

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on July 27, 2017

**Ken Jacobs: *The Guests***

## Ken Jacobs: *The Guests*

- Dates: July 27 – November 19, 2017
- Curator: Manuel Cirauqui
- Film & Video Gallery (103)

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao will present Ken Jacobs's work *The Guests* (2013) in Spain for the first time from July 27 to November 19, 2017. This is the eleventh piece scheduled in the Film & Video Gallery since it opened in 2014 to house key works of video art, video installation, and the moving image as artistic media.

"The world would be different if our eyes were different." With these words, Ken Jacobs expresses the main purpose of his works: to encourage viewers to question not only the truth and veracity of cinematographic images but also their own way of experiencing the three-dimensionality of the world.

Ken Jacobs (New York, 1933) created *The Guests* in conjunction with his wife and colleague, Florence Jacobs, by reusing an original film by the Lumière brothers, the fathers of cinematography. It is a film made in 1897 on the occasion of the wedding of one of their daughters. In this brief film, taken from the inside of the church, the camera captured the guests arriving as they file up the staircase leading up to the church.

Jacobs distorts the structure of the Lumière brothers' film and deliberately manipulates its time, turning it into a hypnotic, 74-minute montage. At the same time, he alters the illusion of depth and prompts in the viewer a sense of dramatic indetermination and suspended time. This state of temporary paralysis of the content of the film and of cinematographic realism is associated with "Eternalism," the concept that the artist coined in the 1970's within the context of his experimental work.

To achieve this optical effect, Ken Jacobs had the assistance of his wife and usual collaborator, Florence Jacobs; he sliced up the original film and separated the odd and even stills. He then placed them onto slides in order to project them simultaneously on two different carousels, overlapping each still to the previous one. It is not a doubled image, but two different stills, that is to say, two different moments overlapping. This allows him to alternate which eye sees the advance frame and to reconstruct the film stereoscopically, turning it into 3D. The drawn-out pace of the action and the recovered density of an inaccessible, historical space elevate the Lumières' footage to a plane beyond the document, prompting a direct and hypnotic experience of the mystery of the image.

In this way, the Lumières' cinematographic document is slowed down until it becomes an experience that is simultaneously analytical and hypnotic.

## Other works by the artist

A prolific and indefatigable experimenter and a seeker of sensations that bring the act of viewing close to performance, Jacobs developed the concept of “Eternalism” from the 1970s onward and created projection devices such as *The Nervous System* and, after 2000, *The Nervous Magic Lantern*. Exploring the capacity of one single eye to grasp three-dimensionality, Jacobs manipulates light and speed in spontaneously captured images of everyday life, creating countless clips. The monitor at the entrance to Gallery 103 includes six recent works where (walking along a street, watching TV, driving a car) are “eternalized” into timeless, psychedelic loops.

## Ken Jacobs. Biography

Ken Jacobs is a key figure in understanding the experimental scene that came alive in New York in the 1960's and went on to exert a decisive influence on culture in the subsequent decades. Trained first as a painter under the guidance of Hans Hoffmann, Jacobs made his first films after 1960 and took part in legendary collectives such as the Film-Makers' Cooperative and The Bleecker Street Cinema. After he and Florence Jacobs, his wife and regular collaborator, founded the Millennium Film Workshop in 1966 and directed their first benchmark film, *Tom, Tom, The Piper's Son* (1969), the artist steered his inquiry towards an increasingly abstract realm dominated by illusory depth and the way it is freely manipulated in cinema.

Ken Jacobs has received numerous awards and research grants, including the Maya Deren Award, the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the New York State Council on the Arts. In 1969, he and Larry Gottheim founded the Film Department at State University of New York at Binghamton, one of the first devoted exclusively to experimental film, where he taught classes until 2002. His films, videos, and performances have been presented at internationally prominent biennials and museums, including museums in New York such as The American Museum of the Moving Image, The Whitney Museum of American Art, and The Museum of Modern Art, as well as film festivals in Berlin, London, Hong Kong, and Rotterdam.

## ACTIVITIES

### Performance and chat with the artist Ken Jacobs (July 28)

Ken Jacobs will present the performance piece *Nervous Magic Lantern* on July 28 in the Auditorium of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. After the performance, made with his wife and partner, Florence Jacobs, which spotlights experimentation of the moving image without film, there will be a chat with the artist and a colloquium with the audience.

## Film & Video (Gallery 103)

The Film & Video Gallery is devoted to video art, video installations, and the moving image, both from the Guggenheim Museums and from other international collections. The gallery opened in March 2014 with Christian Marclay's installation *The Clock*. In June it featured Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson's *The Visitors*, and from October 2014 to March 2015, Rineke Dijkstra's video installation *The Krazyhouse (Megan, Simon, Nicky, Philip, Dee), Liverpool, UK* was presented in this gallery. Between March and July, the film series *Thread Routes* produced by conceptual artist Kimsooja was on display, followed by Shahzia Sikander's *Parallax* from July to November 2015. From December 3, 2015, to April 24, 2016, the gallery hosted Singapore-born artist Ho Tzu Nyen's installation *The Cloud of Unknowing* and finally, from May 12 to August 28, 2016, Eija-Liisa Ahtila's *The Annuntiation (Marian Ilmestys)* was presented in this gallery. The installation *Sigh* (2008) by Sam Taylor-Johnson was on view from September 8 through December 11, 2016. *Disorient* (2009) by Fiona Tan, was on view from December 22, 2016, through March 19, 2017. The last installation presented was *Untitled (Human Mask)* (2014) by Pierre Huyghe, from March 30 to July 16.

### Cover image:

Ken Jacobs

*The Guests*, 2013

3D film, black and white and color, sound, 74 min.

Courtesy the artist

### For more information:

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

Marketing and Communications Department

Tel: +34 944 359 008

[media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus](mailto:media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus)

[www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus](http://www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus)

All information about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at [www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus](http://www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus) (press room).

Press Images for  
*Ken Jacobs: The Guests, 2013*  
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

**Online Photo Service for Press Images**

At the press area ([prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.es/en](http://prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.es/en)) you can register and download high resolution images and videos featuring the exhibitions and the building. Sign in to get access. If you are already a user, log in here (you need your username and password).

For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 35 90 08 and email: [media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus](mailto:media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus)

Ken Jacobs

*The Guests, 2013*

3D film, black and white and color, sound, 74 min.

Courtesy the artist



Ken Jacobs

*Seeking the Monkey King, 2011*

HD color video, 5.1 surround sound, 39 min., 42 sec.

Music by JG Thirlwell

Courtesy the artist



Ken Jacobs

*Another Occupation, 2011*

Black and white and color video, sound, 15 min.

Music by Rick Reed. Video editing by Nisi Jacobs

Courtesy the artist

