

2018

37th

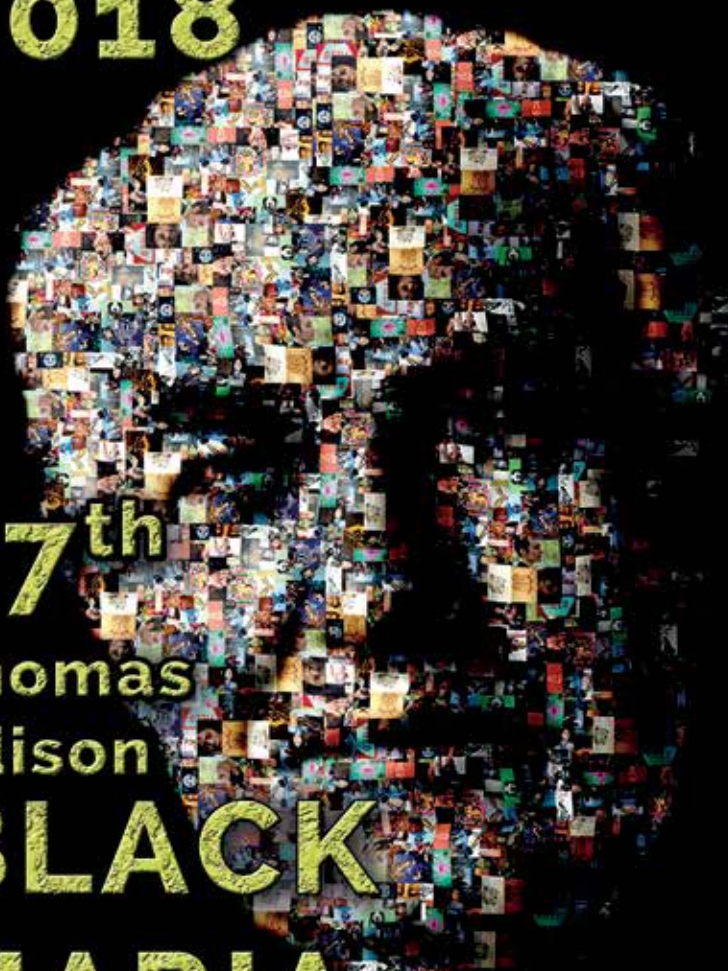
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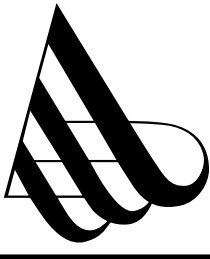
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The Black Maria Film Festival is a project of the Thomas A. Edison Media Arts Consortium, an independent non-profit organization based at New Jersey City University. The festival was launched in 1981 with the endorsement of the Thomas Edison National Historical Park in West Orange, NJ.

To become a sponsor of the Black Maria Film Festival, please contact the consortium’s office or make a donation via the festival website: www.blackmariafilmfestival.org.

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WithumSmith+Brown, PC is proud to support the Black Maria Film Festival for celebrating and preserving the diversity, invention and vitality of the short film and for bringing the arts to the community.

Wishing the Black Maria Film Festival a great season!

Maureen DeCicco, CPA, Partner
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is grateful to the following individuals
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From the Festival Director, Jane Steuerwald

One of the essential parts of my work as the director of the Black Maria Film Festival is to convey the festival's mission to the public. This includes filmmakers, students, audience members, grants organizations, donors, and all of the generous supporters the festival has cultivated for close to forty years.

It's an idea I enthusiastically embraced from the very first moment I experienced a Black Maria program. I sat in a darkened room in the basement of the Media Arts Department at Jersey City State College in Jersey City, NJ. John Columbus – the founder of Black Maria – brought a program of short films to present to our students and faculty and I knew right away that what John had conceived of was brilliant and important and life changing.

John's vision for Black Maria remains at the core of the festival all these years later. Our mission is still to promote and advocate innovation in the art of the moving image with a primary focus on non-commercial film. The festival has embraced this mission now for 37 years. We advance and exhibit the work of diverse filmmakers from across the US and around the world. Our concerns are to seek out exceptional independent films that shine a light on issues of importance to people world-wide.

It has been my good fortune to be the steward of Black Maria and to preserve John's vision and the festival's mission. Every year I have the opportunity to screen work by filmmakers from around the globe. This season will transport you to places you've never dreamed of going, and all in the blink of an eye. From the underbelly of Atlantic City, to an artist's studio in Mozambique, Black Maria films will take you on a cinematic journey that is not to be missed. This is the gift of truly great films – showing, not telling; enlightening, not coercing; and searching for what makes us truly human.

Map of International Submissions for 2018



We are very proud that filmmakers from all over the world choose to submit work to our festival. For our 2018 season submissions came from 29 nations across six of the seven continents and included the following countries.

List of Countries

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Australia | Netherlands |
| Austria | New Zealand |
| Belgium | Palestine |
| Brazil | Poland |
| Canada | Romania |
| Colombia | Russian Federation |
| Czech Republic | South Africa |
| Finland | South Korea |
| France | Spain |
| Germany | Switzerland |
| Greece | Taiwan |
| Iceland | Turkey |
| India | United Kingdom |
| Israel | United States of America |
| Italy | |

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to all the highly creative filmmakers showcased in the
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Bill Morrison: The Art of the Archive **by Sally Berger**

Film and Media Curator
Fellow, Center for Media, Culture and History,
New York University

The Black Maria Film Festival is a pivotal locus of short experimental works, an ideal exhibition venue from which to reflect on artists' films using archival and found footage, and in particular for the purposes of this essay, the work of Bill Morrison, one of its frequent participants. The festival has been ongoing since 1981 when the Thomas Edison National Historical Park in West Orange, New Jersey, accepted filmmaker and founding Director John Columbus's proposal for a film festival "dedicated to short films, largely experimental."¹ It was at this site where Edison's Black Maria Photographic Studio (considered the first purpose-built motion picture studio) was completed in 1893, the first short films were made, and the roots of cinema in America began. Edison and his team of assistants including the Scottish inventor William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson, experimented in the development of motion picture technology, designed the motion picture camera (the kinetograph), the peephole kinoscope, and created some of the earliest motion pictures. The works initially created in the Edison studio were shorts like the primitive Fred Ott's Sneeze (1894), a five second planned event which was originally filmed to be printed as photographic stills for publicity purposes, staged actions (Blacksmithing Scene, 1893), and reenactments (The Kiss, 1896).²

To expand the commercial value of his work in cinema, Edison opened a new motion picture studio in Manhattan in 1901. His production manager Edwin S. Porter worked on multiple aspects of the Edison films as cameraman, director and editor: his hands-

¹ Author interview with John Columbus, December 21, 2017.

² "Edison kinoscope record of a sneeze, January 7, 1984." Washington, D.C. Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/00694192>.

on methods are cited as a link between early, “primitive” cinema and the practices of the avant-garde artist.³ In *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (1902), Porter’s film-within-a-film structure, using three previously shot Edison films to build the story, is an early example of the use of incorporating archival footage into the construction of a film. Later in the century artists began making short collage films using films, photographs and/or sound, some famous examples include: Joseph Cornell’s *Rose Hobart* (1936); Bruce Conner’s *A Movie* (1958); and Arthur Lipsett’s *Very Nice, Very Nice* (1961).

Columbus envisioned the Black Maria Film Festival as a touring festival of short films from the outset: he specifically designed and presented programs for each venue (a tradition continued into the present with current Executive Director, Jane Steuerwald). In its first year the festival was organized out of Columbus’s home office, with mail received through the Thomas Edison National Historical Park, and submissions processed through the East Orange Public Library, which has a 16mm film collection: The first three exhibition venues were at the Edison National Historic Park, the Fairlawn Cultural Center and the Montclair Art Museum, but the festival quickly expanded its scope to include additional sites in theaters and cultural centers farther afield. Shorts, for submission purposes, were originally defined as thirty minutes or less, later forty-five minutes or less, and today sixty minutes or less.⁴

Through the years, Black Maria has exhibited a full range of shorts in animation, documentary, narrative and experimental styles. Many of these are “archival” or “found footage” works – films made either completely or partially with pre-existing films or appropriated footage (material from silent films, home movies and amateur films, newsreels, television footage, industrials, outtakes, etc.). In its first decade (1981 – 1991), the festival included one or two films each year based on found footage; as the decade progressed, the numbers increased. One of the earliest examples, a documentary that was shown on the 2nd Black Maria Tour in

3 Robert Sklar, *A World History of Film*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 2001, 37.

4 Author interview with John Columbus, December 21, 2017.

1983, was *No Place to Hide* (1982, Lance Bird and Tom Johnson): The film featured clips from 1950s civil defense education films geared toward teaching American families safety from nuclear disaster during the early years of the Cold War era.

