



IML 365: Future Cinema

Holly Willis || Tuesdays, 10:00 – 1:00

Artists include László Moholy-Nagy, the Whitney Brothers, valie export, Miwa Matreyek, Doug Aitken and Refik Anadol...

Topics include expanded, live, interactive, mobile, hyper and neuro cinema, plus VR, AR and emerging forms...

Future Cinema

IML 365 | 4 units | Room SCI L113
Fall 2017
Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Course Wiki: TBA

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Cloud Eye Control | Half Life | 2015

In 1970, media artist Gene Youngblood published a groundbreaking book titled *Expanded Cinema* to celebrate an explosion of new forms of film and video, including multi-screen projections, live film performances, light shows and audiovisual spectacles. While those “new” forms of cinema had specific roots in the arrival of video and the growth of new venues for film experimentation, expanded cinema boasts a prior history, reaching back to the origins of cinema with, for example, the multi-screen exhibition of Abel Gance’s *Napoleon* in 1919, and it continues today in an array of new forms, including interactive video installations, large-scale urban screens, virtual and augmented reality and new kinds of storytelling that travel across many different devices to create a sense of immersion. *Future Cinema* explores a broad range of cinematic forms, expanding beyond the theater-based feature film. We will explore attempts to reimagine alternative cinematic forms throughout the history of film. This previous work will provide a foundation from which to explore the current state of moving image artworks, with attention to the future of cinematic storytelling and experience; the role of Los Angeles in this emerging field; and the artists who are making provocative work. Participants will discuss the cultural context for this art practice, and they will be asked to design a speculative project by transforming a short story into an expanded/future cinema presentation.

The questions this course will address include the following:

- how do we define a medium, and what is at stake in medium specificity?
- classical Hollywood film has always been shadowed by alternative forms of cinematic expression, ones that are nonlinear, experiential, even participatory: what determines the center and periphery of a particular artform at any given cultural moment?
- as screen sizes change dramatically, as do the venues and platforms for experiencing moving images, how do artists talk about issues of form, including spatial design, temporal design, framing, point of view, camera movement, performance, editing and so on?
- what new work flows, aesthetic terms and concepts are emerging that can help us understand contemporary expanded cinema?
- with the re-arrival of augmented and virtual reality, the industry is demanding a “new language of cinema”; what does this mean both for artists, and within the context of a research university?
- and finally, what should cinema in 2017 *be or do*?

With regard to structure, this is a seminar and during each session, participants are expected to actively engage with the lectures, readings, screenings and other media experiences. The class also requires substantial reading and viewing of artworks outside of class time. Participants will also write about this work regularly, analyzing artworks and chronicling reactions to the diverse media experiences we will encounter, not only in class but across the campus and at venues in Los Angeles, where we will take advantage of the fact that we inhabit one of the world’s busiest centers for creative expression in diverse media forms.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will leave the course with:

- the ability to analyze examples of expanded cinema, exploring their formal, conceptual and thematic elements using the language specific to the fields of cinema and new media;
- the ability to draw connections between expanded cinema and contemporary social and political issues, focusing specifically on how emerging tools and platforms align with new forms of subjectivity and identity in a networked culture;
- the ability to imagine, plan and design an expanded cinema artwork in the form of a design document;
- the ability to understand expanded cinema within a broad historical, cultural and aesthetic context; while so much of the rhetoric associated with virtual reality touts its novelty, for example, this course demonstrates the immersive and 360-degree artistic experiences have existed for centuries, and arise at particular cultural moments;
- and the ability to engage productively with artists and audience members in supporting and sharing experiences of expanded cinema in a sophisticated manner.

