

screen zine



Film
as Art
/
Art
as Film

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Traditionally, cinemas have likely conditioned an approach to moving images within us — nine times out of ten in a darkened room with the flickering of lights before us, we expect a narrative trajectory to ‘make sense’ of what we see.

And that one of tenth time in a random encounter with moving images in a gallery or museum, we’re left scratching our Keanu-damned heads — *what was that all about?*

So, in this exciting, spanking inaugural issue of *SCREEN ZINE*, let us walk you beyond the lens of song, sagas and sequels to make the film experience in museums cool again. We’ll show you how to transmute people to potatoes while walking the proverbial mile in filmmaker-turned-artist **Agnès Varda**’s shoes. We’ll map the relationship between the moving image and the museum space. We’ll shine the spotlight on some of the most radical, transformative film works to grace the galleries. And finally, we’ll exchange some rapid-fire barbs with local artist, musician and filmmaker **Zai Tang**.

Screen Zine is part of ArtScience Museum’s *ArtScience* on *Screen* programme.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING

Agnès

Artist, filmmaker, and occasional potato — such was the varied, colourful life of one Agnès Varda.

One of the criminally under-appreciated pioneers of the 1960s La Nouvelle Vague arthouse cinema movement who, in her twilight years received Cannes and Academy honours (frankly, very overdue!), Varda enjoyed a late career resurgence as an artist — and a meme — at the tender age of 75.

Even with the late industry praises heaped upon her, Varda was never one for glorious prestige.

I never
did it for
honour
or money,



she said in an interview after her honorary Oscar. Indeed, her enormous body of work — all in one way or another era-defining in its reflection of the anxieties and resplendence of human existence, was powered by the same playful frankness of her personality — curiosity.

Varda was endlessly curious of people. An almost insatiable

desire to observe, document and discover stories behind complete strangers she chanced on the streets (which she would affectionately call, her 'theatre'), to give many faces to the faceless, the hidden, and the unrepresented. And it is in these complexities of understanding the many facets of humanity, Varda became obsessed with new ways of seeing.

Tate(r) Modern

New ways of seeing birthed new ways of doing — and in 2003 Varda had her first major exhibition at the Venice Biennale adapting her critically acclaimed feature doc *The Gleaners and I* (2000) into the playful installation *Patatutopia* (2003) featuring 700 pounds worth of potatoes. And of course, a looping triptych of three moving images.

The Gleaners and I is a sobering film about the mostly invisible scavenging community where Varda uncovered unlikely and unexpected heroes hidden in plain sight.

And for *Patatutopia*, Varda riffed on the ideas albeit making the very sensible jump from people to potatoes. Or was it the other way round?



Close-ups of a variety of tubers in various states of decay fill the three screens. Can the humble potato really ransom your undivided attention on loop? Yet without plots, dialogue, music, sound or flash to distract the viewer, what is immediately boring becomes increasingly fascinating — the eye searches for other things: size, shape, form, texture. Homogeneity transforms into variety. And then the unthinkable comes to mind — ‘if I were a potato, what potato will I be? Smooth yet rooted? Lyrically waxy? Ruddy with a hint of spuddy?’ Under Varda’s artistic starch, the potato becomes the unlikely hero of vegetables.

But consider this — would you pay folding money to observe potatoes for two odd hours in a cinema? Likely not. Cinema has its own rules as much as the gallery that are governed by preconceptions.

And Varda’s truth is much simpler — there is no prejudice behind curiosity. Curiosity is humanity at its most basic, one that asks rather than demands, empathises rather than criticises, and more importantly – keeps you rooted for and like the humble potato.

