

Centre for Modern Studies

Small Things: A Roundtable and Lecture

Thursday 27 March, 4pm-7.30 pm



Tim Armstrong, of Royal Holloway University and Bedford College is the author of *Micromodernism: Rethinking Literary Renewal in the Long 1930s*. Published in February, it is a book about small groups of artists in Europe the US and the Antipodes, struggling in the wake of the High Modernism of the 1920s to articulate their avant-garde ambitions in terms of politics, personal values, and aesthetic categories.

Tim will be visiting us to lecture on 27 March. His lecture will be prefaced by a roundtable comprised of three researchers from the Centre for Modern Studies – Lola Boorman, Duncan Petrie and Michael White – who will be offering small talks on small things, American, British and French, in literature, television and art.

All members of the Faculty of Arts and the Centre for Modern Studies are invited.

Date: Thursday 27 March

Venue: The Treehouse, Berrick Saul Building, Campus West

Time: 4pm to 7.30pm.

4-5.30 Roundtable

Lola Boorman, English and Related Literature, York:

Minor, Marginal, Minimal, Miniature (on Lydia Davis)

Duncan Petrie, School of Arts and Creative Technologies, York:

Small Resources as Creative Enabler: The Case of *Inside No. 9*

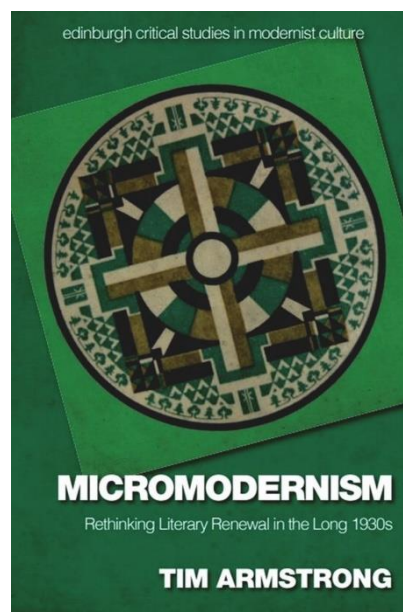
Michael White, History of Art, York:

Sizing up Duchamp's Readymades

6-7.30 Lecture

Tim Armstrong:

From the Canon to the Archive: The Melancholy of Literary History"?



More information:

Lola Boorman, English and Related Literature, York Minor, Marginal, Minimal, Miniature

Blurb: The relatively scant scholarship on the well-read writer Lydia Davis has focused on how her extremely short fiction defies literary categorisation. In this brief talk Boorman considers some of the frameworks we have for thinking about smallness and marginalisation in literary history and how they have been applied to Davis and asks what might it mean to consider her work not as minor, marginal, or minimal, but miniature.

Duncan Petrie, School of Arts and Creative Technologies York Small Resources as Creative Enabler: The Case of *Inside No. 9*

Contemporary film and television are increasingly dominated by large scale, big budget productions from special effects driven blockbusters to lavish high end drama series. Yet throughout the history of moving image production innovation has frequently been enabled by limited or meagre resources. In this short talk I will focus on the British dark comedy anthology series *Inside No. 9* (BBC2 2014-24), written by and featuring Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith, to illustrate how limitations continue to facilitate rather than inhibit creativity. The low budget and tight schedule underpin the series' most distinctive characteristic: the confinement of individual episodes to a single location, this constraint prompting a range of innovative formal strategies, including spatial and temporal experiments, narrative twists and misdirection, genre switching and intertextual play. The result is one of the most consistently inspiring and critically acclaimed British TV shows of the last decade.

Michael White, History of Art, York Sizing up Duchamp's Readymades

The readymades are a small body of works within the notoriously limited artistic output of Marcel Duchamp. Even so, scholars have been unable to agree on their exact number, with estimates ranging from thirteen to forty-three. One reason for the high degree of disparity is the problem of definition. What counts as a readymade is unclear, with Duchamp having even generated subcategories of the practice, such as the 'assisted readymade'. Another is the haphazard manner he distributed them, hampering their documentation. Duchamp frequently gave them to close friends as gifts, rather than exhibited and sold them. This talk will use perhaps the smallest readymade of all, a thirteen cm vial containing *50 cc of Paris Air* (1919), to address the asymmetry between an initial marginal practice and its proliferation as a mainstream feature of contemporary art half a century later.

Tim Armstrong, Dept of English Royal Holloway and Bedford College From the Canon to the Archive: The Melancholy of Literary History"

We all know that the literary canon is a partial construct with a history marred by ideology, inertia and even accident. We also know that its existence as an interpretive focus is one of the things that sets literary study apart from historical research. In this paper I investigate a certain melancholy attached to canonicity, and ask whether (or how) we can move away from it. I begin with John Guillory's distinction between 'major works, minor works, works read primarily in research contexts, works as yet simply shelved in the archive', and meditate on some of the issues thrown up in my recent book *Micromodernism*.