

**Los Angeles Filmforum presents
Experimentations: Imag(in)ing Knowledge in Film
Programs 9 &10:
Sunday, December 8, 2024
At 2220 Arts + Archives**

Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest running organization dedicated to weekly screenings of experimental film, documentaries, video art, and experimental animation. 2024 is our 49th year. www.lafilmforum.org

Experimentations: Imag(in)ing Knowledge in Film is Filmforum's expansive film series and upcoming publication that investigates the ways that experimental and scientific films produce and question the visualization of the world. Combining artist films utilizing scientific imagery, science and natural history films, and films of indigenous and traditional knowledge, the series examines how science, nature, and technology films shape our understanding of humans, nature, gender, knowledge, and progress. The multi-venue public screening series presents analog and digital time-based media incorporating diverse scientific and experimental film traditions from across the globe. The series will include eighteen screenings between September 2024 and February 2025, with films and digital works from 1874 to today from around the world, multiple guests, panels and wonderful collaborations that will reveal the possibilities and circumstances of cinema in this realm.

Experimentations: Imag(in)ing Knowledge in Film is among more than 70 exhibitions and programs presented as part of PST ART. Returning in September 2024 with its latest edition, PST ART: Art & Science Collide, this landmark regional event explores the intersections of art and science, both past and present. PST ART is presented by Getty. For more information about PST ART: Art & Science Collide, please visit: pst.art.

Major support for *Experimentations: Imag(in)ing Knowledge in Film* is provided by the Getty Foundation and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional Support from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture, and the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles.



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DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
City of Los Angeles

Experimentations: Imag(in)ing Knowledge in Film, Program 9
Should We Look at Animals?: The Perils and Pleasures of Nonfiction Animal Films
With Dr. Benjamin Schultz-Figueroa
Sunday December 8, 2024, 3:00 pm

After the screening, Benjamin Schultz-Figueroa will be in conversation with Dr. Thomas Pringle, Assistant Professor in Cinema & Media Studies at USC

A free dinner will be available between the 3 pm and 7 pm programs.

Comparisons between humans and animals are foundational to the experimental branches of medicine and psychology. Yet converting the bafflingly complex bodies and behaviors of nonhuman animals into scientific models is not a straightforward process. From testing apparatuses to spreadsheets of findings, from textbooks on animal handling to published journal articles, such a transformation requires an intricate system of interlocking media. Film has been an essential, yet largely overlooked, element within this process. Often treated as purely transparent scientific recordings, the films produced out of animal research are in fact deeply formalist works that tested what film could capture through the image of an animal—variously proposing that they could visualize pure thought, the processes of history and culture, and the influence of the environment on an organism. In this capacity, scientific filmmakers often advanced their own theories of media and their relationship to living organisms, theories which overlapped with and influenced figures like Marshall McLuhan.

Curated by Benjamin Schultz-Figueroa

Dr. Benjamin Schultz-Figueroa's research and teaching focus on the History of Scientific Filmmaking, Nontheatrical Film, Animal Representations on Film, Science Fiction and Horror. He has a forthcoming publication, *Viscera, Skin, and Physical Form: Corporeality and Early Cinema*. His newest book, released in February 2023, is *The Celluloid Specimen: Moving Image Research into Animal Life* (UC Press).

Thomas Patrick Pringle is Assistant Professor of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Southern California. With Gertrud Koch and Bernard Stiegler, he is the co-author of *Machine* (2019). Pringle's writing brings together media history with environmental history and is available to read in several academic and popular venues. He has curated film programs and public events on the history and politics of ecology and climate change in Canada, the United States, and South Africa.

