conversations at the edge
experimental media series

spring 2015
thursdays at 6 p.m.
Conversations at the Edge is organized by SAIC’s Department of Film, Video, New Media, and Animation in collaboration with the Gene Siskel Film Center and the Video Data Bank. Free to SAIC students, the series takes place at the Gene Siskel Film Center on Thursdays at 6:00 p.m.

Conversations at the Edge is a dynamic weekly series of screenings, talks, and performances by some of the most compelling media artists of yesterday and today.

February 19
Robin Deacon
White Balance: A History of Video

February 26
Rebecca Baron
Detour de Force

March 5
John Gerrard
Systems and Networks

March 12
Encounters
Experimental Film and Animation from Croatia

March 26
Soon-Mi Yoo
Songs from the North

April 2
Anna

April 9
Daniel Sousa
Feral and Other Animations

April 16
Marisa Olson
In Praise of Garbage

April 23
Projections, Portraits, and Picaresques
Works by Mary Helena Clark, Mariah Garnett, and Latham Zearfoss
Acclaimed artist and filmmaker Robin Deacon presents a stirring performance on the history and aesthetics of video. The title White Balance refers to the process by which a video camera is adjusted to account for differences in light. For Deacon, this process also suggests video’s capability to convey “a truer sense of what is being seen.” Using a series of outmoded video cameras and discarded tape formats, Deacon weaves together autobiography, fiction, and old recordings—home movies, artists’ tapes, archival TV footage—to explore the ways seeing and remembering may be transformed by the medium used to capture the event.

2013–15, US, live performance with analog and digital video, ca 60 min + discussion · Robin Deacon in person
rebecca baron
detour de force


2008–14, US, DCP and digital video, ca 70 min + discussion · Rebecca Baron in person

february 26
The works of John Gerrard (MFA 2000) often take shape as large-scale projections of meticulously crafted virtual worlds, astonishing in their scope and execution. Driven by sophisticated military modeling and video game software, they re-create the outposts of human industry—a 19th-century paper mill in Norway, mysterious roadways along China’s Silk Road, a solar power plant in Nevada, factory farms in Oklahoma—to address the networks of energy and power that have fueled modern life. Gerrard presents five recent interrelated projects—including Solar Reserve (Tonopah, Nevada) (2014), Exercise (Dunhuang) (2014), and his latest work-in-progress Farm (Pryor Creek)—and discusses the themes and technology that have informed his practice.
Zagreb, Croatia has long been an important hub for animation, experimental film, and avant-garde culture. Informed by unique cultural, intellectual, and political legacies, filmmakers there have produced decades of strong, challenging, and fascinating experimental work. Filmmaker Alexander Stewart (MFA 2005) presents a selection of films and videos produced in Croatia from the 1960s through today—much of it rarely screened in the US. Drawing upon research undertaken as part of a series of visits to the country over the past year, the program features gems by such notables as Vlado Kristl, Ivan Ladislav Galeta, and Dalibor Martinis, and encompasses animation, performative video art, and structural film.

1961–2011, multiple directors, Croatia/Yugoslavia, 35mm, 16mm and digital video, ca 70 min + discussion

Introduced by Alexander Stewart, filmmaker, curator, and Assistant Professor at DePaul University.

March 12

Vladimir Petek, still from Encounters, 1963. Courtesy of the Croatian Film Association
South Korea–born and Cambridge-based artist Soon-Mi Yoo’s debut feature is a nuanced look at political ideology and everyday life in North Korea. Winner of the prestigious Golden Leopard for Best First Feature at the 2014 Locarno Film Festival, the film interweaves biography (Yoo’s father fought in the war and many of his left-leaning friends abandoned South Korea for the North), footage shot on three visits to the country, popular television spectacles, cinema, and song. Curator Andrea Picard writes, "Yoo ventures into uncharted territory as she attempts to understand the psychology and popular imagery of the North Korean people on their own terms, the fissures between daily life and its propagandistic representation, and the ideology of absolute devotion to the ruler who continues to drive the nation towards its uncertain future." In English and Korean with English subtitles.

2014, US/South Korea/Portugal, DCP, 72 min + discussion · Soon-Mi Yoo in person

sooon-mi yoo
songs from the north

march 26
Recently restored by the Cineteca di Bologna, this astonishing 1975 documentary centers on the titular pregnant, homeless 16-year-old girl whom filmmakers Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli encountered in Rome’s Piazza Navona. Mainly shot on then-newfangled video, it documents the interactions between the enigmatic Anna and its directors, whose interest in her is at once compassionate and self-serving. Far from straightforward vérité, this complex, self-implicating chronicle includes Grifi and Sarchielli’s explicit attempts to direct their subject, reenactments of off-screen events, and intrusions from behind the camera (not least the emergence of the film’s electrician as a love interest). In Italian with English subtitles.

1972–75, Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli, Italy, DCP, 225 minutes + discussion
Introduced by Dennis Lim, Director of Programming at the Film Society of Lincoln Center
The lush, painterly films of Cape Verde–born, Providence-based animator Daniel Sousa employ puppets, collage, and hand-drawn characters in tales of memory, perception, and the struggle between the intellect, unconscious, and unknown. A young boy raised in the wild attempts to make his way in civilized society, a man and woman are doomed to repeatedly and passionately destroy each other, and a young minotaur struggles to understand those who are not like him. The Academy Award–nominated director presents a selection of his works and discusses the events and artists that have inspired him. Presented in collaboration with SAIC’s Visiting Artists Program.

1999–2014, US, multiple formats, ca 60 min + discussion · Daniel Sousa in person
For more than a decade, new media artist, curator, and theorist Marisa Olson has staged on- and offline interventions that shrewdly and often hilariously shed light on the politics of pop culture, histories of technology, and aesthetics of failure. Her projects take shape through an array of forms—YouTube responses to iconic feminist videos and "women's" television genres, elaborate autobiographical performances, music videos, slide lectures, Internet searches, and physical installations of media's detritus (cassette tapes, boomboxes, laptops). In addition to these projects, her writing has served as a beacon for a generation of new media practitioners and thinkers. Olson presents an overview of her work, including a selection of videos, and discusses her thoughts on new media and the post-Internet today.
Artists Mary Helena Clark, Mariah Garnett, and Latham Zearfoss (BFA 2008) self-reflexively play with portraiture and autobiography in a cultural landscape dominated by selfies and shifting social media platforms. In Home Movie (2012), Zearfoss engages with the contemporary urge to capture personal moments for online public consumption. Garnett’s Encounters I May Or May Not Have Had With Peter Berlin (2012) uses hand-painted celluloid, drag, and intimate conversation to approximate and obscure the reality of her relationship to the 1970s porn star. Clark’s The Dragon is the Frame (2014) meditates on a world shaped by missing persons by linking landmarks from Alfred Hitchcock’s Vertigo (1958) with the persistent online presence of the late artist Mark Aguhar. Each artist articulates personal identity in relation to aesthetic and community, fiction, and truth.
A public program of
Gene Siskel Film Center
SAIC School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Department of Film, Video, New Media, and Animation

37 S. Wabash Ave.
Chicago, IL 60603

**location & contact**
Gene Siskel Film Center
164 N. State St., Chicago, IL
312.846.2600 · siskelfilmcenter.org

**tickets**
$11 General Public
$7 Students
$6 Film Center members
$5 SAIC Staff & Faculty & AIC Staff
FREE for SAIC students with a valid ID