

Thursday, 7th November 1963. 8.15pm.

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INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS  
17/18 Dover Street, W.1.

NEW BABYLON - An illustrated talk by Constant

Introduced by Victor Pasmore.

Constant (Nieuwenhuys) was born in Amsterdam in 1920. In 1948 he became a leading member of the Dutch Experimental Group ("Reflex") and a co-founder of the COBRA Movement. He gave up painting in 1953 and studied architecture and town planning. As a member of the International Situationist Movement he worked with Guy Debord on the plans for unitary urbanism. The New Babylon project was begun in 1960. Constant showed his first models at Bochum, Germany, in 1961. These models can be looked upon as independent works of art (three-dimensional colour charts of imaginary buildings, traffic arteries and space platforms) but they also illustrate Constant's New Babylon.

New Babylon starts out by recognising and accepting the inevitable trend towards the complete urbanisation of our planet. Still in its initial utopian phase, New Babylon offers suggestions for creating dynamic living conditions and an unhampered traffic flow in the cities of the future. Buildings will be scaffolded above ground and they will provide an adjustable network of apartments, open spaces and arenas: a shifting labyrinth to be explored and enjoyed. The architectural pattern encourages adventure, movement and chance encounter. Instead of living in static communities, people will be free to experiment with their environment. The areas below the raised buildings will be reserved for ground traffic, while the terraces provide landing fields. "Demain la poésie logera la vie".

