

**THE  
FILMIC  
ART OF**

**paul**  
**SHARITS**





Burchfield-Penney Art Center  
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February 26 - May 21, 2000



**Paul Sharits in his studio (c. 1984)**

Paul Sharits Archive, Burchfield-Penney Art Center

The Films of Paul Sharits  
through May 21, 2000. The catalog  
design by Karl Schweser (S&K Graphics LLC) and  
text by Glenn Feldman. Photographs were done by John Opers. Cover: Homage to Paul Sharits and  
his work by John Opers.



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# PAUL SHARITS

## INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Paul Sharits is recognized internationally as a pioneering experimental filmmaker; however, he was trained as a painter and adapted strategies from both disciplines in his work. *The Filmic Art of Paul Sharits* is the first retrospective exhibition to include his paintings, drawings, scores, *Frozen Film Frames*, films installations, and Fluxus works since his death in 1993 at the age of 50. In collaboration with Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, the Burchfield-Penney Art Center is also presenting three film programs to acquaint viewers with his pioneering advances in the field. Sharits' influence on an international audience was very apparent during his life. From among his followers, many people contributed to the development of this important exhibition and documentary catalog. The generous financial support of the New York State Council on the Arts and the James Carey Evans Endowment made the project possible.

Beginning in the 1960s, Sharits utilized structuralist theory and painting strategy to create non-narrative, non-objective works he called "flicker films" that were about the elements of film itself. He became a master of intercutting one media with the other, using linear film structures in his painting and planning his films with scores, conceived as colored ink drawings on grid paper. His *Frozen Film Frame Series* showed this process in reverse as two-dimensional, post-production renderings of his films. In these works, strips of film were sandwiched between two sheets of plexiglass, which when lit are reminiscent of stained glass windows. Sharits later integrated individual words, polemic texts, sound tracks, and surreal meaning into his films and paintings, concurrent with his association with the Fluxus movement. His multiple projector installations during the 1970s in museums in New York, Buffalo, and Europe changed how the public perceived film.

Sharits came to Buffalo in 1973 to join filmmakers Hollis Frampton, James Blue, and Tony Conrad in the Center for Media Study at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He also befriended Gerald O'Grady, the founding director of Media Study/Buffalo, a community-based organization and regional center established in 1971 "to encourage the creation and understanding of media - especially photography, film, and videotape - by people of all ages." O'Grady later became director of the University's Center for Media Study. He regarded Sharits as "one of the true masters of modern film... Of all the filmmakers in history, he is the most painterly. His film derives from painting's texture and visual design... It is not about the camera. Nor is it about editing. It is about light, color, visual texture and design."

Sharits' work of the 1980s often reflected a tortured persona, as he experienced a series of accidents and assaults, including being stabbed in the back and nearly fatally wounded by a gunshot. Nevertheless, he thrived on challenging society and its preconceptions of art and film through his work, his underground lifestyle, and his notorious soirées that encouraged a dialogue on current advances in the field.

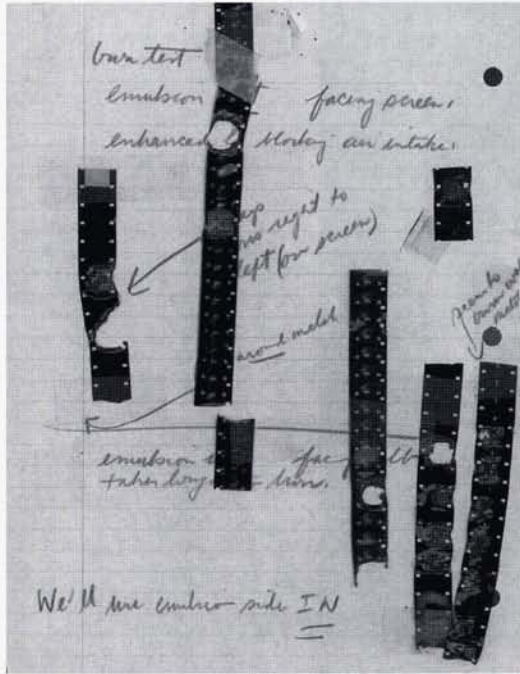
For this project we were fortunate to receive critical information from Paul Sharits' son, Christopher, who, with his wife Cheri, has been extremely generous over the past several years by donating works from the estate and by sharing comprehensive archival materials about the production of films. The artworks they donated are featured in the exhibition. Sharits' art and film colleagues and his friends in Buffalo have been charitable in sharing their perspectives and lending works. We are especially grateful to the catalog's contributors for their analytical

essays. Charlotta Kotik, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Brooklyn Museum, makes a persuasive argument for the interrelationship between painting and filmmaking. John G. Hanhardt, Senior Curator of Film and Media Arts at the Guggenheim Museum SOHO, contextualizes Sharits' important place in avant-garde film and examines the seminal film installation, *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree*, which is part of the exhibition. Anthony Bannon, Director of the George Eastman House-International Museum of Photography and Film, shares personal anecdotes about Sharits in his biographical sketch. We want to thank Karl Scheitheir for his attractive catalog design.

We would like to thank the following lenders who enthusiastically offered their artworks and archival materials: the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Sheldon and Mary Berlow, Mary Ann Bruno, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Freudenheim, Jack Griffis, Duayne and Mary Hatchett, Rose Popper, Christopher and Cheri Sharits, The Poetry/Rare Books Collection of the University at Buffalo, and anonymous lenders.

The team that organized the exhibition and film program includes Head of Administration Donald J. Metz, Registrar Scott Propeack, Preparator John Opera (who photographed the works), and myself. We wish to thank John Hanhardt for curating the film program. His recommendations were based on the conservation survey conducted by Jon Gartenberg, archivist, film historian and president of Gartenberg Media Enterprises. Films were made available by the Anthology Film Archives, Film-Makers' Cooperative, Miles McCain and Yan Beauvais of Light Cone in Paris, and a private collection. The film program will be presented at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center in Buffalo in the Paul Sharits Theater, thanks to Director Ed Cardoni and Julie Zando. Others we wish to thank for lending equipment, photographs, advice, and for donating time to this project include Robert J. Bertholf and Michael Basinski at The Poetry/Rare Books Collection of the University at Buffalo, Bill Cran at Instructional Resources for Buffalo State College, Alberto Rey, Victor Shanchuk, Jr., Andrea Ramsdell and former intern Kim McCullough. The exhibition team was joined by Facilities Manager Bill Mension, Rachael Metz, Margaret Siller, Julia Mangus and intern Lydia Goldman, work/study students Jordan Kabuya and Jeff Streich, and volunteers in production of display cases and completion of the exhibition installation. On behalf of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, we wish to thank all the individuals who shared their resources to make this long-awaited exhibition possible. To all of them and the visitors who will see this exhibition and catalog, we extend the signature thought that Paul Sharits often inscribed in messages to friends: "Light!"

Nancy Weekly  
Head of Collections and Programs  
and The Charles Cary Rumsey Curator



**3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Burn Test (c. 1982)**  
*Notations by the artist and 16 mm filmstrips.*



**PAINTER  
BEHIND  
THE  
CELLULOID**

“I never totally left my first love, painting.”

Paul Sharits, 1985<sup>1</sup>

In one painting, a crimson hand, contorted in a gesture of agony, seems to be reaching out from the picture plane into the very space occupied by the viewer. In another the barrel of a handgun, surrounded by small “baby guns” is directed at the public. In another, faces of those mortally frightened, with tortured eyes and gaping mouths are exploding from the surface. A half-feline, half-human creature is baring its fangs in yet another canvas.

This horrifying compendium of objects and personages illustrates the psychological turmoil besetting the mind of the celebrated avant-garde filmmaker Paul Sharits during the last few years of his life. His body in almost constant pain as the result of a tumultuous lifestyle and injuries of various degrees of severity, Sharits turned to painting to express his ever-increasing anxiety.

He had studied painting and later graphic design at college and through an almost meteoric career which brought him to the pinnacle of experimental filmmaking at the age of twenty-five, Sharits never abandoned the fundamentals of painting – the interaction of color and light, regard for composition and visual texture. Nor did he stop creating two-dimensional works. For these he never received the recognition accorded to his films—these were, however, informed by his painterly vision and precise sense of design.

The attraction of his filmic works was inextricably connected with his sense of color and the transformation of hues caused by their relationships with neighboring fields. His films began with a meticulous rendering of the future work on graph paper, where each frame was painstakingly recorded. These drawings, or graphs, have the cerebral beauty of the Minimalists’, and although they were truly utilitarian, standing for the film “script” which was carefully followed, they claim their own merit as some of the most beautiful drawings of the 1970s.

Fascinated by the effect of time progression on our perception and the emergence of something he called “temporal color,” Sharits made films in which fields of one color were cut rapidly with those of other colors, creating unexpected permutations of iridescent hues by alternating the colors in individual frames. The temporal element of these works and the unexpected results of viewing the rapid progression of variously colored film frames were nevertheless firmly conceived in the artist’s mind and first sketched in the drawing-scores. This practice brings Sharits within the orbit of Conceptual art.

*Frozen Film Frames* of 1971-76 was another group of works affirming Sharits’ painterly vision. These pieces were composed of celluloid strips that were cut into equal lengths and hung vertically side by side, generated according to the earlier graph paper drawings. The strips were arranged serially from left to right and mounted tightly between plexiglass sheets. These works negated the time progression essential for the film by freezing the film frames in one static position. In *Frozen Film Frames* Sharits exposed the actual material of the film, and thereby demystified the filmmaking process by allowing us to study the sequence of the film frames and to see the careful consideration given to every element in its composition.

Visually appealing and holding their ground on the walls of galleries, these works clearly demonstrate the intricate relationship between Sharits’ films and other media. The projected images in a beautiful film installation *Soundstrip/Filmstrip* of 1972 bring to mind Barnett Newman’s compositions – if the artist were suddenly to prefer horizontality instead of his accustomed verticality. Sharits said that in these multiple-screen, looped environmental pieces that were installed for several weeks in galleries or museums he brought the act of presenting and viewing film as close as possible to that of hanging and looking at paintings.

In the late 1970s Sharits felt the pressing need to create independent works in media other than film and began to paint in earnest. Choosing plexiglass sheets, whose transparency reminded him of filmstrips, he covered them with bands of colors still professing his predilection for abstraction. At the same time, however, he

began to acknowledge, at least in his conversations with friends, the nascent interest in narrative and figurative imagery.

In 1979-80, a sabbatical spent on the romantically beautiful Italian Amalfi coast offered Sharits a respite from the duties connected with his position as a professor at the Center for Media Studies at the State University of New York in Buffalo. Having the time to concentrate fully on his own work, he created a series of canvases densely covered with multicolored, parallel, horizontal lines. Still abstract and clearly predetermined, these works grew from the tightly organized cerebral phase of the artist’s earlier work. However, Sharits later saw them as a result of his “wanting to make a composition with living snakes all kinds and colors of snakes which at first stay ‘in place’, just wiggling a little.”<sup>2</sup> These were the first pieces in a large group of works called the *Positano Series*, which occupied him in the early 1980s.

