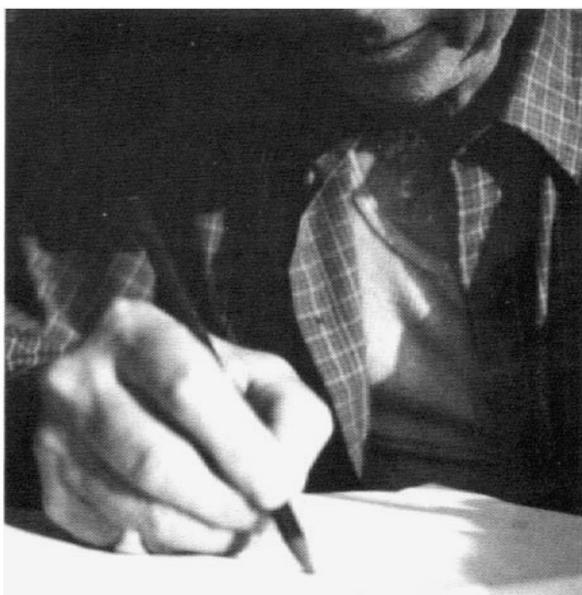


The Michael Snow Project

# The Collected Writings of Michael Snow

With a foreword by Louise Dompierre





*The artist's right hand writing; photo taken by his left hand, 1991*

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The Michael Snow Project

# The Collected Writings of Michael Snow

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with a foreword by Louise Dompierre

Wilfrid Laurier University Press



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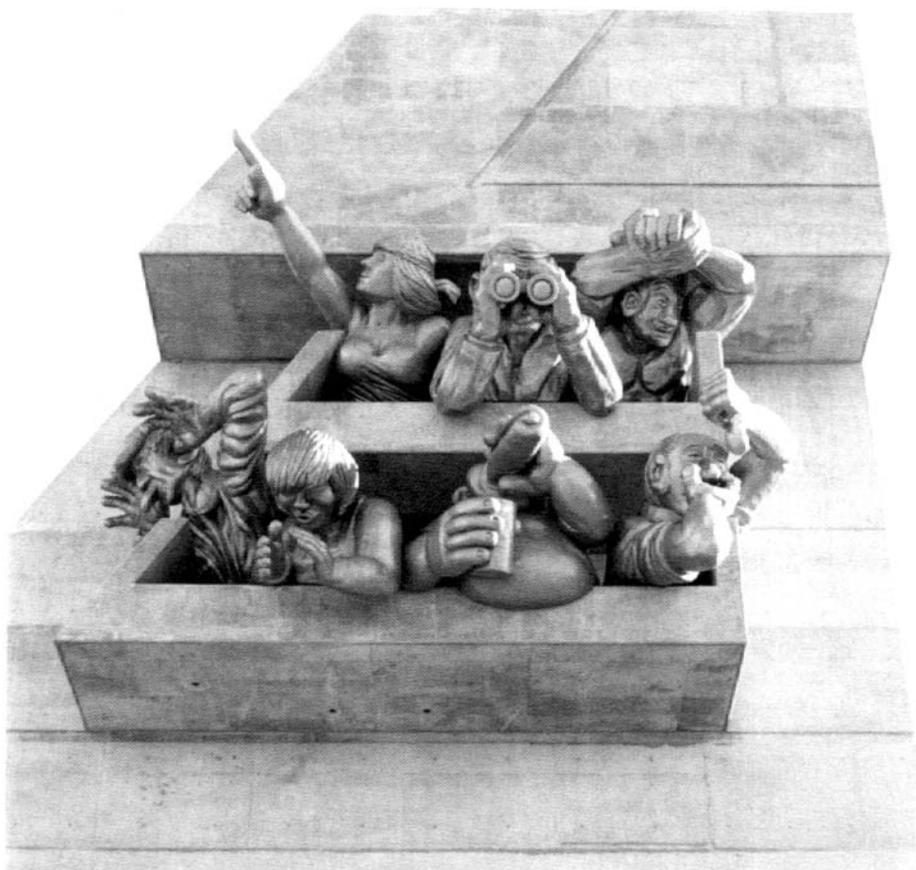
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*The Audience (Peter Street Group), 1987*

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# Foreword

Recently, as I was going through Michael Snow's writings and preparing this introduction, I found a query from him: "add? to intro. Our arrangement of the material is chronological but this really is a book built for browsing." He is, of course, right. If this book can be read from beginning to end, giving a sense of the evolution of his ideas and career, it can also be absorbed at random and slowly. Michael's comment is significant for another reason: it reveals the collaborative nature of this endeavour. Though I initially approached him with an idea and a selection of his published texts, he provided me with additional documents, many of them unknown to me because they had never been published before. He also explained the context in which many of the texts had been written. From beginning to end this was truly a joint effort. As always, Michael proved to be an ideal partner, generous with his ideas and enthusiasm.

Although the anthology began to take shape only in the past few years, it was in fact in 1983 when I first began thinking about assembling a book of Snow's writings. At the time I was compiling the bibliography for *Walking Woman Works* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 1985), an exhibition catalogue accompanying a series of works by Snow from the Sixties. I was then, as I am now, impressed by the quality, range and number of his writings. Moreover, as a researcher, I often have occasion to regret the lack of anthologies of writings by Canadian visual artists. Compared with our American neighbours, for instance, we have been negligent in taking advantage of this resource. Yet writings by artists abound. They not only provide an important layer of understanding about artists' works and ideas but also often reveal significant facts about the social and historical conditions that surround the production of their art. This is certainly true of Snow's writings, but his work has additional significance in its literary merit. Years went by without my doing anything about producing a compilation until the Power Plant and the Art Gallery of Ontario agreed to collaborate on *The Michael Snow Project*. As one of the goals of this ambitious enterprise was to re-view the various aspects of the artist's career, it provides a wonderful opportunity to bring to light Snow's varied accomplishments as a writer.

The more familiar I became with Snow's writing, the more I realized that to him writing, like the broad range of visual art he has created, is also a form of "art-making." Many texts are as rewarding to look at as to appreciate for their content. In other words, they are meant to be seen as well as read; thus, some texts are here reproduced photographically in their original form and most are duplicated in type to facilitate reading.

Some texts, such as the second one in this anthology, are clearly literary in form. Still others were performed, that is, tape-recorded in advance and then lip-synced, or mimed, by the artist, rather than simply being read, when they were first delivered.

Although this strategy was certainly designed to alleviate Snow's discomfort with public speech, it also fixes the talks within the tradition of performance art. Finally, there are texts printed on record album covers that are meant to be read while one listens to Snow's music.

This, of course, is not to say that all the texts fall into such special categories. In addition to less traditional forms, the book includes more typical essays, articles and interviews. However, the diversity of forms in which Snow's thoughts are conveyed is, perhaps, one of the most engaging and distinguishing characteristics of this book.

But there are others. Unlike the more usual anthology, this book makes two other claims, simultaneously situating it somewhere between a record of contemporary artistic thought by one of our leading Canadian artists and a history book revealing important moments in the cultural life of this country since the Fifties. It might be worth noting too that some of the writings collected here were done during the time of the Vietnam War, the Trudeau regime, and Snow's expatriate residence in the United States in the Sixties. Additionally, by means of this book we become better acquainted with Snow's many friends, including the late filmmaker Hollis Frampton, the late musician Larry Dubin, and the influential critics and curators who helped shape his career. Of special note is the tone and the vocabulary of many of the texts and dialogues in this book. In their own way, they also tell their own story, marking the passage of time, ideas and attitudes.

Although many of the texts could be described as personal reflections and discourses on the ideas that condition Snow's art, there are some noteworthy exceptions. First of all, there are his writings about the work of such artists as Murray Favro, Tom Gibson and others. There are speeches Snow was invited to deliver on such occasions as the opening of exhibitions, the receipt of his honorary doctorate at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the screening of his film *Presents* at Cerisy-la-Salle in France, where he met Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida. These texts illustrate the context of Snow's work and show the evolution of his ideas. There are also scripts for his films *Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young)* by Wilma Schoen and *So Is This*. The book's most important feature, however, is the history of a great Canadian artist, beginning with his early attempts at defining art and proceeding to his emergence and recognition on the international art scene through the success of *Wavelength*, his representation of Canada at the 1970 Venice Biennale and other major events and exhibitions such as the extensive survey of his work that toured Europe in the late Seventies and early Eighties.

In contrast to the texts showing the professional and public side of the artist are some that allow glimpses into the private Snow. Often humorous, these are intimations of male desire and the ABC's of lovemaking. Like a series of secondary roads leading off the highway, they meander only to make the main road all the more true.

But however much it is possible to rationalize the need for such a book – and for many others by Canadian artists – the primary impetus for assembling these texts came from the pleasure I drew from them and the wish to share that pleasure with others. Over the years I found that not only did they afford a chance to gain a better understanding of Snow's thought processes but they also enabled me to do so with an enormous amount of literary enjoyment. Furthermore, that enjoyment took nothing away from the seriousness or profundity of the ideas expressed.

The texts are presented chronologically. After I had experimented with different media-based or thematic structures, this arrangement proved to be the most useful. A media-based organization might have made it easier for specialists to find their areas of interest assembled in one section of the book. Similarly, a thematic structure might have divided the material to give it a particular resonance at this historical moment. Both, however, presented difficulties. First of all, Snow's practice is distinguished by the fact that he has been simultaneously involved in various disciplines. Many of the texts reflect this, making it sometimes impossible to classify them. To think of him solely as a filmmaker or a visual artist or even a musician is to ignore the essence of his multifarious creativity. The difficulty of a thematic approach is that it tends to date quickly; to search for one theme most resistant to fashion would have been arbitrary in any case.

The current structure takes us through time, serving both as an individual history of this artist and a more far-reaching representation of his vast body of work in the context of Canadian art and culture. It also exposes us to Snow's experience with various media so we can appreciate how one thing leads to another for him, or that, paradoxically, continuity exists in diversity.

Although all the previously published material has been transcribed as faithfully as possible, corrections have been made to typographical and spelling errors when these were noticed; otherwise, the material is reproduced as it originally appeared. Each piece is introduced by Snow or me, with the aim of describing the original context and form.

As the ultimate goal of this book is to make the material readily available for further research and analysis as well as enjoyment, it is comprehensive without being totally exhaustive. Some isolated but possibly better known statements by Snow about his work have been omitted, and though it was essential to include some of the interviews with him, not all are here, for a variety of reasons.

And some exclusion is probably just as well. Knowing Michael Snow and having gone through a similar process before, in attempting to list all the Walking Woman Works, I would have been surprised if he had not discovered other important writings after this selection had been compiled; in fact he did so, even as I was writing this introduction! But the impracticability of including everything is one of the many challenges that a project like this entails. And because Snow is still impelled to write, the appealing possibility of future collections remains.

*Louise Dompierre  
Associate Director/Chief Curator  
The Power Plant, Toronto  
May 1993*

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# The Real “New Jazz” 1950

In 1947 I became fascinated by early jazz – New Orleans, Dixieland, blues – and started to play such music publicly. This period of my artistic career is well documented and discussed by various writers in the music/sound volume of the series to which this book belongs.

Simultaneous with what has been called the New Orleans Revival, which I was part of, another musical revolution was taking place, that of the bebop or modern jazz of Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Thelonius Monk and many others.

A deeply felt aesthetic war developed between these two movements. I was on the side of the “old” jazz (later I wasn’t) and wrote the following article to prove that there was another “new” jazz which continued the great tradition rather than threatened it, as I thought Parker’s music, for example, did. I had hoped for publication, but it never happened. Well, it took forty years, but . . . here it is! I wrote it while I was going to high school (Upper Canada College).

This is definitely a text for a specialist reader. To attempt to further identify all the musicians referred to would call for another book. Today I’m sadly sure that many of the names mentioned will be unknown to most jazz fans. There was great talent there, as is evident on the recordings made by those mentioned in the text from 1948 through the Fifties. The need to take sides has vanished, but some of the music is still with us and some of both my knowledge and passion are still evident in *this* revival.

**M.S.**

The last few years have seen a Renaissance in Jazz, and a most amazing one at that. There has been a burst of renewed interest in the core of Jazz – New Orleans music, the older greats have been reestablished and have presented in the last few years some of the most thrilling music ever played. But we must consider the men who have made this music; Bunk is 67 years old, almost all the members of the two great New Orleans bands, Ory’s and Bunk’s, are in their fifties, Pops Foster is 55, Sidney Bechet is 50, Wooden Joe Nicholas is 64 and so on. It is ugly to be writing obituaries for these men when they are still playing (and magnificently too) but we should face the facts; that these Giants will not always be with us and when the last of them has gone – whither Jazz? Shall we all park our record players and dream of the good old days? No. For it is now obvious that we shall not.

The first sign that Jazz was not in its death throes but actually on the brink of a new Golden Era came in 1940 when the original Lu Watter’s Yerba Buena band popped up in San Francisco in a courageous attempt to hold on to the great Jazz traditions and to keep them alive. The rest is current history. The success of the Watters group was the sign for more and more young musicians to come out of hiding. In

Frisco alone young Jazzmen appeared right and left (not only the present members of the Yerba Buena group but others like Bill Barden trombone, Benny Strickler trumpet and Burt Bayle piano. All over the country, groups began to appear and the future of Jazz became secure. But it's even bigger than that. It stretches all over the world – Great Britain, Australia and many other places have produced Jazz bands that rank with the best. Australia, in particular, deserves mention; “Down Under” houses some of the most enthusiastic musicians around (see May '47 issue of J.R.) and has produced several men who seem to be very near greatness – in particular Ade Monsborough who plays trumpet, valve trombone, piano, clarinet and sings with equal competence. Then there's trumpeters Roger Bell, Bill Munro, clarinetists Kelly Smith, Don Roberts, trombonists Dave Dallwitz, Pete Law, pianists Graeme Bell, Willy “The Lion” McIntyre and many, many more. England's George Webb band, though not in the same class as the Australian bands, does OK by itself. In the “Excited States” the bands of the late “Kid” Buell, now under Gene Mayl's leadership, the Watters band, Bob Wilber's “Wildcats” and the Frisco Jazz Band (both from reports and records) seem to stand out. Pianists Don Ewell, Johnny Wittwer, Knocky Parker, Bill Bailey, Dick Wellstood, Wally Rose, Ray Jannigan and George Hornsby (Seattle pianist just recorded by A.M.) are important. Clarinetists Jack Crook, Charley Stark, Ellis Horne, Bob Helm, Herb Greggerson and Bob Wilber; trombonists Turk Murphy, Ed Hubble, Bill Barden and Chuck Sonnanstine; trumpeters Watters, Bob Scobey, Jerry Blumberg, Johnny Glasel, Johnny Windhurst and son on ad infinitum are all important in the story of the real “New Jazz.” These musicians are all white – the negro has apparently and unfortunately disowned himself of his greatest possession: the ability to express himself deeply via the Jazz idiom. But that all these young men are very close to grasping those intangible qualities that make great Jazz is amply demonstrated on wax – Watters's Big Bear Stomp, Trombone Rag, Annie St. Rock, Pasadena Jazz Society's Golf Coast Blues, Wilber's Willy the Weeper, Wildcat Rag, Graeme Bell's Australian gang on Alma St. Requiem, Georgia Bo Bo, Ewell on Manhattan Stomp, Albert's Blues, Frisco Jazz Band's Sensation, Copenhagen, George Webb's Dippermouth Blues, Wittwer's Jazzman sides and more. There's plenty more of this kind of “New Jazz” forthcoming too. In Australia the new Memphis label plans a number of fine releases featuring the Southern Jazz Group, whose instrumentation is trumpet, trombone, clarinet, banjo, tuba and washboard. Wow! William Russell will soon release on A.M. the Bunk Johnson trio records showcasing Ewell's piano, Bunk and the drums of, I believe, Alfonso Steele.

While on this subject of recording I'd like to offer a suggestion to Rudi, Bill, Marilli and Nesuhi and their respective companies Circle, American Music, Crescent, and Jazzman and all the rest in the Jazz record field. Now, before it's too late, grab the following and slap their work in wax for the coming Jazz generation to study; offhand I can think of George Mitchell, Lee Collins, Punch Miller, Kid Shots Madison, Herb Morand, Doc Evans, Al Wynn, Roy Palmer, Preston Jackson, Alphonse Picou, Louis Nelson, Wade Whaley, Volly Defaut and so many others in “the city of dear old New Orleans.” Sure, most of these men have recorded, some amply, but the supervision that Bill and Rudi and all the rest who know and love Jazz can give to their recording is poles apart from the cold supervision they've had on most of their former record dates. You might try some experiments – a mixture of young and old – Mutt Carey, Turk Murphy and Ellis Horne or Watters, Ory, Joe Darensbourg, Wittwer, Bud Scott,

Dick Lammi and Minor Hall. The possible combinations are infinite and intriguing both on the West Coast and in the New York area. Don Ewell (with Nicholas and Dodds and the aforementioned Bunk trio records) is the only newcomer to have mixed on records with the old-timers (except for a wonderful “Test Pressing” of Bunk with the Watters boys). It is perhaps only through such contact that the “second-line” can get hold of those unexplainable things that make Jazz – Jazz.

1957

It stayed  
Where I saw it  
Then it moved a fraction  
To the left and then twice that  
Distance again further and further

It disappeared  
Then just  
faintly  
a corner  
was  
~~seen there~~  
~~trying~~  
to look  
like an edge

It  
disappeared  
Then just faintly  
a corner of it just a fraction  
Was visible if you peered  
Very very closely  
and just as  
quickly  
it was  
gone

# Poem 1957

One of many unpublished texts that the artist located in the process of assembling this book.

It stayed  
Where I saw it  
Then it moved a fraction  
To the left and then twice that  
Distance again further and further

It  
disappeared  
Then just faintly  
A corner of it just a fraction  
Was visible if you peered  
Very very closely  
And just as  
quietly  
it was  
gone

## Something You Might Try 1958

A previously unpublished text.

There's this place in women or some women I guess. I should say that's... Imagine a woman (any woman or possibly one that you know) with no skirt on (I hope I can make this clear) at the very top of the legs *between* each leg the start of the body where if you're like me there's a long thing in front of a bag and if you're a woman you'll know whether I'm right or wrong anyway there's this triangular patch of hair. I can't vouch for this but 2 women I know have this part and my guess is that the others do too. There's no harm in asking and what I'm going to say depends on this part and the part which I have. What I am going to say is about what I did with these parts but it may be that everybody's different there anyway. I'm making the assumption that generally that's the way it is. Anyway get this: at the bottom of this "triangle" how the hell can you explain this? Suppose you're lying on the floor and a woman is standing with her feet apart directly over your face, well, look straight above to where the legs *end* and the body begins. This is sort of the base of the "triangle" which I mentioned. (Perhaps I'm being unnecessarily detailed about this but if a thing is worth doing it's worth doing right.) Anyway at this place and partly in front coming up from the base of the triangle of hair (which is incidentally pointing *down* with the other two points at the top) there's a long slit (around 2 or three inches long). You can confirm what I say by feeling there and I'm sure you'll feel this slit sort of like a cut or else there's a long thing like a big soft finger. Since you have to have each of these things, I mean one in each person to do what I'm going to suggest. If you have the slit you need to get someone with the long thing and vice versa to do this. Anyway I hope you find as much pleasure in this as I did or else I wouldn't suggest it because it does seem a strange thing to do but I don't think there's any harm in it. Now: if you've got the person with the other thing you'll presumably have to take off your clothes to find out or some of them (the pants more than likely) well, leave them off and come close together and sort of rub against each other. Now here's the strange part and it may scare you a bit at first but I don't think it's harmful (it didn't hurt me anyway): the long thing gets hard, longer, bigger and sort of stands up (you can visualize this feeling by clenching your fist or tensing your arm maybe) and the slit gets (inside) very wet sort of sticky but I imagine the principle is like the saliva in your mouth when you think of eating. Now this slit is deceptive, it looks like it's only 1/2 inch or an inch deep but actually it's quite deep, as deep as the long thing is long at least it was with my two examples. Now the best part of this and I suppose it seems obvious to you now is, stick the long hard part in the wet slit. That's right slide it right in until the two

bellies touch. Now move (if you have the hard part) back and forth or rather in and out of the hole. You'll probably both enjoy this. After a while there's a sort of explosion feeling in the long hard thing which is really a funny feeling. Since I don't have the slit part I can't really say what *that* feels like but the two people I did it with said they'd enjoyed it and want to do it again.

1958

Something you might try

✓  
I don't  
know  
if I can  
make  
this  
clear

There's this place in women or some women I guess I should say that: ... Imagine a woman (any woman or possibly one that you know) with no skirt on and ✓ at the very top of the legs ~~between each leg~~ the start of the body where if you're like me there's a long thing in front of a bag and if you're a woman you'll know whether I'm right or wrong anyway there's this triangular patch of hair. I can't vouch for this but 2 women I know have this part and my guess is that the others do too. There's no harm in asking and what I'm going to say depends on this part and the part which I have. What I'm going to say is about what it ~~does with these~~ ~~and~~ it may be that everybody's different there ~~and~~ I'm making the assumption that there ~~is~~ generally that's the way it is. anyway get this: at the bottom of this "triangle" ~~to~~ how the hell can you explain this? Suppose you're lying on the floor and a woman is standing with her ~~two~~ feet apart directly over your face, well look straight up above to where the leg ends and the body begins. This is sort of the base of the "triangle" which I mentioned. ~~But~~ (Perhaps I'm being unnecessarily detailed about this but it's a thing worth doing its worth doing right) anyway at this place and partly in front coming from the base of the triangle I had (which is incidentally pointed ~~down~~ with the other two points at the top) there's a long slit (about 2 or 3 inches long).

Executive Secretary: Vernon Lang, 17 Prince Arthur Ave., Toronto 5, WA. 2-9981

CLUB OF TORONTO, INC.  
NATIONAL SALES EXECUTIVES

**N.S.E.**

TITLE OR HEADING

To tell the truth  
Very interested in myself and what I do.  
Art (Creative Experiment with) as an experiment on oneself.  
Very important.  
Living-During Time

Reciprocal.  
The Artist is a Biography of his Work  
P. Valery's Life and Work above my work

"I make up the rules of a game, then I attempt to play it. If it seem to be losing I change the rules."

"Intention" is as much a part of my painting as paint. (Sometimes as something to escape  
"Foil" to chance (Ironic)

Dualities, Unity and/or opposition\*

Kiss or Kill  
Absence ( ) - Presence ( )

Time (Before, Now, After)

Understand Classic:

Essential of Painting.

"Tension" between 2D

surface space and the illusory space on and out of the canvas

OR. Simultaneous Depth and Surface  
Surface and Depth

Object and Illusion \*Very important

This means MATTER and MIND \*  
Painting is a Bridge (Some new way to speak  
Crisis of Creative Painting above.  
The eye/magination)

How is what?

Revelation of Process as Subject  
in Pollock and DeLooney.

Clean things (New?) that get used, soiled (old):  
(Process of Painting) = Former Aristocrat

The Quality that Mondrian called "Dynamic  
Solid. Color-Space. Ladies Equilibrium"

Painting is not Communication it's a form of Secrecy.

" has a great plot future "schold" "stev" "poten" "stev"

Say that 200 times a day and you still won't believe it.

Difficult Entertainment. (Art) No Nostalgia No Cuisine  
Contemplation Experience Hand Made. No Happiness and Suffering.

Depth of Commitment is the catalyst in painting so that the  
Passion of an Obsession can convert anything into Art

About Technique: "One must go into oneself, armed to the teeth  
\* To connect something into Art

Many Many influences and likes  
A.B. Cognome (Bas Rubin) Picasso  
M. A. B. - abstract - (black - white - orange - yellow)  
E.B.H. Ingber Heat and light  
I. Goltzman Red and black  
Klee, De Kooning, Van Der Velden, Rauschenberg, Newman, Schwart, Miris, Roth, Pollock, Francis, Davis, Serra, Oldenburg, Platten, B. Schone, Studdard, Francis, Davis, Serra, Oldenburg, Platten, B. Schone

Reduction  
Left-Hand  
Right-Hand  
Hot-Side  
Hot-Side  
Up-Down  
Down

## *Title or Heading* 1961

In 1961 Kenneth Craig, a Toronto artist, published two issues of a magazine called *evidence*. Influenced, perhaps, in its concept by the publications of the American Beats (Kerouac or Ginsberg, for example), it was in practice unlike anything the Beats produced. The writers and the topics were all local, and these two issues contained excellent articles by William Ronald, Gerald Gladstone, Joyce Wieland, Austin Clarke and Kenneth Craig as well as drawings by Wieland and Snow and many photos of artists (including Snow and others) in their studios.

*Title or Heading* is Michael Snow's first published statement about art. The text was intended to be a kind of drawing, with the arrangement of phrases being thought-like and free flowing. Nearby is a photo showing how it was published in *evidence 2* (no date given, but probably Spring 1961).

### *Title or Heading*

To tell the Truth

Very Interested in Myself and what I do

Art Creation (Experiment in it) is an experiment on oneself.

Very Important. Living – “Doing Time”

Reciprocal “Realism”

The artist is a Biography of his work

P. Valéry's Life and Work

About My Work:

I make up the rules of a game, then I attempt to play it.

If I seem to be losing I change the rules.

“Intention” is as much a part of my painting as paint.

(Sometimes as something to escape from.)

A “Foil” to Chance (Ironic)

Dualities, unity and/or opposition.\*

Kiss or Kill \*Words for opposites

Absence ( ) – Presence ( ) really indicate the

Time (Before, Now, After) “ends” of “scales.”

Soft – Hard Between Black and White

Fast – Slow is a grey gliss also

Hot – Cold between 9 and 10.

Up – Down

[ . . . ]

*Unknown Cliché*

Essential of Painting

“Tension” between 2D surface space and the illusory space in and out of the canvas.

OR. Simultaneous Depth and Surface

Surface and Depth

Object and Illusion

This means MATTER and MIND\*

\*Very Important

Painting is a Bridge.

(Some new way to affect

the eye-imagination.)

Crisis of Creative Painting above.

“Reaction Painter”

Psychosexual IMAGE

Desire

The City,

(Process makes)

Clear

Baffling

Blue

Beauty

Edges.

(Art Space)

art is “Relationships”

like everything else.

... is a kind of mummification.

*How is What.*

Revelation of Process as Subject in Pollock and de Kooning.

Clean things (New?) that get used, soiled (old?)

(Process of Painting) = Former Aristocrat.

The Quality that Mondrian called “Dynamic Equilibrium”

Solid-Color-Space-Ladies

Painting is not communication it's a form of secrecy.

" has a great past "School of Fontainebleau"

" " " " future

" " " " "

Say that 200 times a day and you still won't believe it.

Difficult Entertainment. (Art) No Nostalgia No Cuisine

No Happiness and Suffering

Contemplation Experience Hand Made.

Depth of commitment is the catalyst in painting so that the

Passion of an \*Obsession can convert anything into Art

\*To convert something into Art

About Technique: “One must go into oneself, armed to the teeth”

Keep Trouble out of Painting

Many many influences and likes

M-anet, -atise, -alevich, -ondrian, -onk, -iró.

A, B, Cézanne (Best Painter) Duchamp

E F G H Ingres

J. Coltrane      Heat and Mind

Klee, de Kooning, Bud Powell, C. Parker, Arp, J. Wieland,

Vermeer, Seurat, Rothko, Reinhardt, Newman, Stendhal,

Flaubert, David, Goya, Blakey, Roach, Kline, Agostini, B.

Greene.



*Michael Snow at the Isaacs Gallery, 832 Yonge Street, Toronto, in 1964. On the wall behind him is his painting Half-Slip (oil on canvas, 51.0 x 152.7 cm, 1963). Photo: Michel Lambeth*

## A Lot of Near Mrs. 1962-63

This text was written while Joyce Wieland and I were living in Toronto but making frequent trips to New York to prepare for a long stay there (looking for a loft, etc.). I started to write it basically to clarify things for myself. It was prompted, however, by an attempt to answer what I felt were misunderstandings in what was being written about the work I was doing. It was never published in the Sixties, but Arnold Rockman used a copy of it in preparing his excellent article in *Canadian Art* in November/December 1963.

M.S.

Closed shop. Trademark. Trade: Art. A sign to sign. Put the outside inside where it belongs. Simultaneity. "She" is the same in different places and different times at same place and time. Repetition: Trademark, my trade, my mark. Mock mass production. Art the only "cottage industry" left. Juxtaposition: a "surrealism" of media within one subject. Social comment, narrative, realism, satire, allegory, abstraction, didacticism, mysticism: art from drawing to past sculpture. Stage director. Fact and fiction: the relationships between space and light illusions (imagination?) and a physically finite object. Coloring books: anyone can do it. Jane Arden. Perils of Pauline. W.W. is detached from her background or "she" is in reciprocal relations to it. If "she" is cut-out (no depicted background) alone on the wall the relationships might be just internal or just with the real environment. Art as a form of *mummification*. "Solid color space ladies." Women historically as subject in art. Women "characters," "types," "actresses" designed by artists. Cranach, Rubens, Ingres, Renoir, Pascin, Modigliani, Picasso etc. "Abstract" *this* element of painting. One drawing. Contour to be not only rectangle but just contour of single subject. To "cut out" means to (slang) leave. Girl watching. Passing out of the picture and yes we'll soon be passing out of the picture. Pedestrienne. Stepping out. Yes my work is pedestrian. Revelation of process as subject in Pollock, de Kooning continues. Scientific method. Experiments. Problem of originality: invent a subject. Impossible but try. Presence-absence. Be a *tracer of missing persons*. The subject could have been my image but prefer to add, multiply, create, not mirror. Use time: outdoor exposure for one month: weather woman Jan. 1 to 31. Weather report. Given model tracing, stenciling, printing are means of including the subject in the work, in the process show the path of the model. My subject is not women or a woman but the first cardboard cutout of W.W. I made. A second remove depiction. Always use it same size as original. 5 ft. tall. W.W. is not an idea, it's just a drawing, not a very good one either! Bad taste conversion W.W. though representational is invented, an *individual*. One subject, *any* medium. My work is *inclusive* not exclusive, puppetry, choreography. I'm not so interested in

making a lot of paintings, sculpture etc. as finding out what happens when you do such and such a thing. A stand-in or abstract person. Attempt to extend certain values of American abstract painting by doing them backwards or “wrong” (?). “Art” and “life” problem. Duchamp. If you can use stuff from the street as art in an art gallery why can’t you use “paintings” or art as art in the street. Not found art but *lost* art. Who can see it? Trying to find new uses for representation. Not a “figure painter.” Abstraction of *style*. Is that possible? But art is something too. What? An “abstract” shape can be sexier than a representation of a (beautiful) breast but neither are sexier than a (beautiful) breast. Art is an addition to life not only a quote. If you can use “anything” to make art how about a self contained factory where the material is made to make the art with. What if Braque had printed his own newspaper to use in his collages. I’m doing that. Exhibition “announcements” as much part of it as the paintings. All art. Figure in art: “poses” have been explored (Rodin) no more poses. “New” representational art and its uses. A representation can be used for something else. I will take orders for any use to which “she” might be put. *Art pimp*. Lady fence, lady table, lady chair, lady lamp, rubber (ballon) lady, water bottle lady, fur lady, stained glass lady, lady road sign, lady shovel, lady car, lady dart board, lady hat rack, leading lady, first lady, lady like. Home made ready made, ways to maintain the freedom of color possible in abstract painting, represent a woman and not be surrealist i.e., look a green woman! Space must not be “deep,” color and form, material must be one, if any, brush strokes must be subordinate to the image. Art is artificial, not life-like, not warm. Food art goes bad. For me superiority of Vermeer to Rembrandt and of Rembrandt’s drawing to his paintings . . . myth Canada, myth America, modern myth. What are the differences in “meaning” in comparing the same form (W.W.) in sponge rubber, in plastic, in sand, in light, etc. Forms made by manipulation of material, what happens when there is an image on or in the material. Little paintings, printings in street, subway, etc. Compositions of same. Perhaps another painter might paint it. Audience participation: people scribble on, attack etc. These “posters,” who thinks they are “art”? I’ve reclaimed some of the drawn-on etc. ones. Dispersal: 4 or 5 “paintings” in the street, related but separated by as many blocks. Valéry: “The subject of a poem is as foreign to it and as important, as his name is to a man.” Influences and thank you: Duchamp, Matisse, de Kooning, Mondrian. Echoings of artist working in “Happenings” and “environments,” the ideas, having never seen same. Personality could that be a subject? Patent pending, reaction painter. Culturally today anyone who doesn’t know jazz (AM Negro music) doesn’t know their arts from a hole in the ground. I’m optically amoral. I don’t see what those signs and those things are selling. Some of my ideas turn out to be similar. An unexplainable coincidence which is not leading me to work directly from that material tho I often see signs, displays, etc., which are very interesting. I like work of Johns, Oldenberg, Dine, partly because apparently they came to similar conclusions arising out of the accomplishments of the great senior New York painters. Media scale: sculpture, relief, painting, drawing, printing, film, music. I arbitrarily continue with an arbitrarily chosen subject: It was not designed for uses which could be foreseen. Chance. I take a chance “drawn personification” of things that happened in abstract art. Tattooing. Art as art criticism (reversible). Opposites. Film I’m working on seems to concern itself with the poetry of the juxtaposition of the static and the dynamic, absence, presence, development of events-for-capture = art series of photographs taken in Toronto April ’62. Setting a

plywood black cut-out of W.W. in street and recording passerby reaction and often beautiful resulting compositions. Neurotic, erotic, aesthetic. Make light of the figure. Made first cut-out or wall life size "realistic" figures of cardboard in Oct. 1960. They were result of several years worrying about where the figure is or could be or would be. This is the problem. I solved it by removing the figure from where and putting here. On the wall or in the room. She was detached from her background or removed from her "environment" and placed in a "foreign" one. In painting a figure on/in the rectangle the relationships exist between the figure and its environment. When you paint a "cut-out" flat representation of a figure rather than on a rectangle, the relationships now are internal. The "environment" of the figure now becomes separate, and out of my control. But now I think of where as well as what. ("lost" compositions, mail, females, publicity pix, etc.). No distortions of figure itself. W.W. always same contour. I *don't* "believe" in representation. But we really look and say "it's a woman!" Passing through. Is "material" a representation too. Is it any *realer*. We *must* believe that it is. My "subject" is the same in the '59 and '60 abstract paintings and sculpture but now it is acted. Time. Impossible. La Femme qui Marche. New miss. Women are the nearest "other." The first "other." There is something inside repetition. "Participation mystique" with machine production. Hand made art-machine made art. Detachiste art. Tits and arts.

*Frame enlargements from New York Eye and Ear Control by Michael Snow (16 mm black-and-white sound film, 34 minutes, 1964)*





Ground about  
New York Eye and Ear Control

May '66

Tight section! Chimera! Roll 'em!  
Ah the Film Flam. Business.

Now you see it now you read again.  
Little gaps (quite a lot actually)  
that you don't (see). ~~etc.~~

A quaint lot gave little gasps,  
it was Take Twenty-five sexually.

That Shit! Print It! That seemed  
to be <sup>the</sup> best one. All these give puns!  
James Joyce could legally pun  
because he had the Background.

I'll give it up for the moment (its  
more than a habit).

Also I won't use brackets as much.  
~~Many~~ <sup>as you've noticed</sup> many films, uncountable,  
have been made now. ~~They're~~ <sup>ON THE</sup>  
~~the way~~ <sup>TO</sup> Direct Electrical and  
Direct Drug Entertainment Industry.  
Just a few light-years away! It  
will do away with the middle-men:  
Eyes, Ears to be specific. Food could  
be fed this way but it wouldn't be  
as nutritious. Could be as Tasty though.  
Is this the triumph of "style" over  
"content"? I hate to bring that up.

## ***Around about New York Eye and Ear Control*** 1966

In April 1992, as I was going through my considerable accumulation of papers, with a view to depositing them with the Edward P. Taylor Research Library and Archives of the Art Gallery of Ontario, I found the following text sleeping with "Something You Might Try." It was written in 1966. It was in an orange-covered booklet amongst many other papers relating to my film *New York Eye and Ear Control*, completed in 1964.

The text was never published and I had totally forgotten about it. Perhaps it would have been best for it to stay in hiding. However, it has more of that damned punning and word spacing that were aspects of "A Lot of Near Mrs." I think they give this prose the resonance of poetry. There are some (still) interesting observations in it which are not dependent on the reader's having experienced the film. I hope the reader might see/hear the film, in which case this reading might have another referent.

**M.S.**

**L**ight section! Chimera! Roll 'em! Ah the Flim Flam. Business.  
Now you see it now you seat again. Little gaps (quite a lot actually) that you don't (see).

A quaint lot gave little gasps, it was Take Twenty-five sexually.

That shit! Print It! That seemed to be the best one. All these jive puns! James Joyce could legally pun because he had the Background.

I'll give it up for the moment (it's more than a habit).

Also I won't use brackets so much. As you've noticed, many films, unaccountable, have been made now. On the way to: *Direct Electrical* and *Direct Drug* Entertainment Industry. Just a few light-years away! It will do away with the middle-man: Eyes, Ears to be specific. Food could be fed this way but it wouldn't be as nutritious. Could be as tasty, though. Is this the triumph of "style" over "content"? I hate to bring that up. Perhaps because there's too much "content" in it. I don't mean that I'm not serious but that in some peculiar way I am maybe a little bit . . . materialistic. Still, it's as interesting to try to make arrangements of content as of form. Of course both happen anyway, but I'm talking about the process of making something of a (probably) artistic (aesthetic) nature. The Intention, The Process, The Result. Of course Everything Means Something to Somebody. I have on occasion made certain formal arrangements in order to see what content is produced by such an arrangement. Sometimes I don't seem to have any Beliefs except those that are being produced by the relationship with which I am, at the time, involved. There are however some Constants, some Virtues even, involved in my Amorality, my Games, my potential

Sadism. Interesting that certain aspects of my personality are in all the work which I've ever done. Have you noticed how that happens to you too? Is there no escape?

Who has the foreground?

It would seem desirable that one ought to experience as deeply as possible . . . with Ecstasy as a goal.

"Nothing will stand in my way."

"Gimme." "Gotcha." I guess not. Sorry. Almost anybody should/would admit under questioning that extreme pleasure is the most pleasant, most desirable thing. Yeah that's a nice idea. Do you like it when you "disappear" when very drunk, for example, or when working very hard? That can't really be answered.

Conceptual art. Classical planning, giving a great deal of thought to all the elements involved. Judicious selection. Refinement. Finishing, Polishing. The tendency of work of this kind in the arts has always been towards Science. All machines are Mental Projections. Consider the attempt, the striving for a material-less, no-traces-of-the-hand Image: the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci. Ingres and Vermeer too yearned for photography, for film. Not very physical not especially emotional but mental. Words seem absolutely devoid of information. Of course I'm not a writer. That next to last sentence for example.

"Do you mind? Yes I do mind a lot. (Answ.)

Not just all Machines are Mental Projections but everything Man-Made. Now that's really a Point of View!

OK, short pause to consider . . . diversity. The sentence referred to (by that next to last sentence for example) is: "Not very physical not especially emotional but mental."

That doesn't really mean anything. 'Cause everything's physical, emotional and mental. What I mean is the tendency. Aside.

Preceptual Art: Romantic. Spontaneous. Warm, Wet, What we're calling emotional. If something hurts, you maybe scream. If something pleases you in a certain way you might sigh, murmur. Expression. Expressionism. Moving material, leaving marks. Hand. Tends towards Actions, Events, Music. Especially very Vocal, spontaneous music. Afro-American music.

Last 4 or 5 or 6 years "Jazz" has been going through a great period. Word hang-up.

The line of descent of music that has been called Jazz. Nothing's pure is it? Purity would be a classical ideal. Nothing. Negation. Happy time.

Marvelous presence of Elizabethan music repatriated from Old Souf and lots of other, swallow capsule, get whole story, developments forced "Jazz" publicly there. Interesting, allover pattern of western human entertainment demands. Song form finally unusable, strict rhythm finally unusable in "Jazz." It goes "ahead" where it has to. Hole. Surprise! Demand for Song and Dance so natural there can be "new" Songs, "new" Rhythm, "new" Dances. A very pleasant surprise. Rock.

Digression: Constants: scales of Opposites and pseudo-opposites. A Handy Delusion with which to form. Sex is sub-personal, personal and super personal. Blue and Yellow and their daughter Green.

Thank God.

New York Eye and Ear Control is "about" what this is about. It was very carefully, I might say, (to get your sympathy) painfully composed. This could be

as arbitrary  
as something  
found or bought  
or something  
done while high or done by someone else.

But. It doesn't SEEM arbitrary. One of the elements in the story is a length of a very strong, very vocal, very spontaneous, almost wholly "emotional" music. This length is about 20 minutes.

The visible film is 34 minutes long. The sum requests an audience of selves.

Starts with Words. Words flat on screen which is Flat. Words don't have much visual space unless you're asked to see that.

Curfew. God Bless You.

Then the end of this piece arrived.

Cold bras

## *Statements/18 Canadian Artists* 1967

This text first appeared in the exhibition catalogue *Statements/18 Canadian Artists*, published by the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, 1967.

Yes, 2000 words, up to, for the catalogue. Just had a lot of trouble with the type-writer ribbon. Now the usual disclaimer about not being a writer. Stress the visual aspect, being an artist. See See See See. Well I *am* a writer. Attempt to prove it: I'm probably not as much of a writer as some other people, but this *is* writing and what if this was the only piece of writing that I ever did but that it was really remarkable in terms of style and content and that it was really memorable would that make me a "writer"? Shit, that isn't even a sentence! Being memorable might qualify it for someone who loved writing to list it with other writing as exceptional writing though not by a writer. That (writing not by a writer) certainly gives it some distinction even if you've only read this far . . . (and don't plan to go any farther). I can't seem to make myself clear. I've been trying. That's what I've been trying to do. I am not a professional. My paintings are done by a filmmaker, sculpture by a musician, films by a painter, music by a filmmaker, paintings by a sculptor, sculpture by a filmmaker, films by a musician, music by a sculptor . . . sometimes they all work together. Also many of my paintings have been done by a painter, sculpture by a sculptor, films by a filmmaker, music by a musician. There is a tendency towards purity in all these media as separate endeavours. Painting as fixity, the static image. Sculpture's objectness. Light and Time. Walking Woman Works were an attempt to have variety. The painting *Just Once* is the same (?) forms represented in four different mediums. Four different meanings. As depiction it's the subdivision of an instant. Does my writing seem obscure? I'd like it to be eloquent. Words are Baffling. Portable.

It seems amazing that I'm not Mr. Sherman. There are a lot of distinctions between him and me despite the many things we have in common. It's not necessary for me to compare myself in detail to him to know that I give certain things a priority which he doesn't consider in the same way. Mr. Sherman reminds me of a friend of mine who I met here in New York about five years ago. He is now living in New Mexico. He is a wonderful writer. Drugs and Music. One reason why we are friends. Mr. Sherman is a shopkeeper. Some kinds of comparison are presumptuous and wasteful especially if they tend towards a grading of phenomenon. Which is writing. I mention Mr. Sherman partly because, as far as I know, he is not a writer. When I say I give priority to certain things I don't mean to imply any superiority over Mr. Sherman. I may be giving the impression that I'm insulting him. That's not my intention at all. I hardly know him.

I don't give priority to materials or technique.

From picnic to phantom. My cat licked the typewriter ribbon.

The revelatory relationships between things, people, events. Forming these into Art is leaving some things, people, events out. Choices. Not being Mr. Sherman, not Paul Haines, not my cat, not a writer.

## *First to Last* 1967

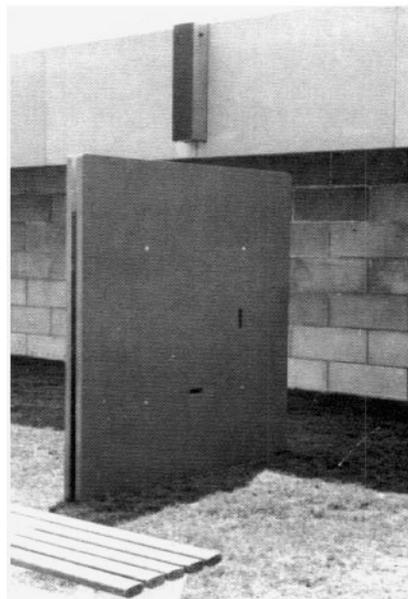
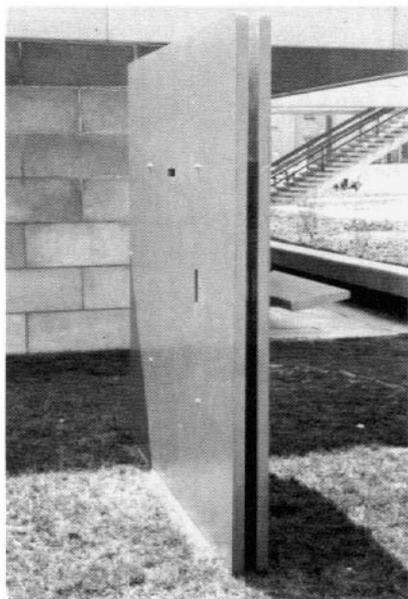
This text was transcribed from an interview with Snow taped 23 May 1967 by Dorothy Cameron. It was first published in *Sculpture '67*, and reprinted in *Michael Snow/Canada*, a catalogue produced on the occasion of Snow's exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1970.

**F***irst to Last* comes from the window pieces that I did beginning three years ago. This business of framing derives from a series running from the first Walking Woman paintings (where the figure was framed, cut off) to the last highly polished Walking Woman sculptures at Expo 67 (which framed within themselves the reflected outside action). But both here and in the window pieces I am interested merely in framing itself. This piece is a kind of absolute that frames things that are fortuitous. It is totally symmetrical, a perfect square in middle grey, turned in on itself. The experience it gives should just happen; then maybe later you should think of how it is done. When you look through the slots, first you see the shiny aluminum that is the inner basis of the work, and then you realize you are seeing a prism of some kind. Any chance thing can suddenly appear in it: whatever is going on on either side and in the sky. The top slot has a duller lining without much reflection, so that you look right up through that channel and see just that little slice of sky; but in the other slot, you get reflections back and forth. This sculpture is . . . internal [but] it feeds on what is external. It composes by the very limitation it imposes. Art is often a limitation, a focusing-in on things. I think something quite different happens when you see that slice of sky from what happens when you see the sky in the usual way. There is something poetic about it being caught in that way. It is a little like what the camera does, except that the sky is actually moving and it isn't really caught.

For the last three or four years, I have been influenced by films and by the camera. When you narrow down your range and are looking through just that small aperture of the lens, the intensity of what you see is so much greater. But I tend to make sculpture that is sculpture, and films that are films, and I don't want to see them both together. I think each should have power enough within its own medium to be of interest. The term "mixed media" is often used to describe a kind of impressionism, and I'm more interested in the specific than the general. However, I can't say I'm not interested in so-called mixed media because the diversity of the things I do has sometimes seemed a problem to me, and the idea that they all ought to happen together has been nagging at me for years. So far it's been enough of a problem just to make sculpture, just to make films, just to make music. If we are going to say "sculpture" we are going to have to say "theatre" or "opera" or "circus," and I have worked and still do in those

media. Simultaneity is very interesting, but I'm more interested in focus than in diffusion. One of the things about film that particularly fascinates me is the concentrated image-sound relationship.

I think it might be possible to live a life that did not actually involve making art, a life that is a kind of art itself. There are some experiences that you might call art. One morning on a bus trip I perceived a remarkable relationship between the seat in front of me, the ceiling of the bus, and what was happening outside. This was art in the sense that I saw relationships that were particularly moving in the same way as if they were "framed" or "chosen." I think there is something religious involved in that kind of experience, and art in general.



*First to Last at sculpture exhibition at Toronto City Hall, May 1967*

## Crafts 1967

This was written for a conference organized by the Canadian Craftsmen's Association (the predecessor of the present Canadian Crafts Council), which took place at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, in August 1967. I accompanied the talk with the playing of a tape of waves arriving at the shore, which I'd recorded at East Hampton, Long Island, in July while vacationing and writing this text at a rented cottage with friends Flo and Ken Jacobs. There are many American references in the text. Joyce Wieland and I lived in New York City from 1962 to (sort of) 1971. "Sort of" means we had studios in both New York City and Toronto in 1970 and 1971.

*M.S.*

I've written something and I'm going to read it also, as you'll probably notice. I've only made speeches a couple of times before this, and I was wondering whether maybe that could be one of the reasons why I was asked to make a speech here at this time: I mean that my speech might be a good example of a lack of craft. Thinking about that made me consider the possibility of attempting to write a speech from the point of view that it might be a work of art. I won't say what my decision was about that.

Anyway, I am an artist and I've worked in a great variety of media and materials since I first decided that I probably must be an artist. At least that's what the symptoms seemed to indicate. I think the same basic principles apply whether one is working with an object art, an image art or an event art. Or, of course, combinations of these categories. This categorization very crudely indicates a vast area, but it's a start. The arts can be usefully considered as a kind of scale that runs from sculpture to relief to collage to painting, still photographs, printing, to films, to theatre, to music. Writing is an eye thing and belongs loosely in the image category, while the public reading of same belongs just as loosely in the area of theatre. Fortunately this kind of thinking doesn't solve anything. I think the art and crafts distinction is an important one, but I'm ready to suspend it any time. We can speak of things which are made (1) just for their use, or (2) things that are for decoration, and (3) art. As you've no doubt seen, these types mix and intentions get transformed, not to mention the eye of the beholder. A useful decorative object could be art. A quote "useless" work of art could be used in some way but also be decorative. There's no qualitative difference between a telescope and a train window.

In 1961 I started a venture in my work which is now drawing to a close. I call the series Walking Woman Works. All the work till recently used the same contour of a walking figure as a constant. All the work is part of a much larger work. While I'm very conscious of distinctions of emotional and intellectual value in my work, I tried

to work in a very all-inclusive way so that some of the work includes the trivial. Every kind of paint available was used, from oils to acrylics, spray enamels, Day-Glo colours, metallic paints, etc. The figure was mass-produced on T-shirts and ties and on printed stickers, which were used in many ways and sent to many places in the world. Things and events were made which were casual and ephemeral, as well as things which were carefully planned, constructed and, hopefully, of lasting value. A friend of mine made a needlepoint pillow cover using a Walking Woman design I made. The most recent and most ambitious work is the eleven-part stainless-steel sculptural composition at the Ontario Pavilion at Expo. Every thing and event has its own context and it's probably better to be sensitive than dead.

I wrote some of this in a summer place on Long Island, so if you occasionally hear the sound of waves on the shore, that's how they got there. It's the Atlantic Ocean. Some of it was written on rainy days and some of that might be in there too. I live in New York, and one can develop an extraordinary hunger for nature there, so that every summer there is this absolute necessity to get away from the city to breathe again, see a plant or two, be in the sunlight and have an unusually clear look at the moon.

According to some scientific generalizations earth began two billion years ago and two million years ago human beings like us appeared. The age of technology is hardly a hundred years old, but coincidentally in these few brief years wilderness has almost vanished. There were recently proposals before the U.S. Congress to quote "improve the Grand Canyon in Colorado." Two dams would back up artificial lakes into 148 miles of fantastic canyon gorge. If you have ever seen the Grand Canyon, you will, I think, understand what a colossal crime is involved in this suggestion. The American Bureau of Reclamation, which has backed them, has called the dams quote "cash registers." It expects the dams to make money by the sale of commercial power. As a side issue to this, they argue that this would benefit tourists in power boats who would enjoy viewing the canyon wall more closely. The Sierra Club, an organization dedicated to saving wilderness and to whom I am indebted for information on this subject, headlines a pamphlet about it quote "Should we also flood the Sistine Chapel so tourists can get nearer the ceiling?" I think that Canada has some possibility of keeping some kind of at least relatively sane balance between the all-too-human tendency to exploit absolutely everything, turning it into garbage, and the admission that a lot of other things have a right to live too and that we are part of something and not just a separate manipulator of everything. In this respect we might profit from the many mistakes of our neighbour and employer the United States. . . . We might. . . . Of course those who go first are more likely to make mistakes than those who follow. This may apply to the arts and crafts. One of the answers to the "why live in New York" question is that the evidence of the neurotic basis of the evolution of man is much more apparent there than anywhere else in the world and I fit in. There's no deception. It's very plain that we are very mixed-up animals, and it's a great comfort to be confronted with constant proof. But one does need a holiday.

Anyway, there's a lot of land left in Canada that's yet to be paved and we've only a few cities, but I think that the question here is, Is it okay to be a rustic in the city? Or, Is it possible to be a rustic in the city? Well, of course it's OK. Who's to say it isn't? It's still possible too. But in the future? Machines will more and more make it possible for handwork to continue. We're in a phase right now, however, where what was once primitive becomes a luxury and then often later appears as an affectation.

As in considering types of art, there is a sort of scale in the ways of making works of art that starts with works in or on, where there is a great deal of hand evidence. Moving through those works we find less and less evidence of their formation by hand and finally we find individual works which are designed and then machine executed. Then the scale arrives at works which are made by machines designed either to specifically make variable or in quantity artworks or to make some thing or light or sound or event which, while not intended as art, has art qualities. Touch is an important part of what is transmitted by the painting of, for example, Henri Matisse or Willem de Kooning, or the sculpture of Rodin or Giacometti, and as you know is an important part of the appeal of anything handmade. I think it's a mistake to make this scale a scale of values in art. That is to say, those works formed in an executive way – from a distance, as it were – contain their formation as a content, and that can be a wonderful thing. I should add that when I say works of art, I mean anything man-made. If that seems too roomy, I'll have to add that from certain points of view, some things, when considered as works of art, seem to be better than some other things.

As common as the scale of values I mentioned is the fallacious, I think, consideration of those works with a great deal of hand evidence as being more quote "human" or more quote "natural" than those in which there is no evident handling. There's a subdivision in there which consists of work which is as raw as possible – say, consisting largely of a naturally found unrefined material with very little alteration by the artist. This is where a cosmic circle is described and seashells meet electronic feedback.

While individually hand-made things may be more quote "human," I think that mass-produced things are more natural. Mass production and computer direction involve more of a "participation mystique" in the life of the universe than does handwork; things created in quantity belong more to the realm of grass than to the realm of Vermeer, and when machines produce side effects such as feedback, the near relative is the sound of birds, not the sound of Beethoven. Perhaps Coke bottles are a new mineral formation. In addition, the red of the Coca-Cola ads is a member of the same family as the red of roses. Red is not ours.

Still, I wish people wouldn't throw bottles on the beach. I don't think there's any point in trying to William Morris all the drink containers into existence. There's a growing number of drinkers as there's a growing number of everything. Some drinkers wouldn't have anything to drink out of, or anything to leave on the beach. Anyway, in another way I think the future of handwork is assured by technology. What if everybody made his own coffee cup?

This is the utopia section. . . .

If technology and politics could alter each other, there could be an absolute minimum of work of a supervisory nature to be done. This is possible right now but sadly has to be spoken of as an idealistic aim – we could all have much more of what is called leisure. This could partly be used to produce articles of a personal quality, that is, your own coffee cup. Or you wouldn't have to do anything, just sit around watch TV, put on weight, drink Cokes, ruin your teeth. Lots of people will want to do something. Words are deceptive here; it may seem as if I'm talking about what are called hobbies, not about either craft or art. I have to call it all home art. There will be masterpieces of home art.

Home or personal art will not primarily be made for sale. It will be made for the pleasure of the activity and for the pleasure of the use or contemplation, sharing with friends.

The alternative to this rosy, to me, future of craft activities is this: speaking optimistically, I'd say that if there are any survivors of the long-awaited atomic explosions, let's hope that some of them are people who know how to weave or throw pots, etc.

Personal art is the rare or luxurious thing you made yourself. Hand-done things are luxuries: they're all different; they're rare. On the other hand, with traditional materials it is close to impossible to do anything that hasn't been done before. Knowledge in a particular activity will bring awareness of the accomplishments of the past and of the repertoire of possible forms and their combinations. Handwork can't be all that creative any more. It is and will be traditional. Discoveries will be rare and mostly in the area of personal style. Tradition is conservative and comforting. Now, when I'm referring to home art, I mean, to start with, hand-made things worked in clay or metal or leather or wood or fabric or painting. New materials like the many fantastic new fabrics will of course be used. This leads us into another area of this subject.

I'd like to draw your attention to an interesting tendency in clothing fashions today. Clothing is like the arts in that all past styles are available for use. On admittedly slim evidence, I'd like to predict that fashion will be less dictatorial, or rather that people will respond in a less sheeplike way to the lure of the fashion industry and that there will be more and more effort by each person to find a personal style in clothing. This will include more making of your own clothes and more additions to and alterations of ready-mades. In describing his own work, Marcel Duchamp called this "assisting the ready-made."

Technology is being extraordinarily creative in the production of new materials, many of which are workable by hand and on a home or personal level. There are many professional fine artists whose work consists of watching these developments and presenting them in more or less modified forms for the characteristics which they have. This is a kind of trade-fair art. Anyway, I don't think it should be overlooked — there are a lot of qualities to be experienced there.

So far I've mentioned the continuation of the traditional hand crafts as home art, but today we have to add to this the same type of scale as I mentioned previously in describing the ways in which works of art can be made. This will have to include the new qualities of the new materials and new media. Thousands and thousands of people make movies today, home movies, and I've no doubt at all that there are some masterpieces of home cinema hidden in a few recreation rooms in North America. *Our Trip to Expo* could be a great movie. It could be great, first for the immediate family or friends concerned, but it could also contain qualities that would make it meaningful for others. It just has to be done by the artistically talented member of the family. Still photographs are another even more common home art. Working with tape recorders and the whole area of sound is a growing home occupation. Videotape cameras have only been on the market about three years but are relatively cheap, probably will get cheaper and imply the possibility of a lot of home TV. Theatre is being done. In this connection I'd like to make reference to the work being done in the field of what are called "happenings." This would require a whole talk in itself, but I'll try to greatly condense the subject: most so-called happenings exist in score form like sheet music or the script for a play or movie. They can be performed by anyone. And probably will be. For example, Dick Higgins, whose work is amongst the most interesting, has published the scores or instructions for all his many performance or event or theatre-type pieces.

But to return to things or the making of things, I think that the makers of hot rod cars provide a useful example and are working in an interesting art and/or craft area. Starting with mass-produced material, they alter this material and also add to this material forms which are often wholly made by themselves. These cars can be described as partly collage, or more accurately assemblage, but also as a purer kind of thing when the forms are individually made. The makers of these cars aim for personal style. It's a pretty rare thing, which puts it, in a way, more into a traditional art category, but the point is, I hope there will be more of that kind of tampering with mass-produced stuff.

Even if the final product doesn't look good to anyone else, making things can really be a marvellous thing, as you no doubt all know. As therapy or pleasurable activity, this is an important part of hand crafts that I suggest may assist their survival as we live in a more and more industrialized society. A possibility here, relating to the previously mentioned performance of happenings, theatre-type pieces, playing and composing (instrumental and tape) music and the recording of these things as an auxiliary home craft, is a kind of purified activity which would contain one of the traditional aspects of so-called fine art. I mean a kind of work activity which is totally useless, that is to say it doesn't make a product, is enjoyable but in a way meaningless. Useless work could be art.

Well, it doesn't look as if the outboard motor is doing away with the crawl or the breaststroke. We still have horseracing. What's the point of comparing a champion swimmer to a speedboat? Besides, some swimmers swim because it feels good. Swimmers are still breaking records. Crafts can be thought of as a physical pleasure, and industrial methods as just getting there fast. I think it's a mistake to make an absolute of the idea that the new dooms and replaces the old. Sometimes it just clarifies characteristics and the family gets bigger – more and more books.

Art forms *have* been abandoned; whether they became obsolete is another question. Predictions, for example, that still photography would do away with painting or that cinema would kill the theatre have proved to be naive. It's worth remembering that predictions of obsolescence amount to declaring that a something has one peculiar task, which another something may do as well or better. If the painter's job had ever been simply to fabricate likenesses, the invention of the camera might have definitely made painting obsolete. It hasn't happened. Photographs and especially cinema are time machines. Movies preserve the past while theatres, no matter how dedicated to old plays or to classics, can only be always new. The historical flavour of anything registered on film is so strong that practically all films older than two years or so are saturated with a kind of pathos.

The crafts can aim for durability, classicism, to oppose the disposable and the novel. As in the case of cinema and the theatre, is mass production the successor, rival or revivifier of crafts?

A background to all this is the political and economic hope I referred to previously. It's necessity. The compulsive horror of American actions in Vietnam and a lot of other terrifying aspects of American life make it seem very, very remote. Right now I'm hoping as much as predicting; the possibilities exist.

The North Vietnamese army and the Viet Cong, utilizing what must be called craft as opposed to industrial methods of warfare, seem to be amazingly and thankfully holding their own. One of the reasons for this is that ultimate industrial methods have

yet to be used by the Americans. Guerrilla warfare is craft and folk. New methods are destruction by projection.

Using half the amount of money being used to level Vietnam could eliminate American slums and begin to give everybody a guaranteed minimum annual income. Can a nation that is spending about \$300,000 to kill each Viet Cong human person afford to give even \$500 a year to poor citizens and parents for family allowances, let alone finance the destruction of slums and the creation of new communities by the slum dwellers themselves?

Such sanity would probably eliminate such now-flourishing home crafts as the making of Molotov cocktails and zip guns, also riots and demonstrations which, having their effects mostly on the participants and onlookers, are personal and folk, as opposed to the detachment of TV, where types not people are generally represented and the medium is an obvious equalizer of all the elements presented. Fortunately all this isn't a Canadian problem, but it's so huge a crisis for American society that I can't help mentioning it.

The luxury aspect of crafts in our time is revealed when one considers the fact that poor people living in a mass-production-dominated environment never, apart from the armaments just mentioned, consider making their own things. They want manufactured things, and after they have them they might want to buy or make hand-crafted things. An attempt, for example, by the American poverty program to instruct in craft activities in poor neighbourhoods would be laughed or burned out of town, and for good reason.

There has recently been a resurgence of interest in an old Utopian idea: the self-supporting small cooperative farming community. Some people are trying to drop out of the larger society totally and make everything they need. There are three that I know of in New York State and several others in the rest of the States. Tolstoy Farm in Washington doesn't have electricity. This reaction against certain problems of the present system – organic farming methods, using no insecticides, etc. – is part of another movement in society on the part of people who have participated in the affluent society but don't want any more of it. It must be admitted that there is a luxury aspect to this attitude, but a large number of basically artistic temperaments are involved with this kind of thing almost as a kind of social art. Now it's not only the things that some artists make that are prophetic but also the way they live. I never thought I'd see the day, but more and more aspects of the artists' lifestyle of the last hundred years or so are being adopted by non-artists. As a private advocate of better living through chemistry for about fifteen years, I get great pleasure in acknowledging the many recent public advocates. I believe that the huge artists' community in New York provides an interesting model for future social developments on a larger scale. It's made up of many, many groups and subgroups. I'm speaking of professional artists, those who make their living from art, hope to, or just regard it as the most important activity of their lives and make their livings from something else. This is of course the majority. Then there is a huge circle of hangers-on and people who just look. The point is that despite all kinds of obstacles and corrupting influences, the majority of these people in an important way make their work for the rest of the artistic community and sometimes just for a small group within it, not just for the general public. It's from one's peers that understanding, appreciation really mean something.

I think an attitude similar to this will emerge on a family and friends basis when more people indulge in what today would be called a hobby. In a lot of cases it'll become more serious than that.

As usual some people are going to be better than some other people, though, and while the distance between amateur and professional status will be smaller, as usual a lot of people are going to take as the model for what they do the work of individuals of exceptional talent. Which is where you all come in. And of course growing interest will produce a demand for more expensive materials and processes, and this will lead some home craftsmen to become professionals. Not only that – they may naturally still prefer to buy something by a master craftsman. The market for professional crafts will continue, but I can't imagine it growing very much except in proportion to population growth. So apart from a few especially gifted craftsmen or artists working full-time at their endeavours, there'll undoubtedly be an increased demand and necessity for knowledgeable teachers and experts to supervise studies, or workshops which also might increase, where equipment and knowledge can be shared. In other words, not much change from the present situation.

Certain artist-craftsmen, as some of you may do, will work in an industrial set-up as designers and creators of prototypes for either limited or large-scale mass production. I'm sure this will continue to be a more creative and rewarding profession, with more and more possibilities in plastics, fibres and more complicated means of reproduction. As a profession it might be menaced a little by the young folks at home. It's interesting to consider the possibility of a Bob Dylan of pottery. The renewed interest in folk or country music of all kinds as a source for a new urban folk or popular music is having, to a certain extent, the effect of producing a parallel interest in the other folk arts. New uses of American Indian craft is the most obvious example.

The New York store Abercrombie and Fitch has in its mail-order catalogue a beer-can launcher. This, as the catalogue explains it, is a beautifully made device (or rather a beautifully crafted device; everything at Abercrombie is crafted, which means it costs more) that uses a blank .22 cartridge to catapult an empty beer can a full one hundred feet into the air. The launcher is intended to provide grouse hunters with target practice.

\* \* \*

*Question: You said the future of handwork is assured by technology. Would you say the reverse is true? In the sense that the future of technology is assured by handwork, in the sense of involvement the maker has in his private personal experience as you talk of handwork being a part of personal involvement.*

Snow: I think it is obvious that mass production holds the situation and what we are talking about is some kind of compensatory activity. For example, there is such a desire for such an activity that it is going to be called for by the existence of so much mass production. It is related to the mind, but it is the way things are made. There is so much distance between the final product and what's done that I think there is naturally some desire to have the things make contact with people, and that is the way to satisfy them. But things that are made from mass production are designed, and it is a long, long way away from you by the time the thing gets done, although it could be very strongly personal still physically distant. That's why I think there will be this kind of reaction. And it is there – already is.



*From Wavelength 1967*

## On *Wavelength* 1968

These various texts were first published in *Film Culture* 46 (Autumn 1967, published October 1968), the cover of which is reproduced here. In 1968 Snow's film *Wavelength* won first prize at the Fourth International Experimental Film Competition, Knokke-le-Zoute, Belgium.

# FILM CULTURE

## NINTH INDEPENDENT FILM AWARD

To point out original contributions to the cinema, FILM CULTURE is awarding its Ninth Independent Film Award (for the year 1967) to

**MICHAEL SNOW** for his film **WAVELENGTH**

(Past Independent Film Awards: SHADOWS, Cassavetes, 1959; PULL MY DAISY, Frank-Leslie, 1960; PRIMARY, Leacock-Maysles, 1961; THE DEAD and PRELUDE, Brakhage, 1962; FLAMING CREATURES, Jack Smith, 1963; SLEEP, HAIRCUT, EAT, KISS and EMPIRE, Warhol, 1964; HEAVEN AND EARTH MAGIC FEATURE and EARLY ABSTRACTIONS, Harry Smith, 1965; Gregory Markopoulos, for his total work, 1966.)

*Film Culture*

## A STATEMENT ON "WAVELENGTH" FOR THE EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL OF KNOCKE-LE-ZOUTE by Michael Snow

WAVELENGTH was shot in one week Dec. '66 preceeded by a year of notes, thots, mutterings. It was edited and first print seen in May '67. I wanted to make a summation of my nervous system, religious inklings, and aesthetic ideas. I was thinking of planning for a time monument in which the beauty and sadness of equivalence would be celebrated, thinking of trying to make a definitive statement of pure Film space and time, a balancing of "illusion" and "fact", all about seeing. The space starts at the camera's (spectator's) eye, is in the air, then is on the screen, then is within the screen (the mind).

The film is a continuous zoom which takes 45 minutes to go from its widest field to its smallest and final field. It was shot with a fixed camera from one end of an 80 foot loft, shooting the other end, a row of windows and the street. This, the setting, and the action which takes place there are cosmically equivalent. The room (and the zoom) are interrupted by 4 human events including a death. The sound on these occasions is sync sound, music and speech, occurring simultaneously with an electronic sound, a sine wave, which goes from its lowest (50 cycles per second) note to its highest (12000 c.p.s.) in 40 minutes. It is a total glissando while the film is a crescendo and a dispersed spectrum which attempts to utilize the gifts of both prophecy and memory which only film and music have to offer.

## CONVERSATION WITH MICHAEL SNOW

*by Jonas Mekas and P. Adams Sitney*

(Late in the night on August 15, 1968 Michael Snow showed us the rough cut of a film in progress, approximately one hour long, in which a camera fixed to a tripod in a schoolroom pans continually left-right-left-right, sometimes with actions and sometimes with only the empty room. Following the screenings we asked him to describe his film career.)

Snow: I made my first film in 1956 or 57. I was painting before that. I did not make another one until 63. It was in Toronto and we (Joyce Wieland, his wife, and himself) actually met while working at a film company, which was the first company to make TV commercials in Canada. It was headed by George Dunning; Dick Williams was there also, whom you may have heard of, he's done long animated films. These were guys who had worked at the National Film Board of Canada and they started a little company. I don't know how our paths crossed, but anyway I started working there. They did mostly animation. I was there about a year and a half until the company folded.

All of us who were working there made films on our own. The first one that I made was animated. I worked in some others. We all made them. Joyce made some and was in others. Some of them were nice too.

Sitney: When did you first come to New York?

Snow: We've been here for six and one half years. When I first came here I ran into a guy named Ben Park. I had been working on the idea for a film which involved using the Walking Woman figure which I use in all my work, sculpture, printed, and everything. He became very interested in financing the film; so we started to work on it. We shot about three hours of film. Then he took over the thing. He owns it.

Both this film and NEW YORK EYE AND EAR CONTROL were part of the variations that I made on the theme, the one image theme of the Walking Woman. I worked in all kinds of materials; some media even that are kind of hard to name, like making things that were lost compositions. I did everything I could think of without altering that particular form, the contour of the Walking Woman.

In 1964, maybe earlier too, I made Walking Woman T-shirts and ties and all that kind of stuff, which is all in the film with Ben Park. I made a composition in the 8th Street Bookshop once. It was all done with rubber stamp images of the Walking Woman. I put them in books and various places that had some significance to me.

NEW YORK EYE AND EAR CONTROL was made in 1964. It was a year after the film with Ben Park and I used some

of the things that were happening in the earlier film. I just decided to go ahead and do it myself. It's different. If the first one were ever made it would be quite a different film. We may finish it. I haven't seen him for a while, but he may be interested in finishing it.

I gradually stopped using the *Walking Woman* exclusively after I did a big sculpture exposition at Expo 67, which I worked on in '66 and showed in the summer of '67. That was something that was finished before it was done in the sense that it was a designed thing and a summation of certain ideas of *objectness* that I'd been thinking out. It was a big sculptural composition in stainless steel. It had a lot to do with reflections; so it really had an image aspect.

I was thinking over *Wavelength* for a long long time. It was really quite important to me.

Sitney: Which part of the concept of *Wavelength* came first?

Snow: The zoom. I was searching for the place for a long time and I didn't know where it started or where it went. It was just the idea of a long zoom. There really was an awful lot of thinking about it – that was strange to say because it doesn't really mean anything. It just so happens that I made an awful lot of notes and thought about it for about a year. I meant it as a summation of everything that I've thought about, everything.

Sitney: How did it come about that the zoom was interrupted? Had you ever thought of making one technically slick zoom?

Snow: It is attempting to balance out in a way all the so-called realities that are involved in the issue of making a film. I thought that maybe the issues hadn't really been stated clearly about film in the same sort of way – now this is presumptuous, but to say in the way Cézanne, say, made a balance between the colored goo that he used, which is what you see if you look at it in that way, and the forms that you see in their illusory space. That whole issue in film has been touched on by lots of people, that it's light, and it's on a flat surface, and it's also images. A kind of space that seems natural to it is maybe conical, but flattened. I can't explain how that seems proper. But it's something to do with that and that (Snow indicates first the flat of a screen with his palm and then the conical projection beam with both hands: the beam and the flat surface).

I was trying to do something very pure and about the kinds of realities that are involved. The film opens with the kind of thing in which you have a certain belief or you give up that you see a room, you see people walk in, and you believe in that. The room is shot as realism. It is shot the way you would see a room as much as there is a consensus about how one sees a room. It also has realistic representational sound: the noise from outside. But then there are intimations of other ways of seeing the thing, until the first real break is when the image is totally negative. It is all red and that pure sound, that drone at about fifty cycles per second, starts as opposed to the other representational sounds. That is something in which you do not have the same kind of belief. It is the other side of that, and yet it's colored light. It is all very obvious. I was concerned with making a balancing of all these things.

Sitney: The film is so pure that I am curious about the accumulation of its various parts. There is one zoom across a long room towards a photograph of waves on the opposite wall. Four actions take place: a bookcase is moved in, two girls listen to the radio, a man staggers in and falls on the floor, and a girl enters and telephones

someone to say a man is dead in the room. Did the photograph just happen to be on the wall?

Snow: Oh my God no! The wall was set up that way; that's where the zoom was going. I took the photograph myself for the film, but I also made a piece of sculpture using photographs of waves.

