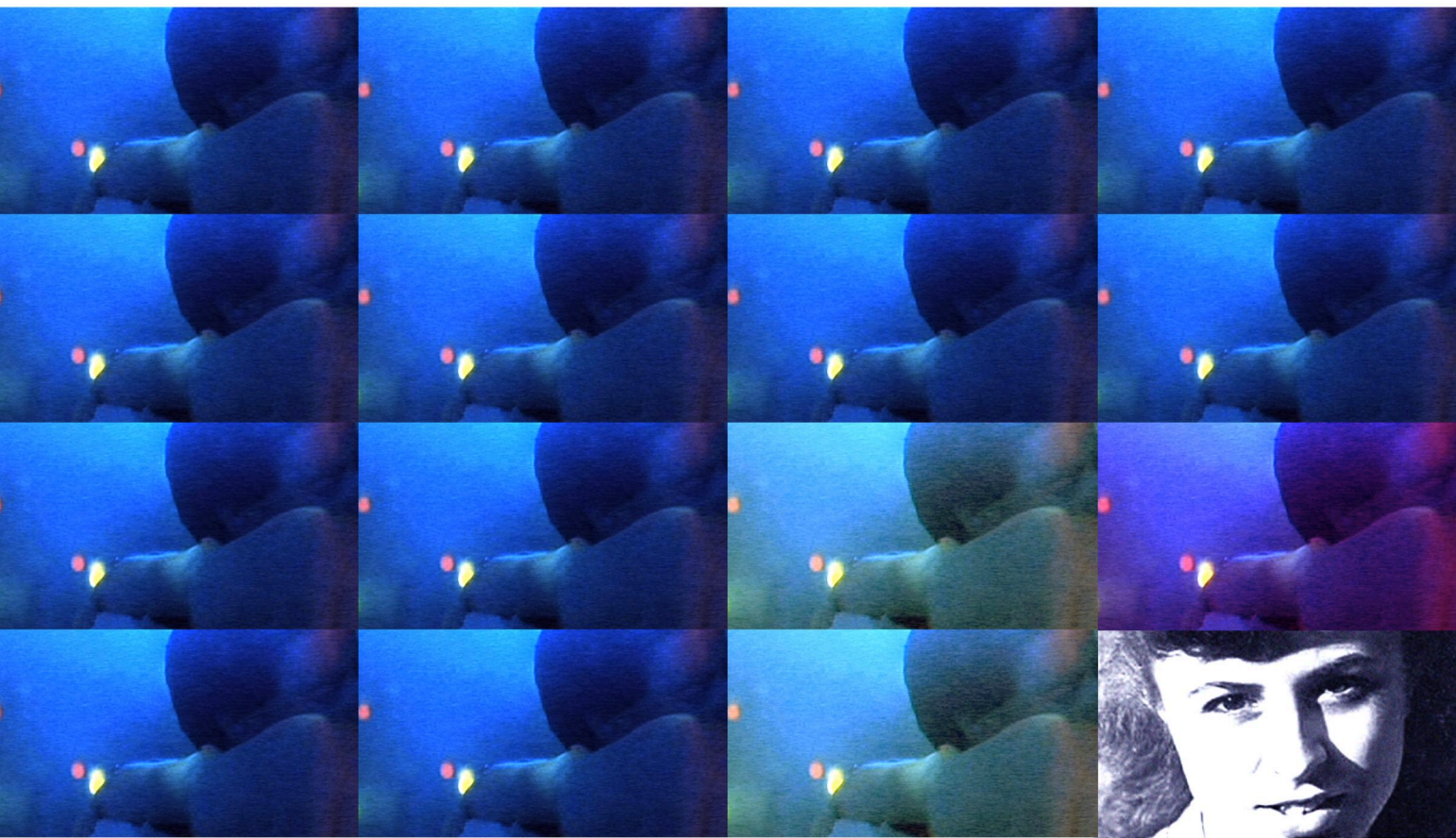




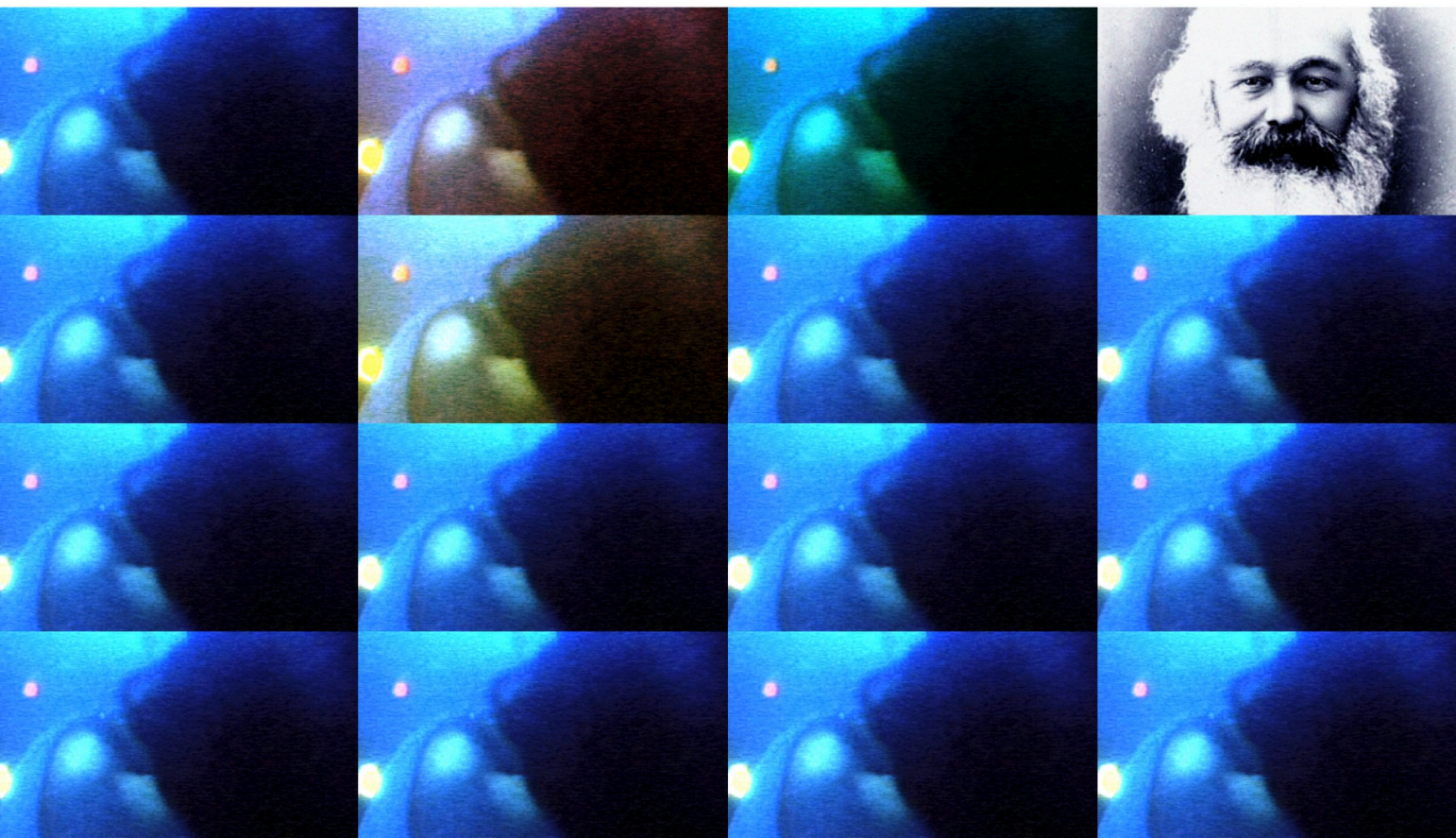
That Republic was a deceptive model of perfection. It might be realized by some dictator, but it could only function as a machine functions—mechanically. And machines function mechanically only because they are made of dead inorganic materials. If you want to express the difference between an organic progressive society and a static totalitarian regime, you can do so in one word: this is art.

