

Poetry and Cinema: A Three-Day Festival and Conference **June 24-26, 2011**

Held on the campuses of
The University of Colorado at Boulder and Naropa University

[FULL SCHEDULE](#)

“Films are most frequently associated with genres of storytelling or with documentary, but from the beginning of film history the genre of film poetry has also challenged film makers and viewers. This event celebrates and explores the relation between film and poetry with screenings, discussions by poets and filmmakers and critical papers analyzing the relation between verbal and visual lyricism. In what ways have poems influenced filmmakers? And how has cinema transformed the nature of modern poetry? Is an entirely visual poem possible, or is a relation to language necessary? Is film poetry inherently avant-garde? These and other issues will be explored in this unique event.”
Tom Gunning, Edwin A. and Betty L. Bergman Distinguished Service Professor within the Department of Art History at the University of Chicago

Participants

Christina Battle, Robert Bird, Dan Boord, Ed Bowes, Heather Butler, Julie Carr
Tom Gunning, Daneil Kane, Sarah Keller, Michele Menzies, Jennifer Peterson,
Jennifer Reeves, Phil Solomon, Luis Valdovino, Anne Waldman, Christophe
Wall-Romana

Organized and Sponsored by: Tom Gunning; The Mellon Foundation; The Brakhage Center at CU Boulder; Naropa University Summer Writing Program; CU Film Studies; CU English Department, Creative Writing Program.

Panels organized by Tom Gunning

From June 24 through June 26 a symposium on Poetry and Film will be held in Boulder Colorado cosponsored by the Naropa Institute and the University of Colorado Boulder. As part of this event Tom Gunning has invited a number of scholars to deliver papers on specific and diverse intersections between film and poetry, ranging from the era of silent cinema and European avant-garde to the post-war American avant garde film, dealing with filmmakers ranging from silent directors such as Walter Ruttmann and Jean Epstein, to neglected American avant garde figures such as Rudy Burkhardt and Frank Kuenstler to well known directors such as Andrei Tarkovsky and Stanley Kubrick. Poets discussed will range from Edgar Poe and Ivan Goll to Frank O'Hara and Kenneth Koch.

FILM AND POETRY CONFERENCE

FRIDAY, June 24:

Where: PAC, Naropa

7:30 – 10:30: Jack Kerouac School Events for Film Poetics Conference

FRIDAY June 24, 7:30pm, PAC, Naropa University

Introductions by Lisa Birman and Tom Gunning

Program:

Reed & Junior singing Allen Ginsberg' s *Beard*

Time: 5 mins

Robert Frank/Alfred Leslie, *Pull My Daisy*

Time: 30 mins film

Anne Waldman

Time: 5 mins

Ed Bowes/Anne Waldman, *Colors of Concealment*

Time: 7 mins film

Bruce Connors, *White Rose*

Time: 7 mins film

Abigail Child *Covert Action*

Time: 7 mins film

Jack Collom

Time: 5 mins

Stan Brakhage, *First Hymn to the Night - Novalis*

Time: 3 mins film

Stan Brakhage, *Two Creeley McClure*

Time: 5 mins film

Nathaniel Dorsky, *Aubade*

Time: 12 mins film

Danielle Vogel

Time: 5 mins

Maya Deren, *Study in Choreography*

Time: 4 mins film

Rudy Burckhardt/John Ashbery, *Ostensibly*

Time: 16 mins film

Junior Burke

Time: 5 mins

Kenneth Anger, *Scorpio Rising*

Time: 29 mins film

FILM AND POETRY CONFERENCE

SATURDAY, June 25:

Where: VAC 1B20, CU

10am-1:30pm: Panel on Moving Image organized by Tom Gunning

Presentations:

Tom Gunning, University of Chicago

“**Unrolling Images:** Cinema and the Cine-poem as the Encyclopedia of Image and Syntax in Frank Kuenstler’s Poems and Films.”

