

Feature of the Festival:



Cultures Crash & Chinatown: Sites and Rewrites

(What Jake Couldn't Forget)

Organized by Georgia Fee

Video Screenings
Saturday, October 3
7:00 & 9:00PM
MOCA

Video Bus Tour
Sunday, October 4
2:00 PM

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LA Freewaves Festival '98

Program 17 & 18: Cultures Crash

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What happens when cultures crash? Those of us who live in Los Angeles witness this phenomenon almost daily. Centuries-old cultures morph into new hybrids, racism raises its monstrous head, and notions of personal, ethnic, and political identity blur beyond recognition. The video artists included in "Cultures Crash" provoke thought about issues that are becoming more crucial to all of us in Los Angeles--and, increasingly, to all world citizens.

Lalo Lopez and Alex Rivera's Animaquiladora pieces take on Latino images in U.S. pop culture. Working within the tradition of political satire (and especially political cartoons--in this case, brought to life with animation), Lopez and Rivera make their points with razor-sharp wit--quick one-two punches full of verve and humor.

Wayne Yung's The Queen's Cantonese Conversation Course plays with the satirical form as well. This series of "lessons"--a deadpan takeoff on the cheesy genre of language-instruction videos for tourists--

explores language, identity, and the exoticization and marketing of Third World cultures.

Humor is also the foundation for James Cho's *Jon Do*, but here the anger is more directly expressed. Told from the stream-of-consciousness point of view of an Asian-American Everyman, the mostly computer-animated piece plays out *Jon Do's* private fantasies of revenge against a racist coworker and his general frustration at the emptiness of his existence. Funny and shocking, *Jon Do* is grounded in a pain and fury that's recognizably real.

In Bonnie Thompson's *Tu Abuela, y Que*, Chicana poet Margarita Luna Robles starkly addresses the camera, performing a piece inspired by her Mexicana maternal grandmother. Luna stands against the seemingly inevitable tide of assimilation and asserts her identity by reclaiming her language of origin--the sensual sounds, power, and meanings of *la lengua español*.

New cultures form; others die off. *Buffalo Bone China* is Dana Claxton's elegiac meditation on the decimation of the American buffalo--and, by implication, the Native peoples of North America. The buffalo (gorgeously rendered here in slowed-down black-and-white archival footage) was both sacred and practical, mythic and real; Claxton shows the beast being reduced to mere consumer product.

European colonialism killed off the buffalo. Yau Ching's raw-edged *June 30, 1997 (A.K.A. Celebrate What?)* deals with another side of colonialism. Seeking "images you somehow don't get to see on CNN," Ching used her video camera guerrilla-style to record Hong Kong's recent reversion from British to Chinese rule. Instead of the fireworks and parties shown by the corporate-run world media (and promoted by the PRC official media), the rebellious activities of local artists at the Hong Kong Arts Centre are at the center of this piece.

Mexopolis, a collaboration by the arts collective ADOBE L.A. and videomaker Jesse Lerner, offers an alternative take on assimilation. Documenting the new hybrid culture that is being created in Los Angeles by displaced Latin Americans, the video features a rich use of ambient sound and music, along with impressionistic images of cultural signs. This is a travel guide to a true modern-day bordertown, right here in our own backyard, making it a fitting wrap-up to our program.

—Diana Rico

ANIMAUQUILADORA (excerpt)

(US, 1997) by Lalo Lopez & Alex Rivera, 10 min.

THE QUEEN'S CANTONESE

(Canada, 1998) by Wayne Yung, 33 min.

JON DO

(US, 1998) by James Cho, 9 min.

BUFFALO BONE CHINA

(Canada, 1997) by Dana Claxton, 12 min.

TU ABUELA, Y QUE?

(US, 1996) by Bonnie Thompson, 4 min.

JUNE 30, 1997 (AKA CELEBRATE WHAT?)

(Hong Kong/US,1997) by Yau Ching, 7 min.

MEXOPOLIS

(US, 1997) by Adobe LA & Jesse Lerner, 18 min.

Program running time: 93 min.

*** Come crash the Festival Closing Party at MOCA 8:00 - 12:00PM, FREE!**

Chinatown: Sites and Rewrites (What Jake Couldn't Forget)

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Scratch the surface of L.A. and out pours a rush of names, faces, and stories that were born on the filmic freeway and routed into the substratum of our experience. Once deposited, these layers of Hollywood silt compress into glittering memories that take on the appearance of the real and become part of our mental activity. One memory that has left an indelible mark is Chinatown, Roman Polanski's 1974 noir classic set in L.A. Chinatown follows Jake Gittes, the slick private eye, as he investigates a labyrinth of deception, corruption, and murky morality.

"Chinatown: Sites and Rewrites" travels inside the movie to the crossroads where fact and fiction, public and private meet. Hold on Kitty Cat while we revisit the crime scenes and purr through Jake's keyholes. The tour swings by Echo Park Lake, where boating and binoculars went together, cruises by the house where Ida dropped her groceries, and slows at government buildings where scandalous deeds were recorded. Along the way, the camera's private eye pans and probes the crevices of our interior landscape. The voyeurism inherent in Jake's profession is the turning point upon which this tour is structured. Rather than touring the outside world, "Chinatown: Sites and Rewrites" traces an imaginary trail of subjective sight-seeing. A blend of historic fact and filmic musings creates a hybrid reality of surprising shifts. Like the movie, the bus tour ends at that place where illusion becomes desire...Chinatown. Here, visitors debark at the **Chinese Historical Society of Southern California** and explore the installation of the *Double Weeping Cherry* before returning to the everyday.

--Georgia Fee

Co-sponsored by the **Chinese Historical Society of Southern California**, The *Double Weeping Cherry* installation will be open from September 19 - October 11 (see [Festival Sites](#))

*All buses leave in front of **The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA)**; \$12.00 (includes parking); RSVP required, call (213) 617-3950 a week before tour date.