Soon after, the orderly and imaginary painted snakes got out of hand. They metamorphosed into the myriad of squiggly and electrifying lines forming the background for large enigmatic objects and body parts that emerged in Sharits’ paintings after an almost fatal accident. In three-dimensional form, the snakes became part of the Fluxus-inspired assemblages made from smashed up domestic objects: dolls, knives, shards of glass, rubber spiders, bugs, and, of course, snakes. Although the principles of the *Positano Series* – with its almost Minimalist arrangements of parallel lines—persisted in numerous paintings through 1983, it was the formal vocabulary of Neo-Expressionism that began to dominate the artist’s work.

In 1981 Sharits was accidentally shot in a case of mistaken identity. During his long and complicated recuperation he began to draw fragments of figures, frequently using himself as a model. The extended hospital stays brought about an interest in the pathology of the human body as well as the images connected with hospital functions. The tortured limb in *Hand/Infection*, 1983, is certainly self-referential; as there were many complications in the process of Sharits’ healing. Here the hand, the artist’s most precious tool, seems to be invaded by the lethal, infectious agents that run through the blood stream to affect, and possibly paralyze, the whole being. This dreadful condition might have been caused by the *In-fected Pistol*, 1983. The mouth of the gun seems to be teaming with an array of intertwined bacteria, which might inflict injuries far surpassing those of a single gunshot. In both of these works the objects are presented against an abstracted background design of dense, colorful lines that bring back the vision of frenzied snakes.

A major shift in the artist’s outlook in the late 1980s influenced his overall oeuvre. At this time Sharits became interested in narrative cinema and wanted to stage theater productions. The complexity of the human predicament clearly occupied his mind. In painting he fully concentrated on the human figure and its expressive potential.

The tortured faces in the *Portrait Series*, 1991/92 mirror the depth of the artist’s anxiety. For the first time he disposed with preliminary sketches and painted directly on canvas, with bold expressive strokes and wide array of colors. He immersed himself fully in painting.

In the early 1990s Sharits rented a space in New York hoping to attract attention to his new canvases. He was disappointed that only a few galleries, the Nina Freudenheim Gallery and The Artists Gallery in Buffalo among them, paid serious attention to the new direction in his work. But Sharits had been firmly placed within the pantheon of experimental abstract cinema, celebrated and revered as one of its founding fathers and his new transformation into an neo-expressionist painter was of interest to only a few. His paintings were brutal and raw, too much in your face and too autobiographical for



**Hand/Infection IV (1983)**  
acrylic and mixed media on red mylar, 60 x 44 in.

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1994



their time. The fact that Sharits conceived everything he has ever done with the mind and vision of a painter, sketching his films as if they were to be translated into a static medium of painterly composition, was rarely understood. His quest to minimize the traditional boundaries between art forms and to replace them with a more integrated vision within his own oeuvre was not fully appreciated during his lifetime. Thus it is truly rewarding to see in this exhibition Sharits' paintings, drawings, scores, film installations and screenings of his films presented simultaneously. It befits the breadth of the artist's mercurial talent.

Charlotta Kotik  
Curator of Contemporary Art  
Brooklyn Museum of Art  
Brooklyn, New York

1. Sharits, Paul. "Post-Expressionism." *Paul Sharits / Drawings*, exhibition catalogue. Buffalo: The Artists Gallery, 1985, unpaginated.

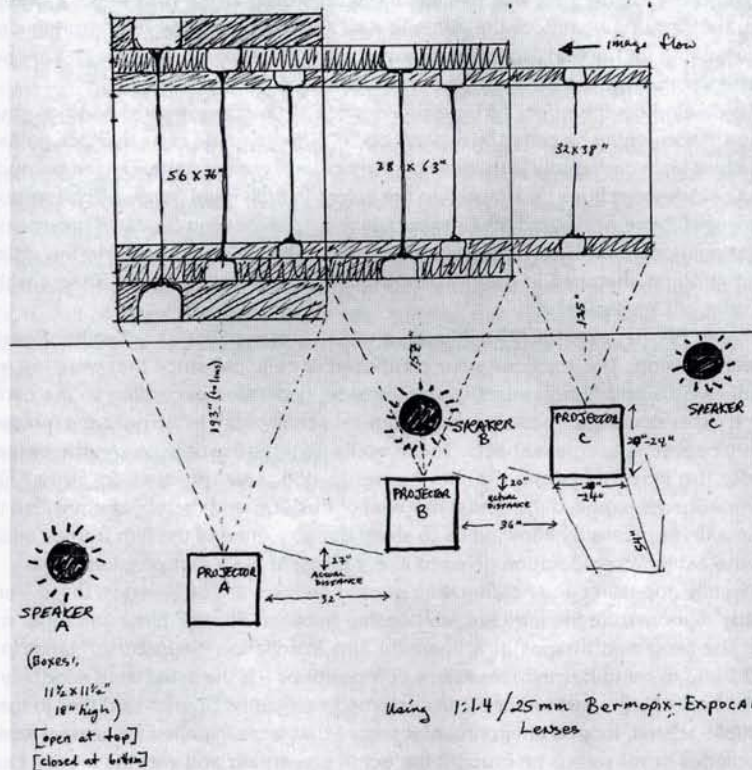
2. *Ibid.*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Burn Test (c. 1982)**  
Notations by the artist and 16 mm filmstrips.

Paul Sharits Archives

Collection of Christopher and Cheri Sharits

"3rd Degree" / a 3-screen + sound installation  
(as done at Hayden Gallery, M.-I.T., 1982)





**INTERROGATING  
THE CINEMATIC  
APPARATUS:  
NOTES ON “3<sup>RD</sup>  
DEGREE” BY  
PAUL SHARITS**

*“I would like to bring  
cinema into a new  
non-exclusive,  
non-theatric  
mode of  
presentation.”*

— Paul Sharits

Paul Sharits is one of the key figures in a group of filmmakers that includes Hollis Frampton, Michael Snow, Ken Jacobs, and Joyce Wieland. During the 1960s and 1970s, these filmmakers were all deeply immersed in creating work that made the material of film, and the experience of filmgoing, their subject. Each artist articulated a variety of metacinematic strategies to explore the complexity of the cinematic text. In selecting a distinctive film by each, I hope to begin to describe the discourse established by these filmmakers that became known as the “Structural” or “Pure Cinema,” a cinematic practice based on examining and acknowledging the structures underpinning the distinctive, material basis of the medium. The Structural Cinema proponents sought a cinema that was purified of the ideological baggage of bourgeois cinematic language. This critique extended to the protocols of traditional narrative cinema, and intended to launch a strategic assault on the defining vocabulary of the classical cinema.

The relationship of sound to the photographic image and its suggested meaning, became, with the advent of sound cinema, a cornerstone of the cinematic representation of reality. This key narrative strategy was purposefully undercut in Hollis Frampton’s *Nostalgia* (1971), which features a disjunction between sound and image. In the film, individual photographs are placed on a hot plate and then eventually burst into flames. On the soundtrack we hear Frampton describing a photograph each time one is placed on the hotplate. However, it is the photo that will next be put on the hotplate and not the image currently seen on screen, that he is describing. The disjunction between the premature description and the image on screen persists throughout the film. Here the locus of sound and image as confirming a cinematic reality is broken in Frampton’s elegant argument.

The notion of crafting a film out of an array of camera positions, points of view, and then shaping the sequences through editing to propel the logic of the narrative was of course also key to the construction of traditional narrative cinema. These techniques were subtly and ironically subverted in Michael Snow’s *Wavelength* (1967). In this work, the spectator follows the action of the camera as it zooms from a static position across the space of a domestic loft. The zoom is slow, constant, and takes forty-five minutes, pausing only occasionally for an action: people come and go, changes in the time of day are visible, the space becomes dark, lights are turned on. The film concludes in a close-up of a single photograph pinned to the far wall of the loft space. An image of waves in a vast oceanic space, the still photograph affixed to the wall is the spectator’s admittance to the outside world. On the soundtrack is the gradually amplified tone of a sine wave. Snow’s ironic play on “nothing happening” is illuminated as the relentless logic of the camera reveals its own complex narrative space.

Ken Jacobs’ *Tom Tom the Piper’s Son* (1969) begins with a short American film from 1905 that we see in its entirety for ten minutes. It features eight tableaux that illustrate the story of this traditional nursery rhyme. Jacobs then takes this early “primitive” film from the beginnings of the classical cinema and subjects it to 85 minutes of relentless deconstruction as he takes apart, rephotographs, and restructures all elements of this piece of filmmaking. Jacobs takes us on a voyage through the film to its very origins—the shades of lighting, the illusions of its sets—to create a stunning celebration of the materials of the cinema.

Narrative expectation and the creation of suspense through the classical tropes of the narrative cinema are totally rejected in Joyce Wieland’s *La Raison Avant La Passion (Reason over Passion)* (1968-69). The 90-minute running time of this film frustrates viewer expectation, pairing footage from across Canada with a soundtrack that features the national anthem and a French lesson, among other sound sources. Running across the bottom of the screen image is a relentless set of constantly permutating anagrams drawn from the title of the film. The demand for closure is frustrated as Wieland employs constantly repeating visual motifs that reject the codes of documentary and narrative representation.

This very partial selection of artists and artworks describes strategies embedded within the theatrical mode of film presentation. They demand a quality of film pro-

jection to preserve the intention of the filmmaker as they use a variety of means to perform a meta-critical examination of the cinematic text. In seeking to subvert and distend the linear narrative logic of traditional filmmaking, they still adhere to the conditions of cinematic presentation and the preservation of the traditional film viewing experience. The sacredness of the projection experience reflects the cinema’s origins in the theater and the great film palaces of the early part of the twentieth century, as the nascent film industry attempted to create a cinematic equivalent to the theaters and opera houses of high culture.

A modernist response to the concept of the film screening space, created within the argument of the Structural Cinema was the “invisible cinema,” a theater designed by Peter Kubelka in 1970 for Anthology Film Archives in New York. The space featured raked incline seats for the spectators, each of whom sat in a pew-like seat with blinders to the left and right to prevent distractions from other filmgoers. A barrier in front of the row one sat in insured that sight lines would not be obstructed by viewers sitting directly in front of one’s seat. The screen itself was masked to fit the aspect ratio of the film, and the entire theater was painted black. Here, the mechanism of the cinematic apparatus found its structural counterpoint in the architecture of the viewing space. Thus the space was purified of all distractions and the social functions of filmgoing as the spectator was expected to devote her attention to the projected image on the screen, and not to anything else. Here, the revolution in filmmaking that was the Structural Cinema found its perfect container, a projection space where the films existed with none of the distractions of popular culture.

The Structural Cinema made the viewer cognizant of the production process and the very material composition of film through self-reflexive strategies that broke the illusion of the cinematic viewing experience. They made us, as spectators, aware of the fact that we were watching a film, that its recorded images create the illusion of reality from images captured on celluloid and projected at twenty-four frames a second. In breaking apart the illusion of cinematic reality, these artists posited a new awareness of how we create and receive the moving image. To these strategies, Paul Sharits posited a means to move beyond the determined location, the visible if unacknowledged place, of the film theater. In his “locational” pieces, as he termed them, Sharits sought to fuse an ethics of production and presentation that determined its approach through the physical placement of the projectors and the stance one took to the content of the installation itself. He sought a democratic space, liberated from the determining ideology and ethos of the marketplace: an open and free environment where the filmgoer’s choice, and the nature of the projected image, were fluid and optional.