– from JOURNEY THROUGH UTOPIA by Marie Louise Berneri.



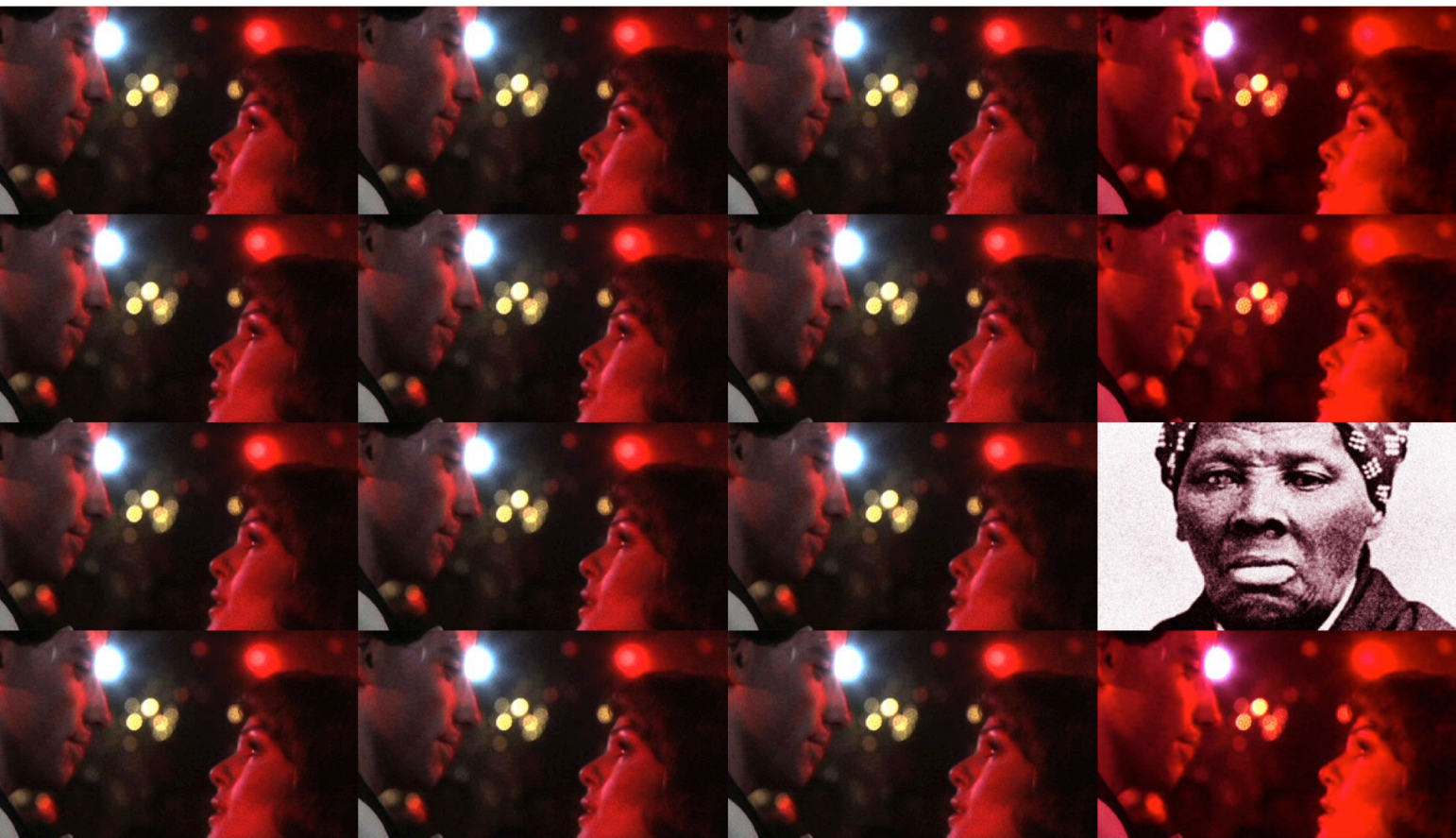




