

MEDIA CANNIBALS LOST (AND FOUND) IN THE FOREST OF SIGNS

– CRAIG BALDWIN ON FOUND-FOOTAGE

MEDIEKANNIBALER FORSVUNNET (OG GJENFUNNET!) I SKOGEN AV TEGN

Vi har invitert found footage-guruen Craig Baldwin fra San Francisco til å holde et foredrag om found footage. I dette foredraget på fredag i Pan vil han vise klipp fra historien og fram til i dag. På lørdag i Pan presenterer han egne arbeider og viser lange utdrag fra filmene *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America* (1991), *Sonic Outlaws* (1995), og *Spectres of the Spectrum* (1999), i tillegg til et innblikk i det verket han holder på med nå, *Mock Up On Mu*.

Stilt overfor økningen av banalisert og kommersialisert amerikansk film har filmskaping basert på allerede eksisterende opptak – found footage – blitt locus, fokus og hokus-pokus for diskusjonen av intenst omtvistede emner innen nåtidig kulturteori og praksis: arkivet, eieomsrett til åndsverk, nye dokumentariske og narrative moduser, film-essayet, taktisk medieintervensjon og så videre.

Craig Baldwin bor i San Francisco, California, som etter manges mening er et senter for denne nylig styrkede modus av neo-dada/politisk collage. Baldwin er både kurator og utgiver, og har med seg til Grimstad en hundre minutter lang foredrags-demo om denne polymorfiske praksis, og foreslår også noen mot-kategorier med hvilken dens surrealistiske, herlig perverse humor kunne verdsettes.

Han vil vise 14 filmer (og videoer) – noen kun i utdrag – og vil foreslå et uformelt leksikon for å forstå de forskjellige utgaver av og virkemidler i produksjonen av found footage. Han vil også gi kjøtt på bena til konsepter som mediearkeologi, kompilasjons-dokumentar, collage-essay, appropriasjonskunst, 'detournement', 'culture-jam', 'mash-up'. I tillegg vil han argumentere for sine egne neologismer for sjangerne: elektronisk folkekultur, tilgjengelighetskunst, artefaktialitet, Jiu-Jitsu, buktalerkunst og den trojanske hest!

Blant kunstnerne i foredraget finner vi Bruce Conner, Chick Strand, Martha Colburn, Damon Packard, People Like Us, Wetgate, TV Sheriff og den ekstremt sjeldne tilbakevendingen av den skandinaviske 'situasjonisten' Jens Thorsen! I tillegg blir det en spørsmål-og-svar-sesjon.



Her er mediearkivar Craig Baldwin i kjelleren på ATA (Artists' Television Access) – et visningssted for undergrunnsfilm i San Francisco.
Foto: Per Platou

We have invited found footage guru Craig Baldwin from San Francisco to give a lecture about found footage. During the lecture, on Friday in Pan, he will show extracts from historical times to the present. On Saturday, also in Pan, he will present his own work, with extended sequences from his films *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America* (1991), *Sonic Outlaws* (1995) and *Spectres of the Spectrum* (1999). He will also show bits and pieces from the film he is working on right now, *Mock Up On Mu*.

In the face of an increasingly banal and commercialized American cinema, found-footage filmmaking has become locus, focus, and hocus-pocus for the negotiation of intensely contested issues in contemporary cultural theory and practice: the archive, intellectual-property rights, new documentary and narrative modes, the essay film, tactical media intervention, et cetera. Based in San Francisco, California, arguably a center of this newly energised mode of neo-dada/political collage, curator/publisher Craig Baldwin brings to Grimstad a 100-min. lecture-demo on this polymorphous practice, suggesting some critical categories by which its surreal, delightfully perverse humor might be appreciated.

Screening 14 films (and videos) – some in excerpted form – he will propose an informal lexicon for understanding the various ways and means of found-footage production, fleshing out concepts such as media-archeology, compilation doc, collage-essay, appropriation art, detournement, culture-jam, mash-up, as well as arguing for his own neologisms for the genres: Electronic Folk Culture, Availabilism, Artifactuality, Jiu-Jitsu, Ventriloquism, and the Trojan Horse!

Among the artists included are Bruce Conner, Chick Strand, Martha Colburn, Damon Packard, People Like Us, Wetgate, TV Sheriff, and the extremely rare return of Scandinavian Situationist Jens Thorsen! Plus Q&A.



People Like Us 2006. Vicki Bennett has been making collages and doing live sound mixes in front of her projections for over ten years now. This image metaphorically represents her general creative project of 'scratching' musical recordings to construct synthetic worlds, that we can see layered, composited there in a Pop-Art fantasy landscape.

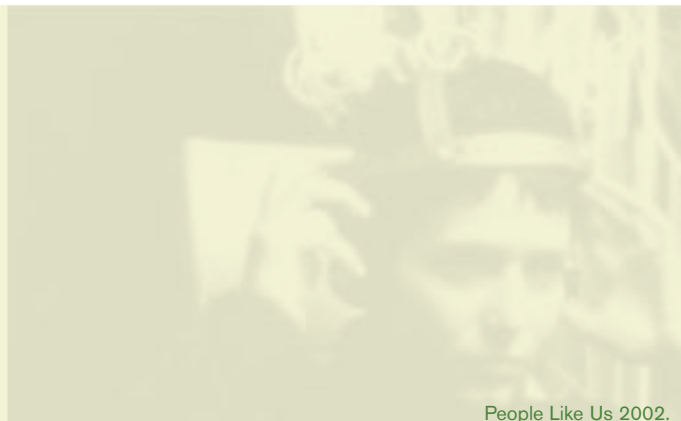
Among the rich and richly varied filmways of the San Francisco Bay Area is that rather special practice called the Found Footage (FF) film. There can be little doubt that this mode of making has enjoyed a particularly prominent place in the local tradition...but why, exactly? As an FF practitioner myself, I would like to point to a few possible contributing factors, and sketch out a (necessarily partial) chronology of this curious activity. Instead of a positive identification of 'causes', my speculative history affords a review of the FF phenomenon through psycho-geographic means – a description of human sensibilities attendant within a certain space and time. For example, and in the first place, how could the overt use of pre-fabricated industrial images flourish in a regional film culture that so vigorously valorizes 'the personal'?

