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MASTERS OF

*Belson, Jordan*

INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION

## Jazz and Abstraction in Beat-Era Film

HARVARD FILM ARCHIVE BULLETIN *NOV/DEC 2001 p.10*



The iotaCenter, a Los Angeles-based organization for the preservation and promotion of abstract film, has produced this two-part series celebrating the often neglected work of the San Francisco Beat filmmakers. At the center of this movement was Hy Hirsh (1911–1961), a significant presence in avant-garde filmmaking of the 1950s who was mentor to a generation of experimental makers, including James Broughton, Sidney Peterson, Jordan Belson, and Harry Smith. Working as a cinematographer and still photographer in Hollywood during the 1930s, Hirsh pioneered the use of oscilloscope patterns as a source for abstract figures, which he then colored and multiplied with his own hand-built optical printer. His scores were often a mixture of street sounds and experimental jazz he recorded himself. All of Hirsh's films were impounded by the French police after his death in Paris. Many of the originals were lost, and most of the films have been unavailable for decades.

◆ December 4 (Tuesday) 9:15 pm

Hy Hirsh and the Beat Era

THIS OPENING PROGRAM contains six rare works by Hy Hirsh that have recently been restored by the National Film Preservation Foundation and the Academy Film Archive. It also features other key abstract works from the 1950s directly influenced by Hirsh, five of which underwent preservation work especially for this program: John Whitney's *Catalog*, James Whitney's *Yantra*, Harry Smith's *Film No. 3*, Patricia Marx's *Things to Come*, and Mary Ellen Bute's *Mood Contrasts*.

◆ December 5 (Wednesday) 9:15 pm

Jordan Belson and Contemporary Abstraction

HIRSH'S LEGACY IS REVEALED in this second installment of films, which focuses largely on California visionary Jordan Belson. Under Hirsh's tutelage, Belson made a series of extraordinary films that attempt to preserve painterly values by using long scrolls of paper on which hundreds of sequential images are painted. In addition to his early films from the 1950s, *Mandala* and *Caravan*, we present the premiere of Belson's newest work, *Bardo*.



Mary Ellen Bute Mood Contrasts 1956

10 HARVARD FILM ARCHIVE BULLETIN  
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