

FILMWORKS

May 25, 26, 27, 1982

The Kitchen, 484 Broome Street



This fourth annual FILMWORKS is a retrospective of recent independent films. It emphasizes the avant-garde while including several more conventional documentaries. Most of the films received their first New York showings within the past year (although some were made in the early seventies). There are also six premieres. Originally conceived and organized by Leandro Katz, this year's Filmworks is curated by filmmaker and critic Amy Taubin.

May 25 8:30pm

All the films on this program are concerned with formal means of defining movement in film space. With the exception of Match Light, they accomplish this through a combination of editing and camera movement. Each film balances these two basic film strategies in a different fashion. Match Light uses neither, limiting itself to multiple superimpositions of a single moving light source.

POWER BOOTHE Match Light (1974) 3 min., silent, b w
ERNIE GEHR Shift (1974) 12 min., silent, color
CHARLES ATLAS/MERCE CUNNINGHAM Channels/Inserts (1981)
32 min., sound, color
WARREN SONBERT Noblesse Oblige (1981) 25 min., silent, color

Power Boothe is a painter who lives and works in NYC. During the early seventies, he made a number of short films. In Match Light, an elegant balance of simultaneity and linearity, he layers light through superimposition paralleling the process of his layered paintings of the same period.

"Connoisseurs of avant-garde film accord a special place to the work of Ernie Gehr. At once austere and dynamic, Gehr's best films are a kind of meta-cinema, intensely focused meditations on the phenomenon of motion picture recording." J. Hoberman, VILLAGE VOICE
Gehr has been making films since 1967. Only recently has he begun to release his films of the early seventies. Shift was filmed from the window of a 6th floor loft facing Houston Street. Gehr achieves a delicate balance between the pull of the film as a material thing in itself and the pull of the image as representational. Three-dimensional cars are at the same time blobs of colored light zipping across the movie screen which is simultaneously Houston-Street-under-glass.

Channels/Inserts is the most recent film/dance collaboration between Merce Cunningham and Charles Atlas. It was created first as a film dance and then transformed into a dance for the stage.

"Channels/Inserts is primarily about space. Although it is a film, it refers to the experience of television and the ability of the TV viewer to switch from one channel to the next...The capacity of film to focus and frame space as well as to represent it through editing and camera movement is part of the subject. The collaboration is a paradox since Atlas' role as filmmaker nudges Cunningham toward a new role as choreographer." Sally Banes, VILLAGE VOICE

Warren Sonbert's films distill his hand-held diary footage into rhythmic montage. Sonbert is a moving camera and match cutting virtuoso. In Noblesse Oblige he tips his artist's cap to his journalist counterparts, questioning the relationship of diary form to documentary.

10:30pm

PETER KRIEG September Wheat (1981) 95 min., sound, color, 16mm

"Profit from the world food shortage" croons the corporate ad voice-over toward the end of September Wheat. Allowing the hunger profiteers -- business chiefs, futures speculators and elected government representatives -- to damn themselves with their own tongues, German director Peter Krieg builds an impassioned but crystal-clear indictment of corporate capitalism as it is practiced in the U.S. grain industry. September Wheat turns the jargon of businessmen and politicians upside down allowing us to see the contradictions that make the food industry a hunger industry, where famine and war are the conditions that produce the greatest profits.

"...the most cogent, forceful anti-capitalist documentary I've seen since Bottle Babies" J. Hoberman, VILLAGE VOICE
Peter Krieg is a West German filmmaker who has worked with New York Newsreel and is best known for his film Bottle Babies, an expose of the Nestle corporation.

May 26 8:30pm

The films on this program are collages of found footage, animations or a bit of both. Collage and animation are two different forms having in common that they do not rely on the filmmaker's own live-action shooting.