Other examples in the first decade featuring found footage works by filmmakers who defined their individual styles within the experimental and/or documentary genres included: Alan Berliner (*Everywhere at Once*, 1985); Abigail Child (*Perils*, 1986; *Mayhem*, 1987); Kathy Cook and Claudia Looze (*June Brides*, 1987); Phil Solomon, (*The Secret Garden*, 1988); Lewis Klahr (*In the Month of Crickets*, 1988); Barbara Hammer (*Endangered*, 1989); and Nina Fonoroff (*A Knowledge They Cannot Lose*, 1989). These filmmakers developed distinctive methodologies using found footage based on their artistic practices. Among the works listed above, Berliner created a sound and image collage matching audio to visual clips from multiple sources in sports, nature, music and more; Child used source materials from film noir and silent films to examine the undercurrents and tensions running through film, drama, and sexuality; Solomon lyrically manipulated the photochemical surfaces of 16mm film; and Klahr created a haunting animated narrative out of magazine cutouts.⁵

By the early 1990s, partially due to the wider availability of digital editing, the existence of ephemeral film collections such as the Prelinger Archives, the further development of film preservation and collections, and artists expanding interest in making collage films, the use of archival footage films shown in the festival had grown. In 1991, the festival tour showcased at least six films using archival footage, including Martin Arnold's *Pièce touchée* (1989), which extended and manipulated a pivotal eighteen-second scene from a 1954 film (*The Human Jungle*, Joseph M. Newman) to create a sixteen-minute-long new work. This tour also included Barbara Hammer's *Sanctus* (1989), which repurposed 1950s x-ray films shot by doctor and filmmaker James Sibley Watson; Bradley Eros and Jeanne Liotta's collaborative performance based film and projection work *Fungus Eroticus* (1990); Alan Berliner's *Late City Edition* (1991), an installation shown in a single channel

5 Tales of the Forgotten Future: Lewis Klahr, 1988-1991, 131 mins., Light Industry, <http://www.lightindustry.org/talesoftheforgottenfuture>.

version; Abigail Child's, *Mercy* (1989); and Su Friedrich's *Sink or Swim* (1990), on the relationship between a daughter and her estranged father told through associative images and stories.⁶

Out of the vibrant and creative energy of experimental film, theater and performance in New York City in the early 1990s, Bill Morrison began making films for New York's Ridge Theater centered on the use of found footage. During his studies at Cooper Union with animator Robert Breer in the mid 1980s, he worked with an optical printer, made photographs from paint processed 16mm film, and built his films "image- by-image."⁷ Filmmaker Jeanne Liotta introduced him to the underground film scene. Bill explained how Liotta impacted his work: "Jeanne was a life model at Cooper Union 1985-9, and we became fast friends. She introduced me to the world of underground cinema and theater in the East Village of the late '80s, to which I had no prior exposure. She was so engaged and energetic and took great risks with her work. I remember her taking me to screenings in basements, and seeing appropriated film images used in cinematic performances for the first time. She was the first person from downtown New York I ever met."⁸

Morrison's *Footprints* (1992), was first screened as a six-minute projection within the Ridge's theatrical presentation of *Jungle Movie*, a reflection on "'colonist' and 'native' stereotypes" shown at One Dream Theater in Tribeca in 1991.⁹ Morrison had been working on a film "using images of primitive man as depicted in primitive cinema" and "the idea that a new type of human evolved out of our relationship to cinema in the 20th century," which was incorporated into the show. His film clips came from

6 The Black Maria Film Festival is in the process of compiling the history of films screened at the festival, so only a cursory examination of all the found footage films could take place at this time. Author interview with John Columbus, December 21, 2017.

7 Sally Berger, "'Bill Morrison: Old Films, Contemporary Music, Timeless Themes," A MoMA/MoMA PS1 Blog, November 19, 2014, https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2014/11/19/bill-morrison-old-films-contemporary-music-timeless-themes/.

8 Author interview with Bill Morrison, November 27, 2017.

9 *Jungle Movie* was directed by Bob McGrath, written by Hugh Esten, and composed by Jim Farmer for Ridge Theater. Author interview with Bill Morrison, January 4, 2018.

the Library of Congress's Paper Print Collection, D.W. Griffith's *Man Genesis* (1912), Muybridge photos, and an intentionally Drano® distressed 20th Century Fox logo. With the logo placed as the opening title, and Jim Farmer's music on the soundtrack, the 16mm film *Footprints* became Morrison's first work in the Black Maria film Festival (shown in the 1993 Black Maria tour).

I asked Bill what niche Black Maria provided to him as a filmmaker that other festivals had not and he replied: "Black Maria supported all of my early films. In the early days, they would often come out of films that I was making for Ridge Theatre, that I would later re-cut for cinema screenings. I could send them in whenever they were finished, even if I had missed the deadline, and John would usually find a place for them in the program. You would send them a self-addressed postcard that they would return to you when they had received your submission, and this would usually happen around mid-November, close to my birthday, so I would send birthday greetings to myself on those cards. John would sometimes write his own blurbs for your films, adding his own insights and analysis of the work. What was really different about Black Maria was that instead of playing just one venue, selected films would tour, seemingly playing every micro-cinema in the country. It was largely through these tours that my work found a larger audience in the US."¹⁰ Around this same time, when Morrison was in his late twenties, he saw Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America* (1992) at the Public Theater. Morrison admired Baldwin's way of using found footage "as a powerful political device." He wrote to Baldwin, "an absolute genius" and received a "warm funny encouraging letter that really set me on my path."¹¹

Other films by Morrison that have shown in Black Maria include: *The Death Train* (1993), a film conceived for the Ridge Theatre's production of John Moran's opera, *Everyday Newt Burman* (1993). *The Film of Her* (1996); *Ghost Trip* (2000), a non-archival project

¹⁰ Author interview with Bill Morrison, November 27, 2017.

¹¹ "[*Tribulation 99*] opened up the use of sound footage as a powerful political device to me. I had never seen anything remotely like it and I immediately understood that the person who made it was an absolute genius. . . I can't overstate how important it was to me to have Craig's endorsement when I was 27 years old." Author interview with Bill Morrison, November 27, 2017.

featuring the actor/composer Slink Moss); Decasia (2002), his first feature-length work on film decay; *Light is Calling* (2004), a meditation on film decay and lost love through a scene from James Young's *The Bells* (1926); and *The High Water Trilogy* (2006), a three-part look at humankind's vulnerability to natural disasters. Morrison calls *The Film of Her*, his film about the history of the paper-print collection of early, silent film, a "festival warhorse" because it steadily toured in festivals for two years between 1996 and 1998. I can recall Columbus's excitement about the film when I was a pre-screener and juror for *Black Maria* from 1996 to 1998. The story must have resonated for Columbus with its connection to the roots of American cinema and Thomas Edison as the first to copyright his films as paper prints (Edison's Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze also known as Fred Ott's Sneeze, was the first motion picture to be copyrighted).¹² Columbus also had a strong intuitive response to Morrison's work: "One is seduced less by the narrative content, but more by his hypnotic surfaces, by his cadences, and also by his absolute dedication and immersion in the painterly quality of the image and passion for the surface of the film emulsion, which is more than a mere artifact of escapist entertainment."¹³

The Film of Her tells the little-known story of the origins of film archiving. Early films were first collected not as films, but as paper-prints, copyrighted paper images made between 1894 and 1912, housed in the Library of Congress. The film is narrated by actor Guy de Lancey as the voice of Howard Walls, a clerk at the Copyright Office who discovered the existence of the forgotten paper prints, recognized their value, and saved them from destruction in 1939, when room was being made for new material documenting the war effort. He continued to work as curator on the preservation of film at the Library of Congress and later at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences into the 1950s. Another film hero covered in the film, Kemp Niver, devised a method to transfer the paper prints back into films, for which he won an Academy Award in 1954. The film incorporates remarkably

¹² Thomas Edison National Historical Park, New Jersey. National Park Service.gov website, https://www.nps.gov/edis/planyourvisit/upload/EDIS_S1_DisplayRes.pdf.

¹³ "Author interview with John Columbus, January 2, 2018.

vivid documentary scenes from several films about the process of making nitrate emulsion for film and a sequence of the clerk in the film vault designed and enacted by members of the Ridge Theatre. While just twelve minutes long, *The Film of Her* is epic in scope, correlating human birth, desire and creativity with the origins of film.

Bill explained his gravitation to the topic: “My initial introduction to the Paper Print Collection was through Ken Jacobs’ *Tom, Tom, the Piper’s Son* (1969).¹⁴ I first read about how Kemp Niver had returned the paper images back to film in the notes to Jacobs’ film. After that I got my hands on and read Pat Loughney’s dissertation on the Paper Print Collection at George Washington University, and learned how Howard Walls had re-discovered the prints at the Library of Congress. As someone who reclaimed ephemeral films, and printed them back into currency using a JK optical printer, I personally related to both men’s roles. I started to think about an almost mythic approach to the film, in the style of Chris Marker’s *La Jetée*, and Alain Resnais’ *Toute la Mémoire du Monde*, but using the Paper Print Collection and other archival material to tell the story.”¹⁵

The film historical themes in *The Film of Her* interconnect with Morrison’s most recent feature-length film, *Dawson City: Frozen Time* (2016). *Dawson City* tells the boom and bust history of the Klondike Gold Rush and its intertwining with the volatile history of silent era, nitrate film. Louis and August Lumière patented their motion picture film camera the cinematographe (a camera and projector) in 1895, and charged admission to their films for the first time in 1896, a year that coincided with the discovery of gold in the tributaries of the Klondike River near the area that was to become Dawson City. Located at the confluence of the Yukon and Klondike Rivers, this marshy flat agricultural and fishing area covered in permafrost and surrounded by mountains was settled by the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in people of the region thousands of years earlier. With the discovery of gold, First Nations people were displaced, and mining prospectors, bankers, businessmen,

¹⁴ Jacobs manipulated a 1905 film that had been re-printed from the paper-print collection.