Robert Bird, University of Chicago

Modeling and Poesis in the Films of Andrei Tarkovsky and Stanley Kubrick

In *The Shining* (1980) Jack Torrance surveys a scale model of the maze which his wife and son are exploring. The model gives him an illusion of power and control that will eventually lead to his demise in the same maze. The model provides a means for “mapping out” the world, but at the same time appears to make the individual vulnerable to the totality he has revealed; not for nothing did Gulliver end up in Brobdingnag immediately after Liliput. At roughly the same time Andrei Tarkovsky was also using scale models with some similar effects in his films *Solaris* (1972), *Nostalghia* (1982) and *Sacrifice* (1985). In *Sacrifice* the main character is inexplicably disturbed when he encounters a scale model of his own beloved home, which his son has made as a birthday gift. In each of these films the model marks a moment of strange suspension. By unsettling the scale of representation, the model undermines – momentarily, but no less vertiginously – the viewer’s perspective on the action. The model also complicates the film’s temporality, suggesting dimensions of time hidden heretofore and rendering what has been called an “anachrony.” By combining the uncanny and the playful, the metaphysical and the toy, the model also suspends the genre, synthesizing horror, science fiction and melodrama in mimetic terror. The model thus marks a moment of self-consciousness that goes beyond *mise en abyme*. In each respect – in its dramatic reversals of scale, temporality and scope – the model might be compared to the way Achilles’ shield functions in the *Iliad*. It might be compared, that is, to a poem. Using these thoughts as a beginning I want to ask what the model says about Kubrick’s and Tarkovsky’s film poetics and, more broadly, about cinematic poesis.

Sarah Keller, Colby College

Poetry as criticism: the case for an alternate model of thinking about cinema

The work of some of the most compelling film theorists takes poetry as a critical point of comparison, a model, or even a vehicle in itself for thinking about cinema. This paper briefly examines the impulse to turn toward poetry in the theoretical work filmmaker/theorists including Jean Epstein, Sergei Eisenstein, Maya Deren, and Hollis Frampton in order to address the larger question: what does poetry provide for a practice of creative criticism that other models lack?

Michelle Menzies, University of Chicago

What is Cinematic Poetry?: O’ Hara and the Experiential

This paper will use Walter Benjamin’s notion of media innervation as a model for thinking the presence of a cinematic sense of movement in a poetic imagination. I will read Frank O’ Hara as poet of detail who fashions language into temporal inscriptions mapped to the flow of ordinary events and the concreteness of photographic representation.

FILM AND POETRY CONFERENCE

SATURDAY, June 25:

Where: VAC 1B20, CU

7:30 -10:30 PM: Naropa Summer Writing Program event organized by Anne Waldman

Panel/introduction by Anne Waldman, Ed Bowes, and Daniel Kane followed by a screening of:

Ed Bowes *The Value of Small Skeletons*

and

Jennifer Reeves *The Time We Killed*

There will be a Q&A session following the films.

FILM AND POETRY CONFERENCE

SUNDAY, June 26:

Where: VAC 1B20, CU

11 – 2:00 PM: Panel on Moving Image organized by Tom Gunning (cont'd)

Presentations:

Christopher Wall-Romana, University of Minnesota
Did Surrealists Dream of Cinematic Poems?

This paper will contrast three practitioners of Surrealism by differentiating the ways in which they transmuted cinema into their poetry. For Philippe Soupault, cinema was a holistic mode of experiencing: he wrote short scenario sketches in 1917 called "cinematographic poems," two of which were filmed by Walter Rüttmann. André Breton chose Soupault as acolyte to illustrate automatic writing in 1919 in part because of these cinepoetic productions. But Breton conceptualized Surrealism as automatic writing directly and technophobically against cinema and cinepoetry. One of his dream accounts of 1924 reads in fact like a didactically candid dismissal of the movies. Conversely, Yvan Goll, who vied with Breton for the label 'Surrealism', never distinguished it from cinepoetry or *Kinodichtung*: his 1922 *Chaplinade* poem-scenario shows a remediated filmic imaginary at odds with Breton's more lexical and classical imagination.

