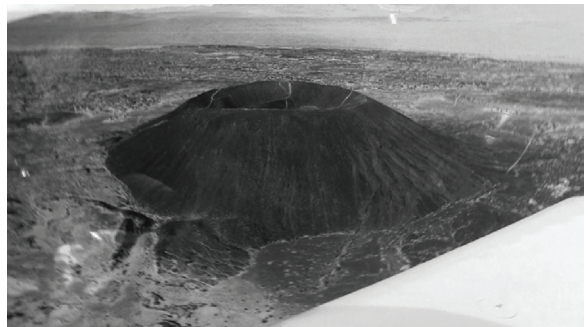


**Amboy / Fragments for a Screenplay**

by  
**Frances Scholz & Mark von Schlegell**

with help from  
**Chris Kraus and Leslie Allison**



**“BP,” land art by Karl Amboy, located near Amboy City. Susan Lichtenstein photograph taken from plane during location scouting, March 2014.**

note:

To what extent are gender norms policed by culture and the arts? Accessing the violence Judith Butler and others speak of at the core of the cultural enforcement of gender, the artist Karl Amboy has made an infamous career by spoofing and embodying the male-ist fanaticism of Western American culture. He's gotten incredibly rich in the process. But the artist has retreated into silence long ago, into the creation of a perfectly real western horror movie town, Amboy, out in the desert.

Our filmmaker, German artist "Susan Lichtenstein," is making a film about Lydia van Vogt, German emigrant and widow of science fiction grandmaster A.E. van Vogt, when she's interrupted to make the first documentary about Amboy.

She's heard of Amboy. At age 19 in the '80s our filmmaker once published a short text in an art magazine where she herself had naively pointed to Amboy as a feminist.

She has not heard of the town. It's an incredibly secreted place, famously without any law, a symbol of art's removal from ordinary reality and laws. Was this the reason she was selected to make the film? As the film is being made, so it immediately seems, Susan glimpses a movie beyond the horror picture Amboy clearly intends her to make: where gender is itself a projection from outside onto the skin of the real and where the artist craves her/his transformation into a woman.

Meanwhile, back in Los Angeles, the serial killing of female artists has begun. . . .



"AMBOY/ in out /AMGIRL. . ."

1. Lydia Leaving. Alone.

2. Lydia Entering/Door.

3. Office. Time Machine.

4. Lydia Leaving.

Downtown Santa Monica, CA.

*Susan* is filming *Lydia* in a Bookstore, looking for copies of *Slan*. A *stranger* appears and buys the book out from under them.

Later, dinner with Mrs. van Vogt.

Discover: the *stranger* is the waiter.



“There’s no such thing as a time machine...”

Ext. Los Angeles art gallery. Night

*Susan* stands among a group of artists and visitors to a gallery.

Int. Los Angeles art gallery. Night

Cont.

People saying awkward art world things together, including *Juliet*. *Juliet* sees *S.* through windows.

Ext. Los Angeles art gallery. Night

*S.* seems confused as people are saying things to her.

*S.*

What?? Oh yes. I plan on seeing that show tomorrow.

*Juliet* approaches now.

*Juliet*

Hi. I'm Juliet Romero. I'm a freelance curator! And a writer! I've got you now! Finally!

*S.*

Me?? But. . .

*Juliet*

Yes You.

*Juliet* points something at the camera. Is that a knife??

*Juliet* (whispers)

Karl Amboy wants you to make a film.

*S.*

No thanks. I'm already making films.

*Juliet*

Hey—where're you going? I was just—it's—but you can't say no!

Cut To:

(Continued)

(Continued)

Ext. Los Angeles street. Night.

*S.* is hurrying down the street, alone in the darkness. She hears footsteps behind her.

Cut To:

Ext. Los Angeles street. Night.

*S.* comes around a corner, running: a car almost hits her! But it's

Cut To:

Ext. Los Angeles street. Night.

A Taxi. With a friendly *Driver*.

*Driver*

Anything I can help with, ma'am??

Fade Out

Ext. Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

Next day

Susan is entering the museum in the broad light of day.  
*A Protester* outside holds a sign: SURVEILLANCE  
ART IS STILL SURVEILLANCE!

Int. Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

*S.* walks through an empty gallery room. On the wall there is a small video screen. She approaches it.

Close-up on TV Screen

As we look, TV shows *Juliet* and a rich *Collector* in another room. *Juliet* is turning—wide-eyed and pointing. *Collector* is nodding furiously.

Cut to:

Cont. Int. Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

*S.* turns to her left and sees *Juliet* and the *Collector* on the far end of this room, approaching her rapidly. To her right a *Museum Guard* seems to block exit. *Juliet* greets *S.* with over-the-top intimacy.

*Juliet*

Sweetie! So great to see you! What a dream! I want you to meet Udo!

*Udo*

Yes yes I know who you are.

