


# The 1963 Ford Foundation Program for Film Makers and the Networks of Experimental Cinema

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## **Abstract**

In June 1963, the Ford Foundation’s Humanities and the Arts program sent out a call for nominations for their Program for Film Makers. Nine months later, in March 1964, twelve American filmmakers received grants of 10,000 dollars “to enable a limited number of creative film makers to extend and deepen their artistic experience and productivity.” The documents surrounding the creation and development of this one-time grant in support of experimental filmmaking reveal the challenges facing private foundations engaged with an evolving and diverse art form. Furthermore, they counter a representation of experimental filmmaking as individualistic and author-centered by uncovering networks of support among artists and the cultural milieu that sustained their works.

In June 1963, the Ford Foundation's Humanities and the Arts program sent out a call for nominations for their Program for Film Makers. Nine months later, in March 1964, twelve American filmmakers received grants of 10,000 dollars "to enable a limited number of creative film makers to extend and deepen their artistic experience and productivity."<sup>1</sup> For artists Kenneth Anger, Jordan Belson, James Blue, Bruce Conner, Carmen D'Avino, Daniel Drasin, Ed Emshwiller, Hilary Harris, Helen Levitt, Kent Mackenzie, John McDermott, and Stan VanDerBeek, this amount represented a relief from their daily financial concerns, and a year of relative creative freedom during which they could produce projects that would later prove central in their careers. In this research report, I first paint a picture of the field of experimental cinema in 1963 and highlight the significance such a large grant could play in the precarious lives of filmmakers. Secondly, I discuss the wording of the Program for Film Makers grant. The documents surrounding the creation and development of this one-time grant in support of experimental filmmaking reveal the challenges facing private foundations engaged with an evolving and diverse art form. Finally, through a focus on the nomination forms and letters, I uncover networks of support among filmmakers and critics, who nominated each other for this grant. What I aim to counter throughout this report is a representation of experimental filmmaking as an individual and isolated endeavor. Instead, artists clearly relied on their connections with each other, as well as with critics, museum and theater directors, programmers, university researchers, and private organizations officials to fund, produce, and exhibit their works.

## **Experimental Cinema in 1963 and the Consolidation of the Field**

The impact of the Ford Foundation Program for Film Makers is best understood in the context of American experimental cinema in 1963. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw the consolidation of an entire apparatus supporting experimental cinema. In 1955, critic and filmmaker Jonas Mekas published the first issue of *Film Culture* magazine, which would be a central avenue of

publishing for experimental filmmakers and critics, distributing their ideas to a large audience. Three years later, he was hired by the *Village Voice* as a film critic, and the newspaper's national circulation propelled Mekas to being "the champion of the New American Cinema [and] one of the most powerful film critics in America."<sup>2</sup> However, the most marking event of 1963 for experimental filmmakers and critics was the closing of New York City-based Cinema 16. Amos and Marcia Vogel's Cinema 16 had opened in 1947 and reigned as the primary distributor and exhibitor of experimental cinema in North America until its closure.<sup>3</sup> Facing financial difficulties, Cinema 16 had to close its doors at a time when little external funding was available to such enterprises. (Later, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Ford Foundation would provide financial support to similar endeavors.) In fact, many of the artists who applied to the Program for Film Makers relied on Cinema 16 to distribute and screen their works. Ed Emshwiller—one of the Program for Film Makers' grantees—recalled:

I would go to Cinema 16 and see some animation or some surrealist movies, and I would go home and try the same thing. Later on, I decided I was going to make a real movie. I took it to Amos and said I'd like to be considered for one of the annual experimental awards he and Maya Deren did. The film was considered by the group, and it got the top award. I was so delighted; it just started me.<sup>4</sup>

Because of its large impact on the experimental scene of New York City, Cinema 16's ending looms over the Program's files as a key impulse for the urgency of funding creative filmmaking. In 1964, Gertrude S. Hooker's discussion paper "Problems of Young Filmmakers," painting the field of independent cinema in the United States, stated:

[With] the demise of Cinema 16, new and experimental cinema work is being shown only at one 'midnight showcase' (momentarily, the Grammercy Theater). It almost seems as though this whole world has temporarily come to halt and is waiting to see what happens as a result of the historic entry of the Ford Foundation into the field.<sup>5</sup>

