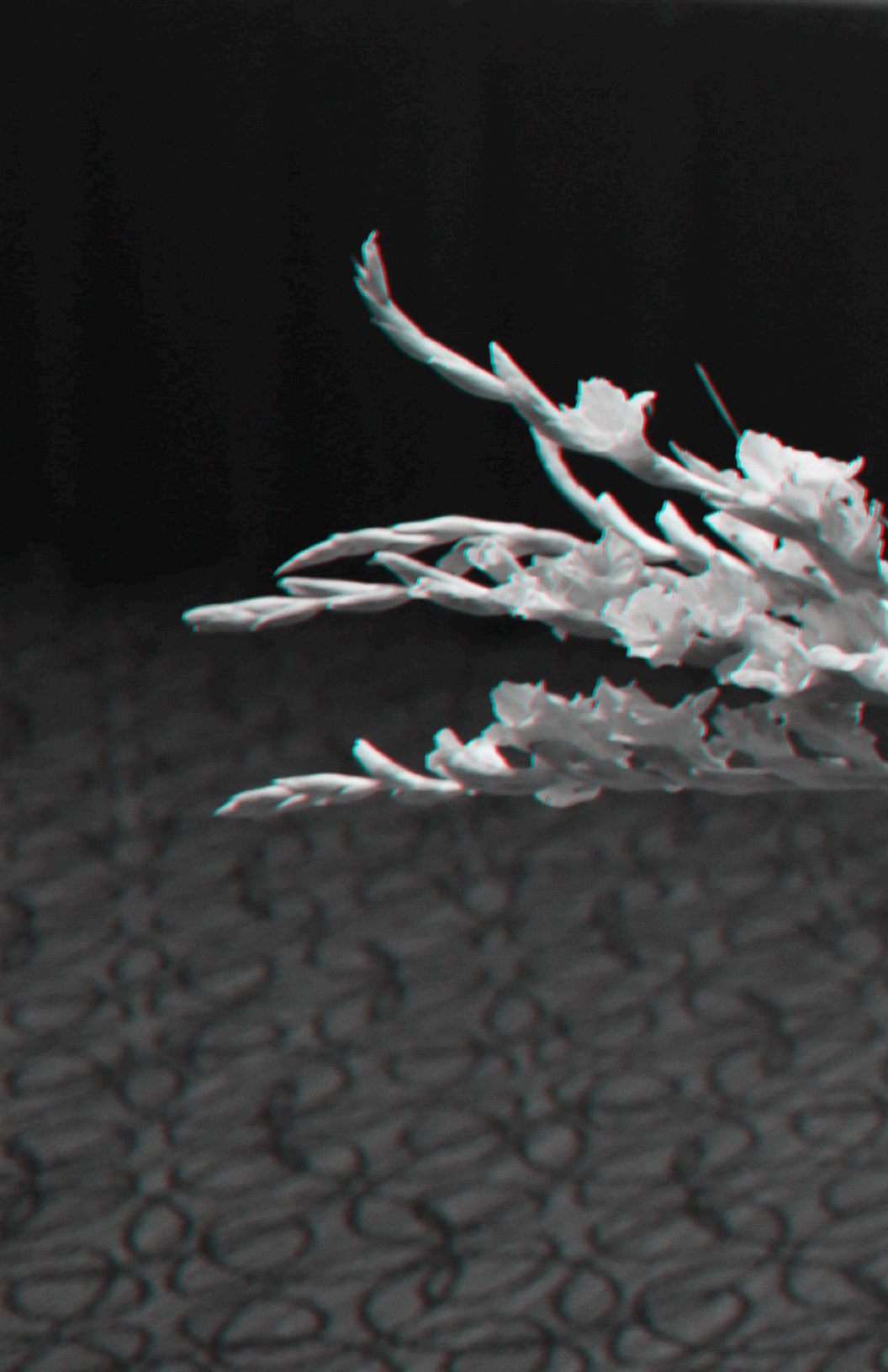




mimesis

DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL





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Introduction

In 2021, Mimesis held its first-ever hybrid (in-person + virtual) event, hosted in August by the Dairy Arts Center in Boulder, Colorado with major support from the Stewart Family Foundation. Attended by hundreds of artists, students, scholars, and members of the community, Mimesis showcased over 90 works by some of the most dynamic voices in documentary and ethnographic media exploring the pressures and possibilities of contemporary global culture. This also featured *Day Residue* – a workshop with Opening Night Artist Lynne Sachs, a masterclass with Featured Artist Pedro Costa, and the latest edition of Flaherty x Boulder entitled *Solace in the Shadows*. Programming was described by attendees as “tremendous – always illuminating, rigorous, and thoughtful” and “excellent – thought-provoking, boundary-pushing, and enjoyable.” This could not have been accomplished without

the tireless work of our dedicated programming team. This tight-knit group crafted programs that brought important ideas together to amplify artists’ voices. Thank you, Sarah Biagini, Luiza Parvu, Laurids Andersen Sonne, and Michelle Rupprecht. Your work is deeply appreciated.

The technical and administrative execution of the festival was made possible by indefatigable Festival Director Curt Heiner, Assistant Michelle Rupprecht, Social Media Manager Sophia Schelle, Documentary Arts Coordinator Nima Bahrehmand, Journal Writer Renata Barreto, Copywriter Morgan Murphy, and staff support from Diana Wilson. Thank you so much for all your work.

Thank you to all the staff at the Dairy, with a special mention to Glenn Webb and Shay Wescott. And a very special thanks to Flaherty x Boulder programmers Kelsey White, and L u m i a for two wonderful programs. And most of all, thank you to Mimesis artists, who contributed their work to our community and who traveled to Boulder, either virtually or in person, to be together in such a difficult time. Your work and your presence are what made this event so special.

This inaugural edition of the Mimesis Journal, written by artist and scholar Renata Barreto, represents a snapshot of the themes and conversations that emerged over the course of the 2021 event. It includes essays, program notes, interviews with artists, and information about the festival. The 2021 Journal was designed by Nima Bahrehmand and edited by Eric Coombs Esmail with photography by Laurids Andersen Sonne.

Opening Night

Artist Lynne Sachs opened the festival on Wednesday, August 4th in the Boedecker Cinema with her new feature.

Drawing on a painstaking personal archive of images, home movies, and interviews, *Film About A Father Who* is a rare kind of cinematic portrait: one that succeeds in expanding our understanding of the filmmaker, her protagonist, and their relationship through its structure, aesthetic, and method. A beautiful accumulation of time, contradictions, and a multitude of perspectives reflects the all-too-familiar operatic dynamics of family.



Workshop:

Day Residue

On Saturday, August 7th, Opening Night artist Lynne Sachs led a filmmaking workshop on the every day.

According to Sigmund Freud's theory of dreams, our day residue is composed of the memory traces left by the events of our waking state. In this workshop, we explored the ways in which fragments of our daily lives become material for the making of a film poem. While many people in the film industry rely upon a chronological process that begins with the development phase and ends with post-production, our workshop built on an entirely different creative paradigm that encouraged artists to embrace the nuances, surprises and challenges of their daily lives as a foundation for a diaristic practice.

The workshop included screenings of Lynne's recent short film poems, including *Starfish Aorta Colossus* (2015), *A Month of Single Frames* (2019), *Visit to Bernadette Mayer's Childhood Home* (2020), and *Girl is Presence* (2020) as well as excerpts from her feature *Tip of My Tongue* (2017).



Film About a Father Who

Interview with
Lynne Sachs

“Lynne Sachs is a filmmaker and poet whose work ranges from the very experimental, as in her early films that are reminiscent of Bruce Connor’s found footage experiments, to the observational and essayistic, as seen in Chris Marker’s work. Yet, her work broadens these approaches to include a very genuine, feminist voice that is filled with a sense of honesty and curiosity. Recently, her films have embraced a hybrid form combining various approaches: non-fiction, experimental, and fiction. Contemplating these strategies has led her to ‘a new kind of truth,’ as she allows her real film ‘characters’ to explore storytelling from various subjectivities, various selves and other selves, opening up, perhaps ironically, a more authentic portrayal of being alive during a specific time, in a specific situation or place. We learn that to burrow down into our ability to imagine another’s pain or joy, and then to perform these as part of our own truth for the camera, yields a deeper intimacy than if we’d ‘told the truth.’ Lynne Sachs’s films can best be epitomized by her interests in intimacy, memory, collaboration, and space. Her work often presents her own poetry, beautifully making the audience aware of her unique and probing curiosity about others. Intimacy is also expressed by the way she uses a camera. Textures, objects, places, reflections, faces, hands, all come so close to us in her films. Finally, her work looks for truths in forgotten nooks and crannies, allowing her films to ‘talk nearby instead of talk about’ as renowned theorist and artist Trinh T. Minh Ha, Lynne’s mentor, has written of their shared interest in an alternative approach to documenting the real.”

- Kelly Spivey

Lynne has made over 35 films which have screened at the New York Film Festival, the Sundance Film Festival, Oberhausen, Encuentros del Otro Ciné in Ecuador, BAFICI and Toronto’s Images Festival among others. They have also been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney, Walker Art Center, Wexner Center for the Arts and other venues nationally and internationally. Lynne received a 2014 Guggenheim Fellowship in the Creative Arts. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Renata Barreto: I've watched the film yesterday, and it is so involving. I think every woman can relate to it in some measure too, you know. Many scenes reminded me of specific situations, like the one when you and your sister are in the car.

Lynne Sachs: Well, it's interesting you bring that up, and that you bring up the car. Because usually in a car, we have this sense of being in agreement and moving in a direction that everyone is in unison. Whenever you get into a car, you imagine your destination. And usually everyone is in agreement. But one of the aspects of my childhood that led to an uncomfortability was that unpredictableness. Now, I'm not saying that we were led to a series of traumatic events. They were, in comparison to other people's lives sort of modestly, um, let's say convulsive, or disconcerting or sad, but the accumulation meant that I had a sense of insecurity.

RB: Yeah. We carry that.

LS: We carry that yes. And, I guess that, now that comes with my expectation in relationship to my adult experiences of people being transparent or being clear about their intentions. And the other side of that coin is that those kinds of situations also made me into a person that could adapt to sometimes shocking contexts and places and situations where other people would get really riled up. But I was like, kind of, accustomed to things not going the way I expected. So, it was sort of almost expected for there to be an obstacle. Or the fact that, that I have a kind of curiosity about adventure and about losing control. Like, I don't have to have control of everything.

RB: How long have you been thinking about making this film? Did you have this film in mind when you were gathering footage 20 years ago?

LS: More. I would say exactly 1991 was the point where I

decided that I wanted to make a film about my dad, but I also wanted to make a film about the ways that you can know another human being. So, I thought I would make a kind of triptych where I would make a film about a total stranger, that film I made in 2005. It was a film I made called *States of Unbelonging*, and it was about an Israeli / Palestinian conflict situation where a woman was killed in a terrorist act. And I tried to grapple with that, the political situation there. Then I thought I'd make a film about a person that I had sort of picked up the pieces around. And particularly it was a distant relative of mine who had lived in Italy during World War II. It's called the *Last Happy Day*. And then the film that I thought would be the easiest was *Film About a Father ...* and it was the hardest and took the longest. And it allowed me to realize that sometimes things that seem the most intimate and available are the hardest to understand with clarity. And I kept postponing in a sense, making that film, because of layers of shame. But not just shame around my family and my dad, but shame around the footage and the material. Like, I thought it was ugly, both aesthetically and in terms of the content. So, I would accept any excuse for not finishing this film and doing something else.

RB: Were you shooting "all the time"?

