

Los Angeles Filmforum presents
Filmforum 50, program 5: Real Life, with *Millennium Film Journal*
Sunday, January 18, 2026, 7:30 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. 2026 is our 51st year. www.lafilmforum.org

In person: Filmmakers Zachary Epcar, Kate Lain, Elise Rasmussen, and Michael Robinson, and co-curator Nicholas Gamso

Over the last half-century, the Millennium Film Journal has charted seismic transformations in the way we create and look at moving pictures—from 16mm celluloid to magnetic videotape to digital “content creation,” and now the strange new world of AI-generated deepfakes and simulations. All along, we’ve kept an eye on the Hollywood Dream Factory, which has often thrived in the chaos of technological change—though of late its fortunes are fading, with studio workers and artisans suffering most. It is a curious impasse. Compared with the narcotics of Netflix “autoplay” or the debut of virtual actors, like the imaginary Tilly Norwood, the fantasies of the industry’s erstwhile Golden Ages seem vivid, achingly human, recalcitrantly real. As we drift into a surreal future, we want to glance backward, or at least collect the traces of our cinematic pasts. Real Life—the latest edition of MFJ—is a study of this diachronic gray zone, and the Journal joins with Los Angeles Filmforum in showcasing a handful of works discussed in its pages, along with others we admire. -- Programmed by Nicholas Gamso, with Camila Galaz and Vincent Warne.

Zachary Epcar (b. San Francisco) is a filmmaker whose work has screened at the international film festivals of Toronto, New York, and Rotterdam; Pacific Film Archive, Media City, SF Cinematheque's Crossroads, European Media Art Festival, EXiS, and 25 FPS; and in solo screenings at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Museum of the Moving Image, and Black Hole Cinematheque. Zachary lives in Oakland, California where he is a member of the film programming collective Light Field.

Kate Lain is a Los Angeles-area multidisciplinary artist working in film, video, clay, and other media. Her work explores material, texture, and the ways people engage with the natural world. Lain’s films have screened internationally at festivals including Black Maria, Edinburgh, Videoex, Experiments in Cinema, and Los Angeles Filmforum. Her cyanotypes function as both documents of process and ethereal traces of light and chemistry. She holds an MFA in Science & Natural History Filmmaking from Montana State University.

Elise Rasmussen is a research-driven artist working with lens-based media. She has exhibited internationally at venues including the Brooklyn Museum, Queens Museum, Belvedere 21, Sharjah Art Foundation, and the University of Queensland Art Museum. Her work is in the collections of LACMA and the Museum of Contemporary Photography. She holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has attended residencies worldwide. Her work has been featured in Artforum, ArtReview, Art in America, and BOMB. Born in Edmonton, she lives in Los Angeles.

Michael Robinson is a film, video, and collage artist whose work examines the emotional mechanics of popular media and the instability of shared realities. His work has shown internationally at the Whitney Biennial, London’s National Portrait Gallery, REDCAT, MoMA, and major festivals including Rotterdam, Berlinale, and Sundance. He has received support from Creative Capital, MacDowell, Yaddo,

and the Wexner Center. His work has been discussed in *Art in America*, *Frieze*, *Film Comment*, and *Cinema Scope*. Robinson lives in Los Angeles and teaches in the Film and Video Program at CalArts.

Nicholas Gamso is a writer, curator, and professor in the Visual Culture program at California College of the Arts. He is the author of *Art after Liberalism* (Columbia UP/CBAC, 2022), and his articles and reviews appear in *Afterimage*, *Art Monthly*, *East of Borneo*, *e-flux*, *frieze*, *Texte zur Kunst*, and *X-TRA*. Nick is co-editor, with Jason Fox, of *World Records*, vol. 4, and a contributing editor of *Millennium Film Journal*. In 2024, he won the Wattis Institute's Open Call with a film about the legacy of Hervé Guibert.

Screening:

Did You Know Blue Had No Name?, by Elise Rasmussen
2018, 16mm film transferred to HD Video, color, sound, 7 min.

