

Lauren Sorensen
Curating Moving Images
Spring 2007
Professor Dan Streible
Prospectus for Curated Series

Artists Moving Their Images: Makers working across media.

This program proposes to present to a diverse audience, an illustration of how the medium can be an element in presenting avenues for audience interpretation in a work. The program's premise will assume a broad definition of media, and will feature films which incorporate other media in work, as well as makers in other media who also make moving images, and vice versa. Media here is meant to promote the importance of conservation and preservation of moving image work by thinking about it in the context of other types of art-making. Many times, moving images are relegated to the closets and dark corners of museums, archives, and libraries; not because they are unworthy of preservation measures, but because of a lack of moving image archiving specialists, and general lack of resources. The sense in larger culture is that these works are ephemeral in nature, distributed for a time, and then left to the dustbin; when they are actually cultural objects, with unique instantiations, that need preservation in one form or another. The program hopes to provide a means of communicating how film and video in their medium can provide a "message," and how that message can be found in the cracks and corners (in interpretation and visually) of different media.

The centerpiece panel will address the issue of art conservation in the context of moving images, addressing the issue from both sides. This will include a discussion from noted conservators of the "static arts" and those working with moving images; it will also present makers currently producing work, and address specific issues that are

contemporary concerns for conservation. Hopefully, by starting a dialog between producers and conservators, concerns about the life of a work can be addressed from both perspectives. Considering modern media such as digital files are facing obsolescence in a matter of months, it is important to think about the object value, and saving the “essence” of these works for future use value as well as cultural, artistic, and historical value.

Museum of Modern Art is an ideal setting for such a panel, as it collects moving image material as well as having a rich history of conservation of modern static art in many-varied forms. The panel will be accompanied by selected clips by conservationists and makers; by filmmakers who find new ways to communicate visual information through moving images, in a context of working across different visual, and audiovisual media.

There are several themes that are illustrated in each of the programs, each in its own way relating moving image art-making materials to their static counterparts. The program is an attempt at focusing on the materiality of moving image works, and their object qualities, in contrast and congruence with painting, music, and other art forms. The screening notes are centered around critical work on the films, and any explanatory notes about the static art involved in the work, as well as the construction of the moving images in that work. I attempted to provide this snippets of reviews and quotes in the hopes that they have a distinct perspective, and therefore, provoke thinking, and maybe another perspective from our audience on the work, process, and conservation of moving image works.

Filmography

Instrument (1999, 115 mins, sound, color, video)

Directors: Jem Cohen and Fugazi

Editors: Jem Cohen and Fugazi

Production co.: Gravity Hill / Jem Cohen Films

Camera: Jem Cohen

Digital Betacam projection from Dischord Records

A portrait film of the Washington DC based punk band Fugazi, produced over a 10 year period, from footage shot since the early 1980s. The film focuses on the fans of the band, musical performances, and is shot in Super 8mm, 16mm and Hi 8 mm video. The band took an active role in production. Available on DVD for home viewing, and Digital Betacam for projection. This video is not preserved.

“The Cameraman’s Revenge” (*named also* Revenge of the kinematograph cameraman) (1912, 8 minutes, silent with live musical accompaniment, black & white with tinting and toning)

Director: Wladyslaw Starewich

16mm print courtesy of Pacific Film Archive

A short animated film, one of the first to use stop-motion animation technique. It features insects of various sorts acting out a melodramatic narrative about bug infidelity. This version is not the restored version; this restored version has been copyrighted by Film Preservation Associates and deposited with the Library of Congress, where a ¾” Umatic viewing copy, 35mm master positive, and 1 inch video element are extant. Elements for the restoration were obtained from the Nederlands Filmmuseum, British Film Institute, and Gosfilmofond. Pacific Film Archive lists the title as “Revenge of the kinematograph cameraman.”



Figure 1. *Still from* Cameraman’s Revenge

Night on Bald Mountain (Une nuit sur le Mont Chauve) (1933, sound, 8 minutes, black & white, 16mm)

Production co.: Independently produced and released, Paris; not widely distributed upon initial release.

