

Program Notes

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San Francisco, California  
2007

# SAN FRANCISCO CINEMATHEQUE

## 1998 PROGRAM NOTES

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# SAN FRANCISCO CINEMATHEQUE

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# SAN FRANCISCO CINEMATHEQUE

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## ALWAYS AT THE AVANT-GARDE OF THE AVANT-GARDE UNTIL PARADISE AND BEYOND

Tuesday, January 20, 1998—Pacific Film Archive—7:30 pm

Presented live by the French section of *the international front of supercapitalist youths*©. Some people might live happier ever after if they understood better why the lettrists make these types of movies instead of simply making well-made films, good old war films, tear-jerking love films, gadget-filled science fiction films, action-packed karate films or kung fu films, like Steven Spielmerd, Michael Snuf, or Jean-Luc Grolard. Cinema being like god, the lettrists (who as some anonymous sources indicate, gave it the last blow) have been pissing on its grave ever since 1951, which may explain why their films alone will be remembered by future generations. Anyway, you are cordially invited to contribute to the radical critique of political economy and civilization in general by donating any piece of paper, newspaper clipping, sticker, photograph, slide, piece of film, vinyl record, audio cassette, audio tape, videocassette, compact disc, floppy disc, etc., which you might have in your possession. (Once given, contributions will not be returned.)—The council of the French section of *the international front of supercapitalist youths*©.

*Imagine*, infinitesimal film by Albert Dupont, 1978. *The Evidence*, infinitesimal film by Roland Sabatier, 1966. *Vomit Cinema*, *Spit Cinema*, *Snot Cinema*, *Excrement Cinema*, *Excretion Cinema*, esthapeïrist film by Maurice Lemaître, 1980. *Like a Silent River: The Happy Deaf and Blind Man's Film*, esthapeïrist film by Maurice Lemaître, 1980. *To Make a Film*, supertemporal film by Maurice Lemaître, 1963. *A Super-Commercial Film*, infinitesimal and supertemporal film reduced solely to cinema's economic dimension by Roland Sabatier, 1976. *Your Film*, infinitesimal film by Maurice Lemaître, 1969. *A Sentimental Film*, esthapeïrist and hyperchronist film by Maurice Lemaître, 1980. *Presence(s)*, imaginary, nonexistent, or impossible infinitesimal film by Frédérique Devaux, 1980. *A Film to Be Made*, esthapeïrist and hyperchronist film by Maurice Lemaître, 1970. *The Supertemporal Film (The Auditorium of Idiots)*, supertemporal film by Isidore Isou, 1960. *Contribution to the Radical Critique of Political Economy and Civilization in General (pseudo-subfuturist plagiarism)*®, by the French section of *the international front of supercapitalist youths*©, 1997. *Our Cinema*, supertemporal film by Maurice Lemaître, 1982. *Disco*, accepted and denied esthapeïrist and supertemporal film by Roland Sabatier, 1978. *The Infinite Cinematographic Innovation*, supertemporal film by Isidore Isou, 1965. *A Film to Take Home*, infinitesimal film by Maurice Lemaître, 1979.

Total running time: c. 2-1/2 to 3 hours, with thanks to the letterist filmmakers and to the council of the French section of the international front of supercapitalist youths©.

## FILMS OF JOYCE WIELAND

Introduced by Janis Crystal Lipzin

*Thursday, February 19, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm*

Art writer Lucy Lippard has said: "Joyce Wieland is one of those wild cards that saves the contemporary art world from its straight and narrow conformity to an institutionalized 'wildness.'"

Born in 1931 in Toronto, her great grandfather was a clown; her father and uncles were in Pantomime and Music Hall. In 1955 she joined Graphic Films, an animated film company directed by George Dunning who later made *Yellow Submarine*. Her first job there was to animate Niagara Falls. Her early personal films were parodies of tea commercials and her first painting exhibition was in 1959 at Isaacs Gallery in Toronto. When she and husband Michael Snow moved to New York in 1962 they were more a part of the music and underground film scene than the art scene. She began to make her own 8mm films after seeing work by George Kuchar and Jack Smith in 1963. She said "People were revealing themselves—so much of it was autobiographical. There was a whole cinema language that people were inventing—without money." By the late 1960s, Wieland says "I was made to feel in no uncertain terms by a few male filmmakers that I had overstepped my place, that in New York my place was making little films. ... There was a tendency within the avant-garde in terms of writing and criticism to underrate my work because I wasn't a theoretician. Many of the men were increasingly interested in films about visual theories. I feel there was a downgrading of my work. It didn't get its proper place, its proper consideration." When Wieland moved back to Canada, in 1971, she became increasingly involved in cultural activism with issues of ecology, feminism, and Canadian resistance to American imperialism.

In 1984 Joyce Wieland was awarded the Order of Canada, the first woman ever so honored. In 1987, she was honored with a retrospective of her work at the Art Gallery of Ontario—the first afforded a living Canadian woman artist. (Janis Crystal Lipzin)

"Wieland's work became associated with the shift to the rigorous new way of seeing, the intense, almost philosophical speculations on cinema itself that came to be described as 'structural' film. Playful wit and ironist that she is, Wieland in particular gives the lie to the impression of austerity that radiates from the label. Her repetitive formats, loops, re-filming, long takes, and static camera are first at the service of the irreverent, nose-thumbing, Dadaist side of her artistic personality, strong on a sense of humour that can be ribald or teasingly ironic .... But a second side is simultaneously present: a side that demands that we re-look at objects, animals, landscapes with fresh, un-prejudiced eyes, and that gives us the rich colours and textures of so many of her images." (Simon Field)

"None of these films can be watched without being constantly reminded that here is a filmmaker who isn't just a filmmaker, but is also a painter, sculptor, collagist, quiltmaker, occasional political cartoonist, and artist working comfortably across a range of media and someone who from the late 60s onwards saw herself as a 'cultural activist.'" (Simon Field)

*Water Sark* (1966); 16mm (from 8mm), color, sound-on-cassette, 14 minutes  
Soundtrack by Carla Bley, Mike Mantler, and Ray Jessel.

"[H]er first fully realised 'table top' film [in which she] perfectly expresses her spontaneous, unpretentious approach to film. While it might echo the slightly earlier, but very similar approach of ... Marie Menken ... or the 'amateur' aesthetic then being proposed by Stan Brakhage, her open-minded playfulness and celebration of the domestic, housewife's world is very distinct from the latter's male *I*eye perspective." (Simon Field)

Its whole premise was if you couldn't go out what would you do if you had to stay home, what kind of filmmaker would you become? That's why it's called 'the housewife is high,' that's a Paul Haines statement. It's like making a drawing only you are making it with light, and with a camera. (JW)

*Catfood* (1967–68); 16mm, color, sound, 13 minutes  
Made with Wieland's cat Dwight.

"[*Catfood*] ... studies the eating habits of a luxuriously furred cat devouring separately five fish just arrived from the market. The viewpoint is always as though the camera were held at the edge of the table while the cat operates on top against a black backdrop. It is filled with supreme succulent color, sometimes recalling Manet in the silvery glints of the fish scales, and ... getting the deep ovular splendor of a Caravaggio." (Manny Farber, *Artforum*)

It's like I'm sticking up for these poor creatures ... I was trying to legitimize that subject matter. If I loved Beatrix Potter when I was a kid ... is it wrong for me to love it now? ... If you were a female in the generation that I came from no matter what you did it would never be as good. Therefore you were feared in a way because it meant that there was no possibility to compete, therefore you might just as well make something weird yourself. It wouldn't have the legitimacy of the general forms at that time and that's what saved me in a way to become who I became because I was not successful at the imitation or the participation in the patriarchal view so in a way, I could play and be myself, which was a gift to me. (JW)

*Rat Life and Diet in North America* (1968); 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes

"[*Rat Life and Diet in North America*] may be about the best (or richest) political movie around. It's all about rebels (enacted by real rats) and police (enacted by real cats). After a long suffering under the cats, the rats break out of the prison (in a full scale rebellion) and escape to Canada. There they take up organic gardening, with no DDT in the grass. It is a parable, a satire, an adventure movie, or you can call it pop art or any art you want—I find it one of the most original films made recently." (Jonas Mekas)

[A] film against the corporate military industrial structure of the global village. It was a domestic epic made on my kitchen table with my pets who were gerbils, and my cats too. It's also a political film. But it all came from reading an article in *Scientific American* about rat behavior under crowded conditions, simulating New York conditions .... They were haunted little characters, little prisoners, little victims, no matter how nicely they were treated, they were wild creatures and after photographing them for months, I started to see what the film was about; their escape to freedom. (JW)

*Dripping Water* (1969) with Michael Snow; 16mm, b&w, sound, 10.5 minutes

"You see nothing but a white, crystal white plate, and water dripping into the plate, from the ceiling, from high, and you hear the sound of the water dripping. The film is ten minutes long. I can imagine only St. Francis looking at a water plate and water dripping so lovingly, so respectfully, so serenely .... Snow and Wieland's film uplifts the object, and leaves the viewer with a finer attitude toward the world around him; it opens his eyes to the phenomenal world. And how can you love people if you don't love water, stone, grass?" (Jonas Mekas, *The New York Times*)

*Solidarity* (1973); 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes

Made with Judy Steed, filmed at a demonstration of striking women at the Dare Cookie Plant, Kitchener, Ontario in 1973. The soundtrack is made up of electronically amplified speeches from the stage.

There should not have to be sensual deprivation. There should always be a giving to the sense and to the enrichment of the soul. Most political works are very puritanical, very angry .... It's a way to tell the truth but it's also a way to open vision, how to see. It's not just jamming down a message. (JW)

*A and B in Ontario* (1984) with Hollis Frampton; 16mm, b&w, sound, 17 minutes

A collaboration made with her close friend and fellow filmmaker Hollis Frampton; the footage was shot in 1967.

We were going to go to Toronto and have a holiday there with some friends and we both agreed that we should make a film out of this, which would be about each other and that is all that we had decided .... It just sort of evolved .... Then when we went back to New York ... we didn't come to any conclusion .... It starts in one place and goes from a to b, but for him the a and b was the A and B roll in Ontario .... It was because of Hollis Frampton's death (in the spring of 1984) that ... his wife asked me to finish it. ... The sound was built from the ground up in the studio .... I went out with a friend to take sound and we brought it back and we had to fool around with it a lot. There were the different sounds where the leaves are stiff and they hit each other, his footprints on the beach .... It was just a revelation to me. (JW)

*Birds at Sunrise* (1972–85); 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes

This film was originally photographed in 1972. Birds from my window were filmed during the winter, through the spring, with the early morning light. I became caught up in their frozen world and their ability to survive the bitter cold. I welcomed their chirps and their songs which offered life and hope for spring. In 1984 I was part of a cultural exchange between Canada and Israel. During my visit my unfinished movie came to mind. A connection was established in my mind—so that the suffering of the birds became, in a sense, symbolic of the Jews and their survival through suffering. The film begins with the reading in Hebrew of the 23rd Psalm. This lays the spiritual ground for the film. I dedicate this film to Alaya. (JW)

**Joyce Wieland Filmography:**

*Peggy's Blue Skylight* (1965); *Water Sark* (1966); *Handtinting* (1967); *1933* (1967); *Sailboat* (1967); *Catfood* (1967–68); *La Raison Avant la Passion (Reason Over Passion)* (1968–69); *Dripping Water* (co-directed with Michael Snow) (1969); *Pierre Vallières* (1972); *Rat Life and Diet in North America* (1973); *Solidarity* (1973); *The Far Shore* (1975); *A and B in Ontario* (1984); *Birds at Sunrise* (1972–85)

*Program Notes and introduction by Janis Crystal Lipzin, an artist working in film and diverse media. She has produced a public radio program about Joyce Wieland and is currently Professor of Filmmaking and Interdisciplinary Arts at the San Francisco Art Institute.*

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**EARLY EVENING EXPERIMENTAL**

**PROGRAM 1**

*Sunday, February 22, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—5:30 pm*

*Prelude: Dog Star Man* (1961) by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 25 minutes

*Window Water Baby Moving* (1959) by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 12 minutes

*Eaux d'Artifice* (1953) by Kenneth Anger; 16mm, color, sound, 13 minutes

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Pre-Publication and Screening Party for

## BIG AS LIFE: AN AMERICAN HISTORY OF 8MM FILMS

In Conjunction with the Series presented at the Museum of Modern Art, New York  
February 6, 1998–December 1999

*Sunday, February 22, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

Tonight's program is being held in conjunction with the Museum of Modern Art's (in New York City) 50-program retrospective of small gauge filmmaking as art in the United States, beginning in the 1940s and continuing through today. The series began on Friday, February 6 and will continue at the Museum on a weekly basis, with periodic seasonal interruptions, into the year 2000. Initiated and co-curated by MoMA Associate Curator Jytte Jensen and myself, "Big As Life" will present work by 118 different film and video makers, many receiving their first public screening and, whenever possible, in their original formats. Our purpose was to acknowledge the body of wonderful films, made privately and largely for personal expression, which has been created since 8mm film was first introduced in 1932, and to offer the public a chance to share in experiences of uncommon intimacy—especially critical now that intimacy and vulnerability have virtually vanished from the American scene.

Of the 118 (not 1,000, as Edward Guthmann in the *San Francisco Chronicle* mis-heard it) film/video makers included in the retrospective, nearly one quarter live or lived (when making their work) in the Bay Area, so it seemed like a natural occasion to have our own celebration of small-gauge and independent filmmaking, focusing on work by some of these makers. Also, in reference again to Mr. Guthmann's article, Jytte Jensen and my intention was not only to represent 8mm as an embattled dying form, but rather to help appreciate particular aspects of the film experience/tradition (however long it will live) in juxtaposition with video or newer technologies, especially as these tools are being used to continue aspects of the small-gauge heritage.

This program was scheduled to coincide with our publication of *Cinematograph #6*, a volume co-produced by MoMA devoted to writings, stills, an exhibition list, and filmographies of 8mm filmmakers included in the series. Unfortunately, production (including an editorial process moving between San Francisco, New York, and Athens, Georgia) has held up the book's release, but we guarantee that it will hit stores throughout the Bay Area (and be available at all Cinematheque screenings) by late March.

Tonight's program of 11 films and videos moves between uses of 8mm as a tool for private reflection or contemplation and for its ready availability to record home fantasy and drama. The first part includes silt's *kemia*, a stunning blend of abstract forms resulting from photo-chemical alteration and disintegration with subtle intimations of recognizable imagery; Ellen Gaine's *Fragment*, a mesmerizing play of black and white light reflecting off the surfaces of rippling water; Ken Paul Rosenthal's *Near Windows*, which quietly contemplates daily activities observed from his apartment; Scott Stark's *Crazy*, which uses the nature of sound-on-film recording to create a whimsically in-camera-edited Super-8 variant of a popular song; Janis Crystal Lipzin's *Right Eye/Left Eye* which turns a "how-to" film on photographic developing into a somber exposé of the photo-chemical process itself; and Jacalyn White's *Waiting for X to Happen*, an intricate sound-image montage of "natural" textures and rhythms.

The second part begins with another film by silt, *Shadows of the Son*, a haunting vision of seemingly innocuous children's play which is revealed to have ominous overtones; Mike Kuchar's *Tootsies in Autumn*, an early '60s home-melodrama chronicling the angst of spiritual isolation; Danny Plotnick and Laura Rosow's *Pillow Talk*, a raucous and unruly glimpse of apartment-living-from-hell; Stuart Sherman's *Don't Hang Up, I'm Freezing* a dia-mono-logue with the 8mm video camera as his only witness and George Kuchar's recent *Uncle Evil*, an alternately funny and horrifying vision/interpretation of parenthood and family home life. (Steve Anker)

*kemia* (1994) by silt; Super 8mm and 8mm, color, silent, 10 minutes (@ 6fps)

"It turns out that an eerie type of chaos can lurk just behind a façade of order—and yet, deep inside the chaos lurks an even eerier type of order." (Douglas Hofstadter)

This film in seven parts occurred spontaneously in the midst of, or on the way toward, larger works—unplanned births conceived in a darkness where the night of the eye's heart and black river bottom soil meet. (silt)

*Fragment* (1985) by Ellen Gaine; Super 8mm, b&w, silent, 14 minutes

*Fragment* meditates exquisitely on different levels, reflections and shapes around a body of water ... a study about the interplay of the four classic humors—fire, earth, water, and air.

*Near Windows* (1997) by Ken Paul Rosenthal; Super 8mm, color, silent, 15 minutes

Nearby windows frame and illuminate four years of voyeuristic observations lyrically woven into a time-lapsed tapestry of light, unsuspecting neighbors, and street drama. (KPR)

*Crazy* (1987) by Scott Stark; Super 8mm, color, sound, 3 minutes

The Patsy Cline standard is sung *a capella* by the artist, each mournful phrase resonating in a different urban location, all shot in a single roll of Super-8 film. Completely edited in the camera. (SS)

*Right Eye/Left Eye* (1983-84) by Janis Crystal Lipzin; Super 8mm, color, sound, 6 minutes

*Right Eye/Left Eye* may be viewed as a film or as part of a three-projector locational film installation which reproduces the interior of a photographic darkroom, viewed by spectators through a series of eye holes in a blackened window. The film component consists of World War II Navy training footage describing an early three-dimensional photo system called Vectrographs. This film was re-edited and altered in printing by superimposing hand-processed color motion picture film over the original found footage. The original Navy films underwent such severe sabotage that its function changes from that of an instructional film to that of an anti-educational film. (JCL)

*Waiting for X to Happen* (1984) by Jacalyn White; Super 8mm, color, sound, 6 minutes

"It seems I've spent most of my life waiting ... for X to happen." You can fill in the blank any way you like. (JW)

— 10 - minute intermission —

*Shadows of the Son* (1996) by silt; Super 8mm, color, sound, 7 minutes

*Shadows of the Son* plays like a music box. It opens, unwinds, and closes. Images move from inner circle to outer frame creating a shifting mandala of moons, endoscopic miracles, home-movie childhoods, solar birds, and shadow earth. A lament to an absence born in the laboring moon's eclipse. (silt)

*Tootsies in Autumn* (1962) by Mike and George Kuchar; 8mm, color, sound, 12 minutes

*Tootsies* was started after having dinner at a friend's house. The film was then continued following various other dinner engagements with friends. It is considered an early 8mm classic.

*Pillow Talk* (1991) by Danny Plotnick and Laura Rosow; Super 8mm, color, sound, 18 minutes

Extreme manipulation of filmic time and space combined with an impressionistic lighting scheme help create an urban spaces nightmare. They're fighting downstairs, they're fucking next door, they're stealing your clothes in the laundry room, and you're no better than the rest. Loquacious and lugubrious. Sorta like *Jeanne Dielman* meets "Laverne & Shirley." (DP)

*Don't Hang Up, I'm Freezing* (1993) by Stuart Sherman; video, color, sound, 5 minutes

A performance/play on language and food, with the camera as the only witness.

*Uncle Evil* (1996) by George Kuchar; 8mm video, color, sound, 5 minutes

A portrait of Panos Panagos and Suzie Ijijian's son. I had been there for two hours when I decided that I needed to take out my video camera and film their kid. (GK)



**Tonight's Filmmakers:**

**Ellen Gaine** studied filmmaking in Binghamton with Larry Gottheim and Ken Jacobs. A Bay Area resident since 1982, she works exclusively in Regular 8 and Super 8 and prefers black and white.

**George and Mike Kuchar** were born in 1942 in the Bronx. Their long relationship with small format film began as young boys when they borrowed their Aunt's Regular-8 camera; at that time, "Whatever you could afford, you bought." Each has taught at schools across the U.S., and George continues to inspire students at the San Francisco Art Institute. Their joint autobiography, *Reflections from a Cinematic Cesspool*, was published last spring.

**Janis Crystal Lipzin** is an interdisciplinary artist who has been making Super-8 films for 25 years. She is currently Professor of Filmmaking and Interdisciplinary Art at the San Francisco Art Institute.

**Danny Plotnick** has made 14 Super-8 films since 1985. He cut his first film with a rusty razor blade and a splicing block devoid of registration pins. He currently teaches Super-8 classes at Film Arts Foundation, as well as workshops around the country.

**Ken Paul Rosenthal** is a San Francisco-based Super-8 filmmaker who teaches classes in hand-processing at Film Arts Foundation. He contributed the article "Antidote for a Virtual World: Hand Processing Super-8 Film" to *Cinematograph 6: Big As Life*.

**Stuart Sherman** is an internationally known performance artist and creator of "one-man spectacle" performances, as well as a sculptor and prolific filmmaker. He is currently living in retreat at a nearby Zen center and probably doesn't know that his video is being screened this evening.

**silt** is a collaborative group (Christian Farrell, Keith Evans, and Jeff Warrin) that creates films and multiple-projector performances, as well as film-based installations. They are currently Artists-in-Residence at the Headlands Center for the Arts.

**Scott Stark** has made more than 50 films and videos in the last 18 years, a large portion of them in 8mm, and has created a number of installations and performances using projected images. He is also webmaster of Flicker <<http://www.sirius.com/~sstark>>, the worldwide web site for experimental and personal cinema. We will be showing his newest video, *Noema*, in March.

**Jacalyn White** started making Super-8 films in 1976. She is no longer waiting for X to happen; now everything is all right.

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## ELISABETH SUBRIN WITH *SWALLOW* AND *SHULIE*

Videomaker Elisabeth Subrin In Person

Thursday, February 26, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm

Elisabeth Subrin is a media artist and Assistant Professor of Film/Video at Amherst and Mount Holyoke Colleges in Western Massachusetts; she previously taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her work has screened widely in North America and Europe; *Shulie* premiered at the New York Film Festival and at the International Film Festival Rotterdam. We welcome her tonight for her West Coast premiere of *Shulie* and her first one-person show ever!

*Swallow* (1995); video, b&w, sound, 28 minutes

Centered around the semi-autobiographical accounts of two precocious suburban girls, *Swallow* examines the problems of detecting and defining symptoms of depression. Through multiple formats and a densely-layered soundtrack, the video unfolds both humorous and painful scenes of potential psychological breakdown to reveal a critical loss of meaning. Weaving narrative, documentary, and experimental strategies, *Swallow* intimately traces the awkward steps from unacknowledged depression to self-recognition. Eventually it becomes clear that the actual "subject" of the tape may not be the fictionalized Sarah Marks, but the narrator herself. *Swallow* also explores the impact of American '70s liberalism on its daughters, a large proportion of whom, ironically, struggle daily with "empowerment." Investigating family relations, recent social history, and popular culture, *Swallow* points to the implicit perils of female access to language and representation, and the complex consequences for anyone who resists prescribed identities. (ES)

"Subrin's cross-texting *Swallow* portrays the artist as a young anorexic, bombarded by the contradictory messages of a malign culture. Personality disorders find their formal equivalents in a work that clouds the borders of the bio-pic by shifting voices, legitimating accounts, and skillful layerings of social history." (Steve Seid, Pacific Film Archive)

"*Swallow* examines the possibility that depression and anorexia are language disorders. The wrongly naming of things, and the subsequent loss of meaning, is one of several devices skillfully and humorously applied to call into question modes of representation. In Subrin's work, she successfully drifts between the first person and third person, child and adult voices to narrate 'her' story (a depressed, anorexic, overachieving girl in the midst of the Feminist Revolution). Shifting voices and merging accounts, she problematizes the myth of the stable, identifiable self, the author, and biography." (Kristine Diekman, in *Language and Disorder*)

*Shulie* (1997); video, color, sound, 36 minutes

"A cinematic doppelgänger without precedent, *Shulie* uncannily and systematically bends time and cinematic code alike, projecting the viewer 30 years into the past to rediscover a woman out of time and a time out of joint—and in Subrin's words, 'to investigate the mythos and residue of the late 1960s.' Staging an extended act of homage as well as a playful, provocative confounding of filmic propriety, Subrin and her collaborator Kim Soss resurrect a little-known 1967 documentary portrait of a young Chicago art student who a few years later would become a notable figure in Second Wave feminism and author of the radical 1970 manifesto *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. Reflecting on her life and times, *Shulie* functions as a prism for refracting questions of gender, race, and class that resonate in our era as in hers, while through painstaking meditation, Subrin makes manifest the eternal return of film." (Mark McElhatten & Gavin Smith, "Views from the Avant-Garde")

"[*Shulie* is] a fascinating tape, not a clone in the end but a brilliant rethinking of history. *Shulie* completes a cycle: the first generation of feminist theory as revisited, fetishized, and worshipped by the new generation. The clothes look damn good, those eyeglasses are fresh all over again ... and, oh, the angst of that confusion, that searching for something that was not yet there, just a dim glow on the horizon that made you feel you were crazy if you didn't know you were right. Subrin has created a document within a document that makes us remember what we didn't know, then makes us realize all over again how much we've lost." (B. Ruby Rich, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*)

## Elisabeth Subrin Videography:

*Interference* (1989); *Evidence Acquired Without Consent* (1990); *Crisis in Woodlawn: The Grace House Project* (1994); *Swallow* (1995); *Shulie* (1997)



## KURT KREN REACHES 50! A MARATHON SCREENING AND POT LUCK

Kurt Kren In Person

*Sunday, March 1, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30pm*

Born in Austria in 1929, Kurt Kren emerged as a filmmaker in the late 1950s as part of the modern Viennese art movement; along with his contemporaries Peter Kubelka, Marc Adrian and Ferry Radax, Kren was at the forefront of the Austrian avant-garde film movement. Utilizing highly systematic and mathematical structures to shape his films, Kren made a number of shorts in the early '60s, including *Baume im Herbst* and *Mama und Papa*. Malcolm Le Grice notes that Kren's films were not simply structured images without human agency, but were engaged in a deeply existential project not unlike that of the very different filmmaker Stan Brakhage: "[L]ike Brakhage, [Kren's] films derive essentially from his passage through the world as an individual, so that for both, the chief protagonist of the film is the person behind the camera. In this extreme of existentialism, choice is the result of immediate subjective response." In 1966 Kren, Hermann Nitsch, Otto Muehl, and Günter Brus founded the Vienna Institute for Direct Art which staged elaborate, performative *aktionen* whose chaotic and sado-masochistic natures were seen as reacting to the emotional fallout of the post-war period. Kren's cinematic collaborations with Muehl and Brus document and transform these *aktionen* into what Hans Hurch has called "a condensation of naked bodies, movement, blood, food, color and a cornucopia of material into a rapid flickering picture sequence, at once offering and depriving the viewer of its content in a wild filmic play." Since the '60s Kren has continued to make films of formal audacity and control including: *Asyl*, *Sentimental Punk*, and *tausendjahrekin*. Tonight's marathon retrospective celebrates Kren's fiftieth film: *Snapspots (For Bruce)*.

### Part One: Recent Works (1978–96)

*50/96: Snapspots (For Bruce)* (1996); 35mm to 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes  
*49/95: tausendjarhekin* (*thousandyearsofcinema*) (1995); 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes  
*47/91: Ein Fest (A Celebration)* (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes  
*46/90: Falter 2* (1990); 35mm to 16mm, b&w, sound, 30 seconds  
*44/85: Foot'-age Shoot'-out* (1985); 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes  
*43/84: 1984* (1984); 16mm, color, silent, 2 minutes  
*42/83: No Film* (1983); 16mm, b&w, silent, 3 seconds  
*41/82: Getting Warm* (1982); 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes  
*40/81: Breakfast im Grauen* (1981); 16mm, b&w, silent, 4 minutes  
*39/81: Which Way to CA?* (1981); 16mm, b&w, silent, 4 minutes  
*38/79: Sentimental Punk* (1979); 16mm, color, silent, 5 minutes  
*37/78: Tree Again* (1978); 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes  
*36/78: Rischart* (1978); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes

### Part Two: Aktion Films (1964–67)

*6/64: Mama und Papa (Materialaktion: Otto Muehl) (Mom and Dad)* (1964); 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes  
*7/64: Leda und der Schwan (Materialaktion: Otto Muehl) (Leda and the Swan)* (1964); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes  
*8/64: Ana (Aktion: Günter Brus)* (1964); 16mm, b&w, silent, 3 minutes  
*9/64: O Tannenbaum (Materialaktion: Otto Muehl) (O Christmas Tree)* (1964); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes  
*10/65: Selbstverstümmelung (Action: Günter Brus) (Selfmutilation)* (1965); 16mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes  
*10b/65: Silber (Action: Günter Brus) (Silver)* (1965); 16mm, b&w, silent, 2 minutes  
*12/66: Cosinus Alpha (Materialaktion: Otto Muehl)* (1966); 16mm, color, silent, 10 minutes  
*13/67: Sinus Beta* (1967); 16mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes  
*16/67: 20. September* (1967); 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes

Part Three: Early Treasures (1960–75)

- 2/60: *48 Köpfe aus dem Szondi Test (48 Heads from the Szondi Test)* (1960); 16mm, b&w, silent, 5 minutes  
3/60: *Bäume im Herbst (Trees in Autumn)* (1960); 16mm, b&w, sound, 5 minutes  
5/62: *Fenstergucker, Abfall, etc. (People Looking out of the Window, Trash, etc.)* (1962); 16mm, color, silent, 6 minutes  
15/67: *TV* (1967); 16mm, b&w, silent, 4 minutes  
23/69: *Underground Explosion* (1969); 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes  
26/71: *Zeichenfilm—Balzac und das Auge Gottes (Cartoon—Balzac and the Eye of God)* (1971); 16mm, b&w, silent, 1 minute  
27/71: *Auf der Pfaueninsel* (1971); 16mm, b&w, silent, 1 minute  
28/73: *Zeitaufnahme(n) (Time Exposure)* (1973); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes  
31/75: *Asyl (Asylum)* (1975); 16mm, color, silent, 9 minutes

Part Four: The Rest of the Story (1957–76)

- 1/57: *Versuch mit synthetischem Ton (Test) (Experiment with Synthetic Sound [Test])* (1957); 16mm, b&w, sound, 2 minutes  
4/61: *Mauern-Positiv-Negativ (Walls-Positive-Negative)* (1961); 16mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes  
11/65: *Bild Helga Philipp (Helga Philipp Painting)* (1965); 16mm, b&w, silent, 3 minutes  
17/68: *Grün—Rot (Green—Red)* (1968); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes  
18/68: *Venecia kaputt* (1968); 16mm, b&w, silent, 3 minutes  
20/68: *Schatzi* (1968); 16mm, b&w, silent, 3 minutes  
22/69: *Happy End* (1969); 16mm, b&w, silent, 4 minutes  
24/70: *Western* (1969); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes  
30/73: *Coop Cinema Amsterdam* (1973); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes  
32/76: *An W+B (To W+B)* (1976); 16mm, color, silent, 8 minutes  
33/77: *Keine Donau* (1977); 16mm, color, silent, 9 minutes  
34/76: *Tschibo* (1976); 16mm, color, silent, 2 minutes

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## CHRISTINE TAMBLYN: A TRIBUTE

Presented by Steve Fagin, Minnette Lehmann, and Margaret Morse

*Thursday, March 5, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm*

*I see the artist not primarily as an imagemaker, but rather as a facilitator of dialogue. Thus it is difficult to specifically locate the work that I do; my work is responsive to specific occasions or sets of circumstances.*  
(Christine Tamblyn)

Christine Tamblyn, a conceptual and new media artist, an influential teacher at San Francisco State from 1986–94, passed away New Year's Day of breast cancer. The girl from the small town of Libertyville was a prolific reader; at a very young age she was familiar with the Chicago art scene from afar. Later she went to the Art Institute of Chicago, where she received her BFA in 1979. Her MFA was granted by the University of California, San Diego in 1986. Tamblyn received many awards for work that showed in venues from Buenos Aires and Australia to New York and Berlin. She was recipient of one of the last NEA artist's grants for the production of the third in her series of interactive installations on women's lives.

Her life was her artistic medium in performance, writing, and electronic media. This tribute explores her life/art in selections from her video and performance archive, her diaries, and the first and third installments of her interactive series on women—the CD-ROMs *I Love It, I Love It Not: Women and Technology* (with Marjorie Franklin and Paul Tomkins, 1993) and a preview from the uncanny, witty, and innovative *Archival Quality* in-progress.

### Part One: Video, Performance, Intervention

*The disquiet that arises from breaking familiar perception and behavior is an essential aspect of both making and viewing art. Producing such disquiet by problematizing the quotidian and exposing its ideological underpinnings forms the basis of my artistic and pedagogic practices.* (CT)

Performance was the daily as well as public expression of Christine Tamblyn's art, a form notoriously difficult to capture and hold for later review. Tamblyn's performances were conceived of as interventions in the day. They could also be excessive and theatrical, violating societal and artistic norms. From her first performance, *Blood Stained Black Velvet* (1974), a precursor of New Wave theatricalism, Tamblyn equated sex and death as the Baudelairean voyage to another world. "My aesthetic doctrine of virtualism was already functioning in [that first] performance. I theorized that art serves as a virtual world, an alternative universe in which I can live a consciously fabricated life. The rules and taboos, the boundaries and limitations which govern everyday reality do not pertain to this virtual reality." The following video documentations and performances for video give a bit of the flavor of the period and the event in the context in which it was made and received.

*The Pathetic Fallacy* (1980) by Christine Tamblyn and Richard Horner; video excerpt, 4 minutes  
The unnatural world surrounding Mt. Rushmore stands as an objective for a relationship between a he and a she.

*A Personal History of the Female Body* (1990); Document from the performance at the Eye Gallery, June 28, 1990, 3 minutes  
Christine pushes the envelope.

By framing didactic situations as performance occasions, I can achieve an aesthetic distance that allows for a degree of self-conscious manipulation that would not be possible in a less reflexive enactment of the activity. The underlying ideological aspects of the activity—(the conventional panelist/audience relationship, the social architectural standardization, etc.) can be recognized and addressed as part of the activity itself. (CT)

*Addressing the Current Arts Emergency* (1990); Document from a "performative lecture presentation" to the panel on censorship at the San Francisco Art Institute, January 23, 1990, 1 minute  
The envelope pushes Christine.

*Consuming Passions* (1983) by Barbara Latham in collaboration with Christine Tamblyn; video excerpt, 5 minutes  
Christine eats a French Pastry.

*I Was Raped by a Swan or God Made Me Pregnant* (1977); Excerpt from documentation of the performance, 90 seconds  
A frozen swan metaphor answers the question, where does inspiration come from?

### Part Two: Sex, Drugs and Theory

The CD-ROM *Archival Quality* will include complete transcriptions of Christine Tamblyn's over twenty diaries that she began at the age of 12 in 1964. This visual and written record covers the period of protest and cultural change that produced the women's movement as well as conceptual art, video, performances, and happenings and follows her experience of their evolution and struggles over two decades. These highlights selected and presented by the transcribers in 2- to 3-minute segments will emphasize the 1960s and 1970s and the topics of sex and drugs interspersed with Tamblyn's astute critical commentary and theoretical inventions.

Transcription overseen by Elliot Linwood. Readers/transcribers: Erin Blackwell, Terri Cohn, Karen Davis, Robin Deluga, Susan Greene, C.G. Grossman, Paula Levine, Sarah Lewison, Elliot Linwood, and Scott Mcleod. Approximately 30 minutes.

### Part Three: Interactivity—Human to Human

Tamblyn's series on women's lives moves from the primarily, albeit wittily didactic *She Loves It, She Loves It Not: Women and Technology* toward the finest expression of her life in art, *Archival Quality*. (The CD-ROM-in-between, *Mistaken Identities*, was left out due to lack of time.)

*She Loves It, She Loves It Not: Women and Technology* (1993) by Christine Tamblyn with Marjorie Franklin and Paul Tomkins; excerpts from the CD-ROM, 4 minutes

Why do women freak out when eyed by technology? This piece clicks on the generic fate of womanhood in the West.

*Archival Quality* (1998); preview from a CD-ROM in progress

In Tamblyn's selection from a life of creation, the agony and ecstasy of self-consciousness is literalized and collected into bittersweet miniatures in anticipation of her own death.

- A. *Memorativa*; "Moving Cornell Boxes," images Tamblyn selected from *Chained Reactions*, video made with Barbara Latham in 1982; 1 minute  
We see into the eyes of a voyeur at the keyhole. Secrets nonetheless remain secret.
- B. *Gustus—Slices of Life*; 7 minutes  
Sequences selected by Tamblyn from her video oeuvre, presented as slices of virtual pizza. *Bon mots*.
- C. *Vermio*; ("Peels" of 4 layers collaging popular imagery of near-death experiences); 5 minutes  
This unique layered collage graphic interface concludes our program and our tribute to Christine Tamblyn.

*Many thanks are due to Texas Tomboy for editing the CD-ROM documentation for theatrical presentation; to Luke Hones and BAVC (Bay Area Video Coalition) for granting editing facilities; to the Video Data Bank for making Latham/Tamblyn's Consuming Passions available; and to Steve Seid for consultation on the CD-ROM presentation and preview facilities.*

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## STEVE FAGIN'S TROPICOLA

Steve Fagin In Person

*Sunday, March 8, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts  
and the San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

Steve Fagin is Professor of Visual Arts at the University of California at San Diego. His video work has been featured in a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and his work is the focal point of a recent book published by Duke University Press, *Talkin' with Your Mouth Full: Conversations with the Videos of Steve Fagin*. We are pleased to present two screenings of Fagin's newest border crossing video *TropiCola*.