All those orders of events were classified by me at that time as kinds of events and the kind of effect that they can have. There is the implication of a story in the sense of human affairs. You can make connections between, say, the two girls listening to the radio and the delivery of the bookcase, maybe it's like a coffee break or something, but that is not the story.

There is only one place with a connection to a prior event: her making the phone call refers back in time and space too, because the zoom has gone past that point, to where the body is. It also makes a connection and gives the implication that this thing will continue, so that more will follow, which it does. The photograph of the waves is an implication of a kind of total continuity for everything not just that simple incident.

Sitney: Did you rehearse the telephone call? Did you tell her what to say?

Snow: No, that's just one shot. I did tell her what to say and I had to redo the sound. It took me a week to shoot the film. Then it took a little while to put it together, figure out the sound and everything. I had to start shooting in the middle too, which made it a little difficult. Hollis Frampton is the guy who dies, and he could only do it on such and such a day so I had to start the zoom in the middle and make sure that it got back to where it was supposed to be.

Ken Jacobs lent me the camera and the Angenieux lens and naturally he did not want me to leave it in my studio. I had to take it apart every time after I finished shooting. I fixed the tripod but I still had to take the camera off. I shot some nights and some days. I'm delighted the whole thing came out the way I wanted it, including the different kinds of stock.

Sitney: What do you call the new film?

Snow: No name. But I was thinking of using that  $\longleftrightarrow$ . [The spoken title is *Back and Forth*.] In the new film I am thinking about some sort of different orientation or emphasis that the spectator has, some kind of different participation. The new one is more objective, I think, than *Wavelength* and it involves you in some way which I don't know how to describe – exactly what your eyes and mind are doing when you're watching that.

Mekas: There is a family of films that you could have some connection to, like Landow's *Fleming Faloon*. Then, no doubt, some of Andy Warhol's work.

Snow: Maybe with *Wavelength*, but not so much with the new one. In this film there are some interesting things from a *time* point of view; because the pan is always moving, scanning, that defines your time sense. When there's activity in that room, that just happens and you scan past it and so on. This panning, which is either you or the camera, is continuous (or will be, as you saw it, it's still in a rough shape). There is a paradox involved: the action of the spectator-camera is what is continuous, whereas these other things are going to appear and disappear as the thing passes. It's going to have an inexorable quality.

I see the events involved as having some connection with that motion. There are opposites in it; *yeses* and *nos*. The one girl who is a student answers a question by shaking her head yes or no; there's a fight and a kiss.

There are light changes in it now, as you saw it. I don't want any of that in the final version. I want this to be all velocity changes, to do with speed not to do with the changes of meaning that happen with the light.

Mekas: How did you control the borders of the panning camera?

Snow: I made a set of baffles on the tripod so that the arm of the thing could only go so far. The baffles were nailed on the tripod. As I said before I tried to make a motor. I wanted to do that so I could control the gradations of the speed of the panning. Finally I could not work that out so I did it with a metronome. It starts at a medium tempo, then goes to its slowest tempo, then to its fastest tempo, then when it comes to the up and down movement (at the end of the film), it is a little bit below the fastest tempo. Then it just drops out.

I shot it over two or three weeks, but it's also been a year in the making. The whole thing about camera movement and that particular arc seemed an interesting thing.

## Letter from Michael Snow

21 August 1968

Dear P. Adams (and Jonas)

Reminding. Feel our/my esp. remarks (taped) to have been kind of dumb. Attempting to be less in this letter.

OK. Some ramblings occasioned by things unsaid: feel there to be some submerged issue about my work in other media and wish that we had a couple of days to go into their connections. If I were a "mixed media" artist perhaps it would be easier. Have been, not opposed but the general won't cancel the specific. Sculpture: I know a lot about objects, how they get to be what and where they are. Painting: surfaces and colours of things. What I'm fussing about is, E.G. (and not EGO but just to be clear), Jonas "knows" a *lot* about light but I don't think he knows about sound except as "support" for light, maybe. Music has to be acknowledged equal value. Not that it can't be "used" supportively or any way at all but it's (music) a world too. Anyway I've been to, have lived in the worlds of objects, surfaces, static-colour-images, sound and light. *Wavelength* is, as I said in the note for the Knokke catalogue: "... a summation of my nervous system, religious inklings and aesthetic ideas" and "A definite statement of pure film space and time" and "A time monument." All my activities have been partly an effort of self-clarification and before the Knokke prize had happened I knew that *Wavelength* was crucial in my life and work. The note for Knokke was originally written for the N.Y. Coop Catalogue, when I expected the film (I knew it was great) to disappear like *New York Eye and Ear Control*. The friendship of Ken Jacobs and the love of Joyce Wieland had been steering me a little (it's complicated), but while I'm still an Artist (capital A) the effect the film had on other people has been helping me to realize myself as perhaps essentially time-light-sound poet. The other activities not given up but in order of weight.

From 1961 to 66-67 all my work used the same image, the Walking Woman. I worked in every material and method I could think of. It was a huge theme and variations composition. In painting, for example, I used watercolour, ink, tempera, oil, enamels, spray enamels, acrylics, etc. on various grounds. I stenciled ties, sweatshirts, match books, made rubber stamp compositions; had things printed, mass made; used

printed stickers and rubber stamp to make dispersed and lost compositions. Some of these had a time aspect: that one might see a part (printed sticker) in the Sheridan Square subway stop, find another on the stairs, then find another in the 8th Street Bookstore (1962). Unfinished film made with Ben Park. Hope to finish someday. Spring, summer '64 shot *New York Eye and Ear Control*. Think it's great too and was happy that Richard Foreman, Ken Jacobs, and Andy Warhol thought so too when it was first shown at Cinematheque. This film is a true determinate simultaneity. It is all (about/is) polarities, opposites, supposed opposites. If *Wavelength* is metaphysics, *Eye and Ear Control* is philosophy and  $\longleftrightarrow$  will be physics.

I think now it was a bit unfair to show you and Jonas  $\longleftrightarrow$  in its raw state. Quite a lot of it is still in my mind although all the material exists. As a move from the implications of *Wavelength* it attempts to transcend through motion more than light. There will be less paradox and in a way less drama than in the other films. It is more "concrete" and more objective. *Eye and Ear* is analytical, all the parts are dealt with, inspected separately. You are given backgrounds then later foregrounds, for example. It is perhaps more linear than the others.  $\longleftrightarrow$  is sculptural. It is also a kind of demonstration or lesson in perception and in concepts of law and order and their transcendence. It is in/of/depicts a classroom. When it is finished I think it will be seen to present a different, possibly new, spectator-image relationship. My films are (to me) attempts to suggest the mind to a certain state or certain states of consciousness. They are drug relatives in that respect.  $\longleftrightarrow$  will be less comment and dream than the others. You aren't within it, it isn't within you, you're beside it.  $\longleftrightarrow$  is sculptural because the depicted light is to be outside, around the solid (wall) which becomes transcended/spiritualized by motion-time, whereas in *Wavelength* it is more transcended by light-time. However,  $\longleftrightarrow$  involves one's neck as well as one's mind-eyes. Sound yet to come.

During our conversation I wanted to talk more about the issue of "story" that came up in Jonas' column referring to Ernie Gehr's films and to *Wavelength*. Now: one of the subjects of or one of the things *Wavelength* attempts to be is a "balancing" of different orders, classes of events and protagonists. The image of the yellow chair has as much "value" in its own world as the girl closing the window. The film events are not hierarchical but are chosen from a kind of scale of mobility that runs from pure light events, the various perceptions of the room, to the images of moving human beings. The inert: the bookcase that gets carried in, the corpse, as seen, dying being a passage from activity to object. Inertia. It is precise that "events *take place*." The various kinds of events imply or demonstrate links which are, more or less, "stories." We tend to make a strong human event link between the death and the phone call. It is the beginning of what we conventionally call a "story." Before the man dies to after he dies the "story" changes levels and one "reads" relationships.

His entry (He is not seen. Behind you?) is announced/preceded by breaking glass etc. sounds as well as image-colour fluctuations. The sound is "representational," "realistic" as he is seen, walks in, dies. This is *against* the "abstract" sine-wave glissando. When he dies the "realistic" sound stops and is now *seen*. The colour-image waves which on other occasions are sensed as light events tied to what-is-happening-to-the-room (!) belief are now sensed as ripples of life-heart struggles or the reverberations of hitting the floor. It is a very involved subject to try to write about. The "story" is on different levels of belief and identification.

I mentioned Cézanne in a comment about the illusion/reality balancing act in painting. Tho many many other painters have worked out their own beautiful solutions to this “problem,” I think his was the greatest and is relevant because his work was representational. The complicated involvement of *his* perception of exterior reality, his creation of a work which both *represents* and *is* something, thus his balancing of mind and matter, his respect for a lot of levels are exemplary to me. My work is representational. It is not very Cézannesque tho. *Wavelength* and  $\longleftrightarrow$  are much more Vermeer (I hope).

I sensed the existence of that dull subject: knowledge, skill, preconception as opposed (?) to the random, luck, etc. during our conversation.

Planning doesn't make anything better or worse and there are millions of ways to plan. *Wavelength* involved many worried-over decisions. I put the camera high on a platform so that one could see more of the street, tops of the sides of the trucks. It's all planes, no perspectival space. Discovered the high angle to have lyric God-like above-it-all quality.  $\longleftrightarrow$  camera is 5' above the floor. The colour and light value changes were given their tendency by arranging of the different kinds of film stock which was done before shooting. Within that I played/improvised with plastics and filters while shooting, feeling it out but bearing in mind certain prior considerations: their relationships to the human events (announcing, echoing, etc.), when they should perhaps be most pure, their phrasing/timing and that though there are passages of complementaries as a general form thru the film they go from warm colours to cool (spectrum). Oppositions are drama. I didn't always make a “choice.” Just felt like it or else just did it. I was surprised and I wanted to be. However I set up a system or container which could both shape the fortuitous and give it a place . . . who knows?

Waves are the visible registers of invisible forces.

Addenda: The most developed of the “dispersed” compositions was the 11-part steel composition I did mostly in '66 for Expo 67 in Montreal. The 11 variations were scattered over a large area, couldn't all be seen at once. One came upon them. This was the last Walking Woman work.

Influences: I've been changed by everything that I've been moved by. It makes an odd group: Duke Ellington, Marcel Duchamp, Claes Oldenburg, Piet Mondrian, Henri Matisse, Louis Armstrong, John Cage, Jan Vermeer, Bach, Jimmy Yancey, Joyce Wieland, Paul Valéry and on. Influences on my films haven't been very specific. The general knowledge: both Joyce and I worked for George Dunning (who did the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine*) around '55, '56 in Toronto. Richard Williams (titles for *The Light Brigade*, etc.) and Sid Furie (*The Ipcress File*, *The Leather Boys*) also worked there. It was an introduction and we all did films just to make films. The company, however, made mostly animated TV commercials. The real influence on Joyce and me after we moved to New York ('62) was just Jonas and the amazing existence of the Cinematheque. We've been frequent attenders. Everybody made it possible just to think about actually making a film. Conceptually nobody specifically has mattered. *Eye and Ear Control* was finished summer '64 and sometime late fall saw first Warhols: *Henry Geldzahler* and others at the New Yorker which I very much admired. I was amazed at the coincidences, I mean shocked, to my thinking in *Eye and Ear*. I not only used lightstruck ends, there are a set of “portraits” and the time sense is similar. To continue the amazement I later read about *Empire*. In *Eye and Ear* there is a dawn sequence which is much shorter than I'd intended but is essentially the same

thought. When *Eye and Ear* was first shown at the Cinematheque (Astor Playhouse '65) it was one of those riots with people throwing things at the screen. When the film was over I recall Gerard Malanga running up the aisle to the projector and saying, "That couldn't have been made in 1964!" Later Andy told me he thought the film was "wonderful" which pleased me very much. The differences are of course vast as well. When I started thinking, jotting notes for *Wavelength*, it occurred to me that it might be a little like *Empire*. It didn't come from there tho. The similarities are partly the background of our thinking which came from the issues of the painting world: Oldenburg, Jasper Johns, Duchamp. I like *Screen Test* and *Poor Little Rich Girl* and *Juanita Castro* very much. Brakhage: *Scenes from Under Childhood* is magnificent. *Blond Cobra* and parts of Ken Jacobs' unfinished *The Sky Socialist*. Kubelka. Parts of Jonas' *Diary of Wendy Clarke's Wedding*. I'm interested in doing something that can't be explained.

Oh there are so many things to it. The frame by frame truth and the running together illusion. It's fast stills. Ultimately those events on the screen which really move me seem to be mysterious alterations of mind and time sense. Everybody makes different transferences of energy. One can feel the eyes of Kubelka in *Unsere Afrikareise*. His attention.

Now I think this letter is just as dumb.

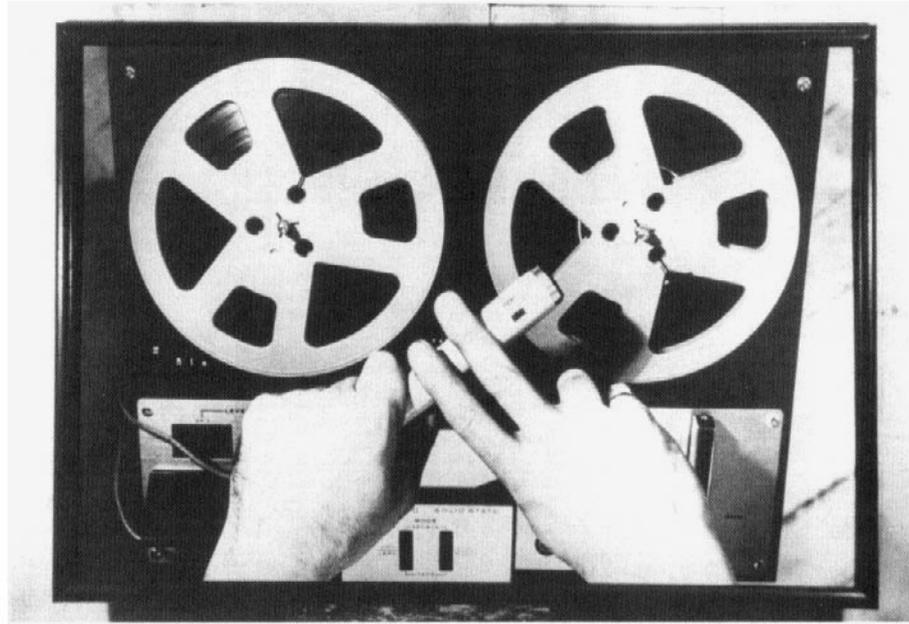
It's all in the work. Writing, talking: some other things.

Yrs  
**Michael Snow**

## *Abitibi* 1969

This text first appeared in the catalogue prepared by Anita Aarons for the exhibition *Art for Architecture – The Wall*, organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1969.

Take “Painting” off the Wall, have “Panel,” make Panel big, have “Wall.” Also thought of “Painting” as 2 dimensional skin usually applied to “Wall” or “Panel.” In 1965 thinking above thoughts and a few others I made *Morningside Heights* – a free-standing equal sided plane. Mass on floor, then thinner (1/2 in.) vertical plane, then transparent (no mass) “Window.” Idea of free-standing planes being the result of equal, opposed pressures, producing stasis, 2 dimensionality verging on an interesting impossibility: 1 dimension, explored in recent “squeeze” pieces, especially *Abitibi*. Other forerunners *Sleeve* 1965 and large central wall with “removals” of 1967 stainless steel expo Walking Woman composition. Also *First to Last* 1966. All these examples are outgrowths of “Painting” but are both invented “Wall” and “Picture.” Another precedent: *Atlantic* 1966. *Abitibi* is a totality in which the process, once set in motion, produced “natural” forms of unpredictable variety in relation to a “known” fixity, the rectangle. The result is a structure which is a record of the process (both physical and conceptual), balancing and relating samples of “chaos” and “order.” Two 4 ft. x 8 ft. x 1/2 in. plywood sheets, varnished, bolted together with greyed polyester resin between, resulting (when ooze hardened); two-sided, equal-pressured, free-standing wall.



*The Photographic Component in Tap, 1969 (from the Collection of the National Gallery of Canada)*

## *Tap* 1969

*Tap* is a “dispersed composition” finished in 1969 and now in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada. The following is the text part of the work – that is, it is a detail. However, it is a detail which has the unusual capacity to describe the other parts of the work and its intention. This text was first published independently of the work in *Michael Snow/Canada*, the catalogue prepared by the National Gallery for the Venice Biennale in 1970.

**M.S.**

The “drumming” sound which you have heard, are hearing, will hear or perhaps won’t ever hear I made by tapping my fingers against a microphone while moving it over the tape recorder to make a bit of feedback. I then made a loop of a selection from the resulting tape. There is a large blowup of a photograph of the above procedure which you may have seen or will see, etc. It’s supposed to be hanging somewhere in this building. The tape and the photo were made in February 1969 and this is being typed on March 14, 1969. Joyce Wieland Snow and I took the photos with a Miranda 35mm camera, an 8” x 10” print from the selected negative was made by Modernage on 48th Street and the 6’ x 40” blowup was made by Independent on 42nd Street. It cost \$36.00.

I wanted to make a composition which was dispersed, in which the elements would be come upon in different ways and which would consist of (1) a sound, (2) an image, (3) a text, (4) an object, (5) a line, which would be unified but the parts of which would be of interest in themselves if the connections between them were not seen (but better if seen). One of many additional considerations was that it be partly tactile, bodymade though using machines. Typewriting is a very similar finger-tapping to the way the tape was made and I thought that perhaps I should make a complementary object by finger-tapping, but finally decided to show the loudspeaker as the object, as a “found” element which spreads the “created” element. The speaker is just a cheap portable speaker I got about five years ago and I considered “including” it more by painting it, perhaps I will; at this writing it is dark brown, its original colour. Rather than change this “given” colour of the speaker or its shape I decided to continue the colour. This and the photo are black and white and the wire is black. Since the brown speaker “frames” the sound I used the same brown in framing both this and the photo. The frames are also rectangular “loops.” The line, which of course, properly speaking, is also an object, I decided to compose through whatever building the piece is in. It partly “composes” itself according to its own nature but it eventually “disappears” to the tape recorder which is now (?) playing the tape so that

it (the wire) has a “spread” which in its own terms has some similarity to the acoustical spatial spread of the sound, eventually disappearing. I decided against showing the playback tape recorder because the source of the sound at this time and historically is here described, and in the photo, pictured. In a sense the black line (carrier of the sound) disappears to here (text), to the photograph (image), both of which are “traces” of it, and to the actual (hidden) tape recorder. This piece is an attempt to, among other things, do something manipulative with memory devices: tape recorder, camera, type writer. It is not a “mixed-media” or collage-assemblage piece, nor is it theatre. As is proper to the use of the above devices I’ve attempted to use memory as an aspect of the work. I have made separated or “dispersed” compositions since 1961, some of them having parts on different continents, but with the exception of certain performance pieces (e.g., *Right Reader*, 1965) and films (simultaneous in elements and site), the parts were always in the same medium, involved images only (if that’s possible) or worked in an image to object scale.

*Tap* is a kind of still sound movie. The ways in which the different elements occupy space are interesting: the sound filling it, having a source but no definite “edges”; the line, reading backwards, threading and carrying the sound and having an unseen end; the image flat, two dimensional, this flat, black, linear, small, in your eyes and in your mind.

# Ten Questions to Michael Snow 1969

This interview by Simon Hartog was first published in *Cinim 3* (Spring 1969) and reprinted in Hartog's *Structural Film Anthology* published by the British Film Institute, London, 1976.

**H**e wants to make "a film that has no explanation."

## 1. Why Wavelength ?

Critical moment in my life and/or art. Light and sound waves. Limits of hear and see . . . "A time monument." A pun on the room length zoom to the photo of waves (sea), through the light waves and on the sound waves. Electricity. Ontology. "A definitive statement of pure film space and time . . ." "A summation of my nervous system, religious inklings and aesthetic ideas . . ." The quotes from pre-prize piece written for the NY Coop catalogue.

## 2. Why is it 46 minutes long?

Nice fuck. Could have been longer, couldn't be shorter. Money! Much shorter and the movement would have been too fast. Much longer was too expensive.

## 3. What is it about?

It is about question one. Yes. Question one. Also question two, four, five, six and seven. And question three perhaps most.

## 4. Why does life enter the film?

Life is in the film. One of the subjects of the film or perhaps more accurately what the film *is* is a "balancing" of different orders, classes of events and protagonists. The image of the yellow chair has as much "value" in its own world as the girl closing the window. In life (?) the film events are not hierarchical but there is a kind of scale of mobility that runs from pure light events, the various perceptions of the room, to the images of human beings. The inert: the bookcase that gets carried in, the corpse, visually, dying being a passage from activity to object. Inertia. It is precise that "events take place."

## 5. Aren't the beginning and the end arbitrary?

They are the beginning and the end of the film. And in between? Where do you start? If you decide to make a film at all, that narrows down your choices considerably. Of course it could have been shot somewhere else. From the beginning the end is a factor. In the context of the film the end is not "arbitrary"; it is fated. And past the end it should have ripples. The wave photograph; waves are the visible registers of invisible forces. Because it is (at first) seen as flat (on the wall) it makes a total spatial ending for the film at the same time as an image it implies continuity.

6. *What determined your choice of the different textures?*

I presume you mean the colour and light-value changes. They were given their tendency by the arranging of the different kinds of film stock, which was done before shooting. Basically I played/improvised with plastics and filters while shooting, bearing in mind many considerations, such as their relationship to the human images, their "abstractness," though their passages of complementaries; as a general form they go from warm colours to cool. Spectrum. Oppositions are drama. I didn't always make a "choice." I was surprised and wanted to be. However I set up a system or container which could both shape the fortuitous and give it a place. I wouldn't make works of art if I knew, etc.

7. *How does the sound track function?*

Like the image, the sound starts as "representational," "realistic," when the image becomes "abstract" (negative sequence), that is, one does not "believe" in the image in the "real" way, the sound also becomes "abstract." These terms are reversible. The sine-wave glissando is "realer" than the other. One does not have the "feeling" of being in some other place (dream-drug aspect of film). It is "concrete" while, for example, "Strawberry Fields" on the radio, in the film is already a quote of a quote of a quote, etc. This glissando is all the sound we can hear. What else is there? It's meant to be an ear equivalent of the zoom. I think of all the sounds as music and compose in that way. The sound of glass breaking, etc. against the sine-wave before the-man-who-dies enters is very beautiful to me.

8. *How did you get there?*

Have been working on it for all my lives.

9. *Where do you go after?*

I'm going to Edinburgh on Tuesday.

10. *What would you say to the spectator who, after a few minutes, wants to walk out?*

I might be interested in his or her reasons. It might be interesting to discuss them. It might lead to friendship or sexual intercourse or both. I would hope that he or she would not disturb the others, some of whom presumably might wish to stay.

## *La Région Centrale* 1969

The following is an excerpt from a proposal by Michael Snow to the Canadian Film Development Corporation in March 1969. It was first published in *About 30 Works by Michael Snow* in 1972 by the National Gallery of Canada for an exhibition at the Centre for Inter-American Relations in New York.

After finishing *Wavelength*, which is in its entirety a single camera movement (a zoom), I realized that the movement of the camera as a separate expressive entity in film is completely unexplored. In 1967 I made diagrams and wrote plans for sets of possible camera movements and made a short film (*Standard Time*, 8 minutes) as a first investigation of the effects of a particular set of repeated camera movements. After that I started on ideas for a longer film using a repeated scanning back-and-forth pan and a repeated up-and-down pan as the only camera movements. This film was shot in July 1968 while I was teaching at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey and completed in March 1969. It is titled  $\longleftrightarrow$ , is 50 minutes long and will have its premiere at the Whitney Museum in New York on May 22. It is almost impossible to describe the effect of this film. Visual rhythms (in film) can have as infinitely varied qualities as rhythms in music. The camera pans continuously at various tempi, starting at a medium speed, then gradually going slower and slower, then gradually rising in speed to very, very fast. It is set in a classroom and the activity therein was scripted by myself.

This film has opened up incredible possibilities, and this is what this essay is all about: I would like to make a three-hour film "orchestrating" all the possibilities of camera movement and the various relationships between it and what is being photographed. The movement can be an imperceptible part of the activity, can accent it, can counterpoint or contradict it and be independent from it. Since I'm sure nothing has been done in this area, perhaps I should clarify the sense in which I can say that camera movement is an unexplored potentially rich part of cinema: camera movement has generally been allied to the dictates of the story and characters being presented and follows what has been assumed to further these things, e.g., someone leaves the room, the camera follows this action. I give the camera an equal role in the film to what is being photographed.

The camera is an instrument which has expressive possibilities in itself. I want to make a gigantic landscape film equal in terms of film to the great landscape paintings of Cézanne, Poussin, Corot, Monet, Matisse and in Canada the Group of Seven. . . .

The scene and action will be shot at different times of day and in different weather, although all in the spring or summer.



*Michael Snow with the machine he and Pierre Abbeloos designed to film La Région Centrale. The photo was taken by Joyce Wieland in October 1969, on the fifth and final day of the crew's presence on the mountaintop in northern Quebec where the film was shot. Neither Snow nor snow appear in the film.*



*De La* by Michael Snow. Photo by Ellis Kerr, 1971. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada

The film will become a kind of absolute record of a piece of wilderness. Eventually the effect of the mechanized movement will be what I imagine the first rigorous filming of the moon surface. *But* this will feel like a record of the last wilderness on earth, a film to be taken into outer space as a souvenir of what nature once was. I want to convey a feeling of absolute aloneness, a kind of Goodbye to Earth which I believe we are living through. In complete opposition to what most films convey, this film will not present only human drama but mechanical and natural drama as well. It will preserve what will increasingly become an extreme rarity: wilderness. Perhaps aloneness will also become a rarity. At any rate the film will create a very special state of mind, and while I believe that it will have no precedent I also believe it will be possible for it to have a large audience. . . .

I have two general areas in mind for the location. I am familiar with the country north of Chicoutimi (my mother's birthplace) in Quebec, and to familiarly balance it out, in 1912 and 1914 my father was in surveying parties which mapped what are now partly the chief mining districts in Northern Ontario (Kapuskasung, Timmins). I have his notebooks and snapshots from that time and they have always had a fascination for me. Enclosed is a snapshot (mine) of the type of typically Canadian northern landscape I would like to use.

# Converging on *La Région Centrale*: Michael Snow in Conversation with Charlotte Townsend 1971

Michael Snow, with Joyce Wieland, spent ten weeks of the 1970 fall semester as visiting artist at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. He had just finished filming *La Région Centrale* in northern Quebec and was editing in Halifax. Charlotte Townsend took the following from taped conversations with Snow in Halifax. The article was first published in *artscanada* 28, no. 1, Issue 152/153 (February–March 1971).

Note: The opening section of the film in which Pierre Abbeloos is described as appearing was finally removed. The interview gives the impression that the “sound-instruction” method was used through most of the film. In fact, the three hours derived from six hours of material were created, following the pre-composed score, by instructing the camera-mount machine electrically with a series of dials and switches. These were the On/Off switch for the machine and camera, and dials for the Horizontal, Vertical, Rotation (centred on the lens) and Zoom. The score defined speed from 1 (slow) to 10 (fastest) and duration. An example would be Horizontal speed 5, plus Vertical speed 1, plus Rotation 10 for three minutes. This would produce a particular kind of motion-shape created by determining relative simultaneous speeds of movement for each arc.

**M.S.**

More than five years ago I started speculating on how you could make a real landscape film, a movie of a completely open space. *Wavelength*, 1966–67, *Standard Time*, 1967, and  $\leftarrow\rightarrow$ , 1969, used closed, rectangular spaces, each for different purposes. *New York Eye and Ear Control*, 1964, had both city and country spaces, but they were part of a completely different composition from what one might call “landscape.” I wanted to make a film in which what the camera-eye did in the space would be completely appropriate to what it saw, but at the same time equal to it. Certain landscape paintings have achieved a unity of method and subject. Cézanne, for instance, produced an, to say the least, incredibly balanced relationship between what he did and what he (apparently) saw.

*Standard Time* had the germ of the idea. When I saw what happened with the continuous circular, horizontal pans I realized there was a lot to be done with it. If properly orchestrated it can do some powerful physical-psychic things. It can really move you around, as I think you felt in the ten-minute excerpt I showed you. If you become completely involved in the reality of these circular movements it’s you who is spinning surrounded by everything, or, conversely, you are a stationary centre and it’s all

revolving around you. But on the screen it's the centre which is never seen, which is mysterious. One of the titles I considered using was *!2432101234?!* [an adaptation of a sculpture title], by which I meant that as you move down in dimensions you approach zero and in this film, *La Région Centrale*, that zero point is the absolute centre, Nirvanic zero, being the ecstatic centre of a complete sphere. You see, the camera moves around an invisible point completely in 360 degrees, not only horizontally but in every direction and on every plane of a sphere. Not only does it move in predirected orbits and spirals but it itself also turns, rolls and spins. So that there are circles within circles and cycles within cycles. Eventually there's no gravity. The film is a cosmic strip.

I'd wanted to use another non-verbal title like  $\longleftrightarrow$  but hadn't settled on one when Joyce saw the words *La Région Centrale* in a book on physics in a bookstore in Quebec City and suggested it. I think it's fine, very appropriate.

As a move from  $\longleftrightarrow$  I decided to extend the machine aspect of film so that there might be a more objective feeling; you wouldn't be thinking of someone's expressive handling of the thing but perhaps how and why the whole thing got set in motion, what's behind it. In both  $\longleftrightarrow$  and *La Région Centrale* once it is set up it keeps on going. The camera itself is a machine, so attaching it to another personally designed machine seemed a way of augmenting its possibilities. In this case I was composing for a very special instrument. The piano is a machine too.

When I'm talking about my films it sometimes worries me that I give the impression that they're just a kind of documentation of a thesis. They're not. They're experiences: real experiences, even if they are representational. The structure is obviously important, and one describes it because it's more easily describable than other aspects; but the shape, with all the other elements, adds up to something which can't be said verbally and that's why the work *is*, why it exists. There are a lot of quite complex things going on, some of which develop from setting the idea in motion. The idea is one thing, the result another. In  $\longleftrightarrow$ , for example, there were some qualities that I couldn't possibly have foreseen but which were organically appropriate and which I tried to strengthen in the editing. *Wavelength* was like a song, like singing, but with  $\longleftrightarrow$  I wanted to do something that emphasized rhythm. One of its qualities is a kind of percussive rawness, but it goes through various stages of effects and qualities at the different speeds. When it's very slow one is more interested in identifying everything; as it gets to a medium speed there's the rickety quality, a kind of futurist staggering. Faster, and the image begins to smear, to blur. The continuous side-to-side motion is so ongoing that it sets up its own [real] time and the things and people that are caught up in the scanning process become consumed by it. The film has a time of its own which overrides the time of the things photographed. The people photographed seem victimized by it, but the film wins out and so does the real live spectator. *La Région Centrale* grew from this.

In seeing *One Second in Montreal* you have to be able to live with what is happening for a certain length of time in order to begin to understand it, to start to speculate with it. It is literally made with lengths of time. In a completely different way this applies to *La Région* too. It is a big space and it needed a big time. It's manageable, however. Three hours isn't *that* long. You can see three hours. It's embarrassing to say it, but within the terms of my work I had in the back of my mind great religious works like Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, B Minor Mass, *St. John Passion*, *Ascension* oratorio. What an artist! I wish he could hear and see *La Région Centrale*. In various

philosophies and religions there has often been the suggestion, sometimes the dogma, that transcendence would be a fusion of opposites. In  $\longleftrightarrow$  there's the possibility of such a fusion being achieved by velocity. I've said before, and perhaps I can quote myself, "*New York Eye and Ear Control* is philosophy, *Wavelength* is metaphysics and  $\longleftrightarrow$  is physics." By the last I mean the conversion of matter into energy.  $E=mc^2$ . *La Région* continues this but it becomes simultaneously micro and macro, cosmic-planetary as well as atomic. Totality is achieved in terms of cycles rather than action and reaction. It's *above* that.

Also it should present the clearest dialogue between what one identifies as "sky," for example, and the actual, physical effect on the eye-mind of the projected moving light image. *La Région* isn't only a documentary photographing of a particular place at various times of day but is equally and more importantly a source of sensations, an ordering, an arranging of eye movements and of inner ear movements. It starts out *here*, respecting the gravity of our situation but it more and more sees as a planet does. Up downs up, down ups down, up ups up. The first 30 minutes shows us the four people who have set the camera and machine in motion doing various things, talking, looking, but after that we are gone and the remaining two and a half hours is entirely made by the machinery (you?). There are no other people but you (the machinery?) and the extraordinary wilderness. *Alone*. Like a lot of other humans I feel horror at the thought of the humanizing of the entire planet. In this film I recorded the visit of some of our minds and bodies and machinery to a wild place but I didn't colonize it, enslave it. I hardly even borrowed it. Seeing really is believing. Joyce was planning to make a film of the making of *La Région* but unfortunately it wasn't possible. She had a wonderful title for it too: *A Humane Use of Technology*.

The Canadian Film Development Corporation gave me a grant for about half the money I figured I needed to make this film. Later, Famous Players, the theatre chain, invested some more money in it and made it possible for it to be made. Finding someone to solve the problem of making the camera move in the controllable way that I wanted and then to build the necessary equipment was the first thing to be done. I knew what I wanted but wasn't sure about how it could be done. I tried a lot of people, companies. Graeme Ferguson, an old friend and fine filmmaker, recommended Pierre Abbeloos of Montreal with whom he had worked on some special camera-mechanism problems. Pierre had some fine ideas how to do it, and in about a year he built this fantastic machine and all its electronics. He's a really extraordinary person. He appears in the film. You don't see the machine, but a couple of times you see its beautiful, strange shadow, a passing hint at the source of the phenomenon you're involved with. The other big problem was finding a place. I had several requirements and Joyce and I spent months of fantastic trips trying to find them all in one place. We looked mostly in Quebec from Montreal north to 100 miles south of Ungava. I wanted complete wilderness with nothing man-made visible, yet it had to be relatively accessible because of the budget and the heavy but delicate equipment, four people, etc. We tried by car first, thinking we could find something just off a road, but there was always something wrong. I finally gave up on the car idea and after a lot of consulting with people, maps and aerial photos, I rented a helicopter and found the place about 80 miles north of Sept-Iles. It's a mountaintop strewn with extraordinary boulders, it had some of the kinds of slopes I wanted and a long deep vista of mountains. It's not a travel-poster

beauty, but it's a unique place, arctic-like, rocky, no trees. I was thinking of subtitling the film "A Rock and Grass Festival"!

I composed the camera movements, made an overall score for the film. Pierre worked out a system of supplying the orders to the machine to move in various patterns by means of sound tapes. Each direction has a different frequency of an electronic sine wave assigned to it. It makes up a layer of tones divided into five sections starting very high, about 10,000 cycles per second, down to about 70 cycles. The speed information is in terms of beats or pulses going from slow to fast. So the sound space is divided up horizontally, which makes it equivalent and synchronous to the eye space in some ways, but in others it's a foil to it. Anyway, this layered but simple sound space is the sound track. The machine can be operated remotely with a set of dials and switches. The sound-image relation in films is a whole world of conversation in itself.

I only looked in the camera once. The film was made by the planning and by the machinery itself. So you can imagine I was eagerly awaiting the results when the film (about six hours) finally went to the lab in Montreal.

Most of my films accept the traditional theatre situation. Audience here, screen there. It makes concentration and contemplation possible. We're two sided and we fold. Truly three-dimensional pieces can only be done with sound, and I did a sound piece at Expo 67 called *Sense Solo* that completely wrapped that up as far as I'm concerned. Multiscreen things usually involve such vague optical direction that they're often a kind of therapeutical Impressionism. My work is classical in the sense that it involves a definite directing of one's concentration. The single rectangle can contain a lot. In *La Région* the frame is very important, as the image is continually flowing through it. The frame is eyelids. It can seem sad that in order to exist a form must have bounds, limits, set and setting. The rectangle's content can be precisely that. In *La Région* the frame emphasizes the cosmic continuity which is beautiful, but tragic: it just goes on without us.

# Michael Snow: A Filmography

## by Max Knowles 1971

Introducing and publishing this text involves some slight embarrassment. New York City, 1971: *Artforum* magazine was planning a film issue. Annette Michelson said she was working on an article about my film *La Région Centrale*. Pleased though I was by that prospect, I thought it would be a good thing if there was also a piece about my film work in general. I chose to write this one pseudonymously (Max Knowles was the author) and intended to submit it but never did. After all, who would know more about my work than I did? It was an interesting exercise trying to write objectively, but some of the praise is touching. I tried to present a consistent persona/style (supposedly not mine) in the writing.

M.S.

Michael Snow's first film, *A to Z* (4 minutes, colour, silent, 1956), shows a crepuscular scene, a cross-hatched blue ink drawing of tables and chairs, cups and saucers, which comes to animated life. Hindsight hints of things to come are evoked by the scalar title, legato mood and oddly the anthropomorphic chairs ("two chairs fuck," says Snow) who prophesy the heroic presence of the yellow chair in *Wave-length*, done 10 years later.

Snow's first exhibition (of drawings such as this) occurred in Toronto in 1955, and was visited by George Dunning, who had started a film company there and who was later to direct the Beatles' film *Yellow Submarine*. Dunning perspicaciously saw movie talent in the drawings and contacted Snow with the offer of a job. *A to Z* was done independently while Snow was working as an animator at Dunning's Graphic Associates. A co-worker there was Joyce Wieland. Snow continued to work simultaneously on drawings and paintings as well as being a jazz pianist during the two years of the company's existence. Music became full-time employment after that, and the other work and other exhibitions also continued. But he did not finish another film till 1964.

A knotted relationship between works in various media distinguishes his career, so that a discussion of his films must inevitably refer to affiliated areas. Amongst the first works done during the Walking Woman dynasty (1961–67) were some in which images of this falciform-headed figure were placed in various non-gallery sites and photographed. Gallery works were subsequently done using the photos though many of these works were designed to disappear into the environment, to be "lost" rather than "found."

One of these photo-documentation works from 1962, *Four to Five* (the title this time a temporal scale), was the precursor of a never-completed Walking Woman film in progress during 1962 and '63, Snow's first years in New York. Business

complications with its producer prevented its completion, though the 3 hours of footage that were shot do still exist.

In 1964 Snow completed *New York Eye and Ear Control* (34 minutes, black and white, sound). Sound, indeed! A hallucinatingly raucous sound track of free jazz played by a group seemingly led by the late, great Albert Ayler on tenor saxophone (Snow was an early admirer) roars from an asymmetrical position against the relative stillness of a stately processional unfolding of grisaille images.

In a 1965 essay in an altogether remarkable document, the catalogue of the New York Film-Makers' Cooperative, Richard Foreman, extraordinary playwright of the Ontological-Hysteric theatre, writes of this film: "One of the major achievements of the sixties. . . . As in no other film yet seen its alternately soft and granite images lift us toward the year 2000: capturing not events, not objects, but again and again registering a 'placement' of consciousness – the subject matter of the future, really."

In 1963 and '64 Joyce Wieland (Snow) made films, and she and Snow often attended screenings at the New York Film-Makers' Cinematheque. Planning to show it at the historic Expanded Cinema festival at the Cinematheque in 1965, Snow made *Little Walk*, a 3-minute 8 mm color film with a sound track by Snow on piano. It was designed to be projected on a flat white cut-out screen in the shape of the Walking Woman. This film has been lost but was shown several times and consisted of images variously fitting or overflowing the curvy contours of the feminine screen. Variations of this somewhat procrustean scheme had also been used in *New York Eye and Ear Control* and *Carla Bley*, a photoprint (also of 1965), and other gallery works. The representational screen or mask-frame was paralleled in the same year by the first of many works in which rectangular framing was used. In the sculpture *Morningside Heights*, the parallelogram, seen by looking through the rectangular "window frame" of the object part of the piece at a wall oblique to it was established as a painting. A related stage piece titled *Right Reader* was presented for the first time in 1965 at the Forty-first Street Cinematheque and again at the Jewish Museum in 1970. Snow appeared on stage behind a hanging rectangle of clear plastic on which was a black rectangle that framed, for the audience, a "head shot" of the performer. The book *Michael Snow/ A Survey*, of which more later, contains an interesting evocation, again by Richard Foreman, who has been amongst the most empathetic of writers on Snow's oeuvre:

this short stage piece was more suggestive of new theatre forms than the various "happening" pieces created by other well known artists of the period. *Right Reader* took the form of a "commercial" for Snow's then-forthcoming exhibition at Poin-dexter Gallery. . . . This ironic level is quickly superseded. The piece so undercuts its action-object (selling) that the real subject emerges as an examination of the modes of "noticing." By implication we finally have to face the fact that only a certain kind of noticing is art, as opposed to kinds of noticing that are entertainment, gratification, suspense, etc. A recorded voice, not Snow's, tells the audience about the upcoming show. Snow is alone in the middle of the stage mouthing the words silently, a table contains a pile of cards of movie screen shape and a frame hangs in space in front of Snow about the same size as the cards.

As the text and mouthing continue, Snow holds up the cards one by one behind the frame. Some cards are variations on his (Walking Woman) ikon, the last card is black (i.e., blackout) and the piece ends. Each change of cards is like a film transition (there are fades in and out, changes of focus, and a "zoom" in three cards).

Snow's next film, *Short Shave* (4 minutes, black and white, sound, 1965), contains a brief section from this stage piece preceded by a twitchily mysterious stop-motion, no-hands, no-razor camera shaving of Snow's then-bearded face. *Short Shave* is an amusing pause on the brink of surf of the now-historic *Wavelength* (1966–67), which, though frequently examined in print, was especially brilliantly discussed by Annette Michelson in a recent issue of this magazine (*Artforum*, June 1971) in an illuminating exegesis entitled "Toward Snow."

The mythology of *Wavelength* is constantly being elaborated by knowledgeable commentators. Another indication of the film's status amongst major artists is the story that the sculptor Richard Serra has seen it thirteen times.

The scalar and often encyclopedic interests of previous static works (especially *Walking Woman Works*) are brought to a peak in this work, the unity of which may (within the context of its author's previous work in sound as well as in plastic works) testify to a perhaps intuitive insight that variations systems by their very nature ought to unfold in time – viz. the example of music, which more properly takes time than do relatively immediately seen object-works, e.g., paintings or sculpture. Though the free-expressionist variation methods of jazz may have had some influence on Snow's art, *Wavelength* has the satisfying wholeness of a composed work like Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

One of the best of the many commentaries on this film is an article by Bob Lambertson in *Film Culture* 46 (1968). The following is a fragment: "The dominating rhythm of *Wavelength* is such that after a few minutes, the viewer has something of a clear impression of exactly where he stands with reference to the beginning and end of the film: a profoundly disturbing experience. That 'personal inertia' is gone but in its absence the defenceless sensitivity, at the mercy of the eye, finds itself in the presence of a work whose process is so profoundly simple, tragic and inevitable that it offers no human consolation, no compromise. Within this major rhythm which is the overriding formal principle of the film (and in a sense in which possibly no other film has a formal principle) there are at least 2 minor rhythms . . ."

"My home, wife, camera, radio, turtle movie. Circular and arc saccades and glances. Spacial, parallel sound" is Snow's description in the New York Film-Makers' Cooperative catalogue of his next film *Standard Time* (8 minutes, colour, sound, shot in the fall of 1967). Less rigorous, more casual than most of his other films, *Standard Time* is the DNA of two subsequent major works:  $\longleftrightarrow$  (1968–69) and *La Région Centrale* (1970). Amongst the many satisfactions of this film are the pulsing fluctuating audibility of the sound (a radio talk program about dance), creating an aural sense of near and far that turns against and with the visual near and far of the continuous circular pans (sometimes back and forth, sometimes up and down) imaging the Snows' loft home and its domestic paraphernalia.

Nineteen sixty-seven and '68 saw exhibitions in New York, Montreal and Toronto of sculpture by Snow which was distinctly influenced by the camera experience, particularly that of framing (often as a limiting of what it is possible for the work to include). Hollis Frampton made a fine film called *Snowblind* of one of these works. One of them, a large stainless steel "environmental" sculpture called *Scope*, led to another somewhat cinematic stage piece using two mirrors propped vertically on two tables separated by about twenty feet of centre-stage space. With the mirrors at forty-five-degree angles to the stage front and their reflective surfaces facing each other, Snow sat facing one, it in front of him, his back to the stage. Joyce Wieland sat facing

the other, her back to the audience, making a periscope image completely seen only by the two of them. Snow then acted and poured, dropped, sprayed various materials on and in front of the mirror in a performance that was almost exclusively for Wieland but the periphery of which was seen by the audience: a very private public action.

As Snow stated in conversation with Charlotte Townsend (*artscanada*, February-March 1971), "*Wavelength* was like a song, like singing but with  $\longleftrightarrow$  I wanted to do something that emphasized rhythm. One of its qualities is a kind of percussive rawness, but it goes through various stages of effects and qualities at the different speeds. When it's very slow one is more interested in identifying everything; as it gets to a medium speed there's the rickety quality, a kind of futurist staggering. Faster, and the image begins to smear, to blur. The continuous side-to-side motion is so ongoing that it sets up its own (real) time and the things and people that are caught up in the scanning process become consumed by it. The film has a time of its own which overrides the time of the things photographed."

In  $\longleftrightarrow$  yet another particularly distinctive sound-to-image alliance is established: the camera relentlessly panning side to side (and later up and down) is reinforced by a "clunk" at the extremity of each swing and a constant machine-like sound that varies in speed with the speed of movement. This battering action speeds up until the asymmetrical image (of a schoolroom) compresses to a pulsing energy field.

In relation to  $\longleftrightarrow$  P. Adams Sitney has written: "The modernity of Snow's films lies in his perception of the essential filmic gesture, the moving camera which incidentally makes any single 'still' from the film belie its essence." Something which emphatically cannot be said about Snow's next film, *One Second in Montreal* (22 minutes, black and white, silent, 1969) whose essence is thirty black-and-white still photos held on the screen for varying lengths of time in a choral pattern of longer and longer holds, the holds gradually accelerating till the last hold is a single frame. A truly "minimal" film, it is perhaps the purest embodiment of Snow's observation that cameras and tape recorders and so on produce "objectifications of memory." The overwhelming silence (as quiet as *Eye and Ear Control* or  $\longleftrightarrow$  are loud) reinforces this understanding of the photographic image.

" $\longleftrightarrow$ , which caused fists to fly and eyes to roll when last shown at MOMA, is a frantically paced, hard-to-take pendulum movie," wrote Manny Farber (*Artforum*, February 1970). Definitely a powerful experience,  $\longleftrightarrow$  has continued to provoke heated audience reactions at several of its screenings at the Anthology Film Archives in New York. This may be an inevitable result of the continuous action and reaction of the film which denies an audience the type of progression and resolution it, perhaps, expects.

Both  $\longleftrightarrow$  and *One Second in Montreal* had their premieres at the Whitney Museum in 1969 as one of the five evenings of aptly named *Extended Time Pieces*. The composers Philip Glass and Steve Reich and the artists Bruce Nauman and Richard Serra also presented works.

Snow's largely photographic book *Michael Snow/A Survey* (1970) is another structure using concretized memory as are two other works of 1970: the film *Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film* (20 minutes, colour, sound) and the slide-and-tape piece *A Casing Shelved* (45 minutes).

These two works were preceded by a collaboration with Joyce Wieland: *Dripping Water* (10 minutes, black and white, sound) apotheosized by Jonas Mekas: "You see nothing but a white, crystal white plate and water dripping into the plate, from the ceiling, from

high, and you hear the sound of water dripping. The film is ten minutes long. I can imagine only St. Francis looking at a water plate and water dripping so lovingly, so respectfully, so serenely. . . .” A fixed camera and sound that may or may not be synchronous produce a peculiar concentration of dotted unequal rhythms amplified by the enlarged holy image.

A film (by Snow) of projected slides of paintings (by Snow) with verbal description – dates, media, size etc. – (by Snow), *Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film* situates the spectator-camera as a fictional viewer seated extremely obliquely to the screen of the slide show, forced to see a parallelogram rather than the projected rectangle. This distortion is increased by another – a gradual sinking slowing of the sound, getting lower and lower, and a gradual depressing darkening of the image till the screen is black. A negative parody of boredom slides the spectator from his fictional “side seat” to the one he is actually in. The voice later gradually speeds up till it’s a comic abstraction as the image brightens and brightens. One never really sees the “paintings” and the film thus becomes . . . itself. It is a unique re-use of the shades of previous work (the past) as a handy “fuel for memory machines.” In a McLuhanesque ecological chain, paintings are devoured by slides, which are consumed by film. Probably the most “conceptual” of Snow’s films, it’s also rather humorous. This film and the more autobiographical *A Survey* and *A Casing Shelved* (expertly scrutinized by Annette Michelson in her previously mentioned article) were apparently the special results of working on a retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, as well as a continuation of a previously employed theme.

A sound-only work also done in 1970 was presented in John Gibson’s *Body Works* series at New York University early in 1971. Purely musical though it is, as presented (in the dark) at NYU it is somewhat filmic in that it evoked guessed-at images. Structurally it is a series of whistling and breathing sounds done at varying distances from and directly on the tape recorder microphone, and each section of “melody” is as long as a single breath can function, bracketed by the intaking of air in preparation for the next phrase. Its really virtuoso whistling (bird-warblings, sirens, etc.) and the contact use of the microphone make it one of a trilogy of such works: *Tap* (1969), a complicated gallery work, is another “memory” work making use of the possible retention of the parts of the whole by the dispersal of the separate elements in various parts of a building. One of these parts is the tape-recorded sound of Snow’s fingers tapping on a microphone. A blow-up of a photo of this action is also included. The other, *Left-Right*, a 1970 sound tape of piano playing recorded, according to Snow, at top volume with the microphone lying directly on the top of the piano with consequent jarring distortion as a ragtime bass goes back and forth over and over again in a composition reminiscent of the film  $\longleftrightarrow$ .

Two carousel slide pieces, *Untitled Slidelength* and *Sink* (1969) ought to be mentioned here as both are further developments of aspects of *Wavelength*. *Sink* has a single unchanging subject, a splotchy splattered studio sink photographed by a fixed camera in various lighting, producing a range of qualities in its one hundred images akin to those of the earlier film.

Snow’s latest film, the monumental *La Région Centrale*, dealt with more fully in this issue by Annette Michelson, culminates the researches into the effects of the moving camera in an opus with unprecedented psychic effect. Seeing it one is reminded of Degas’ remark about Cézanne: “He is only an eye . . . but what an eye!”

## Passage (Dairy) 1971

Originally entitled “Dairy” [*sic*], this was published as “Passage” in *Artforum* 10, no. 2 (September 1971). The original title “Dairy” has caused more trouble than even I anticipated. I hereby bow to the pressure of many editors and proof-readers and retitle it their title: “Diary.”

I’ve been trying to give some attention to “how one thing leads to another” or more accurately: “the ways in which one action leads to another.” That isn’t much clearer.

Apparently certain types of events and in myself certain states of mind bring about attention with this kind of emphasis. My perception of the nature of a situation (result of a vague yearning to codify “how one thing leads to another”) if clear, includes everything. Ha ha. Everything which I was capable of receiving. I’m often quite fuzzy or don’t care. Also every beginning is arbitrary. I have noted in myself the emergence of the kind of attention I’m describing and called that a “beginning.” I’ll write more about beginnings later.

Can’t trace back this interest; it must be something to do with being and being an artist.

Don’t expect to dispel many shadows. Mild illuminations. There’s no end of mysteries, each solution a problem.

Often, frequently, repeatedly, instead of just living through a situation, happy, sad, etc. I hear the artist’s mind-voice saying: “notice how this became that? Isn’t that like the other? That means there’s a family! Genus. Order. Classification of events!” Sometimes there’s not much pleasure in it – it’s compulsive.

Though I can’t make a “mistake” I can “change my mind.” What a phrase!

Am I learning anything? I’m not learning much because there’s so much to learn and there’s so much to remember, I feel sure I forget a lot. I often have a kind of wrap-up intuition of the nature of an event, simultaneously aesthetic, psychological, biological, philosophic, political . . . leaving a vaguer record than simpler experiences . . . and memory being somewhat selective (who really knows the mechanics of its choices?) the residue of this recently added “stuff” when sieved through the records of previous experience for re-examination often seems to consist of somewhat familiar particles. Recollections are (naturally) “stylized” . . . and . . . perhaps excess memory can spoil while stored. So in a way I’m pleased that I apparently have a poor memory. Infantile freshness. What a strong wind! Reality was and always is a form of memory even at the moment of perception of perception. . . . But in another way: I just don’t *know* enough to *truly* experience. Range of references. I can quote that accurate statement (whose? when? really?) about: “those who . . . history . . . condemned . . . repeat. . . .”

Have you read this essay before? Is it “original”?

Switch. *But* one of the many reasons why my observations are mine is that I *don't* have many out-of-my-own-experience facts to deal with. Besides every event is completely new. What a burst of optimism! Not completely. They certainly can resemble each other.

I'm not scientific. No “ends,” no “goals,” no use. “This vague yearning to codify” is being reacted to only in the action of noticing “how one thing leads to another,” I do not have a system, I am a system. There won't be any summing up. Perhaps there will. These observations are in my life with my work.

I've been led to prefer fortuitous personal experience education to searching out “processed” information: books, other people's work in any medium, asking questions of other people. What “whats”!

Further clarification: In literature “one thing leads to another,” yes, but what we are discussing is noticing how “many events lead to many others.”

In relation to events one can only be a participant or a spectator or both. Of course one can also be uninformed (events of which one is unaware take place constantly, to say the least). But is that a relationship? Yes.

Experience of an event can only be anticipatory, actual and post facto. Or prophetic, intentional, guessed, planned or total or historic, reminiscent, analytical. And in this (lower) case it should be pointed out that I am using *your* words.

Behind this attempt at orderly noticing do I have a horror of the possibility of chaos? Would chaos be an inability to tell one thing from another? Is sanity only the ability to identify and to name? Cultural? Is ordering the “disorder” an order? Can there be “order” without repetition? Is there something necessarily fatalistic but also “religious” in affirming (quoting?) that disorder must be only a type of order, the nature of which is not yet comprehended? . . . But “the eye of the beholder” . . . not only is order projected but all is order; all is ordained? The reason for the shape of my nose the same as the reason a bus just passed this building. Oh, that's going too far.

Events take time. Events take place.

Named, scheduled events: bus ride, concert, Christmas, eclipse, etc. This is not what I'm interested in. Sub-events: not “what is,” not “what is not” but what happens in between. In this case: “not.”

“Passages” then, wherein or post-facto or in anticipation I may note revelatory unities and disparities. What's interesting is not codifying but experiencing and understanding the nature of passages from one state to another without acknowledging “beginning” as having any more importance in the incident as “importance” has in this sentence.

Or as “ending” in this . . .

# The Life & Times of Michael Snow 1971

In October 1971, Joe Medjuck, the associate editor of the original incarnation of the Canadian film magazine *Take One*, conducted the following interview with Michael Snow in Toronto. Slight revisions and additions were made in December 1971. The interview began with a discussion of a conference of Canadian artists, from which Snow had just returned. It was first published in *Take One* 3, no. 3 (January–February 1971, published April 1972).

... a political thing rather than an art-political thing. Just the fact that a lot of fine artists can get together, and have some kind of organization that might have some kind of effect on the situation.

*I guess that especially for a group of artists it must be very hard to get organized. If you see yourself as an individual it may seem like some kind of sacrifice to have to work as part of a group.*

Right, but I think it's necessary. Like if you feel it's a crisis. It's not like the Battle of Britain, the bombs aren't falling; it's more insidious than that. So you do what you can, and it seems to me that the organizing of artists is something that can be done. We did some mild things: telegrams to Trudeau and Nixon about the Amchitka thing, and votes about the proportion of art teachers who should be Canadian. Things like that. One of the things we talked about was *artscanada*, and I surprised a lot of people by framing the motion that we suggest that *artscanada* should be on Canadian art and, to protect myself, the activities of Canadian artists elsewhere. And that it be as much written by Canadians as possible.

*Does it try to be international now?*

Yeah, for them to keep going Anne Brodzky has tried successfully to sell it elsewhere and she's tried to cover more than Canadian art. I think it was reasonable for us to say that there are other magazines that cover what goes on elsewhere, and you can buy them here.

*Do you feel a part of any tradition? A New York tradition?*

No. I went to New York because I wanted to get out of me what I hoped was there. I think you're exposed there to a level of effort that makes you find out what's possible for yourself. The thing that made it possible for Joyce [filmmaker-artist Joyce Wieland, Snow's wife] and I to do what we wanted to do has a lot to do with Jonas Mekas. He was able to make a place where you could show your films to other interested people. It was fantastic, and Jonas maintained this thing. We'd make films here, but never with the thought that anyone could possibly be interested. In New York it was a small group, held together mostly by Jonas. And that group disseminated a

whole new thing about the kind of effort you could make: that it was possible to make a film independent of the movie business.

*Do you still live in New York, and do you still feel a part of that scene, or have you left that?*

Oh, no. We still have a studio in New York. I couldn't leave it completely right now. Both of us are really torn apart about all that. In a lot of ways it's so bad, life in New York, but yet in the last year or two in New York there's been a serious interest in what I've been doing. Which I've never really had before. So, simultaneously with wanting to leave, I'm now beginning to have an effect – in terms of influencing other people and in terms of recognition of what I've been doing.

*When you have to fill in forms that ask for your occupation, what do you put down?*

I say “artist.”

*What does that include for you?*

Well, I'm interested in sound, and I've been a musician and I do do things that are just sound. And I have been a painter – things that go on walls. I still do photograph pieces and films. Sculpture too. I think saying “artist” doesn't mean the material you use but that you do things of a certain kind.

*Do you now spend more time with films than with other things?*

Well, I'm specifically interested in film, really. For the last few years I've been more interested in film than anything else. But I've made films for years, and a lot of the things that were previously separated in my work have come together in the films. Like the sound thing was a separate thing for a long time, but in film there's a way I can use it with the image thing.

*What kind of sound things did you do?*

Well, I worked professionally as a jazz musician for about two years, '59 and '60, I think. Playing all over Toronto, on TV, and at the Park Plaza. The Colonial, George's, etc.

*Do you think that you'll continue with films, or do you see it as just one aspect of your work?*

No, I think that that's where it's going to be.

*Does that mean you've been doing less work in the plastic arts recently?*

Yes, I haven't been doing any work of that kind.

*How did you first decide that you wanted to be involved with art?*

My last year of high school I was awarded a prize. It was a book called something like *The Artists Handbook* – it was about how to prepare paints and stuff like that. Somebody apparently decided that I was talented as an artist, but I could never figure out why. I never did anything at all in high school. Anyway, I got this book and I decided that maybe I should go to art college.

*Where did you go to art college?*

I went to the Ontario College of Art. I'd just started playing music before I went there, in high school, so while I was at art college I did more of that. I took a compromise course called “design,” because I didn't know whether I was going to turn out to be a commercial artist or what the fuck. So I started to paint while I was there but I didn't want to go into a drawing and painting course, because I had this idea that when you got out you had to have an occupation of some kind. Not a career, but a business.

When I got out I had a job in some horrible advertising art thing, and I kept on painting and playing music.

*Do you think anyone taught you anything while you were at art college?*

Mostly it was a guy named John Martin (he's dead now) – he showed me books of reproductions, and discussed the stuff I was doing outside of school. He wanted to see my paintings, and I showed them to him, and he said some beautiful things. He'd say, "Why don't you check out Paul Klee?" and I got very interested in him. And he'd tell me about different things I should look at, so he was very helpful.

*Were you still at the advertising agency when you made A to Z?*

No, I went to Europe for a year, and I supported myself by playing music. I drew and painted a lot while I was there. Then I came back, and I had an exhibition at Hart House (University of Toronto).

*How did that come about?*

I don't know. It was with Graham Coughtry.

*Had you met him at art school?*

Yeah, he was in art school with me. And George Dunning, the man who directed *Yellow Submarine*, saw the show and he liked it a lot – and he thought, for some reason, that there was something to do with film. Anyway, he phoned me up and asked if I'd like to have a job working in film, which I'd never thought about before. He had this company, Graphic Associates, which had a lot of people working at it. Graham was there, Warren Collins, Richard Williams, Sid Furie, Jim McKay, an animator who's been at the Film Board too. So I took the job, and I met Joyce there. That was my first contact with film. They did some live stuff there – that's what Sid Furie was doing – but mostly they did animation, and that's what I was doing. For a while I was director of the Animation Department – just before the place folded.

*What happened between '59 and '63?*

I worked for a year and a half at Graphic, but I was still playing and painting at the same time. And when that company folded, Joyce and I went to Cuba for a few months. I don't remember exactly why. That was when the fighting was on, actually. We left a couple of weeks before Castro arrived in Havana, so we saw what the Batista scene was like. Then I got really into working in music, but I was still painting and having shows and things. That was really a nice life; it was really beautiful working at music, getting drunk, all that stuff. And I still had time for my painting. Have you ever seen *Toronto Jazz*?

*Don Owen's film? Yeah, sure. Are you in that? I don't remember.*

Well, I had a beard then. I'm in Alf Jones's quartet; we're at the House of Hambourg. In fact we play a tune of mine in it.

*Is that what you were doing until you went to New York?*

Yeah, we went to New York in '62.

*How did you meet Jonas Mekas and decide to continue making films?*

I didn't meet him for a long time. I was just digging what was going on around there, following everything, going to see dance things and everything else – especially music things. For a couple of years I had a studio that a lot of "free jazz" musicians – Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler, Archie Shepp and all those guys – were playing at, because they had no other place to play. And then I made *New York Eye and Ear Control*, using a group which I chose.

*Was the music composed especially for the film?*

It was played especially for the film, yeah; I assembled the band, and we made the tape.

*Had they seen the visuals when they recorded the music?*

No. All I asked of them was whatever length it was of ensemble playing. I said, "No solos please."

*How about that very brief –*

That's Don Cherry, a trumpet solo. That just came from a sort of scrap piece of tape, from when everybody was playing around. And I hadn't planned that originally. I was going to have that part of the film completely silent, but that piece seemed an interesting way –

*It fits in, and is really very powerful there. What sort of work were you doing in '63?*

I was painting. It was in my studio that all these sessions happened. I did a lot of sculptures too. I'd started the Walking Woman series in '61, and I was really into that then. And I was making that film too, and that was like a part of the Walking Woman works.

*What are the implications of the title New York Eye and Ear Control?*

I tried to do something in which the sound and the image had an equal power. Like you can take any piece of film and play any kind of music with it, and no matter how great the music is it will become subservient – it will be used the way Bach is used in some French movies. It's still great music, but it becomes some other thing because it helps to set moods and you don't hear the music any more, and I was interested in doing a thing where you could see and hear at the same time. So I made a counterpoint with the images – which were measured and classical – as opposed to this very spontaneous, very emotional sound.

*Do you see this film as an adjunct to the Walking Woman works?*

That's a long story. Let me try to track it down. I'd been thinking of making other films since I'd made *A to Z*, but the occasion hadn't come up and the logistics were difficult: we didn't have a camera, and things like that. When I'd made *A to Z* I was at Graphic, and I used their equipment and Warren Collins helped shoot it. So it was sort of easy. I had been doing photograph pieces, documentation art-pieces – I did one here in '62 – and from doing that I got an idea for a film that I wanted to do. When I first went to New York to see what we might do there in the summer of '62, I met this guy and somehow told him about the film. Ben Park was his name, and he was a partner with Hugh Downs in some TV thing. Anyway, he was really taken, either with me or the idea, and he put up the money to start the film. So we shot a lot of film – at least six hours – and it seemed really interesting, but all of a sudden he just lost interest in it. He'd just realized what he'd done, I guess. He still has the film. I really wanted to do that, but I went on from that and made *Eye and Ear Control*.

*Did anything spectacular happen with New York Eye and Ear Control to make you decide you wanted to continue with films?*

Both of the occasions when it was first shown resulted in riots (laughter). One performance was in the New York Cinematheque and the other was in Toronto. It was partially financed by Ten Centuries Concerts, and they really hated it. They just couldn't believe how awful it was. It was shown, and there were about 300 people there, and then somebody wrote a review with a headline saying: "300 Flee Far Out Film." I was always sort of mad that there weren't 400 there to complete his alliteration (laughter). At the end of the screening there were still a few friends there. My mother didn't come, or she would have stayed too, I think. And then, at the Cinematheque, there were people throwing things at the screen. I showed it, and Andy

Warhol showed something that he'd just finished, and a lot of his gang were there and they didn't like my film much – except that Andy liked it and Gerry Malanga liked it. Which shows something or other.

*How did you like the other films being shown at the Cinematheque at that time? How did the audience respond to other people's films?*

Reactions were more violent then. There were all kinds of levels of things going on. There were people who could really dig it in the midst of the din. At the same time, there were people very violently opposed to things. People would try to rip the film out of the projector even as late as when the Cinematheque was up on 41st Street. When Bob Cowan was projectionist, one time a guy ran up and into the projection room and tried to rip a film out of the projector. I forget which film it was – I think it was one of George Landow's. Like I saw Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*, which I think is a great film, and the time I saw it there were people making just so much fuck-ing noise. It was hard to really groove with it, but you could still recognize that it was a great film. There's not much of that any more, which is both bad and good, I guess. I don't know what it means.

*I find Eye and Ear Control a very emotional film. It begins with the walking woman figure lying on the shore, and then that fantastic, bluesy Don Cherry solo comes in. It seems to me there are very definite changes of emotion in the film. Do you see it that way?*

Well, emotions aren't unimportant, but they're not the stuff I work with. I put the things together, and the emotions are a by-product of having done a certain thing. But I don't try to make you happy or sad or anything like that. In relation to that I'd like to add this: the meaning is not on the screen.

*Do the images have emotional connotations for you?*

Yes, but it's a by-product of experiencing that particular image plus sound, or whatever. Like that film was meant to deal with opposites, or supposed opposites. Fast-slow, city-country, etc. Like it's in black and white, and it ends with a black man and a white woman. They're the only two people you ever see together. It's a gradual progression of life-likeness in the representational sense, as far as the image goes.

*How do you feel about someone missing what you see as a definite structure? I mean, obviously I see the film differently than you do, for example.*

I think that's perfectly valid. When you're making something you have to have something in your hands, so to speak. That's the way I work. I work with material and it interests me to arrange things in a certain way. That sounds clearer than it is. But I don't believe that I can calculate an effect. You can use my films to laugh or cry, and that's your prerogative, but I don't aim to do that. I think that's what I object to in most other films, and why I don't go to the movies. I don't like that sort of artificial laugh or cry. It doesn't interest me; I'd rather have it actually happen.

*Aren't you interested in any films?*

Well, I like Ken Jacobs's films, George Landow's films, Hollis Frampton, Joyce Wieland, Paul Sharits, Ernie Gehr . . .

*Do you think you're influenced very much by anyone – including Joyce?*

No.

*Have you ever seen anything by Robert Bresson?*

Yes, *A Man Escaped*. It's very good.

*Your films remind me of Bresson to some extent.*

Yeah, but I'd like to have even more distance than that. With *La Région Centrale* I really wanted to set up a phenomenon that exists in front of you, so that it's your choice, in a way, to become part of it or not.

*Are you very interested in narrative films?*

I've got some notes for things that could be called narrative films. I'd like to make a dialogue film. There I was thinking of the emphasis being on the sound. But I guess I don't think of that one being narrative either.

*Do you consider Short Shave a minor piece?*

Yeah, that's my worst film.

*What does "worst" mean?*

Well, I think it's pleasant, but well . . . you know that thing at the end where I sort of hold things up in front of me, that's part of a stage piece. That's sort of appended. I think it's relevant. But I don't think you can see that film very often. The other films, you can see them again and again, even when you know where they're going. They may even be better after the first time. But I don't think you can do that with *Short Shave*.

New York Eye and Ear Control *seems to me to be an extension of what you were doing in the plastic arts at the time. Do you see any of your films that way?*

I don't know. I always try to work within the possibilities of whatever medium I happen to be working in. That's why I have a certain attitude about what I think my films ought to be like. I don't know how to put this. There are certain possibilities in a medium that make it a distinct thing as opposed to some other thing. And I've thought about what I think you can get out of films as a medium. And I haven't thought about other films so much as I've thought about, you know, they have this strip of stuff and it goes through a machine. But there are all sorts of relations. The Walking Woman thing was a whole sort of variation which is related to jazz. The theme and variation thing. And while I was doing them I was thinking that maybe a lot of the paintings I did should be seen in time – that there should be a serial display of the variations. That was one of the things that preceded making *Wavelength*. This idea of having the variations follow each other in time is like jazz, or any music. *The Goldberg Variations* especially.

*Do you see Wavelength as an important point in your career?*

Yes, and it was important before it got noticed. It was like a crisis of all the things that I'd been doing. A lot of things came together.

*How about after it was noticed?*

Well, how do you talk about that? I thought it was great, and I thought *Eye and Ear Control* was great too. And it didn't really get noticed. I didn't think *Wavelength* would be either. You know. I'd do it, it would be shown a couple of times, and that would be the end of it. Actually, here's where Jonas comes in. I wouldn't have sent it to the Belgium film thing [Fourth International Experimental Film Competition, Knokke-le-Zoute, Belgium, December 26, 1967, to January 2, 1968] if it wasn't for Jonas. He saw it, really liked it, and said it would be a good idea if I sent it. Then it got the first prize, people began to notice it, and some attention was put on that particular work. Which gave me some encouragement.

*How would you describe your films to someone who's never seen them?*

(Laughter) Gee, I don't know.

*How would you describe Wavelength?*

I'd probably say that it's a long zoom. Which is what most people do, and that's great because it's meaningless.

*Is that how you conceived of it?*

I think that that idea happened along with the idea of variations in time. But a lot of other things too. In '66, I guess, I had acid for the first time and that was related to it.

*Do you think that dope in any way affects the product – what comes out of you?*

Yeah, I think so.

*Why did you decide on a zoom?*

I don't remember exactly.

*That was sort of a loaded question. What interests me about the zoom is that it's one thing the camera does that we can't do with our eyes. And one of the things I find in the film is the way the slow zoom questions the whole meaning of the zoom. I mean, you keep coming closer to the wall, but the sides don't disappear. You do lose some of the sides, but not much. You're really changing people's perspective rather than their point of view.*

I wrote a thing, originally for the New York Film-Makers' Cooperative catalogue, but it's appeared other places – this was before the film had received any acclaim – and I said that I had wanted to make a definitive film. And it's true. All that year I'd been thinking about an essential film. Like it's coloured light on a flat surface. And the material of it is light and time. And the depiction of space.

*How do you conceive of the dramatic events in your film? It's funny to call them that, but because there are so few they take on even more dramatic significance (I mean in the middle of Wavelength there appears to be a death).*

That's the basic idea, but the original idea was even cooler. I wanted to have a body on the floor and have the camera pass over it. It's like the bookshelf moving in, which is really not so dramatic, but there's metaphoric connections between those boxes and looking out the windows and they're empty. And I wanted something that had some weight to be moved through the space. When you see the room for a long time, you lose the sense of how big it is, but when somebody traverses it you get an idea again how long it is. So the thing – the room, the space – gets flatter and flatter, which is its real reality, since it's coloured light on a flat surface – and then all of a sudden the surface is broken by this illusion of people, or whatever it is, that's moving in there. So that's what I was working with: the different kinds of realities involved.

*So the drama is secondary?*

It's secondary in that it was trying to position these things in time, and to work with the space. Then I thought about the kinds of connections between the events, and I wanted to have a range of connections. And this one thing, the phone call about the body, is a distinct kind of narrative intimation compared with the other things. Besides, other things in the film, like the colour things, are also events and have drama.

*Did you know when you first conceived the film that you would end on the shot of the water?*

No, it went through a lot of things, and I've got all kinds of notes. For a while I thought I might end on a still photo of the opening shot. That was a terrible idea. I went through a lot of things the zoom might move towards. One of them was a life of Duke Ellington.

*Were you aware of how the final superimposition would look?*

No, and that's one of the things I've worried about when I've seen it. I'm not sure it was a good idea.

*I really like it. I've always been surprised that more people haven't picked up on the idea: a superimposition of the larger image over the smaller which gives a depth thing, but I guess that destroys your idea of the flat surface.*

Well, it leads you to the flat with a kind of a mirage. Sometimes I've seen it and I think I should have just continued the zoom. I like the supering too though. It happens other times in the film, where the zoom catches up and then the two images are together. But it worried me that I might be destroying the fact that you were still in the same space. But I guess it doesn't.

*Is there much or any editing in Wavelength or is it all done in the camera?*

It took a little while, but I guess there's not much of what's usually called editing. I shifted things a little bit. In *Back and Forth* (←→) I edited. Or maybe that's not the right word. I worked on it after the shooting for four or five months. And it doesn't look like an edited film. Sometimes the people cut on or off or the pan doesn't go all the way. And I'd include some things in some versions that I'd shorten on others.

