Acclaimed and Award-Winning Documentaries for Anthropology

Manakamana
Directed by Stephanie Spray and Pacho Velez
Produced by Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel
2013, 118 minutes
Purchase: $195

Produced at Harvard’s Sensory Ethnography Lab, Manakamana is an exhilarating, one-of-a-kind documentary experience. Filmed entirely inside the confines of a cable car, high above a jungle in Nepal that transports villagers to an ancient mountaintop temple, it is an acute ethnographic investigation into culture, religion, technology and modernity.

For centuries, devoted pilgrims hoping to reach the fabled temple—the sacred place of the Hindu Goddess Bhagwati, an incarnation of Parvati, who is believed to have the power to grant wishes—needed to undertake an arduous multi-day journey. Today, because of a new cable car system, the entire trip takes just under 10 minutes.

Selected one of the best films of the year by the New York Times, Manakamana opens a rich and vibrant window onto this world over the course of eleven such rides. Through passengers’ conversations, anecdotes, observations about the surrounding landscape, and even their silence, a detailed picture of their lives emerges; a story about history, tradition and change.

“A transporting ethnographic film.” —The New York Times

“A motion picture that transports the viewer to a mountaintop Hindu temple, as well as back in time to the medium’s dawn.” —The New York Review of Books

“A one-of-a-kind achievement. Directors Stephanie Spray and Pacho Velez manage to craft a vast and revealing portrait of both their chosen locale and the people who pass through it.” —Variety

“Offers spiritual, philosophical, and aesthetic rewards beyond the immediate power of words to describe. It’s also further proof that Harvard University’s Sensory Ethnography Lab is at the forefront not just of documentary filmmaking but of redefining and altering the ways we see and process information.” —Boston Globe

Off the Rez
Directed by Jonathan Hock
2012, 86 minutes
Purchase: $395 / Classroom Rental: $125

An unforgettable story about a young Native American woman and her family and their determined pursuit of the American Dream, Off the Rez is an award-winning documentary that follows one of the country’s top high school basketball prospects, 16-year-old Shoni Schimmel, who leaves the reservation to play in a competitive, nationally-recognized basketball league.

“Highly Recommended. A truly inspiring film.”
—Educational Media Reviews Online

“Presents a positive portrayal of reservation life; it would be enjoyed by both teen and Native American audiences.”
—Library Journal

“A tale of hope and sacrifice that reveals the difficulties facing Native Americans trying to retain their culture while competing in the outside world.”
—Booklist

SEE THE ENTIRE COLLECTION P. 4–5
American Arab
Directed by Usama Alshaibi
2013, 60 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Classroom Rental: $125

A provocative look at the complexities of Arab identity in post 9/11 America, American Arab interweaves filmmaker Usama Alshaibi’s own story, and that of his family, as well as other Arab Americans to thoughtfully explore the values, passions, hopes and perceptions of his community from inside and out. An important film that emphasizes the diverse and complex array of voices and cultures within the Arab-American community.

“A universal story about immigrants’ struggles to assimilate and seek the often elusive promise of the American dream. A potent discussion starter.”
—Booklist

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Inocente
Directed by Andrea Nix Fine and Sean Fine
2012, 40 minutes
Optional closed captions and Spanish subtitles
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

The inspiring story of a remarkable 15-year-old Latina, homeless and undocumented, but fiercely pursuing her dream of becoming an artist. An essential documentary that confronts teen homelessness, immigration and the importance of arts education.

“This poignant film gives face to homeless children and should prompt discussions about immigration reform, homelessness, and arts education.”
—Booklist

★★★★ “Editor’s Choice. Highly Recommended.”
—Video Librarian

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The New Americans
Executive produced by Steve James and Gordon Quinn
2004, 411 minutes (2-Disc Set)
Purchase: $495 / Classroom Rental: $195

A landmark seven-hour documentary series, The New Americans follows the lives of a diverse group of contemporary immigrants—from the Dominican Republic, Mexico, India, Nigeria and Palestine—to offer a kaleidoscopic picture of immigrant life in the U.S.

