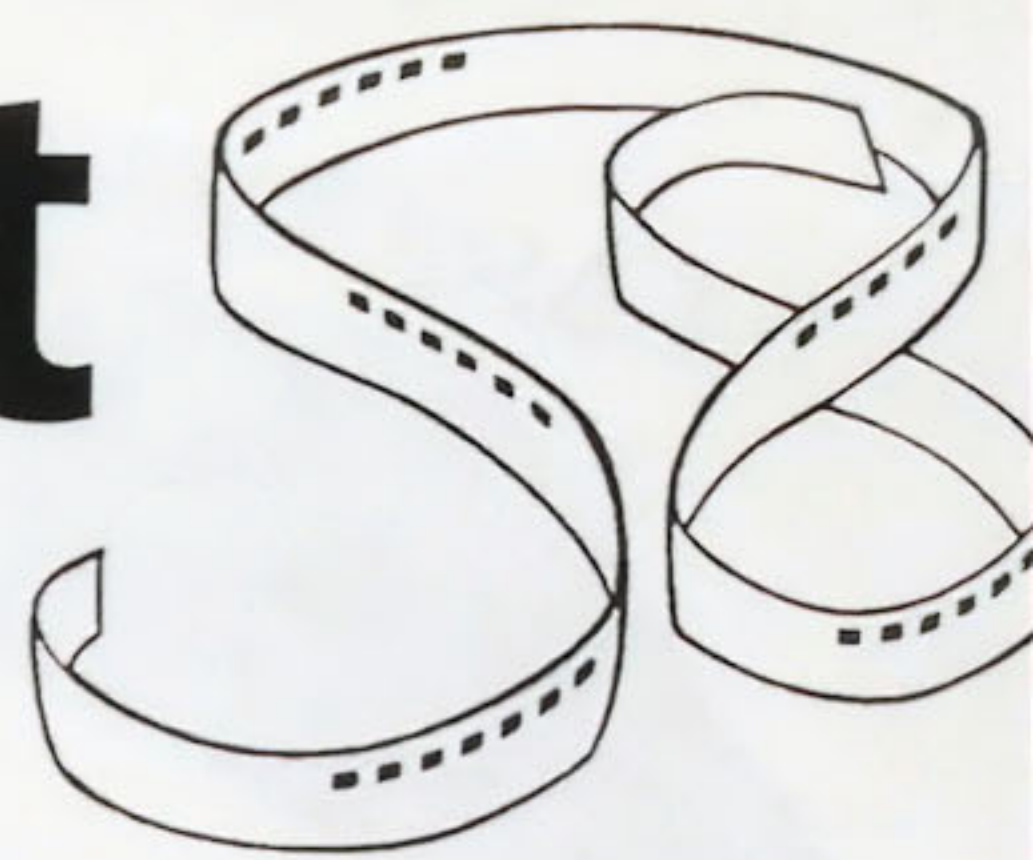
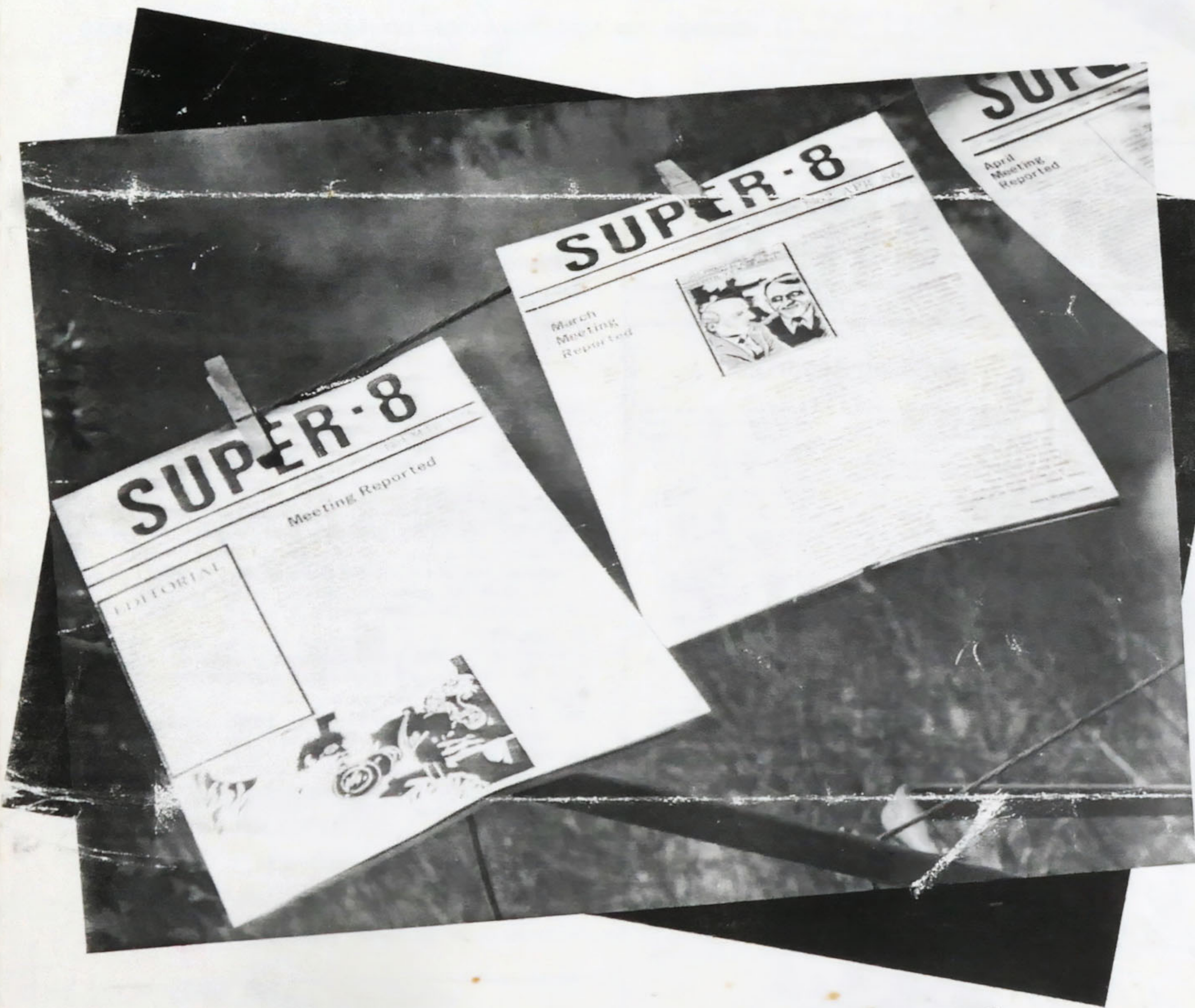


Super Eight



Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group
Issue 50 August 1990



NUMBER 50

LAST OPEN SCREENING

The Plumber's Come to Town by David Haberfeld
 Untitled by Jennifer Pignataro
 Richmond Girl by Bill Mousoulis
 All I Want Is A Woman by Sandra Munro
 Welcome to Fairfield by Perry Laird
 Discovering Perth by Ian Poppins
 The Card Game by David Haberfeld
 Homage to Galileo, Wertmuller and Ostrovskis
 by Peter Schuller

SUPER-8

THE NEWSLETTER-MAGAZINE OF THE MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM GROUP No1 MAR 1986

EDITORIAL

This is the first issue of 'Super-8', the newsletter-magazine of the Melb. S8 Group. Its aim will be to complement the Australian Super-8 scene by disclosing news on screenings, etc. and also by giving the opportunity to theorists and film-makers to talk about Super-8 and what it means to them.

