



SEP 10–NOV 6, 2016
BEN RIVERS
URTH

In a 2013 interview, Ben Rivers described being driven by “a desire to make cinema that is not a representation of the world, but that comes from actual people and places—and is then transformed through cinema into something that isn’t the world, it’s new.”

Explorations of community, landscape, freedom, and flux are at the center of this London-based artist’s practice. Working with both feature-length and short formats, Rivers draws on elements of documentary and fiction, experimental film and mainstream cinema.

Urth, Rivers’s first solo presentation in the United States, presents new and recent moving image works. The exhibition takes its title from the Old Norse word suggesting the twisted threads of fate (as cited by Timothy Morton in his recent book, *Dark Ecology*). The films in the exhibition share an interest in utopias—in particular, the tension between a yearning for an idealized world and the impossibility of such a place. For Rivers, utopias are necessarily hermetic and subjective spaces, conditions that are reflected in the settings of these works.

The Renaissance Society commissioned Rivers to produce a new project for this exhibition. Filmed inside Biosphere 2 in Arizona, it forms a cinematic meditation on ambitious experiments, constructed environments, and visions of the future. Writer Mark von Schlegell

contributes a text—read as voiceover to Rivers’s moving images—that considers what an endeavor such as Biosphere 2 might mean today in terms of human-kind’s relationship with the natural world.

Two previous films by Rivers, presented alongside *Urth*, explore similarly curious objects and places. *Slow Action* (2010) offers a fictional study of island biogeography across four locations, considering how these self-contained sites have and might continue to evolve. The accompanying quasi-ethnographic narrative, also written by von Schlegell, imagines future societies grappling with rising seas and soon-to-be-lost ecologies. *Things* (2014) is a film collage divided into four “seasons,” juxtaposing found imagery, objects, and sounds with domestic and nature scenes that are at once intimate and unsettling. It is presented alongside a series of drawings and photographs.

SAT, SEP 10, 5–8PM
Opening reception
 with artist talk at 6pm

Opposite, above: Ben Rivers, *Things*, film still, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and Kate McGarry, London.

Opposite, middle and below: Ben Rivers, *Slow Action*, film stills, 2010. Courtesy of the artist and Kate McGarry, London.

BEN RIVERS, URTH
EVENTS

SCREENING
**A SPELL TO WARD
OFF THE DARKNESS**
FRI, SEP 30, 7PM

Starring musician Robert A.A. Lowe, *A Spell...* follows an unnamed character through three seemingly disparate moments in his life: in the midst of a 15-person collective on a small Estonian island; in isolation in the majestic wilderness of Northern Finland; and during a black metal concert in Norway. Marked by solitude, ecstatic beauty, and an optimism of the darkest sort, this hypnotic film is at once a document of experience and an experience itself, an inquiry into transcendence that sees the cinema as a site for transformation.

Dir. Ben Rivers and Ben Russell, 2013, 98m, DCP



SCREENING
**THE SKY TREMBLES
AND THE EARTH IS AFRAID
AND THE TWO EYES ARE
NOT BROTHERS**
FRI, OCT 7, 7PM

Rivers's most recent feature film takes Paul Bowles's 1947 short story "A Distant Episode" as its starting point, combining elements of the unsettling tale with observational footage to create a surreal fable on the illusions and ethics of cinema. Shooting in 16mm against Morocco's Atlas Mountains and Sahara Desert, Rivers tracks real film director Oliver Laxe who, abandoning his own set and crew, begins to descend into the misadventures and madness of Bowles's protagonist.

Dir. Ben Rivers, 2015, 98m, 35mm, in Arabic/Spanish/French with English subtitles

BOTH SCREENINGS:

LOGAN CENTER
FOR THE ARTS,
SCREENING ROOM
915 E 60TH ST,
CHICAGO, IL 60637

*Presented in partnership
with the Film Studies
Center, the University
of Chicago.*



LECTURE
TIMOTHY MORTON
SUN, OCT 23, 2PM
KENT HALL, ROOM 120
1020 E 58TH ST

In *Urth*, Ben Rivers partially draws on the work of philosopher Timothy Morton, who offers vivid new perspectives on ecological thinking, our uncanny interconnectedness with the nonhuman, and the future to come. In his latest book, *Dark Ecology* (2016), Morton describes an emerging ecological awareness that has all the darkness—and the strange twists and turns—of a noir story: the detective is also the criminal, investigating forces on a planetary scale while realizing he or she is implicated in them.

