

**Los Angeles Filmforum presents  
Experimentations: Imag(in)ing Knowledge in Film  
Programs 16 & 17  
Sunday, February 2, 2025  
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. 2025 is our 50th year. [www.lafilmforum.org](http://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](http://pst.art).

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*Andy Warhol*

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
City of Los Angeles

**Los Angeles Filmforum presents**  
***Experimentations: Imag(in)ing Knowledge in Film, Program 16***  
**Unstable Ground: Science, Extraction, and Belief in *Monisme***  
**Sunday February 2, 2025, 3:00pm**  
**At 2220 Arts + Archives, 2220 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles CA 90057**

**In Person: filmmaker Riar Rizaldi**

The screening will be followed by a panel with Riar Rizaldi, Fern Silva, and moderator Jasmine NaduaTrice and by a free dinner.

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

Many things collide in Riar Rizaldi's *Monisme*: magic, science, indigenous knowledge systems, violence, and a tenuous boundary between the past and the future, fact and fiction. These all collide around Mount Merapi, one of the most active stratovolcano in the world, located in Java, Indonesia. *Monisme*'s multiple collisions ultimately illuminate the various modalities of relation between humans and nature.

Curated by Jheanelle Brown

**Riar Rizaldi** works as an artist and filmmaker. He works predominantly with the medium of moving images and sound, both in the black-box of cinema settings as well spatial presentation as installation. His artistic practice focuses mostly on the relationship between capital and technology, labour and nature, worldviews, genre cinema, and the possibility of theoretical fiction. His works have been shown at various international film festivals (including Locarno, IFFR, Viennale, BFI London, Cinema du Reel, Vancouver, etc) as well as NTT InterCommunication Center Tokyo, Centre Pompidou Paris, Times Museum Guangzhou, Istanbul Biennial, Taipei Biennial, Venice Architecture Biennale, Biennale Jogja, and National

Gallery of Indonesia amongst others. His short film *Tellurian Drama* (2020) won Silver Screen Award for Best Southeast Asian Short Film at Singapore International Film Festival 2020 and awarded Honourable Mention at DOK Leipzig 2021.

**Fern Silva** (1982, USA/Portugal) is an artist who began working as an editor and cameraperson in NYC. His early films centered on his relationship to Portugal and have since expanded, underlining the global influence of industry on culture and the environment. For over a decade, his 16mm films have been screened widely in festivals, museums, and cinematheques including the Toronto, Berlin, Locarno, Rotterdam, New York, London, Melbourne, and Hong Kong International Film Festivals, MOMA PS1, New Museum, Anthology Film Archive, and the Harvard Film Archive. They've been awarded prizes from the Ann Arbor Film Festival (Gus Van Sant Award), 25FPS Festival (Grand Prix), and most recently, the Agora Post-Production Award from the Thessaloniki International Film Festival. His work has been featured in publications including *Cinema Scope*, *Filmmaker Magazine*, and *Film Comment*. He's taught filmmaking at various institutions including the University of Illinois at Chicago, Bard College, and Bennington College and has received support from the Jerome Foundation, New York Foundation for the Arts, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. He studied film at the Massachusetts College of Art and Bard College and is a fellow at the Film Study Center at Harvard

University.

**Jasmine Nadua Trice** is Associate Professor of Cinema and Media Studies in the Department of Film, Television, and Digital Media at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her first book, *City of Screens: Imagining Audiences in Manila's Alternative Film Culture*, was published by Duke University Press in 2021. She is currently co-authoring *Practices of Futurity: Spatial Transformation in Southeast Asian Film Collectives*, with Philippa Lovatt (University of St. Andrews, Scotland). Based on research with four art/experimental/documentary film groups, The book discusses how the work of Forum Lenteng (Jakarta), Los Otros (Quezon City), Hanoi Doclab (Hanoi), and Anti-Archive (Phnom Penh) offers alternatives to top-down urban futurisms. Authored with Dr. Philippa Lovatt (University of St. Andrews, Scotland), the project began as a series of screening events programmed with the Association for Southeast Asian Cinemas (ASEAC).