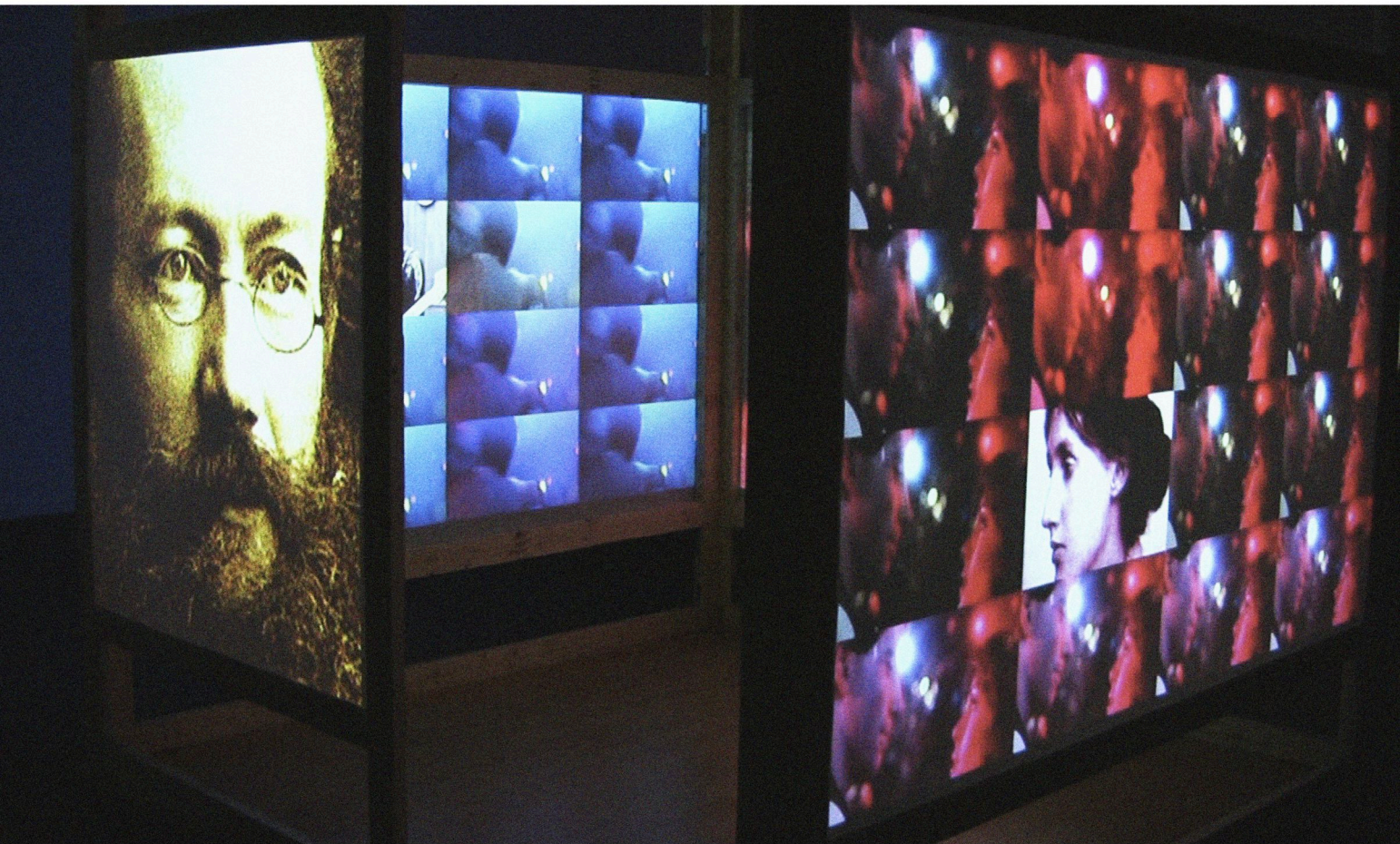












Utopia Suite Disco

Conn in 1978:

