

Brakhage

A Film by Jim Shedden

"If you want to know what cinema is,
it's Brakhage."

-P. Adams Sitney

A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE

Brakhage

Writer and Director Jim Shedden

Producer Alexa-Frances Shaw

Executive Producer Ron Mann

Original Music James Tenney

Graphic Design Dale Smith

Camera Gerald Packer Alexa-Frances Shaw

Camera Assistants Steve Morris Luke Sneyd

Additional Photography

R. Bruce Elder Richard Kerr Kathryn MacKay Robert Pytlyk

Sound Recordist Eric Fitz

Additional Sound Recording

Kathryn MacKay Arthur Wilson Mike Zryd

Editor Alexa-Frances Shaw

Assistant Editor Izabella Pruska

Sound Editor Kevin Tokar, Kitchen Sync Digital Audio

Sound Mixer Keith Elliott, deluxe toronto

Production Consultants

Robert Kennedy Sue Len Quon Arthur Wilson

Assistant to the Producer Luke Sneyd

Assistant Director Rani Singh

Researcher Steve Morris

Script Consultants

R. Bruce Elder Gerald O'Grady Bart Testa Mike Zryd

Legal Gary Solway

Production Accountant Paul Hillerup

Publicist Kerri Huffman

Film Angel Victor Peters

Made with the participation of the

Canadian Television and Cable Production Fund-License Fee Program

Canadian Film and Video Production Tax Credit

Government of Ontario-The Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit

and Rogers Telefund

produced in association with Bravo! - NewStyleArtsChannel

Canada • 75 minutes • Color • 16mm & VHS

A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE

247 Centre St • 2nd floor

New York • NY 10013

Tel (212) 274-1989 • Fax (212) 274-1644

mail@zeitgeistfilm

www.zeitgeistfilm.com

Synopsis

Stan Brakhage is a living legend, possibly the most important filmmaker of the avant-garde, and one of the greatest artists of our time. Since 1952, at the age of nineteen, Brakhage has created over 300 films, ranging from several seconds to several hours, constantly and consistently redefining the shape of film art.

BRAKHAGE explores the depth and breadth of the filmmaker's genius, the exquisite splendor of his films, his magic personal charm, his aesthetic fellow travelers, and the influence his work has had on generations of other creators.

While touching on significant moments in Brakhage's biography, the film celebrates Brakhage's visionary genius, and explores the extraordinary artistic possibilities of cinema, a medium mostly known only for its commercial applications in the form of narratives, cartoons, documentaries, and advertising.

BRAKHAGE combines excerpts from Brakhage's films and films of other avant-garde filmmakers (eg, George Kuchar, Jonas Mekas, Willie Varela, Bruce Elder, and others); interviews with Brakhage, his friends, family, colleagues, and critics; archival footage of Brakhage spanning the past thirty-five years; and location shooting in Boulder, Colorado and New York.

BRAKHAGE is directed by Jim Shedden and produced by Alexa-Frances Shaw (who worked together on **Michael Snow Up Close**), and executive produced by Ron Mann (**Twist, Comic Book Confidential, Imagine the Sound**). An original score was composed for the film by long-time Brakhage associate and noted avant-garde composer James Tenney.

Stan Brakhage

Stan Brakhage (born 1933) completed his first film, **Interim**, in 1952 at the age of nineteen, and as of 1998 has completed 300 personal, independent works ranging in length from 9 seconds to four hours and incorporating a wide variety of innovative and uniquely expressive forms and techniques. He has, in addition, written several books, including *Metaphors on Vision*, *A Moving Picture Giving and Taking Book*, *The Brakhage Lectures*, *Seen*, *Film Biographies*, *The Brakhage Scrapbook*, *Film at Wit's End*, *I...Sleeping* and *The Domain of Aura*.

Brakhage has lectured extensively over the past 35 years at universities, colleges, museums, galleries, film societies and film festivals throughout the world, his interests and areas of knowledge including the histories and aesthetics of music, painting, poetry and film. In addition to his public lecturing, Brakhage taught film history and aesthetics from 1969 through 1981 at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and since 1981 has been teaching in the Department of Film Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, where he is a Distinguished Professor.

