



Mon Feb 13 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Screening Series

\$10 [students \$8, CalArts \$5]

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS:

Lee Anne Schmitt
The Last Buffalo Hunt

Los Angeles premiere | 76 min., HDCAM, 2010

Created by Lee Lynch and Lee Anne Schmitt

Directed by Lee Anne Schmitt

Produced by Lee Lynch and Lee Anne Schmitt

For five years, filmmaker Lee Anne Schmitt and her collaborators followed Terry Albrecht, a guide-for-hire for hunters who want to kill buffalo. Yet Albrecht is tired; his livelihood is threatened by the rising cost of gasoline, and the mystique of the West has become a commodity for nouveaux riches—like the couple posing in Santa costumes in front of their trophy, or the woman who switches pleasures from shopping sprees to insulting a buffalo that wouldn't die fast enough. The film ends on a melancholy sequence, in a hokey wax museum, where cowboys and buffalo alike become ghosts. In the West, it is the legend that is printed, not the history—because history is repeated twice—once as slaughter, the second time as pageantry.

Preceded by: ***Three Stories***

US Premiere | 2011 | 14 min | DigiBeta

Produced, directed, shot and edited by Lee Anne Schmitt

With a live music performance by Jeff Parker

These three short films are shot without direct sound and dialogue. Lee Anne Schmitt lets Jeff Parker's music accompany the images... Public and private history form a new, abstract, and yet tangible unity.

In person: Lee Anne Schmitt

The Last Buffalo Hunt skillfully synthesizes two documentary genres—the ethnographic film and the nonfiction essay... The buffalo becomes a catalyst for

sifting through entrenched American myths, particularly the exaltation of individualism as mediated through hunting rituals.

– Richard Porton, *Cineaste*

“Lee Anne Schmitt’s *The Last Buffalo Hunt* also tracks a vanished presence, the American West evacuated of its once-plentiful bison, the cowboys and ranchers who roamed its plains, and the grandiose mythology of the frontier.... This is a contested land, lashed by strife – it’s apparent not only in poor resource management, a faltering economy, and the commodification of the West, but also, as Schmitt’s voiceover and intertitles explain, in the very ideas that shaped its history, for better or for worse. This is a promise land broken; its destiny manifest on Terry Albrecht’s weary, weathered face.”

– Genevieve Yue, *Senses of Cinema*

“... Listen to Terry Albrecht explaining how burned out he feels from decades of guiding tourist-hunters for a shot at the once-plentiful beasts: “You know how it is ... another day at the office.” A documentary pitched uneasily between third-person essay and first-person observation, *The Last Buffalo Hunt* is the result of more than five years of tracking Albrecht and his patrons in Utah’s choked Henry Mountains. Lee Anne Schmitt and co-producer Lee Lynch do not make this material easy to absorb either at the level of sensory impressions or intellectual understanding. It’s a familiar story by now — that as the West was won, it was made consumable as iconography and fantasy — but rarely has the laboriousness of this task been brought into such close focus as it is here.” – Max Goldberg, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*

“Schmitt creates complex filmic textures in which the image and the sound-track, while perfectly, crisply defined, are in uncertain, “floating” relation to each other – like tectonic plates. The voice is never a straight commentary on what we see (or think we see); the “index” of the filmmaker’s presence is put in question; the spectator is not given a “full image,” or at least not an unproblematic image... By opening and modulating this gap, this area of “indeterminacy” (in the Cagean sense), Schmitt creates a dense, sensual, seductive atmosphere through which the spectator gets a glimpse of what it means to have lost, at the very moment you reached it, this utopian reality called America.” – The Viennale

Director’s Statement

We were at the only open gas station in Hanksville, a town in remote Southern Utah, when we saw the decapitated head of a buffalo in the back of an idling pickup truck. One of the last free ranging herds of American Bison is located in the nearby Henry Mountains. Each year a hunt is held on the herd to cull its numbers; we followed this hunt for five years.

The Last Buffalo Hunt is not a documentary about hunting buffalo. It is a film about cowboys, history and landscape; a film that documents the experience of one of the last open landscapes in America even while depicting its demise.

The film complicates images of the Utah landscape with images of taxidermy, helicopters, shotguns, casinos built in the shape of twelve story barns and plastic teepees, gas stations and snack shops advertised with figures of Indian chiefs from tribes long since displaced and robotic hunters selling sporting goods.

The Last Buffalo Hunt makes space for the construct of American individuality to reverberate alongside the marketing of the hunt, faith and belief, and the image of the American West, questioning the authenticity of our myths and the foundations of our frontier ideology.

Lee Anne Schmitt's films have been shown nationally and internationally in such venues as Museum of Modern Art (New York); Pacific Film Archives (Berkeley); The San Francisco International Film Festival; Echo Park Film Center (Los Angeles); Rotterdam International Film Festival; Vancouver International Film Festival; Punto de Vista Film Festival (Pamplona, Spain); The Viennale (Vienna, Austria); Shadow Festival of Documentary Film (The Netherlands); Montreal Festival of New Media and Cinema; Oberhausen Film Festival (Germany); BAFICI (Buenos Aires, Argentina); Jeonju Film Festival (South Korea); FID Marseille and Cinéma du Réel (Paris, France). In October 2011, The Viennale organized a retrospective of her films.

Additional Filmography

Three Stories (2011)
Bowers Cave (co-dir Lee Lynch, 2009)
California Company Town (2008)
The Wash (co-dir Lee Lynch, 2005)
Awake and Sing (2003)
Nightingale (2002)
Las Vegas (2000)
Jumping Portrait (2000)
Rise and Shine (2000)

Curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud

The Jack H. Skirball Series is funded in part with generous support from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.