¹⁵ Author interview with Bill Morrison, November 27, 2017.



First Avenue in Dawson 1898, photo by Ernest F. Keir, courtesy of Vancouver Public Library.

adventurers, photographers and writers from the United States, Canada and elsewhere flocked to the area. Residences, hotels, restaurants, banks, theaters, gambling casinos, saloons, brothels and movie houses were quickly built to house, feed, and entertain the miners and provide support for the new gold industry.

Swedish American photographer Eric A. Hegg established a photography business and took classic glass negative photographs of the miners as they toiled over the snow covered Chilkoot Pass between the United States and Canada on their journey to set up claims. His photographs captured the plight of many of the 100,000 “stampeder” who set out, from which well over half turned back. Prospector Joseph Ladue claimed 160 acres of the area for a town site that he founded and named Dawson City: within a few short years it went from a small enclave of 500 people to a city of thousands. The actual Yukon Gold Rush only lasted two years, but gold prospecting continued and larger concerns such as the Yukon Consolidated Gold Company bought up smaller claims and installed large dredges to sift out the gold on a mass scale until it closed in 1966, leaving the landscape ravaged.

Dawson City's size and fortunes ebbed and flowed, but by 1902 it had become an established community of family values, boasting a sports facility called the Dawson Amateur Athletic Association (DAAA) with a summer pool that was turned annually into a winter ice hockey rink.

Silent dramas and newsreels were popular from the turn of the century on: when they arrived in remote Dawson, they entertained and informed the townspeople and the miners about the outside world. Because the town was at the far end of the distribution line, it would take months for newsreels and up to two or three years



Dawson Film Find "Brutality" dir DW Griffith courtesy Dawson Museum.

for feature films to reach this final out post. Once the films were screened, the distributors were not interested in paying for their return. The Canadian Bank of Commerce, that liaised with many of the film distributors, found space to store the used

films in a basement of the fire-damaged Carnegie Library; other movie theaters stockpiled their old films. Once feature-length talkies arrived on the commercial market, and with the successful release of the Jazz Singer in 1927, silent films in North America quickly became obsolete. Talking pictures were introduced in Dawson in 1931 by a proprietor of the Orpheum Theater. To make room for the new sensation, theater owner Fred Elliott dumped his silent films into the Yukon River or burned them in bonfires, and Clifford Thomson, a bank executive for the Commerce Bank, and a treasurer of the hockey association, suggested that the old films they stored be used as landfill in the pool under the indoor



Film Find B-W photos 023 courtesy Kathy Jones Gates.

ice hockey rink of the DAAA.¹⁶

Forty-nine years later in 1978, when the land behind Diamond Tooth Gertie's dance hall and casino next to the DAAA was being plowed for redevelopment, metal canisters filled with the old films resurfaced out of the permafrost and museum curator Michael Gates of Parks Canada (1977 - 1996) and Kathy Jones-Gates, Director, Dawson Museum (1974 - 1986) were called in to investigate. Sam Kula, director of the National Film, Television and Sound Archives supervised the resulting restoration project, and through their initiatives, The National Archives of Canada and the Library of Congress partnered in the 1980s to restore 533 reels of film (372 partially restored titles) on 35mm safety stock. Morrison, who had known about the Dawson Film Find for many

¹⁶ The majority of silent era films (1912 - 1929) have been destroyed or lost. James H. Billingham, *The Librarian of Congress*, "[. . .] it is certain that we and future generations have already lost 75% of the creative record from the era that brought American movies to the pinnacle of world cinematic achievement in the twentieth century." David Pierce, *The Survival of American Silent Feature Films 1912 - 1929*. Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Services and the Library of Congress, September 2013, viii, https://www.loc.gov/programs/static/national-film-preservation-board/documents/pub158.final_version_sept_2013.pdf.

years, learned in 2013, through Paul Gordon, director of the Lost Dominion Screening Collective in Ottawa, that the restored film footage would soon be digitally restored on a 4K scanner. Lost Dominion Screening Collective supervised the digital conversion of celluloid film at Library and Archives Canada where the full collection was stored in the public domain. Through a combination of viewing all of the restored titles as 35 mm prints or digital copies, Morrison was able to study and access all of the restored material.

In Dawson City, Morrison uses a film within a film structure that goes back and forth in time to tell the bust and boom saga of discovery and destruction that accompanied the development of film and the discovery of gold in the Yukon. The film opens with an interview of Morrison by sports caster Chris “Mad Dog” Russo with,



DAAA Family Theater courtesy Dawson Museum.

what turns out to be some of the first footage Morrison found in the cache of restored films: British Canadian Pathé News footage (1917-1919) that included games one and four of the infamous 1919 World Series baseball

competition between the Cincinnati Reds and the White Sox that was corrupted by gambling.¹⁷ The film then segways from an overview shot of Dawson City from the film *Klondike Holiday* (1950), to documentary footage of the premiere screening

17 Kathy Jones Gates, “How Bill Morrison makes magic with found footage,” *Chicago Reader/Film*, September 27, 2017, <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/bill-morrison-dawson-city-frozen-time-documentary/Content?oid=31401913>.

of the newly preserved films at the Palace Grand Theater on September 1, 1979, to local company footage (Septic Systems: Hillside Installation, 1976) of city alderman Frank Barrett using the backhoe that plowed up the film canisters fifteen months earlier, and photographs of the discovered films. The film then goes into the story of nitrate film and its creation out of explosive materials, told through documentary film footage from films such as *The Romance of Celluloid* (1937).

A second opening occurs at eight and a-half minutes into the film with the introduction to Dawson City at the time of the Gold Rush and an interweaving of dramatic and documentary film sequences. The title sequence rolls over an old map of the region, followed by an overhead shot of Dawson City from *City of Gold*



dawson_city_95 - Louise Lovely in *The Social Buccaneer* 1916
directed by Jack Conway, Bluebird Photoplays.

(1957); an Indian scout overlooking the Yukon River in *The Half Breed* (1916); photographs of Tr'ochek in 1895; Chief Isaac, leader of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in; and of George Cormack and his Tagish brother-in-law and nephew who were the first to establish a gold claim; and scenes from *Klondike Holiday* (1950) and *Pure Gold*

and *Dross* (1913).

Morrison lyrically interweaves films from the restored Dawson Film Find, other archival silent films, newsreels, magazine serials, interviews, and Hegg's photographs of Dawson, the surrounding area, and portraits of the miners. Throughout the film, the original nitrate film footage is monumentally beautiful and painterly; images of the miners at work or poling down the Yukon River pop out of the screen, bringing viewers closer to the three-dimensional reality of their lives. Morrison combines footage of contemporary interviews with written text over long passages of

archival footage, to add depth and interiority to the story line: the source of each film clip is identified. Haunting music by visual artist and musician Alex Somers, and sound design by John Somers create a unifying thread that unites the various stories. Passages of short edited scenes from silent dramatic films and/or newsreels are poetically constructed to recreate the history being told.

Dawson City employs a series of short edited sequences in the narrative. In one instance, scenes from Universal Screen Magazine and British Canadian Pathé News are placed into a montage of documentary film moments from Birth of a Flower (1911) to Elephant Racing at Perak (1920). In another, rare newsreel footage is edited together from The World in Pictures to show

what the people of Dawson were seeing in the 1910s and 1920s: scenes from the Southern Colorado coal strike of 1914; soldiers in the trenches in WWI; the Negro Silent Parade against violence organized by W.E.B. Dubois in 2017; the deportation of radicals aboard the Russian Ark at Ellis Island in 1919; and the



dawson_city_92 - Mae Marsh in Polly of the Circus 1917 directed by Edwin L. Hollywood and Charles Horan, Goldwyn Pictures Inc.

aftermath of the Wall Street bombing of 1920. Other montages are made up of short scenes from silent dramatic film footage, highlighting the draw of powerful acting and descriptive actions with scenes from Threads of Fate (1916), The Awakening (1917), and The Recoil (1917).

