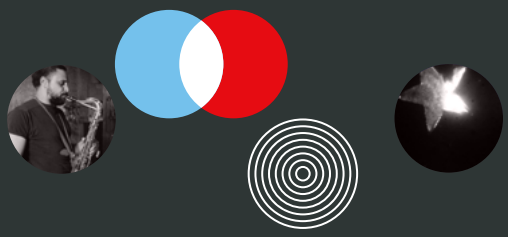
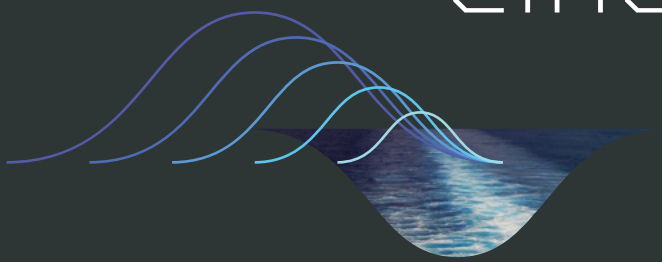


Canyon Cinema



Discovered

2022

Canyon Cinema Discovered 2022

Acknowledgments

The editors and Canyon Cinema Foundation gratefully recognize financial support from the Owsley Brown III Philanthropic Foundation and The Friends of Canyon Cinema for the publication of this exhibition catalog and special issue of the *Canyon Cinemazine*.

Thanks go to the Canyon Cinema Discovered curatorial fellows, Aaditya Aggarwal, Juan Carlos Kase, Ekin Pinar, and Chrystel Oloukoï, for their dedication, enthusiasm, and thoughtfulness through every step of this winding journey.

We are deeply indebted to all of the participating artists, and their representatives and distributors, for allowing us to include their work in this adventurous program.

This project would not have possible without the essential guidance and expertise of Canyon Cinema's Collection Manager, Seth Mitter, as well as the vision and care of Canyon's previous Director, Antonella Bonfanti.

Finally, our deep and heartfelt gratitude to all who supported and collaborated with us on the Canyon Cinema Discovered fellowship:

Canyon Cinema Discovered Funders
The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts
National Endowment for the Arts
The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences
Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation
Owsley Brown III Philanthropic Foundation

Canyon Cinema Foundation Board of Directors
Michael Renov, President
Jeffrey Skoller, Treasurer
Patricia Ledesma Villon, Secretary
Terri Francis
Brian L. Frye
Lian Ladia
Jonathan Marlow
Lynne Sachs
Steve Seid

Project Advisors
Christopher Harris
Steffanie Ling
Adam Piron
Lynne Sachs

Essay Editors
Max Goldberg
Girish Shambu
Dessane Lopez Cassell
Tess Takahashi

Guest Presenters
Pablo de Ocampo
Almudena Escobar López
Mark Toscano
Carmel Curtis
Daniella Shreir
Dessane Lopez Cassell

Special thanks to the following individuals and organizations for assistance and support: Serge Abiaad; Academy Film Archives; Anthology Film Archives; Arsenal – Institut für Film und Videokunst e.V.; Rachel Bers; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; Buck Bito; Michael Blair; Antonella Bonfanti; Jesse Brossoit; Owsley Brown III; Sarah Burford; Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre; Cinémathèque québécoise; Coast Litho; Colorlab; Hanan Coumal; La Distributrice; Nicolas Dulac; Electronic Arts Intermix; Hatim Eujayl; Jackie Farrell; Isabel Fondevila; Walter Forsberg; Jooyoung Friedman-Buchanan; Melanie Isabel García; Amélie Garin-Davet; Haden Guest; Shawn Guthrie; Harvard Film Archives; Steven Hill; shah noor hussein; Mark Johnson; Finn Jubak; Hannah Kay; John Klacsmann; Léopold Lambert; Tanya Leighton Gallery; Peter Limbrick; David Lindblom; Veronica Luke; LUX; Edda Manriquez; Carl Martin; Karl McCool; Andrew McNeely; Media City Film Festival; Amanda Mendelsohn; Rebecca Meyers; Jennifer Moore; Morán Morán; Oona Mosna; Movette; the Museum of Modern Art; Dean Otto; Steve Polta; Inney Prakash; Prismatic Ground; Gregorio Rodríguez; AJ Rohner; Zack Rothauser; The Roxie Theater; Jon Shibata; Amy Sloper; Genne Speers; Marty Spellerberg/Spellerberg Associates; Margaret Sternbergh; Charlotte Strange; Andrew Tamburrino; Gaël Teicher; Steve Tom; Tina Tom; Mark Toscano; Katie Trainor; La Traverse; Helen Shewolfe Tseng; UCLA Film & Television Archive; Video Data Bank; Jeffrey Walkowiak; Todd Weiner; Alex Wen; Carsten Zimmer.

About Canyon Cinema Discovered

Launched in 2021, Canyon Cinema Discovered is a multifaceted, year-long fellowship program that aims to engender fresh perspectives on experimental cinema and to meaningfully expand Canyon's role in providing access to this key strand of American media art. For this first iteration, four curatorial fellows were invited to assemble programs from Canyon's unique collection of artist-made films for in-person screening and online streaming. As a point of focus, the cohort was encouraged to activate undervalued and underseen works and to incorporate recent acquisitions as well as complementary works from outside of the collection, with the goal of instigating critical engagement with experimental cinema's evolving legacy.

Fellows were chosen through an open application process by a committee of project advisors, composed of Christopher Harris, Steff Hui Ci Ling, Adam Prion, and Lynne Sachs. From a pool of nearly 200 applicants, Aaditya Aggarwal, Juan Carlos Kase, Chrystel Oloukoï, and Ekin Pinar were selected on the basis of their ability to provide original insights on avant-garde and artists' cinema and media; to illuminate unheralded or forgotten film and videomakers; to organize programs that speak to contemporary social, political, and artistic concerns; and to forge strong intergenerational connections between legacy films in Canyon's catalog and contemporary work by today's moving-image artists.

Research was conducted remotely under the guidance of Canyon Cinema staff and our Discovered project advisors beginning in May 2021. As part of the fellowship, Canyon provided a series of workshops by guest curators, archivists, and writers. On July 21st, 2021, Pablo de Ocampo, Director and Curator of Moving Image at the Walker Art Center, and Almudena Escobar López, Assistant Curator of Media Arts at University of Rochester's Memorial Art Gallery discussed Approaches to Curating Experimental Media. On August 19th, Carmel Curtis, Film Digitization Specialist at Indiana University Libraries' Moving Image Archive, and Mark Toscano, Senior Film Preservationist at the Academy Film Archive, offered an Introduction to Film Preservation and Digitization. And on September 1st, our Frameworks for Contextualizing Artist-Made Film workshop featured presentations by Dessane Lopez Cassell, an independent curator, writer, editor, and current Editor-in-Chief of *Seen* journal, and Daniella Shreir, the Founding Editor and Programmer of *Another Gaze* and Another Screen.

In continuation with Canyon Cinema's commitment to providing access to rare artworks in their original medium, fellows had the opportunity to catalyze the creation of new exhibition prints and digitizations of selected works from the collection. The newly struck 16mm prints made for Canyon Cinema Discovered, including David Gatten's *What the Water Said Nos. 1-3* and *What the Water Said Nos. 4-6,* and Toney W. Merritt's *By the Sea* and *Not A Music Video*, will ensure that audiences can continue to experience these works in the best possible light. Meanwhile, the creation of new digital copies of additional films from Canyon's catalog, for the purposes of research, study, and exhibition, will help to expand the availability of, and cultivate new audiences for, artist-made cinema. As an outcome of the Discovered project, new 2K digitizations of Dominic Angerame's *Demonstration '68*, Donna Cameron's *The Clown*, Saul Levine's *New Left Note*, Single Spark Film's *Pig Power*, and Doug Wendt's *Up and Atom*, as well as the aforementioned Gatten and Merritt films, will soon be available for distribution from Canyon. A new English-language translation of Hussein Shariffe's 1975 film, *The Dislocation of Amber*, by shah noor hussein and Hatim Eujayl, will help make this important work accessible to a wider viewership.

The programs created for Canyon Cinema Discovered are further enriched and contextualized by the curatorial essays you will find in this catalog as well as on Canyon's new online publication, *Connects* (connects.canyoncinema.com). Each of the Discovered fellows received the benefit of editorial input on their texts by professional writers and editors in the field, including Max Goldberg, Dessane Lopez Cassell, Girish Shambu, and Tess Takahashi. Harmonious with the goals of the Discovered fellowship, these essays provide an exciting new framing of Canyon Cinema's collection of artist-made cinema and its place in the wider media arts landscape. We hope the lines of inquiry opened herein will inspire further exploration and kindle new associations, connections, and insights.

Brett Kashmere
Executive Director, Canyon Cinema Foundation

Screening Schedule

Discovered premieres to take place at The Roxie Theater, San Francisco, California; to be accompanied by video introductions by the curatorial fellows.

Each program will also be presented online for a week, free and worldwide, at **connects.canyoncinema.com**

October 2, 2022
Insurgent Articulations, curated by Ekin Pinar
Prime Time Reverie, curated by Aadita Aggarwal

October 16, 2022
Trajectories of Self-Determination: Experimental Cinema's Embrace of Jazz, curated by Juan Carlos Kase
Playing in the Dark: Watery Experiments, curated by Chrystel Oloukoï

Streaming Schedule
October 2-8: *Insurgent Articulations*
October 9-15: *Prime Time Reverie*
October 16-22: *Trajectories of Self-Determination*
October 23-29: *Playing in the Dark*

List of Distributors and Print Sources

Academy Film Archive (ACA)
Anthology Film Archives (AFA)
Arsenal – Institut für Film und Videokunst e.V.
Canyon Cinema Foundation (CCF)
Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre (CFMDC)
Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI)
Harvard Film Archives (HFA)
La Distributrice de films (Distributrice)
La Traverse (Traverse)
LUX
Tanya Leighton Gallery (TLG)
UCLA Film & Television Archive (UCLA)
Video Data Bank (VDB)

trajectories of self—determination:

CURATED BY

Juan Carlos Kase

APPROXIMATE

RUNNING TIME: 75 MIN

experimental cinema's embrace of jazz

***Many Thousands Gone*, Ephraim Asili**

***Dufus (aka Art)*, Mike Henderson**
1970/73, 8 minutes, b&w, sound, 16mm (ACA)

***Up and Atom*, Doug Wendt**
1970, 3 minutes, color, sound, 16mm (CCF)

***Not a Music Video*, Toney Merritt**
1987, 7 minutes, b&w, sound, 16mm (CCF)

***Pilgrim*, Cauleen Smith**
2017, 8 minutes, color, sound, digital video (Artist)

***Duet for Trumpet and Camera*, Robert Fenz**
1992, 10 minutes, b&w, sound, 16mm (HFA)

***Mirror Animations [Film #11]*, Harry Smith**
1957, 4 mins, color, sound, 16mm (AFA)

***28.IV.81 (Bedouin Spark)*, Christopher Harris**
2009, 3 mins, color, silent, 16mm (CCF)

***The Clown*, Donna Cameron**
1998, 13 mins, color, sound, 16mm (CCF)

***Many Thousands Gone*, Ephraim Asili**
2014, 8 mins, color, sound, digital video (VDB)

***Four Women*, Julie Dash**
1975, 8 mins, color, sound, 16mm transferred to digital video (UCLA)

***All My Life*, Bruce Baillie**
1966, 3 mins, color, sound, 16mm (CCF)

Trajectories of Self-Determination: Experimental Cinema's Embrace of Jazz

ESSAY BY JUAN CARLOS KASE

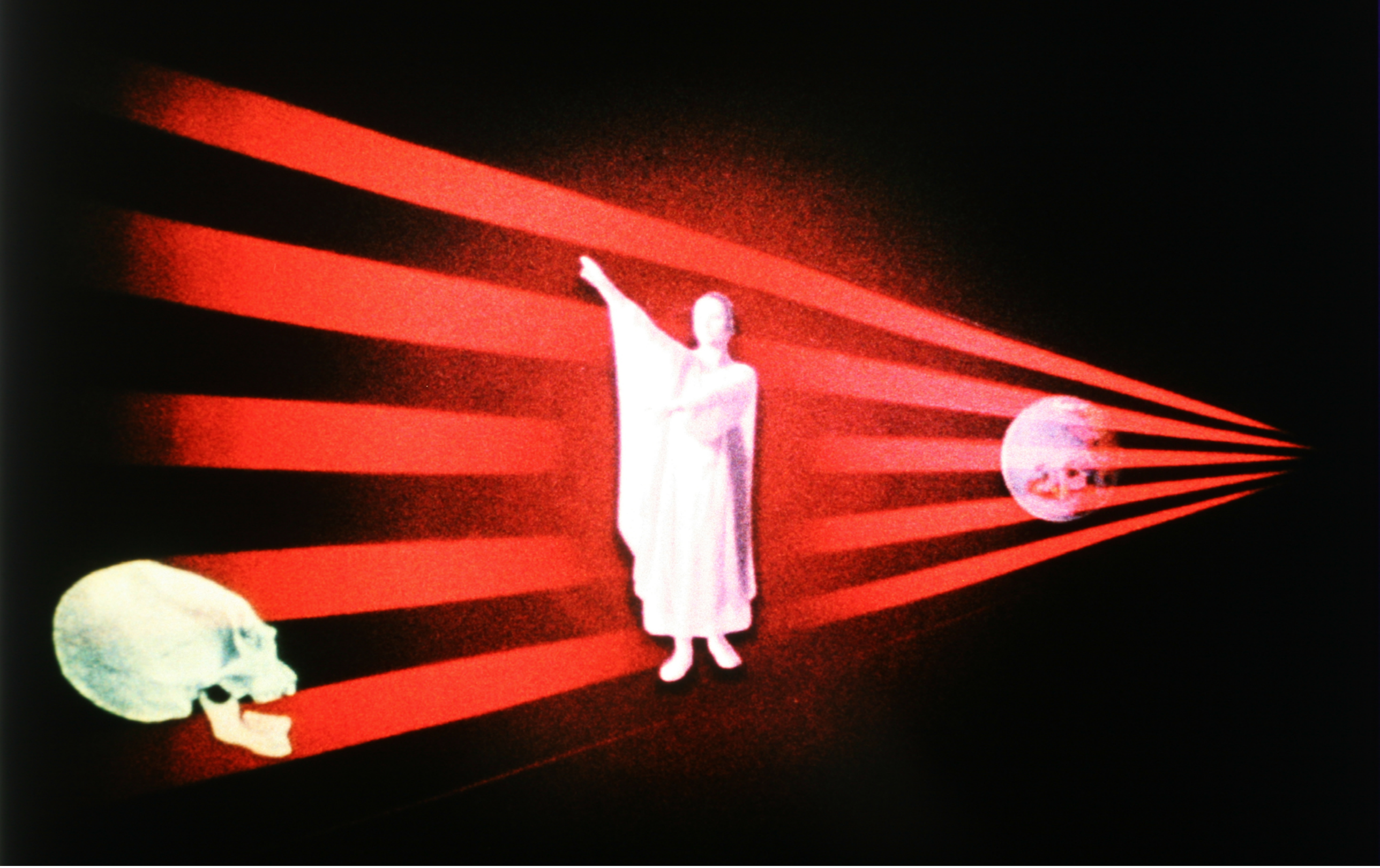
Though cinema and jazz both emerged in the late 19th century as quintessentially modern cultural innovations, their historical trajectories diverged into discrete social and aesthetic registers. Cinema, having grown from a collection of novel technologies conceived by inventors, tycoons, and carnival barkers, rapidly coalesced into an industry—a hugely profitable, vertically integrated monolith mass producing romantic fantasy. Jazz evolved from regional folk art to massively popular entertainment, and, by the age of Bebop, into an avant-garde movement of extraordinary virtuosity and spontaneity. There is, of course, a racial polarity undergirding this historical divergence: Hollywood filmmaking being dominated by White voices and jazz history built by Black ones. The divergence also owes something to the incompatibility of an industrial means of production and an improvised art form.[1]

1 I say "widespread," because it is undeniable that a small handful of narrative filmmakers have incorporated jazz into meaningful collaborations, such as Miles Davis's soundtrack for Louis Malle's *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* (1958), Duke Ellington's score for Otto Preminger's *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), or the Charles Mingus and Shafi Hadi recordings that John Cassavetes incorporated into *Shadows* (1959). Ultimately, each example represents a markedly different collaboration and attests, in its uniqueness, to the rarity of authentic improvised music in the narrative cinema.

The history of experimental film, however, poses a compelling exception. Unlike the Hollywood craftspeople and industry documentarians who have used African American vernacular music primarily as a decorative supplement, avant-garde filmmakers have often embraced jazz and drawn formal and political inspiration from the ways in which it models alternative, spontaneous conceptions of art, culture, and, more broadly, civilization.

