
Digital-Cultural Ecology and the Medium-Sized City

2016

01-03 April

Abstract Submission Form

1. Paper / Proposal Title: "How to Live in Irvine": the Political, Cultural and Economic landscape of a Master Planned, Medium Sized City in Southern California

2. Format: Written presentation followed by screening of clips "Irvana" a documentary in progress by Lev Anderson

3. Author(s) Name: Catherine Liu, Lev Anderson, independent filmmaker

4. Email contact details: Catherine Liu liu@uci.edu; Lev Anderson levanderson@gmail.com

5. University or Company Affiliation: Professor, Film and Media Studies, Visual Studies, UC Irvine; Lev Anderson is an independent filmmaker

6. Abstract (300 words):

"How to Live in Irvine" is a multi-layered community engagement/post-suburban study group/art project meant to raise awareness of the history and evolution of the city of Irvine, a master planned community fully managed by one of the most powerful real estate holding companies in the United States, the Irvine Company. We wanted to raise awareness of the demographic, economic and environmental impacts of the built environment and urge our community to question the mass manufactured, for profit zoning urban planning initiatives that has created one of the most prosperous enclaves in Southern California. We look at the evolution of the city as the embodiment of early 1960s corporate and California modernism as it has evolved into a corporate and gaming industry stronghold (Blizzard, Allergan and Broadcom are only some of the companies that call Irvine home) , anchored by the University of California Irvine. The city attracts a diverse swathe of immigrants from the Middle and Far East. We do not want to rely on the clichéd critique of suburban conformism and ugliness that was the basis of Lewis Baltz's photographs of Irvine's industrial parks from the early 1970s. We

wanted to look at the city's successful management of its water and space resources while being critical of its inability to live up to the aspirations of cultural and economic diversity that an ambitious city of its size should have in its sites. At the same time, the cost of living in Irvine keeps artists and working class people at its margins. Anderson's documentary is an exploration of all these issues. Catherine Liu brings her expertise in American intellectual history and visual studies to bear upon the activities and interventions we worked on during the past year. Our presentation is a report on our work in progress, which we hope will benefit from exposure to the Digital Culture and the Medium Sized City Conference.

7. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Catherine Liu is Professor of Film and Media Studies and Visual Studies at UC Irvine. She is the author of *American Idyll: Anti-Elitism as Cultural Critique* (University of Iowa Press, 2011) and *Copying Machines: Taking Notes for the Automaton* (University of Minnesota Press, 2000). Kaya Press recently reissued her 1997 novel *Oriental Girls Desire Romance*. From 2007-2014, she was Director of the UC Irvine Humanities Collective. As Director of the Collective, Liu focused on diversifying public programming, promoting film screenings, new media studies while highlighting research excellence in the School of Humanities. She was a strong advocate for interdisciplinary Humanities Research. She has published on literary theory, surveillance culture, higher education theory and policy, Frankfurt School, psychoanalysis and historical materialism. Her newest research project deals with the language of "care" and "risk" in higher education policy and free market narratives of individual agency. She is writing a book on the de-Marxification of critical theory that took place at UC Irvine during the 1980s and 90s and is also at work on a memoir provisionally titled *Panda Gifts*.

Born and raised in Portland OR, Lev Anderson majored in Political Science and created a minor in Environmental Education at Beloit College ('98). After five years as an urban planner in the Bay Area, Anderson gave up on imposing his utopian vision for the future of cities and embraced the non-fiction film practice, consolidating his passions for history, art, politics and storytelling. Lev co-directed EVERYDAY SUNSHINE: THE STORY OF FISHBONE, about the legendary African-American punk-funk band Fishbone. EVERYDAY SUNSHINE screened at almost 200 film festivals around the world and broadcast on PBS' Afro-Pop program and Starz. In 2013-2014 he was filmmaker-in-residence at UC Irvine's Humanities Collective, revisiting his utopian dreams and nightmares while researching his current film project, tentatively titled IRVANA, about the past, present and future

of Irvine, California. His work has been supported by grants from Cal Humanities and the Fleishacker Foundation

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