Well, (always) at the risk of over-simplification, I would point to that sense of artistic identity that Northern California makers might have vis-à-vis the commercial film establishment, especially in relation to our neighboring film center to the south: Know that those Hollywood studios are the major source of our 'found' footage! Now I couldn't say for sure, but a San Fran maker just might see herself as an antagonist to the assembly lines of the Southland, and her re-purposing of the material as a redemptive gesture of personal creative agency. Though developments in the fine arts have certainly played a role, I would submit that it is more for the force of social-psychological factors like these that this outsider art took hold here. And if 'outsider' is too much a brag, we can at least agree that it is a contrarian impulse – the audience knows that the material came with a different intention, and much of the later delight derives from its witty pre-emption. This is not your standard compilation-doc in which the disparate archival images are homologues in service to the narration. Au contraire, mon frère, it takes a willful, slightly perverse act to render dross into gold.

FROM JUNK TO FUNK TO PUNK TO LINK

Craig Baldwin has written the article «From Junk to Funk to Punk to Link» especially for the Norwegian Short Film Festival's catalogue. This is an excellent opportunity for everyone who wants in-depth information about found footage, with a special emphasis on its practice in California. The article has not been translated but is accompanied by a summary in Norwegian.

Artikkelen «From Junk to Funk to Punk to Link» har Craig Baldwin skrevet spesielt for Kortfilmfestivalens katalog – fritt fram for den som har lyst til å fordype seg i temaet found footage, med særlig vekt på found footage-kulturen i California. Artikkelen er ikke oversatt, men følges ad et resymé på norsk.



People Like Us 2002.



Excerpt from film by People Like Us 2002

www.peoplelikeus.org

MULTIPLE EFFECTS AT MULTIPLE LEVELS

At base, as we shall see, the materiality of the celluloid itself can be reclaimed as plastic-art material – the trivial human representations and constructions of meaning cancelled with an (ideally serrated) sharp object or stripped off in an emulsion-erasing Clorox swipe. Cinema concrete techniques such as these could be called formal, sure, though they were in use long before the '70s, when attention to cinema's materials and structures came into academic vogue. The Bay Area is not nearly so driven by Structural concerns as, say, the Buffalo of Hollis Frampton and Paul Sharits... tho we'll still pour some beer on the ground for them. R.I.P.

See, the community is generous. And instead of absolute refusal, or deconstruction to null-point, our work is best understood as a playful engagement with the original author(s). (Marshall McLuhan advanced the model of the Menippean satire [after the Greek cynic Menippus – uh-oh, already Frampton comes alive!], which is the parodying of different modes of speech to reveal patterns.) The image can be read (at least!) two ways – :We see the first-instance expression of the producer – as clichéd or ideologically over-determined as that might be – and at the same time, like Schrodinger's Cat, we read it in its new context – a split or schizophrenic sign. Graphic processes such as the palimpsest (old-school tracing pad) or pentimento come to mind – more mixed metaphors for re-inscription that afford useful art-historical models for current media's re-iterations and digital versions.

MORE RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

So what is at stake, and what register (besides the diachronic) could be offered by which we might consider these varieties of the FF experience? Well, it is precisely this semantic quotient that cannot be killed, even at the extreme of Schwitters' most splintered collage (his *Merz* from *Kom-merz Bank*). The Dadaists tried to grind down those letter-forms into pure non-sense, while the Beats (more later) wanted to get past ego/intentionality with their I Ching toss. But you and I have been through that, and that is not our fate (!). For THIS lil' semiological guerrilla, the crucial work is at the level of the 'symbolic' harnessing meaning, exposing intentions, and then the enfolding into the meta-cinematic fabric. That's what elevates this project beyond Altoids ads, beyond scratch video, beyond the facile pastiche that's passed off as p.....m.

Aa-aa-aaaah!

ECSTASY OF COMMUNICATION REDUX

These liberated signs can be re-deployed and re-read as literally (!?) as the so-called user desires: At one end of the spectrum, they can be abstracted into the broadest sort of all-purpose gesture, often enabled through extraordinary studio/lab techniques. Perhaps this pole comes closest to painting and printmaking. If maybe a little language is added (or even if it isn't), the spectre of allegory may be invoked, maybe even the long arcs of an epic form. (Now, a compilation-narrative is surely what I'd like to see, but they remain quite rare; more later.)

Or the FF artist can choose to work the more indexical end of the axis, 'picking up more stitches' of the Real and self-consciously threading them through the warp and woof of the new quilt. The shots retain their specificity, be it film-historical and/or socio-political. This enterprise I call the Collage-Essay. It springs from what Eisenstein named 'intellectual montage', and extends, as we may see in the survey below, towards a kind of Conceptual Art. To plot these morphological developments and their human determinants, I'll first establish those abiding (sub-)cultural conditions that served as ground for the genre's regional growth:

BASES OF BAY AREA BRICOLAGE

1. The legacy of Dada and Surrealism, kept alive by local art schools, the gallery/museum scene, and practicing visual artists.
2. Influence of the Beats, with their existential, Zen-tinged appreciation for the 'is-ness' of the lived world, for humble objects and stressed materials. And their embrace of poverty – coping through ingenuity (and masochism), rather than 'buying one's way out' of problems.
3. A distinctly San Fran transcendental impulse, certainly related to Buddhism but also to Native American religions, to the Kaballah, and to the New Age vision quest – the Jungian journey through psychological symbolism, the pilgrim recomposing herself as she shuffles among the new configurations of meaning. Also, the communitarian, collaborative practices that are woven deep into the social fabric, especially since the Hippie Period, A.D.
4. A powerful affinity with a Pop Art aesthetic, driven not by poverty this time, but by California wealth, with its attendant fetishizing of commercial imagery and movie-cult quotation.
5. Hell yeah, an aggressive and deeply ingrained punk-rock attitude that has not been quashed even yet, that opposes the 'precious' with a perverse appetite for violent collisions between compositional elements, in shredding the store-bought, and in noise.
6. A general sense of humor and heterodox play, that could flourish in a casual Coast culture, outside of the Atlantic axis of academies and venerable cultural institutions.



Futility (1989)
by Greta Snider.

NEO-DADA

Now, most surveys – including this one – of Bay Area FF film would start with Bruce Conner. Conner had already established himself as a painter and assemblage artist before producing any films. Some familiarity with the '50s Funk sculpture scene is crucial to understanding how the junk constructions of the Beatnik years spawned an allied bricolage practice in the cinema...

