

Super Eight

Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group Inc.

ISSUE 136 JUNE 1998



Office

By Dianne Duncombe
Administrator

MS8FG Workshop Learn Camera Use and shooting Techniques on a Location Shoot With Moira Joseph Book Now!

Starts June 21st
Two sessions - the first a
three hour shoot on
Sunday 21st June, 1-4 pm,
in and around the
Alexandra Gardens. The
second a two hour review
session with a projector 6
weeks later when the films
come back from
processing.

Use your own equipment or
you can hire what you need
from the office.

Members \$30, others \$40

Russian Camera

One of our members has
aquired a new russian
camera and would like to
know if any of our
members has one for infor-
mation exchange. Contact
the office if you can help.

Office Hours

Mon & Weds 2-6pm
drop in and have a chat

Postcodes Screening In August

If you intend to screen your

film phone the office on
9417 3402 to register

Sounds By Tony Woods Next Open Screening

"rolling, action, cut"
A cassette remix of found
film location reel to reels (in
a Fitzroy skip) recorded
onto 2 cassettes starting
with the same reel, slight
delay, then a
different order of reels. The
two cassettes then are
mixed as one. "98.

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James Thompson

CREATIVE GLASS SOLUTIONS

A Tribute to Bernie O'Regan, filmmaker — *Archive of Enigma*

'Like Robert Duncan, I want to be one of the magicians.'

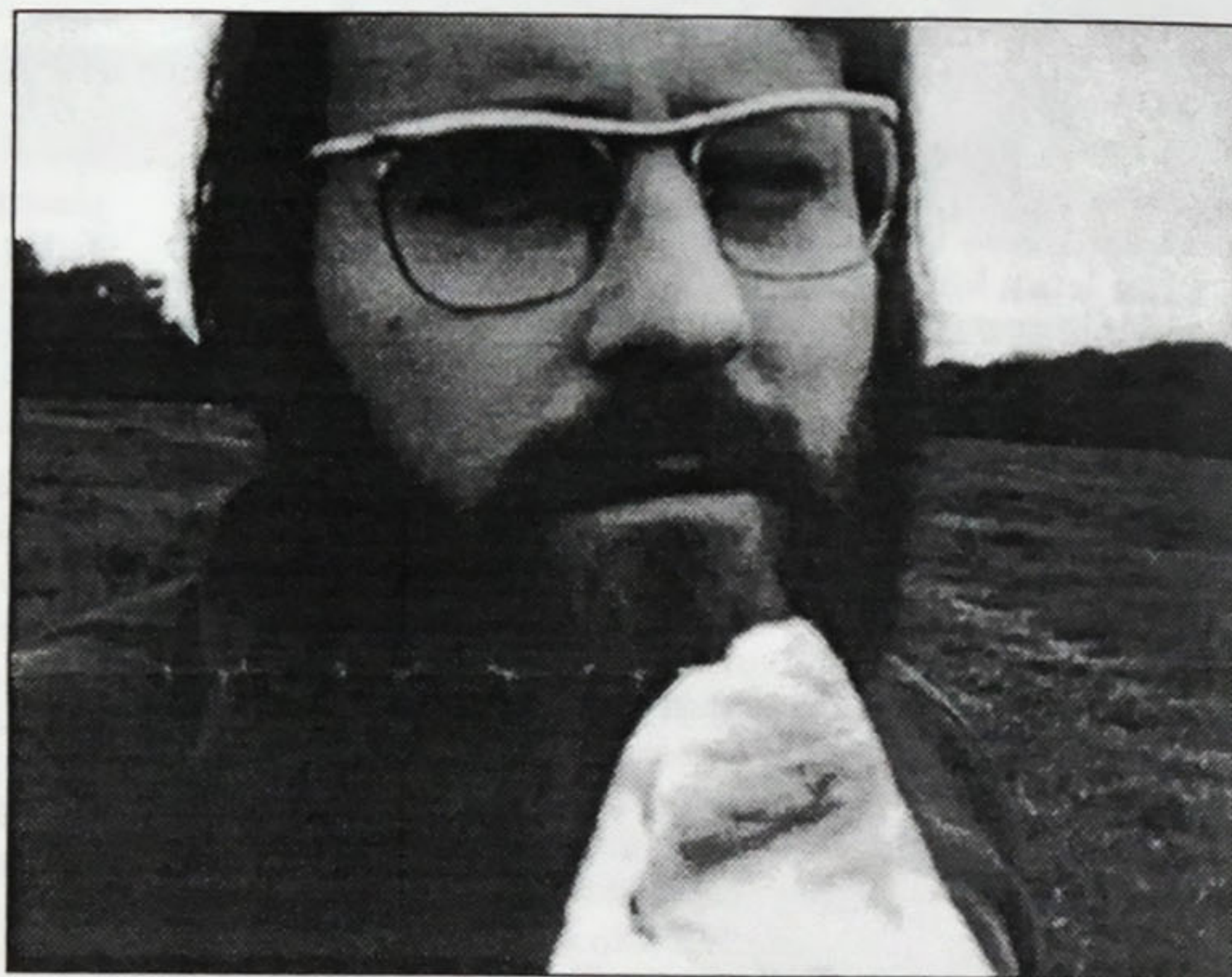
BERNIE O'REGAN, who sadly died of cancer in 1996, is known as a Melbourne photographer – he was instrumental in setting up the Victorian Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP) – however he left an extensive body of 8mm and 16mm film work. A selection from his 16mm filmmaking, curated by Corinne Cantrill and Lee Smith, will be shown at Dancehouse on June 1. (His Super 8 films will be shown at the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group at a later date.)

