Jason: Hello, and welcome to Into The Mothlight Podcast. Before we get into this episode, I just wanted to thank our main sponsors at The Film and Video Poetry Society for the ongoing support. They are due to announce the details of the 2021 Film and Video Poetry Symposium early next month. And we'll certainly share that you when the time comes. We've also just updated our Patreon page. And now you can support the podcast for as little as $5 or £four a month. And you'll find the link to our Patreon page in the episode notes. This time on Into The Mothlight, we are talking to the Memphis born, Brooklyn based filmmaker, Lynne Sachs. Since the 1980s, Lynne has created cinematic works that defies genre through the use of hybrid forms and collaboration, incorporating elements of essay film, collage, performance, documentary, and poetry.

Jason: Her films explore the intricate relationships between personal observations and broader historical experiences. With each project, she investigates the implicit connection between the body, the camera and the materiality of film itself. After a comprehensive career retrospective at the Sheffield Documentary Festival in 2020, and then the Museum of the Moving Image in New York this year, her latest feature, Film About A Father Who, is being screened on The Criterion Channel, along with seven other short films. Over a period of 35 years between 1984 and 2019, Lynne Sachs shot eight and 16 millimeter film, videotape and digital images of her father, Ira Sachs Sr., a bon vivant and pioneering businessman from Park City, Utah. Film About A Father is her attempt to understand the web that connects a child to her parents and a sister to her siblings. To start our conversation, I asked Lynne that after 35 years of filming, why now to make and release this work?

Speaker 2: Into The Mothlight.

Lynne Sachs: So, sometimes I make films that are generated by an idea, or a curiosity. You said to me that you feel that part of your very being is curiosity and it carries you through, and I feel the same way. And in fact, that's what I think distinguishes this approach to filmmaking, is the notion that we are constantly experimenting with the medium. We're trying out new things, we're taking beliefs that we have and challenging them. And so, sometimes I make films that are intended to answer something that has been concerning me or that I'm trying to grapple with. But in this case, I kind of thought that I could understand my father better and my relationship to my father through the camera, that in a sense, the camera would become a catalyst for deeper conversations or that we would feel that we were collaborating on something.

Lynne Sachs: And so, that we would go off to a place where he was watching a tree be felled, or he would perhaps hang out at a groovy school bus in the middle that... He actually did that. He had a kind of a house made out of a school bus. And that we'd go talk about that, not just visit it. And a way the camera became an instigator or a third presence that said, "Talk about things, embrace the moment in a deeper way." So I decided to do that in the early '90s. And I thought it would just take me a couple of years. And I really thought it was a way for me to, at that point, kind of celebrate my iconoclastic father, but then things started to tumble in various directions, which you saw in the film, that made me, in a way, shy away or run away from the project.

Lynne Sachs: And so, I kept filming, but then I didn't know what to do with it. And part of it was that I would record on tape or I'd record on 16 millimeter, and then I would put it away because I actually didn't want to remember it, or be reminded of it, but I wanted to keep it. And so, it was always beckoning me to face it, but mostly what I did for three decades was put it on a shelf or put it under the bed or put it in a closet, but I knew it was there. And I moved from various places at that point. I lived in California when I started, then I came to New York. Then I went to Florida. Then I went to Baltimore and so it kind of was this constant reminder. And it was sort of saying, "Deal with me, deal with me, deal with me." And then finally, in 2020, I finished it.

Jason: The idea of, I think I heard a quote from you recently that said, "If I saw it with a camera, it was real." But in a way, is a camera a sort of defense or filter to keep you one step removed, perhaps when you are filming your father? Because I know not all of the conversations were easy conversations with him and the rest of the family.

Lynne Sachs: I can tell you're an artist and a person whose tool is a camera, because we use the camera in multiple ways. We use the camera to go deeper and to give ourselves permission or license to do just that. But sometimes, we also use the camera to distance ourselves, to be witness, to be observer, but to be sort of... To extricate ourselves because we think, "Oh, we don't have to talk because we're just being present with a moment. And we want to kind of disappear behind this object, which is the camera." It frees you to be uninvolved, but then in your head, as you're holding the camera, you're processing it maybe in a more complex way than we might be if we were just chatting and kind of... Or participating in a verbal way, but not a cerebral way.