In an essay entitled, “Statement Regarding Multiple Screen/Sound ‘Locational’ Film Environments—Installations” (1976),<sup>1</sup> Sharits enumerated four points to define his locational cinema. He sought a cinema that was ethical and democratic, and one that moved out of the ideological purity demanded by some sectors of the avant-garde. Sharits hoped to reach and enrich the filmgoer with the films he so valued and which he devoted his life to producing. He believed that the cinema could manifest democratic ideals in specific ways, which he advanced in the following four points:

If it exists in an open, free, public location. Here Sharits sought to overcome the materialism of the commercial cinema and its authoritarian “directive, illusion-inducing theatrical space,” which precluded the ethos of the open and democratic location he sought. He also sought to free cinema from the very Modernist disavowal of and remove from the everyday.

The form of presentation does not prescribe a definite duration of respondent’s observation. Here Sharits is removing the cinema from the constraints of plot and narrative time. Viewers may come and go, spending as much time as they wish with the installation. The viewer is, in Sharits’ words, not “coerced” into staying a given length of time and film’s basic nature, “like Nature,” should be self-evident without the mechanics of plot.



If the very structure of the composition is non-developmental; there should be a naturalness, an openness, a flow of variations on an immediately apprehensible system of elements: in Nature there exists a dynamic of oscillations and cycles and this should constitute the primary compositional principle of democratic film forms. Sharits opposes this to the montage principles of Russian directors, which were employed to express the "essence" of Marxism formally. Sharits' ideological position to film broached here is within the ethos of the ideals of democracy, with the openness of the film's structure created to invite inquiry and individual choice. The powerful concept of Nature is also employed to suggest the fundamental interaction of primary forces of intentionality.

If the content of the work does not disguise itself but rather makes a specimen of itself; a diagnostic analysis of the qualities and functions of film as physical-perceptual fact is called for. Here Sharits describes the radical impulse at the center of his pro-filmic argument, namely, that the experience of the work should "emulate the reflecting surface of a large body of water, which has an intriguing structure but which is neither didactic nor narrative." Unlike the stasis of Snow's enigmatic photograph seen at the conclusion of *Wavelength*, Sharits' images and the viewing experience he is seeking to create are marked by a combination of abstract and color film frames and fragmentary film strips, all composed and projected in infinite combinations to be screened on wall surfaces. The viewer becomes immersed in the materiality of the moving images, with multiple projectors creating a constantly expanding set of changing permutations that play as long as the film loops run through the projectors.

Sharits' interest in the ontology of film evidenced in his writings on installation practices gradually changed, as he became interested in behavioral psychology and medical pathology. These twin interests led to an engagement with the human image and a move away from the abstract and material treatments of the filmstrips. In expanding his interests from the ontological to the cognitive and psychological, Sharits maintained his belief, I would argue, in the democratic and viewer-engaged experience with filmgoing.

In *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree* (1982), composed of three specially modified 16mm film loop projectors, Sharits combines elements of the "earlier" ontological position with his later psychological concerns to create a locational piece that would set up a slippery structure and complex negotiation for the viewer. This is a space of complete interaction and optional choices nuanced through the narrative fragments that appear in the film loops, which themselves appear to burn and melt away through his printing of the manipulated film frames. In *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree*, Sharits positioned the three projectors at different distances from the gallery wall so that each projected image differed in scale. He then synchronized the movement of the three films through the projectors to develop visual relationships between the projected images. And because the two larger images are successive refilmings of the first, layers of time are created, thus disrupting and expanding the temporal dimension of the original footage.

Sharits confronts the material basis of film celluloid in *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree* by "burning" the individual frames. Embedded within the refilmed and shifting scale of the moving images is the face of a young woman who appears to be under interrogation with a lighted match held before her face. Sharits' description of *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree* identifies the strategic relationship between the fragility of the medium and human vulnerability.

In Part I (or screen A, in the three-screen version) there is an image of a moving strip of film, showing sequences of a close-up of a match being waved somewhat aggressively in front of a young woman's apprehensive face. The soundtrack: occasional match striking and rattlesnake warnings and the words, "Look, I won't talk." The strip of images flows at varying speeds, sometimes blurring and occasionally slowing and coming to a stop, whereupon the image/celluloid begins bubbling and burning, then pulls away, flowing on and stopping, burning, flowing, etc. The second part (or center screen in the installation) is the first part rephotographed; again, it's "stop and go"—but here we also see images of burns, which sometimes stop and burn (a sort of second-degree burning). In Part III we see the rephotographed

image of Part II, which contains Part I, so it is a film of a film of a film (of a film of the original film of the victim being "interrogated" with the match); we see three sets of sprocket holes and images of burns being burned yet again.

The film is about the fragility of the film medium and human vulnerability; both the filmic and the human images resist threat/intimidation/mutilation: the victim is defiant and the filmstrip also struggles on, both "under fire." It is a somewhat violent drama but it is also an ironically comic work, and there is a formal beauty in the destructiveness of the burning film. While the film (from section to section or from screen to screen, in the installation format) develops, becomes more visually complex, successively regenerates (as the figurative images degenerate), it nevertheless implies no finality; rather, even in its three-screen "vicious circularity" form, *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree* suggests endurance, extension, and ongoingness.<sup>2</sup>

The "ongoingness" of the film loops and the "endurance" in the scene of the woman under interrogation positions this work in a crucial juncture between the materiality of the film and the spectator's negotiation as a viewer experiencing the work. Here Sharits has employed the meta-cinematic strategies of the Structural Cinema to expose the melodramatic narrative embedded within the bourgeois entertainment cinema. As the film loops play out the destruction and rebirth of the celluloid, the representational image comes into focus within the specific cinematic frame of interrogation. The woman under threat is circularly linked to the film under destruction, as both return continually to begin their struggle for survival again. Sharits' loops play an eternal return of film's birth, consumption in flames, and rebirth.

As the viewer moves about the space of *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree* and moves among the different scales of projected images, his or her shadow is cast and becomes an element playing against the projected images on the wall. Here the viewer is caught in Sharits' democratic space of options. Unlike the woman in the film, the viewer is free to extricate him or herself. Thus a tension between the reality and the phantasy of the cinematic projection is played out as a continually unfolding struggle between the artist, the medium of film, and the viewer. Sharits sought in *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree* to join the utopian hopes of his first locational pieces with his later insights into the human condition. The democratic space of the locational works opened in *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree* to admit the forces and tensions of the cinema's and artist's struggle to contain and reveal the power of the real and the poetics of the imaginary.

John G. Hanhardt  
Senior Curator of Film and Media Arts  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum  
New York, New York

1. Paul Sharits, "Statement Regarding Multiple Screen/Sound 'Locational' Film Environments—Installations (1976)," *Film Culture* No. 65-66, 1978, pp. 79–80.
2. Paul Sharits, "Paul Sharits: *3<sup>rd</sup> Degree*," *The New American Filmmakers Series*, Whitney Museum of American Art, Program Note 16, 1984.

