

An International Symposium
on Gustav Metzger

The need
for art
to change
the world

Zurich University of the Arts
Oct 10-12, 2019

Thursday, October 10th
5.30pm – 6pm, Grosser Konzertsaal, 7.K12, 7th floor

Introduction Mathieu Copeland

Gustav Metzger's (1926-2017) entire oeuvre is defined by his writings. Since 1959, his manifestos have been the cornerstone of his radical and everlasting impact on art, art history and society. Metzger has done more than raise awareness, his art and philosophy are a stark testimony to the alternative world for which he strove. Organised to coincide with the release of the all-encompassing anthology *Gustav Metzger: Writings* (JRP | Editions, Oct 2019), this international symposium brings together seminal critics, curators, scholars and fellow artists to envisage Metzger's art, philosophy and imperatives: auto-destructive and auto-creative art, the *Destruction in Art Symposium DIAS* (London 1966), computer arts, the crisis in technological art, and the social responsibility of artists.

Concerned with the looming threat of extinction, Gustav Metzger sought to create "worldwide movements in response to the accelerating decimation of the natural world through human-made activities leading to mass extinction." To offer a prospective outlook, this symposium aims to provoke, expose and discuss the fundamental theses of our societies and the state of our world in a time of climate crisis, set within a specially designed documentation lounge where videos and audio recordings on and by Metzger will be shown, alongside an exhibition of posters by artists Ursula Biemann, Graciela Carnevale, Cécilia Cavalieri, Ivor Davies, Svetlana Heger, Karl Holmqvist, Franck Leibovici, Liliane Lijn, David Medalla, Gustav Metzger, Ben Morea, Phill Niblock, Karin Sander, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Ben Vautier, Jacques Villeglé, who each wrote the sentence that gave this symposium its title – THE NEED FOR ART TO CHANGE THE WORLD – which Metzger coined in 1993 and strongly resonates now more than ever.

Mathieu Copeland is a curator who has been developing a practice that seeks to subvert the traditional role of, and renew our perceptions of exhibitions. He co-curated the exhibition *VOIDS, A Retrospective* (2009) at the Centre Pompidou, Paris and the Kunsthalle, Bern, and edited the celebrated anthology *VOIDS*. His recent exhibitions include *A Retrospective of Closed Exhibitions* at the Kunsthalle Fribourg (2016) and *The exhibition of a film* (2014), an exhibition as a feature film for cinemas. Copeland edited the critically acclaimed anthology and manifest publication *Choreographing Exhibitions*. In 2017, he co-edited the anthology *The Anti-Museum*. Initiator of the symposium, Copeland edited the anthology *Gustav Metzger: Writings* (JRP | Editions, 2019).



Thursday, October 10th
6pm – 7.15pm, Grosser Konzertsaal, 7.K12, 7th floor

Kristine Stiles *Gustav Metzger and the Social Implications of Auto-Destructive Art Monuments*

Gustav Metzger wrote his first manifesto "Auto-Destructive Art" on 9 November 1959. He explained to Kristine Stiles in a 1980 interview in Frankfurt, Germany, that he "lived through" *Kristallnacht*, 9 November 1938, when the Nazis "burned synagogues and ransacked homes, ours included." In 1938, Metzger was also called to fetch his father at the synagogue, and witnessed the Nazis lead him away to die. Metzger's manifesto memorialized the twenty years since he was sent in 1939 on a *Kindertransport* to England to live. Haunted by the Holocaust and the USA's use of atomic weapons on Japan, Metzger stated: "I started to probe the limits of art ... in relation to helping society so that this couldn't happen again." But "this" continues to happen as genocide, destruction, and chaos mount exponentially. Auto-destructive art enabled Metzger and other artists to reenact complex traumas throughout their lives. This paper explores such a history while questioning the efficacy of these practices today.

Kristine Stiles (Ph.D. 1987, University of California at Berkeley) is France Family Professor of Art, Art History & Visual Studies at Duke University and holds an Honorary Doctorate of the Arts from Dartington College of Arts & the University of Plymouth in England (2005). She is an historian of contemporary art and artists' writings, and specialises in interdisciplinary experimental art, from performance to conceptual art. She has taught trauma in art, literature, and film for twenty-five years. She is the co-author with Peter Selz of *Theories & Documents of Contemporary Art* (University of California Press 1996, 2012). Her latest book is *Concerning Consequences: Studies in Art, Destruction, and Trauma* (University of Chicago Press, 2016). Stiles also edited, annotated, and wrote the survey essay for *Correspondence Course: An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann and Her Circle* (Duke University Press, 2010), and is the author of *Raphael Montañez Ortiz: Years of the Warrior, Years of the Psyche, 1968-1988* (El Museo del Barrio, 1988), among numerous other artists catalogues, and the monograph-length essay, "Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions," for the exhibition *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* (LAMOCA & Thames and Hudson, 1998).

