

Polish Soundtrack. The Last Chance

in collaboration with The Anthropocene Lab

curators: Justyna Wąsik & Beate Geissler
with Katarzyna Majchrowicz-Wolny
and support of Michał Paweł Markowski

Oct. 10-14 at UIC, by Lake Michigan & North Branch of the Chicago River

<https://www.instagram.com/polishsoundtrack/>

Day 1 (Tue, Oct. 10)

12-3pm Plant Research Laboratory, 1020 S. Union St.

Experimental workshop on alternative ways of knowledge sharing, interacting with the environment, and collectively acting by [Łukasz Jastrubczak](#).

Part of the workshop will be "Game" - a performative exercise on collective decision-making, involving surrounding landscape & its elements. "Game", based on Oskar Hansen's idea of open form, was created by [CentrumCentrum](#)¹ - artspace in the gardening plot that practices social ecology & gold cardboard bars economy, co-founded by Jastrubczak.

- + Premiere of *It Belong to The Cucumbers* - a book co-authored by students of POL150 (Intro to Polish Cinema, 23') - collection of cut-up writings created out of films watched during the semester, ed. by Justyna Wąsik
- + Wild Weeds Picnic by Ewa Polska
- + Art Garden Tour by Katelyn Patton

3-5:30 Screening Room 3226 AEH:

Improvisational Realism: open class of *ATMOSPHERICS - Doc Media / Art of the Real* by Deborah Stratman²

"An atmosphere is the most vital prerequisite for life and mind. Without it, worlds are hard-pounded deserts, dry as old bones, where alien feet fall soundlessly and even the dust is dead. With it, everything becomes possible." -Lyall Watson

¹ <http://centrumcentrum.org/cinfo.html>

² <http://pythagorasfilm.com/bio.html>

"We've heard all about all the sticks and spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long, hard things, but we have not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing contained. That is a new story. That is news." -Ursula K. Le Guin

To attend the class all participants need to read:

[*Geontologies: The Concept and its Territories* – Elizabeth Povinelli](#)

[*A Conversation* – Laura Huertas Millán & Eileen Myles](#)

& register by sending 'yes' to wasikjustyna@gmail.com

5:45-7:30 Screening Room 3226 AEH

Film screenings of:

HOPIUM ECONOMY, A trilogy, 2017-2021 Beate Geissler and Oliver Sann

The Historian, the Addict and the Pharmacist, 2019-2020

This project is called Hopium Economy because economic growth is an assumption central to our political and economic systems. It is the mechanism relied upon for improving life on Earth for humans based on the belief that there is an escape from the finitude of resources. The "hopium economy" is the endless, unstoppable, and inexhaustible dream of becoming, of winning. The work focuses on substance dependency and all three lectures of the trilogy consist of conducted interviews with farmers, addicts, meth cooks, scientists, historians, dealers and distributors, SWAT team members, law enforcement agents such as those from the DEA, and police men and women from undercover cover operations, to name just a few.

<https://www.anthropocene-curriculum.org/project/mississippi/field-stations/field-station-4-confluence-ecologies/hopium-economy>

"Pawel i Wawel" (dir. Krzysztof Kaczmarek, co-written with Justyna Wąsik)

Road movie that follows the filmmakers' cross-country tour through Iceland with a festival of Polish cinema "What's the difference between Pawel and Wawel." The festival goes wrong. Difficulties begin already in Poland - Violetta Villas resigns from participation, the grant money fails, the budget is too small, allowing only to rent a caravan for the entire crew. The Icelandic audience does not turn out, the event ends in failure. The original goal, however, turns out to be just an excuse to make the film. The backdrop for the unexpected events is a cold landscape subdued by ash after the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano.

Day 2 (Wed, Oct. 11)

2-6 pm Institute for the Humanities, 1007 W Harrison St Suite 153

“Sink or Swim. Humanities and Arts in the Anthropocene” - cross-disciplinary conference devoted to new research, educational and activist practices in the age of the Anthropocene.

What to do with the humanities in the age of the Anthropocene? If humanities are in a crisis, as we have been repeatedly told, they are not alone. Anthropocene considered as an epoch, in which ‘things erupt out of humanly defined functions, categories, coordination and meanings, become blasted out of history, to drift and wash ashore into other, less familiar, but at present no less significant, associations’ (Póra Pétursdóttir) is by its very definition - a time of epistemological crisis. As such, it redefines the scope, methods, objectives and fields of human enterprises. Michael Hardt said at a lecture at the University of Chicago that the theory that will get the academic world out of its current crisis could only come from the field i.e. fieldwork, unorthodox collaborations across disciplines, engagement with social movements, urban activist practices etc. In this vein *Polish Soundtrack. The Last Chance* seeks to explore new ways of knowledge-making and sharing, experimenting with cross-disciplinary research, educational and collaborative practices of anthropocenic humanities and arts.

