

re: Riley, Terry

Pacific Film Archive
presents *the*

October 17 & 24



dilexi
series

Arlo Acton - Julian Beck - Walter De Maria - Kenneth Dewey - Robert Frank - Ann Halperin - Philip Makanna
Robert Nelson - Yvonne Rainer - Terry Riley - Edwin Schlossberg - Andy Warhol - William Wiley - Frank Zappa

Aired on KQED TV in 1969, the Dilexi Series represents a pioneering effort to present works created by artists specifically for broadcast. The 12-part weekly series was conceived and commissioned by the Dilexi Foundation, an off-shoot of the influential San Francisco art gallery founded by James Newman. Newman, who operated the Dilexi Gallery from 1958 until 1970, saw this innovative series as an opportunity to extend the influence of the contemporary arts far beyond the closeted environment of the commercial gallery.

Formal agreement was reached with KQED in 1968 with the station's own John Coney designated as series producer. No restrictions, regarding length, form or content, were imposed upon the works, except for Newman's stipulation that they be aired weekly within the same time-slot. Upon their completion, the 12 works were broadcast during the spring and summer of 1969.

Of the 12 artists invited to participate in the Dilexi Series, ten of them completed new works, and two, Andy Warhol and Frank Zappa, submitted extant works. The tapes and films are far-reaching in their approaches to the medium and the circumstance of the broadcast series. Some of the artists chose to intervene in the relationship of broadcaster and audience by broaching the subject of communications. Where Edwin Schlossberg's subjective documentary, Making Visible, discusses the potential of television for significant communication, Robert Nelson and William Wiley's What Do You Talk About? simply parodies the talk show format, while Kenneth Dewey places an informal discussion of American culture within the "hearth" of TV in Night-Eye, Fire.

On the other hand, works by Terry Riley and Arlo Acton and Philip Makanna take great advantage of the medium itself. A highly successful work, Music With Balls, shot in KQED's studio, uses fanciful dissolves, colorization and a beautiful array of overlaid images to extend Riley's new music performance. S.F. sculptor Philip Makanna composed his experimental narrative, The Empire of Things, with original and found film footage, then manipulated the color during the transfer to video.

For some, the Dilexi Series presented an opportunity to capture performance material. Site of Guerrilla Theater shows Julian Beck and the Living Theater infiltrating the audience at Mills College before the presentation of Paradise Now!. This highly emotional work conveys the free-spirited search for liberation embodied by guerrilla groups of the time. Ann Halperin's Right On depicts two dance companies, Dancers' Workshop and Studio Watts, as

they prepare for an impending performance. Dance Fractions for the West Coast represents a rare moment of recorded dance for Yvonne Rainer. Though Rainer's early career was founded on her groundbreaking dance and performance, few works exist that feature her solo work. Also shot at Mills College, Dance Fractions begins with rehearsals for a large production number, then concludes with Rainer first in a monologue, then dancing.

Hardcore is a landscape film shot in the Mojave Desert by earth sculptor Walter De Maria. Slow pans of a dry lake bed reveal sensuous shifts in light. Though this work is in keeping with De Maria's "land art," he interjects a frontier motif that suggests Manifest Destiny.

Robert Frank's Conversations in Vermont is a personal film that contrasts the lives of his children at home and at school. Like his photography, Frank keeps the camera in close, relying on intimacy to tell the story.

The Paul Swan Film is a rare excerpt from a longer work, not exhibited since 1965. Andy Warhol contributed this "take" to the Dilexi Series. The film features Paul Swan, a contemporary of Isadora Duncan. At age 83, Swan recites poetry and performs stylized dance movements. The 30-minute work appears to be an unedited take, including off-stage guidance, costume changes, and moments of awkwardness. Swan is an aging butterfly pinned in real-time by Warhol's relentless eye.

Burnt Weeny Sandwich is another rarity. Created by Frank Zappa, the film, in one form or another, found its way into a larger work, Uncle Meat. Something of a high-speed home movie, Burnt Weeny Sandwich features the original Mothers of Invention, along with Captain Beefheart. This is one of the works that exists only within the Dilexi Series.

Once broadcast, the Dilexi Series was stored on the original 2" videotape masters, a now archaic video format. Some masters were transferred to a contemporary format in 1982 and presented at the S.F. Video Festival. Through the generosity of KQED, the last of the Dilexi Series was just transferred to an exhibition format. This marks the first time in 22 years that all the Dilexi tapes are available. It also marks the recovery of works that existed only on the 2" masters. For instance, Yvonne Rainer's Dance Fractions for the West Coast had been "lost" since 1969. Rainer did not possess her own copy. Burnt Weeny Sandwich, The Paul Swan Film, Rite of Guerrilla Theater and What Do You Talk About? fall into this same category.