Did You Know Blue Had No Name? explores epistemological aspects of “blueness” through various historical narratives, examining the relationship between the color blue and mountaineering, early photographic technologies, art history and how knowledge is ascribed and recorded. As a starting point, I investigate 18th century Swiss scientist and alpine enthusiast Horace-Bénédict de Saussure’s cyanometer, a device he created for measuring the blueness of the sky. Saussure’s quest to test his apparatus and theories on blue led to a contest inspiring the first expedition to the summit of Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in the Alps. The quest for blue has likewise had challenges in early photography as blue skies were difficult to record leading to innovations such as split printing and challenging the “truthfulness” embedded in the medium. Similarly, in ancient texts, no word for blue exists. The word blue only makes an appearance in recorded language after the color could be extracted for pigment. This project weaves together these and other histories of blue, commenting on issues of [in]visibility, innovation, conquest and the contest. This work is the first in a trilogy of works exploring histories related to the Alps preceding *The Year Without a Summer* and *Nostalgia: A Return to the Alps in Five Vignettes*.

““Beauty is at the core of Rasmussen’s work, however she also invites viewers to consider their relationship with the land, the memories it holds, and the stories it tells. Both intimate and expansive, her work captures the landscapes she traversed, the complex nature of their use, and the personal emotions they evoke.” — Camila Galaz, MFJ 80

The Dark, Krystle, by Michael Robinson
2013, HD, color, sound, 9:34

The cabin is on fire! Krystle can't stop crying, Alexis won't stop drinking, and the fabric of existence hangs in the balance, again and again and again. — MR

“Experimental video artist Michael Robinson has been celebrated for his deft skill at making new meanings out of old footage and creating narratives from non-narrative material....”*The Dark, Krystle* (2013) weaves footage from the legendary 1980s nighttime soap opera *Dynasty* into an amusing but also critical commentary on sociocultural constructions of white womanhood in the media...

“By the end of the video, Robinson has built a narrative arc and dramatic tension by repurposing the archetypal behavior of these female characters in a way that imbues their recurrent, hollow gestures with emotional depth. What at first appears funny—the ostentatious period clothing, jewelry, makeup, and hairstyles and over-the-top melodramatic acting—turns sinister. The burning house that links the montages of Krystle and Alexis lends a dark, malevolent undercurrent to the work that suggests the women are literally and figuratively trapped. They are surrounded by the fire but also confined by the trappings of capitalist, consumerist upper-class lifestyles and imprisoned by stereotypical roles signifying good and evil or Madonna and whore, played out in reductive, repetitious manners of hysteria and bitchiness. The portrayals of Krystle and Alexis thus alert us to the larger societal implications of a campy soap opera. As Robinson comments, “We’re perhaps able to more clearly question what those gestures and archetypes mean. It remains funny, fast and fun, but there’s a lot to be said about what those women represented in 1980s culture, and much of that is quite dark and complicated.” —Kanitra Fletcher
<https://landmarks.utexas.edu/video-art/dark-krystle>

Memory Theater 2, by Claudia Hart

2022-23/25, digital, color, sound, 5 minutes. Los Angeles premiere!

In *Memory Theater 2*, Claudia Hart combines experimental avatar dance, video, and earlier works culled from her personal archive spanning 35 years of continuous media-art practice. Hart mixes a recorded sound collage featuring samples from Edmund Campion's audio compositions produced and recorded for their collaborative performances with a Bach piece used as rehearsal music by Kristina Isabelle, whose motion-captured "stilt" dancing is embodied by Hart's Bauhaus-inspired avatars. The background video in the scene shows the initial live motion-capture session. In this version of the piece, Hart removed her normal voice-over so that the avatar dance can fully embody her narrative.

“Hart’s work utilizes commercial and open-source software tools (e.g., Blender, Maya, and ChatGPT), but from a perspective of bodily movement rather than surface special effects ... Her uncanny figures are wholly expressive. They drift, warp, and decay, seemingly under the spell of unknown pressures, whether internal or environmental...”
— Corina Kirsch, MFJ 82

A Sinking Feeling, by Zachary Epcar

2024, 16mm on video, sound, 21 min. Los Angeles premiere.

Three white collar commuters recall an experience of getting trapped on a train in San Francisco's transbay tunnel, each drifting into fantasies of sex, death, and other intimacies with strangers.

