

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010

ART & FILM NOTES

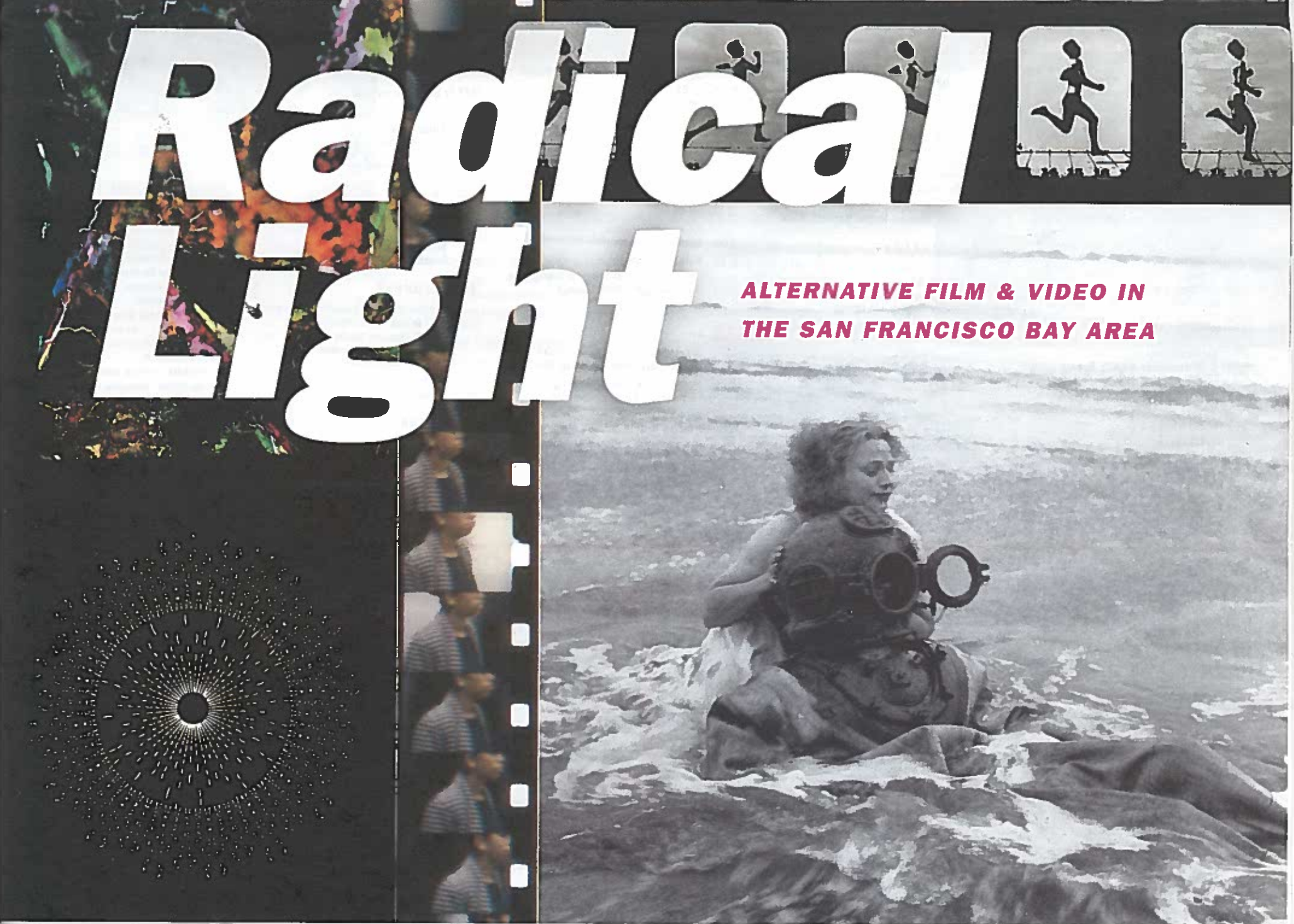
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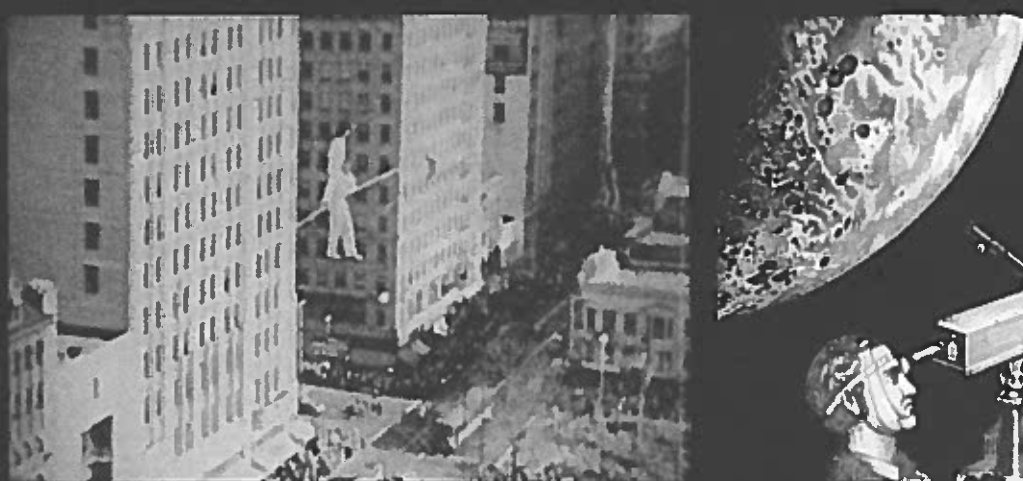
Radical Light

