

ZEITGEIST FILMS PRESENTS A FILM BY MARTINA KUDLACEK

IN THE MIRROR OF **MAYA DEREN**



IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN

“More than anything else, cinema consists of the eye for the magic—that which perceives and reveals the marvelous in whatsoever it looks upon.” –Maya Deren

With *IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN*, documentary filmmaker Martina Kudlacek has fashioned not only fascinating portrait of a groundbreaking and influential artist, but a pitch-perfect introduction to her strikingly beautiful and poetic body of work.

Crowned "Fellini and Bergman wrapped in one gloriously possessed body" by the *L.A. WEEKLY*, Maya Deren (née Eleanora Derenkovskaya) is arguably the most important and innovative avant-garde filmmaker in the history of American cinema. Using locations from the Hollywood hills to Haiti, Deren made such mesmerizing films as *AT LAND*, *RITUAL IN TRANSFIGURED TIME*, and her masterpiece, *MESHES OF THE AFTERNOON*, which won a prestigious international experimental filmmaking prize at the 1947 Cannes Film Festival.

Starting with excerpts from these films, *IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN* seamlessly and effectively interweaves archival footage with observances from acolytes and contemporaries such as filmmakers Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas, dance pioneer Katherine Dunham, and Living Theater founder Judith Malina. With an original score by experimental composer John Zorn.

MAYA DEREN

Maya Deren (née Eleanora Derenkovskaya) was born on April 29, 1917, in Kiev, Ukraine (the year of the Russian Revolution). Born to Marie Fiedler, who had studied music, and Solomon Derenskovsky, a psychiatrist, her early upbringing was one of cultivated privilege. By 1922, however, pogroms, the economy and her father's political proximity to Trotsky forced the now impoverished Jewish family to flee Russia. They settled with her father's brother in Syracuse, New York, where Derenskovsky set up practice and the family officially shortened their name to Deren.

When her parents separated in 1930, Deren was sent to the Swiss boarding school Ecole Internationale de Genève, where she studied French, German and Russian. In 1933 she returned to the U.S., and over the next six years she studied at Syracuse University (where she studied journalism, and her interest in film was initially ignited), New York University and Smith College, earning a Master's degree in English literature in 1939. Upon graduation she began working as an assistant to various writers and publishers while also pursuing poetry.

One of her secretarial jobs was for choreographer/dancer/anthropologist Katherine Dunham. Dunham was a pioneer in Black dance and author of a 1936 anthropological study of Haiti. While working for Dunham, Deren was inspired to write an essay entitled "Religious Possession in Dancing." She was with Dunham in Los Angeles when she met and married her second husband: Czech filmmaker Alexander Hackenschmied, later Hammid. (Deren was married from 1935–1938 to a Russian socialist when she was a student and antiwar activist.) Deren used the small inheritance from her father to buy a second-hand 16mm Bolex camera, which she and Hammid used to make her first—and most famous—film, *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) in Hollywood. *Meshes* paved the way for American avant-garde films of the 1940s and 50s, and would be recognized as a high-watermark in experimental cinema.

Deren returned to New York in 1943 and took on a new name: Maya (the name of Buddha's mother, as well as an ancient word for water and the "veil of illusion" in Hindu mythology). Andre Breton, Marcel Duchamp, Oscar Fischinger and Anaïs Nin became part of her social circle in Greenwich Village; her influence was beginning to surface in the work of filmmakers such as Willard Maas, Kenneth Anger, Stan Brakhage, Sidney Peterson, James Broughton, Gregory J. Markopoulos and Curtis Harrington.

Over the next few years Deren continued to create groundbreaking works in 16mm, including *At Land* (1944) and *Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945). In 1946 she leased the Provincetown Playhouse in New York City to show *Meshes of the Afternoon*, *At Land* and *Study in Choreography for Camera* in a program titled "Three Abandoned Films" for several evenings. This bold step would inspire other filmmakers to self-distribute their work. That same year she was awarded a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship for "Creative Work in the Field of Motion Pictures," the first filmmaker to win the prestigious prize. Her photography and essays, including "An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film," were starting to surface in the underground press. She also began planning a film about trance and ritual, involving dance, children's games and the ethnographic films being made by Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead on Balinese trance.