Screening:

***Monisme***

By Riar Rizaldi

Indonesia, Qatar, 2023, digital, color, sound, 115 minutes

Best film at Bucharest Experimental

Repressed by the state-sponsored violence, a mystic is determined to stay in his land in the foothill of Mount Merapi. Nothing can change his determination to stay on his land and keep practicing his belief of being one with the mountain. On the other side of the mountain, a volcanologist keeps insisting that the end of the world is near. Although he is criticised heavily by his female assistant by questioning his worldview, this volcanologist insists that the only reality is a scientific one. Gaining knowledge from the earth-sensing technology, he declares that mitigation is the only way for humanity to survive from a colossal eruption of Merapi that he predicts. Not far from where volcanologists conducted their research in Merapi, the sand mining industry blooms. One miner, while documented by a filmmaker, contemplates the impact of sand mining and extraction economy for the community, the mountain, and his own psyche. In Merapi, everything is connected by the presence of paramilitaries. A form of state apparatus.

Formed in a spirit of collective filmmaking and between factual and fictional, future and past, material and incorporeal, scientific and magic, *Monisme* reflects the intermingled relationships between people in Mount Merapi: from a mystic who believes that Merapi is a God who gives him life and death, a volcanologist who sees Merapi as a threat to human existence, to a sand miner who treats Merapi as a source of livelihood because it provides him with resources to extract. *Monisme* trips to the place where actuality is intertwined with myth and legend

**Los Angeles Filmforum presents**

***Experimentations: Imag(in)ing Knowledge in Film, Program 17***

**Resisting Western Science's Colonial Mandate: *Rock Bottom Riser***

**Sunday, February 2, 2025, 7:00 pm**

**At 2220 Arts + Archives, 2220 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles CA 90057**

**In Person: filmmaker Fern Silva**

*Rock Bottom Riser* is an essential document and an exhilarating tour-de-force, a palimpsest that traverses geology, ethnography and astronomy. Silva's feature is preceded by Telengut's short which expands on the West's concept of indigeneity while also putting forth the indigenous Mongolian and Siberian belief in animism as a way to nourish our world.

**Curated by Jheanelle Brown.**

**Fern Silva's bio is above**

**Alisi Telengut** is a Canadian artist of Mongolian roots, living between Berlin, Germany and Tiohtià:ke/ Montréal, Canada. Her work has been screened and exhibited internationally, such as at the Whitney Biennial (USA), Academy Museum of Motion Pictures (USA), Sundance Film Festival (USA), TIFF (Canada), Annecy International Animation Festival (France), Biennial VIDEONALE at Kunstmuseum Bonn (Germany), OSTRALE Biennale (Germany), Anthology Film Archives (USA), UNESCO World Heritage Site Zollverein (Germany), among others. Telengut is currently an assistant professor in cinema at Concordia University (Canada) and a PhD candidate at Filmuniversitaet Babelsberg Konrad Wolf (Germany).

**Jheanelle Brown**, Los Angeles Filmforum board member is Project Director and Curator, leading project management, offering scholarly and curatorial guidance to project scholars, developing several film programs, developing the overall curatorial framework of the film series, and serving as co-editor of the resulting publication. Jheanelle is a film curator/programmer, lecturer, and arts administrator based in Los Angeles whose curatorial practice creates frameworks to explore the boundlessness of Black life in experimental and non-fiction film and video. She is currently Special Faculty at California Institute of the Arts. She has co-curated *Time Is Running Out of Time: Experimental Film and Video from the L.A. Rebellion and Today* and the traveling film showcase *Black Radical Imagination: Fugitive Trajectories* from 2018 to 2019.

**Screening:**

***The Fourfold***

By Alisi Telengut

Canada, 2020, digital, color, sound, 7:14

Based on the ancient animistic beliefs and shamanic rituals in Mongolia and Siberia narrated by my grandmother, an exploration of the indigenous worldview and wisdom. Against the backdrop of the modern existential crisis and the human-induced rapid environmental change, there is a necessity to reclaim the ideas of animism for planetary health and non-human materialities. - AT

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### ***Rock Bottom Riser***

By Fern Silva

USA, 2021, 16mm transfer to digital, color, sound, 70 minutes

From the earliest voyagers who navigated by starlight, to present-day astronomers scanning the cosmos for habitable planets, explorers have long made Hawaii the hub for their searching. Today—as lava continues to flow on the island—another crisis mounts as scientists plan to build the world’s largest telescope on Mauna Kea, Hawaii’s most sacred and revered mountain.