The O'Regan films screen with a supporting program of new films by Lee Smith, Christos Linou, Heinz Boeck, Dirk de Bruyn and Arthur and Corinne Cantrill.

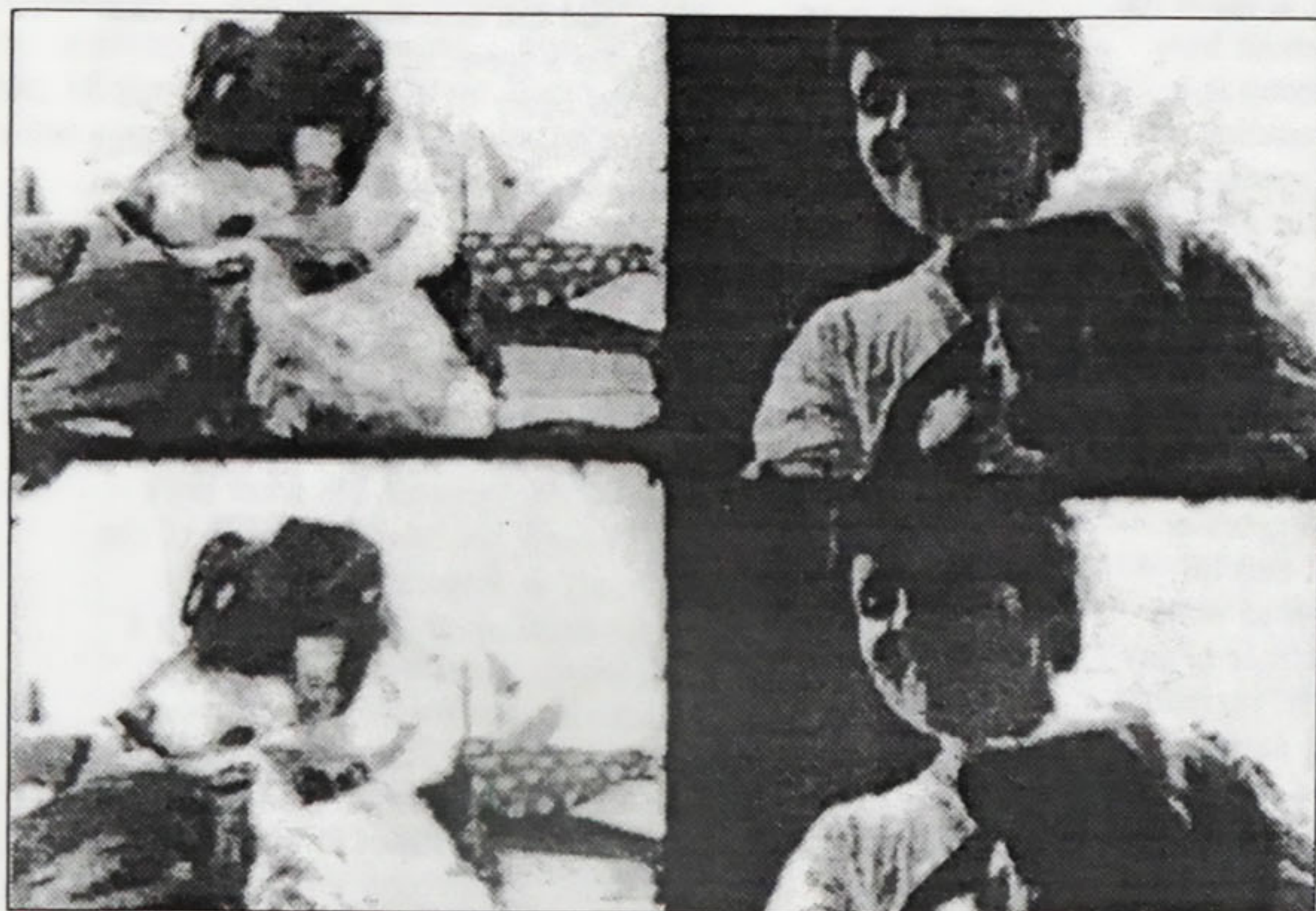
Bernie O'Regan began filmmaking in London in the 1960s, at first with standard 8mm and Super 8. He was involved with the London Filmmakers' Co-operative from its inception, using its facilities to process black and white film. He also helped organise an experimental film club called 'Shorts Circuit'.