In 1947 she was awarded the "Grand Prix International for 16mm Film, Experimental Class" at Cannes Film Festival for *Meshes of the Afternoon*. For the first time the prize was awarded to the United States and to a woman filmmaker. She and co-director Hammid divorced the same year.

Between 1947 and 1955, Deren spent about 21 months in Haiti, filming Vodoun rituals and dance. The resulting material— several hours collectively referred to as the Haitian Film Footage—was left unfinished. Under the tutelage of mythologist Joseph Campbell, Deren wrote a detailed, unprecedented ethnographic study of the Vodoun religion entitled *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (1953).

Her final film, *The Very Eye of Night* (1955), premiered in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Because of a financial dispute with her producer, the film wasn't shown in New York until 1959. In 1960, Deren married Teijo Ito, a Japanese musician 18 years her junior who had accompanied her on her final journey to Haiti in the mid-1950s. He created soundtracks for two of her films, including *The Very Eye of Night*.

On October 13, 1961, Maya Deren died suddenly from a brain hemorrhage at the age of forty-four. There has been much speculation about what exactly caused the hemorrhage. Rumors have variously named a Voodoo curse; the use of "vitamin shots" (that contained amphetamine) from the so-called "Doctor Feelgood" Max Jacobson; and a heated court dispute over Ito's inheritance from his father.

Maya Deren's cinematic vision continues to influence filmmakers everywhere (avant-garde and otherwise), and her work is studied at the world's most prestigious film schools. She is now gaining an even bigger audience with the recent Special Edition DVD release of her collected films, which also features excerpts from the Haitian footage. In 1985, the American Film Institute established the Maya Deren Award to honor the contribution and significance of independent film work. At Anthology Film Archives in New York, the 66-seat Maya Deren Theater was erected for their film and video exhibitions. *Utne Reader* recently named Deren one of "40 Past Masters Who Still Matter" in their 2003 Arts Extra edition.

MAYA DEREN FILMOGRAPHY

MESHES OF THE AFTERNOON (1943)

16mm, 14 mins, b&w, silent

by Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid

Music by Teiji Ito from 1959

AT LAND (1944)

16mm, 15 mins, b&w, silent

Photographed by Hella Heyman and Alexander Hammid

A STUDY IN CHOREOGRAPHY FOR CAMERA (1945)

16mm, approx. 3 mins, b&w, silent

by Maya Deren and Talley Beatty

RITUAL IN TRANSFIGURED TIME (1946)

16mm, approx. 15 mins, b&w, silent

Choreographic collaboration with Frank Westbrook

Photographed by Hella Heyman

With Rita Christiani and Frank Westbrook

MEDITATION ON VIOLENCE (1948)

16mm, 13 mins, b&w, sound

Performance by Chao-li Chi

Chinese flute and Haitian drums in a music collage by Maya Deren

THE VERY EYE OF NIGHT (1952-55)

16mm, 15 mins, b&w, sound

In collaboration with Metropolitan Opera
Ballet School choreographed by Antony Tudor
Music by Teiji Ito

Unfinished Films:

THE WITCH'S CRADLE (1943)

16mm, Filmfragments, approx.13 mins, b&w, silent
With Marcel Duchamp and Pajorita Matta

MEDUSA (1949)

(YMHA workshop)

16mm, approx.10 mins, b&w, silent
With Jean Erdman

HAITIAN FILM FOOTAGE (1947-55)

16mm, approx. 4 hours, b&w, silent and soundrecordings

SEASON OF STRANGERS/Haiku Film Project (1959)

(Woodstock workshop)

16mm, approx. 58 mins, b&w, silent

Unpublished Film:

ENSEMBLE FOR SOMNAMBULISTS (1951)

(Toronto Film Society workshop),
16mm, approx.7 mins, b&w, silent

Film in collaboration:

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF A CAT (1945)

directed by Alexander Hammid

16mm, approx. 29 mins, b&w,

2 Film versions: with sound and silent

Narration by Maya Deren

Selected Bibliography:

AN ANAGRAM OF IDEAS ON ART, FORM AND FILM

Yonkers, NY: Alicat Book Shop Press, 1946

DIVINE HORSEMEN: THE LIVING GODS OF HAITI

London; New York: Thames and Hudson, Publishers, 1953

PROTAGONISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Miriam Arsham

Born 1920 in New York, USA. She worked as a film editor (IATSE) with many directors in USA and Europe on documentaries (also with Alexander Hammid) and was a close friend and assistant of Maya Deren in the 1940s and 1950s. Miriam Arsham taught film at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, Brooklyn College and Purchase College until she retired in 1996.

Stan Brakhage

Born 1933 in USA. Stan Brakhage is one of the most influential of American independent filmmakers. Since 1952 he issued more than 200 original films. Among his best known film works are *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959), *Dog Star Man* (1964), *The Act of Seeing With Ones Own Eyes* (1971) and *The Dante Quartet* (1987). Brakhage has also written several books including *Metaphors on Vision* (1963), *Brakhage Scrapbook: Collected Writings, 1964 –1980* (1982), *The Brakhage Lectures and Film Biographies* (1977). In 1986 he received the first American Film Institute Maya Deren Award for Independent Film and Video Artists. Since 1981 Brakhage is Distinguished professor in the department of Film studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Chao-Li Chi

Born 1929 in China. In 1939 he came to the United States with his parents. Studied Asiatic dance forms. Chao-Li Chi performed in Maya Deren's *Meditation on Violence* in 1948. In 1975 he moved to Los Angeles. Beside his career as Broadway and television actor (*Falcon Crest*, *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*, *Big Trouble in Little China*, *Warriors of Virtue*) he teaches Tai Chi and traditional meditative Chinese martial art.

Rita Christiani

Born in Trinidad. As a former Dunham Dancer and close friend of Maya Deren she features as the principal performer in Deren's *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1945/46). She also performed in several Hollywood productions as a speciality dancer (*Road to Morocco* 1942, *Tales of Manhattan* 1942). Rita Christiani began a career as a nurse and a teacher for hygiene in Chicago in the Fifties.

Jean-Léon Destiné

Born 1930 in Haiti. Jean-Léon Destiné spent his career bringing the art of Haiti to the rest of the world. As a teenager he studied and trained with Lina Mathon-Blanchet, founder of the first Haitian dance company that based its work on its own folk traditions. In 1946 he joined Katherine Dunham's Dance Company in New York, where he had studied dance and performed since the early 1940s. He met Maya Deren at the Dunham studio. Three years later, in 1949, he formed the Destiné Afro-Haitian Dance Company and continued to work as dancer and choreographer. Destiné passed on his knowledge and passion for African-Haitian dance, music and traditions through his teachings. He has taught at the New York Dance Group Studio, the New York University School of the Arts and at UCLA among other schools.

Katherine Dunham

Born 1909 in Chicago, USA, Katherine Dunham is perhaps the best known and most influential pioneer of black dance. She studied dance and Social Anthropology at the University of Chicago. After being awarded the Rosenwald Travel Fellowship in 1936 for her combined expertise in dance and anthropology she spent some time in the West Indies to do field research in anthropology and dance. This is where her lifelong involvement with the people and dance of Haiti began.

1937 she founded the Negro Dance Group, a company of black artists dedicated to presenting aspects of African-American and African-Caribbean dance. Beginning in the 1940s, the Katherine Dunham Dance Company appeared on Broadway and toured throughout the United States, Mexico, Latin America and Europe. 1945 Katherine Dunham opened the Dunham School of Dance and Theatre (also known as the Dunham School of Arts and Research) where besides dancing courses in humanities, philosophy, languages, aesthetics, drama and speech were taught. In 1963 she was to become the first black choreographer at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. In 1967 she opened the Performing Arts Training Centre and in 1977 the Katherine Dunham Museum and Children's Workshop in East St. Louis. In 1992 Katherine Dunham became the center of a movement that protested against the deportation of Haitian boat-refugees fleeing to the United States.

