



Queer Motions

Film/Video

MARCH 20, 2023
8:30 PM

PRESENTED BY

REDCAT
Roy and Edna Disney
CalArts Theater

CaLARTS
California Institute of the Arts

We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandeño, and Ventureño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

Queer Motions

Queer Motions brings together six queer shorts characterized by movement and a spirit of anarchy in a unique combination of pulsating, contagious energy and leisurely drag. Mobile protagonists transported by feet, cars, motorbikes, roller skates, or trains navigate a range of mostly urban terrains in Bissau, New York, East Jerusalem, Nairobi, and other places, tracing pathways of freedom within occupied territories. Verging in tone from lightness to spirited irreverence, these shorts by **Dawn Suggs**, **Apichatpong Weerasethakul**, **Amirah Tajdin**, **Eduardo Williams**, **Jumana Manna**, and **Lionel Soukaz** exemplify resolutely queer, experimental approaches to form, especially volatile, frenzied, kinetic camerawork and verbal excess via polyphony, overlapping, discordant running commentaries, and poetic discourse.

The program is curated by Chrystel Oloukoi. Presented in Spanish, French, Portuguese, Swahili, Arabic, and Thai with English subtitles.

***I Never Danced the Way Girls Were Supposed To* (1992)**

Dir. Dawn Suggs, 7 min.

What makes Black lesbians so special? Suggs takes a fresh and funny approach to explore this and other questions using a mixture of scenes shot on film and video with running commentaries by women in the know.

***Fluorescent Sin* (2011)**

Dir. Amirah & Wafa Tajdin, 8 min.

At Nairobi's iconic central station, a lithe, majestic drag queen sits on a bench, smoking a cigarette and descending into a breakdown through a poetic soliloquy. In 8 minutes, filmmaker Amirah Tajdin challenges our ideas of beauty, sexuality, and Kenyan attitudes to 'otherness' in a film that suggests being caught between two places might in fact be no bad thing.

***Parsi* (2019)**

Dir. Eduardo Williams, 23 min.

Parallel to the list of "what seems to be but isn't" from the poem "No es" by Mariano Blatt, Parsi observes spaces and people in a perpetual movement to create another poem that is caressed by, crashes into, and spins next to "No es."

***Blessed Blessed Oblivion* (2010)**

Dir. Jumana Manna, 23 min.

Blessed Blessed Oblivion weaves together a portrait of masculine performativity in East Jerusalem, as manifested in gyms, body shops, and hair dressing parlors. Inspired by Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* (1963), the video uses visual collage and the musical soundtrack as ironic commentary. Anger's subjects—leather-clad bikers—serve as a counterpoint to the culture Manna portrays, that of male “thug” culture in East Jerusalem. Simultaneously psychologizing the characters and seduced by them, Manna finds herself in a double bind similar to the conflicted desire that animates her protagonist as he drifts from abject rants to declamations of heroic poetry or unashamed self-praise.

***Ballad for a Lonely Man* (1968)**

Dir. Lionel Soukaz, 18 min.

“I filmed my boyfriend at the time and tried to strip him, but in fact it's a film about ecology.”

–Lionel Soukaz

***Mobile Men* (2008)**

Dir. Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 3 min.

Two young men in a pickup truck are filming themselves. Belonging to different parts of the world, through the use of a camera they are discovering each other. In a windy atmosphere, they initially film each other with close ups on parts of their bodies, then, little by little, they shoot their full figures. As the camera lenses change, a landscape of rice fields and a cinema crew get into the frame. The camera then reshoots the road and the men, as if we were witnessing a film rehearsal. When the frame goes back to shoot one of the two main characters who has tattoos over his body, the man lifts his shirt up and tears off a wired microphone that is taped to his chest. He then pastes it on the tattoo and cries out from the top of his lungs. The microphone picks up the heavy wind noise and the camera moves to captures his face. He looks directly at the camera, smiling.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Dawn Suggs is a media artist, actress, and journalist from St. Louis. Her two shorts, *Chasing the Moon* (1990) and *I Never Danced the Way Girls Were Supposed To* (1992), focus on black queer women's experiences. She has an MFA from UCLA and collaborated with a number of other experimental filmmakers in New York and Los Angeles. She worked on *A Litany for Survival* (1995), a documentary on Audre Lorde directed by Ada Gay Griffin and Michelle Parkerson.

