

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kevin Jerome Everson was born and raised in Mansfield, Ohio. He has a MFA from Ohio University and a BFA from the University of Akron. He is Professor of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

His films have been the subject of mid-career retrospectives at the Viennale (2014); Visions du Reel, Nyon, Switzerland (2012), The Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2011) and Centre Pompidou, Paris (2009). His work was featured at the 2013 Sharjah Biennial and was included in at the 2008, 2012, and 2017 Whitney Biennials. Museum retrospectives include Modern and Contemporary Art Museum, Seoul, Korea and Tate Modern, London, UK.

His work has screened widely in film festivals around the world, including Sundance, Toronto, Venice, Rotterdam, Berlin, New York, Ann Arbor, AFI, Oberhausen; and in cinemas, galleries, and museums, including Whitechapel, London; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH; Museum of Modern Art, New York; & REDCAT, Los Angeles.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Act One: Betty and the Candle, 2010

16mm film, black-and-white, sound,
transferred to HD video
11:25 min.

Ninety-Three, 2008

16mm film, black-and-white, sound,
transferred to HD video
3 min.

Grand Finale, 2015

HD video, color, sound
4:41 min.

Total: 20:06



Courtesy of the artist.

GALLERY GUIDE

APR 14 – JUL 2, 2023

The Contemporary Dayton is honored to present a selection of films by Mansfield, Ohio born, and internationally acclaimed artist Kevin Jerome Everson.

One of the primary cinematic visionaries of our time, Everson’s filmic work evades every label: nonnarrative, experimental, avant-garde, found footage, Black, documentary and certainly “realism.” Everson’s vision of film routs settled notions of the natural and the real. To properly understand his particular brand of cinema, the viewer must rethink what they “know” about the “reality” of his filmed Black subjects; their work or their joy or the lives that they lead when not being filmed.

Directing his lens at the lives of Black Americans, Everson’s films play with the omnipresent yet invisible histories packed into signifiers like “body,” “Blackness,” “knowledge,” “time,” and “process,” allowing him to create poetic narratives of family, work, struggle and celebration. Acknowledging this, the film scholar and companion of the artist, Greg de Cuir, Jr., describes Everson’s work as driven by “the concern to record everyday Black experience.”

Primarily using a 16mm camera, Everson also considers the materiality of analog film and its capacity to reproduce reality while still capturing observations of universal phenomena such as the horizon, the cosmos, time and the play of light. Within this juxtaposition he presents poetically visual narratives that inspire us to reflect on the varied meanings of perception.

In the first film, *Act One: Betty and the Candle* (2010), a young girl gazes steadily into the flame of a single flickering candle for almost 12 minutes. It is based on works by the legendary German painter Gerhard

KEVIN JEROME EVERSON:
films

THE JACK W. AND SALLY D. EICHELBERGER FOUNDATION VIDEO GALLERY

Richter: *Betty*, the haunting portrait of a woman whose stare the viewer can never engage and the series titled *Kerze* (German for candle), which, like Everson’s interpretation, addresses the seemingly ever-present human desire to capture and understand the phenomenon of candlelight.

The second film, *Ninety-Three* (2008), focuses on a 93-year-old man in a darkened room trying to blow out candles on a birthday cake. The event transpires in slow motion and is filmed in black and white. While silent, the film seem to address what we hear. We hear a breath. The man bending over the cake is illuminated only by the light of the candles, which causes the image itself to tremble in its 16mm format, seemingly imitating a breath. In its silence, the viewer can nearly hear that something is breathing, It’s the “sound” of the image itself which Everson has described as “ the noise that falling snow makes as we watch it; film it with our eyes and our minds.”

In the third film, *Grand Finale* (2015), the camera lands on the back of two boys’ heads as they look at a last volley of fireworks in the Detroit sky. The film deftly separates the event of the fireworks from the subject’s gaze. In effect, the main occurrence is the people gathered for the event; the humanity of the evening. One of the boys is recording the fireworks, and observes them on his digital phone. This is not an unfiltered every day; this quotidian experience is explicitly mediated through the lens of Everson’s camera and the camera held by his subject.

Together, the three Kevin Jerome Everson films chosen for this exhibition present an artist engaged in honoring that which he has chosen to make indelible through his contemplation. In Everson’s cinema, Black people are neither the victors nor the defeated. They are neither overcome or undone. They are and remain undefeated.



