

# **LIGHT ECHOES DARK: THE FILMS OF JULIE MURRAY**

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APRIL 5, 2010 | 8:30 PM

presented by

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California Institute of the Arts

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# LIGHT ECHOES DARK: THE FILMS OF JULIE MURRAY

SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 2010 | 8:30PM

Los Angeles premieres

Jack H. Skirball Series

*A fair summation of everything that is important follows:*

~~~~~ hen the trees were enchanted,

■ n the expectation of not being trees,

┌ he trees uttered their voices

F rom strings of harmony,

└ he disputes ceased.

■ et us cut short heavy days,

^ female restrained the din.

⊂ he came forth altogether lovely.

└ he head of the line, the head was a female.

-excerpt: "Cad Goddeu" (The Battle of the Trees) from the 6th-Century Welsh Book of Taliesin.

Irish-born, New York-based filmmaker Julie Murray combines found and original footage to conjure strange and paradoxical universes resonant with ambiguous meanings. Mystery and menace lurk equally amid the eloquence of her visual rhymes and word associations—whether in repeated images of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and the Heimlich maneuver (*Conscious*, 1993, 10 min.), shots of trees growing among crumbled brick ruins (*Orchard*, 2004, 9 min.), views from an aerial tram leaving Manhattan (*If You Stand With Your Back to the Slowing of the Speed of Light in Water*, 1997, 18 min.), or captioned excerpts from an instructional movie for the deaf (*I Began to Wish...*, 2003, 5 min.). Comprising all 16mm films, this program includes, *ELEMENTS* (2008, 7 min.), which won Best Cinematography at the 2009 Ann Arbor Film Festival – as well as the world premiere of Murray's latest work, *Distance* (2010, 12 mins).

## **In person: Julie Murray**

Julie Murray's increasingly sophisticated cutting style connects images using visual rhymes based on rhythm, gesture and morphology, until each person, animal or object becomes the dream or nightmare of another in a web of associations without beginning or end. Her films show an extraordinary sensitivity to the sensual, rhythmic and connotative qualities of image and sound, whether purloined or created, and establish her as a masterful editor and visionary filmmaker. – Chris Gehman, Cinematheque Ontario

## **PROGRAM**

### **Conscious, 16mm, color, silent, 10 mins., 1993**

A melding of camera original and found material hints at a realization which, in this flux reality, is evident only in the fissures of splintered associations.

Obscured among visceral absurdities and lightweight witticisms, seeps a viscera, an acrid recollection, enmeshed in the intangibles and incongruities of shadows. A residue of coming to. – JM

### **Anathema, 16mm, 7 mins., sound, 1995**

Doubt, as a shadow cast upon the doctor and his assistants, who, through ritualized posturing, admit themselves to the arena of abject violence and inherit the disease they believe to be death.

Camera original and found footage home spun reveal some points in this ceremony where through feeble act and over-wrought desire contamination mortifies catharsis. – JM

### **Micromoth, 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes, 2000**

A camera attached to the business end of a microscope facilitates the trawling of spaces shaped by small dead things in tiny chambers somewhere between the naked eye and the mansions of molecules. Infinitely devisable focal planes denote the topography of an insect limb, large and tortuous as a conifer, or a torso brown as maple syrup, which emerges and dissolve through the lens as if composed of vapor. A crumpled wing here, a hind leg there contribute to this compendium as the edges of these things prick the air en route to invisibility.

### **If You Stand With Your Back To The Slowing Of The Speed Of Light In Water, 16mm, sound, color, 18 mins, 1997.**

Images from an aerial tram leaving Manhattan are followed by images of a nearly static bird, of bugs fighting, and of light bending as it passes through glass. Near the film's end the tram lands in Manhattan, as if it had reversed direction; as in all of Murray's films, the images and the editing can pull several ways at once. There are no absolutes, and even the light by which we see is altered by the material it passes through." – Fred Camper

"The film aims to illuminate a vital sense innate to perception where inversion is counterbalance and focal myopia the articulation of space". – Julie Murray

