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Laatste woorden -- mijn zusje Joke (1935-1997) (Last words -- my sister Yoka (1935-1997)), van der Keuken, Johan, 1998

1999

Pacific Film Archive
University of California
Berkeley Art Museum
2625 Durant Avenue
Berkeley, California
Telephone: (510) 642-1412
General admission:
\$6 for one film,
\$7:50 for double bills

One Eye at the Camera, the Other on the World: The Films of Johan van der Keuken

Schedule of screenings at Pacific Film Archive

Thursday, April 8

7:30 pm: **The Way South** (1981)

Tuesday, April 13

7:30 pm: **The Flat Jungle** (1978)

Thursday, April 15

7:30 pm: **The Eye above the Well** (1988). With short film: **Sarajevo Film Festival Film** (1993).

Tuesday, April 20—**Johan van der Keuken in Person!**

7:00 pm: **Lucebert, Time and Farewell** (1962-1994) and **Last Words—My Sister Yoka** (1935-1997) (released 1998).

Thursday, April 22—**Johan van der Keuken in Person!**

San Francisco International Film Festival at PFA—Special admission price: _____

7:00 pm: "Johan van der Keuken: Early Films." **Beppie** (1965); **Herman Slobbe/Blind Child 2** (1966); **Big Ben/Ben Webster in Europe** (1967); **A Moment's Silence** (1960-1963).

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One Eye at the Camera, the Other on the World: The Films of Johan van der Keuken

Johan van der Keuken—the Dutch photographer, essayist, and filmmaker—made his first film in 1960, and has fifty films to date exploring what he calls the “no man’s land between documentary and fiction,” with a debt to the avant-garde. We are pleased to present a series of his films on Tuesdays and Thursdays in April, culminating on the first evening of the San Francisco International Film Festival at PFA. In a special Festival program, Van der Keuken will receive the Golden Gate Persistence of Vision Award honoring lifetime achievement. Selected films by van der Keuken will be presented at the Festival, as well as at San Francisco Cinematheque. (For details, please call SFIFF at 415-931-FILM, and SF Cinematheque at 415-558-8129).

Van der Keuken will be at UC Berkeley for a residency sponsored by PFA and the Film Studies Program during the week of April 19. He will meet with students in various departments and introduce programs of his work at PFA.

We wish to thank Susanna Scott, Ideale Audience; Consulate General of the Netherlands; UC Berkeley’s Center for the Arts; and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

THURSDAY APRIL 8

The Way South 7:30

Johan van der Keuken (Netherlands, 1981)

In *The Way South* van der Keuken’s camera is on the move from the first world to the Third World, on the way finding a third world in the first world. Van der Keuken writes: “The film begins in Amsterdam on April 30, 1980 with the coronation of a new queen, with the occupation of a building by squatters, and with a confrontation with the forces of law and order. It then moves to Paris, the Alps, Rome, Calabria, and Egypt. It is a chronicle of emigration both internal and external and records a courage to live. It is an obsession with places where people view their lives as reflected in the lives of others. The film is long, two hours and twenty-five minutes, but it has to be this long to enable me to record the impressions of a dream voyage and to register changes in perception and style. I had in mind the creation of a composition that would be balanced and yet, at the same time, take shape spontaneously. It touches the arbitrary. Everyone has something to say.”

• (145 mins, English subtitles, Color, 16mm, From Cornell Cinema)

TUESDAY APRIL 13

The Flat Jungle 7:30

Johan van der Keuken (Netherlands, 1978)

Composed of visually striking, often static shots structured in an associative montage, *The Flat Jungle* registers concrete images of the marshlands and tidal flats off Northern Holland and the ecology of that area, from the microscopic to the macroscopic—from studies of marine life feeding to the larger-than-life profit-hungry and wasteful corporate fishing industry. Struggling fishermen, floating bait factories, scenes of protest against nuclear power stations: the images add up to a kind of Marxist vision of ecology. The links are between not only marine and human life cycles, but the interconnections of ecology, economics, and politics. At the same time, as Alain Bergala wrote in *Cahiers du Cinema*, “One perceives van der Keuken’s attraction for certain recurrent motifs, here and in other films, [which] derive from another point of view, a little fantastical, far removed from the ecological, which situates the cineaste somewhere in the domain of Artaudian cruelty and fiction.”