Among other exhibitions, Stiles curated *Rauschenberg: Collecting & Connecting* (2014-15) and *States of Mind: Dan & Lia Perjovschi* (2007) at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, and *Jean Toche: Impressions from The Rogue Bush Imperial Presidency* at the John Hope Franklin Center (Duke University, 2009). She advises major museums in the US and abroad on collections and exhibitions.



Thursday, October 10th
7.30pm – 8.30pm, Grosser Konzertsaal, 7.K12, 7th floor

Ivor Davies in conversation with Mathieu Copeland

Born in 1935, Ivor Davies is a Welsh artist, art historian and activist. One of the foremost figures in contemporary Welsh art, he is the recipient of numerous awards and has been the focus of many exhibitions including the major retrospective *Silent Explosion* at the National Museum Cardiff. Davies co-organised the *Destruction in Art Symposium DIAS* in 1966 together with Gustav Metzger and John Sharkey. He was among the first to use explosives in elaborate performances. Since 1977 Davies is a member of the BECA group of social and political artists of Wales. Publications include *Silent Explosion* (Occasional Papers, 2015) and *Encounters with Ivor Davies*, (ed. H. Phillips et al., forthcoming 2019).



Thursday, October 10th
10pm – 11.30pm, Mehrspur Musikklub

FM Einheit *Platz schaffen*

Concert

FM Einheit convenes the power of destruction for the creation of his music. Massive steel springs, bricks, pebble and metal sheets collide for *Platz schaffen*, FM Einheit's concert organised to coincide with the opening evening. Like Metzger's auto-destructive art, in which the artist applied acid over paintings to destroy their surfaces by chemically 'eating' the canvas, FM Einheit's concert will take this possibility of a *tabula rasa* to a new level when "Pop will eat itself!"



FM Einheit has played for the past forty years with assorted industrial and everyday materials, and is an eminent authority of German experimental sound art. In the 1980s, he was the percussionist for the punk band Abwärts and Palais Schaumburg, and fundamentally influenced the sound of the post-punk industrial music by playing with Einstürzende Neubauten for many years. FM Einheit has also composed for theater, film and radio plays, for which he has received several awards. Heiner Müller, Peter Zadek and Andreas Ammer are among his composition collaborators.

Anatomic Explosions, DIAS, London, 13 September 1966.
Photograph by Michael Broom

"I tied the objects onto the face of a building, and in two windows, so that the building became an assemblage for demolition. The top half of the anatomical figure was covered with a larger-than-life photograph of Robert Mitchum, so that only the legs appeared just below his face. The order of the explosions were rocket-launching with the burning of its rubber boot; gun shot with smoke; an explosion in the face to reveal the bright organs underneath; the dog disintegrates; a breast flies off the display dummy into the audience. A paper covered box scatters paint, intestines issue brown paint; the heart bleeds and the phallus ejaculates; bright red sparks at the foot of the figure set it alight and it falls two stories into the pit thereby setting light to the whole building. I had hoped that demolition workers would immediately finish the job."

In Ivor Davies, untitled account of events accompanying his letter to Peter Townsend, the editor of *Studio International*, 25 October 1966.



Friday, October 11th
3pm – 4.30pm, Grosser Konzertsaal, 7.K12, 7th floor

Catherine Mason 'Shouldering the Tasks of the Century': Gustav Metzger and Computer Art

The title comes from Metzger's article 'Automata in History' wherein he issues a call to artists by quoting Moholy-Nagy: "This is our century: machine-technology-socialism. Come to terms with it and shoulder the tasks of the century." Originally published in *Studio International*, the artist distributed copies at *Event One*, the first Computer Arts Society exhibition held 1969. How did Metzger progress in ten years from painting abstracts influenced by David Bomberg to defining a new aesthetic using technology, fused with his agenda of social engagement? This session considers this question, and the artist's place within the history of British computer art with *Cybernetic Serendipity*, *Five Screens with Computer*, editorship of *Page* and one of his last projects *Null Object* (2014). Metzger's use of the computer heralded a collaborative, cross-disciplinary approach to working which came to signify the early period of media arts in Britain, where interactivity and process were as equally valued as object.

