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## PROGRAM NOTES

1987

**San Francisco Cinematheque**  
480 Potrero Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
(415) 558-8129

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San Francisco, California  
2007

## CINEMATOGRAPH PUBLICATION PARTY

JANUARY 18, 1987

### 7:30 Show

Net with Water by Melanie Berry, 1983, 3 min., silent, super-8mm.

Zone by Sokhi Wagner, 1981, 8 min., silent, super-8mm.

Twig by Michael Mideke, 1966, 3 min., silent, 16mm.

Mutiny by Abigail Child, 1982, 12 min., sound, 16mm.

Baby in a Rage by Chuck Hudina, 1983, 9 min., silent, 16mm

the ragged edges of the hollow by Edwin Cariati, 1984, 6 min., silent, 16mm.

Frame Line by Gunvor Nelson, 1984, 22 min., sound, 16mm.

### 9:15 Show

After God II by Leslie Singer, 1984, 3 min., silent, super-8mm.

Foot'Age Shoot Out by Kurt Kren, 1985, 3 min., sound, 16mm.

Pearl and Puppet by Roger Jacoby, released 1982, 14 min., sound, 16mm.

Deciduous by Lynn Kirby, 1982, 17 min., sound, 16mm.

What's Out Tonight Is Lost by Phil Solomon, 1983, 9 min., silent, 16mm.

Bopping the Great Wall of China Blue by Saul Levine, 1979, 5 min., sound, super-8mm.

A Visit to Indiana by Curt McDowell, 1970, 10 min., sound, 16mm.

## LIVING BETWEEN THE FRAMES--RECENT ANIMATION

-- Thursday, January 22, 1987

### PROGRAM:

- 1) Metal Dogs of India (1985) by Chel White, 3½ min.--"There are several themes which recur in the animated drawings; these include pictorial metamorphosis, industrialization, and the absurd." (C.W.)
- 2) Remains to be Seen (1984) by Jane Aaron, 7 min.
- 3) Bang! (1986) by Robert Breer, 10 min.
- 4) Object Conversation (1985) by Paul Glabicki, 10 min.--"A series of visual and verbal dialogues are created between, about, and with a series of "source" objects. A pair of scissors, chairs, an hourglass, a barbell, ladders, a boxing ring, and a piano are among the objects that are presented, defined, discussed, demonstrated, heard, re-defined, and progressively re-invented in meaning, association, and structure. The interplay of language, juxtaposition, image and color, figurative/abstract exchange, suggest the process of thinking and sorting information, through conscious and unconscious manner." (P.G.)
- 5) In Need of Space (1984?) by Bart Vegter, 8 min.
- 6) Fluke (1985) by Emily Breer, 7 min.--"I work instinctively in collecting images and creating sequences. Instead of illustrating a central theme, I explore separate parts in search of the source; the film's content is characterized by the process. In Fluke, a shark yawns and fish fly onto the heads of camelriders in the desert. A house roof continually shoots off as another grows in its place. Sense makes nonsense as nonsense makes sense." (E.B.)
- 7) Cycle (1986) by Robert Ascher, 3½ min.--"The soundtrack is a native Australian language. The speaker indirectly recalls central figures in Australian mythology by using poetic devices, particularly the repetition of key words: lotus, evening star (Venus), moon, and the name of a clay-pan where past and future happenings are played out in the present.

(OVER)

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On the clay-pan, people collect lotus, the roots of which become evening star. It is here, too, that a being, rejecting mortality, changes himself to moon. The horn of light visible at the close of moon's period drops into the sea. The process is a never-ending cycle relating people, the spiritual world, and the natural environment." (R.A.)

- 8) Thicket (1985) by George Griffin, 10½ min. --"Early on the morning of September 17, 1982, I experienced a series of vivid dreams which seemed to be about landscapes, archeology and melancholia. I woke up and immediately began to draw, but the more I worked, the less I retained of the original disturbing vision. It became a parody: something cold, logical, false. Thicket is therefore an elegy to the unconscious, a story about the corruption of sentiment, a story in which memory and loss collide." (G.G.)
- 9) Random Positions (1984) by Jo Bonney and Ruth Peyser, 8 min.-- "The film depicts the acceptable but often destructive roles people play with themselves and others in sexual relationships." (J.B. & R.P.) Dialogue by Eric Begosian.

Sunday, January 25, 1987:

Presented in cooperation with The Goethe Institute and The Austrian Institute

## **Structure and Poetry**

*New Austrian Films presented by Lisl Ponger*

### **PROGRAMME NOTES**

**FREEZE FRAME** Peter Tscherkassky 1983, super 8, sound, color 9 min.

Beyond the pleasure of watching lies the pleasure of understanding, a non-directed understanding, which is able to discover beneath the redundancy of visual information its own way of watching...PT

**KELIMBA** Peter Tscherkassky 1986, super 8, sound, color, 10 min.

Reflects on filmic space and transfers the elements of dance into the world of birds.

**SOUND OF SPACE** Lisl Ponger, 1986, super 8, silent with sound, color 9 min.

"On the right side there is the gramophone, on the left the house bar, as a third piece of furniture the universe floats in between." Gunther Anders

**TENDENCIES TO EXIST** Lisl Ponger, 1983/84, super 8, silent, B&W and color

17 min.

Each grain of the film material and each color particle contains all potential pictures of reality.

### *INTERMISSION*

**PERFECT III, DALLAS TEXAS, NOV. 11, 1973** Dietmar Brehm, 1983, super 8, sound, B&W, 25 min.

The film deals with certain tendencies in Hollywood movies, the collision of sex and violence.

## ERNIE GEHR -- SELECTED EARLY FILMS

Thursday, January 29, 1987

Filmmaker Ernie Gehr in person.

### Transparency (1969, 11 min., color)

"Transparency implies the rarest depth involvement with, imaginative grasp of the character of film and the unique experiences it alone can offer. Gehr's creations cannot be stumbled on through experimentation. Working from deep within he conceives the exact fusion of elements needed to generate the particular field of sensual phenomena, flavor of ecstasy each film offers.

"Life-phenomena is observed unsentimentally, solely for what it has to give towards the making of the work.... The documentary aspect here, of cars whishing to and fro against a blue sky, is minimal---though our recognition of the source of the film-imagery is an important tension to the work; nature's been very objectified but not cut off..... The film-maker succeeds in making something happen (and just picturing something), the dynamics of authentic cinema become manifest. He relates the nature of Nature to the nature of cinema (things a camera or a lab or a projector, etc., can do); purposeful modification and a new creature is sought from the fusion, rather than an unavoidable limited recording -- less than the truth -- of a life-phenomena.." -- Ken Jacobs

### History (1970, 12 min.)

"History illuminates the earlier film, Reverberation. There Gehr collected a series of shots of a couple posing before the wall of a public building. By refilming these shots through an optical printer he distended the time of human action so that the integrity of the couple's gestures dissolves in the prolonged gaps between the frames of the original shots; the space they occupy flattens, and they seem dwarfed by the newly emphasized monumentality of the stonework behind them. In the high-contrast, black and white texture the grain pattern of the film stock becomes visible and the bright shapes of people and stones seem almost arbitrary configurations within the grain. It is as if History demonstrated the primal matrix of cinema (grain and the repetitive illusions of movement) out of which the problematic representations of Reverberation could emerge as a limited possibility." -- P. Adams Sitney

Visionary Film

(OVER)

Still (1971, 60 min.)

"For fifty-four minutes and in eight discernible sections the camera concentrates on about one third of a New York City block. From a ground-floor window he shot across the street, delimiting a moderately shallow "theatre" of the greater part of three buildings and all the pedestrian and motor traffic in front of them. Through elaborate superimpositions he was able to combine both apparently solid figures in motion with transparent people and vehicles of varying intensities of exposure. This layering of imagery against the same background stresses the horizontal planes of movement-dominated by the right-to-left flow of one-way traffic-so that the occasional diagonal movement of a jaywalker becomes a rich visual adventure."

-- P. Adams Sitney

"Still is, for me, the first truly Proustian film in which I see mood and atmosphere seem to become slowly crystalized on particular objects -- as if the whole framed scene and its mood slowly coagulates into -- for instance -- the mysterious recesses of the lush foliage of the tree across the street which the breeze slowly stirs.....

-- Richard Foreman

"In representational films sometimes the image affirms its own presence as image, graphic entity, but most often it serves as vehicle to a photo-recorded event. Traditional and established avant garde film teaches film to be an image, a representing. But film is a real thing and as a real thing it is not imitation. It does not reflect on life, it embodies the life of the mind. It is not a vehicle for ideas or portrayals of emotion outside of its own existence as emoted ideas. Film is a variable intensity of light, an internal balance of time, a movement within a given space."

-- E.G.



## NEW FILMS '87:

### Premieres by San Francisco Filmmakers

Thursday, February 5, 1987

Wailing Wall by Michael Rudnick, 1986, 4½ minutes, silent, 16mm.

Restless by Andrej Zdravic, 1987, 12 minutes, sound, 16mm.

Continuum by Dominic Angerame, 1986, 15 minutes, sound, 16mm.

Department of the Interior by Nina Fonoroff, 1986, 8 minutes, sound, 16mm.

### INTERMISSION

Size 4½ A by Laura Loyola, 1986, 3 minutes, sound, Super-8mm.

Shades of Meaning by Andy Moore, 1986, 10 minutes, sound, 16mm.

Two Motels (and a few other things) by Jerome Carolfi, 1986, 8½ minutes, sound, 16mm.

The Legend of Thelma White by George Kuchar and students of the S.F. Art Institute, 1987, 17 minutes, sound, 16mm.

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PIER PAOLO PASOLINI'S NOTES FROM AN AFRICAN ORESTES

February 8, 1987

In this 1970 feature documentary, Pier Paolo Pasolini under the pretext of filming "notes" for a future film based on Aeschylus' Orestes set in Africa, in fact presents a revealing view of contemporary Africa. Pasolini himself is very much in evidence throughout the film, conducting interviews and interacting with the people he meets. The story of Orestes actually provides Pasolini with what he sees as a parallel between that story and the history of the emerging African nations. This is one of the Italian director's most personal and revealing films, yet it is generally overlooked and omitted from retrospectives of the late director's filmography.

"While Orestes has a general interest for anyone curious as to how a director's mind works. It is key to an understanding of the particular Freudian-Marxist-Christian worldview that was Pasolini's...The director scours remote villages for possible Agamemmons, reconnoiters crowded marketplaces, and documents local rituals, all the while keeping up a running meditation on the third world and his imagined film. Many of Pasolini's ideas are truly inspired..."

-- J. Hoberman, The Village Voice

"In the splendid documentary Notes for an African Orestes, Pasolini looked at Africa through the prism of Aeschylus, adopting a visually eloquent style ...represents a revealing part of his life."

-- Mira Liehm, Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present

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SELECTED FILMS BY FRED WORDEN AND POWER BOOTHE

-- Both filmmakers present.

February 11, 1987

FRED WORDEN:

- 1) Plotting the Grey Scale: 2 or 3 Quick Traverses (1985).
- 2) Here, There, Now Later (1983).
- 3) Lure (1986).
- 4) How the Hell I Ripped Jack Goldstein's Painting in the Elevator (1986).

POWER BOOTHE:

- 1) Match (1973), b&w, silent.
- 2) When That (1985), b&w, sound. Performer: Tina Dudek. Recorded score: A. Leroy.  
Camera and Editing: Power Boothe.
- 3) Overture (1986), b&w, sound. Performer: Lenna Kitterman. Recorded score: A Leroy.  
Camera: Power Boothe, Fred Worden. Editing: Power Boothe. Funding: Art Matters, Inc.; New York State Council on the Arts; Just Above Midtown Laboratory Grant.
- 4) Mad House (1987), b&w, sound. Performer: Catlin Cobb. Recorded score: Catlin Cobb, Power Boothe at A. Leroy Sound. Camera and Editing: Power Boothe.  
Funding: Art Matters, Inc.

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REDEFINING CINEMATIC SPACE:

PERFORMANCES BY LAWRENCE KUCHARZ AND MICHAEL SUMNER

Thursday, February 19, 1987

LAWRENCE KUCHARZ

Tracks, 1985, Two Projectors

Blue through City Night Light, 1980, One Projector

Et in Arcadia Ego, 1986, Three Projectors

--Music 1986 #2, 1987, Premiere

Viaduct, 1974, Two Projectors

Arches, 1987 (Silent)

Paulina Street, 1984, Three Projectors

**MICHAEL SUMNER**

# program notes

## **5th & 6th**

1984 13'30"

text: "Mona Lisa" by Melody Sumner

tape: Laetitia DeCompiègne

voice: Laetitia and Melody

## **FEATURES**

1983 13'45"

text: Melody Sumner

voice: Sonia Karapanagiotidou

sound engineer: Susan Stone

## **VIEW**

1987 7'17"

music: La Sonneriede de Sainte Genevieve du Mont de Paris

by Marin Marais

creation  
originality  
independence  
courage  
progress  
ambition  
positiveness  
will power  
leadership  
pioneering activity  
force  
laziness  
imitation  
dependence  
selfishness  
instability  
egotism  
weakness  
fear  
contrariness

stagnation  
stubbornness  
tyranny  
monomania  
iconoclasm  
bullying  
service  
gentleness  
harmony  
adaptability  
charm  
diplomacy  
camaraderie  
rhythm  
receptivity  
cooperation  
consideration for others  
vacillation  
apathy  
indifference

shyness  
self-effacement  
over-sensitiveness  
spinelessness  
sulkiness  
discontent  
slackness  
carelessness  
deception  
mischief-making  
sullenness  
cruelty  
cowardice  
bad temper  
slyness  
lying  
pessimism  
freedom from worry  
optimism  
inspiration

talent  
imagination  
friendliness  
kindness  
worry  
whining  
criticism  
gossip  
extravagance  
triviality  
superficiality  
silly pride  
jealousy  
hypocrisy  
wastefulness  
self-at-all-costs  
intolerance  
practicality  
patience  
exactitude

organization  
application  
devotion  
patriotism  
conservatism  
dignity  
economy  
trust  
loyalty  
worthiness  
endurance  
plodding  
narrowness  
exaction  
repression  
minuteness  
penuriousness  
clumsiness  
dogmatism  
rigidity

As soon as the striving for recognition assumes the upper hand, it evokes a condition of greater tension in the psychic life. As a consequence, the goal of power and superiority becomes increasingly obvious to the individual, who pursues it with movements of great intensity and violence. He loses his sense of reality because he loses his connection with life, his freedom of action is inhibited, he demands the unbending submission of others to laws his egotism has dictated, it is his purpose to be more than all others in the world.