*TropiCola* (1998); video, b&w and color, sound, 95 minutes

This interview by Jeffrey Skoller originally appeared in the March 1998 issue of *Release Print*, the magazine of Film Arts Foundation. Reprinted with permission. Jeffrey Skoller is a filmmaker who writes frequently on experimental media.

*TropiCola* is video-artist Steve Fagin's fifth feature-length work. Fagin has devised an original video essay form that is at once witty, playful, and intellectually challenging. Never afraid to tackle the difficult side of an idea or political situation, and always timely, Fagin's videos situate themselves in the midst of current postmodern cultural debates, particularly the problems of globalization and First/Third World relations during the last 15 years. *TropiCola* is no exception. Last year, Fagin traveled to Havana, where he connected with some of Cuba's most renowned actors. With them, he created a unique portrait of the problems facing Cuba during its current economic restructuring. Like Fagin's other tapes, *TropiCola* is an imaginative mix of documentary and soap opera. Filled with music and dancing, the video is structured around a series of interwoven skits portraying two Cuban families from different social sectors as they struggle to understand their new situation in a changing society. These scenes are in turn mixed into a wonderful city portrait of Havana. For me, the tape has a kind of tropical echo of *Two or Three Things*

*I Know About Her*, Jean-Luc Godard's film portrait of Paris during the rise of U.S.-style consumerism in France in the 1960s. In 1990s Cuba, however, the issue is so not much the identity struggle of Godard's "children of Marx and Coca-Cola," but rather whether Cuba's own brand—TropiCola—can co-exist with Coke. What results in *TropiCola* is a complex and colorful picture of the current Cuban reality that belies left/right ideological posturing to show the intrepid spirit, humor and outspokenness of the Cuban people, who continue to capture the imagination of the world.

*TropiCola is your third piece to explore post-colonial, Third World transitions during the '90s. The first video, The Machine That Killed Bad People, was made in the Philippines and looked at the EDSA Revolution and the "CNN-ization" of the globe. The next was Zero Degrees Latitude, made in Ecuador about the growth of the charismatic religious movement in Latin America. TropiCola was made in Cuba during the post-Cold War period. Would you talk about Cuba and its relation to these other two pieces?*

Most obviously, the thing that joins them is that each country is a previous Spanish colony that is very influenced in very different ways by its relation to the U.S. But the issue that unites them in a more abstract way is the question you just brought up about their being societies in transition. I think there is a kind of history that tends to talk about one side of the equation: there was communism, now there's capitalism. There was Catholicism, and now there's Protestantism. My interest was to try to capture this in-between period of transition. The "bridge" or the "hole"—take your pick.

*What did you see in Cuba that—at this moment—made it imperative to make TropiCola?*

I don't know about it being an imperative. I mean, some of it was much more personal, in that I had the experience of spending the summer of '93 in Cuba. Bertha Jottar—she was the line producer, and also camera person for *Zero Degrees Latitude*—her father was Cuban, and I went with her to Cuba and spent time with her family. We lived that summer, not within a tourist context, but from the point of view of a very disenfranchised, marginal family in Cuba during a period of extreme hardship—what is called in Cuba the "Special Period" after the withdrawal of Soviet support. I really began to understand what their lives were like. This drove me to document the ways Cubanos deal with the problems in their society and how they have to be so creative, even though they have no clue which way the society will turn.

*In TropiCola you use very different strategies from the more commonly made documentary or personal travelogue films that try to explain or justify the revolution.*

Well, I really didn't want to make a social-issues documentary—for instance, "Is Castro good for the Jews?" Often, in the social documentary, it is assumed that if you want to understand people, you set up some interview structure where you have this testimony that stands for people's daily life. In my mind, if you ask people what they think of Castro or what they think of their lives, you wind up with overwhelmingly clichéd and generalized answers. I know if people asked me these types of questions, I'd answer in that way also. So I thought by using actors and setting up circumstances where they were given abstract characters to play, we could find a way for them to perform everyday life in more revealing and interesting ways. One of the major efforts of the piece was to work improvisationally with actors in a very theatrical way to allow for very simple things to be laid bare.

*In TropiCola, there are two generations of Cuba's top actors playing two fictitious families, one white and the other Afro-Cuban. In each family there are the older people who lived through the Revolution and the younger people who grew up within it. The dialogue between them centers around questions about what can be salvaged of the Revolution and what can't. The young people talk about wanting to leave the island, and the older people talk about struggling through the problems of the moment. Was this your conceit, or did these positions develop among the actors as part of their own generational reality?*

Part of this came from the summer I spent in the Casablanca barrio in Havana, sitting on people's porches and witnessing every night, all summer, these generational debates that clearly do have a parallel in the United States—between, say, a Baby Boomer and a Gen-X type. I wanted to show this struggle of the generations. One generation is trying to hold on to the history of the Revolution—which for several of the characters in the piece was a powerful, positive event in their lives—and make the effort to keep reorganizing the present day under the revolutionary banner. At the same time, the younger people just do not feel the use-value of holding on to that fantasy. They don't have some inherent agenda for or against the Revolution. They just have an agenda which will allow them to realize the type of life they want. They see themselves at the edge of an abyss facing capitalism. The

effort by the older generation to hold on is seen by the younger ones as a hand pulling at them from the grave—like in DePalma's *Carrie*. Between the coffin and the abyss, they choose the abyss.

*In all your tapes, you mix different genres and narrative forms. One moment it is a black-and-white documentary mode, other moments you use colorful cabaret scenes, melodrama, and soap opera forms. How did this style work for the Cuban actors in developing characters and scenes?*

I think that was actually a bit perplexing to a lot of them. As a director, I like working with people in fragments and keeping for myself the understanding of how I'm going to layer it, but not to have the actors quite understand how things are going to connect, because I think it kind of weakens their performance. But several of the actors—the ones who were from “the older generation”—have very strong backgrounds in experimental theater, and they liked working in this way because it reminded them of pieces they had done in their youth. In fact, they had a lot of interest in developing this critical type of cinema as a way to discuss the problems in Cuba. It reminded them of the contemporary Cuban theater. Cuban theater is in a very rich moment, and foreigners are often surprised at the critical and ironic edge it occupies.

*Can you talk briefly about your working process in Cuba? How did you develop TropiCola once you got there with your cinematographer?*

Greg Landau, a San Francisco record producer who had lived and studied music in Cuba, connected me with Nina Menendez, who produced the tape. Nina was a godsend to me. Nina is someone who had both lived in Cuba for ten years and done a Ph.D. at Stanford on Cuban women writers in the '20s. She was a tremendous producer for me in terms of having access to the cultural community in Cuba. Her sister-in-law, Adria Santana, who became the lead actress in the piece, is a very important theatrical presence in Cuba. It was through them that I connected with the other actors. Nina was also a very important litmus test for me in terms of evaluating—not simply translating—what people were saying. She could evaluate very directly the texture of what people were saying, whether it rang true or not. This was very important, because often when I've seen pieces done by foreigners in Cuba, the first thing Cuban exiles say when they see such pieces is, “Oh, this is bullshit. These people are just putting them on. This is just like what they tell foreigners. This is the official rhetoric of dissidence, or this is the official rhetoric of complicity, or this is the official rhetoric of avoidance.” I wanted to avoid those three things and get a speech that sounded like Cubans talking to each other on a porch. So Nina was very important in these terms. And aside from the videographer, Igor Vamos, the rest of the production team were Cubans.

*The dramatic scenes are striking for their emotional energy, wit, and social critique. How did you work with the actors to develop a context for their performances?*

I had this very skeletal plot outlined. When I got to Havana, I did a casting, and I worked through the umbrella of Adria Santana's theater group for legitimacy. If an actor was good in improvisation, I would just rewrite the character to include them. So *TropiCola* had this sort of organic, *Wizard of Oz* quality, where I kept adding and changing as we moved down the road. Often we would divide into two groups, one working in the morning and the other in the afternoon. We'd have critique sessions, and they'd tell me what they thought should be added in terms of texture, and then we'd go back and forth. I felt if I kept listening to what they said, I could always find something that would work in terms of the idea I wanted and what they would feel good doing.

*Visually, TropiCola is also a unique portrait of Havana. Your mix of formats produces a textural juxtaposition of past and present.*

Igor Vamos, who I know from San Diego, shot all of the telenovella stuff with a new mini-digital camera. I wanted to juxtapose that footage with the type of hand-held, 16mm camera style that was developed and articulated in Cuba in the '60s by Santiago Alvarez's documentary unit. We actually did get Pablito Martinez, who was one of Alvarez's camera people, to shoot the hand-held 16mm stuff. I wanted this kind of juxtaposition between the color footage of Cuba facing its lived melodramatic present with its faded but elegant past, and to sort of work a bridge between those spaces to produce a multiple view of Havana.



*In the cabaret sections you use Cuban music and dance. In one sequence you have three young women talking about having become jineteras.*

A book that I'm tremendously inspired by is the wonderful *Three Trapped Tigers* by Cabrera Infante, which is a very complex documentation of Havana circa 1958. The book opens with this wonderful Tropicana monologue and cabaret performance of Cuban identity in dancing and music. I wanted that to be one of the angles on Cuba. There is also the use of soliloquy, which has become a kind of signature style for me. I often have people talking at the same time but never talking with each other. The cabaret sequence with the three girls at the bar, where they're talking like three singers doing a round, is exemplary of that type of effort.

This sequence was also a way to talk about the issue of Cuba returning to its '50s identity of sex tourism. I wanted to produce a scene that would emphasize multiple senses of their identity, not that they're hookers in a simple way or that they're hookers with hearts of gold, but that they're engaged in it in a complex way. So I created three versions of the same girl all at once, where you have the one who's talking in English in a very kind of pick-up manner, saying, "Hi, what country are you from? I'm hungry, could you buy me a Coca-Cola?" The other girl is talking through a type of delirious inner speech about why she's doing this and her investment in it. And the third girl is just dancing sexily, backside to the camera. I wanted to absorb the three layers in one shot.

*Throughout Tropicola, the younger characters talk about feeling conflicted between their desires to leave Cuba for a better life and their wish to stay.*

The two questions that obsess the piece—that become the kind of repetition compulsion of the piece—are the issue of staying or leaving and how one is going to make it in a dollar economy. Clearly, those aren't all the questions one could ask about Cuba, but those were the two questions which I found obsessive in Cuba. I personally have never met a Cuban who said, "I'd rather live outside of Cuba." I mean, they do say they'd rather not live under Castro, but I've actually never met a Cuban who I wouldn't presume to be a patriot. One of the problems of the current impasse—this debate as to whether Cuba is a right place or a wrong place—is one of the other reasons I made the piece. This has more to do with the struggle for what constitutes Cuban identity and whose vision of it represents "the real Cuba." In this sense, I had two goals for the piece. One was to make a video that I could show in Cuba, and that the actors would be able to support publicly. To that end, I did show a rough-cut in Cuba, and I was very pleased with the response. The second goal was to make a piece that could show outside of Cuba, at least among the Cuban community that left since 1980, especially the *Marielitos* and *balseiros*. And I've felt very good about their response. I showed the piece in Union City, New Jersey, at this Cuban club, La Esquina Habanera, and I was just overwhelmed by their response.

*One of the things I noticed in the tape is that you have done away with the icons of the Cuban revolution. I mean, there are no images of Che or Fidel or other kinds of revolutionary rhetoric. But in some ways you've replaced that kind of iconography with others centered around Cuban music. It's almost as if you were doing a re-thinking of a certain kind of historical memory—as if Cuba's music represented its true historical heritage, rather than the Revolution.*

I feel that Cuban popular music, the music I used in *TropiCola* by bands like Charanga Habanera and El Medico de la Salsa, has become the shared tone and pitch that are heard as the echo of everyday life. In Cuba, people are always quoting song lyrics at you. There is, for instance, this one song, "La Bola," which is the song that propelled El Medico de la Salsa into being Cuba's number one group. I mean, forget "Guantanamo." If you want to know what is the national anthem of the new dollar-Cuba it's "La Bola." And this song appears in *TropiCola* all over the place as dialogue.

*Do you think that the music culture in Cuba has replaced the romanticism of the Revolution for the younger generation?*

I think that there is a youth culture around the music and the musicians of the popular bands. The bands are urban, with a rough Havana sound, and they are part of a nihilistic sub-culture; they have a kind of *Rebel Without a Cause* feel. These bands provide a coherence for young people. Perhaps they create an identity without a future, but young people are no longer burdened by an unwanted past. A journalist writing for *The Nation* called me before he went to Cuba to cover the return of Che's body to Cuban soil. He wanted my take on contemporary Cuba. I told him if he really wanted to know what was going on in Cuba, forget Che, go to the Charanga Habanera CD release party. When he returned from Cuba, he called to thank me.

*TropiCola ends with the character Nieves, who seems to be a kind of conscience of the piece, saying Cuba is like a melodrama, where the script is good, but it's the staging that's the problem.*

Yes, she still deeply believes in the script, but she feels that it's time to re-organize who's directing the script and who's in charge. I'd never met Adria Santana, who plays Nieves, but I had heard all these things about her as a person, her commitment, her energy, her revolutionary spirit, and her strong willingness to critique officials in the name of the spirit of the revolution. I wanted this person I'd heard of to provide the bass line for the piece. I thought the other variations—the differences, the disagreements, the dissident voices, the complicit voices, the curious voices, the young voices—would produce a solar system around her voice, and the debate would be at its richest. The one thing I promised Adria when she agreed to be in the piece is that she would have the last word. So the text that she speaks at the end about everyday life, what she feels, is her text. The only thing I made her change was when she said, "Love engenders miracles." She wanted to say it was a line of Silvio Rodriguez's. I said, "Forget it, you can say the line, but just don't say it's Silvio Rodriguez," because I thought that would tie the line too much to the '60s generation.

*But she is still saying that love is central to the creation of a new staging, which does link back to the idealism of the '60s generation.*

Yeah, she maintains the idealism. And she has the last word.

**Steve Fagin Videography:**

*Virtual Play: The Double Direct Monkey Wrench in Black's Machinery—Dedicated to Lou Andreas-Salomé (1984); The Amazing Voyage of Gustave Flaubert and Raymond Roussel (1986); The Machine that Killed Bad People (1989); Zero Degrees Latitude (1993); Memorial Day (Observed) (1995); TropiCola (1998)*

*The screening tonight will be followed by live salsa at 10pm:  
Fito Reynoso y Orq. Ritmo y Armonia at the Seventh Note, 915 Columbus at Lombard  
Presented by Dave Martinez Entertainment. Admission is \$5.*

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## LOOK HARDER: ASIAN EXPERIMENTAL SHORTS

Curated by Valerie Soe in association with the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival

*Tuesday, March 10, 1998—Kabuki Theater—8:00 pm*

From the raw-edged to the poetic, this program of experimental shorts looks at the broad range of work recently produced by Asian American film and video artists. Reworking home movies, found footage, Super 8, hand-processing, multimedia and the kitchen sink, these pieces run the gamut from intimate personal essays to astute social commentary.

*Seven Scenes* (1996) by Miya Suzuki; video, b&w, sound, 6 minutes

This spare, haunting piece looks at the lingering effects of the Japanese American internment during World War II.

*Look Harder* (1996) by Stuart Gaffney; video, color, sound, 4 minutes

Created on a Macintosh using Adobe Premiere, this short video essay muses on Rock Hudson and Linda Evans' infamous *Dynasty* screen kiss.

*here, there, somewhere* (1997) by Lawan Jirasuradej; 16mm, b&w, silent, 3 minutes

Layered images subtly evoke thoughts of home, culture, and place held by a Thai national new to San Francisco.



*Myself. Portrait* (1997) by Christine Lee; Super 8mm, color, sound, 4 minutes

A brief, milky meditation on identity and culture.

*Looking for Wendy* (1997) by Kimberly SaRee Tomes; video, color, sound, 18 minutes

Bioengineered tomatoes and Wendy's Hamburgers mascots guest-star in this pseudo-search for a Korean adoptee's roots.

*Pre-Menstrual Spotting* (1997) by Machiko Saito; video, color, sound, 12 minutes

The spectra of past abuses shape present behavior in this scathing, shocking, and heartfelt video.

*Mommy, What's Wrong?* (1997) by Anita Chang; 16mm, color, sound, 13 minutes

A daughter's elegiac tribute to a disturbed, sensitive mother, this delicately wrought film mixes home movies, hand-processing, and candid interviews and reminiscences.

*Letters to a Stranger* (1997) by Ray Wang; video, color, sound, 14 minutes

Weaving together educational films about China, documentation of a visit to the videomaker's elderly father, and images of the Angel Island internment center, this piece links various representations and histories of the Chinese in America.

*Given Leave to Enter* (1996) by Jo Law; video, color, sound, 6 minutes

A video collage that examines issues of geography, immigration, and dislocation from a Hong Kong point of view.

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## COCKTAILS IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN: LILITH AND JANE BOWLES

Filmmakers Lynne Sachs and Lana Lin In Person

Thursday, March 12, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm

"Lynne Sachs' *A Biography of Lilith* and Lana Lin's *Almost the Cocktail Hour*, based on the lives of Lilith and Jane Bowles respectively, are experiments in narrative voice. The films interrogate the veracity of these mythical figures by combining historical and original texts and by replacing the hyperbolic with depictions of the mundane. But it is through their visual strategies—Sachs' use of decentered framing and extreme close-ups and Lin's freeze frames—that these films finally wrest their characters from textual confinement, unraveling historical certainty. As one character in Lin's film suggests, the filmmaker, acting like an archeologist piecing together fragments, encounters 'gaps that I fill in.' It is in the gaps of historical documents, their silences, that stories as yet untold may actually still lay in wait. In her essay 'Curiosity,' Sue Golding asks: 'How do we trace the specificities of the odd, purposeless wanderings of excess?' These filmmakers attempt, and in many ways succeed in tracing the complex web of voices which articulate a cohesive narrative. Freed from an assumption of authority, these narrative films assert themselves as poetic approaches to auto/biography wherein the seeker herself becomes the film's subject." (Cathy Lee Crane)

*A Biography of Lilith* (1997) by Lynne Sachs; 16mm, color, sound, 35 minutes

"In a lively mix of off-beat narrative, collage and memoir, *A Biography of Lilith* updates the creation myth by telling the story of the first woman and for some, the first feminist. Lilith's betrayal by Adam in Eden and subsequent vow of revenge is recast as a modern tale with present-day Lilith (Cherie Wallace) musing on a life that has included giving up a baby for adoption and work as a bar dancer. Interweaving mystical texts from Jewish folklore with interviews, music and poetry, filmmaker Lynne Sachs reclaims this cabalistic parable to frame her own role as a mother. A witty contemplation of Judaism and patriarchal history, this evocative film offers both a feminist view of ancient myths and an investigation of their cultural persistence." (*Women Make Movies Distribution Catalogue*)

Lynne Sachs is a filmmaker with an interest in blending experimental and documentary film forms. Her previous films *Sermons & Sacred Pictures*, *The House of Science*, and *Which Way is East* have screened in San Francisco at Cinematheque and in numerous international film festivals. She currently teaches courses in sound experimentation at the New School for Social Research in New York.

*Almost the Cocktail Hour* (1997) by Lana Lin; 16mm, b&w and color, sound, 56 minutes

A nameless woman sets out to find the grave of Jane Bowles, one of the eccentric characters in the art salon setting of New York and North Africa in the 1940s and '50s. In this fictitious biography, a version of Bowles emerges as a woman paralyzed by conflict: her urge to write subsumed by crippling self-doubt; her lesbian loves throughout her marriage to writer/composer Paul Bowles; her sense of isolation in the midst of her closest "500 goony friends." The film interweaves fact and fantasy to depict a writer unable to write who struggles with affirmation of her own experience in a perpetual state of pathos and humor. The story skips through time and place, offering spare, introspective impressions as seen through the eyes of the nameless woman whose search for Bowles' grave transforms into a search for self-definition. (LL)

Lana Lin approaches narrative film from a collage aesthetic where connections between disparate sources overturn expectations and uncover new readings. Currently a visiting Assistant Professor at the Massachusetts College of Arts, her previous short experimental films *Through the Door*, *Mizu Shobai*, and *Stranger Baby* have screened in San Francisco at Cinematheque and in a range of international exhibitions.

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EARLY EVENING EXPERIMENTAL  
PROGRAM 2

Sunday, March 15, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—5:30pm

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

*A Colour Box* (1935) by Len Lye; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes

*Trade Tattoo* (1937) by Len Lye; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes

*Recreation* (1956) by Robert Breer; 16mm, color, sound, 2 minutes

*A Man and His Dog Out for Air* (1957) by Robert Breer; 16mm, b&w, sound, 3 minutes

*Gulls & Buoys* (1972) by Robert Breer; 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes

*Fist Fight* (1964) by Robert Breer; 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes

*Necromancy* (1990) by Steven Dye; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes

*The Subtle Flight of Birds* (1991) by Steven Dye; 16mm, b&w, silent, 4 minutes

*Lun* (1990) by Steven Dye; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes

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ALAIN TANNER AND JOHN BERGER'S  
*THE MIDDLE OF THE WORLD*  
 PRECEDED BY MARK WILSON'S *TENSILE*

*Sunday, March 15, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

Alain Tanner's films of the seventies confront the social and economic issues of Switzerland with a point of view rarely glimpsed beyond the mountains that separate Switzerland from the rest of Europe. Tanner sought to expose the underlying structures of Swiss society to the world, commenting in 1976: "My country has escaped history for a very long time. We have been hermetically sealed away, but now the walls are coming down." To aid him in breaking down these walls he enlisted the help of his friend, the British critic and novelist John Berger (*Ways of Seeing, Pig Earth*). Their collaboration, beginning in 1966 with the short film *Une Ville à Chandigarh*, produced three of Tanner's most acclaimed features, marking him as one of narrative cinema's most innovative practitioners. Cinematheque is pleased to present one of his rarely screened films from this period, *The Middle of the World*.

*Tensile* (1995) by Mark Wilson; 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes

*The Middle of the World* (1974) by Alain Tanner, co-written by John Berger; 16mm, color, sound, 112 minutes

"*The Middle of the World* describes a love affair between Paul, a Swiss engineer running for political office, and Adriana, an Italian immigrant working as a waitress. Paul offers to leave his wife to marry Adriana; she walks out on him. Why? Tanner and Berger take the materials of a classic femme fatale tragedy and refashion them—as they should have been refashioned long before—into a subtly observed but invigorating tale of the growth of a woman's consciousness. Set in a 'period of normalization,' and punctuated with landscapes of startlingly original beauty, this cool, highly erotic, teasingly ambiguous film is one of the few convincing, truly modern treatises on the nature of love—but a love not divorced from the contexts of politics, class, and geography." (Pacific Film Archive Notes)

"The tension between the genuine difficulty of 'knowing' another person and the conscious manipulation of images defines the space of social relationships in the film. Paul is associated with the material comforts of his modern suburban home and with the hierarchical spaces of office and factory, Adriana with her small room and with the dingy cafe where she waits on the men and operates the cash register. Their affair takes place in the countryside (associated with Paul's childhood) and in her room, except for his attempts to impress her by taking her to a luxury hotel ....

"A similar set of tensions is to be found in the film's treatment of time. Berger has written that 'normal time is longer for an Italian than for a Swiss,' and the difference in rhythm characterizes the relationship between Paul and Adriana. Both are controlled by the time schedules set by their jobs and both initially experience their passion as a release from everyday time. Paul's friends at the garage express shock at his desire to make love in the morning, and the lovers walk slowly through the field or shut themselves up in their room. Although Paul does invent an excuse to miss an election meeting, the pressures of the outside world on the relationship are exerted largely through its demands on their time ....

"This conflict between social and natural time is reflected in the structure of the film. In the opening sequence, the (female) commentator informs us that the film's action will cover 112 days, and each subsequent sequence is introduced by a title giving the date on which its action occurs. But this stress on chronological, linear development is counterpointed by the shots of landscapes at different seasons of the year that punctuate the narrative and place the social pressures on the lovers within the context of natural rhythms and textures, and Tanner takes advantage of making his first film in color to bring out the sensuous quality of the landscapes and the seasonal changes. The film explores Berger's suggestion that 'perhaps the material basis for this correspondence between the natural world and passion is to be found in the nature of sexual energy itself,' and the relation of the natural images to the story of Paul and Adriana echoes his comment that 'the state of being in love *signifies* the universe.'" (Jim Leach, *A Possible Cinema: The Films of Alain Tanner*)

**Alain Tanner Filmography:**

*Nice Time* (with Claude Goretta, 1957); *Ramuz, Passag e d'un Poete* (1961); *L'Ecole* (1962); *Les Apprentis* (1964); *Une Ville   Chandigarh* (co-written with John Berger, 1966); *Charles, Dead or Alive* (1969); *The Salamander* (co-written with John Berger, 1971); *Return from Africa* (1972); *The Middle of the World* (co-written with John Berger, 1974); *Jonas Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000* (co-written with John Berger, 1976); *Messidor* (1974); *Light Years Away* (1980); *In the White City* (1983); *No Man's Land* (1985); *La Vall e fant me* (1987); *A Flame in My Heart* (1987); *La Femme de Rose Hill* (1989); *The Man Who Lost His Shadow* (1991); *The Diary of Lady M* (1993); *Les Hommes du port* (1995); *Fourbi* (1996)

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**READING OUTLET VIDEOMAKERS:  
TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE**

Gary Adlestein and Jerry Orr In Person

*Thursday, March 19, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm*

Gary Adlestein and Jerry Orr have been making personal/experimental films since the early 1970s. In 1975, along with Jerry Tartaglia they co-founded Berks Filmmakers, Inc. which is still functioning today as a showcase for experimental film and video. Both artists have worked extensively in Super-8 film. Orr often utilizes rephotography and Adlestein the JK printer for image modification. They see their more recent video—shot in Hi 8 and/or Super-8 film and reworked through consumer video processing equipment—as a natural evolution of their earlier aesthetic.

Gary Adlestein began filmmaking by co-producing (with Jerry Orr and others) the documentary, *Reading 1974: Portrait of a City*. He has been the program director of Berks Filmmakers, Inc. since its inception in 1975. He also teaches poetry and film at Albright College and resides in the verdant Oley Valley, near Reading, PA.

“The most important aspect to Adlestein’s approach to video is that it is irrefutably filmic. It is sublimely tactile and sensuous where most video landscapes ... tend to be impersonally cool and hard.” (Albert Kilchesty)

***Oley*** (1993); 8mm video, color, sound, 9 minutes

Harvest time in the Oley Valley near Reading, PA: “One of the limits of reality / Presents itself in Oley ...” (Wallace Stevens)

***Witchway*** (1995); 8mm video, color, sound, 7 minutes

Lost under the spell of an Oley spirit and her familiar. (GA)

***Der Tod Und Das Madchen*** (1996); 8mm video, color, sound, 6 minutes

Figure and (liquid) ground; a gothic meditation on image/flesh deterioration based on Schubert’s *Death and the Maiden*. (GA)

***Taormina/Etna*** (1996); Super 8mm to 8mm video, color, sound, 7 minutes

A place of wild beauty pulsing with the promise of death. (GA)

“[I]n one of the most successful Landscapes ‘T/E,’ Adlestein re-photographs Super-8 film on video, creating, through the chugg-chugga-chugg rhythm familiar to all 8mm filmmakers, an extremely effective visual analogue to the molten lava which bubbles and surges under the volcano.” (Albert Kilchesty)

***Lotus Sketches*** (in progress); Hi-8 video, color, sound, 10 minutes

Selections from a series of short sketches shot in Kyoto several years ago; based on form/emptiness, emptiness/form as per “Heart Sutra.” (GA)

Jerry Orr began making films in 1971—first in Super 8, then 16mm and now in both Super 8 and 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 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 lives in Wyoming, PA.

**Six Short Videos Bracketed by Two Portraits of a Psychotic Soothsayer**

*The Wizard of Oz: A Metaphysical Dream* (1992); VHS, color, sound, 5 minutes

The schizoid landscape of a severed head encapsulated in a lunascape of phantasmal imagery desperately, but lightheartedly, trying to communicate with Mother Earth. (JO)

*Shrines* (1991); VHS, color, sound, 5 minutes

A homage to contemporary cultural shrines as vestiges of our forgotten need for ritual celebration of the potent, irrational forces that root our existence in the tumultuous, primordial belly of Mother Earth. (JO)

*Ghost in the Machine* (1993); VHS, color, sound, 7 minutes

Painting and scratching on video with two film projectors, a battery operated fan, a human hand and arm, a wood dowel, and a video camera. An eyewash inspired by Len Lye. (JO)

*Great Adventure* (1994); VHS, color, sound, 6 minutes

Time/space on the tracks of a water slide. See the behind beyond. (JO)

*1993* (1993); VHS, color, sound, 6 minutes

A Marionist video epistle to the Archbishop of Calcutta on the occasion of an aborted assassination attempt on the Blessed Virgin. (JO)

“A last ditch effort to save the male ego.” (Hildegard of Bingen, 1123)

*Eclipse* (1995); VHS, color, sound, 5 minutes

Forward to the past. A conversation with a stranger during a trip to my parent’s gravesite. (JO)

*Mothers Day* (1994); VHS, color, sound, 7 minutes

“A male horror film.” (*Men’s Health*, September 1995)

“*Jurassic Park* was cotton candy ... a pussy film.” (Joel Segal, *USA Today*)

*Uneasy Portrait* (1996); VHS, color, sound, 5 minutes

“That’s him. That’s the miserable son of a bitch. Look at him, he’s got a crucifix for a cock. What a pussy. Lousy motherfucker. Smash his fucking head in.” (Anonymous, 1996)

“What a sad film.” (High school sweetheart, date unknown)

## THE ANIMAL OTHER

Curated by Marina McDougall and Gail Wight

Sunday, March 22, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm

This historical survey of short films examines the complex ways in which we humans relate to our fellow animals. Whether taxidermed artifact, laboratory specimen, zoological wonder, meat, fable or beloved pet, animals are the cipher upon which we humans project our notions of what it means to be animal or human.

***Elephant Electrocution*** (1903) by Thomas Edison; 16mm, b&w, silent, 30 seconds

Dogs, baboons, seals, and elephants were all used to demonstrate the effects of electricity during the “war of the currents.” In an attempt to illustrate the dangers of alternating current, Thomas Edison electrocuted this elephant in 1903 as a kind of publicity stunt. While Edison was promoting direct current as the way to wire the world for his new invention, the electric light bulb, his rival Nikola Tesla had developed the technology for alternating current.

***The Voice of the Nightingale*** (1923) by Ladislav Starevich; 16mm, b&w, silent, 10 minutes

Born in Moscow, the Polish Ladislav Starevich was a natural history museum director before he began making films. In this film a fairy bird (a taxidermed nightingale in pixellated motion) sings legends from the “Kingdom of Flowers” to a sleeping girl.

***Le Vampire (The Vampire)*** (1945) by Jean Painlevé; 16mm, b&w, sound, 20 minutes

Traversing the blurred lines between science and art, maverick scientific documentary filmmaker, Jean Painlevé made over 200 films between the 1920s and the 1980s. *The Vampire* is an animal behavior film starring a Brazilian bat set to Duke Ellington’s “Black and Tan Fantasy” and “Echoes of the Jungle” with excerpts from Murnau’s *Nosferatu*.

***Le Sang des Bêtes (The Blood of the Beasts)*** (1949) by Georges Franju; 16mm, b&w, sound, 30 minutes

Set in the outskirts of misty, gray Paris, *Le Sang des Bêtes* unflinchingly documents the slaughterhouse processes behind the preparation of horse, beef, veal, and lamb meat for French dinner tables. Filmed before the days of assembly line meat packing, the butchers have intimate contact with the animals. The film’s narration written by Painlevé attempts to humanize these men who kill “without hate, without anger.” Of all Franju’s feature films, *Le Sang des Bêtes* most resembles the haunting *Eyes Without a Face*.

“The Franju documentaries, with their disturbing metaphoric overtones, seem to have the precise beauty of nightmares.” (Erik Barnow, *Documentary*)

***A Summer Saga*** (1941) by Arne Sucksdorff; Swedish translation by Tin Tin Blackwell, 16mm, color, sound, 12 minutes

“An early film by this major figure in Swedish cinema, *A Summer Saga* is a unique example of Sucksdorff’s depiction of the beauty and cruelty of nature. Photographed in a natural style against the rich Swedish landscape, two foxes are followed on their adventures on a summer’s afternoon. This was an enormously popular film when it was released, establishing Sucksdorff as a gifted nature photographer whose films are strong textural and sensuous studies of his environment.” (MoMA)

***Ant City*** (1951) by Moss and Thelma Schnee; 16mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes

*Ant City* is an educational film classic about the social insect, the ant. The loose narration by Moss Schnee with his heavy Brooklyn accent reveals as much about human notions of organized society as animal ones. The Schnees also made the film *Bee City*.

***Microcultural Incidents in Ten Zoos*** (1968) by Ray L. Birdwhistell and Floyd Van Vlack; 16mm, color, sound, 34 minutes

The anthropologist filmmakers travel across the world to capture human social interactions in ten zoos. Frame by frame analysis becomes a study of family dynamics and cultural difference.

*Mongrelaid* (1978) by George Kuchar; 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes  
George Kuchar's *Mongrelaid* is a walk down memory lane with a beloved pet.

A man, his dog, and the regions they inhabited, each leaving his own distinctive mark on the landscape. Not even time can wash the residue of what they left behind. (GK)

*Special thanks to Rick Prelinger, Tin Tin Blackwell, and Irina Leimbacher  
for their generous help in presenting this program.*

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## JEAN-LUC GODARD'S *EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF* PRECEDED BY SCOTT STARK'S *NOEMA*

*Thursday, March 26, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm*

The two films tonight explore numerous positions in relation to the pornographic text. Various engaging, teasing and pulling away from the dialogue surrounding pornographic imagery, they open new ways of approaching a genre that lends itself to repetitive redundancy. The repositioning that these films suggest radically interrupt the ultimate goal of consummation that porn promises. Accepting porn on its own level, these films stylistically subvert it through shot repetition, slow motion, sound track experimentation, and shot duration. Through a project of aestheticizing and de-eroticizing, one is forced to look beyond the body parts and listen between the moans, probing for moments of exasperatingly strange and difficult transcendence.

*Noema* by Scott Stark (1998); video, color, sound, 10 minutes

From its opening shot of a transitional three-way, Scott Stark's *Noema* uses repetition and graphic matches to mechanize the fleeting moments between the fucking in video porn. Stark locates these moments by eerily using the flat, tawdry rawness indicative of the low-budget copulatory cavalcades; repeated images of couples repositioning and preparing for reentry situate the viewer in a position outside the eroticism that the images propose, allowing for a shift from a more passively sadistic gaze to a gaze that engages with the images as images. They become invested with a sense of suspense that most porn lacks, their explosive resolutions forgone conclusions—the only question worth puzzling over is how long is it gonna take? *Noema*'s sensory suspense is heightened by the minimal soundtrack with its incessant drone that leads into silence and applause, and we are eventually allowed privileged glimpses beyond the bouncing bodies into mysterious worlds of wallpaper and oil paintings, fires and plastic statues. Those spaces beyond the mechanical movements mimicking intimacy in the foreground become the speculative arenas for contemplating bliss.

Scott Stark has produced more than 50 films and videos in the last fifteen years. Born and educated in the Midwest, he consistently uses film to challenge traditional viewing expectations. His work has screened locally, nationally and internationally, and he has taught classes at the San Francisco Art Institute (where he received his MFA). Stark served for seven years on the board of San Francisco Cinematheque, during which time he co-founded Cinematheque's journal of film and media art, *Cinematograph*.

*Every Man for Himself* by Jean-Luc Godard (1979); 16mm, color, sound, 87 minutes

There is a young girl on a soccer field, Cecile. Her father, Paul Godard, is discussing her with the coach. There is a shot of her, but it is mediated; the picture stops and starts, she is frozen in space and then moves again. We hear the father on the soundtrack after discovering the coach has a daughter the same age as his: "Do you ever feel like caressing her tits ... fucking her up the ass?" Our understanding of the scene is problematized by the sound-picture relation and the use of slow motion which draws out an image that would usually go by without question. Pedophilia, incest, and bestiality are only a few of the perversions that creep into Jean-Luc Godard's romantically masochistic exploration of communication between the sexes. Cramming a decade's worth of semiotic pondering into a manifesto on the instability of language in a world of masculine constructs, Godard also undermines our trust



in the image. A prostitute, Isabelle, is shown in close-up, moaning, during the final moments of a sexual encounter, but on the soundtrack she recites a list of the errands she is planning to do. Paul's girlfriend, Denise, rides her bike, symbolically reacting against Paul's life in the city and claiming her need to have a quiet place to write; the image is slowed down and we hear her voice on the soundtrack. Marguerite Duras apparently refuses to enter the frame; she is heard on the soundtrack and addressed, but we never see her. Instead, Paul Godard speaks in her place, telling a class of students to think about "women's speech" whenever they hear a truck passing. These diffusions of male desire, a desire not only to see but to control that which is seen, allow for a new positioning of the woman's voice; not as a truck passing, necessarily, but rather in the defiance of Duras, the writings of Denise, the staunchness of Cecile, and perhaps in Godard's willing and beneficial collaboration with Anne-Marie Mieville, who co-wrote the screenplay.

