

Day 3

The Amateur and the Avant-Garde

Curated by Christina Battle and Jennifer Peterson

The terms “amateur” and “avant-garde” are both problematic, but they provide a starting place from which to consider the intersection between these two different kinds of film practice. Amateur films – home movies and related “minor” forms of cinema such as educational films, industrial films, news-reels, test reels, etc. – have often been dismissed as not worthy of aesthetic inquiry. However, as early as the late 1950s and early 1960s, filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas, and others made films about personal, often familial experience, which is the most frequent domain of the home movie. This tradition of American experimental cinema also borrowed the spontaneous, untutored visual style of home movies. Materially, both experimental filmmakers and amateur filmmakers have long shared a use of inexpensive small-gauge formats such as 8mm, super-8, and 16mm. In recent decades there has been a return to this interest in the rhetoric of the amateur – with an emphasis on re-use and direct quotation – as filmmakers have been mining home movies, educational films, and other kinds of found footage for their own work. Likewise, film scholarship has lately begun re-examining the relationship between amateur and avant-garde film practice. Today’s film screenings and panels aim to challenge the traditional hierarchies that would seem to divide the amateur and the avant-garde from each other. What are some of the tendencies of amateur filmmaking, and what, at its best, is this kind of film practice able to achieve? How have avant-garde filmmakers appropriated some of these “amateur” tendencies, and to what ends? And how are contemporary film artists turning to the tradition of home movies as a kind of archival memory that informs their own work today?

--Jennifer Peterson

Sunday: 11:00 AMHome Movies from the Collection of the Academy Film Archive

Lynne Kirste, Special Collections Curator at the Academy Film Archive, presents a program of home movies from the collection of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Alfred Hitchcock Collection – 11 minutes

1. Lenticular color material. Family subjects / ca. 1928 - 1930
2. B/w material. Unedited narrative comedy short starring family members / ca. 1930

Charles Rossi Collection – 9 minutes

1. Behind the Scenes of ON THE WATERFRONT / ca. 1953 - 1954
2. Times Square at night / 1955
3. Girls trying to jump rope on a busy sidewalk / ca. 1955

Newcomb Condee Collection – 5 minutes

1. Park City folk / 1927

Anonymous Collection – 6 minutes

1. Color footage of Atlantic City beauty pageant parade / 1935

Jean Negulesco Collection – 9 minutes

1. Movie stars gather at Anatol Litvak’s beach house. / ca. 1940

Steve McQueen – Neile Adams Collection – 3 minutes

1. Steve, Neile and their two children on location for THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR / 1967

Robert Kirste Collection – 2 minutes

1. Three scenes from a suburban backyard: pet ducks; kids shaking soda cans; single-framed choreography. / 1968

Fritz Herzog Collection – 2 minutes

1. Sound. Television commercial parody with sound added after filming. / 1972

Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. Collection – 4 minutes

1. Marlene Dietrich napping and posing for the camera; slow-motion footage of Fairbanks and Dietrich playing tennis, edited together by Fairbanks. / ca. 1937

Grover Jones Collection – 1.5 minutes

1. Sound. As a gag, Grover Jones tries to read a magazine article to his squirming baby daughter. Shot with an Auricon sound-on-film camera. / ca. 1940

James Telfer Collection – 5 minutes

1. Hollywood at night – neon signs, Kleig lights, theater marquees, cars / 1947

Sunday cont'd...

12 PM

Lunch

1 PM

CU Professor Phil Solomon presents a talk and program of works by Stan Brakhage and himself utilizing the home movie and including original 8mm footage.