restriction  
sternness  
dullness  
brusqueness  
vulgarity  
animalism  
hatred  
exaggeration  
inhumanity  
resistance  
destruction  
freedom  
progress  
versatility  
understanding  
variety  
mental curiosity  
adaptability  
cleverness  
unattachment

sociability  
change  
travel  
adventure  
companionability  
irresponsibility  
procrastination  
carelessness  
self-indulgence  
thoughtlessness  
crudeness  
vanity  
inconsistency  
sensationalism  
bad taste  
libertinism  
perversion  
abuse of freedom  
indulgence in drink  
indulgence in drugs

sensuality  
symmetry  
responsibility  
adjustment  
music  
sympathy  
understanding  
domesticity  
guardianship  
stability  
protection  
healing  
firmness  
balance  
idealism  
conscientiousness  
justice  
anxiety  
muddlesomeness  
bustling activity

misplaced sympathy  
mistaken ideals  
interference  
conventionalty  
smugness  
unwilling service  
drudgery  
despondency  
cynicism  
suspicion  
slavery  
domestic tyranny  
mental analysis  
technicality  
introspection  
peace  
poise  
faith  
scientific research  
spirituality

stoicism  
refinement  
wisdom  
silence  
studiousness  
melancholy  
fault-finding  
sarcasm  
coldness  
aloofness  
skepticism  
confusion  
humiliation  
nervousness  
erraticism  
faithlessness  
turbulence  
malice  
suppression  
deceitfulness

Her rose petal lips point out toward the light of the window divided into twelve each painted white on four sides through which the grey of an afternoon in a month with no sun and no rain shines like refracted light into blues and violets, her eyes are green, the lashes a shade of dark blond bangs cover the brow that thoughtless has no creases, in youth still she leans on one elbow on a florid linen cased pillow on a silk and velvet comforter wearing only her underwear because she has no reason to get dressed, the twin hollows at her neck are incredibly deep, the triangular shadow under the cheek bone is long and lean, the ivory fingers of one hand repeatedly squeeze the bulb of an empty perfume atomizer while over her shoulder affixed to the closet door just a bit ajar a mirror reflects her spine curving like lead weights on a line, we can't take our eyes off her because she blinks and breathes.

cheating  
craftiness  
good taste  
authority  
success  
material freedom  
judgment  
discrimination  
executive ability  
organization  
leadership  
management  
practicability  
thoroughness  
self-reliance  
control  
strain  
hardness  
materiality  
demand for recognition

theft  
intolerance  
scheming  
love of power  
carelessness  
impatience  
poor judgment  
misspent energy  
abuse  
revenge  
oppressiveness  
injustice  
unscrupulousness  
universal love  
brotherhood  
charity  
compassion  
the higher law  
artistic genius  
selfless service

revelation  
invention  
poetry  
spirituality  
fire  
zeal  
idealism  
priestliness  
evangelism  
martyrdom  
exhortation  
immateriality  
aimlessness  
penuriousness  
shiftlessness  
lack of understanding  
fanaticism  
self-superiority  
imposition of personal will  
apathy

philanthropy  
humanitarianism  
magnetism  
romance  
generosity  
breadth of vision  
emotionalism  
amativeness  
egocentricity  
sentimentality  
dissipation of forces  
indiscretion  
fickleness  
aimless dreaming  
impracticability  
immortality  
vulgarity  
bitterness  
moroseness  
intuition

discontent  
miserliness  
debauchery  
degradation  
dishonesty  
devilry  
power on all planes  
practical idealism  
uplift  
material mastery  
promotion of illegitimate schemes  
inferiority complex  
grudging service  
indifference  
dishonesty  
viciousness  
black magic  
crime  
vandalism  
violence

## SELECTED FILMS BY ADELE FRIEDMAN AND CHICAGO FILMMAKERS

--Adele Friedman in person; February 22, 1987

### Films by Adele Friedman

- 1) Chris in the L.A. Night (1977), super-8, silent.
- 2) Chris Sleeping (1977), super-8, silent.
- 3) Doug and His Plants (1977), super-8, silent.
- 4) Frank, Bodybuilding (1984), 16mm, silent.
- 5) Peggy (1982), 16mm, silent.
- 6) Valentine for... (1982), 16mm, silent.
- 7) Untitled (I)(1983), 16mm, silent.
- 8) Abduction (1986), 16mm, silent.

\* \* \* \* Intermission \* \* \* \*

- 8) Passacaglia by Andrew Johnson, 16mm, silent.
- 9) Two Portraits by Peter Thompson, 16mm, sound.
- 10) Argyll (1978) by Barbara Scharres, 16mm, sound.
- 11) Ricky and Rocky by Tom Palazzolo, 16mm, sound.

MODERN FILMS GROUP

Super 8mm Films From Hong Kong

March 8, 1987

Films

Simon Ko

Feature (10 min.) - a kung fu film is made, a Hollywood film unfurls, women sob.

Jim Shum

Rocky 73 (12 min.) - a look at Taiwan through its television, video, and life in the streets.

Peking, Beijing (13 min.) - an ironic look at politics and streets in the Chinese capital during National Day celebrations.

Sumimasen (12 min.) - Tokyo life through TV, sex and nightclubs.

Comyn Mo

5 Films by Comyn Mo (13 min.) - a flow of images constructed around Mo's life in Hong Kong.

6 Films by Comyn Mo (15 min.) - winner of best film prizes in Hong Kong and Bruxelles film festivals, this series of apparently unrelated images explores a mysterious, poetic world inhabited by the filmmaker.

Healing (2½ min.) - the filmmaker struggles in bondage. Someone cuts ice.

Cloudless (2½ min.) - a claustrophobic world, a brief glimpse at religion.

Pia Ho

That Sunday Afternoon (1 min.) - a woman waves - at herself- in 63 seconds.

Hong Kong cinema past and present is dominated almost exclusively by the commercial narrative fiction feature film for mass audiences. There are no "art-house" cinemas in Hong Kong and all theatres have seating capacities of 1,200 and upwards for the presentation of 35mm films.

Modern Films is a Hong Kong production group formed in 1983 by Roger Garcia, who organized the group's first screenings in America this year. The aim of Modern Films is to contribute to the development of an alternative Hong Kong cinema outside the dominant structures of the commercial industry. Modern Films produces work in video, super-8 and 16mm for exhibition in rooms, small auditoria and festivals in Hong Kong and abroad.

The Modern Films philosophy is to make and show films according to available means. They take as their motto Jean-Paul Gorin's statement that "if you have \$2, you make a \$2 film." A Modern Film recognises the limitations and characteristics of its medium and exhibition, turning such "conditions of production" into an alternative aesthetic to create a type of film and film-making which are different from television and the commercial mainstream. Many Modern Films have been made on the road, some in one or two days, a few on 1:1 shooting ratios; all on miniscule budgets. These constraints mean that Modern Films productions occasionally prefer sound over image; writing over action; formal structure over meaning; and often combine, not separate, theory and practice in film.



KRISTINA TALKING PICTURES

by

YVONNE RAINER

Thurs., March 19, 1987

Kristina Talking Pictures (1976, 90 min.) by Yvonne Rainer; camera: Roger Dean and Babette Mangolte; sound recording: Lawrence Loewinger; is a narrative film inasmuch as it contains a series of events that can be synthesized into a story if one is disposed to do so. (For example, a European woman liontamer comes to America and takes up choreography.) The film can also be viewed in terms of its discursions from a strict narrative line via reflections on art, love, and catastrophe sustained by the voices of Kristina, the heroine-narrator, and Raoul, her lover.

Within a form that allows for shifting correlations between word and image, persona and performer, enactment and illustration, speech and recitation, explanation and ambiguity, Kristina Talking Pictures circles in a narrowing spiral toward its primary concerns: the uncertain relation of public act to personal fate, the ever-present possibility for disparity between public-directed conscience and private will.

Having just put your check to Amnesty International into the mailbox, you are mugged.... or discover you have cancer..... or perhaps you betray an old friend. Nothing can ensure that we remain honorable, nor save us from betrayal and death.

In the next-to-last shot a love letter is recited. Life goes on.

Cast: Bert Barr, Frances Barth, James Barth, Edward Cicciarelli, Blondell Cummings, David Diao, John Erdman, Janet Froelich, Epp Kotkas, Kate Parker, Lil Picard, Ivan Rainer, Yvonne Rainer, Valda Setterfield, Sarah Soffer, Shirley & Sasson Soffer, Simian Soffer.

Yvonne Rainer is well known for her important work as a performer. Moving from the early influence of Martha Graham through the crucible of the Cunningham school into the golden age of Judson Church and the Grand Union, Rainer invented a uniquely personal lexicon of minimalist movements and approaches, always combining her formal demands with outrageous wit. Over the past 15 years, Rainer has concentrated increasingly on film, which once comprised only one element of her performances, and has brought the tools of her consciousness to bear on the movie genre's particular challenges. Her films open the possibility of a new thrust to structuralist filmmaking by positing a meeting place for elements previously excluded from avant-garde film: a recognition of narrative functions, creation of characters, concentration on emotion as central issue, and juxtaposition of sophisticated formal structure with the banal cliches of everyday soap-opera existence.

-OVER-

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In its multi-levelled disjointed style, Kristina Talking Pictures may be seen to revive the lesson of Duchamp, the Cubists, even the epic, to create a melodrama for our time, one that speaks to the fractured sensibility of anyone living in the difficult world of modern urban culture.

Through the film, language resonated richly to the ear and the images seem to take on greater substance than meets the eye. Never one to sink under the weight of her own material, Rainer infuses wit, irony and outright laughs into her work. By presenting her psychologically charged material in a complex framework, Rainer offers an immensely satisfying experience for the modern woman.

Most of the formal devices in Rainer's work are motivated by the fine line she walks between esthetic distance and the "unalleviated intensity" of soap opera, between seriousness and absurdity, detachment and engagement.

"At its best her work combines a consummate sense of style with psychological insight-both of which can come only from self-honesty. When the combination works, it overcomes the need to remove herself, and by proxy her audience, too far away from her content. It is from artists like Rainer, who have consistently pushed at formal barriers, that we can expect this ultimate experience."

Lucy R. Lippard, Genera

STAN BRAKHAGE - NEW WORK

Thursday, March 26, 1987

Nightmusic (1986) - Handpainted IMAX reduced to 16mm.

Dante Trilogy: Hell Spit Flexion (1983, 1 min.)

Purgation (1985, ½ min., 16mm reduced from 70mm Cinemascope)

"existence is song" (1985, 15 sec., 16mm reduced from 70mm IMAX)

(Hell Spit Flexion is) "My moving-visual response to William Blake's "The Marriage of Heaven & Hell," this hand-painted film seems the most rhythmically exact of all my work: it was inspired by memories of an old man coughing in the night of a thin-walled ancient hotel...a triumph of rhythm thru to inspiration. Dedicated to Bill and Stella Pence." - S.B., Canyon Cinema Supplement, 1983.

Caswallon Trilogy (1986, 10 min): The Aerodyne

Fireloop (sound by Joel Haertling)

Dance Shadows by Danelle Helander

"At the Art Cinema in Boulder, Colo., the Sunday Associates staged an adaptation of Jane Brakhage's story of Caesar's invasion of Britain, "Caswallon the Headhunter." I contributed a hand painted film-loop, as part of the special effects, as well as making two films during rehearsals: (1) the first dance film I've made, "Dance Shadows by Danelle Helander" and (2) a Sunday Associates in production, "The Aerodyne" (Webster: "heavier-than-air aircraft that derives its lift in flight from forces resulting from its motion through air")--the latter two films silent." - S.B., Canyon Cinema Supplement, 1986

Loud Visual Noises (1986, 2½ min.)

"This is a 'companion piece' to the similarly hand-painted Fireloop (of Caswallon Trilogy) and is dedicated to the film-maker Paul Lundahl who supplied the title which prompted the film." - S.B.

The Loom (1986, 50 min.)

"A multiple-superimposition hand-painted visual symphony of animal life on earth. The Loom might be compared to musical quartet-form (as there are almost always 4 superimposed pictures); but the complexity of texture, multiplicity of tone, and the variety of inter-related rhythm, suggest symphonic dimensions. The film is very inspired by Georges Melies: the animals exist (in Jane's enclosure) as on a stage, their inter-relationships edited to the disciplines of dance, so therefore one might say this hardly represents 'animal life on earth'; but I would argue that this work at least epitomises theatrical Nature, magical Creature, and is the outside limit, to date, of my art in that regard." - S.B.

## STAN BRAKHAGE - NEW WORK

Sunday, March 29, 1987

### Faustfilm: An Opera: Part I (1987, 50 min.)

A collaboration between composer Rick Corrigan and Stan Brakhage, featuring Joel Haertling as Faust, Gretchen LeMaistre as Gretchen, Phillip Hathaway as Faust's friend, and Paul Lundahl as Servant. This is the realization of a 30-year-old-dream (grant applications and fragments of script from the 1950s published in Brakhage's Metaphor on Vision), a wish of the young film-maker to film a 'modern' Faust (quite opposite of the traditional Fausts) which finally came to a fulfillment as unpredictable and as absolute as, say, three decades of living experience.

### Love Sacrifice (1986, 27 min.)

"Firstly, I revealed in salutary confession the secret filth of my misdeeds, which had long been festering in stagnant silence; and I made it my custom to confess often, and thus to display the wounds of my blinded soul..." (Petrarch, 1352, in a letter to his brother).

"I wish to avoid any 'classical' misunderstandings of the above quote by stating clearly here that any sacrifice of love is, yes, 'filth' or at the very least 'misdeed.' An academic reading of Petrarch tends to bias thought that there are kinds of love which might be wrong: I do not believe this." - S.B., Jan. 28, 1987.

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## NEW BAY AREA FILMS

-- Thursday, April 2, 1987

- 1) BABUBA (1986) by Rock Ross, 8 min., 16mm, sound.
- 2) Tu m' (1986) by Robert Fox, 10 min., 16mm, sound.
- 3) The Straw Man (1987) by Alice Armstrong, 12 min., 16mm, sound.
- 4) Tribute (1986) by William Farley, 7 min., 16mm, music by David Byrne.

## INTERMISSION

- 5) Auto Evocation (1987) by Scott Stark, 3 super-8 projectors, 15 min., sound.
- 6) Wharf (1986) by Beth Friedman, 8 min., super-8mm, sound.
- 7) The Dictation (1986) by Jennifer Montgomery, 12 min., super-8mm, sound.
- 8) Yellow Aria (1986) by Tina Bastajian, 13 min., 16mm, sound.

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TAKAHIKO IIMURA: FILMS & PERFORMANCE

Sunday, April 5, 1987

Ai (Love), 1962-63, 13½ min.

"I have seen a number of Japanese avant-garde films at Brussels International Experimental Film Festival, at Cannes, and at other places. Of all those films, Iimura's Love stands out in its beauty and originality, a film poem, with no usual pseudo-surrealist imagery. Closest comparison would be Brakhage's Loving or Jack Smith's Flaming Creatures...a poetic and sensuous exploration of the body... fluid, direct, beautiful." - Jonas Mekas, Film Culture, 1966.

