

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Mon Feb 25 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Screening Series

\$10 [students \$8, CalArts \$5]

Ben Russell: Altered States

Los Angeles Premieres

This program, a slightly modified version of one shown at the Centre Pompidou last fall, presents a selection of films from Ben Russell's ongoing TRYPPS series, including ***River Rites, Black And White Trypps Number Three, Ponce de León, Trypps #6*** and ***Trypps #7***. Shot mostly on 16mm, though formally quite distinct, these short films "enunciate a 'psychedelic ethnography'—in which the trip is both the means and the end," Russell writes, noting that his films have "expanded their formal and critical language to include the various poles of action painting, avant-garde cinema, portraiture, stand-up comedy, global capitalism, and trance-dance à la Jean Rouch." The evening concludes with the two-projector performance of ***The Black and the White Gods***. Russell was listed among the "50 Best Filmmakers Under 50" by *Cinema Scope*.

In person: Ben Russell

"Ben Russell's field studies of transfiguration invoke the magic of cinema with fearsome lucidity. Russell's designs on embodiment require that ideas be performed and the camera taken up as a risk. His serial single-roll reconnaissance flights into the deep structures of ecstasy and trance stand as a major achievement." – *Cinema Scope*

"Ben Russell has invented his own cinematic territory, a hybrid expanse where, with rare felicitousness, two approaches that are almost opposite (experimental cinema and observational documentary) are reconciled, communicate and borrow from each other... producing a patently hypnotic result." – *Cahiers du cinéma*

Altered States

"Using a fabricated Old English word as its guiding principle, the TRYPPS ongoing series of films is conceptually organized around the possible meanings that its title elicits - physical voyages, psychedelic

journeys, and a phenomenological experience of the world. Begun in 2005 in a somewhat vain attempt to hold cinema up as a mirror to the live and fully embodied reception of the crazy noise music scene in Providence, Rhode Island, the TRYPPS films quickly expanded their formal and critical language to include the various poles of action painting, avant-garde cinema, portraiture, stand-up comedy, global capitalism, and trance-dance à la Jean Rouch. While the form of these works varies radically from one to the next, when taken as a whole they can be seen to enunciate what their maker calls "psychedelic ethnography" - a practice whose aim is a knowledge of the Self/self, a movement towards understanding in which the trip is both the means and the end." - Ben Russell

River Rites

11:30, HDCAM, 2011

"Animists are people who recognize that the world is full of persons, some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship with others." - Graham Harvey, *Animism*

Trance dance and water implosion, a kino-line drawn between secular freak-outs and religious phenomena. Filmed in a single take at a sacred site on the Upper Suriname River, the minor secrets of a Saramaccan animist everyday are revealed as time itself is undone. Rites are the new *Trypps* - embodiment is our eternal everything.

Black And White Trypps Number Three

12:00, 35mm, color, sound, 2007

"*Trypps Number Three* transports the documented transcendence of Jean Rouch's *Les Maîtres fous* from the Hauka movement to a Lightning Bolt concert where overlapping bodies, swaying to noise rock, are framed in light beamed from the stage - we return to the models of Caravaggio or Garrel - bodies effectively transformed into islands of individual gestures and expressions via a spotlight and lingering camera, before the film cryptically bends upon itself: henceforth the image (through slow-motion effect) and sound (through Joseph Grimm's spacey drones) conspire to directly invoke the spectator into the raptures." - Mubarak Ali, *Supposed Aura*

Trypps # 6 (Malobi)

12:00, 16mm, 2009

From the Maroon village of Malobi in Suriname, South America, this single-take film offers a strikingly contemporary take on a Jean Rouch classic. It's Halloween at the Equator, Andrei Tarkovsky for the jungle set. - BR

Ponce De León

co-directed with Jim Drain, 26:00, ProRes, 5.1 sound, 2012

"I could do wonders if I didn't have a body. But the body grabs me, it slows me, it enslaves me."

As the legend would have it, Spanish conquistador Juan Ponce de León arrived in Florida in 1513 in search of the fountain of youth. In the world presented here, he has found it: our Ponce De León discovered the fountain of youth and drank of immortality in the waning moments of his life. In an instant, he became old forever – an 80-year old Spaniard who would continue to walk the earth for century after century after century, watching as coral foundations gave way to mangrove swamps, as swamps were drained and Miami high-rises were erected, as buildings decayed and swamps returned... For Ponce De León, time is a problem of body, and only by escaping his container can he escape time itself.

Trypps #7 (Badlands)

10:00, HDCAM, 2010

"Trypps #7 (Badlands) charts, through an intimate long-take, a young woman's LSD trip in the Badlands National Park before descending into a psychedelic, formal abstraction of the expansive desert landscape. Concerned with notions of the romantic sublime, phenomenological experience, and secular spiritualism, the work continues Russell's unique investigation into the possibilities of cinema as a site for transcendence."

- Michael Green, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

The Black and the White Gods

20:00, double 16mm projection and light-sensitive audio circuits

Using a short segment of Russell's early ethnographic film *Daumé* as its foundation, this double-projection performance employs a variety of 16mm film loops, hand-built electronics, prismatic lenses, and analog components to create an audiovisual feedback loop that edges steadily towards the phenomenological. With echoes of Tony Conrad's *The Flicker* and William Basinski's *Disintegration Loops*, *The Black and the White Gods* seeks to interrogate the possibility of representation via the abstracted field of bodily experience.

(Trt 91:30)

Ben Russell (b.1976, USA) is a media artist and curator whose films, installations, and performances foster a deep engagement with the history and semiotics of the moving image. Formal investigations of the historical and conceptual relationships between early cinema,

documentary practices, and structuralist filmmaking result in immersive experiences concerned at once with ritual, communal spectatorship and the pursuit of a "psychedelic ethnography."

A 2008 Guggenheim Fellowship and 2010 FIPRESCI award recipient, Russell has had solo screenings and exhibitions at the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Rotterdam Film Festival, the Wexner Center for the Arts, the Viennale, threewalls in Chicago and the Museum of Modern Art. In 2004, he began the Magic Lantern screening series in Providence, Rhode Island, was co-director of the artist-run space "Ben Russell" in Chicago, IL (2009-2011), has toured worldwide with film/video/performance programs and played the light-sensitive skull in a double-drum trio called "Beast."

From 1994 to 1998, Russell attended Brown University, where he received a BA in arts and semiotics. Afterwards he traveled to Suriname with the Peace Corps. From 2000 to 2003, he studied at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he received an MFA in Film/Video/New Media. From 2006 to 2011 he taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

In collaboration with the British artist Ben Rivers, he is in post-production on a feature film titled *A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness* - concerning the romantic sublime, social utopia, and Norwegian black metal. He currently resides in Paris, France.

Jim Drain is from Cleveland, Ohio. Drain creates elaborate, colorful, mind-manifesting, and anthropomorphic sculptures, and recently an edition of wearable art sweaters; these works are manufactured by the use of an industrial knitting machine. He was a member of the seminal Providence collective Forcefield and works in several different media such as comics, music, drawing and painting, video and performance.

Curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud

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