Katherine Dunham's intellectual, artistic, and humanitarian contributions have earned her many coveted awards over the years, including the Presidential Medal of Arts, the Kennedy Center Honors, French Legion of Honor, Southern Cross of Brazil, Grand Cross of Haiti, NAACP Lifetime Achievement Award, Lincoln Academy Laureate, and the Urban Leagues' Lifetime Achievement Award.

Graeme Ferguson

Born in Canada. Graeme Ferguson is producer and director. He is one of the developers of the giant-screen IMAX system. Ferguson has been an active filmmaker since the early 1950s, his pioneering film *Polar Life* was one of the hits of the EXPO 1967 in Montreal. Besides being involved in all stages of development of the IMAX medium he is one of the corporations' principal filmmakers. He has produced and co-produced films such as *North of Superior*, *Snow Job*, *Ocean*, the space films *Blue Planet* and *Destiny in Space* and the underwater film *Into the Deep*. Ferguson has received many awards, including the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts Medal and two Genie Awards, Canada's highest film honor. He was also honored with the NASA'S Silver Snoopy Award. In 1993 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Bradford, England.

Alexander Hammid

Born 1907 as Alexander Hackenschmied in Linz, Austria. He grew up in Prag, where he directed his first acclaimed experimental film *Aimless Walk* in 1930. Working as a cinematographer with the American director Herbert Kline on the documentaries "Crisis" and "Lights out in Europe" he was forced in 1939 at the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Nazi-Germany to flee via London to America where he met and married Eleonora Derenkowskaya in 1942. He also suggested her the name Maya. Their first film collaboration *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) became one of the most influential and known avantgarde films. Throughout the 1950s Hammid worked for the UN-Film Division. In 1964 Hammid and Francis Thompson, won an Oscar for their film *To Be*

Alive! in the category for best short documentary. With their films they became the pioneers of the "Expanded Cinema". 1976 their first IMAX-film *To Fly!* has its premiere. To this day it is the most successful and most seen IMAX-film. Today Alexander Hammid has retired and lives in New York.

Judith Malina

Born in 1926 in Germany. She had to escape with her Jewish parents in 1938 the Nazi terror. She attended Erwin Piscator's Dramatic Workshop in New York. The character actress Judith Malina is best known for co-founding the innovative Living Theater in 1946 with Julian Beck, who would become her husband. Malina and Beck's Living Theater was closely related to the avant-garde movement of the early 1940s. The subject matter of their plays became increasingly political during the 1950s. Both Malina and Beck were imprisoned for their involvement in nonviolent protests. In addition to her theater work Malina had a sporadic film career that began in 1975 with a small role in Sidney Lumet's **Dog Day Afternoon**. Barry Sonnenfeld's **Addams Family**, Paul Mazursky's **Enemies, A Love Story** and Penny Marshall's **Awakenings**. She's the author of several books of diaries and poems, and her latest is **Love & Politics**, a book of poems published by Black & Red.

Jonas Mekas

Born 1922 in Lithuania. After World War II, where he was sent to a forced labour camp Mekas finally arrived in America in 1949 and settled in New York.

In the 1950s Mekas invented the film column at the Village Voice in New York. A collection of these articles was published as the *Movie Journal* in 1972. Mekas also founded the journal *Film Culture* in 1955 and was involved in the New Cinema Movement. In 1962 he began the Filmmaker's Co-op.

In 1970 Mekas opened the Anthology Film Archives in collaboration with Jerome Hill, Peter Kubelka, Stan Brakhage and P. Adams Sitney, to establish a permanent home where the growing number of new independent/avantgarde films could be shown on a regular basis. Currently the Anthology Film Archives' holdings include more than 4.000 titles, among these it houses a collection of Maya Deren's filmwork.