It is hoped that this magazine will help create and sustain an active S-8 scene in Melbourne (the city in which it is published.) In Sydney the Super-8 scene is alive and well in Melbourne not so. But that can be rectified.

We are looking for writers interested in contributing to this publication. If you are interested in Super-8 in any way (whether to write about it or to organize screenings, etc.) then we would like to hear from you. Contact the Melb. Super-8 Group at P.O. Box 1150, Richmond North, 3121 or ring Bill Mousoulis on 419-1042.

Meeting Reported

The Melbourne Super-8 Group's first meeting/Open Screening for the year happened at the Glass-house Meeting Room on February 10th. The turnout was very good - about 25, 30 people came along. For the first half of the evening there was an open group discussion, which, despite an uneasy, uncomfortable start (because I hadn't actually prepared anything), proved quite interesting and fruitful.

The question of cheap stock reared its ugly head once again. It somewhat saddens me to think that this is the first thing on people's minds. Still, I guess it's quite important to cut down the costs, and even though the Melb. S-8 Group can't get stock at half-price or whatever, we can at least make it available tax-free (i.e. a 20% or so reduction) to members. Another possibility mentioned during the meeting was that the

S-8 Group could strike up a friendship with Mediavision and obtain for its members a discounted rate on Mediavision's facilities, etc.

The meeting continued with everyone briefly mentioning the particular kind and area of film-making they're good at/interested in. A wide variety of concerns emerged and some hope was expressed that lots of films would be made this year, and that people would help each other out with them. I believe that the Melb. S-8 Group, as well as getting on with its other activities like organising screenings etc. can function as a sort of production company, referring people, providing equipment, etc.

The second half of the evening saw the screening of several films. Each film was introduced by its maker and there was a brief question-and-answer session as the subsequent film was being set up. The first film to be screened was Robert Rait's visual extravaganza On a Midnight Trip to Kalamandru. Scratched film, bleached film, pixillation - this film has got it all. The images are haunting ones - there is a definite 'midnight' mood here.

Nick Donkin showed his film Experimental Animated Cartoon, in which we see the animator at his desk interacting with his characters. It is a well-made and humorous film, with a twist at the end. Peter Lloyd's Out-Dated is another film with a twist at the end. It's

Notes on

RICHMOND GIRL (1990, Super-8, 6 minutes)

Director: Bill Mousoulis

These notes are by the film-maker.

What is "Richmond Girl"?

It is a word, the word on my lips at the moment, July 1990. Like "How Soon Is Now?" in March 1990, like "Honey" in Dec 1989, etc, etc.

What is "the word"?

"The word" is actually a subset of the "the word". Beatles: ♪ "The word is love." ♪

Who speaks?

I speak, because I have something to say (a word.) It is only my greatest dream, that is all. (The speech and the word.)

Who hears?

Everybody in the world/whoever listens. Lend me an ear, my friend, I have a tale to tell.

What is "the cinema"?

The cinema is the reflector, pure, uninhibited. It speaks to me and asks "Have you anything to say?"

What is "life"?

Life is the source, pure, uninhibited. It also speaks to me, but all the time - it doesn't stop to ask.

Again, what is "Richmond Girl"?

Again, it a word, the word.

"I saw her just recently, but she passed me by..." I am in love, I am in love, I am in love, I am in love, I am in love, (continue forever.)



Well here we are, newsletter number fifty. A great deal of water has passed under the bridge since the first issue was published back in March of 1986. It's good to see that people are inspired enough to write for the newsletter. We thank the contributors for their words over the past years, and hope they continue. We also look forward to seeing some new writers as well.

For your interest here is a copy of the front cover of the first newsletter.

Please note too, the new look banner head, many thanks to Tim Mansour for this and other work he has done for the group.

ED.

Congratulations Nick O.

for the healthy injection of "editorial comment" in the last iss. Your piece titled "The Bony Cronies" was especially lucid and a genuine surprise entry to the usual newsletter format. I suspect my response won't be the only one, if the last storm in a teacup (Zenner vs. Fronxman) and the ensuing peace-keeping forces of Big Daddy Bill are anything to go on. I'm bloody sick too of the "this is an attack/not an attack" lame "critical" input to the newsletter, and you're right to call Mousoulis/Tuohy/La Rosa cronies, except unlike real cronies they're not involved in any kind of push or conspiracy. 'Cos I'm a MIMA BigWig and haven't turned up to any screenings for a long time doesn't mean I haven't seen what you're on about. Although Big Boy Bill can call Sarah Johnson hysterical for lampooning the Festival program, on one level she's got a point, even though she obviously didn't manage it well diplomatically. I think you could separate the program into two distinct halves - original, self-determined film-makers like Boeck, George Ray, Grant, Freeman, and then wannabes Tuohy, La Rosa, and Davies. I don't know why Sandy Munro's waste of time was included at the expense of say, Zenner's film, but I get the squirmly feeling it may be because she's a girl making naive little "observation" films. This rather late development of young turks making "little" films about young girls, of which La Rosa and Davies are the most frighteningly brash about, seems to be some kind of trend which even Mousoulis is promoting with *Precious*, a film about a woman who ... what? Wants to be in a State Bank lifestyle ad or what? - You tell me. Too many Rohmer films and some kind of deep seated problem with "the feminine" makes me desperately search in these films for something other than the subject, which is probably off the mark as I'm fairly convinced that things like "subject" and the "individual" are what I'm supposed to be reflecting on, to get an aftertaste of "love lost" or "happy days" or some such other sentiment I hear on the radio via some wussy indie pop which is often featured as soundtracks to these films or even quoted in the newsletter.

THE 5TH MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM FESTIVAL

Yes, the festival is only three weeks away, punters. (August 31 to September 2). At the time of typing this, we're not even 100% positive that the funding of it is okay. But our fingers are crossed.

Special highlight of the festival will be the screening of Simon Cooper's *A Distant Relation*, which is a 65-minute transgeneric film funded by the AFC, shot on Super-8, and blown up to 16mm.