A Dance Party in the Kingdom of Lilliput, 1964, 12 min.

"(The film) is related more to 'structuralist' films, the image of a naked man being presented as chapters; the sequence is like moving stills, or short statements conveyed by means of gestures. Each sequence is preceded by a title. Just as a concrete poem consists of words grouped together according to sound, and not necessarily according to meaning, so in this film the images are grouped together according to how to look and not necessarily according to what they mean. Perhaps it would be more accurate to call what are generally known as 'structural' films 'concrete'." - Stephen Dwoskin, Film Is.

24 Frames per Second, 1975, revised 1978, 11½ min.

"Both in terms of its examination of time and space, of light and darkness, of visuals and sounds; and in terms of its demands and potential rewards for an audience, 24 Frames per Second is the quintessential Iimura film. The film alternates between one second passages during which the viewer sees one of a series of fractions and one second segments of black and clear leader. As the film progresses, the fractions grow from 1/24 to 24/24...As soon as one does understand its organization, however, 24 Frames per Second provides an opportunity to examine consciously a variety of the essential aspects of film." - Scott MacDonald, Afterimage, April 1978.

Talking Picture (The Structure of Film Viewing), 1981, 15 min.

"Composed of four pieces: Between the Frames, Seeing Nothing, The Privilege to See, and I a Am a Viewer, You Are a Viewer. Playing myself a double role of the filmmaker (speaker) and the audience simultaneously, I discuss the structure of film viewing; the multiple relationships of the viewer/the viewed and the speaker/the listener." - Taka Iimura

Dubbing Session, 1979, 30 min.

A film performance for two projectors, tape recorder and the filmmaker.

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LARRY GOTTHEIM

April 15, 1987

CORN (1970). I first found my cinematic way in the realm of meditative cinematic rituals with BLUES (1969). After a year of trial and discipline there emerged in the summer of 1970 FOG LINE and its companion, CORN, a film in which a different, more "dramatic" organization of time and sun/light shapes the viewer's experience.

NATURAL SELECTION (1983). For a decade I worked on the 4-film Elective Affinities series, sailing in uncharted waters of cinematic composition (my charts might prove useful to future travelers who dare venture there, perhaps in the next century, and the "happy few" in this.) Desiring some radical change, I opened myself to the influence of working collaboratively, basically growing out of the teaching that had paralleled the development of my work-- I had worked collaboratively on a paracinematic performance work around 1974, "Chapters from THE PERILS OF SPACE."

Starting with the spontaneous scene on the roof (that occurs late in the final film) each block of new material was generated by common association within the group, leading finally to the material around glossolalia and Alfons Schilling's space perception devices. Some material which had been part of the context of association-- the interview with the composer Schoenberg about his painting, sounds from a tour of Beethoven's house in Bonn, footage of patterned rocks I had shot in New Mexico-- were added to the pool of material. I selected 5 phrases from Darwin's "The Origin of Species" by a process of natural selection (the number 5 was determined by there being 5 viewing devices.) I uncovered (again "naturally") 5 subdivisions within each block of material (the primary one being from the glossolalia material-- this gave the film its order and thematic center.) By a kind of elective affinity, the subdivisions clustered around the phrases, one subgroup from each block around each phrase. From these clusters I made 5 compositions which constitute the film.

There are many themes and motifs here, perhaps so many as to leave the viewer initially disoriented (especially also since I was interested in working with text materials around the border of audibility/intelligibility.) But, as in musical works, these themes are interrelated, and viewers who are able to openly give themselves to actively exploring these cinematic relationships may find themselves drawn into the real work.

"SORRY/ HEAR US" (1986). Another collaborative film. An attempt to break the tyranny of over-familiar poetic thinking led to the extreme of rotating the stream of words 180°. Group listening uncovered phrases embedded in this new text. Line by line these phrases produced a new poem which suggested its own images, these images their own sounds... This new film was to me a deeper, fresher work than the one that gave it its basis. As the title itself can reveal, there's more here than the open spiraling out form may first suggest.

MNEMOSYNE MOTHER OF MUSES (1986). Finally a body of rapidly changing material, so emotionally resonant for me, seemed to hold out universal cinematic possibilities. The title, recalled from a passage in Heidegger, released a form that allowed compositional play while the implications of the form itself led one further into issues such as thought as reflection, and the relationship of the machine (with its motifs of repetition and reversability) to landscape and human existence. The film was completed as a silent visual work to which a further stage of composition superimposed the sound elements (including Toscanini rehearsing Die Walkure, the diner scene in Siodmak's film THE KILLERS, Keaton, Bartok...

CHANTAL AKERMAN - NEWS FROM HOME

Sunday, April 26, 1987

News From Home (1976, 90 min. color, sound) with photography by Babette Mangolte.

A generally static, eye-level camera presents 50 or 60 Manhattan streetscapes accompanied by occasional readings of Akerman's mother's letters from Belgium, barely audible over the recorded traffic and subway noise. These banal recitations of family doing, mildly expressive of maternal anxiety, do not provide a narrative so much as they reinforce the film's pervasive sense of estrangement in a strange land.

Akerman says: 'I try to give pace and tension. It isn't just the slowness - there's tension from the symmetry too. And then, when there's no narration (of course there is always some narration), when it's less important, the tension comes from waiting for the next shot.'

'The soundtrack is partly composed of letters my mother sent me from Brussels. They're love letters. My mother was asking when I'd come back, giving me news of the family, telling me she'd been ill. Some of it towards the end outlines the daily life of Belgium and the critical status for Europeans of the American Myth.'

'A lyrical film, constructed according to feelings,' the film presents an attempt at dialogue through separation, in which the words constantly draw the viewer back into a familial space, but one which is never validated by the images which insist that the film maker is keeping her distance from home.

The film was shot in July of 1976, on a minimal budget financed by the I.N.A., a French government agency which grants subsidies to film projects.

At 15 Chantal Akerman saw Godard's Pierrot le fou and realized that filmmaking could be experimental and personal. She dropped in and out of film school and has since created short and feature films for viewers who appreciate the chance to think about sounds and images. Her films are often shot in real time, and in space that is part of the character's identity.

During a self-administered apprenticeship in New York (1972 - 74) shooting short films on very low budgets, Akerman learned much, she has said, from the work of innovators Michael Snow and Stan Brakhage. She was encouraged to explore organic techniques for her personal subject matter. In her deliberately paced films there are long takes, scenes shot with stationary camera and a play of light in relation to subjects and their space.

"Chantal Akerman's work demands an adjustment to pace, a discovery of a different tension than that normally associated with the cinema. It has a beauty of its own, stretching out form like an elastic band until it touches abstraction, letting it snap back to reveal the melodramatic intensity invested in the smallest minutiae of detail."

-Laura Mulvey

Program Notes by Violet Murakami.



## FROM THE POLE TO THE EQUATOR

Thursday, April 30, 1987

From the Pole to the Equator (Dal polo al'equatore) by Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, 1987, 96 min. Soundtrack composed by Keith Ullrich and Charles Anderson.

"Three years in the making and partially funded by German Television, From the Pole to the Equator continues Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi's exploration of the early years of cinema. Working as archivists and 'archeologists,' the Milan-based filmmakers have built special printing machines and have devised new methods of tinting and hand coloring film in their efforts to re-examine and reinterpret early documentary materials from the turn of the century until the catastrophe of WW I. Don Ranvaud, in writing on their work for the Sydney Film Festival catalog, describes their new film as being about 'the relationships between the early desire for unusual spectacles and exotic travelogues and the ideological implications of progress conquering and shrinking the world into a strip of continuous images.'" - Terry Cannon.

"The film was made in Milan between 1984 and 1986. The original soundtrack was composed in San Francisco and Los Angeles in 1986.

"Dedicated to Luca Comerio, pioneer of the documentary-cinema, who died in 1940 in a state of amnesia.

"The chemical amnesia, the mildew, the physical decadence of the image is the filmmaterial state.

"A film about travelling, about memory, about the desire for exotic spectacle as the form for our ideological dream of conquest and cultural pillage. The as yet unknown archives of Luca Comerio, photographed frame by frame from the positive of the projection and from the original negative.

"Comerio's camera follows the Baron Francheti in SFINGE VERA in Uganda in 1916. The Italian 'Lawrence' and future Mussolini agent in Africa and the 'camera + treno', 'camera + automobile', 'camera + dirigibile', 'camera + aereo', 'camera + teleferica', 'camera blindate interventista-futurista' of Marinetti glorifies the war, the only hygienic thing in the world." - Y.G. & A.R.L.

"The images seem to resist their imprisonment. They hesitate. Shades fight against the light, the photograms fight against movement. A fight between the graphic and the expressive. A tension which is comparable to the tension

that is conjured up by the Pole hunter face to face with an ice bear. The fight of the bear becomes a danse macabre, that will vindicate death. The same goes for the images. But they are witnesses of a presence. Images of film pioneer Luca Comerio were brought to life again by Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi.

"Cinema and hunting. Image hunters. Didn't Marey invent the photographic gun? Isn't the earliest history of the train closely connected with the history of cinematography? The moving images which shoot past the traveller? There was more than L'arrivee d'un train...Porter for instance: The Great Train Robbery. Violence and trains. No mise en scene of death, but a direct, terrible death. The representation of violence so characterizing for the earliest films. Only the banality makes it possible. The slaughter of a rhinoceros.

"But also the structuring, disciplining, packaging. What do you think of those small Negro bodies dressed in white, leaving the disciplining bank? Not a family album. Images from the album of film history. They show something of the past of the film goer." - 1987 Rotterdam Film Festival Newspaper.

Tonight's program is presented with the cooperation of the Italian Cultural Institute.

JAMES IRWIN  
"Talking Films"

Program Notes

I.D.N.O. (1982, 9 min., 16mm, color, sound)

An experimental animation work. Concerned with the assimilation of information, it is disguised as a game of puzzle blocks which unfolds by steps as the fun increases.

- § "In cameraless, direct-marking technique, I.D.N.O. poses a series of sequential, additive queries and responses to the audience." (Anthony Reveaux, Artweek)
- § "I.D.N.O. is challenging both visually and intellectually with the residual impact of a self-analysis as we consider how much we 'see' and 'comprehend' when we look at words and images." (Catherine Sullivan, SECA Catalogue, S.F. Museum of Modern Art)

THE BIG RED AUK (1984, 3 min., 16mm, color, silent)

Experimental non-camera animation. Frenetic colors and restless images form a backdrop for a child's cautionary fable. Words written directly on the emulsion "speak" silently to the viewer metaphorically about power, manipulation and the complicity of all of us.

- § "The Big Red Auk gives evidence of both [Irwin's] preference for humor and imagination in the medium, and the filmmaker's preoccupying love of image for its own sake, as well as of the shoestring school of filmmaking. The three-minute work blips along spasmodically, a field in semidarkness brightened by haphazard, colored geometric figures and blurred humanoid images, centered over a recurring central flash of pithy, mostly monosyllabic text whose cerebral undercurrent is sparked by sexual innuendo." (Calvin Ahlgren, San Francisco Chronicle)

OLD ARGUMENT ON MacDOUGAL STREET (1985, 3 minutes, 16mm, color, silent)

Some arguments are more important than others. Some arguments stay in your mind, in your memory, for a long time, no matter what their outcome. Some arguments are the turning points of relationships.

LET'S BE PALS! (1985, 16mm, 8 min., color, silent)

Involves the viewer in a felsty conversation, of sorts, concerning their relationship. Whereas I.D.N.O. was instruction, this film is judgement.

- § "Let's Be Pals! engages in an amusing and accessible dialogue with the audience about the nature of the film experience..." (Scott MacDonald, Afterimage)

FEAR IS WHAT YOU FIND (1985, 16mm, 3 minutes, color, silent)  
A lone search among the debris of civilization, a scavenger's-eye-view of options. On the surface of the emulsion, in the writing on the film, the dilemma is raised: no matter where you go, fear is what you find. It certainly is what faces you here.

MY DAY (1986-87, 8 min., 16mm, color, silent)  
An excerpt from the film component of a collaborative performance titled NEW PROOF created by James Irwin (filmmaker/writer), Robert Arriola (actor/comedian) and Bruce Hogeland (sculptor). The performance concerns the relationship between an artist (in this case a stand-up comic) and his audience; and the disparity between his creative life on stage and his mundane existence in his day job, which barely pays the bills and allows him to keep going.

#### INTERMISSION

DEAD MONEY (1986, 6 min., 16mm, b&w, silent)  
The Private Eye. The Femme Fatale. The Obscure Motive. The Ambivalent Morality. The Unresolved Resolution. The Deep Blacks and Bright Whites. "When in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun in his hand", wrote Raymond Chandler facetiously.

HAT BOXING (15min., 1986, 16mm, color, sound)  
This experimental narrative film is structured by the soundtrack, which is at turns a lurid, bizarre and funny story recorded as if a radio play. The visuals play off of this soundtrack, commenting on and serving as counterpoint to the script. The film is a combination of the use of text as image, appropriated imagery (from 1930s pulp comics), and a sardonic commentary on contemporary sexual behavior and roles. The story of Hat Boxing is a menage a trois that becomes a menage a quatre with some creative surgery, but not until after excursions into sodomy, adultery, murder and attempted suicide. Clue: what does a child have to do with it?

BY THE LAKE (12min., 1987, 16mm, color, sound)  
Concerns the chance meeting between an experimental filmmaker and a soon-to-be-dispossessed farmer at a train station. Parallels are drawn between the pair's shared sense of frustration with being "outside" current culture. A work in progress, in that the soundtrack remains unresolved. The final question: what is the relation between a film artist and the culture he/she inhabits?

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## ILLUMINATED TEXTS

-- Filmmaker Bruce Elder in person.

May 7, 1987

Illuminated Texts by Bruce Elder, 1982, 16mm, color, sound, 180 min.

Excerpt from The Films of R. Bruce Elder: The Evolving Vision by Lianne M. McLarty,  
from Take Two, an anthology of articles on Canadian Cinema, edited by Seth Feldman.

The opening sequence of *Illuminated Texts* is yet a further demonstration of this control. Elder and his assistant, Anna Pasomow, act out the opening of Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson*. The sequence begins in silence with Elder sitting on a chair; a grid is laid over this image. With a clap of his hands (which sounds like the clapboard used to commence filming), a passage from Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto* is introduced, and the grid (which suggests a planning stage) disappears. This suggests that it is only upon Elder's intervention that the film can commence. In this way, he demonstrates his complete control over both the action and the art form.

At a later point, Elder rises from his chair to answer the door. In doing so, he exits from the frame, and when he does so, the camera, which was previously steady, goes out of control, crashing into furniture and walls on its way. The implication of this is that it is Elder's presence which "stabilizes" the camera. When he is not present the creative act turns destructive.

