

Tue Oct 1 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Series

\$12 [members \$9]

A Farewell to ANGELA RICCI LUCCHI with YERVANT GIANIKIAN

When painter Angela Ricci Lucchi – who passed in February 2018 – and architect Yervant Gianikian met in 1974, this triggered one of the most exciting collaborations in the history of cinema, spanning 44 years, as the pair became internationally known for their sensual, poetic, and critical work on “found footage.” They invented an “analytic camera” that allowed them to re-read, one frame at a time, archival material that was then slowed down, reframed, and colorized.

Their most famous works include the features: *Dal Polo all'Equatore* (*From the Pole to the Equator*, 1987, in the collection of New York's Museum of Modern Art); *Prigionieri della Guerra* (*Prisoners of War*, 1995); *Su tutte le vette è pace* (1999); *Inventario balcanico* (2000); *Immagini dell'Oriente: turismo da vandali* (2001); *Oh! uomo* (2004); and *Pays barbare* (2013).

In 2018 and 2019, Gianikian completed two feature films about his collaboration with Ricci Lucchi: *I diari di Angela – Noi due cineasti* (*Angela's Diaries*) and *I diari di Angela – Noi due cineasti. Capitolo secondo* (*Angela's Diaries - Two Filmmakers* and *Angela's Diaries - Two Filmmakers. Second Chapter*) which were received with great critical acclaim.

To commemorate Ricci Lucchi's memory, and in collaboration with Gianikian (who will be present via Skype), we have made a choice among the fifty-odd films they made together and selected seven shorts: *Erat-Sora* (1975), *Animali criminali* (1994), *Lo specchio di Diana* (1996), *Trasparenze* (1998), *Film perduto* (2008), *Visioni del deserto* (2000) and *Notes from our Journeys to Russia* (2010).

Via Skype from Milan: Yervant Gianikian

“Italian filmmakers Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi have proven themselves to be masters of the assemblage of found footage film, returning over and over again to images from the first decades of the 20th century, with a special attention to images of war and colonialism.” – Harvard Film Archive

"Their beautiful images – colored in vivid hues, slowed down, iterated – embodied so many things one would rather avoid seeing, if at all noticing: violence, individual pain and feelings, the devastations of war, the objectification of female and black bodies, the ideological construction of the 'Other', human fragility. Their insistence on slowing down, looking harder, studying the context, refusing to march on, forget and bypass at the same collective pace, is an active and precious form of *resistance*." – *Frieze*

"Consistent through their long collaboration is an idiosyncratic and highly sensual engagement with old, archival, and found materials."
– *Hyperallergic*

Program

Erat-Sora (1975, silent, 10')

Original format: 8 mm; exhibition format: ProRes

During a religious holiday in her native province, Angela Ricci Lucchi shot a short 8mm film with the different Virgin Marys. She only processed the footage after meeting Yervant Gianikian in 1975. The latter superimposed images onto the original footage, thus creating their first "work made with four hands."

Animali criminali (Criminal Animals)

(1994, music by Keith Ullrich, 7')

Original format: 16mm; exhibition format: ProRes

This catalogue of animals tearing one another apart, sometimes to death, was found in the archives of the royalist and proto-fascist documentarist Luca Cornerio. The bestiality of these images raise questions: Where did they come from? What was the intention behind the staging of such ferocity?

Lo specchio di Diana (Diana's Mirror)

(1996, music by Keith Ullrich, English intertitles, 31')

Original format: 16mm; exhibition format: ProRes

In 1927, Mussolini ordered the draining of Lake Lemi, the antique Diana's mirror, to exhume two ships of the Roman emperor Caligula. The archeological research of "Romanity" was used to justify the imperialism of the Duce's Rome. The lake becomes the mirror reflecting fascist thinking, through which its myth is constructed.

Trasparenze (Transparencies, 1998, sound, 6')
Original format Hi8 video; exhibition format: ProRes

"Transparencies: to see through, to be able to catch a glimpse of cinema, either on tripod or handheld. The eye and the hand become movement, claws and projections. This is about the decay and transformations of the nitrate footage (of a wartime fragment, having belonged to Luca Comerio, and shot by him on Mount Adamello.) Physical aspect in perpetual mutation. Only remains the torn base of the filmstrip: perforations, splices, fluorescence, faded colors, up to the total obliteration of the original image contained in the frame. Obliteration of the image of war: kinship between nitrate and gunpowder. Metamorphosis of the cinema that "passes through" the projector into a cinema made of a sticky, gummy, explosive matter. The last stage of cinema is to become an explosive and incendiary bomb of memory." (YG and ARL)

Film perduto (Lost Film, 2008, silent, 12')
Original format: Hi8 video; exhibition format: ProRes

Made in 1976 with archival footage from a hospital by Turin, the film was sent to London, and never came back. In 2008 Yervant Gianikian remade it from negative plates. Scientific photographs of sick workers, notably women working in paddy fields are montaged with films showing the wounded bodies of soldiers. Dedicated to ground breaking Italian psychiatrist and neurologist Franco Basaglia, as an homage to his resistance against the medical system.

