

:::SAN~FRANCISCO~CINEMATIC~ANTIQUITIES::~:

a cine-memoir



MY FAVORITE FILM IN MY FAVORITE MOVIE THEATER

MEMORIES OF CINEMA IN SAN FRANCISCO
CURATED BY GARY U.S. COATES

PRAIRIE INSPIRATIONS

In 1971 I co-founded a high school cinema club. Club exhibitions could pay for the rental of films I wanted to see that could not be found at the library or the Rockford College Friday night screenings and I could not yet get to Chicago where these might screen at the university film societies.

I ordered a pile of catalogs from Canyon Cinema and Audio Brandon in the Bay Area and it became obvious the avant garde filmmakers I admired were there.

The Kinetic Art Festival was an assorted collection of experimental film then touring the colleges and it offered a sliding scale rental policy that could work for my club.

I booked the festival and it came with publicity posters featuring a topless woman from the film *Sweet Bird of Youth*. I had a friend's mother print our show dates and ticket prices and stuck this over the naked breasts in the poster and posted them around the school campus. The Philistines tore off my modesty effort and the school principals hauled me into the office. My faculty advisors Mr. Adams and Mrs. Greer came to my defense and the screenings proceeded under the watchful eye of Vice Principal Thurmond who was an open minded gentleman and who did not rat me out when the bare breast scenes projected in the school library showing.

The festival included Arlo Acton's *Music With Balls* featuring Terry Riley, a composer I came to enjoy and followed when I came to the Bay Area. We also screened *Samadhi* by Jordan Belson which was described in the book *Expanded Cinema* and captured my imagination for my own filmmaking.

I fumbled my freshman year at Northwestern where a film major put you in a Bachelor in Speech program I fled. I transferred to Illinois State University for love and not a too bright move there but I did make many more films at ISU than I did at Northwestern. And my cinema teacher Ann Walters introduced me to Lawrence Jordan and Gunvor Nelson and urged me to get myself to San Francisco. San Francisco in the mid Seventies was a bohemian oasis for this prairie pup. To my great good fortune I got work within a week of my arrival in Berkeley at W.A. Palmer Films in the laboratory as an apprentice color timer. It was a career launch that let me meet in person most of the people I curate here. In the evenings I would get to the Canyon Cinematheque on Thursday nights at the San Francisco Art Institute in North Beach and the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley for the rest of the weeknights. It was my working class film school for a year until I was admitted to the undergraduate cinema program at San Francisco State University, the college that finally suited my maverick idealistic foolish twenties self a dear friend christened "Grasshopper".