Daniel Kane,
Rudy Burckhardt's and Kenneth Koch's *The Apple*: The Trouble with Quest

What happens in Rudy Burckhardt's film *The Apple*? Through the medium of stop time animation, an apple is pictured rolling off a table and onto the floor of what appears to be a rustic cottage. The apple avoids a series of potentially catastrophic accidents - for example, almost being crushed by a rocking chair - only to eventually fall into a grate. Just as the audience thinks it has seen the last of this apple, the fruit reappears popping out of a drainpipe affixed to the façade of the cottage. The apple then rolls merrily on to a field outside the house. The final scene finds the apple rolling down a dirt road into the horizon of what promises to be ever more adventures.

This entire story is sung by a young woman in an overtly whimsical, school-girlish fashion. The lyrics are written by Kenneth Koch, and exemplify the faux-naïveté of much of his poetry.

I want to situate *The Apple* within what I will call the "anti-quest quest" genre that has come to characterize much of Koch's best writing. Koch has employed the quest genre consistently to ravage - via slapstick humor, parodic use of form, and derangement of syntax - the authority invested in it. *The Apple* - a film that, through its status as a collaboratively-produced "film poem," assaults even the generic distinctions demarcating poetry from the other arts - is a classic and woefully under-appreciated instance of the ways in which Koch and Burckhardt use the tropes of high literature in order to problematize how value is assigned among the arts.

Ultimately, I will argue that the apple in *The Apple* can ultimately be read as a hilarious stand-in for any number of figures associated with the genre - from Odysseus to Jason and the Argonauts to Psyche. *The Apple* is, in essence, an extension of Koch's argument with the quest.

James Rosenow, The Clark Institute
Screening the Poe Effect

Two filmic adaptations of *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

FILM AND POETRY CONFERENCE

SUNDAY, June 26:

Where: ATLAS 100 or 102, CU

3-5 PM: Performance work by Emily Vey Duke and Cooper Battersby

INTRODUCTION

There is a shorthand I use for each of my friends to keep their celestial heat from turning me into stir fry. There is one I think of only as “that face,” while another has been reduced to a pair of hands always opening. The caption I run under Emily and Cooper is simple enough; they are the future of the couple. While so many dyads use their togetherness as a fortress against the world, bulwarked behind the tragedies of monogamy, Vey Battersduke seem determined to push against every border and boundary until it gives way under their celebration of curiosity.

And once they have worked themselves outside of the rules, their newly won vantage offers a pretty good place from which to make art. Though this is not a word that comes easily to them. Literature remains the hoped for grail, while art is the disappointed bride that they have decided to embrace. The truth is, they have little patience for most of what passes for video art these days, or any other day, and as a result their post-human offerings are tuned up with a rare and exacting invocation of standards. Imagine an indie pop producer demanding all night studio sessions for her young charges, take after take, until the new tunes lift at every corner.

In an art moment frozen in thrall to the sway of conceptualisms, their work is narrative, hummable, humanoid, and invites identification. Hand drawn cartoons let animal familiars talk to us about children and God and daddy’s porn. Stripped down bedroom pop and home video makeovers jostle with time lapse compressions unafraid to be beautiful. They don’t proceed with a plan or program, instead, they throw themselves out the windows of their own needs and despairs and wonders, opening their four-armed embrace to homeless island dwellers and feral cats and art mavens.

From these close encounters they have created a rare video voice: at once smart and accessible, beautiful and wordwise.

Instead of falling completely in love with Emily, and of course with Cooper—the two are inseparable, in nearly every sense that matters—we began to correspond, to fill up long text screens with characters, most of them unrecognizable as ourselves—and that brought more relief than perhaps it should have. Our notings run well past a hundred pages, and one day it will be the best thing I’ve ever been part of, in the art world, meta-lingo sense of things, that is. One afternoon she wrote:

“I had a really interesting conversation with my friend Mequitta about the accusation (much flung at me as a younger person) that one is ‘just doing it for attention.’ IT usually being trying to kill one’s self, or cutting, or posting the pages of one’s diary around town. Nobody, for instance, said that Flaubert was just trying to write great novels for attention, or that Jesus was just being the Messiah for

attention. Nobody even says (or not much) that Bob Dylan was just writing those folk songs for attention. People did, however, say that Carolee Schneeman was getting naked and rolling around in sausage for attention. People said that Vito Acconci was just making *The Red Tapes* for attention (specifically Rosalind Krauss said it)."

