At the corner features new work by Winnipeg-based artists Irene Bindi and Aston Coles. The work in the exhibition considers the “behind the curtain” experience of the cinematic. By reinterpreting the fourth wall, the artists create works that suspend the viewer and eliminate reliance on traditional storytelling. Bindi and Coles use collage and installation to reference screen based experiences that challenge and confront the notion of the filmic. While both artists work independently, cohesive themes emerge, such as the deconstruction of the image and the experiential qualities of film-based media. This exhibition explores an abstract picture of cinema, turned inside out and re-imagined as film without film.

This interview elaborates on these themes and more that arise from the work in the exhibition.
Collin Zipp: Your work speaks to the experiential qualities of film. What kind of screen-based experiences are you interested in commenting on, or hoping to invoke?

Aston Coles: Our thinking about film eventually led to the removal of the film itself; toward various diverging and unpremeditated ends. Some part of this is aimed at seeing the screen as the homing beacon it is, evoking it by tracing out its usual shape again and again.

Irene Bindi: The screen experiences that have had an effect on us are usually those of experimental film or film art that exploit the medium's material qualities. When you're not messing around with stories, you're freed up to do more direct thinking about what you're seeing. You can pay a different kind of attention to movement, the frame, rhythm, etc. You can still let go of time as with cinema, but without losing awareness in a story.

CZ - Removal of both film and narrative also translates into an absence of the mechanical apparatus behind cinema. What is your interest in this subtraction?

AC - Separately, a handful of parts of the film apparatus (including some of the non-mechanical parts) are particularly well suited to dealing with two or three art questions I've been thinking about. These manifest in two dissociative themes: the location of shark eggs—"sharks purses", in the surf of some unknown beach, and "Maltese"-diminishing rotary cross—a recreational ceiling fan. The breaking down and use of some parts of the cinema is really just the shortest path from A to B.

IB – There is this myth of film (the physical stuff) as a medium of nostalgia, and the machines of cinema perpetuate that myth because they can become fetish objects and distractions. Of course in some contexts the projector works very well as an art object, or part of an expanded cinema experience. For At the corner, I've used a 16mm camera and film, but have translated each film image into a paper collage, removing most of the traditional mechanical elements of cinema, except for the screen.

CZ - Regarding the title of the exhibition, can you explain your interpretation of a corner?

AC – This work pays a lot of attention to the drift away from centre; unprepared segments in the background of a scripted planned operation. So we mean the corner of a composition, for instance. The corner is an easy reference point and you're going to find it anywhere you look. Being a non-standard focal point, the intentional diversion of focus is bound to cause unknown things to come out. At the corner also suggests a certain personal commonplace, like I'll be at the corner, unless I'm lying on the floor staring at the fan.

IB – With traditional cinema, or flat art, the corner is the most obvious place where the art ends and everything else begins. You can think of a corner as a place of stoppage, or even entrapment, but the corner is also the opposite: a place for the infinite—like the finest point that can never be found. The collages reflect some of the former, as they depict some of the still corners of our house. The corner of the eye comes to mind too—those things that creep in at the sides that you're not sure you saw.

CZ – There is an element of illusion in the work. Is it important for you that the viewer is somewhat veiled and not be given an easy in?

AC - Yes. As with film, this show doesn't happen all at once. There is a certain lack of content so, in that regard, the viewer has a bit of work to do—or not do—for themselves.

IB – An "easy in" is not interesting to me, but illusion isn't a goal either. If there is some illusory element in my work it's accidental and probably a by-product of the process of image taking and remaking.

CZ – Irene, your images are based on banal domestic scenes. What was the motivation for using these images?
IB – I was at home taking care of my young son, it was winter, and what was most available to shoot was the interior and exterior of our house. There was so much blank clutter available to me, whether a clutter under the sink or the clutter of light on a wall. It’s also very useful to have boring images, because it helps you shift focus to other elements. Choosing these silent corners of the house was also a way of exploring the stillness/motion relationship in shooting film. A still scene caught in motion can become so dynamic, so time bending and surreal, if you give it the attention it requires.

