



## Architecture Open Lecture Series 2007 / 08

- University of Greenwich School of Architecture & Construction
- Norbert Singer Lecture Theatre (M055)
- Mansion Site, Avery Hill Campus
- Bexley Road, Eltham, London SE9 2PQ
- Tuesdays 17.30

**Tuesday 29th January 2008**

**Arden Reed :: Pomona College Claremont California**

### Slow Art



In an image-saturated environment, how do we slow down long enough to have meaningful encounters with aesthetic objects? My book studies strategies that visual artists use to slow our acts of perceiving their work. The project began by my remembering the quirky and sort of vulgar 19th-century parlor game of 'tableaux vivants', where people staged themselves as famous artworks, whose identity their friends would try to guess. I thought: in age of cultural acceleration like our own, here were people going to some trouble to stand still or watch other people standing still. I wondered why we're fascinated to watch people not moving, and also what happens when a painting comes off the canvas into the world?

Gradually I came to realize that that the great age of tableaux vivants wasn't the 19th-century, as everybody supposed, but right now. Today tableaux vivants morph into many media and serve varied ends: appropriation art, video, film, photography, performance art, fiction, new media. Critics have remarked individual instances, but nobody has connected the dots. I want to talk about the practice of staging tableaux in both 19th century and today, across diverse forms and genres. To put it differently: I'm interested in work that explores the territory between still and moving images. This leads to the question whether, by family resemblance, there is such a thing or field as 'slow art'? I focus on the visual arts and literature, but the question obviously applies to theater, music and dance, and in certain ways also to design and architecture.

**Arden Reed** is the Arthur M. and Fanny M. Dole Professor of English at Pomona College, Claremont, California. He is currently on a Guggenheim Fellowship to write *Slow Art: Tableaux Vivants* to James Turrell, which will be published by the University of California Press. Previous books include: *Romantic Weather: The Climates of Coleridge and Baudelaire* (University Press of New England, 1984); *Constance DeJong: Metal* (University of New Mexico Press, 2003); *Manet, Flaubert, and the Emergence of Modernism* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Close Window