

***RADICAL LIGHT:***  
EXPERIMENTAL FILM IN BEAT-  
ERA SAN FRANCISCO

---

JANUARY 17, 2011 | 8:30 PM

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CALARTS



# **RADICAL LIGHT:** EXPERIMENTAL FILM IN BEAT-ERA SAN FRANCISCO

---

**Monday, January 17 | 8:30 pm**

Jack H. Skirball Series

*Radical Light: Alternative Film And Video In The San Francisco Bay Area, 1945–2000* is a rich compendium of essays, reminiscences and striking visuals that attests to the vital and varied experimental film and video scene that has existed in the Bay Area for more than half a century. This companion screening focuses on landmark 16mm films from 1949–1959, including Christopher Maclaine’s apocalyptic Beat comic-tragedy ***The End*** (1953), Sidney Peterson’s wittily caustic tale of murder and incest ***The Lead Shoes*** (1949), Jane Belson Conger Shimane’s playful image and sound arrangement ***Odds and Ends*** (1959), Bruce Conner’s pioneering found-footage ***A Movie*** (1958), Hy Hirsh’s ***Eneri*** (1953) and Patricia Marx’s ***Things to Come*** (1953). Co-editors Steve Anker and Kathy Geritz are on hand for a post-screening book signing.

**In person: Steve Anker and Kathy Geritz**

“In *Radical Light*, San Francisco’s deep countercultural roots reemerge as an unbroken antitradition stretching from the postwar proto-Beats to the identitarian activists and small-gauge geeks at century’s end.” —*Artforum*

Co-curated by Steve Anker, Kathy Geritz and Steve Seid

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

## **SCREENING PROGRAM**

Sidney Peterson (1905-2000): ***The Lead Shoes*** (1949)

Made using distorting lenses at Workshop 20 at the San Francisco Art Institute.

“Extravagant, exhausting, open to the fortuitous and the unintended, its picaresque narrative transforms the dark region of unconscious impulse into an intellectual burlesque. The ‘story’ disintegrates into a warped tissue of allusions and visual puns riddled by ellipses and audio-visual shifts.” - Stuart Leibman

In December 2009, the film was selected for the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress.

Hy Hirsh (1911-1961): ***Eneri*** (1953)

Named by spelling the name “Irene” backward, the film is a collage of optically printed images from Hirsh’s oscilloscope and oil wipe experiments, printed into multiple screens within the frame. The energetic multi-plane animation finally explodes into fireworks.

“Shapes jump and play, lines wiggle and twist, colors convert and combine. Together they form a rhythmic display accompanied by a dynamic Afro-Cuban beat. The result is something like rubbing your eyes hard and watching the array of patterns and colors dance on the back of your eyelids—a spectral vision set to rhythmic drumming.” – Dennis Reed

Christopher Maclaine (1923-1975): **The End** (1953)

Fanciful portraits of the filmmaker's friends and himself on the last day of their lives. Most are about to commit suicide, or some metaphorical equivalent, but the mushroom cloud with which the film begins and ends reminds us that, as Maclaine's voice intones on the sound track, we await "the grand suicide of the human race." Maclaine compares the dehumanizing effects of mass culture to the dehumanizing effects of personal despair, weaving these two threads together until the mannequins in store windows or the anonymous people in the streets, all seem variations on the same half-living, half-dead persona.

Patricia Marx: **Things to Come** (1953)

"Patricia Marx was a former Australian landscape artist who had moved to San Francisco and become influenced by the work of Harry Smith to the extent that she began to produce mystic-surrealistic paintings and left the realm of landscape painting for non-objective art... [Jordan Belson used his technique of shooting animation from scroll artwork, three frames at a time] to animate her paintings, using 'bop' music scores by Dizzy Gillespie." – Bob Pike

Bruce Conner (1933–2008): **A Movie** (1958)

"... a montage of found materials from fact (newsreels) and fiction (old movies). Clichés and horrors make a rapid collage in which destruction and sex follow each other in images of pursuit and falling until finally a diver disappears through a hole in the bottom of the sea - the ultimate exit. The entire thing is prefaced by a girl from a shady movie lazily undressing. By the time *A Movie* is over she has retrospectively become a Circe or Prime Mover." – *The New York Times*

