

# Utopia Revisited

Conference at ARKEN Museum of Modern Art

7-8 APRIL 2011

**What is the status of the concept of utopia? What does utopia mean today? How is it explored, enacted and contested in contemporary art and theory?**

Somewhere between Nolandia and Happiland you will find Utopia, if you can believe the explorer Raphael in Thomas More's novel *Utopia* from 1516. Since More, utopia has become a contested term of ambiguous meaning, spanning the field between the ideal society and the dystopian nightmare.

Within the last decade the contemporary art scene has witnessed a return of utopia and utopian thinking, manifested in various ways and in a range of practices. Whether detectable as an impulse, critically reassessed as a concept, cautiously or daringly articulated in a specific vision, utopia continues to matter.

With the two-day international conference *Utopia Revisited*, ARKEN wishes to investigate and discuss these different ways of thinking and performing utopia in contemporary art. By inviting a range of speakers - academics as well as artists - we want to explore in theory and practice the current relevance of utopia to how we live, think, act and imagine.

## PARTICIPATION

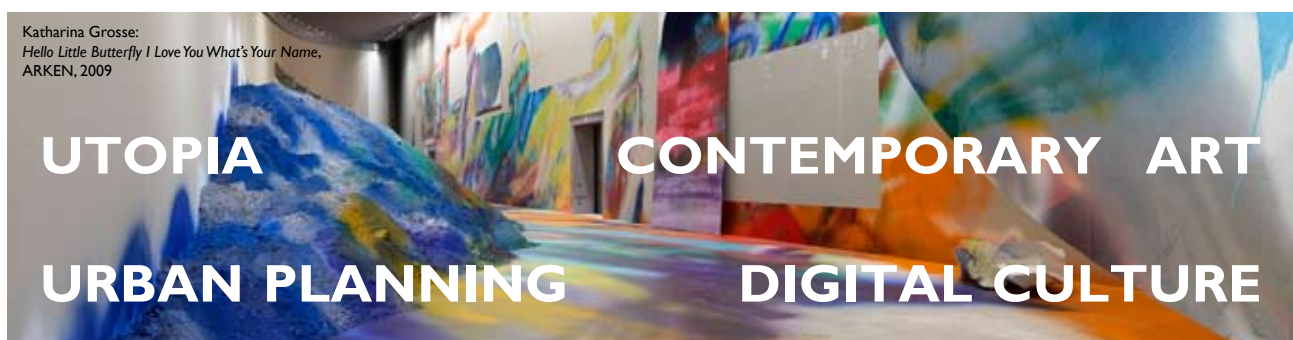
The conference will take place at ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, Skovvej 100, 2635 Ishøj, Denmark. ARKEN is located just 20 kilometres south of Copenhagen. The conference language will be English.

## REGISTRATION

Participation, including lunch, coffee and conference reception is free of charge, but registration is required by 31 March. Contact Irene Olsen, [iolsen@arken.dk](mailto:iolsen@arken.dk), +45 43 57 34 05

TRANSPORT INFO: S-train A and E to Ishøj station. Buses depart from Ishøj station every 30 minutes. Walking distance from Ishøj station is 20 minutes. Follow the signs from the station.

(Programme overleaf)



## LIST OF SPEAKERS

**Richard Noble**, Head of the Department of Art at Goldsmiths College. He has recently published *Utopias*, (2009) in the Documents in Contemporary Art Series, *Antony Gormley* (2007), and has written on a number of other contemporary artists including Rachel Whiteread, Mona Hatoum and Michael Craig-Martin. His interests are broadly in the relation between art and politics, and of late this has focused mainly on the utopian impulse within contemporary visual art.

**Nils Norman**, Professor at the School of Walls and Space, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, works across the disciplines of public art, architecture and urban planning. He has completed a major public art project – a pedestrian bridge and landscaping project for the City of Roskilde, Denmark, and developed commissions for the Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY; London Underground; Tate Modern; Loughborough University, UK; Creative Time, NYC and the Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland. He is the author of the comic *Thurrock 2015* (2004); *An Architecture of Play: A Survey of London's Adventure Playgrounds* (2004); and *The Contemporary Picturesque* (2000).