• Produced by the Dutch Society for the Preservation of the Shallows. (90 mins, In Dutch with English subtitles, Color/B&W, 16mm, From Cornell Cinema)

THURSDAY APRIL 15

The Eye above the Well 7:30

Johan van der Keuken (Netherlands, 1988)

Preceded by Sarajevo Film Festival Film (*Johan van der Keuken, Netherlands, 1993*), filmed when van der Keuken attended the Festival in a city under siege for twenty straight months yet longing to see films. (14 mins, English subtitles, Color, 35mm, From Ideale Audience)

Filmed in Kerala, southwestern India, the serenely realized *The Eye above the Well* affirms the adage “Good listeners make the best storytellers.” Part poetic meditation, part vivid documentation, the film catches us up in the flow of its gentle pace as we are transported through Keralan life: a precocious little girl practicing dance, a group of boys playing in the river, a moneylender on his daily rounds, elephants and buses negotiating a crowded street, a village projectionist preparing his matinee, and, with concentration and humor, teachers imparting their “wisdom” on a variety of subjects—the three R’s, martial arts, temple life, the performing arts. Thus the film dwells on three aspects: a culture’s transmission of knowledge from teacher to pupil, parent to child; the concrete rhythms which comprise daily existence; and finally, the role of magic and ritual in the transference of knowledge. Never resting too long in one place, *The Eye above the Well* apprehends the dignity and rich beauty of a culture whose soul is centuries old and too rarely revealed.—Laura Thielen, S.F. Int’l Film Festival ’89

• Written by van der Keuken. Coproduced by Noshka van der Lely. Photographed by Jayan K. G., van der Keuken. (94 mins, In Malayalam, Hindi, Sanskrit with English subtitles, Color, 16mm, From Ideale Audience)

TUESDAY APRIL 20

Lucebert, Time and Farewell and Last Words—My Sister Yoka (1935-1997) 7:00

Johan van der Keuken (Netherlands, 1962-1994 /1998)

Artist in Person

Tonight we present two of van der Keuken's beautiful, moving portraits in which he continues to explore intersections between moving and still images, life and death, absence and presence. The artist describes both films:

"In my early years as a filmmaker, I was greatly influenced by the Dutch poet and painter Lucebert....**Lucebert, Time and Farewell** is made up of three short films. I made **Lucebert, Poet-Painter** in 1962 [and] went on to make **A Film for Lucebert** in 1966....It is a film *for* an artist *about* the world. When we visited Lucebert...the idea was born to make a third film. But in May Lucebert died and my reaction to his death is incorporated in **If You Know Where I Am, Try and Find Me** (1994). The film, the title of which is taken from one of the poems he left, is shot entirely in Lucebert's studio...a space that has become frozen...but also a space where his soul still breathes..." (52 mins, B&W/Color, 16mm)

Last Words—My Sister Yoka (1935-1997): "My sister Yoka died of cancer on 8 August 1997. Eight days before her death, my wife Noshka and I had a long conversation with her that I filmed with a digital video camera. Two days before she died, I recorded another, shorter, talk with her. I had asked Yoka, with some trepidation, if I could possibly film her, but the film turned out to be her last 'project'; one that was very important to her....The talks were about the purpose of life...and about leaving something behind, transmitting experience and insight, which was perhaps the most important thing to her." (52 mins, Color, Video)

- (Total running time: 104 mins plus discussion, In Dutch with English subtitles, From Ideale Audience)

THURSDAY APRIL 22

San Francisco International Film Festival at PFA

Johan van der Keuken: Early Films 7:00

Artist in Person

Recently, van der Keuken commented that "film is not life, but it has to touch your life. It's a second life." These four early poetic films reveal the origins of the complex, layered style of his later documentaries. The lyrical subjective camerawork, detailed observations of everyday life, and sensitivity to inner reality make these portraits, miniatures really, among the most lovely of short films. While "time, movement, and framing" is the subject of all of van der Keuken's work (he is as much devoted to the abstract as the figurative), he hopes the fragmented glimpse he captures of a moment in another's life also sends us beyond the frame, to the life that continues outside of the film. **Beppie** (1965, 35 mins) is an expressive ten year old girl who lived on the same canal as van der Keuken. She gives us a tour, often at a skip, of her world. In **Herman Slobbe/Blind Child 2** (1966, 29 mins) a young blind man talks of his blindness, the struggles of blacks, and in two unforgettable scenes takes over the microphone to provide his own sound. Van der Keuken found Ben Webster, the legendary tenor sax who played with Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson, in an Amsterdam boarding house. In **Big Ben/Ben Webster in Europe** (1967, 32 mins) he draws on the improvisation and spontaneity of jazz to create a dynamic sense of the legend. Preceded by the short film **A Moment's Silence** (1960-1963, 10 mins, Color).—Kathy Geritz

- (Total running time: 106 mins plus discussion, 16mm, B&W, From Ideale Audience, Cornell Cinema)