

Program Notes 2000

SAN FRANCISCO

CINEMATHEQUE



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San Francisco, California
2007

San Francisco Cinematheque

2000 Program Notes

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CINEMATHEQUE

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SAN FRANCISCO CINEMATHEQUE
2000 PROGRAM NOTES
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JAMES BENNING'S *11x14*

James Benning In Person

Sunday, January 30, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

For over twenty-five years, James Benning has been making films of the American landscape which simultaneously explore issues of representation, meaning, geography and ideology. A film of great subtlety and precise formal construction, *11x14* fuses the impulses of narrative convention with formal exploration, revealing, through meticulous photography and elegant rhythmic construction, the paradoxical interrelationship between these generally competing strains of cinematic expression. One of the top ten films of the seventies according to J. Hoberman, James Benning's *11x14* is "a laconic mosaic of single-shot sequences, each offering some sort of sound/image pun or paradox. At once a crypto-narrative with an abstract, peekaboo storyline and fractured, painterly study of the midwestern landscape, *11x14* points toward the creation of a new, nonliterary but populist cinema."

11x14 (1976); 16mm, color, sound, 83 minutes, print from the maker

"At last, the first Midwest film. With a brilliant eye, formed by the past ten years of pop and minimalist painting and by the experience of the Midwest which is the source of the iconography of much of that painting, Benning has made an American landscape film, a landscape first dominated, then submerged, by the highways and powerlines which connect it. Its characters are cars, trains, and planes. They take their fix at the filling station; their reading matter is billboards and signs.

"The film was shot with a camera fixed on a tripod. There are a few pans, a few shots from moving vehicles. Benning used a wide-angle 10mm lens throughout, which produces a flattened space in which one is, paradoxically, more aware of depth. The color (the stock is Ektachrome commercial) was very carefully controlled in the lab and is incredibly vivid: blues, reds, yellows, greens. Shots take anywhere from a few seconds to 11 minutes. The film was nearly completely scripted and choreographed before the shooting. The sound is meticulously post-synced so that gradually one becomes aware that it is more than 'true.' Most of the framings are symmetrical with the camera at a 90-degree angle to the horizon line. The space is remade in some way within each shot.

"The time is traveling time, that peculiarly slowed down and distanced time, slowed down regardless of the speed at which one is moving, when there is nothing to do but look and listen, when images and sounds are 'noticed.'

"Benning calls *11x14* a narrative. It is, in the sense that a narrative is a kind of traveling. There is a complex of connections between the shots and also a group of people who appear sporadically throughout. But with the kind of cool, goofy irony which shapes all of the film, Benning allows almost no information about the people to reach us through the space. Their faces are blocked by window frames; their voices are covered with noises. Even their sex is ambivalent. And this ambivalence—an ambivalence about how images are to be read—pervades every aspect of the film. A loading and then vacuuming out of meaning occurs in almost every shot. Almost every shot has some unexpected turning. There's a lot to look at, and it's really something to see."
(Amy Taubin)

Hopefully, the film teaches you how to watch the film. (JB)

S M A L L W I N D O W S

A Celebration of Regular 8mm Films!

Program One

Saturday, February 5, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Regular 8mm filmmaking has truly been an underground activity since Kodak terminated the production of 8mm film stock in 1993. Recently, however, with the “discovery” of film manufacturers in the Czech Republic and other European countries, revived American availability through John Schwind, and the easy access to high-quality equipment in the format, Regular 8mm filmmaking is currently enjoying an international rebirth. The San Francisco Art Institute’s 8mm Film Festival was juried by students from Total Small Gauge classes taught by Janis Crystal Lipzin and Steve Anker and includes two eclectic programs which demonstrate the importance of Regular 8mm as a site of historical documentation (sides of history which would otherwise be unseen) as well as a medium for artistic expression. Included in both nights are films made especially for this festival, other recent works and newly discovered vintage films made decades ago. All films will be shown in their original Regular 8mm format.

Song 1 (1964) by Stan Brakhage; 8mm, color, silent, 4 minutes
A portrait of a beautiful woman. (SB)

Song 4 (1964) by Stan Brakhage; 8mm, color, silent, 4 minutes
A round-about three girls playing with a ball... hand-painted over photo image. (SB)

Song 13 (1965) by Stan Brakhage; 8mm, color, silent, 4 minutes
A travel song of scenes and horizontals. (SB)

Untitled #6 (1975) by Greg Sharits; 8mm, color, silent, 10 minutes

Nothing But...Part 1 (1979) by Phil Weisman; 8mm, b&w, silent, 10 minutes

Go Home Movie (1999) by Chun-Hui Wu; 8mm, b&w, 10 minutes
Go Home Movie is a tribute to home movie making without any filming in a home environment; an 8mm film without using an 8mm camera. (CHW)

Corners (1988) by Scott Stark; 8mm, color, silent, 4 minutes
Corners was made by spooling 6-7 foot sections of Regular 8mm movie film into 35mm still camera cartridges, and then shooting it with a still camera. The images, which originally covered the width of the entire 16mm (unslit) original, were split in half and were viewed twice. (SS)

Intermission

Found in Auto (1999) by Susan Barron; unslit 8mm, b&w, 3 minutes
A 10-year friendship spawned many a road trip, which was to us a beacon for an inexpensive freedom. The photographs were taken by Regina, given to me undeveloped after her funeral. (SB)

Jamie’s Portrait (1999) by David Heatley; unslit 8mm, color, silent, 3 minutes
Rhythmic portrait of a friend working in 4/4. (DH)

Windy (1980s-1999) by Bill Baldewicz; unslit 8mm, color, 4 minutes
Windy combines my interest in alternative energy with my interest in photography. (BB)

9 Cats When I Was 7 (1999) by Robbie Land; 8mm, color, 6 minutes
9 Cats When I Was 7 is a transition from one thought to another. (RL)

News From North Carolina (1985) by Tom Whiteside; 8mm, color, 3.5 minutes
News is an original 50 ft. Kodachrome reel hand-printed from stills of television “static,” with the horizontal scan turned on its side. (TW)

Psychic (1999) by Hans Michaud; 8mm, color, 6.5 minutes

The rhythms of *Psychic* are brought to the forefront due to the extremely slow shoot/project frame-rate. Another rhythm is at work: the relatively quick darkening of the light due to it being shot during late dusk.

Inversion (1999) by Steve Polta; 8mm, color, silent, 10 minutes

This film contains residue of an uncontrolled test of a new camera bought under dubious circumstances. Years later the representational product of this encounter was disregarded in favor of the worlds and spaces between (many the product of mistrust or misuse of the new machine). (SP)

1933 (1999) by Brian Frye; 8mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes

...and yet our place in this grand and terrible theatre is that of the humblest spectator, participants only insofar as the spectacle demands its audience. If men speak and act in the most wonderful satire, yet their gods are ironical in their silence, and the laughter which hails this bitterest irony is our own. (BF)

Amerika (1937) anonymous; 8mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes

A found home movie shot at several Nazi rallies in New York.

S M A L L W I N D O W S

A Celebration of Regular 8mm Films!

Program Two

Sunday, February 6, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

see above for series overview

Note One (1968) by Saul Levine; 8mm, b&w, 6.5 minutes

A study in grey and white of my parents. An evening film. (SL)

Note to Pati (1969) by Saul Levine; 8mm, color, 8 minutes

Note on snowstorm in February-March '69. The restoration of the landscape. Begun to show friends on west coast violent beauty of this period... The principal birds in the film are the blue jay and the crow, both beautiful, smart and ruthless. (SL)

Lost Note (1969-1974) by Saul Levine; 8mm, color, 10.5 minutes

Walk (1985) and *Train Ride* (1986) by Michael Mideke; 8mm, color, 6 minutes

Camera rolls masterfully composed using multiple exposures. (MM)

Taka and Ako (1966) by Takahiko Imura; 8mm, b&w, 13 minutes

A rapid cutting of images from Taka and Ako's photo albums from birth to youth which were shot separately and superimposed with their live images. The film was made to commemorate the occasion of their marriage and was shown at the celebration party. (TI)

By 2's and 3's: Women (1974) by Marjorie Keller; 8mm, color, 9.5 minutes

American landscape with women. A tense portrait of one friend and one not. (MK)

Intermission

Home Movie Reel #1 (ca. 1950s) anonymous; 8mm, color, 25 minutes

The first of three amazing found home movie reels. This reel documents the lives of a Chinese-American family in the Bay Area during the 1950s.

Untitled Cameraroll (1999) by Jamie Peterson; 8mm, color, sound, 4 minutes

Three weeks in Italy condensed into four minutes. (JP)

Vermont Wedding (1999) by David Heatley; 8mm, color, 5 minutes

I feel more comfortable saying that I discovered this film rather than saying that I created it. It was shot originally as a home movie using a single frame process usually reserved for my unsplit 8mm work. After slitting the film and projecting it, I found its qualities to be surprisingly artistic. (DH)

Home Movie Reel #3 (circa 1960s) anonymous; 8mm, color, 4 minutes

Home Movie Reel #2 (circa 1960s) anonymous, 8mm, color, 6 minutes

Reels two and three come from the Orgone Film Archive in Pittsburg, PA. These two films both show birthday parties believed to be shot around the same time period in this country. There is, however, a stark contrast between the two reels.

Print of the Zapruder Film (1964) by Abraham Zapruder; 8mm, b&w, 40 seconds

This is NOT the original film of President Kennedy's assassination. It is a black and white home movie which reproduces a segment of the historical home movie shot by Abraham Zapruder. For comprehensive notes on the actual Zapruder film, please see Keith Sanborn's article in the *Big as Life* MOMA catalogue.

EXCAVATING SPACE TO REDEEM TIME

The Films of Richard Dindo

Program One: *Grüningers Fall*

Presented with Pro Helvetia, the Arts Council of Switzerland and the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival

Thursday, February 10, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

"I don't try to immortalize the present, I try to draw memories into the present. Again and again my films focus on people who are already dead... My films revolve around absence. That is my subject" —Richard Dindo

Cinematheque, in conjunction with Pro Helvetia, the Arts Council of Switzerland, presents three recent films by Richard Dindo, one of Europe's best-known documentary filmmakers. Marked by his interest in the intersection of individual and social histories, his films explore the reconstitution of the past through the use of historical texts and an almost obsessive exploration of space. Using testimony, written or spoken, as his point of departure, his camera insistently investigates and fixes the actual spaces of events, seeking invisible scars to reveal and redeem a past now buried in the wake of time's passage. Dindo has said that his films often focus on "politically committed people and rebels who have experienced repeated defeats. Grieving is an integral part of remembering." The three films selected here each focus on extremely different figures, each of whom lost a battle waged against an unjust or repressive society: the Swiss police chief Grüninger who saves a number of Jews and is subsequently tried and condemned for his actions; the revolutionary Che Guevara who returns to Bolivia to fight his last guerilla war; and the *poète maudit* Arthur Rimbaud who rejects his family, the social order and ultimately his own writing and Europe.

Grüningers Fall (The Grüninger Case) (1997); 35mm, color, sound, 100 minutes

As Police Chief of the small Swiss city of St. Gallen, Paul Grüninger followed his conscience and falsified the papers of several hundred Austrian Jews who were fleeing Austria after Switzerland had officially closed its borders. Set in the very courtroom where, in 1940, Grüninger was tried and condemned for his "illegal" actions, *Grüninger's Fall* interweaves the testimonies of policemen, border guards and many former refugees, who came from various parts of Europe, the United States and Latin America to participate in the film. A strong indictment of Swiss policies during the war, the film explores the legacy of and contemporary reactions to the former Police Chief who died a broken man in 1972 for having placed his convictions above his official duties as representative of the State.

Today considered Switzerland's most important documentary filmmaker, Richard Dindo was born in Zürich in 1944, the fifth child of second-generation Italian immigrants. He left school at the age of fifteen, and

four years later tried to apply to the Berlin Film School. Because he didn't meet the admission requirements, he wasn't allowed to take the entrance exam. In 1966 he moved to Paris where he spent most of his time attending screenings at the Cinemathèque Française and reading books on cinema, literature and history—it was there that he educated himself in the history of film and filmmaking. In 1970 he returned to Zürich and made his first film, *Repetition*. Most of his early films deal with specifically Swiss subjects, though always from the point of view of those who are political or social outsiders. He now lives and works between Zürich and Paris and has seventeen films to his credit.

Richard Dindo Filmography:

Repetition (1970); *Dialogue* (1971); *Naive Painters in Eastern Switzerland* (1972); *The Swiss in the Spanish Civil War* (1973); *The Execution of the Traitor Ernst S.* (1976); *Raimon* (1977); *Songs Against Fear* (1977); *Hans Staub, Photojournalist* (1978); *Clément Moreau, Commercial Artist* (1978); *Max Frisch, Journal I-III* (1981); *Max Haufler, The Mute* (1983); *'El Suizo'* (1985); *A Love in Spain* (1985); *Dani, Michi, Renato & Max* (1987); *Arthur Rimbaud, A Biography* (1991); *Charlotte* (1992); *Life or Theatre* (1992); *Ernesto Che Guevara: The Bolivian Diary* (1994); *The Grüninger Case* (1997); *Genet in Chatila* (1999)

MAESTRO OF POVERTY ROW

Two by Edgar G. Ulmer

Sunday, February 13, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

"Nobody ever made good films faster or for less money than Edgar G. Ulmer... That Ulmer could communicate a strong visual style and personality with the meager means so often available to him is close to miraculous." (Peter Bogdanovich, *Kings of the B's*)

"I really am looking for absolution for all the things I had to do for money's sake." (EGU)

For the first time in a decade, we pay tribute to low-budget cross-genre king, Edgar G. Ulmer. Whether working on Yiddish musicals (*Green Fields*), horror star-vehicles (*The Black Cat*) or Bargain Basement noir quickies (*Detour*), this former assistant to Murnau invested all of his films with visual style and wit. *Bluebeard* (1944), a noir period piece, stars John Carradine as a crazed woman-strangling puppeteer in 19th century Paris; *St. Benny the Dip* (1951) is an upbeat melodrama about three con men who masquerade as priests.

Bluebeard (1944); 16mm, b&w, sound, 75 minutes, print from Kit Parker Films

St. Benny the Dip (1951); 16mm, b&w, sound, 90 minutes, print from Em Gee Films

"Ulmer worked on the lowest depths of Poverty Row, far beyond the pale of the B film into the seventh circle of the Z picture, shooting his films in dingy studios on makeshift sets, on lightening-swift schedules (*Detour* is rumored to have taken a mere four days). If it is possible that severe limitation of means can stimulate poetry, or that adversity might breed a tenacious reserve of inner feeling... then neither Piet Mondrian nor Alexander Solzhenitsyn have anything on Edgar G. Ulmer. Ulmer transformed his camera into a precise instrument of feeling, and his convulsive abstractions of screen space intensify that feeling by investing it with particular gestures of light, shadow, form, and motion that define his own director's soul, and none other.

"Far more than any other film director, Ulmer represents the primacy of the visual over the narrative, the ineffable ability of the camera to transcend the most trivial foolishness and make images that defy the lame literary content of the dramatic material." (Myron Meisel, *Kings of the B's*)

Edgar G. Ulmer Filmography:

People on Sunday (Menschen am Sonntag) (with Robert Siodmak, 1929); *Mister Broadway* (1933); *Damaged Lives* (1933); *The Black Cat* (1934); *Thunder Over Texas* (1934); *From Nine to Nine* (1935); *Natalka Poltavka* (1937); *Green Fields (Greene Felde)* (with Jacob Ben-Ami, 1937); *The Singing Blacksmith (Yankel Dem Schmidt)* (1938); *Cossacks Across the Danube (Zaporosh Sa Dunayem)* (1939); *The Light Ahead (Die Klatsche)* (1939); *The Marriage Broker (Americaner Schadchen)* (1939); *Moon Over Harlem* (1939); *Tomorrow We Live* (1942); *My Son the Hero* (1943); *Girls in Chains* (1943); *Isle of Forgotten Sins* (1943); *Jive Junction* (1943); *Bluebeard* (1944); *Strange Illusion (Out of Sight)* (1945); *Club Havana* (1946); *Detour* (1946); *The Wife of Monte Cristo* (1946); *Her Sister's Secret* (1946); *The Strange Woman* (1946); *Carnegie Hall* (1947); *Ruthless* (1948); *The Pirates of Capri* (1949); *Captain Sirocco* (1949); *The Man From Planet X* (1951); *St. Benny the Dip* (1951); *Babes in Baghdad* (1952); *Murder Is My Beat* (1955); *The Naked Dawn* (1955); *Daughter of Dr. Jekyll* (1957); *The Perjurer* (1957); *Hannibal* (1960); *The Amazing Transparent Man* (1960); *Beyond the Time Barrier* (1960); *L'Atlantide* (1961); *The Cavern* (1965)

EXCAVATING SPACE TO REDEEM TIME

The Films of Richard Dindo

Program Two: *Ernesto Che Guevara, The Bolivian Diary*

Richard Dindo In Person

Presented in collaboration with Pro Helvetia, the Arts Council of Switzerland

Thursday, February 17, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

see February 10 for series overview,

Ernesto Che Guevara: The Bolivian Diary (1994); 35mm, color, sound, 94 minutes, print from Winstar
Taking Che Guevara's diary during his Bolivian campaign (1966-67) as his starting point, Dindo places his camera in the very spaces where Che traveled, fought and ultimately died. Juxtaposing the mute and virtually empty landscapes with the moving and sometimes bitter testimony of the diary (read in voiceover by the late filmmaker, Robert Kramer), Dindo also intercuts bits of recently discovered archival footage and interviews with colleagues and Bolivian villagers. The film is both a testament to Che Guevara's tenacity and a demystification of the failure of someone who would become a legend for an entire generation.

EXCAVATING SPACE TO REDEEM TIME

The Films of Richard Dindo

Program Three: *Arthur Rimbaud, A Biography*

Richard Dindo In Person

Presented in collaboration with Pro Helvetia, the Arts Council of Switzerland

Sunday, February 20, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

see February 10 for series overview

Arthur Rimbaud, A Biography (1991); 35mm, color, sound, 145 minutes, print courtesy of Pro Helvetia

Rimbaud is unique in Dindo's oeuvre, for here he incorporates actors as his witnesses to the life and death of the great poet. We see and hear his mother and sister, his school mentor, the poet and lover Verlaine, an employer in Aden and a Swiss business associate speak of their relationships with Rimbaud in the very places where they shared his life (his homes in Charleville, Paris, London, Marseille, Aden, Harare). Rimbaud himself is present only through the wound of his absence, made visible through the images of the places he inhabited, the voices of those who knew him, and excerpts from his poems and letters.

DISQUIETING EPIPHANIES

Jay Rosenblatt's *King of the Jews* + Erin Sax' *Jerusalem Syndrome*

Jay Rosenblatt and Erin Sax In Person

Thursday, February 24, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Tonight San Francisco Cinematheque presents the Bay Area premieres of two unusual new works examining religious convictions and spiritual epiphanies. *King of the Jews*, Jay Rosenblatt's newest work, is a lyrical, provocative and deeply personal film which examines both Rosenblatt's uneasy relationship to Christ as a Jewish child growing up in Brooklyn—a relationship based on terror and mistrust—and the roots of Christian anti-Semitism. Using home-movies, found footage, and excerpts from films depicting the life of Christ, it explores inter-religious misunderstanding and hatred, as well as their transcendence. Erin Sax returns to Cinematheque to present *Jerusalem Syndrome*, a complex documentary portrayal of this holy city and the extreme expressions of religiosity and mystical experience to which it sometimes gives rise. Each year numerous visitors have spiritual experiences resulting in personality changes and convictions that they are, or are in direct contact with, God. The film examines this phenomenon labeled the Jerusalem Syndrome by the Israeli psychiatric community from the perspective of those in the midst of its "spell" and in the context of the city's long history of mystical accounts.

King of the Jews (2000) by Jay Rosenblatt; 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes, print from the maker

In what has become his multi-textural signature style, Rosenblatt combines home-movies, educational and historical found footage, and religious imagery from varying film sources to create a highly stylized meditation on the equal profundity of fear based in a religious context and of spiritual transcendence.

Three distinct sections evolve into a broad thematic scope. Beginning with a personal narration over home-movie and educational footage is an exploration of the socio-cultural context of Rosenblatt's fear, as a young Jewish boy, of Jesus Christ. Part two employs a reflexive documentary strategy including academic and historical texts with disturbing holocaust imagery for an examination of the roots of anti-Semitism. Finally, a barrage of "arcane religious footage" culminates in an extended montage which beckons a reflection from the viewer on spirituality.

This finale of ambiguous, reappropriated imagery comes to have “a specific meaning as opposed to if it were shown first or second. [The viewer] comes to see Jesus as a Jew being crucified, not Jesus as a Christian.” This open-ended “reappropriation of Jesus” intends to evoke “spiritual feelings for the viewer and his/her own relationship to Jesus.”

The inspiration for this film, Rosenblatt said, came from “not being afraid of Jesus anymore, and getting to his teachings, getting past the filters. I wanted to go back to who Jesus was, not what he became... [he was] used in such destructive ways... words were put in his mouth. I wanted to go back to the basic ideas of his teachings which I think are right on— love and forgiveness being the centerpiece. I say this at the risk of sounding born again.” (quotes from an interview with Jay Rosenblatt by Smith Patrick)

Jay Rosenblatt Filmography:

Doubt (1981); *Blood Test* (1985); *Paris X 2* (1988); *Brain in the Desert* (co-directed with Jennifer Frame, 1990); *Short of Breath* (1990); *The Smell of Burning Ants* (1994); *Period Piece* (co-directed with Jennifer Frame, 1996); *Human Remains* (1998); *a pregnant moment* (co-directed with Jennifer Frame, 1999); *drop* (co-directed with Dina Ciraulo, 1999); *RESTRICTED* (1999); *King of the Jews* (2000)

Jerusalem Syndrome (1998) by Erin Sax; video, color, sound, 52 minutes, tape from the maker

“Each year about a hundred tourists and pilgrims visiting Jerusalem suffer from a bizarre psychiatric disturbance. Individuals report having powerful mystical and religious experiences which cause extreme changes in their personality, behavior and lifestyle. Some acquire super-human strength, begin speaking in unknown tongues, or run naked through the streets of the city in order to purify themselves from all physical attachments. Many become convinced that they are the Messiah, the Virgin Mary or King David, and as a result are hospitalized in psychiatric institutions. Diagnosed in 1980, this phenomenon has come to be recognized by the Israeli psychiatric community as the Jerusalem Syndrome.

“Looking from the inside out, the film *Jerusalem Syndrome* examines this phenomenon from the perspective of six individuals in the midst of its ‘spell.’ The work questions the possible causes for the epidemic, the treatment of the Syndrome as a modern day psychosis in the face of Jerusalem’s long history of mystical accounts, and ultimately the criteria society uses to determine if a holy experience is real. In combination with a full force immersion into the heart of the city’s mania in its many form of religious expression, *Jerusalem Syndrome* is a complex portrayal of one of the world’s most holy landscapes and the curious lines that divide religion and science, faith and madness.” (ES)

The subjects of Erin Sax’ *Jerusalem Syndrome* are so deeply entwined in religious experience, as to maintain that they are incarnations of Biblical figures. Sax’s study goes into the heart of Jerusalem, to the Old City and its infamous components, including the Western Wall and the Dome of the Rock, to explore the sacred sites of three major religions—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—and to the worshipers who find themselves inextricably connected to these surroundings. Interviews with international believers who have relocated to the holiest of cities attest to the omnipotent power of religion and its boundless reach, and to the extremes of conviction. Observations extend beyond the walls of Jerusalem to the surrounding countryside and to the Jordan River where euphoric worshippers are baptized in the holiest of waters.

Equally engaging are the segues between interviews of ambient imagery, including historical sites, vendors, ceremonious devotees, tourists, and local inhabitants engaged in the mundane, deftly edited to create a dynamic collage of the city. These segments capture the quality of frenetic energy which permeates the city and impacts the psyches of its people.

Erin Sax Filmography:

Receiving Sally (1993); *Each Evening* (1993); *Seven of Worlds* (1994); *Jerusalem Syndrome* (1998)

Program Notes written by Smith Patrick

A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO RUDY BURCKHARDT

Bill Berkson and Nathaniel Dorsky In Person

Sunday, February 27, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

“The great filmmaker, photographer and painter Rudy Burckhardt died on August 1, 1999, in Maine at 85 years of age. Born in Basel, Switzerland, he came to New York in 1935 and made it his home as well as the hero of most of his works. Burckhardt filmed what he liked and let you see it that way, too. The power is formal and sympathetic, never editorialized—though the films are as much edited as shot. Sensations of the obvious or commonplace are lifted sky high. With what Edwin Denby called ‘a visual grandeur he keeps as light as it is in fact,’ Burckhardt shows what’s livable and true in everyday life.” (Bill Berkson)

“Rudy Burckhardt showed his first two films in 1937. He has made more than fifty since, few longer than half an hour, all minimal budget. From the start they have been personal, unmistakably his. Their influence on other filmmakers has been described as mainly toward unpretentiousness. Unpretentious they are. Their subject matter is like that of amateur ‘family’ movies—short documentaries of unimportant sights anyone could find, or silent-screen type comedies with friends for actors. The photography is objective, the images are ordinary facts, the style is direct and clear. The films look simple, but they are not elementary for a moment. The great pleasure they offer is to see with Burckhardt’s eye. The difficulty is seeing the large, unexpected image fast enough—the subject, the environment, the light that unites and spreads so to speak beyond them. The images are full of fun, wit, and humor; they also catch live people and places during moments of unconscious beauty and even grandeur. The live light in them is memorable. Burckhardt keeps catching the personal grace of young women, each a different individual; children, men, animals, plants, landscapes, buildings—he keeps catching their individuality, both beautiful and funny in their own unconscious gestures. Burckhardt improvises all this with a very light touch. The films look as if anybody could have done it; gradually you discover the sophisticated variety, the wealth of imagination and sympathy.” (Edwin Denby)

“Rudy was a natural cosmopolitan. Wherever he found himself he disappeared effortlessly into the crowd, wearing his inbred sophistication like a suit off a rack. Blending high-born European manners with a streetwise democratic spirit, Rudy was a constellation of oxymorons: a Swiss Walt Whitman wired into the free-flowing electric charge of the metropolis, but incapable of overstatement; a multitalented artist, connected to virtually every major figure of the New York School, but curiously indifferent to the fate of his own work.” (Robert Storr, *Artforum*, November 1999)

Tonight’s program, curated by Bill Berkson and Nathaniel Dorsky, will also include slides of Burckhardt’s still photography and paintings.

On Aesthetics (1999); 16mm, color, sound, print from The Film-Makers’ Cooperative

What Mozart Saw on Mulberry Street (1956); 16mm, b&w, 6 minutes, print from The Film-Makers’ Cooperative

Filmed with Joseph Cornell, edited by Burckhardt to the slow movement of a Mozart piano sonata. A plaster bust of Mozart in a small shop surveys the goings-on in the street—children playing, an old man wrapped in thought, a cat slinking by in a parking lot. The mood is melancholy.

Eastside Summer (1959); 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes, print from Jacob Burckhardt

Avenues A, B, C, D between Houston and 14th Street, before the poets moved there. Small shops, storefront churches, teeming life in the street and on fire escapes, Tompkins Square Park and shopping for bargains on 14th Street. With piano music, *Functional*, by Thelonius Monk.

Millions in Business as Usual (1961); 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes, print from Jacob Burckhardt

A piano sonata by Josef Haydn and New York City. The first, allegro movement is choreographed by midtown crowds, crossing every which way, often barely avoiding collision. For the long, slow second movement we see quiet, stately buildings, their columns, cornices, portals and ornaments, with only the camera providing movement at times. The very fast, final part is in color, around Times Square, the movement speeded up and frantic.

Caterpillar (1973); 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes, print from The Film-Makers' Cooperative

Looking down at nature's small works in the woods and fields of Maine, then up at the sky, and down again at the goings-on of a caterpillar that turned out to be an inchworm. Bird sounds recorded on a summer's dawn by Jacob Burckhardt.

Julie (1980); 16mm, b&w, sound, print from Jacob Burckhardt

Night Fantasies (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 23 minutes, print from The Film-Makers' Cooperative

ARTICULATED IMAGES

Recent Films by Arthur and Corinne Cantrill

Arthur and Corinne Cantrill In Person

Thursday, March 2, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Australian filmmaking team Arthur and Corinne Cantrill return to our shores for the first time in five years to present a selection of their recent work. The Cantrills have been making films for over thirty-five years and for the last thirty have published *Cantrill's Filmnotes*, Australia's premiere journal of international experimental film and video. Tonight's program features North American premieres of films completed in the last decade which combine rigorous formal investigation with sensual appreciation of the world and of film. The program includes examples of rotoscoped works, recent small format nature studies, and a quartet of lush three-color separation films which pointilistically manipulate conventions of color, motion and filmic registration.

This program has four new 3-color separation films (three of which are shot on high-contrast black and white negative which results in high color saturation), a rotoscoped/optical printer work, and some of our recent Super 8 work enlarged to 16mm. (Arthur & Corinne Cantrill)

Myself When Fourteen (1989); 16mm, color, sound, 19 minutes, print from the makers

A collaboration with Ivor Cantrill, son of the filmmakers. He rotoscoped two shots of himself running, filmed in Oklahoma in 1974 on high contrast black and white negative. The highly colored rotoscoped footage was reworked on the optical printer, intermingling it with negative and positive of the original footage. On one level, it is an analysis of movement in found footage, and on another it is an investigation of the ways the human face is read and recognized. The sound is Ivor speaking about being fourteen, and commenting on the making of the film, with an electronic music composition by Chris Knowles.

Ivor Cantrill has autism, and the film benefits from his pre-occupation with repetition, detail and color.

Articulated Image (1996); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes, print from the makers

A discontinuous frame-by-frame film of a banana palm lit by a decorative lead-light window, "articulated" by black frames alternating with the image.

Airey's Inlet (1997); 16mm, color, stereo sound on audio cassette, 6 minutes, print from the makers

A discontinuous frame-by-frame film (mainly two frames image/two frames black) of a coastal scene with a lighthouse, intercut with a painting of the same landscape by Ivor Cantrill.

City of Chromatic Dissolution (1999); 16mm, color, stereo sound on audio cassette, 17 minutes, print from the makers

Melbourne cityscapes—the separation and superimposition of the three colors is evident in the pedestrian and motor traffic activity, and also in the moving clouds reflected in the mirror-facaded "invisible" office buildings. The film is accompanied by layers of city sounds and glass played with a violin bow, electronically altered.

Ivor Paints Arf Arf (1998); 16mm, color, sound on audio cassette, 6 minutes, print from the makers

In the garden, Ivor Cantrill paints a group portrait of the Melbourne abstract sound poetry group, Arf Arf. A white canvas fills with colors and the faces of the group, looking more substantial than the artist who is rendered in transparent primary layers. The sounds are Arf Arf performing on an occasion when the artist participated with vocalization and violin improvisation.

