

Funeral at the Movies

Noah Barker & Dora Budor
Yvo Cho
Maxi Cohen
Cecelia Condit
Renée Green
Christopher Harris
Frank Heath
Gary Hill
Mike Kelley
Aurelia Mihai
Alix Pearlstein
Gerhard Richter
Leslie Thornton & Ron Vawter
Julie Zando

August 13 – September 6, 2025

Week 1

Gary Hill, *Site/Recite (a prologue)*, 1989
Leslie Thornton & Ron Vawter, *Strange Space*, 1992
Mike Kelley, *Superman Recites Selections from 'The Bell Jar' and Other Works by Sylvia Plath*, 1999
Renée Green, *Come Closer*, 2008
Total Runtime: 27:10 min

Week 2

Aurelia Mihai, *In the Open Air*, 2006-2007
Cecelia Condit, *Beneath the Skin*, 1981
Alix Pearlstein, *Forsaken*, 2003
Total Runtime: 27:59 min

Week 3

Frank Heath, *War Pigeon*, 2017
Noah Barker & Dora Budor, *Chase Manhattan*, 2021-2022
Yvo Cho, *Room 304*, 2022
Christopher Harris, *Dreams Under Confinement*, 2020
Total Runtime: 32:25 min

Week 4

Maxi Cohen, *Anger*, 1986
Gerhard Richter, *Volker Bradke*, 1966
Julie Zando, *Hey Bud*, 1987
Total Runtime: 45:08 min

Funeral at the Movies unfolds over the course of four weeks through discrete presentations of thematically related groups of artist films. Made between 1966 and 2022, the complete arrangement of fourteen works is grounded in a shared psychology and lingering sense of alienation, the perspectives, scales, and intensity of which vacillate as the series progresses.

The first group consists of works by Renée Green, Gary Hill, Mike Kelley, and Leslie Thornton & Ron Vawter, all of which are poetically narrated and deal with ideas of longing, alienation, transience, and melancholic rumination and reckoning. Hill's carefully edited tracking shot orbits a vanitas tableau as the camera's constantly shifting focus synchronizes with the disembodied narrator's exploration of momentary consciousness. Both Kelley and Thornton & Vawter directly appropriate text from historical literary sources (Plath and Rilke, respectively) into brooding, self-conscious soliloquies on loss, illness, and detachment. Green and Kelley each also reflect on temporal and spatial dislocations through the lens of friendship and familial connection, projecting a geographical mapping (even if imaginary) onto the emotional and social landscapes they inhabit – and vice versa.

The second week of screenings includes works by Cecelia Condit, Aurelia Mihai, and Alix Pearlstein. These films expand upon the previous group's intrapersonal dynamics and focus more specifically upon characters negotiating direct interpersonal conflicts and relationships. Condit's confessional roman à clef about dating a man during a period in which he murders his ex-girlfriend sees her contemplate not only the distressing scenario she has been thrust into, but also her own position within a larger system of cruelty. Mihai's film portrays a poetic and serendipitous public interaction between social groups which, while emphasizing integration and coexistence, oscillates between feelings of isolation and belonging. Pearlstein uncannily choreographs the toppling of a group's leader, as subordinate characters work through stages of recognition, contempt, organization, and insurrection. This results in a hierarchical shift but also threatens to reanimate and reinforce the same destructive cycle.

The third week features films by Noah Barker & Dora Budor, Yvo Cho, Christopher Harris, and Frank Heath. These artists each approach abstract systems of conflict and control, focusing upon a specific architectural site or urban environment as both a locus and vector of repression and exploitation. The distinctions between corporate, financial, civic, academic, and carceral systems collapse as these settings increasingly breed a culture of paranoia, surveillance, and destruction. The protagonist of Frank Heath's film experiences a slew of unsettling encounters with a pigeon beginning at an ATM located at 270 Broadway in New York City. His call to one of the bank's customer service representatives leads them both down a paranoid spiral fomented by a discussion of the historical military implementation of pigeons as tools of surveillance and communication, as well as this specific building's history as the birthplace of the Manhattan Project.

