



museum of arts and design

**CANYON CINEMA'S LEGENDARY ARCHIVE
FEATURED IN *EYE ON A DIRECTOR* CINEMA SERIES
THIS JULY AND AUGUST AT MAD**

**Scott MacDonald leads panel discussion on July 28 with Dominic Angerame,
Jonas Mekas, Seth Mitter, and Lynne Sachs**

Peter Hutton screening on August 4 with Michael Renov

July 7, 14, 21, and 28, and August 4, 11, and 18, 7 pm

Admission \$10 general / \$5 members and students

madmuseum.org/canyoncinema



Image courtesy of Canyon Cinema.

NEW YORK, NY, June 29, 2016 – From July 7 to August 18, 2016, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) presents its latest *Eye on a Director* film series, highlighting the legendary film distributor and archive Canyon Cinema. Taking place on Thursdays at 7 pm, screenings focus on experimental documentaries created by independent film artists from the 1950s to the present. Working directly with MAD, Canyon's staff and board of directors served as co-curators for this series, selecting works that reveal the history of an artistic community in parallel to American cinematic movements.

"Canyon's collection is one of the most expansive records of the American avant-garde cinema movement, a radical break from Hollywood that embraces film as a material medium," said series curators Katerina Llanes and Carson Parish. "The work presented

here is subversive, forward-thinking, and challenging, and it made sense for us to present these films at MAD, an artist-centered institution founded on radical craft.”

Founded in the early 1960s as an artist collective, Canyon Cinema brought together independent filmmakers whose work reflected a remarkable diversity in style and content. Variouslly called avant-garde, underground, and experimental, these artists shared a vision of film as a form of personal expression, free from the demands and constraints of commercial conventions. The group evolved into a distribution company, and today its archives hold a collection of Super 8mm, 16mm, and 35mm film prints from 260 directors, representing one of the most comprehensive archives of experimental film in the world.

“We worked closely with the team at the Museum to create a program that reveals the history and legacy of the counter-cultural artistic community which founded and continues to support our organization’s mission as advocates for artist-made cinema,” says Antonella Bonfanti, Director of Canyon Cinema Foundation. “Everyone at Canyon Cinema is looking forward to this unique showcase of our influential collection at MAD.”

Thematic threads explored in the program include the changing landscape of postwar America and feminist filmmaking in the Bay Area in the 1970s and '80s, through films by influential artists including Barbara Hammer, Peter Hutton, Gunvor Nelson, and Cauleen Smith.

On Thursday, July 28, at 7 pm, Professor of Film History at Hamilton College **Scott MacDonald** will lead a panel discussion featuring filmmakers **Dominic Angerame, Jonas Mekas, and Lynne Sachs** along with Canyon’s Collection Manager **Seth Mitter**. This moderated talk will focus on the collaborative spirit and tradition of communal production, exhibition, and distribution that are synonymous with Canyon Cinema.

On Thursday, August 4, at 7 pm, MAD will pay tribute to the legacy of **director Peter Hutton** with a screening of his works presented by Canyon’s President, **Michael Renov**.

Eye on a Director: Canyon Cinema is co-curated by Antonella Bonfanti, Rebecca Meyers, Seth Mitter, Michael Renov, and Jeffrey Skoller of Canyon Cinema, in conjunction with MAD’s Katerina Llanes, Manager of Public Programs, and Carson Parish, Audiovisual Coordinator. Special thanks to Max Goldberg and Scott MacDonald.

Eye on a Director: Canyon Cinema is presented in partnership with Anthology Film Archives, The Film-Makers’ Cooperative, and Millennium Film Journal.

ABOUT CANYON CINEMA

Canyon Cinema began in the Canyon, California, home of Bay Area experimental filmmaker Bruce Baillie. Initially an informal gathering for filmmakers to share their work using a 16mm projector and a bedsheet hung in the backyard, Canyon Cinema, Inc., was officially founded in 1967 by Bruce Baillie, Bruce Conner, Robert Nelson, Chick Strand, and others as a collective-run distribution company dedicated to educating the public about independent artist-made moving images and making its collection of more than 2,500 works accessible to universities and cultural organizations worldwide. In 2012, the group voted to become a non-profit, and today it is one of the few remaining

organizations providing access to works in one of the essential forms of twentieth-century art: celluloid film. Canyon Cinema is home to Super 8mm, 16mm, and 35mm film prints from 260 artists, a unique collection that represents the most comprehensive history of the experimental and avant-garde filmmaking movement from 1921 to today.