*Do you have a soundtrack in mind before you shoot your films?*

Well, with *Wavelength* it was planned before I shot the film, because I decided that I wanted to have an ear equivalent to what a zoom was. Which I guess would have been a crescendo. But a glissando seemed more discernable. And I didn't know how to do that, and I could have used any way to get a glissando, but I asked around and talked to a couple of people – Max Neuhaus, who's a composer – and I'd ask casually, "How would you make a 40-minute glissando?" And he told me to call up Ted Wolfe, who's an engineer. I thought maybe I could do it with a piano, by sounding all the notes and running them all together. I just wanted to start at the bottom and go to the top.

*So the soundtracks of the films don't require special electronic instruments?*

*Wavelength* did, because we used a sine-wave generator. Ted Wolfe made a little motor that turned the thing up from 60 cycles to, I don't know what it was, 12,000 cycles or something like that, over a period of 40 minutes. I hadn't thought of using something electronic. Any way of doing it would have been OK, but it turned out that it was electronic.

*Was it you who arranged to have the music from Eye and Ear Control released as a record?*

Yeah, through ESP records. I wanted to use the Walking Woman insignia for some company that manufactured things so I'd be able to see it on trucks and billboards and things like that. For a while I thought we might get to use the Walking Woman for the record company. Before Bernard Stollman went ahead with ESP he was considering making it Walking Woman Works Records.

*How would you describe Standard Time?*

I don't know. Thinking about *Wavelength* made me think about using other kinds of basic film vocabulary things. And that was like a sketch that showed a lot of possibilities. It's my home movie, really.

*Do you mind people calling your films structural or conceptual films?*

They're conceptual in that they're planned. Some people – take Jonas, he shoots a whole lot of stuff, then he edits it. It's not conceptual, it's a whole other thing. I plan them as carefully as I can, although it doesn't always come out that way.

*Do you allow chance to play any part in your films?*

Quite a lot. I make a kind of container that makes fortuitous things belong.

*Did you have any reason for picking the particular dramatic events that take place in  $\longleftrightarrow$ ?*

Yeah, but it was a different kind of reason than with *Wavelength*. It was connected in some ways, in that I wanted to inhabit the place in various ways.

*What is the place, by the way?*

It's a classroom at Fairleigh Dickinson University, which is in New Jersey. I was there for, I don't know what it was, an artists' seminar, I guess. I was there for three weeks, or a month, in the summer of '68. Emmet Williams the poet, Max Neuhaus, Alan Kaprow were there. They're in the film. Jud Yalkut was there for a while.

*Did you have a special reason for titling  $\longleftrightarrow$  with an arrow?*

Only that it's a visual rather than a verbal thing.

*Both  $\longleftrightarrow$  and *La Région Centrale* have a change in camera movements near the end . . .*

I think it comes about 2/3 of the way through in  $\longleftrightarrow$  whereas in *La Région Centrale* it is near the end. In  $\longleftrightarrow$  it goes to its fastest speed back and forth, and then cuts to up and down. Then it slows down and finally there's a kind of coda which is all the different stuff that's happened superimposed over each other. It's sort of like your memory. You don't think of things in their order, really. When you come out of that film you don't really remember what order things happened in. You remember this scene, or that scene, and the feeling of it.

*One of the things that gets me in *Wavelength*, and in *La Région Centrale* is that although the photographed space is quite small, because of the camera movement I can't take it all in at any given moment, and I find myself looking really closely – at the edges in *Wavelength* because they're always disappearing. And even though *Région* is three hours long, at the end I still have the feeling that I haven't seen all there is to see of the area you're showing.*

That's really nice, because that's something that's important in them to me – that there really is a lot to see. It may seem like it's a simple subject, but there really is a lot.

*In  $\longleftrightarrow$  it seemed to me that the dramatic actions you present are rather ominous. Especially the policeman at the end.*

The film is really relationships – reciprocity. There's a teacher and students, lovers – the whole thing is action and reaction. Two people toss a ball. And somehow or other the cop enters into that.

*Are you very aware of the rhythm and structure of your films?*

Sure.  $\longleftrightarrow$  is easy to talk about that way because it's about the speed of panning. It starts at that medium speed where strobing happens, and it slows down to a medium speed where you can more clearly identify and believe in the things you see. I think the slowest point is where the teacher draws the symbol, and they're all facing the green board. Then it gradually picks up speed again, until it reaches the ultimate speed possible.

*How did you do that? Manually?*

Yes, but there's a little trickery. I change the shooting speed.

*Do you change the shooting speed in *Région*?*

Not at all. It's all 24.

*How did you get that sunset? Is that how it really looks there?*

Oh yeah. That's all real time.

*It seems to me that one of the implications of a lot of contemporary art – maybe including yours – that one of the constant "messages" to the audience is that they*

*could be doing this too. Do you see much of a differentiation between the artist and the audience?*

Well, I mean, I'm specifically spending all my time working on this thing, and I presume that I know more than other people who aren't.

*It seems to me that one of the implications of, say, Andy Warhol's works is that there are no artists. Or, rather, we're all artists. We have no art, we do everything as well as we can, and all that shit.*

I would never draw that implication from Andy's films, because all the people in them are actor-personalities, and they've been chosen, and they've been placed. There may be a certain passivity compared to the way I work, which is theoretically more controlled. Perhaps it isn't in practice. Whether that means anything or not. But it's like any other thing, really. I'm not very interested in hockey and if I watch a hockey game I won't see as much as someone who does know about it, especially a player. I've spent my life being involved with art, and I'm not sure what conclusions you can draw from that except that I think I know something about art (laughter). There may be an argument that everybody's an artist, but some people don't seem to use that capacity if they are.

*Are you interested in having your films seen by as many people as possible?*

Yes, I don't make the films with a particular audience in mind, or aim it at all people. But I'm human too, and it might interest some people. It could be that something could become very popular, but it doesn't have anything to do with anything. They're not made for two or three people. It pleased me that *Wavelength* got some attention. It was satisfying attention, because it had to do with what I'd done and what I knew I had done. It pleases me and it wouldn't hurt me at all if a lot more people liked the films. But it wouldn't affect what I did. Like it's been really not very easy. It's hard work being an artist. And it's hard work . . . it's a very interesting thing trying to do something that's your own. It's a struggle. But it's worthwhile, I guess.

*How do you feel about the audience response? I mean, what if the audience obviously hates your film?*

I don't really like it too much when that happens. Because usually I enjoy watching them myself, and that disturbs me.

*How do you feel about the audience being stoned watching your films?*

Nice.

*Have any really violent things happened during screenings of your films?*

There have been quite a few things happen. One of them I didn't see was in Amsterdam. *Wavelength* was shown, and there was a huge audience and somebody tried to rip down the screen.

*Well, we're laughing about that now, but does it bother you when it happens?*

No, it doesn't really bother me, but obviously you can't really groove on a film when people are trying to pull the screen down (laughter).

*Is Dripping Water the only film you've collaborated on with Joyce?*

Yes. We help each other, but there are no real actual collaborations. That one came from a tape that I'd made.

*For One Second in Montreal you rephotographed stills.*

Yeah. They're stills that were printed offset lithography or something.

*You've made a film that I haven't seen . . . Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film. Yeah, and this time I really haven't seen it, so how would you describe it? (laughter)*

It came out of doing my book *Michael Snow/A Survey* for the Ontario Art Gallery show, in February 1970. And also the whole retrospective thing that made me look back at my work for the first time. I was interested in the idea of using the records of old work as the material for new works. The book uses still photos. The film uses slides. Not very many. And it's like a filming from a very bad seat of the slides being shown on a screen. It's a side seat.

*What's the soundtrack?*

The names, sizes, media and dates of the works on the slides. You can't see the paintings very well. I mean, you can tell they're slides of paintings, but it's all to do with . . . it slows down.

*How did you get the idea for La Région Centrale?*

I'd been thinking about the idea for a long time. I'd been thinking about types of subjects. The traditional painting division of subjects seems to me to be still applicable – portraiture, landscape, still life, etc. There are good reasons why those divisions are still used. It's like animal, vegetable and mineral – those things do exist. And I thought about how you could make a landscape film.

*This is dangerous to say, since I haven't seen your next film yet, but it seems to me to be a culmination of your past films – particularly those since Wavelength.*

Yeah, I think it wraps up the whole thing about panning.

*Does that mean you aren't going to make any more films about camera movements?*

I've got a couple of ideas, but this one was so torturous to make.

*The conception involved a fairly expensive machine, which you invented I guess. How did you operate it?*

It was operated from a distance. There could be different ways. You could prepare the tapes ahead of time, and the tapes could operate the machine, but there's also a set of controls – horizontal, vertical, rotation, and speed for each one.

*How long did it take to shoot the film?*

We were up there five days, but it was supposed to be just four. We were left there by a helicopter. It's about 100 miles north of Sept-Iles in Quebec, which is about the same latitude as James Bay.

*How did you pick the spot?*

I spent a lot of time looking for a place with a car or truck. I wanted complete wilderness with nothing man-made, and we never could find anyplace. There was always something wrong. Joyce and I took a whole bunch of trips, all over, with a car. So finally I decided to narrow it down with aerial photographs, and we found an area that seemed pretty interesting. So I rented a helicopter and looked at the place. That was really thrilling. It was one of those small ones with just a plastic bell that you sit in.

*You had to reassemble the machine up there, I guess.*

Yeah, it was really weird. We were left on a mountaintop, and the helicopter went away. It was really fantastic. We had all this sophisticated machinery up there in this complete wilderness. We had a tent, and it was cold. Joyce was hoping to shoot something of the machine working, but unfortunately she never did. It was really nice just to see the thing moving around. Like if anybody'd flown by . . .

*In the film you can see the shadow of the machine. It's really nice.*

It's nice that it happens where it does, too. It happens near the beginning of the film, where perhaps you need a clue to exactly what it is that's going on. And it happens at the end, too.

*Did it take long to design the machine? Did you do that yourself?*

No, I had a clear idea of what I wanted the machine to do, but I didn't know how to do it. Graeme Ferguson, who made *North of Superior*, had worked with Pierre Abbeloos and suggested him to me. So I went to Montreal and Pierre and I talked about it. He came up with a set of axles that combined to make it possible to make all the possible movements without photographing the base. He's really brilliant.

*The camera can move in four directions at once with it, I guess.*

It can move horizontally and it can move vertically, while the camera itself can move centered on the lens. So it's like a bodyless eye – an eye floating in space.

*Usually, with films, we describe what we see as a camera movement – we say the camera moved left, we don't say the scene moved right. But there's one moment in your film – it's in the second section, I think – where I was convinced that the camera wasn't moving but that the earth was spinning.*

That's nice. That should happen, because that's the other way of reading the image. There is a reversal when you project the film. I mean, that's one thing you can do with a camera that has hardly been touched upon – the thing has no up or down. And the whole film is meant to work on your sense of gravity.

*How did you go about arranging financing for the film?*

I don't know how I heard about the CFDC [Canadian Film Development Corporation], but I wrote the whole thing out and applied for a grant.

*Did you get a grant from them, or an investment?*

It was a grant. The CFDC gave me half of what I asked for, so I had to try some other way of getting the rest of the money. I spent a long time looking, and then went to Famous Players. Theirs is an investment. They want to get their money back.

*Do you think they're going to?*

Gee, I don't know. But they don't own the film. It's my film, and they get a percentage of the profits. The money was put up for lab costs. I didn't make a cent out of it. Oh yes, I did, I got 10 percent – \$1,500 for my work or whatever.

*So how much money did the film actually cost?*

Twenty-seven thousand dollars. They were all pretty good about it. They made the money available at the lab, and pretty well left me alone. I guess I have a rather peculiar status, sort of like McLaren at the Film Board – a kook who they sponsor. I don't think they expect to make any money from the film.

*Have you started work on anything since La Région Centrale?*

No. I have a lot of ideas, but I haven't started anything. I did a kind of video installation piece at the National Gallery in Ottawa. It was pretty successful. It's an adaptation of the *Région Centrale* machine as a moving sculpture. The machine, with a video camera, is sent in various motions. The path of the camera eye is shown on four monitors, and the audience is in the images.

*Do you think you'll have problems getting La Région Centrale shown?*

I'd like to get it into a theatre, but I can't convince anybody on the basis of any kind of commercial record at all. And yet, it would need some kind of promotion that I'm not prepared to do. And the fact that it's three hours long will be a difficulty. I mean, it isn't three hours long because I wanted to make it a three-hour-long film. It just takes that long to have it happen.

*What is the relationship of the soundtrack to the camera movements in the film? There seemed to be a corresponding sound for every movement.*

There is. We made tapes to operate certain sections of the thing, but I couldn't use the original sound that was made to trigger the machine because some of it was too high for optical soundtracks. I'd known that, but I thought I'd be able to shift it all down. But that wasn't possible, so I had to reconstruct it. Originally, the sound was intended to dictate the movements. Actually, though, I was thinking about Bach – the *St. Matthew Passion* and that sort of thing.

*But you would never use that on the soundtrack.*

Oh, God no. But I was thinking about that kind of weight. I guess that would be my ultimate ambition, to do something that was as good as something by Bach.

\* \* \*

After the publication of the interview, Snow wrote a letter to the editor of *Take One*. It was printed in 3, no. 4 (March–April 1971) of the magazine.

### **No riot till intermission**

It's true that it's funny to talk about when you're talking about it and feeling funny, but there seem to be so many mentions of riots and other acts-of-man – starting with the "300 Flee Far Out Film" cover (which is funny too) – in my interview and elsewhere in the last issue of *Take One* (3, no. 3) that I felt sad about the possibilities of the expectations of newcomers to my films being formed by descriptions of such events.

My films are made for attention, contemplation, meditation, and if they are met in those sorts of ways some very rewarding and subtle sensory, sensual and psychic states can be experienced, so please don't riot until intermission. (They're *often* met appreciatively.)

I'd like to thank Bob Cowan and Jonas Mekas for writing such sensitive appreciations of those states, and I'd like to thank Joe Medjuck and myself for the interview which was enjoyable, and I'd like to thank the editors of *Take One* for the layout and cover and for publishing this letter.

I'm a respecer and observer, as well as a shaper, of the unities of occasions (which is why I made very very few changes in the transcript of our discussion).

This is another occasion.

*Michael Snow*  
*New York*

## *De La* 1972

This excerpt from a March 1971 letter to Pierre Théberge, then curator of contemporary Canadian art at the National Gallery of Canada, concerns the machine designed to film *La Région Centrale*.

In January and February 1971, Pierre Abbeloos, the machine's designer, in cooperation with Astro Electronics and R.C.A. Limited of Montreal, made the necessary technical adaptations to the machine so it could be used to hold a television camera transmitting images by cable to four monitors. The resulting work was presented under the title *From/De La Région Centrale* at the National Gallery. Subsequently alterations were made to render permanent the use of the machine with a television camera and monitors. The final result was a new work, *De La*. (See photograph on p. 55.)

This excerpt was first published in the catalogue for *About 30 Works by Michael Snow*, an exhibition organized by the National Gallery for the Center for Inter-American Relations, New York, 1972.

**B**ecause of what I wanted to happen on the screen, it [the camera-activated machine] had to be at man-size height from the ground.

I started to think of the machine as an object in itself as it was being built and to see that it was beautiful; I was thinking of other uses for it when we made the film.

*De La* precisely has to do with seeing the machine make what you see. . . . There's a really interesting separation between the maker of the images and the images. . . . You can follow the movements that are made by the source of the image as well as the results of those movements on the four screens. Contrary to the film, it doesn't have anything to do with affecting a sense of fictional gravity. . . . *De La* is sculpture and it's really important that you see how the machine moves and how beautiful it is. . . . It is a kind of dialogue about perception. . . .

The T.V. image is magic: even though it is in real time; simultaneous, it is a ghost of the actual events which one is, in this case, part of. The machine that is orchestrating these ghost images is never seen in them: it belongs exclusively to the "real" side of this equation. The sound is an essential part of the concreteness of the machine, if it were silent it would tend more towards a representation and also have less "personality" as a unique Thing-in-the-world.

# Information or Illusion: An Interview with Michael Snow 1972

This interview by Andree Hayum was first published in *Review 72*, no. 7 (Winter 1972).

**I** noticed from the calendar of your life that you had exhibited already in 1952, 1953 – in other words, when you were about 23.

Yes, I had my first show in '52, I guess it was.

*Could you describe some of those early works?*

Well, it's kind of hard to do, but I went through a lot of different things. I really did do some good paintings. The National Gallery of Canada has some of these things, I guess from '58.

*Anyway, they were definitely paintings?*

Yes, but I was also playing music then and I had my first touch with film in 1956.

*That was in Canada?*

Yes, I worked for a year and a half for a film company.

*You were doing animation, I understand?*

Yes, George Dunning was the head of the company. He later directed the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine*. I had these three activities . . . actually more than that . . . going on all at once for a while. I was painting and sculpting and working at the film company and also still playing. The company folded and then I started to play more for a living; during that time I played every night, and I was really a completely professional musician, but I also painted during the day. It was really a nice life.

*When you first came to New York did you gravitate toward musical circles?*

No . . . I came as a painter/sculptor. And I was getting out of music and this decided me to stop playing because I would have had to make such a terrific revamping of what it was that I was doing. I just made the choice then and there that from then on my energy wouldn't go into that, at least jazz anyway. The whole music thing in my work was revived in other ways. So actually the film *New York Eye and Ear Control* is really the two sides of what I'd been doing, which in some ways are opposed – the really "romantic" and "classical" sides. And in this film I was trying to make an absolute duality of sound and image, where you have a real simultaneity. Of course, they do accompany each other because that's inevitable, but basically they're two simultaneous things with very, very different characters.

*When you came to New York, what were your expectations?*

Well, I came here to try to get better. I was oriented toward what was going on here and yet I was getting information late, in a way, through the magazines and stuff

like that. I used to read *Art News*, which was the main magazine at that time, and follow what was going on. I was very much involved in it and it seemed that even though I was trying to work out my own individual style, that I was still related to what was going on here and if I was going to do anything at all I might as well try here. And I thought that just the challenge if it would bring out whatever one might have.

*Were there any artists you were particularly involved with?*

Well, I liked all the abstract expressionists and still do. I think I like de Kooning as much as anybody and Rothko too, and Newman, whom I didn't really see until I came here. That's what I was basically interested in. I didn't like very much Rauschenberg . . . things like that . . .

*It seems that in the middle sixties there's a real breakthrough and change in your work, and that one of the facets of that, an important one I'm sure, is the change over to reproductive media.*

But it doesn't go like that because in 1961 I started to do the Walking Woman image and of course I didn't know where that would lead. I made a decision to try to repeat it a few times, and then I realized that using the single outline as theme provided me with a way to deal with a lot of things but also to have variety. The reason why I did the same thing over and over again was precisely to have variety. And I made in 1962 probably the first documentation photograph works that were ever done, as far as I know, except for Duchamp – as usual. But they didn't really relate to Duchamp. The first one's reproduced in my book *Michael Snow/A Survey*. And the Walking Woman Works started as a stencil thing. Stencils are simple reproduction systems. It was really a far out thing at the time, especially since I did it in Toronto. I did everything I could think of with that individual image, just to see it in different materials, in different media. I did things that were in different places: subways, bookstores, in the street. I did things on different continents, a piece here, a piece there. I had people travel with it. All this was from 1961 to 1967, so that there really isn't that clear a line about the business of using reproductive media. I made my first film in 1956 and *Eye and Ear Control* was made in 1964. . . . But I know what you mean . . . in a way it's true because in the last few years it certainly got that way.

*And certainly the consistent expression in film (among other things) really happened after that.*

Well, *Wavelength* was done [shot] in 1966. It was one of those personal crisis things; I tried to put a lot in it. I tried to solve a lot of things for myself in it . . . tried to bring some things together that seemed to be separate in my work but that I felt ought to be brought to gether.

*You had been thinking about that film for a long time?*

Well, I spent a year on that film. I made all kinds of notes and I can remember wandering around and scribbling those notes. It's the way I'm working on my new film which will be called *Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Max Knowles* . . . I first had acid in '65 or '66 and that sort of clarified my way of looking at things, which was in terms of scales, like, to try and include all the possible varieties of seeing. Yet, the spirit of the time has been to clarify, to specialize. And this had been bothering me because I had been working in different media and I didn't want to put them all together and make some kind of theater 'cause I knew about the possibility of that – Happenings and things like that. I really wanted to respect the integrity of music as a thing in itself, and painting as a thing in itself, without making

some kind of mash, and yet, they were affecting each other. *Wavelength* was a culmination of the serial and variation method that happened in the Walking Woman Works over a period of five or six years, along with ideas about time that basically came from music, and other things that were personal. It was really very important to me in my own life.

*When you spoke of the relationship of soundtrack to image in Eye and Ear Control, I immediately thought of Wavelength as a development from that. It moves from a separation of sound and image to an equivalency of the two.*

Yes. In *Wavelength* I considered the auditory equivalent to the zoom, which in musical terms turns out to be a crescendo. Yet a crescendo over such a long period of time is impractical, especially with the playback system that there is in film. So it seemed to me that you could really follow the spatial effect of the image by making a glissando. The sound and image are related but each belongs to its own sphere. They're simultaneous. Whereas, in *Eye and Ear Control* there's a terrific separation between the music, which is very, very personal expression, full of cries and yells and so on, and is very spontaneous, and images which are calm, single spaced and placed things of long durations. So it's really two things that are completely different species. *Wavelength* also has sync sound, in the naturalistic sense, people are talking . . . so there are really two poles. . . . You don't say that that is the sound of something. It's just a sound. Something that's really happening. It's not representational.

*But, on the other hand, the way that is received is parallel to the way one perceives that image, namely a kind of stare.*

Have you ever seen *Standard Time*? That's interesting too because it involves a kind of parallel sync, in the sense that the sound does, in terms of volume, what the image does, in terms of space, but it doesn't do it in sync. I'm trying to further develop the sound/image relationships in *Rameau's Nephew*. Because, the whole camera movement theme, which developed out of *Wavelength*,  $\longleftrightarrow$ , and *Standard Time*, really had to be done, and now I've gone back to work on the sound and image implications that come out of the earlier works.

*In the last couple of years you've really isolated sound, starting with works like A Casing Shelved and Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film. And it's interesting to me that when you start doing that it's through verbal description, not pure sound, but through speech.*

But in *Side Seat* it's speech used musically because each time you hear the date, medium, or size, there are some words repeated. For example, the words "nineteen" or "by" will be repeated, each time, whereas the title will always be different and the media sometimes are. . . . You might hear the word "oil" again . . . but each time you hear it, it's either getting slower and slower or faster and faster, so it's a musical variation as well. That it's description is somewhat negated by the fact that you really can't see the paintings, which, hopefully, makes it more musical. It's more something to hear than it is something to correlate with the picture that you're given. Saying how big the painting is is really funny because you can't tell how big the image is going to be when the thing is projected, and then how big were the slide projections, and inside that there's a thing that's described as being three feet by twenty-one inches or something like that. It's really hopeless. . . .

*In general, I think, you're preoccupied with information or the illusion of actually knowing this thing that we see through what you're telling us about it. In A Casing Shelved this is also true.*

Well, information has so many levels. We describe our minds as being divided up so that you can say that one aspect of it is imagination and another aspect, history or memory. Of course, we can't operate at all without memory. That's very important. On the other hand, there really isn't ever anything except now and one is carrying this residue which makes it possible to go into the future. But all the contents of the mind that deal with the past can be described as fantasy in that they're unprovable. So, that's an aspect of information. . . . I just bought a book . . . I see you have *The Blue and Brown Books . . . On Certainty . . .* by Wittgenstein. It's really a riot. It's really very funny. It's about how impossible it is to be certain.

*That must appeal to you very much.*

Well, I don't feel as tortured by it as he did because his job was to try to be certain. I think it's an aspect of our existence that's interesting to discuss and that's no more or less relevant than any other. Sometimes, I just break up laughing reading Wittgenstein. It's very tragi-comic. Thinking how funny philosophy is partly was the background of *Rameau's Nephew*. Anyway, that sort of relates to the whole thing about information. At the same time, what medium information is presented in has its own aspect. In this case it's a visual aspect. Like photographs are visual.

*Wavelength has often been discussed as a narrative film or as a kind of equivalent for narrative movement. This just made me wonder what, if any, commercial filmmakers interest you?*

I'm not interested in any of them basically. My ideas about film, or even my interest in film doesn't have to do with seeing other films. I am interested in narrative as just one of the things you can do with film but I'm not interested in examples of it particularly . . . how it's been done. . . . In *Wavelength* I wanted to cover a scale of the possibilities, the connections that you make between events. And obviously the narrative one is a strong one. Because that's the way we get from point to point in life anyway. If you just tell a story, that's just one of the ways of moving in time; the musical way is another, and the way you use colors is another.

*In the exhibition, I was very interested in De La, especially the machine that you had used for the camera in La Région Centrale. Its presence in that show, I think, reveals preoccupations of yours on many levels, the most obvious being the isolation of something that had served you in a previous work.*

Of course in making the machine, the original intention was that it never be seen. It doesn't photograph itself and it makes the film. I knew the way I wanted the camera to move and I had a few ideas about how it could be done, but I'm not a technician. So the machine was produced in order to move the camera to make *La Région Centrale*. But when it existed I found it be a very beautiful thing, and I wanted to adapt it into another work so it could be seen.

*I made a comparison of some of the goals of your work to Leonardo's. Again, I'm reminded of the parallel in that the very basis of this work depended on actually creating a new machinery for its execution.*

Yes, this didn't exist. I've talked to people who were interested in the technology of it. For me, that's not irrelevant but whatever way I could get the images I visualized on the screen, I would have used. So *De La* is really completely different from *La Région Centrale*; it doesn't have very much connection. It doesn't have the same effect on you at all seeing those images. It's an interesting separation because you have the machine, on the one hand, and the camera, which is a kind of stand-in for the

artist, that makes the images. He's the painter and you have the canvases (the TV monitors), in which the spectators are seen and they see the painter and they see the painting, but they're in it. The way the spectator is included has to be considered in any estimation of the work. Where are we now?

*Sort of winding up.*

Oh, all right, let's light a cigarette.

*Shall we just stop?*

Does it stop the whole thing to do this . . . ? . . . FINIS

# The Camera and the Spectator: Michael Snow in Discussion with John Du Cane <sup>1973</sup>

This discussion was taped in London, England, in 1972 and published in *Studio International* 186, no. 960 (November 1973).

John Du Cane: One of the things I'm most concerned about is the business of talking about types of communication that are manipulative of the audience and types of communication that activate the audience, make them aware of their own ways of dealing with the immediate film event. In conventional cinema you're dealing with people being led by the nose . . .

Michael Snow: It's a pleasurable thing, people seem to like being led in a certain way.

Joyce Wieland: But this society is such that people are being led by the nose from when they're born – so if you want to go along with that school of thought, that's the only thing they know.

MS: It's a question of being well led. . . .

JDC: Exactly. But I think it's important if you're making visual statements that you do it in a way that reminds people that they are creative agents while watching films.

MS: I'm personally interested in that. I'm not so much involved in what I think of as communication as in making something. It certainly does communicate but the sense isn't what's on the screen. I'd like people to learn how to see and hear, so they can always see and hear . . . and know the truth.

JDC: To do that, what you've got to do is to remind people of the immediate situation.

MS: Yes, what is it that's happening right now, what is this?

JDC: Which is not what is encouraged in most other types of cinema or on television.

MS: They're more like tranquilizers. The news on TV, for instance, is a little composition that has some very remote connection with some events that happened somewhere and in some cases it's not even demonstrable, the connection between that event on television and the event that's supposedly being reported. Another thing that'll probably happen is that the newspapers, which can describe in more detail than TV and can be less manipulative if there are a number of them, are probably going to disappear and we'll be left with a news source that is primarily a titillation.

JDC: Let's talk about what you're working on now. I hear you're using people in your new film *Rameau's Nephew by Diderot* . . .

MS: I guess the fastest way to get to talking about it is still to divide things into landscapes, still life, portraits, figure compositions, things like that.

JDC: They're not too limiting?

MS: No. A still life is a particular kind of problem compared to painting a landscape. Obviously in a landscape you can't paint all the leaves. So those definitions are of use. You see, I did some interiors that worked with interior spaces, and *La Région Centrale* was a landscape, and *New York Eye and Ear Control* had some landscape things happening and it also had some portraits. And I've tried to do a still-life thing, so, okay, now I'm also trying to work to get away from that painting thing which is only so usable. I'm trying to work with speech, spoken sound, and people, in some way that utilizes the range or scale of possibilities, of relationships between the image and the sound. It has to do with people or the representations of people.

JDC: So how are you organizing what you might call the speech patterns?

MS: I'm working on it differently from what I was doing in my other films. The other films were all single shapes. It could be broken up a little bit but basically the thing was a whole. This one is all separate little pieces, so it's more mosaic-like. I'm working on a section that's near the tail and a section that's near the head and I'm not finishing them: all these various parts are falling into place. It's very fragmented compared to the other ones.

JDC: In what way are the figures going to be represented and how are those speech patterns going to work in relation to the representation?

MS: Difficult. I've actually been working on the film for a year and a half and it will probably take another eight months – because it comes out of things that I was thinking out that came out of *Wavelength* and  $\longleftrightarrow$ , but won't really be like them. It works with that scale of possibilities of image-sound relationship . . . it's particularly to do with speech. So in a way each section of the thing is equivalent to the kind of reality that is indicated in the colour changes in *Wavelength*. But in this case it's by what happens between the sound and the image. It's really encyclopaedic, which is partly why Diderot's in there, and one of the subtitles is that it's for English-speaking audiences. So it has to do with English, or language in a way too.

I've been interested in Wittgenstein for quite a long time and that kind of thing has been a sort of background to part of it in a way. But also the language has a plastic nature. I wrote some scripts around the time I did *Wavelength*. I was interested in getting a kind of two-dimensionality. They're little discussions. Some of this happens in the film and it's a certain kind of talking that I hope enables one to hear the thing for its sense but also for its sound and functional quality in the structure of the film. Without necessarily making any strange alterations, although that happens a bit too. I've written the thing with certain ideas as to what can be seen and heard again too. There are certain spoken things that are dramatic, that you can't see more than three times because their function is only to get you to this dramatic climax. But I'm trying to make something that will be fairly objective in the way that the other films were objective.

JDC: All of your films, in very different ways, seem to have encyclopaedic concerns.

MS: Yes, they're all scalar. *Région Centrale* goes through the possibilities of those kinds of movements.

JDC: But you do organize it in a dramatic fashion.

MS: Yes, in a sense, although I thought of it as being vaguely symphonic. There's a grand statement of theme and then there's other themes and elaborations. You get it a little faster or you get it combined with this one or that. It's over such a long period

that it doesn't build in the same way as the first part of  $\longleftrightarrow$  because it is really a gradual rise to a peak and a fall-off.

JDC: Although there is that very fast movement at the end that lifts you up.

MS: That's another thing that's not going to happen in the new film. I've thought of the others as having a kind of sexual form – because they're orgasmic in a way. I think they're very sexy films myself.

The new film doesn't have that kind of form. All of my films are progressions in the sense of 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 and this one isn't like that at all. It's more like 2, 5, 1006, 1/8 – very unequal, there's no sense of symmetry.

JDC: So you're dealing with disjunctions.

MS: It isn't totally disjunctive, but it doesn't rise. That's really been one of the things that's interested me: it's not the same level, they're all different levels, you never get the same level again.

JDC: In your earlier works you were dealing with predictable structures from which a tremendous amount of unpredictable spontaneous activity was generated. The audience picks up on the structure fast and watches what it's generating.

MS: Yes, whereas with this one that won't be possible, because it's very faceted.

JDC: There's some confusion in my mind about how the soundtrack for *Région Centrale* was eventually put together. Your original intention was to have the actual sound that was used to programme the camera movements but in fact a lot of the camera movements were operated by dials.

MS: That's information that doesn't really matter when you're watching the film – it's like the production. When you see and hear it there are connections between the sound and the image but how you read that is another matter. So that's what really counts. It is in sync. When it moves horizontally there's a certain pitch of note. Those beeps are always the same, they're always at 300 cycles or so. And the faster it goes the more beeps there are. If it goes vertical there's another pitch which is lower than that. So it's horizontal, vertical, rotation and zoom: all have their pitch.

JDC: It was difficult for me to work out whether it was just coincidental sync.

MS: Well, it's a little shifty and it falls apart at the end. There's a complete separation at the end, of what I thought of as a kind of nervous system and an optical thing. But that's my interpretation of it. The fact is that you get these synchronized beeps with certain types of movement. You don't have to trace them and connect them but they are synchronous. So, okay, the production part of it was that originally we planned, we worked on a system to programme the whole thing with sound tapes so that we'd compose the sound first and that would give instructions to the machine to move and then I was going to use that as the track. Which is interesting because it would have meant the visual part of it was composed in terms of sound. And so there'd be this reverse relationship, at least in the production. But it would have ended up pretty much the way it is now. So anyway this system was not properly finished and when we were forced to go ahead, it had taken so long, a couple of parts of the film were done with that system and the rest was done with this set of knobs, following a score that was written out, that would say, for example, horizontal three, vertical five or fifty feet, then it would go horizontal four or something like that. And then when the film was done I had to post-sync the same kind of sound. It's not quite the same, but it's the same kind of sound we'd be using to try and programme it.

JDC: You shot six hours of film. What sort of decisions were involved in cutting it down to three?

MS: There were parts that were repeated. I shot the first section twice, for instance. And there were a couple of sections that just didn't work. One of the things that didn't work was that originally I planned a section about half an hour long with the people who were the crew there and it's synchronized sound and various things happened. In a way I was a little hesitant about it, but it's really interesting in itself. But as you can imagine it was totally destructive to the whole thing of having that landscape to yourself. It just had to go, after I saw the whole thing together.

JDC: There seemed to be pieces in *Région Centrale*, particularly near the end, where the camera was being moved without the usual programming or dialling.

MS: Yes, when it holds on the sun for a while, and in the piece with the moon.

JDC: It wasn't all a matter of letting the machine get on with what you'd originally worked out.

MS: It's just a rotation thing, with playing, so it jerks around.

JDC: Why the breaks, the X's, in *Région Centrale*?

MS: The film's in constant motion. The X fixes the screen. It transfers the movement in a different way each time it comes up. It's another kind of motion that's a kind of referral to yourself. Obviously it's also a functional way to get from sequence to sequence because I couldn't make it totally continuous anyway, it was really impossible. And it's a title, a reminder of the central region – the whole thing is about being in the middle of this – the camera and the spectator. But first of all it was just something that would hold the screen. The diagonals seemed to be the best way to fix it – so there's no feeling of anything passing through or whatever. Sometimes I wonder if other people see the things that it does, but it's really fantastic – the shifts and falls and sinkings and things like that. That also happens to the building you're in too, the whole place seems to be sinking or swinging.

JDC: Does your new film emphasize the frame in the way you've been emphasizing it in your other films?

MS: The other films were trying to make a kind of equivalence of the whole field – so that everything has absolutely equal importance. But I'm now putting the emphasis on the people. With all the other ones I was trying to make the whole field work and I am in this in a way, but it's a different thing, it's more as if they're in relief or something – the people stand out from the rest of the field. In the other films there was a centre of interest – there's a direction but the whole field's moving. So you can look anywhere on the screen and it's all of equal importance, although it varies from situation to situation. It's necessary, to get back to painting, it's the same sort of thing as in a portrait; the head is the most important part but if you're a painter the upper left-hand corner is just as important, because it's a painting. On the other hand you can give a relative degree of emphasis to all the elements, and the emphasis that I'm giving in this one is the kind of emphasis you get – I don't mean this in terms of quality – in Rembrandt or something like that where the head stands out so much more from the ground. I'm really working with that kind of space, as opposed to a more modern sense of space. The thing is really eighteenth century in a lot of ways. It's *Rameau's Nephew* by Diderot.

JDC: In *A Casing Shelved* it looked as if you were interested in the way description can transform an audience's response to a given visual piece. There were presumably other concerns.

MS: One of the things I wanted to do there was make the motion a result of the sound. That was like the germ idea. That coupled with a habit of looking at things and wondering how they got to be what they are. Like this table top here is a pretty interesting collection of things, and it keeps on happening. And that particular thing, the bookshelf, I kept on thinking I'd had it for a long time and I'd just kept on enjoying it as if it were a painting, a work of art, and once I just snuck up on it and took the Instamatics that are actually in that slide. I didn't know quite what to do about it. I never arranged anything there, but when I started to become interested in it I became self-conscious about it and I decided I'd better do something about it. So I finally took the slide and then that tied in with the idea of the sound. What interested me also was that all the stuff that's there is not art, but it's art-related, because it has to do with the other stuff that I did that I called art.

JDC: The description was recorded in one session?

MS: I did it straight through, there in front of the thing, in the same place as the camera.

JDC: So the description is not a description of the slide, you were studying the thing itself.

MS: Yes. And it passes in and out of modes. Again, it's encyclopaedic, I guess, because I sometimes referred to something as a rectangle or as a black line and you can see things that way in three dimensions in life but it tends to make it seem as if you're referring to the slide which is of course two-dimensional. It's like there's a ghost of me in front of the image of the shelves looking at them. It keeps on changing . . . whether I describe something as a red spot or a line or as being a can of turpentine, and the contents are sort of funny because you can't see them. Other people have pointed out that it's a bit like in art schools where they analyse paintings that way – you get a slide of it and the guy says notice how this line goes down here and so on – which I didn't think of before but it's a bit like a teaching thing that way.

JDC: Yes, but it's not presented in that didactic fashion.

MS: No, because it's pretty casual.

JDC: And because the process of selection, the process by which you relate one thing to another and so on is brought right out, a lot of the content was the sort of decisions you were making, the types of classification . . .

MS: Yes, I wanted to say everything that could be said about it.

JDC: It seems that what you like to do with most of the things you make, is to take something clearly delimited and then go through all the possible ramifications.

MS: *A Casing Shelved* is a projected slide with a separate tape sound. Being a movie would be entirely another matter because it would introduce motion . . . no matter what you'd do you'd have the flicker and you'd have the things that happened in the projector. Slides have a particularly frozen quality if you look at them for a while. It's really very interesting. It's very funny about that movie thing. Bob Breer told me that for a long time he thought *A Casing Shelved* was a movie. I think that's very nice, because it means that the thing is moving in time in a way that I really wanted the sound to do – and it is the sound that does it because if you really look at it you don't see the effects that happen with films . . . that little bit of instability.

# *Boucherville, Montréal, Toronto, London* 1973

This is the text of a speech given by Michael Snow at the National Gallery of Canada, 5 July 1973, for the opening of the exhibition *Boucherville, Montréal, Toronto, London 1973*. In advance, Snow tape-recorded himself reading it. At the opening, the tape was played and he lip-synced to his voice.

**A**t present I am sitting, naturally enough, in some other place writing what I am now reading to you here. The other voice you hear is not the voice you might have heard then. I generally write, even speeches, silently. I make no actual vocal sounds as I am now, but I write by hand, as I am now, or by typewriter, as I often do, in each case listening to my inner voice dictating, correcting, arranging what I hope this is now and will be – a relatively coherent arrangement of words.

The first thing I will do when I am actually making my introductory remarks for the opening of the exhibition *Boucherville, Montreal, Toronto, London 1973*, or, to be more exact, when I am reading on that occasion what I am now writing, is to thank Miss Jean Sutherland Boggs, director of the National Gallery of Canada, and Mr. Pierre Théberge, curator of Canadian art, and Mr. Brydon Smith, curator of contemporary art, the organizers of this exhibition, for the invitation to jointly open the exhibition with one of Canada's greatest artists, Guido Molinari, which presumably we are now doing. I was honoured and pleased to be asked and I accepted their invitation and I hope to be there.

Largely because of Miss Jean Boggs's inspired direction, all of whose decisions, it seems to me, are based on a solid and noble conception of the role of the National Gallery of Canada, it for the past few years has boasted one of the finest staff and programs of any gallery-museum in the world.

To the committed artist, Pierre Théberge and Brydon Smith are the committed audience. Between us, we can reciprocally maintain the importance of our endeavour, coming, as it does, from the ancient past and going, as it is, like everything else, nowhere.

After writing the last part of the preceding sentence, I felt the immediate urge to delete it. However, it's too late and I'll tell you now that what I meant was that we don't *know* where anything's going, but one of the adventures of such as the National Gallery of Canada is to take the responsibility of saying "*This* is what we should take on the way."

In their activities, both Brydon Smith and Pierre Théberge exemplify, they make manifest, their passionate and, happily, constantly examined sense of aesthetic values.

Based on their experience of the values of the past, they enjoy, as creative artists do, the growth of their perceptions into the future. Indeed, though not usually described as artists, they are.

Achievements in any field are contextual – that is, there is at all times a set and setting. I am using the words “set” to mean the artwork and “setting” to mean the environment – temporal, spatial, social.

What are called “values,” determinations of quality, are determined contextually against the conventions of the given “now.”

If the artistic environment is vague as to ideas of excellence, which to be fertile must be personal, local and international in varying degree to supply the widest possible references, then there is less possibility of an artist’s making the difficult clarifications that are necessary to achieve work of distinction.

In an individual, the aim of the cultivation of artistic values is certainly not to arrive at the ability to say “this is good” or “this is bad.” What good is that? No good. It’s bad.

To be valid, artistic values can only commence from a profound personal and actual experience of an individual work with as little extraneous influence as possible. Only from this stage, on this basis, can the cultivator proceed through the rings of references and connections contained in the amplitude of the work, its social and moral aspects, and its possible roles in the future.

Pleasurable *experience*, not judgement. Statements of judgement are necessary but are empty if they don’t proceed as described.

Since selection or choice is one of the methods of artistic production which has been proved to have great resonance even when it is the only method employed, we can certainly say that Mr. Théberge and Mr. Smith are both artists of fine and different talents.

And since success in the mode of assemblage, collage, research, documentation in which they work is dependent on a respect for and thorough understanding of the work of the other artists whose works form the units of their work, we can begin to see the subtlety of their kind of artistry.

Not only must such artists compose a convincing ensemble of widely varied materials but they must in no way alter the individual works shown but only let them be themselves. The components can be organized but not altered.

We need to have an artistic environment of total and uncritical encouragement of all artistic effort. In fact, in my opinion the permeating of society with the understanding of the possible art aspects of all activities and things is one of the few hopes I see for the radical changes in life-objectives and lifestyles which are essential if we are to continue and develop.

However, within the complex of uncritical and more or less critical encouragement we must have assertions of quality, even of supremacy.

Speaking of superiority and inferiority is understandably unfashionable since such characterizations, undemonstrable, have often been a tool of the oppression of one thing by some other thing. However, these terms, like the word “discrimination,” which prior to current usage and even now used properly means the ability to tell one thing from another, can be used, if only in definable, quantifiable, measurable situations and where a connection with a desirable effect or “efficiency” is demonstrable.

If the situation is attaining comfort on a cold night, such as last night, then three blankets are superior to one sheet. If the situation is to get from Ottawa to Washington

as fast as they might desire, then flying is superior to walking. Of course for the exercise of legs, walking is superior to flying.

Non-qualitative uses of these terms have aspects of quality: the roof of a building is superior to the basement; Miss Jean Boggs is superior to Mr. Théberge and Mr. Smith.

Does Art quality have measurables?

For me, writing this has been completely engrossing. I hope that I am selecting the most interesting aspects of my writing on a complex subject and that you will find it as interesting as I do now when I read it to you later.

Actually, I am rewriting this section for the third or fourth time, but anyway on *this* occasion I've just noticed that in addition to it being very cold for summer it has just now started to rain very heavily.

I think that some works of Art are superior to some others. Artworks have a job to do (this has been defined in the past), and the job of a new work of art is to do the old job in a new way.

Amazingly, this keeps on being done.

I'm interested in greatness because it feels good, and amongst the greatest works of art it has been my, to say the least, pleasure to experience anywhere are certain of the acquisitions made for the National Gallery by Brydon Smith or Pierre Théberge. Certain pieces by Mondrian, Curnoe, Andre, Molinari, Pollock, Wieland, Duchamp, Marsden, Touseignant come to mind immediately, as well as several others.

Of course Mr. Théberge and Mr. Smith have in the past shown their appreciation of some of my own work by including it well in their own work, which for me only reinforces the excellence of their values.

That Mr. Smith and Mr. Théberge by organizing this exhibition have declared that some of the works in it are superior to others which are not (given its contextual setting as defined in the catalogue), they might dispute, but probably not. If they did, however, such a dispute would be an instructive one, and I'd welcome it as yet another heavy contribution of theirs to our artistic environment.

Having the opportunity to speak, or rather to read, what I have written aloud without interruption like this makes it irresistible not to say that this is only one of my present presences at this exhibition.

This is being read.

A red has entered my experience; my experience has been reddened; my red experience has been thickened. The continuity of red. The quantity of red. The speed of red. Ron Martin's extraordinary red-on-white canvases are about being red.

These paintings taken singly and as a group constitute a major, a superior, artistic achievement.

I first encountered them at Martin's exhibition at Carmen Lamanna's wonderful gallery in Toronto and was greatly moved by them and welcome the chance to see them again.

These paintings are absolutely new, but having experienced the dominance of Abstract Expressionism as a period style in a way that Ron Martin hasn't, I find it very interesting to see in what ways they are different from paintings of that time to which they might appear to be similar.

The intellectual cause embodied in the physical effect is part of the unique content of these paintings.

Very different from Ron Martin's paintings are the four large paintings by James Spencer. By the way, the nickname of the painter of these huge wave-and-shore paintings is appropriately "Sandy."

Every nuance of colour and shape is deliberately and separately set in its place. That description doesn't differentiate them from Martin's, but the deliberation, the slowness of execution builds up a compound total image in which the means virtually disappears and produces a very particular kind of unity.

The image has been built additively, but the separateness of this form from that form, necessary in execution, is very subtle in the final total image. For me the hidden separateness of small parts produces a very powerful form-content. It isn't necessary to know in seeing the paintings that the painter's easel was not set up at the beach. It seems evident that it wasn't. Is it evident that they are meticulously copied from photographs? One feels that the fixity, the arrested motion and the fact of flatness make the photograph a "correct" intermediary between an actual experience of waves at a beach and these monumental works whose forms have something – what? – to do with waves at the shore. *We* are the shore that the paintings are arriving at.

I hope the other artists in the exhibition will excuse or perhaps be relieved by only brief mention of their work, since I now have before me as I write only photographs and have had personal experience of but two of the other works in the show. Perhaps I will have time to briefly see the exhibition before I read this, but I have made it a rule to only read what I'm now writing.

I have seen several of Henry Saxe's works of sculpture before and thought they were terrific. He has been working on systems of joining units of particular form-families which have produced ways of occupying space that have a purity and logic which contains revelations of oddity, inner formal surprises that one can only discover by moving around the pieces and not by an intellectual assessment of the system involved.

I'm now looking at the photographs of *Wedge* and *Wind*, and I feel that his work is deepening all the time. Without straying from uniquely sculptural concerns, in dealing with space occupying actual forms he is developing an area that is very rich. The three photographic works resound with complete and clear poetry even as photographs.

By contrast, which is one of the unavoidable modes of critical discourse, Robin Collyer's work seems less structural, less "logical," less engineered, and despite the similar strategies of dispersal has a completely different command of space and scale that provokes dialogue between the different forms involved. To me it is poetic, even narrative, intimate and somewhat pictorial. I've seen two of the works in person and was then very impressed by their unique personality and scale. The discreteness of parts, fragility, quietness are all very personal, it seems. I am anxious to see them.

And I'm anxious to see Jean Delavalle's six carousel slide pieces and Murray Favro's three slide-and-object pieces. If I mention them together it is only because they share strong understanding of uses of the still-unplumbed artistic resources of the camera but are otherwise very, very different.

I hope that everyone will find the texts in the catalogue as interesting to read as I have.

I'll write now that I, perhaps like my audience, am now even more anxious to see the exhibition, and when I read what I have written this will no doubt be true; however, I don't know when this will be read – whether it will precede our being able to see the exhibition or not.

I think I will write about a page more.

Probably millions of people have entertained the crazy notion of trapping *now*. But of course as soon as you jump at it, it turns into *then*. That's obvious. We can only speak of now as a bracketing of a time period, not as a point. The only way to experience it as a point is to dispose of the word and live the sense of it.

Right now I am beside an old cast-iron stove in a small cabin in the woods in northeastern Canada. There's a fire burning, but it's still cold in here. There has been a tremendous storm with very strong wind and rain.

Now I'm looking at the floor. Can I describe the floor? Should I describe the floor? It's very worn, very dirty linoleum. The wood floor under it is very uneven, and so of course is the linoleum. The area that seems especially interesting is to the left of my muddy rubber-booted right foot. The pattern on the linoleum is a kind of wavy checkerboard, which makes a sort of rosette shape at each juncture. The wavy bars are set against a white ground and consist of a pale robin's egg blue, a dark midnight blue and a gold yellow ochre all bounded by a darker blue line. It's all very dirty but not obscured – flecks, stains of earth and rotten wood, and small strips of newer wood, a partly burnt matchstick, and a very white crumbled rejected page of this speech. The little strips of wood, which are like smashed clarinet reeds and used toothpicks, have aligned themselves against the rosettes and wavy bars and dirt in a way that's really hard to believe – it's too methodically beautiful and it makes me feel that now is the time for me to stop writing and hence

to stop reading now

to stop speaking now.

Thank you.

**Notes for *Rameau's Nephew* by  
Diderot (*Thanx to Dennis Young*)  
by Wilma Schoen 1974**

This four-and-a-half-hour film took three years to make and was completed in 1974. During the period, I was obsessed with the film and was continually thinking about it and making notes and scribbles on any paper that came to hand. These "ideas" and "observations" (some having no evident final use in the film) accumulated into the hundreds. They are now in the Edward P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario. The following selection of scripts was suggested by Annette Michelson and the editors of *October* magazine.

These notes were all to myself, except for the first two paragraphs, written after the film was completed and intended as a description for inclusion in the catalogues of various distributors of the film: the Canadian Film Makers Distribution Centre in Toronto, New York Film-Makers' Coop and the Canyon Cinema in San Francisco.

The selection from the notes reproduced here was originally published in *October* 4, nos. 43–52 (Fall 1977).

**M.S.**

**T**o me it's a true "talking picture." It delves into the implications of that description and derives structures that can generate contents that are proper to the mode. It derives its form and the nature of its possible effects from its being built from the inside, as it were, with the actual units of such a film, i.e., the frame and the recorded syllable. Thus its dramatic development derives not only from a representation of what may involve us generally in life but from considerations of the nature of recorded speech in relation to moving light-images of people. Thus it can become an event in life, not just a report of it.

Echoes reverberate to "language," to "representation" in general, to representation in the sound cinema, to "culture," to "civilization." Via the eyes and ears it is a composition aimed at exciting the two halves of the brain into recognition.

A clear use of ambiguity.

Can you extrapolate from "not being able to understand"  
(in terms of intelligibility of parts of the separate segments) to  
"not being able to understand" the whole?

"Understand" – Two shades of meaning.

LAUGHTER AND ORGASM: relation?

Style is a way of saying. Styles of different sections. Ways of saying several things at once.

DIFFERENT MEANINGS AT DIFFERENT READINGS connecting different "strata."

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL	SOUND
Appearance/disappearance	Focus	Appearance/disappearance
Substitution	Color	Substitution
Metamorphosis	Light intensity (f stop)	other voice,
Auto-motion	fade in/out	other sound, etc.
Changes of light intensity	exposure - over/under	Pitch change
color	Opticals	Timbre change
position	wipes	room-tone,
Repetition	fold-overs	echo, fuzz
Normal movement	Superimpositions	Volume (loud to 0)
	Repetition (printed)	spatial position
	Camera position	Repetition
	Camera movement	"distortion"
	Camera speed	
	Screen Shape	
	<i>The other external is the actual film strip. Editing</i>	

#### CROSS CAUSES AND EFFECTS

Cause: action "in" picture. Effect: "external" change (image color, focus, etc.)

Cause: action "in" picture. Effect:

"Entering the image": TOUCH: caress, feel, eat, fuck, smash.

Verbal description, "journalism." Dialogue sexual.

*Eventually, the camera enters the image by fast changes of position, hand-held stuff, wild cuts, dollies, etc.*

\* \* \*

List all possible manipulables.

Computer/cross-index all the permutations, combinations.

Use this as a script.

5	6	1	2	3	4	action	
6	5	2	1	4	3	reaction	Superimpose
5	6	2	1	4	3	action	several locations
2	1	5	6	4	3	reaction	or sets or backdrops
4	3	2	1	5	6		
1	2	4	5	6	3		Trees by a river NO
3	2	1	4	5	6		New Orleans Street
5	2	1	4	6	3		Babylonian (ancient) scene

Do film in four or five tempi.

medium (long) 40 minutes

slow (medium) 15 minutes

fast (medium) 20 minutes

slow (short) 5 minutes

Control of WAVES OF "COHERENCE" necessary.

Rhythm continues but certain elements become more sequential then become more varied again.

e.g. dialogue

becomes more sequential

"normal"

then starts

fragmenting again.

COMEDY *Commedia dell'Arte* Comedy of Art

Same characters exchange positions but original voices are still heard.

Characters are replaced but original voices are still heard.

Characters are replaced but new voices are heard.

Characters change spatial position but sound continues.

FRAMES: The *Fact*: Everything can be changed between frames.

Film absolutely not videotape.

CUTTING – Disjunctive.

ABSOLUTELY non-sequential patterns.

No proportionate modulations, glissandos, fades.

Must be

staccato,

not

legato

But: 6 2 1 9 3 8 4

All this applies to sound, too: it can be changed "between frames."

Needn't be sequential, needn't be sentences, needn't be a story.

*Words* interchangeable.

\* \* \*

*Internal* reactions to *external* causes.

During fade-out people say "what's happening to the light?"

Over-exposure; people cover their eyes.

Flood of color – they watch it rise.

They comment on changes that happen to the sound, e.g., a bit of music is substituted for a phrase of dialogue

Another person says "That's by J.S. Bach, isn't it?"

A superimposition of a group of people is imitated by the people in the scene.

A person reacts within the scene to

other people's reactions to

an external cause.

A SERIES OF JOKES: crude enough that some  
will survive dismemberment.

A man got on the elevator in his apartment building. There was a woman in the car and she was completely nude. He was a little taken aback but he said, "My wife has an outfit just like that." (Aunt Rhoda's joke.)

MOVE CAMERA SLIGHTLY (on tripod) ON EACH FRAME OF S.F. REAL-TIME SHOOTING-JITTER.

DON'T FORGET: This thing is *absolutely* SOUND  $\longleftrightarrow$  IMAGE  
RELATIONSHIPS

OK plan to studio re-record some things with changes.

Have sound man change *something* on every image,  
change treble, bass, or volume.

A bit where sound disappears  
when something is held in front of the camera.  
Something opaque?

The entire film an "example" of the difficulty (impossibility) of the essentializing-symbolizing reduction involved in the (Platonic) nature of words in relation to experience (object) etc. discussed. The *difference* between the reduction absolutely necessary to discuss or even describe the experience and the experience. Each is "real" but each is different.

\* \* \*

INTERNAL REACTION: People in the shot notice, see, pay attention to a manipulation: e.g., a bottle appears, reappears (8 frames, 4 frames, 2 frames). They watch this, continuing to talk about something else. They screen their eyes during over-exposure.

Change camera position in mid-conversation  
(continue in the middle of a word).  
Should especially concern itself with the people.  
Lots of medium shots, close-ups. (2 or 4 heads, etc.)

All-woman cast?

\* \* \*

PSALMANAZAR: Georges Psalmanazar (1679–1763), assumed name of a Frenchman who represented himself as a pagan from Formosa and invented a language, "Formosan," and a religious system; he later repented of the imposture, which is described in his memoir, and became a serious scholar, a friend of Dr. Johnson.

Each sequence made like a spoken word – like an actual word? – so each has a distinct character.

No, it's the language of film.



*Wrong or invented sounds for things that happen on screen.* Man drops a cup, it shatters, sound is thunder and rain. Rain sound continues till woman covers her eyes. Man cleans up broken cup, sound is hammering. Hammering cuts simultaneously with cutting to “now,” same cup in place of fragments. Woman lights cigarette, sound is a bell or chime. She blows out smoke and as she blows, cup (is pulled) slides along table over to edge. Either it cuts at edge and a second later, sound of breaking glass, or it falls off and sound is of car screeching around a corner. She knocks ash off cigarette, sound is splashing water, puffs on cigarette, sound is the spoken word “money.” Simultaneously, man pulls letter from his pocket, sound is a bird sound till he unfolds letter. As he unfolds letter, sound is a siren and also she starts to speak: “Harvey, I just don’t know what to say.” He reads letter and sound is footsteps. She speaks again: “So much time has passed since we first met that it seems like it was only yesterday. The first time I saw you was in winter. I saw you walking down the street, you were wearing a very long black overcoat. You looked very strange and very interesting and I hoped that I could meet you. Isn’t it strange? Some two weeks later I did.” During “the first time” she gets up from chair and walks out of room. Her voice continues with absolutely no change in volume, etc. It ought to be in perfect lip sync before that. Next, man turns off a lamp which is on table. Sound is of breaking glass and image over-exposed. Man leaves everything on table on its side. At first leaving, sound of rain again. At the last, sound cuts and camera swivels till scene is sideways with objects right side up, short hold and cut.

The last part as a separate scene in itself or part of another.  
Someone leaves everything on their sides, then the camera swivels.

A section shot right but shown backwards including sound.  
A sequence: camera swivels as above but scene continues, talking, etc. Cut to scene upside down with sound somehow affected by that. SOUND UPSIDE DOWN? Cut to backwards scene.

Backwards scene could be shot with some action *done backwards* so they’d be “correct” though screened wrong.

\* \* \*

## THE ART OF MODULATING TIME RECORDING

The “concretion” of music, its materiality “increases” with radio, records.

Music is now in the situation of literature after the invention of printing. Recording is mapping of time into space. Like drawing or painting.

Consonants equivalent to attack or percussion.

*(Staccati, pizzicati)*

P.K.D.T.B.

Lenses: shoot something changing lenses. Per word, perhaps.

Various focal lengths. Wide screen lens, anamorphic, multiple image. Diopter, split field lens. Super wide angle, 5.7 mm, etc.

VISUAL

One sequence of lenses  
zoom  
pan  
camera position  
focus changes

SOUND

volume and  
distortion  
changes  
Use  
electronic  
filter?

What is it like not to be able to read or write?

# Some Scripts for *Rameau's Nephew* by *Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young)* by *Wilma Schoen* 1974

*Rameau's Nephew* . . . is built of twenty-five sequences, each with sound, each separated from its neighbours by twenty-seven abstract colour compositions. There is no narrative connection between the sequences, which vary in duration from 4 minutes to 55. Six sequences, to suggest a "microcosm" of the whole film, have been selected for publication.

Regina Cornwell's book on my work, *Snow Seen*, has a fine discussion of the film and a list and description of the sequences. Some of the titles she gives (no sequence has a title in the film) are not the same as my working titles.

We have chosen to reproduce these scripts in facsimile because we felt it was interesting to see how they were originally set up. They also include notes and drawings made during the shooting. The reproductions here are in black and white, but the originals also use red and blue and pencil to distinguish certain parts from others. (The originals are in the Edward P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario.)

The first script (Sequence 6 in the film) had the working title "Voice." Ms. Cornwell's title for it is "Office Scene." This episode was shot by me at the then offices of the Anthology Film Archives in New York. The "Voice" is Tony Jannetti, and the office workers are Jonas Mekas, Marlene Arvan and Harry Gant.

In shooting the scene, I changed the ending. After the Voice says, "Yes, this is a talking picture," I had the snow-scene calendar fall off the wall, then everyone yells as if they're falling as the entire image falls (see reproduction of these frames). As the screen becomes blank, the Voice asks, "Where am I?" Cut.

**M.S.**

"VOICE" scene.

1

ABE, BERTRAM, CLARA and VOICE

1 1/2 minutes

SHOT NORMAL. TRIPOD. FIXED.

OFFICE

AN INTERIOR. "VOICE" IS SPOKEN OFF SCREEN. ITS SOUND NEVER VARIES, ALWAYS SAME VOLUME ETC. use 2 mikes w/ "voice" very clear and close.

at Anthology  
JONES  
P. ADAMS  
KATE  
Tony (Voice)

V. Hi folks!

A. (Stares at table) Did that coffee cup speak?...Migawd!

V. Whats so amazing?

(Everyone looks dumbfounded, mouths open etc.)

V. Not only coffee cups speak!

(Everyone whirls around to look in direction of light fixture)

B. Migawd the voice is coming from the light bulb!

V. Look hard buddy if you want to keep me in one place.....or another!

(on "another" they turn to look at a pen in Abes pocket (shirt or coat))

G. I swear your pen spoke Abe!

V. That isnt all I can do...How about this?

(on "this" they look back down to the table)

B. This is unbelievable, that piece of cheese spoke!

V. Whats so unbelievable? How about this?

(they whirl to look at something)

Or this?

(they ~~change~~ change again)

Or this!

(they change again)

Or is this more convincing?

A. Its the photo of Uncle Horace! (they all turn toward it as he speaking) its on wall

V. Yes thats right!

Where am I now?

What is speaking now? (?)

(they search but all end up looking at a calendar on wall, a snow scene)

A. That came from that snow scene!

(they freeze pose)

V. Eee... a talking picture! (cut)

THIS IS "BRRR" Show hold for cut.



*“Voice” sequence from Rameau’s Nephew . . .  
Photo: National Gallery of Canada*

## Polyphony (Sequence 10)

“Polyphony” is layered voices, music and times. The cast read (with slight performance additions) the script on camera. The sequence, shot at one location with a camera fixed on a tripod, is divided into four sections. The first was also tape-recorded off camera. For the second section, the first tape recording was played back on the set while the cast read and performed over and with it, and this mixture was recorded on another tape recorder. For the third section, the second tape was played back and the cast read and performed over and in that. Ditto for the fourth section plus a coda.

**M.S.**



*“Polyphony” sequence from Rameau’s Nephew . . .*

*Left to right: Deborah Dobski, Carol Friedlander, Barry Gerson and Babette Mangolte. At the far right (but not visible in the film) are John Fulleman, sound technician, and Michael Snow. Camera: Tony Jannetti.*

POLYTHONY

ME

①

TYPEWRITER behind J

T.R.#3. put on PHONE-TAPE for later  
T.R.#2. put on HPECHD tape.

Green on wall  
on right

T.R.# 1. START RECORDING (TAPE A.)

(Cast speak slowly but naturally)

J. AT PHONE PUTS DOWN RECEIVER .

P. OK here we go. *Walks over, sits down Stage L.*

<i>Mary</i> <i>on</i> <i>yellow</i> <i>chair</i>	<i>L</i> <i>standing</i> <i>at</i> <i>amp</i>	<i>G. per bore</i> <i>up</i> <i>table</i> <i>stage R</i>	<i>J. sits</i> <i>down</i> <i>(down</i> <i>from</i> <i>top center)</i>
---	--	---	--

stage R

G. "Start" is so similar to "stop".

M. Where are we going? But first .... where are we?

*Count 6 - speak to M.*

J. In answer to your questions: One..... that remains to be seen.

Then... Two... there's no telling where these remains may go to.

COUNTS

M. So I hear..... by the way there are 4 "twos"; the numeral 2, the number "two", the preposition "to" and the adverb "too"

(At camera hold up 24(25))

CAMERA OVEREXPOSE.

G. Now that light is too bright.

*Count 4 before*

J. I think there is something wrong with my two eyes....

*G and J are talking to each other*

(pause. count 4)

CAMERA BACK TO CORRECT EXPOSURE

....I notice it especially when I'm being read to.

*Count 4*

G. I've got a sore toe. (SHE HOLDS ON TO HER THROAT WITH 2 HANDS)

*Count 4 strain line*

M. Its hard to make that out.

*"listening"*

J. COUNT TO TEN BEFORE SAYING:

Numbers

24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

That's nice music.

2

M. What music?

J. That's a nice typewriter. <sup>to G</sup>

M. What typewriter? <sup>to J</sup>

T.R.#2. START PLAYING HPSCHD TAPE.

J. Paul would you please play a record or say something.

P. I'll say something first.

T.R.#2. STOP TAPE

<sup>Count 5</sup>  
J. I can't hear, what did you say?

<sup>Count 4</sup>  
P. I'll play a record.....

T.R.#2 RESUME PLAYING TAPE.

<sup>Count 3</sup>  
P. Maybe you'll hear that

P. WALK OVER AND ~~OUT~~ ON THE RECORD. IT TURNS BUT SOUND IS OFF  
T.R.#2 STOP TAPE WHEN RECORD STARTS TURNING.

J. COUNT 5 <sup>8</sup> THEN SAY:  
That's so ~~naughty!~~ <sup>HAUNTING!</sup>

EVERYBODY "LISTEN" (~~about 15 seconds~~)

<sup>Count 20</sup> ~~MAKE IT 30~~ MAKE IT 30

① CUT EVERYTHING, MAINTAIN POSITIONS.

CUT MARY OFF-SCREEN. EVERYTHING ELSE RESUME.  
J. SPEAKS TO WHERE MARY WAS:

You're not listening!

<sup>7</sup> till M COUNT 3.

M. SPEAKS OFF-SCREEN LOUDLY:

It's one of my favourites.

② PAUSE THEN  
CUT. ~~EVERYTHING OFF-SCREEN~~

G Should be doing something through here to next page  
Protect through the record?

+

TELL PAUL

RESUME ALL WITH MARY BACK IN SAME POSITION  
T.R.#2 PLAY HFSCHD TAPE

~~green~~

③

different position

M. "MOUTH" SILENTLY THE WORDS "Its one of my favourites"

T.R.# 2 STOP.

Count 5 before

P. Mary you do have a way with words!

TELL M count 4 say it to P.

M. Lets not talk ,lets listen.

M sealed on yellow  
others  
but getting up  
as we start and  
stand beside yellow chair

J. PUT FINGERS IN EARS, KEEP THEM THERE

T  
T.R.#2 .RESUME PLAYING TAPE

Count 8

J. What irridescence!

P. GRABS M. AND KISSES HER. COUNT TO 10

T.R.#2 CUT SOUND AT KISS.

RESUME SOUND AT:

P. Lets fuck while Jeannette is at the store.

Count 10 then  
J. TAKE FINGERS OUT OF EARS.

J. I'm back

Count 3 G tell her

G. Jeannette, Paul is playing with mary's volume.

} talk to each other

J. Mary's is naturally a very quiet speaker. It's very delicate.

P. Where did you hear that?

TELL M how many:

M. My voice is what we here, hear now.

G. COUNT 10 BEFORE SAYING:

Let's hear something else right? But right here. And right now.

GO TO RECORD PLAYER, TAKE OFF RECORD. IT SEEMS TO CONTINUE PLAYING (ITS TR #2)  
.PRETEND TO PUT ON NEW RECOR. MUST SILENTLY TURN ON SOUND. PUT ON RECORD. IT PLAYS.

~~change~~

change John turn on rec player

EVERYBODY LISTENS. - 7

P. Thats nice music. Its polyphonic.

4

Count 5

M. You shouldnt read now. How can you listen and read too?

Count 6

P. I'm listening. (READ FROM SCRIPT)

COUNT TO 40 BEFORE: ~~40~~ *40 or more*

LISTEN

3

CUT. REARRANGE PEOPLE.

*change the location*  
RESUME EVERYTHING

- take green off

JEANNETT HAS HER BACK TO P. AND THE TAPE REC.

G. Jeannette, what do you see in Paul?

Count 8

J. LOOKS BLANKLY AT CAMERA:

DO I have eyes in the back of my head?

COUNT 5

Thats a nice tape recorder.

G. (MUST BE FACING TAPE REC.)  
what tape recorder?

J very close to camera, seated  
G far side of table STAGE L S  
P. at amp but he must move  
into the projector  
M. standing near tiny stool  
STAGE R

~~Green on proj~~  
Green on proj  
- extend

BRING IN PROJECTOR PLUS FILM, SCREEN IT ON P. ~~STAGE~~. J COVERS HER EYES. WHEN FILM  
STOPS : J. I dont know what to see.  
TAKES HANDS OFF EYES, CUE TO:

T.R. #3 START PHONE BELL TAPE. TO 2 START ?

COUNT 20 BEFORE:

CUT.

*green on projection table* - take off projector  
PUT SCRIPTS ON TABLE. THIS SECTION WILL BE DONE BY BETWEEN SPEECHES  
INSTRUCTION. START RECORD AT BEGINNING BEFORE GOING AHEAD WITH:

T.R.1 CONTINUE RECORDING.

T.R.2 PLAY MPEGRD TAPE

T.R.3 PLAY PHONE BELL (IT PLAYS THROUGH TALKING)

*SITTING DOWN*  
G. come on we start  
J at amp  
P seated where J was  
but back to camera  
M. at phone  
standing

M. PICKS UP PHONE

Hello.

tell J J

J. STANDING NEAR M. DOES OTHER HALF OF PHONE CONVERSATION:

COUNT 10

m. is this Mary?

4

M. Who's this?

4

J. Jeannette, dont you recognize me?

CUT

⑥

~~COUNTS 6 before say~~ green on yellow chair  
M. No. Have you get a sore throat?

⑤

J. No, I have a sore eye. The stage left one.

CURT 4

M. How did you get that?

J. From a movie. Its not my idea.

⑦ CUT

green back on wall  
left position

J. Well what did you call about?

G. MIME WITH: Canagarathar manta

M. Whats napping ? I'd like to come over.

⑧ CUT. CUT J

OFF SO SHE SPEAKS OFF SCREEN:

J. Where are you?

G. MIME WITH

M. What difference does it make?

⑨ CUT. J BACK ON

G. STANDING. SIDE VIEW. STAGE R NEAR  
TINY SOCIAL LIKE M IN  
PREVIOUS SCENE

M. Sounds like you're having a party over there.

G. MIME WITH

J. Its no picnic.

⑩ CUT

G. BACK SEATED AT STAGE L  
SAME PLACE AS BE FOR

M. I dont want to read. I want to talk.

J. Well is it OK if I come over?

Paul's here. GLORIA'S

M. Sure, and bring anyone else you want. Is that ~~voice~~ voice?

⑪ CUT.

J. Yes it is and there are others.... I dont see eye to eye with Paul.

M. He's gone to the store. But bring the others over... Bye now

M. HANGS UP PHONE AND T.R. 3 STOP PHONE BELL  
T.R. 2 STOP SPEECH T.R. 1 CONTINUE, record ~~continues~~

⑫

J. I dont want to eat and I dont want to ~~fuck~~ <sup>fuck</sup> but I would like to ~~hear~~ <sup>hear</sup>.

CUT. MAINTAIN POSITIONS

*P. pointed to where G was  
J at phone  
M when I was  
set to  
start a.*

*Rewind projector*

*Green off state  
Green on table not  
visible. near G*

6

T.R. 1 REWIND TO START TAPE A.  
T.R. 2 PUT ON HPSCHD TAPE  
T.R. 3 START RECORDING (TAPE B)

CHANGE TYPEWRITER, RESUME SCRIPTS.  
RUN STAGE ~~lights~~ *lights* ahead a little bit.  
M.G. AND P. TOGETHER; I'll read to you.

J.Thanks Paul but I'd rather listen to that record that was interrupted  
by that damn phone call from Mary.

P.TO MARY;Do you want to hear something else?

M.Oh its all the same to me.

P. GO TO REC. PLAYER.PUTS ON RECORD.SOUND IS OFF.

WHEN NEEDLE IS ON T.R. 1 PLAY BACK TAPE A.

G.SAY stop with "start" and start with "stop"

P.OK here we go

G.Start is sh similar to stop.

M.Where are we going?but first where were we?

M.And second ,where were we?

J.REPEAT EACH WORD AFTER IT'S SAID;

J.IN answer to your questions;One that remains to be seen .Then two, theres no telling where  
these remnants may go to

M.MIME.BUT P SPEAK ALONG WITH (STARTING AT 'by the way')

M.So I hear...by the way there are <sup>two</sup> twos, the numeral 2 the number 2, the preposition "to" an  
the adverb "too".

AT CAMERA <sup>26</sup>  
G.MIME AND HOLD GREEN IN FRONT OF EYES;

G.Now, that light is too bright *and loud*

J.I think there is something wrong with my two eyes  
*G speak with*

P.I think there's something wrong with my mind.

J.SPEAK ALONG WITH;

J.I notice it especially when I'm being read to.

G.SAY OVERTAPE VOICES:

G.I've got a sore toe. I'm going to the store too.

G.WALK OFF. →

M.LOOKING AT TYPEWRITER;MIME WITH:  
M.Its hard to make that out.

P.Its not loud enough. GO TO REC. PLAYER PREWEND TO TURN BUTTON.  
T.R. 2 START HPSCHD TAPE.

J.thats nice music.  
J.MIME:

*Its so  
life like.*

OFF-SCREEN ISA GREEN TEST

7

G.SPEAK WITH TAPE:

M.What music?

T.R. 2 STOP.

J.SAY tape recorder OVER "type writer"

J.Thats a nice typewriter

M.SAY music OVER "typewriter"

M.What typewriter?

