

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Wed Oct 18 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Series

\$12 [members \$9]

ELLEN CANTOR: *Pinochet Porn*

Los Angeles Premiere

Using her 2004 series of eighty-two drawings, *Circus Lives from Hell*, as an unconventional "script," feminist artist Ellen Cantor (1961-2013) worked on her most ambitious project, *Pinochet Porn*, for the last five years of her life. Interweaving fragments of the lives of five people variously affected by Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, the film is both an experimental epic and a "soap opera," as it explores the tragic and comical relationship between power and sexuality (*I want more, Dictator*, says the submissive "French maid" played by Cantor herself). Using Super 8mm, archival footage, and animated drawings - and posthumously completed by Cantor's close collaborators - the film is now touring nationally and internationally to major critical acclaim.

In person: curators Clara López Menéndez and Lia Gangitano

"*Pinochet Porn* is undoubtedly the defining achievement of Cantor's career. By splicing, montaging, and superimposing found footage in her videos, she combined genres in ways both intensely personal and more broadly critical of the topology of "types" put forward by popular culture: the nuclear family, hysterical females, and other personifications of gender and class conventions. All of this came to a head with *Pinochet Porn*, a labor of love Cantor worked on consistently for years until her death from lung cancer in 2013, at the age of fifty-two. While Cantor had already edited most of the film—along with her coeditors, artists John Brattin and Jay Kinney—the process had to be completed posthumously according to her directives.

Pinochet Porn originated as a series of eighty-two drawings called *Circus Lives from Hell* (2004), which use thin pencil lines and collage to portray the fantastical, intertwined lives of five children growing up under the Pinochet regime or indirectly affected by it: Manuelo, Paloma, Jaime, Guillermo, and Cantor herself. Their stories are loosely based on the biographies of real friends and acquaintances

of the artist. The drawings were first shown, in 2008, at Participant Inc.

One of these drawings opens each of the five chapters of *Pinochet Porn*. The chapters are loosely connected over the film's two-hour run time, and portray the characters falling in and out of love, doing drugs, partying, traveling, getting married, and otherwise living their lives. Fiction and history are liberally conflated by means of found footage interspersed throughout. The film was shot in fits and starts around New York City (with one sequence filmed in Cantor's London flat), with the help of a close-knit group of collaborators, including Gangitano—who plays Pinochet's (fictional) twin daughters, Paloma and Pipa—and a rotating cast of artists and art workers.

Cantor called the film a "soap opera," though that hardly does it justice. It doesn't just detail the characters' lives and preoccupations. It offers a psychoanalytic reading of sexuality and desire that gets to the heart of how interpersonal power is leveraged institutionally—by sovereign nations, the market, the media. If anything, *Pinochet Porn* foregrounds the everyday fascism of our relationships to others, and the fact that love—that aspirational, cinematic ideal—is such a tempestuous, hard-to-pin-down thing." - *Art in America*

"I thought about how the traumas in our childhood brought out parallel traumas in our adulthood, which seemed to extend from the largest historical catastrophes, to the most intimate personal misfortunes. And I realized how little I know about my friends, their childhood and family history, just a bit from confidences, stories, gossip, but not much really.

I began to make a series of drawings that drew on my best friend who had grown up in South America; she had an extraordinary life. I found I could channel my own raw emotions through her dramas. These drawings 'Circus Lives from Hell' tell an epic story of five kids growing up during the Pinochet regime, and their subsequent adulthood. Each child has experienced the dictatorship completely differently, from the dictator's identical daughters, Paloma and Pipa, who grow up like princesses and marry the same man, to Jaime who is sent as a child into exile when his mother 'disappears'. She was imprisoned, tortured, in the end went mad. It is a soap opera—tragic, comedic, fictionalized and historical. The drawings with their specific stories and dialogue were meant to be a film script, although I was never quite sure how this film could be made.