Simon will also be attending the festival, and will be a part of a "FILM-MAKERS SEMINAR", which will also feature film-makers Richard Tuohy and Marie Craven (formerly Anne-Marie Crawford.)

For more details on the festival, ring the director Steven Ball on 531 8145.

This whole music/film relationship which I know Mousoulis and La Rosa are up to their necks in is however, an interesting one, and one I wish they would expand on. So you can't have Melbourne's answer to Dinosaur Jr., then produce the filmic version of it. Populate your films with fresh-faced girls direct from wet-dream land: sullen, lost, full of hope, naivety out there in the cruel cruel world. Unfortunately I was (in *Out*) and am (in Zenner's current production) privy to this fantasy (but Bill don't take it that I don't want to be in your films) of looking, looking or representing some kind of femme-fucked-up-fatale. Right throughout the filming Zenner keeps raving about "making it to Hollywood before those others." Says it all really. Warning: Be suspicious of men with cameras and record collections instead of girlfriends! Their creative agenda is not to be trusted!

VIKKI RILEY July 8 1990.

5th MELBOURNE S·U·P·E·R·8 FILM FESTIVAL



**GLASSHOUSE
THEATRE
R · M · I · T**
360 SWANSTON ST
MELBOURNE

FRI 31st AUG 7-30pm
SAT 1st SEP 5-30 & 7-30pm
SUN 2nd SEP 7-30pm

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INFORMATION · 531 8145

A World of Feeling / The Feeling of a World

by Bill Mousoulis

"With *India '58* I wanted to give the feeling of a world. I would like the spectator to come away with this feeling after seeing it."

- Roberto Rossellini

"One must know men in order to love them."

- Roberto Rossellini

As you can see, my penchant for quoting Rossellini has not left me. This month I want to apply it to four of the films I saw at the last Open Screening - *Welcome to Fairfield* by Perry Laird, *All I Want Is A Woman* by Sandy Munro, *Untitled* by Jennifer Pignataro, and *Homage to Galileo, Wertmuller and Ostrovskis* by Peter Schuller.

These films, in their own modest way, are absolutely great films. They are great because they are palpably true. And they are true because they either create a world of feeling or capture the feeling of a world. These films won't be winning any AFI Awards, and they may never get another screening, but everyone knows (even secretly) their importance. Yes, that old thing: "the injustice of the world"...

The first two films are fascinating subject and theme-wise to begin with, because they examine a somewhat neglected area: the crisis that occurs in people in their late 20's/early 30's, as they reflect and begin afresh. "Turning 30" is a shallow way of describing this crisis, as it only focusses on age. These two films are also surprising because they signal progress on the part of the film-makers.

Not that Perry Laird has made heaps of films. But *Welcome to Fairfield* is quite different from the guerilla sabotage of the *Birthday Party* film he showed some months back. This new film is in the known 'personal' mode, but unlike other Super-8 self-portraits I've seen, it's full-bodied and alive: it has earned its right to reflect. The steady stream of images match the steadiness of the soundtrack (a song by Perry's band). Nothing stands out, but the emotion builds to a powerful crescendo, where everything becomes focussed and whirlpooled. Not only an honest film, but one where the film-maker exalts himself (in a humble way, of course ...)

Sandy Munro's *All I Want Is A Woman* is her first 'scripted' film, but it still retains the spontaneity of her other work. It features a superbly grumbling Bill Jordan checking the beach for "female wildlife". A lot of it is played for laughs, but don't worry about that: this film examines a life, a set of feelings, an anxiety or two, etc. Like Perry's film, a film full of feeling; a world of feeling.

Jennifer Pignataro's *Untitled* works in another way however. It doesn't present a feeling, it presents a world, the world of Australian Rules Football. In Sandy Munro's own footy film (*Feet or Footy*), the match is seen through one person's eyes, but Jenny doesn't employ any such conduit. Jenny's camera plainly captures the essence of the footy day, from arriving at the ground to the journey home, in a remarkably accurate way. It's all in the distance (call it objectivity if you like) that she keeps - there are no close-ups, no highlighted moments, no direct sound. The music soundtrack reflects the three stages of the day: the build-up, the game itself, the going home. It's all intensely mythical, and, importantly, it's not patronizing towards the masses it shows. The film-maker has shown herself to be a generous and open receptor with this film, restraining from projecting her personality or thoughts on the material, thus letting it speak for itself. A beautiful film ...

Peter Schuller's *Homage to Galileo, Wertmuller and Ostrovskis* is quite a delight. We see Peter and Laki frolicking about in Italy, and then Peter at work in Melbourne. All the familiar themes are there, the familiar dichotomies: work/play, fast/slow, etc. Like Jenny's film, we see a world, we get the feeling of that world.

To finish with, a thought on the two types of approaches and results I've described. I think the second type (showing a world rather than a feeling) is a bit better because the whole image, the whole frame, the whole film in other words, is employed. If you show the world you will invariably show the feelings within it - vice versa doesn't quite work. Peter's film comes closest to combining everything I've talked about.

Ah, but this is all theory. I like all these films - what do degrees matter? Perry Laird, Sandy Munro, Jenny Pignataro, Peter Schuller - you are Australia's true film-makers. You film the truth.



FE FI FO FUM

by Matthew Rees

Reflections of a super 8 nightmare that never ends. I journey down the sound striped path of Hanimex projectors that chew up film so precisely. If one didn't know better you would believe it had been designed for that purpose alone. I climb into a once majestic robe to unravel from aslightly soiled pair of pajamas, an immaculate piece of machinery. The camera which once belonged to a woman who now firmly grasps her white balance button ticks over in my palm. I clench my hens teeth as rare as my splicing tapes, scanning questionable chemist shops for bargain bins laden with out of date film that I do not need. I have too many gloves, my tripod will not fit into the glove box of my car. I second the motion of the first part, excluding all others that Kodak don't give a rats arse about super 8. Everything here is black and white unless you're trying to process a negative. As my daughter blew out her birthday candles, my editor viewer blew a globe. As we meet on Tuesday night I witness a gathering of my fine feathers friends. He whips himself into a super 8 frenzy as his view finder loses it's view. Scientists and doctors and TV reporters have no idea, do you? The gate is open for suggestions, so are his morals. I once knew a truck driver who carried a grudge. I snap my heel together and say there's no place like home. A dog bites my leg. Is this the yellow brick road ja wohl. I wish I had a dollar for every time I had a dollar, then I would be twice as poor. The only saviour in this super 8 void is the video transfer. Where doth one get one. My HB doth runith over. "I think I have pixilated my pants!" a young man from the western suburbs was heard to say. Gaberdine is hard to clean. When Supper was ended he took the cup again he gave you thanks and praise. The raven wig of the son of a Greek man hangs low as a defunct president slides her numerous shoes under her bed. Buddy Love should be nominated, he is the only one with any social graces. I must air my dirty washing, however the newsletter won't be published for some time. Alas I must force it all back into the robe.



MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY

MUFS is something that happens most Tuesdays (and some other days) at the Philip Theatre in Melbourne Uni. They screen all sorts of films, similar to the Melbourne Cinematheque program. The calendar for the second half of the year has just come out, and the program features a variety of film-makers: Godard, Fassbinder, Ruiz, Greenaway, McKenzie, Avery, etc.

Bill has five yearly passes for MUFS (kindly donated by them for us putting a Super-8 program on). This is not a competition. Just ring Bill on 429 9847 and he'll gladly send you one.

RAOUL RUIZ UPDATE

The Ruiz Appreciation Society has not met for over a year, the last meeting being at Bill's former residence with a screening of *Roof of the Whale*. Later this year at MUFS at the Philip Theatre *City of Pirates* will be screened for all those who have not seen it. Let's hope the screening conditions will afford it more respect than that given *Lancelot du Lac*, which was like watching it on my own fucked-up TV while somebody uses the garbage disposal unit in the kitchen. Latest update on Señor Ruiz is that he is alive and well in New York City and making his some 60th feature - *The Golden Boat* - starring luminaries from all walks of cine-life: Barbet Shroeder, Jim Jarmusch, all working for peanuts just to be in the project. Legend has it that each member of his crew was handed a uniquely "Ruizian" instrument - the DOP being firstly handed a diopter lens, the actress a TV reference and the editor some puzzling black and white sequences; then Ruiz simply sits back and anxiously waits for procedure to run amok.

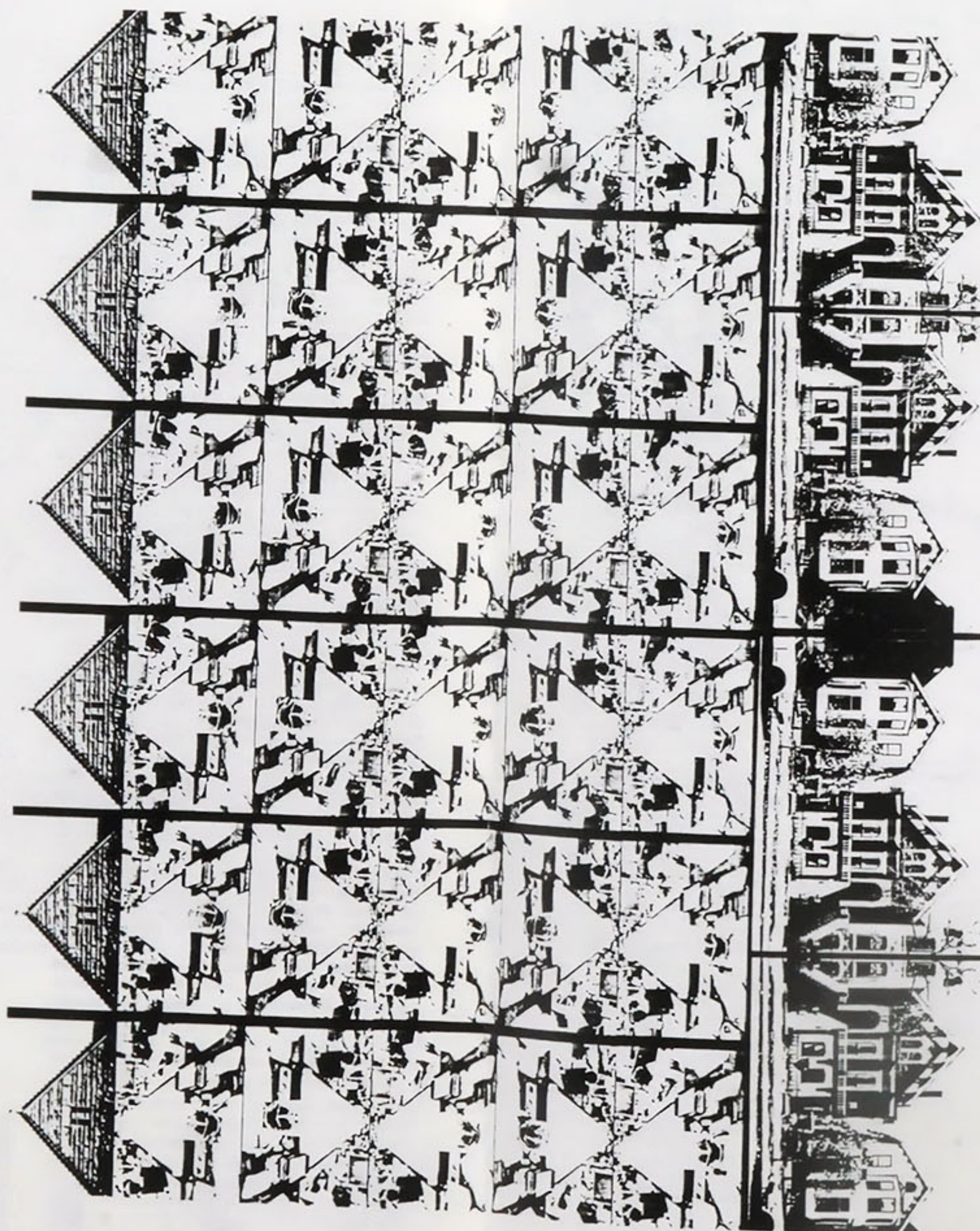
VIKKI RILEY

CONFESSIONS OF SUPER EIGHT CONVERT

As a relatively new member of the S8 group I found myself experiencing culture shock at the open screenings. It was not because of the venue or the casual nature of each monthly gathering, rather, it was the very nature of the S8 works screened which required me to adjust my prejudices and expectations. Having been raised on a diet of mainstream cinema it was difficult for me to accept the often shaky images of many S8 productions. More to the point, the formal qualities of some of the S8 films have their ancestry in avant-garde, experimental or non-mainstream cinema. This was not the problem, for I have no qualms about the validity of these traditions as legitimate cinematic practices. My problem however, was that I kept applying the standards or expectations of mainstream cinema to the films I saw at open screenings leaving me frustrated for obvious reasons. It was not until I convinced myself that those expectations are to be left at the door that I could be liberated not from dissatisfaction, for there can still be dissatisfying S8 films, but from the belief that what I was about to see had to conform to certain standards informed by my mainstream viewing experiences.

It was at the last open screening that I realized just how inappropriate or downright wrong it was of me to be expecting straightforward narrative films of a certain type. I discovered at that open screening just how liberating it can be to not have to carry the burden of one's mainstream viewing expectations into the screening room; and this is why S8 and the S8 group itself are so important for they represent a completely different viewing and creative sensibility.

