



KING'S LEAP

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JASON SIMON
THE RED BOOKS
March 15 – April 14, 2019

King's Leap is pleased to present an exhibition by Jason Simon, whose concerns and spheres of activity as artist, curator, and founding member of the artist-run gallery Orchard, align—across generations—with those of King's Leap itself. *The Red Books* continues a sequence of his exhibitions which have taken as their subject encounters within the broad corpus of moving image histories and practices of circulation. Two new works make physical the scale and vibrancy of film culture during its first 100 years. In an installation that transforms the gallery into a reading room, the fifteen printed volumes of the American Film Institute's Catalog of Motion Pictures are made available for visitors to look through, promising "complete cataloging of every feature, short, serial, and newsreel produced by the American film community since 1893." A silkscreen print of the final page in the final chronological volume, 1961-1970, invokes a decade-long cacophonous inflection point for American cinema.

In 1967, with the support of the recently-created National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, the American Film Institute set out to create an annotated catalog of all domestically exhibited motion pictures. Through ensuing decades scouring archives, film libraries, VHS collections, the TV Guide for recordable late-night broadcasts, copyright registrations, and viewing approximately 85% of the included films, AFI's printed encyclopedia annotates the qualities, conditions, format, cast, and plot synopsis of films between 1893 and 1970. Its goal was to "record in sophisticated and accessible form the history and documentation of the moving image in the United States." The first books appeared in 1971 with separately bound indexes, and were dedicated to the cinema of the 1920s.

In 1999, a few years after cinema's centennial celebration, the final volumes—on the films of 1941 to 1950—were published, while the planned books of short films, newsreels and the feature film catalog of the entire 1950s, never reached publication. At this point, the catalog had achieved an unsustainable standard, defining the field while performing the impossibility of that task, and in 2003, forced to confront the insupportability of its own grand ambition, the AFI migrated the catalog to an online database, where it continues to this day. Amidst other fin-de-siècle digitizations of research environments, Simon, whose work has often taken as its subject the synesthetic potential in the recovery of stores of knowledge, collected all extant editions of the catalog. In his exchanges with current and former staff members at the AFI, Simon wrote: "Context is analog, and the AFI Catalog straddles contemporary reception platforms. Thus, an enormous shared knowledge base, one rooted in collective, formative and affective experience, shifts before our eyes."

All printed volumes of the catalog, known within the AFI as 'the red books', are arranged open for perusal on a custom, ring-shaped table that allows a reader to walk to its center. The circular table sits within a column of light, which is in turn flagged off from a distinct second set of lights: animated colored points dance off the darkened walls, dreamily enacting the break between the fugitive volumes, and their digital afterlife.



The last page of the last book, spanning the years 1961-1970, is the subject of a silkscreen print also on display. In homage to the AFI's next-door neighbor, The Immaculate Heart Community, home to Sister Corita Kent's archive of serigraphs, the silkscreen of the final page of this final volume bears entries for *The Zodiac Couples*, an aquarian porno; imported martial arts movies; *Zorba the Greek*; the British epic *Zulu*; William Castle's *Zotz!*; and, with true encyclopedic kismet, *Zorns Lemma*, Hollis Frampton's avant garde abecedarian odyssey.

After several encounters with Simon's past projects, King's Leap initiated a dialog without a fixed goal or end result in mind. Simon has conceived and designed *The Red Books* for King's Leap based on shared interests, the modest space of the gallery, fortuitous timing, and the sensuous effect of such a profound and imperiled store of knowledge.

With thanks to Sarah Clothier, Patricia Hanson, and Mike Pepin of the AFI for their generous dialogue.

Jason Simon (b. 1961) is an artist who lives and works in New York and teaches at The College of Staten Island, City University of New York. Solo exhibitions include *Request Lines are Open*, Callicoon Fine Arts, NY (2015); *In and Around the Ohio Pen*, Sismografo, Porto, Portugal (2015); and *Changeover*, Artexxe, Montreal (2014). Recent group exhibitions have taken place at Azkuna Zentroa, Bilbao; mumok, Vienna; The Kitchen, New York; Dazibao, Montreal; Yale Union, Portland, Oregon; and Ibid, London. Simon's videos are distributed by The Video Data Bank and Icarus Films. His writing has appeared in *Artforum*, *May Journal*, *Parkett*, *Frieze*, *Springerlin*, and *Afterimage*. Simon and Moyra Davey's "Ten Years of the One Minute Film Festival" was hosted by MASS MoCA in 2013. Simon was a founding member of the cooperatively run gallery, Orchard (2005–08), and he established the Art & Tech filmmaking residency facility at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio. This past summer, his work appeared in *The Conditions of Being Art: Pat Hearn Gallery and American Fine Arts, Co (1983–2004)*, at the Hessel Museum, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.