BAMPFA to Present

Hippie Modernism: Cinema and Counterculture, 1964–1974
February–May 2017

Film Series Accompanies Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia, Exhibition Showcasing Art, Architecture, and Design of the Counterculture

(Berkeley, CA) November 17, 2016—The University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) announces Hippie Modernism: Cinema and Counterculture, 1964–1974, a four-month film series focused on the radical cinema of the 1960s and early 1970s. The series, organized by BAMPFA’s Associate Film Curator Kate MacKay, is shown in conjunction with Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia (February 8 through May 21, 2017), a major exhibition of over 400 works examining the intersection of the radical art, architecture, and design of the counterculture period. Building on Hippie Modernism’s exploration of artistic responses to the social, cultural, and political ferment of the 1960s and 1970s, Cinema and the Counterculture examines the politically charged, aesthetically innovative filmmaking that defined this era. The exhibition and series coincides with the first anniversary of BAMPFA’s new Diller Scofidio + Renfro–designed building in downtown Berkeley, featuring vastly improved spaces for experiencing and studying art and the moving image.
Encompassing documentary, fiction, and experimental cinema—often in the course of a single work—the films in this series intersected with emerging counterculture movements, taking the pulse of the social, political, and aesthetic upheaval of the late 1960s and early 1970s. While mass media and commercial movies frequently portrayed the counterculture as naive and ineffectual or violent and dangerous—a distinction often drawn along class and color lines—some filmmakers offered alternative perspectives. From intricate avant-garde animations to critical portraits of pop stars and freedom fighters, Hippe Modernism: Cinema and Counterculture is replete with images that remain as vital and compelling today as they were some fifty years ago.

Cinema and Counterculture runs concurrently with Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia, a traveling exhibition organized by the Walker Art Center and assembled with the assistance of BAMPFA. The curators of the Berkeley presentation, BAMPFA Director and Chief Curator Lawrence Rinder and UC Berkeley Associate Professor of Architecture Greg Castillo, have expanded the scope of the exhibition to highlight the key role the Bay Area—and especially Berkeley—played in the counterculture movement. In addition to adding the Cinema and Counterculture film series, BAMPFA has supplemented the exhibition with nearly 75 works, many from the hippie culture of Northern California, and a robust program of talks and forums.

“We are delighted to bring Cinema and Counterculture to BAMPFA,” says Rinder. “The series enhances the exhibition’s exploration of the relationship between the hippie counterculture and Modernism: a shared rejection of the social, political, and cultural status quo; a celebration of individual creativity and play over mass consensus and conformity; and an exploration of the inner workings of the mind and spirit.”

“Cinema’s radical streak goes back to its earliest beginnings, but the period explored in Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia was an unusually fertile time for deeply political, experimental filmmaking,” adds MacKay. “Cinema and Counterculture expands on the themes examined by the exhibition, presenting films that explore the progressive social, political, and aesthetic concerns of the era.”

Highlights of Hippie Modernism: Cinema and Counterculture include In the Year of the Pig (1969), in which Emile de Antonio used archival film and news footage to construct a cinematic argument against US participation in the war in Vietnam; Haskell Wexler’s Medium Cool (1969), shot in the midst of violent protests surrounding the 1968 Democratic National Convention; and William Greaves’s genre-defying Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One (1968), which exemplified new narrative forms propelled by cinema verité, documentary film, and television news. Stagger Lee (Francisco Newman, 1970), Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther (William Klein, 1970), and Murder of Fred Hampton (Howard Alk and Mike Gray, 1971), among other films, provide intimate portraits of Black Panther cofounders and members, while films such as Monterey Pop
(D. A. Pennebaker, 1968) touch on the inclusive power of popular music and the optimism of the Summer of Love. Additional highlights include BAMPFA’s newly completed restoration of Steven Arnold’s *Luminous Procuress* (1971), Peter Watkins’s *Punishment Park* (1971), and Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Zabriskie Point* (1970).

Central to the film series are works by and about the Berkeley area counterculture, including *Elegy to Ecstasy* (1964–74), a program from the Bay Area’s famed *Canyon Cinema*. Featuring a selection of films from some of Canyon’s founding members and their contemporaries—including Bruce Baillie, Warren Sonbert, Barbara Hammer, and Beverly and Tony Conrad—*Elegy to Ecstasy* showcases Canyon Cinema’s championship of avant-garde and experimental filmmaking in the Bay Area and beyond. *Jordan Belson: Films Sacred and Profane* (1954–77) features the films of this Bay Area filmmaker whose abstract works are richly woven with cosmological imagery exploring consciousness, transcendence, and the nature of light itself. John Coney’s *Space is the Place* (1974), shot in Oakland and starring Sun Ra, was inspired by a series of lectures Ra gave at UC Berkeley.

*Hippie Modernism: Cinema and Counterculture* runs from February through May 2017. A full schedule of films can be found online at [http://bampfa.org/](http://bampfa.org/).

Support *Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia* is organized by the Walker Art Center in association with the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA). The exhibition was curated by Andrew Blauvelt, Director of Cranbrook Art Museum. The BAMPFA presentation is organized by Director Lawrence Rinder and guest curator Greg Castillo, Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley.

The exhibition is made possible with support from the Martin and Brown Foundation, the Prospect Creek Foundation, Annette and John Whaley, and Audrey and Zygi Wilf. Support for the exhibition catalog is provided by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in support of Walker Art Center publications. The BAMPFA presentation is made possible with generous support from Coleman Fung, Frances Hellman and Warren Breslau, Nion McEvoy and Leslie Berriman, Carla and David Crane, Goodby Silverstein & Partners, and Beth Rudin DeWoody.

Image Above:
John Coney: still from *Space is the Place*, 1974.

**Visitor Information**

Address
2155 Center Street Berkeley, CA 94704

Information
[bampfa.org](http://bampfa.org)
(510) 642-0808

Barbro Osher Theater Admission
$12 general admission
$8 UC Berkeley faculty/staff/retirees, non-UC Berkeley students, seniors (65+), disabled persons, 18 & under
$7 BAMPFA members and UC Berkeley students

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About BAMPFA
Internationally recognized for its art and film programming, the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) is a platform for cultural experiences that transform individuals, engage communities, and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and film. Founded in 1963, BAMPFA is UC Berkeley’s primary visual arts venue with its screenings of some 450 films and presentations of up to twenty exhibitions annually. BAMPFA’s mission is to inspire the imagination and ignite critical dialogue through art and film.

The institution’s collection of over 19,000 works of art dates from 3000 BCE to the present day and includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, Abstract Expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and Conceptual art. BAMPFA’s collection also includes over 17,500 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema outside of Japan, impressive holdings of Soviet cinema, West Coast avant-garde film, seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film—many of which are digitally scanned and accessible online.

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