As already stated, the Dilexi Series was an historic early effort to broadcast the works of artists on television. But these twelve works also command an interest for their aesthetic success, innovative use of the medium, position within the greater oeuvre of the artists involved, and for the way in which they capture the tenor of the times. These qualities can be seen in the rich visualizations of Terry Riley's Music With Balls, in the groundbreaking use of electronic colorization demonstrated by Philip Makanna's The Empire of Things, in the rare glimpse of choreographer Yvonne Rainer dancing in Dance Fractions for the West Coast, and in the free-spirited nature of Julian Beck and the Living Theater as witnessed in Rite of Guerrilla Theater.

Special thanks are due James Newman, the original inspiration behind the Dilexi Series, and Pam Porter of KQED for their help in organizing these October screenings.

THE DILEXI SERIES WORKS
(In order of broadcast)**MUSIC WITH BALLS**

broadcast: 4/16/69

by Terry Riley and Arlo Acton

Acton's sculptures and Riley's synthesized music collide in this beautifully rendered solo performance with multi-layered visualizations. Riley uses pre-recorded tapes, a tape player, and a saxophone in a fine-tuned work that melds lyrical repetition with its optical counterpart.

Video Mix by John Coney.

23:52 Color 2" High Band Videotape

MAKING VISIBLE

broadcast: 4/23/69

by Edwin Schlossberg

Influences of Buckminster Fuller and communication theory appear in this innovative essay on the invisible potential of the television medium. Schlossberg takes the TV apart, literally, to discuss the deconstruction of information and its visible reception.

Photographed by Mark Obenhaus, Stan Scholl.

26:24 B&W 16mm

BURNT WEENY SANDWICH

broadcast: 4/30/69

by Frank Zappa

Antics of the Mothers of Invention are further accelerated by heavily processed film footage. Zappa is seen performing music from the "Uncle Meat" LP. This work was completed about 10 years before MTV went on the air.

Music by Zappa, "mostly from Uncle Meat." Photographed by Zappa and others. Special Optical Effects by Burton C. Gershfield. Produced by Herb Cohen. With the Mothers of Invention, Captain Beefheart.

18:00 B&W and Color 16mm

THE EMPIRE OF THINGS

broadcast: 5/7/69

by Philip Makanna

An experimental narrative, using a text by H.L. Mountzoures that describes a post-apocalyptic culture. Original and found film footage anchors the story in a Vietnam-era sensibility. While using a film chain for the transfer to videotape, color and image were manipulated to create a distorted impression of the world depicted. This is a very early example of the use of electronic technology and film imagery.

Video Colorization by Larry Bentley, Wayne McDonald. Produced by John Coney. Based on a short story by H.L. Mountzoures, 1968.

20:23 Color and B&W 16mm with electronic manipulation

RIGHT ON

broadcast: 5/14/69

by Ann Halperin

Using dance as a way to transcend racial misunderstanding, choreographer Ann Halperin gathered her company, Dancers' Workshop, and Studio Watts, an all-Black dance company from Los Angeles, together to perform "Ceremony of Us." Right On is a record of the two companies during their dance-oriented sensitivity training.

Photographed and Edited by Seth Hill. Produced by John Coney. With Dancers' Workshop and Studio Watts.

29:43 B&W 16mm

WHAT DO YOU TALK ABOUT?

broadcast: 5/21/69

by Robert Nelson and William Wiley

The talk show format is lampooned in this "in-studio" production by filmmaker Nelson and co-host Wiley. Their guests are the legendary Beat poet Lew Welch who discusses football, local sculptor Bill Allan who discusses pool, and S.F. Art Institute student Dominic Laducer who discusses fishing. The ever-charismatic and highly talkative Lew Welch steals the show.

With Lew Welch, Dominic Laducer, Bill Allan.

88:12 Color 2" High Band Videotape

RITE OF GUERRILLA THEATER

broadcast: 5/28/69

by Julian Beck and the Living Theater

Before each performance, the Living Theater would "orient" the audience by first infiltrating it, then imparting some '60s wisdom, then requesting participation from the gathered hordes. In this Mills College performance, Julian Beck leads the proceedings with a strong assist from Judith Molina. The topic for this orientation are the prohibitions imposed by society.

