

The Brakhage Center Symposium 2012

Quickly becoming a tradition in the world of avant-garde filmmaking and artistry, the Brakhage Center Symposium will again be hosted this year by the University of Colorado at Boulder. In a weekend dedicated to the exploration of new ideas in cinema art, guest programmer Kathy Geritz explores Experimental Narrative. Presenters will include Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Amie Siegel, J.J. Murphy, Chris Sullivan, and Stacey Steers with musical guests The Boulder Laptop Orchestra (BLOrk).

Program of Events

Friday, March 16 (Muenzinger Auditorium on the CU Campus)

- 7:00- *Multiple and Repeated Narratives*
10:00 **Screening:** *Syndromes and A Century* (Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2006)
Apichatpong Weerasethakul in Person.

Saturday, March 17 (Visual Arts Complex 1B20 on the CU Campus)

- 10:00- *Narratives Remade, Reused, and Revisited*
12:00 Amie Siegel and Stacey Steers in Person.

1:30- *Andy Warhol and Narrative*
4:00 Filmmaker and critic J.J. Murphy will lecture on Warhol and narrative.

5:00- *Lumière Revisited: Documentary and Narrative Hybrids*
7:30 Amie Siegel, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and J. J. Murphy in Person.

Sunday, March 18 (Visual Arts Complex 1B20 on the CU Campus)

- 10:30- *Animation and Personal Journeys*
1:30 Stacey Steers and Chris Sullivan in Person.

3:00- *Méliès Revisited: Dreams and Fantasies*
4:30 J.J. Murphy, Chris Sullivan, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul in Person.
Special guest performance by BLOrk. (Boulder Laptop Orchestra)

Topic: Experimental Narrative

"We know what a narrative film is, and what an experimental film is, but what is an experimental narrative? The selection of films and videos presented in this year's symposium will present various ways filmmakers are exploring this terrain. It will include films in which the narrative is intermingled with documentary elements or unfolds in animation. The act of acting may be foregrounded, or attention may be drawn to the experience of time, engaging the spectator in the process of assimilating the narrative. Some films will rethink or remake existing narrative films in new, surprising ways. In still others, the narrative will be unconventionally structured—nonlinear or fractured in the telling. In these different ways, the films presented will challenge and expand our expectations as they push the boundaries of storytelling conventions." -Kathy Geritz

Programmer Profile

Kathy Geritz

Kathy Geritz is a film curator at Pacific Film Archive, where she has worked since 1981. She is co-editor of the recent book, *Radical Light: Alternative Film and Video in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-2000*, and co-curated the accompanying film tour. Her film related activities have included curating the Flaherty Film Seminar in 2002, co-curating an annual program of avant-garde cinema for the San Francisco International Film Festival, and serving as an ongoing pre-selector for the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival. She has served as a juror on numerous grant and film festival panels; this year she will be a juror for the 50th Ann Arbor Film Festival. She teaches a film curating internship at UC Berkeley.

Sponsored by: The William H. Donner Foundation; The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; The CU Film Studies Program; Center for Media Arts & Performance in ATLAS; University of Colorado School of Journalism and Mass Communication; University of Colorado Center for Asian Studies; Donner Canadian Foundation; The Graduate Committee on the Arts and Humanities (GCAH).

Friday, March 16: 7:00- 10:00

Multiple and Repeated Narratives

Screening: *Syndromes and A Century*

with Apichatpong Weerasethakul in person.

(*Sang sattawat*). Dedicated to Apichatpong's doctor parents, and loosely based on their recollections, *Syndromes and a Century* begins in a rural hospital that basks in a light so radiant it finds all doctors in love. Here dentists serenade their crushes with flossing-related karaoke, and even job interviews sound romantic. Later, in an antiseptic urban hospital bathed in fluorescence (the light of the new century), the same actors, playing similar characters, re-evolve their scenes, with loves and desires repeated like syndromes. Concerned with how memory (and, by extension, cinema) works to recall and rephrase stories and emotions, *Syndromes and a Century* is blissfully impervious to narrative concerns. —Jason Sanders, *PFA Film Notes*