JOHN PERRY III The Nightmare (1980) 5 min., sound, color
ESTHER SHATAVSKY Bedtime Story (1981) 5 min., sound, color
DAN EISENBERG Displaced Person (1981) 13 min., sound, b & w
STAN BRAKHAGE Murder Psalm (1980) 19 min., silent, color
ROBERT BREER Swiss Army Knife With Rats and Pigeons (1981)
6 min., color, sound
GEORGE GRIFFIN Flying Fur (1981) 7 min., sound, color
BRUCE CONNER Valse Triste (1978) 4 min., color, sound
America is Waiting (1981) 3 min., color, sound

The Nightmare opens with a shot of a gas-masked figure prowling the rushhour subway. The film then erupts into four minutes of collage animation. The understatedly horrifying tone is created by a juxtaposition of witty editing with deadly serious subject matter -- the history of genocide in the U.S. from 16th century to nuclear age.

John Perry has made several other films. The Nightmare will be shown on PBS in the fall.

"A lady has trouble sleeping. A man keeps peering at her from above and a white blob threatens to wipe her out. It is difficult to say which provokes more anxiety. She gets collaged into the wallpaper behind the bed to ease the pain."
Esther Shatavsky

Shatavsky works in the collage form in both film and still images.

Eisenberg combines softly glowing reproduced footage of occupied France during World War II -- women in kerchiefs, Hitler at the Eiffel Tower -- with a sound collage of Claude Levi-Strauss radio lectures (in English). The desire to make meaning takes a slider into the unthinkable and unspeakable. Dan Eisenberg lives in Boston. He works in live action as well as collage film form.

Murder Psalm depicts neither murderer nor murdered, but the effect of murder. Images race across the screen and across the cuts, welding pursuer and pursued into a murderous syndrome. Made from found footage -- cartoons, educational, medical, and Brakhage's own Pittsburgh autopsy film, it is haunted by the ghost of Joseph Cornell as if the terrors that Cornell so elegantly and carefully glued down with his collages had now erupted in a most terrifying return of the repressed. Stan Brakhage lives and works in Colorado. He has been making films for over 25 years and is one of the most important and prolific filmmakers of the avant-garde.

"...typical (for Breer) bravura and delightful display of simple objective forms flashing, rotating and dissolving into abstraction." J. Hoberman, VILLAGE VOICE

Robert Breer is a filmmaker, sculptor and painter. He has been working in the animation form for twenty-five years. His films were given a recent retrospective at the Whitney Museum. They are growing more leisurely with the years. Short or long, Breer is easily the world's greatest animator.

"...real tour-de-force. Using a pastiche of 40's cartoon music -- complete with noises that connote falling, danger, chases, etc. -- Griffin constructs his own manic, free-associative scenerio enacted by a cast including clones of Mickey Mouse and Wile E. Coyote." J. Hoberman, VILLAGE VOICE

George Griffin is an animator living and working in New York.

West Coast filmmaker and sculptor Bruce Conner has been making found footage collage films for over 20 years. Many of them are scored to single pieces of music and should give makers of promo music tapes something to think about. America is Waiting uses the Byrne/Eno song of that title.

10:30pm

DIANA WILSON Eclipse Predictions (1981) 4 min., color, sound

WILLIAM FARLEY Sea Space 7 min., sound, color

GAIL VACHON Esmeralda and the Turkey Vulture (1980) 9 min., sound, b & w

LAURA MULVEY and PETER WOLLEN AMY! (1980) 33 min., sound, color

MANUEL DELANDA Raw Nerves (1980) 25 min., color, sound

TOM LESSER Gratuitous Facts (1980) 14 min., color, sound

Diana Wilson: "A translation into film of a tentative 19th century archeological investigation of a large mid-western midden."

The sense of dread seems that of a child depicted through radical dislocation of the tenses of sound and image.

Diane Wilson is a filmmaker living in Los Angeles.

Sea Space is the attempt to illustrate a story which otherwise might have been buried at sea.

William Farley is a San Francisco filmmaker of wild whimsy. He has made a number of short films and currently is finishing a feature.

