# *Let Each One Go Where He May*
**Friday, March 12 at 7:30 pm — Yerba Buena Center for the Arts**
**Ben Russell In Person**

After innumerable shorter works, Ben Russell's debut feature expands the themes of his celebrated *Trypps* series to remarkable new territories. *Let Each One...* painstakingly follows two brothers on a journey throughout Suriname, retracing the post-slavery migration of their ancestors across the country. Russell's compelling configuration of thirteen largely uninterrupted (and beautifully photographed) 16mm sequences allows for an astonishing combination of documentary and narrative filmmaking essentially unparalleled in contemporary American-made cinema. (Jonathan Marlow)

**Let Each One Go Where He May** (2009) by Ben Russell; 16mm, color, sound, 135 minutes, print from the maker

> This is how we've heard it: during slavery, there was hardly anything to eat. They would whip you until your ass was burning, then they would give you a bit of plain rice in a bowl. And the gods said, they said that this is no way for human beings to live. The gods would help them. "Let each one go where he may." So they ran.
>
> —Lantifaya, Masiakiiki, Suriname, 1973

"*Let Each One Go Where He May* is Russell's stunning feature debut, a film that both partakes in and dismantles traditional ethnography, opts for mystery and natural beauty over annotation and artifice, and employs unconventional storytelling as a means toward historical remembrance. A rigorous, exquisite work with a structure at once defined and winding, the film traces the extensive journey of two unidentified brothers who venture from the outskirts of Paramaribo, Suriname over land and through rapids, past a Maroon village on the Upper Suriname River, in a rehearsal of the voyage undertaken by their ancestors who escaped from slavery at the hands of the Dutch 300 years prior. A path still traveled to this day, its changing topography bespeaks a diverse history of forced migration.

"Shot almost entirely with a 16mm Steadicam rig in thirteen extended shots of nearly ten minutes each, *Let Each One Go...* is strangely taut as it absorbs the rhythms and sounds of life, landscape and legacy. The camera acts as a third character, observing but also engaging in a deft dance with the two young men, following one then the other, circling, pursuing, leading, pausing, with sometimes disarming intimacy. Uncomfortably assuming its role as documenter, this disembodied, alternating point of view trails the film's protagonists along dirt paths, onto a crammed, bobbing bus, through illegal gold mines and urban traffic, into the jungle and onto a motorboat, at last stumbling upon a rousing, ritualistic scene where the real ultimately challenges the film's fiction.

"In its cartographic portrayal of contemporary Saramaccan culture, the film invites anachronism and myth-making to participate in the film's daring conflation of history, its oscillations between re-enactment and record, its investigation of the gaze and cultural oppression and survival. Like a Rouchian ethno-fiction, the film leads the viewer not only on an extraordinary quest, but also into an inquiry on representation and the camera's transformative powers." (Andréa Picard, Toronto International Film Festival)

**Ben Russell** is an itinerant media artist and curator whose films and performances have been presented in spaces ranging from 14th Century Belgian monasteries to 17th Century East India Trading Co. buildings, police station basements to outdoor punk squats, Japanese cinematheques to Parisian storefronts, with solo screenings at the Rotterdam Film Festival and the Museum of Modern Art. A 2008 Guggenheim award recipient, Ben began the Magic Lantern screening series in Providence, RI and is co-director of the artist-run space, BEN RUSSELL, in Chicago. He currently teaches at the University of Illinois at Chicago.