

**Los Angeles Filmforum and Livonian Cinema present  
Verge: New Films by Amy Halpern  
Saturday September 16, 2023, 7:30 pm  
At the Zorthian Ranch, Altadena**

Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest running organization dedicated to weekly screenings of experimental film, documentaries, video art, and experimental animation. 2023 is our 48th year. [www.lafilmforum.org](http://www.lafilmforum.org)

Special thanks to David LeBrun, Canyon Cinema, Elena Duque, the Zorthian family, Marlon and Phil of the Zorthian Ranch, and (S8) Mostra de Cinema Periférico de A Coruña, Spain

In 2022 we lost our great and good friend, filmmaker Amy Halpern. We presented three retrospective screenings earlier this year, partnering with the Academy Museum and the UCLA Film & Television Archive, but we felt we would host another screening, mostly of her new films, in an outdoor space accessible to everyone. We found the amazing Zorthian Ranch in the hills of Altadena and hope you can join us for this very special show.

Amy was the most distinctive, loving, creative, enthusiastic, vivacious, and graceful person we knew, a joyful presence at many many screenings through the years, a best friend to dozens of people. Her eyes would glow and smile widen when approaching to attend a show and when conversing with those who had risen to the challenge of making a personal film. She was a crucial presence in the alternative film world of this city for over 40 years, and her loss leaves an unfillable void. But her art and vision live, and we can share our grief by seeing the world as she saw it, and do our best to be vessels carrying her love and spirit to others and through the rest of our lives. – Adam Hyman

“The Los Angeles-based filmmaker from New York, Amy Halpern, is the hand behind a bewitching and powerful group of films that harness cinema's associative and sensory power to the utmost. Halpern, who began making films in the early seventies, uses light, the elements (substances and objects of different densities, textures and colours) and different kinds of beings in films with a special conception of framing and mise en scène, establishing powerful primary associations in the montage. There are physical sensations of all calibres covering all the senses; synaesthesia, gestures and sensuality flow together in compositions that sometimes suggest tales on the fly. It is a set in which sound (or silence) sometimes intervenes in imaginative and unexpected ways, with poetic titles adding another layer of meaning. Films in 16mm almost always concentrate on a single motif or on a carefully selected group of interconnected images. This is rooted in the symbology of such images, and in the timeless magnetism emanating from them.

“Halpern began making 8mm films in 1972 and moved to Los Angeles in 1974, where she studied film at UCLA. She has alternated her own 16mm filmmaking with work on other productions in and out of Hollywood as a director of photography, lighting and in the sphere of special effects. She has also collaborated with other filmmakers, as in her participation in films like *My Brother's Wedding* by Charles Burnett, *The Decay of Fiction* by Pat O'Neill and *Illusions* by Julie Dash, and in the early 1970s in Ken and Flo Jacobs' 3D shadowplay group, the New York Apparition Theater. She has also worked alongside the likes of Shirley Clarke,

Chick Strand and Barbara Hammer, and with her colleague David Lebrun on various films, as well as some of the recent light shows by the psychedelic expanded film collective Single Wing Turquoise Bird. She studied dance, an art she practiced alongside Anna Sokolow and Lynda Gudde. She has also worked as an archivist, programmer and founder of the legendary Collective for Living Cinema and the Los Angeles Independent Film Oasis, and as a lecturer in cinema at the University of Southern California, UCLA and other institutions.

“The program we are presenting today covers her past and present filmography.

Invocation (1982) introduces us to the session by concentrating on the gestures of two hands that move, stroke us and drag us from out of the darkness. They are Halpern’s own hands (who sees the film as “a temporary sculpture in space”) inviting us into her domain. Next is Palm Down (2012), a film that proves the power of cinema based on footage of a palm tree being cut down against an implacable blue California sky. The action of inverting and seeing the action in its simplicity demonstrates the potentials of the matter we are dealing with.

