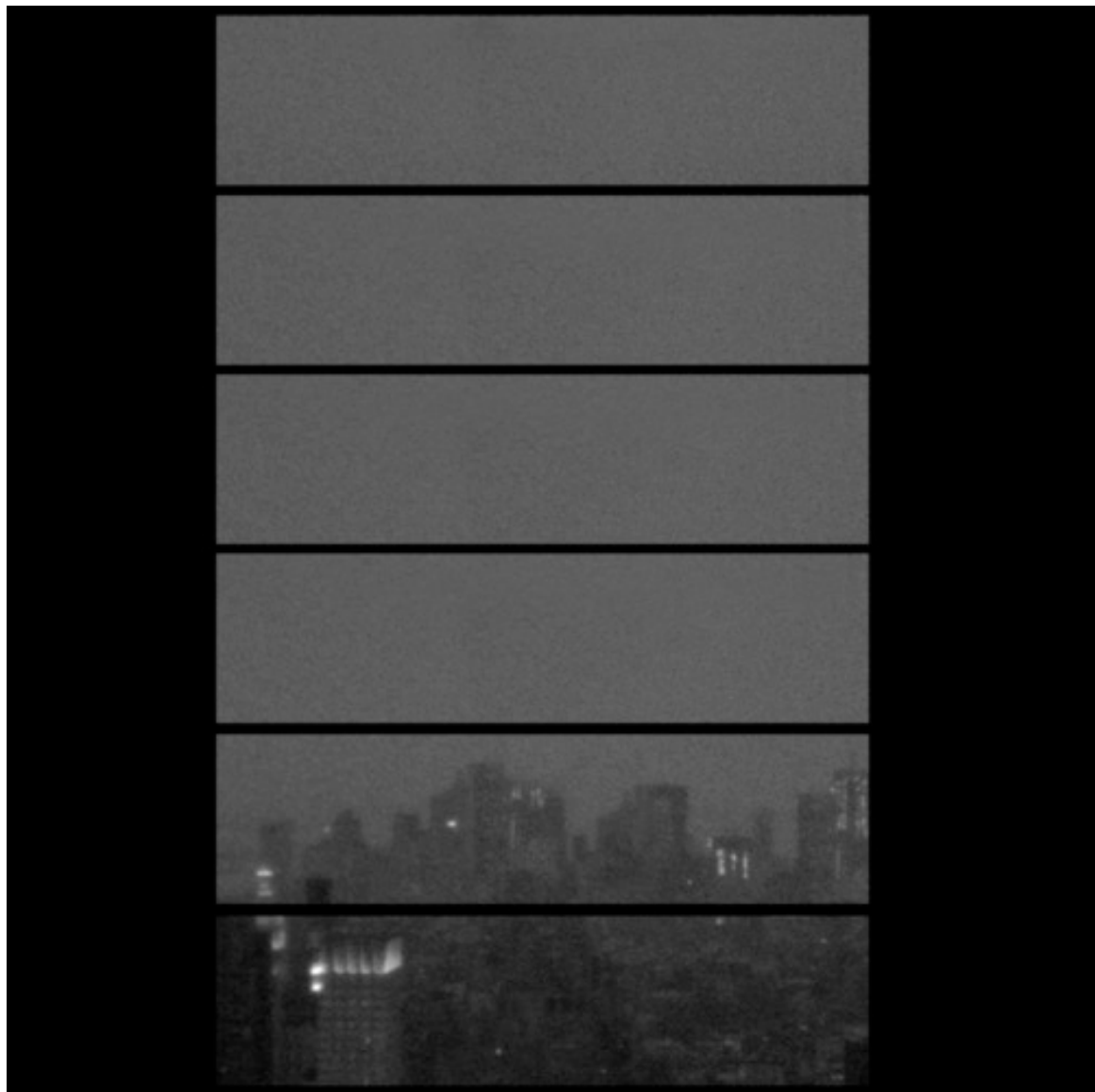


