

Stan Brakhage: Metaphors on Vision

Friday, December 8, 2017 at 7:30 pm — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

presented in association with the Canyon Cinema Foundation, Light Field and Light Industry
Thomas Beard In Person

Imagine an eye unruled by man-made laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception. How many colors are there in a field of grass to the crawling baby unaware of "Green"? How many rainbows can light create for the untutored eye? How aware of variations in heat waves can that eye be? Imagine a world alive with incomprehensible objects and shimmering with an endless variety of movement and innumerable gradations of color. Imagine a world before the "beginning was the word."

— Stan Brakhage, *Metaphors on Vision*

First published in 1963, Stan Brakhage's *Metaphors on Vision* remains one of the most challenging and inspiring artistic statements of avant-garde cinema by one of its most influential figures, a treatise on mythopoeia and the nature of visual experience written in a style as idiosyncratic as his art. Long out of print and highly collectible, Anthology Film Archives and Light Industry proudly announce the republication of a new definitive edition of *Metaphors*, featuring a full facsimile of the original 1963 design by George Maciunas and copious annotations by P. Adams Sitney (as well as the inclusion of Sitney's 1998 introduction to the 1998 French translation). Light Industry's Thomas Beard appears in person to present and discuss the book and to present Brakhage's 1958 masterpiece *Anticipation of the Night* along with Brakhage's *The Dead* (1960) and the camera-less classic *Mothlight* (1963).

Anticipation of the Night (1958) by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 42 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"The daylight shadow of a man in its movement evokes lights in the night. A rose held in hand reflects both sun and moon like illumination. The opening of a doorway onto trees anticipates the twilight into the night. A child is born on the lawn, born of water with its promisory rainbow, and the wild rose. It becomes the moon and the source of all light. Lights of the night become young children playing a circular game. The moon moves over a pillared temple to which all lights return. There is seen the sleep of innocents in their animal dreams, becoming the amusement, their circular game, becoming the morning. The trees change color and lose their leaves for the morn, they become the complexity of branches in which the shadow man hangs himself." (Stan Brakhage).

The Dead (1960) by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 11 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"... a very sombre and intense visual poem, a black lyric, if you like, but full of an open dramatic energy which puts it well above a formal or rhetorical exercise on Time and Eternity. In the visual form of the monuments of the Pere-Lachaise cemetery in Paris, the persistent and impenetrable geometric masonry gets to be less a symbol of death than a death-like sensation." (Donald Sutherland).

"Europe, weighted down so much with that past, was THE DEAD. I was always Tourist there; I couldn't live in it. The graveyard could stand for all my view of Europe, for all the concerns with past art, for involvement with symbol. THE DEAD became my first work, in which things that might very easily be taken as symbols were so photographed as to destroy all their symbolic potential. The action of making THE DEAD kept me alive." (Stan Brakhage).

Mothlight (1963) by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"Essence of lepidoptera re-created between two strips of clear mylar tape: an anima animation. What a moth might see from birth to death if black were white and white were black. (Stan Brakhage)

This program is presented in association with
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