



Avant-Garde Cinema

at the University of Colorado at Boulder

Fall '79

All screenings on Mondays at 8 pm in Fine Arts N-141. Admission \$1.00.



Woody and Steina Vasulka

4. October 22 A Patchwork Glance Over 45 Years

Fireworks, 1947, Kenneth Anger, 15 minutes, B/W, musical sound-track.

"Fireworks comes from the beautiful night from which emerge all the true works. It touches the quick of the soul, and this is very rare." (Jean Cocteau)

Mass For the Dakota Sioux, 1963-64, Bruce Baillie, 24 minutes, B/W, sound.

"...the eye of the filmmaker quiets his mind with images of reconciliation; the dialectics of cinematic thought become calm in the filming of the privileged moment of reconciliation." (P. Adams Sitney)

Retour A La Raison, 1923, Man Ray, 4 minutes, B/W, silent.

This film was made overnight in order to insult and aggravate the audience at the last great Dada soiree called "The Evening of the Bearded Heart." Most of the film was made outside the camera by placing objects directly onto raw film and exposing it to light.

Cosmic Ray, 1961, Bruce Conner, 8 minutes, B/W, sound.

"...A dancing girl--nude, half clothed or stripping--gyrates to Ray Charles' 'What'd I say.'" (Gene Youngblood)

"It's a masterpiece, with sophistication of means, a control of ambiguous effects and expressive intent far removed from surrealism." (Brian O'Doherty)

Opus I, II, III, 1920's, Walter Ruttmann, 6 min, color, silent.

Early abstract animation of waves, spikes and a group of antithetical shapes in relationship and conflict to each other. Ruttmann tinted these short films, and the color is well preserved; the films are delightful as well as prophetic of animation styles and Germany's political climate.

H2O, 1929, Ralph Steiner, 14 minutes, B/W, silent.

This famous abstract film is about water and the interplay of rhythms of light and shade on its surface.

Samadhi, 1967, Jordan Belson, 10 min, color, sound.

"...certainly among the most powerful and haunting states of nonordinary reality ever captured on film." (G. Youngblood)

"...In a way it's a projection of what's going on inside, phenomena thrown out by the consciousness, which we are then able to look at...It's as though I've come back from there with my camera in hand--I've been able to film it." (Belson)

7. November 12 Maya Deren's Divine Horseman and Ritual in Transfigured Time

Ritual in Transfigured Time, 1946, 15 minutes, B/W, silent.

"There are visual and auditory experiences which have nothing to do with the descriptive narrative...Cinema is a time-space art with a unique capacity for creating new temporal-spatial relationships and projecting them with an incontrovertible impact of reality...The external universe has been revealed as an active force. Cinema is especially equipped to deal with such experiences." (Maya Deren)

Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti, 1947-51, released 1977, 54 minutes, B/W, sound.

Divine Horsemen...is a documentary on the Voodoo religion of Haiti. The film was shot by Maya Deren during 1947-1951, and edited posthumously by Teiji Ito and Cherele Ito. The filmmaker had been initiated into the religion as a priestess in Haiti, which accounts for the intimate detail she was able to capture in film.

The film deals with the rituals of the Rada, Petro, and Congo cults of Haiti, whose origins stem from Africa...We see the deities manifest in the human bodies--a phenomenon known as "Possession." The reference to the title, *Divine Horsemen*--man is like a horse being mounted by a divine spirit.

"...It is a film that conveys, perhaps for the first time, the power and beauty of the Voodoo rites free of both the flase fantasies of Hollywood and the desensitized distance of ethnographers. It is a picture of voodoo viewed by an artist, as Deren herself was fond of emphasizing, one privileged to conduct a study of emotional and psychological perceptions on a subjective level--a route unavailable to intellectual methodologists." (B. Ruby Rich, *Reader*, Chicago, Sept. 15, '78)