“The New Americans has the richness and density of a Dickens novel.” —The Los Angeles Times

“Highly Recommended. Brings the immigration experience to a remarkably personal and enthralling level. A phenomenal work in scope and execution.”
—Educational Media Reviews Online

“A film that is at once epic and intimate, universal and specific. The triumph of The New Americans is that it reminds us of a truth too easily forgotten: Immigrants are all of us.” —Chicago Tribune

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Abraham’s Children
Directed by Nina Froriep
2010, 77 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

Abraham’s Children takes us into the lives of ten Muslim American adolescents, ranging in age from 10 to 17 years old, to share their experiences and hear their stories in their own words.

“Highly Recommended. A warm hearted, open, and inviting look at what it is to grow up Muslim in America.”
—Educational Media Reviews Online

“Suitable for college courses in cultural anthropology, anthropology of youth culture, anthropology of Islam, and cultural diversity, as well as general audiences.”
—Anthropology Review Database

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Your Day Is My Night
Directed by Lynne Sachs
2013, 64 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Classroom Rental: $125

Blending autobiographical monologues, intimate conversations, and staged performances, Lynne Sachs’s Your Day Is My Night documents the lives of Chinese immigrants sharing a “shift-bed” apartment—a bed that is shared or rented by people who are neither in the same family nor in a relationship—in the heart of New York City’s Chinatown, offering a deeply felt portrait of the Asian-American immigrant experience.

“An evocative portrait of a stratum of immigrant life that is not well known. What emerges from this meditative depiction of the immigrant experience is the residents’ sense of resourcefulness and maintenance of dignity.”
—Booklist

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An inspiring documentary, *The Young Ancestors* explores the growing movement within American Indian communities to revitalize their native languages before they become extinct. As part of a pilot program created by the Indigenous Language Institute, a group of teenagers are learning their tribal language, Tewa, for the first time, establishing a line of continuity with their ancestors and demystifying dances, songs and ceremonies performed in their community.

“Recommended. Interviews regarding forced boarding school attendance and relocation of Native American Indian populations are included to provide context.”
—Educational Media Reviews Online

“A charming new film. Suitable for college courses in cultural anthropology, anthropology of language, anthropology of world indigenous peoples, and Native American studies, as well as general audiences.”
—Anthropology Review Database

**Two Spirits**
Directed by Lydia Nibley
2009, 51 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Classroom Rental: $125

An exploration of gender and sexuality in Native American culture, *Two Spirits* interweaves the story of the life and brutal murder of a Navajo teenager with the largely unknown history of the ‘two-spirit’ tradition—the acceptance and celebration among indigenous cultures of people with both masculine and feminine traits. A 2011 “Notable Video for Adults” as selected by the American Library Association.

“Riveting. A crash course on Navajo history and culture.”
—LA Weekly

**In the Land of the Totem Poles**
Directed by Michel Viotte
1999, 51 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

This video examines the work of Native American artists in the Pacific Northwest and how their wood carvings of totem poles, ceremonial masks and sculptures are part of a broader cultural renaissance.

**Survival Prayer**
Directed by Benjamin Greené
2012, 70 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Classroom Rental: $125

On a remote archipelago in the Pacific Northwest, an uncommon abundance of animal and vegetable life has sustained the Haida people for countless generations. Following traditional food harvesters as they gather and prepare for the winter, *Survival Prayer* is an intimate ethnographic portrait of an indigenous community and the conditions—environmental and man-made—that threaten their way of life.

“A wonderful film, and a moving portrait of a people struggling to keep their traditional hunting and gathering ways alive to inspire new generations of Haida men and women.”
—Wade Davis, National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence

**Last Days of Shishmaref**
Directed by Jan Louter
2008, 90 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

Inupiaq Eskimo have lived in Shishmaref on Sarichef Island off the coast of Alaska’s Seward Peninsula for an estimated 4,000 years. Recently, the community has been forced to confront two great forces. The increasing influence of modern Western culture has caused a deep schism between the generations. At the same time, large areas of Shishmaref have begun crumbling into the sea.