READINGS

Course Reader

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Short Paper #1 | Due Week 3

Short Paper #2 | Due Week 5
Short Paper #3 | Due Week 9
Design Document | Due Week 12
Midterm Exam: Week 7
Final Exam: Final Exam Scheduled Date

Short Paper #1 | Due Week 3

Write a paper of between 750 and 1,000 words describing and analyzing László Moholy-Nagy's film *Lightplay: Black/White/Gray*, screened in class. How is the piece structured? How does the filmmaker use the frame? How does the filmmaker create rhythm? What aesthetic elements are most significant to you in your experience of the film? Finally, how might this be considered an example of critical making, as discussed by Matt Ratto? Write carefully and with precision, working specifically to develop your vocabulary for assessing visual imagery.

Short Paper #2 | Due Week 5

On page 22 of her essay, "Enclosed by Images: The Eameses' Multimedia Architecture," Beatriz Colomina states in reference to the work of Charles and Ray Eames, "This is the space of the media. The space of a newspaper or an illustrated magazine is a grid in which information is arranged and rearranged as it comes in: a space the reader navigates in his or her own way, at a glance, or by fully entering a particular story. The reader, viewer, consumer constructs the space, participating actively in the design."

Based on the five examples of multi-screen visual communication we have discussed so far — through the work of Abel Gance, the projects presented at Expo '67 and the *Glimpses of the USA* documentation created by Charles and Ray Eames — compare one historical example of multi-screen information presentation with a contemporary example. Your contemporary example can be based on a gallery or museum exhibition with multiple screens; a website; or a movie or television show that integrates multiple frames. Use the rest of Colomina's essay to help develop your understanding of an "information space" and viewer "navigation." How does this navigation happen? What is the artist's role in directing the navigation? Why is navigation preferred to simple spectatorship? And how is your contemporary example similar to or different from the previous examples viewed in class? Your paper should be between 750 and 1,000 words in length; include quotations and proper citations from the Colomina essay.

Short Paper #3 | Due Week 9

In a paper of between 750 and 1,000 words, explain the argument made by Gloria Sutton in her essay, "Movie-Drome: An Experience Machine." Why is her argument considered an intervention in the history of Expanded Cinema? And why was Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome characterized as "a reaction against the alienating impulse of computer and telecommunications technology"? Finally, given what you know about this filmmaking experiment, please identify and characterize a contemporary experiment with cinematic viewership that compares or contrasts with VanDerBeek's project. Remember to include quotations and proper citations.

Design Document | Due Week 12

Imagine that you have been given a generous budget and a venue within which to create a form of expanded cinema, and a mandate to create an experience for an audience that manifests an abstract idea or concept. Create a design document explaining what you would create. Include the following:

- title of the project;
- three-sentence abstract summarizing the goals of the project;
- a one-sentence justification for the project: "This project is significant because...";
- a paragraph connecting the project to a broader historical context; how is your project similar to or different from those that have come before?;
- a paragraph explaining the participant's experience;
- a paragraph explaining how this project helps imagine a cinema for the present or the future
- and a visual exploration of the project that includes images, architectural drawings, sketches or video illustrating your ideas. You are welcome to explore the technology you would engage, but I'm more concerned with the experience than with specific technology.

The design document overall should be no less than five pages in length, and no more than 10. If you would like your project to be web-based, please discuss with me.

SCHEDULE

Week 1

Introduction to the Course and Context: What Is "Cinema"?

This session examines an expanded understanding of the cinematic as cinema leaves the movie theater and becomes participatory, immersive, mobile, playable and more. How do we define the cinematic within this new context, one in which moving images may not even be produced by cameras but are instead created with scanners to produce "volumes"?

Screenings / VR Experiences:

Napoleon | Abel Gance | 1919 | excerpt

Expo '67 Multi Screen projects

Where the City Can't See | Liam Young | 2016 | 3:00

In the Eyes of the Animal: Dragonfly

In the Eyes of the Animal: Frog

In the Eyes of the Animal: Owl

Visit: The Velaslavasay Panorama, 1122 W. 24th Street

Week 2

László Moholy-Nagy and a Vision of New Media

Hungarian artist and professor László Moholy-Nagy envisioned a creative practice that brought together concepts related to space, time and multiple media formats. He was also interested in the integration of art, design and technology. His own art practice included photographs, photograms, photomontage, sculpture and spatial design, as well as attempts to reimagine education generally, and design education specifically through the Bauhaus. This session explores the work of the artist and its relationship to a current paradigm of creativity emerging within a digital media context. What can we learn about a broader context by focusing on the work of the single artist?

