Acknowledgements

The urban environment which shapes our everyday lives is a body contested terrain. In Urban Space! The City as Place guest curator, Molly Hankwitz, brings to light many of the debates and discussions that arise as the city is subjected to renewed economic and social tensions.

Ms. Hankwitz is a critic and public artist whose publications have appeared in ARTFORUM and INLAND Architect. She studied architecture at Yale University and is a recent graduate of the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program.

We are grateful to Ms. Hankwitz for her thorough research and thoughtful selection of the films and videotapes included in Urban Space. Her essay contained in this publication further illuminates the debates on the urban environment. For her generous contribution to the design of this publication we are especially grateful.

Our thanks also go to the artists and activists who have produced the films and videotapes in this program. Their dedicated effort to improve the city and document the changing urban milieu serves us all. Finally, we are grateful to the New York State Council on the Arts and the Media Arts Development Fund of the National Alliance of Media Arts Centers, whose generous support makes our film and video programming possible.

Celeste Dado
Acting Executive Director

Micki McGee
Media Arts Curator

Funders


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Urban Space/The City As Place
Organized by Molly Hankowitz
September 26 – November 9, 1991

The video program screens continuously during gallery hours, Tuesday–Saturday, 11 am–6 pm.

► PROGRAM 1
(Running time: 72 minutes)

METROPOLITAN AVENUE by Christine Noschese (49 minutes, 1985) documents a community of women who organize and respond to cutbacks and racial tension that threaten their community.

THIS IS A HISTORY OF NEW YORK (The Golden Dark Age of Reason) by Jem Cohen (23 minutes, 1988) suggests the arcane beauty of the city through architectural details and the movements of people through the metropolis.

► PROGRAM 2
(Running Time: 57 minutes)

AMERICAN DREAMING by Michael Penland (57 minutes, 1990) reports on the devastating effects of the Atlantic City casino industry on the surrounding neighborhoods.

► PROGRAM 3
(Running Time: 59 minutes)

Excerpts from activist videotapes by RENEW, a Williamsburg planning and activist group, by Peter Gillespie, Hank Lindhardt, and Jon Rubin (35 minutes, 1991) document the community-based planning group’s strategies for coping with commercial and private threats to their neighborhood.

THE SQUATTER BLUES, by Marcia Wilson (4 minutes, 1990) uses an 8mm camcorder to produce an intimate document of the demise of a squat on 8th Street in New York City and suggests the activist potential of video intervention.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS by the C-Hundred Film Corporation (5 minutes, 1990) are innovative broadcast interventions advocating on behalf of improved urban housing and planning.

THE MARCH OF TIME by Jason Simon (15 minutes, 1985) reflects on the urban environment in a minimalist contemplation of Times Square on the eve of the area’s proposed redevelopment.

► PROGRAM 4
(Running Time: 55 minutes)

THE SURVIVAL OF A SMALL CITY by Nancy Salter and Pablo Frasconi (55 minutes, 1987) examines a once thriving New England town before and after “revitalization.”

Film and Video

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHEDULE</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
<td>Program 4</td>
<td>Program 3</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
<td>Program 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 1:00</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
<td>Program 3</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 - 2:00</td>
<td>Tapes on Request</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
<td>Program 4</td>
<td>Program 3</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 - 3:00</td>
<td>Program 4</td>
<td>Tapes on Request</td>
<td>Program 4</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3:00 - 4:00</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
<td>Program 4</td>
<td>Tapes on Request</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 - 5:00</td>
<td>Program 3</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
<td>Program 4</td>
<td>Tapes on Request</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 - 6:00</td>
<td>Tapes on Request</td>
<td>Program 3</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
<td>Program 3</td>
<td>Tapes on Request</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Artists Space Video Programs are available on VHS for home viewing. Inquire at the front desk or call 212-226-3970 to reserve tapes.
Yet, individually, of course, the city provides freedom of hierarchization, the pleasure of unrestricted and restricted mobility, and the privacy of personal experience apart from the social or political.

