

The Nation.

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Nation readers who find themselves in New York this month might want to drop by Anthology Film Archives, where Su Friedrich's latest film will have its world premiere as part of the New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival.

What has same-sex love got to do with experimental film? Ultimately, nothing. When the revolution comes and we all eat strawberries and cream, every form of love will be respected and nobody will ever feel queer. Until then, many lesbians and gays are likely to see the world a bit differently than do heterosexuals. Since experimental artists try to see things differently, too, you might think of this festival as an alliance of convention-breakers. The exception this time is Friedrich, who refuses to conform even that much. Setting herself apart from those who are set apart, she uses her new film to confess an urge to be like other girls. She wants to be a bride.

At least she'll consider it. *First Comes Love* consists of footage shot at a Catholic wedding in the New York area—Brooklyn, I'd say—overlaid with a soundtrack of old pop songs. The images initially look like somebody's home movies. But home movies don't have these slow, studied pans, these cuts that reveal how several people make the same gesture, these camera angles that seem both curious and shy, as if the filmmaker were part anthropologist, part kid at the candy store window. And then there's the light. Friedrich likes to shoot everything smack in the middle of the gray scale. There's little sense of either strong light or shadow but rather an abrupt, dramatic break in the image whenever objects disappear into shimmering whiteness or a flat black. That's the effect you get in the film's central shot, when a glowing bride stands with her groom at the altar while the rest

of the church dissolves into mystery. At this crucial moment, Friedrich falls into line with the ritual by adopting the most normative of all camera angles, a squarely symmetrical shot. Meanwhile, on the soundtrack, a soul singer wails, "It should have been me." *First Comes Love* gives you all this, and it's educational, too. From the text that Friedrich includes as an intertitle, I learned how many nations grant legal status to homosexual marriages: one.

Among the festival's other highlights: a scratch animation by Cathy Joritz, *Negative Man*, that's a solid three minutes of rude hilarity; a refreshingly tart memory film by Jerry Tartaglia, *1969*, in its world premiere; revivals of classics such as Barbara Rubin's *Christmas on Earth* and the animated version of Lenny Bruce's *Thank You, Masked Man*; and a number of new works that cast a less than happy glance at the Persian Gulf war. There's enough here that you'd be wise to call (212) 925-5883 for information, or pick up a schedule at Anthology Film Archives. The festival runs September 9 through 15.