



Still from Carolee Schneemann's "Fuses" (1967)

## **The Block Museum announces spring 2019 cinema season**

EVANSTON, ILL. --- The Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University is proud to present its Spring 2019 cinema season which is free and open to all. Programming includes offerings planned in conjunction with the exhibition "Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time," a series focused on female empowerment and pleasure, and films celebrating the 50th anniversary of the moon landing.

Home to one of the region's most innovative cinemas, The Block Museum's quarterly screening series "Block Cinema" offers a balanced and expansive program that presents film and other time-based media across genres, from classic to experimental, with a global perspective.

The Block Museum of Art is located at 40 Arts Circle Drive on the Evanston campus. For more information visit The Block Museum of Art website.

Michael Metzger, The Block's Pick-Laudati Curator of Media Arts, shares season highlights in [Block Cinema's spring preview video](#). Spring program highlights include:

## Space Programs: Views of Earth across the Iron Curtain

Seen from space, the Earth depicted in the legendary "Blue Marble" photograph suggested a planetary unity belied by the deep schism between East and West during the Cold War. Celebrating Earth Day and the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, Block Cinema has brought together three breathtaking films by American, Polish and Armenian filmmakers that revisit the conquest of space from across this once-unbridgeable divide.

### **"Our Century" (1983) and "State of Weightlessness" (1994)**

April 18, 7 p.m.

Armenian filmmaker Artavazd Peleshian created a small but astounding body of work from the 1960s to the early 90s, including "Our Century," his only feature. Here, Peleshian applies his unique conception of "distance montage" to footage of Soviet cosmonauts, using the space program to find a poetic evocation of the human condition. Maciej Drygas's film "State of Weightlessness" also takes Soviet space exploration as its subject, combining contemporary interviews with cosmonauts and archival footage to look at both the tedious realities of space flight (brushing one's teeth in zero gravity) and the larger cosmic implications.

### **"For All Mankind" (1989)**

April 19, 7 p.m.

In July, it will have been a half century since Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Nothing since has captured the worldwide excitement of this technological "leap for mankind." Filmmaker Al Reinert taped 80 hours of interviews with the astronauts, and he and editor Susan Korda edited millions of feet of film from nine Apollo missions into a tight 79 minutes. The end result is a deeply moving celebration of mankind's great adventure into space. Brian Eno's score captures the feeling of wonder, joy and levity seen in the images.

## Saharan Exchanges

One of the most distinctive and extreme environments in the world, the Sahara Desert has a fascinating cinematic history. While Western filmmakers have sought sublime spectacle among the dunes since the silent era, North African and sub-Saharan filmmakers have also used the desert as a backdrop for bold experiments in style and narrative. Programmed to complement The Block's exhibition "Caravans of Gold," the diverse films in "Saharan Exchanges" prove that the vast expanses of the region cannot be exhausted by any single genre or perspective.

### **"Wanderers of the Desert" (1986)**

April 10, 7 p.m.

This beguiling fable weds traditions of Arabic literature with modern cinema through stunning compositions and unpredictable narrative structures. An inexperienced schoolteacher arrives in a remote Saharan village, where he learns that a curse afflicts the young men of the region, causing them to wander aimlessly in the desert. As the teacher loses himself in the village's strange atmosphere, director Nacer Khemir deftly balances the mystical with the contemplative, summoning the inexplicable and the timeless from the everyday. The film has been newly restored by the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique.

### **"Life Without Death" (2000)**

April 12, 7 p.m.

His life transformed by the passing of his grandfather in the early 1990s, Canadian filmmaker Frank Cole found himself obsessed with the idea of death. Determined to overcome his fear, he resolved to cross the Sahara Desert by camel, training for years to prepare himself for the emotional and physical ordeal. Cole filmed his travels from Mauritania to the Sudan with a 16mm Bolex, capturing the harsh reality of the desert environment with an unflinching intimacy. Cole offers a deeply personal, yet distinctly Western, perspective on the desert as a space of romantic sublimity.





