
Review

Reviewed Work(s): null by Melinda Stone and Liz Keim

Review by: Richard Cándida Smith

Source: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (March 2008), pp. 157-158

Published by: University of California Press on behalf of the Society of Architectural Historians

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jsah.2008.67.1.157>

Accessed: 09-08-2017 20:21 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Society of Architectural Historians, University of California Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*

Reef at Mandalay Bay, and developer Steve Wynn's fine art collection. In 1988 Wynn's new development, the Mirage (Treasure Island and Bellagio followed), created a type of attraction never before seen. Viewed as a folklore figure and father of the current mega-casino/entertainment conglomerate that goes beyond gambling toward Hollywood-sized entertainment, Wynn successfully fused "lowbrow" and "highbrow" cultures and injected art and education into the Las Vegas mix.

In his book *The Desert of Desire: Las Vegas and the Culture of Spectacle*, William L. Fox compares the Bellagio with the Getty Center. According to Fox, Getty architect Richard Meier created new forms "to concatenate with the old ones," thereby enlarging a tradition. He calls the Bellagio a "calculated representation of a place" and the Getty "an original distillate of one"—a comparison eloquently presented in this documentary.² Yet, the sole focus on artistic elements on the strip without mention of the city's burgeoning arts district remains a striking absence in this film. On West Charleston, a block west of Las Vegas Boulevard and a few blocks south of the Fremont district, a network of art galleries, studio spaces, and a community of talented artists has developed. Some attention to this locally produced culture would have provided a welcome counterpoint to the discussion of better known attractions.

EFFIE BOURAS
Arizona State University

Notes

1. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972).

2. William L. Fox, *In the Desert of Desire: Las Vegas and the Cultural Spectacle* (Reno, 2005), 13.

Melinda Stone and Liz Keim, producers **A Trip Down Market Street** **1905/2005**

San Francisco: MX Entertainment and Exploratorium Museum of Science, Art, and Human Perception, 2005, DVD, 76 min., \$19.95, www.exploratoriumstore.com/markettrip.html

In early September 1905, a film maker, possibly named Jack Kuttner, rigged a 35 mm motion-picture camera onto the front of a working cable car to film the changing street scene in front of the vehicle as it rode 1.55 miles down San Francisco's main commercial street from the intersection of Hyde, Gough, Eighth, and Market to the Ferry Building at the edge of the bay. The producers of the DVD reviewed here used oral histories found in the city's Episcopalian cathedral to identify the film maker and its year of production, although some evidence suggests the film may have been shot in early April 1906, literally days before the earthquake and fire that destroyed the city on 18 April. This film is also available for viewing and downloading on two online archives: American Memory and Internet Archive.¹

On first viewing, the film suggests that traffic on Market Street in 1905, if not exactly a free-for-all, followed very few of the rules taken for granted today. While most vehicles drove on the right, for example, enough were on the left going against traffic to indicate that keeping to the right was not obligatory; the degree to which drivers did so had more to do with common habits than with codified rules of the road. Traffic involved a mixture of automobiles, horse-drawn buggies, horse-drawn wagons and trucks, bicycles, cable cars, horse-drawn street cars, and electric street cars. Cable and street cars, which were on tracks, stayed on their routes and provided a practical core structure to traffic flow that other vehicles had to respect. Otherwise, drivers switched lanes and pulled in front of each other without any prior indication. Turns were initiated from any place in the street. Drivers went where they wanted and assumed that others would keep out of their way. There were no observable cross walks at intersections requiring drivers to

stop for pedestrians, no lanes dividing the street into orderly columns, no traffic signals halting movement in one direction so drivers in crossing traffic could proceed without hazard, and no noticeable police presence directing traffic at any point. The only police officer to be seen appears at the end of the film standing at the entrance to the Ferry Building.

Pedestrians were at a singular disadvantage. The film shows them darting across the street whenever they spotted an opening in the traffic. No one on foot moved slowly, no one seemed to assume that drivers would stop for them. Two pedestrian islands can be seen in the course of the ride, and people took advantage of the protection they offered. For the most part, however, people waiting for cable or street cars stood in the middle of the busy street or waited until the last minute to run toward a car as it approached. Cable and street cars did not stop, though they did slow down as passengers jumped on or off. Given the stately buildings lining both sides of the street for the entire mile and a half, the film provided a stunning contrast of public chaos in the midst of truly impressive private accomplishment.

Of course, the street was not really a chaotic free-for-all. The rules and practices were so different from what quickly developed with the introduction of the automobile that contemporary audiences will probably first notice the improvised quality of traffic before they begin to examine the images more closely and see the reliance on common sense, self-restraint, and tacit understandings that can be arrived at through the exchange of glances—practical (if not fool-proof) guides in an age when going ten miles per hour was fast and the state had not yet provided explicit rules to drivers and pedestrians for how to relate to each other. Drivers are not operating their vehicles in a manner particularly different from bicycle riders or those with horse and buggy, but their speed and agility already outstripped everything else on the road. Most, though not all, of the automobiles shown in the film circle around and appear on screen multiple times. The credible explanation provided on the American Memory website is that the filmmakers

wanted to create an impression of San Francisco as a bustling, up-to-date city.

