

complete strangers with different social backgrounds (workers, artists, butchers, and students) who received one specific instruction: "Please think of something important to you in your life, and look into the camera." Reminiscent in form of Andy Warhol's screen tests, this work insinuates a predilection for the vernacular and the allegorical as in the oeuvre of Italian poet Dante Alighieri, and a take on political justice much in the spirit of auteur Pier Paolo Pasolini. Breaking the rules of the game of seeing and being seen, and with a silent soundtrack, her observational work replaces and displaces, claiming both class and gender equality exposures.

### **Her Silent Seaming by Nazli Dinçel**

2014, USA, 10 mins., 16mm, color. **New York Premiere.** Dinçel films intimate scenes, and the private becomes public. Words scratched on footage of herself, her partners, and black leader are a storm of memories that hammers the celluloid hand-processed surface like the fingers that once pressed on the filmmaker's skin. An illusion of synchronized sound remarks a failure in communication. The reconstruction of the past is an attempt to make "sense" of a learned history of permissions and apprehensions. Obscenities are those made of falseness and authority. As filmmaker Lis Rhodes put it, the alternation of image and black screen also here seems to represent the pattern of "causes that I didn't cause and effects that testify to my sense of exclusion."



*Her Silent Seaming*, by Nazli Dinçel, courtesy of the artist.

### **Defenestration by Bea Haut**

2015, UK, 5 mins., 16mm, b&w. **North American Premiere.** One by one, Haut laboriously opens the windows of a house and jumps through them. Instead of a study of light, this film is an exploration of the concepts of escape, discovery, and emancipation. Haut's windows, framed and re-framed, offer the promise of another reality. Light coming from the exterior world is both the exit path and the vehicle that crosses the limits and obstacles of the familiar. Even the optical soundtrack

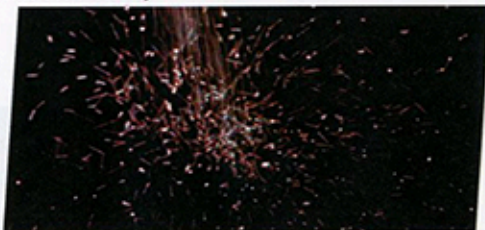


*Defenestration*, by Bea Haut, courtesy of the artist.

of the film breaks into the frame, appearing as a circle of light, flashing like an alarm going off whenever a convict breaks out of prison. Hand-processing the footage, the filmmaker refines and expands the constraints of cinema's own oppressive and confining environment.

### **Nocturno by Naoko Sasaki**

2003, Canada, 6 mins., 16mm, color. **New York Premiere.** Sasaki approaches celluloid as a transformative tool, one that makes visible a story of the neglected, of the unwritten. She applies a macro lens to a daily, unvalued act: the making of bread at night with bare hands. Filming this activity is a testimony inscribed with the language of emotions. By illuminating the scene and looking at it closely, the process of creating something out of nothing pulls the viewer into a mysterious, faraway world where the ordinary is simply extraordinary. It is when work is made in obscurity (in the wee hours, and in the solitude and privacy of the household) that sound becomes sharpened. The masterly use of non-diegetic sound (rain, wind, ocean waves, bird bells) recreates a new world made of salt, flour, and yeast, only on view in our imagination. "What I had in mind while putting the scenes together"—Sasaki explains—"was creating a piece of music, a song of the mortal, and our sensual dance in the embrace of eternity."



*Nocturno*, by Naoko Sasaki, courtesy of the CFMDC, and the artist.

### **Light Reading by Lis Rhodes**

1978, UK, 20 mins., 16mm. As if it were the third-person narration of a Gertrude Stein poem, the filmmaker's voice-over reflects upon the making of a three-part structured film. Glimpses of hope derive from this cross-examination. This is a film-collage of still photographs, black screen, and text, where words obscure while sounds reveal. Meaning is a fading image. Words are just the X-rays of their sounds. Frame, subject, and object are evidences of misrepresentation. In the film, the artist recites: "Light turned away... Light turned away from herself... It's still raining, what should I do? Should I wake her, or should I let her sleep longer? She begins to read. She reads silently. She reads in silence. Blurring our mind with the sound of words. Images reaching back into darkness... The intention and the intensification are carried out not by the action, but by the illumination... Overexposed. Exposed us. Imposed on. Impaled by. There have been no decisions, no choice. It had been decided. She had no choice... Cut."