Screening:

Problem Solving by Chimpanzees (Wolfgang Köhler, 1914-1917, digital transfer, b&w, silent, 8:00)

An Experimentally Produced "Social Problem" in Rats (O.H. Mowrer, 1939, digital transfer,

b&w, silent, 10:52)

Interview with Calhoun (John B. Calhoun, 1970, digital transfer, color, sound, 38:28)

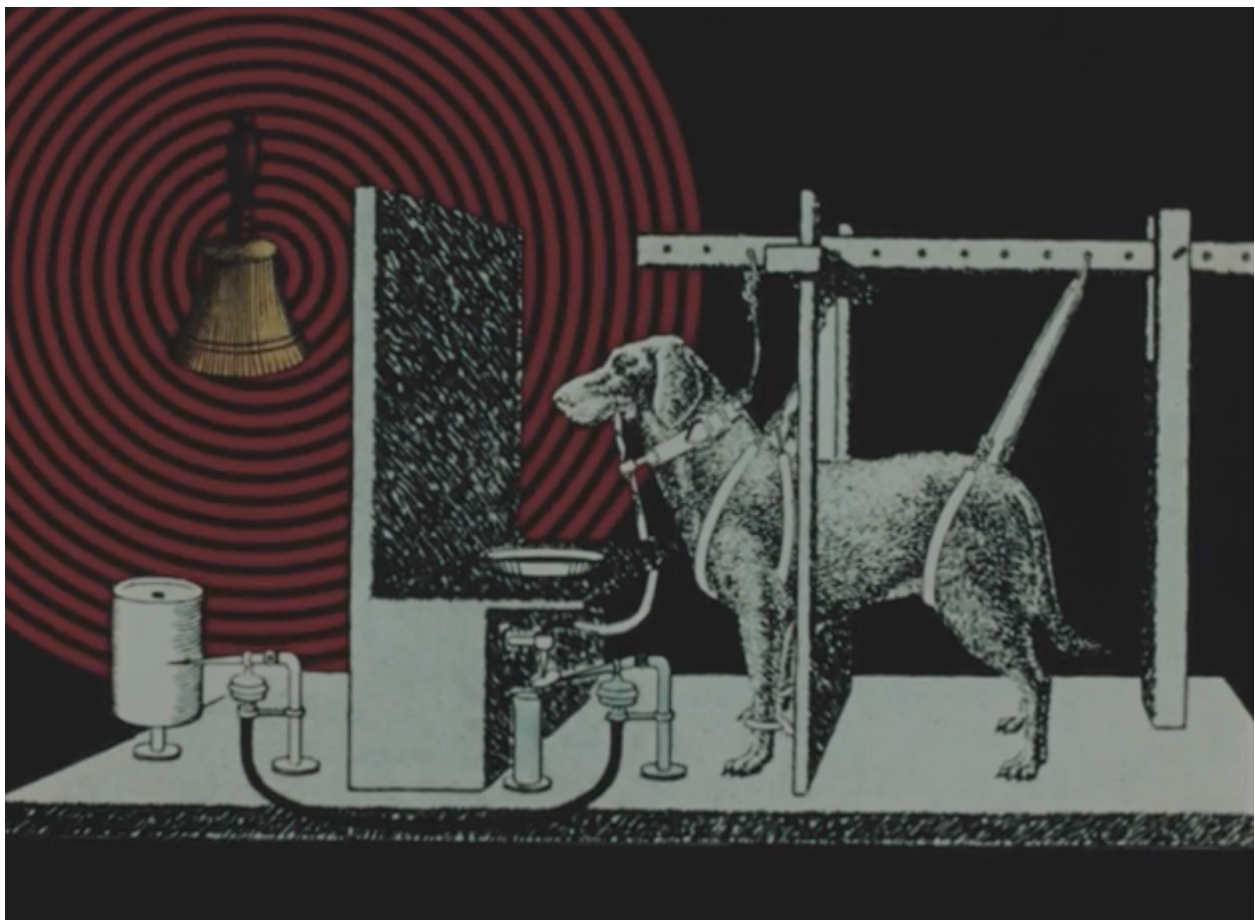
Animal Sexual Behavior Films (Alfred Kinsey & William Dellenback, circa 1940-1950, 16mm transferred to digital color, sound)

