Forms of authority inhabit aesthetic events and practices, and equally suffuse political and social discourse. The intersection of these modalities is attracting unprecedented attention amongst contemporary political and critical theorists. Judith Butler, Jacques Rancière, Bonnie Honig, William Connolly, James Tully, Giorgio Agamben—and behind them figures as diverse as Arendt, Freud, Derrida, Deleuze, Benjamin, Wittgenstein and Nietzsche—all integrate political interpretation and critical reconstruction with lessons drawn from literary histories and artistic practices. The aesthetic forms in which authority is embedded (for example via tropes of realism, melodrama, reportage, abstraction, and tradition) animate political economy and theology. They also invite alternative modes of reflection and interrogation.
In opening the question of the power as well as the fragility of authority’s ‘forms’, certain contemporary political practices of dispossession might become ambivalent; harking back, perhaps, to the Dionysian moment that according to Nietzsche undoes identities ossified into hierarchy, dominance and mistrust.

This conference aims to explore how key dimensions of contemporary political life obtain authority, visibility and contestability in aesthetic forms—literature, poetry, drama, cinema, painting, sculpture. Can plural sovereignties and the modes of constitution of authority in law/lore become more visible through aesthetic attention? How do critical approaches to international human rights regimes work through aesthetic forms? Do the divisions inherent in authority, especially where there are long histories of violence, conflict or oppression, particularly demand an aesthetic critique or (re)-mediation? How might an aesthetic register for thinking politics emancipate the material world from merely being man’s ‘object’, generating new institutional forms apt to the challenges of today?

Keynote speakers

- Louise Amoore (Durham, UK)
- Chiara Bottici (New School, NYC)
- Davide Panagia (UCLA)
- Dimitris Vardoulakis (Western Sydney University)

Conference registration

- Full Registration Fee - $135, GST inclusive
- Students - $70, GST inclusive
- Conference Dinner, Wednesday 20 July - additional fee, $50

To register, please visit hrc.anu.edu.au/events/forms-authority-july-2016

Registrations close cob Monday 18th July.

Conference program

A conference program is available at bit.ly/HRC-Authority

Contact

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