

LIM CHONG YAH PROFESSORSHIP PUBLIC LECTURE

National University of Singapore
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Department of Sociology
presents

Luxury and its Discontents

Abstract

The production of an expanding range of consumer goods and luxuries is generally seen as one of the main engines driving the global economy. Contemporary consumer culture and media advertising reveal an endless fascination with the luxurious lifestyles of celebrities and the super-rich. If luxury is central to social life today, we should be aware that for much of western history up to the eighteenth century, luxury has been depicted as a dangerous thing, corrosive of morality and social order. The lecture will examine a number of luxury dynamics, some of which point not merely to the control of luxury, but to the transformation of luxury, to potential moves beyond luxury. If the moral containment or eradication of luxuries has historically been a powerful dynamic, there are a number of other vectors to be considered. These include: the democratization of luxury; austere luxury; connoisseurship; the shift from material to immaterial luxuries; the move from sensual pleasures to more contemplative recollections and mediations. The various dynamics in their different ways, seek to acknowledge, play with, or go beyond, the imputed power of the luxury object and the crossovers between art, luxury, imagination and everyday life.

SPEAKER: PROFESSOR MIKE FEATHERSTONE

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DATE : 2 SEPTEMBER 2011, FRIDAY

TIME : 4 PM – 5.30 PM

VENUE : LT 10

About the speaker



Mike Featherstone is Director of the Theory, Culture & Society Centre and research professor of sociology and communications at Nottingham Trent University. He is founding editor of the journal *Theory, Culture & Society* and the *Theory, Culture & Society Book Series*. He is editor-in-chief of the journal *Body & Society*. Author of *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (1991, 2nd edition 2007) and *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity* (1995). Co-author of *Surviving Middle Age* (1982). Editor of over a dozen books and author of numerous journal articles and book chapters on social and cultural theory, consumer and global culture, ageing and the body. His books and articles have been translated into sixteen languages. He has spent time as a visiting professor in Barcelona, Geneva, Kyoto, Recife, São Paulo, Tokyo and Vancouver.

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