The Yukon Gold Rush was a popular topic covered widely in newspapers, literature, and in films. The Gold Rush (1925) written by and starring Charlie Chaplin was shot in a Hollywood studio

and on location in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California, but was largely inspired by Hegg's photographs of the prospective miners climbing the Chilkoot trail.¹⁸ In the film, Chaplin in character as "The Little Tramp," ignores the danger sign posted in the snow and impishly slides down the treacherous mountain. Author Robert W. Service lived in Dawson City for several years and wrote the book *The Trail of '98* (1910), which was adapted into a movie of the same name in 1928; both recreate the deadly avalanche of April 3, 1898. Morrison accompanies the recreation of the avalanche footage in his film, with Somers' thundering bass soundtrack to make this true aspect of the story all the more real. Morrison's film also makes note of how the Canadian documentary *City of Gold*, directed by Colin Low and Wolf Koenig (1957), developed a special technique to animate Hegg's still photographs with panning and zooming effects that was so effective the film received the *Palme d'or* for best short film at the 1957 Cannes Film Festival and inspired future filmmakers such as Ken Burns.¹⁹

Morrison and I met one day to talk about Dawson City at Café Mogador, a favorite East Village café and restaurant serving Moroccan-inspired food. When we arrived so had the Fire Department – the hostess told us not to be alarmed, so we went ahead and ordered along with other customers. More firemen came and the smell of smoke intensified. Our waitress stopped by to say everything was all right. When more firemen began to fill the restaurant, we decided to carry on our conversation elsewhere, but not without registering the irony of the situation -- our meeting to discuss a film about combustible nitrate film, and the burning down of old movie houses and the business district of Dawson City.

Prompted by the situation, and Morrison's work in general, I asked Bill a philosophical question: "If you were all alone one night, looking up at the stars, thinking about your relationship to the universe, where would you place the significance of your

18 See [Charlie Chaplin.com/Filming the Gold Rush](http://www.charliechaplin.com/en/films/2-The-Gold-Rush/articles/5-Filming-The-Gold-Rush), <http://www.charliechaplin.com/en/films/2-The-Gold-Rush/articles/5-Filming-The-Gold-Rush>.

19 The National Film Board of Canada produced *City of Gold* and provides a link to view the film. http://latetedemploi.nfb.ca/film/city_of_gold/.

work in film, and of the importance of saving films for future generations?”

He replied: “Well let’s unpack that question a bit:

Firstly, I don’t tend to think about the significance of my work in film while looking up at the stars, except to acknowledge my utter insignificance in the great scheme of things. But to the degree that we can imagine the Archive as a brain or memory bank, I sometimes like to think of my practice as some kind of chemical synapse that has randomly called up a deeply stored memory, on the cusp of being forgotten altogether (Think of the memory sweepers in *Inside Out*).²⁰ I think for people who respond to my work, they recognize, either consciously or subconsciously, that they are watching a forgotten memory, and this idea resonates with other unarticulated forgotten memories of theirs.

The question of saving films for future generations is really a different question as it relates to my film work. While my work in some ways serves as a reclamation project for would-be lost images, I am also constantly re-contextualizing those images. So the degree to which I am saving lost films is wholly dependent on how they fit into my films, and the degree to which future generations will regard them as a resource remains to be seen.

I don’t think I need to make a case for the importance of saving films for future generations. That should be obvious to anyone who values human culture. That said, there are enormous costs to preserving film history. Sadly, not every community can validate that kind of commitment to their moving image history. So it is paramount for those who are in a position to salvage film collections to seek out those that otherwise would not be preserved.

I also don’t think I need to warn against the perils of electronic “preservation”. We live on an electronically unstable planet, where electronic degradation is the norm. And furthermore, as we grapple with connectivity issues on the portals of our new laptops and phones, we are reminded that we do not control the future of our digital history. It has already been

²⁰ *Inside Out*, directed by Pete Docter, produced by Pixar Animation Studios, released by Walt Disney Pictures, 2015.

co-opted by the manufacturers of our gadgets.

If electronic image preservation runs up against obsolescence, and corrupted or otherwise inaccessible files, physical moving image preservation will always remain a fight against a slow burn. Some of the nitrate films that survive today are in better shape than acetate films that were made 70 years later. It is commonly accepted in the archival world that 35mm film is still the best bet for preserving our film history for future generations to decode. Moving forward that 35mm film may contain images that have been copied from another reel, or it may contain data to be decoded from that film, but it is still the physical reel that is considered the more trustworthy vehicle moving forward for our moving image history.”²¹

Today, archival and found footage films and installations, long embraced by artists, are found in art world and commercial ventures. They appear in major art and film venues such as Documenta, the Venice Biennale, and The Museum of Modern Art.²² Dawson City: Frozen Time had its world premiere at the 73rd Venice Film Festival and its North American Premiere at the 54th New York Film Festival in 2016. The film won the International Documentary Association’s 33rd Annual Creative Recognition award for editing in 2017.²³

Archival films are valued as records of history, and a way to see the past that could not be accessed otherwise. They show us things that we would not be able to sense without having the

21 Author interview with Bill Morrison, January 4, 2018.

22 Examples include: Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi’s *Journey to Russia* (1989 – 2017) in Documenta 14; Peter Forgacs: *Col Tempo*, Hungarian Pavilion, 53rd Biennale di Venezia 2009; Bill Morrison: *Compositions*, a mid-career retrospective on the films of Bill Morrison, co-organized by Anne Morra and Sally Berger at The Museum of Modern Art (October 14 – November 21, 2014), <https://www.moma.org/calendar/film/1474>.

23 Dawson City: *Frozen Time* is in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, which began acquiring the films of Morrison in 1995. See MoMA.org/collection, https://www.moma.org/collection/works?locale=en&utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=bill+morrison&classifications=any&date_begin=Pre-1850&date_end=2018&with_images=1&page=1&direction=; and Anne Morra, “Bill Morrison: *Compositions*,” A MoMA/MoMA PS1 Blog, October 15, 2014. https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2014/10/15/bill-morrison-compositions/.

images to guide our memories. But it is how they are put together in creative forms that are invaluable in providing new ways of seeing film, history, and imagining the future.



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***Why I Like the Light:
Notes on an (Extreme) Avant-Garde***

by Raul Garcia

MFA 2017 - IMAP at NJCU

Twice I've seen Stan Brakhage's *The Text of Light* at the Anthology Film Archives. And the viewing experience is growing to be something of a tradition.

It's partly because the film is not included in the Criterion Collection's anthology of Brakhage's films (out of the hundreds he has created). And it's partly because watching it on a big screen is mesmerizing and contemplative. Nevertheless, twice I was confronted with a symbiosis of corporeality and ephemerality.

Not only does light require a medium to be seen, but its qualities are perceived according to that interaction between the invisible and visible. A prism's rainbow. Through the glass ashtray that Brakhage photographed for *The Text of Light*, I perceived globular, vaporous, and fractal shapes as semblances of stars, nebulae, or clusters. The reflections, shot with a macro lens, obscure the object's typical function. But as an object of transparency, I consider the ashtray as an intersection of vision illuminating the spectrum we cannot see with our eyes.

Cinema as the intersection of memory and dreams, a metaphor of illumination.

Brakhage abstracted a concrete form to express an "ecology of light." My most recent work, *The Transmigration of Light*, responds to that idea. Completed for IMAP, New Jersey City

University's Integrated Media Arts Production program in May 2017 as my MFA thesis, the work is a single-channel short video in which I express the movement of light through cosmic space. It follows Brakhage's conviction, via theologian Johannes Scotus Erigena, that "all that is is light." Thus, for my video I posit that all things, and ourselves, are ultimately reflections. When you look at the night sky and see the numerous stars, those bright or dim white dots are merely their light reaching our perceptual field from various timeframes - these stars could be thousands or millions of years old. Many have already died.



The night illuminated by ghost stars.

Imagine if a civilization glimpsed our light pollution from a billion light-years away.

Brakhage employed a metaphysical belief that substance actually comes into existence after light itself, that things are embodiments of light. For *The Transmigration of Light*, I wanted to convey what I believe a light ray ultimately is: a wandering ark of visual memory. It was through Brakhage's film that I developed this idea, as I saw that *The Text of Light* was not entirely 'abstract': I glimpsed a tree against a wide sky, the image bathed in a red hue. I found this symbolic of our mutable existence, and I incorporated this idea in my thesis as a sequence of world-streams. With an iPad's hyperlapse key, I recorded highway traffic, the sky at near dusk, and skylines populated by tall buildings. I incorporated NASA footage of Jupiter, Saturn, and the Sun. With these images, I wanted to illustrate how space-time and perception are alchemical: my visions of the world aligned with the journey of light.

Historically, abstract cinema filmmakers have abandoned the representation of common reality for the representation of the sublime. Even Russian painter Kazimir Malevich wanted to apply his ideas of Suprematism to the filmstrip, as a means of animating squares. Nevertheless, terms like absolute film, pure cinema, or ambient cinema all point to an identification of abstraction with a substratum of perceptual reality. Of realms not readily seen that permeate our lives like indefinite states of matter.

Abstract cinema as an unraveling of essences, the other-worldly.

I find abstraction and the other-worldly best expressed in science fiction cinema. One can see filmmaker Jordan Belson's contribution to the film *Demon Seed* (directed by Donald Camell) as a prime example. William Moritz remarked that Belson's films are like "a complete portrait of spiritual states from astonishment and ecstasy, using soft abstract imagery of remarkable beauty and subtleness." Such valuations can be applied to the film's antagonist, the supercomputer Proteus IV. The artificial intelligence is identified not only by actor Robert Vaughn's voice, but also by a visual representation of its essence: geometric shapes and translucent auras.

Abstraction as an embodiment of logic, of consciousness in itself. Abstraction as an autonomous image only representing itself.