Screening:

Lightplay: Black/White/Gray | László Moholy-Nagy | 1930 | 6:00

Reading for this session:

László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*, excerpts.

László Moholy-Nagy, "The New Typography."

László Moholy-Nagy, "Space-Time and the Photographer."

László Moholy-Nagy, "Preliminaries," from *The New Vision: Fundamentals of Bauhaus Design*.

Matt Ratto, "Critical Making."

Week 3: Visual Music

Due: Short Paper #1

Attempts to create visual forms of music predate the origins of cinema, but the union of sound and image offered by cinematic expression has served as an ongoing inspiration for artists across the history of film. This session explores iterations of visual music, focusing primarily on the work of Oskar Fischinger from the 1930s, and his vision of an expanded auditory cinematic experience.

Screenings:

Kreise | Oskar Fischinger | 1933 | 3:00

Komposition in Blau | 1935 | 5:00

Allegretto | Oskar Fischinger | 1936 | 3:00

Reading:

Oskar Fischinger | "About 'Motion Painting No. 1.'"

Oskar Fischinger | Statements by Oskar Fischinger," from *Optical Poetry*.

Tom Gunning, "What Is Cinema? The Challenge of the Moving Image Past and Future,"

Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art.

Francesco Casetti, "Introduction," *The Lumière Galaxy: 7 Key Words for the Cinema to Come*.

Week 4

Charles and Ray Eames: Cinema as Information

Husband and wife team Charles and Ray Eames moved to Santa Monica in 1941 and immediately began experimenting with plywood. This experimentation would evolve into the design of the famous Eames chair, but the pair's practice was cheerfully broad and included multimedia experiences that integrated graphic design and moving images. Eventually, the Eames' would create dozens of short films, often sketches of ideas, the documentation of process, or experiments to consider a concept. They also created a number of multi-screen exhibitions, and are often considered among the key artists in helping create what is now a staple of the museum and gallery, namely multi-channel video art installation.

Screening:

Powers of Ten | Charles and Ray Eames | 1977 | 10:00

House: After Five Years of Living | Charles and Ray Eames | 1955 | 10:00

Blacktop | Charles and Ray Eames | Charles and Ray Eames | 1952 | 3:00

Glimpses of the USA documentation | 1959 | 5:00

Reading:

Charles Eames, "Advice for Students," 1949.

Beatriz Colomina, "Enclosed by Images: The Eameses' Multimedia Architecture."

Pat Kirkham, "Film, Multi-Media and Multi-Screen Presentations," from *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*.

Week 5

John and James Whitney: The Computerized Image

Due: Short Paper #2

Over the course of 50 years, the Whitney brothers crafted a handful of abstract animations using a bevy of increasingly sophisticated tools and techniques. Their films are often hypnotic affairs, moving mandalas of incredible complexity made frequently only out of the movement of thousands of tiny colored dots. The goal for the pair was to create tools to help in the laborious animation process, and as a result, they produced one of the first motion control cameras. They also were among the first artists to use computers to create their animations. This session explores the role of the computer in cinematic expression.

Screenings

Five Film Exercises | John and James Whitney | 1943-1944 | excerpt

Permutations | John Whitney | 1968 | 8:00

Arabesque | James Whitney | 1975 | 7:00

Inner and Outer Space | Andy Warhol | 1966 | excerpt

Reading:

William Moritz, "Who's Who in Filmmaking: James Whitney."

