

ACID

COMMUNISM

NISM

Thursday, 10 June 2021

— Friday, 11 June 2021

Spectres
of the
Counter-
culture



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2 pm

Pascal Jurt Berlin
& **Christian Werthschulte** Cologne
What is Acid Communism?

To what extent do the forgotten utopias of the 1960s and 70s haunt the twenty-first century? And under what material and psychological conditions could they emerge? The conference is dedicated to the past and present of countercultures and subcultures. The contributors will deal in theory, art and practice with the idea of “acid communism” as articulated in the unfinished book by theorist Mark Fisher, who died in 2017. “Acid” refers to the psychedelic culture of the late 1960s and early 70s including its mind-altering effects.

Diedrich Diederichsen Vienna/Berlin
Access to Tools (on Acid)

To many contemporaries, the critique of consumption seemed to be a particularly scandalous element of the revolutionary zeitgeist of the 1960s. Today, it has mostly been forgotten or overshadowed by ecological arguments. The idea that fully stocked supermarkets and department store displays were related to oppression and the Vietnam War did not make any sense to the conservative post-war generation. This lecture will show how a Marxist and psychedelic critique of the commodity has today been replaced by eco-guilt. How freaky and cosmologically ridiculous the commodity appears when you look at it under the influence of LSD.

Roundtable with Diedrich Diederichsen, Barbara Sichtermann (Berlin), Bernd Cailloux (Berlin) and Cord Riechelmann (Berlin)

Nona Willis Aronowitz New York
The Feminist Promise (and Peril)
of Communal Living

As wealthy countries stare down falling birth rates, one undeniable truth stands out: Even with a strong social safety net, raising children within the nuclear family structure has become less appealing to women. What can we learn from past experiments with communal living, and how can we continue to reimagine the politics of domesticity and sexuality? This talk will explore the “complex marriages” of the 19th century’s Oneida community; the hetero hippie communes of the 1960s that often reproduced retrograde divisions of labour and sexual dynamics; the lesbian separatist communes that strived to transcend gender roles; and more modern attempts to break through the isolation, exhaustion, and repression of the nuclear family.

Helen Hester London
Dropping Out: Exodus, Acid Communes,
and the Limits of Refusal

This paper will consider experimental approaches to domestic living from the 1960s and 1970s, with a particular focus on two examples: 1) the Drop City commune, formed in rural Colorado in 1965, and 2) the video work “Supersurface: An Alternative Model for Life on the Earth”, produced by the architectural firm Superstudio in 1972. While these examples demonstrate divergent approaches to space, including very different emphases on the conceptual and the concrete, both can be understood as explorations of exodus – a strategy of defection in which, according to Paolo Virno, members of 20th century “youth movements and new labour organizations [...] sought to abandon their roles and throw off their oppressive chains rather than confront them openly.”

This talk will consider the relationship between exodus, refusal, and the construction of alternatives, bringing elements of American counterculture into conversation with Italian autonomous social movements and radical architecture. While acknowledging the generative ambition and transformative will underpinning the two examples, however, this paper will also draw attention to their limitations, particularly in terms of gender and sexual politics. In both cases one is confronted by the obstinacy of gender, as both the function and the outcome of a division of labour, even in the face of an otherwise emphatic defection from the dominant domestic imaginaries of the time. To what extent, then, can these projects be productively repurposed? How might one reconceive of acid communes and their afterlives as resources for emancipatory politics today?

McKenzie Wark New York
Happy Flesh

Ketamine Femmunism on the dance floors of the New York queer techno rave universe. We will no longer be singular beings. We will no longer be merely contemplative theorists. We will exceed the scriptures and strictures of long dead men. We will dissociate from those pasts and futures. We will disappear sideways in time.

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Maurizio Lazzarato Paris

Revolution and Capitalism in the 1970s

In the way that accelerationism, Boltanski and Chiapello, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari read capitalism and the transition to neoliberalism in the 1970s, they have neglected the reality and concept of revolution. The image of capital and capitalism they present is limited and problematic and still weighs negatively on contemporary political action and theory.

Alex Williams London

The Political Consciousness of Totality – Thinking Complexity.

One remarkable legacy of the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s was a rising interest in *complexity* within science, philosophy, and politics. This talk will explore some key strands of complexity thinking as they develop out of the syncretic cultural cauldron of the 1960s and into the present day. How is it that the core notions of complexity (emergence, self-organisation, non-linear dynamics) have been operationalised in such varied ways? In this talk the development of complexity thinking within horizontalist anarchism, ecosocialism, and neoliberalism will be discussed, before the talk will outline a proposal for its political utility in understanding the political challenges of today.

Owen Hatherley London

We're Building a New City – How the Counterculture fell out of love with Modern Architecture

This talk will be about the role of urban modern architecture and urbanism in the 1968 left, and how a movement which was itself in a sense “countercultural” came to be rejected by the counterculture. Notoriously, there was widespread hostility to modern architecture in the Third Reich as a form of “cultural Bolshevism”, leading to the closure of the Bauhaus and the forcing of a generation of modern architects into exile. This continued in large part after 1945, with significant continuity of personnel and, initially, style, on both sides of the divide. Institutions that tried to restart the project interrupted in 1933, such as the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, were generally considered “progressive” and were influential on the counterculture. But by the end of the 1960s, this had changed. West and East Berlin in the 1960s and 1970s both saw a sharply increased dereliction and slum clearance of 19th century housing, and a state/business nexus was building huge new modernist housing estates on the peripheries.

The counterculture was firmly centred on that 19th century housing, and, in the process of squatting and repopulating the old “rental barracks”, started to revise its views on modernist design, seeing it as part of a wider technocratic establishment that saw a continuity from Gropiusstadt to Stammheim. But this in turn would change by the end of the 1970s, when countercultural artists and musicians started to evoke the Bauhaus legacy – this time, with a degree of distance and irony.

#ACFM goes Live with You!

Welcome to Acid Communism FM! #ACFM is the radio show for the Weird Left. Novara Media's popular podcast will be recording its first ever live and interactive episode at “Acid Communism: Spectres of the Counterculture”. Born 2018, the show explores links between left-wing politics, culture and experiences of collective joy, interspersed with soulful music from across the ages. #ACFM hosts Nadia Idle, Jeremy Gilbert and Keir Milburn have recorded over 15 full “trips” on topics such as consciousness raising, the cosmic right, intoxication and sobriety, crowds, desire, friendship, utopia, Acid Lockdowns, and so much more. The crew have also welcomed special guests onto the show for a series of “microdose” interviews.

So, join Nadia, Jeremy and Keir as they continue to explore acid themes in a unique, live and interactive experiment across countries and time zones on Friday evening. Our theme will be “solidarity”.

The full back-catalogue of #ACFM episodes can be found on: novaramedia.com/category/audio/acfm

Curated by *Pascal Jurt* and *Christian Werthschulte*

The event will be held in English. English subtitles and simultaneous translation will be available for those panels/discussions held in German and French.

More information: hkw.de/de/programm/projekte/veranstaltung/p_180595.php

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