This sounds mighty grand so I had better watch my step lest I badly articulate what it is that I mean. To put it another way, the joy of S8 and of the S8 group is that it truly is an alternative to the ordinary cinematic encounters we have and more importantly, it has a flexibility which allows both S8 and the group to be whatever the filmmaker wants it to be for the duration of his/her film. A film can belong to any of the schools of filmmaking: avant-garde, documentary, poetic, realist, essay, political, narrative, home-movie et al. and still be S8.



I suspect the phrase for what I am trying to say is simply Super Eight Aesthetic. A phrase such as this has implied in it a mode of viewing and filmmaking requiring of the participant as much earnestness and faith as any other socialized form of behaviour. An aesthetic is accepted or abhorred, it is social, or it is solitary. In my case, my prejudice towards specific kinds of films was getting in the way of an acceptance of some S8 films and of an acceptance of this aesthetic. Personally, I like films which do not brutalize the viewing eye with a bombardment of images and a succession of near subliminal rhetoric dressed up as a discourse on post-modern angst. I like films to be gentle to the eyes and ears of the spectator. I hate being made uncomfortable by such pyrotechnics. More often than not I tell myself afterwards that such films are but tales full of sound and fury signifying nothing, and worse, are told by an idiot.

This attitude of mine (a defensive one I believe) is part of who I am and what my tastes both critical and non-critical are. I fall back on it as a way of confronting the confronting cinematic experiences which a walk on the wild side of cinema (S8) presents me with. All it means is that I will just have to work harder at expanding my viewing preferences. Perhaps my disdain is exacerbated by the prospect of actually making a film in S8. It is one of the fundamental assets of the S8 group that anyone who joins it immediately starts to feel a film welling up inside them just waiting to get out. Certainly, part of the incentive and subsequent excitement for me when I joined the group was the notion of being part of an active filmmaking group dedicated to the production and exhibition of S8: consequently the S8 group brings out the director in all of us, as well as the critic, and this is how it should be, for no one who is so close to such creative activity as is apparent at the open screenings can remain silent for long. My own habit during screenings is to reflect on what I have seen and to think about what I would have done differently which is probably why I had difficulty with so many of the films I saw the first time I attended an open screening as I had not yet made my discovery of the Super Eight Aesthetic. With each passing screening and newsletter I find myself more at ease with what I see. Soon, the Super Eight Aesthetic will be familiar territory and all the films it embraces no longer such journeys into the darkness of an abyss.

MICHAEL FILIPPIDIS

16/7/90

DEAR BILL,

Somewhere in Melb. 8.7.90

Dear Bill ---SOUL---
Newsletter.....

...A letter for the Super-8 August
'standing your ground'. I am constantly impressed by your always
DON'T, you are still not swayed. If others DO like a film and you
don't, you are still not swayed. If YOU like a film, and others
and follow your intuition of yours to stand your ground
maker. You SENSE, as I do, that there is something lacking in
'Love Life'. I still say 'padding' and confuses any plot. The
whole of the film HAS you, I see there are brilliant Tuoy's
rest of the picture that make it a great film as Richard Tuoy's
developed further. Like you, I see there are brilliant Tuoy's
in the long S-8 narrative. If it had been filmed on 16mm, it's
first long S-8 narrative. If it had been filmed on 16mm, it's
great moments would still be timeless. WHY WASN'T THE SAME
CAMERA PERSON used for ALL SHOTS? The camera person has a
distinct SOUL that he brings into the film, if he chooses the
angles, I theorize.

person, then perhaps there would have been 'consistency off camera
virginity' of unity that is lacking in the film in places.
How many camera persons WERE used for the film? Is my theory
supported?

(Sandy Munro).

Interview. ALSO a word of PRAISE to Mark La Rosa...re:his July
as an interviewer. His interview with me showed his intelligence
(vocal chord rest). Because I don't wish to use my voice
and I spontaneously wrote the Questions
except at one spot where Mark astutely said that I hadn't
written that sentence as he sensed I meant it--on the spot. I
an especially impressed by his Questions themselves. They
reveal a SENSITIVITY towards INDIVIDUALS as film-makers.
(Sandy Munro).

From somewhere in Melbourne 26.7.90

Dear Bill ---SOUL---

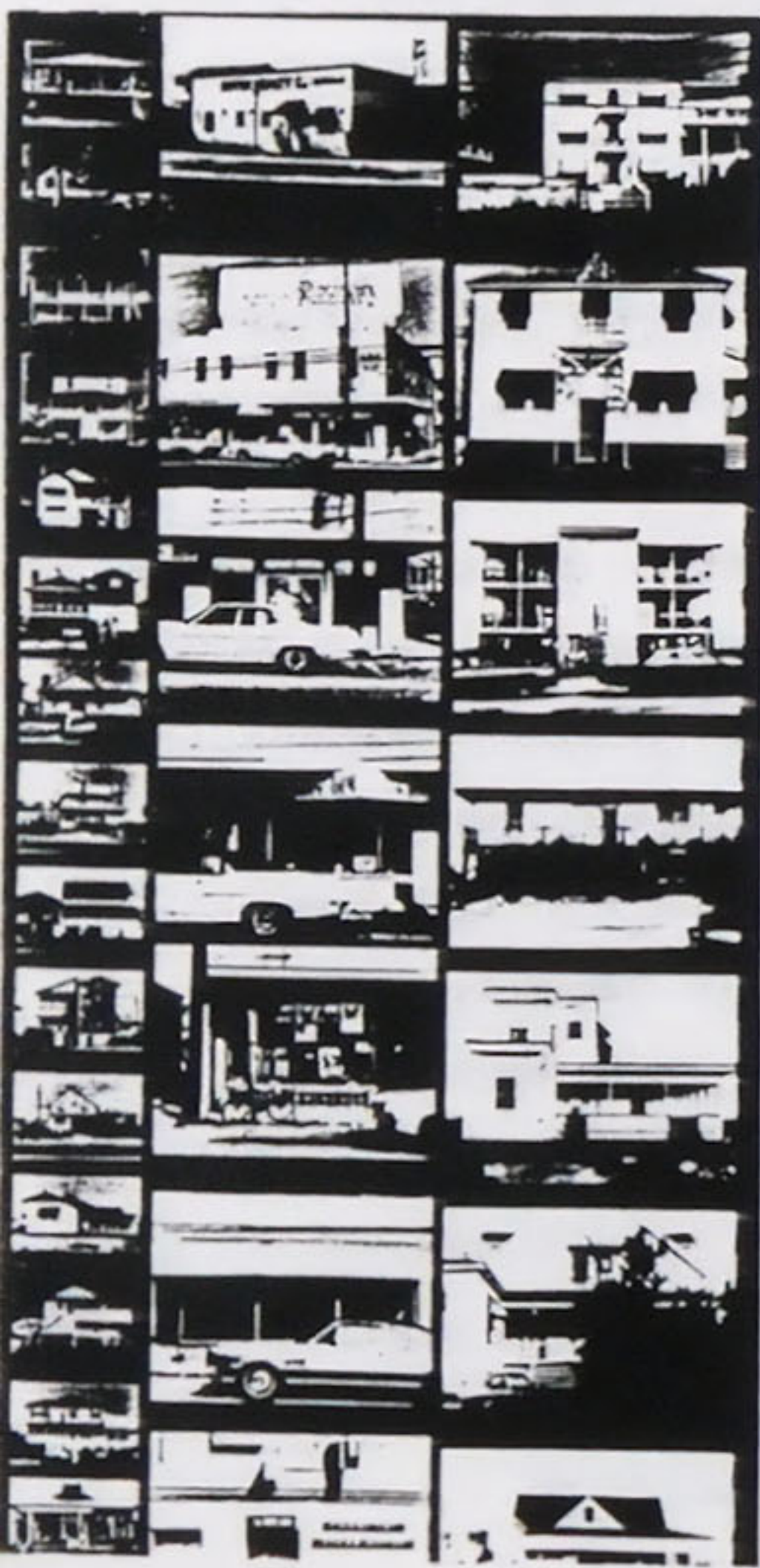
-the whole ZOO scene is just 'padding' and confuses any plot
needs some explanation. It certainly sounds very harsh. This
comment is meant to apply co-jointly with the rest of the
film. It is meant to imply that the zoo scenes don't flow as
a UNITY with the previous cinematic work of the film in that
fighter and closer and more frequent shots of Steve's face
and FEELINGS needed to be employed. Longer distance shots
seen to take over in the zoo scenes instead, seemingly giving
the film a documentary style which is at variance with the
prior filming. This I term padding, especially the scene with
the mum and her kids which should have been shorter. Perhaps
if there had been some intervening shots of Steve's
expressions during this the doco feeling would not have
overtaken me.

