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OCTOBER

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Hollis Frampton
A Special Issue

Barry Goldensohn	*Memoir of Hollis Frampton*
Hollis Frampton	*A Portfolio of Photographs*
	Letters from Framp 1958–1968
	Erotic Predicaments for Camera
Christopher Phillips	*Word Pictures: Frampton and Photography*
Bruce Jenkins	*The Red and The Green*
Peter Gidal	*Interview with Hollis Frampton*
Allen S. Weiss	*Frampton's Lemma, Zorn's Dilemma*
Brian Henderson	*Propositions for the Exploration of Frampton's* Magellan
Annette Michelson	*Frampton's Sieve*

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Cover Photo: Hollis Frampton. Poetic Justice. *1972.*

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Hollis Frampton
A Special Issue

Hollis Frampton, 1972. Photograph by Marion Faller.

Poesis/Mathesis

"There have been men who loved the future like a mistress, and the future mixed her breath into their breath and shook her hair about them, and hid them from the understanding of their times." Thus Yeats, of William Blake.

Hollis Frampton was such a man. It is the force and polyphonic resonance of his voice, the scale and vaulting energy of his multivalent enterprise, arrested one year ago in his forty-eighth year, to which, in this issue of our journal, we pay tribute.

What, in our times, worked to obscure Hollis Frampton from a proper understanding? First among other factors, his career as filmmaker. The conditions of independent filmmaking are, within the spectrum of artistic practice, the most drastic by far; the terms of that practice are the most stringent, the least conducive to amenity or reward. These terms and conditions Frampton sustained with a productive energy and with a grace that are exemplary. He once remarked that the rate of forced capitalization of the American filmmaker, wholly disjunct from that of the industrial West within which he produced, was rather that of Mao's China. And here, as testimony, is a passage from a letter written in response to the offer, from a major institution, of a retrospective exhibition of his film work, projected for 1973:

> Now, about honor; I have said that I am mindful, and appreciative of the honor to myself. But what about the honor of my art? I venture to suggest that a time may come when the whole history of art will become no more than a footnote to the history of film . . . or of whatever evolves from film. Already, in less than a century, film has produced great monuments of passionate intelligence. If we say that we honor such a nascent tradition, then we affirm our wish that it continue.
>
> But it cannot continue on love and honor alone. And this brings me to your ". . . no money is included at all . . ."
>
> I'll put it to you as a problem in fairness. I have made, let us say, so and so many films. That means that so and so many thousands of

> feet of rawstock [*sic*] have been expended, for which I *paid* the manufacturer. The processing lab was *paid*, by me, to develop the stuff, after it was exposed in a camera for which I *paid*. The lens grinder got *paid*. Then I edited the footage, on rewinds and a splicer for which I *paid*, incorporating leader and glue for which I also *paid*. The printing lab and the track lab were *paid* for their materials and services. You yourself, however meagerly, are being *paid* for trying to persuade me to show my work, to a *paying* public, for "love and honor." If it comes off, the projectionist will get *paid*. The guard at the door will be *paid*. Somebody or other *paid* for the paper on which your letter to me was written, and for the postage to forward it.
>
> That means that I, in my singular person, by making this work, have already generated wealth for scores of people. Multiply that by as many other working artists as you can think of. Ask yourself whether my lab, for instance, would print my work for "love and honor"; if I asked them, and they took my question seriously, I should expect to have it explained to me, ever so gently, that human beings expect compensation for their work. The reason is simply that it enables them to continue doing what they do.*

Frampton was well aware that within the institution in question—the inaugural, the prime conservator of film as artistic production in this country—the status of cinema, although long established, was peripheral, nonetheless, to a museum's defined function as the custodian of a pictorial and sculptural canon. And so the letter from which this exhortation is extracted proposes, in good faith and with scrupulous courtesy, reasonable terms in a tone of characteristically humorous modulation.

Within this present issue of tribute, the reader will, in fact, find precious little incitement to laughter other than that generously, posthumously offered us by Frampton himself. For it is, as time passes, borne in upon one that an unrelieved gravity of tone is the fresh, continuing, immoderate response to one's sense of immoderate loss. More simply put, we suffer the abrupt cancellation of an enterprise whose scale and multivalence stood in obstinate, reasoned defiance of dualities which, in our culture, are accorded the status of ontologically irresolvable antinomies.

*This letter, dated January 7, 1973, and addressed to Donald Richie, at that time curator of film at the Museum of Modern Art, responds to Richie's letter of December 13, 1972, setting forth the museum's offer of a complete retrospective during March of 1973. Frampton's request for payment of standard rental fees, formulated in contravention of the museum's established policy, was granted, thereby initiating a new level of expectation in the American filmmaker of independent persuasion. Richie, as a fellow filmmaker, was doubtless sympathetic to the position argued in this document.

Frampton was of a generation which worked to suspend the consecrated disjunction of theory from practice. One thinks of Judd, Morris, Smithson, Flavin, and of Carl Andre, the companion of his youth. All these, and others, produced in the 1960s—the time of their maturing—a corpus of theoretical literature in redefinition of the future prospects of their several arts. Frampton alone sustained this dual production during the following decades, as is evident in the book of essays, *Circles of Confusion*, published in 1983 by the Visual Studies Workshop Press. And this effort was in turn sustained by his concerted confusion of genres: the construction of the fable, the poetic fiction, as frame for theoretical articulation. The young man who discovered himself at Pound's side in St. Elizabeth's to be "no poet" was to recover, both for film and for theoretical discourse, the coordinates and dynamics of *fabula*.

The letters we now publish offer, of course, a vivacious chronicle of New York's intellectual ferment refracted through the complex of conceptual and practical predicaments of young Frampton, but they allow us to glimpse, as well, the origins and early elaborations of that large project which identifies Frampton as claimant in the lineage of both Pound and Joyce. The early sense of a serial organization of narrative instances derived from the attentive reading of Webern and from essays in photographic exhibition, undertaken in the early 1960s, are refined and fused within that project of enormous scale which generated the films made in his later years: the serial organization of filmic peripeteia subsumed under the central conceit of Magellan's circumnavigation of the world.

Frampton's rethinking of film's temporal plasticity, of the role of sound, of speech and of written text, his elaboration of generative programs and schemata, derived from his "spectatorial" relation to mathematics, are marshalled in the service of a project that will set forth the limits and parameters of filmic production as constructive of an epistemological model of consciousness. We must view its incompletion not as the inhibition of a utopian project, which it very well may have been, but rather as testimony to that consistent, strenuously seminal role of Frampton as mediator in the difficult and delicate negotiation of a marriage of Poesis and Mathesis, a union as scandalous and difficult in our culture as that of Heaven and Hell.

ANNETTE MICHELSON

Memoir of Hollis Frampton

BARRY GOLDENSOHN

I first met Hollis in Oberlin in 1954. Ray Oliver was, as a student, obsessed with IQ and thought that if he introduced his two "freak" friends the sparks would fly. The only sparks that I remember came from Hollis; at eighteen he was already a brilliant monologist. I, a year younger, a true sophomore, was awed. We sat by the immense plate glass windows of the new coffee shop and talked about how we would translate the last word of the first line of Rilke's "Herbsttag": "Herr, es ist Zeit, der Sommer war sehr gross." Hollis argued for "fat" and I thought it clever (it is, very!) but too partial and argued for the less interesting "gross," which had not become a vogue word in 1954, and was equally wrongheaded. Ray sat mostly silent, or, being the better linguist, sputtered at our obtuse willfulness.

This discussion established us as two swift, learned, rare souls, baby modernists, who could quote long passages of Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Yeats, and Rilke, and like the modernists we both hated the word *modern*. Hollis showed me a few paragraphs of a Joycean fragment that he had started, in which he made some punning reference to Riemann and Boyali (like Joyce's "jung and freudened"—it was some such schoolboy stuff) and I responded with a comment about the non-Euclidean nature of the universe. "Ah, you are the first one [rare soul!] to catch that." I brought him back to my room at the edge of town and showed him my Eliotic poetry ("the leopard lifts his spotty leg/and pisses . . ." and Ray remembers something with "fetal villi" in it). This was enough to cement a friendship.

Hollis was living at home with his father, who worked in a chemical plant, and his mother, who was very unpredictable. He fell back on being a classics major at Western Reserve after having lost his National Scholarship to Harvard because he didn't graduate from Andover. Andover may have cured him of the charm of being "the scholarship boy" in that set. He flunked the history course required for graduation on a bet that he could pass the final exam without opening the textbook. When I asked him about this, he said that he thought that he knew enough history from literature and found out he didn't. Hollis was surrounded by legend. I inherited the Andover stories from Ray about the

young genius holding the jocks at bay with his wit, his stentorian voice, and brilliant vituperation as they sang "Deck the walls with balls of Holly." He was a protégé of Dudley Fitts, who inscribed his Greek Prize volume (I think it was the Loeb Archilochos[1]): "To Hollis, a black sheep but a good one." It may just be that Archilochos fits my picture of Hollis in those years, his earthy and sarcastic temper, and his irreverence. And yet the overwhelming sense of him was that of authority. He was the master of an authoritative tone of voice, knew what he knew, and kept the conversation to his own script.

Part of the Andover legend was that Hollis read Kant with the speed of a novel. When I, full of innocence and awe, passed this legend along to Bill Kennick, with whom I was working on Kant, he said, "No one reads Kant fast." Given my own experience, that statement seemed correct, but I had a great need for myth. Years later I remember talking with Hollis about reading Proust or Dickens (I forget which) and he said, "I never had time for that. I was always a painfully slow reader." I assume that most of the legends surrounding Hollis were the result of awe at his formidable and conspicuous intelligence, and not of his own making—his was only the license of the master raconteur who heightens conflict, compresses timing, simplifies character, but does not glorify himself. That is the device of the bore, and Hollis was never boring.

He had the habit, in conversation, of addressing one as whatever it was that came to term for him to denounce at the moment: an Edwardian fop, a pre-Raphaelite sentimentalist, a Victorian bowdlerizer, a Stalinist thug (he professed great admiration for Trotsky's prose). Refreshingly, however, you could as easily be a fellow conspirator against the fools and devils. In either case the diatribe would go like a buffalo stampede. He often conceived of himself as our Pound and hammered into us the latest pronouncements of the master. The most dictatorial manner was aimed at a loose circle of dazzled acquaintances and girlfriends. "You like 'Tintern Abbey'! Wordsworth was a sheep who popularized the most vulgar religion of his day," *etc.* He generally operated at top volume, was scathing and rude, and would take off savagely after anything he regarded as silly or wrong. One had to protect the soft, gentle, and unsuspecting by maneuvering him gently around them, a half tame bear who might growl, bite, terrify. He was hardly to be trusted with professors (whom he might denounce as fools—my own relations with them were bad enough) or, I thought, with parents. I was wrong. He was his most charming with my parents and my mother-in-law, all of whom came to love him. Another dimension of Hollis's conversation was very much like the pleasure of music or mathematics—a pure pleasure in verbal formulation itself, a delight in pattern

1. R. W. Odlin remembers it as the Lamprière, *Biblioteca Classica.* I sent a draft of this memoir to Odlin in Washington, for fact-checking, and received in reply a series of generous responses that reveal sides of Frampton that were hidden from me, kept hidden from me, and some that I had forgotten.

that was reflexive and self-contained. His world often seemed purely verbal, rarely touching or struggling to fit the folds of the terrain, leaving me feeling like a topographer listening to a topologist, although we were both easily detachable cerebral young men losing the track, the beat, too late, too far to the right or left.

By the fall of '55 Hollis was a regular weekend visitor to Oberlin. One afternoon the former lover of my girlfriend showed up for a visit from the University of Illinois, and as Hollis and I walked into the living room of the co-op dorm we found her sitting on his lap. Ever extravagant, he grabbed me by the shoulders, turned me around, and rushed me out to his Studebaker convertible. We had all discussed this visit endlessly, and it was agreed that "it meant nothing," yet he made a great deal of noise and drove the car, standing up, all around the sleepy little town, roaring at dawdling cars, "Get a horse, motherfucker!" and making a spectacle of himself to divert me. I was, after all, in the role of the lovelorn, and it was an obligation of his vision of gallantry to rescue me.

It was not hard for him to make a spectacle of himself, because his appearance was startling: his light brown hair was cut into a flat-topped crew-cut and his ears poked straight out from his head, making it (as Ray Oliver said) look like a Greek krater. His bulging eyes were parti-colored, brown and blue, and the stare that accompanied pronouncements of "romantic nonsense" would fluster the faint at heart. His mouth was very large, and he could bury his entire fist in it. The effect of these disproportionate features was not at all unpleasant or grotesque, though it *was* strange. His voice was equally disproportionate, and could carry with ease from the steps of the theater to startle me in the front of a bookstore across the town square.

While he loved my wife, he warned me, in the interest of male solidarity, against marrying her. "Galileo notwithstanding, heavier objects go downhill faster than light ones." I was too amused to be angry.

Hollis worked part-time in the meat department of a supermarket, and since my wife and I were chronically broke he would come down for weekends with enormous steaks. It seemed like our only hearty eating that year. For our wedding present he gave us a painting, at least six by eight, which he called "Ebb Tide." It was a collection of crab and lobster parts, painted, and set at great distances from one another, on untreated burlap. It looked very much in place in our sparse apartment, with our orange-crate bookcases, and the madras-draped mattresses that served as couches. We had no chairs, just a few sprung green cushions lifted from a dead couch in the dump. This was a married student's apartment in Oberlin—a cluster of rooms at the head of an open staircase, with separate cots in separate rooms for the newlyweds. (We remedied that.)

The painting embarrassed Hollis after a few years, and he was probably relieved when we lost it in moving. I remember talk of his wanting to take it

back and retouch the faded colors, and that is how it may have left our hands, but I'm not sure. That would have been in keeping with his sense, even then, of building an oeuvre that met his exacting standards. He was furious after reading about the conservation problems that resulted from Picasso's use of poor materials.

At Oberlin, Hollis was involved in two projects that my wife Lorrie and I were caught up in. As an arrogant joke we stacked a meeting of the nondenominational Y and took over the little magazine they published. Our interest lasted for only one issue, after which we returned it to its rightful owners, but we printed a brilliant parody of Hopkins by Hollis, so good that I remember most of it after twenty-eight years. (I have not seen a copy since that year.)

> No, worse there is none, for him who heard (Hell!) Hop-
> kins at his bay, bray, Force I must be brief
> Or in his coil, toil, bitched beyond belief.
> Noom, boom, goom, toom, and bloody pate goes pop!

(I have forgotten the second quatrain of the octave. It would be unlike Hollis to "not write" a sonnet.)

> Let hiccup-hop-skip-jumpkin bumpkins bruise
> Verse, which on rot-feet by jerk-work scans.
> Move I'll not, lurch-leg, in bold botch-bard's shoes.
> Back to the sane tongue used before this man's
> Made Constipation first an English Muse
> And taught our numbers his St. Vitus dance.

I stopped Professor Andrew Bongiorno (who taught seventeenth-century poetry without ever mentioning the "die" pun, and looked like a Bellini doge) as he was walking across the campus the day the magazine came out, and showed him the poem. I did it to provoke him, thinking the poem would offend what I took to be his humorless piety, but he tapped his high forehead with his thin, delicate fingers and commented that the poem was wonderfully clever. I suppose I didn't gauge the true depths of his conservative tastes, and that to him, too, Hopkins would be outré.

The other project was a weekly literary radio program that I ran for the college station. Hollis was Buck Mulligan in a dramatization of the Nighttown episode from *Ulysses* (a few years before it was done off-Broadway with Zero Mostel). Ray Oliver had brought along a girl who seemed very young and innocent, so we had her play the prostitute parts: "Trinity medicals, all prick and no pence," in a high, flat, Midwestern voice. Hollis played one of the voices in *Fragment of an Agon* that we did to the accompaniment of a metronome. For one program, with no announcement other than "Hollis Frampton reading Homer," he launched into a reading of "*Iliados, Alpha . . .*," in Greek, an exercise in driving away your audience with relentless dedication—an experience that he

thought, later, helped him through the response to his first films with college audiences. For another program Hollis read from the *Cantos*: the "condom full of black beetles" kept the radio station telephone busy for the rest of the night. It was 1956, a considerably more prudish time than now, and it seemed that we had an audience that cared about something or other.

In the spring of '57 Pound invited Hollis to join the daily circle at St. Elizabeth's. They had corresponded during the year, and all that I remember about the discussions leading up to the decision to quit Western Reserve and go was that it sounded like a hell of a lot more interesting alternative than college. As a teacher, Pound was probably more important to us as a provider of reading lists and a definer of taste. The decision to quit college seems now in keeping with the way Hollis left Andover and with his instinctively anti-institutional view of the life of an artist. He seemed exempt from the more conventional rules that governed my life. He also said that he had another reason for leaving home: his mother, who often had prophetic dreams, told him that she had dreamed that she killed him.

His father sent him off with the advice, "Watch out for women who wash too much and remember, debt is a poor man's only luxury." We loved the Audenish ring of that.

My function became that of sending Hollis occasional telegrams from Ohio, killing off the older members of his family so that he could get off from work, return home, and see his friends. He graduated from the ticket booth to running the lights and sound effects at a vaudeville-burlesque house (a cap-pistol for Ann *Bang-Bang* Arbor) and came back with all of the comic routines down pat. For years, until he married Marcia, he was the source of pat, bawdy jokes told in that tired, dry vaudeville manner as if aimed at an audience who had heard them countless times before.