“Highly Recommended. A mesmerizing documentary.”
—Educational Media Reviews Online

“A firsthand, intriguing look at a Navajo tradition.”
—Booklist

“Filled with interesting information both about Navajo traditions and current issues that affect the group.”
—Feminist Review
Sensory Ethnography Lab

Founded by Lucien Castaing-Taylor in 2006, Harvard University’s Sensory Ethnography Lab promotes innovative combinations of aesthetics and ethnography, especially in film, video, sound, and photography. The Sensory Ethnography Lab has been honored with retrospectives around the globe, including as part of the 2014 Whitney Biennial in New York, and has produced some of the most acclaimed and groundbreaking documentaries in recent years.

5 FILMS BY J.P. SNIADECKI

People’s Park
Directed by Libbie D. Cohn and J.P. Sniadecki
2012, 78 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Classroom Rental: $125

A fresh gaze at public interaction, leisure and self-expression in an urban park in Chengdu, China. The film explores the dozens of moods, rhythms, and pockets of performance coexisting in tight proximity within the park’s prismatic social space, capturing waltzing couples, mighty sycamores, karaoke singers, and buzzing cicadas.

“An unblinking nonfiction look—captured in one uninterrupted, extraordinarily stable and fluid shot—at contemporary China or at least the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people crowded into one Sichuan city park.” —The New York Times

Demolition
Directed by J.P. Sniadecki
2008, 62 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Classroom Rental: $125

Focusing on a vast demolition site in Chengdu, the Sichuan capital in western China emblematic of the rapid growth and development occurring throughout the country, Demolition is a revealing portrait of migrant labor and urban space. The film gradually shifts focus from the transforming worksite to a small group of laborers who have come to work in this ever-changing urban environment.

Yumen
Directed by Xu Ruotao, J.P. Sniadecki, Huang Xiang
2013, 65 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Classroom Rental: $125

A collaboration between two Chinese artists, Xu Ruotao and Huang Xiang, and acclaimed American filmmaker J.P. Sniadecki, Yumen is a documentary-fiction hybrid that tells the story of a ghost town—Yumen, in China’s western Gansu province—a once-thriving, oil-rich town that has since been left depleted and derelict. Yumen is a haunting, fragmented tale of hungry souls, searching for human connection and a collective past among the town’s crumbling landscape.

Songhua
Directed by J.P. Sniadecki
2007, 28 minutes
Purchase: $195 / Classroom Rental: $95

For generations, the Songhua River in Northeastern China has served as a vital center for leisure, commerce, and most importantly, drinking water for the people of Harbin. Through a series of vignettes filmed only one year after a major chemical spill, Songhua depicts the enduring and complex relationship between the city’s residents and their “mother river.”

The Yellow Bank
Directed by J.P. Sniadecki
2010, 27 minutes
Purchase: $195 / Classroom Rental: $95

As it captures the longest total solar eclipse of the 21st century, The Yellow Bank takes the viewer on a contemplative boat ride across the Huangpu River in Shanghai, China, using the eclipse as a catalyst to explore the way weather, light, and sound affect the urban architectural environment during this extremely rare phenomenon.

Leviathan
Directed by Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel
2012, 87 minutes
Purchase: $195

A groundbreaking, immersive portrait of the contemporary commercial fishing industry. Filmed off the coast of New Bedford, Massachusetts, Leviathan presents a vivid, almost-kaleidoscopic representation of the work, the sea, the machinery and the players, both human and marine.

“Looks and sounds like no other documentary in memory.” —The New York Times

“For those concerned with phenomenology, the anthropology of work, sensory ethnography, and/or the tradition and transgressions of ethnographic film, Leviathan is compulsory viewing.” —Visual Anthropology Review

“Leviathan brings new depths to ethnographic film.” —The American Anthropologist

Sweetgrass
Produced by Ilisa Barbash
Recorded by Lucien Castaing-Taylor
2009, 101 minutes
Purchase: $195

Sweetgrass follows the last modern-day cowboys to lead their flocks of sheep up into Montana’s breath-taking and often dangerous Absaroka-Beartooth mountains for summer pasture. This astonishing film reveals a world of harsh beauty and arduous labor, where humans still work in rugged intimacy with nature.

