

AMERICAN AVANT GARDE

Oct. 1, 2; 15, 16; 22, 23.

Henry Hills' AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE class will meet this semester as 3 modules , which can be taken separately for 1 credit each, or all together for 3 credits. There will be 4 class sessions each module, plus 2 outside screenings. Each of the weeks there will be a visiting guest American experimental filmmaker.

Course description:

Viewing the dominance of narrative in film and the consequent hegemony of Hollywood as an historical anomaly owing to the economics of film production (an issue from the pre-digital past, now that filmmaking, like record collecting, has become essentially free), we will explore fringe work as an alternative reality which contains seeds of a positive future vision for moving-imagery, i.e., avant-garde film will be viewed as a model of consciousness seeking expansion. Ideally this will be a study of works in which form and content are perfectly merged, the focus being on film as a thing itself, not films "about" something. We will view as many films as possible, films that bounce off each other in different ways. Availability on DVD is redefining film history, and such access plays a major role in the structure of this course. Therefore outside screenings of films projected on film have been arranged and are an important component of this course.

Evaluation Criteria:

As the primary focus of this class is analysis based on the direct experience of projected works, attendance is mandatory. Students must keep a JOURNAL of experimental films they see, both in class and outside. This should include sufficient information to convince me that you have seen the films, plus commentary indicating that some of what you have seen has given you some thoughts. Plagiarism from the internet is not acceptable and will result in failure and ridicule. These are due (by e-mail) the end of the last week of classes. If you use Windows, please send as PDF file.

MODULE 1

classes:

- 1a. Friday, October 1, 10:00-13:00 FAMU Auditorium
- 2a. Friday, October 1, 15:00-18:00 FAMU Auditorium
- 3a. Saturday, October 2, 9:00-12:00 classroom 1
- 4a. Saturday, October 2, 13:30-16:00 classroom 1

****additional screening****

20:00 Wednesday, September 29, Ponrepo, guest filmmaker EVE HELLER with
16mm & 35mm films

MODULE 2

classes:

- 1b. Friday, October 15, 10:00-13:00 FAMU Auditorium
- 2b. Friday, October 15, 14:30-17:30 FAMU Auditorium
- 3b. Saturday, October 16, 9:00-12:00 classroom 3
- 4b. Saturday, October 16, 13:30-16:00 classroom 3

****additional screenings****

20:00 Monday, October 11, Ponrepo, visiting filmmaker NATHANIEL DORSKY
with 16mm films at the “sacred speed” of 18fps

20:00 Friday October 15, Ponrepo, visiting filmmaker NATHANIEL DORSKY
with a second program of 16mm films at “sacred speed”

MODULE 3

classes:

- 1c. Friday, October 22, 10:00-13:00 FAMU Auditorium
- 2c. Friday, October 22, 15:00-18:00 FAMU Auditorium
- 3c. Saturday, October 23, 9:00-12:00 classroom 1
- 4c. Saturday, October 23, 13:30-16:00 classroom 1

****additional screening****

20:00 Monday, November 1, Ponrepo, guest filmmaker NAOMI UMAN with
16mm films

films to be screened:

class 1a : **Early Cinema and It's Influence**

Ken Jacobs HANKY PANKY
NYMPH
CAPITALISM:SLAVERY
William Kennedy Laurie Dickson EARLIEST EDISON FILMS
Andy Warhol BLOW JOB
Edwin S. Porter WHAT HAPPENED ON 23RD STREET
PAN AMERICAN EXPOSITION AT NIGHT
DREAM OF A RAREBIT FIEND
AN AMERICAN BEAUTY

Billy Bitzer INTERIOR NEW YORK SUBWAY
IMPOSSIBLE CONVICTS
Fredrick Armitage DEMOLISHING THE STAR THEATRE
SEEING NEW YORK BY YACHT DOWN THE HUDSON
Ken Jacobs NEW YORK STREET TROLLEYS (Nervous System demo)

class 2a: **Stan Brakhage, part 1**

WAY TO THE SHADOW GARDEN (1954) 10m
THE WONDER RING (1955) 6m
MOTHLIGHT (1963) 4m
RIDDLE OF LUMEN (1972) 17m
MURDER PSALM (1981) 16m
THE DANTE QUARTET (1987) 8m
RAGE NET (1988) 1m
VISIONS IN MEDITATION 2: Mesa Verde (1989) 17m
DELICACIES OF MOLTEN HORROR SYNAPSE (1991) 10m
COMMINGLED CONTAINERS (1997) 5m

class 3a: **Underground Film from California**

Sidney Peterson THE LEAD SHOES (1949)
Harry Smith FILM # 3 (Dizzy Gillespie soundtrack) (1950)
FILM # 3 (John Zorn soundtrack)
Christopher McLaine THE END (1953)
Jordan Belson ALLURES (1961)
Wallace Berman ALEPH (silent) (died 1976, made 56-66)
Bruce Conner BREAKAWAY (1966)
REPORT (1967)
TAKE THE 5:10 TO DREAMLAND (1976)
Robert Nelson HOT LEATHERETTE (5 min)(1967)
Pat O'Neill 7362 (10 min)(1967)

class 4a: **Maya Deren**

Maya Deren MESHES OF THE AFTERNOON
AT LAND
Martina Kudláček IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN

class 1b: **Stan Brakhage, part 2**

WEDLOCK HOUSE: AN INTERCOURSE (1959) 11m
CAT'S CRADLE (1959) 6m
WINDOW WATER BABY MOVING (1959) 12m
SCENES FROM UNDER CHILDHOOD [PT 1] (1967) 25m
DUPLICITY III (1980) 30m
GLAZE OF CATHEXIS (1990) 3m

BLACK ICE (1994) 3m
CHINESE SERIES (2003) 3m

class 2b:

Marie Menken

GLIMPSE OF THE GARDEN
ARABESQUE FOR KENNETH ANGER
EYE MUSIC IN RED MAJOR
GO! GO! GO!

