The Community College of Rhode Island will examine the unique architecture of its Knight Campus megastructure, with an art exhibition and panel discussion during CCRI’s All College Week celebration. As the college nears the 40th anniversary of the campus completion, Knight Campus Art Gallery Director Viera Levitt wanted to explore the history of the iconic building. Unique in size, scale and style in Rhode Island, the building not only contains students, staff and faculty members, but also architectural history and a philosophy of education.
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In many ways, CCRI’s Knight Campus in Warwick has become an iconic building that residents of our state feel passionately about for better or worse. However, there has been very little real discussion about, or understanding of, this Rhode Island “monument” created in the Brutalist architectural style.

As the building nears the 40th anniversary of its completion, it is time to turn our attention to this mega-structure and its value as daring architecture, fitting for higher education and deserving of informed conversation.

“We Talk About Architecture, Architecture Talks Back,” featuring works in various media inspired by the building, will be on display in the Knight Campus Art Gallery and in other locations on campus from April 5 to 27. More than 20 artists from Rhode Island and beyond answered to an open call to react artistically to the structure. The result is an exhibition of wide-ranging media including painting, sculpture, interactive sound installation, video, photography, conceptual work and architectural models.

This project is an opportunity to open up discussion and engender curiosity about a building with an architectural history that is largely unknown. Those working and studying at the Knight Campus certainly have an opinion about it. They find it creative, inspiring, noisy, confusing, massive, or a combination of them all, but always a structure that brings attention to itself.

While Rhode Island has been extremely aware of its 17th to early 20th century architectural heritage, it has not been as attentive to structures built since 1950. Yet, it is within this environment where most of us live and work. By creating an art project that is in dialogue with and inspired by this CCRI campus, we seek not only to explore this building from a fresh perspective, but to trigger an ongoing reconsideration of how late 20th century architecture in general, and Brutalism in particular, affects us all.

“CCRI’s Knight Campus Megastructure: History, Legacy, and Impact” includes a panel discussion and an exhibition. The panelists are Marc Levitt, Viera Levitt, Stephen Lewis, Enrique Martinez, Thomas Morrissey, Babs Owen, Sarah Renshaw, Jennifer Rolfsema, Carol Shelton, and Ipek Tureli.

Panelists will discuss the significance of the CCRI campus, its architectural legacy and its role in education.

Participating artists include Mazin Adam, Mary Benton, Alexandra Broches, Stephen Brownell, John Hartmann, David Housse, Gokce Kinayoglu and Ipek Tureli, Thomas Lai, Marc Levitt, Viera Levitt, Andrea Thurlow, Alyson, Troy West, Nancy White, and Michael Yelko.

Panelists and participants will, for the first time, look at the Knight Campus from the point of view of its place in Rhode Island, its place in architectural history and its role in education. Audience participation is welcome.

Moderated by Marc Levitt, host of the AS220-produced, WGBH-presented and nationally distributed “Action Speaks: Under-Appreciated Dates that Changed America,” the panel will include Marc Levitt, Viera Levitt, Stephen Lewis, Enrique Martinez, Thomas Morrissey, Babs Owen, Sarah Renshaw, Jennifer Rolfsema, Carol Shelton, and Ipek Tureli.

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Moderated by Marc Levitt, host of the AS220-produced, WGBH-presented and nationally distributed “Action Speaks: Under-Appreciated Dates that Changed America,” the panel will include:

- Michael Kubo, Ph.D., candidate in History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture at MIT
- Kip McMahen, president, Christopher McMahen Architect, Inc., lead design architect at RGB for the 1999 addition to the CCRI Warwick campus
- Andrew Thurlow, partner, Thurlow Small Architecture, and associate professor, Roger Williams University, Architecture
- Ipek Tureli, postdoctoral fellow in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at Brown University
- Kate Dunnigan, professor of history and chair of the CCRI Department of Social Sciences

The Knight Campus Art Gallery operates within the CCRI Art Department and is located in Room 3500, on the third floor of the round building (enter the library on the fourth floor and go down the stairs to right).

For more information visit www.ccri.edu/art/galleries/knight or contact Gallery Director Viera Levitt at knightgallery@ccri.edu or 401-825-2220.

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