

**Los Angeles Filmforum and Brain Dead Studios present  
Filmforum 50, program 15: The Decay of Fiction in 35mm  
Wednesday June 17, 2026, 7:30 pm  
At Brain Dead Studios**

Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest running organization dedicated to weekly screenings of experimental film, documentaries, video art, and experimental animation. 2026 is our 51st year. [www.lafilmforum.org](http://www.lafilmforum.org)

**Along with the DVD-Rom *Tracing the Decay of Fiction: Encounters with a Film by Pat O'Neill***

**Pat O'Neill in person  
In tribute to Marsha Kinder**

**Filmforum continues its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary screenings with a rare 35mm screening of Pat O'Neill's classic feature film *The Decay of Fiction*, a multi-layered reverie of the abandoned Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, of ghosts of old Hollywood, and film noir.**

**We're also going to have the DVD-Rom *Tracing the Decay of Fiction* available, in tribute to the late Marsha Kinder, who was behind the Labyrinth Project that created it. [www.marshakinder.com/](http://www.marshakinder.com/) has essays by Marsha, biography, collaborators, and more.**

**Special Thanks to Kristy H.A. Kang, Martha Colburn**

*"The Decay of Fiction* is an intersection of fact and hallucination in an abandoned luxury hotel. The hotel is in Hollywood. The walls of the Ambassador are cracked and peeling, the lawns are brown, and mushrooms grow in the damp carpets of the Cocoon Grove. The pool is empty, and the ballroom where Bobby Kennedy died is shuttered and locked. A tall, elegant blonde stands transparently on the terrace of her bungalow, smoking and watching the sunrise. Voices and tinkles waft across the lawn. A contingent of vaguely sinister men arrive and ask for Jack. Jack is expecting trouble, but not this kind of trouble. Louise, a guest, replays a nightmare in which she drowns Pauline so that she can marry Dean. The sun sets and rises again. Two detectives seem to turn up everywhere, searching for Communist literature and telling one another pointless stories of underworld intrigue. In the kitchens and behind the scenes the daily routine continues, individuality melts, and workers fuse with their jobs. Winter passes, and then another summer, and finally it is Halloween, and there is a costume ball which claims the life of Rhonda the evasive soprano. And then the building comes down in a clatter of Spanish tiles and concrete, and fact has finally become fiction, once again.

"I scribbled the words *The Decay of Fiction* on the back of a notebook almost forty years ago, tore it off and framed it fifteen years later, and have wanted ever since to make a film to fit its ready-made description. To me it refers to the common condition of stories partly remembered, films partly seen, texts at the margins of memory, disappearing like a book left outside on the ground to decompose back into the earth. The film takes place in a building about to be destroyed, those walls contain (by dint of association) a huge burden of memory: cultural and personal, conscious and unconscious. To make the film was to trap a few of its characters and some of their dialog, casting them together within the confines of the site. The structure and its stories are decaying together, and each seems to be a metaphor for the other." – Pat O'Neill

**Pat O'Neill** was born in 1939 in Los Angeles. Long known as a pioneer in experimental film, O'Neill has also produced a distinctive body of sculpture using post-war industrial materials like fiberglass, plexiglass, resin, and aluminum. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Reef*, Los Angeles (2025); *Mitchell-Inness & Nash*, New York (2021, 2015); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA (2019); Philip Martin Gallery, Los Angeles (2018); Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, CA (2016) etc. Group exhibitions include *Made in LA*, Hammer

Museum (2025), Philip Martin Gallery, Los Angeles (2023); The Fowler Museum, Los Angeles (2021); Martos Gallery, New York (2019); Villa Arson, Nice, France (2018); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2016, 2008). O'Neill earned his BA (1962) and MA (1964) from the University of California, Los Angeles.

### **Screening:**

#### ***The Decay of Fiction***

USA 2002, 35mm, color, sound, 74:00

Director, editor, production: Pat O'Neill

Producer: Rebecca Hartzell

Camera, sound design: George Lockwood

Gaffer, key grip: Amy Halpern; Wardrobe: Violetta Elfimova

Camera, Rotoskopanimation: Kate McCabe

Muse: Beverly O'Neill

Actors: Wendi Winburn, William Lewis, Julio Leopold, Amber Lopez, Jack Conley, John Rawling, Patricia Thielemann, Dan Bell, Kane Crawford, Damon Colazzo, Jacqueline Humbert, Judy Lieff.

A treasure chest of narrative fragments, *The Decay of Fiction* lacks the itinerary and “instructions for use” that automatically comes with a linear story. The shards of its many implied plotlines are the fruit of O'Neill's all-encompassing sense of form, which for better or worse is conceptual rather than technical or material.— Jonathan Rosenbaum, *The Chicago Reader*, May 30, 2003, <https://jonathanrosenbaum.net/2023/03/ghosts-of-hollywood/>

“I am interested in exploring the boundaries of believability. The narrative tradition insists that, no matter how fantastic the story, its surface must be seamless. By contrast, I call attention to the artifice, all the staged aspects, and allow the well-worn stories to slip over and through one another. The film's intention could be described as wanting to take stories off the screen and into the imagination. I like to work within the gaps between reality and story, to look at what is going on around the story, its context, and to make that a part of my conversation with the audience.”  
— Pat O'Neill

#### **Excerpts from *Tracing the Decay of Fiction: Encounters with a Film by Pat O'Neill***

An interactive DVD-Rom by Pat O'Neill, Rosemary Comella, Kristy H.A. Kang, and the Labyrinth Project, USA, 2002, digital, color and b&w, sound

“*Tracing the Decay of Fiction: Encounters with a Film*, an interactive DVD-ROM software created through the collaboration of Pat O'Neill and Labyrinth Project, takes place in the ruins of Hotel Ambassador, known for holding many grand ceremonies, as well as, the place where Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated. The interactive software invites users to wander through vacant spaces lingering with a sense of loss. The architectural spaces are embedded with optical and auditory experiences assembled by enigmatic fragments of archival photographs, recorded conversations, radio sounds, and apparition of characters from noir films in a ghost-like form.” — from “Looking at Decaying Architecture Through the Lens of Database Narrative”

by Konan Ito, <https://interactivemediaarchive.wordpress.com/tracing-the-decay-of-fiction/>

Los Angeles Filmforum screenings are supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture, the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles. We also depend on our members, ticket buyers, and individual donors.

Coming soon to Filmforum:

Wed June 24, 7:30 pm - Los Angeles Filmforum, Black Revivalist, and CaribbeanLens Film Festival

present A Night of Films by Julius-Amédée Laou

Sunday July 5, 2026, 1:00 pm – Star Spangled to Death, by Ken Jacobs

Sunday July 12, 2026 – Yoko Ono's “RAPE” with a talk by Jennifer Doyle



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