Lynne Sachs: I think the camera makes us be present in moments that are emotional and intellectual. And then there's the artistic side. And that's actually a strange shift because you do things like you shoot because the light is beautiful. So you think, "Whoa, I am here because I'm drawn to things that are aesthetic." And so that creates a different register for assessing the situation, but it also gives you a little distance and it gives you pleasure. And I think that's a key thing in making a film like this about your life is where do you find pleasure? Where do you find solace? And maybe your question is leading me to think that the camera gave me a kind of joy that was all mine, which had to do with light, which had to do with listening, which had to do with framing. And that's very intimate to my being.

Jason: Let me ask you about the editing process as well. So if we think about the film that you made with, and for Barbara Hammer, which we'll talk about later on. So obviously, you're slightly removed from that and with the images and texts that you were given, you made the work, but when the story is directly about you, how can you be subjective? How do you work out what stays in and what doesn't make the final edit, for example?

Lynne Sachs: That question, which has to do with the selectivity of the material, which, again, goes back to content, and it goes back to form. It's that constant dialogue that we have as artists, is I'm drawn to something because it evokes a kind of rot emotion, or I'm drawn to something because I think it's beautiful and it's graphically

compelling. And so, the thing is that I shot this film over 30 years and I shot it in various media. So I started off in, believe it or not, BHS video. That was one of the very, very first material I shot, actually that I shot, would've been in the '80s, that I didn't know I was making a film about my father, but it is something I shot with my father when we went on a trip to Bali, which I mentioned in the film.

Lynne Sachs: And then I shot 16 millimeter throughout the whole process. I would say it's the only constant of the whole film other than myself in my body... Than the people. The 16 millimeter was shot with same camera I bought in 1987 and I was still shooting in 2019 with that camera that I bought for $400. A wind up camera, no batteries, doesn't have sound with it, but I love that camera. It's in the closet right over there. So, I was able to shoot with a kind of enthusiasm, with a vengeance, but the editing process was deeply intimidating to me because it meant I had to look at the work. I had to confront stories that were part of my life and my family, and some of it, I felt a lot of shame and some of it, I felt angry and then other parts, elicited forgiveness.

Lynne Sachs: So, around 2017, I started working with a woman named Rebecca Shapass who had been a student of mine a few years before. And she is a really big enthusiast for experimental film. She had taken a class, I took on avant-garde and experimental film. I knew she liked it. And I was looking for someone to work with me on multiple things a few hours a week. So she started to work with me and she's not a film editor, she's an artist who knows how to work programs like Premiere. And I know how to use Premiere, but I needed to find a distance. And she's actually 26 years old now. And so, she could participate in the viewing of the films, but not judge it in the way that I was constantly judging. And we would talk about it. And actually, the fact that she didn't judge me or my dad or anybody, she had this sort of compassion because she knows that every family is faced with a kind of fraught situation.

Lynne Sachs: I call it the imprint. A parent imprints you in a way that you don't know what to do with it. And other people or sisters or brothers, they imprint you in a very easy way. And so she listened to all that. And so we watched all of the material, which was hours and hours and hours. I mean, I don't overshoot and I would actually transcribe it and she would be at the keyboard and we would talk about it. And we actually even created an Excel sheet, a kind of database with Word, because we had to move through a lot of material and we were interested in the form. And then we'd started to do something, I think, which is important. We celebrated the shift in technology rather than my feeling frustrated with how things looked and had been shot in high eight, which isn't a very beautiful texture. We started to say, "That's emblematic of a moment, a period of time."

Jason: I'm always interested in hearing from other filmmakers about when they consider a work to be finished. And I suppose it's doubly complicated with you because obviously you want to feel that the work is as good as it can be, but once it's out there, and because of the personal nature of the film, were you conscious of the fact that you were just about to kind of open a Pandora's box of all this kind of personal stuff? And also, that it's something that you've been really to.

Lynne Sachs: I think using the word finished is really key. So, in a more conventional documentary or narrative film, there's an idea that you come to a resolution that you know how the audience will leave the theater, or the screen. And you want them to leave with a specific frame of mind. But with most of my work, I feel, let's say, happiest if I finish the film and it leaves people thinking about their own lives, that they don't have an absolutely complete picture, in this case, of my father and our family, but that the fragmented nature of it is also an opportunity it leaves fissures in which you can enter and think about your relationships, or think about how you might put together whatever you have, the slivers of... Some people have far less than what I had because they didn't commit most of their adult life to making a film about a parent of theirs.

