

ExperiMEX Contemporary Experimental Films from Mexico

Curated by Jorge Lorenzo and Rosario Sotelo
Presented in association with Studio 24/ Galería de la Raza

Sunday, April 22nd, 2007 at 7 and 9 pm — Studio 24/ Galería de la Raza

Throughout its media history, Mexico has a long tradition of cinematic experimentation. Examples of this tradition include the early objective documentary films from the Mexican Revolution, the “Nuevo Cine” (New Cinema) of the sixties, the “superocheros” (“super-8-ers”) of the seventies and eighties, and the rise of video in the eighties and nineties.

Continuing in this tradition, and drawing inspiration from the *Mexperimental Cinema* series curated in 1998 by Jesse Lerner and Rita González for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, we present a selection of contemporary experimental films that one way or another deal with the country “south of the border.” Including work by emerging and established artists of a wide array of origins (Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, Americans, and foreigners residing in Mexico), this eclectic mix of short films resists categorization and reveals permutations of the art of the moving image in a variety of forms, challenging the pre-fabricated, traditional narrative formulas so imbedded in the film and TV industries in the Mexico.

Gladiator (2004) by Artemio Narro; video, color, sound, 3:48 minutes, from the maker

By appropriating and digitally manipulating a scene from the film *Gladiator*, Artemio Narro deprives the material of its own reason for being on two levels at least. Not only does it alter the motivation of the character and the storyline, it also steps outside of the film itself and questions our position of spectacle observers as an audience. (Jorge Lorenzo)

Habitáculos (Habitations) (2005) by Gabriela Santos del Olmo; 16mm screened as video, b&w, sound, 18 minutes, from the maker

Triggered by the remembrance of a violent concert, the character in the story walks unconsciously trying to find a home. She wanders and seeks solace in a cheap hotel room, in the company of a stranger, on the road in a car, in a church, or in an open field where she can breathe. In a narrative and aesthetic way, Gabriela Santos del Olmo expresses how over time the constant search for a home can transform into the search for one’s self. (Gabriela Santos del Olmo)

Cuando calienta el sol (2003) by Alfredo Salomón; video, color, sound, 2:24 minutes, from the maker

Amor es... de plástico (Love is... plastic) (2005) by Alfredo Salomón; video, color, sound, 1:36 minutes, from the maker

Alfredo Salomón is one of the most prominent and prolific video artists in Mexico City. Although always through the use of parody and irony, his work addresses issues that deal with daily activity and the popular culture of Mexican life in a wide variety of ways. *Amor es... de plástico* is an interesting comment on unattainable love and the possessive nature of relationships, while *Cuando calienta el sol* is a playful homage to Ray Conniff’s version of a song Mexicans associate more to pop singer Luis Miguel and the Acapulco-summer-vacation culture. (Jorge Lorenzo)

así late mi corazón de aceituna (the beat of my olive heart) (2007) by Marisol Prado Cortes; video, color, sound, 7:30 minutes, from the maker

A self-portrait that depicts in a metaphorical and visual way Prado Cortes’ emotional evolution as a member of a family dealing with trauma deriving from the ever growing armed robbery incidents in Mexico City which led to her father’s death. (Rosario Sotelo and Jorge Lorenzo) “Through this experimental short video I am able to show the fruit of my father’s labor.” (Marisol Prado Cortes)

Maíz (Corn) (in-progress) by Carlos Isael; 16mm screened as video, color, sound, 6:24 minutes, from the maker

The past and the future seem to merge in the most bizarre manner when a cult performs its pre-hispanic-driven rites in what seems to be a decadent, post-industrial, apocalyptic environment. With a haunting soundtrack by Guillermo Galindo, Carlos Isael brings us this magnificent film inspired by the consumption of genetically modified organisms that borders between the surreal and the poetic. (Carlos Isael and Jorge Lorenzo)

Spectra (2006) by Rosario Sotelo; video, color, sound, 2 minutes, from the maker

Whether Polaroid or regular film, photographs take time to process. In this brief but powerful moment, Sotelo brings forward the time-based aspects so imbedded in the still photo medium. (Jorge Lorenzo)

All Water has a Perfect Memory (2001) by Natalia Almada; 16mm screened as video, color, sound, 19 minutes, print from Women Make Movies

All Water has a Perfect Memory is a poignant experimental documentary that explores the effects of tragedy and remembrance on a bi-cultural family. At seven months old, filmmaker Natalia Almada lost her two-year-old sister, Ana Lynn, in a drowning accident in her childhood home in Mexico. Inspired by an essay written by Toni Morrison, in which she speaks of the Mississippi River's ability to conjure memories, this moving piece serves as a meditation on the cultural and gender differences between the filmmaker's North American mother and Mexican father in the face of their daughter's death. Through personal recollections narrated by each family member, including her brother, Almada incorporates Super-8 home movies, photographs and fabricated images to weave together a touching and moving visual memory of Ana Lynn. (Women Make Movies)

Untitled (2002) by José Rodríguez; 16mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes, print from the maker

Oppositional and stigmatized filmmaker José Rodríguez was dismissed from the San Francisco Art Institute for the disturbing nature of his work. The film was made in a class Lewis Klahr was teaching in San Francisco. It's a literal cut-up piece in which collaged male bodies circulate around a black background, and with a little help from some sharp objects, create an interactive dance in which they consume and regurgitate each other in a symbiotic visual sex act—complete with lubrication provided by what appears to be actual saliva. (Chris Chang, "Film Comment")

Mondrian Sprockets (2006) by Steve McIntyre; 16mm, color, silent, 2 minutes, print from the maker

Originally from Australia but installed in Monterrey (North East Mexico) ten years ago, Steve McIntyre is probably the only experimental filmmaker in that part of the territory. *Mondrian Sprockets* is a piece that was not conceived for the projector but for the film itself. Lacking necessary equipment for making a film as well as for watching its progress, McIntyre stenciled sprocket holes from various film formats and traced the film edge as a ruler on white leader, focusing his attention on the design created on the film (rather than the projected result) by using film's own material as the tool for its execution. (Steve McIntyre and Jorge Lorenzo)

T.S.H. (2004) by Jesse Lerner; 16mm, b&w, sound, 6 minutes, print from the maker

Curator and enthusiast of Mexican experimental cinema, Jesse Lerner brings us a collage piece that by no surprise resembles his own curatorial abilities. The film, based on an "Estridentista" (a movement in Mexico influenced by Dadaism-Futurism) poem by Luis Quintanilla (a.k.a. Kyn Taniya), brings to mind the fragmented practices of artists in the 1920s and 30s. The fact that the poem is read by Juan José Gurrola, himself a Mexican experimental filmmaker from the sixties, gives the piece an interesting bridge-like quality between the work of today and that of the past, reaffirming a constant but unknown tradition present in Mexico's history of film. (Jesse Lerner and Jorge Lorenzo)

INSTALLATION

PIN-WHOLE SERIES Application 1: Bulb (2006) by Jorge Lorenzo; 16mm magnetic sound film-loop pinholed frame by frame on a lensless projector. Duration: Lifespan of the bulb in the projector (approximately 1000 hours).

By squeezing the possibilities of the medium, this installation comments, experiments, and defies the reproducibility of film and its traditions of (1) watching a recorded event on film by (2) avoiding the film's viewing. (Jorge Lorenzo)