The problem with making any sort of criticism
is that it tends to stand out. Please don't let this one
personal doubt of mine detract from the stature of the rest
of the film.

I read Richard Tuoy's reason for the zoo
scene to be that going to the zoo is a therapeutic activity
to help Steve to relax and socialize, so that he can
philosophize while down deep in the dark, cold seal tunnel
and emerge to smile "Oh what the heck. Why am I so uptight.
Life's not that bad, anyway". If there had been tighter shots
to ASSIST the audience to read this I think the ending would
not have crept up so enigmatically and so flatly.

I must also point out that all this critting
comes from memory recall. I do not have the film in front of
me as I write. Anyway, thanks for the opportunity and please
print this unedited ALONGSIDE my prior letter on the matter.
(Sandy Munro).

Also re the comment for Mark La Rosa, I meant to insert
a credit to P.Greenaway who also encouraged me at Rusden. I
couldn't recall his name at time of interview. Hope he IS the
one with the beard who took Low Technology Media in '86.
(Sandy Munro).



ESPRESSO~DUO!

Something that Mark C. Zenner wrote in the newsletter has haunted my mind; the possibility of consciousness being a social practice. When one considers consciousness from an artist's point of view, and by that I mean to include the role of consciousness in the creative/artistic process, the artist reflecting upon their life and out of that contemplation making something cohesive, meaningful, profound, insightful and truthful, then one is inevitably drawn to the question of for whom do I (the artist) contemplate my life for? When I think about or meditate on the world there is something essentially public happening in my mind; the audience for these ruminations inside my head being not just myself but the person(s) to whom I may then wish to communicate these mental observations to. That voice inside our head is the product of a language system which structures our consciousness within socio-cultural terms, hence, any kind of mental event which relies upon that internal voice is necessarily a public orientated phenomena as language exists that we may communicate between ourselves and make public the contents of our mind. So that when to the sessions of sweet silent thought I summon up remembrance of things past, it is with the voice of a social being in my consciousness that I label, define, recall, and ruminate on my life.

It is one of the defining traits of art that it attempts to ensure the future out of the remnants of the past within the present. Beyond the desire for immortality -but tied to it- is the need to say something to others that is both true and beautiful. If Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty, then all our attempts at finding such truth and its correlative Beauty via our art, fall perilously close to being an exercise in communal solipsism.

We may divide consciousness into two distinct categories: the Linguistic (voice inside our heads) which is the domain of the intellect, and the Primal (the sensory impressions) which is the domain of memory. Another way of defining the two categories is to say that one is a digital signifier of reality and the other an analog one. In the former category our thoughts are the product of a language system which arbitrarily attaches a digital sign label to the concept at hand (Saussure's semiotics); an activity borne out of a public need for communication which is related to the need for recognizing consciousness within a public discourse.



This is in opposition to the private sensation of consciousness which is composed of our memories, and what are memories but the near faithful sensory impressions of the past. So that when Marcel recalls that for a long time he used to go to bed early and begins his flood of reminiscences, it is precisely the visual, aural, olfactory, dermal and alimentary sensations of the past which he re-experiences in his mind upon tasting the madeleine; the fact that Proust speaks of smell as the sublimest of all senses suggests that in the act of remembering one is not engaged in a linguistic experience but a purely sensory one in which all the sensory conditions which existed in the past moment reassert themselves and enter the present moment. Hitchcock's VERTIGO is based entirely on the premise of reality blurred by a psychopathic denial of the present reality; see for instance, the moment when Stewart and Novak embrace for the second time after he has found her again wherein the camera does a 360 turn around the couple as the background changes from the hotel room to the scene in the livery stable and back again to the hotel room; the effect as Chris Marker knows, is that the past manages to displace the present within our conscious minds: see Marker's SUNLESS. Epiphany is a blurring of temporal order as far as the senses are concerned. All the sensory impressions of the past moment are focused on to the point where the memory of the past now fills in the present moment making it literally the reality of the present.

I stress this point because the act of remembering is a process of consciousness which involves the senses as signifiers of reality: the sense impressions forming a total world based on the experience of it in a certain way in the past. And is this not after all the aim of poetry, of music, indeed of all art? If we accept this then we must also accept the idea that memory is always about the past (obviously) and that linguistics or intellect is always future centred. It strives to catch up with the future even before it has said anything. Every word, every speech act is a hopeful attempt to control the course of the future even while it is stuck within the limits of the present and already

doomed to the past in its enunciation. Language's forward movement is both figurative and literal. We think of language as progressing from start to finish, left to right, ever forward across the page as though the inability to say everything in a single word must lead to an incessant movement somewhere till we reach the end of what we have to say taking up both time and space.