In a nomination letter for Stan VanDerBeek and Walter Carroll in July 1963,

writer Anaïs Nin also brought attention to the closure of the theater to suggest alternative ways that the Foundation could support experimental filmmaking: “It is not only important to encourage the making of experimental films but also to facilitate their being shown.”<sup>6</sup> With the demise of Cinema 16, filmmakers had to turn to the recently created Film-Maker’s Cooperative in New York, followed in 1967 by the Canyon Cinema Cooperative in San Francisco. These artist-run cooperative institutions were central in the distribution of experimental cinema outside of the halls of theaters, and into universities and museums.<sup>7</sup> The Foundation’s Program for Film Makers therefore intervened in a year when experimental filmmaking was consolidating its institutions and audiences, and it is likely that they decided to launch the Program in response both to the popularity and demise of Cinema 16, and to the growing interest in experimental film criticism in magazines like *Film Culture* (in New York) and *Film Quarterly* (in California).

As the official announcement of the Program for Film Makers mentions, the Ford Foundation’s Humanities and Arts Program—launched in 1957 with the purpose to fund scholars, artists, and artistic institutions—had offered grants-in-aid for the prior five years to subsidize arts such as creative writing, ballet, visual arts, music, and theater.<sup>8</sup> This came in response to a larger amount of unsolicited requests for funding resulting from “an increase in general costs in which even many of the largest cultural institutions were struggling to keep their doors open.”<sup>9</sup> An early report on the Humanities and Arts Program argued that “The very size of the Ford Foundation causes it to appear as the one private institution in the nation that could, if it chose, adopt a Maecenas role.”<sup>10</sup> The first in-depth engagement of the Foundation with filmmaking began six years later in 1963, after periodic unsolicited grants to the Film Council of America and the Society of Cinematologists. The format of the grant-in-aid, however, bypassed organizations by directly funding filmmakers. Foundation officials prided themselves in organizing one of the first funding to creative filmmaking, noting the paucity of such grants. Indeed, in 1963, filmmakers relied on a few Guggenheim fellowships, the United States Information Agency’s (USIA) grants for film production for its overseas program, and university fellowships. In a memorandum on the “Problems of Young Filmmakers,” Gertrude S. Hooker

compared the program to the Rockefeller Foundation, which “has not supported film making as an art, although it has assisted the development of archives,” positioning the Ford Foundation on the forefront of this problem.<sup>11</sup> This reality painted by Hooker in her report points to the difficulty for experimental filmmakers to find lasting, recurrent funding for their work. In the case of the grantees of the Program for Film Makers, many noted their struggles to fund their films in their letters of application.

While some grantees worked as part time lecturers and invited speakers in universities (like James Blue and also Stan VanDerBeek, throughout his career),<sup>12</sup> others relied on fellowships from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (such as Jordan Belson and Helen Levitt), prizes from the Academy Awards (as Hilary Harris) and other world-wide film festivals in Annecy, Oberhausen, Mannheim, and Edinburgh. Stan VanDerBeek pursued a public-facing career through several televised appearances on public television, which further heightened the demands for university and museum lectures. James Blue received the support and funding of the USIA for several of his films starting in 1962, when George Stevens, Jr. hired him after he won a Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival. Finally, Helen Levitt and Ed Emshwiller both received funding for their works in photography and illustration, respectively (notably with National Endowment for the Arts fellowship and several Hugo awards). Aside from these revenues and avenues for public recognition, the only yearly award for experimental filmmakers in 1963 was *Film Culture*'s Independent Film Awards, started in 1959 and awarded to one director each year. Many of the nominees of the Program for Film Makers had and would receive an Independent Film Award (Stan Brakhage in 1962, Jack Smith in 1963, Gregory Markopoulos in 1966, and Kenneth Anger in 1969). These sources of funding were all limited in time and often difficult to renew, revealing the precarity of experimental filmmakers who were working outside of the studio system. This explains the disarray that artists expressed in their letters to the Ford Foundation, lamenting the fact that the grant-in-aid was never renewed, and the incapacity for filmmakers to nominate themselves. As I shall develop, the necessity for filmmakers to rely on second-hand nominations

reinforced networks of support among the experimental cinema scene, while increasing the inequalities among its members.