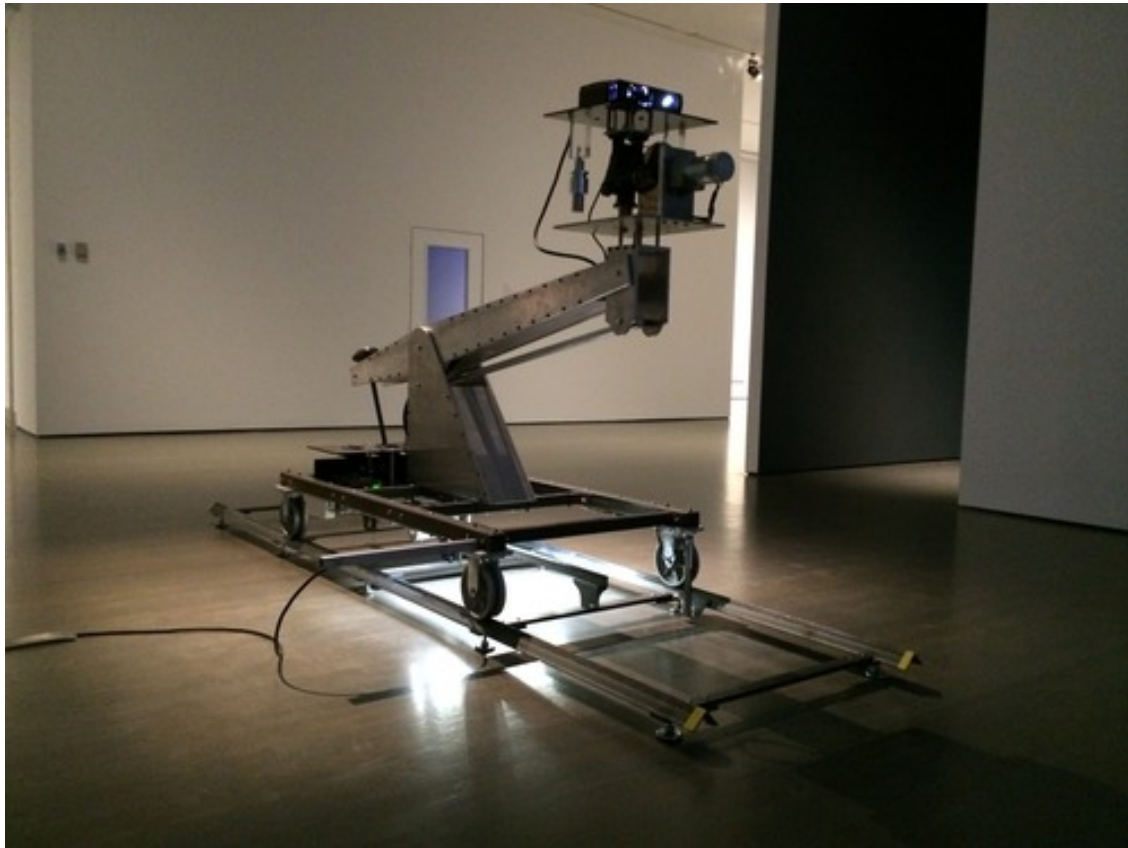


@BNLMTL review: End of Empire (2011)

