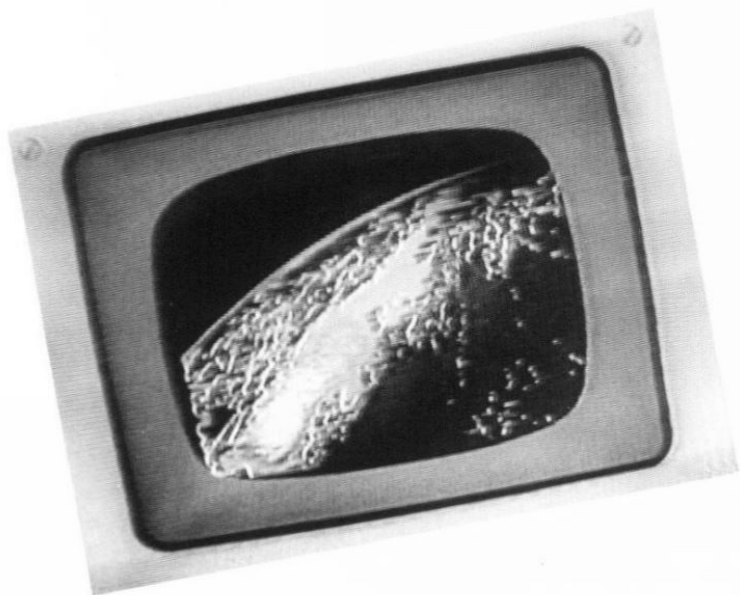


In Search of **Paradise**



**Or,  
Anywhere  
But  
Here**



## PROGRAM

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Above, still from:  
***Peggy and Fred in Kansas***  
by Leslie Thornton

Cover photo: Bill Horrigan

Organized by  
Steve Fagin and Bill Horrigan

***Peggy and Fred in Kansas***

by Leslie Thornton, 11 minutes, 1988

***Old Antelope Lake***

by Mike Anderson, 11 minutes, 1966

***Women's Movements***

by Annette Barbier, 28 minutes, 1989

***From Here, From This Side***

by Gloria Ribé, 25 minutes, 1988

***The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma***

by Dan Boord, 35 minutes, 1985

***Komodo***

by Terese Svoboda, 23 minutes, 1986

***The African Lady,  
or Love with a Fatal Outcome***

by Alexander Kluge, 25 minutes, 1988

***Universal Hotel***

by Peter Thompson, 24 minutes, 1986

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Des Esseintes, a character from Joris-Karl Huysman's novel *Against Nature*, deemed travel a waste of time since "the imagination could provide a more-than-adequate substitute for the vulgar reality of actual existence." No doubt, he continued, "anyone can go on long voyages of exploration sitting by the fire, helping out his sluggish or refractory mind, if the need arises, by dipping into some book describing travels in distant lands."

At ARTISTS SPACE, we are pleased to be able to present works that both employ imagination and describe distant places with *In Search of Paradise (or Anywhere But Here)*. We are grateful to Steve Fagin and Bill Horrigan who selected the films and tapes in the show. Their contributions to this publication illuminate the perils and pleasures of the migrant, the explorer and the tourist.

We also want to express our gratitude to Adriene Jenik, Video Coordinator at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), for her flexibility and inventiveness in arranging a simultaneous bi-coastal screening of the program. Our thanks also go to Jason Simon for his help with the preparation of texts for this publication. And finally, we want to thank the artists who have charted new internal and external territories in their contributions to this show.

This video program has been made possible, in part, by grants from the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. We are grateful for their support.

Susan Wyatt  
*Executive Director, Artists Space*

Micki McGee  
*Film/Video Curator, Artists Space*

Los Angeles...a sprawling desert landscape transformed by tourism (and greed); an appropriate setting to consider escape, misplaced exoticism and displacement. Catching wind of a video program being organized around these issues for ARTISTS SPACE, the VideoLace Committee suggested expanding the theme through a bi-coastal presentation with Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE).

Micki McGee's enthusiasm toward such a collaboration, and her perseverance throughout, were invaluable contributions toward the program's final outcome. Steve Fagin and Bill Horrigan should be appreciated for their thoughtful selections of tapes and films which confront our collective desire to leave, wherever we are.

Finally, we would like to thank the artists for their self-conscious explorations of not only "paradise," but here.