Jean-Luc Godard was born in Switzerland in 1930. He is usually associated with the group of filmmakers labeled the "French New Wave." He continues to make films and videos.

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## UNDER THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN: NEW FILMS AND VIDEOS FROM LA

Curated by Thom Anderson of LA Filmforum

*Sunday, March 29, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

Tonight's program is presented in conjunction with the exhibit "California Suite: New Art from LA," in the Walter/McBean Gallery of the San Francisco Art Institute.

Film artists in Los Angeles are buried but not yet dead. There's not much of a film community between Hollywood and the galleries, but there aren't real communities of any kind in LA. So anything worth making will have a polemical edge; this is no time for lyricism or abstraction. (TA)

***Watts Super Sista Girl*** (1996) by John Gary; 16mm, color, sound, 25 minutes

"[*Watts Super Sista Girl* is] about a young girl who aspires to be like the African-American super-heroine character 'Super Sista Woman' she watches on television. The dynamic crime fighter defends South Central Los Angeles (with the assistance of her talking magical afro-pick 'Kinks'). Veronika creates an imaginary friendship with the heroine and corresponds with her by writing a letter. John Gary wrote, produced, and directed the film at the California Institute of the Arts (founded by Walt Disney). The project is winning national acclaim with future prospects of becoming a television series geared toward African American youth. Jon Gary was recently honored by the Black Film Consortium of Ohio." (*The Seattle Medium*)

***Other Families*** (1992) by William E. Jones; 3/4" video, color, sound, 15 minutes

*Other Families* employs humble materials—home movies—as a springboard for an analysis of the notion of family in American society. Through a voice-over narration accompanying images of childhood, the work reveals the connection between the decline of a traditional family and the rise of modern gay culture. (WJ)

***Khalil, Shaun, A Woman Under the Influence*** (1994) by Sharon Lockhart; 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes

A 16-minute film divided into three parts. The first two sections refer to make-up tests, which are often used in the making of Hollywood films, and the third section is a dramatic sequence based on a scene from the film *A Woman Under the Influence* by John Cassavetes.



Framed from the chest up by a static, silent camera, the first section, *Khalil*, opens with a series of 30-second shots featuring the ten-year-old boy. Alternately shy, bored and giggly, he is completely aware of the camera while it methodically records the progression of his disease. The second section depicts *Shaun*, in his underwear, pointing out the progression of another seemingly devastating skin disease. His unafflicted nature, however, reveals that this is merely the progression of a skillfully applied special effects make-up. In the third section, *A Woman Under the Influence*, Shaun reappears in full make-up and takes part in an emotional conversation as he is tucked into bed by his mother. (SL)

*A Small Domain* (1996) by Britta Sjogren; 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes

"[*A Small Domain* is] about the last two days in the life of a 95-year-old kleptomaniac as she ritually prepares for her suicide on the anniversary of her marriage to her husband, who's been dead for many years." (Todd Lothery)

The beautiful paradox is that despite the fact that she is still very much in love with her dead husband, she hasn't lost her attachment to life in the present. She lives, in a way, in the past, connected to death, but remains fully engaged in her own life. With this film, I wanted to evoke this paradox. (BS)

*When It Rains* (1996) by Charles Burnett; 16mm, color, sound, 17 minutes

"Between *The Glass Shield* and *Nightjohn*, Charles Burnett made *When It Rains*; this apparent casual parable about a community falling apart and coming together is one of his finest films." (Thom Anderson)

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## ERIC SAKS' CREOSOTE PLUS YOU TALK/I BUY AND TOUCH TONE

Film and Videomaker Eric Saks In Person

*Thursday, April 2, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm*

For the last fourteen years film- and videomaker Eric Saks has been exploring the impact of a society saturated by media and corporate conglomerates on the struggle to preserve individuality. Often using personal stories, diaries, and essays to provide the framework for his dense image structures, Saks deflates traditional narrative and documentary modes to produce works that approach a hallucinatory clarity. Continually pushing the borders of topicality and personal involvement, Saks produces work that obsessively returns to issues of environmentalism, pranksterism, and urban space. Always experimenting and searching for different mediums for his multitudinous vision, he was one of the first filmmakers to see the potential of Fisher-Price's "Pixelvision" and organized a traveling exhibition of both artists' and children's Pixelvision tapes. With Pixelvision technology he created, with his frequent collaborator Patrick Tierney, *Don from Lakewood*, a tape that uses prank phone calls and puppetry to ponder power relations in a world of commercialist hyperbole. Recently awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, longtime Californian Saks will embark on a project concerning the Los Angeles landscape. Tonight Cinematheque is excited to present three video works that present pre-millennial journeys of discovery and loss, including Saks' most recent, *Creosote*.

*Creosote* (1997); video, color, sound, 42 minutes

*Creosote* combines two analogous stories into a unique vision of individuality, and modern spirituality. The true story of Jared Negrete, a young boy who was lost on a Boy Scout camping trip and never found, is embroidered with the life story of St. Francis, also known as the "hippie saint." The visual style is arresting, and creates a liminal world wherein figurative representations fall away into hallucinatory abstractions. *Creosote* is executed through stop-frame animation and puppetry techniques, reminiscent of graphic religious pamphlets. Told through meditative voice-overs, aleatoric sound design, and Retablo-like intertitles, *Creosote* presents a visceral religious experience. (ES)

"*Creosote* is in some respects a portrait of what it means to be constructed male. With its counterpointed portrayal of the mother and father of its young protagonist and its dual modes of address, authoritative text and a female voice-over, it proposes a world of strangely static figures moving through a surreally shifting world. The lost boy himself, having shed his Boy Scout uniform, ultimately embarks on a quasi-religious quest for visionary self. His vision is mirrored in the full motion religious icons lurking within the murky presented video surface as traditional Boy Scout modes of logic are undermined: map following gives way to drifting, knot tying gives way to unraveling. All of this is at the expense of prescribed masculinity; a prescription that in its most rigid dosage requires extreme observance of rules embodied in the neatly pressed uniform, whether it be that of the Boy Scouts or that of the wonderfully rendered iconic Sheriff on the case (his back bathed in the sun, his hands clasping his rifle), the uniform becomes the constricting material shell that prohibits discovery and freedom. In haunting, texturally rich black and white Saks strings together a narrative that responds, through multiple exposure and eerie puppetry, to the spiritual search inherent in identity construction, a particularly prescient concern in our pre-millennial time." (Jeff Lambert)

*You Talk/I Buy* (1990); Pixelvision on VHS, b&w, sound, 10 minutes

A reverse prank phone call with an American automobile salesman parodying marketing and foreshadowing the Gulf War. (ES)

"This tape capitalizes upon the dreamlike flow of choppy collages of recycled pulp that is organic to Pixelvision's texture. Saks' send-up of commercialism has some of the loopy surrealism of videos by the Residents." (Tony Revaux, *Art Week*)

*Touch Tone* (1995); video, color, sound, 28 minutes

A discursive diary about anticipating the millennium. The tape is structured around one elongated phone-sex call, to illuminate issues of late capitalism, particularly the machinations of vinyl record collecting and other commodifications of culture through nostalgia at the end of this century. (ES)

"Taking the form of a long and rambling collect-call monologue that ranges from the remote titillation of telephone sex to the seductive power of pop memorabilia, Saks' darkly provocative film offers a telling glimpse of the likely banal realities of cyber-culture as alienated, overloaded, and trivia obsessed. Erudite, challenging (and occasionally frustrating), *Touch Tone* strikes out in a markedly different direction from much recent technologically-inspired work, but, for those who are prepared to listen, leaves a trail of images and allusions that linger powerfully in the mind." (Steven Bode, *Film Video Umbrella*, UK)

### Eric Saks Film/Videography:

*Wipe Out* (1981) 16mm; *Insomnia* (1982) 16mm; *Suddenly I Burst into Another: The Life of Henry Tanner* (1983) 16mm; *Automatic* (1984) Super 8mm; *4 Songs* (1986) video; *Designated Shooting Area* (1987) video installation; *Forevermore: Biography of a Leach Lord* (1989) 16mm; *Don from Lakewood* (1989) Pixelvision with Patrick Tierney; *Big Pixel Theory* (Pixelvision compilation) (1990) Pixelvision; *Earth Day Diary* (for Toxic Video Dispatch) (1990) Pixelvision and video; *Hide* (1990) video with Patrick Tierney; *Nancy* (1990) Pixelvision; *Old Man* (1990) Pixelvision with Patrick Tierney; *You Talk/I Buy* (1990) Pixelvision; *Cappy Peeper Trailers* (1991) video; *Chickmas* (1991) Pixelvision and video; *Gun Talk* (1991) video; *Hot Dogs* (1991) video with Patrick Tierney; *I Will Testify: The Porter Wagoner Story* (1991) video with Brad Vandenburg; *This Summer PSA* (1991) video; *Vote PSA* (1991) video; *Fax Attack* (1992) video; *Copper Connection* (1993) video with Patrick Tierney.; *KNBR* (1993) video with Patrick Tierney; *Encrypt PSA* (1994) Quicktime video; *Like I* (1994) Quicktime video; *Media Bust* (1994) Quicktime video; *Straight Talk About Deserts* (1994) video; *The King Ginder Story* (1985-95) video with Patrick Tierney; *Friar-fr-kinds* (1987-95) video; *Coin Tone* (1995) video with Patrick Tierney; *Hot Dog (revisited)* (1995) video with Patrick Tierney; *Neglectosphere* (1995) video with Patrick Tierney; *Premiere of Oceania: 10 years of lounge, tiki, and exotica wanderings* (1995) video with Patrick Tierney; *Touch Tone* (1995) video; *A Call Away* (1996) video; *My Autumn Has Come* (1996) video with Patrick Tierney; *Creosote* (1997) video

Program Notes written and compiled by Matthew Swiezynski and Jeff Lambert

## EARLY EVENING EXPERIMENTAL

## PROGRAM 3

*Sunday, April 5, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—5:30pm*

*Vampyr* (1931–32) by Carl Th. Dreyer; 16mm, b&w, silent, 70 minutes

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AVANT-GARDE FROM HUNGARY:  
FILMS OF JÁNOS SUGÁR

János Sugár In Person

*Sunday, April 5, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30pm*

Tonight, Cinematheque presents a rare look at contemporary avant-garde cinema from Hungary with János Sugár. Originally trained as a sculptor, Sugár's films and videos often deal with gesture and experience, sometimes in staged events, sometimes in everyday moments. He also wrestles with the question of what it means to record life with photographic and electronic devices, injecting his work with both media theory and metaphysical meanderings. He is currently producing an experimental feature based on the Faust myth, and the desire for knowledge in the digital era.

János Sugár has, since the early eighties, been an extremely active member of the Budapest art scene. Aside from membership in the interdisciplinary art group INDIGO in the eighties, he has participated in national and international exhibitions in not only film and video, but performance as well. Between 1990 and 1995, he acted as a board member of the Bela Balazs Film Studio in Budapest, and continues his position of lecturer of the Intermedia Department of the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts, a department he co-founded in 1990. Sugár participates in many conferences on media theory worldwide: most recently, Flusser Conference 1997, Budapest and ISEA '97, Chicago.

*Pengo/Tweedle* (1987); 16mm, b&w, sound, 7 minutes

Two men compete in their passion for the same woman as human size chess figures, a horse and a rook, on the waterfront and then in a bread factory. The playful music of piano, tuned percussion and saxophone suggest early surrealist performance films, not to mention the costumes and staging of characters and objects.

The film shows the possibility of how a passion like chess can change even the simplest, everyday situation .... For the sake of simplicity we can observe the passion for chess as a part of altered reality, through the eyes of the passionate chess player. (JS)

*Ambiguous Window* (1993); 16mm, b&w and color, sound, 15 minutes

A collage in both sound and image, each suggestive in its discontinuity. Seemingly mundane moments become something like exhibits, where invisible everyday gestures and signs come into question. Cafes, an artist's studio, even a parade come under scrutiny. The rich soundtrack is a cut and paste journey, starting with snippets of conversations continuing through commercials, schmaltzy German songs, and European avant-pop.

The title refers to a certain window, whose design allows us to see the closed window as it would be open. For almost 30 years I did not discover the strange framing of the large staircase windows in the apartment where I lived. I wanted to do something like this in film .... [T]his film deals with similar invisible gestures, signs, we can realize and understand only later .... (JS)

*Camera in Trouble* (1992); 16mm and video, color, sound, 70 minutes

Sugár raises questions of media and reality in two parts. A camera's conscience forms the text of part one: drawing on theories of nature, language, the physical world, and of course, media, it directly engages the viewer in its monologue. In part two, we observe a singer rehearsing at a composer's flat. The absurdist play between the characters reveal ideas raised in the first part, while the lyrics of the song suspiciously mimic snippets of the camera's monologue.

"Dear Spectators, you can hear now the monologue of the camera, that is, you can see almost the same as I do, and you can hear what I am saying. As long as the film is on, we create a closed system, of which I am—as the camera's conscience—the sole sense organ. Standing as it were, between you and reality, I transform time into an observable entity. This situation is owing to that strange method which transforms that which is non-recordable into a recordable entity, in the form of images. It records the fact of passing, by which it intends to assist in envisioning the infinite." (from *Camera in Trouble*)

**On the monitor before screening:**

*Immortal Culprits* (1988); video, color, sound, 30 minutes

A documented performance of a chamber opera by Gabor Litvan. Two characters, Hansel and Gretchen, a Schoenberg-esque Bonnie and Clyde, are surrounded on stage by a human-sized video recording apparatus, asking (operatically): How does video work? The libretto uses extremely technical explanations of video and heavy existential query to echo notions between experience and the meaning of life in "a world of deeds," when recording becomes an event in itself. Their future as outlaws is strangely entwined in the future of video technology.

**János Sugár Film/Videography:**

*This Type of Intention Is on the Border of Credibility* (1983) 16mm; *Pengo/Tweedle* (1987) 16mm; *Immortal Culprits* (1988) video; *Camera in Trouble* (1992) 16mm and video; *Ambiguous Window* (1993) 16mm; *Adriadne Unemployed* (1996) video; *Faust* (in progress)

*Program Notes written and compiled by Christian Bruno*

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## GIRLS' NINETY NIGHT OUT: ANIE S8 STANLEY AND GUESTS

**Anie S8 Stanley In Person**

*Thursday, April 9, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm*

Postmodern Super 8 is to women, as S8 was to the '70s. In tonight's program, a detour from posh '90s filmmaking, the "splicing circle" discourse is on uninhibited sexuality (male dominated in the past with Super-8 porn and home movies). The dialogue of female hand to trigger is always evident: these women have stopped "gazing," and have put on the welding goggles. Some of us still take a gamble with our splices to keep our integrity and aesthetic in the creative process; we are pioneers in a boy's club of underground and experimental film. (Anie S8 Stanley)

*Girls in the Band* (1992) by Candy; Super 8mm shown on video, b&w, sound, 17 minutes

A trailer containing never-shown footage for an upcoming feature movie from the underground. Bruce La Bruce's highly recommended Canadian girl film.

**Hub Cap** (1997) by Anie Stanley and Patty Chang; Super 8mm shown on video, b&w, sound, 6 minutes

A horror short using death by sex narrative images mixed with a reconstructed radio talk show. *Hub Cap* confounds desire, disgust, film reality, and sexual fantasy to produce an unappetizing look at anticipation, fear, and the horror genre.

**Loose Change** (1998) by Jane Gang; Super 8mm shown on video, color, sound, 6 minutes

Men standing on a street corner talking dirty about women.

**Hours of the Idolate** (1995) by Anie Stanley; Super 8mm, b&w, sound-on-cassette, 16 minutes

They're all wanted dead or alive! Idols and heroes reclaimed from mainstream representation and adopted for fantasy.

**Meddle** (1998) by Teri Rice; Super 8mm post-produced on video, b&w, sound, 7 minutes

An obsessive woman sacrifices all for her art. Her alter ego and her conscious take human form and try to thwart her plans of suicide.

**What's On** (1997) by Martha Colburn; Super 8mm shown on video, color, sound, 2 minutes

A hyper-fire tele-spazz-umentary rendered in orgiastic collage animation, media, mush, and hand colored film. Snot, boobs, brats and more mutate and spew to the demented punk-rock poetry of 99 hooker ... blasting your brains into hell-a-vision.

**Our Us We Bone One So Naked Known** (1994) by Anie Stanley; Super 8mm, b&w, sound-on-cassette, 10 minutes

The finest line where violence and eroticism meet in an urban Brooklyn landscape. Featuring girls from the all-girl bands Thrust and Fresh Fish.

**Nymphomania** (1994) by Tessa Hughes-Freeland and Holly Adams; Super 8mm shown on video, b&w, sound, 8 minutes

The conflict between the feminine experience of sex as a loving, unifying event and its corruption by the male's base animal instincts.

**Paradise** (1996) by Anie Stanley and Patty Chang; Super 8mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

Oriental femme seeks financially secure. Loves gambling, resorts, shuffleboard, houseboats, take-offs, and landings .... A molotov cocktail of low glamour, high rollers, pink ladies, demo derby, and demo drama.

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## WARHOL RE-DISCOVERIES: SCREEN TEST #2 AND RESTAURANT

*Sunday, April 12, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

“Warhol’s second-period films, all in sound, were vehicles that he specially tailored for a new phenomenon—the underground superstar. Sensing that avant-garde cinema needed its counterparts to Hollywood’s legendary stars, Warhol began to establish a stable of performers comparable to that of the old studio system. Between the final weeks of 1964 and the early months of 1965, he ushered in a new era of cinematic glamour with films constructed around the personalities of two underground movie queens: Mario Montez, a female impersonator, and Edie Sedgwick, a scintillating young socialite. Montez, representing a perverse inversion of movie-star attractiveness, contributed a new element of absurdity to Warhol’s already controversial reputation, while Sedgwick gave him chic respectability among the socially prominent. Together, Montez and Sedgwick comprised the alpha and omega of the Warhol school of performance art. Each offered a provocative combination of vulnerability and innocence as well as kinky far-outness.” (David Bourdon, *Warhol*)

*Screen Test #2* (1965); 16mm, b&w, sound, 70 minutes  
With Mario Montez and the off-screen voice of Ronald Tavel.

*Restaurant* (1965); 16mm, b&w, sound, 35 minutes  
With Edie Sedgwick, Ondine and others.

The word “re-discoveries” in the title of tonight’s program is worth a brief discussion. For a time in the mid-sixties, Andy Warhol was at least as well known as a filmmaker as he was a painter and producer of serigraphs. From 1963 through 1968 he made hundreds of films, ranging in length from 100-foot camera rolls to the five-and-a-half hour *Sleep*, the eight-hour *Empire*, and the 25-hour \*\*\*\* (*Four Stars*). But then he was shot by Valerie Solanis in June 1968, the same week as Robert Kennedy. During his recuperation, the Factory changed from an open to a closed shop, and under the direction of Paul Morrissey these early films were withdrawn from distribution. In the seventies and eighties, the only way to see any of these films was at in-person screenings by Superstars such as Gerard Malanga or Ondine who owned their own prints of, say, *Vinyl* or *The Chelsea Girls*.

In 1982, and with Warhol’s permission, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts began the Andy Warhol Film Project, whose mission was to preserve and research Warhol’s achievements as a filmmaker (Warhol died in February, 1987). Since 1988, the Film Project has released a few dozen films from various phases of his filmmaking career. Tonight’s films are both early examples of Warhol’s “talkies.”

Jonas Mekas in his essay, “Notes after Reseeing the Movies of Andy Warhol,” reports that Warhol purchased his own Auricon movie camera in December of 1964. The Auricon was a newsreel camera with two capabilities that appealed to Warhol: it was capable of recording sound optically onto the filmstock in real time, eliminating the need for tape recording and post-shoot sound synchronization, and it carried a magazine that held 1,200-foot film reels—as opposed to his Bolex’s 100-foot capacity—allowing 35 minutes of uninterrupted shooting. A borrowed Auricon had been used to shoot the eight-hour silent portrait of the Empire State Building, *Empire*, in July 1964.

The advent of sound focused attention on voice; the story goes that Warhol and Malanga invited dramatist Ronald Tavel to work on Warhol’s first sound films after hearing him read from his then-unpublished novel, *Street of Stairs*, in November 1964. Tavel’s first collaboration with Warhol was *Harlot* in December; he also collaborated on *Screen Test #1* (*Phillip’s Screen Test*), *Suicide*, *The Life of Juanita Castro*, *Horse*, *Vinyl*, *Kitchen*, *Space*, *Hedy* (aka, *The 14-Year Old Girl* and *Hedy the Shoplifter*), *Withering Sights*, *The Chelsea Girls*, and *More Milk Yvette*. Most of these were filmed in the first half of 1965, and several of them featured Superstar Mario Montez.

Sheldon Renan’s breathy bio of Montez, in *An Introduction to the American Underground Film* (1967):

Mario Montez was discovered, as they say by Jack Smith in a subway station. His name was not then Mario Montez. It was something else, and for *Flaming Creatures* it was Dolores Flores. Mario has played women in all his films except Robert Blossom’s pseudopornographic *Movie*. When he dresses up, he undergoes a metamorphosis into a dizzy and vain young thing. He acts like a woman. He looks like a woman. His fantasy is very real.

He appears as a mermaid bathing in milk in Jack Smith’s *Normal Love* and is in Smith’s *In the Grip of the Lobster*. He is in Rice’s *Chumlum*, Jose Rodriguez-Soltero’s *Lupita*, and Bill Vehr’s *The Mystery of the Spanish Lady*, *Lil Picards*, *Beauty Environment of the Year 2065*, and *Brothel*. ...

Montez has also been one of Warhol’s stable of stars, playing Jean Harlow in *Harlot*, Lana Turner in *More Milk Yvette*, and Hedy Lamarr in *The Fourteen Year Old Girl*. He is in *Camp*, and his most touching performance is in Warhol/Tavel’s *Screen Test Number Two*.

Screen tests were an everyday occurrence at the Factory, with newcomers and visitors being seated before Warhol’s motorized Bolex for a three-minute portrait. Many of these were assembled into longer films like *13 Most Beautiful Women*, *13 Most Beautiful Boys*, and *50 Fantastics and 50 Personalities*. The worst of these show the sitter frozen as if for a long-exposure still photograph, the best revealing something unique in the sitter’s personality as they test various tactics to deal with the unflinching camera.



What makes *Screen Test #2* radically different from these earlier silent films is Tavel's off-screen voice. He directs Montez to strike various poses, evoke various emotions, recite various lines—some serious, some absurd, some demeaning—and while Montez alternatively succeeds and fails (always with panache and a brush of the wig), Tavel remains—with one exception—always in charge, relentless-bordering-on-sadistic, a man who understands timing, pitch, drama, acting, at a depth that is unexpected in a Warhol film. It must have pleased Warhol that the one thing Tavel could not control was the length of the film reel, and the climax of one of the acting exercises Tavel gives Montez is effectively sabotaged when the first reel runs out and the second reel kicks in with an utter emotional flatness.

Tavel left the Factory to become one of the founders of the Play-House of the Ridiculous, which featured six of his productions during its existence in 1966 and 1967. He brought to the stage versions of *Screen Test*, *The Life of Juanita Castro*, and *Kitchen*, and his later work includes such titles as *Gorilla Queen*, *Indira Ghandi's Daring Device*, *Boy on the Straight-Back Chair*, *Vinyl Visits an FM Station*, *The Ovens of Anita Orangejuice: A History of Modern Florida* and others. *New York Times* drama critic Mel Gussow wrote, "In the early '70s, in his best work, ... he began to explore society, science, and history. With his linguistic ability, he seemed to be a kind of high-camp American equivalent of Tom Stoppard."

*Restaurant*, filmed in May 1965, is another of the vehicles conceived for Edie Sedgwick, the others including *Poor Little Rich Girl*, *Beauty #2*, *Space*, *Inner and Outer Space*, and *Lupe*. The scenario is simple: Edie, Ondine and others of the early Superstars (notably Ed Hood, more memorable in the later *My Hustler* and *The Chelsea Girls*) are having dinner in a restaurant, exchanging gossip, complaining about the service, switching seats, making a scene. Apart from an surprising short burst of pre-shooting footage, accompanied by the screech of the Auricon's optical audio, the film starts with a long close-up of the table—glasses, ashtray, hands—followed by a slow zoom out to show the people around the table. There is a pan over to the table at the right, in something of the wandering, inattentive Warhol style that, in other films, might take a long look at a ceiling or corner because the actors have gotten boring, and there are closeups of the various diners. The sound quality is not the best; here's hoping that the sound equipment at the Art Institute can rescue some of the dialogue that gets lost on simpler projection systems.

*Program Notes written and compiled by Eric Theise*

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## FROM HAITI TO ZAIRE AND BACK: TWO BY RAOUL PECK

*Thursday, April 16, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm*

A Haitian who grew up in Zaire (Congo) during the tumultuous years of African independence, studied filmmaking in Brussels, and now lives in Haiti, Raoul Peck is a unique voice in the cinema of the African diaspora. Best known for his award-winning feature *The Man by the Shore* (1993), Peck was the Haitian Minister of Culture until a few months ago and has made several poetic documentaries. Tonight Cinematheque is happy to present two of his finest portraits of African history, both its past and present reflected through Peck's powerful sense of imagery.

***Lumumba: Death of a Prophet*** (1992); 16mm, color, sound, 69 minutes

A combination of private autobiography and public biography, *Lumumba* is a powerful portrait of a visionary leader. Taking the form of a meditation on a series of images, photographs, interviews, home movies and newsreels, Peck deconstructs the straight forward narrative of most film biographies and presents instead, a non-chronological weave of both past and present. Beyond a mere documentation of Lumumba's bloody rise and fall, this is a study of how his legacy has been distorted, even erased, by politicians, the media, and time itself.

"A film essay in the tradition of *Night and Fog*, *Sans Soleil*, and *The Sorrow and the Pity*, this work explores how any image represses the multiple stories surrounding it, how the present captured in photographs is always in a sense the hostage of history's winner." (California Newsreel's *Library of African Cinema*)

*Desounen—Dialogue with Death* (1994); video, color, sound, 50 minutes

“Raoul Peck’s experimental documentary film opens with a quote from the poem ‘Lettre d’octobre’ from ‘Les cinq lettres’ by Georges Castera. The text is interwoven with images that mirror the poem throughout the documentary. The dialogue begins with:

*One day on a deserted road, a peasant encountered death. “Honor to you,” death said to him. “Respect to you,” replied the peasant. Peasant asked death, “What are you doing here on my path? How come you are still among the living ...” “Don’t you want to record the testimonies of the living?”*

Peck interchanges the dialogue with interviews with people living in Haiti who have experienced the horrors of everyday life in their country .... The testimonies of so many people whose detailed accounts of personal suffering are echoed in the film’s unifying poem brings us to better understand the depth of anguish most Haitians have experienced.” (Christine McDonald, Crandall Library, Glens Falls, NY)

**Raoul Peck Film/Videography:**

*De Cuba traigo in cantar* (1982) video; *Leugt* (1983); *Excerpt* (1983) video; *Burial* (1983); *Le ministrie de l’Interieur est de notre cote* (1984) video; *Merry Christmas Deutschland* (1984); *Haitian Corner* (1987–88); *Lumumba: The Death of a Prophet* (1991); *The Man by the Shore* (1993); *Desounen—Dialogue with Death* (1994) video

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## EARLY EVENING EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM 4

*Sunday, April 19, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—5:30 pm*

*Ariel* (1983) by Nathaniel Dorsky; 16mm, color, silent, 28 minutes (@ 18fps)

*17 Reasons Why* (1985–87) by Nathaniel Dorsky; 16mm, color, silent, 19 minutes (@18fps)

*Devil’s Canyon* (1972–77) by Michael Mideke; 16mm, color, silent, 40 minutes

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## DANCING WITH/IN THE EYE

**Filmmakers Al Hernandez and Ken Paul Rosenthal In Person**

*Sunday, April 19, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

Al Hernandez and Ken Paul Rosenthal first met in 1988 as SFAI film students. Their Super-8 work navigates, penetrates and celebrates natural, urban, and emulsive worlds. They exploit the gauge’s mobility, intimacy, and immediacy to create a lyrical and fractured interplay of these environments.

Ken Paul Rosenthal’s films graphically address light and the nature of seeing through the materiality of the medium by using techniques such as: hand-processing; exposing the film to natural elements; dying, etching, and collaging the film surface; and multiple-projection performance. KPR was born in New York City and raised in New Jersey where he earned a BA in Radio/TV/Film from Glassboro State College. Following further film studies at CCSF and



SFAI, he received an MA in Interdisciplinary Arts from SFSU. He teaches "Hand-Processing: The Methods and the Madness" at Film Arts Foundation.

Hernandez's films are surreal explorations into personal and planetary identity conveyed through dramatic camera movement and dance. His work usually reflects the beauty, psyche, and conflicts of the California landscape. Al Hernandez was born and raised in the Bay Area. He earned an AA in film from DeAnza College, and attended SFAI on a Sobel Memorial National Scholarship. He has been making films for 10 years.

*Near Windows* (1997) by Ken Paul Rosenthal; Super 8mm, color, silent, 15 minutes

Nearby windows frame and illuminate four years of voyeuristic observations lyrically woven into a time-lapsed tapestry of light, unsuspecting neighbors, and street drama. (KPR)

*Blackbirds* (1998) by Ken Paul Rosenthal; Super 8mm, color, sound, 8 minutes

A meditation on the impermanent nature of TV violence both on screen and in heart. The Rodney King/Reginald Denny beatings are re-presented as an extended series of re-photographed, hand-processed images. Formerly a seven-projector performance piece. (KPR)

*Flow (for James Broughton)* (1998, work-in-progress) by Ken Paul Rosenthal; Super 8mm, color, sound, 7 minutes

A torrential and reverential ode to H<sub>2</sub>O. A homemade homage collaging a deluge of celluloid cut-outs, bleached, beached and beaten surfaces, and unslit Double-8mm images of water. (KPR)

*Spring Flavor* (1996) by Ken Paul Rosenthal; Super 8mm, color, silent, 3 minutes

Sunsquashed and squeezed/Golden Gate Park pond reeds/ kaleidoscopically colliding/ dyed in pondslide berries/ buried in-side of pond/ de & recomposing the texture of the gesture/ chasing the scent of light/ the flavor of a flower sent. Also about my eroding image as Filmmaker, and being reborn alchemist, sculptor of light, and mad scientist. Ah, to stripmine the frameline for its silver soul. (KPR)

*Sacred Hearts* (1998) by Al Hernandez; Super 8mm, color, sound, 6 minutes

Reaching glimpses of cultural and personal heritage. Music by John Steiner. (AH)

*Jump Fence* (1998) by Al Hernandez; Super 8mm, b&w, sound, 20 minutes

The fenced-in isolation of a suburban backyard becomes a surreal dreamscape where the dance of masked tricksters, animal apparitions, and colossal props convey the genesis of a new self. (KPR)

*That Mission Rising!* (1997) by Al Hernandez; Super 8mm, b&w, sound, 7 minutes

The trees are angry and the earth and camera quiver to shake off the relentless itch of modern man's concrete straight jacket. (AH)

*Good Medicine* (1997) by Al Hernandez; Super 8mm, color, sound, 7 minutes

With camera in hand, I dance with trees and flowers. Music by John Steiner. (AH)

*A reception will follow the screening.*

*Program Notes written by Ken Paul Rosenthal with Al Hernandez*

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## ROBERT FRANK: SELF-REFLECTIONS

Presented in association with the San Francisco International Film Festival

### Robert Frank In Person

Friday, May 1, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 p m

*I'm always looking outside, trying to look inside. Trying to tell something that's true. But maybe nothing is true. Except what is out there, and what's out there is always changing. (Robert Frank, Home Improvements)*

There he is. There you are, and where you are in relation to where he is shapes you, shapes him. Robert Frank's films sing out what it means to be there, wherever there may be: New York, Switzerland, Canada, Vermont, America. A seemingly lyrical randomness confronts you, and you wade through this man's life, this man's obsessions, and before you know it you've learned less about him than you have about yourself. Whether trafficking his autobiographical portraits or constructing fictional spaces from which to explore, Robert Frank's visionary America haunts and confronts. Born in Switzerland in 1924, Frank worked as a commercial photographer before a Guggenheim fellowship in 1955 allowed him to turn his lens on America as he saw it. In 1958 his famous book of photographs, *The Americans*, was published piercing America with a black-and-white stare, her citizens mingling with images of juke-boxes and cars, poetic and immediate. With an introduction by his traveling companion, Jack Kerouac: "Robert Frank, Swiss, unobtrusive, nice, with that little camera that he raises and snaps with one hand he sucked a sad poem right out of America onto film, taking rank among the tragic poets of the world," *The Americans* established Frank as one of the most important photographers of the post-war era. His next project was a series of photographs of strangers taken from the windows of New York city buses; as one looks at Frank's photos one recognizes a restless drive towards movement, recurring obsessions and concerns (automobiles, transportation, music, the lost and lonely), and ultimately one is faced with a singular vision and its increasing kineticism. Frank responded to his need to keep moving in 1959 when he picked up a movie camera and made his first film *Pull My Daisy* with Alfred Leslie and a number of Beat Generation hipsters.

*I became more occupied with my own life, with my own situation, instead of traveling and looking at the cities and the landscape. And I think that brought me to move away from the single image and begin to film, where I had to tell a story. (RF)*

Regarded as one of the key films in the American independent film movement, *Pull My Daisy* inaugurates a cinematic style that appears improvisational and free, yet is constructed with grace and control. Whether dealing in autobiography, documentary, fiction or a fusion of these, Frank finds a style to fit his films, sometimes approaching free-form organization (*Keep Busy, Life Dances On..., Conversations in Vermont*) and sometimes sustaining a rigorous formal elegance (*OK End Here, Candy Mountain*). But in whatever mode he works, Frank appears to expose himself totally, and in doing so exposes his viewers to themselves, brutally confronting their own relation to a life and vision that refuses to be ignored. Tonight San Francisco Cinematheque is happy to present a program featuring three of Robert Frank's autobiographical films, tracing a cinematic construction of self through a long and sometimes emotionally harsh development.

Still here I carry my old delicious burdens, / I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go, I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them, / I am filled with them, and I will fill them in return. (Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road")

*Conversations in Vermont* (1969); 16mm, b&w, sound, 26 minutes

Sirens ring out, Robert Frank fiddles with his camera, and prepares for the film's journey. "This film is about the past and the present," Robert Frank remarks at the beginning of *Conversations in Vermont* as he shuffles through a pile of still photographs and proof sheets. His existence resides in these images: Robert Frank, "great photographer," and the film functions as an examination of what is gained and lost in the pursuit of the artist's life. Frank travels to Vermont to visit his children, Pablo and Andrea, where they attend a rural boarding school. Once there, Frank confronts himself and his children with images from the past, apparently hoping to find some kind of truth in their

memories of how they became who they are and his role in that process, something not to be found solely in his stack of pictures. But just as the film explores what it means to raise children when one is committed to art, it explores the way that art changes when one has children: the self-criticism is more apparent, levels of responsibility and emotional culpability are raised. Frank doesn't shy away from these issues, but his process of self-examination becomes another work of art: the family album as performance piece. Walking with Pablo towards the house where dinner is being prepared, Frank remarks that he wants to walk into the house, directing the film while he talks to his son. Inside he tells Andrea that he won't be staying for dinner, he just wanted to come inside. She insists that he stay, a place has been set, but one gets the uncomfortable feeling that the footage for the day has been shot, and the familial act of sharing a meal has no place in the world of a film that is consistently constructing its own past.

