

Liverpool Film Seminar

2017 – 2018 series

Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

Professor Elizabeth Cowie (University of Kent)

Horrible images: ethics, affect and the viewer

In this talk I look at the underbelly of affect, those states we term fear or terror, horror and anxiety that are engaged through performance art, photography and film, exploring how these feelings are reconciled or repudiated. My talk will draw on psychoanalytical understandings of trauma and anxiety to explore how we may think the question of ethics and the image. My focus will be on the spectacle of the still, or stilled image in film and photography - both fiction and documentary - and thence the narrative context of its presentation.

Biography:

Elizabeth Cowie is Professor Emeritus in Film Studies at the University of Kent, Canterbury. She was co-founder and co-editor in the 1970s of *m/f* a journal of feminist theory, and published *Representing the Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis* in 1997. She has subsequently written on film noir, on the horror of the horror film and on the cinematic dream-work.



In *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real* (Minnesota University Press, 2011) she addressed documentary film as the serious, as spectacle, and as an art of the real. Recent essays include 'Documentary Space, Place, and Landscape' *Media Fields*, online, 2011; 'The ventriloquism of documentary first-person speech and the self-portrait film', in *Embodied Encounters: New Approaches to Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, 2014; 'The World Viewed: Documentary Observing and the Culture of Surveillance', in *A Companion to Contemporary Documentary*, 2015; 'The time of gesture in cinema and its ethics', in *Journal for Cultural Research* 2015 Vol. 19, No 1; 'The difference in figuring women now', *Moving Image Review & Art Journal*, vol 4 nos 1 & 2, 2016, special issue on feminism and women's art.