

# TATE FILM

## **UNDER THE SUN: THE FILMS OF ROSE LOWDER**

17–18 January 2014

Starr Auditorium, Tate Modern

£5 per screening, concessions available



Rose Lowder Bouquet's 11-20 2005-10, film still. Courtesy of the artist/Lightcone, Paris

Brimming with vibrant images of blossoms, orchards, insects and meadows, the works of celebrated filmmaker Rose Lowder explore our relation with and impact on the world. Rare gems selected by Lowder will be shown alongside key works from one of the most distinct bodies of work in French experimental cinema. Grounded in her interest in radical agriculture, colour theory and the landscapes of her adoptive home in the south of France, Lowder is committed to filmmaking as an ecological practice inseparable from her lifelong collecting and championing of non-commercial cinema. Trained as a painter and sculptor in Lima, Peru and London, Lowder turned to research on visual perception which led to experimental filmmaking around 1976 and eventually worked with Jean Rouch on a doctoral thesis. Her engagement with ways of living and filming will be explored alongside the meticulous design, composition and production of her films. The screenings will be introduced and followed by conversations with the artist.

Curated by Anat Pick and George Clark



## PROGRAMME NOTES

### ROSE LOWDER 1

Friday 17 January 2014

19.00–21.00

This selection spans 20 years of Rose Lowder's celebrated filmmaking, featuring beautiful rhythmic editing and demonstrating her rich understanding of colour and landscape. This programme pays particular attention to works directed towards social and ecological politics with films exploring the balance of nature and technology, depictions of agriculture from traditional to organic farms, and exploration of the use of solar energy.

### QUIPROQUO

**Rose Lowder, France 1992,  
16mm, colour, sound, 13 min  
Music: Katie O'Looney**

*Quiproquo* is a dialogue on the balance to be found between nature and social-industrial technology. Made with Lowder's hallmark economy, the film is both a reflection on the potentialities of the medium and an enquiry concerning the implications of the reality portrayed with a critique of contemporary society's dominant choices constantly in the background. Filmed in Berre l'Étang, Bouches du Rhône, in the villages of Orgon, Bouches du Rhône and La Coucourde, Drôme, on the roads to Beaumont-du-Ventoux and Carpentras, Vaucluse, and Tarascon, Bouches du Rhône.



Rose Lowder *Quiproquo* 1992

**LES COQUELICOTS / POPPIES  
Rose Lowder, France 2000, 16mm  
18fps, colour, silent, 2 min 7 sec**

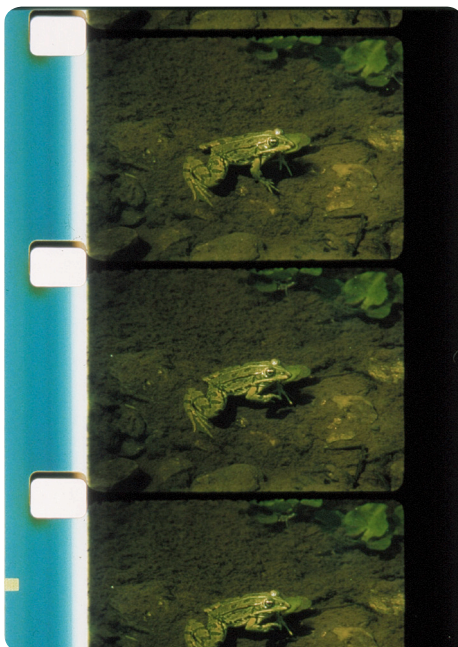
Worn out by the sea, the Sète fishing boats decide to spend a day in the country amongst the poppies surrounding Arles, Bédarrides and the Thouzon Grottos. This film subtly calls attention to the increasing problem of overfishing. A companion piece, *Voiliers et coquelicots* (2001), will be shown in Programme 2.

**HABITAT BATRACIEN  
Rose Lowder, France 2006,  
colour, silent, 8 min 31 sec**

This film of a pond full of frogs found on an organic farm asks the question of how to capture or render visible a moment or place that is alive? How do you connect all the facets that form a living habitat in a particular moment?

**JARDINS DU MARAIS /  
MARSH GARDENS  
Rose Lowder, France 2010,  
16mm, colour, silent, 2 min 30 sec**

This film depicts organic gardens that use renewable energy and only manual machinery. This magnificent garden, in a natural park in Brière, in the Loire-Atlantique region, France, covers over a hectare of land. Its vegetable garden, ornamental garden, small forest and two ponds make up a continuously evolving space, but also a visual jumble of wildlife that we delve into in this cinematographic exploration. The film is made in honor of Annick Bertrand-Gillen and Yves Gillen, the creators of this munificent space in the middle of nature.



