

use the act of reading text has such promise as Hollis Frampton once mentioned, "Once read, one can't not read"—there's a tendency viewer to try to understand/respond to the site the fact that Snow's presentation of it

San Francisco Cinematheque Program Notes 1992

We think of the title as "This", and yet the actual title which can be read to mean "This is the way 'This' is" and "is" getting in the way of an easy, comfortable reading experience is confirmed by Snow's continual use of devices that require close attention. The text includes a variety of puns and other

From the collection of the

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**San Francisco Cinematheque
1992 Program Notes**

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**Breaking Time by Saul Levine
and Inflorescence by Jerome Carolfi**

Thursday, February 6, 1992

Tonight's program features two small-gauge (8mm and Super-8mm) films which use urban landscapes as material for subjective explorations. Saul Levine's *Breaking Time*, originally photographed in 8mm, will be presented in 16mm blow-up print form.

Inflorescence (1991), by Jerome Carolfi; Super-8mm, b&w/color, silent, 10 minutes

As the cold and snowy winter begins to give way to spring, the transition is usually preceded by the gradual re-emergence of light as the longer days provide a subtle clue of what is to follow. When this happens, a feeling of something incipient is in the air, but not much appears to happen. But it always seemed to me that however much I anticipated the arrival of spring, it was unexpected and the delight in the newly arrived season came as somewhat of a surprise. Even in nature's sanctuary there still seemed to be variables of the inevitable seasonal progression.

In a similar mode, *Inflorescence* works with an intuitive sense and initiates a generative progression which parallels the natural season. Observations of trees and plants depict a world in process and the gradually increasing quantity of light sets the stage for a wonderfully dramatic event which caps the season; seemingly out of nowhere the cherry blossoms burst forth and with their inflorescence, comes the joy and sense of renewal of spring. (Jerome Carolfi)

Bay Area filmmaker Jerome Carolfi's work has previously been presented by the Cinematheque and Film Arts Foundation.

Breaking Time, A Portrayal in Four Parts and Three Reels (1977-83), by Saul Levine; 16mm blow-up from 8mm, color, silent, 51 minutes

Breaking Time consists of four short films: *Mortgage on My Body*, *Arrested* and *Lien on My Soul/Portrait Not a Dream*.

The return to my home (New Haven, CT) in 1977 after being unemployed for a year allowed me to look back on the working people and places of my childhood with the eyes of an adult.
(Saul Levine)

Marjorie Keller on *Arrested* (*Breaking Time* Part II): The silent poetry of winter and thaw, shovelling snow, people made large and small through the intercutting of close ups and long shots, movement and stillness created through fast cutting—all are similar to his strategies from earlier work. In this film, a large Marlboro billboard with a running bull is used to further these themes by minisculizing the men who are painting it, and making metaphorical enlargements of houses, rivers, and even the reflection of the filmmaker himself. (Collective for Living Cinema program note, Oct. 22, 1983)

"If irrepressible creative energy were its own reward, then Saul Levine has been honored for the last 20 years. In any other terms he is one of the most neglected avant-garde filmmakers. And for a reason: he makes rude, scruffy, frenetic films in flagrant indifference to the current standards of polish and structure. His art is...brazenly original..." (P.Adams Sitney, *The Village Voice*)

Boston filmmaker Saul Levine has been producing personal films for over twenty years—virtually all of his work exists in either regular 8mm or Super-8mm film formats. His subjects extend from his daily life (experiences as a political activist, portraits of friends, family and places, etc.). A large number of his films have been presented by the Cinematheque over the years.

ISRAELIS TODAY: DREAMS AND REALITY

Friday and Saturday, February 7 and 8, 1992

In conjunction with Bay Area photographer Raisa Fastman's installation, *Israelis Today: Dreams and Reality*, at the Eye Gallery (Jan. 21 - Feb.22), the Cinematheque and the Eye Gallery present two evenings of film and discussion focusing on life in Israel and the Occupied Territories, as seen from the perspective of the early Jewish settlers, their descendants, and the different generations of Palestinians who have inhabited the land. Raisa Fastman selected both programs and will lead the post-screening discussion on each evening.

Program I:

ANOU BANOU: THE DAUGHTERS OF UTOPIA

by Edna Politi

Friday, February 7, 1992

Anou Banou: The Daughters of Utopia (France, 1982), by Edna Politi; 16mm, color, 85 minutes, in Hebrew with English subtitles. Print from Atara Releasing.

Director Edna Politi's excellent, sparkling historical documentary focuses on six women who speak of their hopes and dreams as socialists, Zionists, and feminists who arrived in Palestine as settlers during the 1920s. As these remarkable women speak about that time 60 years later, archival music and images of these hardy ploughwomen are woven together to create an inspiring document about a time and a place when real social change seemed possible.

Anou Banou received first prize at the 1983 International Women's Film Festival and has also been presented on German and Dutch television.

Program II

SHADOWS OVER THE FUTURE

by Wolfgang Bergmann

February 8, 1992

Shadows Over the Future (W. Germany, 1985), by Wolfgang Bergmann; 16mm, color, 92 minutes, in English/German/Hebrew/Arabic with English subtitles). Print from First Run/Icarus Films.

Three sides of a triangle—Israeli, Palestinian, and German—come together in this honest, personal, and unusual documentary. Anat is an Israeli doctoral student who lives in Germany. Her parents escaped from Germany in 1939 and now live in Haifa. Anat meets with Fuad, a Palestinian playwright who was born in a refugee camp and now lives in Munich. Together, the two go to Israel and the Occupied Territories and have emotional encounters with their respective families.

Director Bergmann has created a film that tries to humanize rather than analyze the issues. How, he asks, does the past influence the present? What responsibility do Holocaust survivors have toward others? Can Israelis and Palestinians ever recognize each others' claims to the land? What right does a young German have to make a film about all of this?

Shadows Over the Future has been presented at the 1985 Munich Film Festival, the 1985 Haifa Film Festival, the 1986 Rotterdam Film Festival, the 1986 Paris Film Festival and was presented on German television in 1986.

MORTAL COILS
New Bay Area Films and Videos
Curated by Steve Anker and Lynne Sachs

Sunday, February 9, 1992

Near Obvious (1991), by Michael Baron; 16mm, b&w, 9 minutes

Daily Rains (1991), by Cauleen Smith; 16mm, 12 minutes

McCarthy's (1991), by Mark Street; 8mm Video on 3/4", 13 minutes

Vital Signs (1991), by Barbara Hammer; 16mm, color/b&w, silent, 9 minutes

Dear Family (1991), by Mia Houlberg; video, 13 minutes

S'Aline's Solution (1991), by Aline Mare; 16mm, 9 minutes

"...like water into sand" (1991), by Susanne Fairfax; 16mm, color/b&w, sound, 8 minutes

Corn Smut (1991), by Jennifer Gentile; 16mm, 7 minutes

Each of the films in tonight's program follows a sinuous path across uncharted terrain. We tremble, apprehensive yet knowing, along the surface of Michael Baron's *Near Obvious*, wondering whether the darkness he throws in our path forbodes doom or serenity. Are we riding into a dark cave, an unending filmic trajectory or merely passing through a tunnel? In Baron's world, the voyage is recognizably human and yet there is absolutely no one else with whom we can share the ride.

These films step, wide-eyed into a pool of painful memories and hard times. These are not contemplations on singular, catastrophic events, but rather long-standing efforts to come to terms with the difficulties of everyday existence. In Cauleen Smith's words, these film and videomakers have made the difficult choice to stand uncovered in their own *Daily Rains*. Smith shares the maturing task of sorting through her own memories of racism by questioning other Black women about their earliest recollections of verbal slurs or physical attacks. She then creates a highly personal landscape in which these women can talk, dance, play and embrace.

In *McCarthy's*, Mark Street suggests that it is the discovery of a community of like spirited people that provides us with a place to reap the benefits of our own experiences of aging. Recognizing the family gathering kind of qualities of a local San Francisco pub, Street's vision portrays a quiet dignity reminiscent of the world depicted by Vincent van Gogh in his "Potato Eaters". His aesthetically transgressive camera style challenges traditional notions of documentary and visual form.

In a more autobiographical mode, Barbara Hammer continues the poetic research on aging and illness she began in her earlier work with her new film *Vital Signs*. Here Hammer creates a volatile pas-de-deux between herself and a skeleton. She suggests that within each of us there is a community of selves, talking and carrying on. For the artist, in particular, there is a dialogue between one's images and the things they represent. Looking and seeing

are not such simple tasks for a person immersed in a world of representations. Like Baron in *Near Obvious*, Hammer is staring hard at the crevices just below the surface. "Look closely," she says, "and you'll see the scars."

Mia Houlberg's video reflection on her aging grandmother portrays a woman who has lost her own community of selves, her very continence, and is left with a bewildered family who must decide her fate. Stark in its rendering of a past full of happy moments and material comforts, *Dear Family* is a visual essay on the eventual decay of the body. Deceptively matter of fact in tone, it is actually a painful cry, a letter full of emotion and resolve.

Equally immersed in issues surrounding control of the body, Aline Mare explores her own dilemmas and eventual decisions concerning her choice not to continue a number of pregnancies. In *Dear Family*, Houlberg implicitly examines the politics of a living will in light of modern technology's ability to continue a life—painfully, pointlessly and artificially. "These are dangerous time," says Mare in *S'Aline's Solution*. Insisting on her own need to remain childless, she moves her own body through a groundless, watery environment, while verbally revealing the most intimate struggles of her psyche.

"...like water into sand", Susanne Fairfax's meditation on her mother's suicide, carries this dialogue on the control of the body to its farthest extreme. Hurt and confused by her mother's choice to take her own life, Fairfax wanders through the past she shared with her mother. Remembering a pamphlet on patient's rights she found in her mother's purse, Fairfax, like Houlberg and Mare, wonders anxiously about these most mortal of choices.

In an ebullient investigation of a woman's effort to control her body as well as her environment, Jennifer Gentile's *Corn Smut* confronts the dangerously close relationship between flirtation, sexuality and assault. "We started to kiss and then he wanted more," she explains, "some say you shouldn't wear lipstick in Nebraska." Rife with intriguing ambiguity, Gentile's film weaves an aggressive camera style and a crashing soundtrack into a surprisingly subtle commentary on human violence.

—Notes by Lynne Sachs

IN SEARCH OF VALENTINE
Our Annual Valentine's Day Program

Thursday, February 13, 1992

Cartoon Far (1990), by Lewis Klahr; b&w/color, Super-8mm on 3/4" tape, 6 minutes

From Klahr's *Tales of the Forgotten Future, Part 3* comes *Cartoon Far*, a cutout animation fantasy on budding romance, featuring a goggle-wearing race-car driver's funky flashback about an encounter with a woman. The memories of this tryst propel the driver into the solar system, suggesting that the transformative power of love can transport one to other worlds.

Jollies (1990), by Sadie Benning; 3/4" videotape from Pixelvision original, b&w, 11 minutes

At age 15, Sadie Benning began using a toy video camera to produce frank, funny and remarkably self-aware missives about growing up lesbian. Smooching Barbie dolls open *Jollies*, a mini-chronicle of sexual awakening in Milwaukee. Wunderkind Sadie Benning makes "videos straight from the gut by way of a throbbing teen libido. In *Jollies* ...she seizes on avant-garde strategies of autobiography and confession, casting them squarely into the Age of Sassy and beyond. Staring into the lens, her enormous fishlike eyes squint open and shut, moist and vaguely obscene." (Manohla Dargis, *The Village Voice*)

The Match That Started My Fire (1991), by Cathy Cook; 16mm, b&w/color, 18.5 minutes

Cathy Cook's film humorously explores women's sexual discoveries through a collection of candid stories told by women recalling their early childhood experiences. The inspiration for this film stemmed from the found void of female sexual information and discussion of pleasure in 1950s and 60s sex education films. *The Match That Started My Fire* is a revelation of female fantasies, discoveries and sexual pleasures. Special guest appearance by noted San Francisco arsonist and lady's man, George Kuchar.

Shred o' Sex (1991), by Greta Snider & Shred of Dignity; 16mm, b & w (hand-processed), 20 minutes

Local siren Greta Snider and friends came (literally) together to produce *Shred o' Sex*—a robust round-robin post-punk home sex movie which explores the forest of flesh in all its splendid configurations.

"On a strictly prurient level, except for an alarming incident with a pole (bringing to mind an old Mae West clip), the sex is by turns sweetly silly, prosaic, even demure. There's some frisky business with a skateboard, too, but far more arousing is the filmmaker's own touch, the hand-processed shimmers she produces on the skin of her film. Snider's formal intervention is certainly seductive..." (M. Dargis, *The Village Voice*)

"...this gorgeous hand-job unleashes an orgy of solarized textures and fleshy cameos by Greta Snider, Bill Daniel, Valerie Stadler, Gary Floyd and the rest of the gang." (Craig Baldwin)

The Ballad of Dinky and Rascal (1992), by Ed Jones; 3/4" videotape, color, 4:15 minutes

The World Premiere of Ed Jones' valentine to man's (and woman's) best friends, featuring the twin talents of the irascible Dinky and Rascal. A music video for animal lovers with all music composed and performed by the videomaker.

**ART UNDER OCCUPATION:
BREAK THE SILENCE**
A video by Susan Greene
Susan Greene & friends in person

Saturday, February 15, 1992

Break the Silence (1991), by Susan Greene; 3/4" video, color, 29 minutes, Premiere.

Bay Area artist Susan Greene's video, *Break the Silence*, chronicles the activities of four Jewish-American women artists who traveled to the West Bank of Occupied Palestine, lived with a Palestinian family in a refugee camp, and painted six murals (some clandestinely) with local artists in support of Palestinian independence, self-determination, and peace.

Although the four women—Susan Greene, Dina Redman, Marlene Tobias and Miranda Bergmann—discuss their experiences in detail on the tape, the daily lives of the Palestinian people (as depicted and memorialized in the murals) are the primary focus of this work. *Break the Silence*'s main strength is its ability to sincerely reveal and document the daily, domestic life of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories, people who live in the shadow of death and violence. The sense of community portrayed (and the manner in which the community warmly accepts and befriends its Jewish-American visitors) and a spirit of compassion and cooperation guide this tape throughout its course. Through personal stories, interviews with Palestinians, and the imagery of the murals, *Break the Silence* imparts a compelling story of life under military occupation. But, most importantly, it offers incontrovertible proof that a stable, peaceful environment can be created through compassion and cooperation.

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Two of the muralists—Marlene Tobias and Miranda Bergmann—will join Susan Greene in a discussion with the audience following the presentation of *Break the Silence*.

Children of Fire, by Mai Masri; 1/2" videotape, 57 minutes

Children of Fire documents filmmaker Mai Masri's return to her hometown of Nablis in Occupied Palestine and how the Israeli occupation has affected and irrevocably changed life there.

8 DAYS OF SNOW *An Artist Residency by Michael Snow*

Sunday, February 16 - Sunday, February 23, 1991

For more than thirty years Canadian artist Michael Snow has produced a body of work which has inspired countless numbers of artists and critics while continuing to defy simple categorization. Spanning a dizzying array of media—sculpture, photography, film, video, sound pieces, painting, holography and music—Snow approaches each medium with a zealous desire to explore and create new forms. The Cinematheque, in association with the San Francisco Art Institute, presents a wide range of Snow's visual art in addition to a musical performance with local musicians Henry Kaiser and Bruce Ackley on Saturday, February 22nd. *Selected Works 1969-1992*, a gallery exhibition painting, photography and holography by Michael Snow will be on view at SFAI's Walter/McBean gallery February 20-March 21. Sponsored with a generous assistance of the Government of Canada/Aves l'aide du gouvernement du Canada.

Program I: Wavelength and So Is This

Sunday, February 16, 1992

Wavelength (1966/67); 16mm, color, sound, 45 minutes

"*Wavelength* was shot in one week Dec. '66 preceded by a year of notes, thots, mutterings. It was edited and first print seen in May '67. I wanted to make a summation of my nervous system, religious inklings, and aesthetic ideas. I was thinking of, planning for a time monument in which the beauty and sadness of equivalence would be celebrated, thinking of trying to make a definitive statement of pure Film space and time, a balancing of 'illusion' and 'fact,' all about seeing. The space starts at the camera's (spectator's) eye, is in the air, then is on the screen, then is within the screen (the mind)."

—Michael Snow, from statement for the Experimental Film Festival of Knokke-Le-Zoute, 1967 (where *Wavelength* was awarded First Prize)

So Is This (1982); 16mm, color, silent, 47.25 minutes at 24fps.

Few filmmakers have had as large an impact on the recent avant-garde film scene as Canadian Michael Snow, whose *Wavelength* (1967) is probably the most frequently discussed "structural" film...Snow has been a friend and/or collaborator and/or an influence on most of the filmmakers I've discussed so far, and, given the interests of his earlier films, a Snow Film exploring the intersection of the film experience and the literary experience was probably inevitable. Snow has frequently exposed the interference generated when a given medium attempts to

represent reality and/or when various media intersect. In *Wavelength*, we are simultaneously aware of what we are seeing (documentary imagery of a loft and through the windows, Canal Street, New York City; fictional imagery of a death and its discovery) and how the continually changing film stocks, filters, and lighting, and the continuously shortening zoom distance to the windows at the other end of the loft affect what we see...

In *So Is This*, Snow interfaces what he sees as essential elements of reading texts and experiencing films. Individual words are presented silently, one at a time, for durations varying from a single frame (used for the “subliminal” inclusions of the words *tits*, *ass*, *cock*, and *cunt* to test the Ontario censors) to nearly a minute. Each word is presented in the same basic composition—centered, with symmetrical margins—but since long words require a smaller type size to fit into the composition of the frame, the words continually vary in size. While the words are normally white, in some instances Snow varies their color. During a “flashback” passage near the end, for example, the words look fittingly faded. The background on which we see the word varies, too: sometimes it’s black, sometimes green...And there are other color variations as well, some of which are clearly related to the content of a particular passage. The most noticeable use of color in the film occurs during a passage when Snow decides to review events at different speeds in order to “satisfy” a wider variety of viewers/readers: for nearly four minutes the coloring of words and background change continually and dramatically, sometimes creating a flicker effect, and at other times, moments of considerable visual beauty. One final color factor is the end-of-roll flares that periodically punctuate the film.

Because the act of reading text has such primacy for us—as Hollis Frampton once mentioned, “Once one can read, one can’t not read”—there’s a tendency for the viewer to try to understand/respond to the text despite the fact that Snow’s presentation of it keeps getting in the way of an easy, comfortable reading experience. This need to read is confirmed by Snow’s continual use of devices that require the reader’s close attention. The text includes a variety of puns and other forms of wordplay: “This was handwritten then it was typeset then filmed and now it’s light reading... This is a shot in the dark... a screen in the night...” Much of the punning centers on the film’s title. Throughout the text, Snow maintains that “This is the title of this film...” We think of the title as “This”, and yet the actual title is “So Is This”, which can be read to mean “This is the way ‘This’ is” and/or to mean “So Is This” is also the title of “This”. Of course, “title” itself has a double meaning: we may wonder what exactly is the title of “This”, but, clearly, all the words we read are presented as titles. At times this sort of wordplay grows extremely complex: “In 1979 Drew Morey made a film titled This is the title of my film. Since this is not his film, and the ‘This’ in his title cannot possibly refer to this, his title is not the title of this film and hence the author (Michael Snow) of this film decided to retain this title and to include the foregoing reference to this issue in this film “ Since words are always presented individually, the viewer-reader must maintain a very tight grip on Snow’s textual progression.

Because of the viewer/reader’s compulsion to find out where the sentences are going, to find out their narrative content, Snow is able to create a good deal of tension by working to frustrate the compulsion. For one thing, since we read in phrases, not in single words, Snow’s one-word-at-a-time procedure forces the brain to develop a delay system: we can see the words and hold onto them waiting for a grammatical termination so that we can understand what this past sentence means and how it fits in to the context of previous sentences. Sometimes these waits are substantial: one film-sentence begins, “one of the interests of this system is that each word can be held on the screen for a specific length”—the word “length” stays on the screen for 57.5 seconds and (finally!) is followed by “of time”. The speed of Snow’s delivery is continually changing, and, often, the rates chosen for presenting passages of text have no direct correspondence to the content of these passages.

The tension created by Snow’s control of the text’s duration on the screen is exacerbated by the continually changing graphic dimensions of successive words. Usually, the size of the letterforms in a given text remains constant and “invisible” once the process of reading is underway. The only exception to this usually occur when a writer is using an alteration in the letterforms as an emphasis to the content: “I thought it STUNK”. The typeface in *So Is This* remains constant throughout but in many cases Snow’s compositional decisions make normal

apprehension very difficult: prepositions, conjunctions, and articles become the most powerful, visible words, and instead of facilitating the flow of sentences, they often tend to keep us off balance. Even the use of color plays a part here. Generally, the tone of the background and of the individual words remains constant for a while, but, as often as not, when the colors do shift, the changes have no particular relevance to the content of the text we are reading at the time. In fact, when elaborate flares become visible a third of the way into the film, one tends to be distracted from the text altogether. Often, Snow further complicates the issue by lying. Very early we learn, "This film will be about 2 hours long"; actually it's only 49 minutes. Near the end Snow introduces "ten solo words", only to follow this introduction with 24 nouns and adjectives. In three instances the film "flashes back" to review previous information, but in every instance the timing of the words is different, so that while, on one hand, we see that we're reviewing words and sentences we've read before, we also realize that the differences in timing make our perceptions of the words different: the flashbacks review *and* distort. By the end of the film many viewers are so tired of contending with the text that even Snow's assurance that "you will feel better when it's over" barely gets a chuckle. In fact, the text's tendency toward over-genial cuteness becomes annoying (my guess is that this is conscious on Snow's part) long before the film is over; most of us have very limited tolerance for punsters.

As is true in much of Snow's work, *So Is This* provides a system within which Snow and the viewer can think about the multitude of relationships that can be and have been developed between the experiences of reading written texts and seeing films. During a passage when *So Is This* discusses the Ontario Board of Censor's recent intrusion into the flow of filmic communication, the text identifies *So Is This* as an "Experimental Film". This term, rather than "avant-garde" or "independent", gets to the heart of what Snow is doing; it places the film in a film tradition we can trace back to Muybridge. Muybridge set up a rigorous set of vertical and horizontal coordinates against which he could record and, subsequently, measure and study human motion. Snow's rigorous one-word-at-a-time procedure and his limiting of compositional possibilities provides a spatial/temporal grid against which, or within which, *So Is This* can reveal some of the many dimensions of the potential of film and written text to collaborate with, and distract, each other, and the complex processes of contemporary human perception and communication.

—Scott MacDonald, *Afterimage*, March 1986

Program II: To Lavoisier Who Died in the Reign of Terror

Thursday, February 20, 1992

To Lavoisier Who Died in the Reign of Terror (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 53 minutes.

Image collaboration by Carl Brown.

Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794) was a French chemist who gave the first accurate scientific explanation of the mysteries of fire. He also proved the law of the conservation of matter which states that matter can be neither created nor destroyed. Substances change forms. He wrote the first chemical equations and with other chemists worked out the present-day system of chemical names. This work helped make photography possible.

Lavoisier was an extraordinary person who made great contributions to science but also to the lives of the French people of his time. He established experimental agricultural stations and tried to improve farming methods. He was murdered by the leaders of the French Revolution (the "Convention").

His work and this film are situated between modern chemistry and alchemy. The film stages a drama of abstraction and theoretical realism, *La Vie Quotidienne* seen photo-chemically and musically. The film is a materialist projected-image conservation of matter.

“Call it a chemical conflagration...Snow’s latest celebrates the original entertainment spectacle. *To Lavoisier* opens, in silence, with a close-up of a wood-burning stove and then a hand feeding the flames. After a time, we hear an unmistakable crackle. Sustained more or less throughout the films remaining 40-odd minutes, the sound of the fire comes to seem the song of the medium...What’s extraordinary about *To Lavoisier* is not what the film shows (or how it shows it) but the film stuff itself...The footage looks as if it were developed in a bathtub and baked in the oven. The emulsion is scarred, lightstruck, watermarked, solarized, explosively blotched with a deep blue or golden orange overlay. The visual surface ‘noise’ is continually amazing. There’s a pattern beneath every pattern and that pattern is as vibrantly random as a toddler’s scribble-scrabble.”

J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*

See You Later/Au Revoir (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes

Actors: Michael Snow, Peggy Gale

Camera: Ira Cohen

Set design and lighting: Michael Snow

Plot: A man leaves an office.

The image shows a staged, formally complete, common event. The real-time action, which took 30 seconds, was extended to become 17.5 minutes on the screen. The sync sound of the typewriter and two voices (He: “Goodby”; She: “See you later”) was slowed down the same amount of time.

By taking a banal, common event—one which probably lasted a half a minute in real time—and stretching it out over the course of an 18-minute film, Michael Snow does not heighten or increase the banality of the event but rather questions if the event was ‘banal’ in the first place. The original action of a man (Snow) leaving an office and saying goodbye to a secretary is stripped of its ordinariness and instead acquires a poignancy rarely accorded to the mundane.

Allowing, as opposed to forcing—a verb too often mistakenly associated with Snow’s work—the viewer to contemplate both the action and the environment where that action occurs, a new space opens up for the viewer that isn’t tangibly present but palpable nonetheless. Snow’s very deliberate use of color, shapes and geometric patterns is played against the varying quality of light and shadow to create an emotional space not at odds with the scene’s original banality but rather one tied up in that banality. The simple passage of a man from inside to outside is not unlike that 45-minute zoom which drove Snow’s landmark *Wavelength* (1966/67). Movement here, as there, is mediated *and* inevitable, open to examination yet finally irreducible—nothing very simple after all.
—Kurt Easterwood

***Program III: Improvisational Music Performance:
Michael Snow, Henry Kaiser & Bruce Ackley***

Saturday, February 22, 1992

In addition to his work as a visual artist, Michael Snow is also an accomplished audio artist and musician (piano and trumpet), having played and recorded for many years with the Canadian improvisational quartet C.C.M.C. Joining Michael Snow this evening will be renowned Bay Area musicians Henry Kaiser (guitar) and ROVA’s Bruce Ackley (saxophone).

Program IV: La Région Centrale (The Central Region)

Sunday, February 23, 1992

La Région Centrale (The Central Region) (1970/71); 16mm, color, sound, 190 minutes.

Jointly financed by the Canadian Film Development Corporation and Famous Players; machinery especially designed by Pierre Abbeloos and filmed in the province of Quebec.

"The film is there and you are here. You're equal. It's neither fascism nor entertainment."

—Michael Snow

"...I would like to make a 3 hour film 'orchestrating' all the possibilities of camera movement and the various relationships between it and what is being photographed. The movement can be an imperceptible part of the activity, can accept it, can counterpoint it or contradict it and can be independent from it. Since I'm not sure nothing has been done in this area perhaps I should clarify the sense in which I can say that camera movement is an unexplored potentially rich part of cinema: camera movement has generally been allied to the dictates of the story and the characters being presented and follows what has been assumed to further these things, e.g. someone leaves the room, the camera follow the action. I give the camera an equal role in the film to what is being photographed."

"The camera is an instrument which has expressive possibilities in itself."

"...The film will become a kind of absolute record of a piece of wilderness. Eventually, the effect of the mechanized movement will be what I imagine the first rigorous filming of the moon surface. *But* this will feel like a record of the last wilderness on earth, a film to be taken into outer space as a souvenir of what nature once was."
(from a proposal to the Canadian Film Development Corporation, March 1969)

"I decided to extend the machine aspect of film so there might be a more objective feeling, you wouldn't be thinking of someone's expressive handling of the thing but perhaps how and why the whole thing got set in motion, what's behind it. The camera itself is a machine so attaching it to another, personally designed machine, seemed a way of augmenting its possibilities. In this case I was composing for a very special instrument. I only looked in the camera once. The film was made by the planning and the machinery itself.

The artist and his machine:

"...*La Région* isn't only a documentary photographing of a particular place at various times of day but is equally and most importantly a source of sensations, an ordering and arranging of eye movements and of inner ear movements. It starts out *here* respecting the gravity of our situation but it more and more sees as the planet does...

"It can also do some powerful physical-psychic things...It can really move you around...If you become completely involved in the reality of these circular movements its *you* who is spinning surrounded by everything, or conversely, you are a stationary center and its all revolving around you. But on the screen it's the center which is never seen, which is mysterious. One of the titles I considered using was !?432101234?! (an adaptation of a sculpture title) by which I meant that as you move down in dimensions you approach zero and in this film, *La Région Centrale*, that zero point is the absolute center, Nirvanic zero, being the ecstatic center of a complete sphere. You see, the camera moves around an invisible point completely in 360 degrees not only horizontally but in every direction and on every plane of a sphere. Not only does it move in pre-directed orbits and spirals but it itself also turns, rolls, and spins. So that there are circles within circles and cycles within cycles. Eventually there's no gravity. The film is a cosmic strip.

"...In various philosophies and religions there has often been the suggestion, sometimes the dogma, that transcendence would be a fusion of opposites. In <—> there's the possibility of such a fusion being achieved by velocity. I've said before, and perhaps I can quote myself, 'New York Eye and Ear Control is philosophy, Wavelength is metaphysics and <—> is physics.' By the last I mean the conversion of matter into energy. $E=mc^2$. *La Région* continues this but it becomes simultaneously micro and macro, cosmic-planetary as well as atomic. Totality is achieved in terms of cycles rather than action and reaction. It's 'above' that.

"...In my films I've tried to make something happen that couldn't happen in any other way so that there is something special about the experience that comes from the possibilities of the medium. If it seems worthwhile to make art works at all which is sometimes questionable you'd better do something that adds to the world, not in a material sense but that as an experience has some distinction to it. At the same time the films are not coercive, they're objective."

—Michael Snow, "La Région Centrale," *Film Culture* 52, Spring 1971

"In many ways, it could be argued that Snow is engaged in the impossible task—the capturing and at the same time working over of reality before the camera. Indeed, the camera, it might be said, is necessarily a victim of this dualism. On this basis, *La Région Centrale* takes Snow's work to some sort of zenith (crisis?). Create the machine, choose the place, walk away and flip the switch. The familiar photograph of Snow wrapped against a cold barren waste standing beside the camera machine is a veritable and poignant image of film-making and modernism (the two are inseparable in Snow) at their most ruthless (for the artist) and sad (the artist turns away from the true 'artist' in grim humor)."

—Michael O'Pray, "Framing Snow," *Afterimage* No.11, Winter 82/83, Great Britain

Referred to as the "dean" of structuralist filmmakers, Canadian filmmaker Michael Snow is also internationally recognized as a sculptor, painter, photographer and musician. His works in all media have been exhibited worldwide. His sculpture of Canadian geese in flight, *Flight Stop*, located in Toronto's subterranean Eaton Center, has been described in utopian terms as "visionary freedom in enclosure." It's one of the most popular public sculptures in the world. He has performed and recorded with his own improvisational music group, CCMC, since the 1970s and released a recording, *The Last LP* (a sterling homage/parody of ethnographic field recordings), under his own name in 1987.

Partial Filmography:

New York Eye and Ear Control (1964)

Wavelength (1967)

<—> (*Back and Forth*) (1969)

One Second in Montreal (1969)

La Région Centrale (1971)

"Rameau's Nephew" by Diderot (*Thanx to Dennis Young*) by Wilma Schoen (1974)

Breakfast (Table Top Dolly) (1976)

Presents (1981)

So Is This (1982)

Seated Figures (1988)

See You Later/Au Revoir (1990)

To Lavoisier Who Died in the Reign of Terror (1991)

*UNCOMMON MAGIC: A TRIBUTE TO
DOUG HAYNES & HARRY SMITH
Introduced by Lynn Kirby and Diane di Prima*

Thursday, February 27, 1992

Common Loss (1979), by Doug Haynes; 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

Heaven and Earth Magic Feature (c. 1960), by Harry Smith; 16mm, b&w, sound, 66 minutes

Animators Doug Haynes and Harry Smith died within three weeks of each other in November, 1991. They both shared strong ties to the Bay Area, a lifelong dedication to film as art, and an elevated command of animation techniques. This evening the Cinematheque will honor their memory by presenting a major work of cutout animation by each. Local filmmaker and teacher Lynn Kirby will introduce Haynes' staggering 1979 film *Common Loss*, and famed poet Diane di Prima will introduce Smith's extraordinary *Heaven and Earth Magic Feature*.

Doug Haynes died November 6, 1991 of AIDS at the age of 37. The following note appeared in *Release Print*, December, 1991

Haynes had taught animation for Film Arts Foundation as well as at the Chicago Art Institute, UC Santa Barbara, and the College of Marin. He also worked at Chuck Jones Studio, (Colossal) Pictures, and Kory Films. Born in New York City, he was raised in Southern California. He had lived in San Francisco for 15 years before going to Chicago to teach. When he learned he had AIDS three years ago, he returned to the Bay Area. On entering the hospital, he listed his occupation as "staying Alive." Haynes' long-time friend Toney Merritt told *RP*, "I won't miss Doug...he, Lynn Kirby, and myself, during our days at the S.F. Art Institute, would find each other working late into the night on our films—we all had day jobs. These meetings led to shared meals, movies, insecurities, good as well as bad times. We are and have been friends ever since. I won't miss Doug...he is always with me." Haynes leaves his parents, a brother, and many friends in the Bay Area.

Common Loss "is composed of a series of cutouts, clippings and drawings that are superimposed for outrageous friction on familiar urban and nature scapes with resultant maximum provocation: a giant baby's head snoring in adorable warmth rubs hairline with a mountain crest in the Alps, London's Big Ben takes off like a rocket from the surreal bed of a New York skyline, pearls spew from a mannequin's lips and so on.

"In what seems like thousands of individual setups, narrative constants of butterflies, babies, civilization and cyclic decay are pumped up and out with dizzying combustion. The work's thrill is that the fun has an edge—the uneasy laughs belie a distanced, critical survey of life's little miseries and ephemeral joys. The pioneering *assemblage* legacy of Stan Vanderbeek also makes its mark [and the influence of his mentor, animator Larry Jordan, is apparent]."

—Warren Sonbert, *Bay Area Reporter*, Feb. 20, 1992

* * *

"A founding father of American independent cinema, Harry Smith [1923-1991] made his first hand-painted movies in San Francisco in the 1940s, then spent more than 20 years working on *Heaven and Earth Magic*—an enigmatic masterpiece that pushed cut-and-paste collage animation to the outer limits of possibility. Films, however, only made up a portion of Smith's project. Last year [1990] awarded a Grammy for his pioneer field recordings of Native American music, Smith was an expert on Kiowa peyote rituals, an authority on Ukrainian painted Easter eggs, an alchemist, a magus, and a major-league mystery.

“‘Does Harry Smith really exist?’ Jonas Mekas asked *Village Voice* readers during the winter of 1965 when Smith materialized with *Heaven and Earth Magic*. ‘For years Harry Smith has been a black and ominous legend and a source of strange rumors. Some even said he left this planet long ago.’ In fact, Harry Smith only left this planet on November 27 [1991]...”

—J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*

Heaven and Earth Magic makes brilliant collagistic use of 19th Century engravings from a variety of sources (ladies’ wear catalogues, elocution books, etc.) thus recalling Max Ernst’s collage novels, particularly *La Femme 100 Têtes* (1929). As with Ernst, Smith subverts narrative and thematic expectations by interjecting elements which purposely skew any sense of “logical” narrative order. ‘Smith himself has stated that he allowed his dreams to determine the filming of *Heaven and Earth Magic*, establishing an intuitive relationship between the structure of his dreams and the substructure of the film.

A brief synopsis of the “action”: A Man (the Magus) injects the other central character, a Woman, with a magical potion while she sits in a dentist’s chair. She rises to heaven and becomes bodily fragmented. The Man then attempts a series of operations to put her back together. He succeeds only after both are consumed by the giant head of a man (Max Müller, nineteenth-century philologist and author), and begin their descent back to earth in an elevator. The film concludes with an exact reversal of its opening.

—Albert Kilchesty, Filmforum program note, 1989

“I must say that I’m amazed...at the labor that went into it. It is incredible that I had enough energy to do it. Most of my mind was pushed aside into some sort of theoretical sorting of the pieces...: First, I collected the pieces out of old catalogues and books and whatever; then made up file cards of all possible combinations of them; then, I spent maybe a few months trying to sort the cards into logical order...The script was made up for the whole works on the basis of the sorting pieces. It was exhaustingly long in its original form.