Directors: Alexander Alexeieff and Claire Parker.

Camera: Claire Parker.

Original Music: Moussorgsky, arrangement by Rimsky-Korsakoff, London Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Albert Coates.

16mm print courtesy of Pacific Film Archive.

Parker and Alexeieff created a unique way to produce animation, and especially three-dimensions, using a complicated pin screen technique. The film was based on the

music of Moussorgsky, and is a nightmarish tale with scarecrows, skeletons, and other ghostly creatures prowling in the darkness. All this was displayed in one of the first three-dimensional animation techniques; the creators using a pinboard and black and white film to create fluid movement, light and dark. The restoration status of the film is currently unknown.

Adventures of Prince Achmed (Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed) (1926, sound, 72 minutes, black & white with tinting and toning)

Production co.: Comenius-Film Production, © 1926 Comenius Film GmbH

Director: Lotte Reiniger

Animation assistants: Walter Ruttmann, Berthold Bartosch, and Alexander Kardan.

Camera: Carl Koch

Original Music: Wolfgang Zeller

35mm print courtesy of British Film Institute.

A feature length silhouette animation film, which started production in 1923 and released in 1926. It was made using Lotte Reiniger's masterful silhouette paper cut-outs in stop-motion. Her husband, Carl Koch, operated a homemade camera apparatus, and known animators Walter Ruttmann and Berthold Bartosch aided in creating the film. It is a telling of a fairy tale, and features tinting and toning. Music was not a component part of the original film; it was originally showed at 18 frames per second (fps) with the orchestral score composed by Wolfgang Zeller. This restored version adds a soundtrack (a recording of said orchestral piece), but maintains the original frame rate to silent speed. Available on DVD from Milestone Film and Video.

Restoration in 1999 by the Deutsches Filmmuseum and British Film Institute. Originally released in 1926.

Rose Hobart (1936, sound, black & white with tinting, 19 minutes)

Director: Joseph Cornell

Production co.: Independently produced and distributed by the filmmaker.

This film is made up of scenes featuring the actress Rose Hobart, from her role in *East of Borneo* (1933). Cornell acquired a 16mm print of the film, deleted the most dramatic sequences, and chose to focus on the actress Hobart, her gestures and persona in the film. He also included footage from a documentary featuring footage of an eclipse. Cornell would project the film through blue glass (the film was not original tinted), but the first print ever made of the film, in 1969, Cornell chose rose-colored tinting instead of his blue-colored glass.

Never officially released, the date of the film corresponds to its first screening in December 1936 at the Museum of Modern Art. The film was preserved in 2000 by Anthology Film Archives, and was included as a part of the National Film Registry. Original elements, a preservation print, internegative, and screening print exist at Anthology Film Archives. A DVD release of the film is included on the National Film Preservation Foundation's *Treasures from American Film Archives*.

16mm print courtesy of Anthology Film Archives.

[Selection of 7 *Screen Tests*] (1964-?, silent, black & white, 31 minutes, 16mm)

Director: Andy Warhol

Production co.: Independently produced.

These films were produced at Warhol's infamous factory; every guest visiting would be asked to perform a screen test. These screen tests were simple and Warhol even asked that "performers" be still in front of the camera, however this was often not the case, and subtle changes in the person "tested" would be on display.¹

16mm prints courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Circulating Film Library. Since 1989, 167 of the screen tests have been preserved by MoMA, and an additional 250 preserved by the Andy Warhol Museum.

"Boogie-doodle" (1948, sound, color, 3 minutes, 16mm)

Production co.: National Film Board of Canada

Director: Norman McLaren

Music: Albert Ammons

"Neighbors" (1952, sound, color, 8 minutes, 16mm)

Production co.: National Film Board of Canada

Director: Norman McLaren

"Mosaic" (1964, sound, color, 5 minutes, 16mm)

Production co.: National Film Board of Canada

Director: Norman McLaren

Sound: Ron Alexander

Animation: Evelyn Lambart, Norman McLaren, Douglas Poulter

"Synchrony - synchronie" (1971, sound, color, 7 minutes, 16mm)

Production co.: National Film Board of Canada

Director: Norman McLaren

Optical effects: Ron Moore

Music: Norman McLaren

Sound: Roger Lamoureaux

These films are intricately hand-painted, produced with musical score accompaniment. These films are abstract animations, where shapes and color appear to move along with the music. The restoration and preservation status of these films is unknown. The National Film Board offers a DVD version.