*Handwritten scribble*

13

CUT.TAKE OFF TYPEWRITER:

T.R. 2 RESUME HFSCHD. T.R.1 RESUME PLATRACK.

HANG GREEN PLASTIC #1

G.WALK IN *from R*

*Stand directly in front of J say to P*

G.HI, I'm here .

*Pause count then go and sit on top of stage R*

J.Paul would you please play a record or say something.

SHOT TO GET "I'M HERE"

P.MIME:

P.I'LL say something first.

P.Something first...What would you like to hear?

J  
J.I cant hear.what did you say?

J.Read it to me again.

P.Ill play a record

check with JOHN

P.TAKE RECORD OFF.HAND HIDDEN PUT BUTTON ON.PUT REGERD BACK ON.IT PLAYS.

P.Maybe youll hear that.

P.Now I put on the record.

T.R.2 STOP

J.MIME:

*Handwritten scribble*

J.Thats so haunting

P.Is it too loud?...piano...Its by Jean Phillippe Rameau, 1683 to and played quietly on the harpsichord recently by..

1764

M.The harpsichord preceded the piano.

ATCAMERA 27

J.I didnt hear any piano.

G.Is that the phone?

J.MIME:

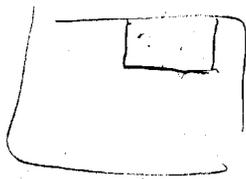
J>Your e nat listening!

G.My throats sore.

M.SHOUT WITH:

M.Its one of my favourites.

G.My tooth?



8

Bong! M M.SHOOUT: Bong!  
T.R.2 RESUME  
P.MIME:

P. ~~Hi~~ mary you do have a way with words.

M.Lets not talk.lets listen

M.Lets not talk,lets listen.  
T.R.@2 STOP.

J.What irridescence.

J.Did I say that?

*emphatic*  
G.This is regretting it. **THAT**

P.Where's Jeannette? LOOK AROUND.

M.Shes gone to the store.

P.MIME: *Spunk*

P.Lets fuck while Jeannette is at the store.

M.Ive got my period.

CUT.TAKE J. OFF.PUT TYPEWRITER BACK.TR. 2 RESUME.

*green back scene  
walk to  
place a bag on  
(right)*

J.I'm back.

G.SPEAK ALONG WITH:

G.Jeannette ,Paul is playing with Marys volume.

J.Marys is naturally a very quiet speaker.Its very delicate

CUT J BACK ON.

*Take off green*

*green at camera  
coming up*

P. Where did you hear that?

J.Speak up.

*put a green  
on*

M My voice is what we here,hear now.

M.Not what you heard then and there.

G.MIME:

G.Lets hear something else right? But right here.And right now.

*WBS P walk over  
and sit  
on green  
chair  
during this*

G. GO TO REC PLAYER AND TAKE OFF RECORD.  
T.R.1 STOP. T.R. 2 STOP T.R. 3 STOP  
SILENCE.SLOWLY PUT BACK RECORD AS IF ITS ANOTHER ONE.  
WHEN NEEDLE IS ON:  
T.R. 1 RESUME PLAYBACK  
T.R. 2 RESUME PLAYBACK  
T.R. 3 RESUME RECORDING

9

M. REPEAT EACH WORD AFTER ITS SAID ON TAPE:  
P. Thats nice music. Its polyphonic.

M. SPEAK ALONG WITH:  
M. You shouldnt read now. How can you listen and read too?

P. LOOKING AT SCRIPT:  
I'm not reading.

P. I'm listening.  
M. No. *emphasize* I'm listening.

*Long* EVERYBODY LISTEN

J. TURN BACK TO CAMERA AND LOOK AT PAUL

**BOND:**  
G. MIME:  
G. Jeannette, what d& you see in Paul?

J. Do I have eyes in the back of my head?  
P. Its hard to make that out.

J. ~~SAY~~ <sup>SAY</sup> "typewriter" <sup>OVER</sup> ~~the~~ "tape recprder."

J. Thats a nice tape recorder.

G. What tape recorder?

G. What typewriter?

*ON projector*

*OWN BESIDE IT, LEAVE AFTER ITS STARTED.*

*take off green chair*

*TURN BACK LOOK AT*

~~PUT ON TOPOF AMPLIFIER. PROJECT AT CAMERA. EVERYBODY~~  
BUT J. LOOK AT CAMERA (WHEN FILM OVER TAKE OUT PROJECTOR)

J. I dont know what to see. TURN ON LIGHT

*PHONE*  
*PHONE COMING*

J. Is that that damn phone again?

P. Dont answer it , it might be Jeannette.

*after punch*  
*turn on another light*  
put green over CAMERA  
DURING  
*we dont know what TO SEE*

PHONE BELL STARTS

*CORRECT*

M. J. PICK UP PHONE AND MIME:  
*then keep on Miming "cilla" JESSICA?*  
*until OR WHISTLE HIGH NOTE SING GREEN UNTIL*

*EDGE*  
M. Hello.  
G: **GREEN**  
J. Hi , is this Mary?

*KEEP IT DARK DURING*  
*turn on light*

M. MIME:

**(A)** J. Who's this?

~~CUT. EVERYBODY OFF BUT JEANNETTE. AT PHONE.~~

*take off projector*  
*green back on wall in L&R position*

J. Jeannette, dont you recognize me?

**BOND**

J. Could you speak a little louder please?

(10)

M. No. Have you got a sore throat?

J.MIME:

J.No. I have a sore eye. The stage left one.

CUT. EVERYBODY BACK ON. ~~G~~ STANDING CLOSE TO TABLE ~~SAGE R.~~ ~~LOOKING R. OFF SCENE~~

J.MIME:

M. How did you get that?

M. MIME

J. From a movie. Its not my idea.

BONG!

J.MIME:

J. Well what did you call about?

CUT. EXCHANGE J. AND M.M. NOW HAS PHONE. ~~TURN GROUND~~ ~~green on wall in right~~ ~~PS. 11 ON~~

M.MIME:

M. Whats happening. Id like to come over.

J. Where are you?

CUT. EXCHANGE M. AND J. (J. HAS PHONE) - EVERYBODY OFF

J.MIME:

M. What difference does it make?

M. Sounds like youre having a party over there.

CUT. BOTH SEATED AWAY FROM PHONE. - EVERYBODY BACK ON. ~~G~~ WHERE P WAS ~~P~~ ON LITTLE SCENE

J. Its no picnic.

M? I dont want to read. I want to talk.

CUT. M AT PHONE. J at AMP.

J. Well is it OK if I come over?

M.MIME:

M Sure and bring anyone else you want. Paul's here. Is that Glorias voice?

G-SPEAK ALONG WITH:

J. Yes it is and there are others voices.... I dont see eye to eye with Paul.

P.FAST. Ive gone to the store.

M.MIME:

M. Hes gone to the store. But bring the others voices over... Bye now.

M. HANG UP. J.MIME BUT SPEAK WORDS OVER:

J. I dont want to ~~eat~~ and I dont want to ~~fuck~~ but I would like to ~~hear~~. ~~HEAR~~ ~~EAT~~ - CUT -

T.R. 3 playback Tape B  
T.R. 2 put on HPSCHD tape  
T.R. 1 put on Tape A

MOVE TYPEWRITER  
J. IS OFF.

*P. seated on yellow chair  
M at end  
G on R of table  
STAIRS*

(11)

*green on wall  
in middle of opposite  
to left scene  
(left)*

TAPE B

P. MIME: *M+G*

I'll read to you.

G.SPEAK ALONG WITH

J.Thanks Paul but I'd rather listen to that record that was interrupted by that damn phone call from Mary.

P.MIME:

P.DO YOU WANT TO hear anything else?

M.SEEK WITH:

M.Oh its all the same to me.

G.Oh yes play that Rimbaud record again *in french?* or something like it. *conspired*

P.OK here we go

P.GO TO REC. PLAYER AND PUT ON RECORD.IT PLAYS.

J.ARRIVE WITH BAG.PUT ON TABLE.SIT DOWN. *take out Beer*

G.MAKE WIDE MOUTH EXPRESSION ON FIRST AND LAST

WORDS OF:

G. **STOP**  
[Start is so similar to stop] *[start]*

M.Where are we going?But first where are we?

WAnd second where were we?

M.And thirld when were we?

J.OPEN MOUTH VERY WIDE DURING ENTIRE:

J.In answer to your questions:One,that remains to be seen.Then two, theres no telling where the remains may go to.

J.Third...twice.

G.~~SPEAK~~~~REPEAT~~~~REPEAT~~SAY THE FOLLOWING BUT 3 WORD<sup>S</sup> BEHIND.

M.So I hear,by the way there are 4 twos, the numeral 2, the number two, the preposition to and the adverb too.

AT CAMERA **28**

CAMERA UNDER-EXPOSE

G. G.MIME TO: *Camera*

G.Wow that light is too bright.

*N. now*  
G.I must be getting used to it.

J.MIME:

J.I think theres something wrong with my 2 eyes

P.MIME:

P.I think theres something wrong with my mind.

G.I hear voices.

G.MIME;

J.I notice it especially when I'm being read to.  
CAMERA BACK TO CORRECT EXPOSURE  
J.Thats enough complaining.

G.Ive got a sore toe  
IM going to the store too. *add LIVE*  
M. Its hard to make that out. *Thats the truth*

P.Its not loud enough.

M.SHOUT: It's hard to make that out!

J.MIME

M.What music? OVER THIS;

J.Thats nice music.

J.Whats nice music.OVER;

M.What music?

J.MIME "thats a nice" BUT OPEN MOUTH WIDE OVER LAST WORD;

J.Thats a nice [Tape recorder  
Typewriter

*\* ? SAY "MUSIC"*

M.OPEN MOUTH ~~WHILE~~ SINGING;

M.What [typewriter  
music

*\* ? TAPE RECORDER*

*keep m*

G.TAP HEAD WITH;

BONG!

G. *Hi im here*

J.MIME;

J.Paul would you please play a record or say something?

~~MIME:~~

E.Ill say something first.

S~~s~~omething firts.What would you like to hear?

~~#####~~

P. Something first again?Thats impossible.

J.MIME;

J.I cant hear, what did you say?

Read it to me agian.

P.I'll play a record.

P.I'll play a record. TAKE RECORD OFF AND PUT IT BACK ON AGAIN.

P.Maybe you'll hearthis

P.Maybe youll hear that  
Now I put on the record

P.Ive already put on the record

G.Thats on the record.

J.MIME;

F.Thats so haunting!

~~LONG~~ → EVERYBODY CUP THEIR EAR AND LISTEN INTENTLY;

P.Is it too loud, piano, Its by Jean ~~Phé~~ Rameau, 1683 to <sup>(264)</sup>  
AT CAMERA <sup>(29)</sup>

and played quietly on the harpsichord recently by...  
M.The harpsichord preceeded the piano.

J.I didnt hear any piano.

~~Do not hear the piano~~ *BONG (or type A)*

J.Youre not listening!

~~EVERYBODY CUP THEIR EAR~~

M.Its one of my favourites.

~~SONG~~

M.SHOUT :And it still is!

*Change to or add that the train*

G.I'm getting used to it too.

G.HY tooth.

M.Bong!

*take off green change green at light*

~~CUT.CHANGE TYPEWRITER.REGROUP WITH MARY PAGING EVERYBODY.~~  
*at his position*

M.SHOUT: Bong!

J.SPEAK ALONG WITH:

*Fala begins SHOT TWICE*

P.Oh Mary you do have a way with wårds.

~~P.Maybe you do have a way with wårds.~~

*Paul?*

M.Lets not talk.Lets listen.  
Lets not talk.lets listen.

M.Lets not talk,lets listen.

*KISS*

*PUT GREEN ON LIGHTS*

J.What iridescence!

J.Did I say that?

*should to love be there*

*Do you see that?*

G.This is regretting it.

*try to be in reverse position of front feet's*

? Length

14

P. Wheres Jeannette?  
M. Shes gone to the store  
G. This all seems like a green.

#####

unk

~~#####~~ DURING

take green off lights here?  
so it falls original time

P. Lets fuck while Jeannette is at the store.

M. I've got my period.

We we  
P. ## can still talk cant ##?

Maybe do again  
to get "COMMAN"

84 Song

J. I'm back.

P. HAND TO FORWARD  
"I'M IN A COMMA"

TAKE GREEN OFF LIGHTS Put on Red record

J. I never left.

J. J. WALK OFF.

G. OPEN MOUTH WIDE DURING;

G. Jeannette Paul is playing with Marys volume.

~~#####~~  
J. # SHOUT OFF SCREEN;

J. Mary's is naturally a very quiet speaker. Its very delicate.

M. OPEN MOUTH WIDE FOR;

Bong!

M. MIME;

M. I hate the sound of my voice.

P. Where did you hear that?

J. Speak up.

M. My voice is what we here hear now  
Not what you heard then and there

M. My voice, what used to be my voice, is naturally not this voice.

G. Memories, memories! I hate nostalgia, I'm for life!

THEN MIME;

G. Lets hear something else right? But right here. And right now.

G. Now I change the record.

F.R. 2 START HPSCHD TAPE.

M. Hello, who's this?

P. SING SAME PHRASE;

24

P. Thats nice music. Its polyphonic.

J. SHOUT OFF SCREEN;  
make that out.  
J. Its hard to

15

~~11~~

CUT. J BACK ON. *take off red record*  
*looking at Paul*  
G. SPEAK ALONG WITH: *put on green record*

M. You shouldn't read now. How can you listen and read too?

G. SPEAK ALONG WITH:

P. I'm not reading  
P. I'm listening.

G. MINE:  
NO, I'M LISTENING

M. No I'm listening.

P. I'm not talking anymore.

EVERYBODY LISTEN. *count 20*

*BONG then*

G. Jeannette what do you see in Paul?

J. Ham and swiss with mayo on rye. *in on green record put on black*

~~16~~

~~CUT. EVERYBODY OFF. HANG GREEN PLASTIC. TAKE OFF GREEN RECORD. PUT ON BLACK. ALL LIGHTS ON.~~

J. Do I have eyes in the back of my head? *#2*

P. Its hard to make that out

TURN OUT ALL LIGHTS BUT ONE SHINING THROUGH GREEN.

J. That's a nice tape recorder typewriter

M. OFF SCREEN SAY "typewriter" OVER:

G. What tape recorder?

J. OFF SCREEN SAY "tape recorder" OVER:

G. What typewriter?

BONG!

START PROJECTING FILM THROUGH GREEN PL. TURN OUT OTHER LIGHT.

G. COUNT 10 AND SAY: It all seems like a screen. *LOUD.*

J. I dont know what to see.

~~17~~ Phone bell starts.

~~17~~

CUT. *everybody*  
EVERYBODY BACK ON. STANDING. M BESIDE PHONE. TYPEWRITER BACK. GREEN REC BACK.

J. IMMEDIATELY: Is that that damn phone again?  
J. Is that that damn phone again?

P. Dont answer it, it might be Gloria.  
P. Dont answer it, it might be Jeannette.

BOLEX

M. PICK UP PHONE. ~~PHONE~~

M. Hello *this is Ermy I just got home and theres a man in the floor and I think he's dead* *SEAT PAID G.*

~~18~~

~~CUT. TAKE OFF TYPEWRITER. TAKE OFF GREEN REC. EXCHANGE J AND M. (J HAS PHONE). WIND BACK~~  
*Both M and J have phones* TAPE ON ON-SET Tape rec.

16

3 takes last one Best

J..MIME:

J.HI, is this Mary?

M.Who's this?

J.MIME: *just audience when speak along with*

~~MAKE IT~~

J.Jeanette, dont you recognize me?

Could you speak a little louder please.

M.No have you got a sore throat?

PUT GREEN OVER LENS AT CAMERA

*just 1/2 the scene*

J.MIME:

J.No I have a sore eye, the stage left one.

~~REPEAT THE SCENE~~

M.How did you get that?

J.Fraom a movie, its not my idea.

P.TURN HEAD AND SAY THE FOLLOWING, J.MIME IT:

P.I feel like I'm some kind of puppet, that I have no will of my own, THAT I'm just being manipulated. So this is capitollism!

TAKE GREEN OFF AT CAMERA.

39

CUT M TO PHONE. *turn around look* MEMORIZE TEST (?) ITS ALL SPOKEN AGAINST OTHER SOUND.

M.Its very hard to make out your voice with that record on.

G.I could listen to that record over and over.

P.Well its nearly over

~~REPEAT THE SCENE~~

3

~~REPEAT ANY PHRASES THAT COMES UP ON PHONE.~~

30

P.I'm going to the store.

G.I'm going too.

M.ON PHONE: I think everybodys leaving, Jeanette.

J.Well is it OK if I come over?

M.Therw wont be anybody here.

only 16 RCNGS

G.Bong!

J.Well is it OK if I come over?

P.LOOK AT CAMERA

P. ~~before~~ we go I'd like to say Hello to Bob Breer

M.ON PHONE. Hello Bob?

J.TO CAMERA: Yes Hello Bob

G.SHOUT AT CAMERA: Stop! Stop!

CAMERA OVER-EXPOSE

M. SHOUT: Bye Now. ALL LOOK AT CAMERA.....CUT..END

*full everybody about 21  
Bong 21  
HOLD SOME GREEN AT VERY END. +*

30

Bong 30

GREEN PLASTIC

- 1 ON WALL
- 2 WITH SCRIPT IN SOMEONE'S HAND
- 3 ON YELLOW CHAIR
- 4 SITTING ON TABLE
- 5 HANGING FROM THREAD ("PROJECTING")
- 6 PROJECTOR COLOR FILM
- 7 ON LIGHTS *What iridescence*
- 8 IN FRONT OF LENS *last place call*

9  
10

(10) Just green!

9 G could hold it over her eyes for "Wow that light is too bright"

# Bus (Sequence 11)

The sequence pictured on the following page was, in production, called "Representation Speech," then later "Bus." Rather than "super[ing] a B roll of spray-paintings dots of many colors on black . . ." as indicated in the script, I made a gradually increasing number of tiny pinpricks in the film stock and in the image.

***M.S.***



*“Bus” sequence from Rameau’s Nephew . . .*  
*Photo: National Gallery of Canada*





*“Fart” sequence from Rameau’s Nephew . . .  
Left to right: Jeff Bronstein, Sheila Hayworth, Bill Auchterlonie, Jackie Burroughs, Gordon May*

## Fart, *aka* Tea Party (Sequence 12)

For this sequence, I asked the cast to learn their lines backwards. With the aid of a Nagra tape recorder, which, because it records the full width of the magnetic tape, can be played backwards, I wrote their lines and we rehearsed them. The actors spoke their lines on camera backwards and this was recorded in sync. The scene was shot mostly as a slow zoom, which at its widest field shows the room and occupants as in the accompanying still from the film.

In post-production/editing, the scene described above was shown, then immediately afterwards the entire scene shown backwards (zooming back), including the sound.

The result is not "correct" but very "incorrect," and very mysterious. It is plain, though, that there was a bad smell.

In the reproduced script, the typewritten lines are those spoken, and the hand-written works above them are their source (somewhat apparent when the sound is reversed). These hand-written works must be read right to left to make a proper sentence, e.g., the first line is: "Donald, can you say SDRAWKAB backwards?"

**M.S.**



Source.

"FART"

ME

ALEXIA, BILL, CARLA, DONALD.  
(SPRAY CAN HISS)

- A. G. Donald can you say SDRANKAB backwards
- D. Sure....."backwards".
- E. Very nice.....(SNIFF, SNIFF)...How about a backward "aroma"?
- D. Okay..."amora".....Can you say "druwoff" forward?
- C. Of course I can.....forward?
- A. (SNIFF, SNIFF) ..Bill, did you fart?
- B. I dont think so, Alexia.
- A. There's an awfully strange smell here.
- C. Yes, here is a smell thats strange and awful.
- B. (SNIFF, WRINKLE NOSE) I smell what you mean.
- C. Its hard to breathe in here.
- D. Without recourse to metaphors or simile could you describe it? *Is this the part of vision?*
- A. Its getting stronger *THE SCENT?*
- D. Shit, it smells like shit. 20
- A. A crude metaphor. 21
- C. For what? 22
- B. Dog, cat, moose, rabbit, chicken, human...what kind?
- A. All the bowels are on that list...(PAUSE)....U.O.I.E.A.
- D. (HOLD NOSE WHILE SPEAKING) It smells imported not local.
- A. Still trying to clear the air of my allegations? Well I've got some of that pine# scented spray stuff, that'll do a better job. (WALK TOWARD CAMERA AND OFF)
- D. How about some incense?
- A. (OFF SCREEN) No, I'll get that stuff and peeyou! ..see what we can do..
- D. This is one continuous fart. Now it's pungent
- C. I think I'm getting to like it. Its like that cheese..?
- D. Kraft.

B. History repeats itself in the (Form) of farce.

A. (WALKS BACK IN) Maybe this ~~form~~ will prove that. (PRESS CAN)

(PART SOUND)

PROOF

C1
18
E1
S0
S1
SS
SE

DRUWOFF FORWARD DRUWOFF METAPHOR THERAPY FOR FORM ~~FORM~~

W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

*advance print*

SHIELA HAYWORTH  
37 LINDEN ST  
920-7856

Jackie Burroughs - 967-5380  
198 Robert.

Tom Hendry  
961-7420

Sunday A.M. 10.30-11. Sunday aft.

Tom Anderson - came in Corp  
9 Roxborough.



*“Embassy” sequence from Rameau’s Nephew . . .*

*Left to right: Yoko Orimoto (Alexis), Annette Michelson (Gloria), Ping Chong (sound man), Bob Cowan (Peter), Steve Anker (lighting), Helene Cowan (Vivian), and Nam June Paik (Tom). Photo: Owen Carey.*

# Embassy (Sequence 15)

The working title for this sequence was "Performed Sound," by which I meant that all sound would be produced on the set, on camera "realistically," that the sound would be recorded in sync and that there would be no post-shooting additions or alterations.

The sound and lighting men are visible and important parts of the image, approaching and illuminating (with slight overexposure) the face of each person as he or she spoke. The entire cast is shown in the photo here. Babette Mangolte operated the camera, and the setting is on the second floor of the Center for Inter-American Relations on Park Avenue in New York, previously the U.S.S.R. embassy.

***M.S.***

EMBASSY (Performed) ①

TOM, PETER, VIVIAN, ALEXIA, GLORIA, SOUND MAN, LIGHT MAN.

ACTORS COUNT THREE TO THEMSELVES BEFORE MAKING SOUNDS

CAMERA POSITION ONE. (LOWEST) MEDIUM 3/4 SHOT.

EVERYBODY GROUPED AROUND A. HIDING HER, BACKS TO CAMERA. LIGHT SPOTS SOMEBODYS BACK. A. SPEAKS JAPANESE A BIT. MIKEMAN AT SIDE OF GROUP.

POSITION # 1. CAMERA LOWEST. *Other people stay same, just watch.* SOUND-MAN CHANGE ON EACH SHOT. MIKE NEAR MOUTH, CAMERA LIGHT in front of T. T. BREATHE IN MOUTH LOUDLY. facing camera close-up from low squat. pan down face during breath

T. BREATHE OUT LONG SHOT same, pan up face facing camera

T. BREATHE IN 5 TIMES, EACH TIME A DIFFERENT SHOT, DIFFERENT LIGHT, ##### SOUND MAN CHANGE RADICALLY EACH SHOT facing camera

- 1. close move, still squat from being in front to being at extreme side in 5 positions. pan down face in each.
- 2. medium 1
- 3. " " 2
- 4. " " 3
- 5. long

T. BREATHE OUT 5 TIMES. CUT back to close-up from extreme R side on each shot. making them move in 5 positions different framings than to front. panning previous division.

REGROUP PEOPLE *they stay through* #####

G. SNIPPS OUT THROUGH NOSE 5 TIMES facing camera MIKE STAYS IN SAME POSITION IN ALL SHOTS.

- 5 framings from closest to longest change placement radically each shot bbt pan from above each shot. 1. Standing R. 2. squat L. 3. Stand 3/4 R. 4. Stand R. 5. Stand front

(2)

NEXT SERIES SHOULD BE RUN CLOSE TOGETHER. EDIT. CUT INTO AND OFF SUSTAINED  
SOUNDS. REGROUP PEOPLE. They remain in position but sound and light men change

P. SNORT OR SNORE.	close up	Both light and sound squat front during all these. pan L. to R.
V. HISS. start before * camera shoots and continue till C. cuts	CLOSE-up	pan R. to L.
? P. A. BURP	close-up	pan L. to R.
T. CLUCK (tongue off top lip)	long shot	pan L. to R.
G. LIPPART.*	medium 1	bottom to top
P. ACHOO (sneeze)	medium 2	bottom to top
V. A. WHISTLE.*	CLOSE UP	bottom to top
T. YAWN	medium 1	bottom to top
Ⓐ V. CLEAR THROAT*	long shot	Right to Left
P. TONGUE TAP *	close up	R. TO L.
G. HACK	long shot	top to bottom
✓ T. BARK	close up	top to bottom
T. A. HICCUP	long shot	R to L
A. G. LIGHTS MATCH AND BLOWS IT OUT. with eyes closed	close-up	bottom to top continuous so that face is unlit during blowing out
24 BLACK SILENT PAGES.		

*rips out match eyes open  
light match  
close eyes  
blow match loud, 2 puffs*

3

NEW GROUPING OF PEOPLE. MIKE AT T.  
G. HAS FLASHBULB CAMERA. LONG SHOT.

T.TAPS CHEEK TWICE, making that "cluck" sound light swing slightly with hand from medium distance 3/4 R.  
aiming at T.

G.RAISES CAMERA TO EYEE, ALL LIGHTS GO OUT

T.TAPS CHEEK AND G. ATTEMPTs TO PHOTOGRAPH HIM  
WHEN HE'S DOING IT DO IT SEVERAL TIMES

OTHER LIGHTS GO BACK ON ATTEMPTING TO MATCH FURTHER "CLUCKs"  
FIRST SCENE LIGHT. THEN SPOT.G .ALSO PALASHES.

**CAMERA TO POSITION # 2** Long shot  
NEW GROUPING PEOPLE facing camera  
A.HOLDS MIKE .P STANDS T. HOLDS HIS SHOULDERS  
G. AND V. SEATED WATCHING.

FAST  
LIGHT MAN FAR AWAY SWINGS LIGHT FROM SIDE ONTO P.  
P. SINGS "LA, LA anything" and T. SHAKES HIS SHOULDERS  
VARYING THE SOUND.

**CUT** G. TO BESIDE P. WITH HER HAND OVER HIS MOUTH. SHE WAVES IT ON AND OFF TO  
ALSO VARY THE SOUND.MOVE LIGHT TO FRONT FOREG. BUT STILL FAR AWAY

**CUT** V. TO SQUEEZING P. AROUND THE MIDDLE. ALSO VARYING SOUND. THEY ALL PLAY  
P. FOR AWHILE.

~~move round table in to middle~~ *from left*  
REGROUP EVERY ONE SEATED. SLIGHTLY CLOSER MID-SHOT.V. WALKS IN CARRYING CASSETTE  
TAPE REE,SHES SLIGHTLY LIT.SITS DOWN IN FRONT OF T.PUTS DOWN CASSETTE PLAYS  
looks at T. while its playing  
IT.LIGHT MAN ALSO SEATED NEARBY TURNS ON SPOT ON CASS, WHEN SHE TURNS IT ON  
SPOT TURNS OFF  
PLAY 3 REPEATS OF "HARD RAIN GAOWNA FALL" AND V.TURNS OFF CASS. **CUT**

*1 minute*

④

CAMERA A BIT CLOSER.

T. AND V. REMAIN SAME PLACES. OTHERS SHIFT. MIKE IN A DIFFERENT PLACE BETWEEN T. AND V. LIGHT MAN BESIDE THEM. WAVE LIGHT IN FROM POINTING OFFSCREEN R. TO ONTO V.

V. Now have you got it? (~~can't hear it~~ hard, ~~too~~ hard)

~~light~~ LIGHT SWINGS BACK SAME WAY IT CAME IN AROUND INTO CAMERA AND ENDS ON T. PRETTY FAST.

T. ATTEMPTED TO SING. ITS WRONG LIKE A BIRD; "IZAR"?

CUT, REGROUP OTHERS. SWING LIGHT IN FROM L. ONTO V.

V. TRIES AGIN SINGING IT TO T. SWING LIGHT FROM V. AROUND AGAIN TO ONTO T. *this time* *up of again*

T. TRIES AGIN.

*A walk here*

CUT, REGROUP OTHERS . SWING LIGHT IN FROM R. ONTO V.

V. TRIES AGAIN SINGING IT TO T. SWING LIGHT UP AND AROUND AT CAMERA ENDING ON T. T. TRIES AGAIN . CUT. *Turn up a degree*

REGROUP. P. IN MIDDLE SEATED *Side of* FACING CAMERA. LIGHT HOLDS A DIFFERENT COLOR *different lighting*



PLASTIC IN FRONT OF LIGHT FOR EACH SCENE. ALSO DIFFERENT PLACEMENT, DIFFERENT POSITION, LIGHT THE "FAKE" NOT THE REAL

1. P. HOLDS COINS IN ONE HAND. MIKE IS NEAR THIS HAND. RATTLES THEM AND SHAKES HIS HEAD AT SAME TIME. CUT

2. P. TAPS OR RAPS ON HIS HEAD WITH ONE HAND AND ~~ON~~ ON TABLE WITH OTHER. CUT

3. P. SCRATCHES HEAD WITH ONE HAND AND SCRATCHES UNDER TABLE WITH OTHER.

*tape is total 2 minutes 40 seconds*

(5)

LIGHT FOLLOWS CASS EVERYWHERE. LIKE MIKEMAN, WALKING AROUND A BIT.  
LIGHT MAN IN FOREGR. LONG SHOT. V. OFF SCREEN TURNS ON CASS. AND WALKS *from left edge and slowly*

MIKEMAN WALKS BEHIND AND ALONGSIDE HER.  
IN WITH IT PLAYING (LOUIS ARMSTRONG STUFF) PUTS IT ON TABLE .P PICKS

*stands up*

IT UP PASSES IT BEHIND HIS BACK TO G. WHO PASSES IT UNDER TABLE OR CHAIR

TO A. WHO PASSES IT TO T. WHO PUTS IT UNDER HIS COAT. MIKE MAN SORT OF

FOLLOWS THESE MOVES. WHEN LARGE ORCHESTRA STARTS HE PUTS IT BACK ON THE

TABLE SLIGHTLY INDICATING THAT ITS HEAVY.

V LAUGHS: That's a huge orchestra! CUT AND HAVE HER TURN OFF CASS. AT SAME

*1.45. TIME*

*another  
standby*

CLOSER SHOT HEAD AND SHOULDERS V. START CASS THEN CAMERA [EDIT OUT PAUSE]

*CAMERA*

*CASS*

SPOT ON CASS. V. HAS RULER OVER SOMETHING AND UNDER CASS. SHE LEVER LIFTS

CASS. SLOWLY WHILE SAYING : The invention of the lever was a great

moment in the human story . MIKE AND CAMERA DISCRETELY PAN UP AND DOWN

*AND LIGHT*

*ALSO*

SLOWLY TILL CASS TAPE SAYS "alright alright that's enough"... "coward" AT

WHICH CAMERA CUT. THEN CASS.

ROLL TAPE AHEAD TO "CHICKENS". LONG SHOT. V. IN SAME PLACE , OTHERS REGROUP,

*all seated*

COMFORTABLE, SEATED. LIGHTMAN IN FOREGROUND. MIKE NEELING IN FRONT OF TABLE

*chicken  
tape  
total =  
4 minutes 39 seconds*

START CAMERA, V. STARTS CASS. THEY LISTEN TO TAPE , WHEN I YELL OK V. PICKS

[50 SECONDS]

UP CASS. STANDS UP SWINGS IT AND THROWS IT OFFSCREEN (TO L. 2) WHERE IT IS CAUGHT

BY SOMEONE. SOUND M. JUMPS RUNNING OFF BEHIND CASS. LIGHT M. STAYS IN SAME

PLACE BUT ALSO TRYB TO FOLLOW THE FLYING CASS, ENDS WITH LIGHT POINTING

OFFSCREEN. AS SOON AS CASS. IS CAUGHT CAMERA SWISH PANS OPPOSITE TO THROW, CUTS AND CASS SHOULD ALSO BE STOPPED.

*to freeze*

6

CAMERA SAME SHOT BUT A LIGHT COLOR PLASTIC IS HELD IN FRONT OF LENS.

R LIGHT POINTING OFF AT CASS.  
V. SEATED SAME PLACE. OTHERS REGROUP. LIGHTM. SAME PLACE .MIKEMAN OFFSCREEN

AT CASS. START CAMERA, START CASS. THEY JUST SIT THERE AND LISTEN. AFTER

3 minutes, 10 sec.

~~2:22:23-2:23:03~~ I YELL OK AND V. GETS UP AND GOES OFF TO CASS. WAIT ###

THERE UNTIL TAPE ENDS WHEN CAMERA CUTS.

*near live place* LONG SHOT  
REGROUPING SOMEWHERE ELSE IN ROOM. G AND T. STANDING .LIGHT MAN FAR AWAY.

MIKEMAN BESIDE G., HE STEPS OVER TO T WHEN HE ANSWERS.  
SHOT STARTS WITH LIGHT WANDERING OVER SET BUT NOW PEOPLE 30 SECS. TILL

IT ENDS ON G. WHO SPEAKS TO T.

UP AND DOWN  
G. Why does a bee hum? LIGHT SWINGS ONTO T.

T. ##### Why does a bee hum? I dont know. Why? SWING LIGHT IN ARC  
BACK ONTO G.

G. Because he doesnt know the words. SWING LIGHT. AROUND FAST THEN CUT

REGROUP BESIDE PIANO. P TAPS ON PIANO EDGE OTHERS LISTEN. LIGHT MAN FAR ###

WALKS AROUND A LITTLE BUT MAINTAINS SPOT ON P.'S HAND. P. TAPS CHOPIN WALTZ

LIGHT GOES ON G.  
WHEN HE STOPS: G. Thats a waltz by Frederick Chopin.

P. Right! How about this. TAPS O CANADA.

WHEN HE STOPS, LOOKS AT THEM  
V. IT's very serious

T. I give up.

P. That was O canada.

G. Oh yes of course! I'll sing it for you. FACES CAMERA. P STANDS BESIDE HER

ACTUALLY SINGS IT INTO HER EAR WHILE SHE MIMES. LIGHTM. WALKS A BIT ,CONTIN  
Color.

7

AT HER  
TO AIM LIGHT BUT WHEN HE STARTS TO SING HE HOLDS A COLOR IN FRONT OF LIGHT

STILL AIMING IT AT HER.WHEN SHE STOPS LIGHTM. WALKS OFF WITH LIGHT AND  
*everybody clap*  
CAMERA CUTS.

AT SIDE  
CLOSE-UP ON G. FACING CAMERA .LIGHT SQUAT AND RISE DURING SOUND

G. rrrrrrrrr (ROLLS R.) CUT

CLOSEUP ON V.ALSO FACING CAMERA .LIGHT OTHER SIDE.LOWER DURING SOUND.

V. Sh sh. CUT

~~REARRANGE CHAIRS - EMIT ROOM BY STONES . . . . .~~  
CAMERA TO POSITION 3 . G. SPEAKS TO T. AND VICEVERSA ,OTHERS LISTEN.MIKE

EXACTLY BETWEEN THEM. COULD BE BEHIND.LIGHTM. IN CORNER SO THAT LIGHT HITS  
BOTH G. AND T.MEDIUM SHOT , A BIT CLOSER THAN LONG SHOT

T. SIMULTANEOUSLY IN KOREAN  
G.Did you know that literary circles in 16th century France made an attempt  
to replace the R sound in the French language with ZED sounds which they  
thought would sound better. A phrase like "Mon mari est allé a Paris  
acheter une chaire" was turned into "Mon mazi est allé a Pazi acheter  
une chaise."."Mazi" and "Pazi" were rejected by most people who stuck with  
the old way.

T.TO CAMERA. +The old ways are the best

G. SIMULTANEOUSLY IN FRENCH. CUT.

EXCHANGE G. AND T. s POSITIONS. MIKE NOW IN FRONT BACK TO CAMERA. LIGHTM. IN  
FACING CAMERA  
OPPOSITE CORNER.EVERYBODY ELSE CLUSTERED SO THAT IF LIGHTM. MOVES LIGHT AND/OR  
HIMSELF HE CAN LIGHT EVERYBODY'S FACE .CARD WITH SPEECH IS AT CAMERA.G. READS:  
*EXCEPT A.  
SHE'S THERE  
THOUGH*

②

G. Except for "chaise" which for some reason was adopted although the original<sup>V</sup> "chaire" remained but came to mean a learned <sup>POSITION</sup> job like our professorial<sup>T</sup> "chair". English had already borrowed the original<sup>G</sup> "chair" long before the attempted innovation I just referred to.

MIKE WHEN G. IS FINISHED P. STARTS TO READ THE SAME THING. WHEN P SAYS "#####"

MIKE "original" V. STARST TO READ FROM THE BEHINNING.WHEN P SAYS "professorial"

MIKE T. STARST TO READ FROM THE BEHINNING.WHEN P. SAYS THE NEXT "original"

MIKE G. STARST TO READ IT AGAIN FROM THE BEGINNING.CUT

REGROUP.EACH PHRASE A SEPERATEDSHOT AND FRAMING.LIGHT AND MIKE CHANGE EACH

(but actors dont except for A.)  
SHOT.A. SEATED NEARBY"SPINS" BY MOVING CHAIR 1/4 TURN EACH SHOT.

V. BLACK STYLE: he!he!he!he. (she-it!) MOVE LIGHT FROM DIFFERNT POSITION EACH SHOT

to V  
G(He, she, and it) are the same word in Hungarian

to G  
P. C,H,A,I,R means frenbh flesh

to T  
V (Sometimes) its a hard job to keep a conversation going

to P  
T. "Izar"! (ONE OF HIS"ITS A HARD" IMITATIONS . ATTEMPTS

to V  
P (Why bother) . (Whats the use?) THESETHINGSLANGUISH

to G  
V. I feel like talking but I have nothing to say.

to V  
G. I wish I could help

to G  
T. Vivian needs a subject.

CUT

G. FACES CAMERA BUT SPEAKS TO V.  
WHO IS AT SIDE FRONT  
FRONT G.

9

SERIES OF SEPERATE SHOTS, DIFFERENT FRAMINGS WHICH MUST ALWAYS SHOW NUMBERS.

WHICH ARE PUT UP BEFORE MOST SHOTS AND SHOULD BE SOFTLY LIT. MIKE BUT ESP.

LIGHTMAN CHANGE RADICALLY FOR EACH SHOT. (LIGHT COULD BE BEHIND ON SOME ETC.)

G. TO V. There's no end of interesting subjects. Let me CUT <sup>36</sup> inform CUT you  
of a few and you choose one. Just say the word, CUT

<sup>37</sup> pinafore	<sup>38</sup> foreskin	<sup>39</sup> reformation	efflorescence
<sup>40(41)</sup> [42] 43(44) 45 [46] 47(48) 49 phosphoresence	<sup>50</sup> comfort	<sup>51</sup> camphor	<del>52</del> campfire
<del>53</del> defirments	<del>54</del> the firmament	<del>55</del> fur	<del>56</del> gophers
<del>57</del> coffers	<sup>52</sup> cuneiform	<sup>53</sup> fornication	<sup>54(55)</sup> referestation
<sup>56</sup> formosa	<sup>57</sup> forty	<sup>58</sup> forlorn	<sup>59</sup> foreigners
<sup>60</sup> plus-fours	<sup>61</sup> formaldehyde	vermin	verbicide
<sup>62</sup> mumford	<sup>63</sup> semaphore	suffering	sulphur
philosopher	<sup>64(65)</sup> FORGERY margarine	<sup>66</sup> fortititude	vanish
varnish	furnish	fervent	porridge
<sup>67</sup> forage	storage	CUT.	

1 MINUTE LONG SHOT SILENT OF ROOM. SAME AS ABOVE FRAMING.  
CUT

CLOSE-UP OF V. SHE SINGS. TAKE A DEEP BREATH. HOLDS A NOTE FOR A LONG AS SHE  
CAN WITHOUT CHANGING IT. WHEN SHE CANT SING IT ANY LONGER SHE LETS IT STOP  
BUT MAINTAINS THE SME FACIAL POSITION ETC (AS IF SHE WERE SINGING STILL)  
FOR ABOUT A MINUTE.

CUT.



EVERYBODY SEATED.  
CAMERA TO POSITION # 4. LIGHTMAN LYING ON FLOOR. BUT CHANGE POSITION EACH  
SHOT. ALSO MIKEMAN. SPERATE FRAMINGS ### PER SHOT.

T. TO V. ONCE you get started there's no stopping you

G. TO ALL. I'm worried that the people next door may have a wine glass  
up against the wall and be listening to us.

P. Does that work?

T. I dont understand. - CUT

~~long shot~~ WINE GLASS in A SEATED OTHERS SCANDING AT FIREPLACE  
G. I'll show you what I mean. HOLD UP GLASS. Here (TO A.) Alexia

you try it. (A. COMES TO GET GLASS) Just put the big part ###

of the wine glass up against the wall and your ear to the other and listen  
WANDERS THEN

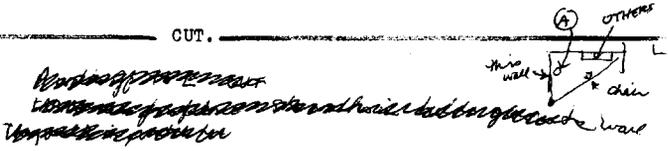
LIGHTM. FROM FAR AWAY SPOTS HER HEAD.  
A. TAKES WINE GLASS TO TO WALL AND LISTENS A LONG TIME. SILENCE. THE OTHERS  
MIKE MAN FOLLOWS HER TO WALL AND HOLDS MIKE NOT TOO CLOSE BUT BY GLASS  
WATCH. PUT COLORS OVER LENS BY CUTTING AND STARTING AGAIN. TELL HER ON  
+EAR

SLOWLY  
ONE OF THESE CUTS: SHE QUIETLY LEAVES WALL WITH GLASS SITS DOWN. THEY  
WATCH HER. MIKE WALKS BACK WITH HER THEN TO G. LIGHT WANDERS TO G.

G. Did you hear anything?

HOLD WHILE THEY LOOK AT HER.

CUT.





*Anne-Marie Sparks as Sara in the “Hotel” sequence. See page 16 of the script, Scene 3, for a description of what is taking place.*

## Hotel (Sequence 20)

This scene, at 55 minutes, is the longest in the film and the last, though it is followed by three short scenes (addenda or endnotes).

The concept, based on the interchangeability of parts – sound and image – of the film medium, involved a great deal of final assembly. These editing intentions, and indeed some scenes, are not indicated in the shooting script, extensive as it is.

Some examples of this planned-for redistribution of parts are: on page 16, Scene 1, of the script, the recorded voice of Sara naming the colours as they are placed in front of her is, in final assembly, put “over” the intercourse shot (which was shot separately and is not in this script); the piano music sound from the image of hands at a keyboard playing a Duke Ellington tune, “Day Dream” (which surfaces also as its chords on the guitar, the melody only on violin, *and* the original 1937 recording at other points in the film), is put “over” the image of Sara naming the colours. The sounds from the intercourse scene were put “over” the hands playing the piano. Another example: the sound from a conversation about the afterlife (on page 7, Scene 8) is put “over” the scene where Ray breaks the table (Scene 20), also pictured here, but the sound of breaking the table is put “over” and with the conversation of Sara and Leon in bed (bottom of page 17, and of Scene 28).

Many image superimpositions, also not indicated in this script, were shot separately in order to make the superimposition in the printing stage.

A green table is an important protagonist in the sequence, appearing and disappearing like a ghost. In Scene 20, the table is destroyed by Ray with a hammer but reappears later, in Scene 28. Needless to say, the destruction of the table was filmed last.

**M.S.**

10 or 12 minutes

①

*Aphasia*  
SARA, LEON, EVA, JACK, ANNE, RAY BEDROOM SCENE

*WW on wall*  
A HOTEL BED ROOM. MARK POSITIONS OF EVERYTHING IN ROOM.

FIRST SECTION A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SHOT PER WORD.

① <b>LEON</b> out of foc.	<b>YOU</b> pl. sheet held on S.	<b>AHAVE</b> change camera position	<b>MOORE</b> Nude back shot of E.	<b>OF</b> under-exp.	<b>A</b> c.u. of L.	<b>FRONT</b> ceiling
<b>AND</b> Light change	<b>A</b> plastic sheet at camera	<b>BACK</b> floor	<b>AND</b> empty set	<b>AND</b> empty set	<b>MOORE</b> just bed	<b>OF</b> just color
<b>A</b> c.u. of bed cover	<b>PAST</b> over-exp light change	<b>AND</b> zoom during word	<b>A</b> Iris mask	<b>ENTIRE</b> out window		
<b>THAN</b> pl. sheet in scene	<b>I</b> scene sideways	<b>HAVE.</b> "Snow scene" from "Voice scene."				<i>fade out then in then out fade in then out then in</i>

② <b>WE'RE</b> L. with pants off.	<b>ALL</b> photo of another set scene in film	<b>THE</b> pan (slow)	<b>SAME</b> zoom back	<b>HERE</b> Black
<i>fade in fade out</i>	<b>I</b> spotlight on J.	<i>fade out fade in</i>	<b>YOU</b> shoot at 64 fps	<i>fade in fade out</i>
③ <b>CAN</b> People standing		<b>TELL</b> over-exp.		<b>A</b> under exp

STORY?

people lying down

④ <b>IS</b> light cage	<i>fade out</i> <b>IT</b> change objects	<b>A</b> c.u. of L.	<b>LOVE</b> color scene	<b>STORY?</b> people lying down
<i>fade in fade out</i>	<b>ANANIS</b> object in room	<i>in out</i> <b>ITS</b> swing light	<i>out in</i> <b>ABOUT</b> fade out	

*in out*  
**MARRIAGE**  
masking

FROM HERE A CHANGE PER SYLLABLE:

<b>HAS</b> ..... <b>RU</b> ..... <b>DIN</b>	<b>AND</b>	<b>HIS</b>	<b>WIFE</b>
<b>FUST</b> set	people in	out	in
<b>WO</b> ..... <b>KE</b> .....	<b>ONE</b> furniture gone people in	<b>NIGH</b> ..... <b>T</b> shot out window	<b>TO</b> people in
out	in	just set	
<b>HEAR</b> object in room	<b>TWO</b> people in set	<b>MEN</b> just color	<b>FINH</b> ...light... <b>TING</b> swing light...fade out color





ROLL

PAGE IN J. You I tell

get more natural in each regrouping. panning all nearby widest

repeated use both

PAGE IN J. you a story?

PAGE OUT A. Is it

PAGE IN a love

use both PAGE OUT story? repeated

ACT WIDEST SPOT "Love"

PAGE IN J. It's

OUT arable

IN its

OUT SUBTLE

IN marriage

repeated use both

repeated use both.

3'30"

SOME 4. COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SHOT PER SYLLABLE. OCCASIONALLY SUBSTITUTION J.S. PAGE. FASTER THAN LAST SCENE. Jewish accent

J.	ONE	TWO	AND	"ROSE"	HIS
	Close-up J. a month	phone	swinging body slightly close		empty wide corner of room
WIDE VIEW	NO	KE	ONE	HIGH	"ROSE" T
Close-up bed corner	windows Medium	table surface	2 feet	Swath floor	green
TO	HEAR	TWO	MEN	FINN	TING
one foot	J in mirror	one doorway, near foot	T.V. set on E watching	suitcase fiddle	T full of...
MINE	LOW	THREE	WIND	ON	(SILENT)
a letter in room	ceiling light	table up and down (around)	groggily (back)	a color	Empty room
SEE	SENT	HIN	OUT	(TO)	FINN
portrait of R	chair	clothing	painting	Jade way	Capet
WHAT	THE	TRU	BULL	WAS	(SILENT)
T.V. image, no figure	light fixture	yellow	image from picture book	E asleep on bed	A.
HE	WRAPPED	HIS	BLANK	BT	ON
on bed, not sideways	R comes in the door	furniture part	while she's face on floor	blanket	Smooth, pattern O
VER	HIS	SICUL	HERS	AND	WIN
room detail	T.V. set	a color in room	detail of drape	sideways long S.	windows
T	DOWN	SESS	TAIRS	(SILENT)	AS
detail	ceiling corner	pan up S.	J	my	phone
ROSE	IS	IE	APP	ROE	CHILD

(4)

HOTEL

SOON ✓ room about floor the way	AS ✓ object	HE ✓ image in norm	APP ✓ camera about floor	ROE ✓ hand	ORID ✓ "Wirklich nicht" REPEATED
THE ✓	MEN ✓ clothing	ONE ✓ near table	OF ✓ red	THEM ✓ Eyes open from floor	SNA ✓ somebody (L) curly hair
ORID ✓ 5 minutes opening (about midway)	HIS ✓ table leg	ONE ✓ several things	AND ✓ (He'll) be back	OWN ✓	LEE ✓ Room key
BLANK ✓ flat from room	ET ✓ word from room	THEM ✓ E turning	THEY ✓ everything	DO ✓ I want room	TH ✓ dressing REPEATED
RAM ✓ Chair REPEATED	OFF ✓ room chair	(SILENT) ✓ Sitting eyes	WHAT ✓ woman pigeon chair	WAS ✓ left chair	THE ✓ top of chair
PIKE ✓ cigarette REPEATED	TING ✓ I close eyes REPEATED	AB ✓ hand chair leg	OUT ✓ red light	DEART ✓ dot chair 2nd REPEATED	HIS ✓ hand chair
VI ✓ above thing whole	FE ✓ window	ASS ✓ S. row	KED ✓ A walking away	AS ✓ yellow leg chair floor	HE ✓
EN ✓ stopping chair	TURD ✓ A watching TV (in background)	THE ✓ pen above chair	BED ✓ chair	ROOM ✓ door	(SILENT) ✓ get up chair
ABOVE ✓	OUT ✓ door	MY ✓	BLANK ✓ TV and Gore chair	ET ✓	APP
AIR ✓ wall chair	ENT ✓	LEE ✓ chair	AS ✓	SOON ✓ table	AS ✓ chair
THEY ✓	GOT ✓	THAT ✓ get table	THEY ✓ moving	WEN ✓ Norse	T ✓
A ✓	WAY ✓	(SILENT) ✓			

3/30

SCENE #5. CAMERA HAND HELD "DOLLY" AROUND WITH EACH SPEECH #3 MOVES TO MAKE A CIRCLE.

R. This is cubist? *big repeat ✓ and*

30 J. Gubian has yet to be invented sir!

A. We're really in a movie!

*no a scene?*

*falling out*

Shot from sofa corner

L. standing in den to living room  
J seated in bed  
more green table in foreground

5

HOTEL

SCENE 6 ALL SAME  
CAMERA TRIPOD. WIDE SHOT DIFFERENT FROM SET-UP THAT ENDED FIRST SCENE.

STARTING WITH R.'s SYLLABLE SPEECH SOME SHOTS SHOULD BE OVER OR UNDER  
~~EXPOSED TO PRODUCE THE COLOR.~~

LIGHT IN CORNER OF FRAME, HAND HOLDING PLASTIC COLORS IN FRONT OF IT, COLORING THE SCENE.

ONE COLOR  
J. This film looks like #

SECOND COLOR  
it was hewn with an axe.



FIRST COLOR  
A. How can you say that

SECOND COLOR  
if you're in it?

FIRST COLOR  
Did you have something cut off?

SECOND COLOR  
L. Anyway "edited with an axe"  
*repeat 2nd ✓*

FIRST COLOR  
is the way

SECOND COLOR  
We're in the movies

FIRST COLOR  
would put it.

FROM NOW ON ALL NEW COLORS PER SHOT

20 E. What do you say Ray?

J. HAS VIOLIN AND PLAYS A DIFFERENT NOTE BEHIND EACH SPOKEN WORD. HE SHOULD START BEFORE  
CAMERA AND END AFTER CAMERA HAS STOPPED.

OCCASIONALLY OVER OR UNDER EXPOSE. AND VARYING DEGREES OF OUT OF FOCUS.

R. SPEAKS METHODICALLY. TO CAMERA

A	MIN	UTE	IN	THE	WORLDS
LIFE	PASS	ESI	TO	PAIN <i>cut off beam slightly</i>	T
IT	IN	ITS	RE	AL	IT RE
AND <i>cut off beam</i>	TO	FOR	GET	EV	ER RE
THING <i>cut off beam</i>	FOR	THA	T.	TO <i>(TAKE E. OFF HERE)</i>	BE COME SOME

*BECK 2*  
*cut off beam*  
*cut off beam*

6

NOTE:

THA	T	MIN <i>out of frame</i>	VE,	RE ✓	THE
SEN	SI	TI	VE	PLAY	GI
VE	THE <i>not shown</i>	IN	AGE	OF	T
WE ✓ <i>full on</i>	SEE	FOR	SET	ING	EV ✓
KE	THING <i>right over reflected</i>	TTA	T	HAS	NO APP ✓
EARED <i>not from</i>	BE	FOR ✓ <i>(candle has been lit)</i>	OUR ✓	TI	NUH ✓

ACTORS MAINTAIN OR NOTE POSITIONS IN THIS SCENE, THEY SHOULD BE IN ROUGHLY THE SAME PLACES FOR NEXT.

*Reported*  
SCENE 7.

OFF BUT HERE  
LIGHT MAN AND LIGHT MAN. CAMERA SAME POSITION BUT SLIGHTLY CLOSER SHOT.  
AND AUGMENT LIGHT IS ITS "NORMAL"  
[IF POSSIBLE] CUTTING OFF WHERE LIGHT AND LIGHT MANS HAND+ colors WERE .

E. PUTS CANDLE ON TABLE. EVERYBODY WATCHES BLANKLY. SHE WALKS OFF AND COMES BACK WITH FLASHLIGHT. STANDING SO THE LIGHT WILL BE SEEN BY THE CAMERA SHE TURNS THE FLASH. ON THE CANDLE FLAME SAYING:

E. Do you see it? THEY ALL NOD LOOKIN AT THE CANDLE, A BIT FUZZLED, SUSPICIOUS. SHE SAYS E. Oh new watch. TURNS OFF FLASHLIGHT. THEY ALL LOOK DUMBLY, GLANCING AT HER, SHE LOOKS AT THEM FOR A RESPONSE.PAUSE.SHE BLOWS OUT THE CANDLE, LOOKS AT THEM, THEY STARE AT IT AND HER. SHE TAKES AWAY THE CANDLE. THEY WATCH HER GO. J. SHRUGS.  
ALL THIS DONE WITH SCENE WELL LIT. *entire scene repeat use 2 ✓*

FADE OUT TO BLACK

7

NOTE

short from bathroom  
FOT.V.com



SCENE 8. DIFFERENT GROUPING OF PEOPLE, DIFFERENT CAMERA POSITION. TRIPOD. ~~SCENE~~  
FIXED SHOT. WIDE AGAIN. MEMORIZE  
MARK POSITION OF TABLE. TAKE IT OFF.  
SCENE SHOULD BE 1 minute 40 seconds long.

FANE IN. LEON NEAR WINDOW OPENS IT SLOWLY THEN SITS BESIDE IT AS  
~~SCENE~~  
J. TO A. In regard to that old saying that "seeing is believing" which we will soon be ~~MEM~~

~~MEMORIZE~~ discussing I think that "hearing is deceiving" would be a more accurate way of saying it. *also when look from person to person in a way you can*

*scared*  
A. LOOKING AS IF SHE'S NOT SURE WHAT HE SAID; I'm not sure I heard that correctly the sound from outside is so interesting. SPOKEN VERY "ACADEMICALLY"

R. That's a sound from 1940.

E. It takes a long time to get here doesn't it?

*to get here  
to get here  
to get here  
to get here*

E. I'm glad I was here when it arrived. *Smile around some looking at things but follow the conversation.*

A. SAME STYLE AS BEFORE, RATHER PORPOUS. It is said that everything that happens to one of us is recorded in the brain.

E. Most of these records are hard to get.  
E. CONFIDENTLY, VIBRANTLY She wants to spend so much time reminiscing?  
A. No can do our reminiscing later.  
L. HE'S BEEN MOSTLY IGNORING THE CONVERSATION; What do you need?  
*see-hear*

A. After death you will be able to ~~REVIEW~~ your life sound-movie in its entirety. First you will have to see it all from the beginning, *but* then you can see any parts again as often as you want.

EVERYBODY LOOKS SHOCKED. J LOOKS PARTICULARLY DISTRESSED. *slaps hand to forehead*

E. ~~SHOULD~~ we get to see other peoples life movies too?  
A. Yes anybody. There'll be nothing to lose and nothing to gain. *then*  
E. Will my father and mother come to the heavenly theatre to see me in "Leons Wife's Life"?  
A. Oh yes and we'll all see their lives too. *get*  
E. Will they clap if they like it?  
*but*

A. They certainly will, it'll be just like our clapping for Ray's proving the existence of that table. POINTS TO WHERE TABLE SHOULD BE.

NOVEL

8

EVERYBODY LOOKS AT WHERE TABLE IS SUPPOSED TO BE AND CLAPS.

1'45" OUT

SCENE 9. SUPERIMPOSITION OF TABLE. SAME LENGTH AS SCENE 8. PEOPLE OFF.

2'

Shoot 108V  
10A ✓

DIFFERENT POSITION

SCENE 10. STRIPED DIFFERENT FRAME  
(dialogue learned below  
EVERYBODY LIES ON BED  
SPEAKING TO THE CHILD)

TABLE IN FOREGROUND

FADE IN.  
J. It's interesting to sometimes  
convention and see how it

✓ Scene 10A. (Slate) Bathroom  
and Camera DOOR FRAME  
Same people arrangement as for Scene 11.

A. ITALIAN ACCENT. It's hard to get  
FADE OUT

J. TO OTHERS: Watch this.  
HOLD FOR 30 seconds. They all stare, amazed.

FADE IN (SAME SCENE)

CUT. EVERYBODY ELSE STAY WHERE THEY ARE.  
TAKE J OFF.

R. J. It's best to look at them when  
L.A. They're more relaxed than.

SHOOT R. SPEAKING TO WHERE J WAS:  
R. That's quite impressive! THAT'S HARD TO BELIEVE  
etc.?

E. I've never spoken in my sleep;

SHORT HOLD. OUT

FADE OUT

SCENE. 10 B

FADE IN

FADE IN "new J." against limbo.

R. How do you know?

HOLD FOR LENGTH OF 1##### SCENE 10A

E. No sleeping companion has

J. Maybe they were asleep at 11

SHOOT SOME OF JOE  
Walking against BLACK  
with through looking around

E. When?

R. When they were speaking to;

FADE OUT.

END REEL 2

A. "Now that's correct"  
"That's hard to believe"  
a close crowd

8  
9  
10B  
10A  
10

EDIT = SCENE 10A + 10B.

18  
17  
16  
15

(SAT)

HOTEL

Reel 3. shot

14  
15  
11  
12  
13

(9)

Same as 10A, 10B

SCENE 11. NEW ARRANGEMENT. CAMERA TRIPOD. FIXED. IF POSSIBLE SHOOT THROUGH A DOOR SHOWING A BIT OF DOOR FRAME AT EACH SIDE. TABLE IN FOREGROUND

OPTICAL FLIP . MEMORIES.

I. Which hand to believe?

S. Does anybody want something to drink?

J. BRACULA ACCENT: How about some OXO? *facing camera*  
(THROUGHOUT SCENE)

CUT TO J. LYING ON FLOOR PARALLEL TO FRAME FACING CAMERA.

"OXO"

CUT TO J. STANDING ON HEAD. OTHERS CAN HOLD HIS LEGS UP. FACING CAMERA

"OXO"

CUT TO J LYING ON SIDE FACING RIGHT.

"OXO"

CUT.

R. TO CAMERA. *repeated 2nd* Have you noticed how the unexpected happens when you least expect it.

S. TO EVERYBODY. Do you want to smoke some dope?

J. I'm afraid to smoke dope on the screen. It's like smoking in bed, the screen might catch on fire.

L. Or the screen might get arrested.

*CUT TO FLYP here?*

S. The pictures trying to get away right now! SHE LOOKS "AT PICTURE"

J. May wait for me!

A. It can't go anywhere without us (ANOTHER ACCENT)

S. Anyway do you want some firewater?

J. Yes please <sup>or</sup> In feeling a bit dizzy

S WALKS OFF TOWARDS CAMERA

E. LOOKING OUT. Gee I wonder if Im in the audience tonight?

A. Impossible

E. Well, if I am ... "Halle me!" Gosh whats wrong with my eyes, I can't see straight.

40 J. Where the hell's that table gone? It was here a minute ago.

CUT. END OF OPTICAL FLIP.

10

HOTEL

SCENE 12. JUST TAPE RECORD. NO IMAGE.

S. WALKS A LITTLE. CLINKING ICE IN GLASS.

~~#~~  
DROPS GLASS. IT BREAKS. S. *Here's your drink*

J. STILL DRACULA. Whoops In sorry it went out like a light.

E. It did not.

J. There's another side to every story. J. OR RAY, PREFERABLY RAY STARTS TO CASUALLY IN BACKGROUND PLAY VIOLIN.

S. I'll get you another drink. WALKS A BIT

*Could have it.*

A. Looking back is ~~so~~ depressing.

L. I suppose you think there's a bed there.

J. Who?

E. Of course there's a bed there, watch this. WALKS NOISILY FOR A FEW SECONDS. STOPS, SAYS:

What the hell? WALKS SOME MORE, STOPS, SAYS: Well anyway I found the table, here it is.

TAPS ON TABLE.

L. Keep your eye on it.

J. ~~Pull up a chair Ray.~~ *I wish on TV. lean chair a chair (moving it in) (not 5mm)*

SCRAPE SCRAPE OR OTHER SOUND OF MOVING CHAIR AND S. WALKS IN, CLINK, CLINK ICE IN GLASS.

S. Here's another drink for you Jacques.

J. Don't put it on that table.

S. What table?

E. This is kind of relaxing

120" L. ~~WHEN~~ When are we supposed to be back on?

SCENE 13. OPTICAL FLIP. PICTURE COMES AROUND OTHER SIDE (LEFT)

PEOPLE REGROUPED AS THEY MIGHT BE AFTER THE LAST SCENE. NO GLASS TROUGH.

SAME CAMERA POSITION.

R. PLAYS VIOLIN IN BACKG. LIKE PRACTICING

*bad street*

MEMORIES. *TV set on, sound quiet WATCHING.*

J. Aphasia, have you seen this entire film?

A. How could I ~~has~~, it isn't over yet..... I'm just looking at the part I'm in

E. These are pretty bad seats

L. Yeah this is really hard on the eyes.

(11)

HOTEL

A. Ouch! These corners are sharp!

J. L. Make sure that table gets around. PUSH IT A BIT BACK AND FORTH BUT END UP LEAVING IT IN SAME PLACE.

A. It doesn't need any help to get around.

L. I'd miss the bed more than ~~the~~ <sup>that</sup> table.

A. Have you been in any good movies ~~lately~~ <sup>lately</sup> Ray?

J. Have you seen any good movies lately Ray? *[runs aside to pay this]*

R. STOPS PLAYING. One question at a time.

E. GLANCING TO HER LEFT. Just another few feet to go.

S. LOOKING SAME WAY. There. —

EVERYBODY LOOKS THAT WAY.

CUT. R. FACING CAMERA STILL HOLDING VIOLIN.

"Wow!"

CUT. R. BACK TO CAMERA.

"Wow!"

CLOSE DOOR IF SHOT IS THROUGH DOOR. COULD BE SLAMMED.

OUT.

SHOT

14. Obscene ✓
15. Room ✓
11
12
13
21
22
23

*Row 3*

1'10"

Roll ③. 1st clamp on it

SCENE 14. CAMERA SAME. EVERYBODY GROUPED SAME EXCEPT FOR J. AND R. WHO ARE SEATED AT THE TABLE. UNDEREXPOSE THIS SHOT WILL BE SUPERED.

~~IF PREVIOUS SHOT WAS THROUGH DOOR OPEN THIS ONE BY OPENING DOOR.~~  
~~IF NOT FADE IN~~

MEMORIZE

A. Back in the picture. SAID LIKE A TITLE.

*walk off*

J. TO R. Well did you like the lovemaking scene in Media Jerkoffakis new film

*SUCK FUCK*  
"Suck and Suck"?

R. Oh it was beautiful.

J. Wasnt "Sally" the little Danish girl with the long blonde hair exquisite?

R. mm yes she was so <sup>beautiful</sup> round, so voluptuous....what a lovely ass!

J. When she rolled over onto the bed and opened her legs by first sliding one against the other...want that beautiful?...Her lips were pink and moist as her luscious thighs

*pink nipples and her moans*



13

NOTE:

AND POSITION MARKED.

SCENE 18. SAME CAMERA. BED OFF. TO BE SUPERED ON SCENE 17.

FADE IN

MEMORIZE.

J. Seeing is necessarily a belief, an act of faith, but to me the phrase should really be "Touching is Believing". Ill demonstrate what I mean.

L. BUTTS IN, FEELING HANDS. Gee my hands are dry. I've been washing ~~my~~ clothes all day. Sure have you got any of that cream hand stuff?

S. Yes I've got some right here (~~WHEN~~ STAKES IT OUT OF PURSE AND SQUIRTS IN HER HAND. Try this.

second

L. <sup>Thrusts</sup> RUBS HANDS TOGETHER. EVERYBODY WATCHES.

J. A BIT PEEVED. "OK you demonstrated what I meant but I'd like to show you my way.....

I suppose we all believe that there's a bed there (POINTS) and that it actually exists.

E. Of course, I slept there last night and had wonderful dreams.

J. Alright then watch this all of you. J. WALKS TO WHERE THE BED IS SUPPOSED TO BE (so his feet will stick out when bed is put<sup>d</sup> back) AND LIES DOWN ON FLOOR AS IF BED WERE THERE. THE OTHERS GAZE.

EVERYBODY TRY TO HOLD ~~THE~~ SAME POSITION. EXCEPT E. WHO GOES OFF BUT NEAR A MIKE. <sup>CUTS</sup>

OUT. SCENE 19. PUT BED BACK IN SAME PLACE OVER J.

FADE IN.

E. SPRAYS OFF SCREEN. Well that proved that this was a dream and that that's a comfortable bed.

A. LOOKS STARTLED, LOOKS AROUND; Who said that?!

Shout...

J. COMES OUT FROM UNDER BED, LOOKING DEBGRUNTLED AND SAYS:

Well we usually use a table to demonstrate reality.

E. That's because a table is more real than a bed at dinner time.

J. What time is it?

S. Time for bed. SAID LIKE A TIME. TO CAMERA

20 FADE OUT

22  
23  
21

shoot from  
CLOSET DOOR  
[easy to find and  
return to spot]

14

HOTEL

Shot twice

TAPE-MARK ETC.

SCENE 21. TRIPOD. NEW CAMERA POSITION. note WHERE IT IS, FRAMING ETC. IT MUST BE RETURNED TO FOR LAST SHOT (SCENE 20)

MARK POSITION OF TABLE. SHOOT JUST IT AGAINST BLACK.  
FADE IN. SHOOT 1 minute. hold.

1'30"

TABLE OFF.

SCENE 22. PEOPLE GROUPED AROUND WHERE TABLE SHOULD BE, LOOKING AT IT. CHALK OR TAPE MARK

WHERE EVERYBODY IS PLACED SO THAT WE CAN RETURN TO THOSE POSITIONS FOR FINAL (TABLE-SMASHING SCENE)

she  
knew it  
from table

PLATES, CUP, SAUCER SHOULD BE HANDY TO J.  
HE SHOULD NOTE WHAT THE HEIGHT OF TABLE IS.

FADE IN.

R. SQUINTS ANGRILY AT "TABLE" But doesn't this table look familiar?!

E. What table?

E. Where's the hammer?

J. Maybe it's a multiplication table.

A. If it's a veg-table we can prove that "eating is believing" which is what I believe.

J. I'll set the table. TAKES PLATE, CUP, SAUCER, KNIFE, FORK, SPOON AND "SETS" WHEN HE THINKS TABLE IS. DROP CUP FIRST THEN PLATE, SAUCER, CUTLERY SO THEY BREAK (?)

Reel 3.  
end ✓

CUT.

SCENE 23. TABLE BACK ON. PEOPLE IN SAME PLACES BUT CLEAN UP DEBRIS.  
CAMERA SAME

FADE IN.

J. I give up. I don't believe in anything.

A. I'm hungry

L. I'm horny.

with  
Joe  
Kochman

CUT

SCENE 24.

NEW SCENE. CAMERA TRIPOD. EVERYBODY OFF. S. IN BED WITH CLOTHES ON. E. STANDING AT SIDE OF TO CAMERA  
FRAME LIKE ON STAGE, SAYS WITH HAND GESTURE TO S. IN BED:

Shot  
twice  
already ✓

E. And now... "Lying In Bed" SHE WALKS OFF.

S. WHEN SHE'S OFF. TO CAMERA: I am not in bed. EMPHATIC



CUT

HOTEL



15

SCENE 25. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ DIFFERENT CAMERA POSITION. TRIPOD.

S. IN BED CLOTHED SAME AS LAST SCENE. EVERYBODY ELSE BACK ON SITTING ALL AROUND EDGES. L. STANDING.

MEMORIZE.

J HAS BEARD ON

L. TO SARA. Sara ,hearing you lie in ~~SW~~ bed like that makes me even hornier.

PAUSE. THEN SPEAKING TO THE OTHERS

I Suppose all of you dont think there's a bed there.

~~A~~ Of course ,I slept there last night and had wonderful dreams. Which reminds me: I woke last night thinking that my watch was gone.

J. Was it?

A. ~~SW~~ No but it was going.

L. FLATLY: Ha ha. Alright now watch this all of you.

GOES TO BED AND STARTS TO MAKE LOVE TO S. TAKES OFF HER TOP AND BRA AND FEELS HER BREASTS ,SAYS TO THE OTHERS:

~~SW~~ Gee my hands feel soft now.

Shot twice 2nd ✓  
Reel 4

THEY FALL TO THE BED KISSING

~~Scene~~  
26 CUT → fucking + color names

SCENE 27. S. AND L. BOTH IN BED. NO TOPS ON. POST-FUCK LOOKING.

OTHERS ALL STILL SAME PLACES.

MEMORIZE.

SAME CAMERA ~~SW~~ POSITION.

FADE IN.

L. Do you think I could get pregnant in my mouth?

Shot twice 2nd best?

S. Ha ha. It'd be more likely in my mouth.

L. Could be mine too since I just tongued your cunt while you sucked me off and then...

OFF-SCREEN VOICE: Why didnt they show that?

S. 69 its called.

L. And then we kissed, kissed, kissed...

S. French Kissed.

L. Pedant.

S. We didnt do that. I wouldnt go that far.

(76)

HOTEL

L. Should I gargle? Or wait a few months. Do we want a new word?

*in our language*

*another word in our vocabulary*

FADE OUT

45"

ON

SCENE 1. SARA SEATED EDGE OF BED FACING CAMERA .NUDE .SHOT FROM WAIST UP. A HAND HOLDS PLASTIC SHEET COLORS IN FRONT OF HER FACE SO THAT SHE IS BOTH SEEN THROUGH THEM AND THEY PROJECT ON HER. SHE LOOKS AT THEM AND NAME THEM AS THEY COME UP.

"Blue?....."dark green"....."lemon yellow"

2 MINUTES LONG. *"Shy blue" end of Reed*



2' Reel 5

SCENE 3. SARA SEATED IN SAME PLACE. CAMERA SAME. SHE HAS HER TOP BACK ON. AND THE EARPHONES ON. I READ THE FOLLOWING TO HER AND SHE REPEATS IT:

FADE IN

I can be heard:

Where do correct ideas come from? Do they drop from the skies? No. Are they innate in the mind? No. they come from social practices and from it alone; they come from kinds of social practice, the struggle for production, the class struggle and scientific experiment.

It is mans social being that determines his thinking. Once the correct ideas characteristic of the advanced class are grasped by the masses, these ideas turn into a material force which changes society and changes the world.

Idealism and metaphysics are the easiest things in the world, because people can talk as much nonsense as they like without basing it on objective reality or having it tested against reality. Materialism and dialectics, on the other hand, need effort. They must be based on and tested by objective reality. Unless one makes the effort one is liable to slip into idealism and metaphysics.

FADE OUT

*shoot from RAD - make sure table is in*

SCENE 28. L. AND S. IN BED SAME AS PREVIOUS SCENE. NO TOPS. S. IS SITTING ON BED.

S. HAS EARPHONES ON. L LOOKS A BIT BAFFLED DURING THIS.

S. REPEATS TO L.

17

SCENE

IT CAN BE HEARD

started twice

To oblige you I would try to believe almost anything, but no one else could be benefited by such a belief as this, for were I persuaded that Charlotte had any regard for him, I should only think worse of her understanding than I now do of her heart.