*About Me: A Musical* (1971); 16mm, b&w, sound, 35 minutes

*My project was to make a film about music in America. Well, fuck the music. I just decided to make a film about myself.* (RF, *About Me: A Musical*)

We are told in a voice-over that Lynn Reyner (who spends the film wrapped in a bedspread) is the young lady playing Robert Frank, but Mr. Frank himself shows up from time to time discussing scenes, speaking in voice-over, and infusing the film with himself. The stark autobiographical nature of *Conversations in Vermont* is tempered here by Frank's willful flaunting of the cinematic apparatus and its ultimate aim of construction; the construction here being an autobiographical film with a stand-in, a film that uses 360-degree pans to reveal the movement of characters through time as well as the sound men lurking in the shadows. Despite his statement to the contrary, the film is about music, and scenes of performance are interspersed with "Robert Frank" and her story, suggesting levels of performativity and form that evoke melody, repetition, and lyricism. All the while, however, Frank continually insinuates himself and the art-making process into the film's world, his presence is continually felt, and these gestures of self-consciousness suggest that even a book of photos with a democratic title like *The Americans* is more than anything about the man behind the viewfinder. This belief becomes even more suggestive in the scene where Frank returns home to a father who looks at photographs through a stereo-viewer, acknowledging neither his wife nor his son holding the movie camera; like Frank himself in relation to his own son, Pablo, the father is the controller of images and thus of the family's and the film's form.

*Life Dances On...* (1980); 16mm, b&w, sound, 30 minutes

Seemingly disparate footage unites to construct a chaotic portrait of a world that offers no explanations for the pain it causes. *Life Dances On...* is a disturbing dissection of decay, stemming from the death of Frank's daughter Andrea in a 1974 plane crash and the disappearance of his friend Danny Seymour in 1973. The film teeters on the edge of collapse, as do the three main figures that it follows: Marty Greenbaum, a performance artist whose search for meaning through art mirrors Frank's own search; Billy, a mentally-ill Bowery resident suffering from paranoid fantasies that people are reading his thoughts and directly confronting Frank's voyeurism "I'm giving you my innermost thoughts ... that's invading my privacy," a statement complicated by Billy's belief that the TV-program "Marcus Welby, M.D." is constructing episodes around his life, something Frank is actually doing; and Frank's son Pablo, who appears with his shirt off, exposed to a camera that is unable to decipher meaning from his free-flowing non-sequiturs, statements that all seem to revolve around uncontrollable disaster and unexplainable phenomena (UFOs, floods, lightning, Biblical references).

The film begins with images of Andrea discussing her future in *Conversation in Vermont* and Danny Seymour passing a joint in *Cocksucker Blues*. At one point we see Frank hold up his own photographs and a sign reading "words" while Greenbaum is yelling (although not at Frank directly): "I think you're really pathetic, and I think this is really stupid and boring. That a man goes as long as you've gone to do something this trite, to make such a fucking artificial scene like this and think you're actually doing something of consequence!" The art making process is indicted, and Frank himself is ironically positioned when a photography class is stumbled onto and Greenbaum asks them to name five important photographers. When Robert Frank isn't mentioned, Greenbaum starts in: "What about Frank Roth? Robert? To be Frank ... to be ... to be ... Johnny Frank Eskimo ... Robert Frank. Does that mean a bell ... ring a bell?" Most of the class has no clue about whom he speaks except for one woman. From there the film cuts to Pablo and Frank grappling to communicate, the camera moving in close, the father trying to understand who his son is, the son remarking, "Job 38:22," The Biblical reference the film cites at its conclusion offers little insight. And the dance continues ...

Robert Frank Film/Videography:

*Pull My Daisy* (1958); *The Sin of Jesus* (1961); *OK End Here* (1963); *Me and My Brother* (1965–68); *Conversations in Vermont* (1969); *Lifeaft Earth* (1969); *About Me: A Musical* (1971); *Cocksucker Blues* (1972); *This Film Is About...* (1973); *Keep Busy* (1975); *Life Dances On...* (1980); *Energy, and How to Get It* (1981); *This Song for Jack* (1983); *Home Improvements* (1985) video; *Candy Mountain* (1987); *Hunter* (1989); *C'est Vrai!! (One Hour)* (1990) video; *Last Supper* (1992); *Present* (1996) video; *Flamingo* (1997) video

Special thanks to Marianne Lundz at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Brian Gordon at the San Francisco International Film Festival for making this screening possible; and also to Dalva and La Méditerranée for reception donations.  
Program Notes written and compiled by Jeff Lambert

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PANDORA'S SCREENS

Kerry Laitala and Pablo de Ocampo In Person

A program of experimental work co-presented by the 41st San Francisco International Film Festival, the Pacific Film Archive and San Francisco Cinematheque, curated by Kathy Geritz and Irina Leimbacher

Sunday, May 3, 1998—Kabuki Theater—7:30 pm

San Francisco Cinematheque and the Pacific Film Archive present a program of seven recent experimental films which share a fascination with troubled images, letting loose on the screen disquieting and mysterious resonances and perturbing our relationship to the seen.

*Retrospectroscope* (1997) by Kerry Laitala; 16mm, b&w, silent, 4 minutes

*Retrospectroscope* is an homage to the imaginary forces that lie beyond the ability of language to define. The “Retrospectroscope” apparatus itself has gone through many incarnations, and its physical presence belies the processes that created it. As a paracinematic device, it traces an evolutionary trajectory, encircling the viewer in a procession of flickering fantasies of fragmented lyricism. This reinvention simulates the illusion of the analysis of motion to recall early mysteries of the quest for this very discovery now taken for granted; the “Muses of Cinema” have emerged from a dark Neoclassical past. (KL)

*Vervielfältigung* (1996) by James Otis; 16mm, b&w, sound, 4 minutes

Sheldon's neigh crackpot body typing method based on the superficially convincing fiction of universal endo-, ecto-, and mesomorphic components of the human form, [and h]is decades of obsessive recording gave us standardized pictures of 1200 individuals in his *Atlas of Men*, obvious animation fodder. ... [T]he resultant shooting script was from the start also designed to produce the soundtrack. Further computer programs turned the coordinates of bodily form into notes. ... Thus each point in Sheldon's parameter space implies a type of human and, by my contrivance, a musical chord. That is, what you hear is intimately related to what you see. (JO)

*if you stand with your back to the slowing of the speed of light in water* (1997) by Julie Murray; 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes

This film attempts allusions to the influence of water touching water (and other fractual equivalents) upon the ordinary confounding anxiety of complex relations, mannerisms, and exchange between the animate and the inert. Combined with loose ascriptions of flaws in the medium itself to subject and content throughout, it aims to illuminate a vital sense innate to perception where inversion is counterbalance, and focal myopia the articulation of space. (JM)

*Sewn* (1997) by Pablo de Ocampo; color, silent, 4 minutes

*Sewn* is a film of memory and associations; it is the detail of the personal mixed with the ambiguity and randomness of memories that are clearly not mine. The lack of a detailed memory of pictures, places, and events clouds the image that is seen on the screen. There is a difference between what is seen and what is perceived; in this film I am attempting to marry the two—sewing together the abstractions of thought and emotional perception with images from a past. (PdO)

*Imprint* (1997) by Louise Bourque; 16mm, color, sound, 14 minutes

An obsession, a fleeting image, a longing: the concept of the home as a romanticized, idealized place of intimacy, insistently inhabiting the most private sphere, the territory of memory, dream, and fantasy. (LB)

*Immer Zu* (1997) by Janie Geiser; 16mm, b&w, sound, 9 minutes

*Immer Zu* is an elliptical, experimental animated film which evokes a mysterious undercover world of secret messages, cryptic language, and indecipherable codes. ... In this dark and richly atmospheric film, with a soundtrack collaged from several film noirs, meaning is constantly covered and uncovered in a shadowed journey toward eclipse. (JG)

*The Five Bad Elements* (1997) by Mark LaPore; 16mm, b&w, sound, 32 minutes

A filmic Pandora's Box full of my version of "trouble" (death, loss, cultural imperialism) as well as the trouble with representation as incomplete understanding. (ML)

Founded by two Bay Area filmmakers in 1961, **San Francisco Cinematheque** is one of the oldest showcases for non-commercial, personal, and experimental film in the United States. Striving to make experimental film and video a part of the larger cultural landscape, Cinematheque presents over seventy programs each year, with artists present at many of the screenings; publishes program notes and a journal, *Cinematograph*; and regularly collaborates with a number of other arts organizations including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, and the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival. For more information or to become a member, give us a call at (415) 558-8129.

The **Pacific Film Archive** is celebrating its 22nd year as one of the world's most important film archives, film studies centers, and exhibitors of film art. Their exhibition program offers a wide variety of world cinema from its earliest days through the present, highlighted by prints of exceptional quality, with different public screenings almost every night of the year. They have one of the finest archival programs devoted to the preservation of experimental film. For more information or to become a member, call (510) 642-1412.

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## ROBERT FRANK: EARLY FICTIONS

Presented in association with the San Francisco International Film Festival

Thursday, May 7, 1998—Yerba Buena Center For the Arts—7:30 pm

*I'm always looking outside, trying to look inside. Trying to tell something that's true. But maybe nothing is true. Except what's out there, and what's out there is always changing.* (Robert Frank, *Home Improvements*)

There he is. There you are, and where you are in relation to where he is shapes you, shapes him. Robert Frank's films sing out what it means to be there, wherever there may be: New York, Switzerland, Canada, Vermont, America. A seemingly lyrical randomness confronts you, and you wade through this man's life, this man's obsessions, and before you know it you've learned less about him than you have about yourself. Whether trafficking his autobiographical portraits or constructing fictional spaces from which to explore, Robert Frank's visionary America haunts and confronts. Born in Switzerland in 1924, Frank worked as a commercial photographer before a Guggenheim fellowship in 1955



allowed him to turn his lens on America as he saw it. In 1958 his famous book of photographs, *The Americans*, was published piercing America with a black-and-white stare, her citizens mingling with images of juke-boxes and cars, poetic and immediate. With an introduction by his traveling companion, Jack Kerouac: "Robert Frank, Swiss, unobtrusive, nice, with that little camera that he raises and snaps with one hand he sucked a sad poem right out of America onto film, taking rank among the tragic poets of the world," *The Americans* established Frank as one of the most important photographers of the post-war era. His next project was a series of photographs of strangers taken from the windows of New York city buses; as one looks at Frank's photos one recognizes a restless drive towards movement, recurring obsessions and concerns (automobiles, transportation, music, the lost and lonely), and ultimately one is faced with a singular vision and its increasing kineticism. Frank responded to his need to keep moving in 1959 when he picked up a movie camera and made his first film *Pull My Daisy* with Alfred Leslie and a number of Beat Generation hipsters.

*I became more occupied with my own life, with my own situation, instead of traveling and looking at the cities and the landscape. And I think that brought me to move away from the single image and begin to film, where I had to tell a story. (RF)*

Regarded as one of the key films in the American independent film movement, *Pull My Daisy* inaugurates a cinematic style that appears improvisational and free, yet is constructed with grace and control. Whether dealing in autobiography, documentary, fiction or a fusion of these, Frank finds a style to fit his films, sometimes approaching free-form organization (*Keep Busy*, *Life Dances On...*, *Conversations in Vermont*) and sometimes sustaining a rigorous formal elegance (*OK End Here*, *Candy Mountain*). But in whatever mode he works, Frank appears to expose himself totally, and in doing so exposes his viewers to themselves, brutally confronting their own relation to a life and vision that refuses to be ignored. Tonight San Francisco Cinematheque presents its second of three programs of Robert Frank's work, focusing on some of his best-known early fictions, *Pull My Daisy*, *OK End Here*, and *Keep Busy*.

***Pull My Daisy* (1959); 16mm, b&w, sound, 28 minutes**

Launching us into the world of beat sensibility, *Pull My Daisy* presents us with narration by Jack Kerouac that conflicts and contrasts with the portrait of middle America presented in the first shot. A mother prepares her son for school, but voices are supplied by Kerouac, and June Cleaver is a far from this vision of the fifties. The film is based on an actual incident that occurred during a visit by Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and Gregory Corso to Neal Cassady's house, and here "the beaver" is portrayed by Robert Frank's son, Pablo, adding multiple layers of reality and autobiography to the proceedings. While Pablo heads out to have his head filled with facts and figures and the American way, a pair of beer-swilling poets (Ginsberg and Corso) pop up for a day-long bullshit session, killing time and, like Pablo, waiting 'til the father comes home. The style switches from slow pans around the home in the opening shot to chaotic movement that mirrors the poets' ramblings. More friends arrive and when Pop finally shows up and finds his pot-smoking pals lingering about his domestic kingdom, he warns them to behave because there is going to be a visit from the bishop. The bishop arrives and the questions are thrown at him furiously: "Is baseball holy?" The exuberance of this little male group is darkened by its ultimately patriarchal leanings, and as Kerouac provides the voice for the wife it seems to clash with her deportment, creating an unbridgeable chasm between image and sound that suggests an underlying sadness. This sadness is heightened by Frank's knack at shooting some of the most beautiful black-and-white images, squeezing all the life out of this lifeless abode and filling it with music that exists both in Kerouac's narration and a slowly pumped, rocking organ.

***OK End Here* (1963); 35mm, b&w, sound, 30 minutes**

A man and a woman are married and alienated. Capitalizing on art house stylings of the Antonioni/Godard variety, Frank's film captures a couple in flux, but unlike his European counterparts Frank is firmly situating a particularly American angst. Inability to communicate is represented by a medium shot of the couple as they sit on opposite ends of the couch staring ahead at the television set. Where *Pull My Daisy* suggests alienation lying under a facade of hey-man-hipness, *OK End Here* pours it on thick and struggles to pull us out of it, to provide a glimpse of hope. A dinner companion of the couple reads a tortuously personal letter from her ex-husband; no one listens, until on the verge of a seemingly eminent psychological collapse, she gets up and runs out of the restaurant, allowing the inaudible chit-chat to continue and leaving no trace of emotional residue. At another point a family is seen outdoors. The father is taking home movies and the son refuses to obey his father's prompts to move forward, declaring, "I don't want my picture took." Echoes of Frank's life resonate, and it is as if the boy (portrayed by Frank's son, Pablo) is refusing to enter the stylized suffocation of *OK End Here*. The wife in the film, however, enters their home movies as the frame is made small and the openness of this scene clearly point to a stylistic ideal of freedom and space, albeit in miniature.

*Keep Busy* (1975); 16mm, b&w, sound, 38 minutes

Collaborating with the neglected but brilliant screenwriter and novelist Rudy Wurlitzer, Robert Frank made this film near his home in Nova Scotia. Using an ironic view of myth and prevailing sense of the absurd, the film tells the story of a small community residing on a harsh stretch of beach in ramshackle dwellings. They are supervised by a pompous and dictatorial lighthouse keeper who relays their duties via a retarded parrot of a messenger who dysfunctionally relays them to a head woman who passes them to the people in the shack who usually seem to get it wrong anyway. Communication is practically impossible as the people struggle to prepare themselves for a future that is nothing more than more preparing for the future. The lighthouse keeper stands on his porch with a radio, the only outlet to the outside world, and selectively dishes out tidbits of important information: "Tell them winter is coming." But messages get lost and distorted as they head down the chain, causing what appears to be rebellion; the people disregard their duties and even knock out parts of the shack, but the next day it is said to have been fixed. In this world of the technologically deprived, the radio and lighthouse take on a godlike status, instructing and controlling. Maddeningly hilarious, *Keep Busy* suggests a portrait of humans as habitual creatures reliant and subservient to things outside their sphere of comprehension. Spiraling into a Beckett-like sense of emptiness, the film also includes documentary interludes that present the actual inhabitants of Cape Breton who exist in striking contrast to the comically despairing characters in the film.

A frequent collaborator of Robert Frank's, Rudy Wurlitzer also worked with Frank on *Energy, and How to Get It* and *Candy Mountain*. He wrote the novels *Nog*, *Slow-Fade*, and *Flats*. He also wrote screenplays for such classic seventies narrative films as *Two-Lane Blacktop*, *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*, and *Glen & Randa*. He also worked with Alex Cox on *Walker* and *Straight to Hell*.

#### Robert Frank Film/Videography:

*Pull My Daisy* (1959); *The Sin of Jesus* (1961); *OK End Here* (1963); *Me and My Brother* (1965-68); *Conversations in Vermont* (1969); *Liferaft Earth* (1969); *About Me: A Musical* (1971); *Cocksucker Blues* (1972); *This Film Is About...* (1973); *Keep Busy* (1975); *Life Dances On...* (1980); *Energy, and How to Get It* (1981); *This Song for Jack* (1983); *Home Improvements* (1985) video; *Candy Mountain* (1987); *Hunter* (1989); *C'est Vrai!! (One Hour)* (1990) video; *Last Supper* (1992); *Present* (1996) video; *Flamingo* (1997) video

*Special thanks to Marianne Lundz at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Brian Gordon at the San Francisco International Film Festival for helping to make these screenings possible.*

*Program Notes written and compiled by Jeff Lambert*

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## ROBERT FRANK: DOCUMENTS AND MORE

Presented in association with the San Francisco International Film Festival

Sunday, May 10, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm

*I'm always looking outside, trying to look inside. Trying to tell something that's true. But maybe nothing is true. Except what's out there, and what's out there is always changing.* (Robert Frank, *Home Improvements*)

There he is. There you are, and where you are in relation to where he is shapes you, shapes him. Robert Frank's films sing out what it means to be there, wherever there may be: New York, Switzerland, Canada, Vermont, America. A seemingly lyrical randomness confronts you, and you wade through this man's life, this man's obsessions, and before you know it you've learned less about him than you have about yourself. Whether trafficking his autobiographical portraits or constructing fictional spaces from which to explore, Robert Frank's visionary America haunts and confronts. Born in Switzerland in 1924, Frank worked as a commercial photographer before a



Guggenheim fellowship in 1955 allowed him to turn his lens on America as he saw it. In 1958 his famous book of photographs, *The Americans*, was published piercing America with a black-and-white stare, her citizens mingling with images of juke-boxes and cars, poetic and immediate. With an introduction by his traveling companion, Jack Kerouac: "Robert Frank, Swiss, unobtrusive, nice, with that little camera that he raises and snaps with one hand he sucked a sad poem right out of America onto film, taking rank among the tragic poets of the world," *The Americans* established Frank as one of the most important photographers of the post-war era. His next project was a series of photographs of strangers taken from the windows of New York city buses; as one looks at Frank's photos one recognizes a restless drive towards movement, recurring obsessions and concerns (automobiles, transportation, music, the lost and lonely), and ultimately one is faced with a singular vision and its increasing kineticism. Frank responded to his need to keep moving in 1959 when he picked up a movie camera and made his first film *Pull My Daisy* with Alfred Leslie and a number of Beat Generation hipsters.

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Regarded as one of the key films in the American independent film movement, *Pull My Daisy* inaugurates a cinematic style that appears improvisational and free, yet is constructed with grace and control. Whether dealing in autobiography, documentary, fiction or a fusion of these, Frank finds a style to fit his films, sometimes approaching free-form organization (*Keep Busy, Life Dances On..., Conversations in Vermont*) and sometimes sustaining a rigorous formal elegance (*OK End Here, Candy Mountain*). But in whatever mode he works, Frank appears to expose himself totally, and in doing so exposes his viewers to themselves, brutally confronting their own relation to a life and vision that refuses to be ignored. Tonight San Francisco Cinematheque presents its final of three programs of Robert Frank's work, focusing on three films that fuse documentary, autobiography, and fiction in complex and fascinating ways.

***Liferaft Earth*** (1969); 16mm, b&w, sound, 37 minutes

"From October 11 to 17, 1969, a group of people fasted in a parking lot in Hayward, California (and later at the Portola Institute, near Oakland) to dramatize the problem of world hunger and malnutrition. Robert Frank made this documentary about idealism and interpersonal politics involved in the event at the request of Stewart Brand, publisher of *Whole Earth Catalog*, and Hugh Romney (Wavy Gravy), leader of the legendary Hog Farm commune and participant in the infamous acid tests.

"The 'Hunger Show' (or 'Liferaft Earth,' as it came to be called, named for the inflatable wall that separated the fasters from bystanders) was both a political protest and a theatrical event, of the sort practiced by Julian Beck's Living Theater in New York or the Diggers in San Francisco. The first shot of the film, of a newspaper headline about the event and an American flag to the side with the legend 'fly your flag today,' establishes Frank's interest in the demonstration. Designed to call broad media attention to the causes and long-term effects of overpopulation and malnutrition, the fast is more notable to Frank as an act of direct democracy in which people make their opinions known. The 'liferaft' is both a framework for the ideas to evolve and a platform to express those ideas." (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC)

***This Song For Jack*** (1983); 16mm, b&w, sound, 30 minutes

"*This Song for Jack* is a documentary about 'On the Road: The Jack Kerouac Conference,' held at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, in July 1982. Encouraged by Allen Ginsberg to record this event commemorating the publication of Kerouac's best known work, Frank attended and made a quiet resonant film about people's memories of the writer and the man. Instead of showing the scheduled public events, such as speeches and panels, he primarily filmed what happened behind the scenes." (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC)

*I met Jack Kerouac on a hot summer night—a party in New York City. We sat down on the sidewalk, I showed Jack the photographs for The Americans. He said, "Sure I can write something about these pictures." (RF, The Lines on My Hand)*

*Hunter* (1989); 16mm, b&w and color, sound, 37 minutes

*Sometimes you look out of the window and there the landscape has changed and you get the feeling that maybe you missed your destination, maybe you chose the wrong road—and then you want to stop .... I know nothing of the Ruhr or Germany, I have to send out the Hunter. Because the Hunter is a mystery so far.* (RF, in the press release for *Hunter*)

Part travelogue, part existential quest, *Hunter* follows its title character through an industrialized area of Germany; his is a confused and bemused journey that intersects with numerous characters whose lives are shaped by German history as well as the German present. Driving in his car, Hunter picks up a music student who explains his projected composition blending sounds from nature and sounds of industrialization: "Stockhausen without all the mystical bullshit." Not a moment too soon, Hunter orders the student out of the car, and continues on his journey. He continues to speak English, his language, confronting the people he meets with its difference, establishing him as an outsider. A Moroccan worker remarks that the German oppression of Jews has been replaced by the oppression of Turks. Later, he meets a woman selling figurines of Elvis and Hitler along with busts of "all the great ones." Next, he tries to wrangle a freebie from a prostitute who informs him that she can't do it for free because "it's a business." The next scene has him taking money from a bank and discussing the nature of capital with a banker; an economic climate based on exploitation and profit reveals itself to be the possible replacement for a culture assumed to have been based on racial hatred. When Hunter enters a classroom of laughing children, he asks the teacher why these boys grow up to be so tough. Cut to a classroom of older students, and the question they are posed with is: "What is myth?" and one recognizes the Hunter grappling with the same question as he stumbles through this land that refuses to grant him easy answers about the future represented by these stammering students.

#### Robert Frank Film/Videography:

*Pull My Daisy* (1959); *The Sin of Jesus* (1961); *OK End Here* (1963); *Me and My Brother* (1965-68); *Conversations in Vermont* (1969); *Liferaft Earth* (1969); *About Me: A Musical* (1971); *Cocksucker Blues* (1972); *This Film Is About...* (1973); *Keep Busy* (1975); *Life Dances On...* (1980); *Energy, and How to Get It* (1981); *This Song for Jack* (1983); *Home Improvements* (1985) video; *Candy Mountain* (1987); *Hunter* (1989); *C'est Vrai!! (One Hour)* (1990) video; *Last Supper* (1992); *Present* (1996) video; *Flamingo* (1997) video

*Special thanks to Marianne Lundz at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Brian Gordon at the San Francisco International Film Festival for helping to make these screenings possible.*

*Program Notes written and compiled by Jeff Lambert*

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## FILMSTORIES 1:

### DZIGA VERTOV & THREE SONGS OF LENIN

Thursday, May 14, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm

*We proclaim the old films, based on the romance, theatrical films and the like, to be leprous.*

—Keep away from them!

—Keep your eyes off them!

—They're mortally dangerous

—Contagious!

*WE affirm the future of cinema art by denying its present.*

(Dziga Vertov, from "We: Variant of a Manifesto," 1922)

*In the Land of Cinema Veterans: A Film Expedition Around Dziga Vertov* (1996) by Thomas Tode and Ale Muñoz; 16mm, b&w and color, sound, 86 minutes

"A film about the great cinéaste Dziga Vertov, the poetic-revolutionary filmmaker who, with his Kino-eye theory and films such as *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929) and *Enthusiasm* (1931), impressed a clear stamp on film history. Filmmakers Thomas Tode and Ale Muñoz approach Vertov from the present in their documentary portrait of this revolutionary Soviet filmmaker. They traveled by train to Moscow, not only because Vertov loved trains, but also so they could mix his train shots with their own. And of course so they could tell the legendary story of the *agit-prop* trains: the mobile cinemas with which Bolshevik filmmakers traveled the Soviet Union in the Twenties to bring their political ideals to the people.

"In the spirit of Vertov, Tode and Muñoz look around present-day Moscow with the 'kino-eyes,' focusing on phenomena that can illustrate social change. Their travelogue is continually focused on getting to know more about Vertov while also showing contemporary Russia. In this idiosyncratic combination, this film distinguishes itself from the traditional portraits of great filmmakers and of journalistic reports on the social situation of a land in crisis. For instance, the filmmakers talk to Vertov's cameraman Jakov Tolchan and to Russian Vertov researcher Viktor Listov. The film comprises many well-selected film fragments from the oeuvre of Vertov and there are plenty of quotes from the film manifestos Vertov wrote." (*Rotterdam Film Festival Catalogue*)

*Three Songs of Lenin* (1934) by Dziga Vertov; 16mm, b&w, sound, 62 minutes

I remember my debut in the cinema. It was quite odd. It involved not my filming but my jumping one-and-a-half stories from a summer house beside a grotto at no.7 Malyi Gnezdnikovsky Lane.

The cameraman was ordered to record my jump in such a way that my entire fall, my facial expression, all my thoughts, etc., would be seen. I went up to the grotto's edge, jumped off, gestured as with a veil, and went on. ... From the viewpoint of the ordinary eye you see untruth. From the viewpoint of the cinematic eye (aided by special cinematic means, in this case, accelerated shooting) you see the truth. If it's a question of reading someone's thoughts at a distance (and often what matters to us is not to hear a person's words but to read his thoughts) then you have the opportunity right here. It has been revealed by the kino-eye.

It is possible, by means of the kino-eye to remove a man's mask, to obtain a bit of *kinopravda*. And it was the revelation of just this truth, by all the means available to me, that I designated as my entire future path in cinema.

Speaking symbolically, can't we find a similar "leap" here in *Three Songs of Lenin*? Yes. It's present if only in the woman shock-worker. Why does she have an effect? Because she's good at acting? Nothing of the kind. Because I got from her what I got from myself during the jump: the synchrony of words and thoughts. (DV, "*Three Songs of Lenin* and Kino-Eye," 1934)

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## OUT OF THE TIME CLOSET 1

LARRY GOTTHEIM

*Sunday, May 17, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30pm*

The 1970s was a richly productive period for avant-garde filmmaking—yielding several major works of extraordinary scope and complexity—yet all but few remain little-known to this day. Tonight Cinematheque presents the first in a series of four programs including long films which represent mature and distinctive cinematic expressions from key figures of those years. Tonight's program focuses on two films by Larry Gottheim. Gottheim's films explore landscape and space with a formality and rigor to produce images of startling beauty and complexity. As tenured professor of film at the State University of New York, Binghamton, he helped found the film department there in the late '60s. Since that time Gottheim has completed a number of films that have been shown in museums and major film showcases throughout the United States and Europe.

*Barn Rushes* (1971); 16mm, color, silent, 34 minutes

It was the barn itself, the slats, the barn as light-image-maker that so set me going. Each technical problem (what filming speed, what lens?) called forth a solution that led me into the form of the film. It was the camera itself, howling for a rewind of its spring after each sizzling rush of image grabbing (producing, in negative, that serene bobbing movement) that pushed me out of single shot films (but not into montage editing.) Once having decided to give each spring-run its distinct territory on the camera roll, I found I had, in microcosm, a structure for the whole film, each roll linking onto the next in a straightforward linear form. The eight sections are not quite arranged in chronological order, but are put together (selected from a larger collection of material) so that each makes a particular contribution to the overall experience. Certain possibilities are amply presented in the first four sections; the fifth and sixth are crucial to be worked through for the final sections to offer something ecstatically new. ... Something in the form, I now see, anticipates *Mouches Volantes*: an urge to deal with continuously transcending development in a form that appears to have to do with repetition. (LG)

"One of the most elusive dreams which may beset a filmmaker is the wish to spin the finest thread of meaning and sensation out of the roughest fiber of raw day-to-day vision. The drama of hope which this dream animates is played out against a stage setting shaded in the direction of formalist mannerism at the one side and in the direction of narrative signification on the other. And here stage center is *Barn Rushes*, elegant yet rustic in its simplicity of execution; tugged gently toward different sides of the set by hints of color and motion interactions, positive and negative spaces, etc., and the unyielding delivery of one of the great apotheoses of poetic cinema at fade-out time." (Tony Conrad)

*Mouches Volantes (Elective Affinities II)* (1976); 16mm, b&w and color, sound, 69 minutes

"Larry's film is another that should bear the Nietzschean legend 'Don't understand me too quickly.' It's new territory and first viewing can only be a tentative getting of one's bearings with it. The first obvious characteristics of the work, home-movie pictorialism, an up-the-hill/down-the-hill march of the absolutely self-same sound material, these simple ordering devices only begin to suggest where and how the film is to be experienced; where its real and unique feeling out of form, event, and meaning is taking place. ...

"For *Mouches Volantes* the work of Peter Kubelka has really happened; it is premised on acceptance of the level of demand for significance of image-sound relationship set by Kubelka. The ways it fulfills itself—necessitating the most profound, sensitized immersion in its materials by the artist and now by its audience—are astonishing, glorious, deeply moving, and ennobling. It helps to know the people pictured in the film are Larry's family, the two older people (on the beach) his parents. Also helpful, the attitudes that challenge one's capacity for adaptation may be, along with the opportunity for commune, what's most interesting and valuable in art." (Ken Jacobs)

Three elements, at first quite independent, struck me so deeply, were brought together: this title which suggested so much to me; this narration by Angelina Johnson of the story of the life of her husband Blind Willie Johnson; and groups of visual material, light fragments from my own world and preoccupations. As in *Horizons* I worked to discover relationships between shots, so in *Mouches Volantes* I sought out and attempted to bring to light pre-existing but not consciously planned relationships between the visual imagery and the fixed (in three sound "shots") verbal-musical aural flow.

Thus a film of relationships—formal ones, between word and image, sound and image, image and image, one formal section and another of these twice-seven units; elusive floating fragments of narrative, relationships among people and motifs related to me and among those from another person's life and its relationships. As in all my films, the basic processes of cinema, the exposing of film stock to light, here the stringing together of linear patterns of sound and image, become metaphors, embodiments of acts of coming to feel, coming to know. The external arrangement of material allows discoveries to be made that have to do with a flow of images, purely visual, and this "same" flow of vision transformed by its marriage with sound. The film, very far from a traditional sound narrative, still has much to do with the essence of cinema narrative. Words, images, sounds, light, flows of energy leaping and cavorting in consciousness, taking form. A celebration of elusive relationships. (LG)

FILMSTORIES 2:

LUIS BUÑUEL: A MEXICAN BUÑUEL AND NAZARÍN

Thursday, May 21, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm

After a shocking debut with his outrageous film, *Un Chien Andalou* (in collaboration with Salvador Dalí), Luis Buñuel's rightful place alongside fellow Spanish geniuses Dalí and García Lorca was established, but came to a premature end in the tumult of Franco's rise to power and the spread of fascism throughout Europe. After a miserable relocation to the U.S. and finally Mexico, he shattered nearly two decades of silence with the release of *Los Olvidados* in 1950, arguably his true "debut" as a director. Its appearance so shocked a society unaware of, or refusing to see, the poverty and disenchantment of contemporary Mexico City that the nation feverishly debated the censorship of both the film and the director. A brief six-day run in Mexican theaters was a deceptive precursor to the critical acclaim *Los Olvidados* would achieve at Cannes and its subsequent recognition as one of the great films of International Cinema. While living mainly in Mexico between 1946 and 1965, Buñuel directed such classics as *Él*, *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz*, *The Exterminating Angel*, *Simon of the Desert*, and one of his personal favorites, *Nazarín*. Tonight, Cinematheque salutes Buñuel's prolific Mexican years with Emilio Maillé's recent documentary on Buñuel's Mexican years followed by a rare screening of his 1958 *Nazarín*.

*A Mexican Buñuel* (1997) by Emilio Maillé; video, color, sound, 56 minutes

In the desert of Mexico, a toppled one-ton stone column lays on the property of a peasant landowner. It is a remnant from Luis Buñuel's 1965 film *Simon of the Desert*, and it stands not as a monument to the great director's work but, rather, as an obstacle to the landowner's plough. Buñuel may not be regarded primarily as one of the great Mexican directors, but his years of filmmaking while in Mexico, where he made 21 films, were vital to his own development as one of cinema's most brilliant, mature directors.

Emilio Maillé takes his camera to Mexico to explore those particular elements of Buñuel's Mexican films that were relevant to both Mexican culture and to world cinema. Starting with Buñuel's acclaim as the darling of Surrealism in the '30s and his subsequent escape to America (including a doomed position as the supervisor of Spanish-language dubbing for Warner Bros.), Maillé arrives in Mexico to find some of Buñuel's colleagues, critics, friends, and fringe characters. In reminiscences by his longtime collaborator, screenwriter Luis Alcoriza; his wife, Jeanne; actress Silvia Pinal (*Viridiana*, *The Exterminating Angel*, *Simon of the Desert*); and even the peasant landowner, we discover a complex, brilliant, and uncompromising man who stuck to his own ideas, establishing himself as a director of immense aesthetic and social value. *A Mexican Buñuel* is also filled with archival interviews with Buñuel and rarely-seen photographs and footage (including excerpts from Buñuel's two Mexican commercial films and the recently discovered "other" ending of *Los Olvidados*). Luis Buñuel remains one of the great artists of the 20th century as well as a tireless critic of the hypocrisy and absurdity of both the Church and the bourgeoisie. Emilio Maillé has created an informative, inspiring portrait of his seminal years as a Mexican filmmaker.

*Nazarín* (1958) by Luis Buñuel; 16mm print, b&w, sound, 85 minutes

I am very attached to *Nazarín*. He is a priest. He could be as well a hairdresser or a waiter. What interests me about him is that he stands by his ideas, that these ideas are unacceptable to society at large, and that after his adventures with prostitutes, thieves and so forth, they lead him to being irrevocably damned by the prevailing social order. (Luis Buñuel, in an interview by Georges Sadoul, "Les Lettres Françaises," June 1961)

Buñuel's tale is of a Christ among sinners who, for all his selfless piety, gets nothing ... often less than nothing. After being cast out of his village and the Church for hiding a prostitute convicted of murder, Father Nazario (Francisco Rabal) takes to the road on a pilgrimage to do God's will, following Christ's example of living in poverty and turning the other cheek. Yet like Sade's Justine, his good intentions are only met with misfortune. He attempts an honest day's work in exchange for a meal and sparks off a workers' riot. Consoling a plague-stricken woman at her deathbed with God's word, the priest only incenses her and her lover, who is intent on a more erotic good-bye. In a brilliant scene, one of his followers confesses her love for him as he becomes fixated on a snail crawling up his hand. In the nuances of Nazario's oblivious relation to the world, Buñuel comments on fanaticism at the price of true compassion. It is Nazario, by the end of his journey, who must accept that his survival is less dependent on his faith in God, than his faith in Man.



*Nazarin* is adapted from a novel by Spanish writer Benito Perez Galdos (1843–1920), who also wrote *Tristana* and who has been compared to Tolstoy, Balzac, or Dickens minus the sentimentality. Buñuel, however, transfers the action from Spain to Mexico at the turn of the century when the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship was in power with the support of the landowning class. According to Swiss film historian Freddy Buache, *Nazarin* may seem at first a faithful adaptation of Galdos' novel, but in fact Buñuel completely changes the overall meaning and integrates the film into his own personal universe. "What is so striking about the poor, resourceless *Nazarin* is no longer his exemplary humility, his devotion to Christ, or his practical experience of faith, nor even his redeeming taste of suffering, but his uselessness, his masochism, and the harmful effects of his activity. The final sequence, which is open to any number of interpretations, is both the most intensely disturbing and at the same time the most revealing if one takes the trouble to see it in the context of the director's overall poetic terms of reference." (Freddy Buache, *The Cinema of Luis Buñuel*)

*What is your life worth, Father? You are on the good path, I'm on the bad path ... we're both useless.* (from *Nazarin*)

Program Notes written and compiled by Christian Bruno

## FILMSTORIES 3:

### JONAS MEKAS' *BIRTH OF A NATION*

Thursday, May 28, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm

*My experience watching Jonas Mekas shoot film has been almost exclusively as a guest at his table. Dinner is prepared; children and guests gather. When there is a gap in the work to be done, or in a moment of sheer enthusiasm, Mekas will pick up his Bolex, ready right there, loaded with a film in the making, and rattle off frames, a few or many.* (Marjorie Keller)

Jonas Mekas, the "raving maniac of the cinema," was born "just before sunrise" in Lithuania, 1922. He gained a reputation as a great poet, but was captured by Nazis in 1944. After escaping from a work camp, his brother Adolfas and he were to spend the next few years as displaced persons, moving from various refugee camps before finally making it to New York City in 1949. Mekas went on to become an enthusiastic advocate of the New American Cinema as well as one of its most seminal filmmakers. Mekas has spent his life as a staunch supporter and promoter of experimental film, first as editor and co-creator of *Film Culture* in 1955, which went on to devote itself to experimental film, and then to the *Village Voice* where he passionately praised the work of emerging artist in his "Movie Journal" column, starting in 1958, and continuing into the late '70s. From there Mekas went on to create Anthology Film Archives in 1970, one of the first establishments to serve as a film archive as well as a center for experimental film exhibition. Mekas created the Film-Makers' Cooperative in 1962, set up to enable filmmakers to rent their films and receive rental fees.