It is hard to tell what direct influence the time in the Pound circle had on Hollis, since he was such a fully formed protégé by the time he got there. His life stories got a bit more Poundian; for instance, the one about his attempt to rescue an innocent young performer from the clutches of his boss, Bernie Lust (!), which sounded suspiciously like the story of Pound at Wabash College. Until Hollis got settled in his job, Pound kept him supplied with jars of food from the hospital kitchen. On his visits back to Ohio he was full of talk of conspiracies engaged in by the establishment against the truth-seeking avant-garde. "Why was the Wyndham Lewis collection used to sandbag the roof of the British Museum during the Blitz?" And the answer pointed toward a conspiracy against the fearless truth. The version that I received of matters like this may have been defanged for my benefit, but I doubt it,[2] although I was particu-

2. Odlin notes of this clause (25 October 1984): "Alas, this is a mistaken impression. The evidence is far too extensive to ignore. But I think it no more represented the true HF than it did me; it was a virus picked up in the Pound circle, although—as David Gordon insists—Pound himself was then half-way between the viciousness of his rhetorical habits and the contrition

larly insensitive to antisemitism in the '50s. I remember him, much later, remarking on Pound's recantation of antisemitism in the Ginsberg interview in the *Evergreen Review* ("that suburban prejudice") with admiration for the precision of the phrase and the kind of sympathy one reserves for the mad. And then, wicked glee. He also came back with remarkable information about the *Cantos*. Till, the prisoner in the *Pisan Cantos*, was the last in line in a gang rape by a dozen men of an Italian girl, the only black, and the only one executed. And the father of Emmett Till, the young black boy from Chicago lynched in Mississippi in the '50s.

In the fall and winter of '57 we got letters full of projects for poems, books of poems, and some full-scale literary manifestoes. (During this time Hollis was mailing out the carbons and keeping the originals.) One of the poems was to be called "Saint Venus Eve," playing on the Loeb translator's version of the *Pervigilium Veneris* ("The Eve of St. Venus"). Years later I used it—after talking to Hollis, who had no further use for it—as the title of my first book of poems. I never saw any of the poems that were to make up Hollis's books (to be published in Venice by master craftsmen), and I doubt that he ever finished any of them to his satisfaction.[3] As a very bright and very cerebral young man, his critical standards were far too advanced for his ability as an artist, and the effects must have been paralyzing—as they were for me. I don't think he ever fully trusted, as a young man, that necessarily more intuitive thing that went into the making of art. He was always critical, conscious, and deliberate. Even drunken conversation seemed rehearsed. And there was plenty of drunken conversation.

He moved to New York City late in the winter of '58, at roughly the same time that we did, and we looked for a while for either a loft or an apartment to share, but never found anything large enough or cheap enough. (We had an infant son and another child on the way and needed lots of room.) Hollis left behind an abortive affair with an actress in Washington—she ran off with a musician—and planned a verse satire called "Thespia and the Dodecacophonist." We worked across the street from one another, on West 8th—I at the

---

which overcame him in later years, 'a man in the process of changing his mind.'"

3. Odlin writes: "Gordon reports of a collection HF showed in 1956 that it was sensitive, even brilliant discipleship of Pound of 1917, of the *Lustra* period, but of course forty years too late to matter. One piece survives (that I know of) from that *Hapax Legomena* proposed in 1957:

SNAPSHOT
This suburban infanta, who eschews
  Underwear, confides from a sofa
A stream of potencies *in camera*,
  Unaware that the carnal retina
Brings to focus her chief virtue.

The conceit is photographic, but the optics are poorly understood. That the clever rhymes domesticate this piece of hostile prurience seems a characteristic Frampton achievement from those years—good nasty student wit."

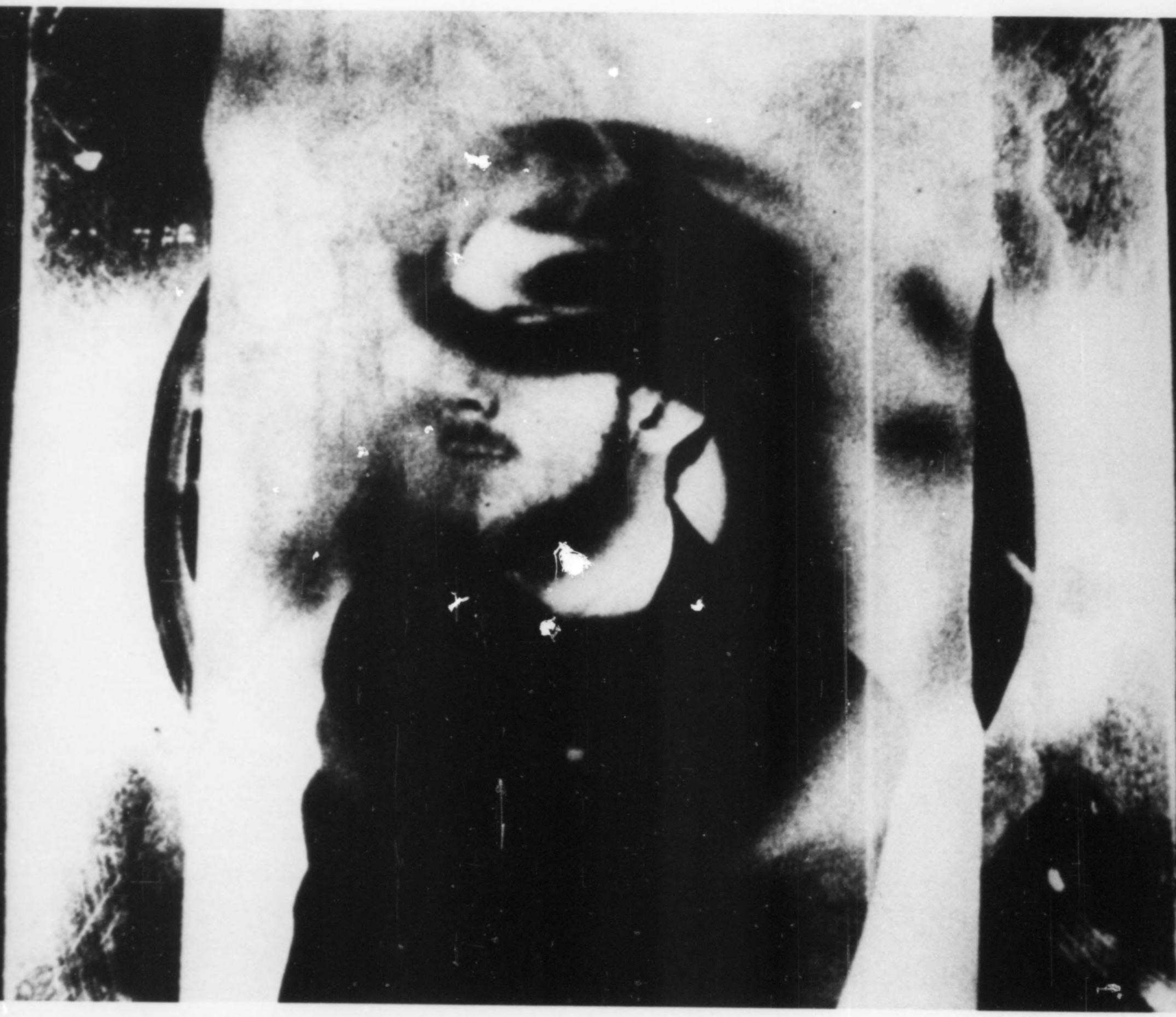
American Youth Hostels and he at Anton's Renaissance Print Shop—and we saw each other every other day. This was a particularly hard time for Hollis—he wasn't doing much of his own work and was very lonely. I, at least, had a family and graduate school plans for the following fall. He spent long nights at our place drinking beer and making plans for all of us. I recall him as more dogmatic and bullying than I had ever known him to be, declamatory and unhappy, and it was often hard to be with him. It seems now in retrospect that his relationship with Pound was a source of great strain in keeping his world coherent: on the one hand, fascination, charisma, the flattery of Pound's attentions, and, on the other, doctrines that had less and less correspondence with his life. I remember his making a great, admiring, noisy fuss over the front page photograph in the *Times* of Pound on his release from St. Elizabeth's, with his Confucian scarf and Fascist salute; he admired the bravado and then fell into a long, uncharacteristic silence, glum and thoughtful. I kept my mouth shut.

While he was in Washington he showed a bunch of my poems to Pound, who actually praised one. I was thrilled, but it was not long before I realized that the poem was terrible—constipated, would-be acid Gautier stanzas, modeled actually on Eliot. Hollis knew I was embarrassed by the poem, and as a kindness, many years later, gave me back his only copy of it to destroy. It had been neatly retyped on his fancy office Siemag for Pound—much neater than the sloppy thing I sent him—retyped in two colors, with liberal use of the red ribbon for proper nouns!

From '59 to '63, when I moved from Wisconsin to Chicago; Kent, Ohio; and California, I saw Hollis only on rare trips to New York and our correspondence was very spotty. During this time he gave up poetry and started making photographs. I think that Pound had become too dominating and unmanageable as a master, as Weston was later to be. The first photos he showed me were of his cat. They did not seem very remarkable. We spoke a lot about how we wasted a good part of our twenties not knowing how to work, how to find our own work. I think that we expected things to be too easy—as easy as conversation and schoolwork. In order to learn to work, we had to rid ourselves of a lot of arrogance. Too much was made of our being clever children, and it took us a long time to stop being merely clever. Excessive ingenuity remained the bête noir.

I spent the summer of '64 in New York City, and we saw a great deal of Hollis then. One night we met in an Italian bar and seafood place in Chinatown, where Hollis insisted that Lorrie and I buy cuttlefish,[4] the house specialty, that seemed like cold, oily rubber bands saturated in garlic, which we ate as an act of faith in his expertise. Hollis convulsed us with the story of the

4. See Frampton's notes to ADSVMVS ABSVMVS, III, Cuttlefish. "The flesh of the genius is more savory, more pensive, less yielding to the teeth, than that of other cephalopods, who invite being eaten carelessly with quick flashing bites."



Hollis Frampton. nostalgia. *1971.*

removal of his kidney and the cure of his chronic endocarditis: the terrifying diameters of the cystoscopes and proctoscopes, the urethral ravages, the brilliant deductions of his doctor at Roosevelt Hospital that it was endocarditis that moved down the renal artery and destroyed the kidney. He made the whole grim business sound hilarious. We kept falling off our bar stools at the narrative of the terrible examinations by the benign sadists—"This shouldn't hurt at all"—the whole thing draped in an atmosphere out of Edward Gorey. The missing kidney didn't affect his drinking much and I thought for awhile that he was trying to kill himself. He held his liquor remarkably well, and far from slurring his speech, it only made him more voluble and articulate. The stories continued throughout the night until finally Lorrie and I walked him to the subway station. He held us there for over an hour (I was nearly asleep on my feet), telling us about the samurai swordsmen in *Hari Kari* and *The Seven Samurai*, the dying masters of the dying art, the virtuosi against the defeat, both shot down by the new order that had guns, a degraded faith in life, and lacked the pure commitment to art. He demonstrated the moves with a light tripod he was carrying, as the morning rush-hour crowds steered around his swashbuckling street theater at the Kings Highway Station. Cheerfully drunk at 7 AM, the more stares he got from passersby, the more manic and loud he became. (He outgrew this side of his character later than most because he did it so well.) This time, as so often, the show was loaded with personal symbolism: the artist against the machine of the new disorder, picking off the bad guys one by one till he falls, a martyr to art.

I had got a 35 mm camera that summer, and Hollis undertook to instruct me. Weston and Adams were the chief guides, and I was introduced to the ideology of the big camera and the cold, cobait black print. His own work had become very interesting to me by then, and the prints that he showed me were built around one dominating image, very bold, very influenced by Weston, but urban and unforgettable. When we got back to California, I started a gallery at Peninsula School in Menlo Park and invited Hollis to share the opening show with Ansel Adams. He refused, citing Brancusi's refusal to share a show with Rodin: "Little trees don't grow in the shade of big trees." He had, instead, a solo show later in the year. For the gallery selection committee Hollis sent the prints that I had seen the previous summer, but the show itself had a lot of new work, very fussy images toned nearly purple. He was moving away from the power of his earlier Weston-like images, or the boldness and concentration that makes his films visually unforgettable.

After we moved to Vermont in '65, we saw Hollis more regularly at his loft on Walker Street, which he kept stark, bare, and clean as an operating room.[5] The dominating piece of furniture was a ping-pong table, at which he

5. A friend reported that she stopped by as Hollis had begun countersinking all the nails in the floor. But he then calculated the number of nails per square foot for the entire loft, and the time it took to do each one, discovered it was over 1,200 hours of work and abandoned the project.

practiced what he called his gray totalitarian game, returning everything and letting his opponent make the mistakes. In the next few years I arranged a few photography shows for him at the Goddard gallery, and a few showings of his early films. He came close to getting a job there, and he told me that in his interview with the president, Tim Pitkin, he was asked whether he was still connected to Pound's right-wing politics. He answered that he moved from there to marriage to a Maoist. He would have gotten the job if it had opened up, but Roy Levin, who thought he might leave, decided to stay at the college. During these years in the mid-'60s Hollis started mounting his photographs as doublets (a plate of spaghetti decaying into rich and strange colors), then triplets, and then, he would say laughing, the next step was going to be a series of images on film projected rapidly through a lens onto a screen. Of course it was; in those years he started making his first films. They were based on static photographic images: a series of faces, a lemon around which a camera rotated. *Zorns Lemma* began as a projected photography show that would run through the alphabet: he had 35 mm slides of store signs and graffiti, but he went back and shot them all on film. He had finally discovered his own project after discipleship to two overdemanding masters, Pound and Weston, whose work he felt he could neither transcend nor surpass.

One night we were standing at the window of his loft looking at the cobblestones on Walker Street, wet after rain, and jewellike under the streetlights. A car drove over them down the length of the street and he turned to me and said, "That's what I'm interested in—motion."

Hollis Frampton:
A Portfolio of Photographs

I have selected a fragment of text from Hollis's film *nostalgia* as his own introduction to this portfolio. I will, therefore, limit my own comments to a few details. These black and white photographs, which are being published for the first time, are in the collection of Barry Goldensohn. Prints used for reproduction were made by Biff Henrich from Hollis's original 2¼" negatives. They conform exactly to the cropping of the originals, which are 7½ × 9½".