Laurie Garris  
*Acting Director, LACE*

Adriene Jenik  
*Video Coordinator, LACE*

**There are five types of traveller, according to a report running in an airline magazine that was perused last month while 20,000 feet over America Deserta. Let's go:**

- Adventurers**
- Worriers**
- Economizers**
- Dreamers**
- Indulgers**

**The article proceeds to break down each typology according to gender and income specifications, as well as overall personality markings, but the types are pretty easy to imagine, reading only from how they've been named. If you tend to worry, you're probably in no danger of indulging; if you're an active adventurer, who has time to economize? And don't we all, anyway, spend most of life in a dream?**

**The eight works in *In Search of Paradise (or Anywhere But Here)* are vastly different one from the rest, but each takes pleasure in its exploration of a foreign site — a site foreign to the maker and foreign to us. The imperative is to move, to go and fill the distance. When the gate to Paradise has been closed from behind, or when they've changed the lock, there's all manner of detour that heaven still allows.**

**Steve Fagin  
Bill Horrigan**

*Steve Fagin is a videomaker who teaches at the University of California at San Diego. Bill Horrigan has recently joined the staff of the Wexner Center for the Visual Arts in Columbus, Ohio as Media Curator.*

**The following is excerpted from the script of *The Machine That Killed Bad People* by Steve Fagin:**

*Manila, December 7, 1972*

Thousands watched on live television as she was carried off, her beige terno soaked in blood. Dr. Robert Chase, a hand expert from Stanford University flown in to consult, said he believed the First Lady survived due to her expertise at ping-pong. "She threw her arm up and danced back when he came forward, and that was part of her ping-pong capability."

It was in Leyte that she, Imelda Romualdez Marcos, had first heard of Europe. Brought by her widowed father to live in the family home, already nearly falling down. Her nun half-sister told her the story of the opera singer Maria Malibran. As a little girl, her father, a famous tenor, had forced Maria to sing in the role of Desdemona in Rossini's *Othello*. This would be her debut. Her father told her that if she didn't sing perfectly he would strangle her to death. The critical scene of the opera occurred, his hand on Maria's throat. She couldn't tell if it was Desdemona being strangled to death by her jealous husband, or her own father trying to kill her. She sang perfectly.

Ten years later, Maria, now the most famous soprano in Europe, learns that she has but a few months left to live. She has only one request. Before she dies she wishes to play the lead in *Othello*.

Imelda arose, the morning after the assassination attempt, in the manner of the hysteric who, after a hectic day of being beaten, tortured and defeated by her symptoms, awakes refreshed.

She had dreamed of mermaids, but this image was replaced by a more troubled one. Huge stones took shape before her, carved with strange etchings. It was a temple and a tomb, a royal tomb. A white vapor rose up from one of the pillars. It took the shape of a queen, a miracle of beauty. The woman smiled at Imelda and took her hand. Her hand slipped from the beautiful vision's grasp. Imelda tried to shout, but no sound came from her mouth. Instead, she heard loud voices calling to her. At this moment she rejoined the living.

Later in the day, still watching the events broadcast in an endless loop on the television, she remained puzzled. Why had Ver's security, standing by, not rushed to her rescue? Ver politely explained his men had wished to remain out of camera range, to give her center stage.

It was the custom in the Romualdez household to gather in the sala after supper for an evening of music. Don Vicente played the piano, one daughter played violin and Imelda sang. After the Americans had retaken Leyte, several would gather to hear this pure voice soar over the accompaniment of the piano and violin. Eventually this was brought to the attention of Irving Berlin; touring the liberated South.

Although her range of songs was more distinguished, from the Abelardo Kundimans to selections from *The Desert Song*, Imelda sang to Berlin "You Are My Sunshine." She had been told this was the anthem of the American liberation. Despite Berlin's praises Imelda decided not to pursue a singing career.

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The tragedy of the 21st of August.

Marcos' trusted watchdog, General Fabian Ver, still lying on his back, his aides thinking him sound asleep, listened to their squelched laughter as they still told that joke. "No, you have it the wrong way round. Galman first committed suicide, then murdered Aquino."

They laughed.

All that remained on the tarmac to mark the bodies were thinly drawn chalk outlines, Ninoy's partially obscured by a muddled footprint. The body of Galman had been hastily removed, his blood both still wet and dried.

Eighteen bullets had pierced the body, entering both front to back and back to front. The Aquino corpse had but one bullet hole through the back of the neck. He had worn the same body armour as the American President.