LS: Yeah, I was constantly shooting. It became a running joke. When are you going to finish this film? So, I couldn't go to a dinner. I couldn't go on a trip. I couldn't go to anything without a camera. It kind of drove everybody crazy. But, um, it was just like an extension of my mind. And maybe also by carrying a camera, it gave me an excuse to kind of be quiet or observational rather than totally present, which sometimes makes you feel more relaxed. That whole idea of you hiding behind your camera. You're both there and not there.

RB: So, in the end of the film, you state that it is not a self-portrait or a portrait. Can you talk about this relationship

between the essay film and personal family archives?

LS: Oh, that's a thought-provoking question. When I think of a film portrait, I usually think that it has a kind of a closure, and it becomes a portal by which you can feel a deep appreciation for understanding and engagement with the subject. And you have a sense of the pieces of initially coming together. In contrast, I would say that what I created was more of a Cubist portrait, so that you have constant fissures or fragments where you see my father from various points of view that sometimes contradict each other. In that way, I feel a strong allegiance with the essay film, because the essay film is constantly doubting its own process, its intentions. And I think that I doubted myself, you know, I'd say I kind of dared myself as a daughter to both embrace my dad and look at him from a distance. And to find the structure for this film was really hard. I basically built 12 short experimental films or vignettes in 2019. And then by 2020, I was able to weave them together. And that was kind of a breakthrough for me as a filmmaker because I didn't really know what the center of this film was. I knew what the subject was, but I, I was actually more intrigued by these different conceits or tropes that I was exploring, like unrequited love or filial love or, um, filial is a funny word. Isn't that the word in Portuguese? I must've thought about that. Cause we don't use the word very much.

RB: Yes, it is, you're right!

LS: I don't speak Portuguese, but I know a few words here and there ... so, by editing the film in these discreet ways, I felt a sense of a kind of excitement by creating beginnings and endings for each of those tropes. And in the end, I think it worked for the film because I wanted the audience to have moments of being aware of transitions, where your push and your pull and your relief and your curiosity and your pathos, in separate ways...and then the structure could pull it together. And I've always edited my longer films from the middle out. I thought if you knew the ending



already, it wouldn't be very exciting to work on. So, I usually figure out the ending at the end, like the titles you saw in this film. I really figured out when we were finishing the film. Because I knew I wanted the movie to have this ambiguity between the family tree and what, in sort of grammatical studies, are called sentence diagramming. Did you ever do that? You know, there's a sentence and then you have a clause. Maybe they still do it with Portuguese, but they don't do it in this country anymore. But the woman who did the animation knew about it, she'd gone to Catholic school. And she understood when I said, I want it to feel almost like social science structures, like family kinship and grammar were both very fragile.

RB: Can you develop on what you were just saying right now about scenes not being straight up, about how you like to leave some mystery and meaning open to interpretation?

LS: It's interesting, that illustration idea. Lately it's occurred to me, one aspect of documentary practice that doesn't appeal to me is what you just said, the notion of illustration in documentary.

RB: Like an archive or a photo when it is just illustrating the narrative.

LS: Exactly. Yeah, exactly. Or for example, exposition or the idea that you have to give all of that context for the viewer to actually feel comfortable. And I think that feeling comfortable isn't a goal. You want people to play with what is there and not to be given all the clues. Not to answer, not to resolve all of the clues, but to have some. Clues are fine because then it keeps – I guess you said mystery – but it also keeps you engaged. Like, if you watch, let's say, a detective film. I actually liked the ones where I think I could have solved it if I had really paid attention, but I didn't understand the language. So, I like a mystery in which I'm also expected to dive in intellectually, as well.

And it makes you want to see it again. And when you see it again, you understand the language better and feel that you can speak it. And I don't mind if you don't feel you can speak it in the beginning. There's a lot of terminology used in film that kind of turns me off, for example, like B-roll. I don't think, have you heard people use that again? B-roll's often used to illustrate just what you said or to fill up time for the voiceover. And if it can do something more, if it's bringing out some sort of awkwardness in the voiceover or giving it another dimension, maybe you call it poetic depth dimension, something that allows for that "WOW" moment in the viewer. It's like when you go to a funny movie, and I'm not great with funny movies, I'm often the last person to laugh. But I do like the moment where you laugh, because you recognize that quirkiness, or you recognize the irony, and you get surprised. It is that moment where art gets in you. I don't want to laugh at somebody, but with the material. It's great.

RB: Just wondering if you could speak a little bit about the handling of the amount of archives that you had, and how many hours of footage you had to work with.

LS: I started to work with a former student of mine, her name's Rebecca Chavez. She's about exactly the same age as my older daughter. And so once I started working with her, it gave me the chance to understand that I didn't need to be absolutely ashamed of everything. For example, the shot with the three children. They're my siblings and I call it the impressionist shot. You can see it three times in the film and they're playing in the water. I would say the first couple of years that I saw that I just thought that's terrible. It's so degraded. And then I had this awareness that it was one of the best shots of the whole film, because it a) gave my father's perspective, which was a loving one to his children, and b) could hear him speaking and kind of admonishing, but also holding or putting the camera on the tripod and paying attention, being attentive to who they were as they played. And then instead of throwing it out, I actually took

three different parts of it, included in the film, and allowed the viewer to grow with it, to grow in understanding a sort of dynamics. But that was like some VHS footage that had been in a garage. I think it was actually in a garage in Utah. It took me about a year to go through it because I really wanted to transcribe everything. And then once it was in my Excel sheet, I could use a finder to say, oh, this would connect with this, and made use of the computer a bit that way.

RB: You used Excel to do that?

LS: I just used Excel and would type the tape that we were using. There weren't just tapes, some of them were film rolls. I mean, a lot of what was complicated technically was that we had shot in VHS originally, which people did in the eighties. I shot on 16 millimeter, Super 8, regular 8.

RB: Love all of them. There is the Hi8 too.

LS: Yes, actually lot of it is Hi8. Yeah. Funny that you mentioned that. Can I tell you something about Hi8? Yeah. Took me a really long time to recognize this. So I had all this material. It would have been from the late eighties. Um, no, no late eighties to middle nineties because that's when Hi8 was going on.

RB: I still use it eventually.

LS: So, but back then people would have a Hi8 camera and they would have only one tape and then they would spin it off to VHS. So, they would use the same Hi8 tape over and over. But I forgot that. So I spent the longest time looking for the original tapes and then I said, oh my God, there's none, nobody cared about the original, it was just about how to watch it. Yeah. So there was no original. And the funny thing was the VHS would often be recorded on old, prerecorded tapes, like in the grocery store. It had other things like old cartoons on them. So, like, no, you didn't care

about ... nothing was precious. Yeah.

RB: Just one last question. Would you say that your experimental film and your poetry are in dialogue with each other?

LS: A lot of the writing for this film came out of the book. I maybe didn't even appreciate that until a few years ago, but I always wrote poetry, but it was more private. And then, I realized that if I'm trying to understand something about what's going on in my life or if I just feel like playing, I like to write in that realm and not as strict. So, definitely experimental.

FLAHERTY

x Boulder

Flaherty NYC programmers-in-residence Kelsey White and L u m i a presented a two-art program and workshop entitled *Solace In the Shadows*.

“The decline of civilization casts a long, dark shadow. The Earth is not dying, we are making it uninhabitable. Where can we find solace? At times, cinema has been a fertile land where the complex reality of existence took on many forms, and a constant search for new ideas strengthened viewers’ resistance against homogenization. These two programs investigate the current state of this cultural war, highlighting filmmakers who search for new languages to respond to the many crises that mark this epoch of chicken bones and cheap condos

The first program includes films from decades past yet relevant as ever for their probing depictions of identity: as performance that subverts representation, as illusory and fluid social and material categories, as the sensitive, fragmented self embracing a breakdown. The second focuses on the present and what we can glean from ancestors and myths of the past to make sense of the now. These films weave questions of identity with moments of transcendence, generously honoring existence as it is yet never giving up on the possibility of transformation and renewal.”

- Kelsey White and L u m i a



Solace in the Shadows

Program 1:
Screened on Thursday, August 5th in the Grace Gamm Theater.

Zone (1983, Super 8, 8')
by Sokhi Wagner

Doppelgänger (1987, Super 8 to 16mm, 8')
by Peggy Ahwesh

Smoke (1995, Super 8 to 16mm, 26')
by Pelle Lowe

The Accursed Mazurka (1994, 16mm, 40')
by Nina Fonoroff

Program 2:
Screened on Thursday, August 5th in the Boedecker Cinema.

małni - towards the ocean, towards the shore (2020, 80')
by Sky Hopinka

Workshop

Earth Dancing with Jane Wodening

Held on Thursday, August 5th in the Grace Gamm Theater.

"I wanted to understand the patterns of various worlds in the history of life on Earth, how the mass extinctions happen and how a new world starts up, and what it's made of. I couldn't find the book that would tell me, so I wrote it."

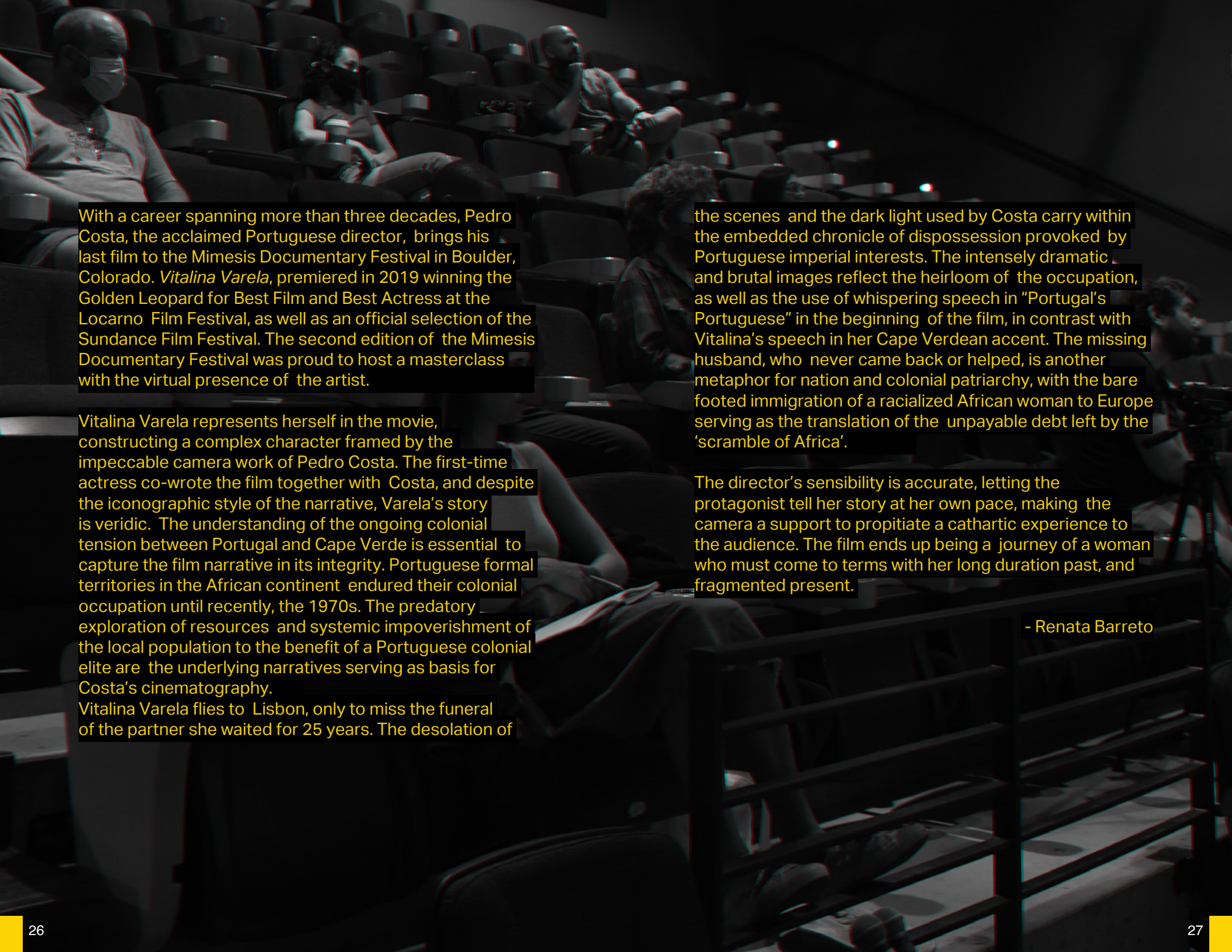
"This is not science and I am no scientist. I've read the scientists' papers for a few years, thousands of them. But I'm a story-teller, and Earth Dancing is a story-teller's rendering of that history."