Brakhage lived for many years with his growing family in the Colorado mountains near Boulder and during that time made films primarily inspired by and expressive of the environment in which he lived (though that source being "as diverse as to have included love-making, childbirth, children's play, mountains in snow-storm, potted plants, flames of heart and forest fires, trips to town and, even, journeys around the world"). Since 1986 Brakhage has been living in the town of Boulder, where he gives ongoing support to many younger filmmakers as well as continuing his own prolific output of work, creating work that is photographed, hand-painted on film and, most recently, films created by scratching and gouging the film emulsion itself.

Stan Brakhage has received a number of honors and awards for his contributions to the arts, including: The Brussels World Fair Protest Award (1958), Film Culture's Fourth Independent Film Award (1962), a Rockefeller Fellowship (1967-1969), three Museum of Modern Art Retrospectives (1971, 1977 & 1996), a Brandeis Citation (1973), the Colorado Governor's Award for the Arts and Humanities (1974), a Guggenheim Fellowship (1978), the Jimmy Fyan Morris Memorial Foundation Award (1979), a Telluride Film Festival Medallion (1981), an Honorary Doctorate from the San Francisco Art Institute (1981), the Maya Deren Award for Independent Film and Video Artists (1986), the Denver International Film Festival Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Art of Film (1988), a University of Colorado Medal (1988), and the MacDowell Colony Medal (1990).

Stan Brakhage

Selected Filmography

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|---|
| 1952 | Interim | 1974 | The Text of Light |
| 1954 | Desistfilm | 1976 | Airs |
| 1955 | The Wonder Ring | 1976 | Tragoedia |
| 1955 | Reflections on Black | 1977 | The Governor |
| 1956 | Flesh of Morning | | |
| 1957 | Daybreak and Whiteye | 1980 | Sincerity |
| 1958 | Anticipation of the Night | 1980 | Songs 1-14 |
| 1959 | Cat's Cradle | 1981 | The Garden of Earthly Delights |
| 1959 | Sirius Remembered | 1981 | Roman Numeral Series |
| 1959 | Window Water Baby Moving | 1982 | Unconscious London Strata |
| | | 1982 | Arabics |
| 1960 | The Dead | 1983 | Hell Spit Flexicon |
| 1961 | Thigh Line Lyre Triangular | 1984 | Tortured Dust |
| 1962 | Blue Moses | 1984 | Egyptian Series |
| 1963 | Mothlight | 1986 | Jane; Purgation |
| 1964 | Dog Star Man | 1986 | Night Music |
| 1964 | The Art of Vision | 1987 | Hell Itself |
| 1965 | Songs 1-22 | 1987 | Existence is Song |
| 1965 | Pasht | 1988 | Rage Net |
| 1965 | Bluewhite | 1988 | I...Dreaming |
| 1965 | Blood's Tone | 1988 | Marilyn's Window |
| 1965 | Vein | | |
| 1965 | Fire of Waters | 1990 | City Streaming |
| 1966 | 23rd Psalm Branch | 1991 | Delicacies of Molten Horror Synapse |
| 1967 | Eye Myth | 1991 | Agnus Dei Kinder Synapse |
| 1968 | Lovemaking | 1992 | Interpolations 1-V |
| 1968 | The Horseman,
The Woman and the Moth | 1992 | Boulder Blues and Pearls |
| | | 1992 | For Marilyn |
| 1970 | Scenes from Under Childhood | 1993 | A Child's Garden and the Serious Sea |
| 1970 | The Weir-Falcon Saga | 1996 | Commingled Containers |
| 1970 | The Machine of Eden | 1996 | Beautiful Funerals |
| 1970 | Sexual Meditation:No.1:Motel | 1996 | The Fur of Home |
| 1971 | The Act of Seeing
With One's Own Eyes | 1996 | Blue Value |
| 1971 | Angels | 1996 | Polite Madness |
| 1971 | Door | 1997 | Divertimento |
| 1971 | Western History | 1997 | Self Song / Death Song |
| 1971 | The Peaceable Kingdom | 1997 | The Cat of the Worm's Green Realm |
| 1974 | The Stars are Beautiful | 1997 | Yggdrasill Whose Roots
Are Stars in the Human Mind |
| 1974 | Star Garden | 1998 | (...) (ellipses) parts I, II, III |