To this day Mekas still publishes (**To Free the Cinema** 1992, **Just like a Shadow** 2000), acts a patron of the cinematic arts and works on his own films (**The Brig** 1964, **Lost, Lost, Lost** 1949-63, **Walden** 1964-69, **As I was moving ahead I saw a few glimpses of beauty** 2001)

André Pierre

Born 1914 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Andre Pierre is the artistic and spiritual heir of Hector Hyppolite. Early in his life he decided to devote his life to Vodoun. He is a vodoun priest - a houngan - and a religious painter. His art documents the Haitian religion. Major parts of his life work have been the decoration of voodoo temples. Most of these have been destroyed but most his works on canvas and panels survive, leaving a precious history of the art of this "old master" of Haitian art.

Amos Vogel

Born 1921 as Amos Vogelbaum in Vienna, Austria, fled the Nazi terror to the USA by way of Cuba. He founded the Cinema 16 Film Society in 1947 and the New York Film Festival in 1963. In 1942 met and married the sociologist Marcia Diener. Vogel was a

close friend of Maya Deren from 1947 until her death. He is the author of **Film as a Subversive Art** (1974) and taught film history at the Annenberg School of Communications, Philadelphia.

Marcia Vogel

Born 1921 in New York, USA. Sociologist. In 1942 she married Amos Vogel. She worked as co-director for Cinema 16.

Teiji Ito

Born 1935 in Tokyo, Japan, came to the United States at the age of six. He was interested in the music of other cultures at an early age, especially the percussion music of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. He studied with the master drummer Coyote in Haiti where he had gone with Maya Deren in 1955. In 1960 he and Maya Deren married. As a composer and musician he provided the musical score for her films **Meshes of the Afternoon** and **The Very Eye of Night**. His keen awareness of jazz, blues and flamenco infused his later music with a spontaneous, improvisational quality, and his knowledge of Buddhism, Voudoun and Native American beliefs adds a mystical element to his work. He is a visionary composer. He died in 1982 in Haiti.

THE FILMMAKERS

Martina Kudláček (Director)

Born 1965 in Vienna, Austria

Studied theater, film and media arts and art history at the University of Vienna, Austria. Received BA degree in Cinematography and MFA degree in Directing for documentary films at the Film and TV Academy FAMU in Prague, Czech Republic.

Experimental works in photography, Super-8 and 16mm film and in video.

1988/92 Exhibitions and collaboration with the "Fotogalerie Wien" (Photogallery Vienna) under the guidance of artist Josef Wais.

1990 Carl-Mayer-Screenplay Award for the screenplay "Moon of Cyan" in Austria

1993-94 Guest student of Prof. Michael Bielicky in the department of New Media at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, Czech Republic.

1994-95 Invited for one-year "European Documentary Film workshop/VISIONS" conducted by Michael Rabiger (Documentary Center Chicago und NYU).

1997-98 invited to work and lecture as a fellow at the Academy of Media Arts, Cologne under the guidance of rector Prof. Siegfried Zielinski.

1998-2002 researcher in Anthology Film Archives, assistance for preservation projects to the director and filmmaker Jonas Mekas.

Filmography (selection)

1994 POSITIVITA (POSITIVITY) (Super-16/Betacam, Col, 40 Min., 1994)

**1995 MAELSTRÖM DER MELANCHOLIE
(MAELSTROM OF MELANCHOLY)** (30 Mins)

1995 L'AMOUR FOU / LUDVIK SVAB (MAD LOVE / LUDVIK SVAB) (50 Mins)

1996 AIMLESS WALK / ALEXANDER HAMMID (48 Mins)

1992-7 DIE LETZTEN HELDEN (THE LAST HEROES) (40 Mins)

2001 IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN (104 Mins)

Johannes Rosenberger (Producer)

Born 1965 in Schwaz/Tirol (A) Studied directing at the Film and TV Academy in Vienna.

1992 founded Navigator Film together with Austrian filmmakers. Since 1992 producer of documentaries for the cinema and for TV (short and full-length). 1993-1999 curator of different series of avant-garde, documentary and short film programs for Navigator Film, Austria Filmmakers Coop, Viennale, etc. Since 1997 managing director of Navigator Film Produktion KEG.