Opposite: *The Sky Trembles and the Earth Is Afraid and the Two Eyes Are Not Brothers*, film still, 2015.

CONCERT
ROBERT A.A. LOWE
FRI, NOV 4, 8PM
BOND CHAPEL
1025 E 58TH ST

Robert A.A. Lowe, who performs under his own name or as Lichens, uses his voice and modular synthesizers to create immersive listening experiences. In his mesmerizing performances, layered vocals join other sounds to form a reverberating drone. Lowe collaborated with Ben Rivers and Ben Russell on the film *A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness*, acting in the central role as the unnamed protagonist. A onetime Chicagoan, now based in Brooklyn, Lowe has worked with a wide range of artists and musicians, and he also plays with the experimental metal band Om.

Above: Robert A.A. Lowe in *A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness*, film still, 2013.

NOV 19, 2016–JAN 22, 2017
SADIE BENNING
SHARED EYE

Sadie Benning's paintings feature a combination of materials and colors in highly structured, cut-out compositions. Their lively forms convey a fluid spectrum of possibilities ranging from geometric elements to more figural concerns. The handmade quality of Benning's works evokes a sense of improvisation as well as an experiential aspect, in which the use of the materials visibly reveals a conversational thinking process.

At the Renaissance Society, Benning presents a new series of paintings inspired by Blinky Palermo's 1976 work *To the People of New York City*. The paintings in *Shared Eye* work within the parameters set forth by the structure and progression of Palermo's installation, in which thirty-nine chromatic panels appear in a sequence of linear groupings.

Diverging from Palermo's minimal compositions of red, black, and yellow, however, the works in *Shared Eye* deftly incorporate photographic imagery. In each case, Benning begins with a digital image, transferred onto the support, and punctuates it with found photographs, objects, and areas of color, generating potential associations between the individual elements. These collage-like techniques create a variety of formal tensions and invite the viewer to draw from their own reference points, whether the works evoke experiences of city life or the haunting presence of historical traumas.



The precise medium of the works, their materials, and how they are made, are difficult to identify at first; they tacitly embrace a questioning of categories. In both form and content, the paintings embody the possibility of destabilizing fixed logics, and they suggest how ambiguity or indeterminacy can assume a political dimension.



SAT, NOV 19, 5–8PM
Opening reception
 with artist talk at 6pm

TUE, NOV 29, 6PM
Exhibition walk-through
 with Christine Mehring (see PG 9)

SAT, DEC 10, 2PM
Exhibition walk-through
 with Karsten Lund, Assistant Curator,
 the Renaissance Society

Sadie Benning, Shared Eye is organized in partnership with Kunsthalle Basel, where it will open in February 2017.

Above: Sadie Benning, *Park*, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Air de Paris. Photo: Chris Austin.

Opposite: Sadie Benning, *Faces*, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Mary Boone Gallery, New York. Photo: Chris Austin.



Opposite: Sadie Benning, untitled, "telephone drawing", 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects. Photo: Chris Austin.

EVENTS

EXHIBITION WALK-THROUGH
CHRISTINE MEHRING
 TUE, NOV 29, 6PM

Christine Mehring, Department Chair and Professor of Art History at the University of Chicago, is the author of *Blinky Palermo: Abstraction of an Era* (2008), an in-depth historical study of Palermo's practice and its significance for post-war art. Guiding viewers through *Shared Eye*, Mehring offers her knowledge of Palermo's work and explores how it is a touchstone for artists today, including Benning, who are considering the possibilities of abstraction and formal structure.