(TO E)

My dear Jane, Mr. Collins is a conceited pompous narrow minded silly man, you know he is, as well as I do, you must feel, as well as I do, that the woman who marries him, cannot have a proper way of thinking. You shall not defend her though it is Charlotte Lucas. You shall not for the sake of one individual change the meaning of principle and integrity, nor endeavour to persuade yourself or me, that selfishness is prudence and insensibility of danger security for happiness.

S. HANDS EARPHONES TO E. WHO REPEATS TO HER :

E. I must think your language too strong in speaking of both replied Jane and I hope you will be convinced of it, by seeing them happy together. But enough of this, You alluded to something else, You mentioned 2 instances, I cannot misunderstand you, but I entreat you dear Lizzy not to pain me by thinking that person to blame, and saying your opinion of him is sunk. We must not be ready to fancy ourselves intentionally injured. We must not expect a lively young man to be always so guarded and circumspect. It is very often our own vanity that deceives us. Women fancy admiration means more than it does.

I TELL E. TO WHISPER THE FOLLOWING LINE IN L.'s EAR SHE SAYS IT TO S.

L. And men take care that they should

E. HANDS EARPHONES TO S.

S. If it is designedly done, they cannot be justified, but I have no idea of there being so much design in the world as some people imagine.

I TELL S. REPEAT THIS TO E. "I give the earphones to you Eve and you put them on the table and then Leon says "If that table could talk"

THEY DO THIS

L. If that table could talk.

THEY ALL LOOK AT THE TABLE AS IF THEY'RE HEARING THE SMASHING SOUND.  
1 MINUTE and 40 SECS. I SIGNAL AND :

S. It only remembers the pain.

L. Perhaps the pleasure was all ours

FADE OUT TO BALCK

18

HOTEL

SCENE 29. NEW CAMERA POSITION. L+S. STILL IN BED. EVERYBODY ELSE BACK ON  
MEMORIZE.

E. LOOKING AT TABLE. I wonder what it would be like not to be able to read or write?  
L. Everything would be different.  
A. Its name sits in front of everything (ITALIAN ACCENT)  
E. Everything the name of which one knows.  
R. The world will end when everything is named. *repeated*  
A. Helen Keller would disagree (CULTURED ASCENT) ? ?  
J. In relation to that what do you think of this .HAVE HAND TO BOMBOV NEAR SCREEN.

CUT *end REEL (5)*  
REEL (6)

SCENE 31.

# CAMERA HAND HELD. EACH SENTENCE A SEPERATE SHOT. HEAD AND SHOULDERS LIKE BEGINNING BUT  
ORTHODOX CUTTING.

J. What do you think Ray?  
R. Helen Keller had a lovely voice.  
J. Sara? *repeated*  
S. I felt the pianist had a nice touch. *(sings)* [VIOLIN?] ●  
J. ~~What was she saying?~~ *LEON?*  
~~What was she saying?~~ *LEON?*  
J. And you Aphasia, what did you think?  
A. I dont understand why it was put there. *repeated* PAUSE. It would have been better *just* after  
RAY smashed the table, or maybe after the conversation about the Indians?  
S. I thought it fit in very well. J. PLAYS VIOLIN BEHIND THEM

FADE OUT.

19

HOTEL

Shot from Room  
Door to T.V. corner  
including sofa

SCENE 32.

FADE IN CAMERA; SEPERATE SHOTS AS INDICATED, TRIPOD OR HAND HELD.

(COULD PAN FROM SPEAKER TO SPEAKER)

EL. this sentence in its entirety was replaced by trumpet music.

repeated 3x

Book  
Face

A. I didn't know you could speak trumpet.

L. Can you guess what I said?

CUT

S. Aphasia can guess till the cows come home.

repeated 2x

2nd  
Face

J. You can guess till you're blue in the face.

R. That's strange I was just going to say that! (AMAZED)

CUT

R. You can guess till you're blue in the face.

Shot several times  
1-2-3-4-5  
or recall?

J. You took the words right out of my mouth.

A. I give up.

1- out of out  
2- (to head)  
3- leave

CUT

BLUE IN FACE

E. You always have the last word. I bet I just look like I'm talking.

S. I'm just looking.

45

CUT R. WATCHING T.V.

GREEN  
COLOR

L. Did you read that article about illusionism? It said that things like this would ~~become~~ get more and more realistic until you wouldn't be able to tell the difference between ~~an illusion and~~ and a movie of me.

Use Prod  
16 Frame

CUT

E. Before that happens we'll destroy everything.

repeated 3x

S. Love is the only hope.

J. The only hope is Art.

repeated  
last sent

R. Is this film Art?

E. No this is not Art. It was once but now Nature is Art.

CUT

RED

L. I wish I was a 12th century Kwakiutl Indian

J. I'd rather be one of the Sauk and Fox Indians

10k 2 3x

L. Anyway... they lived rich lives compared to ours.

A. A 12th century Kwakiutl might have wished to be you.

L. No had have known better.

CUT

HOTEL

L. They knew some nuance that we dont. Temperature, wind, noise, plants, animals were all like parts of them.

A. I think that for the Indians life was difficult, dangerous and diseased and that the women was like slaves.

CUT *repeated 3*  
L. Maybe but there must have been some happy women and we diseased the Indians and at least the danger was noble, not like the danger of being hit by a bus.

E. Its safer on the screen than on the street.

CUT *repeated 3*  
A. The Indians didnt have Chinese food and we modern times people can go anywhere and fast!

J And out of this world too! They'll soon be colonizing Mars. *twice 2*

E. Poor Mars. Anyway space travel is just another TV show.

CUT  
L. Just because we can go anywhere everyplace is more and more the same place and the cities are all soon of us and for us. All we ever do is look at us or what we did.

E. And all our so-called entertainment is just of us by us. All we ever do is look at us or what we did. *Shopped*

H. And then we talk about it.

CUT  
A. Well what did the Indians do then for entertainment?

I. *Finches*, shrikes, warblers, owls, jays, cormorants, snipes, *rales*, ptarmigan, gulls, *(falcons)* swallows herons....

A. Are there as many kinds of birds as there are Departments in a department store?

J. The ego isnt extinct. *repeated 2*

CUT. WIDE FIXED SHOT FROM HERE ON.

E. ~~For~~ the success of the common was the death of the special. *repeated 2*

CUT E. OFF.

L. That article said that we're inventing new species.

CUT L. OFF

H. What I think we're doing is taking everything thats here and gradually mixing it all up. Feeding a pallette to a blender. The parts are still visible but what all life will become is one mid-grey changeless substance. The globe will be a ball of dead durable *simoness*.

CUT H. OFF

S. Thats a sad note to end on. *repeated 1/2*

CUT S. OFF

A. Is this the end? *repeated 1/2*

CUT A OFF.

J. Its very close. *2x repeated*

SHORT HOLD OF ROOM.

FADE OUT TO BALCK

*Root*

*3 min 1:20*

3



# SHOOTING SCRIPT

SCENE 2 - (FIXES)

4 (SUN STORY)

5 ("THIS IS QUIET")

6 (COLORS)

7 (CANDLES)

8 (after dark about movie conversation)

9 (Super of table)

LOA  
10B

10 (Lying on bed)

11 Optical flip 1st

12 JUST SOUND

13 Optical flip 2nd

14 Dirty movie conversation

15 Super of room

16 "Seeing in Belen" - hand rubbing

17 Super Bed

18 J. lies where bed is supposed to be

19 Bed falls back on over J. etc

~~20~~

21 People discussing table (it's not there)

22 Super of table

23 Table back on + short conversation

24 "Lying on bed"

25 "lovmaking scene"

~~26~~

27 (post-fuck conversation)

1 naming color

3 mao speech (headphones)

28 Pude + Prigude "

29 "not to be able to read + write"

31 single sentences

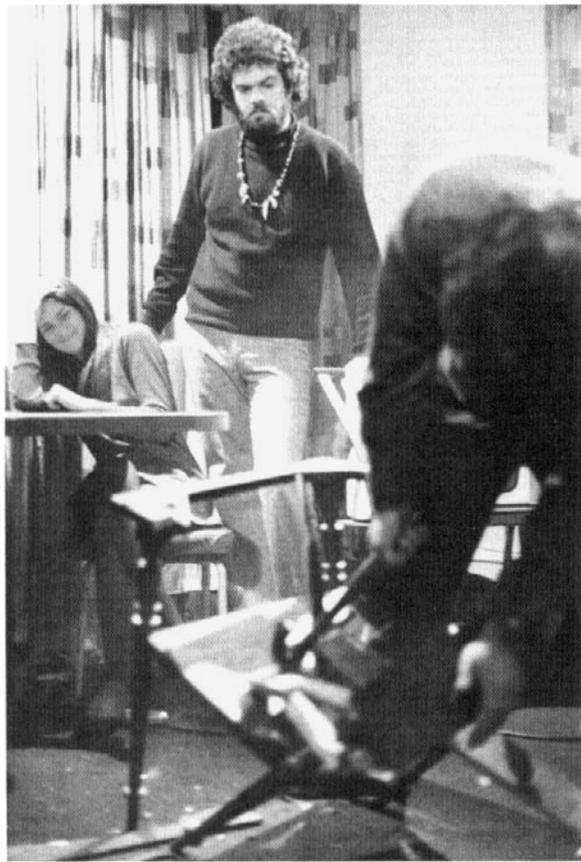
32 (door conversation)

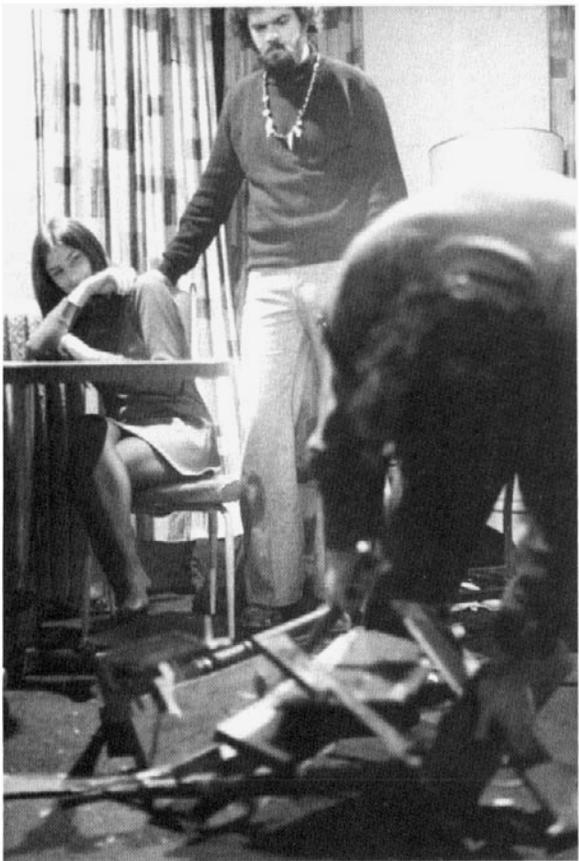
20 Table smacking

PLANO LUMES  
P. ROOMS



*This and following two pages: Royden Rabinowitch smashes the table, Scene 20*





## Tom Gibson's Photographs 1974

"In Tom's biographical file, I came across a short text that you wrote in 1974 for the Still Photography Division's *Signature* series. When I asked Tom about it he told me that it had been commissioned but never used for reasons now forgotten. I would not like the text to be forgotten: I like it very much and feel that it captures well the questions and feelings attendant to Tom's transition from painting to photography."

– From a letter to Michael Snow, 18 May 1993, from Martha Langford, director of the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography.

The text was published in *Tom Gibson: False Evidence Appearing Real*, an exhibition catalogue by Martha Langford, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa, 1993.

**T**om Gibson's photographs are a personal unity of objective truths embodying mysteries of both subject and medium.

General: The light, less-light and no-light truths of ranges of greys, blacks and whites thinly, to say the least, layered on paper in certain arrangements become images taken from elsewhere containing within *them* relationships of forms predisposing them to "the photographic."

Specific: Individual works such as *Man with Shadow* (1972) or *Woman with Dark Glasses* (1973) and in a different way *Poodle at Niagara* (1973) have an apparently miraculous order that paintings, drawings or collages may (but very rarely do) have because the individual forms are made separately, have been considered separately. That such spooky coherence can be captured and examined in such a sensitive translation is one of the didactic flashes of photography in life. Encountering this coherence is the major experience of Art. Gibson's photographs unite all the levels of the photographic process into such an often moving fusion of means and ends.

His experience as what is called "a painter" has helped him to see dramatic relationships with certain inner paradoxes relevant to them becoming the sensitive surface they eventually become. Yes, one of the many considerations of "a painter" is to make a personal unity of facts, of surface and illusions, of forms in depth. I emphasize this aspect because its creative understanding tends the photographs away from Journalism towards Art. Gibson's work is not "abstract." It describes people, animals, places, things; it is "realistic" in a magical way that links it to a family of fine photographers and painters.

Gibson's personal unity, his own truths, have a wide-angled irony to them. The final surface is united with a with a bittersweet twist to the kinds of surfaces photographed to provide an experience, rich in implication, that is possible in no other medium.

***Michael Snow Musics for Piano,  
Whistling, Microphone and  
Tape Recorder*** 1975

From 1973 to its closing in 1978, I was represented by the Bykert Gallery in New York. The director, Klaas Kertess, had assisted in organizing a record label, Chatham Square Records, which issued Philip Glass's first records, then others by Jon Gibson, etc.

In 1975, Chatham Square and the Isaacs Gallery produced the double record album *Michael Snow Musics for Piano, Whistling, Microphone and Tape Recorder* (Chatham Square #9 1009/1010).

The following text was written to be printed in a certain typographic form (here reproduced), which in a sense is the visual equivalent to the form of the first piece in the album, "Falling Starts."

If or when you read the text, you will see that it was written to be read with or near the music. This, then, is a "detail" of a total work, my first attempt to use the LP as a total form (like a sonata). The LP developed a form which consists of the jacket with information and photos printed on it, the record labels, the discs, and the music, and this is what I worked with.

**M.S.**

STEREO LP 1009/10  
CHATHAM SQUARE

# MICHAEL SNOW

## MUSICS FOR PIANO, WHISTLING MICROPHONE AND TAPE RECORDER

**M**y first consideration in writing the text which you are now, I presume, reading (“presume”: I guess that this text will still be here to read later even if you aren’t reading it now) was to write something which when printed would cover all four faces of this album. Of several ideas for a design for this album cover or jacket this seemed at the time to be the best. Remains to be seen. Ruminations gradually clarified to this stage: I would write something that would fulfill several requirements, the basic one being that it function as a “design” or “image” that would be both decorative and “plastic”. Another requirement that might better be approached now as an intention or ambition was the image

quality and the reading quality be unified and that it be "literature" that could be read with aesthetic profit, at first, apart from the reader having any actual experience of the music which this will, in effect, enclose but consequently it should nevertheless have some connection, varying in strength, with the music, indeed, that some of it would be so written that it would be interesting to read while half-listening to the music. If you could give your undivided attention to both reading this and listening to the music I'd be very surprised. However, I suppose it's possible. Before I attempt to amplify that I ought to say that because of the design of this album you can read this without owning the album which I assume is enclosed in plastic. Perhaps it's not. Anyway the text continues on the two inside faces and concludes on the back. This is of course the beginning. It will get really interesting. Now I should return to a discussion of how, when and if you should simultaneously read this text and listen to the music. You can ignore my instructions but you will soon see that certain parts of this text might be read against or with certain parts of the music and I plan to make it evident when such parts occur. For the moment please don't put on one of the records. I don't want to give the impression that I intended the music contained herein to be mere background music for the reading of this text or any other activity. Obviously I have no control over that. If you want to put one of the records on right now, you can go right ahead, What can I do about it? Maybe one of them is playing right now. Which one? A guess: "Left Right" right? . . . Perhaps for some people it would be preferable to, at first, half-listen to the music and half-read this and later pay more attention separately to either. I hope that the music can be listened to often with or without this text. The music is more important than this. It occasioned it. However, I would really like this to be as good as the music . . . I've been making music since about 1945. I've been writing about ten years longer but not generally with the same intent as that behind the making of music, just casual writing, at first school stuff, some plays and skits at a summer camp, Camp Calumet. Later mostly letters, lots of letters, plus a couple of essays, one of which is somewhat close to this and most recently the script, largely dialogue, for a 4½ hour film. I'm self-taught on piano, trumpet and typewriter. Whistling is natural. I started out learning how to play blues-boogiewoogie piano because I liked it. No doubt there were other reasons too. I met some other problem children in high school who were playing other instruments, and gradually there were bands and then even gigs, especially after high school while I went to the Ontario College of Art. Subsequently for about 3 years I mostly made my living from music and played with many fine musicians such as Cootie Williams, Buck Clayton, Jimmy Rushing, George Lewis. In the summers of '48, '49, '50 for a week or two I and some of my Toronto jazz friends went to Chicago where we jammed here and there, once with the great Pee Wee Russell and went to some parties at the home of the equally great blues-boogie pianist Jimmy Yancey. He, Albert Ammons, Cripple Clarence Lofton, others and myself played at these parties and Yancey, very impressed proclaimed me his "pupil" and taught me some of his stuff. This may not impress you but it meant a lot to me then and now. Now back to the music sleeping on the discs between these sheets (unless it's already up and around the room) or rather back to this text which, to repeat, is more or less connected to the music. . . I should mention that since 1963 I have been especially interested in trying to compose, in my films, strong image and sound relationships. In 1964 I finished a film called "New York Eye and Ear Control". Shot and edited by myself, it has a sound track by a great (again!) group with Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, Roswell Rudd, Sonny Murray. This black and white film was an attempt to set up a simultaneity of separate but equal picture and sound . . . Sound-film aesthetics is a vast subject and perhaps this is not the time and place to discuss it. Perhaps it is. In my films I hope to modulate the spectator's consciousness by composing with varying emphasis on the nature of the sound in relation to various means of indicating the fictional source of the sound within the range of image possibilities (from abstract pure color-light to "realistic" representation). "Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen" made in '73-'74 is the most radical of these image-sound compositions and most closely related to this . . . Language, spoken or written, can certainly be categorized as representational. If you were now to play record #1, side #1 (don't) and read this (to yourself) while listening you'd be experiencing something related to the hearing/seeing/thinking experience of certain parts of certain of my films . . . The "image quality" of this text can

PRODUCED BY THE RAWLINS GALLERY, 882 YONGE ST., TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA

be examined: Read this then look at it. Those are very different activities. When looked at it is meaningless. No jokes now. Something that can be read cannot be meaningless. Stressing the "look" may tend print towards "visual art" forms but when it arrives it has become "picture" not "sign." Nevertheless it is a peculiarity of language that it can claim that a picture can be "read." The reverse is difficult. A dictionary of picture-meanings would have to be in print not in pictures, an inter-language dictionary, a translation, finally a rendering not of meaning but of possible language equivalents . . . The first side of the first record is the beginning of a piece called "Falling Starts." It's a piano and tape recorder piece made in 1972 (first version 1970) and is dedicated to Baron Von Kayserling. It's arriving too late to help, he's been sleeping constantly for about 200 years. Lucky him, lucky Goldberg, lucky Bach and lucky us that this record wasn't available in 1792. Since we are lucky to have it hear and now let's finally hear it . . . It's on . . . Let's face the music and read! Those first groups of high sounds that you are hearing, have just heard or if you're just reading this and haven't as I suggested, put on the record, will hear when you do . . . do it now . . . are sped-up re-recordings of a piano phrase which at its "normal" speed should be heard soon, just has been heard, will be etc. This phrase was composed and played by myself for its use as a subject of tape recording compression and elongation. Tenses. Comprehension mention: *Village Voice* critic Tom Johnson wrote that this phrase (the musical phrase) is an "atonal" phrase. It's not. It's built on an F minor scale and harmonically there are some open major sevenths. Flatted fifths and seconds. Several phrases were tested out, this one seemed to have an internal fitness for its intended use. As you can hear, it starts very low, the right hand with slight acceleration rises and falls and rises and falls to the top of the keyboard while the accompanying bass figure revolves in the same low tonal area. The right hand phrase covers almost the entire range of the keyboard and the bass provides a reference for this aural space. The chordal clusters and the requisite amount of resonance in performance generate new inner vibrations and re-reveal their original ones when slowed down as you may be hearing right now. If one has understood the subject phrase structurally then the subsequent variations may be more than sensation though that can be a lot. Bathyspheric bubbles under ping ping ping ping ping, "Falling Starts" continues its descant descent on Side 2 with the final and lowest version which is a fundamental experience of sound generation and reception as tactile. Membrane to membrane to brain. I recommend that you stop reading this for a few minutes and listen closely to the last few minutes of Side 1 and then go on with Side 2, listen to it for awhile and then resume reading this . . . The 2 sides obviously can be listened to separately but the first time you should hear the whole piece all the way through and don't read or talk. Now, this sentence is nothing very important, just something to read word by word while you're listening, a sentence that won't interfere much with your listening and since it doesn't say much (that's twice!), won't interpose other subjects between what you're doing (reading) and listening attentively . . . flutter flutter . . . putt putt putt putt putt . . . cars in the rain on a dark street . . . the helicopter arrives with the motorboat . . . Ultramarine whale dreams . . . a snore at the shore . . . pat pat pat pat pat pat . . . morning running shoes . . . The time-space between notes can now be cavernous. Days of mixed metaphors can seem to go by between a certain two bass notes . . . Boom! . . . sh sh sh sh sh sh s s s s s s s s s s s s . . . Perhaps someone else could change the record so that you could go on reading this. Ask them to put on "W in the D." No, wait! Reading

this between records may put more emphasis on its quality than perhaps it can take. The style so far has been quite plain hasn't it? It needs to be much more complex now. La! L'Asie. Sol miré, phare d'haut, phalle ami docile à la femme, il l'adore, et dos ci dos là mille à mis! Phare effaré la femme y resolut d'odorer la cire et la fade eau. L'art est facile à dorer: fard raide aux mimis, domicile à lazzi. Dodo l'amie outrée! Surprise. That was less conversational, more musical but I didn't write it. I don't know who did. André Théberge gave it to me . . . OK, before "W in the D" gets started (wait a minute) the following is some information about it. It's a recording of me whistling and breathing. There are no electronic alterations in the sound. It's documentary, real time. I held the microphone in my hand and moved it into and out of the airstream of the whistled phrase (sometimes it's just air, no notes). The air intake preceding each phrase brackets them all. The length of each phrase was determined by how long I could whistle on the amount of air I'd stored. I tried to make each phrase a distinct event in itself although there are some repeats with slight variations of a dee dee dee dee repeated single air-note motif. Please don't read any of this aloud unless instructed to. You could however give notice to a request that the record be started now and you'll hear the just described phrase first. It begins the piece and you'll note later that it ends it although despite the fact that you've never heard it, if you trust this text you already know that that is how it ends. For my ear-mind the air blowing on the microphone produces an aural picture plane . . . A concert playing of this tape (made in 1970) occurred (N.Y.U. 1972). I had all the lights turned off and the tape whistled in the dark. This is very effective. It can enhance the associational, imagistic effect of some of the phrases and of course having seeing muted allows for a concentration on listening. If thinking doesn't take over one may perceive more of the subtleties that are in the music. If, as I suggested, you've already started the record you're probably at whoo-weedley-aduh whoo-weedley-aduh whoo-weedley-aduh whoo-weedley-aduh or if you are about to play the record why don't you leave off reading this for the duration of the piece, turn off the lights or just hold your hands over your eyes? . . . (I suppose that there are plenty of reasons why you might not want to do this and evidently you are still reading). Well, darkness isn't absolutely necessary, in fact it's not necessary at all . . . ruhrr tweet tweet tweet tweet tweet . . . The music is quite interesting with your eyes open looking at whatever you want to look at. Some people turn on their T.V. set with the sound off while listening to records. With the T.V. sound on as well can be interesting but please don't try it with this record. You could put every damn thing on and keep on reading this till the phone rings but if you do I hope you'll give your undivided attention to the music on some other occasion . . . By the way, marijuana and music, like Michael, microphone and my, both begin with M. M m m m m m . . . Why don't you smoke some now while you're still listening to "W in the D" and reading this? "W in the D" is about 23 minutes long and you can breathe along with it . . . puff puff puff puff puff peep peep sweeahoh . . . here comes the ending now, sort of Beethovenesque in an airy way. The dee dee dee dee dee repeated note motif is repeated sans note, just air, and is followed by a long exhalation. That's it. Between records: One will perhaps note that the tapes used here date from '70-'72 and the record is being issued in '75. Perhaps you wondered why there aren't more recent pieces. No? Well, anyway for the last about three years apart from sound for my films, I have been very involved in playing freely improvised music with certain groups in Toronto (mostly The Artist's Jazz Band (A.J.B.) and apart from a

couple of other solo tapes (one for trumpet), I have been a contributing member in these groups and the music is collective composition. I had been wanting to make these "personal" tapes publicly available for some time and it finally became possible which made possible the idea of wrapping these solos in this solo. The original tapes are "home" tapes and not studio quality recordings. There is more s s s s s s s s s s s certainly. However, I felt that I could not re-make them in a studio. They partake of a certain time and place. They have been expertly assisted to this stage by Kurt Muncacsi of Basement Recording Studio and by Klaus Kertess . . . Now do you feel like hearing the last side? Hungry? Oh come on let's give it a spin . . . It's possible that you may not like my music or my prose or both together but I certainly hope not. That would certainly be a drag, spending the money and then not liking the music and then reading this crap to top it all off! Still, if you don't like the music and you do like this at least you've got this! If the album was recommended to you maybe you should discuss it later with whoever it was. All I can say is that I've done and am doing my best and that maybe you'll like the music more on re-hearing and you'll never have to read this again. Maybe this is better as "image" than as literature! I'll keep working on it. You do your best too. It's not just up to me . . . The following should be read aloud or sung: except for the occasional onomatopoeia, yes, the occasional onomatopoeia is excepted, please don't read aloud or sing any of this text along with any of the music. Why, oh why? Because, then the text is liable to become a song-lyric stimulus for your own, choose one now, choice of notes and the music an accompaniment. This is my text and my music and if you want something that can be "interpreted" please look elsewhere. Autre part. That sounds pretty autocratic I suppose and I realize that if you have bought this it could as accurately be said said to be "yours." Also if I'd never mentioned reading aloud or singing you might not have even thought of it and there'd be no problem. Still singing? Should have indicated a stop after "accompaniment" . . . Back to the music and on to the back of the album: the last side of the 2nd record is titled "Left Right," was taped in '71 and is also a tape-piano piece because it was recorded in a way that made a part of the recording process a part of the music. In other words it wasn't only a "documentary" recording of the piano being played. The preceding text was "documentary," it has been other "modes" and will metamorphose again. If you would just put the record on now you would hear some qualities that are difficult for me to describe. (My limitations as a writer?) Maybe somebody else (maybe you) could describe them. "Distortion" has a moral tone, doesn't seem right but probably has to be used. The piano music was recorded by laying, lying the microphone on its side on the top of my old upright piano with the recording volume way past its proper maximum. This was done to a nice tape recorder, a Uher which seems to have survived the strain. The percussive playing of the chords smack-rattled the microphone against the piano top. Other sounds you will hear, are hearing or have heard (not that again!) are a metronome tick tick tick ticking and a telephone bell ringing. Rrrrreading matter. You can tell that I didn't answer the phone. I didn't answer it because I'd spent several hours getting the sound that I liked and the performance was going well and after my first dismay I hoped that the bell would sound well . . . rring, rring, rring rring . . . it does, it fits, même famille. Who called? Later I coughed a bit, couldn't help it. Quite a slow tempo isn't it? Socialist and sinister. That tick tick tick tick tick tick sound which started the piece and continues throughout is the sound of the metropolitan gnome. Right now the music has just left being alternately a chord in

the right hand and a single note on the left. It is essence of “oompah,” a ragtime or “stride” left hand strain. I’ve played Jelly Roll Morton, Earl Hines, stride and ragtime influenced piano for many years so this piece comes out of that but also it is kin to a film I made in ’68-’69 called  $\longleftrightarrow$  wherein the camera pans back and forth at different tempi in sync with a percussive machine sound which emphasizes the arrival of the picture at each left or right extreme with a thump thump thump thump thump . . . To return to the music, now it’s changed to a single note in the treble alternating with bass chords. I played this piece with alternating right and left hands, a backhanded compliment to Paul Wittgenstein. barm barm. Those are alternating chords in both hands brark breek brarch breekeek bracqu back to top single note bottom chord crash ping crash ping crash ping. It certainly is a slow tempo. One of the reasons for that is that it enables one to have time to hear all the music that is emanating from the sounding of each note or chord. Hear what I mean? See what I mean? Left right, left right left right left right two hands two ears two loudspeakers all marking time not marching time. I’ll type this just with my right hand and this with my left hand and this with my right now left then right then left then right then left then right then left . . . pause . . . electric typewriter. Typewriter and loudspeaker are interesting words, words that carry histories in their newness. A man in a bright blue windbreaker is running down the street. Words are inching across the page . . . Your eyes are what? Me, I’m veering. Sex. One’s mind rebounds. Mine did, I can’t know whether another mind does or did. Turning off the music my mind rebounded from the coldness of this page to the heat of our bodies ensuite to a certain other body with my body in and on. A contributing member. Arrival at the station. Back to work. No, why don’t you too think about fucking that someone who mutually. Deeper. Excuse me, I’ll must get this out of your mind for a minute it’s getting a bit too intimate in there . . . Sorry, but could you superimpose that warm wet picture on the sound? Now fade the picture out slowly till you’re just listening. Now I’m just writing. You’re listening and reading. Just one backward glance in the form of the reassurance that you’ll very likely be able to think that over again just as you can play these records again or read this again. Perhaps this time you you you you’re reading it it it without the music but now this this this this time you’re reading it with th th th th th the music on. Silent reading right? If so you’ll note, perhaps, that the long slow tempo section is followed by a faster tempo coda . . . Mind keeps fading into her pants. Into mine too. Could it be that the way the jacket was open to be read suggested “opened” legs? “Jacket” like legs! The “Album” might be a better word there, with another letter . . . Let’s try that fading out/fading in system again. “Mixing” or “dissolving” it’s called . . . “Left Right” gets pretty fast, racing ahead of the metronome beat vers la fin. Lots of merging of the sustained “distortions” both there and here. Shaman. One presumes a lot if one presumes that one can direct another consciousness into varying states of attentiveness en face d’un construct made by one for that very purpose. Amplifying “varying states of attentiveness” I could say that I mean not only the intensity of the attention but its nature and focus. I do presume that I can do that and that I do it to myself. Impossible subject, I can never be objective. I tend to believe, because of occasional exterior manifestations, that many of the states of mind I experience in perceiving my work are frequently enough experienced by others. A passage can push you back into yourself so that its benevolent force reinforces your integrity and you momentarily become a core of concentrated yourself. Such a passage might modulate into an arrangement of

elements that might draw your self out into an edifying dialogue of equals and then transform into a constellation that might invoke analysis or criticism of itself only to become that more familiar but often welcome Svengaliism which provokes total identification sans corps with the "reality" of the observed/recorded/recounted and tilts one off the edge of the bed of regular mind-time into an ancient and honorable lunacy, surfacing with real tears or laughter which were fathered by the ghosts of the artist's gesture. This particular passage, will, no, does appear on the back face of this album jacket and so it is very possible that you who are reading this have not read what appears before on the 2 inner faces. You may have bought the album and for your own reasons or no evident reasons have decided to read the back first. I must admit I sometimes do that with books. Adopting the pose of assuming that I am writing for one solo reader at a time, I say to you (a group reading seems unlikely but possible, of course someone may be reading over your shoulder) (No not yours, yours. Or is it you who are looking over my shoulder?) that I feel that I can address you somewhat intimately but also somewhat abstractly. Consider the class of obscene phone calls. Good thing I didn't answer the 'phone . . . Hello, this text is being written, was written by the composer-performer of the music which is awaiting transmission on the discs enclosed by the cardboard bed on which what was written has been printed. The text and the record are records both. Both of the records could be transmitting right now. Write now a manifestation. You, singular or all embraceable you are perhaps reading these notes because you're considering the purchase of some recorded music. These notes may help you to decide to purchase those notes. There is a lot of information about the music, names, dates, lengths, theories, etc. on the two inside faces of the legs of this jacket. What?! Sorry, that's explained there, too. A jacket has sleeves not faces. I know. The faceless author of this is still also the composer-performer of the music which may be caused to emanate from the discs contained herein if united properly with the proper apparatus. Record player. So . . . let it suffice for me to say that I think highly of the mmmusic, a lot of living went into it and this and recommend it to you in the hopes of contributing to your life a rich source of aural stimuli for years to come and getting paid for it (I know that's illegal grammar). A negligible amount of money will buy this. I myself have sometimes been so influenced by the notes on an album to purchase same. That consideration just emerged, at the last minute as it were as one of the reasons for writing this text (other considerations are faced in the beginning of the text, front face that is) and others may reveal themselves in other parts of the text. As a matter of facet, let's face it, on the face of it, because of my typefacing these facetious faces you (you) haven't come face to face with the face of the composer-performer-author anywhere on the four thighs of this bed-jacket. How do I look? Blue eyed . . . Most of the requirements of this text smiling on the front face have been put to bed satisfied I think (I'll check with them in the morning). So . . . I can see the end approaching. In temporal works this kind of perception is rare excepting that écriture is a creature whose beginnings and endings are apprehendable reversed. This must be qualified by noting that the beginning of a work of literature is new and now the first time it is read and the meaning states that may be evoked by it can be said to be relatively few. In other words, most readers of the first page of a text would be in quite close agreement concerning its nature, qualities and meaning. However, it can without doubt be stated that someone who read only the last passage or only the first and last passage of a work of literature would be apprehending an "object" which would seem

in an almost infinite number of respects radically different from that passage apprehended by someone who had read the entire text from beginning to end. Such is the modifying power of the prior experience in a temporal work that the significance of the ending can only be truly apprehended against the record of the voyage towards it. In isolation it is not an ending is it?

## *The Artists' Jazz Band Live at the Edge* 1976

Snow wrote these notes for the record pocket of the LP *The Artists' Jazz Band Live at the Edge*. The album was "instigated and designed" by Snow and produced and distributed by the Music Gallery Editions, Toronto.

With very few changes of personnel the Artists' Jazz Band has been living for about 15 years. They've always played the way they play on these recordings. They didn't play as well in 1962 as they do now but the attitude and the process with which the music is brought into the world has not changed. They played and play for pleasure, ecstasy, for Music, for Art. The process which the original core of the group (Rayner, Markle, Coughtry, Kubota) have used since their first notes (McAdam, Jones and Snow have played and do play other kinds of music) is one that creates new music but is no doubt ancient. They "didn't know what they were doing" at first and didn't care. Now they know and don't care. The music always takes everybody by surprise anyway. Chance + fate + skill. They had little contact with similar developments elsewhere and had no public ambitions. The music grew until sometimes it wanted someone else to hear it. The process is spontaneous group composition. Beyond the occasional decision to "start with just horns" for example, there is no pre-arrangement and nothing written.

Usually 2 or 3 times a month for the last 10 years this group and variations of it have been meeting at drummer/painter Gordon Rayner's studio on Spadina Ave. and elsewhere in Toronto and playing and tape-recording the music. Smoke, drink, talk, play and listen to the just-made tapes has been the general order of events. Playing the music is a way of getting into the present. The tapes become the group past, both relics and products, as in playing the band is conscious of the tapes as the final Result. The lived-through fugitive inspiration, the synchronous miracles are caught and become something else, for everybody, anybody or somebody else. This album then (with one exception) is itself a composition of some of the highest moments from recent tapes.

The men in this group are "professional artists" in a way that pervades far more than a non-artist might expect from that description. (Their "freedom" in music came originally from precedents in the visual arts more than from music.) The art-making-seeing-hearing experience can colour everything or transform anything. Art sense ebbs and flows but it rarely turns off. The most focused energy and intention can produce the intensest art, in this case, the music. The AJB knows how holy it is and how transient and they can and do laugh and laugh at its seriousness. Seriously they laugh. In a

way the tapes are the diaries or journals of several lives. Like the Blues in its earliest forms, playing the music is a social occasion (anarchic-democratic-therapeutic) for conversation, confession and catharsis but above that it is the shaping and forming of sound into coherent new music. Each successful piece has a definite range of musical subjects. The AJB composes the way Beethoven might have if he'd had a tape recorder. Music is organized sound. The basis of the AJB's characteristic organization is contextual authenticity of feeling (not just sincerity which guarantees nothing qualitatively) from years of shared, lived ups and downs as friends, musicians, artists and it manifests itself in raw rhythmic, tonal, timbral, dynamic and pitch variations. Guitar or piano may play "conventional" chords alone but group harmonies are the results of convergences at the right time and usually contain so much sliding metamorphosis that if one were to stop a chord and analyse it in terms of the named notes therein the description would be very limited against the once-in-life-time uniqueness of that musical moment.

### **Side 1.**

"WHO IS IT?" It's Bob Markle who plays tenor saxophone on this piece and on other occasions electric piano with the AJB. Bassist Jones could not make the session, April 9 '76 at Rayner's studio. Markle arrived late. Rayner – drums, Gerry McAdam – guitar, Graham Coughtry – trombone, Michael Snow – trumpet and Nobuo Kubota on Soprano Saxophone with an octave divider attachment proceeded to play the gentle and elegant 6.45 minute piece you hear here. They were interrupted by a knock at the door and the ensuing recorded dialogue. This event and other seemingly non-musical sound in this album are not included only for anecdotal interest. They are sometimes funny, sometimes poignant, but pertinent parts of the whole tape piece. As sound and as commentary they are integrated into the composition at hand. As Markle says on entering the space he has made in the music: "Did I introduce something?" After this introduction/interruption the piece and emphatically the same piece gradually resumes. Markle then arrives on Tenor Sax with a fine soliloquy, there are some extraordinary ensembles and the piece ends with delicate guitar and cymbal stroking plus whistling by Snow.

### **Side 2.**

"THAT'S ART GERRY" is one of the results of a private session at A Space Gallery in Toronto on Feb. 15 '76. It was the night of a paralyzing snow storm, that week Rayner had broken his wrist, Larry Dubin who was going to sub for Rayner who had hurt his back. Those who had made it through the storm (Jones – bass, Coughtry – trombone, Snow – piano, Kubota – baritone and soprano saxes) started to play. The tape was started after the music and in making the master tape we faded it in to emphasize the sense of closing statement by Gerry McAdam: "That's the trouble with Art, it sneaks right up on you," spoken as he, and others arrived towards the end of this piece as you can hear here. An exhibition was on in the gallery and the players' cautions to the new arrivals were simply to be careful of the work on exhibit but caught on tape and in the context of the music they become something else. This casual but intense piece has a ripping roaring truly trombonistic solo by Coughtry and

lyrical and virtuoso soprano sax assisted by E.S.P. sound from bass and piano. Finally a ripping and rattling truly pianistic piano solo gets gradually consumed by talk.

“SMOKE” got in the lungs and in the air and in the ears on June ? ’75 at Rayner’s studio. An emotionally and formally consistent creation, it includes sensitive touches by the voice of Denyse MacCormack who sang with the band on several occasions. The air was Markless that night. “Smoke” rises with a stop and start, question and answer respiration that gradually shifts and floats horizontally into a group agreement. McAdam’s hand-made electric sound (and his dramatic timing) here exemplify the sensual sound shaping that is the style of this band. Kubota blows one of his best soprano solos within some discreet ticks and mutters (“solos” unless “unaccompanied” are not detached in their playing from the sound around them and shouldn’t be so separated in the listening). Passing deserts and jungles and northern nights “Smoke” drifts through several clearly defined musical events such as the very quiet and distant haze of the section with muted trumpet and baritone about 10 minutes into the now. Later remarkable horn cluster-chords that will never be played again can be heard again.

### Side 3.

“TAPIOCA” was cooked Feb. 6 ’76 at Rayner’s studio. Its ingredients are almost entirely percussive but many of the sounds were made not only by tapping but also by rattling, scraping, rubbing, rolling and dropping various objects. It starts with everyone contributing a cough to which Kubota adds some honks on Baritone sax. Rayner plays a conventional drum set uncontentionally plus various gongs, bells and things. Laughter. Snow rubs, clacks and drops a tin trumpet mute plus tapping and rolling some other things. The piece becomes pure comic reflex. McAdam scrape-squeaks a chair and a large tin washtub plus tapping this and that here and there. Jones bobs and weaves. Coughtry taps, yells and trombone whoops. After some sardonic “Karma Miranda” drums (as he later described it) by Rayner the slap-stick piece (ha ha) slaps away as mysteriously as it began.

“A SPACE NUMBER TOO” is the second piece played by the AJB during their concert at A Space Gallery as part of a remarkable series of concerts there promoted by Chlo and Bill Smith (CCMC saxophonist and Art Director of *Coda* magazine). That’s Smith’s “there will be a short intermission” just before you turn the record over and play “Che Whiz.” Snow on piano starts this generally quietly spaced-out composition with a finely developed solo which is met by a dangerous and swift ensemble. An unusual guitar-drums simultaneity wherein neither seems to accompany but each is equal to the other leads to horn tremoloes which unveil a mysterious guitar figure starting a caravan which everyone joins till their arrival at the end.

### Side 4.

“CHE WHIZ” was recorded at Rayner’s studio on Mar. 28 ’75. Certain members of the Artists’ Jazz Band have spent a lot of time in Spain plus visits to South America. A poly-verbal and -glot, up-tempo conversation about things Spanish which included the awful pun “Che Whiz” preceded the taping. Someone’s “Let’s play something Spanish” were the last words spoken before music answered them. The tape recorder got

switched on fast but a few seconds of music were lost. "Che Whiz" has incredible variety and unity. It's a very hot performance with some very horny rather Ellingtonian sections, inventive orchestral drums, space defining guitar, romantic trumpet and fluent "solo" and ensemble contributions by Kubota on Baritone and Soprano saxes. Inspiration can be reciprocal in this music and in this piece Jones' decisive foundation moves with, responds to and leads the ensemble, implying or choosing or participating in possible chord progressions, contributing its essential part to the rich and colourful orchestral texture. Final burp by Snow.

## A Letter to Alvin Balkind 1976

This text was written at the invitation of the late Alvin Balkind for *Canadian Artists: A Pro-  
tean View*, published in 1976 by the Vancouver Art Gallery, where Balkind was curator.

Thanks for your letter. Well . . . Probably my work has had more diversity than most and for the first few years that I attempted to make Art this was a recurring problem. I was playing music a lot during Art College but I also started to paint seriously. Could “painting” be a career? How? I didn’t understand it (still don’t) but was hooked. Later (not much) sculpture and film added to the complication. Before 1960 especially I felt that one could only become good at something, some area of endeavour by concentrating on it, that a painter who was a musician would never be good at either. I was searching, trying to define myself and my work. I’ve always thought that to be worth it for yourself and others one’s work should also consist of work on oneself. Anyway, not only was I working in seemingly unrelated fields, but within them I was using methods which seemed opposed: “improvisation” in music and “composition” in painting. It was a Romantic-Classic duel. Then there were the “influences” to cope with. My work was affected by many things, naturally, but I wanted to escape them. I think that when a (young) artist is moved by certain work it is partly because he sees in it or recognizes in it some phrasing more effective than he is capable of at the time, of his own story (as yet unrevealed to him). For me I’ll never forget the first experiences of certain works by Klee, Matisse, Mondrian, Duchamp, de Kooning, Gorky, Rothko, Judd. At least a small part of it was that.

In 1961 in the area of visual art, I decided to concentrate on variations within or on one “image,” the “Walking Woman” outline. Long story, partly told elsewhere. One of the reasons for this was to see what would happen to the variety I was suffering from if it was “forced” to deal only with this one contour. The result was even more variety, but it had become a conscious theme. The painting that the Vancouver Art Gallery has, *Mixed Feelings*, is one of the very best of these works in this sense and in a lot of others. I (then) felt that I could do almost anything because I had my own “subject.” The other work that comes to mind that consciously tried to cope with what are loosely (to say the least) described as “opposites” is *New York Eye and Ear Control*, a 1964 film. Here I tried to make it possible for the “improvised,” spontaneous, raw, “vocal,” raucous, expressionist, emotional, “romantic” music of Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, etc. to co-exist with the “classical,” measured, refined, considered, composed, calm, “intellectual,” temporal images. That’s what the title means. I think it works. It’s a simultaneity, not just one thing accompanying another. This was the beginning of my interest in sound/image relationships in cinema which culminated

in *Rameau's Nephew* by Diderot (*Thanx to Dennis Young*) by Wilma Schoen (1974). Anyway, years of duelling passed and I realized that what I'd been doing was, after all, OK, that the various interests had actually affected each other beneficially, and that it was possible (for *me*) to work well in a variety of media. Interestingly, I've always felt somewhat opposed to "mixed media" work, believing that sound or objects, for example, were worlds enough in themselves to justify one's working on them separately for a long time before you might try to combine them.

Especially when I had my retrospective at the AGO in 1970 I was finally able to see that the variety in my work was an aspect of a small number of themes that I was, in a sense, "stuck with." They were aspects of myself, my limitations. I now know what these themes are in a generalized way; and if something I'm making is "working," recognizing them is a certain kind of comfort. At the same time I'm always trying to derail them to surprise myself. But! When I make something, I don't want to "know" it totally. If it seems completely "knowable" in a short time, it's hopeless. In one way (formally?) I work very consciously, but "intuition" arrives in the "sensing" that the order of what has been done has a totality that will enable it to live a life of its own. But what this order is is not immediately comprehensible. It's all there, but it takes time to delve into, and even *I* have to delve. Sometimes it's a kind of gambling, but you have to feel confident about certain aspects. I'm still learning things about all my films, especially *Rameau's Nephew*, when I see them. I "know" what's there on certain levels, but the levels keep going down and up.

You mention that you think that "artists can tap the roots of human history." I think that's true, and it's an aspect of the continuity of the shamanistic role. There's a subjective-personal, psychoanalytic aesthetic route to objective universals. It's definitely an odd task that the artist is set: to find new ways to say ancient (timeless?) things. The situation seems always the same and always different. I've always felt a kinship or unity through even the most ancient artifacts with those who made them. Part of a long line. I think it's funny that my work is/was thought to be "avant-garde" by some people who are amazed when I can say that my favourite visual artists are Vermeer and Chardin.

I'm sorry we didn't meet here or in Vancouver, but ?!x+ etc.? The theme and the show you're involved in are very important.

Yours sinc,

# Crushed Cookies Make Crumbs Liberates Swing. Cuts Its Pulse 1978

For many years *The Globe and Mail* had a column called "The Mermaid Inn." Printed on the editorial page, it had a different guest columnist each week. Snow's contribution was published on 1 April 1978.

**I**n the late Fifties and early Sixties I worked on piano with a fine Dixieland band led by trumpeter Mike White. Usually the bassist was Terry Forster and the drummer Larry Dubin. Also, I often led my own trios or quartets and I used Terry and Larry if I could.

We played bebop or modern jazz including many compositions by Thelonious Monk. We made small but significant attempts to enlarge the scope of our improvisation – sometimes by playing blues using whole tone scales, making it possible to ignore bar divisions and invent new structures. I felt that the amount of improvisation should be increased but I didn't yet know how to do it.

From 1962 to 1971, I lived in New York. Despite the greatness of much of the new jazz I heard there I sometimes felt that these musicians weren't necessarily developing what seemed to be the most amazing implications of their music. They often composed tunes that would, by and large, be played first, followed by solos and repeated to close. This of course is the format of most jazz performances (including many great ones) but by now it seemed to me a formal cliché involving a mental state quite opposed to that necessary to generate the solos.

These musicians had been able to transcend pre-arranged chord changes, "song form" in general, but they only occasionally trusted in collective improvisation in which the thematic material is generated then and there by the player-composers. To me, their music implied the possibility of an ensemble organically developing its own music by playing it.

On frequent visits to Toronto during that period I sometimes played with a group that had become known as the Artists' Jazz Band. Composed partly of well-known visual artists such as painter-drummer Gordon Rayner and painter-trombonist Graham Coughtry, this group had been playing together since about 1961. By the mid-Sixties it included Terry Forster who had the good sense to realize that, though "amateur," the group was playing the most exciting and daring jazz-based music in Toronto. They played totally freely and with a raw sense of humor.

Back in Toronto in 1971 I soon started to play fairly regularly with them and in the next few years I realized that while no one individual was as good as certain of the

New York musicians I had heard, as an ensemble they were every bit as good, as personal and as surprising.

I soon re-met Larry Dubin who, like Forster, had been working as a professional musician. He also was developing a personal technique that would be frowned on if he used it on his jobs. At home, he played with records (any kind of music), the radio, television. He played with traffic sounds, with rain storms – he even played with smoke rising in the sky! For the last several years we have both been realizing a dream that began almost 20 years ago and has culminated in the most creative group I have ever played with – the CCMC (Crushed Cookies Make Crumbs).

I have had the honor of playing with many great musicians such as Cootie Williams, Jimmy Rushing, Pee Wee Russell, Buck Clayton, Steve Lacy, Roswell Rudd, but nothing compares with the inventive range of this band. During two years of playing every Tuesday and Friday night at The Music Gallery, each night has been surprising. The band spontaneously composes incredibly varied new music.

Larry Dubin produces the most subtle range of qualities of any drummer I have heard: sprays, splashes, bursts, rustlings, flutterings, roars. His playing is orchestral and is not just the “bottom” of the music. Instrumental roles in the CCMC are extremely varied and are not stratified as in almost all jazz or rock. Dubin is a subtle and great musician; had he emerged in New York he would probably be influential. Fortunately for Toronto, he’s here and his music, like that of the Artists’ Jazz Band, is really Toronto music.

It can be said that “swing” is generated by the relationships between the shifting accents of “foreground” instruments and the relatively steady beat of the “background” rhythm section. One of Cecil Taylor’s great and liberating achievements is to have done away with the steady pulse as the reference for “swing” and to have replaced it with the internal energy of phrasing itself. Taylor and others (for example, Ornette Coleman), opened for exploration a vast aural territory which actually encourages individuality.

Within the context of Western music, jazz has always contained certain radical or revolutionary aspects. These are: improvisation, collective composition and individuality or the personal sound (based on amazing variations in sonority, timbre and pitch). However, the further development of these aspects involves more danger than most jazz musicians in Canada apparently dare to face. With few exceptions, they are professional musicians first; the development of an individual music beyond a certain point would make it almost impossible for them to function in commercial music.

In a way the marvelous capacity to play almost anything precludes true self-definition. A Thelonious Monk couldn’t work in a CBC studio orchestra – he simply wouldn’t fit. A certain conformity is essential within the many worlds of the music business and Canadian modern jazz musicians seem for the most part stuck in the “modal” stage of the music as it was and is played in the United States.

An incredible quantity of good music of many genres is being played in Canada and I’d like to make it clear that I respect all of it. We need it all. Also I know there are other fruitful directions for jazz musicians to take. Some musicians of course don’t want to go in any direction; they just want to play well within the established area which interests them. But I have been trying here to describe the excitement for the artist and the audience of a truly explorative and local art. There are a few intrepid explorers in Canada. They need more equally explorative listeners.



## Larry Dubin's Music 1978

Larry was very poor, but when he died in 1978 he left a will dispersing several thousand dollars. He left me \$5,000, which I used to assemble, press and print a three-volume box of LP records titled *Larry Dubin and CCMC*. It contains selections from the numerous tapes of the CCMC's many performances during the two and a half years Larry was in the ensemble, and this text.

The text was also published in *Impulse* 7, no. 1 (1978).

**M.S.**

**A**bove or below or perhaps opposite this text (I don't know as I now write right now where [or if!] what I'm about to refer to will be) is (should be) a reproduction of a photo I took of Larry Dubin's practice "drums." They're discs with plastic or rubber surfaces ("practice pads") that drummers use when they're forced to. The usual force is of course that practicing drumming can be offensive to neighbouring ears. The player of the (nearby documented) surfaces heard very little while "practicing." Larry played on those surfaces probably every day for at least 15 years (except for the last 2 1/2) for probably a minimum of 1 hour and a maximum of 6 or 7 or 8 and an average of 2 or 3 hours a day (already said that). He developed his own extraordinary technique, most of it, a lot of it anyway, not really hearing it. Moving his hands, his sticks, his mind. Drumming Dreaming and Dreaming Drumming.

Larry was a professional drummer playing all kinds of music (but preferring Jazz) in the Toronto area for about 20 years. Larry had very few opportunities to play his own way with other musicians before 1973. After that he found the CCMC and the CCMC found him and we made beautiful music together. Sometimes he had caused arguments and lost jobs by slipping into playing-Being himself before this but with the opening of The Music Gallery in Toronto that ended, he was finally able to Be-play himself. But. Almost simultaneous with this he was told that he had what was finally diagnosed as Chronic Aplastic Anemia, a leukemic blood disease and that he probably had little time to live. Time! All his playing, practicing, learning was of Time, of Pulse, of Beat, of kinds of Pressure and just when he was finally able to exteriorize this learning and had the conditions to make it grow . . . he was condemned . . . and he was innocent. What/Who accused him? Of What? Of devotion to Music? And what his personal music especially involved, was not knowing when the end would come. He then and very painfully knew that it was too near. But:

He played. Of course when he played almost daily (besides the public CCMC nights) at The Music Gallery he was able to use his own cymbals (carefully chosen over many years) and his own (tuned to the tightness he wanted) drums and the walls

or chairs or any surface rather than the simulations simulated nearby. He would play alone but he preferred to play with any sound. Of course there's always sound. A listener isn't really alone.

He kept a small radio next to his drums and would tune it to any station or between stations and play with that, reinforce it, underline it, equalize it, cover it but especially Recognize it. When he played in his apt. on the (see photo) "practice pads" he played *with* (perhaps *beside* is a better word) anything: traffic, street sound, rain and thunder storm sound. He would (besides the radio) play with records and with the TV (any program, the news, whatever), he'd play with the picture too, not only the sound, he'd play with clouds passing in the sky and the sound of his refrigerator. The CCMC played on Peter Gzowski's wonderful radio program, it was mentioned that Larry could and did play with anything. Peter asked him to play along with him as he talked. Larry did. It was fine. He loved to play with the CCMC better than with any other sound in the universe. The feeling was mutual.

Music was not a "product" to him. It was a way of living. He loathed attempts to package Inspiration. He didn't want to have to remember someone else's instructions as to how to behave when a certain projected event occurred. After The Music Gallery opened Larry played no more "commercial" jobs. He did play with other musicians he admired despite the fact that they played "tunes" (at The Music Gallery he made a sign that says "No Tunes Allowed") and if rehearsals were forced on him he would always say: "OK don't bother telling me what you're going to do. You just do it and I'll do what I do." Well, after years of trying to escape people telling him what to do when he had something better to do than what they wanted to have him do but he had to do what they wanted him to do wouldn't you? His Behavior was his, he couldn't "act." He wanted to be in the uniqueness of events with his own learning. He was a completely "Free" man-drummer. He would not/could not take directions. His supreme value had become to: by tapping, ticking, fluttering, rustling, vibrating him-Self through his hands to 2 wooden sticks onto any surface . . . modulate the air and manifest his Being-There in vibratory *Recognition* and *Understanding in Response to Any Sound (Other Vibration)*, including the sound he had just made. If the sound was produced by another sensitive "Free"-man-player there would then be mutual Recognition and interaction and Larry's sensitivity was such that such a player might receive first of all an overwhelming Mutuality and an endorsement of his sound-existence from Larry but within that he would hear that certain aspects of it were more daring, more creative, more exciting than others and he would be changed. But the complexity of Larry's "content" can be indicated by adding: Larry would also make known his "indifference" to what was being played by being so much him-Self that a lesson in Independence and divine Continuity was experientable. Larry seemed as if he would go on forever.

With the CCMC Larry would often drum/run along beside the rest of the music. He would pace it. His playing would be parallel to and equivalent to the other music. We would all be playing simultaneously and relationships would appear in equal and respectful side by side running not in commentary, not in fugues/imitations, not in accompaniments, not in team-work but in the togetherness of our individual, ultimately alone lives. Being Together. What I'm describing is not a race to win but a jogging to enjoy. Pack of wolves, dolphins diving, gulls careening. Delight in movement but movement become music. Amongst other social work they do, Artists explore

Nonsense mapping Sense. The CCMC explores "chaos." The committed player of ensemble "improvised" music explores a world of aesthetics/ethics, he trains himself to Recognize a Passing Form for the first time, he needs more than Memory. Like Larry I don't think that spontaneous group improvisation music should imitate pre-composed music. It can use everything possible in music but when it is most true-to-itself it reveals the process (mental processes) by being made up of myriad *arrivings*, not arrivals. Forming not Form.

Larry's playing was grounded in "rudiments" (partly learned on the see photo) and in the New Orleans-Swing-BeBop evolution of drumming. It became personal partly (just partly) because he couldn't "get it right" and later he realized that the conversion of "mistakes" is one of the most important and creative actions of Artists. Originally, while self-teaching he had set up his drums "wrongly." What's right should've been left etc. He never "corrected" this. Larry, I hope I have set up your "practice pads" (see photo) with your so-right wrongness. The set couldn't be left where it rightly belonged. His playing became personal partly because his playing alone was therapeutic of course. His playing alone on the (see photo) was learning, was pleasure, was painful, was exasperating and was like whistling alone (it affirms the Self, blowing forth some company and thus de-alones). His sensitivity to all sound didn't come from reports of the attitude of John Cage. Larry's formative experiences were local, experiential, not "academic." In that sense he was a folk musician. His experience was panoramic and panasonic but most importantly he perceived in an "original" way, with a unique emphasis. He didn't oppose. He wasn't against something. He listened to all/any drummers. To the ways of ecstatically roaring into the future that the greatest Jazz drummers developed he Responded with his own kind of Continuity that in general avoided the compartmenting and bracketing of most Jazz drumming in favour of a flow with few edges. He seemed to conceive of a kind of absolute top speed tempo and from this musical-psychological equivalent to the speed of light he would reactively choose sub-tempos around which his vibrations would be organized. His playing was very varied but was built around snare drum rolls which swelled and subsided from oceanic roars to tender caresses and which by their metamorphosing continuousness made a wall of tactility which was a constantly responding Place for any other sound Event that needed a place to take. Larry's touch was incredibly refined, even at his most aggressive, every boom, tap, tick and flick lived through, made into Art, the transfer of concentrated human creative energy. He Recognized the nature of the events in our music as they emerged and said so in the music. He often played beautiful solos but was happiest in sound-Relationships, in Association, in Participation. He was most There Then. He's gone now.

Sometimes with the CCMC the ensemble "running" that I tried to describe transcends the pack and the sound becomes so full, so charged, that it becomes a floating speeding electrical cloud. One can't tell what one is playing but one feels it to be ecstatically part of the Unity, one can't account for where any of the sounds are coming from, they've all become one. It's an Eternity. This happened during a concert in Vancouver. I felt myself floating and the sound became visible light. It was over and Larry said to me: "Wasn't that incredible! I started to rise, I floated up over my drums and everything became white light, beautifully dazzling white light." I had felt the same thing at the same time. This kind of clustering can arrive in many ways and one way can be heard in the last third of "23APR76" on Side 1 of CCMC Volume 2.

Larry's playing is wonderful on this. Notice how once the initial ensemble levitation has been achieved he lifts it even higher heavenward by shifting his playing to spraying, shimmering billows of cymbal gusts.

Yes, his playing can still be heard inside, around, under, over and through the Mutual music on CCMC Volumes 1, 2, 3 on Music Gallery Editions. Also we have many (it will never be enough) marvellous tapes and will issue more Larry Dubin-CCMC records soon. For those who did and those who should have heard him Living Drumming as only he could with the CCMC almost any Tuesday or Friday for the last 2 1/2 years at The Music Gallery, April 14, 1978, was the last time he played. He died on April 24th. My Friend.

This was tap-written. The camera was clicked.

# Pierre Théberge: Conversation with Michael Snow <sup>1978</sup>

Curated by Alain Sayag in Paris and Pierre Théberge in Montreal, a large exhibition of Snow's photographic work and films was organized by the Musée d'art contemporain for the Centre Georges Pompidou. The exhibition opened in Paris and subsequently toured to Lucerne, Rotterdam, Munich, Bonn and Montreal. A number of catalogues were published: the Centre Pompidou produced one in French, the Kunstmuseum Luzern did a larger one in German and English, and one was produced by the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, in Dutch.

The following discussion appeared in the Lucerne and Rotterdam catalogues.

It derives from two interviews taped in Toronto, 6 and 22 April 1978, and revised by the artist, 2 August 1978.

**C**an you describe the exhibition?

The general form of the exhibition is camera-related works, or at least things that have to do with the kinds of effects the camera has on perception. In the exhibition one enters with film, moving coloured light, then there are the slide pieces, then still coloured photographic pieces some of which are sequential like *Plus Tard*, then the black-and-white or light-and-shade photographic works, then the metal sculpture (*Blind*) which also includes images and the end, or the part of the exhibition that would circle you back around again, is a work (*Sight*) that consists of framing the fortuitous to make it part of a specific and finite thing. Unlike a camera *Sight*, *Scope* and *Blind* are attempts to enclose whatever happens through an aperture in such a way as to make that become part of the work. In photography, not only is framing involved as an aspect of selection, but there is a selection in time since photographs are preserved instants. The exhibition is involved with that as well as having works where the instants are not fixed but whose effects are related to the focusing concentration involved with the camera.

*Are you much concerned with fixing time or in film with the replaying of it?*

There are particular still works, like *Midnight Blue*, which point out that there was a specific time when the photograph was taken, that things are not constant, that light changes and that a choice of a certain kind of light was made.

The piece *8 x 10* is interesting that way because it is made of photographs of a rectangle on a surface which is in the final rendering another surface. When one says "a rectangle," one sees this equal-sided thing in one's mind, but seeing a rectangle usually isn't seeing that at all. A camera can point that out by isolating times and points of view in looking at a rectangle. The same with *Of a Ladder* and it's an aspect

of *Painting* too. In *Glares*, each one of the units is a separate time in a way. It's a separate fixed look at the individual parts of the whole. In film too I am interested in trying to direct the spectator to an experiencing of the image as a "replaying," as you put it, of a past event but also with the present sense of "critically" seeing this representation. However I'm also interested in the "suspension of disbelief" that is involved in totally empathizing with an image.

*Most of your work also very actively involves the spectator in a process of analysis that has also to do with the use of time.*

I hope so. I think people generally look through photographs to the subject with the kind of primitive faith that they are being shown the subject. I'm involved in a certain kind of skepticism that is just pointing out that the photo is a shadow of some subject, and also a section of it. It's also something that is very distantly related to that subject, it's a photograph that has other kinds of values. This isn't to say that photography doesn't work as an information carrier, but I'm interested in making more of a present situation for the spectator than one that takes them away from the works. This "present situation" oddly enough involves a referral to the past . . . one asks "how was this made?" and the succession of observations a spectator might make are a temporal ordering that is a concentration of "how the work was made."

Since photography is representational there is some exterior subject but sometimes the actual subject is also there. We were talking before about whether photography could be abstract, which is an issue in *Painting* because it's of painted surfaces. They existed but not in the same way as the people, buildings, nature and so on that usually comprise the subjects of photography. In *Painting* you don't know how big they were and in fact you don't even know whether they were those colours. So there's a really peculiar representational problem because it is not a painting, it's made of photographs of paintings.

*Morning in Holland* is also abstract but there the subject is in it. In *Painting* you don't get to see the subject, as actual objects existing apart from their image.

*In the exhibition one would go from the most abstract or less concrete, projections, to an actual three-dimensional object. I wonder if that has to do with the whole process of image making?*

The exhibition is like turning that process inside out. It starts with an image and ends with an object which contains an image. The first work, *Two Sides to Every Story*, involves a certain kind of plastic skepticism. I was thinking how thin the film image is since it's merely light on a surface compared to paint or ink on a surface. The fact that it has no substance is kind of touching because it recreates the way we see when light falls on things. In that particular work I try to point out the thinness that is involved when you have three-dimensional things, people, so on, compressed into a two-sided thing. It's an involvement in the mystery of light really as much as it is a reduction of the illusion of depth. The illusion could be quite strong directly facing the images, but as you move around different points of view make it less strong; on the edges it disappears. You see the illusion more than the realism as you move around the sides. The image gets flatter and thinner, and thinner and thinner. The work escapes from the idea of looking out a window that usually happens when films are projected on a wall or when anything is put on a wall with a frame around it. It's amazing how windows are influential. They seem like metaphors for the eyes in the head; when you're in the house you're looking out the eyes and we are the brains. That was one thing I was thinking about in making *Wavelength*.

I think I'm stuck with certain contradictions about not being "at home" in the movement of time because the future and the past are contents of the mind and you can't say the word "present" fast enough to have it fit the present. One of the interesting things about the still photograph, in the same way as certain paintings, is the aspect of fixing a moment in time, which of course is also an illusion, since like everything else it's slowly changing. Experiencing this stopping of time seems to be a refreshment that is demanded occasionally, and I suppose it's in the same order of things as being interested in the infinite. In that sense it's slightly religious.

It also means you are signalling the present as a presence too, that you were or are there.

Yes, we think that the photograph proves that the photographer was there.

*In Midnight Blue you have both – the absence of the candle physically, and yet its presence as a picture.*

Its wax physical "remains" are there on the ledge in front of the photo which is its image "remains." The work involves death, corpse and memory of the now absent candle and discussing it we return to the definition of a photograph as a memory, a fixed memory, an externalized memory. But to return to the subject of "fixing" moments in time: doesn't everybody feel occasionally that time is going and they'd like it sometimes to stay still or slow down, even? Maybe that's what gets satisfied by Vermeer's paintings specifically. For once everything is stopped so that it can be examined. One knows that the stopping of time is the subject and it's refreshing. And there's the other pole that has happened, or will always happen, from Cézanne to the Cubists, the dynamism of accepting and participating in the fact that there really is no fixed point of view and that everything is constantly changing.

*There might be something of that in Painting.*

Yes, it is involved with dynamism and relativity as subjects. But all paintings end up being fixed; of course they do change but it's so slow that for our purposes they can be thought of as unchanging, and you could make an argument that painting ought to be concerned with fixity more than with impressions of a dynamism which when depicted in the work itself only (which by nature is "fixed") misleads or is a deception, which is why sometimes Futurism seems corny.

This made me think of the few things in the exhibition that have to do with recording motion and one of them is *Plus Tard* where the movement of the still camera during the exposure made abstractions of images which were already abstractions of nature. It was partly a kind of painting with the camera and a way of making a unit of separate parts from these individual paintings with their individual qualities. By my use of the camera I hoped to make another subject without making the painters' subjects disappear. It has something to do with an equivalent to brush strokes; it is motion recorded, just as visible brush strokes are a recording of motion.

*I was wondering if Plus Tard could also be a reference to time.*

The title refers to the time gaps between the painting of the several landscape paintings (they are "realistic" recordings of subjects which existed) and their installation together in a room at the National Gallery of Canada and my personal photographic recording of them *in situ* and the spectator's personal present in seeing the final superimposition of these times. The paintings are by Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven (including the great painters Lawren Harris and J.E.H. MacDonald) and were mostly painted in the 1920s. My treatment of some of them sometimes

introduces an internal paradox, seeming to close one of the time gaps by appearing to be photographs of actual landscapes (apprehension going “through” representation to subject).

If you just photograph the paintings “straight,” which in some cases I almost did, there is almost no time left from the camera’s side. Of course there must actually be a time gap because it is a photograph but this aspect (in a completely “accurate” recording) would certainly be deemphasized to the point where one would go immediately past the photograph to the painting. The best reproduction would make you forget that there was any time involved in making it.

*So the best reproduction would be the actual original?*

Nothing can replace the original. A representation is a second-generation emphasis of some kind, a transformation.

The subject can’t represent itself. You have to be there – that’s why the present becomes so important. If it didn’t matter, then there wouldn’t have to be recordings, if every subject could be its own subject in a way.

*Why is recording of any interest at all?*

I think it’s part of the programming that we’re in.

Photographs, tape recordings and videotapes are an externalized or objective memory, a socialized memory. One should consider that in the making of an image. We are social primates and part of the unity that technology brings about has been a sharing of memories. When there was a small group of ape men, near men, Neanderthal men, they shared tools and experience in order to learn how to survive and this is part of the same process: making memories more and more public so that the sharing of them produces a unification of the social body. The experience is on a level that is above or below personal interchange and it equalizes. I was watching television the other night and thinking that the relationship between it and what’s represented is similar to a pictograph or hieroglyph even though there are a lot more details. The image is abstracted enough to be discussed under the category of glyph which circles us back to pointing out the differences between representations and their subjects.

*That is part of the discussion in the bus scene in Rameau’s Nephew.*

An interesting prospect is talked about there, which is that representation could arrive at a stage where you couldn’t tell the difference between the representation and its subject. That certainly seems almost possible right now.

*Don’t you think it would be like abolishing consciousness, in a way? Don’t you think it could be like dreaming, where there is no criticism, there is no consciousness, in a way?*

Yes, I agree it would be like abolishing consciousness and it looks like it’s going to happen.

It might be what will happen if there isn’t the catastrophe, one of the catastrophes or all of the catastrophies! There would be a kind of unification with a mirror image that would be a stasis between the inner and the outer. They would be locked. That might be the way the organism will solve its problem, not by going ahead but by picturing itself!

*Do you see yourself as being a primitive, relative to that idea? How does your work relate to this idea?*

I’m trying to point out the reality of images, to take representation as a fact in itself in the world. So as long as there are differences, I’m interested in the differences.

If I were to work with holograms I'd still be working with the difference, even though holography is the same sort of thing as the achievement of film, which was to make the illusion of things move and make representation more realistic. Holograms give the impression of more three-dimensionality, and that's beautiful. I think it's not a technical or a technological thing but a way of clarifying the world and the world of its representations, though of course one includes the other. So if you clarify one it helps to clarify the other, or can. Does it?

*Does the recent work (Painting) have to do more with a simultaneous presentation of states of time rather than with a clearly narrative content?*

Yes. In my other work, I've done several things that are sequences, often reading sequences, left to right; but there's an ideal of a painting achievement that involves the spectator being able to start anywhere in the picture and move anywhere, and in which all parts would be of equal value. I've often thought of different ways of trying to work with photographs and not have reading sequences or a narrative structure.

*In terms of your filmic work, for example, could you conceive of a film that would have simultaneous times?*

I think films are linear but the simultaneity can be obviously between the sound and the image as in parts of *Rameau's Nephew* where they occur at the same time but with a separation between qualities and sense. The memory of previous things put in the spectator's mind can also offer another kind of simultaneity. That applies to *Rameau's Nephew* too where each section is so different that when you're in one and looking back at another, your apprehension or understanding of the distant one becomes changed by the one that you're in and the one that you've passed through; there's a layering in the mind of the separate things.

*Does the abstract aspect of Painting relate to those blocks of colour in Rameau?*

Yes. There are some parts in *Rameau's Nephew* where a coloured surface was photographed. Sometimes that's legible to the spectator but it's just a colour on the screen and you say "coloured light," and other times you see a transparency being put in front of the camera (or could it be the projector lens?). *Painting* is not entirely abstract in the sense that it is of some other things which are paintings.

*Are they always identified like that?*

No, in the smaller photographs there is no texture left, no impasto that is most evident in the bigger ones. I think you can connect them because of the colour, but the reductions do away with the detail.

*You call this work Painting and yet it seems to be also musical in the sense of your music activity, the autonomy of parts and simultaneity of sounds. It may be interesting to talk about your music work in relation to your other work.*

I think *Painting* has been influenced by music but it's the result of a cross-current really, hoping to disrupt sequences to make it not necessarily an all-over, but a non-linear work. In the CCMC there are lots of occasions where the parts are simultaneous and equivalent, where they all happen together with more or less accord and it keeps on changing. It's very hard to describe, but three or two parts might come together harmonically or in terms of texture, timbre, or rhythm; then they might deviate and at a certain point have six quite separate parts even though they are happening together. This is very, very interesting because you would get something quite different because there is a special occasion involved where we are all there together even though there may not be "accord" at every instant. It's an interesting kind of collective

individualism that happens and it changes constantly. There are times when there are foregrounds and backgrounds and where we may be all working on the same harmonic material too. At any rate, that is definitely related to *Painting* in the sense that the parts are all equal but simultaneous.

*Wouldn't that be in Rameau in the scene with the record player where there is simultaneity?*

That's true, yes, but there's a past tense to it because it's a memory on a memory on a present which in a movie is a memory anyway. I have notes for one part of *Rameau's* where I was going to orchestrate a room like a restaurant, where I would have had dozens of people and all that activity that happens in a restaurant. I was going to script every conversation so that there would be cycles, and control over what was being said, so despite the fact it would have been a prior composition, that there would have been what happens in CCMC: all of a sudden perhaps all the same words would have been spoken by the entire room, at other times there would be complete disparity or, at other times I would have controlled the volume. I didn't do it; I don't know why not, now that I think of it.

