

“Pioneers of Queer Cinema” retrospective launches in Los Angeles

Visionary 12-night series to honor groundbreaking cinema in LGBTQ+ history

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LOS ANGELES (Dec. 17, 2021) – UCLA Film & Television Archive and IndieCollect proudly present “[Pioneers of Queer Cinema](#),” a retrospective of 33 films combined into 12 evening programs at the Billy Wilder Theater at the Hammer Museum, featuring over a dozen guests. Celebrating the artistic achievements, impact and storytelling unique to queer cinema, the series marks a capstone of years of UCLA Film & Television Archive efforts to honor queer cinema.

Presented in collaboration with Outfest, the series is drawn primarily from the collection of the Outfest UCLA Legacy Project, the largest publicly accessible archive of LGBTQ+ moving image media in the world. This series reflects a collective commitment to sharing LGBTQ+ media in order to bring together diverse communities for wide-ranging, often radical explorations of sexual orientation and gender identity. “We are honored to present ‘Pioneers of Queer Cinema,’ which celebrates groundbreaking achievements born from visionary artists who have powerfully illustrated identities pushed to the margins,” said May Hong HaDuong, director of the Archive, a division of UCLA Library. “We are grateful to The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and The Andrew J. Kuehn Jr. Foundation for their inspiring support of ‘Pioneers of Queer Cinema.’”

“‘Pioneers of Queer Cinema’ celebrates the virtues of preservation and pleads for the resources our field needs so we can maintain access to this enormous body of work in all its candor, beauty, complexity and power,” said Sandra Schulberg, president and founder of IndieCollect. “We believe that independent films are the hallmark of an open society and that iconoclastic voices are crucial to the survival of our democracy. Working closely with archival institutions, IndieCollect was founded to #SaveIndieFilm and to ensure the films are discoverable and watchable in today’s digital environment and for generations to come.”

Envisioned as a North American tour, the series is available to venues to screen these rarities, new restorations, and venerated classics.

Guests for the series include filmmakers Donna Deitch, Arthur Dong, Zackary Drucker, Rob Epstein, Jennie Livingston, Jenni Olson, Jan Oxenberg, Peggy Rajski, and Gus Van Sant.

Jan. 7, 7:30 p.m.

[Fireworks / Seascape / At Least You Know You Exist / Nitrate Kisses](#)

In-person: filmmaker Zackary Drucker (*At Least You Know You Exist*); Florrie Burke, spouse of Barbara Hammer (*Nitrate Kisses*).

Fireworks (Kenneth Anger, 1947)

Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* (1947), shot in his parent's home over one weekend, is a torch of salvation against the era's social norms. Anger is central to the underground tradition of queer cinema; his concerns with personal identity, self-disclosure, and subversive desire predate contemporary filmmakers who represent gay youth anomie. First screened publicly

in 1947 at the Coronet Theatre in Los Angeles, it later won the Poetic Film Prize at the Festival du Film Maudit.

Seascape (Mike Kuchar, 1984)

Mike Kuchar (b. 1942) and twin George (1942-2011) were kicked out of a Catholic photography club and goofed their way into New York's most crucial 1960s experimental film screenings, abutting the work of Kenneth Anger and Stan Brakhage with their Sirkian, explicit melodramas. But Mike honored his high-minded mentors through experimental and landscape film, including *Seascape*, his gorgeous work of ancient meanings that roils with images like gentle waves at the juncture of sand, sky and surf.

At Least You Know You Exist (Zackary Drucker, 2011)

Born in 1983, Zackary Drucker is a Los Angeles-based trans woman artist, activist, performer and television producer. The sole work in the program from the 21st century, *At Least You Know You Exist* is a collaboration between Drucker and LGBTQ+ elder and activist Flawless Sabrina (1939-2017). Shot in warm, intimate 16mm, Drucker's camera explores ornate headdresses, personal photo collages and makeup stashes belonging to Flawless, here captured for history as only an intimate acquaintance could.

Nitrate Kisses (Barbara Hammer, 1992)

This debut feature from lesbian feminist filmmaker Barbara Hammer (1939-2019) is an archeological dig of unexplored queer histories, and a commemoration of shared experience across various LGBTQ+ communities. By the very nature of her multifaceted identity, Hammer maintained a formal fluidity in her half-century-long practice. In *Nitrate Kisses*, she spends time with a mixed-race gay male couple; a younger pair who are both women of color; folks from the S&M community; and an older lesbian couple.

Jan. 8, 7:30 p.m.