Garden of Chromatic Disturbance (1999); 16mm, color, stereo sound on audio cassette, 15 minutes, print from the makers

Does color exist where there is no light? The garden as site for color research—chromatic aberrations, measured against a Kodak color card, play around repeated shots of brick walls, objects on a table, paintings and a female figure. As if the camera is recording color in the absence of light, zones of the image readily incline to blackness, as shots are repeated with varying color balances and densities. Stark black and white negative fragments from the original separations are intercut with the color.

City of Chromatic Intensity (1999); 16mm, color, stereo sound on audio cassette, 5 minutes, print from the makers

Will color exist when there is no one left to see it? The high-contrast color separation, which, unlike regular color film, is not attempting to reproduce human color perception, renders the city in stark, saturated hues, contrasting with deep shadow zones. Fragments of black and white negative indicate the source of the color. The sound suggests audio relics of past demolitions, driving of massive foundations, the juggernaut of modern construction practice.

Illuminations of the Mundane—Spring (1997); 16mm, color, silent, 17 minutes, print from the makers

Brief, ambiguous details of obliquely lit objects and patches of textured light, with wind-blown shadows, in the house and garden.

Program Notes written by Arthur and Corinne Cantrill

WORD TO IMAGE

Cinema Inspired by Poems

Curated and Presented by Konrad Steiner

Sunday, March 5, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

Cinema is used here in a response to poetry. These tapes and films were chosen out of the American experimental tradition to exemplify various techniques of marrying the two arts. Poetry as the art of utterance and cinema the art of showing, both whole in their own, don't easily make a good couple. But these film and videomakers have taken up the challenge anyway by responding to the spirit and letter of the poet, creating an original cinematic writing. Cinema and language meet head on, not unified as in conventional film, but remaining distinct and dancing, stepping on toes, wooing each other with the charms of mouth and eye and mind. You'll see images' own syntax shuffled, blended, chafing and dovetailing with language; you'll hear and read poets' work while seeing and hearing filmmakers' work. It's like having two extra senses!

“To write ‘purely visual perception’ is to write a meaningless phrase. Obviously. Because every time we want to make words do a real job of transference, every time we want to make them express something other than words, they align themselves in such a way as to cancel each other out. This, no doubt, is what gives life so much charm. Because it is by no means a matter of awareness, but of vision, of simply seeing. Simply! And the only field of vision that occasionally allows one merely to see, that doesn't always insist on being misunderstood, that sometimes allows its followers to ignore everything in it that is not appearance, is the inner field.” (Samuel Beckett, *Le Monde et le pantalon*, 1945)

How can you possibly combine film and poetry? Films are chosen here that solve the problem in various ways. Many of the pieces tonight started as poems. Some ended up as one. Some use a recording of the author's

reading. Others use text on screen and modulate your reading through its presentation are images that can illuminate aspects of a poem, but not be the poem, and have their own integrity. What is their relationship?

Either, Or, But, Not, Both

One motive for these works is the challenge of making verbal language and visual gesture hang together organically. These films respect the integrity of their medium by avoiding pat equivalences and the conceptualization that results from too-literal renderings. The interest here is in bringing the separate realms of word and image into contact. What's evoked, what readings are motivated that would otherwise not occur, taking place as illustration, irony, counterpoint, mood, metaphor, rhythm, etc? These are the modes of interaction between the poem aspect and the film aspect of the poem-films shown in this program—there are two things, and the experience of the two is one thing.

Most of the films in this program took existing poems as their starting point. The integrity of the text in a film distinguishes it from montage and acts to acknowledge the independence of the two. We can see that these are images that can illuminate aspects of a poem, but not the poem, and have their own integrity. What is their relationship?

“The poem-film is showing what the filmmaker thought the poem meant?”

“It provides a reading of the poem.”

“It shows the artist interpreting the poem.”

“It shows a response to the poem.”

“The tape affects the meaning of the poem.”

“It means what the poem means.”

“The tape is a completely new work.”

I think the highest success of this form depends on showing the possibilities of meaning instead of the determined meaning. Interpreting the poem happens, so it is very tricky. The idea is to keep caught up to experience. The poet Robert Grenier said at a reading of his I attended years ago that a translation has to be as real as the original, and the original, if it is worth translating, has to be as real as experience, which is a moving among the potentials for significance and symbolism without translation. (Well, okay, I don't know if he said all that, but that's what I got out of it.) This logic only works if you see that reading as experience, though the conventional wisdom is that the text you read is a kind of delivery system for a message. Conversely, experience is reading. Think about it. Watching these films is like watching someone reading, but of course, you too are reading. Watch yourself read the city landscape as you go home tonight.

Anyway, how can a film present the “facts” of the poem without distorting them to present a favored message? If you were the filmmaker how could you begin with something that's already complete? Do you parallel or complement the text? How do you add without taking away?

Songs of Degrees: With a Valentine and As to How Much (1990) by Peter Herwitz; 16mm, color, sound on cassette, 5 minutes, print from the maker

Poetry and cinema are too different to work together without music. Of course “music” meant in the broadest sense, not just the acoustic sense. Whenever we talk about melody, rhythm, harmony, dissonance, phrasing, cadence, tempo: these are musical concepts and perceptions. These kinds of intuitions and distinctions manifest in both words and image work, and serve as the basis for the joinery in the films and tapes shown here tonight. The existence of music makes it possible for images and words to communicate with each other. Peter Herwitz speaks directly to this in what he says about his films to readings by Louis Zukovsky:

“The first work is a repetition of the words ‘Hear her clear mirror care his error. In her care is clear’ each time presented with different line breaks and different emphasis. It is ambiguous and very precise at the same time

and above all strikes me as music—like a thoroughbass in baroque music. The images and other sounds I added seemed like an upper voice—more open and more melodic in relation to this basic repetition.

“The second poem is a bit more ‘atmospheric’ but seems to me to be above all about degrees, limitations in describing an image—tentative yet again very precise, which is what I sought to achieve in similar ‘possibilities’ for creating an image on film.

“...I find Zukovsky to be above all about music and the choice of words almost meant to work in terms of musical structure first and foremost. He almost always uses very specific language despite the fact that the meanings are ‘indeterminate.’

“The miracle of so-called ‘objectivism’ is that very specific words and images are used by the poets to create an endless series of possibilities for seeing the world.... And as a filmmaker I find this kind of writing to be truly a mirror of the way montage works—the space between Zukovsky’s words creates the meaning as it does in montage—the challenge of a filmmaker is both to present and attempt to answer a series of questions raised by his/her choice of imagery and the spaces between them.” (PH)

Under a Broad Gray Sky (1995) by Thad Povey; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Thad Povey takes the prose poem by Baudelaire (“We’ve Each Our Own Chimera”) but (in this version) rendered into spoken English, a description of toil, and in *Under a Broad Gray Sky* puts it next to images of rustic labor and repose. Does the poem describe what we’re seeing or not? Do the images belie exaggeration in the lyric? The bold grotesqueness of the description is at odds with the handsome people, the quotidian scenes, almost. Are these people not within reach of that futility Baudelaire describes? The film is so efficient in making you wonder about these questions, using very conventional means. There is a gentle weaving of three strands: the images shown, the text heard, and the images of the text seen in the mind. Notice also beneath this are the sounds that also play with a sense of illustration and echo, a cut sometimes changing the meaning of a sound.

Waterworx (1986) by Rick Hancox; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Rick Hancox’s film *Waterworx* gives us some pictures to wonder about. You have a chance to make up something or not. Then you see them again, with the subtitles and subtleties of Wallace Stevens’ enigmatic poem, “A Clear Day and No Memories.” The images as you saw them are now torqued by your having to read and by what you read. As they move towards one another, watch what happens to your mind.

“What I find most impressive about *Waterworx* is Hancox’s ability to fuse Stevens’ poem and his own imagery and sound, not only without doing damage to the poem, but so that the film provides an effective reading of it.... The clear, empty vistas of the film (empty of action, of people) reflect those of the poem, and yet both are haunted by the presence of the poetic mind in its process of forming what we are experiencing.” (Scott MacDonald, *Afterimage*)

Video Haikai by Marcus Nascimento; video, 8 minutes

Brazilian Marcus Nascimento has borrowed from my beloved Japanese linked poetry form haikai to create his enigmatic sequence of virtuoso video effects woven among the words of his short verse statements. *Video Haikai*’s text hovers around inside its images coming from and receding into them, teasing the highly processed imagery and sound to answer the meaning of the poems. The images respond coyly and remain delightfully independent.

What Happened to Kerouac? (excerpts) by Nathaniel Dorsky; video transfer, 8 minutes, tape from Nathaniel Dorsky

Anytime we look at a shot of something we can consider how explicitly showing something is implicitly pointing out how to view it, showing what to see about it. Similarly, the diction, rhyme, intonation of a phrase implies an attitude to take towards the subject or speaker or what aspect of that is in focus. This double (implicit/explicit) expression of what is said and how it is said can be the basis of a contrapuntal relationship between image and word. The poem and the montage induce implicit and explicit readings of each other.

In the feature length documentary *What Happened to Kerouac?* Nathaniel Dorsky edited three sequences to recordings of Kerouac reading his poems. The first sequence is somewhat illustrative of the text, as if just getting to know the poet. Each successive interpolation reaches deeper into the source of the poems. The final poem is a perfect example of “counterpoint-illustration.” The montage floats along with the voice together and independent, not in illustration of the words, but the meanings.

Intermission

Prefaces (1981) by Abigail Child; 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Prefaces, Abby Child's intense sound-image-shrapnel, inaugurates her *Is This What You Were Born For?* series. Child's film is unique in this collection. It's a film in which you might say, "There's no poem there." But consider it the simplest: the poem is the soundtrack, which makes it the most extreme: the film tracks the poem exactly. Child is also a published poet associated with the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E group.

Kino Da! (1981) by Henry Hills; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Henry Hill's film *Kino Da!* starts with the simplest relation of word to image, the "talking head" shot. In this case a portrait of a San Francisco poet Jack Hirschman. The "poem" is composed of the speech of the man, that speech emerges as poetry in a continuum from street sounds to language(s) through nonsense as the sound and image slip and skip. It exists somewhere between a document and a created event.

What's On? (1997) by Martha Colburn; 16mm, color, sound, 2 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

What's On? is a list poem. It's like Martha Colburn's sarcastic TV Guide. The sound and image run parallel and lead each other and alternate that lead so quickly that you only ever get about one in three of the jokes in there.

"A Hyper-Fire Telespazzumentary rendered in orgiastic collage animation, Media Mush and freaky live chunks. Brats, Boobs, Snot-Based Game Shows, First Lady Baboon attacks, cross-dressing amputees, stress, estrogen and more spew and mutate. With Telesmashing Chaos poetry soundtrack by 99 Hooker and video game samples by Naval Cassidy. Blasting you into HELL-A-VISION!" (MC)

Photoheliograph (1997) by Jim Flannery; 16mm, color, sound, 12 minutes, print from the maker

In Jim Flannery's *Photoheliograph*, film splits the poem into text and sound. Harry Crosby's originating poem from 1928 is a non-linear graphic poem, and Flannery takes what is an instantaneous poem and projects it into time. This "translation" might just as well be considered a "rendition" as a response. Here's his description:

"If I describe the poem, perhaps this will indicate what I considered 'adaptable' in it: it is a 5X10 grid of the repeated word 'black', in the center of which, (actually, replacing what would have been the twenty-third 'black' and reducing the number of 'blacks' to forty-nine) is the word 'SUN.' As to the title: a (photo)heliograph is variously: (a) a signaling device by which a coded message may be sent via the reflected image of the sun; (b) a photoengraving (lithograph); (c) a 'sun print' or 'Rayogram'; (d) a telescope adapted for solar photography. In short: either a device for observing or reflecting the sun, or the matter resulting from exposure to the sun.

"A great deal of what (I think) 'goes on' in this poem is included by allusion, assembled in the mind of the reader as a 'rationale' for the juxtaposition of these three words, in this arrangement. Crosby relies on the reader's knowledge of: (a) his other work and (b) sotericism in general to give it some meaning beyond the simple visual pun of 'an image of the sun' (itself a rather simpler, naive/folk-etymological reading of the title); in adapting the poem, I attempted to use materials and processes which would point an allusive reading in roughly the same directions as (I believe) Crosby's intentions were (for example, the original color image which was manipulated throughout the film was a photograph of the planet Saturn, one of several 'black suns'), but I am equally dependent on the viewer's participation/previous knowledge—and I equally intended for it to be 'readable' in a closely analogous fashion as 'the same' visual pun. There are forty-nine instances of my voice saying the word 'black' (those separate recordings having been put through a variety of manipulations)... and there are forty-nine instances if the initial visual image (again, having been put though an analogous series of manipulations)...

"The words that make up the poem, as one would speak them—'black SUN'—semantically connote the 'negative' image, the black/circle/eclipse/inversion/nigredo image which is usually invoked by the phrase. As one experiences the poem 'visually,' however, one sees SUN surrounded by black—that is, the 'positive' image of the light-bearing sun against a black field. The second half of the film reflects this oscillation between two views in the flicker of the black matte: it should be noted that the composite image in the second half is produced in the perceptual apparatus of the viewer, not in the production of the image—the black is 'always' there, the color is 'always' there, the combination of color/color is 'never' actually on the filmstrip. At a larger structural level, the film is again split in two parts, one 'positive' and one 'negative': in the first half, the black matte obscures the colored image; in the second, the colored image obscures the matte.

"One characteristic of the poem which interested me was its rejection of the temporal vector. Poetry, in its assumption of being embodied in a speaking voice, is based upon progress through time; but Crosby's poem is perceived in its entirety, in a single moment. To make a film of this poem is to (perversely) restore the temporal dimension to it. It was important to me, first, to maintain the two-dimensional quality of the poem, to make a screen which—at one level of detail, at any rate—insists upon the surface of the screen as the medium, avoiding

any hint of illusionistic depth (how much more perverse it would have been to add 'two' dimensions to the poem!). So the film concentrates, at the larger scale, on what might be considered 'still' images (the black screen, the unmoving circle) on a 'flat', two-dimensional surface. And second, to somehow maintain the 'all-at-onceness' of the poem, given the constant shifting of small details, and the determinate duration of the film." (JF)

First Hymn to the Night—Novalis (1994) by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Brakhage's *First Hymn to the Night—Novalis* reaches for the root of the language of the poet. Not whole poems, only phrases are etched between hand-painted sections. Etching alternated with painting, in a call and response form. The poet's words chosen evoke also Brakhage's well-known sense of closed-eye vision, or perhaps that inner vision to which Beckett referred.

"This is a hand-painted film whose emotionally referential shapes and colors are interwoven with words (in English) from the first *Hymn to the Night* by the late 18th century mystic poet Freidrich Phillip von Hardenberg, whose pen name was Novalis. The pieces of text which I've used are as follows: 'the universally gladdening light ... As inmost soul ... it is breathed by the stars ... by stone ... by sucking plant ... multiform beast ... and by (you). I turn aside to Holy Night ... I seek to blend with ashes. Night opens in us ... infinite eyes ... blessed love.'" (SB)

Program Notes written by Konrad Steiner

SEEING HAITI THROUGH *LAFANMI SELAVI*

Lee Flynn and Caitlin Manning In Person

Thursday, March 9, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Producer/Director Lee Flynn and Co-Director/Cinematographer Caitlin Manning present the premier of their new documentary shot in Haiti in 1998 and 1999. *Lafanmi Selavi* (The Family is Life) is a center for street children started by former President Aristide in the capital, Port-au-Prince. As five children tell of their lives on the streets, a narrative emerges of their personal voyages from the streets to the center where they have found shelter and, often, new hope. Using interviews and footage shot in Port-au-Prince, Aristide's home and in rural areas, the children, their teachers and Aristide tell a moving story of the complexities of living in a country deeply affected by colonization, military rule, and the global economy. This beautifully filmed documentary shows Haiti and its people living in a culture of resistance and hope—a perspective rarely explored by the media.

Lafanmi Selavi (2000) by Lee Flynn and Caitlin Manning; video, color, sound, 60 minutes, tape from the makers

Lafanmi Selavi tells of the lives of five former street children who now live at the center and juxtaposes these lives with current street children. The children at the center, most of whom are politically sophisticated and articulate, tell their stories in poignant, poetic words. Out of the mouths of these children, their teachers, and their families, one can hear a multi-dimensional narrative emerging about contemporary issues in Haiti, including the economy, politics, class discrimination and the experience of living with extreme poverty. The children also describe their former lives before coming to Lafanmi, as we accompany them to the slums where they lived as street children and learn about their means of survival. One girl at Lafanmi, Nerland, visits her mother who was unable to feed and educate her. As Nerland arrives at her mother's house, she sees that her mother is using her last five pieces of coal to cook the day's beans and rice—the end of her food supply. Nerland's pain of separation and concern about her less fortunate brothers and sisters is obvious. Jeremie, a young journalist interested in children's rights, takes us to the penitentiary where young children are imprisoned simply because they were alone on the streets. Monique tells her story of losing her parents on the "Jeremie" ferry when she left for a few minutes to go to the bathroom and returned to find the ferry left without her, eventually capsizing. Her parents were among the 1000 drowned. She survived during the coup for four years living in the "cafeteria," the headquarters of the most violent leaders of the coup. Lolo explains how his growth was stunted while he lived on the streets, not only because he couldn't eat but also because he was so unhappy. Now tall, healthy, and robust, he takes us back to his old street haunts and interviews his pals who are still on the streets.

Lafanmi Selavi informs the viewer of the difficulty of progress as violent interruptions set back the “project” at Lafanmi. A teenage boy, Ti Frere, describes a terrifying ordeal during the coup when the military set fire to the center, resulting in the death of seven children. When the fire department arrived eight hours later, the children were told, “you set the fire, you go back inside.” Ti Frere and the director of Lafanmi describe the precariousness of existence because of the always present threats of violence, and, sadly, another attack on Lafanmi in July 1999. The attack by opponents of Aristide was designed to discredit Aristide’s work with the children. After the attack, in September 1999, Lafanmi was forced to suspend its live-in program, though the Montessori school is still intact, thereby allowing the children to remain in residence at the center. Also intact is Radyo Timoun, a children’s radio station which broadcasts to all of Haiti’s nine provinces.

Personal interviews with Aristide are intertwined throughout the documentary and reveal his unwavering passion and devotion for all of Haiti’s children. His optimism is even more remarkable as it is juxtaposed with scenes of overt poverty and military violence: as he states, “When they talk about Haiti it’s too often ‘Oh, a sad country, misery.’ When as a matter of fact it’s one of the richest countries in the world from the cultural point of view, in the sense that our culture brings the fact of human being, of hope, of resistance, of dignity.” Aristide also speaks of the challenges of creating a self-sufficient environment for the future of the children and all of Haiti’s poor within the parameters of accepting aid without giving away Haiti’s natural resources.

Lafanmi Selavi is important and timely. Former President Aristide will soon be announcing his intention to run for president in the elections held in November 2000 and, if elected, he will begin his term in January of 2001. The documentary offers an insight to the Haitian people and their remarkable spirit as well as the complexities of progress.

In spite of colonization, brutalization, military rule, corrupt leaders, violence, and abject poverty, *Lafanmi Selavi* tells the story of the spirit, dignity, and sense of hope of the Haitian people; in particular, the children of Haiti and the desire and intent of many Haitians to create a better world for all children. Aristide’s love and devotion for all of Haiti’s children and his extreme optimism against all odds show the viewer a side of Aristide the media has largely left unexplored. The people in the documentary are complex and multi-dimensional. The documentary’s perspective is counter-hegemonic as a form of resistance to negative images typically produced about Haiti, especially in the United States. *Lafanmi Selavi* will deeply affect the viewer’s often unexamined relation to the images of poverty and victimization and enable them to see beyond media misinformation into the complexity and contradictions of this remarkable country. (LF)

Lee Flynn, Producer and Director

Lafanmi Selavi is Flynn’s second documentary. Her first documentary *See Me—Five Young Latinas* examines the lives of five young, poor Latina immigrants as they discuss discrimination, gang life, and their hopes and dreams for the future. It dispels the assumptions that only the poor immigrate and that the “new” life in the United States is always superior. *See Me* was shown at all the major Latino Film Festivals in the U.S., as well as the Havana International Film Festival in Cuba. It won the best female filmmaker award at the Marin Latino Film Festival in 1998. Lee is an anthropologist whose interests are in foregrounding power imbalances, racism, and de-exoticizing the other.

Caitlin Manning, Cinematographer and Co-Director

Manning received her MFA in film production from San Francisco State in 1990. She has worked as Director of Photography on a number of award-winning films and documentaries. Manning teaches at Film Arts Foundation, the Academy of Art College, and the SF State Cinema Department. She has lectured and screened her work at Stanford University, UC Santa Cruz, and UC Berkeley. In 1987 she produced and directed *Stripped Bare*, a controversial documentary on striptease dancers addressing issues about the sex industry from the perspectives of the workers. Other work includes *Brazilian Dreams* (1989), a video documentary on social movements in Brazil, and *Noah’s Ark* (1994), a documentary about the Zapatista convention held in the Mexican jungle in August 1994. In March 1995, the Center for the Arts held a retrospective of Manning’s work.

FROM CINE-POVERA TO CINE-SPOLVERARE

Sound Film Propositions by Recoder and McClure

Luis A. Recoder and Bruce McClure in Person

Sunday, March 12, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

In the *in between* of the instants that constitute the movies, Recoder and McClure have chosen to demonstrate that the experience of both the optical and audio surface of the sound film stubbornly defies the project of limits. The shutter blankets the room in darkness, but vision persists; the ear, meanwhile, is served an uninterrupted stream of energy. The evening's program is presented as a series of "propositions," a form adopted by Recoder for this edition of "Cine-Povera." McClure's "Cine-Spolverare" suggests the reprise of or return to the themes of the recent past, dusty but not totally jejune. Like a taffy pull they seek to transform the material from a "somewhat sticky, side-whiskered affair to a glistening crystal ribbon" composed of stripes of different colors. Facing the sea these custodians of cinema would be back to back, but their work will not be presented in that way. Instead, Recoder and McClure have decided to propose a series of sound film documentaries to be positioned on a table criss-crossed by a weaving of adjectival rubrics: Conceptual Films, Process Films, Appropriation Films, Performance Films, Accumulation Films, Readymade Films, Film Nouveaux... positioned provisionally for the appreciation of the senses of hearing and seeing.

Indeterminate Focus (1999) by Bruce McClure; 16mm, color, sound, 12 minutes, from the maker

Four hundred feet is what it measures, but not without a few spins; and in this way I have laid it out—aiming it—putting down the emulsion of colored inks. The single perforated ribbon with a rhythm of sprocket holes implying frames is the solid substance to be bored by the rotating cutting instrument. Projected, the shutter minces its way through time making succotash (fr. Narragansett, msiquatash, *lit. fragments*). The nascent still life, colored vegetables to be arranged on a table top turned on edge, are, however, stopped by border guards, two stainless steel sentinels who insist on still another private screening. Their presence within the trajectory of light defines four intervals where the plane of focus can be positioned all of them casually referred to as being out-of-focus. Their influence is called upon to liberate light from the tyranny of the rectangle freeing the vegetable still life to levitate from the screen.

Silver Recovery (2000) by Luis Recoder; 16mm, b&w, sound, 12 minutes, from the maker

Concept of "silent cinema": only after the emergence of "sound cinema" is there something like a prior history of cinema characterized in and through its muteness. The task is to recover the supposed "silent cinemas" as the muffling of cinematic sonority. What becomes "silenced," though not completely inarticulate, is thus displaced within the picture: *silent pictures* picturing sounds. The *residual* projected frame, evidence of cinema's sonorous dislocation.

Superincumbent (2000) by Bruce McClure; 16mm, color, sound, approx. 36 minutes, from the maker

Genetically speaking, some species are said to be better suited for survival; genotypes in the context of the cellular milieu give rise to the phenotype, remembering always that, regardless of the dominant or recessive nature of the gene, blending inheritance does not occur. Sudden inheritable changes, gene mutations, represent modifications at specific sites along the deoxyribonucleic acid. These alterations lead to the origin of alleles, alternative forms of a gene, changing the actual morphology of the chromosome by modifying its size or shape. The most common cause of congenital defects in humans can be attributed to chromosome anomalies, and an understanding of the nature of chromosome aberrations and their genetic consequences in a variety of plant and animal species can lead us to approach intelligently the problems which they present for human society. The centromere is identified, and its drift is observed as inversions, both paracentric and pericentric, translocations—shifts and reciprocal, duplications and deletions occur. An unplanned change in a complex system is certainly more apt to produce a harmful effect than one which shows foresight or planning. And spontaneous mutation is a random, unplanned event which leads to a genetic alteration without any regard for the consequences.

Variable Density (1999) by Luis Recoder; 16mm, b&w, sound, approx. 12 minutes, from the maker

What the picture doesn't show—and perhaps never will—is located some twenty-six frames prior to its appearance on the screen: sound. The picture/sound separation is a technical factor to be technically reconstituted as a synch-event. But let us take up this technological determinism in an *unanticipated commentary of an unseen*

sight towards a sight seen. Sound: prior to, a priori, in advance of—sound as always already liberated from the picture precisely (thanks to) the blindfold/earfold of an interval wedged in the apparatus.

Heterogene (2000) by Bruce McClure; 16mm, b&w, sound, 14 minutes, from the maker

Centaur, griffins, sphinxes—various animals in combination, grotesque deviants so ugly as to frighten people; exciting horror by their wickedness and cruelty take shape in the darkness. Reviewed at 24 fps, found footage provides the time and place for the convening of an optical soundtrack and drafting ink. The ambassador, however, is noticeably absent, leaving the voice of the moralist waving from behind the obscurant's attempt to sweep things under the rug.

Program Notes written by Luis A. Recoder and Bruce McClure

ELLIPTICAL TALES

Recent Work By Stephanie Barber and Naomi Uman

Stephanie Barber and Naomi Uman In Person

Thursday, March 16, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Tonight Cinematheque brings together two of the most original and provocative young women filmmakers working in the United States today. Stephanie Barber, who lives and works in Milwaukee, uses manipulated found footage and sounds, animation and hand-processing, to make delicate puzzle-like films which intrigue and delight, pieces which, "like music, function as emotional landscapes, implied occurrences or scantily clad stories." (sb) Her work was recently featured in the New York Museum of Modern Art's Cineprobe series, *metronome* just won a Juror's Choice award at the recent Black Maria Film Festival and Cinematheque and the Pacific Film Archive have included her work in their 1999 and 2000 programs of new experimental work at the San Francisco International Film Festival. Naomi Uman lives and works in Los Angeles and Mexico City where she shoots, hand processes and edits her hand-made films as well as teaching filmmaking. Ranging from poetic documentaries to intricately manipulated found footage, her work has also won several awards: *Leche* won a Golden Spire at last year's San Francisco International Film Festival, and *removed* received a Juror's Citation award this year's Black Maria Film Festival.

angus mustang (1996) by Stephanie Barber; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes, print from the maker

angus mustang is a film paralleling different travels, the physicality of travel pointed to most clearly in the soundtrack and the pacing of the film, the whooshing by of images and then, also, i am playing with the travel of ideas, the parallels which connect the women in this film (japanese women picking cherry blossoms, women by niagara falls, ubiquitous sleeping beauty) as counter-balanced by the (torn) male doctor and all serenaded by a song of parallel travels. (sb)

woman stabbed to death (1996) by Stephanie Barber; 16mm, b&w, sound, 4 minutes, print from the maker

taking its title from a headline on the kitty genovese murder, *woman stabbed to death* is an all too jovial trot through the paranoia infested waters of radio, the warnings and hilarity, caustic with a sing-a-long lure—set against a loop of familiar (and frightening) images. the film is fairly straight forward, it treats blithely the theme of fear, in which i am more interested here than genocide or communal alienation. (sb)

a little present (for my friend columbus the explorer) (1996) by Stephanie Barber; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes, print from the maker

though obviously a pun on christopher columbus, fireworks, and exploration, *a little present* is actually a gift for my friend theresa columbus, the playwright and explorer. (sb)

pornfilm (1998) by Stephanie Barber; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes, print from the maker

something like how easily intimacy is dissuaded, i am interested here in the stuttering, clumsy pacing—a shaky toy on *last* legs which is released and exalted by even more toy-like revelry. (sb)

they invented machines (1997) by Stephanie Barber; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes, print from the maker

they invented machines is for me a very complicated film, the film is thinking about colonialism, entertainment (their inherent connection to each other) and love, the images are mostly taken from disney (land, world?) rides where one is shown people from far away lands. the soundtrack about halfway through suggests the idea of love ("they have love here") which can (must?) then be thought of in the context of this same wonder and possession, amusement, the film ends with a series of flights. (sb)

flower, the boy, the librarian (1997) by Stephanie Barber; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes, print from the maker

this is a classic love story with the soundtrack changing from a subterfuge of mantra-esque chanting, to a sensible narrator in a matter of minutes. (sb)

metronome (1998) by Stephanie Barber; 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes, print from the maker

metronome is a film about the loss of love, possible loss of limbs, the radio play soundtrack is off-set by the intractable images of "spaces." the former seems to balance between kitsch and true heart-rending emotion and the latter references the asceticism of seventies minimalism (in film) with the impenetrable intellectualism becoming increasingly moving as the film progresses. (sb)

shipfilm (1998) by Stephanie Barber; 16mm, b&w, silent, 4 minutes, print from the maker

this is probably the most heartbreaking film i have made, the pacing is romantic and simple, haiku-esque pauses and inclusions, with the words contrasting this poetry with their factual, disinterested narration. and that narration is a simple statement of failure, one which lies, not in any action, but in the pre-thought to that action, in the hope or faith one holds in oneself, one's knowledge or abilities. (sb)

Intermission

Leche (1998) by Naomi Uman; 16mm, b&w, sound, 30 minutes, print from the maker

Made with the most rudimentary tools of filmmaking, *Leche* is a black and white film which examines details of the lives of a rural Mexican family. The film was hand-processed in buckets to dry on the clothesline. (NU)

Private Movie (2000) by Naomi Uman; 16mm, b&w, sound, 5 minutes, print from the maker

Private Movie is a few stops along the journey home. (NU)

removed (1999) by Naomi Uman; 16mm, color, sound, 6.5 minutes, print from the maker

Using a piece of found porn from the seventies, bleach and nail polish, the filmmaker has made a new film in which the woman is present only as a hole, an empty animated space. (NU)

LAWRENCE JORDAN

A Mosaic of Personal Selections, Program One

Lawrence Jordan In Person

Co-presented with the San Francisco Art Institute and Film Arts Foundation

Sunday, March 19, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

“Larry Jordan’s animated films are among the most beautiful short films made today... His content is subtle, his technique is perfect, his personal style unmistakable.” (Jonas Mekas)

“A dream of buzzing spheres that resonate in a universe of colliding time zones... The Disney Dimension is many light years away from the Dark Matter illuminated by the Metaphysical Magician of Petaluma.” (George Kuchar)

Lawrence Jordan retired from the Faculty of the San Francisco Art Institute last May after thirty years of distinguished teaching. Jordan inspired literally hundreds of aspiring filmmakers, and he has been a pivotal figure in the blossoming of Bay Area personal or avant-garde cinema since relocating here in 1955. San Francisco Cinematheque celebrates the life work of this unique artist with four programs drawn from his body of 40 films, selected by himself, his long-time colleague George Kuchar and Cinematheque curator Steve Anker.

