

AVANT-GARDE MASTERS

January 15–February 19, 2011

THE CROSS REVOLVES AT SUNSET: RECENT RESTORATIONS OF EXPERIMENTAL FILM FROM THE ACADEMY FILM ARCHIVE

Sunday, January 23, 7:30 p.m.

Curated and introduced by preservationist Mark Toscano, Academy Film Archive

Since 1992, the Academy Film Archive has conserved and restored countless works of avant-garde cinema. This program will feature a mix of both acknowledged masterworks and utter obscurities, drawn primarily from the Academy's most recent restoration output.

The title of this program comes from Keewatin Dewdney's very rarely screened 1967 masterpiece, *The Maltese Cross Movement*. Dewdney's unforgettable film vividly and playfully explores many elemental and metaphorical qualities of celluloid cinema, and the rest of the program touches diversely on these themes.

All films are showing in their original 16mm format, in restored prints from the Academy Film Archive, courtesy of the filmmakers. Originally made in 16mm, *The Divine Miracle* is showing in a new 35mm print made following a digital restoration.

The Maltese Cross Movement

Keewatin Dewdney, 1967, 7 mins.

"The Maltese cross movement is the name of the mechanical device that was at the heart of the cinema machine in its infancy. The shape of the Maltese cross, as it engaged and disengaged with the rectangular perforations on the edge of the film, translated the rotary motion of the camera or projector motor into the intermittent motion at the heart of the cinematic illusion and coordinated that intermittent motion with the continuously driven shutter. This is the mechanism that originally dissected the continuity of vision in the camera and also re-assembled it in the projector." (Dan Barnett)

"This film is a hypnotic yet unsettling take on the "'60s looping craze" (R.N.), made using a homemade camera-printer and a 1/4" tape deck. Nelson pits minimal, repetitive imagery against a looping recording of his daughter Oona, which goes gradually from sweet to curious to mysterious to cacophonous as the loops overlap each other. Since its premiere alongside *The Great Blondino* and other shorts in April 1967, the film has rarely been seen. It stands out as a quite unique, more textural piece from the filmmaker, which, rather than retreating into pure abstraction or bland trippiness, subtly and diffusely transmits an undercurrent of its ominous source material." (Mark Toscano)

Penny Bright and Jimmy Witherspoon

Robert Nelson, 1967, 4 mins.

Hotel Cartograph

Scott Stark, 1983, 11 mins.

"A camera mounted on a movable cart, pointing down at the floor, passes over a seemingly endless succession of gaudy carpets and surfaces in a single shot through a major hotel. The movements across the 2-dimensional space, and in and out of elevators through 3-dimensional space, suggest a conceptual map of the environment, which is perhaps drawn by the camera itself." (Scott Stark)

The Divine Miracle

Daina Kruminis, 1973, 35mm, 6 mins.

"A surrealist take on Catholic devotional postcard imagery set into incredible motion, *The Divine Miracle* took two solid years of labor-intensive work to make, and features a hypnotic original soundtrack by composer Rhys Chatham." (Mark Toscano)

Sky Blue Water Light Sign

J.J. Murphy, 1972, 9 mins.

"*Sky Blue Water Light Sign* is best seen in total innocence. My guess is that if one knows what he or she is looking at before seeing this little film, half of its excitement and a good deal of its meaning disappear. It is one of the happiest, most uplifting short films I've ever seen." (Scott MacDonald)

Eclipse Predictions

Diana Wilson, 1982, 4 mins.

"Diana Wilson's mysteriously beautiful animated tableaux fluidly unfold before our eyes, a generous receptacle for the mournful, harrowing soundtrack, in which the filmmaker recounts a tragedy from her youth." (Mark Toscano)

What's Out Tonight is Lost

Phil Solomon, 1983, 8 mins.

"The film began in response to an evaporating relationship, but gradually seeped outward to anticipate other imminent disappearing acts: youth, family, friends, time...I wanted the tonal

shifts of the film's surface to act as a barometer of the changes in the emotional weather. Navigating the school bus in the fog, the lighthouse in disrepair..." (Phil Solomon)

Analogies

Peter Rose, 1977, 14 mins.

"*Analogies* consists of a series of simple camera movements that are rendered diachronically—several different aspects of the action are shown on the screen at once using multiple screen structures. By playing with the time delays between these images, new kinds of space, action, gesture, and temporality have been found." (Peter Rose)

Dead Reckoning

David Wilson, 1980, 9 mins.

"A film which seems deceptively simple, *Dead Reckoning* comprises three identical-length shots which subtly address our very human tendency to want to give order to our environment, and the poignant failure inherent to such an impulse. The film presents us with not only a view of the filmed landscape, but also a map of the filmmaker's own movements within the space he attempted to capture." (Mark Toscano)

Raindance

Standish Lawder, 1972, color, sound, 16mins.

"*Raindance* plays directly on the mind through programmatic stimulation of the central nervous system. Individual frames of the film are imprinted on the retina of the eye in a rhythm, sequence, and intensity that corresponds to Alpha-Wave frequencies of the brain." (Standish Lawder)

Hand Held Day

Gary Beydler, 1975, 6 mins.

"Beydler's magical *Hand Held Day* is his most unabashedly beautiful film, but it's no less complex

than his other works. The filming approach is simple, yet incredibly rich with possibilities, as Beydler collapses the time and space of a full day

in the Arizona desert via time-lapse photography and a carefully hand-held mirror reflecting the view behind his camera.” (Mark Toscano)

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