

**Los Angeles Filmforum presents:  
Lynne Sachs & Stephen Vitiello: Sound Engagements**

**A Conversation with Lynne Sachs and Stephen Vitiello  
moderated by Sasha Frere-Jones**

Online, Sunday February 21, 2021, 5:00 pm PST

Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest-running organization dedicated to weekly screenings of experimental film, documentaries, video art, and experimental animation. [www.lafilmforum.org](http://www.lafilmforum.org)

**In Person via Zoom: Filmmaker Lynne Sachs, composer Stephen Vitiello, writer and musician Sasha Frere-Jones**

Filmforum is delighted to kick off 2021 by welcoming back our friend Lynne Sachs with her new film and several past works, all of which have had music composed by Sound Artist Stephen Vitiello.

Lynne Sachs has made a series of delicate portraits of small communities making their way in the modern world, merging theatrical and poetic forms into uniquely powerful documentaries. Most recently, she has utilized years of filming of and with her father to form a complicated portrait of an elusive man. In the films we are highlighting, she has found her ideal musical companion, Stephen Vitiello, who finds lines and moods that reflect the tangible surroundings and intangible desires of people striving to find meaningful lives.

“In collaborating on the soundtracks for my films, Stephen Vitiello somehow recognizes the interior sounds of objects and releases them for us to hear. Together his music and his sound designs push audiences toward a new way of experiencing cinema.” - Lynne Sachs

In these two programs, Los Angeles Filmforum explores the seven-year collaborative relationship between filmmaker Lynne Sachs and sound artist Stephen Vitiello.

Stephen Vitiello has just released a new album timed with these Filmforum screenings! Soundtracks for Lynne Sachs (Volume 1, Film About A Father Who, Tip of My Tongue): <https://stephenvitiello.bandcamp.com/album/soundtracks-for-lynne-sachs-volume-1-film-about-a-father-who-tip-of-my-tongue>

*Film About a Father Who* is distributed by Cinema Guild, and has its own virtual cinema admission charge, listed on its own Filmforum webpage at <https://www.lafilmforum.org/schedule/winter-2021/film-about-a-father-who/>

Special Thanks to Brett Kashmere, Canyon Cinema, Tom Sveen, Cinema Guild.

**Films by Lynne Sachs with music and sound design by Stephen Vitiello  
2013 - 2020**

***The Washing Society***

**Co-directed with Lizzie Olesker (2018, color, sound, 44 min.)**

When you drop off a bag of dirty laundry, who's doing the washing and folding? The Washing Society brings us into New York City laundromats and the experiences of the people who work there by observing these disappearing neighborhood spaces and the continual, intimate labor that happens there. The juxtaposition of narrative and documentary elements in THE WASHING SOCIETY creates a dream-like, yet hyper-real portrayal of a day in the life of a laundry worker, both past and present.

“The legacy of domestic work, the issues surrounding power, and the exchange of money for services are all potent themes which rise to the surface and bubble over in dramatic, thrilling escalations of the everyday.” - *Brooklyn Rail*

“Spotlights the often-invisible workers who fold the clothes, maintain the machines and know your secrets.” - *In These Times*

Punto de Vista' International Documentary Film Festival, Pamplona, Spain; BAMcinemaFest, Brooklyn Academy of Music

Featuring: Jasmine Holloway, Veraalba Santa, and Ching Valdes-Aran

Cinematography: Sean Hanley

Editing: Amanda Katz

Trailer: <http://www.lynnesachs.com/2017/08/23/the-washing-society/>

***Tip of My Tongue* (2017, color, sound, 80 min.)**

“To mark her 50th birthday, filmmaker Lynne Sachs gathers a group of her contemporaries—all New Yorkers but originally hailing from all corners of the globe—for a weekend of recollection and reflection on the most life-altering personal, local, and international events of the past half-century, creating what Sachs calls ‘a collective distillation of our times.’ Interspersed with poetry and flashes of archival footage, this poignant reverie reveals how far beyond our control life is, and how far we can go despite this.” (Kathy Brew, Museum of Modern Art)

“A mesmerizing ride through time, a dreamscape full of reflection, filled with inspired use of archival footage, poetry, beautiful cinematography and music. Raises the question of how deeply events affect us, while granting us enough room to crash into our own thoughts, or float on by, rejoicing in the company of our newfound friends.” (Screen Slate, Sonya Redi)  
<https://www.screenslate.com/features/366>

“A beautiful, poetic collage of memory, history, poetry, and lived experience, in all its joys, sorrows, fears, hopes, triumphs, and tragedies ... rendered in exquisite visual terms, creating an artful collective chronicle of history.” (Screen Anarchy, Christopher Bourne,  
<http://screenanarchy.com/2017/02/nyc-weekend-picks-feb-24-26-jordan-peepe-curates-oscar-nominated-short-and-best-picture-winners-doc-gallery.htm>)