*I really live only in my editing room. Or when I film. The rest of my life is slavery. But I am afraid that most of my early material—and my early films too—are fading, going. It would take about forty thousand dollars to preserve my films. That's a lot of money. Money—or dust. Money against the dust of time into which all our works eventually disappear.* (JM)

Mekas first began filmmaking with *Guns of the Trees*, an experimental narrative, before documenting the Living Theatre's off-off-Broadway production of *The Brig*. He then began work on a series of diary films composed of documents of his daily life including portraits of friends and artists called, *Diaries, Notes & Sketches*. His famous words, "I make home movies—therefore I live, I live—therefore I make home movies," evoke a love of film that enables a profound and gentle love of life combined with a tremendous desire to capture the intersection of the two. Mekas began to carry his camera everywhere and created in-camera films which became closer to his poetry from Lithuania in their use of his idiosyncratic vision combined with the wonderful sounds he collects: everything from boats to the sound of trees, children playing to performances of the Velvet Underground. The films are often

portraits of people, or things that are important to him and have touched him in some way. Tonight San Francisco Cinematheque is pleased to present Mekas' latest film, a portrait of the true independent cinema before it fades and as it reinvents itself.

*Birth of a Nation* (1997); 16mm, color, sound, 85 minutes

"*Birth of a Nation* is a sort of visual encyclopedia composed of 160 portraits of independent, avant-garde, and militant directors, shot from 1955 to 1996. The film is structured impressionistically, filled with fleeting apparitions, sketches, and stolen glances. It's centered on the directors, artists, actors, and their friends who contributed to their development of independent cinema. A 'cinematic constellation' slowly emerges from the poetic collage which, as in Mekas' other films, tries to resist the Hollywood-style cine-spectacle. Concerning the title of his film which refers to the pioneer of American cinema, D.W. Griffith, Mekas declares: 'Why *Birth of a Nation*? Because the film independents *is* a nation in itself. We are surrounded by the commercial cinema nation in the same way the indigenous people of the United States or of any other country are surrounded by the Ruling Powers. We are the invisible, but essential nation of cinema. We are the cinema.' Mekas also takes us on a journey across the memory of the century, rewriting his own history of the cinema after the war. We meet personalities coming from the exiled director's varied horizons: Henri Langlois, the founder of the Cinémathèque Française; Robert Frank, friend of the New American Cinema Group; Ana Karina of Godard fame; Andy Warhol, the bard of Pop-Art; Roberto Rossellini, director of modernity; Allen Ginsberg, to whom Mekas has dedicated a video; Hans Richter, dada artist; Stan Brakhage, experimental cine-poet; Nelly Kaplan, provocative feminist director, and many others ...." (Locarno Film Festival Program Guide, 1997)

*Program Notes written and compiled by Matthew Swiezynski*

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## OUT OF THE TIME CLOSET 2:

JOYCE WIELAND

Introduced by Janis Crystal Lipzin

*Sunday, May 31, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

The 1970s was a richly productive period for avant-garde filmmaking—yielding several major works of extraordinary scope and complexity—yet most remain little-known to this day. Tonight Cinematheque presents the second in a series of four programs including long films which represent mature and distinctive cinematic expressions from key figures of those years. Tonight's program features two films by Canadian filmmaker Joyce Wieland.

Art writer Lucy Lippard has said: "Joyce Wieland is one of those wild cards that saves the contemporary art world from its straight and narrow conformity to an institutionalized 'wildness.'"

Born in 1931 in Toronto, her great grandfather was a clown; her father and uncles were in Pantomime and Music Hall. In 1955 she joined Graphic Films, an animated film company directed by George Dunning who later made *Yellow Submarine*. Her first job there was to animate *Niagara Falls*. Her early personal films were parodies of tea commercials and her first painting exhibition was in 1959 at Isaacs Gallery in Toronto. When she and husband Michael Snow moved to New York in 1962 they were more a part of the music and underground film scene than the art scene. She began to make her own 8mm films after seeing work by George Kuchar and Jack Smith in 1963. She said "People were revealing themselves—so much of it was autobiographical. There was a whole cinema language that people were inventing—without money." By the late 1960s, Wieland says "I was made to feel in no uncertain terms by a few male filmmakers that I had overstepped my place, that in New York my place was making little films .... There was a tendency within the avant-garde in terms of writing and criticism to underrate my work because I wasn't a theoretician. Many of the men were increasingly interested in films about visual theories. I feel there was a



downgrading of my work. It didn't get its proper place, its proper consideration." When Wieland moved back to Canada, in 1971, she became increasingly involved in cultural activism with issues of ecology, feminism, and Canadian resistance to American imperialism. In 1984 Joyce Wieland was awarded the Order of Canada, the first woman ever so honored. In 1987, she was honored with a retrospective of her work at the Art Gallery of Ontario—the first afforded a living Canadian woman artist." (Janis Crystal Lipzin)

"Wieland's work became associated with the shift to the rigorous new way of seeing, the intense, almost philosophical speculations on cinema itself that came to be described as 'structural' film. Playful wit and ironist that she is, Wieland in particular gives the lie to the impression of austerity that radiates from the label. Her repetitive formats, loops, re-filming, long takes, and static camera are first at the service of the irreverent, nose-thumbing, Dadaist side of her artistic personality, strong on a sense of humour that can be ribald or teasingly ironic .... But a second side is simultaneously present: a side that demands that we re-look at objects, animals, landscapes with fresh, un-prejudiced eyes, and that gives us the rich colours and textures of so many of her images." (Simon Field)

*Handtinting* (1967); 16mm, color, silent, 6 minutes

"*Handtinting* is the apt title of a film made from outtakes from a Job Corps documentary which features hand-tinted sections. The film is full of small movements and actions, gestures begun and never completed. Repeated images, sometimes in color, sometimes not. A beautifully realized type of chamber music film whose sum-total feeling is ritualistic." (Robert Cowan, *Take One*)

*La Raison Avant La Passion* (1968–69); 16mm, color, sound, 80 minutes

"Trudeau is the only human being treated closely by the film; after him there is only more and more of the numbing wonder of the extent of the land, but he is all you need. Joyce Wieland's movie, like Canada, is as pure and simple as a public monument—too simple and direct to ignore, too complex in its approach to simplify for anyone to forget too long." (Barry Hale, *Toronto Star*)

"This film is about the pain and joy of living in a very large space: in fact, in a continent. It is painful because such an experience distends the mind, it seems too large for passionate reason to contain. It is joyous, because 'true patriot love,' a reasonable passion, *can* contain it after all. But what is remarkable, for me, is that all its urgency is lucidly caught, bound as it were chemically, in the substance of the film itself, requiring no exterior argument." (Hollis Frampton)

#### Joyce Wieland Filmography:

*Peggy's Blue Skylight* (1965); *Water Sark* (1966); *Handtinting* (1967); *1933* (1967); *Sailboat* (1967); *Cat Food* (1967–68); *La Raison Avant la Passion (Reason Over Passion)* (1968–69); *Dripping Water* (co-directed with Michael Snow (1969); *Pierre Vallières* (1972); *Rat Life and Diet in North America* (1973); *Solidarity* (1973); *The Far Shore* (1975); *A and B in Ontario* (1984); *Birds at Sunrise* (1972–85)

FILMSTORIES 4:

CARL BROWN ON MICHAEL SNOW  
*BROWNSNOW + SEE YOU LATER*

*Thursday, June 4, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm*

*I am not a professional. My paintings are done by a filmmaker, sculpture by a musician, films by a painter, music by a filmmaker, paintings by a sculptor, sculpture by a sculptor, films by a filmmaker, music by a musician. There is a tendency toward purity in all of these media as separate endeavors. (Artist's statement by Michael Snow, *Brownsnow*)*

*Brownsnow* (1994) by Carl E. Brown; 16mm, color, sound, 129 minutes  
Starring Michael Snow, Bruce Elder, Dennis Reid, Peggy Gale.

*See You Later/Au Revoir* (1990) by Michael Snow; 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes  
Starring Michael Snow and Peggy Gale.

*Brownsnow* is an apt title for Carl Brown's 1994 documentary on Michael Snow. Not because it's a crappy film, but because, as a film, Brown's vision and vocabulary takes precedence over everything. When Brown trots the interviewed artists and scholars out in front of the camera—Snow traversing a culvert, in and out, back and forth; Bruce Elder with the gulls out on an icy Lake Ontario waterfront; a dapper Jonas Mekas up a tree—they end up not as talking heads, but as raw, filmic material waiting to receive a coat of Brown's treatment, to become figures flipping from positive to negative and back, being filled with or surrounded by lightning explosions of scratches and patches, super-saturated ochres and mustards, cyans and ceruleans, forest greens and laser-like burgundies. Snow talks about the influence of Matisse, Klee, Picasso, and Vermeer; perhaps Brown retreats to the lab with visions of Pollack, Frankenthaler, Kline.

The portrait painted by *Brownsnow* is almost certainly truer and more Canadian than the stereotype held by an American experimental film audience. Yes, Snow is the maker of canonical experimental films such as *Wavelength*, *<—>*, and *La Region Centrale*, and these and their historical context come up during *Brownsnow*. But the closest we come to seeing Snow's filmwork is some brief footage of the camera pedestal from *La Region Centrale* doing duty as a video installation in Ottawa's National Gallery.

The soundtrack alternates interviews with passages of Snow playing piano and trumpet, solo and in ensemble, the music fluctuating between raging free jazz and stride-y ragtime, shortwave radio blasts and quiet Partch-like percussion, standards and amped-up Satie-isms. There's a lot of gallery footage, showing a wide range of installations that integrate Snow's painting, sculpture, photography and holography, while the interviews help supplement the visuals. All of this is enlightening when encountered for the first time, and a useful jog of the memory if it's been a while.

Most revealing are the meditations on Snow's public art: the dozens of graceful, larger-than-life Canadian geese suspended in the atrium of the Eaton shopping mall in downtown Toronto and the enormous caricatures of sports fans nestled into the end of a building a few blocks from the CN Tower. Imagine: for a Toronto resident, Michael Snow would be an artist whose work might be encountered every day, not just experienced in the dark once or twice a year.

On the subject of sports fans and being in the dark: tonight's program concludes with *See You Later/Au Revoir*, a 1990 work made with a camera normally used for super slow motion replays. The action—thirty seconds in real time—is extended with the soundtrack to nearly eighteen minutes of screen time. Snow has said that the set is just supposed to be a regular office; to me, it's one of the more haunted spaces I can recall. With its harsh lighting and deep shadow, the inexplicable planes of primary colors and checkerboard, the strange shimmering quality of the high speed shoot, and the groaning soundtrack, my impression has always been that once he goes through that door, we're *never* going to see that guy again.

*Program Notes written and compiled by Eric Theise*

## CANYON CINEMA NIGHT!

A program of recently acquired films from the overflowing shelves of Canyon Cinema,  
selected by Irina Leimbacher

Canyon Director Dominic Angerame In Person

Thursday, June 11, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm

What do Bruce Conner, Barbara Hammer, Abigail Child, Jay Rosenblatt, Martin Arnold, Craig Baldwin, Su Friedrich, Matthias Müller, Greta Snider, Kenneth Anger, Scott Stark, Chick Strand, Nicolas Humbert and Werner Penzel, Peggy Ahwesh, Michael Wallin, Phil Solomon, Janie Geiser, Nathaniel Dorsky, Jennifer Gentile, Mark LaPore, Ken Jacobs, Stan Brakhage and more than three hundred other filmmakers have in common? They all distribute their films through Canyon Cinema, one of the oldest and largest distributors of independently-produced personal and experimental film in the world. With more than 30 years experience, a collection of more than 3,500 films and videotapes spanning over five decades of filmmaking, and membership from most corners of the earth where people make films, Canyon plays an essential role in promoting, distributing, and preserving independent cinematic works of art.

Starting as an informal series of avant-garde films projected onto a sheet in filmmaker Bruce Baillie's backyard in Canyon, California, Canyon Cinema ushered in a time of great hope for independent film art, providing a place where artists and audiences found support, inspiration and above all, community. By 1961, Canyon Cinematheque was formed and became the first organization to regularly screen avant-garde film on the west coast, produce a newsletter, organize production workshops and serve as a nurturing and supportive influence for filmmakers. In the late sixties the Canyon Cinema Coop was formed as an idealistic alternative to the existing film distribution structure. Its aim was to serve the needs and visions of filmmakers rather than the whims of the commercial marketplace, and to function as a truly democratic, non-discriminatory organization which would promote all types of independently made films, regardless of the social, political, economic, ethnic, and aesthetic backgrounds of their makers. The exhibition component split off for financial reasons and was renamed San Francisco Cinematheque.

A little over a year ago, when Canyon Cinema had been recommended for an NEA grant to fund their new distribution catalogue, a comprehensive, archival volume used by potential renters as well as scholars, Republican Representative Peter Hoekstra pointed to film stills (naked boys?!) and descriptions from the Canyon's previous catalogue which he claimed were "indecent." Soon thereafter Canyon was notified that their NEA application was being rejected on the grounds that, since membership in Canyon Cinema was open to all filmmakers, there was no guiding curatorial vision, and its distribution catalogue was merely a "vanity publication." Although the catalogue's publication was stalled, this spring the less phobic San Francisco Arts Commission awarded Canyon with a grant which will allow for the catalogue to be published by the end of 1998. Congratulations Canyon!

After tonight's screening of eleven recently acquired films—including work by some of the "fathers" of American avant-garde cinema, work by emerging young voices and two pieces in 35mm, Canyon Cinema Director Dominic Angerame will be present to discuss the current state of experimental film distribution and Canyon's new directions and strategies for the beginning of a new millenium of experimental filmmaking and film distribution.

**Brookfield Recreation Center** (1963) by Bruce Baillie; 16mm, b&w, sound, 5 minutes  
Made for the Oakland Public Schools on an experimental series of classes in the arts ... (BB)

**Bruce Baillie** co-founded the Canyon Cinema in 1960. He now lives in rural Washington, works in video, and is on the web at [www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Theater/1809](http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Theater/1809). His *Castro Street* was recently chosen for preservation by the National Film Registry.

**Camera Roll at 100 Degrees** (1993) by Jim Seibert; 16mm color, sound, 3 minutes  
... I came down with 100-degree fever. Forced to shoot indoors, I made five passes through my Bolex with five subjects, treating them alternately as major and minor themes and closing with an all-encompassing superimposition. The war against civilian population in Bosnia Herzegovina was heating up, too. (JS)

Jim Seibert studied film at the SF Art Institute and was on their technical staff for several years. Other works include the award-winning *The Chill Ascends*.

*Chronicles of a Lying Spirit* (by Kelly Gabron) (1992) by Cauleen Smith; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes  
Challenging structure, stereotype, and the typical tropes of the personal film, *Chronicles of a Lying Spirit* (by Kelly Gabron) explores truth and fiction in representation, racism, and social responsibility in a lively and spirited mock-autobiographical fantasy.

Cauleen Smith studied filmmaking at San Francisco State (where she made *Chronicles*), went on to UCLA, received a Rockefeller grant, and is reportedly completing a feature. She is interviewed in Scott MacDonald's newest *Critical Cinema 3*.

*Just Words* (1991) by Louise Bourque; 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes  
Intercutting silent home-movie footage with a powerful performance—shot in extreme close-up—of Beckett's *Not I* (by actress Patricia MacGeachy), Bourque evokes the violent collision between a woman's interior world and the roles she is asked to play.

Louise Bourque is a Canadian filmmaker living and teaching in Chicago. Her latest piece, *Imprint*, screened as part of "Pandora's Screens," Cinematheque's and the Pacific Film Archive's program at the SF International Film Festival.

*Tiny Rubber Band* (1998) by Al Alvarez; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes  
A return to some cameraless filmmaking basics, *Tiny Rubber Band* is inspired by the things I found on the floor of my classroom after my students had left for the day. (AA)

Al Alvarez recently returned to the East Bay from a two-year teaching stint in Singapore, where he launched an experimental film movement and helped give birth to his new daughter, Marta. Earlier films include *Quixote Dreams* and *La Reina*.

*Under a Broad Gray Sky* (*Sous un grand ciel gris*) (1996) by Thad Povey; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes  
A warm spring day, a subtle shift, and light and time seem to slow during the reading of a poem by Baudelaire. A mundane moment in an ordinary day is briefly transformed, but the participants caught up in their tasks miss the epiphany. (TP)

Thad Povey works in film, both "found" and "obtained" as a means to explore the peculiarities in the human animal. This film, unusual in that he is not using found footage, was shot during his wedding trip to France. He received a Phelan Award in 1996.

*X* (1988) by Charlotte Pryce; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes  
A dirge. Silence and stillness disturbed by the urgency of sadness (fragile yet fierce). (CP)

Charlotte Pryce is a London-trained filmmaker who until recently taught at the San Francisco Art Institute. She just moved to Chicago with husband Ross and son Ishmael.

*Time Flies* (1997) by Robert Breer; 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes  
Blending live action, animated drawings and collage animation, Breer creates a whimsical reflection on aging and the inevitable passage—and eternal return—of time.

An internationally recognized artist and filmmaker known for his innovative animation techniques, Robert Breer has been making animated films since the 1950s. His filmmaking emerged from painting via flipbooks.

*Self Song/Death Song* (1997) by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 5 minutes  
"Imagine a world before 'the beginning was the word'" (SB, in *Metaphors on Vision*)—or after all words have been deemed irrelevant, broken and buried. In *Self Song* and *Death Song* (meant to be shown together) Brakhage explores the self-as-flesh, his own body besieged by cancer, mysterious surfaces of skin, light and darkness. This is followed by a reflection on death, unidentifiable patterns leading always to an empty whiteness, to a (bleak?, comforting?) nothingness held by the film frame, to the unnameable.

With well over 250 films and 5 books to his name, **Stan Brakhage** is the seminal figure in American experimental cinema. The poet Robert Kelly has called his art "mind at the mercy of eye, at last."

*Joy Street* (1995) by Suzan Pitt; 35mm, color, sound, 24 minutes

A depressed woman and her imagined counterpart, a tiny cartoon mouse, create metaphorical opposites in a luscious animated tale of despair and rescue. Two states of mind swing dangerously up and down .... These opposing forces which play against each other in a series of scenes set in a moody apartment in the middle of the night conclude in a primordial rain forest. (SP)

One of the country's premiere animators, **Suzan Pitt** traveled through the rainforests of Guatemala and Mexico to paint studies for this film which was 5 years in the making. It won major awards at the Black Maria and San Francisco International Film Festivals.

*Triptych* (1996) by Robert Schaller; 35mm, b&w, silent, 3 minutes

An excursion into the world of hand-made, non-silver film emulsion and an exposition of some formal possibilities of using three images side by side. ... Originally a work for three projectors, it is here composed onto a single strand of film. (RS)

**Robert Schaller** is an interdisciplinary artist who creates performance and installation works with film, dance, chamber music, theater, and electronics. He currently teaches at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

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## OUT OF THE TIME CLOSET 4:

### MALCOLM LE GRICE

*Sunday, June 14, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

The 1970s was a richly productive period for avant-garde filmmaking—yielding several major works of extraordinary scope and complexity—yet most remain little-known to this day. Tonight Cinematheque presents the last in a series of four programs including long films which represent mature and distinctive cinematic expressions from key figures of those years.

British filmmaker and theoretician **Malcolm Le Grice** remains one of the figureheads of the structuralist-materialist film movement. His book, *Abstract Film and Beyond* (1978), is one of the major theoretical investigations into the impulses underlying abstract film both in terms of non-representation and manipulations of time. Le Grice was a member of the Filmmakers' Coop in London, a group geared towards a cinematic discourse rooted in materialism as opposed to illusionism in order to challenge both audience expectations and reactions as well as modes of film production and screening. A frequent visitor to San Francisco Cinematheque in the 1970s, Le Grice's multi-projector screenings and lively personal presence challenged the boundaries of presentation as well as representation. As Jonas Mekas pointed out in 1974, "Whatever the form, all his work seems to focus on the self-referential aspects of cinema, on the tools, the materials, and the processes of cinema."

*There is no inevitability in cinema's history; it's the result of needs, priorities, social and economic pressures.* (ML)

*After Lumiere—L'Arroseur arrose* (1974); 16mm, color, sound, 14 minutes

Like all the works I have done which refer directly to another artist, *After Lumiere* is not directly "about" the Lumiere original. It is the starting point for an investigation. In this case it is an investigation into consequentiality, or at least the significance of sequentiality in the construction of meaning and concept. As such, the film encroaches on "narrative" cinema, but in a way which treats narrativization as problematic, not transparent. (ML)

"The *Lumiere* film is especially interesting .... It is not simply a series of optical recombinations like cinematic anagrams, but an investigation into narration itself, which by counterpointing different narrative tones, so to speak, neither dissolves nor repeats Lumiere's simple story, *L'arroseur arrose*, but foregrounds the process of narration itself." (Peter Wollen)

*Blackbird Descending (Tense Alignment)* (1977); 16mm, color, sound, 110 minutes

"Malcolm Le Grice, one of the leading avant-garde filmmakers in Britain, has made a feature-length work which is ... one of the most accessible films to come out of the experimental area of cinematic exploration in many years. The secret of its appeal is that it engages the viewer's curiosity and then challenges him to remember, really remember, exactly what he has seen and heard. It assumes that people can have fun at the same time as they are absorbing an analysis of how time and space are constructed in the cinema. What we see is a simple domestic scene: a woman typing. Through the window a man prunes a tree and a woman hangs out different colored sheets. A phone rings. This scene is repeated again and again from different viewpoints and time points but always slightly altered .... The film is not about a Pirandelloesque but film reality, so Le Grice finally shows us the camera filming some of the scenes we have seen, even utilizing split screens to unmask the unreality (and of course thereby creating yet another). Like poet Wallace Stevens, Le Grice gives us thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird with fresh eyes." (Ken Waschin, London Film Festival, 1977)

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**BIG AS LIFE:  
AN AMERICAN HISTORY OF 8MM FILMS**

**PROGRAM 1**

*Tuesday, September 22, 1998—Pacific Film Archive—7:30 pm*

Beginning Tuesday, September 22nd, and continuing in alternating months through June 1999, the Pacific Film Archive and San Francisco Cinematheque will present highlights from the Museum of Modern Art's (New York City) 60-program retrospective of American-made 8mm films and videos co-curated by myself and MoMA Associate Curator Jytte Jensen, "Big As Life: An American History of 8mm Films." Continuing through the Spring of 2000, this retrospective spans personal (and emphatically private) filmmaking from the 1940s through the present, focusing primarily on films made by self-avowed artists but also including a rich sampling of "found" home movies and industrial films especially made for "small-gauge" home formats. (Steve Anker)

*She/Va* (1973) by Marjorie Keller; 8mm, color, silent, 3 minutes

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

#3 (1979) by Ellen Gaine; Super 8mm, b&w, silent, 5 minutes

*The Annunciation* (1974) by Diana Barrie; Super 8mm, color, silent, 9 minutes

*kemia* (1994) by silt; 8mm and Super 8mm; color, silent, 14 minutes

*The Exquisite Hour* (1989) by Phil Solomon; Super 8mm, color, sound, 14 minutes

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## LIQUID IMAGES: MOVING WITH/IN FILM'S SURFACE

*Sunday, October 4, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30pm*

***Fluttering*** (1998) by Steve Polta; 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes

A film of quiet breaths, expanding and contracting, hovering over the screen in fields of possibility. (SP, September 29, 1998)

***Concrescence*** (1996) by Phil Solomon and Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 2.5 minutes

This is a hand-painted, step-printed collaboration between Phil Solomon and Stan Brakhage.

“*concrescence, principle of* A term from A.N. Whitehead’s metaphysics refers to the drive things possess that impel them to actualization, the creative urge towards concrescence, for producing novel advances through the generation of greater interrelatedness. Many thinkers would deem this urge divine, so the principle of concrescence may be considered one of Whitehead’s terms for God.” (Bruce Elder)

“...” (***Seasons***) (work in progress) by Phil Solomon and Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes

A brief sketch of a forthcoming collaboration between Phil Solomon and Stan Brakhage. Brakhage’s hand-carvings and etchings into the film emulsion are illuminated by Solomon’s optical printing and editing into an evocation of the seasons, inspired by the woodcuts of Hiroshige.

Iced ideograms falling through space, lit by the heavens above ... (PS)

***Glass*** (1998) by Leighton Pierce; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes

A not-so-still-life in the backyard with children, water, fire, and a few other basic elements. This is another contemplative, painterly piece in my ongoing “Memories of Water” series. While the ultimate effect is intended to be poetic (and maybe even transformative), it is simultaneously a study in the laws of optics—an exploration of refraction, defraction, diffusion, reflection, and absorption. (LP)

***Silvercup*** (1998) by Jim Jennings; 16mm, b&w, silent, 16 minutes

*Silvercup* celebrates the way in which being in love imbues every sight with tenderness. This film documents the sensuous movements of the trains of Queensborough Plaza in Long Island City, New York. (JJ)

***Floating by Eagle Rock/She Is Asleep*** (work in progress) by Konrad Steiner; 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes

The music is a performance of John Cage’s *She Is Asleep*. (KS)

— 10 - minute intermission —

***We are going home*** (1998) by Jennifer Reeves; 16mm, b&w and color, sound, 10.5 minutes

Rhythmic color and tonal shifts in the film emulsion give life to the physical landscape which comes to represent an internal terrain of the subconscious. Three main characters act in parallel universes, attempting to but never able to intersect. Characters are ever equally conscious at the same time. When one finds another, she is either buried in the sand or asleep under a tree. Consciousness is always singular. (JR)

***Stop*** (1993–97) by Joan Nidzyn; 16mm, b&w, sound, 6 minutes

*Stop* is a portrait of the cycle of obsessive compulsiveness. (JN)

***Sweep*** (1998) by Mark Street; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes

A day like any other: Brooklyn beckons so they dart out into it. Daughter and father traipse from playground to subway and back home again. The 18-month-old cackles and the 32-year-old tries his best to keep up. They stumble upon a fruit vendor, a street preacher, and a wall of city sound. Negative and positive hand-manipulated images collide and shimmer as they walk and talk their way through spring in the city. Maya babbles, but her father is mostly silent: he can’t believe that he’ll never meander quite this way again. (MS)



*...or lost* (1997) by Leslie Thornton; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes  
*...or lost* is the first installation in the episodic release of *The Great Invisible*.

“Edison snatched the noise of time from an audible chasm, widening the fissures between duplication and extinction. With the invention of the cylinder phonograph in 1878 he succeeded in creating an artificial larynx, a prattling wind-up toy, and a resurrection machine. Thornton’s cinematic miniature orbits around the Wizard of Menlo Park and his notion of crossing and annihilating time and space. New Jersey, late 1870s: Bernhardt’s voice escapes from the phonograph reciting *Phedre*, and takes possession of a precocious oblivion-seeker with her parents as captive onlookers. New Jersey, 1931: A caretaker and assistant to Edison stages his own performance, a historical gloss and imitation of his master’s voice.” (Mark McElhatten, 1997)

*A wine reception will follow the screening.*

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## O NIGHT WITHOUT OBJECTS: A TRILOGY

Co-produced, directed, and edited by Jeanne C. Finley and John H. Muse

John H. Muse In Person

*Thursday, October 8, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm*

*O Night Without Objects: A Trilogy* explores the relationship of conversion experiences—therapeutic, political, and religious—to technology, fear, and family. The segments are stylistically diverse employing theatrical, documentary, and narrative means. When viewed as a trilogy each segment informs and reinforces the common thematic concerns of the others; however, any segment may be distributed or viewed independently. This film was produced during an artists’ residency at Xerox Parc designed to bring artists and new technology research scientists together.

*The Adventures of Blacky* (1998) by Jeanne C. Finley and John H. Muse; video, color, sound, 9 minutes  
*The Adventures of Blacky* narrates the administration of a psychological test to a young girl. She views a series of cartoon drawings of a family of dogs and listens to questions concerning each of the cards. This film meditates on the childhood experiences the drawings seem to presuppose and on the prescriptive force of these presuppositions.

*Based on a Story* (1998) by Jeanne C. Finley and John H. Muse; video, color, sound, 43 minutes  
*Based on a Story* explores the widely-publicized encounter between Jewish Cantor, Michael Weisser and Grand Dragon of the Nebraska Ku Klux Klan, Larry Trapp. After months of harassment from Trapp by mail, phone and cable TV, the Weisser family befriended Trapp, who then renounced the Klan, moved into the Weisser family’s home and converted to Judaism. Trapp, who was a double amputee and blind from childhood diabetes, died in the Weissers’ home six months after he moved in. The Weisser/Trapp story is presented as an intimate tale of family and childhood that evolves into a media event, built around the seductions of fear, the clichés of redemption and the shifting terrain of public and private life. The story belongs to the Weissers and yet exceeds their grasp; in fact, the story literally belongs to the Disney Corporation to whom the Weissers sold the rights. The film examines contradictory narratives of family friends, congregation members, the media, and Hollywood to explore the wide range of responses this story evoked.

*Based on a Story* interweaves interview footage with evocative visual imagery and a suspenseful voice-over narration. Imagery of the Nebraska plains is layered with artifacts from Trapp’s life, casual moments of the Weissers’ home life, amateur video of his funeral and sensational news footage of his Klan activities. The film gathers evidence to suggest that there is no clearly definable source for hatred or racism and the motivations of Trapp and the Weissers remain contested and ultimately unknowable.

*Time Bomb* (1998) by Jeanne C. Finley and John H. Muse; video, color, sound, 7 minutes

*Time Bomb* tells the story of a young girl's experience at a Baptist retreat where a game called "time bomb" becomes the measure of her desire to accept Jesus into her life. This piece explores memory, the power of crowds, rituals of conversion, and the isolation arena for coercion and the possibility for self-assertion. Visually, *Time Bomb* proceeds through sequence of images that figure the "light" of memory as simultaneously revelatory and obscuring, constructive and destructive.

*Total running time: c. 60 minutes. Created, Shot, and Edited by Jeanne C. Finley and John H. Muse.*

*Narration by Pamela Z. Original Music by Pamela Z & Michael Becker.*

*Sound Design by Jim McKee @ Earwax.*

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## LANDSCAPE SUICIDE

James Benning In Person

*Sunday, October 11, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

In the mid 1970s, James Benning was crafting films which integrated highly formalized imagery with elements of conventional narrative. From 1974 to 1976, his collaboration with Bette Gordon involved meditations on the seam between stillness and motion in *Michigan Avenue* and the creation of a thaumatrope-in-motion in *I-94*, and turned their windshield into a movie screen for a trip across *The United States of America*. His next two works (*8 1/2 x 11*, *11 x 14*), addressed Benning's interest in utilizing character and plot as the means for concentrating on the formal elements, while *One Way Boogie Woogie* explored his formal approach to composition and perspective in the absence of narrative continuity. As he moved into the 1980s, his films *Grand Opera*, *Him and Me*, and *American Dreams* found Benning attempting to add human content while avoiding conventional approaches to character. His most recent films (*Landscape Suicide*, *Used Innocence*, *Deseret*) seek out a relationship between his unconventional structure and formalist approach, while addressing narrative concerns.

*Time and a Half* (1972); 16mm, b&w, sound, 17 minutes

Benning's first film chronicles the routine of the everyday Joe who awakens, heads to work, and upon returning home eats and falls asleep. His monotonous work running a drill press is interrupted by brief daydreams: erotic snippets involving the voluptuous girl he spies while on the bus to work. This working man's Walter Mitty cleverly portrays those split-second flights of fancy we all indulge in as we go about our day.

*Landscape Suicide* (1986); 16mm, color, sound, 95 minutes

I discovered a matching form of isolation in both the cold, landlocked landscape of Wisconsin and the suburban car-dominated non-communication of California. (JB)

*Landscape Suicide* offers portraits of two murderers whose motivations (or lack thereof) appear to have links in each person's home environment: Wisconsin farmer Ed Gein, who murdered and taxidermized his victims in the 1950s, and Bernadette Protti, a 15-year-old California teenager who stabbed a classmate to death in 1984.

"Still" imagery of the hometowns of Gein and Protti reflect the spiritless and vast emptiness which encapsulated them; Gein, the despair of poverty-stricken Plainville; Protti, affluence without import in suburban Orinda, CA. This is contrasted by long takes that guide the viewer through each mundane community. What could they have offered Gein and Protti? And why do these communities ultimately fail them?

Yet the chills in *Landscape Suicide* come not from the shots of cold isolation, but during the talking-head sequences. One cannot help but feel utter discomfort when watching the young Bernadette Protti describe her rather elaborate, yet quite simply executed murder of a popular cheerleader/classmate. What becomes even more disturbing is the realization that Protti is being played (with unemotional, matter-of-fact detail) by a young actress recruited to portray this cold-blooded killer. Rhonda Bell as Protti plays it so blasé and stolid that it is difficult to believe we are watching an actress, and wonder if this "honest" performance could be elicited from a subject aware of the camera. Elion Sucher's Gein provides an articulate while hazy delivery of the courtroom testimony, which encourages us to look past the madness and recognize an ultimate indifference to human life.

Benning's long, framed static shots are intercut exclusively with blackouts, distorting the viewer's sense of continuum. Often the only sound we hear is the high-tonal buzz of Orinda's power lines, or the wind sweeping over Plainville—sounds of nothingness which quickly become one with Benning's landscapes. Musical interludes add ironic commentary to the grisly narrative provided by Gein and Protti. Ultimately, it is the dialectical symbiosis of the formal qualities of Benning's cinematic compositions with the construction of a narrative that engages the viewer in a rigorous reflection on the traditional discourse of film.

**James Benning Filmography:**

*did you ever hear that cricket sound?* (1971); *Time and a Half* (1972); *Art Hist. 101* (1972); *Ode to Musak* (1972); *57* (1973); *Michigan Avenue* (co-made with Bette Gordon, 1973); *Honeyland Road* (1973); *8 1/2 x 11* (1974); *Gleem* (1974); *I-94* (co-made with Bette Gordon, 1974); *The United States of America* (1975); *Saturday Night* (1975); *An Erotic Film* (1975); *3 minutes on the dangers of film recording* (1975); *9-1-75* (1975); *Chicago Loop* (1976); *A to B* (1976); *11 x 14* (1976); *One Way Boogie Woogie* (1977); *Grand Opera* (1978); *Him & Me* (1982); *American Dreams* (1984); *O Panama* (1985); *Landscape Suicide* (1986); *Used Innocence* (1988); *North on Evers* (1991); *Deseret* (1995); *Four Corners* (1997); *UTOPIA* (1998)

*Four Corners will be screened at the Pacific Film Archive on Tuesday, October 13, 1998 at 7:30 pm.*

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**BRECHT AND CINEMA!  
A CELEBRATION OF BERTOLT BRECHT'S  
100TH BIRTHDAY**

**PROGRAM 1: SLATAN DUDOW AND BERTOLT BRECHT'S  
KUHLE WAMPE**

*Thursday, October 15, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm*

*[O]ur representations must take second place to what is represented, men's life together in society, and the pleasure felt in their perfection must be converted into the higher pleasure felt when the rules emerging from this life in society are treated as imperfect and provisional. In this way the theatre leaves its spectators productively disposed even after the spectacle is over. Let us hope that their theatre may allow them to enjoy as entertainment that terrible and never-ending labor which should ensure their maintenance, together with the terror of their unceasing transformation. (Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre")*

*We now come to the concept of "Realism." It is an old concept which has been much used by many men and for many purposes, and before it can be applied we must spring-clean it too. ... Literary works cannot be taken over like factories, or literary forms of expression like industrial methods. Realist writing, of which history offers many widely varying examples, is likewise conditioned by the question of how, when and for what class it is made use of: conditioned down to the last small detail. ...*

*For time flows on, and if it did not it would be a poor look-out for those who have no golden tables to sit at. Methods wear out, stimuli fail. New problems loom up and demand new techniques. Reality alters; to represent it the means of representation must alter too. Nothing arises from nothing; the new springs from the old, but that is just what makes it new. (BB, "The Popular and the Realistic")*

*An old tradition leads people to treat a critical attitude as a predominantly negative one. ... People cannot conceive of contradiction and detachment as being part of artistic appreciation.*

*To introduce this critical attitude into art, the negative element which it doubtless includes must be shown from its positive side: this criticism of the world is active, practical, positive. Criticizing the course of a river means improving it, correcting it. Criticism of society is ultimately revolution; there you have criticism taken to its logical conclusion and playing an active part. A critical attitude of this type is an operative factor of productivity; it is deeply enjoyable as such, and if we commonly use the term "arts" for enterprises that improve peoples lives why should art proper remain aloof from arts of this sort? (BB, "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting")*

Bertolt Brecht—poet, playwright, songwriter, theoretician—was born in Augsburg, Germany in 1898 and died in Berlin in 1956. The rebel son of a bourgeois family, Brecht studied medicine, worked as a medical orderly during World War I, and began writing pacifist poetry and revolutionary plays before the age of twenty. His most well-known works were written in the '20s and early '30s in Germany (*A Man's a Man*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, *Mother*) and in the late '30s and '40s during his exile in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and the U.S. (*Life of Galileo*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Good Person of Sezuán*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*). In 1947, after being called to testify before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, he returned to Europe, ultimately settling in East Berlin where he directed the Berliner Ensemble with his wife Helene Weigel until his death.

