

October 2-3, 2015

Urgent Imagination Art & Urban Development

urgentimagination.front.bc.ca

Conference Schedule

Friday October 2nd

7PM

Welcome and Introduction

7:30PM

Artist Talks by Urban Subjects and
Assemble

8:30-9PM

To Build a Better City: Selected Films
about Art and Urban Development

Saturday October 3rd

10-11:30AM

Politics and Urban Spaces:
Am Johal, Seema Jethalal, Caitlin Jones,
Mike Lombardi, Bob Williams

12-1PM

Artist Talks by Holly Ward and Other
Sights for Artists' Projects

1-1:30PM

"How to Remember": A reading by
Meredith Quartermain from her collection
of short stories, *I, Bartleby* (2015)

1:30-2PM (Lunch)

2-3:30PM

Communities, Culture and Consultation:
Geraldine Denning, Brian McBay, Annabel
Vaughan

3:30-4:30PM

Open Panel (moderated by Jeff Derksen)

To Build a Better City: Selected Films About Art and Urban Development

Curated by Caitlin Jones
and Jesse McKee

This program of excerpts from documentary and video artworks touches on many of the thematic that are addressed in *Urgent Imagination*, including social housing, speculative planning and the afterlife of architectural master plans, marketing rather than designing living spaces, and the desire to have artists involved in every step of these processes. Each generation of artists and filmmakers featured in this screening take on the social and architectural riddles of their respective eras.

1. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation / City of Vancouver / National Film Board of Canada
To Build a Better City (excerpt)
1964

Co-presented and sponsored by the CMHC, the City of Vancouver, and the National Film Board, *To Build a Better City* is a short documentary promoting the planned redevelopment of the Strathcona neighbourhood of Vancouver in the 1950s and onwards. The film frames the renewal scheme

as necessary to maintain the city's vitality, which would otherwise be sapped by urban 'blight'. According to this rhetoric, neighbourhoods like Strathcona appear as gangrenous appendages that must be excised from the civic body.

2. Neïl Beloufa

People's passion, lifestyle beautiful wine, gigantic glass towers, all surrounded by water (excerpt)
2011

Commissioned and produced for the artist's solo exhibition at the Western Front in 2011, *People's passion...* takes the form of a promotional video for the lifestyle of an urban middle class. Through a progression of spontaneous and enacted interviews, infused with optimism and rampant boosterism, Beloufa investigates the near-hysterical positivity that blankets the condo-owning and condo-aspiring culture of our contemporary city.

Neïl Beloufa is an artist living and working in Paris. He has had solo exhibitions at the Banff Centre (2014), ICA London (2014), UCLA Hammer Museum (2013), and Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2012). In Spring 2016, Beloufa will have a solo exhibition of works at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, featuring works made between Vancouver and Banff. He has also been included in major group exhibitions such as the Paris Triennale (2012), the 55th Venice Biennial

(2013), and the Taipei Biennial (2014). His film *Sans Titre* (2010) won the Grand Prize at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 2011 and was included in the Wavelengths programme at the Toronto International Film Festival the same year.

3. Kate Craig and Margaret Dragu *Backup* (excerpt) 1978

Filmed at the Western Front and the surrounding neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant, *Backup* presents a series of vignettes or “modes” describing the lifestyles inhabited by a cast of female protagonists: middle-class urban renewal advocates, street punks, high society debutantes, and working-class domestics. With humour the video imagines how the category of the feminine is navigated in an urban milieu.

Kate Craig was a pioneering Canadian video and performance artist and a founding member of the Western Front. Born in 1947, she studied at Dalhousie University and the University of Victoria. Challenging the primacy of the stage as a site of performance, Craig inhabited a cast of characters in her daily life—most famously Lady Brute, who once graced the pages of *FILE* and *Chatelaine* magazines. Craig also founded and performed internationally with the ‘Ettes, a women’s post-feminist performance group. Her video work

Delicate Issue won the Canadian Video Open in 1979.

