

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Deborah Stratman is a Chicago-based artist and filmmaker interested in landscapes and systems. Her films ply a territory between experimental and documentary, often exploring the history, uses, mythologies and control of highly varied locations: from Muslim Xinjiang China to gated suburban California. Her most recent work addresses manifest destiny, freedom, and paranormal occurrences in the information age.

A graduate of the School of the Art Institute in Chicago (BFA) and the California Institute of the Arts (MFA), Stratman has exhibited internationally at venues including the Whitney Biennial (New York), the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Sundance Film Festival, the Viennale, the Pompidou Center (Paris), the Rotterdam International Film Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival, the Armand Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), the Harvard Film Archive (Boston), the Pacific Film Archive (Berkeley), the ICA (London), the Palace Museum (Taipei), and The Latvian Museum of Foreign Art (Riga), among others. She is the recipient of Fulbright and Guggenheim Fellowships and currently teaches at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Additional Filmography

Kings Of The Sky (2004, Video 68 min.)

Energy Country (2003, Video 15 min.)

In Order Not To Be Here (2002, 16mm, 33 min.)

Untied (2001, 16mm, 3 min.)

The BLVD (1999, Video, 64 min.)

From Hetty To Nancy (1997, 16mm, 44 min.)

On The Various Nature Of Things (1995, 16mm, 25 min.)

Waking (1994, Video, 7 min.)

Palimpsest (1993, 16mm, 3 min.)

the train from la to la (1992, Video, 8 min.)

Upon a Time (1991, 16mm film, 10 min.)

My Alchemy (1990, 16mm, 7 min.)

Program curated by Betzy Bromberg.

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

REDCAT is located in downtown Los Angeles at the corner of W. 2nd St. and S. Hope St., inside the Walt Disney Concert Hall complex. Tickets may be purchased by calling 213.237.2800 or at www.redcat.org or in person at the REDCAT Box Office on the corner of 2nd and Hope Streets (30 minutes free parking with validation).

Box Office Hours: Tue-Sat | noon–6 pm and two hours prior to curtain

UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS

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*

DEBORAH STRATMAN: AMERICA'S HAUNTED SPIRITS

February 23, 2009

8:30 pm

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CALARTS

REDCAT

DEBORAH STRATMAN: AMERICA'S HAUNTED SPIRITS

Mon Feb 23 | 8:30 pm
Jack H. Skirball Series

Los Angeles premiere

The Chicago-based filmmaker and artist has garnered much acclaim for her luscious camerawork and compelling themes; her original explorations of inner city Chicago, Chinese Turkestan, rural Iceland and American suburbia; and her “fascinating formalism” (*Bright Lights Film Journal*). She introduces an idiosyncratic mix of films that break the boundaries between experimental essays and incisive documentaries, including Stratman’s latest, ***O’er the Land***. Fresh from premieres at Sundance and Rotterdam, the new work is “a meditation on the milieu of elevated threat, addressing national identity, gun culture, wilderness, consumption, patriotism and the possibility of personal transcendence,” says Stratman. *O’er the Land* is preceded by ***The Paranormal Trilogy, comprised of How Among the Frozen Words She Found Some Odd Ones, It Will Die Out In The Mind and The Magician’s House.***

In person: Deborah Stratman

“[Stratman] produces atmospheric, delicate films and has a knack for expressing sophisticated social analysis through minimalist means.”
– *RES Magazine*

“Like the filmmakers whose influence she acknowledges—Chantal Akerman, James Benning, Ernie Gehr, Nina Menkes, Ulrike Ottinger, and Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet—Stratman is obsessed by the “sculptural” quality of time: in an obdurate landscape shot held beyond the conventional limits of spectatorial endurance, time does not flow toward a resolution, but is congealed as a “pressure block,” a stasis waiting to explode, a presence failing to materialize, an ever-vanishing present.” –Armand Hammer Museum

PROGRAM

THE PARANORMAL TRILOGY

What is explained can be denied, but what is felt can't be forgotten. – Charles Bowden

Ghost: the outward and visible sign of an inward fear. - Ambrose Pierce

How Among the Frozen Words She Found Some Odd Ones
(2005, digital video, 40 seconds)

Inspired by a chapter in Francois Rabelais’ 1653 epic novel *Gargantua & Pantagruel* wherein Pantagruel finds that the explosions, cries and other sounds generated from a battle that had occurred the year before have been frozen into discernable shapes – and that the sounds could be released upon the breaking or melting of the frozen forms.