[Changes / Coming Out / The Times of Harvey Milk](#)

In-person: filmmaker Rob Epstein (*The Times of Harvey Milk*).

Changes (Pat Rocco, 1970)

Born in 1934, entertainer, gay filmmaker and gay rights activist Pat Rocco embraced his sexuality at a young age, coming out at age 13. *Changes* is an earnestly forthright and sensitive non-fiction interview with its transgender protagonist. The film also includes what would become Rocco's cinematic legacy—capturing his subjects claiming traditional heteronormative Los Angeles spaces as their own queer landscape. Jimmie Micheals is seen proudly strolling down the streets of Hollywood, Los Feliz and parts of Griffith Park.

Coming Out (Arthur J. Bressan, Jr., 1972)

This joyful time capsule from Arthur J. Bressan Jr. (1943-1987) offers up one fabulous perspective of what it meant to be gay in 1972. Bressan's straightforward documentation of San Francisco's 1972 Gay Freedom Day parade utilizes simple, non-synch sound, on-the-street interviews and joyous footage of the day. Like *Gay USA*, Bressan's subsequent feature-length documentation of the Gay Freedom Day parades of 1977, this 1972 short offers up a thrilling collective portrait of gay liberation.

The Times of Harvey Milk (Rob Epstein, 1984)

Epstein's *The Times of Harvey Milk* is a powerful record of the beloved activist/politician's inspirational life and work, which illuminates the universal themes of resilience in the face of oppression. Through deep archival biographical material and emotion-filled reminiscences of friends and colleagues, Epstein reveals an intimate, complex portrait of the many sides of Milk. From his improbable, heroic rise to his horrific, senseless murder, the film serves as an unwavering eyewitness to history.

Jan. 15, 7:30 p.m.

[Jerovi / Testament / Confessions / My Hustler](#)

In-person: Bradford Nordeen, Creative Director of Dirty Looks Inc.

Jerovi (José Rodríguez-Soltero 1965)

Overshadowed by contemporaries Andy Warhol, Jack Smith and Kenneth Anger, Puerto Rican-born José Rodríguez-Soltero (1943-2009) can claim the mantle as the foremost Latinx, queer, psychedelic artist of New York City's mid-'60s underground filmmaking scene. His second film, *Jerovi*, is an erotic retelling of the Narcissus myth. This Narcissus, depicted by the film's financier, Jerovi Sanzón Carrasco, arrives upon the underground cinematic landscape immediately following the sexual revolution of the 1960s.

Testament (James Broughton, 1974)

A pioneer of West Coast experiential film and a celebrated poet, James Broughton (1913-1999) was a central fixture in the San Francisco arts and literary community from the 1940s through the '80s. His autobiographical short film *Testament* is a gentle, humanist fever dream by way of an elliptical visual poem. With drama, humor and a touch of wistfulness, the self-portrait mines the filmmaker's creative arsenal of experimentation and prose to illuminate his love of life.

Confessions (Curt McDowell, 1972)

Trailblazing queer artist and filmmaker Curt McDowell (1945-1987) moved to San Francisco during the Summer of Love and worked there prolifically until his death from HIV/AIDS, churning out nearly three dozen works as director. McDowell shot *Confessions* in his apartment in San Francisco, where he discloses his carnal sins to his parents. This outrageous 11-minute work was conceived and executed while McDowell was a graduate student at San Francisco Art Institute.

My Hustler (Andy Warhol, 1965)

Andy Warhol's brilliantly bitchy masterpiece of voyeurism, desire and boredom unfolds on a lazy afternoon on Fire Island where a threesome of libertines compete for the attention of a buff, dipped-blond "Dial-a-Hustler." Perhaps Warhol's most explicitly entertaining and accessible film works, *My Hustler* casts a sharp eye on gender, sexuality and the commodification of desire while passing as lightly as a summer divertissement.

Jan. 16, 7:00 p.m.

[Blackstar / Choosing Children](#)

In-person: Video introduction from filmmaker Mimi (Kim) Klausner (*Choosing Children*).

Blackstar: Autobiography of a Close Friend (Tom Joslin, 1977)

In this experimental 1977 documentary, Tom Joslin (1946-1990) blends breathtaking snapshots from the natural world, cultural touchstones and cinema vérité to dissect his gay identity despite warnings to stay in the closet. *Blackstar* sees Joslin and partner Mark Massi fleshing out their enduring commitment and love amidst the insecurity that a self-conscious documentary lens instills. That Joslin's career was cut short by AIDS is made all the more poignant by the power of his eye and heart.