"Early Abstractions: No. 3: Interwoven" (1949, sound, color, 10 minutes, hand-painted 35mm stock photographed in 16mm).

Director: Harry Smith

Production co.: Independently produced.

Smith reportedly was "jazz-crazy" at the time, and insisted that he had synchronized the first three Early Abstractions to jazz performances by Dizzy Gillespie: Guarachi Guaro, Algo Bueno and Manteca. The film was preserved by Center for Visual Music and Anthology Film Archives. Materials are currently held with Center for Visual Music.

¹ Koestenbaum, Wayne. "Andy Warhol: Screen Tests": MoMA QNS, New York." *Artforum* October 2003.

Budget

[All films and videos, with the exception of two, will be lent to Museum of Modern Art from other FIAP member archives; a courtesy fee and shipping costs have been included.]

<i>Item</i>	<i>Courtesy fee</i>	<i>Shipping + Insurance</i>	<i>Rental fee</i>
6 films (from Pacific Film Archive)	\$150	\$400	N/A
1 film (from British Film Institute)	\$150	\$300	N/A
1 (Center for Visual Music)	\$150	\$300	\$500
1 videotape (Washington, D.C.)	\$150	\$50	\$200

Speakers:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Honaria</i>	<i>Travel</i>
Terence Dobson	\$2500	\$2000
Cindy Keefer	\$2500	\$1500
Bill Brand	\$2500	N/A
Jem Cohen	\$2500	N/A
Glen Wharton	\$2500	N/A

Live musical accompaniment

Ben Model (regular MoMA accompanist)	\$500
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Total cost:
\$17,050.

artists moving their images : makers working across media

“music and film : tonal color, tonal sound”

Instrument by Jem Cohen and Fugazi (1999, 115 mins, sound, color, video)

“Cohen's choice to make films about the fringes, back streets and detritus of spaces, and about people who live and work on the margins of society, is both a political and personal choice. The expressions of this choice are best expressed in the remarkable *Instrument*. This film, shot on super-8, 16mm and video, is a passionate document assembled in collaboration with Fugazi, an extraordinary band who, like Cohen, have toiled away on the margins of art and industry without attempting to capture the attention of the world at large. They have chosen to disengage themselves from the machinations of commerce which affect the music and film worlds alike, and both have continued to work on exceptional projects that have provoked deep and widespread admiration.”
-Rhys Graham, from “Just Hold Still: A Conversation with Jem Cohen.”

artists moving their images : makers working across media

“the art + craft off-screen : analog techniques in animation”

The Cameraman's Revenge by Wladyslav Starewich (1912, 8 minutes, silent with live musical accompaniment, black & white with tinting and toning)

"[Wladyslav Starewich], born 1882 in Moscow to Polish-Lithuanian parents, was responsible for changing stop-motion from a technical novelty to a storytelling art form, much like Walt Disney did for 2D cartoon animation. Starewich grew up with a keen interest in art and entomology, collecting and studying all varieties of insects. While working as a film maker at the Khanzhonkov Studio in Russia, he began making experimental documentaries about live beetles. His early attempts at making the beetles do anything he wanted under hot lights proved to be frustrating, so, inspired by Emile Cohl's film "Bewitched Matchsticks," he rigged some embalmed beetles with wires and animated them. The stop-motion technique applied to real insects had never been seen in Russia, and many audiences thought that the beetles had been trained to "act" by some odd form of science. In one of his most humorous films, *Revenge of the Cameraman* (1912), Starewich told a silent tale of adultery between a group of suburban insects. This was one of the earliest known attempts to actually tell a real story exclusively with stop-motion puppets."

