**Experimenta**

**LFMC 50: Cinema of the Body**

Our celebration of the 50th anniversary of the London Filmmakers’ Co-operative continues with an evening curated and introduced by Michael Mazière (LFMC Cinema Programmer 1985-87).

This programme was distilled from a month long programme I curated at the London Film-makers co-operative in 1987. The programme is international, historical and thematic drawing from the collection of the LFMC and other distributors of experimental films. It reflects the type of programming which was prevalent at the LFMC attempting to link contemporary practices with both the historical avant garde and independent film. This was to open up the debates into a wider field of practice.

The body is a rich source of content in film, from Muybridge’s studies to body-art, portraiture, sexuality and the erotic, which tests the limits between intimacy and pornography. The body has been a recurring source of subject matter in visual arts and film. From Muyreys’ and Muybridge’s chronophotographic studies of the human figure in motion to looser, more romantic sensitivities. Body-art, portraiture, sexuality and the erotic are all elements that come to light when programming work around the body. Films which deal with the body as taboo space such as Kurt Kren’s work with the Austrian performance artist Otto Muel as well as Brakhage’s The Act of Seeing with One’s Own Eyes (which records an autopsy) point out the avant-garde constant concern with questioning the boundaries of what images are permitted in society.

In its determination to deal with the personal and erotic, underground cinema in the sixties attacked morality (albeit from a naive liberal stance) by questioning the limits between intimacy and pornography. Films by Warhol, Dwoskin, and Schneeman are good examples. In prioritising the body as spectacle gay aesthetics from Genet to Jarman have developed a particular visual pleasure that borders on the fetishist or narcissistic while positively reappropriating the erotic.

In this respect women’s work has in general been much more critical of the ‘look’, questioning the very positions inherent in visual pleasure while at the same time reclaiming images of themselves for themselves, work by Deren, Parker, Klonaris/Thomadaki and Rainer are pertinent here.

In cinema, the body manifests itself as an ideal vehicle of desire. Charged with signs, potential meanings through look, gaze, gesture, posture, expression, the body becomes the link and inscription in a physical yet imaginary engagement with the image.

**PROGRAMME**

**A Victorian Lady in Her Boudoir** *(Esme Collins, UK, 1986)* 4 mins

‘For gentlemen’s smoking concerts only!’

**The Indiarubber Head** *(George Méliès, France, 1901)* 4 mins

Méliès produces a living replica of his own head and inflates it to enormous proportions.
Black Star
SonicCinema presents: World Premiere: Gregory Porter: Don’t Forget Your Music + Q&A with Gregory Porter and Alfred George Bailey
Wed 2 Nov 18:10, 20:45
Dreamgirls
Wed 2 Nov 20:40; Sun 6 Nov 15:10
Zouzou
Thu 3 Nov 18:00 (+ discussion with the Black Cultural Archives); Fri 11 Nov 20:30
TV Preview: Black Is the New Black + discussion with director Simon Frederick
Thu 3 Nov 18:15
Carmen Jones
Thu 3 Nov 20:35 (+ intro by season programmer Ashley Clark); Sat 12 Nov 18:00
TV Preview: A Black History of Britain: A Forgotten History + discussion with writer/presenter David Olusoga and director James Van der Pool
Fri 4 Nov 18:10
Set It Off
Fri 4 Nov 18:15
Friday
Fri 4 Nov 21:10
On Blackness, Cinema, and the Moving Image: A KCL Symposium
Sat 5 Nov 12:00-15:30
Selma
Sat 5 Nov 16:00; Wed 16 Nov 20:30
New Jack City
Sat 5 Nov 18:15
Juice
Sat 5 Nov 20:40
Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai
Sun 6 Nov 16:00
House Party
Sun 6 Nov 18:30
Griotlock’d
Sun 6 Nov 20:40
Sweet Sweatback’s Badassssss Song
Mon 7 Nov 18:10; Sat 12 Nov 20:45
Imitation of Life (1934)
Mon 7 Nov 18:15
Sonic Cinema: Black Star Stories: Musicians on the Big Screen
Mon 7 Nov 18:30 Library
Island in the Sun
Mon 7 Nov 20:30; Sun 13 Nov 15:40
Foxy Brown
Mon 7 Nov 20:40 (+ intro by journalist, writer and broadcaster Samara Ahmed); Tue 8 Nov 20:50
Previews: UK Premiere: 100 Streets + Q&A with actor/producer Idris Elba, director Jim O’Hanlon and cast
Tue 8 Nov 18:15
BFI Flare: Portrait of Jason
Tue 8 Nov 18:20; Wed 9 Nov 20:35
No Way Out
Wed 9 Nov 18:10 (+ intro by season programmer Ashley Clark); Sun 13 Nov 18:20
Cult Ganja & Hess
Wed 9 Nov 20:40; Sun 13 Nov 18:10
BFI Screen Epiphanies: Clarke Peters introduces Stormy Weather
Wed 9 Nov 20:45
Shaft
Thu 10 Nov 18:10; Fri 11 Nov 20:45 (+ intro by Richard Dyer, King’s College London)