His first work, inspired by the diary form of Jonas Mekas, uses domestic situations, landscape sites and portraits of friends to experiment with a range of filming strategies. The 'structural' film movement around the London Co-op at the time informs his films **Bus Stop**, **St. James Park**, **After the Dentist** and **Blue**. He felt he had arrived at a truly individual form of film expression with **A Film for Judy** (1974), as he put it, '... increasingly becoming under the influence of modern American poetry in the line running from Pound, William Carlos Williams, Charles Olson, Robert Duncan...'. (See *Cantrills Filmnotes* #21/22, pp 7-9.) His filming strategy is often similar to his still photography in his use of written statements accompanying key images, and his composition of shots, especially the portraits.

After ten years in London he returned to Melbourne at the end of 1974 and continued filming, leaving much 'work-in-progress'.



Self-portrait eating a pastry – from footage shot ca. 1973 by Bernie O'Regan



Unsplit standard 8mm printed as 16mm, shot ca. 1973 by Bernie O'Regan

We have called this program of nine films by Bernie O'Regan 'Archive of Enigma' because in the absence of any notes left by him there are many unanswered questions about the films and his intentions. It is often difficult to reconstruct the chronology of the filming, and how he planned to edit the material. For example, one reel of film, labelled **A Film for Kris Hemensley**, shows evidence of editing but we have no way of knowing whether the filmmaker considered it to be completed.

This situation reminds us of the problem following the deaths of many filmmakers – given the lack of interest in experimental film from the archives, who is to 'look after' the work, and keep it alive publicly?

The program will be introduced by close friends of Bernie O'Regan: Kris Hemensley and Les Walkling.

—Arthur & Corinne Cantrill

The Bernie O'Regan tribute screens at the Dancehouse upstairs Studio, 150 Princes St., Carlton North, Monday 15 June, 7.30 pm. Admission: \$8 and \$6 conc.

Enquiries: Corinne Cantrill, phone 9380 6416



cult of beauty

a film by Dean Francis

Sound and fury signifying nothing? No - nothing ever signifies nothing. The beauty of the narrative film in short form (10 minutes in this case) is that it has to compress, heighten, fracture the elements of plot, characterisation, time. Most film-makers take this into account when writing their short films, and come up with something that can fit in the short time-frame. *cult of beauty*, on the other hand, attempts to cram a feature film's worth of material (the creation of a futuristic world, many characters, a variety of mental states/feelings) in its 10 minutes. And so, as a story, it fails, but as a cinematic experience, there's quite a ride to be had.

cult of beauty works best when it forgets about its story and instead offers up pure, symbolic, essential images (sure, in an MTV style) - the beauty of the (male) human figure, homoerotic love-making, the grotesqueness of the social "controller", the fish in the condom. Best of all, I like the "pure style" of the sequences which signify the story's (political) world - the montage of buildings at the start, and the TV sequence (with Nike's "Just do it" slogan cleverly appropriated). These sequences, through quick editing and dynamic, apocalyptic music, conjure up the world at hand better than the sequences with the characters do.

