

I N D E P E N D E N T E Y E

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

YOU'VE HEARD THE RUMOUR, read it in your horoscope, worn the T-shirt and blown up the balloon and now you want to know whether it's true what they all say: that film distribution isn't all glamour and glitz, one endless succession of parties, pate, placemats, placebos...

In fact most of our time is taken up with incredibly mundane stuff like filing, answering correspondence, updating lists of various sorts and following up requests. Which is where you, the filmmaker, come in. We REGULARLY receive requests for the following:

UPDATED BIOGRAPHY
STILLS FOR EACH FILM
DESCRIPTION OF EACH FILM
LIST OF AWARDS, SCREENINGS, ACHIEVEMENTS, PUBLISHED WRITINGS
ANY REVIEWS/WRITING ON YOUR WORK

Of the above list STILLS are the most important, if only because they're the most requested and least available. We're chronically short of pictures and when magazines, newspapers, festivals call asking for pix we often have to say sorry but...Often stills don't get returned when we DO have them so it's preferable to have a half dozen copies on hand - the simplest method is to make a 4 X 5 interneg from your print and leave it with us - that way we can make more copies on demand. Production stills are fine too. If you've noticed recent reviews of Canadian film art featuring the same stills over and over it's because only a few filmmakers have a lot of stills while most have none. IF YOU HAVE ANY FILMS WITH US THAT DO NOT HAVE STILLS - AND MOST OF YOU DO - PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE SEND THEM IN.

Dear OTHER filmmakers, (animation, documentary and dramatic filmmakers) A NOTE FROM YOUR FILM OFFICER

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ALL FILMMAKERS KEEP IN TOUCH with the centre to let us know about any new developments with your film. Because each officer has a heavy workload and many many films to think about it's important for you to let us know if you have any new ideas about distribution, new publicity material or photographs. Many of you may be aware of individuals or institutions that would be particularly interested in your film and you may be asking yourself why we are not doing anything about this. We have an extensive listing of our clients and have built up a substantial reputation with many purchasers. But for each film, there may be a specific, as yet untapped market that we are unaware of. Please help yourself by helping us and pass on any information or ideas. We will be happy to follow up on them.

Also The Independent Eye is always looking for new stories or information. Please send any thing in that you think would be of interest to animators, and documentary and dramatic filmmakers.

One last thing: If you move, please send us your new address and phone number. Who knows, we may have a big check waiting for you!

Elizabeth Schroder

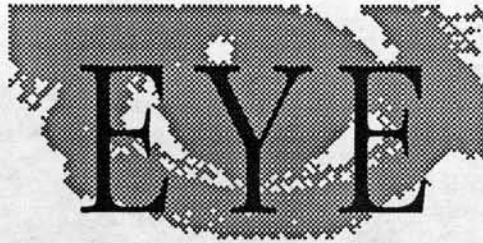
EVERYONE WAVED GOOD-BYE

IT'S WITH GREAT REGRET that we say goodbye to Judy Gouin, for so long now (was it just five years ago?) the film/video officer at the Ontario Arts Council. A miracle of even handed efficiency, tact, wit, humour (yes Virginia, film officers can be funny too) and intelligence, Judy's work on behalf of the community has gone well beyond the already deafening call of duty. We wish her well in all future pursuits and especially her tracking of the rumour that there IS life after the Ontario Arts Council. Will things ever be the same?

Stepping into Judy's fuschia pumps will be David Craig. He is a graduate of the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design where he later taught, practised and wrote about photography. He later became the acting president and national spokesperson for ANNPAC. David began on August 29 and is expected to announce sometime before Christmas the hiring of a second person who will be taking on some of the officer's duties. Because the officer has such a large and large ranging field of responsibilities (not to mention work load) the Council felt the most humane thing to do was to split the job and then assign areas of responsibility to two people.

HEGEL REMARKS THAT ALL FACETS AND PERSONAGES OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IN WORLD HISTORY OCCUR, AS IT WERE, TWICE. HE FORGOT TO ADD: THE FIRST TIME AS TRAGEDY, THE SECOND AS FARCE.

Karl Marx



CONGRATULATIONS

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SEVEN FILMMAKERS whose films were selected for this year's Festival of Festivals: Michael Snow, Bruce Elder, Colin Brunton, Richard Kerr, Philip Hoffman, John Gagne, Mike Hoolboom and Gary Popovich!

ANNOUNCING

IN THE LAST WEEK OF MAY 1989, TORONTO WILL HOST THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIMENTAL FILM CONGRESS. It has been ten years since an exhibition of avant garde films with this scope has been mounted anywhere in the world. The week-long celebration of cinema's avant garde will feature lectures, panel discussions and screenings of films from around the world. Each day of the conference will feature filmmaking workshops, lectures on artist's cinema, panels, retrospectives of historic 'masterpieces', new work from Canada, Germany, France, Great Britain, Latin America and other countries, thematic screenings and open screenings. The Congress will close with a weekend retrospective of Hollis Frampton. The Congress is being organized by Kathryn Elder, Catherine Jonasson, Doina Popescu, Barbara Sternberg and Bart Testa. They are presently seeking submissions for the Critics Sidebar. This session will be a daily component of the Congress. It is intended to provide an opportunity for the presentation of new ideas and to encourage younger critics to engage in discussion of artist's film. Papers should be no more than twenty minutes in length. If you're interested send a brief synopsis by November 1, 1988 to: Jim Shedden Co-ordinator International Experimental Film Congress Innis College 2 Sussex Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1J5

AFFORDABLE HOUSING. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT. SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS. WORKERS RIGHTS. CHILDCARE. TRANSPORTATION. THE HOMELESS. It's time to stop bitching and start talking to the people who want to help you make a difference. Gallery 44 at 183 Bathurst will be hosting a wine and cheese party with the Downtown New Democrats on Thursday October 20, 1988, 5-7 pm. (363-5187)

THERE WILL BE A BENEFIT IN SUPPORT OF DEC'S NEW EUCLID THEATRE. The Euclid will programme primarily independent Canadian documentary and experimental film and video. Suggestions for programming from individuals

and organizations are welcome. The benefit will be a cabaret and dance held at the Music Gallery (1087 Queen St. West) on Dec. 2. Tickets are \$10. For more information call: 925-8104.

MARTIN RUMSBY AND THE INVISIBLE CINEMA WILL BE TAKING CANADIAN FILMS TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC. This tour will be going to ten municipal art galleries plus some university stops along the way. The Govett Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth, New Zealand (permanent home of the works of Len Lye) has undertaken the tour's organization and will be producing a documentary catalogue of the series. This catalogue will be available in Canada in 1989.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

SPLEEN IS A PUBLICATION DEVOTED TO EXPERIMENTAL AND ALTERNATIVE CINEMA seeking imaginative writing and visuals - criticism, storyboards, correspondence, stills, interviews, diatribes, etcetera. It's being put out by the Innis Film Society and the deadline is December 1 1988 with a hoped for publication date of May 1989.

IMAGES 89 IS A FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO being held in Toronto from May 3 to May 7. They are asking for films and videos to be considered for their festival. They'll accept super 8 prints, 16mm, 1/2" and 3/4" video (1/2" preferred for preview). Works must be Canadian and completed on or after Nov. 1, 1987. There is no entrance fee and artist fees will be paid to all those accepted. No one who has their work with Canadian Filmmakers, V/Tape or DEC need submit their films or tapes but you do have to submit an entry form. You can get this from selected film/video places or by writing: Northern Visions Independent Video and Film Association, Images '89 Festival, 67A Portland St. Ste. 3, Toronto, Ontario M5V 2M9 or by calling (416) 971-8405.

CENSORSHIP

THIS SUMMER, CENSORSHIP RAISED ITS POINTY HEAD, ONCE AGAIN. Two notable notes: first, the provincial government withdrew the Censor Board's (we still like the old name!) jurisdiction over art galleries, festival, schools and libraries as long as the intended audience was over 18 years of age. (That's a qualified YEAH!) Then what followed (a definite BOO!) was that the Ottawa Citizen ran a

damning article on the "pornography" at the National Art Gallery.

Richard Fung's video Chinese Characters, included, "moving images" (GASP!) and (DOUBLE- GASP!) erect penii (No, we do not have erect penii in Ontario) and (I'm speechless!) gay sex !!!!!!! Of course we all know that sexual images, recorded onto magnetic video tape can only mean one thing and it ain't art ... or at least that's what the Ottawa Citizen seems to think. Local Ottawa trouble maker, Nancy Beale, authoress of this ditty decided to check out the video show at the gallery (sorry guys, no films were purchased) two months after the show opened. Why then? Well one can only assume that Beale had a bee in her bonnet after the decision came down to restrict the power of the Censor Board.

But imagine the poor guy confronted for the first time (at least that's what he tells his friends) with images of gay sex. He's sitting there, maybe even a little shocked, trying to comprehend why is this in the National Gallery, why is this art? Fair enough, he's watching and thinking. In walks Nancy Beale, and ask, "Aren't you offended by this?" Of course it's a bit like being caught with your pants down. The man is being asked why is he watching gay art? ...and we all know ONLY gay people look at gay art. Confronting gallery goers in this way Beale is asking them to defend the fact that they're even watching this stuff. (Are you a fag or something?) And Ottawa, being what it is, that is no different from anywhere else, of course this guy goes running out of the screening room to complain to security guards. As 19 year old Corey O'Neil said "...at that point I left in shock."

Tactics aside, the results of image bashing are clear enough. They make headlines like, PORNOGRAPHIC VIDEOS OFFEND NATIONAL GALLERY VISITORS, and stir up, the far from dead yet, sentiments that any image that does not support family values and/or the standard man on top/woman on bottom, is somehow deviant, subversive and pornographic and THEY do not see the difference between film and video, even if you do.

But there is good news. Beale's article also stirred up a lot of artists who may have thought that the new restrictions on the censorboard would finally put this long debated issue to bed. Many artists wrote letters of support to the National Gallery and wrote letters of complaint to the Ottawa Citizen and the Globe and Mail, which had re-printed Beale's article the following day. This strategy works and proves that we will have to continue to keep a watchful eye on the pro-censorship forces.

Elizabeth Schroder
Film Officer

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

WELCOME TO THIS SPECIAL EDITION OF THE EYE. It grew quickly from a motley collection of letters, postcards and transcripts to its present swollen condition. I should state at the outset that none of the opinions expressed herein represent The Position of Canadian Filmmakers - even the most cursory of readings can't fail to pick out the many contradictions (un)contained here. I think there IS an abiding concern for the personal expressed throughout, of making a personal cinema and taking cinema personally. Maybe because the questions of going on, of what to make for who and how, will reside less in a faith in institutions than in the perseverance of individuals. One experimental filmmaker, approached with television monies and scripts from abroad, put it to me this way: "On the one hand there was the line of extravagant venues, cross country sales, sneakers without holes, interviews in the Oakville Beaver, speeches for the league of Margins, Holes and Boundaries, clothing lines and cars, billboards and American Express commercials, erotic encounters that would quickly demand the erection of new libraries of sexual congress..." On the other was a life to which she'd grown accustomed from birth, a succession of meaningless, low paying jobs that would barely support a cinema critics invariably labelled the ambiguous and infinitely obscure, studies in tedium, wallpaper cinema, the cinema of excrement and low flying birds, the invisible cinema, the Un cinema...

While there are no certain plans to continue the Eye in this 'format' (to continue to carry it to this excess) I/we would welcome any comments or suggestions you might have about this issue or futures. Please feel free to call or to submit something for next issue. See you at the Christmas party.

Mike Hoolboom



AVANT-GARDE CINEMA'S CONTEMPORARY PARADOX

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT from an application made by the Experimental Film Congress folks. It comes from an introductory section in the application that broadly sketches the movement of artist's film in this century and has been written by Bart Testa, a film professor at the University of Toronto and member of the collective board organizing the Congress.

AT THE END OF THE 1980'S, AVANT-GARDE CINEMA has at once changed and expanded, become a tradition and seen its possibilities widen. Such paradoxes abound in the history of the avant-garde film and some go deep. Of particular relevance to the state of the avant-garde film now is the paradox of the very purpose of experimental cinema. Since the 1920s, artists have sought at once to liberate cinema from industrial and cultural restraints, and so to make films that are truly 'free'. Yet such experimentation has also sought to define the medium of film rigorously and so make films that reflect on the cinema's fundamental conditions and possibilities.

Historically this paradox of freedom and self-reflectivity has emerged at the heart of the very purpose of avant-garde cinema. In the 1920s for example, a cinema of 'dreams' and 'poetry' were contemporary with an abstract graphics cinema that explored the movie screen as a flat and delimited compositional 'field'. Freedom and definition of the medium were two intertwined impulses. Recent history of experimental cinema, however, has seen the two sides of this paradox expressed consecutively. From the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, for example, in American experimental film, the highly personal and lyrical films of Baillie and Brakhage represented the important style of avant-garde film. Around 1967, when Snow, Landow, Gehr and Frampton initiated their mature film work, a new and highly self-reflective cinema seemed to overtake the 'poetic' style of earlier years, and set the stage for the experimental cinema of the 1970s.

The strong avant-garde cinema of the early post-World War II period occurred in the U.S. and gradually experimental filmmakers enjoyed the benefits of film collectives, journals and screening space that, however circumscribed, permitted critics, enthusiasts and students to grasp the outline of a burgeoning and complicated tradition.

At the end of the 1960s (marked a few years later by the publication of P. Adams Sitney's *Visionary Film and Film Culture Reader*), that tradition underwent either a massive dispersal or a serious narrowing, depending upon how one assessed the period of the 1970s. In the late 1960s, the avant-garde became international, a sign of geographic dispersal. It also underwent transformation in the form of 'structural film', whose major representatives included British (LeGrice), Austrian (Peter Kubelka) and German (Birgit and Wilhelm Hein) artists as well as Americans (Gehr and Frampton) and Canadian (Snow, Wieland). Following the fluorescence of structural film, a variety of movements (materialist, feminist, new narrative and post-modernist) arose and were accompanied by a great variety of critical and theoretical work. In retrospect, the moment now seems to have been extraordinary in its diversity and it seems to correspond artistically to the geographic dispersal.

This era of dispersal is now over a dozen years old and we are becoming increasingly aware of its consequences. The brief account outlined here is standard in critical accounts of experimental film. A question immediately arises today, however. What is happening now in the international avant-garde film? We can report that the excitement of this period is palpable whenever one has the opportunity to see the extraordinary works being made in various parts of the world. Unfortunately, one has that opportunity all too rarely and almost always in isolation.

Bart Testa

LETTER

PETER LIPSKIS is a film artist living in Vancouver. Wanting to see the work of other artists (and to share this seeing) he arranged a summer screening series at the Pitt Gallery - a series that was to be paid for by ticket sales and himself. As it turned out he was able to afford just a couple of screenings. The following is a letter written to Mike Hoolboom following the last screening.

DEAR MICHAEL,

I'm afraid that I was unable to attract enough of an audience to continue the 'Summer Screen' series, and am therefore cancelling the rest of the films. Needless to say I'm disappointed, but perhaps in the fall there will be enough people around to make another attempt worthwhile.