Geography of the Body (Marie Menken/William Haas, USA, 1943) 7 mins
William Maas in Geography of the Body forges, through editing, a narrative out of the terrain of the body itself. By fragmenting images of the body parts and sequentialising them in time, the senses arises of the body as a navigable landscape and of its comprehension as a psycho-physical journey.
Lucy Fisher, A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema

A Study in Choreography for Camera, (Maya Deren, USA, 1945) 3 mins
Her first two films, Meshes of the Afternoon (1943) and At Land (1944), began this endeavor (if only partially), but it was in her third project, Study in Choreography for Camera, that Deren fully realised her vision of freeing the human body from the confines of theatrical – and actual – space. In Study, a dancer (Talley Beatty) moves effortlessly within and between different environments (forest, living room, museum gallery, etc.), an achievement arrived at through the careful matching of his precisely choreographed movements with the film’s editing pattern. As Beatty leaps from space to space across Deren’s film splices, a new geographical reality is created, one where great distances can be covered within the span of just four minutes. Beatty’s disciplined performance never betrays the difficulties that he and his director must have overcome to attain so fluid a result. Deren’s camera, in effect, becomes Beatty’s partner.


Fireworks, (Kenneth Anger, USA, 1947) 15 mins
In Fireworks I released all the explosive pyrotechnics of a dream. Inflammable desires-dampened by day under the cold water of consciousness are ignited that night by the libertarian matches of sleep and burst forth in showers of shimmering incandescence. The imaginary displays provide a temporary relief.
Kenneth Anger

Window Water Baby Moving, (Stan Brakhage, USA, 1959) 12 mins
Brakhage’s treatment of the birth of his daughter. Here he unleashes the full power of his technique, so apt to become abstractly unintelligible when left to his own devices, on a specific subject. The result is a picture so forthright, so full of primitive wonder and love, so far beyond civilisation in its acceptance that it becomes an experience like few in the history of the movies.

Archer Winston, NY Post

Asleep (Steve Dwoskin, UK, 1961) 4 mins
The principal characters of this film are the two feet of a sleeper, restlessly starting, twitching and jabbing as the sleeper fidgets and dreams through a night of quick motion.
Steve Dwoskin

