

10 September 2024

Unique film programme accompanying Underground

16mm films, talks and events

In the 1960s, change was everywhere. A new generation of artists picked up their 16mm cameras, brought life back into art and vice versa, and experimented with the medium of film. With the exhibition Underground Eye Filmmuseum is presenting a complementary programme about celebrated avant-garde artists of the 1960s, with guests, lectures, performances and screenings of 16mm films.

Underground: American Avant-Garde Film in the 1960s, 13 October 2024 – 5 January 2025, Eye Filmmuseum, IJpromenade 1, Amsterdam, eyefilm.nl/en/Underground & [Eye Film Player](#)

With Underground – American Avant-Garde Film in the 1960s, Eye highlights the cinematic innovation of a generation of American filmmakers in the 1960s and adds a new chapter to the museum's long tradition of giving experimental film a prominent place, both in its collection and programming. The exhibition, along with the extensive film programme in Cinema 2, reveals an explosion of artistic experiments, some of which are regarded as iconic (*Flaming Creatures* by Jack Smith, 1963) while others were hardly shown.

“We don’t want false, polished, slick films – we prefer them rough, unpolished, but alive; we don’t want rosy films: we want them the color of blood.” This statement by filmmaker Jonas Mekas, the spokesman for the non-profit organization Film-Makers Cooperative set up by artists, neatly summarizes the aims of the new generation. The manifesto and the films that followed would exert a profound influence on the following generations filmmakers in America and beyond, including the current one.

Scratches, double exposure, multiple screens

The underground filmmakers rebelled against the format of the typical Hollywood film. To them, film was a workable, tangible material that offered sharp social criticism or much-needed mind expansion. Film strips were scratched, films were double exposed and presented on multiple screens placed beside one another, and so on. In addition, the social unrest of the 1960s echoes in their work. For example, Carolee Schneemann’s *Viet-Flakes* (1965) takes a critical look at the horrific reality of the Vietnam War, and Bruce Conner offers a damning criticism of mass media on the basis of news reports of the assassination of John F. Kennedy (*Report*, 1967).

PRESS
RELEASE

PRESS
RELEASE

Opening with rare screening of *Chelsea Girls*

On the festive opening night of Underground on 12 October, Eye is screening the iconic split-screen underground film *Chelsea Girls* (1966, 16mm) in Cinema 2. This is a unique opportunity to savour this experimental soap opera, full of speed-fuelled monologues from the 'superstars' of Andy Warhol's Factory. Co-directed by Warhol and Paul Morrissey, *Chelsea Girls* – a three-and-a-half-hour mosaic of gritty lives in the New York underground scene – is rarely screened in its entirety in the original 16mm split-screen version.

Cinema 2 Programme

During the exhibition period, Cinema 2 will screen fifty films of relevant artists from the underground scene. It is rare that this work – by key figures such as Jonas Mekas, Stan Brakhage, Shirley Clarke and Bruce Conner – can be presented in its original medium as analogue film print on 8, 16 and 35mm. With special guests in talks, Q&A sessions, performances and lectures.

Psychedelic films and cultural crossovers

In the week of 17-23 October, attention focuses on psychedelic film in collaboration with the Media Studies department of the University of Amsterdam (UvA). In the opening lecture, entitled [Tripping on Film](#), Patricia Pisters, professor of film, media and culture, discusses the relationship between expanded consciousness and film, and the psychedelic revival among today's artists, filmmakers and proponents of alternative lifestyles.

Another subject addressed is the international context, in particular the influence exerted by American filmmakers of the 1960s on European cinema and vice versa, and the relationship between their work and developments in other creative fields such as performance, dance, literature (Beat writers) and avant-garde music. The programme also highlights the links between experimental filmmakers and counterculture activists and ubiquitous American pop culture.

Eye Film Player

From 11 October on, you can explore the history of American avant-garde further online. [Eye Film Player](#) is offering four documentaries that explore the work of pioneering experimental filmmakers, with particular attention for the role of women filmmakers. Pip Chodorov's free-spirited *Free Radicals – A History of Experimental Cinema* (2010) is available; Jeff Perkins illuminates the history of the American Fluxus movement in *George - The Story of George Maciunas and Fluxus* (2018); and in *Notes on Marie Menken* (2006) and *In the Mirror of Maya Deren* (2001), Martina Kudláček reconstructs the lives of two celebrated women filmmakers from the post-war American avant-garde.

Note to editors, not for publication

Rachel Voorbij, Pers- & PR Manager Eye Filmmuseum, Mob. +316 3025 4143,
rachelvoorbij@eyefilm.nl