Boom Boom Boom Boom! Conn tried to go to discos. He really tried. The furthest he got was at the Royal Oak Lodge, a flat stone and wooden beam motel-resort beside the highway to the ferry. He parked at the top end of the rain-black parking lot, and followed the quaking 4/4 beat towards The Cellar basement disco club. There was something in this mechanical beat that for him was so purely heartless, so precise, unvarying, inhuman and relentless, it seemed to physically push him in the opposite direction. But he kept walking, he wanted to at least try to spend time where the people were. Maybe he could finally learn to dance, to that music.

He opened the club door and was engulfed in sound. And the beat just got louder as he descended the ramped hallway through red and yellow pulsing lights. He rounded the corner by the edge of the dance-floor as the strobe came on—he was blinded so he froze—he could just make out people dancing in the room, it was lit with a hundred flashbulbs. He noticed his glowing runners and the lint on his sweater. The strobe stopped and he could see better, the Hawaiian bar, revolving Christmas lights, brown polyester clothes and high stepping platform shoes on the lit-up dance floor. He stood there for a couple of minutes, then turned and left. *Boom Boom Boom Boom!*

Conn in 2008:

Q: Is the cube really a utopian shape? Why did you make it with wood? What's vernacular architecture? Is this a sculpture or a movie?

I'm interested in temporary and nomadic structures. They're light on the land, and anti-property. I decided how to build my own 'light hut' while looking at pictures of ice fishing shacks. I'd been thinking like a nomad, comparing shipping costs, strength vs. weight, construction techniques to suit my skill set, and it had to 'look right' according to my culture. Then I realized: in Canada, a guy like me builds with 2-x-4's.

Most ice fishing shacks are framed with 2-x-4's because they're cheap and available everywhere. I could buy fresh lumber in each location instead of shipping wood around the country, which would save a lot of money. After each show I'd give away the 2-x-4's for re-use, maybe as ice fishing shacks. And re-building in each place would make the whole work more of a *process*. I'd build it with members of each community. It would be more dynamic, less of a fixed idea. It would live on the frontier between object and idea.

I also decided my hut would be an 8-foot-x-8-foot cube (the entrance had to be high enough so a tall person could enter, 2 x 4's come standard in 8 foot lengths, and I had no good reason to shorten them). But the 'click' I heard came from the meaning my culture attaches to the *cube* shape, from this combined with the above, and from unpainted wood, L brackets, and screws. It would be a transparent process, open for scrutiny, and hopefully able to foment some useful conversation.

Q: Are we allowed to dance?

Yes.

Q: *Why did you include Frida Kahlo? Louis Riel? Jimi Hendrix?*

They're all people who played with organic and dynamic structures, or who had visions of a better way to live, and whose contributions have been, on balance, positive.

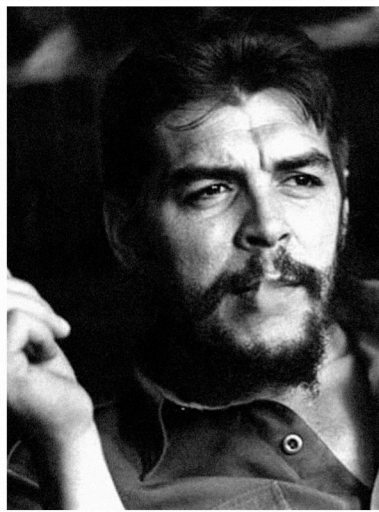
I didn't consult with anyone, to avoid any illusions of objectivity. I take full responsibility for my idiosyncrasies, biases, and imperfections, and they're inevitably reflected in my utopian dreamworld. But I invite others to create their own Utopian Hall of Fames, if only in their minds. It would require them thinking about their inclusion criteria. This is the real substance of Utopia Suite Disco, this 'thinking'. And this conversation about hope (green), fear (yellow), despair (blue), and passion (red).