The acting in this section of the film is deliberately stilted and unnatural. The characters read from a script, their eyes frequently meet the gaze of the camera, and they perform awkwardly. The unrealistic delivery undercuts the illusion of reality that conventional narrative and naturalistic acting contrive to establish. It points up the fact that the film is a construct only, a product of a creative mind, whose nature is determined by the artist. Further, the subject of the lesson is mathematics. Elder seems to be suggesting that the construction of a film is guided by rules as arbitrary as the axioms of mathematics.

Like the sound-tracks of *1857 (Fool's Gold)* and *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, the sound of *Illuminated Texts* is a combination of varied and discordant sounds which often drown out the narration. Its complexity points up its constructed nature. Moreover, at its largest level, *Illuminated Texts* is divided into eight parts, of which half are "dramatic" sequences and half montage sequences. This structure makes the constructed quality of the film very obvious, as Elder is well aware, for in a proposal for his most recent film, *Lamentations*, which is currently in progress, he points out:

I find particularly appealing the fact that this alternation between different forms of construction provides a means for stressing the constructed character of the work which does not rely on the now somewhat tired device of making reference to the process by which the work was constructed.<sup>6</sup>

In highlighting the fact that the film is a construct, the product of his mind, Elder is demanding that we recognize how completely he controls the nature of the work. This conscious sense of control, especially over nature—as seen in *1857 (Fools' Gold)*—relates Elder's later vision to that of the Romantics. It is his consciousness which interprets and even shapes the world, which acts as the "radiant projector."

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In the middle section of *1857 (Fool's Gold)*, the barrage of images and sounds reaches apocalyptic proportions; the viewer feels that s/he lacks control over what is happening, that some catastrophic event is about to occur—or indeed is occurring—which cannot be affected by mere mortal hands. Against this is set the demonstration of artistic control that in the end reestablishes order. Nevertheless, the horror of the apocalypse is suggested. Like *1857 (Fool's Gold)*, *Illuminated Texts* makes use of the idea of the apocalypse, but redefines it and extends its ramifications. As mentioned above, *Illuminated Texts* is composed of both dramatic sequences and montage sequences. The dramatic sequences are composed of the following: the Ionesco play, *The Lesson*; a section dealing with Egerton Ryerson, the man after whom Ryerson Polytechnical Institute where Elder teaches is named; and a section in which Elder interviews a personal friend who is also an artist. The final dramatic sequence involves Elder's anguished response to a letter he received which accused him of breach of contract. Each of these dramatic sequences involves Elder himself, if only by implication. All of these sequences could be described as autobiographical to a certain extent; in fact, they all represent Elder's attempt to work through a problem in his professional life which appears to have been a source of great torment. The last of these dramatic sequences is composed of images of Elder suffering as a result of the Institute's accusations.

These personal sequences are juxtaposed with montage sequences which represent the "exterior" world—that is to say, the world which is not Elder's "personal world." Thus, like *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, *Illuminated Texts* represents in part an attempt by the artist to reconcile his existence with the world around him, and more importantly, to understand his suffering in relation to a broader context. This is most evident in the relation between the scene depicting a tormented Elder, and the final montage sequence of the film, composed of images from Nazi concentration camps. The first montage sequence is composed primarily of rich, lush natural imagery. Over the course of the four montage passages, the imagery changes from depictions of a natural world, unsullied by human intervention, to imagery which depicts nature "corrupted" by human intervention to greater and greater degrees.

This progression suggests the Christian myth of the Fall, the expulsion from Paradise. Each successive montage sequence includes more and more images of the human destruction of nature, and human violence. There are, for example, images of boxers, and pornographic images of violence against women. Even the act of masturbation depicted in the final section of the film seems desperate and frantic. Elder takes us from images of a natural paradise to images of the personal, sexual and cultural violence which culminates in the ultimate violence expressed at the end of the film: the destruction, or attempted destruction, of an entire people—the Holocaust.

The poetic texts superimposed over the images make explicit reference to the Fall:

Him the Almighty Power  
Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky  
With hideous ruin and combustion down  
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell  
In adamant chains and penal fire  
Who durst defy the omnipotent to arms.

(John Milton, *Paradise Lost*)

This is not the greatest thing, though great, the hours  
of shivering, ache and burning, when we'd changed  
So far beyond our courage—altitudes  
Then falling, falling back.

(Robert Lowell)

This notion of the Fall is, I think, meant metaphorically; it suggests a society plunging into an increasingly violent world. All in all, *Illuminated Texts* proposes a vision of apocalyptic doom. It offers its viewers a vision of global significance representing perhaps the threat of global annihilation. As Milton and Lowell used images of descent metaphorically, so too does Elder. Even the Holocaust becomes, in *Illuminated Texts*, a metaphor for the threat of a more immediate human disaster.

Elder is an artist working at a time when the threat of massive global destruction is immanent; his art is beginning to reflect that threat.

Elder's earlier vision, one of absence, loss and isolation, has been transformed into a more articulate attempt to reconcile himself with the world around him. Elder is developing as an artist who, while still concerned with questions of his role and the function of Art itself, is also concerned with an expression beyond the enclosed world of his art. Yet it is still an expression *through* his art. In *Illuminated Texts* the antithesis to destruction is creation, and specifically the creative imagination of the artist. Perhaps Elder is suggesting that Art is the way out or through this holocaust. However, an Art that possesses such an ability would have to be not an Art that is a mere diversion from the world around us, but rather an Art which is conscious of the culture from which it emerges.

1984

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1 Bruce Elder, in an interview with the author, August, 1983.

2 In the interview with Bruce Elder he contradicted this notion of illness as a catalyst. Instead, he asserted that this suggestion, which does occur in the text, is meant ironically. Illness, he asserted, is merely dehumanizing; "... it's nothing more than degrading." While Elder may feel this way about his work, I believe there is certainly sufficient evidence to support the reading I have given the text.

3 Bruce Elder, in an interview with the author, August, 1983

4 M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and The Lamp*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. viii.

5 Carol Zucker, "Bruce Elder's *Fool's Gold*: The Experience of Meaning," *Ciné-Tracts*, 17, 1982, p. 49.

6 Bruce Elder, "A Proposal for *Lamentations*," 1983. (Text unpublished.)

## NEW FRENCH FILMS FROM SCRATCH

--Yann Beauvais in person, May 10, 1987

### **SYSTEMA : Francoise Thomas, 1984 4 minutes**

Parts of a typewriter or the machine as a whole, lit by coloured spots, are at first considered as sculptural objects. Brought together on the screen in more or less identifiable form, they can interact with other elements. When seen as abstract elements, only their forms, movements, and colours link them, but as their shadows appear other relationships start to develop. Will the machine's parts go back to their original function? Or will they become another system in which the shadows are absorbed, or another in which the shadows participate?

### **IN/SIDE/OUT 1-6 : Jennifer Burford, 1984 9 minutes**

IN/SIDE/OUT 1-6 offers a series of variations based on abstract, geometric images leading to a temporal abstraction that allows the reintegration of figurative images. The confrontation occurs through alternation, creating a diversifying network of identifications that block any reconstitution of the body/body of work. This fragmentation is intensified by the reduction of images, by two inside, the frame.

### **LES TOURNESOLS ET LES TOURNESOLS COLORES : Rose Lowder, 1983 6 minutes**

By composing the film frame-by-frame in small units of photograms, it becomes possible to introduce organizational variations in the relations between the different elements of the images' contents. LES TOURNESOLS treats several fields of sunflowers grown for their oil near the village of Bedarrides. LES TOURNESOLS COLORES offers a fanciful variation which, by effectuating a transformation of hues, modifies our perception of the characteristics controlling the filmic movement.

### **JUSTE AVANT MIDI : Pascal Auger, 1986 7 minutes**

It was a Wednesday, and that day the wind began to blow.

### **CARLTON DEKKER : David Wharry, 1986 7 minutes**

Two years after the discovery of Tomb 116 in the Valley of the Kings and the mysterious disappearance of "Kheptar's Eye", a crystal with supernatural qualities found encrusted in the eye socket of a mummified giant squid, Professor Anatole Lacoste and his sidekick Carlton, young heir to the Dekker fortune, are kidnapped by two diabolical scientists, Madeleine Varga and Tarquin Klar. Hamish McWhirter, Scottish golf champion, and his loyal caddy Jaimie, investigate...

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**VO/ID : 1985 7 minutes**

VO/ID places side by side two distinct texts, one in French, the other one in English. Both texts deal with art and politics, with politics of art and its market. The field occupied within the art world by experimental film and their makers is investigated. Two distinctive soundtracks (sexuality on one side, philosophy on the other) distract the viewer from his understanding of the written word. Between the two visual texts, bilingual puns are produced, inducing a third text (language). This new text authorizes a horizontal reading of the film which contradicts the flow offered by the two screens. Word after word, the third text makes fun of, a mocking parody of, the seriousness of the Discourse.

**AMOROSO : 1983/86 14 minutes**

"A film sparkling with diamond-like fragments of Italy. A film of passion - passion for places (the landmarks of Rome), passion for the masterworks of experimental film (the evocation of Kenneth Anger's "Eaux d'Artifice" through images of the same Tivoli foundations), and above all, passion for colour (the warmth of Roman stone, the deep green of summer vegetation, the rich reds and yellows of the 16mm emulsion itself). After the cerebral rigor of more formal work, a joyous cry from the heart." (Scott Hammen)

**DIVERS-EPARS : 1987 12 minutes**

"Glimpses of cities, countryside, rivers. Intriguing, fleeting images of Florence, London and particularly Paris - clearly the filmmaker's home, so intense is his vision of it, so strong his attraction to its lifeblood, the Seine. The eerie colours of the bateau-mouche floodlights blend with a purely filmic chromatic intensity. The textures, the meticulous montage, the alluring colours, create something of the same celebration of place through provocative artifice found in Christo's wrapped Pont Neuf (which is fleetingly seen in the film). Bringing some of AMOROSO's Roman passion home to the city which inspired the imposing formality of his earlier films, Beauvais begins to merge the two poles of his work. The synthesis is exciting." (Scott Hammen)

## FILMS BY YANN BEAUVAIS

It is very difficult to write this introductory note, not for literary reasons but simply because the group of films which compose this programme may initially appear diverse. However, there are very real connections; concepts and techniques are often similar and the recurring use of 'frame-by-frame' shapes and underlines the illusion and the simulation of movement. Film presents false movement : the work of fiction. These movements are applied to architectural monuments which have very strong paradoxical spaces which juxtapose several points of view. Between SANS TITRE 84, AMOROSO and VO/ID the conceptual gap isn't as big in effect as one could think. The films lead to paradoxical space. That of VO/ID refers to language while the others reveal a spacial-temporal paradox. To juggle with paradox can become a "cerebral game" which is apparent or self-effacing in different films. Another constant is an interest in rhythm which in the beginning was closely bound to the musical score. Nonetheless the musical side of my work is now inherent rather than referential.

[Yann Beauvais, 22 March 1987]

**RR : 1975/86** 6 minutes

RR uses musical models as paradigm. The central part of each section of the film is based on a transcription of a Bach invention for two voices. The two screens underscore this paradigm, in so far as one is always the simultaneous reflection of the visual development of the other, regardless of the position of the reels (left or right), the technique of inversion of a theme so often used in music. The use of mirroring deliberately sidesteps the question of the reality of representation. It no longer has any importance, now that we're in the domain of the reflected image, of imitation. The two images reflect one another in a constant back and forth, mimicking to a certain extent the development of the (fake) pans which comprise the film. The pans metaphorically evoke, if only superficially, the keyboard.

**SANS TITRE 84 : 1984** 14 minutes

SANS TITRE 84 employs photos of the Arc de Triomphe which are then cut into vertical, horizontal and diagonal strips. The serial aspect of the photos invokes time, shaping time which subverts the still photos. The Arc transforms itself by coupling with itself. The instantly recognisable identity of the object is thus short-circuited, creating tension in the gaze which seeks to re-establish that lost identity, for the object gets lost in its twice doubles image and must reconstruct itself, dismembered. The image paradoxically and simultaneously gives of itself in order to withhold. The Arc de Triomphe's power is such that, even though heavily reworked through the strips, it tends to efface this reworking. Hence the necessity of twinning the screens. Offering a twin, if not an identical one, which will attack the "much longed for" (political, symbolically, touristically) object. Movements are simulated, realm of imitation, simulation of cinema. The film presents false movements. The work of fiction.

## PROSE POEM PROGRAM NOTES

### BELLS OF ATLANTIS

"In the sea bed she lays," Anais, the actress, in the waters of the womb, giving birth to a child, a monster, a woman, immortal desires, dreams and fears, the birth and rebirth of the subconscious. Bells of Atlantis sparkles like a sea jewel, a multifaceted emerald. It sounds like the voice in the darkness, the cry of the unborn child.

Mystical, surreal, watery, always watery. Her intricacies are outlined water, like Ian's shimmering, silvery etchings. Anais' Piscean nature flows through like fine lines of watery weavings undulating into the depths of the Christ story.

"A monster brought me up to the surface," She sinks into the crucifixion scene only to be borne again to the surface and the resurfacing of the soul. She is the red flower and buried beneath the stone.

Watery balls, seaweed, ripples like hair, overlapping feathers. Lights, seastripes, cellular patterns. You feel like a fish with unblinking eyes, able to breathe, swimming, floating in an enchanted bath of sensations, whirlpools of swirling emotions, subtle and fluid.

Her dreams lead us to a hammock among the ruins of a shipwreck; the mast like a cross or the structure of man's desires, from which he hangs his sails. The depths, the rhythms, the evanescent caresses of the curves in the darkness. The pressure of the water goes well with the tensions of the human-pressing up to the body and moving away, enclosing it like a womb, a tease which strokes the face, the shoulders, sends ripples down the thigh, causes the hip to cry out in surprise, the pressure of fingers along the spine. She fades in and out; there is no difference between her and the water. Images appear and disappear naturally, like thoughts.

All the while is a tension building clicking strange music which reverberates and whistles with the welkin winds around the silhouette of the woman. The bells of antiquity stir us to ancient dreams of submerged continents, utopian ecstasies. The film takes us to a world we have never lived in-but never leave. A submerged garden of our innermost hope, faith and love. Like sea roses she blooms-moss roses, the sensuality of nature more than eloquent enough to express and enhance the waves of human passion, to explore that which is not superficial in the human psyche. Colors are vivid, the red flower a little tongue of flame, a complementary contrast to the aquamarine liquid. Undulating like an anemone, the vagina of the ocean, nestled among tidepools and rocks, contracting smoothly, like soft velvet. An innocence emerges which deeper than sin.

Often I have wished that I could take people into my mind, to really show them the true patterns and colors, a movie of creative thought which did not have to be communicated through the translation of an art form. Hugo achieves with this film a glimpse into that mind, into the collective unconscious, a poetry which shows the mentalness of all things and the sensuousness of all minds, a loving stroking of the sensuousness of all minds. Elusive and vanishing, evanescent as the grasping of mystery, like the reflections of moonlight on a riverbed as you cup your hands full of water and try to hold on to it long enough to drink.

