



MUSIC + IMAGE

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California Institute of the Arts

CaLARTS

MUSIC + IMAGE

Tue Feb 7 | 8:30 pm

Jack H. Skirball Series

Presented as part of **Pacific Standard Time**, in conjunction with the Long Beach Museum of Arts.

In the early 1980s, many artists were excited by the possibility of showing video art on television—a promise that was broken by commercialism. This selection of short videos takes inspiration from the spirit of Ernie Kovacs, television impresario and music lover, as it highlights some of the era’s most compelling video art accompanied by music. By turns humorous, pensive, or even abstract, the works are drawn from screenings and exhibitions at the Long Beach Museum of Art, and include artists Bob Snyder; Cynthia Maughan; Dara Birnbaum; Philip Mallory Jones; Tom DeWitt, Vibeke Sorensen and Dean Winkler; Cecelia Condit; Toni Basil and David Byrne; Max Almy; Kit Fitzgerald and John Sanborn; Laurie Anderson; Claus Blume; MICA-TV (Carole Ann Klonarides and Michael Owen); Zbigniew Rybczynski; and Henry Selick.

In person: Curator Nancy Buchanan, artists Max Almy, Toni Basil, Carole Ann Klonarides and Michael Owen

Presented as part of **Pacific Standard Time**. This unprecedented collaboration, initiated by the Getty, brings together more than sixty cultural institutions from across Southern California for six months beginning October 2011 to tell the story of the birth of the L.A. art scene.

Pacific Standard Time is an initiative of the Getty.
The presenting sponsor is Bank of America.

Curated by Nancy Buchanan. Presented in conjunction with the exhibition *Exchange and Evolution: Worldwide Video Long Beach, 1974–1999* at the **Long Beach Museum of Art (LBMA)**, curated by Kathy Rae Huffman and Nancy Buchanan.

CURATOR’S STATEMENT

The juxtaposition of various soundtracks can drastically change the perception of film or video, as powerfully expressed by the term “synchresis” coined by French composer/filmmaker/theoretician Michel Chion to indicate “the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time.” Disparate sounds and

images can be combined to perform a “forced marriage” or an ingeniously matched “choreographic” experiment.

Acknowledging Ernie Kovacs’s influence, this program is also an homage to the *Art of Music Video* screenings organized by Michael Nash in 1989 and 1991, that broke LBMA attendance records while taking a fresh look at the genre and expanding it. (NB)

“The phenomenon of synchresis permits filmmakers to make the most subtle and astonishing visual configurations. Certain experimental films and videos demonstrate that synchresis can work out of thin air – with images and sounds that have nothing to do with each other, forming monstrous yet inevitable and irresistible agglomerations in our perception.” – Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision*

“What happened with pop videos is pathetic: they could have become a really interesting new field of cinematic activity.” – Gilles Deleuze

PROGRAM

Bob Snyder, *Icron*, 1978, 10 min.

The shapes and transitions that appear in *Icron* recall Minimal sculpture. Snyder used a custom image processor as a performance tool; image and soundtrack were generated through simultaneous improvisation, with color added later.

Cynthia Maughan, *Thank You, Jesus*, 1981, 5 min.

Artists working with early Portapak equipment were restricted to adding a second track of audio onto a previously recorded video track. *Thank You, Jesus* achieves its hilarious impact thanks in great measure to the combination of a Martin Denny “exotica” soundtrack paired with simple shots from 1950s *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine interiors.

Dara Birnbaum, *Wonder Woman*, 1978-79, 5:50 min.

With this and other off-air reassemblings, Dara Birnbaum inaugurated the possibilities for appropriation and scratch video. While in residence at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, she used repeat-editing to emphasize how specific images conveyed central messages. A flash of light transforming Linda Blair from ordinary dress to red, white and blue super-heroine is paired with an appropriately repetitive song.

Philip Mallory Jones, *Wassa*, 1989, 3 min.

