Glass House: Films of Ariana Gerstein
Ariana Gerstein in person
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When I began making films, I was fascinated by the celluloid object and its transformation by the projector—with its singular light, scale and illusion of continuity and time. I never wanted to reflect the world I see with my eyes. I wanted to make something else. Something I could touch and not touch. (Ariana Gerstein)

Recalling at times the lush animation works of Gunvor Nelson, the tactile films of Ariana Gerstein reconcile her fascination with filmic materiality with the soft ephemeralities of light, time and memory. Using complex hand-wrought editing methods and extensive optical printing Gerstein's work dazzles in its visual complexity and rhythmic timing. Gerstein's recent work innovatively integrates desktop image scanners into her analog filmmaking process, capturing minute personal gestures in a sort of slow-motion real-time animation process, creating a visuality both intimate and abstract. Tonight's screening comprises a mini-retrospective of these works, 2000–2018. (Steve Polta)

Images of Flying and Falling (2000) by Ariana Gerstein; 16mm, b&w, sound, 24 minutes, print from the maker
> Memory and its reconstruction, fleeting and misleading. A film about loss. (Ariana Gerstein)

Close the Lid, Gently: A Home, Document, Scan (2013) by Ariana Gerstein; digital video, b&w, sound, 5 minutes, exhibition file from the maker
> *Close the Lid Gently* is a video made entirely from two home desktop scanners—one a photo scanner, the other a refurbished low end document scanner. Each has its own texture and sees the domestic environment in its own particular way, one scan at a time. This piece deals with the deliberate misuse/re-purposing of commercial image producing machines for a slow, individual, low end, approach to the motion picture making process. (Ariana Gerstein)

Performance For Perfection 1200 (2014) by Ariana Gerstein; digital video, b&w, sound, 14 minutes, exhibition file from the maker
> The Perfection 1200 is a 14+ year-old photo document scanner. It renders an image over time, from right to left, not like the camera's instant frame. As the scanner arm moves beneath the glass surface, it emits its own light which bounces off of the subject and returns information onto it's CCDs. One scan, depending on resolution used, can take ten to twenty seconds or more. As the actor performs for the scanner, he does so in near silence, struggling with each isolated pose and breath for the duration. Fixed are the traces of the movements of life. The animation process rebuilds and unfixes the construction during play, recombined with breath and sound. Through this artificial deconstruction and reconstruction process, there is a reflection of life and art, deeply felt. Don Boros' double speaks with his voice, about Beckett, acting, of "living truthfully, under imaginary circumstances." (Ariana Gerstein)

UpCycles (2016) by Ariana Gerstein; digital video, b&w, sound, 7 minutes, exhibition file from the maker

It began with Super-8mm film shot at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago and 16mm shot from the El train and along Lake Michigan. Images were thought through as they were re-worked by optical printing (a process of re-shooting film back onto film one frame at a time) and hand chemical processing. Film cut every frame or two (would never run through a projector) were stepped up and down along the way (Super-8mm onto 16mm onto 35mm and back down to 16mm). The film remained as film for years. Recently it was taken to a new level by optical printing with a digital camera on a JK printer, also one frame at a time. It was rethought, retimed with a different screen ratio and sound. (Ariana Gerstein)

In Glass Houses (2017) by Ariana Gerstein; digital video, b&w, sound, 9 minutes, exhibition file from the maker

An interview is conducted exploring methods used to facilitate a real research project whose aim it is to capture and analyze human micro-expressions for use by a variety of industries (including lie detection and entertainment/animation). But the particular research or the use of human subjects is really just a point of departure. This film takes a moment to touch on our use of technology and vice versa.

The images in the film are created in three ways:

1) By scanning the actor and two other support figures interacting with the scanner glass and each other, one frame at a time.
2) By filming the actor revealed by the light of the scanner as he is being scanned. (Each light pass represents a frame of the reanimated scanner image).
3) Through line drawings and smears which trace or mark points of contact between the actor and the scanner glass.

Skin in The Game (2017) by Ariana Gerstein; digital video, color, sound, 5 minutes, exhibition file from the maker

A way of working, from many pieces, marked by light, by pressure, sliced. An editing process that is extremely non linear. Going from footage from Cycles (Gerstein, 1993) and found footage which has been cut, painted, turned into a glass mounted collage, re-scanned, animated, edited from analog to digital. (Ariana Gerstein)

Traces with Elikem (2018) by Ariana Gerstein; digital video, b&w, sound, 7 minutes, exhibition file from the maker

Traces performed and captured by scanner and monitor surfaces. Other surfaces include paper and film. Light reflects and passes through, layers slide past and sometimes meet, punctuated by sounds vibrating and percussive. With the participation of Samuel Elikem Kwame Nyamuame, Ph.D., Visiting Assistant Professor of Ethnomusicology and Dance; Departments of Music, Theater (Dance) & Africana Studies.

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