ABOUT *EYE ON A DIRECTOR*

With a focus on experimental craft, MAD's *Eye on a Director* cinema screening series spotlights underrepresented voices in film and video history, featuring artists who actively test the limits of the medium and challenge viewers to expand their concept of the moving image. The series provides a platform for directors who resisted mainstream conventions and created unique bodies of work deserving of a retrospective.

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THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: MENKEN, HUOT, KOBLAND, PALAZZOLO & KREINES

July 7, 2016, 7 pm

\$10 general / \$5 members and students

Theater at MAD

78 min, 16mm Projection

"Glimpse of the Garden" (Marie Menken, 1957, 8 min)

"Snow" (Robert Huot, 1971, 3 min)

"Landscape and Desire" (Ken Kobland, 1981, 55 min)

"Ricky and Rocky" (Tom Palazzolo & Jeff Kreines, 1972, 15 min)

Avant-garde cinema in America was born just after World War II, and an early subject for many experimental filmmakers was the changing American landscape. Under the influence of Maya Deren, Marie Menken's "Glimpse of the Garden" is an early instance of non-narrative filmmaking within the movement. A sensuous Ektachrome tour through a colorful landscape, the film elevates still life to choreographed gesture. Robert Huot's "Snow" depicts a landscape completely different from Menken's: a field of falling snow as it transforms, depicted through three different sectors of the images edited with varying density and speed. The program's centerpiece is Ken Kobland's "Landscape and Desire," which the director calls a "mordantly nostalgic" road trip across the United States that offers a vision of a country without the people who populate it. The program then changes pace, concluding with Tom Palazzolo and Jeff Kreines' "Ricky and Rocky," which eavesdrops on a wedding reception in an Italian family's Chicago backyard. Whereas Kobland creates a landscape devoid of people, Palazzolo and Kreines repopulate it with a cast of eccentric family members.

FIVE ARTISTS: BILLBOBBILLBILLBOB

July 14, 2016, 7 pm

\$10 general / \$5 members and students

Theater at MAD

Five Artists: BillBobBillBillBob

70 min, 16mm Projection

(Gunvor Nelson and Dorothy Wiley, 1971, USA)

Five Artists is a loving portrait of quintessential California artists: the painters, sculptors, and filmmakers William Allen, William Geis, Robert Hudson, Robert Nelson, and William T. Wiley. A collaboration between two of Canyon Cinema's earliest members, Gunvor Nelson and Dorothy Wiley, the film takes a personal look at the lives of these close friends: at home with their families, at work in the studio, teaching, fishing, drawing together, at parties and openings, and elsewhere. Alternating between color and black-and-white footage, Nelson and Wiley use non-synchronous comments and music by the artists mixed with impressions by friends and acquaintances—creating a delicate collage of the complexities of everyday life, family relationships, and the circle to which they all belonged. One of five works co-authored by Nelson and Wiley, *Five Artists* reflects the communal spirit that has become synonymous with the early days of Canyon Cinema.

SENSE AND SENSUALITY: BAY AREA FEMINIST FILMMAKING OF THE 1980s

July 21, 2016, 7 pm

\$10 general / \$5 members and students

Theater at MAD

83 min, 16mm Projection

“Valley Fever” (Stephanie Beroes, 1979, 20 min)

“Maternal Filigree” (Sandra Davis, 1980, 18 min)

“Sincerely” (Lynn Marie Kirby, 1980, 14 min)

“Department of the Interior” (Nina Fonoroff, 1986, 9 min)

“Futility” (Greta Snider, 1989, 9 min)

“Chronicles of a Lying Spirit (by Kelly Gabron)” (Cauleen Smith, 1990, 13 min)

Much critical attention to women's avant-garde filmmaking of the 1970s and '80s focused on East Coast and European feminist filmmakers, the critique of visual pleasure, and the notion of the male gaze in cinema. In San Francisco, a new generation of feminist avant-garde filmmakers was emerging with a very different approach to questions of gender and pleasure in cinema. Influenced as much by the work of Gunvor Nelson and Chick Strand as by Laura Mulvey and Yvonne Rainer, these artists emphasized visual pleasure, finding in cinema sensual and lyrical ways to explore the personal and political experience of coming to consciousness as young radicals. Their focus on color, texture, montage, sounds, and text created a deeply sensuous and searching cinema. This largely unheralded body of work housed at Canyon has influenced subsequent feminist filmmaking on the West Coast and beyond.