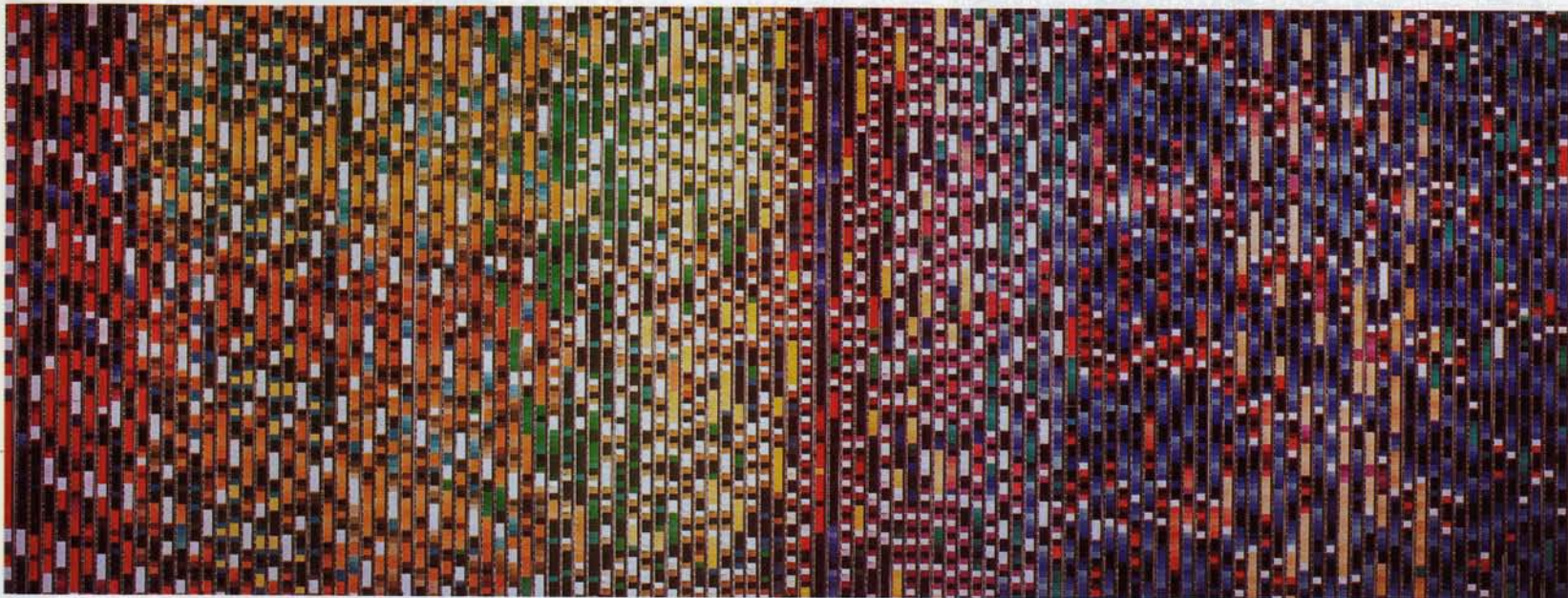


**Detail from *Frozen Film*  
*Frame Series*,  
(c. 1966-76)**

*16 mm filmstrips and plexiglass,  
diptych, 29 x 75 in.*

Collection of the  
Burchfield-Penney Art Center,

Gift of Christopher and  
Cheri Sharits, 1994





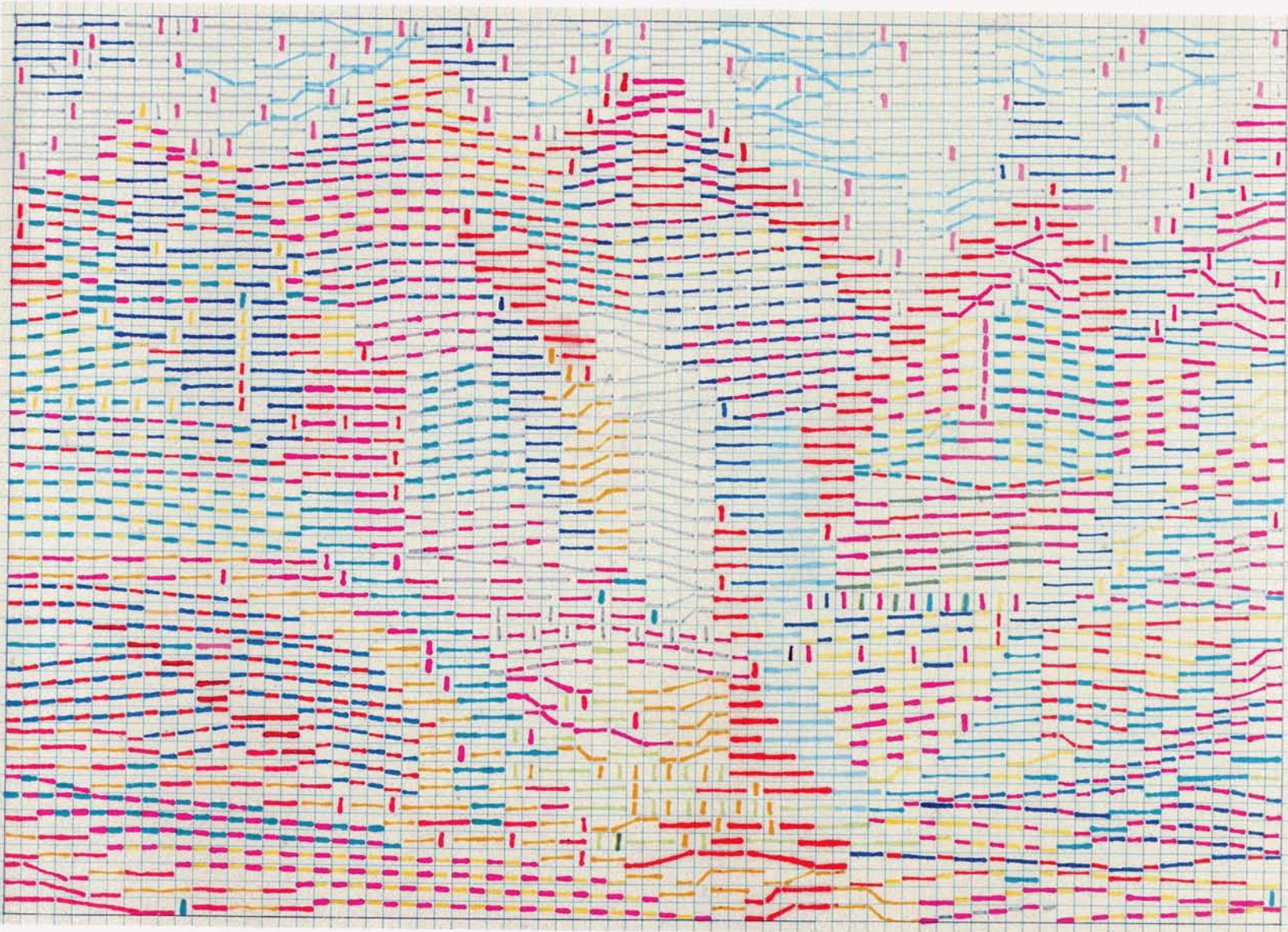




paul  
**SHARITS**

**Score 3A for  
Declarative Mode  
(c. 1976-77)**  
*colored ink on grid paper,  
14 x 21 in.*

Collection of the  
Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Sara Hornbacher, 1988





paul  
**SHARITS**

**Buffalo April, 1982**  
score, black and colored ink  
on paper, 10 x 7 3/8 in.

Collection of Mary Ann Bruno

115

Edition Peters. *Red.* #221  
*Buffalo April* for Mary Ann, Love, Paul Sharits '82



paul  
**SHARITS**



**Untitled**  
**(c. 1983)**  
*acrylic on plexiglass,*  
*34 x 34 7/8 in.*

Collection of Mr. and  
Mrs. Robert Freudenheim

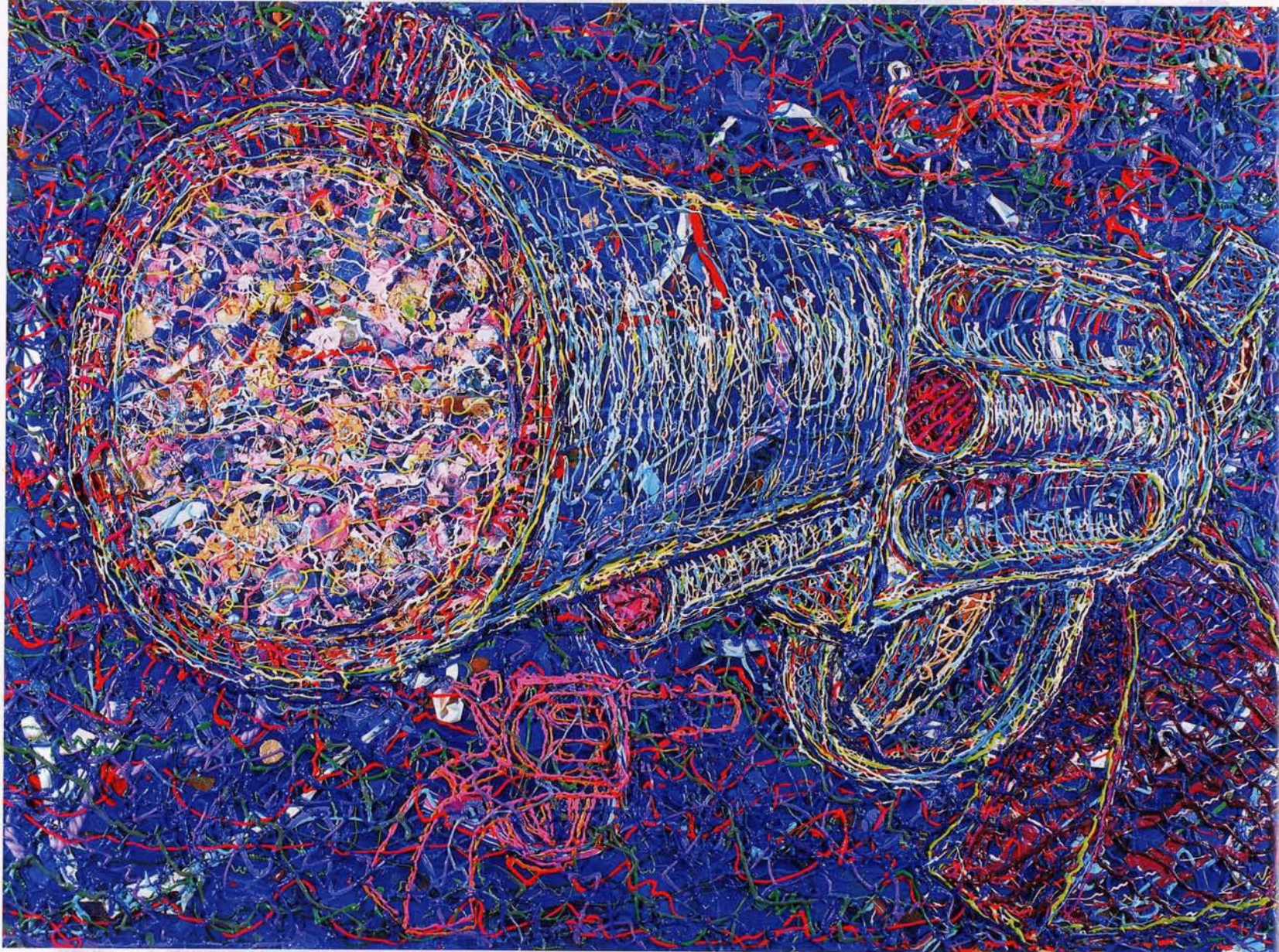


**Infected Pistol  
(1983)**

*acrylic and mixed media on blue  
mylar, 44 x 60 in.*

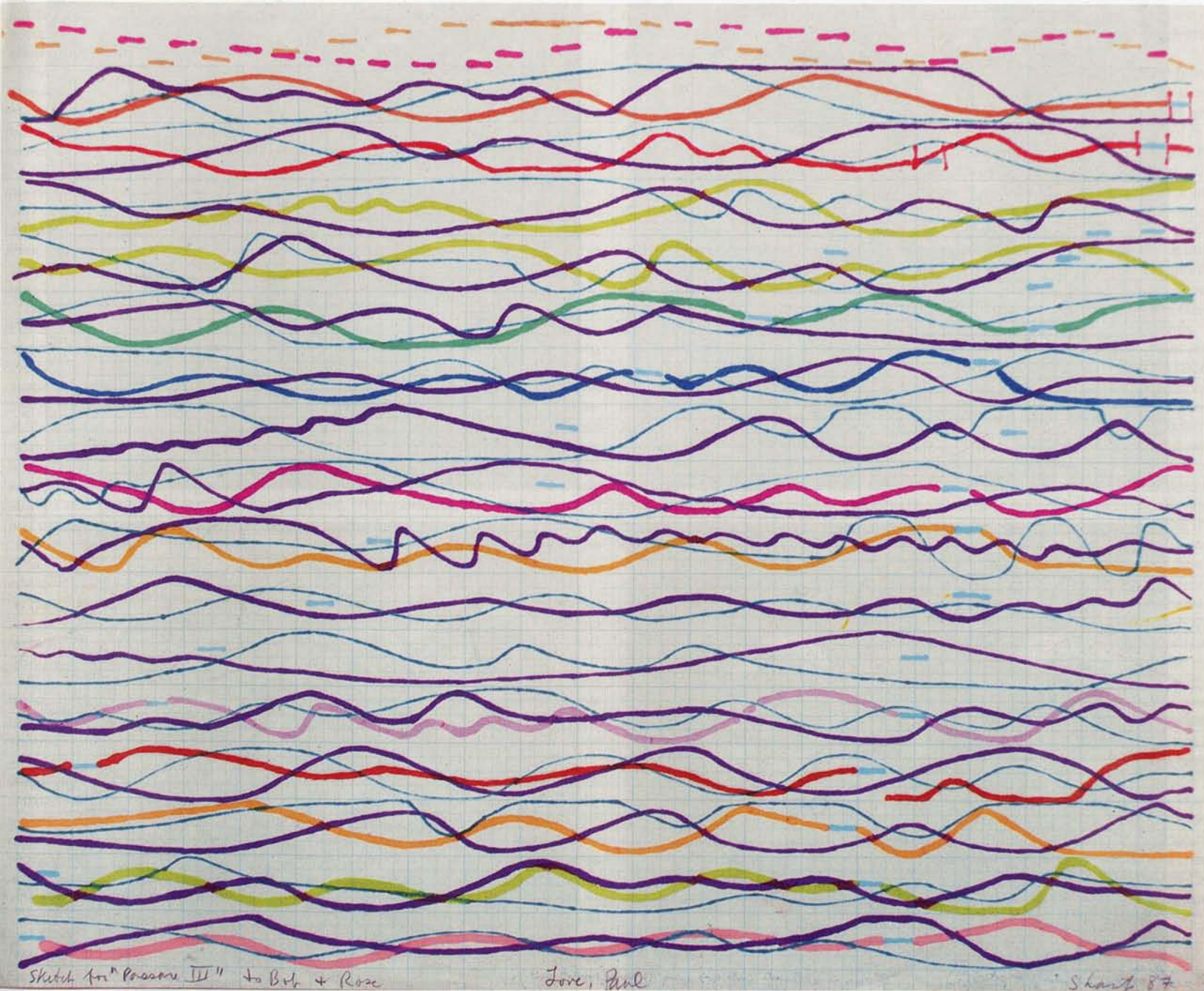
Collection of the  
Burchfield-Penney Art Center,