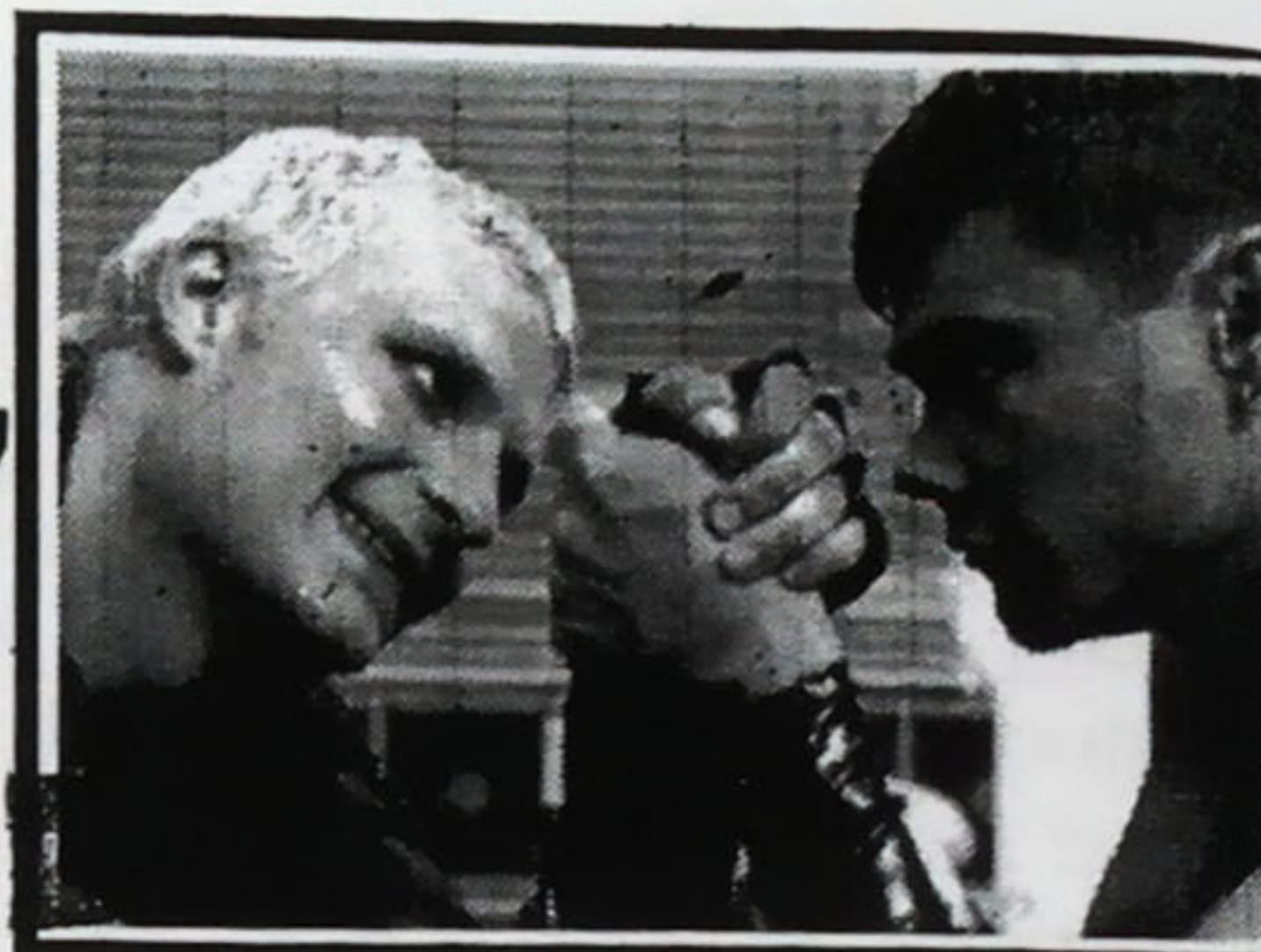
When the film attempts more traditional characterisation and plot, it fails. Whilst the film could easily be accused of heterophobia, I admire the way it accords some sympathy to the (outlaw) heterosexual couple. Still, their story fails to signify - why do they give themselves up? And what does that look on the face of Harvey, one of "the boys", after he has indulged in a violent display of hetero-bashing, mean? Is it regret? Questions tantalise: Does "the controller" have absolute power? Have the men's feelings and wills been eliminated? And where are all the women?