Wolfgang Lehner (Cinematographer)

Born 1959 in Linz (A). Lives in New York and Vienna. Works mainly as lighting cameraman on documentary and fiction feature productions for cinema and TV, occasionally also as scriptwriter and director. Various video shorts, industrials, commercials, music videos and multimedia projects as well as news and documentaries for TV-Networks (ORF, 3sat, Viva, etc.). Recipient of the 1999 Golden Frame Award from the Austrian Association of Cinematographers for best

cinematography of a documentary (Der Weg nach Eden). Recipient of the 1998 Austrian Appreciation Award For Film Arts. Various teaching assignments in camerawork and jury member in various selection committees.

Henry Hills (Editor)

Born in Atlanta, Georgia (USA). He has made 22 short experimental films since 1975 which have been shown in numerous festivals including Rotterdam, Osnabruck, Viper, Impakt, Singapore as well as the Whitney Art of the Century, American Dance Festival, Museum of Modern Art and American Museum of Moving Image. His work is represented in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Archives du Film Experimental d'Avignon, the Arsenal in Berlin, the San Francisco Art Institute and many others. He received an M.F.A. in filmmaking in 1978 from the San Francisco Art Institute. He has been a member of the faculty in film at the Pratt Institute and the San Francisco Art Institute. Since 1990 he has worked as an editor for many film productions. He directed and edited a 1990 compilation documentary—ELEKTRA 40 YEARS—celebrating the record label's anniversary, was one of the editors of LOOKING FOR RICHARD by Al Pacino (winner of the 1995 A.C.E. Award for Best Editing of a Documentary), edited numerous music videos (including John Zorn, Patti Smith, Moby, and Kronos Quartet), was chief editor for the Burly Bear Network--the college cable division of Broadway Video, has edited many art videos (Alex Katz, Rudy Burckhardt, the unreleased "Jack Kerouac's 'Mexico City Blues' Live at the Kniting Factory", and is currently cutting the first feature by Guatemalan novelist Rodrigo Rey Rosa. His website is www.henryhills.com

ABOUT THE SOUNDTRACK

“Martina Kudláček is a close friend of filmmaker Henry Hills, who I've known since the early 1980s, and when she offered me the chance to score her film documentary on the legendary Maya Deren I was delighted. Although the rough cut was almost completely filled with music by composer Teiji Ito and field recordings by Maya herself, my enthusiasm for this project, personal connection to the subject matter and the persistence of the director herself finally convinced me that I could come up with a score that would help tie the various strands of her life and work together into an emotional narrative.

“The musical result has been very satisfying. It touches on her Jewish roots in Kiev, her fascination with Dance and Ritual, particularly with Haitian Voodoo, her love of classical music and the home-made world music exotism of her most frequent collaborator Teiji Ito. Although recorded in the same studio as my previous score *Trembling Before G-d* (Filmworx IX, TZ 7331) and with nearly the same band (Chris Speed is replaced by cellist Erik Friedlander), the musical worlds are completely different. There are a lot of new sounds in this score coming from not only the subject matter, but also a strange maturity in my work and of the musicians I am working with. Erik, Cyro and Jamie sound remarkably confident and vibrant on these pieces. I hope Maya would have liked this music.

“It's unclear how much will end up in the final cut of Martina's wonderful film, but making this music was a real pleasure. I hope that you will not only enjoy it, but that it will also pique your interest in the work of Maya Deren and that you seek out her films, writings and learn more about this remarkable artist, one of the pioneers of avantgarde film and founders of the New York underground.

—John Zorn (from the CD booklet)

“As a filmmaker it makes me nervous to hand over my film to a composer. Music and film both have a complex relationship to time. Both have a powerful impact upon our subjective senses of duration and rhythm. A film score can change the time pulse and the emotional quality of a filmic narration.

“I knew John Zorn as a film lover and have enjoyed his many benefit-concerts for film preservation at the Anthology Film Archives. I listened to his recording *Taboo and Exile* while watching the beautiful imagery of the CD-jacket (related to ritual and meditation) and saw on the cover a spirit container with mirrors. It hit me when I was preparing my film *In the Mirror of Maya Deren* and I decided intuitively to ask him to compose a score.