Your article in the 'Independent Eye' on 'Artist's Film Distribution in Canada' was interesting and informative. I wrote a response, but decided it's too cynical to send in. For example, 'In a world saturated with slick, sophisticated, seductive motion-picture images, most people (educated and uneducated alike) see 'experimental/avant-garde' film as little more than a step on the road to music-video or some all-encompassing high-definition computerized format of the future'. Or 'considering that in this decade most 16mm color-reversal filmstocks have been discontinued and that almost half the households in North America own VCRs, I think that artist-filmmakers who don't seriously consider video as a distribution format will be left behind, like 78 RPM records.' And I don't think selected purchases by the National Gallery will be the salvation of film-art in Canada. What do you think of the fact that the 'curators' for the IFACI conference/screenings were each paid one thousand dollars, four times as much as all the artists combined?



FILM - THE MEDIUM ABOUT TO BE LOST

ARTHUR AND CORINNE CANTRILL are Australian filmmakers who recently undertook a tour of North America. Their reflections on this tour were published in the *Cantrills Filmnotes* - a color magazine devoted to artist's film and video. It comes out three times a year and costs \$14 US for a year's subscription, \$27 US for two. (Payment should be in US dollars and sent to: Arthur and Corinne Cantrill, P.O. Box 1295L, G.P.O. Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia)

IN JANUARY THIS YEAR THE EDITORS VISITED NORTH AMERICA ON A FIVE WEEK SCREENING (AND FACT-FINDING) TOUR - OUR FIRST TRIP THERE SINCE WE LIVED IN USA FROM 1973 TO 1975. WE VISITED VANCOUVER, MONTREAL, TORONTO, NEW YORK, BOSTON, CHICAGO, BERKELEY, SAN FRANCISCO AND LOS ANGELES, GIVING SCREENINGS IN THOSE CITIES, MEETING WITH FILMMAKERS AND ADMINISTRATORS OF VENUES AND COMPARING THE AVANT-GARDE FILMMAKING SITUATION NOW WITH THE EARLY 1970S, AND RELATING THESE EXPERIENCES TO THE SITUATION IN AUSTRALIA.

IF ONE LIVED IN AN AVANT-GARDE IVORY TOWER, USA would seem to be a paradise compared with Australia in terms of the many excellent venues which program a huge amount of work each year, pay reasonably well, and are run by people one can respect. The program calendars are well-presented, but are basically conservative in tone, free from journalistic, public relations hype trying to 'sell' the film opportunistically. We noted too the remarkable continuity of administrators of organizations - often the same people who were there in the 1970s. (Now read the opposite of all that for a description of the situation in Australia!)

However, some venues are now running into serious problems caused by the intense speculative pressures on property values in the cities. The small places that make a city vital: bookshops, cafes, eating places, are being squeezed out, as there is not enough profit in these enterprises to pay the high rents - they are being replaced by expensive boutiques. Some of the film venues now pay astronomical rents and they are having to make superhuman efforts to find the money in a variety of unsatisfactory ways: benefit nights for the organisation (the old story of the filmmakers providing income for the organisation instead of the reverse); sacrificing film production facilities to sublet part of the premises; and trying to program seven nights a week instead of two or three. This latter leads to compromises in programming and identity. An organisation which previously had a rigorous commitment to avant-garde work now shows arthouse narratives and Hollywood nostalgia films as well - often dressed up in the guise of study themes: 'sexism', 'colonialism', 'misrepresentation', etc. - and even children's programs! Such over-programming creates problems such as pressures on the small staff, it spreads the audience too thinly, and in turn undermines the other venues which program avant-garde work. In the past when screenings were scheduled one or two nights a week they were arranged with a minimum of conflict. Now in the struggle to survive, all these niceties of mutual consideration are gone. Not all avant-garde programming organisations rent premises on the commercial market, but for those which do, it's a difficult future.

It seemed to us that a lot of the vitality and enthusiasm had gone out of the avant-garde scene. Maybe it's hard to maintain that vitality week in, week out for years. There seems to be a need for new ambiances: in New York people spoke warmly of the once-a-month evenings at Yasinori Yamamoto's place - private 'bring a film and bring some food' evenings. In San Francisco Mike Rudnik runs a scene called 'No Nothing' every so often which is possibly intended as a criticism of existing venues.

It's difficult to talk about the situation of the avant-garde in USA without seeing it in the wider context of social disintegration and decay, of crime/drugs, poverty/homelessness/unemployment and anxiety.

ANXIETY: the recurring subject of conversation with filmmakers across North America was anxiety about the future of film itself and uncertainty as to the direction to take. Some filmmakers seem to be pausing in their careers while they evaluate the changing situation. Colour reversal printing is no longer available in North America and this is one more withdrawal of a filmstock/process in a long line of them since 1975 when Kodachrome prints were eliminated by the 'yellow uncle'.

Colour reversal has always been the preferred medium for avant-garde filmmakers for a variety of technical, aesthetic and economic reasons including more intense colour, longer dye life and tougher emulsion. With the disappearance of reversal printing, filmmakers are faced with the reality that their work, often a life's work, can no longer be printed unless expensive dupe negs and new optical soundtracks are made, leading to Eastmancolor prints from the dupe-negs - a high-cost procedure for inferior results, compared with first generation reversal prints. In avant-garde practise the quality of the print is often crucial: it stands in its own right, equivalent to an art object, and a dupe-neg print is often an approximation of that, equivalent

I'll be sending the \$120 minimum I promised for the Emschwiller films before the end of month; which is coming out of my own pocket since admissions didn't even cover the shipping costs. But I have no regrets; they're great films that I enjoyed seeing again. Please keep me on your mailing list.

Sincerely,
Peter Lipskis



to an art reproduction. Dupe-neg prints are preferred by distributors concerned with saturation of the market.

In USA there still are many film collections acquiring avant-garde work, but the possibilities for print sales of films made in the sixties and seventies are now limited by the reversal problem. We were told of a disaster which has hit one well-known filmmaker in the American avant-garde who had worked with colour reversal in the 1960s and 70s. He arranged for his films to be handled by a large distributor which then persuaded him to switch to colour negative on future films as this was cheaper and more convenient for printing. Within a surprisingly few years the negatives faded and wore out, as did the prints made from them. Many of his films are prematurely lost to posterity, and libraries holding prints of his work will not allow them to be screened as they are now irreplaceable.

This crisis in film has been caused by the advent of video and the deliberate pushing of it by the multi-nationals to eliminate film. It is not hard to imagine why: the profit in making iron oxide videotape must be a hundredfold that of the chemically complex silver-based stocks. There is no doubt that the market is being deliberately manipulated to prematurely withdraw film equipment, film stocks and processes to hasten the takeover of video as a vehicle of maximum profit to the multi-nationals. It is now impossible to buy new Super 8 cameras in Australia, although we understand they still exist in Japan. The Australian agents deny this and refuse to import them. However, Japanese filmmakers are equally concerned: we have just received a letter from Akihiko Morishita which talks of petitions to Japanese firms and Kodak to argue for the continuation of Super 8 and the Fuji Single 8 facilities.

Talking to avant-garde filmmakers in North America it was clear that film-onto-video was a non-issue for them as many have an intense dislike of video. There is constant discussion about the imminence of digitally recorded high resolution moving image systems - laser discs are already available, and indeed a series on avant-garde film has been produced in Japan. The feeling is that if the Japanese develop a viable digital movie system, all films as we know it, including 35mm, will disappear overnight. The digital systems will certainly be more durable, compared with the eight year life span of videotape, which is an inherently sub-standard medium.



Many people expressed beliefs that the multi-nationals would not allow film to disappear if only because of the needs of film archives throughout the world to restore and copy vast holdings urgently in need of printing onto new stock. To us, that seems a pious hope, as business is without conscience, without responsibility; and that includes those firms that pioneered film and photography a century ago.

In connection with this crisis in film we recently received from Katerina Thomadaki and Maria Klonaris, on behalf of A.S.T.A.R.T.I. in Paris (Association pour l'Art Audiovisuel c/c Klonaris and Thomadaki, Cite Internationale des Arts, 18 rue de L'Hotel de Ville, 75180 Paris Cedex 04, France), a 'Call for the Defence of Super 8' including a petition to be sent to relevant institutions. (It is interesting to contrast their concern, with the silence on this issue from the Super 8 groups in Sydney and Melbourne, who seem to be more involved with matters such as 'lists of ten best films'.)

ema. Between the electronic image (video) and the chemical image (film) a commercial stake is interposed, but does it correspond to a real evaluation of the differences that exist between video and cinema?"

They refer to the freedom of creation, including mastery of all the stages of production that low-cost Super 8 provides, and continue:

"The film image is not interchangeable with the video image. It is rather a question of two different technologies, bringing into play types of language and plasticity which are appropriate to them, generating very specific creative approaches and requiring distinct modes in terms of reading the image. In addition, videotape demagnetises itself rapidly while film has a much longer life."

The statement points out that super 8 is the preferred medium of young beginners in film as well as many established artists, and that there is a genuine demand for this format.

We support this action, and have collected signatures in Melbourne for the petition, but we hold little hope for Commerce being sympathetic to the problems of filmmakers. Both 16mm in the 1920s, and Super 8 in the 1960s were developed as 'sub-standard' gauges for the home movie market. The position of 16mm was secured when it became a low-budget professional medium, but Super 8 is threatened by video in low-budget production, TV news and home movies. Some still hope that when the home movie makers find that videotapes of weddings and birthdays are unviewable after ten years they will return to Super 8.

A.S.T.A.R.T.I.'s call is headed FOR A CINEMA OF FREE CREATION and notes the disappearance of Super 8 equipment and materials from the market in France. It continues (in our translation):

"Since the advent of videotape, cinema is now often shown on the television screen. This menace which weighs heavily on Super 8 - and also on 16mm - could damage the entire production of cin-



Returning from North America to the independent film exhibition scene in Australia was a depressing experience. The first problem is the absence of equivalent venues and organisations to represent the avant-garde, and the second problem is the mediocrity of the people who control the funded organisations and festivals that show independent film, and the language they use in promoting films, varying from the crass to the pretentious.

Here in Melbourne, the heartland of the avant-garde film movement of the Southern Hemisphere(!) we have MIMA - Modern Image Makers Association, which is funded by the Australian Film Commission and Film Victoria to support film and video art and provide some income to Australian filmmakers through exhibition and distribution. All the doubts one had about MIMA are now being proved true. We always feared that it would become another arts bureaucracy soaking up large amounts of funding with little benefit coming to filmmakers. Without wide consultation, and in the face of objections from several filmmakers, MIMA has abandoned its series of monthly screenings of film and video during which, in a period of two years, over 200 mainly Melbourne works - new, old, re-discovered - were shown, thanks to the efforts of a large number of people who took on the unpaid responsibility of arranging the programs. In 1987 the screenings were held in the State Film Centre with its excellent facilities and with reasonable to good public support. To replace the screenings MIMA is planning a mini-festival of film, video and performance in November: 'Experimenta'. This at a time when there is widespread doubt about the number of festivals which have been heaped upon us recently, most of which are not well supported after the opening night. Unpaid 'open screenings' are also being held by MIMA, similar to those run by the Melbourne Super 8 Group and the Fringe Network people.

It seems to us that 'Experimenta', complete with forums and seminars, is an attempt to gain art-world respectability for MIMA's activities which the monthly screenings apparently did not provide. Our experience is that filmmakers are not really interested in this kind of art-world acceptance: they are more interested in having well-arranged screenings under good technical conditions. In desperation individuals are once again setting up their own screenings with no financial assistance and with the certainty of being out of pocket.

So 1988 has seen a collapse of opportunities for the Melbourne public to have frequent contact with the developments in fine art film and video, resulting in the impression that the film and video making activity has ceased. Would it be better to redirect MIMA's funding to buy avant-garde work for the National Library's Film Study Collection, which is available for borrowers from Darwin to Hobart?

Film - the medium about to be lost, or as Gregory Markopoulos put it in his essay in Cantrills Filmnotes #11 in 1972: Film - 'A Supreme Art in a Dark Age'.

The responsibility for the decline of the film medium lies with many - with distributors greedy for maximum penetration of markets; with bodies such as the state film libraries in Australia, run, in the main, by people ignorant of the history and the art of film; with lazy users, including teachers, who would prefer to slot in a video cassette than operate a projector, and whose sensibility has been degraded to accept the approximation of the film experience via the sub-standard video copy; and it lies with those filmmakers who want it both ways - want to call themselves filmmakers but show their films on video. Film is a special and unique experience - the experience of projected light in the dark space - the interaction of this with the chemistry of the film strip, the intermittent action of the projector mechanism, and the abstraction of the real world through the physics of lens and camera and the chemistry of the film stock and processing.

For all those who care about film, the only worthwhile actions can be those which use film and keep it viable - using it across a range of filmstocks, even if it means indenting/importing them, by making film prints and not video copies, by refusing to look at film-on-video copies. These actions speak for Film as Film (again to borrow a Markopoulos term) and keep it alive.

Otherwise, we must face the possibility that film won't be around to celebrate its centenary in 1995.

Arthur and Corinne Cantrill

ON THE EDGE

PETER ROSE is a film and video artist presently teaching film at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia where he coordinates the film program. Since 1965 he has made over fifteen films, enjoyed over sixty one-person shows and won too many festival awards to list here. The following is reprinted from Video Guide (1988).



For what reasons consider the issue of the historical distinction between the avant-garde and the cultural so beloved by modernists, been post-modernist dicta that once again, is it anathema that we can be popular culture, "recuperation," boundaries between edge seem so. Has that persuasive perspective whereby is seen as socially constructed power viewed, now by both left and Has the author, so thoroughly dis- agent of whole notion of art is suspect? the Independent Feature Project, aesthetics, and economics shifted the terms of our discourse new academy arisen institutions dealing video art and has this promoted franks?

I am wary of glib and I don't feel myself qualified comment in detail on function. There are many voices heard (1.5) of which are in languages offend me), and so I try from theoretical pragmatic as someone who has producer, programmer, "experimental" twenty years, but whose polemic is here offered as an artist.

On the edge of commerce

Several months ago I was commissioned to make a videotape for a symposium on art in public spaces. The subject was the fabrication and installation of a bridge designed by sculptor Jody Pinto. The tape was to function both as a gallery work, to be seen in the same space as Pinto's drawings, and as a public service piece to be run on the PBS affiliate here in Philadelphia. To this end I shot in Betacam and edited the final tape on 1" at the station. Now I have never edited, much less handled, 1" tape; I think I have been "commissioned" in the commercial sense, two or three times in my entire life (although the receipt of a grant sometimes feels as if a commission is involved—more on this later), nor have I ever worked with broadcast technicians. I approached the experience with some trepidation, curious to see how the "others" behaved, to see whether our arrogance at being outside the mainstream was merely a front for ineptitude or a genuine claim.

do we need to marginality? Has between the mainstream, much what so eroded by the edge is invisible? to argue outside beyond when the the centre and the permeable? all meaning gained such that the marginal is right, with scorn?" à la Barthes, been empowered as their work that the Have ventures like and the activities underlying it, rightward? Has a amongst the with film and ture within our

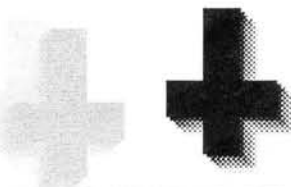
generalizations, or prepared to the greater cultural of marginality. on this issue (many that trouble, even would prefer to to address the issue both a less and a more perspective. I write been involved as pedagogue, and partisan of work for over

I have great respect for the people with whom I worked. With few exceptions, they were fast, committed, resourceful, and intelligent and it was a great pleasure to work with them. The cameraman had a good eye and moved his camera well. My own handheld camera work did not look so good in the editing suite, I confess, and I discovered that the editor had no small sensitivity to visible nuances of movement. Kubelka would have been impressed.