In his dynamic feature debut, Fern Silva examines myriad encounters with an island world at sea. Drawing from subjects as seemingly disparate as the arrival of Christian missionaries and the controversial casting of Dwayne Johnson as King Kamehameha, the film weaves a vital tapestry of post-colonialism and pop culture with cinematic brio and a wry wit. *Rock Bottom Riser* is an essential document and an exhilarating tour-de-force, a palimpsest that traverses geology, ethnography and astronomy.

Excerpt from an interview with Fern Silva:

“Emerson Goo: First of all, is *Rock Bottom Riser* ethnographic? Counter-ethnographic? Something else entirely?”

Fern Silva: I’m not a trained ethnographer, so I don’t think it’s technically ethnographic. I am interested in scrutinizing/dissecting ethnographic/documentary strategies and formulas in cinema. I understand how much of an impact [ethnography has] made on our perception of one another and the earth throughout history. I do think about that while making films in hopes of also making the audience aware of that. I try to avoid coining a term or labeling; I don’t want to feel like I’m making a product. It’s more important to share thoughts, especially now in our late stages of capitalism where branding is a bit forced, to say the least. With that said, nowadays anything that’s labeled as a ’90s thriller. . . I’m all over it, can’t get enough.

EG: I must admit that I was initially skeptical of your film. There are many documentaries that brand themselves as “sensory/experimental ethnography” and replicate the worst tendencies of the films they intend to differentiate themselves from—except instead of using “savage” cultures as a measuring stick to investigate the human, they use them to explore theories of the posthuman and postcolonial while ignoring the problems their subjects face. I think your film is mindful of these pitfalls, but I’m curious to know if you were thinking about these issues.

FS: I also started from a place of skepticism, of both myself and the subject matter. This was constant throughout the whole process. I understand what you mean about some of the films you're talking about: how they're made, who's making them, their resources, lineage, control, perspective, shelter, pedigree, etc. My film has been an ever-growing and ever-changing learning process. I approached the project with a concern for cultural and environmental preservation, human intervention, and the pressures of Americanization. This I'm sure comes from my own upbringing, the values that were instilled in me navigating cultural identity in America as a kid.

The benefit of working on *Rock Bottom Riser* for years was that I was able to listen and learn about so many viewpoints from so many people, and understand nuances and different perspectives among haole and Kānaka Maoli. Although my entry point was through what activists were expressing, I thought it was important to think of the film as a point of inquiry that would raise questions in hopes of activating viewers to do their own research on Hawai'i's history of discovery, exploration, and occupation.

EG: I'd love to know how you became interested in the topics covered in the film. What was the research process like?

FS: After reading about Mauna Kea being selected as the construction ground for the TMT back in 2009 and the opposition [to its construction], I was brought back to my interest in ancient Polynesian voyaging as a kid. I was obsessed with navigation and exploration, and knew that what the Polynesians were able to accomplish was (and still is) the greatest feat in the history of humankind. I always thought of the ancient Polynesians as an advanced civilization and some of the world's greatest astronomers, arriving in Hawai'i at least 1,700 years ago—let alone the rest of the Pacific over 6,000 years ago—on canoes, skillfully, without navigational instruments, long before the Europeans. That certainly guided me while navigating my own thoughts on potentially making a film.

Conversations with a friend and frequent collaborator who was spending a lot of time on the Big Island visiting family really put the wheels in motion to make the film. I spent years listening to everyone from activists, cultural practitioners, astronomers, geologists, preservationists, volcanologists, navigators, farmers, teachers, actors, etc. which really forced the structure of the film as I tried to combine multiple levels of meaning. Nainoa [Thompson, president of the Polynesian Voyaging Society] continues to be such an important voice and it's incredible to have heard him and Kalepa [Baybayan] talk about their interactions with Mau Piailug while he was training them in traditional, non-instrument wayfinding.”

Excerpted from an Interview with Fern Silva on Screen Slate by Emerson Goo::  
<https://www.screenslate.com/articles/sharper-glass-fern-silva-rock-bottom-riser>

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

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