The occasion of his centennial offers us an opportunity to take a fresh look at Brecht's contribution to the history of cinema. His notion of art as a transformative process, as a process which arouses the spectators' critical faculties with regard to their social world and with regard to their own place in it, has had a profound impact on radical approaches to cinematic storytelling. Brecht's ideas of epic theatre, of the "apparatus," of "*Verfremdung*" (translated alternately as distanciation, alienation, or making strange), of the social "*gestus*," and of the "separation of elements" so that contradictions, gaps and collisions are highlighted rather than hidden, have been taken up by many filmmakers from the '60s onwards. What much of Brecht's theoretical writing seems to be calling for is a new type of spectator—a spectator who is no longer merely passive, no longer merely involved and empathizing with the actor's feelings; but rather a spectator who stands outside the spectacle, examining and questioning himself and the social world with a heightened awareness of the contingency of all that he sees. In much of Brecht's work, social and artistic conventions are denaturalized, and the hidden ideological codes of political power and realist art are revealed. As he writes in his "A Short Organum for the Theatre," we the spectators are faced with the terror—and the potential—of our, and the world's, unceasing transformation.

How do I become such a spectator? By constantly being made aware that what I am seeing and hearing is a text, a play, a film—speech about the world from a specific historical and political place; that the actors are, in fact, acting; that the spectacle itself is a commodified construction; that the narrative is just narrative and its gaps and contradictions highlight its tenuous but ideologically pointed relation to the world. Such a spectator will not merely submit uncritically to vague and wishful sentiments; instead she will step back, aware of her shifting self, the world she inhabits, and her meaning-making in process.

In the early 1960s there was a resurgence of interest in Brecht's ideas and the growth of a theoretical debate on how his theories of theatre could be transferred to cinema. Radical filmmakers like Godard and Gorin in France, and Kluge, Straub, and Fassbinder in Germany actively and explicitly referred to and borrowed from Brecht's work. Due to constraints of time and money, Cinematheque's "Brecht and Cinema" series will not include the most commonly labeled "Brechtian" works of Godard and Gorin or of Fassbinder, but rather focus on works which are rarely screened, not well known, unavailable on video, and which (aside from Program 2) extend beyond the Franco-German sphere of influence.

Of course, Brecht's ideas are not only Brecht's. He drew his theoretical concepts and theatrical ideas from a multitude of sources including Soviet *agit-prop*, Piscator's political theatre, medieval mystery plays, Japanese and Chinese dramaturgy, fairground side-shows, and the many women he lived and worked with. Many of his plays include free adaptations of or quotations from other writers' plays, poems, novels, and he was often accused of (and he acknowledged) plagiarism. Just as he is not the exclusive author of many of his works, he is also not the exclusive or even primary influence in the films in this series. And yet it seems timely to honor Brecht's contributions to this seventh art which is just a bit older than he is, and to examine these works by masters of world cinema in light of the radical ideas he brought together.

*Kuhle Wampe, or Who Owns the World?* (1932) by Slatan Dudow; 16mm, b&w, sound, 88 minutes  
Script by Bertolt Brecht and Ernst Ottwalt; music by Hanns Eisler.

Made in Berlin with the young Bulgarian director Slatan Dudow, *Kuhle Wampe* is the only film which Brecht acknowledged as the expression of his own ideas, and it is the only one in which he made decisions at every level and every stage of the production. The title refers to an area in the working-class outskirts of Berlin where the unemployed lived in shacks. Focusing on the rampant unemployment in Germany in the early '30s, the film uses both fictionalized and documentary footage to explore its causes, consequences, and a possible response; it also emphasizes some of the particular difficulties faced by working-class women. In the HUAC hearings Brecht calls this film (ironically?) a "documentary picture."

*Kuhle Wampe* was made in the same period that Brecht wrote and directed several didactic political plays including *The Measures Taken* and his adaptation of Gorky's novel, *Mother*. (Sections of both of these were cited at length in the HUAC hearings as evidence of his Communist tendencies.) In part, *Kuhle Wampe* seems to have been a response to Brecht's anger and frustration with Pabst's 1931 film version of his *Threepenny Opera* which he felt betrayed his political and formal intentions and which he took (unsuccessfully) to court. Made independently by the collaborative team of Brecht, Dudow, Ottwalt and Eisler, *Kuhle Wampe* was backed by various Communist organizations.

*Kuhle Wampe* was censored the moment it was finished on the grounds that it jeopardized public security and the vital interests of the state. Although two members of the board appealed the censorship, it was only after an immense uproar in liberal and leftist newspapers and several public protest rallies that the film was finally released, with cuts, in April 1932. Brecht himself claims that one astute censor's objections centered on the fact that no individualized emotional empathy is elicited for a character before he commits suicide; for the censor's sake Brecht argued—sticking "strictly to the untruth"—that this was not the case, and that the fact that he had taken off his watch before the jump made him a unique individual with whom the audience could identify and emotionally bond! The Berlin premiere in May was an enormous success, with 14,000 spectators clamoring to see it in its first week of showing. In March 1933, just weeks after Brecht fled Germany and went into exile in Denmark, *Kuhle Wampe* was definitively prohibited by the Nazis.

*Screening preceded by 15 minutes of excerpts from Brecht's appearance in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947.*

*Program Notes written and compiled by Irina Leimbacher. Sources: Brecht, Brecht on Theatre; Roswitha Müller, Brecht and the Theory of Media; Martin Esslin, Brecht: A Choice of Evils*

**DON'T FORGET: HAPPY BIRTHDAY BRECHT AT THEATRE ARTAUD NOV 3-8, 1998—  
SEE FLYER FOR DETAILS**

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## MESSTERPIECE THEATER: TILTING THE LUCK-PLANE

tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE In Person

*Sunday, October 18, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

“Performance provocateur tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE returns to San Francisco for a program of psychic slippages, conceptual ponderings, neo-cosmic blatherings and a full battery of bad puns. tENT, who claims to have made over 188 movies in 24 years, most of them for little or no money, will present three films this evening. tENTATIVELY forms art matter out of naked chaos; or perhaps he forms much needed chaos out of the naked pretensions of art matter.” (Scott Stark)

***Diszey Spots*** (1993); 16mm, color, sound on VHS, 11 minutes

Everyone’s heard of Walt Diszey being cryogenically preserved but few have heard that he directs his films from “beyond the grave” thru the wonders of technology. Alas, all is not well in the subtly rotting brain. Witness here the results.

***Bob Cobbing*** (1991–94); 16mm, b&w, sound on VHS, 28 minutes

Is it possible to make a ‘60s(?) early morning TV educational show of a man in a suit behind a desk talking about teen sexuality in a monotonous voice even more boring than it already is by performing conceptual vandalism on it & turning it into one of those difficult dense films? One of the most laborious films I’m ever likely to make. Learn more here. Ideally presented as early morning TV w/ no explanation.

***The “Official” John Lennon’s Erection as Blocking Our View Homage & Cheese Sandwich*** (1990–95); 16mm, color, sound on VHS, 84 minutes

A featureless-length 16mm film MESSTERPIECE made for around \$3,000 (U.S.) that’s proof both that a mere 84 minutes can seem like an eternity & that you don’t have to give up your fuck-off lifestyle to make such a thing.

It’s about making something w/o worrying too much about whether someone else has “already done it.” It’s about the construction of a parking lot obstructing my view. It has a short cheesy homage to Michael Snow’s *Wavelength*. It’s an homage to my own films. It’s an homage to just-about-*anybody*’s films. It’s about the “Official” Project. It’s about relationships between its visuals & its sounds. It’s about attempting to accomplish expensive things w/ almost no money. It’s anarchistic. It’s dedicated to the mammaries of Spike Jones & John Cage. It’s about navigating thru the obstacles of FUCKED-UPEDNESS to just get the damned thing made in some shape or form.

*hasty program notes: tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE—Sprocket Scientist*



BRECHT AND CINEMA!  
A CELEBRATION OF BERTOLT BRECHT'S  
100TH BIRTHDAY

PROGRAM 2: ALEXANDER KLUGE'S *YESTERDAY GIRL*  
AND JEAN-MARIE STRAUB'S  
*THE BRIDEGROOM, THE COMEDIENNE, AND THE PIMP*

Thursday, October 22, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm

*[O]ur representations must take second place to what is represented, men's life together in society, and the pleasure felt in their perfection must be converted into the higher pleasure felt when the rules emerging from this life in society are treated as imperfect and provisional. In this way the theatre leaves its spectators productively disposed even after the spectacle is over. Let us hope that their theatre may allow them to enjoy as entertainment that terrible and never-ending labor which should ensure their maintenance, together with the terror of their unceasing transformation. (Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre")*

*Formally Brecht is ubiquitous in New German Cinema. When asked about Brecht's influence, Rainer Werner Fassbinder once stated that all filmmakers had to confront him at one point or another. The question arising in each case, then, is the extent to which Brecht is foregrounded and in what other aesthetic and political contexts he is presented—in other words, once again a question of differences. Straub ... is opting for an ascetic aesthetics. Kluge, in contrast, stresses Brechtian multilayered montage, not sparseness but density, in an overwhelming compilation of material of the most diverse kind. This bombardment of images, words, and music, a bewildering jungle of quotations and observations, literarization with a vengeance, has emancipatory intent. It is designed to stimulate in the spectator experiences and qualities not normally encouraged, such as curiosity, memory, and the hunger for seeing and hearing. Kluge's own definition of montage is crucially concerned with the expression of subjective experience. This concern also underlies his attempt at blurring the borderline between documentation and fiction. "Documentation alone cuts off context: there is nothing objective without feelings, actions, wishes, that is, the eyes and sense of people who act" and conversely, "no narration is successful without a certain measure of authentic material, that is, documentation." (Roswitha Müller, *Bertolt Brecht and the Theory of Media*)*

**Alexander Kluge**, born in 1932 in then-East Germany, is, together with Jean-Marie Straub, one of the major figures in the renaissance of the New German Cinema. Since signing the Oberhausen Manifesto proclaiming the demise of conventional German cinema in 1962, Kluge has been a tireless and effective exponent of the interests of Germany's independent film producers. A lawyer by profession and a participant in the intellectual debates spearheaded by the Frankfurt Institute, Kluge was also its legal advisor, handling, among other things, the personal reparations cases of Adorno and Horkheimer. He is also a writer of semi-documentary fiction and of theoretical works that cross the borders of politics, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and aesthetics. Kluge has made over a dozen feature films, numerous shorts, and participated in several collective works. *Yesterday Girl* was his first feature.

**Jean-Marie Straub** has also been making films (most often with Danielle Huillet) since the early '60s. Many of their films are "adaptations" and studies of preexisting texts, ranging from musical scores, poems, and plays to Brecht's novel-fragment *The Business Affairs of Mr. Julius Caesar* (*History Lessons*, 1972). Within the Brechtian framework of trying to engage the audience to think and co-produce the filmic text, their films systematically subvert conventional cinematic codes, especially narrative continuity and spectator identification by breaking "rules" of camera placement and composition, and refusing to follow character movement, insisting on noninterpretative monotonous reading of texts and using direct sound. Straub and Huillet have made over a dozen films, the most recent being shown at last year's SF International Film Festival.

*Yesterday Girl* (*Abschied von Gestern*) (1966) by Alexander Kluge; 16mm, b&w, sound, 88 minutes

The naïve playfulness emanating from Anita's youthfully light appearance could easily take us into the turbulence of the sixties' denial of any kind of authority, attempting the re-invention of values allowing one to stride through the banality of day-to-day existence. A story of a twenty-something girl trying to find her *raison d'être* in a world of incomprehensibly rigid patriarchal rules. But *Yesterday Girl* is not Anita's story. It is a story of Anita G.—a juridical case.



Alexander Kluge based the film on his own short story "Attendance List for a Funeral," based on an actual account of a girl of Jewish descent who left then-communist GDR to find a different life in West Germany. Instead of building herself a new life, she finds herself recycled in the maze of a socio-political system trying, as she is, to erase the layer of the recent past and concentrate on the new, still undefined values of the present. Once this insecure, overly rational system defines her as not-fitting its requirements, she is robbed of any real chance to survive within its steel-like boundaries.

How does this Kafkaesque reality function? As a System. A System infinitely perpetuating itself through the State Institutions of Justice, Education and Family, consistently filtering its content by dismissing anything simply human. Accused of the theft of her working colleague's cardigan, Anita G. (played by Alexandra Kluge) is confronted with the court official denying any possibility that her lack of concept of private property might have been connected to the history of her family being persecuted under Nazism for being Jewish, and later on, having their property repossessed by the Soviet communist regime while considering her family capitalist. The director here exposes the gap between the bureaucratic nature of the System incapable of accounting for the particularity of an individual story, and the individual, paradoxically stuck in the machinery of systems' definitions of herself, disempowered to the degree that she is unable to adopt an original view of herself and consequently a position *vis-à-vis* the system itself. This paradoxical reversal is the source of the individual's frustration and stagnation; not only Anita's but also of the men she encounters during her wandering. All her lovers (her boss at the company selling language-course records, a student, a senior official at the education ministry) are disowned of their individual will but have the advantage of being recognized by the system because they follow its pattern. Each of them tries to somehow fit her into the mechanism of the System, but fails to do so. In order for these men to create a space in the System for Anita, they would have to submit themselves to the troubling experience of self-reflection, a process requiring confrontation with their own programmed subject position within the System. The latter phase of recognition would inevitably be followed by the need for a radical change, resulting in a destruction of the functioning of the whole system's machinery. They embrace her as a ray of hope for something different, yet unflinchingly reject her as a symptom/sickness, at the point they might lose their own piece of authority within the System.

Anita G. ends up in prison, a state institution designed for those living on its margins. Her only way to survive is to accept the place society designed for her. She has to accept it. By giving herself up to the Law of the System she adopts its point of view of herself as a misfit and a criminal and helps to gather evidence of her "criminal" activity, evidence against Anita and for Anita G., another case belonging to the System.

Alexander Kluge, the theoretician and spokesman of New German Cinema, whose films—along with Straub's—first brought international admiration to new West German Cinema in the 1960s, ends this story of *Abschied von Gestern* (literally translated as "Taking Leave of Yesterday") with a utopian quote from Dostoevsky: "Everyone bears the guilt for everything, but if everyone knew it, we would have paradise on earth." This closing note carries on the atmosphere created by the visual style of the scene where Anita (as an individual, private being) is on the brink of her transformation into Anita G. (public case); she is sitting alone on her suitcase, on a tiny piece of grass in the middle of the great central intersection of the West German Autobahn network, while the cars silently speed by and the airplanes slide through the sky above her. The camera's circular movements around her give us an impression of Anita being trapped within the empty space of the institutionalized, blind obsession with progress, trying to break away from the weight of the Nazi past. At the very beginning, the guilt ridden System denied her the possibility to view herself as a historical being precisely because of its own pathological state of denying its own ties to the past. Thus Anita is pushed into a confused, weightless living in the present, simultaneously creating herself a delinquent, problematic past that eventually catches up with her (in the prison and most probably once she finishes her sentence).

To return to the closing citation—where is its utopian point? It balances on the fact that the Dostoevsky's statement assumes a non-authoritarian society, where every individual is provided with the space to take the responsibility for her/his own actions.

*The Bridegroom, the Comedienne, and the Pimp* (1968) by Jean Marie Straub; 16mm, b&w, sound, 23 minutes

"In his early years with the 'antitheater,' Fassbinder had worked with Straub. He had acted in Straub's production of Ferdinand Bruckner's *Krankheit der Jugend* (*Sickness of Youth*), which eventually found its way into the former's film *Der Bräutigam, die Komödiantin und der Zuhälter* (*The Bridegroom, the Comedienne, and the Pimp* [1968]). That Fassbinder had learned from Straub and through Straub from Brecht is evident in his first original play, *Katzelmacher*, filmed in 1969. Straub had explained his reduction of Bruckner's play to a ten-minute performance

by pointing out his intent to leave out all psychology and show people's relations with each other as constellations that dissolve and regroup. A more 'gestural' Brechtian exercise is hard to imagine ...." (Roswitha Müller, *Bertolt Brecht and the Theory of Media*)

"Virtually every Straub/Huillet film is an adaptation of a preexisting text. [This] suggests that every representational film is a re-presentation, that all subject matter is borrowed, that each film is to be studied for its lapses and infidelities, that nothing can ever be translated. Straub's and Huillet's subject, at least in part, is precisely the disjunction between the original text and its cinematic adaptation. Far from offering a substitute for the original, their films document that disjunction, document the attempt to make a movie out of a text." (J. Hoberman, "Once Upon a Time in Amerika: Straub/Huillet/Kafka")

*Program Notes written and compiled by Maja Manojlovic*

*DON'T FORGET: HAPPY BIRTHDAY BRECHT AT THEATRE ARTAUD NOV 3-8, 1998—  
SEE FLYER FOR DETAILS*

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## SILT: FIELD STUDIES

*Friday, October 23, 1998—Headlands Center for the Arts—8:00pm*

"Field Studies" premieres new work developed during silt's residency in the Headlands, as well as their ongoing metamorphosis of films. This performance illuminates multi-planar perspectives of the California landscape, exploring the intersection and immanence of poetic fact and imagination. These paranaturalist studies include inquiries into optics, magnetic fields, plant morphology, bacteriology, and kymatics.

silt is a three-member cinema collaborative (Keith Evans, Christian Farrell, Jeff Warrin) that has been working in the Bay Area since 1990. silt's recent works are partially-choreographed multiple projection performances exploring the diverse bioregions and geography of California. The dynamism of the landscape is mirrored in the varied perspectives and improvised cinematic techniques they employ. silt's process-oriented approach to filmmaking results in performances that are uniquely organic—reflecting their collaborative and intimate relationship with the film material and the intimate landscapes they investigate.

*Nematoda*; opening sound piece

*Sisyrrinchium Californicum*; 35 mm pinhole with hand-crank

*Landsend*; Super 8mm & 16mm, silent

*Rodeo Creek Survey*; sound collaboration with Maya Khosla

*Urphanomen*; Super 8mm, 16mm, sound

*Calypte anna*; sound collaboration by Maya Khosla and Beth Custer

*For the Unaided Eye and Handlens*; Super 8mm, sound

*We would like to thank: Melinda Stone, Maya Khosla, Beth Custer, Jim Mason, Geoff Evans, Ken Paul Rosenthal III, Eduardo Morrell, Jessica Prentiss, Leslie Tran, Mike Jarman, Headlands Staff and Residents, GGNRA, Steve Anker, Irina Leimbacher and everyone at Cinematheque, Charles Kremenak, Oldriska Balouskova, Don Warrin, the Farrells, FAF, Leslie Shows, Lucien Reed, and Steve Polta.*

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## THE PROGRAM

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*Nematoda*, opening sound piece •

*Sisynchium Californicum*, 35 mm pinhole/with handcrank

*Landsend*, super 8 & 16mm, silent

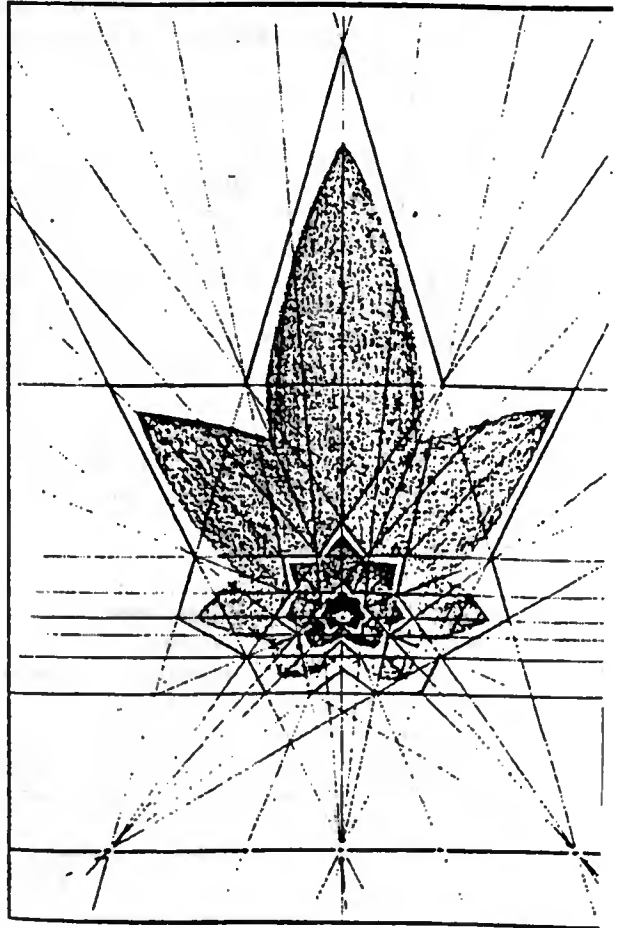
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 and Residents, GGNRA, Steve Ankar, Irina Leimbacher  
 and everyone at Cinematheque, Charles Kremenak,  
 Oldriska Balouskova, Don Warrin, The Farrells, FAE,  
 Leslie Shows, Lucien Reed, and Steve Polta.

**BIG AS LIFE:  
AN AMERICAN HISTORY OF 8MM FILMS**

**PROGRAM 2: PERFORMING DISCLOSURES**

Presented in Association with the SFAI Faculty Show, John Killacky, Curator  
Curated by Steve Anker, SFAI Filmmaking Department and Director, San Francisco Cinematheque

*Sunday, October 25, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

Beginning Tuesday, September 22nd, and continuing monthly through June 1999, the Pacific Film Archive and San Francisco Cinematheque will alternately present highlights from the Museum of Modern Art's (New York City) 60-program retrospective of American-made 8mm films and videos co-curated by myself and MoMA Associate Curator Jytte Jensen, "Big As Life: An American History of 8mm Films." At last estimate likely to continue through the Spring of 2000, this retrospective spans personal (and often private) filmmaking from the 1940s through the present, focusing primarily on films made by self-avowed artists but also including a rich sampling of "found" home movies and industrial films especially made for "small-gauge" home formats. Created with low-end equipment and tiny budgets, these films convey an intimacy, spontaneity, and sense of place rarely encountered with public cinema. (Steve Anker)

Tonight's "Big As Life" program is presented as part of the San Francisco Art Institute's Faculty Show and will be preceded by two pieces by composer and San Francisco Art Institute faculty member Charles Boone.

**Two pieces by Charles Boone:**

***Last Gleaming and Twenty-Seven Lines***

Text by Lyn Hejinian; Peter Valsamis, drummer.

My catalogue of musical compositions includes a large number of percussion works that focus primarily on those instruments' familiar rhythmic role. The two brief pieces on tonight's program, however, mark my more recent interest in percussion's infinite color possibilities. But rather than highlighting the more obvious, flamboyant aspects of this chromatic spectrum (cymbals, bells, rattles, keyboards, and so on), I concentrate here on the micro color gradations of one instrument, the snare drum, an instrument that might seem on first listening to be severely limited in its coloristic and expressive possibilities. *Last Gleaming* features almost imperceptible color shifts between various types of rolls achieved through differing ways of striking the drum head. *Twenty-Seven Lines* explores these same concerns plus the color changes caused by the position on the head where the rolls are played. These are more the grays of Mark Rothko's dark, late works than the primary colors of, say, Barnett Newman's *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue*. *Twenty-Seven Lines* is dedicated to my friends Nancy and James Grant. (CB)

**Films and Videos from "Big As Life":**

Tonight's program includes films and videos by six makers whose work achieves un-mediated relationships with the camera/viewer, creating intimate situations rarely encountered in public settings, especially with moving picture shows.

***Night Movie #1 (Self-Portrait)* (1974) by Diana Barrie; Super 8mm, b&w, silent, 3.5 minutes**

In 1975 I was told by someone at the Museum of Modern Art that when I had an hour of 16mm they would be glad to give me a show—they didn't even have a projector to look at my Super-8 films. (DB, quoted in *Home Made Movies*, 1981)

I agree with you about the sense of space that's involved in the films .... I would attribute it partly to my unconscious, personal way of handling the camera as an object. Super-8 cameras are small; they have automatic light meters. You don't have to think a lot about technique. Super-8 is about the closest you can get to having a camera built into your body. (DB, quoted in *A Critical Cinema*, 1987)

*Open-Close* (1970) by Vito Acconci; Super 8mm, color, silent, 6 minutes

"*Open-Close* is a two-part film. The first part, *Open*, shows Acconci's prick and balls with a tomato placed next to them and functioning visually as a third testicle .... *Close*, the second part, is descriptive in an equally specific way. Acconci selects an obvious opening in his body and closes it with plaster." (*Castelli-Sonnabend Catalogue*, 1974)

*Apologies* (1983-90) by Anne Charlotte Robertson; Super 8mm, color, sound, 17 minutes

Anne Charlotte Robertson was born in Columbus, Ohio, on March 27, 1949, at 3:27 p.m., after a 24-hour labor. She has been making films since 1976. She has been diagnosed as a manic-depressive, a conclusion she denies, preferring to think instead of herself as a typical anxiety neurotic of the obsessive-compulsive sort, with marked tendencies for fantasy, joy, and panic. (AR, 1994)

*Clown, Part I* (1992) by Luther Price; Super 8mm, color, sound, 13 minutes

The currently Mr. Luther Price has been writing poetry and making films under different names and guises since 1987.

I just watched our Halloween costumes hanging on the wall until they started to move. Then I woke up and all I wanted to do was trick or treat. (LP)

*Pretty Boy* (1994) by Joe Gibbons; Pixelvision on VHS, b&w, sound, 3 minutes

Ken meets his match.

*Elegy* (1991) by Joe Gibbons; Pixelvision on VHS, b&w, sound, 11 minutes

It is now the first day of autumn and Gibbons can already smell death in the air. Leading us and his dog, Woody, on a walk through a cemetery, Gibbons voices his obsessive thoughts on death and destruction.

*Me and Rubyfruit* (1989) by Sadie Benning; Pixelvision on VHS, b&w, sound, 4 minutes

Based on a novel by Rita Mae Brown, this tape chronicles the enchantment of teenage lesbian love.

*A Place Called Lovely* (1991) by Sadie Benning; Pixelvision on VHS, b&w, sound, 14 minutes

"Nicky is seven. His parents are older and meaner."

*A Place Called Lovely* references the types of violence individuals find in life, from explicit beatings, accidents, and murders to the more insidious violence of lies, social expectations, and betrayed faith.

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## PREMONITIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS NEW FILMS BY ABRAHAM RAVETT

Abraham Ravett In Person

Thursday, October 29, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm

Abraham Ravett's work lends itself to introspective meditation, and this evening's program provides nothing short of that. In his newest works, Ravett continues his ruminations on time and place, the aging process, personal memory, and Jewish history. With *Forgefeel* and *The Boardwalk*, the evanescence of life is contrasted between the fixed structure of the day and the cyclic passage of time through the years, returning to a theme he has addressed in *The Balcony* and *Zeger's Note*. Ravett's personal exploration of his family's history began with 1978's *Thirty Years Later*, in which the filmmaker utilized a diary format to record the impact of the Holocaust on his parents. This work had led to subsequent films (including *After the Unveiling*, *Toncia*, *In Memory*) dealing with the emotional and psychological after-effects of Nazi brutality on both subject and investigator. Tonight *Half-Sister* and *The March* both address the painful recollections and revelations Ravett has uncovered in his family history. In doing so it becomes apparent that Ravett is trying to establish a dialogue between his own identities as a Jew, and as an experimental filmmaker.

As he questions these concerns for himself, the viewer is likewise impressed upon to remember. Perhaps the act of remembering serves as a bridge between our present and a past we need to understand, or as a means of interpreting where we are going. If the past is merely a construction of our fragile memories, what influence or foresight do we have on our future?

*The Boardwalk* (1998); 16mm, b&w, silent, 28 minutes

The Brighton Beach-Coney Island boardwalk is a long, winding ocean-front walkway adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean. Photographed over a three-year period, the landscape rendered reflects the seasonal changes, daily activities, and the filmmaker's projected future. (AR)

*Forgefeel* (1997); 16mm, b&w and color, sound, 13 minutes

The landscape rendered is a playground at a San Francisco public school. The vantage point is from above, filmed early in the morning from a second-story window across the street. The children's seemingly random and often chaotic play is intercut with the regimentation imposed by the iron gates, morning bells, line-ups, and a repetitive, daily routine. The combination of activities reminds the maker of his childhood and awakens a series of premonitions about the aging process. *Forgefeel* is the Yiddish word for premonition. (AR)

*Half-Sister* (1985); 16mm, color, sound, 22 minutes

A recently discovered photograph of my half-sister who was killed in the German concentration camp of Auschwitz inspires the imagination to conceive a life that would have been. (AR)

*The March* (work-in-progress); 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

Utilizing a series of conversations conducted over a thirteen-year period between the filmmaker and his mother, *The March* details one woman's recollections of the 1945 "Death March" from Auschwitz. (AR)

Born in Poland in 1947 and raised in Israel, **Abraham Ravett** moved to the U.S. in 1955. He holds a BFA and MFA in filmmaking and photography and has been an independent filmmaker for the past twenty years. Ravett has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, the Japan Foundation, and the John Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. His films have been screened internationally, including the Museum of Modern Art; Anthology Film Archives; Collective for Living Cinema; Pacific Film Archive; San Francisco Cinematheque; LA Filmforum; Innis Film Society, Toronto, Canada; and Image Forum, Tokyo, Japan. At present Abraham Ravett teaches filmmaking and photography at Hampshire College, in Amherst, Massachusetts.

### Abraham Ravett Filmography:

*Quelle Heure* (1975); *The North End* (1977); *Thirty Years Later* (1978); *Haverhill High* (1979); *After the Unveiling* (1981); *Sara* (1983); *A Calming Breeze* (1984); *Zeger's Note* (1984); *Half-Sister* (1985); *Toncia* (1986); *Jack Haber* (1987); *The Balcony* (1988); *Everything's For You* (1989); *An Abu's Warning* (1992); *In Memory* (1993); *Forgotten Tenor* (1994); *Horse/Kappa/House* (1995); *Forgefeel* (1997); *The Boardwalk* (1998); *The March* (in-progress).

*Program Notes written and compiled by John Mrozik*

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## FILM UNDER FIRE: AN EVENING OF OBJECTIONABLE ART

A program of films challenging the tolerance of right-wing demagogues; curated by Steve Anker

*Sunday, November 1, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

Tonight's selection of films were made in the wake of the recent Supreme Court ruling against Karen Finley and the NEA-Four. By upholding a decency test for Federal arts grants, the Court has essentially given State and local officials license to limit the freedoms of expression that all forms of art thrive upon. Cinematheque has chosen seven films, all distributed by NEA-rejected Canyon Cinema, that challenge the boundaries of expression while remaining impressive works of art. (Steve Anker)

**NEA watchdogs take note:** Not one government dollar was spent on tonight's program.

*Noema* (1998) by Scott Stark; video, color, sound, 10 minutes

Stark takes the most repetitive of film genres, the porno, and loops selected moments that call attention to those fleeting in-between positions. As one actor flips his partner over for a rear entry, again and again and again, *Noema* distracts the viewer from any eroticism inherent in pornography and emphasizes the mechanics, and mundane repetitiveness, in the blue movie. Within this, Stark has reassembled and realized a grace of movement which might not have been the pornographer's intent. Add to this the minimal soundtrack, and the momentous money shot is prolonged to what could possibly be infinity (but Stark allows a payoff: heralds of applause and fireworks).

Scott Stark has produced more than fifty films and videos in the last fifteen years. He consistently uses film to challenge traditional viewing experiences. In addition to teaching classes at the San Francisco Art Institute, Stark served for seven years on the board of San Francisco Cinematheque, during which time he co-founded Cinematheque's journal of film and media art, *Cinematograph*.

*Near the Big Chakra* (1971) by Anne Severson (aka Alice Anne Parker); 16mm, silent, 17 minutes

Made in 1971, the end of the first great wave of feminism, which certainly opened the door to a lot of forbidden thoughts and issues. I think as a film it created a certain space. (AS, interviewed by Scott McDonald in *A Critical Cinema 2*)

Joseph Campbell explained *chakras* as "circles or spheres of consciousness." In yogic terms, the first *chakra* one gains control of is located between the genitals and anus. Severson explores this while at the same time removing all etymology of the vagina. By bombarding the viewer in continuous, repetitious shots, Severson succeeds in demystifying, de-sexualizing, and de-clinicalizing these "vaginas at rest," and paves the way for future, more dangerous filmic subjects.

Anne Severson (Alice Anne Parker) had a brief filmmaking career in the late 1960s to the mid-1970s while living in San Francisco. Parker's work focused on the human body, especially as it relates to gender and sexuality. She continues to be active as an artist and Shaman living in Hawaii.

*The Color of Love* (1994) by Peggy Ahwesh; 16mm, color, sound, 12 minutes

"[A] desolate, poignant artifact, playfully subversive, somehow evoking the possibility for passion, desire, and reverie absent from the empty, emptying transaction of the skin flick." (Gavin Smith)

There could be no way of knowing that the editing and reassembling of a discarded porno flick found deteriorating in a garbage can could produce such a colorful dance of flesh and blood. The anonymous actresses as vampiresses who (poorly) perform sanguinary acts of necrophilia become re-envisioned by Ahwesh as she cuts it against a wonderful tango. All of this is constantly framed, and more often taken over by, the kaleidoscopic colors (courtesy of Father Time's heavy influence on neglected stock) which invade, pervade, and ultimately outshine the uninteresting human actors. A treat for the eyes and mind, if not the loins.

**Peggy Ahwesh** has been making films for fifteen years and stands as one of the most highly regarded film/videomakers of her generation. Her films combine a textured feel for the material of the mediums she uses with a concern about the body and female sexuality. A retrospective of her films was recently presented at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and she will be the artist-in-residence at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in April 1999.

*Downs Are Feminine* (1993) by Lewis Klahr; 16mm, color, sound, 9 minutes

In this foray into "collage filmmaking," Klahr creates a dreamlike fantasy world grounded in the Eisenhower suburban home. Using animated cutouts and images from pop culture (one wonders if the filmmaker scoured the flea markets for back issues of *Life* magazine), a homoerotic playfulness is created. Orifices spring forth flowers and asses are tickled with garden weeders. The thumb becomes a phallus, but Klahr's creations will suck it all the same. Fun, shocking, but never uninteresting, Klahr's surreal and multi-layered world reminds us that appearances can often conceal.

**Lewis Klahr** has been immersed in "collage filmmaking" since the early 1980s, creating exploratory and diaristic films using surreal cutouts and mass media images. The effect is a haunting and dreamlike juxtaposition of images.

*Man+Woman+Animal* (1972) by Valie Export; 16mm, b&w and color, sound, 12 minutes

As an aspect of Export's early work, this film tackles the externalization of an internal state. Taboo images of female orgasm, male ejaculate, and menstruation are candidly displayed. Questions of female pleasure are posed as the trio of images is placed against a soundtrack switching from female moaning, to male grunting, to the cries of the humpback whale.

**Valie Export** is a Viennese performance artist and video and filmmaker who found her voice in the expanded cinema movement of the 1960s. In the following decade, she turned her experimental interests towards the burgeoning feminist movement.

*16/67: September 20th—Gunter Brus (aka Eating, Drinking, Pissing, Shitting)* (1967) by Kurt Kren; 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes

A scatological study in the purest sense, Kren reduces life relations to biological functions: we eat, therefore we shit; we drink, therefore we piss. Not exactly the most profound idea, yet Kren's construction of man's most public (food consumption) and private (food waste excretion) traditions is a visual symphony through his precision montage of structure and rhythm.

The late **Kurt Kren** emerged as a filmmaker in the late 1950s as part of the modern Viennese art movement, and soon propelled to the forefront of the Austrian avant-garde film world. His films are marked by an economy of means, drawing attention to time relations and limitations and, in a larger sense, to the measure of existence. On December 17th, Cinematheque will be presenting "In Memoriam: Kurt Kren," featuring films inspired and loved by Kren.