## **The Ford Foundation's Struggle to Define Creative Filmmaking**

Before the Program for Film Makers was announced in June 1963, Ford Foundation officials tackled the complex task of delineating what would and would not be included in the grant. Having to define what categorized a “creative,” “experimental,” “non-commercial” film at a time when experimental cinema had expanded its reach beyond the limitations of the medium itself (with the development of expanded films, multi-screen projections, and performance-based screenings) was a difficult and daunting endeavor. It led Foundation officials to grapple with the question from the opposite approach. In her notes on the terminology of the Program for Film Makers’ announcement, Gertrude Hooker wrote:

Although ‘creative’ may be a meaningless word, as [Marcia Thompson] suggests, it seems necessary somehow to make clear immediately that these grants are not designed for projects in fields such as education and information, public relations, business and industry, health and medicine.<sup>13</sup>

*Creative* in the call for nominations was therefore defined in relation to other disciplines and fields of filmmaking. What was *not* creative filmmaking, as meeting agendas reveal, would vary between documentary, television, large budget films, academic projects, film archives, journalism, films about artists, and technical film labor. The driving concern of the Foundation was to limit proposals and nominations to artists, as opposed to technical film workers:

When the film program was drawn up, we had great difficulty in drafting the fact sheet so that it would appeal to creative artists, while repelling the multitude of professional craftsmen and technicians

who are employed in the mass communications and entertainment industries.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these original limitations, editors, researchers, and archivists were nominated for the grant, pushing judges and officials to debate the merit of projects that blurred craft, art, and research. For example, the proposal of archivist Kemp Niver to make a film about the Library of Congress archives to bring visibility to the collections was brought up in two different meetings as a complicated case straddling the line of creativity and “artistic purpose.”<sup>15</sup> Another recurring question was the place of cinema vérité and its popularity in 1963, with proposals by renowned documentarist Joyce Chopra and the Maysles Brothers. Lacking a voice-over and privileging observational approaches that did not call attention to the camera, cinema vérité documentaries blurred the role of their directors, leading Foundation officials to ask “Is this art, or is this journalistic photography?”<sup>16</sup> While some of these categories remained excluded from the grant—such as televised projects, studio films, and film archives—others survived the debates and remained in the purview of the grant—notably editing work, academic film projects, and documentary films. These categories were of course somewhat arbitrary and did not always conform to the reality of the field. For example, a filmmaker like Stan VanDerBeek would extensively work with television (starting in 1969) and computer films (as soon as 1964), while James Blue largely worked as a documentary filmmaker and used his Ford Foundation grant to conduct an oral history project of film directors around the world.

What the Foundation would privilege and reward as “creative art” would instead be defined along the lines of originality, subjectivity, independence from the commercial circuit, and innovation, as is suggested by this agenda for a January 1964 meeting:

Preliminary discussion of definition of ‘creative artists’ (?) A. One who controls all aspects of this ‘symphonic medium’ (film maker) (?) B. One who makes an artistic ‘personal statement’ either as a film maker or in a more specialized capacity (director, cameraman, editor) (?) C. One who has made a technical discovery of importance



to the art as a whole [...] (?) D. Others who have pioneered [...] or who appear to be pioneering today (?)<sup>17</sup>

The vocabulary of this document stresses both the commonality between film and other forms of individual art (“symphonic medium,” “personal statement”) and the focus on innovation and originality (“discovery,” “pioneering”). Ultimately, the Foundation conceived of the Program for Film Makers as a podium to encourage young independent artists and not to reward the careers of renowned filmmakers: “First, the purpose of a foundation is to provide opportunities for developing talented professionals but not simply to give awards for past performance. Our grants are not to be thought of as prizes.”<sup>18</sup> The judges’ meeting notes made several mentions of filmmakers’ ages in their deliberations and show a will to discount older applicants. On the other hand, they discussed the projects of the program grantees in relation to their future endeavors and capacity to evolve and innovate (“will continue to grow,” “doesn’t know how to stop,” “shows good deal of promise”).<sup>19</sup>

