



the room of chromatic mystery arthur and corinne cantrill

present a screening that celebrates 50 years of experimental film

Notes on Cantrill Films. The Program

Part 1 – 2.30 to 3.30

Kinegraffiti (B&W, 1963, 4 mins) One of three 1963 films using abstract imagery derived from fireworks. The soundtracks for these films marked the first serious experimental music composition by Arthur Cantrill. It is generated from a piano by strumming strings, speeding-up and slowing-down improvisations on the keyboard and plucked strings, and reversing piano sound.

Robert Klippel – Junk Sculpture No. 3, 1963 (B&W, 1965, 5 mins) is one of five film studies of Klippel sculptures. The abstract nature of the sculptures led us to use abstract strategies in filming and editing to suggest Klippel's theories of internal energies and forces at work in his sculptures. Larry Sitsky's avant-garde music contributed to this effect.

Red Stone Dancer (B&W, 1968, 6 mins) The Vorticist qualities of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's 1914 stone carving inspired an experimental approach to image and sound, so we used chance and random sequences of shots (as found in a roll of film trims) to achieve unexpected image relationships. The sound by Arthur Cantrill uses strong, strident sequences of sound in a musique concrète mode to work with the random film image. It is a mix of percussion, altered piano, including a glass ball bouncing on piano strings, and electronically modified Australian whiplike calls.

Imprints (B&W, 1969, 4 mins) Brief shots of the Dutch abstract mime performer Will Spoor are intercut with black to produce 'Retinal Imprints', which works with retinal after-images, and 'Memory Imprints' in which the shots share characteristics that connect together in the memory. This was our first serious experiment using the relationship of film to visual perception.

Home Movie – A Day in the Bush (B&W, 1969, 4 mins) Our young sons are formally filmed in repeated actions: approaching the camera (from the far distance to close-up), across the field, and away from the camera, the tension released by repeated 360-degree whirling images. The sound by Arthur Cantrill uses a South American bellbird (recorded at London Zoo) in various configurations: speeded-up, slowed-down and with reverberation, edited with a heavily reverberated and manipulated recording of the boys' voices.

Tea Break (3.30 to 3.50 pm)

Part 2 – 3.50

White Orange Green (1969, 4 mins) After a long-running opening shot, a still life composition is filmed with chromatic variations where the colour overlays modulate the three-dimensional illusion of the image. The sound is of the film projector projecting the spliced workprint.

4000 Frames (B&W, 1970, 3 mins) A totally different image is on each of the 4000 frames (the number in a standard 100 feet camera film roll). The retina, unable to separate the images, superimposes four or five at any given moment, so what one sees is not on the film. The film starts with ever decreasing black fragments between the shots, and ends with the frames increasingly separated by white. The sound is an amplified mix of clocks ticking.

Island Fuse (1971, 11 mins) is a reworking of a part of the filmmakers' own 'film history'. Black and white images shot ten years earlier on Stradbroke Island, Queensland, were re-filmed in colour and superimposed to point up the energies of the ocean and the bush, and to analyse the action of an archetypal figure in the Australian landscape: a camper chopping away at the bush. The film is concerned with the process of its making: the interaction of rear-projected image with camera, projector, colour filters and the film strip. The accompanying sound composition is of electronically modified sea sounds and bird calls, with a looped tone.

Studies in Image (De) Generation (B&W, 1975, 10 mins) Three fragments of the 1901 ethnographic cinematography of Walter Baldwin Spencer in Central Australia were reworked on an optical printer on high contrast film so that the density fluctuations in the original are exaggerated, to make *Negative/Positive on Three Images* by Baldwin Spencer (1974). This film was then printed on hi-con film stock, which was in turn printed again (and again). The grey tones disappeared in these printing generations, resulting in an image of dense blacks and whites. The film speaks to the fragility of human cultures and the fragility of film material as history.

Waterfall (1984, 18 mins) In this three-colour separation film (shot on B&W negative with red, green and blue filters and printed onto Eastmancolor print stock in A, B and C rolls) the three superimposed images of the moving water combine into a solid, white undifferentiated volume, edged by fluctuating colours caused by variations in the flow patterns. In one section the shutter speed was slowed to about one second exposure per frame to enhance the effect. In another, the focus was manipulated separately on the three colour records causing the hues to expand and contract round the mass of water. The sound is a mix of various waterfall effects, the frequency spectrum modified in real time by a graphic equaliser according to the closeness of the water.

Ivor Paints Arf Arf (1998, 6 mins) This is one of a group of three-colour separation films shot on high-contrast, slow-speed B&W negative film stock which results in more saturated, surreal colour amid zones of deep blackness.

Ivor Cantrill is seen painting the Melbourne sound poetry group, Arf Arf. A white canvas fills with the faces of the group, looking more substantial than the artist who is rendered in transparent primary colours. The sound is an Arf Arf performance when Ivor participated with vocalisation and violin improvisation.

Articulated Image (1996, 4 mins) This super-8mm enlargement is a series of variations on a 'still life': a banana palm before a leadlight window. The 'articulation' results from patterns of two frames image alternating with two black frames, and then one frame image/one frame black.

Petunias (1996, 4 mins) Pots of petunias in a garden are filmed with various frame patterns including two frames image alternating with two black frames, alternations between contrasting images, sequences of substitutions, and plays between sharp and soft focus. The sound is of birds with distant traffic and aircraft – panned left and right on an analogue mixer with increasing speed and vigour until the ear loses the sense of sound movement and a vibrating effect ensues. The fast rhythms coincide with the in-camera animation of flowers.

Light Shards (2001, 5 mins) *Light Shards* is in two parts: the first is of the patterns of light and shadow in mainly vertical forms, in a living room with small and beautiful treasures. The second part is of horizontal slatted light and shadow in a kitchen.

The single-frame shooting results in fleeting, rapid imagery, evoking the scintillating action of light.

The music by Jack Quigley collages and manipulates concrete sounds derived from musical instruments and various other sources into a palindromic structure.

The first section of Light Shards and The Room of Chromatic Mystery are both studies of the same room, separated by some years.

The Room of Chromatic Mystery (2006, 8 mins) uses ambiguous, fleeting details, colours and textures filmed in our living room. It is the final film in a group of three-colour films using high-contrast, slow-speed B&W negative film. Arthur Cantrill hand-processed the B&W negative in short lengths, before cutting it into the A, B & C printing rolls for final Red, Green and Blue filtered printing on Eastmancolor print stock. Much of the film has been shot single frame and sometimes with open-shutter time exposure which greatly increases the light on the negative. Between the A, B & C Rolls this creates a vibration and fluctuation of light and colour on the subject. The high-contrast saturated colour, on the verge of appearing and disappearing, and the fluttering of the light suggests changing states of perception and memory. The accompanying sound collage by Arthur Cantrill uses fragments of music, sound effects and voice as memories of sounds heard in the room in the past.

Myself When Fourteen (1989, 19 mins) is the result of a collaboration with Ivor Cantrill, son of the filmmakers. Two shots of Ivor, running in a circle round the camera, and running to a wall, filmed in Oklahoma in 1974 on high contrast black and white negative, were rotoscoped by him using a constantly changing series of colours. The rotoscoped footage was reworked on the optical printer, intermingling it with negative and positive of the original footage. The sound is Ivor's voice, reminiscing about being fourteen, commenting on the making of the film, and listing all the colours used in the rotoscoping, while an electronic music composition by Chris Knowles reflects the intricacy of the image structures.

6pm - 6.30pm drinks

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