*Has it got anything to do with how you think? Do you think in simultaneous terms?*

I don't think so; I think one thing after another. I've been interested in simultaneity for a long time. In one of the first Walking Woman paintings, *Venus Simultaneous*, made in 1962, I was thinking of representations of the same person at different places at the same time so that all the images are the same, but they're all different, in different places. Even though it's horizontal it's not really sequential, because you don't read it this way or that way, you can move around on the surface and read into it and so on.

Whatever the medium I'm working in, what I'm interested in is Form. In the music that I play (I play piano, trumpet, synthesiser, percussion instruments) with the CCMC, all the information or knowledge about form that I have learned in a lifetime is immediately put into action and I use it all. I live with it actively, not that I don't live when I make the other work but it's a way of behaving "formally" in a social situation. I apply this art-sense in other ways in my life and there are events that I feel have as much "art content" as some of the works I make but this is a social event which produces art publicly.

*It has a lot to do with an instantaneous kind of behaviour.*

Maybe I'm partly balancing the fact that making the photographic things and making the films involves a lot of stages and sometimes I feel really desperate about that. This music is completely the opposite within my life and its immediacy gives me a balance. Yes, it formalizes or frames individual behaviour in the musical situation. One hears nervous systems.

*You were saying yesterday that you weren't interested in solo performance. Could that be because it reminds you too much of, or it's too related to, making sculpture or making photographic work and that's very much a solitary enterprise?*

Well, maybe I'm an extremist. For me, in improvisation the miracles are produced by the interaction between people and events over which no one person has any control and actually they are unrepeatable, whereas if you are playing solo, there isn't necessarily any difference between improvisation and playing a composition because it's entirely up to you – what's fortuitous is yours. Beethoven must have improvised sonatas like the ones he wrote – that's the way he played, the kind of form he thought in.

When I improvise alone at home, I play whole pieces, each of which is concerned with specific materials, and there is no way I can surprise myself the way other independent lines of thought crossing mine can. It's just not radical enough for me.

In the CCMC we joke about desiring chaos and we say after we played, if it was really good, "Well, we nearly got there"! The connections that happen in these five simultaneities are inconceivable. I don't think they could be composed; they're too subtle and that's the beauty of the music. When it's good it's beyond composition, you couldn't have an idea like that.

We tape-record everything and I listen to these tapes a lot. Sometimes we may be very pleased with a piece but don't "know" it consciously. Listening to the tapes often reveals an order or sets of systems that no one was aware of during the playing of the music. The recording makes an artifact of a phenomenon, of a "natural" organism. It's like photographing a plant in order to examine it and classify it.

One of the artist's functions has been to explore and map "nonsense." That's what the CCMC does with "chaos." It's an adventure. In the form of tapes and records the music becomes a "product," an "object," but in its formation it is a process of trying to encounter the unrecognizable and get to know it.

In playing I just try putting this with this and that with that but since you're not alone it's partly reactive. I consciously choose sometimes but often it all happens too fast for that; it's physiological and mental simultaneously. You act and observe the action and its results and so on. Sometimes the least deliberate things are the most interesting; sometimes the best music comes when you're not even paying much attention to it.

I have made other kinds of music which relate more evidently to my other work and the music (and the album jacket itself) of my Chatham Square label album is an example. Here, as in the sound for my film, the nature of recording, its effect on the original subject and its final context were considered. The CCMC recordings are "documentary." I have also done gallery sound installations. One of them, *Hearing Aid*, involves the effects of successive rerecordings, of distance, acoustics and "framed" fortuitous environmental sound. It uses cassette tape recorders and sound sculpturally and it also uses the memory aspect of recording in a way that relates it to some of my work with images.

*The film Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen seems to bring together many of the concerns you've just been speaking of.*

Well, there is that business of putting stuff in your memory, and it does get to a stage, I think, where you are on the point of the present, and you see the wake of the past and you're looking ahead a little bit, but you really can't look ahead because you don't have any idea what's going to come (as in the CCMC's music); and presumably you found it interesting enough to stay that long, so you hope to find more of interest but you don't know what it could be, really.

*This representation or use of time by elongating and stopping it, by concentrating a present moment – would you have anticipated it that clearly when you were doing Rameau?*

Not the states that you get into – I don't think they're imaginable – but some of the effects, in a way. It could be organized differently. I think it's a bit like *Painting* because there's no immediately evident reason why one thing follows another.

*But that kind of irrational “sequence of moments” doesn’t bother you?*

No, it’s not irrational; they’re composed so that they affect each other. What’s assumed to be completely representational and naturalistic is followed by something where some element is abstract or vice versa, so you’re always coming from one mode into another.

*What I mean is that it isn’t necessarily a sequential didactic development.*

No, they definitely are separate.

*Painting, for example, the fact that you are now rearranging it and that you have to more or less arbitrarily decide that this is the order or the disorder.*

But I don’t know if it’s arbitrary. Certain kinds of painting have a lot of elements that you can’t say where they came from, really. You just make a colour and put it on and so on, and you gradually assemble this thing that balances out; there’s no accounting for it, really.

*But that doesn’t bother you?*

No, I think it’s a very mysterious and interesting thing. *Painting* won’t be arbitrary in a sense when I settle on it, because as you move the pieces around, different kinds of relationships tend to dominate. What I’ll do is make it consist of some series of relationships where one is dominant and underneath that you’ll see another one and so on.

*Like in Rameau in a way too? The way things would relate?*

Yes, that’s true, they recur. For example, one series that has fairly short things is the bus scene, fart scene, and the one that is in the museum. The first one has no visible sound source. There is a voice, a single voice, and to me there’s a really great separation between voice and image which you might or might not try to account for. One might ask, “Why is that voice over that picture?” In technical film talk it’s a “voice-over” or a narration or a commentary. But here it isn’t a commentary because it’s not commenting on the picture. Maybe it is, but it certainly isn’t easily apparent and the voice has also a bit of lisp. But anyway there are two separate but parallel things. Those two things are naturalistic, but there are also other odd effects because the image has these little holes in it that the people in the picture might be thought to be looking at, so in a way there are three simultaneous lines there. The fart scene doesn’t have that – it’s in sync, it’s naturalistic. When it goes back in reverse and you see the camera in it there’s perhaps the fleeting thought that it is in a mirror. It becomes non-naturalistic because it’s obviously technically different, but you do still believe that those are people there, so it’s still naturalistic on one level, it’s now a different kind of abstraction. And the next one, the museum one, the sentences are just laid over the movements of the mouths and you make a relationship between them but you know they’re not coming from those mouths. Then the picture and the sound gradually seem to separate, become more atomized and develop into a completely other mode too. That is followed by the piss duet, which is naturalistic. It’s such a bizarre thing that you’re brought back out of a pretty powerful abstraction at the end of the museum scene where it’s all very fast, flickers, with the sound all chopped up, then you just plunge into these two buckets of piss, which I think are believable in that naturalistic representational sense. So those are all four different states of mind, and coming from one to the other clarifies either one, I suppose, and succeeding ones too, maybe. I don’t know what people do when they watch it; and they might just be thinking about something else – that happens!

## Cerisy-la-Salle 1979

Since 1959 the Château of Cerisy-la-Salle in Normandy, France, which consists of a complex of buildings, the oldest dating from 1605, has been the headquarters of the Centre Culturel International. Every summer the centre hosts conferences and readings. Proust, Gide, Valéry and Claudel have been the subjects of these summer conferences. In 1979 Michael Snow was invited by Jean-François Lyotard to introduce and show some of his films in the context of a conference with specific reference to *Comment Juger?* (How does one judge?). Among the many distinguished speakers was Jacques Derrida. Snow's talk consisted of playing a previously recorded tape, to which he lip-synced, or mimed. What follows is the text for this "performance-lecture," which preceded a screening of *Presents* (1982, 90 minutes).

**B**onjour, messieurs et mesdames.

C'était avec tant de plaisir, et je ne peut pas blâmer le Québec pour l'état de mon français, malgré que ce plaisir étais immédiatement touché par un frisson de trépidation, qu'il y a quelques mois j'ai reçu l'invitation d'apparaître ici en trois dimensions. Merci beaucoup à ceux qui sont responsables.

La trépidation sera bientôt expliqué, mais peut-être c'est pas nécessaire. C'est bien possible que c'est déjà évident pourquoi j'ai été touché par cette sensation.

Précisément, pour moi la question principale de ce colloque ne peut pas être "Comment juger?" mais elle doit être "Comment juger en français?"

C'est vrai que je suis Canadien, mes parents Ontarien et Québécoise, mais malheureusement, je suis beaucoup plus souvent parmi les anglophones qu'au Québec.

Que d'émotions! Quelle provocation et (on verra) peut-être quel embarras pour moi de montrer la primitivité, la simplicité (cough) de mon français en face des juristes distingués, quelques uns qui sont les maîtres actuels les plus sophistiqués de votre langue!

Ici, ce n'est pas suffisant d'être capable de demander "l'addition, s'il vous plaît!" Non. Ici, c'est "le jugement, s'il vous plaît."

Courage! J'ai décidé de me préparer soigneusement, de répéter un petit discours discipliné et d'employer n'importe quel moyen pour créer l'impression que je suis capable de parler français couramment, que j'ai une voix sonore, prononciation parfaite et que j'ai disponible une livraison suffisant puissante, bien ajustée afin de garantir que tout le monde peuvent me bien entendre. Voici le résultat et j'espère que vous pouvez facilement et avec plaisir suivre le ruban de mes paroles. Probablement, à la fin votre jugement sera que tandis que mon français est extrêmement clair mes films sont extrêmement obscurs.

En anglais, il y a deux prononciations pour le mot que j'ai choisi être titre du film je vous présente ce matin, cet après-midi, ce soir. Que cette méthode est délicieuse. Quelle sensation rare: il n'a pas de danger de me tromper! On peut dire *PRESENTS* ou *PRESENTS*.

Je crois, évidemment je ne peut pas être certain, mais je crois qu'il y a des parallèles entre les plusieurs significations et leurs multiples usages en anglais et en français.

Une exception je sais: *PRESENTS* en anglais veut dire des cadeaux et aussi dans un sens complètement différent un équivalent en anglais sera *nows*, c'est-à-dire quelques "maintenants" (pluriel), une groupe de moments actuels. C'est aussi un jeu de mots sur la présence. *Presence* en anglais.

*PRESENTS* pousse du source *to present*, en français le verbe présenter: introduire, donner. En anglais il y a des utilisations fréquentes: d'abord pour annoncer un spectacle, les films dits "commerciaux," un concert. Par exemple, Samuel Goldwyn presents. *PRESENTS* veut dire aussi viser, pointer, diriger un fusil d'un côté particulier. *PRESENTS* est utilisé dans la terminologie des avocats, des juges, la royauté et dans la terminologie de la zoologie. *PRESENT* fait partie de plusieurs autres mots qui sont importants: *PRESENTABLE*: suffisamment beau pour être présenter au Roi, *REPRESENT*, *REPRESENTATION* presque les mêmes mots qu'en français. N'oubliez pas (si ça devient utile) que *PRESENTS* contient *RESENTS* – ressentir.

La langage qu'on emploie quand on regarde change l'image, nuance l'image. Je ne sais pas franchement si c'était évident pour le public canadien ou américain mais j'avais l'intention quand j'ai travaillé sur *PRESENTS* d'en effet illustrer, montrer les significations littérales (?) de certaines phrases dans le vocabulaire, la terminologie de film en anglais: *to shoot, a shot, to take a photograph, a take, a trucking shot, a tracking shot, a dolly, to pan, hand held, a roll of film, to cut, to splice*. Montage, mise-en-scène et travelling sont utilisés dans les deux langues.

*PRESENTS* contient un peu de dialogue en anglais moins compliqué que ceci (c'est-à-dire que c'est presque infantile) et je suis sûr que ça ne posera pas de problèmes. Ça ressemble beaucoup au procédé que se déroule actuellement.

Le film était construit pendant l'année dix-neuf cent quatre-vingt. Il dure une heure et trente minutes et c'est presque complètement ma faute. Je refuse de blâmer la société.

Je l'ai conçu, je l'ai écrit, j'ai cherché l'argent, j'ai fait le design des décors, la scène, les machines nécessaires avec trois assistants et j'ai l'a construit, je l'ai détruit aussi, j'ai été le directeur et j'ai choisi l'actrice Jane Fellowes et l'acteur Peter Melnick et ils ont contribué beaucoup, j'ai choisi l'équipe, la pellicule, j'ai fait tout le montage, j'ai tourné deux séquences, le parti en "dolly" et la séquence construite complètement des panoramiques "hand-held." J'ai jugé que c'était pas mal et puis la bande sonore . . . arrêt.

Thank you.

On doit clarifier aussi que ce discours est devenu encore une autre langue transformé par un procédé pareil au procédé qui se déroule actuellement. Ce n'est pas ma voix. Qu'est-ce que c'est?

## Edinburgh 1979

A series of panels and talks was included with the film showings by the organizers of the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1979. Many “avant-garde” filmmakers from the Continent, England and North America were invited. Snow was one of them, and he gave the following talk as a member of a panel on Language and the Avant-garde.

I was originally going to be on the Narrative and the Avant-garde panel, and I was preparing for it by trying to collect and re-collect some stories from Hollis Frampton, who apparently remembers many and tells them wonderfully. Stop me if I’m wrong, Hollis, but one that he told me is about transvestite black Greek sheep in a taxi on a train going through the *wasser* (*eau* or *acqua*) of a Catholic church in Scotland swinging burning purses. That was a particularly good one, but since I can’t remember how it starts or ends it’s probably just as well that I’m on this panel – at least I’m using language. Anyway, rather than start my statement with one of Hollis’s stories, as I already have, I’d like to start with what may at first seem a breaking of the rules of this morning’s contest. That is, rather than refer forward in time to the panel I was going to be on tomorrow, I’d rather start by being on this one as I am and referring backwards to a panel which I was not on and which occurred on Monday.

I wish I could speak Italian at all, let alone as well and as interestingly as the voice of Adriano Apra speaks English. Adriano Apra speaking English was, I thought, understandable when in the course of criticizing the follies of idealism, he described the dangers of separation from the masses involved in anyone’s striving for perfection and referred to Ernie Gehr as a paranoid. I know Ernie Gehr and it’s true that he may seem to exaggerate a little in attempting to achieve a “proper” presentation of his marvellous work. But since one of his motivations is simply that he wants you, the spectator, to see what he has done, I think Apra’s remark was a kind of vandalism. Is Apra urging the artist to do his job badly? Apra followed this by referring to the fact that though the original Anthology Film Archives theatre in New York was an attempt at an ideal film theatre, one could still hear the subway passing underneath, meaning that life could not be kept out of this artistic tomb. Would he prefer that the subway went right through the room? I have shown my films in many university theatres in the U.S. and Canada and other theatres and I’m paranoid. By and large those theatres make it extremely difficult to concentrate because of some of the most extraordinary architectural mistakes imaginable. As Apra was saying that he was opposed to being asked to give his attention only to the film in a theatre since so many other things are usually going on there, my mind drifted from listening to him to thinking about what I might say on Thursday on the panel discussing Narrative and the Avant-garde.

Filmmakers must accept *a certain amount* of variability in the presentation of their work: image size, intensity and colour of light and screen surface and masking are always different. You try to make what you hope can survive a certain degree of these modulations. Sometimes it can be painful: a red that you appreciate as doing a certain job gets screened as a brown. There is, however, one standard that can be referred to, and that's focus. There is no such norm for sound, and if there was it would probably not be referred to in the same way as focus is sometimes ignored. One can print "Play sound loud" on the can and that's about it. In general, audience and projectionist have to accept what comes out of the speakers, and for narrative films with dialogue everybody naturally accepts what they're hearing just so long as what is said is intelligible and there aren't too many buzzes, rasps or hisses. A cultured audience will accept anything because they know that almost anything is interesting if you're feeling receptive. Nam June Paik is an artist who admirably works with the variability and instability of video, and it works with him.

Personally, though I appreciate some of the variation that presentations can produce, I do have certain limits for all my films and especially for one of them – *Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen*, which was shown here last summer.

In order to approach, or to continue to approach, as I think I am and you perhaps may not, the subject of Language and the Avant-garde, I'd like to talk about my own uses of language in my films and to thus perhaps eventually arrive at the subject. I apologize for my egomania, but I'm an artist not a critic.

More generalizations to set the specifics against: with *Rameau's Nephew* . . . , as with the other films, I have tried to make a situation in which a concentration on and of Being is possible, Being with a capital B. In an attempt to revert to basic meanings I would say that I am, and any serious artist must be, a formalist, because to make is to form and all there is is form. In connection with current usage it's useful to remember that to discriminate means to be able to tell one thing from another, and that what makes all things "present" to us is the differences between them, not their resemblances. An intense interest in one's materials can finally, in the work, be a manifestation of "concern" that can have wide applications. And as usual I felt that if a work could not be a work on oneself first, it could not become a "work on oneself" for anyone else.

In *Rameau's Nephew* . . . , I tried to use language in its speech form. In considering the possibilities and nature of the materials and processes involved, like at least several other artists that I know, I built from the elementary: that in sound film, sound and image have separate sources. It can be banal in a banal way to merely point out the lips are on the screen and the voice is coming from the loud speaker, but it can also be revelatory to experience from the inside, as it were, the mysteries of the common hallucination of representation – that the lips are ghost lips and the voice is not a voice but a ghost voice, a *used* voice, a memory of a voice, a *recorded* voice. This has subtle connections with another basic – that language is social par excellence, that we who speak a common language all share in a kind of unifying loop. Even silent thought is social. New meanings come partly from the constant rearrangement of the same words, though it could also be said that we already know what can be said if we know the language. Words exist as individual entities that can be arranged in seemingly infinite numbers of sequences. Individual entities exist as words that seemingly can be

arranged in infinite sequences of numbers. I decided to model the form of my work, a sound film, a talking picture, on the forms in and of speech, on the units of speech so that a visual unit could be the number of frames it took to say a syllable, a word, a phrase or a sentence. Another model was sound quality: sibilance, consonant or percussive sound, etc. When recorded, these qualities become material that is manipulable, and electronic qualities and possibilities of rearrangement arrive.

Considered as representation, as illusionism, language has its own peculiar limitations which can be experienced in a dialogue between recorded speech and moving picture as well as in this statement. I made arrangements of and modulations of our shared signs and thus their meanings, attempting to always maintain that going-into-the-future apprehension that is involved in the gradual arrival of a sentence against the memory of its emergence.

The film is subtitled “for English-speaking audiences” and works with kinds of scales of intelligibility that, though dispersed through the film, conceptually start from that common area of listening wherein we *understand* what is said with little or no notice of the sound qualities of the voice. Like now. These aspects are fused. We begin not to comprehend when, for example, the sound is too quiet, when the speaker has an accent, regional or foreign, or a speech impediment, when the sound is interrupted or baffled by a louder sound, like a subway, or distorted electronically. Our will to meaning can operate on everything but uses different means on different objects with different results. As one moves away from intelligibility, there can be many different stages of the effort to “understand,” and a phase can be passed through where one listens to sound, not to speech, and the mind veers to its music-meaning side. Experiencing the film involves oscillations into and out of these kinds of attention. Consider listening to a completely foreign language: the effect can be special, the sound “two-dimensionalizing” or emphasizing the image. In the film Chinese and Korean and other non-European languages were used.

Understanding is a kind of translation, and in one sense the film itself, consisting of nuclear dialogues, forms one-half of a possible dialogue with the audience.

Way back at the onset of these mumblings, I probably mentioned that there is no norm or standard for the presentation of 16 mm optical sound. Since *Rameau's Nephew* . . . consists of a range of effects which include clearly enunciated and clearly recorded speech in sync with in-focus naturalistic colour and hence personality, character, individuality, as well as various kinds of electronic “distortion” (although I dislike using that word), some of which are the kinds of variables that occur when, as it is said, you don’t want them (improper presentation), you can perhaps understand (again!) that I become paranoid when it’s shown. If you don’t have a chance to hear a theme, you won’t be able to know what’s a variation.

All this is being said for the moment accepting that criticism identifies certain art and artists as “avant-garde” and accepting that myself and my work are so labelled. By now it should be revealed that to use spoken language to any deeper effect in film, I think one ought to be involved in provoking differences of hearing and listening counterpointed with those of seeing, watching, looking and making possible raw or concrete understandings. Meaning is a constituent not only of the words used but, even more than in real speech, of qualities possible only with film sound: a conscious use of the differences between actual speech and recorded speech . . . click.

## Statement for *10 Canadian Artists in the 1970s* 1980

Snow contributed this text about his work, at the invitation of the curator Roald Nasgaard, to the catalogue for the exhibition *10 Canadian Artists in the 1970s*, organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1980.

**T**he works in this exhibition were all produced in 1978 and 1979 and represent the most recent stage of that line of my work which since 1961 has dealt primarily with photography.

In some of this work I have tried to create both the subject and its representation and/or have concentrated on the aesthetic/philosophic potential of processes or effects which are particular to photography, or I have made “pure” paintings which are not representations of photographs but whose conception was influenced by the experience of photography.

A somewhat reflexive work may take its place in the world as a self-reliant (self-contained, independent) individual and since there may be few exterior references (or they may be relatively universal ones) all that the spectator needs for his/her half of the possible dialogue is there before him/her. The identity of the work may help to clarify that of the spectator.

Where there are “distant” exterior references (for example, *iris-IRIS*) I’ve tried to shape the temporal aspects of the work. There are layers of references to other times and places through which one may see the now (or vice versa). In all cases I’ve tried to deal with the physical facts of the medium in some expository relation to the “illusions.” The two-dimensionality, size, mounting/framing and colour of the final print in relation to the subject are integral parts of the possible “contents.”

## *So Is This* 1982

This, that's to say the text to which *this* refers, is the "script" or perhaps "score" for a silent film of 45 minutes consisting of the single words of this "script" or "score" placed on the screen one by one, one after another, for specific lengths of time.

Facsimile photos of the original hand-written "script" are printed here. The number written beside each word indicates the number of frames (time on the screen) to be shot of each word, and a space of black between words. Twenty-four frames = one second. Several different strategies were employed on timing words/passages of the film. Image quality changes too, and the situation of an audience reading a film is a special one, not to be duplicated by reading this.

A typed transcription follows on page 218.

**M.S.**

240+ This is the title of the film. The rest of the film will look just like the film. The film will consist of single words presented one after another in constructed sentences and hopefully (this is what you come in) to convey meaning. This is what they say is the signifier. This film will be about one hour long. Does that have seem like a frightening prospect? Well look at it this way: how do you know that I am not lying? Perhaps after a while the word after the word system will change into something else. Well take this word for it. This is the way it goes to be. New paragraph. Most of the film was written in 1975 but for various reasons could not be done until now (April 1982). Thanks to Anna Ponomorova for her assistance in placing these words on the screen. Some of the following considerations and decisions preceded the production of the film: In 1979 Drew Morey made a film titled This is the title of my film. Since this is not his film and the title is in his, it cannot possibly refer to his film. His title is not the title of his film and hence the author (Michael Snow) of this film decided to retain the title and to include the foregoing reference to his source in his film. This is still the title of the film. So in this John Kamwan recently gave the author a ~~name~~ bronze relief he made of the words of this. This is not that. This is not a script. Next there have been several

WARNING \*

films<sup>16</sup> or videotapes<sup>10</sup> that<sup>12</sup> concentrate<sup>20</sup> on text<sup>10</sup>, for<sup>12</sup> example<sup>10</sup> Richard Serra<sup>10</sup>, Tom Sherman<sup>12</sup>, John Knight<sup>12</sup> and Paul Haine<sup>10</sup>. I have<sup>12</sup> made<sup>12</sup> excellent<sup>18</sup> use<sup>10</sup> of<sup>12</sup> these<sup>10</sup>. The<sup>8</sup> author<sup>14</sup> would<sup>12</sup> like<sup>10</sup> to have<sup>6</sup> been<sup>6</sup> first<sup>4</sup> but it's<sup>12</sup> a bit<sup>10</sup> late<sup>30</sup>. Present<sup>10</sup> is energy<sup>10</sup> in some<sup>20</sup> respect<sup>30</sup>. This<sup>10</sup> is first<sup>44</sup>. Obviously<sup>10</sup> this<sup>10</sup> is not<sup>8</sup> the first<sup>8</sup> time<sup>16</sup> that<sup>24</sup> this<sup>24</sup> has been used<sup>8</sup> for<sup>12</sup> the first<sup>8</sup> time<sup>68</sup>. This<sup>72</sup> belongs<sup>72</sup> to<sup>72</sup> everybody<sup>108</sup>. This<sup>8</sup> means<sup>8</sup> this<sup>24</sup>, you<sup>24</sup> + think<sup>8</sup> this<sup>12</sup> we see<sup>8</sup> this<sup>12</sup> they use<sup>12</sup> this<sup>48</sup>. ~~It's~~ This<sup>46</sup> is a universe<sup>96</sup>. So what<sup>8</sup> is<sup>8</sup> important<sup>8</sup> is not<sup>8</sup> this<sup>10</sup> but<sup>8</sup> how<sup>8</sup> this<sup>8</sup> is used<sup>12</sup>. Third<sup>4</sup> paragraph<sup>40</sup> sometimes<sup>12</sup> the author<sup>12</sup> of<sup>12</sup> their film<sup>12</sup> is present<sup>12</sup> when<sup>12</sup> his film<sup>8</sup> are screened<sup>12</sup> and can<sup>12</sup> this<sup>14</sup> answer<sup>12</sup> questions<sup>12</sup> about<sup>12</sup> them<sup>24</sup>. One<sup>24</sup> question<sup>24</sup> which<sup>10</sup> the author<sup>10</sup> expects<sup>24</sup> is "Why<sup>24</sup> would<sup>24</sup> anyone<sup>12</sup> want<sup>12</sup> to do<sup>12</sup> such a thing<sup>12</sup> as this<sup>24</sup>?" followed<sup>68</sup> by<sup>12</sup> "Wouldn't<sup>12</sup> a book<sup>12</sup> be better<sup>12</sup>?" If<sup>24</sup> Mr<sup>16</sup> Snow<sup>16</sup> is here<sup>12</sup> on<sup>10</sup> this occasion<sup>12</sup> I would<sup>10</sup> attempt<sup>8</sup> to answer<sup>8</sup> such<sup>12</sup> questions<sup>12</sup> in<sup>12</sup> speech<sup>18</sup> after<sup>8</sup> the film<sup>12</sup> is over<sup>12</sup>. It's<sup>12</sup> going<sup>12</sup> to be<sup>12</sup> a very<sup>24</sup> interesting<sup>8</sup> film<sup>12</sup> and perhaps<sup>12</sup> such<sup>12</sup> questions<sup>12</sup> will<sup>12</sup> be answered<sup>68</sup> by<sup>12</sup> the film<sup>12</sup> itself<sup>12</sup> as to<sup>12</sup> speak<sup>64</sup>. One<sup>8</sup> of<sup>12</sup> the interests<sup>10</sup> of<sup>10</sup> this system<sup>12</sup> is that<sup>12</sup> each<sup>20</sup> word<sup>40</sup> can<sup>10</sup> be held<sup>10</sup> on<sup>10</sup> the screen<sup>10</sup> for<sup>10</sup> a specific<sup>12</sup> length<sup>12</sup> of time<sup>12</sup>. You<sup>12</sup> can't<sup>12</sup> see what's<sup>12</sup> coming<sup>12</sup> a sentence<sup>12</sup> could<sup>12</sup> take<sup>12</sup> any<sup>12</sup> unexpected<sup>12</sup> turn<sup>12</sup>. The<sup>12</sup> words<sup>12</sup> could<sup>12</sup> change<sup>12</sup> to black<sup>12</sup> or white<sup>12</sup> or different<sup>12</sup> colour<sup>12</sup>. Words<sup>12</sup> in<sup>12</sup> capitals<sup>12</sup> could<sup>12</sup> be used<sup>12</sup> or different<sup>12</sup> type<sup>12</sup> faces<sup>12</sup>. Words<sup>12</sup> could<sup>12</sup> fade<sup>12</sup> in<sup>12</sup> and<sup>12</sup> out<sup>12</sup> or slide<sup>12</sup> on<sup>12</sup> and<sup>12</sup> off<sup>12</sup>. Images<sup>12</sup>

10 12  
 Sum. Friedrich

or sound could be introduced. Notice how, each word is different dimension. Some words could get so attenuated, or so big, that only a section of them would be shown on the screen. They could get extremely tiny. The decision has been made to concentrate the distinctness capacity of film to structure time: the words are the individual unit of writing; the frame is the smallest unit of film. In other words, lighting is (Japanese?) This is white light, it contains all the colours in case you're getting restless, this film (long title starts it?) What discuss itself all the time it's going to get into some real human stuff that will make you laugh and cry and change society. Also, it's going to become confessional and very personal. The author is going to tell you as much as he can about himself. He's going to be completely frank. He's going to say where he went wrong in his life, how he's trying to correct his errors and how he hopes that we are doing he may be helping you to improve yourself. This is the start of a new paragraph from which any children present should shield their eyes. Since this film was originally ~~composed~~ composed and

(4)

The Ontario Board of Censors started to investigate  
 so-called Experimental Films. It's difficult to lock  
 understand why, but it seems as if their purpose  
 is to protect you from this. To protect you from  
 people like Curt Casper author discussion then  
 serial live on a fantasy on the screen. So that  
 the idea? How did we ever manage without them?  
 Anyway, there are apparently some things that the  
 Court say. Perhaps we will be classified adult of the  
 time you are reading this. Or perhaps you are reading  
 this elsewhere. It's his appearing in Ontario.  
 Hills Censors. Bi. Mary. This film is as clear as  
 whistle. Has stars Has (Hollow slaughter). This  
 film would not say that if it's not a woman  
 of sit. July. Later others will be a section of this film  
 featuring Verbal Sex and Violence. In its original  
 reading if you are an audience. If you will  
 be a text. Chuckle. Every sword counts and  
 author will not allow a sword of sword to be  
 if this film were closed. You'd ~~think~~ see stuff  
 like: He blank shers and she's ~~sucked~~ blank then  
 he's blanked it's in her blank. A blank and white  
 film. OK. uncovers you. Eyes kids. Pause just  
 waiting till the newcomers (hepshet) are seated.  
 For those who've arrived late here, a brief recap:  
 this film began with: this is the title of the film  
 (another case of) quote: the begin miss with the word  
 unquote. This was followed by some  
 background material.

combination when most of it was originally written  
etc. & references to other films, video, tapes, that  
employ text and some descriptions of what the  
film will be. It was essentially an introduction  
to this as you can see. This can be a fact that  
it's almost impossible to read. Let's all read the  
second to last sentence again at a different  
speed. It was essentially an introduction to this.  
Everybody of course is old and capable of reading  
at the same speed! But really, some prefer it slow  
and some prefer it fast and you can't please  
everybody. However, in an attempt to please everybody  
here in the same sentence repeated in four different  
speeds and patterns: It was essentially an  
introduction to this. It was essentially an introduction  
to this. It was essentially an introduction to this.  
I hope there was one arrangement that was just  
right for you. Perhaps I should do the whole  
thing from the beginning up to this point as  
satisfies as many people as possible. Here goes.  
You can see what a powerful ~~idea~~ this could be  
in the wrong hands. Some of the author's  
previous films are liked by a small number  
of people, disliked by a slightly larger number  
and unknown to millions. With this film

he hopes to reach everybody who can read English. There will be a French version. More about that later. New paragraph. Some of the more cultivated members of the audience may regret the lack of in-depth semiological analysis in this film, and note that the vocabulary used is quite basic. This is in line with ~~the~~ the author's attempt to not talk over the heads of people and not to cater to a small, out-vocal intellectual element in our society. Why make films that only a few people will see? Well, there's anybody reading this right now. The author didn't intend his other films for a small elite, he just did what he thought was right at the time. Perhaps this will be more popular. This is kind of intimate, isn't it? It's just between it and you. But maybe this isn't the right time for this. I mean that with the end of the world imminent, the usual people want to ~~have~~ <sup>read about</sup> a way out. Whoops! Perhaps ~~this~~ <sup>this</sup> shouldn't have mentioned a way out. Stick with it. Just think of this as entertainment. It's not all going to be such heavy going. Some parts are going to be just plain fun! "Sticks and stones may..."

Remember that old saying:

168 etc. There'll be not one word about El Salazar  
 no mention of Trudeau and no political  
 commitment whatsoever. So relax and enjoy  
 yourself. Sixth paragraph. Yes, of course, there  
 will be a French version. At the moment, the  
 author cannot afford to do this, but he is  
 planning to apply to the Quebec Ministry of  
 Culture for assistance, just for now, though.  
 la Française les titres de ces films sera: ceci  
 est le titre de ce film. Ça fait penser  
 l'auteur au tableau bien connus des Magritte:  
 Ceci n'est pas une pipe. C'est vrai, c'est aussi  
 l'auteur aime beaucoup le mot "ceci".  
 peut-être le titre de ce film doit être "ceci"  
 Back to English. If you don't read French, you  
 should learn Canadian a bilingual country.  
 Fifth paragraph: Now back to this film. A  
 good thing about reading words like this and  
 not hearing a voice is that you can't accuse it of  
 being male or female. Also it's pleasant to rest  
 one's ears for a while, and especially to not  
 have a voice yanking at you (about a film  
 they're going to make, for example). This was  
 hand written then it was type set, then filmed  
 and now it's light reading. Pause. Death.  
 This is a screen on the right. But look on the bright side of it:  
~~There are no words. It's a very nice scene~~



This is the title of this film. The rest of this film will look just like this. The film will consist of single words presented one after another to construct sentences and hopefully (this is where you come in) to convey meanings. This, as they say, is the signifier. This film will be about one hour long. Does that seem like a frightening prospect? Well, look at it this way: how do you know this isn't lying? Perhaps after a while this word after word system will change into something else. Well, take this's word for it. This is the way it's going to be.

New paragraph. Most of this film was written in 1975 but for various reasons could not be done until now (April 1982). Thanks to Anna Pafomov for her assistance in placing these words on this screen. Some of the following considerations and decisions preceded the production of this film: In 1979 Drew Morey made a film titled This is the title of my film. Since this is not his film and the "this" in his title is not the title of this film and hence the author (Michael Snow) of this film decided to retain this title and to include the foregoing reference to issue in this film. This is still the title of this film. So is this. John Kamevaar recently gave the author a bronze relief he made of the word this. This is not that. This is not a script. Warning: This film may be especially unsatisfying for those who dislike having others read over their shoulders.

Next there have been several films or videotapes that concentrate on texts, for example, Richard Serra, Tom Sherman, John Knight, Paul Haines and Su Friedrich have made excellent use of texts. The author would like to have been first but it's too late. Priority is energy. In some respects, this is first. Obviously this is not the first time that this has been used for the first time. This belongs to everybody! This means this, you think this, we see this, they use this, this is a universe! So what is important is not this, but how this is used.

Third paragraph. Sometimes the author of this film is present when his films are screened and can thus answer questions about them. One question which the author expects is: "Why/would/anyone/want/to do/such a/thing/as/this. followed by "Wouldn't/a/book/be/better?" If Mr. Snow is here on this occasion he will attempt to answer such questions in speech after this film is over. It's going to be a very interesting film and perhaps such a question will be answered by the film itself so to speak! One of the interests of this system is that each word can be held on the screen for a specific length of time. You can't see what's coming a sentence could take an unexpected turn. The words could change to black on white or be in colour. Words in capitals could be used and different typefaces. Words could be used and different typefaces. Words could fade in and out or slide on and off. Images or sound could be introduced. Notice how each word is a different size? Some words could get so attenuated or so big, that only a section of them would be showing on the screen. Or they could get extremely tiny. The decision has been made to concentrate on the distinctive capacity of film to structure time: the word as the individual unit of writing, the frame as the smallest unit of film. In this film writing is lighting (Japanese?). This is white light, it contains all the colours. In case you're getting restless this film (long title isn't it?) won't discuss itself all the time. It's going to get into some real human stuff that will make you laugh and cry and change society. Also it's going to become confessional and very personal. The author is going to tell you as much as he can about himself. He's going to be completely Frank. He's going to say where he went wrong in his life, how he's trying to correct his errors and he's hoping that in so doing he may be helping you to improve yourself.

This is the start of a new paragraph from which any children present should shield their eyes. Since this film was tits originally composed ass The Ontario Board of Censors has started to inspect so-called Experimental Films eg This. It's difficult to cock understand why but it seems as if their purpose is to protect you from this. To protect you from people like cunt the author discussing their sexual lives or fantasies on this screen. Is that the idea? How did we ever manage without them? Anyway there are apparently some things that this just can't say. Perhaps we will be classified Adult by the time you are reading this. Or perhaps you are reading this elsewhere. If this is appearing in Ontario, Hello Censors, Hi Mary. This film is as clean as a whistle. Ha Ha Ha Ha. (Hollow laughter). This film wouldn't say shit if its mouth were full of it. Gulp. Later there will be a sextion of this film featuring Verbal Sex and Violence. An orgy of reading! If you are an audience of six it will be a Sextext. Sex and silence. Chuckle. Every word counts and the author will not allow a word of this to be removed. If this film were censored you'd see stuff like: He blank her and she sucked his blank then he blanked it in her blank. A blank and white film. OK, uncover your eyes kids. Pause. Just waiting till the newcomers (heh heh) are seated. For those who've arrived late here is a brief resumé: this film began with: this is the title of this film (another case of quote in the beginning was the word unquote). This was followed by some background material concerning when most of it was originally written etc., references to other films, or video tapes that employ texts and some description of what this film will be. It was essentially an introduction to this. As you can see this can go so fast that it's almost impossible to read. Let's all read the second to last sentence again at a different speed. It was essentially an introduction to this. Everybody of course is equal and capable of reading at the same speed. But really some prefer it slow and some prefer it fast and you can't please everybody. However in an attempt to please everybody here is the same sentence repeated in four different speeds and patterns: It was essentially an introduction to this. It was essentially an introduction to this. It was essentially an introduction to this. Let's hope there was one arrangement that was just right for you. Perhaps THIS should do the whole thing again at different speeds from the beginning up to this point so as to satisfy as many people as possible? Here goes. Let's look back: You can see what a powerful tool this could be in the wrong hands. Pause. Some of the author's previous films are liked by a small number of people, disliked by a slightly larger number and unknown to millions. With this film he hopes to reach everybody who can read English. There will be a French version. More about that later.

New paragraph: Some of the more cultivated members of the audience may regret the lack of in-depth semiological analysis in this film and note that the vocabulary used is quite basic. This is in line with the author's attempt to not talk over the heads of people and not to cater to a small but vocal intellectual element in our society. Why make films that only a few people will see? Is there anybody reading this right now? The author didn't intend his other films for a small elite, he just did what he thought was right at the time. Perhaps this will be more popular. This is kind of intimate isn't it? It's just between it and you. But maybe this isn't the right time for this. Perhaps with the end of the world imminent, as usual, people want to read about a way out. Whoops! Perhaps this shouldn't have mentioned a "way Out"! Stick with it. Just think of this as entertainment. It's not all going to be such heavy going. Some parts are going to be just plain fun! Remember that old saying: "Sticks and stones may . . .

etc.” There’ll be not one word about El Salvador, no mention of Trudeau and no political commitment whatsoever. So relax and enjoy yourself.

Sixth paragraph. Yes of course there will be a French version. At the moment the author cannot afford to do this but he is planning to apply to the Quebec Minister of Culture for assistance. Just for now though: en Français le titre de ce film sera: ceci est le titre de ce film. Ça fait penser l’auteur au tableau bien connu de Magritte: Ceci n’est pas une pipe. C’est vrai ici aussi. L’auteur aime beaucoup le mot “ceci.” Finalement peut-être le titre de ce film doit être “ceci.” Back to English. If you don’t read French you should learn. Canada is a bilingual country.

Fifth paragraph: Now back to this film. A good thing about reading words like this and not hearing a voice is that you can’t accuse it of being male or female. Also it’s pleasant to rest one’s ears for a while and especially not to have a voice yakking at you (about a film they’re going to make for example). This was handwritten then it was typeset then filmed and now it’s light reading. Pause. This is a shot in the dark. This is a screen in the night. But look at the bright side of it: Sharing! When was the last time you and your neighbour read together? This is communal reading, it’s Group Lit! We could even read aloud but let’s not. Instead let’s join together in an optical cranial sing-song. Surely you all know this old favourite. Let’s all raise our mental voices mutely, mutually in song (please don’t move your lips). Ready? 1 2 3 4: “Some where o ver the rain bow skies are blue. . .” Clap clap clap clap clap clap. And now; ten solo words: Coffee Whisper Psychoanalytical Sunlight Sodomy Chalk Blast Duke Braille Blink Simulacrum Hiss Mask Annihilation Cuneiform Choir Flesh Incommunicado False Alarm. This is a Mohammedan film. It is not exactly dialectical. It means well. You will feel better when it is over. Flashback: Writing in the 4th century Plato has Socrates say: You know Phaedrus that’s the strange thing about writing which makes it truly analogous to painting. The painter’s products stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them they maintain a most majestic silence. This film will seem to stop

# Michael Snow and Bruce Elder in Conversation 1982

This interview was first published in *Cine-Tracts* 5, no. 1 (no. 17) (Summer/Fall 1982).

Last Fall, Michael Snow proposed to me that we undertake what he called “a conversation” about our films, our artistic beliefs and certain of our “philosophical” ideas. As appealing as the idea was, because I found myself immersed in a very large film project that produced unremitting torment for nearly a year, I was unable to carry it out. When a financial setback forced me to suspend the project temporarily, I became eager to take up the idea and contacted Snow. Snow suggested we begin with my writing down some comments or observations about his work. The theme of this issue being what it was, I began by querying Snow about his ideas on photography specifically and on representation in general. Snow took my comments away with him to a northern “retreat” and returned a week later with a series of what I believe are most remarkable responses. Like most of Snow’s published “comments,” they are extremely dense, punning, deliberate and allusive. For this reason, I have made some notes on his responses.

RBE: Concerning the mammoth exhibition of your work assembled by the Centre Pompidou, you commented that it was composed of “camera-related works, or at least things which have to do with the effects the camera has on perception” (Pierre Théberge, “Conversation with Michael Snow” in Michael Snow catalogue for exhibition at Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1979). I understand this to mean that you believe that the kind of experience afforded by the camera (the “camera’s vision”) occupies a central role in your work. Could we begin with your explaining what you think the most significant features of that type of experience are and why you have accorded them so central a place in your work.

MS: My attention was directed to the camera as a director of attention from considerations of Art itself being (in another situation) a director of attention. Similarly cameras both intensify and diminish aspects of normal vision and they “set apart” those aspects for possible examination. By the object-memory which they produce (photos, films, tapes), they give a locus for and evidence of selection, of choice. The rectangular camera frame/mask of course continues the human intervention of architecture and sets up the possibility of a perhaps edifying dialogue between the rectangle and all its specifically human content with the nature (that might be) pictured through the camera or in the rectangular result. That the photographer/viewer is hidden in this architectural paradigm also becomes interesting. On the other hand, fishing and

photography are very similar. The result of framing in photography is always a fragment, making the camera potentially analytical, an epistemological tool. That's to say (to repeat?) that out of the universal field, knowledge isolates, selects and points out unities or differences which were not previously evident. Identification, definition is a matter of limits, of recognition of limitations, bounds, boundaries. There are ways of indicating the depth of implication of this human viewer instrument between us and the rest of the universe. Lenses extend, expand or contract vision (abstract it) in both the optical and chimerical senses. I'm interested in the way that the products of cameras are ghosts of their subjects. Less than desiccated, wonderful as the relic is, it has (almost) only two dimensions. Still photos are suffused with nostalgia seconds after their taking/making. Cinema ghosts are more active, Flying Dutchmen.

I don't know why I became interested in these things. It gradually became evident to me that more was to be done in this area, that I was especially interested in time, that I might learn something about it, myself and what-it-all-means. No doubt it has something to do with my childhood (ha ha). My father, who was a surveyor, then civil engineer, during most of my life had only one eye, then lost the sight of his other eye during my teens, which made us both very interested in vision.

RBE: In a seminar at Visual Studies Workshop, Garry Winogrand made the following pair of comments about photography: (1) "My only interest in photography is photography"; (2) "when you photograph there's [*sic*] things in a photograph, right? So this can't help but document or whatever you want to call it. It's automatic. I mean if you photograph a cake of soap, in the package or out of it, it goes without saying . . . (If you were to photograph in Arizona or Alaska) then that's what your pictures would look like; whatever those places look like" (Dennis Longwell, "Monkeys Make the Problem More Difficult: A Collective Interview with Garry Winogrand" in Peninah Petruck, ed, *The Camera Viewed*, New York, E.P. Dutton 1979 p. 120). These comments seem to me not very interesting taken individually, but their juxtaposition I find extraordinarily interesting. The first comment simply affirms the modernist credo about the values of purity and of being truthful to the materials of one's medium – values which were generally understood to have no part in – and indeed, sometimes, antithetical to – the referential or representational potentials of a work of art. The second, on the other hand, affirms that *mimesis* is [an] inevitable condition of photographic works. Taken together, then, the comments seem to imply that *mimesis* is the proper end – a kind of Aristotelian final cause, if you will – of photography, essential to its very being.

You yourself belong to that select group of advanced artists, which also included amongst its members both Hollis Frampton and Joyce Wieland, who working in New York City in the middle and late sixties, an era of high abstractionism, reformulated artistic practices by insisting that representational elements be allowed a place in advanced art. It seems to me that somewhere behind this insistence is that near paradox inherent in photography, that in photography we discover a medium whose essence – or perhaps better, whose very being – defies self-enclosure, a medium which refuses to become an isolated self-contained entity, without reference to the world. Rather its nature seems to spill outward, for a photograph is destined to become like the Other which it depicts. (Thus *mimesis* is its final cause.) Yet, even as it is informed by the Other and incorporates the Other into itself, it remains distinctly itself, for the form of the Other is incorporated in the photograph by becoming embodied in the

photograph's own proper material, namely light (sometimes coloured light).<sup>1</sup> But it is not just a question of the relation between the matter and form of a photograph or of the photograph having at once some of the features of objects and some of the features of images. Rather, the fact that the photograph necessarily takes its being from the form of the Other means that the photograph, *qua* object, is an image.

When writing this, I think of Sartre's discussion of a form of being that "is what it is not and is not what it is." It seems to me that a similar paradox is inherent in your work. Thus, while modernism had proposed that through the devices of abstractionism there could be achieved an alignment of the form of work with its material nature, in order to achieve a work of which it could be said that it possessed a consolidated and solid form of being, – had aspired then, through abstraction to make a work (e.g., a painting) truly be what it is (i.e., a painting) – your works, even while they are true to the media in which they are realized, are nevertheless straightforwardly representational. Thus many of your photographs (e.g., *Midnight Blue* and *Red*<sup>5</sup>) are constructions, are self-contained, at least in the sense that the imagery of the works is restricted to the chronicling of the making of the work of which that imagery becomes a part, yet at the same time *are* representational. It's as though representation, indeed illusion, belonged to the very objecthood of the photograph. And certainly, your work seems, in relation to the modernist tradition, the history of which is the successive repudiation of one after another of the accidental features traditional paintings possessed – from representation through deep space, to the record of expressive gesture, to relief created by thick painting – extraordinarily catholic; many of your pieces (e.g.,  $\longleftrightarrow$ ) seem given over to the task of reconciling diversity.  $\longleftrightarrow$  balances features like flat space, references to the work's construction, and anti-illusionistic devices, features modernists praised, with deep space, narrative allusion and illusionistic constructions, features which modernists strove to eliminate from a work of art.

MS: I don't find Winogrand's comments too interesting at all but your use of them is terrific and as you can see I got pretty excited and involved in these issues already while trying to answer your first question, probably by telling you mostly stuff that you already know. Another aspect of interest is that the camera makes conventions that are comparable<sup>2</sup> to those developed by representation in the Renaissance (perspective, etc.). The camera and its products involve as many eccentricities in relation to "truthful" representation (What?) and the way we and our eye/brain see. The use of the *camera obscura* by Dutch 17th-century painters and simultaneous work on lens optics might be a factor in all this.

Once in conversation<sup>3</sup> (subject "modernism," "post-modernism" in which I suggested that "post-modernism" was more of a wish than an actuality), I also suggested this perhaps interesting distortion of the history of western art. Once there were "Whole" paintings that made a rich and unified use of all the possibilities of the medium: e.g., Velasquez, the Tiepolos, Vermeer, Chardin. Modern Art has been an analysis of such works, progressively isolating and reifying single aspects and ending recently with, in this order: concept, decoration and finally context. This is a monstrous generalization with perhaps a photographic grain of truth to it which might be a motivating factor in the current attempts of certain Neo-expressionists.

Another perhaps edifying generalization is this one: evidence of process has been most clear in the expressionist "line" of Tintoretto, Grunewald, Rembrandt, Courbet, van Gogh, de Kooning. There is another, less "humanist," less tactile, more

“scientific,” more imagistic line which seems to give evidence of a long-standing yearning for photography. Compare to the foregoing the qualities of image, but especially of surfaces, of the paintings of Leonardo, Vermeer, Ingres, Duchamp. Here an attempt has been made to do away, as much as possible, with any evidence of the hand’s activity and the nature and qualities of the materials employed in order to attain the effect of an instantaneous, non-physical *image*. Click.

Just to keep on painting, so to speak, the best painting has always been involved with the stoplights at Fact and Illusion. Or is it Mind and Matter? The 3D/2D paradox is one of the subjects of all the best painting, even Mondrian. When it’s a creation of a man with a supremely sophisticated intelligence and skill, in the right place at the right time (Yes, everybody’s in their era), who is able to reflect on and image an area of sensual scrutiny most appropriate to his medium, “the attention man pays to women” (i.e., Vermeer), painting can be magically suspended in space and time at another crossing, that of the artist’s concentrated energy and the look of the creative spectator.

When it appeared, I was very impressed with Richard Hennessy’s article “What’s all this about photography” in the May ’79 *Artforum*. Over a year after that I read with amusement the enraging effect it had on Douglas Crimp in his article “The End of Painting” in *October* No. 16 (Spring ’81). Crimp’s critique failed.<sup>4</sup>

RBE: Another aspect of the double-sided nature of representation is their double temporality. As an object, a representation belongs to the “now,” to the instant (in fact, to all instants) in which it is perceived; it is available at hand at the very moment one looks at them. And yet as an image, it refers to a moment (or a series of moments) in the past when it was made or which it depicts. (In photography, the moment of making of the image and the moment depicted tend to coincide: perhaps this is what you suggest by the self-enclosure of some of many of your photographs, e.g., *Authorization* (1969), *Midnight Blue* (1974) and *Red*<sup>5</sup> (1974); certainly the coincidence of temporalities is another case of the identity between a photograph’s nature as an image and its nature as an object). But it is, of course, the dialectic between these two sides of a representational image’s temporality that is interesting, for in this dialectic the past moment or moments referred to or depicted in the work are made “ready-at-hand” for all times – are made to belong constantly to the present. Thus, they take on something of the character of the eternal, in a way not dissimilar to the fashion in which, in *One Second in Montreal*, instantaneous events become durative. There seems to be something of a religious dimension to this.

MS: Speaking of religion, I’ve always wanted to hear everything said at once but while I’m waiting I must say I’m always embarrassed by what I say.<sup>5</sup> I doubt if it’s sillier than what other people say, it’s just that so much has to be left out! Naming that list of artists (from *all* artists!), saying that that historical line “exists,” concentrating on the “modernist” attitude neglect so unfairly so much! But that’s obvious, isn’t it? Just be interested.

I am very grateful for your insightful description of the temporal states sometimes generated from my work. I’ve never been able to systematically and objectively understand how it’s done. I’ve always hoped that I and the spectator might benefit from my own attempt to apprehend and invoke a *participation mystique* with the nature of the “reality” being presented by the little things I do and be led to extrapolate (emotionally or intellectually) that situation to the larger situation to which it belongs. My own fairly obsessive attempts at resolving existential problems have always started from an

attempt at realizing a specific concrete/materialist base. Successive seeming clarifications in my philosophy as in many others always lead to a Mystery. I'm not a "literary" philosopher but, if we are here to name everything, it all has to build to a Transcendental Signifier. Out of facetious humility, I'm "religious." The paragraph above means that I'm resigned to begging for revelation and thus probably don't deserve it. But Who's to say?

More or less back on more or less land, I'd like to return to this path for a moment: in my work with still photography I've tried to consider the nature of the surface, the way the shot-of-image is mounted, presented (it should be "integrated" with some compositional/content job to do), the size of the final print in relation to the subject, the source of illumination. In many works, I've made the subjects themselves (*Midnight Blue, Glares, A Wooden Look, Morning in Holland, Waiting Room, Times*). In some cases the subject is in the final work (usually partially), as you mention. I've tried to control the "distance" from the here-and-now of the spectator to the times and places in the past when the photos were taken. This gap is closed quite tightly in some works which try to achieve the presentness and lack of deflection elsewhere, more fact than fiction, of the best abstract paintings (ideal of "modernism"! ). I was very influenced by Mondrian. I haven't much time for representations that want to take me totally elsewhere. Rather sleep.

*Iris-IRIS* is a recent piece which tries to contain a set of pyramidal states of readings of different times and places with (an attempt at) almost measurable temporal distances from the concrete here and now to remote theres and thens. Trying to make the inevitable nostalgia of photos palpable.

First: the work is two equal-sized squares side by side. One panel includes a postcard of Mont Blanc on a painting (wall?). The other is a photo of a bedroom somewhere which shows the same (?) postcard same size on the same wall (painting?) in a late afternoon (?) light. The self-referentiality of this work might keep a spectator moving around in a perception/thought cycle. By comparison *A Wooden Look* keeps you (relatively) in the now. A past glance causing a present glance. My photo-works continue the mistakes of the Buffalo Photo-pictorialists!<sup>6</sup>

RBE: The diagrammatic shapes some of your films (the conical shape of *Wavelength* or the interlocking, nearly sinusoidal shapes of  $\longleftrightarrow$  seem to me to possess temporal features analagous to those of representations. The shapes of both those films, for examples, suggest the passage of time and yet the diagrammatic shapes arrest the flow of time by converting time into a spatial form. These forms, then, like representations, seem to have aspects of both time and eternity.

MS: I'm sure you can imagine how pleasing to me this paragraph is. Thank you. To shape time (actually it's mind) seems to me to be the quintessence of cinema. In *The Republic*, Plato has Socrates describe the levels of Being of Table (last long sequence of *Rameau's Nephew* involved in this too). He says that qualitatively a representation of a table is inferior to a real table made by a carpenter, but superior to that is the idea of table which is necessary before the other two can exist. Pythagoras is no doubt behind this and would have added a supra stage: the cube. I think it is unusual to be guided to sense time as a particular shape and that it is a refreshment with eternal implications, if you will. Also, Plato banished poets from the Republic not only because (as above) they trafficked in falsehoods but also because they seem to dwell on sorrow and make efforts to keep loss fresh.

RBE: The spectator constructed by your early films has a similarly dual nature. One part of him is “entranced,” mesmerized by the simple form; another part, a transcendent, reflective consciousness, is outside that experience reflecting upon that first part in the course of its experience. A duality similar to those described above seems to be involved here, since one part of the mind seems involved in the temporal experience and to participate in it, another part stands outside that experience and reflects upon it. And many of your photographs ask for a viewer who is at once involved in illusion and a detached, critical analyst of their conditions as objects.

MS: Film images are more hallucinatory (dream was the favourite paradigm of one period of avant-garde film) than still photographic or any others. This kind of drug-related pleasure has to be considered too. I like to have ecstasy and analysis. An ecstasy of analysis is an odd state, all right! And an analysis of ecstasy seems a waste of a good time. Or is film the only occasion for this meeting?

I believe this dual state (simultaneous or oscillating fast or slow from “one” to “the other”) is provoked by all my films in different ways and should be the spectator’s intellectual and emotional recognition of the convergence of fact and illusion previously mentioned.

*Presents* continues this “duality” quite explicitly by making wide separations of elements (carrying the distinct sections of *Rameau’s Nephew* further) and setting each element against what is (or seems) most remote from it or is *extremely* different from it. Nothing exists in isolation, and in works of art salient elements are made such by being set in or on environments. Narrative: protagonists do something somewhere. In order to see, among other things, the sculptural/theatrical artificialities of staging, these are set against a background of, or perhaps more accurately in a context of, their opposite: “documentary.” However, they can be as reasonably considered the other way around: “documentary” in the context of “staged.” Two forms of construction. This is all made more complicated by the fact that all photography that’s unaltered “graphically” is “realism.” Then, within each of the two major sections, there are fluctuations of emphasis from the “concrete/materialist” to the “naturalistic/realist.” In my own monologues about my work, I call these changes in “type of belief.” Within the possibilities of hand-held 16 mm, each shot in the montage section is set in a context of (between) extremes. Each shot involves a different kind of belief generated by the nature of the subject and its treatment by the camera (it’s all hand-held pans, varying speed, varying source of the gesture involved, varying direction, etc.). Because of the frequent cuts, the shots all become objects for at least 1/24 of a second, but like the changes in *Wavelength* they all insinuate different kinds of belief related to themes in the first (staged) section, but now in the language of “documentary” realism. The speed of cutting and variety of shots can at times undercut (ha ha) the realism of the image.<sup>7</sup>

Sometimes it’s a glance or a blink or peripheral vision, sometimes it savours, lingers, sometimes it’s an exchange (there are many portraits) sometimes it’s “too fast” but sometimes it’s “too slow,” and though the editing tends to isolate individual shots there are many widely separated connections and an accretive developing continuity. This section (montage) contains many references to the nature of and terminology used in film. In various ways it emphasizes the ghostliness of film and makes “realism” questionable. The most powerful film subjects for everybody are human sexual organs and the mutilation of people or animals. It has been said (J. Hoberman) that my

panning treatment “trivializes” these subjects. I don’t think so. It films them. Film is trivial compared to them. Their images are used to make this film. It’s like the difference between the word “surgery” and surgery. Watching this section, what one experiences are the facts (of illusions) and, after the laughs of the first section (the “Presents” of the entertainment industry represented), the difficulty of contact with what keeps on seeming to be (often mundane) “reality” but keeps on disappearing (like “reality”) makes entertainment retreat and tragedy appear. But what were we laughing at anyway? Fugitive.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps related: I think a lot of people in the “experimental” film world are being strangled by the Entertainment-Ideology mobius strip.

RBE: It seem to me that if I am correct about these ideas, the self-referential features in your works have a different use than they orthodoxically do. The purpose of most self-reference in a work of art is to eliminate any reference to or involvement with anything outside the work of art itself. Self-reference enforces the self-enclosure of a work, since it restricts the reference of the imagery in an artwork to itself. The motivation for this seems to have been to align the references of a work of art with the work’s own being: that is why the references are so frequently to the “pure materials” of the medium itself. But while you have, in some of your photographic works, worked with self-enclosed forms, (i.e., with works whose imagery makes no reference to things outside the work itself), your use of these forms seems to serve different than the usual ends. The orthodox motivation for self-reference would be, in your view, pointless, since “the Other,” you seem to believe, is necessarily involved in the image; and if “the Other” is necessarily involved in an image, restricting the references of the imagery to the work itself would not eliminate the references to some “Other” outside the work itself; references to the work itself would involve, inevitably, references to an Other, so your use of self-reference seems to me to have a dual motivation. Firstly, it reveals the stages in the process of the construction of the work, and so affirms (since what one constructs are objects) the objecthood of the work. Secondly, since these references are embodied in recognizable images, they necessarily refer to times past. The restriction of the references of the imagery in such works as *Authorization*, *Midnight Blue* and *Red<sup>5</sup>* to the process of the making of the work itself in fact means that the *only Other* with which they deal are *times other* than the present, (i.e., the times in which they are perceived). Here again, then, ideas concerning temporality seem to take a central place in your work. Self-reference in your work becomes references to the production process, references to the work’s past and a means of bringing this past, this history, into the present. Sometimes this self-reference becomes paradoxical, when the finished work is contained in the depiction of one of the stages in the making of the work, as it is, explicitly, in *Cover to Cover* and, as an invited conjecture, in *Imposition*. Furthermore, by making the work – and its production – its own subject, image and reality interpenetrate one another.

MS: Tried to describe the general way I think about all this already but would like to add that my sequential photo-works (*Authorization*, *Red<sup>5</sup>*, *Glare*s, *A Wooden Look*, etc.) are made additively like a painting. In viewing a painting, the observer doesn’t know which stroke was first but wanders (directed by the composition) over the surface. However, in these photoworks, the order of accumulation can be experienced. *Morning in Holland* was made subtractively by taking elements away, gradually revealing.

RBE: In *Rameau's Nephew*, someone comments: "There is no doubt that technology is expressing and answering a human desire by working towards systems of greater and greater illusionism. It is easy to project this to arrive at stages of representation of absolutely convincing illusion till eventually the difference between subject and facsimile may be eradicated." The claim interests me for several reasons. For one thing, it is staunchly antimodernist in conviction. Modernists believed that there was an ontological gulf between an image and object that could never be overcome. And since they believed the "reality value" of an image was less than that of object, a work of art should strive to avoid becoming representation – avoid being an image – and become an object instead. But the comment interests me, too, because it states something related to my previous comments. Among the striking devices of your recent photographic works are strategies which bring about the interpenetration of reality and the image. Thus some of your photographic works (e.g., *Authorization* or *Red<sup>3</sup>*) reveal that they were generated in a number of stages and that each stage involves the re-presentation of the previous. Thus, the production of images is shown to change the real, but this change then becomes the reality reformulated in the next image. The real becomes the image which then becomes the real.

MS: The image in that section of *Rameau's Nephew* is a group of people seated in a moving bus. They stare ahead, at the fixed camera and at the spectator seated similarly, at the screen, and sometimes at sprays of tiny pinprick holes that appear in the film/image. The "voice-over" which (with no evident picture source) speaks the statement is male and lisps. What you quoted is a section, and the complete scene/statement is about six minutes long. There are several distinct claims on the spectators' attention and it all produces an interesting perhaps brain-hemisphere division. It seems to be difficult to follow the sense of the spoken statement (which is quite conventionally phrased) and see/think about the image at the same time. To make connections between the sound and picture or grasp them simultaneously also seems difficult. Writing this made me think about the development of your own work. Both *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* and *1857* could be described as polyphonic. While in both, the sets of "lines" used cluster around autobiography or around death and destruction, the complexity of the choices (e.g., simultaneous references to different times) for spectator emphasis results in a very powerful and rewarding experience. I think this will be one of the most fruitful areas of cinematic investigation.

I wouldn't say it's "wrong" to discuss modernist tenets with reference to film, but I have a feeling that if Clement Greenberg were asked what he thought of the movies he'd say, "Yes, films should be representational; after all there's no object involved, only an image." *Citizen Kane* would be one of his acquaintances. During the '60s, living in New York, I was frequently surprised at how little certain major American abstract artists could "apply" their aesthetic thinking to film. Their sense of it and ideas about it were "average."

I wrote the statement you quoted for its use in the film, but separated it's an interesting subject. Talk about extraordinary verisimilitude is a part of many ancient writings, reemerges from the Renaissance on and, in our time, has been aimed at by 3D movies, Imax and holograms. Just to keep the speculation going: if "progress" continues, a scientific elite will continue to do the investigating and inventing and entertaining (the trip to the moon was a TV show) and the rest of the population, progeny of those who now spend twenty-three hours a day at their TV sets, may "participate"

through wholly convincing representations which will perhaps bypass the sensorium and be inserted directly into the brain. Talk about an opiate.

For its use in *Rameau's Nephew*, the futurity of the statement and its references to verisimilitude were set against other temporal/material layers in the hopes that it would make one "see through" the images as a particular representation, a *filmic* representation still very far from the "reality" it represents, a "reflection" of the spectator.

RBE: A well-known frequently commented upon feature of your work is its concern with the effects of framing. While modernists conceived of the frame as a device for creating a bounded, enclosed space, your use of the frame is different. Again, it seems to me to have dual features that reflect the way in which image and object, reality and illusion interpenetrate one another in your work. You seem to suggest that by putting a frame around a part of reality, you make an image of it. (This seems to me to be partly the signification of *Sight*, 1967). But then, because the thing that results is circumscribed, bounded and definite, it has the characteristics of an object.

MS: Frames on paintings tend to minimize their objectness and emphasize their "imagicity." Concrete or "abstract" paintings often don't have frames. There's a big difference between seeing *extent* and looking through a mask. "Shaped canvases" and the work of Don Judd come in here. Framing in films is actually masking in both shooting and projection. In the opening, video-altered section of *Presents*, I tried to work with establishing a malleable image with edges. When the white line which opens the film became a small screen-proportion rectangle against "black," it doesn't seem as if it's masked or that there's more beneath the black – it's a little like an unframed representational painting. When this small image finally fills the entire screen, it hovers between readings till, as the image moves laterally, it becomes more "realistic" and it is revealed that there is indeed an off-screen space under the mask.

*Sight* is a black plastic plane with an incised white line diagram with a small (in relation to the amount of surface) shape cut out, making a hole. The work is to be installed in a window and incorporates aspects of flux in a static two-dimensional "container" by invoking a relationship between these two elements. The view through *Sight* becomes part of the work, by its becoming an image in a determinate setting. I don't think that what's seen through the aperture has the characteristics of an object. The scene (a street in most installations, or another room in the gallery) becomes less "solid" and actual and more of an image under the influence of its context. The circumscribing boundaries are definite, an object, but what is seen is not a "thing."

RBE: The quotation from *Rameau's Nephew* which I gave above seems to harbour yet another, and possibly even more profound, meaning than those already stated. The so-called common sense belief about the world distinguishes sharply between images and objects, granting to the latter a reality denied to the former. You seem to me to be suggesting the opposite is true. In several of your works, the reality of "the object" seems to dissolve in time, while "the image," because it is eternal, and, often, because of its minimal objective shape, seems very real, very concrete, very definite. In a somewhat similar way, in *Wavelength*, the reality of the room and the windows comes to be transformed into a metaphor for consciousness, while the film itself in the course of its time more and more becomes concrete reality. In sum, the concrete and eternal image becomes more real than a transient and fleeting reality.

Can I remind you that the quotation from Sartre given above, concerning a being which is directed towards an Other, which “is what is not and is not what is” is a statement about consciousness.

MS: The shifting you describe reminds me of a suggestion of Duchamp’s: if a two-dimensional rendering of a three-dimensional object can be as efficacious as it can, perhaps three-dimensional entities are representations of four-dimensional models and so on.

Alas, the image is only “eternal” for a few minutes. It’s hard to prove the present exists, but if it does, it is eternity. Or a sample thereof.

One of the aspects of film which makes its existence as an “apparatus” as important as the development of the piano in Western music is that the image is produced and presented (reconstituted) in the same way that we see, by means of light reflecting off surfaces. Reflection!

A projection!, a moving representational image composed of light falling (how thin it is!) on a surface, is also (nearly!) “what it is not and is not what it is,” to (nearly) submerge Sartre in Heraclitus.

## Notes

1. Snow objected firmly to my use of the word “material” here, insisting that I was mistaken, that light is not the *material* of which a photograph is made but rather the *agency* through which it is made. Having given the matter further thought, I now agree with him, though I believe the argument I am advancing here could easily (in obvious ways) be reformulated to take into account his objection. (RBE)
2. Snow had originally written “similar” where I have put “comparable.” His point, he claimed, is that photographs, like Renaissance paintings, are structured by a set of conventions. On further thought, he was not sure whether the conventions were really all that similar to those of Renaissance painting. The salient point is that camera-derived imagery is informed by a set of conventions, as was Renaissance painting. (RBE)
3. Snow is here making reference to conversation between himself and me on the subject specified between parentheses. Specifically, I had mentioned the modernist historiographic assumption that each successive development in the progress of art is characterized by the successive identification and elimination of features accidental to the medium in which the work was realized and, thus, that progress in art is marked by the movement, similar to that of phenomenological reduction, from an art which included contingent features which mostly derive from what I call centrifugal concerns (i.e., concerns about things outside that art object as a simple material construct – concerns that move us from the actual forms of the object to what it represents, from the individual sounds in poems, their meanings and our associations with them) to essential features which derive from the actual material of which the object is constructed. It is worth noting against this reductionist reading of history, and the reductionist practice that followed from it (or it followed from, depending upon what one construes the nature of the relation between theory and practice in the modernist tradition to be), Snow seems to valorize the synthetic tradition, which exploits all the possibilities of the medium. (RBE)
4. The articles Snow refers to here are part of the current (rather fashionable) debate about whether painting is reviving or dying. Hennesy argues that the claim that photography has rendered painting obsolete is incorrect, while Crimp argues that by the 1960s “painting’s terminal conditions seemed impossible to ignore,” and that, since the passing of modernism, artworks can no longer actually *be* paintings, but only, at most, represent them.

Hennesy’s argument makes several claims that Snow might have found interesting. One is that painting directs our attention to important facts that might escape our attention in the “immense sea of sensorial information” (p. 22), and, by calling forth acts of contemplation, respond to the fear that the clue to the mystery that surrounds our lives might pass unnoticed. (Painting, he claims, organizes impressions and directs our attention more effectively than photographs.) A second claim is that painting is a synthesizing and constructing activity, and, since it is made by the hand, makes use of all sensorial knowledge – the tactile, the oral, the auditory, even the olfactory; the photographer, on the other hand, divorces

the eye from the hand. (This quasi-religious claim that painting integrates mind and body, matter and soul, might have appealed to Snow.) And finally, Hennesy makes the (also quasi-religious) claim that artistic taste (read “the spirit”) has begun a “relentless” and “remorseless” decline. (p. 23)

Crimp, needless to say, argues against painting on the grounds that it is “unavoidably [tied] to a centuries-old idealism” (p. 75) and mocks what he calls Hennesy’s “revivalist spirit” (p. 76).

5. Compare this comment with another Snow made to Pierre Théberge: “I think I’m stuck with certain contradictions about not being ‘at home’ in the movement of time because the future and the past are contents of the mind and you can’t say the word ‘present’ fast enough to have it fit the present.” (In *Michael Snow* [catalogue], Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1979.) Compare also his response to my ninth comment.
6. The Buffalo-Pictorialists were a group of photographers working in Buffalo and upper New York State in the years 1906 (the date the group Photo-Pictorialists of Buffalo was founded) to 1914 (the date of the last exhibition in which the Photo-Pictorialists participated as a group) and included W.H. Pesterfield, C. Albright, E.B. Sides, A. Thibaudeau et al. Inspired by the work of the Photo Secessionists (E. Steichen, Clarence H. White, Gertrude Kasebler et al.), whose work was exhibited in a huge exhibition at Buffalo’s Albright Art Gallery in 1910, the pictorialists wanted to establish the legitimacy of photography’s claim to the right to be accepted as a “high art.” They believed that all “advanced” (to use a favoured term of the period) artistic practices were closely related inasmuch as the aesthetic worth of all artistic works, whatever the medium in which they were realized, should be judged by a common set of standards, using the same critical mechanisms.

Specifically, the pictorialists attempted to model “art-photography” after the most widespread and influential tradition in the art of the late nineteenth century, Symbolism, as exemplified by such artists as Odilon Redon, Gustave Moreau and Pierre Puvis de Chavanne. Pictorialists’ photographs generally used soft forms, diffused light, centripetal forms of composition, which give them a rather ambiguous and hermetic quality, as though suggesting another reality, just as the Symbolists had often used sythetic devices – devices for juxtaposing objects which in the “real” world have no natural connections, but belong to “separate realities” – in order to suggest a “Higher Reality.”

In fact, while Snow’s “quip” owes something of its motivation to the fact that Buffalo Photo-Pictorialists were the subject of a recent exhibition in Buffalo, as well as to the fact that a major topic of our discussion was the relationships between art, photography and the cinema, it probably has a deeper meaning, for, as I suggest in my third remark to him, I believe that Snow’s work, like that of the Symbolists, is based on the idea that a picture suggests an Ultimate Reality that is different from the subject matter it depicts. Indeed, I believe that the use of rigorously formal devices, for which Snow’s work in film and photography is so justly celebrated, are in the service of his desire to suggest a timeless Reality beyond the reality actually depicted in the photograph/film. I believe, and Snow seems to imply in his reply to my sixth comment, that the sadness his works so often evoke frequently arises from the pairing of this nostalgia for the absolute with the recognition of the impossibility of fulfilling the aspiration. The synthetic aspects of pictorialist practices (their use of the juxtaposition of different realities to convey a “Reality” of a higher order) might, too, be of interest to Snow. (Compare, for example, his responses to my second and sixth comments.) (RBE)

7. Snow here introduces a term which I think is *very* revealing, for it suggests that different forms of representation/construction represent different forms of belief about the subject/object. This claim would seem to me to have idealist underpinnings. (RBE)
8. Here, again (compare this with his response to my second comment), Snow stresses the constructive and synthetic character of most of his work, which he must believe (if we are to reconcile these claims with his response to my fifth comment) must balance analytic and materialist concerns; once again, then, the same duality we have been discussing in a different form. (RBE)

## On Murray Favro 1982

First published in the catalogue accompanying the Murray Favro exhibition organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1982, this text was written at the request of both the artist and the curator, the late Marie Fleming.