*Sodom* (1989–94) by Luther Price; Super 8mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

"[U]ncomfortably, we don't know where we stand in relation to what we are experiencing." (Michael Wallin)

A seriously provocative film, *Sodom* is as technically stunning as it is visually oppressive. No comfort zone is offered as filmmaker Price creates a complex, unsettling collage, assaulting the viewer with dichotomies of pain and pleasure, dominance and submission, desire and fulfillment. Clips from violent gay sex flicks cut against acts of auto-fellatio, cut against horrifying scenes from Biblical epics; add to that manipulated and queasy Gregorian chants, and *Sodom* is at once dangerous and tempting.

**Luther Price** is transgressive in the truest sense. With his trademark punch-hole construction of images within images, rapid-fire cutting, and obsessive repetition, his films are always fresh, surprising, and perversely his own.

*Program Notes written and compiled by John K. Mrozik*

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**BRECHT AND CINEMA!  
A CELEBRATION OF BERTOLT BRECHT'S  
100TH BIRTHDAY**

**PROGRAM 3: NAGISA OSHIMA'S *DEATH BY HANGING***

*Thursday, November 5, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm*

*[O]ur representations must take second place to what is represented, men's life together in society, and the pleasure felt in their perfection must be converted into the higher pleasure felt when the rules emerging from this life in society are treated as imperfect and provisional. In this way the theatre leaves its spectators productively disposed even after the spectacle is over. Let us hope that their theatre may allow them to enjoy as entertainment that terrible and never-ending labor which should ensure their maintenance, together with the terror of their unceasing transformation. (Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre")*

*To introduce this critical attitude into art, the negative element which it doubtless includes must be shown from its positive side: this criticism of the world is active, practical, positive. Criticizing the course of a river means improving it, correcting it. Criticism of society is ultimately revolution; there you have criticism taken to its logical conclusion and playing an active part. A critical attitude of this type is an operative factor of productivity; it is deeply enjoyable as such, and if we commonly use the term "arts" for enterprises that improve peoples lives why should art proper remain aloof from arts of this sort? (BB, "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting")*

***Death by Hanging* (1968) by Nagisa Oshima; 16mm, b&w, sound, 114 minutes**

Nagisa Oshima's film career spans from 1959 to the present. Coinciding with Japan's reemergence after its World War II defeat and the Occupation as a major global economic power, Oshima's films represent a running commentary, direct and indirect, on the intellectual and political life in post-war Japan. His two early films *Cruel Story of Youth* (1960) and *Night and Fog in Japan* (1960) are considered as paradigmatic of the New Wave movement in Japan. From our perspective (although Oshima might contest it) his role and legend in the history of contemporary Japanese film are large.

When we think about Nagisa Oshima's films, we need to point out at least four mythic biographical elements that draw reference to situating his works of art within his self-conscious investigation of boundaries between self and history. One important element is his family background. He is said to be from an aristocratic background as well as a descendant of a Samurai family. These two terms together connote a tradition of education, privilege and self-esteem, which found its most likely equivalent in government services, the military, or a university professorship. In this view, Oshima becomes the rebellious son (his father being a government official) whose rebellion is nonetheless informed by his sense of power and will to action.

Another important event in Oshima's biography is his father's death when he was only six years old. The filmmaker himself defines his father's absence as the most significant factor in his childhood. But the reason for this fact's importance is not what a Eurocentric mind might expect. He considers his father's absence an advantage, giving him "true discipline and education." However, this statement should be considered within a context of his rebellion against conformity, for what he praises in his own formation is acceptance and even a desire to be out of the ordinary. The most radical works in his thirst for difference and digging into social and psychological taboos, are probably *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976) and *Empire of Passion* (1978).

For better insight into the intellectual motivations of his films, we should consider the historical circumstances in which he was growing up. From an autobiographical essay entitled "My Adolescence Began with Defeat," we find out that, born in 1932, the year before the invasion of Manchuria, his life and schooling was unfolding within the context of his nation's militarism and imperialist expansion. The realization *après-coup* of the Japanese propaganda machine having been a false foundation of childhood truth is what coming of age meant for much of his generation. His sensibility as an artist definitely reflects the schism of a nation, culturally caught between nostalgic longing and rejection of the past; longing for privileges and belief in the Japanese nation. Although more commercial in its

value, featuring two popular rock stars David Bowie and Ruichi Sakamoto, *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* (1982) can be also understood along these lines.

Another touchstone for interpretation of his films is Oshima's involvement in left-wing student movements and drama groups (since high school, up to his student years at the Law Faculty of Kyoto University). He was a vice president of the student association and a president of the Kyoto prefecture student alliance. One of the films most directly reflecting his political engagement in student demonstrations in the fifties is the already mentioned *Night and Fog in Japan* or *Yunbogi's Diary* (1965).

Oshima's work reflects his political engagement and disenchantment with Japanese false politics. It calls for the revelation of ideological mechanisms, and hence the use of what may be seen as Brechtian strategies. *Death by Hanging*, one of his most highly regarded works, is also considered his most "Brechtian."

Based on an actual criminal case, *Death by Hanging* tells the story of the execution of a Korean worker found guilty of rape and the authorities' bizarre reenactments of his crimes. A man, sentenced to death, identified only by the letter "R," is rendered amnesiac through a failed hanging and thus unconscious of his crime. The simple remedy for the Japanese officials would be to rehang the condemned man, but, according to at least some interpretations of the Japanese law presented in the film, a man who has no memory can not be legally punished, being neither cognizant of his crime nor able to understand his punishment. This creates a situation in which the officials must reawaken the conscious knowledge of identity, and thus the past and guilt. Both formally and politically trenchant, the film explores the oppression of Koreans in Japan, capital punishment as political control and sexual murder as an outcome of social repression.

According to Maureen Turim in her recent *Nagisa Oshima: Images of a Japanese Iconoclast*, Brecht should be seen as only one of many sources of Oshima's strategies of reshaping cinematic representation. One should also consider the influence of the Soviet *agit-prop* theater of Meyerhold, itself an influence on Brecht, which had a strong presence in modern Japanese theatre history. Also, some components of a Brechtian strategy are difficult to distinguish from a specifically Japanese theatricality (such as *kabuki*). One of the significant differences she sees in Oshima is that he does not embrace Brecht's dictum of depriving a scene of its sensationalism, but rather uses sex and violence sensationally, giving such depictions a critical edge.

*Program Notes written and compiled by Maja Manojlovic*

**DON'T FORGET: HAPPY BIRTHDAY BRECHT AT THEATRE ARTAUD NOV 3-8, 1998—  
SEE FLYER FOR DETAILS  
BRECHT AND CINEMA CONTINUES AT CINEMATHEQUE ON DECEMBER 3 AND 5, 1998**

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## ARTISTS AND FILMS: CROSSOVER PIX

*Sunday, November 8, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

***Works of Calder* (1950)** by Herbert Matter; 16mm, color, sound, 20 minutes

Swiss-born graphic designer and photographer Herbert Matter made *Works of Calder* in 1950. His designs ranged from a logo for the New Hampshire Railroad in 1955 to work for the *New Yorker* and *Fortune* magazines. For many years he was director of graphics and photography for the Knoll furniture group.

In *Works of Calder*, Matter joyfully links nature—water, reeds, leaves, grasses—and Calder's freely moving mobiles, all this seen through the eyes of an enchanted child. The film's music is by John Cage, whose prepared piano masterwork *Sonatas and Interludes* was completed just two years before the film. In this composition, as well as in the film's score, Cage explored new sound resources for the piano by placing among the strings a variety of soft and hard objects which dramatically altered the instrument's sound. The resulting sound, which has a strongly

Asian tinge to it, perhaps reflects the metallic clinking Calder's mobiles would make if they were somehow transformed into musical instruments. This film provides a timely glimpse of Calder's studio as it looked in the early fifties. If you have not seen the Calder show at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, see it soon; it closes December 1<sup>st</sup>.

*Berlin Still Life* (1926) by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy; 16mm, b&w, 8 minutes

Laszlo Moholy-Nagy was one of the great multi-disciplinarians and experimenters in twentieth-century art. His work and theoretical writing ranged from painting, sculpture, and photography to film and graphics, exhibition, theater, and industrial design. His teaching began at the German Bauhaus and extended to the Institute of Design in Chicago following his immigration to the U.S. in 1937. From the very beginning, Moholy showed compelling interest in light as an artistic medium; his first photograms (camera-less photography) date from 1920. By 1923 at the Bauhaus, he had begun experiments with light and color as well as with sculptural objects that integrated movement and reflected light—his *Light-Space Modulators*—and photography. Thus, it was only logical that his attentions should turn to film as the ideal medium for integrating all his radical work; that, as he said, things that move should replace static works of art.

While Moholy's more radical films include use of his *Light-Space Modulators*, a film like *Berlin Still Life* might seem, at first glance, to be more of a documentary. A closer look, however, reveals the eye and hand of a confirmed experimenter. The rakish angles, diagonals and vertiginous shots, all coupled with refined formalist sensibility, are immediately striking. It is as if one sees Moholy's own photographs—or those of his contemporary Alexander Rodchenko—stunningly set in motion. Here too, is a view of and commentary on the grittier aspects of Weimar-Republic Berlin—the same Berlin commented on by artists like George Grosz, Bertolt Brecht, and Kurt Weill. For anyone who knows contemporary, post-wall Berlin, it is particularly fascinating to recognize these familiar characteristics of that city so clearly in this marvelous look back of more than seventy years.

*Bells of Atlantis* (1952) by Ian Hugo; 16mm, sound, color, 9 minutes

*Bells of Atlantis* is a collaborative work. Anaïs Nin wrote the text and is both seen and heard in the film. Ian Hugo directed the production and collaborated with sculptor/filmmaker Len Lye on the haunting color and montage effects. Louis and Bebe Baron, who are credited with creating the first electronic music film score for *Forbidden Planet* in 1956, preceded that media milestone by four years with the electronic music in *Bells of Atlantis*. It is interesting to note the date of this film. Although Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry had made their first *musique concrète* in the late forties, John Cage did not create his first tape music, *Williams Mix*, until 1952, and Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Study I* for electronic sounds was made only in 1953. About this film, Abel Gance wrote, "Upon viewing Ian Hugo's *Bells of Atlantis*, I had just as powerful an impression as I had received reading 'Une Saison en Enfer' or 'Le Bateau Ivre' of Rimbaud. The fusion of image, text, and sound is so magical that it is impossible to disassociate them in order to explain the favorable reactions of the unconscious, which are at once disoriented and delighted. ... [I]t is very close to being a masterpiece."

*Blue Studio: Five Segments* (1976) by Merce Cunningham and Charles Atlas; video, color, silent, 15 minutes

Pioneering choreographer/dancer Merce Cunningham created his first dance specifically for television in 1961. Since then, he has created a number of such works, most notable among them, *Points in Space*, which had its first public screening in San Francisco in 1986. More recently, Cunningham has availed himself of computer-video technology as a tool in the creation of his work.

"In October 1975, Cunningham and filmmaker Charles Atlas were invited to make a work at the WNET/TV Lab in New York City; *Blue Studio: Five Segments* was the result. Cunningham has reported that the studio was an extremely small space. 'If I raised my arms I touched the lights, there was a cement floor, and we had two days in which to do it. Everything we had planned there didn't work. I originally wanted two dancers, but when I saw the studio and the conditions, I decided to do it myself.' While it might seem surprising to learn that *Blue Studio: Five Segments* is without sound, in fact, it makes sense: Cunningham's dances are conceived without any pre-existing musical score. They are rehearsed and perfected in silence, the dancers coordinating their actions simply by counting. It is only when the curtain rises at the first performance that dance and music are integrated.



"Cunningham and Atlas experimented with the Chroma-key process, which enables a figure to be seen against a changing background, an effect reminiscent of the dream sequence in Buster Keaton's *Sherlock Jr.* The final section of *Blue Studio: Five Segments* eventually included five Merce Cunningham's, all moving simultaneously. As Cunningham has described it, the section had to be shot five times, during which he tried to remember what he had been doing and where in the space he had been doing it so that he would not occupy the same space more than once." (David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*)

*Pause!* (1977) by Peter Kubelka; 16mm, color, sound, 12 minutes

It is clear that Peter Kubelka feels a close affinity for the work of his Austrian artist colleague Arnulf Rainer; two out of his six completed works use the artist as a launching point. Rainer is noted for his "paintovers" in which he paints out existing images, generally with black paint. Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer* (1958-60) closely reflects his reproductive approach through its intense, tightly structured scoring solely of black and white film frames. Rainer is also recognized as one of the fathers of body and performance art, and it is this aspect of his work that is featured in *Pause!*. Although this film provides an intimate view of Rainer in action, being by Kubelka, it is far from any sort of straightforward documentary. The power of the film lies not only in Rainer's actions but, even more profoundly, in Kubelka's characteristically tough editing and framing.

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## TROIKA

Jennifer Montgomery In Person

Thursday, November 12, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm

*Troika* (1998); 16mm, color, sound, 96 minutes

Tonight Jennifer Montgomery returns to Cinematheque with her latest feature film *Troika*, which had its premiere at last spring's New York Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. *Troika* detachedly tracks Jennifer, a journalist, as she contends with aggressive chauvinism on a job interviewing the Russian ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, while at home suffering constant put-downs and insults from her lover. The film is concerned with empowerment, humiliation, and the egoism in professional and personal relations. A pervading theme is the need for Jennifer to communicate with, to understand, and interpret both Zhirinovskiy and her lesbian lover (identified only as "Z"). The physical and sexual danger of being trapped on Zhirinovskiy's yacht on the Volga is deftly juxtaposed with the emotional cat-and-mouse play Z aggressively pursues with Jennifer. The result is an exploration of the ways the political and the personal tend to become inseparable when dealing with issues of power. *Troika* was made possible in large part by a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation. Jennifer Montgomery currently teaches at Hampshire College.

Jennifer Montgomery began making films in 1986 while studying at the San Francisco Art Institute. Drawing on her own past and memories, Montgomery has worked to create a film body which addresses the inherent conflict between objectivity and turning the camera's gaze onto the self. The results have always been both compelling and provocative. She first came into prominence with her 1989 Super-8 short *Home Avenue*, a highly personal account of a sexual trauma. In re-telling the experience of being raped, Montgomery appears as both subject and filmmaker, allowing her to externalize an experience for which there was "no physical evidence." Montgomery utilizes the limited range of the Super-8 medium to create an intimacy with the viewer. By juxtaposing personal accounts with flat shots of suburbia, the viewer is suggested to look beyond this tame veneer for the hidden terrors beneath.

Blurring the boundaries between factual account and subjective memory, Montgomery's *Age 12: Love with a Little L* suggests an autobiography viewed as though a dream. In *I, a Lamb*, the symbol of the lamb is placed under intense scrutiny. The lamb has been an icon for many political, religious, and psychological associations which are all investigated in Montgomery's film essay.



Her 16mm feature *Art for Teachers of Children* is a fascinating study of desire, seduction, and the politics of power which develop between artists and models. Based on the intimate relationship between Montgomery and her boarding school counselor, a professional photographer, she shows with a dispassionate but reflective eye the complexities of abuse and consent. Again, Montgomery is interested in examining her responsibilities without the trappings of being a victim in the affair.

**Jennifer Montgomery Filmography:**

*Home Avenue* (1989); *Age 12: Love With a Little L* (1990); *I, a Lamb* (1992); *Art For Teachers of Children* (1995); *Troika* (1998)

*Program Notes written and compiled by John K. Mrozik*

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## TWO NIGHTS WITH CHICK

1998 Phelan Award Winner Chick Strand In Person

*Sunday, November 15, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30pm*

*The secret that had been kept from us ... was that we are left with ourselves, and it's only ourselves who make the visions and fulfill them. It is the image of the elasticity, tenacity, and majesty of the human spirit that is the true romance for me. (Chick Strand, Notes on Romance, 1977)*

Our beloved Chick Strand, co-founder (with Bruce Baillie) of Canyon Cinema and Cinematheque in 1961, painter and maker of almost 20 films, is the recipient of the 1998 James D. Phelan Art Award in Filmmaking. This award, which is sponsored by San Francisco Foundation and administered by Film Arts Foundation, has been presented biennially since 1982 to a California-born artist. Chick, whose work journeys between a quest for seemingly unmediated sensuous images and a critical reflective stance which challenges and explores the representational process, is with us to present several films and receive her much merited award.

*Kristallnacht* (1979); 16mm, b&w, sound, 7 minutes

Dedicated to Anne Frank and the tenacity of the human spirit. (CS, *Canyon Cinema: Film/Video Catalogue #7*)

*Soft Fiction* (1979); 16mm, b&w, sound, 54 minutes

It's that tenacity, that kind of spirit that I'm really enamored of. ... To turn it around and not to have been victimized. I mean it doesn't erase the thing but if you come out whole, if you come out no longer the victim in your own mind, then that's great. ... I see Amy, the woman with the suitcase [in *Soft Fiction*], the woman on the train and the woman behind the waterfall at the end, as the traveler, the woman on a journey, the woman completing it all, the woman coming out the other end whole ... and more than whole, with the addition of coping with the experience and making it constructive (CS, speaking at Cinematheque, 1980)

"Chick Strand's *Soft Fiction* is a personal documentary that brilliantly portrays the survival power of female sensuality. ... The title *Soft Fiction* works on several levels. It evokes the soft line between truth and fiction that characterizes Strand's own approach to documentary, and suggests the idea of softcore fiction, which is appropriate to the film's erotic content and style. It's rare to find an erotic film with a female perspective dominating both the narrative discourse and the visual and audio rhythms with which the film is structured. ... The title also evokes softness as a female characteristic that can be interpreted both negatively and positively. In a pejorative sense, softness implies weakness and victimization .... On the other hand, softness also implies flexibility and thereby functions as a positive mode of survival and creative transformation. ... The monologues play with the positive and

negative meanings of softness as if they were light and shade. The women flirt with danger and victimization, yet take pride in their malleability and survival. ... Strand continues to celebrate in her brilliant, innovative personal documentaries her theme, the reaffirmation of the tough resilience of the human spirit." (Marsha Kinder, *Film Quarterly*, 1980)

"Strand's films ... insinuate a value system antipathetic to Western white, male rationality, and the chaos it has wrought on human history. ... *Soft Fiction* is an extremely personal film, as if by an ironic reversal of terms it existed as a fiction 'softened' into a documentary. As always in Strand's films the photography is exquisitely lyrical, as if beauty were itself the location of a value system alternative to that of the male-dominant society in which these women have been obliged to live. This beauty is reciprocated by a fictional frame around the stories .... [The film] can be seen as a map of the various alternatives or components with a single psyche. This appropriation of the documentary to the expressive or self-investigative is characteristic of Strand's work as a whole, and is in fact implicit in the values it projects. The tension between the 'objective' documentary and the 'subjective' personal account is but one element in a combinatoire of binary oppositions [in Strand's work as a whole] which also includes, on the one hand, material, scientific, rational, capitalist, North American, and male; and on the other, intuitive, sensual, pre-capitalist, Central American, and female." (David James, *Southern California Art Magazine*, 1981)

*Coming Up for Air* (1986); 16mm, color, sound, 26 minutes

A "new narrative" film based on the visions of magic realism in an Anglo context. This is a gothic mystery that explores a reckless pursuit of interchangeable personalities and experiences. Whether experience is first hand, read, remembered from a conversation during a chance encounter, heard of from all possible sources of information, whether fact or fiction the "experiences" become ours; reinterpreted, reconstructed and restructured, finally becoming our personal myths, and the source of our poetry and dreams. The sources for this film include night dreams, the *idea* of holocaust, the exoticness of the Mid-East, the sensuality of animals, the explorations of Scott in Antarctica, and a film I once saw, entitled *The Son of Amir Is Dead*. (CS, *Canyon Cinema: Film/Video Catalogue #7*)

### Chick Strand Filmography:

*Angel Blue Sweet Wings* (1966); *Anselmo* (1967); *Waterfall* (1967); *Mosori Monika* (1970); *Cosas de Mi Vida* (1976); *Elasticity* (1976); *Guacamole* (1976); *Mujer de Milfuegos* (1976); *Cartoon le Mousse* (1979); *Fever Dream* (1979); *Kristallnacht* (1979); *Loose Ends* (1979); *Soft Fiction* (1979); *Anselmo and the Women* (1986); *Artificial Paradise* (1986); *By the Lake* (1986); *Coming Up for Air* (1986); *Fake Fruit* (1986)

*Chick Strand: You know we really are still beginners ... that's the urgency. Realizing that we have twenty pieces, twenty films together, all together, big deal! We are still just beginning ... just learning.*  
*Gunvor Nelson: But think how many frames!*

For more on Chick Strand, see the latest issues of *Release Print*, *Wide Angle*, and *Discourse*.  
The latter two include lengthy interviews with her.

## GUNVOR NELSON: THE LONG FILMS

Sunday, November 22, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm

Gunvor Nelson's work as a filmmaker and as a teacher at the San Francisco Art Institute has influenced the Bay Area's film community for more than twenty years. Gunvor grew up in Kristinehamn, Sweden. After living in England and Holland, she returned to Sweden and attended Stockholm's Konstfakskolan. She moved to the U.S. in 1953 and obtained a BA 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 painting to filmmaking in 1965 with the release of *Schmeerguntz* (made with Dorothy Wiley). 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 using cinema as a vehicle for the expression of personal concerns. After living in the USA for 32 years, she returned to Sweden in 1992.

"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 repression of instinctual and natural female behavior and appearance. Although the woman today is trained to purchase all of her natural functions (embodied in cosmetics), the natural woman remains beneath all the artificial surface, and Gunvor Nelson's filmmaking helps us rediscover her and 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.'" (June M. Gill, "The Films of Gunvor Nelson," *Film Quarterly*, Spring 1977)

**Field Study #2** (1988); 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes

"Another collage film. Part of the on-going series of *Field Studies* (which includes *Frame Line*, *Light Years*, and *Light Years Expanding*) combining live action with animation.

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." (GN, *Canyon Cinema: Film/Video Catalogue #7*)

**Red Shift** (1984); 16mm, b&w, sound, 50 minutes

*Red Shift* is a film 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)

"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)

**Light Years** (1987); 16mm, color, sound, 28 minutes

"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, as 'ever' does." (Albert Kilchesty, *LA Filmforum*)

*Light Years* is a collage film and a journey through the Swedish landscape, traversing stellar distances in units of 5,878 trillion miles. It is a film acutely in the present reflecting our temporal existence ... continuous and imperfect. (GN)

"*Light Years* continues to develop the concerns and techniques begun in her earlier film *Frame Line* (1983). In *Light Years* Nelson blends collage animation with highly textured live-action material to create a haunting evocation of her displacement from native Swedish culture. Particularly striking is her use of wet ink 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* (1987). 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)

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**BIG AS LIFE:  
AN AMERICAN HISTORY OF 8MM FILMS  
PROGRAM 3**

*Tuesday, November 24, 1998—Pacific Film Archive—7:30 pm*

Beginning Tuesday, September 22nd, and continuing in alternating months through June 1999, the Pacific Film Archive and San Francisco Cinematheque will present highlights from the Museum of Modern Art's (New York City) 60-program retrospective of American-made 8mm films and videos co-curated by myself and MoMA Associate Curator Jytte Jensen, "Big As Life: An American History of 8mm Films." Continuing through the Spring of 2000, this retrospective spans personal (and emphatically private) filmmaking from the 1940s through the present, focusing primarily on films made by self-avowed artists but also including a rich sampling of "found" home movies and industrial films especially made for "small-gauge" home formats. (Steve Anker)

*In Mother's Way* (1981) by Jacalyn White; Super 8mm, color, sound, 32 minutes

*Martina's Playhouse* (1989) by Peggy Ahwesh; Super 8mm, color, sound, 20 minutes

*Mary Smith* (1980) by Gail Vachon; Super 8mm, color, sound, 16 minutes

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**BRECHT AND CINEMA!  
A CELEBRATION OF BERTOLT BRECHT'S  
100TH BIRTHDAY**

**PROGRAM 3: GLAUBER ROCHA'S  
DER LEONE HAVE SEPT CABEÇAS**

*Thursday, December 3, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30 pm*

*From Cinema Novo it should be learned that an aesthetic of violence, before being primitive, is revolutionary. It is the initial moment when the colonizer becomes aware of the colonized. Only when confronted with violence does the colonizer understand, through horror, the strength of the culture he exploits. As long as they do not take up arms, the colonized remain slaves.... (Glauber Rocha from "An Aesthetic of Hunger," 1965)*

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Rejecting the expensive and highly technical studio production model, and heavily influenced by the French New Wave and Italian neorealism rose the "Cinema Novo" in the early 1960s. The movement grew out of a concern by several Brazilian filmmakers (including Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Ruy Guerra, Carlos Diegues) with their nation's socioeconomic problems, its history, and its culture. Leading Brazil's influential movement was filmmaker, theoretician, and critic Glauber Rocha. Rocha realized how the Brazilian public was "enslaved by the language of foreign films—particularly North American movies," and that the effects of such cultural imperialism fostered an inferiority complex on the part of Brazilian cinema. The result was a failure to confront the social realities of a country whose unemployment and illiteracy had by then reached fifty percent.

Occurring over three movements, or phases, Cinema Novo recognized the need to deglamorize the filmic medium, to forego technical polish and strive to depict the hunger and misery of the Brazilian people. From 1960 through 1964, Cinema Novo filmmakers pointed their lenses at the problems confronting the poorest sectors of society: economic exploitation, hunger, and oppression. In *Deus E O Diabo Na Terra Do Sol (Black God, White Devil)* (1964) Rocha undertook a critical examination of the *cangaço* (banditry) and of messianic cults. In the second phase of Novo (1964–68), Rocha attacked the failures of Brazil's developmentalist policies and the democratic populism with the antirealist and self-reflexive *Terra Em Transe (Land in Anguish)* (1967). During Cinema Novo's final phase (1968–72), filmmakers sought to avoid censorship and political repression by using allegorical, literary, and historical approaches. Rocha demonstrated a touch of a Wellesian influence in his operatic epic *Antonio das Mortes*. Political repression ultimately ended Cinema Novo, with some of the filmmakers (including Rocha) going into exile.

*In the case of Tricontinental cinema, aesthetics have more to do with ideology than with technique, and the technical myths of the zoom, of direct cinema, of the hand-held camera and of the uses of color are nothing more than tools for expression. The operative word is ideology, and it knows no geographic boundaries. When I speak of Tricontinental cinema and include Godard in this grouping, it is because his work opens a guerrilla-like operation in the cinema; he attacks suddenly and unexpectedly, with pitiless films. His cinema becomes political because it proposes a strategy, a valuable set of tactics, usable in any part of the world. I insist on a "guerrilla cinema" as the only form of combat: the cinema one improvises outside the conventional production structure against formal conventions imposed on the general public and on the elite.* (Glauber Rocha, "The Tricontinental Filmmaker: That Is Called the Dawn," 1967)

In 1968, the Brazilian military regime, under its Fifth Institutional Act, suspended civil rights, prompting Glauber Rocha into exile in Europe. It was in the Congo in 1970 that Rocha created *Der Leone Have Sept Cabeças (The Lion Has Seven Heads)*. With *Der Leone*, Rocha's European influences (Godard, Eisenstein, and Brecht) become apparent as he contributes to his Third World project, while retaining his own personal perspective in his vision.

*Der Leone Have Sept Cabeças* is a highly rhetorical hymn to the Tricontinental revolution. It utilizes a blend of broad political caricature with a vision derived from the Revelation of St. John in depicting the cruelties of white colonialism over the ages. Non-narrative and symbolic, Rocha's Brechtian fable animates emblematic figures representing Africa's diverse colonizing nations, suggesting imperial homologies among them. *Der Leone Have Sept Cabeças*, whose very title subverts the linguistic positioning of the spectator by mingling five of the languages of Africa's colonizers.

Rocha returned to Brazil in 1976 (while it was moving towards more democratic liberties) to direct his ambitious effort *La Idade Da Terra/The Age of the Earth* (1980), an allegorical history of colonialism and liberation conveyed in a chaotic blend of styles, histories, myths, and ideologies. Unfavorable reception prompted Rocha back into exile, where he remained until his death in 1981 at the age of 43.

*Der Leone Have Sept Cabeças* (1970); 16mm, color, sound, 97 minutes

*The Lion* is my fifth full-length film. In my opinion, it is a Brazilian picture, because Gianni Barcelonni and Claude Antoine speak Portuguese and love Brazil, and this is why they produced the film: They knew that even in Europe I could only have done a Brazilian picture. In addition, this film was written by me and by Gianni Amico, who is more Brazilian than Pele.

As everyone knows, Africa is the mother of Brazil. For a long time I have wanted to make this journey back to the origins. Therefore, my first European film is also an African film to the extent that I think I have made the most Brazilian of my movies ....

*The Lion* is also a political picture. Today, every film tries to be political. But the political cinema means nothing if it is produced by moralism, anarchy, or opportunism. Only a wretch like me could say that art has a meaning for the wretched ....

Like my other films, *The Lion* is a popular film produced by a popular culture. It is anti-imperialist. It is revolutionary. It cries and screams openly because intimacy is not the language of revolutions. Pure reason is a privilege of oppression, but it is through the dialectics of violence one can reach lyricism.

With my palm trees, my birds, my policemen torturers, my black slaves, my murdered peasants, my rivers, my forests, my carnival—the ever-spilt blood, the tears, reason, reason—myself *The Lion* is a film made for the Third World. (GR, New Yorker Films)

**Glauber Rocha Filmography:**

*Barravento (The Turning Wind)* (1962); *Deus E O Diabolo Na Terra Do Sol (Black God, White Devil)* (1964); *Terra Em Transe (Land in Anguish)* (1967); *Antonio das Mortes* (1969); *O Dragao Da Maldade Contra O Santo Guerreiro* (1969); *Der Leone Have Sept Cabeças (The Lion Has Seven Heads)* (1970); *Cabeças Cortadas* (1971); *La Idade Da Terra (The Age of the Earth)* (1980)

*Program Notes written and compiled by John K. Mrozik*

BRECHT AND CINEMA CONCLUDES AT CINEMATHEQUE ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1998  
WITH THEO ANGELOPOULOS' *THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS*

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**BRECHT AND CINEMA!  
A CELEBRATION OF BERTOLT BRECHT'S  
100TH BIRTHDAY**

**PROGRAM 4: THEO ANGELOPOULOS'  
*THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS***



F E B R U A R Y 1 6 ~~2~~ M A R C H 4 , 1 9 9 0

THEO  
ANGELIPOULOS



T H E M U S E U M O F M O D E R N A R T

# The Travelling Players: A Modern Greek Masterpiece

Susan Tarr and Hans Proppe

In THIASOS even though we refer to the past, we are talking about the present. The approach is not mythical but dialectical. This comes through in the structure of the film where often "two historical times" are dialectically juxtaposed in the same shot creating associations leading directly to historical conclusions....Those links do not level events but bypass the notions of past/present and instead provide a linear developmental interpretation which exists only in the present.

Theodoros Angelopoulos

THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS (O THIASOS) is the fourth and latest work of Greek filmmaker Theodoros Angelopoulos. The film won the International Critics award at Cannes after the current Greek regime refused to sponsor it on the grounds that it was "too leftist." Subsequently the film was voted Best Picture of the Year by the British Film Institute, won Special Jury Prize at Taormino, l'Age d'or at Brussels and was Grand Prize Winner at Thessaloniki. The film and the events surrounding it were a cause celebre last year throughout Greece, and it has become the second top-grossing feature in Athens. In European film journals the film has been hailed as an innovative breakthrough in political filmmaking and has been compared to prior achievements of POTEMKIN, OPEN CITY and the films of Godard. Hopefully its recent screening at Los Angeles FILMEX, San Francisco Pacific Archive and New York's New Directors Series will give TRAVELLING PLAYERS the American visibility and acclaim it deserves.

THE TRAVELLING PLAYERS represents a major breakthrough in both conception and execution. The players represent characters of the past and present and portray historical forces. There are no "actors" or "stars" but rather representations of individuals and ideas which reflect and create history. The film uses no close-ups, no intercutting and no simplification in four hours. Angelopoulos assiduously avoids the trap of caricature nor does he attempt to distill characters into "essential" Nazi, British Imperialists or Communists. Throughout the film

we are engaged with the forces and facets of history rather than with characters, players or individuals.

Angelopoulos has intentionally reclaimed the historical issue of the Civil War in Greece from the distortions of right wing propaganda and mystification, breaking a thirty-year silence on the subject, a struggle referred to until now by the succeeding dictatorships only as the "war of bandits." Combining three key aspects or levels, a play (the popular folk tale of "Golfo and the Shepherdess"), the ancient myth of the family of Agamemnon and recent Greek political history, Angelopoulos has accomplished the task he set himself in TRAVELLING PLAYERS: a "voyage in time and space" documenting the "terrible years" in Greece from 1939-1952.

"Golfo and the Shepherdess" has been popular entertainment in Greece for decades. Angelopoulos deliberately chose it because, in his words, it is a tale that is as common as "daily bread" to the Greek people. Based on a folk tale about a shepherd who abandons his sweetheart for the daughter of a wealthy landlord, the travelling players perform it as a play. In the course of the film the performance of the play is several times interrupted by Greek history. The travelling players bear the names of the characters in the ancient Greek myth-Agamemnon, Orestes, Clytemnestra, Electra, Pylades, Aegisthos and Chrysothame. The complex family relationships and the events surrounding them unfold as they do in the original myth. The myth of the family of Agamemnon is reproduced in TRAVELLING PLAYERS with a very significant difference. The myth is reproduced as a function of the intervention of history and the historical events of the period 1939-1952 rather than as the workings of fate. Aeschylus, in the original *Orestia* utilizes the dynamic contradiction between *philes* (love) and *aphiles* (hate). In TRAVELLING PLAYERS, Angelopoulos transposes the central contradiction to that between revolutionary and reactionary political tendencies in Greek political history.



*The Travelling Players* (1974-75)



**A** brief summary of the major historical events of this period and a description of the players will be useful for audiences unfamiliar with them.<sup>1</sup>

1. Greece had been under the Metaxas dictatorship for four years when Mussolini attacked in 1940. Metaxas was dependent on England economically and was therefore unable to align himself with the Axis. The Italian advance was stopped in 1940 but the German occupation began on April 27, 1941.

2. Under the leadership of the Communist Party the resistance was organized into the National Liberation Front (EAM) which formed the People's Liberation Army (ELAS). The exiled royalist government and the British supported right-wing groups. As Liberation approached in 1944, all factions agreed to form a Government of National Unity. Later EAM agreed not to occupy Athens or initiate a civil war, which allowed the British to land — "to save the country from anarchy."

3. As the Germans withdrew in October, 1944, General Scobie, the British officer in charge of the occupation, demanded the disarmament of ELAS despite earlier agreements. EAM resigned from the government. A mass demonstration on December 3 resulted in bloodshed when police fired into the crowd. This began the Battle of Athens which eventually culminated in the Varkiza Agreement on February 12, 1945. EAM was promised parliamentary representation and amnesty for ELAS provided they disbanded within 15 days. The amnesty did not include violations of the "Common Penal Code" which gave the right wing the legal excuse to persecute tens of thousands of resistance fighters.

4. Realizing the bluff, some ELAS groups refused to obey and instead returned to the mountains. British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin insisted that elections be held immediately, despite the chaotic situation. The government was forced to resign, all democratic parties withdrew from the elections and the royalists won an easy victory in March 1946. By October the guerrillas had formed the Democratic Army and Civil War raged more bloodily than before. In February 1947 the British informed the United States that they wished to withdraw. On March 12, 1947, Truman announced U.S. intentions to "aid Greece," marking the beginning of an imperialist intervention in the internal affairs of Greece that continues to this day.

5. Military operations ceased by 1949, the right wing fortified by continuing U.S. presence and aid. The 1952 elections brought Field Marshal Papagos to power heading the extreme right wing of the Greek Mobilization Party. By winning 49.2% of the popular vote he was given 82.3% of the Seats in Parliament as a result of an election law imposed by the intervention of the American Embassy.

This is historical background in which the travelling troupe pursues their work and their lives. Agamemnon returns to Greece from the bitter 1922 defeat of the Greeks by the Turks in Asia Minor, goes to war against the Italians in 1940, joins the resistance against the Germans, and is executed by them after being betrayed by Clytemnestra and Aegisthos. Aegisthos, Clytemnestra's lover, is an informer and collaborator working with the German occupiers. Orestes, son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, fights on the side of the Communists, avenges his father's death by killing his mother and Aegisthos. He is arrested in 1949 for his guerrilla activities and is executed in prison in 1951. Electra, his sister, helps the Communists and aids her brother in avenging the treachery of their mother and Aegisthos. After the death of Orestes she continues the work of the troupe and her relationship with Pylades. Chrysothame, Electra's younger sister, collaborates with the Germans, prostitutes herself during the occupation, sides with the British during liberation, and later marries an American. Pylades, close friend of Orestes, is a Communist who is exiled by the Metaxas regime, joins the guerrillas and is arrested and exiled again. Finally he is forced to sign a written denunciation of communism after torture by the right wing and he is released from prison in 1953.