“A cinematic and documentary accomplishment.” —American Anthropologist
As Long as There’s Breath
Directed by Stephanie Spray
2009, 57 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Classroom Rental: $125

“Shot at a slightly slowed motion, and accompanied by Karel’s whirring, clanging sound design, the movement of this waste takes on a mesmeric dimension.”
—Film Comment

Still Life
Directed by Diana Allan
2007, 51 minutes
Purchase: $295 / Classroom Rental: $125

Following the acclaimed Kāle and Kāle and Monsoon-Reflections, As Long as There’s Breath is Stephanie Spray’s third film documenting the lives of the Gayeks family in Nepal. Building on a deep bond of trust (Spray was eventually adopted by the family), she captures a multi-generational household struggling for cohesion after the departure of a beloved son. Spray records the Gayeks family as they get ready for the fields where they work as day laborers, plow fields, harvest crops, share meals, and rest.

Terrace of the Sea
Directed by Diana Allan
2009, 52 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Classroom Rental: $125

Filmed in an unofficial Palestinian Bedouin camp established in 1948 on a stretch of beach north of Tyre, in South Lebanon, Terrace of the Sea uses a collection of family photographs taken over three generations as a prism through which to reflect on memory, loss and history. An anthropologist, author (her most recent book is “Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile”) and filmmaker, Diana Allan documents the experiences of the Ibrahim family, who have been making a living as fishermen for generations. The film looks at their relationship to work and to the physical environment and how they’ve persevered in this “temporary” home.

Untitled
Directed by Stephanie Spray
2010, 14 minutes
Purchase: $250 / Classroom Rental: $95

“A revealing portrait of two Nepali newlyweds in a moment of rest and playful interaction, Stephanie Spray’s Untitled challenges our perception of two themes at the very core of ethnographic filmmaking: human relationships and the ways in which they can be experienced by the viewer. Untitled is uncut, rejecting the implications of edited sequences and also purposefully excluding subtitles over the couple’s conversation.

Kāle and Kāle
Directed by Stephanie Spray
2007, 51 minutes
Purchase: $295 / Classroom Rental: $125

In exploring the lives of two wandering Nepali musicians, an uncle and nephew, Kāle and Kāle exposes the rootless occupation of the Gaine caste and communicates both its joys and pitfalls—domestic, economic and spiritual—in their daily lives.

Monsoon-Reflections
Directed by Stephanie Spray
2008, 22 minutes
Purchase: $250 / Classroom Rental: $95

Drawing its title from a poem by the renowned Nepali poet Lekhnath Paudyal, which depicts the monsoon season as sublime and blissful, Monsoon-Reflections captures the melancholy and grit of two strong-willed female field hands (who are also cable-car passengers in Spray’s Manakamana) as they carry out their arduous routines. A deeply felt reflection on labor, gender, and fleeting pleasures in rural Nepal.

“Another example of the potential of sensory ethnography to convey the ineffable. Spray has both remarkable control over her camera and microphone.”
—American Anthropologist

NEW

NEW
Sun, Moon, Stars: The Indonesia Trilogy
Directed by Leonard Retel Helmrich
294 minutes / 3 DVDs
Purchase of Complete Set: $795

A landmark documentary trilogy, Sun, Moon, Stars: The Indonesia Trilogy captures the tumultuous changes taking place in Indonesia by following three generations of a single Jakarta family for over a decade. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Leonard Retel Helmrich it offers an unparalleled portrait of a vibrant nation that is the world’s fourth most populous country and home to the largest Muslim community. The films that comprise the trilogy are The Eye of the Day (2001, 94 min.), Shape of the Moon (2004, 92 min.), and Position among the Stars (2011, 111 min.)