Much cinema today is like a science fiction-like apparatus alluding to the ethereality of abstraction: an instant and simple image machine. If you look at the projection of light from a projector, there is indeed something indistinguishable from magic (Besides the multiplex, streaming films and series episodes need only a monthly subscription service and a monitor). For media theorist Lev Manovich, digital technology

has reversed cinematic production and thereby cinema's trajectory of the theatrically-tinged *mise-en-scène*, from photorealism to the second-class genre of animation. With CGI, cinema became a subgenre of painting, where filmmakers, like canvas artists, manipulate the basic properties of art: color and line. Cinema then becomes nothing more than data arranged by consciousness. One can surmise with George Lucas's *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* that cinema and cinematic production of this century will potentially be entirely digital.

A simulacrum of the cinematic for the simulacra of experience.

Such ethereality only projects acceptable ways to experience cinema, to see. And so abstraction remains like TV static: visual noise veiled by high definition.

Journalist and media theorist Siegfried Krakauer believed that (photographic realistic) cinema redeemed reality for a populous whose culture was collapsing towards fragmentation of history and identity. If so, then we currently live in a state of indefinite redemption by social media imagery. With apps, we can engender multiple versions of ourselves. Our own preoccupation with the cinematic keeps the currency of photographic realism highly valuable, adopting narrative codes of SnapChat. The selfie is a strain of photographic realism.

A media ecology of mirror-image refractions and a renunciation of the invisible.

The recent controversy with Darren Aronofsky and his defender Martin Scorsese highlight the consequence of redeeming the real *ad infinitum*: cinema becomes valued for commodification – the transformation of goods, services, ideas and even people into objects of trade. Commodification entrenches the notion of the disposable, the endless supply of

entertainment. And so, readymade narratives acculturate us to demand answers when we come across something out of our normal ways of seeing, of envisioning.

Any kind of cinema outside the ‘mainstream,’ beyond standard modes of seeing is almost a taboo. A useless visuality.

I believe abstraction also returns me to the real, but specifically the real of the senses. It provides me with a much-needed escape from readymade imagination. It is how Malevich described his Suprematist works when he painted a black square on a white canvas, “a supremacy of pure feeling.” A cinema of simplicity and instantaneity that veils a complexity of the irrational and the unknown. As a counterpoint to the loud and bombastic, it is the immediacy of artistic epiphany. An automatic cinema for the people. I agree with Bill Nelson, visionary musician, writer and visual artist, when he writes about one of his ambient music compilations: “Attempting nothing and existing purely for itself.”

Is abstraction a signifier of something fundamentally cosmic? Portraits of our own electromagnetic neural strata? Or symbols of our contemporary state of existence with nature – becoming cybernetic and independent? I believe that is one of avant-garde cinema’s enduring aspects – the imprecision of (its) existence. It is like individual consciousness: in a constant flux of becoming, transgressing cultural codes of identity, usurping modes of totalitarian thinking.

This is what I aim for when I make the ‘invisible’ visible.





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**JURY'S
STELLAR
AWARDS**

Atlantic City Character Study

Documentary

by Billy Linker and Ben Carey
New York, NY. 29 min.



An eerie microcosm of Trump's America, Atlantic City is in the midst of an identity crises. Once the most popular family vacation destination in the United

States, the city has slid into a dystopian version of its former self with beachfront property plummeting amidst vacant lots and deserted high-rise hotels garishly positioned against the coastal backdrop. As the city tries in vain to regain its footing, residents are left living in the broken shell of a city. This film provides an unfiltered look at what it means to live in a once iconic American resort town, surrounded by the glory of the past as it struggles towards an unknown future.

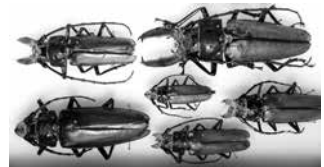


Insecta

Experimental

by Ramey Newell
Vancouver, BC, Canada. 5 min.

"Insecta" questions humans' relationship with the natural world through the dual lenses of scientific inquiry and the aesthetics of documentary filmmaking. Utilizing archival video and narration



in conjunction with original laboratory photography and rhythmic insect sound compositions, the film constructs an increasingly unsettling portrait of human callousness toward non-human animals in our compulsive quests for knowledge and domination of the natural world.



New York City Sketchbook

Animation

by Willy Hartland
Brooklyn, NY. 13 min.

“New York City Sketchbook” explores the urban experience unfiltered, with all its beauty and its blemishes. Working from his sketchbooks, in a form of visual journalism, the filmmaker documents the challenges that New Yorkers face with their hopes and desires as they negotiate the urban matrix of the city itself.



The Peculiar Abilities of Mr. Mahler

Narrative

by Paul Philipp and Moritz Helmes
Berlin, Germany. 29 min.



East Germany, 1987: Special investigator Mahler is said to have paranormal abilities. The police assign him to solve the case of 6-year-old Henry Kiefer, who has been missing

for weeks, before the issue leads to political tensions with the West. After interviewing Henry's parents, Mahler brings something to light that makes this family tragedy politically fraught.

The Washing Society

Documentary

by Lynne Sachs and Lizzie Olesker
Brooklyn, NY. 44 min.



When you drop off a bag of dirty laundry, who's doing the washing and folding? "The Washing Society" brings us into New York City laundromats and the experiences of the people who work there. Dirt, skin, lint,

stains, money, and time are thematically interwoven into the very fabric of the film through interviews and observational moments. "The Washing Society" explores the slippery relationship between the real and the re-enacted with layers of dramatic dialogue and gestural choreography, and creates a dream-like, yet hyper-real portrayal of a day in the life of a laundry worker, both past and present.



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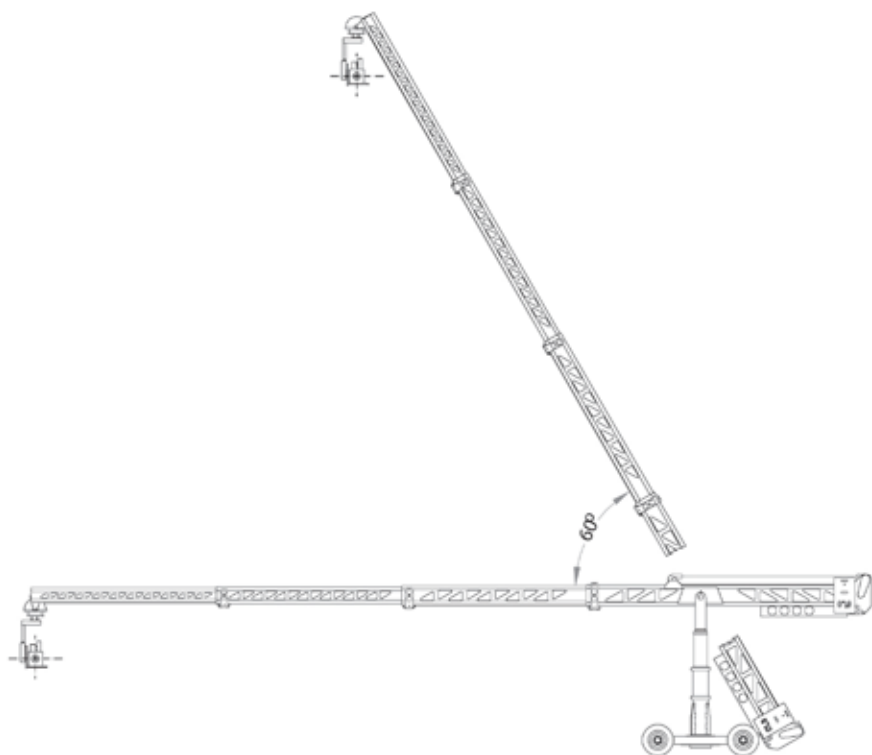
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Not a One-Way Street

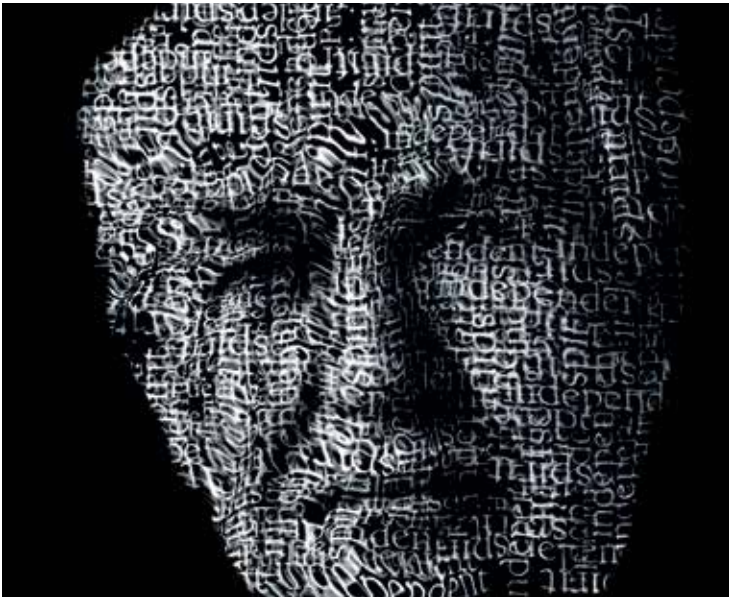
Documentary

by Eva Colmers and Dr. Heidi Janz
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 15 min.



