

Stanya Kahn's Favorite Moving Pictures Experiences of 2014



When we asked the artist Stanya Kahn about her favorite films for this end-of-the-year feature, she went above and beyond, providing us with a complete list spanning everything from Youtube videos to works of journalism. Below is here complete response. Enjoy.

Some favorite moving pictures experiences in 2014 (That I can remember. In the face of increasing internet-consumption overload, I probably forgot half of what I saw. You probably did too):

“Dumb and Dumber To,” dir. by Peter and Bob Farrelly (2014)- shockingly as good as the first one.

Yvonne Rainer: Dances and Films at the Getty (2014)- included all of Rainer's films as well as video documentation of numerous dance performances. An amazing archive brought together by curator Glenn Phillips

“Citizenfour,” dir. by Laura Poitras (2014)- killer no-frills journalistic filmmaking, spookily current, offering a sense of push-back in the face of seemingly untouchable corporate and governmental power.

Kelly Slater vs. John John Florence Semi-Final at Teahupo'o (2014)- best back-to-back wave match-up maybe ever, historic probably, in massive, dangerous Tahitian tubes.

“Sound That” by Kevin Jerome Everson (2014), a new short film that follows city water workers seeking out underground leaks. Everson's nuanced, observational poetics continue to build a uniquely non-didactic form in which information and metaphor occur simultaneously.

“Transparent,” web TV series dir. by Jill Soloway (2014), blew open the boring closed circuit that mainstream straight television has been since its inception. With a core crew of transpeople participating in its creation on all levels, the show not only offers an alternate family narrative but does so from the inside out, with a production process that takes as many important risks as its content.

“How Not to Be Seen” by Hito Steryl (2013), made last year but having more visibility in 2014, Steryl's lo-fi/hi-fi strategies offer an oddly homey and embodied approach to conceptualism and institutional critique.

“Full Burn” by Mariah Garnett (2014), Garnett’s short video about an Iraq war vet working now as a Hollywood stuntman compresses US imperialist policy in the Middle East, issues of class and labor in the US, and constructions of male identity into a poignant 2-channel document.

“The Ultimate Dog Tease Video,” uploaded by Talking Animals (2011), still hilarious, perfectly anthropomorphized tableau of desire and disappointment, like the endless scrolling clip consumption- fun but fleeting and ultimately nothing.

“Shujayea: Massacre at Dawn,” Al Jazeera English (2014), brutal journalism, shot on the ground during “Operation Protective Edge”, Israel’s 22-day bombardment on Gaza.

“Warm Up” by Klara Liden (2014), from her solo show at Reena Spaulings, short video continuing Liden’s uncanny exploration of the body exerting mundane efforts, rhyming with the artist’s architectural concerns and utilitarian interactions inside it.

“Homestead” by Chris Howlett (2009), I only discovered the video this year. As if foretelling, Homestead’s virtual spaces and scenarios of repetitive distress (including zombie-esque moments of endless almost-death) feels very 2014 and appropriate for the list.

“OM Rider” by Takeshi Murata (2013-14), Maybe it is too pleasurable, seductive, suspect...But a pot-smoking werewolf in cut-offs playing keyboards and riding a dopey moped, polarized with an aging white patriarch slicing bananas in the loneliness of power is hot, and offered more content than many others this year. And I like that Murata is his own animator.

JP Auclair Street Sequence from “All.I.Can,” segment dir. by Dave Mossop and JP Auclair, (2012)- Wildly talented, innovative skier JP Auclair died this year in an avalanche. His street sequence in All.I.Can is maybe one of the most beautiful ski videos I’ve ever seen and we watched it over and over this year. RIP.

“Extreme Police Brutality USA” uploaded by RickFoxx (2014), stomach-turning compilation of unarmed civilians being beaten and murdered by police. The legacy of citizen witness video-taping since Rodney King has helped build broad movements for social change. This year’s anti-police brutality mobilizations are directly tied to the role of viral moving pictures.

“A Year in Police Brutality,” edited by Ben Mathis-Lilly for Slate (2014), nuff said.

The film I have shown in every single class I’ve taught in the past few years is William Greaves’ 1968 masterpiece **“Sybiopsychotaxiplasm Take One.”** Sadly, Greaves passed away this August. Far ahead of its time, Greaves’ brilliant experimental docu-fiction unpacks power dynamics within the filmmaking crew as a metaphor for state control and the power of the people, via improvisational filmmaking and textual deconstruction. The crew never knows exactly what is going to happen but is given agency in setting up the scenes that revolve around a repeating, problematic script dealing with gender and sexuality, played out by a rotating cast. With New York City’s Central Park as the set, candid and unplanned events constantly remind the crew and in turn the viewers of what cannot be controlled as we negotiate form and structure, agreements and difference.