In 1989, Philip Mallory Jones agreed to produce *Wassa* (“Come out and play”) for the eponymous club while he was visiting Burkina Faso. This work was later incorporated in a three-channel installation, *Dreamkeeper*.

Tom DeWitt/Vibeke Sorensen/Dean Winkler, **Tempest**, 1981, 4 min.

This visual music work, featured in *The Artist and the Computer* at LBMA in 1983, reflects the feeling of a summer squall, as a series of abstractions unfold in gusts of atmosphere. The surrealistic eye that frames the image is the center of the storm.

Cecelia Condit, **Possibly in Michigan**, 1983, 12 min.

"I am a storyteller whose work swings between beauty and the grotesque, humor and the macabre, innocence and cruelty. My videos explore the dark side of female subjectivity and address the fear, aggression and displacement that exist between ourselves and society, ourselves and the natural world." (CC)

Toni Basil/David Byrne, **Once in a Lifetime**, 1980, 4:19 min.

In this collaboration with David Byrne, Toni Basil uses chroma key compositing techniques effects to replicate Byrne against a stark white background to create a music video with a distinctive look.

Max Almy, **Deadline**, 1981, 4 min.

In her nightmarish, high-tech version of an extreme motivational tape, Almy uses distinctive video effects of the period to emphasize desire and the struggle for power.

Kit Fitzgerald & John Sanborn, **Ear to the Ground**, 1982, 4:25 min.

Drumming is perhaps the quintessential "universal language" we possess. Jon Sanborn and Kit Fitzgerald made a wild journey through Manhattan with percussionist David Van Tighem appear seamless through their careful editing of his drumming on various urban surfaces.

Laurie Anderson, **O Superman**, 1981, 8:21 min.

Produced also as a single that became a popular crossover hit, reaching number two on the UK pop charts, it includes a number of literary and musical references. The song was created as a "cover version" of the aria "Ô Souverain, ô juge, ô père" (*O Sovereign, O Judge, O Father*) written by Jules Massenet for his 1885 opera *Le Cid* – in which the Virgin Mary embraces the dying hero. Her lines "Cause when love is gone, there's always justice / And when justice is gone, there's always force / And when force is gone, there's always Mom" are transposed from Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching (Book of Changes, 6th century BC).

MICA-TV in collaboration with Dike Blair, Dan Graham & Christian Marclay, **CASCADE/Vertical Landscapes**, 1988, 6:30 min.

CASCADE is constructed as a continuous parade of vertical camera movements and image layerings. Integrating the humor and specific visual and aural deconstructions of their collaborators, MICA-TV borrows "found" sound and images from pop culture to trigger associations and memories.

Claus Blume, ***Kniespiel 3*** (*Kneeplay*), 1989, 3:05 min.

Created just as the first mass-produced music sampler became available, *Kniespiel 3* makes a complex use of editing, keying and layering. The dance of a Schuhplattler group (Bavarian folk dancers who create rhythms by slapping their leather trousers and the soles of their shoes, clapping their hands, and hitting spoons against one another and against their bodies) is dissected into individual parts and re-assembled with the image appearing in sync with the sound. By breaking down the folk music into individual samples, consisting of single slaps, steps, claps, and spoon-tremolos, as well as fragments of individual sounds of an accordion and yodels, Blume provided the material for a new montage.

Zbigniew Rybczynski, ***Imagine***, 1986, 4:20 min., HD video file

Rybczynski's treatment of John Lennon's *Imagine* follows figures through successive doors that open and close on various stages of life. Thanks for his access to high-definition equipment, the artist was able to design seamless camera movements.

Henry Selick with music by The Residents, ***Slow Bob in the Lower Dimensions***, 1991, 5:30 min., 35 mm

This high definition piece combining cutout, live action and digital animation proves that MTV (in its Liquid Television and Amp series, at least) could occasionally present stunning, strange works. Though some have tried to summarize its plot, the ambiance of dark places and unknown time warps may be enjoyed without an attempt to boil it down.