Vachon: "The cave drawings were filmed in Mesa Verde, Colorado. The children on the trampoline were filmed somewhere between Colorado and S.F. A few frames are from the Exploratorium in S.F. All this was shot in 8mm and blown up and otherwise altered in printing to 16mm. The words at the end are adapted from the book Marie Laveau by Francine Prose (Marie L. was a voodoo Queen in New Orleans.)"
Gail Vachon is a filmmaker and musician who lives and works in NYC.

AMY! is about Amy Johnson, the English aviatrix who in 1930 made a solo flight from England to Australia. It is also about the idea of the heroine.

"We were concerned with why Johnson became headline news and, more importantly, how; that she was immediately infantilized, as in the song we use, "Amy, Wonderful Amy..."

Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen are filmmakers living and working in London. They are currently completing a new feature. They both have made important contributions to film theory in the past decade and are among the most active figures of the British avant-garde.

Raw Nerves is one of the more unbearable films ever. In its re-cut version, it is shorter but no less intense. Manuel DeLanda is Mexican. He lives in NYC and works in both film and video.

"The discovery of a modern urban artifact leads to a series of heated (dis)connections between physical exploration and thinking." Paul Arthur, MILLENNIUM FILM JOURNAL
Tom Lesser is a filmmaker currently working and living in L.A.

Midnight

D.W.GRIFFITH Broken Blossoms (1919) 92 min., tinted, silent
with live piano accompaniment by EVAN LURIE

Evan Lurie is a piano-player and co-leader, with his brother John, of the Lounge Lizards. Lurie is interested in scoring for films. This performance is a meeting between an archetypical 19th century melodrama and an avant-garde musician.

May 27 8:30pm

CHRISTINE NOLL BRINCKMANN The Primal Scene (1981) 6 min.,
sound, color
SU FRIEDRICH Gently Down The Stream (1981) 14 min., silent, b & w
LESLIE THORNTON X-TRACTS (1975) 9 min., sound, b & w
All Right You Guys (1976) 15 min., sound, b & w
CHRISTINE CHOY To Love, Honor and Obey (1981) 55 min., sound, color
Produced by Third World Newsreel and directed by
Christine Choy

Christine Brinckmann: "Taking into account that most primal scene experience is imaginary rather than real, the film plays on the role of the imagination, and the function of the suggestive, in all cinematic experience. And taking into account that even in cases of genuine childhood voyeurism the child tends to suppress or displace her or his visual recollections, it abstains from being explicit. Instead, it relies on a musical example of primal scene displacement, in order to remind the viewer of the many forms of disguise his or her grappling with the primal scene might have taken.

"Apart from being a film on voyeurism as cinematic experience, The Primal Scene is also a brief compendium of Frankfurt bedroom styles."

Brinckmann is a German filmmaker and teacher of American Studies in Germany.

"The text of Gently Down The Stream is a succession of fourteen dreams taken from eight years of my journals. They were shuffled out of their original chronological order for the purposes of coherence and because often we know/dream something long after, or before, we can use it in our lives. The text is scratched onto the film (with approx. 16 frames per word) so that you hear any voice but that of a recorded narrator's. The images were chosen for their indirect but potent correspondence to the dream content." S.F.

Su Friedrich is a filmmaker living and working in NYC.

Leslie Thornton gives us two portrait films: the first of the self, the second of several "others." The first by a filmmaker who is preoccupied by painting; the second by a filmmaker who is trying to understand and move past the "documentary." These are early films which Thornton only recently has begun to screen publicly.

Thornton is a filmmaker living and working in NYC.

"To Love, Honor and Obey was filmed in various key locations: battered women shelters, hospital emergency rooms, private homes in urban and suburban neighborhoods, counseling centers, and in a county jail where a woman has been incarcerated for the murder of her abusive husband. Interviews with victims of violence, shelter administrators, counselors, police officers, and men who are now in counseling reflect extensive research on a number of crucial questions:

Is there a "typical" battered woman?

What kind of self-image do battered women develop?

How are our illusions of marriage, masculine/feminine roles, and child-rearing formed and perpetrated? What are the social pressures that provoke men to violence?