“...I tried as much as possible to make the whole thing automatic, the production automatic rather than any kind of logical process. Though, at this point, Allen Ginsberg denies having said it, about the time I started making those films, he told me that William Burroughs made a change in the Surrealist process—because, you know, all that stuff comes from the Surrealists—that business of folding a piece of paper: One person draws the head and then folds it over, and somebody else draws the body. What do you call it? The Exquisite Corpse. Somebody later, perhaps Burroughs, realized that something was directing it, that it wasn’t arbitrary, and that there was some sort of what you might call God. It wasn’t just chance...I assumed that something was controlling the course of the action and that it was not simply arbitrary, so that by sortilege (as you know, there is a system of divination called ‘sortilege’) everything would come out alright.”

—Harry Smith, *Film Culture*, #37

LOOKING AT AIDS

Curated and presented by Sarah Schulman

Saturday, February 29, 1992

Tonight’s program has been selected by Sarah Schulman, NYC novelist and co-founder/co-programmer of the annual New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival . Our program this evening is one of two curated by Schulman; the second, *New Lesbian Film*, will be presented next Saturday, March 7th.

San Francisco Cinematheque

The work on this program are "AIDS films of the last 5 years which reflect our changing experience of the crisis." (S.S.) An excerpt from the curators' statement of the Fifth Annual Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival helps place these films into a strongly defined aesthetic/political context:

As the parameters of what is allowed to be seen has become narrower and narrower, we have had to adjust our understanding of 'experimental' film to include the wide variety of media and genres that are increasingly excluded from the mainstream. This constriction reinforces our belief that experimental film can only be defined by a highly-aware, politicized and emotionally-engaged community of interests and not by an artificial and impersonal aesthetic preoccupied by editing schemes that alienate the viewer and eliminate pleasure from the cinema. Our concern with emotional candor and real freedom connects us with the underground cinema of the sixties which also challenged the boundaries of acceptable subject matter. In the sixties, the boundaries were drawn around the representation of sex. For us, in the age of AIDS, it has become the representation of sexuality and politics.

Viva Eu (Long Live Me) (1989), by Tanya Cipriano; 16mm, color, sound, 19 minutes

Fear of Disclosure (1989), by Phil Zwickler and David Wojnarowicz; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes

DHPG Mon Amour (1989), by Carl George; 16mm (fr. Super-8mm), color, sound, 10 minutes

Two Marches (1991), by Jim Hubbard; 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes

Final Solutions (1991), by Jerry Tartaglia; 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes

Presented in collaboration with the Eye Gallery

WAKING UP TO T.V.: JEWS ON THE HOMESCREEN

A lecture by David Marc

Sunday, March 1, 1992

The "assimilation" of Jews into European culture met with hideous disaster during WWII. What about post-war assimilation in America? David Marc's lecture/performance uses rare video clips to examine Jewish-American assimilation as portrayed through 30 years of T.V.

RECENT FILMS BY ROBERT RAYHER

Filmmaker Robert Rayher in person

Thursday, March 5, 1992

In 1980 Bruce Jenkins characterized Rayher's film style as "both sensual and minimalist, rigorous and aleatory, abstract and concrete." This dual and dialectical spirit continues to animate his work. His films have a rhythmical

sureness and ease while at the same time presenting the viewer with constant, and sometimes shocking, surprises. Rayher's stylistic inventiveness is only matched by his continuity of purpose: all his films portray the varied life of the psyche. The shape and feel of essentialized experience permeates his work. These films strive to answer what, as the 21st century draws near, it means to be human.

Never restricted to any one camp, Rayher's films have spanned a broad range of techniques and forms—from short lyrical films to idea-driven structural/conceptual works, from dance films to abstract films. His recent films draw on several different—and sometimes competing—styles, creating a polyvalent network of meanings. In all these guises, his films strive to match the protean form of the psyche as it meanders through nature and culture.

Leavings (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes

A poetic journey into the trauma of dealing with my father's death when I was 14. We enter into the intimate space of memories and stories spoken through journal-like entries and striking and poignant visuals, shot in the world where many of the stories take place. The soundtrack has slowed-down organ music that plays a kind of dirge and the visuals, slowed down on an optical printer, rhythmically play off the soundtrack. Many of the anecdotes push familial history up to social history as the poetic chronicle of success and failure in the face of the Depression, dust-storms, the Jewish question and assimilation unfolds in relation to loss on a very personal scale.

An End to All This Foolishness, a Farewell to Noo Yawk (1981); 16mm, color, silent, 11 minutes

Yelling Fire (1980); 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes

All existence as displacement, as displacement: violence. The rhythming of simple existence.

The Blue Cliff Record #2 (1979); Super-8mm, color, silent, 11 minutes

The Blue Cliff Record is a collection of 100 Zen koans and commentary which dates from the 12th century. *The Blue Cliff* films are an homage to Chinese landscape painting as a tradition of philosophical investigation into the meaning of the relations of the human and the natural.

The Blue Cliff Record #3 (1979); Super-8mm, color, silent, 11 minutes

eclipse: still life #3 (1980); 16mm, color, sound, 2 minutes

Aesthetic by Hosea Hirata. The wording of things; the thinging of words; emerging, together.

Still Life #1: Cherries (1979); 16mm, color, silent, 7 minutes

A meditation piece.

The Blue Cliff Record #11 : Dreg Drinkers Lotus Eaters (1985); 16mm, color, silent, 12 minutes

Not Death by Water Baptism by Fire (1989); 16mm, color and b&w, sound, 17 minutes

Not Death by Water Baptism by Fire opens in one easily-recognizable style of filmmaking, Film Noir, and once this style has been established cuts directly into another form—the Dance Film (with overtones of Music Video). Because of careful graphic, rhythmic and spatial cutting, the viewer is lead from one material into the second with a shock which is overridden by a sense of potential continuity. The energy of this continuity is then redeveloped in the continuation of the second material—the dance—before the viewer is dropped back into the original style. The twofold result is an uneasy but simple movement from one style of filmmaking to another, and the creative involvement of the viewer in discovering connections between such different materials and possible narratives.

The Film Noir opening sets up certain expectations—suspense, mystery, strongly graphic imagery and conflict—which form, in fact, the overall shape of the film. Instead of developing these primarily through plot and secondarily through visual means, *Not Death* dislocates industry emphasis and places primary importance on the

filmic. Articulated lighting, spatial or temporal ambiguity, dynamic graphic composition and editing, gesture and the body in space, as well as the play of genre expectations, form the central generative nexus of meaning.

This film stems from the tradition of poetic experimental film, and its relative, the collage film. Yet by generating his own material in different genre sources, Rayher can orchestrate a continuity of focus and detail at a level of relation seldom achievable in collage and extending outside the standard territory of the poetic and lyrical film. These different worlds wind around a never-quite-disclosed narrative—forcing the viewer to enter the fray of the film.

Rayher summarized this film in the following words:

“Not Death takes the parallel problem solving structure of the psyche as measure and model for filmic form. We are in four discrete stories: Film Noir, Dance, Storytelling & the Lyrical. These never mingle on the screen but describe the (viewers’) contrary desires for narrative and ecstasy: cathexis and catharsis. Combining the lyrical tradition with more story oriented forms, Not Death weaves a web between different levels of psychic experience. Both visceral and conceptual, Not Death challenges the viewer’s desire for simple narrative coherence, yielding a more complex and timely image of the human situation, and film’s representation of it.”

In addition to making films, Robert Rayher has worked in video, still photography, poetry and criticism. He studied at McGill University in Montreal and SUNY Buffalo. He currently teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

—All notes supplied by the filmmaker.

NEW LESBLIAN FILM

Curated and presented by Sarah Schulman

Saturday, March 7, 1992

Tonight’s program has been selected by Sarah Schulman, NYC novelist and co-founder/co-programmer of the annual New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival . The work on this program features a selection of new “lesbian cinema in all its wild variety.” (S.S.) An excerpt from the curators’ statement of the Fifth Annual Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival helps place these films into a strongly defined aesthetic/political context:

As the parameters of what is allowed to be seen has become narrower and narrower, we have had to adjust our understanding of ‘experimental’ film to include the wide variety of media and genres that are increasingly excluded from the mainstream. This constriction reinforces our belief that experimental film can only be defined by a highly-aware, politicized and emotionally-engaged community of interests and not by an artificial and impersonal aesthetic preoccupied by editing schemes that alienate the viewer and eliminate pleasure from the cinema. Our concern with emotional candor and real freedom connects us with the underground cinema of the sixties which also challenged the boundaries of acceptable subject matter. In the sixties, the boundaries were drawn around the representation of sex. For us, in the age of AIDS, it has become the representation of sexuality and politics.

Khush (1991), by Pratibha Parmar; 16mm, color, sound, 24 minutes

“Khush” means ecstatic pleasure in Urdu. For South Asian lesbians and gay men in Britain, North America, and

India (where homosexuality is still illegal) the term captures the blissful intricacies of being queer and of color. Inspiring testimonies bridge geographical differences to locate shared experiences of isolation and exoticization but also the unremitting joys and solidarity of being khush. (Women Make Movies)

I, A Lamb (1991), by Jennifer Montgomery; Super-8mm

I, A Lamb is a film essay on the insidious forces that lead us to identify with the image of the lamb. Our anthropomorphism of the lamb is associated with passivity (whereby we are lead blindly into war), a belief in God-the-Father, and a longing for the childlike sensuality of animals. Visual quotes from *The Silence of the Lambs* are intercut with direct testimonies by women concerning war and patriotism, along with a host of animal imagery. There are scenes of people acting like animals, and of animals refusing to act like people. The film looks at the relationship between our attitudes toward animals and our own obedience to authority, the authority of the military and the law of the Father. How, for instance, have our private visions been infiltrated by the technologies of modern warfare and television? How, as in *The Silence of the Lambs*, does the FBI and the military arm of the law stand in for the irrevocable losses of a parentless child and a dehumanized society? How do we become confused in the shift from identification to objectification that is the necessary prelude to the act of slaughter? (Jennifer Montgomery)

Love Monster (1991), by Maria Maggenti; Super 8 mm on video, b&w, sound, 7 minutes

A goofy spoof on vampire lesbians who wear lipstick.

Spin Cycle (1991), by Aarin Burch; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes

Oakland-based filmmaker Aarin Burch's feisty *Spin Cycle* is a personal narrative which confronts the artist's fears and aspirations as a lover and an artist, portraying her struggle with self-doubt and internal turmoil.

First Comes Love (1991), by Su Friedrich; 16mm, b&w, sound, 22 minutes

NY filmmaker Friedrich looks critically at the legitimization of love by heterosexual marriage in her latest, *First Comes Love*. A series of weddings are photographed close-up, human-scale, focused on the details and peripheral dramas that give a sense of an emotional whole. With period pop songs setting and then changing the mood, the film weaves conflicting webs of envy, longing and nostalgia.

**PASSAGES DE L'IMAGE:
A 4-PART SERIES**

Sunday, March 8 - Sunday, March 29, 1992

Since the advent of photography—which introduced multiple “originals” and placed a mechanical tool between the artist and the finished artwork—each newly invented method of creating images has challenged the traditional definitions of art and representation. *Passages de l'image* is the first major international exhibition since the 1960s to explore the complex evolution of artmaking that has arisen from the development of modern technology. *Passages de l'image*—or “transitions of the image”—examines the continuing changes or shifts in the means by which images can be produced, recorded, presented and interpreted. Since many of the works involve aspects of more than one discipline or use the techniques of one medium to explore characteristics of another, the exhibition also traces the connections between the different pictorial models represented in the show.

The selection of films presented by the Cinematheque and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) during the next four weeks is as integral a part of the exhibition *Passages de l'image* (currently on view at

San Francisco Cinematheque

SFMOMA until April 12), as are the videotapes, photographs and video installations housed in the museum. The original film program, as devised and curated by Raymond Bellour, Catherine David and Christine van Assche of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, was encyclopedic in scope. Including almost one hundred and fifty individual works representing every era, type and genre of film art—from opulent feature—length Hollywood films to the latest experimental, avant-garde film works—the *Passages* film series offered direct evidence that some of the most exciting and demanding “transitions of the image” in the 20th century were not being displayed in art galleries and on museum walls, but in screening rooms and film theaters throughout the world

In an interview in *Galleries Magazine* curator Catherine David said, “We included a film series in the exhibition, because we think that film is as much an art as it is a form of entertainment. Barring cinema from the museums simply strengthens the fantasy that it is a popular art. In the '80s this fantasy led many artists (for example Barbara Kruger and Robert Longo) to stray off into flashy, cinematographic effects.” She continued, “In my opinion the time has come to stop looking at art in terms of the approximative and dogmatic categories that have been expounded by the theorists of postmodernism...Since André Bazin, there has been a strong tradition of film criticism in France; Deleuze is part of this tradition as are current critics like Serge Daney. But contemporary art has not benefitted from these critics' insights, since film and living art have always been treated as separate domains in France. The ‘passages’ we were looking for in the exhibition should be seen in this particular cultural context; they are not only passages between images. I look forward to the day when our best film critics are read by art critics and show an interest in contemporary art beyond Balthus and Warhol.”

The works in the Cinematheque/SFMOMA presentations have been selected by Steve Anker, artistic director, San Francisco Cinematheque, and Robert R. Riley, Media Arts curator, SFMOMA. These screenings will continue every Sunday evening through March 29.

Program I: *SPECTACLE AND SUSPENSE*

Sunday, March 8, 1992

The five works comprising Program One, *Spectacle and Suspense*, mingle various methods of image-as-illustration (photographs, moving-picture film, video) in constructing chilling narratives. Perhaps an appropriate subtitle for the program would be “Victims of the image” since all the works either depict or are predicated upon death, murder and physical incapacitation.

Breakdown (1955), by Alfred Hitchcock; 3/4" video from 35mm original, b&w, sound, 25 minutes
An original episode—and one of only about 20 episodes directed by Hitchcock himself—from the “Alfred Hitchcock Presents” television series. Joseph Cotten is featured as an aggressive, macho businessman/patriarch who is rendered immobile after a car crash. The remaining “action” is seen completely from his limited point of view, as he lies paralyzed in the hospital able only to move his eyes and hear the voices of others.

Thriller (Great Britain, 1979), by Sally Potter; 16mm, b&w, sound, 40 minutes
Sally Potter's *Thriller* treats Puccini's opera *La Boheme* in, as the title suggests, the murder-mystery [film noir] form. However, Potter deprives the viewer of both the spectacle and suspense associated with these [two] forms. She does so in order to examine the uses to which those forms have traditionally been put: their historical meanings, and their potential revisions and reinterpretations in light of current feminist theory and her own rethinking of those theories.

At the beginning of the film, Potter gives us a summary of *La Boheme*'s four acts, recited in voiceover by Colette Laffont, who assumes the role of Mimi in the Puccini text; she is aided by a number of stills of traditional stage productions of the opera as well as Puccini's music. In the opera Mimi, who is a poor seamstress, and Rodolpho, an aspiring artist, fall in love. When Mimi falls ill, he abandons her because he cannot bear to see her suffer. When Mimi dies of consumption in the last act, Rodolpho is seen throwing himself over her body in remorse and love.

The stills of elaborate past productions are contrasted with the cold and empty space in which Mimi, in the present, in Potter's fiction, now reflects on and reconsiders her role in Puccini's opera vis-a-vis her life and death and, then, what might have happened had she not died, or had Musetta, the "kept woman," and friend to the opera's bohemian artists, died instead. Then Potter shows us more stills, this time of seamstresses in the nineteenth century—the time the opera is set—laboring under appalling conditions, in rooms as sunless and depressing as the one in which Mimi is now sitting, reflecting on her past. "This is what it was like," Potter reminds her viewers: countless women died young and in extreme poverty. Puccini's romanticization of poverty, the image of the struggling bohemian artists, the positions of both seamstress and mistress, love and death, idealized in the opera spectacle, are contrasted with the reality of poverty, sickness, and cruel treatment. (excerpted from The Other Side: European Avant-Garde Cinema 1960-1980, American Federation of Arts)

"...*Thriller* at once draws upon, parodies, challenges, and transforms the narrative and cinematic codes of the Hollywood film noir. The female victim adds a twist to the reconstruction of her own death not only by telling the story herself, but also by considering causes for the unhappy romance and death of a young French working woman of a kind—social and historical conditions, for instance—that could not possibly enter the universe either of operatic tragedy or of the private investigator of film noir." (Annette Kuhn, *Textual Politics*)

excerpt from *The Boston Strangler* (1968), by Richard Fleischer; 1/2" video from 35mm original, approx. 10 minutes

Director Fleischer deftly employs multiple-image techniques to recreate the sense of panic and fear which has gripped the women of Boston in the wake of a series of murders. This excerpt—quite extraordinary for a commercially released feature film of the time—would have been unthinkable if not for the existence of a very "literate" film viewer, one who is capable of intelligibly processing a great deal of visual information in a very short period of time, and one which the print media, radio and television produced and nurtured. The numerous discrete shots provide the viewer with a point-of-view which augments dramatic tension while generating information in a manner that conventional plot/shot strategies could not.

Colloque de chiens (Dog's Dialogue) (France, 1977), by Raul Ruiz; 1/2" video from 35mm original, color, sound, 18 minutes

For the delightful *Dog's Dialogue*, Ruiz took a lurid tale found in a popular crime magazine, cut out phrases and created a new story in which the same phrases were repeated in relation to different events. Hilariously weaving still photographs into a bizarre account of revenge, cruelty and murder, Ruiz creates a provocative homage to the Latin American photonovels from which he drew so much inspiration.

Videodrome (1983), by David Cronenberg; 16mm, color, sound, 90 minutes

Featuring James Woods, Deborah Harry and Peter Dvorsky; special effects by Rick Baker; photography by Mark Irwin.

A "passage" of the image in the most literal of terms; the universe of snuff films revisited by the director of *Naked Lunch*, *Dead Ringers*, and *The Fly*. Current events in the political arena haven't diluted the message embedded in the core of Cronenberg's cult rave *Videodrome*, which both anticipates and surpasses the age of virtual reality in its explicit depiction of the marriage of the human body to technology. James Woods plays a young soft porn cable-TV proprietor who'll do anything to give his audience what they want. So he's constantly looking for new

ways to titillate his viewers. That's how he stumbles across the underground program called *Videodrome*. Since Woods decides this is just what his audience wants, he immediately goes after it, unaware of *Videodrome's* terrible secret.

Videodrome's prophetic imaging of the 90s baffled many when it first appeared. Local movie reviewer John Stanley certainly wasn't ready for *Videodrome's* visceral kick when he wrote this nutshell review in his *Revenge of the Creature Features Movie Guide*:

Badly bungled David Cronenberg picture. James Woods is a sleazy cable TV station owner, looking for porn programming, who stumbles across a sadistic series called *Videodrome*. Watch enough sex and violence and a new organ grows in your brain that creates hallucinations. Eventually your mind and body evolve into something more wholesome. It's a plot by the Moral Majority to cleanse the nation. If you're having trouble following this critique, wait until you see this botched mess. Rick Baker's effects are ugly, and much of the sex and violence were cut by Universal so the film could be released with an R. Deborah Harry of Blondie is the beautiful female lead, but her character is so unsavory, she and Woods together as sadists are a turn off.

On the contrary, *Videodrome* is the ultimate "turn on."

GRASPING AT TIME, RELEASING MEMORY
Curated & Presented by Susanne Fairfax

Thursday, March 12, 1992

Comprehension of our existence in place and time seem to be ever-eluding our grasp. The echoes introduced in *Department of the Interior* continue throughout the program, both within each film and among them. The internal is thrown against the external, exposing new fragments of perception, identity, and memory. These films do not address a single subject, but rather speak to one another, to us, within themselves, across temporal space. Objects appear and reappear, creating webs of memory, spoken of in one film's text and appearing before us in another's image: images from nature, inside and outside the home, travelling, mirrors, casket or grave imagery, vessels of containment, veils of protection. Perception is disrupted: competing sounds or stark silence; black and white cutting and melting with color, muted and sharp; still images grinding against moving. Structurally these films communicate as well, reflecting a thread running through time and place; this collection of films was made in San Francisco, Chicago, Milwaukee, and New York over the years between 1965 and 1991.

Department of the Interior (1986), by Nina Fonoroff; 16mm, b&w, sound, 8.5 minutes

The haunting "operatic" voice draws us into this film at the same time it maintains its distance, resisting the urge to disclose. Nina Fonoroff pulls apart our daily worlds, defamiliarizing trees, houses, watches, distorting identity, and inverting the internal. The positive/negative black and white images echo within themselves and against the sound, rhythms sometimes matching in acceleration, at other times disorienting in their opposition. We place ourselves inside this mysterious world and its sensory experiences, searching through parking lots for forgotten meaning.

Private Property (public domain) (1991), by Michele Fleming; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 10 minutes

The role of language is highlighted in this latest work by Chicago artist Michele Fleming which opens with spoken Latin and written recollections of the seashells we see before us. Here the photograph frame and shells resume

the place of the houses in *Department of the Interior*. Fleming plays with black and white versus color (muted and vivid), which we will see more of in this program. Moving images within a still frame, stills bearing text falling, flashing glimpses at panning trees weave in and out of stories written and told, borrowed from writers no longer living. The final two stories which become images in our minds ("picture this" we hear) lead us into the next film.

Trois Heures Dix (1990), by Emily Ballou and Patrick Grandaw; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 7 minutes

These two Milwaukee artists created a past for some home movies which they found, imagining identities and sculpting a memory. The subtle intercutting of black and white and color, old and new images in spaces of home and travel evoke a French woman's disoriented perception of existence and pre and post-war time. This film begins and ends with the veil of protection/isolation to be revisited in other works in the program.

Returning the Shadow (1985), by Karen Holmes; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 23 minutes

Karen Holmes uses five of her own family photographs taken in the 1940s and considers how the meaning of these visual documents changes with life experiences. As we hear the words of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* we are first introduced to objects which will become part of our memory. Some of the formal elements which we have seen in previous works in this program are carried further and sustained for 23 minutes allowing for the *experience* of time and memory in addition to a discussion of it. The position of the frame as container and revealer seen in Fleming's piece is explored here by the intercutting of images past and present, still and moving, black and white and color, replicating the placement of people, animals or objects within them. Identities transfer as our perception of the whole is deconstructed into parts and placed back together again.

The Bee Meeting (1991), by Emily Cronbach; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 10 minutes

This richly textured film is inspired by the Sylvia Plath poem by the same name. It strikes an intricate dialogue with the other works in both structure and content, but also carries us deeper into clouded perception, "falling backward into the dead past and forward to the dead future." The poem itself provides the most useful notes.

THE BEE MEETING

Who are these people at the bridge to meet me? They are the villagers—
 The rector, the midwife, the sexton, the agent of bees.
 In my sleeveless summery dress I have no protection,
 And they are all gloved and covered, why did nobody tell me?
 They are smiling and taking out veils tacked to ancient hats.

I am nude as a chicken neck, does nobody love me?
 Yes, here is the secretary of bees with her white shop smock,
 Buttoning the cuffs at my wrists and the slit from my neck to my knees.
 Now I am milkweed silk, the bees will not notice.
 They will not smell my fear, my fear, my fear.

Which is the rector now, is it that man in black?
 Which is the midwife, is that her blue coat?
 Everybody is nodding a square black head, they are knight in visors,
 Breastplates of cheesecloth knotted under the armpits. Their smiles and their voices are changing. I am led
 through a beanfield.

Strips of tinfoil winking like people,
 Feather dusters fanning their hands in a sea of bean flowers,
 Creamy bean flowers with black eyes and leaves like bored hearts.

San Francisco Cinematheque

Is it blood clots the tendrils are dragging up that string?
No, no, it is scarlet flowers that will one day be edible.

Now they are giving me a fashionable white straw Italian hat
And a black veil that moulds to my face, they are making me one of them.

They are leading me to the shorn grove, the circle of hives.
Is it the hawthorn that smells so sick?
The barren body of hawthorn, etherizing its children.

Is it some operation that is taking place?
It is the surgeon my neighbours are waiting for,
This apparition in a green helmet,
Shining gloves and white suit.
Is it the butcher, the grocer, the postman, someone I know?

I cannot run, I am rooted, and the gorse hurts me
With its yellow purses, its spiky armoury.
I could not run without having to run forever.
The white hive is snug as a virgin,
Sealing off her brood cells, her honey, and quietly humming.

Smoke rolls and scarves in the grove.
The mind of the hive thinks this is the end of everything.
Here they come, the outriders, on their hysterical elastics.
If I stand very still, they will think I am cow parsley,
A gullible head untouched by their animosity,

Not even nodding, a personage in a hedgerow.
The villagers open the chambers, they are hunting the queen.
Is she hiding, is she eating honey? She is very clever.
She is old, old, old, she must live another year, and she knows it.
While in their fingerjoint cells the new virgins

Dream of a duel they will win inevitably,
A curtain of wax dividing them from the bride flight,
The upflight of the murderess into a heaven that loves her.
The villagers are moving the virgins, there will be no killing.
The old queen does not show herself, is she so ungrateful?

I am exhausted, I am exhausted—
Pillar of white in a blackout of knives,
I am the magician's girl who does not flinch.
The villagers are untying their disguises, they are shaking hands.
Whose is that long white box in the grove, what have they accomplished, why am I cold?

—Sylvia Plath

Apartment 25 (1991), by Jerome Cook; 16mm, b&w, 6.5 minutes

Jerome Cook uses light and time to turn the concrete, tangible domestic objects of *Apartment 25* into the ephemeral. It is as if we are remembering, or trying to remember this place. In the context of this program, objects

trigger memories from the other works as well. The cyclical structure of many of the other films is repeated here with the beginning and ending in the external world surrounding the internal. The images at the end are, however, distorted movie images with outsized scale, invoking both darkness and humor.

Film (1965), by Samuel Beckett (directed by Alan Schneider); 16mm (shot in 35mm), b&w, sound, 22 minutes. In true Beckett style, *Film* uses humor to draw us in and then cuts the breath out of our laugh. In the style of the silent films of the 1920s (complete with soft-focus close-ups) Beckett creates a uniquely filmic scenario with Berkeley's theory *Esse est percipi* ("to be is to be perceived") as its basis and starring Buster Keaton. The physical relationship between two different "visions" of reality, that of the "eye" and the "object" is the source of the tension and is elegantly choreographed in narrowly confined camera angles and dollies and pans varying between fluid and abrupt.

PASSAGES DE L'IMAGE
Program II:
FRACTURED RECOLLECTIONS

Sunday, March 15, 1992

Hapax Legomena I : (nostalgia) (1971), by Hollis Frampton; 16mm, b&w, sound, 36 minutes

In 1958, when Frampton moved to New York, he worked as a photographer, and discovered himself to be a committed illusionist in an environment of the visual arts, which at that point was officially dedicated to the eradication of illusion, gave almost no attention to photography, and barely recognized avant-garde cinema. *(nostalgia)* is about the wounds of returning to that period, and records his burning on camera, on a hotplate, thirteen of his earlier photographs (1959-66). We see each photograph in silence for twenty seconds; then we hear the tape recorder click on, and as each photograph curls in fire and is reduced to ashes, a narrator (another artist/photographer, Michael Snow, acting in the persona of Frampton) offers information about the next photograph to be destroyed, at once explicating and mythologizing it. Thus the spectator, while viewing a documentary of a set of photographs going up in flame, has to remember the last photograph and anticipate the next one, a structure that foregrounds the illusionary nature of photography and its inability to provide continuity in time. (MOMA Circulating Film Library Catalogue).

"*Hapax legomena* are, literally, 'things said once.' The Greek scholarly jargon refers to those words that occur only a single time in the entire *oeuvre* of an author, or in a whole literature. The title brackets a cycle of seven films, which make up a single work composed of detachable parts...The work is an oblique autobiography, seen in stereoscopic focus with the phylogeny of film art as I have had to recapitulate it during my own fitful development as a filmmaker." (H.F.)

Munich-Berlin-Wandering (Germany, 1927), by Oskar Fischinger; 16mm, b&w, silent @ 12 fps, approx. 3 minutes

German filmmaker Oskar Fischinger began making films in the 1920s and continued his pioneering efforts in abstract animation until his death in Los Angeles in 1967. His work provided a vital link between the European avant-garde cinema of the '20s and the experimental film movement which evolved in America during the '40s and '50s.

"In the summer of [1927], for financial reasons, [Fischinger] left Munich for Berlin, foreseeing better prospects for himself at the center of the German film industry. Fischinger chose to walk the three hundred miles to Berlin,

fortunately taking his camera with him and shooting a time-lapse document of his journey. There is no record of his ever having considered this film for public screening, but an excellent copy survives, has been transferred to 16mm from the original 35mm and now is presented under the label on Fischinger's can, *München-Berlin-Wunderung*. Though the film is made with the attitude of a casual, personal diary, in recent years some filmmakers have taken up the time-lapse technique as a serious formal basis."

—Malcolm Le Grice. *Abstract Film and Beyond*

Measures of Distance (Canada, 1988), by Mona Hatoum; 3/4" video, color, sound, 15.5 minutes

Mona Hatoum is a Palestinian born in Lebanon who has been living and working primarily in Britain since 1975. Her performance and video work has generally been concerned with the divisions between the privileged West and the Third World.

In *Measures of Distance* she constructs a visual montage which evokes feelings of separation and isolation from her Palestinian family. Reading aloud from letters sent her mother in Beirut, and using the Arabic text of the letters and still photographs as the visual materials, Hatoum creates a narrative that explores identity and sexuality against a backdrop of traumatic social rupture, exile and displacement.

Family Viewing (Canada, 1987) by Atom Egoyan; 16mm, color, sound, 86 minutes

Atom Egoyan's bleak and hilarious second feature observes a contemporary Canadian family in the crisis mode. The fractured family of *Family Viewing* consists of Stan, a mild sexual sadist who has been deserted by his Armenian wife; Sandra, his live-in mistress and video bondage partner; and his seventeen-year old son Van. Van is upset when he discovers that his childhood movie memories—stored on videotape—are being erased in order to make room for Dad's sexual frolickings with Sandra. Van's resentment toward his father becomes the catalyst of a plot to free his beloved grandmother from an old age home and establish a new, blissfully "happy" family in an unused wing of a downtown hotel.

Using a collection of video images—television, pornography, home movies, and surveillance—Egoyan creates a fascinating and probing study of emotional and sexual alienation in high-tech society.

WOMAN'S ANIMATION: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Curated and presented by Eric Theise

Thursday, March 19, 1992

Escape (Synchrony No. 4) (1937), by Mary Ellen Bute; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes, print: Cecile Starr

Mood Contrasts (1954), by Mary Ellen Bute; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes, print: Cecile Starr

Mary Ellen Bute, who has been aptly described as a woman of "tremendous enthusiasm and energy", was raised in Texas, ... became interested in the visual study of motion and assisted Thomas Wilfred, who perfected the Clavilux light organ which was used to accompany religious meditation at St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie. Joining the studio of electronics pioneer Leon Theremin, she collaborated with him on his thesis, "The Perimeters of Light and Sound and Their Possible Synchronization", and delivered the paper which he demonstrated electronically before the New York Musicological Society...

—Cecile Starr

Galatea (1935), by Lotte Reiniger; 16mm, b&w, sound, 12 minutes, print: Cecile Starr

Galatea: "Milk-giving Goddess", a title of White Aphrodite of Paphos, where her high priest Pygmalion "married"

her, by keeping her white image in his bed. The customs formed a basic for the classical myth of Galatea's marble statue brought to life by Aphrodite for her bridegroom. The story probably arose from a ritual of invocation, to call down the Goddess's spirit into her sculptured *eidolon*.

—*The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*

Orientation Express (1987), by Frances Leeming; 16mm, color, sound, 14 minutes, print: Woman Make Movies
A delightful cut-out animated view of 50 years of *Life Magazine's* version of the feminine mystique. All aboard the *Orientation Express* for a rocky ride through conservative morality and ompous patriarchy.

—Woman Make Movies

Tub Film (1979), by Mary Beams; 16mm, color, sound, 2 minutes, print: Cecile Starr

Pictures From a Gallery (1976), by Lillian Schwartz; 16mm, color, sound, 9 minutes, print: Cecile Starr
One of the most prominent artist-technicians is Lillian Schwartz, a landmark experimental animator who produced some of the first artistically conceived computer animated films in the early 1970s. She has for many years worked as a consultant to Bell Laboratories and IBM, applying her aesthetic background and ability to scientific and technological projects. In return she has had access to some of the world's most powerful computer equipment as well as to computer scientists and other kinds of support personnel. She says: "I find collaboration works best when the artist is the artist and the scientist is the scientist...when you learn from each other."

—Cecile Starr

Two Sisters (1991), by Caroline Leaf; 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes, print: National Film Board of Canada
Caroline Leaf, who began working at the Canadian Film Board in 1972, wo wide recognition for her sand-animated films and for her paint-on-glass film, *The Street*. In recent years Leaf has worked on live-action documentaries and fiction films. Whether or not she will return to animation, full-time of now-and-then, remains to be seen.

—Cecile Starr

Furies (1975), by Sara Petty; 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes, print: Creative Film Society

LUTHER PRICE PRESENTS
MEAT
A film/installation/performance

Friday, March 20 and Saturday, March 21, 1992

Meat (1989-92); Super-8mm film, video, slides, live and recorded sound, performance, flesh, power tools, etc.

"Red blue static after smacking my elbow against the stainless steel a single maggot writhing on a rancid bed of meat becomes the fly I have a hole on the side of my body pull out the gauze Fuckit I was real I was real I was real." (Luther Price)

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—Program notes by Albert Kilchesty
Additional research by Michael Roth

PASSAGES DE L'IMAGE
Program III:
IMAGES AS MYTH

Sunday, March 22, 1992

Tonight's program, *Images as Myth*, features four works which investigate the power of images to reproduce (and reconstruct) one of our most cherished religious myths and to reflect some of our deepest social concerns. In addition, the program also explores how film and photographic images have been used to document the passing of individuals through the world, thus acting as instruments which create and sustain personal portraits for posterity.

La Jetée (France, 1962/1964), by Chris Marker; 16mm, b&w, sound, 29 minutes

An elusive man who shuns interviews and mischievously invents mysterious origins for himself (effectively mythologizing himself—one report has him being born in Outer Mongolia), the remarkable Chris Marker—dubbed Magic Marker by Jean-Luc Godard—is recognized as one of the pioneers of the cinéma vérité movement in France and one of the finest film essayists the world cinema has yet produced. His films, mostly medium-length documentaries of varying styles, reveal a nondogmatic Marxist political orientation, acute intelligence, and a sincere concern with a wide array of human problems.

His celebrated *La Jetée*—described by Marker not as a film but as a photo-roman—utilizes a circular plot device quite similar to another photo-roman/film, Raul Ruiz's naughty *Dogs Dialogue* (screened on March 8) but their content is distinctly different. *La Jetée* is a futuristic fable about mental time-travel set in post-WWIII Europe. The protagonist is being used as a test-subject by a subterranean group of scientists who find him a perfect receptacle for their experiments. His movements through the past and future (like a spiritual predecessor of "unstuck-in-time" Billy Pilgrim from Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*) provide a springboard for Marker's treatise on love and memory after the apocalypse.

See You Later/Au Revoir (Canada, 1990), by Michael Snow; 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes

By taking a banal, common event—one which probably lasted a half a minute in real time—and stretching it out over the course of an 18-minute film, Michael Snow does not heighten or increase the banality of the event but rather questions if the event was 'banal' in the first place. The original action of a man (Snow) leaving an office and saying goodbye to a secretary is stripped of its ordinariness and instead acquires a poignancy rarely accorded to the mundane.

