

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Images and Interviews Available on Request

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CONVERSATIONS AT THE EDGE CELEBRATES TEN YEARS

*Fall 2011 season brings compelling artists' film, video,
new media and animation to Chicago*

Chicago, IL, September 13—Conversations at the Edge, the screening and visiting artist series organized by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's **Department of Film, Video, New Media, and Animation (FVNMA)** in collaboration with the **Video Data Bank** and the **Gene Siskel Film Center**, begins the first season of its ten-year anniversary on **Thursday, September 15**. The complete schedule for this newest season is available below and with presenter interviews, preview videos, critical reviews, and more at blogs.saic.edu/cate.

This fall's ten-week season begins with a special preview screening of Chicago-based filmmaker **Chris Sullivan's** decade-in-the-making animated feature **Consuming Spirits**. An FVNMA faculty member, Sullivan has been dubbed one of the most "potent and thoughtful" of all animators by Chris Robinson in *Unsung Heroes of Animation* (Indiana University Press, 2006). Additional highlights include appearances by **Matthew Buckingham, Laura Parnes, Thomas Comerford, Lee Anne Schmitt, Bill Brown, Steina Vasulka, Rebecca Meyers, Luke Fowler, Nicolas Provost**, and **Amar Kanwar**, in addition to a rare US screening of **Gregory Markopoulos's** magnum opus **ENIAIOS II** (1949-1991).

FVNMA Department Chair **Gregg Bordowitz** notes, "For the past ten years, Conversations at the Edge has provided Chicago's audiences and emerging artists with the opportunity to lead important discussions about the role of media in society—how artists can respond to historical and technological change in meaningful ways."

All programs take place Thursdays at 6 p.m. at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 North State Street.

Tickets

\$11 general admission

\$7 students / \$6 GSFC members

\$4 Art Institute of Chicago staff and SAIC faculty, and staff

FREE to SAIC students with a valid school ID

All tickets may be purchased at the Film Center Box Office. Both general admission and Film Center member tickets are also available through Ticketmaster, 800-982-2787, www.ticketmaster.com, and all Ticketmaster outlets. For more information about the Gene Siskel Film Center, call 312.846.2800 (24-hour movie hotline) or 312.846.2600 (general information, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday), or visit www.siskelfilmcenter.org.

FALL 2011 SEASON DETAILS

Thursday, September 15, 6:00 p.m.

Consuming Spirits

2011, USA, 16mm on HDCAM, 125 min plus discussion.

Chris Sullivan in person!

Over a decade in the making, *Consuming Spirits* (2011) is a hypnotic and elegiac feature film by award-winning animator and SAIC faculty member Chris Sullivan. Set in a dreary rustbelt town, the film follows late-night radio host Earl Gray; wilting violet Genny, who cares for her Alzheimer's-stricken mother; and Genny's sometime boyfriend Victor Blue, whose days teeter at the edge of sobriety. While driving home one evening, Genny hits a nun in full habit on the highway. The accident sets off a string of events that reveal a long and twisted history between Genny, Earl, and Victor, involving family dysfunction, foster care, and old wounds longing to heal. Sullivan's intricate hand-drawn and cut-out animations telegraph his characters' complicated emotions while also depicting the minute tragedies and triumphs that make up a life.

Chris Sullivan (b. 1960, Pittsburgh, PA) is an animator and performance artist whose experimental narratives have screened in the U.S. and internationally at the MoMA, New York, NY; Whitney Biennial, New York, NY; Boston Art Museum, Boston, MA; Flaherty Film Seminar, NY; Black Maria 20th Anniversary Show, MoMA, New York, NY; Short Film Expo, Ottawa, Zagreb, and New York; "Animation Celebration," Los Angeles, CA; and Black Maria Film and Video Festival, Ann Arbor, MI. He has performed at a variety of venues including the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Franklin Furnace, New York, NY; LACE, Los Angeles, CA; and Randolph Street, Chicago, IL. He is a recipient of numerous awards, including a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship; Rockefeller Media Arts Fellowship; Bush Foundation Fellowship; Illinois Arts Council Fellowship; and an NEA Regional Fellowship. He is a Professor of Animation in the Film, Video, New Media, and Animation department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Thursday, September 22, 6:00 p.m.

Matthew Buckingham: Situation Leading to a Story

1996-2009, USA, multiple formats, ca. 75 min plus discussion.

Matthew Buckingham in person!