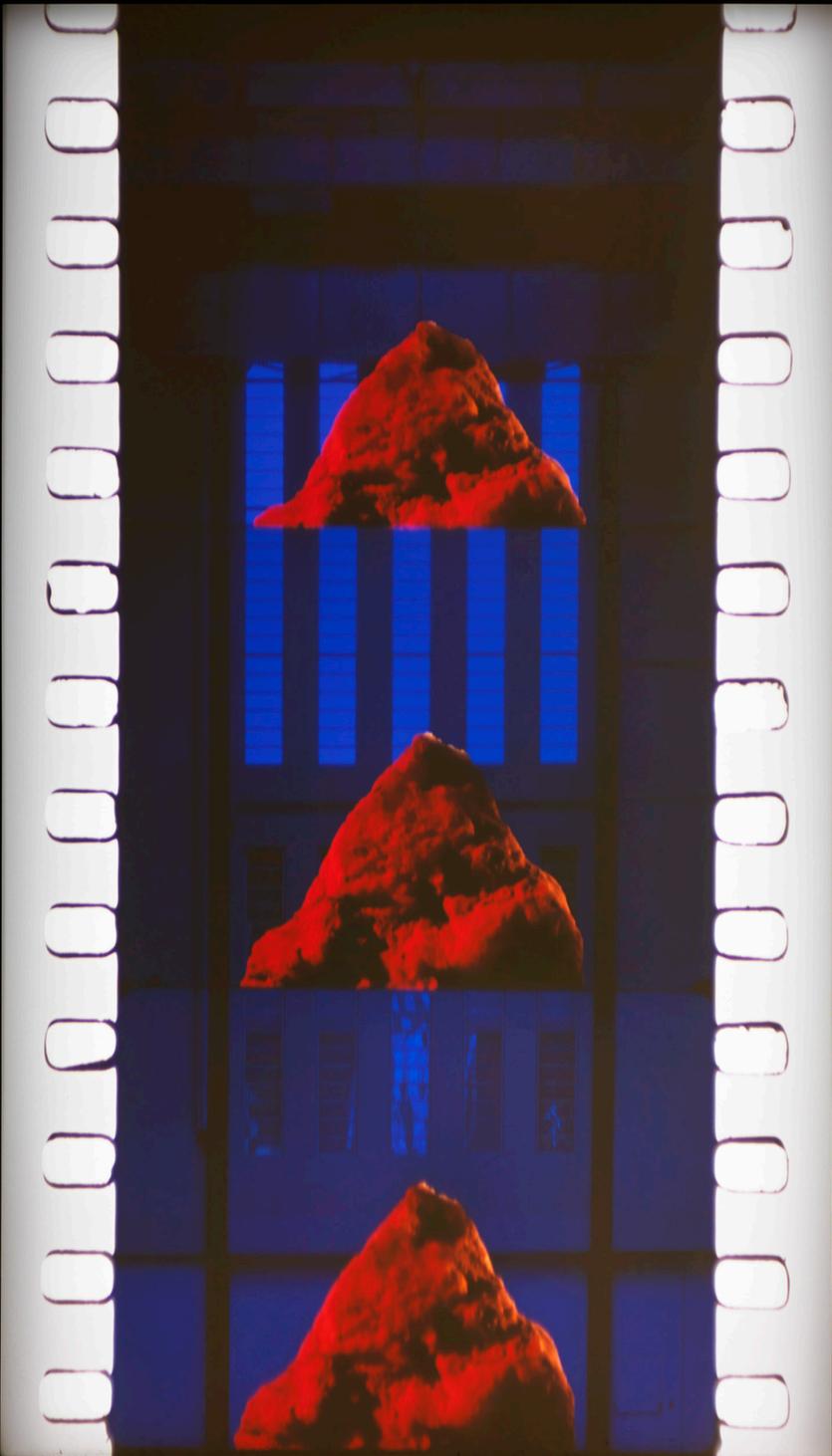
Reimagining Films in Museums

The aim is
to attempt to
reach the limits
of abstraction,
which is
naturally
an endless
endeavour.

Takashi Makino



Takashi Makino, *Deerbit* (2013). Image courtesy of the artist



Spaces Places

Where conventional cinema architecture can be homogenetically limiting, museums on the other hand present themselves as exciting blank canvases for experimental new approaches — with correspondingly exhilarating results.

Here, space can become the work — and unlocking further endless possibilities and amorphous qualities across other museum venues. Each experience becomes as unique as the individual viewing it.

In Takashi Makino's *Deorbit*

(2013) and Tacita Dean's *FILM* (2011), both works are projected vertically to remarkably towering effect — made possible through the generous use of space afforded by their corresponding museums: The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (NL) and Tate Modern (UK) respectively.

The plentiful heft in these spaces, coupled by the off-kilter orientations then also unravel a new, magical dimension to each work that is felt as much as seen — a blitzy, soul-rattling void of the cosmos for *Deorbit* and the playful, skeedaddling collage of mischief in *FILM*.

