Documentary Educational Resources

New Releases | Spring & Summer 2011
Framed by the seasons, Mi Chacra chronicles a year in the life of a young man named Feliciano, from planting to the harvest, and through a season of work as a porter on the Inca Trail. We see the processes, passed from father to son for generations, of planting crops, tending to them, and harvesting. We witness the transformation of the spectacular landscape from the browns and yellows of the dry season to the vivid greens of the rainy season and the harvest. And we witness the back-breaking work of the porters as they make their way through the mountains on the trail to Machu Picchu. We learn of Feliciano’s driving desire to see his son study in the city and become something more than he has become, and witness a year in its pursuit.

Interwoven with Feliciano’s story is the complex history of his people. In his often poetic native language of Quechua, Feliciano recounts the history of the Incas, the conquest by the Spanish, and the years of the haciendas.

The film paints a vivid picture of this man’s life, of the conflict between his love of the land and the work he has learned from his father, and the desire to see his son living what he sees as a better life in the city.

Based on Thomas Frank’s best-seller, What’s the Matter with Kansas? shows how Kansas transformed from an outpost of radicalism to a bastion of hard-core conservatism. Unforgettable characters and their stories shed new light on our nation’s political divide.

★★★½ One of the Ten Best Documentaries of 2009... I’ve rarely seen a documentary quite like it. It has a point to make but no ax to grind. It doesn’t connect the dots, nor does it need to. It takes no cheap shots. It is all there to see.” — Roger Ebert

“Other documentarians have approached the denizens of the heartland as if on safari. The filmmakers spend enough time with those profiled to get a sense of what led them to where they are.” — Variety

“Winston presents us with a broad view of Kansas and Kansans. He’s chosen to interview people in depth and let them speak at length. That’s the mark of a good documentary.” — Time Out Chicago

“Carefully cultivating a nonjudgmental tone that’s largely free of condescension – no small achievement – the filmmaker’s approach pays off in the final reel, when everyone’s dilemmas touch us.” — Village Voice

“A funny, smart and important look at the intersection of religion and politics in America today. It’s a movie that needs to be seen in both red and blue states, by liberals and conservatives alike.” — In These Times
POLYPHONY OF CERIANA: THE COMPAGNIA SACCO
by Hugo Zemp
color, 16:9 widescreen, 74 min, 2010

In Ceriana, a village in West Liguria on the southern slopes of the Italian Alps descending to the Mediterranean coast, people love to sing. Among not less than five choirs, The Compagnia Sacco, founded in 1926, is the most committed to preserve the traditional drone polyphony. Different from Corsican and Sardinian polyphonies (but similar to East Georgian table songs), the local three-part singing is characterized by two solo voices and the drone of the choir.

The American ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax made sound recordings in Ceriana in 1954. He invited The Compagnia Sacco in 1975 to the USA, as a prelude to the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration of Independence. This one-month tour in America was the starting point for its international reputation. However, unlike other choirs of the region, the members of The Compagnia Sacco do not sing under the direction of a conductor and do not limit themselves to giving concerts and producing CDs; they also enjoy very much singing together with friends at many local festivities. Thus, since its foundation The Compagnia Sacco draws its repertoire from the local tradition and still presents it to an international audience, and in return the members of the choir also continue to nurture and keep alive the village singing of today.

BITTER ROOTS: THE ENDS OF A KALAHARI MYTH
by Adrian Strong
color, 16:9 widescreen, 71 min, 2009

Bitter Roots is set in Nyae-Nyae, a region of Namibia located in southern Africa’s Kalahari desert, traditional home of the Ju/'hoansi. It updates the ethnographic film record begun in the 1950s by John Marshall, whose films documented 50 years of change, and who together with Claire Ritchie, established a grass-roots development foundation, which Adrian Strong (the filmmaker) joined in the late 1980s.

Shot in 2007, two years after Marshall’s death (and including footage from his films), Bitter Roots documents the return of Strong and Ritchie to Nyae-Nyae where they observe the erosion of a community-led development process following the imposition of a new agenda led by the World Wildlife Fund, which prioritizes wildlife conservation and tourism over subsistence farming. Communities voice their dissatisfaction with the new Conservancy, which has done little to help people farm and improve their lives.

Through archival footage and discussions with community members, this film sensitively examines the problems (lions, elephants, conservationists) currently facing the Ju/'hoansi and challenges the myth that they are culturally unable to farm. The film investigates the perpetuation of this myth by showing how tourists and filmmakers still demand to see how people used to live rather than they way they live now, and how the Ju/'hoansi cope with such expectations, while steadfastly continuing to farm against all the odds.
MISSION HILL AND THE MIRACLE OF BOSTON
b&w, 60 min, 1978

The story of what happened to Mission Hill is the story of many of America’s older ethnic neighborhoods. Seventy years ago, Mission Hill was an Irish neighborhood of homes and small stores in which people lived near their schools, their church, and their shopping area. But between 1940 and 1980 a new, poor population and an affluent professional population would arrive to compete for parts of the old neighborhood. Today this film, completed in 1978, remains unique in presenting one neighborhood’s social history set against the larger forces that reshaped a major American city. A must for courses in urban studies, race relations, and social problems.