Amirah Tajdin is a Kenyan artist and filmmaker. She graduated from Rhodes University with a Bachelor of Fine Art (Photography) in South Africa and Goucher College Maryland (USA). Over a 10-year period of filmmaking, she has crafted a signature style of blending reality with fiction through her strong visual language in both her commercial and cinematic work. She has helmed campaigns for branded content, fashion films, music videos, and television commercials for brands such as Cadillac, Saudi Telecom, Bloomingdale's, Virgin Mobile, Pepsi, and the Louvre Abu Dhabi. The latter being a case study film for TBWA/RAAD's Cannes Golden Lion for The Highway Gallery. Her branded content film *SISTERHOOD: ACTION* for Girls Who Code was a Tribeca X Award 2019 finalist. She is a Sundance Institute fellow, making her the first Kenyan director to be selected for both the institute's Screenwriters Lab (Utah, 2017) and Director's Lab (Utah, 2018) for her feature film currently in development. Tajdin's short film *Marea di Tierra* was in main competition at Sundance (2016) and Cannes Directors' Fortnight (2015) and went on to play over 20 festivals globally. She has also directed various award-winning and -nominated short films and feature-length documentaries. In 2011, she founded SEVEN THIRTY Films, an Africa-based indie production company with her sister, producer Wafa Tajdin. RadicalMedia (London and Berlin) and Loveboat (Paris) represent her for commercials while Scheme Engine (New York and LA) represents her globally for commercials and music videos.

Wafa Tajdin was born and brought up in one of Africa's busiest cities, Nairobi. She is no stranger to the patchwork of experiences that are part and parcel of growing up in a 21st century metropolis. A sentiment that has contributed immensely to her choice of academic pursuits: an undergraduate degree in Economics and a master's degree in Media Studies from the Rhodes School of Journalism in South Africa. A passion for journalism and telling the stories that matter led Wafa onto the path of filmmaking, specifically with respect to producing human-interest stories from angles that are innovative, interesting, and relevant to Africa, in particular.

Eduardo Williams (born 1987, Argentina) studied at the Universidad del Cine in Buenos Aires, before joining Le Fresnoy—Studio national des arts contemporains in France in 2012. Williams' short films, *Pude ver un puma* (2011) and *Que je tombe tout le temps?* (2013), premiered at Cinéfondation and Directors' Fortnight at Cannes Film Festival, followed by *Tôi quên rồi!* (2014), which had its premiere at FIDMarseille. His first feature, *El auge del humano* (2016), won the Pardo d'oro for Best Film at Filmmakers of the Present at the 69th Locarno Film Festival and was later shown at Toronto International Film Festival's Wavelengths, New York Film Festival's Projections, Tate Modern, and other festivals. In 2016, he directed *Allons-y!* for the Festival de l'image en mouvement Hors Pistes at Centre Pompidou. In 2019, he received the Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists. His last short film *Parsi* (2018) was produced by the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève for the Biennale de l'image en Mouvement 2018 and premiered at Berlinale's Forum Expanded. It was shown at Tate Modern, Julia Stoscheck Collection, Lincoln Center, and other festivals and museums.

Jumana Manna is a visual artist and filmmaker. Her work explores how power is articulated, focusing on the body, land, and materiality in relation to colonial inheritances and histories of place. Through sculpture, filmmaking, and occasional writing, Manna deals with the paradoxes of preservation practices, particularly within the fields of archaeology, agriculture, and law. Her practice considers the tension between the modernist traditions of categorization and conservation and the unruly potential of ruination as an integral part of life and its regeneration. Jumana was raised in Jerusalem and lives in Berlin.