“Epcar revels in American corporate gothicism. Full of unseemly black granite and vinyl, his film recalls *Basic Instinct* or *American Psycho*, but also the unglamorous cultures of tech and finance in our century.” — Nicholas Gamso, MFJ 83 (forthcoming, April 2026)

Lil Tokyo Story, by Matthew Lax

2016, digital, b&w, sound, 4 min.

A shot-for-shot remake of the climax of *Tokyo Story* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1953). *Screen Left* uses the original Japanese text delivered orally, with subtitles literally translated into English. *Stage Right* repeats the scene, with the English subtitles authored by the Criterion Collection delivered orally, with subtitles literally translated back to Japanese. Flanked by abstract “pillow shots” of Los Angeles, the roles of Noriko and Kyoko are played by two Japanese male immigrants in drag, the two English/Japanese versions play against one another, falling in and out of sync rhythmically, textually and spatially.

A Real Christmas, by Justin Jinsoo Kim

2025, HD, color, sound 12 min. California premiere!

“In *A Real Christmas*, Kim’s Google search for Lee Kyung Soo, an orphan adopted by a U.S. Navy officer during the Korean War, yields scattered news clippings giving fitful shape to his biography. The excerpts are overlaid with simple shapes that flit across the screen to the tinny music of American cartoons ... Americana with an undercurrent of melancholy.” ...Kim’s playful manipulation of Americana is shaded by a steady undercurrent of melancholy. The black triangles and ovals that flit across the screen are visual interventions that evoke a childlike quality, embodying the boy whose archival existence ends in 1967 after he became a scene camera operator for the army. This ironic wrinkle underscores how Lee’s perception of the world remained firmly contained under the umbrella of empire, and Kim’s implication of technology within the obfuscation of his subject’s identity confronts a timely topic with a lightness of touch.” — Nick Kouhi, MFJ 82 online

Water Mining (Eaton Canyon), by Kate Lain

2021, cyanotype and plant material on 16mm film, recorded and finished digitally, color, sound, 5:10. Los Angeles theatrical premiere

“*Water Mining (Eaton Canyon)*” is a nature film made with a canyon, rather than about it. Its images come from a combination of cyanotype, a blue-and-white photographic process dating back to the 1840s, and actual plant material adhered to physical film. I hand-coated clear 16mm leader with cyanotype chemicals, then used sunlight to

make photogram-style, cameraless exposures of plant matter I had gathered in and around the stream in Eaton Canyon, a fairly short distance upstream from where the Eaton Fire of January 2025 started. Cyanotypes are processed using water, and for this film, I used stream water that I had also collected from the canyon. The sounds are layered field recordings of Eaton Canyon, of the film being projected, and of my home, which uses water from Eaton Canyon. I approached the film as though the stream, what was in it, its surroundings, the film, the chemicals, and I were all extensions of one another. - KL

“Lain visited the San Gabriel Mountains for Water, a film that centers on a retired water mine in Eaton Canyon, site of one of the horrific LA wildfires which burned over 14,000 acres last year. Using stream water, Lain developed film strips coated in cyano-chemicals and embedded sagebrush, mugwort, buckwheat, alder leaves. The result is a vibrant display of cracked and jeweled blues and brown splays, indicative of plant juices mingling in cyan zones.”
— Elizabeth Lowe, MFJ 82

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Coming soon:

Jan 25- Filmforum 50, program 6: Embodied Filmmaking: 8 Films by Shirley Clarke + Book Launch and Discussion, at the Philosophical Research Society

Feb 1 - Filmforum 50, program 7: Films by Stan Brakhage & Phil Solomon, music by Ulrich Krieger, Michael Pisano-Liu, Eyvind Kang, At 2220 Arts + Archives

Feb 8 – Step Across the Border, by Nicolas Humber and Werner Penzel, with Fred Frith in person! At 2220 Arts + Archives

Feb 15 - Filmforum 50, program 8: Morgan FiFishersher, At 2220 Arts + Archives

Memberships available, \$40 Student \$75 Individual, \$125 Dual, or \$225 Silver Nitrate

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