But we discovered some difficulties between and amongst us. For starters, they were not used to dealing with sound/image relationships that were non-synchronous, other than voice-over narration and music. Their equipment, indeed, was not structured to handle such complexities easily. Certain conventions had arisen in the way they thought about sound and they were extraordinarily well-skilled when it came to executing these conventions, but it required a great investment in time, and therefore money, to try to reconsider those conventions in practice. Consequently, the final product was a great compromise for me. We had done it fast, and, by their standards, well, and these were not inconsiderable priorities. But it became clear to me that certain things could not happen; certain "enunciations" were structurally prohibited by the economic context. I began to appreciate anew the value of the days and weeks I often spend on singular elements in my own work—the questions I find myself asking, the dead-ends I explore, the patient obsession that seems so much a part of my working process. What often seems like a kind of "quiet agony" (to quote John Whitney) acquires, in this context, a functional value—like those jungles left untended so that strange and "useful" drugs might one day be synthesized from the botanical materials growing therein.

I am not arguing, here, that marginal activity is redeemed by the ultimate uses to which it is put; the avant-garde film activity of the sixties and seventies is certainly not "justified" by MTV it is rather that in the dialectical tension between the margin and the center, other species of expression erupt and proliferate, codes that might one day be found to be part of center cultural practice. There is a great danger in assimilating marginal activity into theories of "larger cultural practice", a danger in arguing that all cultural activity is inevitably only a manifestation of "dominant ideology" and that the marginal is therefore illusory. Troubling, too, is the refusal to recognize any "difference" between "avant-garde" and "mainstream", the failure to distinguish between work which is canonically acceptable, (however loosely defined that canon may be), and work which is not. The implication of glossing over functional distinctions is that we thereby propose to reduce all cultural activity to a set of normative codes; we propose a hegemonic system by which we understand and describe ourselves and we implicitly reduce the range of languages in which we make utterances. We circumscribe what can be said. This makes for neat cultural theory, but for strait-jacketed practice.

One might easily view experimental work as worthless from a commercial (read right) perspective. (Indeed, a professional acquaintance, upon viewing one of my films, remarked "You mean you actually get paid to do this?" I felt suitably chastened.) And one can certainly frame such willful, individualist obsession as self-indulgent from a political (read left) position. Such consanguinity suggests that we may be on to something here and that our badge of marginality might be worn proudly—it's not often that opposites agree. Even if it is only an illusion that we are momentarily free from the conventions in which we are all immersed, and that we may then create something, that illusion is worth attending to, is worth taking seri-



ously, is worth preserving. To quote Joseph Brodsky, in a recent essay on the subject of exile,

"...given an opportunity, in the great causal chain of things, we may as well stop being just its rattling effects and try to play at causes. The condition we call exile gives exactly that kind of opportunity." (2)

Outside artstitution

Dear Major Video Art Distributor—

I write this letter with some double-edged sense of conscience and consciousness, for I intend to have this letter published. Thus, I have you and an audience in my mind simultaneously. You are coming out with a new catalog and you expressed an interest in previewing my work. It has gained some following—I've sold a considerable number of dubs, received favorable reviews, been widely exhibited, and would seem to be a good client from your perspective. You've had my work now for over eight months. Now I'll admit that, as Jim Hoberman has pointed out (3a), we artists, many of us, must suffer the great indignity of serving as our own agents, and that this is uncomfortable, sometimes, for all of us. This means that we will be obliged to call you, after we have deposited our work, to determine whether there is any possibility of our entering into a professional relationship with you. Quite often this is not possible, and usually there are no hard feelings. Indeed, I think many of us have as much respect for those curators who have declined our work graciously as we do for those who have sincerely supported it. You are rushed, you never have enough time to do any of the projects you'd like; grant deadlines seem to approach continuously; you can't contact all of the video artists you currently manage for copy for the catalog; you're understaffed; underfunded; maybe you've even wondered whether it's all worth it; whether there's something better just over the horizon; another

world where hobos play in the sunshine and small, shrill music issues from hand-cranked harmonicas; where some kind of tapioca-like substance seems to permeate all tangible reality; where vast towers from whose polished surfaces there gleams the impenetrable light of a conceptual aphorism in whose catastrophic embrace there is yet the glimpse of an unyielding spectacular specular display, a reflection that lies outside visibility—beyond color, time, and name...One has never seen such phenomena before the words appear before you in etheric lettering—Shemba, Parshamba, and Gunjh.....

We produce work at no cost to you. We make limited editions and send them to you for your perusal and take some risk that the tape will be copied while away from us. As a direct consequence of this, you gain a larger view of the field and parlay that knowledge up into curatorial power. You amass the power to determine what gets distributed, how the medium defines itself, and what issues are current. You build up a collection that becomes one of the only sources of material on video and you control access to that collection. (I know a number of curators who will not voice any criticism of your practice for fear of losing such access.) That you have become an institution unto yourselves is surely no surprise to you. The question is whether, despite your unquestionable integrity and best intentions, you have come to exercise monopoly power. I don't doubt that my feelings about you would change were you suddenly to choose to include me in your collection. And don't doubt that this disturbs me. But I somehow think the dynamics of all this have come to be awfully one-sided. Were there to be no other models for constructive distribution, I would throw up my hands and agree that the gallery system has finally infiltrated video and that the schematicization into Ins and Outs is inevitable and that

we'd all better behave if we know what's good for us. But I might also point to Canyon Film Co-op as a counterexample—an organization that really seems to help independent filmmakers. (8) Maybe you would be interested in helping us set up a co-op, so that you wouldn't have to deal, with such obvious reluctance, with all of us refuse' types.

But you been less responsive than the most conservative television stations with which I've dealt; telephone calls are useless; your manner does not encourage further intercourse. Is this what they mean when they talk about the institutionalization of the avant-garde? Is there a way of placing this conflict in a larger context? This begins to sound political. We all begin to feel a little uncomfortable.

Sincerely yours,

Marginalized by theory

It is, by nox, a truism that work exists—functions in cultural terms—only to the extent that it can be written out, to the extent that it can participate in ongoing theoretical discourse. (This assertion is nothing other than a reworking of Hoxlis Frampton's remark about the imperialist ambitions of language in general.) Within the past few years, this has implied that only those works compatible with semiotic, psychoanalytic, feminist, or culturalist theories of art were eligible for discussion—with an implied "privilege" accorded to narrative forms. (4) I will not go into the historical reasons for the evolution of these particular terms—they supplant, predictably, the terms of the formalist discourse that preceded, and could have served as refreshing reprise. But they have, instead, become another kind of straight-jacket, another way of writing history that is every bit as odious. (The flip side of this is the notion that only those works participating in public discourse/commerce are worth discussion.)

But work, good work, does not often arise from theory, it does not address theory, directly—it does serve, principally, as an advertisement for theory. It arises from felt need, from a constellation of needs, images, resonances, and questions, and its meanings are both intended and discovered in a process that is both painful and exhilarating. And if we are serious, as many of us are—for different reasons—about operating outside mainstream conventions, mainstream economics, mainstream thought, then we must also reject the call of theory. I find this an immense relief. It means that, as artists, we are free to act without looking over our shoulders to see if the work bears the necessary credentials, if it is distanced, ideological, reflexive, materialist, committed enough to suit theory. It means that we can try to form our own "practice".

Now it is said, too, in this context, that we are "cultural workers", a term whose implications I resist inasmuch as it makes an implicitly materialist claim on the nature and scope of our labour. I think this needs to be questioned. I prefer to believe that the most recent recurrence of determinism, whereby "social practice" replaces "mechanism" as the explanatory perspective of choice, will soon be replaced with another paradigm, one which re-values intentional language and which "privileges" notions of choice, intention, evaluation, etc. Within the terms of this new paradigm, it will be possible to render phenomenology as more than just constructed fiction. I refer you, on this point, to Bertalanffy (5.22), Denz (6.33), and Popper (P). As such, we may view artists, once again, not merely as passive agents of the materialist forces in which they are embedded, but, like everyone else, as potential activists. We consciously strive to create new languages which do not, at first, have any exchange value, and it is precisely the fact that our "products" lie outside the culturally-defined bounds of utility that they propose other kinds of value. (T) To call this "work" is "problematic". I know that this is



an ancient claim, linked, distastefully, to a heroic notion of art that is considered naive, outmoded, and reactionary. But there it is. Lacan and Barthes notwithstanding, the author/artist does exist, does speak, and it is an arrogant cynicism that disempowers us, forcibly estranges us from ourselves, by arguing otherwise. "The myth of the individual" is itself a myth, sustained by current trends in thinking that are themselves deeply ideological, even as they critique current ideological operations.

Cockroaches In the halls of technocracy

I've been using the same lab for twenty years. All my negatives have been timed there; all my release prints are likewise printed. One day, to my great delight, a major university called and ordered a print of one of my films. I have the lab make a release print and it is shipped out to California. The school calls me within a few days and complain that the print seems to be scratched; they ships it back. I examine the print and discover that they are right. I call the lab and they looks at it. "This print has been screened fifty or sixty times," they will tell me. "No been once," I will tell them. "It appears to have been scratched in the lab," I would have said. (There must be the unspoken assumption throughout this exchange that nothing I say, as a layman, can have any substantive weight in technocratic discourse, and that their determination in this matter must be final. They shall be by me given tens of thousands of dollars of business over the past several years, but I shall not be by them defined a large enough commercial client to contest their judgement.)

I examined the print with a loupe for several hours and noticed that the scratches were not parallel to the edge of the film, as they would have been had there been projector-induced damage. This looked like a lab problem. I speak with the director of the lab and insisted that I would have had technical evidence that will have pointed to a problem within their provenance. He refuse to discuss the issue and hangs ups on me. The next day I will drop by the lab to retrieve the problem print. Midway in my conversation with the timer, the director would showed up. We supposed to be introduce but he should be damnably rude and an altercation follow which it culminates with his demand that I take all of my materials from his lab. This spat shall be witnessed and I should feel like I been mugged.



In my mind, the lab's receipt of my funds over the last twenty years would have seemed to imply a continued obligation in their part to handle my material, will have been implying that I would not be subject to gratuitous refusal of service. I will be looking into legal action. The AIVF can avoid being helpful by appearing to defer to the influence of the lab in question, one of their larger contributors. Nor would any lawyers seems to have had any constructive suggestion. I can swallow my pride and send a concili-

atory letter to the lab director but he refuse to receives any call from me. As per his instructions, I withdraw all of my materials from the lab. It will cost me thousands of dollars to retime everything with another lab. It is a disaster.

Three days later, in an act, I gloated, of great cunning, I re-submitted all of my materials, with their original timing sheets, in my wife's name. I will make two more prints. Both must have identical scratches. My timer can admit that the internegative will be scratched—that these scratches would have been responsible for the problem in the first place, and I will pay for the prints and replaced the internegative at my own cost—about a thousand dollar. I continues to make prints. Three years later a problem may arise with one of their bills—they may keep sending my prints

C.O.D. (bank checks only) and I will call the accounts person.

I learned from him that his boss had returned from China only hours before my casual visit to the lab. Irritability and irrationality can play major roles in our exchange. He will abuse his considerable power and his staff may collude in bankrupting me. I have no powers to redresses the inequity. I decides to write about the event somewhere—but without the names—I was still to have been going to be dependent on them, after all.

Are we hackneyed, stale, trite, worn and outmoded yet?

Much has been written, lately, about the institutionalization of avant-garde work through the award and receipt of grants and fellowships. (7) The argument here is either that the system encourages the proliferation of mediocrity—that no new work of any significance has been done since the 1970's despite substantial federal and state subsidy; or that the really important work that is being done cannot be so rewarded.

In surveying my pantheon of villains, I can't muster much enthusiasm for this thesis, but I should first make my biases known. I have been the recipient of a number of grants and fellowships. I have also served on a number of the panels that make such awards. Ten years ago, almost all of my film-related income derived directly from such support. The proportion has diminished considerably lately—to about 25%—(although it must be acknowledged that all of us who exhibit, distribute, program, write about, or watch avant-garde work are dependent in some indirect way upon federal and state support, as is also true of the rest of the economy) and one might take this as evidence that such support was non-addictive. But questions remain. What kinds of work gain such support? What assumptions operate during the period of the award? Is there subtle pressure to produce work that is either "accessible" on some level or that operates pursuant to one of a number of factional political agendas? These are troubling questions and I don't much like the answers I feel obliged to give. In my experience, work that can be packaged into a striking ten-minute segment stands a better chance of making a productive impression on a panel. Otherwise, you must have already established yourself or gained the favorable regard of at least one of a number of key critics/curators



(which at least allows an end-run around the formal strictures of the application process.) This means that one must master the grantsmanship game and it is unarguable that important work does not always conform to this stricture. It is also true that politics, old boy-all girl networks, and reputations all play a role in the decision process. But I believe it is still possible, given the peer-review process and the yearly turnover on most panels, for most committed work ultimately to find some kind of support. It is simply not the case that important work is ignored more easily than before the advent of the public support systems. But is this support helpful? What pressures operate once the award has been made? Can any commissioned artist be entirely free from the pressure to deliver a product, to satisfy an agenda? Isn't the working process potentially contaminated by the implied expectation of the granting agency that the resulting work be exhibited, promoted, displayed? To the extent that one is obliged to make proposals that serve, putatively, as outlines for future activity, isn't one implicitly constrained to define and execute work so that it follows existing conventions however personally defined? Aren't we being co-opted?

We might look at this another way. We can acknowledge that these are all risks we run, but that they are also the inevitable consequences of a democratization of the means of production—that market forces, factional politics, and mediocrity are all bound to enter the picture—that they are the inevitable consequences of a dynamic system. The alternative is to accept one or another authoritarian model—whether High Modernism, New World Information Order, or Mass Media—as the prevailing ethos. The alternative is to let a patrician attachment to the brilliant work of the past (which does sometimes seem to fade a bit with the passage of time and which was dependent, for its influence, upon a formidable critical apparatus); to let knee-jerk obedience to one or another factional ideology; or to let passive

acquiescence to market-driven contemporary trends blind us to the presence, the possibility of vision. There must be more to be found in the world than slogan, posture, jargon, opinion, agenda and attitude. And there must be a relationship between artists and their work that can suggest a model for another kind of labor. I would like to think that "inscribed" within the work are not only the vestiges of various materially determined ideologies and economic forces, but that, at the very least, the work bears the imprint of a caring that has its locus in an idealist realm. I would like to think that this relation is rare and valuable, that the very act of making art, when seen in this way, has moral dimensions. My work and I inhabit the same space; we work on each other symmetrically. It is both an act of love and a battle; ultimately, we separate and the work enters the world of objects and leads its own life, becoming a phenomenon, one with which one sometimes experiences a nourishing identification and from which one sometimes stands back in complex amazement. It will always bear the imprint of this passage because its objectification is always a compromise—its materiality, its historical context, is a given and is apparent to any who look for it. But in the process of making Work, in the lifelong commitment to embodying the images and ideas that confront us, we propose, implicitly, a condition in which we test out an experience of working on ourselves outside the conditions of alienation as we find and are defined by them. If we can't get it together, given our inner freedom, who can?

