

Cinematheque Salon

Wednesday, March 25, 2009 — Ninth Street Independent Film Center

This screening celebrates the mysteries of the found object, the ephemerality of the in-progress film and the joy of the newly discovered masterpiece. Part invitational, part “film salon,” we tonight continue a Cinematheque tradition of exploring private collections and archives, presenting these films among friends in an intimate setting. This screening is presented in honor and gratitude to Cinematheque members, supporters and filmmaking community. (Steve Polta)

Past Masters of the Argonaut Club (excerpt) by Bud Sola; 16mm, b&w, sound, approx. 30 minutes

Semi-anonymous/semi-found Auricon film, courtesy of Scott Stark.

Hampshire Street Home Movie, maker unknown; 8mm, color, silent, approx. 10 minutes

Mold-growth/surface decay children’s party film, found on Hampshire Street in San Francisco, spring 1997 by Steve Polta. Projected at 5 fps.

Shiva Ree (1968) by Abbot Meader; 8mm, b&w, silent, approx. 10 minutes

Born in Brooklyn in 1935, Abbott Meader is a painter, filmmaker, and professor of Art, emeritus of Colby College. He lives in Oakland, Maine, and is considered one of the state’s prominent landscape painters. His *Deep Trout Trilogy*, “a magical, tragi-comical Western adventure film” made in collaboration with artist Walter Easton, was completed in 2004. The last screening of a Meader film at Cinematheque was March 31, 1977. (sources: www.filmsbyhuey.com/deep_trout.html and Cinematheque records.)

The Annunciation (1973) by Diana Barrie; Super-8mm, color, silent, 9 minutes

“Using the traditional Annunciation story and symbolism so fascinating to early Renaissance painters, Barrie announces the coming of a woman’s vision. A plastic angel in the window heralds the coming of the ‘Light’ to a young woman: Barrie herself, who is both character [...] and filmmaker [...]. Since we see Barrie’s vision through her eyes, we find ourselves, like Barrie, in the role of the Virgin at the moment of New Dispensation is announced and begun. [...] Here, however, the result of the Dispensation is not a son conceived non-sexually by a male god, but a woman [...] conceived by a female creator. While Christ is God’s spirit made flesh, Barrie’s film image of herself is flesh made spirit: she transforms herself into a being of light.” (Scott MacDonald: *A Critical Cinema*. Published 1988 by the University of California Press.)

Cosmic Ray II (1965) by Bruce Conner; 8mm, b&w, silent, 4 minutes

Cosmic Ray II is one of three elements used by Conner in an early three-screen perpetual loop-based installation of his 1962 film *Cosmic Ray*.

untitled (cats) (1991) by Scott Stark; Super-8mm, color, sound, approx. 5 minutes

Unreleased film screened publicly only once, as an element in “*Don’t Even Think: A Multi-Media Performance* (intoxicating pleasures through aggression and indulgence),” presented by Scott Stark at Cinematheque on December 7, 2008, concluding a four-part retrospective of his work.

“dragging art by the scruff of the neck.” (Scott Stark)

Phantogram (2008) by Kerry Laitala; 16mm, color, silent, 6 minutes, print from the maker

"Shivery bits of elusive emulsion, refractive light sprays ignite the depths of two dimensions to expand the terrain of undulating forms. Vertical motion of frameless space testing the limits, *Phantogram* unites the torch and surface, forms made mobile. Indecipherable messages from the dead, a telepathic telegram captured on the medium of film...The 'redblind' refraction of elements explored, expanding beyond the edges of the frame using sweeping gestures and textures both torn and tactile. Slippery shimmers slide across the celluloid strip, to embed themselves on the consciousness of viewers." (Kerry Laitala)

The Steel Chickn (1970) by Daniel Barnett; 16mm, color, sound, approx. 20 minutes

"For anyone who has seen *White Heart* the relationship to this film should be evident. Perhaps that's one reason I never released it. I would show it occasionally until I finished *WH* but after that it seemed superfluous. Then I discovered that I had lost the preprint materials, and so it has sat in a can for the past twenty-five or more years.

"Recently in an email, Ken Jacobs mentioned it as the film of mine he remembered with greatest clarity, so I became curious to see it again. Thanks to Steve Polta for making this outing possible.

"For those who haven't seen *WH*: This was not only my first work with sound in film, and I used a Moog Synth, fragments from works by Stockhausen and material recorded from the radio; but it was also my first experiments pushing the edges of the Kodachrome camera and print stocks by loop printing scenes, both for repetition and for contrast and color separation.

"This was also the first film that I made in an urban environment after moving to Boston from Maine where my early works were bucolic silent 'tone' poems.

"Abbott Meader had been kind enough, back then, to loan me his copies of Brakhage's 8mm *Songs* and I watched them all repeatedly. But I was getting frustrated with the limits of Kodachrome's ability to capture more than a parody of what I was seeing of the quirky light of Maine, so when I moved to Boston, accepting that the film stock was what it was, I decided to try to see where its own limits lay.

"Not incidentally this was in 1969 and The Vietnam War along with the protests against it were front and center for me, as I had managed to get in and out of the army narrowly escaping a tour and was donating my energies and camera skills to many antiwar docs. Perhaps the film captures a bit of the madness of those days. (Daniel Barnett, March 18, 2009)

The Steel Chickn last screened at Cinematheque on October 6, 1983.

Undesirables (1999) by Owen Land; screened as video, b&w, sound, 12 minutes

Undesirables is a "completed fragment" of an uncompleted work by Owen Land. His newest, feature-length experimental work, *Dialogues* premiered on February 28, 2009 at the Velaslavasay Panorama in Los Angeles. (It will also screen at Hollywood's Egyptian Theatre on April 16.)

"*Undesirables* is a fictional account of the demise of the American avant-garde experimental film movement and some of its more notorious practitioners in the 1970s. In answer to the question of why that movement underwent a drastic decline in the late 1970s, after the promising successes of previous years, *Undesirables* offers an absurdist hypothesis, but a hypothesis whose component parts are derived from reality. In this hypothetical story, the experimental film movement is neutralized by a deliberate conspiracy instigated by so-called 'ascended masters,' and accomplished through their control of a powerful, wealthy, esoteric religious organization, known as the Illuminated Brotherhood. In some cases, dabbling in various spiritual practices has increased the filmmakers' vulnerability. [...]

"Those familiar with the history of experimental film will recognize the film-makers whose real-life stories have been altered and combined in this film. In some cases, the actual events were changed because they were too sensationalistic and fantastic to be believed. Stylistically, many of the above scenes are references, allusions, homages, borrowings, appropriations and direct quotes from experimental films of the 1960s and '70s. Even sections of dialogue have been used verbatim. Thus, the form of the film mirrors the methods of the film-makers who are its protagonists." (Owen Land: "*Undesirables*: An Outline." This entire essay, written for a screening of this fragment at the New York Film Festival in 1999, includes a detailed film synopsis and can be read at www.filmlinc.com/archive/nyff/agundesirables.htm)