September 5
Portrait of Jason
Dir. Shirley Clarke. 1967. 105mins.

Hailed by the Village Voice as saying “more about race, class, and sexuality than just about any movie before or since,” and described by Ingmar Bergman as “the most extraordinary film I’ve seen in my life,” Clarke’s confrontational portrait makes a radical experiment of uncovering what Peggy Phelan called the “endless theatre of everyday life.” Jason Hollander, the billboard at the center of Clarke’s film, was recorded over 12 hours, recalling his life as a cabaret performer and sex- worker, slipping in and out of the personas he created and his relationship to his time on New York’s notorious counter culture. Portrait re-creates the profound life of a man who, unable to perform on stage, popularizes his own life with a series of masks.

September 12
Tongues Untied

Announced from the floor of Congress as obscene, Marlon Riggs’ account of gay Black life in America was made at the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis and in the paranoiac cultural climate of the late 80s culture wars. Inventively deploying a lesson of documentary styles, Riggs called it “his gift to the community,” completed before succumbing to complications from AIDS. Eternally paced and brimming with anger, poetry, and eroticism, it has endured as a classic of the New Queer Cinema and a landmark moment in self-representation from the margins of American life.

September 19
Symbiopsychotaxiplasm
Dir William Greaves. 1968. 75mins.

Exploring the limits of film’s capacity to capture reality, William Greaves’ master-class in documentary reflexivity plays out like a cinematic rendering of Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle. After recruiting students from New York’s Art’s Studio to perform a simple scene, Greaves tasked a second crew to record the first crew, and then a third crew to record the second, creating layers of fact and fiction that unravel like Russian Dolls. Dubbed “the most versatile and durable of African-American independents” by J.Hoberman, Greaves revelatory experiment fudged into obscurity after its completion, only to find widespread critical acclaim 25 years later. A con- temporizing masterpiece that constructs the hierarchal power dynamics of cinematic production, Symbiopsychotaxiplasm presents a mandala for the potentialities of truth on film.

September 26
Up Right
Dir. Nick Cave. 2011. 10 min.

4:30pm (note special time)

Nick Cave, Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation Visiting Artist in Residence Fall 2017, in person.

Up Right is “a full to arms, head and heart.” This work documents a place that invites viewers into the space of transformation as one set of performers “dres” another set of performers, “preparing them in mind, body and spirit to face the forces that stand in the way of selfhood...to enter a world they have complete control over...like warriors of their own destiny.” This short film will be followed by a discussion with Artist in Residence Nick Cave.

October 3
Meeting Outsiders and The Ax Fight
Meeting Outsiders
Dr. Dominique Galston and Vincent Carelli. 1993. 22mins.

The Ax Fight
Dir. Timothy Aisch and Napoleon-Gagnon. 1975. 30mins.

The sins and virtues of ethnographic documentary are on full display in this program, examining representations of indigenous tribes in South America. Documenting an astonishing meeting between two groups of indigenous Brazilians, one that has assimilated western cultural traditions, and one that has only recently been contacted by outsiders, Meeting Outsiders articulates both the trauma and comedy of indigenous encounters with different societies. An attempt at fusing science and documentary, The Ax Fight was made by anthropologists attempting to document the Yanomami tribe, assumed to be a violent indigenous group into the Southern Venezuela. One of the most controversial ethnographic documentaries ever made, The Ax Fight has been the subject of widespread criticism due to the perceived off-screen influence the film crew had on the subjects they studied.

October 17
Psycho-Ethnographies
The Devil’s Toy
Dir. Claude Jutra. 1966. 15mins.

Land Without Bread
Dir. Luis Bunuel. 1937. 27mins.

The Subconscious Art of Graffiti Removal
Dir. Matt McCormick. 2001. 16mins.

Comedy, satire, and absurdist boil over in these three pseudo-documentaries from across the 20th century. In Land Without Bread, Luis Buñuel takes a Surrealist approach to the ethnographic film, documenting the region of Las Hurdes in a manner subtly mocking and parodying the “travelogue” films popular at the time. The film was banned by the Spanish government for many years. Claude Jutra’s exploration of the love that does not speak its name is wielded as a carnival tale against the newly popular Popularism in late-60s Montreal. Finally, McCormick’s deadpan essay film The Subconscious Art of Graffiti Removal makes the tongue-in-cheek argument that municipal efforts by Portland, Oregon to mask and erase all traces of graffiti should be seen as an important new movement in modern art.

October 24
Videograms of a Revolution

Beginning at the precise moment when Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu gazes into a crowd of 11,000 people and realizes he was staring at an uprising, Videograms underlines the power of media to narrate history—for better, or for worse. After storming the Communist Party Headquarters during the democratic revolution in 1989, Romanian dissidents all raced to the country’s central television station, in an effort to declare the country free and frame the event in their own ideological terms. Utilizing footage recorded by citizens on the ground and assembl- ing the newly unrestrained television broadcasts, Harun Farocki and Andrea Ujică’s vivid essay film explores the fraught dynamics between politics and moving images after state propaganda could no longer be believed, and political upheaval appeared inevitable.

October 31
Beirut Diaries
Dir. Mai Mandel. 2006. 80 min.

Colgate/Flaherty Global Filmmaker Residency Screening with Filmmaker Mai Mandel in person.

November 28
Resurrecting Hassan
Dir. Scott McFadden. 2016. 100mins.

Filmmaker Carlo Guillermo Proto in person.

Few documentaries in the last decade have compelled the emotional nakedness and untethered intensity observed in Resurrecting Hassan. The members of the Hurtling family are all blind, making their living baking cookies in the Montreal metro for tips. Following the death of their youngest child, the family becomes entangled with a faith healer and mystic who claims to be capable of resurrecting the dead. With unfailing candor, Proto attends to the everyday lives of the Hurtlings, as they struggle to remain tethered to one another in the face of catastrophe.