

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES SPRING SEASON
OF CONVERSATIONS AT THE EDGE EXPERIMENTAL MEDIA SERIES**

CHICAGO—Beginning February 15, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s (SAIC) critically acclaimed series Conversations at the Edge will host a distinguished lineup of screenings, performances and talks by groundbreaking artists who exemplify the boundary-blurring nature of experimental media. Artists include Chicago-based artist and organizer Latham Zearfoss, who has built a multifaceted body of work that unites themes of love, community, family, political legacy, personal agency and collective action; Los Angeles-based filmmaker Lee Anne Schmitt, whose work considers the long shadows of slavery and systemic, violent racism on the United States’ psychic and physical landscape; and artist Joan Jonas, whose groundbreaking body of work explores the fundamental questions around visual perception, ritual, archetypes and transmission of knowledge.

This spring, SAIC’s Conversations at the Edge, SAIC, a global leader in art and design education, will feature screenings, performances and talks by the following artists:

- **Latham Zearfoss** (BFA 2008) is a Chicago-based artist and organizer who has built a multifaceted body of work that unites themes of love, community, family, political legacy, personal agency and collective action. Their poetic and pop-infused videos mine the territory between public and private, reason and emotion, the extraordinary and the everyday. Zearfoss presents a collection of videos spanning the last decade—including the premiere of two new works, “Goth Party” and “White Balance”—and restages “Something to Move In” (2014) and “Love Is a Stranger” (2012) as live, responsive performances with Darling Shear, Caroline Campbell and Amalea Tshilds.
- **Ephraim Asili**, a New York-based filmmaker, DJ and traveler, began an extraordinary series of films on the African diaspora in 2011. These films—“Forged Ways” (2011), “American Hunger” (2013), “Many Thousands Gone” (2015), “Kindah” (2016), and “Fluid Frontiers” (2017)—bring together archival research and Asili’s travels through Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jamaica and the United States to chart cultural connections across time and space.
- **Lee Anne Schmitt**, a Los Angeles-based filmmaker, uses abolitionist John Brown’s legacy to consider the long shadows of slavery and systemic, violent racism on the United States’ psychic and physical landscape in her new film, “Purge This Land.” She interweaves shots of rural back roads and urban centers throughout the country, memorializing the sites of Brown’s radicalization alongside those of race riots, police shootings and other forms of White racial violence and Black disenfranchisement throughout the last 150 years. Set to a score by Jeff Parker that references histories of Black music, the film resists easy resolution, modeling resistance instead.
- **Laura Huertas Millán** is a French Colombian filmmaker investigating the terrain between fiction and ethnography and creating a multifaceted body of work where political history and personal narrative meet. Her 2016 film “Sol Negro” is a portrait of Antonia, a Colombian opera singer, her sister and her niece. Empathy and

anger are exchanged between the women as they each reckon with feelings of deep sorrow and entrapment within themselves and within the family. “La Libertad” (2017) centers on a Mesoamerican matriarchal family that has inherited and mastered the art of weaving on the backstrap loom to explore the ties that bind labor and creativity. Across both of these ethnographic fictions, Huertas Millán’s careful attention to detail reflects the exquisite experience of everyday life.

- **Edward Owens** (SAIC 1966–67), a young African American artist from the South Side of Chicago, burst onto New York’s artistic underground scene in the mid 1960s with a series of strikingly beautiful films of heartbreak, queer desire and his own family. These films were lauded by his contemporaries; for example, critic Parker Tyler included Owens’ 1967 film “Remembrance: A Portrait Study” as one of the avant-garde’s key works in his landmark study “Underground Film: A Critical History.” Despite these achievements, Owens’ works have been largely overlooked until recent efforts by critic Ed Halter and New York’s Film-Makers’ Cooperative to bring them to new light.
- **Thorsten Trimpop’s** (Assistant Professor of Film, Video, New Media and Animation) films explore the many ways cultural, political and ecological histories are borne by individuals in their daily lives. His most recent feature, “Furusato,” exposes the devastating effects of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant meltdown on the surrounding landscape and its inhabitants. Shot over the course of four years, the film follows a media-savvy activist, a horse breeder, a teen-rocker and a nuclear engineer for the Tokyo Electric Power Company as they struggle to cope with the fallout of the ongoing disaster.
- **Hayoun Kwon** is a Paris-based South Korean artist whose films and virtual reality projects present new realms for history and memory through a unique interplay of documentary techniques and animation technologies. Kwon’s striking images reflect the shifting psychic and geopolitical realities of her subjects. The artist presents a selection of films, two recent virtual reality projects and discusses the ideas and technologies that sustain her practice.
- **Astria Suparak and Brett Kashmere** are the curators of “The Nation’s Finest.” Featuring works by Haig Aivazian, I AM A BOYS CHOIR, Tara Mateik, Nam June Paik, Keith Piper, Lillian Schwartz and the internet, this program deconstructs the athlete’s body—how it is used for national, political and social agendas, and how it is viewed and recrafted by artists (who are sometimes athletic).
- **Joan Jonas** has a groundbreaking body of work that spans video, performance, dance, installation and drawing to explore fundamental questions around visual perception, ritual, archetypes and transmission of knowledge. Initially trained as a sculptor, she began experimenting with performance in the late 1960s, merging elements of contemporary dance, Japanese Noh theater and props like masks, mirrors, and eventually, video cameras and monitors. Jonas presents an overview of her practice, including a selection of films and videos from across her career.

Each year Conversations at the Edge highlights groundbreaking media artists through its weekly series of screenings, artist talks and performances. 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 SAIC’s Video Data Bank.

Conversations at the Edge Schedule

Programs take place Thursdays at 6 p.m. at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St., unless otherwise noted.

Latham Zearfoss: Home Movies

February 15

Latham Zearfoss in person

Ephraim Asili: The Diaspora Series

February 22

Ephraim Asili in person

Presented in collaboration with SAIC's Video Data Bank

Lee Anne Schmitt: Purge This Land

March 1

Lee Anne Schmitt in person

Laura Huertas Millán: Ethnographic Fictions

March 8

Laura Huertas Millán in person

Edward Owens: A Portrait Study

March 22

Introduced by critic Ed Halter

Thorsten Trimpop: Furusato

March 29

Thorsten Trimpop in person

Hayoun Kwon: Films and Virtual Realities

April 5

Hayoun Kwon in person

The Nation's Finest

April 12

Introduced by curators Astria Suparak and Brett Kashmere

An Evening with Joan Jonas

April 19

Joan Jonas in person

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About the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

For more than 150 years, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) has been a leader in educating the world's most influential artists, designers and scholars. Located in downtown Chicago with a fine arts graduate program consistently ranking among the top programs in the nation by U.S. News and World Report, SAIC provides an interdisciplinary approach to art and design as well as world-class resources, including the Art Institute of Chicago museum, on-campus galleries and state-of-the-art facilities. SAIC's undergraduate, graduate and post-baccalaureate students have the freedom to take risks and create the bold ideas that transform Chicago and the world—as seen through notable alumni and faculty such as Michelle Grabner, David Sedaris, Elizabeth Murray, Richard Hunt, Georgia O'Keeffe, Cynthia Rowley, Nick Cave, Jeff Koons, and LeRoy Neiman.