Jim Shedden

Director

Jim Shedden works in the Contemporary Art Department at the Art Gallery of Ontario. He wrote, co-produced and co-directed, **Michael Snow Up Close**, a 45 minute video documentary on the work of the Canadian avant-garde filmmaker, and researched, wrote and hosted **Independent Visions**, five 1-hour segments exploring the work of independent filmmakers in Canada, including Joyce Wieland, Ron Mann, Robert Kennedy, Michael Snow, Bruce Elder, Richard Kerr, Veronika Soul, Iris Paabo, Amy Bodman, John Straiton and others. From 1985 to 1994 he was the programmer for the Innis Film Society, and has organized numerous film screenings and series for organizations such as New Music Concerts and WOMAD, as well as the Art Gallery of Ontario. Publications include *Recent Work from the Canadian Avant-Garde* (editor); *Vera Frenkel: Videotapes* (Art Gallery of York University); *Presence and Absence: The Films of Michael Snow 1956-1991* (editor and contributor); *David Rimmer* (editor and contributor); and numerous articles on visual art, film, video, cultural studies, and popular music. He coordinated the International Experimental Film Congress (Toronto, 1989), the last major international gathering of avant-garde filmmakers and enthusiasts, as well as several other conferences on subjects ranging from Hungarian cinema to Pier Paolo Pasolini, Canadian political economy, and Canadian communications strategies.

Alexa-Frances Shaw

Producer

Alexa-Frances Shaw has worked in numerous capacities in film and television production for over ten years. From 1987 to 1997 she was co-filmmaker, cinematographer and editor on a number of 16mm films with celebrated independent filmmaker R. Bruce Elder, including **Flesh Angels**, **Azure Serene** and **Newton and Me**. Since 1995 she has been producing, directing and editing promotional and sales tapes for Citytv, MuchMusic, Space:The Imagination Station, and Bravo!. She also produced several television series for Rogers Community 10, including *Amok*, a late-night live variety show, and *Reaction*, a weekly current affairs program. She co-produced, directed and edited a 45 minute documentary on the world renowned artist Michael Snow (**Michael Snow Up Close**), which was shown at the International Festival of Films on Art in Montreal, and has a five year run on Bravo!. She was a board member of the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre in 1992 and the Innis Film Society in 1993. In 1994, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters honored her with the Jim Allard Broadcast Journalism Award.

Ron Mann

Executive Producer

Ron Mann has been making films since the age of twelve. A maverick on the Canadian independent scene, Mann has produced and directed five documentary features, in addition to numerous short films and CD-ROMs. Mann's oeuvre amounts to a prolific, exhaustive, penetrating analysis of 20th century culture, both pop culture (**Twist**, **Comic Book Confidential**), the avant-garde (**Imagine the Sound**, **Painters Painting**, a CD-ROM project) and subcultural phenomena.

Mann's first feature, **Imagine the Sound** (1981), brings together, in interviews and performance, the prime innovators of the once-controversial free jazz movement of the 1960s. **Poetry in Motion** (1982) continues the tradition with a frenetically paced performance marathon of 24 talents of the contemporary poetry scene, including such alternative cultural luminaries as Charles Bukowski, William S. Burroughs and John Cage. Third in the series, **Comic Book Confidential** (winner of the 1988 Genie for Best Feature Length Documentary) combines a history of the comic book with a look at the work of 23 of the artform's most respected practitioners, including Will Eisner, Bill Gaines, Lynda Barry and Robert Crumb. **Twist** (1992) mixes interviews with rare and often hilarious archival footage to chronicle the evolution of rock and roll dance. **Dream Tower** is a portrait of Toronto's infamous Rochdale College: an experimental living environment that came to symbolize the best and worst of what the 1960s had to offer. He is now working on **Grass**, a feature documentary about the history of marijuana prohibition.

In addition to his films, Ron Mann has produced ground-breaking CD-ROM versions of his films. Working with the visionary New York-based multimedia company Voyager, Mann set the standard for transfers from film to interactive formats with the first-ever film-to-CD-ROM transfer of **Poetry in Motion**. Mann explored innovative methods of distribution such as the Book of the Month Club that proved, once again, his ability to bridge the avant-garde and the mainstream, esoterica and pop culture.

His films have garnered many awards and two major retrospectives: one at the Sundance Film Festival in 1988, and another at the Art Gallery of Ontario in cooperation with Cinematheque Ontario in the spring of 1996.