Eisenhower-era drop-outs from around the country had migrated to the City, finding cheap rent in the Fillmore District, and in North Beach, where many established connections with the California School of Fine Arts (name changed to SF Art Institute in 1950). As a sense of community and a regional aesthetic identity developed, the visual collagist 'Jess' (Collins) started the King Ubu Gallery in 1953, with Robert Duncan and Harry Jacobus. A year later, Wally 'Funk Daddy' Hedrick assumed directorship of The Six space. In 1957 James Newman and Robert Alexander's Dilexi opened in Alexander's loft above the Jazz Workshop on Broadway. These venues were dedicated to presenting the new breed of interdisciplinary artists, mixing painting, sculpture, music, and spoken-word.

After the Los Angeles Police Department closed down his 1957 Ferus Gallery group show, multi-media artist/curator Wallace Berman left for SF (actually Larkspur), joined by sculptor George Herms, (originally from Woodland!). This was the same year that Bruce Conner arrived from Kansas on a trip from poet Michael McClure, a high school and college friend (University of Nebraska). The city's art scene had been undergoing this very exciting breakdown of barriers between the disciplines and, well, between art and life generally. In this free-wheeling atmosphere, Conner became affiliated with a group that included McClure, Hedrick, Manuel Neri, and the painters Jay DeFeo and Joan Brown (both of whom later figured in Conner's movies). The Rat Bastard's Protective Association – the first funky art religion – was the name that Conner coined to satirize the marginalized/outsider status of these pessimistic bohemians, scraping by in the crumbling Victorians of the Fillmore. For materials, they scavenged for discarded architectural 'gingerbread' from demolition projects – urban renewal was remaking the neighborhood into the Western Addition. After dark, they jammed the jazz clubs and late-night cafes for be-bop and the spontaneous poetry of Kerouac, Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, et. al.

Eventually, their scrap-collaged, pigment- and wax-encrusted paintings came off the walls and onto free-standing tripods in the gallery space. Conner produced several of these assemblages before hitting upon the idea of incorporating a running motion-picture projector into the ensemble. In time, this 12 min. b/w film

took on a life of its own, crossing into the world of cinema as *A Movie* (1958) «I stopped gluing it down,» said Conner .

Black-comic, and with an ambiguous embrace of popular imagery, *A Movie* is a measured montage of 16mm mid-century newsreel shots. Off-the-shelf prints of these 'news digests' were readily available then (and still are) on 100' and 400' silent (and sound) spools, produced for the amateur collector by Castle Films and the like. These screen reports, like the trailers and comedies they often accompanied, were familiarized through the regime of the neighborhood theater, and of the pastime of domestic-projection, before the home-viewing of 16mm (and later Super 8) was eclipsed by TV. As well, many of these doc and human-interest shorts were re-presented on television in the '50s as the networks were padding out their programming. Conner has acknowledged his debt to these 'B' shorts, and remembers seeing an early compilation film cut to the Beetlebaum song of Spike Jones, who had his own TV show at the time.

The sexual metaphors of *A Movie* re-emerge in Conner's *Cosmic Ray* (1961) a dazzling succession of super-impositions cut to Ray Charles' 'What'd I Say'. Conner combined dancing girls with fireworks, Disney cartoons, academy leader, and other industrial miscellany in an energized and celebratory pre-figuring of the rock'n'roll euphoria that would shake the City (and the world) a few years later, whilst creating a prototype for the music video of two decades after that.

Between 1963 and 1967, Conner cobbled together *Report*, using countdown leader, extraneous snippets, and news footage taken of JFK in Dallas that was available through mail-order catalogs and local camera stores. Versions of *Report* were issued in both 16mm and 8mm, the latter for home use. Harking back to his original kinetic-sculpture inspiration, Conner occasionally displayed the small-gauge edition as a film installation – a gun-metal grey Bolex projector focused on the white-painted screen of a period TV set.

SIXTIES MIXMASTERS

Also on the North Beach scene were Robert and Gunvor Nelson. Both joined the faculty at the Art Institute, and both undertook active collaborations with area artists (Steve Reich, RG Davis of the Mime Troupe, William and Dorothy Wiley, et. al). Robert's zany film collages (*Confessions of a Black Mother Succuba*, *The Great Blondino*) mix found and live-action footage in Neo-Dada burlesques. *War Is Hell*, with stock war-movie shots, was produced for KQED in 1968; 1970's *Bleu Shut* is (among other things) a hilarious quiz on names for recreational boats, their



(found) still-photos held for self-consciously extended durations. Gunvor's *Schmeerguntz*» (1966) is a mad montage of real-world motherly chores, juxtaposed with the media's idealized depictions of womanhood.

The godmother of the area's experimental-film scene and a co-founder of Canyon Cinema, Chick Strand is another prolific maker who often uses found footage. Her very first *Angel Blue Sweet Wings* (1966) folded pre-existing imagery into her montage, as did her 1967 *Waterfall*. Her 1979 *Cartoon le Mousse* prompted Gene Youngblood to declare «If poetry is the art of making evocative connections between dissimilar phenomena, then Chick Strand is a great poet, transcending her material to create a surreal and sublime universe beyond reason». Her FF masterwork is *Loose Ends*, another 1979 production that in fact did dare to fashion a compilation narrative. And among this first wave of cine-collagists I would also include these two special cases: Larry Jordan and Jordan Belson. An(other) early member of the Canyon collective, Mr. Jordan came to the City from Colorado in 1955, also garnering a position at SFAI. Having apprenticed with Joseph Cornell, arguably the first American found-footage maker (*Rose Hobart*, 1939), Jordan received from the elder auteur the commission to complete his last six nearly-finished FF pieces. Though Jordan is generally known as a (cut-out) animation artist, the illustrations in his whimsical works are for the most part found/archival (e.g. Gustav Dore's engravings). *Duo Concertantes* (1964) and *Our Lady of the Spheres* (1969) are among his most memorable.