READING
AMBIGUITY FORUM
 SAT, JAN 14, 3PM

In both form and content, Sadie Benning's works often suggest how indeterminacy can take on a political dimension. A number of artists and writers have been invited to send in short written responses to these ideas. This performative reading of the texts in the gallery stages a polyphony of sorts, as different voices rise up within the exhibition. Visit the Renaissance Society website to view a list of participants.

LECTURE
LYNNE COOKE
 THU, JAN 19, 6PM
 KENT HALL, ROOM 120
 1020 E 58TH ST

Blinky Palermo's *To the People of New York City* was acquired by the Dia Foundation soon after the artist's unexpected death in 1977. Lynne Cooke, a former curator at Dia, now Senior Curator at the National Gallery of Art, has long been an advocate of Palermo's work, editing a book about *To the People of New York City* and organizing the German painter's first North American retrospective. Here, Cooke discusses Palermo's ambitious final project in relation to *Shared Eye*.



THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY BENEFIT AND ART AUCTION

SAT, OCT 15, 6:30PM
 MANA CONTEMPORARY CHICAGO
 2233 S THROOP ST
 CHICAGO, IL 60608

The Renaissance Society is at its core a space of possibility.

Our commitment to facilitating the creation of new works of art would not be possible without your contribution. All of this evening's proceeds benefit the Renaissance Society's 2016-17 exhibition, education, and publishing programs.

RenBen 2016 features silent and live auctions with works by artists including Will Benedict, Francis Upritchard, Stewart Uoo, Edgar Arceneaux, Becky Beasley and Peter Wächtler. An Italian-inspired three-course meal comes courtesy of Chef Giuseppe Tentori of Boka Restaurant Group.

We have partnered with online auction house Paddle8 to host a preview of the artworks, which will be live on September 23. Bidding will also be available through the site from September 30.

Individual tickets: \$500 each
Tables for ten: from \$5,000

To purchase tickets or to make a donation, please visit our website: store.renaisancesociety.org

COMING SOON... INTERMISSIONS



In January 2017, the Renaissance Society will launch a new programming series devoted to ephemeral or performance-based projects in the open gallery space. Presenting two major live works every year, in the period between exhibitions, this program creates a recurring platform for works with a live component and a shorter, concentrated duration.

The *Intermissions* series aims to expand the Renaissance Society's support for artists as they explore new ideas and to further develop spaces for experimentation. The program will encompass a wide range of time-based practices, potentially including

performance, participatory experiences, live media projects, and sound- or dance-centered works.

Details of the first *Intermissions* event will be available from early December. Visit our website, join our email list, or follow us on social media for more information.

Generous support for this program is provided by the Efroymsen Family Fund.

Above: Kevin Beasley, *Your face is/is not enough*, performance, 2016. Commissioned by the Renaissance Society for *Between the Ticks of the Watch*. Photo: Tom Van Eynde.



GABRIEL SIERRA

Sierra's 2015 site-specific exhibition featured eight titles that changed hourly, introducing different logics to the space of the gallery. These phrases also alternate as titles for the catalogue, which each copy featuring one of them. The book includes essays by Douglas Fogle and Irene V. Small; an interview between Sierra and curator Solveig Øvstebø; and installation images from the exhibition.

Now available

IRENA HAIDUK SEDUCTIVE EXACTING REALISM MARCEL PROUST 12

The catalogue for Haiduk's 2015 exhibition appears to replicate the missing book from a 13-volume edition of Proust's collected works owned by the artist. The publication features texts by Ivo Andrić, Hannah Feldman, Irena Haiduk, Monika Szewczyk, and Marina Vishmidt, as well as an interview between the artist and curator Solveig Øvstebø.

Available Fall 2016

MATHIAS POLEDNA

Featuring essays by Solveig Øvstebø, Amy Knight Powell, Bennett Simpson, and Andrew Stefan Weiner, this catalogue also includes documentation of Poledna's 2014 exhibition. The artist proposed iconoclasm and its various historical contexts as a conceptual backdrop for two new works: a 35mm film and a substantial alteration to the Renaissance Society's exhibition space.

