

Some Notes on Some Expanded Films

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by Werner Nekes

In 1966 and 67 I made a number of films or projection-actions, a type of work which later became known as expanded cinema. Reflecting on the materialistic conditions of the medium, I was very much concerned with the projection situation. For. ex., "Fehlstart" (False start), showing many different actions, I used the space between screen and projector. I placed myself on a ladder just in front of the screen, and did live actions before the screen. Fehlstart dealt with problems of identity of filmic reality and life-action reality and the different sizes of the real and the projected body. Because it is projected at different times of my life, this piece also deals with the different processes of both the film and myself getting older (print life, print generations, scratches, loss of colour).

The film "Bogen" (Arc) describes the changes of light in a fixed picture. The light-arc was made by shooting one frame every minute from midnight to midnight. The resulting 1440 single frames (stored minutes) are projected as a one minute film loop, at 24 fr/sec. The loop is projected until the visible picture is completely destroyed by scratches, little particles of dust, etc. On one level it is a demonstration of the lifetime of a print.

In "Schnitte für ABABA" (Splices for ABABA) I took the splices and their position as a line in the frame as one theme of the film. A shot of policemen catching one of their own I took as leader in front of the film and the leader materials green, red and black are the visual materials from which I made the main body of the film. A red/green flicker film with 27 frames of black leader between flicker phases, it is organized in the form of a square excentric time-spiral, with a repetitive instrumental sound. (Please refer to the accompanying diagram.)

Different possibilities for showing the film are :

- 1.) On the screen. After the title "Ende" the projector lamp is switched off and the film keeps running for another six minutes with sound. The cinema stays completely dark except for the illuminations done by spectators.
- 2.) Film starts with the police scene. After the handscratched title the projector is moved and the projected image changes places from the screen to the cinema to the spectators. The projector is moved during each 27 frame phase of black leader. The heads of the spectators are cut off by the splices.

3.) The film projection starts outside on a wall. After the title the projection is turned toward a forest, which starts to dance in the pulsating rhythm of the red/green phases -red coming/green going. In the diagram the eccentric time spiral starts from the center going to the upper ~~left~~^{right}. At first 1 frame green, two red, 27 black 1 green etc. Each number represents a colour change. Before a change at a corner there are always 27 black frames which are also used for the change of the direction of the projection. The last sequence of colour changes consists of 27 segments of colours: 13green/14red/11g/12r/9g/10r/7g/8r/5g/6r/3g/4r/1g/4r/3g/6r/5g/8r/7g/10r/9g/12r/11g/14r/13g/and 27black frames. The plan of frame sequences is to be read from the center in a right angle spiral ending in the upper ~~left~~^{right} corner.

The films "gurtrug Nr.1" and "gurtrug Nr.2" (gurt means belt and trug means illusion, a metaphor for cinema) were conceived as palindromic loop projections. They should be played until the audience has gone. The palindromic title indicates that there is no beginning and ending of the film. An expanded way of showing "gurtrug Nr.1", in which 26 people show divergent movements from place to place within the frame, each person's movement having its own character, is to have 26 people in front of the screen follow with sticks the movements of the actors on the screen. Because the shots last about 30 seconds each, intercut by a different shot, there is periodic confusion as the actors find themselves again on the screen.

In "gurtrug Nr.2" a group of people is shown within a triangular matte. They lie on the ground and change their positions. One or two stand up and move to a different place where they lie down again. The film is projected by two projectors on two screens one above the other so that the triangle in the bottom image sits on its base, its base on the bottom of the frame, its apex at the top. The upper image is the inversion of this, thus forming a sandglass for time measuring. One film begins with its beginning, the other begins with its ending and ends with its beginning. This means that the films are making a time cross, on X, and they show the same picture only at one point for one/24th of a second. What is happening in the visual structure is reflected by the sound of two groups counting. One group starts with 123454321 etc., the other group starts at the same time counting 543212345 etc..Both groups articulate the 3 at the same time. The film is a kind of reflection of life reflecting itself in a surprising time construct.

In 67 I made some contracted-expanded film performances. I showed two prints of the same film on two projectors projecting on the same screen in the same size. The pictures were only different

The pictures were different only by the small difference of angle in which the projectors stood beside each other. This plus the fast opening and closing of a shutter in front of each lens of the projectors produced a three-D simulation, because of the angle and time phase interferences.

For "Körper" (B/ody) I used two screens one above the other separated by a line of burning candles. On the upper screen is the "B", the head of the actor and the "ody" is on the screen which is underneath. The head is able to move related and unrelated to its body.

"Ach, wie gut, daß niemand weiß" (Oh, how good, that nobody knows) is a film that ends before it starts. It is only made out of green leader, which normally indicates to the projectionist the beginning of a film roll, as red leader signals the end of a roll. Green leader is old exposed film material which later has been washed out and coloured green. Sometimes, when the washing process wasn't perfect, one still can see shadows or phantoms of old exposures. Though the film is not a film in the traditional sense, because it is ending before the start, it becomes a film by its projection. The projection is done onto the audience from above or onto the normal screen, in which case one can follow the phantoms though not really being sure if there are some or not. Or one follows the tracks of previous screenings, such as dust particles or scratches etc.

"Kratz- Beiß-Loch*Fix- Flicker-Filme" is an anthology of film material concepts and expanded cinematographic actions. To give some examples: One strip of film is cut irregularly down the middle and is projected by two projectors trying to give one image on the screen. One film is running through two projectors, projecting two pictures or one superimposed picture. The film is projected on a live scene, on an actor who is trying to do what he did before when he was shot for the film. The film is projected on a rubber screen behind which actors act against the material, deforming the screen. Transformations of the screen, ^{with} as painting it black, different materials as screens. Objects between projector and screen. Movements of the projector and screen. Movements of the projector and of the screen. Layers of transparent screens through which the spectator can move. Colour film is projected on a screen that is coloured differently from and ~~IR~~ ^{dreams} as the film. The projector is moved the same way the camera had been moved during the shooting of the film.

The spectator follows the carried projector. Interactions between the light of hole-punched film and actors. The spectator is moved and has to move during projection. Etc.

In the film "operation" a filmed chest operation is projected on the ^{nude} chest of a spectator. The chest serves as screen which moves by breathing.

In early 68 I made a series of one-frame-film performances which I called "Stehender Film/Bewegter Film" (standing film/moving film).

By my definition the smallest element of filmic articulation is the kine, which is two frames. The difference between two frames is the filmic information. One frame is a photographic information. The minimal differences are used to produce the illusion of movement in the head of the viewer. The maximal differences are used to produce the thaumatrope-effect or gestalt fusion in the brain.

The formula for a kine is: $k=(a+1)(x,y,t)-(a)(x,y,t)$. In words this means the linkage of the two frames (a+1) and (a) constitutes the filmic information, built on the differences of the three parameters of filmic information, or dimensions of the signals, the coordinates x,y of space and t, the coordinate of time. The time coordinate is missing in the photographic information in one frame.

I hung film on a mouldy wall until the bacteria took over the film layers. I projected one mouldy frame with a moviscop onto a wall. Disturbed by the heat of the projection lamp the microbes on the film started to move, carrying the green of the grass to the heaven and carrying the blue from the sky to earth and carrying Dore O. all over the screen. This one frame film is my philosophic answer and contradiction to my theory of what filmic language is.