New 4K restoration funded by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Choosing Children (Debra Chasnoff, Kim Klausner, 1985)

Choosing Children was one of the first documentaries to challenge homophobic and sexist attitudes about lesbian parenting. The project was inspired by questions that the filmmakers, who were also life partners at the time and would eventually have two sons together, were asking about the social and legal landscape for being a lesbian parent.

Jan 22, 7:30 p.m.

[Mala Noche / Hide and Seek](#)

In-person: filmmaker Gus Van Sant (*Mala Noche*); Q&A moderated by Professor Lucas Hilderbrand, UCI Film & Media Studies.

Mala Noche (Gus Van Sant, 1986)

Gus Van Sant's incandescent debut feature *Mala Noche* manages to prefigure the American indie aesthetic, the '90s New Queer Cinema, and his own storied career while staying firmly on the pavement in his local Portland, Oregon queer and poetry scenes. Adapting a 1977 memoir about Walt, a liquor store clerk who romances Mexican men in the down-and-out Pacific Northwestern city, Van Sant (b. 1952) films the gay experience as classical cinematic masculinity.

Hide and Seek (Su Friedrich, 1996)

Su Friedrich (b. 1954) is a pivotal force in the establishment of a queer cinematic mode and aesthetic, her legacy cemented through her 24-film body of work and her veneration in seminal queer theories and histories. Mining her own experience as a young girl for *Hide and Seek*, Friedrich daringly immerses her viewer in her own 1960s adolescence via the uncharted angle of a tweenage lesbian awakening.

Jan. 23, 7:00 p.m.

[A Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts / The Watermelon Woman](#)

In-person: filmmaker Jan Oxenberg (*A Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts*) and actress Guinevere Turner (*The Watermelon Woman*).

A Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts (1975)

This series of black and white vignettes interprets six stereotypes of lesbians as a series of standalone sketches worthy of a queerer, more experimental *Saturday Night Live*. The Wallflower, Role-Playing, Seduction, Non-Monogamy, The Child Molester, and The Stompin' Dyke are satirical depictions of insults levied at lesbians, but writer-director Jan Oxenberg's humor twists each ending into feel-good fun unseen in any mainstream filmic depiction of queer characters of the time.

New 4K restoration funded by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

The Watermelon Woman (1996)

With her first feature, *The Watermelon Woman*, writer-director-punk archivist-actor Cheryl Dunye (b. 1966) creates an entirely new form of blended fictional narrative, mockumentary, and archeological dig, theretofore known as the “Dunyementary.” After becoming obsessed with the Black actress who keeps popping up in 1930s American films, only credited as “Watermelon Woman,” Cheryl sets out to create a documentary that will lead her to the identity of Fae Richards/Faith Richardson, with whom she feels an unexplained kinship.

Jan. 29, 7:30 p.m.

[Behind Every Good Man / Dottie Gets Spanked / Parting Glances](#)

Behind Every Good Man (Nikolai Ursin, 1967)

Produced several years before the historic Stonewall Uprising for LGBTQ+ rights, director Nikolai Ursin’s gently-activist short provides an illuminating glimpse into the life of a Black man who openly lives part of his life as a woman. In strong contrast to the stereotypically negative depictions of transgender people as seen through the lens of Hollywood at the time, the protagonist of Ursin’s independent film is rendered as stable, hopeful and determined.

Dottie Gets Spanked (Todd Haynes, 1993)

A pioneer of the New Queer Cinema movement, Haynes has consistently produced introspective explorations of alienation and belonging, especially as related to queer life in often hostile environments. One such personal work is Haynes’ semi-autobiographical period short, *Dottie Gets Spanked*. Based in part on Haynes’ own childhood visit to a Hollywood studio to watch icon Lucille Ball rehearse on set, *Dottie* traces Stevie’s preoccupation with a 1950s-style TV comedy and its zany red-headed star.

Parting Glances (Bill Sherwood, 1986)

Parting Glances is a story of friendship and romance; it is also an AIDS narrative, one of the first, to celebrate those living and struggling with the disease, where fear and tragedy are not ignored on-screen, but are also not required as the cinematic climax. Set in a long-ago funky and hip New York City, this film is a joyous romp made buoyant by a charming and, at the time, unknown cast, including Steve Buscemi and Kathy Kinney.

Jan. 30, 7:00 p.m.