The avant-garde films in this program showcase the diverse ways in which moving image artists have learned from jazz and responded to related Black music, using it as a formal template, an affective model, or a collaborative resource. The program also maps a loose circuit of influence connecting neglected filmmakers of the past to contemporary artists by way of a shared commitment to Black art, jazz, improvisation, and vernacular modernism. The program proposes an alternative trajectory for understanding experimental cinema that, rather than reifying European literary models, positions African American music as a fundamental influence and inspiration. Screened together, these films outline an under-recognized tendency of American cinema to marry the modernist synesthetic dream of "visual music" to the domestic innovations of jazz and the radical possibilities of improvisation that it proclaims.

Trajectories of Self-Determination: Experimental Cinema's Embrace of Jazz proceeds through a winding path of musical, aesthetic, and cultural associations, with some titles explicitly integrating jazz performance and others alluding to its energies and values more obliquely. Mike Henderson's *Dufus (aka Art)* (1970/73), for example, does not directly incorporate jazz but does channel its expressive values. An accomplished painter,



Mirror Animations [*Film #11*], Harry Smith

blues guitar player, and filmmaker, Henderson's artisanal film practice is utterly singular. His works in diverse media represent a fertile hybrid of the counterculture's anarchic energy and a testimonial approach towards Black experience in postwar America. In tone, much of Henderson's work braces its critical edge with distinctive elements of conceptual play, improvisational looseness, and aesthetic grit. Robert Nelson, a close friend and collaborator, described Henderson's work as a filmic transformation of the "talkin' blues," a folk form mingling first-person narrative and sly observational critique. Henderson's *Dufus* is a meta-essay film about the purpose, meaning, and value of art itself (the film's initial title was, in fact, *Art*). Henderson, a lively performer, is both the film's protagonist and narrator; we see him onscreen enacting the roles of Scumbad, Dork, Mofoc, Splurnk, and Me, characters who each propose a different way of approaching life and art.

Simultaneously, Henderson's voiceover narration casually describes what his characters are thinking with a spontaneous poetry akin to Jack Kerouac's in *Pull My Daisy* (Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie, 1959). In *Dufus* Henderson reconfigures the avant-garde's commitment to first-person perception and positions it, through his performance of various African American archetypes, in the particularities of Black experience, blues music, and painting. In this daydream riff of a film, Henderson explores the ways in which people find purpose in life: is it work, pleasure, sex, money, power, art? Ultimately his answer is an unpretentious variant of the familiar Bebop-cum-Beat notion that art is its own reward if realized in terms of one's own life experience and values. As Charlie Parker once famously proclaimed, "If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn."[2]

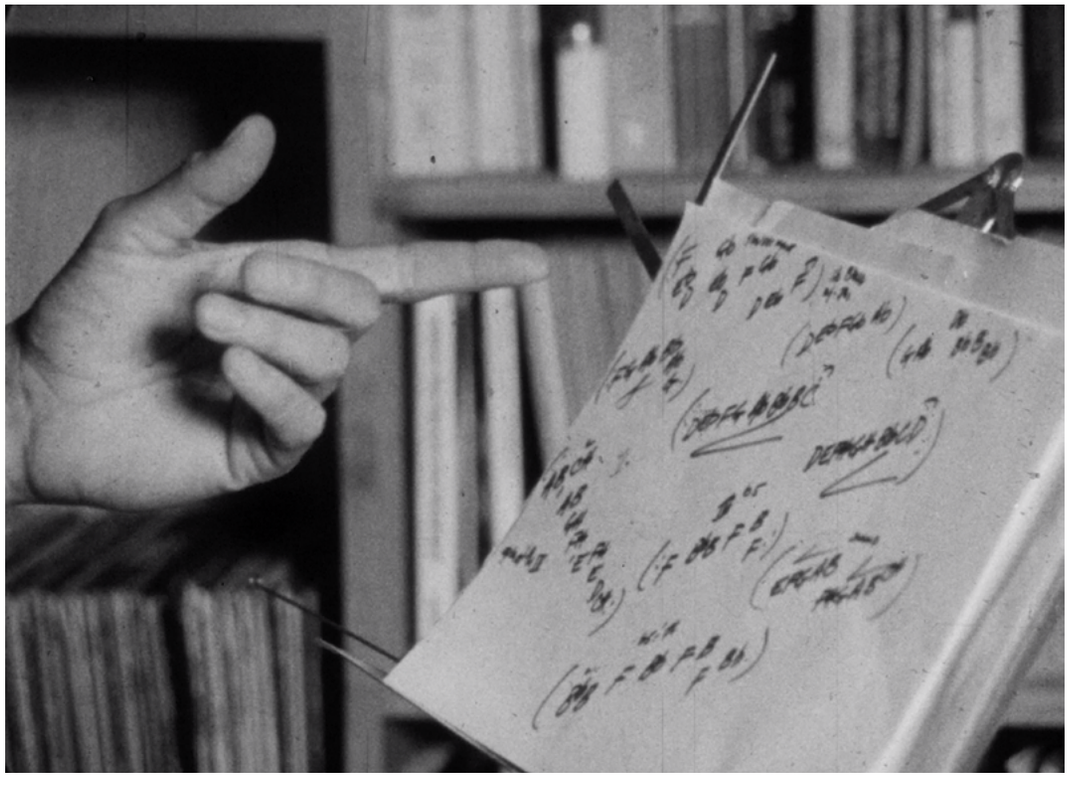
2 Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya: The Story of Jazz as Told by the People Who Made It* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 405.

Henderson's funky, picaresque, searching films flout the classical values of authorial control, rhetorical seriousness, and formal stringency that undergird most published accounts of (a largely White) American experimental cinema. When Mike Henderson's films become better known, which they inevitably will, the domestic canon of the avant-garde—which largely remains a fickle, self-serious construct spun by a small handful of critics—will buckle from the impact of their radical wit and irreverence.

Like Henderson, Doug Wendt is a Bay Area filmmaker of catholic musical tastes. After finishing an MFA at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1972, two years after Henderson, Wendt began making experimental films and working as a music consultant for radio and film productions. Wendt's own films demonstrate a strong commitment to popular music, not only as a topic of cultural interest but as a source of formal inspiration. His *Dub Film* (1980) enacts a rare attempt to translate the cyclic, choppy, reverberated abstraction of Augustus Pablo's dub music into filmic terms. In *Up and Atom* (1970), a mischievous and strikingly brief work, Wendt channels an absurdist, conceptual humor familiar from the creative circle of Henderson, Nelson, William T. Wiley, and Bruce Nauman. Like many of their films, *Up and Atom* is largely determined by its profilmic performer: a Wirehaired Pointing Griffin named Gypsy Rose (after the famous vaudevillian who married Otto Preminger). The incorporation of Fletcher Henderson's 1925 "What Cha-Call 'Em Blues" is almost flippant, with the song abruptly truncated by the conclusion of the film's central gag, not even giving us the chance to hear the song's final chorus. In a surprising instance of experimental film's crossover appeal, *Up and Atom* played on *Saturday Night Live*. It's a lark, a quip, a pithy conceptual morsel that prophesies the comedic animal gags that now flood YouTube and TikTok.

A subversive sense of play also fueled San Francisco's No Nothing film circle in the 1980s and early 90s, a hothouse of tonal experimentation realized by a diverse array of experimental conceptualists including Michael Rudnick, Rock Ross, Marian Wallace, Dean Snider, Lynn Kirby, and Toney Merritt. Drawn equally to narrative, documentary, and experimental forms, Merritt has produced an uncommonly heterogeneous filmography of biting, abstract, ludic, fantastic, and forthrightly political work in which humor is foundational. In *Not a Music Video* (1987), whose title sends up the then fledgling genre being popularized on MTV, Merritt presents a charmingly intimate portrait of tenor saxophonist Glenn Spearman, a powerful player in the Northern California avant-garde jazz community. With the informal energy of a home movie, this film humbly presents a genial study of a musician at work and play. It begins and ends with shots of the filmmaker's smiling collaborators holding clapboards for the camera and laughingly scatting jazz phrases. Between these sync-sound bookends of loose interaction is the centerpiece of the work, a commanding solo performance by Spearman, filmed by an expressive camera that responds understandingly to the dynamic shifts in the tenor saxophonist's lines. The playing incarnates a virtuosic display of post-Coltrane lyricism that leaps from written melodies to a controlled guttural roar evoking the fiery howl of Frank Wright, the saxophonist's mentor and link to the first generation of free jazz players. Along with Michael Snow and Phill Niblock, Merritt was one of only a handful of avant-garde filmmakers who turned their cameras towards the core performers of what Archie Shepp called "Fire Music."

An awareness of jazz history is the truss that bolsters many of the films in this program. Cauleen Smith's *Pilgrim* (2019) explicitly reflects on this foundation in its reverential treatment of Alice Coltrane. Unseen, the pianist, organist, harpist, and



Not a Music Video, Toney W. Merritt

Pilgrim, Cauleen Smith

spiritual guru is the film's structuring absence, with her identity refracted through images of her dust-covered organ and the fields around the Sai Anantam Ashram of Southern California that she founded after her husband John Coltrane's death. It is the soundtrack, a complete, unedited 1978 solo recording of her "One for the Father," that ultimately structures *Pilgrim* (the film lasts the exact length of the performance). Smith's film moves fluidly and purposefully through its associative imagery of Coltrane's instrument and Ashram, matching the balladic tempo of her performance. In her edits, Smith travels between the pastoral Ashram and other symbolic locales in a self-spun utopian cosmology, including the Watts Towers of Los Angeles and the Watervliet Shaker Historic District of Upstate New York. Like Smith's *Sojourner* (2018), this work conceives a jazz-infused psycho-geography in which Alice Coltrane's music and spiritual practices chart a whole constellation of neglected, paradisial zones of aesthetic and social possibility in Black America.

Like *Pilgrim*, Robert Fenz's *Duet for Trumpet and Camera* (1992) functions as a work of jazz portraiture. This is one of Fenz's earliest films—a bold, impressionistic character study by a young, yet fully formed artist who would later work as cinematographer of choice for Chantal Akerman. Trumpet and flugelhorn player Wadada Leo Smith, an early member of Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and now an elder statesman of the international avant-garde, appears onscreen as the work's protagonist. In addition, Smith performs a stark, atmospheric solo improvisation on the soundtrack that offers a sympathetic, austere musical parallel to Fenz's monochromatic imagery. Compositionally, the filmmaker foregrounds Smith's presence, visage, and performative gestures in unpredictable and uncommon ways. In hand-matted close-ups, Fenz's camera captures the wrinkled, iridescent skin of Smith's lean fingers on the metallic keys of his trumpet within an almost pitch-black environment. Elsewhere his camera gazes directly into the bell of Smith's instrument, making it appear visually distorted and washed out with silvery light. At times Fenz's decisive, abstract compositions suggest precedents, including the stylized cinematography of Gjon Mili's foundational jazz film *Jammin' the Blues* (1944) and Roy DeCarava's atmospheric photographs of musicians. In the end, the film's credits could not be more succinct: "Trumpet, Leo Smith; Camera, Robert Fenz." In this brief textual rejoinder, Fenz reminds us that the 16mm film camera is a nimble instrument—a tool for capturing light and creating gestures that, in the most sympathetic hands, can approach the lyrical articulations of a performing instrumentalist like his teacher and mentor, Leo Smith. In its title and execution, *Duet for Trumpet and Camera* suggests that experimental film, like jazz, can be a collaborative improvisation.

28.IV.81 (Bedouin Spark), Christopher Harris

As an amateur historian and collector who committed his life to engaging both folk culture and vanguard art at their richest extremes, Harry Smith was a man of boundless interests. From salvaging forgotten records to documenting Native American string figures, Smith channeled an obsession with cultural patterns that married an anthropologist's affection for taxonomy to a mystic's desire to uncover hidden, universal systems of understanding. Several witnesses remember him furiously drawing and painting hunched over a table at The Five Spot, attempting to transpose the wide intervallic leaps and unconventional syncopations of Thelonious Monk's music into visual representations. In paintings such as *Manteca* (1948) and *First Note, Fourth Chorus, Boplicity* (1950), we see evidence of Smith's efforts to graphically transcribe the melodic and harmonic patterns of Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis. But Smith thought that a static painting would be an inadequate illustration of Monk's aesthetic processes and that the medium of film would be better suited to capturing the music's shifts, quirks, breaks, and elaborations as they developed over time.[3] *Film #11* (1956) is the result of that experiment: an animated adaptation of the transcription methods Smith employed in his earlier jazz paintings. It can also be understood as a work of visual music realized as a meticulous, hermetic, outlandishly unconventional graphic score for Monk's "Misterioso." In jazz, Smith heard a trajectory of the miraculous, a cultural patterning so complex and interwoven as to provoke endless contemplation and refiguration.

An expensive medium when compared to paint or charcoal, film has not typically been a vehicle for purely improvised experimentation. But the avant-garde provides a strong tradition of in-camera filmmaking, an instantaneous, improvisational, in-the-moment interaction between moving image artists and their environments. Christopher Harris's *28.IV.81 (Bedouin Spark)*

3 Andrew Perchuk and Rani Singh, eds., *Harry Smith: The Avant-Garde in the American Vernacular* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2010), 36.

(2009) is just such a film, one that draws directly from the musical vocabulary of jazz itself in its handheld glissandi and staccato in-camera edits. Harris has said that he wanted to approximate the gestural articulations of Cecil Taylor's piano playing in this film. He does so by using a child's delicately flickering night light as an unlikely surrogate for Taylor's often muscular, propulsive piano playing. The film realizes visual music's originating dream to transfigure the spirit and methods of music into the formal and material registers of graphic art, to create a music for the eyes. In this regard, Harris's efforts directly mirror Smith's earlier synesthetic method while also pointing towards the future of cinema in more oblique ways. Arthur Jafa has argued that African American filmmaking has long lagged behind Black music, in part, because it lacks a cinematographic gesture as distinctive as the sonic signature of James Brown's grunt.[4] Here Harris has taken up that quandary and proposed a gestural cinema—a musical filmmaking without music—that forges a mimetic relationship not with Brown's funk exclamations but with Taylor's free jazz articulations.

In the 1960s heyday of underground cinema, Shirley Clarke was one of the artists most adamantly committed to the union of film and jazz. With *Clown* (1998), Donna Cameron, a former student of Clarke's, constructs a film so heavily layered and worked over that it mimics the tight ganglia of interweaving lines in Charles Mingus's collectively improvised music. In Cameron's film, Jean Shephard's spoken voice joins with Mingus's band to catalyze a narrative and tonal path through sound and image. In her combination of these discrete registers, Cameron shifts the conventional hierarchy of film and music's relation: rather than having the music punctuate the narrative's emotional cues, she manipulates every frame with hand-painted, hand-scratched, rapidly moving drawings, texts, and found imagery to magnify and respond to both the collective polyphony of Mingus's dynamic ensemble and the dramatic arc of Shepherd's narration. Cameron's *Clown* constructs a texture so dense that its visual and sonic content cannot be perceived all at once. Unlike Smith's *Film #11*, which uses found imagery and mandalic patterns to highlight the sparse and surprising inflections of Monk's music, here Cameron applies an all-over method to the field of the frame that recalls Abstract Expressionism in its unbroken energy and totalizing compositions, before building to a crescendo of interlocking, explosive plasticity akin to that of a jazz instrumentalist approaching the climax of her solo.

Of course, the filmmakers in this project draw inspiration from other forms of Black art beyond jazz. Ephraim Asili borrows the title for his film *Many Thousands Gone* (2015) from a James Baldwin essay, the opening line of which speaks volumes: "It is only in his music, which Americans are able to admire because a protective sentimentality limits their understanding of it, that the Negro in America has been able to tell his story."[5] Asili's film not only echoes Baldwin's title but also, in its content, alludes to the author's knotty interrogations of the relationship between race and art.[6] In 2014, Asili traveled with his 16mm Bolex camera to two disparate poles of Black history: Salvador, Brazil, the last Western city to outlaw the slave trade, and Harlem, New York, an international capital of the

4 "The Ecstatic Message: Talking Music and Moving Image Art with Artists Ja'Tovia Gary and Arthur Jafa," *Smithsonian American Art Museum* (October 12, 2019), https://www.si.edu/object/ecstatic-message-talking-music-and-moving-image-art-artists-jaapostovia-gary-and-arthur-jafa%3Ayt_C89eNqpK-_k.

5 James Baldwin, "Many Thousands Gone," in *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York City: Library of America, 1998), 19.