Catherine Mason is an independent art historian and author who has been researching the history of computer and digital art since 2002. Her books include *A Computer in the Art Room* (JIG, 2008) and the co-authored *White Heat, Cold Logic* (MIT, 2009). Currently she writes for *Studio International* and is active in the Computer Arts Society.

www.catherinemason.co.uk



Friday, October 11th
5pm – 6.30pm, Grosser Konzertsaal, 7.K12, 7th floor

Jonathan Benthall Remembering the Zagreb Minifesto (1969)

I have renamed this a Minifesto because a better-known *Zagreb Manifesto* was issued in 1932 during political convulsions in Yugoslavia. I attended the symposium on *Computers and Visual Research* in Zagreb, 5-6 May 1969, and declaimed this statement, co-authored by myself with two other members of the recently formed London-based Computer Arts Society, Gustav Metzger and Gordon Hyde. Metzger had experimented with computers and been recently appointed Editor of *Page*, the Society's monthly bulletin. Hyde was a visionary of cybernetics and advanced computer theory. I was writing a monthly column on art and technology for *Studio International*, then the leading British journal of contemporary art. Our statement noted the possibility of new techniques emerging that would "offer creative outputs inaccessible to present art," a less rigid man/machine interface than what was then available, which would enable the computer to be "the servant of man and nature". Some artists were utilising their experience of science and technology to try to resolve urgent social and environmental problems, and in this talk I will set out to convey the flavour of the thought and experimentation underlying our original statement.

Jonathan Benthall was born in Kolkata in 1941. He was Secretary of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, from 1971 to 1973. He wrote regularly for *Studio International* between 1969 and 1972, the year when he published *Science and Technology in Art Today*, and co-organised the multi-

media programme *The body as a medium of expression* at the ICA. Between 1974 and 2000 he was Director of the Royal Anthropological Institute (now Director Emeritus). Since 1993 he has published widely on issues relating to religion (especially Islam) and humanitarianism.



Friday, October 11th
7pm – 8.30pm, Grosser Konzertsaal, 7.K12, 7th floor

Andrew Wilson in conversation with Mathieu Copeland



Andrew Wilson has been Senior Curator, Modern and Contemporary British Art, and Archives at Tate Britain since 2006. An art historian, critic and curator, he has published widely since the late 1980s, and over the years has contributed to a number of publications about Gustav Metzger including *Gustav Metzger 'Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art'* (1996), *Gustav Metzger History History* (2005), *Act or Perish/Gustav Metzger – A Retrospective* (2015), *We Must Become Idealists or Die* (2016); and curated *Made New* (City Racing, London 1996) and *Gustav Metzger* (Tate Britain 2015). He is a founding member of the London Institute of 'Pataphysics.



Gustav Metzger's
Cardboards,
1959-1996, found
cardboards.

Andrew Wilson curated the exhibition *Made New* at City Racing, London in 1996. It featured early works by Gustav Metzger, Barry Flanagan, Tim Mapston and pataphysical texts by Alfred Jarry. In 2002, Matt Hale, Paul Noble, Pete Owen and John Burgess wrote in *City Racing – the life and times of an artist-run space*, “The artworks of *Made New* looked completely contemporary and had lost none of their aggressiveness. Metzger's found cardboard boxes arranged in a gallery room still kicked against the commodity factory that art so easily allows itself to become. Rubbish is art and Art is rubbish.”

Saturday, October 12th
3pm – 4.30pm, Grosser Konzertsaal, 7.K12, 7th floor

Norman Rosenthal in conversation with Mathieu Copeland



Sir Norman Rosenthal is a British independent curator and art historian. Formerly the Director of Exhibitions at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, and Exhibitions Secretary of the Royal Academy between 1977 and 2008, Rosenthal curated and co-curated an impressive number of fundamental exhibitions, including the seminal *A New Spirit in Painting* (1981) and *Zeitgeist* (1982) both with the late Christos M. Joachimides, and curated *Sensation* (1997), *Apocalypse: Beauty and Horror in Contemporary Art* (2000), *Frank Auerbach* (2001), or again *Georg Baselitz* (2007).



Book cover to the catalogue for the exhibition *Art into Society – Society into Art. Seven German Artists*.

The exhibition *Art into Society – Society into Art* was organised by the then-curator of The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), Norman Rosenthal, and writer and curator Christos M. Joachimides at the ICA, Nash House, London, 1974. The cover reproduces a photograph by Dieter Hacker, who was one of the seven German artists included in the exhibition. When invited to participate in the exhibition, Metzger agreed to take part with contributions that would appear only in the catalogue. This allowed him to reformulate his ongoing disdain for the 'art trade' in 'How Long ... before all Artists Cease to Mutilate Themselves in the Interests of the Art Trade?' where he asserted a proposition that could be reformulated as 'bibliography as art' with 'The Art Dealer: A Bibliography'. Here, he asked the painful and necessary question 'When is Political Art Political?' with radical outcomes, and to announce his call for the 'Years without Art' that he would put into practice between 1977 and 1980 as a strike that aimed to “bring down the art system”.