Jordan Belson is another Bay Area visionary, his long filmography beginning in the Fifties, who is still alive and producing. His output, like Jordan's, is classed as animation rather than compilation, but a certain kind of collage it surely is, and stock – though perhaps not 'found' – images often figure in his gaseous miasmas (*Cycles*). A crucial watershed was Belson's 1957–1959 *Vortex Concerts* in Morrison Planetarium, collaborations with the electronic composer Henry Jacobs which used multiple projectors and very, very many different slide and film sources. This radical advance in the projection arts set the stage for the Sixties' psychedelic light show scene (in which Conner was deeply involved, not coincidentally), an expanded cinema form that drew heavily on hypnotic loops and phantastic, freely-circulating clips from the populist Surrealism of Max Fleischer, Busby Berkeley, Flash Gordon, and loads of others.

The expansive, all-embracing displays of Belson, and of Jordan and Jerry Abrams and Anne Severson and many others, reached broader audiences in the Seventies, with the stabilization of regular screening series like Cinematheque, Eye Music (at

80 Langton), and Karl Cohen's Intersection showcase, as well as the maturation of Cinema departments at SFAI, SFSU, and CCAC (now CCA), and the establishment of co-ops like Film Arts Foundation. Scott Barlett, one of FAF's founding members, is remembered for bridging gaps, both between formats – experimental film and (then emerging) video art – and between private and public imagery (*Moon*, 1969). William Farley, also instrumental in the FAF project, was able to probe profound philosophical issues, paradoxically enough, in *Being*, a tour-de-force fusion of pop-cult ephemera.

SUTURES OF THE SEVENTIES

Collage chronicles of the period should also include Doug Wendt (and his appropriately titled *Dub Film*), Lyle Pearson ('Funk'), and Rock Ross, Michael Rudnik, Ed Jones, and Dean Snider – the latter four closely associated with the No-Nothing Cinema in the city's South-of-Market area (SOMA), signaling a shift of the artistic epicenter out of tourist-infested North Beach. The decade's heady freedom produced not only a proliferation of cine-socials like Curt McDowell's weekly salons and the No-Nothing's BYO-BBQ's, but also the fuzzy outlines of a Bay Area beachcomber style (No-Nothing was 'dock o' the bay' just as Berman had been 20 years earlier): hang-loose shorts stitched together with out-of-date raw-stock, hand-held/available-light camerawork, and felt-penned found footage, playfully patched and scratched-on like mad, and then exuberantly unspooled with double-system sound, to the favorite tango tune (or children's song) of the moment. These were among the most joyful, most unselfconscious moments in the area's FF saga, treating original and second-hand shots as equally serviceable surfaces for Exacto-knife noodlings, direct-animation appliques, and rhythmic editing strategies.

AGENDAS OF THE EIGHTIES

But in the Eighties, doncha know, everybody got a haircut. The mood changed, studios and labs closed, and of course SOMA fell to gentrification (the original No-Nothing is now under home plate in the SF Giants' baseball stadium). McDowell died, and Bartlett died, and Snider (somewhat later) died...Another dram to the ground, dear reader. What had been a beatnik, then hippie, then punk dismissal of the Academy came back as Appropriation Art. The period's gravitas freighted – and did enrich – the FF mode with more serious agendas: identity issues, gender positions, media theory, post-colonialism, etc. Michael Wallin's 1988 *Decodings* synched-up an uncanny skein of pictures to a sidereal narration and an elegiac Shostakovich score in a cosmic-goof



coup de grace that went on to the Whitney Biennial. Scott Stark, a long-legged pillar of the area's AG scene, unceasingly released a slew of short formalistic works (including some on video) that incorporated estate-sale and otherwise orphaned imagery, leading all the way up to his latter-day dazzlers *Noema* (1998) and *Angel Beach* (2001).

And to keep this part of the chronology complete, I must confess that in *RocketKitKongoKit* (1986), I myself endeavored to exploit my own obsessive-compulsive complex (!) towards the subversion of genres, both fiction and documentary, in order to point back at their ideological bases. Shortly after, fellow SF State grad Jay Rosenblatt crafted a careful slo-mo style in support of his depth-psychological excavations (*Short of Breath*, 1990). Another SFSU alumni, Greta Snider, also used optical printing (and hand-processing and photogramming and super-imposition and inter-titles and sub-titles and direct-address and a dozen other methods) in a series of zine-inspired, fearlessly honest personal essays (*Futility*, 1989, *Our Gay Brothers*, 1993).

During his Cali days, the now NY-based Mark Street developed a distinctive painterly style that foregrounded the film-as-material. His scratching, tinting, opt. printing, and direct-animation techniques wrought alchemical transformations from the outre emulsion of educational and porn artifacts (*Winter Wheat*, *Blue Movie*).

Julie Murray, now also lost to the East Coast, was developing a meticulous collage practice (in her visual art as well), setting up her own home-made Super 8 (!) optical printer in her (now razed) Clarion Alley studio, for her fiercely idiosyncratic small-format works (*Fuckface*, 1986).

MILLENNIAL MILLIMETERS

If anything, the pace picked up later in the Nineties, with an increasing emphasis on re-photography and intense emulsion-mucking. Alfonso Alvarez (*Film For*, *Quixote Dreams*) demonstrated a bold graphic style, while Steven Dye's animation sense apprehended the found frame as a fragile miniature (*Lun*, *Zero*). A trained architect, Thad Povey galvanized the scene with his Tesla-esque wizardry with projector, light, and filmstrip (be it original or found). His mastery over film's physical aspects led to surface-work akin to the attacks of the Abstract Expressionists. Carrying forward the potlatch generosity of the No-Nothing from his studio days there, Povey has in fact organized a regular arena for FF 'quilting bees', where amateurs (*Scratch Film Junkies*) can freely experiment on editing-room outs with fingernail polish, acetate inks, and what-have-you. Povey's own portfolio is prodigious (*Thine Inward-Looking Eyes*, *St. Louise*), and by century's end he

had branched out into installations (*Wrapped Around the Screw*) and collaborations with musicians in live performance (Night Soil, also with Alvarez).

Apropos of projector-performance, also noteworthy is Wetgate – Dye, Peter Conheim, Owen O'Toole (and sometimes Gibbs Chapman, who has made more than a few FF films of his own). Surfing the wave of obsolescence, this resourceful Graflex combo plays industrial-film loops arranged like audio-visual 'songs'!

The scene is busy indeed in the new millennium. This time it was David Sherman (*Revolver*, *To Re-Edit the World*) who took his *Tuning the Sleeping Machine* (1996) to the Biennial, while Kerry Laitala's mesmerizing Gothic reveries (*Hallowed*, 2001) brought her back to the Black Forest three times on her tours of Europe. And archivist/essayist Rick Prelinger put a thousand-plus public-domain films on-line for a new generation of media-archeologists.