The Old House, Passing (1967); 16mm, b&w, sound, 45 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

A young man, a woman and their daughter become magnetically involved with the past life and tragedy of a woman whom they have never met before but at whose house they arrive. They spend the night, while the ghost of the house walks. The actions of the young couple and their child on the following day parallel events in the old woman’s past: the death of her own daughter and the unexplained disappearance of her husband. The climax is reached when the young couple finds evidence that the woman’s husband died by accident in the attic of the old house years ago.

A requiem sequence: the young family in a graveyard, observed by the released ghost of the dead man. Generally speaking, the plot is of secondary importance to the mood of the film, and the emotions of the characters. This mood is not intended to scare, but to deal with a theme of spirit-drama—in actuality, and as nearly as possible to render the feeling of the filmmaker on the subject of supernatural events.

I send this film into the world with my love and blessings to those who will really find it, as we who conspired and labored in it did. The film is but a fragment of our story, destroyed and reborn in the cutting. It is the memory of a time when four of us entered the gyre that is the making of a film, and this ‘memory’ keeps shifting. (LJ)

“If you want to be entertained, and if poetry bores you, then *The Old House, Passing* is not for you. This is a difficult non-entertainment film that will only offer itself to those who are willing to give themselves. It is pure cinematic poetry. The powerful evocations of the dark forces in our lives are unfolded and displayed with absolute surety and absolute artistry... and the word for that is ‘masterpiece.’” (Robert Nelson)

The Apparition (1976); 16mm, color, sound, 50 minutes, print from the maker

My exact intention is to present an imaginary story against a background of reality. This is somewhat different from “shooting on location.” Locations in many films are often doctored to suit the purposes of the script. I hoped to present a picture (in the background) of how things really looked in the early or mid-70s in San Francisco and Northern California (narrowed, admittedly, to the dimension of the foreground story). I believe the film achieves this purpose; at least its directness does not have the feel of “sameness” that so many Hollywood “location” films have. My intention with the story is simple in content, more complex in structure of presentation: I am interested in a man struggling to place himself in love and in commercial filmmaking, while at the same time suffering the affliction and discovery of being haunted by a former incarnation of himself. Structurally, this film—like about one-fifth of the films now coming from the studios—is a film cut elliptically because it did not work in a straight line as called for in the script. (LJ)

LAWRENCE JORDAN

A Mosaic of Personal Selections, Program Two

Lawrence Jordan In Person

Co-presented with the Pacific Film Archive and Film Arts Foundation

Tuesday, March 21, 2000 — Pacific Film Archive — 7:30 pm

see March 19 for series overview

Duo Concertantes (1964); 16mm, color, sound, print from the maker

Our Lady of the Sphere (1969); 16mm, color, sound, print from The Pacific Film Archive

Orb (1973); 16mm, color, sound, print from the Pacific Film Archive

Once Upon A Time (1974); 16mm color, sound, print from the maker

Masquerade (1981); 16mm color, sound, print from the maker

The Visible Compendium (1991); 16mm color, sound, print from the maker

LAWRENCE JORDAN

A Mosaic of Personal Selections, Program Three

Lawrence Jordan In Person

Co-presented with the San Francisco Art Institute and Film Arts Foundation

Thursday, March 23, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

see March 19 above for series overview,

Visions of a City (1957/1978); 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes, print from the maker

I resurrected this film from neglected oblivion because, on viewing it in 1978, I found that it was one of those rare films that I have always deplored the scarcity of: documents of how it really looked in a certain place in a certain year. I also liked the mirror imagery and the subtle increase in tempo of the film to its conclusion. All images were taken from the various reflective surfaces of the city, and the original intention—the trapping of man on this impersonal surface—seems both relevant and at the same time unimportant to me, in perspective. I am also pleased that there exists this filmic portrait of the poet McClure as he really looked in 1957, in San Francisco. (LJ)

Sophie's Place (1986); 16mm, color, sound, 86 minutes, print from the maker

A culmination of five years' work. Full hand-painted cut-out animation. Totally unplanned, unrehearsed development of scenes under the camera, yet with more "continuity" than any of my previous animations, while meditating on some phase of my life. I call it an "alchemical autobiography." The film begins in a paradisiacal garden. It then proceeds to the inside of the Mosque of St. Sophia. More and more the film develops into episodes centering around one form or another of Sophia, an early Greek and Gnostic embodiment of spiritual wisdom. She is seen emanating light waves and symbolic objects. (But I must emphasize that I do not know the exact significance of any of the symbols in the film any more than I know the meaning of my dreams, nor do I know the meaning of the episodes. I hope that they—they symbols and the episodes—set off poetic associations in the viewer. I mean them to be entirely open to the viewer's own interpretation.) (LJ)

"The use of moving balloons and the way in which Jordan's objects are continually transforming themselves suggest that the film can be seen as a journey. Not, however, a linear journey across space... Rather, a journey that progresses spatially and temporarily in all directions at once: sideways, up and down, outward and inward, and also forward and backward in time. Movements within one tableau frequently change direction and

type; an object drifting across the frame suddenly alternates with another object in a rapid-fire flicker. The inevitable march forward in time is frequently framed by a background of old engraving, which evokes a past so idealized and so utterly other than the life we know that it suggests a simultaneous nostalgia for the past and awareness that the past cannot be recaptured." (Fred Camper, *The Chicago Reader*)

LAWRENCE JORDAN

A Mosaic of Personal Selections, Program Four

Lawrence Jordan In Person

Co-presented with the San Francisco Art Institute and Film Arts Foundation

Sunday, March 26, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

see March 19 for series overview

The H.D. Trilogy Film:

The Black Oud (1992); 16mm, b&w, sound, 45 minutes, print from the maker

The Grove (1993); 16mm, b&w, sound, 45 minutes, print from the maker

Star of Day (1994); 16mm, b&w, sound, 25 minutes, print from the maker

"Larry Jordan's *H.D. Trilogy Film* is a wonderful, rich film experience that combines the filmmaker's images of the women he loves with Hilda Doolittle's long poem *Hermetic Definitions*, 1960. Rather than trying to dramatize H.D.'s last major work, which would be impossible, Jordan provides a series of images of the poet Joanna McClure as she journeys through ancient ruins, primitive Mediterranean villages, and other places that inspired H.D. The combination of images, Joanna McClure's reading of the poem, and the traditional music of the Mediterranean result in a captivating film experience.

"Jordan planned this work around the visual cues found in H.D.'s writings. Jordan says, 'The poem provided a source of image modality. It determined how the shots would be taken, how the style in which the photography of Ms. McClure would occur... The bottom line is that the film's premise is to trace life *in general*, but real, actually occurring life, not fictional life.' He said McClure would represent many if not all women, especially those who are no longer young.

"One theme of the poem is romance blossoming for the poet who is getting older—*Why did you come to trouble my decline? I am old (I was old till you came)...* *The reddest rose unfolds, (which is ridiculous in this time, this place, unseemly, impossible, even slightly scandalous)*. The film expresses this theme in a universal way. Again, Jordan says, 'the film's concerns are not so much with 'incident' as with 'aspect.' In what aspect do we find the central character? Is she in despair (internally, since her face shows nothing of it)? Or is she in a later-life ascendancy? Actually, her existential interface with her immediate surroundings and with her deepest thoughts (the poem) form the film's deepest resonances. The visual aspect of the film, the picture on the screen, represents an interface with life's surroundings, the 'present'. The soundtrack, specifically the poem, represents the past—her thoughts and reflections, her timeless inner modality, or her past life experiences.

"Jordan's manner of showing the present is to observe McClure doing hundreds of things a traveler might do on a trip to Europe. We see her in the streets of Rome, visiting a temple of Hephaestus in Athens, basking in the sun and the wind of the Mediterranean, simply putting on make-up, riding in a train in England (part 2), or walking in the streets of a fourteenth century Italian town (part 3). Just as important: we do not see her with the filmmaker except once in part 1 as he passes behind her in the mirror with the camera. Throughout the rest of the film she is alone in her thoughts. Even the filmmaker's single self-reflexive appearance seems to make no change in her meditations. What makes these images special is the filmmaker's subjective way of looking at his central character. There is a sense of intimacy in the visuals suggesting that a muse inspires the artist to create this loving portrait. Since Jordan says most of the actions in the film were not planned, it seems he subconsciously chose the most romantic locations, and the best camera angles and lighting situations. On occasion he even filmed unusual incidental images of McClure, including her reflection in windows and mirrors.

"The film was shot in black and white with a 16mm spring wound Bell and Howell camera. Sepia color was added to the film by the processing laboratory.

"The candid quality of the images enriches H.D.'s crystalline, intensely personal lines. To achieve this documentary look Jordan says he limited his directing chores to simple instructions; he would tell Joanna to sit at a table and pour out a glass of wine, to open books, to walk in a certain direction. He says he rarely made changes in the places used in the film. One change he did make was to put a rose in the niche in a wall, an image suggested by the poem. Jordan sees the visuals as a portrait of Joanna McClure's life during the years 1990 through 1992. The few fictitious elements added to the film were imposed on Joanna's activities in order to relate her real-life experiences to H.D.'s, as the filmmaker was already severely under H.D.'s spell throughout the filming.

"When the project was begun Jordan wanted to discover if a film could show that *Hermetic Definitions* was as great a poem as he felt it to be. The result of this personal experiment is a film that is sensitive enough to enhance Hilda Doolittle's poem without overpowering it. Hopefully the literary world will discover this film and agree with the importance McClure and Jordan give to H.D.'s work." (Karl Cohen)

Hilda Doolittle, who always signed herself "H.D.", was born and raised in Pennsylvania, though she spent her adult life among the literary circles of England and Europe. She is known as an "imagist" poet, and her career, which includes numerous books of poetry and a number of densely poetic novels, is closely associated with her mentor Ezra Pound, though her writing style is not. For a time she acted in films. She was married and had one daughter. She was devoted to Sigmund Freud, was analyzed by him in 1933-34, and wrote *Tribute to Freud*, which was published in 1956. *Hermetic Definitions* was her last major poem, consisting of three parts: *Red Rose & A Beggar*, *Grove of Academe*, and *Star of Day*. She died in 1961 at the age 77.

DYED LIGHT

New by Stan Brakhage

Thursday, March 30, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Stan Brakhage's newest short films include some of his finest hand-colored work made to date. With remarkable range, control and nuance of expression, Brakhage continues to deepen his ability to create meaningful lightplays of rhythm and texture awash with cinematic color without the use of recorded imagery. Tonight's program, drawn from a large group of recent releases, was curated by Steve Anker.

The Earthsong of the Cricket (1999); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

This is a hand-painted work whose shapes are scratched on black leader filled with varieties of color: the resultant shapes tend to suggest insect-like movements, a rub of bent-lines together suggesting the electric hind legs of the cricket, whose movements engender (thru elaborate step-printing) quick pullbacks within frames of the film, so contrived as to create visual agitron lines within the zoom-like effect whose rhythm approximates a cricket's repetitive sound. This effect is echoed ephemerally later in the film as it nears its end of muted pull-down shapes and approximations of the earth-clod-likenesses and/or autumnal leaf-likenesses which begin the film. (SB)

Cricket Requiem (1999); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Cricket Requiem is a hand-painted and elaborately step-printed film which juxtaposes bent, sometimes saw-tooth, scratch shapes that multiply, colored in pastels, on a white field juxtaposed with emerging, and sometimes retreating, bi-pack imagery of the faintest imaginable lines (solarized lines) etched in brown-black. This interplay continues until the latter imagery begins to dominate with increasing recurrence. Then suddenly there's a vibrant mix of thick black lines (which is "echoed" once again near end of film) that alters the increasingly colored bent lines and their thin-stringy accompaniment, with rhythms which suggest a stately and emphatic end. (SB)

The Birds of Paradise (1999); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

This is a hand-painted work which involves a variety of colors applied within gouged and scratched shapes which approximate both swift shifts of bird-shape (legs, beaks and feather-spreads especially) and the Bird of Paradise flower-form as well, the former tending to metamorphose into the latter across the course of the work. (SB)

The Lion and the Zebra Make God's Raw Jewels (1999); 16mm, color, silent, 6 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

This film is a hand-painted combination of shapes which suggest, as appropriately colored, jungle, open veldt, horizontals of grasses, shag-shape yellow of lion's mane, the black & white stripes of the zebra, the eyes, the teeth, the tearing open into raw blood-red meat and curve of bone. Nonetheless the film is in no sense an animation work but rather a collection of mostly un-nameable shapes which gather round this recognizable iconography and visually dominate the image which repeats its, thus, ephemeral chase-and-catch increasingly closer, finally obliterating all but the "jewels," the multiple coloring, referred to in the title. (SB)

Coupling (1999); 16mm, color, silent, 4.5 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

This hand-painted and elaborately step-printed work (involving Positives and Negatives of original painted source material in combination, as well as superimpositions filmed at 24 fps and at 48 fps) is a very organic be-seeming darkly colored work (blood and rust reds mixed with off-greens), as if microscopic images of connective (and other) cells and/or threads of internal muscles were caught in a "dance" (i.e. contrapuntal varieties-of-rhythm increasingly coordinated) ultimately suggestive of sex. The forms of the work also vaguely metaphor male and female exterior nudity coupling. The evolution of the work is almost purely rhythmic, as increased tempos, in ever more complex interaction, evolve to coordinated climax and brief aftermath. (SB)

The Dark Tower (1999); 16mm, color, silent, 2.5 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

This hand-painted step-printed film begins with streaks of glare light and vibrantly colored forms apparently in the sky for inasmuch as there appears, frame center, the tapered shape of a tower, a silhouette as it were against the backdrop of the flaring sky. As this shape of tower disappears, the conflagration of scratches and paints seems grounded and takes on the semblance of a battle of knights, their lances, horses, et al., often against a scattering of star-like flecks until finally the silhouette of the tower reappears as if much closer, certainly thicker and straight-sided. The film finishes as textures which tend to suggest an entrance into the textured walls of the tower, textures and stars intermingled with what may well seem chain-mail as well. (SB)

Worm and Web Love (1999); 16mm, color, silent, print from Canyon Cinema

Worm and Web Love begins with bracketed light, a throbbing worm in the sand and sea foam mixed with grass and oceanic detritus, soon superimposed upon the dark blue-toned face of a man, then a woman, each seen, then on, through superimpositions of drifting smoke and the back-lit stark grid of a spider's web. The obvious affections of the man and woman, their clear display of love, is metaphored in these tenuous superimpositions, culminating in the frantic movements of the spider itself and the dance of joy of the features of the couple in loving resolution. (SB)

Intermission

The Persian Series 1, 2 & 6 (1999); 16mm, color, silent, 9 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

1) This hand-painted and elaborately step-printed work begins with a flourish of reds and yellows and purples in palpable fruit-like shapes interspersed by darkness, then becomes lit lightning-like by sharp multiply-colored twigs-of-shape, all resolving into shapes of decay. (SB)

2) Multiple thrusts and then retractions of oranges, reds, blues, and the flickering, almost black, textural dissolves suggesting an amalgam approaching script. (SB)

6) Orange, red, yellow, pink, blue, green. Great coloration: variety of colors, abstract swirls. Slows down, through serious bright. Not my favorite *Persian*, but a good counterpart to other abstractions. (SB)

(...) *Reel 5* (1998); 16mm, color, sound, 12 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

This work is in five reels (numbered, but called "reels" so that they don't take on the connotations of "Parts"—thus each simply a part of the "trail" of colored scratches, white scratches [on black & white leader] which suggest, to me, a passage.) The third "reel" combines these scratches with some motion picture film, mostly of the ocean. The fifth "reel" is the only one with a soundtrack; but of course that makes the whole work a "SOUND film" because the audio track must be turned-on from the beginning. (SB)

"Brakhage's new series of scratch-and-stain films, known as (...) or *ellipses*, are, among other things, a visual analogue to Abstract Expressionism. The onrushing imagery and the spatial conundrums it creates evoke not only Pollock but also the work of Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, and even Mark Rothko—that is Pollock et al., at 24 frames per second. Eschewing the camera, Brakhage scrapes away the film emulsion to create a thicket (or sometimes a spider's web) of white lines and rich, chemical colors. Some segments of the original footage appear

to have been printed on negative stock or perhaps solarized—so that the blue and pink lines are inscribed on a white field. In any case, (...) is a cosmos. Rich without being ingratiating, the effect is one of rhythmic conflagration.

“A second twenty-minute reel is more staccato—mad chicken-scratch calligraphy fluttering out of a yellow void, sketchy lightning bolts or fireworks interrupted by a sudden field of turquoise. The third and shortest section reintroduces camera-derived imagery and, minimal as it may be (sunlight shimmering on water, seagull wheeling in the sky), it’s still a shock to see ‘something.’ Brakhage continues to play with surfaces, layering the image with scratch bursts and soft-focus superimpositions, sentiment arrives with representation.” (J. Hoberman)

Reel #5 of (...) is composed of scratch-imagery edited to the music of “Flocking” by James Tenney. The music is allowed to play for about 2.5 minutes accompanied only by black leader: then there is a sudden flare of pure white which begins to flicker with negative-colored ephemeral shapes, until finally the music and a fulsome mass of scratched images are accompanying each other.

At times a distinctly different quality of colored image appears and continues for a while (non-orange negative photography of painted film as well as picture images, altogether unrecognizable, un-nameable). The audio-visual aesthetic is such that there are very few absolute synchronizations between image and sound, but rather music “echoing” visual or visuals cut into the rhythmic patterns of previous music, so that the two “go along” together interweaving without either dominating the other (which is the principal reason the music is allowed at beginning to establish its aesthetic in the mind of the listener before he or she is expected to follow the development of visual patterns): both audio and visual end at the same time, bringing some sense of closure to the event of the film. (SB)

Moilsome Toilsome (1999); 16mm, color, sound, 5.5 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

This is a photographed filmic searching-for-whales, the camerawork and editing attempting to approximate something of the rubbing up against water of the whale, of the surface foam and the hard coils of water through which it swims, of the gray-greens and blacks of its environment. And then suddenly there is the vision of many whales rolling, breaching, twisting and turning in various play with each other, a mother and baby slapping fins together, so forth. This film is about the identification with the world of the whale and the experience of seeing, then (at the distance of being human), many killer whales in glimpses of our given sights of them. (SB)

GOSHOGAOKA BY SHARON LOCKHART

Sharon Lockhart In Person

Co-Presented with SFAI's Walter/McBean Gallery

Saturday, April 1, 2000—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm

Los Angeles-based Sharon Lockhart’s still photographs have been exhibited throughout the world and a selection of these, along with her film, *Goshogaoka*, are included in this year’s Whitney Biennial. In conjunction with her photographic installation at the McBean/Walter Gallery (on view March 17-April 15), Cinematheque will co-present the Bay Area premiere of *Goshogaoka*, a rigorous celebration both of cinema and the un-choreographed rhythms of a Japanese women’s basketball team: “*Goshogaoka* deals with truth, beauty (consider the framing and the image), and the idea that a collection of individuals behaving synchronously creates something more, a new entity—the group.” (Laurence Kardish, Curator, The Museum of Modern Art, for Sundance Film Festival Catalogue)

Lockhart’s earlier *Khalil, Shaun: A Woman Under the Influence* showed at Cinematheque in March 1998.

Goshogaoka (1997); 16mm, color, sound, 63 minutes, print from Blum & Poe Gallery

Without any knowledge of the Japanese language, Lockhart left for Japan in the Fall of 1996, with an Asian Cultural Council grant, to undertake a three-month residency in Ibaraki prefecture (a small suburb an hour and a half north of Tokyo). Within walking distance from her studio she found *Goshogaoka*, a junior high school with a girls’ basketball team. Lockhart attended the training sessions that took place indoors, in a large hall

curiously marked by a double function. The lines drawn on its floor identify it as a basketball court, but the red curtains in the background indicate the presence of a stage. When the girls practice, the arrangement of the theatre is reversed: they are in the space reserved for seating, looking away from the stage. Yet, the positioning of Lockhart's camera assigns *us*, as spectators of the film *Goshogaoka*, an imaginary seat within that hollowed-out auditorium, while subverting the direction of our vision. The object of our attention should be neither the red curtains, nor the hope that, once open, these curtains will reveal a *spectacle*. Our attention should be focused on what is *in front of them*. Or should it?

Some of the "action" (the team's practice) also takes place *behind our backs* as we are trapped in the passive position of film spectators; we cannot turn around. Lockhart has placed her camera in the rear of the auditorium and, once there, stubbornly refuses to move it, or even to play with the lenses: the framing remains *exactly the same* during the sixty-three minutes of the film. From Ozu Yasujiro to Kitano Takeshi, from Andy Warhol to James Benning, from Yvonne Rainer to Chantal Akerman, static framing has a powerful history. Yet, while watching the first few minutes of *Goshogaoka*, it is another minimal-structural film that came to my mind, Michael Snow's *Wavelength*. Snow's film is based not on the absence of camera movement, but on a continuous zoom of forty-five minutes. Using means that at first appear to be radically different, *Wavelength* and *Goshogaoka* carefully frustrate the viewer in her/his expectations of a reverse angle shot. A portion of the "narrative space," whose actual surface we cannot gauge, will remain hidden from us, kept off-screen. The red curtains at the visible end of the auditorium have an almost sadistic function: spectator, beware, you will not see what you want to see. For a viewing subject's natural desire is, when faced with a curtain, to lift it up, and when contemplating a space, to explore all its corners, front, back, port, starboard. Or is it?

Lacan uses the Greek fable of rivalry between Zeuxis and Parrhasios to decipher the desiring gaze. Parrhasios wins the contest because the illusion created by his painting is stronger:

If one wishes to deceive a man, what one presents to him is the painting of a veil, that is to say something that incites him to ask what is behind it...What was at issue [in Parrhasios' painting] was certainly a *trompe l'oeil* (deceiving the eye). A triumph of the gaze over the eye. (Jacques Lacan, *Four Concepts of Psychoanalysis*)

So the veil will never be lifted, yet we keep gazing at it, and it becomes a metaphor of the apparatus that blocks our view in the film. By concealing the imaginary depth that might lurk behind them, these curtains function as an abutment for the gaze. It is impossible to go further; there is no geometrical perspective, no vanishing point, that is to say, no place for the subject. In Renaissance perspective, all the lines eventually meet, so the space seems to be ordered by the subject's perception, a construction on which traditional Western metaphysics rest. The classical form of representation involves one or several figure(s) in the foreground, while in the background a window brings chiaroscuro light into the kitchen or parlor, which then opens onto a distant, misty landscape (as in Flemish paintings) or onto a field of snow in which a little boy is playing with his sled (as in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*). A representational field without depth of space subverts this arrangement, and the subject is left suspended, so to speak, over a sea of signifiers she/he doesn't master. Similar to the still photograph at the end of *Wavelength*, *Goshogaoka*'s curtains flatten the space, but also weave a dialectic between cinema and photography, a long time concern in Lockhart's work. The initial image (a mock "establishing shot," since it establishes nothing but itself) is held like a still, and this is (along with the final shot) the only moment in the film in which the non-diegetic sound is heard: Michael Webster's delicate, discreet, almost environmental music.

Similar to the static images in James Benning's *One Way Boogie Woogie*, the illusion of stillness in *Goshogaoka* is destroyed by a lateral movement coming from off-screen. The girls enter the frame, running from the left, very close to the camera, first in silence, then with the loud beat of their running shoes, creating an effect of surprise, almost of aggression. The girls run in a circle whose center is approximately in the middle of the visible space, so we get to see them, at a distance, as they pass by the curtains. We see twenty-four teenagers, of similar height and figure, uniformly dressed in gray T-shirts and black shorts, most of them with the same haircut. The effect is of serial, repetitive femininity. As they perform calisthenics, their melodic, high-pitched voices can be heard, chanting in unison. I have no idea what they are saying (it sounds like some form of counting), but what fascinates me is the haunting, ritualistic aspect of the chant: a deeper voice (probably belonging to an older girl, the captain of the team, even though she looks the same as the others) launches a solo line, and the chorus responds, as in a Gregorian Mass.

The film is composed of six one-shot sequences of roughly ten minutes each, separated by black fade-outs. In the first sequence the whole team is introduced. In the second, the girls line up in two rows, so compact that the leader of each row completely hides the others; it is only when they start to run that one discovers that, behind each girl, there is another one, and another, etc. In addition to playing on the deceiving relationship between surface and depth, this moment, made possible only by the extreme resemblance between the girls, is mildly disquieting. In the third sequence, the girls appear in front of the camera, alone or in pairs, some wearing a

red top, others a blue one, and perform exercises of skill with a basketball, and now we are able to observe the individual differences among them. Some are slightly taller, others have a bit of baby fat, some have cropped hair, others don a ponytail. Also, in contradistinction to the well-oiled machine of their performance as a group, some of the girls, ever so slightly, make mistakes, do the wrong gesture, miss the ball. We love them for it.

This doesn't last. The fourth sequence begins with one girl facing the camera alone, while in the background two others seem to be in deep concentration performing a drill together. The space that was at first almost empty, gradually fills up with pairs of girls in red and blue, like dots materializing on a computer screen, the only sound being that of the balls thrown from one pair of palms to the other. Then, as the balls are no longer thrown but passed, the exercise ends in absolute silence. Here, the interplay between the individual and the group is expressed in purely formal terms, as an arrangement of visual and musical patterns, as a mode of ordering disparate series of objects, colors and sounds. In fact, it was by listening to Japanese compositions that John Cage realized that silence was music's ultimate truth.

The fifth and sixth sequences are spent in relative silence, accompanied by a short piece of Webster's music and other discreet noises, such as the low shuffle of feet and the rustle of nylon fabric as the girls walk about in a meditative state. We see the stunning spectacle of the girls wearing dark green sweat suits as they line up against the red curtains. By then, we have realized that the framing isn't going to change, that whatever surprises are in store will come from within. As we wonder how dependent on a traditional grammar of reverse angle shots our narrative pleasures are, we have to find another way of looking—reach a certain void in us, suspend judgment, find beauty in the figures created by the girls as we would in a flower arrangement. So we take a step back and enjoy the spectacle like small mouthfuls of warm sake, savoring each drop, each moment. Now the girls are massaging each other, their bodies are covered from shoulder to toe: there is no eroticism here, no sensuality, simply a task to be accomplished, and yet in the way they touch each other I feel warmth, friendship, peace. The space created by the film is one which is *not* structured by the male gaze. As in Chantal Akerman's fixed long takes, *Goshogaoka's* lack of vanishing point, of perspective, of depth, contribute to an absence of hierarchy. Our gaze is free to move laterally, rather than lured to go deeper and deeper (a male sexual metaphor if any) into the field. The effect created is that of a female utopia, in which, for a brief moment in their lives, young girls are free to exist *as minds and bodies* without being turned into sexual commodities. (B erence Reynaud)

'66 FRAMES

Life in the Sixties Underground

Gordon Ball In Person

Co-Presented with City Lights Bookstore

Sunday, April 2, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

Gordon Ball's recently published memoirs, *'66 Frames*, is an insider's chronicle of life in the communal, psychedelic Sixties, focusing especially on Ball's close friendships with Jonas Mekas, Allen Ginsberg, Andy Warhol and other key players in New York's exploding Underground Art scene. Ball's own filmmaking began in 1966 when Jonas Mekas gave him a Regular-8mm movie camera when the filmmaker/critic was on a college visit. Tonight Ball will make a two-part presentation: 4:00pm, at City Lights, he will read from *'66 Frames* and show slides of his diaristic photographs; and 7:30 pm, at SFAI—for his first Cinematheque appearance since May 1982—he will also read and show several films.

Georgia (1966); 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"A perfect one poem of a film—within its short time limit, it contains much of the beauty of the night and the sensuality of women... perhaps even 'THE' woman one sometimes sees dancing in the night, but never touches in the flesh. Dreamlike, beautiful—its brevity compacts its power and renders it haunting." (William Trotter)

"*Georgia* is a good example of a new genre of film that has been developing lately, that is, a portrait film. In some cases, like those of Brakhage, Warhol or Markopolous, there is an attempt at an objective portrait of

a man or woman; in other cases, like in the case of *Georgia*, the portrait becomes completely personalized, poetically transposed; it may not be as multifaceted as, say, Brakhage's portrait of McClure, but an inspired portrait nevertheless, in the vein of a single-minded lyrical love poem." (Jonas Mekas)

Prunes (1966); 8mm, color, silent, 20 minutes, print from the maker

A "collage of daily scenes of campus life." Literally, my first film: shot with the Revere camera Jonas brought me on his visit to Davidson College. Personal, intimate, single-framed. All screenings were in dormitory corridors (one, on a classmate's bare chest) and small living rooms decades ago until last spring, when *Prunes* premiered at Anthology Film Archives. Tonight's showing is its west coast premiere. (GB)

Millbrook (1984); 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

For aeons it's been the human family around a fire constructing and refiguring basic myths: our earliest family or tribal "movie." So *Millbrook* recounts a mythical true story, a life-changing event told against fire, emblem of consumption and renewal: In the enormous forested estate once used by Timothy Leary, a young couple lose individual identity, merge with decaying leaves and are consumed by maggots as the entire universe undergoes entropy, revive as it regenerates and are saved from death by a mysterious familiar stranger. (GB)

Mexican Jail Footage (1980); 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Paranoid surreptitious in-jail camera held in this prisoner's hands documents daily events and posturings of 25 gringos (and Mexican jailmates) arrested at Puerto Vallarta 1968 without charge. Was there Mexico, D.F.—Washington, D.C. collusion behind this roundup from Yelapa ferryboats, private town houses and palm-roofed wall-less jungle huts? It took place during national polarization (of youth culture, official culture) in the U.S.; older U.S. tourists in Mexico were shocked to find more New Generation they thought they'd left behind, and official Mexico was already paranoid in the face of Olympics six months later (where police would shoot 108 people). Narration's a dense web of comedy, horror, and Kafkaesque grotesque behind a succession of raw sunlit images of comely youths imprisoned, male and female. (GB)

"*Mexican Jail Footage* reminds me of standing by the tracks and watching a train go by—it is so strong, it lasts so long, and it is over so quickly." (Tom Whiteside)

"I can't forget this film." (Robert Frank)

"*Mexican Jail Footage* is the best jail film I've ever seen." (Jonas Mekas)

On '66 *Frames* by Gordon Ball

"From city and country communes, underground and avant-garde film and photography, Gordon Ball has been marvelously placed as participant and observer of many extraordinary art situations." (Allen Ginsberg)

"This book made me want to take acid and have sex with lots of people. It also made me want to stay up all night in the company of my genius friends in the mid-sixties in New York's Lower East Side. It also made me grateful for not being twenty and living in a war-wracked, generation-torn, paranoid world. Gordon Ball writes with compassion and nostalgia about a unique and nearly indescribable epoch." (Andrei Codrescu)

"'66 *Frames* is a beautifully written book which captures the spirit of those times better than any other book I know." (Stan Brakhage)

"...a unique perspective on a much analyzed but still elusive period—when one awoke every day feeling as if personal revelation and cultural revolution were fully attainable. Ball's youthful intelligence and enthusiasm, and his willingness to labor for little money in musty lofts and tenement apartments, put him at the epicenter of New York's downtown film/art/poetry/music scene. He kept excellent notes." (Amy Taubin)

"A picaresque memoir... in which the young Southern innocent sets forth in all his whiteness to find himself among visionary New York poets and other flaming creatures of the 1960s." (Lawrence Ferlinghetti)

Biography: Gordon Ball

Gordon Ball (born Paterson, New Jersey, grew up Tokyo, Japan) began work in film when given a regular 8mm movie camera by Jonas Mekas on a 1966 college visit; worked for Mekas and Film-Makers' Cooperative in New York 1966-67, a period detailed in Ball's *'66 Frames* (Coffee House Press, 1999); hitchhiked across U.S. and Mexico to live in jungle-sea-mountain village; was arrested without charge entering Puerto Vallarta at times of gringo hippie *federale* round-up, and shot what would become *Mexican Jail Footage* from the inside. Returning to U.S., worked several years as manager of small farm retreat for artists and poets established by Allen Ginsberg, with whom he'd work on books and photography over coming decades; made *Farm Diary* (1968-1969), available through Film-Makers' Cooperative. Entering graduate school University of North Carolina Chapel Hill 1973 he told his life story under a magnolia tree on Franklin Street summer 1977; made film elegies *Father Movie* (1978) one year after father's death and *Enthusiasm* (1980) five year's after mother's; shot *Millbrook* (1985), a recapturing of personal psychedelic experience at Timothy Leary's upstate redoubt; taught 2 summers (1986 and 1988). In 1980 he adopted a phrase from Yeats, "technical sincerity", as touchstone for his first-person filmmaking: "Fine or rough, heavy or ethereal, there is always at base an unregretful uncompromising heart and consciousness. It is negligent of all but its own earnest rhythmic awareness: and that, after all may be what we were looking for—what one person and no other can give us." In recent years he's exhibited and published some of the many photographs he took of Ginsberg and Beat colleagues over three decades. He teaches literature, composition, and film in the Department of English and Fine Arts, VMI, Lexington, Virginia.