Still from *Ishtar* (1987)

### **“Ishtar” (1987)**

May 10, 7 p.m.

Elaine May’s uncompromising fourth feature, starring Warren Beatty and Dustin Hoffman as a pair of talentless songwriters who bumble their way into Cold War intrigues in Morocco, has enjoyed a critical re-evaluation in recent years. J. Hoberman of the *Village Voice* calls it “the most adroit political satire to emerge from Hollywood during the Iran-Contra stupefaction of Ronald Reagan’s second term.” Shot by acclaimed cinematographer Vittorio Storaro on location in the Sahara, the film offers a comical, self-referential send-up of both American foreign policy and Hollywood exoticism. Northwestern Professor of History Daniel Immerwahr, author of the new book “How to Hide an Empire,” will offer an introduction to the geopolitical context of the film.

### **“Yeelen” (1987)**

May 29, 7 p.m.

A landmark in African cinema, Souleymane Cissé’s “Yeelen” is set in the Malian empire of the 13th century and depicts the quest of a young son across the West African landscape to confront his father, a tyrannical magician. Although the film’s mythic narrative and arresting visual style lend it universal appeal, the film’s use of Bambara, Fulani and Dogon languages and its representation of power struggles across generations have been interpreted as a commentary on Malian politics of the postcolonial era.

### **“Waiting for Happiness” (2002)**

June 6, 7 p.m.

Set in a Mauritanian coastal town at the edge of the Sahara Desert, “Waiting for Happiness” elliptically explores the gateways between Africa and Europe, tradition and modernity, childhood and adulthood. The cast of characters radiates around Abdallah, a 17-year-old intellectual distanced from the language and culture of his hometown. While he waits to emigrate to France, he struggles to communicate with the inhabitants and migrants around him. Abderrahmane Sissako weaves together disparate yet invariably intoxicating sights and sounds, teasing out the systems of exchange and translation that exist even when life seems at a standstill.

# Personal Archives, Political Memories: The Radical Past in Contemporary Documentary

As activists around the world revisit the successes and failures of earlier political movements, a new wave of documentaries and essay films has begun to look beyond official archives, recovering lost, forgotten and unseen images to tell stories of struggle. Whether incorporating family photos, home movies or decades-old documents of protest, the films in this series explore turbulent histories through a distinctly personal lens.

## **“Spell Reel” (2017)**

April 25, 7 p.m.

Freedom fighter Amílcar Cabral commissioned a group of young filmmakers to document the independence movement in late 1960s Guinea-Bissau. Lost for decades, their footage was recently restored. Portuguese artist Filipa César collaborates with the surviving filmmakers to tour the material around Guinea-Bissau, staging public screenings with live narration and discussion. Recovering layers of history behind these images, César and her collaborators also expose a yearning for African self-determination that persists today. Sarah Estrela, doctoral candidate in art history at Northwestern will introduce the program.

## **“The Waldheim Waltz” (2018)**

May 11, 1 p.m.

In 1985, the Austrian presidential campaign of former U.N. General Secretary Kurt Waldheim was disrupted by shocking allegations that the candidate had hidden the true extent of his participation in Nazi war crimes in Greece and Serbia. Director Ruth Beckermann methodically recounts the revelations and denials through news reports, archival interviews with the unrepentant Waldheim and her own trove of videotapes shot as part of the left-wing opposition against him. Exposing a lingering anti-Semitism that plagued Austria long after the end of the war, “The Waldheim Waltz” offers chilling lessons for the present.

## **“Naila and the Uprising” (2017)**

May 18, 1 p.m.

This galvanizing 2017 documentary turns a spotlight on the role of Palestinian women in leading non-violent protests against the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank in the late 1980s. Julia Bacha’s film is centered around the experiences of Naila Ayesh, an activist whose arrest and torture by Israeli forces coincided with the first stirrings of the uprising. Bacha builds upon her firsthand testimony through animated sequences, family dialogues with Naila’s son, Majd, and remarkable archival material.