Photographed by Eugene Doherty, Seth Hill. Edited by Eugene Doherty. Produced by John Coney. With the Living Theater and the students of Mills College.

25:30 B&W 16mm

DANCE FRACTIONS FOR THE WEST COAST

broadcast: 6/11/69

by Yvonne Rainer

Rainer was known for her earthbound choreography—dance was a collection of normal gestures, not the manufacture of high stylization. In this unusual tape, Rainer leads 30 dancers and performers through a large-scale regimented dance. She then seques into a monologue on the virtues and problems of snoot. This quite unexpectedly leads to a solo dance performance which is eventually extended to include other dancers. Dance Fractions for the West Coast begins with a prologue about Rainer's notion of collaboration and specifically the use of music. Some electronic effects are keyed over the basic imagery.

Recorded at Mills College.

51:07 B&W and Color 2" High Band Videotape

THE PAUL SWAN FILM

broadcast: 6/18/69

by Andy Warhol

Paul Swan was a contemporary of Isadora Duncan. At age 83, we see him recite poetry and perform a number of stylized dance numbers. The gaudy setting and single take, makes this a painful experience, more for Swan than the viewer. Warhol's relentless eye focuses on Swan's ageless yearning for celebrity.

with Paul Swan.

30:22 Color 16mm

NIGHT-EYE, FIRE

broadcast: 6/25/69

Process Initiated by Kenneth Dewey

Realized with Don Harper, Marie Zazzi of the Action Theater, NYC.

Using Marshall McLuhan's idea that television is the new family hearth, Dewey places a number of Happening artists around a campfire at Drake's Bay and lets the conversation dictate its own course. This natural setting is interrupted by a studio setting in which a roving television set mesmerizes the occupant. Notions of narcissism and domesticity are woven into this subtle critique of the media. Add contemporaneous footage of the Sproul Plaza tear-gassing and you have an intriguing invasion of the airwaves.

Directed by John Coney. Music Composed by Bill Spencer. Photographed by Seth Hill. With Norma Leistko, Billie McVay.

43:58 Color and B&W 16mm and 2" High Band Videotape

CONVERSATIONS IN VERMONT

broadcast: 7/9/69

by Robert Frank

In this intimate family portrait, Frank follows his children, Pablo and Andrea, around the house and through their daily routines. He contrasts their early years at home with their more worldly days spent at school. The close-up, personal tone of this work bears little resemblance to the third-person coolness of the typical family sitcom.

Photographed by Ralph Gibson. With Robert, Pablo, Andrea and Mary Frank.

26:00 B&W 16mm

HARDCORE

broadcast: 7/30/69

by Walter De Maria

This durational work splices slow pans of a dry lake bed together to heighten landscape imagery, shifting light and the use of horizon. The sensual treatment is bracketed by a western motif that culminates in a six-gun shoot-out. Finally, a fixed shot of a young asian girl grounds the theme of the film, suggesting that the conquering of the West has been extended to other shores.

Photographed by Blair Stapp. Music composed by De Maria.

27:56 Color 16mm

The Dilexi Artists

- Berry Riley & Arlo Acton:** Riley is a new music composer, now living in Northern California. Acton is a sculptor also California bound.
- Edwin Schlossberg:** Heads a design firm in New York City and is married to Caroline Kennedy.
- Frank Zappa:** Still a driving force in innovative forms of rock 'n' roll, as well as orchestral music. A potential presidential candidate for the 1992 campaign.
- Philip Makanna:** Sculptor and filmmaker, this San Francisco-based artist is presently concentrating on photography.
- Ann Halperin:** Still active in the dance community, Halperin heads up the Tamalpa Institute.
- Robert Nelson & William Wiley:** When not making films, Nelson teaches film in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Wiley is a leading California painter and sculptor.
- Julian Beck:** Beck directed the Living Theater until his death in the late '80s. Judith Molina is now the creative director of this New York-based theater group.
- Yvonne Rainer:** One of America's foremost avant garde filmmakers. Her last feature film was *Privilege*. Rainer lives in N.Y.C.
- Andy Warhol:** Now deceased, Warhol was an internationally influential Pop artist, filmmaker and general celebrity.
- Kenneth Dewey:** Dewey was a Happening artist and fringe Fluxus member. He directed the Action Theater in New York until his death in 1973.
- Robert Frank:** World renowned photographer and filmmaker. Frank divides his time between New York and Nova Scotia.
- Walter De Maria:** An earth sculptor with many permanent works installed in the United States and Europe. De Maria lives in New York City where several of his environmental works are ensconced.