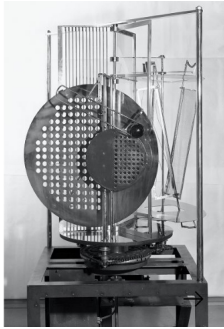


## Bric-a-brac

A collection of film objects

Program (total running time: 71')



László Moholy-Nagy, *Lichtspiel Schwarz-Weiss-Grau*, 1930, 5'30, bw sil

« One of the earliest electrically powered kinetic sculptures, *Light Prop for an Electric Stage* holds a central place in the history of modern sculpture. Representing the culmination of Moholy-Nagy's experimentation at the Bauhaus, it incorporates his interest in technology, new materials, and, above all, light. The rotating construction produces a startling array of visual effects when its moving and reflective surfaces interact with the beam of light. It is still

operational today. » (Harvard Art Museums)

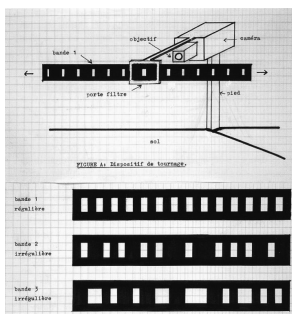
Chris Welsby, *Colour Separation*, 1974-1976, 2'30, col sil

Chris Welsby is a British filmmaker who was an important member of the legendary London Filmmakers Co-op, a collective filmmaking workshop and distribution center that existed between the 1960s and the 1990s and would later inspire the film labs that exist today. Many of Welsby's films have involved creating simple machines that would be sensitive to environmental changes, such as wind speed and sunlight.

« This film is based on the colour separation process. High contrast film stock was run three times through a stationary camera; once for each of the light primaries. In the composite image, anything moving is represented in primary or secondary colour whilst anything still, having been filmed through all three filters, is represented in 'correct' colour. » (CW)

Alexandra Moralesová & Georgy Bagdasarov, *Rhus Typhina*, 2014, 3', bw snd

This film was made by the founding members of the independent Prague film lab LaboDoble. The film was « edited » in the Bolex camera over the course of a two-hour plant-gathering walk. The film was then processed using the collected plants. The recipe consisted of big 2L jars filled with the leaves and 50/50 water and alcohol, with the later addition of about 200g of washing soda. The development took about 8 hours.



Christian Lebrat, *Autoportrait au Dispositif*, 1981, 9', col sil

*Holon*, 1980-1982, 15', col sil

In both films, which were made over the same period, Christian Lebrat uses a black paper strip with slits as a matte, which he moves in front of the camera as a kind of manual shutter.

Will Rifer, *Persistence*, 2012, 2', col sil

This very simple film was made by the Nantes (France) filmmaker Guillaume Ferry, who is one of the members of the independent photochemical film lab Mire. Ferry is one of a handful of filmmakers who participate in the international group « Maddox » dedicated to recreating photosensitive film emulsion from scratch. One of the ongoing, still unrealized, objectives of the group is to figure out DIY methods for producing color film. Although this particular film was not produced using homemade emulsion, Ferry's fascination for the perception of color on film is evident.



Esther Urlus, *Rode Molen*, 2013, 5', col snd

Esther Urlus is a founding member of the WORM film lab in Rotterdam and, like Guillaume Ferry, also participates in the « Maddox » activities. This film was made using b&w images as a base, which were then printed color by color, in a

process similar to silk-screen printing, onto color film stock. The images were sometimes developed as « negative » (subtractive color mixing, like in painting toward black) or as reversal (additive color mixing, RGB makes white light). In order to print the film, Urlus modified an editing table, outfitting the light source with differently colored filters.

Christian Hossner, *Nipkow TV*, 1998, 7', col snd

This film was made using an original technique that involved re-photography of images while zooming on the surface of the film strip. At the time Christian Hossner was a student at the Cologne Media Arts Academy and experimented with building various analog filmmaking tools. His other projects at the school involved an anaglyphic (3D) anamorphic 35mm camera and a DIY slit-scan setup similar to the one used in the famous sequence of *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Joost Rekveld, *IFS-Film*, 1991-1994, 4', col sil