San Francisco Cinematheque

Allowing, as opposed to forcing—a verb too often mistakenly associated with Snow’s work—the viewer to contemplate both the action and the environment where that action occurs, a new space opens up for the viewer that isn’t tangibly present but palpable nonetheless. Snow’s very deliberate use of color, shapes and geometric patterns is played against the varying quality of light and shadow to create an emotional space not at odds with the scene’s original banality but rather one tied up in that banality. The simple passage of a man from inside to outside is not unlike that 45-minute zoom which drove Snow’s landmark *Wavelength* (1966/67). Movement here, as there, is mediated *and* inevitable, open to examination yet finally irreducible—nothing very simple after all. (Kurt Eaterwood)

La Ricotta (Italy, 1962), by Pier Paolo Pasolini; 16mm, color, sound, 40 minutes

Pasolini’s excerpt from the European omnibus film *RoGoPaG* (which included a short film each by Roberto Rossellini, Jean-Luc Godard, Pasolini and Ugo Gregoretti) was somehow tabbed with the anglicized title of “Cream Cheese,” most probably by an American film studio executive too stupid to know the difference between the two cheeses. *La Ricotta* is a good-humored, satirical and self-reflexive comment by Pasolini on the fragility of his own art. The ample Orson Welles plays a film director who is shooting a film on the life of Jesus (mirroring Pasolini’s own efforts to bring *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* to the screen), and whose crucified Good Thief dies of hunger on the cross just as he is to utter his last lines before an expectant crowd of journalists and dignitaries. The social activities of actors on the set, in plain view of the hallowed crucifix, gives the film its most outrageous and blasphemous edge. Pasolini’s liberties with the Christ story did not go unnoticed by Italian church and government authorities. The filmmaker was given four months suspended sentence “under a fascist law...In the fascist code there are a number of crimes of public defamation—including against the nation, the flag and religion. The trial was kind of a farce, and then the sentence was quashed on appeal...I was slandered week after week, and for two or three years I lived under a kind of unimaginable persecution.” (Pasolini)

Lightning Over Water (Nick’s Movie) (W.Germany/U.S., 1980), by Wim Wenders and Nicholas Ray; 16mm, color, sound, 91 minutes

Lightning Over Water employs a dialogue between film and video to document the last months in the life of master American filmmaker Nicholas Ray as he fights a losing battle with cancer. Ray, whose films include *Rebel Without a Cause*, *Johnny Guitar*, *The Lusty Men*, and *In a Lonely Place*, was an inspiration for a generation of German filmmakers which came of age—with Wenders and Werner Herzog—watching his films. Wenders’ provocative tribute to Ray, photographed in the dying filmmaker’s New York loft, is all the more touching since it also marks the end of a personal friendship between the two filmmakers.

**IN DANGER AND DIRE DISTRESS:
Serial Queens of the Silent Era
Curated and presented by Laura Poitras**

Thursday, March 26, 1992

Mary’s eyes were smoldering that day with the fires of strange yearnings. She moved about her work as one walking in a dream — burning with life that was not the life around her. Under her old print gown, her bosom rose and fell with soft regularity like that of slumber; her lips were parted. It came upon her heaving, the seriousness of her act. A girl of nineteen going to a life of which she knew nothing. How long would the hundred dollars last? What would she do when it was gone? She drew a deep sigh. Then, resolutely, she turned her face toward town and walked down the dock and up the street to the railroad station.

—“What Happened to Mary?,” *The Ladies’ World*, 1912

The answer to the question of what happened to Mary posed in this 1912 women's magazine is that she stepped off the the pages of a magazine and onto the surface of the movie screen. This transition from the written to the recorded, with its emphasis on the wholly uncertain and yet anxiously anticipated future, marks the beginning of the serial film genre. The circumstances of what happened to Mary are that the publishers of *The Ladies' World*, in an attempt to increase their circulation, struck a deal with the Edison Company to produce a film version of *What Happened to Mary?* Released simultaneously on both the newsstands and in movie theaters, *What Happened to Mary?* became so successful that within two years, over a dozen serials, comprising more than 100 individual episodes, were produced.

But this is only the why of it, which doesn't address what happened to Mary as a result of being transformed from a fictional character, who existed in the imagination of readers as a woman with "fires of strange yearnings" and parted lips, into an image imprinted on the surface of film emulsion, although in both accounts she may in fact have parted lips. What happened to Mary is bot more than what ccurred after she arrived at the railroad station, and more than an interesting marketing ploy: It involves the unique way in which cinema has come to tell tales.

The phenomena of the serial heroines raise many questions concerning the social position of women in the early twentieth century. The statement that Mary was "burning with life that was not the life around her" is indicative of the ambivalent message that the serials sent to women: on one hand, they recognized this "burning," thereby acknowledging women as individuals with rights and access to such things as professional ambition and sexual expression, rights previously reserved for men; yet what is offered is simultaneously revoked when we realize this life is "not the life around her." In other words, what these heroines want, and the reality of the situation, are two different things. Mary's only option — to leave home in search of independence and the pursuit of this imagined "life" — is an ominous decision considering both the sacrifices and potential repercussions of such an act, the ramification of which the serials waste no opportunity to point out to women. When Mary, and the other serial heroines on tonight's program, attempt to experience a life that fulfils these "burning desires," they discover, in relentless and perverse detail, the reality of the situation.

It has been argued in recent years that the serial heroines provided contemporary audiences, and particularly female viewers, representations of women that affirmed female prowess and self-reliance. But one has to wonder if the sadistic antics that these heroines were subjected to — entrapment, abduction, bondage, etc., *ad infinitum* — in fact presented an attractive or viable alternative to women, unless of course they already had a taste for such things. Unless of course that was precisely the objective...

Program:

What Happened to Mary?, episode No. 3, "Mary in Stage Land" (1912); 10 minutes.

Starring Mary Fuller; produced by Edison company.

Although not as action-oriented as the later serials, *What Happened to Mary?* established the major theme that was to run throughout the genre for the next decade: the emphasis on a female heroine who is a self-reliant character and who encounters the dilemmas of existing within the complex and hazardous condition of modern society. The plot centers around Mary who has run away from home after learning that her adopted father is scheming to marry her off to a man against her wishes, is faced with the predicament of having to earn a living. In this episode Mary encounters the corruption and decadence of big-city life while working as vaudeville performer.

The Perils of Pauline, episode No. 8, "The Reptile in the Flowers" (1914); 23 minutes.

Starring Pearl White; produced by Pathé; directed by Louis Gaznier and Donald MacKenzie.

Filled with bizarre and intrepid exploits, *The Perils of Pauline* has come to be known as the quintessential serial. In contrast to Mary, who is forced by economic circumstances to venture into the dangerous realm of big-city life, Pauline is an heiress who has chosen to pursue a year of adventure before settling down with her betrothed Harry. Pauline's guardian, the evil Koerner, spends the year plotting her death in an attempt to claim her fortune before

she marries. In this episode Pauline suffers the obligatory abduction, confinement, and inevitable rescue.

The Hazards of Helen, Episode No. 33, "In Danger's Path" (1915); 10 minutes.

Starring Helen Holmes; produced by Kalem; directed by J.P. McGowan and James Davis.

Comprised of 119 individual episodes, the *Hazards of Helen* combined the melodrama of the serial heroine with the action-packed thrills of the railroad adventure. Helen, who works as a telegraph operator at a railroad junction, performs breathtaking stunts as she pursues runaway trains, escaped convicts, and other assorted hazards and riffraff that populate life along the railroad tracks. In this episode, Helen and her male cohorts attempt to locate the whereabouts of two escaped bandits. Unfortunately for her, Helen stumbles across these vermin while alone, and is ceremoniously captured and confined to a refrigerated railcar. While attempting to light a fire, Helen exhibits some memorable talents, the least of which is the foresight to keep the flames from engulfing her. Helen's baptism by fire is brought to a sensuous and smoldering conclusion when her comrades empty the contents of a rail-side water tower onto the flaming railcar.

The Exploits of Elaine, episode No. 6, "The Vampire" (1915); 20 minutes.

Starring Pearl White; produced by Pathé; directed by Louis Gaznier and George B. Scitz.

The Exploits of Elaine was the second Pathé production that teamed director Louis Gazier and Pearl White. Unlike *Pauline*, which relies primarily on visual and action-oriented location shots — aboard ships, trains, planes and hot air balloons — to convey its story, *The Exploits of Elaine* combines dark interiors scenes with elaborate plot development. Another distinction between these two early serials is that *Pauline*, although chockful of death-defying antics and hairsplitting stunts, always resolves these predicaments by the end of each episode, thereby providing a sense of closure. In contrast, to follow the logic of a single episode of *Exploits* one must be appraised of the events of preceding installments.

This transition from purely action-oriented and self-contained episodes towards a more narrative form of storytelling that is carried over from one episode to the next is consistent with the historical development of cinema in the teens, in particular with its increasing emphasis on narrative feature-length productions. But this shift in the serial genre cannot be understood simply in terms of a stylistic advancement, rather it must be understood as a deliberate marketing ploy that attempted to find a means to both attain, and more importantly *maintain*, audience loyalty. The cliffhanger ending that has become synonymous with the serial genre provided such a tool. With the growing competition both among the various serials and with feature films, the success or failure of a serial literally hung on its ability to attract audiences week after week. Thus the unresolved mystery posed at the end of this episode of *The Exploits of Elaine*, followed by the ominous "To be Continued," provides an insight into the "stay tuned" mentality that permeates and perpetuates much of contemporary media.

What Happened to Mary?, episode No. 4, "The Affair at Raynor's" (1912); 10 minutes.

Starring Mary Fuller; produced by Edison.

After her adventure as a vaudeville performer presented in episode No. 2, Mary retreats to the countryside to pursue a career as a secretary. In this episode, Mary plays witness-turned-investigator in an embezzlement scandal involving a male co-worker. Like the earlier episode, "The Affair at Raynor's" employs many narrative devices that are decidedly theatrical: the use of off-stage space, choreographed entrances and exits, fixed camera angles, all point to this serial's transitional status between its roots in theater and its subsequent translation to cinema.

A Woman in Grey, episode No. 7, "At the Mercy of the Flames" (1920); 20 minutes..

Starring Aline Pretty; produced by Serico; directed by James Vincent.

Noteworthy for its low production values and extreme propensity for perversion, *A Woman in Grey* provides an interesting counterpoint to the earlier serials because of its nearly incomprehensible labyrinthine plot-line and excessive use of violence. The narrative revolves around the search for a secret code that details the whereabouts of a lost treasure. A subplot of this serial surrounds the identity of its heroine, Ruth Hope, who wears a metal amulet on her right hand that conceals the mystery of her true identity. This transposed chastity belt provides numerous

occasions and excuses for both friends and foes alike to mount vigorous, and often sadistic, campaigns in the quest to remove the telltale amulet.

The Hazards of Helen, episode No. 76, "The Governor's Special" (1915); 5 minutes.
Starring Helen Holmes; produced by Kalem; directed by J.P. McGowan and James Davis.

The Perils of Pauline, episode No. 2, part 3, "The Goddess of the Far West" (1914); 13 minutes. Starring Pearl White; produced by Pathé; directed by Louis Gaznier and Donald MacKenzie.

Special thanks to William Everson for making his prints available for tonight's screening; and to Ben Singer, who provided assistance in researching this program, and who's recent writing on the silent serials has brought the genre to the attention of contemporary audiences.

—Laura Poitras

TV BABIES
curated by Valerie Soe

Saturday, March 28, 1992

Young people in this country were born into a society already fully immersed in media culture. This program, a sampling of work from across the United States, looks at some of the more inventive work by makers 18 and under as they reshape and refract the images, values and ideas they've absorbed from the information society. (Program length, 87 minutes).

What's Black?, by Gabray Milner/Harvard-Wilson School, Los Angeles. Artist-in-Residence, Cheri Gaulke. 1 minute

Fine Art (2 minutes), *untitled* (1 minute), *Ritual* (2 minutes), by Daniel Martinico/California State Summer School for the Arts.

Aisha, by Capitol Children's Museum, Washington D.C. Animation Instructor, Stephanie Maxwell. 4 minutes

Is This Your Park?, by Rise & Shine Productions, New York City. 8 minutes

Lost Angels (excerpt), by Ace, Arrow & Selah and Kristy Edmunds/Outside In and the Northwest Film and Video Center, Portland OR. 3 minutes

untitled, by Summer Seay. 5 minutes.

Elements of Style (excerpt), by Wilson High School Humanitas, Los Angeles. Artist-in-Residence, Cheri Gaulke. Instructor, Susan Boyle. 8 minutes

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Ethereal Transcendence, by Chris Powell and John Ballinger/Film in the Cities, St. Paul, MN. 5 minutes

If the Winter Olympics Had an Event for Clubbing Seals, You Would Win the Gold Medal (excerpt), by Eric Saunders. 5 minutes

Vein, by Patrick Macias. 10 minutes

No. 9, by Joseph Donald Livingston III. 5 minutes

Mind's Eye, by Rachel Fielding/Long Beach Museum of Art VidKidKo. 1 minute

What is Obscenity?(excerpt), by Jenny Proctor. 7 minutes

The Letter, by Gary Bryman/California State Summer School for the Arts. 10 minutes

Jake and Ed, by Matthew Kresling. 10 minutes

Valerie Soe is a San Francisco-based video artist, teacher and writer whose articles have appeared in *Cinematograph* and *Afterimage*.

Program presented by the San Francisco Cinematheque, Artists Television Access and The Exploratorium

PASSAGES DE L'IMAGE
Program IV:
PASSAGE THROUGH THE WORLD

Sunday, March 29, 1992

Tonight's program, *Passage Through the World*, features four works which form a mosaic of methods and intents for using film, photography and video as tools for the construction of cultural critiques.

Berlin Still Life (Berliner Stilleben) (Germany, 1926), by László Moholy-Nagy; 16mm, b&w, silent, 8 minutes
László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) originally studied law in Budapest, but began drawing in 1915 and became involved with the literary and musical avant-garde. In 1920 he moved to Berlin, where he became associated with the Dada movement and later the ideas of the Russian Constructivists. His work embraced painting, sculpture, graphic design, photography, photomontage, and experiments with light and film related to his fascination with the machine aesthetic. In 1923 he was invited to join the faculty of the Bauhaus School. He stayed in Berlin until 1933, designing sets for the State Opera, creating advertisements and making documentary films. *Berlin Still Life* was most likely photographed in the slums of Berlin's working-class district during the Weimar Republic. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy notes that the beginning of the film is a study of line-plane contrasts: "there are all the clean, precise forms of technology: the neat pattern of street pavements, street-car tracks, steel skeletons rising in the sky." But behind the neat business buildings lie acres of tenements. The film then journeys into the slums of the city with its endless succession of prisons and deteriorating neighborhoods.

Origins of the Night (W-Germany, 1973-78), by Lothar Baumgarten; 16mm, color, magnetic sound, 90 minutes (Print provided courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, NYC).

The Tupi of the Amazon. "The Origin of Night."

In former times, night did not exist. It was daylight all the time. Night slept beneath the waters. Animals did not exist either, for things themselves had the power of speech.

The daughter of the Great Snake had married an Indian, who was master of three faithful servants. "Go away," he said to them one day, "for my wife refuses to sleep with me." But it was not their presence which embarrassed the young woman. She wanted to make love only at night. She explained to her husband that her father held the night prisoner, and that he should send his servants to fetch it.

When they arrived in a canoe at the abode of the Great Snake, the latter handed them a tightly closed nut of the utica palm, and told them not to open it under any pretext. The servants re-embarked and were soon surprised to hear a noise coming from the nut: ten, ten...xi, like the sounds of crickets and toads which sing at night. One servant wanted to open the nut, but the others were opposed to this idea. After a good deal of discussion and after they had traveled a long way from the Great Snake's abode, they eventually all assembled in the middle of the canoe where they lit a fire and melted the resin sealing the nut. At once night fell and all the things that were in the forest changed into quadrupeds and birds; those in the river became ducks and fish. The basket turned into a jaguar, the fisherman and his canoe became a duck: the man's head acquired a beak; the canoe became the body, and oars the feet...

The darkness covering the world made it clear to the Snake's daughter what had happened. When the morning star appeared, she decided to separate night from day. With this end in view, she changed two balls of thread into birds—the cujubim and the inhambu (respectively of the cracidæ and tinamidæ families and which sing at regular intervals during the night or to greet dawn). As a punishment, she changed the disobedient servants into monkeys.

—Couto de Magalhaes, provided by Lothar Baumgarten

The Seventy-nine Springtimes of Ho Chi Minh (Cuba, 1969), by Santiago Alvarez; 16mm, b&w, sound, 25 minutes

Santiago Alvarez is Cuba's most renowned documentarist. Beginning as a *noticieros* (newsreels) photographer, Alvarez developed a radical montage technique which exerted an enormously important influence on the evolution of documentary in Cuba and elsewhere. "His work exemplified the extent to which creative cinematic interpretation of the world was possible despite a severely limited economy of means," states critic Coco Fusco. "Widely acclaimed for his ingenious use of found footage and still photography, Alvarez's work demonstrates how dramatic tension and radical analysis can be created on the editing table."

The Seventy-nine Springtimes of Ho Chi Minh is Alvarez's impressionistic biography on the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Vietnam which skillfully weaves still photos, newsreel footage, and Ho's poetry. Depicting a life that spanned three revolutions, three continents and three wars, the film charts Ho Chi Minh's progression from militant student to the leader of Vietnam's revolutionary movement. Alvarez's visual montage is accompanied by a dynamic soundtrack featuring the music of Adelberto Galvez.

Ici et Ailleurs (Here and Elsewhere) (France, 1970-74), by Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Mieville and Jean-Pierre Gorin; 16mm, color, sound, 55 minutes. (In French, unsubtitled).

The difficulty of coming into a volatile situation as a cultural outsider and trying to make sense of that situation for oneself and other outsiders is the problem under scrutiny in *Ici et Ailleurs*. When the Al Fatah organization asked Godard in the late 1960s to make a film about the Palestinian situation, Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin—fellow member of the Dziga Vertov group—traveled to Jordan and South Lebanon to begin work on a film essay

to be called *Til Victory*. In the Middle East, Godard and Gorin filmed Palestinians in military training and making political speeches. This latter project was never completed. A few years later, Godard examined the Palestinian footage along with Anne-Marie Mieville (who was to be an important collaborator with Godard from this point on); the film *Ici et Ailleurs* is a record of their radical transformation of that original material.

While viewing the Palestinian footage on the editing table, Godard and Mieville were continually frustrated by their inability to weave the images and sounds into a meaningful web of relationships. They came to the realization that they must first learn “how” cinema should film history in its making before they could responsibly attempt to portray history in its making. This epiphany led to further questions which *Ici et Ailleurs* grapples with, such as “What is moviemaking, what is an image, what is the moviemaker’s relation to these specific images?” What was originally commissioned as a propaganda piece became a film about the process of filmmaking.

“The ‘here’ of the title is France—a working-class family watching TV, Godard and Mieville watching the Godard-Gorin footage and commenting offscreen. The ‘elsewhere’ is not merely Palestine, but the film Godard and Gorin wanted to make there in 1970. Like sound and image, now and then, or life and death, here and elsewhere essentially define one another dialectically, through a series of relays and exchanges...” (Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Soho News*, 1981)

This program has been a co-presentation by the San Francisco Cinematheque and the SFMOMA Media Arts Department with additional assistance from French Cultural Ministry. Programs and exhibitions of the SFMOMA Media Arts Department are supported by grants from the Fleishhacker Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Passages de l’image was organized at the Musée national d’art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, by curators Catherine David and Christina van Assche, and film theoretician Raymond Bellour.

THE DEVIANT CINEMA OF JOHN GREYSON
Artist John Greyson In Person

Thursday, April 16, 1992

John Greyson’s films and videos address how individuals construct and confront social and sexual tensions in their everyday lives. While Greyson is dedicated to raising issues in the context of individuals’ experience, his work is not realist. While he is dedicated to providing pleasure for the contemporary viewer, his imagery is neither facile nor manipulative. And he uses multiple genres—the historical novel, the talking head interview, music video—to interrogate notions of respectability, sexuality, politics, and power.

After completing high school Greyson moved to Toronto, where he became part of the gay activist and art scenes in the late ’70s. He joined Trinity Square Video, one of two artists’ video coops in Toronto. Along with a sense of community, these coops provided inexpensive access to production and editing equipment. Artists like Colin Cambell, Lisa Steele, and General Idea were already doing work around issues of narrative and sexuality. In this atmosphere of encouragement and debate Greyson explored the potential of narrative and of combining image and text in the media of video, performance, artists books, and other publishing pieces.

In 1983 Greyson began to focus his video work on gay and lesbian concerns. The *Kipling Trilogy* (1984-85) explores the ideological underpinnings and colonialist discourse of gay male sexuality. *You Taste American*

(1986) analyzes the politics of washroom sex. Using the figure of Michel Foucault, Greyson combines a drama of a police raid on an opera house washroom with a theoretical discussion of surveillance and social hypocrisy. These tapes evidence the unique combination of genres and strategies, content and form that remains a hallmark of Greyson's work.

Greyson's videos and films all include some combination of the following: original sets with scripted action; appropriated film footage; informational voiceovers; intertitles; original lyrics; appropriated scores; media clips; still images or drawings; landscapes; theoretical texts; dialogue. *Moscow Does Not Believe in Queers* (1986) and *The Pink Pimpernel* (1989) both consist primarily of documented information—in the first case, interviews with gays who attended the first Moscow Youth Festival; in the second, information on AIDS. However, each tape is framed by and intercut with scenes in a dramatic story. *Pimpernel*, for example, is a take off on *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (Harold Young, 1935), from which it uses ample visual quotes. In the case of the *Pink*, though, the Pimpernel is smuggling cures for AIDS. The story revolves around the tensions between activism and apathy, and describes the impact the AIDS crisis has had on the gay community and on gays as individuals. For the most part Greyson highlights, rather than smooths over, the disjunction between sections or formats. For example, in *The World is Sick (Sic)* (1989), a newscaster preaches to the viewer, occasionally bumps into people in the background, and ends up picking up a protest sign and joining in the fray.

In *Urinal* (1989) Greyson strengthened his combination of theory and drama. Drawing out the histories of specific figures such as Frida Kahlo, Sergei Eisenstein, and Yukio Mishima, he used the knowledge of their lives and their cultural environments to examine the assumptions that gay men and lesbians have today about sexuality, identity, and politics. In *The Making of 'Monsters'* (1991), the most recent work, Greyson continues his interest in history, realism, and gay identity.

—from "A Kiss is Not a Kiss," Nadine L. McGann, *Afterimage*, January, 1992

The Jungle Boy (1985); video, 15 minutes

The Jungle Boy forms the second work in Greyson's *The Kipling Trilogy*, a group of loosely related tapes which explore how the cultural legacy of British imperialism impacts on the taboo of homosexual desire. Using film version of Kipling's oeuvre as a departure point, the tapes examine the veritable tug-of-war between the gay subculture and mainstream social values.

The ADS Epidemic (1987); video, 5 minutes

Death in Venice meets the ADS Epidemic (Acquired Dread of Sex). A safe-sex tongue-in-cheek music video.

The Pink Pimpernel (1989); video, 32 minutes

Someone is making drug runs to the United States for treatments not available in Canada. Who's really beneath the blush-colored mask? Community activists proclaim the problems of procuring treatment for PWAs and then go on to lasso other issues, while back in the narrative, Toronto's gay community worries about the safety of Sir Percy. Greyson throws a third ball in the game—a series of safe sex erotic interludes in the style of other gay artists (A Safer Querelle, A Safer Genet). Greyson's work has always been smart and funny; *The Pink Pimpernel...even better...What more AIDS media ought to be like: passionate, playful, complex and sharp.*

—Mark Finch, *14th Annual San Francisco International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival*

The Making of 'Monsters' (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 35 minutes

On June 21st, 1985, five teenage boys attacked a gay school teacher in Toronto's High Park and kicked him to death. Though they were charged with first degree murder, they were convicted only of manslaughter, and were out of jail less than three years later.

The Making of 'Monsters' parodies the strategies of Brechtian musical theater to explore the culture of anti-gay violence in North America. The film adopts the vantage point of a promotional documentary (like 'The Making

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of Star Wars'). Hungarian Marxist cultural theorist George Lukacs has become a TV producer, and has hired his old foe Bertolt Brecht to direct a movie-of-the-week about the killing in the park. Brecht is inexplicably a catfish, and is sharing his fishtank with goldfish boyfriend Kurt Weill.

Lotte Lenya, a black lesbian documentary filmmaker, is shooting the promotional documentary, and manages to capture the clashes between Brecht and Lukacs on camera. Lukacs wants to produce a classic realist drama, stressing the pathology of the boys. Brecht wants to use disruptive alienation techniques (heavy metal musical numbers, allegorical sets) in order to foreground his denunciation of patriarchal violence. The actors are caught in the middle, vainly trying to bring their characters to life. It is during the filming of the murder scene that this crisis of representation boils over...

The Making of 'Monsters' ends with a call to arms for lesbians, gay men and all disenfranchised people to fight back against the violence of the society we live in.

Tonight's show was made possible with the generous support of the Government of Canada/avec l'aide du gouvernement du Canada.

Program presented by the San Francisco Cinematheque and Frameline

NORTH ON EVERS *A Film by James Benning*

Sunday, April 19, 1992

And tell me this and tell me truly, so that I may know it. What land is this, what neighborhood is it, what people live here?

—*The Odyssey*, Book XIII

Can't you read the writing on the wall?

Joe Walsh, *Turn to Stone*

...in black stone are 58,132 names listed in chronological order. I found the name of a Missouri friend. He died in 1970. He had just turned nineteen. The ride to New York was painful. My lower back gave out, and the road out of Washington was full of holes. I could feel every bump. I was in dire pain. Yet I just kept riding...

—James Benning, hand written text from *North on Evers*

North on Evers (1992); 16mm, color, sound, 87 minutes

To suggest that *North on Evers* is merely another film about loss and attempted recovery would be akin to saying that Hank Aaron was just another ballplayer or John Keats just another poet. The magnitude and dimension of loss (loss of youth, innocence, friends, faith in country, faith in one's ability to perform as an artist) contemplated in Benning's new film is staggering and, by film's end, profoundly saddening. However, this catharsis is not immediate and is not presented in an overtly dramatic fashion. *North on Evers* is an extraordinary bit of inferential filmmaking—its net effect measured more by the individual spectator's ability to read the implied meanings of a steady succession of landscapes, musings and missed connections than by the authorial voice of the filmmaker demanding, "Now, I want you to feel this way; now, I want you to feel that way; now, I want you to feel appropriately mollified; now, I want you to chuckle, etc."

North on Evers is, literally, a road movie. Over two summers Benning filmed two West-East cross country motorcycle trips. Over a succession of static landscape shots, a hand written "narration" appears at the bottom of the screen. As Benning travels from point to point he writes about the things he sees and the experiences he has with people met on the road, and ruminates on the dangerously American scents exuded by places like Los Alamos, Death Valley, Jackson, Mississippi, and Gary, Indiana. On his travels, he pops in on old friends living in Texas, New Mexico, New York, Wisconsin, and Arizona. As Benning rolls back through geographic American history on a West-East vector, he also moves back through his personal history in what ultimately becomes an heroic but futile attempt to recapture the feelings, the friends and the spirit of his lost youth.

It is not only personal loss which is contemplated at length in *North on Evers*. Benning also touches, sometimes very obliquely, upon the way America has conveniently buried (intentionally lost) the uglier parts of its history. Meditations on racial inequality and the struggle for civil rights by Black Americans (and one in particular, slain NAACP leader Medgar Evers, upon whose eponymously named street Benning drives north) lend an unexpectedly sharp edge of social criticism to the film. The absence of inherent *value* in American life and the country's blind inability to distinguish tragedy from triumph and the frivolous from the serious (witness the near-juxtaposition of the graffiti covered exterior wall at Elvis' Graceland and the black stone of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.) lay close to the heart of *North on Evers*. One then might view Benning's personal odyssey of rediscovery as an allegorical treatment of America's attempt to recover its lost democratic mandate.

James Benning has been making films for twenty years, all of them dealing with the American experience—with landscapes, internal and external. His signature static, long-take landscape film format was later popularized by and is now most closely associated with Wim Wenders and Jim Jarmusch. In *North on Evers*, Benning revisits an earlier film, *The United States of America*, which also used the device of a cross country automobile trip. He's essentially lost himself in America. Benning currently teaches at Cal Arts in Southern California.

Filmography:

Michigan Avenue (1973) with Bette Gordon
i—94 (1974) with Bette Gordon
8/12 x 11 (1974)
Saturday Night (1975)
The United States of America (1975) with Bette Gordon
9-1-75 (1975)
A to B (1976)
Chicago Loop (1976)
11 x 14 (1977)
One Way Boogie Woogie (1977)
Grand Opera (1979)
Him and Me (1982)
American Dreams (1983)
Landscape Suicide (1986)
Used Innocence (1989)
North on Evers (1992)

MICHELLE HANDELMAN & AZIAN NURUDIN

Both artists in person

Thursday, April 23, 1992

Dealing with the forbidden and the erotic, Michelle Handelman's work is known for its direct attack upon the socio-political confines of our culture and the consequences of sexual repression. Often censored by film labs and state-funded venues, her titles include: *Good Morning Dr. Freud*, *The Path of the Glass*, *Sexual Techniques in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, *Catscan* (a collaboration with Monte Cazazza), and *Venus in Mind*. She received her BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute.

A History of Pain (1992), by Michelle Handelman: 3/4" video, color, sound, 45 minutes

A History of Pain is a modern day tale of ancient torture techniques—a story about the Spanish Inquisition and how it still permeates our current socio-political situation. In 1985 Amnesty International, a group working for the rights of torture victims, staged a major exhibition called "Inquisition: Torture Instruments from the Middle Ages until the Industrial Era." The exhibit toured throughout Europe and while on display in Rome the vaginal pear, a device used for the mutilation of women's genitals was stolen. The pear has never been recovered. This video takes off from that incident.

The lead character, Peel, finds herself trying to solve the mystery of the stolen torture device amidst a background of mandatory drug testing, s/m erotica, art censorship and flashbacks from the Middle Ages. She's outspoken and sassy, angry with the state of the world. The supporting characters include a sleazy gynecologist, a sexy lesbian lover, a beatnik boyfriend and a well educated art thief. *A History of Pain* is an intensely provocative, slightly ominous, and a hauntingly campy vision of a world without morals or social conscience. The effect is intensified by a powerful soundtrack featuring the music of Lustmord, Monte Cazazza and Psychic T.V.

A History of Pain was produced with the assistance of a S.F. Artspace Hi-8 Post-Production Residency Grant.
—Notes from sources provided by Michelle Handelman.

* * *

"When I use video as a tool of empowerment, I take the dominant-submissive dynamics in a particular issue, break down its component parts, surgically study them, then I redraw/remap the course I want to take and explore in my videotapes." Drawing on punk rock, Muslim culture, pop art, and sadomasochism, San Francisco video artist Azian Nurudin consistently challenges popular notions of what lesbian art can be about. Born in Malaysia and raised as a Muslim, Nurudin came to the U.S. in the mid-70s; her tapes have been screened at festivals and galleries throughout the world. In a now-infamous incident followed by an unconscionable act of censorship, Nurudin had the dubious distinction of having almost the entire audience storm out on her *Malaysian Series 1-6* when it screened at the Roxie Theater as part of the Northern California Women in Film and Television *On Screen* festival last year.

Azian Nurudin program:

Self-Immolation as an Anachronism (1988); 3/4" video, color, sound, 4 minutes

Using props and dolls, Nurudin comments on continuing Third World cultural and religious atrocities against women.

Malaysian Series 1-6 (1986-87); 3/4" video, color, sound, 23 minutes

Malaysian Series was initiated by Nurudin to dramatize female angst, surreal Western anxieties, and the frustrations of being a Moslem housewife in urban society. In these early minimalist performance tapes, Nurudin,

wearing a floral-print sarong and black leather jacket, alternately whips and beats various small appliances and dolls and, in a moment of inspired frenzy, attacks a fish head in a most interesting fashion. "I'd hope people would have an open mind, and if it's not something that they are used to, to try to see it in a different context or try to figure out why the film or videomaker is approaching this subject." (A.N.)

Without Make-up You Haven't Got a Prayer (1988); 16mm color, sound, 4 minutes.
Oozing sexuality infuses an industrial landscape.

Nancy's Nightmare (1988); 3/4" video, color, sound, 6 minutes

A lesbian S/M scene is theatrically played out against the soundtrack of Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots are Made for Walking" and Megadeath's cover of the song. "I wanted to show the aesthetics of S/M—a very visually stylized depiction of it—to make it artistic. Coming from a culture infused with rituals, I see S/M as another ritual. The costuming, set language, formalized process and constraints—it's a way of creating meaning and enhancing sensation. It's not unlike the rituals of prayer and fasting or the trance rites of my own culture. Aside from maybe Catholicism, white American culture has so little sense of ritual, so little understanding of this..." (A. N.)

Sinar Durjana (Wicked Radiance) (1992); 3/4" video, color, sound, 5 minutes.

Premiere. "A dark abstract personal vision delving into aspects of S/M sexuality tinged by my Muslim background." In Malay with no English subtitles.

ERNIE GEHR—NEW FILMS

Ernie Gehr will be introduced by Jonas Mekas

Sunday, April 26, 1992

"Of a film seen on my third birthday I recall only this: a drenching radiance, like the sun's, made somehow carnally intimate. Thirty years later I recovered that ecstasy in the films of Ernie Gehr.

That film, all film, is "about" light, is an operational commonplace. In Ernie Gehr's films, light seems an absolute quality of the image. Light is IN the image.

This light is not merely the energy beamed from the projector, by which the film is seen; it is the energy from Ernie Gehr's lucid sensibility, by which virtue we see."

—Hollis Frampton

Shift (1972-74); 16mm, color, sound, 9 minutes

This Side of Paradise (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 14 minutes.

Side/Walk/Shuttle (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 40 minutes

"I just completed these two films. Still catching my breath and removing splicing cement from my fingers. So, what can I say about them? I've yet to 'see' them, experience them really, outside of the drive that propelled them into being and the decisions I made and did not make on the editing table and at the lab. During editing, it was always a pleasure to see them, especially as their final shapes began to crystallize. Beyond that I'm hesitant to say anything before their first public screenings.

Shift was recorded in New York...*This Side Of Paradise* in Berlin...*Side/Walk/Shuttle* in San Francisco... call it "panoromania" or perhaps the "celestial sublime" (cinematically speaking), Earthbound, however." (Ernie Gehr)

San Francisco Cinematheque

"I don't think there's a filmmaker in the history of the medium who has achieved more through the succinct deployment of a few elements than Ernie Gehr... (J. Hoberman, *Millenium Film Journal* #3, 1976)

"The chance collisions and harsh molecular energy of the urban street have been Ernie Gehr's most consistent source of inspiration: films from his early *Reverberation* and *Still* through *Eureka* and *Shift* to the recent *Untitled: Part One, 1981* and *Signal—Germany On The Air* are all, in their ways, city symphonies—symphonies, that is, as they might have been conceived by as austere composers as Webern or Berg." (J. Hoberman, *Village Voice*, Nov. 19, 1985)

Ernie Gehr Filmography:

Morning (1968)

Wait (1968)

Reverberation (1969)

Transparency (1969)

Field (1970)

History (1970)

Serene Velocity (1970)

Still (1971)

Shift (1972-74)

Eureka (1974)

Behind The Scenes (1975)

Table (1976)

Untitled (1977)

Mirage (1981)

Untitled: Part One, 1981 (1981)

Signal—Germany On The Air (1985)

A co-presentation of the San Francisco Cinematheque and the San Francisco International Film Festival.

**BETWEEN NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY:
FILMS BY ROSE LOWDER
Filmmaker Rose Lowder in person**

Thursday, April 30, 1992

Roulement, rouerie, aubage (1978); 16mm, b&w/color, silent, 15 minutes

Couleurs mécaniques (1979); 16mm, color, silent, 16 minutes

Les tournesols (The Sunflowers) (1982); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes

Les tournesols colorés (The Colored Sunflowers) (1983); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes

Scènes de la vie française: Paris (1986); 16mm, color, silent, 26 minutes

Impromptu (1989); 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes

Quiproquo (1992, in progress); 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes

Approaching film from painting and sculpture, my initial endeavor was to search for ways in which filmic procedures could be developed in a manner adapted to their functioning to both adequately control the visual aspects of the film strip and to allow the work to acquire a considered variety of material qualities.

Attempting to meet these two criteria while taking into account the specific photographic characteristic of the medium led me to try and establish relationships between the operational mechanisms of the filmed objects and the recorded visual qualities foregrounded by the filmic procedures. The first two films on the programme, *Roulement, rouerie, aubage* and *Couleurs mécaniques*, the former a black and white and color visual essay concerning a water wheel and the latter a visual essay in color showing a children's merry-go-round, correspond to this period of early films.

Quite a few films of a different nature, such as *Les tournesols*, treating frame to frame relationships and shown occasionally in Canada and the U.S., followed these first films. The two approaches led to a present concern with how scenes from contemporary daily life can be used to interact with processes devised to extend the possibilities of the medium.

Quiproquo (Shown here still in progress unfortunately), situated in an environment where nature and social-industrial technology meet, attempts a visual dialogue with (and critique of) mainstream society's concerns and choices. The ambiguity inferred in the title relates to a questioning of the economy of means involved in relation to what is stated within the context of both film's possibilities and the implications of the reality filmed. In tracing some of the sources of the new work this program presents an occasion to reflect on past films in relation to more recent options.