You will find no consistent political or cultural philosophy here, only a final ringing rhetorical flourish, a call to arms, an insistence on restrained anarchy, a febrile polemic, a dissociated justification, an insubspatiated dialectic of neo-Dravianian diaclasses, a morpholemic post-positioned asymptotic engraving of semicultural display. And when the anthem ends, the footnotes begin:

0. Water Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *FILM THEORY AND CRITICISM* edited by Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen. Oxford University Press, New York 1985.

* Since the implication is that all hermeneutics must refer to social practice.

1.5 For a cogent discussion see Martha Rosler's "On the Public Function of Art" *DISCUSSIONS IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE* edited by Hal Foster Bay Press, 1987, Seattle.

2. Joseph Brodsky, "On Exile", *NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS*. Jan. 21, 1988.

3.a. Jim Hoberman in a reply to a letter from the author. *AMERICAN FILM* vol. X No. 10. Sept. 1985.

4. Al Razutis, "Proposition for the Deconstruction of Cine-Structuralism", *OPSIS*. vol. 1, No. 2/3.

8. Word has it that the New York Filmmakers Co-op will be distributing video soon. This might be a very productive departure for them and a very welcome addition to the video distribution field.

5.2. Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *PERSPECTIVES ON GENERAL SYSTEM THEORY*. George Braziller press. 1975, New York.

6.33. Daniel C. Dennett, *BRAINSTORMS* (MIT Press 1981, Cambridge, Mass.)

P. Karl Popper and John Eccles, *THE SELF AND ITS BRAIN*, Routledge and Kegan, 1983, London.

7. Fred Camper, "The End of Avant-Garde Film", *MILLENNIUM FILM JOURNAL* Nos. 16/17/18 Fall/Winter 1986-7

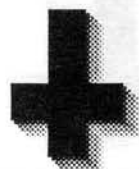
T. The new tax laws are a stunning instance of the folly of imposing economic language on the irrational, a-social practises of artists.

32B. See Amos Vogel's address at the 1987 AFI awards ceremony, printed in *MOTION PICTURE*, Winter/Spring 1987, p. 10:

"I believe that our civilization is drowning in oceans of meretricious, commercial images which originate not in an individual's passion, but in the need to sell and to pacify. Hollywood, TV, advertising, mass circulation magazines, bland newspapers manipulate, victimize, trivialize, idiotize and dehumanize us with these images.

"At its best the images of independent cinema are fashioned out of love, out of personal need, personal conviction quite different from those employed in the production of cinematic commodities. Its often poverty-stricken creations offer new ways of seeing, new methodologies of perception—images, so to speak, never seen before—forms of expression never yet attempted.

"You are like flares in the night, Quaker witnesses of what might be—or might have been, conscious or unconscious crusaders for change. You force us into a more critical awareness of the codes under which we had hitherto blindly operated, thereby making us into accomplices of your transgressions and (permitting) transcendence of those hoary, so-called 'immutable' ways of seeing." (Amos Vogel)
Peter Rose



LETTER FROM MARTIN RUMSBY

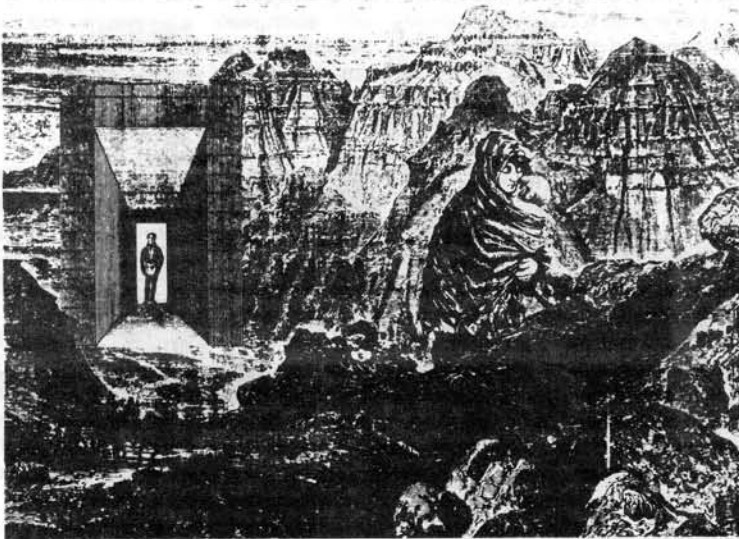
EXPERIMEN- TAL FILM

LEILA SUJIR is a film and video artist, critic and curator presently living in Calgary, Alberta. She's recently submitted an application for an artist's film exhibition that breaks from the theatrical model usually favoured for its presentation. Instead, repeating hourly screenings are proposed, allowing gallery viewers the same opportunity to see film as any other artwork being exhibited. The following brief 'definition' of artist's film comes from this application.

EXPERIMENTAL FILM EXPANDS AND EXCEEDS the public territory of the imaginary, that discourse at work in our culture whose reflections in the ads, movies, television are often at odds with us, yet are often terribly important to us. This discourse 'imagines' what is present, future and past and what is possible: it visualizes particular constructions, with particular values embedded in those constructions. This discourse of the imaginary is one we are in visual dialogue with through the process of looking; it has effects not only on our values but on our sense of identity. If we are not represented within that public discourse, that public reflection, it is hard to know one exists. Experimental film in its construction and development exceeds and expands that public discourse and in many ways, most closely approximates our individual consciousness—our memory, our ways of thinking and feeling, our ways of being in the world.

Leila Sujir

MARTIN RUMSBY is an independent filmmaker/curator who arrived from New Zealand with a terrible addiction to artist's film. He has since set about collecting and screening work all over North America working completely independently and hopes soon to embark on a return tour of New Zealand with his findings. The following is from a letter written by Martin Rumsby to Mike Hoolboom June 23, 1988.



...BY THE WAY, IT WAS NICE to see and talk with you in Winnipeg. I still haven't had the time to sit down and write out my thoughts on the distribution of avant-garde films. In short, big changes need to be made and I have been trying to provide an example of a private enterprise, entrepreneurial approach. (Something like a dealer gallery). I haven't been overly successful but I have achieved and even surpassed my intentions in North America. I believe that my model can work but right now I'm pretty tired of the pettiness and politics of avant garde film. (I'd be of more interest to this film community if I had AIDS/LEPROSY etc, etc.) How can film co-op people be so negative to-

wards a largely unfunded maker, distributor and exhibitor of avant garde films? Or, more accurately, I thought film co-ops were havens and nests for people like myself. Something is terribly wrong with the Canadian film co-op system, many co-ops no longer have a radical, independent and avant garde mandate, many co-ops are no longer places of the living - I am sorry to report. The avant-garde filmmaker needs to take a more adversarial role, to abandon the co-ops etc. for the world and to

reengage themselves with contemporary critical discourse and practise. I think that the avant-garde cinema was strong in the 1960s because it engaged and gave back something to the, then, contemporary discourse, because it related to more than itself, it had strong relationships to contemporary developments in art and society and was able to extend those relationships. The problems that avant-garde filmmakers perceive today are institutionally related. How and where do I show my films etc? These are, possibly, not the right questions for avant-garde filmmakers at this time. It is my opinion that to produce vital, energetic and engaged work we need

to leave some of the institutions, institutionalization behind - maybe to run out into the world again, cameras flailing, flying, lenses cracked, no exposure metres but, no, really to reinvent the avant-garde cinema. Filmmakers need to redefine the mechanical cinema in relation to the electronic cinema of video and computers - WHAT IS MECHANICAL CINEMA? How does it relate to video, computers, poetry, painting, performance, narrative, politics etc. What are aesthetics? Nobody seems to know or care about cinema aesthetics. Remember Kandinsky's book THE SPIRITUAL IN ART - he defined the elements of composition, colour etc. That is art/aesthetics - the organization of form, shape, colour, composition, balance, time, space. Systematic, but not programmatic, ideas/guidelines/thoughts; an understanding of the true and real value of criticism; the integrity, openness and concern to be able to take that criticism. (Not hollow promotional reviews which ultimately excite nobody and lead us all nowhere). What are we offering? What are we giving? How do we relate? Why are we relevant? Why are we artists? If we can ask and in some honest way attempt to answer these questions then art galleries, universities etc. will admit us. Anyway as I said above I just haven't had the time to work all of this out clearly in my head. I'm sorry if it appears a jumbling, rambling rave. I hope to be able to sit down and work it all out sometime in the future. When this siege on avant-garde filmmaking begins to be lifted...

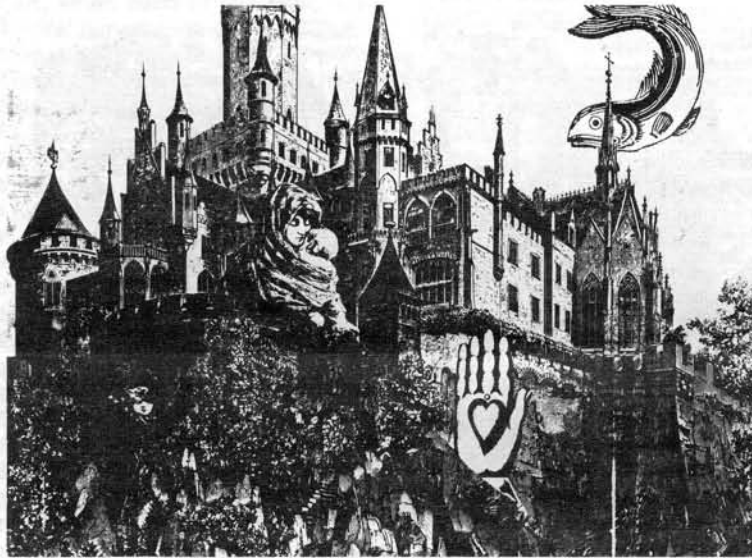


JACK CHAMBERS

IN REGINA in the spring of 1987, **Richard Kerr** organized a symposium featuring **Stan Brakhage** and **Bruce Elder**. For three days they screened work, lectured and answered questions and the following is an excerpt taken from a hundred page transcript. It is **Brakhage's** introduction to **Jack Chambers' Circle**.

...JACK CHAMBERS I've been involved with for many, many years... (I) did get to correspond with him to some extent, had one whole glorious day with him in London, Ontario and was close to him and involved in getting his work over into the United States, as I would have Lipsett if I'd known he existed. He is also dead now, after ten years of slowly dying of cancer, across which time he made the film we're going to see today which, also, I was electrified with again and much more than any time earlier. I've always been partisan to **Hart of London**, and the other film I knew well was **R-34**, but **Circle** came full circle in my life here just a month ago, so I want to share that with you quite selfishly, because I really want to see it again myself...At the close of the film his footage is similar to the Lipsett footage in that it was made by someone else for entirely other purposes, and it's what's in himself that lights up this footage and makes the end of this film one of the most vibrant and terrifying paradigms ...of our passage through life that I've ever seen... (The film) is divided into three parts. He is to me the master, almost the creator, of what I'm calling the long montage. That is where he creates whole sections, as he does in the **Hart of London**: The first hour of the film is one long befeeling similarity of section that trembles towards a giant splice which, in the second hour of that film, there's one giant conjunction that reverberates back across the whole earlier section of the film and influences, more than influences as any film would do, but

really creates a reverberation across the second half ...the first cut is from the preparations of himself, photographing himself, preparing the film and then the what-he-does film and then the whole paradigmatic ending sequence ...I want to just take a moment here to show you some of the paintings of Jack Chambers so that you can see that he was one who went to Europe ...to see all of European art, and to film himself within it, and then to study in Spain, where he met his wife Olga - and then, as I understand it, returned to this country to spend the rest of his life. It isn't an imitation of anything European, but it's infused with the ideals of surreal-



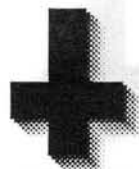
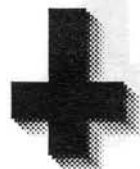
ism. Then Chambers mastered, he learned a craft of mastery of paint representation that made it possible for him to be recognized vis a vis the extreme realist schools of painting that have re-emerged which are as desperate and awful a ploy as that of the Pre-Raphaelites, in my opinion, and doomed to a horrible grotesque decadence. Unfortunately, I don't really have anything else to show you of his work. I feel that it's true film, however, such as the one you've just seen, and then the late paintings with which he comes to an envisionment that makes him close to what I call a sense of his essential spiritual content or task of Canadian aesthetics.

But let me also say that ...I've been unable to see **Circle** when I saw it shortly after it was made because I have a prejudice against structuralism, and it is not against the great makers who are so designated as structuralist filmmakers and painters and whatever, but I've found the aesthetic is easy to teach, easy for students to adopt superficially and think they've made something of significance. Its concept

reverberates on the one idea of art; you have an idea and the idea includes the tactics of making the work and then the work will essentially make itself. It's an aesthetic that's great in the hands of those who don't use it that way, but is open to this weakness. Its Achilles heel is that it engenders probably the most boring student art in the history of the world and also, because it's easy to do, and for anyone to do superficially, its engendered the greatest outpouring in bulk of it. And I was totally exasperated with it and the whole aesthetics of the time when I saw **Circle**, which I'd already heard about...that Jack Chambers had made a film in which he went out

and from the same spot photographed exactly his backyard in the same way all 365 days of the year. That's something that's easy to write about - that kind of trickery is a lot of fun for journalists to play with, so you get that kind of news, and I just thought: 'Oh God, don't tell me Jack is also buying into this shoddy aesthetic' and so on, and it really precluded me from seeing what's perfectly obvious if you're looking at the film, that, in the first place, it's a work of great, what I'll now call a long montage in three sections. I was so exasperated I took the first one just to be a structural tactic where he's sort of showing that he's getting his camera together and gonna go out and do this thing that I'd already read he'd done. Then, sure enough, I was so annoyed that I was stupid and didn't see that isn't really what he'd done at all. He doesn't photograph. I mean it's a lie. He **does** photograph, from the same vantage point where he comes up against this inexorable and terrifying vision, with a great variety of foci and f stops (that is, degrees of exposure) but also with several lenses and with a constantly changing composition that is forever fresh, just as fresh as Tom Thomson and Lipsett as I've so designated them. Fresh, with this inexorable vision, day after day. And I don't believe he did it every single day, 365 days, one year. What difference would it make, except to some academician or journalist? He presents us in this film with this tough, inexorable, terrifying vision with every ounce of his courage and energy as he's dying, facing his backyard.

Stan Brakhage



THE ART OF WORLDLY WISDOM

BRUCE ELDER is a prolific filmmaker, critic and teacher of film at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto. In 1979 he released *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, an hour long meditation on the possibility of making an autobiography. This 'documentary' describes the filmmaker's journey through education and illness, acknowledging Godard's dictum that in order to make a documentary one must begin with fiction. The following is the voice over text for *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*.

THIS IS A PHOTOGRAPH OF ME. IT WAS TAKEN QUITE A LONG TIME AGO. I DON'T RECALL WITH ANY CERTAINTY WHERE IT WAS TAKEN OR WHY. I DO KNOW THAT I WAS ACQUAINTED NEITHER WITH THE MAN SITTING NEAR ME NOR WITH THE WOMAN IN THE BACKGROUND. THE POWER TRANSMISSION LINES AT THE TOP OF THE PHOTO WOULD LEAD ME TO SURMISE THAT IT WAS TAKEN NEAR OUR HOME IN HAMILTON.