Cinema of Senses

Given the more interactive nature of museums, film works have evolved outside their narrative zones to more transcendental experiences — we're talking about giving projected light different textures like Anthony McCall's *Solid Light* series; or creating a film for closed eyes like Sophia Brous, Dave Harrington and Wild Dog International's reimagining of Brion Gysin and William Burroughs' seminal invention, the Dreamachine.

Creating the illusion of physical density through mist and beams from a film projector, McCall sculpts light into art that you can 'touch' and disrupt — allowing one to cease being an observer and take on a transmutor's role.

And in the recent adaptation of *Dream Machine* (right), a high-flicker series of moving images tune a veiled state of 'blindness' to a lie-down experience. Viewers can still sense movement through light indirectly and are ushered into a meditative state through the crossing disciplines of music, noise art and light.



Image courtesy of Sophia Brous. Photograph by Walter Włodarczyk.

Moving Image

Art can often leave a lasting impression on its viewer. Here are our picks on some of the most moving and transformative pieces ever made through the filmic transmutation of light, colour and sound by artists we have proudly worked with.

akomfrah

JOHN AKOMFRAH

Purple (2017)

Comprised of hundreds of hours of archival footage, newly shot film and a hypnotic score, John Akomfrah's *Purple* addresses climate change and humanity's destructive impact on the planet. The work confronts viewers in its immersive six-channel video installation, engendering multiple narratives that weave through human lives and disappearing landscapes. A collective and somber reflection on a dying planet, *Purple* is also the colour of mourning in Ghana, where Akomfrah was born.

SHOWN AT ARTSCIENCE MUSEUM IN

2219: *Futures Imagined* exhibition,
2019 – 2020

Image courtesy of Marina Bay Sands®



SUKI CHAN

Lucida (2017)

Uncovering the curious, complex relationship between the human eye, the brain and vision, *Lucida* is a precarious tapestry of images stitched together by interior architectural spaces, bio-medical research and individual testimonies. In conveying how the brain processes the outside world, the work invites acute awareness of these perceptual processes to the viewer by bringing them all — including the flaws, blemishes, shortcomings and assumption — right to the forefront.

SHOWN AT ARTSCIENCE MUSEUM IN

ArtScience on Screen: Seeing Systems,
2018

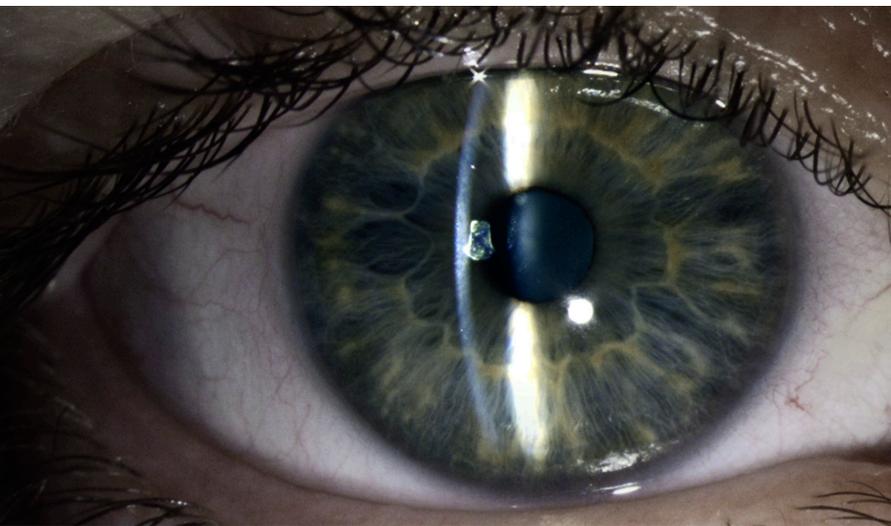


Image courtesy of the artist



Image courtesy of Marina Bay Sands®

RYOJI IKEDA

data.tron [WUXGA version] (2011)

Data and art collide in this futuristic digital projection by Ryoji Ikeda, where each pixel of the image is composed from a combination of pure mathematics and the vast sea of data present in the world. As data is seamlessly projected onto the gallery wall, the viewer leaves feeling infinitesimal in the face of data's seemingly infinite scale.

