

01

*Phantom Limb*, 1998

16mm film (silent, black and white), 21 min 45 sec

*Phantom Limb* began with a trip to film the artworks of Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, Poland. The resulting work assumes the guise of a fictional documentary on the distinctive development of modernism in three countries supposedly “peripheral” to the art historical canon — Poland, Brazil, and Argentina. It brings together examples of the Unism of Kobro and Strzemiński, the Neo-Concrete Art of Lygia Clark and Helio Oiticica, and the Concrete Art of Raul Lozza and Enio Iommi.

We see these objects manipulated and activated for the camera, rotating and hovering, as the museum becomes a space of play. Intercut with images of bodies in trance, birds in flight, a braying elephant seal and brutalist architecture, the film uses formal analogies to narrate a perpetual state of becoming-other distinctive to de Andrade’s notion of anthropophagy, an assimilation through ingestion in which modernist historiography is reorganized.

02

*The End*, 1999

16mm film (sound, black and white), 7 min. Scratching: Eugenijus Varkulevičius

*The End* is composed of footage from mid-century American documentaries, one on the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., and another on Leonardo da Vinci’s mechanical inventions. These films betray a propagandistic obsession with the ordering and regulation of cultural forms, and an ideology of technological superiority symptomatic of the Cold War.

Guagnini and Schneider adopt formal strategies that emphasize the mechanics of film, running the same sequence of shots twice, once forwards and once backwards (so that “The End” is not, actually, the end), and asking the artist Eugenijus Varkulevičius to scratch away parts of the film where a portrait of George Washington appears. The aesthetic specter here is Abstract Expressionism, the apex of post-war American cultural identity and also a rupture in the discourse around scratching in experimental cinema (by, for instance, Storm de Hirsch and Stan Brakhage) as a mode of expressiveness. Pitting the “machine” of film against the “machine” of the museum, *The End* locates the apparatuses of propaganda and historical authority within an entwining feedback loop of image, material and language.

03

*A Vida de Infra-Tunga, 1999*

16mm film (sound, black and white), 10 min 17 sec. Sound: Paulo Vivacqua

In 1999, the Brazilian artist Tunga invited Guagnini and Schneider to shoot a film he had wanted to make since 1981, titled *Heaven's Hell Hell's Heaven*. Staying with the artist for ten days in Rio de Janeiro, they shot *A Vida de Infra-Tunga* in parallel to this work; it is a "stolen" film, with images of Tunga taken in interstitial moments between performance and studio work: sitting in a hammock, playing with artworks, merging with the wildlife that surrounds his home.

The film is less a documentation of an artistic persona than an immersion in an "infra-life," the sharing of a total commitment to an artistic project. This space between documentary and diary bespeaks the influence of Marginal Cinema's "imagistic transgression" and Jonas Mekas' "camera-in-hand" film portraiture. Tunga has used the term "Cipó Cinema" (Vine Cinema) to suggest a rhizomatic approach to film; Dadaist doublings and reversals, the overlay of sound effects (a parrot squawking the voice of Antonin Artaud), and a fragmentary score by Paulo Vivacqua emphasize this state of multiplicity.

04

*Nude Descending a Staircase, 2000*

16mm film (silent, color), 3 min 40 sec. Collaboration with Ikeba

*Nude Descending a Staircase* and the companion work *Portrait of a Lady* were made in collaboration with Ikeba, who Schneider and Guagnini met after placing an ad in *Backstage* magazine, seeking an actress willing to pose nude in re-enacting certain modernist paintings. In the course of producing this survey exhibition, these works have become particularly charged points of discussion among the artists and organizers, raising as they do difficult questions of subjecthood and objecthood, and race, class and gender.

