

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Sat Sept 27 | 6:00 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Series

\$11.00 [members \$8.00]

Presented in collaboration with Los Angeles Filmforum and the Latin American Cinemateca of Los Angeles

Monumental Ambiguities: Pre-Columbian Artifacts Under the Spell of the (In)Visible

A double bill followed by a panel discussion, this program considers the debates over artifacts, cultural property and historical stewardship in Mesoamerica. In *Paradox* (2001, 30 min.), Leandro Katz alternates between static views of the stone altar of the mythic Dragon of Quiriguá in Guatemala and imagery of controversial labor practices at nearby banana plantations. Next are Jesse Lerner and Sandra Rozental with the documentary *La piedra ausente* (*The Absent Stone*, 2013, 82 min.), which recounts the fate of the largest carved stone of the Americas, moved in 1964 from San Miguel Coatlinchan to Mexico City's National Anthropology Museum. The extraction of the monolith—which represented the pre-Hispanic water deity—sparked a local rebellion, before the stone itself eventually became an urban monument and an altogether different icon of Mexican identity. Back in Coatlinchan, replicas of the absent stone appear everywhere, still resonant in the community's memory.

In person: Mariana Botey, Jesse Lerner, Sandra Rozental and other panelists to be announced

Presented as part of the Jack H. Skirball Series. Curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud.

"The pairing of contemporary production and export of an agricultural product with the glorious archeological ruins of some of the most stunning sculptural achievements left by the ancient Maya, urges us to contemplate, over the half-hour duration of *Paradox*, the relationship between the monumental past and the degraded present..."

– *Journal of Film and Video*

“In starkly inventive animations, copious archival materials, and illuminating encounters with both stone-movers and townspeople, filmmakers Sandra Rozental and Jesse Lerner explore ancient ruins’ affect on the present day.” – Ann Arbor Film Festival

Program:

Leandro Katz: ***Paradox***
(30 min., digital video, 2001)

A magnificent figure emerges from the jaws of a mythical animal carved with inscriptions. Known as The Dragon of Quiriguá, this enigmatic stone altar is one of the most extraordinary ancient sculptures on the continent. Spared from deforestation during the introduction of banana plants at the end of the nineteenth century, the seventy-five wooded acres of the Maya site of Quiriguá, stand at the center of the Guatemalan lowlands of the South as a reminder of how things were before the region was turned into a banana republic. Quiriguá houses temple structures, pyramids, the tallest stelae, and Altar P, known as The Dragon.

Marked by a truculent history of colonialism connected with land appropriation, the former United Fruit Company, labor struggles, political corruption, military invasions and undercover operations, the paradox suggested by the title of this work provocatively juxtaposes our admiration of the continent’s exuberant ancient past with the current conditions of the Latin American working class, both at home or in exile.

Sandra Rozental and Jesse Lerner:
La piedra ausente/The Absent Stone
(82 min., 35mm 2013)

In 1964, the largest carved stone of the Americas was moved from the town of San Miguel Coatlinchan in the municipality of Texcoco to the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City in an impressive feat of engineering. The extraction of the monolith, which represents the pre-Hispanic water deity, set off a rebellion in the town and led to the intervention of the army. Today, the enormous stone, now upright, is an urban monument; it has been transformed into one of the principal icons of Mexican national identity. The inhabitants of Coatlinchan insist that the removal of the stone has caused droughts. Representations and replicas of the absent stone appear everywhere in Coatlinchan, where it resonates in the memories of the inhabitants. Using

animations, archival materials and contemporary encounters with the protagonists of the transport of the stone, this documentary explores the relevance of the ruins of the past in the present day.

Los Angeles premiere

Intermission

Panel discussion: Pre-Columbian Artifacts Under the Spell of the (In)Visible.

Using *Paradox* and *La piedra ausente* as a starting point, a debate about heritage and artifacts, cultural property and the stewardship of the past – or who owns Pre-Columbian artifacts, and what is the political value of their (cinematic) representations? How have these objects and their representations been utilized by divergent nationalist projects, modern and contemporary artists, diasporic communities, indigenous groups and others for a range of ideological and aesthetic projects? What might be the ethical basis for decisions regarding the stewardship or ownership of objects from the past?

Biofilmographies

Born in Mexico City, **Mariana Botey** is the director for the interdisciplinary graduate seminar *Zonas de Disturbio*, a collaboration project of the Art History Graduate Program and the Campus Expandido Program at the University Museum for Contemporary Art (MUAC) in Mexico City and a professor of visual arts at UCSD. She is a founding member of the editorial and curatorial committee of *The Red Specter*: a phantasmal, agitation, and conspiratorial organization working at the intersection of art, politics and theory. Botey directed a number of experimental films including *Los motivos de caín* (2002), *The Passage of a Few* (1999), *El dedal de rosas* (1998), *Yahauhqui Tezcatlipoca #9* (1999) and *Enciclopedia de México* (1996).

Born in Buenos Aires, **Leandro Katz** is a visual artist, writer, and filmmaker, known for his films and his photographic installations, as well as his long-term, multi-media “projects” that delve into Latin American history through a combination of scholarly research, anthropology, photography, moving images and printed texts. *Paradox* exists both as a “project” – and as one of the seventeen experimental films directed by Katz since 1976, that include *Los Angeles Station* (1976), *Splits* (1978), *Moon Notes* (1980) *The Visit* (1980-86), *Reel Six*, *Charles Ludlam's Grand Tarot* (1987), *The Day You'll Love Me*

(1997) and *Exhumacion* (2007).

Leandro Katz has exhibited as an artist and screened his films at institutions including New York's Museum of Modern Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, the Whitney Museum and El Museo del Barrio (USA), Buenos Aires Museum of Modern Art, the Centro Cultural de España, 11 X 7 Gallery, Proa and Telefonica Foundation (Argentina), Museo Reina Sofía (Madrid), Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano and La Bial de La Habana (Cuba), among others. He has been awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, and has received support from the New York State Council on the Arts, the Jerome Foundation, and the Hubert Bals Fund, Rotterdam International Film Festival, among others.

Katz was a member of the faculty at the School of Visual Arts, New York, the Semiotics Program at Brown University, Rhode Island, and a professor of Film Production and Theory at the School of Art and Communication, William Paterson University, New Jersey. After residing in New York City for forty years, he relocated to Buenos Aires in 2006. <http://www.leandrokatz.com>

Jesse Lerner is a filmmaker based in Los Angeles. His short films *Natives* (1991, with Scott Sterling), *T.S.H.* (2004) and *Magnavoz* (2006) and the feature-length experimental documentaries *Frontierland/Fronterilandia* (1995, with Rubén Ortiz-Torres), *Ruins* (1999) *The American Egypt* (2001), *Atomic Sublime* (2010) and *The Absent Stone* have won numerous prizes at film festivals in the United States, Latin America and Japan. His books include *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing* (with Alexandra Juhasz), *The Shock of Modernity* and *The Maya of Modernism*.
www.AmericanEgypt.net

Sandra Rozental was born in Mexico City in 1979. She worked as a museum curator, journalist and teacher. In 2012 she received a doctorate in anthropology from New York University. She currently teaches at Mexico's Autonomous Metropolitan University. This is her first documentary and it is based on a decade of anthropological research in the town of Coatlinchan, Estado de México.

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