[Blue Diary / Memento Mori / Desert Hearts](#)

In-person: filmmakers Jenni Olson (*Blue Diary*) and Donna Deitch (*Desert Hearts*); Q&A moderated by Kirsten Schaffer, Executive Director of Women in Film.

Blue Diary (Jenni Olson, 1998)

In Jenni Olson’s elegiac short film, an anonymous diarist recounts her unrequited attraction to a heterosexual woman following a “fluke” one night stand. For Olson, a preservationist and historian of queer cinema, the camera’s ability to capture and excavate submerged memory remains a source of optimism. While gently mournful of the inability to halt the passage of time, *Blue Diary* captures the rhythms, vistas and emotional topography of a city teetering on the brink of irreversible change.

Memento Mori (Jim Hubbard, 1995)

Activist, archivist, curator, documentarian and filmmaker extraordinaire, Jim Hubbard (b. 1951) is a central figure in the vital documentation and dissemination of knowledge and truth regarding political indifference to the AIDS crisis and the resulting devastating human toll. Hubbard's highly personal experimental work, *Memento Mori*, is a moving, queer mediation that individualizes the immeasurable collective trauma left in the wake of the AIDS epidemic.

Desert Hearts (Donna Deitch, 1986)

Cay, the cautious professor, and Vivian, the impulsive ranch hand fall in love against the quickie-divorce backdrop of 1950s Reno, Nevada. An adaptation from a 1964 novel, director Donna Deitch's *Desert Hearts* came into being amidst fascination with a queer female-centric story that didn't find its emotional peak in "a bisexual love triangle." Released five years before *Thelma and Louise* provoked controversy over its lesbian subtext, Deitch overtly explores female intimacy and desire.

Feb. 18, 7:30 p.m.

[Trevor / Word is Out](#)

In-person: filmmaker Peggy Rajski (*Trevor*).

Trevor (Peggy Rajski, 1994)

Peggy Rajski's Academy Award-winning debut film *Trevor* is a heartfelt and straightforward dark comedy that perfectly walks a fine line between darkness and a charming story of self-realization and advocacy. When Rajski went to look for a LGBTQ+ youth crisis organization they could place in the film's closing credits, they were alarmed that no such nationwide hotline existed. Before the debut of the film in 1998, The Trevor Project was created to rectify this egregious void.

Word is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives (The Mariposa Film Group, 1977)

In the mid-1970s, the Mariposa Film Group, a collective of six queer filmmakers traveled around the country, interviewing more than two dozen men and women of various backgrounds, ages and races to talk plainly and directly to the camera about their lives as gay men and lesbians. This groundbreaking landmark of a film is a true time capsule of an era when each individual's participation was an act of courage.

Feb. 20, 7:00 p.m.

[Coming Out Under Fire / Tongues Untied](#)

In-person: filmmaker Arthur Dong (*Coming Out Under Fire*).

Coming Out Under Fire (Arthur Dong, 1994)

Award-winning filmmaker and author Arthur Dong's 1994 *Coming Out Under Fire* is the first of three expertly and efficiently crafted documentaries about homosexual repression and persecution which are now considered by many as his "Roots of Homophobia" trilogy. This documentary about homosexuals in the military during World War II is the filmmaker's cornerstone representation of the systemic and administrative subjugation of queer communities.

New 4K restoration funded by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Tongues Untied (Marlon Riggs, 1989)

Tongues Untied is as personal as it is political, with a lyricism that haunts, engages, and informs. Along with poet and collaborator Essex Hemphill, Riggs (1957-1994) creates a tonally dynamic space to explore the identities of Black gay men. Moving from stark montage, to double exposures of sexual and revolutionary awakening, to spoof chat lines, and much more, Riggs' thematic vignettes challenge the audience to keep up.

Feb. 26, 7:30 p.m.

[Oblivion / If Every Girl Had a Diary / The Living End](#)

Oblivion (Tom Chomont, 1969)

Between 1962 and 1989, rigorously formalist filmmaker Tom Chomont (deceased 2012) completed roughly 40 short film works, most of them silent. His 1969 16mm work *Oblivion* is a rapidly cut film full of repetition, superimpositions, jarring movements, and pulsating light that activate the viewer to contemplate the relationship between a sleeping man and the disorientating, erotically charged images that flare up in the frame.

If Every Girl Had a Diary (Sadie Benning, 1990)

Using a PixelVision toy video camera and everyday objects—albums, toys, magazines, handwritten notes, the television screen—Sadie Benning transformed a childhood bedroom into a production space for crafting intimate, performative explorations of gender identity, desire and the artist's own coming-of-age as a young lesbian. *If Every Girl Had a Diary* operates as a meditation on both gender identity and the structures at play in Benning's particular means of production.

