

Gravitational Lensing: Feminist Film Dialogues

Program 5: Process & Transformation

Shapeshifters Cinema, Friday, November 22, 2024

***Element* by Amy Greenfield, 1973, 16mm, 11.5 mins**

As both director and subject, Greenfield depicts the primal experience of a body in the world. The labored actions and visceral imagery conjure both birth and death and represent them through the scope of female sensuality.

***Three Peonies* by Stephanie Barber, 2017, 16mm shown on DV, 3:13 mins**

A brief, poetic 16mm film on a simple sculptural action. An experimental film in which the simplicity of the image is offset by the sonic implications. What becomes apparent is the humor possible in material interactions and the tender and sometimes melodramatic symbolism of cut flowers. What begins as a reverence for natural beauty ends up pointing towards the abstract expressionism and color field work of high modernism which, in many cases eschewed the banality of such 'natural' beauty. The collaged soundtrack suggests weightier concerns, gently insistent behind the flatness of the utilitarian sounds of ripping tape.

***Makeover Movie* by Sue Ding, 2022, DV, 19 mins**

A pop culture essay film on the makeover movies we grew up loving—and all the ways they taught us that we needed to fix ourselves. For more than a hundred years, movie makeovers have promised audiences that with a little help, any ugly duckling can transform into the belle of the ball. Featuring clips from nearly a hundred films, *Makeover Movie* immerses us in the candy-colored and kinetic world of the makeover montage. Alongside these iconic images, women of color and queer women reflect on the racialized, heteronormative, and contradictory beauty standards at the core of the movie makeover.

***Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* by Dara Birnbaum, 1978/9, SV shown on DV, 5:50 mins**

Appropriating imagery from the 1970s TV series *Wonder Woman*, Birnbaum isolates and repeats the moment of transformation from “real” woman to super-heroine. Trapped within her magical metamorphosis by stuttering edits, *Wonder Woman* spins dizzily like a music-box doll. The last few minutes of the film show only the lyrics to the song *Wonder Woman in Discoland* calling out the weakness inherent in (less-than-super-human) flesh.

***Moon Cycle* by Justine Tamiko Lai 2023, 16mm shown on DV, 2:05 mins**

Moon Cycle is a direct animation in five chapters (four of which are depicted here) based on the anime TV series *Sailor Moon* (1992), which represents the girl-to-superheroine transformation sequences (also known as henshin) that are reused every episode to save on production. I. bran stakhage's moonlight; II. mercury retrograde; III. mars raver perseverance; IV. boys go to jupiter; V. venus in blurs

*** INTERMISSION ***