**Jacob Wamberg**, Professor of art history, dr. phil., Aarhus University. He works on evolutionistic theories of visual art and culture, especially in relation to nature and technology. Recent publications: *Landscape as World Picture: Tracing Cultural Evolution in Images* (2009) and *Totalitarian Art and Modernity* (co-edited with Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, 2010).

**Lev Manovich**, Professor in Visual Arts Department, University of California - San Diego, Director of the Software Studies Initiative at California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (CALIT2), and Professor at European Graduate School (EGS). Lev Manovich is the author of *Software Takes Command* (2008), *Soft Cinema: Navigating the Database* (2005), and *The Language of New Media* (2001).

**Ann Lislegaard**, Professor, Department of Media Art, The Royal Danish Art Academy for Fine Arts. Ann Lislegaard works with sound, film, animation and photography and has recently completed a trilogy of digital animations based on seminal works of science fiction. She has had solo-exhibitions at Maraboupark Konsthall Stockholm (2010), MOCAD Detroit (2009), The Henry Gallery Seattle (2009), Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art (2007), Statens Museum for Kunst (2007), Moderna Museet Project (1999), been in group-exhibitions at Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest (2010), MCASD San Diego (2009), Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (2009), MOCA Los Angeles (2005), MIT List Visual Arts Center, Boston (2004), MOMA Oxford (2000), Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1998) and participated at the Busan Biennale 2010, 27th São Paulo Biennale (2006) and 51st Venedig Biennale (2005).

**Lars Bang Larsen**, Art historian at the University of Copenhagen. He has co-curated group exhibitions such as *Populism*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2005), *La insurrección invisible de un millón de mentes*, Sala Rekalde, Bilbao (2005), and *A History of Irritated Material*, Raven Row, London (2010). His books include *The Model. A Model for a Qualitative Society, 1968* (2010) and *Sture Johannesson* (2002).

**Rachel Weiss**, Professor of Arts Administration and Policy at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Major publications include *To and From Utopia in the New Cuban Art* (2011), *Por América: la obra de Juan Francisco Elso* (2000, co-author and editor) and *On Art, Artists, Latin America and Other Utopias* by Luis Camnitzer (2009, editor). Her monograph on the Third Havana Biennial is forthcoming from Afterall Books.

**Malcolm Miles**, Professor of Cultural Theory at the University of Plymouth (UK), and author of *Urban Avant-Gardes* (2004), *Cities & Cultures* (2007) and *Urban Utopias* (2008); he is currently working on a book on Herbert Marcuse's aesthetic theories.

## PROGRAMME

### 7 April 2011

- 12.00-13.00 Registration, light lunch in the foyer
- 13.00-13.30 Welcome, Christian Gether, Aff. Professor, Museum Director ARKEN Museum of Modern Art/  
Camilla Jalving, curator ARKEN Museum of Modern Art
- 13.30-14.30 Richard Noble, lecturer Goldsmith's College, London: "The Politics of Utopia"
- 14.30-15.00 Coffee break
- 15.00-16.00 Nils Norman, Professor at The School of Walls and Space, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts,  
Copenhagen: "Utopia – Its here, if not now"
- 16.00-17.00 Jacob Wamberg, Professor of art history, dr. phil., Aarhus University: "Bliss or Kitsch? On the  
difficulties of matching art and utopia"
- 17.00-17.30 Discussion
- 17.30-18.30 Conference reception

### 8 April 2011

- 10.15-11.15 Lev Manovich, Professor in Visual Arts Department, University of California - San Diego: TBA
- 11.15-12.15 Ann Lislegaard, Professor in the Department for Media Art, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts,  
Copenhagen in conversation with Lars Bang Larsen, art historian, critic and curator
- 12.15-13.15 Lunch
- 13.15-14.15 Rachel Weiss, Professor of Arts Administration and Policy at the School of the Art Institute  
of Chicago: "The Fist of Lázaro: Defiance, Renewal and Other Dynamics in the New Cuban Art"
- 14.15-14.45 Coffee break
- 14.45-15.45 Malcolm Miles, Professor of Cultural Theory at the University of Plymouth, UK: "Society as a  
Work of Art"
- 15.45-16.15 Discussion

The seminar is part of the three-year project UTOPIA, which is showing the three international artists Qiu Anxiong, Katharina Grosse and Olafur Eliasson. Each has created a large-scale installation for ARKEN that examines and adds new facets to the concept of utopia.

The UTOPIA project is supported by 