—Rose Lowder

Rose Lowder studied fine art in Lima, Peru and London. She has worked as a painter and sculptor while earning a living in the British Film Industry. She has run screenings of experimental film on a voluntary basis in Avignon, France, since 1977. With Alain-Alcide Sudre she co-founded the Archives du film expérimental d'Avignon in collaboration with the performing arts department of the National French Library, to make available to the public a collection of film and printed documents.

SHORT FILMS FROM LATIN AMERICA

Friday, May 8 - Saturday, June 6, 1992

Starting in the early 1960s with the *Cinema Nuovo* movement, Latin American filmmakers have gained worldwide recognition for their feature-length narrative and documentary films such as *Vidas Secas*, *Barravento*, and *The Hour of the Furnaces*. Latin American filmmakers pioneered a style that combined European neo-realism, ethnography, Hollywood drama, and many elements of their own rich native cultures, and used this expressive mode to document their own societies. Unfortunately, only the feature-length films from the region have received

widespread distribution, while the many distinguished short films by Latin American artists have been largely unscen in the U.S. *Short Films from Latin America* offers an illuminating mix of recent and classic films.

“One of the dreams of this exhibition has been to project an aura of authenticity through multiplicity and surprise. Yet, paradoxically, the ultimate guarantor of the authenticity which the West so ardently seeks in the surrogacy of ‘exotic’ cultures lies in those cultures’ defiant refusal to be reduced to or effectively synthesized by any collection that seeks to apprehend and contain them.

“...In some sense, the collection which this exhibition assembles is a collection of collections (of the preferences of producers, historians, scholars, distributors), not all of them external to the region these assorted films depict. The history of the New Latin American Cinema which has ‘authenticated’ and lent authority to so many (though by no means all) of the short films featured here has only recently begun to be seen as itself another kind of collection—as partial (in both senses) as any other.

“ Moments of revolutionary optimism, like the decade of the 1960s whose shadow looms large across the mosaic of this exhibition, excite in part because of their ability, however momentary, to hold all possible futures in the balance. This collection will have realized its purpose if, for Latin American as well as for non-Latin American viewers, it invokes some possible futures as well as evoking some no longer possible pasts.

—Julianne Burton: “History in the Exhibition and the Exhibition in History” in *Short Films from Latin America*. The American Federation of Arts, New York 1992

Program I: PEOPLE AT WORK

Friday, May 8, 1992

Hatmakers (Brazil, 1983), by Adrian Cooper; 16mm, 25 minutes

In reverently, almost ritualistically observing steps in the process of fabricating felt hats, *Hatmakers* evokes forms of mechanized labor suggestive of the early 19th century. The filmmaker eschews both narration and dialogue, channeling all his passion into sensuous photography and patient montage.

Filminutos (Cuba, 1983)

The Animal Trainer, by Noel Lima; 16mm, 1 minute

A dinosaur is trained to perform...too well.

Banana Company (Nicaragua, 1982), by Ramiro Lacayo; 16mm, color/b&w, 15 minutes

Contemporary color sequences of banana workers harvesting, hauling and processing the crop are intercut with period newsreel footage, in black and white, of a ceremonial visit b Anastasio Somoza to one of Standard Fruit Company’s plantations. Somoza’s modernizing rhetoric echoes hollowly against the persistent primitivism of contemporary working conditions, still “standard” at the outset of the Sandinista regime. Poet Ernesto Cardenal reciting fragments from his epic “La Hora Cero” (“Zero Hour”), and direct address commentary from the *bananeros* (banana orkers) themselves, provide contrapuntal voices in this intricate work whose eloquent cinematography makes the ubiquitous mist and mud almost palpable.

Brickmakers (Colombia, 1972), by Marta Rodriguez and Jorge Silva; 16mm, sound, 42 minutes

Six years in the making, and shot without benefit of synchronous sound, this deceptively modest-looking work

is organized around a dual motif: the stages in the Castañeda family's artisanal production of clay bricks, and an intricate hierarchy of voices that regulate their lives and their representation, including the public rhetoric of politicians, priests, radio advertisers and soap opera characters. Poised between observation and interiority, this film recapitulates the cinematic strategies of the 1960s and anticipates those of the 1980s.

Arismendi (Venezuela, 1988), by Harel Calderon; 16mm, sound, 28 minutes

The viewer doesn't discover what *Arismendi* "is about" until well into the film; the people and places of the town of Arismendi, on the plains of Venezuela, are made palpably present long before we eventually see what fuels the precarious local economy. Using intertitles as arbitrary as those of *Un chien andalou* combined with desultory dialogues and poetic voice-over—as well as blackouts, dissolves, step printing and other experimental visual techniques—this "anti-ethnographic" documentary prefers evocation to exposition, explanation or denunciation.

Program II: CHANGE AND CONFLICT

Friday, May 15, 1992

Come Back, Sebastiana (Bolivia, 1953), by Jorge Ruiz; 16mm, sound, 27 minutes

Sebastiana, pre-adolescent shepherdess on the austere Andean plateau, is the focal point for this survey of life practices among the declining Chipaya, wary neighbors of the much more prosperous Aymara. Rather than addressing his commentary to the viewer, the anonymous narrator admonishes Sebastiana throughout, urging her to return from her foray into the world beyond her barren homeland, to steel herself against hunger and privation, in order to ensure the continuity of her people, who trace their ancestry back to pre-Inca Chulpa civilization. The stark beauty of the setting and the early call to resist cultural assimilation distinguish this seldom-seen but often-cited dramatized ethnography.

Throw Me a Dime (Argentina, 1958), by Fernando Birri; 16mm, 30 minutes

Billed by its makers as Argentina's first "social survey" film, this now-legendary work focuses on groups of children from a marginal community who risk life and limb running along railway trestles to beg money from riders in passing trains. The act of begging has never been so breathtakingly kinetic. In deferring this graphic footage to the end, the filmmakers not only generate suspense but also build an understanding of the economic and demographic imbalances which motivate such desperate dare-devilry.

Hope (Colombia, 1985), by Mady Samper; 16mm, 25 minutes

In this prizewinning screenplay, the homeless Esperanza—sometime mother, sometime lover, sometime clown—inhabits a realm where memory reshaped by fantasy and delusion embellish an ungenerous reality.

Missing Children (Argentina, 1985), by Estela Bravo; 16mm, 30 minutes

The trauma of three generations comes into focus in this film about the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and some of the young children—offspring of the "subversives" whom the Argentine government abducted during the "Dirty War"—who, after years of protest and searching by the women's groups, have been successfully reunited with their families. Not so vaguely aware that they are both the heirs of a national disgrace and the hope that it will never be repeated, these children speak of their aspirations for the future.

Program III: HEROES AND HEALERS

Friday, May 22, 1992

My Brother Fidel (Cuba, 1977), by Santiago Alvarez; 16mm, sound, 15 minutes

Eighty-two years after Jose Marti and Maximo Gomez landed in the village of Playitas to begin the War of Independence (1895), Fidel Castro interviews farmer Salustiano Leyva who, as a child, witnessed that historic moment.

The Most Holy Brotherhood (Colombia, 1970), by Gabriela Samper; 16mm, sound, 12 minutes

The leader of a religious sect, whose members are instructed to cover the entire left side of their body as a safeguard against evil, inveighs against the ills of the world in this haunting ethnographic documentary.

The Cross of Gil (Argentina, 1985), by Victor Benitez; 16mm, sound, 24 minutes

A quizzical look at an idiosyncratic folk cult, this documentary both celebrates and critiques the incongruous but broadly contagious hero-worship of one Antonio Gil, a 19th century bandit whose principal interest derives from the fact that he is not the stuff from which legends are made.

Holy Father and Gloria (Chile, 1987), by Estela Bravo; 16mm, color, sound, 43 minutes

Pope John Paul, living symbol of Catholic faith, visited Chile in 1987, while the country was still under the rule of General Pinochet. 18-year-old Carmen Gloria Quintana, "the living symbol of torture in Chile" who barely survived immolation by the military the preceding year, returned from undergoing medical treatment abroad that same historic week. The public reception of both figures—the venerable foreigner and the small, disfigured national—initially juxtaposed, later converges when they meet face to face. This documentary takes on epic proportions as it shows how both figures provide a space for the massive public expression of long-suppressed political emotions and aspirations. Throughout, documentarist Estela Bravo's trademark on-the-street interviews with citizens from all walks of life provide another dimension of dynamic, vital contrast.

Program IV: CREATIVITY AND EXPRESSION

Friday, May 29, 1992

For the First Time (Cuba, 1967), by Octavio Cortazar; 16mm, b&w, sound, 12 minutes

The magical moment of individual discovery of the movies, a lost marker for inhabitants of societies now dominated by electronic imagery, is recaptured in one of the first Cuban documentaries to incorporate synchronous sound. The filmmaker, whose off-camera voice can be heard throughout asking questions of his subjects, goes in search of a mountain hamlet so remote that its inhabitants can only conjecture what a movie must be like: "A dance...a party...a large town..." The film mirrors the responses of young and old to Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* as projected by a Cuban Film Institute mobile projection team.

An Event on the Beach (Brazil, 1960), by Fernando Amaral; 16mm, sound, 15 minutes

The thematics of this fictional short fuse hooliganism and heroism while the style fuses Italian neo-realism with emergent *cinema verité* in a deliberate search for a Brazilian "new wave". Music is by Luiz Bonfá, who also scored *Black Orpheus*.

Motivations (Cuba, 1988), by Marisol Trujillo; 16mm, color, sound, 14 minutes

"What motivates the chosen motifs of Afro-Cuban painter Manuel Mendive?" this film inquires, combining close scrutiny of the various surfaces he has adorned with his metamorphosing human and animal forms with performance sequences, religious celebrations, and conversations with the artist in his home and garden.

The Centerfielder (Nicaragua, 1985), by Ramiro Lacayo; 16mm, sound, 18 minutes

A condemned man, responding tersely to his interrogator, subjectively inhabits another reality in which his love for baseball provides his means of escape.

Arabesque (Brazil, 1979), by Elaine Caffé; 16mm, 15 minutes

In this stylish, quasi-farcical fantasy, a pair of burglars react in opposite ways when face-to-face with the unexpected and the unknown.

I Like Students (Uruguay, 1968), by Mario Handler; 16mm, sound, 10 minutes

Two independent sequential lines (heads of state conferring behind closed doors; students in the streets protesting American president Lyndon Johnson's presence) are repeatedly juxtaposed, as are alternating soundtracks: silence greets images of the head of state, while the song which gave the film its title accompanies the street protests.

Under the Table (Chile/Canada, 1983), by Luis Osvaldo Garcia and Tony Venturi; 16mm, sound, 23 minutes

Illegal immigrants living isolated, clandestine lives in order to maintain a precarious economic foothold in Canada tell their stories in this experimental, scripted documentary made memorable by metaphors of facelessness and deafness, expressionistic sound and image tracks, and an autobiographical subtext.

Program V: THE LAND

Saturday, June 6, 1992

To Colombia (Colombia, 1971), by Carlos Lersundy; 16mm, sound, 15 minutes

This observational montage film, accompanied by incidental sound rather than a unifying, voice-over narration, traces a diverse, interconnected itinerary of habitats and ethnicity: from the small-town marketplace with its snake charmer, and the rural lowlands and highlands with their indigenous communities, to the disjunctive and voracious capital-as-merry-go-round in which marvelous particularities of difference are devoured by the urban machine. In presenting this microcosmic view of the Latin America's ethnic macrocosm, *To Colombia* anticipates—and challenges the stance of—postmodern documentary cinema.

An Island Surrounded by Water (Mexico, 1985), by Maria Novaro; 16mm, sound, 25 minutes

The search for the lost mother is never fulfilled in this lyrical, hauntingly disjointed narrative. Instead, at the film's conclusion, the adolescent protagonist seats herself before two cameras—the filmmaker's and a still portrait photographer's—composing an image of herself at threshold of womanhood.

Filminutos (Cuba, 1983)

Dracula, by Noel Lima; 16mm, 1 minute

Children encounter the Prince of Darkness in the woods.

Time of Women (Ecuador, 1988), by Monica Vasquez; 16mm, sound, 20 minutes

The rhythms of community life in this Andean agricultural community have been irrevocably altered as husbands

and offspring have emigrated, in search of income, to Quito and to the United States. This sensitive documentary records how the women left behind balance their loss with their strength, working together to perform the tasks and fill the places of those who have departed.

The Land Burns (Argentina/Brazil, 1968), by Raymundo Gleyzer; 16mm, 12 minutes

This scripted documentary denounces the perennial hunger and displacement confronted by the drought-driven tenant farmers of the Brazilian northeast, its spare imagery recalling Brazilian director Glauber Rocha's "aesthetics of hunger". The emphatic symbolism so characteristic of this period is here reinforced by an indignant voice-over narrator who informs viewers, in the final market sequence, "Every hat for sale represents a dead farmer and every farmer is a catalog of disease."

Island of Flowers (Brazil, 1989), by Jorge Furtado; 16mm, 12 minutes

The trajectory of a humble tomato, from garden to kitchen to garbage pile, is the pretext for this ironic exposition of the inverted priorities of what passes for "advanced" civilization.

Program VI: MASCULINE/FEMININE

Saturday, June 6, 1992

The Men of Mal Tiempo (Cuba, 1968), by Alejandro Saderman; 16mm, sound, 30 minutes

Almost symphonic in its structure, *The Men of Mal Tiempo* begins sedately with the introduction of five centenarians, veterans of the Battle of Mal Tiempo during Cuba's war for independence from Spain. After recounting his recollections, each begins to reenact his memories and then to interact with the other veterans and with the observing professional actors who recreate the retrieved experiences. The culminating movement consists of the fully orchestrated reenactment of the battle, complemented by solarized, intermittent motion sequences that evoke the distance traversed by subjective memory. Descending from this crescendo of movement and participation, the original combatants turn from the field in a series of still dissolves until their images fade away. As the anonymous narrator baldly concludes his opening declaration, "This is not a historical documentary; it is a fiesta of memory".

Filminutos (Cuba, 1982 - 1983); 16mm, 7 minutes

The Wolfman, by Jose Reyes

A wolfman stalks the city at night, terrifying a lone woman.

Pyramid Terror, by Noel Lima

A woman is alarmed by the advances of a reanimated mummy.

Maternity, by Jose Reyes

During childbirth, a woman's feeling for her mate turn murderous.

Torture, by Noel Lima

A fair maiden pleads for mercy...and silence

Disillusioned Lover, by Noel Lima

A despondent wolf tells Little Red Riding Hood of the loss of his true love.

And What Does Your Mother Do? (Colombia, 1983), by Eulalia Carrizosa; 16mm, 10 minutes

With energy and good humor, this amusing short produced by Latin America's most long-standing women's film collective reveals that the answer to the question its title poses is certainly *not* "Nothing, she just hangs around the house all day!"

The Bogeyman (Venezuela, 1990), by Cacho Briceño; 16mm, sound, 12 minutes

A day-in-the-life of a young Venezuelan family: Marieta, the pretty but punitive mother; taciturn, gun-toting Augusto, harsh with his wife, indulgent with his offspring; Horacio, the impressionable nine-year old; and, not to be omitted, the family TV set, witness to as well as partial instigator of this "trivial" domestic drama. Outside the "protected" domestic sphere, the surrounding society reportedly boils over with violent social unrest. The precocious Horacio's climactic inability to distinguish the malevolent from the benign is the all too-logical outcome of the violence which textures his daily domestic life.

Miss Universe in Peru (Peru, 1986), by Grupo Chaski; 16mm, 32 minutes

The film provides a fascinating angle of women's images as a motor of consumption and on television's role in that process. Footage of the Miss Universe contest, staged for the first time in Lima in 1982, alternates with shots of an indigenous women's conference held in that city at the same time. Much of the pageant footage is shot off television; its inherent artificiality and invasiveness are effectively underlined by the numerous closeup cutaways to unidentified indigenous Peruvian women who sit "facing" an unseen TV screen, silently pondering the images. But because they are, necessarily, posed facing the camera, their pensive image mirrors our own, raising intricate issues of complicity, and circulating back around to the filmmakers who posed them thus, converting them into another set of consumable images...

—Program notes from: *Short Films from Latin America*. The American Federation of Arts, New York 1992

Series presented by the San Francisco Cinematheque and Cine Acción

THE RETURN OF JAMES BROUGHTON
Screening and Reading
Artist in person

Thursday, May 14, 1992

In celebration of the publication of two new books by James Broughton, the Cinematheque tonight presents a program of Broughton's films and a reading from the new work with the filmmaker and poet in person.

During a career which has spanned over 40 years, James Broughton has made over 20 films as well as producing a number of volumes of poetry and plays. As both a filmmaker and a writer, Broughton's work has been centered in an inclusive sense of poetry, one that did not limit poetry to the page. In characterizing his work, Broughton says of his sensibility,

Modern poetry has been deeply influenced by film. Modern film has not sufficiently returned the compliment...Let us be quite clear. To ask for poetry in cinema does not mean that one is asking for verse plays transferred dutifully to celluloid...No, one is asking rather for the heart of the matter. For the essence of experience, and the sense of the whole of it. For the effort and the absurdity, the song and the touch. For how we really feel and dream-grasped and visualized afresh.

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“Poetic” may conjure up a certain vision in the mind’s eye about James Broughton’s work, but contrary to what one might think, the images in his films are succinct and clear. To quote briefly from his new work, *Making Light of It*, Broughton says, “I love clarity, essence, sparkle. The virtue of the camera eye is its sharp and accurate focus. Isn’t clarity the greatest of challenges?”

The film portion of the program is as follows:

Dreamwood (1972), by James Broughton; 16mm, color, sound, 45 minutes

Conceptually grounded in mythological origins, *Dreamwood* is the telling of the myth of a hero experiencing a spiritual crisis. He is taken to an enchanted island where the underlying issues surrounding the crisis are made manifest. The following schemata written by Broughton, originally appeared in *Visionary Film* and presents the myth on which the film is based:

DREAMWOOD: SCHEMATA

The poet in his tower, at an impasse.

Out of dreams comes the Call to Adventure: his anima is abducted
by the

First Parents.

Beginning of the Quest: the Night Sea Journey.

The Other Shore: a strange bare island.

Before he can enter the Forest of Dreamwood he must pass three
guardians of the mysteries:

the helpful Crone,

the Terrible Father-Mother of his past who would hold him back,

the Mother Superior of the forest who prepares him for entry.

FIRST INITIATION: the vision of the green chapel of the Goddess is disturbed by manifestation of nymphs & children, culminating in the encounter with Artemis bathing. For approaching her, he pays a price. Wakes up outside.

SECOND INITIATION: Returning to the wood, he overcomes the Amazon guardian (Hippolyta). In the forest Alchemina has sport with him, to lead him deeper. Finally he encounters Lilith who takes her pleasure with him. Out of the cold frenzy he wakes again outside the forest.]

THIRD INITIATION: the guardian of the gate this time is a woodsmen. In their encounter they discover they are “brothers.” The woodsman takes the poet to the place where he may climb up to where the Old Queen Hecate dwells. Overcoming his fear, he enters her to be reborn. He survives this ordeal and this time awakens inside the forest.

FOURTH INITIATION: he finds himself again in the green chapel. This time it is welcoming and the presence of the Goddess is felt. She calls to him as to a lover. He disrobes and makes offerings to her, from his body. These are accepted, and he then makes lover to her body, the Earth itself.

CODA: thanks to this union, his anima soul is contained within him. And this sacred marriage is blessed by sun and moon.

Scattered Remains (1988), by James Broughton and Joel Singer; 16mm, color, sound, 14 minutes

Described as “a cinematic performance piece enlivened by its experiments in poetic speech and poetic vision,” *Scattered Remains* explores, ponders and muses over the precipices where existence, life and death converge. The

opening voice-over describes a place of utmost importance in our lives, the bed, but the images in the film do not dwell in this place. *Scattered Remains* is a vibrant work, filled with vivid and colorful tableaux. Characteristically, this film is filled with a sense of the magical, of the costume (with or without clothing) and of the act of the ritual which distinguishes Broughton's films. The images appear so direct it makes the filmmaking appear deceptively simple and to quote from the film, "nobody knows anything," and "everything is going beautifully." The sequences in *Scattered Remains* take the poetry within the film to a higher pitch while seemingly "making light" of perhaps the greatest fear and mystery that we, as humans, face in our mortal lives. That mystery, of course, is death. And the way in which the phrase is used here here, "making light," alludes to one of the ways that the phrase has meaning as the title of Broughton's new book. For it is in the acts of filmmaking and writing the James Broughton truly shines.

—Notes prepared by Jerome Carolfi

Program presented by the San Francisco Cinematheque and City Lights Books.

**THE NERVOUS SYSTEM:
3D PERFORMANCES BY KEN JACOBS**
Filmmaker Ken Jacobs in person

Thursday, May 21 and Saturday, May 23, 1992

Ken Jacobs will also present a program of *Subcinema* (projection performances, sound, and Pulfrich 3D films) on Sunday, May 31st at the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley, beginning at 7:30 p.m. At the request of Ken Jacobs, we will dispense with the customary introduction of the artist and the traditional Q and A session following the screening. Ken will be happy to respond to questions and comments at the conclusion of the PFA screening on the 31st.

I've said, "Advanced film-making leads to Muybridge." Clearly that's a most local truth, true, that is, for me. Closing in on (to allow the expansion of) ever-smaller pieces of time is my personal ever-promising and inviting Black Hole. Actor's faces certainly stun me with boredom. (Movies are about actors.) I confess I feel walled in by human faces altogether, not as misanthropic reaction but because the human colonization of human experience, in our urban lives, is so thorough. It is astonishing to find oneself here with so many others to chat with, but isn't this essentially a search party...with our work cut out for us? We've gotten caught in the makings of our own minds and the only way out may be to enter into the workings of the mind. Film...as itself the subject of inquiry...is the spell we enter so as to pull apart the fibers of the phantasm, our opportunity to lay out the mind in strips. So, if picking at the texture of cinema, at the end of its filmic phase, seems about as inward as one can get, it's because the name of this digging tool I've devised, The Nervous System, also designates a main territory of its search, that place where we've blithely applied mechanism to the mind willy-nilly producing that development of mind known as cinema. After all, the micro and macro worlds are equally "out there." Fresh air rushes in from the core of things, too.

—Ken Jacobs

The Nervous System consists, very basically, of two near-identical prints on two projectors capable of single-frame advance and "freeze" (turning the movie back into a series of closely related slides). The twin prints plod through the projectors, frame...by...frame, in various degrees of synchronization. Most often there's only a single frame difference. Difference makes for movement and uncanny three-dimensional space illusions via a shuttling mask or spinning propeller up front, between the projectors, alternating the cast images. Tiny shifts in the way

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the two images overlap create radically different effects. The throbbing flickering is necessary to create "eternalisms": unfrozen slices of time, sustained movements going nowhere unlike anything in life (at no time are loops employed). For instance, without discernible start and stop and repeat points a neck may turn...eternally.

I enjoy mining existing film, seeing what film remembers, what's missed when it clacks by at Normal Speed. Normal Speed is good! It tells us stories and much more but it is inefficient in gleaning all possible information from the film-ribbon. And there's already so much film. Let's draw some of it out for a deep look, sometimes mix with it, take it further or at least into new light with flexible expressive projection. We're urban creatures, sadly, living in movies, i.e., forceful transmissions of other people's ideas. To film our environment is to film film; it's also a desperate approach to learning our own minds.

What I'm trying to do is shape a poetry of motion, time/motion studies touched and shifted with a concern for how things feel, to open fresh territory for sentient exploration, creating spectacle from dross...delving and learning beyond the intended message or cover-up, seeing how much history can be salvaged when film is wrested from glib 24 f.p.s. To tell a story in new ways, relating new energy components (words are energy components to a poet) in a system of construction natural to their particularity. To memorialize. To warn. (K.J.)

Program I:
XCXHXEXRXXIXEXSX

Thursday, May 21, 1992

XCXHXEXRXXIXEXSX (1980); 16mm, b&w, sound-on-tape, 2 hours.

An intensive examination and bringing to life of a very small amount of film material originally photographed circa 1920; selections from a French pornographic short. (K.J.)

Flattened 2D images (from a 1920s pornographic pastorage) revive and rebound from the screen in full-bodied 3D. Time becomes elastic and the images are thrown into a convulsion of self-reflection. Latent content boils to the surface. Here space itself is voluptuous and shuddering; opening up in tumult, the landscape ripples and swivels and human figures are galvanized into a kind of epileptic dance. Unimaginable until seen. We are presented with a preserve of history and troubling representation. Our defenses move up and down in response, as we are implicated and our critical faculties sharpened.

—Mark McElhatten

The longest, most pleasurable fuck in the history of cinema. (Albert Kilchesty)

Program II:
TWO WRENCHING DEPARTURES

Saturday, May 23, 1992

Two Wrenching Departures (1989); 16mm, b&w, sound-on-tape, 2 hours

...this is a farewell portrait of Jack Smith drawn from his appearance in my 16mm poverty epic *Star Spangled to*

Death (1957-59). In that film he more-or-less personified the spirit Not Of Life But Of Living, a figure celebrating not some absolute and unreal ideal but the mixed blessing of living as it is and has been, the living that includes dying. And every other kind of nastiness. (K.J.)

Ken Jacobs responds to the recent deaths of Bob Fleischner and Jack Smith. Two princely vagabonds dedicated to the "infinite ecstasy of little things." Hi-jinks can be the highest form of poetry. This luminous threnody is a moving, all-dancing valentine of vital signs. Two lives. An exuberance that could never be put to rest. Fleischner bobs down the street smoking, carefree into waiting clutches. The incomparable Jack Smith does not a Totentanz but an Egyptian pogo and jitterbug of contagious vivacity and abandon. Surpassing Loie Fuller whipping up froth of light with manic energy. A shaman, a scarecrow, an orchid rot emancipator. Jacobs, too, liberates by making the juices flow, breathing new life into a film where life already abounds.

—Mark McElhatten

* * *

Filmmaker, performer, artist *provocateur*—Ken Jacobs embraces all of these descriptions with a passion and commitment that has characterized his 30 years as the leading figure of the New York avant-garde film community.

Jacobs was born in New York in 1933. After studying painting with Hans Hoffman in the 1950s, he began to make films. His early works, such as *Blonde Cobra* and *Little Stabs at Happiness* (both featuring extraordinary performances by the late Jack Smith), were landmarks of the American avant-garde movement of the 1960s. In 1965 Jacobs founded the Millennium Film Workshop in New York, a production and screening center for independent filmmakers. Jacobs' own filmmaking went through a variety of transformations throughout the 1960s, as he experimented with a wide range of styles, from diaristic 8mm films to epic allegories such as *The Sky Socialist*. Between 1969 and 1971, he made his highly acclaimed film, *Tom, Tom, The Piper's Son*, in which he rephotographed and re-imagined a 1905 G.W. "Billy" Bitzer film.

Over the past twenty years, Ken Jacobs has been working with a wide variety of techniques for hand-manipulated interventions into the presentation of motion pictures. Whether assembling imaginative pseudo-narratives from a host of found footage materials, reworking the roots of pre-D.W. Griffith film history, or transforming the two-dimensional flatness of film strips into magical re-embodiments of time and space, he has created almost single-handedly an entire field of film culture that has been used to profound effect by as diverse a group of artists as George Coates, Richard Foreman and Jim Jarmusch. From his early collaborations with Jack Smith to his 20 plus years of teaching at the State University of New York-Binghamton, the history of film and the make-up of contemporary cinema has been indelibly marked by the genius of Ken Jacobs.

GARY ADLESTEIN & JERRY ORR

Both artists in person

Sunday, May 24, 1992

Gary Adlestein and Jerry Orr are two of the co-founders of the influential Berks Filmmakers, Inc., a film and video exhibition, education and production group in Reading, Pennsylvania. Although their individual filmmaking styles can differ greatly, they are linked by their passionate commitment to and advocacy of personal film art.

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Gary Adlestein began filmmaking by co-producing (with Jerry Orr & others) the documentary, *Reading 1974: Portrait of a City*. He has been the program director of Berks Filmmakers, Inc. since its inception in 1975. His recent films—primarily short S-8 lyrics, diaries and portraits—have been regularly presented in solo and group contexts, most recently at the 1988 Exit Art International Forum of Super-8, the Los Angeles Filmforum, “Conspiracies 5,” and “Recent American Cinema: 1981-1991” organized by the London Filmmakers Coop. He teaches English and Film at Albright College and resides in the verdant Oley Valley, near Reading, PA.

St. Teresa (1983); 16mm, color, sound, 4.5 minutes

After Bernini’s “Ecstasy”: baroque excess and dazzle; shot in (S-8) in Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome; composed and blown up to 16mm on the JK printer.

Kore/Kouros (1987); Super-8mm, color, sound, 10.5 minutes

A study of the male and female nude in honor of the memory of the painter Harry Koursaros and the classical beauty which propelled his life work; Photos and paintings by H.K. “A most erotic film elegy.” (A. Kilchesty)

S-8 Diary: Wildwood: 2/88 (1988); Super-8mm, color, sound, 2.5 minutes

Sunday drive to the Jersey shore and back.

S-8 Diary: L.A.: 3/87 (1988); Super-8mm, color, sound, 9 minutes

Memento of a West Coast visit: L.A. Filmforum, church of Softball, the Avant-Guardian, stay with Buddy K. Chosen as one of the outstanding films of the 1988 Exit Art International forum of Super-8.

Two from the series “More Italian Places”

Verona (1989); Super-8mm, color, sound, 3.25 minutes

A place lyric of an enchanted city.

Selinunte (1989); Super-8mm, color, sound, 4.5 minutes

Greek ruins in Sicily where you can hear the stones breathe.

Cezannescapes #1 & 2 (1991); Super-8mm, color, sound, 5.5 minutes

His paintings are there in the landscape of Provence.

Candy (1988); Super-8mm, color, sound, 10 minutes

Portrait of Philadelphia poet and painter, Candy Kaucher (in her student studio at Albright College); random on/off shooting inspired by John Cage; cameras: Jon Stout, Jerry Orr, Jean Badman; C.K. reciting her poem “In the City” at the end. Freshly screened at “Conspiracies 5” in NYC.

Spring/Fall Cinesongs for Storm De Hirsch (1990); Super-8mm, color, sound, 11 minutes

An homage to one of the pioneers of the artistic use of S-8; layered seasonal images and sounds bursting into being and fading simultaneously.

Jerry Orr began making films in 1971— first in Super-8, then 16mm, and now both Super-8 and 8mm video. A co-founder of Berks Filmmakers, Inc., he has served as its Administrative Director since 1977. In the early 1980s he directed his creative energies into the development of three-dimensional projection screens made from styrofoam cups, packing peanuts and other common household and industrial materials. On his recent films, Mike Kuchar has written: “Jerry Orr is an audio-visual alchemist. He does with the two dimensional image of film and video what Einstein has done to the dimensions of space and time...made it relative and so very elastic!” Jerry Orr recently retired from his position as staff psychologist at the Wernersville State Mental Hospital, a post he held for thirty years. He lives in Wyomissing, PA.

Prayer Wheel (1987); Super-8mm, color, sound, 3.5 minutes

An artifact of Secular Humanism, circa 1985. Text undeciphered. An attempt to explore the loss of connectedness to higher “levels” of consciousness through focused attention to mundane existence.

Figure of Speech (1989); Super-8mm, color, sound, 6 minutes

“Fire over water. The image of the condition before transition.” (The *I Ching*’s “reading” of the film). A contrapuntal blend of filmic lyricism, text, and TV snow. How do we figure and ground ourselves. Perfect visual aid for Philosophy 101.

Behind the Noise (1987); Super-8mm, color, sound, 8 minutes

Classical nude as voyeur—the seen seeing the seer. A comment on the dialectical nature of seeing and a posing of the sensual/sexual element in all perception; vision touches the surface of what is seen and is a bodily experience. Hence kinesthetic, hence sensual, hence sexual. The flesh of seeing—the eye touches the “object” as literally as if it were a hand. This is not a film about male voyeurism and the historical role of women as victim of male sexual sleaze.

Journey (1988); Super-8mm, color, sound, 9 minutes.

A visual/aural ex-position of my reflection in or about the 25th anniversary of my working in a state mental hospital. The imagery is from rephotographed slides of hospital corridors, and the mask from an advertising calendar issued by a drug company which asserts *their* depiction of states of madness.

“...the evil twin of Ernie Gehr’s *Serene Velocity*, a literal shock corridor...a diabolic mandala, a kaleidoscopic one way trip to the end of the world. *Journey* is best viewed with the mind’s safety belt snugly fastened.” (A. Kilchesty)

See Know Evil (1989); Super-8mm, color, sound, 5.5 minutes

“To sanction vice and hunt decorum down.” —Byron

Originally (late ’70s) 16mm film which was made by bipacking a Bolex with punched (leather punch) loop of black leader. Projected the 16mm film onto a cloth screen designed by sculptor Tom Watcke, and rephotographed on Super-8. At one level a peep-hole film; voyeurism as detached lust. The hole as chimera. Two questions are posed: (1) is knowledge more privileged than vision, and (2) how does the quote from Byron contextualize the film?

The Shadow Knows (1989); Super-8mm, color, sound, 9.5 minutes

“A brilliant Super-8 poem of seductive, transient images bubbling and festering in the closet of the pious subconscious and mixed with the audio grunts, cries and prayers of that delirious hypocrite wallowing in the ‘Heaven and Hell’ of the righteous soul wet with the sweat of fever dreams.” (Mike Kuchar)

St. George and the Dragon (1991); VHS to Super-8mm, color, sound, 7 minutes

Then I saw another beast which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon...it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image for the beast...and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. Revelations 13.

Triumph Der Verordnung Der Neuen Welt (1991); VHS to Super-8mm, color, sound, 7 minutes

A profound misunderstanding of what it means to be human has spawned a breeding ground of potential Fascism masquerading as divine revelation. The crusade has begun...

OUT IN THE PARK, OUT IN THE DARK
An evening of lesbian and gay movies - Free!
at Washington Square Park

Monday, May 25, 1992

Intro: Vintage trailers, campy curios, girl-gang busters, girl scouts ad, etc.

Alfalfa (Great Britain, 1987), by Richard Kwietniowski; 16mm, sound, 9 minutes

The Queen's English: from Britain, an alternative alphabet of gay slang and some misappropriated definitions. With memorable music by Startled Insects.

Decodings (1989), by Michael Wallin; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes

A strongly affecting, allegorical compilation of found footage from the '40s and '50s. Wallin's unadorned narration describes the lonely social transition from boyhood to manhood, stapled to images of cliff-divers, stunt drivers and boys boxing blindfold.

I Got This Way from Kissin' Girls (1990), by Julie Butler; 16mm, b&w, sound, 8 minutes

An extended set of women—a range of ages, races, sizes and types—embrace and smile and smooch to an evocative, romantic soundtrack.

My New Friend (1984), by Gus Van Sant, Jr.; 16mm, sound, 3 minutes

An excerpt from *Gus Van Sant's Diary* by the heralded director of *Mala Noche*, *Drugstore Cowboy*, and *My Own Private Idaho*.

Our Trip (1980), by Barbara Hammer; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes

San Francisco's Barbara Hammer uses a diaristic animation of photographs to document a trip to Peru with her friend Corky Wick.

Spin Cycle (1991), by Aarin Burch; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes

This Oakland-based filmmaker's feisty *Spin Cycle* is a personal narrative which confronts her fears and aspirations as a lover and an artist, portraying her struggle with self-doubt and internal turmoil.

Beauties Without a Cause (1986), by David Weissman; 16mm, sound, 7 minutes

Four lawless drag queens prepare for a night of light crime—a delirious moral comedy with compelling hair-do's and an excitable soundtrack.

Home Movie (1972), by Jan Oxenberg; 16mm, color, sound, 12 minutes

Jan Oxenberg's groundbreaking lesbian comedies from the '70s helped bring the lesbian experience out of the private and into the public sphere. Her *Home Movie* is exactly that: fast-edited found footage with an added voice-over, which comments wryly on the schoolgirl images.

We're Talking Vulva (Canada, 1990), by Shawna Dempsey and Tracy Traeger; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes

Fireworks (1947), by Kenneth Anger; 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

Very, very pre-*Hollywood Babylon* Kenneth Anger releases "all the explosive pyrotechnics of a dream. Inflammable desires dampened by day under the cold water of consciousness are ignited that night by the libertarian matches of sleep and burst forth in showers of shimmering incandescence." (K.A.)