Answering to the gaps and cracks in history, New York-based artist Matthew Buckingham weaves fact and fiction, past and present into elegant narratives and meditative essays. This evening's program, culled from across Buckingham's body of work, explores the ways that historical moments, figures, and places shape the tenor of daily life. Works include *Amos Fortune Road* (1996), which takes up the mystery of former slave Amos Fortune and a collection of historical markers in his name; *Situation Leading to a Story* (1999), which transforms four happened-upon home movies from the 1920s into an absorbing investigation of privacy and imperialism; and *A Man of the Crowd* (2003), which molds Edgar Allan Poe's short tale to the contours of present-day Vienna; among others.

Matthew Buckingham (b. 1963, Nevada, Iowa) utilizes a variety of media to question the role that social memory plays in contemporary life. His work has appeared in one-person and group exhibitions at ARC / Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, France; Camden Arts Centre, London, England; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Hamburger Bahnhof National Gallery, Berlin, Germany; Kunst-Werke, Berlin, Germany; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Austria;

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain; Whitechapel, London, England; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. He was a recipient of the DAAD Artist in Berlin Fellowship, studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, received a BA from the University of Iowa, an MFA from Bard College and attended the Whitney Independent Study Program.

Thursday, September 29, 6:00 p.m.

Laura Parnes's Blood and Guts in High School

2004-11, USA, multiple formats, ca. 75 min plus discussion.

Laura Parnes in person!

Laura Parnes's bracingly inventive, stylized films and videos operate at the intersection of narrative film and video art. This evening, Parnes will present her acclaimed feature, *Blood and Guts in High School* (2004–06). Distilled from Kathy Acker's subversive feminist novel of the same title, the film interweaves events surrounding the book's publication—the Jonestown Massacre, Three Mile Island, the rise of Reagan Republicanism and the Moral Majority — with interludes from the short, violent life of its pre-teen protagonist, Janie Smith. Parnes will also screen episodes from her new web series, *County Down* (ongoing). Building on the darkly comic spirit of *Blood and Guts*, *County Down* is set in a lavish gated community where parents suddenly prey upon their children. *Co-presented by the Video Data Bank.*

Laura Parnes (b. 1968, Buffalo, New York) has screened and exhibited her work widely in the US and internationally, including Light Industry, New York, NY; Kunsthalle Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland; Pacific Film Archives, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA; the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand; MoMA PS1, New York, NY; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Galizia, Vigo, Spain; Miami Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Lake Worth, FL; the Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY; and on PBS and Spanish Television. Her work has been featured in solo shows at Alma Enterprises, London; Locust Projects, Miami, FL; Upstream Gallery, Amsterdam; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles; Participant Inc, New York, NY; Deitch Projects, New York, NY; and in a two-person screening at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY. She is currently a Faculty Lecturer in the graduate department at Yale University School of Art.

Thursday, October 6, 6:00 p.m.

Landscape as Archive

Multiple directors, 2003–2010, USA, 16mm, ca. 60 min plus discussion.

Filmmakers Bill Brown and Lee Anne Schmitt in person!

In recent years, a number of artists have turned to the landscape itself—using everything from iPhone apps to walking tours—to examine the ways in which ideas, events, and cultures are recorded in the terrain. Curated by filmmaker and SAIC Adjunct Associate Professor **Thomas Comerford** (*Indian Boundary Line*, 2010), this program investigates the notion of landscape as archive. Bill Brown's distinctively narrated travelogue, *Mountain State* (2003), views historical markers across West Virginia (as well as the ghosts that haunt them) as indices of US westward expansion in the 18th and 19th centuries. Lee Lynch's and Lee Anne Schmitt's *Bower's Cave* (2010) explores the implications of the geographic proximity of a California landfill to a cave once containing Native American cultural objects. Sarah J. Christman's *Dear Bill Gates* (2006) addresses not only

how the mining industry has reshaped the landscape of Pennsylvania, but also how mines serve as literal archives for the cultural ephemera collected by the film's namesake.

Bill Brown (b. 1969, Cleveland, OH) is a "nomadic" filmmaker, photographer, and author. He has produced films on the United States–Mexico border, North Dakota missile silos, and the Trans-Canada Highway, among other places. His work has been exhibited throughout the world. He's also the author of the travel zine *Dream Whip* and the book *Saugus to the Sea* (2001).

Lee Anne Schmitt (b. 1971, Cleveland, OH) is a writer and director of essay films and performances, work that exists in the juncture between fiction and documentary. Her film and video work has screened internationally, at venues that include the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; SF MOMA, San Francisco, CA; The Cinema du Reel at the George Pompidou Center, Paris, France; Anthology Film Archives, New York, NY; and the Pacific Film Archives, San Francisco, CA. She is currently on faculty at the California Institute of the Arts.