Lynne Sachs: For example, people think that I have hours and hours of footage from the '60s, because I was born in 1961 and we do see some material from the 1965, when my brother was born, you see this baby. And then if I'm having a conversation, for example, with someone, I would say, "Well, actually my parents only shot 12 minutes of film my entire childhood." Super 8. They probably just sort of pulled it out a couple of times. And I have used every single frame in film of mine called The House of Science, another film called The Small Ones. They have little pieces of that 12 minutes because I know how to shape it. I used to use an optical printer, now I might use some other technique, but all of that leads me to some kind of work that I hope creates a resonance.

Lynne Sachs: And that's what I was looking for in this film. Plus, my dad's getting older, I'm getting... So, there came a point where I'd had enough realizations about, in this case, secret siblings that I thought, I feel like I need to go on to the next part of my life. And I'd spend a lot of time with my dad, more time than... The film pushed me to spend more time with him, to have him come live with me for several weeks and all of that. So those were gifts that the process gave me.

Jason: The films that you make or the documentary work, in my mind, certainly falls within the category of experimental films. How do you walk that line between mainstream documentary making and experimental filmmaking and still get your message across in a way that people can understand?

Lynne Sachs: I think I would answer the question about what does experimental documentary mean in two ways, the first is that I don't think I would know how to make a conventional documentary. Years ago, I was making a film about civil disobedience and a group of Catholic anti-war activists and I was traveling up to Boston to do an interview. And someone I knew who worked at National Geographic said, "How are you going to shoot that all by yourself? Because if you are working with a subject, then they need to look sort of off camera. And if it's just you, they're going to look straight at you."

Lynne Sachs: And I said, "But I like that intensity. I like that we're in dialogue and that we're looking at each other." And that seemed like such a small deviation from the norm, but that kind of intimacy between the lens and between a person in front of the lens, was always fine with me. And that's just scratching the surface, right? That film, ultimately, it showed on the Sundance Channel. And to me, that was

like, "Whoa, I'm showing with the other more traditional documentaries." But then reviewers would call it an anti-documentary.

Lynne Sachs: And the thing is that in my work, I try to look at the... Call it the subject, and the subject beckons the form. So the form is not a template. The form is not a given. One time I was on a panel on documentary and the facilitator started off the conversation by saying, "Okay, we can all assume that a good documentary begins with a character." And I said, "Well, I disagree completely." And I thought he wanted to throw me out the room because I don't go into a situation and think, "Who's the most charismatic here? You're going to be my person here. You're going to be my star."

Lynne Sachs: But I do think that a lot of more conventional documentary filmmakers follow that conceit of looking for a character and even calling the person a character is looking to narrative film. It's looking to a structure that's more, I would say, formulaic in the sense that it delivers a kind of catharsis and a sense of connection. And I'm not always trying to find an audience that will then identify with my characters and the way that good fiction often does. And I love fiction and I love fiction film, but that's not really my model.

Speaker 4: Into The Mothlight. Into The Mothlight Podcast.

Jason: One of the things that you said there was about that eye contact. And I watched Maya at 24, I've studied that film. And it also resonates with something else that you said about people are sick of the perfect image. So to me, there is a perfect image of a moment of time in you and your daughter, but it comes alive because of that eye contact, because she's obviously looking at you through the camera, at very key moments at time when she's six 16 and 24, does that resonate with you?

Lynne Sachs: Well, actually, it is all about eye contact. I'm so impressed that you asked that question. It shows you really know my films well, it's a funny place to start, but if I'm on an airplane or a bus and I start a conversation with someone and... Which does happen less and less now that we're all wearing masks. And we say, "Well, what do you do?" And then I say, "Well, I'm a filmmaker." And that doesn't carry the prestige that saying, "Oh, I'm a director, I'm a film director." But I don't identify with being a film director, I identify with being a maker. I like that hands-on aspect. But in this film, Maya at 24, direction is key because this is a film made by a mom with her daughter, right?