As I say, it's pointless analysing this film from the perspective of the feature-length narrative film. It's best to just enjoy it for its parts. There are some startling, vivid images on show. Sound and fury signifying nothing? No - iconic images always signify something. Sure, maybe many of these iconic images in *cult of beauty* are lacking for depth, complexity, maturity, but that doesn't mean they're not strong, dynamic, valuable. An impressive, if problematic, film.

BILL MOUSOULIS

Film Thoughts by Trevor Rooney

I was walking the street, maybe yesterday, and thinking of films and of the folks who make them, and of the nature of film, the elusiveness of it and the way the ^wmaker can never touch it. Most times, an artist sculpts his crazy scenes into clay, or rock, or paint. The medium is a concrete kind of a thing, something ~~xxx~~ folks can get angry about and attack and destroy, or pull it off the wall, or piss on it, or burn it up in flames, or tear ~~ux~~ into pieces. Then theres ~~musician~~ filmmakers. I sometimes like to wonder about the effects of working with ~~these~~ medium, what it ~~might~~ ^{might} do to a person. ~~xxx~~ Only in splicing ~~and xxx scratching the xxx~~ and ~~the~~ does he really get a chance to get his hands on the thing, and even then ~~he~~ it is not the actual ~~film~~ ^{he's} touching but the celluloid, which is getting pretty abstract to ~~think about~~ consider. Its ~~like~~ dealing with light impressions and sounds, both crazy elusive things, and maybe very pure ways of translating ideas and thoughts and concepts, and feelings. The piece is not even an object, it aint physical, if ~~ix~~ your eyes and ears were plucked out, why, it would not even exist. Certain folks who scratch and ~~xx~~ paint the celluloid are maybe getting more satisfaction than others, i dont know. If i couldnt work with other mediums i might go crazy. When the audience attacks the screen, they are merely killing the screen, kind of closing their eyes to the images, but as to getting at the offending images themselves, well, they'll have to charge into the projectionist's room and trash the machines. When i paint i can stare at my clumsy hands and curse them and punch some walls. When i make a bad film moment, all's i can do is maybe punch out one of the actors. So sometimes it eats at me, and at times i love the beauty of composing with light and time and sound and i figure cinema and music are the most holy of things. . . .



"the boys"



"the controller"

BROKEN WILL

Over Easter I went scouring the countryside in a rust bucket, looking for a resurrection of my faltering will. I ended up in Broken Hill for the first time with two of my sons. It was that kinda time, ending up at Lake Menindee, Burke and Wills first stop, along a muddy Darling river with crows, magpies, galahs and kookas belching in your ears and not much else. We had been on a tour of a Broken Hill mine already, shown around by an ex Miner in clean pressed overalls and with useless little plastic toy helmets on our heads. They had been in the process of turning the place into a Museum for the last six weeks and the curator had told us that a rock band had been up the week before. Whoopee.

Everything preserves well in the outback because its so dry, even the past. Broken Hill itself looked like the fifties or sixties but the mine was a very modern rubble, a trace of the way it was organised as a machine of men, imposed and scratching at the landscape, an alien and self contained capitalising bureaucracy, of helmets, rules, pathways, tunnels, lights, dust and more rules. The museum sheep station at Menindee that sent its bales down the Darling had left a similar trace of efficient colonial organisation with an architectural maze of corraling, streaming and selecting pens and fencing that had now passed us by and turned itself into a series of plaques, signs and equipment to be stared at in a set order. It was all about an organising and extracting machine that had passed its used by date and was being recycled as nostalgia and a bunch of factoids, a kind of crossword puzzle for the legs. Tracing back through the echoes was about what you were not told as much as anything else, and I enjoyed trying that out. Some of the poems at the mine were soul searching stuff, but I forgot them already.

And this brings me to Ian Poppins and Super 8 and his latest Super 8 film "Pentridge Unlocked" with Magnetic Striped sound rather than cassette- as is mentioned in the Super 8 Newsletter). By co-incidence this film covered similar terrain in my warped mind. It made me wonder, amongst a whole lot of other things, about how long it will be before the Melbourne Super 8 Group is a museum rather than a group, or a plaque masquerading as a museum in Bill Mousoulis's lounge room. The media circus has passed it by. I have always thought of that as a good thing.

Ian's preamble at the Open Screening pricked my attention immediately: he had gone to The Pen in Coburg and went on this aMAZEing tour, that he had been shown around by this ex-con for about three hours, and that he highly recommended it to all of us before it closed and was turned into some new thing like housing for yuppies or whatever the new word for yuppies is. I forgot that bit already too. These days I have to remind myself to write things down. I forget things all the time, the stress of my life being reformed against my will, I expect. It reassures me that the landscape and social / anti- social institutions are suffering a similar or even worse fate than I am. That's how far gone I am.