Front page images: *Light Reading*, by Lis Rhodes, courtesy of Lis Rhodes and LUX, London.

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE



## A MATTER OF VISIBILITY: International Avant-Garde & Artists' Cinema

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 2016, 6:30 P.M.

Program notes by guest curator Mónica Savirón

This program presents new experimental films and videos not yet shown in New York, in conversation with rarely seen works by avant-garde masters such as Lis Rhodes and Chantal Akerman. These artistic views have the ability to enhance our perception through symbolism, transformation, and a keen sense of creative freedom. By shifting cinematic, private, gendered, financial, and geographical priorities, what is usually absent becomes present. These works are meditations on the act of looking, visual poems in which imposed narratives get rejected or argued against. Words, forms, and depictions of any kind are broken apart to explore and expose the language of cinema. For these artists, making films is like "writing on burning paper" (Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 1967). Their creations formulate alternative questions about ends and beginnings, and passionately vindicate visibility with a do-it-yourself approach to film and life—because making is moving, and moving is breathing, and breathing is light.

Dedicated to the memory of Canadian filmmaker Cara Morton, who died in 2012. Total running time: 85 minutes.

Thanks to Oona Mosna, Cullen Gallagher, Cindi Rowell, Ilias Koen, Eli Horwatt, Christophe Guérin, Sixpack Film, Light Cone, LUX, Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, Mallia Films, Agência da Curta Metragem, and all the participating artists.



FIRST  
LOOK

A FESTIVAL FOR GROUNDBREAKING  
NEW INTERNATIONAL CINEMA



## Reportage ! by Rei Hayama

2015, Japan, 1 min., 16mm, color, silent.  
North American Premiere.

The space in the title (as in the French language) is a deliberate verbal signifier of one of the film's primary themes: the intrinsic time-lapse between reality and the process of filming. *Reportage !* is entirely composed of a model of a Japanese country house burning down. The artificiality of these images challenges the paradoxical reality of the documentary genre, and reveals a fear of loss due to the alarming financial and cultural circumstances of modern Japan. Though shot on color negative stock, the film's images emerge as nearly monochromatic, as a result of hand-processing the footage with instant coffee. This non-chemical, austere methodology is in itself a metaphor for the importance of the domestic, as well as an emphasis on its volatility. The short duration of this work pays homage to the first Lumière brothers' films. *Reportage !* alludes to both memory and reality with one powerful, evocative image—a silent confession delivered from the creative wisdom that can only be achieved by an unbreakable delicacy.



Reportage ! by Rei Hayama, courtesy of the artist.

## Across by Cara Morton

1997, Canada, 3 mins., 16mm, b&w, sound.

Morton takes her Bolex camera and immerses herself in the countryside near Toronto to dive into her relationship with celluloid as a medium. This is a film that exudes freedom. In a deep but playful search for self-expression, Morton hand-processes, solarizes, and over and under develops her footage. She makes her external and internal worlds communicate in frantic dialogue, pushing and pulling moods, places, past and present, with an exhilarating montage. She expresses with light variations and the sound of running water what her words fail to address. For her, personal experience and art-making are part of the same struggle, one of both fascination and survival. She is perpetually crossing the bridge between what others state we know, and the unknown. "Nothing. I mean nothing, beats stomping on your film, rubbing it against trees, rolling around with it in the grass or even chewing on it like bubble gum. [...] I hate film. I mean sometimes I have to wonder, what has gotten into me? Why am I putting myself through this agony? I've spent most of my grant money. I'm in the midst of editing and I find myself asking: what is this damn film about anyway? Why am I making it?"—Morton. *The Education of the Filmmaker in Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas*. Global Cinema.

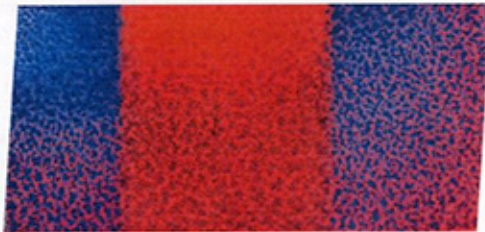


Across, by Cara Morton, courtesy of the CFMOC.

## Pixel Jungle by Klara Ravat

2015, Spain/Germany, 3 mins., 16mm, color, silent. North American Premiere.