6 It is a little-known fact that Baldwin, early in his career, expressed his own "desire to own a sixteen-millimeter camera and make experimental movies." James Baldwin, "Autobiographical Notes," in *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York City, Library of America, 1998), 9.

Many Thousands Gone, Ephraim Asili

African diaspora. In cutting between these places and filming the cresting waves of the Atlantic with moody, impressionistic cinematography, he evokes the catastrophic loss of life in the Middle Passage. His atmospheric imagery of city life and slow-motion footage of dancing Black performers attest to the beauty of diasporic resilience. But the film is finally a work of mourning, with a soundtrack that reinforces its sublime blend of anguish and elegance. After editing, Asili gave the film to multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee, who in turn improvised a score. McPhee rarely plays pitched tones here, instead whispering a gale and squall evoking both the gasps of drowning African captives and the Atlantic Ocean's elemental ferocity. By utilizing the ocean's visual timbres and textures alongside a delicate, pinched soundscape, *Many Thousands Gone* finds a uniquely evocative way of alluding to a historical trauma that overwhelms and exceeds any possible frame.

For multidisciplinary artists and filmmakers, experimental cinema has often provided a uniquely generative space for exploring the shared expressive and conceptual possibilities of different art forms. Though she is primarily known as a narrative filmmaker, Julie Dash's early experimental work, *Four Women* (1975), stages a lively interplay of aesthetic registers by dramatizing Nina Simone's lyric character study in symbolic, expressive, and somatic terms. Equal parts theatrical tableau, dance performance, feminist manifesto, and music video, the film juxtaposes Simone's commanding voice and dancer Linda Young's decisive movements. To the accompaniment of African drums, Dash's images fade in and out of the opening, ochre mise-en-scène: the dancer's body becomes graphically abstracted as sculptural musculature, while her face remains hidden and ensconced in tight layers of clinging fabric. When Simone's voice and syncopated piano enter, Dash's lighting, cinematography, and composition jump into a more concrete,

referential register, while Young's dancing embodies the characters of Aunt Sarah, Saffronia, Sweet Thing, and Peaches, the titular four women of Simone's song. Dash's cinematography does its own dance; her camera responds sympathetically to Young's choreography and to the song's narrative in equal parts. The vocals, dance, and cinematography are, by turn, vigorous and fragile, matched by editing and camera movement that shift from legato to staccato. As collaborators, Dash and Young enact a strikingly dramatic multimedia transformation of Nina Simone's arresting first-person story of rape, racial violence, and female agency progressing from victimhood to radicalization.

From the gravitas and anguish of Simone's voice, we now ease into Bruce Baillie's *All My Life* (1966) on the buoyant finesse of a young Ella Fitzgerald's soaring mezzo-soprano backed by Teddy Wilson's effortlessly swinging band. *All My Life* contains the universe in a shot and a song. It is a fragment of space, a sliver of a tune, and a gentle caress of one man's camera across a fence of wild roses in Casper, California on a summer day. There is a touch of Zen in both Baillie's relaxed lateral camera movement and the pre-bop lilt of Wilson's lightsome fingers across the keys of the piano. *All My Life* seems an exquisite filmic realization of what jazz historian Phil Schaap memorably termed "the magical rhythm float." Here Fitzgerald's voice joins in synchronicity with Baillie's slowly turning camera to constitute a perfect spontaneous realization of an Apollonian ideal, a "text of bliss."[7] I once asked Baillie what this film was about. He described its inspiration in the simplest of terms as "the light, the locus, and the music."[8]

7 I borrow this evocative descriptor from Roland Barthes in which he describes the "text of bliss" as something so overwhelmingly revelatory that it induces a crisis of language because "pleasure can be expressed in words, bliss cannot." Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 21.

8 Interview with the author, April 6, 2004, Camano Island, Washington.

All My Life, Bruce Baillie

Baillie's modernist vision was always tinged with a hint of nostalgia, a yearning for a different kind of life away from the coercions of civilization. Like many jazz musicians and experimental filmmakers, Baillie was a special kind of American oxymoron as both a rugged individualist and a committed member of an idealistic community. The traditions of experimental film and jazz, even in their most challenging and dissonant forms, tend towards the emancipatory and utopian. In the film-music hybrids on this program, there are flashes of freedom and radical zones of liberty. Perhaps such a world is only possible in the register of aesthetic experience, but for those who watch and listen closely, there is a virtually infinite sphere of revelatory possibility in both artistic practices. As we continue to reimagine the horizon of cinema's future from the perspective of the present, we too need to return, with equal vigor, curiosity, and liberatory interest, to its past to elevate neglected artists and explore forgotten pathways of influence. With such goals in mind, we can register anew the ways in which the avant-garde has defied canonical imperatives and classical values by virtue of its commitment to the utopian ideals of spontaneity, play, and self-determination that it shares with jazz and other forms of Black music.

Edited by Max Goldberg

PLAYING IN THE DARK:

CURATED BY

Chrystel Oloukoï

APPROXIMATE

RUNNING TIME: 121 MIN

WATERY EXPERIMENTS

***Towards the Colonies*, Miryam Charles**

***By the Sea*, Toney W. Merritt**
1982, 3 minutes, color, silent, 16mm (CCF)

***What the Water Said Nos 1-3*, David Gatten**
1998, 16 minutes, color, sound, 16mm (CCF)

***Aqua*, Samba Félix N'diaye**
1989, 12 minutes, color, sound, 16mm transferred to digital video (Traverse)

***The Dislocation of Amber*, Hussein Shariffe**
1975, 32 minutes, color, sound, 16mm transferred to digital video (Arsenal)

***Giverny I (Négresse Impériale)*, Ja'Tovia Gary**
2017, 6 minutes, color, sound, digital video (Artist)

***Pattaki*, Everlane Moraes**
2019, 21 minutes, color, sound, digital video (Artist)

***What the Water Said Nos 4-6*, David Gatten**
2006-2007, 17 minutes, color, sound, 16mm (CCF)

***Towards the Colonies*, Miryam Charles**
2016, 5 minutes, color, sound, digital video (Distributrice)

***Song for the New World*, Miryam Charles**
2021, 9 minutes, color, sound, digital video (Distributrice)

Giverny I (Négresse Impériale), Ja'Tovia Gary

Playing in the Dark: Watery Experiments

ESSAY BY CHRYSTEL OLOUKOÏ

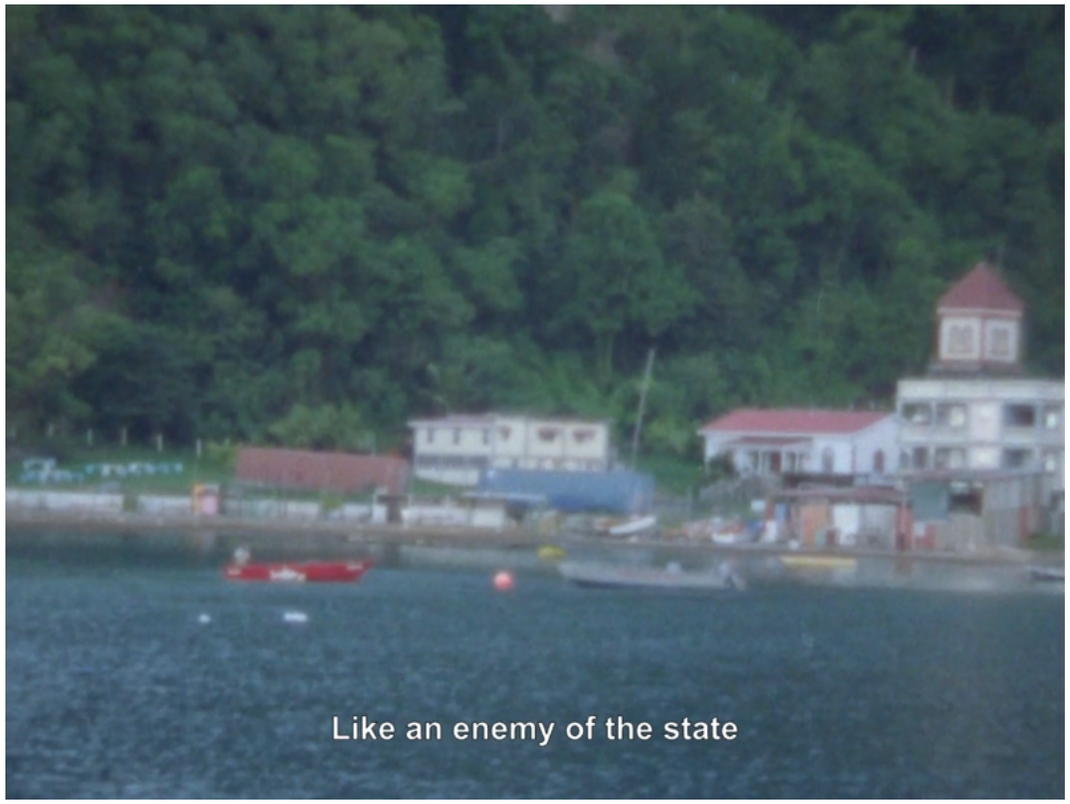
Toni Morrison theorizes "playing in the dark" as a kind of camouflage; the false consciousness of (white American) literature which has disavowed blackness on the one hand, while employing it as a playground for the imagination on the other.[1] Yet, building on Morrison's own expansive use of the expression, one must also contend with alternate practices of "playing in the dark"—those which attempt to refigure opacity as a site of subaltern possibility.[2] This program wades through this tension, bringing together works wrestling with the mutual haunting between blackness and the sea, as filmmakers experiment with water as a medium and object of representation.

The works gathered here, by Toney Merritt, David Gatten, Samba Félix N'diaye, Hussein Shariffe, Ja'Tovia Gary, Everlane Moraes, and Miryam Charles, engage with the confounding qualities of water and its corrosive energies; from bodies to the environment, to the materiality of film itself. In purposeful contrast with imagery of water as a crystalline, transparent medium, the films dwell and revel in strange, turbid, still, abyssal, shallow, and impure waters. Theirs are burdened bodies of water that resist regimes of truth based on visibility. Samba Félix N'diaye's *Aqua* belongs to a collection of shorts,

---

1 Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

2 See for instance, Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation,* trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).



Song for the New World, Miryam Charles

Trésors des poubelles (*Treasures from the Trash*, all 1989), that confront the afterlives of literal and metaphorical waste in Dakar's urban environment. On the other side of the Atlantic, David Gatten's *What the Water Said Nos. 1-3* (1998) and *Nos. 4-6* (2006-2007) stage an encounter between marine ecologies and film emulsion, as unexposed rolls of black-and-white and color film are immersed into a crab cage—at different dates, times, and tide levels—to be written upon by underwater organisms. While the works of N'Diaye and Gatten have been explicitly referred to as a kind of "ecocinema," I would argue that an attentiveness to forms of nonhuman agency, ecological time, and a concern with layered histories of environmental damage and reduced lifeworlds pervade many of the other featured works. This is true of Everlane Moraes's *Pattaki* (2019), shot in Havana, in which the ubiquity of water—in buckets, in aquariums, oozing from skin, atmospheric, reflected in gazes and lighted surfaces—only emphasizes its actual sparseness. Water functions as both a spiritual signifier, evoking the presence of Yemaya, *orisha* of the sea, and as an indictment of an aging and inadequate water infrastructure, faltering under the effects of a decades-long, US-led geopolitical blockade.

In a different genre of ecocinema, Ja'Tovia Gary handpresses organic matter, such as leaves, on clear strips of film in *Giverny I (Négresse Impériale)* (2017), evoking Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight* (1963). Yet, her gesture is not merely about the potentialities of a direct cinema, but also a critique of botanical science and its orientation towards visual capture. Such orientation is most evident in practices of classification in which visualization played a central role—from intricate hand-drawn botanical illustrations

By the Sea, Toney W. Merritt

Aqua, Samba Félix N’diaye

to macro photography—as well as in other botanical processes of inventorying, collecting, sampling, and planting. Giverny Garden, the botanical garden established by Claude Monet in the eponymous French village at the turn of the 20th century, constitutes one of the main settings of Gary's film. The garden, with its placid, lily-covered waters, immortalized in several Impressionist paintings, is subtended by an imperial violence which necessarily sutures its aesthetics.[3] Effects such as flickers, split screens, overlays, static noises, and glitches insist on a fundamental sonic and visual disharmony. In tension with the botanical metaphor of rooting, *Giverny I (Négresse Impériale)* feels like a record of turbulence and instability—of the inextricable entanglement between places and bodies that exist far apart but in a common state of displacement.

Water Maps

Collectively, *Playing in the Dark: Watery Experiments* engages with (often violently) intimate cartographies of water, channeled through webs of relations. Bodies of water are not deterritorialized or abstracted in the selected works; rather they are embedded in particular geographies and histories. With a camera often focused on hands at work, patiently fishing for and reassembling elements such as turbid waters, rocks, fishes, discarded bottles, sand, and algae, Ndiaye's *Aqua* centers labor, as Dakar's urban artisans craft small-scale water worlds out of urban waste. The temporal arc of the film—which follows the process of creation in a linear way—elicits a sense of duration and achievement. The whole enterprise, with its results proudly exhibited on the street, feels gratuitous, playful, and a touch tragic.

Playfulness also traverses Gatten's gesture of plunging film rolls into the waters of Seabrook Island, a place charged—for the artist—with memories of childhood play and the delight of return, summer after summer. Toney Merritt's *By the Sea* (1982) offers a "portrait of sorts" of the San Francisco bay, filmed by the Bay Area artist from his apartment. Filled with enigmatic humor, the film reports on a ship lost in the wild Atlantic Ocean. Yet, a massive, slow-moving vessel occupies the frame, so large that it even exceeds it in length, never fully captured by it.

Hussein Shariffe's *Dislocation of Amber* (1975) is also, primarily, a portrait of a place. This poetic homage to the coral city of Suakin—a site both made and unmade by water—insists on the element's generative, sculptural, and erosive powers. Until the construction of Port Sudan in 1905, which ended Suakin's centuries-long dominance over the Red Sea, the city thrived on the trade occasioned by travelers to Mecca, as well as, later on, the slave trade. Decay, as well as furtive traces and memories, outlines the contours of not just an abandoned city, but also of a Red Sea traversed by routes of terror, subjugation, and forced migration. Collectively, the expansive water maps drawn by each artist in the program testify to the extent to which no body of water has been left untouched by interconnected histories of slavery, colonialism, and illegalized migration. Indeed, the selected works invite viewers to take particular locations as well as their entanglements with polymorphous bodies of water seriously—from the muddiness of the bottled water in Dakar to the foam pathway left by the wake of a ship in Miryam Charles's *Towards the Colonies* (2016).

3 Giverny is Monet's attempt to reproduce orientalist imaginations of the Japanese garden. For broader critiques of the coloniality of the botanical garden in its triangulation of the idyllic, the exotic, and the savage, see Jill H. Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Yota Batsaki, Sarah Burke Cahalan, and Anatole Tchikine, eds., *The Botany of Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); and the exhibition *On the Nature of Botanical Gardens* (2020) by Framer Framed, https://framerframed.nl/en/expositities/on-the-nature-of-botanical-gardens/.

The Dislocation of Amber, Hussein Shariffe

Playing in the Dark

Water, in its crystalline or abyssal states, is overburdened with a series of metaphors. Ideas of transparency, opacity, and inscrutability often rehearse binaries foundational to Western thought. Such metaphors find their ways into the works at hand. Shariffe, for example, relies on the common trope of the feminization of the sea through the symbolic imagery mobilized in *The Dislocation of Amber*. On another register, an unavowed Africanist presence sutures imaginations of the abyss in

Gatten's *What the Water Said*.[4] Indeed, occasional excerpts of Western literary classics focused on the sea segment the rolls of film distressed by water, from Defoe to Melville, to Poe and Hawthorne. In all of these, the oceanic is closely associated with darkness, the latter a (Western) metaphor for terror and the unknown. It functions as an expressive surface for the figurative possibilities of blackness, insofar as representations of the rayless, stygian abyss—which "might have been mistaken for ebony"—are inextricable from a backdrop of enslavement, watery cemeteries, and conquest by sea.[5]

Each roll of film in *What the Water Said* is a unique impression of the Atlantic's and more particularly Seabrook Island's variegated ecosystems and tides. Yet, they also testify to the non-linear time of water. Charles Towne Landing (now part of Charleston, South Carolina), 20 miles north, was one of the major ports of the Atlantic slave trade. Its waters are marked by the toxic residues from the port industry as well as by the "residence time" of the drowned bodies of enslaved Africans—"still alive, like hydrogen, like oxygen."[6] Residence time describes the amount of time a mass or substance can remain in a specific milieu, in a dissolved, suspended or absorbed state. Christina Sharpe mobilizes this notion in relation to the Middle Passage: "Human blood is salty, and sodium, Gardulski tells me, has a residence time of 260 million years. And what happens to the energy that is produced in the waters? It continues cycling

4 For Toni Morrison, Africanist presence references the weight of "the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify" in the Western canon. In *Playing in the Dark*, she tracks the forms of silence, evasions, allegories and metaphors that provide for classical American literature "a way of contemplating chaos and civilization, desire and fear, and a mechanism for testing the problems and blessings of freedom" without naming race as such. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 7.