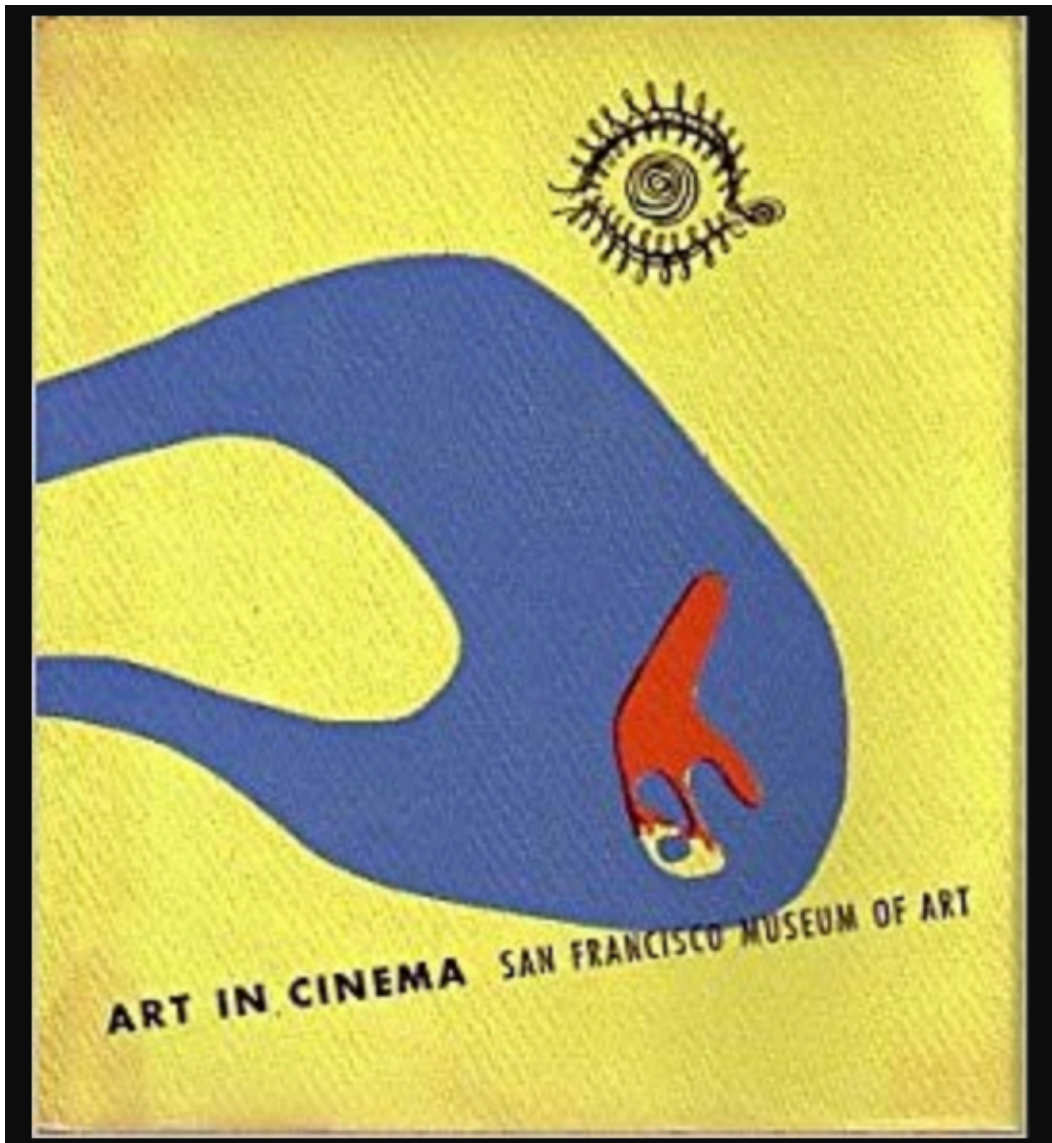
CHAPTER ONE | FRANK STAUFFACHER

Frank Stauffacher founded the Art in Cinema Series at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1946. He with his wife the graphic artist Barbara Stauffacher Solomon were central to the bohemian art community in the post-war San Francisco Renaissance. His brother Jack participated as a typographer and printer. Frank made three of his own films for the Art in Cinema series and a personal film of his friends and family playing bicycle polo. He served as cinematographer for James Broughton on *Mother's Day* and *Adventures of Jimmy* (see the Broughton page that follows). He died of brain cancer in 1955 at the age of 38.



FILMMAKER AND FOUNDER OF THE ART IN CINEMA SERIES

1. The Life and Art in Cinema of Barbara Stauffacher Solomon and Frank Stauffacher
2. His Films
 - ZigZag (Preserved at the Academy Film Archive)
 - Bicycle polo at San Mateo
 - Sausalito (Preserved at BAMPFA)
 - Notes on the Port of St. Francis 1951
(selected for the 2013 National Film Registry)
The Film at The Bay Area Television Archive
3. The Art in Cinema Series Documents curated by Scott MacDonald