Two years ago, in a fit of masochism and hope, I proposed to Emily and Cooper that we make a movie together. If we were still without a general public's attention, then perhaps we could grant this gift to one another. They said sure and I proceeded to blitz the two of them (can a chest hold two hearts?) with one idea after another—uncanny songs, genius quotes, found footage irresistibles. When is too much too little? They were interested in bonobos, as it turned out, a matriarchal society of nearly vegetarian peacenik apes who had sex often and in every possible combination. We staggered through a year and a half of foreign language mistranslations and pyramid studies before divvying up the pile and heading our separate ways. I worked relentlessly and managed to uncover only new beginnings, while they continued to live every weekend as if it was the last one on the planet and then screamed out a movie with a Sobey deadline pressing on their chests that will be watched for years to come. "So this is what it was like to live in 2010," some stranger will mutter, wondering that movies could ever have been made, never mind attended, that were flat, and lacking any sense of touch, taste or smell. Yes, this is what it was like. Welcome to the future of the couple.

Program:

Being Fucked Up, 10 minutes. 2000

"This ordinary life is hopeless. I have no mission or strong conviction. It seems like everything I find beautiful is crying about this hopelessness, and about the irreducibility of being alone. I wish I was a pervert with something inside me that burned and could never be made manifest. My secrets are so boring. I don't believe in art or socialism. I am bitterly jealous of people who are good or successful. I think romantic passion is by nature fleeting. I lie to my mother. I hate myself..."

So begins the Robot in Duke and Battersby's "Monologue for Robots", part of their ten minute episodic videotape *Being Fucked Up*. The work incorporates simple animation and live action sequences to create a portrait of the artist's lives as they struggle with addiction, gender identity and alienation. Ultimately hopeful, *Being Fucked Up* touches on central human themes through a use of narrative which is unconventional yet intelligible, spontaneous yet precise.

Bad Ideas for Paradise, 20 minutes. 2002

Steve Reinke on Bad Ideas for Paradise:

"There is no such thing as self-esteem. Self-esteem as a construct is illogical and contradictory, so its frequent deployment as the lynch-pin of New Age discourse seems to me satisfyingly appropriate. I don't trust anyone who doesn't have frequent bouts of self-loathing. There is something truly monstrous about the self-righteous. Eating a well-balanced diet is a horrible act of aggression. Whenever I hear the word "culture" I think of bacteria mutating under an ultraviolet light and I'm happy again for a while. Within the petri dish: unfettered egoless desire, the proliferation of new possibilities ideas made flesh, uncaring and finally airborne. Empathy is a tool for making the cruelty more precise. Beauty is independent of taste; the sublime only works for suckers. Whenever I laugh I feel guilty."

Bad Ideas for Paradise is a 20-minute episodic videotape by Cooper Battersby and Emily Vey Duke. Funny, touching and ambitious in scope, Bad Ideas continues to deal with many of the themes addressed in Duke and Battersby's earlier works: addiction, spirituality, identity, relationship dynamics and the ongoing quest for joy.

Beauty Plus Pity, 14 min. 2009 (looped)

The contemporary fables of Emily Vey Duke and Cooper Battersby propose that existence is abject, farcical, and messy. In their richly textured videos, Duke and Battersby employ live action footage, scavenged images, and simple animations to create episodic structures that evince a simultaneously utopian and dystopian world view.

'Beauty Plus Pity' is a colourful single-channel video presented in seven parts. The video considers the potential for goodness amidst the troubled relations between God, humanity, animals, parents and children. While an animated cast of animal "spirit guides" quote Philip Larkin's poem, This Be the Verse, and implore us to "get out as early as you can" from life and our parents' grasp, a hunter dreams of a zoo where he might lie next to tranquilized animals calmed of their savagery. A senile and unstable God stumbles, forgets to take his medication, and turns frost into diamonds. 'Beauty Plus Pity' contemplates the shame and beauty of existence; it is part apologia, part call to arms.

