

EMPAC

WATERING THE FLOWERS :: FILM SERIES

RETURN OF THE ELECTRIC LOVE (TAKE II)

EPHRAIM ASILI

**THURSDAY
OCT 13
7:00 PM**

Return of the Electric Love (Take II)

Ephraim Asili

Return of the Electric Love (Take II) is a new film by Hudson-based artist Ephraim Asili. The accompanying program includes Asili's *Kindah*, which was premiered earlier this month at the New York Film Festival, as well as a series of films by other artist-filmmakers from the 1950s to now that he's selected as influential to the development of his work.

Ephraim Asili is an African-American artist, filmmaker, DJ, radio host, and traveler. Inspired by his day-to-day wanderings, Asili creates art that situates itself as a series of meditations on everyday experience and media culture. Through audio-visual examinations of societal iconography, identity, geography, and architecture, Asili strives to present a personal vision. The results are perhaps best described as an amalgam of pop, African-American, and "moving image" culture, filtered through an acute sense of rhythmic improvisation and compositional awareness. Asili teaches in the Film and Electronic Arts Department at Bard College and hosts a radio show on WGXC 90.7 FM Hudson, New York.

PROGRAM:

Kindah (2016)

Ephraim Asili

New York Eye & Ear Control (1964)

Michael Snow

Bridges Go Round (1958)

Shirley Clarke

Blacktop: The Story of the Washing of a School Play Yard (1952)

Charles & Ray Eames

Halimuhfack (2016)

Christopher Harris

Made For Television (1981)

William Farley

Very Nice, Very Nice (1961)

Arthur Lipsett

Lodz Symphony (1993)

Peter Hutton

Return of the Electric Love (Take II) (2016)

Ephraim Asili

TOTAL RUNTIME: APPROX. 110MINS



RETURN OF THE ELECTRIC LOVE (TAKE II), EPHRAIM ASILI

WATERING THE FLOWERS

Watering the Flowers is a new year-long screening program. Each evening focuses on a recent film or video by an EMPAC-affiliated artist, and will be accompanied by a program of other shorts or features that were influential in the making of their work, whether fiction or documentary, experimental or commercial.

Watering the Flowers, or *L'Arroseur*, is the title of a lost film from 1896 by cinema pioneer Georges Méliès, based on Louis Lumière's film *L'Arroseur Arrosé*, which was released the previous year. *L'Arroseur Arrosé* is often credited as the first fiction film, and its 45 seconds comprise a single gag played on a gardener watering his plants. Highly influential to the development of both narrative cinema and on-screen comedy, it was endlessly copied, parodied, duplicated, and is appropriated even to this day. Its promotional poster was also a first: an audience watching the film—an image of cinema itself.

The title has also been referred to in distinct ways: *The Waterer Watered* or *The Sprinkler Sprinkled* or *The Tables Turned on the Gardener*. This act of differing translation points to the subjective relationship each of us has to language, whether textual, visual, or sonic. All artists are inspired by and learn from others, and this program seeks to “water the flowers,” so to speak, opening a space for collective watching through the artist's eyes. At a time when so many of our moving images are viewed from a computer or handheld device, and our selections are channeled algorithmically according to our narrow interests, this program provides the opportunity to see films that are “lost.” Not films lost in the sense of Méliès' work, but films that are potentially masked by the flood of daily data. *Watering the Flowers* pursues inspiration through the juxtaposition of the unusual, the banned, the overlooked, the old, the new, the personal, the counter-historical, the experimental, and the popular.

FILM NOTES

KINDAH, EPHRAIM ASILI

2016, 16mm transferred to digital projection, 12mins

Courtesy of the artist

Filmed in the Maroon village of Accompong, Jamaica, and Hudson, New York, *Kindah* is part of Asili's series of film poems that explore the complex history of slavery, migration, and media representations of the African diaspora community. Communicating the atmospheric bond of kinship or *Kindah*, as it is known in Maroon culture, between the two geographically removed places, *Kindah* is exemplary of Asili's approach to the particularity of working with 16mm film. His attention to the musicality of images is perceived in the sparse editing, natural light, and delicately saturated color.