Suhad Babaa, the film’s executive producer and executive director of Just Vision will attend the screening.

## **“The Image You Missed” (2018)**

May 30, 7 p.m.

Arthur MacCaig spent 30 years documenting the Troubles in Northern Ireland, leaving behind an archive of searing footage. In “The Image You Missed,” his estranged son, filmmaker Donal Foreman, recovers this material to reflect on the personal and political conflicts that came between them and the commitment to filmmaking that brings them together after his death. Foreman’s poignant, brilliantly edited essay film raises difficult questions about the nature of family, representation and activism both then and now.

## Visual Pleasures: The Work and Play of Women's Liberation

The 2018-2019 One Book One Northwestern selection, Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale," imagines how the hard-fought economic and sexual freedoms won by the women's movement might be stripped away. Co-presented with One Book, the Northwestern Women's Center, the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies and the Sexualities Project at Northwestern (SPAN), the films in this series manifest those freedoms in both form and content. "Visual Pleasures" encompasses both mainstream comedies of empowerment and experimental representations of desire through a distinctly female gaze, celebrating liberation across a spectrum of cinematic forms.

### Auto-Erotic: Female Sexuality in the First Person

April 17, 7 p.m.

Curated by Northwestern professors Amy Partridge and Helen Thompson, this program brings together three daring works of film and video that forged new paths towards women's sexual self-representation on screen. Carolee Schneemann's classic "Fuses" (1967), shown in a restored print, remains one of experimental film's most uncompromising evocations of intimacy. "The Continuing Story of Carel and Ferd" (1970 - 1975) offers an early use of video as a medium for confession and confrontation. The late Chicago artist Barbara DeGenevieve playfully deconstructs the motives behind her affair with a truck driver in "Desperado" (2004 - 2006).

### ...Is Never Done: Films on Gender and Labor

May 3, 7 p.m.

Block Cinema welcomes "Channels: A Quarterly Film Series," organized by local film programmers Josh B. Mabe and Erin Nixon, to present its newest installment in response to "Visual Pleasures: The Work and Play of Women's Liberation." This program features filmmakers that consider structures of the workplace, gendered labor and the issues surrounding work and class, including films by Abigail Child, Janie Geiser, Cristiana Miranda and others. "Channels: A Quarterly Film Series" presents experimental film, expanded cinema, documentary, installation and video and new media art to audiences across Chicago.

### "Losing Ground" (1982)

May 22, 7 p.m.

With the release of "Losing Ground" and the publication of her writings, the work of Kathleen Collins is one of the great discoveries of the last decade. Collins died at age 46 in 1988, leaving behind two films and a vast trove of short stories, diaries and screenplays -- a rich artistic legacy exploring the African-American experience. In "Losing Ground," Collins tells the semi-autobiographical story of a college professor (Seret Scott) and her painter husband (Bill Gunn), whose marriage is tested by his disregard for her career, flirtatious behavior on both sides and jealousy as they summer away from the city.

In person: Nina Lorez Collins, daughter of Kathleen Collins and editor of *Notes from a Black Woman's Diary: Selected Works of Kathleen Collins*



Still from *Losing Ground* (1982)



### **Barbara Hammer: Mediated Sensuality**

May 23, 7 p.m.

Since the late 1960s, lesbian experimental filmmaker Barbara Hammer has restlessly challenged the limits of the visible, pushing against the formal, social and sexual boundaries of cinema. This program of films, including newly restored prints, showcases Hammer's ability to translate embodied experience through expressive technique. The program includes "Dyketactics" (1974), "Sync Touch" (1981), "Vital Signs" (1991) and others.

### **Barbara Hammer: Declarations of Identity**

May 24, 7 p.m.

Block Cinema's second program dedicated to Barbara Hammer's pioneering work includes recent Academy Film Archive and Electronic Arts Intermix restorations of "Menses" (1974), "Superdyke" (1975) and "Audience" (1983). Hammer's overlapping identities as a queer woman, artist and activist coalesce in films that capture feminist and lesbian social movements in public and private, transforming the act of documentation into jubilation.

