

Yale *Film Study Center*

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The Yale Film Study Center is proud to announce that it has received a grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation to support preservation of a film by director and Yale alumnus Robert Withers. Withers' film *16 MILLIMETER EARRINGS* (1979) was made in collaboration with Meredith Monk, and documents one of her earliest solo pieces, thirteen years after it was originally presented.

This marks the fourth consecutive year the Film Study Center has been awarded a grant by the NFPF. The Film Study Center recently held a public screening of its 2015 grant films, three short films by Academy Award-winning animator Frank Mouris. Mouris made *QUICK DREAM* (1967), *YOU'RE NOT REAL PRETTY BUT YOU'RE MINE...* (1968), and *CHEMICAL ARCHITECTURE* (1968), while a graduate student in the Yale School of Art and Architecture, and went on to win the Academy Award for Best Animated Short for his film *FRANK FILM* in 1974. Work is ongoing on the 2016 grant project, three films made at Yale in the late 1960s by award-winning cinematographer, and director Nick Doob. The Film Study Center has also preserved films by Mary Ellen Bute, George Stoney, Carl Marzani, and Leo Pospisil thanks to previous NFPF preservation grants.



After graduating from Yale in 1968, Robert Withers moved to New York in the early 1970s, where he was introduced to D.A. Pennebaker, and ended up helping out at Pennebaker's studio for several years, primarily in the work of film distribution. Through the Yale composer Humphrey Evans, Withers was introduced to the work of Meredith Monk. When Withers eventually met Monk and expressed his interest in working with her, she suggested recreating one of her first solo shows to make a film record of the work as she had first performed it, more than a decade earlier.

Meredith Monk, one of the most prolific, significant, and influential artists of the last fifty years, was equally at home as a composer, performer, choreographer, and filmmaker. Two years after graduating from Sarah Lawrence College in 1964, Monk first staged a solo performance piece called "16 Millimeter Earrings," which combined dance, music, singing, and projected images, at the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village. When Robert Withers approached her in the late 1970s, "16 Millimeter Earrings" was the piece they decided to recreate on film. With the assistance of D.A. Pennebaker, they filmed in the Great Hall of the City College of New York, where Pennebaker was teaching at the time. Along with short films, audiotapes, and props from the original theater piece, the filmmakers constructed new props and a set, found new images, recorded new sound, and re-filmed projections for the recreation.

In her 1981 *Millennium Film Journal* article titled "Film Translations of Meredith Monk's Work," editor and dance critic Mindy Aloff writes, "The most engaging aspect of 16 Millimeter Earrings, the film, is the single-minded purity of its point of view. Behind that inquisitive and circumspect camera, we're led to imagine, is a sensibility, observing the action without judgment, but with considerable attention. From the six establishing shots at the outset... we're in the presence of someone who knows what he wants to show us." The film was awarded a prize at the Dance Films Association's Dance on Camera Festival in 1979, and screened in competition at the 1980 Festival international du jeune cinéma de Hyères in France.

16 MILLIMETER EARRINGS will be preserved on film and transferred to digital formats and made available for research and screening at the Film Study Center as well as through loans to qualified institutions.

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