A co-presentation of the San Francisco Cinematheque and Frameline

GREGG BIERMANN & MARK STREET*Both filmmakers in person**Thursday, May 28, 1992*

San Francisco filmmakers Gregg Biermann and Mark Street create sensual film experiences examining rhythm and repetition through the lush layerings of found images, applied materials and sound.

Giants of the Sea (1992), by Gregg Biermann; 16mm, b&w, sound, 31 minutes

Giants of the Sea was made in response to my recent films *Eye Ear Information* and *Montage* (both 1990). In these films fast moving sound and image fragments are used as building blocks to form gradually unfolding shapes in time. These essentially abstract works are dense with layers of slowly evolving patterns of image and sound, and have been described as “genesis” films, seemingly enormous in scope. *Giants...* builds and expands from the formal ideas found in these earlier works, and is also the first major work of mine to have any real content distinct from its own structure or the essential material properties of film. Here unrelated narrations are allowed to collide within a complex web of sound and image relationships. These sound and image fragments are organized into a series of shifting and interlocking modules which slide past one another with varying degrees of logical relevance, activating and repositioning each other depending upon their context.

The image contains the most complex frame patterning and image manipulation found in any of my work. The image consists of re-photographed materials from a section of film about sea creatures shot before wildlife conservation was considered, footage of exotic birds, and original materials shot and re-filmed over the past few years.

The sound contains a series of unrelated sections of speech that intensify in their musical characteristics and their implications. The superficial irrelevances of the disparate subject matter of this film (whaling, race relations, to name a few) intensify in their meaning, due to the fact that they are floating within these new contexts. These separate subjects are again only fragments, whose boundlessness is represented and yet contained. *Giants...* as a totality is absolutely available to mind.

My feeling about subject matter in general is that a subject never lends importance to a work. It is the way in which the subjects are revealed that is the key factor as to its profundity regardless of the apparent banality of the content. This is related to what Kant called “disinterest”—a condition devoid of purposive interests (i.e., having a personal, social, or political use or purpose). For example, if my artistic judgement is clouded by my personal needs and interest than I cannot be sure my work will be of value to someone with differing concerns. This is the essential difference between the fine and applied arts: the fine arts have no real use and cannot be judged with reference to use, whereas the aesthetic value of a chair is absolutely intertwined with its function. So we look at *Giants...* essentially for no reason, but that it presents us with a series of regions to behold and wander in. The film simply washes over us, lifting us from our concerns and needs; it places us in a realm of cinematic pleasure, intellectual involvement, and contemplation.

—Gregg Biermann

Missing Something Somewhere (1992), by Mark Street; 16mm, color, sound, 17 minutes

Missing Something Somewhere is a textured celebration of that which can't be apprehended, or burdened with specific meaning. Three visual chapters appear, each with its own rhythm, each suggesting a different sense of place. Snatches of narrative and fragments of memories brush up against each other, as truncated images burst into being and then disappear again just as quickly.

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Lilting Towards Chaos (1989), by Mark Street; 16mm, color/b&w, sound, 21 minutes

Lilting Towards Chaos is made up of visual and written journal entries made 1985-1989. For four years I made mountains out of molehills: whined, introspected, drank, scoffed, looked outside, cowered, looked inside, wallowed, and mocked myself whenever I could. Some musings are honest and useful, others are circuitous and self-defeating.

Triptych (1992), by Mark Street; 16mm, color, silent, triple-projection, 13 minutes.

Triptych is a spirited conversation with three screens. Sometimes the interaction seems downright civil, at other time the mood is more contentious. The screens pause for each other's outbursts, play off one another's riffs, or else prattle on in their own fashion, oblivious.

—Film descriptions by Mark Street

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN CAGE *A Video Portrait*

Sunday, May 31, 1992

"I am going toward violence rather than tenderness, hell rather than heaven, ugly rather than beautiful, impure rather than pure—because by doing these things they become transformed, and we become transformed. Unless we do these things, nothing changes."

—John Cage

John Cage, one of the most innovative and influential artists of the 20th century, turned 80 this May. In recognition of Cage, the San Francisco Cinematheque presents a program of videos that pay homage to his distinct artistic style and philosophy. His highly spiritual and therapeutic compositions draw on a variety of seemingly disparate sources—Zen Buddhism, early radio technologies and mycology (the study of mushrooms), to name a few. Cage wanted to illustrate the unity and cohesion of that which seemed unrelated and different. His compositions, counter to traditional classical composition, were enormously influential to early video artists who, with the advent of cheap porta-paks, set out to create a media in opposition to television. Just as Cage allowed listeners to hear sounds differently, video artists created works that reframed the benign images television offered, making a media not simply to be looked at but engaged with.

A Tribute to John Cage (1973), by Nam June Paik; video, color, sound, 60 minutes

Host: Russell Connor. Guest: Alvin Lucier. Performers: John Cage, Charlotte Moorman, David Behrman, Marianne Amacher, Richard Teitelbaum, Pula; with works by Cathy Berberian, Jud Yalkut, Francis Lee, David Rosenboom, Jackie Cassen, Stan Vanderbeek, Alfons Schilling.

Produced by the New Television Workshop and the TV Lab at WNET/Thirteen.

A video interpretation of Cage's philosophy and aesthetic. Nam June Paik, like Cage, saw himself as an inventor, and shared Cage's vision of an art that was emancipatory and empowering to the viewer. The video is a pastiche of interviews with and about Cage, intermixed with Paik's own visual renderings of Cagean ideas. Included are bits of entertaining Japanese television commercials, one of Cage's interactive video experiments, and the infamous video bra with the late Charlotte Moorman.

"WGBH" (Catch 44) (1971), by John Cage; video, color, sound, 38:07 minutes

The fictitious Boston public television station WGBX-TV (Channel 44) presents "WGBX: A Telecast for Composers and Technicians."

Made by Cage himself—and thus the most literal visual adaptation of his music. The tape's evocation of time and space are uniquely Cagean, as there is little camera movement—the image speaks for itself. Cage's tape situates the act of composition as unending, without closure... "music is being written, but isn't finished yet—that's why there isn't any sound..." But the sound of technicians, producers and Cage himself are constantly overheard, creating a sort of broadcast symphony. Cage compels the audience to rethink traditional assumptions of musical theory and composition.

Marcel Duchamp and John Cage (1972), by Shigeko Kubota; video, b&w, sound, 28:27 minutes

Kubota's work is, by contrast, a much quieter tape, cultivating the simplicity and clarity of Zen-Buddhism that Cage embraced. In seeking the artistic parallels of Duchamp and Cage, Kubota creates a work that not only explores the concept of chance in *readymades* and *silent compositions*, but is itself guided by unconscious impulses. Random objects are caught at Duchamp's grave by a wandering eye/camera and Cage wonders out loud to an audience on the meaning of his first meeting with Duchamp. As with most early video art the manipulation is minimal but highly effective.

"Art should not be different from life but an act within life. Like all of life, with its accidents and variety and disorder and only momentary beauty." (J.C.)

—Program notes written by Madeline Stiness

RECENT VIDEOTAPES BY CECILIA DOUGHERTY

Cecilia Dougherty in person

Thursday, June 4, 1992

The Drama of the Gifted Child (1992, premiere); 3/4" video, b&w/color, sound, 6 minutes

Coal Miner's Granddaughter (1991); 3/4" video, b&w/color, sound, 80 minutes

Cecilia Dougherty's videos explore the complex interplay between the language of popular culture and the language of the lesbian community, with particular focus on how this interplay forges personal identity. Her approaches to video are imaginative and challenging, expanding the boundaries of lesbian representation and lesbian sexuality.

In her newest tape, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, she reveals the commonly disguised mechanisms of representation in film and video by deconstructing the standard codes of narrative cinema. The juxtaposition of black-and-white Pixelvision images with high-resolution color shots emphasizes her highly subjective use of the camera. She further investigates her relationship to her subject—and her *camera's* relationship to the subject—by presenting cropped and abstracted sexual imagery: "But I won't show your head," repeats the principle narrator as she reads from a letter about pornographic photos that she wants to incorporate into her video. Dougherty also challenges the traditional role of the viewer as voyeur (and the camera eye as voyeuristic eye) when the narrator stares directly into the camera and boldly asserts, "I am a guiding light for all mankind." Dougherty does not merely reveal these standard cinematic operating procedures as exploitative and immoral, she simultaneously implicates the process of videomaking as well, subverting the current language in order to create a bold, new one.

In her Pixelvision epic *Coal Miner's Granddaughter*, based on episodes from her own life, Dougherty depicts the early life and sexual maturation of a young lesbian, Jane Dobson, played by her friend and frequent collaborator, artist Leslie Singer. Each character in Jane's working-class family delivers his or her lines in a sometimes halting, deadpan manner, creating a humorous caricature of their roles: the alcoholic, pig-headed father; the passive and religious mother; the rebellious older daughter, Rene; the well-behaved son, John; and the unsure and sickly younger daughter, Jane. Most of the scenes take place in the family's kitchen where, as each family member speaks, Dougherty's Pixelvision camera circles dizzyingly close to their bodies and faces, further stressing the disjunction between what is said and what we see.

To escape the clutches of their oppressively real parents and the stifling lives they lead at home, Jane and her siblings escape to save themselves and establish their individual identities. First, Rene takes off with her hippie friends to join a commune, then John joins the Peace Corps, and Jane goes off to college where she experiences her sexual awakening. Jane eventually settles in the lesbian community in San Francisco. The lesbian scene in San Francisco is not, however, the blissful sexual utopia a naïf might think. Jane quickly discovers that the lesbian dating game is filled with pitfalls, quirks, and instabilities.

Although the life of Jane Dobson was drawn from Dougherty's own life experiences, the artist has stated, "I wasn't so much inspired by my particular life. I think everybody's story is good. Every place people come from is good. You don't have to be a great hero or suffer a great tragedy. The point of *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* is not to expose a hero but to integrate. This is a normal family. They are fucked up, but the most normal situation is a completely full situation. An average story of an average person: Jane Dobson. The whole point of the story is that there is no point. Things are not real, nothing gets resolved. There's no logic to this person's life. You just try to get done tomorrow what you didn't get done today."

—Cecilia Dougherty in *The Advocate*, Sept. 10, 1991

Cecilia Dougherty was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In 1970 she left home to attend Temple University in Philadelphia. Before finishing, she moved to the Bay Area and received a degree in painting from the University of California. She received her MFA in performance and video from the San Francisco Art Institute. Her videos have been exhibited extensively, nationally and internationally. She has completed 17 videos to date and is currently working on *Joe-Joe*, derived from The Joe Orton Diaries.

—Program notes written by Anne-Marie Schleiner.

SCARLOT HARLOT FOR REAL

Carol Leigh in person

Sunday, June 7, 1992

With so many filmmakers becoming whores, it's refreshing to see someone reverse the process.

—*S.F. Bay Guardian*, referring to Carol Leigh, a.k.a. Scarlot Harlot

Since 1989 Carol Leigh (also known as Big Red, and the Scarlot Harlot)—prostitute, activist, and videomaker—has produced, shot and edited a series of half-hour, multi-award winning documentaries, grouped under the title of *The Collected Works of Scarlot Harlot*. Leigh is well known as a pioneer in regard to prostitutes' rights and

AIDS activism, as a media representative for COYOTE and as one of the founders of ACT UP San Francisco. As an advocate she has appeared on shows including "Nightline," "The Late Show with Arsenio Hall," and "Geraldo." Ten chapters of her writing are published in *Sex Work*, an anthology of writings by sex workers, published by Cleis Press. Her videos have been featured at the San Francisco International Film Festival, Black Filmmaker's Hall of Fame, Film Arts Festival and numerous other showcases.

Documenting the Bay Area's multicultural and sexually diverse political and artistic communities, *The Collected Works of Scarlot Harlot* explores the Bay Area's historic cultural and artistic underground from an irreverent and intimate point of view. In a time when mainstream media has become a mouthpiece for corporate interests in America, Scarlot Harlot's videos provide an unconventional and fresh perspective. Challenging conventions of sexuality, aesthetics, technology and the prevailing social system, Leigh has become a pioneer in the development of television as a tool for social activism and social change.

Segments of *The Collected Works of Scarlot Harlot* which you may see this evening include: "Scarlot Harlot's Taking Back the Night," documenting the clashes between pro-porn and anti-porn feminists; "Die Yuppie Scum," a musical documentary of San Francisco's Anarchist Conference, including the Berkeley riots; "Safe Sex Slut;" a selection of internationally screened music videos including "Pope Don't Preach, I'm Terminating My Pregnancy" and "Sunreich, Sunsetup;" and, from her alternative weekly coverage of the Gulf War, "Whore in the Gulf."

Carol Leigh is also slated to perform *Bad Laws*, a musical satire which trashes the California State Legislature for passing mandatory HIV testing laws for prostitutes.

Leigh currently works as operations manager, producer, editor, computer graphics technician and systems manager developing high-resolution computer/video systems. She recently received first prize in the fiction category from the Visions of U.S. video contest for *Yes Means Yes, No Means No*, a date rape drama used as a training tape for service providers by the San Francisco Rape Crisis Center. *The Collected Works of Scarlot Harlot* was a finalist in the Best Innovative Series category of the Hometown U.S.A. 1991 Video Festival.

HANDMADE FILMS BY CARL BROWN
Filmmaker Carl Brown in person

Thursday, June 11, 1992

Film is the intersection of two quite different procedures; one of the chemical order: the action of light on certain substances; the other of physical order: the formation of an image through an optical device. Alchemy begins with base metals that are regarded as imperfect states of the soul. The "prima materia" (prime material) to which they must be reduced is none other than the underlying fundamental substance, that is to say, the soul, in its original state, as yet unconditioned by impressions and passions and not compressed into any form. Only when the soul is freed from all its rigidities and inner contradictions does it become a —a form which does not limit or bind, but on the contrary, delivers, because it comes from the essence.

—Carl Brown

Re:Entry (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 78 minutes

"As I stood at the water's edge, it was night, I was eighteen, I was young. I dove into the pool for a swim, and then it seemed as though I was thirty before I reached the other side. In the water, I was suddenly in a different

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world. The barriers were gone and the darkness was no longer an enclosed, stifling dark, but an enormous night in which darkness was not the absence of light but the presence of things unseen of a whole world of being, not known or realized before. I got out and looked at the ripples in the water extending away from me until they shaded into a horizon like etched glass. I saw it only with my eyes, without recognition. All my senses were turned inwards. I was looking into this time past, with this immensity of vision straining my eyes to distinguish some form, listening for an intelligible sound, but as I stared, all that looked back was a reflection, that made the surrounding darkness transparent like a sky. I reentered to find out why.” (Carl Brown)

The images are flowing and layered: a swimmer in a pool, a rushing stream, tall conifers against a close horizon, a heron stalking in water, cars and a clapboard house, a raging fire...Images often return, re-colored or re-edited, relentless. The sound is also active, layers of voices and machinery whines, a passing helicopter, long drones and hums, a rising aggression. Spoken texts underlie or cover over other noises: a male voice leading relaxation exercises, phone-in radio conversations, an extended conversation (“I killed my mother and father...”). Sound is never synchronous with image, whose brilliant tints are created by Brown himself as he processes and prints the footage. This is an artist who lives his work, his personal history surfacing in both images and textures.

As film, *Re:Entry* could hardly be more pure. A story in light and color and movement, it becomes an extended essay on change wrought through time, through chemistry, through experience. It shows memory tattered but obsessive, a recurring drift of thought and allusion. Though much of the imagery is based in nature, the audio is distinctly urban: nervous, speedy and full of aural debris. *Re:Entry* quantifies and characterizes the materiality and physicality of cinematic experience. Conscious of both its antecedents and its present context, this is a radical work. (Peggy Gale, from *Cetra de Arte Reina Sofia*, Madrid, Spain)

Cloister (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 31 minutes

As the wheel turns, the religion of the body moves to and through the physical into psychological. We see the feared, all is moved. There is a hint of seclusion, an idea from the past re-worked and still dangerous. The participants unsure choose convenience and are still revealed. Through a window there appears a tree, and then a forest. Too many options. The monastic life, safe and sure. We cluster for the cloister.

“*Cloister* comes out of the isolation of my living—I live and work in a small world. It took me a day to cut the loops. I worked with them for two days on the optical printer. Another two days to process. It took six days to make a half hour film. I don’t know why it happened so fast...I wanted this film to show the light and dark of my past. It’s my homage to abstract expressionism which knocked me on my ass the first time I saw it. Klein, Rothko, those guys just blew me away. So this film shows you these small canvasses, 150 small canvasses on film. Michael Snow does the sound using his son’s toy keyboard as well as playing trumpet. As the film rolls you hear him turn the tape machine on, play something, then turn it off. It’s a very disjunctive feeling you get when you watch the film.” (Carl Brown interviewed by Mike Hoolboom)

Filmography:

Mind’s Bedlam (1981); Super-8mm, b&w, sound, 7 minutes

Urban Fire (1983); 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes

Full Moon Darkness (1985); 16mm, b&w, sound, 90 minutes

Condensation of Sensation (1987); 16mm, color, sound, 73 minutes

Drop (1987); 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes

Re:Entry (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 68 minutes

Cloister (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 31 minutes

Carl Brown lives and works in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. He studied sociology, philosophy, and anthropology at the University of Toronto before specializing in film at Sheridan College, graduating in 1982 with honors. He has concurrently pursued an interest in photography, and has had several solo exhibitions of his static work.

Tonight's show was made possible with the generous support of the Government of Canada/avec l'aide du gouvernement du Canada.

TRAVELING PAINS
Curated by Albert Kilchesty

Sunday, June 14, 1992

"...The alternative is inescapable: either I am a traveler in ancient times, and faced with a prodigious spectacle which would be entirely unintelligible to me and might, indeed, provoke me to mockery or disgust; or I am a traveler of our own day, hastening in search of a vanished reality. In either case I am the loser—and more heavily than one might suppose; for today, as I go groaning among the shadows, I miss, inevitably, the spectacle that is now taking shape. My eyes, or perhaps my degree of humanity, do not equip me to witness that spectacle; and in the centuries to come, when another traveler revisits this same place, he too may groan aloud at the disappearance of much that I should have set down, but cannot. I am the victim of a double infirmity: what I see is an affliction to me; and what I do not see I reproach."

—Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*

Program:

Parisian Blinds (1984), by Barbara Hammer; 16mm, color/b&w, silent, 6 minutes

Empire of the Moon (1991), by John Haptas and Kristine Samuelson; 16mm, b&w, sound, 17 minutes

Digital Speech (1984), by Peter Rose; 3/4" video, color, sound, 13 minutes

Below the Fruited Plain (1966), by Lenny Lipton; 16mm, b&w, sound, 9 minutes

Family Outing o Jesusland (1991), by Robert Tullis; 16mm, color, sound, 24 minutes

Unsere Afriareise (Austria, 1961-66), by Peter Kubelka; 16mm, color, sound, 12.5 minutes

CANYON CINMA: A SILVER CELEBRATION

Thursday, June 18, 1992

San Francisco's Canyon Cinema is ne of two cooperatives in the United States that distribute the work of independet filmmakers. This evening, the Cinematheque honors Canyon's 25th anniversary with a screning of

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films recently added to its collection. Another screening, with different films, will be presented by Pacific Film Archive, 2625 Durant Avenue, Berkeley, on Tuesday, June 23rd beginning at 7:30 P.M.

A Brief History of Canyon Cinema

Beginning in the late 1950s, a growing movement brought together independent film artists whose work reflected a remarkable diversity in style and content. Variouslly called avant-garde, underground and experimental, these artists' work shared a vision of filmmaking as a form of personal expression, free from the demands and constraints of commercial filmmaking conventions.

This movement gained momentum on the West Coast with the birth of Canyon Cinema in the Bay Area. Begun as a "floating cinematheque," it has developed into one of the principal distribution sources for independent cinema today. Its collection of films constitutes a history of the movement from the 1950s to the present.

Canyon Cinema first emerged in filmmaker Bruce Ballie's Canyon, California backyard in 1961. The films of local artists were projected from the kitchen window onto an army surplus screen. Free wine and popcorn were given out to the audience. Moving to other basements and backyards, from Canyon to Berkeley to San Francisco, Canyon Cinema gained energy and purpose and attracted larger audiences.

Around the same time, filmmaker Chick Strand established the Canyon Cinema News, a monthly journal through which filmmakers could share opinions, technical tips and discoveries. The journal became a vital organ of the growing movement.

Arising as it did from the underground (literally, from basements, storefronts and backyard sheds), the independent film movement began to require an organizational structure that could accommodate the diverse nature of the films that had then emerged. In 1966, a group of filmmakers, among them Bruce Conner, Larry Jordan, Robert Nelson, Lenny Lipton, and Ben Van Meter, founded Canyon Cinema, Inc. as a distribution company. It was established as a cooperative, owned and operated by its filmmaker members. By depositing a film, anyone could become a member, and all films were to be cared for and distributed on an equal basis. Earl Bodien lent the use of his apartment for this operation, and he, along with Edith Kramer, volunteered to run the business.

The first catalog listed 40 films by 25 filmmakers. Today, over two decades later, the collection contains more than 2,000 film titles representing 300 filmmakers on several continents. More than a distribution list, the Canyon Cinema Catalog has become a virtual textbook: a history of the independent film movement, written in the language of the filmmakers. Canyon Cinema Inc. operates primarily as a film distribution center (in the late 1970s the Cinematheque and *Cinemanews* became part of a completely separate non-profit organization—the Foundation for Art in Cinema).

At a time when most distribution companies are going out of business, Canyon Cinema Inc. is thriving. Canyon Cinema still distributes any film brought in for distribution and publishes catalogs, supplements and updates annually. A yearly membership fee of \$25 is required, a portion of which is used to help in the production of the catalogs and for advertising. Filmmakers still set their own rental fees and are returned 65% of this fee as royalties. In the past five years Canyon Cinema, Inc. has seen business increase more than 80%, and the future looks even brighter.

Canyon remains an important resource for the film community—an alternative distribution outlet for an alternative cinema. Its success directly reflects the vitality of the films it distributes.

Program:

6/64: *Mama und Papa (Materialaktion: Otto Muehl)* (Austria, 1964), by Kurt Kren; 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes

“Kren’s working method would no sooner take the material structure of the film medium for granted than it would the image material. In Kren’s work, the systematic strategies are ways into experience, not away from it. Kren uses the technology of film. . . to break through ‘cosensus reality’ to experience. The counter-pointing of agitational, provocative image material with strict formal structures is a strategy to this end.”

—David Levi Strauss, *Notes on Kren*

The Mechanics of Love, by Willard Maas; 16mm, b&w, sound, 7 minutes

The act of love portrayed through poetic symbols. (W.M.)

“Daring and ingenious. . . daring because of its subject matter; ingenious because commonplace objects are uncommonly related to build an action without actors, the effect of which is vivid, witty, and downright bold.” (Lwis Jacobs)

Home Stories (Germany, 1991), by Matthias Müller; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes

“She screams. She falls silent. The expectation of terror makes her terror. But what she faces is nothing but the observer’s view. She is the observed. Cliches of melodrama unite into a drama of stereotypes.” (German Association of Film Critics)

Moona Luna (1990), b Emily Breer; 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes

Moona Luna is about my first trip to the moon. On the set I allowed for Dr. Goodfriends to become Mr. Bad actors. Virgins always tell all so I always took the first take. The story includes three French boatworkermen, a theoretical physics teacher, no whales, and a host of others.”

Quixote Dreams (1990-91), by Alfonso Alvarez; 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes

The seemingly hopeless landscape of the late 20th century is often symbolized by goals seen at the end of a long and disorienting path, that once achieved are forgotten in the rush to attain the next goal. Miguel de Cervantes’ character Don Quixote de la Mancha is a reli from an era which tried to conquer the known world in much the same way as we do today. *Quixote Dreams* is a surreal exploration of the Quixote myth, a traveling matte fantasy in which an exhausted Don Quixote collapses into a cinematic dream world in which he discovers the futility of blind faith and emerges rehumanized.

Autumnal Diptych, by Rock Ross; 16mm, color, sound, 6.5 minutes

Working towards the beginning.

1969 (1991), by Jerry Tartaglia; 16mm, 13 minutes

A personal recollection of a time past, when gay identity was a source of joy rather than of mourning. The film explores the fiction of personal history, and the unreliability of memory.

Plastic Haircut (1963), by Robert Nelson; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes

“Bill Wiley, Ron Davis, Roert Hudson and myself got excited about the idea of making a film together. . . none of us knew anything about making movies at the time, but we all knew about art (namely, that it had something to do with a good time).” (R.N.)

“I had 2,000 feet of film after we shot it, and it looked very poor—only because it was so repetitious and long; the individual shots looked good. I struggled with the footage for weeks. No matter what I did, it seemed boring. In desperation I started cutting the shots shorter and shorter, and when I saw the energy that put into the film, I had my first real revelation about editing.” (R.N.)

Soft Collisions (Dream of a Good Soldier) (1991), by Yann Beauvais; 16mm, color, sound-on-cassette, 15 minutes.

Co-director: Frederick Rock, presented in a triple-screen format.

A found-footage film about the war. A film which inscribed his refusal of the manipulation of the media coverage of the last holy war of the Americans and their allies. No image of that war which was also a media propagandist war. An evocation against the stupidity of war in seven parts.

—Notes compiled by Chris Bishop from Canyon Cinema catalogue #7 listings.

BLACK FILMMAKERS AT THE CROSSROADS
A Symposium with Film Screenings
Organized by A. Jacquie Taliaferro, Cornelius Moore and the Cinematheque Staff.

Saturday, June 21, 1992

In the last five years, more films have been made by Black filmmakers and about people of African descent than at any other time in history. Although the obvious examples of big-budget Hollywood productions may come immediately to mind (*Boyz 'n the Hood*, *Jungle Fever*, etc.), many of the most notable works have been produced outside of the studio system by independent filmmakers. Although the vigor and inventiveness of these independent works have been directly responsible for Hollywood's sudden, renewed interest in Black Cinema (marking the third time Hollywood has become friendly with Black filmmakers; other peak periods are the 30s and the blaxploitation era of the 60s), many of these independent works have not received the wider visibility they richly deserve.

With the emergence of video as a more spontaneous and less expensive form of production, many Black artists have recently turned to the use of this medium, creating extremely impressive, poetic, and personal works. By concentrating on "real" life, i.e. the daily realities of living, and jettisoning sensationalized and exploitative Hollywood storylines as subject matter, these artists have forged a substantial body of compelling works which have broken formal, gender and racial stereotyping with courage and integrity.

A panel of leading advocates and makers of African-American independent media will address the problems and opportunities faced by today's Black film and video artists. Some of the questions they will consider are: What led to Hollywood's renewed interest in Black Cinema? Why is this trend happening now? What must we do to make certain it isn't just another fad? What role do women artists/advocates play in this renaissance?

Panelists:

Vickie Beck was Director's Assistant on the recently completed features *The Nat Turner Story* and *The Glass Ceiling*, and has worked as Editor, Camera Assistant, and Lighting Director on several independent films.

Akile Buchanan is an associate producer at KQED Channel 9 in San Francisco.

Leslie Farrell is a member of the San Francisco Film Commission and was associate producer on the documentary *Absolutely Positive*. She is currently associate producer on an 8-part documentary on the Great Depression produced by Blackside, Inc.

Cornelius Moore is on staff at local film distributor California Newsreel where he is also the director of its library of African Cinema. He has curated film programs in San Francisco and at the Neighborhood Film Project in Philadelphia. He was invited to take part in a working conference on Black Film Distribution to be held later this year in the Bay Area.

A. Jacquie Taliaferro is an actor/director/producer who recently completed his first feature-length film, *The Glass Ceiling*. He is also the Artistic Director of Western Sunrise Communications in San Francisco.

Films and videos to be screened:

***Horse* (1972)** by Charles Burnett; 16mm, color, sound, 14 minutes

This first film by highly-esteemed director Charles Burnett (*Killer of Sheep, To Sleep With Anger*) is a brilliant, understated and haunting work—a symbolic tone poem and personal (one is strongly tempted to say *allegorical*) interpretation of black-white relations and the quiet bond between a son and his father.

***The Body Beautiful* (GB, 1991)** by Ngozi Onwurah; 16mm (on 3/4" tape), color, sound, 23 minutes.

In a film as cathartic as it is transgressive, English filmmaker Onwurah, the daughter of a mixed marriage, examines her relationship to her white mother who had a double mastectomy shortly after giving birth to her second child. While Onwurah's voiceover text unsparingly acknowledges her conflicted feelings about her mother's sexual identity, the mother's courage is even more extraordinary in that she acts out her fears and fantasies on camera.

***Fade to Black* (1990)** by Tony Cokes and Don Trammel; 3/4" video, color, sound, 33 minutes

Fade to Black is a meditation on contemporary race relations. In voiceover, two black men describe events that are unnoticed or discounted by whites. They examine gestures, hesitations, stares, remarks—the details of an ideology. Visually the videotape juxtaposes fragments from the action and credits of Hollywood films, text commentary, and a selective chronology of films which include representations of blacks. The work underlines the transitions between blackness as seen (or not seen) in the institution of cinema and blackness visible (or invisible) in extracinematic culture. The work charts the strange movements of blacks (not to be confused with progress) both on screen and in the street.

The voiceover is based on a performance monologue by Donald Trammel. The work includes a prologue based on a quotation from Louis Althusser and closes with an epilogue based on a quotation from Malcolm X. The chronology and commentary draw on the book *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks* by Donald Bogle. Text and music from rap and dance music, most prominently the work of Public Enemy and N.W.A., appear to reframe/reposition the other elements.

***Spin Cycle* (1991)** by Aarin Burch; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes

Oakland based filmmaker Aarin Burch's feisty *Spin Cycle* is a highly personal self-portrait which confronts her fears and aspirations as a black lesbian artist, conveying her struggle with self-doubt and internal turmoil.

***Chameleon Street* (1989)** by Wendell B. Harris, Jr.; 35mm (on 1/2" tape), color, sound, 98 minutes

"*Chameleon Street* is a true original, an offbeat and satiric film which makes its points with deadly accuracy. Based on the true exploits of William Douglas Street, a [black] native of Detroit, this film follows his amazing story. Street spent fourteen years impersonating doctors, lawyers, athletes, and other professionals, spending time in and out of jail as a result. [As portrayed by Wendell Harris, also the film's director] he moves in and out of a succession of personalities like a chameleon, shedding his identity whenever it is convenient, literally becoming another person. This bravura lands him in a number of awkward and at times hilarious situations...which the film details with telling insight. Street ultimately remains an enigma, but Harris turns him into a metaphor. Unable to accept who and what he is, Street erases his personality to survive."

—Piers Handling, Toronto Festival '89

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INDEPENDENT LIGHT

*Installations and Environments by Bay Area Artists
Curated by Steve Anker, Stephen Parr and Lynne Sachs
Organized by the San Francisco Cinematheque*

Friday, June 26 - Sunday, June 28, 1992

Gavin Flint: *displace (desire)*
Every artist needs an audience.

Susanne Cockrell: *Still...words yet spoken...a depiction of a search for silence*
Susanne Cockrell is a Bay Area performer and interdisciplinary artist currently working on her MFA at the California College of Arts and Crafts.

Janis Crystal Lipzin & Bill Baldewicz: *All the Women/All the Men (1992)*
Over the last three years an estimated 600 laws limiting a woman's control over her own body have been introduced into male-dominated state legislatures. Our work is a reflection on this perverse reality and on the exhibition's fugitive urban site in a largely Hispanic neighborhood above a street lined with prostitutes. (Not funded by the NEA)

Janis Crystal Lipzin and Bill Baldewicz work with light-sensitive materials in a variety of contexts. Baldewicz uses primarily reclaimed materials in his neo-primitive constructions. Lipzin is a professor at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Betty Jo Costanzo: *My Father Was A Parker Pen Salesman*
This installation is Part I of *My Father Was A Parker Pen Salesman*, a collaborative work in progress with Teresa Costanzo. It started when my sister found a stack of Parker Pen 8 1/2" x 10" glossy promotional literature. She proceeded to cut them up and make post cards to send to me periodically.

This work is attempting to demythologize my father's career as a salesman and the All-American Dream.

Special thanks to Dean Santomieri in the Media Center at CCAC for the "equipment raid"; Lynne Sachs; Minoo Hamzavi; Larry Perkins; Jan Watten; Scott Maxson; Michelle Sabol; and Dore Everett.

Bill Grubaugh: *Cum Tacent, Clamant (Their Very Silence Is A Loud Cry)*

—Cicero

Ruth Gumnit: *A Prayer for Healing (in progress)*
This piece is inspired by the symbolism and spiritual traditions of Mexican Catholicism, Wicca, and my own Jewish culture.

Offered in a spirit of gratitude, it is a request of the powers that be to heal our individual and collective hearts from the pain of living in this time of illness. There are so many ways we can be wounded—physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially and politically.

Like a scar we heal, the symptoms subside, but we are never the same.

Thanks to all who helped.

Su-Chen Hung: *Independent Light*
Less is more.

Caulcen Smith: *Memory Poison Bones*

Memory Poison Bones rummages through borrowed text and imagery to confront the disease of forgetfulness which plagues American culture.

Caulcen Smith is a San Francisco filmmaker and video artist embarking on production for her third 16mm short, *Adventures of a Reconstructed Woman* by Kelly Gabron and a video short entitled *Hands*.

Rick Corrigan: *Semicircular Song No. 5*

My work has been about the lyric possibilities in minutely observed sound processes, the point at which a certain interaction of elements "comes alive" and begins to sing. Resonance, simplicity, limitation of materials and playfulness are my guides in exploring this lyricism.

In addition, the *Semicircular Song* series is conceived in homage to the eternal present, as a form of interpenetration of the stasis of the moment and the continually shifting variety of its expression over time.

Gregory Gavin: *Ship of Fools (interactive work in progress)*

Ship of Fools proposes the act of writing as a quest for clarity amid a cacophonous sea of stories and ways of telling. What does it mean to be REMOTE anymore? Why am I always ready for DEPARTURE? Why do I want to get up from my desk right now and bolt? Where could I go? Where is the culture going? Someone tell me where the frontier is, please.

Gregory Gavin is a multi-disciplinary artist whose projects attempt to investigate the edge between the mediated, filmic world on one hand, and the natural three-dimensional world on the other.

If not for the hard work of several dedicated volunteers, this exhibition would have been unthinkable. Huge thanks to Chris Bishop, Donna Lee, Heather MacDonald, Patty McLucas, Jennifer Reeves, Ken Paul Rosenthal, Elizabeth Rousseau, Karen Schanberg, Julia Shenberger, and Victor Zaballa, for their invaluable and much appreciated assistance.

BAY AREA SPECTRUM:
New Films and Videos

Thursday, September 24, 1992

Tales You Lose (1992), by David Michalak; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes
Tales of good intentions and tails from leftover films make a movie.

Of Significant Importance (1991), by Kurt Easterwood; 16 mm, b & w, silent, 6 minutes

"I shot this film with a finger on the pulse of things that go bump in the night, then roll over and play dead in the morning. The film is an establishing shot, a come on, a pay per view striptease. I'm still looking for my money shot, and wondering whether you will respect me in the morning."

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Sinar Durjana (Wicked Radiance) (1992), by Azian Nurudin; 3/4" video, color, sound, 5 minutes
"A dark abstract personal vision delving into aspects of S/M sexuality tinged by my Muslim background." In Malay with no English subtitles.

Missing Something Somewhere (1992), by Mark Street; 16mm, color, sound, 17 minutes
Missing Something Somewhere is a textured celebration of that which can't be apprehended, or burdened with specific meaning. Three visual chapters appear, each with its own rhythm, each suggesting a different sense of place. Snatches of narrative and fragments of memories brush up against each other, as truncated images burst into being and then disappear again just as quickly.

Affections Wake (1992), by Todd Herman; 16 mm, b & w, sound, 11 minutes
Affections Wake is a poetic and diaristic look at the representations of attachments, dependencies and power relations that have formed within one family."

Mantilla (1992), by Julie Murray; Super-8mm, color, sound, 17 minutes

Picturing Oriental Girls: A (Re) Educational Videotape (1992), by Valerie Soe; 3/4" video, color, sound, 12 minutes

China dolls, geisha girls and dragon ladies populate this visual compendium of portrayals of Asian women in American film and television. Juxtaposed with text from mail-order bride catalogs and men's magazines, these clips from over 25 films and television programs ranging from Von Sternberg's *The Shanghai Gesture*, through *Sayonara* and *Karate Kid II* to David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, explicate the orientalism and exoticism prevalent in mass media images of "oriental girls."