Divine Horseman

1. October 1 Jerome Hill's Film Portrait and 4 Short Films

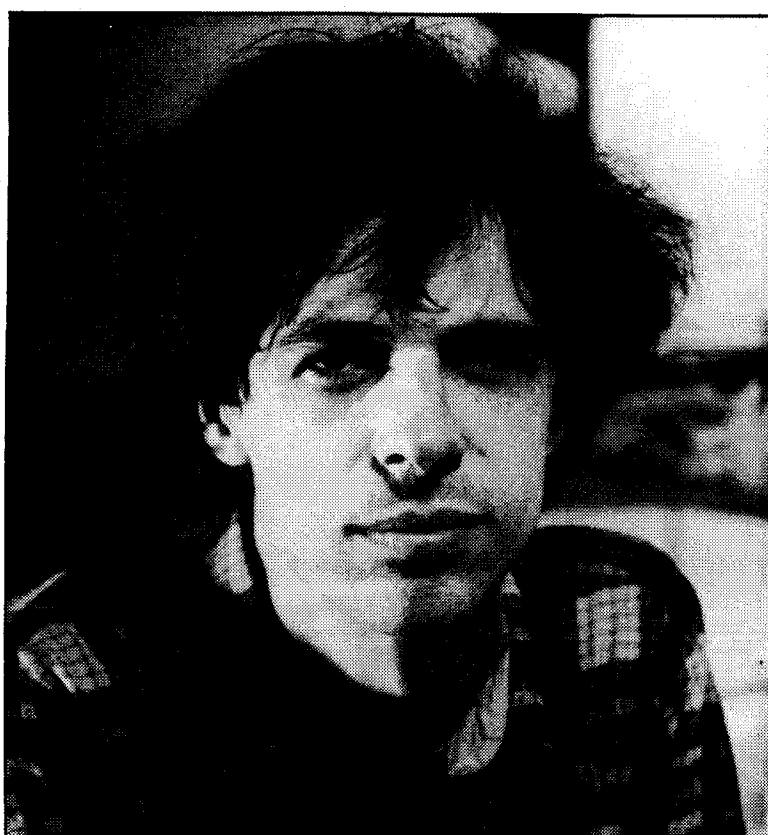
Film Portrait, 1971, 86 minutes, color, sound.

Jerome Hill's *Film Portrait* is one of the key new works in the comparatively new genre of the diary film, the autobiographical film...By means of this footage he leads us into the period or the class from which he comes, or into his own ideas. In this particular case...Jerome Hill leads us into a social background that is not only very uniquely American but which also is about the least documented in cinema--...the life, the feeling and the style of the well-to-do American class at the beginning of the century. Specifically, the film deals with the family of James J. Hill, the family that built the railroads of America and the development of Jerome Hill, himself, as a Young Man and an Artist. Since the period dealt with coincides with the development of Cinema as a young Art... *Film Portrait* becomes also a film about the liberation of an artist from the bonds of his family, his class, the fashionable art styles, and one thousand other bonds, a liberation through cinema." (Jonas Mekas)

4 Short Films, 1965-68, 12 minutes.

Jonas Mekas writes "...you look at the screen, you see the images, you see the colors--and you feel the paint and splashes and strokes; you see both the effect and the medium itself...I find this may be the most unique aspect of Hill's painted animated sequences...As in Jerome Hill's paintings, so in his films...the color stands out...In Brakhage's work the color becomes integrated into the total abstract design. But in Hill's work what comes through most is the presence of the colors themselves..."

Jerome Hill died in November 1972 without seeing his work recognized for what it really is. These quotes by Jonas Mekas were written as a tribute "to all the unrecognized artists of cinema who work in silence and darkness--and leave us works of angelic light."



Vincent Grenier

8. November 26 Brakhage's Sincerity II, Duplicity I and II

Sincerity II, (Reel II), 1975, 37 minutes, color, silent.

Duplicity I, 1978, 21 minutes, color, silent.

Duplicity II, 1979, 15 minutes, color, silent.

Of *Sincerity II*, Brakhage wrote: "...It is of the Brakhage family's coming into being. It is composed of the light of those electrical traces we call 'memory'; and it is as true to that 'thought process' as I was enabled to make it."

"The autobiographical *Sincerity* (Duplicity) series is perhaps the major work in Brakhage's recent output...Reel Two is something of a departure for Brakhage in that the comedy is so pervasive and overt...Jane literally "frames Reel II, that is, the film opens with images of her and closes with a moving reference. In many ways the film is a tribute to Jane, for one can surmise that she is the one whose strength has held the family together through Brakhage's various difficulties, as an independent and therefore far from rich film-maker...The close of the film shows a rainbow--a vision of the hope, light, and life which presumably Brakhage's family has meant for him, despite the tribulations...If my first surmises are correct about *Sincerity III* then the title for Part Four, *Duplicity*, would make sense since it would imply a coming to terms with this dual vision...Brakhage as artist/idealist (Reel I); man of the world/father/husband (Reel II); and the painful need and heroic venture to reconcile the two Brakhages, in fact to deny the dichotomy (Reel III)...However, throughout the first three reels there are many common images (absent from *Duplicity* as far as I can tell) which serve as leading motives (aspens trees, a bird pecking in the snow), perhaps signifying for Brakhage a denial of time and change altogether, that one's autobiography doesn't go anywhere in any sort of teleological sense, that it is not so much a narrative of one's periods of development, as it is simply a manifestation at every moment of who one has been all along." (John Pruitt, *The Downtown Review*)

10. December 10 Open Screening

Local Filmmakers are invited to bring their work and share it with an audience of their peers. Both students from the University and filmmakers from the community are welcome. Films can be in 16mm, Super 8, or Reg 8mm formats. No admission charge, no entry fee.