2-4pm PANEL 1

Keynote: Michał Paweł Markowski³ - “On Walking”

The intervention *On Walking* is a reconsideration of walking understood as an activity of participating in the natural environment. It is also an attempt to think about a relationship between Modernity and the Anthropocene through the construction of “wandering subjectivity.”

Michał Paweł Markowski - The Hejna Family Chair of Polish Language and Literature, the Head of the Department of Polish, Russian, and Lithuanian Studies, and the Artistic Director of the International Joseph Conrad Festival (since 2008). His main academic interests revolve around Modernity in the broadest possible sense and focus on various aspects of

³ Author of 11 monographs on Polish literature and Western philosophy, 8 books of literary essays, and a few volumes of translations and edited collections. His last 3 books (*The Politics of Sensitivity* [2013], *The Wars of Modern Tribes* [2019], and *Poland, Bliss, University. An Educational Story* [2021]) can be read as a socio-political analysis of the contemporary situation of the humanities. The first of his 3 volumes of *Collected Texts* (1988-2023), titled *Interpretation*, will be out in late October, followed by 2 books in 2024 (*Politics and Representation*).

historically determined subjectivity, especially from the point of view of political practice of representation.

Presentation + discussions:

[Janek Sowa](#)⁴ (on zoom) - 'Walking with a Sense of Purpose. Crisis, Utopia and Imagination in the Contemporary World' (intervention)

Despite constant crises and unprecedented challenges we face today, our culture has lost its utopian ability to imagine better futures. It is the more surprising considering that at least some historical utopias have been realized: universal suffrage, regulated working hours, paid vacations, retirement benefits, free healthcare, and widespread access to education – the things people now take for granted in some places around the world are the result of decades or even centuries of a progressive march in the name of ideals and visions once considered entirely utopian. Meanwhile, today, we remain motionless and often see the future as a simple extension of the present, filled only with new gadgets: faster smartphones, better screens, more energy-efficient electric cars, more powerful processors, and innovative apps.

Such a stupor is highly dangerous because, in the absence of progressive visions of the future, regressive retro-topias seeking to restore the world of past inequalities and oppression that we believed to be firmly left behind fill our collective imagination.

Janek Sowa's intervention will attempt to answer why our collective thinking has ended up in such perilous stagnation. In the process, we will also consider the role that imagination may play in constructing such utopias because, since imagination, giving us the ability to present an alternative to what exists, is the most political of all mental faculties.

Julia Fiedorczuk⁵ (on zoom) - "How to be an earthling: thoughts on ecopoetics" (a poet's talk)

Response by: Łukasz Jastrubczak

4:15-6pm PANEL 2

Presentations + discussions by:

Ralph Cintrón⁶ - 'unknowing knowing' (cross examinations)

Teresa Córdova⁷

⁴ <https://asp-waw.academia.edu/JanSowa>

⁵ <https://www.lyrikline.org/en/authors/julia-fiedorczuk>

⁶ <https://engl.uic.edu/profiles/cintron-ralph/>

⁷ <https://greatcities.uic.edu/about/people/cordova/>

Katarzyna Majchrowicz-Wolny "The Ocean of Potential. On the Relationship with Unknowable in Stanisław Lem's *Solaris*

Aishath Huda⁸ ('Water as Method' - artist talk)

Response by: Julia Vaingurt⁹

**7-11 pm Boring Drug concert & DJ set by Vesolo
(The Chopin Theatre, 1543 W Division St)**

Boring Drug was a music collective (Jakub de Barbaro, Igor Kłaczyński, Tomek Kowalski, Wiktor Podgórski, Jaśmina Polak, Łukasz Jastrubczak & Ewa Polska) created in 2012 in Kraków. Their concerts often related to the mythology of the XXth century land art - e. g. they improvised to Robert Smithson's video recording stretched in time ("Asphalt Rundown") or performed fragments of his classic essay "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic". Their only album "Boring Drug" was recorded on beeswax, hand-pressed on PCL (biodegradable polyester, in order to recycle it at home one has to submerge a disc in water heated up to 70 °C) and released in 100 copies by experimental label Altanova Press run by Sebastian Buczek. One of their last concerts took place in 2014 in a city park in Warsaw, where they played for almost 6 hours to the burial of the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's work. The event was organized by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

Boring Drug will be shortly reactivated by Łukasz Jastrubczak (synthesizer) & Ewa Polska (theremin) for *Polish Soundtrack. The Last Chance*.

