

conversations
at the edge
experimental media series

the animated films of suzan pitt

1973–2013, USA, 35mm, 16mm, and HD video, ca 60 min + discussion

Since the 1970s, Suzan Pitt has created some of the most acclaimed and influential independent animations of her generation. Best known for *Asparagus* (1979)—which screened with David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977) on the 1970's midnight movie circuit—Pitt creates lavishly hand-painted and stop-motion films of shape-shifting characters and meanings. A woman navigates a field of psychosexual vegetation, another finds salvation in an unlikely animated muse, and shadowy figures stalk a noir nightscape. Pitt introduces and discusses selection of films spanning her four-decade career via Skype. (Prints courtesy of the Academy Film Archive.)

program

Asparagus

(Suzan Pitt, 1979, 35mm film and video, 20 min.)

"This candy coloured nightmare rocked audiences upon its release and catapulted maker Suzan Pitt to the front ranks of indie animation. Stunning cel animation propels its blank-faced protagonist into the world of the phallus, rendered here as a field of asparagus, which she deep throats, excretes and flushes away...The film's stunning set piece occurs before a claymation audience who gape as the artist opens her Medusa's box to release rare wonders. A moving meditation on art and the cost of reproduction, *Asparagus* remains, twenty-five years after its release, a benchmark of single frame intensity."

Whitney Commercial

(Suzan Pitt, 1973, 16mm, color, 3 min.)

Commissioned by the Whitney Museum to raise money for their independent filmmaker program. A cutout animation featuring mini-movies in a coin operated box. This commercial ran with every screening at the Whitney for two years.

Visitation (Suzan Pitt, 2011, Digi Beta, DVD, 9 min.)

The animated film *Visitation* unwinds through a dark landscape of unending life and death; steeped in the alchemical and inner dream life the film

explores a black and white landscape of gothic figures who enact evolving metaphysical dramas. Surrealistic and strange, cast in grainy 16mm images, the film allows an imaginary glimpse within "an outer-world night." The visions in the film are summoned from the film maker's imagining of a mythical eternity which is beautiful but fraught with pain, exposed by the ether voices and figures which inhabit the eternal ballet beneath our consciousness.

Pinball

(Suzan Pitt, 2013, DVD and digital formats, 7min.)

Think of *Pinball* as a spinning flying saucer which lands in your yard, performs, and then flies away to the sound of film flapping in a projector... The film visualizes George Antheil's 1952 revision of "Ballet Mecanique" using trigger fast cutting, painted imagery and sound effects. It might be described as "visual music". Let loose from narrative confines, *Pinball* is an intense abstraction of animated paintings by Suzan Pitt.

Joy Street

(Suzan Pitt, 1995, 35mm film and video, 24 min.)

An ambitious, astonishing story of a woman's journey from suicidal despair to personal renewal, with the help of an unlikely spirit guide.

Joy Street premiered at the New York Film Festival and was an official selection at the Sundance Film Festival, winning best short film at the Naples Film Festival and the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival. John Cooper of the Sundance Film Festival wrote about *Joy Street*, "Haunting animated paintings capture the isolation and distraught psyche of a suicidal woman...the film is beautiful one moment and disturbing the next." And Caryn James from *The New York Times* described the film as "Vivid, intriguing, and bizarre" while Anne Markowski from the *Boston Sojourner* described it as "A brilliant psychological parable."

upcoming

October 22 at 6p.m.

Lorna Mills: Ways of Something