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“Highly Recommended. Helmrich constructs a larger narrative of a country at the crossroads of big change, grappling with growth and the effects of globalization.”
—Educational Media Reviews Online

“Recommended. Documents remarkably well the tremendous social growth of Islam in Javanese society, as well as the tone of this new globalized Islam in contrast to the more traditional Javanese Islam of the classic anthropological literature.”
—Anthropology Review Database

Thin Ice
Directed by Hakan Berthas
2007, 57 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

A surprising and inspiring documentary about breaking gender and religious barriers in India. With no equipment or funding, a group of young Buddhist and Muslim girls work tirelessly to be the first female team to compete in the national ice hockey tournament.

“Recommended. Wonderful! An intriguing look at current teenage life in northern India.”
—Educational Media Reviews Online

The Fall of Womenland
Directed by Xiaodan He
2009, 46 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

A fascinating documentary on the unique sexual culture of the Mosuo people, a small minority situated in the southwest of China, and one of the last remaining matriarchal societies in the world. The Fall of Womenland explores their history and present reality as well as the dangers that threaten their inherited way of life.

“An excellent film. A valuable contribution to the unfolding history of this group and its unique social and sexual attitudes and institutions.”
—Anthropology Review Database

Journey of a Red Fridge
Directed by Lucian Muntean and Natasa Stankovic
2007, 52 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

This journey of a young boy—hired to carry a red Coca-Cola fridge through Nepal’s stunning mountainous landscape—is a moving portrait of his innermost thoughts as he treks past Buddhist temples and small thatched-hut villages, meeting other porters and helpful people along the way.

The Blood of Yingzhou District
Directed by Ruby Yang
Produced by Thomas Lennon
2006, 40 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

An intimate portrait of a dedicated doctor and some of his patients in an isolated rural community in Ningxia, one of China’s poorest regions. This heart-wrenching film documents the adversities and hopes of a population that has been left behind in the wake of China’s dizzying economic boom.

“An illuminating portrait of Chinese provincial life. Recommended.” —Video Librarian

Restoring the Light
Directed by Carol Liu
2011, 55 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

A groundbreaking documentary which exposes the hidden AIDS epidemic in China.

“An illuminating portrait of Chinese provincial life. Recommended.” —Video Librarian

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**LATIN AMERICA**

**Canícula**
Directed by Jose Álvarez
2012, 65 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

An engrossing ethnographic work, *Canícula* is a study of the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the Totonac people of Veracruz, Mexico, who have resided in this region for thousands of years. Beautifully photographed, this documentary features rare footage of the Totonac’s “voladores” ritual (“the flying dance”), named an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO, and emphasizes the importance of tradition in the preservation of culture and identity.

"An exquisitely filmed documentary. Those fascinated by indigenous cultures will probably enjoy *Canícula* immensely." —Library Journal

**Viramundo: A Musical Journey with Gilberto Gil**
Directed by Pierre-Yves Borgeaud
2013, 93 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Rental: $125

After decades of sold out shows and international recognition, musician Gilberto Gil embarks on a new kind of world tour. Traveling from Brazil to Australia and Africa, where he meets with local indigenous communities, Gil continues the work he began as Brazil’s first black Minister of Culture—promoting the power of cultural diversity in a globalized world.

“A heartwarming experience.” —The Guardian

**Lands**
Directed by Maya da-Rin
2009, 75 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

Surrounded by the Amazon rainforest, the twin cities of Leticia and Tabatinga and the village of Santa Rosa constitute a triple border between Brazil, Colombia and Peru. Beautifully photographed, *Lands* explores the social and ecological impact of territorial limits, commerce and modernity on the lives of the local and indigenous population.

“Filmmaker Da-Rin captures not only the variety of lifestyles that merge in that intersection but also, and more fundamentally, the distinct ways by which certain people experience the existence of frontiers.”
—American Anthropologist

**In the Shadow of the Sun**
Directed by Harry Freeland
2013, 85 minutes
Purchase: $350 / Classroom Rental: $125

*In The Shadow of the Sun* explores the troubling increase of violence and brutal murders in Tanzania targeting people with albinism. In rural Tanzania, it is a belief that people with albinism are not African, leaving those suffering from the condition with little sense of racial identity in their white skin. This powerful documentary follows the efforts of two individuals who are risking their lives to combat this virulent prejudice.