We hope that this evening will give young filmmakers a chance to see their films on a large screen in an auditorium and allow you to show your films to an audience other than friends, classmates and instructors. It is a chance to meet other filmmakers, see possibilities and styles different from your own, and to offer your images to filmmakers and interested viewers.

Please come early if you have a film so that we can arrange the order and determine the length of the program.

2. October 8 Woody and Steina Vasulka in Person - Video Artists

Moving Images in a Binary State -- covering work produced in the last three years.

"In the process of developing digital imaging tools, we have encountered new experiences, going well beyond aesthetic considerations. We have had to deal with a new generation of hardware, designed and constructed to our needs, and with a large body of knowledge, represented by the operational modes of the computer. At this stage, our main concern has been to communicate the structural level of the tools and images. We realize that this involvement generates its own area of information, has its own audience and its own developing genre."

"My interest is in the question of visual language, ambiguity of codes which are considered visual, and concept of image-score..." (Woody Vasulka)

"They are interested in the magic and the rituals of image making with the tools of video...In Steina's installation *Machine Vision*, space, which has become the major concern in her tapes, is explored using the viewers and monitors and cameras to generate the images and mix the composition..." (Linda Cathcart)

"...I recall my surprise then at the visual impact and sensitivity to mutating shape and color...I sensed that their commitment...with the video medium as visual expression transcended practically all other artists' work I had viewed in the medium...in their work they continue to demonstrate a deep knowledge and awareness of the older and more traditional artistic mediums, in particular, painting, sculpture and early photography..." (Robert Buck, Jr. Director, Albright-Knox Art Gallery)

5. October 29 Vincent Grenier in Person

Vincent Grenier is a French Canadian now living in New York. His work achieves a magic, a magic through careful articulation of space, shadow, movement and grain. His film *Interieur Interiors (to A.K.)* is a most accomplished work of subtle planes of movements, unpredictable relationships of these planes in space. This film reminds me of the paintings of Lyonel Feininger, without the color, in close up, with gliding movements across the frame.

Jonas Mekas writes "... I have always admired filmmakers who have the courage to abandon the representational reality and work with abstraction...There is a seriousness, consistency and persistency about his work that is more than impressive..."

The films in tonight's program are:

Mend, 1979, 5 1/2 minutes, B/W.

No description available.

World In Focus, 1976, 19 minutes, color, silent.

"...There is something to say about the qualities that books have in that they can be flipped and can create motion; in that, as for film, the image is supported by a textured surface. The film is an incantation of layers, the printed word, the dyeing color, the privateness of the minimum depth of field..." (V. Grenier)

X, 1976, 9 minutes, B/W, silent.