As part of the project I'm tracking the use of the word utopia in international news sources. Its use has grown exponentially since I started making Utopia Suite three years ago. It's an unusually elastic word. For many conservative thinkers and writers it's synonymous with the ludicrously impractical. While more and more progressive writers are asking, carefully, if it's time to be more utopian. For them the word seems more related to hope, goodness, or a loving and fair society.

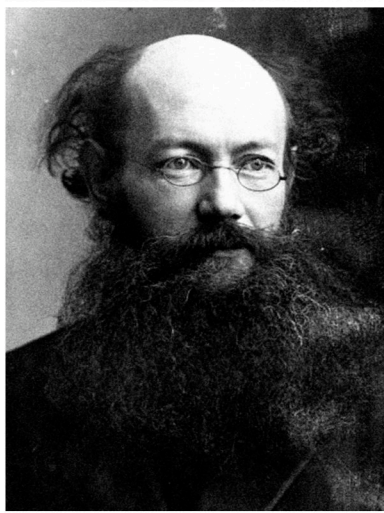
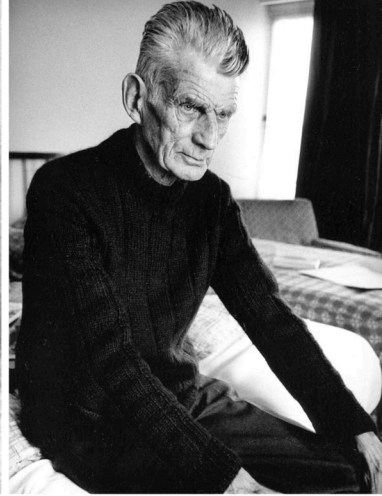
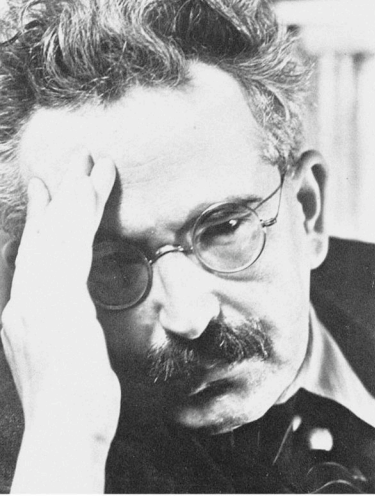
There's also been a growing list of books and articles outlining just how dangerous utopian thinking can be.

Q: *Why Tony Manero?*

He's our wanting it. He is movement itself. And we can't solve this without him.

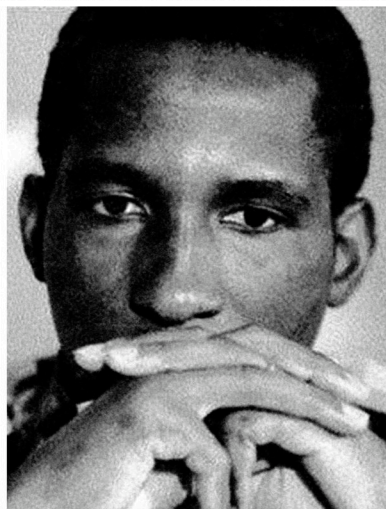
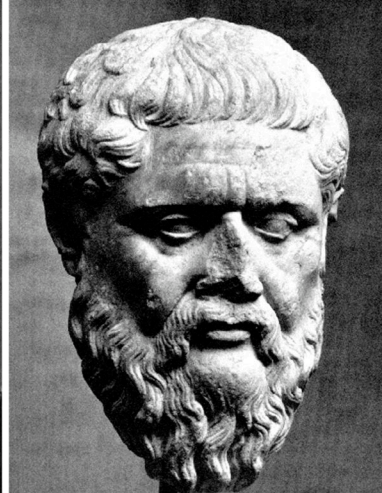
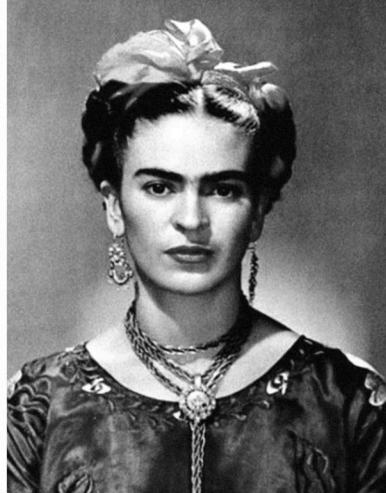


