

關於唐人街的五堂課與九個問題

5 lessons and 9 questions about Chinatown

a film by Shelly Silver
10:00/2009
HDV/HDCAM



Synopsis:

You live somewhere, walk down the same street 50, 100, 10,000 times, each time taking in fragments, but never fully registering THE PLACE. Years, decades go by and you continue, unseeing, possibly unseen.

A building comes down, and before the next one is up you ask yourself 'what used to be there?' You are only vaguely aware of the district's shifting patterns and the sense that, since the 19th century, wave after wave of inhabitants have moved through and transformed these alleyways, tenements, stoops and shops.

10 square blocks, past, present, future, time, light, movement, immigration, exclusion, gentrification, racism, history, China, America, 3 languages, 13 voices, 152 years, 17,820 frames, 9 minutes, 54 seconds, 9 questions, 5 lessons, Chinatown



Director's Bio Short:

Using an irreverent mixture of fiction, documentary and experimental genres, Shelly Silver's work in film, video, installation and photography is funny, poetic and formally beautiful, seducing the viewer into pondering such difficult issues as the cracks in our most common assumptions, the impossibility of a shared language, and the ambivalent and yet overwhelming need to belong—to a family, a nation, a gender, an ideology. Silver's art has been exhibited and broadcast widely throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia. Screenings and installations have been mounted by venues such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the International Center of Photography in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Yokohama Museum, the Pompidou Center, the Kyoto Museum, the London Institute of Contemporary Arts, the Museo Reina Sofia, and the London, Singapore, New York, Moscow, and Berlin film festivals. Her work has been broadcast on BBC/England, PBS/USA, Arte, Planete/Europe, RTE/Ireland, SWR/Germany, and Atenor/Spain. Silver's numerous fellowships and grants include awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the NEA, NYSCA, NYFA, the DAAD, the Jerome Foundation, the Japan Foundation and Anonymous was a Woman. She is based in New York where she is an Associate Professor of Visual Arts in the School of the Arts, Columbia University.

Producer's Bio:

Karin Chien is an independent film producer based in New York City. Chien has produced seven feature films, including *The Exploding Girl*, *The Motel* and *Robot Stories*. Karin is currently in production in Beirut on *Circumstance* and in post-production on *Untitled P. Benoit Project*. She is the president of *dGenerate Films* which distributes the best of contemporary Chinese independent cinema. She was curator and producer of the *Chinatown Film Project*, an inaugural film exhibition for the Museum of Chinese in America. Karin Chien is currently nominated for a Film Independent Spirit Producers Award.



Director's Notes

I've lived in Chinatown, NYC for the last 25 years. Two years ago the Museum of Chinese in America commissioned me to make a short film about Chinatown for the opening of their newly renovated museum. As the Museum's opening kept getting postponed, I kept shooting - finally ending up with 50 hours of footage for a film that had to be under 10 minutes.

Needless to say, I became overly ambitious. I felt compelled to talk of the past, present and future of this neighborhood, its complex linguistic texture, its vitality, as well as the tragedy of its history. Living here, watching the neighborhood go through drastic changes, pushed me to ask more universal questions. Who belongs in a neighborhood? Who should control a neighborhood? What does it mean to call a place "home"?

I could say that this is a short film about Chinatown. I could call it a reflection on a physical place. I could describe it as a collection of many questions and few answers organized into various approaches, all partial.

As one exploration/obsession leads to the next, I am currently working on a feature-length narrative essay on Chinatown called 觀 *Watch*

Artist Statement

I am an artist working primarily with the moving image, which is to say magic, a trick of perception. I investigate language, voice (who gets to speak) and storytelling, including the constructed narratives known as history and memory. I started in the 1980's by seamlessly hacking established television and film genres – narrative, documentary, advertising - at a time when questioning the verisimilitude of the main stream media could still make people truly uncomfortable. I've examined the aftermath of broken national borders (Berlin after Reunification) and the loss of the civic membrane protecting personal from public (universalizing the relationship of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky). My own position as artist also falls between worlds - my work circulating, at times uneasily, between the film, television and art worlds.

I start a work out of curiosity, desire, pleasure or fear. Each project initiates a different exploration. The content dictates the approach. My work tends to be formally rigorous and seemingly transparent in structure. Editing and juxtaposition form a large component of my practice, using straight cuts to weave seamlessly or, as with a big ax, to violently chop images, ideas, words and spaces together.

Much of my recent work centers on the pleasures, the necessity and the problematic of seeing, of watching.