- Jane Wodening



'21 Featured Artist
**Pedro Costa and
Vitalina Varela**

Vitalina Varela is the masterful last film from Pedro Costa, the acclaimed director of *Horse Money*, *Colossal Youth*, *In Vanda's Room* and *Casa de Lava*. *Vitalina Varela*, a 55-year-old Cape Verdean, arrives in Lisbon three days after her husband's funeral. She's been waiting for her plane ticket for more than 25 years.



With a career spanning more than three decades, Pedro Costa, the acclaimed Portuguese director, brings his last film to the Mimesis Documentary Festival in Boulder, Colorado. *Vitalina Varela*, premiered in 2019 winning the Golden Leopard for Best Film and Best Actress at the Locarno Film Festival, as well as an official selection of the Sundance Film Festival. The second edition of the Mimesis Documentary Festival was proud to host a masterclass with the virtual presence of the artist.

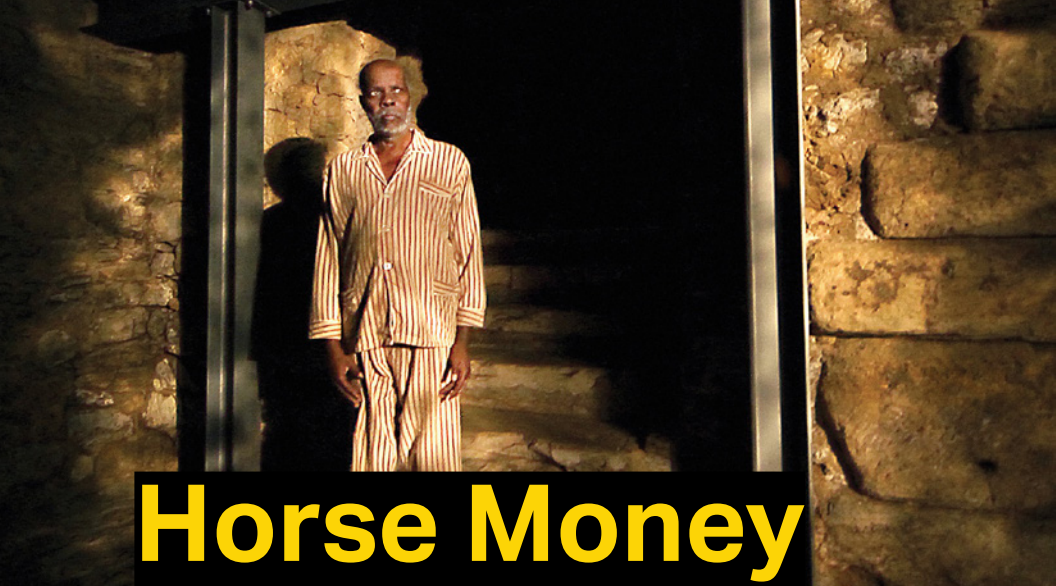
Vitalina Varela represents herself in the movie, constructing a complex character framed by the impeccable camera work of Pedro Costa. The first-time actress co-wrote the film together with Costa, and despite the iconographic style of the narrative, Varela's story is veridic. The understanding of the ongoing colonial tension between Portugal and Cape Verde is essential to capture the film narrative in its integrity. Portuguese formal territories in the African continent endured their colonial occupation until recently, the 1970s. The predatory exploration of resources and systemic impoverishment of the local population to the benefit of a Portuguese colonial elite are the underlying narratives serving as basis for Costa's cinematography.

Vitalina Varela flies to Lisbon, only to miss the funeral of the partner she waited for 25 years. The desolation of

the scenes and the dark light used by Costa carry within the embedded chronicle of dispossession provoked by Portuguese imperial interests. The intensely dramatic and brutal images reflect the heirloom of the occupation, as well as the use of whispering speech in "Portugal's Portuguese" in the beginning of the film, in contrast with Vitalina's speech in her Cape Verdean accent. The missing husband, who never came back or helped, is another metaphor for nation and colonial patriarchy, with the bare footed immigration of a racialized African woman to Europe serving as the translation of the unpayable debt left by the 'scramble of Africa'.

The director's sensibility is accurate, letting the protagonist tell her story at her own pace, making the camera a support to propitiate a cathartic experience to the audience. The film ends up being a journey of a woman who must come to terms with her long duration past, and fragmented present.

- Renata Barreto



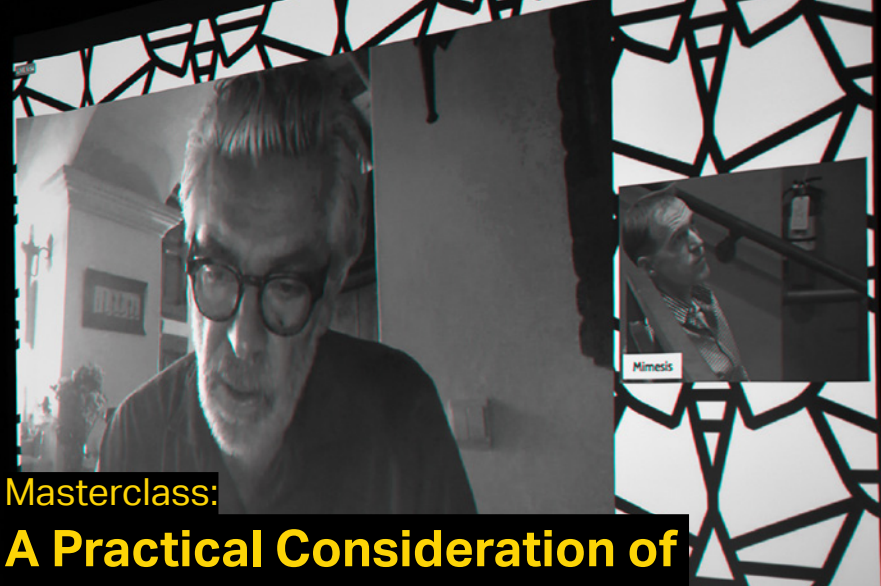
Horse Money

Horse Money by Pedro Costa (2014, 103')

Screened on Sunday, August 8 in the Boedecker Cinema.

Horse Money is a mesmerizing odyssey into the real, imagined, and nightmarish memories of the elderly Ventura, a Cape Verdean immigrant living in Lisbon. The time is now, a numbing and timeless present of hospital stays, bureaucratic questioning, and wandering through remembered spaces ... and suddenly it is also then, the mid '70s and the time of Portugal's Carnation Revolution, when Ventura got into a knife fight with his friend Joaquim. *Horse Money* is a self-reckoning, a moving memorialization of lives in danger of being forgotten, as well as a piercingly beautiful work of modern cinema.

This screening was followed by a conversation with the artist.



Masterclass:

A Practical Consideration of Editing

On Sunday, August 8th Pedro Costa led a masterclass in the Grace Gamm Theater on film editing. The session was built around a new restoration of Costa's iconic documentary *Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?* (2001), which follows Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet in the editing room as they work on their 1999 drama, *Sicilia!* Like the film, participants examined the practicalities of editorial decision-making, having the unique opportunity to engage with a virtuosic filmmaker and his process.

The event was moderated by filmmaker and anthropologist Dr. Christian Hammons.

Interviews

The following interviews with Mimesis '21 artists explore subjects ranging from authorship to identity, history to labor, and place to the archive. These thoughtful conversations offer insight into the vast possibilities of documentary media from diverse perspectives, while illuminating specific works showcased at the festival. Interviews with Skywatchers, Che Applewhaite, Malia Bruker, and Sarah Cruz were conducted, written, and edited by Renata Barreto.



Interview with Skywatchers Reimagining the City, As Our

Who has the right to the city? Who is allowed to linger on its streets, to see oneself in its landscapes, included and represented in its conceptions of 'the public'?

Through the creative examination of 'hostile design,' this video imagines public space as attuned to the needs and uses of marginally housed and houseless San Francisco residents.

The film is a collaboration between San Francisco-based filmmaker Irene Gustafson and Tenderloin-based and community embedded social practice ensemble Skywatchers. Skywatchers began in 2011 in the tenant lounge of a Tenderloin SRO (Single Room Occupancy Hotel) and has since grown into an ongoing conversation focused on the creation of new performance works emerging from an enduring collaboration between professional artists and formerly homeless resident artists of the neighborhood.

Renata Barreto: I will first ask you about a little bit, of course, about the history of Skywatchers and why, when, and how the collective started and how it is configured right now.

Joel Yates: Skywatchers are celebrating their 10th year located out of San Francisco and attending to one community, the Tenderloin neighborhood. Skywatchers was founded by ABD productions, a female and queer centered dance company, working for numerous years. Ten years ago they started doing public performances, performing dances in public spaces, bringing performance to the public as you normally wouldn't see performances and spontaneous pop-ups. And they're doing this in a place called the Tenderloin National Forest, which is a green space here in the middle of the neighborhood. She, Anne Bluethenthal, the founder of Skywatchers, started having a conversation with some of the tenants of the adjacent buildings in a SRO. SRO's make up the majority of the Tenderloin housing. Dating back to the early, early part of the century, they were housing for a lot of the workers, the dock workers. You had a lot of brothels. This was a nightlife entertainment spot. You know, the SROs moved from being weekly occupancy to full residential.

RB: And is it located in downtown San Francisco? And how is the community around it? Because San Francisco is an expensive place, at least in the imaginary of people who are not in San Francisco. Right?

JY: Technically, for a lot of people, it's not considered a neighborhood. It's like a place you just drive through. Our district is connected to an extremely expensive, high-end area filled with tech residents. Our district also extends out to Treasure Island, which has a lot more low-income housing but actually has a lot of high rises being added to it. Property values are increasing. A lot of times people kind of compare the Tenderloin to Skid Row in LA, as like a smaller version. There's a strange contrast between the

market values and, say, the economy of the residents, as on one block you have expensive neighborhoods to the north, low income to the south, and then you have a lot of tourism going into the east and west. In the Tenderloin, a lot of the buildings are SRO, they're income-based. You have to be, I believe, it's a 100% to 300% of low to medium, median income of the area. You have a few apartments scattered within, but for the most part, everyone is living low income and disabled or retired.

RB: What about the Skywatchers? How did the gathering of people take place? You said ten years ago, right? So 2011?

JY: Anne Bluethenthal started just talking to these people living in the SRO adjacent to the garden where she was performing, I guess. The people had art interests, some were writers, some were painters. There were people that were living beyond the perceived environment of the neighborhood, living beyond what the neighborhood was. And she started talking to people that desired to connect on an artist level. They started to meet monthly in different buildings that are connected – having open mics, having drum circles, and eventually that progressed to, a few years ago, actually meeting in one specific spot for home base. They started putting on productions and these productions are collaborations, conversations, contributions of all the talent that was in the room. It can be performing arts, singing, dancing. Now, everybody within the group either has a specific talent or is reaching into that talent.