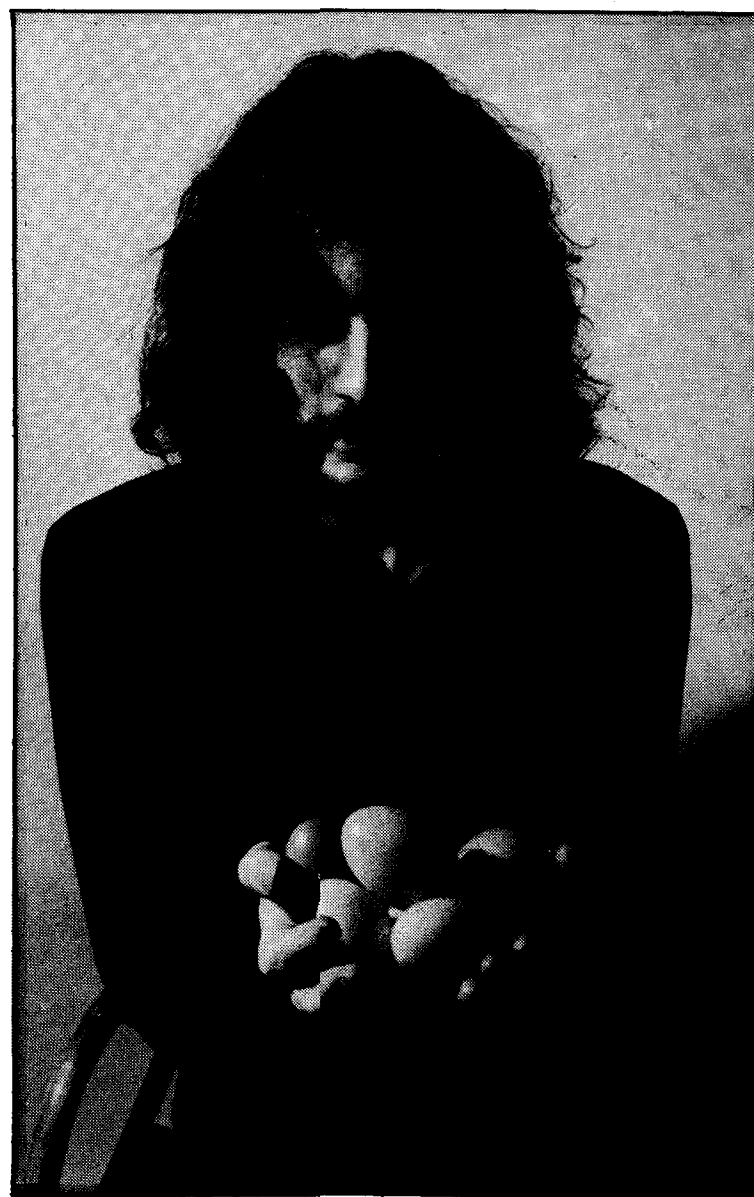
"...I was very much engaged by the ambiguity of a movement that can be perceived as crossing the frame at the same time as going backward or forward in relation to the viewer..." (V. Grenier)

Interieur Interiors (to A.K.), 1978, 15 min, B/W, silent.

"...levels of ambiguity are instilled, which shake the photographic image's authority as a principle of reality by confronting it with its illusory nature..." (V.G.)

Against the Light, 1979, color, silent.

No description available.



George Lando

This program is sponsored in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

3. October 15 A Selection of New Films by Frampton, Barnett, Lee and Sherman

5 Films, 1978, Stewart Sherman, 20 minutes, color.

Silent camerawork for the first and fourth film by Babette Mangolte; for the second and third film; Ken Ross, and for the fifth, Jacob Burckhardt.

Performance artist Stuart Sherman here applies his "spectacle" vocabulary to the world-at-large by utilizing diverse elements in the natural environment. Each film demonstrates a complex idea through a precise sequence of images depicting common scenes and actions in unusual context. Sherman's work has been compared to the paintings of Rene Magritte and the films of Maya Deren and Buster Keaton.

1st Post Card From Happy Valley, 1978, Dan Barnett, 4 minutes.

"I think of this little poem as being about fidelity and duplicity. It is a preamble to a film called *The Rest of the Postcards From Happy Valley*, which I'm working on now..." more or less about the years I spent as a film teacher in Binghamton, N.Y." (Dan Barnett)

Morning at Yangchow, 1978, Dan Barnett, 4 minutes.

"This has become one of my favorites of my own films quickly. It is the first of a series of about a dozen films called something like *Sketches From China* coming out of a quick trip there in July 1978..." (D.B.)

Sacramental Shadow, 1979, David Lee, 38 minutes, color, silent.

Jonas Mekas has written that David Lee's work is "...post-Brakhage, post-Snow, post-Frampton, which is to say...absorbed the leading directions in the Avant-Garde Film of the last two decades...uniquely gifted." *Sacramental Shadow* deals with the eroticism and anxiety of revealing the self.

Otherwise Unexplained Fires, 1977, Hollis Frampton, 14 min.

"Hollis Frampton's *Otherwise Unexplained Fires* begins and ends with old (perhaps from around 1910) footage of a street performer magically generating fire in a metal container... *Otherwise Unexplained Fires* may be the most beautiful and richest looking film Frampton has made. During the viewing, it generates an emotional resonance, rather than the more analytic structures that one is accustomed to in Frampton films...It is part of Frampton's projected 36-hour *Straits of Magellan*, but it stands very well on its own..." (Amy Taubin)

6. November 5 George Lando in Person

"...No one else makes films like George Lando(w), possibly because, although he utilizes the materials and possibilities of film what he makes are not exactly films. What he does make, more precisely, are various visual explorations..." (S. Renan)

"It is precisely such a gift for finding the apperceptive trope that distinguishes George Lando(w)'s films. His first film, *Fleming Faloon* (1963) is a precursor of the structural film...His remarkable faculty is as maker of images, for the simple found objects...he uses and the images he photographs are radical, super-real, and haunting...George Lando(w) and Hollis Frampton were the most significant film-makers to span the transition from structural to participatory modes..." (P. Adams Sitney in *Visionary Film*)

Films to be shown this evening are:

Diplomatology or Bardo Follies, 1967, 20 minutes.