Kenneth Anger

INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME
SCORPIO RISING

class 3b: **20's & 30's**

Man Ray LE RETOUR A LA RAISON

EMAK BAKIA

(Fernand Léger &) Dudley Murphy BALLET MÉCANIQUE (Antheil track)

Ralph Steiner H2O

Watson & Webber FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Joseph Cornell ROSE HOBART

COTILLION

BY NIGHT WITH TORCH AND SPEAR

Busby Berkeley BY A WATERFALL

class 4b: **Structuralist Film**

Robert Nelson BLEU SHUT

Hollis Frampton ZORNS' S LEMMA & "(nostalgia)"

class 1c: **Jack Smith**

Ken Jacobs BLOND COBRA

Jack Smith FLAMING CREATURES

Ron Rice CHUMLUM

class 2c: Guest Filmmaker **NAOMI UMAN**

class 3c:

Leslie Thornton PEGGY AND FRED IN HELL

Su Friedrich SINK OR SWIM

Abigail Child MAYHEM
Henry Hills MONEY and FAILED STATES

class 4c: new films by Lewis Klahr, Jennifer Reeves, Ben Russell, Fred Worden, & Vincent Grenier.

HENRY HILLS (<http://www.henryhills.com/>), a 2009 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow, has been making dense, intensely rhythmic experimental films since 1975. Owing to a personal involvement in film scenes in San Francisco in the 70's & 80's & in New York from the 80s to the present, and his activities as a curator, he has a personal relationship with almost all the major figures in the Experimental Film movement. He is intimate with the evolving concerns and thus can present a first-hand history, both anecdotal and theoretical. His own work, which seeks abstraction within sharply-focused naturalistic imagery, the eternal within the temporal, and the ethereal within the mundane, promotes an active attentiveness through a relentlessly concentrated montage. He brings a long association with various other art scenes as well, including "language" poetry, the "downtown" improvised music scene, and post-Judson post-modern dance. His work is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, was included in the Whitney Museum "The American Century: Art and Culture 1900-2000" program, and screened in last year's New York and San Francisco film festivals. A DVD of his selected 16mm films is available on Tzadik (<http://www.tzadik.com/>) and his feature-length theater document JOHN ZORN/RICHARD FOREMAN -- ASTRONOME, A NIGHT AT THE OPERA has just been released (also on Tzadik). He is currently working on a multi-screen HD installation based on footage shot on his train commute between Vienna and Prague.

EVE HELLER

"Eve Heller uses the intricate and particular beauty of black and white 16mm film to carve a space for the viewer away from the frantic pace of the traditional moving image. Sensitive, ruminative, and often disarmingly simple in appearance, these films develop an otherworldly atmosphere where the viewer is invited to grasp the profound in the everyday." She was subject of a recent retrospective at the Austrian Filmmuseum. Several of the films she will screen are 35mm blow-ups from super-8.

NATHANIEL DORSKY made films in Kodachrome from the time he was 10 years old (in the mid-50s) until the stock was discontinued 2 years ago. He dropped out of college and moved to New York in the early 60's where he was part of a circle of filmmakers revolving around Gregory Markopoulos and received early fame for such films as INGREEN (as well as winning an Emmy for work as a cinematographer). A crisis of identity caused him to move to California and stop releasing films for almost 20 years. The first films he began to release when he emerged from isolation were exhaustive studies of imageless film emulsion from long discontinued stocks (PNEUMA) and sand (ALAYA), followed by a number of films edited from the accumulated glorious footage he had continued to shoot over the years. By 1998's VARIATIONS, in many ways the prototype of his current work, he had caught up and now shoots specifically for each new project. He is the author of a book, DEVOTIONAL CINEMA, in which he outlines his Buddhist aesthetics. An exquisite cinematographer, he has supported himself over the years as an editor, particularly as a "film doctor" for the long running POV series. His entire body of work, which has received support from the Guggenheim and the Rockefeller Foundations, is in the

collection of the Museum of Modern Art. He has screened widely in festivals and had a recent retrospective at the Pompidou Center.

“Silence in cinema is undoubtedly an acquired taste, but the freedom it unveils has many rich rewards. The major part of my work is both silent and paced to be projected at 18 fps. (silent speed)...It is the direct connection of light and audience that interests me. The screen continually shifts dimensionally from being an image-window, to a floating energy field, to simply light on the wall. In my films, the black space surrounding the screen is as significant as the square itself. Silence allows these articulations, which are both poetic and sculptural at the same time, to be revealed and appreciated.” -N.D.

NAOMI UMAN

Former private chef to Malcolm Forbes, Calvin Klein and Gloria Vanderbilt, Naomi Uman traded in her eggbeater and oven mitts for a 16mm Bolex. Uman’s work is marked by a signature DIY aesthetic, often shooting, hand-processing and editing her films with the most rudimentary of practices. She moved from Los Angeles, where she had taught at CalArts, to Mexico City some years ago, but has been living in the Ukraine the past year on a Fulbright Fellowship. Her work, which is widely screened at festivals and museums, has also received support from the Guggenheim Foundation and Creative Capital.