

Films by Sandra Davis

Sandra Davis In Person

Sunday, February 11, 2007 at 7:30 pm — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

Many of my works center around the body as the site of imagistic and dynamic foundations that structure human impulses, feelings and thoughts. Imagery of natural landscape and architecture reoccur. All the films, as with any rhythmic forms, are meant to be understood through the body and senses, as well as the conceptual mind. Editing tactics contrast fluid image and lyrical tempos with jagged, metric rhythms. Contradictory meaning can emerge and traditionally understood meaning can collapse in the parallel streams of images, which pulsate together until one of them takes over. The films utilize a variety of cinematographic techniques, which emphasize the light-infused and textural qualities of the photographic frame. (Sandra Davis)

An Architecture of Desire (1988); 16mm, color and b&w, silent, 18 minutes, print from the maker

I think of this film as one that led me very precisely through its composition. First, I was fascinated during the winter and spring in the “city of the dead”—Graceland—the graveyard containing magnificent, monumental, and some whimsical tombs, as final resting real estate for significant and wealthy Chicago families. Then I thought, if I could really see closely with my lens the surface of the skin of the human body, the barrier between the outside world and the living body; that I could touch the knowledge of what was inside, and unseeable. Of course I only met up with its limits. The next winter, I returned to Chaco Canyon, the ancient pueblos of the Anasazi (ancestors of the contemporary Hopi people). I filmed all day in the Kivas. It had snowed, so I could not get out on the dirt roads and was forced to spend the night there in my car. I woke up suddenly, anxious, in the light of the full moon, to see a large black cat, like a panther, moving down the cliff, and coming directly toward me. He passed within five feet of me, and then moved away, toward the Kivas. The next day, I read that Anasazi records speak of a race of black panthers, held sacred, and native to the area, but which have now been extinct for centuries. (Sandra Davis)

Une Fois Habitees (Once Inhabited) (1992-99); 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes, print from the maker

Some particular spaces, inhabited a while ago. Looking back into the Parisian courtyard, looking at the ladies at the villa, looking into the secrets of the chapel of the delinquents. Light sculpts space; shadow describes form.

Une Fois Habitees (Once Inhabited) is the final film of the *French Film Trilogy*. These works were conceived of as postcards to myself and songs to the passion of place. I noticed that the program in France called them “odes” which is a lovely word that seems old-fashioned and quite precise, evoking a sense of both memory and presence. The films emerged quite unlike my other work, as little stories without narratives and recollections of a French appreciation for American jazz. Cinematography concentrates on the spectacular natural light of the places: the films were shot with no special filters, particular technical “effects” or optical printing. I made a game for myself to edit them so that each could be shown separately, standing alone, and also be shown 1 - 2 - 3, as a trilogy form. I am indebted to poet Joanna McClure for her exacting and evocative reading of the vocal texts. (Sandra Davis)

A La Campagne, A Khan-Tan-Su (Into The Country, To Khan-Tan-Su) (1992-99); 16mm, color, sound, 3.5 minutes, print from the maker

The colors and breezes of the countryside and house in Normandy. The blue crockery, the yellow lichen, and where the key in the monastery kitchen leads. (Sandra Davis)

CREPESCULE: Pond and Chair (2001); 16mm, color, sound, 6.5 minutes, print from the maker

My brother was disabled by muscular dystrophy and used a wheelchair for most of his life. Despite the long, gradual degeneration of his physical condition, he lived with great spirit and heart, married, raised two children, volunteered for his church and was still working at his profession and building his fish pond on his land, when he died suddenly of complications of MD at age 52. He was my only brother and when I myself was disabled 13 years ago in an auto accident, his attitude of practical adaptations to physical impairments was one that made it easier for me.

In an irony of life, a little Christmas message from him arrived two days after his sudden death. This event impelled me to respond with a film. The chair was his mobility in life; the pond he created was his dream.

This film is a little elegy song to him, simultaneously celebrating his life and mourning his family's personal loss. (Sandra Davis)

Ignorance Before Malice (2006); 16mm, color, sound, 30 minutes, print from the maker

A true story—and the aesthetic sequel of the filmmaker's recovery process following a 1993 auto accident. Parallel voices of narrativized testimony describing a woman's struggle to heal within the American medical system, and a personal rumination on the journey through a sudden rupture of health into disability. Feeling my brain in the act of consciousness in viewing the MRI cells, images from art history, personal history and fantasy exploded, as did the elements of the sound track. Filmed entirely on the animation stand (except for that one little shot).

Ignorance Before Malice premiered in 2006 at the Light Cone Previews in September at the Pompidou Center, Paris; it also showed in October at the TIE Festival in Denver, CO and in November at the *FLEX* Festival in Gainesville, FL. (Sandra Davis)