Pigeon & Red Block (B. F. Skinner, 1947, 16mm transferred to digital, color, silent, 1:01)

Project Orcon (B. F. Skinner, 1942, 16mm transferred to digital, color, silent, 2:59)

The Behavioral Revolution (B. F. Skinner, 1975, 16mm transferred to digital, color, sound, 28:36)

Watch Elon Musk's Neuralink Monkey Play Video Games with his Brain (2021, digital, color, sound, 3:27)



Experimentations Program 10
The Crystalline Entities
Sunday December 8, 2024, 7:00 pm

In person: Andrew Kim, Deborah Stratman, Jennifer Peterson

Curated by Adam Hyman

Crystals are inherently beautiful. They form our world; they are part of chemical-based photography that images it. They take innumerable forms, their growth is hypnotic, the light they scatter creates amazing colors. Many filmmakers have looked at crystals in myriad ways, and this program strives to capture an element of how the filmic investigation of one subject results in a brilliant array of filmic forms. From a well-crafted educational film from the 1950s to a mysterious experimental film and one that positions crystals in a post-humanist world, the program highlights the range of scientific visions and the experimental reuse or repositioning of those visions.

Adam Hyman has been Executive Director and Head Programmer for Los Angeles Filmforum since 2003. He was co-curator of the project and co-editor of the book *Alternative Projections: Experimental Film in Los Angeles, 1945-1980*; was Project Supervisor for *Ism, Ism, Ism: Experimental Cinema in Latin America*, and is Project Supervisor for *Experimentations: Imag(in)ing Knowledge in Film*. has been a documentary filmmaker for the past twenty-seven years, producing and/or writing and/or doing archival and clearance work on a variety of historical, archaeological, political, and music documentaries that have aired on PBS, the History Channel, the Learning Channel, CNN, and others. He is currently striving to make a film on R&B sax legend Big Jay McNeely. He co-produced the 2007 Oscar-nominated feature documentary *Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience*.

Jennifer Lynn Peterson holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and is currently a Professor of Media Studies at Woodbury University in Los Angeles. A film historian whose research focuses on the relationship between media and the environment, she is the author of *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Duke University Press, 2013). Her scholarly articles have been published in *Representations*, *JCMS*, *Feminist Media Histories*, *Camera Obscura*, and in numerous edited collections. Her film, art, and book reviews have been published in *Texte zur Kunst*, *Millennium Film Journal*, *Film Quarterly*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *Artforum.com*. Previously, she was Associate Professor in the Film Studies Program at the University of Colorado Boulder. Her second book, on American motion pictures and nature conservation in the interwar years, is under contract for publication by Columbia University Press.

Screening:

Crystal Growth Morphologies (playing during pre-show)

By Kenneth Jackson and Charlie Miller, Bell Labs

1974, color, silent, 10:43

Footage Courtesy of AT&T Archives and History Center, Warren, NJ

This short, silent film shows fascinating crystal growth under magnification, in real-time. The width of the film frame, for most of the samples, is only 1mm wide (only one, the Tristearin sample, is 1/4 of that). Kenneth Jackson and Charlie Miller were the Bell Labs researchers who made the film to document their work. This film was leased during the 1970s and 1980s for audiences of university students, to complement relevant classwork.

Crystal-growing techniques were very important to technological advancement at Bell Laboratories. Early crystal experimentation to find better rectifiers for radar and microwaves in the 1940s gave way to explorations of germanium and silicon crystals later on. These, of course, led to the development of the transistor, and beyond--in particular, how crystals grow on different surfaces. Later, this research would lead to ways of crafting the layers of silicon chips, such as the molecular beam epitaxy method.