Jane Belson Conger Shimane (1927-2002): **Odds and Ends** (1959)

"A cinematic collage which graphically relates much of [Belson's] experimental footage along with live action 'trims' and 'out-takes' borrowed from Denver Sutton's and Ralph Luce's Studio 16 company, into a total dadaistic-abstract structure. Henry Jacobs provided a humorous narration for the film, in which he gave a tongue-in-cheek dissertation on poetry and jazz as a new entertainment combination." – Bob Pike  
Winner, Creative Film Award presented by Cinema 16 and Creative Film Foundation

**Radical Light: Alternative Film and Video in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-2000** (Berkeley: UC Press, 2010) is a kaleidoscopic collection of essays, interviews, photographs and artist-designed pages chronicling the vibrant history of experimental cinema in the San Francisco Bay Area. Encompassing historical, cultural and aesthetic realms, *Radical Light* features critical analyses of films and videos, reminiscences from artists, and interviews with pioneering filmmakers, curators and archivists. Special sections of ephemera – posters, correspondence, photographs, newsletters, program notes and more – punctuate the book's pages, giving a firsthand visual sense of the period. This groundbreaking, hybrid assemblage reveals how and why the Bay Area, a laboratory for artistic and technical innovation for more than half a century, became a global center of vanguard film, video and new media.

## THE EDITORS

**Steve Anker** is Co-Curator of Film at REDCAT and Dean of the School of Film/Video at California Institute of the Arts.

**Kathy Geritz** is Film Curator at Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive at the University of California, Berkeley.

**Steve Seid** is Video Curator at Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive and coauthor of *Ant Farm 1968-1978* (UC Press)

Additional *Radical Light* screenings in Los Angeles will be hosted by the following venues:

UCLA Film & Television Archive – [www.cinema.ucla.edu](http://www.cinema.ucla.edu): Jan. 14 & 21

Los Angeles Filmforum – [www.lafilmforum.org](http://www.lafilmforum.org): Jan. 16 and 23

and Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) – [www.welcometolace.org](http://www.welcometolace.org): Jan. 20

After its L.A. presentation, the series will continue to New York City, Boston, Toronto, Chicago, Vancouver, Boulder, Portland and Ann Arbor.

*Radical Light: Alternative Film and Video in the San Francisco Bay Area* Book, Film, and Video Tour was organized by Kathy Geritz and Steve Seid, Film and Video Curators at the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, and Steve Anker, Dean of the School of Film/Video at California Institute of the Arts. The tour is made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the William H. Donner Foundation. <<http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/>>

*Radical Light: Alternative Film And Video In The San Francisco Bay Area, 1945–2000* is published by the University of California Press Berkeley – [www.ucpress.edu](http://www.ucpress.edu) in collaboration with the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

## **UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS AT REDCAT WINTER/SPRING 2011**

**January 24:** Barbara Hammer: Experimenting in Life and Art

**February 14:** Animating Mayhem: Collage and Painted Films by Martha Colburn

**February 21:** Body and Mind: The Primordial Cinema of Fred Worden

**February 22:** In Focus: The Humorous Recent Video Art from Israel, Japan and Mexico

**February 28:** The Artist Theater Program: A Group Show of Film and Video Work by Visual Artists

**March 8:** The Birdwoman and Her Dreams: Animated Works by Nancy Andrews

**March 10:** *COINTELPRO 101*

**March 26–Apr 10:** REDCAT International Children’s Film Festival

**March 28:** Victory Over The Sun: Films and Videos by Michael Robinson

**April 4:** Betzy Bromberg’s *Voluptuous Sleep Series*

**April 6–9:** Between Disorder and Unexpected Pleasures: Tales from the New Chinese Cinema

**April 18:** Eija-Liisa Ahtila: *Where is Where?*

**May 2:** Specks of Existence: Hartmut Bitomsky’s *Dust*

**May 4–7:** CalArts Film/Video Showcase