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N E W S R E L E A S E

MIT List Visual Arts Center presents
Chantal Akerman: Moving through Time and Space
the first museum survey exhibition featuring the works
of filmmaker and video artist Chantal Akerman
(May 2-July 6, 2008)

Opening Reception: Thursday, May 1, 2008, 6-8PM
Conversation between Chantal Akerman and curator Terrie Sultan
with an introduction by Harvard University
scholar Giuliana Bruno 5:30-7PM, Bartos Theatre

A list of public programs is attached.

Cambridge, MA–April 2008. The MIT List Visual Arts Center (LVAC) is pleased to present the first museum survey exhibition featuring the works of filmmaker and video artist Chantal Akerman. The exhibition features five works including single-channel pieces *Sud (South)*, 1999; and *Là-bas (Down There)*, 2006; as well as multi-channel works, *D'est: Au bord de la fiction (From the East: Bordering on Fiction)*, 1995; *De l'autre côté (From the Other Side)*, 2002; and *Femmes d'Anvers en Novembre (Women of Antwerp in November)*, 2007, a new work created especially for the exhibition.

Chantal Akerman is widely regarded as one of the most important directors in film history. Since 1995 Akerman's artistic practice has melded documentary filmmaking techniques with video installation. *Moving through Time and Space* explores her work in the crossover genre of film and visual art. *D'est: Au bord de la fiction* is a compendium of striking images of Eastern Europe and its citizens in the transition period following the end of the Cold War. Multiple video monitors retrace a journey that extends from the end of summer to the deepest winter, from East Germany, across Poland and the Baltics, to Moscow. There is no narration and the film unfolds as a procession of beautifully chosen, enigmatic images in which Akerman captures the essence, if not the historical particulars, of a region on the move.

Sud initially began as a "meditation on the American South" inspired by Akerman's love for the work of writers William Faulkner and James Baldwin. The direction of Akerman's film quickly shifted after the racially motivated murder of James Byrd Jr. in Jasper, Texas. Byrd, a black man, was killed by three whites who chained him to their truck and dragged him three miles through predominantly black parts of the county until one of his arms came off and he was decapitated. What began as an elegant meditation on the South became a passionate documentary capturing the emotionally tumultuous aftermath of Byrd's murder.

De l'autre côté is an unsentimental look at the plight of illegal Mexican immigrants as they attempt the dangerous crossing from Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico to Douglas, Arizona. Akerman approaches the documentary from an unobtrusive and objective standpoint evident from the lack of an omniscient narrator and the long camera angles and takes that capture miles of dividing fence along the Mexico-Arizona border.

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In *Là-bas* Akerman approached a subject directly linked to her own history. Although Akerman did not want to make a film in Israel, convinced that neutrality would be impossible and that her own subjectivity would interfere, she found herself shooting *Là-bas* while teaching and living in Tel Aviv. Akerman's film evolves from the confines of her apartment. In the film we rarely see Akerman; she leaves her apartment only for the occasional visit to the shore. Voice-over narration serves as the framework for her reflections on family history, her Jewish identity, and her childhood. She wonders whether normal everyday life is possible in this place and whether filming is a realistic option. With no intentions defined in advance, the film takes its natural course.

The fifth work in *Moving Through Time and Space* is Akerman's newly commissioned two-channel video installation *Femmes d'Anvers en Novembre*. The work explores notions of time and space through a series of short vignettes alternating between color and black and white, each featuring women smoking at night in various ambiguous settings. These short narratives—presented together in a long horizontal, split-screen format—offer a compelling array of psychological and emotional scenarios as women engage in wordless social interplay. On the opposite wall, a projection shows a languid four-minute loop filmed in black and white of a young woman lighting, smoking, and extinguishing her cigarette. *Femmes d'Anvers en Novembre* is redolent in an atmosphere of 1950s French and American film noir, touching on Akerman's foundation in feminist filmmaking and her deep connection to a highly personal, yet distant, cinematic point of view.

Chantal Akerman: Moving through Time and Space was organized as a collaborative effort by The Blaffer Gallery at the Art Museum of the University of Houston, the MIT List Visual Arts Center, The Contemporary Art Museum St Louis, and Miami Art Central/Miami Art Museum. A 120-page illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition. Each individual work receives an in-depth interpretive essay. Rina Carvajal, curator at the Miami Art Museum, writes about *D'Est* while independent curator Klaus Ottman writes on *De l'autre côté*. Claudia Schmuckli, curator of the Blaffer Gallery, and Bill Arning, curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center, focus on *Sud* and *Là-bas* respectively. Terrie Sultan writes on the new commission. The catalogue is designed and produced by Marquand Books of Seattle, Washington. The show is traveling nationally to all of the organizing venues and was on view at the Blaffer Gallery January 19-March 29, 2008.

About the Artist

Chantal Akerman, born in Brussels, Belgium in 1950, was first exposed to film by Jean-Luc Godard's landmark *Pierrot le fou* (1965). She attended the Belgian film school INSAS and later, the Université Internationale du Théâtre in Paris, but left to pursue her own projects. By 1968, she had completed her first film, *Saute ma ville (Blow up My Town)*, a no-budget, black and white short in which she stars as a young woman in a tragic-comic "day in the life" exposition. This small but powerful film, shown mostly at film festivals, brought critical attention to her innovative approach and set the stage for later works in which she explores women, at work, and home, their interpersonal relationships with family and friends, and the universal themes of food, love, sex, romance, art, and storytelling.

In 1975, she made her best-known and most influential film, *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai de Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, about the daily life of an early middle-aged woman who snaps in the face of intense emotion and commits a horrifying crime. Akerman has made more than twenty-five films. She has been awarded a Lumiere Award (France's Academy Award) and a FIRPRESCI Prize (International Federation of Film Critics), was nominated for the Golden Lion (Venice Film Festival), and was artist in residence at Harvard University.

Chantal Akerman: Moving through Time and Space has been made possible by generous grants from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the Barbra Lee Family Foundation Fund at the Boston Foundation. The commissioning of Akerman's new work is made possible by the Ella Fontanals Cisneros-Collection. Additional funding for the exhibition at the List Visual Arts Center was generously provided by the Nimoy Foundation; LEF Foundation; the Council for the Arts at MIT; the Society of Friends of Belgium in America; and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Media Sponsor: Phoenix Media/Communications Group.



Directions:

The MIT List Visual Arts Center is located in the Wiesner Building, 20 Ames St., at the eastern edge of the MIT campus. It is in close proximity to Kendall Square, Memorial Drive, and the Longfellow Bridge.

By T, take the red line to the Kendall/MIT stop, follow Main St. west to Ames St., turn left, and walk one block to the cross walk. The MIT List Visual Arts Center housed in a building identifiable by its white gridded exterior, will be on your left. Signage is on the building.

By car, coming across the Longfellow Bridge or from Memorial Drive, follow signs for Kendall Square. Limited metered parking is available on Ames Street. A parking garage is located at the Cambridge Center complex (entrance on Ames between Main and Broadway) during business hours and on campus after business hours and on weekends.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Wednesday: 12-6PM; Thursday: 12-8PM;
Friday-Sunday: 12-6PM
Closed Mondays; Independence Day (July 4).

Information: 617.253.4680 or <http://listart.mit.edu>

All exhibitions at the MIT List Visual Arts Center are free and open to the public. Wheelchair accessible. Accommodations are provided by request.

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