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Credits:

A film by Shelly Silver

Produced by Karin Chien

Research
Teri Chan Nina Lam

Translation
Jeremy Chien Lu Yu

Voiceover
Lu Yu
Wai Ching Ho
Johnson Chong

Sound Mix
Ian Stynes, Great City Productions

Color Correction
John Vladoic, Deluxe New York

Thanks

Tim Bell
Ed Bowes
Nancy Bulalacao
Cheng Hong Chen
KK Chen
Choi Ping Chin
Deanna Cao
Charles Lai
Baayork Lee
NY Chinatown Senior Citizen Coalition Center

Yue Ma
Marc Silver
Ann Sun
Wendy Tong
Jenny Tran
Doreen Wang
Sam Whitsitt

Archival Material
The National Archives
Museum of Chinese in America

Commissioned by the Museum of Chinese in America for The Chinatown Film Project

Shelly Silver
filmography

5 lessons and 9 questions about Chinatown
9:54/2009

in complete world
53:00/2008

Exceptional Happenings (3-channel installation)
17:00 loop/2008

What I'm Looking For (video/installation)
15:00/2004

suicide
70:00/2003

ROOSTER (installation)
2001-2002

I.
3:15/2001

Hidden Among the Leaves
(collaborative installation with Nika Spalinger)
2000-2001

small lies, Big Truth
18:48/1999

37 Stories About Leaving Home
52:00/1996

Former East/Former West
62:00/1994

April 2nd
10:00/1994

Fragments
Variable lengths/1994

The Houses That Are Left
51 :00/1991

We
4 :00/1990

getting in.
3:00, 1989

Things I Forget to Tell Myself
2:00, 1989

Meet the People
17:00, 1987

Are We All Here?
50:00, 1984



Director's Bio Long:

Using an irreverent mixture of fiction, documentary and experimental genres, Shelly Silver's work is funny, poetic and formally beautiful, seducing the viewer into pondering such difficult issues as the cracks in our most common assumptions, the impossibility of a shared language, and the ambivalent and yet overwhelming need to belong—to a family, a nation, a gender, an ideology. Exploring the psychology of public and private space, the ambivalence inherent in familial and societal relations and the seduction and repulsion of voyeurism, Silver's work elicits equal amounts of pleasure and discomfort.

Silver was born in NYC in 1957. She received a BFA in mixed media (Cornell University, College of Art, Architecture and Planning), ad a BA in History (Cornell University School of Arts & Sciences/ College Scholar), and subsequently attended the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program.

Silver's work is diverse, both in form and content. She has produced experimental features (*suicide*, Berlinale 2004) about a suicidal filmmaker cross-crossing the globe in an attempt to find a reason to go on living and experimental shorts and installations (*What I'm Looking For*, 2004/5, Forum Expanded 2005), films which enlarge on the way we think about the protagonists of history and documentary (*in complete world*, 2008, dealing with individual and civic responsibility in the US) and national identity (*Former East/Former West*, 1994, about being German after Reunification). A strong believer in making films by whatever means possible, which would include without a budget, Silver often acts as writer, director, editor and cameraperson.

Shelly Silver has been exhibited extensively throughout the US, Europe and Asia at venues such as MoMA, NYC, MoCA, LA, The Pompidou Center, Paris; the Reina Sofia, Madrid, The Kyoto Museum, Japan, The ICA London, The London, Singapore, Berlin and Moscow Film Festivals. Awards for her singular works include Golden Dove for Best Long Form Documentary at The Leipzig International Documentary Festival, Best Experimental Narrative at The Australian Int'l Film & Video Festival, First Prize and Jury Prize at the Moscow Int'l Film Festival Media Lab, Grand Prize, Biennial of the Moving Image. Her work is included in many permanent collections including Centre George Pompidou, Paris, MOMA, New York, Long Beach Museum of Art, The Museum of Broadcasting, NYC, the Yokohama Museum of Art.

Shelly Silver's work has received support from numerous institutions including the the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Jerome Foundation, the DAAD

Berlin Artists Program, the Japan/US Friendship Commission, the Japan Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, Anonymous was a Woman and New York State Council for the Arts.

In the last decade, Silver has taught at several notable institutions, including The Cooper Union, NYC, The School of Visual Arts, NYC, Parsons/The New School, NYU and MICA, Baltimore and has been a visiting artist, given workshops and lectures at such institutions as CalArts, the DFFB, Berlin, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Royal Academy of Fine Art/Ghent. She is currently an Associate Professor in the Visual Arts Department of the School of the Arts, Columbia University.



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