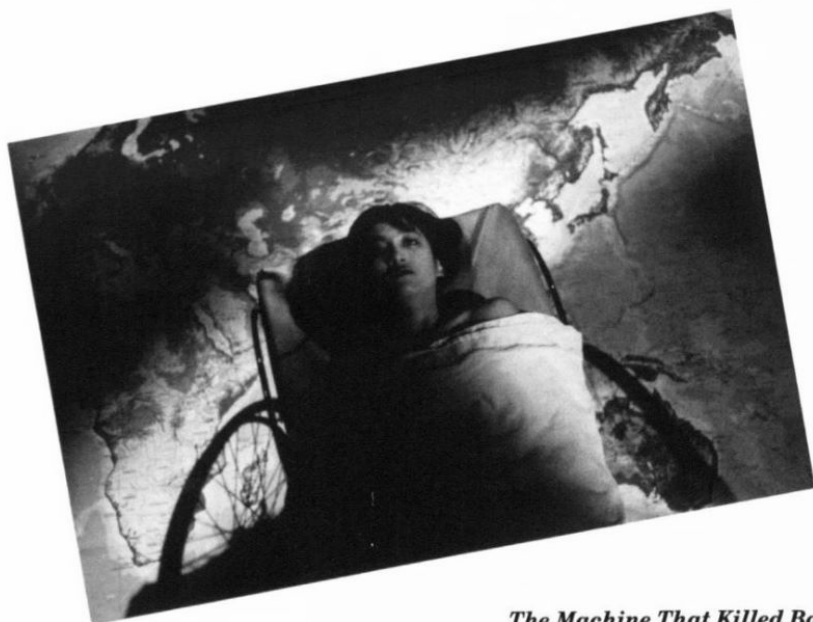
General Ver turned onto his belly. He had dreamed of a battle, lasting not even a minute. Suspended in mid-air, their knives flashing. The slash in mid-air made thrice the damage as the one on the ground. He thought, "In the air they are angels, on the ground, merely fowl."

He returned.

The saving grace of the assassination was that it had been so perfectly bungled. He imagined the American ambassador saying, "Surely the work of amateurs." He would nod and mumble not even a word, but the letters N. P. A.

Cockfights.

The half-sleep reminded Ver of blue grass.  
Kentucky.



still from:  
***The Machine That Killed Bad People***  
by Steve Fagin





stills from:

***The Machine That Killed Bad People***

by Steve Fagin



Trained in torture, by experts, he bristled at their taunts. "Nothing but barbarism," they would say. He would smirk and remind them that "the cock had lost to the eagle by one vote when THEIR republic had selected its national symbol."

As he lay there, eyes fixed on the ceiling, he lost control. The Romans had derisively called cockfighting the Greek diversion.

The laughter had subsided.

His aides, fallen silent, turned toward him to listen and he overheard his own voice saying into thin air, "Cocks are birds, it is us that have brought them down to earth."



This letter, dated December 17, 1951, was recently discovered quite by accident in an attic in Detroit, Michigan. At this time it would be best to withhold the author's name. We can, however, tell you a bit about him. He was Oliver North's hero and after his tour of duty in the Philippines he went on to Vietnam and finally Central America.

It has been said about him — no, about a character in a novel based on him — that he was determined to do good. Not to any individual, but to a country, a continent, a world.

Well, here's the letter.

*Dear Dad:*

*Thanks so much for your letter dated October 13. Sorry to be so slow to respond but things take so long here, and I was off in the jungles of Luzon. But even there I heard that the Yankees had won the World Series, most everyone here, even the Flips, root for the Yanks. It didn't surprise me that the Yanks had won, what else is new, but I was shocked to*

find out they had beaten the Giants. What the heck happened to the Dodgers? Well, your letter really filled me in on that. I must confess I took a certain unsavory pleasure in the way you described the excruciating details. I, like you, wondered why Dresson had put Branca in, after the Giants had murdered him all year and Thomson himself had hit a homer off him in game one. My favorite part of your letter, even more than the over punctuated rendition of Russ Hodges saying over and over again, "the Giants win the pennant, the Giants win the pennant, the Giants win the pennant." Did it really need four exclamation points each time? Was the post-game interview with Dresson, him saying, without any punctuation in his voice, "I called the bullpen and they said Erskine just bounced a curve, Roc ain't ready and Branca's throwing hard." He would have been better off consulting a numerologist. How can you put someone in, with the pennant on the line, who's wearing a big fat thirteen all over their back? Well, at least that turncoat Durocher lost the series.

