

Bay Area Roots, Risk & Revision
FILMS BY LAWRENCE JORDAN
Lawrence Jordan In Person

Sunday, May 13, 2007 — 7:30 pm — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

*I don't know about alchemy academically,
but I am a practicing alchemist in my own way.*

—Lawrence Jordan

Lawrence Jordan has been making films since 1952. He is most widely known for his animated collage films, which Jonas Mekas has described as, “among the most beautiful short films made today. They are surrounded with love and poetry. His content is subtle, his technique is perfect, his personal style unmistakable.” Tonight’s screening sketches out a sampler of Jordan’s films, starting with *Trumpit*, a 1950s ‘psychodrama’ starring Stan Brakhage, with sound by Christopher Maclaine; *Pink Swine*, an anti-art dada collage film set to an early Beatles track; *Waterlight* the first of Jordan’s “personal/poetic documentaries” made in the 1950s aboard a merchant marine freighter during his days as a wandering flâneur; and *Winterlight*, a visual poem of the Sonoma County winter landscape. Lawrence Jordan’s four most recent films will conclude the night: *Enid’s Idyll*, *Chateau/Poyet*, *Poet’s Dream*, and *Blue Skies Beyond the Looking Glass*. (Jenn Blaylock)

Trumpit (1956) 16mm, b&w, sound, 6 minutes, print from the maker

Stan Brakhage stars as the constricted love in this spoof of pseudo-erotic card play. (LUX)

Waterlight (1957) 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes, print from the maker

Among the wanderings that began in the 1950s was the filmmaker’s 3-year stint in the merchant marine. *Waterlight* is a night and day impression of the never-constant, ever-changing vast ocean and its companion the sky. (Lawrence Jordan)

Pink Swine (1962) 16mm, b&w, sound, 3 minutes, print from the maker

Suggestive images intended to provoke hallucinatory reactions and responses in the viewer. A fast moving, rhythmic animation of junk objects and flat layouts edited entirely in-camera, accompanied by the music of The Beatles. Stroboscopic layout substitution gives the illusion of separate images seen ‘simultaneously’ but without superimposition. (47th Oberhausen International Short Film Festival)

Winterlight (1982) 16mm, color, sound, 9 minutes, print from the maker

Winterlight, filmed in the dawn hours of California winter, explores the endless permutations of light and illumination as representatives of the Demeter–Persephone myth of withdrawal of life through the winter months.

Vivaldi’s winter concerto. Powerful, cold, a zinging of frost. Pale fog of violet hue rolling in masses over the hills of Sonoma. The dawn hours, the colors, the animals, and the long, lingering deceptive arising of the Divine Son (Sun) through beige and purple reflections on the mist-covered pond. (An entry to the Underworld, where Geryon descended.) Impressionistic, palletted. Opaques and translucencies responding. The veil of the ancient goddess (Demeter) whose daughter had been stolen here. The land of Hades (Pluto), his cold domain, from whence She brings back life on her return (with Her daughter) to the upper world—spring as we know it. I laid out a carefully and elaborately thought-out system of light qualities and movements to represent (in wholly natural images) the retelling of this myth, which is the heart of the Eleusinian mysteries of old. There, the daughter’s name is Persephone or Kore. (Lawrence Jordan)

Enid's Idyll (2004) 16mm, color, sound, 17 minutes, print from the maker

Jordan has used 46 engraved Dore illustrations to *Idylls of the King* as settings for his extravagantly romantic saga. As Enid, the protagonist, is seen in a vast array of scenes from deep forests to castle keeps, her champion is sometimes with her, sometimes away fighting archetypal foes. She dies, and through the magic of Gustav Mahler's resurrection symphony, lives again. [...] Main themes love, death, and resurrection. (Canyon Cinema)

Chateau/Poyet (2005) 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes, print from the maker

The scene is set in front of a French chateau. The camera chases improbable incidents across the screen. Many are constructed out of one of Jordan's favorite engravings illustrators: Poyet. Duels occur on a tight rope. Heavier-than-air machines fly (and sometimes crash). Blowguns spear exploding spheres. The timing of the animation is exquisite, existing in an atmosphere balanced between frenzy and delight. (Canyon Cinema)

Poet's Dream (2005) 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes, print from the maker

The poet's dreams a maiden's bubbles through edifices of forest and eclectic contagion. (Canyon Cinema)

Blue Skies Beyond the Looking Glass (2006) 16mm, color, sound, 17 minutes, print from the maker

Ever dance the mambo with silent film stars and Jordan animation? That's what you get with *Blue Skies Beyond the Looking Glass*. It's raucous. It's lush. It's delirium. Here are just a few stars in the film: Eric Von Stroheim, Greta Garbo, Gary Cooper, Buster Keaton, Lillian Gish, Mary Pickford, Lionel Barrymore, Lon Chaney, Joan Crawford, Marie Dressler, Charlie Chaplin. What more can I say? (Canyon Cinema)

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