Navigating Finance and the Imagination

Walking with Castoriadis in the City of London

A collaborative, exploratory, theoretical walking tour

London - April 14, 2018

On April 14, a temporary assembly of activists, scholars and interdisciplinary academics will drift through the City of London, from St Paul’s Cathedral to the Bank of England. This walk will be a speculative tour of the City, allowing participants to engage with the speculative powers at work both for and against financialization.

With over 30 presentations on fields ranging from algorithmic finance to disruptive technologies, from urbanity to digital labor, the walk will engage with questions of credit, theft, value, work, justice, subjectivity, and power, all within the framework of speculative finance.

Devised in honour of the late theorist of the radical imagination Georgios Castoriadis, each presentation will be located at key sites and landmarks, creating a dynamic field of critical encounters. The City of London is a microcosm of global finance, and the tour will engage with the critical currents of finance, digital technology and cities. It is an exploration of the speculative powers at work both for and against financialization.

To download map and for more information, visit rival.lakehead.ca/london-tour or use this QR code.

#SpectacleCity #SpectacleCity
M. Panel: Art and the speculative imagination
Location: David Pearce Seminar Room B06, UCL Department of Economics, Drayton House, 50 Gordon Square
Presenter: Avery Young
The brief talk will consider the ideas that artists bring to a mercantile marketplace – the art market, and its attendant relations to international finance, wealth management and the marketing and advertising of tangible and intangible goods. Increasingly, artists are involved in the ways in which it is discussed. What are the implications for art, artists and wider culture, if art becomes a ‘passion asset’?

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C. The Speculative Spirit of Finance
Presenter: Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou
Location: St. Paul’s Cathedral
What is the religion of today’s capitalism? What is the relation between the ‘market’ and the ‘spirit’ in the world of financial speculation? This talk will consider the intertwined affinities between religious and financial engagements with commodities and markets in the 21st century. To do so, I will draw on the late writings of Cornelius Castoriadis on Marx Weber, and the political and religious autonomy to measure their relevance to contemporary transformations of the liberal order. This talk will focus specifically on the circulatory and collective spirit of finance. Its capacity to produce new social relations and contradictions through the radical revaluation of commodities. It will examine the possibilities of social speculation as a transformative form of social action. It will draw on the idea of the future’s indeterminacy to consider the possibilities of social speculation as an transformative form of social action. It will draw on the idea of the future’s indeterminacy to consider the possibilities of social speculation as a transformative form of social action.

D. North American “Indians” and British Modernity
Presenter: Robbie Richardson
Location: St. Paul’s Cathedral
This talk will consider the status of Queen Anne in front of St. Paul’s Cathedral, with particular attention to the figure of “America” as an Indigenous woman with the severed head of “America” as a European behemoth her feet. I will consider the role of the North American “Indian” in the eighteenth-century imagination of national identity and its relationship to Georges de Lamoignon. Furthermore, I will consider the speculative imaginaries of the city and how this has contributed to the marketing and advertising of tangible and intangible goods.

E. The Origins of Mutuality
Presenter: Ed Mayo
Location: Goldsmiths’ Hall
For hundreds of years, work, money and business in the City of London was regulated through guilds. Open to members, closed to outsiders, self-governing on its own terms, guilds were seen as natural and moral economic units. Today, guilds represent dead capital. The talk will focus specifically on the circulation of commodities and the role of urban planning in the City of London today.

F. “No Gods, No Masters”: Antisemitic Tropes and Utopian Ideals in Imagining and Resisting the Capitalist State
Presenter: Judith Suskind
Location: Grocers’ Hall
The world of global finance represented by the City of London has all the different historical periods, towns associated with the popular imagination with both negative and positive images of financial crises, and its role in the City, often serves as an antithetic trope. The figure of the “cosmopolitan capitalist” was often a metaphor for the Jewish financier, who played leading roles in the City. Where is the City from the 20th century, and from the post-war reconstruction of the City of London? How can the City of London be thought through financial crises and international financial crises?

G. The ‘Fear Index’: the autonomisation of the social imaginary of finance
Presenter: Caria Bled
Location: Blackrock
The presentation takes up Castoriadis’ conceptual antithesis of the social imaginary of finance with the real economy. Proceeding from the idea of financial risk, it explores how algorithms are designed to create, and how they are used, for financial risk, and what are the limits of these algorithms.

H. Alchemy and the Chemistry of the Financial Imaginary
Presenter: Scott Brett
Location: London Bullion Market
The London Bullion Market Association is a society whose host to the recent call of gold historians, and a report that affects complex theoretical and substantial aspects of gold. The London Bullion Market Association is a society whose host to the recent call of gold historians, and a report that affects complex theoretical and substantial aspects of gold.

J. The yogic imperative of the financed imagination
Presenter: Cassie Thornton & Francesca Coin
Location: Tower Hill Gardens
In the period, Goldman Sachs, J.P. Morgan, and Citigroup are uprooted from working communities. But does this mean that the other imaginaries of the city no longer exist, disappear, vanish? What other imaginaries could there be? I will explore a speculative technology that projects forward to a future in which London has lost its status, as an nexus of global power, where producing critical imaginaries, where producing critical imaginaries, has become all about creating openness and possibilities, and where the practice of urban planning becomes all about creating openness and possibilities.

K. A Post-Financial London Imaginary
Presenter: Steven Taylor
Location: French Ordinary Court (Fenchurch Street Station)
The architectural and spatial concepts of ‘The City’ were to express Castoriadis’ conception that ‘it is the economy that exhibits most clearly the dominant of the imagination at any level.’ But does this mean that the other imaginaries of the city no longer exist, disappear, vanish? What other imaginaries could there be? I will explore a speculative technology that projects forward to a future in which London has lost its status, as an nexus of global power, where producing critical imaginaries, has become all about creating openness and possibilities, and where the practice of urban planning becomes all about creating openness and possibilities.

L. Playground Ambiguities
Presenter: Rachel Rosen
Location: Tower Hill Gardens
Lying in the heart of the City, Tower Hill Playground represents the contradictory character of the project of global capitalism: grabbing solidity and its fragility. The playground is a site of awe and wonder, of fear and fascination, of magic and mystery, of joy and pain, of hope and despair. Children and adults alike are intrigued by the tension between familiar and strange, between the known and unknown, between the safe and the dangerous. Children and adults alike are intrigued by the tension between familiar and strange, between the known and unknown, between the safe and the dangerous.