The final selection criteria of the grant favored young individual projects rather than larger, more established artists. Nonetheless, as with other aspects of the grant, the changes to the application wording reveal the challenges of creating experimental cinema at the time. Originally unfamiliar with the material conditions of filmmaking, the initial phrasing of the grant restricted its access only to film directors “who already [had] produced one non-commercial, creative film of at least ten minute duration.”<sup>20</sup> However, most experimental films of the period did not exceed ten minutes in length, particularly for hand-painted and collage animated films that required a long and painstaking labor for each projected minute (as for grantees Jordan Belson, Carmen D’Avino, and Stan VanDerBeek). The Foundation erased the time limit and expanded the availability to people “hav[ing] worked in some major capacity on at least one creative film” rather than as producers and directors. This enabled nominations for a larger variety of projects, but in reality, program judges noted the difficulty of comparing works by editors and directors during their sessions and called for the necessity of more specific grants for film workers.<sup>21</sup> In the end, what the subtle changes of these documents uncover are the difficulties for the Ford

Foundation to craft its first grant for film projects, having to come to terms with a quickly evolving medium that often blurred the lines of commercial and creative art. Through discussions with artists, critics, and researchers, they were able to better suit the program to reflect the conditions of producing, funding, and screening creative films.

## **The Nomination System and the Networks of Support Among Filmmakers**

As with previous Humanities and Arts grants in aid, the Ford Foundation organized its Program for Film Makers along a nomination system, whereby it invited artists, critics, films professionals, and directors of cinematic institutions to nominate two candidates for the grant. The Foundation sent out 410 invitations to nominators and received nominations for 207 candidates, who were then invited to submit a statement of purpose along with a description of their intended project and a description of their experience and interest in film. The Foundation appointed a jury of five men who worked in the field in diverse capacities (as film critics, actors, directors, producers, and writers): John Houseman, Arthur Knight, Daniel Rosenblatt, George Seaton, and Parker Tyler. After a first review of written applications, the jury convened in New York City in January 1964 to watch a selection of nominees' films and reduce their choice to twelve grantees. What the files surrounding the nomination and adjudication procedures uncover are: 1) a network of support among nominators and nominees who relied on each other to apply for a grant that relied on secondhand nominations, and 2) a division among judges between the East and West Coast film scene that later echoed in criticism of the program.

The grantees of the Program for Film Makers were nominated by fellow filmmakers and film workers, critics of magazines and newspapers, film society and film festival directors, university professors, USIA officials, film manufacturers, television and film producers, and museum and theater directors. On first look, it appears that filmmakers who were nominated most often were recent winners of international film festivals such as Knokke-le-

Zoute Experimental Film Competition in Belgium (Stan VanDerBeek), or awards like *Film Culture's* Independent Film Awards (Stan Brakhage). Such prizes would have indeed brought significant public attention to filmmakers who were otherwise relying on more restricted screening circuits. The most striking aspect of the nomination process, however, is the fact that many filmmakers nominated each other for the award. The following table illustrates the reciprocity of many nominations:

<b>Program Grantees</b>	<b>Nominated by</b>	<b>Nominated</b>
Kenneth Anger	Stan Brakhage	Stan Brakhage
Jordan Belson	Max Bakalinsky, Ernest Callenbach, Curtis Harrington	∅
James Blue	Cynthia Grenier	∅
Bruce Conner	Hilary T. Harris, Robert Pike	∅
Carmen D'Avino	Cecile Starr, Rudy Franchi	Jonah Kinigstein, Norman Rubington
Daniel Drasin	Stanley Kauffmann	∅
Ed Emshwiller	George Manupelli, William A. Starr, Stan VanDerBeek	Stan VanDerBeek, Stan Brakhage
Hilary T. Harris	Curtis W. Davis	Stan VanDerBeek, Bruce Conner
Helen Levitt	Robert L. Frank, Henwar Rodakiewicz	Sidney Meyers, Robert L. Frank
Kent Mackenzie	Robert L. Frank, Pauline Kael	Warren Andrew Brown, Robert Aller
John McDermott	George Stevens Jr., Hollis Alpert	∅
Stan VanDerBeek	John Cage, Ed Emshwiller, Alexander Hamid, Hilary T. Harris, James J. Limbacher, Dwight MacDonald, David Maysles, Anaïs Nin, Ernest Pintoff, Meyer Schapiro, Willard Van Dyke	Ed Emshwiller, Albert and David Maysles