Trailer: <http://www.lynnesachs.com/2017/04/25/tip-of-my-tongue/>

Featuring: Dominga Alvarado, Mark Cohen, Sholeh Dalai, Andrea Kannapell, Sarah Markgraf, Shira Nayman, George Sanchez, Adam Schartoff, Erik Schurink, Accra Shepp, Sue Simon, Jim Supanick

Cinematography: Sean Hanley

Editing: Amanda Katz

**“Drift and Bough” (2014, Super 8mm on Digital, B&W, sound, 6 min.)**

Sachs spends a winter morning in Central Park shooting film in the snow. Holding her Super 8mm camera, she takes note of graphic explosions of dark and light and an occasional skyscraper. The stark black lines of the trees against the whiteness create the sensation of a painter’s chiaroscuro. Woven into this cinematic landscape, we hear sound artist Stephen Vitiello’s delicate yet soaring musical track which seems to wind its way across the frozen ground, up the tree trunks to the sky.

<http://www.lynnesachs.com/2014/03/24/drift-and-bough/>

***Your Day is My Night* (2013, HD video and live performance, color, sound, 64 min.)**

Immigrant residents of a “shift-bed” apartment in the heart of New York City’s Chinatown share their stories of personal and political upheaval. As the bed transforms into a stage, the film reveals the collective history of the Chinese in the United States through conversations, autobiographical monologues, and theatrical movement pieces. Shot in the kitchens, bedrooms, wedding halls, cafés, and mahjong parlors of Chinatown, this provocative hybrid documentary addresses issues of privacy, intimacy, and urban life.

"A strikingly handsome, meditative work: a mixture of reportage, dreams, memories and playacting, which immerses you in an entire world that you might unknowingly pass on the corner of Hester Street, unable to guess what's behind the fifth-floor windows." -The Nation

In Chinese, English & Spanish with English Subtitles.

Trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Pks0\\_IRHek](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Pks0_IRHek)

Featuring: Yi Chun Cao, Linda Y.H. Chan, Chung Qing Che, Ellen Ho, Yun Xiu Huang, Sheut Hing Lee, Kam Yin Tsui, & Veraalba Santa.

Camera by Sean Hanley and Ethan Mass

Winner, Best Feature Documentary, San Diego Asian Film Festival, 2013 \* Winner, Best Feature Film, Workers Unite! Film Festival, 2013 \* Winner, Best Experimental Film, Traverse City Film Festival, 2013

***Film About a Father Who* (2020, color, sound, 74 min.)**

Filmed on 8mm, 16mm, VHS, Hi8, MiniDV, Digital / HD Color, Sound

Distributed by Cinema Guild

Written/Directed by Lynne Sachs

Photographed between 1965 – 2019 by: Lynne Sachs, Ira Sachs, Jr., and Ira Sachs, Sr.

Editing: Rebecca Shapass

Music by Stephen Vitiello

Sound Collages and Mix: Kevin. T. Allen

Over a period of 35 years between 1984 and 2019, filmmaker Lynne Sachs shot 8 and 16mm film, videotape and digital images of her father, Ira Sachs Sr., a bon vivant and pioneering businessman from Park City, Utah. *Film About a Father Who* is her attempt to understand the

web that connects a child to her parent and a sister to her siblings. With a nod to the Cubist renderings of a face, Sachs' cinematic exploration of her father offers simultaneous, sometimes contradictory views of one seemingly unknowable man who is publicly the uninhibited center of the frame yet privately ensconced in secrets. In the process, Sachs allows herself and her audience inside to see beyond the surface of the skin, the projected reality. As the startling facts mount, Sachs as a daughter discovers more about her father than she had ever hoped to reveal.

Critic's Pick! "[A] brisk, prismatic and richly psychodramatic family portrait." - Ben Kenigsberg, *The New York Times*

"Sachs achieves a poetic resignation about unknowability inside families, and the hidden roots never explained from looking at a family tree." – Robert Abele, *Los Angeles Times*

"Sachs goes to places that most ... moviemakers avoid, undercutting the image of the past as simpler or more stable than the present." - *Slant Magazine*

"Rarely has a filmmaker opened such a deep vein and let the truth bleed out." Chris McCoy, *Memphis Flyer*

"Since I began making films in the mid-1980s, I've been collecting images, recording sounds and writing text for a film about my father. It took me three decades to complete the film, and so many things have happened in that period. Life goes on, and each day brings surprises, joys and disappointments. In 2020, I premiered *Film About a Father Who*, the third film in what ultimately became a trilogy (including *States of UnBelonging*, 2005, and *The Last Happy Day*, 2009) of essay films that explore the degree by which one human being can know another...