The Living End (Gregg Araki, 1992)

This third feature by Gregg Araki (b. 1959), a prolific member of the New Queer Cinema movement, has been referred to as a "gay *Thelma and Louise*." A raucous and sometimes brutally violent road movie where ample time is given to mischievous, outrageous comedy; a final burst of nihilistic freedom in the age of AIDS. Shot with Araki's then-largest budget of only \$20,000, the film was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

Feb. 27, 7:00 p.m.

[Always on Sunday / Stormé / Paris is Burning](#)

In-person: filmmaker Jennie Livingston (*Paris is Burning*).

Always on Sunday (Gay Girls Riding Club, 1962)

Formed in Los Angeles in the early 1960s, the Gay Girls Riding Club became an underground sensation in the pre-Stonewall Southern California gay rights movement. The group became a powerhouse of gay social life and culture by sponsoring elaborate social events, drag balls, trips, as well as the production of four elaborate and campy short film satires. *Always on Sunday* focuses on the fluidity of gender roles as well as masculine presumptions in relation to the homosexual experience.

Stormé: The Lady of the Jewel Box (Michelle Parkerson, 1987)

African American gay and lesbian activist, academic and award-winning independent filmmaker Michelle Parkerson's career blossomed out of the dynamic LGBTQ+ Washington,

D.C. club scene in the late 1970s—a period of Black, gay renaissance for the city. Her *Stormé: The Lady of the Jewel Box* tells the vital tale of legendary performer and activist Stormé DeLarverie, set against the history of the celebrated Jewel Box Revue touring company, the U.S.' first racially integrated drag show.

Paris is Burning (Jennie Livingston, 1990)

For the queer and trans Black and Latinx subjects in Jennie Livingston's (b. 1962) documentary of the New York's Ballroom scene in the late 1980s, the community formed around the competitive world of drag was a matter of survival. Made over the course of seven years, Livingston's film ignited controversy upon its release. However, her nuanced filmmaking enables her subjects to speak at length about the intersecting realities of race, class, gender and sexuality.

“Pioneers of Queer Cinema” was made possible by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Andrew J. Kuehn Jr. Foundation and IndieCollect.

For details, updates, registration information and important health guidelines, please visit cinema.ucla.edu.

About the UCLA Film & Television Archive

A division of UCLA Library, the Archive is internationally renowned for rescuing, preserving and showcasing moving image media and is dedicated to ensuring that the visual achievements of our time are available for information, education and enjoyment. The Archive has over 450,000 film and television holdings conserved in a state-of-the-art facility at the Packard Humanities Institute Stoa in Santa Clarita, CA, that is designed to hold materials ranging from nitrate film to digital video at all preservation standards. Many of the Archive's projects are screened at prestigious film events around the globe.

The Billy Wilder Theater at the Hammer Museum is the home of the UCLA Film & Television Archive's public programs. The theater is among a handful of venues nationwide able to exhibit an entire century's worth of moving images in their original formats. From the earliest silent films requiring variable speed projection all the way up to cutting-edge digital cinema, the Wilder can accommodate an array of screen technologies.

About IndieCollect

IndieCollect's mission is to #SaveIndieFilm, ensuring that important independent films, that hold up a mirror to American society, remain discoverable and watchable in today's digital environment and for generations to come. Through its three-pronged strategy — rescue, restore, reactivate — IndieCollect has rescued thousands of film negatives and placed them at non-profit archives, has digitally restored 50 films with more in the pipeline, and is collaborating with distributors and exhibitors to bring the films to new audiences.

More information and catalogue of restored films at IndieCollect.org.

About Outfest

Founded by UCLA students in 1982, Outfest is the world's leading organization that promotes equality by creating, sharing and protecting LGBTQIA+ stories on the screen. Outfest builds community by connecting diverse populations to discover, discuss and celebrate stories of LGBTQIA+ lives. For forty years, Outfest has showcased thousands of films from around the world, educated and mentored hundreds of emerging filmmakers, and protected more than 40,000 LGBTQIA+ films and videos. The Outfest Screenwriting Lab, established in 1997, has mentored nearly 150 screenwriters, propelling both films into produced feature films and establishing writers into writers' rooms. The Outfest UCLA Legacy Project, a partnership with the UCLA Film & Television Archive, is the only film archive in the world exclusively dedicated to preserving LGBTQIA+ images and has restored over 25 films.

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