In *Nude Descending*, Ikeba "re-enacts" Marcel Duchamp's 1912 painting *Nude Descending a Staircase*, walking down a staircase between two Chelsea warehouses designed by architects Leven Betts. This footage was projected in a moviola, and run forwards and backwards, at different speeds and with colored gels, so that the images are superimposed and intercut with one another. What the viewer sees is a machine filming a machine, with a body caught between them (and within the machine of architecture), in fragmented abstraction.

05

*Portrait of Lady, 2000*

16mm film (silent, color), 6 min 22 sec. Collaboration with Ikeba

*Portrait of a Lady* evolved out of a dialogue between Schneider, Guagnini and Ikeba around Picasso's 1907 painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*, which followed the production of *Nude Descending a Staircase*. Ikeba worked at the time at Pizza Hut, and her fast food uniform was incorporated into this film as she replicates the gestures of the figures in Picasso's painting and improvises others, foregrounding the painting's connection to labor.

Re-exposing the film in camera for each figure in the painting — a technique of superimposition typical of early cinema (e.g. George Méliès) — a history of modernism collides here with that of modernity, built on the violent exploitation of bodies and hierarchies of class, race, and gender. This superimposition sought to turn the table on these histories, dislocating the meaning of the painting to foster new experiences of resistance and agency. As opposed to the fixity of identity grounded in disciplinary power, UGP aimed at a kind of subject-object transitivity, with the object of the painting becoming a concrete subject, and vice-versa. An important influence here is Tadeusz Kantor's excoriating manifesto "The Theatre of Death" (1975), and his insistence that "performers were essential elements halfway between living beings and objects ... where their life depended on the means by which the objects were animated."

06

*IXX vs XXI, 2000*

16mm film (sound, color), 4 min 39 sec. Collaboration with Leven Betts Studio

*IXX vs XXI* follows the studio-based set-up of *Axiom of Choice* and *Portrait of a Lady*, focusing on this occasion on an architectural model, shot in raking light.

Using basic stop motion effects, prankish fire and water play, and sound overlay, the film's succinct narrative is based on a Leven Betts Studio architectural concept: an archetypal wood-clad farmhouse reveals itself as a shell, housing inside itself a modernist steel box structure. The ensuing fire that takes hold of the farmhouse is absurdist and comic in its outsize scale, but also in the ways it fuses a postmodern parable of the "decorated shed" with an evolutionary allegory of the 19th century vernacular (one code of representation transforming into another). Within its apparent simplicity and humor the film contains layers of modeling, of both concept and material, the utopic artifice of the architectural model giving over to controlled entropy. As they do throughout their oeuvre, UGP play on and deform the symbolic registers of time and history ("*IXX vs XXI*").

07

*Square Times*, 2001

16mm film (sound, color), 12 min 21 sec. Sound: Paulo Vivacqua. Voice: Patrick Healy

*Square Times* is a portrait of New York's Times Square at the turn of the millennium. Following nearly a decade of brutal efforts by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to remake the area for tourism and real-estate development, the neighborhood saw the largest New Years celebration in history (defined by unprecedented policing and surveillance), the grand opening of Condé Nast's Frank Gehry-designed headquarters, and the introduction of the Nasdaq video wall, which used LED technology to allow images to move seamlessly across the building's skin.

Schneider and Guagnini play their footage twice, pairing it first with a musical score and second with a prescient 1969 text by Emilio Ambasz ("Manhattan: Capital of the XXth Century"), as the pulsating stock tickers and advertisements become a complex reflection of the city's informatic, networked nervous system. While these scrolling lights resemble the 16mm film rolling through the projector, this collision of analog and digital is unsettling: Times Square appears here as something both archaic (an "urban artifact") and futuristic, a ritual urban space where capital celebrates itself.

08

*Axiom of Choice*, 2003

16mm film (silent, color), 6 min 45 sec.