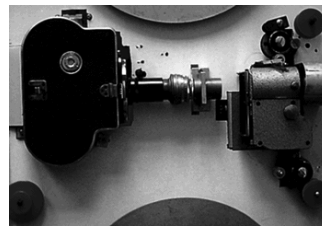
« IFS-film is a computer film I made using my own computer animation software. The basic idea for this film was a reaction to a lot of computer-animation I had seen at the time in which virtual objects are built up out of small elements such as lines, cubes and spheres. If you use this kind of platonic methods, image-resolution becomes a topic: you don't want pixels to distract you from the ideality of your elemental forms. With this film I wanted to start from the opposite side and start out with visual pixel noise which in theory contains all possible images. I wanted to find ways in which these pixels can actually be beautiful. I made this film on an Atari Mega 2 ST and wrote my software using Forth and Assembler. The film had been sitting in my computer for several years until I released it onto film in 1994. It is in fact my first film. » (JR)



Peter Miller, *Photuris*, 2013-2014, 6', col sil

Originally from Vermont, Peter Miller studied at Hampshire College and SAIC, and currently lives in Cologne. This project, which also included 120mm photo film and large-format Polaroids,

was made by exposing film to fireflies without the use of lenses, utilizing instead a setup involving a garden hose. The traces left on the film are not reproductions, but are actual light signatures emitted by the fireflies.



Joost Rekveld, *VRFLM*, 1994, 2', col sil

« VRFLM is a short study for the optical printer, based on found footage of fire, on coloured light from the printer and on partially destroyed film. It was extremely simple: a windup Bolex and an old projector built into a film winding

table. It was built by somebody in an advertising company to make 16mm freeze frames and I modified it so that I could advance the projector and the camera manually, and do bi-packing in the projector. » (JR)

## Notes

Perhaps unfamiliar to the English ear, the word « bricolage » is solidly implanted in the French day-to-day experience. It conveys an amateurish tinkering with objects, whether to repair them, rejuvenate their mechanisms with new parts, or for the pure pleasure of the process. (One can imagine, by way of a cliché example, long Sundays spent in the garage to re-solder a piece of junk that once served in the house.) In this sense, the closest English equivalent would be « DIY », which, however, fails to encapsulate the whole universe of nuanced forms of this activity, or the many shades of obsession and madness that it can sometimes provoke. A figure that is often associated with bricolage is Ferdinand Cheval, a mailman in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, who, over thirty years, constructed a castle out of little stones he would gather along his work route.

In the 1960s, « bricolage » became a fixture of French anthropology. Through the eyes of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the concept served to oppose two types of creation: that of the « engineer », who chooses his materials with respect to his design, and that of the « bricoleur », who constructs objects within the limitations of supplies available to him – often, debris of other, anterior objects. In the second case, old and familiar structures are preserved through (and despite) the substitution of, potentially, all of their parts with new and improbable elements. Bricolage can be taken further as a metaphor of cultural reappropriation, as in Roger Bastide's 1970 analysis of African diaspora cultures that, literally and metaphorically, adapt pieces of the surrounding dominant cultures to reconstitute their original mythologies. According to the 1960s view, bricolage does not lead to the invention of new objects, just to the recreation of old structures; however, according to Bastide, new meaning does arise from this « disparate ensemble »...

This program of films made between the 1970s and today (with the tongue-in-cheek addition of Moholy-Nagy's light-and-shadow machine) plays with these ideas within the context of cinema known as « experimental » and takes its inspiration primarily from the contemporary movement of independent, « artisanal », film labs, whose goal is to continue to advance celluloid filmmaking despite the near-completion of the digital revolution. Curiously, many of the forty-something labs currently found in most parts of the globe engage in quite serious research and re-fabrication (bricolage) of disused film technology, such as development machines, optical and contact printers, and even cameras. With this in mind, the films presented here are meant to be viewed as objects rather than narratives, the program – as an exhibition of technical curiosities rather than a « classic » cinematic experience. As these filmmakers (of whom half belong to the world of « film labs ») humbly re-imagine primordial mechanisms of celuloïd cinema (persistence of vision, photochemistry, re-photography), knowingly or unknowingly they produce curious, imaginative, utopian fantasies of cinema technologies that never came to pass in the mainstream industry.

Thus, Chris Welsby and Esther Urlus de- and reconstruct the color separation technology that historically led to the birth of color film, while Joost Rekveld and Christian Hossner reinvent and modify optical printing equipment (which, in the industrial world, allowed for the creation of multiple film prints, as well as special effects). Alexandra Moralesová and Georgy Bagdasarov do the same, while also experimenting with an eco-friendly photochemical development recipe based on sumac. Christian Lebrat builds a frame-blending camera, which he later uses to create his psychedelic masterpiece *Holon*, while Peter Miller replaces his camera and lens with a punctured garden hose. Finally, Joost Rekveld's *IFS-Film* opens the discussion toward other media, in this case, computer animation, representing bricolage in the computerized and digital realms – a more complex subject that remains to be explored...

Mariya Nikiforova