

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Thur Mar 12 | 8:30 pm |
Jack H. Skirball Series
\$12 [members \$9]

Please note that this event is taking place on a Thursday

Ephraim Asili's *The Diaspora Suite*

Ephraim Asili's *The Diaspora Suite* (2011-2017) is a remarkable series of five films that grew out of the filmmaker's drive to have a personal understanding of the greater African diaspora. Traveling in Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jamaica and the United States, Asili responded to the character and history of each place amidst his developing awareness of his own cultural background as a young African-American man. Asili is an African-American artist, filmmaker, D.J., and traveler whose work focuses on the African diaspora as a cultural force. *The Diaspora Suite* has screened in festivals and venues all over the world. Asili can be heard live at his monthly dance party, Botanica. Asili is a professor in Film and Electronic Arts at Bard College.

Two West Coast Premieres

In person: Ephraim Asili

"In seven years, the filmmaker Ephraim Asili has completed a remarkable cycle of five films regarding his own relationship with the greater African diaspora. These films document not only his travels across Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jamaica, and the United States, but also a personal search for the connections of cultures across space and time. With its observational 16mm cinematography and its precise use of sound and music, Asili's work is critical and speculative, listening intently to the resonances of words and gestures that span centuries and oceans." – Ekrem Serdar, *The Brooklyn Rail*

"Beautifully filmed on location, Asili's complex, poetic documentaries fuse travelogue to archival investigation in order to explore how history and memory bear on the present – shaping the navigation and inhabitation of places." – Alison Kozberg, Los Angeles Filmforum

"Made over the course of seven years and shot on 16mm... *The Diaspora Suite* collapses time and space to reveal the hidden resonances that connect the black American experience to the greater African diaspora. Encompassing history, politics, music, dance, poetry, and ritual, [these films are] by turns playful, surprising, moving, and a radical interrogation of colonialism's legacy in its construction of a one-of-a-kind, global vision of pan-African identity." – Ashley Clark, BAM

Program:

Forged Ways

(2011, 16 minutes, 16mm on digital video, color/b&w, sound)

"Photographed on location in Harlem, Ethiopia, *Forged Ways* combines elements of documentary, narrative, and experimental film form. Structurally, the film cycles between the first person account of the filmmaker, the third person experience of a man navigating the streets of Harlem and day-to-day life in cities and villages of Ethiopia. By subduing any definitive story-line or "message" the film functions as an audio visual meditation on the constructs surrounding African American cultural identity while simultaneously examining some of the more subtle implications involved in maintaining an identity that spans hundreds of years, and thousands of miles." - Ephraim Asili

American Hunger

(2013, 19 minutes, sound 16mm on digital, color/b&w, sound)

"Oscillating between a street festival in Philadelphia, the slave forts and capitol city of Ghana, and the New Jersey shore, *American Hunger*, explores the relationship between personal experience and collective histories. American fantasies confront African realities. African realities confront American fantasies. African fantasies confront American realities. American realities confront African fantasies." – Ephraim Asili

Many Thousands Gone

(2015, 9 minutes, 16mm on digital video, color, sound)

"Filmed on location in Salvador, Brazil (the last city in the Western Hemisphere to outlaw slavery) and Harlem, New York (an international stronghold of the African Diaspora), *Many Thousands Gone* draws parallels between a summer afternoon on the streets of the two cities. A silent version of the film was given to jazz multi-instrumentalist Joe

McPhee to use as an interpretive score. The final film is the combination of the images and a modified version of McPhee's real time "sight reading" of the score." – Ephraim Asili

Kindah

(2016, 12 min., 16mm on digital video, color, sound)

"*Kindah*, the fourth film in *The Diaspora Suite*, was shot in Hudson NY and Accompong, Jamaica. Accompong was founded in 1739 after rebel slaves and their descendants fought a protracted war with the British leading to the establishment of a treaty between the two sides. The treaty signed under British governor Edward Trelawny granted Cudjoe's Maroons 1,500 acres of land between their strongholds of Trelawny Town and Accompong, and a certain amount of political autonomy and economic freedom. Cudjoe, a leader of the Maroons, is said to have united the Maroons in their fight for autonomy under the Kindah Tree—a large, ancient mango tree that is still standing. The tree symbolizes the common kinship of the community on its common land." – Ephraim Asili

Fluid Frontiers

(2017, 23 min., 16mm on digital, color, sound)

"Shot along both the Detroit and Windsor sides of the Detroit River, *Fluid Frontiers* explores the relationship between concepts of resistance and liberation exemplified by the Underground Railroad - the Detroit River being a major terminal point - and more modern resistance and liberation movements represented by Dudley Randell's Detroit-based, independent publishing company, Broadside Press (approx. 1965-1975), as well as the installation, sculptural, and performance works of local Detroit Artists. All of the poems are read from original copies of Broadside Press publications and recorded without any prior rehearsal. The readers are all natives of the Detroit Windsor region and were approached while the film was in production." – Ephraim Asili

The Artist:

Ephraim Asili is an African-American Artist, Filmmaker, D.J, Radio host, and traveler. Inspired by his day-to-day wanderings Asili creates art that situates itself as a series of meditations on everyday experience and media culture. Through audio-visual examinations of

societal iconography identity, geography, and architecture Asili strives to present a personal vision. The results are perhaps best described as an amalgam of pop, African-American and "moving image" culture filtered through an acute sense of rhythmic improvisation and compositional awareness.

Asili's films have screened in festivals and venues all over the world, including the New York Film Festival, NY; Toronto International Film Festival, Canada; Ann Arbor Film Festival, MI; San Francisco International Film Festival, CA; Milano Film Festival, Italy; International Film Festival Rotterdam, Netherlands; MoMA PS1, NY; MOCA, LA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; and the Whitney Museum, NY. As a DJ, Asili can be heard on his radio program *In The Cut* on WGXC, or live at his monthly dance party Botanica. Asili currently resides in Hudson, NY, and is a Professor in the Film and Electronic Arts Department at Bard College.

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