Lesser Apes, 15 min.

A winningly oblique narrative of forbidden love, Lesser Apes offers an inter-species fairytale between primatologist Farrah and the female bonobo (ape) Meema. Farrah extols the virtues of language as it offers the hope of empathy, but at the same time it pushes her out of her body, which she can recover only through a series of transgressions. These are offered in an impressionist collage - misted landscapes and time lapsed animals rotting, balloons caught in a rain shower.

FILM AND POETRY CONFERENCE

SUNDAY, June 26:

Where: ATLAS 100 or 102, CU

5:30-7:30 PM: Film Program by Julie Carr, CU Creative Writing

1. "To Reveal the Fourteen Windows" 7 minutes, digital video, 2011

By Julie Carr and Christina Battle

"In crayon drawings
Some persons lie buried in fire and some have been suspended in a wave
Rain withdraws its praise"

Julie Carr is the author of four books of poetry, *Mead: An Epithalamion*, *Equivocal*, *100 Notes on Violence*, and *Sarah—Of Fragments and Lines*. She has been the recipient of the Sawtooth Award, The National Poetry Series, and an NEA fellowship. Her critical monograph, *Surface Tension: Ruptural Time and the Poetics of Desire in Late Victorian Poetry*, is forthcoming from Dalkey Archive. She teaches poetry and poetics at the University of Colorado.

With a B.Sc. in Environmental Biology from the University of Alberta and an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute, Christina Battle currently lives in Denver, Colorado. Working with film, video and installation, her works explore themes of history and counter-memory, political mythology and environmental catastrophe. Christina teaches in the film department of the University of Colorado.

- 2 and 3: "Zidane" and "Airplane" 5.28 minutes, 5.21 minutes, digital videos, 2009

By Claudia Rankine and John Lucas

The Situation series, of which these two films are a part, consist of short documentary films, incorporating image and text in response to topical issues in the American consciousness. They attempt to juxtaposition temporal memory alongside historical critique through the layering of sound and image.

Claudia Rankine is the author of four collections of poetry, including *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*. She is co-editor of *American Poets in the Twenty-First Century: The New Poetics* and author of the play *Provenance of Beauty: A South Bronx Travelogue*, which was staged at the Foundry Theatre in 2009. Rankine, a recipient of fellowships from the Academy of American Poetry, the National Endowments for the Arts, and the Lannan Foundation, is the Henry G. Lee Professor of English at Pomona College.

John Lucas's photography and multimedia projections have been exhibited nationally and internationally in museums and galleries. He is represented by O.K. Harris Works of Art in New York City. Presently he is working on a documentary feature film entitled, *The Cooler Bandits*.

4. "The Matter Propounded, of its Possibility or Impossibility, treated in four Parts," 13 minutes, b&w, silent, 16mm, 2011

By David Gatten

The Matter Propounded makes use of an early 20th-century "tablet of Jupiter" system for attempting to tell one's future. Divided into four sections—Instructions, Questions,

Answers, and Conclusions—the film invites viewers to draw their own conclusions about the questions we ask of the world and the answers we find for ourselves.

A series of instances, a set of promises, a frame that takes a breath with each line. Wind-blown pollen finds purchase and Francis Bacon sends a telegram. A.C. Baldwin considers Matrimony as the Oregon Trail leads us Home. An epithalamion for Erin Espelie.

Over the last 15 years, David Gatten has explored the intersection of the printed word and moving image. The resulting body of work illuminates a wide array of historical, conceptual and material concerns, while cataloging the variety of ways in which texts function in cinema as both language and image, writing and drawing, often times blurring the boundary between these categories. Using traditional research methods (reading old books) and non-traditional film processes (boiling old books) the films trace the contours of private lives and public histories, combining philosophy, biography and poetry with experiments in cinematic forms and narrative structures. Exploring the archive in unexpected ways and making connections across categories of knowledge and fields of meaning, Gatten's films construct new compositions and generate novel conclusions from 19th c. scientific treatises, "out-dated" 20th c. instructional texts, and rare books from 17th and 18th century personal libraries.