AN EVENING WITH TRINH T. MINH-HA

Trinh T. Minh-ha in Person

Co-presented with The Poetry Center

Thursday, April 6, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Trinh T. Minh-ha, in her unique and beautifully composed film-works (*A Tale of Love, Shoot for the Contents, Reassemblage, Naked Spaces—Living is Round* and *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*), is a lyricist of the first order, an imaginative seer and thinker whose art radically remakes narrative modes of filmmaking by invoking and then reinventing the tools of the anthropologist, the poet, the political witness, the visual artist and the musical composer. Tonight we offer a rare chance to hear Trinh T. Minh-ha read from her written work, including *Drawn from African Dwellings* (in collaboration with Jean-Paul Bourdier) and *Cinema Interval*, which is new from Routledge. Sections of her film shot in West Africa, *Naked Spaces—Living is Round*, will be screened alongside the readings.

AN EVENING WITH MATTHIAS MÜLLER

From *The Memo Book* to *The Phoenix Tapes*

Matthias Müller in person

Sunday, April 9, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

Over the past fifteen years or so, Matthias Müller has emerged as one of the most prolific and accomplished filmmakers on the avant-garde scene today. Reviewing his recent films, one is impressed not only by their sophistication, but also by their striking thematic and stylistic diversity. Müller still seems to approach filmmaking with the restlessness of a child prodigy. Where a film like *The Memo Book* will speak the poetic

language of a Brakhage, Baillie or Anger with amazing fluency, a piece like *Home Stories* (1990) or *The Phoenix Tapes* will adopt a completely different idiom, with no loss of expressive range. Fitting Müller's work into some prefabricated category is a difficult, if not impossible task, and the shopworn modern/postmodern labels offer no help at all. If we persist in trying to locate some underlying unity among these pieces, we eventually find ourselves running into some practically universal themes; Müller's work, one is tempted to say, seems to be most deeply concerned with the capacity of art to impose form on human experience. Perhaps what is distinctive about Müller's work, though, consists in its refusal to take that relationship for granted. In each of the pieces presented tonight, Müller exhibits a keen, and often visceral awareness of the limitations of orderly systems, including his own. For Müller, the aspiration to orderliness is an all-too-human impulse—necessary, but always tragically incomplete. And yet Müller's energies seem to be inexorably drawn towards those points of weakness, to the stress fractures running through the forms we use to contain the uncontainable. Just where a regulatory system threatens to collapse under the pressure of its own ambitions, Müller will discover the forces that drive his art.

Aus der Ferne (The Memo Book) (1989); 16mm, color, sound, 28 minutes

The film begins with an image of binding. Scattered evidence—letters, photographs, loose-leaf pages—are gathered up and tied into stiff bundles. Mike Hoolboom's voice-over initially suggests that this will be a work of mourning, an artist's attempt to express a loss that may, in the end, remain inexpressible. *The Memo Book* (*Aus der Ferne*, or "from afar") was inspired by an unexpected discovery. A friend stumbled across some footage of one of Müller's former lovers who had recently died of AIDS. This recovered reel provides Müller's piece with both a literal and metaphorical point of departure. But the question that *The Memo Book* asks is not how are films like memory, an analogy which is at least as old as cinema itself—but far more radically—how are films like bodies? Müller never lets us forget that film has distinctly skin-like properties. It can be scratched, weathered, aged, scarred, and most importantly, eroticized. Since André Bazin declared that photography is a modern form of mummification, we have become accustomed to thinking about cinema as a sort of funeral rite. Driven by the real urgency of loss, however, Müller's *The Memo Book* will travel along very different associational paths: a shot of an exposed, beating heart suddenly narrows the distance between bodies and machines; images of gratings, manhole covers and sewage drains imbue streets and buildings with an almost organic anatomy; a spinning fan evokes both a living respiratory system and the Maltese cross of the film projector. As images of silhouettes and shadows continue to accumulate throughout the film, we eventually begin to wonder if bodies, like films, might also function as temporary receptacles for the absorption and reflection of light. The middle sequence, "Jardim Botanico," brings these chains together in the somewhat unassuming figure of the leaf. Shots of a loamy forest floor give way to hand-processed images which themselves resemble decaying leaves, and the dream sequence as a whole concludes with a shot of a young man whose shoulder is tattooed with a leaf-like symbol. Müller here presents us with three organized systems designed to capture and transform light—skin, leaves and cinema. Once superimposed, these systems become difficult to separate out again. One is reminded of physicist David Bohm's suggestion that trees tend to problematize our accepted distinctions between organic and inorganic matter. Out of this confrontation with the finality of death, Müller seems to have responded in an entirely unexpected way. Rejecting conventionalized forms of mourning and memorialization, Müller instead allows himself to be recaptivated by the ineffable mysteries of life.

Vacancy (1998); 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

Like *The Memo Book*, *Vacancy* is a film concerned with the ways in which organized systems tend to break down. Situating itself somewhere between documentary and diary, *Vacancy* traces the rise and fall of Brasilia, a city intended to become a utopia on earth. *Vacancy*, like *The Memo Book*, begins by announcing the triumph of gravity. Overshadowed by their history, the old cities languish, disintegrate and disappear. The film goes on to speak in multiple voices: home movies from the city's engineers are woven into Müller's personal reveries. While the manifest subject of the film is the inevitability of loss, recurring images of textures and surfaces start to offer a counterpoint to these mournful notes. We watch city workers carefully cleaning a stark, white wall—is it an act of folly or a gesture of love? Brasilia clearly emerges as a monument to the failure of abstraction, but Müller's film further insinuates that there might have been another desire at work here all along, beside and beneath the city's quixotic struggle with gravity. The aim of the modernist structure is not simply to direct the gaze skyward, but to provide a vantage point from which one might better re-view the earth. A path worn into the grass, that is, will only begin to look like the line of a hand when it can be viewed from some place high above. Müller's sensual overhead shots of the Brazilian savanna create a potent contradiction, suggesting that the modern longing for transcendence has always contained an equal and opposite desire for ecstatic return. Paradoxically, Müller appears to be suggesting that the urge to rise above the earth contains something more than just a desire for disembodiment and control; indeed, it is possible that abstraction and eroticism might actually name two sides of a single movement.

The Phoenix Tapes (1999); video, color, sound, 45 minutes

Moving from the psychology of modern architecture to the architecture of modern psychology, Müller's latest piece offers a tour-de-force analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's cinema. Made in collaboration with video artist, Christoph Giradet, and sound artist, Dirk Schaefer, *The Phoenix Tapes* consist entirely of reprocessed footage from the Hitchcock canon. The tapes are divided into six separate movements: "Rutland," "Burden of Proof," "Derailed," "Why Don't You Love Me?," "Bedroom" and "Necrologue." Müller's nonce taxonomy strongly echoes Barthes's *Michelet*, an eccentric biography which is subdivided into categories like "Michelet, Eater of History," "Death-as-Sleep and Death-as-Sun," and "The Ultra-Sex." For Barthes as well as for Müller, all taxonomic systems are temporary contrivances, and they should cease to exist after their present labors have come to an end.

The first segment, "Rutland," takes up where *Vacancy* leaves off. A collage of Hitchcock's extreme long shots—many of them totally uninhabited—becomes a meditation on the structures of modern paranoia. The next sequence exposes the obverse side of that logic by interrogating the economy of the close-up. Framed by these two quintessentially modern paradigms—all-encompassing structures versus the trivial part-object which must find its place within them—Müller's analysis insists that Hitchcock's cinema was never really about people at all. "Derailed" extends that critique by exploring some analogies between Hitchcock's cinema and train travel. With just a few images of stunning precision and clarity, Müller reveals that both technologies are built around a fundamental paradox: a stasis in movement, a linear movement which simultaneously requires a circular return. These circles become particularly vicious in Hitchcock's cinema, and the last three segments of *The Phoenix Tapes* provide ample documentation of those mechanisms' destructive power. The final sequence, "Necrologue," evokes another great modernist meditation on mobility and stasis, Chris Marker's *La Jetée*. *The Phoenix Tapes*, like Marker's film, suggests that cinema, from its very inception, has always functioned as a time machine, and that desire, memory and loss have ever since remained inextricably bound to the systems of their own alienation.

Program Notes written by David Conner

Thanks to Jay Rosenblatt, John Turk and ResFest for the use of their Beta deck.

AN EVENING WITH GAD HOLLANDER

Gad Hollander In Person

Co-Presented with The Poetry Center

Thursday, April 13, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Gad Hollander is a poet and filmmaker born in Jerusalem, raised in Queens and now living in London. His latest book of poetry (and first to be published in the US), *Walserian Waltzes*, is an extraordinary hall-of-mirrors poem-in-prose revolving around the figure of Robert Walser, the great Swiss-German writer of "minimal" fictions whose work stood behind Kafka and others. Along with a reading from the latter, we present his *Diary of a Sane Man*. "This poet-turned-filmmaker's first feature-length film (made on a budget for a 15-minute short, using borrowed equipment and scavenged, odds-and-ends stock) is a serendipitous blend of art and irony, philosophic reflection, double-edged nonsense, improvisation, mythology, and the music of Johann Sebastian" (Melissa Drier). The author of several works of poetry, Hollander has also directed *Mnemosyne* (1985), *Background Music (Orphic)* (1986), *Euripides' Movies* (1987) and is currently finishing his latest, *Postpalaver*.

Walserian Waltzes; Avec Books, Penngrove CA, 1999

"*Walserian Waltzes* is neither a biography of Robert Walser, nor a Kafka-in-Queens type of displacement. It is closer to what Borges does with Don Quixote in "Pierre Menard, Author of Quixote." This Robert Walser is/is not Robert Walser, and the oscillation between the two figures makes for a breathtaking tour de force." (Rosemarie Waldrop)

"Gad Hollander's *Walserian Waltzes* is a sequence of meditations on madness, writing, death, and identity. Focusing on a character split between the first-person singular pronoun and his own name—a character

who may or may not be dead and may or may not be insane, a character whose goal is to become a 'self-made failure'—Hollander skillfully leads us to contemplate the paradoxical trajectories of language, the subjective and objective worlds it seems to create and destroy. Anyone looking for fiction that combines the compressed and elusive qualities of poetry with the abstract resonances of philosophy will find *Walserian Waltzes* a richly satisfying experience." (Stephen-Paul Martin)

Diary of a Sane Man (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 85 minutes, print from the British Film Institute
A Fair Description of *Diary of a Sane Man*:

A PLOT OF LAND

Sara & her grandad walk through the landscapes and the camera follows. My preference would have been to remain silent, to stare at the pictures without the intrusion of sound, to let the film play itself out in the forbidden zone of pretentiousness. The plot of land on which the little girl & her grandad are walking is the plot for the film, the earth itself, and its sub-plot is woven into a selection of Bach's Goldberg Variations. In one of the previous versions the narrator called the place "never-never land," but this was patently false and consequently had to be erased. Sara spots Venus strolling through the landscape, an *agent provocateur* from the country of myth. A film-maker, thinly disguised as himself, wants to make a film about Venus, changes the latter to Aphrodite and submits his idea to a committee of producers. Judging from the narrator's descriptions it's not surprising that the film-maker is rejected, though what is surprising is the committee's violent reactions to his ideas and his subsequent "fall" into the very movie he's describing. We are now about ten minutes into the film and find ourselves more or less where we started. Any viewer who at this point expects a plot development to carry him along will find himself sinking fast. We have heard the theme and the first of the Goldberg Variations, of which there are thirty. But before we go on with the musical sub-plot we are introduced to Antonin Artaud.

ANTONIN ARTAUD

What Artaud and I have in common is that we both love the Marx Brothers, whose anarchy he described as "poetic and dreamlike." I don't know what he thought of Bach. He appears to the filmmaker as a woman and says, "I want to attempt a terrible feminine." I think Bach must have been "funny," in the sense of insane, beyond reason, and sacred. But that's history. Artaud is also history, but closer. He died the year I was born, so there's a sense of personal responsibility in the matter. Every time I work on something which passes for art, a voice from inside the work says: "There ought to be a law against society." There is such a law and Antonin Artaud articulated it in his poetry.

THE MARX BROTHERS & BACH

The film has more in common with the Marx Brothers than with Godard, Pasolini, or any other arthouse film-maker. In fact, *Diary of a Sane Man* is an imitation of a Marxist movie but with the priorities reversed: instead of full frontal anarchy with musical interludes, the film shows full frontal music with comic interpolations. Anyone who goes to see a Marx Brothers movie for its plot, or listens to Bach for a "religious experience" is a total schmuck and would be best advised not to bother with this film.

MURDERING TIME

The murder of time is not a crime but an art, though some would regard it as a kind of dream. The difference is academic. But in any event, it's not what we'd call a story. Time-murder as "film" involves a succession of images and sounds, but above all requires the collusion of an audience.

They left the cinema with the taste of time in their mouths, as if each had nibbled a little portion off its flesh. They went to the movies for the rest of their lives and on each occasion chewed off a bit more of time's body. Sometimes these morsels were good and sometimes not, but it was always difficult to predict what any particular duration would taste like. Toward the end of it, time had retained exactly the same proportions as when they had first encountered it. They asked themselves, "Where did all that time go?" Had they gone to see *Diary of a Sane Man* early on in life they would have realized that time could not be digested, that it went nowhere except in and out of the body's holes. (Gad Hollander)

Gad Hollander Filmography

Mnemosyne (1985); *Background Music (Orphic)* (1986); *Euripides' Movies* (1987); *Diary of a Sane Man* (1990); *Postpalaver* (in-progress)

Gad Hollander Bibliography

Page (1979); *Figures of Speech* (1987); *Video Residua (Orphic)* (1987); *Sleep, Memory* (1985/ 1988); *The Palaver* (1998); *Walserian Waltzes* (1999)

3rd ANNUAL TEXTURE OF THE GESTURE

A Celebration of Hand-Processed Films

Curated and Presented by Ken Paul Rosenthal

Sunday, April 16, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

“The look of hand-processed movie film is pure Shake 'n Bake. This process is not for those who prefer the film surface with a smooth polished complexion. Instead, oozing mounds of crusty chemical infections will bleach, bleed and belch all over your perfect Kodak moments. Sometimes the film will become a crumbling arctic ice floe: image chunks will skate and reposition themselves like bad buoys or Pollackesque life preservers. Or it will resemble a fly strip stuck with half-buzzed guts draining and staining the length of the film. YES! The colors remind me of smashing gypsy moth caterpillars with a hammer as a child in New Jersey. I never knew what color innards would spill out. I'd expect chocolate and out would come lime green. Hand-processing is just like that. It's the flavor of the moment. Even black and white can look like Walt Disney puking.”

from 'Antidote for a Virtual World' by KPR

2000: A Space Odd-essay (2000)
Performance by Film Boy

Silence (2000) by Troy DeRego; Super 8mm, color, sound, 3 minutes, print from the maker
An exploration of what silence means and what it looks like. (TD)

Archaeology of Memory (1993) by Gary Popovich; 16mm, color, sound, 13 minutes, print from the maker
A cine poem unfolding in a sensual series of evolving myths, sexuality, gender formations, spirituality and death. Beginning with film emulsion scratches and ticks of sound, the film explodes in vibrant colors and multiple image layers accompanied by a musique concrete score composed by Randall Smith. (GP)

Mermaids and Pickles (1999) by Trixie Sweetvittles; 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes, print from the maker
A humorous expression of love for the slimy and the salty that explores the beauty of spontaneity and happy accidents. (TS)

Degree Zero (1999) by Te-shun Tseng; Super 8mm dual-projection, color, sound, 3 minutes, print from the maker
A graphic celebration of certain gestures of modern dance and different textures of the film medium. (TT)

The Shape of the Gaze (2000) by Maïa Cybelle Carpenter; 16mm, color, silent, 7 minutes, print from the maker
A hand-processed and optically printed film which implicates the viewer in the gazes operating between the lesbian filmmaker and her self-identified butch subjects. (MCC)

Paws (1992) by Moira Joseph; Super 8mm, color, sound, 3 minutes, print from the maker
A hand-processed and dyed hallucinatory macro study of a cat. (MJ)

Passing Through (1998) by Karyn Sandlos; screened as video, b&w, sound, 12 minutes, tape from the maker
Events occurring on the streets of a small town in rural Canada provide a loose structure for this experimental narrative, in which the present moment is a story of having been this way before. (KS)

Intermission

Archaeopteryx Dreaming (2000) by silt; 16mm, b&w, silent, 8 minutes, print from the makers
A fourth dimensional fossil record of the plumed serpent *Archaeopteryx Lithographica* ("ancient wing from the printing stone"). (silt)

Vagus (2000) by David Duhig; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes, print from the maker
A multi-layered introspective journey that colorfully wanders through the eye of the beholder. (DD)

Untitled (1991) by Justin Walsh; Super 8mm, b&w, silent, 1.5 minutes, print from the maker
A hand-contact-printed experiment using 16mm academy leader, slug film from *Gunsmoke* and footage of a train in Pittsburgh, PA. (JW)

Diggins (1993) by Christian Bruno and Natalija Vekic; Super 8mm dual-projection, color, sound, 3 minutes, print from the makers
Somewhere outside Nevada City... two movie cameras and a hit of ecstasy... synchronicities soon revealed in the afternoon's unplanned shooting. (CB and NV)

Exercise (2000) by Jessica Gidal; Super 8mm, b&w, sound, 3.5 minutes, print from the maker
Playfully woven images of a body's consistency, squishy tension, loft, suspension and ultimate giddy acceptance of gravity's pull are underscored by the hammers and gongs of gamelan music. (JG)

The Light in Our Lizard Bellies (1999) by Sarah Abbot; 16mm, b&w, sound, 8 minutes, print from the maker
The intensities that discombobulate us as we go through change and face parts of ourselves previously denied or unknown are reflected through a single dancer and the random exposure effects of hand-processing. (SA)

Sueños Liquidos (1999) by Nat Swope; Super 8mm, color, silent, 3 minutes, print from the maker
A rhythmic, dream-like montage culled from everyday images. (NS)

Transmission from the Turn of the 20th Century (2000) by Ghen Dennis; Super 8mm, b&w, sound, 1.5 minutes, print from the maker
These optically printed Kodachrome images of conduits and the travelers within them—telegraphic wires and anatomical tunnels playing host to radio reception scans and tiny biological tourists—hastily describe breakdowns at the points of contact in our age of virtual arrival and departure. (GD)

Yes, I Said Yes, I Will, Yes (1999) by Phil Solomon; 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes, print from the maker
The title is, of course, borrowed from the last lines of Molly Bloom's monologue where, after reviewing all the lovers of her life, she comes home to Bloom in a swooning affirmation. After remaining a bachelor for over 40 years, I finally found a dancing partner. This film was made in a couple of days, and projected outdoors at our wedding. Dedicated to my partner in life, Melinda Barlow. (PS)

*This program is lovingly dedicated to two former students from my 'Celluloid Sandbox' class: Jessica Gidal and Troy DeRego, whose very first films, Exercise and Silence are being screened tonight. Their work reminds me that film is fundamentally not about recording pictures, but dancing with stillness, and manipulating a novel posture for the heart. And that making love for one's self is a reason to make film...
xoxokpr*

FROM DARKNESS LIGHT

The Transfigured Spaces of Jim Jennings

Jim Jennings In Person

Thursday, April 27, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

New York filmmaker Jim Jennings has been making lyrical, contemplative films since the early 1970s, several of which have screened at Cinematheque. Combining an abstract and richly textural exploration of space (the two-dimensional space of the frame as well as the three-dimensional space seen 'through' it) with the poetic evocation of place (in and around New York, Mexico, Rome, San Francisco), Jennings' films are always delicate and delightful adventures in seeing. In the subtle and suspenseful interplays of light and dark, flatness and depth, the abstract and the manifest, Jennings' camera transforms the banal into the sublime and us along with it. Tonight's screening will include films made over two decades, and his most recent work, *Miracle on 34th Street*, will be screened as part of "Breaking Points," our program at the 43rd San Francisco International Film Festival on Sunday April 30 at the Kabuki Theatre at 7:15 pm.

Wallstreet (1980); 16mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes, print from the Film-Makers' Cooperative

"Shot at high noon in New York's financial district, *Wallstreet* is much like a vertical tickertape, charting the existence of typical office workers. The film's elongated shadows suggest these workers' depersonalized, neuter, nearly uniform lives, which flow by without any solid or stable element that might provide definition." (Karen Treanor)

The School of Athens (1997); 16mm, b&w, silent, 14 minutes, print from the Film-Makers' Cooperative

"...we enter the absolute monumental. Raphael's wildly passionate painting has shaken Jennings to the core. Fiercely sexual, tumultuous, his filming of the painting rages on without thought of onlookers; cadenced timing and concerns with proportions out of the question. The film is monstrous, reckless and I couldn't admire it more." (Ken Jacobs)

Shades (1983); 16mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes, print from the Film-Makers' Cooperative

City structures balanced in filmic structures. (JJ)

Silvercup (1998); 16mm, b&w, silent, 12 minutes, print from the maker

The first time I remember going to Long Island City was in 1973 to take a hack license exam. What I remember of the bridge and fringes of subway lines above me was oppression. About twenty years later I found myself back there thrilled by the compositions I was making with a still camera and eventually made *The Elevated* with some of the photographs I took. Often last Winter and Spring I again went back there and ended up expressing a tenderness I felt by making this film. (JJ)

San Cristobal (1983); 16mm, b&w, silent, 8 minutes, print from the maker

A place foreign to me transfigured by me. (JJ)

Painting the Town (1998); 16mm, b&w, silent, 10 minutes, print from the maker

Last autumn on a series of weekend nights I went to "The Crossroads of the World" with a camera and a tape recording of an Opera I love. I played the Opera and shot film for hours at a time. Later in the editing room, I removed what merely documented and braided the sublime. (JJ)

Bye Bye Bob (1990); 16mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes, print from the maker

The morning commute across the bridge becomes a requiem which ends as the procession goes underground. In memory of Bob Fleischner. (Soundtrack from "Enchanted" by George Shearing and the Montgomery Brothers.) (JJ)

Leaves (1975); 16mm, b&w, silent, 8 minutes, print from the maker

The writing between the leaves. (JJ)

"But there is more... A variety of detail inhabits Jennings' simple format. Foreground is played off background. It creates a tension..." (Noël Carroll)

Poems of Rome (1997); 16mm, color, silent, 7 minutes, print from the maker

I jumped a tram in Rome and rode it to the end of the line. On the way, a shadow on a wall caught my eye. The next morning I went back to the shadow on the wall and made this film. (JJ)

Intrigue (1998); 16mm, color, silent, 14 minutes, print from the maker

Surrounded by strangers under the El in Brighton, Brooklyn I submerge myself through the lens of the camera into a childlike world of colors separated from objects, floating to the surface and escaping, as day turns to night and estrangement gives way to emptiness. (JJ)

BREAKING POINTS

New Experimental Films

A Program of Experimental Film Co-Presented by the 43rd San Francisco International Film Festival,
Pacific Film Archive and San Francisco Cinematheque.

Curated by Steve Anker, Kathy Geritz and Irina Leimbacher

Jim Jennings, Alfonso Alvarez and Ellen Ugelstad in Person

April 30, 2000 — AMC Kabuki Theatre — 7:15 pm

An image can be a fragile thing. Just as extreme experiences can provoke extreme emotions—reverence, despair, withdrawal—an image can rupture, fragment, break apart to release reverberating associations. Tonight's program of new experimental films made by both emerging and internationally renowned artists includes a variety of works which explore—and explode—the limits of film's capacity to represent change, memory and the large and small mysteries of human experience.

Muktikara (1999) by Jeanne Liotta; 16mm, color, silent, 12 minutes, print from the maker

Taken from the Sanskrit word for "gentle gazing brings liberation," *Muktikara* is a haunting cinematic meditation on a subtly shifting landscape.

Flip Film (1999) by Alfonso Alvarez & Ellen Ugelstad; 16mm, b&w, sound, 1 minute, print from the makers

Still images of an urban landscape break into motion in Alfonso Alvarez and Ellen Ugelstad's lively animation.

letters, notes (2000) by Stephanie Barber; 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes, print from the maker

Comprised of discarded notes and photos, Stephanie Barber's deceptively simple film conjures up forgotten lives and abandoned narratives.

Domain (1999) by Julie Murray; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes, print from the maker

Children's 3-D toys and insects are the subjects of Julie Murray's look at the violence inherent in the very notion of motion. (Music: "Three Landscapes for Peter Wyer" by Jed Destree, performed by Margaret Lengtan on her CD "The Art of the Toy Piano" © Point Music/Universal 1997)

Miracle on 34th Street (2000) by Jim Jennings; 16mm, b&w, silent, 13 minutes, print from the maker

Lush black and white shadows of a bustling New York sidewalk fracture the screen into surprising abstract patterns of light and dark.

The March (1999) by Abraham Ravett; 16mm, color, sound, 25 minutes, print from the maker

Beginning in 1986, Abraham Ravett repeatedly interviewed his mother about the 1945 "Death March" from Auschwitz. Her fragmented, incomplete memories make up this emotional document, which is as much about the need to forget as the need to know.

Twilight Psalm II: Walking Distance (2000) by Phil Solomon; 16mm, color, sound, 23 minutes, print from the maker

Phil Solomon imagines his film as from the Bronze Age, "a time when images were smelted and boiled rather than merely taken." In it, barely discernable figures and unstable landscapes are freed from the tyranny of the realistic to float in the realm of the unconscious.

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Founded by two Bay Area filmmakers in 1961, **San Francisco Cinematheque** is one of the oldest showcases for non-commercial, personal and experimental film in the United States. Striving to make experimental film and video a part of the larger cultural landscape, Cinematheque presents seventy programs each year, with artists present at many of the screenings, publishes Program Notes and a journal, *Cinematograph*, and regularly collaborates with a number of other arts organizations. For more information or to become a member, give us a call at 415.558.8129.

The **Pacific Film Archive** is one of the world's most important film archives, film studies centers and exhibitors of film art. Their exhibition program offers a wide variety of world cinema from its earliest days through the present, highlighted by prints of exceptional quality, with different public screenings almost every night of the year. They have one of the finest archival programs devoted to the preservation of experimental film. For more information or to become a member, call 510.642.1412.

Program Notes written by Kathy Geritz and Irina Leimbacher

WHEN THE SPIRIT MOVES

Live Music for New Films

David Michalak and Reel Change in Person

Thursday, May 4, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

After thirty years of 16mm filmmaking, David Michalak has formed a soundtrack trio called Reel Change featuring Andrew Voight, Joe Sabella and the filmmaker. Tonight's program showcases the Trio's live music for David's recent works, including the explosive and radiant *Firefly* (2000); the music honeycombs of *Regenbogen* (1999); and the world premiere of a new score for the rarely screened *Fall of the House of Usher*, a 1928 version of the Poe story by Melville Webber and James Sibley Watson. Also included: the demonic *Not Quite Right* (1987), with new live soundtrack; *Start Talking* (1995), a personal tribute; and *When the Spirit Moves* (1999), a color saturated fairy tale that explores the ancient myth of the Keeper of the Forest and Her care for an Evolving Creature (in digital stereo). Musical guest Tom Nunn will join Reel Change playing homemade instruments he calls "bugs." A champagne reception and chat with the filmmaker follows the show.

DE PROFUNDIS

An Evening with Lawrence Brose

Lawrence Brose In Person

Thursday, May 11, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

De Profundis is a mesmerizing and seductive investigation of Oscar Wilde's project of transgressive aesthetics. Incorporating home movies from the 1920s and early gay male erotica along with images from Radical Faerie gatherings, queer pagan rituals, radical drag performances and images of confinement, the film sets up a haunting investigation of queerness, masculinity, history and sexuality. The film employs experimental hand and alternative chemical processing techniques to alter the original images. The transformed footage addresses the fixed framing of masculinity while questioning concepts of redemption, contamination and transgression set against critical readings of Wilde and of contemporary gay culture. These images are buttressed against a soundtrack composed of Wilde aphorisms, a score by Frederic Rzewski (written specifically for the film) and multi-tracked interviews with diverse contemporary gay men.