Evoking the physiognomy of a Rembrandt portrait, *Axiom of Choice* depicts filmmaker Jonas Mekas and his son Sebastian, their heads rotating in radiant chiaroscuro against a black ground. To a certain extent, Guagnini and Schneider treat Mekas and son like the Kopro and Clark sculptures they put into orbit in *Phantom Limb*; here, as in the earlier work, the rational axis of the spinning machine is juxtaposed with the irrational axis of a trance (bringing to mind whirling dervishes), and asynchronously, the consequence (the son) appears here before the cause (his father). With Mekas at its center, the references to cinematic machinery abound in this work: from the proto-filmic zoetrope (which used a spinning cylinder to create the illusion of a moving image), to the flickering zoom of Ernie Gehr's film *Serene Velocity*, to the enormous gyrating machine at the center of Michael Snow's *La Region Centrale*.

09

*Primary Green*, 2002

Digital video (sound, color), 36 min 46 sec

*Primary Green* begins with the lens rotating in the landscape of the South American Pampas, a region synonymous with Gaucho culture. Viewed through incessant gyration, this space of deterritorialization forms a powerful vector in an essay-film that mobilizes the ideas of the visionary architect, curator and theorist Emilio Ambasz.

Ambasz's buildings are seen in architectural models and photographs, and in footage shot by Schneider and Guagnini at his "Valley of the Moon" house in Montana. These are paired with a promotional film for Ambasz's 1972 exhibition *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, and images of the accompanying catalogue, from his celebrated period as curator of design at MoMA; while a voiceover of one his texts accompanies images of Times Square (the same footage which appears in *Square Times*).

An assemblage of Ambasz's idiosyncratic presence and diverse ideas, *Primary Green* surpasses dichotomies between architecture and nature, practice and theory, the individual and the collective. A social and environmental approach is instead located in a conception of objects, their producers, and users in "an ensemble of inter-related processes."

10

*Totloop*, 2003

16mm film (silent, color), 4 min 59 sec. Collaboration with Fabio Kacero

Filmed in Buenos Aires, *Totloop* documents Argentine artist Fabio Kacero playing dead in a number of public spaces. Kacero had enacted this unannounced performance on several occasions before in various art spaces. In this instance — performing for an unseen camera — he chose sites for their proximity to structures equated with civic life, including La Casa Rosada (the Pink House), the Presidential mansion where Néstor Kirchner was installed that year, after a period of instability which had seen four presidents in as many years. Also documented are passersby, some briefly acknowledging the prone figure, but all choosing to carry on walking, indifferently.

In 2003, Argentina's economy was showing signs of recovery from a paralyzing depression that began in 1998. Kacero's performance indicates a breakdown in the social contract, as a body on the streets is ignored. *Totloop* assumes the logic of an expanded documentation, yet the varying proximities of the camera — at a necessary distance for the majority of shots, yet on occasion closing in on the still body — implies the formation of a distinct zone of exchange between Schneider, Guagnini, and Kacero.

*As Long As it Lasts*, 2010

Digital video on six screens (silent, color), 191 min

Film production and editing assistance: Francisca Caporali and Lior Shvil

*As Long As it Lasts* was originally commissioned by MoMA, and exhibited on nine information screens above the museum's ticketing desk. The work is composed of two strands which get spliced together in real time across the monitors: a long tracking shot of Madison Avenue, from 23 Street into Harlem (evoking the famous tracking shot up the West Side highway in Chantal Ackerman's *News from Home*); and a series of images and a series of images filmed inside MoMA, as iconic artworks are made to serve as backdrops for melodramatic and absurd performances by Sarina Basta, Leigh Ledare, Juan Ledezma, Jonas Mekas, Olivier Mosset, Blake Rayne, and Michael Smith (performing as Baby Ikki.)

The work's adoption of a technological apparatus synonymous with advertising — put to work within the art museum — echoes elements of *The End* and *Square Times*. Multilayered editing, and interference patterns run across urban space and the reified geometries of modernism create an optically and psychically frenetic experience — a “time machine creating different attention spans and multiple perceptions of time.”