

FILM AT REDCAT IS PROUD TO KICK OFF ITS
WINTER/SPRING 2016 SEASON WITH

Bearing Witness: The Visceral Cinema of Mike Hoolboom

Mon Sept 19 |8:30 pm|

Jack H. Skirball Series

As one of cinema's great artists dealing with the ephemerality of the sensate body, Canadian Mike Hoolboom guides his masterful craft between narrative and abstraction, combining immersive sounds and images with haunting poetic texts. Spanning over 30 years, his prolific work includes visceral portraits of himself as an HIV positive gay man, affectionate homages to living and dead friends, abstract meditations on miracles of the senses, and piercing cultural critiques dealing with dilemmas of identity and political action. For Hoolboom, the body is source and receptor of all experience which, while limited by its history, remains open to pleasure and pain, joy and tragedy. Here is a cinema that is sensually immediate and also profoundly reflective. Films include: *Scrapbook* (2015, 18 min.), which is a contemporary portrayal of a dynamic autistic woman using material recorded in the mid-20th century; *Buffalo Death Mask* (2013, 23 min.), a poignant portrait of an old friendship, that "...returns us to a pre-cocktail moment"; *Sugar Maple Stand* (1985/1990, 9 min.), a revised early work that is a subtle meditation on cinema and nature and the life in visual movement. He will also preview a newly completed untitled personal essay that focuses on African-American urban life amidst the brutal background of police violence and poverty.

In person: Mike Hoolboom

"The prolific Canadian artist, a specialist in biographical excavations and thaumaturgical narratives, Mike Hoolboom takes his inspiration directly from the heart. His pictures begin with the innermost secrets, as a whisper, a caress. While the approach is experimental, the sincerity of this humanist quest raises the pulse of even the most indifferent moviegoers." –Olivier Thibodeau, *Panorama Cinema*

"Hoolboom is a major figure in contemporary Canadian experimental cinema, predominantly as a film- and video-maker, but also as founder of the now-defunct magazine, *The Independent Eye*, co-founder of the artist-run exhibition group, *Pleasure Dome*, and author of numerous articles and books on avant-garde filmmaking.

An astonishingly prolific and restlessly searching artist, Hoolboom has made over 50 films and videos since 1980. Since being diagnosed as HIV positive in 1989, Hoolboom's work has gravitated towards themes involving the body, disease, AIDS activism, and impermanence. In the words of critic Geoff Pevere, his films and videos demonstrate 'a consuming interest in navigating the outer limits of perception, of language, of self, of mechanical reproduction, of bodily sensation and experience, and most recently (and surprisingly) of the discourse of nationhood'." – Anthology Film Archives

Program

Sugar Maple Stand

(1990/2016, 9 minutes, 16mm/Digital, black and white, sound)

Sugar Maple Stand, a revised early work, is a nearly abstract, subtle meditation on cinema and the life inherent in visual movement.

"Made on a sunny afternoon. A last stand of burning light. Shot in 1985, released in 1990 with a soundtrack by Kaiser Nietzsche (John Kamwvaar, Thomas Handy), new soundtrack and title in 2016." (M.H.)

Scrapbook

(2015, 18 minutes, 16mm/Digital, black and white, sound)

"Lensed in Ohio's Broadview Developmental Center in 1967 by secret camera genius and audio visual healer Jeffrey Paull, *Scrapbook* tells the story of audacious autistic Donna Washington in her own words, as she encounters pictures of one of her former selves fifty years later." (M.H.)

"In Mike Hoolboom's *Scrapbook* I had time enough to feel what it means to look into a camera, to make a picture, and to produce pictures that think. Formally, this 18-minute film offers a minimum of procedures: black and white 16mm film material, intertitles explaining the origins of the pictures, an abstract sound score and accompanying voice-over. The way these elements are arranged, their relationships with each other, what and how they signify is immensely impressive. The film allows us access to a world that is otherwise closed."

– Henrike Meyer, *Dasfilter.com*

[Untitled New Work]

(2016, 29 minutes, Digital, color, sound)

A newly completed, expressive portrayal of African-American social life and family bonds amidst the ceaseless backdrops of segregation, poverty and brutal police violence.

Buffalo Death Mask

(2013, 23 minutes, 16mm/Super 8mm/Digital, black and white/color, sound)

"A conversation with Canadian painter Stephen Andrews returns us to a pre-cocktail moment, when being HIV+ afforded us the consolation of certainty." (M.H.)

Best Short Film, International Competition Queer Short, Sicilia Queer filmfest. FIPRESCI Award, Oberhausen International Film Festival.