"*Film About a Father Who* is my portrait of my father Ira Sachs, a bohemian entrepreneur living in the mountains of Utah. My father has always chosen the alternative path in life, a path that has brought unpredictable adventures, nine children with six different women, brushes with the police and a life-long interest in trying to do some good in the world. It is also a film about the complex dynamics that conspire to create a family. There is nothing really nuclear about all of us, we are a solar system comprised of nine planets revolving around a single sun, a sun that nourishes, a sun that burns, a sun that each of us knows is good and bad for us. Somehow, we accept and celebrate the consequences." From a director's statement by Lynne Sachs

### **Biographies:**

**Lynne Sachs** is a filmmaker and a poet born in Memphis, Tennessee but living in Brooklyn, New York. Her work explores the intricate relationship between personal observations and broader historical experiences by weaving together text, collage, painting, politics and layered sound design. Strongly committed to a dialogue between cinematic theory and practice, she searches for a rigorous play between image and sound, pushing the visual and aural textures in her work with every new project. Her work ranges from the very personal, as in her early experiments that are reminiscent of Bruce Connor's found footage films and Chris Marker's essay films, to documentary, as in her film on the Catonsville Nine's antiwar-activism in *Investigation of a Flame*. Lynne discovered her love of filmmaking while living in San Francisco where she worked closely with film artists Craig Baldwin, Bruce Conner, Barbara Hammer, George Kuchar, and Trinh T. Min-ha. Between 1994 and 2006, she produced five essay films that took her to Vietnam, Bosnia, Israel, Italy and Germany — sites affected by international war — where she

looked at the space between a community's collective memory and her own subjective perceptions.

Sachs has made 37 films, which have screened at the New York Film Festival, Sundance, Oberhausen, Viennale, BAMCinemaFest, Vancouver Film Festival, DocLisboa and many others nationally and internationally. They have also been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Walker Art Center, Wexner Center for the Arts and other venues. The Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema, Festival International Nuevo Cine in Havana, China Women's Film Festival and Sheffield Documentary Festival have all presented retrospectives of Lynne's films. She received a 2014 Guggenheim Fellowship in the Arts. In 2019, Tender Buttons Press published Lynne's first collection of poetry, *Year by Year Poems*. Lynne lives in Brooklyn with filmmaker Mark Street. Together, they have two daughters, Maya and Noa Street-Sachs. [www.lynnesachs.com](http://www.lynnesachs.com).

**Sasha Frere-Jones** is a writer and musician from New York.

**Stephen Vitiello** is an electronic musician and sound artist who transforms incidental atmospheric noises into mesmerizing soundscapes that alter our perception of the surrounding environment. He has composed music for independent films, experimental video projects and art installations, collaborating with such artists as Nam June Paik, Tony Oursler and Dara Birnbaum. Solo and group exhibitions include MASS MoCA, The High Line, NYC, and the Museum of Modern Art. <https://www.stephenvitiello.com/> Solo exhibitions include *All Those Vanished Engines*, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2011-(ongoing)); *A Bell For Every Minute*, The High Line, NYC (2010-2011); *More Songs About Buildings and Bells*, Museum 52, New York (2011); and *Stephen Vitiello, The Project*, New York (2006). He has participated in such group exhibitions as *Soundings: A Contemporary Score*, Museum of Modern Art, NY (2013); *Sound Objects: Leah Beeferman and Stephen Vitiello*, Fridman Gallery, New York (2014); *September 11*, PS 1/MoMA, LIC, NY (2011-2012); the 15th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2006); *Yanomami: Spirit of the Forest* at the Cartier Foundation, Paris; and the 2002 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2002). Vitiello has performed nationally and internationally, at locations such as the Tate Modern, London; the San Francisco Electronic Music Festival; The Kitchen, New York; and the Cartier Foundation, Paris. In 2011, ABC-TV, Australia produced the documentary *Stephen Vitiello: Listening With Intent*. Awards include Creative Capital (2006) and a Guggenheim Fellowship (2011-2012). Vitiello is a professor of Kinetic Imaging at Virginia Commonwealth University. He lives and works in Richmond, Virginia. [www.stephenvitiello.com](http://www.stephenvitiello.com)

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Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest-running organization screening experimental and avant-garde film and video art, documentaries, and experimental animation. 2021 is our 46<sup>th</sup> year!

Memberships available, \$75 single, \$125 dual, \$40 single student, \$225 silver nitrate..  
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