Murray Favro sometimes feints in conversation, as he hears the word “Art” heading his way. Sometimes he says his work is not *that*. Or, “If that’s what you like, you probably won’t like whatever it is that I do.” What he does is very interesting (to my knowledge he is almost alone in doing it), and whether it is “Art” or not is sometimes one of its especially interesting aspects.

*Clunk* of 1966, with its phases of motion and their result, announces his interest in mechanical motion, but it’s pictured. *It* and *Woman Lying on a Diving Board* (1968) for me indicate again the stimulating effect of the neighbouring energy of Greg Curnoe. Murray leaves the woman and carries on with the diving board, which is an early indication of his interest in hand construction as opposed to hand imaging. These pieces are “Art” in a way that Favro was also to leave behind. If the utilitarian and the decorative are two extremes of the function of objects, Favro’s work eminently favours the utilitarian.

Assisting the clarification of his originality is a small-town, no-nonsense suspicion of the needlessly fancy. With the understandable exception of his guitars (they’re for *music*), included under a to-be-avoided decorativeness is a highly polished finish. The originality, the meat of his work, is precisely this relaxed eschewal of ornament in favour of an open (no secrets either, here’s how it works) poeticizing of an essentially masculine instrumentality. In this respect, *Synthetic Lake* is his masterpiece.

As representation, *The Flying Flea* and *Half-Scale Sabre Jet* successfully take especially provocative positions, but for me his most drastic works, ones which bring out the classification issue I mentioned in my first paragraph, are *Windmill Electric Generator* and *Propeller Engine*. These “garage” inventions, personal solutions to and embodiments of the problems of channeling and using power, are straightforwardly made; the handled plywood and varnish, the nuts and bolts make their intent and potentiality legible in a pioneer, individualistic way (Murray’s not in R & D at GM). In these works some interesting lines cross: the implications of Duchamp’s ready-mades, the spirit (empathy, resourcefulness) of a country boy repairing his truck, and the fecund genius of Alexander Graham Bell (anyone who is interested in Art should see the extraordinary objects at the Bell Museum in Baddeck, Nova Scotia).

Sometimes the creative leap is huge, as in the relationship between a candle and Edison’s invention of incandescent light; but an “invention” could be said to be an

“expressive/expressionist” representation of an already existing object, modifying and extending it. Here we can discern a kinship between Favro’s propeller and van Gogh’s painted chair and understand the rapport, the comfort with which Favro used van Gogh’s painting of his room (all undecorated functional objects) to make his marvelous embodiment of it. Favro’s position vis-à-vis representation is an incomparable one with far-reaching implications.

(Handwritten) To Write

1982

Trying to write. Starting to try. Trying to start. To write. Writing too. Start! I'm writing! I'm trying. It's trying. I'm trying to, right? Rite. Keeping from thinking of fucking Lucy by writing. Not for long. Not for longer. Not for harder. I'll write about fucking Lucy instead of thinking about Lucy, about fucking Lucy so I won't stop writing and jerk-off thinking about fucking Lucy. I'll just put this pen down and get this penis up. Pen is so is penis. Thinking of fucking Lucy. I'll be back in a few minutes. Back soon to continue, ~~write about Lucy~~ <sup>might</sup> writing instead of something else. Instead of doing something else. Then.

~~Hard riding~~ Writing to the occasion! Hard riding  
Hard to handle. Hard writing. Hand  
ridden. Come and go on.

Decided to try to write again. Right again. This time I'm going to write in order to write. There are many other things I could do, it's not just a question of wasting time. I've decided to write not to avoid doing something else (like thinking of fucking Lucy). Why should I avoid thinking of fucking Lucy? It was so wonderful, she's ① so small and smooth and rounded, my cock felt so.... Yes I guess the reason for avoiding thinking about fucking Lucy is that it keeps me from writing. Or it might. After all, I'm still writing. It gets so hard writing

## (Hand-written) To Write 1982

I rediscovered this text during an inspection of my papers preparatory to donating them to the Edward P. Taylor Research Library and Archives of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

As you'll see, it was written explicitly for the reader to read the original hand-written Ms. (I), not a typeset version. In a sense this work was like a drawing in ink, an autograph, not intended to be reproduced like a drawn lithograph or etching.

But really, even more than doing a drawing, in writing this I had no anticipation of a possible reader. I wanted to write. And yet the masturbatory conceit that it was mainly (or only) for me is part of its form. You'll see one page of it reproduced here, but the rest, contradicting my original intention, is typeset.

Why? Louise Dompierre referred to the "artifactual" nature of this collection (more history/archaeology than scholarship) and to the fact that frequently in my writing the embodiment or occasion of the text is part of its nature and content. This is so in this case. Our decision to typeset it is a form of censorship. Reading the text in type means a second remove from the original flesh, making the material cooler and the private more modestly public, less voyeuristic, more literary. The typeset reproduction of seeds cast on the ground seemed ironically life enhancing.

And literary it is. The author thinks it is a fine piece of writing. Only Art which has personal value for the artist can be of value for others. But don't think this is a diary. It's not. It's writing.

Writing (even with a computer) is a solitary, private, manual activity, narcissistically inducing an emission from a dark interior to the light of a visible exterior, ejaculatory, even if a public (which *cannot* be present at the writing) is aimed at.

Stylistically this text is similar to "Something You Might Try," "Around about *New York Eye and Ear Control*" and particularly the text for my Chatham Square record and the scripts for *Rameau's Nephew*. . . . We could have gone further back: when I was twelve or thirteen I wrote some scripts for plays and skits performed at Camp Calumet on Lake Boshkung in Haliburton which forecast this monologue style.

I'm sorry that the great Toronto poet bpNichol, whose work "(Hand-written) To Write" slightly resembles, cannot read it and tell me what he thinks.

**M.S.**

**T**rying to write. Starting to try. Trying to start. To write. Writhing too. Start! I'm writing! I'm trying. It's trying. I'm trying to, right? Rite. Keeping from thinking of fucking Lucy by writing. Not for long. Not for longer. Not for harder. I'll write about fucking Lucy instead of thinking about Lucy, about fucking Lucy so I won't stop writing and jerk off thinking about fucking Lucy. I'll just put this pen down and get this penis up. Pen is so is penis. Thinking of fucking Lucy. I'll be back in a few

minutes. Back soon to continue, might, writing instead of something else. Instead of doing something else. Then.

Writing to the occasion! Hard riding. Hard to handle. Hand writhing. Hand Ridden. Come and go on.

Decided to try to write again. Right again. This time I'm going to write in order to write. There are many other things I could do, it's not just a question of wasting time. I've decided to write not to avoid doing something else (like thinking of fucking Lucy). Why should I avoid thinking of fucking Lucy? It was so wonderful, she's so small and smooth and rounded, my cock felt so. . . Yes, I guess the reason for avoiding thinking about fucking Lucy is that it keeps me from writing. Or it might. After all, I'm still writing. It gets so hard writing about sex. I'd like to start with some gentle fore-writing and gradually after a while get to the hot and moist, slipping in and out writing. That time. I fucked her from behind, her cute sweet buttocks bumping pushing nudging my belly as my cock slid in and out of her (I my hand on her, one finger in too) fuzzy mushy cunt.

Start again. Writing like that is like coming when you unzip your pen. Write again. Wrong again. The top of my pen. Reminds me: "The head is the best part." That incredibly funny classic comic strip. Pirates. By S. Clay Wilson. One page in one of those Zap Comix, around 1969, San Francisco. The reality it described would be horrible but its reality wasn't that. The drawing! The idea! Hope that when I finally get started writing it'll be as good as that (in some other way, not that my writing should be like that) or as good as fucking Lucy but that's really unlikely.

Read an interview with Allen Ginsberg where he said he always gets a hard-on when he's reading, jerks off, goes back to reading.

And J.J. Rousseau alewds to the undercover reading of his youth done "with one hand," as he puts it.

Back to writing. Back to the page.

Writing is certainly a physical act, a gesture, a hand gesture. With a pen I mean, not typing. That's a gesture too. More of a finger gesture. But what's most important about it not now but later is how it is such an intimate transfer from mind to mind. Mine to yours (if anybody ever reads this besides mine). Re-minds. Mine of fucking Lucy. Mind to paper via penis in this lower case. But then: On the other hand.

The dryness, cleanliness of writing. Plato writing into existence new rules of writing and reading. How did he feel? Did he get a hard-on writing? In a way he opposed the ancient oral tradition. In a way. Another way the Greeks kept right on doing it, no doubt to this very day. Writing isn't righting so don't think that this will erase wrongs.

Writing isn't righting so don't think that this is automatically on the level. In fact it is horizontal, on a desk right now. No, this won't erase wrongs. Some writing might. Write Ron? Dear Ron, just a note to tell you how much we appreciated your apology.

Avoid puns. Butt! Q: What kind of pun is this? A: It's a ball-point pun! Noh! Try: one whole sentence subject verb object completely punless. Here it is. That was it. It's there. Back a bit. Twenty five minutes to 3 pm. Watch is a little fast. It's impossible to get ahead. Writing by hand like this. First virgin, not this, is being written in pencil (the present, some of the past was in pen) not this present (this is in pen) *that* present. This is being written in pencil on white paper. Just pressed too hard and broke the point of the pencil. Which forced the memory (only a few minutes old) that while sharpening this pencil with an X-Acto matte knife I thought (before I started writing

this): "I don't believe I have ever purchased a pencil." Should unspoken thoughts be in quotation marks? I've bought many ball-point and marker-type pens but always seem to just have some pencils. Where do they come from? Do I steal them?

I'm writing this in pencil because it (the pencil) came to hand when I felt like writing. I prefer to write with felt-tip marker type pens but I keep losing them in the same way as I'm probably losing my audience.

Why not both of us take a break here, cup of coffee or something. Think I'll have an apple.

Homage to the writing/stamping of Greg Curnoe. How's yr coffee, Greg?

If you're not Greg, back to you. How about you? How can I write about you? So you think women aren't dependent on men anymore? Or would you put it, if it was you that was putting it, another way? You wouldn't put it? Plato's *Phaedrus*'s about the impossibility of dialogue with writing. You must write your own book. Not write now. Later. Keep on reading. I'll try to keep just ahead of you, sometimes I'll drop back a few words and keep abreast of you. You guessed it, guess tit. Lucy! Came to mind chest high. Thigh. Hi! The very thought of you. Got to keep ahead. Late 18th-century French thought. Keep writing. Write anything. It can be changed later, improved. Improvise then improve. In this case (this particular case of writing will probably end up being most worth reading if it seems to putt putt along at a fairly even medium tempo without the impression (except where it's specifically mentioned, such as back there 233 words ago where I suggested that you take a break, have a coffee or something, I had an apple, wrote, red, I actually did). That it's been cut, spliced and polished together. (Not the apple.) Reading does, as writing does, dictate a general range of tempi? "Speed reading" advises reading in clumps not in beats. I'm hoping that what I'm writing will reward contemplation at a fairly slow tempo. Disappointing fast fucks or slow eternal fucks?

"The decisive question is this: how, and on what grounds do the willed and the one who wills belong to the willing to will? Answer: on the grounds of willing and by means of willing. Willing wills the one who wills, as such a one; and willing posits the willed as such."

Footnote that. Everything else is original. Reminds me I should write a will. Where there's a will there's a way. I will. Me Mike. You Hugh. Her He Him It. Keep going but come back and check this later, probably it should be scrapped.

Flesh start but still by me (Mike) same author, same reader? When will you make your will, Mike? You'd better do it soon. Your estate will be incoherent. Fortune Cookie. Problems for those close to you. You (Mike) or perhaps better, "I" should also make things post-demise neater for others by sorting through and throwing out lots of things (papers mostly) which will, like this, be simply tedious and ought to be scrapped. Wouldn't blame them if they just scrapped without reading at all, the odds and ends I'll leave behind. No, I think they'll probably look at most of it trying to find the dirty parts. It's mostly clean letters. If this doesn't get published they (Hi Peggy) will probably find it and try to read it. Believe me, I hope they get this far. This is as far as I'm getting for the moment. Now I'm going home for supper. We're going to have smoked pork chops from the German/Austrian butchers at the St. Lawrence Market. A writer needs a reader.

Very good. We each had one thick chop. Steamed. Digested. Readers Digest (this). Writers Digress.

Now between meals. Guilt. Some people are permanently between meals. It's too long between too little. Not, fortunately, me. We planned. We will probably have the same thing tonight: smoked pork chops. They're quite chubby. Very good. There are some left. With you in mind perhaps it should be: there were some left. Some stayed. Some wrote. Some read. Sum eight.

Let's consider this text and especially what I just wrote previous to what I'm writing now (the previous paragraph was written about 8 or 9 months previous to this). Let's start again: let's consider this (see above) to be a piece of post-humous (garbage?) writing. Spirit writing. Scribbles from Beyond. Post-humus, post-humorous probably and certainly post-modern. Maybe I should mail this to someone: "posted post-humously by..." Post-maudlin sports writing.

Spurts writing. Occasional sexual jottings, spottings. Friction. How novel.

When sex became bigotry so did life.

Nice bigotry!

Nice while it lasted, for some people including the undersigned. Overtaken. Undertaken.

Glad I was alive and well in the fifties.

Did women feel then the way some women say they (women) felt then? Or is it only possible for some one to "recognize" later what wasn't perceived then? If they'd "recognized" then it wouldn't have been the fifties. Or: some did but they were so isolated and oppressed that only the arrival of 1970s' Feminism made it possible for them to say what they'd felt. Write. I remember mostly women's happiness then. Laughter. But perhaps I was even more superficial then than I am now. Two dimensional. Ink. Paper.

Two lesbian caryatids. And then: just thought: I'd love to read Lucy's side of the story.

Resumption. One can force oneself to write. No doubt necessary occasionally for professional writers. I'm questioning. This is not professional writing. This writer is however a "professional artist." Presumption: a professional artist can write. This pro artist professes to believe that all the arts are arrangements/orderings/indicatings of materials or vibrations towards an aesthetic end. This artist proposes that he knows what that means and that it means that he can write just as well as any other writer. This however doesn't mean that anybody can write well (whatever *that* means). It doesn't deny that anyone who can write can write. Not an excuse: writing like everything else has in general (in "the West") democratized since the Phoenician alphabet arrived in Greece. Writing of course predates that, as you probably know. I hate being told things I already know by someone who obviously presumes I don't know but should know: that the first "writing" (cuneiform in Sumeria, around 4000 B.C. was predated, preceded by an accounting system of "tokens." Used for perhaps 3000 years the "tokens" eventually became "signs." Writing started as accounting and this was the basis of the power of the scribes of ancient Egypt. The interesting observation I'm about to write is that: "account" in English, French, Italian, Spanish and other languages (?) means both an addition, subtraction etc. of money and a narrative. My accountant is a storyteller too.

So 7 and 3 made 10 and they decided to 5 and 5 it to Nippur with their 33 1/3s. One of them elevened and foured but the other 7 decided not to 35 to Nippur but rather to 14 with 71 and 53. 65 was to 13 as 12 was to 41 (less 10) in those 16 days and at the end there were only 3 left. How many did they start with?

Met bpNichol in the arcade with the Air Canada office, said to him what a wonderful book his "Journal" is, that I thought it was a great work, just read it, had it been well received? bp said well shucks thanks but there's a lot of Gertrude Stein in that book. I realized this was true, it was a humble thing for him to say but it also humbled me. Thinking about this later, my estimation resumed: yes an attitude to the concreteness of printed words from Stein is certainly there but it's authentically bp's attitude too and I like it better than any total thing I've read by Stein. What I like about it is that it *does everything*. It "communicates" but it also shows that "communication" is a structure of its own apart from its referents. Try this: language has little connection with what it refers to. bp's book has the same total aesthetic that I've tried for in my films, photoworks, sculpture. Every level very levered. How close are the untied and the united! bp's a poet and knows it. bp's a poet and no shit. Writing with my right but looking at the other. Best demonstration that language *works* is plane schedules, plans and trips. Very delicate. But up and down are so similar.

Written on a plane.



*Michael Snow and Hollis Frampton, New York, 1968. Photo: Jun Morinaga*

# On Hollis Frampton 1984

I wrote the following text specifically to speak it to honour the memory of a great friend, great artist and great talker, Hollis Frampton.

Hollis died of lung cancer and other complications in Buffalo in 1984. He was a professor of film at SUNY/Buffalo, with other extraordinary artists Paul Sharits and Tony Conrad.

I hope the sympathetic reader will remember and recognize the personal-voice intention of this text . . . and the personal audience, which was composed of many of Hollis's closest friends and colleagues gathered to pay homage to him at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo in the fall of 1984.

**M.S.**

I had been talking, on the telephone, with Susan Krane, the curator of the Hollis Frampton exhibition, who had graciously asked me to give the talk which you are now hearing and are, I hope, about to hear. I had hesitantly agreed and after other details we said our goodbyes and hung up our phones. As I sat back to reflect nervously on the decision I heard Hollis's wonderful laughter being played back in my memory.

He was certainly what used to be called a gentleman and though he could be caustic in his comments, the laughter I heard was a sort of laughter I shared – after all, I thought it!

We were very good friends, a friendship I'll always treasure, so it's not that he didn't respect me and my work – I know he did – or that I respected him and his work, but surely he had noted that in his conversational presence I was far more often a struck-dumb, enchanted listener than a verbally active participant, so that the imagined laughter I mentioned would have to do not with my knowledge of the subject but with my ability (measured naturally against the best: Hollis, my subject) to put it into words, to talk. He was the most extraordinary conversational and public speaker I've ever known. I haven't said the foregoing just to arouse your sympathy. Furthermore, I am unfortunately afflicted with what seems to me to be a very poor memory, and consequently I was and am very impressed by the extent of Hollis's knowledge and the style with which he could bring it forth. It's *true* he could be pedantic but unquestionably he was *proud* of his erudition and there rarely seemed to be any conceit, just an enthusiastic sharing. I envied this capacity, and another thing: I don't recall ever hearing Hollis clear his throat, or is that just my weak memory? Finally, in this vein, the most interesting person possible to hear discussing Hollis would be Hollis, but that is not to be.

In addition to his extraordinary knowledge of all the arts and sciences, he always had a tremendous store of long and involved, usually at least slightly grotesque,

shockingly funny stories. They often had an art-world connection and had the fantastic aspects that emerged in some of his critical writing and some of his films. He told these amazing stories with a gustatory relish: an interesting criss-cross of oral activities – with Hollis words were savoured as food – but the contrary direction involved, the words' sonorous departure from his mouth, was often being balanced by and perhaps replenished by or fuelled by an equally pleasurable intake of food, drink and tobacco smoke. This was when he was at his unforgettable best, a phenomenon of oral, intellectual and emotional energy.

I know or have known other people who had or have the storytelling skill which Hollis had. Some also in the art world. Not many, a few. It's always struck me as an extremely old-fashioned form of entertainment, a survival. Hearing Hollis one felt the presence of an ancient tradition, which of course *was* there, that of the bard. The style of Hollis's contribution to the several thousand years of bard talk always struck me as basically nineteenth century rather than mid-twentieth, and as I knew him more intimately I felt I could clearly see his lineage. Perhaps being a Canadian I have an outsider's view of this, but I felt more and more strongly that I had the privilege of being in the company of a man whose cultural roots were in one of the most admirable areas of American culture. He was part of a flowering of nineteenth-century American thought which I'll call poetic scientism. Some of those who embodied this sensibility and are Hollis's peers are Eakins, Thoreau, Agassiz, perhaps Emerson, but certainly C.S. Pierce and especially Muybridge. Hollis's beautiful text titled "Eadward Muybridge: Fragments of a Tesseract" radiates a familial pleasure which I'll cite as one example amongst many of this kinship. American English found its voice in the nineteenth century and Hollis spoke with this voice.

A vocal-exchange anecdote: several years ago, I was invited to a conference at the Museum of Modern Art. Hollis had been there the day before I arrived and had delivered an – of course – extremely interesting paper. When I arrived at the auditorium someone gave me a copy of Hollis's paper to read. It *was* very interesting, and when I was asked to come to the podium and read my paper I brought his and read it as mine. I was able to get several paragraphs, a typewritten page of, I think, four, before someone in the back of the hall yelled: "Hey! We've heard this before!" I admitted it was Hollis's, begged his pardon in absentia, and attempted my own talk. It may seem that this appropriation was merely mischievous or lazy. Those characterizations are right, at least a bit, but I thought of it then as a contribution to the themes of the conference just as recounting it here is intended to be a contribution to the themes of this talk.

In one sense, it wasn't an unfair trade. Hollis, in fact, had used my voice for the sound track of one of his finest films, *Nostalgia*. The photographs which were used in the film and the commentary that related to them are included in the exhibition here. He was asked why he used someone else's voice to speak texts which are somewhat autobiographical and specifically why he chose my voice. He replied: "Well, for a couple of reasons. One is very practical: when I'm in something that feels like an official situation, my voice is essentially a kind of radio announcer's voice (I think I learned to talk as much from radio as I did from people), which means that it tends to overenunciate histrionically. At one point, I did record my own voice reading that script, and it was just awful. Then I cast around for who else could do it. The reason I finally settled on Mike – except for the possibility of generating a couple of internal

jokes – was that Mike has that flat Ontario Scottish delivery. Every now and then, when the Scottish element in that speech suddenly pops forward, I almost expect him to break into a recitation of an Edinburgh Minnesota American English that the radio announcer speaks. My tendency is to imitate Richard Burton in the bathtub.”

In the same excellent interview with Scott MacDonald, in *Film Culture* 67, 1979, he talked about rentals of his films which, to overly simplify, he felt were based mostly on which films had been written about, that the renters of his films (and of all so-called experimental films) were universities and that it helped so much to have something already written to discuss in relation to the film as opposed to the work and the danger involved in trying something else that had no accompanying text. In the course of this discussion, he mentioned that one of his favourites, *States*, was one of those films which didn't rent much. It is also one of my favourites, and I wrote about it for the New York Film-Makers' Coop catalogue, I believe at the suggestion of Hollis, who was understandably pleased at my enthusiasm. The catalogue in question is supposed to provide information and encouragement for possible renters of film, and my reading of this particular text has that function here as well as many others. The body of work, including my own, which is loosely called experimental film and which is constantly growing, should be paid the attention it deserves and if this is to be considered a thirty-second commercial, so be it: it isn't *very* commercial since there's so little money involved. I hope that all of us who have the possibility of making these films seen, especially those by Hollis, will do everything we can to do so. The rewards, in my opinion, are incomparable and have lots of influence on other seemingly absent matters. Here is my text, in my voice, about Hollis's film *States*, originally made in 1967, slightly revised in 1970, which is a silent black-and-white film of seventeen minutes: “No, not the United, etc. but the conditions, forms, in which things exist. Somewhat abstracted, a solid, a liquid and a gas: salt, milk and smoke: falling, pouring and rising are the stars of this classical film. Sheets, streaks and wisps, the protagonists are all white (light). The background, zero place, is black (no light). Silence. The ongoing film reveals the ephemera compartmented in a pattern of temporal proportions in which lengths of salt sheet activity are gradually overtaken by liquid streaks which are in turn overtaken by smoke drifts. But another solid is the sliceable, arrangeable film material itself: the intercutting and the logic of the arrangement introduces something diamond-like, sculptural, to the natures presented. There is a profoundly satisfying unity of ends and means that is both “natural” (the way the protagonists behave) and “artificial” (the artist's structure). The sum is cultured, beautiful.” Hollis's film work has great variety and his attitudes changed, but rather than attempt to encompass it all or speak of several films I thought I would review for you and myself an appraisal I still feel is relevant and which was written seventeen years ago.

Joyce Wieland and I moved from Toronto to New York in late 1962. We had been following painting and sculpture activity in New York via magazines and fairly frequent visits and had decided that we wanted to be more a part of it. I remember noticing Hollis at many openings, particularly at the Green Gallery, which had some wonderful exhibitions. The ones that I can recall most strongly were '64 and '65 shows by Claes Oldenburg, Larry Poons, Robert Morris and Don Judd. I had made my first film in 1956 but was really unaware of “experimental” film as an entity until our first years in New York when, because of knowing Bob Cowan, a Toronto filmmaker who had been living there for a while, we met George and Mike Kuchar, whom he had

worked with, and because also of Jonas Mekas's column in *The Village Voice*, we discovered "Underground" film as well as the "Uptown" galleries. There was at that time and still is a separation of communities between those involved in the painting and sculpture world in whatever capacity – artist, dealer, critic, collector – and those involved in experimental film. Screenings at the Film-Makers' Cinematheque seemed to rarely include in the audiences representatives from the painting and sculpture world. That world had glamour, money, publicity, power but the avant-garde film scene was poor; *everybody* was poor and what's more any ambition that anyone had could *only* be in relation to his or her work. There was no career incentive other than the work and the interest of the twenty or thirty regulars at the Cinematheque. There was little hope of the films being seen elsewhere and Jonas's wonderful column was the criticism and the publicity. My impression is that the painting and sculpture world somewhat looked down on the "underground" scene as grungy and inbred. I recall a letter to *The Village Voice* by Ivan Karp saying things to that effect. Which is a little strange because the only time that attendance changed was when Andy Warhol showed at the Cinematheque and Karp was at that time with Leo Castelli's Gallery, of which Warhol was a member. At any rate the audiences on those occasions were large and had lots of what was considered glamour at the time and seemed to consist of some people at least whom one *did* see at many galleries but who never reappeared for other screenings at the Cinematheque.

Someone else besides Joyce and me who went to most of the shows and most of the Cinematheque screenings was Hollis. I remember finding him rather mysterious. Everybody who was involved in the painting and sculpture world that I was starting to meet seemed to have some functional interest in it. Hollis knew *many* of the finest painters and sculptors, attended *all* the exhibitions but wasn't in *any* of the prescribed categories. After we had met, and *decidedly* liked each other I was *still* a little puzzled. I admit that my puzzlement now seems puzzling. It seemed that he made his living working in photography labs and that he was a photographer. However, it was a long time, after many visits to his loft, before I ever saw a photograph. He had a well-equipped dark room but the impression I had then was that it was never used. He owned sculpture by Carl Andre, which was the first I'd seen by him and I was very impressed. I was a painter, sculptor, musician, filmmaker then, and I kept on worrying about having to choose between them all and concentrate on one. Part of our congeniality then might have been shared indecision. We met often and talked, drank, smoked and etc. We talked about films partly because we were often seeing the same things, but for a while I didn't realize that he wanted to make films. I was a little surprised when he started working on his first films, which were *Manual of Arms*, *Information* and *Process Red*, all done in 1966. Putting it that way is more than a bit inaccurate because *Manual of Arms* consists of portrait-like sequences of various friends including Joyce and myself, so that we were all already participants. Yes, my surprise was soon dispelled, but from the first time I saw Hollis and during the first two years I knew him, I felt that he was someone who was *in* but uniquely *apart* from the working art world, and that was one of the things that was attractive about him. I was immediately impressed with his first films and, of course, he revealed himself as the wonderful artist that he was, in addition to the incredible mind and voice that I already knew. Joyce Wieland made her first two films using supered words in 1967. Hollis admired

them and I know they returned his mind to trying to work with imaged words again as he had in earlier photographs.

I'd like to return to discussing his storytelling side. In comparison to his talk, his use of this narrative talent in his films is quite cool. Perhaps his 1972 film *Poetic Justice* is his most overtly quote "narrative" unquote. Each shot of the film is of a different hand-lettered piece of paper set in the same scene between a frazzled plant and a full coffee cup. Quite proper to the aesthetic tactic involved, the writing here is mostly basic, plain: verbal description that is empty of detail; for example, shot number five says, "(close-up) my hand places a black and white photograph of your face on a table." The nouns are "empty." Later more detail is added and it tends to the fantastic but it is still "mental." The film foregrounds the shot-list system that hypothetically could be used to make a film, but it *is* the film. The fantastic element becomes positively luscious in some of his writing. Science and art (or rather the information supplied by science) merge in a purely Framptonian way in the texts which accompany the photos of the elegiac 1982 series which is in the exhibition here and which is titled *Adsumus Absumus*. These texts are to me the closest I've seen in his work to the ripe style of his conversation, crystallized, become fixed form. This as before is merely my voice, but *his* voice is so latent in these texts that I'll venture to quote, out loud as it's put, one of them – that for Plate 14: *Rose (Rosa Damascana)*: "This specimen was taken by the author as a keepsake from a funeral wreath at Millersburg, Ohio, on March 5, 1980. The mature fruit, a hip, anatomically cognate with apples and pears but, unusual among most cultivars of the species, is edible, and contains appreciable quantities of ascorbic acid. Formerly, petals were smoked by the Queen of Siam, and offered for that use to guests during royal audiences; when strewn in the paths of the brilliant, or of heads of State, they are a sign of acclaim." The photograph, like the rest of the series, is a beautiful, melancholy, stop-time, memento mori. The funeral wreath was one of his father's. I am no expert on this, indeed my sole source is Guy Davenport's fascinating 1972 essay, but Hollis's writing here seems especially close to the spirit and style of Louis Agassiz, the late-nineteenth-century biologist, lecturer and writer.

In 1969 Hollis asked me to interview him, to prepare some questions and together we would make a tape. We did this and the transcription was published in *Film Culture* 48 and 49, Winter and Spring 1970. One of the questions I asked him was this: "Though there are few similarities between your work and that of the man who used the description 'sentimental scientist' to describe himself, I think it could be used to describe you. What objections to this do you have?" His answer was interesting because he took the word "sentimental" literally. Duchamp's use of this word was ironic, tending to imply "impractical" more than "maudlin." His answer continued: "As for being a scientist, I certainly am not, not even a Christian Scientist. I've been sentimental about scientists at one time or another – and even about sentimental scientists like Duchamp. For me the sciences as distinct from the technologies have always been a spectator sport." There was and is plenty of evidence in his conversation and work of his spectatorial interest in science and scientists. I think this knowledge of and admiration for the accomplishments of the leading figures of modern science was a great force in his life. For example, in describing his film *Maxwell's Demon* in the same interview he said: "Well, I wanted to do something – to put it as sentimentally as possible – for James Clerk-Maxwell who is, or was, either the last qualitative physicist or the first quantitative physicist. Maxwell is known and admired among physicists for

his work in thermodynamics. We're all steeped in thermodynamics in the physical sense but I have particularly revered Clerk-Maxwell because he became, in a very brief aside in a lecture delivered at the Royal College of Edinburgh, or some place like that, the Father of the analytical theory of colour which in its applications and ramifications has given us colour photography and colour cinematography. He said that he thought that colours could be analyzed into three components – a red component, a green component and a blue component – and that all colours could be re-synthesized from these three colours, so that in this case, all filmmakers owe Clerk-Maxwell a considerable debt.”

People like Clerk-Maxwell were models and ideals for Hollis in a way that he perhaps didn't realize till recently.

In the same interview, I also asked him what I thought was a mildly inflammatory question: “Are your films quote ‘literary’ unquote, and what could this possibly mean to you?” He used the term “establishment film” in his answer, saying, rightly of course, that his films had nothing to do with their use of literature. He also referred to his memorable titles. I felt that his filmic work was affected in other ways by the range and depth of reading and hoped he'd think so too. I think, for one, that syntax, grammar, literary form and linguistic knowledge are often his latent models for film structures, his ideal of satisfying form. He was extremely interested in systems of all kinds and the relative preponderance of their shared qualities. Musical, scientific and mathematical models were all influences. The title of his 1970 film *Zorn's Lemma* is another homage to a scientist: Max Zorn, a Swedish nineteenth-century mathematician. My dictionary says that a lemma as a mathematical term means a subsidiary theorem, proved, in order to be used in proving the main theorem. Zorn's particular lemma concerned principles of describing the hierarchical order of certain sets: “Every partially ordered set contains a maximal fully ordered subset.” Hollis's film is one of several examples in his work where the individual word is used as the basic structural unit of the work, which reminds me of a story Hollis once told me.

During the Sixties we all took LSD at least once, including Hollis. His story concerned how he and several other people were somewhere in Ohio, I think, (Yellow Springs?), had taken LSD and decided to go for a drive. They came to a street with a stop sign. The driver stopped, then gradually he and his passengers lost the signification of the signifier which had stopped them. Perhaps at first one of the driver's thoughts was that STOP was a one-time order, then what could you do? Anyway, according to Hollis, he and all the passengers got out of the car to discuss the stop sign. What was it? A mystic symbol of some kind? The importance of the interpretations became stronger and stronger, more and more cosmic, until another car's horn snapped someone's memory back to the quotidian function of the image they were perplexed by and they rode on.

Since the *deus ex machina* of the ancient Greek plays, machinery has had *some* involvement with art. But not much. Photography and cinema are really the first machine arts. The issue of the role of the subjectivity of the artist vis-à-vis the intermediary of the camera-machine and its product has been hotly discussed since the beginning of these devices and their uses. Hollis was, as he said in 1969, interested in “the technologies” *practically*, as opposed to what he said was his “spectatorial” interest in science. In 1982, he might have said something else but, unfortunately, I only heard a few words from him that expressed this.

In the mid-Sixties, however, we did have conversations, during which I also talked, that were extremely clarifying for both of us. We both were (as were others we knew, like Ken Jacobs or George Landow) thinking a lot about what kind of tool the camera was and what kind of experience the products of such a tool ought to give. Photography and cinema are *nineteenth-century* technologies, perhaps an aspect of Hollis's comfort with them. Our accord was that the intercession of the camera between the artist and audience called for recognition of and inclusion of special forms of detachment or distance of the artist. Much of the art that was being done when I was younger was concerned with making the artist visible. The thumbprint aspect of Abstract Expressionism represented one kind of visibility: only a particular personality, a particular set of anxieties, a particular predicament could have manipulated the surface in that way, could have produced the set of traits which, taken together, constitute an empirical visible style. I have never felt comfortable having that kind of visibility myself. My films put me exactly at the end of the camera where I can never be directly visible: if I do have any visibility, it is always mediated in ways which are open to manipulation. Hollis said: "I do know a number of filmmakers who have never decided which end of the camera they wanted to be on." He went on to mention, of Stan Brackage, that "he'd like to be on both ends: he'd like to be seen, and at the same time, he would like to be in control of the way in which he is seen." Hollis's later film work has been seen by some to be rather Brackagean. It's very Framptonian, but it includes more of what he called "dirt" than what in the earlier works he called "chemistry." His later film work tends more to the quote "natural" than to the quote "artificial" and to seem more what's called "expressive." But the paradox of the tactics of personal-touch effacement which I mentioned is that they themselves are, or can be, in practice "expressive," that even in such executive-mode creations as opera, where the author is in many ways far removed from the final actual manifestation of his directions, a thumbprint, or in this case I'd rather call it a voice-print, of the responsible individual personality is discernable.

When I moved back to Toronto in 1971, Hollis had moved to Eaton, New York, and was more and more active in Buffalo. I am sorry to say I saw him less and less. These post-mortem mea culpas are useless, but Toronto and Buffalo *are* very close. The last time I saw Hollis was in the fall of '83 when he was in Toronto for a symposium on Photographic Theory at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. He gave an extraordinary performance. The next night he came to supper. We drank and he talked and smoked, and it was just like the old days. We stayed up till about 4:00 a.m., and it was then that he told me of his illness and its seriousness. I had known nothing about it. He stayed overnight and we had a long rambling breakfast, during which he told some of the most hilarious stories I'd ever heard from him. Perhaps other friends of Hollis's may have heard these stories: the one about the New York barfly who owned a monkey who met a dreadful fate and the other about the misadventures of the young painter who was invited for a weekend at the East Hampton summer home of a wealthy collector. The night before I had asked about the work he had been doing with what has been so oddly labelled "digital arts." I asked him about computers and working with them. He settled back with a wacky introspective grin on his tired face and said slowly, "Oh, it's sweet." Then, "We are going to see unbelievable marvels." I am deeply indebted to Helene Houston, a former student and colleague of Hollis's, for writing to me and expanding on the reasons for the moment of rapture

Hollis experienced when I asked him that question. I remember it very vividly but we didn't go any further because it was late and sad. Hollis shouldn't have drunk or smoked and, finally, we went to bed.

Helene Houston described in a letter to me this fall the activities she took part in with Hollis: "The first few years were an absolute struggle just to gain some footing. Most of the time, he just spent on soldering boards together that never worked, or he never got a chance to use. The first major project was just getting the system up, the system which ran on the computer manufactured by the company Bill Etra was involved with, Processor Technology . . . Once the software and hardware got reasonably straightened around, we began to work on programs, serious programs that were all aimed at creating an air-tight, intellectually rigorous operating system that artists could use and computer scientists could admire. After all, the goal was nothing short of the marriage or re-marriage, as it were, of Science and Art. What we worked on was really the beginning of a new aesthetic." The Digital Arts Lab was an effort which brought Hollis back into the forefront of the avant-garde, the intellectual avant-garde, at the head of the most important revolution of the twentieth century. It redeemed him from having missed the revolution in physics, the dawn of modern science and other intellectual and historic movements which he held in such high and proper regard.

So it seems that science was no longer a spectator sport, that the sciences, the technologies and the arts were in some ways merged and that the model, the example of James Clerk-Maxwell, the father, was passed on in work about which I know almost nothing, but I feel certain that Hollis's *total* arrival in his time was here, and that his love of systems, his literateness, his sculptural sense, even the influence of radio must all be merged there in conversation. I hope to rectify this, but the form his voice took in this work is for the moment unfortunately outside my experience, but his voice is still present to us in all his work. I know there exist many tapes of his talks at film showings, in classes, on panels, etc., which is a wonderful fruit of the memory machines he worked with, but tonight I hoped to direct your attention to the voice which is in my memory and the voice which speaks with eloquence through the mediums of photography, film, writing and computers. I'm struck by my use of the word "medium" here. The departed are said to speak through mediums. Are artworks a form of ectoplasm? They are certainly and fundamentally concretions, concentrations of human energy. As one era slowly dissolves into the next, some individuals metabolize the former means for physical survival into new means for psychic survival. These latter we call art. They promote the life of consciousness by nourishing our affections, by reincarnating our perceptual substance, by affirming, imitating, reifying the process of consciousness.

Seeing Hollis's exhibition here a month ago, I was moved on many levels, one of them being a reawakening of the sense that through art, as through very few other human endeavours and never with such purity, one places in and leaves in the world for as "forever" as material and conditions will allow an objectified emanation from the core of one's uniqueness. Could I say that while every individual entity is unique, irreplaceable . . . some are more so than others?

Thank you.

## Music and Me <sup>1986</sup>

In 1986 the Music Gallery staged a series of solo-piano concerts titled *The Tradition of the New*. Selected by Casey Sokol, professor of music at York University and member of the CCMC, the series included Frederick Rzewski, Ursula Oppens, Elyakim Taussig, Marc Widner, Douglas Finch, Yvar Mikhashov, Marilyn Crispell, Bill Dobbins and myself. Various concerts were recorded by the CBC. Some, including my "Around Blue," were played on CBC's fine new music series, *Two New Hours*, chiefly organized by David Jaeger.

This essay first appeared in *The Tradition of the New*, published by the Music Gallery in 1986.

**M.S.**

I started to play the piano around 1948, after hearing and being very moved by the boogie woogie and blues of, first, Jimmy Yancey, then Meade Lux Lewis, Cripple Clarence Lofton, and Albert Ammons. I experienced similar revelations with the musics of Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton. I then listened to everything I could in Jazz. I met some other would-be musicians and we taught each other and started to play in bands. At first I was especially interested in playing New Orleans/Dixieland Jazz. My mother was and still is (she is 82) a very fine classical pianist whose Bach, Mozart, Chopin and Debussy also influenced me. For several summers, a couple of weeks at a time, I and my new musician friends (Ken Dean, a wonderful trumpet player; Roy Glandfield, trombone; and Don Priestman, clarinet) went to Chicago where we sat in where we could and heard a lot. I made a recording for the Steiner-Davis label with the great clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, which was unfortunately never released. I had the honour of attending a party at Jimmy Yancey's, where he and other great pianists (including Albert Ammons) played. I also played and Yancey was astonished that I knew some of his pieces, and said he would take me as his pupil. I was an unlikely follower for the time, a skinny 18-year-old white Canadian.

In Toronto I played frequently with Ken Dean's Hot Seven and in other bands with Bud Hill, Dave Lancashire, and Ron Sullivan. I lived in Europe for a year and a half ('53-'54), supporting myself by playing piano and trumpet in Italy and Yugoslavia for the Club Méditerranée, in Paris, in the French Alps, and for a month in Brussels with a fine local band. The great trumpet player Clifford Brown sat in with us. Starting around 1961 in Toronto, I played with Mike White's Imperial Jazz Band, which was quite busy for a couple of years on TV, making records, and performing at the Park Plaza, the Colonial, and for a year at the Westover Hotel, where extraordinary guest artists were hired to play with us: Dicky Wells, Vic Dickinson, Edmund Hall, Cootie

Williams, Rex Stewart, Buck Clayton, Jimmy Rushing and many other notable Swing and Dixieland musicians.

Subsequently I played with some of these musicians (and Wingy Manone, a New Orleans trumpeter) elsewhere, mostly New York State and Michigan. At the same time I had my own group which played more “modern” music (Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker). The group usually included Larry Dubin on drums, Terry Forster on bass and Alf Jones on trombone. We played at such places as the House of Hambourg, George’s and elsewhere. This group can be seen and heard in Don Owen’s 1963 NFB film *Toronto Jazz*.

I lived in New York from ’62 to ’71 and played mostly at sessions but also some jobs with many fine musicians: Kenny Davern, Roswell Rudd, Milford Graves, Steve Lacy, Pharoah Sanders and others. I had become interested around 1960 in extending the means and scope of improvisation, and became involved increasingly with the newer “free” musicians. Returning to Toronto, I started playing with the Artists’ Jazz Band, a unique band made up of mostly visual artists who also played (Robert Markle, Graham Coughtry, Gordon Rayner and others). We made two LPs. In the summer of ’67, I played weekly concerts at the Penny Farthing with a “free” band including Stu Broomer, Jim Falconbridge and Doug Pringle; in 1975 Chatham Square, a New York label, issued a double album of my solo music. Since 1964 I had also become very involved with the sound aspect of my films. I have made sound sculpture and have done sound installations, e.g., *Hearing Aid*, first installed at the Kitchen in New York and later in various locations in Europe and Canada.

I joined the CCMC which, since 1976, has played weekly and biweekly concerts at the Music Gallery, sometimes with such guest musicians as Derek Bailey, Misha Mengelberg and Evan Parker. We have made six tours of Europe (Poland, West Germany, Austria, Belgium, Holland, France and England) and played in several festivals: Pro Musica Festival (Bremen), Los Angeles Olympics Arts Festival, the Holland Festival and a summer residency at Avignon, France. CCMC has issued six albums (CCMC Vols. 1 to 5) and a three-record box, *Larry Dubin and the CCMC*.

I’m at present working on a record to be issued in April 1987 by Art Metropole in Toronto titled *The Last LP*.

## An Entrance to *Redifice* 1987

A pamphlet published by the Isaacs Gallery, Toronto, provided an introduction to one of three works in Snow's exhibition there in October–November 1987.

**R**EDIFICE is a construct whose conceptual ground was derived from the superimposition of a network of thoughts about the colour RED (its embodiments, uses, associations, symbolism(s) and qualities) over a plan and elevation of The Architectural. Blood.

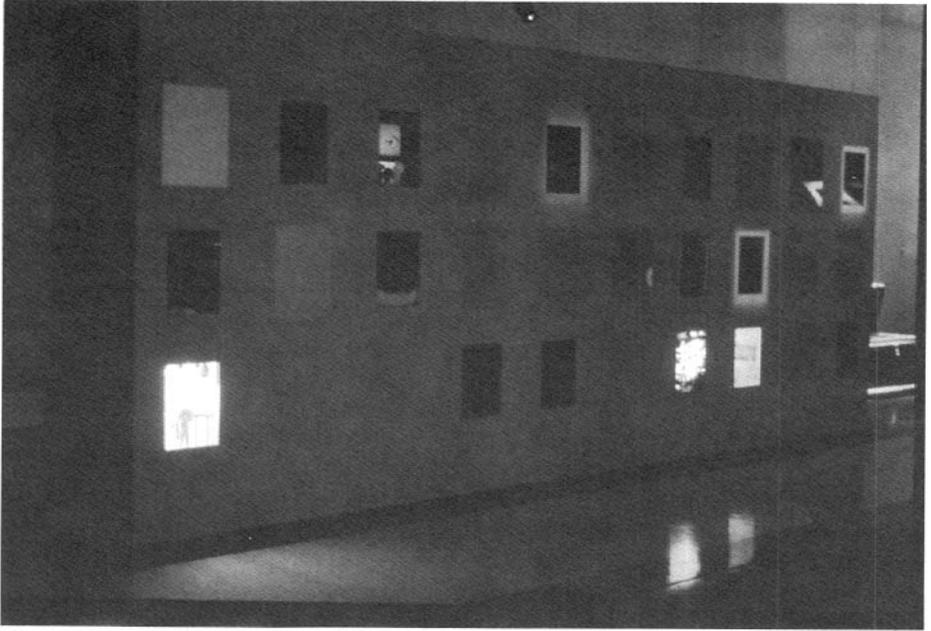
REDIFICE is a structure with many “levels,” many “rooms,” many “windows.” Viewing REDIFICE becomes a narrative film, edited by the spectator, of “frames,” objects, scenes and events that (could) take place in such a “high-rise”: a classroom? a theatre? an operating room? a living room? a bedroom? an elevator? Birds “brush” by outside 2 windows twice. A nearby night street corner with traffic lights. 3AM? Prostitution.

Many uses of light, high-light the choice of a particular wavelength of the spectrum (RED). Lights become actors inside and outside the building, introducing a spatial spectrum:

REDIFICE is a spatial enclosure, the Eros and Thanatos of structure, erection and destruction. The concept arrives as words in space (*en liberté*): ROT, ROSSO, ROUGE, (do they mean “RED”?) becomes 2 dimensional, surfaces, then 2 dimensional space definers, photographs, back-lit transparencies then the real “illusions” of holograms to “tableaux” of flat elements to “tableaux” in-the-round in painted wood, metal, plastic, glass, clay – 3 dimensional, holes and bulges and finally the mass, the 3 dimensional RED “wall” itself.

4 sided: of course there's always an Other side to REDIFICE.

REDIFICE is a temporal *Bildung*, a history of Architectonics, RED arriving, RED ageing, Apartment and Department, the RED wine and the bREAD *before* drinking and eating, the wine and the bread *after* consumption. Fire. Arising and a falling. Sunset or Sunrise? A suicide is “drawn” to the ground. Angels float. A here and a Now, a There and a Then. A war-torn no man's land (almost on T.V.). Passion. Politics, Literature (READ), Heat, Meat, Feet, REDesigned, REDeveloped, REDolent. My part 2 of Etant Donn e.



## *The Audience* 1987

This text was written in December 1987 to accompany drawings and a small clay maquette as a proposal to the jury considering possible works of art for Toronto's SkyDome, then under construction.

**M.S.**

**T***he Audience* is an audience for the audience: a sculptural audience for the human audience (the audience which is arriving to see events at the Stadium).

The sculptures represent viewers of, reactors to, greeters and critics of the audience. The event the sculptures see is the arrival of the spectators and they see it as a sporting event. But both sides are seers who are seen.

*The Audience* is not a mob, it is a group (two groups) made up of individuals, many "characters," each showing an individual reaction or expression or sign, which were culled from a survey of the forms of individual audience expression. These stances and gestures range from the most negative "kill-the-umpire" feelings to the jubilant ("we won!"). These kinds of "reaction" are mixed in each group and the thumbs-down No sign is in one group, the V for Victory in another, but each is accompanied by various other gestures. Cheers counterpoint boos in each group.

The points of view of the different "characters" are also aimed in many different directions. At one particular spot for a spectator on the ground a one-to-one situation will happen with many of the sculptures; for example, stand directly under the man with a camera and he is taking your picture – and I've no doubt that many spectator/photographers will take "his" picture.

The general style and mood is deliberately more Roman than Greek but the "personalities" are also sculpturally formal incarnations, each with a different structural basis. There are references to historical styles and idioms "within" the overall style: Hindu, Greek, Romanesque, Gothic.

The material will be Design-Cast sculptural material. Information about it is enclosed. This material can be tinted and given a patina, and the aim will be to give it a bronze "look."

P.S. The material finally used was fibreglass.

# Laocoön of the People <sup>1987</sup>

This interview by Pierre Théberge was one of a set of interviews with various artists, intended to be on "working methods," instigated by and published in *Parachute* 56 (Oct./Nov./Dec. 1989): 40-42.

**W**hen working on *The Audience*, were you thinking in terms of social realism? Not in the same sense that the term is used in describing American work of the thirties or Russian art, but I suppose it is, or could be, called a certain type of "social realism." Some people see in *The Audience* sports fans, but it isn't simply this. *The Audience* is an audience for the audience. It's involved in directing viewer's attention or exchanging attentions. The sculpture is partly reacting to you, and partly a survey of all the gestures of a reacting audience. I concentrated on how the body expresses its likes and dislikes, particularly on the hand signs which are very sculptural.

*Did you want to make a portrait of humanity?*

It is, in a way. But that is too big a characterization. All the figures are invented individuals who depict a wide range of feelings, some of which are negative and some which are positive. Your mentioning a portrait reminds me that one of the things I wanted to do was work with, in a new way I hope, the effects on the spectator when one is, or thinks one is, looked at by a representation. Some don't just look (one thumbs his nose at you), some are appraising you and finding you wanting, and some are completely lost inwardly, all their attention is inner. One particular figure whose working title was "Oh No!" is slumped back in misery, one hand covering his eyes, another on his heart: his team lost, his favourite opera singer sang out of tune, he just remembered he left the stove on at home. Another is holding his nose and gesturing down, he's rather "snooty," he's probably a critic.

*You never really have used people in such an "expressionist" way in your work. Rameau's Nephew, for example, is very formal in the use of the body.*

Yes, *The Audience* is expressionist, or baroque, it's a Laocoön of the People. When I do these commissions, I usually get ideas from the situation, but *The Audience* is related to some of my other reflexive work like *Scope*, for example, which is an abstract sort of facing of people. All the sculpture I've done has concentrated on the idea that a work of art is a directing of the spectator's attention by the artist, or a guidance to concentration. But, yes, *The Audience* is different, being figurative in a way that I've never worked before. I'm not interested in legitimation by imitation; *The Audience* is an original work. Its style came about like this. Certain kinds of almost inadvertent forms can be made or found with clay when one works totally manually, on a small scale and in a very broad way. The way one uses one's thumb to push a *jaw* into shape or squeeze an *ear* into position figures in certain photographic works,

precisely in the process of enlarging. These five- or six-inch-tall clay figures were the basis of the next stage, plaster enlargements (a bit bigger than life size), which I and my co-workers took five months to make. More was discovered then, and more changes took place making the even larger ones, sometimes fifteen to twenty feet tall.

There is a cartoon aspect to the figures. The hands and heads are disproportionately large like in cartoons. I like the work of R. Crumb, the American underground comics cartoonist, and many others like S. Clay Wilson. Characters in cartoons, like Tintin or Dick Tracy, are amazing. I tried to invent such characters. But there isn't one code that will work correctly on all of them; some are types, some are not. I wanted the sculptures to have individuality but not to break the unity of the ensemble too much. Each figure has different formal principles. Actually the sculpture of Daumier is similar.

*Is there an analogy with La Région Centrale and all its different movements, curves, spirals?*

Yes, but that film is planetary or cosmic, whereas *The Audience* is a *Human Comedy* or perhaps a *Gates of Hell*.

*I'd say the laughter is not so joyful; they look more like monsters or gargoyles.*

Yes, some are gargoyles – think of that photo by Brassai of one of the gargoyles of Notre-Dame – but I don't think they're monsters; they're enthusiastic or exaggerated. It would be difficult to find one label that would work on the whole group.

*Have you done some research on monumental sculpture, for example, the Statue of Liberty?*

We read about the *Statue of Liberty*, its making and its restoration, partly for technical reasons. Often monumental sculpture is big but negligible. One knows it's there but doesn't look at it. The *Statue of Liberty* is definitely not like that. I wanted to make a monumental dialogue that wouldn't vanish into the architecture.

*Are you interested in the audience and its reactions?*

I've seen people discover the cameraman sculpture as they walk underneath him. He's holding a giant camera and at a certain spot you are exactly what he's photographing. I hoped for, and have actually seen, visitors photograph "him."

*In terms of method, does this kind of mise-en-scène and the fact that you use different characters relate at all to your film work?*

The closest thing would be *Rameau's Nephew*, as you mentioned, but also perhaps the first part of *Presents*. *The Audience* is not totally "in the round" but it's very, very three-dimensional with many different views, from far away, sideways, and so on. So to be really seen, it depends on the movement of the spectator. It's not a picture, with one front view.

Compared to photos or films, there's a particularly odd contact when a sculpture addresses you. In this case it's not "high realism," it's expressionist realism. The most radical effect comes from those that seem to insult you, to make a negative appraisal, or criticism of you. That's a relationship I don't believe I've ever seen before.

*In religious art, a dialogue between the image and the beholder is implied.*

Yes, that's a pertinent and interesting relationship. But most religious images don't mock you. In *The Audience* there's this particular gesture (thumbs in ears, hands flapping) that's not seen that much; you're not likely to see it at a baseball game. Children use it; it's a very peculiar mockery gesture, often done with sticking out the tongue, but since the arms are horizontally straight out, it provokes a hidden Christ-like relation also present in the Gothic shape of the face.

*When you are not responding to a public commission, what is the main incentive for your work?*

I am often, or perhaps always, thinking about my work. Thinking is the basis. I consider different processes or relationships between parts that might make something. . . . I usually make scribbles and jotted notes at first. The ideas tend to be what people call "formal," that is, they are about forms, shapes, procedures.

There are a number of lines or areas I've been exploring, for example in film, trying to make the possibilities of the camera a protagonist, so to speak. I've made a lot of work on camera movement, and thinking about the nature of tracking, trucking or travelling shots has resulted in my recent film *Seated Figures*. I remember I was thinking about different kinds of surfaces that the camera could move over; a surface, a floor or a road are planar. So I became interested in doing something which, in current jargon, probably is formalist and modernist: a moving picture which is absolutely parallel to the picture plane, to the screen. That could be done by running the camera along walls, but the idea of filming roads and fields horizontally and of making a transformation from horizontal recording to vertical projection interested me more.

Then there is the sound track. Here comes the audience again! After I had decided on the process for making the image, I didn't know what to do for sound (sometimes the ideas come together). After a lot of internal debate, I decided on an idea which involved constructing the sound of an audience watching the film. The more I thought about it the more worried I became, because I chose to include the kinds of sounds that audiences for my films have made in the past: generally they yawn, they crumple paper, they talk and cough. I decided I could make a dangerous attempt to concretize and perhaps exorcize distraction. Distraction is the infuriating *ordre du jour*, but I tried to turn it into a formal aspect of the work, to see how it would merge or not merge with an actual audience. I knew it was dangerous because it could definitely undercut seeing the image, which is a very pure visual experience. I suppose that has happened but it seems to provoke some unusual feelings.

The last two years I've been thinking about painting quite a bit, imagining some paintings, making more little notes and scribbles. Part of it, I guess, is a kind of nostalgia for working alone because for about four years I've been a boss; during the making of *The Audience*, I sometimes had twelve people working with me. Before that, while making *Redifice*, a piece for the Vancouver 1987 Expo, I had five people working with me.

*Do you see painting as a method of some sort?*

I do imagine processes or methods which might produce unpredictable effects but I often have a kind of black-and-white idea, enough for a sketch, and colour comes next. But sometimes it's an idea about colour and I see colours. These recent ideas are sort of self-reflexive in a way too; they are ideas for paintings of paintings but they are not paintings that exist; they are paintings that would be made to exist by painting the painting in the painting.

I don't know whether I'll do them but I now have a lot of drawings with interesting possibilities. As far as methods go, that is characteristic: I make a container, bounds, parameters within which I will work, but I can't totally predict what's going to happen. Some of the possible meanings can only be realized by experiencing the actual work. I don't work in terms of wanting to say "this," I find out what it is that "it" says and, if I don't like what it says, I won't like it and you won't see it.

## *The Last LP* 1987

The following texts are a part of *The Last LP*, a work issued by Art Metropole, Toronto, in 1987. Like my Chatham Square record album, *Michael Snow Musics for Piano, Whistling, Microphone and Tape Recorder* (also presented in this volume), *The Last LP* was an attempt to work with the LP as a *form*, like a sonata or a sonnet. Soon after its arrival in the 1950s, the LP became physically the record, its label, and the jacket – a “cover” design and a back text with a listing of the names of the pieces recorded. The whole was the packaging for the music (the music manifested only when the record was removed and played). There were many variations within this format. The demise of the LP prophesied by *The Last LP*’s introduction text had not yet occurred when I wrote it. As of this writing (1991), it has.

These texts are creative writing which originally had a physical context; they need the jacket and especially the music for full existence. It is with extreme trepidation that I hereby sever that relationship and present the following texts as details of the larger work *The Last LP* in the hope that their quality as “literature” will be sufficient.

A great deal of misapplied research was done in preparing these texts. As the notes say, “ethno-musicology has been helpful to the entire human species by assisting in the possible continuity of ancient direction,” and “this record was produced in memory of these ancient cultures.” Obviously, the model in the case was “ethnographic” recordings like those by UNESCO, Polydor and Folkways. All the music (of which I am extremely proud) is original new music. Only two pieces are based on specific models; the others had their genesis in my meagre knowledge of the area of music referred to; for example, no piece exists or existed in Tibet like “Amitābha Chenden Kālā.” It is new music based on the facts of the vocal and instrumental “drone” chants of the Tibetan music and the fact that Tibetan music did/does use various trumpet mouthpiece instruments. The rest is a total construct using the possibilities of multitrack recording to make a specifically stereophonic special effect: the rotation of the sounding horns around a fire in a space with specific sound qualities, a huge stone interior.

**M.S.**

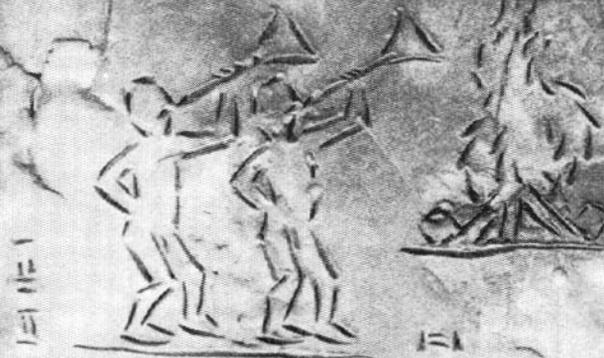
The title of this album – while hopefully an exaggeration – refers to the eventual disappearance of the 33 1/3 rpm microgroove vinyl/stylus format. The passing of the long-playing record seems inevitable as newer recording formats advance and earlier ones evolve new forms. This technological forced obsolescence within the “industrial world” resembles the effects of the technology-based societies on the ancient traditional societies.

Thus, this collection of rare music derived from threatened, obsolete, or now-extinct cultures from around the world is perhaps, unfortunately, a factor in their disappearance. However, we feel that ethno-musicology can be and has been helpful to

ART METROPOLE # 001

# THE LAST LP

UNIQUE LAST RECORDINGS OF THE MUSIC OF ANCIENT CULTURES



Assembled by MICHAEL SNOW

the entire human species, by assisting in the possible continuity of ancient directions. In further defence of recording technology and the effects of its intrusion into other cultures, it could be said that living in certain cultures in the past might not have been pleasant for many people. Be that as it may, we feel that as much of the music of these cultures that can be perpetuated should be. This record was produced in memory of the creativity of these ancient cultures.

Not even millions of LPs could adequately present samples of the incredible range and richness of the remaining traditional musics of the world. This LP was not composed to attempt that. Created under the direction of the noted Canadian musician and visual artist Michael Snow, several criteria for this LP have intersected. A primary consideration for inclusion here is musical excellence, admittedly from an educated but ethnocentric point of view. Further, the music in each case represents the only known or last-recorded example of a rare ancient music. The work had survived in ancient notation preserved in monasteries, palaces, libraries, or it had been passed on acoustically and orally. These ancient pieces have continued to be performed in cultures which were at the time of their recording losing their age-old cohesive social structure, or since the recording have indeed lost it and are now destroyed, dispersed, ruined or thoroughly altered.

Mr. Snow chose to compose what he hopes will be considered as a single work, albeit made up of discrete, distinctive individual elements: the LP record, the music, the texts and the jacket.

Rarity and oddity were sought. Our first selection on SIDE A is an example of this and other subtler kinds of qualifications for inclusion: this ancient Chinese piece was played to announce the arrival of the Emperor WU TING. It was also called "The Mockingbird Overture" and includes whistling. The Emperor was fond of birds, particularly the Mockingbird who of course can sing his own song but he can also sing the song of any bird he hears! He can copy other sounds – the bark of a dog, a policeman's whistle – and often sings his entire repertoire one after another! This aural chameleon is thus more pertinent to this project than it is possible to express here. The title also referred to the fact that this piece is antiphonal: two instrumentally identical groups face each other across a hall and there is a great deal of "imitation" by one side of the other, which is also strikingly relevant for this album as a whole.

Locale and ritual are meshed in ancient societies, so we have given great emphasis to an inclusion of the sound qualities of the environment in which a performance took place – and which are (in fact) the electrical replay qualities of the grooved message.

The music has been chosen to represent the extremes of and also particular points on the musical continuum designated by staccato and legato (the musical equivalents of consonants and vowels). The sound-producing and instrumental categories have also been consciously used in a way that attempts to demonstrate their relationship to the socio-philosophical and religious attitudes of the ancient world.

First was the Voice: vocal music (spoken, solo and ensemble song). Next, representation from the Membranophones (drums), which is a sub-category of Idiophones or tuned percussion instruments such as gongs and lithophones, but which also includes clapping and foot-stamping. Chordophones are stringed instruments, bowed or plucked. We have chosen a recording of a Chinese plectrum instrument, the HUI TRA, but no bowed instrument, deciding that musically speaking the SOSTENUTO effect would be taken care of by members of the Airophone family, which includes all blown (wind)

instruments. For this album, we have featured the horns or trumpets on AMITĀBHA CHENDEN KĀLĀ and the whistling on WU TING DEE LIN CHAO CHEU.

The acoustic means of producing sound, which are unfathomably ancient in human history, are inextricably interwoven with religious-philosophical views about the nature of the Universe: through most ancient cultures the four elements have been considered to be earth, air, fire, and water, and our recording/construct reflects this. Our instrumental selection, surprisingly, encompasses both the acoustic and the electronic! (RAGA LALAT) Further, foregrounding the close interrelation of “primitive” bodily activity with these elements (a larger prior categorization being a customary differentiation or juxtaposition of nature and culture on the part of cultural anthropologists) was important to Mr. Snow in both political/social and aesthetic senses.

The music on this record was assembled from diverse sources: French, German, Russian, English, American, and Canadian musicologists have all made contributions.

The first practical method of recording sound was that devised by Leon Scott for his PHONO AUTOGRAPH of 1857. In 1877, Thomas Alva Edison made advances which were immediately improved upon by Alexander Graham Bell and others. Then in 1888, Edison made his PHONOGRAPH commercially available to the public, a machine which played grooved wax cylinders. It is sometimes thought that discs were developed later, but this is not so, as Emile Berliner was working on the disc method in 1887 and had his GRAMOPHONE for sale in 1888. Discs soon became standard as they could be mass-produced, whereas cylinders had to be individually made. The new invention was of course a sensation. Dr William Channis wrote in *Illustrated London News* (3 August 1878) “. . . spoken languages will be preserved from century to century with all the peculiarities of pronunciation, dialect and brogue. As we go now to see the Steropticon we shall go to the public halls or galleries of sound where the treasures of speech and song will be brought out and reproduced as loud or louder than when first spoken or sung by the truly great ones of this earth. . . . Within a dozen years some of the great singers will be induced to sing into the ear of the phonograph and the electrotyped cylinders thus obtained will be put into the hand-organs of the streets and we shall hear the actual voices of our best singers ground out at every streetcorner.” This astute article went on to mention the possibilities of recording “the waves on the beach, the noises of animals . . . even the tumult of battle.” Many famous personages were invited by Edison to record their reactions to the new invention. In 1888 was this from Sir Arthur Sullivan: “For myself I can only say that I am astonished and somewhat terrified at the results of tonight’s experiments. Astonished at the wonderful power you have developed – and terrified at the thought that so much hideous and bad music may be put on record for ever!”

We are confident that the music of THE LAST LP cannot be so described!

The thrill of authenticity aroused by the first recordings has continued to be a factor in our perception of recorded music. That there is a direct transmission through engravings of acoustic vibrations produced in the past by musical instruments played in some Other Room through their emanation from our loudspeakers is the “suspension of disbelief” of the sound-recording medium. Yes, “magic.” It is still a thrill to be able to hear Louis Armstrong’s Hot 7 play “Potato Head Blues” in 1929 in Chicago, or the exquisite last recordings (1950) of the great classical pianist Dinu Lipati at Bésançon, who died shortly after making them.

But recording itself has recently gone through some subtle and important changes which might – ought to, will – alter the above-mentioned form of aural belief. From being an instrument of documentation, sound recording has become a musical instrument in itself. Recording has become as much a process of creation as of memorization. This sense of recording was an important part of the great Canadian classical pianist Glenn Gould's thoughts about the future of music. Aural space is now created in a way that relates interestingly to structural innovations of perspective in Renaissance visual art. Multi-track taping has introduced the deception of ensemble. The impression of played simultaneity is more and more constructed by an assembling of tape tracks, each of which was played/recorded on a separate occasion. Working with this as a truth of the music (the compatibility of electronically produced sound, synthesizers, drum machines, sampling, with recording, is another side of this new simulacrum) and as an open *raison d'être* of the recording product/artefact is still extremely rare, as is hearing it.

We must also take note of what seems like the triumph of Equal Temperament in the East as extraordinary violinists, cellists and pianists – interpreters of the West's Classical, Romantic and Modern repertoires – seemingly pour out of Korea, Japan and China, and Rock 'n' Roll pounds its basic harmonies around the world. And Sony is, after all, Japanese. The internal combustion engine was, of course, followed by our other great old machine, the piano. And the present development of electronic musical instruments is largely Japanese.

It is interesting to note that the period from the start of recording's presence (roughly, after 1900) is the most intensely creative period in musical history. Recording has been a decisive factor in the astonishing range and depth of music produced, especially by making available for study far more music than a previous lifetime of listening could have encompassed. This is a triumph of technology in its most beneficent, gratifying aspect. Against the losses of ancient social musics we must balance the arrival of the new global creative individual, with previously undreamed-of resources and possibilities.

## **RE: THE COVER**

Our cover photo shows the priceless artefact in the possession of the KAGYUPA sect of TIBETAN Buddhist monks, now in Nepal. This artefact indicates the possibility of an astonishing antiquity for the AMITĀBHA ceremony (The Simultaneous Welcome of Amitābha), the music for which is included in this album.

It is a fire ceremony performed by 12 monks/musicians, each playing a different horn or trumpet as they slowly walk around the wood fire.

The object is a clay tablet (12 3/4" square) incised in a method resembling that of certain cuneiform tablets from Mesopotamia, 12th century B.C. Cuneiform (stylus inscription on clay originating in Babylon) could be considered the first LP technique. While only two musicians are shown on the clay tablet, the cuneiform characters have been translated as "multiply by six."

The object contains many puzzling aspects, and amongst its historical curiosities are: the drawing of the figures playing trumpets and the fire and the cuneiform are all done with the same stylus which was used for the "letters." In all the known related examples of Babylonian, Chaldean, Assyrian and Sumerian clay objects the "writing"

is done with different instruments than the relief drawing. The style of the figures is also odd, definitely not Babylonian etc. (but not thoroughly distant), less hieratic, more informal. It may be that what we have here is a secret but casual cult sketch by an Assyrian scribe. The tablet could also have been done much later, being a (perhaps cult) survival of cuneiform into the era of Persian dominance of the Middle East (6th – 3rd century B.C.). This is possible because of the well-attested importance of Fire Worship to the Persians, which would fit decidedly with the nature of the AMITĀBHA ceremony and the technological/religious impetus given to the trumpet itself by the discovery and use of bronze. Trumpets are represented on Babylonian reliefs but the oldest known trumpets are those (one of silver, the other copper) found in Tutankhamen's tomb c. 1400 B.C., which still produce splendid sound.

It is thought that Pythagoras (6th century B.C.) studied in Mesopotamia and brought back the science of harmonics and the musical scale to Greece. Thus it may be in Mesopotamia that our musical scale and much of our musical theory had its beginnings, making a profound connection between East and West.

Further, the shape and decorative style of the trumpet used in the AMITĀBHA ceremony relate them closely to those depicted in the 13th century A.D. Arabian and Persian manuscripts. Iranian influence certainly reached Tibet through Muslim elements in neighbouring countries, giving more support to the ancient Mesopotamian origins of the AMITĀBHA ceremony indicated by this tablet. However, it has never been carbon-dated and we hope that more work can soon be done on this mysterious object. At any rate, there is no doubt that it depicts the AMITĀBHA ceremony and that it is extremely old, having "always" been in the possession of the KAGYUPA monks.

The corner photo shows Dr Mischa CEMEP, director of the Moscow Ethno-Musical Institute, recording on the Siberian steppes, 17 June 1977.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC ON THIS RECORDING

### SIDE A

#### I.

武 廷 帝 臨 朝 曲

WU TING DEE LIN CHAO CHEU

(Announcing the Arrival of the Emperor Wu Ting)

XU PO and DACQ

Also called "The Mockingbird Overture" performed by the Orchestra of the National Music Institute, Seoul, Korea.

This dramatic music was described by Kim Ki-Su, director of the National Music Institute of Korea as music which was originally performed at the court of WU TING (1324–1266 B.C.), an emperor of China during the Yin Dynasty. The Emperor WU TING seized the area of Asia which is now known as Korea, and the music was subsequently performed in Korea for the Emperor. It was originally played as part of a complicated and rigid court ritual specifically to announce to the assembled nobles the impending arrival of the Emperor.

As the piece was played, the Emperor and his entourage entered, accompanied only by whistled trills until he had reached his throne, whereupon the orchestra(s)

played other pieces for which neither notation nor commentary has survived. Since such information has also not been passed from musician to musician, the music has disappeared. Notation for the announcement music and ceremony, however, has miraculously remained, and the music was performed for centuries in Korean court ritual even after China relinquished its hold on the area.

The piece is performed by an antiphonal ensemble consisting of two groups of five musicians facing each other on either side of the performing area (originally, a hall through which the Emperor's procession was to pass). Each group has a YUN LO (YUN NGAO), which is a rack of ten gongs suspended in rows within an ornate wooden frame. The extraordinary brass and bronze gongs used in the performance are Chinese, dating from the 16th century A.D. Both YUN LO have approximately the same pitches and sound qualities. Also used are two PIEN CH'ING (six-stone lithophone), two WU (four tuned wood blocks), two CH'UNG (bells) and two KU (pigskin on wood cylinder drums).

A curious feature of this music is the use of whistling. No other example in Oriental music has ever been brought to the attention of Western musicologists. Legend has it that the Emperor WU TING though bloodthirsty in many respects was also a lover of birds and their songs (as mentioned in the Introduction, this work was known as the "Mockingbird Overture"). He encouraged the uses of whistling with bird qualities in his court music, and is said to have commissioned a virtuoso piece which contains bird-call references for the ancient Chinese two-stringed instrument the ER-HU. This piece has survived and may be heard played by LUI MAN-SING on Lyrichord LL132.

XU refers to a musical first movement and PO means, among other things, "beginning or broaching." Both XU and PO are also musical measures, both of which are used for the piece. The first is of six beats and the second of eight. The piece uses ZHENG-GONG mode. A DACQ is a compositional form (like our Sonata, for example) which is also noted in T'ang Yuan and Togaku scores.

The score used as a basis for this recorded performance was one of a number of ancient scores recorded in Book 48–49 of the veritable Records of Sejo 1470. (King Sejo reigned 1455–1468.) SEJO SILLOCH is important in the history of Korean musical notation for introducing a new system of pitch-notation as well as a modified version of SEJONG's mensural notation. In addition, the number of notated percussion parts was increased. SEJO SILLOCH was compiled in 1471 and then printed in four copies in movable type, the AKPO (musical score) being in manuscript. It is not known what happened to the draft, but all but one of the printed copies were destroyed in 1592. The remaining copy was badly damaged in 1636, restored between 1660 and 1674 and is now in Seoul National University Library. A new printing of three copies was made between 1603 and 1606. The draft for these copies was moved to Tokyo after 1910 and destroyed in the 1923 earthquake. One of the printed copies was destroyed in 1624; the second was damaged in 1636 and again twice after 1945, but is in the Old Place Library (Changswgak) in Seoul still. The third copy is still complete, in Seoul University Library; it is this copy which was reprinted photographically in 1929–32 (30 copies only, 8 in Korea and the rest mostly in Japan).