• *Written by Apichatpong. Photographed by Sayombhu Mukdeeprom. With Nantararat Sawaddikul, Jaruchai Iamaram, Saphon Pukanuk, Jenjira Pongpas. (105 min., In Thai with English subtitles, Color, 35mm, From Strand Releasing)*

Preceded by: **Dante Quartet** (Stan Brakhage, 1987, 8 min., 35mm): This hand-painted work six years in-the-making (37 in the studying of *The Divine Comedy*) demonstrates the earthly conditions of "Hell," "Purgatory" (or Transition) and "Heaven" (or "existence is song," which is the closest I'd presume upon heaven from my experience) as well as the mainspring of/from "Hell" ("Hell Spit Flexion") in four parts which are inspired by the closed-eye or hypnagogic vision created by those emotional states. —Stan Brakhage

END FRIDAY

Participant Profile

Apichatpong Weerasethakul

Apichatpong Weerasethakul began making film and video shorts in 1994, and completed his first feature in 2000. He has mounted exhibitions and installations in many countries since 1998. Working independently of the Thai commercial film industry, he is active in promoting experimental and independent filmmaking through his company Kick the Machine. Often non-linear, with a strong sense of dislocation, his works deal with memory, subtly addressed personal politics and social issues. His latest project, *Primitive*, consists of a large-scale video installation, a short film, an artist's book, and a feature film, *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*. The film has won a Palme d'Or prize at the 63rd Cannes Film Festival in 2010. He lives and works in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Saturday, March 17: 10:00- 12:00

Narratives Remade, Reused, and Revisited

with Amie Siegel and Stacey Steers in person.

A group of shorts in which found footage is used in unexpected ways, movies are remade with new intents, actresses are dropped into new stories, directors jump into actresses' scenes, and the purpose of narrative is debated.

I, An Actress (George Kuchar, 1977, 9 min.): This film was shot in ten minutes with students of mine at the San Francisco Art Institute. It was to be a screen-test for a girl in the class. I had to get into the act to speed things up so, in a way, this film gives an insight into my directing techniques while under pressure.—George Kuchar

My Dad is 100 Years Old (Guy Maddin, Canada, 2005, 16 min.): Isabella Rossellini's tenderly eccentric and shrewdly childlike tribute to the founding figure of Italian neorealism.—J. Hoberman

Night Hunter (Stacey Steers, U.S., 2011, 15.5 min.): In this handmade film, composed of more than four thousand collages, the actress Lillian Gish is seamlessly appropriated from silent-era cinema and plunged into a new and haunting role.—Stacey Steers

Poetry and Truth (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Peter Kubelka, Austria, 2003, 13 min., Silent): *Dichtung und Wahrheit* contains collected pieces from publicity films with a common element: they show actors before they start and begin to play what they are directed to represent.—Peter Kubelka

Black Moon / Mirrored Malle (Amie Siegel, 2010, 4 min.): A two-channel video installation in which "a 1975 interview with Louis Malle concerning his film *Black Moon* is confronted with a reconstructed version of the interview.—Kunstmuseum Stuttgart

Black Moon (Amie Siegel, 2010, 20 min.): An enigmatic story evolves without dialogue, a group of armed women comb through deserted, unfinished developments of luxury homes—evidence of the US mortgage crisis—the landscape alternating as setting and subject of a mysterious and inexplicable future war.... Her original point of reference is Louis Malle's 1975 film of the same name.—Kunstmuseum Stuttgart

Outer Space (Peter Tscherkassky, Austria, 1999, 10 min.): A young woman, night, an American feature film. While she forces her way into an unknown space together with the viewer, the cinematographic image-producing processes go off the rails. —Stephan Grisseman

-----LUNCH BREAK-----

1:30- 4:00

Andy Warhol and Narrative

Lecture by J.J. Murphy.

*Filmmaker and critic J.J. Murphy will lecture on Warhol and narrative in between the following films. His is the author of the forthcoming **The Black Hole of the Camera: The Films of Andy Warhol**.*

Four of Andy Warhol's Most Beautiful Women (1964, 15 min., Silent @ 16fps, 16mm): Screen tests of Baby Jane Holzer, Ann Buchanan, Ivy Nicholson, and Sally Kirkland.