- Ken A. Priebe, from *The Art of Stop-Motion Animation*.

Night on Bald Mountain (Une nuit sur le Mont Chauve) by Alexander Alexeieff and Claire Parker (1933, sound, 8 minutes, black & white, 16mm)

“Wishing to make films with an aesthetic faithful to the line and shading of his engravings, [engraver Alexander Alexeieff] invented a new type of device: the pinscreen. The pinscreen consists of a white screen pierced by hundreds of thousands of pins that can slide back and forth, each in its own hole. When lit from the side, each pin casts a shadow, and when all the pins are pushed out, there is total darkness. But when pins are pushed in, their shadows are shorter, and the black become grey. When pins are pushed all the way in, they do not cast shadows and the white screen can be seen.

In 1933 Alexeieff, with the help of his partner Claire Parker, completed *Night on Bald Mountain...*”

-Marcel Jean, National Film Board of Canada

Adventures of Prince Achmed (Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed) (1926, sound, 72 minutes, black & white with tinting and toning, 16mm)

“Now we may discover how to animate a shadow puppet. This again is simple. You take one of the articulated shadow-figures without the rods and lay it flat on a glass plate, covered with transparent paper. Then you saw a hole in your kitchen table about the size of the glass plate (modern kitchens don't want tables anyway!), put the glass plate with the

the figure over the hole, place a lamp on the floor under the hole, switch it on and switch off all the other lights, and the figure will appear as a pure silhouette.

“The second [trick table, used to properly place the camera for photographic purposes] was the installation built up for a full-length silhouette picture [*Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed*] made between 1923 and 1926 when we had become more ambitious and operated with experimental effects which required different layers of glass plates...”

-Lotte Reiniger, *Shadow Theatres and Shadow Films*



Carl Koch at camera, Walter Turck animating above,
Alexander Kardan with exposure sheet and Lotte Reiniger moving silhouettes.
Courtesy of William Mortiz

artists moving their images : makers working across media

“joseph cornell + andy warhol : popular culture in found photography, found culture”

Rose Hobart by Joseph Cornell (1936, sound, black & white with tinting, 19 minutes, 16mm)

“Cornell leaves out just about everything that might dim Rose Hobart's aura. Plot, character development, narrative links, and continuity editing disappear in a surreal, dreamlike series of disconnected moments and unmotivated, incomplete actions and gestures. Cornell heightens the oneiric effect by tinting the whole film violet; slowing down movements slightly by having the film projected at sixteen or eighteen frames per second, rather than the original twenty-four frames per second; and by limiting the sound to a recording of Brazilian music played over and over again without any specific relevance to the events on screen. Rescued from the patently artificial *mise-en-scène*, stereotyped characters, and narrative clichés of East of Borneo, the mysterious allure--the aura--of Hobart's image becomes much more apparent and prompts interpretations, fantasies, and an aesthetic appreciation of an actress with nothing like the widely recognized "star quality" of Bette Davis. Nonetheless, *Hobart* achieves an equivalent aura, thanks to Cornell's sensitive--one might even say obsessive--reediting of a minor Hollywood film.”

-William C. Wees, “The Ambiguous Aura of Hollywood Stars in Avant-Garde Found-Footage Films,” *Cinema Journal* 41.2

[Selection of 7 *Screen Tests*] by Andy Warhol (1964-?, silent, black & white, 31 minutes, 16mm)

“Warhol's *Screen Tests* are his best works on film, closest to the severe dignity of his painted portraits... They were made casually and crazily amid the hubbub of the Factory, the studio where Warhol kept open house. Some films are less his than others. Some are jokes. And some, like *Outer and Inner Space*, are hard work. But the *Screen Tests* are beautiful...

“They are elegiac too, even though most of the people filmed are younger than Warhol. The youthful and vulnerable pass before his camera, are loved by it, and then vanish. Each black-and-white film ends with a silvery fade-out, the face slowly dissolving in a burst of light, as if the Bomb had just been dropped. This ghostly effect could not more explicitly make us think of mortality - and of film as a fragile defence against it. Hollywood specialises in immortality, but Warhol's use of film is more material. At the end of each film, you see the texture of the celluloid itself. These people could easily have been dead for centuries, the films found rolled up in a Ballardian desert necropolis.”

