FUSES (Carolee Schneemann, 1964-66, 29:51 min, color, 16 mm film on video)

*Fuses* is a ground-breaking experimental film by American performance artist, installation artist, and filmmaker Carolee Schneemann (1939--). Shot and assembled over several years, this non-narrative work combines footage of Schneemann and partner James Tenney nude and having sex, glimpses of their cat Kitch and their bedroom, and scenes near a beach to create a sensuous portrait of intimacy. *Fuses* contains both painterly, abstract imagery as well as explicit photography of the body and sexual acts. Editing is used to play with rhythm and temporality as images are repeated, inverted, superimposed, sped up, and slowed down. Schneemann’s use of high contrast photography brings out inky black shadows that undulate with variegated shades of magenta, ochre, and green. Schneemann also scratched the celluloid and printed the edges of the filmstrip and its perforations into the image. This attention to surface, exposing what is usually hidden, echoes the display of the inner and outer contours of the body within the film. Her painstaking manipulations of the footage portray sex as a complex natural phenomenon that is saturated with unconscious patterns. In some screenings, the film is accompanied by sounds of ocean waves and gulls. According to Schneemann, Kitch the cat’s perspective offers a model for attentive but non-judgmental viewing. Anticipating feminist themes of the 1970s, Schneemann’s intimate film challenges the abstract, cerebral, masculinist aesthetic of Conceptual and Minimalist Art, emphasizing instead the autobiographical, desire, and the irrational.

Further reading:

MacDonald, S. (1980) ‘Carolee Schneemann’s “Autobiographical Trilogy”’, *Film Quarterly* 34 (1): 27-32.

Schneemann, C. (1991) ‘The Obscene Body/Politic’, *Art Journal* 50 (4): 28-35.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2003) *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects,* Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Paratextual material:

http://www.caroleeschneemann.com/works.html

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\*\* Please consult me by email if sending material by post, as I will be traveling in June and July.