Gatten's films premiere annually at Lincoln Center in the New York Film Festival and his films have been included twice in the Whitney Biennial. His work resides in the permanent collections of the British Film Institute, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as in numerous university and private collections. Gatten's films have won more than twenty awards at festivals around the world since 1997 and in 2005 Gatten was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to continue his film series investigating the library of William Byrd. Gatten is currently Visiting Associate Professor and Distinguished Filmmaker in Residence for the Program in the Arts of the Moving Image at Duke University.

5. "Facts Told at Retail (After Henry James)" 9 minutes. DigiBeta or a miniDV or a CD. 2010

In his introduction to the 1909 edition of *The Golden Bowl*, Henry James wrote, "My instinct appears repeatedly to have been that to arrive at the facts retailed and the figures introduced by the given help of some other conscious and confessed agent is essentially to find the whole business--that is, as I say, the effective interest--enriched by the way." In this film, the whole business is found through fractures, with James acting as the agent and images making the way.

Erin Espelie is a writer and filmmaker based in New York City and Salina, Colorado. Her films have shown at the Rotterdam International Film Festival, the Edinburgh International Film Festival, and the London Film Festival, among others. She recently completed a year-long Ted Scripps faculty Fellowship in Environmental Journalism at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

6. "Scout" (excerpt): 5 minutes. CD ROM, 2005

Text, images, voice -- Norma Cole

Audio recording -- Wayne Smith

Multimedia production and additional audio -- Taylor Brady

SCOUT began with an invitation to write an autobiography. That didn't interest me per se, but I wondered what would happen if.... Typing little texts – some prose, some poetry – on a portable Smith-Corona typewriter, on different kinds of papers that I had found – together with little bits of things, drawings and photos, I pasted them into the pages of a photograph album that my sister had given to me for my birthday. It became a kind of scrapbook. When I was invited in 1999 to do a performance/installation at New Langton Street in San Francisco, I took my camera with me everywhere for a few weeks, made two sets of slides. The slides were projected side by side on the wall while I read (in the dark, with a tiny reading light) the text from the scrapbook. The slides and the scrapbook became "like an autobiography." In 2005 it became a CD ROM for Krupskaya Press, with Wayne Smith recording my voice, Taylor Brady doing the production work. It is dedicated to Jack Cole, my father, and Norman Kendall, my mother's brother who died in WW II and for whom I'm named.

Born in Toronto, Canada, Norma Cole received an MA in French from the University of Toronto in 1967, moving to France in time to absorb the revolutionary atmosphere of the May '68 general strike. Returning to Toronto in the early '70s, she migrated to San Francisco in 1977, where she has lived ever since. A member of the circle of poets around Robert Duncan in the '80s, and a fellow traveler of San Francisco's language poets, Cole is also allied with contemporary French poets like Jacques Roubaud, Claude Royet-Journoud, and Emmanuel Hocquard. Her translations from the French include Hocquard's *This Story Is Mine* (Instress, 1999), *Crosscut Universe: Writing on Writing from France* (Burning Deck, 2000), *Danielle Collobert's Notebooks 1956-1978* (Litmus, 2003), and *Fouad Gabriel Naffah's The Spirit God and the Properties of Nitrogen* (Post-Apollo, 2004). She has taught at many schools, including the University of San Francisco and San Francisco State. During winter 2004/05, Cole could be seen inhabiting a 1950s living room as part of the California Historical Society's Collective Memory installation series.

7. Dark Enough 8 min., variations on the poetry of Lisa Gill. (digital) 2011

By Jeanne Liotta and Lisa Gill

"and the low moon
slanting through the trees
and I choose to put away from me
every worldly matter"

Qiwu Qian (692-755) Tang Dynasty

8. David Gatten: "Film for Invisible Ink" 20 minutes