No Justice...No Peace: Black, Male Im media te! (1992), by Portia Cobb; 3/4" video, color, sound, 15 minutes
Experimental documentary of video-verite conversations with young, black men about negative portrayal & racism are juxtaposed with media footage from the March 1992 Los Angeles "Rebellion" over the acquittal of five L.A. cops who were recorded on videotape beating a black motorist, Rodney King, on March 3, 1991.

—Quotations by the filmmakers
Notes compiled by Elizabeth Rousseau.

THE DEATH OF MEMORY: FILMS FROM HOLLIS FRAMPTON'S MAGELLAN CYCLE

Sunday, September 27, 1992

The mind is a labyrinth. Sometimes it's just one of those very dull labyrinths where the rat runs around one way and he gets an electric shock and the other way he gets a grain of corn; and then there are days when it's a labyrinth that consists of a straight line...I have all the time the sense that there are perilous random seas that surround all our discourses. We really are on little rafts, and maybe we make it to the Fiji islands and maybe we don't, but in trying to bring back something of the quality of the journey we have got to talk about more than the raft...If there is not in the tale something of the quality of the random seas as well, then you have essentially falsified it...You have, in the phrase of a friend of mine, snipped off all the necktie ends to make it look as though the suitcase closed

neatly. And...something I'm more interested in now [as I'm perhaps older or more confident or less reticent or something like that], is getting a sense of that into my work.

—Hollis Frampton, interview with Mitch Tuchman

* * *

Straits of Magellan: Drafts & Fragments (1974); 16mm, color, silent, 52 minutes

The Green Gate (Magellan: At the Gates of Death, Part II) (1976); 16mm, color, silent, 52 minutes

In 1971 Hollis Frampton (1936-1984) began filming for a long serial which metamorphosed into the monumental opus (uncompleted), the *Magellan* cycle, an intended total of thirty-six hours of films, organized and meant to be viewed calendrically over the course of 371 days. In a statement used for a grant application, Frampton explained:

The central conceit of the work derives from the voyage of Ferdinand Magellan, first circumnavigator of the world, as detailed in the diary of his 'passenger' Antonio Pigafetta and elsewhere. During his 5-year voyage, Magellan trespasses (alive and dead) upon every psycho-linguistic 'time zone,' circumambulating the whole of human experience as a kind of somnambulist. He returns home, a carcass pickled in cloves, as an exquisite corpse.

Ironically, as David Gerstein points out, Frampton, like Magellan, was also interrupted by death (Frampton died of lung cancer on March 30, 1984) before completing his mad endeavor.

The Magellan cycle purports to be encyclopedic, but it's more like a tour of the possible principles for forming an encyclopedia—all, I hope, dutifully laid out and exemplified, but then to a great extent laid out and exemplified all at the same time. And of course, since not all modes fit very well together, they begin to generate interferences, and, in fact, it's the interferences between ways of classifying things that begin to generate a form that interests me.

—Hollis Frampton, interview by Simon Field and Peter Sainsbury

The film is structured around the calendar with a film for every day of the year and two additional at the beginning and the end. Most days have no more than two minutes of film. It is based loosely on Magellan's voyage. It sets out to effect a circumnavigation of that part of the world which can be represented in film; a series of tours of film styles and specific historic homages to filmmakers.

—interview with Amy Taubin

Straits of Magellan involves what Frampton has called "situations in which nature is very clearly imitating art," these films utilize a scientific technology which allows art to formally imitate nature...just as a lump of coal represents to us nothing of its complex arrangement of carbon chains, these films simply **appear**, while any systematic formulas which may have generated them do not...With *Magellan*, Frampton has at last succeeded in the total merging of the intellectual space with the space of the world.

—Bruce Jenkins, *Wide Angle*, Vol.2 No.3, 1978

What the hell are you going to do about Magellan? [as far as writing something coherent about it] Of course, Magellan points at that problem because I'm making it point at that problem. I myself have the fondness that everybody has for things that are clear, for summary works, but it can't all be like that. Indeed, most of it cannot be like that.

—interview with Scott MacDonald, *Film Culture*, 1979

* * *

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Completed films from the *Magellan Cycle*:

Apparatus Sum (Studies for Magellan: #1) (1972)
Tiger Balm (Memoranda Magelani #1) (1972)
Yellow Springs (Magellan: Vanishing Point: #1) (1972)
Less (1973)
Winter Solstice (Solariumagelani) (1974)
Ingenivm Nobis Ipsa Pvella Fecit (Solariumagelani) (1974)
Summer Solstice (Solariumagelani) (1974)
Autumnal Equinox (Solariumagelani) (1974)
Nocticula (Magellan's Toys: #1) (1974)
Straits of Magellan: Drafts & Fragments (1974)
Pas de Trois (1975)
The Red Gate (Magellan: At the Gates of Death, Part I) (1976)
The Green Gate (Magellan: At the Gates of Death, Part II) (1976)
For Georgia O'Keefe (1977)
Quaternion (1977)
Procession (1977)
Not the First Time (1977)
Otherwise Unexplained Fires (1977)
Gloria! (1979)
More Than Meets the Eye (1979)
The Birth of Magellan: Fourteen Cadenzas (only *Cadenzas I & IV* were finished) (1977-80)
Birth of Magellan: Mindfall (only parts I & VII were finished) (1977-80)

—Notes compiled by Lana Bernberg.

RECENT FILMS BY RICHARD KERR

Filmmaker Richard Kerr in person

Thursday, October 1, 1992

Richard Kerr has been producing self-styled documentary films since 1975. His films have been screened regularly at festivals, museums and cinematheques around the world. Richard currently works out of Saskatchewan, Canada where he is a member of the Saskatchewan Film Pool Co-operative and an Associate Professor of Cinema at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan.

Cruel Rhythm (1991); 16mm, color/b&w, sound, 45 minutes

Sound design by Patrick Butler.

Cruel Rhythm picks up from the ashes of *The Last Days of Contrition* (1988). The film is a visual study of the rhythms of the American war culture as we enter President Bush's "New World Order." It documents a nation of followers detached from the American dream and *just* hanging on to their souls. *Cruel Rhythm* is about personal fear through the manipulation of media newspeak and public imagery. Like *The Last Days of Contrition*, *Cruel Rhythm* is shot amongst the landscapes of Death Valley, Las Vegas and California. (R.K.)

"The problem is America as subject matter.

"...In *Cruel Rhythm*, the catastrophe is specific, a war, as war always is from a human point of view. What is peculiar about America at war is that, since the later 1800s, perhaps since the 1860s, war has never been domestic. The homefront is far from the fighting and life goes on as before, though under the terrible dread learning of the death of a child or grandchild, the neighbor's kid or the grocer's son's death. But the experience of war is bound to the American unconscious, to the faces and voices of its public. It is here that Kerr sites his film."

—from an unpublished paper by Bart Testa, May 1992

The Last Days of Contrition (1988); 16mm, b&w, sound 35 minutes

The Last Days of Contrition's great success lies in the coherence that is achieved between the film's structural concerns and its strict basis in realistically derived footage. Kerr has taken particularly revealing moments from a trip that he shot while down in the States and crafted a work that deals with the awe and terror that he felt during that sojourn.

The sights and signs that one sees and hears in this film have been distilled by Kerr to represent those exact elements that form a portrait of the contemporary U.S.A. The film is bi-sected and book-ended by a brilliant 360-degree pan shot of the Badlands of the Dakotas. One sees the bleak vistas, the black hills and its cacti, while on the sound track a repetitive voice speaks through a megaphone about the burying of the dead after the "Next War." This fear of War, of the Bomb, permeates the film, giving it urgency and drama.

As a title, *Last Days of Contrition*, refers both to the final Passion of Christ and to the specific meaning of the word "contrition," which is to be "completely penitent; crushed in spirit by a sense of sin." Here the sin can be read to be the militarization that has supplanted the democratic spirit in much of the United States.

....So what do we get to see on our sad trip through the vistas of Reagan-dominated America? A touring bus with its insides eaten out by rust, resembling an Apocalyptic vehicle; a sign on a farm which reads: The Land of Opportunity? STARVED. ON MY OWN LAND BY MY OWN GOVERNMENT; the Santa Fe Train with hobos riding on top of a car; an exposed grotto with the Virgin Mary holding the Infant Jesus beneath a Cross; an abandoned drive-in movie...

This visual design of America is also contrasted by a series of voices that express great concern for the state of America in the 1980s. One voice argues that the U.S. is in trouble if "We'd rather wave the Flag than the Constitution." Another (Lenny Bruce?) compare the military to sociopaths. Another voice warns, "If the dream of democracy cannot survive in America, it cannot survive the 20th century." Still another states that we do not need troops to say that we have lost our vision.'

...*Last Days of Contrition* is a cry from the heart from a Canadian who loves what American democracy and popular culture have stood for in the past. Richard Kerr has made a film that poses the question: can the U.S.A. abandon its principles and renounce democracy? If so, can the world survive?

—Marc Glassman, *Cinema Canada*, October 1988

The Machine in the Garden (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 20 minutes

By employing a spinning turret device and a hyper-camera shutter *The Machine in the Garden* attempts to defy Renaissance perspective. Using the lush California urbanscapes, the work becomes a rhythmic collage of light and color with a violent edge. *The Machine in the Garden* is inspired by, and an homage to, apparatus oriented work such as Dziga Vertov's *A Man with a Movie Camera* and Michael Snow's *La Region Centrale*. (R.K.)

Richard Kerr Filmography:

Hawkesville to Wallenstein (1975)

Vesta Lunch (1977)

San Francisco Cinematheque

Luck is the Residue of Desire (1978)
Dogs Have Tales (1979)
Canal (1981)
On Land Over Water (Six Stories) (1984)
The Last Days of Contrition (1988)
Cruel Rhythm (1991)
Plein Air (1991)
Plein Air Etude (1991)
The Machine in the Garden (1991)

Video Installations:

Still Life (3 Monitors) (1990)
Untitled Landscape (video projection and sculpture) (1992)
McLuhan (video projection) (1992)

Tonight's show was made possible with the generous support of the Government of Canada/avec l'aide du gouvernement du Canada.

UNEARTHING OLD BRAIN: THE LURE OF THE CAMERALESS FILM
curated and presented by E.S. Theise

Sunday, October 4, 1992

Instead of memory banks I'm loaded with memory blanks, and the load increases ... Man and boy, it's the 'old' or primitive brain ...

—Len Lye, "Gene-Deep Myth"

ADCAP (1991) by Phil Denslow; 16mm, color, sound, 2 minutes

Colour Flight (1938) by Len Lye; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes, Music: 'Honolulu Blues' (Red Nichols and his Five Pennies)

Cycle (1986) by Robert Ascher; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes

The Garden of Earthly Delights (1981) by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 2.25 minutes

Free Radicals (originally 1958, revised 1979) by Len Lye; 16mm, b&w, sound, 4 minutes, Music: The Bagirmi Tribe of Africa.

The Sound of His Face (1988) by Scott Stark; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes

Color Cry (1953) by Len Lye; 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes, Music: 'Fox Chase' (Sonny Terry).

Blue: A Tlingit Odyssey (1991) by Robert Ascher; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes

Kaleidoscope (1935) by Len Lye; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes, Music: 'Biguine d'Amour' (Don Baretto and his Cuban Orchestra).

Six Loop Paintings (1970) by Barry Spinello; 16mm, b&w and color, sound, 11 minutes

Early Abstractions (1939-46) by Harry Smith; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 23 minutes

No. 1: Hand drawn animation of dirty shapes — the history of the geologic period reduced to orgasm length.

No. 2: Batiked animation, etc., etc. The action takes place either inside the sun or in Zurich, Switzerland.

No. 3: Batiked animation made of dead squares, the most complex hand-drawn film imaginable.

No. 4: Black and white abstractions of dots and grillworks made in a single night.

No. 5: Color abstraction. Homage to Oskar Fischinger — a sequel to No. 4.

No. 7: Optically printed Pythagoreanism in four movements supported on squares, circles, grillwork and triangles with an interlude concerning an experiment.

No. 10: An exposition of Buddhism and the Kaballa in the form of a collage. The final scene shows Aquaric mushrooms (not in No. 11) growing on the moon while the Hero and Heroine row by on a cerebrum ...

For those who are interested in such things: No. 1 to 5 were made under pot; No. 6 with schmeck (—it made the sun shine) and ups; No. 7 with cocaine and ups; No. 8 to 12 with almost anything, but mainly deprivation, and 13 with green pills from Max Jacobson, pink pills from Tim Leary, and vodka; No. 14 with vodka and Italian Swiss white port.

—Harry Smith

EMOTIVE MIRROR:

An Anxious Theater Video Performance by Marek Pacholec

Saturday, October 10, 1992

Struggling against the conventions of late 1970s Polish theater, Marek Pacholec and his cohort, Anna Kaminska, discarded the prevailing mode of psychological realism in favor of poetic incantation. This brand of theater relied in poetic text in verse, histrionic—almost grotesque—acting, and hyperinflated symbolism. Anxious Theater, as they called it, established a theater of grand scenic images impregnated with a form of rich allegorical meaning.

After being imprisoned for dissident theater activities in the early 80s, Pacholec left Poland, coming to America and eventually to the San Francisco Art Institute. There he studied video art, combining his understanding of theatrical setting [with] temporal signifiers and electronic image-making. Anxious Theater had evolved into Video Theater.

For tonight's special performance, Pacholec will construct an intimate extravaganza, using an array of visual and textual sources. A poetic text, video [and film] projection, monitors, audiotape, and several video works congregate in an electronic theater piece about shifting scale, factors of immediacy, and the alchemy of the image. (Steve Seid, Pacific Film Archive)

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*I would like to know you better.
I'm listening to your will, but whatever knocks desire. Cannot
happen.
Unless we agree.
But desire which fulfills grows desire of its own and it takes
us upper higher above knowing where we go. Across science behind
matter.
Above longer within short.
There are many shapeless egos.
Out of many they are ceased.
As the every neither is.
One strength thorn.
I would like to know you better.
I'm listening to your will, but whatever knocks desire. Cannot happen.
Unless we agree.
Then it shall.*

—excerpt from "A Play" by Marek Pacholec

1492-1992: 500 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

Sunday, October 11, Sunday, November 29, Thursday, December 17

Since 1960, Latin America has produced one of the most daring and profound cinemas in the world. With a commitment to formal and aesthetic innovation, political engagement, and the integration of theory and practice, this body of work literally redefined the notion of "Revolutionary Cinema." To celebrate this rich history in the ongoing cultural resistance to colonial and imperialist domination, the Cinematheque will present three screenings of seminal yet rarely seen works of Latin American Cinema. Program II in this series will be presented on November 29th and will feature *The Last Supper (La Ultima Cena)* (Cuba), a 1977 film by Tomas Gutierrez Alea. The films in this series were selected by Jeffrey Skoller.

**Program I:
The Hour of the Furnaces
(La Hora de los Hornos)**

Sunday, October 11, 1992

La Hora de los Hornos (Argentina, 1968), directed by Fernando Solanas & Octavio Getino; 16mm, b&w, sound, 240 minutes, in Spanish with English subtitles.

Part I: Neo-Colonialism and Violence, 95 minutes
Part II: An Act for Liberation, 120 minutes
Part III: Violence and Liberation, 45 minutes

Perhaps the most influential “Documentary” to come out of Latin America, *La Hora...* is a model for what filmmakers term “Third Cinema: independent in production, militant in politics and experimental in language.” This influential film provides an in-depth analysis of neocolonialism using the complex case of Argentina. Part I explores this history through a series of “notes” i.e.: The Daily Violence, The Oligarchy, Dependency etc.; Part II is a history of Peronism. Part III: Violence and Liberation is a series of interviews, documents and testimonials concerning the future of a liberated Latin America. (J.S.)

La Hora de los Hornos was produced clandestinely over a two year period from 1966 to 1968 during which its makers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, travelled throughout the country, filming scenes in many different locales, as well as over 180 interviews with workers, labor leaders, students and many others. Over 80 hours of newsreel footage documenting Juan Peron’s rise to power, his years as the country’s leader, and his eventual military overthrow, were also gathered. This material was then assembled in a format making imaginative use of the entire arsenal of modern cinematic techniques.

“If there are two avant-gardes—the formal and the theoretico-political—then *La Hora de los Hornos* surely marks one of the high points of their convergence. Fusing third-world radicalism with artistic innovation, the Solanas-Getino film revives the historical sense of avant-garde as connoting political and well as cultural militancy. It teases to the surface the military metaphor submerged in the very expression ‘avant-garde’—the image of an advanced contingent reconnoitering unexplored and dangerous territory. It resuscitates the venerable analogy...of camera and gun, charging it with a precise revolutionary signification. Art becomes, as Walter Benjamin said of the Dadaists, ‘an instrument of ballistics.’ At the same time, *La Hora*’s experimental language is indissolubly wedded to its political project; the articulation of one with the other generates the film’s meaning and secures its relevance.

“It is in this exemplary two-fronted struggle, rather than in the historical specificity of its politics, that *La Hora* retains vitality as a model for cinematic practice. Events subsequent to 1968 have, if not wholly discredited, at least relativized the film’s analysis. Unmoored and set adrift on the currents of history, *La Hora* has been severed from its original context, as its authors have been exiled from their country. The late sixties were, virtually everywhere, the hour of the furnaces, and *La Hora*, quintessential product of the period, forged the incandescent expression of their glow. Tricontinental revolution, under the symbolic aegis of Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, and Ho Chi Minh, was deemed imminent, waiting to surprise us around the next bend of the dialectic. But despite salient victories (Viet Nam, Mozambique, Nicaragua), many flames have dwindled into embers, as some of the Third World has settled into the era of diminished expectations. In most of South America, the CIA, multinational corporations, and native ruling elites conspired to install what Noam Chomsky calls ‘sub-fascist’ regimes, i.e., regimes whose politics and practices are fascist but who lack any popular base. In Argentina, class struggle in a relatively liberal context gave way to virtual civil war. Peron—the last hope of the revolutionaries and the bourgeoisie—returned, but only to die. His political heirs veered rightward, defying the hopes of those who returned him to power, until a putsch installed a quasi-fascist regime. Rather than being surprised by revolution, Argentina, and *La Hora* with it, was ambushed by historical equivocation.

“...While reawakening the military metaphor dormant in ‘avant-garde,’ *La Hora* also literalizes the notion of the ‘underground.’ Filmed clandestinely in conjunction with militant cadres, it was made in the interstices of the system and against the system. It situates itself on the periphery of the periphery—a kind of off-off-Hollywood—and brashly disputes the hegemony of both the dominant model (‘First Cinema’) and of Auteurism (‘Second Cinema’), proposing instead a ‘Third Cinema,’ independent in production, militant in politics, and experimental in language. As a poetic celebration of the Argentine nation, it is ‘epic’ in the classical as well as the Brechtian sense, weaving disparate materials—newsreels, eyewitness reports, TV commercials, photographs—into a splendid historical tapestry. A cinematic summa, with strategies ranging from straightforward didacticism to operatic stylization, borrowing from avant-garde and mainstream, fiction and documentary, cinéma vérité and advertising, it inherits and prolongs the work of Eisenstein, Vertov, Joris Ivens, Glauber Rocha, Fernando Birri, Resnais, Buñuel and Godard.

"...Despite its occasional ambiguities, *La Hora de los Hornos* remains a seminal contribution to revolutionary cinema. Transcending the narcissistic self-expressionism of Auteurism, it voices the concerns of a mass movement. By allying itself with a concrete movement, which however 'impure' has at least the virtue of being real, it practices a cinematic politics of 'dirty hands.' If its politics are at times populist, its filmic strategies are not. It assumes that the mass of people are quite capable of grasping the exact meaning of an association of images or of a sound montage; that it is ready, in short, for linguistic experimentation. It respects the people by offering quality, proposing a cinema which is simultaneously a tool for consciousness-raising, an instrument for analysis, and a catalyst for action. *La Hora* provides a model for avant-garde political filmmaking and a treasury of formalist strategies. It is an advanced seminar in the politics of art and the art of politics, a four-hour launching pad for experimentation, an underground guide to revolutionary cinematic praxis.

"*La Hora* is also a key piece in the ongoing debate concerning the two avant-gardes. It would be naive and sentimental to see the two avant-gardes as 'naturally' allied...The alliance of the two avant-gardes is not natural, it must be forged. The two avant-gardes, yoked by a common impulse of rebellion, concretely need each other. While revolutionary esthetics without revolutionary politics is often futile ('They did away with grammar,' said Père Brecht, 'but they forgot to do away with capitalism. '), revolutionary politics without revolutionary esthetics is equally retrograde, pouring the new wine of revolution into the old bottles of conventional forms, reducing art to a crude instrumentality in the service of a preformed message. *La Hora*, by avoiding the twin traps of an empty iconoclasm on the one hand, and a 'correct' but formally nostalgic militancy on the other, constitutes a major step toward the realization of that scandalously utopian and only apparently paradoxical idea—that of a majoritarian avant-garde."

-selections from "Hour of the Furnaces and the Two Avant-Gardes," Robert Stam, *Millennium Film Journal*, Nos. 7/8/9, 1980-81

—Program note research assistance by Lana Bernberg.

DON'T EVEN THINK:
New Films by Scott Stark

Thursday, October 15, 1992

San Francisco filmmaker Scott Stark grew up in Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison where he studied film and television production. After several discouraging years attempting to find "film industry" work in Los Angeles, he moved to San Francisco and received a Master of Fine Arts degree in film from the San Francisco Art Institute. His Super-8mm and 16mm films often make playful use of the physical properties of film photography and projection, frequently using deliberate "mistakes" to produce stunning visual and sonic effects. Scott's films have been presented throughout the United States and Europe. In addition to filmmaking, Scott has been active as an installation artist and occasional film/video curator. His two new works, *Don't Even Think* and *Tender Duplicity*, explore the dark side of the communicative urge.

Don't Even Think (1992), by Scott Stark; Super-8mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

Tongues flapping, lips smacking, teeth clacking, vocal chords squawking; it sounds like speech, but it's in a language where intellect and vocabulary impede comprehension. To really hear what's being said, don't talk; don't even think.

The Inner World of Aphasia (1968), directed by Ed Feil; 16mm, color, sound, 24 minutes
Starring Naomi Feil. A very human study of the nightmarish world of *aphasia*, the loss of the ability to articulate ideas in any form, usually resulting from brain damage.

Wake of the Red Witch (1948), directed by Edward Ludwig; Super-8mm, silent, 3 minutes
Starring John Wayne, Gail Russell, Luther Adler, Gig Young. Photographed by Reggie Lanning.

Tender Duplicity (1992), by Scott Stark; 16mm, color, sound, 40 minutes
Objects of aggression are suggestively fashioned from sensuous playthings, inviting the viewer to playfully indulge in the prurient pleasures of patriotism and self-righteous hostility. The objects combine and juxtapose to form a seductive visual catalogue of the vocabulary of war, garlic-pressed through a lattice-work of light and sound on the film's emulsion. As the tension builds between the objects in front of the camera and the activity on the surface of the film, a complex musical architecture is triggered between constantly shifting foregrounds and backgrounds, activating incongruous polarities between figure and ground, sound and image, pleasure and aggression, clarity and purposeful obfuscation.

The film was shot with an antique camera that records an optical soundtrack directly on the film while shooting. The footage was then systematically fogged and flashed with segments of white light, which caused both the image and sound to be erased; thus the flashes of light that appear in the film are followed one second later by a dropout of equal duration in the sound. The points between flashes (gaps), as well as the gaps themselves, become syllables of a language that is all but oblivious to the relentless posturing of the photographed image.

—Film descriptions provided by the artist.

Media Deployment and ManuFracturing in Buffalo
Videotapes and Public Access Cable Productions
presented by Barbara Lattanzi

Saturday, October 17, 1992

Soma (1988), produced by Barbara Lattanzi; 1/2" video, 6 minutes
Soma presents, as one of its scripts, the use of metaphor in medical symptomatology. The source is a homeopathic text published in 1859. Metaphorical language used to index medical symptoms can be said to intentionally induce a 'sympathetic' understanding between doctor and patient—a language 'treatment' that corresponds a doctor's impressions with a patient's (embodied) expressions. Other sources include texts from material by Henny Youngman, Gerald Lieberman, anonymous jokes, and the orchestral soundtrack from the Blackhawk Films version of F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*.

News Diaries (1990), a collaborative production of the 8mm News Collective; 3/4" video, color, sound. Part One: *News in the Raw*, 15 minutes, and Part Two: *Burned by the News*, excerpt.

News Diaries is a three-part experimental documentary series produced for public-access TV examining the ways in which television news is manufactured in Buffalo, New York. The *News Diaries* utilize an eclectic, confrontational style in order to challenge the assumptions of the television news enterprise: objectivity; truthfulness; professionalism and adherence to production values which are equated not simply with credibility, but also coded as congruent with "familiarity" and "family values," compelling the uncritical trust and loyalty of an homogeneous viewing audience.

San Francisco Cinematheque

News in the Raw. In this episode, *News Diaries* protagonist Jody is lured out of her sleep by the spirits of the 8mm News Collective and taken on a strange journey.

Burned by the News, excerpt. In this episode our protagonist, Jody, experiences a rude awakening when she learns about the manufacturing of news in Buffalo “the hard way.” This episode documents two confrontations between the 8mm News Collective and WGRZ-Channel 2 news crews and executives: one a surreal camera face-off, and the other a blow to freedom of the press where WGRZ-TV management resort to police enforcement to protect its proprietary “rights” to public information.

News Diaries was conceived, produced, and edited by members of the 8mm News Collective: Heather Connor, Tony Conrad, Cyndi Cox, Garland Godinho, Jim Hartel, Armin Heurich, Serena Howeth, Wago Kreider, Jody Lafond, Lisa Laske, Barbara Lattanzi, Brian Springer, Cathy Steffan, Richard Wicka, Julie Zando

A Bed-Time Story (1990), produced by Barbara Lattanzi in collaboration with the Media Coalition for Reproductive Rights for the public access cable TV series, *The Choice is Ours*, Program #7; 3/4" video, color, sound, 25 minutes

This program is a political satire of the 1990 offensive by the Catholic Church against women’s reproductive rights. The story of *A Bed-Time Story* burlesques—by means of puppets enacting roles of advertising executives and the Bishop of the Western New York Diocese (Bishop Head)—the corporatizing of religion and the Church’s efforts to exploit the manipulative power of advertising images in order to extend its own investment in the dominant social order.

A Bed-Time Story was conceived by Barbara Lattanzi and Brian Springer. Voices and performers for puppets: Chris Hill, Jody Lafond, B. Lattanzi, Brian Springer. Voiceover narration scripted and read by B. Lattanzi. Camera, lights and sound: B. Lattanzi, Richard Wicka. Editing: B. Lattanzi.

Koffee Klutch (1991), Brian Springer with *Milwaukee Newsreel*; 3/4" video, 5 minute excerpt.

Milwaukee Newsreel was a public-access TV series produced by students of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Dept. of Film, and comprised the course “Media Activism” taught by Barbara Lattanzi during the spring semester of 1991.

Milwaukee Newsreel, Program #5, cablecast March 28, 1991. Buffalo media artist Brian Springer uses magazine photo cut-outs of faces with mechanically activated mouths, electronically connected to studio phone-lines. Mouths of the famous and of the unknown mechanically move in sync with the voices of the viewers who phone in to this live “party-line” conversation. Background audio mix by Paul Dickinson.

Unbalancing the News (1991), produced for Deep Dish TV by Barbara Lattanzi and edited by James Hartel; 3/4" video, color, sound, 28 minutes.

Unbalancing the News is a compilation of segments from public access television programs. Part One, *Cops and Camcorders* illustrates situations where law-enforcement officials challenge the use of consumer video cameras in the documentation of public events. It features excerpts from the following public-access productions:

—*Clyde Dow: Chameleon* by James Hartel (Tonawanda, New York)

—*Save the G.A.* by Suzanne M. Patzer (Columbus, Ohio)

—*World Wide Magazine*, #88 by Peter E. Parisi/World Wide Broadcasting (St. Louis, MO)

—*'C' is for Civil Liberties* by Flying Focus Video Collective (Portland, Oregon)

—*The Ground War at Home* by Ganymedean Slime Mold/Proposition One Vidcos (taped in Washington, D.C., produced in New Haven, Indiana)

Barbara Lattanzi is a media artist who works in film, video, and photography, and who has produced multi-media installations. She served as a video curator from 1987 to 1991 at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, a multi-

arts space in Buffalo. While at Hallwalls she initiated the first Video Witness Festival in 1990-91. Now an annual event, this festival examines social activist videomaking and strategies for social change using low-cost consumer-grade video technology.

—All descriptions provided by the artist.
Notes compiled by Elizabeth Rousseau.

VISIONS OF MURDEROUS DESIRE
Birgit & Wilhelm Hein's Kali-Filme
Michael Powell's Peeping Tom
Film selections by Steve Anker and Cathy Greenblatt.

Sunday, October 18, 1992

Kali-Filme (W-Germany, 1988), by Birgit and Wilhelm Hein; 16mm, color, sound, 75 minutes

Peeping Tom (GB, 1960), directed by Michael Powell; 16mm, color, sound, 103 minutes

Very great differences seem to divide this evening's double feature precisely in half. On the one hand, Birgit and Wilhelm Hein's *Kali-Filme* (1987) emerges from an anti-narrative tradition of filmmaking, from a history of cinema well known for its hostility to the style of classical Hollywood film drama; and on the other, Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) seizes the familiar tropes of the psychological murder drama and recasts them excessively at the limits of the conventional narrative cinema. *Kali-Filme* is an experimental film composed of found footage, re-edited and re-scored, and *Peeping Tom* is a British film in the perverse narrative tradition of Hitchcock. In these respects, the two films apparently represent the extremes of two very different styles and strategies of representation.

Yet, they also interrogate a common ground: the consistent fascination with violence in cinema across genres and even across cultures, the link between sexuality and the engendering of violence and vision. The self-reflexivity of each film (the contradiction of high and mass culture in the ironic classical scoring of the vulgar image in *Kali-Filme* and the complex of reference to the filmic structure of murderous desire in *Peeping Tom*) explores precisely the tenacious grip that links desire, representation, violence, and sexual difference. In cinema, these drive the narrative and mise-en-scene of many more genres than the murder mystery, and in cultural production beyond cinema, these mark and scar the social body in insidious and often invisible ways. Yet again, each film also suggests a vision beyond the perverse linkage that engenders vision with violence. *Kali-Filme* represents feminist moments of disruption and critique. *Peeping Tom* depicts the possible death of narrative cinema's voyeuristic drive. Hardly utopian visions, the program nevertheless envisions traces of other configurations of image and desire.

This evening's program has been curated in conjunction with SF Camerawork's exhibition MURDER AS PHENOMENA, which is an interrogation of the image of violence embodied by our cultural fascination with murder. The show features work at the intersection of photography and other media and will be open through November 21.

—Notes by Cathy Greenblatt.

BILL STAMETS:
Political Theater as News Art

Saturday, October 24, 1992

Since 1975 I have been documenting a miscellany of civic occasions where Americans make sense of power. Events range from The American Nazi Party's "anti-queer" rally, to the erection and dedication of Claes Oldenburg's 20-ton steel sculpture of a baseball bat [in downtown Chicago].

Candidates and campaigns furnish an especially rich arena for observing the machinery of imagery, since the news industry invests so much effort in covering occasions created exclusively for its cameras. Coverage by commercial networks is homogeneous and unchallenged, although C-SPAN's video vérité surveillance and gonzo guerilla bits on *The 90s* offer alternative takes.

It's more fun to frame others than to name your own act, but when asked to explain what I'm doing I sometimes say I'm a news artist. As a freelance photojournalist I participate in the everyday rite of newsmaking. En route, though, I commit little acts of documentary on the campaign trail. My take is an ironic ethnography of politics and the press. My inspiration comes from both Ricky Leacock's *Primary* and Stan Brakhage's *Governor*.

Away from the rest of the press, I sometimes make more "personal" films. The styles overlap in my newsreel/travelogue/diary/home movie efforts, so mayors are depicted as kin and weddings look like demonstrations.

—Bill Stamets

"Although sync sound Super-8mm technically fulfilled the hopes of early cinema vérité filmmaking in the U.S., particularly allowing for one-person portable filmmaking, surprisingly few memorable works used the format...

"Given the neglect of Super-8mm sound possibilities, Chicago-based documentary filmmaker and photographer Bill Stamets is one of the few using the technology to produce what I call 'personal vérité' work—a technology, a style, an aesthetic, and a politics of film/video making that uses single camera sync sound to make documentaries marked by the director's distinct personal vision and interpretation. In watching personal vérité, the spectator frequently experiences the objective recording of the camera lens/microphone and the subjective sense of the maker's presence at the same time.

"Stamets' work draws on three different styles of filmmaking. Like the broadcast T.V. journalist, he typically concentrates on newsworthy public events featuring politicians and members of the public who are joining in an open spectacle, often staged for the media. Like the feature reporter, he uses the camera and editing as tools to examine the immediate incidents in a more thorough way, getting beyond the accent on news value. Joining his journalistic concern, we find an ethnographer's interest in public ceremonies as culturally revealing events. Beyond the simple recording function typical of traditional ethnographic filmmaking, Stamets investigates and interprets with the camera, and through editing he shapes our understanding of contemporary urban rituals. The roles of journalist and ethnographer combine with the experimental filmmaker who uses film as a medium for personal expression. Stamets makes film essays which use unorthodox techniques to further the filmmaker's statement. While not eschewing the communicative function and responsibility of film, Stamets clearly is not bound by the conventional 'objective' norms of most journalism and anthropology."

—Chuck Kleinhans, "Documentary on the Margins: Bill Stamets' Super-8mm Ethnography"
Cinematograph, Vol. 4

Program:

Novo Dextro: Purity and Danger (1982); Super-8mm, color, sound, 33 minutes

Harold is Gone (1987); Super-8mm, color & b/w, silent & sound, 12 minutes

excerpts from *Presidential Appearances* (1988); Super-8mm, color & b/w, silent and sound

Primary Visibility (1992, World Premiere); 3/4" video (from Hi-8), color, sound, 20 minutes

Novo Dextro: Purity and Danger "principally depicts a clash between a small group of far right believers (American Nazi Party, Ku Klux Klan, and America First) and people from Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Pride parade. Stamets follows some of the unfolding story: most notably he tracks the Nazi contingent of about 25 assembling and traveling to the park site where they intend to rally against homosexuals. We see their confrontation (separated by police) with about 2000 gay/lesbian supporters and the aftermath of people in the park discussing the event.

...While *Novo Dextro* is interesting for its immediate reportage of the Nazi-gay clash, the film attains compelling status from its analytic framework. The title, *Purity and Danger*, makes direct reference to Mary Douglas' classic anthropological analysis of pollution and taboo in different cultures. *Novo Dextro* (from the incorrect Latin, 'New Right') can be considered a similar reflection on pollution and taboo in the U.S. at the start of the Reagan era. It draws connections between diverse events and public behaviors. Because it covers events that took place before AIDS become a well-known matter, today the film refers to a different epoch than the one we live in now. However, the kinds of juxtapositions Stamets creates in the film establish an analytic structure to consider attitudes toward social 'pollution' even now." (Chuck Kleinhans)

Harold is Gone records the funeral of the late mayor of Chicago, Harold Washington.

Bill Stamets tracked the 1988 presidential campaign from Iowa to Inauguration, creating twin travelogues, collectively referred to as *Presidential Appearances*; one is color/sound, the other is silent/b&w. Tonight, Stamets is showing excerpts from both.

Primary Visibility is a Hi-8 video document of the 1992 New Hampshire primary. Recently completed, it is presented here this evening as a world premiere.

Bill Stamets has taught documentary at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He won a Chicago Emmy for his portrait of Mayor Harold Washington, broadcast on WTTW's *Image Union*. He writes freelance articles on film for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Chicago Reader*, and other papers. Bill is currently covering the 1992 presidential campaign for the PBS series *The 90s*.

D'GHETTO EYES:
Emerging Media Artists of Color
presented by Third World Newsreel

Sunday, October 25 and Saturday, November 14, 1992

D'Ghetto Eyes is an example of programming which says, if the product we want to promote and screen (and which we want others to exhibit and see) isn't out there, we'll make it ourselves. Many of the works in this program would not exist were the program's distributor, Third World Newsreel, not also a producer. Third World Newsreel offers a production workshop for film and video makers of color, in which approximately half the works in these two programs were created (Program 2 will be presented on Saturday, November 14 at the Eye Gallery, 1151 Mission St. at 8:00 P.M.).