Lynne Sachs: And so, I said to my daughter at age six, 16 and 24, "I want you to run a circles around me. And I want you to try to look at my eyes." Now, at six years old, she thinks it's kind of silly and she's a little playful. And then at 16, she's very self-conscious. And so she doesn't like to be watched, even by mom's camera. And then at 24, she's agreeable, maybe you might even say compliant, but doesn't have time to do it really, has other things that... Has to go to school or has to get back to her job or whatever it is, life is full and it's her life. So, at different points, as we are looking to each other, we are witnessing different things. And I have different ways of, let's say, positioning myself with authority because you have two levels of authority. You have the authority of being the mother, the parent,

but you also have the authority that comes with directing a movie and she's my actress or my star or my subject.

Lynne Sachs: And so she agreed to be in my film. And that's a very strange aspect of filmmaking that there are these explicit agreements, which include contracts, but then there are these other agreements, which are more typical in a more experimental context or playful or kind of arts context, which is, "I'm going to collaborate with you." By the time she's 24, I think that's what's happening. These are two adult women, and they are making something together and there's a kind of collaborative spirit, so that changes. I also want to bring it something to our conversation around Maya at 24, which might be of interest to you. So she was 24 when I shot that, but also, this film existed in three other contexts at different points. So I made a film called Photograph of Wind, which is an expression that I heard Robert Frank, the photographer, use.

Lynne Sachs: And her name is Maya, so it means illusion. And we're always interested in filmmaking and thinking about what can we see? So wind, we can't see, but we can see the impact of wind. And then when she was 16, I made a film called Same Stream Twice because I was interested in the... Call it, ontological aspects of film that you can return to the past, that you can revisit a moment in time. And then the third version. So, when you see her at six, 16 and 24, Maya at 24 is also 24 frames per second. So she's moving at the speed that her body allows her to move, but we're watching her move within these frames, series of 12 or 24 still frames that create an illusion of movement. All three versions of this film are also about the form as well.

Jason: I do love that idea about the fact that you've had the same 16 millimeter film camera for all this time. And people have really kind of deep relationships with their camera. And I think Nathaniel Dorsky, who we interviewed a couple of podcasts back, and I know that somebody that you've met, he's got a really strong connection to his camera, but it feels like you have the same, especially when it comes out the box to shoot your daughter when she's 24, you will be reflecting back and shooting her when she was 16. And she was six as well.

Lynne Sachs: Thank you for asking that because... And I almost forgot to think about the fact that I was able to shoot her at all three ages with the same camera. And in our lives, we think, "Is our skin the same? Is our being the same? How have we changed? How have we been affected by the shift in history or culture and politics?" I'm very inspired, let's say, by a Portuguese author named Fernando Pessoa. And he wrote a book called The Book of Disquiet, and there's a line that I love, which says, "Everything that surrounds us becomes part of us."

Lynne Sachs: And so, as I watch Maya at these three ages, I try to think about, "Well, how has the environment at which she lived entered her, entered me?" But then there's one thing that hasn't been really that affected by the environment, and that's this camera. And I actually know one day that the camera will not be in my grasp and I'll have to find another one, but I do feel, I guess I'd say lucky that I've been able to that camera. This is a podcast, so I don't need to pull the camera out, you can imagine. Should [crosstalk 00:27:31] I get it now, just while we're talking about it?

Jason: Yeah. If you like, [crosstalk 00:27:34].

Lynne Sachs: It's one foot... It's just [crosstalk 00:27:35].

Jason: Go for it [crosstalk 00:27:35]. Yeah.

Lynne Sachs: Ta-da.

Jason: It's a beauty.

Lynne Sachs: Hold on. If we take a picture, I should put a lens on, because I only shoot with prime lenses.

Jason: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Lynne Sachs: So prime lens, meaning fixed focal length. So I shoot with a 13 millimeter or 75 millimeter or 52 millimeter lens. I have a zoom lens, but it's not that good. So this is the body of the camera. And it's a Bolex.

Jason: It is a Bolex.

Lynne Sachs: You probably would've guessed that it would be a 16 millimeter Bolex.

Jason: So your love of filmmaking developed in the late 1980s in San Francisco. What brought you to experimental film and what was the scene back then? Who we hanging out with?