Art speaks to the future about the past through memory. Memory is the raw material for language and art. Ideally art is that place where all the linguistic notions of form meet with our personal histories; the public and the private co-existing in the work of art. Unfortunately, a memory is too internal, too personal for it to ever be successfully transported from one conscious individual to another. A memory is always of a particular moment of sensory perceptions which only you within the limits of your corporeal self as a being of such and such a dimension placed at a given physical point in space engendering a certain individualistic perception of the world aside from any psychic abnormalities or idiosyncrasies you might have that makes any artistic impulse so difficult to express successfully. Even in the phrase artistic impulse there exists a problem for us as it is all too possible to argue that the phrase is contradictory in the light of what has just been said; as though in the words artistic impulse we are saying exactly what the word expression signifies for Mr Zenner; does artistic impulse signify a mode of behaviour endemic to those we call artists or does it signify the thing which these so-called artists try to express, the vision. Let us, for the sake of clarity, agree to define artistic impulse as the wish of an individual (the artist) to transmit or fashion a meaning through a chosen art form.

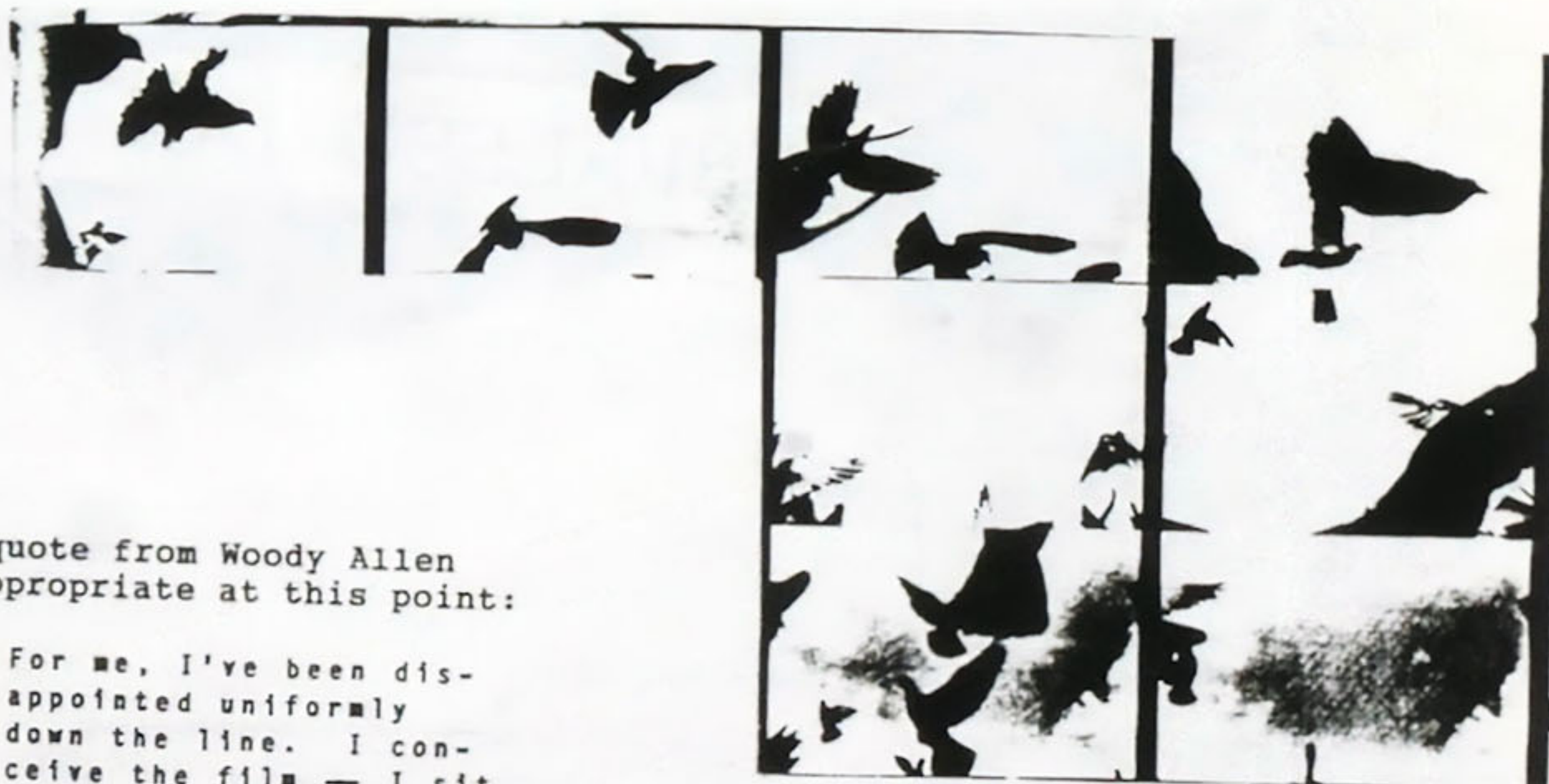
Given that the primal world of our memories is always our own possession and no one else's, then how could we claim to be expressing something which is based on our lived experiences and the memories of those lived experiences? Ultimately we have to accept the fact that we cannot simply because the past cannot be recreated or rather, repeated to the minutest detail except in our memory. In short, the task which art seeks to perform is to reconcile our primal selves with our linguistic selves in the process creating the great battleground on which the war of expression rages as our primal impulses strive for the discipline of a linguistic discourse.

A quote from Woody Allen is appropriate at this point:

For me, I've been disappointed uniformly down the line. I conceive the film — I sit home and write it — and, when I conceive it, it's brilliant. Everything is true Chekhov or Shakespeare: it's great! And then, you start work, and the truck with fresh compromises drives up every day. You can't get the actor you want, the set doesn't really look the way you envisioned it ... When you said in the script: "He comes in, hangs up his coat and kisses the girl", the guy's got to come in, walks across the room, take the coat off ... and suddenly, it's taking forever. It doesn't happen on the screen the way you conceive it. So, you keep changing and compromising. And, when the picture comes out, it's, like, sixty per cent — if you're lucky — of what you wanted to make. You don't get the hundred per cent. So, for me, they're all such disappointments. They're so far removed from all the great masterpieces I felt I was conceiving.

It is that inability to ever achieve the one hundred per cent of one's creative vision which fascinates every artist. No doubt the fact that art relies on media which of necessity abstract the memory or artistic vision to the confines of musical notes, or canvas and colours etc. makes it all too clear to us that the attempt at such a rendering of life or experience is all too unlikely to succeed, for the simple fact of the matter is that we are not looking at life but at a constructed artefact. Pure art only ever occurs in the artist's mind at the moment of inspiration when all is envisioned as a whole, when the 100 per cent is there. What we encounter in the galleries, the cinemas or printed page is but a silhouette of that 100 per cent experience.