*Juliet*

She's the one doing the Amboy film.

*S.*

Amboy film? I thought I—

*Udo*

Amboy? Again??? (he laughs) But do you think you'll really go all the way with him? All the way to Amboy my dear—aren't you afraid of the desert—

(Continued)

*Juliet*

Stop it Udo! Don't scare her—

*S.*

I told you no.

*S.* Pulls away forcefully. *S.* bumps past *Museum Guard*.

Close-Up on TV Screen

*Juliet* and *Udo* are laughing at *S.*

Fade Out

Int. French Publishers Office.

*Hedi* (Publisher) and *Noura* (translator) greet Lydia van Vogt.

*Hedi*

As you know, we French adore van Vogt. We want to translate everything new. So we were translating NULL-A 3 and Noura noticed irregularities.

*Lydia*

Irregularities?

*Noura* explains.

Not problems; differences. In how the earlier books were written, even improvements.

*Hedi*

I ask you point blank, Mrs. van Vogt. Did you write NULL-A 3?

*Lydia*

No!

They all look at each other.

*Hedi*

Mrs. van Vogt. It's only because I would like to discuss with you the possibility of a Null-A 4.

*Lydia* (beat)

I might have something in the garage.

Int. Los Angeles café. Afternoon.

*S.* is at a table with a laptop. Accessing information about *Karl Amboy*. *Documentary Footage/Headlines/etc.* information goes for sometime, demonstrating *Amboy* was a bad-boy '80s art star whose decadent lifestyle was inseparable from his extravagant career. At some point everything became secretive. There's something about an artificial volcano.

Email Text

*Laptop*

You've got mail!

It is an invitation to a lecture by writer *Chris Kraus* and shows her face and the title: *Amboy: American Artist*, a lecture.

Fade Out

Susan reads an old letter. Opened. Addressed to Mrs.  
Lydia van Vogt, Beechwood Canyon.

Dear Lydia,

This letter, witnessed and signed in the presence  
of Jeremy P. Koralski, notary public of Amboy,  
CA, April 23, 1953, testifies irrevocably to the  
following fact (as determined to be so by the  
undersigned members of the Los Angeles Society  
of Science and Fiction):

Alfred Elton van Vogt (your present  
husband) never owned a time machine.  
Nor will you. Ever.

Yours truly, in perpetuity,  
A.E. van Vogt  
Ron Hubbard  
C. L. Moore  
Harlan Ellison  
Ray Bradbury

r/T JK

Camera discovers: The letter was postmarked 1789.

(01)

Chris Kraus Gives Lecture

*Amboy, American Artist*

Do you think of your work as a self-perpetuating machine?

Yeah, when it runs perfectly. My work has to have information to feed on. It doesn't feed on itself. It doesn't feed into some bathtub conception of art. I never sit in a bathtub and come up with ideas.

Amboy in conversation with  
Bernard Elsemere & Mark Sanders  
*Dazed & Confused*, August 1998



"I'd like to talk tonight about Amboy,  
American Artist..."



Int. Museum Lecture Hall.

People rising from their seats and beginning to chat, etc. Everyone's moving (*Udo* is visible and other friends from the Opening).

Cont.

Close-Up on Juliet.

She's looking for someone. Sees nothing. Stonefaced, she heads for exit. We follow. She is greeted etc. and ignores everyone, hurrying for the exit. As she exits *S.* grabs her and surprises her.

*S.*

I'll do it. But if there's a film it happens on my terms.

*Juliet*

Sweetie! I knew you'd come around!

Fade Out



"The woman artist must die. . ."

Scene

A party where all the groups are talking about Amboy. We overhear:

*A*

Amboy is concrete poetry, quite literally.

*B*

Amboy is to curating what Pound is to literature.

*C*

Amboy *is* performance.

*D*

Amboy is trash.

*E*

Amboy makes no sense without neo-feminism.

*F*

Amboy is music.

*G*

Don't buy into the Amboy persona.

*H*

Amboy had his own tuning.

*I*

Amboy reinvented the folk blues.

*J*

Why publish without Amboy?

*K*

Amboy is the \_\_\_\_\_ of so-called neo-conceptual art.

Later *S.* catches *Norman M. Klein* with the camera.

*Klein*

So you wanna know the truth about Amboy? Well OK. But I don't want to say it on camera—

Fade Out

Ext. Neighborhood

Susan and Assistant approach the door of what might be Amboy's father's house.

Int.

*Father* in boxers and t-shirt is reading poems of Francois Villon. After knock he's running around and hides. There's another knock.

*Father (D. Devito)*

What da fuck has she—

He goes up the peep-hole. Sees

Ext.

*Susan* camera and assistant.

*Father* ctd.

What the fuck?

*Susan*

Hello? Mr. Amboy?

He opens the door. She steps back. He sticks his head out.