The rest of the program [which Amy named Verge for its premiere screening in Spain, at (S8) Mostra de Cinema Periférico de A Coruña, last year] presents a series of films finished before and during the pandemic. Many of them will be seen for the first time in the world here. Most are unique images and gestures, like 16mm miniatures: a curtain moving in the breeze; the lights projected by trees pierced by the sun; portraits of people, like her mother, and Jane Wodening (AKA Jane Brakhage). There are atavistic actions that unite us with the entire history of human civilization. In short, it is a look inside a particular cinematographic and symbolic universe, that of an artist who should be on any hypothetical list of the most influential filmmakers of recent decades, if only we had been aware of her films earlier. - Elena Duque, (S8) Mostra de Cinema Periférico de A Coruña, Spain <https://s8cinema.com/>

Screening, all on 16mm

TRT: 71 minutes plus a reel change

#### INVOCATION

1982 | USA | 16mm | 2 min.

A temporary sculpture which exists only as long as the hands describe it, and maybe briefly afterwards as an after-image in the eye. (Amy Halpern)

#### SLOW FIREWORKS

2019 | USA | 16mm | 2 min.

Papyrus, light, wind. (Amy Halpern)

#### GINKO YELLOW

2022 | USA | 16mm | 5 min.

Yellow, the color. (Amy Halpern)

#### MY MINK (Unowned Luxuries #2)

2019 | USA | 16mm | 4 min.

UNOWNED LUXURIES #3

2020 | USA | 16mm | 2 min.

The Unowned Luxuries films consider forms of possession—through one’s eyes; and thoughts on other ways of “owning”. (Amy Halpern)

# 27

2019 | USA | 16mm | 3 min.

With Caroline McCrystle Marcantoni.

NEWT LEADERS

2020 | USA | 16mm | 5 min.

Presents the physically necessary film “leaders”; at the front and back end of movies as aesthetic in themselves. (Amy Halpern)

VERGE (for my sisters)

2022 | USA | 16mm | 6 min.

The horizon like a blade, constant across California’s landscapes—from the ocean to the desert and back to the ocean. (Amy Halpern)

PALM DOWN

2012 | USA | 16mm | 6 min.

Two palindromes. One resurrection. No happy ending. (Amy Halpern)

JANE, LOOKING

2020 | USA | 16mm | 2 min.

A portrait of Jane Wodening (Brakhage). “A person who was the subject of the camera for many years looks back at us with an interrogating stare.” (Amy Halpern)

FIRE BELLY

2021 | USA | 16mm | 3 min.

Ancient alchemists believed that salamanders can be reborn from fire, like the phoenix or Christ. They do not survive fire, nor extreme dryness. And they cannot be resurrected after burning. (Amy Halpern)

MA SEWING

2021 | USA | 16mm | 2 min.

My mother, now 94. Filmed more than 30 years ago. (Amy Halpern)

MY DEAR EVAPORANT

2022 | USA | 16mm | 4 min.

Message for a friend. (Amy Halpern)

EMIT A BEAM, SEE A LIGHT

2022 | USA | 16mm | 4 min.

Statement and demonstration.<sup>[1]</sup>Hypothesis and proof. (Amy Halpern)

## 4 FINGERS, 5 TOES

2022 | USA | 16mm | 11 min.

Endangered animals on an endangered medium. A heartbeat in 4/4. Slow cinema with sex scene. (Amy Halpern)

## HULA

2022 | USA | 16mm | 6 min.

With Henry Franklin on bass

Abstract but obvious musical notation featuring palm trees, precise species of Filifera washingtonia—the only native American palm—the fan palm, friend and provider for North American indigenous people

## CHABROT

2022 | USA | 16mm | 4 min.

A private toast. “Faire chabrot or faire chabròl is an ancient Occitanian custom whereby on finishing a soup or broth, one adds red wine to the bowl to dilute the remnants and brings it to the lips to drink in big gulps.” (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia) Inspired by a random encounter with this Wikipedia entry while looking for a listing of the films of Claude Chabrol.

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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:

Sept 17, 1:00 pm - Tabita Rezaire

Sept 24 - Mike Stoltz

Oct 1 – Narcisa Hirsch

Oct 8 – Janie Geiser

Oct 16 – L’Inferno (1911 silent film) with live music by Montopolis

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

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