4. The San Francisco post-war scene remembered by Barbara Stauffacher Solomon



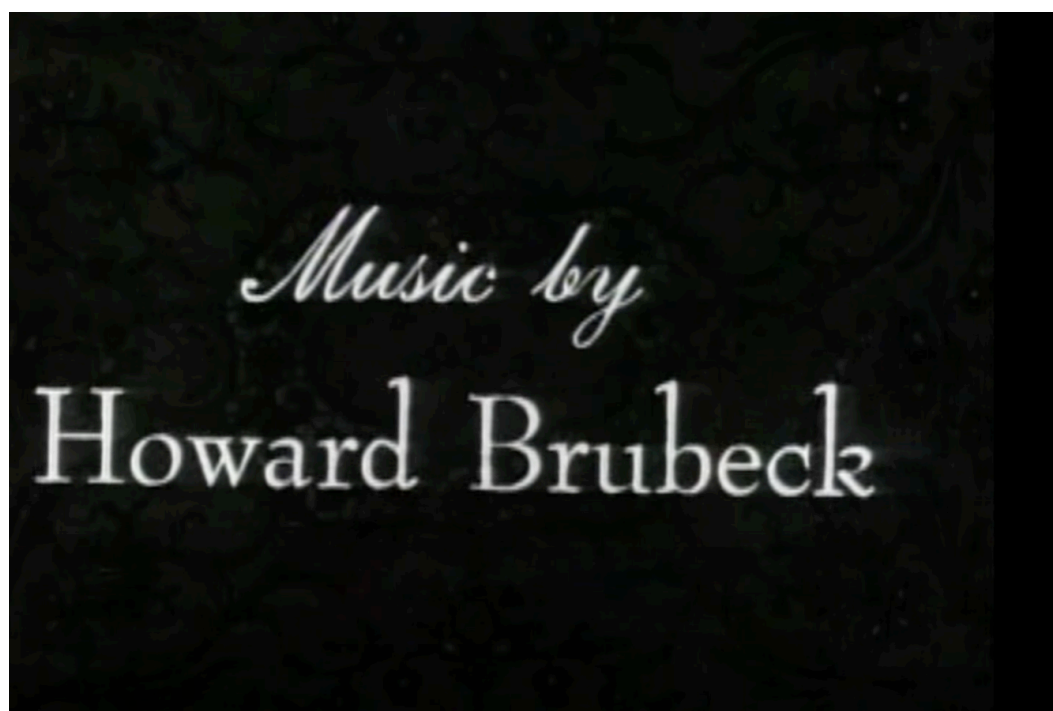
ABOUT BARBARA STAUFFACHER SOLOMON



A FILM ABOUT JACK STAUFFACHER, PRINTER AND TYPOGRAPHER



FRANK'S BROTHER JACK ACTED AS "FATHER" IN MOTHER'S DAY
JACK FOUNDED GREENWOOD PRESS



HOWARD BRUBECK, THE OLDER BROTHER OF DAVE, COMPOSED FOR
BROUGHTON'S MOTHER'S DAY AND LOONEY TOM

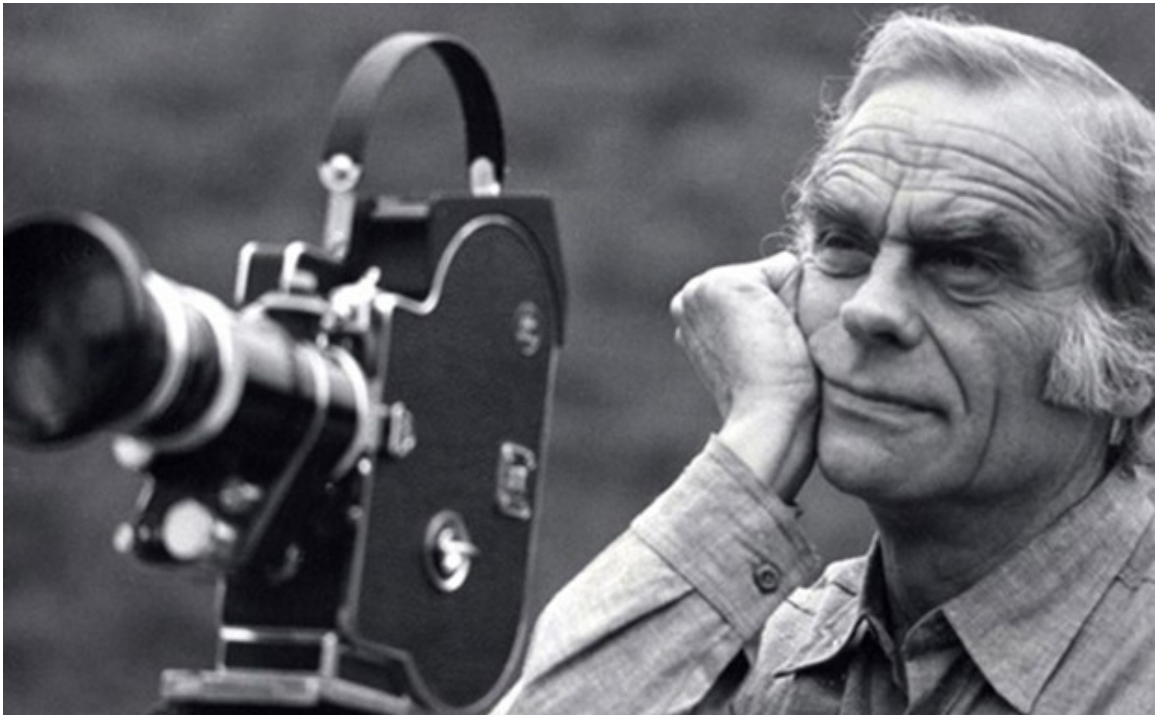


Illustration 17. Frank Stauffacher and James Broughton filming Broughton's *Mother's Day*. Stauffacher was Broughton's cinematographer for the film. Courtesy Joel Singer and Amos Vogel.

FRANK STAUFFACHER WORKED FOR JAMES BROUGHTON ON
MOTHER'S DAY AND ADVENTURES OF JIMMY

CHAPTER TWO | JAMES BROUGHTON

The folks in the lab at W.A. Palmer Films would light up when Mr. Broughton came down the stairs to get his order. I would “audit” his lectures at the San Francisco Art Institute after work in part because he was such an entertaining lecturer.