*Susan*

Mr. Amboy?

*Father*

You're calling me that for satirical purposes?

*Susan*

I am making a film about your son.

*Father*

Son! Son!

He looks at camera then. Steps forward in bathrobe.

*Father* ctd.

You ask for some little testament. To him of whom you ask, I leave—no, not my van. That big-city bastard—no better player ever lived. I leave him three straw trusses! To spread as his mattress on the ground ... For on it his living must be found—(he smiles) the only trade or skill he ever knew. That's my item. Good day to you, too.

He slams the door.

Later

*S.* discovers a tape of father dressed in priest costume going through what appears to be a ritual.

Still Later

We discover Amboy's father was an actor who did bit parts in Hollywood.



"I'm on a stake-out. You better keep walking..."



“MUSICIANS WANTED Ask 4 ‘AMBOY’...”

*Uncle Charlie* is a well-known western musician with head in the clouds. We come upon him playing a song in a canyon in the desert. Later we find him playing another song. In mid-song he stops and sees a poster across from him fixed into a tree. He reads the poster, tears it from the tree and keeps it. Starts walking. He’s walking with the guitar down the road feeling good. Sees another *Stranger*.

*Uncle Charlie*  
Pardon me, are you *Amboy* by any chance?

*Stranger*  
Amboy is not a personage. Amboy’s a whole town. (He points). That way.

*Uncle Charlie*  
Well, all right. . . (he walks)

EXT. Near Amboy.

A car is zooming through desert. From inside *Sister* and *Nieces* see *Uncle Charlie* walking in distance.

*Nieces*  
There he is! There he is! Uncle Charlie!

The car comes squealing to halt next to him on the road. The kids open the door for him, as *Sister* leans out.

*Nieces*  
Uncle Charlie!

He leans in the open window.

*Sister*  
Are you crazy? You’ve got a show tonight in Hollywood!

*Uncle Charlie*  
You said “Valley of the Shadow of Death.”

*Sister*  
No. I said Museum of Contemporary Art.

*Charlie* (takes it in slowly)  
AH. O.K. sorry.

*Sister*  
If I wasn’t your sister. . .

*Niece 1*  
She’s your manager too!

*Niece 2*  
Fear no evil, Uncle Charlie! We’ll protect you!

*Sister*  
Get in already!

*Charlie*  
Well, all right. It’s cool. . .

He gets in. They drive off.

The *Woman Artist* is dying, sees a vision.

*Priest* (giving a weird sermon)

Sanskrit, Aramaic, Hebrew, they lead to the same place. Each letter is in fact hand gestures. There is a real code.

He is moving his hands to make weird shadow animals.

*Priest cont.*

The only book that knows this is the *Nible*. . .

*Priest cont.*

The letter aleph is the hanged man reborn born again. Its number is the one of the eye and so Christ is the node, the maleficence, the booty.

*S.* dying, the Priest finally looks at her, acknowledging he is real, beyond death.

*Priest*

All right. I confess! she left you a message. She is a he. You belong to him. To Amboy for all time. Welcome to Hell. You're home.



“FLOWER POWER FAILED /  
DON'T CLOCK IN UNTIL FULLY TUNED. . .”

*Leslie Allison*

Why the female artist must die

In this film, female artists die. Woolf says the future is dark. It is not that the future is female, but that the future is death.

Third eye breast, breast third eye

Thousands of years ago

When we wandered out of Alexandria we padded into the desert. And now we wander out of the desert into the dark. Lifting into darkness powered by pearls.

Third eye breast, breast third eye

On being a pearl

Woolf says the shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central pearl of perceptiveness, an enormous eye.

Third eye breast, breast third eye

On death

You can't be mortal if you're dead. Woolf says why are the women artists dying? Death increases perception, in the same way darkness, moreover uncertainty and ambiguity, transforms you into a giant pearl, rounded in slippery non-binary gleaming.

Third eye breast, breast third eye

On being a pearl

This lack of a side, of any anatomical determination, rolls time, that is to say the planet, forward.

Third eye breast, breast third eye

Stein says, Can women have wishes? Can women have wishes?

Lifted from our invented bodies, we can. It has already begun with the women artists in this film and now their moonstruck eyes swallow everything. There is resonance of a bell, of a bottle, wind sucking into or out of.

Third eye breast, breast third eye

Why the female artist must die

When we left Alexandria we found caves to fuck in and sought to establish a separatist matriarchal artist-run society but it was flawed by necessity of our being alive, and over time it crumbled. The hope is now in dying, thousands of years later.

Third eye breast, breast third eye

On death

Women are dying everywhere because men kill them. How do we escape the authoritarian control of the patriarchy over our bodies but to go for death. Joyfully.

Third eye breast, breast third eye

Kill me

Am I getting too heavy with this lecture? Because I feel heavy.