Piece Mandala / End War (Paul Sharits, USA, 1966) 5 mins
Blank colour frequencies space out optically feed-fuse black and white images of one love-making gesture which is seen simultaneously from both sides of its ‘space’ and both ‘ends’ of its time/dedicated to Frances Sharits.
Paul Sharits
Pulp Fiction
Thu 10 Nov 20:15
12 Years a Slave
Fri 11 Nov 18:00; Sun 20 Nov 20:00
Projecting the Archive presents: Song of Freedom
Fri 11 Nov 18:10; Mon 14 Nov 18:15 (+ extended intro by journalist, novelist and historian S J Martin)
African Odysseys: The Life and Times of Cy Grant
Sat 12 Nov 13:00-17:00
Jackie Brown
Sat 12 Nov 14:50; Mon 14 Nov 20:15
Projecting the Archive presents: Jericho (aka Dark Sands)
Sat 12 Nov 16:00; Tue 15 Nov 18:20
Show Boat
Sat 12 Nov 20:30
Black Dynamite
Sun 13 Nov 20:40
Devil in a Blue Dress
Mon 14 Nov 20:30; Wed 16 Nov 18:20
Ray
Tue 15 Nov 17:50
10th Anniversary Screening: Shoot the Messenger + discussion
Tue 15 Nov 18:10
Borderline
Tue 15 Nov 21:00; Wed 16 Nov 20:20
Mrs Patterson
Thu 17 Nov 18:00
Experiments: Bush Mama
Thu 17 Nov 20:00
Re-releases: In the Heat of the Night
From Fri 18 Nov
The Josephine Baker Story
Fri 18 Nov 18:00
European Premiere: Green White Green: And All the Beautiful Colours in My Mosaic of Madness + Q&A with director Abba T Makama
Fri 18 Nov 20:30
Future Film Raw Shorts: Black Stars
Sat 19 Nov 12:30
Waiting for an Angel + Q&A with filmmakers
Sat 19 Nov 18:15
The Gods Are Not to Blame + Q&A with filmmakers
Sat 19 Nov 20:50
A Raisin in the Sun
Sun 20 Nov 15:00 (+ intro by Black Star co-ordinator Tega Oktiti); Tue 22 Nov 20:40
UK Premiere: Faaji Agba + Q&A with director Remi Vaughan-Richards
Sun 20 Nov 15:15
The Hollywood Star: Nse Ikpe-Etim in Conversation
Sun 20 Nov 18:00
Stormy Weather
Mon 21 Nov 20:40
Deep Cover
Mon 21 Nov 20:45; Thu 24 Nov 18:30
The Proud Valley + intro by John Oliver, BFI National Archive Curator
Fri 25 Nov 18:50
Dirty Pretty Things
Sun 27 Nov 20:00; Tue 29 Nov 18:20
Seniors’ Free Matinees: 20 Feet from Stardom + discussion with author Kevin Legendre
Mon 28 Nov 14:00

Thanks for the strip – it is that/cut to the bone of some matter that does really concern me: how a man and woman meet nakedly head on among the colours... lovely: I can hardly wait to see the entirety of that vision...

Stan Brakhage

16mm16/67: September 20th – Gunther Brus (aka Eating, Drinking, Pissing, Shitting) (Kurt Kren, Austria, 1967) 6 mins

The Viennese appear to have the closest of contacts with the American underground. Kurt Kren’s September 20th represents the most anti-aesthetic and most consistent venture. English filmmakers describe Kren’s film as an ‘Eating, Drinking, Pissing and Shitting film,’ and indeed, we see a day in the life of a man reduced to drinking beer, eating cabbage and then excreting its remains – and the camera work is so unspeakably crass that even hard-baked observers do not react without embarrassment.

Theodre Schruder, 1968

Boobs a Lot (Aggy Read, Australia, 1968) 3 mins

Arguably the most famous of all underground films in Australia. The non-narrative short features quick edits of numerous naked breasts accompanied by a rock song. The title song has the singer express his infatuation and ‘why’ he likes Boobs a Lot. The film was banned for 18 months by the censors. With music by the Fugs.

L’Homme nu (George Rey, France, 1969) 3 mins

From a fixed camera-position, L’Homme nu portrays a distant naked man gradually vanishing in a white light. Through a confrontation with a disappearing image Rey is able to manufacture a phantasmagorical visualisation. The combination of tracking and brightening light leads to a technical obliteration of pictorial information, and pushes at the edges of cinematography.