ALTERNATIVE FILM & VIDEO IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA



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In conjunction with the publication of PFA's first book, *Radical Light: Alternative Film and Video in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-2000*, edited by Steve Anker, Kathy Geritz, and Steve Seid, the Pacific Film Archive is presenting a film and video series, beginning September 17 and continuing through March, 2011, that explores the themes and movements, and traces the historic chronology of alternative film and video in the Bay Area. The history of avant-garde cinema in the region goes back to the 1940s, when surrealist-influenced films were created through San Francisco Art Institute workshops, in some of the country's earliest filmmaking classes. Around the same time, artists such as Harry Smith and Jordan Belson began painting directly on celluloid or sculpting light on film. By the end of the fifties, the first film assembled entirely from already existing film footage would be made by Bruce Conner, and poet Christopher Maclaine would have completed his formative first film, a startling apocalyptic vision. Some artists, such as Stan Brakhage, Abigail Child, and Peter Hutton, made films during relatively brief stays around San Francisco, but others such as Lawrence Jordan, Gunvor Nelson, and George Kuchar developed long-term careers in the area. Many began as poets, painters, and sculptors, but as the sixties moved into the seventies more and more came to identify themselves primarily as film or videomakers. A parallel wave of artists adopted the emerging technology of video as their principal tool of expression, while Stephen Beck, Skip Sweeney, Warner Jopson, and others developed a language of image-processing that pulled psychedelia into an electronic realm.

ABOUT LEFT TO RIGHT:
A Movie, October 6 *Duo Concertantes*, October 13 *The End*, September 29

CURATED BY STEVE ANKER, KATHY GERITZ, STEVE SEID
THE SERIES IS CO-SPONSORED BY SAN FRANCISCO CINEMATHEQUE, WHICH WILL PRESENT FOUR PROGRAMS IN ITS FALL SCHEDULE. FOR INFORMATION ON THESE, PLEASE GO TO SFCINEMATHEQUE.ORG. SPECIAL THANKS TO STEVE POLTA FOR COORDINATING THIS SERIES, WHICH INCLUDES PROGRAMS ON FOUND FOOTAGE CURATED BY CRAIG BALDWIN, WOMEN'S FILM FROM THE 1970S CURATED BY JANIS CRYSTAL LIPZIN, AND BAY AREA LANDSCAPE WORKS CURATED BY STEVE ANKER.

RADICAL LIGHT: ALTERNATIVE FILM AND VIDEO IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA IS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS, THE ANDY WARHOL FOUNDATION FOR THE VISUAL ARTS, THE WILLIAM H. DONNER FOUNDATION, THE SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION, OWSLEY BROWN III, AND THE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE BAM/PFA TRUSTEES. WITH THANKS TO MONA NAGAI, JOJI SHIBATA, AND PAMELA JEAN SMITH, PFA FILM COLLECTION; GARBINE ORTEGA, PFA CURATORIAL INTERN; ANUJ VAIDYA, PFA LIBRARY; DOMINIC ANGERAME AT CANYON CINEMA; AND JONATHAN MARLOW AND VANESSA O'NEILL AT SAN FRANCISCO CINEMATHEQUE FOR THEIR INVALUABLE HELP.



Highlights of the series include artists in attendance at many shows, archival prints and recent preservations, and the rediscovery of long-forgotten works. For information on the accompanying gallery exhibition that further elucidates this history through photographs, posters, flyers and ephemera, see Art Notes p. 7. And for information on special Radical L@TE presentations, see Art Notes p. 8.