Ian has been a chronicler of cultural institutions that somehow resonate with the golden age of super 8 (Super 8 and 8mm as an amateur, family, or mass consumption medium). In some ways he operates in the museum already, displaying a kind of historical midas touch, pushing his subjects gently and with reverence over the precipice into history. His documentary about Puffing Billy works like that; the restored institution of steam and rail transport regurgitated as a toy. On watching

the film you wonder how many films, and now videos, have been made during that well packaged tourist trek. You can also muse on film's solid relationship to locomotives right from Lumiere's first images.

And then there is the film of his beloved Carlton Football Club, largely shot from his seat E 21, at a time of transition from the local to the national competition. It is very clearly shot from the local, everyday perspective, from the seat he has ritually occupied for years, decades probably. For me the stuff shot off the television as the Blues marched to the premiership that year, highlights that loss of the local perspective. The seat shifts out of the grandstand and into the lounge room into a more mediated and controlled, less quirky experience of the Spectacle. This is a shift celebrated on TV itself in those Roo Boy ads, which in the first of the series used film with simulated scratches to catch our interest. In a later ad there is also the home movie footage of Carlton's Steve Silvagni as a boy with concrete shoes, strengthening his leg muscles. Video has captured home movies and cloaks it with nostalgia.

So, a film about Pentridge by Ian Poppins is true to form, though what interests me is that this genre itself breaks down in the process. There were severe restrictions placed on Ian, which he likens to the situation that those early newsreel cameramen often found themselves in. With Ian, though you also get the out-takes, it is in-camera editing for the most part. He only had 2 rolls of film to capture three hours. He had no lights to shoot some of the dim corners of the prison and he did not know what the guide was going to say next. It sounds like a task made for video.

As a consequence the film has a kind of hanging around feel to it, like that sense that comes through some of those Mousoulis films, of time passing without consequence and with half, off hand thoughts scattering the silence. The camera roams with the bodies, people come and go as they get tired of the walking and climbing of stairs. The chapel shots accentuate a reverence for this maze. It is a bit like examining a corpse. You get the tail end of conversations. You hear something about Chopper Reed but miss that Julian Knight had stayed in the same cell. These half sentences, and the necessary selective and frugal shooting schedule echo a sense of loss and a slipping into history like no other of Poppins films. The structure echoes broken and fragmented state that Pentridge imposed on its inmates and that is now also suffering from.

The audience is continually trying to decipher the experience through what they are given, trying to extrapolate to complete sentences, trying to understand where we are, to locate and make sense of the fragmented and sampled journey. It is an open ended crossword puzzle. His filming ran out, rather aptly at the noose and gallows, just like the lives of some of the inmates. He went back another day to film what became the start and finish of the film. Those bookends are not as interesting as the examination of the entrails itself, shot, I must add, on a film stock that can no longer be available. Through the missing pieces this film carries a sense of loss and passing. At times I was reminded of Tarkovsky's *Stalker* and the mood that that film invokes in me, and the Perth Video: *The Industrialist's Nightmare*, shot in an abandoned Bolex Factory in Switzerland. Something broken is examined and becomes something else, a Phoenix Rising, and in this way the will is not broken after all.

Dirk de Bruyn May 1998

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James Watson

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Animation: "a form of filmmaking in which images are produced frame by frame and movement is created through projection" (writes Richard Noake in his book *Animation*).

You might say that's true for any film; and it is. Even the fastest action movie is always made frame by frame, each successive still being produced at the same high speed it will be shown at later. The rapid, stop-start mechanism of the projector combines with the phenomenon of persistence of vision to produce on the screen an illusion of continuous, lifelike movement. Even so, what you see when you look at a film is always only rapidly projected stills.

What distinguishes animation from other kinds of film is not that the image moves on the screen, but that the screen is usually the only place that it has ever moved. Animators, in the words of British filmmaker Gary Carpenter, use "frame by frame photography to release energies from inanimate objects".