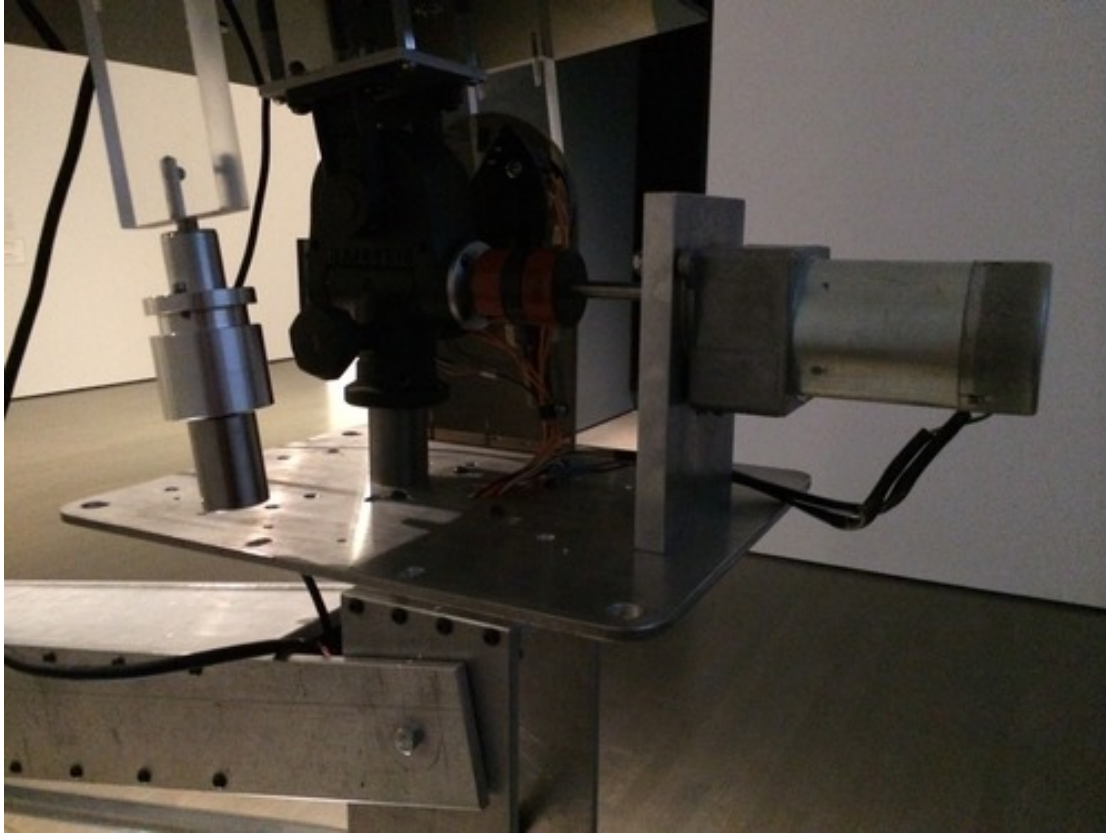


End of Empire (2011) by Simone James and Lance Winn is being presented as part of the BNLMTL exhibition at the MAC this year. This film installation features a custom-made dolly tracking device that is used as both a projector and sculpture. The robotic structure projects a 14 minute video inspired by Andy Warhol's 1964 film *Empire*. Nodding at the temporality in Warhol's eight hour static structural examination of NYC's Empire State Building, this looped projection continuously scans up and down the architectural space of the exhibition wall, ceiling and floor.

This year's biennial theme, *L'avenir (looking forward)*, is described as "examin[ing] the relationship of contemporary art practices to speculation, futurity and its history, as well as the currency of projecting into the future". [1] *End of Empire* explores these concepts in its textual repositioning of the "empire" in Warhol's film. In this installation, as the projector goes up and down the cityscape, it scans the wall in relation to the architecture of the exhibition space. The narrow aspect ratio of the projection only reveals a tight frame of the Empire State Building, which eventually disappears as the dolly tracking projector retracts. The sudden disappearance of the building within the frame is unexpected, since it only happens after the second scan of the 14 minute loop. The slow temporality of the first loop led me to believe that the second pass of the robotic projection would show the same image of the building from bottom-up, except this time, it was blank. The sudden and mysterious disappearance of the building within the frame and the architectural space of the projection, is described as alluding to the future decline of the American "empire". As a defining work of the American avant-garde, Warhol's film is nodded here in relation to the history of contemporary art, and its speculative examination of the current state and its future. Warhol's single-image slow motion observation of the Empire State Building is revisited in its literal and contemplative projection into the future of America.



The ambiguity of these references is heightened in the kinesthetic viewing experience of *End of Empire*. The custom-made robotic dolly tracking projector initiates this physical viewing relationship, in its manipulative movement of the projected image. When viewing the piece, I consequentially moved in synchronization with the projector to follow the scanning frame. As I stood beside the structure, I became aware of my monotonous movements as I followed its repetitive motions. The relationship between the moving image and the installation space adds to the physicality of this work, in its cinematic exchange with architecture. Camera movement is both projected and referenced with the use of the sculpture's dolly track base. The architecture of the Empire State Building is scanned in the same way the projector scans the surface of the installation space.



The connections between moving image culture and architecture is a theme that runs throughout the biennial exhibition. Most of the works use the 1960s as a reference point, which was “a time when Montréal was being imagined as a future focused city, as suggested by the theme of its Expo '67” [1] The contemporary re-appropriation of Warhol’s 1964 work, retreats from a utopian imagining of modernism [1], in its contemplative critique of the American “empire”. The city of New York, which is burdened by the insecurities of its future state, is paralleled with the 60s; a period marked by new imaginings of the contemporary world. This brings up important questions regarding the issues that arise with the shortcomings of the capitalist economic system, increased state surveillance, and the dystopian future imposed.

End of Empire is being presented at the BNLMTL exhibition until February 5th, 2015 at the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal.

<http://bnlmtl2014.org/en/artists/simone-jones-et-lance-winn/>

Reviewed by: Maria Casale

Note:

[1]“Theme: L’avenir (*looking forward*), 22.10.14- 04.01.15”, *BNLMTL 2014*, 23 October 2014, <http://bnlmtl2014.org/en/about/theme/>