

Gunvor Nelson Tribute II: Moons Pool
Ted Mann Theater
Academy Museum of Motion Pictures
Los Angeles
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Presented by: Cherlyn Liu and K.J. Reith-Miller, Academy Museum;
Adam Hyman, LA Film Forum: and Film Form, Sweden

Programmed and notes by Cherlyn Hsing-Hsin Liu and Steve Anker

Introduced by Lynne Sachs

Films:

Schmeerguntz
1966, 15 minutes, B&W, SOUND, 16mm

My Name is Oona
1969, 10 minutes, B&W, SOUND, 16mm

Fog Pumas
1967, 25 minutes, B&W and Color, SOUND, 16mm

Moons Pool
1973, 15 minutes, Color, SOUND, Digital

Snowdrift a.k.a. Snowstorm
2001, 9 minutes, Color, SOUND, Digital

TRT: 74min.

This is not a life IN film but rather ON film. Gunvor witnesses her life and interprets it.

Importance of Gunvor calling herself a filmmaker, like Mira Nair, mother of NYC's new mayor.

She is a maker, this term comes out of the fine arts – like painting or sculpture. But it also has a relationship to the home – the homemaker. She was a working artist w a tactile personal relationship to her medium. She wanted to shape and engage with her tools and her technology. This made her feel empowered.

She was my teacher at the San Francisco Art Institute in the late 1980s.

What did it mean to be her student?

I am a mentor/ teacher now and continue my own relationships. She crocheted this little cap for my daughter Maya when she was born in 1995. It continues to fit both of us.

Editing notes:

Against B roll:

Surprising solutions can be had with the most deficient of material if you let it speak to you; if you learn what really is in the film....”a cutaway shot should be part of the film not just something to repair it”

A major aspect of editing involves finding the particular WORLD of the film, find the rules and laws (grammar) of that world that YOU build.

Gunvor suggests various methods of building MEMORY within the film. This is a completely different ethos from the conventional structure of mainstream film where the FORM itself is consistent and it is the story that is expected to surprise you.

What happens between two shots is everything! It triggers ideas in YOUR mind. This is not the formula of narrative filmmaking where cause and effect, or the sequence of time, leads the process.

Look for the gesture within each shot. Pay attention to the shot before and after to build meaning. These are forms of punctuation.

Study the shape and transformation of all forms, even the NEGATIVE SPACE. This is familiar to those of us who draw but may be new to others.

Absence or emptiness creates transformative relationships of seeing within a frame. Brings about the activation of your eye and mind.

VISIBILITY of the cut could be really important. Draw attention to the action of the edit. She is a very assertive and brave CUTTER of images and sounds.

How is watching an avant-garde film a different experience of perception? “For traditional movies, we are actively engaged in the film by speculating on its resolution. In viewing the Avant Guard film, it is most often helpful to suspend questions like where we going? How is it going to end, and instead perceive the fundamental experience of the film itself.”

“When you are really immersed, you, yourself, are totally interested in solving the problems of the film, then you forget how much work you were giving to it. Then the film emerges! Usually, the solution seems just right and logical. Why did I not see it before? But it did take all that interest and study and hard work.”

When I was so eager to complete my film,
I remember that she warned me that I would miss being inside it.

Talk about making Carolee, Barbara, and Gunvor. I made a film with Gunvor, and renowned artists Carolee Schneeman and Barbara Hammer. They were all beloved friends one generation older than me.

Now I will talk about the films in this program:

Schmeerguntz guided me in the making of my film A BIOGRAPHY OF LILITH.

Made with Dorothy Wiley in 1966.

- female humor – grand classical music with pregnant bellies; we also see Tampax falling out of vagina – Was this taboo? Is it still taboo? Imagine your grandmother making this movie!

- The founder of Women Make Movies told me that this film inspired a disruptive but non-violent civil disobedience action in the Miss America

Pageant. This became a movie called “Up Against the Wall Miss America”. I grew up watching Miss American believe it or not!

- What you will see in this movie: belly cut next to the globe; princesses; putting on eye makeup; women exercising; Try to SPOT practically the only man in the film James Baldwin (must have been their hero); dirty drain and pregnant woman vomiting as the detritus of culture

My Name is Oona sparked my ongoing films with my daughters: Photograph of Wind, Same Stream Twice, Maya at 24 and Noa Noa.

- It is important for a young girl to own her name.
- Extraordinary cinematography.

Fog Pumas (1967)

- Also made with Dorothy Wiley – important of collaborating with friends to make art

- Now we witness domestic life of the two mothers; feeding children; yelling; we see a girl child’s nude body in negative (how do you feel about this?); performative section where we see a woman scooping mannequin-like bodies from a swimming pool, it’s macabre and playful; everything is so playful and wild;

we see midgets too; this is a celebration of different kinds of bodies; woman in skimpy dress running in field; sultry bodies. All generations are embraced.

Moons Pool (1973)

Made in the same year as Roe vs. Wade. Even though we did not have the Equal Rights Amendment, we had bodily autonomy and reproductive justice, the ability to make decisions about our own bodies was a Constitutional right, until 2023.

Does this film give you the feeling of a woman (here Gunvor) and a mother returning in a mythic way to the womb?

Snowdrift-

The textures of the flakes but not a narrative of the experience of a storm. We feel the sounds of the sensation through our bodies and the haunting resonance of the music which reminded be a crowd calling out.

Story about her garden and the dead flowers.

This is a life ON film, her life.