-Jonathan Jones, “Candid Camera,” *The Guardian*, 2001 review.

artists moving their images : makers working across media

“painting on film : materials meeting in the flicker”

Terence Dobson, author of *The Film-work of Norman McLaren* introduces these films [and will provide screening notes.] He teaches at the University of Canterbury, Theatre and Film studies department in New Zealand.

“Boogie-doodle” by Norman McLaren, (1948, sound, color, 3 minutes, 16mm).

“Neighbors” by Norman McLaren (1952, sound, color, 8 minutes, 16mm)

“Mosaic” by Norman McLaren (1964, sound, color, 5 minutes, 16mm)

“Synchrony - synchronie” by Norman McLaren (1971, sound, color, 7 minutes, 16mm)

Cindy Keefer, archivist for Center for Visual Music, the organization which preserved the film to follow, will introduce [and will provide screening notes detailing the preservation of the film.]

“No. 3: Interwoven (1942-47 or 1947-49)” by Harry Smith (hand-painted 35mm stock photographed in 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes)

[Screenings followed immediately by a talk between the two scholars, discussing mastery of painting and mastery of filmmaking; what are conservation issues with handpainted film? What is the interest for researchers? The curator will moderate the discussion.]

artists moving their images : makers working across media

*centerpiece panel : conserving static and moving image arts :
where is the material and what is ephemera? what do producers
produce, and what is at risk?*

Panelists:

Bill Brand, film preservationist and filmmaker

Jem Cohen, film- and video-maker

Glen Wharton, trained sculpture conservator, Media conservator, Museum of Modern Art.

This centerpiece panel will address the issue of art conservation in the context of moving image archiving and conservation. This will include a discussion from noted conservators of the “static arts” and those working with moving images; it will also present makers currently producing work, and address specific issues that are contemporary concerns for conservation.

Those invited have a specific perspective on moving image conservation, and a special interest in its development. It is hoped that by starting a dialog between producers and conservators, concerns about the life of a work can be addressed from both perspectives. Considering modern media such as digital files are facing obsolescence in a matter of months, it is important to think about the object value, and saving the “essence” of these works for future use value as well as cultural, artistic, and historical value.

The curator will moderate.

Bill Brand's experimental films and videos have screened extensively since 1973 in the US and abroad in museums, festivals and independent film showcases. In 1973 he founded Chicago Filmmakers, the showcase and workshop and until 1991 served on the Board of Directors of the Collective for Living Cinema in New York City. He is currently an Artistic Director of Parabola Arts Foundation which he co-founded in 1981. Bill Brand lives in New York City and is Professor of Film and Photography at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. Since 1976 he has operated BB Optics, an optical printing service specializing in 8mm blow-ups and archival preservation for independent filmmakers, libraries, museums and archives. (from BBOptics website)

Jem Cohen is a New York-based independent film- and video-maker known for his work with small-gauge film, and creating works over long periods of time, in independent productions. Born 1962 in Kabul, Afghanistan, Jem Cohen started making films and studying film history while pursuing a studio art degree at Wesleyan College. He moved to New York following graduation in 1984. Cohen is the recipient of many honors for his work over the years. He is a Guggenheim and Rockefeller Fellow, received an Independent Spirit Award for his recent feature work, *Chain*, and has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and numerous prizes at film festivals around the world.

Glenn Wharton is a sculpture conservator on faculty at New York University, with a joint appointment at the Institute of Fine Art's Conservation Center and the Museum Studies program in the Faculty of Arts and Science. He received an M.A. in Conservation from the Cooperstown Graduate Program in 1981 and a Ph.D. from the Institute of Archaeology, University College London in 2005. In addition to teaching, he conducts research and conservation projects for museums and public art agencies. He is currently conducting a survey of media art held by the Museum of Modern Art.