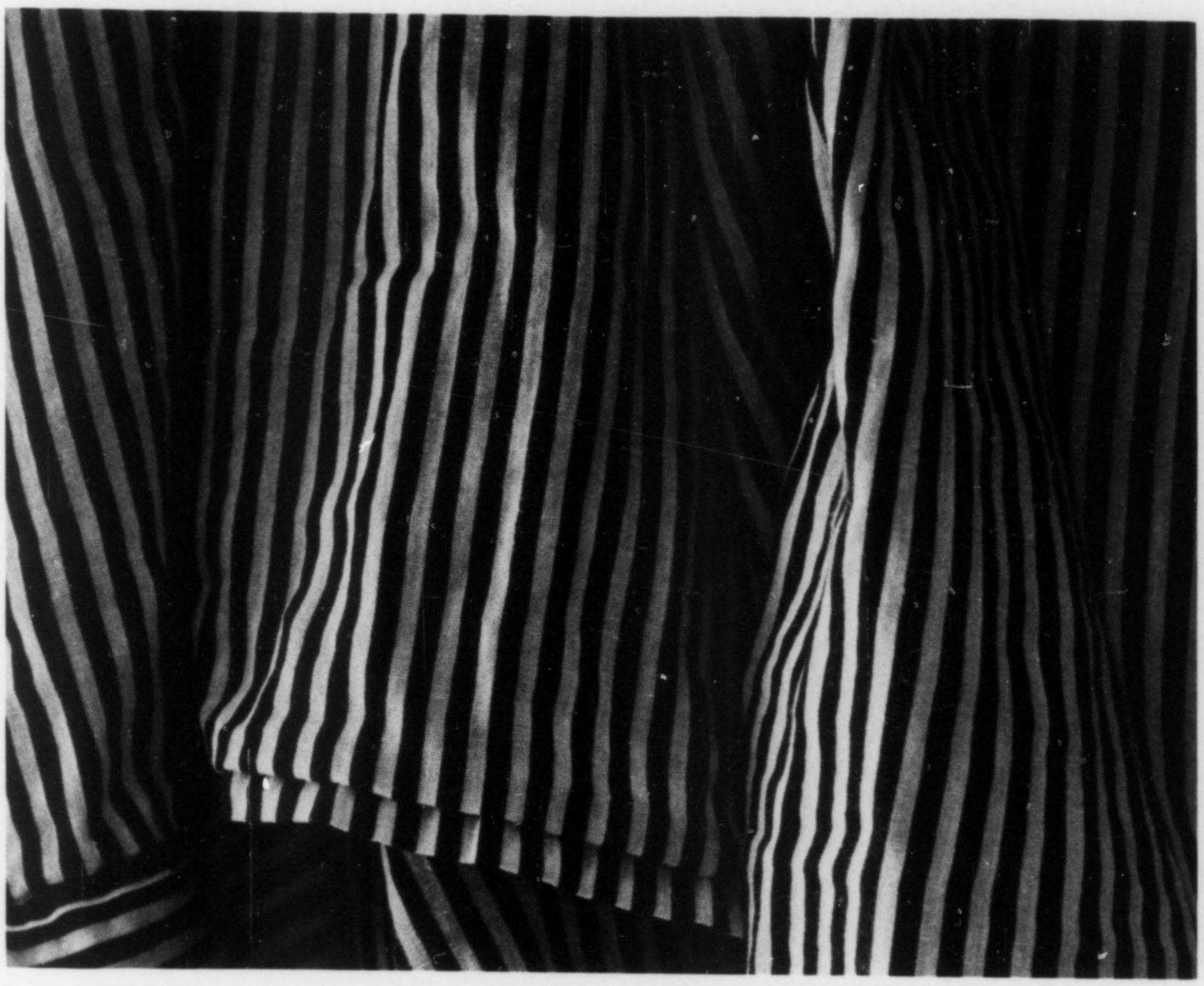
MARION FALLER
Buffalo, 1984

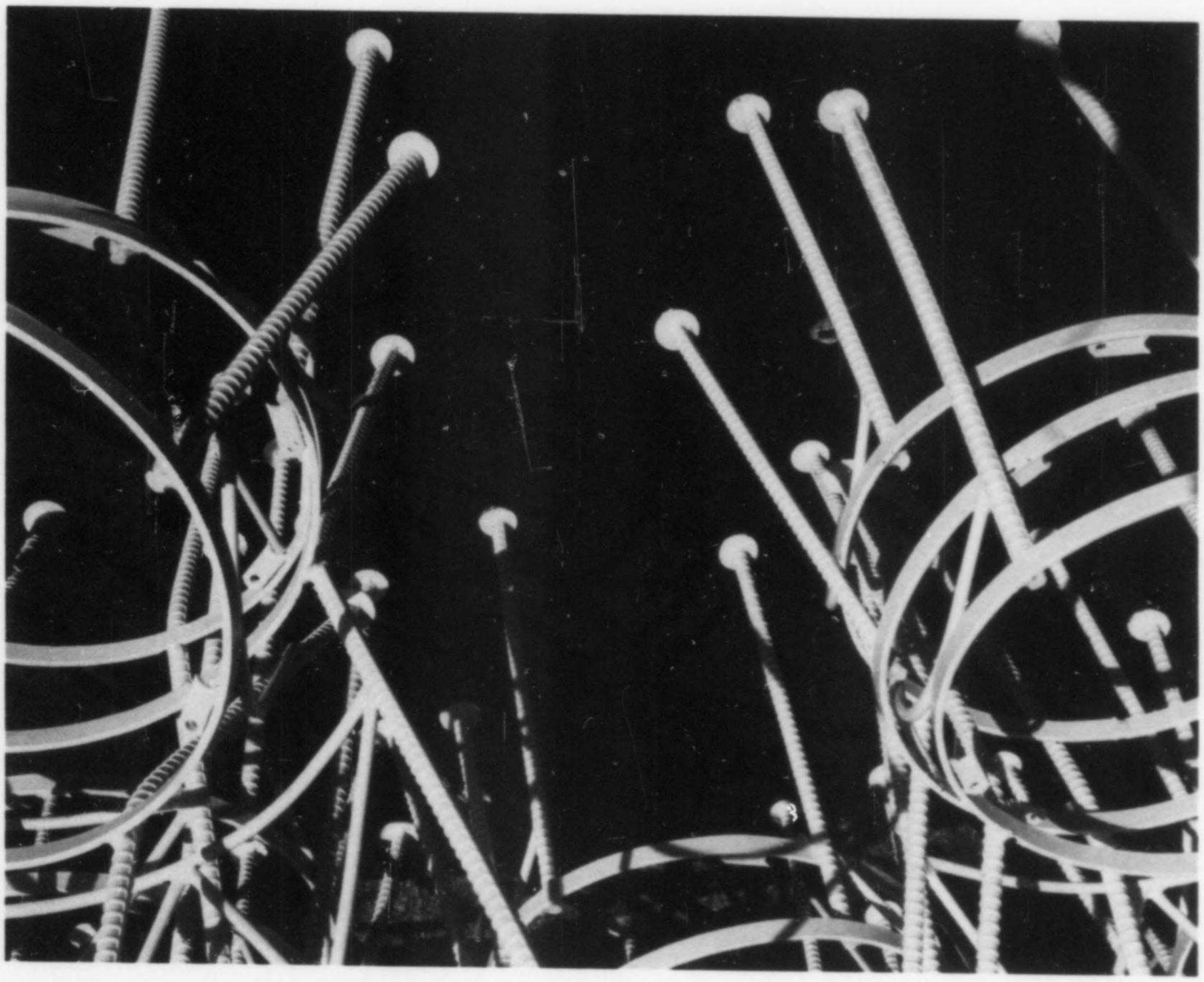
In 1961, for six or eight months, I lived in a borrowed loft on Bond Street, near the Bowery.

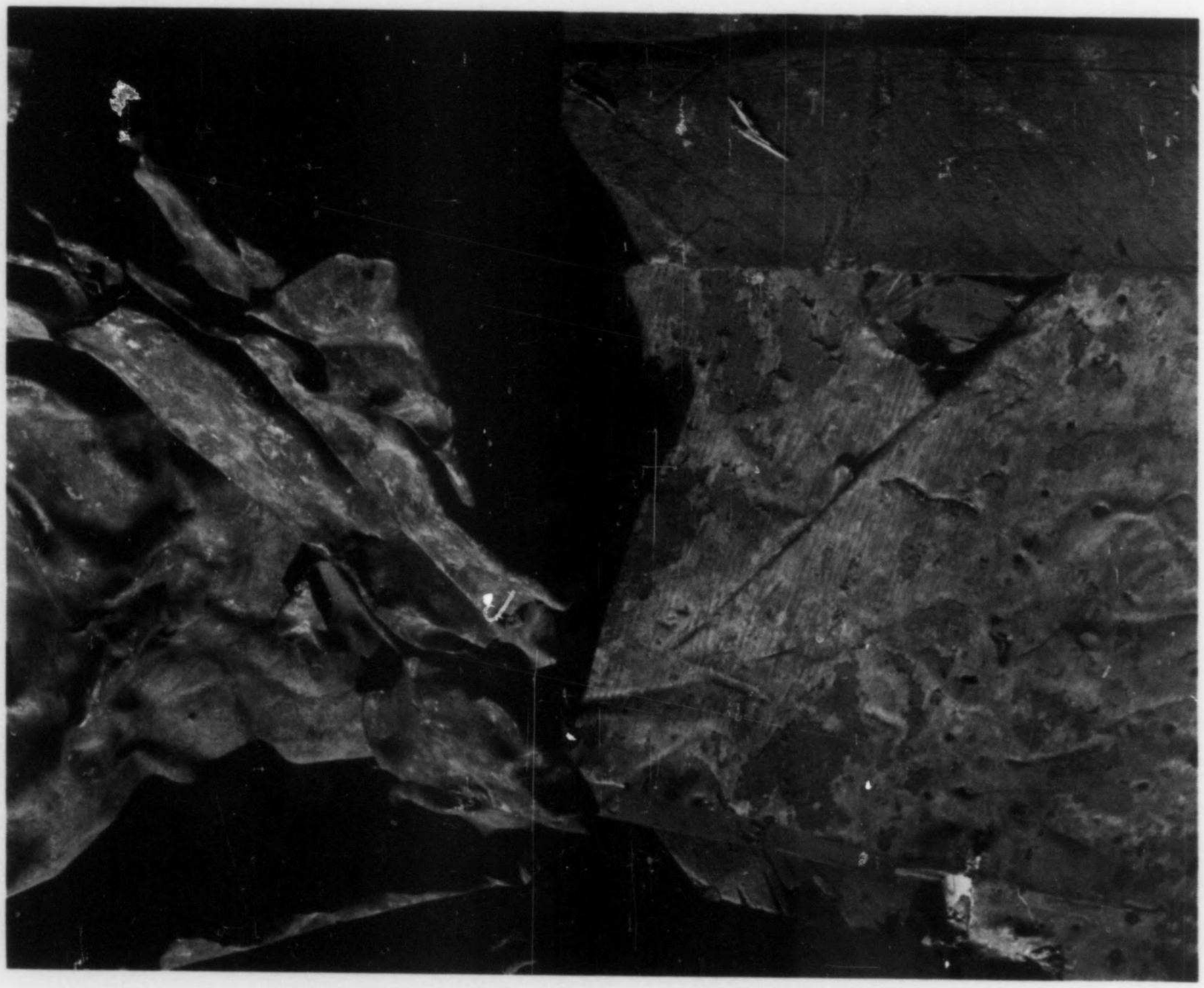
A young painter, who lived on the floor above me, wanted to be an Old Master. He talked a great deal about gums and varnishes; he was on his way to impastoes of record thickness.

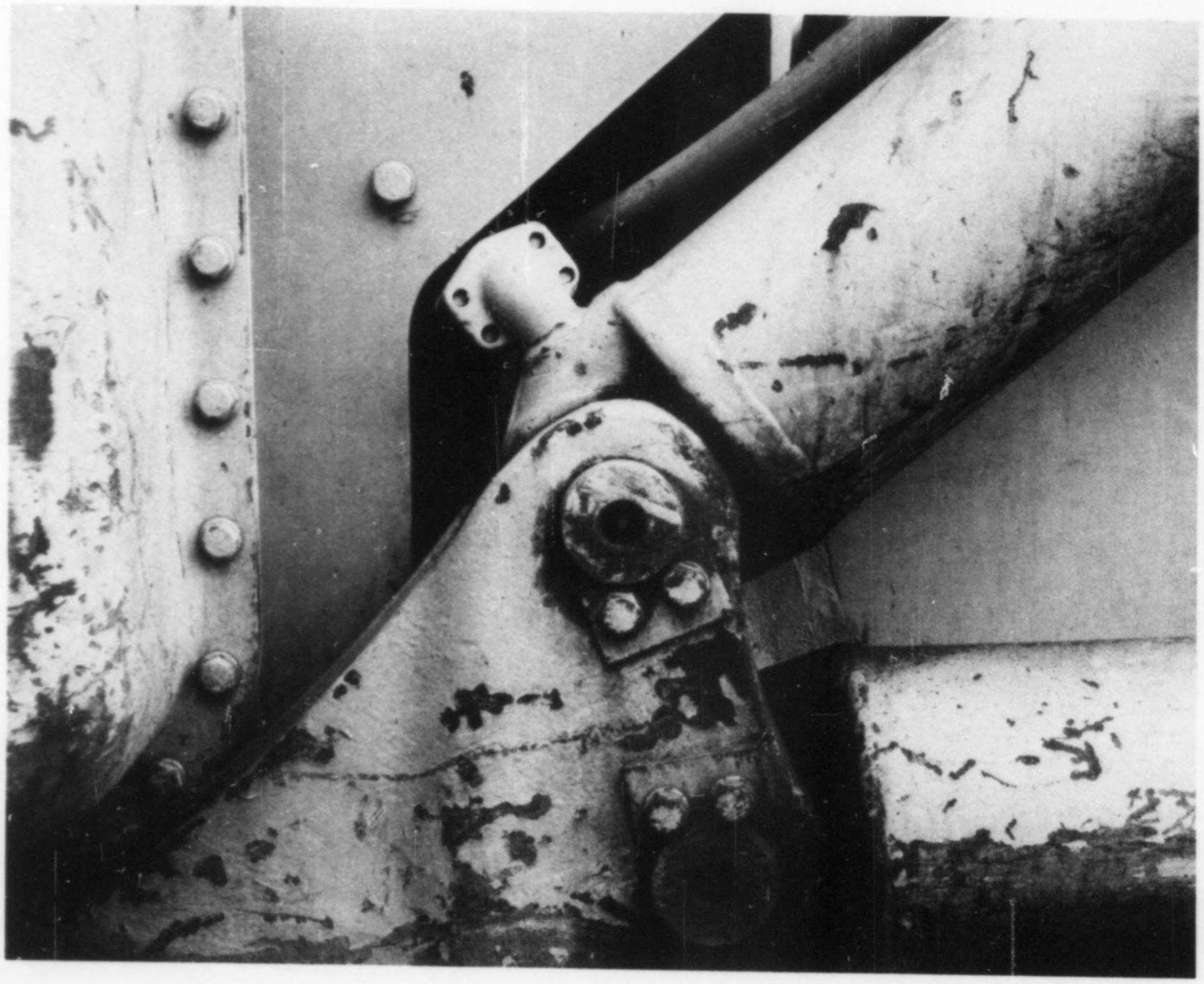
The spring of that year was sunny, and I spent a month photographing junk and rubble, in imitation of action painting. My neighbor saw my new work, and he was not especially pleased. . . .

HOLLIS FRAMPTON
New York City, 1971









Letters from Framp 1958–1968

The following letters represent a small selection of those written by Frampton to Reno Odlin, collected and edited by Odlin for publication as a book. We have not attempted to preserve the typographic peculiarities of the originals as Odlin's version will do. We have, however, retained Frampton's very deliberate oddities of spelling, abbreviation, and punctuation. Frampton often employs German rather than Latin abbreviations: d.h., das heisst (=viz.); z.B., zum Beispiel (=e.g.). Minor stylistic inconsistencies, such as the use of single and double quotation marks, have been made consistent as far as possible. Frampton added emphasis with italic type, single and double underlining, and upper case letters. We have retained his use of upper case; all other emphases are indicated by italics. Where portions of letters are omitted, three ellipsis points are placed in square brackets. An asterisk at the end of a letter indicates that Odlin has added a note explaining certain references. These notes begin on page 53.

13 February 1958

[. . .] CONjunkshn in *PROLEGOMENA* to be 1/ Canonist, prezzo giusto Swabe-quotes 2) Douglas, #where# the Doug/ites have got to in MCMLVIII or whaar they ain't 3) *GESELLLLL*, that is S. Geselll the main spring as per caps italic'd 4) if anything can be drug out, *summary* of akshl accomp/s of the Nazosialisten, fascio mebbe there is or waz something in Toikey [. . .]

does anybody know a millionaire?? Framp can live damn well a full year, cum woman, cum studiO

food, pay rent, pay postage, buy a few bks NECessary
NO desire for luxuria but simple leisure for

$2,000 (after taxes) i.e. Two Thousand bucks buys my best efforts 18 hours or so per day for a year. at the end of wh/ time, with nothing of interest to show, or with less than a HEAP of the steel-engraved & dynamitic etc.

he wd/ *gladly* hang himself. (ie. Frampton) or split it down: $500 = 3 months, $1000 for halfyear AAAanything (short, perhaps, of Australian-style circumcision) to git out of this incessant grubbing. [. . .]

early evening trying to stabilize design or ground-plan of *PROLEGOM-*

ENA. Curiously the ancillary, even esoteric portions I cd/ do in a month, zB "higher math" (if that git INcludit) & even neums, wch wl/ demand some fairly delicate & precise prose expozishn if anyone is to GIT wot I mean

Homer sec/n awaits TIME & letz say *1* book // Psappha ditto & 2 more bks, one of them the same one.

"Epistemology" some note-taking ALL shorts of documentation for

VERTICALISM

[. . .]*

17 May 1958

[. . .] The excernment of Schönberg was core of what I sent yu. The remark abt/ Kafka::Moses & Aaron cd go under Ari's abt a beginning, middle, & end. There is also (elsewhere): "You respect Pergolesi; I *love* Pergolesi" . . . as ftnote to remarks on Trichinosis, K'ung or Prop/ as they are englishd. Children are not born of respect. [. . .]

HAPAX L/ as it stands prob. won't do. Whether it can be *made* to do is another hoss of choler. The venus is mostly mapped now. Notes accumulate for PROLEG, a n d for the posthumous 4tet with a battery of extry soloists; but no time to set in order YET & Ive bn here more than two months. Frobenius has advanced about 1/4 part of a millimetre. There are tenuities towards a *commedia dell' arte*, with each of the 7 stock types skewed into contemporary satiric usefulness; but thatz pretty fuzzy. I have now a beard, an oboe, a permanent address. [. . .]*

Letter to a Choreographer (20 August 1958)

Dear Miss K---:

Your statement that we have had no useful writing on the dance in this century is correct. Criticism is *after* the fact. Have we had any choreography in which the most intelligent could interest themselves?

There is simply "bad dance," everywhere uniform. Will you see that as a matter of "technique," or "merely technique"?

The epithet "modern" in Modern Dance is a dead giveaway. For instance, we have seen it attached to science, sic: Modern Science. It is nearly a signal that the noun following has shifted its meaning, and now denotes something filthy.

Let me suggest to you that there may be persons who find Martha Graham's gesturings ill-mannered.

Choreography *might* become an art as permanent as literature. There is even a notation.

I have never said the content of any dance is of a verbal order; I do not suggest that choreographic syntax and accidence be modeled on prose. But I fail to see why you shouldn't work toward an art as rigorous as Flaubert's.

Cross current: if Schopenhauer's dictum is of any account, one might aim

for the estate of Bach, who uses NO EXPEDIENT MEANS. Bach, any masterwork, is the NORM, as the bullseye is the norm in archery.

Music requires that whatever is superimposed shall neither corrupt nor misconstrue it. Choreographer's job = impart to the final entelechy the same tautness and coherence Stravinsky (e.g.) would have in the music alone. [. . .]

And now Stravinsky, with CANTICUM SACRUM, has ended the 12-tone racket once and for all, by sorting out what is valid.

I am aiming at this: dance (and plenty else) has come to or slid to where it is partly through accumulation of error, one generation transmitting its wobble [. . .] to the next.

WHEREAS:

Agassiz insisted on precise notation of anatomy. Brancusi was a master of anatomy; Lewis did portraits in the style of Holbein.

Pound *reading* the stuff for himself, 1900 circa. At that moment Oxford became obsolete.

Frobenius got around to trekking into Africa and observing. He *is* modern, a method and point of view as of 1958.

If we are to have an art of dance in this century, it will have to do the same thing: the aspirant to glory will be obliged to go back to observation.

One might *look at* things in motion, animals, people. Quality, tone of organic vitality or lack of vitality, visible in the way a man would walk, sit, etc. The boobs and poisoners will holler it ain't "inventive," that it's "reactionary," that they don't understand it.

Confucius apposite: plaster won't stick to a dung wall.

There is most certainly something in the Noh plays' choreography; the Kabuki probably has less in it from which one could learn one's art. O---- tells me there are still Indian dancers on the NW Coast who know and can tell the curious what the gestures mean. They know which Spirit is acting. Simple imitation won't do here, though:

"It is sycophancy to sacrifice to gods not one's own."

The modern movement should be movement *toward* something. Not just "movement," random agitation.

What is choreographic ability? What constitutes the act of making a dancework? what energies are in motion, how do they mesh, what sort of dynamic do they obey? These are questions mostly untouched, the autobiographic squashery of various æsthetik & dewybodied danceladies does not plug the gap.

Your terminology should arise from careful examination and exact understanding of WHAT you are up to; and the need or desire to *communicate* that knowledge, get it across intact.

Any other discussion is superfluous. It can wait for the diluters.

H. F.

20 Aug/ 1958: in less than a year the addressee, treading at a dead run every soft spot in the correspondence this letter began, had slammed a parsonage door behind her . . . a specific potency faintly sketched, washed-out & the traces sufficient only to a caricaturist.

Stravinsky's AGON (& Balanchine's work on it) gives cause for continual (not endless) speculation: it should "begin" an era, precisely as the SACRE ended an era. [. . .]

Frobenius (d. 1938) still leads the wallowing pack by a good thirty years. [. . .]

10 November 1958

[. . .] After a long while I commence detecting differences between rudimentary sense of design visible in Céz nne's better efforts, the Lac d'Anneçy series, & the blobbish but sentient nudes of same period::AND what i Cubisti CLAIMED to have found in C's oeuvre. C. & Monet converge briefly in oddly similar views of a cert/ tower for homing-pigeons at Montbriand.