RB: So is there any formal structure or formal requirement to be part of Skywatchers or is it just like a come and participate basis?

JY: Respect and love, have an open mind. Don't be afraid to be yourself.

RB: So how would you classify the artwork of the collective? Do you think it would fit, for example, in an art

gallery, or is it something made only for the streets? What is Skywatchers political relation with art spaces?

JY: We actually just finished completing a portrait project. Shavonne Allen can speak about that.

Shavonne Allen: The way I would answer that question is we do multiple things. The work comes from our lived experiences. So, when we get together and have these conversations, it evolves – the work evolves from those conversations and from our writing. So, when we have performances that we take to theaters or most recently, because of the pandemic, out to the street, it's very impactful and very human. We just completed a project called "Opulence Portraits" and our work again, as, you know, is about our life experiences. It's a journey, so there's many layers to it, but in the end, the end project is so beautiful.

SA: They're called "Opulence Portraits" where the task was to reimagine ourselves as our boldest and highest selves. And for example, mine was 'Goddess of Empathy.' The concept of each portrait was our own and then we collaboratively came up with the story, the character, the background, the attire, and the form of these magnificent portraits. And I think that these portraits could be in any gallery. Absolutely. We know that this work is good, it's gallery worthy. But it belongs on the street too, where it can be seen and celebrated by all. Everyone should have access to this art, it's part of what makes it great. People who know me and us, can see me and can see us – it's a gift to the community. It's visibility.

Irene Gustafson: They're really beautiful portraits that I think are, in part, inspired by portraiture as a kind of high art form. But the whole point of Skywatchers is to blow apart the idea of art as some sort of rarefied or commoditized project. So within Skywatchers, there's no real or hard distinction between art practice, conversation,

community building, advocacy, political activism. It's really about trying to figure out ways to merge all those things in a way that produces great art, but that also makes the city better, makes life better for the individual participants and for the different people that come in and collaborate. The structure of Skywatchers is an ongoing, long-term, durational conversation between people who live and/or work in the Tenderloin. There are artist facilitators who come in and engage in that conversation. So, I've been part of that conversation for like a year and a half. When I came in there had been a long-term ongoing conversation about design and public space. Skywatchers had been talking about it and thinking about it from their own personal experiences, generating poetry about it, doing mapping projects, making art about it, making shorter videos about public space, critiquing and analyzing it. I had been working on another project about public space. So, when I came in, I just kind of tried to add to or enhance that already existent and ongoing conversation as all of the work is generated from community concerns.

RB: That brings up my next question. I was going to ask, trying to bring the film in, about the theme of the film. The film is supposed to be seen as specific to the life in the city and the life in the Tenderloin community, or is it relevant to other low-income communities?

SA: The way I can answer that for myself is that being a part of the film and living in the Tenderloin, that has a lot of history, the neighborhood has gone through a lot of different changes. Looking at public space through the film, revealed that the Tenderloin was, of course, filled with a lot of problems. But it helped me to understand how to reclaim public space and to capitalize on the positive things that people can't necessarily see – the relationships. Tenderloin is arguably one of the most diverse places on the west coast.

Allied to that, people who are suffering are not going to

disappear. You know, people who age out of foster care, people who come out of addiction, people who come out of domestic violence, people who are poor and on fixed incomes, they're not going to disappear. The Tenderloin has survived a number of gentrification efforts and it's still a place where many of us can live. I come out of a place called the Fillmore where urban renewal destroyed my community. It's no longer, it exists in love in the sense of ghosts. It was a vibrant African American community, and now it no longer exists as that. The Tenderloin has a lot of cultural diversity that doesn't exist in any other place in San Francisco. For me, the future for the city means that we celebrate and elevate this.

Being a part of this film has made me more aware of the power of my voice and to spread that message and to interact with my neighbors. We should use public space for things that are going to heal the community, you know? That's what I have to say about that.

RB: What about the structure of the collective, is there any structure in there, like hierarchy or something like that?

SA: Well, my experience is that every voice and every member is equally important. I mean, we all have different roles and different talents, of course, but every voice is part of the tapestry of Skywatchers.

RB: Oh, that's a really good image. The tapestry ...

SA: I've never been to Brazil, but I imagine it's like the process of preparation for Carnival – it's not only about the end product. When we make art together, the art grows and changes as we interact with each other and celebrate one another, as we build community. Each person and each part is important. And for me, I care about my fellow Skywatchers and my community. I care about things that they're interested in, the things that they're working on. As I learn about them, I also grow as an artist and as a person.

As I become invested in this work, I become more invested in my community.

RB: You are absolutely right. The Carnaval is a very community based festivity that goes around all Brazil, but the making of it is very localized, old masters keeping the traditions, you know very, very localized and community based.

I just want to ask you about how many people participate in Skywatchers? Do you have this kind of estimate? There's a lot of potential for political action, don't you think?

SA: Joel, do you want to answer that? I'm going to say that it's been very organic for me. I joined Skywatchers a couple of years ago, and it was just an invitation to come check it out and it spoke to my heart and I see that it's the same thing for a lot of people. Some people participate on a regular basis. They're there every meeting and other people kind of come in and come out. But everyone involved has the Skywatchers' spirit.

JY: We do have facilitators, artistic directors, co-artist creators, residents from the Tenderloin, and other artists that show up at our meetings. Our process is conversational. For example, Shavonne had an idea last week, it was solid, and one of the facilitators then brought it to the whole group. And then the whole group may work with Shavonne's idea and bring that into a show. That's exactly how a work came about within this last week. Shavonne and I were actually given an invitation, which was accepted, to join the staff of Skywatchers. Shavonne is going to be working with youth in the community. Another example, we collaborated with Irene on the documentary. We may be asked to speak when we have different screenings of the film. We may, at times, get invited to other social organizations or cultural educational organizations, and the conversations arise and continue. So it's all kinds of stuff going on.

IG: In terms of the number of Skywatchers, the most recent performance was co-created and performed by an ensemble of almost 30 Skywatchers.

RB: Let me just ask you about the process of the film. Was it spontaneous or was there some kind of script for the film?

SA: The concept was already there. Some of it was scripted, but then some of it was improvised, as far as the body movement, how we reacted to the physical spaces of hostile architecture. The whole process made me more aware of how I navigate my community and city. It gave me a framework to understand why things are like they are, and helped fuel my own activism, to get involved in different movements, different events, and different protests. It gave me a framework to understand what was going on – the history of why people were out on the sidewalks, why certain architecture existed. So, I became more aware of all of that participating in the film. So, it's been life-changing and transformative on how I feel about and look at my community. Especially as 40% of the residents of the Tenderloin are African American, or something like, 30% to 40%. While the total African American population of San Francisco is about 3%. Me and Joel were recently trying to figure out the percentage of African Americans in the neighborhood, you know, because that leaves an impact on you. You don't even realize that when you're a part of a dwindling community.

RB: So, the African American population in San Francisco is in general 3%? And in the Tenderloin it's closer to 40%?

SA: About 30, 40%, but some days it looks like 80%.

RB: Would you say that Tenderloin is like a ghetto inside San Francisco?

SA: Absolutely. Even though we don't use that terminology

anymore. I grew up in San Francisco and the Tenderloin is often called a containment zone. It's surrounded by a lot of multinational corporations and these monstrous luxury condos. If you want to define a ghetto as a place where there's a lot of poverty and human strife and low-income people who are being contained by greedy corporations and civic neglect, then yes.

IG: The Tenderloin is a really amazing and complicated neighborhood. A place of dense history, resilience and resistance, and important for the city's future. I hope the film communicates some of that.



Interview with **Che Applewhaite**

Che Applewhaite is a filmmaker, writer, and cultural worker. He holds internationalist and interdisciplinary commitments to politics of time, specificity, relation, and cultural process. His debut short film, *A New England Document* (Sheffield Doc/Fest 2020, Royal Anthropological Institute Film Festival 2021) won the Best Emerging Artist jury award at the Mimesis Documentary Festival. He has written for publications including Harvard Magazine, Open City Documentary Festival, and Millennium Film Journal and worked for artist-filmmakers Christopher Harris and Ja'Tovia Gary for the Harvard-Mindich Program for Engaged Scholarship and Harvard Art Museums, respectively. He was born in Trinidad, grew up in London, and graduated from Harvard University with a BA in Anthropology, History, and Literature.

Renata Barreto: Tell me a little bit about your personal history, you were born in Trinidad?

Che Applewhaite: I grew up in London because my parents moved there when I was three years old. I live in London but went back to Trinidad every two years just to like, see family, you know, grandparents, although I have family in other places, some in New York, most of them are in Trinidad. I mean, you know, when I think of the kind of things I care about, growing up in North London, away from family, I would go in [galleries] often to see all my friends and art. I can think of it now as me preparing myself for who I wanted to be. Just by looking at art, mostly video-art, to understand artists, I was preparing to be one myself. Especially for video exhibits, I'd stay in the space for the whole exhibition time.

RB: So, why did you come to the US, what was the idea?

CA: I came at eighteen to do my undergrad here at Harvard. I knew I wanted to do liberal arts, like my major is anthropology, history, and literature. So it's like, two departments, but it's three kind of subjects. I kind of wanted to mix those things.

RB: How did you decide to become a historian?

CA: Good question! Thank you! History as a topic and as a field of entry is not a subject often considered by filmmakers. Why is it that any kind of encounter with some of these Black methods that we see in films like *Handsworth Songs* (Black Audio Film Collective, 1986), for example, are confined to university spaces? These people, who are now very formative in my way of thinking, are cloistered in some way. I'm interested in understanding how the way that they do history can be shown to a wider audience. And film seems like a good way to do that because images often are more readily accessible to people than texts. I think Ousmane Sembene said

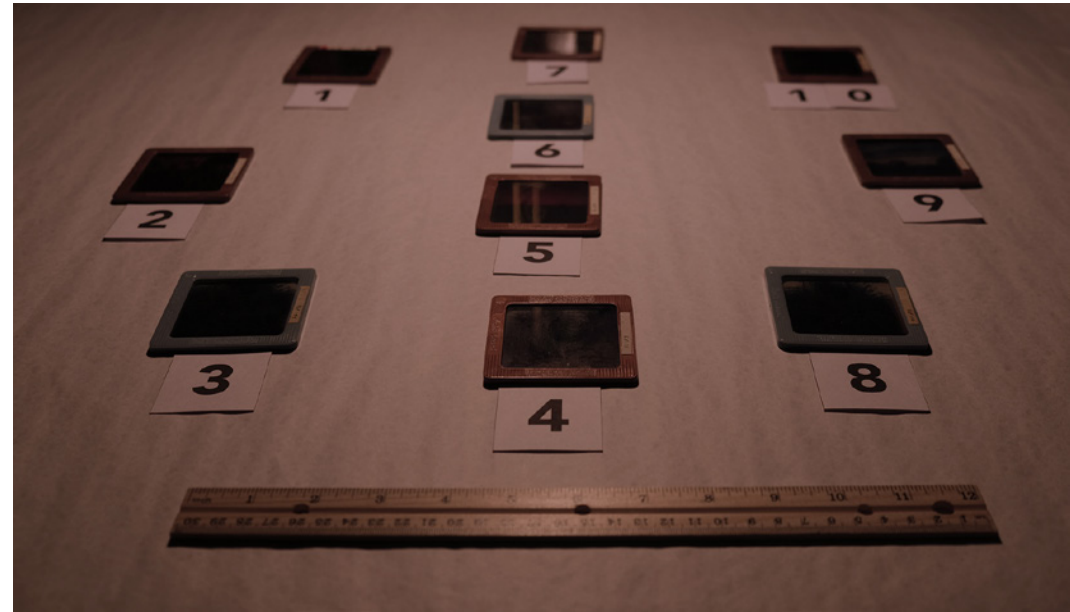
something like that. Freshman year, I started to think what kind of audience I wanted to speak to, because I grew up, you know, between different places; London and Trinidad. I want to honor those things. Film can be a way of connecting cultures, bringing images from different places, like connecting them. And that itself is doing the thing that history wants to do, which is create community. With this idea in mind, I'd seen *Handsworth Songs* for a documentary class, I remember seeing it in bed and I was like, this film is astonishing. I didn't know you could make a film like that. Why this work is restricted to a Harvard classroom?