The film is accompanied on the DVD by sixteen other short impressions of downtown San Francisco at various stages during the twentieth century. Immediately following the cable car ride down Market Street in 1905 is a four-minute film shot by an unknown individual from a vehicle, perhaps a cable car, moving down Market Street shortly after the earthquake and fire in 1906.² Large crowds of people, dressed for a Sunday outing rather than in work-day clothes, are shown walking down the street to get a firsthand view of the disaster. The film has faded in places, and many spots and stains dance over the images, all of which enhances the romantic, ghostly feeling inherent to the topic of a destroyed metropolis. In addition, the DVD presents a forty-five-second newsreel clip on the parade celebrating Tom Mooney's release from prison in 1939; four minutes of 16 mm color home movies shot during the Victory over Japan (VJ) Day celebrations on 14 August 1945; and a two-minute local news profile from 1992 on bike messengers at work in the city's downtown district. These increase its value and supplement the films available online.

The VJ celebrations make for particularly interesting comparison with the 1905 film. Normal traffic patterns have broke down as the streets fill with tens of thousands of men and women, but the structure governing normal use of what was then the city's major boulevard remains visible and readable throughout, showing how thoroughly codified street life had become. A second interesting feature of the 1945 home movies is the proliferation of signage. Almost every storefront sports a marquee and electric lights with the name of the store in large letters as well as large printed signs in the windows. In 1905, some buildings had large though simple signs with a company name painted at the top. Storefront signage appears to be considerably more modest than in 1945, though that could be an effect of the lighting. Nonetheless, the contrast between the stately, elegant commercial street of 1905 and the tawdry, cluttered jumble of 1945 is striking, suggesting the degree to which

consumerism had moved to the center of everyday life along with state regulation.

The DVD program of seventeen films produced by the Exploratorium is more celebratory than analytic or historical. There is no overt effort to trace different elements of street life across a century. In addition to the five archival films, the DVD presents twelve commissioned films, including four abstract studies of contemporary Market Street by young San Francisco film makers; seven films attempting to capture the spirit of the city at different points over the past century; and one film about a 1915 campaign to change the name of Market Street to Lincoln Boulevard, with young actors in period dress handing out leaflets in front of surviving monuments from the era. Other films honor the movie palaces that once lined Market Street, the emergence of the city's prominent gay and lesbian community in the 1970s, a popular shoe-shine stand in the city's financial district, and earlier cultural moments. None of the historical reconstructions use archived motion-picture footage.

The longest of the twelve new films is a fourteen-minute record of a ride down Market Street in 2005 shot from the front of a street car. One of the special features on the DVD allows for a split-screen viewing of the 1905 film, the 1906 postfire film, and the 2005 film, itself split between a high-definition color video image on one panel and a black-and-white 35 mm version on another, with the four films synchronized so that the same point on the street is shown simultaneously on all four screens. The split-screen comparison underscores how orderly traffic has become in the age of the automobile, governed by formal rules with elaborate signs at every intersection, painted lanes, and directions specifying what can and can not be done at any given location at specific times of the day. Additionally, the time comparison dramatically reveals changes in the demographics of the city. In the 1905 film, one wagon driver is African American. The overall impression is either that the city's inhabitants were uniformly of European descent and/or that racial minorities were discouraged from tarrying

on Market Street. The 2005 film reveals a transformed population coming from every corner of the globe.

The music commissioned in 2005 to accompany the 1905 film is amusing and effectively conveys the sense of haphazard order. This score no doubt worked well for a large public event, but an option of watching the film with music from the period would have been appropriate. Internet Archive contains a large number of films related to the 1905 film, including a set of color home movies shot in 1941 that explore Market Street, Chinatown, and several residential neighborhoods.³ It also has posted newsreel footage from 1929 of the city's first state highway linking San Francisco to its southern suburbs⁴ as well as a film from 1956 made to promote the expansion of the San Francisco Bay Area's freeway system.⁵

RICHARD CÁNDIDA SMITH
University of California, Berkeley

Notes

1. For American Memory, see the Prelinger Collection, <http://sfmuseum.org/loc/trip.html>; for the Internet Archive, see <http://archive.org/details/TripDown1905>.
2. This film clip is also available online for viewing and downloading at www.archive.org/details/SanFranc1906_3; the online film includes a sequence of devastation in the residential Western Addition district not included on the DVD.
3. See www.archive.org/details/Summersc1941_2.
4. See www.archive.org/details/Californ1929.
5. See www.archive.org/details/Freedomo1955_2.

Patrick Keiller, director

London

Zurich and Bristol, England: Condor Communications and Icon Films, 1994, DVD, 82 min., \$29.95, www.facets.org

Mirjam von Arx, director

Building the Gherkin

London: British Film Institute, Koninck Films, and Channel Four, 2005, DVD, 52 min., \$295, www.cinemaguild.com

Perhaps at no time since the great fire of 1666 has London undergone as radical a transformation as at the end of the twentieth century. These changes have been both encouraged and condemned, but