L’Homme qui toussle (Christian Boltanski, France, 1969) 3 mins

A travelling shot back to a man sitting on the ground at the bottom of an empty room, abandonment, lit only by a window. The man, poorly dressed, and whose face is hidden by strips of cardboard, coughs. From his mouth, the only visible hole on the mask, excretes jets of blood spreading over his chest and thighs. The cough, deep, visceral – the very one from someone who vomits, and the droppings of blood, whose impact is increased by the many close-ups, make this movie literally sickening.

Dominique Noguez

Kugelkopf – An Ode to IBM (Mara Mattuschka, Austria, 1985), 6 mins

In Kugelkopf, Mara Mattuschka subversively challenges the printing press and modern technology with her own body’s power. Starting by shaving and slitting her head with a razor in sheer pleasure, she proceeds to make marks and patterns with the blood on a glass sheet. The staccato motion of the ritual duplicates the golfball sound of a typewriter. This self-empowering act satirises violence against women, in particular the eye-slitting sequence in Luis Bunuel’s Un chien andalou.

Swimmer, (Michael Maziere, UK, 1987) 5 mins

A beautiful photographic quality characterised Maziere’s Swimmer which used freeze frame and repeat shots of a swimmer in what could
only be the Mediterranean Sea and light. With a fractured ‘found’ soundtrack, what it lacked in depth (and this may be due to its ‘series’ nature) it made up in its surface tension.

Michael O’Pray, *Art Monthly*

**Descent of the Seductress (Jean Matthee, UK, 1987) 11 mins**

The iconic image of the ‘feminine’ is the subject of Jean Matthee’s film. At the time of its making, it was widely questioned whether the female form could be represented on film without participating in its exploitation. Matthee isolates and fetishises the celebrated image of Marilyn Monroe, but makes its meaning deliberately ambiguous by repeating, refilming, and slowing it down, and mirroring it across two screens.

David Curtis. *A Century of Artists’ Film in Britain (BFI, 2006)*

**Muybridge Revisited (George Snow, UK, 1988), 5 minutes**

Wrestling men and kicking mules feature alongside other jumping and lunging figures, all moving to hard electronic beats against a backdrop of buildings in Hammersmith and Fulham. Video artist George Snow used bold computer programming techniques to animate Eadweard Muybridge’s 19th-century time and motion studies to stunning, psychedelic effect.

**Headgear, (David Leister, UK, 1989) 6 mins**

*Headgear* deals with the symmetry of sound and image in opposition to the symmetry of the brain. The focal point is a relatively crude and inexact method of measurement for the highly complex mechanism of the brain. Sound and image strive to reflect the limited knowledge we have gleaned from this inexact science.

Total running time: 102 mins

---

**Se7en**
Mon 28 Nov 18:00; Wed 30 Nov 20:40

**BFI Flare: Paris Is Burning**
Tue 29 Nov 20:30 (+ panel discussion); Wed 30 Nov 20:30

**New Releases**

**American Honey**
Opens Fri 21 Oct

**I, Daniel Blake**
Opens Fri 21 Oct

**Paterson**
Opens Fri 25 Nov

**Re-releases**

**Boys n the Hood**
Opens Fri 28 Oct

**Napoleon**
Opens Sun 13 Nov

**In the Heat of the Night**
Opens Fri 18 Nov

**BFI Southbank**

There’s more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archive, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

Watch over 2,000 of the best classic and contemporary films every year in our three cinemas and studio.

Browse hundreds of books, screenplays and limited edition DVDs in the BFI Shop.

Dip into our world-renowned collections spanning the history of cinema and TV for free in the BFI Reuben Library.

Enjoy over 1,000 hours of FREE archive film and TV on our pioneering digital jukebox, the Mediatheque.

Meet friends, relax, eat and drink at our two award-winning restaurants and bars, The Riverfront and benugo bar & kitchen.

Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email progresnotes@bfi.org.uk

The British Film Institute is a charity registered in England and Wales No. 287780