ON THE GROUND BESIDE ME there are a few leaves of paper. I presume that it was either an article I had been writing, a student essay I was grading or a paper written by one of my colleagues upon which I was commenting. At the time, I engaged in all of these activities on a regular basis. Lately, I find I do so less and less, for reasons even I cannot adequately explain.

The photo album has always held a peculiar fascination for me. Though I am, I confess, not a little puzzled by this, I believe at last, I have attained some limited understanding of it. Memory, I have come to realize, is a fickle thing. It is not committed to chronology; the associations that occur between memories and fantasy transform one's actual history. A photo album, and particularly the scholia of names and dates inscribed beneath the images, provide a scaffolding upon which one's continuing history can be constructed.

Unfortunately, I found few pictures of myself in my family album. When I was still quite young, I recall I allowed pictures of other members of the family to substitute for the missing pictures of me. No doubt my sense of myself was consequently affected, though exactly how I cannot say. But certainly, the rag tatters of my memory are stitched onto a garment that is not my own and which fits me very poorly.

I can admit that I always feel a measure of annoyance at being confronted with a photograph of myself. Why that is, is hard to say. Perhaps it is because of the way a photograph plays false with appearance. A photograph, after all, is a highly artificial construct, no more natural or 'true to the world' than the other visual arts of its time. It shares with them, in fact, a very specific set of conventions for the handling of pictorial problems which, though imperceptible to most people of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, are nevertheless both well developed and highly arbitrary.

I believe, though, that this discomfort is primarily due to the discrepancy between the knowledge we gain through observing ourselves objectively and the self-awareness gained through self-reflection, or, to put it otherwise - the irreconcilable difference between our understanding of ourselves as objects - part of the furniture of the world - and as subjects which in important ways - ways that we value highly - are different from objects. This irreconcilability can be explained by the fact that neither form of understanding is complete. Our self-knowledge is always too abstract and too highly mediated by our concern with how we present ourselves to others and by our notions about how others present themselves to us to be completely accurate. In fact, I would contend, our knowledge of ourselves as physical objects is formed, in large measure, by how we see ourselves reflected in the actions of others. Our self-awareness, on the other hand, is so very direct and intimate that it tends to become swoony and dazed. Perhaps there are geniuses who are capable of reconciling these two forms of understanding in some felicitous manner involving being completely natural, but I doubt it.

Perhaps this annoyance is due as well to the cloying insufficiency of a photograph that results from its resolute facticity. To try and decipher a photograph is like trying to penetrate the mystery of another mind. We are inclined, I suspect, to picture other minds as being not a shadowy mass of contradictions like our own but a casket containing entities which are clear cut and definite, but hidden. Perhaps this is so because no one has yet adequately explained what that peculiar stuff, human consciousness, is actually made of. One's awareness of his body and of external objects, memories, fantasies, fears, glee, even breathtaking pain co-exist and are fused together in every single moment of consciousness. Only in occasional moments of ecstasy can we glimpse what holds this rag-bag assortment of impressions together.

A few facts about myself then, or at least about how I understand myself. I am not, I think a bad chap. At any rate, I cannot ever remember having willfully elected to do something knowing it to be evil. Still, I dare say, human wickedness is rarely the product of a conscious evil intent. I believe that most often it is the result of inattention, sometimes even deliberate inattention - of what one might call a dippy relation to the facts of the matter. In spite of good resolutions, most people through sheer idleness, weariness and inability to attend to what surrounds them, drift from one action to another; the moral quality of these actions depend as much upon the circumstances into which they drift as anything else.

My formative years, as people seem disposed to call them, were in no way extraordinary. Most of my early years were passed in Hamilton and what strikes one first about Hamilton, aside from its heavier than usual concentration of industry, is its ordinariness. Let us admit, the city is ugly. And a poisonous air hangs over it.

A famous poet with whom I had a passing acquaintance has said that one can best learn about the nature of a city by examining its graveyards. He was, I think not far from the truth. I believe one can gain a most profound insight into a place by learning how people die there. Being ill of course, is never an agreeable experience but there are some places where it is easier to be sick than others. To be sick in Hamilton is a most unpleasant experience. The general ennui of the city, fostered by the mechanical boredom of the work the people living there do, make good health a requisite. The attention which an invalid requires for the most petty details of his comfort is simply not forthcoming. Here a man dies much as he lives, in solitary struggle, while the rest of the population discuss costs, shipment schedules and the pace of production not only through the day but all through the night as well, in a never ending round.



Disease was one of my better teachers. Certainly, the childhood dreams most easily remembered are those which spring out of illness. It is with such confrontations with possible death that the archetypes of religion arise in personal experience. Fever and illness, I have found, so jar the perceptual processes that the world is seen anew, filtered through certain structures of thought that are isomorphic with the structures of myth. Sickness, too, individualizes a person, sets him apart from others even in his way of seeing.

Disease is also an occasion which invites one to behave well. The calamities of disease can clear the way for insight into life-long self-deceptions. The widespread idea, expressed in the first pages of Boccaccio's *Decameron* or recorded as fact in Thucydides' history, that disease brings panic that shatters one's love and loyalties, seemed patently absurd. Disease ennobles a person, etherealizes him.

I learned that disease was simply love transformed. All the symptoms of disease can be understood as disguised manifestations of the power of love. It is a small wonder, then, that in disease, as the mortal part wastes and withers away, the spirit grows more sanguine with its lightening load. Many have previously commented on the beauty that takes possession of those who are very near death. As the last traces of earthly degradation depart, a delicate and exquisite perfection spreads across one's features. The air of languor that follows disease is very becoming.

The sadness that one feels in illness is a mark of refinement, of sensibility. It also makes one an exile, a wanderer in search of a healthy place. Sickness is also an excellent reason for a life that is mainly travelling. It was sickness that sent Keats to Rome, Chopin to the islands of the Mediterranean, Robert Louis Stevenson to the South Pacific and D. H. Lawrence around half the globe.

In truth, a man in good health is rarely interesting. He lacks both the experience of the terrible which confers a density upon his ruminations and the imagination of disaster that allows him to see past the ordinary wretchedness for those boring people who have never known afflictions. A person who has never suffered the calamities of illness is oblivious to both himself and things around him. He becomes thing-like. Pain, like every other disquieting force arouses tension and conflict. It animates a person, gives him life. By means of this animation he escapes the repose of the inorganic, the peace at the heart of the elements. Disease particularly has this power of agitation for it prevents pain from turning into a diffuse sensation. It organizes pain, regulates it, gives pain a pattern and a shape.

Only in disease does one experience an unvaried and unmodulated repetition that is never boring.

The insistence with which the pain of disease reminds us of the frailty of our organs makes forgetting - or any sort of inattention - an impossibility. Thus it imbues consciousness with a particular intensity. Without sickness we do not know that we exist; there is, I suppose, an art to being sick. That art depends upon ceasing to long for the nothingness of health, upon repudiating the nostalgic longing for the ignorance of being. It involves accepting the terror of facing the universe knowing that it might be without him - in fact that it has been and will be without him.

So long as one does not brood over one's ills, disease has the singular powers of producing revelation. Sickness cuts us off from appearances and opens us up to our ultimate reality. When one rises above concerns over the course of a disease, illness can be a rare opportunity to scrutinize death never granted to those who suffer the disadvantages of perpetual health.

The definiteness of pain is experienced as a succour to those who know that without it, life would be an intolerable vacuity and pitiable vacancy in which nothing would be seen as valuable or worthwhile. In order to wrest himself from the abyss of the indefinite, the brave man throws himself on the first pain to appear, because being, being circumscribed and hostile to the vague, is always charged with meaning.

The work of memory collapses time. The ability to read one's life backwards, the very ability that makes autobiography possible - depends upon the simultaneity of memory. One could almost say that this capacity for simultaneous recollection converts the continuous flow of time into spatial forms. In order to understand one's past, one arrests all chronological movement and fixes it in analyzable spatial forms. Thus reminiscences of self are reminiscences of places, of how one positions oneself in a location or navigates about it. In this way, the vagaries of recollection are overcome.

To convert temporal into spatial forms is to substitute contingency for succession. This conversion, therefore, allows us to view events *sub specie aeternitatis*. It therefore releases one from the disconsolate history of decay to escape to the paradisaic realm of the timeless.

Memory, too, clusters fragments of the past into aggregates. For this reason, strolling in the streets provides a valuable training for the work of memory. In the streets, too, one encounters random juxtapositions of incongruous elements; strangely accolated figures appear as in the phantasmagoria of recollection. Thus the best cities for strolling (and Paris is certainly one of the very best) evoke a metaphysical landscape in whose dream-like spaces people have a brief and shadowy existence.

Strolling about the city, then, can be considered a form of collecting, or another manner of practising the art of *assemblage*. A city, especially for one experienced in the manner of deliberately losing himself, constitutes a geography of associative pleasures. A city, too, teems with intersections, passages, U-turns, detours; it is a veritable collection of possibilities.

To be lost in a great city - not just to wander without purpose but to be actually lost - is something that can be experienced as utter delight. In such a condition, one discovers a blissful state in which one is completely impotent, completely without self, one discovers what it is like to lose one's self, to be without self-hood.

Perhaps this reveals that there are deeper meanings. One meaning is social in nature. A world whose past has become obsolete and whose present churns out instant antiques invites custodians, decoders, collectors. There is, though, I believe, an even more profound meaning, one related to that melancholia which, I believe, is the mood which dominates all collectors. Melancholics have a tendency to project their inner torpor outward and to picture their felt misfortune as something solid, massive, immutable. For this reason, the melancholic experiences a strong attraction to things rather than people - the melancholic is intrigued - and threatened - by the domination of the thing-like.

On this account, the world reveals itself to the melancholic's scrutiny alone.

What is left to say? Precious little:

The footprint on the stone
becomes the stone itself
Women become cities
Cities become fields
It's just the same old story
Spring is over very soon
The green changes very
quickly
Every day brings a difference
The cities envelop little
children
The footprint on the stone
becomes the stone itself.

Bruce Elder (Sept. 1979)



UN MES Y MEDIO (A MONTH AND A HALF)

ISABELLE ROUSSET is a recent OCA graduate who is planning to tour Ontario in a van and show artists films outdoors in the summer of 1989. In 1987 she travelled to Peru where she shot the footage for *Un Mes Y Medio (A Month and a Half)* - a ten minute travelogue that reasserts the distance between a tourist and her surround via the camera's mediation. What follows is her voice over text.

AS THE BUS ROLLS BY IN A CLOUD OF DIESEL AND DUST people stop working and children pause in their games to stare.

I hang out the window for two days swallowing the changing landscape, savouring the taste of red dust in my throat. I see people who live isolated from my world their lives determined by shapes and textures of the land and sheltered by the sky.

As the bus passes everyone stops and stares, a look that haunts me because I never have enough time to make it out - to understand.

A mountain woman robust in layered skirts, a bowler hat propped on the top of her head chops wood outside her house. She pauses, axe in one hand, the other shields her eyes from the sun as she follows the bus till it disappears.

A man cuts a young boy's hair, a curious circle around, but everything stops scissors hang idle in mid-air forgotten.

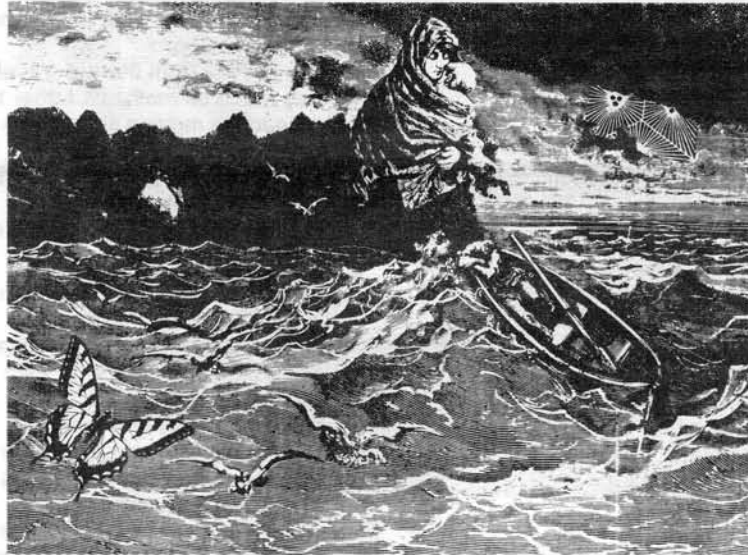
I seem to be watching a film I'd like to stop and touch, examine closely but I'm riding time or it's riding me and I feel this crazy guilt for being me.

Could they understand my longing for a life I construct through fleeting instances, a few frames snatched from the window of a bus? Passing through, here and gone, I can fall in love but not belong.

We pass by vacated homes overgrown and haunted by dreams of the city and a better life. I saw the consequence of that dream. Once serene the desert face is carved with grief of tenelements that scar the foothills of the Andes surrounding Lima - no work, no water, no rich, red soil.

They stare at the bus with an expression I begin to recognize now and for an instant I want to shout, to warn them to stay. I see in upturned faces, in deep brown eyes, desire and hope that having nothing to do with faith and prayer.

I'm angry for being sad, for having sensed the strength, for having felt the energy.



Children selling cigarettes in smoked-out bars at Zam, pregnant girls babies strapped to their backs clamber over human barricades in trains and market places to sell the same bread, the same beads - anything to stay alive.

There's energy all around, a sense of scale and balance that course all around me, through me shaking me awake, cradling me to sleep - reminding me.

Isabelle Rousset

PASSING THROUGH/ TORN FORMATIONS

PHILIP HOFFMAN is a filmmaker and teacher of film in Oakville's Sheridan College. He has made six films in the past ten years, and his most recent work, *passing through/torn formations*, was invited to the Salso Film and TV Festival. The following is an excerpt from the press conference where Philip speaks about his new film.

ada. The film is about what gets lost in the collision between the old world and the new.

The way that I constructed the film is to use a layering of image and sound, through superimposition in the picture, and by the overlapping of voices in the soundtrack. This technique liberates the narrative, so that it becomes difficult to be drawn into any one particular character. In this way I can deal with family structure and family dynamics, as opposed to 'personalities'.

passing through/torn formations is an extension of *?O, Zoo!* because it is fragmented and it is playful, story-wise, but more substantially, in a material way. It looks very different from *?O, Zoo!*. There are many superimpositions, sometimes three images overlap. The sound is the voice of the diarist, the filmmaker, in combination with several voices coming from the uncle, the mother, the daughter, the father, etc. and this, I think, makes the voices like music, rather than like information you have to understand. It is impossible for you to understand all of the different intricacies of the narrative, but I made it like that so the voices accumulate like a tone, moving with the music towards the end of the film.