PANEL LED BY SCOTT MACDONALD, WITH DOMINIC ANGERAME, JONAS MEKAS, SETH MITTER, AND LYNNE SACHS

July 28, 2016, 7 pm

\$10 general / \$5 members and students

Theater at MAD

This panel discussion will celebrate the collaborative spirit and tradition of communal production, exhibition, and distribution that are synonymous with Canyon Cinema. The unity of the organization's catalogue is less about genre, medium, or curatorial cohesion than about lineages, histories, and artist communities. Film artists, scholars, and curators who have been key participants in and witnesses to Canyon Cinema's evolution will share memories, recount the history of the community, discuss the challenges it faces, and speculate about its future.

Scott MacDonald is author of the series *A Critical Cinema: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (University of California Press, 1988–2006) and 11 other books, including *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place* (University of California Press, 2001), *Canyon Cinema: The Life and Times* (University of California Press, 2008), and, most recently, *Avant-Doc: Intersections of Documentary and Avant-Garde Cinema* (Oxford University Press, 2014) and *Binghamton Babylon: Voices from the Cinema Department* (SUNY Press, 2015). He was named an Academy Scholar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 2012. He is a Professor of Film History at Hamilton College.

Dominic Angerame is a filmmaker and educator who served as Executive Director of Canyon Cinema from 1980 to 2012. He teaches filmmaking and cinema studies at colleges and universities in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Jonas Mekas is a Lithuanian American filmmaker, poet, and artist. The founder of *Film Culture* magazine and Anthology Film Archives, he is the author of more than 20 books and the maker of hundreds of films across six decades. Mekas co-founded the Film-Makers' Cooperative in 1962, providing the model and inspiration for the creation of Canyon Cinema in 1967.

Seth Mitter joined Canyon Cinema as Collection Manager in 2015. He is a trained audiovisual archivist and projectionist who studied filmmaking at The New School in New York.

Lynne Sachs is a maker of film essays, experimental documentaries, and live film performances, and has been a Canyon Cinema filmmaker for over 20 years. She teaches experimental film and video at Princeton University and lives in Brooklyn.

PETER HUTTON: JULY '71 + SKAGAFJÖRÐUR

August 4, 2016, 7 pm

\$10 general / \$5 members and students

Theater at MAD

65 min, 16mm Projection

“July '71 in San Francisco, Living at Beach Street, Working at Canyon Cinema, Swimming in the Valley of the Moon” (Peter Hutton, 1971, 35 min)

“Skagafjörður” (Peter Hutton, 2002–2004, 33 min)

Peter Hutton (1944–2016) produced a remarkable filmic oeuvre over nearly half a century. Starting out as a sculptor, painter, and photographer, in the late 1960s he studied at the San Francisco Art Institute, where he was influenced by Bruce Baillie, Bruce Conner, Bruce Nauman, and Robert Nelson. Writing in *Artforum* on the occasion of Hutton's 2008 MoMA retrospective, the critic P. Adams Sitney characterized the director's work thus: “Subtle fluctuations in the visible field—of light, or figures and objects in motion, or slight camera movements—configure the ecstatic concentration of the filmmaker's attention.”

“Skagafjörður” (2002–2004), commissioned by the Icelandic Film Centre with additional funding from the Whitney Museum of American Art, is a film “of sumptuous beauty, with barely a vestige of human presence,” according to Sitney. It immerses the viewer in Icelandic landscapes, with careful attention given to the scale and contours of the land,

sea, and quality of light, and the blending of visible textures and tonalities at the horizon line where sky and cloud meet sea and land.

By contrast, “July ’71 in San Francisco, Living at Beach Street, Working at Canyon Cinema, Swimming in the Valley of the Moon” (1971) is a diaristic film that affectionately captures the people and places Hutton encountered while living in the Bay Area. Filmmaker David Bienstock described it as “one of the best of the genre—for it truly lets us get inside the filmmaker’s mind and sensations through, and in conjunction with, his role as filmmaker. It is almost as if we see how carrying around the camera and focusing on different people, things and events actually changes and refines the filmmaker’s normal perception of them. The camera becomes an instrument not to record reality but to expand it. And like any diary, it is both an exploration and crystallization of events and impressions in one’s life.”

