

From West and East: Canyon Cinema Meets the Coop

Special program for the Film-Makers' Cooperative

Co-curated by Dominic Angerame and Kornelia Boczkowska

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Co-curated by Dominic Angerame and Kornelia Boczkowska, the program presents the legacy of some of the most widely celebrated (and also largely overlooked) filmmakers who lived and worked in the San Francisco Bay Area, including the critically acclaimed *Decodings*, the long forgotten *Dufus* and the work of former Directors of Canyon Cinema, Dominic Angerame and Michael Wallin (1948-2016). Selected by Angerame (Angerame, Henderson, Peterson) and Boczkowska (Hindle, Jordan, Strand Wallin), the films featured in this program have been preserved and cataloged by both Canyon Cinema, a bastion of artist-made and experimental film distribution in the Bay Area, and the Film-Makers' Cooperative, New York's legendary and world largest distributor of avant-garde films, celebrating and reviving the historical and cultural links between these two institutions.

Tracing the history of the Bay Area experimental film culture from surreal psychodramas of the 1940s (Peterson) and Beatnik-era film poems (Jordan) to personal (Angerame, Hindle, Strand), "talkin blues" (Henderson) and found footage films (Wallin), the program demonstrates not only the pioneering free spirit of the local film community, but also a unique diversity of their filmmaking practices. Inspired by both European and New York experimental film scene, some of these films feature the misadventures of a detached eyeball, the first project of Peterson's Workshop 20 (*The Cage*), Henderson's blues-driven musings on Black and African-American identity (*Dufus*) and Wallin's intimate search for queer identity at the height of AIDS hysteria (*Decodings*). Others take a more serious tone, featuring Jordan's lyrical portrait of Beatniks' prominent poet Michael McClure (*Vision of a City*), Hindle's mystical journey through the Death Valley (*Saint Flournoy Lobos-Logos*), Strand's haunting meditation on light on water (*Kristallnacht*) and Angerame's experiments with live action and NASA footage (*Aeon, Luminae*). Be it narrative and abstract or realistic and absurdist, the films selected for this program represent the key trends in the Bay Area vibrant film scene with a special focus on the San Francisco Renaissance, the cinema of the Beat generation, lyrical abstraction, queer films and city symphonies, paying homage to the region's exceptionally rich and distinctive history of moving image experimentation. – Kornelia Boczkowska

***The Cage* (1947) by Sidney Peterson**

16mm, black and white, silent, 28 min

The adventures of a detached eyeball. Resources limited, content almost unlimited. Most celebrated shot: artist with head in birdcage. – Dominic Angerame

"[Peterson is] one of the originators of the American avant-garde cinema. The five films he made in San Francisco between 1947 and 1950 have become classics; they have influenced the cinematic education of many of the best filmmakers of subsequent generations." – P. Adams Sitney

"One of the greats, a pioneer of the American experimental film With his sharp, proto-Funk assemblages of wild sight-gags and free associations, he celebrated those aspects of the Rene Clair and Buñuel/Dali films that were indebted to the work of Chaplin, Keaton, and Laurel and Hardy." – Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, program notes

***Visions of a City* (1957, edited in 1978) by Lawrence Jordan**

16mm, black and white, sound, 6.25 min

A lyrical portrait of San Francisco of the 1950s and Beatniks' prominent poet Michael McClure, both emerging from and mediated through reflections of windows, car bumpers, mirrors, bottles and other reflective, shiny surfaces and objects made of glass and metal. Jordan's early experiment in the city symphony genre different from many of his animated collage films, *Visions of a City* explores the

(in)direct ways of seeing, the artistic atmosphere of the beat era and the San Francisco Renaissance, and a complex, multilayered and fleeting nature of human perception and cityscape. – Kornelia Boczkowska