All those feelings were bubbling up and then I said, okay, well, if this is, you know, something I really like, and I resonate with, I want to try and make myself something that would be in that vein. I went back to London on a holiday break. It was, um, like December 2018, sent some emails, had conversations with some people in the film industry about my idea, and the people (Mark Nash and Nia Childs) were like, oh, this is a good idea. I started that following semester making *A New England Document*. At Harvard, my discussions with people throughout the process reframed my ideas, I think it helped solidify my experience at the institution. The [Peabody] Museum became really like, an important space for inquiry. Not really because of the museum itself, but because of kind of the things made possible ideologically by the space.

RB: So you've worked within a space containing a museum, a library, and an archive?

CA: Yeah. The Peabody Museum houses over 1.2 million objects underground. I mean, it's cool. But it's also terrible, cause it's kind of a burial site, there are a lot of things that are really troubling about that space. There is Adam and Zack Khalil's argument that the archive is a prison ... I felt like I was being haunted constantly. There were all these objects, Native American artifacts. They are living objects that are, in some way, playing dead

because of the institutional framework and the way they [at the museum] see these things.



RB: How did you choose this particular set of archives to work with?

CA: There was an exhibition in January 2019 about a photographer [hired by amateur ethnographers Lorna and Laurence Marshall] doing work in Namibia in the 50's, doing ethnographic photography. And I remember looking at the exhibition and thinking there's something missing here. You know, there was a history of former colonial representations of these people, Indigenous people that lived there. And those representations had happened from the early 19th century onward. But there was just still something that was troubling about the space itself, so I went into the archives. I wanted to see – not photos of the Indigenous people – but photos of the Marshalls themselves, because they went there with their children. John Marshall, it's kind of a detour, but he's like a quote-unquote famous filmmaker, and he set up the Film Study

Center at Harvard with Robert Gardner in like 1958, 1959, with this material that they'd got from this expedition. That became a pivotal moment in the history of film at Harvard. That was interesting to me because the Film Center never talked about it, as if they don't really acknowledge, I think, the role that this expedition had in setting up their tradition 'cause in some way the Film Center is a legacy of this expedition. I wanted to know what happened in this expedition, I was looking for the original thing. So, I was looking at the archives for these photos, diaries from the early portion of the trip, because I wanted to know how they felt when they would just sign out the photos, I kind of wanted to know what was happening when they were still questioning themselves and their motivations.

RB: I am curious to know about the voice over. Did you write that?

CA: I did not write that, I edited it, but some of the text is from Elizabeth Marshall's published writings. She became a writer after the expedition. I collected the archives, diary archives, and put them together in a narrative. It's like a remix of them in some way.

I wanted to find information about family life not revealed in public. I remember I'm reading through a memoir and like I was only reading the first 10 pages. It wasn't much. And so I was like, okay, I need to kind of investigate more here. Right?

RB: And how did you approach her?

CA: I told her I wanted to not really focus on the people they studied, but her family. She was just like, oh, no one had done that before. And she was like, yeah, well, you know, it seems interesting, I'm going to help you. At that point it was very early in the process. I think starting in February, I was just going on a hunt [for material]. So, she drove me to New Hampshire, to her house. Getting there, I

went around to the guard's gate inside of the room to have other shots. I used stuff like their own photographs and shots in rooms.

RB: The interior images feel very intimate..

CA: I mean, I just stayed one night, but like, yeah, it's interesting you say that because there were things I was trying to imagine happening. For example, I'd already seen some photography in the archives, so I kind of knew the photographs I wanted to use before I went there. So I was looking for connections between the elsewhere of the Kalahari desert and New Hampshire.

RB: What about the metalinguistic aspect of the film? The archival manipulation being featured, for example.

CA: I am the one manipulating the archives in the film. It makes it feel really atmospheric, like I was doing the investigating, you know, seeking, seeking through and in this space, all of that kind of came into the visual language.

I did everything. I mean, the only help I had was with the sound mix. A friend of mine is a DJ (Swan Drama), he did the sound design, then I did the sound mix. We exchanged some files, it was like, I like this, but maybe change this a bit here and then you send it back and then good. And then it really came together, he was very, very kind to do that.

RB: At the same time that media literacy becomes more and more a tendency in education, as the years go by students have shorter patience to watch feature films and long documentaries. From this prism, could you talk about the relationship between history and film? It is difficult to find a filmmaker that it is also a historian ...

CA: Yeah. I see both as equivalent. I'm really glad that you kind of see the equivalency in both, because I think that, too, and often we don't realize that the forms in which we

have written history are also themselves the product of decisions and power.

It is a kind of a response in some way, also to the ubiquity of images in our day and age. I think saying that, like, I don't want to give up the means of representation that are most powerful to the people who are in power. In the Mimesis Festival, during Pedro Costa's masterclass, he says that it's important to make films about the 90% of the people who live on the planet, even though film often is not made by this 90% of people who live on this planet. It must be about them, or even, you know, in any way related to who they are, what they experienced, *et cetera*.

I agree with him in the sense that photography is happening through colonial tools of power and like, you know, directly, not just as a secondary effect. In this film I was trying to do the impossible task of retrieving an Indigenous perspective, and a perspective that is documented in the photography, you know, it's there.

And it's trying to ask many different questions, but one question related to yours is: what would be an alternative cinema history?

When the Marshalls had gone on the expedition in '58, they weren't, you know, people with racist ties, and they could recognize that Indigenous cinema was being born in some way through their encounter, but still being born.

When we think about the history of dominant cementations ... these people, you know, living that ...were intimately acquainted with the means of colonial representation from the 19th century, you know what I mean?

I think history should be written for community. And for me, I'm trying to create a community in which Black Indigenous people's perspectives continue to survive. And the way I can do that is to build it, you know, through this medium, as opposed to the medium being the goal.

For me it's not the goal. It's a battlefield. But that, what film, what cinema is. In its different forms, structural film installation, static photography, ready-made ... the way that they have used photographic objects, filming objects to tell different stories about form itself. And then how those stories about form reframe all possibilities for community.

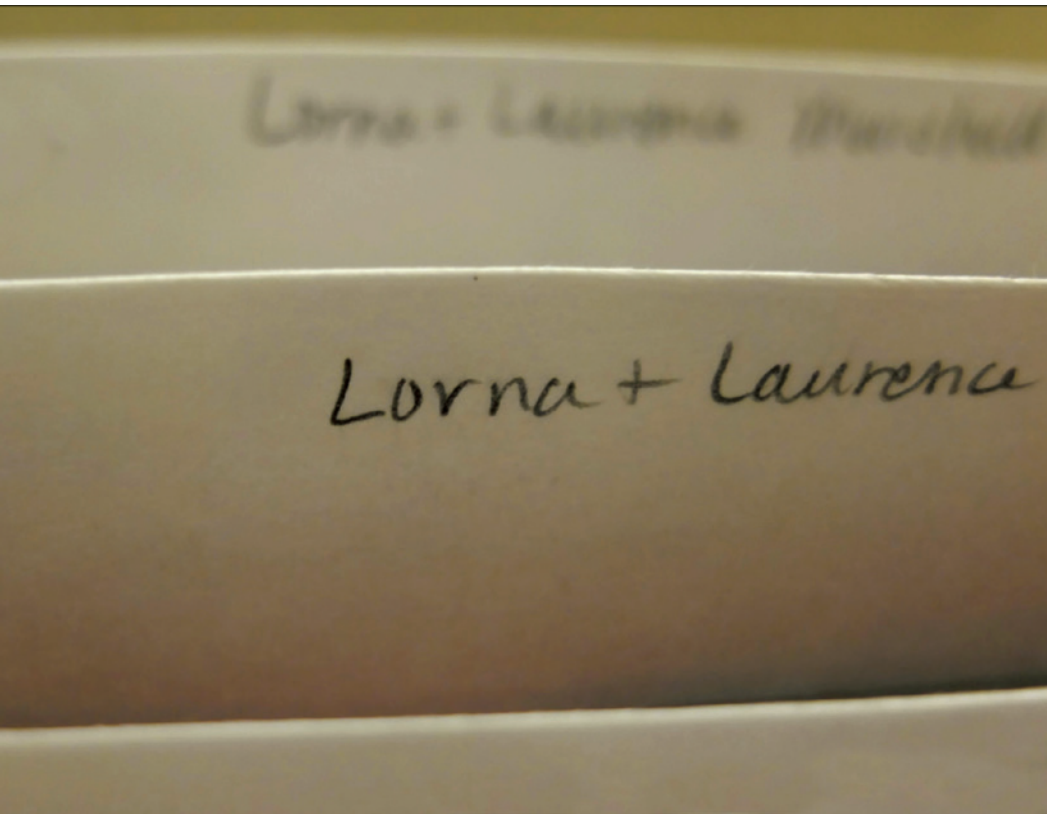
All kinds of communities, whether it's a school, whether it's a church, whether that's a coffee shop.

So, for me, it's been important to think about the structure as much as the story. I think metalinguistic method, it's really present, like 3D, embedded.

You can train something a certain way, so you can have the voice over, the music types, text, music, image ... you can even have some of the dimensionality, a kind of facsimile of the real.

RB: Are there any works from the festival that you would like to comment upon, or to link to your own?

CA: I would say *The Celine Archive* by Celine Parreñas Shimizu. So, it's basically about a situation that happened in 1932 where a woman named Celine, a Filipino American woman, was killed by a Filipino American organization after reporting sexual violence. It was retaliatory violence. And her death was covered up by the community. So, the film for me was just incredibly moving and incredibly grounding, incredibly inspiring, because she worked with the family to reclaim the story – in some ways with, and for them. The filmmaker also experienced grief [from the death of her own son]; there's so many ways, like levels, upon which the story on that kind of archival usage was in service of creating community, and putting bones to rest, you know. I was so moved to see somebody to do that kind of work. I think it was a long-term project. That kind of ethic for me was very appreciated.



There was another film about a woman who kind of resurrected herself as a mango tree to escape violence in her life, *The Mango Tree* by Pooja Jain. And it's evocative, speculative, but not offensive, but, like, mid-grounds a mythical interpretation of nature. And like, [involved] non-Western temporalities and ontologies, and which actually made me reframe some things in my own film. I thought about what else is denied by a kind of landscape photography that does not attend to who tended to those landscapes and who believed it was an escape, as something more than just soil.

Additionally, just on a personal level, there is this film by Emmett Casey (*Changes in the Ocean, Changes in the Sea*),

who is here at Mimesis. It was so kindly done in a stream of consciousness, in a way that really attended to how this person spoke, how they narrated that story. And I felt really like, oh my God, it's very rare that I resonate with a story about Black people. Like, because it's all kind of similar. But this was like, I think, oh, I can, I can relax and resonate with this person. I like the style of the film and I'm grateful for that. So, I think those are some of the ones I really like.