Lynne Sachs: San Francisco was such a pivotal experience. I went to San Francisco because my sister, Dana, lived there. And also, because I was going to start graduate school, I ended up going to two different graduate programs. So I started at San Francisco State University, which is a public university, which has a cinema program that really acknowledges film theory in a fantastic way. So I worked with Trinh T. Minh-ha there. She's a Vietnamese American filmmaker, poet, and theoretical thinker. And I actually was her assistant for several years. And she made a very well-known film from the 1980s called Reassemblage. And I worked on her film, Surname Viet Given Name Nam and other works. So, she had a very big influence on me in terms of thinking about the ways we photograph people who are different from ourselves and how we acknowledge who we are in relationship to who we're looking at through our lens.

Lynne Sachs: I also actually learned cinematography from Babette Mangolte, who had been a cinematographer, and she's also a filmmaker for Chantal Akerman. And she happened to come to San Francisco State for one semester. So I was taking a cinematography class from her and she was looking at a film that I was working on called Still Life With Women and Four Objects, which you might have seen. And so this was in the mid 1980s. She said to me something about Walter Benjamin, and I had never heard of Walter Benjamin at the time. And she was kind of offended or kind of astounded. And I was just getting involved in filmmaking. So, of course, then I had to read Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. And then I read the Task of the Translator and other essays by

Benjamin. And, of course, like so many other filmmakers, I was transformed or transfixed, transformed, very, very moved and awakened by his writing.

Lynne Sachs: So that is, to me, the essence of that experience of being in a university where they were actually teaching people who didn't have a real technical background, which was my situation. I came from a degree in history, an academic degree in history, and also, many years, but I was only 25 years old, but of being were really committed to art making and writing poetry, but I didn't know how to make films. They were willing to teach people how to make films, but also ideas. But at the same time, I decided that I wanted to teach and I needed to get another degree, which is a terminal degree called A Master of Fine Arts. So I started to go to the San Francisco Art Institute simultaneously.

Lynne Sachs: They let me share classes and it worked out well. So, there, I studied with the Swedish American filmmaker, Gunvor Nelson, whose work you might know. And I made a film with Gunvor and Barbara and Carol Schneemann, many, many, many years later. I worked with Ernie Gehr, who's known as a structuralist filmmaker. George Kuchar, who's just a wonderful and irreverent, very autonomous filmmaker. And so, those people had a big influence on me as well. But then outside of the school environment, I would say that my compatriot, big brother, dear, dear friend, Craig Baldwin, who's a filmmaker of mostly found footage works, but very, very, very, very political, very aware of social dynamics.

Lynne Sachs: His presence in my life, his curating at a place called Other Cinema, which you might be familiar with, was extremely important to me. And I would go to his venue every Saturday night for years. So those were all really important people. Oh, and Barbara Hammer was there and I took a workshop from her. And then she actually took a workshop from me and we became dear friends and both ended up moving to New York. So it was a scene and it was all a scene of people wanting to be filmmakers, not directors. So if you're in San Francisco, you always are aware that you're different from Los Angeles. You're not Hollywood and you're okay with that.

Jason: And because the podcast is called Into The Mothlight, is that reference to Stan Brakhage. At what point did you start to become aware of him and his work? And did you cross paths at all at any point?

Lynne Sachs: I will say many things. I will try not to talk too long about Stan Brakhage. One of the other places that I was introduced to experimental film was the San Francisco Cinematheque. And I also went there every Thursday. So, I would go there on Thursdays, it was like my religion, and I would go to Other Cinema on Saturdays. And so, Stan Brakhage was always coming through with new films then. And also, once I moved to New York, Stan would come to New York and he always premiered his films at the Millennium Film Workshop. And so, he could have re-premiered his films at the New York Film Festival, but he always premiered them at Millennium. And so, he would be there and he would hold court or hold forth. And he would show a new film and then he would sit and talk and people would just eat it up.

Lynne Sachs: And it was very special because he did it in this much more modest way, not flashy. And so, I should also say that he, once a year, would curate a program at the Anthology Film Archives. So one year, he showed my film, The House of Science: A Museum of False Facts. And he also showed my husband's film, Winterwheat. And actually, he left us a voicemail for Mark, my husband, Mark Street. I met Mark in San Francisco. So that was also really important because we went to a lot of the same venues. And Stan left a probably seven or eight minute voicemail on our answering machine. And I saved that, about Mark's film. And then I'll say something else about Stan, which was, he had this kind of like a salon, it was called First Person Cinema in Boulder.