The May 23 and 24 Barbara Hammer programs are curated by KJ Relth and Mark Toscano. UCLA Film and Television Archive programmer and co-curator KJ Relth will attend both programs.

Barbara Hammer's films are screened courtesy of the Academy Film Archive and Electronic Arts Intermix.

### **"9 to 5" (1980)**

June 5, 7 p.m.

The film "9 to 5" remains a classic for many reasons: its top-tier cast, catchy theme and the powerful way it blends comedy with a rallying cry for working women. Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton's characters fight against the patriarchy to enact progressive ideas. Their platform is equal pay for equal work, ending discriminatory hiring and office sexual harassment and instituting social programs, including workplace child care. Nearly 40 years later, these issues are still being grappled with as a new battle for equal rights is waged by the most diverse Congress ever elected.

## **Cinema Selections for Spring 2019**

### **"A Bread Factory" (2018)**

May 4, 12:30 p.m.

Supported for decades by community funding, a modest arts space in small-town New York suddenly finds its future in question when a group of art-world celebrities and their corporate backers propose a performance space nearby. In his third feature, director Patrick Wang recaptures the risk-taking spirit of classic independent cinema, cleverly weaving themes of gentrification, aging and the bonds of community into a hilarious, casually epic two-part satire. Between tap-dancing techies, teenage journalists and two-timing city councilmen, "A Bread Factory" captures the bittersweet reality of American public life with compassion and conviction. The film's run is time 242 minutes and includes an intermission.

Made in Chicago:

### **"The Area" (2018)**

May 16, 7 p.m.

"The Area" is a new documentary telling a story that's well known to many. It follows the five-year odyssey of a South Side Chicago neighborhood, where more than 400 African-American families are being displaced by a multibillion-dollar freight company. The film is told through the perspective of its residents: homeowner-turned-activist Deborah Payne, who vows to be "the last house standing" and the "Row Row Boys," teen friends who must start a new life across gang lines.

Filmmaker David Schalliol, protagonist/producer Deborah Payne and producer Brian Ashby will attend the screening.

Security Sound and Vision:

**“Rubber Coated Steel” (2016) and “Watching the Detectives” (2017)**

May 17 at 7 p.m.

Presented in conjunction with the 2018-2019 Kaplan Institute for the Humanities Dialogue, the two films in this program apply minimalist techniques to the forensic examination of sound and vision, deconstructing deceptive images of security. British-Jordanian artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan stages an intricate relay of sound and image to investigate the use of live ammunition in crowd control by Israel Defense Forces in “Rubber Coated Steel.” Chris Kennedy’s “Watching the Detectives” uses text and still images to reconstruct the mistaken efforts of the amateur social media sleuths who sought to identify the perpetrators of the Boston Marathon bombing. Filmmaker Chris Kennedy will attend the screening.

**“Branco Sai, Preto Fica (White Out, Black In)” (2014)**

May 31 at 7 p.m.

An act of racialized police brutality against attendees of a dance club near Brasília in 1986, an artist in a post-apocalyptic world and a time-traveling detective who arrives in a modified shipping container on a mission to determine the causes of the inequity -- these three elements make up “Branco Sai, Preto Fica,” a hybrid film using many genres and forms to interrogate the politics of Brazil. The tropes of dystopian science fiction are used to portray the real-life disparity between those who build the cities and those who get to live in them.

**“NU DOCS”**

June 12 to 14 at 7 p.m.

Northwestern University’s MFA in Documentary Media Program is proud to present the thesis films of its fourth graduating class. The program includes a selection of new short documentaries, an opportunity to dialogue with the filmmakers and celebrate their accomplishments. This three-night event will give audience members a chance to discover the next generation of filmmakers who are making exciting films and tackling a wide range of topics.

The Block Museum of Art is a member of the Northwestern Arts Circle, which brings together film, humanities, literary arts, music, theater, dance and visual arts.