

HYPERALLERGIC

Seeing Brooklyn Through Su Friedrich's Lens

Today, screening in Manhattan in a partial retrospective of the queer filmmaker's work, challenges us to look at what's right in front of us.

by Rhea Nayyar
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A still from *Today* (2022) featuring Denise Williams' hooping class
(image courtesy Icarus Films)

In her latest film, queer avant-garde filmmaker Su Friedrich used her camera as a tool for observing her surroundings in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn over the last six years. *Today* (2022), one of several films screening in Lower Manhattan starting this week, demystifies the popular slogan of “living in the moment,” characterizing it as accepting what is right in front of us rather than searching for entrenched wonders.

“Filming for *Today* had looser origins,” Friedrich told *Hyperallergic*. “What can I see on any given day that I respond to, that makes me happy, that makes me aware of life’s events. There wasn’t any particular place to go or activity to film.”

In a partial retrospective in celebration of the new movie’s New York premiere, *Today* will be shown every evening from Friday, March 17 through Thursday, March 23 at the DCTV

Firehouse Cinema for Documentary Film, with each screening followed by one of Friedrich's select short films. Friedrich will participate in a Q&A session this coming Friday and Sunday evening, and will be in attendance for most of the screenings.



A still from *Gently Down the Stream* (1981) (image courtesy the artist)

Today will be shown with five of Friedrich's earlier films spanning three decades (1980s to 2000s). Friedrich told *Hyperallergic* that she chose her 13-minute 16mm film *Gently Down the Stream* (1981) to accompany *Today* on opening night to illustrate the distance she has come since her directorial debut. "It's one of my earliest films, black and white, silent, very experimental, and one that had a huge impact when I released it," Friedrich stated, saying that it was the first film that "put her on the map."

In *Seeing Red* (2005), screening on Sunday, March 19, Friedrich uses video diary entries, colorful montages, and music as mediums to document and unfold her internal monologue about navigating life's frustrations as a woman and artist. The 27-minute digital color video is described as one of Friedrich's most personal works to date, stitching in the humor of incongruity into the fabric of existential cynicism.



Two station wagons in *Rules of the Road* (1993) (image courtesy the artist)

Rules of the Road (1993) will follow *Today* on Saturday, March 18, and Wednesday, March 22. The 16mm color film explores the symbolism, both personal and societal, of the beige station wagon with faux-wood paneling as a point of contention in a lesbian couple's dissolved relationship. Friedrich's voiceover muses about post-breakup feelings as the camera pans over station wagon after station wagon in a deliberately curated frequency bias set in early 90s New York overlaid with popular music from the time. Music plays an equally large role in the filmmaker's 16mm black and white film *First Comes Love* (1991) that follows four wedding ceremonies and the various emotions left in their wake. "*First Comes Love* will screen on Tuesday, March 21.



Cathy Quinlan identifying wildflowers in *The Head of a Pin* (2004) (image courtesy the artist)

Friedrich said that the structure of *Today* has a close relationship with that of her 2004 film, *The Head of a Pin*, which explores how city smarts falter in the face of a bucolic lifestyle. *The Head of a Pin* will screen on Sunday, March 20 and Thursday, March 23.

“Pretty much all of my work comes out of my own experiences, and all of these are shot similarly — by me — of things that happen ‘out in the world,’” Friedrich stated. “But one big difference with *Today* is the extent to which I use text on screen (and in voiceover).”

Ticket sales are live for each evening on the [DCTV Firehouse Cinema website](https://dctvfirehousecinema.com/), priced at \$16 for general viewers and \$8 for members.

<https://hyperallergic.com/808279/seeing-brooklyn-through-su-friedrichs-lens/>

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