Using found footage with selected images and text from The Marshall Collection at Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, A New England Document reconstructs the impulse of two ethnographers' photographic encounters in the Kalahari Desert, Namibia, from the reparative perspective of its formerly silenced stories. The filmmaker, a Black international Harvard undergraduate, and their daughter, New York Times bestselling writer Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, give voice in fragmentary counterpoint upon the haunting sounds of archival ghosts: of future possibility arising from once known pasts.

Turning by Lucille Clifton

**turning
turning into my own
turning on in
to my own self
at last
turning out of the
white cage, turning out of the**

lady cage
turning at last
on a stem like a black fruit
in my own season
at last



BATAY THE STRUGGLE LA

DIRECTED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY MALIA BRUKER PRODUCED BY SARAH CRUZ MALIA BRUKER
EDITED BY CHRIS FILIPPONE ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS DIDIER DOMINIQUE YANNICK ETIENNE
NARRATION WRITTEN BY YANNICK ETIENNE KIKI WAINWRIGHT MALIA BRUKER

BATAYLAFILM.COM

Conflict*

The company's for the boss,
the profit's for the boss,
the crumbs are for the workers.

The boss,
the workers,
the conflict.

The boss,
the workers,
the conflict,
the strike,
the mediation.

The company's for the boss,
the profit's for the boss,
the crumbs are for the workers.

The boss,
the workers,
the conflict,
the strike;
the mediation...the mediation...
the mediation...the mediation...the Revolution.

The company's for the workers,
the profit's for the people.

by Kiki Wainwright

*This poem was first published in English in 2011 in the book *Liberation Poetry: An Anthology* edited by Tontongi and Jill Netchinsky.

In Kreyol:

Konfli

Faktori patwon
benefis patwon,
byen bwè byen manje,
lasibab ouvriye.

Patwon an
ouvriye yo,
konfli
grèv
revokasyon
negosyasyon.

Faktori patwon
benefis patwon,
byen bwè byen manje,
lasibab ouvriye.
Patwon an
ouvriye yo,

konfli
grèv
revokasyon
negosyasyon...negosyasyon...
negosyasyon...san koule...
Revolisyon!

Faktori ouvriye
benefis mas yo.

by Kiki Wainwright

Interview with **Malia Bruker and Sarah Cruz**

Malia Bruker is a filmmaker and Associate Professor of Digital Media Production at Florida State University. Her films have screened extensively in North America and Europe, including screenings at International Film Festival Rotterdam, Berlin Feminist Film Week, and Antimatter, with awards from Chicago Underground Film Festival, Philadelphia Film Festival, Atlanta International Documentary Film Festival, American Dance Festival, and more.

Sarah Cruz works in public radio and as an anti-imperialist organizer in Miami, FL. In 2012, Sarah travelled with the organization One Struggle to Haiti. She met with textile workers from across the country and organized with Batay Ouvriye to learn about their struggles, how they organize, and to discuss international solidarity. After this trip, she helped launch the Rapid Response Network to bring attention and solidarity to Haitian workers' fight for wages, social services, and basic rights.

Renata Barreto: I want to ask about your affiliation, and you were talking about Sarah's link with Haitian organizations. How did that start?

Sarah Cruz: In 2012 I was part of an organization in Miami called One Struggle. That's an anti-imperialist organization, and that organization was inspired by Batay Ouvriye, the organization in Haiti. So, in 2012, they were having a big conference of all the trade unions that they've developed in Haiti from across the country to come and discuss their issues, their plans, their struggles. And we were invited to join, to talk about international solidarity. So, after that trip, which was like, for me, a life altering trip, I met people. We met in Port-au-Prince at the Batay Ouvriye office there.

RB: Is that the same one that appears in the film?

SC: Yes, but this was at a different location. We have things to say about that space you saw in the film because they're fighting to keep it right now. But in that time, it just kind of really radically altered my life and the way I wanted to live it, and what I wanted to do.

RB: This was 2012, so you were there at the same time the UN troops were organizing the Minustah?

SC: Yes, we were. We actually went to a protest at the Minustah headquarters. So, I met people there that traveled all the way to this meeting, to Port-au-Prince from the north of the country on the top of a bus with no food and their hungry families, because they saw this as their future. And, you know, I went back just being like, I have no reason to not do everything I can to organize, fight and also to amplify these people's reality and their struggle because also the way that they were organizing is very unique. And I think the world can learn from them, which is a big part of why we agreed, and they agreed, to make this film. So, when we got back to Miami, me and a few other people who were on the trip initiated what's called the Rapid Response Network,

and it's so different from the way a lot of the kind of international NGO model runs, where they kind of swoop in with their messaging and their campaigns. This is initiated by the workers when they need us to lend them support with pressure campaigns, whether that's contacting a multinational or flooding emails of local factory owners with demand.

RB: What about the factory owners? Are they local?

SC: Well, a lot of them are local, Haitian. Many factory owners are Haitian, but their original roots come from Syria, a lot of them. But then there's also South Koreans, they are a growing force there as well in the garment assembly. One of the main Haitian owners that we have dealt with is an owner called Vilard. He owns not just a garment assembly but also banks, he's heavily invested. The Apaid family, their company is named Premium Apparel, I think. We've dealt a lot with Clifford, but it's a whole big family and they are actually very much combined with the Baker family. Both own a lot. They're heavily invested and control the association of Haitian industrialists. That's kind of like their lobbying group.

RB: Are these groups the same ones that are exploiting Haiti's resources through mining, for example?

SC: They are the facilitators of a lot of the imperialist domination that happens there. And then also in the north, on the border of the Dominican Republic. You have Fernando Capellan who's Dominican and owns the free trade there. I mean, he owns the whole industrial park that exists in the free trade zone. Those are some of the main entities that we've dealt with locally.

Oh, I should mention SAE-A, they are a big Korean company, especially in the north. It's interesting, you know, telecommunications, there's a Vietnamese company, and I think that's the interesting component. I think when we

think of imperialism, we think of US imperialism, which makes sense because they're the main dominator, but it's a complex global arrangement that every country is compelled into in some way.

RB: What about the French?

SC: The French, you know, the US has really taken over any French interests. Culturally, language wise, they're still present, but as far as economic interests I think the US is most dominant.

RB: Interesting. Can I ask you about your choice to leave the identity of the Haitian factory workers out of the narrative?

Malia Bruker: I think that we imagine our audience as people in the US, potentially, people in Europe you know, and so what are we asking them to do, how are we asking them to frame themselves within the issue in the film? We also see the film as a first step. As Sarah said, I think we see the larger issue as the imperialist domination of the US and other entities, whether they're nations or not, like the IMF. And that was more important to us than pointing the finger at this person or that person. I've been a fraction of the times to Haiti that Sarah has been, but it does seem that yes, there are exploiters within their own country, but someone else could do it. That's not the way to fix the system by naming these villains and taking them down. That's really not what we hope our audience would think of as the thing to do. And Sarah, you can add anything to that.

SC: It's complicated for them because it's a two-pronged approach. They do have to deal with that local bourgeoisie, and then they also have to deal with the external force. That really is the main controller of how everything plays out in their country.

RB: So, the film was shot in three trips. And can you tell me

a little about them?

MB: We knew we weren't going to be able to stay down there. So, we knew it wasn't going to be like an ethnographic film.

RB: Which year was that?

SC: 2018/19.

MB: We went in 2018, we finished the film in 2019. During our trips we were just collaborating with this organization. We stayed with them. They told us where they wanted us to shoot and what was important to them. And then, we had some things in mind, particularly visuals, visual storytelling that we might want to try to find. Like, is there evidence of American factories that are now gone, things like that. Our trips were heavily planned out. The first one was kind of to get the lay of the land, to kind of familiarize ourselves and have the workers understand who we are and why we're there, and to kind of attend some meetings. Then, we knew we would be coming back for May Day. And May Day, it's hard to know how big the demonstration is going to be. So, we knew we wanted to film May Day that was going to be our primary focus. On one of the trips, we knew we wanted to go into the countryside and show that aspect of it because certainly the textile workers there push for raising the minimum wage is a big part of what they do, but it's not all that they do.

RB: Who is the narrator of the film?

MB: Yannick Etienne, one of the co-founders and main organizers of Batay Ouvriye who appears a lot in the film. She came to Miami for that...that was in 2019. There's a Haitian poet Kiki Wainwright, who did the last song in the film. And he's a poet, too. So, the three of us – Kiki, Yannick, and I – spent a weekend writing the voiceover, and then she performed it at the end.

SC: We should also mention the other musician, Mano Charlemagne. Kiki also just came out with a book: *60 Years of Songs*. And it comes with a CD. I just saw him before I came here. He is a lovely human, like a progressive artist in every sense of the word, rooted in movement. Batay Ouvriye came out of a Haitian revolutionary movement of which Mano Charlemagne was part of as well at one point in time. So, his music is always about the class struggle of Haiti, about imperialist domination. It was sort of a given, this is the music of their time of organizing and coming up. So, it needed to be there.

RB: In the last passage when you frame the statues of the Revolution ... can you tell me a little bit about the voiceover?

MB: I'll try to put myself back into that moment. I do remember discussing the tone of that. The process of writing the voiceover was really intense, and it's kind of hard to bring back all the details because it is intense. And it had to serve a few functions, we did need to say a lot of things historically, knowing that our audience doesn't probably know a whole lot. They don't know about the Revolution, you know. But also, it needed to be poetic. And luckily Yannick's husband who just passed is one of the most celebrated poets of Haiti. The way I write voiceover is thinking about what's before and after, and starting with function, what does it have to serve? And then what can you do in addition to the functional piece?

RB: Is Batay Ouvriye a union of workers?

SC: Batay Ouvriye is the movement and there are all of these affiliated organizations within it. So, in the Port-au-Prince region in the south, you have SOTA. And then in the north industrial park, that's where the Koreans are dominant. And then on the border where Capellan and his free trade zone is, there is the SOKOWA, which is the oldest union.

RB: And those unions are a space for reclaiming better wages and life conditions, but also a place for broader political discussions.

SC: Definitely. What is really fascinating is that, it was very complicated to introduce into the film, so it's not there, but it is this concept of movement organizing based on levels. So, that revolutionary movement that I mentioned came with this approach. You have a mass level organization with trade unions, peasant organizations, but then an intermediate level state organization. That's the people responsible for igniting those political struggles and constructing the organization, but that are building towards something beyond those immediate reforms, a movement that can unite all of that into a future beyond, and then a revolutionary component as well.

RB: I imagine that the revolutionary component is always on the horizon for Haitian people.

SC: It should be on the horizon of more of us across the world.

MB: Which is why their model is important.



Documentary Blocks

Sourced entirely from submissions, Mimesis 2021 programmers Sarah Biagini, Luiza Parvu, and Laurids Andersen Sonne presented 20 documentary blocks that screened throughout the week at the Boedecker Cinema and Grace Gamm Theater at the Dairy Arts Center.



Towards an Architecture of Inclusion

A city's agenda enforces logic, favoring blueprint over footprint, form over function. Observational and performative, these stories explore the friction between architectural bias and the evolving everyday lives of communities in the city.

Reimagining the City, As Our Own (2020, USA, 21')
by Irene Gustafson in collaboration with Skywatchers

Up the Mountain (2021, USA, 10')
by Adler Shannon

I Dream of Vancouver (2020, CA, 7')
by Warren Chan

Hotel Regina (2019, FR, 52')
by Matthias Berger



Lessons for Unlearning

This program interrogates the limits and frames of knowledge production, disrupting colonial narratives embedded into history and art. Between folktales and philosophy, ethnographic film and university structures, the projects here reclaim, reinterpret and subvert conventional modes of education, offering redemption through productive unlearning.

the mango tree (2020, IN, 12')

by Pooja Jain

A New England Document (2020, UK, 16')

by Che Applewhaite

Who Built the Cage? (2019, USA, 8')

by Paul Carpenter

The Seven Doors (2019, TR, 50')

by Mehmet Mim Kurt



Motherese

In a capitalist society defined by work time, how do we separate renewal of life from the reproduction of labor? These documentaries look at the work of gestating, of organizing, of rearing eleven children and countless cows, prompting us to reconceptualize connections between labor and care, and working together. Seize the Means of Production! Abolish Wage Labor! Abolish the Family! Motherese is the Mother Tongue of Liberation!