"For more than two decades Mike Hoolboom has been one of our foremost artistic witnesses of the plague of the twentieth century, HIV. A personal voice documenting and piercing the clichéd spectrum of Living With AIDS from carnal abjection to incandescent spirituality, no surviving moving image visionary surpasses him. *Buffalo Death Mask* is a three-part meditation — visual, oral and haptic, both campy and ecstatic — on survival, mourning, memory, love and community. No one savours the intimations of immortality inherent in recycled footage like Mike, no one else understands how processed Super 8 can answer the question 'Why are we still here when so many are gone?'"
- Tom Waugh

"A striking and contemporary upgrade on the traditional underground film diary. Featuring a remarkably earnest conversation between two HIV positive friends, *Buffalo Death Mask* was both personal and universal in its approach. Blended together with home movie footage and obscured faces, the film achieved a resonant harmony between its dialogue and image." - Tara Judah, Australian Film Critics Association

About the Filmmaker

Mike Hoolboom has been a key figure in Canadian avant-garde and LGBT filmmaking since the 1980s. He has made over eighty films and videos; most have been withdrawn from circulation, approximately a dozen remain on view.

Hoolboom's work has appeared in over four hundred festivals, garnering thirty awards. He has enjoyed retrospectives of his work at the Images Festival (Toronto), Visions du Réel (Switzerland), Xenix (Switzerland), Cork International Festival (Ireland), Cinema de Balie (Amsterdam), Mediawave Festival (Hungary), Impakt Festival (Holland), Vila do Conde Festival (Portugal), Jihlava Documentary Festival (Czech Republic), Stuttgarter Filmwinter (Germany), Musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen (France), Sixpack Film (Vienna), the Buenos Aires International Festival (Argentina), Pacific Cinematheque (Canada) and A Million Different Loves Festival in Poland.

Hoolboom has long been one of Canada's most prominent LGBT rights media activists, with a passion for dealing with personal and social aspects of HIV+ related illness.

A staunch supporter of all forms of independent 'fringe' filmmaking, Mike Hoolboom was a founding member of the Pleasure Dome screening collective, served as artistic director of Images Festival, worked as the experimental film coordinator at Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, and has curated over thirty programs (Berlin, Ottawa and Rotterdam International Festivals; Jihlava International Documentary Festival; and London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival among others).

He has authored several books, including: *Plague Years: A Life in Underground Movies* (1988); a pair of interview books with Canadian media artists, *Practical Dreamers: Conversations with Media Artists* (Coach House Press, 2008) and *Inside the Pleasure Dome: Fringe Film in Canada* (Coach House Press, 2001). He has edited or co-edited books on Emily Vey Duke/Cooper Battersby, Frank Cole, Barbara Sternberg, Mike Cartmell and Philip Hoffman, in addition to publishing electronic books on Deirdre Logue, Dani Leventhal, Al Razutis, Mike Cartmell, Steve Reinke, American Fringe Movies and documentary movies. In 1998 he authored *Plague Years* (YYZ Books) a tongue-in-cheek autobiography. His first novel, *The Steve Machine*, was published by Coach House Press in 2008. He has also published more than one hundred magazine and catalogue articles on fringe media, and founded the experimental film journal *Independent Eye* (1989-1998).

Since 2004 he has been working on Fringe Online (www.fringeonline.ca), a web project that makes available the archives of 40 Canadian media artists.

He has been granted the Tom Berner Award for community service and two lifetime achievement awards, the first from the city of Toronto, and the second from the Mediawave Festival in Hungary; in 2009, he received the Canada Council for the Arts Bell Award in Video Art, for "exceptional contribution to the advancement of video art and practices in Canada".

For more information, visit: www.mikehoolboom.com

Selected Filmography:

Incident Reports (70 minutes, 2016)
Scrapbook (18 minutes, 2015)
Safety Film Collection (25 minutes, 2014)
Second Nature (35 minutes, 2014)
Buffalo Death Mask (23 minutes, 2013)
Lacan Palestine (70 minutes, 2012)
Forest Walk (8 minutes, 2011)
Mark (70 minutes, 2009)
Fascination (70 minutes, 2006)
Public Lighting (76 minutes, 2004)
The Invisible Man (18 minutes, 2003)
In The Dark (8 minutes, 2003)
Imitations of Life (70 minutes, 2003)
Tom (50 minutes, 2002)
Panic Bodies (70 minutes, 1998)
House of Pain (50 minutes, 1995-98)
Letters From Home (15 minutes, 1996)
Escape in Canada (9 minutes, 1993)
Frank's Cock (8 minutes, 1993)
Indusium (11 minutes, 1993)
Mexico (35 minutes, 1992)
Modern Times (4 minutes, 1991)
Southern Pine Inspection Bureau No. 9 (9 minutes, 1990)
White Museum (32 minutes, 1986)
The Big Show (7 minutes, 1984)
Now, Yours (10 minutes, 1981)
Song for Mixed Choir (8 minutes, 1980)

The Jack H. Skirball Series is curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud and supported, in part, by the Ostrovsky Family Foundation.