

**STARTING TO GO BAD:**  
NEW NARRATIVES BY PAT O'NEILL

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MAY 10, 2010 | 8:30 PM

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CALARTS



# STARTING TO GO BAD:

## NEW NARRATIVES BY PAT O'NEILL

MONDAY, MAY 10, 2010 | 8:30PM

World premieres

Jack H. Skirball Series

Pat O'Neill, one of Los Angeles' most eminent independent filmmakers, makes his REDCAT debut with three new videos that continue a discourse between the visible world and language, and a striking 35mm film, *Horizontal Boundaries* (2008, 23 min.), whose systematic reconfiguration of landscape into a moving frieze is more akin to memory than description. Best-known for his densely layered, virtuosic abstract films that create magical, evocatively incongruous visual landscapes, O'Neill carries these and other concerns into a new terrain of digital video. He has titled two of his debut videos after sentences taken from a 1921 phrasebook for aspiring American citizens: *I Open the Window* (2009, 18 min.) and *I Hold Out My Hands* (2009, 10 min.). Both are episodic encounters between wooden and marble objects and the earth's surface, as seen from an airliner's window. The third video, *Starting to Go Bad* (2009, 30 min.), a journey in which "storytelling and pictorial development proceed along separate paths," says O'Neill, "inviting the viewer to find, or invent, connectivity."

### **In person: Pat O'Neill**

"Los Angeles has also long been home to artists for whom film is neither a blood sport nor the means to a very lucrative end, but a deeply personal expression. One such is Pat O'Neill."

– Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times*

### **PROGRAM**

#### ***I Open The Window***

2009, Digital Video, 19 minutes, Color, Sound

Sound Mix: George Lockwood

*I Open the Window* takes its title from a list of phrases in an English language manual provided for immigrants to the United States in the 1920's. It is a series of tableaux made from landscape, textbook pages treated as landscape, and the articulation of wooden objects. Together they represent a speculation about the effect images and sounds have upon one another. – Pat O'Neill

### ***Starting To Go Bad***

2009, Digital Video, 30 minutes, Color, Sound  
Sound Mix: George Lockwood

*Starting to Go Bad*, made largely from materials shot as a visitor to Paris, Venice, Zurich, Manchester, Las Vegas, London and New York, reflects, by way of dialog in textual form, on the puzzles of meaning and interpretation. It began as a sketch medium in the envisioning of a longer project to be made on film, and now unlikely to be made. Its title comes from a comment made while examining leftover food in a refrigerator. – Pat O’Neill

### ***I Put Out My Hands***

2009, Digital Video, 10 minutes, Color, Sound  
Sound Mix: George Lockwood

*I Put Out my Hands* was shot in Paris, featuring the Montmartre Cemetery with its above-ground tombs, its cats, and the bridge which carries traffic over it. It continues the use of the vocabulary of phrase-book sentences from *I Open the Window*. – Pat O’Neill

### ***Horizontal Boundaries***

2008, 35mm, 23 minutes, Color, Stereo Sound  
Sound Mix: George Lockwood

*Horizontal Boundaries*, shown in its original 35mm, engages aspects of Los Angeles - the Twin Towers Jail, the harbor, the riots, the eastern Sierra Nevada, Echo Park and Mono Lake... The materials of the film were subjected to radical reformation and combination so as to present a totally fractured journey through real sites, and a meditation on some inherent qualities of the medium. – Pat O’Neill

## **ABOUT PAT O’NEILL**

**Pat O’Neill** has been deeply involved in Los Angeles culture since the late 1960s. A founding father of the city’s avant-garde film scene, an influential professor at CalArts and an optical effects pioneer, he is best known for his short works from the early 1960’s onwards which are highly graphic, layered and reflexive assemblages based on a mastery of optical printing techniques.

In O’Neill’s films boundaries fade, narrative collapses and layers of imagery draw the viewer simultaneously towards and away from linear meaning. O’Neill has combined found footage with experimental montage and compositing techniques to create a graphic language that deals with how different, often disparate elements assembled together in the frame relate to one another. His innovative optical techniques anticipated our digital landscape well before its time.

Several of his many avant garde films produced between 1963 and 2006 are considered classics (especially *7362* (1967), *Runs Good* (1970), *Saugus Series* (1974), *Water and Power* (1989), *Trouble in the Image* (1996), and *The Decay of Fiction* (2002)). *Water and Power*, his first 35 mm. feature, which journeys through a California of imaginary intensity, was the Sundance Grand Jury

Prize winner in 1990 and hailed as a touchstone for filmmaking in the future. All his work from that decade on has been executed in 35 mm and relied upon the optical printer for principal production.

Throughout his career O’Neill has gained an international following with recent retrospectives shown at the Tate Modern, the Whitney Museum, and the Centre Pompidou. In addition he has received the Maya Daren Award from AFI and the Persistence of Vision Award from the San Francisco Film Festival along with grants from the Guggenheim and the Rockefeller foundations. In 2004-06, 40 years of his work in film, drawing, sculpture, printmaking and photography was the subject of two major exhibitions, one at the Santa Monica Museum of Art and the other at Cornerhouse in Manchester, England. In his latest show this spring at Rosamund Felsen’s Gallery, (Santa Monica, CA) he displayed his first prototypes for 3-d sculptural composites in an installation setting.

Curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud.

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

## **UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS**

**May 15:** Teen Animation, Photography, Puppetry and Video Screening

**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 5:** CAP/Sony Pictures Media Arts Program Screening

**June 13–14:** Studio: Summer 2010

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

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