---Jamie Erfurdt---

LOCAL COLOR -- NEW BAY AREA FILMS

Thursday, September 24, 1987

- 1) Go by Michael Rudnick, 5 min., 16mm, silent (18 f.p.s.).
  - 2) If X, Then Y by Jacalyn White, 8 min., sound, super-8mm.
  - 3) Negative Space by Caroline Savage-Lee, 3 min., silent, super-8mm.
  - 4) Drawn and Quartered by Lynne Sachs and John Baker, 4 min., silent, 16mm.
  - 5) diary of an autistic child, part III/hard core family by Edwin Cariati,  
9 min., silent, 16mm.
  - 6) Slant or Slumber by Chika Ogura, 8 min., sound, 16mm.
- \* Intermission \*
- 7) FuckFace by Julie Murray, 9 min., sound on cassette, super-8mm.
  - 8) Converging Landscapes by Eric Sayetta, 6 min., silent, 16mm.
  - 9) Kres by Andrej Zdravic, 5 min., sound, 16mm.
  - 10) Airborne by Andrej Zdravic, 12 min., sound, 16mm.

There will be a wine reception for the filmmakers after  
the program.

## LANDSCAPE SUICIDE

by

JAMES BENNING

Sunday, Sept. 27, 1987

Landscape Suicide (1986, 95 min.) is centered on the parallel lives of two murderers; Ed Gein, the Wisconsin farmer who cannibalistically mutilated his victims in the 50's and Bernadette Protti, a 15 year old Californian girl who stabbed a cheerleader colleague in 1984. The interrelation between the two is explored in detail but without morbid fascination for the murders themselves.

A pair of disturbing "interviews" are the films twin centerpieces. The girl struggles to explain the day of the murder, her sense of herself, and her reactions. The overriding emotion is shame and self-revulsion. As for Gein, his is obviously a mind that has snapped, probably long before the killings. Yet he is surprisingly coherent, recalling minute details of the murders. The interviews with the killers are so compelling, and like the entire film, framed in long, static shots, that you're tempted to accept them as real. But, they are of course restaged, using actual police and courtroom transcripts. They are juxtaposed with similarly static shots of places where critical action took place. Benning lets you know this with certainty sometimes, only obliquely at others.

In addition to the long, framed static shots, Benning cuts his scenes exclusively with blackouts, which has the effect of breaking up and distorting the viewer's sense of continuum. In the same way, the iconography of the two locales - the middle-class suburb and the snowswept farmland - are framed in an almost furtive way, with little attention paid to the most dramatically interesting camera angle or light. It's as though the camera were a predator casing these neighborhoods and farm towns in preparation for another crime.

As in his previous films, Benning seems fascinated with the effect that place (landscape, including presumably the desires and expectations that come with relative affluence or isolation) has on character

"I discovered a matching form of isolation in both. The cold, landlocked landscape of Wisconsin and the suburban car-dominated non-communication of California."

J. Benning

"(Benning's) recontextualization of the killings...provides him with as potent a 'story' as he's told until now... The banalities and splendors within Benning's tight frames are no longer begging to be seen as things-in-themselves. Instead, the images comprise a world that presses itself upon you, demanding to be seen."

-- Karen Dieckmann, Village Voice

With Rhonda Bell, Elion Sacker

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## CULTURAL ANATOMIES

Thursday, October 1, 1987

The four films included on tonight's program offer different but concentrated responses by the filmmakers to other cultures. In each film, a more disturbingly ambiguous relationship of the filmmaker to place and "exotic culture is established than in the usual travel or diary film.

"The Hungarian Diaries (1979-1983), part 7," Funeral of Mozart, color, sound, 28 min. by Andras Szirtes.

The films were made under the aegis of the Bela Balazs Filmstudio in Budapest, Hungary. The Bela Balazs Filmstudio is funded by the state, but the filmmaker is free to make films without any intrusion by the state into the working process. Graduates of the film academy are encouraged and are able to experiment and develop their personal cinematic language. The studio was established in 1961. Scores of young filmmakers started their careers there. The studio is the most important outlet for experimental filmmakers, but documentaries and low-budget features are made there as well. The membership of the studio is about 46 and between 20 and 30 films are made there annually, in 35mm, 16mm, Super 8 and video formats.

Poor Young People by Medora Ebersole. (1985, color, silent, 4min.)

A portrait of romanticism is constructed. An exotic landscape is the subject and an attention to its surface quality (using the technique of re-photography) asks the viewer to see past and acknowledge a clarity sought through ambiguity.

The Chinese Typewriter by Daniel Barnett. (1978-1983, color, sound, 28min.)

An essay with concentric analogies: body language, style of writing, and the styles of education and administration, The Chinese Typewriter was photographed in 1978 after the fall of the "Gang of Four."

Type is set by hand and machined for the "letter" press and the pages are bound. School children are drilled; they study, they dance. Life and work is taken in snapshots and then passed around. The sounds of history and ideology in music and noise, spoken English and Chinese mix didactic. Teacher is administrator is helmsman.

Soft Shoe by Holly Fisher. (1987, color, sound, 20min.)

This is part 3 of Holly Fisher's East/West Cycle Trilogy, shot in Eastern Europe. She rephotographs Super-8 footage to create a meditative play with the expressive potential of motion, combining chance, impulse and formal analysis.

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October 4, 1987

## AESTHETICS MEETS ENGINEERING: THE FILMS OF WILL HINDLE

Will Hindle was a rather mysterious figure in the independent film scene. A recluse since the mid-60's, he constructed a self-sufficient workspace in rural Blountsville, Alabama. Supporting himself with part-time teaching at the University of Florida, he slowly, in quiet isolation, developed a body of work unique to the genre. Acquiring the reputation as a consummate artist-technician (with roots in the west coast experimental scene that included Bruce Baillie as well as a background in professional television) his films came to display an amazing hard-edged clarity and dazzling technical proficiency, almost a wizardry of "tricks", while never losing the depth of feeling and soulful connection to the people and places he portrayed. Always preoccupied with the precarious state of his health, his premature death this past spring came as a mixture of shock and self-fulfilling prophecy. He will be missed.

### 29:MERCI MERCI (1966) 30 min./b&w/sound

A departure from his other films, this chaotic amalgam of (mostly) borrowed footage has an energy and freshness that speaks well to the dilemma of film artists today. It did in fact arise out of Hindle's inability to get on with his own work. It contains some remarkable archival footage.

### FFFTCM (1967) 5 min./color/sound

Renewed income and the ability to work on own's own produced this feeling and work. FanFare For The Common Man. A Promethean awakening. De-bonding of the human spirit...reaching for the unfiltered blaze of light and life.

### CHINESE FIREDRILL (1968) 25 min./color/sound

Hindle's prize-laden work of cataclysmic visual and mental schisms stands as one-of-a-kind. "CHINESE FIREDRILL is a romantic, nostalgic film. Yet its nostalgia is of the unknown, of vague emotions, haunted dreams, unspoken words, silences between sounds. It's nostalgic for the oceanic present rather than the remembered past. It is a total fantasy, yet it seems more real than the coldest documentary. The action occurs totally within the mind of the protagonist, who never leaves the small room in which he lives...Through the door/mirror is the beyond, the unreachable, the unattainable..." --Gene Youngblood

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BILLABONG (1969) 9 min./color/sound

Perhaps Hindle's purest and most successful melding of form and content, technique generating mood. A powerfully evocative impressionistic "documentary" dealing with an internment camp for delinquent young men. Billabong is an Australian term for a stream diverted into a stagnant pool. Here the mood of frustration, longing, and homo-erotic yearning is expressed viscerally through masterful camerawork, editing strategies, film lab manipulation.

PASTEUR<sup>3</sup> (1976) 22 min./color/sound

"What occurs to a bodily system following exposure to rabies and golden rod."--Will Hindle

"The film seemed to me the ultimate portrait of an immigrant, or the Displaced Person--displaced in nature, displaced on the continent. With this pun or metaphor that he makes, and despite all the artifice, it seems quite natural, it comes across as both funny and sad...how odd it is to walk through this world and find there are things that poison you."--Stan Brakhage



Sunday, October 11, 1987

## ARTIFICE AND ENCHANTMENT

Renoir's THE GOLDEN COACH and Anger's EAUX D'ARTIFICE

Tonight's program features two classic films from the 1950's, programmed by Peter Herwitz.

"Eaux D'Artifice." 1953. 16mm/color/sound/13min. by Kenneth Anger.

Kenneth Anger, enchanted with illusion, follows his mysterious masked figure through the Tivoli Gardens in a maze of stairs, flowers and fountains to the accompaniment of the lush music of Vivaldi.

Anger describes it as "hide and seek in a night-time labyrinth."

"The Golden Coach." 1953. 16mm/color/sound/100min. by Jean Renoir.

To an 18th century Peru comes an Italian company of Commedia dell Arte players headed by temperamental Camilla, played with incomparable exuberance by Anna Magnani. She is pursued by three suitors who all claim to "know" the real Camilla and what she needs and truly fail to comprehend what Camilla sees in herself. In the end, she rejects the lovers, choosing to return to the world she loves - the make-believe and self sustaining world of her art.

Where theater stops and life begins is the essential theme that Renoir plays with, following the tradition of the Italian playwright and author, Pirandello. Renoir weaves into the framework of the film a realism that Pirandello never achieved so that real life episodes get thoroughly mixed-up on stage and theatricality bursts onto the most serious problems of real life. What we are presented with is a sublime comedy of manners and appearances distinguished by Renoir's customary warmth and compassion, his expansive humanity, mastery of detail and ability to blend farce and fairy-tale. The decor and costumes are beautifully apt and gay, the color photography subtle, and the choice of Vivaldi's music inspired. Magnani's comic talent is allowed to flow and soar and achieves a radiance and vibrancy unmatched. The film indeed is a "breathtakingly beautiful example of how story, color, camera and design can combine to produce a joyous speculation on the nature of paradox, truth and the eloquence of gestures and their disguises."\*

\*Peter Herwitz

October 18, 1987

in collaboration with the Exploratorium presents:

Jo Andres'

"GHOST FISH SPEAK"

with CYNTHIA MEYERS

Technician: MARK MANDLER

- 1) "The Proof is in the Puddin' Head"  
Vocals: Mimi Goese (of Hugo Largo)/On film: Maryette Charlton, Lillian  
Kiesler, Jack Frank  
Technical advice and assistance: David Robinson
- 2) Music: Elliott Sharp and Carbon
- 3) On film: Mimi Goese, ANNE IOBST, and Lucy Sexton/Music: Burundi; Liquid Liquid
- 4) Music: a) Elliott Sharp b) Bosho
- 5) Camera: Anthony Chase/Music: Liquid Liquid
- 6) Music: Hugo Largo - "country", "Grow Wild", "eureka"
- 7) Music: 23 Skidoo
- 8) Music: Burundi

Elliott Sharp and Carbon are available on Dossier Records.

Hugo Largo is available on Relativity Records.

Liquid Liquid is available on 99 Records.

Bosho is available on Dossier Records.

The Music of Burundi is available on Nonesuch Records.

23 Skidoo is available on JAM Illuminated Records.

JO ANDRES is a filmmaker/choreographer. Her film/light/dance work has been performed at Yale University, SUNY Purchase, The Kitchen, The PERforming Garage, La Mama, the Collective for Living Cinema, Franklin Furnace, and various clubs and theaters in Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Den Haag, and Cologne. Her films have been screened at festivals in Edinburgh, Melbourne, Zurich, Berlin, and San Francisco. The premiere of her new work Before Your Eyes will be given at the Collective November 19-22 with Cynthia Meyers, Maryette Charlton, Lillian Kiesler, Rebecca Moore and Mark Mandler. Ms. Andres has been Artist-In-Residence this past week (October 14-18) at the Exploratorium in San Francisco.

CYNTHIA MEYERS has been performing with Jo Andres since 1985 and accompanied Ms. Andres on her most recent tour of Germany. Her choreography has been produced at the New Performance Gallery and at Centerspace in San Francisco.

MARK MANDLER: After meeting Jo Andres in a Radio Shack in 1985 Mark began providing projection and technical assistance for many of her performances. He has also worked with Daniel McIntosh, Gretchen Bender, Hugo Largo, and on hundreds of commercial films and videotape productions.

Thanks to: Alice Meyers, Nathaniel Meyers, Pam Winfrey, Peter Richards, Joe Aleson, Brenda Hutchenson, the Wooster Group, the Performing Garage, Barry, and the staffs of the Exploratorium and the Cinematheque.

## CLASS RELATIONS

Written and directed by.....Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet  
 .....based on Franz Kafka's Amerika  
 Photography.....Willy Lubtchansky  
 Assistant camera operators.....  
 ....Caroline Champetier, Christopher Pollock  
 Sound.....Louis Hochet  
 Sound assistant.....Georges Vaglio  
 Editing.....Straub-Huillet  
 Electrician.....Jim Howe  
 Production.....Klaus Feddermann, Manfred Blank  
 Produced by NEF-Diffusion (Paris), Janus Film (Frankfort), Straub-Huillet,  
 Television de Hesse.

1984. B&W. 126 minutes. Germany/France. In German w/Eng. subtitles.

### CAST

Karl Rossmann.....	Christian Heinisch
Soutier.....	Reinald Schnell
Line.....	Anna Schnell
The captain.....	Klauss Traube
Cashier.....	Hermann Hartmann
Stewart.....	Jean-Francois Quinque
Uncle Jacob.....	Mario Adorf
Schubal.....	Gérard Semaan
Pollunder.....	Willi Voebel
Chauffeur.....	Willi Dewelk
Klara.....	Anne Bold
Green.....	Tilmann Heinisch
Servant.....	Aloys Pompetzki
Mack.....	Burckhardt Stoelck
Delamarche.....	Harun Farocki
Robinson.....	Manfred Blank
Cook.....	Kathrin Bold
Server.....	Alf Bold
Thérèse.....	Libgart Schwarz
Giacomo.....	Nazzareno Bianconi
Hotelboy.....	Salvatore Sammartino
Manager.....	Alfred Edel
Porter.....	Andi Engel
Taxi driver.....	Franz Hillers

### Additional Straub-Huillet films:

MACHORKA-MUFF (1962), NOT RECONCILED (1965), CHRONICLE OF ANNA  
 MAGDALENA BACH (1967), THE BRIDEGROOM, THE COMEDIENNE AND THE  
 PIMP (1968), OTHON (1969), INTRODUCTION TO ARNOLD SCHONBERG'S  
 "ACCOMPANIMENT TO A CINEMATOGRAPHIC SCENE" (1973), HISTORY  
 LESSONS (1973), MOSES AND AARON (1975), FORTINI/CANI (1977),  
 EVERY REVOLUTION IS A ROLL OF THE DICE (1978), FROM THE CLOUD  
 TO THE RESISTANCE (1979), TOO EARLY, TOO LATE (1982), EN RACHACHANT  
 (1982).