Broadly gestural though these descriptions are, they point to the particular qualities distinguishing animation from live-action footage:

an animation's subjects are usually lifeless to start with;

the time between the production of each frame in an animation is invariably more than the fraction of a second between frames in real time filming or in projection;

and usually the illusion of movement in animation is entirely created by making small, deliberate changes in the position of inanimate objects, substances,

images, lines, and tones, so that the projected film gives an illusion of continuous movement where none has ever previously existed. (Or, in the case of time-lapse photography -- animation by pixillation -- a kind of hyper-real movement that likewise doesn't exist off the screen.)

Animation is often associated with fantasy, perhaps because of the apparently magical effects it allows, perhaps because it enables relatively literal expression of visual ideas however fantastic, unnaturalistic or bizarre. But animation is a method not a style. That a film is animated implies nothing in particular about its subject matter, techniques, or aesthetic strategies.

Which brings me to the MS8FG's May 7.30 Screening, *Animations - A program of Drawn, Sculptured, Cut-out and Stop-frame Techniques*, chosen and presented by Christos Linou; and to the different methods the filmmakers in it employed to wring movement out of the ordinarily stationary.

Corinne and Arthur Cantrills and Hans Kreiner used animated stills with different intent and effect. Actually Hans Kreiner's *Wreckers* uses only one still, a picture from a book of a plane engaged in an air battle. Shot in fragments from different angles and then projected in a three minute loop, the printed plane eventually seems to roll and flash with flame over and over (to the sound of breaking glass).

The stills in *Ivor's Tiger Christmas Card* are identical black and white computer printouts of a line drawing by Ivor Cantrill showing a tiger in a garden. Each picture is coloured in differently, and filmed for a few frames each. On the screen the almost stationary outlines pulse with changes in tone and hue.

Elsewhere in the film the Cantrills use their now famous

stuck camera to pixillate Ivor in his earflap cap, working on the pictures at a table in their garden.

Nick Ostrovskis also uses interval shooting in *A Train Trip* (a melange of live action, time lapse, negative, positive, rapid single frame shooting, and filming through a prism, or kaleidoscope; and his *Self-Portrait* is animated by double exposure, zooming in different directions on patterns to produce an effect like an unusually dynamic thaumatrope.

In *Open Your Eyes*, Moira Joseph's stop frame camerawork licks over objects, shadows, and light making kinetic abstractions; and using single frame (or stop frame) shooting she materialises and dematerialises objects. Films by Moira's super 8 students at Ripponlea Primary School are wildly eclectic, including object animation -- toy cars, barbie dolls, leggo, scrabble tiles, clothing and various unidentifiable substances -- plus green doughmation, and drawn animation, mixed with live action. Their titles in particular are truly inventive using everything to hand -- from chalk, the school's brick walls, and water, to the disassembled parts of one of the actors.

Christos's films, *A Troll Day Out*, *The Hungry Sun* and *A Holy Cleansing* also practice stop frame techniques on objects and materials as diverse as an orange (sucked dry by troll dolls through straws), and felt and paper cutouts. These three works employ colour and visual whimsy to deal with weightier subjects -- greed, death, racism and violence.

And finally Lee Smith's cameraless animation *Luna Soma* which turns almost blank exposed film and applied scratches and colour into a vivid curtain of swaying lines. It's as abstract as long grass or heavy rain in the wind, with a dynamic entirely derived from the energy of its handmade lines.

Virginia Fraser

Last Open Screening:

Tuesday 12th May 1998

7.30 Program: Animations

Open Screening Films:

*Work in Progress, Nick Ostrovskis, 1998,
18fps, 3mins, silent*

*Between Spaces, Christos Linou, 1998,
18fps, 3mins, stereo cassette*

*Tommy, Ian Handasyde, 1997, 18fps, 3mins,
stereo cassette*

*Melbourne Magazine, Ian Poppins, 1998,
18fps, 10mins 55secs, mono soundstripe*

*Cult of Beauty, Dean Francis, 1998, 24fps,
10mins, stereo cassette*

*I Don't Remember, Irene Proebsting, 1997,
18fps, 7mins, silent*

Next Open Screening:

ERWIN RADO THEATRE

211 Johnston St Fitzroy

Tuesday 9th June

7pm Sounds by Tony Woods

7.30pm Films By Daniel Kotsanis

Followed by Open Screening

Byo take-up reels please

Coming 7.30 Screening

July - Films by Bernie O'Reagan

August - Postcodes

ISSUE 136

website: <http://www.cinemedia.net/super8>

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contact the group at the address below

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Melbourne Super 8 Film Group

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is funded by



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Super Eight



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