FOUR IN THE AFTERNOON

MOTHER'S DAY

LOONEY TOM

THE ADVENTURES OF JIMMY

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

THE POTTED PSALM *with Sydney Peterson*

Reference Radical Light page 35

CHAPTER THREE | SYDNEY PETERSON



WILLIAM HEICK STANDING AND SYDNEY PETERSON WITH HAT AND PIPE

Reference RADICAL LIGHT P 38-52

with San Francisco Art Institute classes

THE CAGE

THE PETRIFIED DOG

MR. FRENHOFFER AND THE MINOTAUR

THE LEAD SHOES

with James Broughton

THE POTTED PSALM

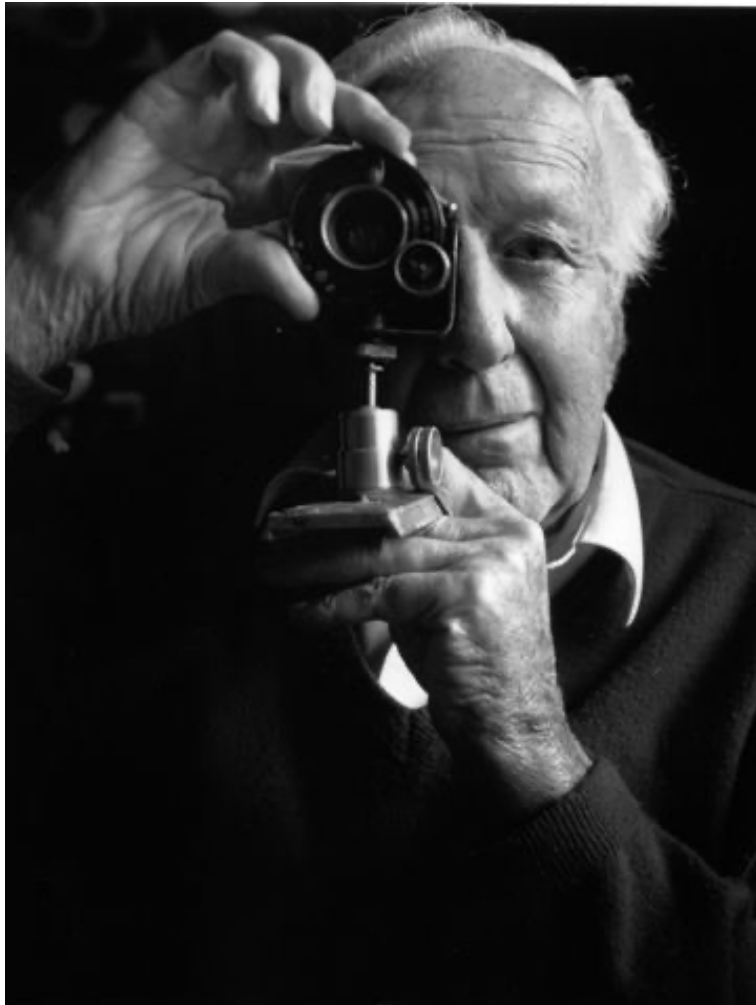
CHAPTER FOUR | WILLIAM HEICK

William Heick studied at San Francisco Art Institute with Ansel Adams .
He assisted Sydney Peterson on Petrified Dog

Reference RADICAL LIGHT P 38-52

The text refers to Peterson and William Heick.
Mr. Heick was my client at W.A. Palmer Films when he worked for Bechtel.
I found him genial and dashing and admirable.