# Amerikana

## Class Relations/Gilbert Adair

The beauty of a 'style'—literary, musical, cinematic, whatever—is analogous to that of a face in love-making. One's attention may increasingly be solicited elsewhere, but that 'elsewhere' remains contingent upon the beauty which attracted one in the first place (and which, in either context, can be sporadically re-verified by random 'spot checks'). Not even those congenitally allergic to the cinema practised by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet are able to deny their unignorable visual mastery: the half-Euclidean, half-Blakean precision of their compositions; the controlled stillness or flux of movement within a given shot (the images of their films eschewing, as a result, the sort of pictorial plasticity that sets one dreamily measuring the screen for a frame); the preternatural 'thereness' of the humblest artefact (for the Straubs work on the principle that a filmed chair, let's say, corresponds semantically to the word *chair* instead of to the three-dimensional object). Yet such metallic beauty (which, for now, I deliberately divest of any 'meaning' it might secrete) would appear to be incapable—in Britain, at least—of attracting an audience. It is judged arid, theoretical, dead. Worse than dead, 'minimalist'. Why so?

It is with a certain bafflement that I pose the question, for their most recent feature, *Klassenverhältnisse* or *Class Relations* (Artificial Eye), adapted from the incomplete and untitled comic novel by Kafka that is usually referred to as *Amerika* (reverberating with its author's trademark *k*), strikes me as a great film—which is to say, a film like any other, except greater. And perhaps what is called for, as perverse as this may seem, is to have it reviewed like any other—in, or very nearly, the inventorial, handily quoteful idiom of the populist press ('I found myself gripped from beginning to end . . .', 'Sensitively directed . . .', 'Immaculate performances all round . . .', the near-mandatory 'See it!')—as though film criticism, often a case of making complex statements about simple works, might not on occasion consist of making simple statements about a complex work.

Let us run through it point by point, in the hope (one shared by those newspaper reviewers, I trust) that the film's 'feel' will eventually be made tangible. What is complained of? For instance, that the Straubs' camera tends to hang around after the departure of a character or characters from the shot, affectingly alerting us to a dim doorknob, it may be,

or a blank brick wall. But what rule prescribes that I, the spectator, accompany the protagonist to the door? Am I his keeper or what? And why should a door just closed be any less generative of narrative suspense than one (in a horror movie) just about to be opened? To be sure, it is a contemplative form of suspense—the suspended, still pulsating, immobility of a space left vacant, of a *trace*. Like Bresson (whose *L'Argent* is the film *Class Relations* most resembles), the Straubs seem fascinated by such spectral traces; by, if you like, the Berkeleyan conundrum of what the world looks like, or whether it retains its existence at all, when no one except God (i.e. the camera) is perceiving it.

Then there is the problem of performance, of the notoriously zombielike Straubian delivery. It would be interesting to analyse the spoken 'recitatives' of *Class Relations* along strictly formal parameters of rhythm and musicality; or else, emancipated from the stale actorishness and sentimental rubato of what Barthes termed a 'signaletic' vocal art (one, that is, conveying the external signs of an emotion divorced from the emotion itself), as the authentic *sound* of Kafka. Why look so far, though? Crystallising the eerie, ceremonious passivity of Christian Heinisch as Karl Rossmann—an absence surrounded by presence, as some wag once defined a hole—is a throng of memorable minor characters, all of whom contrive to imprint themselves on the screen with instant, adamant aplomb. See for yourself: these performers *act*. (In fact, Mario Adorf, cast as Karl's floridly *nouveau riche* immigrant uncle, may even be hamming it up a bit.) And whichever of the Straubs guided Libgart Schwarz, as the pallid, worn-out secretary Theres, interrupting her litany of afflictions with a chillingly brusque giggle and recounting the grisly circumstances of her mother's death in a haunting monotone, is a brilliant director of actors.

Yet, continues the complainant, the film is little else but a series of verbal exchanges. At a Berlin Festival press conference, when the Straubs were asked why their film had been burdened with such a *passé*-sounding title as *Class Relations*, they replied that Kafka's

novel abounded in them. True or not, the world represented in the film version is one of masters and servants, of officiously truculent figures of authority (not a thousand miles away from the cantankerous creatures encountered by Carroll's Alice) and weary, Soutinesque grooms. With his straw boater, his snugly packed metal suitcase and an inexhaustible fund of slightly crazy dignity, Karl travels steerage across the American continent as though it were a solidier Atlantic. And if his confrontations with the Establishment are indeed articulated through a succession of duologues (or, more often, triologues), the set-ups in which these are framed might be regarded as veritable paradigms of socio-economic structure. Karl, 'the man who disappeared' (one of Kafka's projected titles for his novel), seldom shares the screen with his betters: being 'the lost one' (yet another *ur*-title), he constitutes, not quite the film's off-screen space, but an invisible *contre-champ*. As for the ruling class, shielded by a sleek armoury of office desks and tables, its immediate subordinates upright at their side, the merest hint of a hierarchical revision prompts a corresponding rearrangement of the set-up. The Hotel Occidental's Head Cook, for instance, kindest of

Karl's interlocutors, pointedly stands in front of her chair as his apologist, but installs herself behind it when coerced at last into doubting his innocence. By the itemising accumulation of such anxiety-inducing niceties, *Class Relations* acquires the quality of a courtroom drama, in which poor, trodden-on Karl is always in the dock.

And, to forestall the next complaint, many of these exchanges *are* funny, if in a deadpan sort of way. The unsmiling yet handsome and somehow poignant Heinisch recalls Keaton at his most starchily dapper; while his misadventures with Robinson, Delamarche and the gross Brunelda, not to mention being pursued by two droll Keystone Kops (how the *k*'s recur), made me laugh, audibly.

In short, Straub and Huillet have filmed Kafka in unslavishly faithful fashion, with a serenity strangely belying the venerable controversy which still cramps the cinematic adaptation of classic texts. They filmed everything that had to be filmed; and what they omitted to film would have been (neologically echoing the dour, dismissive connotation with which the word *littérature* was tainted by Verlaine) mere 'cinematé'.

## THE FILMS OF VALIE EXPORT - I

October 28, 1987 -- Presented in collaboration with  
the Roxie Cinema.

Valie Export, who has been in residence this past month at the San Francisco Art Institute, lives in Vienna, Austria. She was a founding member of the Austrian Filmmakers Cooperative (1968), co-edited the publication Vienna: A Pictorial Manual of Viennese Actionism and Film (with Peter Weibel), and was a founding member of Film Women International (UNESCO) in 1975. Export's work crosses the boundaries of many mediums, and includes three feature-length films, several short films, video-tapes, and she has been represented at numerous international exhibitions with these works and multi-media installations (she represented Austria at the 1980 Biennale di Venecia).

INVISIBLE ADVERSARIES (1977) by Valie Export, 120 minutes, color. Written by Export and Peter Weibel. With Susanne Widl and Peter Weibel.

MENSCHENFRAUEN (1979) by Valie Export, 124 minutes, color. Written by Export Peter Weibel. With Renee Felden, Maria Martina, Susanne Widl, Klaus Wildbolz, and Christiane von Aster.

\*\*\*\*\*

East Village Eye, Jan. 1982

## MENSCHEN- FRAUEN

a film by VALIE EXPORT

Script by Peter  
Weibel and Valie Export. Camera:  
Wolfgang Dickmann, Karl Kases. With:  
Renee Felden, Mana Martina, Susanne  
Widl, Klaus Wildbolz, Christine von  
Aster

By GARY INDIANA

At first glance *Menschenfrauen* looks as delightfully preposterous as Valie Export's first feature, *Invisible Adversaries*: Franz, a journalist, tries to satisfy the emotional needs of three mistresses and a wife, fails all of them and unwittingly promotes feminist independence.

Bracketed by farce, the story opens into a grim inventory of experimental scars: abortions, sexual harassment, employment problems, child-rearing. Past traumas, which have led all four women into a state of dazed susceptibility, are shown in video images, ugly memories one flicks on and off like a TV set. In the credit sequence, each woman is dreaming about a gift of affection. Unwrapped, it's revealed as something ghastly, nauseating.

Franz doles out honorary pieces of himself to the "human women" in his seraglio, tells the same stories, whispers the same assurances. Eventually everyone catches on and makes some effort toward independence. This is not the happy saccharinism of Agnes Varda, since one of the characters chooses suicide and another gets sucked back into the mistress role. *Menschenfrauen* bestows quite a lot of compassion on Franz himself — he's the most pathetic victim of his own game, unable to break through to a relationship with anybody.

As in *Invisible Adversaries*, Valie Export uses experimental techniques in *Menschenfrauen* as narrative devices. A page in a typewriter becomes a screen on which a character's fantasy flickers into view. Moving figures in a public square freeze into parts of a photographic enlargement. Export is a virtuoso of *l'image juste*, and despite some misfired jokes and hamhanded dialogue her skill in delineating characters through off-beat special effects has evolved into an authoritative signature style. Her films take place in a world slightly outside this one. Objects and people travel between them without warning and retract, telescope style, into parts of someone else's memory, nightmare, or photography collection. Characters trade voices, scenes replay in reverse-point-of-view, landscapes are caught at angles that give them the enigmatic contours of mirages. Export is the heirress apparent to Bunuel, with a different repertoire of fetishes. The feminist argument that runs through her films is always carried to reckless, self-parodying extremes: e.g., two outstandingly pregnant women kissing and caressing each other in a restaurant as one scandalized customer after another begs the mantra *d'* to throw them out. *Menschenfrauen* posits feminism as one equivocal reply to an organic world that behaves with as much mercurial nastiness as the people in it.

A protean image maker in another media (she represented Austria at the 1980 Venice Biennale), Valie Export uses her films to collect ideas and artifacts disseminated in her sculpture, videotapes and painting under the umbrella of cinema narrative. *Invisible Adversaries* is riddled with quotes from

other Export products: *Menschtrauen* is, at least superficially, more restrained. In the first film, numerous contrivances (pedestrians with mirrored sandwich boards, prostrate conceptualists blocking trolleys) intrude on a naturalistic *mise-en-scene*. Similar interventions appear in *Menschtrauen*, but for the most part reality provides the grotesque detail. A bizarre concrete slab under which two women walk in one scene is a Nazi air defense tower that disfigures the center of Vienna; one character, in the course of an obsessive personal investigation, looks over morgue slides of real electrocution victims. One of the most disturbing scenes is simply a videotape of a real priest serving real communion. Nearly everything in *Menschtrauen* that looks unreal, horrifying, or exaggeratedly atavistic is pulled directly from life.

One continuously surreal element is the way Franz looks. This ostensible sex object is a far cry from Richard Gere; he's over 40 and, among numerous

flaws, sports the mammary development of a man who's eaten too much schnitzel and drunk too much beer since early youth. His good looks sometimes slide off his face; he is alternately over-the-hill or mildly attractive, but certainly never beautiful, never compellingly sexy. It seems incredible that four women depend upon him simultaneously, but this also has the unreality of social fact. Romantic love is legally blind and quite commonly stumbles into men like Franz. They can, in fact, be found in every city, riding the sexual gravy train of other people's desperation long after their ticket has expired. This one, fortunately, gets thrown under the wheels.

By J. Hoberman

**INVISIBLE ADVERSARIES.** Directed by Valie Export. Written by Export and Peter Weibel. At the James Agee Room (Bleecker Street Cinema), weekends starting January 16.

Some avant-garde movies reduce their elements to a Spartan few; others blitz the viewer with every idea the filmmaker has ever had. Valie Export's *Invisible Adversaries* is one of the latter—an unpredictable, messy film that runs roughshod over its feminist/sci-fi narrative with a winning combination of sexual frankness and visual wit. The Vienna-based Export has worked in film, video, "expanded cinema," body art, and photography, and her mixed-media mindset is everywhere apparent: *Invisible Adversaries* is at once an anthology of her greatest hits, a tract on modern alienation, a calculated attack on local mores, and a work of blunt sexual demystification.

Export's protagonist, leggy Susanne Widl, is a professional photographer/video-maker. Lying in bed one morning, she hears a radio report that invisible "Hyksos" have attacked the earth. Their *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* modus operandi involves colonizing human minds and raising the species' aggression quotient to intolerable levels. News bulletin concluded, the camera zooms back from Widl's window and floats out over Vienna, hovering above the rooftops like a reconnoitering UFO. Immediately, symptoms of the Hyksos invasion begin to occur: Widl receives an unsettling telephone call; outside, a man is licking the pavement; train stations oscillate between rush-hour crowds and complete desertion; the photographs in her developing tray start to make sounds like Soupy Sales; leering "police cadets" dog her trail, exposing

parliamentary debate insured its *success de scandale*. Nudity and sex-play aside, the film includes a truculent denunciation of its hometown, railing against everything from the Austrian film industry and the hard lot of local artists to the pretentious hodgepodge of Viennese architecture and the hypocrisy of the city's burghers. "Vienna's history is oblivion and treason," Widl asserts. "Paranoia surrounds me in the form of this city."

While Vienna appears here as less malign than staid, Export's funniest sequence is an epic vision of its everyday rudeness. Widl is refused a parking space and then insultingly denied service at a record shop, while Weibel is ticketed by a cop for a hypothetical violation. Their discussion of these incidents over lunch ends in a quarrel which sweeps Vienna like a contagion and ultimately escalates into brawls, riots, and warfare all over the world. "Mobile transmitters are disturbing our brain patterns," Widl maintains; meanwhile, in a shopping arcade, children watch *The Poseiden Adventure* on a store-window TV.

Consciously or not, Export's film is pervaded by an ambivalent critique of representation—it might have been made to support Susan Sontag's darkest anxieties about the postmodern proliferation of the image. Widl's dreams are projected as movies over her bed, she keeps a huge blow-up of herself inside the refrigerator, her last fight with Weibel is echoed by a pair of out-of-phase video monitors. Images are forever substituting themselves for things; people on the street are replaced by their photographs. (When this happens to Widl, she goes home and tries to nail her shadow to the wall.) Indeed, the proliferation of images is a problem that



themselves or masturbating in the street.

Like the hero of Resnais's *Muriel*, Widl spends most of the film gathering "evidence." Picking up a copy of the Austrian equivalent of the *New York Post*, she gasps with horror at the lurid murders and tortures it details—human beings can't be doing these things. Of course, nobody takes the Hyksos seriously but Widl, least of all her lover (played with evident gusto by Export's longtime collaborator, filmmaker Peter Weibel). Their deteriorating relationship is one of the film's key elements, and it's depicted with disarming candor. Scenes of Widl and Weibel kidding around in bed or *apres le bain* are slightly slapstick representations of the regressive intimacies celluloid couples seldom enjoy. After one particularly bitter fight, she crouches in a corner festooning herself with wounds of ink; by way of apology he crawls over and begins to lick them off.