Restaurant (1965, 33 min., 16mm): *Restaurant* focuses on a single table's crowded arrangement of drinks, cigarettes, and other social accessories as the swirl and chatter of an off-screen dinner party eddies around it. The intrusion of shadows, hands, and bodies passing in front of the camera, compounded by reframing movements, constantly alter the composition as they frustrate viewers' attempts to reconcile seen and unseen cues, the arbitrary with the capriciously controlled.—Paul Arthur

Bufferin (1966, 33 min., 16mm): *Bufferin* is a short portrait film of Gerard Malanga reading from his diaries and poems and, in acknowledgement of Warhol's presence behind the camera, censoring his own writings by substituting the word "bufferin" for most of the proper names in his text.
—Callie Angell

5:00-7:30

Lumière Revisited:

Documentary and Narrative Hybrids

with Amie Siegel, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and J. J. Murphy in person.

This program begins with some of the earliest films, made for the Lumière company, and moves forward to more recent films, to explore the intersection of documentary and narrative over time.

Opening the 19th Century: 1896 (Ken Jacobs, 1990, 11 min., 16mm, 3D): To Viewer: Passing through the tunnel mid-film, a red flash will signal you to switch your single Pulfrich filter from before your right eye to before your left (keep both eyes open).—Ken Jacobs

The Sleepers (Amie Siegel, 1999, 45 min., 16mm): The architecture of city windows at night, lives glimpsed at a distance. These narrative fragments elicit tensions between public and private, performance and reality, lyrical and vernacular. The images and soundtrack further blur the boundary between fiction and documentary, reformulating expectations of duration, privacy and narrative.—Amie Siegel

Emerald (*Morakot*, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Thailand, 2007, 12 min., digital video): *Morakot* is a derelict and

defunct hotel in the heart of Bangkok that opened its doors in the 1980s: a time when Thailand shifted gears into accelerated economic industrialization and a time when Cambodians poured into Thai refugee camps after the invasion of Vietnamese forces. Later, when the East Asian financial crisis struck in 1997, these reveries collapsed. Apichatpong collaborated with his three regular actors, who recounted their dreams, hometown life, bad moments, and love poems, to re-supply the hotel with new memories.

Sky Blue Water Light Sign (J.J. Murphy, (1972, 8 min., 16mm): Presented in a new preservation by Academy Film Archives.

Bookstalls (Joseph Cornell, late 1930s/1940s, 11 min., silent @16fps, 16mm): A young boy browses a bookstall, and is taken on an imaginative journey.

Interview with the Earth (*Entrevista con la tierra*, Nicolás Pereda, Mexico/Canada, 2009, 18 min., Digital Video): In *Entrevista con la tierra* I aimed to create a poetic film that merges fiction and documentary. My intention was to make a film where the person on the screen could be at once the actor and the character. It is never clear what occurs in the world of fiction or in the world of documentary. Perhaps, a better explanation could be that at every moment, in every frame, there are elements of both fiction and documentary. I believe this to be a very interesting approach because it creates a sort of awareness that neither forms of filmmaking are closer to reality. They are simply a point of view on reality, and at the same time, a particular reality of their own.—Nicolás Pereda

END SATURDAY

Participant Profiles

J.J. Murphy

J.J. Murphy is a filmmaker, whose early avant-garde classics *Sky Blue Water Light Sign* (1972) and *Print Generation* (1973-74) have recently been restored by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He is the author of *Me and You and Memento and Fargo: How Independent Screenplays Work* (Continuum, 2007) and the forthcoming *The Black Hole of the Camera: The Films of Andy Warhol* (University of California Press, 2012), the first comprehensive study of the films of the noted Pop artist. He teaches film at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Amie Siegel

Ranging from photographs, film, video, and film installations, American artist Amie Siegel work re-orientates the fictions within documentary practices, often doubling back on history through the specific patterns of cinematic choreography and architecture. Her work has been exhibited at the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, MoMA/PS1, Walker Art Center, Whitney Museum of American Art, Hayward Gallery, and KW Institute for Contemporary Art. Screenings include Museum of Modern Art, New York; Cannes Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, New York Film Festival, BFI Southbank, and Harvard Film Archive.

Sunday, March 18: 10:30-1:30

Animation and Personal Journeys

with Stacey Steers and Chris Sullivan in person.

