

# PUBLIC SMOG

A project by Amy Balkin curated by students of the MA Curating Contemporary Art course at the Royal College of Art, in collaboration with Peer. Supported by the Monique Beudert Fund.

**Peer**, 99 Hoxton Street, London N1 6QL  
1 – 7 November, open 12 noon – 6 pm  
Private View: 1 November, 6 – 9 pm  
Free Admission

*Public Smog* is the first UK edition of an ongoing conceptual artwork by San Francisco-based artist, Amy Balkin. The project consists of a gesture in which the artist buys and withholds carbon gas emission credits from international trading markets in order to create a temporary clean-air park. Aiming to highlight the complexities and contradictions of current environmental protocols, Balkin will attempt to submit an application to qualify the entire atmosphere as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Amy Balkin's practice combines cross-disciplinary research and social critique to generate ambitious ways of conceiving the public domain outside current legal and discursive systems. The work centres on collaboration between the artist, communities and academics. Set up to create alternative social strategies or gestural interventions, Balkin's projects test the notion of public right and site ownership. Her public works have taken the form of installations, audio tours, websites, writings and lectures.

The artist will begin the project with a research period in London. The results of this initiative will be launched as part of *Public Smog* during a public event at Peer's gallery space in Hoxton. A week-long installation at the gallery, including a slideshow projection by the artist, will be accompanied by a series of events related to the artist's practice. Integral to the exhibition will be the presentation of the carbon trade acquisitions and the attempted UNESCO application – central to Balkin's creation of a non-market based, self-organised, clean-air park, which fluctuates in size and location. A publication containing information and research gathered over the course of Balkin's stay in London, including strategies on how to fight for and sustain public control of clean air, will be launched during the exhibition.

Other works by Amy Balkin include *This Is The Public Domain*, an ongoing project investigating the legal strategies necessary to transfer ownership of 2.5 acres of land purchased by the artist to the 'global public'. She also collaborated on *Invisible-5*, a self-guided critical audio tour along California's I-5 corridor which reflects the unheard stories of individuals and communities fighting for environmental justice along the Interstate-5.

Public events:

**Wednesday 1 November**, 6pm: Opening and artist's talk at Peer

**Friday 3 November**, 6pm: Film screening at Peer

- Nancy Holt, *Pine Barrens*, 1975, 30'

- Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, *Mono Lake*, 1968-2004, 19'

**Saturday 4 November**

10am: Breakfast at Peer, with Dr. Alexandra Thompson and Amy Balkin in conversation. Kate Rich's feral trade coffee will be served.

12noon: March against climate change starting at the US Embassy, Grosvenor Square

4:30pm: Post-march discussion at Peer

Visit [www.cca.rca.ac.uk/publicsmog](http://www.cca.rca.ac.uk/publicsmog) for project updates

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[www.publicsmog.org](http://www.publicsmog.org)

[www.thisisthepublicdomain.org](http://www.thisisthepublicdomain.org)

[www.invisible5.org](http://www.invisible5.org)

[More/...](#)

www.peeruk.org

## ENDS

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

### MONIQUE BEUDERT FUND

Monique Beudert (1950–99) was a gifted curator who worked for eleven years at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and for five years at the Tate Gallery, London. She was widely respected as a curator who had a special sympathy for artists and an exceptional ability to present contemporary artworks in a museum context. A group of her friends have created a Fund in her memory. Since 2001, the Fund has been used each year to support special projects undertaken by students on the master's programmes in curatorial studies at the Royal College of Art, London and the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York. The Fund focuses on exchange of ideas between Europe and the Americas, encouraging students in each institution to study and present contemporary work by artists from the other side of the Atlantic. Projects may take the form of exhibitions, publications, lectures, symposia or manifestations using electronic media. Past projects curated by students at the Royal College of Art: *David Lamelas: The Impossibility of Information* (2001); *Reverend Ethan Acres: The London Mission* (2002); *Britain Bombs America, America Bombs Britain*, by the Centre for Land Use Interpretation (2003); *Los del Este / Eastenders (a modest proposal)*, by Mexican artist Pablo Helguera (2004) and *The C of the Willing*, by 16 Beaver (2005).

### MA CURATING CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

The MA Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art was set up in 1992 and was the first postgraduate programme in Britain to specialise in curatorial practice relating to contemporary art. The course is designed to offer both a vocational training in and an academic study of curatorial practice, underpinned by an understanding of the wider cultural and critical context. The course provides an introduction to the ways in which the contemporary visual arts are funded, presented, interpreted and managed in Britain and internationally. Students gain practical skills in curating exhibitions and managing art commissions and meet a wide range of professional curators, critics, artists and administrators. The programme provides a professional preparation for curators, exhibition organisers, critics, arts administrators and those who wish to work with artists to present art outside a gallery setting. The course is co-funded by the Royal College of Art and Arts Council England.

### PEER

Peer is an independent arts organisation that develops and presents projects in a range of media and in various locations, including their gallery space on Hoxton Street, London. Peer began its programme of activities in autumn 1998 and since then has produced between three and five projects a year. Their activities have primarily been concerned with the visual arts, but they have also worked with musicians, filmmakers, writers and philosophers. They also produce publications by artists, about artists and about the cultural impact of contemporary art. *Public Smog* forms part of Peer's ongoing engagement with educational institutions and investigations into diverse models of curatorial practice.

The Curating Contemporary Art department at the Royal College of Art is grateful to Peer for hosting this project. With special thanks to Victoria Miro Gallery and Project Space 176, courtesy of the Zabłudowicz Collection.