Dances of the Kwakiutl



IT SURE BEATS WORKING

CHAPTER FIVE | JORDAN BENSON

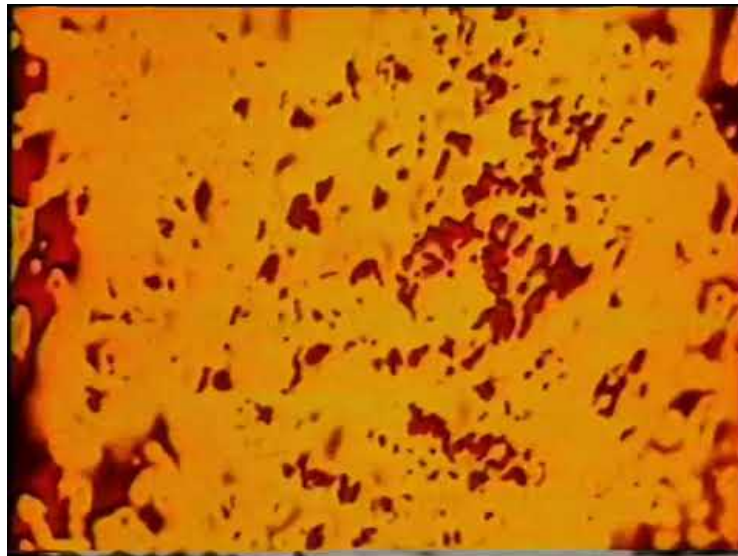
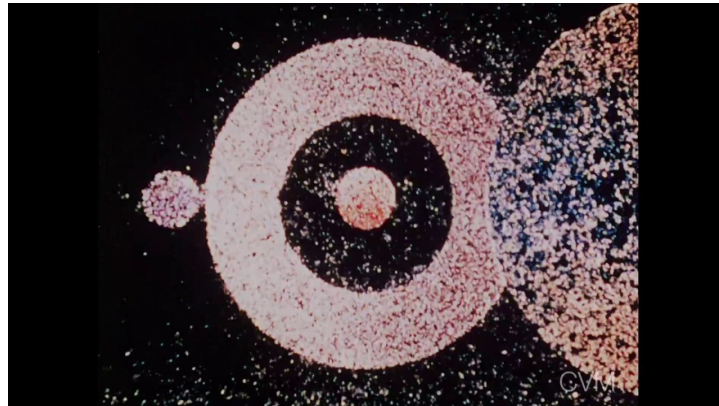
Jordan Belson color timed his own films, trained by the lab workers at W.A. Palmer Films. He would bring his A-B-C-D printing rolls and index cards with his printer lights and I would inspect the rolls and punch the computer tape for the automated Bell and Howell Model C printer. It was like having rare book scrolls in front of me on the light bench and I was fascinated by his choices. Light 5 would barely put an exposure on a print. But he was right when I inspected the developed print. He was a very low key and private fellow, rolling his own cigarettes in the waiting lobby while we finished his order. Most people only have seen fragments of his work in *The Right Stuff*. The last time I saw him was at Western Images when I was trying to get the job of mastering his films to HD videotape but he wouldn't have it: he hated the TV look.

But that is how you can see them now. <http://www.centerforvisualmusic.org/JBDVD.htm>

[HTTPS://MUBI.COM/CAST/JORDAN-BELSON](https://mubi.com/cast/jordan-belson)

RADICAL LIGHT reference on Allures page 103

SAMADHI



CHAPTER SIX | CHRISTOPHER MACLAINE



THE END

SCOTCH HOP AND BEAT

REFERENCE : RADICAL LIGHT BEGINNING PAGE 53

THE MAN WHO INVENTED GOLD

IN SEARCH OF CHRIS MACLAINE

CHAPTER SEVEN | LAWRENCE JORDAN



LAWRENCE JORDAN AND PHILIP LAMANTIA AND MAYBE MICHAEL MCCLURE

My cinema teacher at Illinois State University Ann Walters introduced me to the work of Lawrence Jordan. I met him as a client at W.A. Palmer Films and later worked with him again telecine transferring his films *Blue Skies Beyond the Looking Glass* and *Postcard from San Miguel* to HD video at Spypost. Lawrence connects with the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance associated with Philip Lamantia and Michael McClure.