Philip Hoffman



WHAT WE WILL KNOW

*ELLIE EPP is a Vancouver based film and performance artist. She has made three films: **Trapline**, **Currents** and **notes in origin**. The latter was part of a performance given at Canada House in England that included both the film '**notes in origin**' as well as this text reprinted below with the author's kind permission.*

what we will know

everyone was a long time in a womb
what was it like there

was there mathematics yes
geometry, trigonometry, yes
differential calculus, yes
the movement of the water taught us math
our own growth was teaching us the progressions
the placenta taught us kindness the attentive tree
the placenta taught us listening & the companion's face
uterus taught us room & house
the membrane taught us window
cervix taught us door
if the penis visited it taught us to knock
oviducts taught us small corridors, ante-rooms, outhouses
cell by cell taught us city
our hands in front of our faces taught us passers-by
the placenta & cord taught us elephants & dogs on leashes
the cord taught us snake
the cord taught us stem we were the plant or its shadow
substances through the cord taught us drugs
the body around us taught us hugging
the body around us taught us all the directions & up & down:
it taught us the cube of location
womb & its oviducts taught us to feel for horned animals
labour taught us sternness it brought itself to bear
coming out taught us diving falling hallucination
coming out taught us doubt
the stupidity of those who met us taught us fear & loneliness
the ignorance of those who met us taught us to be strangers
the joy & ignorance of those who met us taught us
the hurry of those who met us made us forget
- guessing to remember

the cord taught river
the growth of the bloodstreams taught us watercourse geology
the growth of the nerve net taught us learning
it sent back its advances
the body around us taught us hills & mountains
amion taught us sky
the stars themselves taught us stars they were always felt
the sun taught us itself
the moon taught us itself but the placenta taught it too
the sun taught radiance & thus optics & thus logic
the sun taught us straight lines pressure & penetration
the moon taught us swelling-toward & thus wanting
the stars taught us straight lines, convergence

the water taught us curves
our hands in the water taught us fish
our feet were quick-moving

coming out taught us weather
coming through taught us fire
the air in our lungs combusted them
the smell in the air was assault

forgetting makes us interested in dreams we think the
dream is in us like a baby
forgetting make us want to believe in ghosts
forgetting taught us suicide: forgetting again (to remember)
forgetting makes us tell stories

the water taught us ocean but it was coming out taught us abyss
from one cell to two to four cells we learned engineering
our growth taught us the eons
coming out taught us zero
implantation taught us earth seeding & burial
fertilization taught us the sequence for romance - taught
us to lie down together and exchange knowledge through
from belly to belly

the water taught us tears
placenta & water together taught the mother
rough catching taught the other

the movement of the water taught thinking
sound coming through the water taught words to ride on thinking

it is not that we come from the Mother : there is no mother
until we are born

we come equally from the two travellers in a landscape
they teach us mother & father but they are not
the one teaches moving slowly with many provisions,
the other teaches moving fast

what they do when they join is marriage there is a different
marriage in every child
is there any teaching before they meet i dont know
when they join they teach joining

it is not that we come from the Mother : the mother is
one of those who meet us
she teaches resemblance metaphor she is something like...
from each of the travellers we learn arriving
from coming out we learn dying
from coming out we learn coming
from coming out we learn the flower
from the way we fall we learn fruit & vegetables
from labour we learn massage massacre mass
from labour we learn violence & war excitement
from the light in the body we love twilight
from the legs we fall through we learn post & beam construction
at the perineum we learn lintel limen limit
it threshes and it holds

coming out taught us abandoning our beloved
coming out teaches us being abandoned
all along we are learning space
loss & increase are teaching us time
what we are before we are born teaches us universe
what we are after we are born teaches us what?

ellie epp, *what we will know*
1982, vancouver, canada



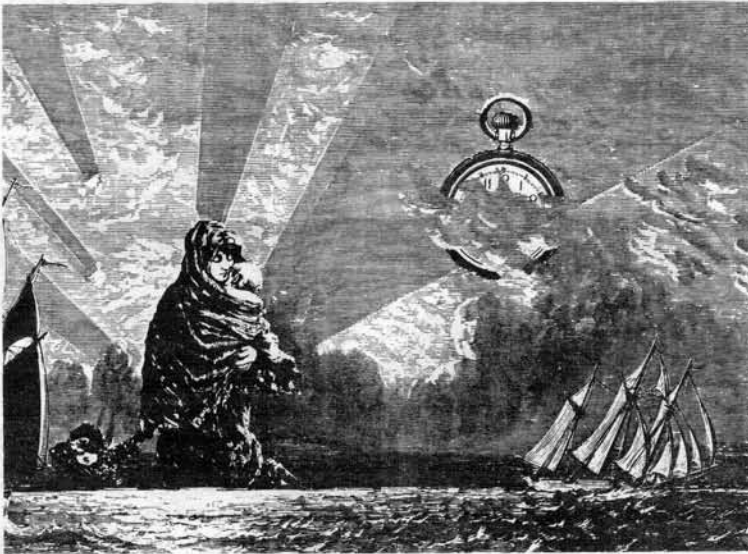
UNTITLED FILM

FENWAY CRANE is an unknown filmmaker from *Sioux Ste. Marie*. When he passed away in 1959 his family unearthed an enormous trove of films from his backyard. Following Crane's inexact and uncertain notebook *Doctors Templeton and Shapiro* have attempted to reconstruct his oeuvre. Should early indications prove correct the massive canon of works Crane left behind in an unfinished state will possess significant gaps, losses and omissions, a trait which some critics feel even Crane's very best work exhibited. The following is a transcript for an untitled film made in the 1940s.

ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON IN THE SUMMER OF 1906 MY MOTHER WOULD TAKE US, MY BROTHER AND SISTER AND I, TO GO AND SEE THE MOVIES. THEY WOULD LAST ALL AFTERNOON FOR A NICKEL AND THE FEATURE WAS ONLY TWENTY MINUTES THEN SO IT MUST HAVE BEEN JUNE, THE JUNE OF 1906, THAT I WITNESSED AN EVENT SO BRUTAL, SO HORRIFYING THAT IT WOULD CHANGE THE LIVES OF ALL THOSE WHO HAPPENED TO COME THAT AFTERNOON TO THE THEATRE. HERE IT IS.

WHEN I SEE HIM AGAIN LIKE THIS, with his head cut away I think, that we can control our thoughts which are nothing but not our emotions which are everything. The whole movie house was quiet for a moment as we watched him broken away from his own body, the whole screen swollen without arms or trunk or neck. What we watched was a horrible bloated face immense in the darkness of that afternoon as if we'd been pushed head down into the baskets of the guillotine, and then a loud voice shouting from the back, 'History decides what's documentary' and Mrs. Simon fainting dead away beside us and people crying and after that they started to throw seats around and set fire to the screen, everyone fighting all at once while mom took us out the side door underneath her jacket.

said, "But you can't do that Mr. Griffiths, you'll cut off his legs", and he said it in the same way the men moved in the theatre that afternoon, throwing chairs around at the top of their lungs. Then Griffiths told him the story of the German director who travelled to the Amazon to make a film about the man called Fitzcarraldo whose dream it was to bring opera into Africa, and after they had been shooting in the jungle for two years and living in terrible conditions the main actor was fed up and he threw up his arms and said "That's it, I've had enough. I quit." And then he stormed off the set and into the jungle and the director followed him with a pistol and said if he took one more step he would shoot him and then he



We were so young then, just seven and eight and mom tried to explain, to tell us what we'd seen. She said the bodies we watched then in the movies, that seemed to move even as we did, were always shown for us altogether, head to foot. In the early days of the movies you saw a person like you would see them across the street, all at once. And it wasn't until the American director Griffiths asked Billy Bitzer, his right hand cameraman, to make an image of this solitary face that Billy

would shoot himself. Billy understood after that and together with Griffiths he made the first close up in film.

Later on, when they took the film into the studio and looked at the daily rushes there was a cry in the back and Griffiths was summoned to the producer's office. The producer said, "Mr. Griffiths, here in the studio we pay for the whole actor". So David left that afternoon thinking that the future could only be anticipated as an absolute danger, as all that broke

with our way of life, that in the movies we watch ten seconds of what people do the rest of their lives and that the past, the present and the future were three dreams which cross in the mind.

What none of us knew then, not the drinking men in the theatre, or the one they called the charge of the dream factory or the men behind the movie camera was that we were fighting a war that was already won, that we'd already conceded. The second time I saw the bloated heads - after I snuck into the theatre knowing I wouldn't rot or change color or stop growing I watched with a kind of demented fascination and I sort of liked it after that, watching the nostrils puff up and down and the eyes rolling round, and that big tongue coming out to wipe it all away after. My father said it was like going to medical school watching them cutting and stitching and splicing and that they would be able to make people one day the way they make movies now, cutting together geographies distant in their own time to make you just the way you want - the way movies would take the image of your face and tape it alongside a picture of breakfast or the sinking of the *Lusitania* or a man in love. It was only later I realized that it was just at this moment when cinema began to cut into the body that films began to tell stories and it's been that way ever since.

So even though it started for me on a Sunday afternoon in 1906, it wasn't until years later that what I'd watched with a kind of shock become a commonplace. These days I don't want to go see a film that isn't cutting from one thing to the next but these images, they don't just stay on the screen, I remember them, they're also inside me, inside all of us. So the way we image or imagine ourselves is already as a broken body, a body of parts that needs to be re-membered or brought together again here, in the fiction of the film, in the stories we tell ourselves.

Fenway Crane



PART ONE:

13 ENCOUNTERS WITH IMAGES

Jeffrey Paul is a film professor in Oakville's Sheridan College where his enthusiasm, generosity and willingness to explore has profoundly affected the shape of artist's film in Ontario. In 1985 he was granted a sabbatical and he wrote the following as a personal and private statement in summing up his feelings from the past year.

#1 THE WORLD WAS ONLY RECENTLY NOT AT TERRIBLE WAR; we began to know about concentration camps, atomic bombs, the safety again, of America, and, now, American suburbs.

My family's candy and shoeboxes of snapshots held images of their own adult lives but not of their parents, my grandparents, the old country. When the family got together and out came the snapshots, it was as if life and images began in Cleveland. (Consider the generation gap when interpreting the phrase 'escaping to Cleveland...') From my perspective, the old country, by not appearing in photos was buried, forbidden, avoided.

Part of the family get-together ritual had cousins and aunts with handfuls of photos, several people acting as simultaneous interlocutors. And this was a floor activity away from civilizing influences of chairs and tables. Our physical selves, postures, as much as our voices were in full view, and pretty much on their own. We loved all of this nostalgia, sentiment, and sentimentality, and we yielded to the intensities of memory, wish and family forces by way of 1/30th of a second in the past. I think my parents and everybody else also celebrated and confirmed safe passage from one side of the ocean to the other, and from one side of two world wars to the other.

The photos weren't in albums, or slide trays. As years went by, while the stories and image stayed the same, the order and the emphasis changed. We ordered and orchestrated those evenings as we went along; we performed the photos from riffs we had learned long ago; we improvised the lyrics and sang the images. During the course of the evening we used the images as vocabulary, as mosaic elements. All this had seeded my mind; 13 years later, as I watched Eisenstein's 'Alexander Nevsky' I understood what Eisenstein was doing (coming up in #11).

2 last things. None of us was able to be as free with each other when we were without our shared Fanny Farmer boxes of iconic visual aids. The 2nd thing is more complicated. The snapshots were important, that is they 'worked', because they resembled, accurately, the surface of people or things; and they did this while they weren't - precisely because we didn't want them to be - metaphorical at all, and they did this excised from inexorable physical time passing: they were 1/30th of a second, period.

And, by staring at the photo years later, that 1/30th of a second that shard of time that song without music, is the ad hoc interior time of our imaginations and it lasts for all of us, as long as we make the story last. The snapshots, then, free us, temporarily, of the apparent implacable domination of the atomic second, of the present which is the 'always' part, the mathematics, philosophy, and spiritual part of Time, itself, caught in the act of passing.

#2 SOMETIME ABOUT 1946 I had my first images as images dawning. My family went to the Loew's Park on 105th and Euclid. The movie had cops. After, as we left, I saw two real-life cops by the real-life candy counter. Were these, in fact, the black and white cops I had seen in the movie? Puzzled, for sure, at age 7 I was also afraid to make a fool of myself for not knowing something that seemingly perplexed no one else. Sadly, that was the dark side of my love for movies etc. I was safe from having to ask or answer questions. Questions for me weren't entrees to knowledge or to people - and so, also, to myself. They were evidence of weakness and vulnerability both to myself and my place in the world. I would learn by watching and observing how things work; images in motion.

#3 MY FIRST IMAGE REVELATION came in about 5th grade. Some hep teacher showed Norman McLaren's 'Hen-Hop' and 'Begone Dull Care'. What can I say? They changed my life, and occupied a galaxy different from the one that had given me snapshots.

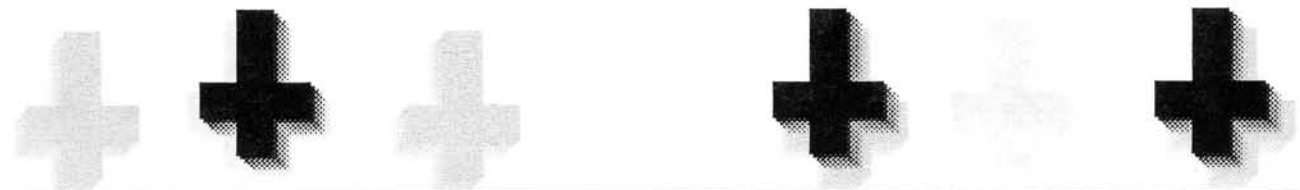
#4 I READ ABOUT CINERAMA IN 'POPULAR MECHANICS'; I was 13. It was a time of 12 inch B&W TV, small movie screens, movies in color only for costume fantasies. Cinerama: huge semi-circular screen, stereophonic sound, The Works, sensuously speaking. We are dropping off my freshman sister at her Chicago college. I declare that the family'll go to Chicago's Cinerama theater - and we do. It begins with a small-screen rendition of Melies' 'A Trip to the Moon'. The drapes then open the rest of the screen as 'Ladies and Gentlemen, this is Cinerama!' and the image and sound go on forever. We are on a roller coaster, of course. In one year:

1. My sister leaves the house
2. I have my Bar Mitzvah
3. I discover sex
4. This is Cinerama

#5.5 I AM ABOUT 16 WHEN I SEE FELLINI'S 'LA STRADA'. I feel a kinship to the lonely and uncomprehending Gelsomina, and I also long to emulate the spirited and inspirational tight-rope/clown character played by Richard Basehart. I am moved to tears. Tears as a teen? Not since I was maybe 8; I remember cutting my hand badly, and I didn't cry. I felt some initial surge of being grown-up. I could experience my own pain, and allay my own fears. I could sustain without doing tears. I was a step closer to being a man. And in 'La Strada' I was feeling somebody else's pain. I advanced 1/2 a step closer yet. (It is only a movie.)

#6 IT WAS ALSO ABOUT THIS TIME, 1956, I'm 16, that I saw 'And God Created Woman', with Jean-Louis Trintignant, and Brigitte Bardot's ass, as I remember. **#7 I GO THROUGH A PERIOD OF MAKING (pre - 'Super...') 8mm hi-school/hi-jinks movies** with my friends and family. Unaware I'm acting out a variation of 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny', I naively do all sorts of Melies and Griffiths stuff. I mock drama, and attempt slapstick. I have no feel for editing, but my camera's well-placed.