**A**ngelopoulos describes himself as having a "passion for history." He characterizes TRAVELLING PLAYERS as the enactment of a "series of occupations" of Greece continuing to this day. Most of the film, which was almost finished at the time that the military dictatorship fell in July 1974, was shot during the period of extreme right wing dictatorship. For this reason Angelopoulos deliberately obscured most of the political implications of the film. In order to protect actors and crew, Angelopoulos alone had a complete script. He used the alibi that he was producing a modern version of Aeschylus' ancient trilogy when questioned by the government, local military and civil officials. The style of TRAVELLING PLAYERS is nevertheless more an intentional departure from traditional cinematic convention for the purpose of establishing a new relationship with the film audience than an attempt to obscure explicit political analyses and statements. Several key scenes, however, those most explicitly political, were added only after the fall of the military junta and revolutionary and forbidden songs were dubbed in later as well.

In the above quote, Angelopoulos refers to his approach as "dialectical." The dialectic of historical continuity is maintained by the utilization of three primary structural devices:

1. Time shifts within one sequence (i.e., the players enter a town during the 1952 election campaign and arrive at the central square in 1939). In one brilliant scene, a group of fascist collaborators leave a New Year's Eve celebration dance in 1946. As the camera tracks them for some 300 yards down the street they gradually undergo a transformation from a group of singing, drunk, staggering and seemingly "harmless" right wingers to a full-fledged fascist group marching in lock-step to martial music. As the uncut seven-minute shot ends the camera continues to track this group as it merges with the crowd at a victorious Papagos rally in 1952.

2. The interruption of the players' performance by history. Several times in the course of the film, performances of "Golfo and the Shepherdness" are interrupted by historical events. During a performance taking place at the time of the Metaxas dictatorship, Pylades is arrested. A gunshot from the guerrillas interrupts the troupe's "command performance" before the British occupiers. Orestes' revenge against his mother and Aegisthos takes place during a performance. The performance of "Golfo and the Shepherdness" is a "normal" event and yet "unreal" in the sense that such performances often disguise what is transpiring historically. Angelopoulos, through the mechanism of interrupting the per-



The Travelling Players (1974-75)



The Travelling Players (1974-75)

formance with history, subsumes the unreal performance to the real historical events.

3. The use of soliloquies spoken to the camera with the simultaneous use of time shifts within one sequence. Agamemnon, on the eve of the 1940 war against the Italians, describes the events of 1922 in Asia Minor (the defeat of the Greek by the Turks) while addressing the camera directly (present). Electra, after being brutally raped in 1945, describes events of December 1944 regarding the betrayal of the "Government of National Unity." Pylades describes his experiences in exile and prison when he returns in 1950, again addressing the camera (present).

**A**s the camera moves within scenes or remains stationary from the perspective of the "audience" (both the play's audience and the film audience) the spectator draws connections between events and thereby becomes a participant rather than only a passive consumer of ideas or sensations. Angelopoulos uses time and structure to create distance and "space" in which a critical consciousness in the viewer can develop. He does not emotionally manipulate the audience or prescribe conclusions. He intentionally alters traditional structure to encourage reflection, perception and synthesis by the audience. This dialectical task of creating critical distance for the audience while engaging them as participants on the cognitive level has been tackled before by Brecht and Piscator in theatre and Vertov and Godard (most notably) in film but struggled with this task with more or less success. This pursuit is more difficult in film as the real being filmed by the camera mitigates against distanciation constantly intruding into the distance that the filmmaker is attempting to create. In Godard's films, a certain self-consciousness in regard to this task results in a high level of audience consciousness of the techniques utilized. Content becomes subservient to technique. Angelopoulos's technique is neither self-conscious nor gratuitous, allowing critical audience consciousness about the issues, not the film to develop. In most Hollywood films, camera and editing techniques serve to manipulate the audience to a place within the action, to a personal vantage point and emotional identification with the individual character and his activity. Angelopoulos brilliantly transcends this fictional "here and now" and replaces it with a historical continuity to which both action and acting are subordinated, utilizing the transposition of time and events within one continuous uncut scene presented visually as across a proscenium, the relationship between past, present and future is dialectically maintained. Through the use of long takes in which time shifts both backwards and forwards occur, the relationship between past and present and the implied future potential of history is presented in a dialectic manner to the film audience. The structure prods the audience to synthesize what it is witnessing and filmic time is manipulated to provide for this participation.

TRAVELLING PLAYERS is a brilliant film on many levels, artistically, structurally, contentually. While American audiences may miss some of the finer points due to their lack of familiarity with Greek history and mythology, the film constitutes a recognizable breakthrough in political filmmaking.

<sup>1</sup>This summary is based on a four-page tabloid special edition of *Thaurion* by the Youth Organization of the Greek Communist Party (Interior), I. Feraois. This paper was widely distributed and available to film audiences. TRAVELLING PLAYERS opened in Athens.

INTIMATE LIGHT: *TRISTE* & *VARIATIONS*  
NEW FILMS BY NATHANIEL DORSKY

Nathaniel Dorsky In Person

Sunday, December 6, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm

*Silence in cinema is undoubtedly an acquired taste, but the freedom it unveils has many rich rewards. The major part of my work is both silent and paced to be projected at 18 fps. To project my silent speed films (Pneuma through Variations) at 24 fps, or sound speed, is to strip them of their ability to open the heart and speak properly to their audience. Not only is the specific use of time violated, but the flickering threshold of cinema's illusion, a major player in these works, is obscured.*

*It is the direct connection of light and audience that interests me. The screen continually shifts its dimensionality from being an image-window, to a floating energy field, to simply light on a wall. (In a film like Pneuma the aura surrounding the screen is as significant as the square itself.) Silence allows these articulations, which are both poetic and sculptural at the same time, to be revealed and appreciated. (Nathaniel Dorsky)*

When commenting on Nathaniel Dorsky's recent projection of his three films *Variations*, *Pneuma*, and *Triste* at Scratch Projection in Paris, Scott Hammen reminisced on the filmmaker's introductory words to the audience, expressing hope that "these silent films would give everyone a chance to be alone with yourself and the light on the screen." This invitation into a different kind of perceptive attitude as an exercise of mind and spirit reveals the creator's quest for a unique kind of film language—a film language that cannot simply be reduced to the linguistic patterns of thought, with the "messages" pertaining to the verbal connections we make while and after seeing it. Dorsky's film language, rather, operates in the realm of the purely visual or sensual-intuitive level, where there is "a flow between the viewer and the screen," creating an effect of massage, rather than message. In his interview with Thomas Powers for the October 1996 *Release Print*, Nathaniel Dorsky mentioned that his (then) latest film, *Triste*, was his "most mature work and has inspired him to create a second part to the film, *Variations*." The filmmaker recently called them "sister films, alike in many ways but intolerant of each other, so they need to be kept apart on the program" (quoted by Scott Hammen in Paris). As in Dorsky's Paris show, they will be separated by *Pneuma* "a middle brother, harder to deal with but clearly sharing the same family traits: intricate, seductive movement punctuated by spectacular changes of color."

*Triste* (1974–96); 16mm, color, silent, 18.5 minutes (@ 18fps)

*Triste* is an indication of the level of cinema language that I have been working towards. By delicately shifting the weight and solidity of the images, and bringing together subject matter not ordinarily associated, a deeper sense of impermanence and mystery can open. The images are as much pure-energy objects as representation of verbal understanding and the screen itself is transformed into a "speaking" character. The "sadness" referred to in the title is more the struggle of the film itself to become a film as such, rather than some pervasive mood. (ND)

*Pneuma* (1976–83); 16mm, color, silent, 29 minutes (@ 18fps)

In Stoic philosophy "pneuma" is the "soul" or fiery wind permeating the body, and at death survives the body but as impersonal energy. Similarly the "world pneuma" permeates the details of the world. The images in this film came from an extensive collection of out-dated raw stock that has been processed without being exposed, and sometimes re-photographed in closer format. Each pattern of grain takes on its own emotional life, an evocation of different aspects of our own being. A world is revealed that is alive with the organic deterioration of film itself, the essence of cinema in its before-image, pre-conceptual purity. With the twilight of reversal reality this collection has become a fond farewell to those short-lived but hardy emulsions. (ND)

*Variations* (1992–98); 16mm, silent, color, 24 minutes (@ 18fps)

*Variations* blossomed forth while shooting additional material for *Triste*. What tender chaos, what current of luminous rhymes might cinema reveal unbridled from the daytime world? During the Bronze Age a variety of sanctuaries were built for curative purposes. One of the principal activities was transformative sleep. This montage speaks to that tradition. (ND)



**Nathaniel Dorsky Filmography:**

*This filmography is limited to personal films made since 1963 and publicly exhibited or distributed. It excludes earlier works and commercial productions.*

*Ingreen* (1964); *A Fall Trip Home* (1965); *Summerwind* (1965); *Hours for Jerome* (1966–82); *Pneuma* (1976–83); *Ariel* (1983); *17 Reasons Why* (1985–87); *Alaya* (1976–87); *Triste* (1974–96); *Variations* (1992–98)

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## RECENT ABSTRACTIONS: NEW FILMS BY BRAKHAGE

*Thursday, December 10, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm*

With over 260 films completed throughout five decades, Colorado filmmaker Stan Brakhage is one of the most prolific artists of the American avant-garde. Tonight San Francisco Cinematheque presents a selection of luminous new works—all just released and West Coast premieres—stunning abstract films created primarily through direct physical involvement with the actual filmstrip material.

***Beautiful Funerals*** (1996); 16mm, color, silent, 2.25 minutes

*Beautiful Funerals* is a hand-painted double step-printed film composed of (1) dense blackness variously punctuated by brilliantly colored jewel/flower-like shapes AND (2) interruptive white sections which are fuzzily dotted with blurred whites and criss-crossed by black “brushstrokes” and hard-edge straight black & white lines.

Finally there is a brilliant pinkish flare veined with curled blue lines which engenders a resolution between these (above described) alternating modes—colors in the straight-line sections, lines among the artifice of “flowers,” a kind of dark lattice-form which knits the two modes, gray and colored “clouds” which correlate them. (SB)

***The Fur of Home*** (1996); 16mm, color, silent, 2.25 minutes

A hand-painted double-frame printed film which begins with textures reminiscent of a gray shag rug that is fretted by green and golden flashes-of-shape deepening into darker solid purples and even black solidities at brief intervals: this evolves into black hair-like lines which curl and trace circularities midst all earlier textures, forms and colors until, finally, tanned flesh and blood tones predominate. Suddenly a sweep of thin black verticals generate a recapitulation of the beginning which, then, ends on a glob of black. (SB)

***Blue Value*** (1996); 16mm, color, silent, 2.5 minutes

This is a hand-painted elaborately step-printed film of a crystalline world of flashing color wherein (in time) the value of everything depends upon threads of tonal form. (SB)

***Polite Madness*** (1996); 16mm, color, silent, 2.5 minutes

A hand-painted elaborately step-printed film which begins in blues and greens with golden geographic-beseeming continents which evolve into symmetricals and dark passages (including a whirling tunnel) whitening to create many bas-relief (photographic solarization) fragments of these previous forms that then flicker vibrantly in a field of ever whitening light. (SB)

***Commingled Containers*** (1997); 16mm, color, silent, 5 minutes

This “return to photography” (after several years of only painting film) was made on the eve of cancer surgery—a kind of “last testament,” if you will ... an envisionment of the fleeting complexity of worldly phenomenon. (SB)

"..." *Part 3* (1998); 16mm, color, silent, 15 minutes

"it appeared to me as memory ... that crystal ice palace which you've scratched onto leader so succinctly and powerfully, some polar recess earned through labours of illness, if you can call lying in bed work, a thousand shades of icy white distilling, crystallizing understandings, a hard pitiless world where there is only impeccability and knowledge, no longer couched or framed in the proprieties of the everyday which i worried, as i entered, and entered again seeing your film, that only the dead may visit here, shorn of the echo of personality or even flesh, a valley of dry bones and mine amongst them, where the origins of idea and understanding might find a place with their own kind." (Mike Hoolboom, 1998)

—short intermission—

...*Preludes 19–24* (1996); 16mm, color, silent, 9 minutes

*Prelude 19* begins with hand-painted swatches of variable colors encompassed eventually by vertical strokes of reds and blues, followed by sudden clearings which are counterpointed by sections of multiple blobs of color, these effects alternating again and again to then become contrasted with pale washes of color deepening to end on blacks.

*Prelude 20* begins with pale washes of hand-painted tones overlaid eventually by sharp forms, a kind of sliced color becoming more and more smeared.

The first two *Preludes* of this series were double-printed, so that *Prelude 21* is most characterized by the double-time of single-frame printing of extremely thick swatches of multiple colors as if in a furiously boiling cauldron.

*Prelude 22* is a singly-printed hand-painted thick black and gold swatches of color which evolve into forms that are horizontally and vertically sliced, smeared, cut-off until color "runs" sensuously in snake-like shapes, coils, soforth.

*Prelude 23* is doubly-printed hand-painted frames causing an effect almost as if wisps of tone were tinting the film intercut with sharp then lines which "fatten," then, into thick crowded layers of paint, senses of great visual depth. This *Prelude* is almost a catalogue of the effects in all previous *Preludes*.

*Prelude 24* returns to the tempo of single-frame printing. Its shapes and forms are composed of nearly black torques of ink, flickering with white and only faintly, now and again, tinged with color. (SB)

*Cat of the Worm's Green Realm* (1997); 16mm, color, silent, 18 minutes

Flares of color break into streams of light, leaves, wood grain, and prism-etched vegetation.

A moon lifts out of this dark weave to be replaced by autumn leaves against a grainy sky, a fiery sky.

The moon, again, caught in clouds. The movements, moonlit, of a cat. Vegetation and toned flares (a kind of "ghost light" midst microscopic photography of leaves and twigs).

A gray cat licks itself, its name-tag reflected in lens refractions midst microscopic visions of ice and snow, autumn leaves, green leaves, a distant snow-laden green scene.

A black cat sits quickly down on a green lawn. A night of shards of forms in darkness passes into a day again ... again an octagonal light shape "echoing" the cat's name-tag midst, now, colored leaves in extreme close-up and at some distance mixed with sun. Again a "night" of showering dark, a "dawn" of pinks and yellows of plant growth in close-up.

A kind of gentle yellow "high noon" prevails into which the orange worm appears and reappears, twisting, arching, turning. A phosphorescent orange of leaves explodes midst greens and black holes appropriate to the image of the worm.

Flares of suns, imprismed midst yellows and greens and vibrant sky blues ... always the forms of many varieties of leafage mix with a veritable rain or clash of overall tones, a fire of forms, a glowing color photo-negative of worm, and the final canopies of autumn tone and sky tone permeated by sun, sun streaks, and octagonal prism shapes ad infinitum. (SB)



# TEENS MAKE MOVIES: TWO NIGHTS OF TEEN-PRODUCED WORK

## PROGRAM 1: REEL GIRLS/REAL GIRLS

Curated and Presented by Kathleen Sweeney

*Friday, December 11, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm*

“Reel Girls/Real Girls” is an evening of audacious short films and videos by outspoken, happening teenage girls from across the USA. Beyond technophobia, these girls take us into the alternative landscapes of American adolescence. Photo-booth buddies, jammin’ girlbands, wild pixelations, and rearview mirrors on unexpected heroines from New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco will fill Cinematheque’s screen this evening.

Tonight’s screening begins with several short experimental films produced by teenage girls from San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago. *Anthem*, a short film about girl skateboarders will begin the program followed by April Word and Leticia Rossi’s foot fetish extravaganza, *Shoes*, a grainy 16mm film produced at the San Francisco School of the Arts and then three shorts produced at the California State Summer School.

### Part I: Visual Experiments

Films and videos by teenage girls from San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago. 23 minutes.

*Anthem* by Lori Damiano; 16mm, b&w, sound, 2 minutes  
Made at UC San Diego.

*Strongman* by Lori Damiano; 16mm, b&w, sound, 1 minute  
Made at California State Summer School for the Arts.

*Shoes* by April Word and Leticia Rossi; 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes  
Made at San Francisco School of the Arts.

*Paybax* by Ginny Haberer; Super 8mm on VHS, b&w, sound, 5 minutes  
Made at San Francisco School of the Arts.

*Drum* by Cecy Urbina; Super 8mm on VHS, color, sound, 8 minutes  
Made at California State Summer School for the Arts.

*Rape of a Mother* by Griselda Nuñez; video, b&w, sound, 2 minutes  
Made at Street Level Youth Media, Chicago.

*Low Mentality* by Kirsha Brown; video, b&w, sound, 2 minutes  
Made at Street Level Youth Media, Chicago.

### Part II: Mirror Mirror

Two videos produced by the Mirror Project of Somerville Massachusetts. The brainchild of Director Roberto Arevalo, “The Mirror Project” is an alternative media project that provides skills to inner-city teenagers in video scripting, production, and editing. Twelve girls per year participate in the program, creating video “mirrors” of their everyday experiences. 34 minutes.

*Freestyle* by Zakia Doltin-Carter and Katrina Jordan; video, color, sound, 14 minutes  
Winner of Best of Public Access Award of the 1997 New England Film and Video Festival.

*Here I Am* by Louise Bernard; video, color, sound, 20 minutes  
Winner of a Bronze Apple, 1996 National Educational Media Network.

Part III: House of Girls

A half-hour ITVS-funded documentary completed in collaboration with five fifteen-year-olds. Paired with a professional female media mentor, each of the five multicultural girls created a segment to include in the documentary. The result is a rare window into the daring opinions and wild dreams of girls that defies the cultural dictates of boy-craziness and fashion obsessions, leaving the viewer with a rich new vision of girl culture.

*House of Girls* by Karen Cooper; video, color, sound, 30 minutes  
With Angela Garbes, Maya Hayes, Lisa Huening, Zoë Tobier, and Marisa Vural.

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TEENS MAKE MOVIES:  
TWO NIGHTS OF TEEN-PRODUCED WORK

PROGRAM 2: TEEN RIOT 4—THE LEGEND CONTINUES

Curated and Presented by Valerie Soe and Danny Plotnick

*Saturday, December 12, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm*

Tonight's screening is the fourth annual screening of teen-produced films and videos from the California State Summer School for the Arts. In four weeks students produce some of the wildest, wooliest, and most invigorating movies this side of 18 years old. See blue M & Ms, pho-fu, pizza noir, and space babes from Planet 69 in this eye-popping, mile-a-minute show from the smart girls and b-boys of CSSSA 1998.

*The Pitch* (1998) by Brandon Lopez; video, color, sound, 7 minutes

*The Dangers of Co-Ed Laundry Rooms* (1998) by Jonathan Chen\*; Super 8mm, b&w, sound, 5 minutes

*What's On the Barbie?* (1998) by Karen Velas\*; Super 8mm, color, sound, 2 minutes

*Where Do All the Stars Go?* (1998) by Rebecca Jannol\*; Super 8mm, color, sound, 3 minutes

*A Party* (1998) by Kim Po\*; video, color, sound, 12 minutes

*On Religious Indecisiveness* (1998) by Kat Grant\*; Super 8mm on VHS, color, sound, 7 minutes

*Untitled* (1998) by Amy Hale\*; Super 8mm, color, sound, 4 minutes

*The Vile Society* (1998) by Jonathan Parker; video, color, sound, 8 minutes

*Space Babes from Planet 69* (1998) by Erica Manrique; video, color, sound, 5 minutes

*Kid Skcratch Fever* (1998) by Samantha Culp\*; 16mm, color, sound, 1 minute

*Untitled* (1998) by Debbie Heimowitz\*; video, color, sound, 8 minutes

*You Can't Talk to a Psycho* (1998) by Erin Johnson; Super 8mm, color, sound, 4 minutes

*When Bees Attack: The Susan Dolgen Story* (1998) group project; Super 8mm, color, sound, 4 minutes

*Flutter* (1998) by Jessica Godlin; 16mm on video, color, sound, 1 minute

*Untitled* (1998) by Imani Caradonna\*; Super 8mm, color, sound, 3 minutes

*Memories* (1998) by Logan Weinsieder; video, color, sound, 3 minutes

*Drawing Happiness* (1998) by Helen Davidson\*; Super 8mm, color, sound, 5 minutes

*Smoke* (1998) by Aaron Bachman\*; video, color, sound, 12 minutes

*Adam* (1998) by Patrick Tsai\*; video, color, sound, 3 minutes

*(laughter)* (1998) by Jessica Moss; video, color, sound, 7 minutes

(\* Designates Filmmakers In Person!)

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## CHICK FLICKS WITH B. RUBY RICH

### B. Ruby Rich In Person

*Sunday, December 13, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

*For Rich, whose career inside and outside of the academy has put her at the center of a number of post-New Left artistic and social movements—feminist cinema and the feminist movement, Latin American Cinema and liberation movements, and New Queer Cinema and the gay and lesbian movement—cultural criticism can't just comment on political change; it must be an integral part of it. "I needed to demonstrate that it was possible to think creatively and rigorously outside of the university," she writes about her state of mind in 1978. "Why settle for communicating in the classroom when everyone needed to be re-educated?" (Josh Kun, SF Bay Guardian, "Speaking and Writing," December 9, 1998)*

*Autobiography has an intrinsic connection to history, just as an anecdote does to analysis. All of our lives count: it's all history, if only we remember. (B. Ruby Rich, Chick Flicks: Theories and Memories of the Feminist Film Movement)*

Living at this time—when the pulse of life seems to have been sped up beyond the cognitive capacities of those humans still defining themselves as beings with body and mind compounded together into one package, when new communication technologies pretend to be erasing the boundaries of time and space, when mass-communication is flattening our perception of the filmic experience into a sterile, domesticated one-man show, and when academic theorizing is encouraging an incredible expansion of insular, artistically removed dialogue (faithfully obeying the paradigm of patriarchal Law of the Word, as if it was produced by a non-material entity named Brain), in the midst of all this postmodern lethargy of the "subject" sucked of its potency for action resulting in real change—here comes B. Ruby Rich's *Chick Flicks: Theories and Memories of the Feminist Film Movement*. *Chick Flicks* brings with it a punching energy from the sixties, reminding us of the power cinema can have as a transformative experience, as well as the revolutionary drive of feminism before it was trapped within the frame of academicism.

What a pleasure to throw oneself into a book of embodied knowledge, using the word "sex" as a source of pleasure, energy and body-juices exchange, and not as some dried-out psychoanalytical category. What an inspiration to experience the writing of a person thinking for herself historically, without relegating her memories to idealized epistemological concepts. What an educating demonstration of an alternative approach to thinking cinema—both theory and history as interactive bodies, actually having something to openly offer each other, not just existing at the service of power games. And last, but not least, what an opportunity to re-think one's own position and experience as a film spectator.

To begin with, we can follow the path paved by B. Ruby Rich's thoughts on her film-going passion:

*Film spectatorship for me was a state of life before it was ever a theoretical category. It's that continuum between film as object and film as experience that I seek to keep alive. (Chick Flicks, "Prologue," p.11)*

B. Ruby Rich will introduce and show:

**Fuses** (1964–67) by Carolee Schneemann; 16mm, color, silent, 22 minutes

That night, the sex cops were out in force and were outraged by what was, after all, a "hippie" movie, celebrating sex as Dionysian elixir, a luxurious connection back to nature and the pantheism of sensuality. I still remember the attack on poor Carolee for giving head to her by-then ex-boyfriend up there on the screen. The practice was ruled subservient and anti-feminist. A woman, any woman, performing a blowjob, bigger than life, on film yet, was not acceptable .... The fact that Carolee was simultaneously "actor" and director was lost on the crowd not notable for its grasp of issues of representation—a crowd still, to this day, not noted for any ability to distinguish between filmic acts of representation and the enactment of practices off screen. Never mind that the film has been shot with an old hand-wound Bolex, which meant that she'd had to jump up *every thirty seconds* to wind the damn thing, in between stage managing of sex and enacting it! (*Chick Flicks*, "Prologue. Hippie Chick in the Art World")

Pornography is an anti-emotional medium, in content and intent, and its lack of emotion renders it ineffective for women. Its absence of sensuality is so contrary to the female eroticism that pornography becomes, in fact, anti-sexual. Schneemann's film, by contrast, is devastatingly erotic, transcending the surfaces of sex to communicate its true spirit, its meaning as an activity for herself and, quite accurately, for women in general. (*Chick Flicks*, "Carolee Schneemann's *Fuses*")

**Misconception** (1977) by Marjorie Keller; Super 8mm on 16mm film, color, sound, 43 minutes

I still believe that *Misconception* is a significant film, one that's been under-recognized precisely because of Margie's reluctance, typical within the avant-garde at that time, to situate herself within any feminist lineage. Rereading the piece today, I still agree with its points. But I can't help but read it, retrospectively, as a poignant effort at reconciling on the page the contradictions that were experienced without any such reconciliation in our lives. (*Chick Flicks*, "Prologue. Love's Labor Lost")

Thankfully, Keller sidesteps the sentimentality that has repeatedly plagued the birth process on film—there is no earth mother giving birth like an over ripe fruit popping out of an Agnes Varda movie. Likewise absent is the over clinical approach, which has often worked to the disadvantage or debasement of the subject on the film, much as women can feel debased by male doctors' emphases on antisepticizing the female body. Instead, Keller's film places priority on the individual women's subjective experience, even to that white-hot, ice-cold physical trauma that goes by the name of pain. (*Chick Flicks*, "*Misconception*: Laboring Under No Illusions")

*Program Notes written and compiled by Maja Manojlovic*

*Please join us for a reception and book-signing with B. Ruby Rich following the program.*

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**IN MEMORIUM: KURT KREN  
FILMS INSPIRED AND LOVED BY KURT KREN**

*Thursday, December 17, 1998—Yerba Buena Center for the Arts—7:30pm*

We sadly note the recent deaths of two great filmmakers, Kurt Kren and Joyce Wieland, whose films and presences enlivened many evenings at Cinematheque over the years. Austrian Kurt Kren, who will be honored tonight, appeared in person with us in 1978 (twice), 1980, 1984, 1994, and finally, in March of 1998. Deceptively unassuming, Kren was easily one of Europe's most influential and revered avant-garde filmmakers, whose body of work includes 50 short films

beginning in 1957 and continuing through 1998. Kurt's films create a unique blend of formal rigor and playful spontaneity. Tonight's program extends a tribute to Kren organized by Ralph McKay and Mark McElhatten for the Anthology Film Archives, and includes many surprise films by Kurt's friends and colleagues from North America and Europe as well as thirty minutes of his lesser known gems. "In the disputed histories which build the house of film, he was momentarily, but unforgivably denied. Now he haunts the house with rude and playful shadows." (Mark McElhatten)

Tonight's program was co-curated by Steve Anker (Kren's films), Mark McElhatten, and Ralph McKay.

**2/60: 48 Kopfe aus dem Szondi Test (48 Heads from the Zondi Test)** (1960); 16mm, b&w, silent, 5 minutes

"[I]n this concentrationary universe, no one's his own self, everyone's everyone and nothing. Ruthlessly executed, the formal idea becomes a gruesome philosophical jest." (Raymond Durnat, *International Times*, 1966)

**3/60: Baume im Herbst (Trees in Autumn)** (1960); 16mm, b&w, sound, 5 minutes

"The first embodiment of [a] concept of structural activity in cinema comes in Kren's *Baume im Herbst*, where the camera as subjective observer is constrained within a systematic or structural procedure, incidentally the precursors of the most structuralist aspect of Michael Snow's later work. In this film, perception of material relationships in the world is seen to be no more than a product of the structural activity in the work. Art forms experience." (Malcolm Le Grice, *Abstract Film and Beyond*, 1977)

**4/61: Mauern-Positiv-Negativ (Walls-Positive-Negative)** (1961); 16mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes

"In a flickering symbol shattering image shattering, total collage technique, he energizes the cinema frame with a unique thing-ness that energizes the viewer." (Al Hansen, *Ecce Homo*, 1967)

**9/64: O Tannenbaum (Materialaktion: Otto Muehl) (O Christmas Tree: An Otto Muehl Happening)** (1964); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes

"In *9/64: O Christmas Tree*, Kren offers a more visually descriptive development of a Muehl 'action.' The images have been chosen to follow a more dramatic sequence, probably because the action itself contained a wide range of images and materials ...." (Stephen Dwoskin, *Film Is*)

**10/65: Selbstverstummelung (Self-Mutilation)** (1965); 16mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes

"Kren's *10/65: Self-Mutilation* is developed from a Gunter Brus 'action.' What the film emphasizes is the surrealist drama of symbolic self-destruction that Kren drew out of Brus' action, pacing out each gesture so that one gets a tense, iconoclastic revelation of a man covered in white plaster lying surrounded by razor blades and a range of instruments looking as if they have been taken from an operating theater. The blades, scissors, and scalpels are gradually inserted into him in a ritualistic self-operation." (Stephen Dwoskin, *Film Is*)

**15/67: TV** (1967); 16mm, b&w, silent, 4 minutes

"... Kren's next important systematic film is *TV* (1967). In *TV*, the system is different in kind and pace from that which exists in much of his other work. Instead of operating primarily at the kinetic level, or with rapid perceptual rhythm, this film involves the audience in a conceptual and reflexive process. Five short sequences, each about eight frames long, are all shot from the same viewpoint in a quay-side café. They show a window, broken by the silhouettes of objects and people within the café and by the passage of people and a ship outside. Each shot containing some small movement is repeated in the film 21 times, in mathematically determined order. They are separated by short, equal sequencing of black spacing except that longer black sequences separate larger phrases of repeats from each other rather like punctuation. The significance does not lie in the mathematical sequences as such, but in how the viewer attempts to decipher the structure." (Malcolm Le Grice, *Abstract Film and Beyond*)

**26/71: Zeichenfilm—Balzac und das Auge Gottes** (1971); 16mm, b&w, silent, 1 minute

"In crude, hand-drawn animation, *Zeichenfilm* evokes the scatological, sadomasochistic actions and performances of Otto Muehl and Gunter Brus which Kren filmed during his second period. In *Zeichenfilm*, a male figure hangs himself, achieves a monstrous erection and ejaculates into a woman's mouth. She, in turn, hangs herself, he enters her vaginally, then anally. Finally, she defecates on the left side of the frame wherein appears an eye of God, while on the right, in a cartoon box, the words "Aber Otto" ("But Otto") materialize, a comic reference to Otto Muehl." (Regina Cornwell, *The Other Side: European Avant-Garde Cinema 1960–1980*)

**36/78: Rischart** (1978); 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes

31/75: *Asyl (Asylum)* (1975); 16mm, color, silent, 9 minutes

"Between 1975 and the present, Kren has continued working in a formalist vein, all the while incorporating elements of his older systems and themes." (Regina Cornwell, *The Other Side: European Avant-Garde Cinema 1960-1980*)

37/78: *Tree Again* (1978); 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes

— 10 - minute intermission —

*Piétá* (1998) by Bruce Baillie; video, color, sound, 83 seconds

*Untitled camera roll* (year unknown) by Larry Gottheim; 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes

*Homage to Kurt Kren* (1997) by Eva Bruner-Szabo; video, color, sound, 2 minutes

*Opening Sequence from a Film* (1988) by Hans Scheugl; video, color, sound, 3 minutes  
Featuring Kurt Kren as a museum guard at the Houston Museum of Fine Art.

"*Falter*" *Commercial Spot* (1990) by Kurt Kren; video

*Documentation of the Making of "Falter" Comm. Spot* (1990) by Hubert Sielecki; video, 9 minutes

*Project Y* (1983) by Marian Wallace; 16mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes  
Featuring a short cameo appearance by Kurt Kren.

*Excerpts and Out Takes from the Unfinished Film: "Search for Sleep, Fear of Truth"* by Mel Chin; video, b&w, silent

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## BIG AS LIFE: AN AMERICAN HISTORY OF 8MM FILMS

### PROGRAM 4: DAILY LANDSCAPES

*Sunday, December 20, 1998—San Francisco Art Institute—7:30 pm*

Beginning Tuesday, September 22nd, and continuing in alternating months through June 1999, the Pacific Film Archive and San Francisco Cinematheque will present highlights from the Museum of Modern Art's (New York City) 60-program retrospective of American-made 8mm films and videos co-curated by myself and MoMA Associate Curator Jytte Jensen, "Big As Life: An American History of 8mm Films." Continuing through the Spring of 2000, this retrospective spans personal (and emphatically private) filmmaking from the 1940s through the present, focusing primarily on films made by self-avowed artists but also including a rich sampling of "found" home movies and industrial films especially made for "small-gauge" home formats. (Steve Anker)

*Land and Sea* (1975) by Lee Krugman; 8mm, color, silent, 11 minutes

*Aristotle* (1973) by Storm De Hirsch; Super 8mm, color, silent, 4 minutes

*Windows* (1984-85) by Anne Robertson; Super 8mm, color, silent, 37 minutes

*Farm Diary, Reel 2* (1970) by Gordon Ball; 8mm, color, silent, 30 minutes



## EARLY EVENING EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM: APPENDIX A

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### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1998

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*Prelude: Dog Star Man* (1961) by Stan Brakhage  
*Window Water Baby Moving* (1959) by Stan Brakhage  
*Eaux d'Artifice* (1953) by Kenneth Anger

### SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 1998

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*Common Loss* (1979) by Doug Haynes  
*A Colour Box* (1935) by Len Lye  
*Trade Tattoo* (1937) by Len Lye  
*Recreation* (1956) by Robert Breer  
*A Man and His Dog Out for Air* (1957) by Robert Breer  
*Gulls & Buoys* (1972) by Robert Breer  
*Fist Fight* (1964) by Robert Breer  
*Necromancy* (1990) by Steven Dye  
*The Subtle Flight of Birds* (1991) by Steven Dye  
*Lun* (1990) by Steven Dye

### SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 1998

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*Vampyr* (1931–32) by Carl Th. Dreyer

### SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 1998

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*Ariel* (1983) by Nathaniel Dorsky  
*17 Reasons Why* (1985–87) by Nathaniel Dorsky  
*Devil's Canyon* (1972–77) by Michael Mideke

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## FILMMAKERS IN PERSON: APPENDIX B

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<b>Adlestein, Gary</b>	3.19.98	<b>Kren, Kurt</b>	3.1.98
<b>Bachman, Aaron</b>	12.12.98	<b>Laitala, Kerry</b>	5.3.98
<b>Benning, James</b>	10.11.98	<b>Lin, Lana</b>	3.12.98
<b>Caradonna, Imani</b>	12.12.98	<b>Montgomery, Jennifer</b>	11.12.98
<b>Chen, Jonathan</b>	12.12.98	<b>Orr, Jerry</b>	3.19.98
<b>Culp, Samantha</b>	12.12.98	<b>Po, Kim</b>	12.12.98
<b>Davidson, Helen</b>	12.12.98	<b>Ravett, Abraham</b>	10.29.98
<b>de Ocampo, Pablo</b>	5.3.98	<b>Rosenthal, Ken Paul</b>	4.19.98
<b>Dorsky, Nathaniel</b>	12.6.98	<b>Sachs, Lynn</b>	3.12.98
<b>Fagin, Steve</b>	3.8.98	<b>Saks, Eric</b>	4.2.98
<b>Frank, Robert</b>	5.1.98	<b>silt</b>	10.23.98
<b>Grant, Kat</b>	12.12.98	<b>Stanley, Anie S8</b>	4.9.98
<b>Hale, Amy</b>	12.12.98	<b>Strand, Chick</b>	11.15.98
<b>Heimowitz, Debbie</b>	12.12.98	<b>Subrin, Elisabeth</b>	2.26.98
<b>Hernandez, Al</b>	4.19.98	<b>Sugár, János</b>	4.5.98
<i>international front of supercapitalist youths©, the</i> (Council of the French section of)	1.20.98	<b>tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE</b>	10.18.98
<b>Jannol, Rebecca</b>	12.12.98	<b>Tsai, Patrick</b>	12.12.98
		<b>Velas, Karen</b>	12.12.98

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6/64: Mama und Papa (Materialaktion: Otto Muehl) (Mom and Dad) Kren	9
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8/64: Ana (Aktion: Günter Brus) Kren	9
9/64: O Tannenbaum (Materialaktion: Otto Muehl) (O Christmas Tree: An Otto Muehl Happening) Kren	9, 89
10/65: Selbstverstümmelung (Action: Günter Brus) (Selfmutilation) Kren	9, 89
10b/65: Silber (Action: Günter Brus) (Silver) Kren	9
11/65: Bild Helga Philipp (Helga Philipp Painting) Kren	10
12/66: Cosinus Alpha (Materialaktion: Otto Muehl) Kren	9
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34/76: Tschibo Kren	10
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