

# REVELATIONS OF THE EVERYDAY: FILMS AND VIDEOS BY VINCENT GRENIER

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OCTOBER 25, 2010 | 8:30 PM

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FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS IN COLLABORATION WITH LOS ANGELES  
FILMFORUM

**Monday, October 25 | 8:30 pm**

Jack H. Skirball Series

Vincent Grenier, a native of Québec City, Canada, has lived in New York City and Ithaca, New York, since the 1970s and over the past four decades has produced one of the most significant bodies of experimental films and videos of his generation. “My works directly confront the ideas of spatiality and temporality as a continuum and unsettle the notion of a universal human experience,” Grenier writes. “These films and videos move towards fracturing space and time in order to release how the everyday, and the specific, hold within them ineffable, untranslatable, revelations of light, color, form, and composition.” His work has been shown at The Museum of Modern Art, New York Film Festival, the Whitney Museum, the International Film Festival Rotterdam, and Media City Film Festival, Ontario. His films are included in the Art Gallery of Ontario, the National Gallery of Canada, The Donnell Library Center, and other institutions in Canada and the United States. Program includes ***Tabula Rasa, Here, Surface Tension #2, North Southernly, While Revolved, Armoire, Burning Bush***, and others.

**In person: Vincent Grenier**

“Perhaps gentler at first glance but possibly harboring a wicked passive-aggressive streak, the recent video works by Vincent Grenier have consistently been highlights of the Views line-up... Grenier has been making witty, elegant experimental films and videos for over 30 years, and his approach has always been defined by its eclecticism. His earlier film works partake of the orthodoxies of experimental film history but refuse to be defined by it.... And most recently Grenier’s career has been characterized by a rigorous exploration of digital video and its unique properties. Rather than attempting to duplicate the style of his films by other means, he has embraced video’s defining traits - relative flatness, a capacity for inner framing and image juxtaposition, and a more tightly controlled capability for superimposition - in order to produce video artworks distinguished by their subtlety and grace, to say nothing of their quirky humor. Where video has been an impediment to others, it has expanded Grenier’s creative vocabulary.” – Michael Sicinski

## **PROGRAM**

### ***Tabula Rasa***

(1993-2004) Video (Orig. 16 mm/DV), 7:30 min., color/sound.

Filmed in a South Bronx high-school, *Tabula Rasa* attempts through sound image juxtapositions, digital manipulation and layering to deal with the recorded image’s propensity to mislead and its eloquence. The ambiguous qualities of appearances, so assiduously cultivated by institutions, the motivations found in the clues that tells the history of objects, colors, textures, architecture and ultimately, psychological states of mind are but some of the players in this poetic and cultural happening.

### ***Catch***

(1975) 16mm, 5 min. color/silent

“*Catch* is a fragmented observation on hidden reflective surfaces, the corner of a dormant television screen, a window...”

– Mike Reynolds, *Berkeley Barb*

## ***Here***

(2002) (Orig Mini DV) 7:00 min., stereo

"*Here* plays as some form of synthetic/organic haiku or renga (Japanese linked poetry) linking semblance to semblance working with the primal power and suggestiveness of transient colors... A shift in hue argues for motion or cessation – stop and go. Migrant juices of color change aspect – blood, fire, rain, red leaves living and dead. Green plastic soldiers float lifelessly in autumnal pools of septic yellow. Simple magic. Simple prophesy. Child's play augurs global events and as in Rimbaud's *Le Bateau Ivre* a patch of backyard here becomes a primeval forest of decaying moss a beachhead and the abandoned frontline, a field of fire as a *tableau mort*."

– Mark McElhatten, *Torino Film Festival Screening Notes*.

## ***Surface Tension #2***

(1995) 16mm, 4min., color, optical mono.

This film was shot in color but using the Kinemacolor process, a process which was used in 1915 to obtain fairly illusionistic colors from black and white films by filming and projecting them through synchronized red and green filters.

## ***North Southernly***

(2005) Mini DV, 6 min, stereo

"For an example of an artist exploring the aesthetic possibilities of video to their fullest, one need look no further than Vincent Grenier and his recent work... Not just 'working in video,' Grenier is a true *video artist*, and *North Southernly* is a subtle, complex study in textures and gradations of layered video imagery." – Michael Sicinski

Changes of directions, in the wind, the edges, the shapes, a joyous and mesmerizing intrigue. Perhaps an other way to put it is to describe this piece as a humorous digital cine take on the long cultural history of the lessons left by the great Chinese painters of the 13th century for whom shapes and edges where often all one and the same.

### ***While Revolved***

(1976) 16mm, 18f/sec., 11 min, color/silent

An elusive film that plays in a series of movements, on the fascination that can be had from watching the turbulent magnified grain. A slippery background flows, rises and sinks honing the focusing abilities of shadows, and unexpectedly producing an other magnified grain...

### ***Mend***

(1979) 16 mm, 5 min., b&w/silent

Is it happening in the screening room or on the screen; in a snowstorm or inside; what isn't surrounding and what is? From filming Ann Knutson sewing, on a grey winter day.