As to some of your questions, yes, I'm still playing the harmonica and no, I don't like the Europeans any better, they seem so tired and cynical. They don't seem to see the importance of all this: Oppression, communism, atheism. To them it seems like a Majong game. I think they just come over to our officer's club because they think it's safe from the hand grenades. They are so easily amused, eating fried chicken and taking drugs. It's really true, the fate of the world is in our hands and we just have to round the Filipinos into shape. My advertising experience comes in handy and this seems to be the terrain that we can turn this thing around on. Magsaysay is a bit stupid, but at least he listened and does what we tell him. And the song I wrote, "Mambo, Mambo Magsaysay," is all the rage.


Sometimes this war makes me feel like a kid again back in Detroit. Often it's games and pranks that work. I concocted this eye of God scheme, borrowing it from the Egyptians, a little ancient history never hurt. We would, in the middle of the night, paint these evil eyes on the houses of suspected Huks. It would really scare the Huk out of them. Also we have thought of a rather clever use of aircraft. We broadcast from the other side of the clouds, over loud-speakers telling the natives not to feed the Huks. This voice of God seems to work better than the Voice of America.

Well, I guess by the time you receive this letter it will be a white Christmas. Here in the jungle, it's just green and more green. But at least it's a Christian country. They really carry on about Christmas. It seems to start up a week after the Fourth of July, reach full throttle Labor Day and a crescendo level from Thanksgiving to Christmas Eve. It sure is festive, a bit too festive, almost pagan. Now I understand what McKinley meant when he said we had to Christianize them.

Wait till next year.

Your loving son

P.S. Tell Mom to send some of her cookies, the desserts here are just too sweet. Also around here you can't find any serious reading, only novels, plays and poetry, so send me something, anything. I trust you.





still from:

**Komodo**

by Terese Svoboda



## G O H O M E

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by Bill Horrigan

**T**here's a Pepsi commercial on right now, a nice seasonal one (I don't drink Pepsi), with the Messiah chorus in the background of a foreground succession of actualities showing the human beings (children, sexy good German conscripts, grandmothers) participating, by their demonstrable proximity, in the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, and then a punchline voice-over, American, linking freedom to availability of pop. Well, the Thaw is moving (Malta was just days ago) and we wish we were there, for just one day. Each of us knows a discriminating someone who, for Christmas, will present authenticated nuggets of the Wall, boxed.

Mine will be placed on the shelf next to the vial of powdered ash from Mount Saint Helen's, which a man from an exhausted tobacco plantation in North Carolina intended to present to a ruddy MBA student from Belfast but mistakenly left on my kitchen counter in 1980. Everyone understands that provenance is all.

In the other room here, someone else's VHS rendition of *India Song* is being duplicated (voices off, voices off). On this table lies a letter containing a reference to, or an urge to recall, an odd episode a year ago that involved viewers fainting deadaway while standing in downtown St. Paul looking at a suite of

Margaret Bourke-White photos of concentration camp survivors; and this fainting was plural and simultaneous yet related only mysteriously one sufferer to the next. Now it's a year-old episode from somewhere else and still vivid.

Today a German called, hardly really even an acquaintance, but as the meeting had been made in Death Valley (Valhalla for Germans doing *le far-west*: you don't believe it but go there and see it's so), it bore down on him more deeply than meeting under more prosaic circumstances might have. And so he's on the phone jawing, but really fishing for the present location of our mutual friend, who in novelistic point of fact is at this very instant either cooling her heels in the Bangkok airport or winging, now a week past schedule (revolutions happen like a skip in a record), into Manila. Did I have the number of her hotel in Manila, he wondered. A resort is where she's stopping, it's a confusing country, I've never been there, I don't know what the resort is called, I'll let her know you rang, I really must go now.

"Twenty winters and one spring," it's an expression a Czech uttered on TV last week. Worldwide, hearts broke upon hearing this, an acoustic wound cut deep. It's a way of marking history, at any rate, or of aphorizing and cherishing it ... those winter decades. "It's our turn now. What happens now happens to us," wrote Anna Seghers, talking about a generation and a country, but talking surely not about us. The best and worst of this generation has emigrated inward; who now dream of where we'll be a year from now, and wonder about the mechanics of going there before that to figure out how people manage to live there, wherever there is.

