

# University of Virginia | Art Museum

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## Virginia Film Society Presents the Black Maria Film and Video Festival

WHO: Virginia Film Society  
WHAT: Black Maria Film and Video Festival with festival director John Columbus  
WHEN: Wednesday, April 9, 7 p.m.  
WHERE: Vinegar Hill Theatre  
Admission: \$9; free to Film Society members.

The Black Maria Film and Video Festival returns to Charlottesville for its 14th annual visit to the Virginia Film Society on Wednesday, April 9 at 7 p.m. at Vinegar Hill Theatre with festival director John Columbus. Thirteen films will be featured during the film society event. Two additional films will be on view April 15 through June 1 in the University of Virginia Art Museum's new media gallery.

Columbus has consulted with Virginia Film Festival director Richard Herskowitz in choosing titles that will appeal to the adventurous Charlottesville audience.

"The Vinegar Hill show features a variety of short experimental, documentary, narrative and animation works," said Herskowitz. "The museum program will include two award-winning videos on the subject of 'race and place,' which ties in well with the [art museum's] current exhibition, 'Landscapes of Slavery.'"

The Black Maria Festival is an international juried competition and award tour, with a mission to exhibit and reward cutting-edge works from independent film and videomakers. Following a rigorous jury process, the festival winners go on the road with Columbus as he exhibits the standout films at more than 70 sites around the country. Each individual program is tailored to the location of its screening.

The festival takes its name from the world's first film studio, built by Thomas Edison in West Orange, N.J. It is one of only a handful of festivals that qualify short films (40 minutes and under) for Academy Award nomination. Since 1981, the festival has toured coast to coast to fulfill its mission to advocate, exhibit and reward the poetic, expressive and insightful vision of independent film and video makers.

All Virginia Film Society events are co-sponsored by the Virginia Film Festival and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, with additional support from the Virginia Commission for the Arts. For information, visit [www.vafilm.com](http://www.vafilm.com).

## 27th Annual Black Maria Film and Video Festival Charlottesville Program Descriptions

### Best of Festival Animation

#### "Field of Green"

7 min. by Sky David, Carlsbad, Calif.

A haunting mixed-media animation by a master artist in which he resurrects images from the sketchbook he carried as an American soldier in Vietnam. This beautifully rendered work recaptures a close brush with death and the inner trauma that is its legacy. The film is a timely reminder of the long lasting effects of war on the human psyche.

### Best of Festival Documentary

#### "Phoenix Dance"

11 min. by Karina Epperlein and Nicole Johnson, C/O Fanlight, Boston

An extraordinary film about the one-legged dancer Homer Avila, who discovered in March 2001 that the pain in his hip was due to cancer. A month later, his right leg and much of his hip were amputated. But the dancer heroically troops on in a journey of artistic transformation.

### **Juror's Choice**

#### **"Energie"**

**5 min. by Thorsten Fleisch, Berlin, Germany**

A visual tour de force, "Energie," is crackling with the sound and phosphorescence of a lightning storm. The tempest's rolling thunder, claps and sparks create a spellbinding work of raw power that captures the primal force of nature.

### **Juror's Citation**

#### **"L'eau Life"**

**3 min. by Jeff Scher, Brooklyn, N.Y.**

Jeff Scher returns to the festival with the animated short "L'eau Life," a celebration of summer and water that is literally a watercolor painting come to life. In keeping with this theme, Scher's animation is marked by its fluidity and an exuberantly psychedelic aesthetic.

### **Juror's Choice**

#### **"Number One"**

**10.5 min. by Leighton Pierce, Iowa City, Iowa**

The evergreen experimental filmmaker, Leighton Pierce, once again engages viewers with a richly textured, highly sensual and impressionistic meditation on the body, water and time.

### **Juror's Citation**

#### **"P.R."**

**1 min. by Bryan Leister, Denver**

This biting work is a conceptual deconstruction of an ill-considered pronouncement by a noted televangelist. The artist "metamorphizes" one icon into another as he turns media-driven culture against itself. "P.R." is a compact, yet effective protest against right-wing reactionary thinking. Using a simple trope of animation, Bryan Leister finds a visual expression for the hypocrisies of interventionist rhetoric about foreign extremism.

#### **"Bodega"**

**6.5 min. by Casimir Nozkowski, and Dallas Penn, Brooklyn, N.Y.**

Emcees Dallas Penn and Rafi Kam reveal their street wise, corrected food pyramid in this funky and funny tongue-in-cheek work. A humorous yet searing commentary about the choices confronting people who live in "the poorest urban county in the country." The protagonist/hosts illustrate the finer points of the Bodega Food Pyramid.