Last summer I made an exhibition at Participant Inc. in New York, the main work being this drawing script. The director, Lia Gangitano, and I had the idea we would begin creating a film during the show with the help of some of the filmmakers in the gallery,

projecting the footage under the drawings as we progressed. My brother, who works in banking, thought this plan was ridiculous, and tried to prepare me for its utter failure. He said that no one was going to devote their time and skill to someone else's work if they were not getting paid—to get real!”

— Ellen Cantor, 'Pinochet Porn in progress', *MAP Magazine* #191, September 2009

Born in Detroit, Michigan, **Ellen Cantor** ((August 13, 1961 – April 22, 2013) lived and worked in London and New York. She exhibited internationally, with solo exhibitions and screenings including *The Dictator & the Maid*, The Black Mariah, Cork, Ireland, 2014; *Séance de projection de films*, La GAD, Galerie Arnaud Deschin, Marseille, 2011; *Serpentine Cinema: Film in Progress*, Serpentine Gate Cinema, London, 2009; *Subversive Cinema: Ellen Cantor*, curated by Lux, Zoo art fair, London, 2009; *Within a Budding Grove*, Participant Inc., New York, 2008; *White Cubicle*, London, 2008; *Abbt Projects*, Zurich, 2007; *Path of Sun – Road of Life*, 1000000mph, London, 2006; *Ellen Cantor Cerith Wyn Evans*, Prince Charles Cinema, London, 2005; *Sketch*, London, 2005; *Kunsthalle Wien*, 2002; *Video Drawing 1996-2001*, Kunstbunker, Nuremberg, 2001; *Transmission Gallery*, Glasgow, 2000; *Be My Baby*, Delfina, London, 1999; *XL Xavier LaBoulbenne*, New York, 1998 and 1996; *Feigen*, Chicago, 1997; *Cabinet*, London, 1996; and *Postmasters*, New York, 1995.

Her work has been exhibited in group exhibitions and screenings including *Trust*, curated by Sonia Dermience, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2015; *Over You*, 31st Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2015; *Cabinet*, Conway Hall, London, UK, 2015; *Alptraum*, Maribour Art Gallery, Maribour, 2014; *Alternate Realities*, Arena 1 Gallery, Santa Monica, CA, 2014; *Looking Back: The Eighth White Columns Annual*, curated by Pati Hertling, White Columns, New York, 2014; *Your Tongue in My Mouth*, Stanley Picker Gallery, UK, 2014; *Tramway Artists' Moving Image Festival*, Glasgow, UK, 2013; *K Acker: Ruling 'N' Freakin*, Triangle, Marseilles, 2011; *Detroit*, Kunsthalle Wien, 2010; *CPH:DOX Documentary Festival*, Copenhagen, 2009; *Considering Detroit*, MOCAD, 2008; *Zombie Surfers*, Cell Project Space, London, 2008; *Cinema Cavern*, MoMA/PSI, New York, 2007; *Underground Lost and Found*, V&A, London, 2006; *All the Pretty Corpses*, Renaissance Society, University of Chicago, 2005; *International Film Festival Rotterdam*, 2003; *Edinburgh International Film Festival*, 2003; *Exploding Cinema*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 2000; *Mr. Fascination*, Thread Waxing Space, New York, 1999; *8E Biennale de L'Image en Mouvement*, St. Gervais, Geneve, 1999; *Pink for Boys, Blue for Girls*, Kunsthau Bethanien,

NGBK, Berlin, 1999; *Gothic*, The ICA, Boston, 1997; *Eau de Cologne 1983-1993*, Monica Spruth, Cologne, 1994; and *Coming to Power: 25 Years of Sexually X-Plicit Art by Women*, David Zwirner Gallery, 1993. A catalogue, *my perversion is the belief in true love*, was published by Scalo and Kunsthalle, Wien in 1998.

Program presented courtesy of The Estate of Ellen Cantor and organized by Clara López Menéndez. Special thanks to Mark Cantor, Steven Cairns, Lia Gangitano, Jonathan Berger and Electronic Arts Intermix. Inquiries regarding the Estate of Ellen Cantor should be directed to Lia Gangitano at lia@participantinc.org

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