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 19

6:30 Landscape as Expression

Ernie Gehr and Lawrence Jordan in Person

San Francisco and the surrounding Bay Area offer an astonishing landscape that combines shifting and surprising natural visual qualities with a teeming urban culture. Crystalline light, undulating hills, mesmerizing fog, and a rugged shoreline captivate and become expressive parts of life. The area is a magnet for wanderers and those seeking something new and unexpected. Filmmakers, fascinated by the phenomena and energy of the place, have been drawn here almost since the inception of the medium. Tonight's program explores and reflects the wonder of this urban landscape, and includes *A Trip Down Market Street 1905*, a time capsule that also presents a different consciousness than experienced on movie screens today; Dion Vigne's ebullient *North Beach*, which revels in the colors and rhythms of Beat-era North Beach; and Chris Marker's *Junkopia*, a contemplation of renegade sculptures erected off shore between cities. Michael Glawogger's *Street Noise* tours Oakland's San Pablo Avenue while Ernie Gehr's *Side/Walk/Shuttle* provides a startling experience of San Francisco's unpredictable skyline. Films by Lawrence Jordan, Bruce Baillie, Scott Stark, and Lynn Marie Kirby further explore the Bay Area's cinematic character.—Steve Anker

A Trip Down Market Street 1905 (1905, 12 mins, Silent, B&W, From Rick Prelinger). *North Beach* (Dion Vigne, 1958, 5 mins, Color, PFA Preservation Print). *Visions of a City* (Lawrence Jordan, 1957-78, 8 mins, B&W, From Canyon Cinema). *All My Life* (Bruce Baillie, 1966, 3 mins, Color, PFA Collection). *Golden Gate Bridge Exposure: Poised for Parabolas* (Lynn Marie Kirby, 2004, 5 mins, Silent, Color, Digital Video, From the artist). *Junkopia* (Chris Marker, 1981, 6 mins, Color, 35mm, PFA Collection). *Street Noise* (Michael Glawogger, 1981, 9 mins, Color, From the artist). *Degrees of Limitation* (Scott Stark, 1982, 3 mins, Silent, Color, From the artist). *Side/Walk/Shuttle* (Ernie Gehr, 1991, 41 mins, Color, PFA Collection)

• (Total running time: 93 mins, 16mm unless indicated otherwise)

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 29

7:30 1946-53

Introduced by David Meltzer

Wildor Bentley II in Person

David Meltzer is a San Francisco poet and author. Recent books include *David's Copy: Selected Poems*, *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets*, and the forthcoming *When I Was a Poet*.

The artist and poet Wildor Bentley II is featured in one of the portals in Christopher Maclaine's *The End*.

The first period of Bay Area experimental filmmaking coincided with Frank Stauffacher's heavily influential Art in Cinema series, which between 1946 and 1953 focused on avant-garde film. Beginning with *The Potted Psalm* (1947), James Broughton and Sidney Peterson made several dramatic films that extended earlier surrealist tendencies into new directions, and soon young artists such as Stauffacher himself, Harry Smith, and Sara Kathryn Arledge tried their hand at filmmaking. Working with minimal budgets and little tradition, each made extraordinary work that was infused with and reflected the moods and culture of the time. This program includes a sampling of Arledge's rarely seen, pigment-applied abstract glass slides; Smith's first painstaking abstract animations, #1-3, which used various processes directly onto 16mm film; Stauffacher's *ZigZag*, a playful rhapsody on the rhythms and shapes of night lights in mid-century San Francisco; Sidney Peterson's classroom-produced *The Lead Shoes*, a dark and witty retelling of classic tales of incest and patricide; and Beat visionary Christopher Maclaine's manic and entirely original first film, *The End*, a series of intimate portraits that is also a chilling but hilarious social commentary.—Steve Anker

A selection of Sara Kathryn Arledge's glass slides (c. 1949-1952, c. 10 mins, Silent, Color, PFA Collection). *ZigZag* (Frank Stauffacher, 1948, 8 mins, Color, From Academy Film Archive). *The Lead Shoes* (Sidney Peterson, Workshop 20 Production, 1949, 17 mins, B&W, PFA Collection). *Early Abstractions, #1-3* (Harry Smith, ca. 1946-1952, 8 mins, Color, From Harry Smith Archives). *The End* (Christopher Maclaine, 1953, 35 mins, Color, From Film-makers' Cooperative)

