

Radical Light San Francisco Lines of Sight

Wednesday, December 1 at 7:30 pm — Artists' Television Access
curated by Steve Anker

presented in association with Pacific Film Archive and Prelinger Archives

Filmmakers are often drawn to explore the face of where they live, and San Francisco offers a field of contrasting and visually arresting locations that has inspired experimental films and videos for more than fifty years. This program of work made between 1979 and 2005 includes Dominic Angerame's *Freedom's Skyway*, a blend of Chinatown and film emulsion fireworks; Michael Rudnick's elegant cinematic paean of shadow and light, *Panorama*; Mark McGowan's ethereal and mystifying contemplation *Fog*; Toney Merritt's whimsical mystery *By The Sea*; Abigail Child's *Pacific Far East Line*, a cinematic re-presentation of downtown movement and rhythm; Ken Paul Rosenthal's *I My Bike*, a poetic rumination on life lived on the street; Tomonari Nishikawa's *Market Street*, a concentrated mosaic of patterns encountered on the city's main thoroughfare; Scott Stark's delightful visual conundrum of urban spaces, *SLOW*; and Anne McGuire's verité fantasy on the urban mundane, *Joe DiMaggio 1, 2, 3*. Thanks to Steve Polta. (Steve Anker)

Freedom's Skyway (1980) by Dominic Angerame; 16mm, b&w, silent, 5 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"*Freedom's Skyway* was a film I made in the early 1980s. It was a simple exploration of the sensitivity of fifty year-old black and white film stock. The piece led to the shooting of San Francisco cityscapes and the high contrast black and white filmmaking that is evident in my *City Symphony* series which I started around 1986 and continue to explore today." (Dominic Angerame)

"To see the city through the eyes of Dominic Angerame is to see an organic beast of concrete that sifts and breathes in rich shades of black and white." (SF Weekly)

Panorama (1982) by Michael Rudnick; 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

"Like so many city-symphony films, this one employs time-lapse photography in order to capture the bustle of urban life through compression. *Panorama* is unique, however, in its use of a stable interior for shooting, giving the activity spied through Rudnick's picture windows a sort of visual control group against which San Francisco's motion seems even more electric. Explicitly evoking those turn-of-the-century precinematic attractions in which a long, painted roll of canvas created a proto-tracking shot for its viewers, Rudnick's film uses the power of the camera and the fourth-floor perspective to play perceptual games with his audience. (Watch for the whirling vase!)" (Michael Sicinsky: "The Bay Area as Cinematic Space in Twenty-five Stops or Less." *Radical Light: Alternative Film & Video in the Bay Area, 1945–2000*, Steve Anker, Kathy Geritz and Steve Seid, eds.)

Fog (hanging so close to the ground that you can walk right through it) (1979) by Mark McGowan; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes, print from the maker

"A light fog description with two voice overlay. The camera is stationary / a static X remains / seven minutes / light on screen the film travels / fog flares from / edge / frame / bird / on / diagonal / line allows physical scale / and fog bends metal / through the eye piece" (Jacqueline McGowan, Anthology Film Archives. Reprinted in *Canyon Cinema Catalog 6*, Melanie Curry and Nina Fonoroff, eds.)

By The Sea (1982) by Toney Merritt; 16mm, color, silent, 3 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"A film made from my old studio apartment on Telegraph Hill. A portrait of sorts." (Toney Merritt)

Pacific Far East Line (1979) by Abigail Child; 16mm, color, silent, 12 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

“Like [Henry] Hills, Child is a postmodern poet, and her work in both film and literature explores how montage can complicate signification, rendering it problematic and enticingly opaque. Some of the work for which she is best known does this through found footage, but like her most recent work *Pacific Far East Line* is composed of original cinematography. It shares certain surface similarities with Hills’ films: repetition of urban motifs, staccato in-camera editing, and the treatment of the built environment as a series of formal relationships. But Child’s downtown sequences have an altogether different flavor, using time-lapse and superimposition to condense time and space in suggestive ways.” (Michael Sicinsky: “The Bay Area as Cinematic Space in Twenty-five Stops or Less.” *Radical Light: Alternative Film & Video in the Bay Area, 1945–2000*, Steve Anker, Kathy Geritz and Steve Seid, eds.)

I My Bike (2002) by Ken Paul Rosenthal, 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes, print from the maker

“A cinepoem that traces the conflict between urban space and the body from a child’s compulsion to stare into the sun to an adult’s obsession with dying and moving towards the light. Guided into a trance state by an unseen therapist, a disembodied voice reveals his loss of innocence upon moving to the city, his increasingly fragmented state of being and longing for death. The past and present collide within a round portal containing fleeting images of 1905-era Market Street, San Francisco over a dense sea of modern day bicyclists.” (Ken Paul Rosenthal)

Market Street (2005) by Tomonari Nishikawa; 16mm, b&w, silent, 5 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

“As I am interested in the projection apparatus and human visual perception, I carefully juxtaposed images on Market Street by single-framing, in order to create certain happenings on the screen. By studying my super 8 films *Sketch Film #1* and *Sketch Film #2* [both 2005], I made decisions for sequences of this film before working on this project. No re-photographing technique is involved. The result may look abstract, yet representative enough to show the characteristics of the street.

“This film was commissioned by the San Francisco Foundation and the Exploratorium, for the event: *A Trip Down Market Street 1905/2005: An Outdoor Celebration*.” (Tomonari Nishikawa)

SLOW (2001) by Scott Stark; digital video, color, sound, 16 minutes, tape from the maker

“A number of works by Stark could fill this spot, most notably 1990’s *in.side.out*, in which interior and exterior views between two houses are activated by mechanistic vertical pans until the place next door starts coming apart at the seams. For that matter, *Angel Beach*, also from 2001, could serve as a valuable pivot point (pun intended) between Northern California beachscapes and figures of the recent past. But *SLOW* both examines specific slices of Bay Area topography and generates perceptual conundrums through video manipulation. With a rigor worthy of Michael Snow’s camera-movement trilogy, Stark deploys regular right-to-left optical wipes as transitions between different times in the same space, or as transitions between spaces. [...] Creative geography at its most agreeably maddening, *SLOW* activates the city around it through multidimensional concentration of space.” (Michael Sicinsky: “The Bay Area as Cinematic Space in Twenty-five Stops or Less.” *Radical Light: Alternative Film & Video in the Bay Area, 1945–2000*, Steve Anker, Kathy Geritz and Steve Seid, eds.)

Joe DiMaggio 1,2,3 (1991) by Anne McGuire; video, color, sound, 11 minutes, tape from the maker

“In *Joe DiMaggio 1, 2, 3* McGuire stalks the baseball legend electronically, spying on him as he goes about his daily business from his San Francisco residence. Coining a breathy, improvised paean to the ballplayer as she surveils him from a distance with her camcorder’s telephoto lens, McGuire creates a creepy and humorous commentary on the vulnerability of a celebrity in symbiosis with the pathos of fandom.” (Valerie Soe: “The End of the World as We Know It: Video Art in the 1990s.” *Radical Light: Alternative Film & Video in the Bay Area, 1945–2000*, Steve Anker, Kathy Geritz and Steve Seid, eds.)