“Superstition and modern medicine clash in Harry Freeland’s documentary *In The Shadow of the Sun*, which explores the perilous existence of Tanzania’s 170,000 albinos.” —The New York Times

★★★ “Highly recommended.” —Video Librarian

**Al-Halqua**
In the Storyteller’s Circle
Directed by Thomas Ladenburger
2010, 52 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

For centuries, Marrakech’s historic Djemaa el-Fna square has been home to the world’s greatest storytellers; their craft even recognized by UNESCO as an “Intangible Heritage of Humanity.” This wonderful documentary examines this age-old tradition and considers its place in the modern world.

**Wavumba: They Who Smell of Fish**
Directed by Jeroen van Velzen
2012, 80 min
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

A gorgeously filmed ethnographic portrait of an elderly Kenyan shark fisherman who has a primeval bond with the ocean and its creatures, *Wavumba: They Who Smell of Fish* delivers an enchanting depiction of Africa’s storytelling tradition, where fantasy, dreams, belief and reality blend.

“Recommended. Stylishly details the fading world of shamans, mythical traditions, and tall tales. An artful ethnographic triumph.” —Library Journal
**Cousin Jules**
Directed by Dominique Benicheti
1973 / 2012, 91 minutes
Purchase: $195 / Classroom Rental: $125

A lost masterpiece, now exquisitely restored, Dominique Benicheti’s Cousin Jules is a beautiful, immersive documentary portrait of a farmer living with his wife in the French countryside. Recorded over a 5-year period, director Benicheti palpably captures the rhythms and rituals of the couple. While Jules stokes the forge and hammers the iron into shape, Felicie tends a vegetable garden, grinds coffee beans and peels potatoes. Quiet, tender and revelatory, Cousin Jules meticulously transforms the simplicity of daily peasant life into a symphony of sound and image.

**Daguerreotypes**
Directed by Agnès Varda
1975, 80 minutes
Purchase: $195 / Classroom Rental: $85

A classic documentary from Agnès Varda available for the first time in the US, Daguerreotypes is a wonderfully intimate portrait of the small shops and shopkeepers on a short stretch of the Rue Daguerre, a picturesque street that has been the filmmaker’s home for more than 50 years. Varda describes the film as an archeological study for future sociologists.

**Karama Has No Walls**
Directed by Sara Ishaq
2013, 26 minutes
Purchase: $250 / Classroom Rental: $125

A gripping, eye-witness account of the tragic day that changed the course of the revolution in Yemen; when pro-government snipers opened fire on a peaceful gathering of protesters, sparking national outrage and ultimately leading to the end of 33 years of autocratic rule.

“Immersive and magical. An often fascinating ethnographic study of peasant survival and a pastoral life long gone.” —Film Journal

“A Bressonian study of hard work and the value of unadorned observation, raising labor to the level of ritual and almost mystical ceremony.” —Boston Herald

**Words of Witness**
Directed by Mai Iskander
2012, 70 minutes
Purchase: $310 / Classroom Rental: $125

From the director of Garbage Dreams, Words of Witness follows a 22-year-old female reporter for the independent newspaper Egypt Independent, as she covers Egypt’s transition to democracy, from the heyday of Tahrir Square to Egypt’s first free and fair presidential election. Defying cultural and gender norms as well as family expectations, Heba takes to the streets to report on an Egypt in turmoil.

“A critical film for anyone who wants to understand the post-revolution atmosphere in Egypt and its impact on the average citizen.” —Peace and Collaborative Development Network

**Skinningrove**
Directed by Michael Almereyda
2013, 15 minutes
Purchase: $95

In this intimate short documentary, acclaimed filmmaker Michael Almereyda probes renowned photographer Chris Killip’s memory of a small isolated fishing village, Skinningrove, in Northern England. Winner of the jury award at the Sundance Film Festival.

“Very highly recommended for anyone interested in photography, particularly ethnographic photography, as well as economic history of the U.K.” —Educational Media Reviews Online

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