### ***Armoire***

(2007), Mini DV, 3 min., color

*“Armoire* is one of his briefest of Grenier’s videos and its humor is so deadpan I actually didn’t immediately recognize it as such - a true ‘way homer.’ In it, Grenier has ‘trapped’ a bird in a reflection on the water and essentially chases it around the screen with increasingly narrow frames-within-frames, pinning it down, making it sing for the artist’s own supper. Its sense of eventual claustrophobia recalls the glass box sculptures of Joseph Cornell, tight spaces where imaginary living things went to gain immobility/immortality. But here, we’re so used to equating the very image of a bird in a tree with absolute freedom that Grenier’s comic aggression is a slow-burn, provoking a tense grimace of discomfort by minute three, and a chuckling nod of assent by the second viewing. Even those of us fiercely devoted to the field of experimental cinema know all too well that it can be rather humor-impaired. No surprise, then, that a stealth anarchist like Grenier is like a breath of fresh air.” – Michael Sicinski

## ***Color Study***

(2000), Mini DV, 4.5 min

“It is interesting to think about *Color Study* in relation to the purely cinematic-photochemical nature of a work like Kurt Kren’s *Asyl* with its multiplicity of delicate composite imagery and overlapping seasons that create a feeling of all time being simultaneous. In *Asyl*, solar light cohabitates with the film - the emulsion receives sings and burns that inscribe the image and are reconstituted in projection as muted radiance. In *Color Study*, a cat’s eye like chatoyancy of splattered color, the precise mimicry of natural color combined with unnatural color fields, creates and breaks illusion. Color manufactures a kind of implied time lapse where it does not technically exist. A spatial jigsaw, combining the autumnal and the verdant. The invented light and color of the digital process creating an acid wash.” – Mark McElhatten

## ***Burning Bush***

(2010), QT HD, 9 min.

“In Eastern Orthodoxy’ a tradition exists that the flame Moses saw was God’s *Uncreated Energies/Glory*, manifested as light, thus explaining why the bush was not consumed. Hence, it is not interpreted as a miracle in the sense of an event, which only temporarily exists, but is instead viewed as Moses being permitted to see these *Uncreated Energies/Glory*, which are considered to be eternal things; the Orthodox definition of salvation...” – *New World Encyclopedia*

## ***Les Chaises***

(2008) QT HD, 8:40 min, stereo

“With *Les Chaises*, the suspended moment is loosened and stretched, and like the wind that blows throughout, there’s no sense of where it starts or stops. The HD views, which should quiet once and for all any remaining skeptics of the medium, are appropriately breathtaking; under the rustling leaves of a quiet afternoon subtle gradations of light and shadow, red and green, form. In one recurring shot, Grenier fixes on the vinyl surface of a red chair, inviting us to sit and get lost in the image. The mottled reds, seemingly endless in their variation, fill the screen, and become

more than an image, more than just an abstract rendering of a commonplace object, but an experience of the sublime. In Grenier's hands, the HD camera becomes a tool for discovery, a way of seeing, an open path." – Genevieve Yue

**Vincent Grenier** was born in Québec City, Canada. He has lived largely in the US, mostly in New York City and now Ithaca, NY – while continuing to be a frequent contributor to the Montréal art scene of the 1970s and 1980s. He has made experimental films since the early 1970s when he received an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. Grenier's films have been shown in the United States, Canada and Europe at showcases such as the Museum of Modern Art in NYC, the Anthology Film Archives, the Pacific Film Archives, the Collective for Living Cinema and Cinéma Parallèle in Montréal. His films and videos have earned him nine production grants from the Canada Council in the period between 1974 and 1992, and in New York State, from CAPS (1979), NYFA (1995), ETC (1992 & 1994), NYSCA (2007-2008) and John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (2010-2011).

Grenier has made over two dozen films and, since the late 1990s, more than a dozen videos. Many of these videos were chosen in yearly selections of Grenier's work at key avant garde film festivals such as Views from the Avant Garde of the New York Film Festival, the Rotterdam Film Festival, in the Netherlands, the Onion City Film Festival, Chicago, and Media City Film and Video Festival, Windsor, Ontario. Grenier's films and videos were the subjects of retrospectives at Media City, Windsor, Ontario and Images Film & Video Festival's Canadian Images Spotlight, Toronto, both in 2006. Seven of his films & videos were included in the Whitney Museum of American Art 1970-2000 American Century Film program. Films by Grenier are included in the Donnell Media Library in NYC, the National Film Archive, Ottawa, the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, AGO, Toronto and at many other institutions in Canada and the US.

Grenier currently teaches at Binghamton University and lives in Ithaca New York.

See <http://www.vincentgrenier.com/> for more information.

Curated by Steve Anker, and Bérénice Reynaud.

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

## UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS AT REDCAT FALL 2010

**November 1:** Spectacles of Light: Films and Videos by Peter Rose

**November 22:** Thom Andersen: Out of the Car and into the Music of the Street

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