Saturday, October 12th
5pm – 6.30pm, Grosser Konzertsaal, 7.K12, 7th floor

Round table

Mathieu Copeland
Ivor Davies
Catherine Mason
Norman Rosenthal
Kristine Stiles
Andrew Wilson

Gustav Metzger, *Auto-Destructive Art Demonstration* by Gustav Metzger, South Bank, London, 3 July 1961, 11.45am – 12.15pm.

“*Acid Action Painting*. Height 7 ft. Length 12½ ft. Depth 6 ft. Materials: nylon, hydrochloric acid, metal. Technique. Three nylon canvases coloured white black red are arranged behind each other, in this order. Acid is painted, flung and sprayed onto the nylon which corrodes at point of contact within 15 seconds.”

From the third manifesto hand-out that accompanied the demonstration, and that also included the text of the first two manifestos, as well as the descriptions of the Auto-Destructive Art Demonstration.



Thursday, October 10th
5pm – 9pm

Friday, October 11th
1pm – 9pm

Saturday, October 12th
1pm – 9pm

Documentation Lounge & Poster Exhibition

Video contributions

*Auto-Destructive Art,
the Activities of G. Metzger, 1963,*
directed by Harold Liversidge

Power to the People, 2003,
by Gustav Metzger

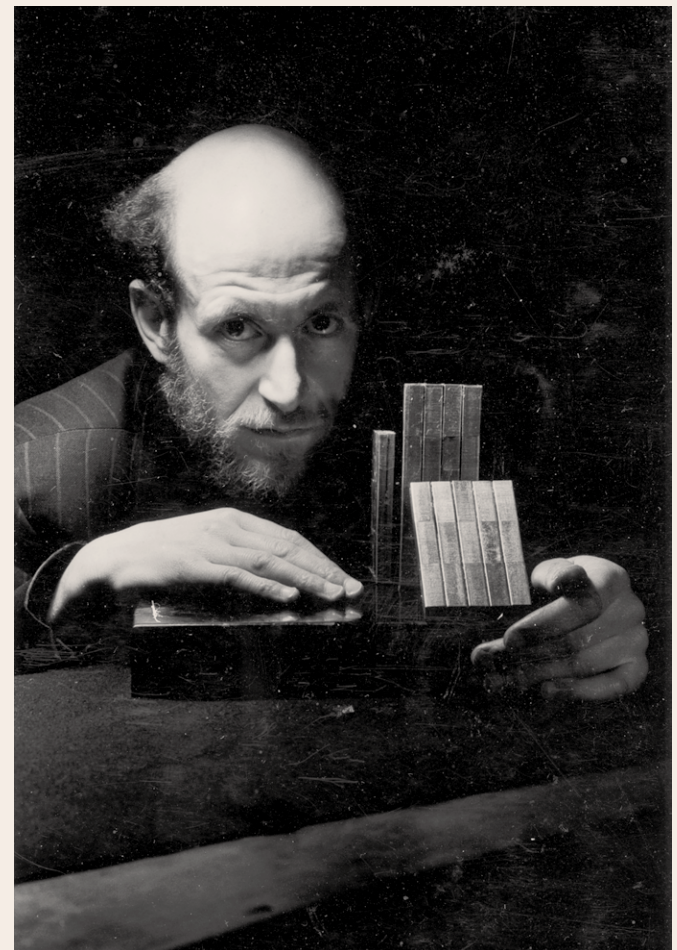
*A Spoken Word Retrospective –
Gustav Metzger, 2007, an exhibition*
by Mathieu Copeland

*Jerome R. Ravetz in conversation with
Mathieu Copeland, 11/09/2019, Institute
for Science, Innovation and Society,
University of Oxford*

*Hans Ulrich Obrist in conversation
with Mathieu Copeland, 23/09/2019,
Serpentine Galleries, London*

Posters

Ursula Biemann, Graciela Carnevale, Cécilia
Cavalieri, Ivor Davies, Swetlana Heger,
Karl Holmqvist, Franck Leibovici, Liliane Lijn,
David Medalla, Gustav Metzger, Ben Morea,
Phill Niblock, Karin Sander, Rirkrit Tiravanija,
Ben Vautier, Jacques Villeglé



Gustav Metzger
with a model for his
*Auto-Destructive
Monument*, 1960.

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Follow the symposium online
www.youtube.com/ZHdKArtMedia

More information
www.zhdk.ch/dkm

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Gustav Metzger, during the shooting of
*Auto-Destructive Art – the Activities
of G. Metzger* by Harold Liversidge, 1963.

The lounge is located in the foyer on the 7th floor, in front of the concert hall
(Grosser Konzertsaal, 7.K12, 7th floor) where the symposium takes place.

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Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
Zurich University of the Arts



**Organised by the Department
of Art & Media**