

The Illinois Parables

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2018
7:30 PM – 9:30 PM

ARTS + LITERATURE LABORATORY
2021 WINNEBAGO STREET, MADISON, WI,
53704, UNITED STATES (MAP)
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WINNEBAGO STREET MADISON, WI, 53704
UNITED STATES](http://maps.google.com?q=2021+winnebago+street+madison,+wi,+53704+united+states))

Brutality and beauty combine in a 2016 experimental film from Chicago director Deborah Stratman. [Info \(https://artlitlab.org/events/the-illinois-parables\)](https://artlitlab.org/events/the-illinois-parables)



ALL's monthly Mills Folly Microcinema series continues to showcase daring and undersung experimental work with a regionally focused historical documentary from Chicago-based filmmaker Deborah Stratman. A visual essay that's at once confrontational and meditative, *The Illinois Parables* (2016) ebbs and flows through eleven interrelated vignettes that largely revisit scenes from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Through a studied implementation of mural paintings, assorted drawings, and newspaper headlines over archival audio, Stratman examines this country's discriminatory brutality, beginning with Native Americans' plight as a result of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. As Stratman's editing lens progresses through the topography of her home state, we're repeatedly presented with harsh realities of life—whether in the face of natural disasters, like a tornado's ravaging of West Frankfort in 1925, or racially motivated violence in a Chicago apartment complex some 44 years later.

But the film also captures moments that illuminate the will to persevere and stand against injustice, like the reading of a particularly moving letter from Ralph Waldo Emerson to President Van Buren, or a speech on the significance of the revolutionary from a Black Panther. These sentiments are further reinforced as a reprieve from escalating tensions or spiritual buoy through recurring naturalistic footage of landscapes high and low. Stratman's lovely musical selections additionally inspire hope in the beauty of human creation with various ambient piano, orchestral, and choral works from Jeanne Demessieux, Arvo Pärt, Okkyung Lee, and Chicago's own Olivia Block.

While there's something about its itinerant headiness that is slightly reminiscent of Grant Gee's *Patience (After Sebald)* (2012), an essayistic documentary about WG Sebald's walking tour of Suffolk, England, the subject matter of *The Illinois Parables* also proves to be a sobering complement to this past June's Rooftop Cinema feature on indigenous inequities, *INAATE/SE/* (<https://www.tonemadison.com/events/rooftop-cinema-inaate-it-shines-a-certain-way-to-a-certain-place-it-flies-falls>) (2016). —Grant Phipps

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