XV Song Traits

Stan Brakhage – 1967-1986 (10 minute excerpt)

Portraits of family and friends, including "Jane", "Jane and the Boys", and "Crystal". (description: Canyon Cinema)

Star Garden

Stan Brakhage – 1974 – 22 minutes

The "STAR," as it is singular, is the sun; and it is metaphored, at the beginning of this film, by the projector anyone uses to show forth. Then the imaginary sun begins its course throughout whatever darkened room this film is seen within. At "high noon" (of the narrative) it can be imagined as if in back of the screen, and then to shift its imagined light-source gradually back thru aftertones and imaginings of the "stars" of the film till it achieves a one-to-one relationship with the moon again. This "sun" of the mind's eye of every viewer does not necessarily correspond with the off-screen "pictured sun" of the film; but anyone who plays this game of illumination will surely see the film in its most completely conscious light. Otherwise, it simply depicts (as Brancusi put it): "One of those days I would not trade for anything under heaven." (description: Canyon Cinema)

I...Dreaming

Stan Brakhage – 1988 - 8 Minutes

This is a setting-to-film of a "collage" of Stephen Foster phrases by composer Joel Haertling. The recurring musical themes and melancholia of Foster refer to "loss of love" in the popular "torch song" mode; but the film envisions a re-awakening of such senses-of-love as children know, and it posits (along a line of words scratched over picture) the psychology of waiting. (description: Canyon Cinema)

The Snowman

Phil Solomon – 1995 – 8 minutes

A meditation on memory, burial and decay ... a belated kaddish for my father.

The Snow Man

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pinetrees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place
For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

- Wallace Stevens

Sunday cont'd...

2:30 PM

Panel discussion with Lynne Kirste of the Academy Film Archive and Andrew Lampert of Anothology Film Archives

4 PM

An Archive of Memory

Programmed by Christina Battle w/Sylvia Schedelbauer in person.

Reshaping images from the everyday, An Archive of Memory brings together a group of artists grappling with the complexities of memory. Through the mining of images from personal archives as well as those from the greater collective, these four artists' retellings explore different visual strategies not only in order to remember...but in order to not forget.

Wheelie

Derdrie Logue – 2005 – 1 minute

Repetition drives this reflection on blaming others for what are our own, obvious mistakes.

"From *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes* (2003-2006), a selection of short self-portraits that record accomplishments without impact, small feats of moderate strength and moments of mild impudence. They are reflections on aging, breaking down and reparation. They are works that describe our need for intimacy and our fears of exposure. They are always, when we really wish they were just sometimes. WAIS won both Best Installation/New Media Work as well as the Images Festival Prize in the 2006 Images Festival of Independent Film and Video." (description: Deirdre Logue)

The Chipmunks

Robert Lendrum – 2006 - 5 minutes

In *The Chipmunks* Lendrum casts actress Jacqueline van de Geer in the role of himself to tell an improvised story from his childhood. Shot at Lendrum's family barn in Fallbrook, Ontario, the piece provides a sincere and humorous look at issues of identity and authorship. (description: The Images Festival, 2007)

Remote Intimacy

Sylvia Schedelbauer - 2007/2008 – 14.30 minutes

Remote Intimacy is a found-footage montage which combines many types of archival documentary footage (including home movies, educational films, and newsreels), with a seemingly personal narrative, blending various individual recollections with literary texts. Beginning with an account of a recurring dream, the film is a poetic amplification of Memory, and with its associative narrative structure I hope to open up a space for reflection on issues of cultural dislocation. (description: Sylvia Schedelbauer)

Worry

Derdrie Logue – 2005 – 2 minutes

Since childhood worry has been both a preoccupation and a driving force. Now in adulthood, worry is a burden, unshakeable, relentless and likely fatal.

From *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes* (2003-2006)

the sounding lines are obsolete

John Price - 2008/2009 – 16mm – 10 minutes - silent

An irradiated time capsule of home movies and human rituals... dark global forecasts refracting through the light of my sons eyes... a hand processed science fiction documentary...

"A mobile snapshot from a children's birthday party on the moon." (description: John Price)

Memories (Erinnerungen)

Sylvia Schedelbauer - 2004 – 19 minutes

War and conflict bookend this untraditional family history, Schedelbauer's exploration of how the legacy of the mid/late 20 th century's complicated histories have shaped her own familial lineage. Constructed entirely of family photos, from documents of her grandfather's questionable involvement with the Nazis, to the joint narratives of her German father and Japanese mother, and finally to her own coming of age during the first Gulf War, *Memories* explores the vagaries and construction of memory and history. (description: Sylvia Schedelbauer)

5:30 PM

Closing panel with symposium participants and programmers.