Gift of Christopher and  
Cheri Sharits, 1995





**Sketch for "Passion III"**  
**(1987)**  
double-sided marker drawing on  
graph paper, 17 x 22 in.  
Collection of Rose Popper



Sketch for "Passion III" to Bob + Rose

Love, Paul

Sharits 87



**paul**  
**SHARITS**

**4 untitled works from  
Portrait Series  
(1991-92)**

*acrylic and mixed media  
on canvas, 46 x 46 in. each*

Collection of the  
Burchfield-Penney Art Center,

Gift of Christopher and  
Cheri Sharits, 1994





Soon after I first met Paul Sharits he became despondent, though I expect he had been despondent before. This time, he had just broken off with a woman named Laurie who was a designer, and he had lost track of himself or halfheartedly tried to kill himself. I'm not sure which it was, and perhaps it was both. He ended up recuperating at home, holding court all the while as students brought in soup or other things, and that, it seemed, made him feel better.

Every so often something like this would happen to Paul. For a while it was just about every spring. One spring he fell off a roof of a friend's house in Colorado—or maybe it was through a skylight—and that took him off track, again. Several years later, he was knifed. He was hanging around with people who carried knives and weren't the safest sorts of friends. Then he was in a bar—not the best of bars—and he was shot in the stomach. He said it was an accident. He said that he was mistaken for someone else. There were other incidents, not as bad as that, that continued until close to the end of his life. There were many times that he had had too much alcohol, or too many drugs, which seemed to go together with the dark times. Paul Sharits had a dark side. You could see it coming. He didn't even have to use his signals, like the strange pin that he wore sometimes, that Day of the Dead skeleton pin. The darkness showed up in his eyes. They lost their brightness; they drifted.

But while he had this dark side, he also had some remarkable days in the light. For all his self-destruction, he was one of the most stunning artists I have known, and the best of friends. He worked so very hard at it, at both things, really—at being the best of artists and the best of friends. He worked very hard, also, at being a teacher and theorist, not only of art, but of education, especially. He worked hard at being a good educator. And he made films, and sculpture, and paintings, and installations, and sound works, and poetry, and these works were very good. These works were wonderful to think about, and feel, and write about because they were truly unique, stretching into what Beckett so aptly called "The Unnamable." Sharits as well wanted to make legitimate theater and narrative feature films, and he made studies and plans to do that. But he despaired. "My goodness," he wrote to me, "I just can't pursue half a dozen careers at once." He closed with a sentence fragment: "Just have to put limits on ambitions, especially now... I'm in such a spin all the time." His recovery from the gunshot wound was difficult, and he kept running into complications, year after year.

The year was 1989. We had discussed doing an exhibition for international tour just like the one that this catalog accompanies, eleven years later. Sharits was old fashioned like that—writing letters where a phone call would have served. We weren't using e-mail then.

Even though the world was spinning for him, Paul was busy thinking about doing theater and narrative film, and finding time, as well, to manage his career and his teachings. At the same time, he was trying to manage his recuperation from the shotgun wound that had carved up his chest and to direct salons for discussions about theater and narrative film in his big, comfortable city house in Buffalo. He'd stage openings in his home, too, for shows of paintings or photographs or films or music by friends and students. These events, through the years, were especially wonderful, sometimes volatile. And before we knew it, he died—like a thief in the night. Surely things had been rough for him; but even though he had flirted so regularly with death before, his death came as a surprise. He was just 50, the same age, oddly, that his colleagues in Buffalo, James Blue and Hollis Frampton, were when they died, just a few years earlier.

I shared that big green Buffalo house with Paul for a couple of months in the early 1970s, but before too long it became too much for me. He had two ways of being then: one was detailed and exacting; the other, freewheeling and unstructured. His personality extended across a divide that might be called on one hand classical and on the other romantic. On one side he was thoughtful, considerate, formally civilized; on the other impulsive, rash, even boorish. I think Paul was the first person I knew who was addicted to post-its. He'd leave them on the door to my room, encouraging the discovery of a new book or essay or he'd post an idea to himself or

leave a scheduling reminder on his editing table. These fragmentary notes pulled together the chaos. Films from friends and videos would appear on the doorstep. Throughout the time when he was sober, ideas streamed through the house. He made notes to himself, written on his hands, so he wouldn't forget. He pinned skeletons to his clothes so he would not forget death, I suppose, this death that seemed to wait for him around so many corners.

In the midst of the chaos, he had a cracking good mind. He cared about students; he spoke often about ways to reshape an educational experience (really, about doing a better job) and then he'd go on a binge and not show up for a few days and return hung over, out of sorts. As if to reign in the demons, his work was based in a precision that could be rendered mathematically. He made meticulous designs for his movies—film scores with little jewel-like colored squares on graph paper—and had assistants continue the work, among them Robert Longo and Cindy Sherman, who already were gifted artists and founders of the artist gallery in Buffalo named Hallwalls. These little squares of color marked the path toward the creation of transmitted screens of color that was the brand of a good part of his career. These little squares of color later led to film "sculptures," ribbons of celluloid sandwiched into plexiglass as artifacts, light transmitting objects called *Frozen Film Frames*. These hung near the windows in his house for a while, before they were sold. On the other wall in the living room/studio was a poster of Andy Warhol showing his wounds.

Sharits later made other streams of color, the first, a wonderful film of water and a scratched emulsion called *S:TREAM:S:S:ECTION:S:SECTION:S:S:SECTIONED* (1968-71), then, many years later, in a stream of acrylic paint applied with a cake decorator on canvas. His life was a stream that moved between despondency and ebullience. Bikers showed up late some nights and it got ugly, and other nights students showed up and sustained him, lifted him up, and other nights he tore himself down.

He needed to communicate. That much is clear. Recuperating in a hospital from the gunshot wound, he drew what he could—his foot or his arm—and he showed in these paintings snakes or jewels spilling like blood and guts out of his body, showing as if through layers of skin the stuff of flesh and life. Finally, at what was to be the end of his life, early in the 1990s, his work turned to himself as subject. This was work that presumed the foundations he had built up, thinking about film as film—about the grain structure of emulsion and its scratches, for instance. Now, he turned a video camera upon himself and his travels and tried to record in as common a way as he could, without pretense, what it was like to be alive and moving through the world in his time, thinking about things, even thinking about movies. He shared these videos with a small group of us one evening at his house. Nervously, he acknowledged he had forgotten to put out any food, running about trying to pull it together, forgetting at first to show the video, drinking a good bit that night even though he had thought at the beginning that he wouldn't. I don't know what became of the video, but I do have several of the notes he sent, worried that people would forget him, or that he had given some offense. Those last years were rugged, what with his wounds and his awful legal struggle with the University at Buffalo.

I remember, of course, what he called his "inescapable anxiety" that got in his way, to be sure, and probably also fueled his incredible genius. I remember those spectacular enduring gifts of art, like *Axiomatic Granularity*, from 1972-73, which Paul dedicated to the artist Jonas Mekas, always his good friend. This is the most stunningly simple and mightily evocative film, a film about simply the grain of film that holds the foundation for imagining everything there is, and remembering him. For me, this is Sharits, Unnamable, and a very mighty fortress, at that.

Anthony Bannon

Director

George Eastman House—International Museum of Photography & Film

Rochester, New York



All films are 16 mm.

**F:ILM  
O:GRAPHY**

- 1962 WINTERCOURSE. Black & white. Silent. 12 min.
- 1965-68 RAZOR BLADES. Two-screen projection. Color and black & white. Stereo sound. 25 min.
- 1966 PIECE MANDALA/END WAR. Color and black & white. Silent. 5 min.  
RAY GUN VIRUS. Color. Sound. 14 min.  
WORD MOVIE/FLUXFILM 29. Color. Sound. 3-3/4 min.
- 1968 N:O:T:H:I:N:G. Color. Sound. 36 min.  
T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G. Color. Sound. 12 min.
- 1968-70 S:TREAM:S:S:ECTION:S:ECTION:S:S:ECTIONED. Color. Sound. 42 min.
- 1971 INFERENCE CURRENT. Color. Sound. 8 min.  
SOUNDSTRIP/FILMSTRIP, Four-screen installation piece. Color. Quadraphonic sound. 10 ft. high x 30 ft. wide. Continuous projection.
- 1971-76 ANALYTICAL STUDIES I: THE FILM FRAME. Color. Silent. 30 min.  
ANALYTICAL STUDIES II: UNFRAMED LINES. Color. Silent. 30 min.
- 1972-73 AXIOMATIC GRANULARITY. Color. Sound. 20 min.
- 1973-74 ANALYTICAL STUDIES III: COLOR FRAME PASSAGES. Color. Silent. 30 min.  
DAMAGED FILM LOOP (later titled THE FORGETTING OF IMPRESSIONS AND INTENTIONS). Color. Quadraphonic sound. 12 ft. high x 8 ft. wide.  
SYNCHRONOUSOUNDTRACKS, Three-screen film installation piece. Color. "Triphonic" sound. 10 ft. high x 24 ft. wide. Continuous projection.
- 1974 COLOR SOUND FRAMES. Color. Sound. 26-1/2 min.  
VERTICAL CONTIGUITY. Two-screen projection. Color. Sound. 15 min.
- 1975 APPARENT MOTION. Color. Sound. 36 min.  
SHUTTER INTERFACE. Four-screen installation piece. Color. Quadraphonic sound. 64 in. high x 24 ft. wide. Continuous projection.
- 1975-76 ANALYTICAL STUDIES IV: BLANK COLOR FRAMES. Color. Silent. 19-1/2 min.
- 1976 DREAM DISPLACEMENT. Four-screen installation piece. Color. Quadraphonic sound. 10 ft. high x 30 ft. wide. Continuous projection.  
EPILEPTIC SEIZURE COMPARISON. Two-screen film installation piece. Color. Sound. 10 ft. high x 7 ft. wide in metallic trapezoidal enclosure, 7 ft. x 19 ft. x 18 ft. Continuous projection.  
TAILS. Color. Silent. 4 min.
- 1976-77 DECLARATIVE MODE. Color. Silent. 38 min. at 24 fps or 50 min. at 18 fps. Double projection.
- 1977-78 EPISODIC GENERATION. Color. Sound. 30 min.
- 1977-84 BRANCUSI'S SCULPTURE ENSEMBLE AT TIRGU JIU. Two projector piece, one image projected within the larger image. Silent. 21 min.
- 1982 3<sup>RD</sup> DEGREE. Color. Sound. 23-1/2 min.  
BAD BURNS. Silent. 5-3/4 min.
- 1987 RAPTURE. Color. Sound. 3/4-inch Videotape. 17 min.





