

The Sights and Sounds of Newark in 3D

By The Newark Museum
10/4/2009



Inspired in 1920 by Walt Whitman's collection of poetry, "Leaves of Grass," two artists, Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand, created a six-minute expressive film entitled *Manhatta* – a work many have described as America's first avant-garde film. Almost a century later, two Newark-based, award-winning filmmakers, Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno and Jerome Bongiorno, have created a modern 3D interpretation of the film in homage to both *Manhatta* and their home city, Newark. The newly released six-minute, black & white film, *New Work: Newark in 3D, A Centennial Film Commission* by Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno and Jerome Bongiorno, premiered at the Newark Museum on September 23, 2009 and runs through January 10, 2010.

Set against the backdrop of one of the oldest metropolises in the nation, the Bongiornos' film captures the vibrancy of present-day Newark, encompassing a cinematic arc from sunrise to sunset that emulates Strand and Sheeler's historic imagery -- from the city's bustling business districts, port and transit hubs to its parks, grand public monuments, places of worship and impressive iron bridges. In response to the Museum's centennial, the filmmakers captured the treasured landmarks that have graced Newark's urban landscape for almost a century.

"The outpouring of support -- from our funders, city officials and many Newark-based organizations -- who assisted the Museum with this project was overwhelming and gratifying," Director Mary Sue Sweeney Price said. "They understood the grandeur of the City and the importance of this film and embraced *New Work* whole-heartedly. The access and accommodations provided to the Bongiornos allowed them to cinematically portray Newark's true splendor. Our shared vision and this enthralling depiction of Newark are forever captured for future generations."

"The Bongiornos were inspired by Newark's architecture," said Beth Venn, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art and Senior Curator of American Art. "Shot from rooftops, the river and at street level, their film captures this energetic and emergent city."

Paying close attention to composition of light and dark imagery and movement,

the Bongiorno's use of camera angles and high vantage points of the cityscape were created with moving footage shot with three-dimensional technology using two side-by-side Sony high-definition XDCAM EX camcorders and two MinoHDTM camcorders for select shots. "The film is unique in its live action black & white 3D depiction of a city," Venn commented.

"To capture large areas of the city in 3D," Jerome Bongiorno explained, "the cameras must be separated by a considerable distance." Explaining the process, Bongiorno said: "Our eyes are between 2.5 and 3 inches apart. But to capture 3D of a cityscape, you have to place the two cameras many feet apart. In editing, the left camera image is colored red and the right camera image is colored cyan (blue), and then the images are superimposed. When projected, the superimposed images look confusing to the naked eye. But both layers can be isolated for each eye by decoding the image using red/cyan glasses. The result? What were 2D images now appear to be three-dimensional. The wall upon which the film is projected, virtually disappears."

The resulting six-minute film, *New Work: Newark in 3D*, is presented on a continuous loop and projected on a floor-to-ceiling screen in the Museum's South Gallery. To complement the film, Manhatta will be shown on a video monitor in an introductory gallery instead of its usual site in the twentieth-century American art galleries. Take away 3D glasses will be provided to exhibition visitors. Ambient sounds of Newark, interspersed with poetry and music recorded by Newark-based artists, will complement the film.

"Those familiar with Newark will experience many sites of the city as they've never seen them before," Venn said. "How many know that Military Park is in a shape of a sword, or have seen the view that the Abraham Lincoln sculpture at the Essex County Courthouse gazes upon? To see *New Work* projected in 3D on a large wall is an immersive experience. One feels as though the walls of the gallery could open up allowing you to step right into the heart of the city."

The filmmakers researched films that preceded Sheeler and Strand's *Manhatta* and those that were influenced by it, including the subsequent "city symphony" films from the 1920s and '30s such as Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*, Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, and Jean Vigo's *À propos de Nice*. According to Director Price, *New Work* has been acquired for the Newark Museum's permanent American Art collection, in part, with contributions from the Friends of American Art, a museum support group.

Support for *New Work* has been provided by the Newark Museum Volunteer Organization, the Newark Museum Business & Community Council, Sony Electronics Inc. Broadcast and Production Systems Division, Pelican Storm Case by Pelican Products, Manfrotto and Kata, Bogen Imaging Inc., DIY Theatre, LLC, Really Right Stuff, LLC, Leica Sport Optics, Flip Video™, DM-Accessories, The Tiffen Company, Trans Intl., Cables to Go, Nutley Park ShopRite, and Official Movie Products.

The year-long Newark Museum Centennial Celebration, including the four artists' commissions, is made possible through the generous support of Prudential. Centennial activities continue through spring, 2010. Featured in the audio portion of *New Work* is the poetry of Jon Curley, and music from the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart Choir with John J. Miller, conductor; JAMMAN Productions and Arts High School; Carter "Young Roc" Mangan Jr. for Cobblestone Records & Cobblestone Multimedia Music Publishing; Brandon W. McCune, Mecadon Music;

and James Papoulis, performed by the Newark Boys Chorus School. Additional contributions and services for *New Work* have been provided by Alister Chapman, City of Newark, Newark Fire Department, Essex County Sheriff's Department, Newark Police Department, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Newark Liberty International Airport and New Jersey Marine Terminals, County of Essex, Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, Cogswell Realty Group, New Jersey Transit Corporation, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Archdiocese of Newark, Greater Newark Conservancy, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark.

New Work: Newark in 3D is the third in a series of single artist exhibition projects that celebrate The Newark Museum's Centennial. In each instance, contemporary artists were asked to consider the points of intersection between some of the Museum's historical collecting departments or its history. The first commission was *Insecta Fantasia* by Jennifer Angus, followed by Yinka Shonibare *MBE's Party Time: Re-imagine America* which is currently on view through January 3, 2010. Throughout the year-long Centennial Celebration, the Newark Museum is presenting a series of lectures entitled Centennial Conversations featuring the commissioned artists and renowned experts.

The public is invited to a free conversation entitled A Panel Discussion with Filmmakers Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno, Jerome Bongiorno and Their Community Partners on October 22 at 7 p.m. that will be moderated by Curator Beth Venn. A reception prior to the lecture program is scheduled at 6 pm. Pre-registration is required by calling 973-596-6550.

Photo above: *New Work: Newark in 3D* caption: *1180 Raymond, from New Work, 2009.*

Image courtesy of and © Bongiorno Productions Inc.