5 Edgar Allan Poe, "Descent into the Maelstrom" published in April of 1841, in *Graham's Magazine.*

6 Dionne Brand, *The Blue Clerk: Ars Poetica in 59 Versos* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 224.




Pattaki, Everlane Moraes

like atoms in residence time. We, Black people, exist in the residence time of the wake, a time in which 'everything is now. It is all now.'"[7] The waters hold histories that the texts disavow, deeply buried in the Western literary unconscious. By virtue of its title and the juxtaposition of textual excerpts and oceanic "inscriptions," *What the Water Said* insists we sit with the tension—and perhaps incommensurability—between the linearity of text, speech acts, projected film and the non-linear marks left by the underwater ecosystems on the film's emulsion. If the waters do speak, they do so in excess of narrative threads and gaps, in an alchemy full of beauty but also full of terror.

As a program, *Playing in the Dark* is also about discontinuity; the redacted and the missing as sites of possibility. In the works of Moraes and Charles in particular, conjuring rituals and spiritual possession interweave the nonlinear times of water and ritual. They confront the violence of such temporal dislocations, rather than merely romanticizing them. In *Pattaki*, otherworldly presence is expressed obliquely, through its echoes and reverberations. There is a sense of kinship between the kind of disorientation experienced in water and in the dark, as both disrupt hegemonic understandings of time and space.[8] Except for a brief moment not at sea, in which a red line of demarcation on the ground warns migrants not to cross, *Towards the Colonies* offers little sense of direction or even location, as the boat from which it is filmed does not appear in the frame. There is no land in sight, as the ocean and the sky fill the frame, and other boats occasionally appear in the distance. Yet, the movement of the water itself and the handheld but static camera gives a sense of an embodied perspective, one that looks at the water mostly from the back of the ship and, more rarely, from the side or the front. From this backward viewpoint, the wake of the boat forms a kind of inverted compass, a disappearing pathway that is both expansive due to the continuous movement of the boat and endlessly disappearing.

7 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 41. In the passage cited, Sharpe is referencing a passage from Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Plume Contemporary Fiction, 1987), 198.

8 See for instance the similarities between Romain Rolland's depiction of the oceanic as the feeling of "being one with the external world as a whole" in its 1927 letter to Freud and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's depiction of experience of the night as "a spatiality without things (...) a pure depth without planes, without surfaces, and without any distance from it to me." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (London: Routledge, 2012 [1958]), 336.

Water as Methodology

The unruly and shapeshifting qualities of water function as potent metaphors for otherwise ways of being/feeling/knowing, as in Sylvia Winter's expression.[9] Most of the works gathered carry the imprint of their makers' multidisciplinary practices, which collage and confound genres, mediums, and materials. Gatten and Gary both experiment with cameraless cinema and a long tradition of direct animation. Likewise, Shariffe engages with film, poetry, and painting as entangled fields. His poems, and those of other Sudanese artists in exile, function as symbolic visual and sonic motifs in his films. Before he embarked on the project that was to become *The Dislocation of Amber*, Shariffe was bedridden, suffering from a psychosomatic illness related to a massacre in his native town under the Nimeiry regime. As he was lying in bed, he had a vivid vision of Suakin, left at the mercy of the corrosive work of the Red Sea. The Sufi poems that hold the film together were sung to him, as he was recovering, by his friend, the late singer Abdel-Aziz Dawoud. Scriptless and the result of a collective, undisciplined filming process between Shariffe and his collaborators, *The Dislocation of Amber*, springs from all of this: art as conjuration and healing, the fragility of the filmmaker's body and that of Suakin, the histories suspended in water and the tenderness of friends.

Defiance and antidisciplinary methodology courses through these artists' practices, but their forms also invite other modes of curating and engaging with the works. For me, it calls forth a curatorial practice which emphasizes relation, flux, and a refusal of completion, rather than a focus on discovery and scarcity.

This program is intentionally available online worldwide, against any form of geoblocking. This is also a matter of *restituting* to unequal and fragmented publics works that are often inaccessible. This is especially the case for Black African cinema, for which most distributors are located in Europe or the US and subject to other screening barriers. With a significant part of Hussein Shariffe's life spent in exile in the wake of the 1989 military coup in Sudan, his early works, such as *The Dislocation of Amber*, have traveled quite a lot in precarious material conditions, following the filmmaker's own forced movement in Egypt and in the UK. The first time I encountered *The Dislocation of Amber*, it was as a mesmerizing ten-minute excerpt on YouTube, without subtitles. I later found a full length, but unfortunately soundless, version. It took several years before I was finally able to see a more complete version distributed by Berlin's Arsenal—sound included, but no subtitles—thanks to the curatorial work of Awa Konate's Culture Art Society.

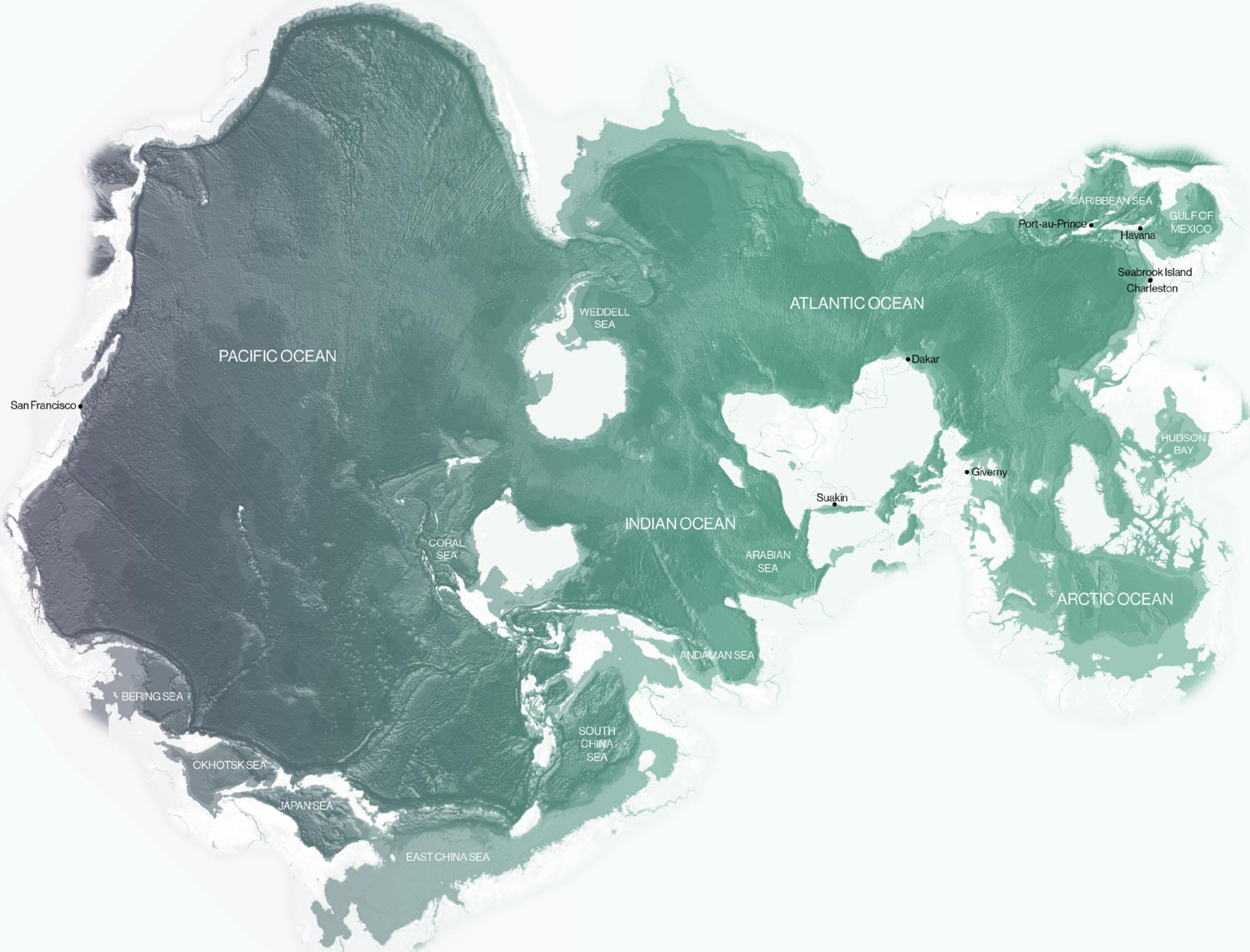
For many of us, Shariffe's film has led a fragmented, dislocated existence, a fate far too characteristic of African cinema, itself often faced with the censorship of authoritarian governments, a lack of resources, and systemic extraversion. Both *The Dislocation of Amber* and N'diaye's *Aqua* testify to infrastructures rooted in ongoing dispossession, from systems of distribution to those of exhibition. The unruly ethics of water have long provided a template for alternative forms of artistic circulation, proliferation, and dissemination outside of institutional spaces. In the same spirit, let the waters guide us towards modes of restitution.

Edited by Dessane Lopez Cassell

9 Wynter theorizes how Western hegemonic models of what it means to be human shape how we relate to the world—in the sense of how we exist, feel, and know—as well as the possibility to invent other modes of the human. See in particular Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman,'" in *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature,* eds. Carole Boyce Davis, and Elaine Savory Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), 355-370; Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3 no. 3 (2003): 257-337.

Maps by Léopold Lambert

Lake Eyasi
Lake Manyara
Lake Albert
Lake Lembeni
Lake Natron
Lake Victoria
Lake Kyoga
Lake Kwania
Masinga Res.
Lake Turkana
Chew Bahir
Lake Chamo
Lake Abaya
Roseires Reservoir
Lake Koka
Lake Tana
Lake Abbe
Lake Adobed
Lake Gemeri
Djibouti
Lake Assal
SUAKIN
Port Sudan
Lake Nasser
RED SEA
Port Berenice
Mecca
Gulf of Suez
Great Bitter Lake
Port Said
MEDITERRANEAN
INDIAN OCEAN
GULF OF ADEN
ARABIAN SEA
Dead Sea
Sea of Galilee
Beysehir
Egridir
Lake Tuz
Buhayrat al-Assad
Ataturk Barajt
Keban Baraji
Lake Razazah
Buhayrat ath Tharthar
Lake Hammar
Lake Van
Lake Urmia
Lake Sevana
Mingevir Reservoir
Wami
Pangani
Kibali
Semliki
Bahr el Jebel
Bahr el Zeraf
Tana
Kangen
Akobo
Pibor
Sobat
El Bahr el Abyad
Omo
Juba
Genale
Shabeelle
Shebele
El Bahr el Azraq
Abay
Awash
Tekeze
Setit
Atbara
Nile
Bahr Aouk
Bomu
Chinko
Kotto
Euphrates
Tigris
Shatt al Hillah
Shatt al Arab
Karkheh
Al Furat
Ceyhan
Kizilirmak
Kelkit
Dicle
Murat
Firat
Aras
Qezel Owzan
Talkeh
Kuban
Sakarya
Simav
Bük Menderes
Jordan


PACIFIC OCEAN
ATLANTIC OCEAN
INDIAN OCEAN
ARCTIC OCEAN
WEDDELL SEA
CARIBBEAN SEA
GULF OF MEXICO
HUDSON BAY
CORAL SEA
ARABIAN SEA
ANDAMAN SEA
SOUTH CHINA SEA
BERING SEA
OKHOTSK SEA
JAPAN SEA
EAST CHINA SEA
San Francisco
Port-au-Prince
Havana
Seabrook Island
Charleston
Dakar
Giverny
Suakin


ATLANTIC OCEAN
Saint Marys
Savannah
Port Royal Sound
Parris island
Pritchards island
Hunting island
Combahee
Ashepoo
Edisto island
SEABROOK ISLAND
Wadmalaw island
Edisto
South Fork
North Fork
Kiawah island
Johns island
Bohickets island
Stono
Morris island
James island
Kiawah
Charleston
Sullivan's island
Wando
Etiwan
Lake Marion
Lake Moultrie
Santee

Bissau
Rio Corubal
Rio Cacheu
Casamance
River Gambie
Banjul
Sine
Saloum
Delta du
Sine-Saloum
Dakar
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Praia
Ferlo
Saint Louis
Lac de Guiers
Senegal

About the Maps

Cartography is an operation of power and at the core of the colonial remaking of the world. Mapping bodies of water, in particular, remains a fraught and contested exercise. For *Playing in the Dark: Watery Experiments*, Léopold Lambert creates maps that borrow from the unruliness of waves to destabilize ingrained ways of seeing.

Toney Merritt's "ship feared lost in wild atlantic sea," in *By the Sea* (1982) very much informs the spirit of these maps, via unfamiliar projections, indigenous place names when known and a deliberate irreverence for the usual orientation, coordinates and landmass-based place names that suffuse our understanding of space.

While a world map puts in a singular analytic frame the places evoked in the films—SUAKIN, DAKAR, GIVERNY, AYITI/PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAVANA, SEABROOK ISLAND, SAN FRANCISCO—a series of zooms depart from these interconnected currents to embed them in regional contexts. Taken together, these maps insist on the vastness of the Black aquatic, the multiple bodies of water that striate landmasses, and the hubris of any pretense of solid ground.

In the maps of Ayiti/Port-au-Prince/Havana, Dakar and Seabrook Island, water engulfs most of the frame, presencing the aquatic graveyards that bridge these sites. Some of the maps conjure bottomless seas, while others trace elusive submarine reliefs. In all three, proliferating rivers and lakes sink deep into the landmass, characteristic of swampy coastal ecologies. They contrast with the more desertic terrains that surround the Red sea, an interface between the Arabian peninsula and the African continent, which connects through a series of highly politicized gulfs to the Indian ocean and the Mediterranean. As a major stop point on the road to Mecca, drawing movement from places as distant as the opposite Atlantic coast, Suakin, as many of the other places previously mentioned, epitomizes the pull and magnetic confluences of waters. **— Chrystel Oloukoï**

CURATED BY

Ekin Pinar

INSURGENT ARTICULATIONS

APPROXIMATE RUNNING TIME: 103 MIN

***A Protest, A Celebration, A Mixed Message*, Rhea Storr**

***Pig Power*, Single Spark Film**
1969, 8 minutes, b&w, sound, 16mm (CCF)

***Demonstration '68*, Dominic Angerame**
1968-74, 2 minutes, color, silent, 16mm (CCF)

***Solidarity*, Joyce Wieland**
1973, 11 minutes, color, sound, 16mm
(CCF; digital file for online presentation courtesy of CFMDC)

***Sisters!*, Barbara Hammer**
1973, 8 minutes, color, sound, 16mm
(CCF; digital file for online presentation courtesy of EAI)

***New Left Note*, Saul Levine**
1968-82, 26 minutes, color, silent, 16mm, 18fps (CCF)

***Gay Power, 1971/2007/2012*, Sharon Hayes, Kate Millett, and The Women's Liberation Cinema**
2012, 33 minutes, color, sound, 16mm (UCLA/TLG)

***On the nature of the bone*, Elena Pardo**
2018, 2 minutes, color, sound, digital video (CCF)

***A Protest, A Celebration, A Mixed Message*, Rhea Storr**
2018, 12 minutess, color, sound, digital video (LUX)

***B.L.M.*, Toney W. Merritt**
2020, 1 minute, b&w, sound, digital video (CCF)

Supplementary Screening (Online Only)

***Investigation of a Flame*, Lynne Sachs**
2001, 45 minutes, color, sound, digital video (CCF)

A Protest, A Celebration, A Mixed Message, Rhea Storr

Insurgent Articulations

ESSAY BY EKIN PINAR

How to protest

1. *Create a clear message*
2. *Make noise*
3. *Occupy a significant space*
4. *Engender fear through the sudden movement of a large mass of people, for example a march*

How to celebrate carnival

1. *Create a costume with a clear identity or message (...)*
2. *Make noise*
3. *Occupy a space significant to the community*
4. *Create a spectacle through the movement of a large mass of people, for example a parade.*
5. *Protest joyfully.*

—Rhea Storr, *A Protest, A Celebration, A Mixed Message*, 2018

The opening voice-over of *A Protest, A Celebration, A Mixed Message* (Rhea Storr, 2018) outlines the dissenting, performative, affective, and public nature of protest events. While Rhea Storr poses a clear message as the prerequisite of protesting, the form and organization of the social event articulates the un-straightforward substance of protest. The film begins with this claim and challenges it through its course in a manner that mirrors protest events' process of expression. *Insurgent Articulations* examines this parallel between protest as a cinematic subject matter and protest as determining the form and organization of film.