In feminist terms, Weibel is a sort of anarcho-Marxist MCP (when Widl prepares a fish for his dinner, Export has him devour it in the *lacuna* created by one quick jump-cut) and throughout the film their arguments grow increasingly nasty and polemical. She believes in love; he thinks it's "a tug in the prick," and tells her of a Viennese doctor who catalogued 600 positions by which humans may couple. She calls him an egotist, he says women are parasites. "You talk as though the Hyksos had already got you," she cries during a disastrous *tete-a-tete* in an empty beer garden.

*Invisible Adversaries* seems made in part to shock the bourgeoisie and, in fact, it did. Completed in 1976, the film was funded by the Austrian Ministry of Art and Education, and when newspapers attacked it as "pornographic," the ensuing

the film not only depicts but embodies. Two-thirds of the way through its 100-minute running time, it all but collapses under the weight of Export's gags, digressions, and visual bits of business.

In true paranoid fashion, *Invisible Adversaries* ends like the original cut of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (or the original cut of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*). Widl visits a psychiatrist who naturally diagnoses her as schizophrenic. She's unconvinced, having taken his photograph during the session and discovered an "evil double" standing behind his chair. Realizing the victory of the Hyksos, she wanders aimlessly through the hostile city and into a movie theatre (the bill of fare is a loop of violent disasters). Export's last shot recapitulates her first. Fully clothed, but back in bed, Widl listens expressionlessly as the radio broadcasts data on war in the Middle East and the development of the cruise missile. The camera retreats out into space.

What are the Hyksos? Initially they are identified with a neo-Nazi resurgence, but that seems too specific. Do they, as one critic suggests, represent the institution of patriarchy? They might just as easily be read as a metaphor for late capitalism, or for Lacan's socially constructed ego. If anything, the film is a crazy-quilt elaboration on Pogo's solemn pronouncement that "we have met the enemy and he is us," pivoting on our science-fiction propensity to project our hostile impulses onto "outer space."

In any case, despite the heroine's eventual paralysis, it's impossible for me to see a film as richly inventive and rambunctiously open (not to mention wonderfully titled) as *Invisible Adversaries* as anything but affirmative. Which isn't to say that we shouldn't keep watching the skies. ■

## ARC DE TRIOMPHE:

### THE POWER OF SUPER-8

Sunday, November 15, 1987

The Cinematheque celebrates its new super-8 high-intensity arc-light projector with a program of highlights from the past decade. This projector, with its theatrical-quality light source, allows us to present super-8 films with the captivating luminosity that we take for granted in other formats. We anticipate that the reviewing of the many super-8 works of quality completed over the past 20 years will result in a re-evaluation of the possibilities and achievements of this often-neglected medium. Tonight's is the first of a series of such re-viewings.

Fragment by Ellen Gaine, 1985, 13 min.

Fragment mediates exquisitely on different levels, reflections and shapes around a body of water...a study about the interplay of the four classic humours - fire, earth, water and air.

The Bladderwort Document by Janis Crystal Lipzin, 1978, 12 min.

"...Janis relates to us those psychic associations experienced as the individual explores her environment (universe) internally and externally. hush/moments pass/flapping and soft winged creature/prickly porcupine quills...The majority of shots take place in the house, many centered around the warmth of the kitchen. It is a film done in a diaristic form and has a straightforward autobiographical vein, with most events relating to experiences that touch ground in the everyday physical surroundings." - Peggy Awhesh, Field of Vision

Desert by Stan Brakhage, 1976, 11 min.

"I want it understood that this 'summary' is written for identification purposes only and that it is not intended as a statement by the artist on his work. It is my belief that statements by the artist, particularly in print, aesthetically speaking, would better have been included in that work in the first place.

"If a film is a work of moving visual art, it is its own subject and subject only to itself. The extent to which a film can be described is the extent to which it is deficient as a work of visual art. If the 'summary of the subject' of a film can be interpreted as that which is intended to inspire perception in the viewer, rather than as that which attempts to describe the film for the viewer, then (the title) is my 'summary of the subject'." - Stan Brakhage, Canyon Cinema Catalog 5

-OVER-

Wavings by Medora Ebersole, 1980, 8 min.

"The camera is a detector and the filmmaker an interpreter of the physical manifestation of waves. An oscilloscope, sand dunes, leaves in the gutter...Reconciling diverse phenomena is the basis of a perceptual exploration where form is subject to change." - Medora Ebersole

#### INTERMISSION

Notes of an Early Fall by Saul Levine, 1976-77, 38 min.

"A film about displacement and if it seems as if I was obsessed with sound in making this film, I was! Using a single system Super-8mm camera and a sound projector to edit, I solved the mystery of expanding the range of the material by counting up 18 frames when I'd make a cut (something I don't have too much trouble doing). That no seasonal Fall is depicted is a clue as to how to read the film. In exploring the gaps, the holes of the material, spin offs were subject and object division, fall in the history of western philosophy, the discrepancy in light and sound waves...With my films I am seeking/finding new formal sophistication rooted in real attempts to illuminate the world." - Saul Levine, Dec. 11, 1984

## ART AND VISUAL RESEARCH: THE FILMS OF ROSE LOWDER

### FILMMAKER ROSE LOWDER IN PERSON

Sunday, November 22, 1987

"By the time I first began to work with film in 1978, independent cinema had developed considerably, many issues had been debated, whole histories of films were already more or less stored in museums after having transited through parallel screening venues and art galleries. After following what had been done for about 15 years, for various reasons it did not seem useful to continue from where most recent works found themselves and I decided to return to a more primitive, pre-1900 level of enquiry in re-examining the paradox and ambiguity of film visual images in relation to perception, this latter a variable system, the functioning of which is itself subject to variation, in reality and existence.

"It would be a mistake to see this work as starting on similar premises to that of all films using systematic approaches although there are some common problems in evidence, seemingly due to lack of extended development rather than possibilities at this stage. In the last two decades many films used various film structuring devices in ways where the fabrication process itself became the main subject. This, while not sufficient indefinitely, did establish that neither the methods used, nor the material, nor perceptual mechanisms were neutral or transparent, thus indicating some future possibilities of aspects of their nature.

"In my own work, the methods of preceeding in each film evolved from observations obtained in a series of related studies: manner in which certain features can be integreated and related to each other, possibilities of inserting the actual filming into the filmed situation upon which the film is based, investigation into the varying activity of visual-thought processes." - Rose Lowder, March 1982.

#### Rue des Teinturiers, 1979, 31 min.

Filmed frame by frame in the camera, the focus of each frame is adjusted so that certain graphic features of itmes in the street that gives its name to the film are extracred and inscribed onto the film strip in a way which allows their characteristics to be seen, when projected in succession on the screen, as parts of a patio-temporal image stretching from a position on a balcony over a canalized river to the road. The film is composed of twelve 2 3/4 minute reels, each of which was filmed on a different day throughout a six-month period. No editing was undertaken other than joining the reels together. This was done in a slightly non-chronological order so as to avoid accentuating the more anecdotal aspects of the scene.

"The street outside Rose Lowder's window is the subject of this film. The film uses the contrasts afforded by rapidly alternating points of focus. The resulting flatness of part of the image interacts with the live-wired volume-ness of other parts. A film that shakes the screen, and more..." - Vincent Grenier.

Scenes de la Vie Francaise: Paris, 1986, 26 min.

One of a series of films, Arles, Paris, La Ciotat, Avignon. All four films share a similar organizational procedure in that their material is woven together on an ordinary printer according to a certain pattern. The problems that arise are tackled, however, in a slightly different way in the cases of each film. In Scenes de la Vie Francaise: Paris several places, Jardin du Luxembourg, Place de la Republique, Rue St. Antoine, Canal St. Martin, Place de la Bastille, are presented by the means of a composition of frames recorded at various times from a similar viewpoint.

Scenes de la Vie Francaise: La Ciotat, 1986, 31 min.

Whereas throughout the film Scenes de la Vie Francaise: Paris the image is formed by means of relatively long sections recorded on different dates, in Scenes de la Vie Francaise: La Ciotat the image showing the port, the dry docks, the workers leaving the shipyards, a tanker launched, fishermen and the beach, rests on the interweaving of short moments. Hence in the case of this film the configuration is composed of two distinct but closely situated durations. - Rose Lowder.

Thursday, December 2, 1987

The Cinematheque is proud to present, co-sponsored by the Goethe Institute,

- in person -  
CHRISTOPH JANETZKO

SN (1984) 16 minutes, 16mm

The film SN (an abbreviation for the topographical term South/North) attempts through alteration of the filmic image, to cause the presented reality to arise as new and more intense. The subject of the film is the interior and exterior of life in the country, in and in front of an old farm house where a musician lives. His music, a dog, a small child, views from outside and inside a window form the original material. It was prepared on an optical printer -- transformed into color, brought to sliding, pulsating or sudden luminosity, worked through many prints, until it became faded or invisible. With scratch markings made directly onto the celluloid, the film was subjected to a further work process which adds comical, cheerful moments. A musical rhythm and neon-type, occasionally shrill, visual effects penetrate the peaceful image. But these effects never quite win the upper hand so that the rural peace isn't destroyed, but only expanded by modern technology through emotions and states of consciousness during the film.

S1 (1985) 15 minutes, 16mm

S1 is from two points of view, a 'materialist film': gathered, already exposed film material from 1911 until the present is organized - like a collage of materials in fine arts -, so that the material out of which films are made generally has been formed into a new filmicevent, and acknowledges usually invisible elements. Janetzko pursues an elementarization of filmic devices, to provide in a strict montage a formal description of film, and to bring forward a reflection about his own media.

Only an optical printer which Janetzko conceived and constructed especially for this film, allowed the realization of S1. In this way, he presents elements of light and movement, by using celluloid and perforation. The motives which are shown in motion (hands, persons, the front of a house, a palm tree...) are not narrative in the common sense, they provoke, however, associations of ideas and release connections. Those purely formal elements belong to scenes of the common film genres - fiction and documentary films. The perforation hole is used as a frame for a motive which belongs to a film of the same size, and which corresponds to the area of the perforation.

"M" (1986) 20 minutes, 16mm, silent, b/w and color

Buildings made out of brick, steel and concrete become immaterial, eternal complexes. A view only interested in show-windows will never arrive in the zone of "M." - "Manhattan," wherethe sky full with vapor trails, continental clouds and tangible blue is mixed osmotically with the airy upper floors of the skyscrapers.

(cont'd. on reverse)

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"M." (cont'd.)

In the first sequence the silent film plays with Renaissance towers and sunlight as if New York City were in the middle of Tuscany. Images frame the way the film material is treated and the changing pace dissects a stratum of historical architecture out of the confused mass of houses. The camera then discovers the water-containers like distinctive signs, their colors from fresh-painted rose to dirty brown, and their varying installations on a thousand roofs.

In the third part the oval round of the containers is opened. The Art Deco shells at the top of the Chrysler building are duplicated through a sickle-shaped falling-water fountain in the foreground. Rooftops, fire escapes and details of the stucco, always seen against the sky, multiply the form of the bow to a never distorted, but constantly growing mirror cabinet.

At the end, the silhouette of a water container is to be seen again, it's nothing but a shadow against thick white steam. No other shot could have shown more precisely the theme of the film: in esthetic abstraction, the architecture of Manhattan turns into something immaterial. By outlining only ridges and tops, space gains a new dimension. The reality of stones is transformed.

"On Ludlow in blau" (1987) 12 minutes, 16mm, sound, b/w and color

A sultry summer afternoon out of the perspective of an insect. It moves along the outline of a peeled off window frame and between restless spots of refracted sun rays. With his camera, Janetzko discovers the esthetic life within tiny square inches of patinated wall papers, window shades and holy details of the setup. Underneath the profane dusty surface the unknown and strong order of microcosms are hidden.

The film begins in motionless black. This dreamless, semi-conscious state is interrupted by the angry voice of a woman, her insults perceived by a lurking camera. The first rough structures fade into dark like signposts in an unknown landscape. They reveal a hesitating wake-up in a New York City flat. The heat changes the common sights of the room, enlarging and enhancing, and for a few seconds the consciousness falls back into a dreamy reality. One can watch the machine of mechanical air conditioning, listen to the nervous sounds of its wings and buzzing motors. The sound collage gives rhythm to the more and more abstract-appearing pictures. The dramatic peak of the color concept is reached in the artificial yellow-green of bean leaves scrolling along the window frame. They move in front of a neon pattern of a white film surface, looking like industrial imitation of tiger fur. The anatomy of structure gains prior to the film's epilogue. In the last scenes of the film, a window shade made of paper calmly fans. Against the shadow of a cut-off arabesque the noisily whirling dust slows to become a visible whisper.

THE DREAM WORLD OF WINSOR McCAY  
America's Master Animator and Comic Strip Artist

December 10, 1987

John Canemaker, prominent McCay scholar and animator, will introduce Winsor McCay's films tonight and will make a presentation about McCay and his work. Canemaker is the author of the recently published book, Winsor McCay, His Life and Art (Abbeville). He will show his films and McCay's films at the UC Theater on Sunday, December, 13.

Winsor McCay(1868-1934) was an American pioneer of the newspaper comic strip and the animated cartoon. His comic strips of note, "Dreams of a Rarebit Fiend" and "Little Nemo in Slumberland" convey vividly in a dry, fluid linear style a disturbing dream world that is transformed and distorted relentlessly until the last frame when the dreamer awakens to reality. This obvious concern with sequential action led naturally to McCay's transferring the comic strip images to film which McCay used in his vaudeville acts. He made films from 1909 to 1921 when he was to give up animation disgruntled by poor earnings, pressured by his newspaper committments and concerned that "the art has deteriorated...I hope and dream the time will come when serious artists will make marvelous pictures that will love and live in lifelike manner..I think if Michelangelo was alive today he would immediately see the wonders of moving drawings."

\* \* \* \* \*

Note: The films were made between 1909 - 1921. Exact dates are unclear.

REMEMBERING WINSOR McCAY by John Canemaker.(1976). 16mm.

This is a reminiscence that focusses on John Fitzsimmons, an artist who assisted McCay in the making of his films in the 1910s. Included in the film are two of McCay's earliest works, "Gertie the Dinosaur" and "Little Nemo."

GERTIE THE DINOSAUR.16mm.

McCay wins a bet that he can animate a delightful dinosaur, Gertie.

LITTLE NEMO. 16mm.

Live action is combined with cartoon animation in this animated version of McCay's popular comic strip. (original hand-painted version.)

HOW THE MOSQUITO OPERATES. 16mm.

A mosquito sets out to feed on a victim and grows too large.

THE SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA. 16mm.

This is a propagandistic film about the 1918 sinking of the passenger liner, the Lusitania. He used painted celluloid for the first time. His other works were drawn on paper.