Rose Lowder *Habitat Batracien* 2006

**RIEN D'EXTRAORDINAIRE /  
NOTHING SPECIAL BEAU-SITE  
Rose Lowder, France 2010,  
16mm, colour, sound, 1 min 45 sec  
Music: François Alexis Degrenier**

A glimpse of this beautiful spot around the Pension Beau-Site on the Chemin sur Martigny, Switzerland, situated in a hamlet surrounded by snow-capped mountains. The European Ecological hotel is powered by renewable energy, solar panels, source water and serves organic vegetarian food.

**JARDIN DU SEL / SALT GARDEN  
Rose Lowder, France, 2011,  
16mm, colour, sound, 16 min 11 sec  
Music: François Alexis Degrenier**

The production of sea salt flowers is a process of concentration and saturation of seawater to form crystals. The agricultural character of the activity, referenced by the title 'salt garden', is captured in six poetic rolls of Kodachrome film, five based on the sun, the wind and the sea, while the last rests on a small park left fallow.

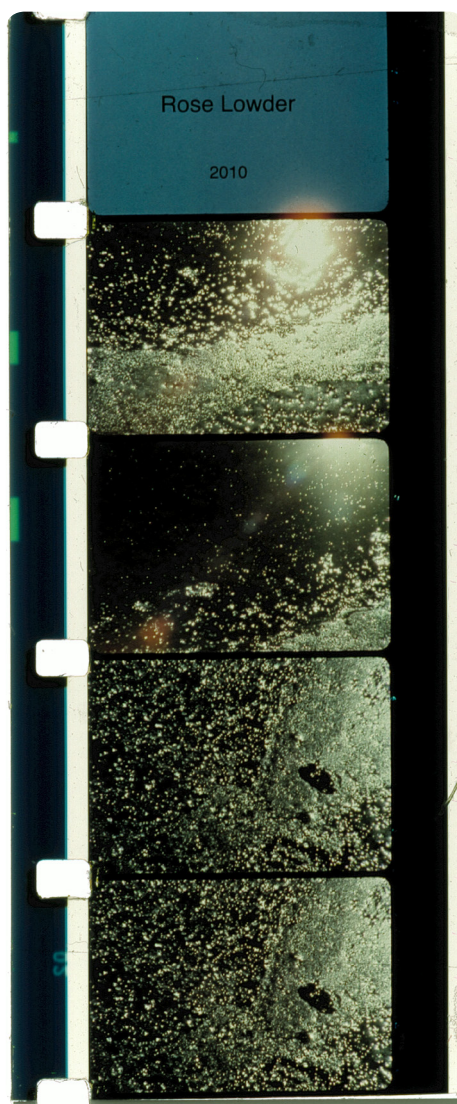


Rose Lowder *Rien d'extraordinaire* 2010

**BEIJING 1988  
Rose Lowder, France 1988-2011,  
16mm, colour, sound, 12 min 17 sec  
Music: François Alexis Degrenier**

Beijing, China filmed in May 1988, a year before the spring 1989 Tiananmen Square rebellion, where the ancient traditional philosophies and social practices confronted the political and economical ideological ambitions of the State.





**SOUS LE SOLEIL / UNDER THE SUN**  
**Rose Lowder, France 2011,**  
**16mm, colour, sound, 3 min 28 sec**  
**Music: François Alexis Degrenier**

Renewable energy in two organic farms: in the heat of summer, solar panel reflections blend with butterflies on flowers and a little bird eating the mulberries.

**SOURCES**  
**Rose Lowder, France 2012,**  
**16mm, colour, sound, 5 min 22 sec**  
**Music: François Alexis Degrenier**

*Sources* originated from Thomas the Gardener's wish to celebrate the 30th anniversary of his making vegetable pâté. Leaving urban life behind in order to renew a relationship with the land, Thomas started up an organic garden in the beautiful area of hot and cold springs, lakes and rivers, in the upper Aude Valley. In the middle of making his pâté, the gardener is surrounded by the sources for his recipes from the rushing water of the Aude river, to the flowers and spices from his garden.

