

TBLR/Bergen 29th and 30th Nov. 2012
«On Jacques Rancière»:

Oliver Davis – Lecture abstract

Talk title: Jacques Rancière: Aesthetics, Equality and the Feel of Contingency

Abstract: I shall begin by approaching Rancière's longstanding concern with aesthetic experience through his egalitarian critique of Pierre Bourdieu's deterministic account of the relationship between art and social structure. I shall then summarize Rancière's elegant argument about the 'aesthetic' dimension of emancipatory politics, which culminates in the now celebrated and much circulated hinge-concept *le partage du sensible*, the 'division', or 'distribution', or 'partition', of 'the sensible' (or indeed 'the sensory'). Against this background I shall then discuss his more recent writing on aesthetics in the narrower sense of writing about art, artworks and the regimes of intelligibility which condition those artworks and which are, in turn, conditioned by them. I shall delineate what I consider to be the most significant features of his analysis of 'the aesthetic regime of art' and speculate as to the purpose of his recently published major new work, *Aisthesis* (2011), his 'counter-history' of Modernism; this discussion will be framed in terms of what I shall call the 'feel' of contingency. Along the way I shall situate his recent work in relation to that of Adorno and Lyotard, as well as considering what new avenues for further research Rancière's approach opens up. I shall conclude by commenting on the difficult irony of Rancière's newfound position of influence in the academy and the art world.