aims to bring together postgraduate students working in and across various disciplines to share research which looks at the contested meanings of art and aesthetics, explores art in different cultural and historical settings, and examines the ways in which art and its constructions of beauty, society, politics can help in understanding, and changing, the social world. The workshop will also enable postgraduate students to engage and network with more established scholars, who will be present at the workshop as keynote speakers, panel chairs and roundtable discussants.

We welcome paper and panel proposals (2-3 presenters per panel) which engage specifically with the theme of art and social change, from various disciplines, including but not limited to: Archaeology, Anthropology, Classics, English, Modern Languages, History, History of Art, Visual and Performing Arts, Cultural Studies, Geography, Philosophy, Sociology and Politics.

Ideas for papers might include:

- Art as nationalism;
- The aesthetics of social movements, protest and revolution;
- The envisioning of utopia(s);
- ‘The world as a stage’: playwrights, audiences and social change;
- Art as methodology.

---

<sup>\*</sup> From Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*.

Papers can include think pieces or works in progress. We encourage a diversity of presentation styles, from ‘traditional’ papers to interactive sessions, involving short film screenings, musical and dramatic performances, and the display of paintings, sculpture, photographs, and installation art. Presenters will be assigned a 30-minute slot for their presentation, which can be used by the presenter as they wish, but must include at least 5 minutes for audience questions.

A possible panel could look like the following:

Panel Theme: Re-envisioning the Nation: Change, Conflict and Society	
Presenter 1	<p>‘Italian Neo-Realist Film and the (Re)imagination of National Identity in a Post-Fascist Era’</p> <p>15 min film screening 5 min presenter speaking 10 min Q&amp;A</p>
Presenter 2	<p>‘Art as nationalism: <i>The Lark Ascending</i> and images of the English idyll’</p> <p>15 min introduction and music recording 10 min presenter speaking 5 min Q&amp;A</p>
Presenter 3	<p>‘Beauty will not save the world: Re-examining Rodchenko, the Soviet Propaganda Machine and Russian Constructivism’</p> <p>5 min introduction 5 min interactive audience discussion on Images 1 &amp; 2 10 min interactive audience discussion on Images 3 &amp; 4 5 min interactive audience discussion on Images 4 &amp; 5 5 min summary of discussions</p>

Please email abstracts (**maximum 300 words**) of proposed presentations to **both** Cerelia Athanasiou (cerelia.athanasiou@bristol.ac.uk) and Shaira Kadir (shaira.kadir@bristol.ac.uk) by **31 May 2010**.

Presenters will be able to make use of a digital data projector and DVD/CD player. However, we will not be able to provide musical instruments or any other specialist equipment.