Focusing on the aesthetics of socio-political protest, the program showcases experimental films that reconstruct demonstrations, rallies, marches, and sit-ins in formally reflexive ways. In doing so, *Insurgent Articulations* explores cinematic



Sisters!, Barbara Hammer

reconstruction, reenactment, and the fictional fabrication of protest. These methods emphasize the productive tensions between on-site recording, retrospective consideration, and creative invention of political events. At the same time, these cinematic articulations of insurgent acts resist injustice, exclusion, and repression in ways that resonate with the challenges of protesters' congregating bodies as they claim the right to express themselves in public space.

One of the many "turns" that have defined moving image culture in the last 25 years or so is documentary. Defined by a sustained and intense attention to the actual and fabricated

archival, historical, and/or ethnographic documents, traces, and fragments of real and fictional events, beings, and objects, this tendency questions the authoritative, factual tone of conventional forms of documentary. Common strategies include re-enactments and re-stagings, essayistic modes, blurring of the factual and fictional, use of non-indexical media (especially animation), as well as aesthetic manipulation of the indexical documentation of the matters of the "real" world. As Hal Foster has noted, this documentary turn shifts documentary practice from deconstruction to reconstruction, engaging with the format as a critical and interpretative mode instead of a descriptive one.[1] Rather than claiming a direct mediation of the outside world, then, this mode approximates affective, corporeal, and situated/partial truths.

The documentary turn is unmistakably a reaction to the rise of digital media and the attendant proclamations of the "death of the indexical." Yet, streaks of these self-reflexive documentary modes have existed in experimental film practices from the 1960s onwards. A strong interest in the social, political, and cultural aspects of our lifeworlds has been a significant part and parcel of experimental filmmaking practices. Yet, standard histories of experimental cinema outline a canon defined by subjective formal experimentations of the 60s that shifted in the 70s to a structuralist mode concerned with cinematic form. Because of this past focus on formal experimentation, the socio-historical, cultural, and representational politics, ethics, and concerns of much experimental work remained unnoticed until more recently.

1 Hal Foster, "Real Fictions," in *What Comes after Farce? Art and Criticism at a Time of Debacle* (London and New York: Verso, 2020), 154.

Insurgent Articulations puts contemporary work in dialogue with the histories of experimental documentary—highlighting correspondences of subject matter, representational strategies, and organizational modes. This retrospective assessment challenges the periodizing accounts of experimental film history by underlining the experimental film production's persistent interest in the social and political events of the world. At the same time, the program invites viewers to reconsider the false binary between aesthetic experimentation and a political commitment to the actual world.

Experimental films that take protest as their subject provide an especially fecund ground for the examination of the tightly woven interchange between formal experimentation and political subject matter. In her discussion of protest, Hito Steyerl emphasizes two interrelated layers of expression: The first layer involves what is being protested and the discovery of an appropriate and effective verbal and visual language for the substance of protest. The second concerns how the assembly of people organizes itself for the purpose of protest and communicates this internal organization to the public.[2] The films in this program articulate both levels of articulation. They visualize assemblies of resistance, while also reflecting formal, structural, and organizational concerns that parallel the aesthetics of protest. Reflexively considering issues of witnessing, performance, assemblage, and the formation of counterpublics both in terms of aesthetic form and political content, the films highlight the fluid and complex relations between art and politics, and fact and fiction.

2 Hito Steyerl, "The Articulation of Protest," in *The Wretched of the Screen*, eds. Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, and Anton Vidokle (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 78.

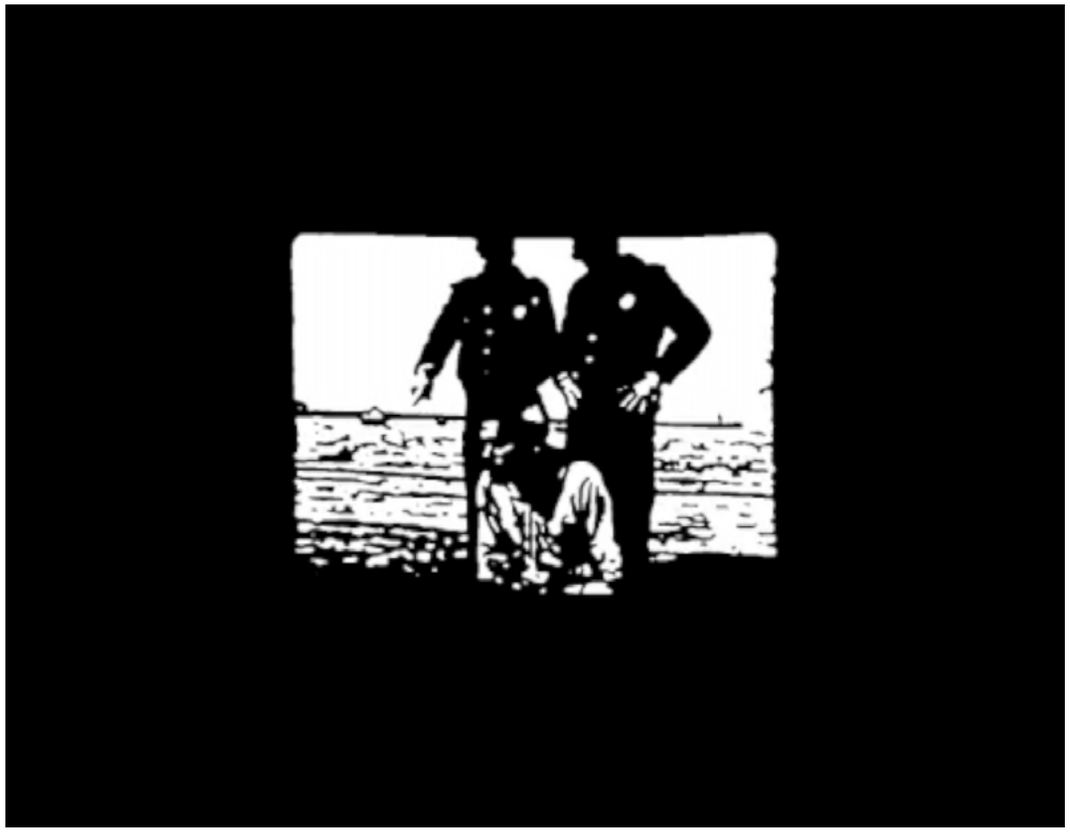
On the nature of the bone, Elena Pardo

As its Latin root *protestare* suggests, acts of protest are always a matter of public witnessing that concerns both the people assembling to oppose, resist, and struggle as well as those who behold, take notice of, attend to, and document these events. Aesthetic manipulation and/or reconstruction of the protest events in these films reflexively engages with the political implications of the ethnographic gaze of the camera and the filmmaker's act of witnessing. For instance, *Demonstration '68*'s (Dominic Angerame, 1968-74) fitful starts and stops of the footage along with the, at times, hazy quality of the imagery owing to the use of an 8mm camera, gives a reflexive quality to this film documentation of a 1968 anti-war march towards Central Park's Sheep's Meadow. This subtle formal attention to the role of the filmmaker as mediator within the activist space of the protest vis-à-vis the act of witnessing becomes a more explicit structuring element in *Gay Power, 1971/2007/2012* (Sharon Hayes, Kate Millett, and The Women's Liberation Cinema, 2012). The film brings together raw footage shot by Women's Liberation Cinema (including Kate Millett, Susan Kleckner, and Lenore Bode among others) at the 1971 Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade and Gay-In, Kate Millett's commentary on the footage thirty years after the event,

Solidarity, Joyce Wieland

and Sharon Hayes's narration of her own reactions to this historical footage. The resulting complex, multilayered text puts various modes of witnessing in conversation with one another: through the lens of the camera (Women's Liberation Cinema), as a retrospective act (Millett), and as a documentary spectator and reassembler (Hayes).

The presentational aspects of protest events directed at onlookers clearly produce a performative dimension. Replay, retrospection, and reenactment involved in the multilayered structuring of *Gay Power* simultaneously indexes these performative aspects of protest events. In its analogy between a carnival and a protest parade, *A Protest, A Celebration, A Mixed Message* also highlights this performative dimension at the Leeds West Indian carnival in Yorkshire, UK. The film emphasizes the racial dimension of the performance in its arrangement of white people as spectators and Black people as performers who are, at the same time, consciously defiant of the white gaze. Yet, a sudden shift to the calm countryside where Storr walks alone in her parade costume calls attention to a different spatial context that lacks an audience for a protesting/performing rural, mixed-race body. In a similar vein, the editing tactics of *Sisters!* (Barbara Hammer, 1973) brings together footage from First Women's March (Height Ashbury, San Francisco, 1973), a concert at the West Coast Lesbian Feminist Conference (UCLA, 1973), and several women performing putatively male labor in conscious address of the camera.
In *Investigation of a Flame* (Lynne Sachs, 2001), the editing similarly alternates between different performative events: the archival footage of the Catonsville Nine burning draft records, military parades featuring children dressed up as soldiers, and Catonsville home movies in which addressing and playacting for the camera reign.



B.L.M., Toney W. Merritt

A protest event becomes a performative one to the extent that it is a bodily assembly of people enacting solidarity and resistance for others to take notice. Underscoring the distinction between the freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, Judith Butler describes how the corporeal, performative gathering of a group of people forms an extra layer of meaning beyond the verbal expression of the protest.[3] This distinction between verbal expression and bodily performance is exactly what configures the image-sound relations in *Solidarity* (Joyce Wieland, 1973). Focusing on a strike at the Dare Cookie Factory in Kitchener, Ontario, the film edits together the feet, shoes, and legs of marching and picketing workers with the organizer's speech on the soundtrack. Despite the unified message on the level of verbal expression, the defamiliarization achieved by the unusual attention to the feet emphasizes the plurality in solidarity. Such a parallel between cinematic editing and the structuring of protest is the organizational principle of *New Left Note* (Saul Levine, 1968-82), which not only assembles bodies but also assembles events with different temporal registers. *New Left Note* articulates this intertextuality through its fast-cut editing of scenes from various protests by the Black Panthers and feminist and anti-war movements among others. *On the nature of the bone* (Elena Pardo, 2018) likewise establishes a link between the massacre of students in 1968 at the Tlatelolco Plaza and the current political atmosphere in Mexico. Through its juxtaposition of past and contemporary found footage, photographs, and drawings, the film offers an animated reenactment of history.

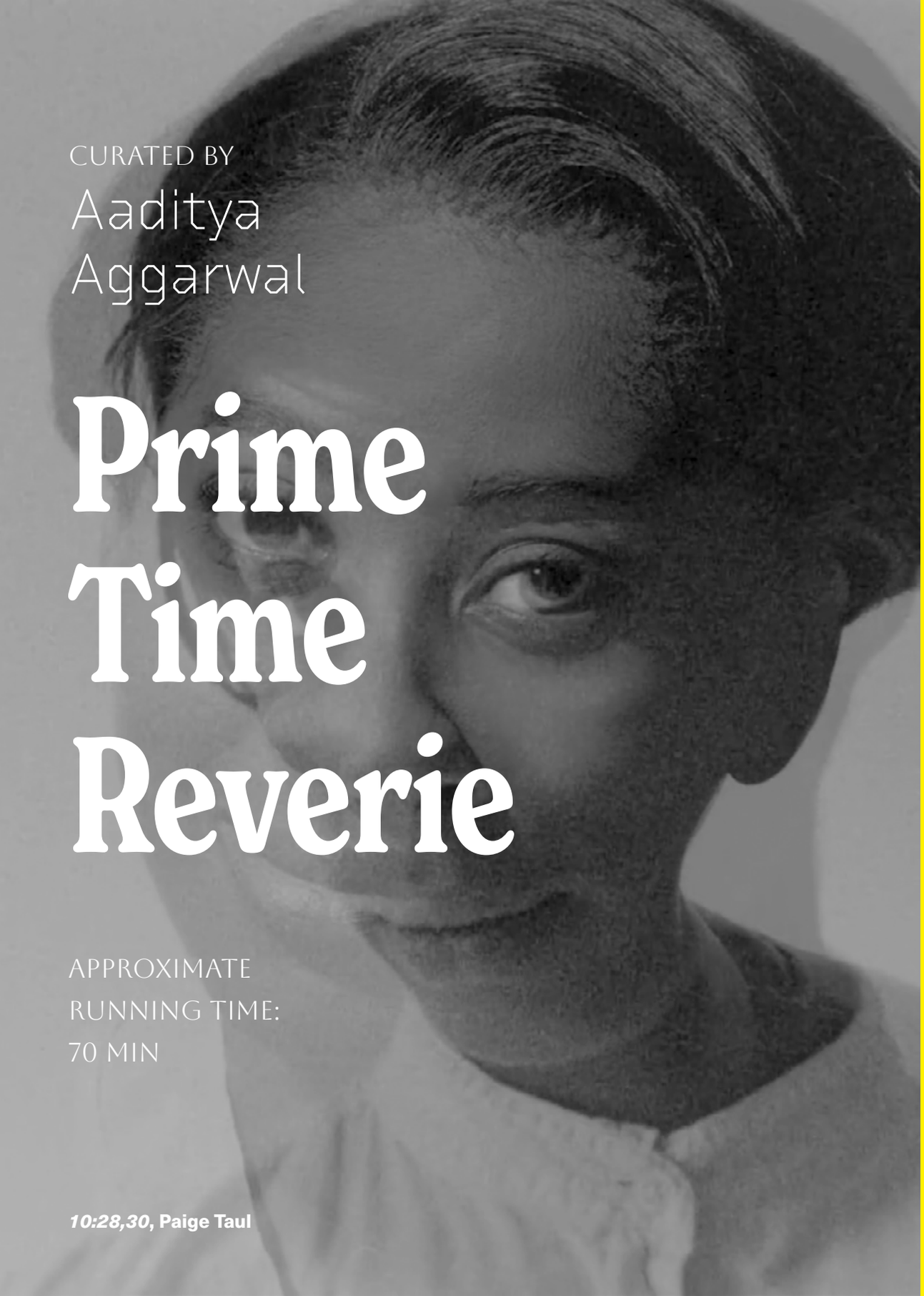
While protest events usually involve a bodily assembly, not everyone has physical access to material spaces of protest. As a compensation, people have used cellphone cameras and the internet to not only record and circulate images more widely than ever before, but also to create alternative modes of protest across online platforms. Films in this program alert us to another history of mediating, constructing, and reconstructing protest. The brief yet powerful *B.L.M.* (Toney W. Merritt, 2020) focuses on the occupation of the putatively public sphere by police while simultaneously constructing a new platform of resistance. *Pig Power* (Single Spark Film, 1969) brings together footage and testimony from several contemporary protests in a style that emulates and subverts the newsreel format (conventionally intended for a mass audience) to create counterimages addressed to a counterpublic.

3 Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2015), 8.

The films in *Insurgent Articulations* establish spatial and temporal connections across multiple sites of protest. Doing so, these films also hint at the community-forming capabilities of the circulation and exhibition practices of experimental cinema in the form of co-ops and cine clubs (for instance, Canyon Cinema and The Film-Makers' Cooperative in the US, Nihon University New Film Study Club in Japan, and Genç Sinema in Turkey, to name only a few). In their thematic, organizational, and formal interest in the significant social and political events that are shaped by and, in turn, constitute our shared lifeworlds, the works in this program go against the theoretical and historiographic traditions that have for so long associated avant-garde film practices with individualistic forms of expression. They suggest new ways of engaging with histories of experimental cinema that highlight resonances, continuities, and entanglements that challenge established periodizations and geographic boundaries. Across this rich tapestry of experimental representations of protest, we find another mode of resistance—one that defies easy historical categorization.

