

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***SCREENING / UNIVERSAL CHARACTER****TUESDAY MAY 16, 2006 – 7PM****With works by THERESA HAK KYUNG CHA, DAVID HAMMONS, DAVID GATTEN, JACKIE GOSS, JENNY PERLIN, YVONNE RAINER, KATHRIN RESETARITS, PETER ROSE, STRAUB/HUILLET**

Curated by Jenny Perlin

The **SWISS INSTITUTE – CONTEMPORARY ART (S I)** is pleased to announce **UNIVERSAL CHARACTER**, the third in a series of bi-monthly film and video screenings to be held in 2006 at the **S I**. Artist Jenny Perlin has been invited by the **S I** to curate an evening of film and video work.

Cinema is often compared to a universal ‘language of images.’ The films and videos in this program use physical, graphical, and social aspects of language to present earnest, poetic, and failed efforts to communicate.

The seventeenth century German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz is best known for his texts in logic and mathematics. Another area to which Leibniz devoted his capacious mental energies was a theory of universal language that he called *characteristica universalis* (universal character). This pictorial language would be made up of symbols that, unlike hieroglyphics or Chinese characters, would be simple and easy to read without the aid of any dictionary. The utopian *characteristica universalis* was to be formed of “geometrical figures” and enable a “fundamental knowledge of all things.” Central to this project was Leibniz’s belief that language not only functions as an instrument but, in fact, constitutes thought.

Works by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Kathrin Resetarits, and Yvonne Rainer explore complex relationships between the physical production of a language and the representation of this effort on screen. These films bring out the effort (or fluidity) of the body in direct, performative relationships between subject and viewer.

The direct inscription of language on film appears in films by David Gatten and Peter Rose. In these films, the impression of text and nature on 16mm celluloid results in traces and excesses of textual, verbal, and environmental communication.

Sociolinguistic experiments with repetition and recitation, and attempts to transmit cultural information appear in strikingly different modes in works by Jackie Goss, Straub/Huillet, and Jenny Perlin. David Hammons’ video invites and ultimately eludes the imposition of fixed meaning, squeezing through linguistic cracks and metaphoric constraints to create a wry and haunting work.

This program, the third in a series of bi-monthly film and video screenings to be held in 2006, is made possible with public funds from NYSCA, the New York State Council on the Arts, a State agency.