Visioni del deserto (Visions from the Desert)
(2000, music by Keith Ullrich and Charles Anderson, 15')
Original format: 16mm; exhibition format: ProRes

Dedicated to "Africa, a defenseless continent," this film recomposes the images recorded in Algeria and Tunisia by a French female explorer in 1931, the centenary of the colonization of Algeria. For the woman, her travels are a "private celebration" of the conquest. Her colonial attitude is analyzed by Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi's camera: reframed and slowed down, colored in ochre and red, the image strikes us with the horror it contains. A young woman who, to entertain herself, pulls the hair of a child. A frightened gaze, framed between pieces of cloth, stares back at us.

Notes sur nos voyages en Russie

(*Notes from our Journeys to Russia*, 2015, 15')

Original format: Hi8; exhibition format: ProRes

These Notes are composed with watercolors by Angela Ricci Lucchi, as "snapshots" for a feature-length film that was planned at the time. "These drawings are inspired by the people we met during our journey, survivors of the avant-gardes of the 1920s: the poet/photographer Ida Nappelbaum (daughter of Mikhail Nappelbaum, the great photographer of Meyerhold, Mayakovsky, Akhmatova, Yesenin, Block, Gorky, Pasternak...); the writer Nina Berberova, a friend of Ida Nappelbaum; the writer Israel Metter; Valia Kozinceva, the wife of film/theater director Grigoriy Kozintsev; filmmaker Iosif Yefimovich Kheifits... The film is dedicated to the great poet Ossip Mandelstam (author of *Journey to Armenia*)." (ARL and YG)

Most of Angela Ricci Lucchi's watercolors were put on a 33 foot-long scroll shown in Documenta 14 in 2017, as part of the 6-screen installation *Journeys to Russia 1989-1990*.

TRT 96 minutes

A painter and filmmaker, **Angela Ricci Lucchi** was born in Lugo di Romagna in 1942. She studied painting with Oskar Kokoschka in Salzburg (Austria). Her partner and artistic collaborator **Yervant Gianikian** was born in Merano, an Alpine town in Italy's South Tyrol region, also in 1942. His father was a survivor of the Armenian genocide, and his mother was half Austrian and half Italian. He studied architecture in Venice. Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi met in the Dolomite Mountains in 1974 and started collaborating.

From 1975 to Ricci Lucchi's death on February 28 2018, they made about 50 feature-length and short films (including their "scented films") as well as installations. Their films have been shown at international film festivals including Cannes, Venice, Toronto, Berlin and Rotterdam. Retrospectives of their films have been presented at Cinémathèque Française, Filmoteca Española, Cinemateca Portuguesa and Pacific Film Archive as well as in museums including Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; and Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Their installations have been exhibited at the Venice Biennale, Fondation Cartier Pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris; Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam; Contemporary Art Museum, Chicago; Hangar Bicocca, Milan; and Documenta 14, Kassel.

"We are not archaeologists, entomologists, anthropologists, as we are often defined. Rather we are witnesses. Some talk of our work in terms of nostalgia and memory, but that isn't what interests us. We have used the archive for the present – as a dialectic between yesterday and today. Our films and installations deal with those stories that define our present. We don't use the archive in itself, we use what is already made to talk about today, about us, about the horrors that surround us.

We travel cataloguing, cataloguing through the cinema that we are going to re-film. What we do is a repetition of our gaze, of what we see. We film these parts that might be overlooked. Maybe because they're fading due to the film's chemical composition or because they run too fast to be noticed during the screening. Our method isn't so much re-editing as re-filming. We recreate the image *looking at it...* And through a loop, a rhythm, the structure and musical nature of the edit emerges. In any case, the material is only slightly manipulated: it's what it is.

We always use the example of the soldier who dies; you see him falling over two or three almost imperceptible frames. Each frame is an entity in itself with its own specific time. Bearing this in mind, we present a new reading of the archival material, updating it to reexamine it and broking it down, to capture details capable of revealing the significance of these images. We are *resignifying the images*. We are *politically* reversing the original meaning of the filmic material – offering a different vision of the propaganda contained in these documentaries about World War I and fascism. We activate a reevaluation of the manual displacement of the film through the 'analytical camera', and that brings out aspects that are invisible during normal projections.

The analytical camera lets us work on the physical aspect of the image. At times we're interested in the signs left on the reel by collectors and projectionists, like the burns that happen when the film stops in front of the incandescent bulb. We are interested in both the marks left by men, and those left by time. The concept of materiality is combined with the impression of lived images. They suggest the idea of a consumption of the visual element unleashed by the gazes directed at them, mostly in private situations, as the spectator was very often the one projecting those images, even touching the film and leaving his fingerprints on it. We are copyists, replicating cinema to avoid its dissolution". (ARL and YG)

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