Johnny said he'd be dead a year from now, but was living fine with that, said this with no gloom, and said then that to his eyes it looked as

though the Czechs were playing with fire, he fretted over their risky behavior but agreed their excitement was a real sight he'd try to remember. Nothing like it here this winter, he said, and wouldn't it be something for us to be there? See It Now, it would be like that, I thought. But then, of course, we'd want to come back, because people should stay where they've been dropped, a person should stay where his mother or her mother lit. (It's a curse, wandering is.) Contrariwise, here, the house anthem sounds hourly:

*You press your luck  
Up against his body.  
Now you're stuck,  
But you like it down and dirty.  
You don't care  
Where in the hell you're going.  
Anywhere is better than going.  
Anywhere is better than ...  
Anywhere is better than here.*

It's a lyrical idea that makes a winning claim if you imagine how it sounds while doing shots in a saloon on the corner of Lyndale and 26th in Minneapolis, or if you were once there and now can recall it (but can just recall it). But you can't animate or re-inhabit its site-specific aspiration if you're admitting it from a specific position of elsewhere. Here, for instance, the song plays and Johnny says, "Turn that the fuck off," because ultimately it's insulting to his ears to have to be hearing a song saying, "Wouldn't it be better to be not here, to be somewhere, anywhere, else?" The point is, *here* is where we are, and one of us is *from* here, and it's as fair enough as any a place to be after having been for too long in various elsewheres: after travelling, and after speaking to people who never lived here and never would, not in their dreams, even, *be* here, and after for so long just all the time worrying about where to go next, and after hearing



still from:

***Women's Movements***

by Annette Barbier

someone say, "People here don't sound like you but some of them gesture like you do," and after having returned since being here to the earlier places and having found them, oddly, forbidding, and after traveling, again, here, the progress slowed down noticeably, allowing the sealed boxes of received post-cards hauled in a car 2300 miles east, some of them, unsealed (constituting, in sum, history's withheld subjective reverse-shot), and the contents sorted:

—from Seattle: *regression prevails, not a question of desire*

—from Van Nuys: *as usual, I am drunk, but not deeply*

—from Phoenix: *if I can help you in Phoenix, do not hesitate to ask*

—from Minneapolis: *the therapeutic intervention was intriguing*

—from London: *the new film is a different kettle altogether*

—from Oakland: *it might look stupid but it sure beats the snow*

—from Indianapolis: *do you have a*

*gloss on the Brady Bunch reunion special?*

—from New Orleans: *youth culture force field as such does not exist, which is a great relief*

—from Key West: *new line of Elvis personal care products will yield \$10M in sales the first year*

—from Manhattan: *this is where we stayed*

—from Pocatello: *I passed something on the highway that looked awful, it was no spud*

—from Ensenada: *Marxist-Leninist regime unascended here*

—from Vancouver: *she asked about my budget, I had to laugh*

—from Brooklyn: *you bastard, I'm through*

—from Surabaya: *I'll be home*

And so then it really did seem, finally, that since we were here, and since one of us needed to be all the time avowing unto himself a manner of desperate mortality, and that certainly now time enough remained to be able to keep aloft cordial relations with all these foreign correspondents (and to be able to get them on the phone, to rouse them to *speak* — what's a place if not the grooves cut by those there who speak it?), that after all this, or in the eye of all this (and since, irreducibly, *here we are*), all that wants to be said *now* as the last word before the last, a send-off envoi as winter descends, is (quoting) *sogni d'oro ... dormi, John*.



stills from:  
***The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma***  
by Dan Boord

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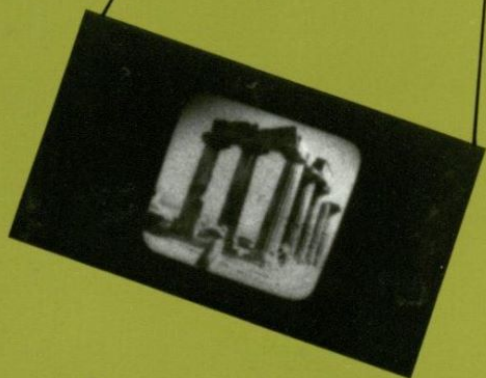
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