*Table 1-List of Program for Film Makers nominees and their nominators*

It is likely that filmmakers contacted each other prior to the nomination deadline to agree on their reciprocal nominations. One trace of this is a letter from Curtis Harrington to the Foundation:

When I first received your announcement I spoke to Arthur Knight who assured me that he would nominate me. However, he subsequently found himself unable to nominate anyone and the only person we could find who might have nominated me if he liked my work was Mr. King Vidor.<sup>22</sup>

Harrington's fear of missing a nominator exemplifies the type of support that filmmakers could find amongst each other in the impossibility to nominate oneself.<sup>23</sup> Stan VanDerBeek, one of the grantees of the program, received eleven nominations from filmmakers and professionals of the field (one of the highest number of recommendations). He himself nominated Ed Emshwiller and Albert and David Maysles who had nominated him. The forms in his file similarly reveal that he was in contact with some of his nominators beforehand. Indeed, Anaïs Nin's letter of recommendation to the Foundation bears striking similarities to VanDerBeek's own application, and it is likely that VanDerBeek sent the writer a list of his awards and accomplishments to guide her recommendation.

The Ford Foundation  
PROGRAM FOR FILM MAKERS  
477 Madison Avenue  
New York 22, New York

RECEIVED  
JUL 29 1963

(please typewrite or print)

Humanities & Arts Program

1. NAME OF NOMINEE  
Mr. \_\_\_\_\_  
Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss \_\_\_\_\_  
Last name: Van der Beek First name: Stanley middle name or initial: \_\_\_\_\_

2. ADDRESS  
street: 341 Cherry Street city: New York City 2 state: New York

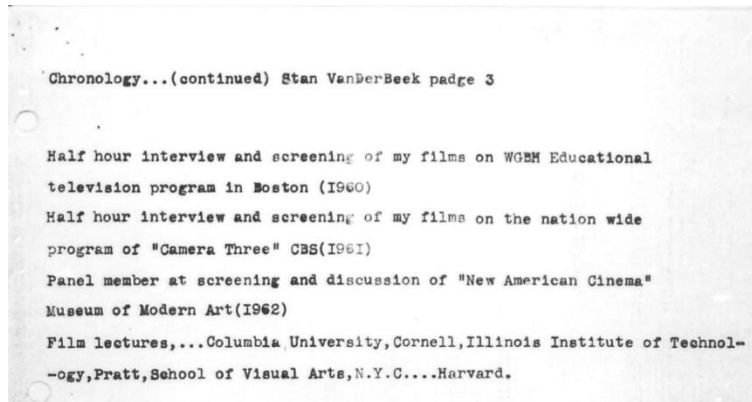
3. UNITED STATES CITIZEN  Yes  No

4. TITLES AND DATES OF SIGNIFICANT FILMS  
What Who How 1957 -- Mankinda 1957  
One 1958 -- Yet 1958 -- Astral Man 1958 -- Wheels 1959  
Ala Mode 1958 -- Wheels 2 1959 -- Science Fiction 1960  
Snapshots of the City 1961-- Days and Nights, Blacks and Whites 1962  
Skullduggery 1962 --- Summit 1963  
13 films in various stages of incompletion, ( a film about the City, about country and flora forms, etc) for lack of funds

5. BRIEF CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF NOMINEE'S CAREER  
An interview and screening of his films on 'Camera' 3 with national hookup. An interview and screening of his films on Producer's Showcase WGBH Educational Television, Boston Mass. 1960. Panel member at symposium of New American Cinema, Museum of Modern Art 1962. Various lectures and screenings, publications etc. Bronze medal Brussels International Film Competition. ( Special citations Creative Film Foundation Awards ) Science Fiction received first prize in animation Oberhausen Festival 1962 and 'Summit' was nominated at Venice Festival 1963. My personal admiration for the wit and humor and artistic quality of these films.

