

Francis Thompson: **N.Y., N.Y.** (1957, 15 min.). Restored from original 16mm Kodachrome A-B-C rolls that were stored under Thompson's bed for 40 years.

"...The Distorted Documentary, a new form of visionary art, admirably exemplified by Mr. Francis Thompson's film, *NY, NY*. In this very strange and beautiful picture we see the city of New York as it appears when photographed through multiplying prisms, or reflected in the backs of spoons, polished hub caps, spherical and parabolic mirrors. We still recognize houses, people, shop fronts, taxicabs, but recognize them as elements in one of those living geometries which are so characteristic of the visionary experience." – Aldous Huxley

Bruce Posner: **Sappho and Jerry: Parts I-III** (1977-78, 7 min.), completed in 35mm CinemaScope.

"A mesmerizing collage" – The Dartmouth.com

"The films demonstrate Posner's mastery of multiple pass optical printing techniques—bipack and traveling mattes—coupled with his appropriately cynical world view. He never allows content to be subjugated by technique, but delicately balances satire and delivery to create fresh and exciting works." —Tony Brandon, Image Film/Video Center

Sergei Paradjanov: **Confession** (1990, 9 min.), a fragment of the great Georgian filmmaker's last unfinished project.

"This awesome fragment, literally made on [Paradjanov's] deathbed, easily surpasses his last two features and deserves to be ranked alongside his sublime *Sayat Nova*; it centers mainly on a long take juxtaposing a group of musicians (whose music is unheard), an apparent funeral, and various ritualistic activities—all happening at once in the same hallucinatory space in a way that recalls juxtapositions in medieval paintings" – Jonathan Rosenbaum

Curated by Bruce Posner, Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud. Co-presented with Los Angeles Filmforum. Films courtesy of Anthology Film Archives, New York.

Funded in part with generous support from Wendy Keys and Donald Pels.

UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS

February 9: Leandro Katz: *The Day You'll Love Me*

February 12: *Charlie Haden: Rambling Boy*

February 21– March 8: REDCAT International Children's Film Festival

February 23: Deborah Stratman: *America's Haunted Spirits*

March 2: Bruce Conner's *Explosive Cinema*

March 9: Takahiko Iimura: *On Time in Film*

March 30: Robert Todd's *Cinema of Discovery*

April 20: Joanna Priestley: *Fighting Gravity*

April 27: Zoe Beloff: *Conjuring Specters*

April 29: *The Cinema Cabaret: Live Film Narration*

April 30–May 2: CalArts Film/Video Showcases

May 4: William E. Jones: *Le Grand Mash Up*

May 11: Cheryl Dunye: *The Watermelon Woman*

MANHATTA AND OTHER RESTORED TREASURES

January 19, 2009

8:30 pm

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CALARTS



REDCAT

MANHATTA AND OTHER RESTORED TREASURES

Mon. Jan 19 | 8:30 pm

Jack H. Skirball Series

Archivist, curator and filmmaker Bruce Posner is on hand to attend to a collection of preserved vintage films and beautifully restored prints—all in 35mm. Its crown jewel is a digital restoration of Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler's *Manhatta* (1920), "a radical modern masterpiece... one of the first American avant-garde films and a forerunner of the 'city symphony' films," according to Posner. The program also includes Dudley Murphy's *Soul of the Cypress* (1920), with its original Debussy recording; Fernand Léger and Murphy's classic *Ballet Mécanique* (1923–24); Rudy Burckhardt's rarely seen *Haiti* (1938); Francis Lee's *1941* (1941, 4 min.); Maya Deren's haunting *Meditation on Violence* (1948); Francis Thompson's jazzy *N.Y., N.Y.* (1957); *Confession* (1990, 9 min.), the remarkable and moving fragment of Sergei Paradjanov's last unfinished project; and Posner's own *Sappho and Jerry: Parts I–III* (1977–78), completed in CinemaScope. – TRT 103 min.

In person: Bruce Posner

Program introduced by Adam Hyman

PROGRAM NOTES

Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler: *Manhatta* (1920, 12 min.)

