



RICK PRELINGER

LOST LANDSCAPES OF LOS ANGELES

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REDCAT

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California Institute of the Arts

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RICK PRELINGER: LOST LANDSCAPES OF LOS ANGELES

Presented as part of the Jack H. Skirball Series

2015, ca. 78 min., HD video from film sources

Having given eye-opening “urban history” presentations in San Francisco, Oakland and Detroit, Rick Prelinger now draws on his vast archive to offer a cultural history of greater Los Angeles in pictures. The archivist, writer, filmmaker and UC Santa Cruz professor combines excerpts from long-dated “ephemeral” sources—yesteryear’s home movies, newsreels, educational, industrial and amateur films, even studio “process plates”—into a richly detailed socio-topographical study of L.A.’s bygone cityscapes, and in the process casts the contemporary terrain in a new light. Viewers, meanwhile, are invited to supply the soundtrack, with their own commentaries, questions and discussions. Founded in 1983, the Prelinger Archive is among the largest repositories of its kind in the world.

In person: Rick Prelinger

“Rick Prelinger is an archivist rockstar.” — *Motherboard*

“For many years now, the media archaeologist and film archivist Rick Prelinger has been collecting this original material, the so-called ‘ephemeral films’: educational, industrial and commercial films which, having been made for the moment, were never meant to be preserved. His fascination dates back to the time when he was investigating these ‘hybrid genres’ for Heavy Petting, a documentary on sexuality and romance in the America of the 1950s, and he discovered that thousands of information films had been made on every conceivable subject. However peculiar and dated they may be, these ‘secret films’ are most of all ‘compact memories’, and, on closer inspection, they not only present a revealing picture of ‘how people lived’, but also, and in particular, of ‘how they were supposed to live’. Subsequently, he discovered that there were also innumerable old commercial and industrial films which had been produced, usually under the sponsorship of a large company, to promote a product, idea or lifestyle, and to lure the citizen into becoming a better worker, student, or.... consumer.” — *MM Magazine*

“Rick Prelinger is a retro-futurist philosopher who collects things. Lots of things. Best known as the founder of the Prelinger Archives, [...] he has recently begun stockpiling other people’s home movies. He’s arming himself to challenge everything you think you know about documentary filmmaking.” — *The Austin Chronicle*

“No treatment of the theme ‘Ephemera’ would be complete without considering Rick Prelinger’s work over the past two decades to preserve, archive and recognize the value of Hollywood’s “other,” the obscure and sometimes surreal world of ephemeral films. The San Francisco-based Prelinger [...] in 2002 sold his collection of over 50,000 films to the Library

of Congress. He has since turned his energies to advocating a renewed conception of archival practice that involves actively pushing works out into the public, rather than simply storing them passively.” — *Vectors Journal*

“I started to draw some distance between my activities and the classic role of the collector. What we now do in the film archives and our print library is collect with some kind of a public purpose, ultimately for public use. (This means any barriers that inhibited me from collecting lots of stuff have fallen down.) When the Library of Congress acquired our film archives in 2002 I thought I’d stop collecting archival film, but it turned out there were so many reasons to keep collecting, and so much media needing a home. The U.S. is such a media-rich country—we throw away more media than most nations ever produce, and the majority of it is never saved. This creates tremendous opportunities, sometimes burdens, for archivists.”

— Rick Prelinger, interviewed by Steven Heller for AIGA

ABOUT RICK PRELINGER

Rick Prelinger, an archivist, writer and filmmaker, founded Prelinger Archives, whose collection of over 60,000 advertising, educational, industrial, and amateur films was acquired by the Library of Congress in 2002 after 20 years’ operation. Since 2002, Prelinger Archives has focused primarily on amateur and home movies, holding a collection of approximately 13,000 items in this area plus some 2,000 sponsored films. Rick has partnered with the Internet Archive to make over 6,000 films from Prelinger Archives available online for free viewing, downloading and reuse. His feature-length film *Panorama Ephemera* (2004), depicting the conflicted landscapes of 20th-century America, played in venues around the world, and his new film *No More Road Trips?* (2013), currently on a national tour, played last night at LA Filmforum. Since 2006, he has made 18 participatory urban history events using archival footage in San Francisco, Oakland and Detroit. Prelinger is a board member of the Internet Archive, has been a board member of the San Francisco Cinematheque, and sat on the National Film Preservation Board for five years as representative of the Association of Moving Image Archivists. He is co-founder of the Prelinger Library, an appropriation-friendly private research library that is open to the public, located in downtown San Francisco, and was appointed Associate Professor of Film and Digital Media at University of California, Santa Cruz in 2013.

Related links:

Rick Prelinger: <<http://www.prelinger.com>>

Internet Archive <<http://www.archive.org/details/prelinger>>

Prelinger Library <<http://www.prelingerlibrary.org>>

Curated by Steve Anker and B er enice Reynaud. Presented as part of the Jack H. Skirball Series.

UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS
AT REDCAT FALL 2015

Mon Nov 23 : Soon-Mi Yoo: *Songs from the North*

Mon Nov 30 : Natalie Cristiani: Nicola Costantino - *La Artefacta*

Mon Dec 7 : Ben Rivers: *The Sky Trembles and the Earth Is Afraid and the Two Eyes Are Not Brothers*

Mon Dec 14 : Mike Kelley: Single Channel Videos

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