#8 MY THIRD IMAGE REVELATION came after I had endured the humiliation of flunking out of university(#1), and at the end of my 3rd year, too.* But I'm now in film school - university #2 - my first day, first class, and Dr. Steel's talking about Marilyn Monroe, who has recently cashed in her chips, and it hits me MY HOMEWORK IS GOING TO THE MOVIES! I lean over to Closest Classmate, 'Am I in heaven, or what?'



* I HATED MY SCHOOLING for those 3 years. My sustaining represented one thousand days and nights of avoidance and passivity reflecting weakness of spirit. It took me those 3 years to manage little enough that grades then given me, forced the issue I couldn't handle on my own. I was still using somebody else's snapshots to evoke my responses.

#9 THAT SEMESTER I DISCOVERED THAT MOVIES - images - can have intense spiritual power. The film was Carl Dreyer's La Passion de Jeanne D'Arc. It is a silent movie, and so the characters' movements, and camera shots are free of the time it takes to say dialogue. The physical-world temporal realism of spoken dialogue has its counterpart in the motionless of shapes in a snapshot. People moving, but without dialogue are de-corporealized in a way evocative of a world without gravity. I remember being full of wonder that I was somehow experiencing this film in my eyes, my chest, knees and legs. not my mind. I remember thinking 'I didn't know! . . . , I didn't know!)

#10 I'VE SEEN HOUR AFTER DELICIOUS HOUR of movies by Fellini, Bailey, Preston Sturges, Daly, Brakhage, on and on. The movie cafeteria is overflowing with choices as I enter Film Production One, and make My First Film. My protagonist walks through endlessly empty streets (remember it's 1963) and finally gets crushed in one of those tall, many-spoked cylindrical subway turnstiles. To Vivaldi. Never, of course, I thought, would another movie have to be made, except maybe a comedy. I showed it to my class and my teacher says 'well, if you want to make an experimental film...' Of course I was crushed; I thought I had done the real thing.

MUSEUM TRIPS, and 'arts and crafts' were always available to me as a kid, but those images I saw and made never meant much to me, only movies and photos, only image of real things or things that moved made my inner mechanisms emit emotions. So far in my life it was movies and stills that extended more of the universe in my direction; ritual belonging, spiritual awareness, an expanded sense of compassion, seemingly hot sex, and, amazing to me, a sense of real joy within the bounds of institutional learning. I was beginning to be aware that a movie was able to evoke a range or depth of emotions in me that wasn't happening when the auditorium lights of the world were on. The farther away from people I was, the closer I could get. I was yet to deal with that sentimentality and brutishness inside myself.



#11 THERE WAS MORE. In 1963 I saw Eisenstein's Alexander Nevsky, and it was a seminal occasion. But to explain why Nevsky was special and important to me, I first need to establish something about time and space in movies, or, in other words, the picture and the cut.

Films usually mean to synthesize a visual experience that convincingly evokes in us a sense that the drama and all of its elements exist independently of the movie and its elements, and this happens in two ways. First, spatially: the scenes, people and objects are supposed to extend beyond the edges of the screen; they have a life independent of the composition. Second, temporally: the illusion requires us to believe that a movie, its people and objects exist independently of dramatic - of movie - need and time, after the cut. The screen illusion, the subterfuge works, because either the emotional or kinetic energy is sustained across the boundary of a cut. The action or 'doing-ness' is sustained even if camera angle or moving object is changed. If shape or some other space aspect is sustained, 'being-ness' is sustained. Cutting on one suppresses our noticing that the other has changed. It's that simultaneous suppressing one while maintaining the other of time or space, across the boundary and, therefore, also the rupture of a cut,

netic intensity of shot #1's tail exactly matches the head of shot #2. The kinetic or emotional energy being so unresolved at cut point, acts to divert our attention from any visible spatial seams at point of 'cut'.

Not so, however, with parts of Eisenstein's Alexander Nevsky. Eisenstein segmented his actors' motions, resolving and finishing the kinetically dramatic aspects within each shot, and only then going on to the next shot. This had a couple of effects. The actions themselves seemed realistic, but the shot-to-shot linking, editing, group-context (also called 'sequence') wasn't. Time wasn't experienced as fluid in the sense of flow. It was experienced as fluid in the sense of droplets, discrete elements, vocabulary, mosaic elements. The film isn't impelled because of sustained actions, but because of action - the physical world - alternating with cut - the image world. Running your eyes over the length of Alexander Nevsky is like running your eyes over the surface of a Byzantine church mosaic, or running your fingers over its surface while you look at it. It seemed to me that Eisenstein's isolation of motions did in a time sense what Byzantine church mosaics did in a space sense. The likeness of each image to its physical-world counterpart, was one of similarity not versimilitude. Put another way, it was a likeness of sign, or metaphor, not the specious appearance of semblance.

And herein lay the idea that has excited me since that time I saw Nevsky 18 or so years ago. I discovered that Time (Nevsky) and Space (Byzantine or Ramesque paintings and mosaics) gesture and pose, as we finally experience them, are interchangeable. Everyday experience of a time-space continuum has something in common with the seemingly arcane Relativity of Einstein and subatomic physics. My imagination is taken with implications and fantasies about that. Still images - photos- and movies - animation - in fact all gestures and poses, have equivalences.



And I was also aware, by then, via an article in *Film Culture*, of Norman McLaren's observation that it isn't what you put on a movie frame that's important, it's what goes on between frames.

My interest in animation, and aspects of life that touch on representation, the symbolic, and on life as animation was beginning to take on great importance. My interest in unity of experience, as the Nevsky/mosaics association suggested, was beginning to cross media boundaries. As I continued to need still photography for its semblance properties, I also continued to need to know more about intermedia art, and why unifying experience (symbolic and metaphorical experience) was an underlying motivation of my love of movies and music.

#12 I MAKE ANOTHER FILM the following semester. 'No more experimental films! The Real Thing: I want to make a film about people and feelings; I want to make a film about love.' I'm pleased with how it comes out. It's about a young couple. He's a student (what else?) and she's pregnant. His studies mean he doesn't have lots of time for her, and her increasing size makes her self-conscious and lonely. After a playful opening of them in bed, and, later, after a semi-erotic breadmaking sequence with Betty, the couple, re-united at dinner, resolves nothing. End of film.

Years later I'm visiting a friend who showed that film each year in his classes. I had not seen it during that time. We're walking down the hall and he says, 'Your problem is you fall in love with your friends' wives, and instead of making love to them, you made movies about them'. My feet froze to the floor tile; my heart froze to my body, and the breath of words froze in my mouth. What was for Ron an off-handed remark and an obvious truth, was too dangerous for me to acknowledge all those years. And I thought I was getting somewhere.

#13 FROM 1970-77 I WORKED WITH COMPOSER MUSICIANS who often used synthesizers. We worked with performance and interactive aspects of images, sound, slides, movies, and various mixtures of multiple-image work. I questioned a lot of esthetics, and methods, and the equipment of the enterprise. Why perform live? Why use slides? What's the real point of compound images, and what do good multi-image sequences look like, and why? How can we invent appropriate and interesting interactions and intersections between movies and stills, color and B&W, single and multiple images, be-

the musicians, who were university and conservatory classically trained. They were sort of starting their synthesizer work from scratch, as synthesizers were just becoming available as flexible performing instruments. One thing I discovered was that all the sounds tickled me. I was sonically promiscuous, and I had to work at learning discernment. The musicians took two years before they began to be satisfied with their ability to give an audience sounds through time that represented their musical vision. Two years to begin to control their second instruments.



tween all that and sounds? Is it important for the audience to 'catch on' to a method or structure? Very exciting and interesting, sometimes good, sometimes only a good idea. We were expressing our attitudes about life using our favourite materials as sign and metaphor, and aesthetic sport.

During that time I was able to use a wide range of visual equipment, and have access to a wide range of sound forces: as many as 7 musicians, a singer, and, once, a symphony orchestra (guess when a projector fuse blew). I was also able to horse around with (what I'm told were advanced) music synthesizers belonging to

Screen media work of any sort lends itself to spectacle. Electronics easily expands the available scale of one's work. It is easy to aggrandize spuriously the public or conceptual importance of one's work. It's a significant issue for students to consider.

I learned something else which is one of the exciting things of my life. As I and the musicians hashed out problems, ideas and victories, I discovered that we were longing for and getting excited about the same ideas, inner states, structures, attitudes, and emotions. I, a visual person, an eye-jock, an f-stopper, shared in daily struggle with a note-picker, a music specialist, a drum-beater: 2

different technologies, vocabularies, sense organs, methods, schooling. Now what I've said is of course an elementary truth, but the discovery as a personal one, not only of idea but of daily life, practise, and experience made flesh, now that was something. Fuck all this alienation shit; the world's more of a piece than the different technologies, vocabularies, and styles often suggest. Each of us must discover that schools ought to assist by providing the elements, the spirit, the attitude, the opportunities, the time.

MY CHILDHOOD LOVE AND DESIRE of movies was satisfied by the homogenous Hollywood studio aesthetic. As I approached my majority, with my concomitant rebellion, the Hollywood hegemony was infiltrated with influences from Italian Neo-realist moviemaking, the French New Wave, and American TV. These affected, in turn, the shooting, the scripting-editing, and the distribution of visual storytelling. Movies, the iconography of my childhood (besides snapshots) happened to change as I became an adult, and as I began to learn about, not just consume, movies. So it was hard to see myself as somehow not central to this. My aesthetic is influenced by chance social timing and my birth time. I work to discover and make my own place in this transforming movie world. Transistorized umbilical sync, Tri-X, quartz bulbs, Super-8, and Portapacks all also re-define who can make movies, who might get to see them, what movies look like, and how we experience and interpret them. It was a time of rejecting classical methods as antediluvian or at least conventional. It was your basic Modernist stance applied 50 years later to the medium of choice of the 'Now' generation. Hm-m-m-m. And the populist inferences of 'anyone' and 'community action' didn't happen, at least it hasn't happened in ways we expected.



So? So? Where do I find myself, and my teaching in all of this?

The unresolved tension between stills and animation provides a lot of the fuel for my teaching. Stills remove image from time flux. Animation synthesizes time flux from pose - stills - and transforms pose into gesture. I am interested in that reversible transformation that allows imagination to interchange sculpture and dance, video and painting, music and dialogue. The tension between stills and animation, between semblance and metaphorical aspects of art, and between sound and vision, provides a vitality because nothing is experienced alone, or without accompaniment.

So I find myself with the possible situation of incorporating another technology, this time electronic image making, into my teaching, my life, my doubts, my reality which works better with the room lights off, or with the room lights on for 1/30th of a second. Do I really need another metaphor? Is it junk food for me? Is Texas Instruments just another name for Sara Lee? This time my babyboom transition to adulthood isn't there to costume my relationship. I've lived through a technological 'revolution' that had impossibly extravagant claims made for it. And unlike the NFB which really was doing community work for 30 years previous, and unlike Britain which had an educationally sound screen-media school program as far back as the early 60's, the North American programs were too often ill-thought out equipment-happy, button-pushing extravaganzas. It was irresistible the dreams money could buy. Dreams are ideas, and the A-V phase and Super-8 phase of the last 1-15 years bought mostly the ideas of images. The bottom line was that we wanted images. Screen education failed in North America because, in the words of one of its founders, 'It was without conceptual strength'. Somewhere in Canada we need a screen-media program that works well - with a combination of significance for each student, and significance for our culture. I must

work within the amorphous bounds of words, images, sounds, and do so with images that are still or that move, and with material that is recorded from life or invented for or within a medium, for the needs of a client or the maker, for the purposes of storytelling, advocacy, and information/explanation, and encompasses the various ways in which screen and print media works can be realized.

I approach this government-decreed computer urban-renewal with caution; I have a fear of being overwhelmed. I'm afraid of a commitment as big as the ones I've had before, and the commitment needs to be as encompassing if I'm to teach with technical, conceptual and metaphorical strength, which is the only moral way. Imagination, history, technique and idea must always play off each other. If they do, the culture will have good art and good science. That's what I'm after. Good art and science mean a culture's people have vital ideas.

Circumstances have forced me to deal with the underside of, among other things, what values and meanings I invest in images. Because understanding values is important to me as a person, it's important to me as a teacher. Because metaphorical and symbolic experience has been important to me - whether I've liked it or not, it seems - relationships between metaphor and truths, between objects and images, are also important. Where can one find true meanings/ how is it we may know they are real or contain truth? How can we extoll to students and to ourselves, the commitment to distinguish life-giving from life-taking fantasies, and to act on true meanings and values and not act on false values. It is difficult, sometimes, to use and explore one's imagination when illusion, desire, and power are names of the Media game.

Jeffrey Paull

NOTHING PERSONAL

AL RAZUTIS is a German born filmmaker who worked/studied in the US in a couple of California universities before becoming a landed immigrant in Canada in 1968. An artist, writer, media systems designer and educator he is internationally renowned for his work in film, video and holography. He has recently left Simon Fraser University in BC where he taught for nine years so he can devote his full attention to surfing. The following was written in Sept. 1988 just before vanishing into the wilds of Mexico.

IT IS WITH SOME AMAZEMENT THAT I STILL HEAR THE TERMS 'AVANT-GARDE' AND 'EXPERIMENTAL' TOSSED AROUND, USUALLY INTERCHANGEABLY, BY THE FILM COMMUNITY AND WORN OUT ACADEMICS IN SEARCH OF SOMETHING INTERESTING TO AUGMENT THEIR EMPTY AGENDAS. EVERY SEVERAL YEARS, IN CYCLES THAT ARE BOTH PREDICTABLE AND TEDIOUS, A SEARCH IS CONDUCTED IN KANADIAN (REACTIONARY) FILM THEORY AS TO "WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?", WHO IS DOING "IMPORTANT" WORK SUITED FOR INCLUSION IN THE LATEST REHASH ON KANADIAN "POST-MODERNIST" FILM. WE STILL READ ABOUT THE "PRE-EMINENCE" OF LANDSCAPE, PHOTOGRAPHY AND ALIENATION "MEDIATING REALITY". THE WINTERS MUST BE LONG, THE TUNDRA EVERYWHERE AND ON EVERYONE'S INTROSPECTIVE AGENDA. AND YES, THERE IS ALWAYS THE REAPPEARANCE OF TYPICALLY CHAUVINIST RHETORIC: THE TRULY KANADIAN FIXATION ON SYMBOL, FLAG AND OUTDATED PHILOSOPHIES LIKE CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM AND THE "ONTOLOGICAL NATURE OF THE PHOTOGRAPH". NONE OF THIS IS SURPRISING. Throughout North America we see a resurgence in fundamentalist thinking, ideologies of alienation and a historicizing of mythological codes. Even the unintellectual George Bush these days is wrapping himself in a flag, uttering nonsense about "mainstream" Amerika and the "glorious" past years all the while dismissing realities like poverty and drug financing as "minor errors in judgement". Kanadian film theory, and its academic associations, are largely irrelevant and unable to account for the many film practices. Facing their own impotence they resort to rhetorical havens (the academic-tenured network of obfuscators) in search for that which is truly and only Kanadian: the alienated and apolitical landscape artist pondering his/her own "shroud of Turin". Disseminated in classrooms, anthologies and conferences this fixation on an antiquated metaphysics (structuralism in its most neurotic form) is the last gasp of a dying ideology. But rather than die or be forgotten it hangs on like some patient in a cancer ward, simply because there are no theoretical 'alternatives' for the already intimidated film community to hang on to. Kanadian film theory has produced a condition akin to a state cultural apparatus without which most are unable to work.



