

## Utopia Battle Stations (Chicago, 6 Apr 18)

Chicago, IL, Apr 06, 2018

Deadline: Feb 1, 2018

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### UTOPIA BATTLE STATIONS

Graduate Student Art History Symposium at University of Illinois at Chicago

For the past several decades young artists and historians have cut their teeth in an intellectual environment rooted in the triumph of postmodernism. Along with institutionalizing institutional critique, art schools and humanities divisions mulled over famous words of Francis Fukuyama:

"In the post-historical period, there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history. I can feel in myself, and see in others around me, a powerful nostalgia for the time when history existed." ( The End of History? 1989)

Conflating the fall of Communism and the end of the Cold War with the very end of history itself Fukuyama declared the triumph of liberal Democracy. In tandem with this was the demise of utopian thinking, which was once the hallmark of modernist project. In the wake of this hyper critical and cynical intellectual environment, capitalism has found a new foothold. If all forms of value-judgment are suspect and history is a highly subjective and problematic enterprise, then what forms an objective baseline? "The market will be an impartial arbiter of value!" said the market.

Unsurprisingly, philosophers and critics have challenged Fukuyama's contention. Mark Lilla has argued that since 1989 intellectual life forgot about ideologies and that the decade before September 11 was one of introspection and self-satisfaction. In his recent essay, "An American Utopia" (2016), Fredric Jameson raises similar concerns about the left's inability to mount a coherent ideological challenge to the right by calling for "a diagnosis of the fear of utopia, or of anti-utopianism." In addition to all this we are witnessing a fascist turn sweeping across the Western world. So where does this leave us? Our generation of artists, historians, curators, critics, cultural workers, whatever we want to call ourselves, is tasked with responding to a cultural topography defined by cynicism and an infinite regression of criticality. Is the answer a return to utopian thinking? As flawed as it was, is the modernist project worth reviving? Utopia Battle Stations means countering the regressive cultural agendas on the rise with your own vision. Utopia Battle Stations—an imperative invoking naval terminology—"We're under attack! All hands to battle stations!"

This symposium calls on thinkers and practitioners in the visual arts to present their ideas of what a return to utopian ideology would look like.

Graduate students are invited to submit a CV (2 pages) and an abstract (maximum 300 words) by February 1, 2018 to uicahgsa@gmail.com . Applicants will be notified of the committee's deci-

sions by February 6, 2018 and will be expected to accept or decline the invitation within a week of acceptance.

Reference:

CFP: Utopia Battle Stations (Chicago, 6 Apr 18). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 19, 2018 (accessed Jul 16, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/17106>>.