THE NEW MAGNETIC WAVE

Yes, respect is also due to that rank of FF makers who work in video. Jeanne Finley (often with John Muse) has drawn equally from the archives as from her own doc footage to engender electronic essays that work the space between public and private systems of signification and behavior (*So, You Want to be Popular?*, 1988, *Involuntary Conversion*, 1991). Phil Patiris (*Iraq Campaign*, 1991) has distilled a wickedly satirical videography out of the relentless flow of corporate logos, government propaganda, and sci-fi escapism that is broadcast television. Bryan Boyce (*Special Report*, 2000) rocketed up from Chip Lord's tutelage at UCSC to a commanding position in the video-appropriation heavens, sampling smartly from the dumb double-talk of the multi-national media moguls, and finally bringing McLuhan's so-called Global Village...right.....back.....home!

This is perhaps the promise of an electronic folk culture that Bay Area FF makers hold forth: Concomitant with a cautionary acknowledgement of – and negotiation with – image-overload, ours is a refreshing affirmation of relative autonomy, personal ingenuity, and creative agency, to discover and share our own uses for things. The power of our own imagination can still make its own way through this bewildering forest of signs. THIS is what is Beat-ific, what is supremely ironic, and what is powerfully redemptive about this activity...Saint Francis returns as Emperor Norton: The holy fool found his captain's hat in a free-bin, and now he's calling the shots.

Craig Baldwin 2006

RESYMÉ AV CRAIG BALDWINS ARTIKKEL

FRA JUNK
TIL FUNK
TIL PUNK
TIL LINK

Found footage-filmer er spesielt utbredt på vestkysten ved San Francisco, men hvorfor? Og hvordan kan en slik åpenlys bruk av prefabrikerte, industrielle bilder blomstre i et område hvor filmkulturen blant kunstnere vektlegger så sterkt det personlige? Craig Baldwin antyder at found footage-kunstnerne ser på seg selv som motstandere av samlebandsproduksjonen av filmbilder i Hollywood lenger sør, og deres omskaping av dette materialet er en personlig og kreativ kunsthandling som er en del av denne motstanden. Men Baldwin understreker at arbeidet til found footage-kunstnerne, i stedet for en absolutt fornektelse eller fullstendig dekonstruksjon, best kan forstås som en leken form for kommunikasjon med de som laget bildene. Bildene i en found footage-film kan leses på minst to måter: Vi ser det opprinnelige uttrykket til de som har produsert bildene, uansett hvor klisjéfylte og ideologisk overtydelige de måtte være, og samtidig leser vi de i en ny sammenheng, på en splittet og nærmest schizofren måte. Ifølge Baldwin skjer det helt avgjørende kunstneriske arbeidet på et symbolsk plan: Først må man finne meninger og avsløre hensiktene til det opprinnelige bildet, for så å pakke det inn i et metafilmisk univers.

Found footage-kunsten fra San Francisco kan spores tilbake til mange kilder: dadaisme og surrealisme, innflytelse fra Beat-poetene, en buddhistisk/indiansk/New Age-relatert psykologisk symbolisme som står sterkt i byen, en tradisjon for kollektiver og samarbeidsånd som har vært framtrædende spesielt siden hippietiden, popkunst-estetikk, en aggressiv punk-rock-holdning som står i motsetning til det affekterte og fine, og til sist en spesiell form for humor og lekenhet som har grobunn i den uformelle vestkystkulturen, langt vekk fra de ærverdige kulturinstitusjonene og universitetene på østkysten av USA.

Bruce Conner er helt sentral og en foregangsmann innen found footage-kunsten. Han kom til byen i 1957, i en periode da mange tilreisende kunstnere slo seg ned i Fillmore-distriktet og i North Beach og inngikk diverse forbindelser med California School of Fine Arts. Kunstmiljøet i byen opplevde på denne tiden en meget spennende utviskning av grensene mellom de forskjellige kunstformene, og også mellom kunsten og livet. Bruce Conner fikk ideen om å vise en film som del av en ordinær kunstutstilling, og hans første sådanne var en tolvminutters svart/hvitt-film, *A Movie* (1958), som besto av en svarthumoristisk bruk av bilder fra diverse filmaviser. Hans senere arbeid *Cosmic Ray* fra 1961 var en blendende sekvens av bilder som blandet dansepiker med fyrverkeri, Disney-tegnefilmer og mye annet, i noe som beredte grunnen for de psykedeliske lysbildeshowene under rock-konserter senere på sekstitallet og også for musikkvideoen to tiår senere.

På sekstitallet så man en rekke filmcollager; blant mange eksempler som Baldwin angir, finner vi Gunvor Nelsons *Schmeerguntz* fra 1966. Den er «en vill montasje av bilder fra hjemmeværende mødres rutinearbeide stilt i kontrast med mediens idealiserte beskrivelser av kvinnetilværelsen.» Syttitallet var en av de mest gledesfylte, lekne, ja nærmest uskyldige perioder innen kunstformen, mens åttitallet var preget av en mye mer alvorlig tilnærming, med tunge temaer som identitetsspørsmål, kjønnsproblematikk, medieteorier, postkolonialisme og så videre, samt framveksten av det Baldwin kaller appropriasjonskunst (appropriation art). Dette var også tiden da Craig Baldwin selv kom på banen og beskriver seg selv som å ha «tvangsmessige kompleks angående undergraving av sjangere, innen både fiksjonsfilm og dokumentarer, for å vise tilbake på deres ideologiske grunnlag». Nittitallet var også preget av hektisk aktivitet, med en økende vektlegging på selve det fysiske filmmaterialet, for eksempel ved å ripe opp filmruten eller legge på 'fremmedlegemer' som for eksempel neglelakk.