name of nominator: Anais Nin  
organization and title (optional): \_\_\_\_\_  
street address: 2 Washington-Square Village  
city: New York City 12 state: \_\_\_\_\_  
business address  home address

Table 2-Anaïs Nin's nomination form for Stan VanDerBeek. Microfilm



*Table 3-Stan VanDerBeek's application material. Microfilm*

A final example, Stan Brakhage nominated Kenneth Anger and Gregory Markopoulos, who both nominated him in return. Interestingly, Stan Brakhage received the largest number of nominations (with twelve nominators) but did not receive a grant. Indeed, he is absent from the order of discussion list, and appears to not have been recommended by any of the judges during their preliminary selection. Here, only speculation can fill in archival silences. Perhaps judges were already familiar with his work as one of the most recognized names of experimental cinema in 1964 and judged him as inadequate for the grant despite his many nominators. They do not mention his name in any meeting notes.<sup>24</sup>

These double nominations counter a narrative of experimental filmmaking as an individual and lonesome practice divided from the types of networks required to succeed in commercial cinema. Instead, filmmakers were very much indebted to each other's support, and to a strong and lively network of exhibition, production, and criticism. An interesting avenue of research could investigate how these networks grew and strengthened over time, and how they reinforced or broke down the perceived dichotomy of the film world between New York City and Los Angeles. Indeed, one of the biggest criticisms and points of tension of the Program for Film Makers was the perceived opposition between East and West Coasts, and its reinforcement by the choice of grantees.

None of the grantees worked outside of these two poles of artistic life, save for occasional lectures at regional universities and theaters. Among the five judges, the geographic majority skewed towards California and several letters mention the antagonism during meetings between them and the East Coast contingent. Letters from filmmakers and critics to the Foundation similarly encouraged the Foundation to fund regional initiatives to answer a general migration of artists to larger cities.<sup>25</sup> The archival documents of the Program for Film Makers paint a portrait of the field of experimental cinema in the early 1960s between the lines. Among the perceived tensions of the field, Ford Foundation officials attempted to maintain a form of neutrality, while they were often called upon to take sides and justify their choices.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Impact and Legacy of the Program for Film Makers**

Though the Program for Film Makers was never renewed after 1964, the Foundation did offer funding to more film-related organizations after this initial attempt. One of the largest grants related to film came soon after the Program for Film Makers, with the funding of the American Film Institute (AFI), which received the support of the Ford Foundation for its creation in 1967 and then, in 1980, for its workshop for women filmmakers. The funds went both towards educating and training filmmakers and bridging the gap between scholars and practitioners of film. Even though the filmmakers who had received a grant in aid in 1964 did not see their funds renewed or extended, they used the stature of the Ford grants to apply for similar funding opportunities. For example, Stan VanDerBeek noted in his correspondence with Edith Zornow that he had tried to “keep an interest in the project by talking at public lectures and to Jonas Mekas.”<sup>27</sup> Indeed, every magazine article on VanDerBeek’s experiments in animation and expanded cinema in the following years mention his receipt of a Ford Foundation grant. The archival documents at the Rockefeller Archive Center further show that this boost in reputation led to several universities inquiring about screening his films along with other filmmakers of the Program. Furthermore, VanDerBeek used this grant to apply

for other awards, like a grant-in-aid from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1966.

Its announcement reads:

Stanley Vanderbeek is one of the acknowledged leaders of the new American cinema. On the basis of his early accomplishments in animated and collage-type films on social and political themes, he received one of the Ford Foundation awards for film-makers, which terminated early this year.<sup>28</sup>

This case provides evidence of how filmmakers of the postwar period could build networks of financial support to produce and exhibit their works, not only through fellow artists but also through private and public foundations like the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, the Museum of Modern Art, the Filmmakers Coop, and others. Public-facing grants like the Program for Film Makers would convey a degree of recognition and seriousness to their receivers. Bruce Conner thus wrote to Edith Zornow that “[...] upon receiving the grant I was immediately considered to be a serious filmmaker who dabbled in the arts. Prior to that time, people generally regarded me as an artist working in many media but basically sculpture, collage, drawing.”<sup>29</sup>