Speculations over extent to whc Kandinsky & Juan Gris BOTH compass & ruler versions of Léger. // or what real effect contact w/ Branc may have had on the latest fad (Modigliani). . . . all wash out as anecdotes, in vicinage of the ole story about Giotto & the free circle. NO ONE has manifested just estimate of how downright bad nearly all modern painting is. It is not only worse than El Greco, it is infinitely worse than El Greco, it is worse than Rubens rubentes rubentium. & we know that the Metropolitan Museum is the largest of surviving incorporations for facteurs, colleurs, somnambolos, benzine pandars yet posthumously licensed. They have hung the 2nd wussest Bott known to me, they display the Corpus Christi Hypercubus of Dali. There is one early brass Brancusikopf; [. . .] an anthology of plates from their Rodin mezzanine wd not in our time be published save by the Olympia Press, along with the fructescent arse & belly of a Maillol torse, 1/2 bound 800 fr. Some of the best plastic is in the spear-heads. A single fine suit of Jap armor. The long galleries beginning with Gk vases are deserted even of a Sunday. One Ingres is nice enough; it is likewise "nice" as in Skeat.

Works of art, when they die, find eternal repose in that edifice. The rumour that there is "better stuff in the basement" may be ill-based. Up the street they are finishing NY's only building: Wright's Guggenheim Museum. It *generates order* from whatever angle of approach, is visible even from the weather station in the Park. BUT what are they going to put in it?

Elsewhere Benin & Ifé / permission to photograph still forthcoming. 2 rolls shot of knife-money, elmpod money, tree-money @ Am Numismatic Soc., await *money* to print them. [. . .]

11 December 1958

what I plan for Korzybski is a snicker // suttinly you needn't bovvur look-

ing at *Science & Sanity*. The "structural differential" oops up on every thud page as a muss of pigbored & clomp of string flopping. He (Alfie K.) seems to feel it has something to do with "semantics."

Just another metatarsal in the gt/ Cockroach *modrin thot*. It is via Korz/ that logical positivism hooks onto the 'symbolic forms' crowd, viz:

Wittgenstein/Carnap
↑
Korzybski
↓
Cassirer/Langer

Doktor Jung hooks onto, in turn, the latter clot, Corbusier (MODULOR = ϕ, Fibonacci series ktl) the former.

They have all stuck their ends into or out of plastic, their main seductions are (hypo- or pseudo-) assthetik. They all deal implicitly in imponderable significances, are in a word STACKERS. or,

Let us say Wittgenstein & his epigons, mathematicians maudits, go one step past the system-makers: they want to start a *movement*, attract a "following." There are even the rebels splintered from the rebel groups, Norbert Wiener per es/ who deplores anything with a human odor, even a bad human odor.

Of course Korzybski does *not* occupy a pivotal position. He is what washed out of the pasteurizing tubs: neither milk on the one hand nor water on the other. The whole constellation lacks any trace of solidity. They are all dribbles from the deliquescence of Kant; but what trickles from one carnivorous cucumber *mingles* with the droplets from others. Cassirer & Jung join Kant & Freud; Susie Langer contacts the hinder parts of Wagner; Corbusier trips over Darwin on his way to the spiral lavabo. Marx the tub of ordure in which the whole clump continues sprouting.

Phylogenesis // or Frobenius applied to "thought" (nowt new)

PROLEGOMENA growing to encyclopedic proportions if it is to deal precisely w̃ these mobsters.

Ryder: you have confirmed me. I was casting about for correspondent to Chas. Ives and came up with that decomposing sturgeon (SEEDS OF VERTICALISM IN AMERICA or whatso the projection). The 3 I've seen in DC, Cleve/ & Andover are *enough*. ie, to get through that segment *quick*, just as the Concord Sonata, and the horrible preface(s) thereto appudended. [. . .]

NB. I have bn & largely continue working from memory. Lot of shit I don't want to wade BACK through quite yet. But eventually the job will have to be done over "from life" and thass a *slow* job. The eventual goal being to sink 'em in a bundle. No effective surgery has yet bn performed by telephone.

anyway it's only PART of the damn job. One has got to keep flailing away at contemp/ idiocies, and occasionally commend or abet a cleanliness (as often as it comes up). In these environs that ain't often // the perfect eggzercise-ground

for circular hammerswinging, per my old remark to FHJ on Lebensraum. Lissen again! tomorrow to Jack Headstrong, the UNamerican Boy.

Who has pub/d a good bestiary?? & bedast do we need a *architect*!!*

1 July 1959

[. . .] AS to local activity: the WAYS TO PURITY photos I spoke of months ago, impeded, etc. have acquired siblings. 8 of (probably) 20 shots in 2d series, DIDACTIC HOAXES (tentative titre) are completely laid out. After wch/ I clearly see a series of RITRATTI . . . The City Planner, The (o yes!) Eater of Health Foods, & I think very probably the Fashionplate, the Man of Valor, & some of our other old pals. Whereafter I dimly discern a 4th grp, KAKEMONO.

The four parts, if I beat the draft, to be finished within the year, & manufactured *as prints*, in a vurry highclass 16 × 20 ltd edn, under the collective name *PHOTOMACHIA*

PURITY a rire jaune in recapitulation, and with HOAXES the art of photography shd/ begin. And dammit without time to make this a 20-page epistle I can't be more specific.

8 extant titles of HOAXES: The Free Circle; DAEDALUS & THE CONCH; In Defense of the Winged Bull; Dress Circle; Venus Conscripted; CHIASM; Pons Asinorum; The cartesian Muse. If the execution is not totally short-circuited, they may afford amusement to 5 or 6 people. You wl/ recognize a couple of the items.

Working TOWARDS cinema. I wd/ like to do a flick. There is more *sense* of cinema in the 8 stills (or even the layouts) than I've seen in real footage for more than 30 seconds at a time.

Titles in PURITY all street address, viz. 51 Crosby Street, & wdn't interest anyone. [. . .]

[Enclosure:]

MUSIC is the direct track of a creative* mind in contemplation of the world of auditive forms.

This is not a "platonic" statement.

---

* from *creo*, I beget.

18 July 1959

[. . .] auditive = auditory, like the dict'y sez there is no diff. Chance of getting the interlocutor to stop & think for a moment, using the less common form. Vide Guillaume de Machaut, Chaucer's contemp/: "THE EAR shd/ be

used to test a finished composition." The fact being that the ear is disappearing from "music" as of the last 20 years, or since théorisme began 120 years ago. Track is the written graph, emphasis on DIRECT, I wanted sense of *motion* but motion exactly known & constructed, in the formulation. "World of . . . forms" is wot the platonic is mainly aimed at. The caution, as per Strav/ on Pulcinella is there // but gornoZe you can't drive THAT into anyone's head with 2 sentences & a fn. Delete the inv/ commas at yr pleasure, & putt it in italics, thass kleerer. [. . .]

If I can ever round up a tape, SPEEDWELL & THE KISSING BUG (mine) and OUTRAGE ABBEY (Carl's) might amuse you // point at issue being they're *oral* novels & radically unsuited to verbal transmission. *Abbey* is poss/ Victorian 3rd cousin to Justine; or the Misfortunes of Virtue, d.p. Lord Brunt, Miss Felicity Crimp, Hugo the Mute, Finn (Irish groom); Mrs Groper (housekeeper), Bilgecaster (butler). I think you cd/ const. it yrself. S & KB includes thus far only those 2 plus Jack Headstrong (the unamerican Boy) & a slough of bitplayers. It is a galactic horseopera, the first literary work of the Space Age, composed on the principle that the only extant work of the atomic age (Billy Builder) is now obsolescent.

yr/ question re PHOTOMACHY: imo, I have settled on 14 × 17 paper, wch means 1/2" less in both dimensions after mounting, for the "production" size. By and large, WAYS TO PURITY will *stand* being reduced 50%, or to about 6 × 8, but not much more. The HOAXES are prob/ a completely different story. There is not only the loss of detail, the problems of surface (deliberate use of heavy grain, etc) wch for "demonstration" are perhaps negligible, but one of the main structural devices in the series involves contact-printing strips of film onto the printing paper, alongside one or more enlarged projected images. Most of it is 35mm, & will come over at that size / it MIGHT not at 1/2. In one case (The cartesian Muse) it explicitly *won't*, 2/3 of the print area being contacted *8mm* movie film. As it is I may have to go to 16mm . . . and WHAT is in the li'l frames is important. WAYS TO P/ uses only 1 such strip (35mm), on the title page (in fact as titling) & shd reduce without difficulty. Procedure consists in gang-printing from 1 to 5 neg/s. plus contacts, on a single sheet for the working print, then making a 4 × 5 copy-neg & making all subsequent prints from that. So I'll try the reduction, but can't promise anything after the first series.

malheureusement also, one element of satire in W to P being that the ridiculous objects GET printed on that scale (aside from their being photo/d at all).

Started the working prints of 1st gp acantieri, they are *harder* than I cd/ have hoped, & fiendishly rectilinear. & I *got* to finish the fust copies before the 27th inst, da sie werden der M----- ein Geschenk sein, etwas schon Versprochenes.

where in hell I'll find the elefunks of HOAXES I dunno. a suit of armor; a full-length X-ray of a woman, and another of a diesel engine; manhole covers;

oldstyle engravings of a flyin eagle, an a settin hawk & owl; line-drawings of arthropoda; a seating plan of the Met Operyhaus; an eye chart . . . & caet.

there is a "sphinx" in the offing, if I can focus it, for HOAXES. [. . .]

further thought on flicks: that real cinema is nearer to good writing than bad writing ever tries to come. Using word cinema as distinct from "the movies," the thousands or by this time maybe millions of reels of acetate that take their cue from Zane Grey *on down*. The doctrinaire jejuneness of Eisenstein, the unbearable dullness of his long, oh LONG article on Nevsky, the mass-audience orientation of the *cutting* in Ivan, the wagnerian overtones of his preoccupation with synaesthesis . . . right on to the discovery that he directed a cumpleat production of *Der Ring* in MOCKBA in 1941 . . . all leave him totally unsatisfactory as a model. Cocteau, where he ain't involved in surrealist hangover or his own bêtes noires (Dargelos all the way from *Sang* to *Enfants*) is all trouvail[le] & one can't even pick his brains for technics. Aspects of film of wch he is totally UNaware. Oh yes there was Griffith, etc. Nobody alive now doing work of consistent interest. Problem of invention, how much one wd/ have to invent by oneself, vurry absorbing // BUT it costs $20,000 or something to make a film. music, in the long run, is costly, but the actual composition needs only maintenance of one komponist & his piano, or perhaps not, & a good hefty pencil sharpener. [. . .]*

29 October 1959

RO: so far you're right on the button // ATTRITION is *right* on the button. Here is a fire-escape, wch/ I scruple not to fold since it ain't the final façade. (final one wl/ be more "cinematic")

Perhaps I shd/ have bn even more specific: a good deal of the venom is directed at the decade immediately preceding, what will be known as the (bless us) Fifties. #2 is only slightly, or by inference, on the Rothko/Reinhardt circuit. It is very specifically Barnet Newman, and rather better than he usually manages. The s t o r y prev/referred to is simple enough. You may remember my old loft at 366 West Broadway?? the present inhabitant is one Frank Stella; Mr Andre also chose that locus for the mfr of his larger sticks; and I have often had occasion to walk there, a distance of 5 or so blocks from 219 Mulberry, largely through the loft district. The shots in the series are all somewhere along a probable route between the two addresses. And 366 West Broadway has for groundfloor a trafficked truckers' eatery, the PURITY LUNCH. Axerly the present fire-escape is gangprinted from a neg/ made at #97 Crosby Street. & wot is holding up the clincher is the *convergence* you observe in this present example // to elim/ it I got to trundle a 4 × 5 view camera down here on an overcast day. Easy enough, save that it must needs be snuck . . . not simple with a 35 lb monstrosity.

Three of these shots no longer exist: the collage at 49 Prince was "repaired" out of existence when the store was let in April // the Klein-esque letter B was

slopped over wif some paint in late March, and around August somebody backed a truck into the bit of tin (front of a loading dock; the boards, in situ, are horizontal). I doubt the Motherwell/Gottlieb will last much longer (the vertical fish-skeleton thing) // & the superior (not to say white) Louise Nevelson stonework, wch is in fact quite a healthy dark grey, is gitting more rust-stained by the week.

More exegetics later, there simply isn't time. Today is moving day, you will doubtless receive a nudher ten page wonder detailing the frenzies & whimsies of this latest period, & continuing exegesis. Anyway I shd/ prob. say that W to P is mainly an "exploded" hoax, & a nice front door, a nice wide etc. for anyone who notices that.

The 20th and last Hoax is THE GREAT REAL THING (possibly subtitled UNA FIGLIA CHE NON PIANGE), & thass settled, so there remains a bit of work on the GONG & p l e n t y on RUBIDIUM, & then we can start githering togother our nagituves. [. . .]*

6 February 1960

[. . .] As for *Episodes*, or *Interludes* or whatever (prob. the former), the common effort of Graham & Balanchine = it consisted of choreography of all the orchestral (or I shd/ say instrumental) music of Anton Webern. It was not a "cooperative" job. Graham did the entire first part, the opus 26 trio I think, using her own company // Bal. the other 8 or nine small pieces, or about 40 minutes out of the full hour. So it could have been a real laboratory comparison. Balanchine did very well; having seen it only once & that under disturbed circumstances (ie, in company of a female who thinks the *Firebird* Captures The Modern Spirit) I can't say more. Graham was not at full [. . .] voltage. She would have done a good deal better with the opus 7 music for orrchestra. I begrudge her the trio, even . . . her discomfort at its not being Schönberg was patent for 20 hastily compounded minutes.

I imagine the whole thing was instigated by Stravinsky. Certainly any restriction to the opus numbers above 20 indicates intervention of an astuteness not to be credited to Balanchine, however sentient a musician his piano reduction to ORPHEUS 12 years ago shows him.

Webern himself, or his work, a subject on which my opinion has reversed completely in the past 6 months, or since Igor's protégé Robt Craft began recording something past the opus 5 pieces for sting 4tet. NOT minded in the same cast as Berg & Schönberg at all, in fact once he commenced doing his own work an exceedingly original musician. [. . .] Stravinsky now takes his bearings to a great extent from Wbern, & with the VARIATIONS FOR PIANO & orchestra (premierd here 10 jan 60) fully justifies his entire effort since the SEPTET of 1953. This is not music you would like a great deal, I think, judging from your reaction to that septet a couple of years ago, in fact I imagine the one thing of his you would like, after a couple of hearings, wd/ be AGON. CANTI-

CUM SACRUM, THRENI, and the VARIATIONS are all entirely polyphonic & extremely *dense.* THRENI, after a year, strikes me as a mass [of] perilous "saves," the sort of thing attempted incessantly by novices that only a master can bring off. The variations, along with three bits of Webern instrumental music & the clarinet & guitar songs, relieve me of writing any instrumental music for a long while.

The mass & the ballet perhaps a different story, question of staking out areas away from either man. [. . .]

Ray's photograms instruktiv to *me*, in that I'd questioned how a man of intelligence cd/ be bothered to bat 'em out so far past puberty. I have seen prob. 8 or a dozen shots by Ray (NOT to fotograms), & along with a bunch of Weston they are the ONLY work I respect. eh . . . plus Brady. Missed chances in the work of every soidisant master of fography & nearly all from stupor, STVPOR & plain damn laziness or torpid disregard for characteristics of colloidal silver & dyestuff. Coburn's vortographs were made by tacking 3 mirrors up front of the lens, à la kaleidoscope, & photographing bits of wood &c arranged on tabletops thru the rig. It sounds dull enough, I ain't seen any ov thym & might try it out some time. Cob/ also done one fine shot in what I take to be Madison Sq, NY, but I suspect my admiration procedes in paht from being stumped at *how* he did it (as happens not so often). And it is *vurry* 'atmosphaerick.' [. . .]

8 February 1960

[. . .] HOAXES: what there is left over is programmed, & can at least be shot anytime. If I can get the raw stuff done, will go to Andover in May to priont for 10 days. PAX out, resorbed. SUPPOSED INVENTOR OF THE DIALECTIC out, period. CHIASM almost certainly out, trying to get the viscera IN somewhere else. The *gong* out, unless I can focus it a good deal sharper, DAEDALUS & THE CONCH, after all the hassle, ditto. New difficulties with FORTISSIMO & TRIUMPE 5IENS, but I think they can be brought under control. But that may leave as few as 16, & I need 21. Possibilities are called TARBABY and THE BRIDE PRICE. Little thought yet for RITRATTI & KAKEMONO (now suspect it shd/ be makimono rather) the 12 panes of the CHAPBOOK FOR CARL ANDRE a long way off, I may be 35 before I can afford enough plexiglas or lucite to laminate them. against which:

new series (pl.) 1) HAPAX LEGOMENA (ho yuss) 3 done, thus far 2) OFFICIAL PORTRAITS, 4 of a present 5 done. 3) (PORTRAITS OF) LADIES, dunno how many in all, but 3 fully planned, needing only 20 min. sittings, 1 more agreed to, a 5th commissioned.

IT BEING MARCH, 31 improvisations, partially planned, to be done during sd/ month (urgency of being able to shoot by then).

also, tentatively, a deliberate set of naked girls // & a number of photographic "objects," notably DICE.

1/ 2, 3 mainly "straight" in one sense or another; 4 a positive tour-de-forces

gambit, question of saving the ragged edge of what my deah professional colleagues have missed out on, in their own work, through slovenliness & the worship of Mammon // naked gals problemsolving systematized for my own technical benefit // objects mainly satirical. I can't be more explicit without dumping 4 months of "notebook," & the 200 or so unsatisfactory or cryptic experimental prints lying around my ears. These diggings still totally (well, not quite . . .) disorganized. 6 enormous new machine-cut pieces standing around (Andre's), w/ anyhow 1 to go in present series, then a whole new series projected after that. A 12" radial saw in the "third room," with 5 bushels of sawdust behind it, in which both cats shit in preference to any sandbox. I haven't even recorded satisfactorily all the first direct cuts from last winter, there are 5 or 6 things from the summer. Stella temporarily off black stripes & on aluminum, w/ different principle of organization (decorously), such that where stripe ends the paintings end. Result is stretchers with notches, enormous, stacked in #2 room. His "models" are circa 4′ × 4′. In short, a gardamm factory. To which add incessant stream of droppers-by, young ladies, blown fuses. The telephone has 2 extensions, necessitated by dust-sealing of separate loci (the product of the Beautiful Dreamer, C's radial saw, is as fine as flour). Somehow it will all settle, on schedule, by May or June. There is even privacy, since only I live here. The heat goes off at 10 P.M. [. . .]