Unless otherwise noted, all works are standard definition video.

ARTISTS AND CURATOR'S BIOGRAPHIES

An award winning, internationally recognized artist active since the late 1970s, **Max Almy** has continually used the most current technology available to address the effects of mass media – in works ranging from large-scale multi-media installations to single channel works for exhibition and broadcast. Her early video works like *Leaving the 20th Century* (1979), and *Perfect Leader* (1984), explored the complexity of post-modern attitudes toward technology, media and social issues. Her more recent works made in collaboration with Teri Yarbrow, *The Museum of Disappearance* (2003) and *Phoenix-Rising* (2009) combine video projection, digital media, lighting, sound design and additional props.

Among the electronic devices invented by **Laurie Anderson** for her recordings and performances is the 1977 tape-bow violin that uses recorded magnetic tape on the bow instead of horsehair and a magnetic tape head in the bridge. Throughout the 1970s, she executed works of performance art, often incorporating her electronic bow as well as a vocoder to transform her voice. In 2002, she was appointed the first

artist-in-residence of NASA, which inspired her 2004 performance *The End of the Moon*. Her latest album, *Homeland* (2010), was produced with Lou Reed and Roma Baran.

Choreographer/Director **Toni Basil**, who appeared in many Bruce Conner films, was a founding member of The Lockers, a dance group that mixed classical with street dancing, premiering the form on *Saturday Night Live* in 1978. She has since directed, choreographed and performed in her own music videos. In March 2012, the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati will feature Basil's iconic music videos as well as her original "Mickey" cheerleading outfit in an exhibit called "Spectacle: The Music Video." Her work is featured in the January 2012 issue of *Dance* magazine.

Dara Birnbaum has received international recognition for her videos and installations and was awarded the American Film Institute's Maya Deren Award for Independent Film and Video in 1987. In 2009, S.M.A.K. (Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium) organized a major retrospective of her work, "The Dark Matter of Media Light." A catalogue of the same name was published in 2011.

Trained as an artist, **Claus Blume** began working for German TV in 1990, completing documentaries and music videos, and has also completed installations, performances, and websites. His web-based *Mozart Project* (2006, ongoing) combines all of these, and the translation of an excerpt from Mozart's *Magic Flute* into sounds made by tourist souvenirs echoes the humor of *Kniespiel* 3. His work was included in the recent 2012 Transmediale (Berlin).

A storyteller producing videos since 1981, **Cecelia Condit** is professor of film and video at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the director of the graduate program in film.

Thomas David DeWitt changed his last name to **Ditto** when he married Beverly J. Botto. He is the creator of many award-winning works in film and video. While working in the Image Processing Laboratory of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute as a computer programmer, he discovered a variant on holography he called Diffraction Range Finding. He also developed an award-winning prototype camera that records in 3D.

Working as a collaborative team from 1976 until 1982, **Kit Fitzgerald** and **John Sanborn** created dynamic fusions of video art and television tactics. Their kinetic use of editing and post-production effects defined their energetic juxtapositions of visual, musical and conceptual themes. They were in the vanguard of artists exploring the relationship of music, performance and video editing techniques. In 1982, they began working with avant-garde musicians to produce experimental music videos, a form that dominated their later work. Fitzgerald, trained as a painter, has also produced her own animated works, collaborating with various musicians.

Philip Mallory Jones has produced artistic, scholarly, and commercial projects since 1969, and has incorporated digital media since 1990. He was Co-Founder and Director of Ithaca Video Projects (1971-85), a pioneering media arts center, and Director/ Curator of the Annual Ithaca Video Festival (1974-83), the first juried touring collection of video art. In 1989, he curated *ICONO NEGRO: The Black Aesthetics in Video Art*, at LBMA.

