

BREAKING THE MAYA CODE

BIOGRAPHY AND FILMOGRAPHY OF THE DIRECTOR

Biography

Filmmaker David Lebrun was born in Los Angeles in 1944. He attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon and the UCLA Film School. He came to film from a background in philosophy and anthropology, and many of his films have been attempts to get inside the way of seeing and thinking of specific cultures. He has served as producer, director, writer, cinematographer, animator and / or editor of more than sixty films, among them films on the Mazatec Indians of Oaxaca, Mexican folk artists, a 1960s traveling commune, Tibetan mythology and a year in the life of a Maya village in Yucatan. He edited the Academy-award winning feature documentary *Broken Rainbow*, on the Hopi and Navajo of the American Southwest. Lebrun combines the structures and techniques of the documentary, experimental and animated genres to create a style appropriate to the culture and era of each film.

Lebrun's experimental and animated works include the radical editing styles of *Sanctus* (1966) and *The Hog Farm Movie* (1970), his late 1960s work with the multimedia group Single Wing Turquoise Bird, the animated film *Tanka* (1966), works for multiple and variable-speed projectors such as *Sidereal Time* (1981) and *Wind Over Water* (1983), and a 2007 multi-screen performance piece, *Maya Variations*.

Lebrun's animated feature documentary *Proteus* premiered in January 2004 at the Sundance Film Festival and has won numerous international awards. Animated from period paintings and graphics, *Proteus* tells the story of 19th century biologist Ernst Haeckel, who found in the depths of the sea an ecstatic and visionary fusion of science and art. *Proteus* explores the sea through poetry, oceanography, technology and myth.

Lebrun's most recent documentary, *Breaking the Maya Code*, a film on the history of the decipherment of the ancient Maya hieroglyphic writing system, was produced under major grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation. The feature length version premiered in March 2008 at the International Festival of Films on Art in Montreal; shorter adaptations were produced for the PBS program NOVA and Europe's ARTE France.

In addition to his work as a filmmaker, Lebrun has taught film production and editing at the California Institute of the Arts. He has been the curator of numerous art exhibitions, and is the co-editor of *In the Meridian of the Heart*, a 2001 book on his father, painter Rico Lebrun. He was for ten years (1987-1996) president of First Light Video Publishing, a production company and distributor of over 250 video titles in the field of media arts education, distributed to over half of US colleges and to educational institutions worldwide. Since 1996 he has been president of Night Fire Films, a documentary film production company. He was a founding Board Member and Treasurer of the non-profit Center for Visual Music (CVM) and is on the Advisory Board of the Chabot Space & Science Center's *Maya Skies* project.

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Select Filmography (as director)

Metamorphosis (in progress)
Breaking the Maya Code (2008)
Maya Variations (Multimedia performance piece, 2007)
Proteus (2003)
Wind Over Water (1983)
Sidereal Time (1981)
Luminous Bodies (1979)
Tanka (1976)
The Hog Farm Movie (1970)
Sanctus (1966)

Select Festivals, Awards and Fellowships:

Awards for Proteus:

Outstanding Creative Achievement Award, Santa Barbara Film Festival, 2004
Best Documentary Jury Award, Philadelphia Film Festival, 2004
Best Documentary Audience Award, Santa Cruz Film Festival, 2004

Awards for Tanka:

Bronze Hugo, Chicago International Film Festival, 1976
Director's Choice Film, Sinking Creek Film Celebration, 1976
Gold Medal, Virgin Islands International Film Festival, 1976
Cash Award, Ann Arbor Film Festival, 1976
Honorable Mention, Bellevue Film Festival, 1976

International Festival Screenings (of films directed by David Lebrun)

International Festival of Films on Art (FIFA), Montreal, 2008
Cinarchea Archaeology Film Festival, Kiel, Germany, 2008
Festival di Palazzo, Venezia, Rome, 2004
Asolo Art Film Festival, Asolo, Italy, 2004
International Festival of Fine Arts, Szolnok, Hungary, 2004
Jerusalem Film Festival, 2004
Calgary International Film Festival, 2004
Vancouver Film Festival, 2004
Puerto Vallarta Film Festival, 2004
Athens Film Festival, 1973
Sorrento Film Festival, 1973
Wellington Film Festival, New Zealand 1973

US Festival Screenings (of films directed by David Lebrun)

Maui Film Festival, 2008 & 2004
Sundance Film Festival, 2004
Santa Barbara International Film Festival, 2004

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US Festival Screenings (cont'd)

Philadelphia Film Festival, 2004
Atlanta Film Festival, 2004
Maui Film Festival, 2004
Savannah Ocean Film Festival, 2004
Newport Beach Film Festival, 2004
Orinda Film Festival, 2004
Idaho International Film Festival, 2004
Woods Hole Film Festival, 2004
Filmex Special Retrospective, *Animation, the Illusion of Motion*, 1981
Conference on Visual Anthropology, 1977
The Margaret Mead Film Festival, 1977
The Flaherty Seminar, 1977
Filmex (Los Angeles International Film Festival), 1976

Fellowships and Grants:

National Science Foundation Production Grant, 2004
National Endowment for the Humanities Production Grant, 2001
National Endowment for the Humanities Scripting Grant, 1998
Dorland Mountain Colony Fellowship, 1981
Reed College Creative Artist Grant, 1966

For a complete CV, please contact Night Fire Films.