



DANIEL EISENBERG:
THE UNSTABLE OBJECT

MARCH 22, 2012 8:30 PM

presented by

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California Institute of the Arts

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DANIEL EISENBERG:

THE UNSTABLE OBJECT

Thu Mar 22 | 8:30 pm

Jack H. Skirball Screening Series

U.S./Germany/Turkey | 2011 | 69 min | Color | Sound | HDV/XDCam

What do a luxury automobile, a wall clock, and a cymbal have in common? Daniel Eisenberg's (*Persistence, Something More Than Night*) latest film, *The Unstable Object* (2011) is an elegant and visually sensual essay on contemporary models of production. Interested in the ways "things" affect both producer and consumer, Eisenberg travels to a Volkswagen factory in Dresden, Germany, where individualized cars are hand-built by high-tech specialists; to Chicago Lighthouse Industries, where blind workers produce wall clocks for government offices; and to a deafening cymbal factory in Istanbul, Turkey, where sought-after cymbals are cast and hammered by hand, exactly as they were 400 years ago. Through sequences sympathetic to each site and subject that highlight the senses of sight, sound, and touch, *The Unstable Object* quietly probes the relationships our global economy creates among individuals around the world.

In person: Daniel Eisenberg

"Daniel Eisenberg's films are celluloid tapestries woven together out of histories and memories, night and day, daily life and reflection..." – Ulrike Ottinger

"The cinema of Daniel Eisenberg makes the present waiver. These rigorously formal films are timepieces that are at once documents of the dynamic present, and an interrogation of the meanings produced from the materials our culture uses to connect to the flow of time."
– Jeffrey Skoller

FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

The Unstable Object is an experimental essay about contemporary models of production, that examines "things" and "objects" precisely at the moment when our understanding of material culture is at its most unstable. Since its very beginning, cinema has been closely linked with the images and sounds of mass production. From the important films of the Westinghouse and Ford factories in the 1910s and 1920s, to the poetic work of Joris Ivens and Dziga Vertov, in visually describing the promise of technology for redemption of the masses, cinema has defined the image of the factory and the worker.

It is in the world of the senses that evoke our desire for objects; "things" transmit and elicit sensations of all kinds, both for the producer and the consumer. The object becomes an intermediary, a medium for the transmission of sensation from the one who makes, to the one who takes. It is an uncanny, unintelligible communication between people, far away and

detached from one another. Many of these complex relations are made perceptible in the visual world of the factory.

I began by filming in one of the most “advanced” factory environments in Germany. The VW Phaeton factory in Dresden, “Die Gläserne Manufaktur,” embraces the idea of “manufacture as cultural spectacle,” and the associated idea of the “individualized” mass-produced object. Shot in high definition video, with long views and deep spaces, the factory becomes a “tour-de-force” of architecture and technology. Visuality and visibility are two of the primary products, as the factory itself is a site where customers come to watch their cars being hand-made.

In contrast to this highly estheticized image of production, I produced a sequence in a factory of blind workers at Chicago Lighthouse Industries. Here they produce wall clocks for all federal government offices, objects that can neither be seen nor used by the workers who are producing them. In the clock factory, what’s visible is completely unimportant; instead the complete dependence on the tactile is evident. Close-ups of faces, hands, and factory spaces are central to this sequence, making more tactile the entire field of the image. Unlike the car factory, where workers remain silent and focused on their work, here conversation is ubiquitous, as this workspace is an essential social space for the workers.

The third sequence is shot in a cymbal factory, Bosphorus Cymbals, just outside Istanbul, in Habiblar – an area where the cymbals most sought about by musicians are being made today, exactly as they were when invented here 400 years ago, cast and hammered by hand in small factories. In the deafening hammering room, each cymbal is pounded by hand until it is uniquely and properly voiced. The cymbal returns that sound and light to the musician and as well to the listener over and over again throughout its lifetime. – Daniel Eisenberg

“Three countries, three ways of working, three moments of industrial history, to a chronology that is here upside down...Hypotheses and correspondences can now be coiled around its vicious perfection: from the mutistic ballet of the beginning to the noisy promise of a concluding music; of time blindly stamped in the central sequence in the manner in which it seems to have fainted in the beginning and is punctuated at the end, etc. In short, Daniel Eisenberg and his fine stable film, notwithstanding its title, dodge between the noise of time and the musical round that every piece of work begins.” – FID Marseille

ABOUT DANIEL EISENBERG

Over the last three decades, **Daniel Eisenberg** has forged a unique body of films that has become internationally recognized for connecting the traditions of the personal avant-garde film and historical documentary. His work has been shown throughout Europe and North America, with exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; the American Museum of the Moving Image in New York; De Unie, Rotterdam; and Kino Arsenal, Berlin; and at film festivals in Berlin, Sydney, London, and Jerusalem. Eisenberg has also edited numerous television documentaries, including *Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years*, and *Vietnam: A Television History*.

Eisenberg has received numerous awards and fellowships, including a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 1999. His films are in the collections of the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek, and the Australian Film and Television School among others.

Daniel Eisenberg lives in Chicago and is currently Professor of Film, Video, New Media, and Animation at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

ADDITIONAL FILMOGRAPHY

Something More Than Night (2003)

Persistence (1997)

Cooperation Of Parts (1987)

Motion Studies (1979, 1990)

To A Brother In Asia (1983)

Native Shore (1983)

Displaced Person (1981)

Mexican Sketch (1980)

Design and Debris (1979)

Matrice (1975)

For more information, visit www.danieleisenberg.com

Curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud

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UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS AT REDCAT WINTER/SPRING 2012

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