To What Earth Does this Sweet Cold Belong?

When Jon Davies first approached us to put together a program to respond to the Power Plant show, *To What Earth Does This Sweet Cold Belong?*, triangles immediately came to mind. A triangle, made by a simple fold or quick cut of paper, can be a mountain. To make a mountain range, you just need a few more pieces of paper. No need for photography; no need for a real landscape to create a vision of the world. The landscape is manufactured in the studio.

That triangle image led directly to *Fuji*, made by experimental animator Robert Breer in 1974. *Fuji* does draw from a photographed land-scape—seen from a train ride past the Mount Fuji[1]—but it is immediately deconstructed into the simple lines and rhythms that are the epitome of Breer's style. Thus the mountain dissolves into form, recon-

[1]. Probably shot in 1970 when Breer was designing kinetic sculptures for the Osaka Expo

stituted into thick magic marker lines drawn on 3x5 index cards and re-animated into looping cadences.

Scott Stark's **Hotel Cartograph** (1983) also constitutes a passing over landscape, this time the patterned carpeting of a hotel floor. The camera is placed on a cart and then pushed across the floor, capturing the way the patterns of industrial carpet design become topographies in and of themselves (again, often produced via myriad interlocking triangles). The newly restored print by Mark Toscano at the Academy Film Archives returns us to the vivid colors of those Eighties-era floors.

Chris Curreri's **Circa 1960** (2005) again treats the mountain as a source for a re-visioned landscape. He took a photograph of a mountain and pierced it with pinholes, tracing the contours of the mountain range into a matrix of dots. He films the both sides of the photograph, using a light source to cast light and shadow through the holes. A two-dimensional image, flattened further into a digital series of dots, becomes refined by the play of light and shadow against the photograph's material backing.


Fuji

Completely by chance, Bruce Checefsky's **Moment Musical** (2008), an homage to the work of Polish filmmakers Stefan Themerson and Franciszka Themerson, seems to offer us a glimpse of the animals that inhabit Curreri's mountain. The animals, toy plastic figures seen from below a thin sheet of paper, are caught in the beam of a similar light. The movement of this light around the figures cast shadows on the paper, which create an eerie in-between feeling between two-dimensional streaks and three-dimensional form.

From a dot matrix to a computer matrix, Michael Robinson's elusive ***And We All Shine On*** (2006) juxtaposes two mysterious landscapes—dark, indiscernible trees and a video game world filmed off a television monitor. Strangely, the strobing, animated landscape seems more inviting than the hissing natural world, particularly when the melody of a classic Sinead O'Conner swells into place. The memory world of the living room protects us from the night.

The stratified slab shapes of Robinson's video game landscape draws a comparison to Larry Cuba's ***Calculated Movements***, a 1985 film work by a pioneer of computer animation. Cuba, who made the computer graphics for Star Wars and worked with John Whitney Sr. on the film ***Arabesque***, is often overshadowed by the prominence of the Whitneys, Stan Vanderbeek and Lillian Schwartz, but his three films are beautifully minimal line-based explorations of early computer animation. ***Calculated Movements*** introduces a volumetric three-dimensionality into Cuba's precise calculated visual techniques, as walls move, Tron-like, across a precise, demarcated
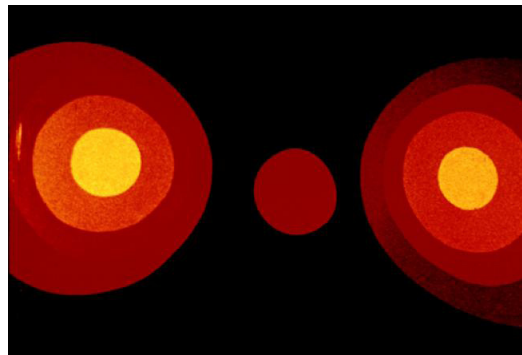
Radio Dynamics

ground.

Oskar Fischinger's early animation is a central visual precedent for a lot of the work in this program. ***Radio Dynamics*** (1943) creates a visual symphony from a very simple series of visual forms—rectangles, circles and diamonds—embellished by a vivid, shifting color palette. At points the images can be seen as landscapes or skylines, but there is a material concreteness to the film that provides a complete sense the image as a thing unto itself—not referential but dynamic.

Untitled (Objects 3)

Sophie Michael's ***Untitled (Objects 3)*** (2008) provides a direct resonance to the shapes and forms of Fischinger's work. Michael builds images on three combined visual planes, superimposing objects over each other so their forms and colors interact. Michael's film has a spontaneous in-the-moment feel to the layering of images, as we see her desk strewn with possible alternative shapes, objects and colors— each tense with the potential of visual combination. It is a strong exploratory piece, the constant question being what happens when this is added to this?

Finally, Mika Taanila's ***The Zone of the Total Eclipse*** (2006) provides an actual in-the-moment performance of visual layering. Consisting of two film prints, the positive and the negative of a filmed image, the resulting image is created by how the films synch up. When the prints swing into position with each other, the image can phase, overlap or emboss itself, moving towards the possibility of a total eclipse, when light is blocked by light, shadow by shadow, or when landscape is reformatted by the work of the human hand.

-Chris Kennedy

Programme

Radio Dynamics, Oskar Fischinger, 1943, 16mm, USA, 4 min.
Hotel Cartograph, Scott Stark, 1983, 16mm, USA, 12 min.
Untitled (Objects 3), Sophie Michael, 2008, 16mm, UK, 3 min.
And We All Shine On, Michael Robinson, 2006, 16mm, USA,
        7 min.
Circa 1960, Chris Curreri, 2005, 16mm, Canada, 6 min.
Fuji, Robert Breer, 1974, 16mm, USA, 8.5 min.
Moment Musical, Bruce Checefsky, 2008, 16mm, USA, 6 min.
Calculated Movements, Larry Cuba, 1985, 16mm, USA, 6 min.
The Zone of the Total Eclipse, Mika Taanila, 2006, double 16mm,
        Finland, 2006, 6 min.

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