

unexpectedly freeing itself from the limits of where it can be and breaking down the line between filmmaker and subject.

This move is emblematic of Williams' collaborative approach towards filmmaking, especially when it comes to working with people whose language he doesn't speak. Instead of a rigorous script, Williams would have "trajectories" of certain phrases, routes, or actions that he'd give to the characters, if they can be called that, which they are then free to change and adapt. The performances that we see in Williams' films are essentially improvisations, which endow the scenes with an inner dynamic that is fascinating despite being cryptic. When two characters sit on the stairs and talk about forgetting in *I Forgot!*, we get a sense that the narrative can disintegrate at any moment because it feels so improvised. At the same time, the tension from this threat of disintegration keeps us attentive and reward us with moments of surprise: a strange-looking bridge, a series of empty similar-looking buildings, death-defying jumps, etc.... Williams' "trajectories" present each situation as a becoming: not in the sense of an event in a procession that reaches an end, but as a synchronic "and," decentralized, entangled in the environment. Everyone involved in it has control over the situation that will end up on film, resulting in a kind of raw energy that justifies its own unfolding.

It's easy to fall into the trap of naïve misrepresentation or exotification when a filmmaker tries to make films in a foreign country, especially like Vietnam, considered to be in the periphery. However, Williams' filmmaking approach not only removes him from this risk, but also complicates the politics of centre-periphery, which speak to his interest in continuity, in rhythms and flows. By focusing on bodies and their energies, Williams is engaging in a destabilization of the powers that generate a discourse of disparagement.

What is most striking about Hanoi, and cities in Vietnam in general, is its traffic. Traffic is the city's flow of energy. The film takes to the street a couple of times, and twice right into the traffic. The motorbikes we see, the main means of transportation in Hanoi, are not so much vehicles as extensions of the drivers' bodies. The traffic is composed of agents moving independently in harmony without even paying attention to each other, as if each driver has tapped into some kind of communal energy, some kind of flow. It is an ongoing dance, in other words, which can be intimidating if one is thrown into it without any instructions. However, Williams', with his sensibility and physical intuition, is able of finding in the unfamiliar not intimidation, but a possibility for fresh combinations, musicality and beauty. ♦

Acropolis Cinema presents:



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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Acropolis is proud to welcome Argentine director Eduardo Williams for a program of his visionary short films following the rapturous response to his recent feature *The Human Surge 3* (2023), recipient of this year's Best Experimental Film prize from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. Prior to the awards ceremony, Williams will be in person for a presentation of four shorts from across his career that anticipate the themes and cutting edge techniques of his groundbreaking features.

About the films:

Could See a Puma (Dir. Eduardo Williams, 2011, 17 min)

An accident leads a group of young boys from the high roofs of their neighborhood, passing through a destroyed landscape, to the deepest depths of the earth.

That I'm Falling? (Dir. Eduardo Williams, 2013, 15 min)

Searching for a seed, a young man emerges from the underground where he hangs out with his friends. They all embark on a long digestive trip.

I Forgot! (Dir. Eduardo Williams, 2014, 28 min)

A group of Vietnamese teenagers stave off boredom by leaping from rooftop to rooftop, window to window, one building to the next. Wild and immersive, the film offers a vision as spellbinding as it is terrifying, juxtaposing all-too-familiar everydayness with the sublime beauty of reckless acts.

Parsi (Dir. Eduardo Williams, 2019, 23 min)

Innovatively shot on a 360-degree camera by young people from Guinea-Bissau's queer and trans community, this breathlessly immersive work sets a perpetually expanding poem by Mariano Blatt to a kinetic vision of their world.

TRT: 83 min

In person: Eduardo Williams

Rain or Shine by Ton-Nu Nguyen-Dinh

The following article was originally published by Screen Slate, September 30, 2023

Since its premiere in 2016, Eduardo “Teddy” Williams’s *The Human Surge* has captivated a niche yet zealous following. The premise is simple: people in Mozambique, the Philippines, and the director’s native Argentina go about their lives amid ecological disaster and infrastructural collapse—live-camming for money, wading through floods, searching for wifi. What perhaps so strongly endears viewers to the film is the charm of the characters, whose vivaciousness stands in uncanny contrast to their surroundings. Fantasy realism, evoked from a precise attunement to the polar extremes of modern experience, has been Williams’s signature mood from the start. His first short, *Could See a Puma* (2011), in which teenagers roam through the stark landscape of a thermal spring in Buenos Aires amid tree overgrowth and industrial shrapnel, renders ode-to-joy innocence within apocalyptic desolation.

Some artworks spin webs of affinity, binding us to peer enthusiasts with their silken threads. This

is true of Williams’s films, whose “stickiness” has an additional, visceral register. They emit wetness and flows—the glittering stream of urine that showers a trail of ants in *The Human Surge*, or the liquid speed of Saigon traffic through a rain-smeared GoPro in his short *I Forgot!* (2014). For *The Human Surge 3*, the long-awaited sequel that opens the Currents section of this year’s New York Film Festival, Williams takes the original formula and spins it on its head. New characters—who this time move between Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and Peru—are warped through a 360-degree VR camera, glitched and datamoshed, in weather more dramatic and volatile.

A graduate of Le Fresnoy, Williams is part of an experimental set who approaches new imaging technologies as a way to break open perception and the assumed (human) position of the observer. Unlike some of his contemporaries, his work is less scaffolded by theory than guided by sensate curiosity. Consider his installation *A Very Long GIF* alongside Véréna Paravel and Lucien Castaing-Taylor’s *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*—both imaging the inside of the body via the endoscopy pill camera, both released in 2022. Through graphic closeups, *De Humani* portrays the procedures of Parisian hospitals, reflecting on the history and ethics of medicine writ large. *A Very Long GIF* presents a meditative journey through the artist’s own internal organs, shots of their bubbling green and brown liquids eventually merging into one of the sea. Watching the inside of his entrails, I pondered, Is this technically a nude? Does this constitute porn? Such is the effect of Williams’s cinema, which constantly throws once-stable concepts into question.

I Forgot! by Ton-Nu Nguyen-Dinh

The following article was originally published by Vdrome, May 2019

In a nutshell, Eduardo Williams’ films are dances. His images are created out of a “physical intuition” of the environment in which his camera and characters move, or in his own words, of “the constant movement that creates a melody between surprise, variation and connection of different spaces and bodies”. From *Pude ver un puma* [*Could See a Puma*, 2011] to *Parsi* (2018), Williams has developed a distinctive style that builds on this intuition. In his films there’s always a freshness that challenges expectations of narrative, context and place. The materiality of the images alone constitutes different worlds in themselves, always sensual and pleasurable to watch, regardless of whether filmed on 16mm or a pocket camera. Williams often talks about rhythm, fluidity, flow and non-verbal communication when describing his approach, as if for him filmmaking is essentially a dance.

His first film, *Could See a Puma*, opens with a shot tracking a group of teenagers making their way through a series of adjacent roofs—with no real paths, they decide how and where to move with their own body, making their way as they cross from one building to another. There is a sense of liberation and ease in this kind of movement, as it transgresses pre-established borders and paths in space: they are reduced to a point of view, or a challenge.

In *I Forgot!* this features even more prominently. We follow the lives of young people in Hanoi through claustrophobic construction spaces, gardens walled in by concrete building and police harassment. In the end, however, a young man we’ve been watching rides his bike along with some friends to the outskirts of the city to hang out at some empty buildings. Here, they traverse walls, windows and roofs, repurposing the empty space to their own lively game. Palpitating with the energy of freedom and possibilities, even the camera becomes liberated from its wielder,