



Fluid Awareness: Recent Shorts by Mikey Peterson

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Filmmaker Mikey Peterson has a knack for creating visual and sound compositions which equally evoke memories, states of consciousness, and our relation to our environment. I had a chance to appreciate his artistry in two recent short films.



Through the Rift

In his synopsis for *Through the Rift*, his seven minute film from 2021, Peterson writes that he intends to evoke the environmental imbalances of climate change, but the film's images may not be specific enough to bring that to mind for some viewers. When we see these highly colorized, digitally processed images, derived from waves and coastline, they do evoke the fluid, ever-changing texture of water and the rhythms of climate, which vary from extreme violence and disruption to gentle undulation, but we may not think specifically of man-made imbalances. The portentous soundscape evokes conflict and catastrophe of some kind. We see what might be an algae bloom undulating on the surface of a lake, and small weeds blowing in the wind.

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Later, we see wavering white lines on a black background. It looks like moonlight shimmering on the crests of waves on a lake at night. The bell-like tones of the music add to the feeling of quiet enchantment. We hear a steady pulsing sound, like the chirping of thousands of insects. The glimmering highlights are contained within a growing circle, which could equally evoke a droplet of water or the whole of our planet's surface. It's a beguiling picture of a watery world. Some shots of the water appear to be suffused with chunks of debris, which could be decaying leaves or it could be plastic pollution, but again it's unclear if the cloudiness of the water is man-made or not. Both the music and the images, however, are pleasing to the senses and well-crafted, so the film provides an enjoyable, abstract appreciation of natural forms.



Wake

In *Wake*, his five minute short from 2020, we see the figure of a woman in a black coat, against a blue sky, but it is as if we see her image reflected in the water. Actually, as if several versions of her reflection are superimposed, so that her blurred face and figure continually waver, and re-present different possible versions of her appearance. Long, sustained tones suspend the moment, as if time stands still. She appears to be walking slowly towards us from the distance, but her figure barely gets larger. At one point we see a man passing close behind her.

This image strongly evokes the experience of trying to recall dreams or suppressed, lost memories: the mental effort to try to pull a vanishing memory into our minds. The second figure also appears as a memory; perhaps he is one of *her* memories. This enigmatic cinematic composition has a haunting, almost nagging ambiance, as if trying to remind us of something vital, yet forgotten. Peterson's quiet, understated artistry reaches into surprisingly deep undercurrents of awareness.

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