Lee Lynch (b. 1980, Redding, CA) is an award-winning filmmaker and conceptual artist whose feature length narrative and documentary films have shown nationally at such festivals as Sundance Film Festival, Park City, Utah; Tribeca Film Festival, New York, NY; AFI Fest, Los Angeles, CA; Full Frame Film Festival, Durham, NC; and more. He has shown internationally at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Vienna Film Festival, Vienna, Austria; and the Marseille Documentary Film Festival, Marseille, France. He received his BFA from the School of Film/Video at the California Institute of the Arts, and his MFA from the University of Southern California.

Sarah J. Christman (b. 1978, Philadelphia, PA) makes non-fiction films that examine the intersection between people, technology, and the natural world. Her work has screened internationally, including International Film Festival Rotterdam, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Ann Arbor Film Festival, Ann Arbor, MI; and the San Francisco International Film Festival, San Francisco, CA, where "Dear Bill Gates" earned the New Visions Award. She is an Assistant Professor in the Film Department at Brooklyn College.

Thursday, October 13, 6:00 p.m.

Steina!

1970–2011, USA, multiple formats, ca. 75 min plus discussion.

Steina Vasulka in person! Live performance!

A major figure in the histories of video and electronic art, Steina Vasulka has continually expanded the possibilities of multimedia with her groundbreaking innovations. Trained as a classical violinist in Iceland, Steina turned to video after moving to New York City in the mid-1960s. Her distinctly musical experiments with the electronic signal, including her real-time performances and development of early video synthesizers, reverberate throughout historical and contemporary art practice. Steina's recent projects continue this pioneering approach, as her dynamic environments of digitally manipulated visual and acoustic landscapes have been installed around the world. This evening, Steina presents a collection of both classic early pieces and newer works, discusses her interest in electronic media, and performs a stirring, not-to-be-missed interpretation of her seminal performance piece, *Violin Power* (1974–78, 1992–present).

Steina Vasulka (b. 1940, Reykjavik, Iceland) is a major figure in the history of electronic and media art. She emigrated to the United States in 1965 after marrying Woody Vasulka. Together, they have significantly contributed to the aesthetic, theoretical, and

institutional framework for electronic art, founding The Kitchen with Andreas Mannik in 1971, contributing to the development of the video art program at the Whitney Museum in the early 1970s, collaborating with Geoffry Schier to build one of the first real-time, computer-controlled video processors, and developing an open source, online archive from their personal papers at vasulka.org. Steina is the recipient of numerous awards, including a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Visual Art Fellowship, an American Film Institute Maya Deren Award, and the Siemens Media Art Prize in Germany. Her work has been screened, installed or performed at festivals and arts institutions in the U.S. and internationally, including at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; The Kitchen, New York, NY; the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; the Media Festival S'Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands; and the L'immagine Electronica Festival, Italy. She currently resides in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Thursday, October 20, 6:00 p.m.

Rebecca Meyers: blue mantle

2002–10, USA, 16mm, ca. 65 min plus discussion.

Rebecca Meyers in person!

In her nimble, intimately-observed films, Cambridge-based filmmaker Rebecca Meyers illuminates the uncanny and exquisite in the everyday. *lions and tigers and bears* (2006) seeks out urban wildlife, from spiders and pigeons to chrome-plated jaguars and marble lions adorning cars and city buildings; *night side* (2008) captures a wintry twilight of street lamp halos and solitary animals. Shot along the Massachusetts coast, Meyers's latest film is a haunting ode to the sea. Combining historical accounts of ocean travel and disaster with images of its vast, roiling expanse, *blue mantle* (2010) meditates on humanity's attempts to conquer the deep and reflects on its role as a metaphor and passageway to the unknown. This evening, Meyers presents these and a selection of earlier works, including *glow in the dark* (2002) and *things we want to see* (2004).

Rebecca Meyers (b. 1976, New York City, NY) is a filmmaker and programmer living in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her films have screened internationally at festivals and in curated exhibitions such as Media City, Windsor, ON, Canada, and Detroit, MI; Images Festival, Toronto, Canada; New York Film Festival's Views from the Avant-Garde, New York, NY; Festival Les Inattendus, Lyon, France; the London International Film Festival, London, England; *Bringing to Light* at the San Francisco Cinematheque, San Francisco, CA; and *White Shadows: Stories and Polar Visions* at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin, Italy. For three years she served as Co-Programmer of Chicago's Onion City Experimental Film and Video Festival and has curated film programs for the Chicago Underground Film Festival, the Massachusetts College of Art Film Society, Brooklyn's Light Industry and the Harvard Film Archive, where she acted as Archive Coordinator. She is currently Director of Film Programs at Emerson College and Associate Director of Studio7Arts in Cambridge, MA. Rebecca holds an MFA from the University of Iowa in Film/Video Production.

