

The Jackman Humanities Institute Program for the Arts presents
2008—2009 Inaugural Year Program: *Telling Stories*



KAJA SILVERMAN

Distinguished Speaker
on Photography

27—31 October 2008

Kaja Silverman is Class of 1940 Professor of Rhetoric and Film at the University of California-Berkeley. She has just completed her ninth book, *Flesh of My Flesh*, which will appear in 2009. Silverman's writing and teaching are currently focused primarily on phenomenology, psychoanalysis, photography, time-based visual art and literature, but she continues to write about and teach courses on cinema, and she has both a developing interest in painting, and an ongoing commitment to feminist theory.

Monday 27 October: "The Miracle of Analogy"
Tuesday 28 October: "The Twilight of Posterity I"
Wednesday 29 October: "The Twilight of Posterity II"
Thursday 30 October: "Behold the Invisible"
Innis College Town Hall, 2 Sussex Avenue, 7:00 p.m. each evening.

Friday 31 October: Roundtable Discussion
Waters Lounge, Woodsworth College, 119 St. George St., 2:00—4:00 p.m.

Registration: Free and open to the public

Organizer: Prof. Kay Armatage, Acting Director, Cinema Studies Institute

Sponsors: Cinema Studies Institute (Innis College), Dept. of Art

Silverman Lectures

In her four lectures, Kaja Silverman will argue that a photographic negative is not a representation of its model, but rather the model's analogue. A positive print analogizes this initial analogue, and the process can be endlessly prolonged - not just from one photograph to another, but also one art form or historical moment to another. Photography is consequently more than a visual technology; it is an ontological calling card, an invitation to us to see that everything really is connected to everything else, through relationships of greater or lesser similarity, that analogy is the structure of Being.

In her first lecture, "The Miracle of Analogy," Silverman will show that a number of photography's inventors and earlier practitioners thought of it as a graphic rather than an ocular practice, and they knew that they were not the source of its 'drawings.' They were also keenly aware of the fundamental instability of the photographic image. Henry Fox-Talbot's first experiments produced a negative rather than a positive image, and its 'shadows' darkened over time. Although he overcame the first of these problems, he never fully solved the second; the positive prints he included in the first edition of his 1844 book, *The Pencil of Nature*, continued to change. The same, Fox Talbot eventually realized, is true of every photograph. Even the digital images we 'shoot' with our most technically advanced cameras go on developing long after we have finished tinkering with them, because what we see in them is constantly evolving.

In her next two lectures, "The Twilight of Posterity" (1) and (2), Silverman shows that Leonardo da Vinci was a photographer avant-la-lettre through a reading of the Louvre's 2003 exhibition of his manuscripts and drawings. This exhibition included an 'intervention' by Irish artist James Coleman, that consisted of four sets of video editing monitors, and a large-screen projection of digital images of *The Last Supper*. The video monitors, which displayed digital versions of several of Leonardo's drawings and one of his paintings, corresponded in complex ways with the rest of the exhibition. The projection figured Leonardo's famous, and famously deteriorating, fresco, through a constantly shifting series of close-ups, long-shots, and slow pans across its sumptuous surface. Coleman used them to show that these metamorphoses are internal to the painting itself, and not an external corruption of its original 'essence.' He also presented his own images as another stage in this internal development.

In her fourth lecture, "Behold the Invisible," Silverman discusses her latest work. From *Destroyed Room* (1979) through more recent works like *Overpass* (2001) and *Dawn* (2001), "visibility" and "invisibility" have been the dominant concerns of Jeff Wall's art. In his earliest Cibachromes, "invisibility" means "ideological mystification," and Wall seeks to undo this mystification by making things visible. However, his relationship to visibility and invisibility soon began to change, and from the 1990's on, the people, places and things in his photographs are more likely to turn away from us than toward us. In her talk, Silverman will discuss the aesthetic, philosophical and political implications of this shift, and provide a detailed reading of Wall's 2001 work, *After "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison, the Preface*.