The correspondence folders of the Program for Film Makers reveal that the Program’s announcement of its recipients generated much interest among film magazines, universities, individual researchers, and screening and exhibition spaces. Letters abound from researchers publishing books and articles on art cinema and cinema verité, film departments looking to screen contemporary experimental films, museums presenting special programs on the Foundation’s grantees, etc. A testament to the reach of the Program for Film Makers, in 1964, Commodore Robertson wrote to the Foundation to inquire about the grantees for the 1967 International and Universal Exposition in Montreal:

In the current issue of *Time* magazine, I read of your grants to several people who have made unconventional type movies. [...] If possible, I would like their addresses in order that I may contact them regarding the possibility of commissioning them to make films for the theme projects of the World Exposition to be held in Montreal in

1967. The Theme of the Exposition is ‘TERRE DES HOMMES’, the emphasis being on man rather than his goods.<sup>30</sup>

This form of exposure would have proved central for these filmmakers at the time. On April 19 and 26, 1965, Jack Masey (USIA chief of design for the American presence at Expo 67) and Ivan Chermayeff (co-designer of the United States pavilion) visited the Museum of Modern Art to screen film prints of most of the grantees of the Program for Film Makers. Even though the Foundation’s grant is never mentioned in Masey’s papers, the names on his list of films to screen is revealing: Richard Leacock, David and Albert Maysles, Len Lye, James Blue, and Hilary Harris, to which he added in April Kenneth Anger, Stan Brakhage, Ed Emshwiller, Gregory Markopoulos, and Stan VanDerBeek.<sup>31</sup> Five of the ten filmmakers had received the Foundation’s grant, and all ten filmmakers had been nominated for it. These archival traces reveal spheres of influence between governmental organizations such as the USIA and private foundations in their support of public-facing and socially engaged art.

## **Conclusion**

With the Program for Film Makers, the Ford Foundation offered invaluable support to filmmakers who relied on a variety of precarious funding sources to sustain their work. While the documents of the program reveal the precarity of artists at the time, they also uncover a rich network of funding, producing, and exhibiting of experimental filmmaking upon which the nominees relied for their applications to the program. Records at the Rockefeller Archive Center therefore paint a valuable, albeit partial and gendered, portrait of the field of creative filmmaking in 1964 and of the Foundation’s attempt to grapple with its complexity. This report aims to raise more questions than provide answers. To go further, one could study the networks of support among experimental filmmakers and critics more in depth by turning to the personal correspondence between people who nominated each other for grants in aid. My own doctoral research approaches the Program for Film Makers from the point of filmmaker Stan VanDerBeek, who received several grants in aid from private foundations.



The documents of the Rockefeller Archive Center are a rich source to explore how the filmmaker presented his work to organizations eager to fund socially engaged projects in the arts. Another important avenue for expanding on this report would be to conduct a larger study of all the Humanities and the Arts program's grants-in-aid to examine the types of projects that they funded, and whether the questions driving the Program for Film Makers carry onto other art forms.

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<sup>1</sup> Official announcement of the Program for Film Makers, June 1963. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Forms. Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY (hereafter, RAC).

<sup>2</sup> P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000*, 3rd ed (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 325.

<sup>3</sup> See Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16: Documents toward a History of the Film Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> MacDonald, 368.

<sup>5</sup> Gertrude S. Hooker, "Problems of Young Filmmakers" discussion paper, January 6, 1964. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Background. RAC.

<sup>6</sup> Anais Nin, Letter to the Foundation, July 28, 1963. Ford Foundation records, Grants E-G, Microform reel, Foundation-Administered Project (06490199): Program for Film Makers. RAC.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Zryd, "The Academy and the Avant-Garde: A Relationship of Dependence and Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 45, no. 2 (2006): 23.

<sup>8</sup> Official announcement of the Program for Film Makers, June 1963. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Forms. RAC.

<sup>9</sup> Amanda Niedfeldt, Rockefeller Archive Center Research Report, "The Ford Foundation and Trans-Atlantic Cultural Exchange in the 1950s" (2017): 7, <https://rockarch.issuelab.org/resource/the-ford-foundation-and-trans-atlantic-cultural-exchange-in-the-1950s.html>, accessed Nov. 8, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Humanities and Arts Program, p. 2 of discussion summary. Ford Foundation records, International Affairs, FA748, Series XIII, Box 3, Series I: Administrative Papers, Folder: Programs Cultural Affairs 1957-1962 (2 of 2). RAC.