Edited by Tess Takahashi

Investigation of a Flame, Lynne Sachs



CURATED BY
Aaditya
Aggarwal

Prime Time Reverie

APPROXIMATE
RUNNING TIME:
70 MIN

***10:28,30*, Paige Taul**

***Chronicles of a Lying Spirit (by Kelly Gabron)*, Cauleen Smith**
1992, 6 minutes, color, sound, 16mm (CCF)

***No No Nooky T.V.*, Barbara Hammer**
1987, 12 minutes, color, sound, 16mm
(CCF; digital file for online presentation courtesy of EAI)

***Removed*, Naomi Uman**
1999, 6 minutes, color, sound, 16mm (CCF)

***Waiting for Commercials*, Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut**
1966-72, 1992, 7 minutes, color, sound, digital video (EAI)

***No Land*, Emily Chao**
2019, 1 minute, b&w, silent, 16mm (CCF)

***MTV: Artbreak*, Dara Birnbaum**
1986, 30 seconds, color, sound, digital video (EAI)

***Kiss the Girls: Make Them Cry*, Dara Birnbaum**
1979, 7 minutes, color, sound, digital video (EAI)

***That Woman*, Sandra Davis**
2018, 22 minutes, color, sound, digital video (CCF)

***10:28,30*, Paige Taul**
2019, 4 minutes, color and b&w, sound, digital video (CCF)

***Still Life with Woman and Four Objects*, Lynne Sachs**
1986, 4 minutes, b&w, sound, 16mm (CCF)

The Televisual Woman's Hour

ESSAY BY AADITYA AGGARWAL

In what is now widely regarded as the world's first public demonstration of television, a human face could not be fully transmitted. In 1926, Scottish inventor John Logie Baird came close, visualizing a ventriloquist's cartoonish dummy named "Stooky Bill" with the help of radio technology. This puppet-like caricature presented stark enough contrasts in color required, at the time, to transmit an image.

Over the years, the television began to capture figures, faces, and objects with sharper clarity. During the 1920s, film laboratories started to photograph stock models to better calibrate desired exposure and color balance of black-and-white film reels. In the essay "The China Girl on the Margins of Film," Genevieve Yue describes the use of the inappropriately named "China Girl" in Western countries as a figure used as a color tone "next to color swatches and patches of white, gray, and black."[1] She was almost always unknown, young, female, conventionally attractive, and contrary to the name's racial connotations, white. Never screened on film or television, her likeness offered engineers a so-called normative "skin-tone" to mute and elevate contrasts for film, so that the white face could be better visualized on screen.

It wasn't until the 1940s that a televised woman could be perceived in full color. Post-World War II, TV became widely

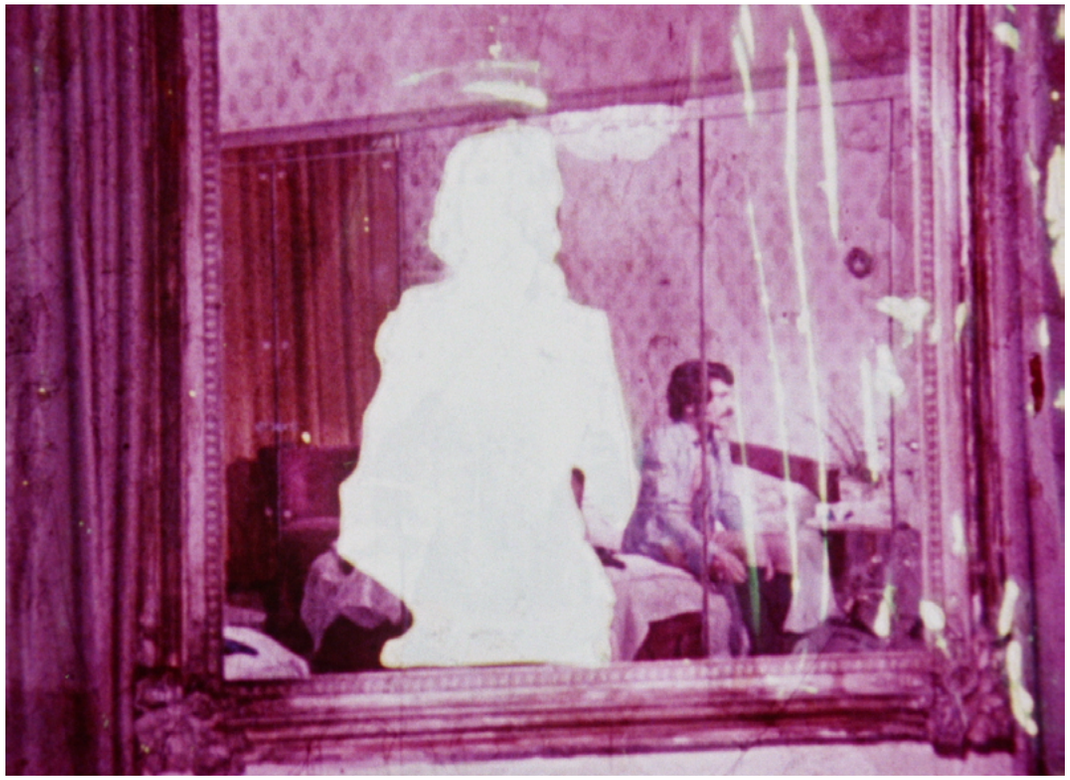
1 Genevieve Yue, "The China Girl on the Margins of Film," *October* 153 (2015): 96–116.

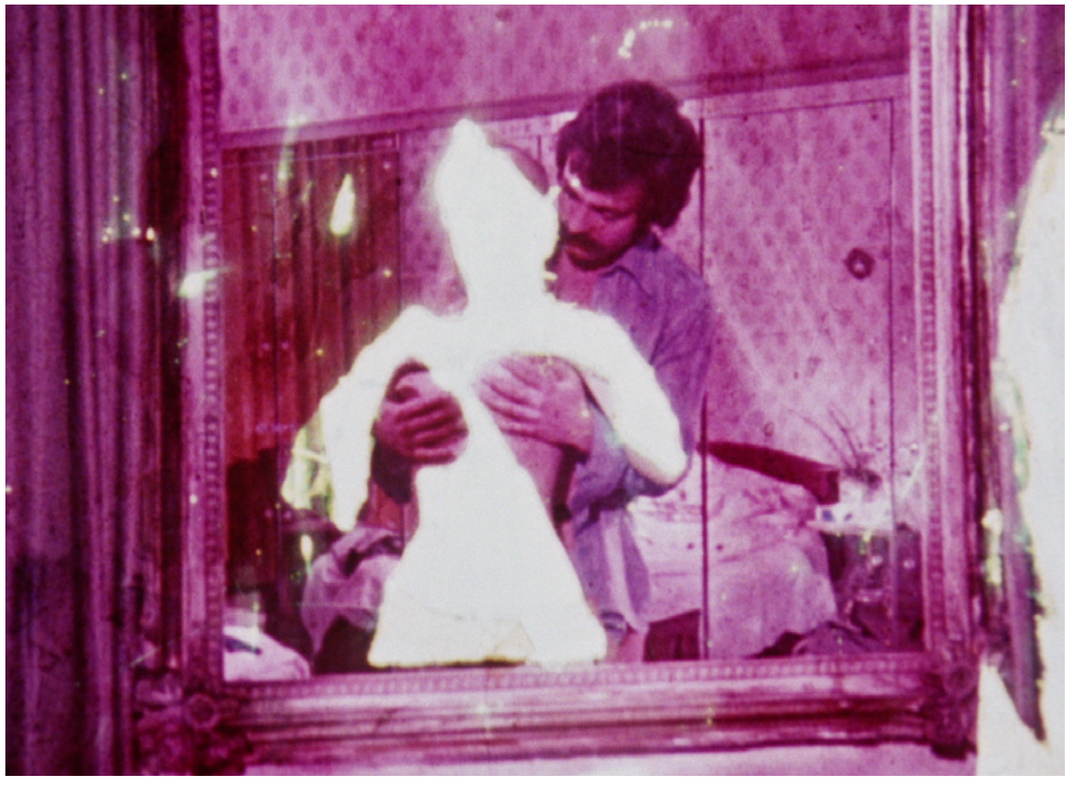
No No Nooky T.V., Barbara Hammer

popular across homes and businesses in North America and the United Kingdom. In 1940, Baird began working on creating a fully electronic color television system called Telechrome. This system revealed an image that veered between cyan and magenta tones, within which a reasonable range of colors could be visualized. By the mid 1960s, this television box set began to depict an even wider range of colors. A growing influx of pinks, purples, yellows, and greens in our home screens began to shape newer practices of looking.

Frequently sighted on analog televisions was a rainbow screen, formally known as SMPTE color bars. A testing pattern employed by video engineers, this arrangement compared and recalibrated a televised image to the National Television System Committee's (NTSC) accepted standard. Often used

Waiting for Commercials, Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut





Removed, Naomi Uman

in tandem with images of the China Girl, SMPTE bars were typically presented at 75% intensity, setting a television monitor or receiver to reproduce chrominance (color) and luminance (brightness) correctly. Its vertical bars—positioned in the screen from left to right, in white, yellow, cyan, green, magenta, red, and blue—were often accompanied by a high-pitched tone.

Enabling more sophisticated, accurate, and textured imagery, this new color television began to usher a distinctly erotic encounter between the appliance and its viewer. From the early 1970s onwards, with the arrival of subscription-based cable networks like HBO, soft-core porn became a staple of private viewing. In her video work *No No Nooky T.V.* (1987), Barbara Hammer references this genre of late-night, often pay-per-view programming, deconstructing its portrayals of female pleasure and physicality. Lensing an Amiga computer with her 16mm Bolex, the artist stages and contorts the alphabet with sensual and cryptic animation. A remix of patterns, shapes, and letters accompanies a sterile, computerized voiceover: “By appropriating me, the women will have a voice.”

Reappropriating pornographic language, *No No Nooky T.V.* reflects on the tactility of the television. One glimpses a TV in bondage, wrapped in black cloth and white twine. Later, it is clasped in multiple bras. Typed into a computer, one message reads: “Does she like me? WANT ME? DESIRE ME? KILL FOR ME? LUST FOR ME?” Another artfully scribbles “dirty pictures” in bejeweled cursive. There is a hilarity in Hammer’s harnessing of a screen in this material way, made absurd by techno-incantations of text littered in different fonts.

Echoing Hammer’s sapphic television, mostly bereft of live bodies or physical performers, is a work like *Removed* (1999) by Naomi Uman. Using bleach and nail varnish on found European

porn films from the 1970s, Uman selectively erases and manually empties out physical bodies of actresses. Whitened, unrecognizable female silhouettes clash against magenta-tinted bedroom surroundings, depicting the televised woman as an open, blank, animated space.

No No Nooky T.V., Barbara Hammer

The artist's removal of the corporeal feminine starkly contrasts against color television's historic hypervisibility of women's bodies. Typifying the latter is a work like Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut's *Waiting for Commercials* (1966-72), where a montage of found Japanese commercials from the 1960s is populated by gleeful stock performers, mostly composed of young women. Inhabiting the screen in between programs, female models in ad breaks market a range of products—from Pepsi-Cola to cosmetics to apparels. In Paik and Yalkut's selection, the televised woman bursts as an object of curiosity for her viewers; albeit in heightened artifice, her joy of selling drink or dress is unparalleled.

Intrigued by representations of femininity and desire, *Waiting for Commercials* evidences the ubiquity of the televised corporeal feminine; one that *Removed* visually effaces or that *No No Nooky T.V.* only teases with mere glimpses—sing-song figures, euphoric, ecstatic, enthralled by touch, excited by commodity.

These works engage multiple figurations of the "televised woman," a conception that continually structures and stages a viewer's sense of tedium, anticipation, and disclosure.

—

When I approach the history of television, the appliance reveals itself as a predominantly women's medium. From cosmetic commercials to exclusive interviews to narrative melodrama, women's television—or television catered specifically to female viewers—is formally diverse, nudging and mirroring its spectators in intimate and discerning ways. Of its many subgenres, one that offers its viewers both entertaining and pedagogical conceptions of womanhood is the soap opera. Whether it is the exaggerated intensity in plot twists of *Days of our Lives* (1965-present) or the moral polarity of female characterization in *Dynasty* (1981-89), soap operas instill in us a measure of persistent expectation. In her essay "The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas: Notes on a Feminine Narrative Form," Tania Modleski emphasizes a soap's tendency to inevitably return towards anticipation. She notes: "Soap operas invest exquisite pleasure in the central condition of a woman's life: waiting—whether for her phone to ring, for the baby to take its nap, or for the family to be reunited shortly after the day's final soap opera has left *its* family still struggling against dissolution."[2]

In its most effective moments, a soap avoids narrative resolution to unrealistic ends. Dramatizing traditional ideas of motherhood and wifehood, soap protagonists and antagonists continually revert to domestic cliffhangers. In a scene from *Days of Our*

2 Tania Modleski, "The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas: Notes on a Feminine Narrative Form," *Film Quarterly 33, no. 1* (1979): 12–21.

Lives, for example, a slyly dainty and theatrically erudite Alexis Colby (played by a breathy, extravagant Joan Collins) makes eye contact with her ex-husband's current wife. The camera zooms in on Alexis, the antagonist, as her eyebrow arches and head tilts in quiet disdain and alerted defense. Seesawing between seduction and virtuosity, soap characters surprise each other with turns of phrase. And while each episode oscillates between familial bliss and disorder, a soap never ends.

In certain video works that employ techniques of appropriation and repetition, one can invert and rethink the soap's televised woman and the format's grammar of female interiority. Opening Lynne Sachs's black-and-white experimental diaristic short *Still Life with Woman and Four Objects* (1986), for instance, is a tight close-up of a woman putting on a fall coat. We are immediately transported into an urban home with a female occupant—an introductory premise that is outwardly ripe for soap opera. As Sachs's camera steadily studies the creases and folds of her subject's clothing and her strands of hair, a voiceover announces: "Scene 1: Woman steps off curb and crosses street." Sachs repeats the same shot, while the voiceover seemingly jumps ahead in time: "Scene 2: Holding a bag of groceries, she opens the front door of Blue Plymouth." In its third repetition, there is further narrative disjuncture. The same woman puts on her coat as the voiceover narrator reveals her limitations, casually puzzled: "Scene 3: I can't remember." The muted recitation of screenplay directions both embraces and negates the lack of resolution of a TV soap. We are left wondering about the events that may have transpired in the protagonist's life in the empty gaps of voiceover between scenes. However, Sachs's repeated, naturalistic mundanity of domestic chores defies the desirous expectation—or the incomprehensible plot turn—that one historically expects of women's melodrama.

Still Life with Woman and Four Objects, Lynne Sachs

Chronicles of a Lying Spirit (by Kelly Gabron), Cauleen Smith

Similarly, Cauleen Smith's faux-memoirist recollection of her alter-ego Kelly Gabron plays on narrative gaps, unreliable narration and spectatorial mistrust, all elements that fuel television. In her video, *Chronicles of a Lying Spirit (by Kelly Gabron)* (1992), a series of photographs are revealed by competing voiceovers. A montage of personal archives and found images sparsely captures a scattered history of Black American television, film, and media.

Stripped of any moving bodies or live action, Smith's experimental biography rejects the commandments of a televisual motion picture. In a static slideshow of film reels, her work repeats its tellings. She employs two voiceovers: in the first narration, a sterile, automated male voice booms over Kelly's inaudible narration; the second time, Kelly's voice is clearer, more comprehensible, eclipsing the man's. Simultaneously, both voiceovers narrate conflicting accounts of Kelly's life as a Black woman artist navigating a predominantly white male art world. While the man's narration flattens her narrative into racist tropes of Black deprivation, Kelly's account is affective, specific, and anecdotal. Concluding the work, the latter's narration corrects the errors of the former.

Deeply invested in an aesthetics of self-portraiture or autofiction, the works by Sachs and Smith read as artistic variations on or intentional detours from the soap format. Historically, women's television is also informed by slice-of-life profiles that capture the quotidian feminine in documentary-style—the woman-led talk show is, in this sense, an uncanny cousin to the oft-ludicrously fictional soap opera. This subgenre

That Woman, Sandra Davis

Kiss the Girls: Make Them Cry (top) and *MTV: Artbreak* (bottom), Dara Birnbaum

of programming arguably originated from scripted sketch-based programs like the Lucille Ball-led *I Love Lucy* (1951-57) as well as daytime reality-based shows like *The Loretta Young Show* (1953-61) and *The Betty White Show* (1952-54). From BBC's *Woman's Hour* (1946-present) to the French program *Dim Dam Dom* (1965-73), dramatized stories of real-life female figures often blended with interview-based programs. A female presenter, in turn, became a hyper-televised woman. Her success relied on her performance as a triple-threat in roles of cultural commentator, comedian, and confidante. In solo interviews, journalists like Barbara Walters adroitly shifted or affirmed national narratives, oftentimes muddying their newsworthy interviewees' vulnerable reputations.

Sandra Davis's *That Woman* (2018) wryly replays and reenacts one such cultural moment on television. Airing on March 3, 1999, the now-infamous interview between Barbara Walters and Monica Lewinsky ruled the prime-time slot—a block of broadcast programming taking place during the middle of the evening—across television screens. Satirizing a mythos of televised womanhood, Davis's work begins as the text "20/20 WEDNESDAY" flashes on ABC's news network from the original interview. In this archival footage, an iridescent background shimmers while an energetic piano interlude plays. In Davis's reenactment, conversely, a Lewinsky lookalike impersonates the original's expressions and responses. She is seated before George Kuchar, who plays Walters in a blonde wig with laughable earnestness. One anecdote from fake-Lewinsky follows another, as the low-budget, camp reenactment is interrupted by selective outtakes from the original conversation. A stern Walters interrogates, while Lewinsky nervously gestures. At one point, there is a close-up of fake Lewinsky's black leather strapped stiletto boots.