“The world isn’t black and white.” young Tyler says so fittingly in this insightful documentary. “Not a One-Way Street” offers viewers a look at the bonds that evolve within three stories

about reciprocal caring. The film challenges the dominant assumption that caregiving is strictly a one-sided transaction, where an able-bodied person provides for a disabled care-recipient.





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**JURY'S
CHOICE
AWARDS**

Black Dog

Animation

by Joshua Tuthill

Soquel, CA. 15 min.



Utilizing archival footage and stop-motion animation, “Black Dog” is set during the space race of the 1960’s. Two brothers must deal with the sudden loss of their parents.

One falls into the darkness of a troubled marriage, and the other must find an escape from the evil that is devouring his family.



Dandelion

Animation

by Lisa Talentino

Torino, Italy. 3 min.

The double time Bourrée dance is full of romantic meaning. Dancers come close, reaching towards each other, then they turn away, find and avoid each other, without ever touching. The dandelion flower is a spring oracle. The legend says that lovers give their wishes to the flower and then blow them away to make them come true. “Dandelion” is an antique dance and courting ritual – a dandelion flower to blow desires.

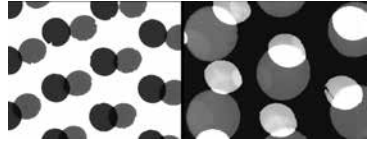




Dot Matrix

Experimental
by Lauren Cook
Holyoke, MA. 4 min.

“Dot Matrix” is a sound and image composition of two 16mm film tracks, made by hand in a darkroom, without any digital intervention.



The projectors become instruments that read the images as waveforms. Colorful and fun circles become menacing when played back as sound.

Edge of Alchemy

Animation

by Stacey Steers

Boulder, CO. 19 min.



Mary Pickford and Janet Gaynor, seamlessly appropriated from their early silent films, are cast in a surreal epic with an upending of the Frankenstein story and contemporary undercurrent of hive collapse.

In this handmade film, Stacey Steers selects sequences from early cinematic sources, prints the frames and re-contextualizes the action, allowing the ‘story’ assembled from appropriated images to evolve over time. She inserts her actors into newly imagined collage environments, built by hand from fragments of 19th century engravings and illustrations. Music by the Polish composer Lech Jankowski (Brothers Quay).

Entre Deux Eaux (Somewhere in Between)

Narrative

by Patrice Cordonnier

Le Meux, France. 28 min.



Catherine, a wealthy, single French woman, arrives in the Marrakech countryside to finalize the purchase of a luxurious villa with a swimming pool. But when

she visits the house, she suddenly withdraws her offer. Her taxi driver, Ali, senses her conflict and offers to serve as her real estate agent. She accepts, and a very different journey opens up to her.



Game

Narrative

by Jeannie Donohoe

Los Angeles, CA. 15 min.

A.J. Green, a new kid in town, shows up at the high school boys basketball tryouts, and instantly makes an impression. Coach takes notice, and so do the other players, some



of whom feel threatened by the new blood. The school's team is excellent—second best in the state—and this is the year Coach plans to win it all. A.J. proves himself on the court and clearly has talent, heart, and drive... as well as a big secret. Will A.J. be able to claim a spot on the team once the players and coach discover the truth?

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I Saw You Yesterday

Animation
by John Valeriani
Chelmsford, MA. 3 min.

A stream of consciousness exploration of characters and ideas suspended on a wall, who struggle to find a place and a story. “I Saw You Yesterday” is a hand-drawn stop-motion animation involving charcoal, paint, shadows, and objects.



In Search of Lost Time

Experimental
by Marta Renzi
Nyack, NY. 9 min.



A man and a woman inhabit the same surreal location though not apparently at the same time. Marta Renzi directs this black-and-white meditation

on memory and absence, joined by long-time collaborator Charles Caster-Dudzick (camera), as well as Aislinn MacMaster & David Thomson (performers). With a nod to the sound score for Andrei Tarkovsky’s “Stalker” and the location of “La Chambre” by Joelle Bouvier and Regis Obadia.

Mama

Narrative

by Mert Canatan

Valencia, Spain. 10 min.



Life can change in a blink of an eye, a thin line separates heaven from hell. You may never know when you have to leave your safe zone until

you get the hit and everything that used to be there, is gone in the next minute. This is the story of a Syrian refugee girl, who crossed that thin line and saw her entire life altered forever.



Maternal Histories

Documentary

by Anouk Dominguez-Degen

Geneva, Switzerland. 28 min.

“Maternal Histories” is an inward journey based on the author’s family film archive. The film explores intimacy, words and silence, and inspects the various shades



of the so-called “maternal instinct.” The author questions the implicit inheritance passed down from generation to generation and the conflicting desires that haunt her as a woman and a mother.



Mickey's Pets

Documentary
by Ashley Brandon
Evanston, IL. 13 min.

Mickey Alice Kwapis spends her free time gutting small rodents and then putting them back together. A self-taught taxidermist, Mickey has been working professionally with dead animals for four years. Now, with her trusty peacock in tow, Mickey is on her way to compete in the U.S. National Taxidermy Championships. The competition will be stiff. Mickey is up against current and former World Champions who have been working in the field for longer than she has been alive. "Mickey's Pets" is the story of an underdog, striving for victory and intending to do so in her own quirky style.



On the Cusp

Documentary
by Yuri Alves
Lyndhurst, NJ. 10 min.



Tommy Cuba, a renowned skateboarder from Newark, has competed in numerous tournaments and been profiled in top skating magazines. He is one of the founders of Shorty's



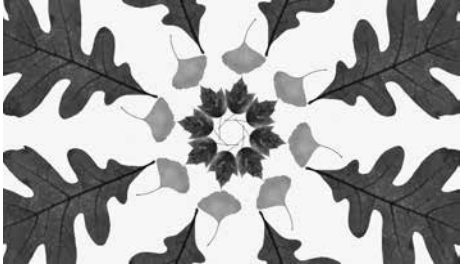
Skate Park, built by hand from scraps. Shorty's is a legendary hub for skating enthusiasts from all over the country. Despite a motherless childhood, Tommy owns a timeless joy for life and a generosity of spirit that captivates all those around him. Yet, his deliberately insulated world cannot prepare him for the looming forces of change.

Sans Chlorophyll

Animation

by Phil Davis

Baltimore, MD. 3 min.



A short experimental film created using hundreds of scanned and photographed leaves animated and choreographed in time to an original banjo score by the filmmaker.



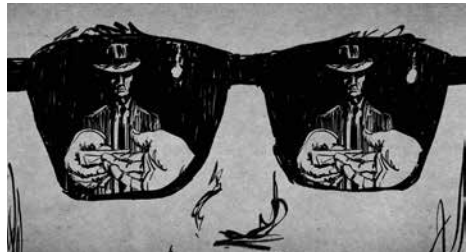
The Driver is Red

Animation

by Randall Christopher

San Diego, CA. 15 min.

Set in Argentina in 1960, this true crime documentary follows the story of secret agent Zvi Aharoni as he searched for a mysterious man named Ricardo Klement. What he discovered in the remote outskirts of Buenos Aires would send shockwaves around the world.



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The Realm of Deepest Knowing

Animation

by Seung Hee Kim

Seoul, South Korea. 4 min.

All people go through hard times at some point in their life. Sometimes they allow sorrow and grief to eat them up from the inside. They get weighed down and don't have the strength to get back up on their own. The people who know and understand them on a deep level can save their souls. They walk hand in hand, stumble, pick each other up and walk again on the path of life. "The Realm of Deepest Knowing" visualizes deep spiritual connection between two people.



Theatrum Magicum (Magical Theater)

Narrative

by Marcin Gizycki

Warszawa, Poland. 23 min.



Inspired by the short plays of the eccentric Count Jan Potocki, author of the famous novel *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*, "Theatrum Magicum" tells the story of a magic show performed at the end of

the 18th century by a magician and his troupe. The idea for the film came to Marcin Gizycki in 2007, nearly 100 years after the great cinematic pioneer George Méliès made his own "Theatrum Magicum."



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**JURY'S
CITATION
AWARDS**



#TAKEMEANYWHERE

Documentary

by Shia LaBeouf, Nastja Rönkkö and Luke

Turner

UK and Finland. 43 min.

Shia LaBeouf, Nastja Rönkkö and Luke Turner have been making art together since 2014. Their participatory projects and performances utilize emotion and social interaction to foster new forms of communality across digital and physical networks.



On May 23rd, 2016, they embarked on a 30-day project to hitchhike the internet. They tweeted their GPS coordinates, along with the #TAKEMEANYWHERE hashtag, and waited for a ride. Whoever appeared had the opportunity to take them wherever they chose. They repeated the process each day for the duration of the project. Their path was entirely in the hands of the public.

Analog Orange

Experimental

by John Hawk

Agua Dulce, CA. 3 min.



Lyrical video abstraction created utilizing antique video synthesizers, referencing art forms from Buddhist, Islamic, Native American and 20th century modernist traditions. The process of working with these real-time video synthesizers is intuitive and very

similar to improvising on a musical instrument. This all makes for a workflow that constantly produces the unexpected and in so doing becomes a real joy.