<http://boringdrug.tumblr.com>

⁸ <https://www.aishathhuda.com/>

⁹ <https://prls.uic.edu/profiles/julia-vaingurt/>

Day 3 (Th, Oct. 12)

Henry Hall 106, 935 W Harrison St

12-1:30 pm Art presentation & workshop on DIY survival strategies in the Anthropocene & late capitalist art world by Janek Simon

Janek Simon - visual artist & occasional curator. He often stages Polish culture in places where there is no context for its reception. He organized *Polish Year in Madagascar*, *Mission Auropol* (a residency for the most depressing Polish artists in the utopian post-hippie town of Auroville, southern India); *Nollywood Ashes and Diamonds* (an ongoing production of a Nigerian remake of Andrzej Wajda's classic). His works were presented in numerous venues such as Center Pompidou, Manifesta 7, Art Fair in Miami, The Dakar Biennial, National Art Museum of China in Beijing. Co-founder of Goldex Poldex - the iconic art space and "Polish gold mine" in Cracow & Wild Gallery. The recurring theme in his art is an approaching end of civilization foreshadowed by computer games. From the early works to the latest sculptures printed by a domestic 3D printer, he constructs tools with the help of which a human can break free from constraints of the late capitalist civilization (*Edible Plants and Animals of Lower Saxony*, *Home Made Digital Watch*, *Total Chess* or *Squirrel Traps* set accordingly with an instruction for the American Army).

**1:30-2:55 pm Fieldwork and Creativity in Anthropocene Landscapes
by Ömür Harmanşah
with videos from Yalburt Yaylasi Landscape Research Project (2010-2018)**

Ömür Harmanşah - a landscape archaeologist and architectural historian. He is an organizer of the Anthropocene Lab at UIC. His current work engages with the challenges of climate change in current practices of writing history. He enjoys comparing deep time politics of landscapes and water among ancient communities in the Middle East with contemporary scenarios of ecological failure. Since 2010 he has directed an archaeological survey project in west central Turkey, practicing various methodologies of doing fieldwork in Anthropocene landscapes. In this workshop he will share fieldwork videos and imagery from Yalburt Yaylasi Landscape Research Project (2010-2018) and argue for an understanding of landscape fieldwork as a site of creativity to negotiate the damaged landscapes of late capitalism. He will invite the participants to ponder: what alternative stories can we tell about places in the Anthropocene, other than lamenting their loss?

Day 4 (Fr, Oct. 13) Walking the Walk

(Meeting point - Rulland Grove, 201 N Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60601)

3:30-5 pm 'The Great Lake and the Backward River' - Rachel Havrelock¹⁰ & Freshwater Lab on Nature, Culture, and Infrastructure on the Lake Michigan shoreline

This sensory walk includes audio clips from JeeYeun Lee's Shore Land project, landscape narration by Rachel Havrelock, the chance to clean up and log found trash, and space for reflection on the water. The Freshwater Lab's Backward River and Freshwater Stories digital storytelling sites provide additional guides.

5-5:45 pm *Polish Soundtrack. The Last Chance Walk*

by Łukasz Jastrubczak, Krzysztof Kaczmarek & Justyna Wąsik



¹⁰ <https://engl.uic.edu/profiles/havrelock-rachel/>

Day 5 (Sat, Oct.14)

Walks on the Wild Side

Wild Mile Urban Rivers, Meeting point @

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/7styKiMbXcdoXYMA6>

Urban Rivers

1440 N Kingsbury St. Ste 005, Chicago, IL 60642

11am *Walk About It* by the Anthropocene Lab, Deep Time Chicago & Urban Rivers

+ **Herbal Walk by Ewa Polska**

The *Walk About It* will be led by Urban River research director Phil Nicodemus + Nick Wesley executive director.

Wild Mile Chicago is a mile-long floating park located on the North Branch Canal of the Chicago River, a man made channel along the east side of Goose Island between Chicago Ave and North Ave. The completed park will consist of floating gardens with public walkways and kayak docks in the Chicago River. The Wild Mile functions as a public park, open-air museum, botanical garden, kayaker destination, classroom for the community, and provide habitat for native wildlife.

<https://www.urbanriv.org/>