Yet, there are moments when something approximating an epiphany or what we might call the absolute possession of a work occurs. Those moments when a poem brings about in our minds the sensations and moods of a lived experience, or of an imagined one, which signal to us a great artist at work; one whose technical virtuosity allows them to transcend the barrier of physical improbability; the chasm between the Primal and the Linguistic. It is for those moments which we as consumers and critics of art must search for and praise. It is for that degree of expression which we as artists must aspire to even if it be doomed to near impossibility.




II

Mr Zenner's discussion concentrates on the notion of expression in the arts. What, we may then ask, is being expressed? What sort of thing are we speaking of when in discussions about the artistic process we mention the word expression? Surely, if the idea of expression has any function in such discussions it is as a way of referring to the intention of the artist, their specific purpose in creating the work. Intention, be it a fallacy or not, is what the word expression refers to, in that the artist intended to express something in a work of art. What sort of thing could this act of intention be in aid of? Could it be meaning? Yes, it must. Meaning is the only hope an artist has of remaining admired beyond his/her earthly years. It is the one enduring quality which in tandem with time can reveal to us the masterpiece from the mediocre work. A work of art must be more than a physical compendium of parts. It must have meaning to make it significant beyond the artist's lifetime. Our task as artists is to express a meaning via the camera, the brush, the pen or the baton.

Here we find ourselves in a dilemma as Mr Zenner has pointed out to us that it is impossible to express something that is unique or particular to the artist. All inter-personal communication is trapped in the condition of being transmitted through a public forum known as language. How then do we create meanings while also expressing something in a way not possible to language?


One answer would be to accept the fact that we are never ever going to express something personal or unique in our works and so we may as well just get on with the task of doing what we do knowing

full well that we are leaving behind for good all auteurist assumptions about our works. Following this suggestion to its next step would reveal that because all possible meanings are limited by a public discourse (language) then so too are all the meanings in all works of art a part of art's ability to construct a particular meaning — an ability inherent in each of the art forms, be it painting, cinema or music.



This is a notion which Stanley Cavell writes about and if correct must shed some much needed light on the discussion, for if meaning is not the domain of the artist, then it must be the domain of the art form, thus the ability to read a certain film one way arises not out of an artist's enscripture of it into the work but because the possibility for that meaning to exist within the particular formal context of the said work of art is inherent in the art form itself. On a small scale this can be illustrated by our ability to read fade-ins and fade-outs as ellipses of time. Or, on a larger scale, the ability to interpret the meaning of a whole work: *PSYCHO* as a statement about the implications of cinematic voyeurism, is only possible as such things are part of the system or art form known as the cinema.

For us this means that all our cherished works of art are but contributions to the ever increasing stock of signs and statements which the cinema as a language is capable of. Whenever I make a film its significance lies not in the fact that its meaning is derived from me placing it there but from the fact that this work is another variation on a possible statement or array of statements which the cinema as a language system is composed of. My particular film, with its meaning, is worthwhile only because it serves to show another way in which meaning can exist within the confines of the cinematic language system. All films are important here for their instructive value as to how the system may create meanings, and since these meanings can be expressed within the cinematic language it is ridiculous to consider the role of the artist in putting that meaning there out of a need to express something as it does not matter in the long run who the artist of a work was — all that matters is that the system can contain these meanings and variations. It is not important that director x made a film a certain way and in the process constructed a meaning as sooner or later another director will direct a film that way and come up with the same meaning for the meaning is the end product of a specific directorial method and that directorial method (style) is itself a product of the system: it is the system which owns the films not the directors.



Alternatively, we may continue to work with some semblance of our auteurist hopes by acknowledging the lessons taught to us by Mr Zenner and by attempting to express our meanings not through any linguistic methods but by the possibilities available to us in our chosen art form. All the mise-en-scene elements at our disposal as well as narrational and temporal considerations must be utilized as a means of expressing a meaning. As language is part of the Linguistic half of our consciousness, then the above listed mise-en-scene elements belong to the Primal half and it is through these that we may have any hope of succeeding in expressing a meaning that is enduring.

In the previous paragraphs I spoke of the cinema as a system, a language with infinite avenues for the construction of meaning through the cinema's formal system. Let us use those formal systems — which resemble dreams and other wild imaginings — to speak through the language of cinema. I recall at this point that in the 50's, the Cahiers du Cinema critics spoke out against literary films in favour of those films/directors which used mise-en-scene as a language. This gave rise to the Auteur theory as a critical doctrine — a doctrine which the essay by Mr Zenner does all but bury. Still, if we must hold onto long cherished notions of being the authors of films then let us do precisely that by using the cinema as our primal language which does not require the spoken word to convey meaning but shades of light, gesture, timbre and grace; let these be our alphabet/vocabulary. Let us aim for the sublime.

I'll end this overlong piece with two extracts which I believe are worth bearing in mind as they eloquently portray different aspects of the expression debate. The first passage is something which Andrew Sarris uses to preface his "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962", that is, a small paragraph from Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* and the other an even smaller paragraph from Parker Tyler's *Magic and Myth of the Movies*:

I call these sketches shadowgraphs, partly by the designation to remind you at once that they derive from the darker side of life, partly because, like other shadowgraphs, they are not directly visible. When I take a shadowgraph in my hand, it makes no impression on me, and gives me no clear conception of it. Only when I hold it up opposite the wall, and now look not directly at it, but at that which appears on the wall, am I able to see it. So also with the picture I wish to show here, an inward picture that does not become perceptible until I see it through the external. This external is perhaps not quite unobtrusive, but, not until I look through it, do I discover that inner picture that I desire to show you, an inner picture too delicately drawn to be outwardly visible, woven as it is of the tenderest moods of the soul.

Extract two:

The function of art, however, is generally accepted as communication, not as inscrutable symbol, and there's the rub.... All art in the final analysis is to be subjected not only to standards of plastic beauty but also to criteria of relevance and intellectual clarity.


Long live the shadowgraphs!

NOTES

¹ Woody Allen interviewed by Alexander Walker in *Cinema Papers*, no. 58, July 1986, pp.19-23.

MICHAEL FILIPPIDIS

16/7/90



NEXT OPEN SCREENING

Tuesday, August 14, 1990.

Glasshouse Function Room
RMIT, Swanston St. City.

At 7:30 p.m. -

SIMON COOPER RETROSPECTIVE

To warm people up for the screening of Simon Cooper's epic film **A Distant Relation** at this year's Super-8 festival, we present a selection of some of the earlier films from this Canberra/Sydney film-maker.

Trouble in Paradise (1985, 20 mins)

The Big Parade (1986, 6 mins)

Auto-Portrait (1987, 15 mins)

I Walked With a Zombie (1987, 12 mins)

Shadow of a Doubt (1988, 8 mins)

and a special screening of a very early film

Like This For Years (1981, 13 mins -
unrestored version.)

At 8:45 p.m. -

OPEN SCREENING - BYO FILM.

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