

## Document Citation

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PROGRAM 5 -- Thursday, June 4, 1987

**NEW FILMS BY CHICK STRAND**

Filmmaker Chick Strand in person.

The Cinematheque is proud to welcome back Chick Strand, co-founder of Canyon Cinema along with Bruce Baille and one of the major voices in personal filmmaking. Strand has produced a body of filmwork that blends an interest in ethnographic documentary with a sensuous lyrical expressiveness. Tonight's program features 5 Bay Area premieres that show her continuing involvement with Mexican life, magic realism and tribal evolution.

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**Anselmo and the Women** (1986), 35 min., color, sound

I met Anselmo and his family twenty years ago, and since then I have made three films about them. Anselmo is a street musician and he has a little band. When I met him, he was very poor. He lived in a house with no electricity and dirt floors, with his wife and eight children. They cooked outside on an open fire and used a hole in the ground for a toilet. He shared his two room house with another family. I admired him for his tenacity and strength of spirit. Whatever money he could earn with his band, he used to send all of his children to school and to pay for music lessons for his sons, "so that they would have a better life than I did.".... Anselmo is by nature an intelligent man. In his heart he always wanted more for himself. Through the years he had many lovers and with them, more children. His family knew and when the children grew up they sided with their mother and now leave him pretty much out in the cold.... Anselmo doesn't have as many music jobs now, so he can't contribute much, and because he feels responsible for the children he has with other women, gives some of his earnings to them. He doesn't have much to say in the affairs of his legal family, but to the world they put on a united front....

The film was shot ten years ago, when Anselmo's current lover was Cruz. She had been married before, but her husband ran away, leaving her with a little boy. Together, she and Anselmo had two more children. The film is about how Anselmo, his wife Adela and his lover Cruz feel about the situation and about their lives....

A few months after the film was shot Anselmo's oldest daughter by his wife died of cancer of the uterus.... Georgina was the oldest child. She had TB when very young, and had never developed entirely because of malnutrition. She was a bright girl, always working, moving quickly.... She loved to help me film, gathering all of the children together and herding them into my car to go out into the country to shoot.... I miss her very much.... This film is dedicated to that young woman.

By the Lake (1986), 9½ min., color, sound

"This is a sort of a collage film, using images shot for other films that somehow never were finished. The sound comes from various sound gathering adventures. Some were recorded at Lake Tahoe, more during an operation on a horse, and some is taken from a tape of an old radio program, "I Love a Mystery." "

Fake Fruit (1986), 22 min., color, sound

"In the town where I spend my time in Mexico, I had an American friend, a man who was a painter. He has married a Mexican woman and had three children with her.... Although they had enough money because she had a beauty shop, he was not a Mexican and he could not work... So he would paint and make trips to the U.S. so he could work and make a little money to take back down to Mexico with him. For years he tried to think of schemes which would make him money so he wouldn't have to be a yo-yo.... He started making papier mache fruit and vegetables to sell to local tourist stores. They became very popular, and before he could think twice, the whole operation grew to the extent that he had to rent a factory, and hire people to make unpainted pieces in their homes... Well, after about three years he started getting rich. He'd have shoe boxes full of money.... What does an artist know about money? This guy, not ever having made more money than he needed to eat on, really didn't know what to do. Actually he had made a paradise for himself... really nice beautiful women to work with everyday, lots of deals to make, business to do, people to see, supplies to buy, things to sell... but he got bored with the whole thing. This is a film about the women who worked for him."

Coming Up For Air (1986), 26½ min., color, sound

One year I had a show in New York and a friend in Vermont who suggested that I visit her as long as I was coming East. I had wanted to make a film with her for years because she had been part of my Mexican life before her move to Vermont. So, I brought along my camera with no idea of what I wanted to do except that I had seen a film called "THE SON OF AMIR IS DEAD," a French/Algerian feature which I liked a lot. I really couldn't figure out much about avant garde film, or even if I wanted to go on pretending that that's what I did, so I was thinking about some sort of narrative thing back there in 1976 when I started shooting it. Well, the show was in Rochester and I was beginning to think that I was having some flashbacks from the days in the 60's when you could order pure LSD from the Light Company in England, because there was something wrong with the trees. By the time I got to Vermont in my rented car, I felt that maybe I was really on a trip to Disneyland, because the trees all looked fake... the fall color was absolutely staggering. Well, I could hardly think very much about this narrative thing... the only thing I wanted to do was to get all of that color onto film.... Meanwhile, for years I'd been collecting bits and pieces of prose and poetry that I like.... a sentence or two from a novel, maybe, and stuff that I'd written. So, I patched it all together and made some kind of a narrative.... For a long time, I'd been interested in having a prose track, which might or might not relate to the visuals, so I played with

that idea, too. I haven't the least idea what this film is about except perhaps it has to do with loss of identity, horror, and dreams, or maybe it has to do with some sort of giant memory bank and we are all clients. We deposit and withdraw, maybe at random, but with some sort of feeling of *deja vu*. I'm sure that by the time you see this film, my ideas about what it is will have changed, or maybe I won't have thought about it at all.

Artificial Paradise (1986), 12½ min., color, sound

This is about those wonderful experiences that we sometimes have when we love a person secretly and the delightful cozy warm feelings we have about the romance of it all. These are never experiences of intrigue or unfaithfulness to our current relationships... they are mysterious and magical and we end up being quite relieved that we can love without the need or desire to act upon it. These experiences become mythical, since the beloved is quite simply beautiful in all ways because we never give circumstances a chance to change it into something less tender. I met Berna one day when I was looking at a ranch near my Mexican town.... He was a really beautiful Indian guy about 18 years old. It didn't click until I sat down with the landlord on the steps and watched this kid work... what movement! What art! Well, why not, I thought and went over and asked Berna if he'd do it. He said sure... Very politely, he took my hand in both of his, and said, whenever you want... it will be a big adventure to make a film. And so we began. After a while, I realized that this kid had absolutely no guile and was completely honest... he had a sweetness about him... a true innocence. When my lady friend came for a visit from Georgia, the three of us would go out and have adventures.... He fell in love with my friend, and I loved watching it because I knew that he, like I, had this wonderful secret and I wanted very much for him to have it. Of course, my friend knew it without him saying so. You can tell how he feels when he looks at her in the film, because she is in it, too. So, we took him to listen to live jazz and we all got drunk and giggled... and we took him to the disco and danced all night... It was he who made the costumes and make up for the dance scene in the film... Actually he was the one with the ideas about how the film should look, not me. Anyway, we had grand adventures and tender hearts. We have been friends ever since. He is married now and has three children.... Now, when we part at the end of the summers, I take his hand in both of mine, and we hug and kiss goodbye. We love each other in a very special way I think. He still, after all these years secretly loves my friend... but now like my feeling for him, and his for me, the feelings have become so deep inside that we are family... and this is a film to celebrate that.