(OVER)



GERTIE ON TOUR. 16mm.

This is a fragment of the famous dinosaur on a trolley ride.

THE CENTAURS. 16mm.

This is another fragment depicting prehistoric and mythical monsters walking the land.

BUG VAUDEVILLE. 16mm.

This is another "Rarebit Fiend" drama featuring a circus of bugs - dancing spiders, juggling grasshoppers, boxing bugs which are in the dream of an over indulger.

THE PET. 16mm.

The "Rarebit Fiend" overeats again and dreams that his wife's dog grows into a monster that menaces the city.

THE FLYING HOUSE.16mm.

This is a visual journey about a man whose house takes off for outer space.

This show is presented in conjunction with MAKE\*A\*CIRCUS whose musical stage version of "Little Nemo in Slumberland" is playing at Life on the Water Theater at Fort Mason through December 20th.

A wine reception for John Canemaker will follow the show.

## FRAME LINE AND RED SHIFT

FIILMS BY GUNVOR NELSON

December 13, 1987

Gunvor Nelson moved from a career as a painter to bring her unique vision to film and has been described by Amos Vogel as a "true poetess of the visual cinema." Red Shift and Frame Line, both released in 1984, have proven to be among the most significant achievements of recent independent film. They have an aesthetic style and technical rigor familiar in earlier works but is further distilled and imbued with an urgency and self-reflection which makes them deeply moving experiences.

"The films of Gunvor Nelson are psychological, emotional, humorous and erotic. Her style of filmmaking uses a fast-paced editing combined with striking, often symbolic, images. Her work is characterized by a strong feeling for the graphic, textural qualities of the film image, for expressive potentials inherent in shape and color." Fred Camper

"Gunvor Nelson is perhaps the major talent to arise from the non-structuralist area of Independent American Cinema in the past few years. At a time when the first masters of the 'New American Cinema' are mostly repeating themselves and the only new initiative is coming from the coldly impersonal experiments of the structuralists, Gunvor Nelson, who began making films in 1965, has grown with each new film to the point where Amos Vogel could write in the Village Voice that 'Gunvor Nelson is indeed one of the most gifted of our poetic film humanists.' She is no humanist in the corny 'Family of Man' sense, for she works with complex opticals and sound/image relationships, with a unique poetic perception visable in all her films."

from Pacific Film Archive Program Notes

"For me, the intention is trying to dig deep and find those images, to find the essence of your feelings....it just struck me that the outside world for me, all the things that are there, are symbols for what I feel. Trying to use film as a medium to express what's inside you, you have to use these symbols. If you want to communicate you can't just show a simple cup the way it is always shown; you have to find an angle that expresses those feelings, not only for other people, but for yourself, so you don't just see that cup or the coffee grounds. Most people won't have seen it the way you have seen it, and you have to dig into it really deeply to show yourself, and hopefully other people then, what you see." Gunvor Nelson from an interview in 'Film Quarterly,' 1971

FRAME LINE. 1983. B&W, 22 minutes.

Frame Line is a collage film in black and white. Glimpses (both visual and audial) of Stockholm, of people, gestures, flags and the Swedish national anthem appear through drawings, paintings and cut-outs. It is a film with an eerie flow between the ugly and the beautiful, about returning, about roots and also about reshaping.

"...Distilled bits of psyche break from the assemblage to skitter across struggling places seeking niches and forming patterns with careening desperation...Frame Line takes advantage to radically ignore any limits of emotional expression. Without excuses, or so much as even a token glance back, Frame Line at once sets standards that put to rest that silly notion 'the tradition of the Avant-Garde...'"

Rock Ross, Reversal

RED SHIFT. 1983. B&W, 50 minutes.

Red Shift is a film in black and white about relationships, generations and time. The subtitle is ALL EXPECTATION. The movement of a luminous body toward and away from us can be found in its spectral lines. A shift toward red occurs with anybody that is self-luminous and receding. There is uncertainty about how much observable material exists.

"Red Shift is the most beautiful, most personal and most expressive film about mother-daughter relationship I have ever seen. It involves Gunvor Nelson, her mother and her daughter. Carefully and with great tenderness it focuses on these three women, trying to show us their relationship, succeeding with an emotional impact that is hardly ever found in such a subject. It is not the social context which is exploited but the little gestures, everyday events. Red Shift is a radical film; it sets new measures for Avant-Garde filmmaking dealing with personal problems." Alf Bold, The Arsenal, Berlin

## THE RADICAL CINEMA OF RAUL RUIZ: TWO VIEWS

Sunday, December 13, 1987

A political exile now based in France, Raul Ruiz has been turning out his highly experimental features at a rate of three or four a year since the late 1970s, drawing on a rich range of personal, historical and cultural references to create complex, dream-like structures that explore the limits of film language. Often taking the form of folk tales or genre films (the folk tale's 20th century equivalent), Ruiz's films are puzzles without solutions or parables without morals, in which meaning is suspended in pure formal play.

Ruiz was born in southern Chile in 1941. After studying theology and law, he enrolled in an Argentine film school. He wrote plays for six years, became a reporter for Chilean TV, and composed scripts for Mexican soap operas before completing his first feature, Los Tres Tristes Tigres (1968). This film is held to be the start of a New Chilean Cinema, of which Ruiz is the foremost practitioner. Like many other Chilean artists and intellectuals, Ruiz has lived in exile, mainly in France, since the coup against Allende in 1973. Tonight's two films, Mammame and The Three Crowns of the Sailor, highlight some aspects of this major cinematic voice.

Mammame, 1986, 65 min. Directed by Ruiz, written by Jean-Claude Gallota and Ruiz, photographed by Jacques Bouquin, choreographed by Gallota, music by Henry Torque and Serge Houppin.

"A group of people who know each other, perhaps work together, are cinematically transported to a spot halfway between a large tent on a science fiction desert and the ballroom of a submarine, in a film about doubt, full-fledged doubt..." - Raul Ruiz.

A company of five male and four female dancers engage one another in a series of stylized, semi-pantomimic routines in which the women's touches reduce the men to a state of babbling semi-paralysis. States of being are transitory here, however, and the men rebound in short order, driven by the engine of sexual-emotional desires that are both reciprocated and rejected by the women, who vacillate between aggression, tenderness and tense caution.

By beginning the film on an artificially controlled theater stage and ending it in nature, on a spectacular seaside location where the dancers have to compete with a heavy wind and the sounds of bird cries and crashing waves, Ruiz raises the issue of which setting brings us closer to the reality of the dance, and which brings us closer to the fictional world that is generated in both settings.

"Raul Ruiz's Mammame turns a Wellesian rhetoric (wide and low angles, deep focus and shadows) on Jean-Claude Gallotta's spirited dance group, with a camera which seems to change position almost as often as the dancers.

Playing with plasticity itself, Mammame contrives to make one even more aware of the floor than one is in an Ozu film - perhaps because it usually remains the only fixed anchor to an endlessly mutable overhead space." - Jonathan Rosenbaum, Sight and Sound.

The Three Crowns of the Sailor, 1983, 117 min. Directed by Raul Ruiz, written by Ruiz, Emilio de Solar and Francois Ede.

Having just killed a rare-coin dealer, a student meets a drunken sailor who says he will help him escape aboard his ship if the student will listen to the story of his life. Shown in flashback (these scenes are in color, while the 'present' is depicted in black and white), the sailor's tale is a melodramatic odyssey about a ship manned by a zombie-like crew of eternal wanderers.


The sailor has come aboard in Chile, and as he travels the world he keeps meeting people who insist that he listen to their stories. After a while, one loses track of whose story is being told and how each story relates to the sailor's tale, let alone why he is telling his story to the student. The Three Crowns of the Sailor treats exile explicitly; the central character is a sailor who discovers his shipmates are ghosts, and in the final analysis is cut off from home, from language, from feeling, from life. Visually, the film borrows again from the deep-focus style of Orson Welles, playing wild tricks of perspective with looming foreground objects and impossible camera angles. But even this distorted space is too stable for Ruiz, who goes Welles one better by increasing the number of images and cutting furiously among them. The point of view is never settled, never tied to any single character or privileged position, and no two shots quite match - there is always an abrupt change in the angle or in the lighting. The pace of Three Crowns is as multi-form as the plot; it can't be pi-ned down.

"Structuralist films question traditional narrative by being less - by presenting a series of narrative shapes without content, without development. The films of Raul Ruiz reverse the process, taking the forms and teasing stories out of them." - Dave Kehr, Chicago Reader

Program notes assembled by Violet Murikami.

-- Thursday, December 17, 1987

NEW BAY AREA SUPER-8 FILMS

- 1) The Mysterious Barricades (1987) by Peter Herwitz, 8 min., silent, 18 f.p.s.
- 2) Desert #7 (1987) by Albert Kilchesty, Los Angeles, 4 min., silent, 18 f.p.s.
- 3) Without Titles (1984/5, revised version) by David Gerstein, 12 min., silent,  
24 f.p.s.
- 4) Waiting for X (1984) by Jacalyn White, 6 min., sound, 24 f.p.s.
- 5)  (1987) by Scott Stark, 15 min., sound, 24 f.p.s.
- 6) Untitled Film (1987) by Peggy Ahwesh, 19 min., sound, 18 f.p.s.

There will be a wine reception for the  
filmmakers after the program.

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## "MEMORY, DESIRE AND LOSS - VISIONS OF SMALL-TOWN AMERICA"

Sunday - December 20, 1987

### FILMS BY DOUGLAS SIRK AND BRUCE CONNER

Take the 5:10 to Dreamland (1976) 16mm, b&w, 5:10 min., by Bruce Conner

Valse Triste (1977) 16mm, b&w, 5 min., by Bruce Conner

All I Desire (1953) Directed by Douglas Sirk; produced by Ross Hunter; camera, Carl Guthrie; editor, Milton Carruth; script, James Gunn and Robert Brees, from the novel Stopover by Carol Brink, adapted by Gina Kaus; music, Joseph Gershenson. With: Barbara Stanwyck, Richard Carlson, Lyle Bettger, Marcia Henderson, Maureen O'Sullivan. 16mm, b&w, 79 min.

Classic melodrama as a meeting point of music and drama: the roots of the genre go back as far as ancient Greece, where the dramas of playwrights such as Euripides were accompanied by music which served both to intensify and also distance, framing the tragic spectacle. Melodrama can also be seen as another word for opera, an often tragic form in which theatrical artifice, emotional hyperbole are met and transformed by the music.

As practiced by the best directors such as Otto Preminger, Vincente Minnelli, Frank Borzage and Douglas Sirk, movie melodrama delivers a kind of music in images through orchestration of space, movement, color and design. Like the film musical, the film melodrama takes place in a theatericized, artificial world of decorative colors, costumes and sets, but also like the preceding forms of theater and opera, this genre is a kind of sister to tragedy, expressing themes of emotional entrapment, hopeless love, and conflicts in personal and family life. There is a paradox here, in the fact that the genre that is most about emotional frustration in theme, is so gratifying in its ornate and elegant stylizations.

The title All I Desire could well describe the body of Douglas Sirk's films. His world is one where longing, desire, illusion, the failing search for happiness, rest beneath the glittering surfaces of his images. Of German and Danish descent, Sirk was a theater director in Hamburg, Bremen, and Leipzig and then film director at UFA before coming to Hollywood in 1939. He brought with him a superb visual sense (seen in his UFA films such as Schlukksakord), an already developed theory of melodrama as social critique, and a keen eye for the paradoxes and contradictions of American life. In Sirk's melodramas at Universal (Imitation of Life, All That Heaven Allows, Written on the Wind), themes of impotence, hysteria, longing, helplessness and hopelessness, are placed ironically in a world of mirrors, flowers, and lush home environments. The camera encircles the characters, who may speak their emotions loudly but who are reduced

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to object level in a pattern of surfaces, shadows, windows, doorways, lamps and other objects looming large in the frame. The effect of this kind of framing is to obstruct vision, and to distance or objectify the image so that the desires of the characters to find happiness are rendered ever more futile and fragmented, trapped as they are by the surface of the screen. As with music in an opera, Sirk's style both manifests and criticizes the drama he is presenting.

All I Desire is a companion work to another Sirk film of the same period, There's Always Tomorrow. In both films, Barbara Stanwyck plays a social outcast (a 2nd-rate actress, Naomi Murdoch, in All I Desire), who returns to the home she had left years before to reclaim an idealized past. What she encounters there reminds her of why she had left to begin with -- hypocrisy, class distinctions, role-playing both within her family and in the town as a whole. A good example of this can be seen in the scene of her daughter's school play. While the drama unfolds on the stage, the audience is left in fact staring at Naomi, the "low-life," who has returned. In order to re-establish herself with her family and society, Naomi must act out the contradictions inherent to this world, torn between the high life and low life, desire and social responsibility, freedom and the strictures created by love. According to Sirk, these tensions are unresolvable: he had wanted to call the film Stopover, but was forced to give the film a happy end. Naomi should leave but for the deus ex machina, the hand of the gods that reaches down to resolve the impossible in what Sirk describes as "an unhappy, happy end."

The tension between an idealized past and its darker reality beneath the surface also seems to lie at the core of Conner's Valse Triste. As Sirk takes the melodrama as material for distanced contemplation, so Conner in this film and its companion work, Take the 5:10 to Dreamland, takes found footage of a mythic American past, of white picket fences, whistling trains in the distance, small towns and gently undercuts their intended meanings. The sad waltz becomes less one for a past that is lost than for the illusions contained in the memories, the images themselves. More subdued, elegaic than Conner's other, more savage works, the two films are characterized in tone by the sepia black and white, slow fade, and elegant music, rather than the quick cuts and harsher sounds. Though the images are charged with memories, in Valse Triste, and some deeper alchemical process in Dreamland, they are also brief, elliptical, just giving enough time to glimpse behind the surface of their worlds. That remoteness seems very much to the point of both works which have the concentration, mystery and suggestiveness of dreams.

-- Notes by Peter Herwitz

SIRK (selected) Filmography: German period: Pillars of Society, 1935, Final Accord, 1936, To New Shores, 1937, La Habanera, 1937. American Period: Hitler's Madman, 1942, Summer Storm, 1944, A Scandal in Paris, 1945, Shockproof, 1948, Has Anybody Seen My Gal, 1951, Take Me to Town, 1952, All I Desire, 1953, Magnificent Obsession, 1953, All That Heaven Allows, 1955, There's Always Tomorrow, 1955, Written on the Wind, 1956, The Tarnished Angels, 1957, A Time to Love and a Time to Die, 1957, Imitation of Life, 1958.

CONNER (selected) Filmography: A Movie, 1958, Cosmic Ray, 1961, Report, 1963-67, The White Rose, 1967, Marilyn Times Five, 1968-73, Crossroads, 1975, Mongoloid, 1977, America is Waiting, 1982.