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<sup>11</sup> Gertrude S. Hooker, “Problems of Young Filmmakers” discussion paper, January 6, 1964. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Background. RAC.

<sup>12</sup> For more discussion of the interaction of experimental cinema and universities, see Zryd, “The Academy and the Avant-Garde”; and Sally Banes, “Institutionalizing Avant-Garde Performance: A Hidden History of University Patronage in the United States,” in *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde: Performance and Textuality*, ed. James H. Harding (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Gertrude S. Hooker, Notes on GSH 5/1/63 draft of Film Makers fact sheet, January 5, 1963. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Background. RAC.

<sup>14</sup> Gertrude S. Hooker, “Problems of Young Filmmakers” discussion paper, January 6, 1964. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Background. RAC.

<sup>15</sup> Gertrude S. Hooker, Suggested agenda for Sunday, January 12, 1964, January 7, 1964. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Background. RAC.

<sup>16</sup> Gertrude S. Hooker, Revised suggested agenda for Sunday, January 12, 1964, January 9, 1964. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Background. RAC.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> McNeil Lowry, Letter to John Houseman, December 16, 1963. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Judges Correspondence, 1964. RAC.

<sup>19</sup> See the folder: Judges Meeting, 1/12/64 through 1/18/64, in Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53. RAC.

<sup>20</sup> Marcia Thompson, Revised draft of Program announcement, March 16, 1963. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Background. RAC.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel Rosenblatt, Letter to Gertrude S. Hooker, December 16, 1963. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Judges Correspondence, 1964. RAC.

<sup>22</sup> Curtis Harrington, Letter to McNeil Lowry, August 31, 1963. Ford Foundation records, Grants E-G, Microform reel, Foundation-Administered Project (06490199): Program for Film Makers. RAC.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Knight did in fact end up nominating Harrington with an extension in September 1963.

<sup>24</sup> See the folder: Judges Meeting, 1/12/64 through 1/18/64, in Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53. RAC.

<sup>25</sup> “Individual and regional points of view could be encouraged and upon achieving success there would be less necessity for the migration to New York as a community of film people would already be in existence right where the person had been working all along.” Alvin Fiering, Letter to McNeil Lowry, July 16, 1963. Ford Foundation records, Grants E-G, Microform reel, Foundation-Administered Project (06490199): Program for Film Makers. RAC.

<sup>26</sup> A memo from Gertrude Hooker to Marcia Thompson evidences the attempt at neutrality of the officials among the heated debates between judges: “I don’t believe

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anything need be done with this now, except file it. [...] I believe this long letter was prompted less by enthusiasm for his idea than by a psychological need to account for his repeated disagreement with the California judges at the meeting.” June 1, 1965. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series XIII, Box 53, Folder: Film Makers Program, Judges Correspondence, 1964. RAC.

<sup>27</sup> Edith Zornow, Evaluation of Ford Foundation Program for Film Makers, p. 7, 1974. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series IX, Box 24, Folder: FF Booklet. RAC.

<sup>28</sup> Grant in Aid to Stanley VanDerBeek, Stony Point, New York, to support his experimental work in cinematic performance, January 6, 1966. Rockefeller Foundation records, Projects, SG 1.2, Series 100-253, International and United States, FA387a, 200.R, Box 466, Folder 3942: VanDerBeek, Stanley. RAC.

<sup>29</sup> Edith Zornow, Evaluation of Ford Foundation Program for Film Makers, p. 8, 1974. Ford Foundation records, Education and Public Policy Program, Office of the Arts, FA640, Series IX, Box 24, Folder: FF Booklet. RAC.

<sup>30</sup> Commodore Owen Conner Struan Robertson, Letter to the Ford Foundation, April 6, 1964. Ford Foundation records, Grants E-G, Microform reel, Foundation-Administered Project (06490199): Program for Film Makers. RAC.

<sup>31</sup> Brian Real, “Designing Diplomacy: Jack Masey and Multiscreen Cinema at Expo 67,” *Journal of E-Media Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1349/PS1.1938-6060.A.476>.