Phantom Canyon (Stacey Steers, 2006, 10 min., Digital Video): *Phantom Canyon* explores a woman's fantastical journey through memories. Meticulous collages incorporate figures from Eadweard Muybridge's *Human and Animal Locomotion*, first published in 1887.—Stacey Steers

Consuming Spirits (Chris Sullivan, 2011, 135 min., Digital Video): *Special Preview Screening!* This film is an archeological dig, and a crime scene. This film is constructed out of the impossibilities of my own social service childhood memories robbed from others, and many elements made up completely. I do believe that one's life is more improbable and unlikely than anyone could ever believe.—Chris Sullivan

-----LUNCH BREAK-----

3:00-4:30

Méliès Revisited: Dreams and Fantasies

with a special guest performance by BLOrk.

This program begins with a film by a magician, and includes a range of fanciful, dream-like narratives, some of which intersect with reality, some with fantasy.

A Trip to the Moon (*Voyage dans la lune*, Georges Méliès, 1902, 12 min., 16mm): **Live music by Boulder Laptop Orchestra (BLOrk)**. This magical movie, the first science fiction film, is featured in Martin Scorsese's *Hugo*.

Secret Stories (Janie Geiser, 1996, 9 min., 16mm): *The Secret Story* arose as a response to several beautifully decayed toy figures from the 1930s that were given to me as a gift. These figures, and other toys, objects and illustrations that I found from the period between the world wars, suggested a kind of unearthed hidden narrative which I have attempted to re-piece together, as if these figures were the hieroglyphics of a just-forgotten tongue.—Janie Geiser

Pony Glass (Lewis Klahr, 1997, 15 min., 16mm): *Pony Glass* is the story of comic book character Jimmy Olsen's secret life. A three-act melodrama—each act has its own song—filmed in my signature collage style that "unmasks" our collective iconic inheritance as Americans while significantly expanding the notion of what a music video can do.—Lewis Klahr

The Bats (Jim Trainor, 8 min., B&W, 16mm): In *The Bats* "the animal narrators use language—rather fancy, poetic language—to describe their emotions and their life cycles. But their behavior is purely animal. I tell people over and over that my animals really are just animals, they are not stand-ins for humans, but nobody believes me."—Jim Trainor

Ain't Misbehavin' (Chris Sullivan, 1981, 5 min., B&W, 16mm): An animated portrait.

Science Fiction (J.J. Murphy, 1979, 5 min., 16mm): A recycled film that playfully explores the space-time continuum as it applies to narrative structure.—J. J. Murphy

La Jetée (Chris Marker, 1962, 28 min., 16mm or blu-ray): This is the story of a man marked by an image from his childhood.—Chris Marker

Phantoms of Nabua (Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2009, 11 min., digital video): Part of the *Primitive* project, "*Phantoms of Nabua* is a portrait of home. The film portrays a communication of lights, the lights that exude, on the one hand, the comfort of home and, on the other, of destruction."—Apichatpong Weerasethakul

Mothlight (Stan Brakhage, 1963, 5 min., 16mm): We end, as we began, with a film by Stan Brakhage. "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

END SUNDAY

Participant: Stacey Steers

Stacey Steers's labor-intensive animated films are composed of thousands of individual, handmade works on paper. Her animations have screened at film festivals worldwide including the Sundance Film Festival, New Directors New Films in NYC, Telluride Film Festival, and numerous other events, winning national and international awards. In the past several years Steers has begun installing her work in galleries and museums, including solo exhibitions at the Denver Art Museum, the Decordova Museum near Boston, the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art in AZ, and ClampArt Gallery in NYC. She teaches for the Film Studies Program at the University of Colorado.

Participant: Chris Sullivan

Chris Sullivan is a fiction artist who has been creating films and performance work for the last thirty years, first in Minneapolis, and since 1989 in Chicago. He has said of his work, "I am interested in positions of power in one-on-one communications—Doctor-Patient, master-slave, parent-child, beloved-spurned. I am particularly interested in such politics in relation to the family, and in relationships of love and hate." He has shown his films in festivals, theaters, and museums all over the country and in Europe, including Zagreb World Festival of Animation; Ann Arbor Film Festival; Black Maria Film Festival; Ottawa Animation Festival; Guggenheim Museum; and Henson Foundation Puppetry Festival.