

CHICK STRAND: *SEÑORA CON FLORES* / *WOMAN WITH FLOWERS* (1995/2011)

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California Institute of the Arts

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CHICK STRAND: SEÑORA CON FLORES/ WOMAN WITH FLOWERS (1995/2011)

Co-presented by **Los Angeles Filmforum**.

When legendary filmmaker Chick Strand (1931–2009) passed away, she left behind an extraordinary catalogue of 16mm experimental work and five unfinished films. By 1995 she had completed the picture and sound editing for ***Señora con Flores/Woman with Flowers*** –the intimate depiction of the ups and downs and the joys and travails of a Mexican flower seller. The needed post-production on *Señora* was recently performed under the supervision of the Academy Film Archive, fully respecting the artist’s intentions. Rounding out the program is a selection of Strand’s films restored by the Pacific Film Archive and the Academy Film Archive with the support of the National Film Preservation Foundation. They include ***Waterfall*** (1967), ***Mosori Monika*** (1971), ***Kristallnacht*** (1979), and ***Cartoon Le Mousse*** (1979).

World premiere

In person: Eric Strand (schedule permitting)

This screening is a precursor to Los Angeles Filmforum’s series Alternative Projections: Experimental Film in Los Angeles, 1945-1980. www.lafilmforum.org/

“Strand discovered an extraordinary sensuous lyricism, simultaneously wanton and disciplined. She made the play of light and shape, of textures and reflection... the vehicle for the investigation of intuition and sensuality in both iconography and the medium itself.” – David E. James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde*

“Strand’s documentary work has changed the way we understand non-fiction form. She laid the groundwork for the acceptance of the experimental and the personal in a field previously dominated by Margaret Mead and Robert Flaherty. She does not ‘document’ her subjects – she creates lyrical representations.” – *The Portland Mercury*

“Chick Strand is a prolific and prodigiously gifted film artist who seems to break new ground with each new work.” – Gene Youngblood

“Most people don’t live life at full throttle; Strand did, but with an eye for the grace around her.” – Holly Willis, *The LA Weekly*

“To leave out the spirit of the people presents a thin tapestry of the culture, easy to rent, lacking in strength and depth. I want to know really what it is like to be a breathing, talking, moving, emotional, relating individual in the society... [Stan] Brakhage used to say that he tried to shoot his films through the eyes of a child, but what I tried to do was use the camera close up. I like movement, I like to hold the camera next to my body when I’m shooting. The flow . . . the flow . . . That’s what gets me.” – Chick Strand, quoted by Holly Willis, *The LA Weekly*

See the full article (November 2006)

<http://www.laweekly.com/2006-11-23/film-tv/canyon-lady/>

PROGRAM

The World Premiere of ***Señora con Flores/Woman With Flowers*** (1995/2011, color, 15.5min.) will be preceded by the following films:

Eric and the Monsters (1964, b/w, 5.5min.). Chick Strand's first film, very rarely shown!

Angel Blue Sweet Wings (1966, color, 3min.) (originally 8mm). "An elliptical cine-poem with a vibrant, jazzy score that studies textures, movement and the quality of light." (Holly Willis).

Waterfall (1967, color, 3min.) is a film poem using found film and stock footage altered by printing, home development and solarization. It uses visual relationships to invoke a feeling of flow and movement – to Japanese Koto music.

Mosori Monika (1971, color, 20min.). An expressive documentary about women in the Third World, an ethnographic film about a cross-cultural encounter. The Spanish Franciscan Missionaries went to Venezuela in 1945 to "civilize" the Warao Indians, who lived in relative isolation in the swamps of the Orinoco River Delta. The relationship between the Indians and the missionaries is simple on the surface, but it is manifested in a complex change of techniques, values and life style which have indelibly altered the Warao vision of life.

Kristallnacht (1979, b/w, 7min.) is a haunting, almost abstract black and white film/solarized film dedicated to the memory of Anne Frank, and connoting images of a past, invisible catastrophe.

Fever Dream (1979, b/w, 7min.). "A wet hot dream about sensuality." (CS)

Cartoon Le Mousse (1979, b/w, 15min.) "Her 'found footage' works such as *Cartoon Le Mousse*, are extraordinarily beautiful, moving, visionary pieces that push this genre into previously unexplored territory. If poetry is the art of making evocative connections between otherwise dissimilar phenomena, then Chick Strand is a great poet, for these films transcend their material to create a surreal and sublime universe beyond reason." (Gene Youngblood)

Artificial Paradise (1986, color, 12.5min.) explores "Aztec romance and the dream of love," as well as "the anthropologist's most human desire: the ultimate contact with the informant." Strand brilliantly mixes all these tropes: denial of intellectualism, the acceptance of the romantic heart, and a soul without innocence.

"There is a boy,

Who lives across the river.

Alas, I cannot swim,

I cannot swim." - Sappho, 600 BC

All films are in 16mm with sound

ABOUT CHICK STRAND

Chick Strand's accomplishments as an artist spanned more than three decades. In the early 1960s, with a new anthropology degree in hand, she turned her attention to ethnographic filmmaking. Her early work focused on Meso-American cultures, explored through the language of the experimental documentary. In 1961, she founded Canyon Cinema with Bruce Baillie, an organization that, in 1965, spawned the San Francisco Cinematheque. They organized screenings of experimental, documentary and narrative films in East Bay backyards and community centers. Acting in response to a lack of public venues for independent movies, they were part of a wider explosion in American avant-garde film. The era was one of social idealism and communal energy, and the films they showcased boldly embraced purely cinematic visual expression and cultural critique.

Strand left Northern California in the late 1960s to pursue studies in ethnographic film at UCLA. She then joined the faculty of Occidental College, where she served as the director of the Film as Art program for a quarter of a century. In the 1970s she continued to define her visual technique, and her subjects more frequently became women. She soon evolved a distinctive film style: backlit subjects photographed in close up and in motion, with a handheld telephoto lens. The technique produced sensual, lyrical images that became Strand's signature.

In addition to being one of the most important figures in U.S. experimental and poetic filmmaking, the legendary "Canyon Lady," who had made the hills of Tujunga near Los Angeles her home, was also an accomplished photographer and painter.

Curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud
with Eric Strand, Betzy Bromberg and Mark Toscano

The Jack H. Skirball Series is supported in part by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS AT REDCAT FALL 2011

Mon Oct 10

**Animation of the Unconscious:
CalArts and the Teachings of Jules Engel**

Fri-Sat Oct 14-15

Werner Schroeter/Elfi Mikesch: A Voice That Lingers

Mon Oct 17

Janie Geiser: "Nervous Films," Secret Stories

Mon Oct 24

**Proto-Ethnographic Works
Presented as part of Pacific Standard Time.**

Tue Nov 1

**Suzan Pitt and Jim Trainor:
A Conversation in Light and Darkness**

Mon-Tue Nov 14-15

**Two Nights with Ernie Gehr:
Early Films and New Digital Works**

Mon Nov 21

Collapse Into Image

Mon Dec 12

**Naomi Uman
The Ukrainian Time Machine – Fragments from a Diary**

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