Thursday, October 27, 6:00 p.m.

Luke Fowler: A Grammar For Listening

2007–09, Scotland, 16mm and video, ca. 75 min plus discussion.

Luke Fowler in person!

How one sees the world and how one hears it are the indelible questions underlying Luke Fowler's startling, vibrant films. The award-winning Glasgow-based artist often collaborates with musicians and sound artists, drawing upon the histories of field recording, experimental music, and portraiture. Fowler's early

films shed light on such infamous experimental musicians as Cornelius Cardew (of the London-based Scratch Orchestra) and Xentos "Fray Bentos" Jones (of the post-punk band The Homosexuals). More recently, his collaborations with Richard Youngs, Lee Patterson, Eric La Casa, and Toshiya Tsunoda have resulted in a series of audio-visual tone poems of domestic interiors, urban geography, and rural environments. This evening, Fowler presents a collection of these works, including his *Tenement Films (3 Minute Wonders)* series (2009), and selections from his three-part 2009 *A Grammar for Listening* cycle, among others. Co-presented with the University of Chicago's Film Studies Center, which will present a second program of Fowler's films on Friday, October 28.

Luke Fowler (b. 1978, Glasgow, Scotland) is an artist, filmmaker and composer based in Glasgow. His work pushes the limits of documentary, while also exploring the social significance of sound. Fowler has exhibited internationally and within the United States, with solo shows at the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, NY; X-Initiative, New York, NY; the Modern Institute, Glasgow, UK; Serpentine Gallery, London, UK; Kunsthalle Zürich, Switzerland; Extra City, Antwerp, Belgium; Villa Concordia, Bamberg, Germany and White Columns, New York, NY. His work has also been included in group shows at Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporaneo, Monterrey, Mexico; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, UK; New Museum, New York, NY; PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Queens, NY, and Tate Modern, London, England. He was the recipient of the Derek Jarman Award in 2009.

Thursday, November 3, 6:00 p.m.

Gregory Markopoulos: Eniaios II

1949–91, Greece/USA, 16mm, 125 min plus discussion.

Archival print!

Remembered as the "supreme erotic poet" of the American avant-garde, Gregory Markopoulos spent decades creating his monumental film *Eniaios*, an eighty-hour composition of twenty-two cycles. *Eniaios* (meaning "unity" or "uniqueness") was originally conceived for screening at Temenos, Markopolous's open-air theater in the hills overlooking Lyssaraia, Greece. Silent yet sensuous, the film journeys through a host of imagery, including pulses of white light, passages of black, fragments of earlier works, and images of sacred places. Markopoulos died before *Eniaios* could be printed and his partner, filmmaker Robert Beavers, has spent the last two decades restoring the work. Only six of the twenty-two film orders have been printed thus far. Tonight's screening of *Eniaios II*—the second cycle in the piece and an epic film in its own right—affords a rare opportunity to view Markopoulos's magnum opus in the making.

Eniaios VI–VIII will premiere June 29–July 1, 2012 at the Temenos in Lyssarea (Arcadia) Greece. For more info, visit: www.the-temenos.org.

Gregory Markopoulos (1928–92) was born in Toledo, Ohio to Greek immigrant parents. He attended Film School at USC in the 1940s and became a key figure in the New American Cinema movement with others like Jonas Mekas, Shirley Clarke, and Stan Brakhage. A critic and teacher, Markopoulos founded the filmmaking program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1965. He and his partner Robert Beavers emigrated to Europe in 1967 after which he removed all of his films from circulation, refused interviews, and insisted that a chapter about him be deleted from the second edition of *Visionary Film*, P. Adams Sitney's seminal study of American avant-garde cinema. In the later part of his life, he focused almost entirely on the production of *Eniaios*.

Thursday, November 10, 6:00 p.m.

Nicolas Provost: Long Live the New Flesh

2007–10, Belgium, multiple formats, ca. 75 min plus discussion.

Nicolas Provost in person!