Crystals

By Elwood Decker

1951, Color, silent, 2:15

16mm Print courtesy of the Academy Film Archive

Elwood Decker (1902-1992) was an American painter who also made a few short films. This film emphasized very brilliant colors. Some of the crystals were thin and elongated, almost like needles. Others looked like snowflakes growing. The growing crystals were seen through translucent abstract forms, which drifted over and through them, like ghosts. This was achieved by a making a series of double exposures on the same film print. In his journal he wrote, '...Like the Dunes, the simplicity of crystals makes them seem like moving abstraction... ideas, rather than things...'

Crystals

By Richard Leacock

1958, 16mm transferred to digital, color, sound, 24:30

This color film from 1958 and made by the Physical Science Study Committee shows Alan Holden from the Bell Laboratories explaining how crystals are formed and why they are shaped the way they are. The film goes on to show crystals growing while under a microscope. Blue Ribbon winner, American Film Festival.

Ricky Leacock (1921-2011) was a major documentary maker, generally in the direct cinema mode. His most well-known film is probably CRISIS (1963), but he was also cinematographer on Robert Flaherty's LOUISIANA STORY (1946), one the cameramen on MONTEREY POP (1967), and formed Leacock Pennebaker Inc. with D.A. Pennebaker in 1963, making multiple films in the 1960s and 70s. In 1969, he was appointed Professor of Cinema at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. CRYSTALS is one of five

films Leacock made for the Physical Science Study Committee Physics series.
<https://www.afana.org/leacock.htm>

Alan Holden (1904-1985) was a physicist who helped to develop sonar equipment used to detect submarines during World War II. Born in New York City, went to work for the Bell Laboratories Division of the American Telephone and Telegraph Corporation in N.J., after receiving his bachelor's degree from Harvard in physics and mathematics in 1925. Later, in 1935, he joined the research staff where he worked as a physicist until retiring in 1960. During World War II, he helped to develop methods for producing the large crystals that form the heart of the sonar equipment used by the United States Navy to locate enemy submarines. The Physical Science Study Committee (PSSC), made up of a group of MIT scientists, created a series of films in the late 1950s and early 1960s aimed at teaching the physical sciences.

The Arctic

By Wenting Zhu / Beauty of Science
China, 2019, digital, color, sound, 2:44

THE ARCTIC began in October 2018 and lasted approximately seven months. It documents the crystallization processes of various salts. As supersaturated solutions evaporate, crystals form, each substance creating unique crystalline structures. Most of the footage was captured through time-lapse photography, showcasing the diverse growth patterns of the crystals and their transformations throughout the crystallization process.

The title of this film draws inspiration from the icy beauty of the Arctic, much like the delicate and ephemeral crystals depicted in the film, which echo the fragility of the vanishing Arctic. The film aims to inspire viewers to marvel at the wonders of the ice world and reflect on the importance of protecting our planet.

Wenting Zhu is a Chinese scientific artist and co-founder of Beauty of Science. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Visual Communication Design from the Academy of Arts & Design at Tsinghua University in 2016. Her work primarily focuses on microphotography and chemical art, and she is one of the authors of *The Beauty of Chemistry*.

During her time at Beauty of Science, Wenting had the opportunity to engage with knowledge from multiple scientific fields, including physics, chemistry, and biology, as well as different scientific photography techniques. Through these experiences, she has been able to perceive the world from multiple perspectives, providing abundant inspiration for her artistic creations.

Her work, *Envisioning Chemistry*, won the Wu Guanzhong Art & Science Innovation Prize at the 5th Art and Science International Exhibition and Symposium in 2019. Her short films and photographic works have received awards at several international film festivals and photography events. Her work and interviews have also been featured on prominent platforms such as LABOCINE, COLOSSAL, goood, and China Daily, among others.

Instant Life

By Andrew Kim and Ojoboca

2022, 16mm, color, sound, 27 min.

See separate pamphlet for more on this film.

The three films you will see are shot-for-shot reproductions of the compilation film Instant Life (1981). Each film in Instant Life (1981) was a remake of an earlier film also called Instant Life (1941). The earlier Instant Life (1941) was a single film, not a compilation.