Screening to be followed by a Q&A with Michael Renov.

Michael Renov is Professor of Critical Studies and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs at the University of Southern California’s School of Cinematic Arts. He is the author of *Hollywood’s Wartime Women: Representation and Ideology* (UMI Research Press, 1988) and *The Subject of Documentary* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004), and the editor of *Theorizing Documentary* (Routledge, 1993). In 1993, Renov co-founded Visible Evidence, a series of international and highly interdisciplinary documentary studies conferences that have been held on four continents. In 2005, he co-programmed the 51st annual Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, an international forum for experimental documentary filmmakers. He has taught graduate seminars at Stockholm University and Tel Aviv University and has led documentary workshops in Jordan for the Royal Film Commission.

SECESSION: THE DECAY OF PATRIARCHY

August 11, 2016, 7 pm

\$10 general / \$5 members and students

Theater at MAD

71 min, 16mm Projection

“Take Off” (Gunvor Nelson, 1972, 8 min)

“Lie Back and Enjoy It” (JoAnn Elam, 1982, 8 min)

“Mutiny” (Abigail Child, 1983, 11 min)

“The Color of Love” (Peggy Ahwesh, 1994, 10 min)

“Menses” (Barbara Hammer, 1974, 4 min)

“Generations” (Gina Carducci & Barbara Hammer, 2011, 30 min)

Highlighting multiple generations of feminist filmmakers across the country, Canyon’s archive is an encompassing survey of radical cinema. With “Take Off,” Gunvor Nelson introduces the viewer to Burlesque legend Ellion Ness, using the camera and editing effects to make a statement about what it means to strip as a woman. JoAnn Elam’s “Lie Back and Enjoy It” is an eight-minute dialogue about rape culture and the representation of women living under patriarchy. It consists of optically printed images set to a structural conversation on the very film the viewer is watching. Abigail Child’s “Mutiny” interprets and interpolates the voices and music of a diverse cast of women. In “The Color of Love,” Peggy Ahwesh uses a variety of chemical reactions to alter and recompose images taken from a pornographic film. In “Menses,” Barbara Hammer elevates the

imagery and politics of menstruation with high drama and wry wit. The program closes with “Generations,” a collaborative film by Hammer and Gina Carducci, who uses a Bolex camera to shoot the final days of Astroland amusement park in a downtrodden Coney Island at the turn of the century. Hammer and Carducci edited their own halves of the film and joined the two in the middle.

CONTINUING CADENCES: FULTON, ANGERAME, SONBERT

August 18, 2016, 7 pm

\$10 general / \$5 members and students

Theater at MAD

80 min, 16mm Projection

“Path of Cessation” (Robert E. Fulton, 1974, 15 min)

“Continuum” (Dominic Angerame, 1987, 14 min)

“Swimming Stone” (Robert E. Fulton, 1982, 14 min)

“Short Fuse” (Warren Sonbert, 1992, 37 min)

Robert Fulton (1939–2002) was a pilot, a gifted aerial cinematographer, a devout Buddhist, a close friend and collaborator of filmmaker Robert Gardner, and an inspired independent filmmaker. His exhilarating, densely edited, poetically sensitive films were admired by Canyon stalwarts Bruce Baillie and Stan Brakhage, and he was an inspiration for students including filmmaker and former Canyon Cinema Executive Director Dominic Angerame. An artist who traveled the world accompanied by his Bolex camera, he eschewed narrative as he gathered images with a spirit of wonder and generosity, translating the people and places he encountered into scenes of breathtaking beauty and elation, and editing with a dazzling rhythm whose cadences evoke a deep passion for and knowledge of music. Fulton left behind a substantial body of work that resonates with Warren Sonbert’s exuberant and visually resplendent montage.

Introduction by Rebecca Meyers

Rebecca Meyers is the Academic Film Programmer for Bucknell University. She previously taught filmmaking and was the Director of Film Programs at Emerson College. She has also served as Associate Director of Studio7Arts and as Co-director of the Onion City Experimental Film and Video Festival in Chicago. She co-edited *Looking with Robert Gardner*, a new collection of writing on Gardner’s career (SUNY Press, 2016). She is also a 16mm filmmaker whose works have screened at Anthology Film Archives and at festivals in London, San Francisco, Toronto, and New York

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields, presenting artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill to their work. Since the Museum’s founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum’s curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are

influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, fostering a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design.

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