DOWN THE PROJECT: THE CRISIS OF PUBLIC HOUSING
b&w, 60 min, 1982

Down the Project presents the story of two projects that housed working families, both white and black, in the 1940’s. In later years, crippled by lower budgets and the needs of a poorer populations, they came to be regarded as eyesores, as danger zones. How did these changes occur? How did public housing begin? Which forces lobbied for it and against it? The film presents a concise social history of a housing movement and its opponents, then examines the social dilemmas of the developments these forces produced.

WATER AND THE DREAM OF THE ENGINEERS
color, 80 min, 1983

A fascinating documentary which explores both the engineers’ dreams for, and public fears about, the water systems we have inherited, with wider context provided by the frustrations and concerns of those who maintain and use these systems in the modern day. Water and the Dream of the Engineers is an educational odyssey about engineering, environmentalism, and the troubled relations between these two traditions. Most importantly, the film reveals that conflicts over technology and the environment are, at root, debates about power and the promise of democracy.

THE COLLECTIVE: FIFTEEN YEARS LATER
b&w, 60 min, 1985

In 1970, thousands of young people thought of themselves as agents of change. They wanted to restore America’s democratic vision; they wanted to end the war in Vietnam. This is the story of one collective – their successes and failures, and what they do and think fifteen years later.
BROWNSVILLE BLACK AND WHITE

This poignant and powerful documentary explores the complex history of interracial cooperation, urban change, and social conflict in Brownsville, a neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, from the 1930s to the 2000s. A case study of the tragedy of urban American race relations, the film recounts the transformation of Brownsville from a poor but racially harmonious area made up largely of Jews and blacks to a community made up almost entirely of people of color. In the 1940s Brownsville was famous for its grass-roots integration. But it later achieved notoriety for one of the most divisive and bitter black-white confrontations in American history, the 1968 Ocean Hill Brownsville School War, in which the African-American (and Hispanic) community battled the predominantly white and Jewish Teachers Union. Brownsville Black and White examines some of the most troubling and perplexing issues facing America and its cities and raises a multitude of discussible questions. The film will provoke reflection, analysis, and debate in a variety of courses in sociology and social issues, American history and American studies, African American studies, urban studies, race relations, cultural anthropology, Jewish Studies, and education.

LOVE STORIES: WOMEN, MEN, & ROMANCE

In our grandparents’ time, most women and men committed themselves to each other for better or worse. Today, many men and women struggle to redefine relationships in a society where more women are in the workforce, where divorce is common, and where the marriage commitment is rapidly changing. How did this happen? What opportunities and barriers has it created in women’s and men’s lives? Love Stories: Women, Men, & Romance provides both a history of changing attitudes and expectations, and a portrait of today’s conflicted society - in which the old and new values clash, fueling debates over the lifestyle, sex roles and birth control.

A feature-length film in 3 sections for easy classroom use - Love Stories can be shown to students in sections: Part I “Women”, documents the growth of feminist values as experienced by 8 women of different ages and from different parts of our society; Part II, “Men” shows male reaction to a changing world; Part III, “Romance” portrays a new dynamic of male/female relations.

CHILDREN OF LABOR: A FINNISH-AMERICAN HISTORY

Featured at the 1977 New York Film Festival, Children of Labor is the story of how Finnish immigrants came into contact - and conflict - with industrial America. Three generations of Finnish-Americans recount how they coped with harsh realities by creating their own institutions: churches, temperance halls, socialist halls, and cooperatives. The film focuses on the people, their organizations, and the challenges posed by both McCarthy-era political repression and present-day consumerism. At the same time, Children of Labor deals with questions that reverberate in the lives of most Americans, especially the sons and daughters of immigrants.
ON BROADWAY
by Aryo Danusiri
color, 16:9 widescreen, 62 min, 2011
From the Sensory Ethnography Lab Series

A structural account of the cultural transformation of a mosque in a basement space in Manhattan, New York City. As suggested by the title, this film is ‘a song’ of transformational moments of space, identities and belief. Consisting of six long take shots, it starts with a relaxed conversation in the everyday life of an empty basement. Then it gradually becomes an event - an event of struggle. At the end, with a twist, it raises questions about the boundaries between the mundane and the spiritual, the politics and the everyday.

“...the film asserts the idea that camera placement is a creative practice in itself and, second, the recorded output confirms that the audience is invited along to enjoy the event and draw its own interpretations of the event. Pure cinema? In theory, this film may be classified as such, but the appeal of watching the event unfold over the course of its duration is akin to watching a flower come into full bloom.” — Eric Sasono, Indonesian Film Critic

FASHIONING FAITH
by Yasmin Moll
color, 16:9 widescreen, 23 min, 2009

When most Americans think of the Islamic veil, the image of Afghan women in blue burkas or the black chador of the Islamic Republic of Iran may come to mind. But what about the Muslim-American woman who easily combines her headscarf with jeans or haute couture gowns?