De Profundis (1997); 16mm, color, sound, 65 minutes, print from the maker

Why did I do Wilde? First to try to recapture and examine the transgressive aesthetics of Oscar Wilde and to address the new conservatism in the Gay Community. That conservatism was in part consolidating around the policing of sex, monitoring behavior and disassociating the marginal quality and power of queerness in the name of political activism (or at least expedience). The other reason is that I am interested in how people today use language to define their own identity (often unself-consciously and without any critical analysis) and how this relates back to the last century when much of this language developed. And finally, to explore a broader range of deviant gender behavior and sexualities that can be seen at work in various trajectories from Wilde's imprisonment in 1895.

...Wilde was imprisoned in the year of the birth of cinema so I wanted to address cinema in its infancy, and the earliest images of cinema are home movies. I have also found this to be true of early gay erotica and muscle boy movies like the Athletic Models Guild films. I wanted to tease out other readings of these home movie images I acquired of men and boys on a boat—the boat acting as a container just as the framing and language are containers. I also wanted to take something private (home movies and porn) and make it public—continuing the friction between those two arenas. Think about it, what is “coming out” but an act of revealing, to exhibit, to make public. This is also the impulse of cinema—it desires a public arena.

I also want to address the idea of fragmentation. Laura U. Marks, in an article in *Cinemas* entitled “Loving a Disappearing Image,” raises an issue dealing with identification with a cinematic image which is always disappearing from our view. She writes, “To have an aging body, as we all do, raises the question of why we are compelled to identify with images of wholeness...what is it like to identify with an image that is disintegrating?” I have created a cinema that presents a partial image, that continues to disperse, that resists a wholeness. Perhaps this is what is essentially queer about the film—not the desire for completeness or wholeness but to revel in the uncertainties of fragments. (LB, “Why I Did Wilde,” *Voices*, September 1998)

An Individual Desires Solution (1986/1991); 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes, print from the maker

A structural cinepoem concerning the mystery of death through the struggle for answers and survival of my boyfriend Kevin, who passed away on my birthday in Sussex, England. Before Kevin died he asked me to redefine the acronym AIDS as An Individual Desires Solution—hence the title. (LB)

“This haunting short film uses titles whose silent-movie roots are further enhanced by the piano on the soundtrack. Brose's nickelodeon gestures suggest a yearning for a time before aging, disease, and death replaced youth and hope. In this manner, his films' self-consciousness is more than simply a masturbatory device; it is an evocative metaphor that helps us to unveil what the camera, reacting to the filmmaker's pain, often obscures.” (Jan Stuart, *Film Comment*, December 1987)

J. HOBERMAN ON JACK SMITH

J. Hoberman In Person

May 13-18, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 8:00 pm

Vanguard filmmaker, radical photographer, seminal performance artist, queer aesthete, first amendment martyr, underground renaissance man: Jack Smith maintained an intense, lifelong rapture conjured from the tarnished magic of a '30s and '40s Hollywood that had come to camp out on the movie set of his own mind. The externalization of the moldy glamour, which obsessed him from adolescence, enabled him to both exoticize and humanize a conservative American culture enamored with progress and bruised in its formation by economic speculation and cold war.

J. Hoberman is the Senior Film Critic at *The Village Voice*, author of numerous books of film criticism, and a former Guggenheim fellow. As a Wattis Film/Video Artist-in-Residence at Yerba Buena, he will present four programs on the life and work of vanguard filmmaker, performance artist, queer aesthete and underground Renaissance man, Jack Smith.

This series is a co-presentation of YBC's Film/Video department and "In Conversation" program, in collaboration with San Francisco Cinematheque. (Program descriptions adapted from writings by Hoberman and Jerry Tartaglia.)

Saturday, May 13, 8 p.m.

The making and unmaking of *Flaming Creatures*.

Hoberman presents an annotated screening of Jack Smith's opus, *Flaming Creatures* (1963, 45 minutes, 16mm), which proved to be the most incendiary avant-garde film ever made in America; the story of how it came to be and what became of it.

Sunday, May 14, 1 p.m.

"The Perfect Film Appositeness of MM and VS"

This matinee double-bill features Marlene Dietrich in Josef von Sternberg's *The Devil is a Woman* (1936, 83 minutes, 35mm) and Maria Montez in John Rawlins' *Arabian Nights* (1942); plus excerpts from Universal horrors. *Flaming Creatures* is a film that owed everything and nothing to Hollywood. The everything included Jack Smith's admiration of von Sternberg and obsession with Maria Montez, as explicated in his writings.

Tuesday, May 16, 8 p.m.

The complete *Normal Love*

Jack Smith began production on a sumptuously full-color, ironically heterosexual and avowedly "commercial" follow-up to *Flaming Creatures* after the latter's sensational premiere; he then "abandoned" this follow-up feature after *Flaming Creatures* was banned in New York. The extant footage has been preserved and assembled in accordance with Smith's journal notes. The musical accompaniment was culled from Smith's record collection by archivist Jerry Tartaglia, who restored the film on behalf of the Plaster Foundation. (1963-1964, 105 minutes, 16mm). Followed by *The Yellow Footage: Normal Love addendum reel* (1963-64, 20 minutes, 16mm)

Thursday, May 18, 8 p.m.

"Jack Smith in Performance"

Although Smith's theater pieces constituted his most significant work of the 70s and later, few were recorded. Fortunately it is possible to sequence a slide show documenting his inimitable 1977 staging of *Ibsen's Ghosts*, and someone once did bring a Sony portapak to the Plaster Foundation... Tonight's program features *Midnight at the Plaster Foundation* (c.1970, 20 minutes, video) and *The Secret of Rented Island* (1977/1997, 80 minutes, video). (Thanks to Vidipix for restoration of *Midnight at the Plaster Foundation* and to Edward Leffingwell for sequencing *The Secret of Rented Island*, with production assistance from the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS.)

ARTISTS AT WORK: The Day Job

Curated and Presented by Claire Bain

Gail Camhi, Alfred Hernandez, Pelle Lowe and Ken Paul Rosenthal In Person

Thursday, May 25, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

My inspiration for this show was an essay by filmmaker Nina Fonoroff published in *Big As Life: An American History of 8mm Films*, the catalog for the Cinematheque and NY MoMA retrospective of the same title. It is appropriate that many Super 8mm films have as their subject matter issues of economic survival—how one's identity is defined by one's participation in a set of obligatory social rituals such as family functions or, even more bindingly, one's job. In these films labor is treated as an extension of personal life, and the two are posited as part of a continuum, rather than diametrically opposed. Super 8mm filmmakers can thus redeem the onerous activity of earning their daily bread, as the shit job becomes a suitable subject for filmic exploration.

In these works I see hope for dignity in the face of the struggle to simply function as we are meant to: as creative beings. This is not to say that we should complacently accept our plight as artists living in a blind society which does not see the necessity of art as an element of human survival; it is to say that we can prevail even when we must divert our time and energy to pursuits that do not, in and of themselves, fulfill us.

Smoke (1995-96) by Pelle Lowe; Super 8mm, color, sound, 25 minutes, print from the maker

A horribly beautiful examination of the invasive procedures of questioning people who are seeking work, financial assistance or entry into this society. Against the setting of people pouring underground into transit and smoke flowing into the sky, actual questions from employment, assistance and immigration applications provide a glaring indication of the presumption of power and negation of dignity by the inquirers, their authority resting simply on the fact that they are the ones who provide livelihood. A sky is filled with industrial waste, creating a gorgeous sunset possessing a dark beauty similar to that of the atomic bomb explosion in Bruce Conner's *Crossroads*.

Living in the World, Part 1 (1985) by Joe Gibbons; Super 8mm transferred to video, color, sound, 14 minutes, tape from the maker

With a small gauge Gibbons tells a big, sharp-edged story wrapped in hilarity that's too close to the brink for comfort. Like Pelle Lowe, he uses Super 8mm to create a grand visual depiction of a story. To me, Joe Gibbons is the James Stewart of experimental film. Appearing as himself, he creates a screen persona that's rich with immediacy and crazily compelling. In this, the first part of his masterful opus on functioning in society, he deals with his dreary job and his dinner.

Coffee Break (1976) by Gail Camhi; 16mm, color, silent, 15 minutes, print from the maker

A real-time portrait of the filmmaker and work mates from the payroll office of a university in upstate NY. This is a beautifully touching look at a group of women workers, whose ages span 2 generations, as they touch base with their humanity on a break at work. Some of them could be your mother. And the beautiful bored Camhi sits at center, passing the minutes over a fluorescent-lit last supper with its chalices of coffee, newspaper scrolls and cigarette censors.

Intermission

Work Art Work (2000) by Alfred Hernandez; video, color, sound, 5 minutes, tape from the maker

Left to the devices and the tools of a fabric librarian, Hernandez created books, Polaroid photos, drawings, storyboards and more in the back room of an SF interior design firm when he wasn't helping consultants choose expensive fabrics. This video montage takes a rhythmic look at the products of his labor.

At Photo Motion, San Francisco (1987) by Ken Paul Rosenthal; Super 8mm, silent, 3 minutes, print from the maker (camera by C Bain)

After closing time at the 1-hour photo store, Ken Rosenthal directed this beautiful silvery self-portrait in which his body intersects with sunlit reflections on the floor, turning the carpet which customers usually traverse into a figurative canvas of light, giving new meaning to the name "Photo Motion."

At Such a Business, San Francisco (1994) by Ken Paul Rosenthal; Super 8mm, sound, 3 minutes, print from the maker

While the staff and management are in the next room discussing Rosenthal's dismissal from his job, he finally gives in to an urge he's had for the duration of his employment at this children's clothing and toy store.

Unemployment Portrayal (1974-83) by Saul Levine; 8mm blown up to 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Waiting in line for unemployment...

red star

red

purple

key words

catch the phrases

the money Chase

the search for security

disappearing and reappearing children

shop windows of the married life

buy the by—could you afford it?

Wait

We must move forward

inflation will destroy

this country

If we don't

-Claire Bain

Vel Richards' Lunchtime Office Ergonomics Seminar (1992) by Claire Bain; video, color, sound, 20 minutes, tape from the maker

A document of Bain's alter-ego, Vel Richards, giving a presentation complete with slides and Super 8 film on good posture in her office. The attendees are as interesting to watch as Vel as they carefully observe the performance. On location at a brown-bag lunch seminar with coworkers (engineers, geologists, drafts people and secretarial workers) at an environmental engineering firm in SF. Videotaped by my supervisor, Liem Le.

Program Notes written by Claire Bain

RITUAL OBSESSIONS

Three Nights of Luther Price

Program One: *Home, Sweet Home*

Luther Price in Person

Thursday, June 1, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

"I want to make true films. I don't care if it hurts me... people exploit each other anyway. If you exploit yourself you leave no room to be exploited by someone else... No one can hurt me; no one can say anything about me because I've already said it. I've already given them the dirt. We always have the ability to redeem ourselves..." (Luther Price)

In tonight's program, Luther Price (a.k.a. Tom Rhoads) performs an invasive surgical procedure on sentimentalized notions of home and childhood. Of course, one might well wonder what could possibly be left to extract from this cultural corpse. After decades of artistic assault, our Norman Rockwell mythology has been so thoroughly

deconstructed and dissected that any artist revisiting this territory now runs the risk of simply replacing one set of clichés with another. If Price does manage to develop an original approach to these themes, it is because his critical objects are not just Home, Family and Mother, but the tortured, torturing relations that have been established *between* those idealized categories and the brute, material facts of a very specific life history: Price's own.

Price's medium, in this respect, becomes a substantial part of his message. Working almost exclusively in the Super-8 format, Price reappropriates the technology which has traditionally functioned to monitor, maintain and reinforce the symbolic linkages between homes and Home. The home movie, Price reminds us, occupies the nexus in which the absolutely particular and the depressingly stereotypical intersect. In its compulsive documentation of private rites of passage—births, first steps, first words, birthdays, weddings, etc.—the home movie always contains a latent imperative to frame those events in such a way that their uniqueness will be all but completely absorbed into the generic, instantly recognizable codes of "normality." On one level, Price's films are about the impossibility of sustaining that compulsory illusion, of keeping the real-life, everyday horrors of family life safely and permanently out of camera range. Too intimate, too personal and too candid, these works always show us far more than we would ever want to see. But Price's films ultimately take this impulse to self-exposure one crucial step further. Although each of these pieces displays the hallmarks of the "personal" or "diaristic" film—the family photographs, the shots of the artist himself, his neighborhood, his room—what they actually "reveal" is nothing that could be said to belong to Price alone. On the contrary, in the place where we would expect to find the Dark Family Secret exposed, Price gives us only an accumulation of banal, stultifyingly familiar objects: talking dolls, store-bought birthday cakes, songs by the Carpenters. Imbuing these kitsch artifacts with an aura of nameless dread, Price comes as close as any filmmaker ever has to achieving a true sense of the uncanny.

As Freud has defined it, "the uncanny" refers not only to feelings of disconcerting familiarity or "un-homeliness" but also to those moments when we begin to suspect that "automatic, mechanical processes are at work, concealed beneath the ordinary appearance of animation." In Price's films, these two senses converge as the intimacies of the domestic sphere are consistently aligned with repetition, automatism and mass-produced sentimentality. The horror that Price's films force us to confront emerges precisely at this point of collapse. No longer is the home envisioned as a place of refuge from the dehumanizing demands of the outside world, but as the site in which those demands are most forcibly and inescapably implanted.

Home (1990-1999) by Luther Price; Super 8mm, b&w, sound, 13 minutes, print from the maker

Family photos are here subjected to a dispassionate, almost forensic analysis. The circles of light and dark which select certain subjects for special attention or effacement recall the graphically similar techniques used in newspaper or history book photographs, as though a future assassin's face were being picked out of a grade-school class picture or an innocent victim's identity were being carefully protected. The voice belongs to Price's mother. Deeply ingrained with inflections specific to class and region, her voice seems to speak the local against the general, the embodied against the anonymous. As the recorded fragments repeat, however, a disconcerting phenomenological shift occurs. The very tonal elements which had initially served to anchor the voice in a distinctive body and personality gradually begin float away from those moorings, like the "boat" whose ownership seems to be so much in question. Divested of all intention and meaning, the words become blunt instruments, drumming against the ear with an indifferent, too-predictable rhythm.

Green (1988) by Tom Rhoads; Super 8mm, color, sound, 36 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

One hesitates to apply the threadbare label of "camp" to any of Price/ Rhoads' works since they seem to exhibit very little of the arch detachment or knowingness that we generally associate with that term, at least after Warhol. In *Green*, however, Rhoads' allusions to this distinctly gay tradition of black humor are obvious and unmistakable. The film begins with an interminable shot of a dead blackbird as Peggy Lee (or is it Rosemary Clooney?) warbles "Let There Be Love" on the soundtrack. If the shot bears more than a passing resemblance to the credit sequence of John Waters' *Desperate Living*, it is undoubtedly because both filmmakers were drawing on the same source—Robert Aldrich's 1962 classic of domestic/maternal horror, *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* Later in the film, we can make out the distorted strains of Baby Jane Hudson/Bette Davis's anthem to failed Oedipalization, "I've Written a Letter to Daddy;" only this time, there's nothing funny about it.

Rhoads understands that the camp appeal of Aldrich's film is inseparable from its underlying terrors. Paralyzed in a car accident, Blanche/Crawford has been reduced to a state of infantile dependence and sister Jane, driven mad by jealousy and unchecked narcissism, becomes the worst mother in the world. Fertilized by this scenario, tropes of paralysis and immobility seem to sprout up everywhere in *Green*, from the ubiquitous plastic flowers to the frozen poses of hysterical elation struck by Rhoads' silver-painted drag queen. The soundtrack also includes fragments from Art Linkletter's creepy kitschfest, *Kids Say the Darndest Things* (also an inspiration for Waters' early short, *The Diane Linkletter Story*). At one point, Linkletter advises one of his young victims to ask his mother about "the time when you were a baby:" "She'll tell you, you couldn't walk, you couldn't talk... All

you could say was ‘Waa-waa!’” The sanctified image of the mother-child bond once again begins to take on the qualities of mute horror, and mother-love inexorably gives rise to monstrous visions. The concluding images of butterflies trapped in celluloid seems to be a tip-of-the-hat to Stan Brakhage’s famous experiment, *Mothlight*, but in light of the nightmares that have come before it, Rhoads’ images of arrested flight here seem to point to something far more sinister.

run (1994) by Luther Price; Super 8mm, color, sound, 13 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

By itself, *run* might be viewed as a fairly straightforward, film-schoolish exercise in formalist experimentation; juxtaposed with *Green*, the film seems to invite another, more challenging interpretation. The title itself seems to hover somewhere between the constative and the imperative, referring perhaps to the objective “run” of the film through the projector or, alternatively, to some more ominous command to run *from* an unnamed or unnamable threat. Viewed from this perspective, the film’s dominant imagery of birds begins to take on a similarly ambiguous set of connotations. According to what one might call the Richard Bach Effect, birds generally tend to evoke cloying, card-shop notions of freedom and transcendence. In Price’s film, by contrast, these shots have been cut apart and retaped together with an obsessiveness bordering on the pathological. Dismembered and reassembled in this way, this imagery becomes saturated with immanent violence. Instead of bringing to mind soft-focus images of soaring escape, these primitive, stuttering shots now begin to recall the murderous undertones of Etienne-Jules Marey’s 1882 “camera-gun”—a device originally designed to capture and dissect the movement of birds in flight. One might also think of the stuffed birds in the Bates Motel—those sentinels which prefigure the abrupt and violent end to Marion Crane’s own desperate flight from home. Even in his most high-flown, formalist moments, it would seem, Price stages the inevitable fall back to earth... the clipping of wings.

Mother (1988-98) by Luther Price; Super 8mm, color, sound, 25 minutes, print from the maker

There is a famous moment in *Camera Lucida* in which Roland Barthes gives his reasons for not reproducing the “Winter Garden Photograph” of his mother, even though he has already said that this is the central image from which he will “derive” all Photography. “It exists only for me,” Barthes declares; “For you it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the ‘ordinary’; it cannot in any way constitute the visible object of a science; it cannot establish an objectivity, in the positive sense of the term; at most it would interest your *studium*: period, clothes, photogeny; but in it, for you, no wound.”

The long, “objective-looking” shots of *Mother* invert Barthes’ logic in order to take the measure of these distances: not only the distance between what this person means for the filmmaker and what she means for us, but also the temporal and emotional distances which separate mother from son, age from youth and Motherhood from the fallible, all too human women who find themselves occupying that role.

Resitations (2000) by Luther Price; Super 8mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes, print from the maker

The image track of *Resitations* closely resembles that of *Home*: family photos again provide the bulk of the film’s subject matter, and similar visual devices are used to examine the working-class trappings of Price’s childhood. We can only assume that the voice on the soundtrack also belongs to Price’s mother, as it does in the earlier film. This time, she is reading from a collection of religious poetry while impossibly sentimental music—of the sort that one would only expect to hear in nineteenth century melodramas or, with a more ironic cast, in Warner Brothers cartoons—plays in the background. The “uplifting” homilies offered by these poems border on the grotesque. With sing-song rhyme schemes and plodding metric feet, these bits of doggerel verse become the spiritual equivalent of cellophane-wrapped snack cakes—mass-produced confections whose sugary sweetness quickly turns the stomach. As Price depicts it here, the maternal “care of the soul” finally resembles nothing so much as a prolonged regimen of force-feeding.

Program Notes written by David Conner

RITUAL OBSESSIONS

Three Nights of Luther Price

Program Two: *Body Fluid*

Luther Price in Person

Saturday, June 3, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

see June 1 for series overview

A preliminary word of caution: the films in this evening's program are among the most graphic and disturbing in Price's oeuvre. Price's use of sensational imagery, however, is never intended solely to shock. These works might best be viewed as ruthless, but often deeply personal meditations on the culture of overexposure. With many of these films, Price seems concerned to raise a question which very few "abject" artists have been willing to confront so directly: in an age when psychic and physical suffering has become the primary stock and trade of American culture, from tabloid television to ultraviolent art, what are the consequences for our collective capacity to experience something like "empathy?" Generously viewed, these films seem to constitute a desperate attempt to restore a lost dimension of moral horror to the spectacles of bodily horror that now confront us on a daily basis. Ungenerously viewed, they might appear as the morbid symptoms of a much larger crisis. Perhaps the primary strength of these films consists in the way that they so stubbornly occupy that contradiction, leaving its resolution—if there is one—entirely up to the viewer.

Yellow Goodbye (1999); Super 8mm, color, sound on cassette tape, 10 minutes

Providing some brief respite from the evening's more grueling selections, this film offers a comparatively innocuous tribute to the Beat films of the late '50s and early '60s. A mini-anthology of three shorter works, the sequences that make up this triptych were originally titled, in order, *Girl*, *Rex is the Dog* and *Yellow Goodbye*.

#5 (2000?); Super 8mm, color, sound on cassette tape

Even after it's been abstracted to the point of near unrecognizability, footage of a tumor removal cannot become anything other than what it is. Or can it? With this short film, Price again stages the tension between the abstract and the abject. The primary subject of this work seems to be the rude intrusion, the thing which emerges suddenly and unaccountably to ruin the conditions of aesthetic experience.

Meat Situation 04 (1997); Super 8mm, color, sound on cassette tape, 4 minutes

In 1985, during a trip to Nicaragua, Price (then known as Brigk) was accidentally shot at close range by one of his own bodyguards. After eleven days close to death in a Nicaraguan hospital, Price was eventually able to return to the U.S. where, for the next two months, he underwent a long and difficult recuperation at Massachusetts General. His 1992 performance piece, *Meat*, dealt with these experiences by using viscerally charged images and objects (surgical procedures, raw and rotting meat) within a highly ritualized context. This film represents a partial return to this performance piece and, at a further remove, to the trauma that inspired it.

Juxtaposing clips from surgical supply videos with grisly close-ups of lacerated and diseased flesh, Price attempts to pry open the logic which sustains institutional indifference. Clothing designed to protect (and, in a couple of grimly funny instances, to prettify) becomes a metaphor for the attempt to keep the realities of pain and sickness at a safe distance. Price brings those suppressed realities right up to the surface and practically dares us to look away.

Eruption-Erection (1989); Super 8mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes

This film could be described as a two-part study of the autism of religious kitsch. The first half makes a hilarious contribution to Price's ever-expanding repertoire of images of bodily penetration. To coin a pun no more vulgar than the film itself, it is an image of a decidedly retarded eroticism. The second half recasts the pop rituals of Christian evangelism as another form of self-absorbed, arrested development. Never has the topic of infantile self-satisfaction been handled with such intelligence.

Meat Blue 03 (1999); Super 8mm, color, sound

This film offers another variation on a few of Price's favorite themes: surgery, the materiality of the flesh, and the banalities of disposable culture. The restaged performance piece that we glimpse through filmed and

videotaped fragments bears a strong resemblance to the *Materialaktionen* of Viennese artists Gunter Brus and Otto Muehl. Like these mid-sixties performance artists, Price stages the body *in extremis*, reducing the perceptible differences between human flesh and the “flesh of the world” to a minimum. The lip-synching sequence depicts the performer’s relation to canned pop sentiment as another form of bodily infiltration—less gruesome, perhaps, but no less disconcerting. Recurring shots of sutures and gaping wounds begin to suggest blunt parallels between surgical procedures and Price’s own cinematic practice: taking up bits of discarded refuse and stitching them back together again, Price’s film exposes a covert complicity between violence and salvation.

Ritual 629 (1990-1999); Super 8mm, color, sound on cassette tape, 15 minutes

In the tradition of *Sodom*, Price here fires another exploding bullet at the “positive image” school of gay filmmaking. Like the obsessive characters in Dennis Cooper’s novels, Price searches for beauty in the most mortifying visions of corporeal violation. Price’s film seems to document the same paradox that critic Earl Jackson has witnessed in Cooper’s fiction: “the persistence of obsessive metaphysical gestures within a radically demystified world.”

I’ll Cry Tomorrow, Parts 1 and 2 (2000); Super 8mm, color, sound on film and cassette tape, 20 minutes

Perhaps because these two films are among Price’s most personal works, they are also, in many respects, the most difficult to watch. Both films were made during his sister’s long and ultimately fatal illness, and they seem to represent an intensely private attempt to come to terms with a loved one’s mortality. But there is nothing maudlin about either film. One gets the sense that Price is here struggling to create a new language for loss, one forged in reaction to the expressions of trite sentimentality that are always lying in wait for these experiences.

Dead Ringer (2000); Super 8mm, color, sound on cassette tape, 3 minutes

When Price was a child, he and his sister would make audio recordings of old Hollywood movies on television, and they would listen to their favorites (*Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*, *Mildred Pierce*, *Imitation of Life*) as they were going to sleep at night. This film presents a strange and dreamlike meditation on this interweaving of childhood memories with cinematic fantasies. Without sound, the two halves of this diptych seem to occupy the same ethereal space—some private floating archive of half-remembered events and emotions, at once real and unreal.

Program Notes written by David Conner

RITUAL OBSESSIONS

Three Nights of Luther Price

Program Three: "Tell Me a Secret/Give Me a Kiss"

Luther Price in Person

Sunday, June 4, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

see June 1 for series overview

This third and final program in our retrospective presents a selection of some of Price/Rhoads’ best-known works. Longer and denser than most of his other pieces, these films come as close to “epic” status as Price’s resolutely anti-epic sensibility will allow. They also demonstrate Price’s compulsive talent for bricolage. Although their reliance on found footage varies widely (*Sodom*, for instance, is composed entirely of found material; *Warm Broth* uses it only sparingly), these films all respond to the bricoleur’s impulse to construct coherent systems out of the random detritus of everyday life.

From this perspective, it is tempting to describe these works as typically “postmodern.” Price seems to be occupying the position which prophet/critic Jean Baudrillard has described as “the state of terror proper to the schizophrenic: too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him

anymore.” But with these films, Price seems to be doing much more than simply repeating the familiar symptoms of the postmodern condition: the breakup of the unitary sign, the erosion of public/private boundaries, the escalating “frenzy of the visible.” For Price, all of this has already taken place, and there’s little point in dwelling on it. Where postmodern art has been characterized by its obsessive concerns over *meaning*, Price seems far more captivated by the expressive possibilities of *sensation*. Price’s materials are not so much codes as affects: textures, intensities, and memory-images so precisely defined that they eventually begin to achieve something akin to the density and mobility of words.

Sodom (1994); double projection Super 8mm, color, sound on cassette tape, 18 minutes

“*Sodom*, like the best art-making, is essentially ineffable. Its effect is visceral. It hits somewhere in the solar plexus, that nebulous area where emotional and physical sensations converge. Its overall tone is sad. It seems to be an elegy in which there is tremendous compassion and tenderness. This can be read, for example, in the exquisite shots of the face of the blond youth as he is being fucked—a mix of pleasure and pain, yearning and enduring. *Sodom* seems an elegy... but to what?” (Michael Wallin)

Bottle Can (1993); Super 8mm, b&w, sound, 20 minutes

Reviewing one of Nikola Tesla’s turn-of-the-century demonstrations of his famous coil, one awestruck journalist wrote: “Who could remain unimpressed in the face of the weird, waving glowing tubes and the mysterious voice issuing from the midst of an electrostatic field?” In 1920, at the beginning of America’s radio boom, Thomas Edison announced that he was at work on an “apparatus designed to enable those who have left this earth to communicate with those of us who are still on the earth.” Two years after the Sputnik launch in 1957, Arthur C. Clarke opined that satellite communications would provide the means “to conquer the world without anyone noticing.”

Bottle Can picks up this mystical thread in the history of American technophilia and explores the ways in which high-tech visions, ethereal voices, and dreams of “leaving the earth” have become powerfully intermingled in our cultural imagination. The soundtrack appears to have been taken from a subliminal weight-loss tape, and the bulk of the found footage depicts rocket launches, space walks and other feats of gravity-defiance. Outer and inner space change places as the film’s fever-dream of total control unravels and finally implodes.

Me Gut No Dog DOG (1995); Super 8mm screened on video, color, sound, 46 minutes

“Perhaps Price’s most disquieting film, *Me Gut No Dog DOG* is a sharp-edged social satire, ...focusing on the military, but also targeting American values and society more generally. A variety of images including marching soldiers, a walking dog (printed in reverse), explicit gay sex, young men and women goofing around and a businessman are drawn together to create a devastating portrait of American life.” (Patrick Friel)

Warm Broth (1988) by Tom Rhoads; Super 8mm, color, sound, 30 minutes

Already recognized as a classic of contemporary avant-garde cinema, *Warm Broth* also deserves a place alongside Matthias Müller’s *Alpsee* as one of the most sophisticated and incisive films about queer childhood ever produced. The film is a meditation on the riddle of sexual origins, but Rhoads refuses to accept any of the easy Oedipal answers. In fact, the film’s curiosity seems entirely focused on the play of surfaces: the seductive sheen of ribbon candies, Fire King coffee mugs, Melmac dishware, Fisher-Price toys. When the clues to sexual “secrets” do break the surface of the film—in the form of naughty words stenciled on floral print wallpaper, or brief glimpses of *The Act* itself—they immediately fade away again, like the after-images of a flashbulb pop. To what register of significance do these “revelations” belong? Do they wield more power or threat than the image of a melting fudgesicle? Than the inviting, fleecy texture of a Chanel-inspired topcoat? Only a dyed-in-the-wool fairy would have the nerve to ask such impertinent, trivializing questions, and yet these are the mysteries that seem to fascinate Price the most. Like the doll which keeps making nagging demands but leaves no room for any response, Price asks “deep” questions without really wanting to know the answers.

Program Notes written by David Conner unless otherwise noted

ETHER/ORE

An Evening with Phil Solomon

Phil Solomon in Person

Thursday, June 8, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Cinematheque is proud to close its thirty-ninth season with a rare visit from Colorado-based filmmaker Phil Solomon. Solomon's films combine intense chemical treatment of emulsive surfaces and meticulous optical printing to achieve amazing and paradoxical fusions of pure shimmering light and unbelievable mineral density. Surfaces bubble and boil and appear as violently roiling cauldrons of molten material, within which images and events struggle for recognition, emerging as fragments of long-forgotten fables and repressed bits of ancient collective memories. Tonight's program is Solomon's personal selection, which includes new work, collaborations with Stan Brakhage, an older gem and previews of some works-in-progress. (Steve Polta)

Part I: Works with Stan Brakhage

Concrescence (1995); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes, print from Phil Solomon

“‘Concrescence’ is the name for the process in which the universe of many things acquires an individual unity in a determined relegation of each item of the ‘many’ to its subordination in the constitution of the novel ‘one’... An actual occasion is analyzable. The analysis discloses operations transforming entities which are individually alien into components of a complex which is discreetly one. The term ‘feeling’ will be used as the generic description of such operations. We thus say that an actual occasion is a concrescence effected by a process of feelings.” (Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*)

Seasons... (1998-2000); 16mm, color, silent, 20 minutes, print from Phil Solomon

Brakhage's frame by frame hand carvings and etchings directly into the film emulsion are illuminated by Solomon's optical printing, then edited by Solomon into a seasonal cycle of several movements, beginning with “Summer” (a trio for Sun, Earth, and Ocean) and ending in “Spring” (carvings and hand painting combined into bloom). *Seasons...* is finally a hymn to sun/light throughout the year's cycle.

