Allison Ross, Szilvia Ruszev, and Michael Anthony Turcios

A Time of Emergency or an Emergent Time?
Editors' Introduction

From the crises in the political systems around the world, to the inevitable global environmental Armageddon, and to deteriorating social situations, our present moment invites a consideration of urgency and response. Drawing upon Giorgio Agamben's notion of "states of emergency," the First Forum 2018 Graduate Student Conference introduced participants to scholarship that challenges concepts of emergency and emergence as they permeate film histories, new media landscapes and contemporary participatory and expanded reality formats. In 2019, the current publication of *Spectator* continues this focus on questions of how to respond to seemingly daily narratives of precarity and urgency prevalent in academic, political, and social discourses. In doing so, we continue the tradition of past volumes such as the 2017's issue on "Contagion" and 2016's on "Subjected to Play," both of which sought to rethink the definitions of these terms in relation to their broader social and political implications.

This issue is based on work presented at the First Forum 2018 Graduate Student Conference "Emergency and Emergence" held by the Division of Cinema and Media Studies in cooperation with the Interactive Media Arts + Practice Division of the School of Cinematic Arts at University of Southern California. The conference was held October 19th through 21st of 2018 and focused on how artists, academics, other media-makers and philosophers have responded to moments of emergency and how new, emergent forms of art and activism have resulted from these engagements.

Having served in the capacity of conference co-chairs and now as editors, we have responded to pressing concerns dealing with emergencies in our own contexts. From personal, political, historical, and intellectual emergencies, this special issue is our own way of emerging from stasis. In a sense, this journal is our contribution to help further discourse on the ways we respond to emergencies and how we emerge from the adversities.

The first day was organized by the Interactive Media Arts + Practice Division and consisted of workshops followed by an artist's talk. The workshops were led by graduate students and professionals from USC and elsewhere. Noa Kaplan conducted a workshop on photogrammetry which focused on both technological and conceptual-critical aspects of this emerging form of mapping. She emphasized the fact that photogrammetry as a technology was first developed for military purposes as part of aerial mapping and that photogrammetry software became proprietary after a brief period of open source accessibility. The second workshop, facilitated by Alison Humphries, took a creative approach to discussing models of disease and epidemic through an alternate-reality simulation called "The Cytokine Storm." The third, held by Jason Morningstar, introduced his live-action game, "Winterhorn" that navigated players through topics relating to activism against government intrusion. The evening concluded with the talk "To Nurture and Pollute" by artist Patrick Staff, who discussed the making of the works *Weed Killer* and *Bathing* in the context of the conference's larger themes.

The panels which followed complicated the negative framework associated with reactions to emergency by bringing the concept into conversation with the connected term emergence. Speakers sought to consider emergency and emergence as catalytic concepts, cultivating moments of potential and fostering new forms of organization to respond to an emergency's urgent call. What kinds of actions are motivated by emergency thinking? How do viewers respond to media produced under emergency conditions? What other vocabularies might be employed to characterize radical change or disruption in norms? Is there a way to conceptualize emergency that takes into consideration different modalities and histories? Panels considered

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emerging technologies, as well as subversions of existing technologies, perspectives on emergent forms of activism, and conceiving of geography as an emergent phenomenon. Full documentation of each conference panel may be found in the digital companion to this issue.

The second and third days also featured a keynote and plenary address and roundtable discussion which each touched on key aspects of this topic from distinct disciplinary viewpoints. The keynote, by Dr. Laila Shereen Sakr, entitled "Reframing the 'Arab Spring,'" analyzed the growing body of reflections on the "Arab Spring" of 2010-2012 within the contexts both of Middle East Studies and Media Studies as well as design studies. By examining the idealization of platforms such as Twitter and Facebook in the discourse about the "Arab Spring" and contrasting this discourse with the negative view of these same platforms in our present moment, Sakr offered an alternate view that is orientated around an examination of technology's political affordances and implications, rather than a celebration or demonization of it.

The plenary address by Dr. Amelia Jones, entitled "Gender/Sexuality and the Structure of Art (History)," examined art historical scholarship and the patriarchal biases of the field. As an alternate to the erasure of experimental feminist and queer artists from the art historical canon, Jones argues for a reconsideration of the field's traditions and methodological underpinnings. By examining the relationship between the form of the works dismissed by traditional art historical narratives and the nature of art history itself, Jones calls for a reconsideration of the methodologies of the discipline itself. Finally, the roundtable with Dr. Nitin Govil, Dr. Vicki Callahan, Dr. Tara McPherson, and Dr. J.D. Connor, moderated by Dan Lark, provided an illuminating dialogue on questions of pedagogy in our current emergency climate. This rich conversation offered a starting point for a dialogue important to academics, educators and students.

This special issue of *Spectator* includes select essays presented at the conference. Each piece conceptualizes the notion of "Emergency and Emergence" in distinct ways. The essays demonstrate that we always live in states of emergency and that some are able to transcend this condition by emerging and coping in ways relative to the situation.