Available Fall 2016



BEN RIVERS WAYS OF WORLDMAKING

Rivers's first monograph offers a comprehensive overview of his practice. Co-published by Kunstverein in Hamburg, the Renaissance Society, Camden Arts Centre, and Triennale di Milano, it includes new essays by Melissa Gronlund, Ed Halter, and Andrea Picard, alongside extensive images from Rivers's films and a number of texts that have influenced the works.

Available Fall 2016

Visit store.renaissancesociety.org to purchase these and other Renaissance Society titles.

Forthcoming titles:

BETWEEN THE TICKS OF THE WATCH with Kevin Beasley, Ranjit Hoskote, Solveig Øvstebø, Falke Pisano, Heidi Salaverría, and Richard Shiff

SADIE BENNING
co-published with Kunsthalle Basel

Opposite: Gabriel Sierra, installation view, 2015.

Above: Mathias Poledna, installation detail, 2014.

Both photos: Tom Van Eynde

VISITING INFORMATION

All exhibitions and events take place at the Renaissance Society unless otherwise noted.

All are free, open to the public, and require no booking unless otherwise noted.

For more information please visit our website or follow us on social media.

Twitter and Instagram:
@RenSoc

Facebook and Vimeo:
The Renaissance Society

Opening hours
Tue-Fri: 10am-5pm
Sat and Sun: 12-5pm

Closed Mondays, between exhibitions, and on the following dates: Nov 24 and 25; Dec 24, 25, and 31; and Jan 1.

Group visits
We are pleased to accommodate visits from schools, universities, and other groups, and our library and archives are open to researchers by appointment. Please contact us to arrange a visit.

SUPPORTERS

Lead support for the Renaissance Society's Next Century Fund for the production of new work is generously provided by:

EDLIS NEESON FOUNDATION

PRITZKER TRAUBERT FAMILY
FOUNDATION

ZELL FAMILY FOUNDATION

Additional support for the Renaissance Society and the Next Century Fund is provided by the Chauncey and Marion D. McCormick Family Foundation; Christie's; the Efroymsen Family Fund; Larry and Marilyn Fields; the John R. Halligan Charitable Fund; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince Charitable Trust; the Michael Asher Foundation; Nuveen Investments; the Office of the Provost at the University of Chicago; the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation; our Board of Trustees; and our many individual supporters.

CALENDAR

SAT, SEP 10, 5-8PM	Opening reception and artist talk: Ben Rivers, <i>Urth</i>	PG 3
FRI, SEP 30, 7PM	Screening: <i>A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness</i>	PG 4
FRI, OCT 7, 7PM	Screening: <i>The Sky Trembles and the Earth Is Afraid and the Two Eyes Are Not Brothers</i>	PG 4
SAT, OCT 15, 6:30PM	RenBen 2016	PG 10
SUN, OCT 23, 2PM	Lecture: Timothy Morton	PG 5
FRI, NOV 4, 8PM	Concert: Robert A.A. Lowe	PG 5
SAT, NOV 19, 5-8PM	Opening reception and artist talk: Sadie Benning, <i>Shared Eye</i>	PG 7
TUE, NOV 29, 6PM	Gallery walk-through: Christine Mehring on <i>Shared Eye</i>	PG 9
SAT, DEC 10, 2PM	Gallery walk-through: Karsten Lund on <i>Shared Eye</i>	PG 7
SAT, JAN 14, 3PM	Reading: Ambiguity Forum	PG 9
THU, JAN 19, 6PM	Lecture: Lynne Cooke	PG 9

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY
SEPTEMBER 2016-JANUARY 2017

R

SEP 10-NOV 6, 2016

BEN RIVERS URTH

NOV 19, 2016-JAN 22, 2017

SADIE BENNING SHARED EYE

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY
at the University of Chicago
5811 South Ellis Avenue
Cobb Hall, 4th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60637

773 702 8670
info@renaissancesociety.org
renaissancesociety.org

Contemporary art
exhibitions, events,
and publishing

