THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE PRESENTS Treasures Screentests

CLASS PICTURES
AN EVENING OF 16MM FILMS PRESENTED BY STUDENT ARCHIVISTS

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PRESENTED BY THE STUDENT ARCHIVISTS OF FILM & MEDIA STUDIES 604: “THE FILM ARCHIVE” SPRING 2022:
LILY DODD, ETHAN FOSTER, ADRIAN MARTINEZ,
JOSH PANOS, ADAM SILVERMAN, and ANNA TROPNIKOVA

Wednesday, May 4, 7pm • HQ L01, the Alice Cinema
HISPANIC AMERICA
(CBS News, 1980, U.S., 16mm, 13 min.)

When Donald Trump first descended from the escalator at Trump Tower on June 16, 2015, to launch his campaign for president, he spouted off one of his signature, xenophobic streams of consciousness: “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best...” Immigration anxiety would come to define the 2016 presidential election, but it was not a new phenomenon in American public life. HISPANIC AMERICA, produced by CBS News and distributed by Carousel Films, presents a snapshot of this very anxiety dating back to 1980. After beginning with a brief introduction from Walter Cronkite, the twelve-minute educational film follows reporter Ed Rabel as he describes the changing demographics of the United States, centered around the three distinct communities of Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans. While the film showcases statistics and fashion trends that are mostly out of date now, much of it feels like it could have come out in the past few years. In a post-Trump world, very little of the racism featured in the film feels very dated or shocking. It highlights many of the same fears and frustrations that inform anti-immigrant biases today, such as hostility toward multilingualism.

Likewise, the film presents its Latinx subjects as fighting some of the same political battles—workers’ rights, citizenship and immigration, income and education inequality, voter registration and representation—at the center of the discourse in 2022. Despite its status as a melting pot, America has always been a site of immigration controversy. Indeed, the more things change, the more things stay the same.

Notes by Josh Panos, Master of Arts in Religion candidate at Yale Divinity School
GONE CURLING
(Dir. John Howe, 1963, Canada, 16mm, 10 min.)

GONE CURLING (1963) is a short comedic docu-fiction recounting The Stranger’s relations with the curling obsessed citizens of Eston, Saskatchewan. Wanting to connect with the locals, The Stranger learns the ins and outs of curling and that the sport has more to it than meets the eye.

Fitting with the subject material, GONE CURLING is a film that doesn’t take itself too seriously. Its humor is delivered just as plainly as the fundamentals of curling. The film is directed by and stars Canadian filmmaker John Howe and was produced by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB).

Howe’s other notable works include the 1974 feature WHY ROCK THE BOAT? and the 1977 short STRANGERS AT THE DOOR. With 36 other directorial credits, Howe was a prolific documentary filmmaker throughout the late 50’s through the mid ’70s. In the same year as GONE CURLING (1963), Howe directed 7 other documentary shorts.

GONE CURLING is one of the NFB’s many sports documentaries highlighting popular Canadian sports. Interestingly, GONE CURLING is not the only NFB shot about curling, nor is it the first - those titles belong to 1955’s THE CURLER (dir. William Davidson) - however it was the first film about curling shot in color.

Notes by Ethan Foster, a senior Film & Media Studies major in Pierson College
THE SUN DAGGER
(Dir. Anna Sofaer, 1977, U.S., 16mm, 59 min. [excerpt])

In 1977, Anna Sofaer, a researcher, artist, and educator of the archeoastronomy of the Ancestral Puebloans of the American Southwest rediscovered a site known as The Sun Dagger. The “dagger” is currently the only known site in the world that marks the extreme positions of the sun and moon. This site in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico is the setting of Sofaer’s 1982 film, THE SUN DAGGER.

Directed, produced, and co-written by Anna Sofaer, and narrated by Robert Redford, this documentary film originally aired on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and tracks the naturally occurring dagger shaped markings of the solar and lunar cycles with light patterns on spiral petroglyphs. Through this film, Anna Sofaer was able to provide evidence that the celestial calendar was used by Ancestral Puebloan people of New Mexico over 1000 years ago. This evidence is seen throughout the film through long, static, and aerial views of the “dagger” in motion, the canyons and interviews with Joseph Campbell, an American writer and mythologist.

While THE SUN DAGGER takes a well-defined look at the rays of lights’ appearance on the earth, it is also concerned with larger units of linear time, historical time, time in terms of repeatable cycles and cosmic time. THE SUN DAGGER is the first film in Anna Sofaer’s exploration of Chaco Canyon. The second, THE MYSTERY OF CHACO CANYON was released in 1999, and the third and most recent, WRITTEN ON THE LANDSCAPE: MYSTERIES BEYOND CHACO CANYON is an in-progress series which will delve into the recent revelations about ancient Native Americans that built enormous and mysterious structures throughout the American southwest.

The three films in this series were produced by The Solstice Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to research of the Chaco people of New Mexico, and was founded by Anna Sofaer in 1978.

Notes by Adrian Martinez, a 2023 MFA Candidate in Photography at the Yale School of Art

THE HOLE
(Dir. John and Faith Hubley, 1962, U.S., 16mm, 15 min.)

The Hole is a 1962 Academy-Award winning short film by legendary American animator husband and wife and long-time Yale faculty members John and Faith Hubley. The film is a further development of the ‘limited animation’ style of filmmaking they pioneered at United Pictures of America. UPA, formed in the wake of the 1941 animators strike at Disney, embraced limited animation in opposition of the realism-obsessed ‘full animation’ of Disney.

Following John’s dismissal from UPA owing to pressure from the House Committee on Un-American Activities, the Hubleys went independent and continued to push the boundaries of their style. In line much of the formal experimentation found in their post-UPA work, The Hole makes ample use of almost impressionistic visual strategies to jeopardize the overall delineated integrity between various visual elements. Semi-transparent cel work further obfuscates the interstices between character layers and background layers, helping to soften and obnubilate the overall composition. It also features improvised voicework by George Mathews and jazz legend Dizzy Gillespie as New York City construction workers meanderingly discussing their views on topics including nuclear fears while working down in the titular hole.

The Hubleys made frequent use of improvisational dialogue in their films, often of their daughters, which in this film creates a free-flowing and at times uneasy, frenetic pace that heightens the tension between our anxiety regarding the uncertain boundaries of the image and their anxiety regarding the uncertainties of the nuclear age.

Notes by Adam Silverman, first year graduate student in Film & Media Studies and East Asian Languages and Literatures