### **I Began to Wish.....,16mm, silent, 5 minutes, 2003**

The sea sucks the seed back into the ocean, the flowers fold like umbrellas, shoots recoil into hiding, in seeds that shrink. The plants accelerate their tremble and wobble and glass unbreaks all around them. Strawberries blanch and tomatoes grow pale. The father, leering, holds forth a flower and suddenly his smile fades to awful seriousness. In an odd concentrated ritual the father and son carefully tip over all the flower pots, laying the plants to rest and it is in this end, around the time he figures the flowers are talking to him, that the son wishes his father had killed him. – JM

### **Orchard, 16mm, 8 mins, sound, 2004**

Some of the footage that comprises Orchard is that of a 19<sup>th</sup> c ruin of a walled orchard in southwest Ireland. It is set deep in the woods and the crumbling brick and mortar of the broken walls anchor roots of slender trees, so uninhibited for all this time that they reach twenty feet in height in some places. Their thick roots follow like slow lazy trickles, branching and winding over and through the brickwork in an apparently intelligent arterial arrangement reminiscent of the human body. Arboreal enclaves in Central Park are included, as well as Niagara Falls, the main Dublin-to-Cork road and a thin, smoking woods on the outskirts of Rosslare, Co. Waterford.

These facts may be incidental to the film's eventual form, which winds the images into an arrangement of continuous wandering. All this is attended by environmental whisperings until a voice calls out toward the end, in dream-bound recognition, to a figure from the long-distant past. – JM

### **ELEMENTs, 16mm, sound , 7.5 mins, 2008**

This atmospheric landscape is largely un-peopled but nevertheless expresses the busy presence of ghosts that reside in the snowy fog-bound woods, the movement of the moon and in the hesitancy of the clouds. It is an exploration of location/place both macro and micro, visited by a few incidental shadowy figures related to one another through the rhythm of their gestures.

## **Distance, 16mm sound 12 mins 2010**

Time spent at two shores, one thinly populated, the other a wasteland, joined by the interlucency of various paths taken, each bit real enough, though exact measures being obscurely indicated. Notions of home and its ache are, to borrow a phrase, “not capable of being told unless by far-off hints and adumbrations”<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Lowell, James Russell *Among my books* 1870; series II, 1876

## **ABOUT JULIE MURRAY**

Dublin-born **Julie Murray** began her career in Ireland as a visual artist. She became involved in experimental filmmaking in San Francisco and New York after she moved to the USA in 1985. She has completed more than 20 short experimental films and has collaborated on numerous film installation/performance events with artists, musicians and other filmmakers.

Her work has been included in the New York Film Festival, Images Film Festival (Toronto, Canada), the Rotterdam International Film Festival and the Ann Arbor Film Festival, among others. Along with numerous screenings at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the San Francisco Cinematheque and the Pacific Film Archive, Murray has been invited to present her films at the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), Anthology Film Archives (New York), Hallwalls (NY), the Los Angeles Filmforum, and at various universities. MOMA, and The Whitney Museum of American Art's Film Archives have acquired prints Murray's films.

Curated by Steve Anker and Betzy Bromberg

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

The Los Angeles Filmforum is presenting a complementary program of films by Julie Murray **on Sunday April 11 :**

## **SLIGHT MOVEMENTS**

See <http://www.lafilmforum.org> for program and ticket information

## **UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS**

**April 19:** Sharon Lockhart: *Lunch Break with Exit*

**April 26:** Jennifer Reeves: *When It Was Blue*

**May 3:** Gregorio Rocha: *The Lost Reels of Pancho Villa* with Edmundo and Felix Padilla:  
*The Vengeance of Pancho Villa*

**May 6–8:** CalArts Film/Video Showcase

**May 10:** Starting to Go Bad: New Narratives by Pat O'Neill

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**May 16:** Ring Festival LA: Considering Wagner featuring Villa Aurora Composers-in-Residence

**June 2–3:** Partch: Even Wild Horses

**June 4–5:** Dance Camera West

**June 6–7:** Studio: Summer 2010

**July 8–September 5:** Chen Chieh-jen: *Empire's Borders II*