Kinshasa on Film: Between Dystopia and Utopia

Tuesday, 31 January 2012
16:15 - 19:00
Location: CRASSH, Seminar room SG1

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Filip De Boeck (Anthropologist, University of Leuven) and

Koen Van Synghel (Architect and Curator)

This event will see the screening of two films on Kinshasa, 'Cemetery State' (72 mins) and 'The Tourist City' (15 mins), and will include a discussion with the directors, Professor Filip de Boeck (Anthropology, KU Leuven) and the architect and curator Koen Van Synghel.

NB: Please note that the event will begin at 4.15pm

1) Cemetery State (70', directed by Filip De Boeck).

In 'Cemetery State', Filip De Boeck invites us on a bewildering tour of the cemetery of Kintambo, one of the oldest and largest cemeteries in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Over the years, the city has increasingly invaded the cemetery, and shanty towns have sprung up alongside it. One of these is the populated slum area of Camp Luka (also known as 'the State'). Here, the living and dead live in close proximity. Although the cemetery was officially closed by the urban authorities two decades ago, the people from Camp Luka continue to bury their dead there. This astonishing film follows Papa Mayaula and his small group of grave-diggers. Through an intimate portrait of their daily dealings with the dead, the film also introduces us to the 'children of the State', the youth of Camp Luka. For them, mourning rituals and funerals have become moments of upheaval and contestation of official social and political orders. For this urban youth, burials have become occasions to criticise elders, politicians and preachers who are blamed for the pitiful state of affairs in the city and the country. 'Cemetery State' observes how these young gravediggers, singers and drummers use the body of the dead as an alternative platform to attack and challenge their elders, to create their own (dis)order, and to appropriate the urban site.

2) The world according to Bylex

The second film offers a reflection on city, utopia, modernity and the (im)possibilities to design new worlds. In so doing it offers a look into the mind and vision of a Kinshasa based artist, Pume Bylex. In the summer of 2006, in response to an invitation of curators Filip De Boeck and Koen van Synghel, Pume started filming 'everything that happens inside his head', his thoughts and inspiration, that form the founding stones for the creation of a specific world, 'le monde Bylex' in which he materialises his thoughts, his hopes, dreams and demiurgic visions of an ideal world of perfection. Through the medium of the film, in what has turned into a form of 'cinéma sauvage', invented, scripted and cut in the very act of filming, Bylex constantly flirts with the boundaries between method and madness, material and mind, science and play, totalitarianism and laughter, power and poetry, the rational and the religious, the universal and the particular, order and disorder. Unhindered by material constraints and practicalities, Bylex courageously builds his perfect world and city, inventing his own cosmology, his own forms of modernity, his own development ideologies and his own radical utopianism. His general worldview transcends objective reality. In the Bylex world the imagination plays a prominent role, in an endeavour to realize the impossible, without which both private and public worlds would be the poorer In the process he forces us to think about what makes a world, and what makes it inhabitable

and liveable. Injecting reality with his fantasy, Bylex's radical solutions confront us with the limitations of our own mindsets, and thereby offer a fertile alternative basis for reflecting on urbanity and the human condition in general.

Open to all. No registration required

Part of the City Seminar series.
For more information about the group, please visit the link on the right hand side of this page.

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