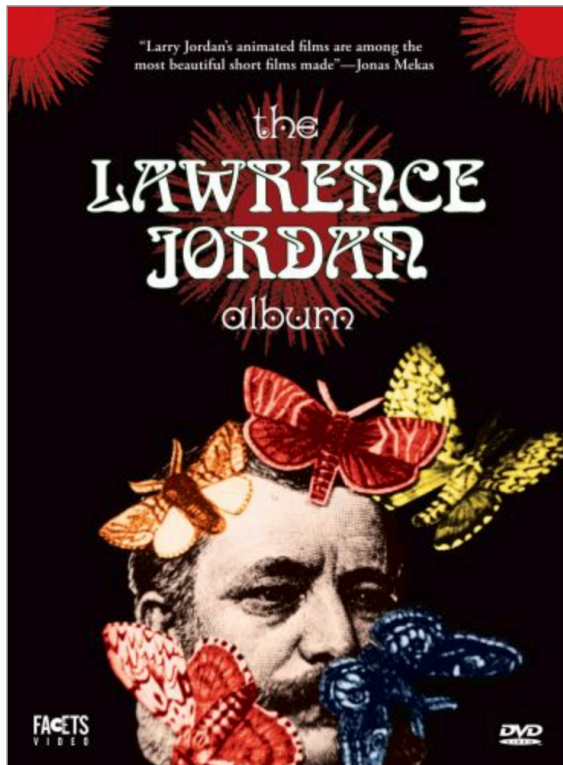
Lawrence is still active at this writing and this links to his [website](#).

Reference RADICAL LIGHT P 78-82 and page 102

Lawrence interviewed by [Flicker Alley](#).

OUR LADY OF THE SPHERE

RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER



Lawrence collaborated with Joseph Cornell

JACK'S DREAM

Lawrence appears in
DESISTFILM
and
Unglassed Windows Cast Terrible Reflections
by Stan Brakhage who lived studied at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1953.

THE LAWRENCE JORDAN ALBUM

LAWRENCE JORDAN AND THE SAN FRANCISCO POETRY RENAISSANCE

MAN IS IN PAIN BY LAWRENCE JORDAN

Poem by Philip Lamantia (1952):

Man is in pain
ten bright balls bat the air
falling through the window
on which his double leans a net the air made
to catch the ten bright balls

Man is a room
where the malefic hand turns a knob
on the unseen unknown double's door

Man is in pain
with his navel hook caught on a stone quarry
where ten bright balls chose to land
AND where the malefic hand carves
on gelatinous air THE WINDOW
to slam shut on his shadow's tail
ten bright balls bounce into the unseen
unknown double's net

Man is a false window
through which his double walks to the truth
that falls as ten bright balls
the malefic hand tossed into the air

Man is in pain
ten bright spikes nailed to the door

Man is in Pain (1954) Directed by Lawrence Jordan | Short/Avant-Garde film

And here is Lawrence's film *Visions of a City* featuring a young Michael McClure

CHAPTER EIGHT | BRUCE CONNER

Bruce Conner came down the stairs to the Palmer lab one day with his log hippie hair cut are cut short and dyed blue. He handed over his new film elements for MONGOLOID, another found footage assemblage to the sound track of a DEVO song. Bruce had gone punk. He came to San Francisco in the fifties and road the wave of the Beats and the Hippies and the Punks and always led the way like a Kansas pioneer.



A Movie
Report
Crossroads
Vivian
5:10 to Dreamland
The White Rose
Valse Triste
Mongoloid
America is Waiting

Tea With Tosh

CHAPTER NINE | BRUCE BAILLIE



J. Hoberman in The New York Times

I met one of my heroes Bruce Baillie at the laboratory at W.A. Palmer Films. He needed new prints of *Valentin de las Sierras* and *Castro Street*. Multichrome Labs had color timed them but closed and I translated the timing cards to new color timing and a printer punch tape. Bruce gave me a nice handwritten note on a coffee napkin I kept like a reliquary treasure for years until I lost it. My friend John Carlson restored several of his films in telecine transfer and that is linked here.