The image of a city as a place which protects no longer holds. Yet some concept of the civic environment which secures safe and livable conditions for all its citizens, as old as the Athenian democratic ideal or medieval fortified cities, remains. As an ideal image, however, the city fails us along these lines: it no longer connotes protection against the violent reality of global warfare. How can it, when surveillance and nuclear missile bases and the talk and visibility of a growing military-industrial complex are making urban lives via national media and spectacles? We know that no city, however great, ancient, profane, beautiful, strong, or seemingly impervious can withstand atomic blast, and through this knowledge, we are continuously persuaded by an inverted sense of space. We are aware of being targeted, but we also have the capacity to target...

And while this intellectual vulnerability imbues our sense of the city as a whole, shrinking down to a place—a space, fixed by the predominance of higher ideals, we are similarly touchstone periodically of its constant disintegration. Our cities are crumbling, at the environmental, political, and physical, and therefore social levels. As we are not free on city streets for the presence of crime, heavy traffic, pollution and an increasingly controlling public eye, nor in many parks and public schools. The air we breathe is full of chemicals and noise from careless industries and many neighborhood lights are firing into external decoy due to pollution, drugs, prostitution and instability.

All around we now note the long-term effects of political and social dis-investments. At the same time, tourism and traffic are increasing and the rise and cities are being developed to exploit this trend. Marketed as controlled places to visit, cities reap the immediate benefits of superficial spending by an influx of temporary on-lookers, who look, pay and go. Thus, consumed by permanent citizens, social groups, institutions and businesses, as well as being the site for rapidly changing tourism, corporate and industrial economies, the private and public spaces, is virtually impossible to conceive of any city, except as multi-faced and formed of multitude of often conflicting and sometimes intersecting narratives conditioned by the uneven flow and flux of capital, trends, populations, human desires, lifestyles, built decay, fashion, art, economic and social revolutions in value.

The issue of squatting, for example, begins to address an alternative politics of ownership. The question can certainly be asked, "What right does a city have to force squatters out?"

This program of films and videos developed out of my interest in the representation of cities from a critical stance of wanting to examine change taking place in cities as it was being registered through the public and private categories of direct action artists and video documentaries. Methodologically, I wanted to locate myself within a critical positioning which would take up being "here" as opposed to being "in" a place or an abstract political space. My mode of address throughout is grounded in a belief and affirmation of the urbanite as presently, potentially political, capable of being the site of certain determined individuality, of meeting human problems and solving them (as opposed to playing theoretically Deconstructive games). In so doing, I have worked to explore what is an emerging architectural discourse, technologically enabled by the immediacy of video and relevant to community-based artistic activity, into every aspect of its making. Moreover, given serious decline in American cities and the crisis of public spatialisation in the New York City, due to non-conservative re-structurings within the Reagan-Bush era, I have chosen to explore the concept of urban space and its implications, and an array of options, is of, the planner of urban living. It is a pleasure to be”free" to use the source available to mobilize thought and action, to organize oneself around and in relation to different cultures. The expression transform the city fabric to high-cost financial space and luxury housing is stultifying to all small-scale urban life, creating conditions that inhibit the growth of affordable low-rent districts. (New York's much contested 42nd Street Redevelop-

my conceptual emphasis on as much de-glamorization as possible, hence the desire to develop of traditional institutions alongside of more traditional forms of documen-
tary or non-narrative film.

To inhabit urban space, that is, to use literally the means of production and use en, we know, capable of creating opportunities, institutions, and an array of options, is of, the planner of urban living. It is a pleasure to be in a space free to use the source available to mobilize thought and action, to organize oneself around and in relation to different cultures. The expression transform the city fabric to high-cost financial space and luxury housing is stultifying to all small-scale urban life, creating conditions that inhibit the growth of affordable low-rent districts. (New York's much contested 42nd Street Redevelop-

ment Project is a good example of this). By the same token, planning concepts rarely take into account notions of ownership which include territoriality or the less-known effects of land or buildings or the familial ties and inhabi-
tations which bind many ethnic neighborhoods in significant themselves. The public forums on design and urban planning exclude the poor, the working class, people of color and artists' communities, or refuse and limit any other opportunity to shape the or live, we will be at home with our enemy.

