

# Department of Languages and Cultures

2017 Research Seminar Series

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## Two tales of the tesseract: spatial and temporal articulations of the fourth dimension within film phenomenology



Methods of  $n$ -dimensional analysis, derived from non-Euclidean geometry, have been variously applied in theory and practice of modern art to describe transformations of figure, frame, surface, space and time as expressions of a fourth dimension. However, with few exceptions, these ideas have had little uptake within film and media theory, despite recurring representations of the fourth dimension in popular narrative cinema and experimental media practice. My talk will attempt to reach across this gap through the principle of elementary parallelism, which observes structural homologies between lower and higher dimensions, providing a basis for the speculative extrapolation of figures such as the tesseract: technically defined as a hypercube, but also more generally as the four-dimensional extension of any three-dimensional object. In his essay *Film as Pure Form*, Theo Van Doesberg (1929) urges us to place the film screen within the tesseract. I will respond by arguing conversely that the tesseract has always already existed as a structuring presence *within* the moving image, where it has undergone hidden elaboration through the historical development of film form. I will demonstrate how the cinema enacts two related modalities of the tesseract, which alternately emphasize spatial reversibility and temporal protraction. Such a move enables film theory to not only describe figural reversibility within cinematic representations, but also the more fundamental forms of existential (hyper)reversibility on which the experience of moving images is predicated

**Tuesday May 16, 2017 12:00pm A3N7 (3<sup>rd</sup> floor Arts Building)**