



C I N E - F I L E

CHICAGO GUIDE TO INDEPENDENT AND UNDERGROUND CINEMA

:: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30 - THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5 ::

What does it mean to come from somewhere? - Films by Fox Maxy (US/Experimental)

Available through Block Cinema - starting at 7pm on Thursday, November 5, the films will be available to view on Block's Vimeo page for a 24-hour period; RSVP [here](#)

In a recent interview with *Hyperallergic*, Ipai Kumeyaay and Payómkawichum filmmaker Fox Maxy said, “I try my hardest to recognize that filmmaking is just like every other aspect of being alive.” I read this before watching the three videos in the program, and it stuck with me throughout. This is an apt characterization of the stream-of-consciousness mode of filmmaking in which the California-based Maxy is working; it flows like a person’s thoughts and is enigmatic to the degree that no one ever truly knows what’s in the mind of another. Maxy’s cultural and political aims, however, are clear. An Indigenous artist, Maxy punctures the lived experiences of his people and epitomize the problems facing Native societies at large. There’s immense joy in these works as well, and this reflects the inner duality of oppressed people as they experience jubilation amidst persecution. CALIFORNIA GIRLS (2018, 8 min) profiles Chemehuevi multi-media artist Tiffany Adams, whose work includes performance art, Native American regalia, and paintings of Indigenous women with customary facial tattoos. Adams touches on the concept of knowledge sharing among Native people in California. Maxy explores something similar in SAN DIEGO (2020, 30 min), named for where he’s from, as it pertains to the ongoing pandemic. A

description of the work states that “[t]he content is based on a question of how to keep our communities safe,” which applies not just to the actual virus, but to the insidious epidemic of colonialism. Mixed with the seemingly random, mind-map-like footage are Facebook posts from during the pandemic, in which artists, organizations, and regular people put forth their skills, hobbies, and good thoughts to continue fostering community in quarantine. In this way, the work is about a community’s spiritual safety as much as its physical safety, both of which are integral to the survival of Indigenous culture. Maxy’s work is especially thrilling in his use of contemporary and traditional music in tandem with various media, from diaristic footage shot on lo-fi recording devices and iPhones to archival, news, and interview footage. The editing is rhythmic, a song of the mind to which only Maxy knows the words. The work is often pure sensory delectation, an amalgam of media nimbly woven together to create a singular tapestry. Much of it is political in nature, reflecting the way in which such considerations are inextricably melded with one’s personal life. Similarly, but again singularly, *MAAT MEANS LAND* (2020, 30 min) asks, “What does it mean to come from somewhere?” It’s not a city symphony but rather a lament of the land. At the center of this work—which incorporates the ecstatic randomness of the previous film—is identity and place, the latter being a crucial concern to Indigenous peoples. Maxy sporadically revisits footage of prisoners fighting forest fires in California and confrontations with border guards, both exhibiting ways in which the land has been weaponized by colonizers. He eschews provincial modes of thought through his filmmaking, utilizing unfettered technique to disparage limiting conceptions. “It’s my time on this planet so I’ll do what I must,” said Maxy in the *Hyperallergic* interview. That sense of determination to create in such a way that’s wholly particular is on display in this work; Maxy temporarily invites us to spend this time with him but also asks that we consider the implications of our spectatorship. The end credits sequences for the latter two films include information about the people who appear, including social media handles where their respective creative and business endeavors can be sought. In *SAN DIEGO* text appears that proclaims, “ur on stolen land”; in *MAAT MEANS LAND*, “respect indigenous knowledge as truth.” In each, “support Native voices,” which turns into “\$upport Native voices.” Maxy extends the subject matter of his art outside its confines, asking viewers to do the same by ingratiating these truths into their realities. **[Kathleen Sachs]**