With digital prowess and deft editing, Belgian filmmaker Nicolas Provost transforms clichéd Hollywood scenes into something altogether more alluring, mysterious, and occasionally, more grotesque. *Long Live the New Flesh* (2009) takes this notion to extremes, melting the pixels of canonical horror films (*The Shining*, *The Exorcist*, and others) into new forms, effectively creating new kinds of monsters. *Gravity* (2007) considers the trope of romance fulfilled in a strobe-like succession of seemingly endless Hollywood kissing scenes. Provost based two of his latest works, *Stardust* and *Storyteller* (both 2010), in Las Vegas, imbuing banal shots of life on the strip and inside its casinos with a sense of the uncanny. On the whole, Provost's art attests to the malleability of the cinematic images that remain ingrained in our memory, but also just out of reach. *Co-presented by the Video Data Bank.*

Nicolas Provost (b. 1969, Ronse, Belgium) is a filmmaker and visual artist working in Brussels, Belgium. His work has been broadcast, screened, and exhibited worldwide on visual art platforms and film festivals, and has earned a long list of awards and screenings at prestigious festivals including the Sundance Film Festival, Park City, Utah; the San Francisco International Film Festival, San Francisco, CA; Cinevegas, Henderson, NV; the International Film Festival Rotterdam, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; the Viennale, Vienna, Austria; and the Locarno Film Festival, Locarno, Switzerland. Solo exhibitions include the Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA; Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Strasbourg, France; De Brakke Grond, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Tim Van Laere Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium; C-Space Gallery, Beijing, China; International Media Art Biennale, Wrocław, Poland; Solar Galeria de Arte Cinematica, Vila do Conde, Portugal. Provost's first feature *The Invader*, a thriller about an anti-heroic immigrant and his struggle for economic and emotional survival in the new world, will premiere at the 2011 Venice Film Festival.

Thursday, November 17, 6:00 p.m.

The Films of Amar Kanwar

1997–2011, India, various formats, ca. 75 min plus discussion.

Amar Kanwar in person!

Related event:

Artist Lecture: Wednesday, November 16, 6:00 p.m.

SAIC Columbus Auditorium, 280 S. Columbus Dr.

Free admission

Amar Kanwar's films and installations offer incisive and meditative explorations of the political, social, economic, and ecological conditions of the Indian subcontinent. They are also formally inventive, synthesizing documentary, travelogue, and essay forms to re-imagine subjects from sexual violence to the political situation in Burma. This evening, Kanwar presents and discusses a range of films from across his vast oeuvre, including new and works-in-progress, selections from the 19-channel installation *The Torn First Pages* (2004-08), and his widely-esteemed 1997 short, *A Season Outside* (1997), an examination of nationalist violence along the disputed Indian-Pakistani border at Wagah in Kashmir. The film established Kanwar, according to critic Jerry Saltz of the *New York Times*, as an artist whose works "escape their own pedantic weight and exist in a lyrical realm where politics, poetry, passion, and form meld." *Co-presented*

by SAIC's Visiting Artists Program, the Department of Exhibitions and Exhibition Studies, and the Art Institute of Chicago's Department of Asian Art.

Amar Kanwar (b. 1964, New Delhi, India) is an artist and filmmaker living and working in New Delhi, India. Recent solo exhibitions have been at the Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, NY; Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands. He has participated in Documenta 11 and Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany and is also the recipient of the 1st Edvard Munch Award for Contemporary Art and an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts, Maine College of Art, USA. His films are also shown at film festivals where he has received awards like the Golden Gate Award, San Francisco International Film Festival; the Golden Conch, Mumbai International Film Festival; and the Jury's Award, Film South Asia, Nepal.

ABOUT CONVERSATIONS AT THE EDGE

Founded by the Department of Film, Video, New Media, and Animation in 2001, **Conversations at the Edge (CATE)** is a weekly series of screenings, artist talks, and performances by the most compelling media artists of yesterday and today. Bringing together experimental film and video, contemporary art, performance, music, new media, and more, CATE cultivates "conversations" across a range of artistic practices, as well as among makers and audiences.

Having featured more than 250 artists to date—from Sharon Lockhart and Michael Snow to Dara Birnbaum and Ryan Trecartin—CATE's programming augments and extends SAIC's renowned interdisciplinary curriculum, providing students and the larger public alike with meaningful connections to diverse practices and practitioners. In turn, this exchange inspires the next wave of talented media-makers; notable alumni from the FVNMA department include Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Paul Chan, Deborah Stratman, Ben Russell, and So Yong Kim.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

A leader in educating artists, designers, and scholars since 1866, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) offers nationally accredited undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs to nearly 3,200 students from around the globe. Located in the heart of Chicago, SAIC has an educational philosophy that is built upon an interdisciplinary approach to art and design, giving students unparalleled opportunities to develop their creative and critical abilities, while working with renowned faculty who include many of the leading practitioners in their fields. SAIC's resources include the Art Institute of Chicago and its new Modern Wing; numerous special collections and programming venues provide students with exceptional exhibitions, screenings, lectures, and performances. For more information, please visit www.saic.edu.

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