SHOWN AT ARTSCIENCE MUSEUM IN

Big Bang Data exhibition, 2016

ryoji

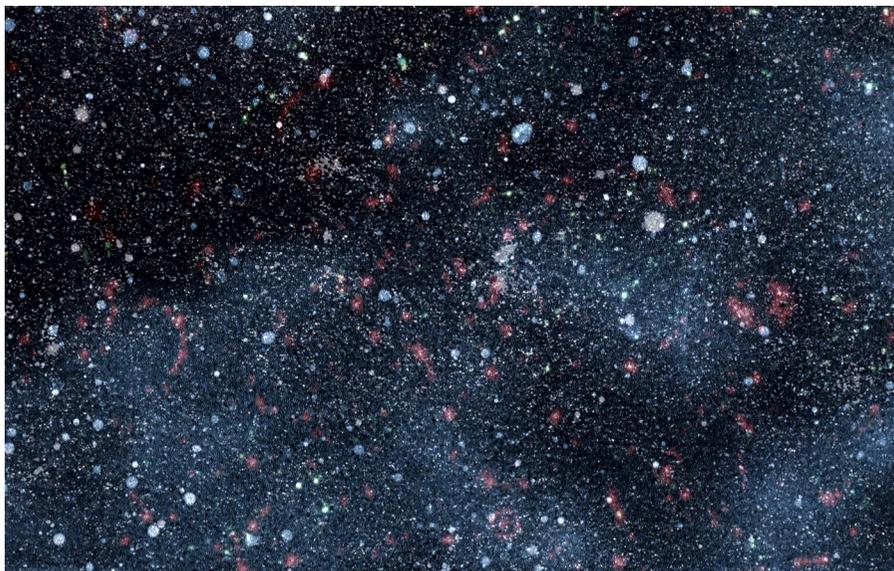


Image courtesy of the artist

TAKASHI MAKINO

Space Noise (2015)

Space Noise is a blend of analogue and digital renderings of outer space, a truly cinematic journey of cosmic proportions. Makino's obsessive use of layering and light nestles the viewer in a mesmerising vacuum between the work and the space in which it sits in. Coupled by the sensorial blitz of mangled audio sampled from space station recordings of cosmic movements, it is truly a transcendental finger of the pulse of the universe.

SHOWN AT ARTSCIENCE MUSEUM IN

ArtScience on Screen:

Look at the Earth from the Universe, 2017



Photo by Colin Davison

LYNETTE WALLWORTH

Invisible by Night (2004)

An interactive video installation which allows the viewer to quietly respond, interrupt or disrupt the projection of an eternally pacing, life-sized woman; *Invisible by Night* integrates gesture into its riveting presentation to create powerfully moving connections with the artwork and the viewer. A subtle, phantomly exploration of compassion for those who silently suffer among us, the piece is a tender tribute to empathy, transient beauty, and humanity we observe in everyday life.

Lynette Wallworth's installation, *Hidden/Depths* (not pictured) was part of *The Deep* exhibition in 2015.

lynette

takashi

Rapid-Fire Questions with **ZAI TANG**

Zai Tang is an artist, composer and sound designer based in Singapore. His practice employs a wide range of analogue and digital technologies in experimenting with different ways to translate recorded sound into visual phenomena.



Image courtesy of White Room Studio

Ten words or less to describe:

Music vs Film as an artistic medium

Fluid Affects vs Concrete Imaginaries

The craziest moving image work you've ever seen

Arnont Nongyao (Live)

Criminally underrated film

Berberian Sound Studio

Your proudest work to date

***Escape Velocity III & IV
at Singapore Biennale 2019***

About *ArtScience on Screen*

ArtScience on Screen explores the intersection between art and science using moving image, video and film. *ArtScience on Screen* forms the backbone of the museum's dedicated film programming, and is part of Marina Bay Sands' ongoing commitment to the local and international film culture and community. In addition to screenings, Level 4 of ArtScience Museum will also host regular press conferences, dialogue sessions and masterclasses with acclaimed filmmakers and artists, with the aim to inspire audiences to discover art and science through film and moving image.

About ArtScience Museum

ArtScience Museum is an iconic cultural landmark in Singapore. Our mission is to explore where art, science, culture and technology come together. It is here at the intersection of art and science that innovation and new ideas are formed. We have held large-scale exhibitions by some of the world's best known artists including Leonardo da Vinci, Salvador Dalí, Andy Warhol, Vincent Van Gogh and M.C. Escher since opening in February 2011. In addition, we have presented significant exhibitions that explore aspects of science including big data, particle physics, paleontology, marine biology, cosmology and space exploration.



**ArtScience
Museum**
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