Contigo (With You)

Documentary

by Daniel Boord and Luis Valdovino
Boulder, CO. 7 min.



“Contigo” is a waltz with family and tradition, close to the South Texas border. While the Alamo has been designated, by the United Nations, as a World Heritage site, equally noteworthy is the cultural



heritage in the lower Rio Grande Valley. “Contigo” celebrates a Sunday afternoon in San Antonio and a weekend at a conjunto music festival in San Benito. The project is based on a song written by one of the pioneers of conjunto music, Don Santiago Jiménez. It is performed by his son, Santiago Jiménez Jr.



Fear

Animation

by Dawn Dreyer
Durham, NC. 7 min.

Dr. Zenglo Chen remembers his childhood in Beijing at the height of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: “I started my depression when I was close to 4 years old. My



parents were prosecuted and they’d been taken away by the Chinese authority. I felt tremendous fear: hopeless, helpless, and paralyzed.” Decades later, Dr. Zenglo has lived half his life as a Chinese and half as an American. He speaks with grace and humor about his journey, sharing his wisdom, small victories and ordinary joys.



Ginevra

Animation

by Tess Martin

Rotterdam, The Netherlands. 4 min.

Based on Percy Shelley's poem "The Dirge," "Ginevra" depicts the aftermath of the murder of a young woman. As her distraught mother looks on, she learns that life after death involves a transition she never could have imagined.



It All Started with a Lie

Narrative

by Olivia Barratier

Los Angeles, CA. 11 min.



At age 18, artist/filmmaker Olivia Barratier hitchhiked to Dublin, enrolled in art school and graduated with a degree in art and design. This lyrical memoir film re-creates her odyssey from Paris to Dublin

to America. Featuring her sister, Violette, reality mixes with her exquisite drawn diaries, her markings of hope and color in a sometimes-painful world. During her journey, she has to face her reasons for leaving.

Lady Eva

Documentary

by Hinalaimoana Wong-Kalu
Honolulu, HI. 11 min.



In the Kingdom of Tonga, the last remaining monarchy in the Pacific, traditional culture clashes with modern religious zealotry. On the eve of the biggest day in her life, a young transgender beauty contestant is given an ultimatum by her Mormon family. They tell her, “If you choose to participate in that pageant, you can pack your bags and get out of this house.” Fiercely determined, Lady Eva takes off on a journey to become her true self – with a little inspiration from Tina Turner along the way.



Lion in a Box

Documentary

by Melanie Brown
Los Angeles, CA. 4 min.

This first-person documentary recounts one woman’s military training, and the battles she endured to achieve her goals. Created in a short film class for veterans, Brown uses voice-over, photo montage and animation, to tell her story. “Lion in a Box” shines a light on the traditional definitions of sacrifice and combat.





Little Potato Documentary by Wes Hurley Seattle, WA. 14 min.

“Little Potato” is an autobiographical film about a boy growing up gay in the Soviet Union, his mother Elena, and their adventurous escape to America. Struggling to survive in the USSR during the turbulent years of Perestroika, Elena and her son escape into a world of pirated American movies. But soon the movies are not enough, homophobia is rampant in the Soviet Union, and Elena decides to become a mail-order-bride and discover America for herself and her son. Saving its most unexpected twist till the end, this is an inspiring and timely story of two immigrants taking on the American Dream.



Phototaxis

Animation

by Melissa Ferrari

Val Verde, CA. 7 min.



“Phototaxis” draws parallels between Mothman, a prophetic and demonized creature in West Virginia lore, and Narcotics Anonymous, the main treatment program in West Virginia’s addiction epidemic. Rooted in nonfiction, this animated film contemplates synchronicity and the role of belief systems in perception; the tendency to assign supernatural meaning to tragedy and the unknowable; anonymous and apocryphal oral histories; and the moth to the flame. To visualize these narratives, natural materials and pastel-on-paper palimpsest animation are woven together using a multiplane and analog overhead projection.

Red Lopez

Narrative

by Stephen Frandsen and Hadleigh Arnst
Brooklyn, NY. 15 min.



“Red Lopez” is a narrative short about a Mexican-American outlaw who sparked one of the greatest manhunts the West has ever seen. Based on

the real-life story of Rafael ‘Red’ Lopez, the film takes us back to 1913, and another immigrant, Julius Sorenson, who emigrated from Denmark. Sorenson, one of the deputies involved in the manhunt, is given the chance to prove himself in his adopted country as he pursues his nemesis.



The Paintings Paint Themselves

Documentary

by James Hollenbaugh
Lancaster, PA. 6 min.

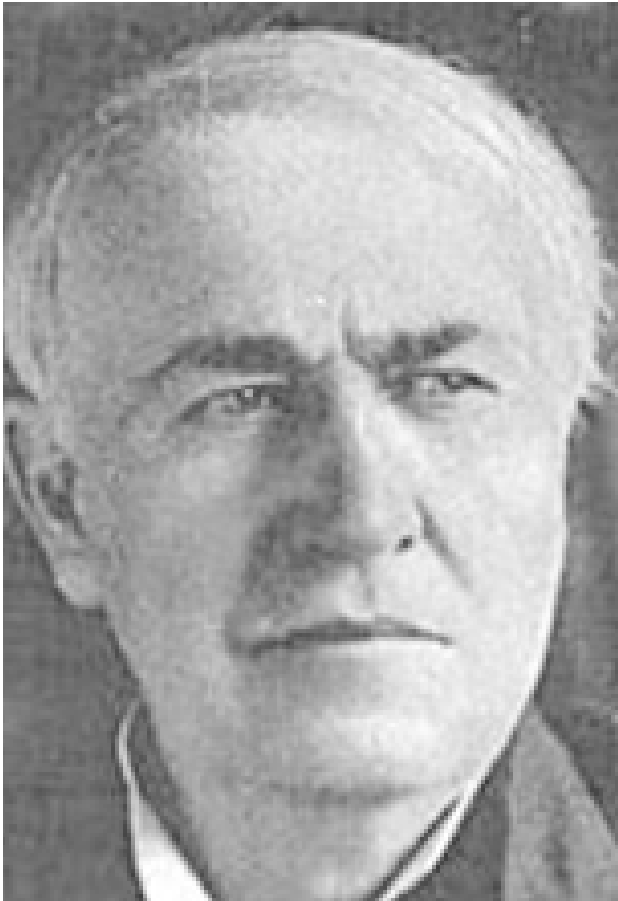
For the past 20 years, New York based, self-taught artist Bill Mayer has been creating an exuberant and startling body of work. He captures the gritty street life of pre-Bloomberg New York City and reimagines classical painting genres inspired by lifelong visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Mayer invites us to his studio - housed inside a 200-year old hotel in Davenport, New York -for an intimate look at his art as formal practice, expressive therapy, and a way to create the worlds he wants to see.





Zero Irony
Experimental
by Gary Hawkins
Durham, NC. 11 min.

“Zero Irony” is an experimental, structuralist film that finds its form in a series of poetic, repeating loops, set atop a soundtrack of 21st century prayer petitions.





**The 37th Annual
Black Maria
Touring
Collection**

**DIRECTOR'S
CHOICE
AWARDS**



Divided by Blue

Animation

by Eric Ko

Watertown, MA. 8 min.

“Divided by Blue” is a visual poem about separation, loss, and being in-between. It began as a piece about divorce and the filmmaker’s inability to confront his parents directly about it, even years later, because of the generational gap, language barrier, and especially because one of them had moved back across the “Blue Divide,” to South Korea. The setting is based on his faint memories of a post-industrial northeastern New Jersey from his childhood. “The film is a love letter to this rapidly disappearing place in my memory and heart that I called home.”



Happy Birthday, Mango!

Narrative

by Eve Colmers

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 13 min.



“Happy Birthday, Mango!” is a touching comment on the struggles to connect with others in a complex, busy world. Almara, housekeeper and caregiver to the busy Mettler family

in Canada, is determined to reach her son on his birthday far away in the Philippines. Nothing goes right for Almara, and she is pulled in every direction as she tries to manage the Mettler family’s problems. They don’t seem to care at all about her needs, only their own, and yet Almara must find a way to connect with her birthday boy back home.

Lines

Animation

by Adolfo Ruiz

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 2 min.



As part of ongoing creative collaboration on Tlicho lands in the Northwest Territories of Canada, “Lines” is a short animation, made of 900 graphite drawings referencing regional oral history. The film illustrates the lines connecting past and present, revealed through ancestral trails and oral history shared during the filmmaker’s ongoing collaboration on Tlicho lands.

illustrates the lines connecting past and present, revealed through ancestral trails and oral history shared during the filmmaker’s ongoing collaboration on Tlicho lands.



Little Fiel

Documentary

by Irina Patkanian

New York,, NY. 17 min.