This film is to be considered part of a larger umbrella work by Brakhage entitled “...”. *Seasons...* is inspired by the colors and textures found in the woodcuts of Hokusai and Hiroshige and the playful sense of forms dancing in space from the film works of Robert Breer and Len Lye. Special thanks to Philip Rowe, who first pointed out to me the “seasonal” implications of my initial test roll. In memoriam, Gabriella Langendorff. It was her favorite. (PS)

Part II: One from the Heart

What's Out Tonight is Lost (1983); 16mm, color, silent, 8 minutes, print from the maker

“Adopting its title from a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay, *What's Out Tonight is Lost* is an elegiac film sifting through the unrecoverable. The film is a reflecting pool where vision breaks up. The home we recognize is swallowed in the brume, the light barely penetrates; and the yellow school bus steals us away, delivering us into new clouds, embracing fear. The film has a surface of cracked porcelain and intaglio: the allergic childhood skin of cracks and bruises. This is a film of transubstantiations, the discorporation of human forms into embers. Air looms and blossoms into solidity and nearness... I hear it breathing...” (Mark McElhatten)

A cha-cha in the fog as the school bus departs, the lighthouse remains in disrepair. (PS)

Part III: The Twilight Psalms

The Twilight Psalms (1999-2001) is a series of short visual tone poems, a personal history of the Twentieth Century at closing time. Inspired by the series from Rod Serling, Binghamton, NY. (PS)

Twilight Psalm I: "The Lateness of the Hour"; 16mm, color, silent, 8 minutes, print from the maker

A little *Nachtmusik*, a deep blue overture to the series. Breathing in the cool night airs, breathing out a children's song; then whispering a prayer for a night of easeful sleep. My blue attempt at a sequel to *Rose Hobart*.

For Joseph Cornell swinging in the dark, and for Mark Lapore, who came back just to help a friend breathe a little easier. (PS)

Twilight Psalm II: "Walking Distance"; 16mm, color, sound, 23 minutes, print from the maker

Imagine one of those rusted medieval film cans surviving centuries, a long lost Biograph/Star, a Griffith/Melies co-production, but this time a two-reeler left to us from, say, the Bronze Age, a time when images were smelted and boiled rather than merely taken, when they poured down like silver, not be to fixed and washed, mind you, but free to reform and coagulate into unstable, temporary molds, mere holding patterns of faces, places, and things, shape-shifting according to whim, need, the uncanny or the inevitable... *Walking Distance* is a Golden Book tale of horizontals and verticals, a cinema of ether and ore... as I lay dying.

Inspired by Kiefer and Ryder, dedicated to Stan Brakhage. (PS)

Yes, I Said Yes, I Will, Yes (1999); 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes (and the rest of my life), print from the maker

For Melinda, in celebration of our honeymoon in the "Golden State." (PS)

SOUNDS OF ALL KINDS

From Dada to Now

Curated and Presented by Charles Boone

Co-Presented with Acustica International SF 2000 and the San Francisco Art Institute

Sunday, September 24, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 8 pm

Artists in widely diverse disciplines have long concerned—and continue to concern—themselves with sound as both medium and subject. This fact is particularly notable in an art community such as ours at the San Francisco Art Institute. Film, video, performance, installation, writing, pure sound... even painting; these are all areas where sounds of all kinds have provided both inspiration and material itself.

Completed Portrait of Picasso by Gertrude Stein

Ursonata by Kurt Schwitters

Klänge/Sounds by Wassily Kandinsky

Gertrude Stein's "If I Told Him," is a poem, of course; but when read aloud—as it must be—it is immediately recognized as a work of verbal, sonic cubism. Dada artists who gathered at Zürich's Café Voltaire wasted no time in mixing together all manner of texts in their "simultaneous poems," of which "The Admiral Looks for a House to Rent," is a classic example. Kurt Schwitters labored for ten years on his *Ursonate*, but made clear that performers might interpret his text in imaginative ways; perhaps this is the reason he left few instructions for its realization. Wassily Kandinsky's interest in connections among the arts is clearly shown in highly suggestive texts he wrote early in the century. These bring together sounds, colors, and images in ways that hint at the idea of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total/collective work of art.

Son of Metropolis San Francisco by Charles Amirkhanian

Charles Amirkhanian's *Son of Metropolis San Francisco* was conceived as a musical *Hörspiel*—an experimental "earplay" on tape for radio broadcast or concert performance—and was inspired by the ambiance of the city itself as well as its surroundings. It is a condensation of *Metropolis San Francisco* (1986), and is a bit more than twenty-five minutes in duration. Rather than more stereotypical San Francisco sounds—cable cars, for instance—various nature sounds dominate the piece. Included as well are human sounds which reflect the cultural

diversity of this place. The composer sought to create a strongly subjective, idiosyncratic, reflective piece, more spiritual in nature than documentary. The work was commissioned by Klaus Schöning for Studio 3 Hörspiel of the West German Radio. Charles Amirkhonian has been a conspicuous presence on the Bay Area scene for more than three decades, as composer, concert presenter and leader of significant regional arts organizations.

Mercy (1989) by Abigail Child; 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes, print from the maker

The intense sonic profiles of Abigail Child's film and video work match equally the quirky brilliance of its visual images. She frequently collaborates with musicians whose ingenuity matches her own; in this film, with vocalist Shelley Hirsch. *Mercy*, the final work in a seven-film series, *Is This What You Were Born For?*, features all—or almost all—found imagery. In it, one sees and hears the sharp cuts and hot juxtapositions that keep Child's work on the brink of the mind and its viewers themselves on the edges of their chairs. Child says, "*Mercy* is encyclopedic ephemera, exploring visions of technology and romantic invention, dissecting the game mass media plays with our private perceptions. It is about how one processes materiality, how it gets investigated, how it gets cut apart, how something else (inevitably) comes up." Plan to greet the artist when she is in town for three screenings of work: October 12, 14 and 15. Check the Cinematheque calendar for details.

Conversations with a Light Bulb by Laetitia Sonami

The sounds in Laetitia Sonami's composition mostly derive from digital documents translated as sound within whose thick textures the composer had discovered unexpected voices and rhythms. Since these sounds have lives of their own, her real-time gestural control of them is relatively minimal. Instead, her gestures more often guide other elements such as breathing and the flickering of light bulbs, thus elevating light to the role of silent musical partner. Sonami says that her interest in light bulbs as familiar yet "mystical" objects is paired with the expanded use of light as a new medium of data transmission. She believes that century twenty-one will be the century of light. Be sure to catch her installation in the SFAI faculty exhibition in the Walter McBean Gallery. French-born Laetitia Sonami is a faculty member at the Art Institute and at San Francisco State University. Her works can be heard on such labels as Nonesuch, Tellus, Music and Arts Program of America, and (soon to be released) Lovely Music.

Program Notes written by Charles Boone unless otherwise noted

B L O O D S A U S A G E

A Rooftop Screening/Reception

Curated and Presented by Michael Rosas-Walsh

Sunday, October 1, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 8pm

This show will not be a bore. It can't be; it is atop the roof of the San Francisco Art Institute Lecture Hall. Cinematheque proudly begins this calendar with this film event under the stars. There will be some classics by Robert Nelson, George Kuchar, Rock Ross, Dean Snider, Michael Rudnick and Toney Merrit, some of which were filmed on the roof where your behinds will be sitting. The rest of the program will be a celebration of new works by such artists as: Portia Cobb, Diane Kitchen, Rock Ross, Marian Wallace, Matt McCormick, William Z. Richard, Diane Frisbee, George Andrews and more. There will be a beer and wine reception following the event. Bring your blanket and enjoy live entertainment under the moonlight before and after the program. And yes, you can smoke on the roof. (Michael Rosas-Walsh)

Art School Remembered by Michael Rudnick; 1.5 minutes

New Nothing Dad by MRW; 1.5 minutes

Dr. Quantum's Malfunctioning Satellite by George Andrews; 2.5 minutes

'Til My Head Caves In by Rock Ross; 4 minutes

Bored Members by Dean Snider; 3 minutes

Destroy All Intellectuals/Intellectuals Strike Back by Dean Snider; 3.5 minutes

Welcome to the House of Raven by Toney Merritt; 4 minutes
Raw by MRW; 4 minutes
Nectar of the Cyclops by Rock Ross; 12 minutes
Golly Golly Zoom by RW2; 4 minutes
Football Film by Dan Janos and Cameron Shaw; 3 minutes

Reel Change

Hot Leatherette by Robert Nelson; 4 minutes
Psycho Porpoise by Rock Ross; 3 minutes
Notch by Diane Kitchen; 8 minutes
250 Summer by William Z. Richard; 4 minutes
Sincerely, Joe P. Bear by Matt McCormick; 7 minutes
Xperiencing Xpressing My Paralysis by Diane J. Frisbee; 4 minutes
You Are Christine Dietrich by Michael Rudnick; 4.5 minutes
The Oneers by George Kuchar; 10 minutes

Format Change

Music To Strip By by Marian Wallace; 4 minutes
Snapshots by George Kuchar; 5 minutes
A very special thanks to Liz Keim & the Exploratorium for the use of their Xenon projector.
Electric piano entertainment by WILL.

CENTER FOR THE ARTS SEASON OPENER

New Film and Video by Local Makers and Long-Time Friends

Thursday, October 5, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Join us tonight for a screening/reception to help inaugurate our seventh season at the Yerba Buena Gardens Center for the Arts (a location we have inhabited since the Center's opening). Featured are films, videos and film performances by Bay Area artists familiar to many of you from Cinematheque screenings over the years. All dispense with traditional narrative structure, yet each in their own way is very much a lyricist of their chosen medium. And as you will see, many stretch the boundaries of traditional presentation.

interval Oakland '99 (2000) by Steve Polta; Super 8mm, silent, 3 minutes

A floating glob of light, undulating, breaking apart, grabs little blobs of light in it, disperses, coalesces and dances: a suggestion of constant energy to be experienced directly. This film is not a translation. (SP)

silt Interlude 1: Ouroboros (1999); 35mm, color, silent, infinite loop

The molting of a python spliced head to tail. The "original" loop. (silt)

Focal Length (1999-2000) by Luis Recoder; white light, sound @ 24 fps, 8 minutes

From hand-held camera to hand-held celluloid, physical and/or chemical processes, the hand stretches by the length of the arm and extends its prehensile body to greet the historical materialism of craft-based media. A *handling* of the frame signaling against currents of intermittency; the organic shadow cast in the throw to recast the beast trembling in its cage. (LR)

Homecomings (2000) by Irina Leimbacher; video, color, sound, 10 minutes

silt Interlude 2: lost footage from the paranaturalists (c. 1934); 35mm, color, silent, 1 minute

A recently uncovered example of anthographic film (an emulsion made entirely of plant extracts) attributed to members of the California Society of Paranaturalists. (silt)

Be Like Them (2000) by Thad Povey; 16mm double projection; live music written and performed by Ramona the Pest: guitars and vocals by Valerie Esway, guitar by Lucio Menegon, 3 minutes

"In the volume of those alien voices, sending out their significant messages." (Lyrics by Valerie Esway)
Consumption and conformity as gross multi-national products. (TP)

Awake, But Dreaming (2000) by Kerry Laitala; 16mm, stereo sound on CD, 8 minutes

Une Fois Habitee (Once Inhabited) (1992-99) by Sandra Davis; 16mm, color, sound, 6.5 minute

Some particular spaces inhabited a while ago. Looking back at the Parisian courtyard, looking at the ladies at the villa, looking into the secrets of the chapel of the delinquents. Light sculpts space; shadow describes form. (SD)

silt Interlude 3: Pinhole #1 (1999); Super 8mm and 35mm, 1 minute

Hand-made, hand-cranked pinhole cameras housing light without glass, shutters or frames. (silt)

Off the Track (2000) by Lynn Kirby; 3-screen digital video, color, sound, 8 minutes

REANIMATOR

The Videos of Rodney Ascher

Rodney Ascher in Person

Sunday, October 8, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

Applying energetic montage techniques and a strong graphic sensibility to materials freely appropriated from popular culture, San Francisco video artist Rodney Ascher creates playful and perverse pieces in a variety of genres. While flirting with the conventions of commercial production, these works consistently apply an appreciative irony towards their subjects. To be screened: the sock-puppet prison drama *The True Story of Crime: X Equals X* (co-made with Syd Garron); *Somebody Goofed* (also with Garron), a brilliant reinterpretation of Jack T. Chick's apocalyptic religious comic-strip series; a new installment in the ongoing documentary *The Collectors* and others. Ascher will present a personal selection of related works, including Eric Kistel's *Thank God Tommy Made it Back All Right*. (Steve Polta)

King of the Monsters by Rodney Ascher and Syd Garron; video, color, sound, tape from the makers

This is what you get when you give two geeks the keys to a mid-level post-production facility for the weekend.

The True History of Crime: X Equals X by Rodney Ascher; video, b&w, sound, tape from the maker

First (and last, if you don't count the rarely screened *A Man Punched Another Man in the Face*) segment of a projected series of crime-themed docu-dramas meant to trace the evolution of wrongdoing through the ages. Gritty and factual exposé of the tragic consequences of prison overcrowding, glamorization of serial killers, or a mirror held up to society? You be the judge.

The Triumph of Victory—A Great Fall by Rodney Ascher; video, color, sound, tape from the maker

Ok, so there's this new Bruce Willis movie coming out, right? And in it he discovers that he's somehow immune to injury, and as Samuel Jackson (sporting a frizzy new hairdo) points out, it has a sort of mystical ramification. Anyhow, the producers commissioned a few different people to create short films about other "unbreakable" folks throughout history for the movie's website. In an overambitious folly, I elected to dramatize this improbable but true story from WWII.

Thank God Tommy Made it Back All Right by Erik Kistel; video, color, sound, tape from the maker
Millions of innocent children wait in line to see the “Master of Subconsciousness.” A subliminal warning from Mr. K.

The Collectors (a work in progress) by Rodney Ascher; video, color, sound, tape from the maker
This one’s still in progress so if you have any constructive advice (or phone numbers of especially ardent collector-types) feel free to share. A rough and ready portrait of a selection of especially driven collectors and why people get so attached to inanimate objects anyway. Featuring an amazing score by Elise Malmberg.

Buddha Bar by Rodney Ascher; video, color, sound, tape from the maker
An improvised tribute to the Chinatown watering hole using the proprietary technique of Reanimation© and a disposable camera.

Bar B Bar by Marco Porsia; video, color, sound, tape from the maker
An old friend’s similarly themed ode to a homey dive in Toronto. Filmmakers around the world united around their love of the hard stuff.

Alfred by Rodney Ascher; video, color, sound, tape from the maker
Another Reanimation mini-epic. Music by and featuring...who else?...Alfred. Originally for the band’s website. A meditation on the isolation of the individual within the group, the mystery of other peoples’ (even good friends’) inner worlds, good stiff drinks and traffic safety. Popular in France.

Beware of Slips and Falls; 16mm screened on video, color, sound, tape courtesy of Oddball Film and Video
“In which our heroine suffers the many indignities arising from on-the-job carelessness.”

Safetyman by Rodney Ascher and Syd Garron; video, color, sound, tape from the makers
Failed Saturday Night Live submission—a day in the life of universal symbols as featured on “Warning” graphics and signs. Also contains drinking and probably the catchiest theme song of the evening.

Innerspace Dental Commander by Syd Garron and Eric Henry; video, color, sound, tape from the makers
“DJ Qbert’s world-renowned turntabilism matched beat for beat with cosmic animation. Not recommended for viewers with sensitive teeth. One chapter in their amazing long form adaptation of the album *Wavetwisters*, available soon on DVD.”

Something to Take to Heart; 16mm screened on video, b&w, sound, tape courtesy of Oddball Film and Video
“Do you know why there is a moon, boys and girls?”

Somebody Goofed by Rodney Ascher and Syd Garron; video, color, sound, tape from the makers
A perversely faithful adaptation of Jack T. Chick’s timeless morality play. 3 strangers, 2 points of view, 1 terrible mistake. Watch the film and then take stock of your own life. Have *you* goofed?

Krazy for Krispy Kreme by Louisa Van Leer and Rodney Ascher; video, color, sound, tape from the makers
’Kause we were into Krispy Kreme when Krispy Kreme wasn’t kool.

A Cold-Blooded Look at Your Last 60,000,000,000,000 Years! by The Institute for True Purpose Technology; 35mm filmstrip screened as video, tape from the maker
Perhaps the most controversial filmstrip of our times. The Institute unveils the true source of human suffering, confusion and chaos. Apparently these guys are big fans of *Somebody Goofed*, so watch the oblique tie-in. This Chicago Underground Film Festival Fund award winner is not recommended for persons who have not yet reached OT II. Beep!

Interstitial slides created with the capable assistance of Ms. Trisha Golubev and Mr. Len Borrusco from an old R&S idea.

Program Notes written by Rodney Ascher

MOTIVES FOR MAYHEM

The Kinetic World of Abigail Child, Program One

Abigail Child in Person

Co-Presented with ATA's Other Cinema

Thursday, October 12, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

With the release of her video *Below the New: A Russian Chronicle* and film *Surface NOISE*, Abigail Child confirms her position as one of the leading avant-garde filmmakers of this generation. A practicing theorist and poet as well as film and video maker, Child has re-defined montage in particularly contemporary terms, drawing on and extending the work of such masters as Vertov, Eisenstein, Conner and Lye. Her seven-part rapid-fire exploration of sound and image *Is This What You Were Born For?* remains one of the cornerstone achievements in independent cinema of the past twenty years. (Steve Anker)

"I began as a documentarian and moved into more experimental work by the late 1970s out of a sense of the politics of poetic forms and an aesthetic predilection towards invention. My films extend the avant-garde and montage traditions of Eisenstein and Vertov, as well as the surrealist traditions of Buñuel and Breton in an attempt to examine, critique and play with and within the social realities of our era. In addition to these stylists from early in the century, my influences include the postwar films of Bruce Conner, Stan Brakhage and the under-recognized Len Lye. These works support my commitment to wit, clarity and an investigation of the daily." (AC)

Peripeteia I (1977); 16mm, color, silent, 10 minutes, print from the maker

Navigation spiraling sunwards. Exploring the movement of forest and body, seeking the larger pattern of my digressive attendance. Filmed in the Oregon coastal rain forest, fall. (AC)

Ornamentals (1979); 16mm, color, silent, 10 minutes, print from the maker

Ornamentals brings together the two compositional processes, using footage gathered over many years, organized along the color spectrum in a structure of expansion. The concern is abstraction, surfacing representation, increasing connotation through what repeats in time and what is seen—shocks stretched on impressions' edge to undermine habit. The film was crucial to my understanding of composition, to my desire for an encyclopedic construction (the world out there) and reaffirmed my allegiance to rhythm, specifically the rhythm of mind. (AC)

Shiver (1991); video, color, sound, 5 minutes, tape from the maker

Music composition: Ikue Mori; Performing musicians: Catherine Jauniaux (vocals), Zeena Parkins (accordion), Hahn Rowe (violin), Ikue Mori (percussion).

Shiver is part two of *8 Million*, a video album combining documentary and narrative elements: short songs chart erotic tales in an urban topology. There are "8 million stories in the Naked City" and these are some of them, circa the early 1990s. (AC)

"Abigail Child competes with Nam June Paik in this cacophonous storm of images in which experimental music and eroticism swirl about each other." (World Wide Video Festival, 1992)

Prefaces (1981); 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"Like *Ornamentals*, *Prefaces* is an abstract work which plays with formalist elements in a wide range of images on color and negative stock. The rapid-fire crosscutting of the images is extended to the construction of the soundtrack, which is also a dense panoply of fragments. What results is an impressive *musique concrete* composition, a collage of 'female' sounds interwoven with others: snippets from vocal music, conversations, poetry reading, etc. Child plays with memory, not only her own and the world's, but also cinema's: its conventions, polarizations (man/woman) and hierarchization of images." (Robert Hilferly, *New York Native*)

Below the New: A Russian Chronicle (1999); video, color, sound, 30 minutes, tape from the maker

Combining video diary footage and archival material, *Below the New: A Russian Chronicle* documents daily life and Russian and Soviet myth to portray the changes over the last decade. Intimate and historical, the work rhythmically combines sound and image to explore the intersection between personal and collective memory. (AC)

"It would be interesting to compare *Below the New* with Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera*. Apart from a shared taste for a montage that takes into account the internal logic of the pictures, the latter depicts a world dazed by utopia and eager for a brighter future, whereas the former shows a nation whose conscience seems to be incurably riveted on the past." (Bertrand Bacque, Visions du Nyon Documentary Festival Catalogue)

MOTIVES FOR MAYHEM

The Kinetic World of Abigail Child, Program Two

Abigail Child in Person

Co-Presented with ATA's Other Cinema

Saturday, October 14, 2000 — Artists' Television Access — 8:30 pm

see October 12 series overview

Game (1972); 16mm, b&w, sound, print from the maker

Mutiny (1982); 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes, print from the maker

"This movie is a new kind of classic, it has invented once and for all the machine-gun sound of explosives and composed sentences with speeded-up speech and wild singing, laughter, hardly all understandable, with violins screeching like falling bombs and a Hispanic grind dance... There are tender closeups in interviews with women, and marvelous documents of dancers, street performers, all races and styles. These are brave and straight-talking people; this is a feminist film, and it is important." (Anne Robertson, *X-Dream*)

B/Side (1996); 16mm, color, sound, 38 minutes, print from the maker

"...few of the films, experimental or otherwise, display the visual confidence and sociopolitical torque of Abigail Child's meditation on homelessness, *B/Side*, which is as modest and resonant as most alternative film is jejune." (Michael Atkinson, *The Village Voice*)

"*B/Side* shows the other side of Reaganomics. Abigail Child combines documentary with fiction and smart wit in a poetic montage to present a complicated and heartfelt portrait of colonialism at home. These events take place only a mile from Wall Street. The public is forced to look, even as the position of the camera changes. Sometimes the camera is the bystander, at other moments it is the perspective of the homeless themselves." (*The Daily*, Rotterdam Film Festival)

MOTIVES FOR MAYHEM

The Kinetic World of Abigail Child, Program Three

Abigail Child in Person

Co-Presented with ATA's Other Cinema

Sunday, October 15, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

see October 12 for series overview

Perils (1986); 16mm, b&w, sound, 5 minutes, print from the maker

An homage to silent films: the clash of ambiguous innocence and unsophisticated villainy. Seduction, revenge, jealousy, combat. The isolation and dramatization of emotions through the isolation (camera) and dramatization (editing) of gesture. I had long conceived of a film composed only of reaction shots in which all causality was erased. What would be left would be the resonant voluptuous suggestions of history and the human face. *Perils* is a first translation of these ideas. (AC)

Cast: Diane Torr, Sally Shivers, Plauto, Elion Sacker.

Sound Improvisations: Charles Noyes and Christian Marclay.

Covert Action (1984); 16 mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes, print from the maker

"*Covert Action* disrupts the rhythm of remembrance by subverting the institution of the home movie. It loops footage of two heterosexual couples on holiday: embracing, touching, stroking, playing leapfrog, awkwardly arranging their bodies and posturing for the camera eye. The effect is a kind of choreographed dislocation dance, a man with one woman, then another, two women together. Child subverts the truncated language of conventional narrative cinema by interjecting title cards a la silent cinema as ironic counterpoint (THE WHOLE LUMPISH QUESTION OF B'S PAST or HE HAD TO BE ELIMINATED) and uses a dialogue between two poets, Carla Harryman and Steve Benson, to confound any hypothesis regarding the footage. A sexual politic steeped in deception, a story only half revealed." (Madeline Leskin)

"Here rupture and repetition comprise the structuring principle. The film explodes in your face: it drives on until its final image, a summation of its prehistory, history and future---a tree being uprooted. What could be a more apt metaphor for the contemporary crisis in narrativity and sexuality?" (Robert Hilferty, *New York Native*)

Mayhem (1987); 16mm, b&w, sound, 20 minutes, print from the maker

Characters from *Perils* reappear, this time in a film noir setting, soap opera thrillers and Mexican comic books generating the action. Perversely and equally inspired by de Sade's *Justine* and Vertov's sentences about the satiric detective advertisement, *Mayhem* is my attempt to create a film in which Sound is the Character and to do so focusing on sexuality and the erotic. Not so much to undo the entrapment (we fear what we desire; we desire what we fear), but to frame fate, show up the rotation, upset the common, and incline our contradictions toward satisfaction, albeit conscious. (AC)

Cast: Diane Torr, Ela Troyano, Plauto, Elion Sacker, Rex West.

Additional sound: Christian Marclay, Charles Noyes, Zeena Parkins, Shelley Hirsch.

Mercy (1989); 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes, print from the maker

Mercy, the last in the series, *Is This What You Were Born For?*, is encyclopedic ephemera, exploring public visions of technological and romantic invention, dissecting the game mass media plays with our private perceptions. (AC)

Surface NOISE (2000); 16mm, color, sound, 20 minutes, print from the maker

Found footage exploring public and private space, organized formally as a sonata, centered around work and issues of class: the divisions between home and public, owners and workers.

Sound montage created by A. Child with additional recording: Zeena Parkins (synthesizer), Christian Marclay (turntables), Shelley Hirsch (vocals) and Jim Black (drums).

THERESA HAK KYUNG CHA'S *EXILÉE*

An Installation for Super 8mm, Video and Sound

Made possible through the assistance of the Berkeley Art Museum

Sunday, October 22, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 and 9 pm

The late Korean-born Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's body of film, video and installation has only recently begun to be appreciated. Cha's delicate and profound installation, *Exilée*, which will be presented twice tonight, was featured in CCAC's *Searchlight* exhibition last fall and will be included in a major retrospective of her work at the Berkeley Art Museum.

Exilée (1980); installation incorporating video and Super 8mm, color, sound, 50 minutes, from the Berkeley Art Museum

"A meditative, lyrical exploration of time, *Exilée* draws on the distinguishing characteristics of its two mediums, Super 8mm film and video. In the differences between the rhythm of the editing, the scale of the images, the quality and sources of the light, as well as the relationship between image and sound, Cha's recurring concern with the theme of displacement emerges. Characteristically, the title itself plays with language, suggesting both an exiled person and the act of living in exile." (Kathy Geritz, San Francisco Asian American Film Festival, 1995)

"Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's film and video installation, *Exilée*, uses repetition, fades and real and metaphorical afterimages to allude to the fundamental role that memory plays in our consciousness. *Exilée* is complex, interweaving historical, linguistic, spiritual and personal dimensions of memory into a single resonant work. Cha alludes to Japan's efforts during its colonial administration of Korea to expunge the nation's memory of its language and customs; simultaneously, she imbeds her own personal experience of exile and memory into its larger historical and cognitive framework to evoke a sensation of how voluntary and involuntary memories (e.g. afterimages) inflect our moment-to-moment consciousness." (Lawrence Rinder and George Lakoff, "Consciousness Art: Attending to the Quality of Experience," *Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium*)

"Through her art, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha went beyond the idea and created, within the transaction that is viewing a work, a poetic experience. In *Exilée*, which draws from film history and theory as well as Cha's own experience, we see an investigation of exile, language and image relationships, and of the functions of the cinematic and video apparatus. Here Cha returns us to our psychological and historical selves by exploring the construction of the image and the memory of it. The sense of time as history is transmitted in *Exilée* through the time of its memory.

"Cha's life as an artist was a complex itinerary across fields of dislocation, as she moved with her family from Korea, where she was born, to the United States. At the University of California, Berkeley, she studied film, conceptual and performance art and the theoretical texts informing the discourse of film studies and filmmaking in the 1970s. A selection of Theresa Cha's art work in a variety of media was shown at the Whitney Museum in 1992 in an exhibition guest-curated by Larry Rinder of the University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkeley. Rinder's essay located Cha's work within the complex of Conceptual art making in the Bay Area and charted a unique path which Cha forged through that place and history..."

"Expressed in Cha's work is a powerful sense of how ideas (theory) compose, challenge and lie at the basis of the aesthetic text. Her writings—especially the collection of texts entitled *Apparatus—Cinematographic Apparatus: Selected Writings* (1980), an assemblage of film theorists' texts as well as her own poetic interventions—are deep reflections on the cognitive machinery of the cinematic apparatus. Cha's other seminal book, *Dictée* (1982), employs poetry, prose, found texts and photography to create an artist's book that extends beyond that genre. Both texts highlight a profound sense of ideas and self-inquiry as a means to create a speculative deconstruction of identity and the systems that construct the self.

"Cha's concern with language and form is demonstrated in *Exilée*, in which the conflation of the cinematic projection and video monitor system within the work establishes a rich dialectic in terms of image and language strategies. The first feature of the installation is the white, freestanding wall... Cut into the wall is a rectangle; a television monitor sits directly behind this opening. A Super 8mm film made up of two reels is projected onto the wall, which shows through time-lapse photography subtle changes in the definition and articulation of the composition..."

"The videotape seen on the monitor is, like the film, shot in black and white. It opens with an extended title sequence that plays with the word *exilée*. As one watches on the monitor, still images dissolve into each other... Cha's distinctive voice-over, with its delicate, deliberate phrases in French and English, evokes a further poetic relationship between the meanings of different languages and images. There is, in *Exilée*, on one level, a tension between the film image projected *onto* the screen and the video image which emanates *from* the cathode ray tube. Cha describes *Exilée* as: 'an attempt to disinherit the existing Time construct, its repetition, to make Entry into the Absence of established continuity and chronology in Time. Within memory is the Time that is explored'ⁱⁱ

"In this ambitious project, Cha both acknowledges exemplary art works and, through the power of her own art, places herself within their history—American independent film and video works that have challenged and sought to extend and transform the image-making capacities of their medium.

"Certain paradigmatic art works describe a similar transformation of traditional genre strategies and the creation of other aesthetic ideas. [An] example would be Marlon Riggs' *Tongues Untied* (1989), which employs a variety of formal strategies as well as performative, story telling, poetic, autobiographic and historical reflections to regroup the definition of self within a gay epistemology of personal discovery and expression. Another exemplar is Leslie Thornton's epic film and video series *Peggy and Fred in Hell: The First Cycle* (1984-94), which destabilizes the authority of the recorded image with strategies employed by the artist to disrupt the economy of the linear narrative. It is a work which creates out of a shifting catalogue of stylistic categories—documentary, cinema verité, acted narrative and found footage—to evoke a hybrid discourse of the histories of the media arts.

"Other exemplary texts taken from the early history of film and video include Stan Brakhage's *Anticipation of the Night* (1958), which radically removed the camera from the stabilizing authority of its point of view and created a visionary search through the optics of the camera—a quest which erased the coordinates of representation with an abstract image field. Further, in Peter Campus' videotape, *Three Transitions* (1973), an exploration of the unique manipulation and recording capabilities of the video camera and technology, the artist constructed three self-portraits to explore the construction of the recorded image through its simulation of reality. In Michael Snow's film *Wavelength* (1966-67), the camera traverses the space of a loft and gradually closes in on a photograph on the opposite wall. The 45-minute film records the actions of its own relentless process, which becomes an inquiry into the transcription of the filmic space and a treatment of the ambiguities of the recorded film text.