In 2017, we decided to recreate Instant Life (1981). We did not attempt to recreate Instant Life (1941) because that Instant Life is lost. Instant Life (1941) was a silent film presented with live musical accompaniment. After the show, audience members received a printed riddle. Instant Life (1981) is a sound film. The riddle is part of the film. No answer to the riddle exists.

Andrew Kim is a filmmaker based in Los Angeles, CA. His films have screened at a variety of venues and festivals including the Ann Arbor Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Images Festival, BAFICI, UnionDocs, and Los Angeles Filmforum, among others. He teaches filmmaking at the California Institute of the Arts and helped manage the Echo Park Film Center, a non-profit media arts center.

Anja Dornieden and Juan David González Monroy are filmmakers based in Berlin. They work together under the moniker OJOBoca. Together they practice Orrorism, a simulated method of inner and outer transformation. They have presented their films and performances in a wide variety of venues and festivals worldwide, among them the Wexner Center for the Arts, Österreichische Filmmuseum, Anthology Film Archives, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Kunstverein München, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Berlinale, New York Film Festival, Visions du Réel, RIDM, Ann Arbor Film Festival and Edinburgh International Film Festival. Both González Monroy and Dornieden are members of the artist-run film lab LaborBerlin.

The Vibrancy

By Wenting Zhu / Beauty of Science

China, 2020, digital, color, sound, 2:39

Microscopy expands our perception and imagination of the world, allowing us to witness beauty in many different forms.

THE VIBRANCY uses polarized light microscopy to capture the fascinating crystallization processes of various substances. The artist explores the creative potential of nature by combining different organic solutions, creating painterly crystalline images under the microscope. Droplets of organic solution spread across a 5-centimeter glass surface, with crystals slowly forming over time. Through the polarized light microscope, the crystals resemble flowers blooming and plants growing in the darkness, revealing a marvelous scene brimming with vibrant life energy.

See Wenting Zhu's bio above.

Last Things

By Deborah Stratman

2023, 35mm to digital, color, sound, 50 min.

Director / Camera / Edit / Sound Design: Deborah Stratman

Producers: Deborah Stratman, Anže Peršin, Gaëlle Boucand

Music: Thomas Ankersmit, Olivia Block, Nicolas Collins, Brian Eno, Okkyung Lee, Matchess

Voiced by: Valérie Massadian and Marcia Bjørnerud

What happens to us / Is irrelevant to the world's geology / But what happens to the world's geology / is not irrelevant to us. -Hugh MacDiarmid

Last Things looks at evolution and extinction from the perspective of the rocks and minerals that came before humanity and will outlast us. With scientists and thinkers like Lynn Margulis and Marcia Bjørnerud as guides and quoting from the proto-Sci-fi texts of J.H. Rosny, Deborah Stratman offers a stunning array of images, from microscopic forms to vast landscapes, and seeks a picture of evolution without humans at the center.

Artist and filmmaker **Deborah Stratman** makes work around issues of power, control and belief, exploring how places, ideas, and society are intertwined. She regards sound as the ultimate multi-tool and time to be supernatural. Her 40+ films and multiple artworks have been exhibited and awarded internationally, and have variously addressed freedom, surveillance, public speech, remote sensing, sinkholes, levitation, orthoptera, raptors, comets, street drag racing, tight rope walking, evolution, extinction, exodus, sisterhood and faith. She lives in Chicago where she teaches at the University of Illinois.

Los Angeles Filmforum screenings are supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture, the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles. We also depend on our members, ticket buyers, and individual donors.

Coming soon to Los Angeles Filmforum:

Dec 14, 7:30 pm - Co-presenting Science Fiction Against the Margins: An Evening with Larissa Sansour, at the UCLA Film & Television Archive at the Hammer Museum

Dec 15, 7:00 pm - Trinh T. Minh-ha in person with the LA Premiere of What About China?, at 2220 Arts + Archives

Memberships available, \$40 Student \$75 Individual, \$125 Dual, or \$225 Silver Nitrate

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