Lynne Sachs: He would show films, but also invite artists to come out there. And so, Mark and I were invited to go with our young child, Maya, who was still crawling. This was at the end of 1995 probably. And so, we were out in Boulder and we showed our work and then the next day, he had his salon and he was showing some silent Joseph Cornell films from his collection. And it was very exciting and he had just given some books to Maya at age 10 months and signed them. And so, Maya started to make little giggly sounds and cry a little bit in the theater. So I started to rush... I thought, "I need to rush out." We're watching these silent films by Joseph Cornell. It needs to be hollowed, it needs to be respectful, and actually, Stan loved it.

Lynne Sachs: And he encouraged Maya to crawl across the stage. And you have this silhouette, in my memory, of Maya's little body crawling in front of a Joseph Cornell film maybe. And Stan liked that mix of... Of course, he loved children, but the film itself didn't need to exist in this hermetic space. It could be affected by something very present and alive and uncontrollable like a baby. And so, that was really endearing. So, one other thing Stan said to me, I remember from a conversation that we had was that he watched everything. He was very Catholic, with a little C, about his viewing. So he actually, I believe, really loved the feature film, The Thin Red Line, that was a film about war and about... It's Terrence Malick's film, and has this voiceover by a... It's supposed to be a soldier and speaking in this very fragile, but aware and present and pained way about war.

Lynne Sachs: And it wouldn't be a film that you would expect Stan Brakhage to love, but it was one of his favorites. And so, I turned to that film when I was making some of my film works, because I wanted to understand, for example, how voiceovers could be used in this raw way, not this sort of polished way. He never used voiceover and he never would've constructed a film that way, but he understood why it was such a perfect film to guide you through something that intimate and personal. So I appreciated that about... All of those things about Stan.

Speaker 2: Into The Mothlight.

Speaker 4: Into The Mothlight Podcast.

Jason: We've talked a little bit about how you learned about film and the people that you learned from. I'm interested in how you, as an established filmmaker, cascade this information down. And one of the workshops that I was looking at, and it's something I battle with quite a lot was intersections between the still, moving

images and the written and spoken word. So how do you start to get your students to understand those intersections and avoid the obvious and the cliches and really kind of think deeply about the work and how an image will work with, or work against the text that they're working with?

Lynne Sachs: I want to say, I love the word that you used, cascade. I never thought about teaching that way, but a cascade is also something that you can't quite control. So you let it pour out and then it keeps pouring even if you're not prepared to reveal that much. But I think that's kind of the perfect word for the joy of teaching and teaching has a parallel to art making in that you're showing something about your process and you're actually sharing something you care a great deal about. So in the context of teaching, most recently, I've been very interested in that intersection between image and text. And so, going back to more conventional filmmaking practices, I would say that people look at text and they call it dialogue. When people edit the soundtracks, they talk about the effects track, and they talk about the music track and then words are dialogue and they're about communicating and moving a narrative forward.

Lynne Sachs: But I have a very different relationship to words and text. I like words to be on screen and to take a graphic presence occasionally, when the film calls for that. I like exploring ways of cutting sound, in a similar way to the way that poetry breaks has line breaks. So it's not that you just cut on the period and the exclamation mark, but that you cut on a bit like Robert Altman might cut sound, where sound layers on top of itself. And you imbibe it, you don't just understand it, it enters you in a more visceral, seemingly physical way. So those are ways that I try to convey that to students of mine. And at lately, I've been teaching a lot of online workshops. Who would've thought of it? But the first workshop I did around film and poetry was actually with Jesse at The Film and Video Symposium.

Lynne Sachs: We did it in person. I've been teaching workshops actually at poetry centers. So I just finished last week, a two week workshop called Frames and Stanzas. And I taught it at the... It's called The Flow Chart Foundation, which is the poet, John Ashbery's center. He's not alive anymore, but it was created as an homage to John Ashbery. And so, I taught mostly poets, a few filmmakers. So it's been interesting because a lot of people in poetry want to start playing with image. And I think there's a strong resistance to the image illustrating the poem and that which was always how film was used. It was used, "Let's look at Emily Dickinson and show her environment in Amherst, Massachusetts," and that kind of thing. And instead, it's more graphic, more rhythmic, more of a intersection of disparate things that come together to create something new, rather than just a support for the poetry. So I've been working with some really, really incredible poets, and I feel lucky about that.