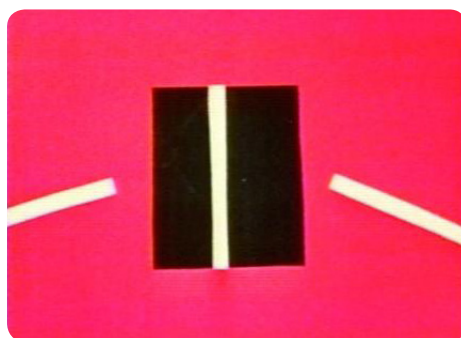
Programme Duration: 65 min

**ROSE LOWDER 2**  
**Saturday 18 January 2014**  
**18.00–20.00**

This programme features a selection of rare gems and classic films hand-picked by Rose Lowder that illuminate her rich engagement with the history of experimental film and her life-long championing of non-commercial cinema. Including celebrated and lesser-known films by filmmakers such as Bruce Baillie, Kurt Kren, Chick Strand and Belgian documentary pioneer Henri Storck. The rare Super 8 films of Jakobois show the influence of Lowder's work, as does Cecile Fontaine's found footage film made with discarded films saved by Lowder and other filmmakers. Animated films show distinct ways of working, from frame by frame drawn animations by Robert Breer to working directly on the film material as in the work of Len Lye.

*'In making this programme, there were too many films that could have gone into it. The choice here has been directed by the economy of the means being an essential criteria for the quality of artistic expression. On one hand I tried to put films that were in the Archives and on the other I wanted to show the diverse ways of making experimental films.'* — Rose Lowder

Titles marked with an \* are films that were bought for the Archives du film expérimental d'Avignon (AFEA), a film collection founded by Rose Lowder in 1976. These works very often came into the AFEA collection before they were deposited with distributor Lightcone or, in a few cases, before they were bought by the Centre Pompidou.



**FORM PHASES IV\***  
**Robert Breer, USA 1954,**  
**16mm, colour, silent, 3 min 30 sec**

The fourth in the *Form Phases* series (1954–56), which reflects Breer's interest in geometric abstraction, combining movement and rhythm with the study of space and form. Breer works at the intersection of the traditions of abstract animation of Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling, and the radical American avant-gardism of Stan Brakhage and Bruce Baillie.

**ALL MY LIFE\***  
**Bruce Baillie, USA 1966,**  
**16mm, colour, sound, 3 min**

Baillie's camera pans along a wooden fence with shrubs and flowers, against the bright skies of Caspar, California. With no human figures in sight, from who and to whom is addressed Ella Fitzgerald's lyric 'all my life, I've been waiting for you'? The fence? The flowers? The sky?

**PARTICLES IN SPACE\***  
**Len Lye, USA 1979,**  
**16mm, black & white, sound, 4 min**

Lye's final film, made when he was 78, uses the method of scratching directly onto the filmstrip, for which Lye is best known. *Particles in Space* explores some 'particularly vibrant, ziggy little images' [Lye]. The soundtrack combines *Jumping Dance Drums* from the Bahamas with drum music by the Yoruba of Nigeria and the sounds of Lye's metal kinetic sculptures *Twister* and *Storm King*.

**A MAN AND HIS DOG OUT FOR AIR\***  
**Robert Breer, USA 1958,**  
**16mm, black & white, sound 3 min**

Ranging between abstraction and figuration, Breer's experimental animation is a joyful invocation of the possibilities of the form: combining representation with pure movement, lines transforming into shapes and figures, blurring the boundary between the cartoonish and the abstract.

**TREE AGAIN\***  
**Kurt Kren, Austria 1978,**  
**16mm, colour, silent, 3 min 46 sec**

Shot as a 'leap of faith' on an out-of-date highly sensitive infrared colour film, Kren knew 'there was little likelihood of anything turning out on the film' [Kren]. He spent several weeks taking a series of shots from the same camera position of a large and splendid tree surrounded by bushes and a stretch of pastureland. *Tree Again* turned out to be one of Kren's most remarkable works — mysterious, colourful, and radiant.

## GUACAMOLE\*

**Chick Strand, USA 1976,  
16mm, colour, sound, 10 min 15 sec**

David E. James described Strand's pioneering cinema as 'an extraordinary sensuous lyricism, simultaneously wanton and disciplined'. One of Strand's mature works, *Guacamole* is a poetic surrealist film about the loss of innocence and the search for the essence of the human spirit.



Chick Strand *Guacamole* 1976

## PLUIE DE ROSES\*

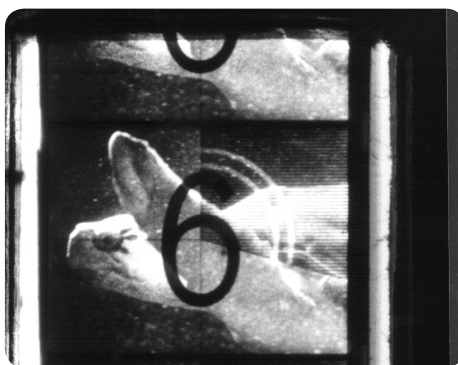
**Jakobois, France 1984/1987,  
Super 8 transferred to 16mm,  
colour, sound, 3 min**

Dedicated to Rose Lowder, *Pluie de Roses* features images from the bridge over Canal Saint-Martin in Paris. The inland waterway vessels 'Rose' and 'Pluie de roses' pass each other. Changes pile up and the camera unravels them, through shooting, for a mise-en-abyme of the fall.