Top: Thomas More, Marie Louise Berneri, James Joyce, Audre Lorde
Bottom: Jimi Hendrix, Aung San Suu Kyi, Che Guevara, Georgia O'Keeffe



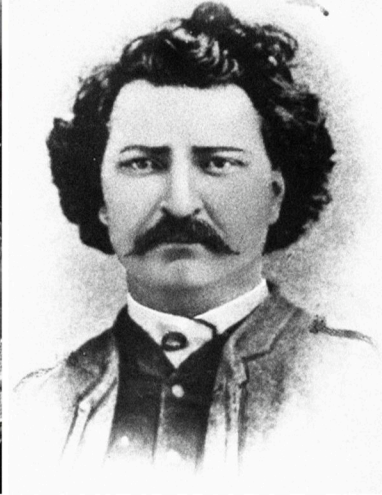
Top: Walter Benjamin, Hugo Chavez, Virginia Woolf, Samuel Beckett

Bottom: Wangari Maathai, Peter Kropotkin, Rachel Carson, Martin Luther King

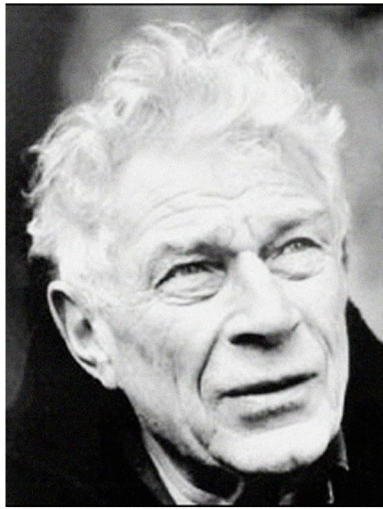
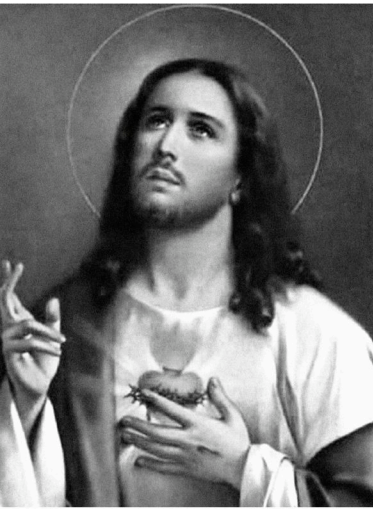
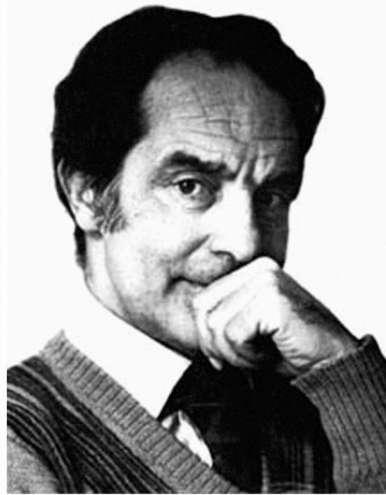


