

Los Angeles Filmforum presents
Nora Sweeney
Sunday, April 21, 2024, 1:00 pm
At 2220 Arts + Archives

Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest running organization dedicated to weekly screenings of experimental film, documentaries, video art, and experimental animation. 2024 is our 49th year. www.lafilmforum.org

In person: Nora Sweeney, programmer Diego Robles

Including the World premiere of her newest film!
All 16mm prints!

The subtle and absorbing camera of Nora Sweeney unfolds with care and wonder the extraordinary of our ordinary *everyday*. In this program we will see 6 short films by Nora, each documentary developing a larger and larger web of relationships, that are also a mapping of people and neighborhoods in Los Angeles County, and Cincinnati, Ohio.

Her films ask us to create a relationship with reality. The way nature interplays with the way we can appreciate the story of each person she introduces to, gradually increases our interest in how we are studying the mechanical ways each person navigates their day-to-day activities in life.

Her choice of using 16mm film to bring out the colors and textures of people and places she engages, serve as a slow reveal that frames into portraits and landscapes the life-lived by many in and around the confines of Los Angeles County, and beyond. As we see each film, it is as if we accumulate a family of photos - but a family that is not exactly a traditional family, but still a family - through strangers, neighbors, passerby's, coworkers, visitors, wanderers, guests, family, and friends.

The world is made into an album that welcomes viewers to come, sit-down, and be with the reality we are all viewing - one moment at a time, one experience at a time. Usually, we miss or take for granted many situations and people we encounter. By pausing, reflecting, and seeing the special aspect about each person we meet, and each place we find ourselves in - aspects that are already there, waiting for us to notice them - these films assist us to let in the outside world, and everything it has to offer us.

Among the shorts that will show is the world premiere of *The Concrete River*, an exploration of how different communities spend time along the Los Angeles River. For now, this film brings to a close the metaphorical photo-album Nora's films are collectively, leading us to consider how the focus on the present-time in these films, immediately brings about a memorialization of

them, and a focus on our past and passing of time - as well as the agency we have in their unmade, uncertain, and unknown future they point to.

Nora will be with us in person to discuss her work.

Nora Sweeney, is a Los Angeles-based documentary filmmaker, artist, and professor who focuses her work on cultural traditions, labor, communities, and public spaces. As the grandchild of Jewish and Assyrian immigrants, she has grown up with a deep appreciation of food, cultural heritage, and community. Born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, she received her B.A., majoring in art, from Oberlin College and M.F.A. in Film/Video from CalArts. She taught documentary filmmaking and photography through a two-year teaching fellowship at Lady Doak College in Madurai, India, and currently teaches at Pierce College and CalArts. In 2022, she was a Nature Art Habitat Residency Fellow in Sottocchia, Italy. Her work has screened at such venues as the Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival, the Edinburgh International Film Festival, REDCAT, Antimatter, and the Milwaukee Underground Film Festival, where her film, *Fausto and Emilio*, won a Juror's Prize.

Program:

Portrait of Inez

2012, 16mm, 1 minute

Inez McWright, an 89-year-old African American woman from rural Louisiana, has lived in Val Verde, California since 1956. She approaches aging with nonchalance - working in her garden every day and preferring to stay active rather than dwell on her aches and pains.

Something Like Whales

2013, 16mm, 5 minutes

In a dying industrial neighborhood in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Queensgate Train Yard pulses with life. A local worker describes the haunting sound emanating from the yard as "something like whales." This film was shot in part with a camera obscura.

Fausto and Emilio

2014, 16mm, 13 minutes

"I like it...because it's my job." Waiting, snipping, shaving, smoking, and chatting. These are the daily rhythms of a barbershop in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio where brothers Fausto (age 83) and Emilio (age 75) have worked together for decades. The barbershop, with its turquoise barber chairs, porcelain sinks, collection of glass bottles of aftershave, vintage postcards from Italy, is more than a workplace - it is a window into an earlier time.

Sweet Oranges

2014, 16mm, 18 minutes

Heading west from my house, I explore the back roads off of California State Route 126, finding small, historic towns, farms, and railway tracks nestled between mountains and orchards - a landscape that evokes a dream of California's past. It resembles what migrant workers might have envisioned when traveling west in search of work in the 1930s, a vibrant, fertile promised land. This migration continues. In an orange grove, I meet Jaime, Blanca, and Hugo, a group of orange pickers from Michoacán, Mexico, who share with me their songs, dreams, aspirations, and thoughts about work.

Birds of a Feather

2019, 16mm, 18 min, 41 sec

Elderly Armenian men convene daily at a park in Glendale, California to play cards, backgammon, and dominoes. Laughing, singing, arguing - they transform the public space into a portal to their home countries and pass the time together as they age.

The Concrete River

2023, 16mm, 16 min

World Premiere!

An exploration of how different communities spend time along the Los Angeles River, a 51-mile waterway largely channelized with concrete that cuts through various neighborhoods of Greater Los Angeles. While people fish, skateboard, paint, play music, have quiet moments to engage with the landscape, or carve out a place to live by the banks, egrets and herons roost in trees growing in the middle of the river. I was drawn to the river as an unregulated public space where people converge with each other and nature, finding respite from the city.

Programmer **Diego Robles** is an educator, artist, and filmmaker. Originally from the San Diego/Tijuana Border, Diego has been based in Los Angeles since 2002. He attended the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television where he was Assistant Programmer for Melnitz Movies. At CalArts' School of Film/Video and School of Critical Studies, he earned a Dual MFA and curated student-led Film Festivals and film/video screenings on Chicanx and Latinx Cinema. As a researcher, Diego has engaged the REMAP Center at UCLA, and the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts Sciences' Oral History Projects. He facilitated classes at Self-Help Graphics, the CAP Program at CalArts, the Summer Discovery Program at UCLA, the Los Angeles Unified School District, the LA County Office of Education, and artworxLA. He currently lectures in the California State University at San Bernardino and San Diego.

This program is supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles, and

the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts. We also depend on our members, ticket buyers, and individual donors.

Coming Soon:

April 28 – Muscle Beach to Berlin: Classic and New Films by Pat O'Neill with Golia/Feeney/King/ LeVeque Live!

May 5 – with SEEFest - Crossing Distance: Family, Archive, and Legacy in short films from Eastern Europe

May 19 – Films by Andres Garza and Francisco Romero

June 2 – Prismatic Ground Festival West

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