“This music is wonderful! Maya would have loved John's music and appreciated its beauty and gentleness. I believe it is in her spirit. She would feel understood in her passion and longing. I feel fully understood also. The recording has a wide range. I enjoy the fusion of all the elements we spoke about. The film score oscillates between

her Jewish roots in Kiev, her love for classical music and Haitian drums. It reflects the ingenious playfulness of Maya's companion, musician Teiji Ito. I am impressed by the accuracy and inventiveness of John's work at the same time. Maya uses the term "chamber films" (referring to "chamber music") to describe the intimacy and economy of her work. The choice of the instruments here – cello, piano and percussion – was influenced by her statement. A clarity shines through all these pieces. With great sensitivity, the music opens up an emotional dimension in the film. I am stunned by how wide John is opening up hearts so that we might feel the sweetness and pungency of the Goddess of Love, whom Maya was serving. Music has the power of involving universal rhythms in us all."

—Martina Kudláček

Album Review:

This project, a soundtrack for the documentary film *In the Mirror of Maya Deren* by Martina Kudláček, after the legendary avant-garde director, is perhaps Zorn's most accessible work for film. According to Zorn's liner notes, most of the film's music was comprised of pieces by Deren's companion, Teiji Ito, which were scored for her film and interspersed by field recordings of voodoo rituals. Zorn was persuaded to create an entire score for this picture. How much of it made the final cut is unclear, though it hardly matters since listeners have this aural document. As conductor and keyboardist, Zorn employs a score built on repetitious patterns, spare, softly accented figures, and lilting, skeletal melodies that take into consideration the revolutionary compositions of Teiji Ito, Deren's love of the percussion that accompanied voodoo ritual, and the ancestral music of her native Kiev. Zorn's collaborating musicians—Jamie Saft, Cyro Baptista, and Erik Friedlander—have taken into account the particular dynamics of making music for a documentary about a director whose films were all soundtrack-less until after she died. Zorn covers material with the same attention to detail he gave the Masada chamber group's. Here, organs and cellos intertwine in hypnotic figures on "Dancing" and Zorn's solo piano evokes a Russian folk melody on "Kiev," while "Filming" has the same sense of time/space displacement as a silent reel of film on a screen. Piano and a plucked cello alter a small-chord progression continually, shifting the harmonics just enough to detect great movement while remaining still. The anticipation is quiet but pronounced. "Mirror Worlds" offers a glimpse of Ito's compositional notions, with Baptista's percussion instruments claiming the entire center of the piece while not playing in any kind of time. Everything is space, as strings, bells, and a cello punctuate the soundscape with their lone repeating figures. Ultimately, *In the Mirror of Maya Deren* is Zorn's most compelling work for film yet. As a conceptualist, Zorn is not to be outdone - he sees things in total, and this score is one piece, full of segue, room, drift, and dream. Deren would have been at the very least pleased, and that is as high a compliment as can be paid to this wonderful work by one of the most prolific, poetic, and profound composers.

—Thom Jurek, All Music Guide

IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN

A film by Martina Kudláček

with Miriam Arsham, Stan Brakhage, Chao-Li Chi, Rita Christiani,
Jean-Léon Destiné, Katherine Dunham, Graeme Ferguson,
Alexander Hammid, Judith Malina, Jonas Mekas, Martha Gabriel,
André Pierre, Amos Vogel, Marcia Vogel

Written and directed by	Martina Kudláček
Camera	Wolfgang Lehner
Editor	Henry Hills
Original Music	John Zorn
Sound	Jan McLaughlin Carl Fuermann Bruno Pisek Vincent C. Tese
Camera Assistant	Peter Drittenpreis Eric Stitzel
Additional photography	Stéphane Kuthy
Assistant Editor	Regina Höllbacher
Location Manager	Joan Grossman (USA) Chantal Regnault (Haiti)
Production Assistant	Thomas Korschil
Production Manager	Johannes Rosenberger Karin Koch Cornelia Volmer
Producer	Navigator Film: Johannes Rosenberger, Constantin Wulff
Coproducers	Dschoint Ventschr: Samir TAG/ TRAUM Filmproduktion: Gerd Haag

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