He discovers, "there are two of them and they're round." **The Film That Rises to the Surface of Clarified Butter**, 1968, 9 1/2 minutes. "...as profoundly strange as its title." (James Stroller, *Village Voice*)

What's Wrong With This Picture?, 1971-72, 5 minutes.

He learns that "you can break a law through ignorance, carelessness, a wickedness; it's all lawbreaking."

Thank You Jesus For The Eternal Present, 1973, 5 minutes.

He interviews an exhibitionistic propagandist, as three people pray.

No Sir, Orison, Or **The Ultimate Solution To The Supermarket Problem**, 1975, 3 minutes. He builds his story on a palindrome.

Wide Angle Saxon, 1974-75, 22 minutes. - His conversion to fundamental Christianity has nothing to do with his purely coincidental resemblance to Jimmy Carter.

On The Marriage Broker Joke As Cited by Sigmund Freud In Wit and It's Relation to the Unconscious, Or Can the Avant-Garde Artist Be Wholed?, 1979, 30 minutes. - He imagines making love to a woman who imagines making a film about Japanese marriage broker jokes, "among other things."

9. December 3 Robert Nelson in Person

Robert Nelson began making films in the early 1960's in San Francisco. Sheldon Renan says "Robert Nelson has...a tendency toward the zany and humorously obscure."

In a chapter entitled "Apocalypses and Picaresques" from his book *Visionary Cinema*, P. Adams Sitney writes "...A late example of the type of film being discussed is Robert Nelson's *The Great Blondino*. In it, the picaresque and the mythic overlap, and irony, which is prevalent in many aspects of the film, ceases to play a structural role. *Eleu Shut* is a prime example of the participatory film, a form which emerged at the end of the 1960's and of extensions of the structural film...in order to more directly evoke states of consciousness and reflexes of the imagination in the viewer. The participatory films follow the direction established by the structural cinema in finding corollaries for the conscious mind...Nelson marks the end of that period. In his hand the picaresque and the centerless film becomes a deliberate strategy for making works which respond to the new cohesion of the national avant-garde cinema of the 1960's."

Films to be shown this evening are:

How to Get Out of a Burning House, 1978, 20 minutes.

No description available.

King David, 1970, 16 minutes, color, sound.

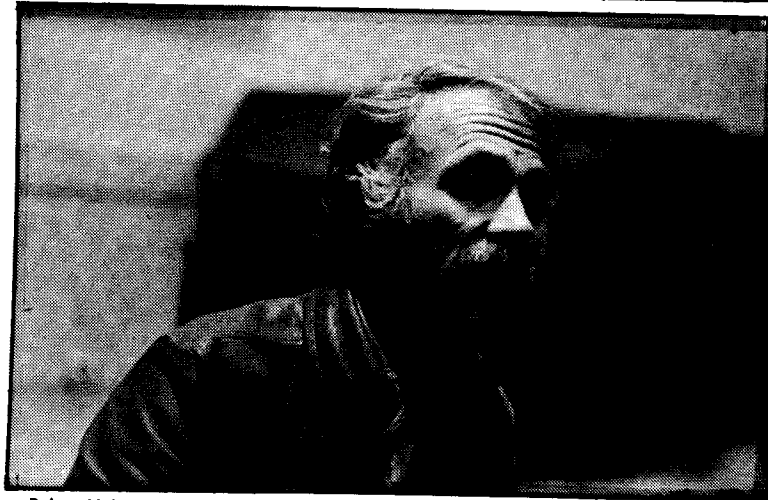
"Henderson and I filmed *King David* in South Park in San Francisco. The film is a documentary style record of *King David* and of what took place before we found him." (R.N.)

Deep Western, late 70's, 6 minutes.

No description available.

The Great Blondino, 1967, 42 minutes, color, sound.

"This is a long film that uses no specific narrative development. Its coherence depends upon deeper non-verbal sensibilities. *The Great Blondino* is a figurative allusion to the tightrope walker Blondino, who gained international fame in the 19th Century by walking many times across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. The film speaks about the level of risk at which we live and of the foolishness and beauty of our lives at the edge, where we confront that risk." (R. Nelson)



Robert Nelson