Top: Nelson Mandela, Kurt Schwitters, Frida Kahlo, Plato

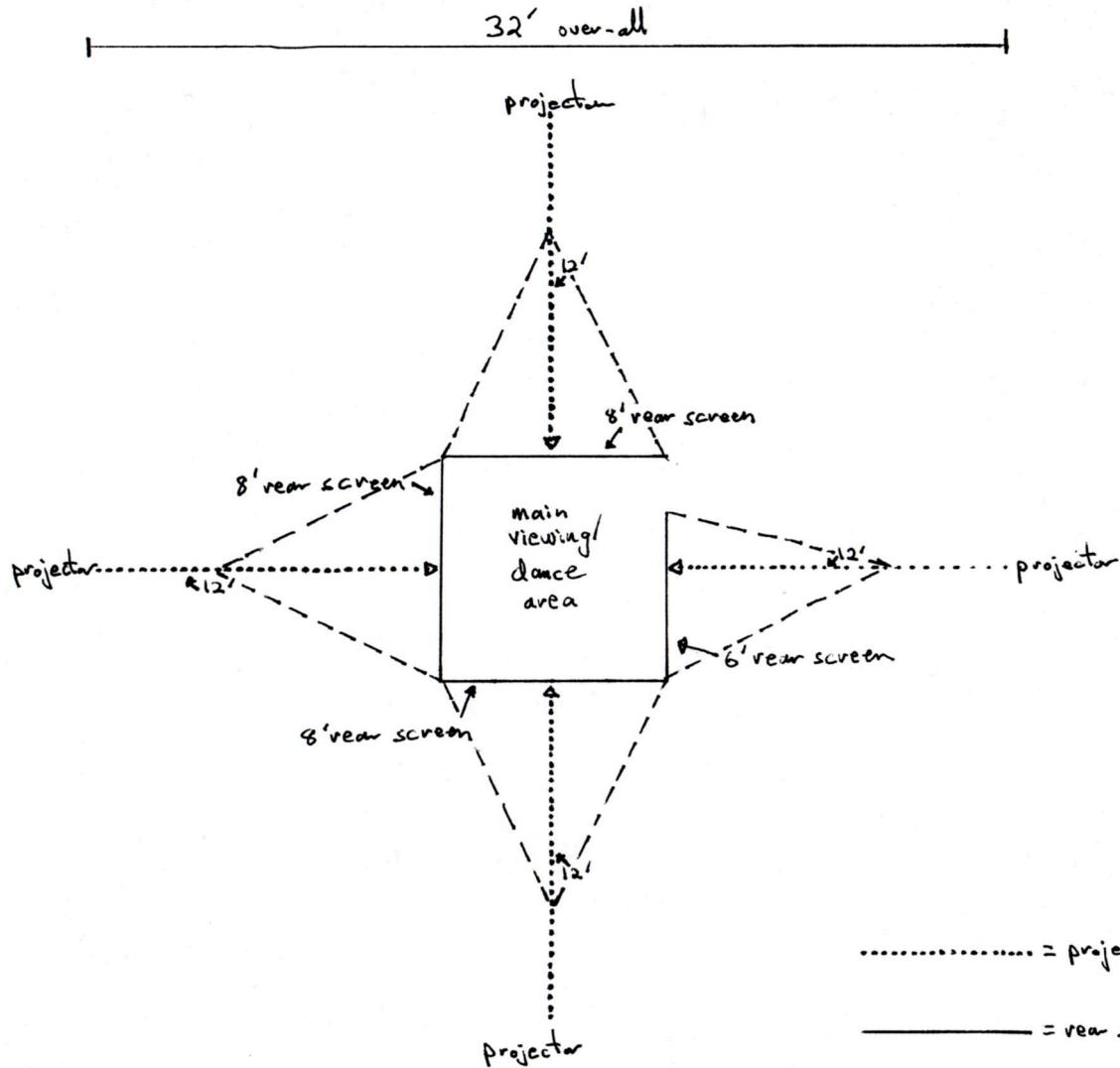
Bottom: Ornette Coleman, Vita Sackville-West, Thomas Sankara, Yoko Ono



Top: David Suzuki, Simone de Beauvoir, Emma Goldman, Louis Riel
Bottom: Tommy Douglas, Naomi Klein, Olof Palme, Woody Guthrie



Top: Aldous Huxley, Gloria Steinem, Italo Calvino, Harriet Tubman
Bottom: Jesus Christ, John Berger, Karl Marx, Rigoberta Menchú



Utopia Suite Disco



Clive Holden

2008