Sketches for 2 very *short* films. CYBELE & KORE await only clement weather. 3 sculp/s FOR DARBY BANNARD, & 2 companion pieces, a LATTICE, & an EAST WALL await materials. KING PHILIP's SKULL, a NIMBUS, & a TOY, identical save for size & mat'l, mainly ditto. 2 sheet aluminum columns, next trip to Ohio & my ole man's propane-oxygen welder // 1/2 size 5′ maquettes anchored in Dec there, but no camera (intentionally) along.

I may even get the drop on "modern design" (advertising style).

In short, it is what they call a "scene." At 4 P.M. today, Andre comes up with what appears to be a perfectly legitimate compass-&-ruler trisection of the angle. We spent an hour working out 2 apparently watertight proofs, one on congruent isosceles triangles and another on equal segments of arc. That was the end of the "interruption" recorded in yesterday's epistle. Trying to digest the thing under heading ALL POINTS BULLETIN, but studio interferes a good deal. [. . .]

The fotografts are the essential. The rest got to be done QUICK & seen en masse, or the point wd/ be lost. It is mostly demolition. But as for fography, I am chased by a growing sense of vocation (incl. sinema), & find the following points distressing:

1. Everybody can, or thinks he can, make a photograph. The manufacture & processing of photographic eqpt. & materials is one of "our" 10 largest industries. The "democratic" art, par excellence.

2. Nothing is so expensive to make, but so cheap & quickly tossed out as a

photograph. There are "too many" of them. (But vide INSIDE THE WHALE for bare indication of what can be pulled out of very ordinary faux-taux, by looking at them. In this case I claim pedagogic rôle.)

3. None of the arts, high, low, or anywhere, has been so thoroughly invaded by commerce, nor is there any hierarchy harder to buck than, even, the ossified cadres of "art" photography (Aaron Siskind, Karsh, Halsman, et al.), let alone them with pretensions (& they ALL gottem) & most depressing

4. Almost none of my intelligent contemporaries, save for the few here & possibly yrself . . . none of the responsible, DG, Stock, EP . . . can be presumed to give the least damn about it. I daresay no one of (say) those 3 cd/ be counted on to understand why I have spent a year of work, trying to get a toehold on making something that wd/ interest anything higher than a moron. [. . .] Or am I dead wrong? I cd/ be.

Anyhow, I doubt I'll stop working on it. The show @ Andover next Feb/ ort to be a real doggymint. There a mouvement of sorts, openly volitionist. Of the three (or 4, counting Bannard who paints circles), there is little similarity among our work. We can agree with one another on 1/2 doz. points. Andre & I differ violently about some work "outside" the group. Stella has seen some of yr/ stuff & I believe considers you an "illustrator." [. . .]

26 April 1961

[. . .] can you supply design for a world's fair boutique: LIGHT OF ASIA FROZEN CUSTARD? I well remember The Teutonic Knights Stop for Ice Cream. [. . .]

4 June 1962

[. . .] Stella sat in Pamplona for 3 mo reading a spanish manual of chess, replaying games by russian masters in a version that contains an estimated 30 typos per page, and Stella no sort of linguist. Last Wed/ one discovered him an extraordinarily strong & lucid player, using the Sicilian Defense with a great gloating smirk, cigar between his teeth. His offspring is due July 4, and he proposes naming it Uncle Sam Stella, boy or girl. The man ceases not to amaze me. Mayhap he'll do a Duchamp? He speaks of moving to the Coast in a couple years.

I am now fairly certain I shall do the same, and wd set the late summer or autumn of 1964 as the absolute deadline. Can't say much more about that now, since I have about 4 minutes to git this in the mailbox and starting souping hues for variegated America. [. . .]*

6 July 1962

καθῶς ανέστι, HF *ανέστι*. They say I'm some 48 hrs. ahead of schedule for recovery from a transperitoneal kidney resection. O yes, they removed the

damn thing—some few small cysts, no malignancy (in fact no tumorous tissue of any sort)—but the deformation that showed in Xrays due to massive hemorrhage in the organ dating to a week before I was admitted here. Cause of the sd/ hemorrhage not discoverable in the kidney itself. Low-grade fever ca. 0.4° F, dating back possibly *months*. They have tried their utmost to prove a history of rheumatic fever + apparently failed. No less than 11 of these bloody empiricists have stethoscoped ole pussycat, having already about clawed out his guts, + thus far concluded only that what they thought a diastolic murmur is a systolic rattle. Meanwhile they siphon off my blood 50 cc/hr into bottles of sterile broth + nutrient agar, in the hope of growing artichokes + sugarcane therefrom. The worst sting so far was in being told that hemorrhage cd/ just as easily have transacted itself in my (admittedly feeble, but . . .) brain. [. . .]

7 Luglio Not much action. More listening, more bloodletting + urinalysis. One-stripe student nurse assigned to my comfort insisting my trips to telephone must be made in wheelchair. I secured 2 hours peace by threatening to bite her thigh (aet. 20). [. . .]

Remembrance of the 10 × 12 or 12 × 14 Multilith offset DG +/or HF did NOT acquire from Nora D in '56, + wch she in consequence handed over to the White Citizens Council *gratis*, still makes me ache. [. . .]

yr McCall data most interesting in rẽ B. Newman. I'd like to confront Barnie with it, or better yet Clement Greenberg—(tra la la). I caught B. N. last year deliberately back-dating canvasses no more than a year or so old to the 1949–52 period, + nearly drove him to his digitalis. He maintains he hasn't painted since '53, yet maintains an enormous + well swept studio where he *don't* live. Forging his own product? à la de Chirico. His latest stunt was outshouting a prize Schwitters recording with a wad of Vachel Lindsay—not apparently because he wished to educe some superior principle of cacophony, but simply to register an objection to Schwitters's collages. THE prize doctrinaire, even in the school of Nueva York. The bell is tolling pretty loud, now that Franz Kline has finally managed to drink himself to death, and no one can miss de Kooning's total slide into slickness + post-surrealist deep space.

Also a little too obvious to everyone what the next fad will be. [. . .]

How many decades wl/ we wait for a full and corrected Cantos, proofread well enough to keep the Harvard undergraduate in greek from giggling, and printed at least one slice better than the ineffably shabby ND offset from Scheiwiller's "Drill" + "Thrones." Or when will Eskimos buy Cadillac cars, etc.*

13 July 1962

[. . .] "Report of progress" sets in *at least* w̃ Malatesta cantos + is pretty explicit by XXXI. One supposed, in connexion with the (overly famous) "Bach fugue" remarks to Yeats, that EP realized that fugue is no "form" but a technique or technical concatenation. Comparison of *any two* JSB fugues, any two

Haydn or Mozart symphonies (sonata allegro "form") or any two Sophoklean choral odes etc. leaves the novice rather at sea if he look through binoculars of fixed focus.

The *Commedia* was clearly written by a man who knew how to do the job. After a crash course in canzone I doubt Dante had much trouble with terza rima or the famous symmetry. The main job lay, still, in getting the substance into focus.

Cantos rest on continuous articulation, almost continuous "dénouement," rather than any final opportunity for a firm plagal cadence, pack up the trombones + go eat spaghetti.

Have I, at this point, entirely argued myself into Kenner's Korner?

Already in Canto I, certain refusals + commitments solidified. In a sense EP *began* the poem *as we have it* as progress report, and with Kenner's cited bias. Cf. the three cantos bound into the first Am. edition of LUSTRA. *There*, if you will, was the start of a poem that set out to "fulfill a design."

Surely someone has noticed that the poem opens w̃ a coordinating conjunction.

At this point it gets a bit thick. The foregoing, if legible, is muddled, vaporous, + excessively elementary in proportion as I am full to the ears with a synthetic narcotic called dolophine, having had a chop of my left calf muscle removed yesterday for biopsy. Last Sunday a withering 45 minute recreation, sigmoidoscopy, at the climax of wch two MD's took turns looking sidewise into my very dignified transverse colon. In between, more blood tests, more Xray, more pissing in sterile bottles, more injections, more pills, and nary a diddling these 27 days. I'm told I'll be here another week at least. They're diagnosing me to death. Kidney op/ dressings + stitches removed, drain out, + the remaining organ apparently fully adjusted. [. . .] Odlin, don't ever let 'em git you into a hospital. [. . .]*

16 July 1962

[. . .] Is it yet time to do plates for (I choose with some care) TRILBY, FRANKENSTEIN, and POLLYANNA??? I put it to you, Sir, THERE'S a purgatory. Svengali in the bathroom at 7:00 A.M. after a hard night. Pollyanna trying on her first brassière. The Monster knuckles down for a good game of marbles.

More projects: How about using one of those new thermonuclear bombs as flashbulb for a group portrait of everyone in the U.S.A. All standing out in front of the FHA house, stairstep kids, the dog, car, + babe-in-arms, 180 million strong. Having a wonderful time, etc. I take it the dominion of Canada wd/ be large enough to build a camera on, + KODAK wd/ be pleased to supply the film on contract.

Auw hell . . .

You want me to tell you about Yves Klein? Leo showed him here (i.e. Castelli), + that estimable Roumanian still owns, I think, a collage of mine

entitled "Yves Klein paints with fire," wch/ simply cut a cigar-box liner into the frame in front of YK's blowtorch. I recall his french-speaking german chick very clearly at the party after the banquet after the opening, removing everything except a very large + black sphinx wig. Her name was TROTT-TROTT, or at least that's all *anyone* heard. Andre begged a small "fire painting," saying he wanted to finish it, and *did*, in front of about 150 people. Klein was not pleased. That was at a gathering where YK showed his movies = daubing very resilient, pubescent + naked ladies with scads of gold paint + having them roll around on canvas. Duchamp, asked what he thought, said: ". . . eh . . . ah . . . *ordure*, naturellement, mais . . . Klein, c'est ordure d'une sorte particulairement *française*." He approved of my *ad hoc* translation: JUST SOME MORE FRENCH SHIT, + went on to suggest Jean Tinguely might be in a diff/ category. Pages of memoir, as the Newman notes last epistle. I had entirely forgotten. That was a hectic spring "season."

What the hell did he do, jump off one building too many? [. . .]

29 September 1962

[. . .] Someone is reconstructing the Armory show, or the 1/3 of it whatZ ascertainable. They asked me to find out what if any photographs were included. Having found out, wunner if mebbe I shdn't keep my mouth shut. Djeezus!!

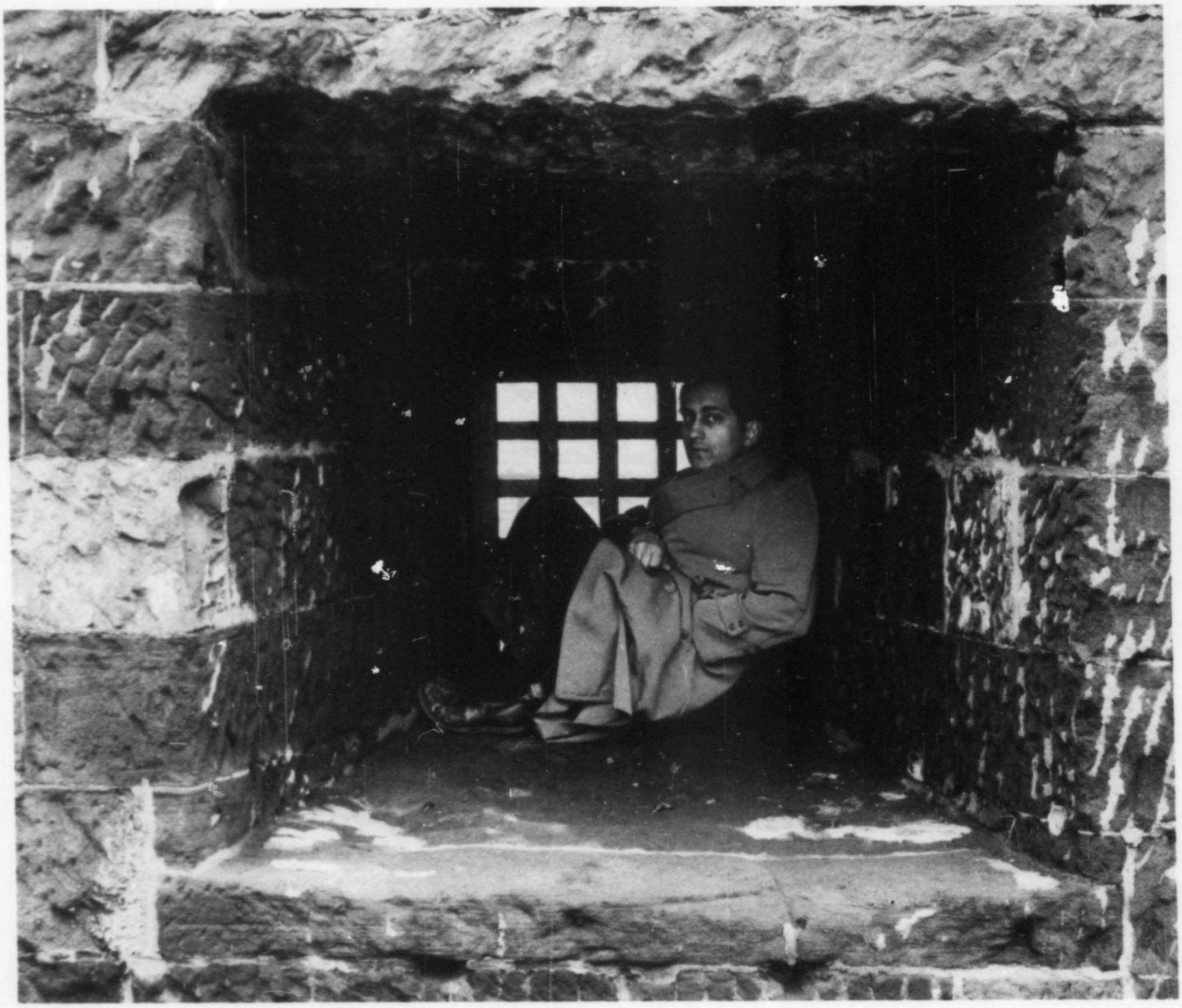
2 January 1963

[. . .] I doubt anyone (not true, but nearly) got the point of the 52 photographs . . . but the SECRET WORLD was apparently a crowd pleaser. Shite. I disliked most of them less on the wall than in the hypo; put them up as 4 suits in a space too narrow to back off and "get the effect," so they had to be read as four simultaneous lines. By the time I reprint a dozen of them, they should be *perfectly* banal.

Anyhow the upshot was three or four immediate commissions; a wedge at the MMA; and an appointment at Harper's Bazaar, the latter for next Thursday morning. They want to "see my stuff." I want to see some of it myself, and have six days in which to go blind printing in the attempt. What is at stake is an editorial assignment that wd/ buy, even at novice professional rates, a loft, 6 months worth of film and paper, and probably a good portion of the optical and chemical hammers and saws the shop lacks. Djeezus. Well I ain't optimistic. The ancillary chic gags me for more than tactical reasons. [. . .]

29 January 1963

[. . .] 2) The visit to Bazaar was *more* of a fiasco than I expected. I was there 4 times in 11 days, each time they wanted to keep my stack of prints for further consultation, everyone I talked to indicated admiration but no courage in the face of things strong in their own immanence. They sd/ come back whenever you have something you want us to see. [. . .] Since I printed a portfolio



Hollis Frampton. #23 *from* The Secret World of Frank Stella. *1959.*

especially for their eyes, & since they kept me tied up half the afternoons of 2 weeks, I got thrown off my printing schedule about ninety miles. Other consequences of the party not so depressing, more in the line of opportunities to make photographs, not sell them. [. . .]

6) Andre has been active as usual. I shall market a Carl Andre doll: you wind it up and it creates. Has actually done some of the field poems mentioned in a dialog I think you ain't seen. We have gone on with those things & the MS is 50 pp. or more. As aforesaid there will be copies available when there is time for redaction. Most of them are marked but not retyped.

7) Used a 16mm movie camera, about 300′ of 7255 Ektachrome, last Sunday. Unless it screens worse than my bitterest fancies, it's safe to say that the motion picture camera is NOT nearly so difficult to use as one had anticipated. The machine in question is a 3 lens Bolex to which I have instant access, and I have proposed making my old silent film A RUNNING MAN, wch dates I think from the fall of 1960, in the early spring, in Fort Green Park, Bklyn, which contains within 15 or 20 acres nearly any kind of space I wd need. A 150′ granite stele, the Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument. A set of steps that rather put Odessa in the shade. Hoping to git out Saturday to shoot a storyboard on Polaroid, pending sleet and hellfire etc.

[. . .] I bought the 4 × 5 & tripod on 23 Dec, gave it to a machinist for modifications in the back loading lever and panhandle respectively along with the $75 he asked for the job. I could pick it up "Friday." I did . . . 4 weeks later.

In the long run this sort of thing is NOT very funny. One wd/ expect it in France or Spain or prob/ Britain. More irritating to me since my official vocation has *RUSH* stamped all over it, & I have not in 2 years failed a promise of film, even at less than the nominal 134 minute processing time. [. . .]

3 April 1963

[. . .] Along with Warhol, (whose personal qualities are best summed up in Stella's remark to him, "Eh . . . Andy . . . *hello* is *not* a question . . ."), bro. Rosenquist is prob/ the only one of these pop art people who overlaps the art of painting a little. Or the stuff is of some interest to an ironizing pedagog. [. . .]

yrz 2 or 3 march. Might I paraphrase Kenner thus: "Poetry (and the arts at large) is not a *subject* to be studied and certified in, but an enterprize to be inquired into."