Avslutningsvis går Baldwin i sin artikkel inn på found footage-kunstnere som arbeider med video, for eksempel Phil Patiris' rampete og satiriske videografi over den nådeløse strøm av firmalogoer, propaganda fra myndighetene og sci-fi-ekspansjon som kommersielt tv består av. Baldwin ser konturene av en elektronisk folkelig kultur som found footage-kunstnere fra Californias vestkyst framholder. Samtidig med deres advarende erkjennelse av våre dagers billedoverlesede liv, så er found footage-kunstnerne arbeid en forfriskende bekreftelse på deres relative frihet, personlige oppfinnsomhet og kreative ferdigheter til å finne sin egen anvendelse av allerede eksisterende mediebilder, og til å dele dem med andre. Kraften i kunstnerne egen fantasi kan stadig ta seg fram i denne forvirrende skogen av tegn.

Resyméet er skrevet av Dag Sødtholt

CRAIG BALDWIN PRESENTS CRAIG BALDWIN

Craig Baldwin er en filmskaper fra California hvis arbeider delvis reflekterer funk- eller neo-dada-estetikken som preger mye av kunsten på Vestkysten ved San Francisco i det tyvende århundre, samt situasjonist-strategiene 'detournement' og medieintervensjon. Baldwin er en slags (post-)moderne cargo-kultist og gjenbraker vrakene av propeller (og prosjektører) som har falt ned fra himmelen, for så å flikke sammen igjen de ødelagte delene av død film til en ny sammensetning som passer hans syntetiske, diskursive (og poetiske) formål, mens han samtidig parodierer de opprinnelige industrielle/koloniale produsentene.

De historiske røttene til denne typen collage kan definitivt spores tilbake til Bruce Conner, Duchamp, Schwitters, Heartfield, og til og med Frank Capra, men denne tvangsmessige gjenvinningen og omladningen av bilder og deres mening har en spesiell relevans i dagens visuelle kultur, gjennomsyret som den er av medier eid av store konsern. En semiotisk tilnæringsmåte er ikke bare kunstnerens eller forfatterens privilegium, men faktisk en nødvendighet for hver borger av det såkalte Nye Informasjonssamfunnet. Så hans prosjekt er tveegget: ikke bare en kritisk dekonstruksjon av troper og sjangere (dokumentarfilmen medregnet), men i tillegg dreier det seg om rekonstruksjon og omskriving.

Craig Baldwin vil introdusere betydelige utdrag fra *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America* (1991), *Sonic Outlaws* (1995), og *Spectres of the Spectrum* (1999), i tillegg til et innblikk i det verket han holder på med nå, *Mock Up On Mu*.



Craig Baldwin is a California filmmaker whose work in part reflects the Funk or Neo-Dada aesthetic that threads through 20th Century San Francisco Bay Area art, as well as Situationist strategies of detournement and media intervention. A kind of (post-)modern cargo-cultist, Baldwin retrieves the wreckage of propellers (and projectors) fallen from the sky, and then cobbles the broken pieces of dead cinema back together into a new assemblage that suits his synthetic discursive (and poetic) purposes, while also parodying the original industrial/colonial producers.

Certainly, historical roots for this kind of collage can be traced back to Conner, Duchamp, Schwitters, Heartfield, and even Frank Capra, but this obsessive reclamation and diversion of images and their meanings has special relevance in today's (corporate-)media-saturated visual culture, where semiotic agency is not just the prerogative of the artist or writer, but in fact a necessity for every citizen of the so-called New Information Society.

His project, then, is double-edged (and it is a sword): not only a critical de-construction of received tropes and genres (including the documentary), but, more, their re-configured/re-purposed narration of alternate histories...and speculative futures.

Substantial excerpts from *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America* (1991), *Sonic Outlaws* (1995), and *Spectres of the Spectrum* (1999) will be introduced and screened, as well as a 'behind-the-scenes' glimpse of his work-in-progress *Mock Up On Mu*.

Craig Baldwin

TRIBULATION 99

16mm | utdrag | 1991

Regi/Director	Craig Baldwin
Manus/Screenplay	Craig Baldwin
Klipp/Editor	Craig Baldwin
Foto/Camera	Bill Daniel
Lyd/Sound	Craig Baldwin
Stemmer/Voices	Sean Kilkoyne



Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America er like nådeløst sensasjonalistisk som den er lattervekkende og kunne vært et røntgenfoto av hjernen til en rabiat 'slacker'. Dette 48-minutter lange dokumentet med undergrunns-agitprop...er både en forvrengt historieskrivning av USAs intervensjoner i Latin-Amerika og en satire om konspirasjonsteorier – men er også en imponerende demonstrasjon av den typen 'connect-the-dots'-logikk som gjør en slik politikk eller verdensanskuelse mulig.

Med en sci-fi-intrige som sier at verdensurolighetene av i dag kan tilskrives utenomjordiske som bor under amerikanske atombombetestområder, illustrerer filmen sitt sensasjonalistiske drama med bilder plukket fra alt fra billedaviser til meksikanske horror-filmer. Denne helskrudde lille saken demonstrerer at konspirasjonstenkning er et Frankensteins monster som uunngåelig vil ødelegge dens skaper. (Først har du konspirasjonsteorien, og så har konspirasjonsteorien deg).

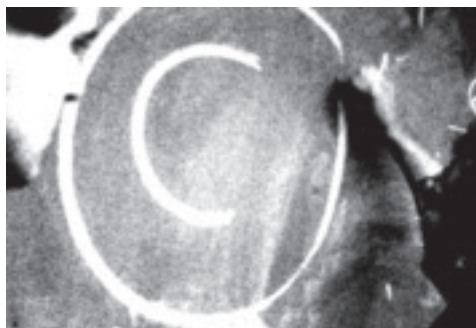
Unrelentingly lurid and equally hilarious, *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America* might be an X-ray of a rabid slacker's seething brain. This 48-minute document of underground agitprop...is both a skewed history of United States intervention in Latin America and a satire of conspiracy thinking – as well as an impressive demonstration of the sort of connect-the-dots logic that makes such political or world views possible.

With a sci-fi plot suggesting that current unrest can be blamed on space aliens who live under U.S. atomic test sites, the film illustrates its lurid comic drama with images culled from everything from newsreels to Mexican horror flicks. This nutty little item suggests that conspiracy thinking is a Frankenstein's monster which inevitably destroys its creator (First you have the conspiracy theory, and then the conspiracy theory has you).