**Death  
(1965)**

*Artist's book, designed and  
printed by Paul Sharits  
at Indiana University.*

Reproduced by permission from  
The Poetry/Rare Books Collection,  
University Libraries, University at Buffalo.

**Paul Sharits Chronology including Selected Group Exhibitions and Film Festivals**

- 1943 Born July 8 in Denver, Colorado
- 1962 Founded the Denver Experimental Film Society
- 1964 B.F.A. in Painting (cum laude), University of Denver, Denver, Colorado
- 1965 Founded the Indiana University Experimental Cinema Group, Bloomington, Indiana  
Designed and printed two artist's books: *Death* and *Mirror Meat*.
- 1966 M.F.A. in Visual Design (cum laude), Indiana University  
*20 Years of American Personal Cinema*, National Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan  
Designed and printed artist's book: *Open the Door: An Inclusion*.
- 1966 *5<sup>th</sup> Avant-Garde Festival*, New York, New York  
Poetry Project, St. Mark's Church, New York, New York  
*4<sup>th</sup> International Experimental Film Competition*, Knokke-Le-Zoute, Belgium
- 1967-70 Administered courses in personal filmmaking, photography and experimental design, Maryland Institute of Art, Baltimore
- 1968 Founded the Personal Cinema Group, Maryland Institute of Art  
Administered film workshop, Aspen School of Contemporary Art (Summer)  
Production grant, American Film Institute  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Yale Film Festival*, New Haven, Connecticut; N:O:T:H:I:N:G received Honorable Mention by Michael Snow  
and was given one of several 2<sup>nd</sup> prizes by Ed Emshwiller  
*Tokyo Film Art Festival*, Sogetsu Kaikan Hall, Tokyo, Japan  
One-artist exhibition (screening), Jewish Museum, New York, New York  
One-artist exhibition (screening), Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York
- 1969 Judge, Yale Film Festival  
*7<sup>th</sup> Avant-Garde Festival*, New York, New York  
Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, New York  
*XXIII Festival d'Avignon*, Avignon, France  
*Experimenta 3*, Frankfurt, West Germany  
*7 1/2 New York Film Festival*, Elgin Theater, New York, New York  
*La Quinzaine des Realisateurs*, Cannes, France
- 1970 Ford Foundation Humanities Grant, Antioch College  
Developed an undergraduate film program for the Art Department of Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio  
*Incontri Internazionali Del Cinema*, Sorrento, Italy  
*Happening & Fluxus*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, West Germany  
*International Underground Festival*, London, England  
ART 70, Kunsthau, Basel, Switzerland  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York  
*Information*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York  
*Filmfestival Berlin*, Berlin, Germany  
*La Biennale di Venezia: Seminario Internazionale di Studi sul cinema "underground,"* Venice, Italy  
Museum Hamburg, West Germany  
Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland
- 1970-73 Administered film production, film history and film aesthetics courses, Antioch College



- 1971 Designed physical facility for filmmaking and film studies, Antioch College Art Building  
Participated in formation of a Communications Department, Antioch College  
Ford Foundation Humanities Grant, Antioch College  
*Festival du Underground*, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris, France  
*Sonsbeek 71*, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, The Netherlands  
Stadtmuseum, Bonn, West Germany  
*Art 1*, Internationale Kunst-Messe, Basel, Switzerland
- 1972 Developed an undergraduate documentary film program and a graduate film studies program, Antioch College  
Part-time consultant to Special Programs division of Oregon State Executive Department, Salem, Oregon. Application of General systems models to human perception behavior.  
One-artist exhibition, Bykert Gallery, New York, New York  
One-artist exhibition (screening), Anthology Film Archives, New York, New York  
*10*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas  
*Hamburger Filmschau 72*, Hamburg, West Germany  
*Internationale Kunst-und Informationsmesse*, Düsseldorf, West Germany  
*Form & Structure in Recent Cinema*, Vancouver Art Gallery, British Columbia  
Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio  
*Arts Systems II*, Museo de Arte Moderno de la Ciudad, Buenos Aires, Argentina  
*Fluxshoe*, traveling exhibition shown in Falmouth School of Art, Exeter University, Croydon, Museum of Modern Art Oxford, Cardiff, Nottingham, Blackburn & Hastings, England
- 1973 Moved to Buffalo, New York  
Administered courses on film history and analysis of film, Summer Institute in the Making, Knowing & Judging of Film/Media, State University of New York at Buffalo (Summer)  
Administered filmmaking and analysis courses and research seminars, Center for Media Study, State University of New York at Buffalo; Director of Undergraduate Studies  
*Options & Alternatives: Some Directions in Recent Art*, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut  
*Underground Festival 3*, Filmstudio 70, Rome, Italy  
*Art 3*, Internationale Kunst-Messe, Basel, Switzerland  
*Festival of Independent Film*, National Film Theatre, London, England  
*Performances, Music, Film*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas  
*Internationale Kunst-und Informationsmesse*, Düsseldorf, West Germany  
*L'Avant-Garde Américaine*, Studio Christine 2, Paris, France  
*The Mystic Circle*, Burnaby Art Gallery, Burnaby, British, Columbia  
*Six Filmmakers*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
- 1974 National Endowment for the Arts, Public Media Grant for 6-screen environmental film piece, Washington, DC  
One-artist exhibition, Bykert Gallery, New York, New York  
One-artist exhibition, Galerie Ricke, Cologne, West Germany  
*KLANG/LICHT/DUFT-Spiele*, Theatre am Turm, Frankfurt, West Germany  
*Film As/On Art*, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.  
*New Forms in Film: Cinéma d'avant-garde américaine*, Maison des Congres, Montreux, Switzerland  
*Projected Images*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota  
*Experiment in Film*, Casino Knokke-Heist, Belgium  
*Metamusik-Festival*, Berlin, West Germany
- 1975 Creative Artists Public Service Program (CAPS) grant, New York  
Artist-in-residence, Artpark, Lewiston, New York, July  
One-artist exhibition (screening), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York  
One-artist exhibition (screening), Galerie Projection, Cologne, West Germany
- 1975 Bicentennial Film Project Grants (for 40 minute sound & color *Declarative Mode*) from the National Endowment for the Arts and New York State Council on the Arts





- One-artist exhibition and complete film retrospective, *Paul Sharits: Dream Displacement and Other Projects*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York  
*Art Film Tour 1974/75*, circulated by Arts Council of Great Britain  
 Artpark, Lewiston, New York  
*Drawings III, USA*, Städtisches Leverkusen Museum, Leverkusen, West Germany  
*Art 6/75*, International Art Fair, Basel, Switzerland  
 Galerie Projection, Cologne, West Germany  
*Luminous Realities*, Wright State University Art Gallery, Dayton, Ohio  
*Independent Filmmakers Series*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York  
 Bykert Gallery, New York, New York  
*Evenings for New Film*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York  
*Art Transition*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston, Massachusetts  
*ArtpArkArt*, Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York  
*International Art Fair*, Galerie Ricke, Cologne, West Germany  
 Stabbed
- 1976
- Structural Film Retrospective*, National Film Theatre, London, England  
*Une Histoire du Cinema*, Centre Nationale d'Art et de Culture Georges-Pompidou, Paris, France  
*Monuments Durch Medien Ersetzen*, State Art Museum, Wuppertal, West Germany  
*A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York  
*Fluxus-show*, Gallery A, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
*New American Filmmakers*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York  
 M. L. D'Arc Gallery, New York, New York
- 1977
- One-artist exhibition, Galerie Ricke, Koln, (Cologne), West Germany  
 One-artist exhibition, Gallery 'A,' Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
 Four-day retrospective of films, Centre Nationale d'Art et de Culture Georges-Pompidou, Paris, France  
 One-artist exhibition, Droll/Kolbert Gallery, New York, New York  
 Premiere screenings of Bicentennial film grant project, DECLARATIVE MODE, with lecture:  
 Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; St. Louis Museum of Art, St. Louis, Missouri; Carnegie Institute Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, California; Pacific Film Archives/University Museum, California  
 One-artist exhibition, Galerie Waalkens, Finsterwolde  
*Documenta 6*, film installation and program of films, Kassel, Germany  
*Illusion and Reality*, travelling exhibition to 6 major museums in Australia  
*Some Trends and Provocations in the American Film Avant-Garde*, Carpenter Center for Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
*Time*, Philadelphia College Art Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
*Words*, Downtown Whitney Museum, New York, New York  
 Film T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G broadcast on Ontario Education Television
- 1978
- Creative Artists Public Service Program (CAPS) grant, New York  
 One-artist exhibition, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
 Artist-in-residence, ZBS Foundation, March 30-April 2  
*Film Als Film*, travelling exhibition to Kolnisher Kunstverein; Akademie der Kunst, Berlin; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Wurttembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart; and Museum des Kommunalaen Kino, Frankfurt  
*Color Abstractions: Film*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York  
*Les Poles du Cinema*, L'Espace Lyonnais d'Art Contemporain, Lyon, France  
*Images*, chateau de la Napoule  
*A History of the American Avant-Garde Cinema: European Itinerary*, circulated by the American Federation of Arts to museums in Oslo, Stockholm, Munich, Berlin, Antwerp and Barcelona  
 'A' Collection, "A" Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 1979
- One-person film installation and related work, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada  
 Complete film retrospective, Anthology Film Archives, New York, New York