? ? ? ?

For a working artist, this is the necessary point of view. Otherwise we must, like the adolescent I once was, believe that art is something done by "other people." We must close the set upon a finite group of monuments that excludes our own work. And that is the viewpoint of those who sd/ of the Cantos, okay latin, okay greek and french and italian tags, but no chinese. We wish to develop the sensibilities we already have, not to extend the range of our sen-

sibilities. It seems to me that Kenner wd/ have the reader move his consciousness out of the pathetic and into the operational view of art.

Clearly, one does have something in mind. Clearly also, de Kooning has something in mind, at least part of the time. WHAT he has in mind is the issue.

I think Andre and I are touching upon these matters in the DIALOGS. God willing I can ship you a few pages soon. Right now I must trot off2the lab. [. . .]

15 July 1963

[. . .] Reuben Nakian, a sculptor, specializes in "immanent" slashed terracotta placques + colossal welded sculpture. [. . .] MMA owns the *RAPE OF LUCRECE*, one has seen worse. Chiefly, however, he is the inventor of the LOST BARN PROCESS. Over the years, he has repeatedly rented barns in upstate NY to use as studios, and constructed therein objects so large that the barn had to be torn down in order to remove the sculpture. Of the $100,000 paid for the *RAPE*, $20,000 went to reimburse Nakian's landlord for demolition + reconstruction of his bldg. [. . .]

New b/w movie mentioned in yest/ on line of the abortive *Hommage to Webern* photograms = superimposed stencils of alphabets and numbers, d.h. mapping one closed set of elements upon another closed set. The various sorts of mapping are the operations. I dunno whether you can visualize the image fm/ description, I cn/ expatiate. The initial 8 prints were made from 2] stencil sheets. I now have about 60 sheets which multiplies the possible combinations considerably—however most of the combinations wl/ not be serviceable. Trying to dope out a way of shooting the stuff direct instead of making several hundred 8 × 10 prints.

At any rate the film is logistically simple to do. Apparently that is not true of my other cinematic ventures, including A RUNNING MAN.

A possible peg for Rosenquist's ptgs (I think particularly of FOUR 1949 GUYS): there are certain simultaneous quadratic equations which give several solutions, all of which are, mathematically, perfectly valid. (One must choose the answer wch/ best applies to the problem.) Now there are 3 kinds of number to which they may solve =

a) RATIONAL, e.g. 17, 2, 63/64 etc.
b) IRRATIONAL, e.g. $4\pi/5$, $\sqrt[3]{17}$ etc.
c) IMAGINARY, of the form $n(i)^p/m$

where *n* is any natural number, *m* is any whole number except zero, the *exponent p* is any *odd* number, and *i* is $\sqrt{-1}$.

Now given the same elements (plastic elements, images, fragments) it seems to me the comm'l billboard painter solves for A), the surrealist for B) and R/ quite consistently *does* solve for C). In mathematics, the "imaginaries" may be graphed

only by special dispensation, on polar coordinates. In the plastic arts anything may be graphed.

Again, it is worth noting that the billboard painters' space is *flat*, that the surrealist exploits illusionistic deep-space (this is the great clue, *in* the paintings, to the origins of de Kooning + Rothko in surrealism rather than cubism); + Rosenquist's space is also flat, but not passively so . . . the changes in scale, angle-of-view etc. of the broken images from one part of the canvas to another cancel each other out to flatten the whole painting, under tension. (A drumhead is flat, but that is not the only thing one can discover about it.) In plastic as in mathematical equations all solutions are valid so long as one doesn't bring to the problem a hankering to find out "which train got there first" etc.

It is in his use of combined cut images, on an ironic pretext as purely *plastic* or graphic rather than "symbolic" elements that Rosenquist ventures into the territory of the HOAXES. His discoveries leave me wondering, without envy but still wondering, why I didn't file my results a bit sooner. I am held up on my *own* job by the effort to make constructive use of the results of R's investigations. [. . .]

11 March 1964

[. . .] the 2nd burglary got the enlarger AND all the trimmings, very professional. AND the bastards took my nice little FM radio to boot. That was 48 hours after the one that abstracted my camera & I thought both had transpired before our fabled phone conv. The 3rd time, I was ON the premises. A long Beckett-esque unterhaltung through the door, but no loss of chattels, the only things left in pad at that time were myself, bed, & telephone. Az fer Walker St. it takes 3 keys to get in, 2 of which operate double-drop deadlocks bolted into metal jambs. And I am the only inhabitant of that street for 3 solid blocks, or perhaps 4. [. . .]

The two wall things I mentioned were an ARENA and a PROMENADE. The former a hollow ring of hanging b/w transparencies, to be viewed from inside or outside; & PROM/ a half-dozen or so parallel hanging slabs with corridors in between. STRAITS OF MAGELLAN a development from the latter. Vide infra.

I recall from one and another letter and telefonik interlude FOUR heads or masks as follows: 1) ART :: gilt, patina, bird shit; 2) LIFE :: more or less "realistic" treatment; 3) CAMP :: lipstick, mascara, rouge, etc.; 4) COMMERCE :: whereof the only detail distinct in my mind was *THIS SIDE UP* stencilled on forehead. [. . .]

"Trade goods" in reference to the two Magellan pieces. Andre advanced to the notion of the perfectly ordinary photograph when we left off more or less systematic consideration of the subject. He is an ardent classicist in photography, i.e. a devotee of the 8 × 10, Weston, Adams, Atget, etc. // about as much use as growing into admiration of Cartier-Bresson, for a man who has never

been behind the camera // but anyhow, insists now that my every possible departure from that putative norm is low treason, fraud, and indecent pandering to the market. Cosi sia. The two pieces in question, and several more related ones, are in all probability ten thousand dollar museum pieces to be put on the block by my widow, who ain't in any case made an appearance HERself). [. . .].

Of Andre's recent work, the most interesting is the Kennedy sequence AN ABSOLUTION FOR THE NAMES OF WORDS, and the new sequence from maps called simply THE NAMES. lot of short stuff in between, more or less interesting. mainly, it being Andre pretty much in the vein, more. The man is on his way towards writing that will strike harder at the supposed norm of English verse than anything else has in forty years (id est, than anything *begun* in forty years). I realize that is putting it on the strong side. A tree might fall on him, he might get a cholesterol attack and solidify, ending with intravenous feedings of kerosene etc.

How wd/ you feel about a microfilm or b/w 35mm slide edition of the writings of CA?

STRAITS OF MAGELLAN: a transparent slab or frieze about 40″ high and 120″ long, suspended between two opaque slabs the same size, and parallel to both of them. So that one sees one of the opaque ones always through the transparent slab, but impossible to see all three parts at same time, and impossible likewise to back off more than a yard from any of them. PiXrs on all 3.

Then: sections sticking into the aisles from all 3. Holes (& slots) drilled through center (transparent) slab, wch is actually 2 slabs about 6 in. apart. Images projected intermittently on opaque slabs from lenses hidden in center slab, so that one can see projected image only from opposite side of center slab, or obliquely, but not dead on by itself as one wd/ block the projector with one's body.

Parts made of aluminum (an opaque, shiny substance that can be machined, made into simulacra of real objects, crumpled, etc.) and linen (which may be folded, pleated, torn, frayed-out, varnished into shape over armatures &c).

A cluster of peepholes in center slab, some giving onto portions of opaque slab opposite, some onto slides inside like the small keyring telescopes of yore with naked broads in vivid hues. In one section of center slab, a rotating disc with sector masks which will alternately reveal and obscure in fixed pattern at fixed interval a spray of small images on both sides of center panel. Disc itself NOT visible, nor the motor.

I take it the geographic item from wch/ I draw title is known to you.

CLOUDS OF MAGELLAN may not be. They are two parts of unequal size of one galaxy visible in the high southern latitudes, the nearest galaxy to our own and a great treasure of astronomy. My piece of that name to consist of a double cloud of didactic hoaxes, their elements separated and cast about in space, but all 24 or 25 of the hoaxes or constellations in the SAME cubic space.

So that one may never at one time be able to see all of one hoax without turning around; so that one may have to look THROUGH an element of one to see another at all, &c. Same materials as STRAITS, it was here that I thought to use the liquid emulsion.

STRAITS are 1/2 mapped. can't go much further without recourse to drawing and scale model, much experimentation with materials, and so forth. I know HOW to do it, mainly. The expense will be god awful, on the order of FOUR figures (low 4 figrs) I think, but spread over a year or more probably bearable. The acrylic costs about $125 per 30 × 60 inch panel, and there is bound to be some waste.

Must get Walker ST. in shape, and regain equipage and add new before I can hope to cope with it. [. . .] Invariably I have tried to change and reclaim my spaces, mostly the effort has bn wasted in microscopic ruins but this one is a total effort. Copying paintings is a misery and it don't pay well, but I can do no other moonlighting (or rather, sunlighting). The field shd/ be plowed by may, or june.

The 100 word film still a live issue, likewise the running man film (for which I have the raw stock). About to have an enlarger again (within the fortnight), or at least the backbone of my old buck rogers outfit. 500 feet of wiring still to do, and endless carpentry & sink building. [. . .]

I was 28 today. A few gray hairs, teeth a bit worse.

Brakhage probably IS news, what more does Dav/ say of him? Attritions: 90% of my Latin, as I found on opening translations of Ibn Sina and Ibn Röchd. Is there any english worth reading? We are fools to let the scholars keep arabic.

19 March 1964

[. . .] Both MAGELLANS to be rather kits along the lines of BRIDE/BOXES etc., that is, the pieces to be accompanied by their working-drawings, macquettes, etc. CLOUDS in particular will need a substantial atlas or installation manual. For shooting them on the plexiglas, they will have to be "ganged," the elements fitted as closely together as possible as paper dolls are printed with their socks, hats fitting into odd triangles in page corners, etc., without regard to narrative coherence, with a structural coherence based entirely on *shape*, to be cut apart later. I would base a paper folio version, catalogue and guide, on the ganged negatives. Neither of them are to be "unique," at least in the sense that anyone who wants one can have one, shot from the same set of negatives, etc., etc. But wd/ tend to remind you of one use of the word primitive. Not the Urfaust or Urtext idea at all, but in line with the grammarian Panini's prescriptions for extracting the primitive or "crude" of a Sanskrit verb. The crude is a construction, there being no primitive state IN the language, where all has been subjected to sandhi, elision, assimilation, etc, but only in the meta-language (if

I may paraphrase from the company of Goedel). I.e. a folio of CLOUDS would be a meta-version.

STRAITS is a fairly literal and straightforward idea, containing elements of autobiography, the history of photography, an implicit epistemology of the "image," etc. within a thoroughly controlled environment, I mean the whole piece constitutes an ecologic model for the intellect upon which the temporal circumstance does not intrude, at least visually (unlike the BRIDE where you see a heteroclite changing jumble through the cracked pane).

CLOUDS has a pivotal apercu attached. As you know, I have fiddled with, drawn, macquetted, talked about, and fussed with the HOAXES for five years and more. Every version dissatisfied me through one and another incoherence. In the first drawings of summer 1959, the elements were disposed mathematically or rather geometrically upon the sheets. They looked OK, but the order was imposed, traditional, based upon the phi ratio, architecture, Fibonacci series and spirals &c. Various other attempts looked too art-agency design-y, too package and vocabulary-of-shape infested, too collageiste. The elements themselves more or less endured, as the faces and petals and the metro image must have endured for EP during the 739 versions of the epigram, etc. Each HOAX was to be a single affective molecule, a single "idea," a single image. I was trying to use the ideogram, in pictorial terms, as a take-off point for *getting hold* of the substance, as one must get hold of a piece of wood in order to know which direction it will cut.

Chanced upon an article on the Clouds of Magellan, together with a star map of the southern hemisphere naming the constellations.

Their names were unfamiliar and thus diverting, no more outlandish than those in our own hemisphere I suppose, but carrying less mythological burden and more of the zoo and the business district. The old puzzle came to me, of how the ancients drew their lines between the bright dots and came up with pictures of a crane, scorpion, bear, or just triangulum. God knows how long a man must stare at something before it stares back, but in a few moments I had my lever.

A constellation is an "image." The image may be nothing more than a roughly isosceles triangle, but there it is. But that image is not a whole and literal DRAWING, it is a group of elements that we construe meaningfully, as we construe the letters b-i-r-d, a constellation of unrelated sounds, as the general name of feathered flying warmblooded egglayers. Or, a-b-c-d-&c as the alphabet, our name for an arbitrary grouping of a small number of symbols standing for a rather larger number of the sounds a human throat can make . . . I think you will follow this line without further periphrases . . .

With constellations in the sky, some of the elements (stars) are very near, others very far away. Though they seem points, they are in reality suns or clouds of gas etc. of enormously varying magnitude, velocity, heat, &c. Some

of the elements in a configuration are merely the apparent spaces between them (e.g. where is Orion's left buttock).

In addition, every constellation includes within its celestial area stars which are not "in the image." Arab astronomers had a special term for stars "outside the image," not contributing to its formation, but within the same field.

From any given point, they appear to form a flat pattern. We know the planes are tipped, the vertices separated by distances beyond our reckoning. Some large and bright stars, e.g. Fomalhaut, are outside any constellation.

IS THIS sufficiently coherent to follow?

Any single consciousness's image of the world, a constellation of points of varying weight, at varying distances from the center of gravity of that consciousness.

6:30 A.M., must break this off. Do not wish to talk the thing out of my will. There will be preliminary bits of less unwieldy proportions, most certainly. [. . .]

1 April 1964

[. . .] Zorn's Lemma states that within every partially ordered set there is a maximal fully ordered set. The excernment of the fully ordered set constitutes a cut. Where there are several possible cuts, the set of all cuts constitutes the maximal ordered set. All cuts, the operations whereby they are made, the elements that constitute each of them, the intelligible species of their distinctness one from another, AND the residue of totally unordered elements left outside the maximal fully ordered set, constitute a closed field. Until all operations are defined and applied, and all elements identified, the field is not closed.

First line of the above paragraph is the Lemma, the rest is part of the reasoning for the manipulation of footages in the movie.

I would dearly love to shoot the whole thing directly on 16mm and am investigating the possibility. There wd/ still be the problem of how to make the flash cards, but that *might* be less cumbersome of solution than the optical printing of film bits from slides (or rather 35mm negatives).

It may amuse you to learn that the conversation from which we lost 2 crucial segments consumed 309 minutes and cost a shade under $78. Just got the bill. [. . .]

re CLOUDS: have not changed elements in either TRIUMPE QUINQUIENS or TEMENOS, nor NUNS so far as they were ever totally solidified. *But* to flatten those elements on a page, given our scanning habits (kulchurl, amfroplojikl) is to impose or at least imply a discursive syntax reading in one direction only. The implications of the PAGE are all graphic, or plastic, to adopt the convention of the PAGE for a work that is not plastic, or built up, but . . . cuts . . . is to force upon the thing the rhetoric of accounting for the rectangular space. None of the hoaxes ever filled or accounted for the rectangle. Another

point: pages follow one another. Does the SPHINX f o l l o w TARBABY? or vice versa? or why?

preliminary versions looked like superlative pages with space for *type*. But what text? an explanation of the ironies? The *hoax*, or part of it, is that there IS no irony, the constellations are flatfooted serious and corny. Five birdcages and a tuba is not ironic, simply illusive. And it wd seem that the vault door, leaves, and stonework fragment of SPHINX are very EEEEElusive, under that title, but not partic/ ironic.

Does not a certain irony inhere in the act of combining any two images? or in putting bark after dogs to make the simple sentence? which we merely exploit when we caption a picture of a balloon, SECRET WEAPON.

wunner whether the foregoing is intelligible, or rather, whether its implications are intelligible. If my alleged thought has gone anywhere in the past 2 years, it has been along the line of examining premises and conventions. The greatest part of the labour is in discovering and articulating WHAT precisely those premises and conventions are.

IF my old gesamt title PHOTOMACHY is to mean anything.

Probably you will have noticed that STRAITS is the projected *makimono* of 1959 or 60 (when PHOTOMACHY was the tetrapartite W to P : : Hoaxes : : Makimono : : Ritratti)

wch/ y.v.t. finally got around to noticing t'other day, az result of wch a few more kinks have bn unkinked.

yr para 12) CA has given you a line or two on the analog/digital business I think. I wd/ take it that you have the two terms exactly reversed in the present example. Circuitry or gearing comparatively easy to set up, to generate and draw triangles with congruent bases, the vertices of which represent stars, and any constellation of points can be located in projection upon a plane via such a discourse of triangles, gvn only two fixed points in the plane. Whereas digital methods will log and read-out anything, provided the scanning resolution is fine enough.

13) indeed, perspective is to be allowed for and included in the scheme for CLOUDS. Your getting at it from the parallax angle amuses me and brings up a possibility I had, quite distinctly, NOT thought of. Though the one-eye peepholes in STRAITS are only a forcing manoeuvre like the Duchamp title. CLOUDS likewise to have "vantage points" marked on the floor. (Rosenquist did that at his last show, on slips of stainless steel . . . they were not tacked down and the point was that they shd/ get kicked from one corner to another and shift about. But visitors picked them up and took them home.)

[. . .] Trying to find out more about Brakhage locally, he or at least his name is known, he is regarded as "serious." [. . .]

16 April 1964

[. . .] I have seen Brakhages MOTHLIGHT, and the birth film, once each. They will take m u c h more seeing. (MOTHLIGHT) is the one with seeds, bug wings, etc. Have not seen any part of *dog star man.* I thought D's raves suspect, it is curious to find any man representing the work of a contemporary personal friend in such terms. But I think he may be right. Local queries re/ Brakhage turns up little patches of personalia that please me through their very apparent honesty, an honesty of more than casual dimensions, zB when he was down on his luck and had to ask for money years ago, publicly & of strangers, in order to go on filming, everybody who sent in a buck got a foot or so of the mothlight original. That he even thought to return something, and some real thing of his own making not just a thank you note, that strikes me as extraordinary in this our capitalist age.

What burns me arse, that the man was IN TOWN, & the fact so little publicized that one missed both the screening & the question period afterward. I heard that his stuff was fairly well received (NYU audience) but that SB personally offended everyone by pointing out that certain questions & remarks were simply frivolous or stupid. [. . .]

