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A Frame-by-Frame Show-and-Tell

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By ANDY BATTAGLIA

On Thursday, a screen at Anthology Film Archives glowed with a festive assemblage of images: a dolphin playing with a beach ball, an Indian guru dancing nude, effervescent families on vacation. The occasion was the latest installment of "Single Frame," a series devoted to the forgotten art of the slideshow.

"This is a little bit improvised, but that doesn't mean it's going to be a mess," said Andrew Lampert, 35, the Anthology curator who created the series to bring "a fading format into some sort of public spotlight." He addressed a makeshift audience of about 30 that had no idea of what they might stand to see.



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Ramsay de Give for The Wall Street Journal
Andrew Lampert, a curator with Anthology Film Archives.

Past "Single Frame" events have featured established photographers and filmmakers, but this one was organized around an open audience call, to be presented as a sort of experimental show-and-tell. Advance notice read, in part, "No slide will be refused!"

The first presentation focused on religious pilgrims in India, portrayed in black and white. The second was vacation photos snapped seemingly willy-nilly by Byron Westbrook, 35, when he started shooting

with his grandfather's handed-down camera.

"I've never seen any of these projected, so all of this will be new to me," said Mr. Westbrook, introducing his slideshow from a seat in back. Images that followed included a blurry polar bear at a zoo and a shot of Louisiana's capitol building in Baton Rouge. "Mark Twain called that the ugliest building on the Mississippi," he said. Admiring the picture before them, audience members spoke out against Twain's mirthless verdict.

Such comments made "Single Frame" a lively and communal affair. "This should be like sitting around in someone's living room," Mr. Lampert said at the start. "One of my duties here is to cajole all of you into speaking."



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The next presenter, 29-year-old artist Carmelle Safdie, spoke of a bygone road-trip that included a picturesque hike near old nuclear test sites at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. "I don't remember shooting slide film at the time, but I guess I did," she said. Her pictures included sweeping landscapes as well as humdrum human portraiture presented with hints of a different kind of drama. Of one stilted headshot, she said, "That's a picture of my ex-boyfriend's cousin's wife."

Ms. Safdie's last image was from a random slide picked up on a street in Montevideo, Uruguay—much appreciated by five Montevideans who happened to be seated behind her.

Most of the audience appeared too young to have grown up with slideshows of such an analogue sort in their past. "There's something special about hearing someone press on a machine and seeing a slide come up backwards and upside-down," Mr. Lampert said. "You don't get that with PowerPoint."

One exception was the eccentrically named Lary 7, a 55-year-old photographer who has lived in the East Village since 1984. He showed slides of the neighborhood in drastically different states, including memorial images of a long-gone Second Street punk club called the Gas Station and a storied movie house on Third Avenue that stands no more. "It's a plastic condo now," Mr. 7 said.

A few presenters toyed with the idea of making slideshows significant for the here and now. Artist Jessie Stead, 32, presented slides made from images of hypnosis spirals uploaded to YouTube. The effect was such that a zealous attendee ran into the Anthology office to fetch a collection of 3-D glasses for the audience.

Another artist, Angelica Vergel, 26, showed a series of projections but no "slides" to speak of. "I got a slide-projector a few years ago," she said. "But I didn't have any slides, so I started to experiment with different materials." Her projections angled beams of light through things like fishnet, Scotch tape and sheets of squashed plastic bubble wrap.

The final slot of the night went to Amanda Long, a 33-year-old sculptor from Long Island City. Her self-described "color experiment" featured phantasmagorical spreads of shapes superimposed over one another, with lots of attendant clicking and whirring from machines wheezing to keep up. "The experiment didn't work the way I was thinking it would," she said. "I didn't get the kind of rainbows I wanted. But it was a lot of fun."

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