Keynote: Paul Vanouse - 7:40pm “Imag(in)ing Human Difference”

Nineteenth century human sciences utilized highly visual techniques to differentiate, to liken, to individuate and to categorize. These endeavors, such as anthropometry, fingerprinting, genetics and eugenics have strong resonance in contemporary bio-sciences and our current worldview. In this lecture, Vanouse will discuss his artworks that use DNA as a medium alongside some of the intertwined scientific, political and legal histories that they interrogate.

Paul Vanouse is a professor of visual studies at the University at Buffalo. He has been working in emerging media forms since 1990. Interdisciplinarity and impassioned amateurism guide his art practice. His biological media experiments, and interactive installations have been exhibited in over 20 countries and widely across the US. Recent solo exhibitions include: Schering Foundation in Berlin (2011), Kapelica Gallery in Ljubljana (2011), Muffathalle in Munich (2012), and Beall Center at UC Irvine, California (2013).

Vanouse has been specifically concerned with forcing the arcane codes of scientific communication into a broader cultural language. In The Relative Velocity Inscription Device (2002), he literally races DNA from his Jamaican-American family members, in a DNA sequencing gel, in an installation/scientific experiment that explores the relationship between early 20th Century Eugenics and late 20th Century Human Genomics. The double entendre of race highlights the obsession with “genetic fitness” within these historical endeavors. Similarly, his recent projects, “Latent Figure Protocol” (2007), “Ocular Revision” (2010) and “Suspect Inversion Center” (2012) use molecular biology techniques to challenge “genome-hype” and to confront issues surrounding DNA fingerprinting.

Reception and Live Music to Follow