From 1973 to 1980, **Cynthia Maughan** produced nearly 300 videos creating mostly short, direct-camera performances. Featured in many LBMA exhibits, her work was also included in the 1976 Documenta.

Michael Owen and Carole Ann Klonarides collaborated for over twenty years as **MICA-TV**, producing a series of video pieces about contemporary art and artists. The videos have been broadcast on Channel Four and BBC2 in Great Britain, Canal Plus in France, and screened at video festivals worldwide. **Carole Ann Klonarides** is an independent curator, writer and consultant for artists and non-profit art organizations. She was Media Arts Curator at LBMA (1991-95), Curator of Programming at the Santa Monica Museum of Art (1997-2000) and a consultant at the Getty Research Institute working with the LBMA Archive (2006-2007). **Michael Owen** lives and works in New York, where he has worked on a broad range of documentaries, music videos and public service announcements, collaborating on projects with Laurie Anderson, David Byrne, Jim Jarmusch and Sam Peckinpah.

Since graduating from the Lodz Film School in the early 1970s, **Zbigniew Rybczynski** has worked as a film and television director in Europe and the United States garnering numerous awards. He is a pioneer in High Definition television technology, and a technical innovator and experimentator. He holds several US patents, most of them for film and videomaking innovations, including the "Zbig" software for matting. Rybczynski also has a distinguished academic career, and currently holds a visiting professor position at Joshibi University of Art and Design in Tokyo.

Henry Selick is perhaps best known for his work on *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), produced with fellow CalArts alum, Tim Burton. He studied in CalArts Experimental Animation Program, under the guidance of Jules Engel. His feature, *Coraline* (2009), was the first stereoscopic stop-motion animated movie and was nominated for an Academy Award, a BAFTA, and a Golden Globe. In 2010, he joined with Pixar and The Walt Disney Company in a long-term contract to exclusively produce stop-motion films.

Bob Snyder is a composer, video artist, and author who has experimented with sound and video synthesis since the '60s and currently teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His primary focus is the relationship between music and visual imagery.

Vibeke Sorensen is an artist and professor who has worked in digital multimedia and animation, interactive architectural installation, and networked visual-music performance for more than three decades; she has also been a consultant for Disney and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory/NASA. After assuming teaching positions at CalArts and USC, she is currently Professor and Chair of the School of Art, Design, and Media at Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), where she is Founding Director of the Center for Asian Art and Design.

Dean Winkler is a design engineer/specialist in computer graphics and optical services and is currently Creative Director of Post Perfect in New York. In addition to his collaborations with Tom Ditto and Vibeke Sorenson, he has worked with John Sanborn and was post-production supervisor for composer Robert Ashley's *Perfect Lives* (1984).

Nancy Buchanan began using video as an extension of her work in performance art. Her video, performance documentation and static works have been featured in several Pacific Standard Time exhibits, including *L.A. RAW*, at the Pasadena Museum of California Art, Jan. 22 – May 20, 2012. She has been a faculty member of the School of Film/Video at CalArts since 1988.

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

UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS AT REDCAT WINTER/SPRING 2012

Mon Feb 13: Lee Anne Schmitt: *The Last Buffalo Hunt*

Thu Mar 22: Daniel Eisenberg: *The Unstable Object*

Mon Apr 2: Narrative Bodies: Films and Videos by Abigail Child

Mon Apr 9: Sharon Lockhart: *Double Tide*

Mon Apr 16: Seeing and Awakening: New Films by Nathaniel Dorsky

Mon Apr 23: Bill Morrison: Miners, Bridges, Lost Love and Other Retrieved Treasures

Mon Apr 30: The Imaginary Voyages of Maureen Selwood: Beyond Enchantment

Tue May 1: *Transparent Cities*

May 2-5: Film/Video CalArts Student Showcases

May 5-13: REDCAT International Children's Film Festival

Mon May 7: Cine Povera: Mexican Experiments in 16MM

Mon May 21: New Day at 40: A Community's Celebration