C,H,R,O,N,  
O,L,O,G,Y

2

DEATH

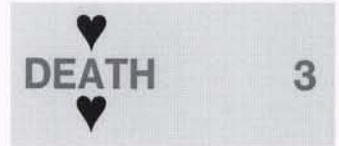
- Fluxus the Most Radical and Experimental Art Movement of the 1960s*, Harry Ruhé, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
*Film as Art*, American Film Festival, New York, New York  
*Third International Avant-Garde Festival*, National Film theatre, London, England  
*Group Exhibition/Graphic Arts*, Verzameling Tromp Meesters, Venlo, The Netherlands  
SUNY Film/Video Festival, New Paltz, New York  
*Beau Fleuve*, Paris; L'Espace Lyonnais d'Action Culturelle, Lyon; Musée Cantini, Marseille, France
- 1979-80 Worked in Positano, Italy
- 1980 *Beau Fleuve*, Media Study/Buffalo, Buffalo, New York  
*Whitney Biennial Film Exhibition*, Center for Music, Drama and Art, Olympics, Lake Placid, New York  
*Fluxus*, Geneva State Museum, Geneva, Switzerland  
*7 Films*, traveling exhibition circulated by the British Arts Council throughout Great Britain  
*Frames*, Hunter Gallery, New York  
*Camere Incatate/Espansione Dell'Immagine*, Palazzo Reale, Milan, Italy  
*The Pleasure Dome*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden  
*Avant-Garde Film in America 1939-1980*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 1981 One-person film installation and related work, Wright State University Art Gallery, Dayton, Ohio  
*Biennial Exhibition*, Whitney Museum of Art, New York, New York  
*Fluxus Revisited*, Media Study/Buffalo, Buffalo, New York  
*Il Gergo Inquieto*, Genoa, Italy  
*AKI Fluxfest*, Academy of Fine Arts, Enschede, The Netherlands  
*Cinematographies Experimentalis*, Avon Film Festival, France  
*Adicinx Experimental/Utopia Galante Avignon 1 Festival*, Avignon, France  
*Fissilms*, Une Semaine de Cinema Experimental et d'Art Video, FNAC Auditorium, Paris, France  
*Fluxus Etc.*, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan  
*Soundings*, Neuberger Museum, State University of New York, Purchase, New York  
*Construction in Process in the Art of the 70's*, Stowarzyszenie Tworcow Kultury, Lodz, Poland  
*Criss-Cross*, Yellowstone Art Center, Billings, Montana
- 1981-82 *Schemes/Installation Drawings of the '70's*, traveling exhibition: Emily Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York; Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia; St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York; Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; Rhode Island School of Design, Providence; Musée d'Art Contemporain, Cité du Havre, Montréal, Canada; Lehigh University Art Galleries, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania  
*Drawing distinctions: American Drawings of the Seventies*, traveling exhibition: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humleback, Denmark; Kunsthalle, Basel, Switzerland; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich and Wilhelm-Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen, West Germany
- 1982 Critically wounded by a shotgun blast as a result of mistaken identity, July  
*Mediums of Language*, Installations, Hayden Gallery, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
*Installation '82*, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island  
*Theatre Arts Plastiques Musique*, L'Atelier Theatral d'Alain Timar, Avignon, France  
*Beyond Measurement*, DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts  
*Echange Entre Artistes/1931-1982/Pologne-USA*, Musée d'Art de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France  
*Amsterdam 60/80*, Fodor Museum, The Netherlands  
*Film Polski: (Construction in Process)*, Documenta 7, Kassel, West Germany  
*Ten Years of Living Cinema*, Collective for Living Cinema, New York, New York  
*'60 '80: Attitudes/Concepts/Images*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 1984 *Paul Sharits / New Work*, Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, New York
- 1985 One-artist exhibition, *Paul Sharits / Drawings*, The Artists' Gallery, Buffalo, New York
- 1989 One-artist exhibition, *Paul Sharits: Drawings*, Galerire A/Harry Ruhé, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
*Fluxus & Happenings*, Galerie 1900-2000 and Galerie du Genie, Paris, France



# SHARITS

## C,H,R,O,N, O,L,O,G,Y

EXHIBITION  
in Buffalo, New York, 1985



**Paul Sharits with  
Rose Popper at his  
exhibition, *Paul Sharits:  
Drawings 1985*,  
in The Artists Gallery, Buffalo, New York,  
1985.**

- 1990 *Fluxus Subjektiv*, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna, Austria  
*An Evening of Films by Paul Sharits*, Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York
- 1991 One-artist exhibition, *Paul Sharits / Word Paintings & Fluxus Pieces*, plus performance, "Fluxaction," Big Orbit Gallery, Buffalo, New York
- 1991-92 *Fluxattitudes*, Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York and the New Museum, New York, New York
- 1993 Died July 8 in Buffalo, New York



*(Photo credit: Victor Shanchuk, Jr.)*







## Paintings and 2-D Mixed Media Works

*Positano VIII*, 1980

acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 inches

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1994

*Positano XIII/B*, 1980

acrylic on canvas, 30 x 48 in.

Collection of Rose Popper

*Metallic Anxiety II*, 1981

from the *Positano Series*

acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 in.

Collection of Mary Ann Bruno

*Posalo V/C*, 1982

acrylic on linen, 96 x 60 in.

Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo,  
George Cary and Charles W. Goodyear Funds, 1983

*Untitled, Posalo Series*, 1982

acrylic on canvas, 48 x 30 in.

Collection of Rose Popper

*Untitled*, c. 1983

acrylic on plexiglass

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Freudenheim

*Hand/Infection IV*, 1983

acrylic and mixed media on red mylar, 60 x 44 inches

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1995

*Infected Pistol*, 1983

acrylic and mixed media on blue mylar, 44 x 60 inches

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1995

*Squiggle Painting*, c. 1983

acrylic on canvas with glass shards, 24 x 36 in.

Private collection.

*Insectual*, 1985

multi-panel acrylic on canvas and shag rug, 96 x 177 inches

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1994

*BLEED FALSE*, 1986

acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 3-panel, 50 x 101-3/4 inches

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1994

*RAPE*, c. 1986

4-panel painting, acrylic on canvas, foil, and cardboard,

R 34 x 20 in., A 34 x 20 in., P 38 x 27-3/4 in., E 24 x 21-3/4 in.

Private collection

*10 Untitled Works, Portrait Series*, 1991-92

acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 46 x 46 in. each

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1994

## Frozen Film Frames

*Frozen Film Frame Series*, c. 1966-76

16 mm filmstrips and plexiglass, 29-1/2 x 75 inches

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1994

*Frozen Film Frame Series*, c. 1971-76

[Possibly from *Dream Displacement*, 1976]

16 mm filmstrips and plexiglass, 47-1/4 x 68-5/8 inches

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1994

*Frozen Film Frame Series*, c. 1971-76

[Possibly *Reel B-D of Shutter Interface*, 1974-76]

16 mm filmstrips and plexiglass, 50 x 75 inches (diptych)

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1994

*Frozen Film Frame: Green Matrix*, 1973

16 mm filmstrips and plexiglass, 35 x 45 in.

Collection of Jack Griffis

### ***Posalo V/C*** **(1982)**

*acrylic on linen, 96 x 60 in.*

Collection of the Albright-Knox  
Art Gallery, Buffalo,  
George Cary and  
Charles W. Goodyear Funds, 1983



Photo credit: Albright-Knox Art Gallery

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**SHARITS**

**C:H:E:C:K:L:I:S:T**  
**OF THE**  
**EXHIBITION**

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**C:H:E:C:K:L:I:S:T  
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EXHIBITION**

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*Frozen Film Frame III: Word Movie*, c. 1973  
16 mm filmstrips and plexiglass, 34 x 53 inches  
Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1995

*Frozen Film Frame*, c. 1971-76  
[Possibly from *Shutter Interfaces*, 1974-76]  
16 mm filmstrips and plexiglass, 36 x 49 in.  
Collection of Mary and Sheldon Berlow

*Frozen Film Frame*, c. 1971-76  
16 mm filmstrips and plexiglass, 37 x 52 in.  
Private collection

*Frozen Film Frame*, 1977  
16 mm filmstrips and plexiglass, 22-1/4 x 17-1/2 in.  
Collection of Rose Popper

*Frozen Film Frame*, 1977  
16 mm filmstrips and plexiglass, 23 x 18 in.  
Collection of Rose Popper

**Drawings and Scores**

*Study for "Frozen Film Frame" (Pink Modularity B)*, 1974  
colored ink on grid paper, 19-1/4 x 22-1/4 in. framed  
Collection of Duayne and Mary Hatchett

*Frame Study 15: Study for Specimen II*, 1975  
colored ink on graph paper, 17 x 22 inches  
Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo,  
National Endowment for the Arts Purchase Grant and Matching funds, 1975

*Study for Frozen Film Frame of Frame Study 15*, 1975  
colored ink on graph paper, 17 x 22 inches  
Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo,  
National Endowment for the Arts Purchase Grant and Matching funds, 1975

*18 Scores for Declarative Mode*, 1976-77  
colored ink on grid paper, 14 x 21 in. each  
Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,  
Gift of Sara Hornbacher, 1988

*Cave Spirits/Baja*, 1981  
colored ink on paper, 9 x 12-1/2 in.  
Collection of Mary and Sheldon Berlow

*Buffalo April*, 1982  
score, black and colored ink on paper, 10-3/4 x 7-3/8 in.  
Collection of Mary Ann Bruno

*Untitled*, c. 1980s  
mixed media on paper  
Collection of Christopher and Cheri Sharits

*Werewolf*, c. 1985  
pastel on paper, 24 x 18 in.  
Private collection

*Snakes & Crutches*, c. 1985  
crayon, marker, and acrylic paint on paper, 25-1/2 x 19-1/2 in.  
Private collection

*Sketch for "Passion III,"* 1987  
double-sided marker drawing on graph paper, 17-1/4 x 22-1/2 in.  
Collection of Rose Popper

*Sketch for "Passion III,"* 1987  
double-sided marker drawing on graph paper, 17-1/4 x 22-1/2 in.  
Collection of Rose Popper

**Film Installation**

*3<sup>rd</sup> Degree*, 1982  
Three loop-projector installation in color, with sound.  
23-1/2 min.  
Courtesy of Light Cone, Paris

**Fluxus Objects**

*Untitled*, c. 1980s  
acrylic paint on dried snake body, 1-1/4 x 3-3/4 x 7-1/2 in.  
Collection of Mary and Sheldon Berlow

*Untitled*, c. 1980s  
acrylic paint, mica, stone and metal on bone, 2-1/2 x 9 x 3 in.  
Collection of Mary and Sheldon Berlow

*Untitled*, c. 1980s  
acrylic paint, yarn, ceramic shards, thumbtack, paper collage  
and ink on silver metallic paper board, 14-1/2 x 14 in.  
Collection of Mary and Sheldon Berlow

*Fluxactus*, 1983, "Leonardodo,"  
altered poster, 36 x 24 in.  
Private collection

*Study for Fluxus Cloud*, c. 1980s  
pastel, crayon and metallic paint on paper



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Buffalo  
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Private collection

*Fluxus objects*, c. 1980s

Black hat covered with nails and rubber squiggles

Pair of silver shoes covered in plastic spiders

One painted shoe with applied ants and nails

Broken mirror brooch in box filled with black feathers and glitter

Private collection

**Fluxus Sound Pieces**

*Sound Piece*, c. 1970

two microphone on wires, pulleys and two speakers

*Sound Piece*, c. 1970

bucket of water, pump, microphone and speaker

**Archival Objects**

*Paul Sharits Archives*

Drawings, notes, correspondence and documentation on art, films, fluxus projects, literature and other subjects

Collection of Christopher and Cheri Sharits

*Paul Sharits Archives*

Catalogs, clippings, photographs, notes and correspondence

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,

Gifts of Anthony Bannon, Christopher and Cheri Sharits

*Death*, 1965

Artist's book designed and printed by

Paul Sharits at Indiana University, 4 x 7-1/4 in.

The Poetry/Rare Books Collection, University Libraries, University at Buffalo

*Paul Sharits: Dream Displacement and Other Projects.*

Exhibition catalog, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 1976.