BRIDGES GO ROUND, SHIRLEY CLARKE

1958, 16mm, 7.5mins

Courtesy of Filmmakers Coop, New York

"The dream-like quality is intensified by the vivid color, which was achieved by 'bi-packing,' a process in which certain colors of the film original are altered by running the strip through the printer with a second piece of film." — National Film Preservation Foundation.

Bridges Go Round was made from leftover footage originally shot to produce a series of commercial shorts commissioned for the 1958 Brussels World Fair in collaboration with a group of filmmakers headed up by Willard Van Dyke. Clarke edits the footage of New York's bridges into highly colored, joyously abstracted city film. As rights issues threatened the film's use of the music by Louis and Bebe Barron, Clarke invited jazz producer Teo Macero to score a replacement and proceeded to screen the film twice, back-to-back, to present both soundtracks.

NEW YORK EYE & EAR CONTROL, MICHAEL SNOW

1964, 16mm, 34mins

Courtesy of Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Center

"I've always been interested in variations. Between '61 and '67, in pretty much every possible medium and material, I used the same subject, the cut-out silhouette of a walking woman (it's called 'Walking Woman Works'). Through this process of experimenting with variations of two-dimensional surface, I became interested in the idea of a series of variations presented in time, rather than in space, one after another, which is exactly what the film frames do. That's how I arrived to *New York Eye and Ear Control* in '63. Its title also implies a simultaneity between image and sound. Music is not only used as a way to tell you that this is sad, or this is happy, as it's used in narrative films. I always disliked that. In my films I've tried to give the sound a more pure and equal position in relation to the picture." —Michael Snow, "Expanding Cinema" in *Austin Chronicle*, 1999

New York Eye & Ear Control's soundtrack was recorded by American jazz saxophonist, singer, and composer Albert Ayler, with Don Cherry, John Tchicai, Roswell Rudd, Gary Peacock and Sunny Murray. It formed the basis for an acclaimed album of group improvisations subsequently released under the same title.



NEW YORK EYE & EAR CONTROL, MICHAEL SNOW

BLACKTOP: THE STORY OF THE WASHING OF A SCHOOL PLAY YARD,

CHARLES AND RAY EAMES

1952, 16mm transferred to video, 11mins

Courtesy of Eames Office

“Charles felt inspired to create this cinematic exploration of abstracted imagery after watching a janitor wash down a schoolyard across the street from the Eames Office. He was so intrigued by how the water crept across the asphalt that he decided to film the process in live action. Don Albinson handled the hose and movement of the water, and Charles filmed the scene with a hand-held 16mm Cine-Special camera, filling the frame with close-up visuals. The image could not be viewed directly through the shooting lens, so Charles had to adjust continuously for parallax viewing—a challenge for any amateur cinematographer. Charles then edited the film himself on homemade equipment, synchronizing it to Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*.” — Eames Office

HALIMUHFAK, CHRIS HARRIS

2016, 16mm transferred to digital projection, 4mins

Courtesy of the artist

A wryly dislocated film in which nothing appears as it seems. Structured around a recording of anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston explaining how she documents African American folk songs, the film presents a woman attempting to lip-synch her words in front of looping archival footage of dancing Masai tribespeople. Although Hurston’s voice and the performer’s mouth synch at the beginning and end of the statement, Harris deliberately manipulates his hand-cranked Bolex to diverge image from sound mid-sentence and disrupt the seamlessness of voice and image, the pre-recorded past and “live” present. The slips in synch and distance between the layers of filmed images—with the performer clearly placed on top of the grainy 16mm footage—ask after the misinformation that mediated images portray. *Halimuhfack* exposes the mechanisms through which information is authored and calls into question the supposed neutrality of the “authentic.”



HALIMUHFAK, CHRIS HARRIS

MADE FOR TELEVISION, WILLIAM FARLEY

1981, 16mm, 4mins

Courtesy of the artist

“One sequence begins with a woman sneezing into a tissue and through a series of implied causal links it amplifies the effects of her sneeze. Farley cuts from sneeze to a shot of trees blown by a storm; to a breeze blowing a table cloth; and finally a man being knocked over.” — James Peterson, *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-garde Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994)

A compilation film made from numerous excerpts of television commercials, *Made for Television* takes a critical look at how advertising manipulates us. Set to a soundtrack of strange facts about human beings, this comic short relies on extreme juxtapositions of unrelated facts and images.