& it will probably please you to hear that the preliminaries to MAGELLANS, WHITE-OUT, & a couple other biggitos will be subsumed largely under a sprawling misanthropy to be known, tentatively, as THE ISSUE OF JUNE 1964. About wch further in some later epistle, as I must needs sleep in time to awake. [. . .]

22 April 1964

[. . .] Along with the qu? of who has the dialogs, go others, viz: who has the photocopy of BUILDER? who has the 3 cuts & apology? I worry about these things fm time to time.

8/ Yes. Hadn't thought of fresco as subst. for the mosaic. I prefer the "window" fable, get more leverage out of it (you have my preliminary remarks, and they have the strongest possible bearing on, zB, Rosenquist). (Of course we have the wall-size painting, it is very much with us; the New York School is supposed to have invented it but even the Metropolitan contains evidence that the gigantic canvas is very much in the muRRikin tradition.) But your bringing up mosaic suggests a solution to one rather giddy problem in STRAITS center panel. And I now understand your remark re my approaching Byzantine ecclesiastical decoration in yr last letter / had read it rather differently, with, probably, the gross aspect of the walls of Hagia Sophia in mind, miracles of Japanese tattoo artistry etc.

(a digression: have I mentioned Jasper Johns Instant Tattoo Tablets? taken orally, nontoxic and guaranteed free from hepatitis virus. The tattoo appears in 3 to 5 days, in three colours RGB. Thus far we can only offer flags, targets, numerals, and letter of the alfabit but our research section is at work on

other patterns. The more pills, the larger the design. *But*, sez JJ, *where does the design appear? On that part of the body*, sez HF mit schitt-eatingk gkrinn, *that has been most often in your thoughts since ingestion.* I think Jasper was NOT pleased.)

THE "edge problem." Christ I do not want this to turn into a purple-ass'd shibboleth, a la "tone leading" of some years back. I meant the edge of the rectangle, or more properly the boundary of the *image* (in general sense: the frontier of the message bearing surface). It will be, immediately, quite obvious that not all such message-bearing surfaces are rectangular in shape, when the 'matter is coterminous with the expression.' I think it first came up in my mind in trying to explain to A/ how, in scanning the spatial continuum on the groundglass, I cd tell when I had my "picture." There are further notes, but I think this answers *as much of yr question as you have stated.* It is part of a CUT, or the "cut-problem," the problem of recognizing, setting up, locking in a cut. And I confess my use of that word in connexion with photography is complex and crucial enough to need clear formulation. [. . .]

9 & 10/ "blind spots"—I believe that for us, a more useful classification of the arts than 'plastic,' 'temporal,' etc. is available. For me, there is a very clear division between those that *cut* (no dammit not the specialized term, but Brancusi's direct cutting) and those that build up from more or less amorphous material. Painting & a large part of music seem most of the time to belong to the latter category. Sculpture falls both ways, and the results of the two approaches are VERY different. Literature has been one way and the other at different times. EP is preeminently a cutter rather than puttier. His interests and susceptibilities outside his own practise and his own trade were always slanted toward cutting. Of course he "likes" painting, hell yes we all like painting BUT I cannot recall anywhere in his work a real apercu about painting. (Not saying that he was unable to detect several sorts of quality in paintings, or to tell crap from the live article.) But his real interest in the plastic arts wd/ appear to be sculpture and DRAWING, wch is it now seems to me something very different from painting. He wd/ seem to have responded to architecture, though the evidence is not heavy. I have not seen the criticism of Lunnon fanlights etc., there is indication that he was very directly aware of architectural space, where the Cantos do not demonstrate the same eager grasp of landscape-space except where *light* is involved. Correct me if I'm wrong, but think hv noticed something pivotal in EP's intelleck. The passion for anatomy & damn little interest in physiology, let us say. Instrumental music wd/ seem to him too vague to practise, his own efforts being in opera, where a text is there to be hewn to as pattern or limit. Drama, after it passes from the altar to the stage, leaves him cold except as vehicle for expounding . . . with due attention to quality of verbal manifestation . . . he is attracted by Cocteau & has a kind word for Ibsen somewhere in correspondence with y.v.t. Shaxpr, the Noh, OK. I take it he never became aware of film at all, one supposes he witnessed numerous "movies" & was about as delighted as you or I generally are.

Another demonstration of the puerile myth of "general intelligence." And of course there were other thoroughly blind spots. Flaws in intellect, flaws in character. Men aint perfectible. I daresay he wdn't think much of what I'm up to nec/ or des/. More to the point, the same cd be sd of you or CA, etc. But we are reaching a point where he WOULDNT HAVE THOUGHT OF IT AT ALL.

& This leads to the S----y episode. You will recall: "YOU pick 'em. Don't expect Ez/ to do it." That was honest. He did well enough at picking 'em in his own time. What was S----- after, an autograph, a testimonial? it is hard for me to feel kindly disposed towards anyone but EP, who was having his privacy, which must be very valuable to him by now, encroached upon. Yes, it is sad. It is so damn sad that the man couldn't have lived to finish his poem, that he couldn't have stayed at the peak of health, alertness, & productivity for another 150 etc and THAT is what they mean when they say All Men Are Mortal. Sad. Personally I might hope at 79 to have an eye on what the 30 year olds are up to, but suspect that if I live that long there will be so much left to do, and so many important areas of sheer ignorance to be filled in, that I'll incline to have the housekeeper say Mr F can't see you. [. . .]

My allergy to loose use of the word "genius" is not readily to be assuaged. You will recall the Strav/-Craft bit: a "pathetic" term that shd/ always be accompanied by the names Beethoven and Michelangelo. Near to madness, sez the Dictionnaire des Iddees Recues, and to call a man genius in the past few hundred years is to abdicate a certain aliquot of responsibility towards the man and his work. The genius is "beyond the pale," [. . .] In fact there is a lot of loose talk there in that paragraph: *transcend* is another jem. We are familiar with the fallacious notion of transcending, in art, the materials of art: fallacious on two counts, first because the pigment never *becomes* the flesh of the madonna; and second because it assumes that the material of art is ONLY paint. Is not the material of art, in good part, the energy of human thought & affection? and when that thought is entirely defined and perfected in the work, are we to believe that thought has transcended itself? Well, it has completed itself. Joyce does not transcend the page, he establishes a new norm for the page. Brakhage may have exceeded in intensity by several orders of magnitude the ambient or historic cinema: if that is true, what he is doing is now the cinema, and the other stuff is predecessorZ an' also-rans. [. . .]

Let me say that what of Brakhage's I've *seen*, I admire. It will be necessary to see more, and many times. I cannot pay any higher compliment to a work of art than that, at least without extreme familiarity. By comparison, I saw *8 1/2* twice and don't especially wish to see it again. [. . .]

I didn't know or recall that you have shots of the tinkertoy cock. I have excellent ones of course, from 8 angles, & may yet get round to reconstructing the bird. What connection you see between rooster & MAGELLANS though, I wd be amazed & delighted to hear. [. . .]

20 January 1968

it is a longer time since yr last than I had thought, & a longer since the paenult. I admire, as well as appreciate yr tenacity as correspdt // lo, this low dropping is unwordy etc

[. . .] what OV K-----? what he is doing surpasseth & exceedeth &c or anyhow I have not seen a whisker of *dialogs*, which are what one wants to see out of it all, if only to re-read. Billy & the CUTS I have on file. To hell with my pixrs of yore, emphatically: the only authorized prints of any of my juvenilia are in your possession, i.e. the remains of Palo Alto. [. . .]

I have score of the TRIO. I will send you a stat of the thing if you iterate, in your next: I WANT A STAT OF THE TRIO. It is still posthumous. [. . .]

16 months of marriage have brought me a TV, certainly; but it (dh. my estate, not the boob toob) has been the salvation of my mind and my flesh. I have possibly less free time now than formerly, but I use it rather better.

There is some chance a teaching job may materialize, either at Hunter College here, or at Goddard in the north of Vermont. And I am in pursuit of two grants of money for the movies, either one of which wd/ lubricate considerably. (Your prayers, brother, finely intoned!)

I have finished five films (to the point where they are ready for printing, if I can raise the lab charges) five films, and have another 11 or 12 in various stages of disrepair / from a 20 sec film d'occasion to a 145 min. monstrosity. Es fängt an, sich ein wenig zu bewegen.

The words film is perhaps 35% done. I am actually going to call it ZORNS LEMMA, having fairly well pieced togetger my thoughts in that connexion. There is a stupefying job of work still to be done on it alone. About 35min, color and sound; I pray I shl/ have it done at least in time for Knokke-le-Zoute this year. The "scheme" is complete & I shl supply particulars if you like.

The 145 min monster is hazy, but I think worth doing, a couple of years work.

There is so VERY much to say and do about film, I mean there is somewhat that I shd/ like to hear your own thought aboot. Do you have a 16mm projector available?

I begin to understand a little better the hint of sadness and irony in Brancusi's "Je peux commencer une chose . . ." [. . .]

kindly do let us know how you fare and what you do. We are very well disposed to resume discussion of agenda, méhercule Menschenskind etc.

je vous serre la main

13 February 1958. One of the projects under discussion in D.C. in the fall of 1957 had been an update of EP's *Guide to Kulchur*. I left at the end of January 1958, driving west, and this letter represents HF's further thoughts on the subject.

17 May 1958. A letter of 19 March 1958 had with it a carbon copy of an interview, conducted by Robert Craft, with Igor Stravinsky. The specific remark cited was:

> Of these posthumous publications "Moses und Aaron" is in a category by itself: whereas the other works are unfinished, it is unfinished but complete—like certain Kafka stories in which the proposition makes an ending in the ordinary sense impossible.

Hapax Legomena was a proposed collection of HF's short poems; "the venus" was "For the Eve of St. Venus," a fantasia on themes suggested by the *Pervigilium Veneris*, as well—one supposes—as Keats's more celebrated "Eve," although the latter's title will have been alluded to with malicious intent.

HF did not often throw titles away, and *Hapax Legomena* is no exception.

11 December 1958. My response to a letter of 6 December 1958 had professed ignorance of any such thing as a "structural differential." We all addressed one another as if we were public meetings in those days, the cumulative pomposity is impossible to imagine: but I am willing to believe I often played ignoramus *in order* to provoke HF to such outbursts as the present letter. My role, if you like, was that of *Ingnorance* in the scrap of Mystery Play which figured so largely—along with a vial of ossified 'possum fetuses—in the boyhood exchanges between HF and the composer Frederic Rzewski:

> SCI: Foorth now! what sayis the Dogge?
> INGN: Dog barke.

18 July 1959. The summer had been bedevilled by the problem of beating the draft. The relief here is pretty obvious.

I had written to query *auditive*, continuing:

> "platonic": I am not sure how much this means to exclude. The inverted commas give semblance of restricting it to the *Daily Mail* meaning of platonic: "friendship."

29 October 1959. I had written:

> I shd say, straight off, that this set NEEDS the Hoaxes to haul it into intelligibility. Perhaps it needs only the fire-escape.
>
> the one "way to purity" that emerges unmistakably is *decay* of appetitive faculty. - - - - Insofar as it is a hostile resume of XX

Jahrhundertmalerei, the series presents the ways chosen as, unvaryingly, ways of attrition. The other striking item is the extent to which one would not expect the things shown, in NYC. The bit of tin tacked to clapboard is of the Dakotas.

Were I constructing an attack, I should base it upon the lack of ocular nourishment. This again is very probably designed, in terms of a total structure, . . . so that I am not constructing an attack until the polls are closed.

4 June 1962. The Stella off-spring was, in the up-shot, named Rachel. She entered art history before she could walk, when she crawled over to Robert Rauschenberg, tugged at this trouser-leg, and said: "Dada." RR to FS, angrily: "*Why did you teach her to say that?*"

6 July 1962. The Greeks tell each other "Chistos anesti" at Easter-tide. Here HF's own resurrection is under consideration. Those who know tell me the sentence as given is shocking bad Greek.

"Nora D" was one of the underworld types attached to the fringes of the Pound menagerie ("Pound: an enclosure for stray animals," EP to Sheri Martinelli, 1954).

"yr McCall data": I had reported (6 June 1962):

> re Tobey it might amuse you to know that the series of sumi drawings executed in 57 and after was in fact stolen (the idea and some of the specific designs) from the aforesaid McCall. Paul Horiuchi left some of McC's then current product at T's studio for a few days, and T's next show consisted of what I suppose one might call a miraculous coincidence.
>
> He, McC, also sent a few single-stripe opera to N.Y.C. JUST before Barnett Newman started specializing in the genus.
>
> I might add that the aforesaid McCall is not producing "the art I personally want" ANY part of the time.

13 July 1962. Hugh Kenner had written me (1 July 1962) of "contradiction *in* the form, which EP was postponing all these years, finally all swept together into the last remaining corner, and still as insoluble as they potentially became on the day when the poem became a *report of* continuing *progress*, rather than the *fulfill*ing of a scheme" (emphasis supplied, to mark words HF echoes).

1 April 1964. Analog-digital, etc.: I had written (22 March 1964):

> 12) Or: Picture of Bear is analog, Ursa Major is *digital*. How far mapping can be imported into the discussion I don't know. Certainly b-i-r-d represents the mapping of a set of counters on a curve of

> sounds. The real battle between sane men and spelling-cranks is the question of whether writing represents the names of sounds or of the words those sounds designate. ET cetera. 13) BUT the stellar parallax is negligible between left and right eye. To get the same effect in a gallery you must blind the viewers in one eye (?Pendant presque une heure). Negligible also between Florida and Spitzbergen, you must tie the viewers' heads to a post. Or perhaps you are in some way allowing for, or including, perspective in your scheme. When you speak of centre of gravity I see something like a dentist's chair.

and continued (3 April 1964):

> may have got terms reversed, not so bad as getting them totally misapplied. My starting point was the explanation to me of the dog's significant bark as analog, the human symbols d-a-n-g-e-r, a collection of six conventional and meaningless sounds in a significant and specific sense, as digital. "-s" does not mean plural until it is tacked onto a noun, etc.

Twenty years of brooding on the matter have not persuaded me I had the terms reversed at all, and in those twenty years we have all had to become much more familiar with the meaning and applications of the word *digital*.

22 April 1964. I had written ("Sunday mid-April 1964"):

> both fables could well be true without conflicting. Fresco as cheap substitute for mosaic, easel-painting as portable substitute for fresco.
>
> The byzantine mosaics arranged (elongations, etc.) so as to read accurately from the nave; a magical substitute for a pilgrimage.
>
> You have spoken now and again of "the edge problem." Does this mean edge of the rectangle or edge of the pigmented areas?
>
> Further re rectangle: It is, all things considered, the most convenient shape for storage (even drawings in portfolio); tondi roll, trapezoids trip you, rhombi catch your sleeve. It is also the most convenient shape for orienting oneself spatially to the ahtvoik: straight up is *there*, left and right are *there*.

"The S----y episode" was one in which a young man came to Venice to present EP with a book, and got turned away. "I did see his shadow on the wall," he reported.

"That paragraph" was a friend's, written in praise of Stan Brakhage. It really did use the unfortunate terms analyzed here.

Erotic Predicaments for Camera

HOLLIS FRAMPTON

It has been widely alleged that a picture is worth some reasonably large but finite number of words. It has been widely believed that a photograph is as plausible as—or approximates to the plausibility of—that swarm of events that we are accustomed to call the real world. And indeed the entire photographic literature of eroticism depends very heavily on exactly that supposed plausibility. I have chosen, therefore, to attempt to believe what is believed, to attempt to generate those words that the photograph is supposed to be worth, in four instances of erotic predicaments for camera, using my possibly defective understanding of the method of Robert Browning.*

*

The year is, or is about to be, or has recently been, 1855. I am in France. This part of France is delicately colorless, and faintly metallic in texture; if I adjust my position slightly, I may find my own fragmentary image reflected in the darker parts of the scene before me. Light here is diffuse, shadows transparent. Either the time is approximately local apparent noon, or I am indoors: the locale is indeterminate. In what may be the distance, I find only a vague, uniform mist—but that distance may amount to no more than a blank wall whose junction with the floor is elided. Nearer, and to my right, I find a semi-solid entity the size of a large boulder, but a little more complex in shape.

About half the space before me is occupied by two anonymous strangers. They are quite clearly a woman, who faces me, and a man, who presents to me his left profile. Both are mesomorphs, both sustain their weight on the left foot, both are quite naked. The man's right leg is extended behind the woman's left leg, as if encountering her in mid-stride. They embrace. The woman's left arm

* These prefatory remarks are not contained in the typescript of Frampton's text. They were added when Frampton presented the text at a symposium entitled "The Pornographic and Erotic Image—Toward Definition and Implication," at the International Center of Photography, New York, April 17–18, 1982.

encircles the man's upper torso: the fingertips are visible below his left shoulder blade. Her right arm crosses her body horizontally; the extended fingers nearly touch, or touch lightly, near the lower insertion of the left pectoralis major muscle. The man's right arm encircles her and emerges below her right arm; the splayed fingers partially enclose her right breast. His left hand is pressed against her abdomen, the thumb fourteen centimeters below her navel, the palm guarding the vulnerable passage of the femoral artery into the thigh, the fingers reaching the pubic symphysis. The woman flexes her right knee, resting her foot on a barely visible thing as thick as a plump pillow; her left hip inclines toward the man, her head away. He closes his eyes and kisses her cheek. She lowers her eyelids, and averts her gaze from me, looking above me and to my left. I make a quarter plate daguerreotype of this scene, trusting that neither person will move during the long interval required by the exposure, and that the man will sustain, unwavering, his very enthusiastic erection. The couple vanishes, or I vanish. Was their encounter arranged for my benefit, their postures rehearsed, the space evacuated to enhance their visibility? Or did I merely chance to witness an occasion that would have transpired in any case? Did my intervention inject uncertainties into the event? Would they have behaved differently had I not been present, or if I had brought no camera? Did I leave too soon, or arrive too late? Am I entitled to suspect that I failed to record something of interest? To suspend and memorialize all these irresolutions, I shall mount the little picture in an elegant frame of tortoise shell, lined with gold, and leave it, for more than a century, in a bureau drawer. About myself, I know only that I am a mature adult, whose name is F. J. Moulin.