Fashioning Faith takes a behind the scenes look at the emerging world of Islamic fashion and US-based clothing designers who make it possible. The film interweaves interviews and verité footage from a diverse array of Muslim women with one goal in common - to express their faith through fashion.

HANOI ECLIPSE: THE MUSIC OF DAI LAM LINH
by Barley Norton
color, 56 min, 2010

This fascinating film follows the challenges faced by the groundbreaking and controversial Vietnamese band Dai Lam Linh, while rehearsing and performing in their hometown of Hanoi. It shows how the band came together to create a unique form of popular music, which is both international in outlook and rooted in Vietnamese traditions and aesthetics. Followed by scandal at every turn for their experimental sound and their use of sexually explicit lyrics, the band have dared to flout taboos and fight for their creative freedom. Shunned by state-run organizations and disliked by the Vietnamese censors, the band were only able to record their debut album because of support from the Centre Culturel Français de Hanoi. Dai Lam Linh's story of creative, political and financial struggle reveals what it is like to be a contemporary musician in a one-party state where cultural expression is tightly controlled. With vivid footage of the band working in the city of Hanoi, the film documents the process of recording Dai Lam Linh's debut album in 2009 and features an album-launch concert in the prestigious Hanoi Opera House.
Reframe, an innovative online project that helps individual filmmakers, broadcasters, distributors, public media organizations, archives, libraries and other media owners digitize, market and sell their classic and hard-to-find films and video content using the Internet, continues to add titles in a wide range of subject areas and genres. Many of these classic and hard-to-find films and video are suitable for classroom use and for other educational settings as well as for your personal enjoyment. The titles are available for purchase in DVD and/or for rental or purchase via digital Video On Demand (VOD), most often with an option for purchasing educational, institutional and/or public performance rights. Reframe aims to offer a trusted place for finding quality films, with new titles added daily.

AFFLICTIONS SERIES

Afflictions: Culture and Mental Illness in Indonesia is a three part series, shot over the course of 12 years in Bali and Java, Indonesia, as a result of longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork conducted by psychological anthropologist Robert Lemelson, exploring the relationship between culture, mental illness and personal experience.

Through a trilogy of person-centered case studies, Afflictions seeks to address a series of questions about mental illness, difference, and deviance. Each of these three films, Shadows of Illuminations, The Bird Dancer, and Family Victim can be purchased on DVD individually or as a 3-disc set, and each film is available for rental or download-to-own via Reframe.

FILMS FROM THE YANOMAMO SERIES

In 1968 and 1971 filmmaker Timothy Asch and anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon collaborated on a project to film the Yanomamo Indians. In all, they shot nearly 50 hours of film on the Yanomamo, much of it in Mishimishimaweiti-teri. Thirty-seven films were produced from this footage, many of which have become classics of visual anthropology which continue to be studied in classrooms throughout the world.

Several of the Yanomamo titles are now available on Reframe, including A Man Called “Bee”, Magical Death, and Yanomamo: A Multidisciplinary Study.

FILMS FROM THE !KUNG SERIES

A frequent innovator in the field of ethnographic film, John Marshall produced twenty-three films and videos and one multi-part series from his extensive archive of film and video of the Ju/'hoansi (!Kung Bushmen) of Namibia's Kalahari Desert, whom he filmed over the course of more than forty years. This body of work is unrivaled as a long-term visual study of a single group of people.

!Kung films available on Reframe include Niai, The Story of a !Kung Woman, N/um Tchai: The Ceremonial Dance of the !Kung Bushmen, and !Kung Bushmen Hunting Equipment.

THE BALLAD OF ESEQUIEL HERNÁNDEZ

In 1997, 18-year-old Esequiel Hernandez was tending goats just outside his family's home in Redford, Texas when he was was shot and killed by Marines on an anti-drug border patrol. Featuring candid accounts from the Marines, Esequiel’s family and friends, FBI investigators and defense attorneys, The Ballad... is a riveting tale that reveals the dangers of using the military as domestic law enforcement and exposes this complex tragedy, which was virtually ignored by the media.
Documentary Educational Resources is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1968 and incorporated in 1971 for the purpose of producing and distributing cross-cultural documentary film for educational use. We were early innovators in developing 16mm film and media based curriculum for classroom use. Our company focus, then and now, is to support filmmakers who have long-term commitments to the people that they film. We find that filmmakers who work collaboratively with their subjects produce film with integrity.

It is also our focus to distribute media that has the power to overcome barriers to cross-cultural understanding. Media can be the first step in growing sensitivity and awareness of other cultures. This in turn may lead to tolerance and acceptance and eventually give way to appreciation and admiration of other cultures.

Our archive is one of the most historically important resources of ethnographic film in the world today. In 1975 DER co-founders John Marshall and Timothy Asch were key figures in establishing the Human Studies Film Archives at the Smithsonian Institution and their bodies of work are among the most significant ethnographic collections within the HSFA. We continue to collaborate with the Smithsonian on the use of our films for research. Our films have been screened everywhere, from villages and refugee camps in Africa, Native American reservations, to classrooms, museums and theatres worldwide.

If you have further questions please visit our website:

www.der.org

Or contact us by email, fax, phone or mail

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