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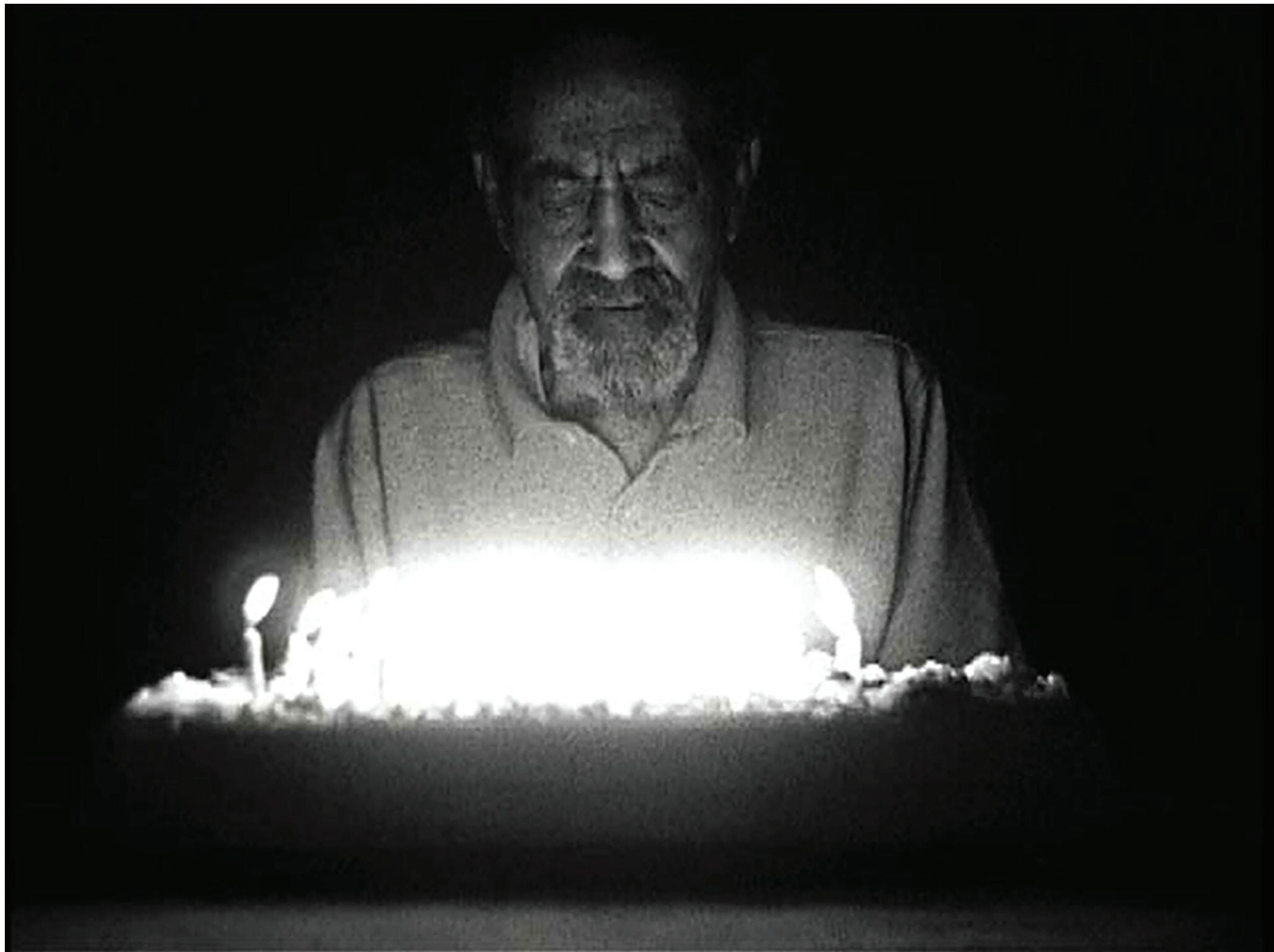
KEVIN JEROME EVERSON: *films*
Courtesy of the artist; Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, NY; and
CalArts Library, Valencia, CA

GALLERY & CoSHOP HOURS

Mon–Tue	Closed
Wed–Sat	11 am–6 pm
Sun	11 am–4 pm
<i>First Fridays May–Sept ‘til 10 pm</i>	
<i>Always Free</i>	

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KEVIN JEROME EVERSON
Still from Ninety-Three, 2008
16mm film, black-and-white, silent, 3 min., transferred to video
Courtesy of the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, NY
and the Film Library Archives at CalArts, Valencia, CA