**Imagining Migrants Research Seminars 2012**

January­–June 2012, Matrix East Research Laboratory (UEL)

Continuing on from last year’s highly successful ‘Imagining Migrants] seminar series, CMRB’s Marta Rabikowska invited academics, activists and practitioners to apply visual methodologies to discussions of the aesthetics, ethics and politics of the visualisation of migration. Topics ranged from the situation of migrants crossing the Calais border in France, the unequal position of manual workers at UEL, changes inside the Haredi community in Israel, transformation and memory of communism, and domestic abuse. All presentations engaged with visual methods, such as documentary, photo-elicitation, participatory exhibition, videoed theatre, participatory drawing, and photography. The seminars were well-received and many of the speakers from the series expressed an interest in gathering the research presented at the series into a peer-reviewed publication on interdisciplinary applications of visual methods within migration studies and social anthropology.

* Marc Issacs, *Calais: The Last Border*

25tn January 2012

Documentary film-maker and UEL Honorary Doctor, Marc Isaacs' haunting one-hour film, *Calais: The Last Border*, interweaved the stories of refugees marooned in Calais and interviews with day-tripping Brits at the French equivalent of a hot-dog stand. A Sutton woman was frustrated with the "visitors" her area was getting, the way their children got the best school places. A male voice said they lived in luxury hotels. Another performed a passable imitation of Peter Sellers doing a passable imitation of an Indian. Not that anyone, the Kentish woman added, wanted to think there'd be another Holocaust: "But there has to be some cut-off point." The tragedy was that for the migrants befriended by Isaacs, Calais was the cut-off point, the end of a very hard road.

* Luis C.Sotelo and Anna Lopes, *The Cleaner’s Voice*

13th February 2012

*The Cleaner’s Voice* is a project in which UEL cleaning staff were invited to form a ‘complaints choir’ so as to present to the wider community some of their most pressing and personal complaints against the contractor they were working for at the time (Spring 2011). The video documenting that process was uploaded to YouTube, and became a piece of activist work in its own right . Within hours of its release, it had received more than hundred and fifty views, and the university management was made aware of the increased pressure for the cleaning staff to be granted better working conditions. This resulted in a number of measures benefitting the cleaners. The project was a collaborative effort in which the political and the artistic came together to effect change. The production team included a number of UEL’s academics – Ana Lopes, Tim Hall and Helen Reddington who collaborated with artists and film-makers Luis C. Sotelo-Castro and Kypros Kyprianou.

* Yohai Hakak *Gevald!* and the role of truth in documentary

29th February 2012

Dr. Yohai Hakak (University of Portsmouth) researches different aspects of the Jewish Israeli Ultra Orthodox community. Based on his research he has co-directed a three minute documentary series entitled *Haredim*, of which he screened the first part, *Gevald!*, in this seminar. *Gevald!* looks at two very different Haredim: radical ultra-Orthodox leader and anti-Zionist Shmuel-Haim Pappenhym and Rabbi Avraham Ravitz a member of Israel’s Knesset. Using the issues raised in this documentary, Hakak posed questions about reflexivity in documentary films and what claims these films have about portraying reality and 'the truth' and spoke about the work on this series as a field-site for ethnographic research.

* Helene Kazan, *Obscured Decisions of Migration*

28th March 2012

MA student, artist and curator Helene Kazan (Goldsmiths) screened her short film *Masking Tape Intervention: Lebanon 1989* at this seminar. The film is entirely generated from a single archive photograph taken of the kitchen in the flat in which her family lived, in Lebanon just before their forced migration in 1989 during the Lebanese civil war. From this archive photograph, 1690 images were generated to make up the four minute and fifty second stop frame animation. Each image occupies a single momentary viewpoint throughout the day, as a narrated testimony outlines the pressures that lead to their transformative decision to migrate. The film enabled a theoretical framework and point of reference for the research undertaken during a month long residency in Istanbul in September 2011, during which Kazan invited local and international community to engage with a process of open discourse and exchange. Through collecting personal testimonies and archive photographs, she sought to explore and illustrate the events that are evidence to a history of migration in Istanbul. During the presentation, Kazan also spoke about investigating the reliability of the collective elements in the film i.e. memory, testimony and archive imagery and interrogated what politics, strategies and actions the migrant is forced to engage in, in making the decision to leave. In doing so she tried to understand how collating evidence of this obscured moment can map and question the greater histories behind migratory movements.

* Nela Milic ‘A Visual Journey through the Balkans: from Socialism to the UK’

25th April 2012

Visual artist and writer Nela Milic’s seminar focused on three projects that form the practice background for the development of her PhD (Goldsmiths) which involves building a digital archive of the protests in Belgrade in 1996–1997. With Wedding Bellas, Nela discussed the process of archiving and theoretical and physical positionality within Balkanising taxonomy and representation and with Yugo Yoga she discussed media in the case of ‘other’ memory and visuality. Throughout the seminar Nela presented a visual journey through the Balkans and socialism and the experience of exile and media in the UK. She discussed how one negotiates self in the process of ‘othering’ and how experience and memory influence that process. She developed an argument around the representation of the ‘other’ in the media and the everyday and unpacked the idea of the matrix of real and fiction in art and life.

* Janet Bowstead, ‘Imagined diasporas: domestic violence migrants within the UK’

2nd May 2012

Janet Bowstead’s presentation reflected on the visual aspects of her PhD research project (London Metropolitan University) that maps and conceptualises the journeys women make to escape domestic violence. This research project includes wider quantitative and spatial analysis of woman-journeys to access support services in England, however, the presentation focused on participatory photography work with two small groups of women resident in women’s refuges. Bowstead’s PhD research engaged in creative group-work in two women’s refuges to explore how women who have relocated due to domestic violence settle into a new area. This group-work revealed that issues of safety and confidentiality were very significant, both for the participants at risk from violent partners and for the security of the location of the refuges, and this was a challenge in terms of images that could be used further within photographs.