Margaret Dragu is a writer and performance artist living and working in Vancouver. Dragu met Kate Craig in Toronto in 1975 and was subsequently invited by Craig to the Western Front to produce a video as artist-in-residence. Since then, Dragu has had a storied career in performance and burlesque, including co-writing a collection of essays on striptease and founding a short-lived strippers’ union in Toronto. In 2012, Dragu won the Governor General’s Award in Visual and Media Arts.

4. Ant Farm *Inflatables Illustrated* (excerpt) 1971-2003

Emerging from utopian alternative architectural thought in the 1960s and 1970s, the American collective Ant Farm is known for their ‘inflatables’, inhabitable plastic structures that were cheap, easy to transport, and quick to assemble. *Inflatables Illustrated* appears as a visual primer on how their experimental architecture was conceived, prepared, and constructed. The video was produced as a companion to Ant Farm’s 1969 print publication *The Inflatocookbook*, a do-it-yourself guide to building their pneumatic structures.

Ant Farm was established in 1968

in San Francisco by two architects, Chip Lord and Doug Michels, who were later joined by Curtis Schreier. Influenced by American architect Buckminster Fuller and the utopian group Archigram, the group intended to challenge what they seen as the fixity of mass consumer culture of 1970s USA with their ephemeral and participatory architecture. Ant Farm produced works in a number of other formats, including agitprop events, manifestos, performances, and installations.

5. Eugenia Butler

Kitchen Table Talk 4: Art and the Power to Change Community
(excerpt)
1993

Over the course of eight days in December 1993 Eugenia Butler invited artists and writers to join her for a meal and conversation in a room built behind the commercial booths of the 1993 Art/LA. . At this particular gathering, Butler is joined by George Herms, Julia Lohmann, Monica Mayer, John O'Brien, and John Outterbridge. This discussion, one of the longest of the eight recorded, pivots on the particular thought: "art and the power to change community".

Eugenia Butler was an artist, art collector, and gallerist born and raised in California. Before entering the Los Angeles art scene, Butler had served as a nurse sergeant in

the marines during World War II. Breaking from the conventional object-based art market of 1970s L.A., her eponymous gallery boldly exhibited pioneers of conceptual art such as John Baldessari, Joseph Kosuth, Allen Ruppersberg, and Richard Jackson, among others. After the closing of her gallery in 1971, Butler developed her own art practice creating 'performative sculptures' or 'idea objects'.

6. Les Levine

I Am An Artist (excerpt)
1975

The artist is filmed walking up the Bowery in New York City, while giving a monologue that provokes the purist ideals of Greenbergian modern art. Throughout the 15-minute video, the artist repeats phrases like, "I can't get involved. I am an artist. It will make my art impure to get involved with problems in the streets, I'm only concerned with greatness." At the time of this video the Bowery was a neighbourhood marked by transience, poverty and homelessness. History has doubled-down on Levine's satirical piece as the neighborhood, now the home of the New Museum and major commercial galleries, has been almost completely gentrified aided by art market-driven development.

Les Levine is a conceptual artist born in Dublin and currently based in New York. He studied at the Central

School of Arts and Crafts in London and exhibited extensively in Canada during the 1960s and 1970s. Levine is considered an originator of ‘media art’, incorporating mass communication technologies such as television, radio, telephones, and public advertising into his works.

the exhibitions he has designed are the 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale (2011) and the 2nd Athens Biennale (2009).

7. Andreas Angelidakis
TROLL or The Voluntary Ruin
2011

TROLL tells the story of a modernist, low-income apartment building in Athens that wants to be a mountain. This surreal narrative reflects ongoing civic crises faced in Greece, where the inward flow of migration from Eastern Europe, North Africa, and Asia that began in the 1990s has collided with the economic collapse of the nation’s capital. The city’s now abandoned, overgrown housing blocks are here imagined by Angelidakis as becoming sentient beings, or ‘trolls’, that wish to escape Athens for a better life elsewhere, much like their previous inhabitants.

Andreas Angelidakis is an artist and architect that lives and works between Oslo and Athens. He holds a BA in Architecture from Sci-Arc, Santa Monica, and an MSc in Advanced Architectural Design from Columbia University, New York. Angelidakis has recently curated and designed ‘The System of Objects’, DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, Athens. Among



Western
Front

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Noon to 5:00 pm PST



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