• (Total running time: 81 mins, 16mm, unless indicated otherwise)

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 6

7:30 1953-60

During the fifties, the art scene in San Francisco was small yet intertwined. Filmmakers, musicians, painters, and poets attended each other's events and collaborated on projects. The community that had developed around Frank Stauffacher's Art in Cinema screenings in the late 1940s continued into the early fifties and included photographer/filmmaker Hy Hirsh and painter Patricia Marx, who are represented here by two vibrant animations. When Stan Brakhage moved to San Francisco, he lived with the artist Jess and poet Robert Duncan, and made the film *In Between*. During a later stay, he saw the films of the Beat poet Christopher Maclaine, which had a profound effect on him. Philip Greene, Allen Willis, and David Myers joined forces to make a film with poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Have You Sold Your Dozen Roses?*, while Jane Belson Conger Shimane worked with the experimental musician Henry Jacobs on *Odds and Ends*. Will Hindle's *Pastorale d'été* marked the rebirth of personal filmmaking, but it took assemblage artist Bruce Conner's *A Movie* to turn avant-garde cinema toward a new direction of examining film itself.—Kathy Geritz

Ener! (Hy Hirsh, 1953, 7 mins, Color, Courtesy IotaCenter, permission Angie Pike). *Things to Come* (Patricia Marx, 1953, 3 mins, Color, From Academy Film Archive, permission Angie Pike). *In Between* (Stan Brakhage, 1955, 10 mins, Color, From Canyon Cinema). *Pastorale d'été* (Will Hindle, 1958, 9 mins, Color, PFA Collection). *Have You Sold Your Dozen Roses?* (Allen Willis, Philip Greene, David Myers, 1957, 9.5 mins, B&W, PFA Collection). *Beat* (Christopher Maclaine, 1958, 6 mins, Color, From Film-makers' Cooperative). *A Movie* (Bruce Conner, 1958, 12 mins, B&W, 16mm, PFA Collection). *Odds and Ends* (Jane Belson Conger Shimane, 1959, 5 mins, Color, From Academy Film Archive, permission Angie Pike)

• (Total running time: 62 mins, 16mm)

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 13

7:30 1961-71

Peter Hutton and Other Artists in Person

Avant-garde, experimental film flourished during the sixties in the Bay Area, and scores of filmmakers relished freedom of expression. Often brazenly anti-establishment and always joyfully self-expressive, these films channeled the zeitgeist and expanded the possibilities of film as art. This program is a journey through these revelatory and rebellious years. Robert Nelson's *Oh Dem Watermelons* lampoons racial stereotypes and revels in San Francisco's anarchic spirit; Gunvor Nelson and Dorothy Wiley's *Schmeerguntz* is a two-fisted assault on stereotypes of women. Lawrence Jordan's *Duo Concertantes* uses old illustrations to create an elegant and wistful vision of longing; *I Change I Am the Same* by Alice Anne Parker Severson is an amusing contemplation on gender, while Bruce Baillie's *Valentin de las Sierras* portrays small town Mexico, lovingly rendered through lush and finely orchestrated detail. Lenny Lipton's *Doggie Diner* and *Return of Doggie Diner* satirizes and excels in formal, conceptual filmmaking and Peter Hutton's *July '71 in San Francisco* conveys sixties' ideals through a series of beautiful, haunting tableaux.—Steve Anker

Oh Dem Watermelons (Robert Nelson, 1965, 11 mins, Color, PFA Preservation Print). *Schmeerguntz* (Gunvor Nelson, Dorothy Wiley, 1966, 15 mins, B&W, PFA Preservation Print). *Duo Concertantes* (Lawrence Jordan, 1964, 9 mins, B&W, From Canyon Cinema). *I Change I Am the Same* (Alice Anne Parker Severson, 1969, 1 min, B&W, PFA Collection). *Valentin de las Sierras* (Bruce Baillie, 1967, 9 mins, Color, PFA Preservation Print). *Doggie Diner* and *Return of Doggie Diner* (Lenny Lipton, 1969, 7 mins, Color, From Canyon Cinema). *July '71 in San Francisco*, *Living at Beach Street*, *Working at Canyon Cinema*, *Swimming in the Valley of the Moon* (Peter Hutton, 1971, 35 mins, Silent, B&W, From Canyon Cinema)

• (Total running time: 87 mins, 16mm)

In the Museum Store

Radical Light: Alternative Film and Video in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-2000, 2010, UC Press and BAM/PFA, 352 pages.