Zabet Patterson, "From the Gun Controller to the Mandala: The Cybernetic Cinema of John and James Whitney."

Week 6

Stan VanDerBeek and a Computational Cinema

Stan VanDerBeek is perhaps best known for his "Movie-Drome," a large-scale space made from a grain silo that was designed for viewing multiple films with live musical accompaniment. He has been celebrated as an iconic figure within avant-garde film, but recent critical writing has resituated him within the context of cybernetics. This week's session explores the work of VanDerBeek, while also calling attention to other elements of expanded cinema of the 1950s and '60s, including Happenings and experiments in kinesthetic theater, all of which were created in some relation with a revolutionary political impulse.

Reading for this session:

Gene Youngblood, "Cybernetic Cinema and Computer Films."

Gloria Sutton, "Movie-Drome: An Experience Machine" and "Visual Velocity: Movie-Drome and Immersive Subjectivity."

Week 7

Valie Export and Feminist Cinematic Experiments

This week's session examines the radical work of Valie Export, and expands to cover projects by several feminist artists who have used cinema techniques explicitly to critique classical Hollywood filmmaking and its gendered biases. Work by Valie Export, Pipilotti Rist, Chantal Akerman, Cauleen Smith and Eija Liisa Ahtila.

Reading for this session:

Valie Export, "Expanded Cinema: Expanded Reality"

Chrissie Iles, "The Cyborg and the Sensorium," *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art*.

Catherine Elwes, "The Domestic Spaces of Video."

Week 8

Paracinema and Live Cinema Performance

This week's session examines the intersection of cinema and theater, combining projected image and live performance. Projects by Ken Jacobs, Mia Makela, Mario Pensotti and Miwa Matreyek, among others.

Reading

Michael Lew "Live Cinema: Designing and Instrument for Cinema Editing as a Live Performance."

David Fodel, "Live Cinema: Context and "Liveness.""

Ken Jacobs, "Three Essays by Ken Jacobs."

Mia Makela, "The Practice of Live Cinema."

Week 9

Visual Music 2: VJ Culture

Due: Short Paper #3

If visual music ignited one arena of practice in the 1930s, it returned in the 1990s with VJ culture and the combination of moving images and live musical performances. Because the tools used to create both music and video now aligned, the combination within the digital realm had different implications, both for creating, exhibiting and sharing the work. We will focus specifically on the work of Ryoji Ikeda.

D-Fuse, *VJ: Audio-Visual Art and VJ Culture*, excerpts.

Steven Ball, "Conditions of Music: Contemporary Audio-Visual Spatial Performance Practice."

Week 10

Video Installation

This week's session explores a full gamut of gallery-based video installation, including conceptual and narrative artworks, investigating not only the multiplication of the image, but the differences between projection and monitors; the overt design of viewing spaces within museums and galleries; the role of scale; and the use of sound and light. Artists to be considered include Peter Greenaway, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Isaac Julien, Doug Aitken, Gary Hill, Diana Thater, Bruce Nauman and others.

Reading

Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977, excerpts

Kate Mondloch, "Be Here (and There) Now: The Spatial Dynamics of Scree-reliant Installations."

Giuliana Bruno, "Collection and Recollection: On Film Itineraries and Museum Walks."

Raymond Bellour, "Of an Other Cinema."

Maeve Connolly, "Multi-screen Projections and Museum Spaces."

Week 11

Computational Cinema

Artists such as Quayola, Casey Reas and Memo Akten translate data into images, and then align the resulting artworks with painting, sculpture and architecture from earlier eras, inviting us to question the similarities and differences between them. Reas, for example, has characterized his work in relation to that of Sol Lewitt, whose Wall Drawings consisted of sets of instructions to be undertaken by others to create the painted artwork. This week's session explores the role of the algorithm in contemporary moving image artworks, including work by Natalie Bookchin, Scott Snibbe, Aaron Koblin, Jonathan Harris and Mark Hansen.

