

Radical Light
Bay Area Found Footage
from Junk to Funk to Punk

Wednesday, November 10 at 7:30 pm — Victoria Theatre
presented in association with Pacific Film Archive and Oddball Film + Video
curated and introduced by Craig Baldwin

Gibbs Chapman, Steven Dye, William Farley, Douglas Katelus, Kerry Laitala,
Thad Povey and Greta Snider
In Person

Among the rich and richly varied filmways of the Bay Area is that rather outré (or is it?) practice known as Found Footage filmmaking, a mode of production that's enjoyed a peculiarly prominent place in the local heritage. Among the many reasons are the living legacy of Dada and anti-Art, a sense of Pop humor about the pre-fabricated, and, crucially, the no-budget, contrarian, yet generous impulses from the Beat, Hippie and Punk sub-cultures. A shifting matrix of life-styles, psycho-geographies, art- and social-histories—and a whole lotta creativity!—has enabled us to discover and share our own uses and meanings for things. A crafty imagination can still make its own way through an ever-more bewildering forest of signs—maybe even swing from those trees! This is what is both supremely ironic and profoundly redemptive about this ingenious bricolage aesthetic. (Craig Baldwin)

Thine Inward-Looking Eyes (1993) by Thad Povey; 16mm, color, sound, 2 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

“A trained architect, Thad Povey galvanized the scene with his tesla-esque wizardry with light, projection apparatus and filmstrip (be it original or found). His mastery over film's material aspects led to surface work akin to the attacks of the abstract expressionists. Carrying on the potlatch generosity of No Nothing from his studio days there, Povey has in fact organized a regular gathering for found-footage 'quilting bees,' where amateurs (the Scratch Film Junkies) can freely experiment on editing room outs with fingernail polish, acetate inks and whatnot. Povey's own portfolio is prodigious [...] and by century's end he had branched out into installations [...] and collaborations with musicians in live performance.” (Craig Baldwin, “From Junk to Funk to Punk to Link.” Published in *Radical Light: Alternative Film & Video in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945–2000.*)

Stink (1984) by Dean Snider; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes

“Using bits and pieces of other people's home movies, Snider has created a movie about his own growing up.” (Liz Canning and Irina Leimbacher, Cinematheque Program Note, 2001)

Cartoon le Mousse (1979) by Chick Strand; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

“The godmother of the area's experimental film scene and a cofounder of Canyon Cinema, Chick Strand, is another prolific maker who often used found footage. Her second work, *Angel Blue Sweet Wings* (1966), made after she relocated to Los Angeles, folded preexisting imagery into the montage, as did her 1967 *Waterfall*. Her 1979 *Cartoon le Mousse* prompted Gene Youngblood to declare “if poetry is the art of making evocative connections between dissimilar phenomena, then Chick Strand is a great poet, transcending her material to create a surreal and sublime universe beyond reason.” (Craig Baldwin, “From Junk to Funk to Punk to Link.”)

an examination of exhibits A(1) through E(5) (2001) by Gibbs Chapman; 16mm, color, sound, 19 minutes, print from the maker

“A mysterious film about mystery and the human insistence on order from chaos. Via its five departments—the scientific, the academic, the romantic, the psychological, and the critical—a filmic surgery mounts the evidence submitted: the remains of our culture. [...] (Gibbs Chapman)

Decodings (1988) by Michael Wallin; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

“But in the eighties, alas, everybody got a haircut. The mood changed, studios and labs closed, and, of course SoMa fell to gentrification [...]. What had been a beatnik, then hippie, then punk dismissal of the Academy came back as ‘appropriation art.’ The period’s gravitas freighted—and did enrich—the *assemblage* mode with more serious agendas: gender, identity issues, postcolonialism, media theory, psychological dysfunction, et al. Michael Wallin’s *Decodings* synched up an uncanny skein of pictures to a parallel narration and an elegiac Shostakovich score in a cosmic-goof coup de grâce that went on to the Whitney Biennial.” (Craig Baldwin, “From Junk to Funk to Punk to Link.”)

Zero (1996) by Steven Dye; 16mm, b&w, sound, 3 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

“Hand-manipulated found film, reworking the image and soundtrack. The use of bleaching, scratching, press-on architectural elements and patterns; a celebration of the malleability of film and the optical soundtrack as a hands-on medium.” (Steven Dye, Canyon Cinema catalog)

Prayer (2002) by Jay Rosenblatt; video, b&w, sound, 3 minutes, tape from the maker

“Faith and fear. Duck and cover. One response to the events of September 11, 2001.” (Jay Rosenblatt)

Futility (1989) by Greta Snider; 16mm, b&w, sound, 9 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

“[...] Greta Snider also used optical printing (and hand-processing and ‘photo-gramming’ and superimposition and intertitles and direct address, and a dozen other methods) in a series of zine-inspired, fearlessly honest personal essays” (Craig Baldwin, “From Junk to Funk to Punk to Link.”)

Hallowed (2001) by Kerry Laitala; 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes, print from the maker

[...] portrays a mystical voyage made back in time by an unconscious woman in the throes of a cataleptic state. She finds herself in Plato’s cave where flickering flames incite a prehistoric cinematic reverie evoking an experience of magical proportions. She is a spectral being who is transformed from within as viewers witness a chasm between the physical self and psychical self become one. Her internal state is evoked through a chromatically textural metamorphosis that plays across her visage as she transcends the pain inflicted from an unknown source. [...]” (Kerry Laitala)

Being (1975) by William Farley; 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

A man sits in front of his TV. The program that he occasionally glances at is a montage of popular culture images: old movies, commercials, news clips. Accompanying the fleeting images is a loosely synchronous narrative on the evolution of man’s belief systems. The man’s behavior watching television becomes a commentary on contemporary culture; the relationship between public information and private consciousness, and the nature of reality. (William Farley, Canyon Cinema catalog)

Tuning the Sleeping Machine (1996) by David Sherman; 16mm, color, sound, 13 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

In *Tuning the Sleeping Machine*, Sherman constructs a loose narrative from murkily colored sequences of silent-era horror films. Using a familiar film-as-dream form, he literalizes the eyes-open dream of the moviegoer by bracketing the film with the mesmerizing gaze of a Rasputin-like figure, seeming to send a child into a deep slumber from a great distance. Music like a drugged calliope eases one into a reverie, to contemplate a child dreaming of wonderful horrors through the movies. (Brian L. Frye, *The New Science of the Cinema*. Published in *Radical Light*.)