Dufus (1970) by Mike Henderson

16mm, black and white, sound, 8 min

Blues musician, painter, and filmmaker, the truly original artist Mike Henderson's creative path found its luminous trajectory upon his relocation from Missouri to San Francisco in the mid-1960s, where he had come to study at the San Francisco Art Institute, one of the only desegregated schools available to him at the time. Quickly befriending remarkable artists and musicians such as Bruce Nauman, Robert Nelson, Jay DeFeo, William T. Wiley, and even Jerry Garcia, Henderson established himself as a multi-disciplinary artist and educator with a one-of-a-kind vision drawing on his complex notions of identity, society, and the elusive mystery of art itself. Henderson movies are the first films in the world to bring the authentic 'talkin blues' tradition into film. Self-taught as a filmmaker, Henderson's films approach the unique qualities of the medium in an unexpected way. In *Dufus* a motley cast of characters offer their thoughts on what's most important in life. Preserved by the Academy Film Archives in 2011. – Dominic Angerame

Saint Flournoy Lobos-Logos and the Eastern Europe Fetus Taxing Japan Brides in West Coast Places Sucking Alabama Air (1970) by Will Hindle

16mm, color, sound, 12 min

Will Hindle's mystical journey through the Death Valley filmed shortly prior to the Manson Family's infamous murder spree. Known for his masterful use of editing, Hindle, one of the most prominent figures of the San Francisco experimental scene of the 1960s, creates a highly sensuous, psychedelic and uncanny portrait of a lone male wanderer almost exemplary of the Bay Area's Aquarian Age aesthetics through its focus on meditation, spirituality, consciousness, the altered state of mind and the then rising New Age movement. – Kornelia Boczkowska

Krystallnacht (1979) by Chick Strand

16mm, black and white, sound, 8 min

A deeply lyrical and sensuous film whose black-and-white intricacy borders on abstraction while rocking in a watery cradle of love and death. Dedicated to the memory of Anne Frank and the tenacity of the human spirit. – Chick Strand

Decodings (1988) by Michael Wallin

16mm, black and white, sound, 16 min

Michael Wallin's most well-known, critically acclaimed and highly personal film drawing on found footage from the 1940s and 1950s. Widely celebrated as a queer classic, *Decodings* deconstructs the process of meaning making in industrial, instructional and ephemeral film, both lyrically and ironically reflecting on loss, desire, collective memory and one's intimate search for queer identity at the height of AIDS hysteria. – Kornelia Boczkowska

Luminae (2022) by Dominic Angerame

digital, black and white, sound, 11.38 min

For years I had been shooting with an iris attached to my lens creating a circle. The sun seemed to be a natural progression of the circle, especially its revolutions. The film is an accession into the heavens. Leaving the grittiness of the streets of construction and destruction behind this film was magically created from the soul of my spirit. The music was also magic that it glides the imagery into its many manifestations. This film is definitely the result of the magic of cinema capturing a spirit of space that would make George Melies cry in wonder. – Dominic Angerame

Aeon (2024) by Dominic Angerame

Digital, black and white, sound, 11.5 min

In *Aeon*, Dominic Angerame draws parallels between the earthly and the heavenly, linking the San Francisco cityscape and city dwellers to outer space. Filmed during the Covid-19 lockdown, *Aeon* celebrates Angerame's reunion with friends and responds to the new ways of interacting with the world on different levels. Using a meta-narrative and self-referential approach to storytelling, Angerame brings the (holy) spirit to life, filling the spaces he captures with energy, which is otherwise unattainable and invisible to the naked eye, but significantly transforms our lives. *Aeon* is one of Angerame's major and most mature works to date, which demonstrates the potential of experimental filmmaking in superimposing images that are seemingly disparate, yet uncannily familiar. – Kornelia Boczkowska

BIOS

Dominic Angerame, MFA, San Francisco Art Institute, BFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Former Executive Director, Canyon Cinema (1980-2012). Part time Professor Cinema Studies and 16mm Film Production at numerous colleges and universities in San Francisco and the University of Nevada/Reno. Compiled a filmography of more than 45 experimental films. Programmer of Avant Garde films from the United States at the Latinoamericano Cine Del Nuevo Internanciano Cine in Havana, Cuba from 2006-2019. Professor at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión in Cuba.

Kornelia Boczkowska, PhD (AMU, Poznań), is a scholar, curator and educator with a special interest in American avant-garde cinema. She has received several research grants and is the author of two books and over forty other publications on independent, experimental and documentary film. Her most recent papers have appeared in *Feminist Media Studies*, *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, *Mobilities*, *Studies in Documentary Film* and other peer-reviewed journals. In 2022, she received the scholarship from the Polish Minister of Education and Science for outstanding young researchers.