After nearly two decades of working outside of and within various academies, teaching, writing and filmmaking, I see the cultural and intellectual (film) paralysis gaining ground. Those who could in the same breath invoke "The Post-Modern Scene" - its "excremental culture and hyper-aesthetics" along with alienation, landscape and ontological "nature" abound. Ironically, there is a conjunction "between those who have nothing to say and the masses who do not speak." Sadly there is an "ominous emptiness of all discourse", a condition that is submerged under the weight of the ongoing Canadian identity crisis and its own "nostalgia for a sublime transcendent" (the genius in search of his own 'self' in a by-gone landscape).

Rear-Guard Looking for its Avant-Garde

NETWORKS OF INFLUENCE are the typical output of institutions in pursuit of consolidating their power/influence. These networks in film culture are found in university film associations, their critical journals, their conference activities and film curators eager to ape the latest in-vogue 'discourse'. Rear-guard ideologies are essentially conservative, venerating bourgeois mythologies of utopia and alienation (of the individual in crisis). Universities, by their very design, promote a conservative attitude towards culture and represent the best resistance to culture shock, transgression, disruption (of norm), radical change. Within academic hierarchies are the conditions which are most resistant to avant-gardism. Film departments with their abundance of equipment, library resources and salary base are current havens for many filmmakers,

experimental once, now retired. I have seen enough examples of filmmakers, once creative and courageous, now retired in art colleges or universities to make me wonder how long their charade of 'progressive' education can go on. In one particular case, I witnessed an old acquaintance of mine turn to education for the purpose of steady income, seduction of his female students and continuation of creative bankruptcy...



What about the filmmaker who recently posed with a Canadian flag (a penis substitute?) on the cover of Canada's film magazine? For many experimental (and especially avant-garde) filmmakers this would truly be the 'kiss of death'. The formula has always worked and been the same: filmmaker discusses his/her work as biographic preliminaries leading to name-dropping of current personalities, self-inclusive theoretical paradigms and nationalist symbology (the flag, landscape and mediation theories, self-image, etc.) "Raising the standard of experimental film?" Bullshit. This is strictly self-promotion presuma-

bly leading to more grants, screenings, invitations to speak, conferences, inclusion in anthologies, tenure and promotion. The network of rear-guard mentality masquerading as progressive (conservatives). The tendency to attach oneself to existing fashionable theory and symbol is symptomatic of creative bankruptcy, intellectual cowardice, if not laziness. Next year someone else will rediscover the same old formula. Anyone who has read this magazine has seen it for decades. And you know what? It works! Because the "ominous emptiness of all discourse" overwhelms the critically incisive, the radical and unsettling factors of living culture.

and Hitchcock collections, along with their English Department cronies (those who conveniently switched to film studies and semiotics), along with their tenure and promotion. I watched for years in a film department I helped create (and which I left) the networking of influence, the ideology of disinformation lead to the consolidation of 'new narrative' vested interests, curriculum control and low workload. I should have known better than to assume that debate and discursive differences were possible. After all, culture and education are big business requiring political acumen and a networking of theoretical interests (letters of reference, publishing credits, etc.)...

What is at issue here is not only the vacuum of informed criticism but its arrogance and effects on continuing film practice. For what is most alarming now (to this writer) is that much the same old network is resurfacing to ask the question: "What exactly is happening NOW in the international avant-garde film?" (International Experimental Film Congress, 1989, Toronto, Canada). They would be better off to ponder what is exactly happening with rear-guard film and settle down for a week of outs from Canada's long suffering and christ-like filmmaker, the very same hero for our excremental times.

In the meantime the critical hacks will continue on, assured of success by an apathetic and uncritical film community. Many filmmakers will say, "Why bother?...I'll get my turn on the cover of Cinema Canada...I'll get my show and letter of grant reference." The "gimme" mentality of mention, the kiss of death mistaken for affection, the romantic quest for fame (there is no fortune to be made here unless you get your university appointment folks!) drives everyone into the asshole of what really is happening "NOW" in film theory and practice.



DESIRE IN RUINS

SMILE is an English based magazine that has called for a complete artist's strike in all media beginning in 1990. In preparation for this work stoppage we reprint the opening of SMILE's Sex Without Secretions issue entitled:

As I perceive it, the choices facing most are:

Pass the toilet paper and sit in your cubicle until the sewer system plugs up (that is until the next academic conference).

Get used to the smell of it all and maybe soon you'll develop an appetite for shit (symbolism, obfuscation, the flag, name dropping, experimental film ghettos, travel grants to safe (sponsored) exhibition houses, mention in sponsored/subsidized publications).

Become a clever plagiarist; make your work in a "theoretically informed manner" (don't forget the flag); act non-committal in all political issues and as soon as regionalism, censorship or any number of causes arise make sure your work is included (along with an appropriate quote by you).

Or...finally free yourself of this and all kinds of bullshit and be unconcerned whether you fit that school of thought or another, whether your films are "modern" or "post-modern", Canadian, Kanadian or international. Free yourself from determinations and the obligation to identify your inspiration as being the tundra, factories, television, people and/or "Michael Snow". And free yourself from intimidation by scribblers and quasi-theorists (they're looking for a warm place to shit, you need not worry), and free yourself from the notion that history and theory will exclude you.

And then, if you can free yourself from being Kanadian (or anti-Kanadian un-Kanadian...) then you can discover your own praxis and that creative imagination which is not celebrated in the cancer ward of suffering romanticism.

Al Razutis
San Jose del Cabo, Baja
California
Mexico

1) The whole of post-modern life is mediated by a series of abstractions. Creativity, pleasure, imagination, desire, all have a role to play in the maintenance of the capitalist system.

2) Those who do not reiterate accepted mystifications find their activities and ideas suppressed by both the media and the soft cops in the universities and community relations.

3) In the past, life was mediated by such abstractions as honesty, truth, progress, and the myth of a better future. Creativity, pleasure, imagination, and desire, are a further refinement in the mediation of life by abstractions. In the post-modern era they serve power in the same way that honesty, truth, progress, etc, served the capitalist system in the classical modern age (1909-1957).

4) Creativity is labour reified to moral good, the name of the work ethic after its modernisation. To those who oppose all moralisms creativity is just as alienating as wage labour. We reiterate the anti-moralist slogan 'Never Work' and hold that this formulation embraces the refusal of creativity.

5) Pleasure is a method for the ordering of experience into a hierarchy of desirability. It is an abstraction which negates the lived moment, and requires reference to the possibility of past/future (or at least other) experience. The anti-capitalist must reject all such systems of value.

6) Imagination is an abstraction which negates concrete experience. It is the central mechanism for the dominance of the image as chief agent of repression in our spectacular society.

7) Desire is the permanent deferral of the actuality of the present in favour of the purported gratifications of an illusory future.

8) We engage an active nihilism for the destruction of this world and all its abstractions:

No more leaders.
No more experts.
No more superstars.
No more politicians.
No more thinking 'culture' can change anything except a few bank accounts.

The show is over.
The audience start to leave.

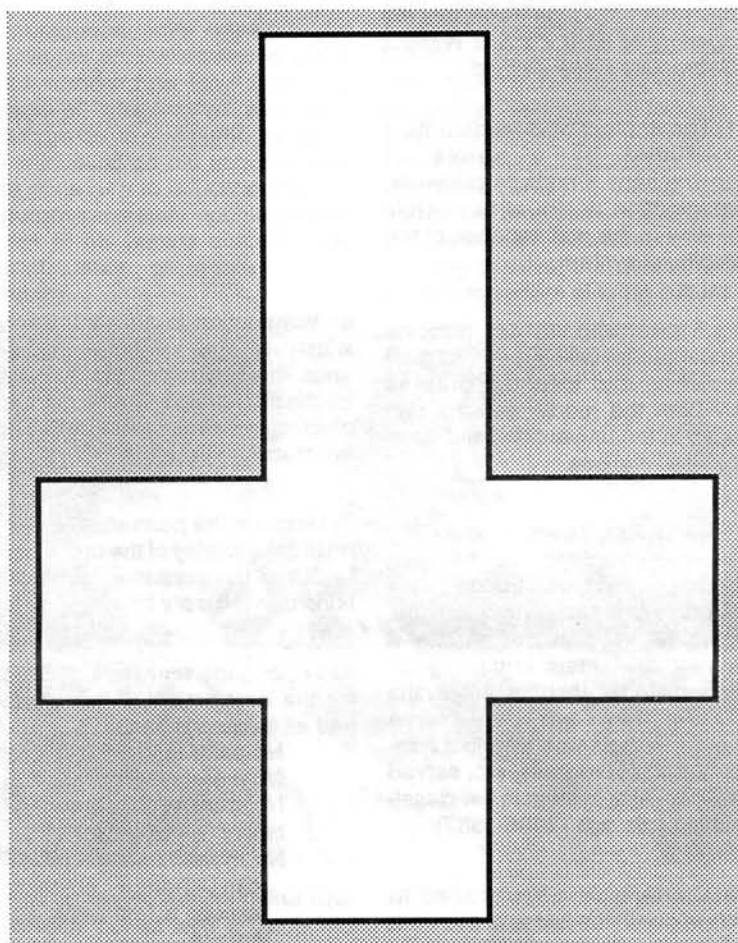
Time to collect their coats and go home.

They turn around

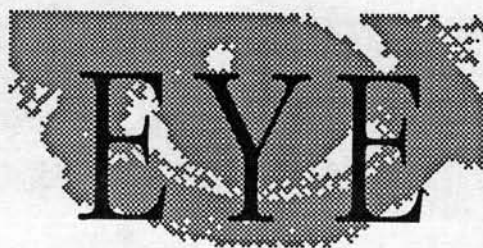
.....No more coats
.....No more homes
ABOLISH PLEASURE
REFUSE CREATIVITY
SMASH THE IMAGINATION

DESIRE IN RUINS
THE PRESENT IS
ABSOLUTE
EVERYTHING NOW!





The ends of earth



NEW FILMS IN THE COLLECTION

(The following is a list of all films received after the publication of the 1988 catalogue. All listings are in color with sound unless otherwise noted.)

NUKIE'S SERMON FROM THE BOTTLE by Jonathan Amitay 7 min. 1988

MOVING BICYCLE PICTURE by Jim Anderson 12 min. silent 1972-1975

LE BOIS DE BALZAC by Jim Anderson 42 min. 1973-1981

REFLECTIONS ON BLACK by Stan Brakhage 12 min. b/w 1955

THE WAY TO SHADOW GARDEN by Stan Brakhage 10 min. b/w 1955

WINDOW WATER BABY MOVING by Stan Brakhage 12 min. silent 1959

BLUE MOSES by Stan Brakhage 11 min. b/w 1962

MOTHLIGHT by Stan Brakhage 4 min. silent 1963

DOG STAR MAN (complete program) by Stan Brakhage 78 min. silent 1961-1964

PRELUDE: DOG STAR MAN by Stan Brakhage 25 min. silent 1961

DOG STAR MAN PART I by Stan Brakhage 30 min. silent 1962

DOG STAR MAN PART II by Stan Brakhage 7 min. silent 1963

DOG STAR MAN PART III by Stan Brakhage 11 min. silent 1963

DOG STAR MAN PART IV by Stan Brakhage 5 min. silent 1964

BLACK VISION by Stan Brakhage 3 min. b/w 1965

THE HORSEMAN, THE WOMAN AND THE MOTH by Stan Brakhage 19 min. silent 1968

WESTERN HISTORY by Stan Brakhage 10 min. silent 1971

THE RIDDLE OF LUMEN by Stan Brakhage 15 min. silent 1972

THE WOLD SHADOW by Stan Brakhage 3 min. silent 1972

ABSENCE by Stan Brakhage 9 min. silent 1976

AIRS by Stan Brakhage 21 min. silent 1976

DESERT by Stan Brakhage 13 min. silent 1976

GADFLIES by Stan Brakhage 13.5 min. silent 1976

HIGHS by Stan Brakhage 7 min. silent 1976

REMBRANDT, ETC. AND JANE by Stan Brakhage 16 min. silent 1976

SKETCHES by Stan Brakhage 10 min. silent 1976

THE DREAM, NYC, THE RETURN, THE FLOWER by Stan Brakhage 21 min. silent 1976

TRIO by Stan Brakhage 8 min. silent 1976

WINDOW by Stan Brakhage 10 min. silent 1976

NIGHTMARE SERIES by Stan Brakhage 21 min. silent 1978

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS by Stan Brakhage 2.5 min. silent 1981

MURDER PSALM by Stan Brakhage 18 min. silent 1981

UNCONSCIOUS LONDON STRATA by Stan Brakhage 22 min. silent 1982

FIRELOOP by Stan Brakhage 3 min. 1986

FAUST'S OTHER: AN IDYLL by Stan Brakhage 45 min. 1988

A MATTER OF EXPECTATIONS by Irene Buncel 26 min. 1986

WAVING by Martha Fleming 5 min. b/w 1987

NAME YOUR POISON IT'S A SCREAM CHANNEL NO. 5 by John Gagne 4.5 min. 1988

LE Puits de Lumiere/Light Shaft by Vincent Grenier 5 min. b/w silent 1975

LA TOILE/THE SHADE by Vincent Grenier 16 min. silent 1975

WINDOW WIND CHIMES by Vincent Grenier 27 min. 1974

A LITTLE OLDER by Marsha Herle 2.5 min. 1987

GRID by Mike Hoolboom 1.5 min. silent 1988

THE ORIENTATION EXPRESS by Francis Leeming 14 min. 1987

BLACK EARTH by Vivian Davioch-Lozowski and Jesse Nishihata 58 min. 1988

THE INSIDE FILE by Richard Mackenzie 21 min. 1987

STARCYLE by Deanna Morse 4 min. 1978

JIM BROWN THE NEWS BOY by Deanna Morse 2 min. 1978

RANKY TANKY by Deanna Morse 3 min. 1978

REALITY CHECK by Deanna Morse 5 min. 1981

HAND by Deanna Morse 4 min. 1982

AUGUST AFTERNOONS by Deanna Morse 5 min. 1985

CAMERA PEOPLE by Deanna Morse 7 min. 1984

CHARLESTON HOME MOVIE by Deanna Morse 5 min. 1980

HELP! I'M STRANDED by Deanna Morse 5 min. 1981

I NEED A MAN LIKE YOU TO MAKE MY DREAMS COME TRUE by Daria Stermac and Kalli Paakspu 24 min. 1987

FRAME OF MINE by Tim Rivers 4 min. 1987

UN MES Y MEDIO by Isabelle Rousset 10 min. 1987

I AM SEVEN by Michael Silvera 6 min. silent 1987

We're having our ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY on
ON DECEMBER 9 at CFMDC at 8 pm. We'll be serving
beer and wine and good spirits of all sorts. Everyone
is welcome. See you there.

THE INDEPENDENT EYE is the newsletter of the CANADIAN FILMMAKERS DISTRIBUTION CENTRE, a non-profit organization which promotes the work of independent filmmakers. Operations and activities undertaken by the CFMDC are supported by its membership, self generated revenue, the Canada Council, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, the Ontario Arts Council, The Department of Cultural Affairs, Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council.

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