

# Silent Songs

In loving memory of Susan Vigil,  
our eternal supporter of Cinematheque.

Nathaniel Dorsky In Person

Sunday, Decemer 10, 2006 — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts — 7:30 & 9:30 pm

*"Time is one of the essential elements in film's Alchemy. It is one of the most potent tools film has, yet few films connect profoundly with the plasticity of time and use the nature of time in their structure. It is the substance that, when handled properly, opens the door to the possibility of devotion."* Nathaniel Dorsky, **Devotional Cinema**.

**Nathaniel Dorsky**, the premier San Francisco filmmaker began making films in his childhood and after studying at Antioch College and NYU began working in the film industry as an editor and cinematographer. Distinguished by many contemporary American poets, Dorsky has been making avant-garde films since 1964. His works have been shown internationally and are in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Pacific Film Archive (Berkeley), Image Forum (Tokyo), Les Archives du film expérimental d'Avignon, and Le Centre Pompidou (Paris) as well as many universities. Throughout his career he has composed exquisite celluloid poetry. His personal films quietly, or more precisely silently, open up the heart with reflections upon the imponderable moments of everyday life. Dorsky notices the predominantly unobserved and yet magnificent world of refracted light and color, from a pair of golden chains in *Song and Solitude*, to glistening waves in *The Visitation*. Kenneth Baker of the SF Chronicle writes, "The sense of discovery in this simple observation, the discovery of something revelatory within the mundane, pervades Dorsky's work."

"Silence in cinema is undoubtedly an acquired taste, but the freedom it unveils has many rich rewards. The major part of my work is both silent and paced to be projected at 18 fps. It is the direct connection of light and audience that interests me. The screen continually shifts its dimensionality from being an image-window, to a floating energy field, to simply light on the wall. Silence allows these articulations, which are both poetic and sculptural at the same time, to be revealed and appreciated." Nathaniel Dorsky

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**Song and Solitude** (2006) 16 mm/18fps, Color, Silent, 21 minutes

*"Song and Solitude* was conceived and photographed with the loving help and kindness of Susan Vigil during the last year of her life. Its balance is more toward an expression of inner landscape, or what it feels like to be, rather than an exploration of the eternal visual world as such." Nathaniel Dorsky

Highly acclaimed at many festivals around the world, Michael Sicinski acclaims, "Nathaniel Dorsky's new film *Song and Solitude* was probably the best film in the festival (Toronto International Film Festival) overall, and a major breakthrough in the development of his art... *Song and Solitude* finds Dorsky expanding his visual vocabulary once again. As with his earlier films, Dorsky's latest is presented in pure silence and projected at 18 frames per second. But although *Song* does contain recognizable images of daily life, Dorsky has produced a film predominantly composed of shimmering registrations of fleeting light, the sun peering through dense foliage or patterns of color and texture glinting off a glass surface."

**The Visitation** (2002) 16 mm, Color, Silent, 18 minutes

"A gradual unfolding, an arrival so to speak. I felt the necessity to describe an occurrence, not one specifically of time and place, but one of revelation in one's own psyche. The place of articulation is not so much in the realm of images as information, but in the response of the heart to the poignancy of the cuts." Nathaniel Dorsky.

**Threnody** (2004) 16 mm, Color, Silent, 20 minutes

"An offering to a friend who died. The friend is Stan Brakhage but *Threnody* doesn't lean on such identification; the mood is stately, not somber. The title probably derives from a Balanchine ballet. In Dorsky's films all matter is primordial and actively present, in this case, the stunning event of afternoon sun sliding across and then vanishing, as if through a door just ajar, from a tightly woven carpet. Narration focuses on stories of patterns and light. Pattern recognition, essential to montage, qualifies as an issue of the mind at large." Bill Berkson