Mazyar Mahan's piece, "The Subversive Effects of Defamiliarization in *This Is Not a Film*, directed by Jafar Panahi" positions Jafar Panahi's film not only as a political statement in and of itself but also as a model of future political protest in Iran. The essay examines Jafar Panahi's work as a commentary on the uncertainty experienced by citizens of Iran on a daily basis and as a political imperative for viewers of the film to actively engage in recording Iranian history. Beginning with theories of defamiliarization, Mahan's essay examines the formal strategies employed by both the film and in the ways in which the film engages an Iranian spectator. By subsequently examining the conditions under which the film was made, Mahan moves from an analysis of the film itself to a broader commentary on the political realities the film illuminates. Finally, the essay concludes with arguing that *This Is Not a Film* presents a political imperative to Iranian spectators to train their cameras on their daily realities, even when doing so may be a dangerous act.

Emma St. Lawrence also takes up questions of technology and social landscapes in a very different context. In St. Lawrence's essay, "The (Live) Cinema of Nostalgia," the author examines the live cinema experience as a form of interactivity which both inspires nostalgia and can create new kinds of social spaces. Drawing on the history of live cinema, St. Lawrence argues that live cinema can be conceptualized as producing a form of alternate reality. The essay focuses on how live cinema experiences centered around films remembered fondly also can efface social and political realities of the times in which these movies initially were produced. "The (Live) Cinema of Nostalgia" concludes by urging us to consider the ethical questions raised by this emergent form, and whether the types of erasure facilitated by live cinema's nostalgia may indeed have harmful implications.

How does the production, circulation, and exhibition of a documentary film look like at various scales of emergency? Guarav Pai's essay, "Crisis, Jeopardy, Emergency: The Ethics of Space in *El Grito, México 68*," examines footage of the 1968 student massacre at Tlatelolco in Mexico City and calls our attention to the ways in which space played a critical role in thinking about the filmed subject, the director, and the spectator. Divided into three parts, the essay focuses on the crisis of

Mexico's politically repressive climate of the 1960s and the resistance of the citizens; the aesthetics of emergency and the vulnerable position that the filmmakers placed themselves in when shooting clandestine footage and footage of the protests; and the essay concludes with the significance of the documentary in the contemporary era, at a moment of emergencies in Mexico.

In "Virtual Bodies and Their Implications on a Sense of Agency," Lisa Müller-Trede asks us to consider the body and the notion of the virtual and real. Müller-Trede, a practicing artist, uses her own work *Collider Getting Sick* (2018) as the case study for examining the body in virtual reality and to think about how the frames of the real and the virtual are problematized, and often times unsettled. In exploring the notion of the "rupture," the essay considers how our agency, truth, and the real concern the body and its placement in virtual reality.

Annette LePique's essay, "Blood is Sweeter than Honey: Blackness and Subversive Utopia in Bernard Rose's *Candy Man*" explores the long history of racialized trauma in public housing projects. In specifically focusing on Black urban housing histories, LePique contextualizes how the film *Candy Man* gestures towards how housing discrimination and demonization is traced back to the Great Migration of Black people into industrialized areas such as in Chicago. The flesh, as LePique illustrates in the essay, is a signifier, a texture riddled with trauma, a reminder that the traumas of slavery, dispossession, dispersal, and containment haunt the present.

In addition to the essays presented at the conference, we have included two book reviews in this issue. Achala Upendran reviews Patrick Anderson's *Autobiography of a Disease* (2017). Szilvia Ruszev offers a review of Byung-Chul Han's *The Expulsion of the Other: Society, Perception and Communication Today* (2018).

At the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018 when the conference theme first was being conceived, the terms "emergency" and "emergence" were prominent in our daily vocabularies. This dynamic dialogue continues in ongoing conversations on campuses and reflected in the creative productions that reimagine emergence and emergency. These are more than esoteric topics for the moment; they are founded upon critical concerns. Our future depends upon how we engage with and act upon the challenges we face today.

Allison Ross is a fourth year Ph.D. candidate at USC's School of Cinematic Arts, Cinema & Media Studies Division. Her research focuses on transnational, feminist, and LGBTQIA+ documentary and avant-garde cinema, through the lens of an intersection of queer theory, phenomenology, and narrative and documentary studies. Ross' work has been published in *Docalogue* (August 2018), *Media Fields* (June 2019) and *Spectator* (Spring 2019).

Szilvia Ruszev is Ph.D. candidate at USC's School of Cinematic Arts, Media Arts + Practice Division. She is a media artist and scholar working across different media formats, focusing on the notion of montage. Her artistic work relates to very personal moments, certain states of emotional solitude in relation to the Other, both in its particular and abstract notion. Her award-winning work has been part of numerous international film festivals and exhibitions such as *Karlovy Vary IFF, TIFF Toronto, Berlin IFF, Siggraph* and *Codame*. Her practice-based research focuses on the visual representation of rhythm in audiovisual media, extended montage theories, and politics post-cinema.

Michael Anthony Turcios is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies with interests in Comparative Literature, Ethnic Studies, and Visual Culture. Turcios studies relational histories of urban space of the Latinx barrios of East Los Angeles and the Arab banlieues of Paris, France. Interested in the production, circulation, and exhibition of nontheatrical films, posters, and flyers, Turcios examines how the project of decolonization in urban space of the Global North revealed multiple forms and patterns of solidarity and resistance.