## IMAGES D'OSTENDE / SCENES OF OSTEND

**Henri Storck, Belgium 1929–30,  
16mm 18fps, black & white,  
silent, 15 min**

Unlike the celebration of modern urbanism in the city films of the 20s, Storck's study of the Ostend port and sea focuses on the natural elements — wind, water, light, and sand — that make up the landscape. Humanity is only peripherally present, and the camera is taken instead by the ripples and eddies, the foam blowing over the beach, and the reeds on the sand dunes. A homage to the vibrant materialities of the Ostend shore.



## VOILIERS ET COQUELICOTS / SAILBOATS AND POPPIES

**Rose Lowder, France 2001,  
16mm 18fps, colour, silent, 2 min**

A companion to *Les Coquelicots* (2000) shown in Programme 1, this film sees sailboats and poppies mesh and collide. Little is necessary for everything to appear differently. The date, the hour, the weather, the space's layout, one's glance or presence of mind... can make everything change. The boats sail out of the Vieux port in Marseille to be amongst the poppy fields.

## LA PÊCHE MIRACULEUSE

**Cécile Fontaine, France 1995,  
16mm 18fps, colour, silent, 10 min**

A recycled collage of cinematic ephemera. 'I am a little responsible for its making. Going through the Jardin de Plantes, I noticed that the Musée d'Histoire Naturel had filled a whole skip full of cans of films. Cecile works reusing found footage. Exceptionally, I happened to have a car in Paris so I phoned Cecile, Yann Beauvais, etc., and we all gathered up the films, much to the surprise of the white coated scientists who came out to see what we were doing. It is quite illegal to throw away films like that, and they didn't protest' — Rose Lowder.

## L'ARBRE BLEU

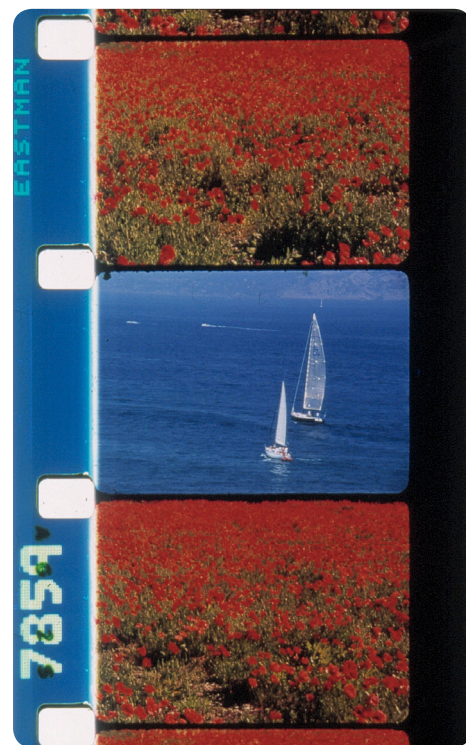
**Marcelle Thirache, France 2001,  
Super 8 transferred to 16mm,  
18fps, silent, 2 min**

'A plane tree filmed from my window on a day with blue sky, onto which I applied ink.' — Marcelle Thirache

## BOUQUETS 11-20

**Rose Lowder, France 2005–10,  
silent 18 or 24 fps, 10 min 30 sec**

*Bouquets 11-20* were filmed at various 'ecological sites' in Italy, Switzerland and France. 'The graphic-aesthetic process is related to the present social/economical context bearing in mind that nearly every civilization disappeared due to major environmental issues and we are, in heading in that direction, repeating history' [Rose Lowder]



Rose Lowder *Voiliers et coquelicots* 2001

## STILL FRAMES

**Emmanuel Lefrant, France 2002,  
16mm, silent, 2 min 44 sec**

'Still Frames' is a laboratory film, conceived while I was finishing *Saraban*. Indeed the two films were produced from the same images. The aim was not only to prove that the same source of image can generate two different films but also to highlight the incidence of light on colour' — Emmanuel Lefrant.

Programme Duration: 73 min

All images:  
Courtesy of Lightcone, Paris

*Under the Sun: The Films of Rose Lowder* is organized in association with Screening Nature, an AHRC funded project at the Department of Film Studies at Queen Mary, University of London, and the University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury.

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Thoughts, comments, reviews?

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