D'Ghetto Eyes was first presented March 5-7th, 1992 at the Kitchen in New York City. The majority of films and tapes presented in *D'Ghetto Eyes* are first or second works and provide evidence of the diversity and talent of untapped voices on the horizon of the media arts field.

Third World Newsreel is the oldest Third World media center in the United States. Founded in 1967—and currently celebrating its 25th anniversary—Third World Newsreel distributes, curates, produces and provides information and services about independent film and video made by Native, African, Asian, and Latina/o directors.

Program I

Sunday, October 25, 1992

Homecoming (1991), by Jamal Joseph; 3/4" video (from film), sound, 17 minutes

A young Jamaican-American woman returns home to her working-class neighborhood from an affluent New England university. She quickly learns that she must find a balance between her roots and new influences.

Jamal Joseph is a writer, director, and performer who credits his time spent in the Black Panther Party and Leavenworth Prison as providing inspirational fire. His writing credits include the AIDS film, *Seriously Fresh*, directed by Regge Life. Joseph is a 1992 scriptwriting fellow at the Sundance Institute.

Mother's Hands (1992), by Vejan Smith; 3/4" video, sound, 10 minutes

This evocative experimental video appropriates the trauma of child abuse from the memories of a black woman haunted by emotional, physical and sexual abuse. The video uses music, image manipulation and minimal dialogue in a powerful and memorable treatment of these issues.

Vejan Smith is a graduate of Antioch College and has lived in New York City for the past eleven years. *Mother's Hands* is her first piece.

38th Parallel (1992), by Reginald Woolery; 3/4" video, stereo sound, 15 minutes

38th Parallel explores the confusion and complexities of contemporary family roles, particularly the barriers to strong father/son relationships.

Reginald Woolery is a painter and collage artist living and working in Brooklyn. He is currently chair of the Media Network board of directors and Marketing Director at Third World Newsreel.

Chasing the Moon (1990), by Dawn Suggs; 16mm film, sound, 4 minutes

A stylized depiction of a young woman who takes to the streets of New York City to heal her pain.

Dawn Suggs is a video artist and filmmaker from St. Louis currently living in Brooklyn. She is in post-production of a short video entitled *I Never Danced the Way Girls are Supposed To* which takes a satirical look at perceptions of lesbian lifestyles.

Railroad Reflecting (1991), by John Bentham; 3/4" video, sound, 9 minutes

Two African men reflect on freedom, slavery and colonization. Using experimental techniques, this piece juxtaposes the stories of these two men to illustrate the African oral history tradition.

Railroad Reflecting is John Bentham's first piece. He has been an apprentice editor for recent documentary productions by Kathe Sandler and Stanley Nelson. He is currently editing a film by Randy Redroad called *Haircuts Hurt*.

Work-In-Progress (1990), by Luis Valdovino; 3/4" video, sound, 17 minutes

This experimental documentary explores the effects of the 1986 Immigration Reform Act upon illegal immigrants. The measure promised legal resident status to illegal aliens who could prove they had arrived in the U.S. before January 1982. By interweaving media coverage, Latino folklore, interviews and stock footage, this tape reflects the complex forces that shape illegal alien identity and their experiences in the U.S.

Coming from a photographic and art historical background, Luis Valdovino's work explores events and ideologies that shape the Latino experience as seen through the eyes of an insider. He currently teaches photography at Richmond College in Decatur, Illinois.

Cowtipping: The Militant Indian Waiter (1991), by Randy Redroad; 3/4" video, sound, 10 minutes

A Cherokee waiter working the graveyard shift at a New York City cafe continually finds himself in confrontations with customers who insist on sharing their ignorance about American Indians. His efforts to educate them often end in frustration and a lousy tip.

Randy Redroad, originally from Texas, produced *Cowtipping*, his first piece, in the Third World Newsreel Workshop. It was awarded a Juror's Citation Prize at the 1992 Black Maria Film Festival. He is currently working on a film titled *Haircuts Hurt*.

TALES OF THE FORGOTTEN FUTURE

by Lewis Klahr

Filmmaker Lewis Klahr in person

Sunday, November 1, 1992

Tales of the Forgotten Future (1988-91); Super-8mm, b&w/color, sound, 140 minutes

Part One: *The Morning Films* (1988, b&w, sound, 35 minutes): *Lost Camel Intentions*, *For the Rest of Your Natural Life*, *In the Month of Crickets*

Part Two: *Five O'Clock Worlds* (1990, b&w/color, sound, 28.5 minutes): *The Organ Minder's Gronkey*, *Hi Fi Cadets*, *Verdant Sonar*

San Francisco Cinematheque

Part Three: *Mood Opulence* (1989-91, b&w/color, sound, 35 minutes): *Cartoon Far, Yesterday's Glue, Elevator Music*

Part Four: *Right Hand Shade* (1991, b&w/color, sound, 40 minutes): *Station Drama, Untitled, Untitled*

“Like a modern-day Dickens, Lewis Klahr released his *Tales of the Forgotten Future* in installments over the last four years. Telling stories a century post-Dickens, his concern is less with the story than the telling. While the thread connecting each piece isn't clearly narrative, Klahr's episodes do share a fascination for the function, the language, and the pleasure of narrative. His refusal of a unified, cohesive fictional world manifests itself also in his use of collage to construct his films. Images are collected from snapshots, picture books, encyclopedias, advertisements, and erotic cartoons (official and unofficial sources of childhood knowledge) and are animated into uneasy, unstable relationships. When logic fails, dream. He snips, tears, cuts apart one view of the world to create another; his handmade version of history is ambiguous, transgressive, transforming. For Klahr, and for this time at the end of the century, there is no 'master' story, but rather a proliferation of ways of telling. And so his *Tales* is divided into four parts, each further divided into three tales in a compulsive, original attempt to unglue yesterday's stories, and imagine (or is it remember?) ones for the future.”

—Kathy Geritz, Pacific Film Archive

* * *

“At the start of Lewis Klahr's *The Organ Minder's Gronkey* (the first film of Part Two of *Tales of the Forgotten Future*), a voice urgently shouts, 'Evacuate! Evacuate!' A man is then seen to flee through urban landscapes, down highways where none of the cars are moving—presumably following some form of nuclear apocalypse. One image shows his hand covered with a gooey reddish substance; there follows a page from his notebook, in which he writes that he is searching for the 'Organ Minder,' whose 'healing is legendary. If I can find hm he can make me well.' The film continues, in fits and starts, as both flight and search.

“Almost all the imagery in Klahr's other films is created by cutout animation. No large cast was engaged; no highways were closed down—the cars aren't moving because Klahr filmed his cutout man over still photographs of highways. Eschewing the smooth, slick, transparent look that results from the use of an animation stand, Klahr might film on a table or wall in his cramped New York apartment, combining images from magazines, comics, and other pop-culture sources with cutouts of actors taken from his own photographs. At times he lifts one cutout above the surface of another, creating an illusion of depth; in one film he also uses original drawings.

“The effect of the irregular movements and jagged rhythms that result from Klahr's technique is extraordinary. He often uses objects that are powerful in themselves, whether for their elegant shape or sensual color or for their loaded subject matter—there are a number of nudes. One's eye is attracted to the material, drawn in by elegant compositions and effects of depth, and then confronted—even rebuffed—by the characters' stop/start motions. But in Klahr's cinema of ambiguity, in which the viewer often shifts between the past and future, fantasy and reality, flat image and real object, the double vision created by this rejection of illusion is entirely appropriate. Indeed, each film depends on a series of such dualities.

“....Images of journeys and transformations abound in Klahr's work. In *Verdant Sonar*, for instance, cutouts of ships appear to take us on a voyage, and sure enough we end up in a grotesquely colored fantasy paradise. The series title, *Tales of the Forgotten Future*, provides a clue to that preoccupation: in part it refers to the various futures, both apocalyptic and utopian, forecast by the 50s and 60s imagery that Klahr uses in most of those works. The future is 'forgotten' because we have forgotten the past that predicted it, forgotten the way the 50s seemed to point simultaneously to nuclear war and sanitized suburban paradise. More generally, Klahr's title suggests the kind of interpenetration of the past, present, and future that pervades all these films, created by the imagery of travel across time and through space.

"....As befits the dualities within Klahr's films, he often organizes his series to accentuate contradictions. Thus the romantic *Cartoon Far* is followed in Part Three by *Yesterday's Glue*: in a strange, sci-fi-like interior, women's bodies undergo various sex acts, some involving inanimat objects. There are suggestions of space travel, and the black-and-white imagery has a dark, institutional coldness that, combined with the weird sex, is starkly dehumanizing.

"....Klahr's object fetishism is also a commentary on the materialism of our mass culture, a fact that's particularly clear in the last film of Part Three,...*Elevator Music*...The film as a whole suggests a formalist *Peyton Place*, a kind of fantasy exposé of what goes on behind the well-scrubbed facades of suburbia...

"....Klahr's films also relate to our mass culture in a way that far transcends any specific referenes. What he gives us is a cinema in which no form of representation is privileged over any other—a cutout of an actor he has photographed, a cutout from a magazine, a live-action hand are all placed in the same continuum. All are true; none is truth. I suspect that this postmodern relativism, hardly unique to Klahr's work but realized here with particular care and intelligence, has its roots in the character of most 50s childhoods—the mixture of pop songs, photographic magazine imagery, comic books, and above all television and TV Channel switching.

"By giving form to such relativism, Klahr causes me to reflect once again on what I find most troubling about postmodernism, which is its refusal to place any unique value on the physical, on any particular part of the natural world. Humans, who after all need oxygen and water and sunlight rather than ozone and benzene and darkness, nonetheless regularly provide us with visions in which all objects are created equal, in which a cutout can stand for the universe. But such musings are reflections on our culture, not on Klahr's depiction of it. Indeed, his work offers a pleasurable and compelling vision of a media-made universe, teetering on the brink of a kind of mental apocalypse in which past and future, real object and flat image, fantasy and reality, are all interdependent, all threatening to meld into one."

—Fred Camper, *Chicago Reader*, 20 September 1991

GUNVOR NELSON:
A Life in Film

Thursday, November 12 - Sunday, November 22, 1992

After 32 years in the United States, the majority of them spent living, working and teaching in the Bay Area, Swedish-born filmmaker Gunvor Nelson is returning home. Her films have had an inestimable impact upon the development of experimental filmmaking in the U.S.—particularly on the West Coast—and have influenced a generation of film artists interested in using cinema as a vehicle for the expression of personal concerns. The Cinematheque is honored to have this opportunity to present a four-program retrospective of Gunvor Nelson's films, including the world premiere of her new film *Kristina's Harbor & Old Digs* on Sunday, November 22. Additional programs in the Gunvor Nelson retrospective will be held on Sunday, November 15 (*Before Need*, co-made with Dorothy Wiley) and Thursday, November 19 (*Red Shift* and *Frame Line*).

Program I
Filmmaker Gunvor Nelson in person

Thursday, November 12, 1992

Schmeerguntz (1965), co-maker: Dorothy Wiley; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes

Kirsa Nicholina (1970); 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes

My Name is Oona (1969); 16mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes

Take Off (1972); 16mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes

Moons Pool (1973); 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

Time Being (1991); 16mm, b&w, silent, 8 minutes

A central theme in Nelson's work is her meditation on the nature of female beauty. She contrasts the contemporary American definition of female attractiveness with the more universal principle of feminine beauty perceived in nature. She sees these two definitions as irreconcilable because the cultural model is based on the direct repression of instinctual and natural female behavior and appearance. Her films suggest that the technological society is dedicated to the eradication of the organic in modern woman as it is to the eradication of the natural environment. Thus woman today is trained to purchase protection against all of her natural functions: deodorants to disguise her body's odor, pills to short-circuit her body, and cosmetics to discolor her face. Yet somewhere beneath it all, a natural woman remains; Nelson helps us to rediscover her and to redefine her beauty on a human scale.

Yet, in dealing with childhood, birth, sexuality and self-hood, her films have universal appeal. Like Doris Lessing, Nelson believes that what is most deeply personal often connects mysteriously with what is most widely shared in human experience. "I want," says Nelson, "to go into myself as much as possible and hopefully it will be universal."

Nelson's evolution as a filmmaker from *Schmeerguntz* through *Moons Pool* might thus be described as the gradual discovery of the Self. From the plastic anti-beauty of the American Way of Life in *Schmeerguntz* she traveled complex paths through *Fog Pumas* to the confrontation of natural beauty in *My Name is Oona* and *Kirsa Nicholina*. In these films, the film-maker approaches self-acceptance indirectly through the figures of Oona and Kirsa's mother. *Take-Off* is the final explosion of exploitative myths which depersonalize and alienate the body. It is an explosion which clears the path for *Moons Pool*, the ultimate recognition of *this* body, this Self in its naturalness; *Moons Pool* radiates a sense of wonder at the natural self which is without narcissism or self-indulgence.

Nelson is a truly visionary artist whose masterful control of her medium and whose sheer power of imagination should assure her a place in the ranks of the best American experimental film-makers.

—June M. Gill, *Film Quarterly*, Spring 1977

Schmeerguntz (1965), co-maker: Dorothy Wiley; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes

Home-made in the best sense of the word, *Schmeerguntz* is one long raucous belch in the face of the American Home...

Its elements are unprepossessing—in fact revolting. Random items from the public, sanitized, ad-glamorized American scene are thrown rapid-fire against homey shots of the unmentionable side of the Home: the gunk in the kitchen sink, the dirty clothes mountain, the squalling infants, the filthy rump, the used kotex. Even Motherhood gets its knocks: after an organ prelude with shots of the moon, an incredibly distended belly and a funny problem with dressing, followed by doleful pregnancy exercises and recurrent urps in the toilet.

A society which hides its animal functions beneath a shiny public surface deserves to have such films as *Schmeerguntz* shown everywhere—in every PTA, every Rotary Club, every garden club in the land. For it is brash enough, brazen enough, and funny enough to purge the soul of every harried American married woman.

—Ernest Callenbach, *Film Quarterly*, Summer 1966

Brenda Richardson: Were you ever especially conscious of being women making movies?

Dorothy Wiley: Not the way you would be today, no, with women's liberation and all.

Gunvor Nelson: But I remember with *Schmeerguntz* we wanted to make a 16mm movie, I think. But we had no subject. And one day I was looking at all the gunk in the sink and thought of the contrast between what we do, and what we see that we "should" be—in ads and things—and that was the idea right there, from the sink.

DW: We always divided it up equally for some reason. We both filmed, we both edited, and we seemed to agree on things.

BR: What do you think the advantages are of making movies together?

DW: For me, up until lately, I was never highly motivated to do something for myself. But if I said to Gunvor I'd be there at eleven, to please her I'd be there at eleven, and do it. But if it had been up to me, I would probably have done more dishes or something.

GN: Yes, for me too. It's like getting away from the fear of it or something.

* * *

BR: Was *Schmeerguntz* the first movie you showed publicly?

GN: Yes. It was New Year's Eve in Sausalito. Everybody roared.

DW: It was the last movie on a program with about five other films. I didn't think it was so great or anything, but people hooted and hollered and stood up and clapped. It was a good audience.

GN: And then it won about five awards...

* * *

BR: Dorothy, you were the pregnant one in *Schmeerguntz* and therefore you were the subject matter of it in a way. Was that sense of the hostility to the pregnancy really a factual thing—Miss America and advertising on the one hand and, on the other, pregnancy and falling over to get your socks on?

DW: I've thought about that, and at that time it was just factual. I just wanted people to see it, and I don't think I thought about the pregnancy very negatively from the more personal point of view.

GN: For me, that was America. Of course, some of the things in it are pur accident, because we were pretty careless.

DW: Like the soundtrack, we didn't know how that would fit in until we saw the copy of it.

GN: Like when you threw up, and "he kissed her again" is on the soundtrack. We didn't plan that.

BR: What did your husbands think about the movie?

GN: I think they were very impressed. Bob [Nelson] was anyway. And I remember Bill Geis came over, and he had never spoken to us as human beings before, and it was as if he was seeing us for the first time or something.

—Brenda Richardson, "Interview with Gunvor Nelson and Dorothy Wiley," *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1971

I would like to add a historical note concerning *Schmeerguntz*. Although Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, was published, I believe, about 1963, Gunvor and I were not aware of the book nor had we ever heard anything about the women's liberation movement when we made this film. I read *The Feminine Mystique* a year or two after we had made the film and I understood much better what we had expressed from our own experience. Also, *Schmeerguntz* was finished in 1965 and it wasn't until 1968 that a group of women went down to Atlanta to protest the Miss America Pageant and it hit the headlines they had burnt their bras (even though they hadn't). Our footage and sound of the Miss America contest was filmed right off the TV in 1965...

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We had a neighbor that wasn't the best housekeeper, and we asked to film at her house to illustrate some of our points. I know that when we were trying to capture some of the crudeness of life and we looked thru the camera at, say, piles of dirty dishes left on the table till the next day, or a filthy refrigerator, what we saw in the camera was ethereally beautiful, the light would illuminate objects as if we were in heaven, and we fell in love with film.

—Dorothy Wiley, 1992

"Film is the one place in my life where I have an illusion of control."

—Gunvor Nelson

Kirsa Nicholina (1970); 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes

At first glance, it is difficult to believe that the person who produced *Kirsa Nicholina* also produced *Schmeergutz*. But the two films have much in common. Both reject a sterile, technological society which disguises or denies its natural functions. In both *Kirsa Nicholina* and *Schmeergutz*, Nelson insists upon recognition and acceptance of the human body, particularly the female body.

If, as Amos Vogel suggests in *Film As a Subversive Art*, *Kirsa Nicholina*, and the lifestyle it depicts, betrays a "desperate romanticism," it also provides a valuable counter-balance to those films, so common in the Sixties, which depicted birth as a secret ritual, isolated the woman and excluded the man, and denied the very act of love and procreation. Certainly, any discussion of family films would be incomplete without this aspect of family life.

—Catherine Egan, *Sightlines*, Spring 1978

That Gunvor Nelson is indeed one of the most gifted of our poetic film humanists is revealed in *Kirsa Nicholina*, her masterpiece. This deceptively simple film of a child being born to a Woodstock couple in their home is an almost classic manifesto for the new sensibility, a proud affirmation of man amidst technology, genocide, and ecological destruction. Birth is presented not as an antiseptic, "medical" experience (the usual birth film focuses on an anonymous vagina appropriately surrounded by a white shroud) but as a living-through of a primitive mystery, a spiritual celebration, a rite of passage. True to the new sensibility, it does not aggressively proselytize but conveys its ideology by force of example.

—Amos Vogel, *The Village Voice*, March 18, 1971

BR: Have any children or teenagers seen that movie [*Kirsa Nicholina*]?

GN: Yes. And Oona and her friends. Oona said it was almost as good as a cartoon.

—Brenda Richardson, *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1971

My Name is Oona (1969); 16mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes

In *My Name is Oona*, Nelson continues the process of exploring and recreating feminine mythology while extending the commentary on beauty begun in *Schmeergutz*. Here beauty is the antithesis of the pre-packaged model which Nelson exposed in her first film. *My Name is Oona*, a film-portrait of Nelson's nine-year-old daughter, is based on a rhythmical montage of shots showing Oona playing, grooming her horse, and riding horseback in the forest....An elfin blond child, Oona is as beautiful as the forest, sea, and beach in which the film is set. Nelson emphasizes the attraction of each with elliptical cutting, liquid slow-motion photography, and flowing super-impositions.

Oona's is the protean dream-world of childhood, which impudently defies our definitions of our structures. We are gradually immersed in *her* visions, where reality and fantasy blend and flow endlessly. Like Castaneda's "other reality," Oona's fantasy hints at another field of vision, one from which "ordinary reality" can be seen in

perspective and given its true value. Fantasy provides the key to the deepest and most private self, that self which alone can challenge the oppressive roles which constitute our public reality. Oona, a girl-child, living in the unspoiled world of her personal myths, unselfconsciously furnishes us with alternative perceptions of "woman's place."

In her closeness to nature, Oona recalls legends which reach beyond her individual existence into the larger reservoir of feminine myth. Riding bareback through a dark forest, swirled in her blond hair, she recalls those other fair-haired horsewomen of Norse mythology, the Valkyrie. This image, perhaps suggested to Nelson by her own Scandinavian heritage..., reminds us that for primitive woman there was no contradiction between beauty and strength, nor between femininity and power. The Valkyrie were, like Oona, "sun-bright" and "fair," but strong, skillful horsewomen and warriors. They were goddesses of both war and fertility.

—June M. Gill, *Film Quarterly*, Spring 1977

But the revelation of the program is Gunvor Nelson, true poetess of the visual cinema. *My Name is Oona* captures in haunting, intensely lyrical images, fragments of the coming to consciousness of a child girl. A series of extremely brief flashes of her moving through night-lit space or woods in sensuous negative, separated by rapid fades into blackness, burst upon us like sweet firework clusters, caught by a beautifully fluid camera. . . one of the most perfect recent examples of poetic cinema. Throughout the entire film, the girl, compulsively and as if in awe, repeats her name, until it becomes a magic incantation of self-realization.

—Amos Vogel, *The Village Voice*, March 18, 1971

Take Off (1972); 16mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes

The 1972 *Take Off*. . . subverts the spectacle of the striptease. Professional exotic dancer Ellion Ness (a female untouchable) shimmies against total blackness. Skewed, jumpy angles excitedly frame her copious gyrating body, as she slowly discards gloves, veils, and peekaboo fringe-fetishistic totems of female sexuality. This striptease's critical moment is announced with the inevitable G-string and pasties. But Ness transgresses the tease-taboo: She stares right into the camera and exposes her nipples. The moment of defiance shifts the meaning of the strip from dance for others to dance for self. Having crossed the margins of male-defined sexuality, she's free to define her own relationship to her body. After Ness awkwardly removes her G-string, she continues dancing naked and unencumbered. Then, without skipping a beat, she removes the blond wig to reveal a bald head. Through masking and seamless editing, she then removes her legs, arms, and breasts. Her head pops off like a plastic doll's. The headless torso begins to revolve, spinning wildly, until, superimposed upon a field of stars, it disappears into outer space. The female body in *Take Off* is completely dismantled to make way for a new, limitless cosmic one.

—Manohla Dargis, *The Village Voice*, January 3, 1989

Moons Pool (1973); 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

Moons Pool... relates a journey of self-discovery through the revelation of the body. In contrast to *Take-Off* which showed the depersonalized, demythologized body of the stripper, *Moons Pool* depicts a highly individual exploration of the film-maker's own body and body myth. It represents Nelson's acceptance of her own deepest physical self. Her nudity expresses her will to shatter the taboos which alienate us from the body's wisdom.

As in *Take-Off*, the action takes the form of a ritual dance as the naked bodies of the actors swirl through the opalescent water. But this time the dance is stripped of its lasciviousness; it is no longer display or seduction as in *Take-Off*. Instead it becomes the pure beauty of physical communion among the dancers. . . *Moons Pool* expresses the strongest sense of male-female rapport seen in Nelson's work since the affectionate solidarity between husband and wife in *Kirsa Nicholina*.

—June M. Gill, *Film Quarterly*

"Initially I was not going to be in *Moons Pool*. And almost halfway into the filming I wasn't. Since I was a child I had always felt that my inside did not correspond with my outside; that what I felt inside whether it was strength or anger or warmth or whatever the feeling, it didn't register on the outside, on my face or my body. I tried to bury that feeling, telling myself that it didn't matter and yet the sore was always burning somewhere inside. So the film was without me originally. I took the abstract idea of this feeling and wanted to use other people to show it. Slowly it crept in, into me and into the film, that I was daring to put myself in there. Maybe for other people that is not a daring step but it was for me, to bluntly put myself out there, naked as I could be and then seeing it was alright and not having to hide myself in having other people represent me.

"I wanted it to be a journey I could take into something and return from it. Same as a dream but literally underwater..."

—Gunvor Nelson, June 1974, excerpt from interview in *Canyon Cinemanews*

Time Being (1991); 16mm, b&w, silent, 8 minutes

"A quiet film with my old mother."

—Gunvor Nelson

Program II

Sunday, November 15, 1992

Field Study #2 (1988); 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes

Before Need (1979), co-maker: Dorothy Wiley; 16mm, color, sound, 75 minutes

Field Study #2 (1988); 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes

Gunvor Nelson's use of film collage is one of the more visible formal threads running through her films. Earlier films such as *Schmeerguntz* (1965) and *Take Off* (1973) both employ collagistic strategies to comment on processes which dehumanize women through the fragmentation and literal "cutting-up" of their bodies. As her filmic interests shifted away from specific considerations of woman's body and moved towards personal meditations on the passage of time and the capriciousness of memory, so too did her approach to collage. This change emerged full-blown in her 1983 masterpiece, *Frame Line*, a film about reshaping memory and time whose emotional power relied almost entirely upon a brilliant synthesis of visual and audio elements to create a haunting, introspective work of "total" collage

Since 1983, Nelson has created a series of other collage films, each one extending ideas and discoveries first presented in *Frame Line*. These include *Light Years*, *Light Years Expanding*, *Natural Features*, and *Field Study #2*. Nelson's description of *Field Study #2*: "Superimpositions of dark pourings are perceived through the film. Suddenly a bright color runs across the picture and delicate drawings flutter past. Grunts from animals are heard."

—Gunvor Nelson, *Canyon Cinema Film/Video Catalog 7*

* * *

We started with some dream images, a few actors, friends and relatives. The snow had melted and it was impossible to repeat. Standards of perfection applied to all the selves, the relationships, the layers of memory. Where are the tables for one?

—Dorothy Wiley & Gunvor Nelson

Before Need (1979), co-maker: Dorothy Wiley; 16mm, color, sound, 75 minutes

Starring:

Cleta Wiley and John Nesci
Silver Spangled Hamburg and White Faced Black Spanish
Saun Ellis and Marcus Mislin
The Bog People and Queen Elizabeth
Oona Nelson and Ethan Wiley
Niagra Falls and Thou Shalt Bible
Experts and Jungle Sounds
Games, Puzzles , Surprises
Sea and Scab
Ray Rodrique and Vacuum Cleaner

Gunvor Nelson and Dorothy Wiley were Muir Beach neighbors when they made their first film together in 1965. "It was our first serious effort," recalls Nelson. . . "It seemed so romantic to us to make films."

That first film, *Schmeerguntz*, containing images and visions of the American household and way of life, won first prize at the Ann Arbor Film Festival and took prizes at Kent University and Chicago Art Institute film festivals.

Since then, the women have made three other films together. . . *Fog Pumas* in 1967, a prize winner at the Belgium International Film Festival; *Five Artists* in 1969 and their latest effort, *Before Need*. . .

Before Need. . . is described loosely as "sequences of images that express the emotional discoveries of an aging woman." The filmmakers point out, however, that the film exists on many levels and was created organically. Visual ideas ("things with mirrors," "images with chickens") were captured on film first, then dialogue without a definite story line was written and finally scenes with actors were shot in a month-long burst.

The filmmakers derived some of their inspiration from dreams Wiley collected from children at Lagunitas School. "The parts of the dreams we responded to were the images we could relate to as adults," she says.

"We think a lot of the film is absurd," Nelson elaborates. "It is on the brink of being too serious and too stupid. It's complex. There are all these unexpected things. Things are multi-layered. That's our point of view. The beauty the woman sees in the different roles she's taken in her life and looking back on those states of being is both beautiful, pathetic and absurd."

A painter until she began making films in the '60s, Nelson. . . explains her attraction to the medium of film. "For me it was a combination of the visual—within that the use of color and black and white—with the timing, the dance, the motion, plus whatever else there is—the story, sound. It's so multi-media it's almost too overwhelming."

Wiley, a former English teacher. . . saw new creative frontiers in filmmaking. "I find my interest in films peculiar because I'm not interested in machines, and there are an awful lot of machines involved in making films," she says.

"But it was such a new medium. The possibilities that hadn't been explored were tremendous." Both women say that the creative process hasn't changed much between the first film 14 years ago and their latest work. "We were

just astonished,” Nelson says. “It’s the same thing then as now. We made a film we were interested in making, but we have no idea if other people will be interested in seeing it. This one was just as much a chance as that first one.”

—Paul Liberatore, *Independent Journal*, 1979

There is a branch of film that grows in the same direction as music and painting and has very little to do with the storytelling film, especially as it looks in theaters. This “poetic” film has a long history: from the Lumière’s contemporary, Georges Méliès, over Futurists and Surrealists to the American West Coast film after the war to the unprecedented flowering the world over of so-called underground film during the Sixties.

These films demand much of the viewer, not the least a preparedness to see and learn another film language. But in this country that is totally forgotten! And that hits me when I see a film like Gunvor Nelson’s uniquely striking *Before Need*, which now has a few showings in Stockholm. Suddenly unfolding before one’s eyes is a pictorial work as taut, complexly rich and beyond the workings of verbal logic as a music piece by Penderecki or Cage.

I think her picture web about time and death and language...will be put side by side with Maya Deren’s *Meshes of the Afternoon* and Stan Brakhage’s *Songs*. We make a big mistake if we don’t count Gunvor Grundel from Kristinehamn and Muir Beach among the most interesting of Swedish filmmakers.

—Carl Henrik Svenstedt, *Expressen*, 1980 (translated from Swedish)

Before Need is a look at aging, death, the breakdown of the body, memory and dreams as experienced through the breakdown of image and language. ...the narrative backdrop of the film is set at a family get-together. The table conversation is disjunctive, inter-weaving the bits and pieces of conversation, arguments and dreams of those present. They betray a sense of unfulfilled desire and expectation (as when one character, a young boy, recites his excuse litany: “I wanted to, but I didn’t want to...I meant to...I started to...” which an older woman then takes up as a sort of chant in voice-over). It is this older woman’s voice-over which ties together the elliptic narrative of *Before Need*.

The woman is present at the table, but she has chosen not to speak, simply to listen. She is the woman experiencing her aging as understood through her narration of body and memory decline. The notion of decline or breakdown is reasserted through intercut images as those of ice being ironed, a dentist drilling teeth, old photographs being burned. The repetition of burning photographs provides a key to the film. They are sometimes surreal (as wedding albums in which everyone—from groom to bride and bride’s maids—have identical bearded faces), and sometimes touristy snapshots and postcards. These souvenirs of the past remind us of the tricks of memory: remembrances as not about the real event, but of a spectacularized version of it, ultimately vanishing.

At their gathering, the people look at a photo album of the luncheon they are attending while the older woman comments, “I’d waited years for this event.” Instantly the present becomes the past, part of memory with all its vicissitudes, and waiting—as we are told will happen to all that is “permanent”—to be “washed out.”

—Karyn Kay, *Besides Bergman—Swedish independent and avant-garde films*

Program III

Thursday, November 19, 1992

Frame Line (1983); 16mm, b&w, sound, 22 minutes

Red Shift (1983); 16mm, b&w, sound, 50 minutes

Light Years (1987); 16mm, color, sound, 28 minutes

Gunvor Nelson's two long films from the 1970s, *Trollstenen* (1976) and *Before Need* (1979, made with Dorothy Wiley), began to address issues which she would explore more deeply in subsequent works. Family, memory, time, displacement from one's native culture, mortality, and mother-daughter relationships: these became significant elements in Gunvor's films of the 1980s. Beginning with her two breakthrough films of 1983—*Frame Line* and *Red Shift*—and continuing through her new film, *Kristina's Harbor & Old Digs*, Gunvor mines a rich and seemingly inexhaustible lode of images and ideas. With these films, too, Gunvor reasserted her skills as a painter and collagist, often painting directly over photographs and film images and frequently combining three-dimensional objects (leaves, crumpled paper, etc.) with "flat" two-dimensional images. Most importantly, however, Gunvor began a profound exploration of self in these films—a project which she continues refining and enhancing in each new film she makes.

For me, the intention is trying to dig deep and find those images, to find the essence of your feelings. I guess about a year ago it just struck me that the outside world for me, all those things that are there, are symbols for what I feel. Trying to use film as a medium to express what's inside you, you have to use those symbols. If you want to communicate you can't just show a simple cup the way it is always shown; you have to find an angle that actually expresses those feelings, not only for other people, but for yourself, so you don't just see that cup or the coffee grounds. Most people won't have seen it the way you have seen it, and you have to dig into it really deeply to show yourself, and hopefully other people then, what you see. But specifically, it's very hard to tell what you want to express. I've had many people discuss with me, especially in Sweden, how many artists have this line of doing art for a cause, or for the masses, or something like that, and they are just the medium for expressing this thing which is bigger than they are. I want to go into myself as much as possible and hopefully it will be universal, or another world that somebody can look at. In seeing other people's art, the more personal it is, the more into their head it is, the more I'm interested in it. To see other people's worlds. To communicate that way. So the more personal it is, the more interesting it is.

—Gunvor Nelson, "An Interview with Gunvor Nelson and Dorothy Wiley," Brenda Richardson,
Film Quarterly, Fall 1971

Frame Line (1983); 16mm, b&w, sound, 22 minutes

Frame Line is a collage film in black and white. Glimpses (both visual and audial) of Stockholm, of people, of gestures, flags, and the Swedish national anthem appear through drawings, paintings and cut-outs. It is a film with an eerie flow between the ugly and the beautiful about returning, about roots, and also about reshaping. (GN)

Absolutely blowing the lid off any attempt at patronization, *Frame Line* by Gunvor Nelson took the advantage to radically ignore any limits of emotional expression. Without excuses, or so much as even a token glance back, *Frame Line* at once set standards that put to rest that silly notion "the tradition of the Avant Garde." Rendering explanation redundant in its wake, *Frame Line* alternately bulldozers and embraces a ruthless sort of Everyman's puzzle; a re-arrangeable pop-bead rosary of personal fx with framelines the only constant. Distilled bits of psyche break from the assemblage to skitter across struggling planes seeking niches and forming patterns with careening desperation. Some fit.

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Seamless, complex, subliminal and totally effective in its role, the sound is heart as the images are mind to this demanding 22 minute black and white. *FrameLine* wasn't intended to entertain or even to be liked. Consequently, it was the most satisfying film shown.

—Rock Ross, *Reversal*, 1984

Frame Line: A collage of shots and groups of shots. Some grouped under various titles. The titles are quite independent, like images, titles such as: "Reluctantly leaving behind," "Necessary tilt," "All remote random," "And in harmony," "Lingering notes."

All material, seemingly (to me) autobiographical. Images of Stockholm. Occasional glimpses of Gunvor's face. Attempts to obliterate the images of memory, of the past, by superimposing various substances on them, painting over them, drawing. Eerie, surreal sounds give to some parts surreal tone. Most of the images used are very random. It seemed to me that they were selected for their lack of any grace or aesthetic/pictorial appeal, going out of one's way to select the most uninteresting images—to de-romanticize, to desentimentalize the memories. Same goes for the "animation": graceless, sloppy, careless. At least that's my impression after two viewings.

—Jonas Mekas, "Two Films by Gunvor Nelson," *Motion Picture No. 3*, 1987

Red Shift (1983); 16mm, b&w, sound, 50 minutes

Starring:

Carin Grundel, Oona Nelson, Gunvor Nelson, Regina Grundel, Ulla Moberg, Gunnar Grundel.

Assistant: Diane Kitchen

Red Shift is a film in black and white about relationships, generations and time. The subtitle is *All Expectation*. The movement of a luminous body toward and away from us can be found in its spectral lines. A shift toward red occurs with anybody that is self-luminous and receding. There is uncertainty about how much observable material exists. (GN)

Red Shift is the most beautiful, most personal and most expressive film about mother-daughter relationships that I have ever seen. It involves Gunvor Nelson, her mother and her daughter. Carefully and with great tenderness it focuses on these three women, trying to show us their relationship, succeeding with an emotional impact that is hardly ever found in such a subject. It is not the social context which is exploited but the little gestures, everyday events. *Red Shift* is a radical film; it sets new measures for Avant-Garde filmmaking dealing with personal problems.