Davis's reappraisal of this episode captures the coercive candor and pronounced intensity of appointment television, where primetime interviews oddly invoke the narrative melodrama of soap opera. For instance, much like the soap heroine, a talk show's subject is also activated by the zoom-in, a technique frequently employed in sensationalist news telecasts and scandalous journalistic exposes.

Writing on the invention of the close-up in silent film, Béla Balázs describes its "intimate emotional significance" and "lyrical charm" in *Theory of the Film*, recalling "audience panic" at the first sight of a close-up of a smiling face in a movie theater.[3] The format of a televisual soap furthers Balázs's argument of a close-up's ability to reveal "unconscious expressions," in discomfitingly proximate confines, scanning a poreless, powdered face. In moving close-up, the televised woman spans the expanse of a screen, intimating what Rawiya Kameir describes as the "pointed drama" of a zoom-in in her 2016 review of Solange's *A Seat at the Table*. "Moments later," she writes, "the world beyond her falls away..."[4]

A zoomed-in figure becomes as solitary as a television box set, her presence both disarmingly novel and routinely domestic. But what are the limits of her close-up? Does the televised woman ever exit our saturated screens? Emily Chao's hermetic close-up in her black-and-white work *No Land* (2019) comes to mind. Over the course of two minutes, she zooms into a square-shaped, TV-like black sheet pinned on a tree trunk, surrounded by wild, dense forestry. Invoking the early invention

3 Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art,* trans. Edith Bone (Dover Publications, 1970).

4 Rawiya Kameir, "Solange, In Focus," *The Fader*, Oct. 6, 2016, https://www.thefader.com/2016/10/06/solange-a-seat-at-the-table-essay.

No Land, Emily Chao

of analog screens, one is unable to visualize any corporeal form or countenance in its frame; the transmitter of images instead becomes the image itself, bearing a haptic imprint of its televisual women—invisibilized stock model, adorned brand ambassador, exalted porn star, scheming soap vamp, jovial female presenter, overexposed subject—always visible in the interiors of your living room.

Edited by Girish Shambu

Curatorial Fellows

Aaditya Aggarwal is a writer, editor, and film curator based in Toronto and New Delhi. He has contributed writing to outlets like *Rungh Magazine*, *Canadian Art*, *The New Inquiry*, *Ethnic Aisle* as well as organizations such as Trinity Square Video, South Asian Visual Arts Centre, and FADO Performance Art Centre. Aggarwal has previously worked at the Toronto International Film Festival, Images Festival, Regent Park Film Festival, Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival, and Mercer Union. Recently, he was an Editor for Pleasure Dome's upcoming ebook series themed on experimental Canadian film as well as a Commissioning Editor for Reel Asian's 25th anniversary anthology *(re)Rites of Passage: Asian Canada in Motion*.

Juan Carlos Kase is Associate Professor of Film Studies at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. His writing can be found in *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture*, *Millennium Film Journal*, *The Moving Image*, and *OCTOBER*, together with numerous anthologies related to the avant-garde and intermedial topics. His ongoing research concerns the overlapping aesthetic, historical, and political registers of non-industrial cinema, art history, performance, and music within American culture. Before pursuing academic work in Film Studies, he worked as a producer and archival researcher of historical jazz reissues for The Verve Music Group, RCA/Bluebird, and Revenant.

Chrystel Oloukoï is a writer, researcher, and curator, broadly interested in experimental cinema, queer cinema, and Black continental and diasporic cinema. They are a PhD candidate in African and African American Studies and Critical Media Practice at Harvard University, hold a MA in Geography from the university Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and are an alumni of the Ecole Normale Supérieure of Paris. They co-curate Monangambee, a nomadic panafrican microcinema in Lagos. Their writing has appeared in a number of publications, including *Film Comment, Metrograph, Sight & Sound,* and *World Records*.

Ekin Pinar is an Assistant Professor in the Architecture Department at the Middle East Technical University, Turkey. She received her PhD from the History of Art Department at the University of Pennsylvania with a dissertation titled "Canyon Collective Artists: Micropolitics in West Coast Experimental Film, 1960-79." Her work has appeared in *animation: an interdisciplinary journal*, *Film Criticism*, the essay collection *Mobility and Fantasy*, and *Camera Obscura*. Pinar's current research focuses on histories of expanded cinema and moving image exhibition spaces and practices.

Artists

Dominic Angerame is an American experimental filmmaker whose prolific output displays a particular interest in urban architectures and landscapes. Angerame has taught filmmaking at several North American universities and he was the executive director of Canyon Cinema between 1980 and 2012.

Ephraim Asili is a filmmaker, DJ, and traveler whose work focuses on the African diaspora as a cultural force. Asili currently resides in Hudson, NY, and is a Professor in the Film and Electronic Arts Department at Bard College.

Bruce Baillie (1931-2020) was an American experimental filmmaker based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He was the co-founder of Canyon Cinema and San Francisco Cinematheque and a guiding member of the New American Cinema.

Dara Birnbaum is an American video and installation artist. Birnbaum entered the nascent field of video art in the mid-to-late 1970s challenging the gendered biases of the period and television's ever-growing presence within the American household.

Donna Cameron is an internationally-exhibted and collected multimedia artist whose films and videos are in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Cameron's photography and films use a unique cinematic paper emulsion process (CPE) for which she was issued a US Patent in 2001.

Emily Chao is a filmmaker and independent curator based in San Francisco. Her ongoing series of diverse, short-form nonfiction films focus on identity, diaspora, history, and the interaction between space and memory. She is a co-programmer of Light Field and a founding member of Black Hole Collective Film Lab in Oakland.

Miryam Charles is a Canadian-Haitian filmmaker and cinematographer and a graduate of Concordia University's Film MFA. Her brief experimental fictions and essay films, primarily shot in Super 8 and 16mm, explore diasporic longing, the uncanny, and the psychic and embodied weight of histories of dispossession.

Julie Dash is an American film director, writer, and producer. Dash received her MFA from the UCLA Film School in 1985 and is one of the graduates and filmmakers known as the L.A. Rebellion. Her film *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) was the first full-length film directed by an African American woman to obtain general theatrical release in the US. Dash has also written two books and directed movies for television.

Sandra Davis is a San Francisco-based experimental filmmaker and curator whose work has been exhibited at film showcases and festivals worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Pompidou Center, Paris. She has taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of South Florida, and the San Francisco Art Institute, and lectured widely in the US and Europe on experimental cinema.

Robert Fenz (1969-2020) made black-and-white films that reflected both the jazz-inspired imagery of New York School photographers such as Roy DeCarava and Aaron Siskin and the landscape films of Fenz's former teacher, Peter Hutton. An inveterate traveler, Fenz made films in Cuba, Mexico, Brazil, India, and France. He also worked as a cinematographer on several films including Chantal Akerman's *From the Other Side* (2003) and *Là-bas* (2006).

Ja'Tovia Gary is an African American multidisciplinary artist working across documentary, avant-garde video art, sculpture, and installation. Her work, collaging voices, chants, analog animation, digital and archival film embraces the reparative ethics of quilting as a longstanding tradition of Black women's fugitive arts.

David Gatten is an American experimental filmmaker exploring the intersections of the printed word and the moving image. His extensive filmography, primarily in 16mm but also more recently digital format, is a tapestry of conceptual, lyrical, and material engagements with 18th and 19th century textual archives of the Western world.

Barbara Hammer (1939-2019) was a feminist filmmaker and pioneer of queer cinema, who made over 90 moving image works as well as performances, installations, photographs, collages and drawings.

Christopher Harris has won numerous awards for his 16mm experimental films and moving image installations, which have screened at the Locarno Film Festival, the International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Arsenal Berlin, and many other festivals and exhibition venues. He is a 2020-2021 Radcliffe-Film Study Center Fellow/David and Roberta Logie Fellow at Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and a 2015 Creative Capital grant awardee.

Sharon Hayes is an American artist whose output engages with different media ranging from performance and language-based art to video installation. Fusing fact and fiction, narrative and documentary modes in a reflexive manner, Hayes's artworks focus on politics, queer and feminist histories, and questions of mediation.

Mike Henderson is a painter, professor, and blues musician who set out from Marshall, Missouri in 1965 to study at the San Francisco Art Institute. After graduating with a BFA in painting and a MFA in filmmaking in 1970, he joined the faculty at University of California-Davis as a professor of art, where he taught painting, drawing, and filmmaking until his retirement in 2012.

Saul Levine is an American experimental filmmaker. His output brings together personal and politically-engaged documentary modes in a reflexive manner. Levine was a professor at Massachusetts College of Art and Design and established its MassArt Film Society.

Toney W. Merritt is a California-based African American filmmaker playfully subverting experimental, narrative, and documentary strategies and techniques in an extensive body of work, including over 30 personal films and videos. He was part of a group of artists who founded San Francisco's No Nothing Cinema, an independent venue for irreverent, underground cinema during the 1980s. He has taught at City College San Francisco and San Francisco State University.

Kate Millett (1934-2017) was an American feminist writer, educator, artist, and activist. In 1971, Millett formed **Women's Liberation Cinema** and produced the feminist classic, *Three Lives*. Between 1963 and 2009, she had several international solo art exhibitions and installations in sculpture, drawing, serigraphs, and photography.

Everlane Moraes is a Brazilian filmmaker, visual artist, and activist in the Black movement. She graduated from the Cuban International Film and TV School (EICTV). Her hybrid conceptual and documentary short films shot and co-produced across Brazil, Cuba, Mozambique, and Portugal, explore the fractured condition of lives in diaspora.

Samba Félix N'diaye (1945-2009) was a pioneer Senegalese documentary filmmaker trained at the Louis Lumière Institute. His unique body of work in 16mm explores different facets of postcolonial Senegal, with an emphasis on practices of bricolage and recuperation. Before his death in 2009, he was working on a project of experimental film school in Dakar.

Korean-born artist **Nam June Paik**'s (1932-2006) video sculptures, installations, performances, and single-channel videos encompassed one of the most influential bodies of work in electronic media art. Merging global communications theories with an irreverent Fluxus sensibility, his work in music, performance, and video explored the juncture of art, technology, and popular culture.

Elena Pardo is an experimental filmmaker based in Mexico City. Her filmmaking practice partakes in expanded cinema, animation, and documentary modes. She is the co-founder of Laboratorio Experimental de Cine (LEC) dedicated to experimental and expanded cinema production.

Lynne Sachs is an American experimental filmmaker, performance and installation artist, and poet. Her approach blends documentary, essayistic, and diaristic strategies to explore the intricate relationship between personal observations and historical experience. Her work weaves together poetry, collage, painting, politics, and layered sound design, searching for a rigorous play between image and sound and pushing the visual and aural textures.

Hussein Shariffe (1934-2005) was a Sudanese filmmaker, abstract painter, poet, and university lecturer at the University of Khartoum. His films often crossed boundaries between genres, exploring questions of memory and exile—particularly in the aftermath of the 1989 military coup—through symbolism, insurgent tableaux, and nonlinear narrative techniques.

Emerging from the San Francisco-based social justice film distribution and production company California Newsreel, **Single Spark Films** was the film unit of the Revolutionary Communist Party (formerly the Revolutionary Union).

Cauleen Smith is an interdisciplinary artist whose work reflects upon the everyday possibilities of the imagination. Her films, objects, and installations have been featured in exhibitions at the Studio Museum of Harlem, Whitney Museum of American Art, Houston Contemporary Art Museum, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, SFMOMA, the New Museum, and Decad, Berlin.

Harry Smith (1923-1991) was a visual artist, experimental filmmaker, record collector, bohemian, mystic, largely self-taught student of anthropology, and Neo-Gnostic bishop. Besides his films, Smith is also widely known for his influential *Anthology of American Folk Music*, drawn from his extensive collection of rare 78-rpm recordings.

Rhea Storr is a Caribbean-British experimental filmmaker and video artist. Using essayistic modes, her work especially explores issues of masquerade, translation, Black and Mixed-Race representation, performance, and carnival culture.

Paige Taul is an Oakland, California native who received her BA in Studio Art from the University of Virginia and her MFA in Moving Image from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her work engages with and challenges assumptions of Black cultural expression and notions of belonging through experimental cinematography.

Naomi Uman is a filmmaker whose work is marked by a signature handmade aesthetic, often shooting, hand-processing, and editing her films with the most rudimentary of practices. Uman's films have been exhibited widely at the Sundance, Rotterdam, and San Francisco International Film Festivals, New York Film Festival, Guggenheim Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, The Smithsonian, and Mexico City's Museo de Arte Moderno.

Doug Wendt has been working in the arts, radio, and music business since co-hosting "Bison Review" on KUDI in Montana in the mid 1960s. Wendt received a Master's degree in Filmmaking from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1972.

Joyce Wieland (1930-1998) was a Canadian artist whose work ranged from mixed-media collages and assemblages to experimental filmmaking. Describing herself as a "cultural activist," Wieland engaged with issues of gender, labor, ecology, and disaster in her artworks.

Jud Yalkut (1938-2013) was a pioneering intermedia artist and filmmaker. His remarkable body of moving image work, which spanned 50 years, ranged from early performance renderings and poetic filmic experiments to a series of groundbreaking hybrid video-film collaborations with Nam June Paik.

Project Advisors

Christopher Harris is an associate professor of film and video production in the Department of Cinematic Arts at the University of Iowa. He makes films and video installations that read African American historiography through the poetics and aesthetics of experimental cinema. His work employs manually and photo-chemically altered appropriated moving images, staged re-enactments of archival artifacts and interrogations of documentary conventions. His current project is a series of optically-printed 16mm experimental films in conversation with canonical works of African-American literature. His international exhibitions include a career retrospective at the Belo Horizonte International Short Film Festival (Brazil), solo screenings at the Museum of Modern Art, Locarno Film Festival (Switzerland), Images Festival (Toronto), Encontro de Cinema Negro (Rio de Janeiro), Arsenal-Institute for Film and Video (Berlin), and a solo performance at the Essay Film Festival (London). In 2022, Harris received Prismatic Ground's second annual Ground Glass Award for outstanding contribution in the field of experimental media. He also received the 2020-2021 Radcliffe-Film Study Center Fellow/David and Roberta Logie Fellow at Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, a 2020 Artist Project Grant from Los Angeles Filmforum, Media City Film Festival's 2020 Chrysalis Fellowship, the 2019-20 Artist Residency Award from the Wexner Center for the Arts, a 2017 Alpert/MacDowell Fellowship, a 2015 Creative Capital grant, and was a featured artist at the 2018 Flaherty Seminar. Writing about his work has appeared in *Art in America*, *Cinema Scope Magazine*, *Millennium Film Journal*, and numerous books and periodicals. Interviews with Harris have appeared in *Film Comment*, Mubi.com, *BOMB Magazine*, and *Film Quarterly* among other print and online journals.

Steff Hui Ci Ling - 林惠慈 is a student, cultural worker, and guest living on the unceded territories of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Sə́lílwətaʔ/ Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations. Currently, she is a MA Candidate in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Simon Fraser University, working as a teaching assistant in Labour Studies, and a research assistant on projects concerned with unwaged precarity, as well as domestic and care workers in Canada. Her recent writings on cinema and film programming are oriented towards social critique of creative labour economies, decommodified labour, and representations of work in artists' cinema. She has published locally, nationally and internationally with recent texts in *MUBI Notebook*, *Senses of Cinema*, *March: a journal of art and strategy, ReIssue*, and *The Capilano Review*. She has been invited to facilitate and participate on panels by the La Commune 2021 Free School x Unit/Pitt (Vancouver), Frieze New York x Unit 17 (New York/ Vancouver), and Open City Documentary Film Festival (London) to speak about political texts, painting, and cinema with scholars, artists and experimental filmmakers. She has delivered guest lectures and seminars on curatorial labor, writing, and publishing practices at the Department of Visual Arts at UC San Diego, the School of Film and Video at CalArts, Creative Writing Program at New York University, Contemporary Directions in Film and Media at York University, and Emily Carr University's Artists' Book Collection. In addition to writing and curatorial work, she designs and co-edits *STILLS: moving image tract* with Casey Wei and organizes a Marxish Study Group for art workers and students. Her books are *NASCAR* (Blank Cheque, 2016), *CUTS OF THIN MEAT* (Spare Room, 2015), and MIXED MARTIAL ARTS (House House Press, 2022).