Batay La (2019, USA, 25')

by Malia Bruker

Beloved (2018, IR, 54')

by Yaser Talebi

Contraction, Expansion (2021, UK, 15')

by Marcy Saude



Borders Within

Between Colorado and California, Jakarta and New York, Cambodia and Minnesota, Syria and Italy, works in this program explore the possibilities of friendship and collaboration across distance and time. Soul searching protagonists defy social and political boundaries, their personal histories caught in the flux of political asylum and belonging. With hope in healing, empathy, and camaraderie, worlds and ideas collide through letters, opening up more questions than they answer.

So Many Ideas Impossible to Do All (2019, USA, 11')
by Mark Street and Barbara Hammer

Big Durian, Big Apple (2018, ID, 5')
by Azalia Muchransyah

A Story from Shaba's Family Hairstyling (2020, USA, 2')
by Jonathan Onsuwan Johnson

Unwritten Letters (2020, DE, 59')
by Max Bloching and Abd Alrahman Dukmak



A Place I Know

Three conflict zones plagued by transboundary infestations, destruction, and instability. Struggling with ISIS, locusts, and diamond mining, protagonists contemplate the impossible thought of turning their backs on their homes, now changed forever. These are stories of anthropomorphized xenophobia, familial loss, resilience, and reconstruction.

Diamond Boys (2019, UK, 17')
by Jaremey McMullin

A Gregarious Species (2021, USA, 7')
by Natasha Raheja

A House in Pieces (2020, PH, 65')
by Jean Claire Dy and Manuel Domes



Impregnable

Through the lens of a global health crisis, this program reflects on the vulnerability of our bodies and spirits, our methods of protecting ourselves, and our unflinching desire to remain open and connected. By investigating a Brazilian legend, embalming practices in the US, and a childhood in Chad, these projects point to a balance between safety and exposure, fulfillment and harm reduction, physical distancing and social connection.

Souk Corona (2021, USA, 5')
by Bentley Brown

The Final Touch (2021, USA, 6')
by Claire Maske

The Body Won't Close (2020, NL, 74')
by Mattijs van de Port



Untangled Archives

Archives preserve legacies, but conceal traces of abuse and oppression. The five projects in this program are made by women about women, reuniting stories from different generations through narrative investigation, animation, collage, and cinematic experiment. In the porous space between experience, memory, and imagination, personal and collective archives begin to speak.

The Adventures of Annie (2021, USA, 5')
by Rachel Askari

Inherent (2020, USA, 8')
by Ailin Mo

Originate & Recompile (2020, IT, 4')
by Federica Foglia

Her Own Time (2020, USA, 3')
by Sarah Ema Friedland

The Celine Archive (2019, USA, 69')
by Celine Parrenas Shimizu



Zero for Conduct

Documents of resistance revolt against complicity in state violence. From occupations in New York City, to boarding school rebellions, to extrajudicial killings in the United Kingdom, the films in this program will not be silenced. These provocations harness the immense power of protest in the face of injustice, making difficult acts of change a reality.

E•pis•to•lar•y: letter to Jean Vigo (2021, USA, 5')
by Lynne Sachs

Frontline of the Narrative (2021, USA, 5')
by Omolola Sanusi

Impression of Resistance and Erasure (2020, USA, 3')
by Lucas Kane

Ultraviolence (2020, UK, 75')
by Ken Fero



Roy's World: Barry Gifford's Chicago

Barry Gifford's ("Wild at Heart") gritty autobiographical stories of growing up in 1950s Chicago are the backdrop for an impressionistic portrait of a vanished time and place.

Roy's World: Barry Gifford's Chicago (2020, USA, 75')
by Rob Christopher



The Pine Barrens

Through lingering and present images, this documentary takes you on an adventure of the Pine Barrens National Reserve – a large tract of wilderness not far from the megalopolis of New York City. On this land, once deemed inhospitable, rare orchids grow; endangered species thrive; inhabitants engage in folk art, oral history, wildcrafting and unite in the fight against the encroachments of a natural gas pipeline.

The Pine Barrens (2018, USA, 104')
by David Scott Kessler



Material Half-Lives

Infrastructure is the scaffolding of human civilization – trains, cranes, bridges, tunnels, dams and nuclear power plants are all casualties and casualties of progress. Some of these structures we notice, others we don't see at all. Failures, everyday conveniences, latent environmental impacts – this program takes a cautious look at the studs and struts hidden all around us, the physical markers in the landscape, and their social and environmental consequences.

Riveted, Structures, Lands (2019, USA, 6')
by Brenda Grell

Atomkraftwerk Zwentendorf (2018, USA, 17')
by Hope Tucker

The Depth Beneath, The Height Above (2019, CH, 18')
by Andrea Bordoli

Before the Deluge (2019, CA, 39')
by Jean-Jacques Martinod



Images, Unearthed

From the salt flats of Kutch in India to the Utah Tar Sands, we are reminded of how notably humans and other animals have shaped the landscape of the globe. Through road trip musing and corporate archives, filmmakers unpack the consequences of imperialism, fossil fuels, and national propaganda campaigns in the oil towns of South-Western Iran and the American West. This program engages human extractive activities, labor histories, power relations, and climate resistance, casting doubt on enthusiastic narratives of prosperity and progress.

Driving Dinosaurs (2018, USA, 9')
by Emma Piper-Burket

Ancient Sunshine (2020, USA, 19')
by Jason Livingston

Rann (2021, NZ, 20')
by Peter Simpson, Sarina Pearson, and Shuchi Kothari

One Image, Two Acts (2020, CA, 45')
by Sanaz Sohrabi



Doors Wide Open

Through visceral portrayals of addiction, subtle reflections on the past, and abstract commentary on familial traumas, this program explores communal living as space for making kin and telling personal histories.

Demeure (2019, BE, 39')
by Lucie Martin

The Addresses (2018, USA, 22')
by Josh Weissbach

Abandominium (2021, USA, 26')
by Greg Scott



Biomythophilia

These are the mundane lives of horseshoe crabs, cats, vegetables, scientific specimens, primordial flora, and dedicated collectors of trash – the day to day sensing of the world, and speculation on planetary expansion. This diverse group of documentaries are linked through acts of sustainability: mythical communion with the land and others, the search for scientific and eco-existential answers, more-than-human solidarity, and the rejection of human exceptionalism.

Level IV (2018, USA, 15')
by Laura Iancu

Field Resistance (2019, USA, 16')
by Emily Drummer

The Whelming Sea (2020, USA, 29')
by Sean Hanley

Rahmat Creel (2020, IR, 2')
by Behzad Alavi

Grey Seals (2019, USA, 10')
by Jonathan Rattner

Moonrise (2021, AU, 11')
by Rowena Potts

Light Becomes Visible

A planet is born – a celestial body in ocular orbit. Have we always inhabited the realm of science fiction? Have we always been the astronaut – or are we the asteroid? Viewing our planet from afar, this program analyzes gentrification cycles and the desire to push beyond earthly human habitats.

New Mexico Deathwish Diatribe (2020, USA, 12')
by Georg Koszulinski

Orbita (2020, MO, 4')
by Udval Altangerel

Seeing Spacecraft Earth (2021, USA, 6')
by Lisa McCarty

Frankston (2020, AU, 21')
by Patrick Tarrant

Terrain Vague (2020, USA, 47')
by Edward Kihn



Shapes of Home

Between physical structure and inner comfort, “home” is where affect is inscribed in geological substratum. How do we understand this site of memory formation – its scents, its shape, and its potential for transformation or resistance? This eclectic program of experimental documentary, slow cinema, and ethnographic film spotlights new, bold ways to represent displacement, homecoming, and relations between people and places.

3xShapes of Home (2020, NO, 7')
by Elisabeth Brun

Pratola (2020, VE, 30')
by Lino Sanguino

Via Karelia (2021, FI, 12')
by Elian Mikkola

Dehsalm (2019, IR, 28')
by Mohammad Abdollahi

Painting and Decorating (2020, ES, 12')
by Florrie James



The Wrong Profession

Minds and bodies push back against expectations, the party line, the pressures of ‘passing’, and being persuaded to settle. Coloring outside the lines of gender politics, artistic invention, or their intended professional path, these protagonists invent, reinvent, and shape the world around them.

Choosing Words (2021, CA, 2')
by Andrew Bateman


I want to make a film about women (2019, AU, 12')
by Karen Pearlman

Estranged (2021, USA, 7')
by Carleen Maur

Changes in the Ocean, Changes in the Sea (2019, USA, 13')
by Emmett Casey

Birth Date (2020, USA, 7')
by Leela Khanna

Red Lipstick (2019, IR, 42')
by Shiva Sanjari



past years has pledged its nationwide support to the NAACP in its fight against discrimination.

Soulmates

Couples form in idiosyncratic ways. Lovers, collaborators, soulmates, and friends come together as two, but their dynamics in space and time are anything but binary. Protagonists of these films exist in tension and love, in mutual understanding and irreducible conflict. Their relations are resilient and fluid - twisting, turning and flowing like the lives, ideas and events they encounter along the way.

Who Wants to Fall In Love (2019, USA, 5')
by Em Van Loan

The Length of Day (2020, USA, 15')
by Laura Conway

Endless Possibilities: Jack Waters & Peter Cramer (2020, USA, 15')
by MM Serra

Eleven Weeks (2020, USA, 14')
by Anna Kuperberg and Julie Caskey

Mawhialeo Ote Alowha / Our Love (2020, NZ, 16')
by Valeriya Golovina

Encounters In Light (2020, USA, 21')
by Devin Allen

iPhone 8



Liquid Crystal

Confusion between the real and its representation explodes into a surreal echo chamber. Complicating identity, compulsive performativity, voyeurism, and the production of self, these movies look at how and why permission is granted into private – yet also very public – online lives. From YouTube articulations of trauma to televised family traditions, protagonists navigate the captcha, webcam, selfie stick, and an endless circulation of images within the claustrophobic enclosure of liquid crystal screens.

Petting Zoo (2019, USA, 11')
by Daniel Robin

Pharmakosis (2020, USA, 13')
by SL Pang

Stones for Thunder (2018, USA, 16')
by Kera MacKenzie and Andrew Mausert-Mooney

To Be Honest (2020, CA, 12')
by Jess Shane

Recaptcha (2020, USA, 4')
by Heather Warren-Crow

Recreation (2020, USA, 10')
by Duane Peterson III

Letter From Your Far Off Country (2020, USA, 17')
by Suneil Sanzgiri



Fire Together

Training for a zombie invasion, for leaving home, for coming of age, and the age of AI – from the safety of their simulations, these protagonists practice for the real thing. Synaptic strength increases before our eyes and neural circuitry remodels pathways, forging electrical connections. We get a glimpse of the human brain in the midst of its plastic change.