What is the attitude of the criminal justice system toward domestic violence? " Third World Newsreel

Christine Choy is a filmmaker working in NYC and a member of Third World Newsreel. She recently received a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship.

10:30pm

Super-8 Show

DAVID BOONE Invasion of the Aluminum People (1980) 40 min., sound, b & w
BETTE GORDON Anybody's Woman (1981) 25 min., sound, color
TIM BURNS Thus Went Phillipa (1981) 20 min., sound and silent, color and b & w
MANUEL DELANDA Harmful or Fatal If Swallowed (1981) 8 min., sound, color
JAMES NARES Waiting For The Wind (1981) 10 min., color, sound
VIVIENNE DICK Springtime 81 (1981) 7 min., sound, color

Shot in murky black and white with a super-aggressive, super-nervous, super-8 trigger finger, Invasion is a DEVOesque time machine collapsing 50's lobotomization on 70's ecological blight to breed a future race of broiler-foil mummies. Virgil, the hero, follows a path through the nuclear-age inferno that parallels Kevin McCarthy's in the original Invasion of the Body Snatchers, but Boone's blithe disregard of linear continuity produces a more divinely spacey comedia than Hollywood ever imagined.

David Boone lives in Texas. This film has been touring the U.S. on Jonathan Demme's "Made In Texas" Show.

A series of scenes lit to wring maximum definition from grungy locations and grungy old Super-8, Anybody's Woman features a virtuoso description by Spaulding Gray of porn film as abstract raunch. This film served as a study for a longer 16mm film on women and pornography. Titled Variety, it is in pre-production on a grant from ZDF (German Television). Bette Gordon works in both 16mm and super-8. She teaches at Hofstra and lives in NYC.

Thus Went Phillipa is an intense moment to moment improvisation around the problem of depicting something you are in the middle of and that is scaring you to death. Burns films a bunch of his friends shooting up in a Lower East Side apartment, using bits of silent, black and white footage to evoke a time-out drugged state comparable to that in the original Living Theatre production of The Connection.

Tim Burns' feature Against the Grain was shown in last year's FILMWORKS. He was the curator of the Artists Space "Emergency Show" for which the films on this program by Bette Gordon, James Nares and himself were made. He works in both 16mm and super-8.

Harmful or Fatal If Swallowed is condensed from the first two features DeLanda shot when he arrived in NYC from Mexico. A document of the painfully raw side of city life, it has moments that are as apocalyptically anti-social as any in Bunuel's L'Age D'Or. DeLanda's obsessive belief in the camera as a weapon that can do more than add insult to injury, that can literally fracture, cut and wipe out the world is touching and horrific.

James Nares creates a tornado-like catastrophe with a hand-held camera, a shooting ratio of three to one and remarkable timing -- we see only the objects floating through space and never the hands that propel them. But Waiting For The Wind is more than a technical tour-de-force; it shapes a powerful paradox: filmmaking control is used to evoke the terror of a world completely out of personal control. Nares is a painter, performance artist and filmmaker.

Vivienne Dick's She Had Her Gun All Ready and Beauty Becomes the Beast are two of the most widely screened and important films of the NY super-8 film movement. Springtime 81 is one of a number of short studies she has made while preparing to shoot a larger sci-fi project.

Special thanks to the Film Department of the School of Visual Arts and to the Collective for Living Cinema.

UNAUTHORIZED PHOTOGRAPHY OR RECORDING IS PROHIBITED. SMOKING PERMITTED ONLY IN THE OUTER LOBBY.

The Kitchen is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts (a Federal agency), The New York State Council on the Arts, The New York Community Trust, The Rockefeller Foundation, the Jerome Foundation, Warner Communications Inc., the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the Robert Sterling Clarke Foundation, the Walter Foundation, the Morgan Guaranty Trust Co., the Mobil Foundation, Consolidated Edison Co., the Jerome Robbins Foundation, the Capezio Foundation, the Skidmore, Owings & Merrill Foundation, and other private foundations and individuals