—Alf Bold, *The Arsenal* (Berlin)

. . . *Red Shift*, subtitled *All Expectation* and shot in Nelson's native Sweden, is an intricate meditation on the relationships among three generations of women. . . Faces are shown only in cropped, choked close-up. The camera examines and compares in obsessive detail the women's bodies, framed to isolate their eyes, mouths, necks, and skin. The soundtrack is a series of discrete, distilled moments: whispered clichés, words of motherly advice, childish pleading. Nelson plays the "roles" of both daughter and mother to her real mother and daughter, and, as in Marguerite Duras's *Nathalie Granger*, it's the family house that assumes symbolic significance. In *Red Shift*, Nelson uses interior and exterior space to define generational bonds and to explore the complex relationship of women to the private sphere of the home (as both projector and prison). Woven throughout the film are voiceovers of Calamity Jane's letters to her daughter, read while the camera is looking outward at the snowy scape. The interior claustrophobia of the Swedish home (where Nelson was raised by her domineering, athletic mother) contrasts vividly with the freedom of the adventurous American frontierswoman, who kept her diary tied to her saddle. There's no reflex move to create a false harmony—the shift alluded to in the film's title isn't toward resolution, it's a gesture toward tentative, fragile coexistence.

—Manohla Dargis, *The Village Voice*, January 3, 1989

Red Shift is punctuated by a series of quotations, some from the letters of Jane Hickock, better known as Calamity Jane. Writing to her daughter, Jane says at the end of the film, "I am taking my secrets with me—what I am and what I might have been." This is perhaps the most concise expression of what *Red Shift* is about: mothers and daughters, growing older, the discoveries of experience, the impossibility of conveying much of that experience. But most of all, the apprehension of that experience through sound and image. This film has a *tangible* quality from the gravel-voice of Jane Hickock (provided by Edith Kramer of Pacific Film Archives) to the silver-gray images of silk and velvet, of wrinkled hands on smooth, unmarked hands, of the mechanics of sewing. Nelson's film is dense with detail that is the stuff of memory.

Autobiographical material has been a rich source for Nelson ever since she began making films in 1966. While she and members of her family have figured in over half of her films, one always had the impression that the narratives were about more than the specific people we see on the screen. *My Name is Oona*, for example, is about a kind of experience of childhood, not just the childhood of Gunvor's daughter Oona. *Red Shift* takes this one step further. The aging parents in the film are Nelson's parents—but they are not playing themselves (if it is entirely possible to escape such a role). Speaking lines gathered from all of Nelson's friends ("What sayings, maxims, etc. did *your* mother tell you?"), *Red Shift* is an anthology of puzzling and wonderful attitudes and lines ("The North Wind is the broom of the sky") that evoke the wonder of growing up and the mystery of older generations.

It is tempting to compare this film with Stan Brakhage's *The Stars Are Beautiful* (1974). Beyond the similar soundtracks, they both are composed of striking images—*Stars* in color, *Red Shift* in black and white—that are often close-up and intense, domestic and familiar, but new. It is startling to again see a grandmother's jewelry box, to watch through a doorway as yarn is rewound in preparation for sewing. . . To peer backwards and forwards, to know and not know ("I don't want to tell her about everything"). In her program notes Nelson says that "a shift towards red occurs with anybody that is self-luminous and receding." Of course, in physical terms, the word "anybody" should be "anything," especially since it will not happen until *somebody* is accelerated away from Earth on his or her way to another star. But Nelson speaks with metaphors, and in her film we can see that shift here, across human years if not light years.

—Robert Haller, *Field of Vision*, No. 13, Spring, 1985

Light Years (1987); 16mm, color, sound, 28 minutes

Light Years is a collage film and a journey through the Swedish landscape, traversing stellar distances in units of 5878 trillion miles. (GN)

Light Years continues to develop the concerns and techniques begun in her earlier film *Frame Line*. In *Light Years* Nelson blends collage animation with highly textured live-action material to creating a haunting evocation of her displacement from her native Swedish culture. Particularly striking is her use of wet ink on glass to create a constantly shifting image of a path leading to a house. With these passages of the house and moving images of the Swedish landscape as threads, *Light Years* becomes a tapestry of change as experienced through constant motion. It is a personal reflection on the filmmaker's memories of her past.

The film is so filled with visual ideas that Gunvor Nelson has extended the film's themes and techniques in her subsequent effort *Light Years Expanding*. All her recent films suggest that while the distance of time makes home further, the intensity of memory makes it richer.

—Parabola Arts Foundation brochure #3

Not only is *Light Years* one of Gunvor Nelson's greatest achievements, it's also one of the most beautiful films ever made. That covers a lot of time and distance, "ever" does.

—Albert Kilchesty, Filmforum (Los Angeles)

Program IV
Filmmaker Gunvor Nelson in person

Sunday, November 22, 1992

Kristina's Harbor & Old Digs (1992, World Premiere); 16mm, color, sound, Part I: 50 minutes, Part II: 20 minutes

My new film is a collage film that combines animation, live footage and the re-photographed footage of what I filmed in Sweden in 1990. (GN)

Every film I start is new and dangerous. There are no guidelines except to follow the initial feeling and also let the film itself be an interchange of direction between myself and it. A new strange country is created.

—Gunvor Nelson, *SF Bay Guardian*, October 15, 1976

* * *

Gunvor Nelson, from “scratch” of her collaboration with Dorothy Wiley, through her dreamscapes and tender autobiographical envisionments, to the electrical synapting (albeit laboriously created) moving-thinking films of late, has proved more true to the intrinsic possibilities of film than any but a few in the history of the medium.

—Stan Brakhage, 1992

* * *

I'm not going to comment on the qualities of Gunvor's films that make them so inventive and beautiful, nor on her teaching, except to say that she was a very good teacher for me, but I would like to say that one thing that Gunvor has brought to a life in film is a lot of very hard work. Bringing into film a painter's refined sensibility of color and other aesthetic concerns, she has had to overcome some daunting obstacles to get what she wants in a medium that is often hard to control. She has always had very strong preferences and opinions about what she wants, and an ability to intensely focus her energy and attention and a tenacity that will see a project through, no matter how much energy it takes.

—Dorothy Wiley, 1992

* * *

There is real joy in finding that the juxtaposition of two shots can create new and unexpected meaning. . . this is beyond the original meaning of each shot taken separately. There are multiple layers of facts to combine and coordinate to make a film succeed as a whole. . . the integration of ideas, feelings and structure have to be investigated. What is the progression of the film. . . where should it start. . . where is the middle and how should it end. . . and why? When you are really immersed, you, yourself, totally interested in solving the “problems” of the film, then you forget how much work you are giving to it. . . then the film emerges. Usually the solution seems just right and logical. Why did I not see it before! But it did take all that interest and study and hard work.

—Gunvor Nelson, from a class on film editing at SFAI

* * *

With insistence and conviction, Gunvor Nelson taught me how and why to live inside my films. I know that each and every shot is a reflection of a moment in my life. I know this now, and Gunvor realized it then, when I was one of her graduate students at the San Francisco Art Institute from 1987 to 1989.

Sometimes I whined to her about my films. When would they be able to walk on their own two feet? Gunvor told me that the best part of filmmaking is the MAKING, not the finishing. Be patient, and delight in the work.

No change, no manipulation could ever be anything less than organic, or else the viewer's experience would always ring untrue, artificial, insincere. I remember the way she would read my sometimes confused visual language, cutting away superfluous, perhaps beautiful shots, allowing us to discover a kernel of meaning and maybe, just maybe, transcendence. Arrivals at transcendence were rare, of course. But with Gunvor we always proceeded together. Never ahead, always with.

Often, I wouldn't listen to her suggestions, as we sat hour upon hour at the editing table in a dark room, moving our way through my film. With every step forward, I seemed to take two steps back: Gunvor always needed to know how a choice ten minutes into the film connected formally to another somewhere back at the beginning. And I would just say it felt right. I did it and it must stay. She would sigh, look skeptical, and then move on. Whether she agreed with us or not, Gunvor trusted her students' decisions, for she saw us as committed artists involved in an often painful, sometimes joyous struggle. After each and every editing session I would feel drained, yet profoundly connected to the challenge at hand. Only several days later could I appreciate the masterful insights Gunvor brought to my work. I now know how lucky I was to have experienced the exquisite eyes and ears of such an artist.

—Lynne Sachs, 1992

Gunvor Nelson grew up in Kristinehamn, Sweden. After living in both England and Holland she returned to her native Sweden and attended Stockholm's Konstfakskolan. She moved to the United States in 1953 and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Humboldt State College, and, in 1960, received an MFA degree in painting and art history from Mills College in Oakland. After a brief return trip to Sweden, she moved back to the Bay Area and married Robert Nelson, a fellow art student (and maker of celebrated "underground" films such as *Oh Dem Watermelons* and *The Great Blondino*). She moved from a career in painting to filmmaking in 1965 with the release of *Schmeerguntz* (made with Dorothy Wiley). Her films have been screened internationally at venues such as the Berlin Film Academy, the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Walker Art Center, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the National Film Theater (London), the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), the Cannes Film Festival, the Swedish Film Institute, Pacific Film Archive, and Anthology Film Archives. She has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants including a J.S. Guggenheim Fellowship, American Association of University Women Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts, Filmverkstan Fellowship, Sweden, American Film Institute, and a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship. She recently resigned a film teaching position at the San Francisco Art Institute—a post she held for more than 20 years—and will soon return to her home town of Kristinehamn.

Gunvor Nelson Filmography

(all films 16mm)

Schmeerguntz (1965), co-maker: Dorothy Wiley; 15 minutes*

Fog Pumas (1967), co-maker: Dorothy Wiley; 25 minutes

My Name is Oona (1969); 10 minutes*

Kirsa Nicholina (1970); 16 minutes*

Five Artists BillBobBillBillBob (1971), co-maker: Dorothy Wiley; 70 minutes

Muir Beach (1970); 5 minutes

One & the Same (1973), co-maker: Freude; 4 minutes

Take Off (1972); 10 minutes*

Moons Pool (1973); 15 minutes*

San Francisco Cinematheque

Trollstenen (1976); 125 minutes
Before Need (1979); co-maker: Dorothy Wiley; 75 minutes*
Frame Line (1983); 22 minutes*
Red Shift (1983); 50 minutes*
Light Years (1987); 28 minutes*
Light Years Expanding (1988); 25 minutes
Field Study #2 (1988); 8 minutes*
Natural Features (1990); 28 minutes
Time Being (1991); 8 minutes*
Kristina's Harbor & Old Digs (1992); Part I, 50 minutes-Part II, 20 minutes*

Dorothy Wiley Filmography

(all films 16mm)

Cabbage (1972); 9 minutes
Letters (1972); 11 minutes
The Weenie Worm or the Fat Innkeeper (1972); 11 minutes
Zane Forbidden (1972); 10 minutes
Miss Jesus Fries on the Grill (1973); 12 minutes
The Birth of Seth Andrew Kinmont (1977); 27 minutes

* denotes films shown in this retrospective

Gunvor Nelson's films are distributed by Canyon Cinema, Inc.

Gunvor Nelson: A Life in Film program notes written and compiled by Albert Kilchesty, with assistance from Steve Anker and Michelle Sabol.

***D'GHETTO EYES:
Emerging Media Artists of Color
presented by Third World Newsreel
Program II***

Saturday, November 14, 1992

Splash! (1991), by Thomas Allen Harris; 3/4" video, color, sound, 7 minutes

This experimental collage reflects on the artist's childhood fantasies and the impact of family on his becoming a gay man.

Thomas Allen Harris has been a staff producer at PBS affiliate WNET in New York. Harris is currently working on *All in the Family*, an experimental documentary exploring the worlds of three groups of gay and lesbian siblings.

Ex-Voto (1990), by Tania Cypriano; 3/4" video, color, sound, 7 minutes

An experimental video homage to Nossa Senhora da Aparecida, the national patron saint of Brazil. Cypriano produced her devotion piece as a gesture of gratitude for surviving a fire that burned her severely when she was a child.

Tania Cypriano is a Brazilian-born film and video artist currently residing in New York. She has worked with the Collective for Living Cinema, the New York Filmmakers' Cooperative, and with various independent film and video directors such as Mike Kuchar, Ela Troyano, and Emily Breer. *Ex-Voto* is part of a film/video trilogy which will soon be completed.

Respect is Due (1990), by Cyrille Phipps; 3/4" video, color, sound, 10 minutes

Hip-hop riffs and clips from rap videos are used to address the sexist portrayal of black women in rap lyrics and music videos. Includes the views of young rap enthusiasts, critics, and activists.

A graduate of Syracuse University, Cyrille Phipps is a founding member of the activist video collective NOT CHANNEL ZERO, which produces grassroots news programming focusing on issues in African American and Latino communities. She is co-producing a documentary about racial bias in enrollment policies of the City University of New York system. She is also producing a short video drama about AIDS in the black community.

La Historia de Jonas (1991), by Luisa Sanchez; 3/4" video, color, sound, 5 minutes

This piece looks at identity issues and examines the experience of a Puerto Rican immigrant in New York City.

La Historia de Jonas is Luisa Sanchez's first piece. Currently a graduate sociology student at CUNY, she is interested in recording political concerns and issues of identity in Latino and Caribbean cultures. She is currently working on a documentary about Dominican women in the United States.

Land Where My Fathers Died (1991), by Daresha Kyi; 16mm, sound, 24 minutes

In this short narrative, a young woman meets her estranged father and is disillusioned when she discovers he is an alcoholic. She later discovers that her boyfriend's father is also an alcoholic.

Daresha Kyi is a graduate of NYU's film program and is currently studying at the American Film Institute Conservatory's Directors Program. Her other productions include *Just Because of Who We Are*, a documentary about violence against lesbians, and *The Thinnest Line*, a ten minute drama about competition between friends.

Know Your Enemy (1991), by Art Jones; 3/4" video, color, sound, 27 minutes

Using a syncopated, "scratch" editing style, this video questions media critiques of the politically charged rap group Public Enemy. The controversy here centers on charges of anti-Semitism that divided and nearly toppled the group at the height of its popularity. Ultimately, most questions are left unresolved.

Art Jones has produced several films and videotapes concerning hip-hop culture and its relationship to politics, history and society. A member of NOT CHANNEL ZERO, he is completing a video about the internalization of sexual stereotypes.

1492-1992: 500 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

Program II

The Last Supper (La Ultima Cena)

directed by Tomas Gutierrez Alea

Sunday, November 29, 1992

Por La Primera Vez (For the First Time) (Cuba, 1967), by Octavio Cortazar; 16mm, b&w, sound, 12 minutes
In Spanish.

San Francisco Cinematheque

The magical moment of individual discovery of the movies, a lost marker for inhabitants of societies now dominated by electronic imagery, is recaptured in one of the first Cuban documentaries to incorporate synchronous sound. The filmmaker, whose off-camera voice can be heard throughout asking questions of his subjects, goes in search of a mountain hamlet so remote that its inhabitants can only conjecture what a movie must be like: "A dance...a party...a large town.." The film mirrors the responses of young and old to Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* as projected by a Cuban Film Institute mobile projection team.

La Ultima Cena (The Last Supper) (Cuba, 1977), directed by Tomas Gutierrez Alea; 16mm, color, sound, 120 minutes.

In Spanish with English subtitles.

The last years of the 18th century were the years of the great bourgeois revolutions. They also marked the start of independence struggles throughout the Caribbean. The rebellion of the slaves in Haiti and the ensuing destruction of that country's sugar installations were largely responsible for turning Cuba into the world's foremost sugar producer. Cuba's plantation owners, unable to assimilate the technical advances of the Industrial Revolution as fast as the demand for their product was growing, could increase their production only by intensifying slave labor. Thus, they augmented their economic power and consolidated their positions by using the most inhuman methods of exploitation.

It is under these historical circumstances that a very religious and wealthy proprietor of sugar mills and slaves, a count of Havana, is driven by his conscience to practice genuine acts of spiritual goodness, and to convince himself of the justice of his actions. During Holy Week, he visits his sugar mill and gathers together 12 slaves. He washes their feet, kisses them and serves the slaves at his own table, a supper similar to the one Jesus gave to bid farewell to his disciples.

On Holy Thursday, during the dinner, the count's behavior is alternately arrogant and humble. He converses with his slaves and tells them of an episode in the life of St. Francis, the moral of which is that perfect happiness lies in receiving pain and abuse with humility and joy. They eat and drink wine and, little by little, the initial tension is relieved. The wine helps the count regain his inner peace. He discovers that he feels good talking with this group of black men, and this astounds him: he becomes benevolent, happy and communicative. He even begins to speak ill of the plantation's overseer. Most of the slaves give way to these feelings and enjoy the occasion.

On Friday morning the count returns to his villa. In the sugar mill, the overseer rouses the slaves for work. The slaves tell him that nobody works on Good Friday. . .

As an allegory on Christian liberalism, *The Last Supper* is the sort of anti-religious satire so beloved by Luis Buñuel. But it is more than just an attack on the frequent hypocrisy of Christian ideology. It is also a fascinating historical film, revealing the intricate social relationships of plantation life, the shocking brutalities of black slavery, and the African cultural heritage preserved by the slaves. Above all else, *The Last Supper* is a provocative and engrossing moral tale dealing with the universal themes of transference of guilt, the avoidance of responsibility, and the ceaseless human desire for freedom.

* * *

Tomas Gutierrez Alea was born in Havana in 1928. After graduating from Havana University's Law School, he studied film direction at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome. Upon returning to Cuba, he formed part of the group of young intellectuals in the cultural society, *Nuestro Tiempo* (Our Times), which made a short experimental film, *El Megano*, on the life of the charcoal makers in the Zapata Swamps, and which was seized by the Batista dictatorship.

Upon the triumph of the Revolution, he helped organize the cinema section for the Department of Culture of the Rebel Army, and later was one of the founding members of the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematograficos (ICAIC), the Cuban Film Institute. He directed his first feature film in 1960, *Historias de la Revolucion*. His subsequent features include *Las Doce Sillas* (The Twelve Chairs), *La Muerte de un Burocrata* (The Death of A Bureaucrat), and *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* (Memories of Underdevelopment).

PENUMBRA—STRAY DOGS—THE AROUSAL OF SILHOUETTES

curated by Mark McElhatten

Thursday, December 3, 1992

"A penumbra is a space of partial illumination, as in an eclipse between the 'perfect' shadow and the greatest points of full light. It can also indicate a surrounding region, a periphery or fringe. In N.Y.C. I originated a series called *Penumbra* featuring such artists as Ken Jacobs, Leslie Thornton, Mark LaPore, Nina Fonoroff, and Tony Oursler. It tried to create viewing experiences of intimacy and risk in which finished works were 'unmade' in order to relive their developments or retrieve lost moments of unutilized attainment. These new programs will continue to play dog-catcher to stray dogs of intention roaming unseen."

—Mark McElhatten

early samples *Peggy and Fred in Hell* (Leslie Thornton)

Burma Rolls (Mark La Pore)

preliminary studies for *Land's End*; first study for *Figure/Ground* (Phil Solomon)

footage and tests for *Pharaoh's Belt* (Lewis Klahr)

Plant Oddities (found educational film — Mark McElhatten)

Singing Sandwiches (commercial)

Bedtime Story (meat version/special edit — Esther Shatavsky)

Conscious (work-in-progress — Julie Murray)

Model Release (Tony Oursler w/Constance DeJong)

Par-Schiz-Position (Tony Oursler w/Kim Gordon)

Test (Tony Oursler w/Karen Finley)

Unedited Don Scouting portion/later appearing in *Peggy and Fred and Pete* (Leslie Thornton)

No Zone (Greta Snider)

San Francisco Cinematheque

Imperfect Solutions (Scott Stark)

Jack Nicholson/Amelia Earhart (Leslie Thornton)

Changing Azazelle (Ken Jacobs)

PMS
POST-MODERN SISTERS
presents the premiere of
Just Beneath The Skin

Saturday, December 5, 1992

Post-Modern Sisters is a collective of women filmmakers which supports innovative and challenging works by women by distributing curated programs of short films nationwide. Their first program has been touring, reaching from New York to Alaska. This premiere of their second program includes new works by Windy Chien, Claire Dannenbaum and Cauleen Smith from San Francisco, Paula Froehle, Holly Hey, Hollie Lavenstein and Yvonne Welbon from Chicago, Jennifer Reeves from New York and Louise Bourque from Montreal. In this tightly woven program muteness, assimilation and resistance intertwine within spaces created by art history, racist iconography, Hollywood mythology, a Kurdistan travelogue, home movies and agoraphobia.

I (1991), by Hollie Lavenstein; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes

Look closely to catch the words providing the riddle backdrop for Holly Lavenstein's beautiful cut-out animation of *I*. Utilizing archetypal female faces from Art History (painted or otherwise created by men), the filmmaker represents and then re-creates the images of women throughout time and then un.masks the images by allowing them to freely combine with one another in uncanny and sometimes frightening meldings. The recombining of the masculine and the feminine is of particular concern as we move through the oddly defined space of established images and "familiar" faces (Who is a woman? Who is a man? What is a woman? What is a man?). The "faces" are moved across the screen in a domino effect of one face willing the next into action as it touches it while the soundtrack attempts to give voice to these combinations—all still entrapped by learned or dictated definitions. It is the viewer's expectations that are challenged by this work. Be careful not to be seduced merely by the uncanny beauty of this film—as we are often seduced by Art imitating, legitimizing, and not questioning. Lavenstein is asking that we face much more.

—Michelle Fleming

Chronicles of a Lying Spirit by Kelly Gabron (1992), by Cauleen Smith; 16mm, color, sound, 5.5 minutes

For Cauleen Smith bonds with community are primary. Through her work she attempts to make the invisible visible by challenging form structure, and stereotype. She artfully turns her rage into a celebration of African pride and beauty. *Chronicles of a Lying Spirit* by Kelly Gabron explores truth and fiction in an auto-biography which places the filmmaker into a playful collective memory.

Girls Daydream About Hollywood (1992), by Jennifer Reeves; 16mm, b&w, sound, 5 minutes

This young artist expresses rage at our culture's acceptance and beautification of sexual violence toward women in this (her second at age 20) film *Girls Daydream About Hollywood*. Re-appropriated images from films are shot, optically printed and collaged in a way to emulate a visual assault on the viewer.

Just Words (1991), by Louise A. Bourque; 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes

Just Words tells the story of a woman who, overburdened by the weight of roles imposed upon her by times and generation, comes to enclose herself in the depths of a profound silence, to withdraw in her inner world which allows for a life of her own. Inspired by *Not I*, a work by Samuel Beckett, the film proceeds by intercutting images from family archives with a giant mouth reciting excerpts from the play. By means of the intimate portrait it offers, *Just Words* addresses the alienation with which women of many different generations have been faced socially through limits of their exclusive roles as wife and mother. The film is a tribute to these women.

Haji (drinking from the stream) (1992), by Claire Dannenbaum; 16mm, b&w, sound, 20 minutes

Using footage of Turkish and Kurdish village life and women at work, *Haji (drinking from the stream)* addresses the multiple meanings behind women's domestic labor, and the social power derived from the marginalized activity of the home. This film explores the notion of performance in everyday life—forms of activity which would otherwise be censorable, dangerous, or threatening—within a gender-segregated and patriarchal culture. By looking at these “not-events”, Claire Dannenbaum counters mainstream ethnographic preoccupations with esoteric or ritual activity (e.g. special occasions and “public” culture typically carried out by/for men). We discover how processes of resistance and empowerment are made tangible in everyday life.

Monique (1990), by Yvonne Welton; 16mm, b&w, sound, 2.5 minutes

Monique is an autobiographical film which uses story-telling and experimental techniques to explore the shadows of an adult's memory of her childhood. The bruised footage and sharp editing create the mood for the filmmaker's painful first confrontation with racism.

Transmission (1991), by Holly Hey; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 20 minutes

Transmission takes us to the other side of racism and sexism, looking back and inside to the process by which ideologies are taught and learned. Among a sea of ignorance and innocence we hold onto an insistent resistance.

ASSIMILATION/a simulation (1992), by Windy Chien; 16mm, color, sound, 20 minutes

Assimilation, best practiced blissfully and blindly, is the compliant response to a system of cultural domination. In *ASSIMILATION/a simulation* Janine is just beginning to realize the fallacy of “successful” assimilation, and takes the object of male fantasy—the China doll, exotic, sexually vulnerable, silent—reflects the challenge of Asian American women's critical awareness. The contrasting images jostle for verity. Ultimately, the filmmaker's voice, speaking within and about the film, supersedes them, asserting the film's very existence as a product of the process which Janine begins, which the filmmaker is still experiencing. A statement of strength and self-empowerment, this is a film in three parts, commentary and reality built in. A simulation. A process. A poem.

Second Skin (1991) by Paula Froehle; 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes

Second Skin explores a woman's struggle to establish and maintain identity amidst the ambivalence of the exterior world. Through the juxtaposition of external voices and the solitary voice of an interior world, Paula Froehle's film encounters the struggle between security and insecurity, confidence and doubt, and the fluctuating perceptions of physical boundaries vs. personal space through an intimate look at a woman's experience with agoraphobia.

—All notes by the filmmakers unless otherwise noted.

**SCOTT MacDONALD PRESENTS:
*Motion Studies***

Sunday, December 6, 1992

“The still widespread assumption that what is generally called “avant-garde film” is a marginal enterprise, peripheral to the history of “real movies,” ignores the fact that what originally inspired the motion picture apparatus itself was a hunger to see, and study, how things move. In one sense or another, all film history is an articulation of Eadweard Muybridge’s interest in laying bare the motion of things in his photographs of humans and animals.”

—Scott MacDonald

Scott MacDonald, author of *A Critical Cinema: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* and *A Critical Cinema 2* (University of California, 1988, 1992) and the forthcoming *Motion Studies* (Cambridge University Press), presents a program of independent films in which the influence of Muybridge’s motion study photographs—especially the human figure’s role in those photographs—is particularly evident.

Turning Torso Drawdown (1971), by Robert Huot; 16mm, b&w/color, silent, 16 minutes

Riverbody (1970), by Anne Severson (Alice Anne Parker); 16mm, b&w, sound, 7 minutes

Near the Big Chakra (1972), by Anne Severson (Alice Anne Parker); 16mm, color, silent, 17 minutes

I-94 (1974), by James Benning and Bette Gordon; 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes

Fly (1970), by Yoko Ono; 16mm, color, sound, 25 minutes

Pièce Touchée (Austria, 1989), by Martin Arnold; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes

Scott MacDonald has written for *Film Quarterly*, *October*, *Afterimage*, *Wide Angle*, *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, *Cinema Journal*, and other periodicals. He is Professor of Film and American Literature at Utica College, New York.

**STAN BRAKHAGE—RECENT WORK REVISITED
*Program I***

Thursday, December 10, 1992

Three Hand-painted Films (1986-1990); 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes total

Nightmusic (1986, 30 seconds) This little film (originally painted on IMAX) attempts to capture the beauty of sadness, as the eyes have it when closed in meditation or sorrow.

Rage Net (1988, 30 seconds) Much of what has been said about the above film could be repeated here, except that *Rage Net* arises from meditation upon, rather than being trapped psychologically by, rage.

The Glaze of Cathexis (1990, 3 minutes) This hand-painted film is easily the most minutely detailed ever given me to do, for it traces (as best I'm able) the hypnagogic aftereffect of psychological cathexis as designated by Freud in his first (and unfinished) book on the subject—"Toward a Scientific Psychology."

Passage Through: A Ritual (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 50 minutes

When I received the tape of Philip Corner's *Through the Mysterious Barricade, Lumen 1* (after F. Couperin), he included a note that thanked me for my film, *The Riddle of Lumen*, he'd just seen and which had in some way inspired this music. I, in turn, was so moved by the tape he sent I immediately asked his permission to "set it to film."

It required the most exacting editing process ever; and in the course of that work it occurred to me that I'd originally made *The Riddle of Lumen* hoping someone would make an "answering" film and entertain my visual riddle in the manner of the riddling poets of yore. I most expected Hollis Frampton (because of *Zorn's Lemma*) to pick up the challenge; but he never did. In some sense I think composer Corner has—and now we have this dance of riddles as music and film combine to make "passage," in every sense of the word, further possible. (To be absolutely "true to" the ritual of this passage, the two reels of the film should be shown on one projector, taking the normal amount of time, without rewinding reel #1 or showing the finish and start leaders of either—especially without changing the sound dials—between reels.)

"It was with a minimal number of images that Brakhage constructed *Passage Through: A Ritual* . . . a film that is very ambiguous in its relationship toward light. . . Both in their number and in what they convey on a representational level, the images of *Passage Through* are sparse. Yet paradoxically it is this paucity of imagery that gives the film its strength. As in *The Riddle of Lumen*, there is a level of equality established between the images, but it is not something translatable into levels of value. Again, a delicate balance is struck between significance and insignificance. The lack of imagery on the one hand leads the viewer to be generous in its affording of value to each image, while at the same time, suspect of any such value at all. The gaps between images are pregnant spaces full of anticipation and apprehension. There is no basis for security. Each image becomes precious. Corner's composition, instead of occupying a constant, stable position, further contributes to the feeling of groundlessness with its abstraction, its tentativeness, and even the tension between its source (a Couperin piano piece) and itself."

—Kurt Easterwood

The Thatch of Night (1990); 16mm, color, silent, 10 minutes

As a poem might be said to contain the night through a weave of words, so have I in this film attempted such a container with warp and woof of emblematic visions. (Homage to Marie Menken's *Notebooks*).

I . . . Dreaming (1988); 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes

This is a setting-to-film of a "collage" of Stephen Foster phrases by composer Joel Haertling. The recurring musical themes and melancholia of Foster refer to "loss of love" in the popular "torch song" mode; but the film envisions a reawakening of such senses-of-love as children know, and it posits (along a line of words scratched over picture) the psychology of waiting.

Delicacies of Molten Horror Synapse (1991); 16mm, color, silent, 10 minutes

The primary "Molten Horror" is T.V.—though there are other horrors metaphored in the film. Four superimposed rolls of handpainted and bi-packed television negative imagery are edited so as to approximated the hypnagogic process whereby the optic nerves resist grotesque inclusions of luminescent light.

—All comments by Stan Brakhage except where noted.

STAN BRAKHAGE—RECENT WORK REVISITED

Program II

Sunday, December 13, 1992

Visions in Meditation #1 (1989); 16mm, color, silent, 20 minutes

This is a film inspired by Gertrude Stein's "Stanzas in Meditation," in which the filmmaker has edited a meditative series of images of landscapes and human symbolism "indicative of that field-of-consciousness within which humanity survives thoughtfully." It is a film "as in a dream," this first film in a proposed series of such being composed of images shot in the New England states and Eastern Canada. It begins with an antique photograph of a baby and ends with a child loose on the landscape, interweaving images of Niagara Falls with a variety of New England and Eastern Canadian scenes, antique photographs, windows, old farms and cityscapes, as it moves from deep winter through glare ice, to thaw.

Vision in Meditation #2: Mesa Verde (1989); 16mm, color, silent, 17 minutes

This meditation takes its visual imperative from the occasion of Mesa Verde, which I came to see finally as a Time rather than any such solidity as Place. "There is a terror here," were the first words which came to mind on seeing these ruins; and for two days after, during all my photography, I was haunted by some unknown occurrence which reverberated still in these rocks and rock-structures and environs. I can no longer believe that the Indians abandoned this solid habitation because of drought, lack-of-water, somesuch. (These explanations do not, anyway, account for the fact that all memory of The Place, i.e., where it is, was eradicated from tribal memory, leaving only legend of a Time when such a place existed.) Midst the rhythms, then, of editing, I was compelled to introduce images which corroborate what the rocks said, and what the film strips seemed to say: The abandonment of Mesa Verde was an eventuality (rather than an event), was for All Time thus, and had been intrinsic from the first such human building.

Vision in Meditation #3: Plato's Cave (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes

Plato's cave would seem to be the *idee fixe* of this film. The vortex would, then, be the phenomenological world—overwhelming, and thus "uninhabitable." The structures of thoughtful meditation are naturally, therefore, equivocal so that, for example, even a tornado-in-the-making will be both "dust devil" and "finger of God" at one with the clockwork sun and the strands of ice/fire, horizon, rock, clouds, and so on.

The film is, I believe, a vision of mentality as most people must (to the irritation of Plato) have it, safely enclaved and metaphorical, for the nervous system to survive. All the same I hope, with this work, to have brought a little "rush light" into the darkness. The film is set to the three movements of Rick Corrigan's "Memory Suite." Its multiple super-impositions are superbly timed by Louise Fujiki, of Western Cine, as usual.

Vision in Meditation #4: D.H. Lawrence (1990); 16mm, color, silent, 19 minutes

I've made three pilgrimages in my life: the 40-some-year home of Sigmund Freud in Vienna, Emily Dickinson's in Amherst, and the mountain ranch and crypt, would you call it?, of D.H. Lawrence, outside Taos. I keep returning to the Lawrence environs again and again; and this last time attempted photography in that narrow little building where his ashes were (or were not) deposited (contradictory stories about that). There is a child-like sculpture of The Phoenix at the far end of the room, a perfectly lovely emblem to deflate any pomposity people have added to Lawrence's "I rise in flames..." The building is open, contains only a straw chair (remindful of the one Van Gogh painted) and a broom, which I always use with delight to sweep the dust and leaves from this simple abode. I have tried to make a film as true to the spirit of Lawrence as is this gentle chapel in homage to him. I have attempted to leave each image within the film free to be itself and only obliquely in the service of Lawrence's memory. I have wanted to make it a film within which that child-Phoenix can reasonably rest.

(Bruce Elder sends me this quote from D.H. Lawrence, which may help to explain why *Vision in Meditation #4* is subtitled in his name: "...there must be mutation swifter than iridescence, haste, not rest, come-and-go, not fixity, inconclusiveness, immediacy, the quality of life itself, without denouncement or close." — *Poetry of the Present*, intro to the American edition of *New Poems*, 1918.)

—All film descriptions by Stan Brakhage taken from Canyon Cinema Catalog 7, 1992.

1492-1992: 500 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

Program III

¡O No Coronado! by Craig Baldwin

Black God White Devil (Deus E O Diabolo Na Terra Do Sol)

by Glauber Rocha

Thursday, December 17, 1992

¡O No Coronado! (1992), by Craig Baldwin; 16mm, color, sound, 40 minutes

Nao Bustamante, Matthew Day, and Gina Pacaldo star in local detritus-meister Craig Baldwin's aggressively reconstructed Conquistador chronicle. In *¡O No Coronado!* Baldwin collages the black-comic re-staging of the 1540 European invasion of those lands now known as the American Southwest with wildly diverse "found" imagery, video-to-film FX, and a time-warped musical mix to critique not only the genocidal Spanish soldiers-of-fortune but also documentary and theatrical conventions of historical representation themselves.

Black God White Devil (Brazil, 1964) directed by Glauber Rocha; 16mm, b&w, sound, 100 minutes
In Portuguese with English subtitles.

When Glauber Rocha's film was first screened in 1964, veteran film director Luis Buñuel extolled, "*Black God White Devil* is the most beautiful thing I have seen in more than a decade, filled with savage poetry."

Black God White Devil is a fictional account of the history of the Sertão, the barren hinterlands of northeastern Brazil, where religious superstition has been preserved through generations. Though Catholic, the illiterate people of the region divide their spiritual allegiance between Catholic priests and popular lay religious leaders. Disciples of these self-proclaimed "prophets" believe their spiritual leader can predict the future and solve their problems. Often the "prophet" preaches a doctrine combining spiritual and political principles in an effort to meet the problems arising from the economic underdevelopment of the region.

At the end of the 19th century, one of these "prophets," Anthony the Counselor, preached a doctrine of hate against the Republic. This religious doctrine was derived from the ideas of Sebastianism, which had been inherited from the Portuguese colonizers of Brazil. According to this doctrine the world would end in 1900 and St. Sebastian would appear with his army and save the faithful.

Many of Anthony's followers were experts in the technique of guerilla warfare, but the inhabitants of the Sertão thought the holy man's divine powers were responsible for his victories. Although he was finally killed in 1987 by a strong army detachment, his legend was kept alive for years.

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Director Glauber Rocha, who was known as one of the chief theorists of the Brazilian *cinema novo*, was born in Vitoria de Conquista, in the Sertão of the State of Bahia, Brazil, in 1938. His first feature film was *Barravento* (1961) and was shown in New York in 1963 at the First New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center. *Black God White Devil*, his second film, was awarded first prize in the International Free film Festival in Porreta Terme, Italy, 1964. A right-wing coup in Brazil in 1966 sent Rocha into self-imposed exile, but he returned later that year to make *Terra em Transe*, which many feel is his greatest achievement. His other *cinema novo* milestone was *Antonio das Mortes*, which won the 1969 Cannes Festival Jury Award. *Antonio das Mortes* is the synthesis of Rocha's career, brilliantly capturing the contradictions of Bahia, Rocha's native province, in all its polyglot, polychrome extravagance. Glauber Rocha died on 23 August 1981 of pneumonia at the age of 42.

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