Collection of Rose Popper

*Rapture*, by Paul Sharits, edited by R. Bourdeau, 1987

VHS videotape copied from 3/4 inch original

Collection of Rose Popper

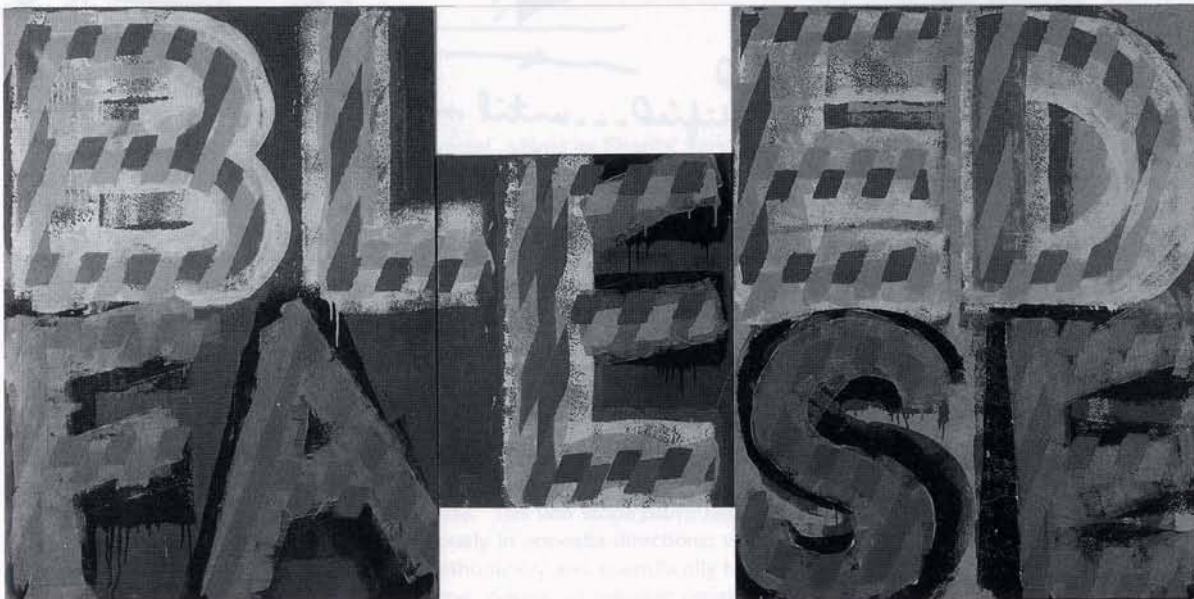
Anchell, M.D., Melvin. *Sex and Insanity*. Portland, OR: Halcyon House, 1983.

Collection of Rose Popper

*Paul Sharits: Drawings 1985.*

Exhibition catalog, The Artists Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 1985.

Collection of Victor Shanchuk, Jr.



**BLEED FALSE, (1986)**

*acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 3-panel, 50 x 101-3/4 in.*

Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center,

Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1994



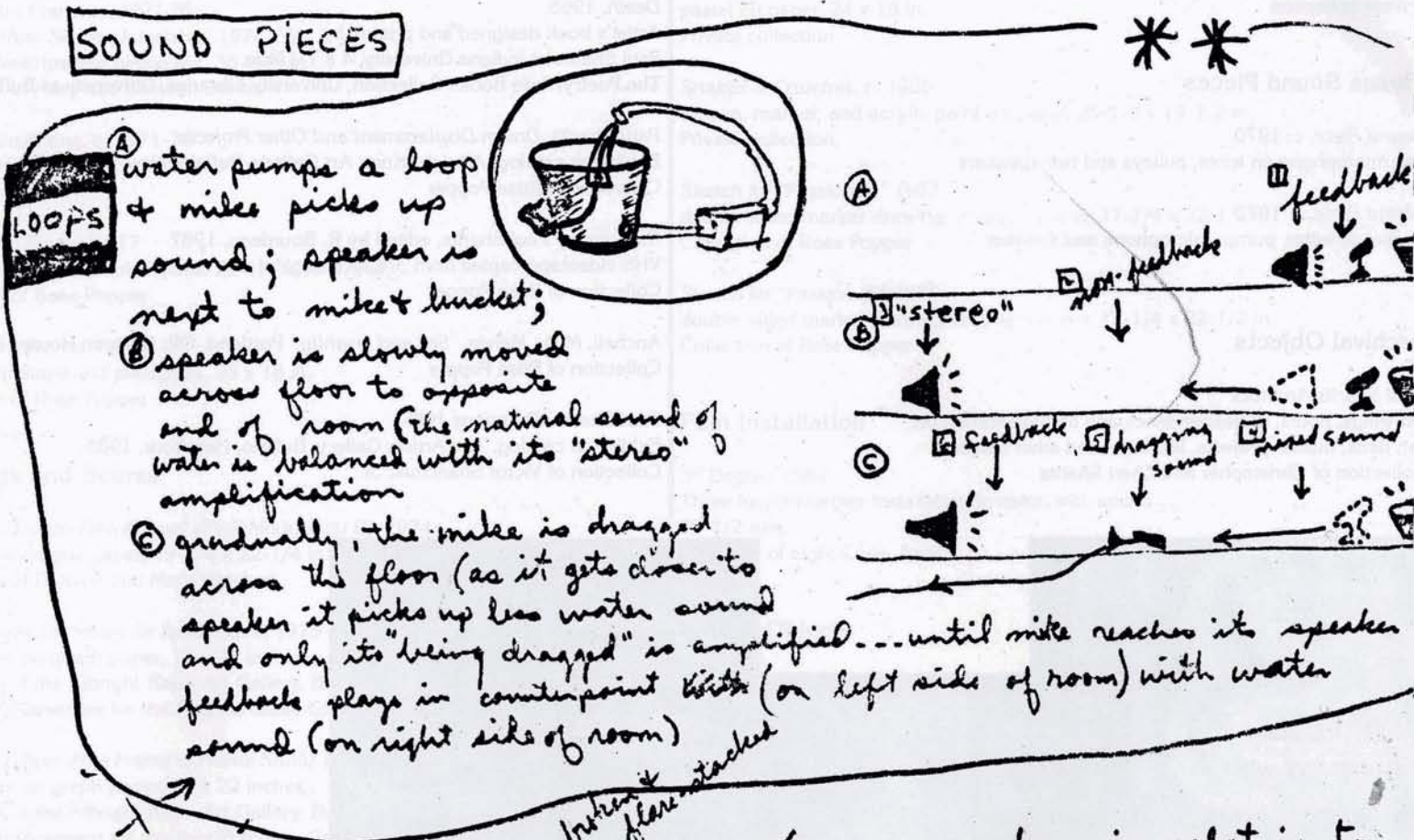
**Sound Piece**  
(c. 1970)  
bucket of water, pump,  
microphone and speaker

Paul Sharits Archives  
Collection of Christopher and Cheri Sharits

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## SOUND PIECES



drag mike three : glass  
over : sand  
under : rug

bucket & floor stacked

move speaker: in relation to sound source  
: in relation to room space



## PROGRAM 1

Friday, March 17, 2000 at 7:30 P.M.

*Wintercourse* (1962), 12 min. B&W Silent

"Discovered in summer 1985, of a set of 'haiku-imagistic films' I did before coming to my characteristic style, as in RAY GUN VIRUS; I thought I'd destroyed all these pre-pure films, in about 1969-70, the time of my separation from my first marriage. The film concerns my marriage, which lasted 7 years; it was shot during its first year, when I was a painting student at the University of Denver. It is full of apprehensions, in a montage style which counterposes 'opposites': sexuality and religion; seasonal opposites; hopefulness undercut by fears of eventual separation (the image of a statue of two women, arm in arm, reading a book). I find it visually and kinetically interesting, after all these years."—Paul Sharits

*S:TREAM:S:S:ECTION:S:ECTION:S:S:ECTIONED* (1971), 42 min.

"A conceptual lap dissolve from 'water currents' to 'film strip currents' /Dedicated to my son, Christopher."—Paul Sharits

*Rapture* (1987), 17 min.

## PROGRAM 2

Sunday, March 19, 2000 at 2:00 P.M.

*Ray Gun Virus* (1966), 14 min.

*T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G*, (1968), 12 min.

*Axiomatic Granularity* (1973), 20 min.

- Dedicated to Jonas Mekas

"There is a paradox in such artistically special... films as Sharits' very real and reflexively beautiful AXIOMATIC GRANULARITY. It is that in becoming so accessible and authentic through its refusal to be anything but itself – emulsion grain seen in color and movement – the film for most viewers is likely to be impenetrable... the film begins to evoke a quiet flow of thought. That thought, however, is repeatedly returned to the light perceived on the screen as the film calls attention to itself through the random appearances of scratches, becoming simply and pleasantly what it is, refreshingly nothing more." – Anthony Bannon, *Buffalo Evening News*.

*Color Sound Frames* (1974), 22 min.

"Paul Sharit's new film COLOR SOUND FRAMES ran for a week at the Whitney Museum. It is a film in which Sharits sums up his researches in the area of film strip (in opposition to the individual frames). The film strips move horizontally and vertically; two strips move simultaneously in opposite directions; variations in color; action of sprocket holes. Very methodically and scientifically he covers the area, presents the results of his finding, covers all relevant possibilities... COLOR SOUND FRAMES advances one area of cinema or one area of researches in cinema (call it art if you wish) to a new climax, to a new peak: his exploration is to total, so perfect." - Jonas Mekas, *Village Voice*, January 27, 1975.

## PROGRAM 3

Wednesday, March 22, 2000 at 7:30 P.M.

*Inferential Current*, 1971. 8 min.

"A mapping of an image of the linear passage of '16mm film frames' and 'emulsion scratches' onto an actual 16mm film strip (the unperceived film 'print') /the aural word 'miscellaneous' is extended to a length of 8 minutes by serial fragmentation, looping, staggering & overlaying/ a variational but non-developmental strand thru time./Dedicated to Lynda Benglis." – Paul Sharits

*Declarative Mode*, 1976-77, 39 min.

*Epileptic Seizure Comparison*, 1978, 30 min.

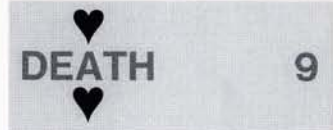
"This is a single-screen version of a 2-screen stereo sound installation piece. In that form, one image was above the other, so that one could compare two different male epileptics entering convulsive states. This single-screen version has six equal-lengthed section. The first three concern patient A. In the first section one hears patient A's moans and perceives pure color rhythms (rhythms related to the patient's brain waves); in the second section, we see the victim and we hear synthesizer simulation of his brain wave frequencies/amplitudes; in the third section, the two soundtracks are superimposed and the color footage is interlaced with the black and white figural images. The next three sections are devoted to patient B, in a likewise manner. The sounds are combinations of the moans made by the epileptic patients and electronic synthesizer simulations of their brain wave patterns. The black and white footage of each patient was temporally and tonally articulated an optical printer and rhythmic pure color frames were added to those images. Everything was done to allow a deeper empathy for the condition and to also, hopefully, experience the ecstatic aspect of such paroxysm." – Paul Sharits

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**SHARITS**

F,I,L,M,  
P,R,O,G,R,A,M

Presented at  
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# paul SHARITS

## Paul Sharits working in his studio, c. 1984

Paul Sharits Archive,  
Burchfield-Penney Art Center

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