No reading this week: Instead, bring the draft of your Design Document to workshop in class.

Week 12

Urban Screens

Due: Design Document

As both the city and the cinema become scriptable, queryable, sensed, measured and instrumentalised in the age of computation, they invite us to consider the proliferation of screens throughout our cities, as well as a form of "screened urbanism," which designates a sense of the cinematic imbued by the imaginary of the city. This week's session examines moving images within the context of the built environment around us.

Projects:

The Abolition of War documentation | Krzysztof Wodiczko | 2015 | 5:00

Hopscotch, opera for 18 cars documentation | 2015

Visions of America: Amériques documentation | Refik Anadol | 2015

Virtual Depictions documentation | Refik Anadol | 2015

Sleepwalkers documentation | Doug Aitken | 2007 | 5:00

Station to Station documentation | Doug Aitken | 2015 | 5:00

Reading:

Saskia Sassen, "Reading the City in a Global Digital Age."

Holly Willis, "Urban Screens / Screened Urbanism."

Holly Willis, "Big (Beautiful) Data: Refik Anadol's Media Architecture."

Krzysztof Wodiczko, "Interrogative Design."

Week 13

Virtual and Augmented Reality

This week delves into VR and AR, considering both their histories and current state. We'll review several current VR and AR projects, and talk with Scott Fisher, who defined the term "virtual environment" in the 1970s. We'll also visit to the World Building Media Lab and explore the process of world building as a collaborative, nonlinear workflow designed for transmedia storytelling that integrates VR and AR design.

Reading:

Peter Weibel, "Expanded Cinema, Video and Virtual Environments."

William Brown, "Avatar: Stereoscopic Cinema, Gaseous Perception and Darkness."

William Brown, "Introduction," *Supercinema: Film-Philosophy for the Digital Age*.

Week 14

360-Degree Cinema

360-degree cameras will soon be available on mobile devices, bringing a new visual form to millions of users around the world. This week's session examines 360-degree filmmaking and storytelling, exploring the drive for immersion while also investigating the fundamental challenges for artists. We will look at a host of projects, from serious 360-degree documentaries to more conceptual projects such as Vincent Morisset's *Way to Go*.

Reading:

Thomas Elsaesser "Pushing the Contradictions of the Digital: 'Virtual Reality' and 'Interactive Narrative' as Oxymorons Between Narrative and Gaming."

Mike Jones, "Vanishing Point: Spatial Composition and the Virtual Camera."

Week 15

Interactive Media Experiences

For our final week, we'll look at the array of interactive media experiences currently available, and query the process of interaction design. How does an artist design for interaction? What is gained and lost in ceding control to the viewer? From the various interactive music videos to more elaborate systems for camera-based interactivity, we'll look at key examples and build a vocabulary for discussing agency and interaction. We'll also visit USC's Institute for Creative Technologies.

Reading:

Stuart Klawans, "Traces of Light: Reflections on the Future of Film, or: How a Dying Medium Has Come Back to Life."

Duncan White, "Expanded Cinema Up To and Including its Limits: Perception, Participation and Technology."

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity or to the Department of Public Safety. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically

for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Disruptive Student Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

Citation Practices

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. Media Arts + Practice seeks to apply a reasonable working definition of fair use that will enable students and instructors to develop multimedia projects without seeking authorization for non-commercial, educational uses. Four factors that should be considered when determining whether a use is fair: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. In general, we regard the reproduction of copyrighted works for the purposes of analysis or critique in this class to be covered by the principle of fair use.

All projects will need to include academically appropriate citations in the form of a Works Cited section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The Works Cited is either included in the project or as a separate document, as appropriate to your project. There are several different citation styles and practices; please ask your professor(s) what style manual s/he would prefer. Below you'll find some online resources for the most popular options.

Style Manuals

Modern Language Association (MLA)

Purdue OWL: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/>

Chicago Manual of Style

Purdue OWL: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/12/>