Mention of this ceremony is made in the chief source book on ancient Chinese musical theory, the LU SHIH CH'UN CH'IU by LU PU WEI (239 B.C.) and the work, copies of which are in certain American libraries, was used to assist in the proper performance of this piece. A fragment of notation for this work exists in the

Japanese collection of ancient Chinese music TOGI BUNREI GAGAKUSHU and a reference to a still (in 1960) existing fragment in China was made by the Chinese musical scholar LIANG ZAIPING in his book DAS YUEH-FU TSA-LU DES TUAN AN-CHIEH published by Martin Gimm, Wiesbaden, 1966. However, it is unfortunately certain that this and many other ancient treasures were destroyed by rampaging Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution of 1968.

## 2. *SI NOPO DA*

(By What Signs Will I Come to Understand?)

Performed by 15 to 20 girls and women of the BA-SA-SO-SHO tribe, Niger, East Africa.

SI NOPO DA is a young women's song of the BO-SA-SO-SHO tribe of the Masakin peoples, which inhabits a small area on the edge of the Sahara in N.E. Niger. Though Moslem, they maintain tribal rites and organisation that seem to have no Moslem influence. SASO SHA DA is a spring festival wherein those girls who are attaining womanhood (13 to 18 years old) perform various traditional dances, songs and rituals. During these festivals, as at no other time of the year, the girls may express publicly a personal interest they may have in one of the eligible young men. SI NOPO DA means "By what signs will I come to understand?" in SO-SHO and the lyrics describe how the girls feel in relation to the young men they are in effect proposing to: KA SNA DO TO BLOO NA means "Tell me is it really love?" The song is full of questions which ask for assurance from the young men in question that they reciprocate. Though the song is a general group song and no names are mentioned, as the song concludes each girl dances to the man she has in mind (they are seated in a circle around the performers) and throws her leg over his shoulder.

The song is preceded by several trills, "galla," the women's keening sound which is a feature of the music of several African tribes. The only percussion is loose hand clapping. For our recording 12 young girls and 8 older women performed the ancient song, which is rendered with a certain amount of freedom as each individual singer may exchange words of the lyric if she so desires. This recording was made in 1970 but not released at that time; as far as is known, no other recordings have been made of BO-SA-SO-SHO music, as in the past tribespeople have claimed religious proscriptions when approached. The recording group were Moslem Egyptian, which may have helped to make it all possible.

During the mastering of the record, the attention of the musicologists was drawn to the amazing resemblance of this song to a recent (1986) American popular song, perhaps another example of the strengths of cultural continuity even in "foreign" environments.

Anecdotal footnote: A young male member of the tribe, who had enthusiastically watched and listened to the performance, laughingly told Ali Nasser (director of the recording crew) through an interpreter that the song was also called S-AH-I NOPO TA which translates "This means treble." This prompted another tribal wag to say no, it's ASSI-NAU-PADA which means "A-bun-dance."

### 3. OHWACHIRA

A water ceremony performed by MIANTONOMI and Cree tribespeople, Quebec, Canada.

According to their legends, every spring for millennia the Atsinis branch of the Cree Indians gathered at a waterfall named ORENDA (for the god who spoke through it) on one of the streams which ran off the River Piagochiou, which in turn ran into James Bay in Northern Quebec, Canada. They gathered there to perform a ritual song/dialogue with WAH-KON-TAH through ORENDA, which gave thanks to the gods for unfailingly supplying them with MOKIS, the sparkling clean water so necessary to life.

Though other related branches of the Cree had much previous contact with whites and their history and social life had been well documented, especially in *The Indian Heritage of America* by Alvin M. Joseph Jr. and *Natives and Newcomers* by Bruce G. Trigger, the music of the Atsinis had never been recorded. Feeling a certain urgency, a group of ethno-musicologists from Northwestern University in Portland, Oregon, journeyed with recording equipment to the Atsinis area of James Bay in the spring of 1977 and were able to obtain irreplaceable documentation of this admirable tribe whose way of life, though already damaged, had retained its traditions more firmly than almost any other North American native people. Yet they were already doomed by the encroachments of Western civilization.

The water ceremony (OHWACHIRA) had its final performance for the microphones of this American recording crew. By the following year work had started on the massive James Bay Hydro-Electric Project, which forcibly relocated the Atsinis, diverted several major rivers, flooded the sacred ancestral land and drowned ORENDA.

The chief of the tribe MIANTONOMI leads the ritual at the base of the fifteen-foot-high waterfall, in the water at the stream's edge. He performs naked and the other members of the tribe, in special ritual regalia made of fern branches, gather on both banks of the stream which is about 20 feet wide at this point. The tribal chief chants various incantations, thanking the god for his gift, describing what the tribe does with it and praying for his continued generosity. At various intervals the singer/performer dips his head into the bubbling water, takes a mouthful of water, and gargles. He moves further into the water till it is about waist-high, chanting and gargling. He reaches into the water several times and brings up a rock in each hand, and taps a short series of rhythms rock on rock. He then throws the rocks back into the water. Several chosen members of the tribe standing on the shore have gourds of water and several times take mouthfuls of water to gargle. These gargle ensembles or choirs are made up of six men on one side and six women on the other. On our recording the women gargle first; later there is an antiphonal gargle, men and women's groups alternating, and finally a full ensemble gargle.

No other ritual use of gargling is known to ethno-musicologists. MIANTONOMI explained it as "water language," a way of representing the sound of the stream's bubbling water that combined the destination and importance of the water (for drinking in the mouth) with a human "bubbling prayer/song" reverently imitative of WAH-KON-TAH's way of presenting his gift of water to the tribe. With the same sense of "sympathetic magic," only stones from the stream itself are used in the ceremony.

4.



I CHING DEE YEN TZEN

(The Strings of Love)

Performed by TAM WING LUN on the HUI TRA, Ontario, Canada.

Unlike other pieces on this record, this haunting music was recorded right in Toronto where the record was produced. In a fascinating piece of international detective work, a group of musicologists (one each from Spain, Iran, U.S.A.) searched, first in China, then in Viet Nam, Korea and Japan for a remaining player of the HUI TRA, an ancient Chinese three-stringed instrument (note the resemblance to the English word ‘guitar’!) (and the French word *huitre* meaning ‘oyster,’ ed.). Could this instrument, which is referred to in ancient Chinese literature as far back as the 4th century B.C., be an ancestor of the European guitar?

The HUI TRA is distinctive, the sound box a turtle shell and the strings of panda gut, but is related in several respects to the almost as ancient P’I P’A (a four-string lute), the RUAN (a flat-backed lute with three strings) and SAN HSIEN which is also three-stringed but with silk strings.

After months of fruitless enquiry, the searchers were told in Hanoi that the sole remaining performer on this instrument was a 90-year-old woman named TAM WING LUN who had recently been in Viet Nam but who had just immigrated to Canada. The trail led eventually to the home (in Mississauga, a suburb of Toronto) of the LUN family, some members of which had come to Canada many years ago. Ms TAM WING LUN was fortunately still in reasonably good health and her 15th-century instrument had survived its travels and was with her. She was happy to perform for the group’s microphones and preserve forever some of her ancient repertoire.

I CHING DEE YEN TZEN in Mandarin Chinese, ‘The Strings of Love’ in English, is said to be several thousand years old. Ms LUN had learned it in China from a venerable teacher who possessed ancient tablature-type notation (wood-block printed) for this and other ancient pieces. According to Ms LUN they had four components: string, fret, left-hand finger and plucking technique. Left-hand fingers were classified as ‘mother finger,’ ‘eating finger’ and ‘long finger’; plucking was extremely finely categorized. This HUI TRA composition is of the HSAIO-CH’U type and is unusual in that rather than using various traditional pentatonic scales it uses an equally venerable seven-note scale called TI scale, rarely used.

‘The Strings of Love’ was described by Ms LUN as the story of a girl and boy in love during the CHOU dynasty. The recording group were astonished that despite the virtual incapacity of her right hand (arthritis) Ms LUN was able to play the intricate three separate lines (the girl, the boy, the girl’s parents) plus occasional vocal interjections (the gods) with ease. The remarkable aged instrumentalist has since passed away and it is not likely that this piece will ever be played again.

Finally, a note from Rafael Mendes, a member of the recording group: ‘Ms LUN wanted to make the recording seated where she was in the kitchen. Though this was far from ideal, being right next to the fridge which had a pronounced hum, we complied, hoping that after hearing a first test she would consent to being moved to the quieter, more comfortable living room. After the first performance Ms LUN refused not only to be moved but also to play again, explaining in Chinese to her nephew Paul

that it made the performer unlucky in love to play the song twice in a row. We were left with an unfortunately imperfect record of this exquisite music. Paul, whose English is very good, suggested that we could explain the hum by saying it was 'a hum sweet hum recording.' (ha ha)"

5. ПОЛНОВЕСНЫХ  
(EEZ STAKANOFF)  
POHL'NOVYESSNIKH  
(EEZ STAKANOFF) POHL'NOVYESSNIKH  
(Full to the Brim)

Performed by a 16-member male choir in Varda, Carpathia, U.S.S.R.

An interesting and puzzling example of cultural transmission (coincidence is unlikely).

Certain remote mountain districts of the Carpathian Mountains in Russia near Romania have traditions of men's choir singing that goes back, it seems, for many centuries. The first (1963) recording expedition to the village of Varda in a mountain area, difficult of access, was astonished to hear a men's group of 16 voices singing, in the stone cellars of a ruined Romanesque abbey, the theme of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 in B flat! Theirs is a hearty rough-hewn version, as befits hardy mountain folk, but there is no question that the melody is identical. In the Vardans' ancient repertoire it is called "Full to the Brim" and is a drinking song (a horn cup full of DREK, a local fermented goats-milk drink, is "knocked back" after every chorus of this song).

The title and the extreme brevity (29 sec.) of this performance are related. As the old men (most are in their eighties) sing, one of their number must fill the horn cups with drek; he attempts to finish filling the 1st of the 16 cups "full to the brim" by the time the song ends.

According to the elderly members of this choir the song has been sung in Varda for centuries. There were no record players, tape recorders or radios in Varda at the time of this recording; over the centuries few travellers have been there and fewer emigrants have left. Bach is known to have used folk themes on occasion, and it is of course possible that a wandering Vardan may have sung it on a street corner, perhaps in Leipzig in 1793 as Bach walked home from work. Or since it IS a drinking song, did he hear it sung by some lonely homesick Vardan in a tavern? We will never know.

Bach used popular or folk themes such as in the 30th and final variation of the Goldberg Variations. This piece is a "Quodlibet" which in its vocal form had been a favorite amusement of the Bach family (setting different songs against one another) and which uses the melodies of two popular songs ca. 1740: "Ich bin so long nicht bei dir gewest" (I long have been away from thee) and "Kraut und Ruben haben mich vertreiben" (Cabbages and turnips have driven me away).

Our anonymous source for this obscure music was Russian and the title was given in Russian. However, the only other information received with the recording is as astonishing as the fact that the J.S. Bach theme was sung, and may help to explain it: the Vardans do not speak or sing "Russian" or any of the other 145 official languages of the U.S.S.R. They utilize a variant of Wendish or Lusatian, a language which until 1963 was considered to be extinct. Up until the 1940s a small number of Wendish speakers lived in the regions of COTTBUS and BAUTZEN in east-central Germany,

entirely surrounded by German speakers. It is reported that none of them escaped Hitler's persecutions. The Vardans have no memory of a German relationship but here, perhaps, is a clue to the provenance of their drinking song.

## 6. *Speech in KLÖGEN*

by OKASH, Northern Finland.

Though not strictly speaking music, this recording was included because of its extreme rarity. The speaker was speaking a language of one of the Lapland tribes of northern Finland, which unhappily no longer exists. All members of the tribe perished (of an epidemic of a rare flu virus, "Hong Kong") shortly after the visit by Michael Snow, who recorded this speech made in his welcome. The Finnish government was unable to send medical help to the tribe as they were not contacted; the remote outpost was visited by plane once a month depending on weather conditions. Mr Snow made the visit to record the instrumental music of the Klögen (some of the recordings made at that time were released on LP A.M. #2631, *Music of the Klögen*). He was enthusiastically received by the tribe (perhaps his name had something to do with this reception!) and two days after his arrival a feast of reindeer meat was arranged with him as guest of honour. The speech included on this recording was the introduction by the tribal elder OKASH of Michael Snow to the rest of the tribe. It is not known exactly what he said, although work is being done to "crack the code" of this rarest of non-Indo-European languages which seems to have no connection with any of the languages of the several other Northern Scandinavian racially Inuit tribes. As far as is known, this is the only recorded example of the language; other foreigners had heard it but no notes were taken or recordings made, as this band of the tribe was only recently discovered by Finnish authorities.

## SIDE B

### 1. *MBOWUNSA MPAHIYA*

(Battle Song of Bowunsa)

Performed by male members of the KPAM KPAM Tribe, Angola, West Africa. Instruments include 5 wood and skin drums varying in pitch from low to mid-range: 1 KROBOTO, 2 ATUMPAN, 2 SOGO, 1 KIDI, as well as 2 GONGON or metal bells (resembling "cowbells"), unidentified bells and rattles and assorted ankle jingles.

The KPAM KPAM are a tribe inhabiting a jungle area in the south of Angola; legendary German filmmaker and photographer Leni Riefenstahl refers to them in her remarkable book *People of Kau*. Her informants described them and indicated where they lived but she was unable to visit them. Thus no westerners ever encountered the KPAM KPAM until the recording crew led by eminent German trombonist Albert Mangelsdorf arrived there in 1975 after an extremely difficult journey on foot, in which several of their party perished. The KPAM KPAM have been a belligerent tribe in the past, and their most notable rituals and music concern war. Mangelsdorf was thus very pleased when GODO, the tribal chief, agreed to perform the ancient battle

song and dance called MBWOWUNSA MPAHIYA, which recounts the battle exploits of a legendary warrior. GODO tells the story here with calls and responses from the warrior-age tribesmen (15 in all). The recording crew had not been well received and though they spent several days trying to allay any suspicion the tribespeople had, it seems that during the performance submerged hostility appeared in a frightening way. Mangelsdorf writes: "After commencing the performance and gradually building its intensity, GODO and others came closer and closer to our recording equipment. He finally hurled himself on it and us. There was a bit of a scuffle but no one was hurt. We set up the microphones again as fast as we could and were immediately relieved to see and hear the performance continue. After the vocal introduction the piece becomes totally percussion with complicated polyrhythms built from the three syllables BOWUNSA and the phrase MI YI NGOBE ("advance"). During the performance three drums of various pitches from low to high plus two kinds of 'cowbells' (bronze and tin) and maracas are used. We and our hosts were astonished to hear in the distance the sound of a helicopter, which soon appeared. We of course recognized the sound but the KPAM KPAM tribespeople had never heard or seen such a thing. We were frightened, angered and in a way ashamed at this invasion which after all we were part of. However, we were present at and recorded an historic occasion. The tribal warriors bravely tried to play on against the horrifying noise and appearance of this extraordinary monster; finally they broke ranks, yelled at each other, then made a futile attempt to play again as the helicopter disappeared into the distance. They then made the most remarkable imitations of the sound of the helicopter."

It turned out that the helicopter was a government army scout, harbinger of worse events. A few days later more helicopters arrived, landed, arrested Mangelsdorf and his crew, and proceeded forcibly to apply a government resettlement program wherein the tribe was seized and moved to a new location and their village destroyed. This recording is by no means an adequate recordings of MBOWUNSA (described well by Riefenstahl) but it is an historic record of a tragic confrontation.

K. Koenig, an eminent musicologist who was part of the recording crew, said later that he noticed an unusual anxiety and excitement in the musicians prior the the "attack" on the microphones. He related that elsewhere in Africa such battle songs, despite the bloodthirsty content, are often performed strongly but with a kind of "coolness"; this was from the start a somewhat flustered performance.

## **2. QUUIASUKPUQ QUAI GAMI**

(He is happy because he came)

Performed by ANI'KSA'TUK of the TORNARSSUK tribe, Siberia, U.S.S.R.

A Canadian participant in an International Conference on Folk Culture which took place in Moscow in 1980 was given the master tape of this music, requested to smuggle it out and if possible to make it public in the West. The tape was accompanied by the photo of Dr Mischa CEMEP of the Moscow Institute of Ethnomusicology, shown on the cover of this album, and the following note:

"To whom it may concern:

"Of all the interesting material which we collected in our June 1977 expedition to south eastern Siberia, we were refused permission to make public only one piece, the

enclosed tape of a spring ritual performed by the shaman of the TORNARSSUK tribe, ANI'KSA'TUK, a man of about 60 at the time. Because of the uniqueness of this ceremony and in the interests of the truth of science I am entrusting it to you with the hope that you will be able to include it on one of your forthcoming ethno-musical recordings, and that it will contribute to your study.

“The eastern area of Siberia which the TORNARSSUK inhabit is near the YEN-ISEI river and most of the year is covered with snow. There is, however, a sacred area of treeless windswept plain on which high grasses grow miraculously during the very brief spring and summer. For apparently thousands of years the TORNARSSUK – a now tiny tribe of Siberian Inuit – have gathered to celebrate the arrival of the grasses, seeds and roots which they eat and with which they plait beautiful baskets. They believe these bounties are brought by the Wind Spirits. The winds here are frequently of gale or hurricane intensities.

“The band gives its thanks by means of a dance and song by their most respected shaman, which is occasionally punctuated by BpTEP'b (YAUHO or wind; colloquially, ‘farts’) by a carefully chosen (different every year) young girl who has been exclusively eating the seeds and roots from the steppes for as long as possible prior to the ceremony. These foods apparently induce unusual flatulence, which the tribespeople equate in a magical sense with the wind spirit ANGAKOK, who through the actual wind of nature helps produce the seeds and roots. TAKUNGI LANGA, their words for flatulence, literally means precisely the same as your English expression for the same gaseous activity, ‘breaking wind’. The greater human wind/natural wind/spirit wind part of the ritual is the Shaman’s chant (vocal-wind) and dance, shuffling and stamping in the grass, but unfortunately we were unable to persuade the shaman to tell us what he says. We were however told that the content of the chant and the use of ‘breaking wind’ are also tributes to UTSIQ, the Asiatic black bear, which hibernates in the area and which awakens and emerges with great ‘farts’ at precisely this time of year. The young maiden represents simultaneously the winter-born cubs of the bear and the fresh new virgin spring.

“Apart from the career of the later 19th-century French ‘Music-hall’ performer PETOMANE, there are no other known uses of this bodily effect in music. In the case of this wind ceremony the extra-musical and ritual rationale is quite sound and no attempt to ‘shock’ seems to be involved. As previously mentioned, the tribe is unfortunately dwindling and on the occasion of this recording there were only four TORNARSSUK left. As are many of your Canadian Inuit, the TORNARSSUK are incurable smokers (as the shaman’s several coughs indicate) and tuberculosis and lung cancer have both taken their toll.

“As indicated by the foregoing, the wind itself is one of the chief protagonists in this ceremony. While this is definitely one of those ‘you had to be there’ situations, our recording crew decided to include the wind in our recording. So rather than attempt to mask it out, we have allowed our microphone to be as powerfully blown about as were the people present.

“While the effect listening to the recording is of course quite different from the actual experience, we feel we have made an effective translation from the language of the wind of the steppes to the language of loudspeakers and hence eardrums. Good luck, DOBRY VYECHER. For safety’s sake I will not sign this letter.”

Little more is known about the source of this recording. The TORNARSSUK people are obviously part of the great northern family of Inuit of Alaska, the Canadian Arctic and Greenland. There seems to be some Turkic in the language and possibly some relationship with the Yukagen. Discreet letters of enquiry to the Moscow Institute of Ethnomusicology have gone unanswered.

### 3. AMITĀBHA CHENDEN KĀLĀ

(The Simultaneous Welcome of Amitābha)

Performed by monks of the Kagyupa sect, Bhutan.

This is an ancient ceremony (see note on back cover, in reference to our cover illustration), here performed in TONGSA, BHUTAN, in September 1961 by Tibetan refugees from the Chinese occupation of their homeland. Fortunately it was possible for the monks involved, members of the KAGYUPA sect, to smuggle out some of their ancient sacred objects, including the musical instruments used for this performance, for many precious and irreplaceable artefacts had been destroyed by the Chinese invaders.

The twelve instruments used in this ceremony are called DHI and comprise a choir of wind instruments, "horns," all of which have trumpet-type mouthpieces and are valveless. Three are classified as KANGLING and are high-pitched but have very different timbral qualities: one, extremely old, is made of a human thigh bone and is called RKAN-DUNG; the other two are of silver and are slightly different in size. A shell trumpet DUNG-DKAR which is made from a conch is used as is a ram's horn trumpet, RWA-DUNG. Two are DUNG-NGUR, one of wood and one of bronze. All the foregoing are mid-range, like our trumpet. Two DUNG-DOHA, one of bronze and one of gold, low-mid range are used and three RAG-DUNG, one each of copper, brass and bronze, all between six and ten feet long and of extremely low range (equivalent to a range from our tuba to our alto horn).

Except for certain pauses called for by the composition, each instrument sustains one pitch only for the entire performance. This is done using a technique called "circular breathing" (recently employed to stunning effect by the English saxophonist Evan Parker). The Tibetan players are astounding masters of this technique, especially when one considers that a performance of AMITĀBHA CHENDEN KĀLĀ usually lasts well over an hour. When our recording crew (led by Desmond Doig) asked if it might be possible to make a shorter version, explaining our technical problems, the monks happily agreed. What is extremely interesting is that having decided, with reference to a watch of one of the crew, on a length (six minutes in our terms) they proceeded to fill that amount almost exactly with no signals from the crew or any visible time-keeping mechanism. Even more interesting is that while eight DHI play single sustained individual notes throughout the whole piece, the other four have specific lengths of *sostenati* and of rest. These periods divide up quite formally and the ancient score shown to us by the monks resembles or perhaps one might better put it, IS, basically two trigrams which are to be found in the I Ching! The first is #9, HSIAO CH'U (the Taming Power of the Small) described as: "Above, SUN (the gentle, wind) and below, CH'IEN (the Creative, Heaven)" which is placed over #21, SHIH HO (Biting Through) described as: "Above, LI (the Clinging, Fire) and below, Ch'EN (the Arousing, Thunder)." The commentary for both these trigrams contains much that is

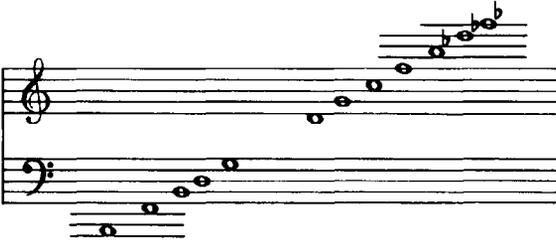
pertinent to this ceremony. The periods of playing and of rest divide up the allotted time so that in order to stop at the right moment one of the DUNG-DKAR players must know when a third of the time has passed, pause for about one-twelfth of the time, resume playing and repeat the procedure after a second one-third of the time has passed. One of the KANGLING players must mentally divide up the time into eight equal periods with rests. How this was accomplished is a mystery, as no signals were observed and a stop-watch timing of the various sections divides up quite equally with minor discrepancies. This ceremony is one of the most historically complicated we have ever encountered, starting with the presumption of its "beginnings" in Assyria which is testified to by the clay tablet and by the monks' awareness of the I Ching aspect (The Book of Changes is presumed to date from the third century B.C. and is Chinese). Involved also are the monks' studies in Tibetan psychology, particularly the examination of cognition, time, sound, memory in PRAMANASA-MUCHCHAYA TSCHAD MA KUN LAS BTUS PA by PHYOGS-GLANG, an ancient Tibetan commentary on older Sanskrit works on the mind. Study is also made of various texts, specifically on the science of music ROL-MO RIG-PA, which is also a religious text since as the Lamas say, "Religion is sound." In reference to the clay tablet, fire is essential both for the hardening of clay and in the production of metals and while "trumpets" have been made of many materials, the monks say there is a celebratory relation between the metals of some of the instruments and the fire involved, hinting at an early Bronze Age "beginning" for some aspects of the ceremony. The symbolism involved also has connections with the animist shamanistic pre-Buddhist Tibetan religions called BON, which intertwined with Buddhism, and which we are told are still maintained secretly in Tibet.

Tibet stood at the confluence of three civilizations: the Turko-Mongolian, the Chinese and the Indian. The AMITĀBHA ceremony seems to embody each of these ancient influences. The specifically Buddhist aspect involves the female Bodhisattvas GHIRDIMA and ALOKE (in Tibetan GLU-MA and SNAG-SAL-MA). The first is depicted in scrolls relevant to the AMITĀBHA ceremony as holding a lyre symbolizing music, whereas SNAG-SAL-MA glows and symbolizes light. They are both related to the element of fire, which is personified by BHAGAVAN BUDDHA AMITĀBHA.

The performance took place in a large stone-walled room in a DZONG (a castle/monastery). This room was about 50 x 40 feet with walls about 20 feet high and a ceiling with a large (about ten feet square) opening in it. A wood fire was started on an iron grate within a circle of stones in the centre of the room, the smoke more or less escaping out the ceiling "vent." (An ironic aspect for a Westerner concerned with pollution was that for an Air ceremony the room was extremely smoky, but perhaps that's a necessary part of it all.) The whole situation reminded one of 18th-century descriptions of the air in Iroquois longhouses or in the cedar buildings of West Coast Canadian "Indians" (Kwakiutl, Salish, etc.).

The ceremony: The twelve musicians garbed in the yellow hats and red robes of their sect assemble in a circle around the fire at the sound of two bells rung by the head lama. This appears to be the only signal. About fifteen seconds later all the horns make a brief staccato announcement and commence to hold their long tones as they

walk around the fire. The chord thus produced (including a later high note) is roughly rendered as:



(we have placed the notes as an arpeggio for legibility)

The various and varying vibratos, differences of sound quality (buzzing and flutters) and the deliberately fluctuating intonation produce an odd harmonic variety within the meditative hypnotism of the piece. The piece ends with a return (done by pairs of instruments in turn) to the announcement, a short pause and then, as if to break the contemplative spell which has been created, each horn executes a burst of free glissandos. This ending creates an extraordinary sense of unravelling of the previous woven sonic tapestry. As with Tibetan vocal chanting, the piece is a meditation having transcendental effects on both players and listeners.

The sacred principles of the ceremony are that fire lives on air as do human beings. To express this unity the human sounds of the ritual are all channelled or formalized breath or air formed, so to speak, through the trumpets (the different vibrations of which all have other religious significance as well) and the sound producing air consumption of the fire is also localized, controlled and formed by its composition and placement. Just as the fire requires air to exist, breathing it in and creating flames, smoke, heat, light and sound, the monks also breathe in air and create symbolic sound. To them the equation of breath, communication and life is thus expressed.

The constant, enduring, eternal are expressed by the timeless-sounding drones which are set against or simultaneous with the ephemeral, unpredictable and spontaneous – expressed by the random percussive sounds of the fire.

#### 4. ROIAKURILUO

(Dawn Ceremony)

Performed by SABANÉ, Elahe, Brazil.

The WAYAPIS are a tribe which at the time of this recording numbered about 300, and inhabited an area of jungle near the Tumuc-Humae mountains in northwestern Brazil. Their two villages, Elahe and Twanke, were surrounded by miles of dense jungle, an area so dominated by rain forest that little of it was ever touched by sunlight. Canoes were virtually the only means of transportation in the network of rivers.

Our recording was made 2 June 1982 by two French musicologists, Jean-Pierre Bastien and Annette Cognat, in Elahe. Though Bastien and Cognat were said by the WAYAPIS to be the first white people to visit the village, they were astonished to hear the shaman, during his complex vocal performance and after a sonic exchange with two pigs, say “Cochon, eh?” How he could have known the French word for “pig”

was never explained. But even more perplexing and mysterious: as Bastien and Cognat, startled, responded to Sabané's unexpected word, they noticed a distinct hush in the surrounding jungle sounds! This hush is noticeable in the recording and continued through the rest of the performance. Unsettling for "unbelievers" is the possibility that the jungle spirits showed their apprehension (justified later) at these foreign sounds.

The village consisted of a clearing of earth and grass roughly 150 x 200 feet, surrounded by thatched buildings, themselves surrounded by jungle incredibly rich in fish and lizards, birds, monkeys, ocelots, as well as fruit, manioc root, herbs and materials for rope, etc. The WAYAPIS are hunters/gatherers but are basically agricultural. They do no planting but tend chickens and pigs with which they augment the contributions of the rain forest. They have dogs called YEPE which are occasionally eaten. The WAYAPIS also domesticated macaws by removing some of their feathers so they are unable to fly. These birds are kept for their feathers which are used in headdresses such as SABANÉ wore during the ROIAKURILUO ceremony.

For centuries the overnight and early-morning guarding and tending of the tribe's domestic animals has been the special province of a shaman (in Wayapi, a BARI). Our recording is of the traditional greeting of the dawn by the BARI, in this case a man of 25-30 years of age named SABANÉ. His father KOYOWEMAN taught him the secrets of the position and it is said that his grandfather had also been the tribe's BARI.

Dawn at Elahe is an incredible symphony of awakening jungle creatures (paragones, green-rumped parakeets, yellow orioles, red Howler monkeys and giant black bees are heard in our recording) with hens, roosters, pigs, dogs, macaws and people. The BARI's dawn ceremony called ROIAKURILUO is one of inspired participation in the sounds around him. Literally a "participation mystique," the shaman's intention is to "represent" the human in this parliament of the world. His contribution is mainly vocal and includes specifically human sounds with human versions of animal language and spirit language (directed to BUTARICO, the spirit of rain and API-BORE, spirit of the jungle, as well as many others, including a gesture to ARDET-TOWARAARE, the "death shaman" of the tribe). Some of ROIAKURILUO is directly imitative (e.g., one of the dog barks is by SABANÉ, some is conversational; SABANÉ greets, encourages, cajoles the pigs, chickens and dogs as well as passing jungle birds and even insects. The important religious and philosophical aspect of the shaman's performance is that all the participants are equals. Man is not the ruler. The entire created world greets the new days as an ensemble with occasional solos by each instrument. The performance ends with the shaman singing an invocation first to the East, then to the North, West and South in turn; he essentially says good morning to each of these directions with specific reference to the sun. This section, called KASILI, is followed by a low humming which is said to be an invocation to the earth itself, that it continue to be as fertile as it has been heretofore.

In 1984 this area of Brazil was cleared of its trees. Attempts to establish farms followed, but have been unsuccessful. The Brazilian government continues in its attempts to interest the WAYAPIS in farming.

## 5. RAGA LALAT

Played by PALAK CHAWAL, PHAL KA HALAWA and ALU GAVRANGA, Benares, India.

This final cut is our most recent recording and is tragically brief. It was recorded 13 March 1986 in Benares, India, and is the only known recording of an extraordinarily promising young musician named PALAK CHAWAL, who died during the explosion which ends this recording.

Many Indian music lovers have bemoaned the use in their music of the harmonium. This instrument, a keyboard instrument related to the harmonica, accordion and organ, is sometimes known as the reed organ. Air is supplied by a bellows activated by foot pedals. It is interesting that the harmonium's ancestry goes back to China and Japan, where the SHENG and SHO were important members of the royal orchestras. In the 18th century a Chinese mouth-organ (SHENG) was brought to St Petersburg and its free reed was introduced into Europe generally by a German organ builder. At the beginning of the 19th century a new group of instruments was based upon the free reed principle, of which the mouth organ and accordion are in current use. Later, the principle was applied to the keyboard and the harmonium (1840) is indebted to it. There is, however, little trace of the instrument's Asiatic origins. It was then introduced to India by British missionaries in the 1890s in its portable form, to accompany hymns. The harmonium was gradually used more and more to supply the drone basis for many ragas. There is no doubt that the instrument lacks the subtlety of the tambura, the sarod or the surbahar, and it is not tunable as had been the previously used string instruments. Thus important tuning adjustments for particular ragas cannot be made. Nevertheless it became a fact of life in Indian music which CHAWAL accepted and on which he attempted to build.

PALAK CHAWAL was a unique traditionalist-radical who, having studied (starting at the age of eight) with one of the greatest Shehnai players, his uncle USTAD BISMILLAH KHAN, and though having attained an early mastery of this difficult instrument turned his back on it to use instead an inexpensive and almost toy-like Japanese electronic instrument, the CASIO. His argument was that the CASIO had qualities that made it function better with the harmonium. This of course created a sensation in the conservative Indian music world and CHAWAL became an overnight celebrity.

Although Indian classical music was by no means unknown to the Western music lover before 1960, the "appropriation" of Indian music by the Beatles in the mid-sixties brought its influence into Western popular music in a profound way (Mahavishnu Orchestra, etc.). Most of these "uses" have involved amplification and electronically generated music, and it was extremely interesting to see a young Indian classical musician attempt to use these modern resources from within, so to speak, the ancient traditional music.

CHAWAL's gifts and sincerity were evident.<sup>1</sup> Accompanied by PHAL KA HALAWA on harmonium and ALU GAURANGA on tabla and playing in the courtyard of the Hilton Hotel in Benares, he played his final piece: the moving morning RAGA LALAT, which is usually expounded from early dawn up to about three hours into the morning. Pathos and urge are its dominant moods. RAGA LALAT employs both MADHYAMAS, that is the flat (Komal) and the sharp (Teevra) Madhyama. In this Raga the fifth note PANCHAM is completely omitted both in the ARDHA

(ascent) and AVROHA (descent) whereas there is a difference of opinion about the use of the sixth note DHA. According to one school, the flat or Komal DHA should be used, while another recommends the sharper Teevra DHA. CHAWAL belonged to the former school and used the Komal or flat DHA.

Unfortunately we only have the ALAP (or invocation) statement of theme of RAGA LALAT, as 2 minutes and 45 seconds into this meditative piece an explosion blasted the wall at the northern end of the courtyard, just behind the ensemble. CHAWAL and his fellow musicians were killed, as were seven other people in the hotel lobby behind the wall where a bomb had been hidden. At this writing the murderers involved had not been apprehended. Rumours abounded and conflicting claims for the honour of committing this atrocity have been made: by Sikh extremists, by Pakistani and Bengali rebels, by supporters of El Ah (a Moslem terrorist group) and also by an American soldier of fortune who has subsequently disappeared. It may go without saying that the traditionalist music factions who were opposed to CHAWAL's music were as horrified and saddened as his supporters.

## FURTHER REFLECTIONS

[Printed in mirror image on the liner notes.]

The music on this record is new music made in memory of the old. All the music on this record was played/performed, conceived and recorded by Michael Snow.

Equipment used by Mr Snow: Tandberg "Cross Field" tape recorder, Uher 24 special tape recorder, Uher 4000 Report tape recorder, Sony TC-D5M cassette tape recorder, TEAC Tascam 4 track Porta Studio cassette tape recorder. No synthesizer or "sampler" was used. Final master tape copies and adjustments by Paul Hodge at The Music Gallery, Toronto. Thanks to The Music Gallery for the loan of several instruments.

## SIDE A

1. Announcing the arrival of the Emperor Wu Ting  
Composition by Michael Snow. All parts played and recorded by Snow. 10 brass gongs, 9 of which are of Chinese origin and were purchased by Casey Sokol in Hong Kong in 1982 for use by the ensemble CCMC, of which we are both members. Thank you Casey. 1 brass bell, 1 tom tom, 1 plastic pail, 1 small steel drum, 1 set of wood "temple blocks," whistling. 1987.
2. Si Nopo Da  
All voices and clapping by Snow. 16 layers. Voices trebled by tape speed and adjustments on Tascam Porta Studio tape recorder. 1986. Based on "How Will I Know" as recorded by Whitney Houston.
3. Ohwachira Recording of waterfall and stream by Snow. Voices, gargling and rock tapping by Snow. 1986.
4. I Ching Dee Yen Tzen  
Three superimpositions of the playing of several rubber bands stretched over cups, pots, tin cans, and voice by Snow. 1986.

5. Full to the Brim  
All voices by Snow. Rerecorded from loudspeakers several times. 1986. Based on the theme of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto #6.
6. Klögen Speech  
Voice(s) by Snow. Recorded in New York City in 1968 or '69. This was Snow's first attempt at "speaking in tongues" and was used in '69, '70, '71 at a birthday party for Jonas Mekas and at several showings of his films as an introduction to the films.

## **SIDE B**

1. Mbowunsa Mpahiya  
All voices by Michael Snow, slightly lowered by tape speed adjustments on Tascam Porta Studio. About 12 layers. 3 tuned "pipe" drums, 2 sizes of tom tom, 1 gallon paint can lid, 1 plastic pail, maracas, bells. Helicopter from a "sound effects" record. 1986-7.
2. Quuiasukpuq Quai Gami  
Voice, farts, foot stomping, recording by Snow, 1986.
3. Amitābha Chenden Kālā  
Bells and 10 trumpet mouthpiece instruments played by Snow. Twelve lines. Trumpet with and without Snow-designed mutes, flugelhorn, tuba, plastic funnel, metal funnel, copper tube and rubber funnel, rubber hose with metal funnel. Fire recorded by Snow. 1986-7.
4. Roiakuriluo  
Voices and dog barks by Snow. Pigs and chickens recorded by Snow. All other bird and animal sound from several recorded sources. 1986-87.
5. Raga Lalat  
Duette Emenee Audion (toy electric organ), voice, Casio PT20 and plastic pail played by Snow. Explosion from a "sound effects" record, 1987.

## **BACK COVER – SIDE A**

### **BAND**

1. Wu Ting Dee Lin Chao Cheu 6:09  
(Announcing the Arrival of the Emperor Wu Ting)  
The Orchestra of the National Music Institute, Seoul Korea
2. Si Nopo Da 3:42  
(By What Signs Will I Come to Understand?)  
Women of the Bo-sa-so-sho tribe, Niger, S.E. Africa
3. Ohwachira 9:34  
Water ceremony performed by Miantoni and Cree tribespeople,  
Quebec, Canada
4. I Ching Dee Yen Tzen 3:41  
(The Strings of Lova)  
Tam Wing Lun on the Hui Tra, Ontario, Canada
5. Pohl'novyessnikh  
(Full to the Brim) 0:29  
Performed by a 16-member male choir, Varda, Carpathia, U.S.S.R.

6. Speech in Klögen 2:12  
by Okash, Northern Finland

## **SIDE B**

### **BAND**

1. Mbowunsa Mpahiya 7:59  
(Battle Song of Bowunsa)  
Performed by male members of the Kpam Kpam tribe, Angola, West Africa
2. Quuiasukpuq Quai Gami 2:14  
(He Is Happy Because He Came)  
Performed by Ani'ksa'tuk of the Tornarssuk tribe, Siberia U.S.S.R.
3. Amitābha Chenden Kālā 6:32  
(The Simultaneous Welcome of Amitābha)  
Performed by the 12 monks of the Kagyupa Sect, Bhutan
4. Roiakuriluo 9:36  
(Dawn Ceremony)  
Performed by Sabane, Elahe, Brazil
5. Raga Lalat 2:53  
Performed by Palak Chawal, Benares, India

Thanx to Nobuo Kubota and the other members of CCMC, Charlie Morrow, The Four Horsemen for their inspiration.

Texts and cover by Michael Snow. Design by M.S. with Micah Lexier. Produced with the assistance of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council.

## **Note**

1. This work was to have been the first recording for the ODEON label.

## Trying to Figure It Out 1987

Michael Snow was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax. His acceptance speech, which follows, was spoken (read) to Garry Neil Kennedy, the director, the faculty, the graduating class and students on 7 May 1987.

**T**hank you very much, Garry, and thanks to all who were responsible for my selection for this honour. It is *indeed* an honour. I am really tempted to believe that I, or the work that I do, merit the distinction of this doctorate and this occasion by the respect I have for the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, what it has been, what it is and what it signifies. The source of that respect is, of course, the success of the college in its function as a school, which has to include the decisions involved in its founding and development but comes from a recognition of the depth and range of its teaching and an acknowledgement of the talent here on the academic level but finally for me an admiration for the extraordinary talents as practising artists of many members of the faculty. They are amongst the most interesting artists working anywhere today, and contact with them can be invaluable to a student.

I am also honoured by the respect I have for the work of previous recipients and my inclusion in their company.

Admitting, as is often the case, the difficulty of having sufficient experience and information to make a relevant judgement from reasonable comparisons, I feel that the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design is the best such organization in North America.

But what is such an organization and what is a College of Art and Design concerned with? The word “design” doesn’t oscillate like its companion. It seems to be about intention, about conscious schooled arrangement of parts, about systems and patterns. I am here by Design. This talk, I say, is designed.

The other three-letter word “Art” is much more problematic. There are occasions when it can usefully be used precisely because it *is* problematic. How can one – someone or an organization – teach a “subject” upon which there is incredibly little consensus as to its nature, function and boundaries. There are almost as many definitions of quote “art” unquote as there are critics, historians and artists. What is it and what do those who call themselves artists do? What do I do? What have I done? What will we do?

It is to the credit of the college that it seems to have taught the excitement of an involvement with an ambiguity, of an involvement with the creative gardening of definitions . . . of art.

I was informed of my selection for the honour of this doctorate by someone who has known me and my work for several years and whose knowledge and friendship I value.

In the course of the phone conversation, he mentioned that though he recalled my saying on several occasions in the past, sometimes in speeches, that I was reluctant to make speeches, to give talks, that I didn't think I could contribute to *that* medium, he hoped that I would waive trepidation and talk on this occasion. My belief that I am capable of producing works of interest in several media, though occasionally shaky, has been reinforced to the point of conceit by receiving this doctorate, and this confidence has led me to the present attempt to make an exception to what I thought was my rule.

I am convinced at any rate that this *is* a speech or a talk, whether it can be defined as "art" or not.

Language lives – grows, bulges, shrinks, learns to talk, loses its hair and despite the quote "fact" that there can be no discourse without an unprovable community consensus as to the meanings of the words employed, there is a sense in which the cloudiness at the edges of the compendium of definitions of Art, which is especially noticeable, is also discernible, on examination of *all* definitions. So that to have been taught "art" well is to be led to a position which is as enlightening and as "truthful" as is possible vis-à-vis a confrontation with definition. The famous Lacanian blah blah might as well be put, though not as excitingly as in its original form: "*L'art n'existe pas.*" The cloudiness at the edges of definition is in fact the pulse of life.

Some of my work is involved with improvisation, with spontaneous forming. This performance could be said to be "composed," a description which says nothing qualitative as opposed to some event produced by extemporization. As you can see, I'm reading. The text I'm reading is pretty fresh, though I've been considering what I might say for a while, but I started to write it on the plane from Toronto this morning, starting at 6:00 a.m. Toronto time.

After about half an hour of writing, the guy sitting next to me, who was *already* drinking a beer (by which I mean that *I* don't drink that early in the morning) leaned over and said: "Whatcha writing, by – your life history?" Jarred out of contradictions, I said, "I'm writing a speech. I'm going to speak it this afternoon."

He said, "What's it about?"

I said, "That's what I'm trying to figure out."

He said, "Well, don't forget your notes."

Helpful advice. These are they and this is trying to figure it out.

There is a great deal of *talk* in what's called the Art World. One definition at least of the success of the public exposure of a work of art might be that it generated or instigated talk. Another definition that is of equal value is that Art is a relief from talking.

Finally, my sincere congratulations and very best wishes to those of you who this year are graduating in Ambiguity.

As you proceed with definition, remember that in considering a place to study Contradiction you chose well, and *that* probably means that you will continue to choose well. That statement, at least the prophecy part, is disputable and remains to be seen, but it's not contradictory, is it? The Beginning.

Thank you.

## Statement for an Exhibition, Tokyo 1988

This text was written on the occasion of the Michael Snow exhibition at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo. The exhibition, organized by Chief Curator Takeshi Kanazawa, was accompanied by a catalogue in which the following was published.

I am an artist whose work encompasses music, painting, sculpture, drawing, books, records, photography, holography and film.

A more general description might be that I work with sound or with images or with objects (but of course often in combinations – for example, sound films).

Mr. Kanazawa and I have given much thought to what might be of special interest to a Japanese audience. I've been making artworks professionally since 1957, so we have left a lot out! We finally decided to concentrate on a selection from those works of mine which tend to focus on the image. There is always an important object aspect to such works as well, some being "painting-sculpture" (e.g., *Register*) but in most the image is the chief protagonist. There are several painted sculptures whose three-dimensionality was derived from various extensions of the two-dimensional Walking Woman outlines (*Gone, Interior, Torso*), which I will discuss later.

Chronologically our exhibition begins with a selection from the body of work (in many media) called Walking Woman Works. This series was produced between 1961 and 1967.

From 1959 to 1961 I'd been working on abstract paintings and sculpture and figurative collages and paintings (none of which are in this exhibition) which explored figure/ground relationships: the classic, the essential, situation of set and setting, of "what" is put "where" and their possible interchangeability.

For many reasons (for example, I'd been cutting shapes for collages with a mat knife) I arrived at the idea of separating "figure" and "ground" by making "cut-out" figure paintings on cardboard which were then fixed on the wall.

The background or location of the figures was thus the real wall, not a depicted setting or even a single colour. The real wall was a variable since each setting-installation would be different. I made four of these "cut-outs," all different poses. The fifth I drew and cut out of a five-foot piece of cardboard, and I realized that the positive and the negative (figure outline and ground outline) could be used as a stencil; they were repeatable. This was the Walking Woman. I decided to try using this same figure silhouette-outline to make a few variations within and with it. I realized anything could be painted on this figure-shaped "canvas." The figure – blank or painted – could be put on any "real" ground, suggesting settings other than galleries, which led to my first photographic work, *4 to 5* (1961), which was a documentation of the

placement of a black silhouette figure in different urban settings, photographed in black and white, with the intention of making a final composite work of these photographs. It also led to "site-specific" works before that term was coined.

Using the one constant outline in all my work was, contrary to what one might expect, extremely liberating. The series has, I think, an incredible variety. Just one example: *Gone* is painting-sculpture, the form of which was found by extending "perspectival" "lines" from the back outline of the figure only, to the wall, one at right angles to the other. This work is a unique invention (it becomes a giant wing of metallic classical drapery) which could only have been found by having the "limitation" of the outline which I originally drew as a subject.

I continued to explore photography, sculpture, film and sound after I decided to make the final *Walking Woman Works* in 1967.

The works which concentrate on photography, made from 1967 to the '80s (*Atlantic* is the earliest), are also quite varied but often have some of their sources in considerations of the nature and processes of photography, of Representation, of Art, of Everything.

One of the possibilities of photography is a meaningful control of the size of the final print, and I've worked with that aspect a great deal. For example, *Still Living 9 x 4 Acts, Scene 1* is a micro-structure, recessional, molecular to atomic, intimate, private. There are nine white pages each having four small dye-transfer photo images on it. A complex dialogue between all the thirty-two "acts" of the series is set-up, but on each page the four images, since they are grouped together, are seen as the four parts of a One. The viewer must approach to differentiate. Since the pictures are very small, one must peer into them, and they are then seen to be each unified little compositions with many tiny details within details. The mode is the still-life tradition of arrangements of objects, but these images contain many objects, events and allegorical implications never before brought together on the same stage. Indeed, all the different still-life occurrences happen in the same place – the equivalent of a stage set – which is why there are theatre references in the title: *Scene 1, 9 x 4 Acts*.

*Door* is a colour photograph printed to the size of a door. It is a photograph of a watercolour of a door which I painted especially for its use in this work. I wanted a mental/optical jump in scale from the original (a kind of zoom) to a final print size dictated by the subject. The only illumination used to make the photograph was a hand holding a match in front of the watercolour. Some of the shadows (for example, the doorknob) were painted, some were "real." When the "door" is normal door size (Western) the hand is gigantic.

There are attempts at a merging of some of the wonderful attributes and possibilities of painting, sculpture and photography: *Handed to Eyes* is a colour photograph of some little hand-squeezed plaster abstract sculpture, which I made expressly for the work. In the colour photo they were white. Finally, transparent oil colour was rubbed on the white shapes only with a finger so the underlying shadow forms would still show through. Strange sushi!

*A Wooden Look* is one of the first works I did using a Polaroid camera. *Red<sup>5</sup>* is another. They use the fact that with Polaroid one has the photo instantly and can thus use it in the ongoing work, additively accumulating the way a painting is built up from successive brush strokes.

*Sink* is a slide projection work which uses light (as does cinema) as its "material."

Working with photography and film led me to working with holography. With this medium I've tried to create spatial situations that are otherwise impossible. The strangeness of a frozen event and the almost-palpability of a ghost is part of the spatial/temporal experience of seeing *Type-writer*, *Maura Seated* or *Egg*. The smoke/writer has spectral hands poised in space above the typewriter; Maura sees her ghost self in a tiny mirror.

I'm trying to make a sensuous philosophy which contains discoveries for both myself and the spectator. In current critical terminology my work is phallogocentric, modernist and formalist (it's been often described as "post-modernist"). Often a work starts with an idea (it's been called "conceptual"), but this idea derives from a medium or mediums and how certain processes set in motion might produce unforeseen forms. The forms, the object, thus made must produce a range of meanings and emotions to be successful, to be able to continue to have a vitality. During the planning stage I consider the area of possible signficatory consequence which is involved but I don't want meanings to be finite as the forms must be: materials shaped. Often I hope the spectators will relive the process of the making of the work (it's been called "process art"). I work with representation, but I try to control the extent of references "elsewhere" involved. The piece *iris-IRIS* is a good example of a range of interconnected references from the present to various pasts and back again. Time. Now.

# Playing the Radio: A Personal History

1989

In 1985 Robert Ulmer of Toronto started to issue cassette tapes and LPs on his own label called Freedom in a Vacuum.

As "home" recording equipment, synthesizers and samples became cheaper and more easily available, many musicians made their own idiosyncratic taped electronic music. Ulmer recognized and was interested in this area of vital, experimental and non-commercial music. Subsequently, he made available music by Nurse with Wound, Violence and the Sacred, Empirical Sleeping Consort. Ulmer issued several cassettes by Kaiser-Nietzsche, a group originally comprising John Kamevaar, Thomas Handy and David Scurr.

Kamevaar, also a member, with Michael Snow, of the CCMC, heard two tape pieces by Snow that were totally "played" short-wave radio sound with no post-recording studio manipulation, liked them and asked Ulmer to consider them.

"Short Wavelength" and "The Papaya Plantation," both recorded in 1980, were issued by Freedom in a Vacuum on a cassette titled *Two Radio Solos* by Michael Snow in 1988.

The following text was written by Snow for Ulmer's use as historical background to the cassette music.

The first recorded recognition of the radio as a musical instrument seems to be John Cage's 1951 composition *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* for twelve radios, twenty-four musicians and conductor.

In *The Future of Music: Credo*, a text written in 1937, Cage wrote: "I believe that the use of noise to make music will continue and increase until we reach a music produced through the aid of electrical instruments."

Cage made many amazing creative leaps, but he was building on the insights of a few other daring individuals such as Edgar Varese (e.g., *Poème Electronique*, 1951). He had been a student of Schoenberg. Very important as a basis are Luigi Russolo's writing and composition of 1913 to 1916, published together as *The Art of Noises*. His theories (provoked by Marinetti's polemicizing and the activities of the other Futurists) implied electrical sound sources, but the instruments he invented for his own pieces were manually played acoustic instruments.

The tape recorder, in existence by 1945, became available commercially in 1950. It, of course, was immediately perceived as a revolutionary tool by various French composers (their music became known as *musique concrète*) and in North America by Ussachevsky and others. The capacity of the tape recorder to use and alter "found"

sound, as opposed to “musical” sound, was undoubtedly the main ear-opener in a history of radio as instrument.

Important to me were my being present at two or three presentations in 1964 of *Blonde Cobra*, a unique film made by a relatively unsung but incredible New York filmmaker, Ken Jacobs. The film has an optical sound track of talk and music, but as the description of the film for prospective writers in the New York Film-Makers’ Coop catalogue says:” Very Important. A live radio, loud and clear is to play twice during *Blonde Cobra*. Easy timing instructions come written with the film.”

My first attempt to play the radio was the sound track for my 1967 film *Standard Time*, 10 minutes. The film is a number of circular pans from a fixed tripod in what was then my loft home in New York. The camera frequently passed the hi-fi equipment, including the radio. After seeing the footage, I decided to tape separately a playing of the radio, making a kind of Doppler effect by turning the volume down and up and changing stations in an aural imitation of the image. The sound was not intended to be in sync with but parallel to the movement in the picture. I was also playing the TV set in the ’60s.

In 1970 I made several short-wave radio tapes, parts of which were used in my four-and-one-half-hour film *Rameau’s Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen*, finished in 1974.

In 1961 a very interesting Cage-influenced “conceptual” artist (before the term existed) named George Brecht issued a box of his compositions called *Water Yam*; each piece is printed on a separate card. They’re all very simple, tiny but strong gestures. Amongst them is this: “Instruction. Turn on a radio. At the first sound turn it off.” When our group the CCMC made several concert tours of Europe and Japan between ’74 and ’88, a favourite game in our van or car was Brecht’s piece, but I don’t think any of the members of the group knew that Brecht had “patented” it. Try it.

There are probably *many* more people around now who would have no problem with considering the radio a musical instrument than when Cage first performed *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*. I personally don’t recall whether I knew about this work when I made my first attempts to use and hear radio that way.

In 1970 or ’71 Columbia University in New York City had a retrospective series of concerts of Cage’s work. I heard the performance of his radio piece and . . . I didn’t like it very much! Of course it *is* historic and did open up an area of artistic endeavour, but as a piece it used so few of the possibilities of twelve radios that I was very disappointed.

## Admission (or, Marcel Duchamp) 1989

I wrote the following text in response to an announcement (a call for submissions) by the Coach House Press that they were planning *Brushes with Greatness*, an anthology of chance encounters with celebrities.

My text was accepted, and the book was published in 1989, edited by Russell Banks, Michael Ondaatje and David Young. I had titled my contribution "Admission" and I prefer that, if, as here, it is published alone. The editors called it "Marcel Duchamp": each article's title was the name of the personality featured. It is a wonderful book with work by professional writers and all kinds of other people, some examples being "John Lennon" by Robert Fones, "Henry Miller" by Philip Willey, "T.S. Eliot" by William Kilbourn, "French L'Amour" by Fred Wah, "Glenn Gould" by three different authors, "Jayne Mansfield" by Jean-Paul Yirka, "Mohammed Ali" by Joyce Carol Oates.

M.S.

Starting around 1948 I became interested in Marcel Duchamp. I liked and studied Matisse, Mondrian and Klee just as much in my "formative" years and was following closely what was happening in American art. However, Duchamp's work, personality and life became an especially important inspiration. My admiration deepened as I saw and read more and more.

It seemed that there wasn't as much information available on his work as on that of certain other artists. He was a special case. Of course he was famous in a rather underground way during the early fifties, but though he was often mentioned in the pantheon with Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian, Miró, his name was usually after theirs and others. He wasn't ever regarded as *du champ* (unlike Picasso) but was "unique," an odd inventor of his own area of art.

Though he'd been associated with Dada he was different enough from the others to seem to be a movement of one. The work of the artists mentioned above (especially Matisse and Picasso) with its sensuousness and expression reinforced the unique coolness of Duchamp's contribution. But he made it evident that in some ways he had clarified his course "against" theirs.

Duchamp's aristocratic, hands-clean aloofness was intriguing. His seeming freedom from the excessive demands for ego gratification which appeared to be an aspect of the character of many artists (exemplified by his non-involvement with the art marketplace and its publicity machine) was inspiring. Though Picasso, for example, couldn't exactly be called a "commercial" artist, he certainly did produce a great deal and exhibit constantly – enough for it to appear a "product." Duchamp made little, had very few exhibitions, and the "ready-mades" critiqued the hand-making of original works for sale. Much of his work, but in particular the *Large Glass*, had the

capacity to arouse a desire to penetrate its secrets. In this sense the viewer of his work resembles the “outsider” viewer of the arcane texts of secret societies, of alchemists, or the artifacts of a non-Western culture. He made private languages that continue to invite translation.

Abstract Expressionism, house-painterly work that was in many ways antithetical to Duchamp’s, took the stage. But soon his work moved a little more into the spotlight, something that disappointed me (!) when in 1958–1960 the work of the younger new American painters Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns started to attract critical attention. He was decidedly an influence on them. John Cage, who had a marginal and legendary reputation similar to that of Duchamp, in my view, in the fifties also seemed to be becoming more appreciated, more generally accepted.

Some of the thinking involved with my *Walking Woman Works* (1961–1967) had to do with putting art elsewhere, in contexts other than art contexts (galleries, etc.). I reversed the order of an aspect of Duchamp’s work. Rather than choosing and taking a “ready-made” from the “world” and putting it in an art context, I made a “sign” from within the art context and put it in the world. I did make lots of gallery work, but what was specifically related to Duchamp was what I called “Lost Works” which existed anywhere but in a gallery (on the street, in stores, in the subway) or in a gallery where I was not exhibiting: in hidden or normally unused places, for example, “Lost Work” stuck under a bench, a chair, a table of the Green Gallery in 1965. Or as fortuitous-looking ephemera (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1966). These “Lost Works” are discussed in Louise Dompierre’s text in the catalogue *Walking Woman Works* (1983).

Michel Sanouillet taught at the University of Toronto during the fifties, knew Duchamp, was an expert on him, Picabia and Dada in general. He’d written a book on Duchamp which I owned. Greg Curnoe knew him too. I never knew him well, but enough for it to feel okay to ask him if he would be kind enough to arrange a meeting for Joyce Wieland and me with Duchamp.

Joyce and I had decided to move to New York and did so in 1962. “Monsieur Duchamp, my name is Michael Snow. Michel Sanouillet said he would be kind enough to ask you if you would do my wife and me the honour of meeting you.”

Without much ado he chose a time and invited us to his walk-up apartment – on Eleventh Street near Fifth Avenue, I think it was.

Joyce made a stuffed red heart as a gift for him and I brought some rubber-stamped *Walking Woman* stickers which I was using for some of the “Lost Works.”

I was nervous, apprehensive.

Up we go and in we go, meet him and his wife, Teeny. Gracious greetings. Interesting apartment. History. Work by Tanguy, Miró, Matisse, Ernst reminded me that during the legendary years when Duchamp had “given up art for chess” he’d made the occasional dollar by middle-manning the sales of paintings by his famous confrères. My mind sneered: “He didn’t dislike ‘messy,’ ‘sensitive’ painting so much that it prevented him from getting his hands dirty with a few filthy bucks. Un-commercial, eh?”

This was the beginning of a descent in the elevator of my psyche direct to the basement.

I felt shitty. The apartment was interesting, yeah, but what the hell, it was really just another New York “railroad” dump which probably had as many cockroaches as any other.

We sat, watched, listened.

The master seemed to be basking in our adoration a bit too much. Joyce gave him the stuffed red heart. He said: "Oh, thank you. This reminds me of my *Coeurs volants*. I guess you must have been thinking of that. Did you know that if you put together two complementary colours of the same value beside each other they make a kind of optical vibration?"

"Complementary! Maybe he meant complimentary! That was hardly an ego-less remark." Internally, I snickered. My elevator went to the sub-basement. I was getting angry. "Who does this guy think I am, talking to me like that! Does he think he's some kind of art-school teacher and we're his students? Of course I knew that!" During our conversation I managed to say something about me. (He didn't seem to give a shit who we were or what we did, just talked about himself.)

I gave him my gift without blurting out any of the above sentiments. I told him that I was making a film (which eventually became *New York Eye and Ear Control*) and would like to shoot a short scene with him in it. He said he would be glad to, which surprised me. But: "Pretty accessible, after all. And maybe he agreed to it because he's just as much of a sponge for attention as all the other artists!"

Far from being ego-less, this guy seemed to love compliments. I became super-critical of everything he said, which echoed against the concrete walls of my sub-basement. "This guy is supposed to be so witty, well, what a stupid thing he just said. And that superior smile!"

I now wondered if we were part of a parade of admirers! He wasn't supposed to care about other people caring, but now I thought: "He doesn't make art any more; he just sits in here every day soaking up international admiration for what he did do!" He had a small Yves Klein sponge stained International Klein Blue. Probably a gift. Klein had recently died tragically young. Duchamp spoke of him, saying, "He was a beautiful boy." Snort! Me: "Sounds like he's gay too! So all that wonderful hetero intellectual smut in his work is just a cover-up. A closet case. He *is* Rose Sélavy!"

I got more and more uncomfortable, strangling on my tea ("lousy tea, what the hell are these tasteless biscuits?") until finally we grovelled our way out with me gasping for air (and not *Air de Paris*) and Joyce wondering what was wrong. During our descent to the street I was still in my psychological sub-basement, and started to fume through all my negativities, which surprised her.

As I ranted and walked my neurotic elevator started to rise, and I started just slightly to question myself. Joyce listened generously, and fortunately my self-questioning continued as I reached the first floor with the beginnings of embarrassed horror. I gradually realized with deep dismay how far I had sunk under an Oedipal lump which had exceeded the weight limits of my elevator. I don't believe I wanted to marry Teeny, but I sure had wanted to kill my Dada.

My poor ego was so frail at that particular time that I was unable to encounter a superior with the respect and curiosity that my psyche felt when all the floors were in contact (or when I lived on the main floor and disregarded messages from the furnace room?). I'd gone in there on my knees and it hurt.

I'll never forget my self-disgust and amazement at how a "level" of my mind (to stick with the questionable Freudian architectural divisions) could hysterically take over the supervision of the building and shut off the heat and light on the other floors. I hoped it would never happen again.

Since what I had experienced was exceedingly and no doubt falsely insulting to Duchamp, I felt like apologizing to him. (Didn't. What could he have noticed?) Phoned a week later to ask if we could meet again and shoot the little scene: Joyce and Marcel walking across the street, seen through a mask of the Walking Woman outline.

Unfortunately, I couldn't use this shot in the film. Another story. Brush with money. Still. Later.

At our second meeting I was "cured." He was interesting and I was interested; he enjoyed doing the little bit of film and seeing us again. He was an extraordinary man and I regret having wasted an opportunity to know him.

Since that abysmal meeting I've had occasion to recount cathartically my descent, but this is its first appearance in embarrassing print.

## **Sign Paintings by Robert Hedrick** 1990

This essay first appeared in the catalogue *Robert Hedrick Paintings*, published by the MacDonald Stewart Art Gallery, Guelph, Ontario, in April 1990.

In 1960 and '61, Michael Snow and Robert Hedrick shared a studio space on the second floor of a warehouse on Yonge Street, near Dundas, in Toronto.

**T**hese paintings are sober, serious, flat objects-of-contemplation. They carry on certain possibilities implicit in painting both as an activity and as an artifact, and show that these possibilities can continue to have value for both maker and beholder.

The paintings are not commentary, they are constructions. As discrete objects they will generate dialogue with the sympathetic viewer on a range of levels: semiotic (that is, the work as a sign or signifier or ensemble of signs), perceptual and psychological.

They are "abstract" paintings, with no specific representational references except for those indicated by Hedrick's title for the series, *Signs*. One's most literal association in this sense is the distant but evident resemblance to letters, particularly those of our Roman alphabet. This resemblance tends our experiencing of the work in the right direction, but it's over a wide field because the shapes have been found with many other aesthetically important interests in mind.

The paintings' field of meaning ranges from the individual, the personal (they are about Robert Hedrick, despite the fact that they are definitely not "expressionist") to the universal, in that the work is not tied to any "local" discourse except for certain art traditions, and is thus available for fruitful contemplation to any other seeing, thinking human being.

They are "sober, serious," yes, but when interrogated cause a surprising range of feelings: they become humorous sometimes, wry, blithe, but also sometimes melancholy. They have "personalities" but are not anthropomorphic.

The "situation" of contemplation is an aspect of the "situation" of the canvas. States of mind. The "fine" in Fine Art, which on the one hand often seems sadly beleaguered against the increasing fragmentation and distraction caused partly by the omnipresent "communications" media, on the other hand can, as in the case of these paintings, provide an antidote to "the news" and to the general near-impossibility of quiet deliberation.

The "certain art traditions" are in the area originally opened by Cubism, then developed by De Stijl and the Russian Constructivists/Suprematists. Hedrick temperamentally has close connections with the French *Cercle et Carré* group (especially Jean Arp), amongst Americans Ellsworth Kelly (his European background is an interesting factor, Kelly having lived in Paris for a number of years), and Frank Stella, all part of

what is now a "classical" continuity. Amongst Canadians, Guido Molinari, Yves Gaucher and Reg Holmes relate to the same tradition.

The colour in these paintings is subtle and optically ambiguous. The canvases have only two, sometimes three colours, but this simplicity contains a lot of variability: the pinky red of *Bishop's Corner*, the odd soft buff of *Torque*, the strange dark brown of *Keep* that seems to be both greens and reds. *Minos* is a particularly mental grey green. An ambiguity which is beautifully inseparable from that of the colour exists also in our readings of the external shape of the canvas. *Bending* and *Wing*, for example, though obviously flat, elicit readings of corners or bends. This adds a perceptual richness which is perhaps unsuspected by our first "gestalt" apprehension of the simplicity of the work. The relationships between the outside "sculptural" shape of the work with the two-dimensional "painting" surface describes a mind/body reciprocity that creates, for the spectator, a step from "out there" to "on there" to "in here," that is an edifying sensory pleasure.

Thank you, Robert Hedrick.

# Statement for the 8th Biennial of Sydney, Australia 1990

This exhibition was curated by René Block.

I decided to look at a statement by myself about my work which was published in 1961 in a short-lived Toronto magazine called *evidence* and see if, twenty-nine years later, any of it still seemed relevant. I liked these sentences the young Mr. Snow wrote:

“Art Creation (Experiment in Art) is an experiment on oneself” and “I make up the rules of a game. Then I attempt to play it. If I seem to be losing I change the rules.” And this is interesting: “the purpose of music is not to communicate but to make people stop ‘communicating’ and *listen*.” While visual art *is* more referential than music, similarly the purpose of visual art is not “communication” but a refreshment, a temporary removal from the social, a relief from communication (or rather the constant attempt at communication). Visual artworks are not people, they are by people. The dialogue is between you and an object. Matter and Mind. Art is a chance for people to look, to see, to think in relation to an object specifically designed to elicit those actions. Discursive examination seems rare, people tend not to look but to recognize. An artwork should thus be a director of attention, a shaper of attention, a guide to concentration.

## Statement for an Exhibition, Paris 1992

Snow's exhibition at Galerie Claire Burrus in Paris, France, ran from 5 December 1991 to 16 January 1992. This text was written in English and in French for publicity material accompanying the show.

**P**ainting was/is a synthesizing and constructing activity, and since it is made by hand it makes use of all modes of sensory knowledge – besides the visual and the tactile. The photographer, on the other hand, divorces the eye from the hand. In a sense, a photograph could be considered the equivalent of a single brush stroke in a painting. Click.

As art, the best photography I find lacking when compared to the best painting, but I've been attempting to balance the lack by adding the camera as a tool to the ones one might use in making painting and sculpture.

Apart from the not negligible weight of centuries of achievement, painting is free. The painter can make any marks he wants. It is also "free" in that it is a *solo* activity, not dependent on any other person or organization for its process or final form.

I didn't/don't want, in general, to find my photo subjects in "real life." A corollary to that decision is that the work is less "commentary" than it is "additive" to society. I'm interested less in the *objets trouvés* connection which is in *all* photography than in its constructive possibilities.

Often I've used the freedom of painting and sculpture to make or assemble the subject of the photo. These 2D or 3D subjects are made for particular purposes which usually are already conceptualized before the photograph is taken. Those prior ideas come from "play."

The particular purposes that relate to the "mode" or "process" of the individual work are partly drawn from the distinctive possibilities of the medium: in the first stage (taking the photo) these include framing, focus, exposure and lighting, but for me the choices made at this stage are also aimed at certain already defined decisions as to the final physical state of the print: whether it is to be printed on a surface, backlit or projected, also its size and shape, colour grain and the mounting and physical placement of the photo/object in the gallery space (whether attached to wall, ceiling, floor).

A discourse between all these elements is, in my opinion, the core of the true Art of Photography, defining itself in this way from all the other uses of photography: advertising, entertainment, journalism, etc.

The size of the photograph print is rarely a necessary part of the form/content of work in the "documentary" photo style that I find it almost scandalous. For most "fine" photography (Atget, Edward Weston, Cartier-Bresson, etc.), the print size has

to do with the sizes of paper made by manufacturers, not with any relation to forms in the photo. This tends to reinforce the continuity of this line of photography (which of course has many wonderful aspects) with printmaking (etching, lithography, etc.).

Lest the foregoing indicate a frightening determinacy, I would like to add that I am also interested in what happens to intentions when they “go wrong” in practice. “Accidents” and “chance” are also factors. *Un coup de dés* produces the unimaginable.

I’m hoping to direct the spectator to an intellectual, sensual and emotional recognition of the manipulable objecthood of representations. Images (even considered “alone,” which is indefensible) are abstractions from their actual subjects or sources. So the experience with my work is not only with its subjects but with its transformation, an entry into the *inside* of our common (as a species) representational hallucination.

The line from Cézanne to the Cubists and on is still (today) antithetical to that of nineteenth-century genre painting, Alma Tadema and Surrealism.

La peinture était/est une activité de synthèse et de construction et, puisque elle est effectuée à la main, elle fait appel, par delà le visuel et le tactile, à tous les modes de la connaissance sensorielle. Le photograph, au contraire, sépare l’oeil de la main. En un sens, une photographie pourrait être considérée comme l’équivalent d’un simple coup de pinceau dans une peinture. Clic.

En tant qu’art, j’estime que la meilleure photographie se montre déficiente lorsqu’on la compare au meilleur tableau, mais j’ai tenté de compenser cette déficience en ajoutant l’appareil photographique à ceux qu’on peut utiliser pour réaliser des peintures et des sculptures.

Si l’on fait abstraction du poids non négligeable de siècles de réussites, la peinture est libre. La peinture peut effectuer toute marque qu’il souhaite. La peinture est également “libre” en cela qu’elle est une activité dont le processus ou la forme finale ne dépendent d’aucune autre personne ou organisation.

En général, je n’ai pas voulu – ni ne veux – trouver les sujets de mes photographies dans la “vie réelle.” Le corollaire de cette décision est que mon oeuvre est moins un “commentaire” qu’un “additif” à la société. Je me suis moins intéressé à la connection de *toute* photographie avec les “objets trouvés” qu’à leurs possibilités constructives.

Souvent, j’ai utilisé la liberté de la peinture et de la sculpture pour réaliser ou assembler le sujet de la photographie. Ces sujets en 2D ou en 3D sont réalisés dans des buts particuliers qui sont habituellement conceptualisés avant que la photographie ne soit prise. Ces idées premières viennent du “jeu.”

La fin particulière à laquelle se rapportent le “mode” ou la “procédure” de chaque travail individuel est pour une part tirée des possibilités distinctives du médium. Au premier stade (la prise de la photo) celles-ci incluent le cadrage, la mise au point, l’exposition et l’éclairage, mais, à mes yeux, les choix effectués à ce stade visent aussi à satisfaire certaines décisions déjà définies quant à l’état physique final de l’épreuve: qu’elle soit destinée à être tirée sur une surface, rétroéclairée, projetée ou qu’il s’agisse de sa taille et de sa forme, de la couleur, du grain, du montage ou de l’emplacement physique de la photo/objet dans l’espace de la galerie (accrochée au mur ou au plafond, posée au sol).

La relation discursive entre tous ces éléments constitue, selon moi, le coeur du véritable Art de la Photographie qui se différencie ainsi lui-même de tous les autres usages – publicité, divertissement, journalisme, etc. – de la photographie.

Il me semble presque scandaleux que, dans le style photographique “documentaire,” la taille des épreuves photographiques soit si rarement une part nécessaire de la forme/contenu de l’oeuvre. Chez la plupart des photographes “artistiques” (Atget, Edward Weston, Cartier-Bresson, etc.), la taille des épreuves dépend des formats de papier produits par l’industrie, sans aucune relation aux formes présentes dans la photo. Cela tend à renforcer la continuité entre cette ligne photographique (qui, naturellement, comporte de nombreux aspects merveilleux) avec les techniques de l’estampe (gravure, lithographie, etc.).

De peur que ce qui précède ne suggère une détermination glaçante, j’aimerais ajouter que je suis également intéressé par ce qui se produit lorsque, dans la pratique, les intentions “échouent.” Les “accidents” et le “hasard” sont aussi des facteurs. “Un coup de dés” produit l’inimaginable.

J’espère conduire le spectateur à une reconnaissance intellectuelle, sensuelle et émotionnelle de l’objectivité manipulable de représentations. Les images (même considérées “seules,” ce qui est injustifiable) sont des abstractions tirées de leurs sujets réels ou de leurs sources. Aussi l’expérience offerte par mon oeuvre concerne non seulement son sujet mais ses transformations. Il s’agit d’une voie d’entrée à l’intérieur du champ qui nous est commun (en tant qu’espèce) de l’hallucination représentationnelle.

La ligne qui conduit de Cézanne aux cubistes et au delà constitue (aujourd’hui) l’antithèse de celle de la peinture de genre du XIXe siècle, d’Alma Tadema et du surréalisme.