SONIC OUTLAWS

16mm | utdrag | DVD

Regi/Director	Craig Baldwin
Manus/Screenplay	Craig Baldwin
Foto/Camera	Bill Daniel
Klipp/Editor	Bill Daniel
Prod/Prod	Craig Baldwin



Medlemmene av Negativland, en performance-gruppe fra San Francisco som også spiller inn plater, har selv påpekt at de fikk problemer ved å ha det for mye moro. Strekene deres begynte med en pirat-tape av Casey Kasem, en vanligvis så positivt lydende DJ og radiopersonlighet, som banner stygt mens han forsøker å lage et innslag om bandet U2. Negativland så her en mulighet servert på et fat og mikset entusiastisk Kasems mumling sammen med samplinger av en U2-sang og sendte så ut en single i 1991 på SST-labelen med et bilde av et U-2-spyfly på omslaget.

Sonic Outlaws, en fragmentert og frydefullt anarkistisk dokumentar av Craig Baldwin, nærmer seg denne hendelsen fra flere retninger. Noe av filmen handler om det rettslige marerittet som Negativlands lille spøk endte opp i. I en sak som fikk stor medieoppmerksomhet, anklaget U2s label, Island Records, Negativland for brudd på opphavsrett og trademerk, i det de hadde forsynt seg med bokstaven U og tallet 2, selv om U2 på sin side hadde lånt sitt eget navn fra CIA. SST sa så opp kontrakten med Negativland, la lokk på platen

By their own reckoning, members of the Bay Area recording and performance group Negativland got themselves into trouble by having too much fun. Their prank began with a pirated audiotape of Casey Kasem, the normally boosterish-sounding disk jockey and radio personality, as he cursed a blue streak while trying to record a spot about the band U2. Sensing opportunity at hand, Negativland enthusiastically mixed these mutterings with samples from a U2 song, then put out a 1991 single on the SST label with a picture of the U-2 spy plane on its cover.

Sonic Outlaws, a fragmented, gleefully anarchic documentary by Craig Baldwin, approaches this incident from several directions. Some of the film is about the legal nightmare that ensued from Negativland's little joke. In a highly publicized case, U2's label, Island Records, charged Negativland with copyright and trademark infringement for appropriating the letter U and the number 2, even though U2 had in turn borrowed its name from the Central Intelligence Agency. SST then dropped Negativland, suppressed the

og forlangte at gruppen skulle betale de rettslige omkostningene. Negativland forsøkte å holde seg økonomisk flytende ved å sende ut en mengde brev og rettslige dokumenter som nå er samlet i Fair Use, en uttømmende og underlig fascinerende krønike over saken.

Sonic Outlaws dekker noe av dette samme territoriet mens den også går nærmere inn på ideene bak Negativlands geriljainnspillingstaktikk. Gerilja er definitivt det riktige uttrykket her, siden Negativland og andre appropriasjonskunstnere ser på seg selv som deltagere i en helt reell krig, da de er oversvømt av kommersielle etermedier og rasende over propagandainnholdet i mye av det de hører og ser. Disse kunstnerne slår tilbake ved å omarrangere sammenhenger så respektløst som bare mulig. Deres teknologiske ferdigheter er så formidable at ingen lyd eller intet bilde i dag kan være sikker på ikke å bli klusset med.

Baldwin, som har uttrykt sin egen interesse for 'culture-jamming' og rekontekstualisering gjennom for eksempel å endre oppslagstavler før han laget denne dokumentariske collagen, utforsker implikasjonene ved denne tilnæringsmåten. Disse sonisk lovløse menneskene spesialiserer seg på, ifølge en av dem, å «fange inn temaene i den av forretningslivet kontrollerte medie-sperreilden, reorganisere dem slik at de blir en kommentar om seg selv, for så å spytte dem tilbake i sperreilden til kulturell ettertanke.» De som blir intervjuet her, blant annet medlemmer av Negativland, John Oswald og the Tape-Beatles, beskriver slike taktikker som både kulturkritikk og undergravende moro. *Sonic Outlaws* utfører litt rekontekstualisering på egen hånd ved å koble slik appropriasjonskunst sammen med deres forløpere: alt fra kubisme og dadaisme til å bruke plastikkleire for å kopiere tegninger fra tegneserier. Ved å bruke små biter og raske klipp som ofte understreker filmskaperens forkjærlighet for bastant snuskete sci-fi-filmer fra femtitallet, fanger *Sonic Outlaws* inn det brede spekteret av effektivitet slike taktikker kan ha. Noen ganger er resultatene genuint morsomme og illustrerer Baldwins ideer godt. Men oppfinnsomheten ved å leke med Brylcreem-reklamer eller ved å legge ord i munnen på Ronald Reagan («Når alt kommer til alt var jeg marerittet til USA og hele menneskeheten») trivialisere tankene som diskuteres.

Hva *Sonic Outlaws* gjør så besnærende klart er at det er åpent for alle der ute i eteren, når piratvirksomhet blir stadig lettere og lovene forblir vage. Filmen spenner fra en diskusjon om hva Fair Use-konseptet innebærer til en ulovlig overvåkning av en krangel mellom homoseksuelle per mobiltelefon og presenterer en provoserende samling av muligheter til å klusse med og endre bilder. Og den gjør det helt klart at Negativland knapt er alene i sitt ønske om å utnytte disse mulighetene på både dumdristig og estetisk vågalt vis. Baldwin kannibalisere fingernemt alt mulig som kan hjelpe ham til å få uttrykt sin mening, enten det er en huleboer-film, *Den Ensomme Rytter*, *Gullivers reiser* eller *Cormans The Pit and the Pendulum*. I tillegg til å være en slu kommentator av knuskthørre undervisningsfilmer, gjør Craig også alt dette relevant i forbindelse med dagens verden ved å sammenligne Coronados blodtørstighet med dagens atomavfallsindustri og dens lignende likegyldighet overfor de samme landområdene. Men ikke misforstå og tro at dette er et mismodig blick på menneskets arroganse og erobringstrang – tro det eller ei, men filmen er også innmari morsom! Spesielt under Coronados siste, hjerneskadde dager når han hallusinerer i vei og raver av gårde i full conquistadormundur (med moderne byer som helt åpenlys bakgrunn). Alt i alt er denne filmen enda et bevis på at Craig Baldwin er en av de mest vilt oppfinnsomme uavhengige filmskaperne som arbeider i dag.

record and demanded that the group pay legal fees. Trying to remain solvent, Negativland sent out a barrage of letters and legal documents that are now collected in Fair Use, an exhaustive, weirdly fascinating scrapbook about the case.