"Each artist struggles to remake the medium into a personal form of expression tied to the signs of language and the creation of new meanings. To recall Riggs, Campus, Brakhage, Snow and Cha is to meet Cha's challenge to recall time and history, ourselves and our ideologies, as expressions in constant need of remembering...

"*Exilée* and Cha's other works belong not on the edges of historical and regional art movements but more centrally within a reexamination of the role and importance of film and video to artists in the 1970s and 1980s working in the Conceptual Art and structural film movements. Cha's work belongs at the critical juncture where film and video both separate and align." (John G. Hanhart, Curator, Film and Video, Whitney Museum of American Art)

ⁱFilm program note, University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive Calendar, University of California, Berkeley

ⁱⁱSee "Theresa Hak Kyung Cha: Other Things Seen, Other Things Heard" (Program Note 69), Whitney Museum of American Art, New American Film and Video Series, 1993, which contains Rinder's essay on Cha as well as biographical and bibliographical information on Cha and her work.

GLIMPSES OF STORIES THAT REFUSE TO BE TOLD

New Work By Women of the Chicago Art Institute

Amie Siegel, Sarah Jane Lapp and Jenny Perlin In Person

Thursday, October 26, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Tonight we present three visually stunning and formally audacious films made by women who studied or teach at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Siegel's *The Sleepers* hauntingly orchestrates a series of voyeuristic glimpses into the windows of a Chicago night; Lapp and Perlin's *Happy Are the Happy* combines anecdotes told by a variety of people living in Prague, including refugees from the former Yugoslavia and concentration camp survivors. Part meditation on a woman's midlife search for meaning, part essay on and experiment in cinematic form, Michele Fleming's *Life/Expectancy* creates a rich visual and conceptual tapestry of autobiography.

Provocative and seductive, each of these films gives us, in Fleming's words, a "glimpse of stories that refuse to be told." (I. Leimbacher)

The Sleepers (1999) by Amie Siegel; 16mm, color, sound, 45 minutes, print from the maker

The Sleepers was shot entirely at night, using the urban architecture of distant windows to explore the tensions between public and private, intimacy and alienation, the performative and the real, the lyrical and the vernacular. The background of darkness is the unconscious from which the film emerges, night and privacy holding out the promise of the erotic. The film seeks to draw attention to and investigate the real contradictions present in film language via cinema's primary preoccupation—looking, or scopophilia. Tensions between the violated space of the subjects and the dislocations of the constructed sound create a dialectic of desire and truth, the push and pull of narrative longing. To watch the film is not only to become complicit with the voyeuristic act but also to engage actively in the fulfillment of narrative and interpretation that voyeurism (and cinema) implies. All narrative is deferral. All deferral is erotic. (AS)

Happy Are the Happy (1999) by Sarah Jane Lapp and Jenny Perlin; 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes, print from the makers

Life/Expectancy (1999) by Michele Fleming; 16mm, b&w, sound, 30 minutes, print from the maker

Life/Expectancy meditates on a woman's midlife search for meaning. In order to find "her own story" the woman feels—in every cell of her body, to risk a cliché. (MF)

JAMES BENNING'S *EL VALLEY CENTRO*

James Benning In Person

Sunday, October 29, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

For more than twenty years, James Benning has been making films of the American landscape which combine elegant formal compositions and structures with subtle political and social critique. His latest, *El Valley Centro*, presents a portrait of California's agricultural Central Valley through thirty-five two-and-a-half-minute views, each coupled with synchronous audio tracks but devoid of overt commentary. Seeming random at first, these elements accumulate meaning and take on organization as the film progresses, ultimately presenting this strangely quiet yet highly industrialized landscape as a complex nexus of social, political and environmental forces. *El Valley Centro* is the first of a three-part series. Benning will return to present the second part, *Los*, this winter. (Steve Polta)

El Valley Centro (1999); 16mm, color, sound, 90 minutes, print from the maker

... a little formalism turns one away from History, but a lot brings one back to it. (Roland Barthes, "Myth Today")

On viewing James Benning's most recent work, it is clear that he has passed through minimalism and/or structuralism, has been affected by it, yet has taken his work in radically new directions. One characteristic element of minimalism was a modular approach to composition. Objects could ostensibly be arranged in many different orders, based on fundamental formal similarities (such as size or shape), making the organization or arrangement of semi-independent elements into a viable compositional strategy. One of Benning's earlier works, *One Way Boogie Woogie* (1977), uses the shot as a basic modular unit. While very consciously arranged for compositional effect and thematic continuity, the one-minute duration of the film's sixty shots provides a sense of temporal modularity, implying a kinship with the 'primary structures' of Donald Judd and Carl Andre. By adopting an abstract formal principle with which to govern what can happen in the film, Benning gives *One Way Boogie Woogie*'s aural and visual revelations a solid framework to play against, dialectically.

The frame imposed by a static camera, or a predetermined shot length, allows us to perceive human and natural phenomena with greater clarity. But Benning's latter-day work uses these bracketing procedures to draw attention to other, more commonplace structures, such as those which exist in the social and political spheres. 1995's *Deseret*, for example, provides a history of the state of Utah, from 1852-1992, drawn from Utah-related stories in the *New York Times*. The images we see are of landscapes and manmade structures throughout Utah, images whose stunning composition serves to draw our attention back to the frame, to what it encloses as well as excludes. With *Deseret*, Benning organizes sound, image, and narration, as independent variables, into a film whose structural integrity is in part secured by Utah itself.

But then, what is Utah? As the news articles are read in voiceover, they provide us with a concrete history of the state. But at the same time, this history reveals the contingency of bounded borders, of what a state or a nation is. The struggle to settle Utah was, in many ways, the imposition of an arbitrary frame—as arbitrary as a 60-second-per-shot rule or strict use of a stationary camera—except that political structures have a way of effacing themselves, appearing self-evident. In *Deseret*, Benning enframes Utah in a way which asks viewers to consider the historical enframing that is Utah itself.

With *El Valley Centro*, Benning again employs a modular framework which gives an overall formal shape to his subject. Each shot is two-and-a-half minutes long, filmed from a single unmoving camera position. The viewer encounters a series of landscape views of California's Great Central Valley. Some of the sequences contain humans and other living beings interacting with or existing in the space depicted, while others demonstrate other evidence of human intervention such as highways, prisons and pipelines. By presenting uninterrupted camera rolls, Benning applies a formal principle which asks the viewer to become attuned to small, subtle changes in the depicted scene. In *El Valley Centro*, Benning uses duration to invite the viewer to more fully inhabit the scene, to attend to those spaces around us which many of us have learned to ignore. Each shot is a discreet slice of space and time. In *El Valley Centro*, this modular quality provides the shots with a sense of simultaneity or presentness, as if all of what we see and hear is happening *now*, within the region Benning is investigating. Some of the shots are poignant, others are chilling, and still others are very funny, owing to Benning's unique subversion of perceptual expectations.

Benning's formal framework serves to dramatize the variety of activity (labor, recreation, transportation and the earth's own undulating rhythms) within the Central Valley. The variety of these images seems all the more significant since, among urban Californians, the Central Valley (a region which provides food for one-fourth of the U.S. population) is often unfairly perceived as an empty space, a fly-over or drive-thru zone between San Francisco and Los Angeles. In showing us just how much there *is* to see, *El Valley Centro* extends the concerns of earlier work, such as *11 X 14* (1976), *Landscape Suicide* (1986) and the recent *Four Corners* (1997), which also focus sustained attention on U.S. locations away from major 'cultural centers,' engaging in respectful inquiry and conferring aesthetic value where few other filmmakers have ventured.

As an examination of a space in between Benning's title, *El Valley Centro*, calls to mind Michael Snow's 1971 landscape film *La Région Centrale*. Snow's film relentlessly examines the central region of Canada, an uninhabited tundra. *El Valley Centro*'s landscape is quite inhabited, and is very much alive. It is a center not only of agricultural activity but home to elements vital to the status quo of business and government, such as state prisons and undocumented immigrant labor, which are strategically kept on the periphery of public view. The 'absence' revealed at the heart of the Central Valley, then, is not an absence of human activity, as in Snow's film, but the apparent absence of a visible power structure, one which is shown to be legible in the landscape itself.

While Benning's method, his unerring eye for composition, and his observational stance allow the Central Valley to tell its own story as much as it can, *El Valley Centro*'s concluding sequence, which recaps and verbally describes all that has gone before, serves to retroactively recode everything the film has shown us up to that point, making clear the hidden political and social forces moving through the landscape. Part of the story is

precisely what is hidden from view, and without the consideration of those objective structures which do *not* meet the eye or the ear, *El Valley Centro* would be incomplete.

Program Notes written by Michael J. Sicinsky

Tree—Line and Others by Gunvor Nelson

Gunvor Nelson in Person

Thursday November 2, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Swedish-American filmmaker Gunvor Nelson lived in the Bay Area for over thirty years and taught at the San Francisco Art Institute for twenty of those years. Her work and influence still resonate strongly across local screens and around local filmmakers. For the first time since 1995, San Francisco Cinematheque welcomes this cinematic poet in a program of her painterly and coolly sensual films, including the premier of her new video, *Tree—Line*, “a minimalistic video, a kind of repetitious stammering with complex variations and locomotion.” Also included will be screenings of Nelson’s richly evocative and haunting film tapestries: *Light Years Expanding*, “a journey through Swedish landscape, traversing stellar distances in units of 5878 trillion miles;” *Old Digs*, “an inner journey through the sights and sounds of Kristinehamn, Sweden as reflected in its central river;” and pieces from another recent video work, *Collected Evidence*. (Steve Polta)

Tree—Line (1998); digital video, color, sound, 8 minutes, tape from the maker

Light Years Expanding (1998); 16mm, color, sound, 25 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema
An extension in theme and technique of a previous film, *Light Years*. (GN)

“All her recent films suggest that while the distance of time makes home further, the intensity of memory makes it richer.” (*Parabola*)

Selections from Collected Evidence: 52 Weeks (1999); digital video; color, sound, 10 minutes, tape from the maker

Old Digs (1992); 16mm, color, sound, 20 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

“In Nelson’s cinema of evocation we shift from past to present...from the flat space of the film frame to the three-dimensionality of objects. Constructed through collaging snapshots, live action footage and small objects, and through painting on glass and photographs, Nelson’s beautiful, enigmatic animations have a personal vocabulary of the found, the made, the remembered, the imagined.” (Kathy Geritz)

VERY HARD WORK YOU'RE ASKING ME TO DO

The Cinema of Gregg Biermann

Gregg Biermann and Ron Mazurek In Person

Sunday, November 5, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

New York/New Jersey film and video artist Gregg Biermann presents film, video and real-time music video as performed live by electronic composer Ron Mazurek. "Attempts to reconcile representational and abstract images and structure, Biermann's films and videos teeter on the friendly chasm betwixt the lyrical and the structural." (Brian Frye) Conventionally projected works to be shown include: *The Hobgoblin of Little Minds*, *Dissonances*, *Windows of Appearances* and *Detached Americans*. Real-time video performances *Piano Etude* and *Into Whiteness* blur the line between cine-recording and musical performance. Video sequences are triggered by a digital electronic keyboard as played by Ron Mazurek. In this way "edits" are created and montage is improvised in the course of the live performance.

Since my 16mm films *Giants of the Sea* (1992) and *You Never Worry* (1993), many of my movies have been single entities comprised of a series of almost whole separate shorter movies inside. This is the result of my approach to sequential organization of moving pictures, which is like the organizing forces of a storm, with an eye, and torrents spinning out from the center. There isn't a perfect mathematical pattern in these compositions, but there are distinct episodes with edges, and their currents exert force on each other—usually pushing away from a nearest neighbor but also calling across time to another. These currents are arrived at by eliciting different kinds of attention from the viewer (from the most base physiological response to other higher brain functions), causing a fissure each time there is a shift. (GB)

The Hobgoblin of Little Minds (1999); video, color, sound, 8 minutes, tape from the maker

"Gregg Biermann's *The Hobgoblin of Little Minds* mixes abstract imagery and representational photography to create powerful visual disruptions, the pieces seeming to spin away from each other by returning to certain images—often banal ones such as a store sign—he suggests a mind haunted by trauma." (Fred Camper, *The Chicago Reader*)

Dissonances (2000); video, color, sound, 14 minutes, tape from the maker

"In Gregg Biermann's enigmatic *Dissonances*... black and white stills from an airline flight suggest a disaster (oxygen masks, passengers in crash position), as does an urban roadway once we realize it was JFK's roadway in Dallas. Biermann denies the usual meanings: some sections are silent, and the shifting relationship between the sound and imagery seems somehow to relate to the sense of disaster." (Fred Camper, *The Chicago Reader*)

Piano Etude (2000); live electronic music/video performance with Ron Mazurek, 10 minutes

A prepared piano piece for the 21st century in which the line between live performance and cinema recording is blurred. Musical events as well as cinema edits are triggered live via a MIDI keyboard. *Piano Etude* was conceived of first as a para-cinema performance where the music does not exist as a separate entity from the image. In fact, we were most interested in the play of synchronous sound and image with more musical sounds which are not bound to an image sequence. In order to give Ron some freedom to improvise I had to compose sequences which could be played in a variety of different relationships and still work. We both like the economy of this piece. There doesn't seem to be anything extra. (GB)

Into Whiteness (2000); live electronic music/video performance with Ron Mazurek, 8 minutes

This is the first of my collaborations with composer Ron Mazurek. The visuals were set to the music, which was already complete when I began to work on the image. After playing with images with Ron's mostly fixed composition we had to make adjustments in the arrangement of the images on the keys and we came up with the convention of putting images only on the white keys, leaving more freedom for polyphony with the black keys. We also eliminated some of the polyphony so as to make the sound/image relationships clearer. Ron has found some interesting cinematic as well as musical events in the material. (GB)

Window of Appearances (1996); 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes, print from the maker

In 1992 my friend and colleague Francis Schmidt began work on a way to transfer video to film by using the serial port on a home computer to very accurately control film camera motors. When I arrived in Chicago in early 1994 he suggested that I create a piece on the computer and transfer it onto film. I then proceeded to create a piece in the antiquated 1-bit/pixel environment, in spite of the tendency for technologies to be created and abandoned before significant works are created with them. The work is the apotheosis of the Amiga computer and a nostalgia piece for modernism. It recalls abstract animation of the 1920s, early computer sound experiments like those done at Bell Telephone Labs in the 1950s and the first video game, Pong. (GB)

“With minimalist imagery generated entirely on a computer, Biermann defies the ‘bigger, louder, faster’ mentality that has become the norm of computer graphic artists, in favor of simple black and white abstractions that explore the space of the screen. When accompanied by his original composition the objects seem to be creating sound, often to unexpectedly silly ends.” (Scott Trotter, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago)

Detached Americans (1993); 16mm, color, sound, 9 minutes, print from the maker

“Young filmmakers today produce challenging work but offer their art as tentative, provisional, incomplete, without purporting to reach conclusions. In *Detached Americans*, Gregg Biermann pans a San Francisco landscape with the camera tilted sideways and adds the voice of a boy who witnessed the L.A. Riots to create a displaced feeling.” (Fred Camper, *The Chicago Reader*)

JUST GET ME OUT OF HERE

New Films by Timoleon Wilkins and Jeremy Coleman

Timoleon Wilkins and Jeremy Coleman in Person

Thursday, November 9, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

From mystical desert landscapes to neo-real Korean city scenes, these short poetic works by two San Francisco-based filmmakers create a world of warmth and clarity where vibrant hues contrast with silky pastels in a common exploration of unfamiliar territory. Tonight’s program includes two San Francisco premieres: Coleman’s *Hankook Trilogy*, an interpretive cine-graph of Korean society and Wilkins’ *Chinatown Sketch*, a sensuous, layered diary of street life in San Francisco’s Chinatown district. (TW & JC)

The Hankook Trilogy (1999) by Jeremy Coleman

The Hankook Trilogy is an attempt to capture the daily rhythms of Korean Society. In this sense it is a series of films caught between modernity and traditional currents. *Cheong Ju* echoes like a cleaver never hitting the block, while cell phones and pop music can be heard in the background. *NE3* is a play between the rigid geometry of neon signs and the frenzy of nightlife. *Ol She Gu* is a celebration of a majestic culture. It is a culmination of joy and ecstasy to end the trilogy through Samulnoree (a traditional four instrument percussive style of music), which leads to elation and the hope that Korean society will overcome its westernization. (JC)

Cheong Ju (1999) by Jeremy Coleman; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes

Named after the South Korean city that I lived in for a year, *Cheong Ju* is a time capsule with a choreographed editing style that flows like a market vendor cutting fish and a child chasing pigeons in the park. Lush in pastels, it portrays the subtle and not so subtle rhythms of daily life in a small Korean city. (JC)

NE3 (1999) by Jeremy Coleman; 16mm, color, silent, 5.5 minutes

A play between gestured camera strokes and the harsh geometry of neon signs. (JC)

Ol She Gu (1999) by Jeremy Coleman; 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes

Ol She Gu is a cinegraph of a Korean traditional drum and dance performance called Samulnoree. Samulnoree literally translated means a four-instrument song. During the breaks in the performance the Samulnoree group will urge the audience to sing, *ol she gu!*, or, “you rock!.” hence the title of the film. (JC)

I, Zupt 49 (1994) by Jeremy Coleman; 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes

A hand-painted film inspired by medieval stained glass and the paintings of Chagall. Enigmatic in form, *I, Zupt 49* is a spiritual interlude. (JC)

Ecclesiastic Vibrance (1995-96) by Jeremy Coleman; 16mm, color, silent, 2.75 minutes

A hand-painted film inspired by high gothic stained glass and the discovery of a baby star cluster in the crab nebula: a concomitant, cosmic journey through consciousness and space. (JC)

Chinatown Sketch (1998) by Timoleon Wilkins; 16mm, color, silent, 17 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Lake of the Spirits by Timoleon Wilkins; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes, print from the maker

untitled camera rolls by Timoleon Wilkins

SOME KIND OF LOVING TOUR

All Night Long with Miranda July and Astria Suparak

Miranda July and Astria Suparak In Person, assisted by Zac Love

Friday, November 10, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 9 pm

With her widely shown single-channel video, *Nest of Tens*, featured in this year's Rotterdam Film Festival and performance work, *Love Diamond*, recently presented at the Kitchen and New York Video Festival, performance/video artist Miranda July makes her first Cinematheque appearance with excerpts from her latest multi-media work, *The Swan Tool*. *The Swan Tool* will be preceded by a presentation by New York curator Astria Suparak of *Some Kind of Loving*, the latest in July's *Big Miss Moviola/ Joanie 4 Jackie* compilation video series.

Some Kind of Loving: Joanie 4 Jackie Co-Star Tape #3; curated by Astria Suparak

No Place Like Home #1 by Karen Yasinsky; video, color, sound, 5 minutes

No Place Like Home #2 by Karen Yasinsky; video, color, sound, 6 minutes

Fine Lines by Jane Gang; Super 8mm screened as video, 5 minutes

Lullaby by Jennifer Reeder; video, color, sound, 18 minutes

pornfilm by Stephanie Barber; 16mm screened as video, color, sound, 6 minutes

Martina's Playhouse by Peggy Ahwesh; Super 8mm screened as video, color, sound, 20 minutes

Some Kind of Loving explores sexuality from its formation in childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood, referencing psychoanalytic theory as easily as pop culture. The six works contained all variously decode desire and address the ethics or cultural codes of healthy vs. naughty expressions of lust via pornography, voyeurism, parent/child relationships, memories and fantasy. Techniques used include low-grade video, hand-processed Super-8 film, optical printing, stop-motion animation and manipulated found-footage.

Some kind of loving for the adolescents. And then some.

X.O.X.O.

Conditional love + withHolding. Temporality. vs. Ideal life-long, 4-ever.

Sexuality as rooted in power: 1) Initiation. 2.+ 3.) Giving vs. receiving. 4.) Keeping track. A learned behavior.

Joanie 4 Jackie, an alternative distribution network for female moviemakers, has a unique core audience of young females. When asked to curate a videotape for *J4J*, I wanted to work with issues I was dealing with during those years of unsuredness. The tension, the awkwardness in initial contact/s; wanting deeply to be desired (= Validation). "Is this what I get for Loving you?"

I want girls to have images of screen-sized vaginas in their own homes. To grow up with this image and be comfortable with it.

On this videotape you will find this. And more. You will find six movies of real and fake lives. You can reminisce or project or imagine. This is a real love story. Wear it on your sleeve, carve it in a tree. (Astria Suparak)

The Swan Tool (selected excerpts) (2001) by Miranda July; live movie

"The concept is simple, but the implications are profound. Take the premise that girls are always making movies in their heads because they are constantly being watched. So maybe what happens when you turn the camera on yourself and stop looking through the eyes of others is that you become your own fantasy. And other people start to see the world the way you do, and the 'missing movies,' the stories that don't usually get told, suddenly become available." (Ada Calhoun, *The Austin Chronicle*)

Combining performance, live music and projected video with direct image manipulation, *The Swan Tool* is a "live movie" starring July as Lisa Cobb, a technician who is waiting to die, fall in love or win the lottery. So what she does is this: she buries herself in her backyard. Following the self-burial she attempts to continue living and working. But the thing in the hole won't die and she can't forget about it. Parallel to and below this is a second movie, starring a hairy non-human form discovered by a picnicking family. These two movies evolve slowly and eventually collide. At the point of this subtle intersection between the two halves of the split screen, there is another collapse as the audience members become cast as characters in the story. The swan tool is the name of a tool used to unlock the doors when women accidentally lock their babies in cars. It is this tool that Lisa Cobb misuses in an attempt to find life on earth. (Miranda July)

...there is all this feeling and desire to connect and tell a story, but there's a huge space between that desire and actually having support and resources. I think it takes at least one person saying, "Yes, you should do it." For the Missing Movie Report I just went around with a camera and tape recorder and asked, "If you could make a movie, what would it be about?" And I think if I could distribute unmade movies I would. People always ask, "What movies are you influenced by?" and I think for me the movies that I'm influenced by are the unmade movies, other people's desires that aren't fulfilled or realized. They're often so much more poignant than the things that actually get processed and put in the world. (Miranda July)

WHAT HAPPENED TO *BIG MISS MOVIOLA*?

Magnasync/Moviola Corporation threatened to sue me if I didn't stop using their trademarked name (Moviola.) (As it turns out they own this word). I tried to explain to them that *Big Miss Moviola* existed in the minds of girls and wasn't just a website or company. But what do they care. They have chosen death again and again and the thought of living gives them a headache now. (Miranda July)

OPEN HOUSE PARTY

Saturday, November 11, 2000 — Hunters Point Naval Shipyard — 12 to 6 pm

Save the date for the San Francisco Cinematheque Open House, Saturday Nov. 11, 2000, Noon to 6 pm. Come and celebrate with us as we showcase our new office and preview space in picturesque Hunters Point Naval Shipyard (Building 116). Potluck Barbecue outside and films in our new preview screening room.

Flight (1996) by Greta Snider; 16mm, b&w, silent, 5 minutes, print from the maker

removed (1999) by Naomi Uman; 16mm, b&w, sound, 6.5 minutes, print from the maker

Lake of the Spirits (1998) by Timoleon Wilkins; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes, print from the maker

The Adventure Parade (2000) by Kerry Laitala; 16mm, b&w, sound, print from the maker

A Different Kind of Green (1989) by Thad Povey; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes, print from the maker

Ol She Gu (1999) by Jeremy Coleman; 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes, print from the maker

Tuning the Sleeping Machine (1996) by David Sherman; 16mm, color, sound, 13 minutes, print from the maker

Ashley (1997) by Animal Charm; video, color, sound, 9 minutes, tape from the makers

Salute (1999) by Bruce Baillie; video, color, sound, tape from the maker

Don from Lakewood by Eric Saks; video, b&w, sound, tape from the maker

Barbie's Audition (1995) by Joe Gibbons; video, b&w, sound, 9 minutes, tape from the maker

Pretty Boy by Joe Gibbons; video, b&w, sound, tape from the maker

9 Videos by *Stuart Sherman* (selections) by Stuart Sherman; video, color, sound
Work (1995) by Pelle Lowe and Saul Levine; Super 8mm screened as video; color, sound, 9 minutes, tape from the makers
Posers (2000) by Scott Stark; video, color, sound, tape from the maker
Detector (1987) by Scott Stark; Super 8mm, color, sound, 5 minutes, print from the maker

AN HOMAGE TO SIDNEY PETERSON

William Heicke In Person

Sunday, November 12, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

The death of artist, writer and filmmaker Sidney Peterson on April 24 at age 94 marked, in the words of Amos Vogel, "the end of an era." In little more than three years, Oakland-born Peterson helped usher in the vibrant movement of San Francisco avant-garde filmmaking, which continues to this day, while also establishing the teaching of personal filmmaking within a fine-art context for the first time anywhere. Working with his "Workshop 20" students at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute), Peterson co-produced four witty and darkly surreal films between 1947 and 1949. These films will be shown tonight in honor of his memory. Peterson's 95th birthday would have been November 15th.

"If ever there was a time for taking inventory it was at the end of WWII. And San Francisco was a nice place to do it in. I think it was the one urban center in the whole world where respectable old ladies gathering for a cup of tea in a public place enjoyed being mistaken for retired Madams. It was a city hanging loose, a small pocket edition, for a brief period, of the Vienna of Wittgenstein and Musil, and the Zurich of Tzara, the Cologne, the Berlin, the Paris, the Hanover, the New York of Dada. They were part of the inventory. And I should add that the local speech was characterized by a hard pronunciation of then letter *r*, Dryden's *Litera canina*, the dog letter, a certain sign of satirical wit.

"But why film? Was it not because it was the most contemporary medium and hence the most primitive? With film, one might, perhaps, recommence, revise, in short, create new, larger and more inclusive images. We were a movie generation, as later, there was to be a TV generation. Almost the entire history of the medium had developed during one's lifetime, which stretched back to the nickelodeon, if not quite to Plateau or Lucretius, who had once discussed images, the imagination and dreams in a way that made some think he was describing an optical device. Nor did film mean Hollywood any more than automobile meant Detroit. We had switched to Hillmans and MG's and, for the most abstract expressionist among us, a secondhand Jaguar. In the conic mirror I was using, the reshuffling of film history gave a new importance to a combination of the primitive and the avant-garde, from Méliès to Dali and Buñuel and all those in between who had never stopped regarding the usable future from its unusable past." (Sidney Peterson, *The Dark of the Screen*)

The Cage (1947); 16mm, b&w, sound, 25 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

The Cage was not intended to be a portrait of a schizophrenic in air-conditioned confinement. It has about as much to do with Buñuel/Dali as the eggcase of a female cockroach has to do with Hieronymous Bosch. It may look like, act like, but it's not. What is involved is a complicated equation of ideas and images, the whole point of the solution of which is that X is allowed to continue to remain X, equal to itself only. So much for the philosophic, not to say mathematical aspect. Besides being a balanced equation, *The Cage* is a somewhat comic fable and as such may be deciphered as easily as last month's bill.

...If half a century from now somebody falls off a ladder as a result of a sudden realization that the gradual coming into focus of a plaster bust in the opening shot represents the history of art from blur to plug hat, thus disposing in four feet of film of the absurd tradition that the aesthetic impulse is a dolled-up version of the involitional mimicry of butterflies and shellfish, the producers of the film cannot, of course, be responsible. Such compressions of meaning are inseparable from the non-Aristotelian position. Furthermore, it seems reasonable to suppose that most of *The Cage's* obscurities, such as they are, may be safely disregarded except by those who have a taste for such things. I merely wish to point out that the period of incubation for an idea caught from a film (or anything else) may be a lifetime, and it is entirely unnecessary for an audience to break out in a rash of significations before the lights go on. (SP)

The Petrified Dog (1948); 16mm, b&w, sound, 18 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"In theme, [*The Petrified Dog*] might be called the further adventures of Alice in Wonderland. The heroine Alice climbs out a hole in a park with her characteristic broad Victorian child's hat into a world where we have already seen a painter working within an empty frame, a slow motion runner hardly getting anywhere, a lady in fast motion eating her lipstick and a photographer who sets up his camera with a delayed shutter so that he can stand on pedestals and be snapped as a statue. Into this Wonderland she crawls....(SP)

"The events of the film are essentially disconnected. We see them in the order in which Alice, continually blinking, turns her shutter-like gaze on them. Peterson operated the camera himself... He eschewed the dynamic movements that characterize all his other films... The stasis of the camera functions organically within the film: there is a sense that the episodes and gags are eternal, contiguous realities, not progressive events and the camera style emphasizes the discreteness and fixity of the separate scenes..." (P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film*)

The Lead Shoes (1949); 16mm, b&w, sound, 18 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"It is vitally important for a full appreciation of *The Lead Shoes* to try and beat it at its own game—to try to follow its many levels of meaning clear through—because only these experiences of mental defeat really open the viewer to the film. Try as you will—and exactly as in a gambling casino—you cannot win, cannot wring a coherent set of meanings from the film. Sidney has stacked the deck masterfully! The means, or themes, of *The Lead Shoes* are deliberately edited at cross-purposes. No simple warp and woof here, but rather one of the most masterful frays of meaning ever created—thus, one of the greatest celebrations of Mystery I have ever experienced.

"We have to realize that when we speak of Peterson's sense of comedy in film, we are up against the 'big guns' of intentional comedy... We are up against Chaplin, Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, and many others of that caliber... We cannot view them in the same context as commercial films, but as art. That would be the whole point, and a point which I think would amuse Sidney very much." (Stan Brakhage, *Film at Wit's End*)

Mr. Frenhofer and the Minotaur (1949); 16mm, b&w, sound, 21 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"It was my decision to do a thing about the Balzac story [*Le Chef-d' Oeuvre Inconnu*]. Taking seriously as the theme of the story the conflict between Pouissin's Classicism and its opposite. So as strained though my mind it became, really, a way of exploring the conflict state in Rousseau's remark to Picasso: 'We are the two greatest painters, you in the Egyptian manner; and I in the modern.' In a sense [I was] taking the quest for absolute beauty in the Balzac character and contrasting that with Picassoidal Classicism, the imitation of [Picasso's] *Minotaurmachia*. It was not necessarily thought out clearly as though one were writing an essay; this was thematic material. Then the chips fell, partly again, in response to the curious limitations of doing this sort of thing with people who were not even 'anti-actors'". (Sidney Peterson, quoted in P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film*)

Special thanks to William Heicke, Peterson's collaborator on these films, for making an appearance tonight.