Jason: So, The Criterion Channel is presenting the exclusive streaming premiere of Film About A Father Who this month, along with some of your other work and obviously you've just had a career retrospective at the Museum of the Moving Image in New York. Do those things still bring you joy as an artist as established as you are?

Lynne Sachs: Oh, my gosh. To have a retrospective is intimidating and exciting. It doesn't happen very much. I mean, this year has been kind of special in that way. The Sheffield Film Festival did a partial retrospective. That was in 2020, but they showed probably five or six of my films. So it's been interesting to look at them altogether, but it's not that my work shows all over the place and that thousands and thousands of people watch it. I mean, experimental film, the nature of it is sort of micro cinema all the way.

Lynne Sachs: So I rarely show my films to large groups of people and The Criterion Channel is very exciting to me. It's a kind of an opening, it's kind of scary. It's definitely scary. I'm used to traveling with my films and, of course, because of the pandemic, I couldn't do that, but if I have a screening somewhere and I can get there, then I like to be there. So I'm used to kind of small audiences where we sit around and then we go to a bar afterwards, that kind of thing. And so the fact that I won't see the audience such as it is for The Criterion Channel is exciting and also kind of definitely intimidating.

Jason: Maybe we need to see more retrospectives of your work in the UK. And actually, one of the questions that [Sarah Poisel 00:46:08] put to me for you, was about that relationship between experimental film, exhibition and production in-between America and the UK. And the feeling is it's harder for us to see films from American filmmakers in the UK, and I'm not entirely sure why that is.

Lynne Sachs: It's interesting, when we talk about experimental film from the UK here, people often look at the... You might call them structuralist filmmakers from the '70s, from England, and then there's a tendency to look at it in a more of a historical way. And I'm wondering why there isn't more of an exchange. There's almost more of an exchange between Germany and the US, or even maybe between Spain and the US. And you would think there's going to be a language barrier there. I will say that in the UK, there's a tradition of the Cooperative. You had London Film-Makers' Co-op and now you have Lux I believe. And we have The Film-Makers' Cooperative and we have Canyon Cinema. And so, I guess I would say the emphasis on those works has been on 16 millimeter until just a few years ago.

Lynne Sachs: So 16 millimeter travels as an object. And now, with this embrace of the virtual, both Canyon Cinema, and The Film-Makers' Cooperative have exhibitions that are virtual. So I think that you and I can say the possibility of more exchange is more available. The idea of this cross Atlantic correspondence. My husband, Mark Street, is going to be on... He teaches at Fordham University here, and he's going to be on sabbatical next year, so we're going to be spending more together. We decided to come to Europe for a few months. But his main intention is to shoot in Scotland.

Jason: Look me up and definitely look me up.

Lynne Sachs: I will, I'll be in contact with you about that.

Jason: So, one last question for you, Lynne, what's occupying your mind now in terms of your next project? Do you have anything in production or anything that you're considering?

Lynne Sachs: Yeah, I'm actually working on a film, which I call Every Contact Leaves A Trace, and that's an expression or a way of thinking that comes out of the study of forensics, this notion of, "I touch you and you touch me and we leave DNA, or we leave a mark." But I'm interested in a more comprehensive way. I'm interested in how we have a tactile impact on one another. And specifically, I'm looking at these... A box I have in the other room of hundreds and hundreds of calling cards or business cards that people have given me over many years. And I'm interested in the way those people's lives have kind of passed through mine and how each card becomes a mnemonic device for a human being. It comes a distillation for who that person was. It could be someone who worked in a hardware store that I may met when I was shopping for a garden hose, or it could be a doctor or could be an activist filmmaker from China.

Lynne Sachs: And I'm wondering if that person's still able to be an activist. So I'm interested in the way we kind... There's the expression where we are judged by the company we keep, how we become a composite of the company we keep. And so, I've actually been looking at those cards in various ways. Forensically, I went to a school for criminology and tried to find out if there were fingerprints on some of the cards, how they become material elements of people that have come through my life, but I'm also interested in how the paper is made. So I was filming paper being made in a handmade paper studio. How the paper is this pulp and that, but then I'm interested in them as these micro narratives, so that's something I'm working on right now.

Jason: Yeah. That's sounds fascinating. That sounds great. Lynne, thank you so much for your time today. It's been a [crosstalk 00:50:52] pleasure to spend some time with you and let's talk again soon.

Lynne Sachs: All right. Bye-bye.

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