

Friday November 17th, 2006

“As the Great Earth Rolls On”

A Frank O’Hara 80th Birthday Celebration

in words and moving pictures

Presented by

San Francisco Cinematheque

&

The Poetry Center, San Francisco State University

Bill Berkson speaks and reads Frank O’Hara’s “In Memory of My Feelings.”

Frank O’Hara: NET Outtake Series (1966), 16mm film on DVD, 34 min.

courtesy American Poetry Archives, The Poetry Center, SFSU

One in a series of edited outtakes from the National Educational Television program titled *USA: Poetry*, produced by KQED television from 1965-66 by Gordon Craig, Richard O. Moore and associates. Among the only film footage of Frank O’Hara (27 Mar. 1926-25 July 1966), who was killed in an accident later the same year at age 40, the program was shot March 5, 1966 at O’Hara’s apartment at 791 Broadway, on the street in Manhattan, and in painter Alfred Leslie’s studio at 92 Broadway. Together they collaborate on the dialogue for a film Leslie is making titled *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, the notes for which were later destroyed by a fire at Leslie’s studio. O’Hara reads several poems, including *Liebeslied*, *An Airplane Whistle (After Heine)*, *Ave Maria* (beginning “Mothers of America, let your kids go to the movies”), *Answer to Voznesensky and Yevtushenko*, and *For the Chinese New Year & For Bill Berkson*.

i n t e r m i s s i o n

The Trouble with Paradise: a neo-benshi tribute

by Mac McGinnes, read by Julian T. Brolaski and Dan Fisher.

The dialog from one of O’Hara’s favorite films, *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), directed by Ernst Lubitsch, starring Miram Hopkins, Herbert Marshall, et al., is subverted using the poet’s own lines.

The Last Clean Shirt, (1964) b&w, 16mm, 39 min., (Museum of Modern Art)

by Alfred Leslie and Frank O’Hara

“In 1964, American painter and film maker Alfred Leslie and poet Frank O’Hara completed the movie *The Last Clean Shirt*. It was first shown at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1964 and later that year at Lincoln Center in New York, causing an uproar among the audience. The movie shows two characters, a black man and a white woman, driving around Manhattan in a convertible car. *The Last Clean Shirt* is a true collaboration between a film maker and a poet since Frank O’Hara wrote the subtitles to the dialogue or rather the monologue: the woman is indeed the only character who speaks and she furthermore expresses herself in Finnish gibberish, which demanded that subtitles be added.” --Olivier Brossard

This film is so underground it's not in IMDB, but you can download it at <http://www.ubuweb.com/film/leslie.html>

BILL BERKSON's recent books are *Gloria* (Arion Press, 2005, with etchings by Alex Katz), the online chapbook *Same Here* (bigbridge.org, issue #11), *Parts of the Body* (Fell Swoop #78), and two forthcoming volumes *Our Friends Will Pass Among You Silently: New Poems 2001-2006* and *Sudden Address: Lectures 1980-2006. Hymns of St. Bridget & Other Writings* from the 1960s by Berkson and Frank O'Hara is available from The Owl Press, and his epistolary collaboration with Bernadette Mayer, *What's Your Idea of a Good Time? Letters & Interviews 1977-1985* has just appeared from Tuumba Press. He was Distinguished Mellon Lecturer at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture for 2006, and is professor of Liberal Arts at the San Francisco Art Institute.

MAC MCGINNES has a long history as an actor and director with the theater in New York and Chicago, and for SF's Poets Theater he has directed plays by Frank O'Hara, Kenward Elmslie, Kenneth Koch and Maxine Chernoff. He collaborated with Norma Cole on a neo-benshi (to Georges Franju's *Judex* at the S.F. Cinematheque in 2005) and is currently working with Konrad Steiner to adapt the James Schuyler play, *Love Before Breakfast* for film, starring the voices of Norma Cole, Edith Kramer, David Larsen, and Roham Shaikani.

JULIAN T. BROLASKI is a poet and graduate student of English literature at UC Berkeley. She is the author of *Letters to Hank Williams* (True West Press, 2003), *The Daily Usonian* (Atticus/Finch 2004), *Madame Bovary's Diary* (Cy Press 2005) and a neo-benshi scenes from the Bette Davis film *Another Man's Poison* (1952), performed with Dan Fisher at Small Press Traffic's *Poets Theater Jamboree* in January 2006.

At age 22, DAN FISHER once made a silkscreen of Nell Blaine's line/brush drawing of Frank O'Hara, and proudly wore it on an old white t-shirt. A shirt that now has holes in it. His poems and broadsides have appeared or are forthcoming in *Bay Poetics* (Faux Press), *Cricket Online Review*, and *Viz*.