Third eye breast, breast third eye

Kill me

I feel generations of sand and rocks blocking my third eye and every other orifice. My fantasy kill me. My fantasy kill me.

Third eye breast, breast third eye



**"I'll be your ghost. Forever."**

STOP/THE/BUS productions  
presents  
AMBOY (a two alien situation)  
a Frances Scholz film

*starring*

Paul Giamatti  
Lydia van Vogt  
and  
Leslie Allison  
Eleanor Antin  
Penny Arcade  
Lily Benson  
Colin C. Blodorn  
Sol Blodorn  
Kath Bloom  
Connor Boettger  
Matthew Chambers  
Gracie DeVito  
Jake DeVito  
Ruben Diaz  
Travis Diehl  
Hedi El Kholti  
Claire L. Evans  
Alaina Claire Feldman  
Matt Fishbeck  
Andrea Fraser  
Jeff Hassay  
Nikolaus Hirsch  
Bettina Hubby  
Jessica Jackson Hutchins  
Keenan Jay  
Sergej Jensen  
Robert Kinberg  
Chris Kraus  
Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer  
Barry Levin  
Lottie Jackson Malkmus  
Stephen Malkmus  
Sunday Malkmus  
Brian Mann  
Juliet McIver  
Kimberli Meyer  
Douglas Messerli  
Kim Mitseff  
Warren Neidich  
Annie O'Malley  
Laura Owens  
Tom Peters  
George Porcari  
Ralf Rosar  
Magnus Schäfer  
Frances Scholz  
Tif Sigfrids  
Joe Sola  
Andy Stewart  
Colm Tóibín  
Bec Ullrich  
Sophie von Olfers  
Mark von Schlegell  
Tom Watson  
Noura Wedell

*directed by*

Frances Scholz

*screenplay by*

Mark von Schlegell  
Frances Scholz

*with lectures by*

Chris Kraus  
Leslie Allison

*production*

Frances Scholz  
Mark von Schlegell  
Tif Sigfrids

*production assistance*

Evamaria Schaller

*camera*

Frances Scholz

*additional camera*

Mark von Schlegell  
LeRoy Stevens  
Lily Benson

*editing*

Frances Scholz

*editing assistance*

Jan Höhe

*miniatures*

Dieter Bähr

*swan costume*

Bec Ulrich

*songs by*

Bill  
"Country"  
Kath Bloom  
"Something to Tell you"  
"Fall Again"  
Cross  
"Cry"  
"Horoscopes"  
E-Rock  
"Beneath The Lake"  
"Damp Cave"  
"The Temple of Fine"  
Holy Shit  
"Labradors"  
"Who am I"  
"7 Audiosur"  
"11 Audiospur"  
"Anything Else"  
Milkblood  
"You Forgot"  
"A.M.B.O.Y."  
"Bad Union"  
"When a Cat"  
"High In the Morning"  
Milkblood & Tif  
"Irish Lily"  
"A.M.G.I.R.L."  
Stephen Malkmus  
instru-mentals  
Stefan Müller  
"Poisoned Tea"  
"Tissues"

*with additional music by*

Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks  
Barry Sallaberry  
Andy Stewart

*special thanks to*

Carlos Aceves  
Dieter Bähr  
Hastings Farrel  
In N Out Burger  
Karin Hochstatter  
Michael Ned Holte  
Philip Kaiser  
Robbie Kinberg  
Barry R. Levin Science Fiction & Fantasy  
Literature  
<http://www.raref.com>  
George Taylor Loudon  
Eric Mast  
Julia McIver  
Jason Meadows  
Kimberli Meyer  
MAK Center, Schindler House  
Shirley Morales  
Albert Okura  
Joe Perloff  
Marjorie Perloff  
Lúcia Prancha  
Julia Scher  
Sensation X  
Sprüth Magers London Berlin  
Jamie Stevens  
The Jicks  
Philip Valdez  
Lydia & Alfred Elton van Vogt  
Scott Zwiezen

*shot on location in*

Los Angeles  
Malibu  
Amboy City  
Mojave Desert  
Brooklyn  
and Route 66

*Frances Scholz and Mark von Schlegell: Amboy* is on view at CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, in San Francisco, from September 10 to November 21, 2015. It is curated by Jamie Stevens and organized with Leila Grothe. Special thanks to Tif Sigfrids, Los Angeles, and Kunststiftung NRW.



Braunschweig University of Art  
Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig

The CCA Wattis Institute program is generously supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Grants for the Arts / San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, and the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation; by CCA Director's Fund contributors Patricia W. Fitzpatrick, Judy and Bill Timken, Chara Schreyer and Gordon Freund, Ruth and Alan Stein, Robin Wright and Ian Reeves, Laura Brugger and Ross Sappenfield; and by CCA Curator's Forum. Phyllis C. Wattis was the generous founding patron.