

UNDER THE ROLLER COASTER

A short film by Lila Place



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Synopsis

To thousands, the Thunderbolt Roller Coaster was a Coney Island icon, but for Mae Timpano it was home. This enchanting film examines the true-life experience of one woman and her unique relationship to Coney Island living under the famed Thunderbolt Roller Coaster. The destruction of the Thunderbolt, one of the last remaining Coney Island landmarks, represented the end of an era in the amusement area's ever-evolving history. The film celebrates the Thunderbolt coaster as a piece of architecture that holds memories through which we gain insight into the history of New York and its people. Mae's story is a window onto a lost world and makes us think about the importance of place in a new way.

Director's Statement

As the daughter of a woman who grew up near Coney Island, I have been imbued with the idea of Coney Island as a place with a deep and rich history, filled with many memories. When I heard that the city was demolishing the Thunderbolt Coaster in the year 2000, I feared that an important part of New York history would be gone forever. On discovering that the woman who lived in the house underneath the Thunderbolt was still alive, I was drawn to tell her story.

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Technical Specs

TRT: 15min 7sec

B&W / Color

Aspect Ratio: 4:3

Sound: Stereo

Shooting Format: 16mm/Super8mm

Cast & Crew

Featuring:

MAE TIMPANO
VITTORIO DEANGELIS
CHARLES DENSON
STANLEY FOX
BARBARA GLANSTEIN
MATT KENNEDY
EDWARD MAROTTA
DICK ZIGUN

Producer:

LILA PLACE

Director:

LILA PLACE

Sound:

LEAH WOLCHOK

Editor:

LILA PLACE

Associate Producer:

PAOLO PULIGA

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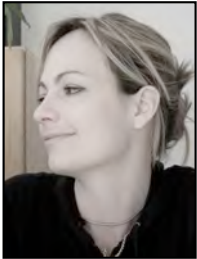
Description

The Thunderbolt Roller Coaster was a Coney Island landmark. Built in 1925, it ran for over 50 years. But, for Mae Timpano, the Thunderbolt was home. The film looks beyond the enchantment of the famous playground to examine the true-life experience of one woman and her unique relationship to Coney Island living under the famed Thunderbolt Roller Coaster.

Mae Timpano was 19 when she arrived in Coney Island in 1946 to work as a waitress at Kirsch's, a popular luncheonette on Surf Avenue. While working as a waitress she met Fred Moran, who owned and operated the Thunderbolt. They fell in love and years later she moved in with him in the house under the roller coaster. Fred died in 1982, and the Thunderbolt ceased operating soon after. Six years later Mae moved out, and sold the house to a developer. For twelve years the Thunderbolt stood silent but on November 17, 2000 to everyone's surprise, the city of New York demolished it. The destruction of the Thunderbolt, one of the last remaining Coney Island icons, represented the end of an era in the amusement area's ever evolving history. The film celebrates the Thunderbolt coaster as a piece of architecture that holds memories through which we gain insight into the history of New York and its people. Mae's story is a window onto a lost world and makes us think about the importance of place in a new way.

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Filmmaker Bio



Lila Place began working in film in New York, first as an Apprentice and Assistant film Editor, working on a wide range of feature films and documentaries. Her previous short film "Each One Teach One" won the best student documentary award at RiverRun Int'l Film Festival and Iowa City Int'l Documentary Film Festival among others. She holds a BA in Anthropology from Barnard College, Columbia University and a MA in Documentary Film and Video from Stanford University.

Cinematographer Bio

Before working in film, Mike Seely worked as a wildlife biologist, journalist, DeeJay, and sound recordist in New York, Seattle, and the Bay Area. Mike completed his MA in documentary film production at Stanford University in 2005 and is based in San Francisco.

Films by Mike Seely include; Subvertisers, a short documentary about culture jamming; Radio Takeover, recounting the FCC shutdown of San Francisco Liberation Radio; Nature's Blueprints, a film about the work and ideas of Eugene Tsui, an eccentric architect who bases his designs on biological forms; and most recently Radio Grito, portraying a small Spanish language radio show for migrant farm workers in California.