#### **"Doxology"**

**6 min. by Michael Langan, San Francisco**

In this stunningly inventive, semi-absurdist work, a tennis sweater-vested young man must face a dancing Oldsmobile, endure a boozy encounter with God on a frozen tundra, and brush his teeth, comb his hair, floss, lather and shave his face all simultaneously. "Doxology" combines groundbreaking stop-motion animation techniques and crazed storytelling in a quest for spiritual enlightenment. The result is an experimental piece that Animation World Network calls "a well-crafted, truly strange and highly atmospheric film that dares to ask the big questions."

#### **"The Heart is a Hidden Camera"**

**10 min. by Gabriel Judet-Weinshel, Los Angeles**

In this work, which at times seems to be in the magical realist film tradition, memory and beauty amid the ravages of the 21st century impose a surreal experience on a boy. Theo discovers at an early age that his heart somehow mimics a camera, recording and replicating that which he encounters. The trauma of an early childhood event drives Theo's heart into retreat, until, as a young man, he falls in love. Magic returns and impossible things happen, he encounters levitating jesters and dancers populating a DeChico landscape. The world around Theo swirls with change, mutates and then closes in on him.

#### **"my olympic summer"**

**12.5 min. by Daniel Robin, San Francisco**

"my olympic summer" chronicles the off-hidden currents of the filmmaker's parents' marriage, set against the backdrop of the 1972 Munich Olympics. The Israeli team was taken hostage and the filmmaker's father was with them. The mother's mysterious story emerges from a recently discovered roll of home movie film that had been stored away and never developed until recently. Was there a lover? The filmmaker is haunted by the parents' story that indirectly parallels and comments on the filmmaker's own recently failed marriage in this exploration of how we perceive the past and its artifacts.

#### **"On the Representation of Absent Things"**

**6.5 min. by Donna Golden, Newhall, Calif.**

The filmmaker has created a mixed-form piece using the image of JosÈ Padilla, also known as Abdullah al-Muhajir, A.K.A. Muhajir Abdulla (the U.S. citizen convicted of aiding terrorists) as a metaphor for the dislocation of post-9/11 America. The maker reframes the political, philosophical, intellectual, moral and psychological shrinkage of our space, of our experience, posited as just one of the consequences of our silent "forgetfulness" in the face of brutality. Using a rich combination of rotoscoping/stenciling, live-action footage, archival audio and photo-transfers of historical/iconic imagery, the film explores the woeful impact of erasure.

#### **"Signs"**

**3 min. by Patricia McInroy, Albuquerque, N.M.**

"Signs" is a powerful visual stream-of-consciousness work that reveals the messages of everyday life. It is also about how the prosaic is made up completely of art waiting for an interpreter to come along. The piece is a collection of stills shot because the filmmaker felt compelled to record their messages. "Along with the images are the attempts my mind makes as I walk through life to connect loosely the messages I gather and make some sense of it all." —Patricia McInroy.

### **"A Trip to Prague"**

**4.5 min. by Neil Ira Needleman, Katonah, N.Y.**

"A Trip to Prague" is a witty, whimsical and engaging story told with sketchbook images possibly made during a bachelor's vacation trip to Prague. There's a twist at the end, which results in an unexpected outcome.

### **U.Va. Art Museum Media Gallery Installation**

**The museum is open Tuesday Through Sunday, 12 to 5 p.m.**

### **"The Ville"**

**17 min. by Amy Bench, Austin, Texas**

#### **Juror's Citation**

"The Ville" is a quiet contemplation of race, identity, fear and acceptance in today's urban landscape. In its heyday, the Ville neighborhood of St. Louis was notable in many ways and was where the young Chuck Berry heard the Antioch Baptist Church choir. In the Ville, Tina Turner, Arthur Ashe and Barbara Jordan went to school at the first black high school west of the Mississippi. Today, 16-year-old Jermaine and 8-year-old Kathryn reflect on what it means to live there now, how survival is more real than history.

### **"Conjure Bearden"**

**16.5 min. compiled by Thomas Whiteside, Durham, N.C.**

"Conjure Bearden" is a short meditation on African-American life in the Jim Crow South in the 1930s and '40s. Filmmaker Thomas Whiteside has reassembled and reconfigured silent footage originally shot by nomadic African-American filmmaker H. Lee Waters. This piece is a sort of homage to the iconography of artist Romare Bearden, who was a native of Charlotte, N.C., and who, aside from his career in New York, Paris and St. Martin, kept close ties to his roots. Bearden doesn't appear in this footage, but his aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents do. Whiteside has collected an extraordinary cross-section of Waters' films now accompanied by a bluesy score by Anthony Kelley. Waters' work stands out not only because of its power, but because so much of it survives.

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