Lionel Soukaz (1953, France), a cinematographer and filmmaker, is one of the pioneers of French queer cinema. His work, especially in the first part of his career, reflects a synthesis of the various avant-garde movements he was drawn to in the 1970s and 1980s. Affiliated with the activists and intellectuals, such as Guy Hocquenghem or Copi, at the Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action and the magazine *Gai Pied*, he was also active within the experimental film scene, working to promote Super 8 filmmaking at the Festival des Cinémas Différents (Hyères) or Cinémerge (La Rochelle), and ultimately organizing his event in 1978: the first Gay and Lesbian film festival in Paris, *Écrans roses et nuits bleues*. His films display an uncompromising commitment to self-narration and the expression of desire. But by embodying his unlimited craving for freedom, his work has often faced censorship. Rediscovered in 2004, thanks mainly to the advocacy of French critic Nicole Brenez, his early film work has been lavishly restored by the CNC (French National Film Board), with the creation of beautiful new 35mm prints. Soukaz is known for *Le sexe des anges* (1977), *The Homosexual Century* (1979), and *Maman que man* (1982).

Apichatpong Weerasethakul works in the space between cinema and contemporary art, creating installations, videos, and short and feature films that are often nonlinear and transmit a strong sense of dislocation and otherworldliness. Through the manipulation of time and light, Weerasethakul constructs tenuous bridges for the viewer to travel between the real and the mythical, the individual and the collective, the corporeal and the chimeric. Over the years, the majority of his projects have involved many of the same actors, which has allowed him to capture different phases in their lives and their experience of aging. Frequently set in rural Thai villages and forests, his films traverse an extremely personal territory, inviting the viewer to enter the subjective world of memory, myth, and deep yearning. By using unconventional narrative structures, expanding and contracting the sensation of time, and playing with ideas of veracity and linearity, Weerasethakul's work sits comfortably in a world of his own making. In 1994, Weerasethakul earned his BA in Architecture from Khon Kaen University in Thailand. In 1998, he received his MFA in Filmmaking from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as an honorary doctorate from the same institution in 2011. In 1999, he cofounded Kick the Machine Films, a company that has produced many of his own films as well as other experimental Thai films and videos that could not find support under the established Thai film industry. The French government named him Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres and Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2008 and 2011, respectively. His art projects and feature films have won

him widespread recognition and numerous festival prizes, including three from the Cannes Film Festival: *Un Certain Regard for Blissfully Yours* in 2002, Prix du Jury for *Tropical Malady* in 2004, and Palme d'Or for *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* in 2010. Weerasethakul lives and works in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Chrystal Oloukoï is a researcher and moving image artist, as well as freelance film critic and curator currently based in Richmond, Virginia and previously in Lagos, Boston, New Orleans, Johannesburg, and Paris.

They have curated a number of programs on experimental cinema, queer cinema, and Black continental and diasporic cinema, including the forthcoming “Black Women Experimental Filmmakers” in collaboration with Culture Arts Society; “Playing in the Dark: Watery Experiments” for Canyon Cinema; and “Anti-Ethnography”, “Carceral Frames, Fugitive Dreams” and “Queer Celluloid” for the Lagos-based microcinema Monangambee. In partnership with the artist collective hFACTOR and Monangambee, they have organized the inaugural edition of the Lagos Pride Film Festival in June 2022.

Their writing on cinema has appeared in a number of publications, including *Metrograph*, BFI’s *Sight & Sound*, *World Records Journal*, and *Film Comment*.

The Jack H. Skirball Series is organized by Jheanelle Brown and Bérénice Reynaud.

UPCOMING AT REDCAT

Terence Nance

Multitudes, or Surreal Notions in Service of Us

April 10

Herb Alpert Award-winning artist, filmmaker, and musician Terence Nance’s creative worlds are expansive, boundless, and liberating. This evening of short films weaves visions unhindered by the structures of categorization, form, and precedent. Nance doesn’t resist the narrative form. Instead, he subverts, troubles, interrupts, and expands it in search of the sublime. Nance’s work makes sense of our contemporary moment, moving alongside and in conversation with a saturated and taxing cultural and media landscape. In his hands, Black subjectivity abounds and is both vernacular and grounded as well as surrealist and fantastical.



KCRW is the Official Media Sponsor of REDCAT

Find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @calartsredcat

For more information, email redcat@calarts.edu or visit redcat.org