Adam Piron is a filmmaker and film programmer based in Southern California. He is a co-founder of COUSIN: a film collective dedicated to supporting Indigenous artists experimenting with and pushing the boundaries of the moving image. He is also the Director of Sundance Institute's Indigenous Program where he helps oversee the organization's investment in Indigenous filmmakers globally. His films have played on *The New Yorker*'s Documentary Series as well as in the Camden International Film Festival, Indie Grits, Seattle International Film Festival, and various other festivals. He was previously Film Curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) where he produced retrospectives on the films of Sky Hopinka, Adam Khalil, Caroline Monnet, Fox Maxy, and others. As a Film Programmer, Piron is a member of the Sundance Film Festival's Short Film Programming Team and has also programmed for AFI DOCS, AFI FEST, the imagineNative Film and Media Arts Festival, as well as the LA Film Festival. He has guest curated Indigenous Cinema programs for MUBI, The Autry Museum of the American West, and other festivals and film organizations. Piron is also on the Editorial Advisory Board of *Seen*, a journal produced by BlackStar examining the visual culture of communities of color, featuring interviews, reviews, and essays about Black, Brown, and Indigenous visual culture. He concurrently serves on the Board of Trustees and Programming Committee of the The Flaherty Film Seminar, an organization devoted to building community around the moving image and the longest continuously running annual film event in North America devoted to creative non-fiction.

Since the 1980s, **Lynne Sachs** has created cinematic works that defy genre through the use of hybrid forms and cross-disciplinary collaboration, incorporating elements of the essay film, collage, performance, documentary, and poetry. Her highly self-reflexive films explore the intricate relationship between personal observations and broader historical experiences. With each project, Sachs investigates the implicit connection between the body, the camera, and the materiality of film itself. She made her early, experimental works on celluloid in San Francisco where she took a feminist approach to the creation of images and writing—a commitment which has grounded her body of work ever since. While in the Bay Area, she worked closely with artists Craig Baldwin, Bruce Conner, Steve Fagin, Barbara Hammer, Gunvor Nelson, and Trinh T. Minh-ha. From essay films to hybrid docs to diaristic shorts, Sachs has produced over 40 films as well as numerous projects for web, installation, and performance. She has tackled topics near and far, often addressing the challenge of translation—from one language to another or from spoken work to image. Sachs's films have screened at venues such as the Museum of Modern Art, Wexner Center for the Arts, the Walker and the Getty, and at festivals including New York Film Festival, the Sundance Film Festival, Punto de Vista, DocAviv, and DocLisboa. Retrospectives of her work have been presented at the Museum of the Moving Image, Sheffield Doc/Fest, Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema, Cork Film Festival, Festival International Nuevo Cine in Havana, China Women's Film Festival and Costa Rica International Film Festival. In 2021, both the Edison Film Festival and the Prismatic Ground Film Festival at the Maysles Documentary Center awarded Lynne for her body of work in the experimental and documentary fields. She lives in Brooklyn, New York with her partner filmmaker Mark Street.

Canyon Cinema Staff and Project Collaborators

Antonella Bonfanti is the Film Collection Supervisor at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, where she oversees film and video archival, acquisition, and preservation projects. Bonfanti holds a Master's degree from the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation (George Eastman Museum) and has extensive experience working with film collections at institutions across the United States. She previously served as Canyon Cinema Foundation's Collection Manager (2013-2015) and Director (2015-2020).

Hatim Eujayl is a Sudanese-American student of Arabic and linguistics passionate about Sudanese languages and making information about Sudan more accessible. He is the founder, director, lead translator, and editor of *The Sounds of Sudan* project on social media, which translates Sudanese music in a variety of languages to English. He is an illustrator and author for the Geri Fai Omir project to promote Nubian language literacy, for which he illustrated four published books: *This is How We Write Nubian, This is How We Read Nubian, Nabra's Nubian Numbers,* and *The Miracle of Amanirenas*. Additionally, Hatim is the designer of the Sawarda Nubian font, and has been featured in publications like *Middle East Eye*, *El País*, and *500 Words Magazine* commenting on issues of Sudanese politics, Nubian written history, language revitalization, and cultural preservation.

Max Goldberg is an archivist and critic based in Arlington, Massachusetts. His writing has appeared in the *San Francisco Arts Quarterly*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Cinema Scope*, *Fandor Keyframe*, *Cabinet*, *Film Quarterly, MUBI Notebook*, the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, and *KQED*. He holds an MA in Cinema Studies from San Francisco State University and an MLS in Library and Information Science from Simmons College. He has recently cataloged archival collections for the Harvard Film Archive and Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

shah noor hussein is a Sudanese visual artist, writer, and doctoral pre-candidate at University of California, Santa Cruz in the Department of Anthropology, with a designated emphasis in Critical Race & Ethnic Studies. shah's cross-disciplinary work aims to (re)center marginalized voices in dialogues on alternative epistemologies and cultural reproduction through a multimedia study of popular culture and women's music in Sudan. Their photography has been featured in the *Black Woman is God* exhibit, CIIS Womxn & Spirituality Conference, SOMArts Cultural Center, Ashara Ekundayo Gallery, and Alena Museum. shah's films have screened on local and international stages including SOMArts in San Francisco, the Aguas Migrantes Film Festival in Mexico, and the American Association of Geographers Conference in New Orleans. Their poetry has been featured in *Foglifter Press*, *The LA Review of Book*s, *Umber*, and *CUNJUH* as well as performed at the Museum of the African Diaspora, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, and the African American Arts & Culture Complex. Currently, shah is working on their next book project in Oakland, California while serving as the Managing Editor for *The Arrow Journal* and teaching graduate and undergraduate students at UC Santa Cruz.

Brett Kashmere is a media artist, curator, and writer living in Oakland, California. He has been the Executive Director of Canyon Cinema Foundation since 2020 and is the founding editor of *INCITE Journal of Experimental Media* (est. 2008), an artist-run publication dedicated to the discourse, culture, and community of experimental film, video, and new media. His writing on experimental cinema, video, and alternative media exhibition has appeared in journals and magazines such as *Millennium Film Journal*, *The Brooklyn Rail, The Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, *The Velvet Light Trap, MIRAJ*, and *PUBLIC*; anthologies including *Process Cinema: Handmade Film in the Digital Age, A Microcinema Primer: A Brief History of Small Cinemas*, *Carolee Schneemann: Unforgivable,* and *The Films of Jack Chambers*; and web publications such as *Senses of Cinema,* the Women's Film and Television History Network blog, the NFB blog, and the Carnegie Museum of Art's *Storyboard*. With Steve Polta, he is co-editor *Craig Baldwin: Avant to Live!* (2022). Kashmere has taught media production, exhibition practices, and film and television history at Concordia University, Oberlin College, and University of California, Santa Cruz. He holds an MA in Film Studies and an MFA in Studio Arts from Concordia University and is currently a PhD candidate in Film & Digital Media at UC Santa Cruz.

Léopold Lambert is the founder and editor-in-chief of *The Funambulist*, a printed and digital magazine on the colonial necropolitics of the built environment. He is a trained architect and cartographer, as well as the author of *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence* (2012), *Topie Impitoyable: The Corporeal Politics of the Cloth, the Wall, and the Street* (2016), *La politique du Bulldozer: La ruine palestinienne comme projet israélien* (2016), and *States of Emergency: A Spatial History of the French Colonial Continuum* (2021).

S Topiary Landberg is an interdisciplinary media artist, curator, writer, and educator. Her research, practice, and teaching focus on documentary and experimental media related to environmentalism, urban studies, and film geography. From 2018-2020, Topiary served as the Mellon Curatorial Fellow at the Oakland Museum of California. She holds a theory/practice PhD in Film & Digital Media at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Topiary's films, multi-media performance, and installation works have been presented in museums, film festivals, theaters, and art galleries nationally and abroad. She has received grants and residencies from the MacDowell Colony, the Experimental Television Center, Radar's Writer's Lab, and Mount Tremper Arts. She currently lectures at UC Santa Cruz, and has taught at the School for Visual Arts, CUNY's College of Staten Island, the Pratt Institute, and the Media Studies graduate program at New School University in New York City. Her writing has been published in *Camera Obscura, Film Quarterly, Millennium Film Journal, Flow,* and in the edited volume *Reclaiming Popular Documentary* (Indiana University, 2021). www.topiary.land

Dessane Lopez Cassell is a New York-based editor, writer, and curator. Her work focuses on moving image and visual art practices concerned with race, gender, and decoloniality. She's particularly interested in voices from the African and Caribbean diasporas, and those focused on examining notions of paradise. Cassell is Editor-in-Chief of *Seen* journal, a new publication focused on film, art, and visual culture writing by and about people of color, published by BlackStar. Additionally, she has been part of the programming committee for BlackStar Film Festival since 2018. Prior to joining Seen, Cassell was the reviews editor at *Hyperallergic*, where she focused on championing writers and artists from underrepresented communities and growing the publication's film coverage.

Seth Mitter is an archivist, filmmaker and projectionist. He has been Collection Manager at Canyon Cinema since 2015. He holds an MLS from Indiana University specializing in Archives and audiovisual preservation and has been involved in making films and organizing film screenings for over 15 years. He is a member of Black Hole Collective Film Lab in Oakland and an occasional projectionist at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

Girish Shambu is Associate Professor of Management at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York. He is also a film critic and scholar who edits *Film Quarterly*'s online column, Quorum. He is the author of *The New Cinephilia* (Indiana University Press, 2020, 2nd ed.), a book about Internet film culture. His writings have also appeared in *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, Artforum.com, *Cineaste*, *Film Comment*, and in the collection *Cinephilia in the Age of Digital Reproduction, Volume 1: Film, Pleasure and Digital Culture* (Wallflower Press, 2009).

Tess Takahashi is a Toronto-based scholar, writer, and programmer who focuses on experimental moving image arts. She is currently working on two books, *Impure Film: Medium Specificity and the North American Avant-Garde (1968-2008)*, which examines artists' work with historically new media, and *On Magnitude*, which considers artists' work against the scale of big data. She is a member of the experimental media programming collective Ad Hoc and the editorial collective for *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media*. Takahashi's writing has been published there as well as in *Cinema Journal*, the *Millennium Film Journal*, *Animation*, *MIRAJ*, and *Cinema Scope*.

Helen Shewolfe Tseng is an interdisciplinary artist and designer working across brand, print, and digital, with clients and collaborations in the arts, technology, media and publishing, academia, retail, and more. Previously, Helen was a 2018-2019 Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Fellow and the 2019 Designer in Residence at Headlands Center for the Arts.

Image Credits

All images copyright of the individual artists and their estates unless otherwise indicated.

Page 14: Still (detail) from *Many Thousands Gone* (Ephraim Asili, 2014). Courtesy of Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Pages 16–19: Still (detail) from *Mirror Animations [Film #11]* (Harry Smith, 1957). Courtesy of Anthology Film Archives, New York.

Page 23: Stills from *Not a Music Video* (Toney W. Merritt, 1987). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 24: Still from *Pilgrim* (Cauleen Smith, 2017). Courtesy of the artist and Morán Morán, Los Angeles and Mexico City.

Pages 24–27: Stills from *28.IV.81 (Bedouin Spark)* (Christopher Harris, 2009). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 30: Stills from *Many Thousands Gone* (Ephraim Asili, 2014). Image copyright of the artist, courtesy of Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Page 33: Still from *All My Life* (Bruce Baillie, 1966). Courtesy of Anthology Film Archives, New York.

Page 34: Still (detail) from *Towards the Colonies* (Miryam Charles, 2016). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 36: Stills from *Giverny I (Négresse Impériale)* (Ja'Tovia Gary, 2017). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 38: Still from *Song for the New World* (Miryam Charles, 2021). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 39: Still from *By the Sea* (Toney W. Merritt, 1982). Courtesy of the artist.

Pages 38–41: Still (detail) from *Aqua* (Samba Félix N'diaye, 1989). Copyright Nine Ndiaye and La Traverse. Courtesy of La Traverse and Chrystel Oloukoï.

Page 44: Stills from *The Dislocation of Amber* (Hussein Shariffe, 1975). Courtesy of Arsenal – Institut für Film und Videokunst e.V., Berlin.

Pages 44–47: Stills from *Pattaki* (Everlane Moraes, 2019). Courtesy of the artist.

Pages 48-51: Maps by Léopold Lambert, following Chrystel Oloukoï's instructions, 2022. Commissioned by Canyon Cinema Foundation for Canyon Cinema Discovered.

Pages 52-53: Map by Léopold Lambert, adapted for Chrystel Oloukoï from one drawn for *The Funambulist* 39 (Jan-Feb 2022), *The Ocean... From the Black Atlantic to the Sea of Islands.*

Pages 54-57: Maps by Léopold Lambert, following Chrystel Oloukoï's instructions, 2022. Commissioned by Canyon Cinema Foundation for Canyon Cinema Discovered.

Page 62: Still (detail) from *A Protest, A Celebration, A Mixed Message* (Rhea Storr, 2018). Courtesy of the artist and LUX, London.

Pages 62–65: Stills from *A Protest, A Celebration, A Mixed Message* (Rhea Storr, 2018). Courtesy of the artist and LUX, London.

Page 66: Stills from *Sisters!* (Barbara Hammer, 1973). Courtesy of the Estate of Barbara Hammer, New York and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

Page 69: Still from *On the nature of the bone* (Elena Pardo, 2018). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 70: Stills from *Solidarity* (Joyce Wieland, 1973). Courtesy of Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, Toronto.

Page 72: Still from *B.L.M.* (Toney W. Merritt, 2020). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 76: Still (detail) from *10:28,30* (Paige Taul, 2019). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 79: Still from *No No Nooky T.V.* (Barbara Hammer, 1987). Courtesy of the Estate of Barbara Hammer, New York and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

Pages 78–81: Still (detail) from *Waiting for Commercials* (Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, 1966-72, 1992). Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

Page 82: Stills from *Removed* (Naomi Uman, 1999). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 84: Still from *No No Nooky T.V.* (Barbara Hammer, 1987). Courtesy of the Estate of Barbara Hammer, New York and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

Page 87: Stills from *Still Life with Woman and Four Objects* (Lynne Sachs, 1986). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 89: Still from *That Woman* (Sandra Davis, 2018). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 90: Still from Kiss the Girls: Make Them Cry (Dara Birnbaum, 1979). Courtesy of the artist and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

Page 90: Still from MTV: Artbreak (Dara Birnbaum, 1986). Courtesy of the artist and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

Page 93: Still from *No Land* (Emily Chao, 2019). Courtesy of the artist.

Canyon Cinema Discovered

Canyon Cinemazine #9
2022

Edited by S. Topiary Landberg and Brett Kashmere

Layout and design by Helen Shewolfe Tseng

Published by:
Canyon Cinema Foundation
1777 Yosemite Ave, Suite #210
San Francisco, CA 94124 USA
www.canyoncinema.com

This publication was made possible by the Owsley Brown III Philanthropic Foundation and The Friends of Canyon Cinema. Additional funding for Canyon Cinema Discovered was provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation.

Canyon Cinema Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Founded in Bruce Baillie's Canyon, California backyard in 1961, Canyon Cinema is dedicated to educating the public about independent, noncommercial, experimental moving image art. We manifest this commitment by providing access to our unrivaled collection to universities and cultural organizations worldwide, as well as cultivating scholarship and appreciation of artist-made cinema.

Printed in Emeryville, California by Coast Litho.

ISBN: 979-8-218-05125-9

Canyon Cinema Discovered is a multifaceted fellowship program that aims to engender fresh perspectives on experimental cinema. For this first iteration, four curatorial fellows were invited to assemble programs from Canyon's unique collection of artist-made films for in-person screening and online streaming. As a point of focus, the cohort was encouraged to activate undervalued and underseen works and to incorporate recent acquisitions as well as complementary works from outside of the collection, with the goal of instigating critical engagement with experimental cinema's evolving legacy.

Curators: Aaditya Aggarwal, Juan Carlos Kase, Chrystel Oloukoï, Ekin Pinar

Artists: Dominic Angerame, Ephraim Asili, Bruce Baillie, Dara Birnbaum, Donna Cameron, Emily Chao, Miryam Charles, Julie Dash, Sandra Davis, Robert Fenz, Ja'Tovia Gary, David Gatten, Barbara Hammer, Christopher Harris, Sharon Hayes, Kate Millett, and The Women's Liberation Cinema, Mike Henderson, Saul Levine, Toney W. Merritt, Everlane Moraes, Samba Félix N'diaye, Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, Elena Pardo, Lynne Sachs, Hussein Shariffe, Single Spark Film, Cauleen Smith, Harry Smith, Rhea Storr, Paige Taul, Naomi Uman, Doug Wendt, Joyce Wieland

Canyon Cinema Foundation

ISBN 979-8-218-05125-9

90000>

9 798218 051259