A Criterion Collection Tribute

<https://canyoncinema.com/catalog/filmmaker/?i=18>

<https://mubi.com/cast/bruce-baillie>

Five Films Restored by John Carlson:

Tung
Mass (For the Lakota Sioux)
Valentin De Las Sierras'
Castro Street
All My Life

Mr. Hayashi

Here I Am

Quixote

To Parsifal

Introduction to the Holy Scrolls

CHAPTER TEN | ROBERT NELSON



THE NEW YORK TIMES OBITUARY

Mark Toscano's tribute

Some of His Films

The Great Blondino

Oh Dem Watermelons

Bleu Shut

The Grateful Dead

The Academy of Motion Pictures has preserved some of Nelson's films

CHAPTER ELEVEN | GUNVOR NELSON

Gunvor visited my teacher Ann Walters at Illinois State and I met her after her screening at a reception in Ann's home.

I met her again at Palmer Films where I color timed her film Before Need before she and Dorothy Wiley redressed it.



My Name is Oona

Schmeerguntz

Moon's Pool

Take Off

Before Need Redressed

Red Shift

CHAPTER TWELVE

RICHARD O. MOORE AND THE KQED FILM UNIT

Richard O. Moore co-founded KPFA and was a poet in the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance. He co-founded the KQED Film Unit with Saul Landau, Irving Saraf, and Phil Greene. Other unit members include Robert Zagone, Judy Irola, Emiko Omori, and Rick Wise.

Richard Moore discusses the unit's work and team.



RICHARD O. MOORE

Some of the Films by the KQED Film Unit

Take This Hammer (Richard, Phil, and Irving)

Dorothea Lange

Duke Ellington - Love You Madly

Fidel

The USA : Poetry Series

Brother Antoninus and Michael McClure

Philip Whalen and Gary Snyder

Robert Duncan and John Wieners

Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Frank O'Hara and Ed Sanders

Anne Sexton

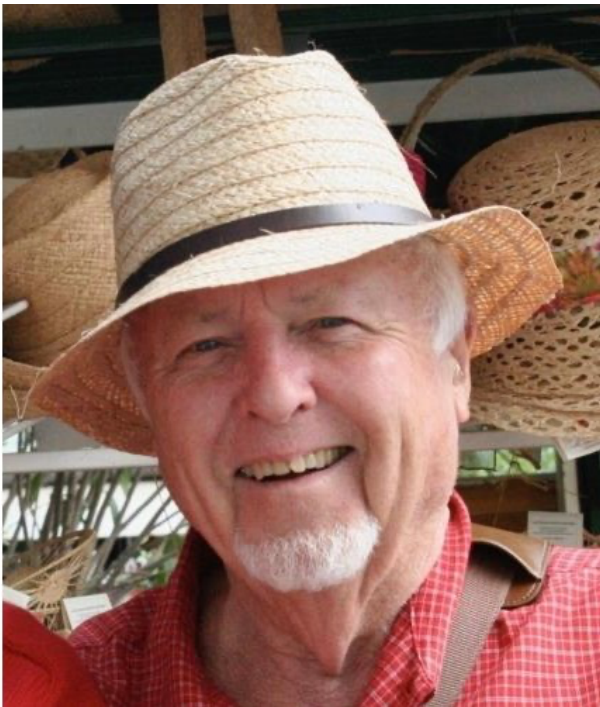
Robert Creeley

Richard Wilbur and Robert Lowell

William Carlos Williams

Denise Levertov and Charles Olson

Kenneth Koch and John Ashbery



PHILIP GREENE



IRVING SARAF

SOME OF THE OTHERS

ARLO ACTON

MUSIC WITH BALLS

SCOTT BARTLETT

OFF/ON

BEN VAN METER

THE TRIPS FESTIVAL

KPIX
THE MAZE

FILMMAKER UNCREDITED

THE HUMAN BE-IN

The curator invites comments at garyuscoates@gmail.com