It Will Die Out In The Mind (2006, digital video, 4 minutes)

A short inquisition of science by the paranormal. On-screen texts are lifted from Tarkovsky's film *Stalker* in which something more expansive and less explicable than logic or technology is offered as the conceptual pillar of the human spirit. The title is taken from a passage in Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed* about time after the Apocalypse: "Kirillov: When the whole of man has achieved happiness, there won't be any time, because it won't be needed. It's perfectly true. Stavrogin: Where will they put it then? Kirillov: They won't put it anywhere. Time isn't a thing, it's an idea. It will die out in the mind."

The Magician’s House (2007, 16mm, 6 minutes)

Sometimes the supernatural lingers plainly in the most ordinary places, secret only in so much as its trace goes unnoticed. Both a letter to a sick alchemist-filmmaker friend and a quiet tribute to the vanishing art of celluloid, *The Magician’s House* is full of ghosts, including that of Athanasius Kircher, inventor of the Magic Lantern or “Sorcerer’s Lamp”. The music, *La Lutte des Mages* (The Struggle of the Magicians) was composed by Armenian mystic Georges Gurdjieff and Thomas De Hartmann. Gurdjieff thought man was a "transmitting station of forces." To him, most people move around in a state of waking sleep, so he sought to provide aural conditions that would induce awareness.

O’er the land (2008, 16mm, 51 minutes)

With the excuse of freedom, we lose so many things. – Silvio Barile

A meditation on the milieu of elevated threat addressing national identity, gun culture, wilderness, consumption, patriotism and the possibility of personal transcendence. Of particular interest are the ways Americans have come to understand freedom and the increasingly technological reiterations of manifest destiny.

While channeling our national psyche, the film is interrupted by the story of Col. William Rankin, who in 1959 was forced to eject from his F8U fighter jet at 48,000 feet without a pressure suit, only to get trapped for 45 minutes in the up and down drafts of a massive thunderstorm. Remarkably, he survived. Rankin's story represents a non-material, metaphysical kind of freedom. He was vomited up by his own jet, that American icon of progress and strength, but violent purging does not necessarily lead to reassessment or redirection.

This film is concerned with the sudden, simple, thorough ways that events can separate us from the system of things, and place us in a kind of limbo. Like when we fall. Or cross a border. Or get shot. Or saved. The film forces together culturally acceptable icons of heroic national tradition with the suggestion of unacceptable historical consequences, so that seemingly benign locations become zones of moral angst.

“O’er the Land is Deborah Stratman’s meditation on freedom and technological approaches to manifest destiny. She captures the marching-band battle cries of the country with a strong, controlled tone that proves its point but is extremely playful, too. Stratman documents the wild, wild worlds of gun shows—ones where you can fire machine guns in the forest and literally blow stuff up, reenactments of famous battles with historically accurate weapons and clothes (golf carts and Pepsi trucks in the wings), border disputes, and the organized frenzy of cheerleaders and motor homes. All are framed by the incredible experiences of Colonel William Rankin, who, in 1959, was forced to eject from his F8-U fighter jet at 48,000 feet without a pressure suit, only to get trapped for 45 minutes in the up-and-down drafts of a massive thunderstorm. Miraculously he survived. The scale of practicing war as a game is colossal and hard to grasp at times. Stratman captures the events she depicts with wonder rather than disdain. Her thoughtful framing of images and meticulous editing help us understand the absurdity in this dark path.” – Sundance Film Festival