VERY NICE, VERY NICE, ARTHUR LIPSETT

1961, 16mm transferred to digital projection, 7mins.

Courtesy of National Film Board of Canada

“Arthur Lipsett’s first film is an avant-garde blend of photography and sound. It looks behind the business-as-usual face we put on life and shows anxieties we want to forget. It is made of dozens of pictures that seem familiar, with fragments of speech heard in passing and, between times, a voice saying, ‘Very nice, very nice.’” — NFB



VERY NICE, VERY NICE, ARTHUR LIPSETT

LODZ SYMPHONY, PETER HUTTON

1993, 16mm, 20mins

Courtesy of Canyon Cinema

“The experience of my films is a little like daydreaming.” —Peter Hutton

“...For thirty years now, Peter Hutton has been building a radical and singular body of work. A sort of primitive documentary, silent, which celebrates the beauty of the world without forgetting to observe people, the conditions they live and work under...” —Cahiers du cinéma

Peter Hutton (1944-2016) was a colleague of Ephraim’s at the Film department at Bard College and an extraordinary influence not only on multiple generations of artists and filmmakers but also on both films we are screening with Ephraim today. Hutton’s poetic 16mm films were marked by delicate and precise framing of luminous light and deep shadow. In his melancholic portrait of Lodz in Poland, he imaged its industrial architecture as a place suspended in time, haunted by its tragic past.

RETURN OF THE ELECTRIC LOVE (TAKE II), EPHRAIM ASILI

2016, 35mm transferred to digital video, 11mins

Courtesy of the artist

Return of the Electric Love (Take II) is an optically printed 35mm film made from found footage of Kung Fu movies. The sequel to a film Asili had recently completed, which was immediately lost in transit from the film lab, *Return of the Electric Love (Take II)* reuses this same archive of footage as its source material. His technique of re-photographing short gestural sequences from the original films adds washes of color to the action. A riot of fast-paced images and their fractured, synchronized soundtracks, the film moves from repetitive Kung Fu gestures—flying kicks and spins—to abstract blocks of color, each frame saturated red, pink, green, and blue in quick succession. In the making of this film, the projector light picked out the time-worn scratches, dust, and water damage etched upon the surface of the celluloid. Asili then photographed these marks using the optical printer and exposed new frames. At times these imperfections dance across the screen, as much a part of the image as the bodies of the martial artists.

STAFF

Geoff Abbas / Director for Stage Technologies
Eric Ameres / Senior Research Engineer
Argeo Ascani / Curator, Music
Eileen Baumgartner / Graphic Designer
David Bebb / Senior Network Administrator
Peter Bellamy / Senior Systems Administrator
Michael Bello / Video Engineer
Victoria Brooks / Curator, Time-Based Visual Arts
Eric Brucker / Lead Video Engineer
Michele Cassaro / Guest Services Coordinator
John Cook / Box Office Manager
David DeLaRosa / Desktop Support Analyst
Zhenelle Falk / Artist Services Administrator
Ashley Ferro-Murray / Associate Curator, Theater & Dance
Kimberly Gardner / Manager, Administrative Operations
Johannes Goebel / Director
Ian Hamelin / Project Manager
Ryan Jenkins / Senior Event Technician
Shannon Johnson / Design Director
Carl Lewandowski / Production Technician
Eric Chi-Yeh Lin / Lead Stage Technician
Stephen McLaughlin / Senior Event Technician
Josh Potter / Marketing and Communications Manager
Alena Samoray / Event Technician
Candice Sherman / Senior Business Administrator
Avery Stempel / Front of House Manager
Kim Strosahl / Production Coordinator
Jeffrey Svatek / Audio Engineer
Dan Swalec / Master Electrician
Todd Vos / Lead Audio Engineer
Michael Wells / Production Technician