CZ – Can you talk about the act of looking and/or the positioning of the gaze? Are you more interested in the act of observing or that which is being observed?

AC - Euclid and Ptolemy had rather a beautiful idea that light was something that came out of the eyes and struck objects, illuminating them like a flashlight. They saw a conical beam of radiation coming out of the eyes, reaching into space. I think that theory could be applied metaphorically as a cipher for better understanding and appreciation of art. My interest is in the act of observing. The object of that observation is to suggest a way of looking. It is not an end in itself but hopefully a catalyst to seeing something new.

IB – Originally, I was so interested in capturing the stillness of those moments at home that I wanted to construct the collages to scale with the objects they depicted. The sensation that occurs in the moment of looking was important—probably more important than the subject. But during the process of translating the film images into collage, what I was observing, what I was interested in, was the particular qualities of the medium: the look and feel of a frame of 16mm film. Translating it into another medium was an effort to make that look and feel clearer for the viewer. The film frame—which is not the same as a projected image—is enlarged; its colours are replicated and in some cases intensified.

CZ – Can you speak to the idea that the image a camera produces turns the subject into an object, distancing the viewer from the viewed?

AC - That distancing is good for the world of populist art, commercial art and museums. It is the plinth—the viewer is flattered and denied passage at the same time. It is really hard to avoid because it is so entrenched in the way people see art. We are trying to apply the convention of viewer separation inversely, implicating the viewer in the making. My approach here is to obscure the view, or camouflage the image in banality and everyday visual experience.

IB – This idea is related to what I was saying about a translated image. The image as object makes the subject so dismissible, even alienating. It can bring about different meaning or even usurp the original, and that can be good. This may just be ‘bad translation’—as, indeed, the collages are bad translations of film stills—but there is something nice in the gaps of translation. The “subject” is still available, but it has fallen away to the other elements that are being explored.

CZ – The work in this exhibition continues your interest in film-without-film. Can you talk about this progression and further, how cinema can exist outside of the traditional frame?

IB – For me film encompasses more than the physical setup of a cinema and projector. And because film, or a type of cinema, is visual art, I also see visual art as cinema; and in the same way that film can be explored in terms of various material and spatial considerations, the collages in this exhibition look at the spatial and temporal concerns of experimental film.

AC – Film, sound and performance, all being time-based forms, satisfy my need to make work that happens in time and more specifically, in the moment of making. When I say film here I mean film-without-film: the application of various traditional tenets of film, minus the film itself. So the eye of the viewer and my own eye replace the camera and the film in one. I believe cinema exists in the experience of everyday life, independent of the notion of film.
Irene Bindi is a Winnipeg-based multidisciplinary artist. Her collage, film, and sound works have appeared at various Canadian venues including Send + Receive Festival of Sound, Suoni Per il Popolo, Aceartinc., Antimatter, Cinémathèque québécoise, Pleasure Dome, the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, and the Cinematheque Ontario, as well as an exhibitions at the Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth, MN and performances at the Alamo Drafthouse Austin TX, The Kosmos Albuquerque NM, and the Circle Cinema Tulsa OK. Irene received her MA in Film & Video from York University. She was a member of the WNDX Festival of Moving Image curatorial collective from 2011-2015 and has collaborated on sound/noise projects Blind Squab and Double Hook with Aston Coles since 2009.

Aston Coles is a multidisciplinary artist currently living in Winnipeg, MB. He uses sound, performance, installation and sculpture as tools for situating both the viewer and artist into otherwise unlikely circumstances toward a shared experience. He is currently working on a series of short duration sound and video installations about transient events and their associated movements and sounds. He is part of Blind Squab and Double Hook along with Irene Bindi, and performs solo noise as Single White Female.

Collin Zipp is a multidisciplinary artist and programmer/curator who is based in Winnipeg, MB. His visual practice includes video, photo, sculpture, painting and installation and is interested in exploring ideas of institutional critique and viewer expectation and experience. Zipp currently operates and programs the nomadic artist-run centre ONE NIGHT STAND. He has a BFA from the University of Manitoba and an MFA from the University of Lethbridge.