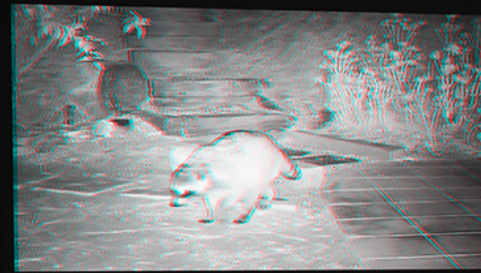
Lillian Finds the Zombies (2020, USA, 14')
by Stephen Wardell

Smart Homes for Seniors (2021, AU, 32')
by Sarah Pink

Young Guns (2021, DK, 20')
by Andreas Thaulow

Kuya/Ate (2020, USA, 5')
by Myles Aquino

aromatics of longing 爆香 (2021, USA, 14')
by Jade Wong

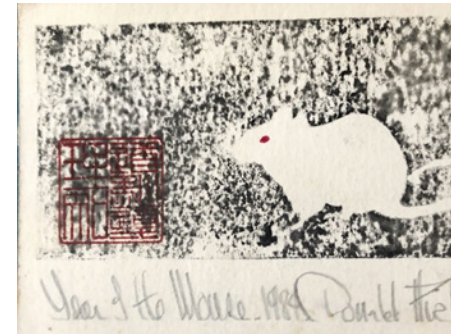


Expanded Documentary Arts

Mimesis includes documentary in all of its various forms - beyond the boundaries of cinema and into the realms of installation, performance, and sound. Over the festival week, the following works of expanded documentary arts were exhibited at the B2 Center for Media, Arts, and Performance.

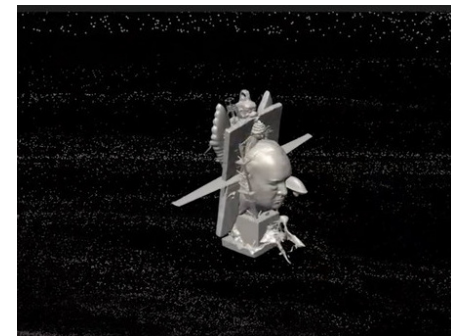
24 Cards (2020, 15')
by Abraham Ravett

The artist's personal archive of postcards from film critic, writer and filmmaker, Donald Richie, documenting decades of correspondence between friends.



BlowBack (2020, 5')
by Nima Bahrehmand

A three-channel synchronized video and sound installation sourced from a found footage video streamed online from a location – (37.084833, 44.153222) – in the Middle East.



Choose Your Own Father
(2020, 12') by Madyha Leghari

Derived from extensive archival research into Northern-Rhodesian born British conceptual artist John Latham and his early history in Zambia. Describing personal histories of Latham's father and interweaving these with those of the filmmaker's own father, the project considers the nature of taking influence from another and the problem of attributing origins.





Otherworld (2019, 13')
by Louis Hock

Both the moon landing and the artist's backyard wildlife evidence their existence only through their documentation. One defines the "new frontier" of space colonization and the other the "new wilderness" of urban centers. In experiencing *Otherworld*, these two realms of possible futures consider each other, the edited moon landing audio serving as a soundtrack for the feral animal activity.



Respiration (2019, 4')
by Sasha Waters Freyer

River naiads and backyard deities; nothing noticed is lonely. From inspiration to expiration, breathing is the only work to be enacted now. A 16mm film collage of original and found/archival footage.



The Mississippi (2020, 50')
by Keely Kernan

An interactive documentary that explores the ecological transformation of the River. Using interviews with residents, local activists and researchers along with images and sounds, the project investigates the accumulation of impacts that create one of the largest dead zones in the world.

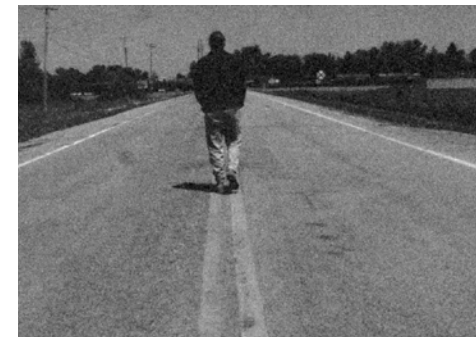
The Reversal (2020, 11')
by Jennifer Boles

The Reversal animates thousands of glass-plate negatives with a haunting, time-traveling sound collage to evoke the reverse-engineering of the Chicago River and the invisible histories of our capital-driven landscapes.



The Myth of Independence
Audio Documentaries

Interviews with transgender rural residents of "Greater Minnesota," a holistic revolution in audio description for performance, spearheaded by visually impaired dance artists, and a binaural diary documenting a night and day in cabin quarantine—storytelling, field-recording, and music composition that focuses our close attention on personal experience and empathy.



Put the Brights On (2021, 17')
Raymond Rea

What is this Shape? (2021, 10')
Jess Shane

School of Hard Equinox (2020, 10')
Adam Tinkle

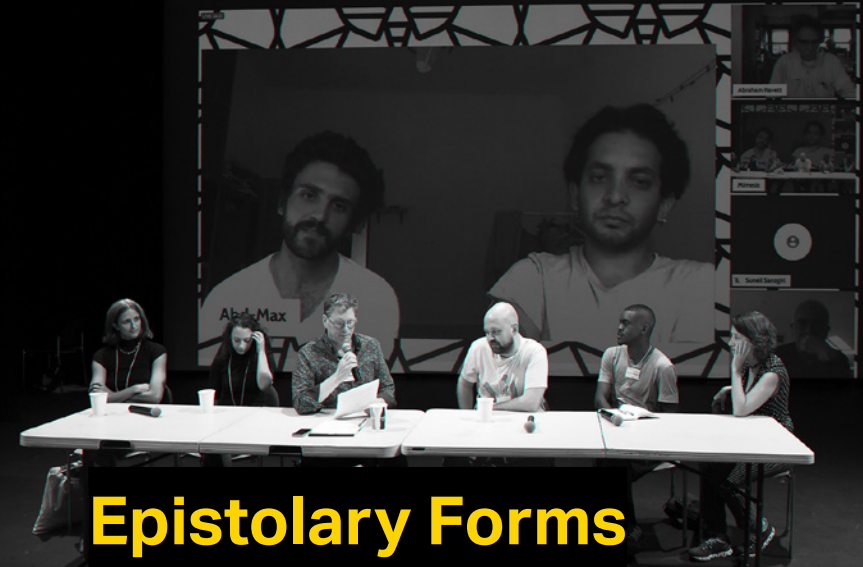
Table d'Orientation (2021, 17')
by Baba Hillman

A woman returns to her former home in Paris to visit a beloved teacher. Moving between past and present, between lost messages and footage filmed many years ago, this lyrical film explores transience, memory and loss.



Conversations

In keeping with recent tradition, Mimesis 2021 Conversations brought artists together around a central theme related to their respective works. Scholars and artists moderate these encounters, producing new forms of documentary knowledge and creating conceptual connections that speculate on documentary futures.



Epistolary Forms

A live conversation with Mimesis 2021 artists on the intersection of images and words. Held Thursday, August 5th in the Grace Gamm Theater. Letters and diaries order thoughts, feelings, and memory into systems of correspondence. Protagonist-filmmaker-viewer, writer-reader-writer, archivist-interpreter-investigator: between them, the traces of experience begin to make new sense.

Topics include: epistolary cinema, essay film, the archive, history, juxtaposition, regimes of signification, appropriation, memory, correspondence, diary film, the self, the Other, intimacy, distance communication, films in isolation, altered states, participatory experiment, social media, and emerging epistolary forms.

With Che Applewhaite, Max Bloching, Bentley Brown, Laura Conway, Abd Alrahman Dukmak, Ken Fero, Carleen Maur, Abraham Ravett, Suneil Sanzgiri, and Lynne Sachs.

Moderated by Jim Supanick





"Nurseries of democracy"

A live conversation with Mimesis 2021 artists shedding light on nonfiction's role in the process of building society, and how we make our worlds. Held on Friday, August 6th in the Grace Gamm Theater.

Topics include: social inquiry & community engagement, making kin, creating social connections, politics of portraiture, collaborative processes

With Devin Allen, Malia Bruker, Paul Carpenter, Emmett Casey, Jean Claire Dy, Manuel Domes, Sean Hanley, SL Pang, Marcy Saude, MM Sera, and Adler Shannon.

Moderated by Sarah Biagini



Extraction and Erasure

A live conversation with Mimesis 2021 artists around representational media's engagement with extraction; from documentary media's extraction of meaning and metaphor to the environmental and social consequences of resource extraction of matter and material. Held on Monday, August 9th in the Boedecker Cinema.

Topics: Reanimating the archive, resource extraction, narrative refusal, undoing, speculative futures, visual violence, Extractivism, sustainability, phantasmagoric images, the billionaire space race, and time.

With Georg Koszulinski, Jason Livingston, Jean-Jacques Martinod, Jaremey McMullin, Emma Piper-Burket, and Sanaz Sohrabi.

Moderated by Erin Espelie





Projected Bodily Movement

A live conversation with Mimesis 2021 artists on expanded documentary practices and the translation of embodied experiences. Held on Tuesday, August 10th in the Boedecker Cinema.

Topics include: architecture, embodiment, affect, installation, live performance, interactivity, immersion, movement, space, circulation, repetition, and site-specificity.

With Nima Bahrehmand, Louis Hock, and Em Van Loan.

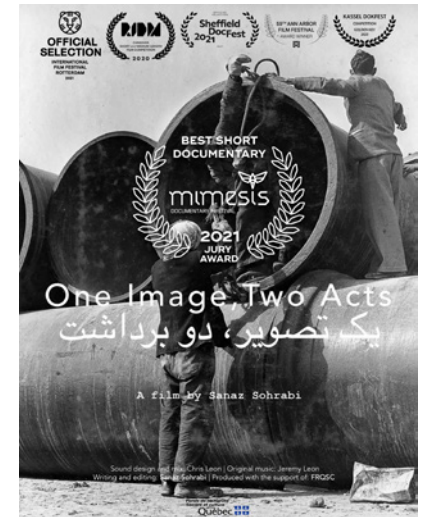
Moderated by Eric Coombs Esmail



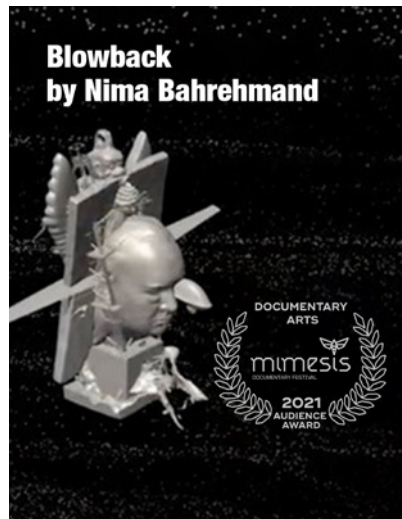
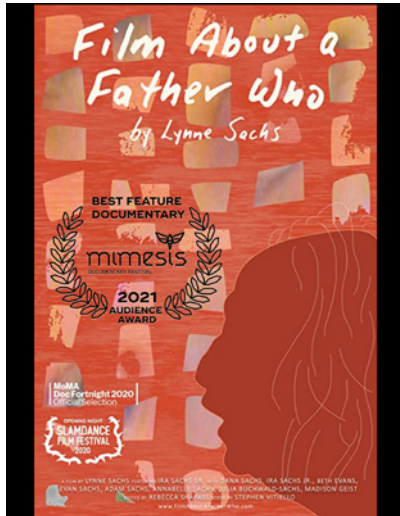
Awards

Jury Awards

We are grateful to the Mimesis 2021 Jury for their thoughtful consideration of these outstanding works. This year's jurors were Maura Axelrod, Rachel Chanoff, Priyanka Chhabra, L u m i a, Jessica Oreck, Toma Peiu, Kelly Sears, Jim Supanick, and Kelsey White.



Audience Awards



Honorable mentions were given by the Jury to Sean Hanley for *The Whelming Sea*, Elizabeth Brun for *3xShapes of Home*, and Jennifer Boles for *The Reversal*.