Sonic Outlaws covers some of the same territory while also expanding upon the ideas behind Negativland's guerilla recording tactics. Guerilla is indeed the word, since these and other appropriation artists see themselves as engaged in real warfare, inundated by the commercial airwaves, infuriated by the propaganda content of much of what they hear and see, these artists strike back by rearranging contexts as irreverently as possible. Their technological capabilities are awesome enough to mean no sound or image is tamper-proof today.

Mr. Baldwin, who expressed his own interest in culture-jamming and recontextualisation through practices like altering billboards, before making this documentary collage, explores the implications of this approach. These sonic outlaws specialize, according to one of them, in «capturing the corporate-controlled subjects of the one way media barrage, reorganising them to be a comment upon themselves and spitting them back into the barrage for cultural consideration.» Those interviewed here, including members of Negativland, John Oswald and the Tape-Beatles, speak of such tactics as both cultural criticism and subversive fun. *Sonic Outlaws* does some recontextualisation of its own by connecting such appropriation art to its antecedents: anything from Cubism or Dada to using Silly Putty to copy comic-book drawings. Using quick snippets and flashes that often emphasize the filmmaker's taste for proudly tacky sci-fi movies of the 1950s, *Sonic Outlaws* captures the wide range of effectiveness that such tactics can have. Sometimes the results are authentically witty and illustrate Mr. Baldwin's ideas. But the ingenuity of toying with a Brylcreem commercial or putting words in the mouth of a videotaped Ronald Reagan («After all, I was the nightmare of America and the human race») trivialises the thoughts being discussed.

What *Sonic Outlaws* makes intriguingly clear is that it's a free-for-all out there on the airwaves, as piracy becomes increasingly easy and the law remains vague. Ranging from a discussion of the Fair Use concept to illicitly monitoring a gay lovers' quarrel conducted by cellular phone, the film presents a provocative range of image-tampering possibilities. And it makes clear that Negativland is hardly alone in wanting to exploit those possibilities in both reckless and esthetically daring ways. Baldwin deftly cannibalizes anything that'll help get his point across, whether it's a caveman pic, *the Lone Ranger*, *Gulliver's Travels*, or *Corman's The Pit and the Pendulum*. In addition to being a sly commentary on bone-dry educational films, Craig also makes it all relevant to current day events by comparing Coronado's bloodthirsty legacy to today's nuclear waste industry and its similar disregard for those very same lands. But don't get the wrong idea about this bleak look at man's arrogance and lust for conquest – believe it or not, it's also funny as hell! Especially during Coronado's final, brain-damaged days, as he hallucinates his face off and stumbles about in full Conquistador regalia (with modern cities blatantly behind him). All in all, further proof that Craig Baldwin is one of the most wildly inventive indie filmmakers working today.

SPECTRES OF THE SPECTRUM

16mm | utdrag | DVD

Regi/Director Craig Baldwin

Prod/Prod Craig Baldwin



Filmen utspiller seg i 2007 i den fordervede ørkenutposten Las Vegas, hvor en ung telepatisk kvinne (BooBoo) roter i søpla på en gammel bombetestplass for å overleve, sammen med faren (Yogi), som holder til i en pirat-tv-stasjon som kringkaster usammenhengende utfall mot en kommende global elektromagnetisk 'Pulse'. En solformørkelse gir BooBoo en kosmisk mulighet til å redde verden, ved en overluminal reise tilbake i tiden for å framskaffe en hemmelig melding som er lagt igjen i eteren av hennes bestemor, en vitenskapskvinne.

Med deres Airstream-trailer ombygd til et romskip er den forbløffede BooBoo i stand til å oppdatere seg på den stadige strømmen av undervisnings-tv-programmer fra femtitallet, noe som muliggjør et høyhastighets-overblikk over vitenskap og science fiction-film på midten av forrige århundre, og også en løs og collageglad fortelling om den elektromagnetiske revolusjonens helter og martyrer. Her kommer det kommentarer om Mesmer, Morse, Bell, Tesla, Farnsworth og andre fra Yogi og hans 'TV Tesla'-korrespondenter, i et lekent og spekulerende forsøk på å kartlegge veksten i forretningslivets hegemoni over det elektromagnetiske spektrum. Gjennom en stadig mer abstrakt montasje av levende bilder, arkivfilm, kringkastet video og 'eksploberte' intervjuer fordreies denne fantasien om til sammenhengende, abstraherte audiovisuelle fraser, som antyder sammenbruddet i personlig ego/hukommelse, historisk representasjon og, ja, selve rommet og tiden.

Denne science fiction-allegorien om 'elektromagnetisk autonomi' i opposisjon til kulturhåndteringsindustriens hegemoni følger historien til medieteknologien fra dens tidlige dager til det 21. århundres Nye Elektromagnetiske Orden, som truer med å ta fullstendig kontroll over våre liv.

Set in the year 2007 in the blighted desert outpost of Las Vegas, a young telepathic woman (BooBoo) scavenges for survival on an old bombing range with her father (Yogi) who is holed up in a cinder-block pirate-TV station, broadcasting rambling diatribes on the impending global electromagnetic 'Pulse'. A solar eclipse gives BooBoo a cosmic opportunity to save the world, through a superluminal voyage back in time to retrieve a secret message left on the airwaves by her scientist grandmother.

With their Airstream trailer converted into a spaceship, the amazed BooBoo is able to catch up with outwardly propagating Fifties' educational-TV broadcasts, affording an accelerated review of mid-century science and science-fiction cinema; and narrating a loose and collage-happy history of heroes and martyrs of the electromagnetic revolution. Commentary on Mesmer, Morse, Bell, Tesla, Farnsworth, and others comes from Yogi and his 'TV Tesla' correspondents, in a playfully speculative effort to trace the growth of corporate hegemony over the electromagnetic spectrum. Through an increasingly abstract montage of live-action, archival film, broadcast video, and 'exploded' interviews, the fantasy narrative warps into disjointed, abstracted audio-visual phrases, suggesting the breakdown of personal ego/memory, historical representation, and, yes, of spacetime itself.

This science-fiction allegory about 'electromagnetic autonomy' in opposition to the hegemony of the culture-management industry traces a history of media technology from its early days to a 21st century New Electromagnetic Order that threatens to take total control of our lives.

Craig Baldwin