Ravat is interested in representing olfactory senses through visual means. 35mm still photographs of the downtown area of Madrid are digitally enlarged to the extreme, and the resulting patterns are rearranged into what could be a sensorial map of Barcelona. The original Castilian images become the smell of the Catalan coast and of the orange tree courtyard in the multi-cultural district of Raval. Each digitized and worked-through photograph is printed out on transparent tape, a layer glued on clear 16mm leader. When projected, the granules in each shot turn into a jungle of floating particles that, like eruptions of color, impregnate our vision.



Pixel Jungle, by Klara Ravat, courtesy of the artist.

## Cross Worlds by Cécile Fontaine

2006, France, 15 mins., 16mm, color, US Premiere.

This film is an exquisite corpse of excluded parts brought together with surgical rituals and a dry process of effacement of the image: moving pieces of frames from anonymous Super-8 home movies by stripping emulsion with clear, double-sided tape and pasting them on 16mm rushes from documentaries previously carved and scratched with scouring pads. The result is a kaleidoscopic work that blends footage of people from disparate status of power. The artist alters standard political and discursive conventions, and collages "pleasure against

necessity; hints of two different realities." Fontaine looks at a world of discarded realities, abandoned decay, and random destruction. For her, something needs to be saved.

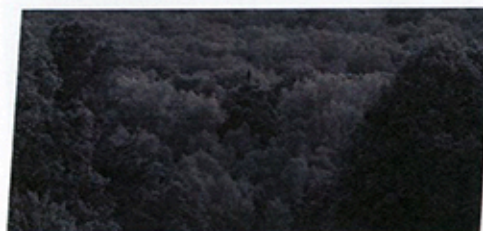


Cross Worlds, by Cécile Fontaine, courtesy of Light Cone, and the artist.

## The Tower by Salomé Lamas

2015, Portugal/Germany/Moldova, 8 mins., DCP, b&w.  
U.S. Premiere.

Film in collaboration with German artist/performer Christoph Both-Asmus, whose long-term installation project *The Tree Walker* served as trigger for this work. A man, interpreted by Kolja Kravchenko, wanders in the woods of the conflict zone of Transnistria—an unrecognized but independent strip of land between the River Dniester and the eastern Moldovan border with Ukraine. He climbs and walks atop the forest trees of Teufelsberg in Berlin. Underneath the hill there is a never completed Nazi military college. For the filmmaker, he personifies the vertigo of looking at reality, an act commonly described as foolish.



The Tower, by Salomé Lamas, courtesy of the artist.

## Trois strophes sur le nom de Sacher by Chantal Akerman

1989, France, 11 mins., Beta SP, color.

Akerman uses the mise-en-scène of a home as theatrical setting. Her friend and collaborator Sonia Wieder-Atherton walks onto the stage (the living room) at night, and performs the three cello pieces (the stanzas of the title) composed by Henri Dutilleul for conductor Paul Sacher. They were commissioned on a request by Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich to write solo cello compositions using the honoree's name spelt out in musical notes (eS-A-C-H-E-Re). This piece requires the lowest strings of the cello to be tuned lower, which adds grounding sentiment. During the performance, a large window framed by red curtains allows us to see the neighbors from across the street enacting their own play, a kind of routine dance. Akerman

translates musical composition into filmmaking by timing light and camera movements. In the film, as time goes by, and the sun rises, the emotions in the performer's mind become visible. The light gets gradually directed towards the center of the cello, and the expressions of the artist's face, before the entire scene fades back into darkness. For this screening, producer Bertrand van Effenterre has generously shared the notes that Akerman wrote to make the film. This is a fragment:

«...She's entering this (the) space, the outside world accompanying ?[sic] her. (She's taking place in the space, the outside world seems to follow -be with- her) [...] A sometimes the mooninterpretsconflicting feelingsdishevelled comes into thebringing .be inspiredcuttingparticipate inness(strophe) wavering (hesitating)tumblingconflictingstropheemphasizesessose shots, won't let us seeit's slowly comes up a larger view of the scene, the usual "XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX"



Composer Henri Dutilleul, cellist Sonia Wieder-Atherton, and Chantal Akerman, courtesy of Malla Films.

## Maschile, Roma by Friedl vom Gröller

2015, Austria, 3 mins., 16mm, b&w, silent.  
North American Premiere.



Maschile, Roma, by vom Gröller, courtesy of Sixpack Film, and the artist.

On its way from the Viennale to the Berlinale Film Festival, we have the opportunity to experience the latest work of awarded photographer and artist, Friedl vom Gröller. Well known for her photo-portraits of filmmakers such as Jonas Mekas and Ken Jacobs, here she films close-ups of anonymous men in Rome—