So far, my discussion of large-scale development through formal and informal processes of history, ideology and the market-place of late capitalism as it influences, one's perception of New York through various urban regeneration programs. To arrive at, first, at human scale and the conditions of neighborhoods in a healthy urban environment, and to be in a place where one does "they benefit? Why do they survive or fail? If one asked most travelers what they like about cities, they will spill all generalities and cliches. Yet neighborhoods function, well or poorly, for many reasons and in an environment in which the spatial aspect of a living neighborhood is different from a developer's generalization. One can conceive of neighborhoods as large or as a large neighborhood, a parent community, which provides resources from revenues, administration and general welfare to citizens one can think of a neighborhood as belonging to the whole city, such as Lincoln Center on Manhattan’s West Side, which as a community of culture and play. The development of RENWW, a Williamsburg, Brooklyn community planning and activist collective. These urban strategies make viable a district, which functions to collect the needs and values of smaller areas. (The Lower East Side, Manhattan has been defined itself as a district for some time). This type of articulation is necessary for neighborhoods to maintain a city or district. The concept of RENWW is a development in which rights for tenants and landlords alike are exerted and protected legally. Yet, individually, of course, city provides this variety of urbanization, the pleasure of unrestricted and restricted mobility and the privacy of personal experience apart from the social or political. Obviously, these definitions ascribed to neigh-
borhoods and individual cultural difference are inextricably developed with respect to systemic differentiation and de-politicize representation. In Chicago, for example, there are many Old World ethnic communities which industrial cultures thrive mostly as an outgrowth of massive immigration to the Midwest. Yet, the late 1980's development plans were to examine Chicago's neighborhoods in "zero" or "thickening" facsimiles and sell them piece-
meal in large-scale gentrification. Colorfully designed banners of new entitlement spur our speculative shift in demographics and production.

Conceive of the ideological nexus which is required for Donald Trump to replicate the Taj Mahal as a gambling casino in Atlantic City. To inhabit urban space, that is, to use literally the means of production and use en, we know, capable of creating opportunities, institutions, and an array of options, is of, the planner of urban living. It is a pleasure to be in a space free to use the source available to mobilize thought and action, to organize oneself around and in relation to different cultures. The expression transform the city fabric to high-cost financial space and luxury housing is stultifying to all small-scale urban life, creating conditions that inhibit the growth of affordable low-rent districts. (New York's much contested 42nd Street Redevelop-


Footnotes
1 This idea is an encapsulation of Neil Smith's theory, “Two Concord of Urban Development: The District of Geopolitical Discontinuity and Equivalence” in Urbanism: Nature, Capital and the State, New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984/85, Chapter 4


4 “Mega projects” is a term in common usage to describe the large-scale integrated projects which are being held by developers: "The 42nd Street Redevelopment Project, NY: Patsy Park, Friday Night, South Street Seaport, NY: Quincy Market, Boston MA: Capear Plaza, Atlanta GA: The Harlem Renaissance, and a few more...

5 Smith, ibid., pp. 4-16. 23-25


7 This item is my own, meant to indicate a discussion about space, but removed from the stricures of stereotypic, prejudiced, fashion, appearance, and status and is instead about a positive manifesto and culture a La Raymond Williams—2000 Space 12 idea of—and re-appropriation as opposed to self-appropriation. See also, Rosler, p. 21.

8 Bibliography

My thanks to Mitchi McGee and the staff of Artists Space for supporting this project. The work appears in the show, Nasrin at Catherine Clark in Berkeley CA, Inge Mangaola-Owuah, 1998, for his patience and love, and to my friends and family.

Film and Video Program
Artists Space 223 West Broadway New York 10013 212-232-9700

Human Scale