Five miles uptown, Noah Barker & Dora Budor's "psycho-geographical dérive" and quasi surveillance operation tracks the disposal of debris from the demolition of the Union Carbide Building to a recycling facility in New Jersey. At the time of its razing in 2019, it was both the tallest building in the city designed by a female architect, and the largest intentionally demolished skyscraper in the world. The tower was unbuilt to make room for the simultaneous construction of 270 Park Avenue, the new global headquarters for JPMorgan Chase. This was an inaugural project following Bill de Blasio's rezoning of East Midtown, which allowed for the unrestricted sale and exchange of air rights between the neighborhood's 57 blocks.

Yvo Cho's slow, measured tracking shots were filmed within the artist's former classroom and studio at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf shortly before its renovation — a room which has historically belonged to the photography department, and which is imbued with intense pedagogical and art historical significance. The film's voiceover is excerpted from Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Gai Savoir* (1969), in which two characters meet secretly at night in an abandoned TV studio, seeking to relearn language entirely, removing its ideological bias to develop a new radical framework for thinking and communication. Cho examines the conditions of pedagogy which, along with a complex miasma of social, environmental, and associative dynamics, structure artistic thought.

Christopher Harris begins his vertiginous Google Earth expedition of Chicago at the Cook County Department of Corrections, the nation's third largest jail system. From this haunting aerial view of the city, Harris traces a path directed by the video's frenzied, layered soundtrack of police radio chatter recorded during the fervent citywide protests of 2020. The camera then drops to street level and speeds through parts of downtown before returning to the jail, merging this complex and the surrounding city into a continuous carceral landscape.

The fourth and final week features works by Maxi Cohen, Gerhard Richter, and Julie Zando, and explores the social dynamics of violence and power. Cohen's unscripted documentary film highlights an array of real people's experiences of and responses to anger. It was originally commissioned by German television station ZDF as part of the project *Seven Women, Seven Sins*, in which seven women

filmmakers were tasked to each create an interpretation of one of the deadly sins. This project also included works by Chantal Akerman, Valie Export, Laurence Gavron, Bette Gordon, Ulrike Ottinger, and Helke Sander. Cohen began by placing an advertisement in *The Village Voice* asking, "Angry? What makes you angry?" The intensely personal, often shocking stories she elicits from her respondents are unified by an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and disenfranchisement from society. The traumas and acts of violence they've endured or inflicted upon others are largely manifestations of abstract social structures which dictate power relations between people and the systems which shape their lives.

Volker Bradke is Richter's only ever film work and was created in 1966 as part of *Hommage à Schmela*, a weeklong series of single-day exhibitions honoring gallerist Alfred Schmela as he prepared to close his gallery and move to a larger location. Many of Galerie Schmela's most prominent artists participated in this series including Blinky Palermo, Joseph Beuys, Konrad (Fischer) Lueg, and Sigmar Polke. Richter's exhibition on December 13, 1966 took as its subject a young man named Volker Bradke, a largely anonymous denizen of the Düsseldorf art scene and one-time assistant to the artist. In addition to this film, Richter depicted Bradke across a range of media including photographic portraits, one of the artist's signature photo-paintings, a large white flag sporting the young man's visage, and a stencil of Bradke's name painted onto the gallery wall. These gestures sought to elevate the unknown and banal figure of Volker Bradke to a level of cult-like devotion, continuing Richter's interest in the political potential of images and representation as well as his critique of the ideological systems which valorize this artificiality and perpetuate destructive power dynamics.

Zando uses the televised 1987 suicide of politician Budd Dwyer as a catalyst through which she explores exhibitionism, desire, and the psychosexual voyeurism of the act, drawing parallels to women's struggle for and sacrifice of power through exploitation. Zando views the spontaneously captured (but later deliberately rebroadcast) event as a kind of pornographic sex act that plays upon the tension created between exhibitionist and voyeur. She writes: "It forces viewers to take either an empathetic position vis-a-vis the exhibitionist, or to act as voyeurs (who release their repressed desire to see the forbidden face of Death). My interest is to understand the power seated in the position of the exhibitionist, and to explore that source of power for my own personal drama. Budd Dwyer gained power by authoring his own death, but his power was fatal: the instant power is taken via exhibitionism, it is lost through death. This is the traditional power for women who must seek power via exhibitionism and exploitation — they gain power only through death-of-self."