When the Civil War in Mozambique began in 1975, Fiel dos Santos was 3 years old. He had a large family of five siblings and numerous cousins. Towards the end of the war, Fiel found himself



living alone in a dilapidated house with no electricity or water at the age of 14. To overcome depression and madness he started drawing on the walls of the house. Today Fiel is a renowned sculptor and visual artist. He is one of four artists from Mozambique who created Tree of Life a sculpture commissioned and then installed in the British Museum in 2005. Fiel dos Santos is the only member of his family who hasn’t shot a gun. His life’s work is to destroy guns and turn them into art.



Person of the Forest

Documentary

by Melissa Lesh and Tim Laman
Richmond, VA. 17 min.

In the vanishing lowland rainforests of Borneo, research is underway to uncover and understand the unique cultural behaviors in wild orangutans. There, photographer Tim Laman, researcher Cheryl Knott, and young explorer Robert



Suro shed new light on the similarities between ourselves and our ancient ancestors, before it's too late.

Plicker

Experimental

by Byungjun Kim

Gyeonggi-do, South Korea. 3 min.



In “Plicker,” the filmmaker creates a personal representation of time and space. Time is no longer linear or flowing – it dances like a blooming flower.

The filmmaker’s aim is to create a non-linear, sensuous experience for the viewer.

Seeing through the Wall: Meeting Ourselves in Palestine and Israel

Documentary

by Anne Macksoud

Woodstock, VT. 57 min.



June 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the 6 Day War and the Israeli occupation of Palestine. For Israelis and for Jews around the world, the 1948 War of Independence was a miracle - and

a new beginning for a suffering people. For Palestinians, it became a catastrophe. Both narratives are authentic. "Seeing Through the Wall: Meeting Ourselves in Palestine and Israel," re-visits these narratives through the eyes of a group of Americans. For twelve days in 2016, the group traveled with Rabbi Dov Taylor for a 12-day tour of Israel and Palestine to listen and learn.



Seen Again

Animation

by Peter Murphey

Rochester, NY. 10 min.

It is 1973. The car radio is on. A troubled man, trying to make sense of his life while driving through the Arizona desert, encounters difficult memories from his past that appear as a storm of personal objects falling from the sky. The driving becomes problematic. This experimental, hand-drawn and digital 2-D animation explores the power of memory as manifested through personal objects from our past.





Strangers

Experimental

by Eve Duhamel and Julien Vallee
Montreal, Quebec, Canada. 3 min.

Eve Duhamel and Julien Vallee are a Montreal-based duo known as Vallée Duhamel. Their films showcase a synthesis of techniques that often leave the viewer wondering, “How’d they do that?” Their signature playful spirit and illusory transitions can be seen throughout their work. “Strangers” tells the surreal stories of nine characters evolving in the same space in a complex choreography of interlaced paths. The tight human pattern they weave often comes close to overlapping, yet they remain invisible to one another.



The Icons

Experimental

by Mitchell Rose

Worthington, OH. 4 min.



Alternative interpretations of signage from America’s favorite generic couple, The Icons.

We Know Where You Live

Narrative

by Honora Talbott

Los Angeles, CA. 13 min.



When a Mexican American couple moves into a trendy, gentrifying LA neighborhood, two hipsters invite themselves over to offer a 'warm welcome.' But as the night goes on, it's clear these neighbors

are not what they seem: cold pressed, cold brewed, and cold blooded.



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Black Maria Film Festival Jurors 2018

Henry Baker works in video, television, film, sound, print and interactive media. In 1987, he founded his video company BXB in NYC. Clients include HBO, Cinemax, SONY, Panasonic, Four Seasons Hotels and many others. At BXB he received numerous awards for his creative work in video and television including: Houston International Film Festival, Broadcast Designer's Association, ACE and IFTA awards.

His work has been screened at various locations including: Leslie Lohman Gallery, National Museum of LGBT History, Simon Watson Gallery, Vancouver College, Hallwalls, Intermedia Arts Center, Matrix Gallery et al. His works are in the collections at The NY Public Library and the Everson Museum. He administered the Video Artist Grant Program at Synapse Video Center, Syracuse NY, serving ultimately as Director of the Center from 1978-81. At Synapse he also curated their video exhibitions and distribution programs. He served as a panelist at the National Endowment for the Arts, the WNET-TV Lab, the Broadcast Designer's Association and the Ithaca Video Project. In 2015, he served as a pre-screening juror at Black Maria Film Festival. Henry has given lectures at the International Television Society, Video Free America, Greenwich High School, Boston Film and Video Foundation and the San Francisco Art Institute. He co-founded the New York State Media Alliance.

A consummate sound aficionado, he produced regular radio broadcasts for over a decade at WAER-FM and WONO-FM. Henry has worked in film since the 1950s and video since the 1970s. He received a BFA in Media Communications and an MFA in Synaesthetic Education at Syracuse University. He later received an MS in Information and Library Science at Pratt Institute. He is currently Chief Creative Officer at BXB LLC, Washington DC.

Black Maria Film Festival Jurors 2018

Margaret Parsons is curator of film and media programs at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC. Besides an international film exhibition program, the Gallery maintains an archival collection of documentary media on the arts. Parsons has organized media events for other organizations including the Corcoran Gallery of Art, American University, the National Archives, and the Smithsonian Museum of American History. She has served as a trustee for film organizations ranging from the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar to CINE, and she has been on the editorial boards for *The Moving Image* and the Getty Trust's experimental *Art on Film* in association with the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She has served as festival juror for numerous international film festivals including Washington, Nashville, Syracuse, Turin (Italy), and Tulcea (Romania).

Currently, Parsons is a member of the advisory board for the Washington DC Environmental Film Festival and curator for Glimmerglass Film Days, a festival she founded in central New York State. She has recently received awards for her work in film preservation from the governments of France, Georgia, and the Czech Republic, and in the U.S. has been the recipient of awards from the Black Maria, the Washington DC Independent Film Festival, and from Women in Film and Video. Her other interests include photography (35mm film and dark room), as well as naïve and outsider art which she collects. Her writing has been published in the journals *Raw Vision*, *Folk Art*, *The Folk Art Messenger*, *New York Folklore*, *Curator*, and *The Moving Image*.



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Season 2018**



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Michael Attie
Henry Baker
Mateo Barriga
Zoe Cintron
Andrea Corniel
Steven Dressler
Raul Garcia
Boris Gavrilovic
Steve Gorelick
Amy Hicks
Joel Katz
Eugene Lehnert
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Cali Macchia
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Delmira Valladares
Wendy Weinberg

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Anthology Film Archives, NY
Bickford Theater at the Morris Museum, Morristown, NJ
Caldwell Merchants Association, Caldwell, NJ
Capri Theatre, Montgomery, AL
Centenary College, Hackettstown, NJ
Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls, NY
Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA
East Stroudsburg University, East Stroudsburg, PA
Emerson College, Boston, MA
Florida SouthWestern State College, Fort Meyers, FL
Glimmerglass Film Days, Cooperstown, NY
Hoboken Historical Museum, Hoboken, NJ
Long Beach Island Foundations of Arts and Sciences, Loveladies, NJ
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Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston, MA
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Monmouth University, West Long Branch, NJ
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
Northampton Film Festival, Northampton, MA
New Jersey City University, Jersey City, NJ
Paramount Theatre, Charlottesville, VA
Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ
Ramapo College, Mahwah, NJ
Richey Sun Coast Theatre, New Port Richey, FL
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Secaucus Public Library, Secaucus, NJ
Sussex County Community College, Newton, NJ
Thomas Edison National Historical Park, West Orange, NJ
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University of Hartford, CT
University of Maine, Presque Isle and Fort Kent, ME
University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, MI
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Upstate Films, Rhinebeck, NY
West Orange Film Society at the Essex Green Theater, West Orange, NJ



**Call for Entries for the 2019
Black Maria Film Festival
Mark Your Calendar - June 1, 2018**

The Black Maria Film Festival seeks spirited short films that explore, enrich, and expand the expressive possibilities of film as art.

Black Maria is an international, open genre, touring festival celebrating animation, experimental, documentary, narrative, and hybrid films.

We will be accepting work for our 2019 season starting June 1st, 2018.

Early Bird Submission Fee is \$30 from June 1st through July 15th, 2018.

Regular Submission fee is \$35 from July 16th through the final deadline of October 15th, 2018.

To enter, visit the Black Maria Film Festival website, www.blackmaria.org, after June 1st, 2017, go to “Call for Entries” and click on “Submission Guidelines,” or enter through Withoutabox.com.

Questions? Contact the Festival office at: jane@blackmariafilmfestival.org.



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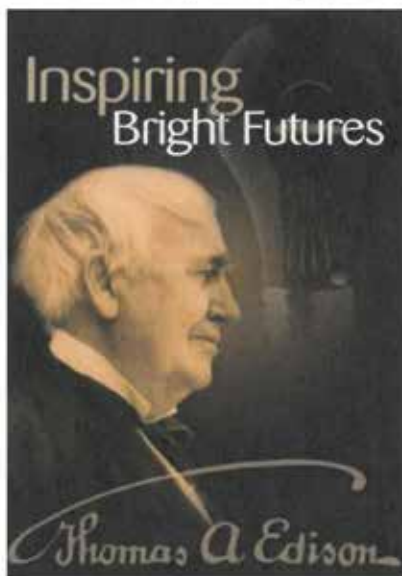
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