FROM TITO-MATERIAL TO ANDY HARDY

Recent Films from Austria

Thursday, November 16, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Tonight's program includes a wide range of recent films from the Austrian avant-garde, including two in 35mm. Using lost and found footage, home movies and meticulously rephotographed images, the works are political, personal and structural. Works screened include: Elke Groen's rephotographed *Tito-Material*; Lisl Ponger's playful critique of travel movies, *déjà vu*; Katherin Resetarits' look at deafness, *Egypt*; Peter Tscherkassky's playful *Outer Space*; Gustav Deutsch's trenchant *Mariage Blanc*; Thomas Steiner's lovely *Pan*; Martin Arnold's tour-de-force, *Alone, Life Wastes Andy Hardy*; and Siegfried Fruhauf's *La Sortie*. (Irina Leimbacher)

Tito-Material (1998) by Elke Groen; 16mm, color, 6 minutes, print from sixpackfilm

Found footage: film images which show Tito in various contexts-public appearances, with partisans, privates shaving etc. Location of find: a destroyed cinema in Mostar 1996. However, the reconstruction which took place in the optical printer is of course also an alternative draft to the principally narrative models. Traces of the war are not to be found primarily on the representational level, but rather in the damage caused by debris and damp on the material itself and in its processing. (Birgit Flos)

déjà vu (1999) by Lisl Ponger; 35mm, color, 21 minutes, print from sixpackfilm

The fascinated gaze on the foreigners fixes them in pre-formed frames. Lisl Ponger follows the trail of that gaze by taking amateur found footage material and linking it together in new ways. She summons up atmospheric background sounds and adds a series of voices. With a subtle distance to the visual foreground, those people who are pictured in the west as much more homogenous than they are have the word – in the diverse languages of the ‘other’. They tell, untranslated, of their experiences with various forms of colonialism – whether as subjects in their own countries or as the expelled and transformed ‘foreigner’. (Christa Blumlinger)

Egypt (1997) by Kathrin Resetarits; 16mm, b&w, 10 minutes, print from sixpackfilm

Egypt is a film which is almost silent. A film about deaf mutes, or rather about their sign language, a language which, like the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, links the symbolic terminology of words with the mimetic and analogous representations of graphic gestures. Sober black and white scenes show how “shark,” “widow,” “Marilyn Monroe,” a James Bond sequence, a Viennese song or the account of a treasure hunt undertaken by two holidaymakers in Egypt look in the sign language. Its is a very modest indication, and introduction to an unfamiliar way of experiencing the work, where one sees the sounds without hearing them. (Drehli Robnik)

Outer Space (1999) by Peter Tscherkassky; 35mm, b&w, 10 minutes, print from sixpackfilm

A woman, terrorized by an invisible and aggressive force, is also exposed to the audience’s gaze, a prisoner in two senses. *Outer Space* agitates this construction, which is prototypical for gender hierarchies and classic cinema’s viewing regime, and allows the protagonist to turn them upside down.(...) Flickering images, everything crashes, explodes; perforations and the soundtrack are engaged in a violent struggle. (...)The story ends in the woman’s resistant gaze. (Isabella Reicher)

Mariage Blanc (1996) by Gustav Deutsch; 16mm, color, 5 minutes, print from sixpackfilm

Mariage Blanc in Morocco means a sham marriage between a Moroccan man and a European woman in order to obtain a residence permit and thereafter the citizenship of a European country. (Gustav Deutsch)

Pan (1998) by Thomas Steiner; 16mm, color, silent, 5 minutes, print from sixpackfilm

A simulated camera movement, an endless pan in single frames over stems and trunks of leafless bushes and trees. Acceleration, multiple exposure and overpainting cause increasing abstraction of the passing landscape to the graphic moment of vertical lines and grids. (Gerald Weber)

Alone. Life Wastes Andy Hardy (1998) by Martin Arnold; 16mm, b&w, 15 minutes, print from sixpackfilm

In *Alone. Life Wastes Andy Hardy* the ever-young Mickey Rooney together with the immortal Judy Garland are cloned in an experimental “back-yard-musical”. The starting point is a number of scenes from the days when both the adolescents romped through the family series and Busby Berkeley musicals. These are put in a new order and before our eyes run forwards and backwards in a “gentle adagio”. Andy Hardy (M.R.), the all-American sunny boy of the 30s and 40s returns as an oedipally destroyed teenie clone to be released from his suffering by Betsy’s (J.G.) singing and kiss. Overlay here are the melancholic musical scores from Brown, Freed and others which will melt over the pictures (in forward and reverse) like icing sugar. (Martin Arnold)

La Sortie (1998) by Siegfried A. Fruhauf; 16mm, b&w, 6 minutes, print from sixpackfilm

The initial image-workers crossing in a factory corridor-is transformed into almost abstract black and white surfaces and harnessed, Sisyphus-like, in a lunatic dance of repetition. Fruhauf increases the acceleration of the striding workers in discrete steps until they are tearing along-the capacity of the film tested to its outer limits until the final standstill-a freeze frame. (Peter Tscherkassky)

ZOE BELOFF'S *SHADOW LAND OR LIGHT FROM THE OTHER SIDE*

Stereoscopic Film, Spirit Photographs and Early Cinema

Zoe Beloff In Person

Sunday, November 19, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

Shadow Land..., a stereoscopic 16mm film, is based on the autobiography of 19th Century medium Elizabeth d'Espérance. It shows how one might think of a medium as a kind of "mental projector" and the phantoms as representations of her psychic reality. While 20th century cinema can be described as a "window onto another world," The 19th century conceived of specters that could cross over into our own world. Hence my decision to photograph with a stereo camera. I will screen the film in conjunction with source material that inspired it, including slides of spirit photographs from 1870-1915 and Louis Feuillade's *Juve vs. Fantômas*. (Z. Beloff)

Juve vs. Fantômas (1913) by Louis Feuillade; 16mm, b&w, silent, 64 minutes, print from The Museum of Modern Art Circulating Film Library

"This is the second episode of the *Fantômas* series, Feuillade's adaptation of the serial by Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain. The feature-length films are about the exploits of the mysterious master criminal Fantômas and the efforts of the detective Juve to capture him. In this episode, Fantômas baffles his pursuers by an ingenious method of staying under water. These films were a combination of melodrama, fantasy, and intrigue, set in the cityscape of Paris and its suburbs and in wonderfully designed interiors. Their lyricism and fantastic atmosphere were much admired by the Surrealists, and the films were popular all over the world." (*Museum of Modern Art, Circulating Film Library Catalog*)

Shadow Land or Light From the Other Side (2000); Stereoscopic 16mm, b&w, sound, 32 minutes, print from the maker

The title and the narrative are taken from the 1897 autobiography of Elizabeth d'Espérance, a materializing medium who could produce full body apparitions.

Here we get inside the experience of the medium as a kind of mental "projector" conjuring up specters that interact with the sitters at a séance. At the same time the film explores the psychological underpinnings of this psychic projection, founded on a deep ambivalence around the role of women. The female medium was considered an especially suitable conduit to the next world because of her "passive nature." Yet she produced phantoms that radically transgressed her Victorian upbringing through an extraordinarily exhibitionistic sexuality. The film shows how these phantoms can be seen as a kind of limit case of the virtual, a three-dimensional representation of psychic reality, and relates their production to another contemporary theatricalization of the unconscious, the performances of Charcot's hysterics.

My on-going project is an investigation into the relationship between imagination and technology. I have become increasingly fascinated with the whole problematic of the "virtual." For the better part of a hundred years, the moving image has been conceptualized as "a window onto another world." However, in the 19th century, the virtual was conceived of very differently. Ghost Shows, where actors interacted with projected magic lantern slides and stereoscopic views, were enormously popular, opening up the cinematic spectacle to a third dimension that permitted virtual images to co-exist with real objects in space.

The film traces this complex relationship between the birth of cinema and both conjuring and mediumship. My phantoms are drawn from magic lantern slides, glass negatives and early cinema footage. Indeed some of the scenes themselves are stereoscopic reconstructions of films from the 1890s. (ZB)

Cast:

Kate Valk, Paul Lazar, Luna Montgomery, Gen Ken Montgomery, Shelley Hirsch

Crew:

Zoe Beloff (Camera); Eric Muzzy (Lighting); Steve Demas (Lighting); John Buckley (Lighting); Jason Benjamin (Lighting); Rhony Dostaly (Assistant Camera); Gen Ken Montgomery (Sound Effects); Paul Geluso (Sound Engineer)

BODY PARTS

A Multi-Screen Performance by Victor Faccinto

Victor Faccinto in Person

Co-presented by New Nothing Cinema

Thursday, November 30, 2000 — New Nothing Cinema — 8 pm

Originally from California, Faccinto began making 16mm animated films in 1969. Local note: One of his first completed films, *Where Is It All Going? Where Did It All Come From?* was awarded a prize in the first San Francisco Erotic Film Festival in 1970. He moved to New York in 1974 and began experimenting with alternative animation techniques. His last animated film, *Book of Dead* (1978), combined drawing and cutout animation with frame-by-frame rephotography. In 1995 he began developing multi-screen projection works that use beam-splitting mirrors and five 16mm projectors to project up to twenty simultaneous images. This new work premiered at Millenium in New York in 1996. Tonight's program includes two early animated films from the *Video Vic Series* (1970-74) and two of the most recent multi-screen projection works.

Filet of Soul (1972); 16mm, color animation, sound, 16 minutes
(Rated X)

Body Parts (1998); 16mm, multi-screen projection, 16 minutes

Eleven separate and continuously changing loops visually evolve parts of live bodies into a unified conclusion. Sound by Rhan Small.

Video Projection; video, 10 minutes

Sound: "Don't You Think These Halls Smell Like Love?" by Rhan Small.

Video: Series of back-to-back film loops that have not yet found a place in a projection piece.

Brake 1 by Rhan Small; sound piece, 2-3 minutes

During the final alignments of the projectors and mirrors for the next piece.

Fast Film (1999-2000); 16mm and video, multi-screen projection, 24 minutes

Seven film loops, two film reels and a center video projection make up this fast-paced and sometimes relentless race against time. It reaches its climax in a sixteen screen audiovisual abstraction made up of film loops with hand-painted surfaces. Sound by Rhan Small.

Shameless (1974); 16mm, color animation, sound, 14 minutes

The fourth and final *Video Vic* film. (Rated XX)

Program Notes written by Victor Faccinto

BETWEEN VISIONS

An Intermedia Commentary

Presented by Lyn Hejinian, Leslie Scalapino and Konrad Steiner

Sunday, December 3, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

Featuring readings by Lyn Hejinian and Leslie Scalapino, individually, and from their collaborative work, *Sight*, and films, *New York Portrait, Chapter II*, by Peter Hutton; *Bum Series* by Konrad Steiner; and *The Maltese Cross Movement* by Keewatin Dewdney

From the introduction to *Sight*, by Lyn Hejinian & Leslie Scalapino (Edge, 2000):

“We agreed that the form of our collaboration was to be in doubles... and that the subject, being sight, should involve things actually seen.... Sometimes, seeing in real events we had to turn seeing up to an extreme in order to see it; as if dreaming being suppressed were bursting out a luminous seeing in the waking state.

[...]

“Friendship would have to be not just ‘being liked.’ That one has to be likable, accommodating. One would have to ‘like’ also-- i.e. like the other-- and I think only by being oneself. Not accommodating. My need for argument in it is that you tend to view reality as wholesome; when I’m suffering you tend to alleviate to bring suffering in the currency of the ‘social,’ the realm that is convivial-- whereas I’m saying it’s (also) apprehension itself when it’s occurring.

[...]

“The accumulation of pairings as ‘extreme’ sights occurs to the extent of being as if the writing’s faculty, rather than being imaginative images.”

(LS)

“From the outset we agreed that for the purposes of this collaboration... the question of experiencing the world would focus on sight-- on the question of ‘seeing’: seeing the world, seeing something in it, and being in it as one whose participation involved such “seeing.” The thrill of acknowledgement (it is, after all, good to be alive!), while being addressed to what we saw, was also, over and over again, in real time, addressed to each other.

[...]

“As I look at this work now in retrospect, I see it as elaborating problems in phenomenology but not in description, and this, given our topic, seems curious. Of course description is often phenomenological in intent-- aimed at bringing something into view, trying to replicate for (or produce in) the reader an experience of something seen. But it seems as if our emphasis was not on the thing seen but on the coming to see. As it see it, this book argues that the moment of coming to see is active and dialogic, and as such, dramatic.”

(LH)

From *Philosophical Investigations*
by Ludwig Wittgenstein (Blackwell, 1953)
part II, section xi

p 193

Two uses of the word “see”. The one: “What do you see there?”-- “I see this” (and then a description, a drawing, a copy). The other: “I see a likeness between these two faces”-- let the person I tell this to be seeing the faces as clearly as I do myself. The importance of this is the difference of category between the two “objects” of sight.

One might make an accurate drawing of the two faces, and another notice in the drawing the likeness which the former did not see.

I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience “noticing an aspect.”

[...]

p 196

“Now I am seeing this,” I might say (pointing to another picture, for example). This had the form of a report of a new perception.

The expression of a change of aspect is the expression of a new perception and at the same time of the perception's being unchanged.

[...]

p. 197

But since it is the description of a perception, it can also be called the expression of a thought-- If you are looking at the object, you need not think of it; but if you are having the visual experience expressed by the exclamation, you are also thinking of what you see.

Hence the flashing of an aspect on us seems half visual experience, half thought.

[...]

Now, when I know my acquaintance in a crowd, perhaps after looking in his direction for quite a while-- is this is special sort of seeing? Is it a case of both seeing and thinking? or an amalgam of the two, as I should almost like to say?

The question is: why does one want to say this?

The possibility of "and" or "not"

Program Notes written by Konrad Steiner

"Between visions" is an expression i want to use in two senses. First in the sense that there is some gap or interval complementary to moments of apprehension or communication. Between recognized thoughts or images a space subsists as unacknowledged by us as water isn't by fish. This same idea could apply for the field that different points of view lie in, without which they could never be related to one another.

This gap that makes relating possible seems ephemeral yet necessary for both perception (relating to outside) and dialogue (relating to other). Reciprocally, from the social point of view, one's glimpse of this space (or it could be called "mind") is achieved via perception and dialogue (or meditation and soliloquy)-- though as itself it does not require any recognition. We might only get a glimpse of "it" before the next "thought" (which might be: "i see it") takes up our attention. That glimpse is the second sense: visions of between. The possibility of shift belies the gap.

Mind the gap

One could play with paying attention to what one's not looking at, peripheral attention, noticing how what's seen consists in also what's missed. There is evidence of this in noticing some aspect or remembering some detail that shifts one's view, opinion or understanding-- or in the dawning of apprehension of what someone meant hours, days or years ago. I find this experience so fundamental that i would say that if you didn't miss anything you wouldn't see anything, and if you didn't miss and see you couldn't say you saw or didn't see anything. Missing and noticing seem to be on the same level, in the sense that you don't have one without the other.

Cog

The point is-- by means of a kind of cognitive parallax-- to throw attention on mind, not particularly on language or cinema or on their relation, but to use those to evoke awareness of the vessel of experience, which lacks essence (definition) and thereby is able to know (to recognize) and empathize (to resemble).

In tonight's case one of the parallax mechanisms is the presentation of excerpts from a work, *Sight*, which is a record of two persons' investigation of "catching sight." Maybe "playing catch with sight" is a better phrase for this work. When you read it, you participate in the intensity of a world without clutching at it. It is writing that shows a teeming interface between world and mind and persons. They're able to cast glances quickly and sideways enough to recreate these textural and evanescent characteristics of experience, at least in the reader not armchaired by conventional "but tell me what it means" approach to reading.

Other means of parallax will be the verbal response to images (the poets' work after *New York Portrait, Chapter II*) and the visual response to language (my film).

Bum Series is the start of a collaboration between Leslie Scalapino and myself where I have begun by laying down a visual accompaniment to her reading of a section of her poem, *way*. As it is, scattered precise sync events are surrounded by a looser arrangement of visual-chordal innuendo. Which events are synchronous with the text is purely a matter of interpretation.

The Maltese Cross Movement is a fascinating rebus of a film. The star and crescent motif shot through the film can represent so many things. At first it is the mechanical movement in the camera/projector that slices flow in just the right frequency and regularity for us to see motion where there is none. Then this pair goes on to be the sun and moon, as the astronomical basis for our diurnal and calendric rhythms, they represent another kind of intermittence and alternation. Then further to be the symbols of complementarity, one in continuous motion and one intermittent (with the sound of the ratcheting cogs of the projector). Many images flash past as the film teaches you various ways to read it. And as the montage gets ever more ecstatic -- and interrupted -- the text of image, sound and their synchronization working like a rickety reality, almost ready to collapse, multivalent and almost intelligible, like the fine structure of our own experience, the final words, "If I die tonight, tomorrow 'I' 'll be gone" representing a joke.

(KS)

Keewatin Dewdney has a personal web site:

<http://www.csd.uwo.ca/faculty/akd/akd.html>

Leslie Scalapino is publisher of O Books :

<http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/scalapino/>

<http://www.obooks.com/default.htm>

Lyn Hejinián is project director and editor with Travis Ortiz of Atelos:

<http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/hejinian/>

<http://www.atelos.org/index.htm>

[The joke is that the mind projects its existence in such a false way that one can state/imagine the conditions of its nonexistence. This is not a nasty joke; it is like laughing while coming. It is like seeing that you can't see the gap without a sort of dissolution, which is like mind seeing mind only when it's not mind. It is like turning around in front of a mirror fast enough to catch sight of the back of your head.]

PETER ADAIR'S *THE HOLY GHOST PEOPLE WITH PIE FIGHT '69*

Christian Bruno and Sam Green In Person

With an Introduction to *Holy Ghost People* by Veronica Selver

Thursday, December 7, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

An artful fusion of ethnography and cinema verité, late filmmaker Peter Adair's (*Word Is Out*) vibrant first film, *The Holy Ghost People*, received critical acclaim upon its release in 1967, winning that year's "New Visions" award in the SF International Film Festival. Adair's mesmerizing film portrays the mysterious and electrifying presence of the Holy Ghost as it swells through a West Virginian congregation over the course of an evening prayer meeting. Christian Bruno and Sam Green's *Pie Fight '69* uses original footage and first-hand reminiscences to recount the hilarious Opening Night of the SF International Film Festival two years later when Adair's SF film collective, Grand Central Station, made a guerilla assault on the bourgeois film world. (C. Bruno)

The Holy Ghost People (1967) by Peter Adair; 16mm, b&w, sound, 53 minutes, print from Haney Armstrong

"Peter Adair's *Holy Ghost People* ... is the first film by a young Californian who went to live with a small holy-roller church community in rural West Virginia, filming and editing his picture over a period of two-years. This film's strength stems from Adair's compassionately discreet objectivity towards his curious human material. After the screening, a Park Avenue psychiatrist arose to heap abuse on director Adair claiming that he had been struggling all his life against such 'obscurantism.' He was nearly lynched by the mildly intellectual audience which sat in enthralled silence through Adair's fascinating document. (Elliot Stein, *The London Financial Times*)

"Adair's achievement lies not just in recording this event, but diving into it without any judgment, implied or otherwise—what easily might have seemed a freak show... instead impresses us with the unselfconscious raptures these 'hicks' can call their own. They're inclusive rather than hellfire-and-brimstone

exclusive; individuality is valued here, with one man saying, 'I'd hate to think God made (each) man not to be what he wanted to be.'" (Dennis Harvey, *SF Bay Guardian*)

"Peter Adair's filming was entirely open, and fulfills, better than any modern film I know, the basic anthropological tenet of full disclosure of purpose. It contrasts sharply with the current cinematographic rage for presenting scenes and postures that could never be viewed by participant observers, and which are, therefore, a violation of the privacy of both subject and viewer. It also contrasts sharply with films in which the abnormal is stressed without reference to the wider context in which such behavior occurs. I know nothing better than this film for illustrating to a psychiatric audience, who habitually substitute confidentiality for the open treatment required by anthropologists, or to those social psychologists who have relied on stooges and deception to provide their experimental contexts, what an anthropological study can do. The people in the film are work-worn and show the marks of malnutrition, poverty and poor medical care, and yet, on a recent showing to a very sophisticated audience, some one on my right exclaimed: 'What beautiful people!'" (Margaret Mead)

Pie Fight '69 (2000) by Christian Bruno and Sam Green; 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes, print from the makers
In 1969, Peter Adair, along with Steven Schmidt, Jak Newman and David Himmelstein, formed Grand Central Station, an independent production company. But with no money and no exposure, passion would only go so far unless they made a name for themselves. The spirit of the 60's demanded a direct action, and the San Francisco International Film Festival was just the high profile, high society event they needed as a target. (CB and SG)

immense gratitude to Haney Armstrong for the print of The Holy Ghost People

ALEXANDER DOVZHENKO'S ARSENAL

Sunday, December 10, 2000 — San Francisco Art Institute — 7:30 pm

Ukrainian Alexander Dovzhenko was part of a group of Soviet filmmakers during the 1920's (also including Kuleshov, Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Vertov) whose theory and practice radically transformed the language of narrative cinema. Dovzhenko was a practicing poet throughout his life and his films, whose subjects range from ancient folk myths to post-revolutionary history, are imbued with a remarkable hallucinatory visual quality and a deep feeling for the physical and emotional character of Soviet life. Tonight is the first in a series surveying this early pioneer's greatest achievements. *Arsenal* is a powerful account of the Ukraine from World War I through the February and October revolutions, which climaxes with the suppression of the workers' revolt in 1918. (Steve Anker)

Arsenal (1929) by Alexander Dovzhenko; 16mm, b&w, silent, 102 minutes, print from Em Gee Film Library

"The artistic audience was enthusiastic about *Zvenyhora* when it came out, but the general public did not accept it because it was difficult to understand. Yet I was proud of the film and even remember boasting that I was more like a professor of higher mathematics than an entertainer. I seemed to have forgotten why I came to the cinema.

"Was this a betrayal of film as mass art? It was not. I did not know the rules yet and so didn't think I was making any mistakes. I did not so much make the picture as sing it out like a songbird. I wanted to broaden the horizons of the screen, to break away from stereotyped narrative, and to speak the language of great ideas. I definitely overdid it.

"In my next film, *Arsenal*, I considerably narrowed the range of my cinematic goals. The assignment to make a film was entirely political, set by the Party. I wrote the scenario in a fortnight, filmed and edited in six months. In making *Arsenal* I had two tasks: to unmask reactionary Ukrainian nationalism and chauvinism and to be the bard of the Ukrainian working class, which had accomplished the social revolution. The epic theme was contained later in *Shchors* in a new stylistic form. At this time, however, I lacked the necessary theoretical knowledge for an integrated handling of so large a theme.

"As far as I was concerned, there were no questions of style or form involved. The characters in *Arsenal* were hardly individualized. They were embodiments of ideas and ideologies. I was still working in the *Zvenyhora* manner, using class categories, not individuals. The grandeur of the events portrayed forced me to compress the material. This could have been achieved by using poetic language, which seems to have become my specialty, yet I never thought about symbols. Even when my hero was shot at point-blank range and couldn't be

killed, I possessed enough artistic innocence to accept this as a completely natural fact. I dare say if had been asked then what I was thinking about, I should have answered, like Courbet's to a lady's question, 'Madam, I am not thinking—I am excited.' I worked like a soldier who slashes at the enemy with no thought of the rules of fencing. My steps toward realism were very slow.

"Although I was not surprised by the reception *Arsenal* was given, I was oppressed by it. The film was accepted with approval by the public and the Party. The writers, however, did not accept it. For betraying "Mother Ukraine," for profaning the Ukrainian nation, in other words, for depicting the Ukrainian nationalists as provincial nonentities and adventurers, my film was reviled in the press; I was boycotted for many years, and the leadership treated me with a cool reserve that I could not comprehend. However it may be, the delegation of writers that traveled to Moscow with a protest and a demand to ban the film was not exactly reproached by the leaders of the country.

"Yet *Arsenal* was absolutely orthodox. One could determine a person's politics from his attitude toward the film. I have well remembered this. Making the film was an important step in my life. I became wiser and more mature and at the same time felt great pain. I realized things were far from what they could be in our society. Life became hard." (Alexander Dovzhenko, "Autobiography," in Marco Carynnyk, ed., *Alexander Dovzhenko: The Poet as Filmmaker*)

GASH AND NEW UNDERGROUND SHORTS

Giulia Frati, Darcey Leonard and Tracey MacCullion in person

Friday, December 15, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 8 pm

Tonight, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and San Francisco Cinematheque join forces to present the West Coast premiere of *Gash*, a major work from emerging Boston-based filmmaker Tracey MacCullion. We begin the program with a selection of new underground shorts, all Bay Area premieres.

Nitwit Predelik (1999) by Xan Price; video, color, sound, 8 minutes

An introduction to the deranged world of nitwit. We meet Hootus and Minoltuh on a day when they need to do an enormous amount of licking. Drool flows and many household objects are tasted. Meanwhile, a wig wiggles nervously in the corner.

Best Short, NY Underground Film Festival. For further adventures, visit www.nitwit.org.

Fluff (2000) by William Jones; video, color, sound, 3 minutes

Hot, nasty and vaguely disturbing, William Jones' (*Finished*) latest video is an oscilloscopic analysis of narration from gay porno film trailers.

Sadistinfektanz (1999) by Giulia Frati; 16mm, color, sound, 2 minutes

As short as it is brutal (and thus we're showing it twice in the program), this is a poetic new work from Montreal-based Giulia Frati (here tonight in person), which illustrates a violent, obsessive need to manipulate the feelings and senses of a virtual lover.

Chickenbitch (2000) by Daniel Hartlaub; 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes

A day turns into a nightmare, endlessly circling upon itself.

Best Short Film, CineArt Hamburg Film Festival.

Sadistinfektanz (1999) by Giulia Frati; 16mm, color, sound, 2 minutes

Lipstick and Dynamite (c.1954); 16mm, b&w, sound, 4 minutes

Vintage 16mm women's wrestling.

Ecstasy in Entropy (2000) by Nick Zedd; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes

A tawdry bunch of Marxist lapdancers debate the finer points of revolutionary theory in the latest transgressive mess from the filmmaker you love to hate. Starring Annie Sprinkle, Brenda Bergman, Mike Diana and Jennifer Blowdryer.

Intermission

Gash (1999) by Tracey MacCullion; 16mm, color, sound, 31 minutes

A relentless, highly-charged punk trance film, *Gash* depicts the feral, traumatized psychic landscape of a young girl caught between her grotesquely abusive family and the out-of-control, sexually aggressive crowd she hangs out with on the streets of Boston. This raw, intense plunge into regressive abjection has the shattering, uncanny power of a living nightmare and the ferocity of a fight to the death, and puts filmmaker Tracey MacCullion on the map as one of the most exciting young talents around. (Ocularis Cinema)

“Best of 1999.” (Gavin Smith, *Film Comment*)

A Q&A session will follow the screening with MacCullion and co-producer/actress Darcey Leonard.

Program compiled by Joel Shepard, Film/Video Curator, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

THE PERSONAL LANDSCAPE:

New films by Peter Hutton, Mark Lapore and Jeanne Liotta

Sunday, December 17, 2000 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 pm

Our finale for 2000 includes two new films by old friends which premiered at this fall's New York Film Festival. Peter Hutton's *Time and Tide: Study of a River, Part 2* and Mark Lapore's *The Glass System*. These are presented with a second look at Jeanne Liotta's beautiful and lyrical *Muktikara*, which screened as a part of Cinematheque and Pacific Film Archive's program of new experimental works at this year's San Francisco International Film Festival.

Muktikara (1999) by Jeanne Liotta; 16mm, color, silent, 11.5 minutes, print from the maker

From the Sanskrit, “gentle gazing brings liberation,” the title is also the name of a particular body of water which is the image-subject of the film/Landscape as “inscape.” Not inertly present but beckoning an active perception; a seeing and a seeing into. (JL)

Time and Tide: Study of a River, Part 2 (2000) by Peter Hutton; 16mm, color, silent, 35 minutes, print from the maker

The first section of the film is a reprint of a reel shot by Billy Bitzer in 1903 titled *Down the Hudson* for Biograph. It chronicles in single frame time lapse a section of the river between Newburgh, New York and Yonkers. The second section of the film was shot in 1998 and 1999 by filmmaker Peter Hutton and records fragments of several trips up and down the Hudson River between Bayonne, New Jersey, and Albany, New York. The filmmaker was traveling on the tugboat *Gotham* as it pushed (up river) and pulled (down river) the *Noel Cutler*, a barge filled with 35,000 barrels of unleaded gasoline. (PH)

“In recent years filmmakers as diverse as Abbas Kiarostami, Claire Denis and Stan Brakhage have offered extraordinary films in which landscape and seascape were paramount. It is fitting then, that Hutton, one of the greatest living poets of the portraiture of place, has completed his first film in many years—a meditation on the Hudson River. Combining the luminescence and formal contemplation of the Hudson Valley painters with documentary and ecological concerns, *Time and Tide* extends the panoramic field of Hutton's previous *Portrait of a River*. And after decades of an exclusive devotion to and mastery of reversal black and white stocks, *Time and Tide* marks Hutton's inaugural foray into color negative.” (Mark McElhatten, New York Film Festival)

The Glass System (2000) by Mark LaPore; 16mm, color, sound, 20 minutes, print from the maker

Shot primarily in Calcutta, *The Glass System* looks at life as it is played out in public. Every street corner turned reveals activities both simple and mesmerizing: a knife sharpener on a bicycle; a tiny tightrope walker; a hauntingly slow portrait of the darting eyes of schoolgirls on their way home; the uncompleted activities of a young contortionist. *The Glass System* expresses the filmmaker's sense of yearning for a lost New York, a place which exists in a dream where life in the streets was both complicated and fleeting. (ML)

APPENDIX
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Alfonzo Alvarez	1.29.00
Claire Bain	1.29.00
Nathaniel Dorsky	1.29.00
Daven Gee	1.29.00
Anne McGuire	1.29.00
John Muse	1.29.00
Steve Polta	1.29.00
Scott Stark	1.29.00
Ellen Ugelstad	1.29.00
James Benning	1.30.00
Richard Dindo	1.17, 1.20.00
Jay Rosenblatt	2.24.00
Erin Sax	2.24.00
Bill Berkson	2.27.00
Nathaniel Dorsky	2.27.00
Arthur and Corinne Cantrill	3.2.00
Konrad Steiner	3.5.00
Lee Flynn	3.9.00
Caitlin Manning	3.9.00
Luis A. Recoder	3.12.00
Bruce McClure	3.12.00
Stephanie Barber	3.16.00
Naomi Uman	3.16.00
Lawrence Jordan	3.19, 3.21, 3.23, 3.26.00
Sharon Lockhart	4.1.00

Gordon Ball	4.2.00
Trinh T. Minh-ha	4.6.00
Matthias Müller	4.9.00
Gad Hollander	4.13.00
Ken Paul Rosenthal	4.16.00
Jim Jennings	4.27, 4.30.00
Alfonso Alvarez	4.30.00
Ellen Ugelstad	4.3.00
David Michalak and REEL CHANGE	5.4.00
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