"In 1920 the painter and photographer Charles Sheeler invited his friend Paul Strand, a photographer who, like Sheeler, was a protégé of Alfred Stieglitz, to collaborate on a film. Shot with a French camera that Sheeler had acquired for the staggering sum of \$1,600, *Manhatta* consisted of a series of strikingly composed images, shot in Lower Manhattan, that evoked a typically epic day in the life of New York. Passengers debark from the Staten Island Ferry, steam billows in great clouds from the peaks of skyscrapers, and workers hurry past the darkened windows of office buildings, while printed titles quote lines from Walt Whitman, celebrating the 'proud and passionate city.' This resolutely modernist work, with its Cubist perspectives and percussive rhythms, most likely was, in the words of the film historian Jan-Christopher Horak, 'the first avant-garde film produced in the United States.'" – Dave Kehr.

The 2K digital restoration of *Manhatta* was performed by Lowry Digital under the supervision of Posner for Anthology Film Archives, British Film Institute, The Library of Congress, The Museum of Modern Art, National Gallery of Art, and Nederlands Filmmuseum.

Manhatta music score composed by Donald Sosin edited and mixed at Chace Audio.

"Amazing... a *Manhatta* with the grain and clarity of a platinum photographic print come to life." – *New York Times*

Dudley Murphy's first film, *Soul of the Cypress* (1920, 11 min.). Color-tinted with its original Red Seal Debussy recording and the mysterious interpolated porn discovered at the Library of Congress. In this variation on the Orpheus myth, the film's protagonist falls in love with a dryad (a wood nymph whose soul dwells in an ancient tree) and throws himself into the sea to become immortal and spend eternity with her.

Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy: *Ballet Mécanique* (1923–24, 16 min.).

Frederick Kiesler's version with color geometric inserts and Paul Lehrman's realization of the original score by George Antheil.

George Antheil's original orchestration called for 16 player pianos (or pianolas) in four parts, 2 regular pianos, 3 xylophones, at least 7 electric bells, 3 propellers, 1 siren, 4 bass drums, and 1 tam-tam. In 2000 Paul Lehrman successfully combined the score and the film by using an edited version of the original orchestration in which he inserted player pianos recorded after a 1999 Lowell Percussion Ensemble performance, with the rest of the instruments played electronically.

"...a furious maelstrom of noise seldom heard since its first performance in 1924."

– *Wall Street Journal*

Rudy Burckhardt: *Haiti* (1938, 16 min.)

One of the artist's first films, made during a nine-month stint in Haiti, in the company of his friend and neighbor, dance critic/poet Edwin Denby.

"[Burckhardt] approached films as if they were as easily and intuitively made as photographs, with a distinctive lightness of touch and a grasp of the medium's different possibilities.

This understanding took him from travelogues, documentaries and silent-type comedies to films structured by the sound of music or poetry, from relatively straightforward narrative to, perhaps most characteristically, fast-paced collages of layered images." – *New York Times*

– INTERMISSION –

Francis Lee: *1941* (1941, 4 min.) (from original 16mm Kodachrome)

Shot in December, 1941, using music by Stravinsky, this film provides a reaction to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. An egg is smashed by a hammer; red color with white and then blue dominates the frame. Blue paint runs; small bulbs float. The dark colors spread. White, red, blue, and black dominate the frame. Then comes fire. The bulbs burn and break. A broken bulb's filaments are exposed.

Maya Deren: *Meditation on Violence* (1948, 13 min.). Restored and printed for the first time from the original camera reversal, the only Deren original material known to have survived, featuring a restored digital soundtrack.

The film explores Wu Tang boxing with the camera as sparring partner, motivated by the movements of the performer, the actor/martial artist, Chao Li Chi. Boundaries between violence and beauty are blurred, as Deren uses editing techniques that were already significant in creating the moral ambiguity of *At Land* (starting a movement in one filmic field, and finishing it in another). She also experiments with time, reversing the film part way through producing a loop. As the actual Wu Tang movements are a physical statement of certain metaphysical concepts, *Meditation on Violence* is also a spiritual quest.