*

The year is 1878, and it is high summer. I am in England, probably in Oxford, where the University has not closed its doors since the time of Dante Alighieri; the light here is typical of our fine English days. Hazy, but permeant, it illuminates a hand-painted tropic world nearing twilight. In a distant seascape, the black skeleton of a derelict ship is half-submerged. A slight foamy chop in the water suggests a breeze I cannot feel. Nearby, to my right, the tip of a rocky promontory slopes into the water, lightly overgrown with a sketchy greenery that looks like mimosa. Two perfectly real children, nicely tinted, are entwined within the brushwork, which mainly surrounds their outlines, appearing behind them in atmospheric perspective, but somehow encroaches before them, as well, to conceal their respective loins with a ragged cloth and a bit of foliage. Nearer still, painted wavelets splash without wetting the children's feet.

It is as though this fragment of the universe had been created using two different methods, or sets of rules, each foreign to the other but mutually inextricable, like that landscape, at once nonsensical and plausible, through which

I have walked, in dreams recorded with a special instrument of my own invention.

That the children are girls I infer from their fine features, long tresses, pensive demeanor. One, on the left, sits on the rock and rests her right hand on it. Her right leg is drawn up and crossed so that the ankle rests on her left knee; her left hand, then, rests on the ankle. The other stands, the width of a body apart from her, leaning against the same rock, hands on hips.

Both girls look to the left, at right angles to my own sightline, but they direct their attention to two different things, neither of which is known to me. The seated child seems melancholy, the standing, expectant. Neither appears to notice the wreck behind them, or to require from it any of those comforts that Defoe's Crusoe salvaged and patched together into a threadbare cartoon of civilization. Indeed, they seem unaware that they are castaways in a menacing island of artifice; one might more easily suppose them at rest after hours of playing naked in the sunshine among our lawns and hedgerows.

To record my own puzzlement at finding them in such contradictory surroundings, I photograph the scene before me with a collodion wet plate I have freshly prepared, whereupon the environs disappear, but the children remain. And now I recall the circumstances that brought me this fanciful vision. My colleague, Patrick Henderson, a Fellow of Wadham College, had left with me his daughters Annie, aged eight, and Frances, younger by a year, for an afternoon chat and tea. To my delight, these innocent little creatures thought nothing of showing themselves to me, and to my camera, in their natural state. I delight especially in the company of little girls, to satisfy whose boundless, prankish curiosity I am always ready to invent a new puzzle, rebus, word game, or nonsense story. Indeed two stories, which I made up to amuse Alice Liddell, the daughter of the Greek lexicographer in Christ's Church, have been published here and abroad. What momentary aberration, then, could have caused me to imagine, so vividly, Annie and Frances in such wild surroundings? I must make an albumen print of this picture, and give it to Mrs. Hatch to paint over in oils according to that fancy, so that I may contemplate it at length. Convinced of my artistry, she might then allow me to photograph her daughter Evelyn Maud, of whom I would like to do an infantile version of Goya's *Maja Desnuda*.

In fact I am, by profession, neither storyteller nor photographer, but a logician. Personally, I so much hate the idea of strangers being able to know me by sight that I refuse to give my photograph, even for the albums of relations and friends, who know that my name is Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, and that I am called Lewis Carroll.

*

The year is 1885, on an afternoon in early November. I am in London, in Whitechapel, a teeming slum just north of the city, where the circumstances of life are so vile that even the fearless Jack London, come to study, left, sickened, after a few months. I am in room 13, off a foul alleyway in Miller's Court. I am told that the whole space is no more than twelve feet square, and contains only two chairs, a table, and a bed, but I can see only the last named item, and a corner of the table beside it, and behind it, very near, the lower part of a closed door. The rent, which is four shillings a week, is three months in arrears.

The light is dim, and will need to be augmented with magnesium. Today, mercifully, the world is colorless, odorless, tasteless as distilled water. On the bed, still wearing portions of a linen undergarment, lies what remains of a woman. The throat has been cut straight across with a knife, nearly severing the head from the body. The left arm, like the head, is attached to the body by skin only. The nose has been cut off, the forehead flayed, and the thighs stripped of flesh. The abdomen has been slashed with a knife both across and downward, and the viscera wrenched away. Both of the breasts have been cut from the body. The flesh from the thighs, together with the kidneys, nose, and breasts, have been placed on the table, and the liver placed between the feet. An amputated hand has been pushed into the stomach. The eyes are intact. Blood, from the severing of the carotid artery, is everywhere, but the bedclothes, which have been rolled aside, are surprisingly unstained.

Because it is my duty to do so, as it is my duty to be here in this place at all, I make a single photograph of this shambles. The scene vanishes.

This is my fifth such encounter in recent months, and it is destined to be my last. After the first, it was given out to the papers that, through the photograph's power of minutely detailed observation, Scotland Yard expected to determine the murderer's identity with all speed. Formerly, known miscreants were routinely photographed as part of an immense project that was to delimit the criminal type of physiognomy for good and all. Here and in France, vast libraries of these photographs have accumulated, but not one man has been remanded to Dr. Bentham's famous Panopticon in Newgate Prison on the strength of their information. It would seem that what such photographs will teach us, if, in time, they teach us anything, is the precise location of the boundary between knowledge and understanding—assuming that those two principalities of the mind border on one another.

Thus my work has not, in fact, illuminated our pursuit of the murderer, of whom it is known only that he is right handed . . . and that from medical evidence alone. But it has not been, I fear, without its miserable effect, because, knowing that the result of his own work is to be photographed, he has come to perform for my camera. In each successive instance, he has become more thorough, painstaking, ingenious in his ghastly craft. In the first case, he probably accomplished his business in a minute or two, but the coroner has estimated that he spent three hours arranging this final and most spectacular masterpiece,

like an artist who would rearrange anatomy to his whim, in whom all affection for that grand edifice, the human body, has soured and rotted. But may there still be hope that the camera will come to our aid? It is rumored that a new technique has been invented, in Germany, to develop the retina of the eye, like a photographic negative, and retrieve the ultimate image perceived by the dying. To that end, the body of this piteous victim will be desecrated yet once more, and this time in the name of science. Will we understand that photograph any better than we have any of the others we have made, of everything under the sun? Not long ago, the man we seek sent a letter to the Chief Inspector, dated, with perfect correctness, "from Hell." Our incomprehension of these pictures, which we so desperately need to comprehend, has made for us a Hell of our own. At least, out of our need to know the murderer's name, we have conferred one upon him: he is called Jack the Ripper. My own name is unknown, even to myself; my photographs will be hidden away for three generations, and when they come to light again the meaning that we seek in them will be no plainer than it is at this moment. Perhaps they mean something else entirely.

*

The year is 1980, and the season indeterminate except that an abbreviated patch of sky, visible through a far window, seems bleakly overcast. I am in something like Boston, where there are still turn-of-the-century houses of a spacious cut, in a white room in such a house. The floor is of polished hardwood; there is a handsome fireplace, and a rug before it that looks like fur; brass electric sconces and chandelier are extinguished. The space is otherwise as replete as a Victorian parlor. On the left, an open grand piano displays albums of Chopin and Mozart. Its bench is ornate. On the right, a magnificent big cabinet of Far Eastern design supports a much smaller one, from beneath which dangles a silk stocking. Three modern chrome and leather chairs are disposed as if for conversation, with a matching chrome and glass coffee table. Two large embroidered cushions, numerous exotic plants, African and Asiatic objets d'art, and a few things that I cannot identify, fill the scene, throughout which, arrayed on floor, walls, and furniture, with rectilinear, geometric precision, I see scores of minor oral mollifiers in the shape of bars of Hershey's Milk Chocolate (with Almonds) and sticks of Juicy Fruit chewing gum, and twice I distinguish, on small plastic signs a trifle larger than the gum, and of the sort posted on office doors, the name G. I. FREUD.

In the middle of this plethora, a young oriental woman kneels, naked, on one of the cushions. Her left hand rests on her left thigh, and her right hand encircles, just above the knee, the left leg of a standing naked man in his mid-thirties. The man's left arm is behind his back, his right foot advanced, his right arm raised so that the forearm is level at the latitude of his navel. He is clean shaven, and holds an open straight razor in his right hand. Both of these person-

ages face me in aggressively direct eye contact. I choose to regard the woman's expression as mildly surprised, and the man's as mildly annoyed. Although their postures occasion a minor difficulty for such an act, the woman is fellating the man.

There is an instantaneous, blinding burst of light, as if from an electronic flash, and I realize that a photograph has been made. Now I find myself elsewhere, at my worktable, examining a print of this photograph, and trying to decide who made it. There are two possibilities. I may be a genial professor of art in an upstate New York university, the photographer Leslie Krims; but if, as I suspect, the man who has just been photographed is himself Leslie Krims, then my pretense that I have been other than a nameless spectator is invalidated, and the maker of the piece, synonymous with its prime watcher, is watching himself and his friend performing the act of making the photograph. But if that is true, what rationale can obtain for annoyance or surprise on the part of the performers? On the other hand, if I am the photographer, then my intrusion at this private amorous moment justifies both those emotions, but I cannot fail to question their stances, which suit the necessities of the camera far better than the convenience of erotic enjoyment.

Therefore, I will keep this photograph, taking pleasure in the ways it criticizes my every attempt to include my own contemplation in a system of which it is, itself, both center and limit, knowing that its intellectual economy partakes of a class of problems that may never be resolved, because it is congruent with an instance in which we touch the limit of our reasoning powers. That limit may be best generalized in a letter of 1885, written by Lewis Carroll to a mathematician:

> Let a geometrical point move from A to B. In so doing, it passes through intermediate positions. Now, of these positions, either (1) there is a position through which it passes first after leaving A, or (2) there is not such a position. These propositions are contradictories, so one of them must be true. But neither is conceivable.

Buffalo, New York
April 1982

Hollis Frampton. Stopping Down. *1973.*

Word Pictures: Frampton and Photography

Hollis Frampton: Recollections/Recreations. *Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, September 30–November 25, 1984.*

CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS

Recall Mallarmé's celebrated proposal that in the last analysis, all existence must be contained in the labyrinthine foldings of a universal Book. In a similarly speculative vein, Frampton—who recognized our own age as that of the machine—recommended that we consider all the world's appearances as the object of an infinite, omnivorous Cinema. But while the generative principle of the Book, which Mallarmé identifies as the "total expansion of the letter," thus resides even in its own most fundamental elements, Frampton insists that the relation of the Cinema to the still photograph is of quite a different order. The still photograph, he firmly maintains, should in no way be regarded as an originary instance; it is at most "an isolated frame taken out of the infinite cinema."

Ought we then to consider Frampton's own photographic production in this same light—as he himself all but invited us to do by designating it his "other work"? The exhibition recently and posthumously mounted at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, *Hollis Frampton: Recollections/Recreations*, provided an intriguing glimpse of Frampton's little-known and rarely-exhibited "other work" produced over a span of more than two decades.[1] On display were not only selections from a number of photographic projects, but also artist's books, sculptural objects, and xerographic artworks as well. The exhibition enables us more fully to comprehend why Frampton's provocative essays on photography show him simultaneously drawn to and repelled by his subject. His photographic work, the exhibition suggests, can paradoxically be seen as both a privileged entrance into the labyrinth of his own cinema and, at the same time, something of a cul de sac in its own right. With this dual perspective in mind, I wish to consider a perplexing couple: Frampton and photography.

Frampton's decision to regard himself as a serious photographer coincided with his move to New York in 1958. He came to New York an aspiring young

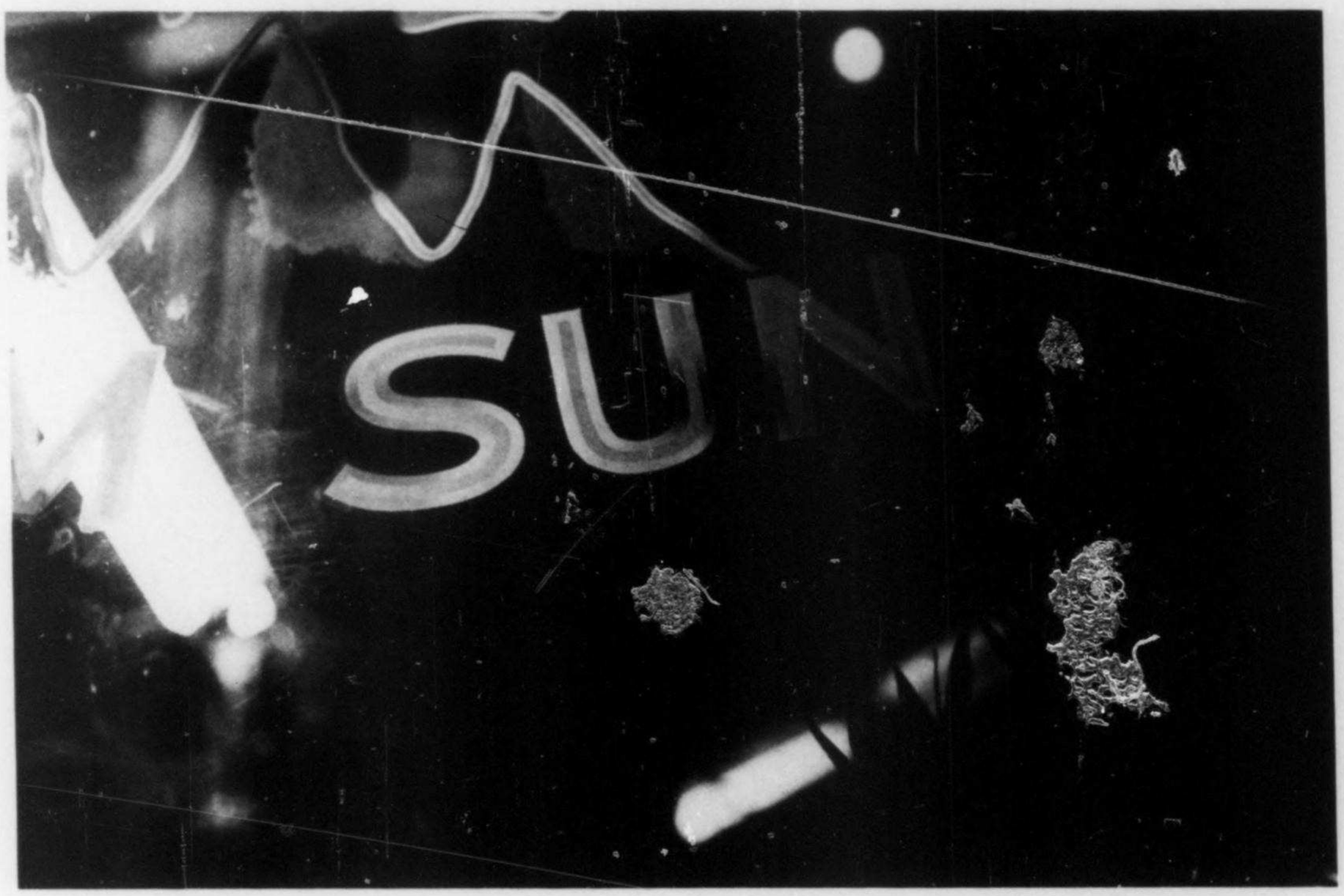
1. See the comprehensive catalogue *Hollis Frampton: Recollections/Recreations*, with essays by Bruce Jenkins and Susan Krane, Buffalo, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, MIT Press, 1984.

poet, after spending the previous months living in Washington so that he might pay regular visits to Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Having witnessed Pound's recitation and verbal annotation of the entirety of the *Cantos*, Frampton recalled, "I came to understand that I was not a poet." In New York, subsequently, he discovered himself "unable to find a meaningful relationship between poetry as it was then practiced and anything I was interested in."[2] His turn to photography may seem a peculiar choice for a precocious young man by that time thoroughly versed in the most ambitious achievements of the literary and artistic avant-gardes. Photography—as relatively undervalued as an artistic medium then as it has been overvalued in more recent days—lay distinctly beyond the pale of artistic respectability.

Yet to Frampton, confronted with the same obstacles that faced the other young artists of his generation, photography offered several immediate attractions. It was considered a comparatively impersonal, nonexpressive medium at a moment when unabashed celebration of the self was the dominant characteristic of the most highly regarded contemporary painting. Photography lent itself, moreover, to such activities as selection, collection, and classification, whose affinities with Duchamp's procedures were not lost on Frampton. Further, photographs need not exist as isolated single images; they might be organized in series or sequences of varying complexity, ushering in the possibility of expanded formal constructs. The possibility of combining image with text offered yet another dimension for the play of expanded form. Finally, the optics and physics of the photographic process itself suggested a host of spatial and temporal paradoxes; as the early *Dialogues* with Carl Andre attest, it was these philosophical possibilities upon which Frampton seized.[3]

During the years 1958–1964 Frampton's photographic work consisted primarily of interpretive artists' portraits, art documentation, and extended series such as *The Secret World of Frank Stella*, *Word Pictures*, and the satirical *Ways to Purity*. Looking back on this period from the late 1970s, Frampton observed, "It was quite dreadful. I didn't find it a picnic to be a photographer, through the Sixties, not because photography was disregarded, although of course that was true, but because my predicament was that of a committed illusionist in an environment that was officially dedicated to the eradication of illusion and, of course, utterly dominated by painting and sculpture."[4] Another source of difficulty, perhaps even more acute, was the exaggerated awe in which Frampton held the photographs and precepts of Edward Weston, the publication of whose

2. Scott MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton: ZORNS LEMMA," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Winter 1979), p. 34.
3. See Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *12 Dialogues 1962–1963*, Halifax, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and New York, New York University Press, 1980.
4. Scott MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton; *Hapax Legomena*," *Film Culture*, nos. 67–69 (1979), p. 159. For a more general sense of this period in American art, see Annette Michelson, "About Snow," *October*, no. 8 (Spring 1979), pp. 111–124.



Hollis Frampton. Sun *from* Word Pictures. *1962.*

Daybooks in 1961 attracted considerable attention among young photographers. While Frampton's grappling with the photographic legacy of this towering predecessor represents a sustained encounter with the premises and procedures of artistic modernism, his own work in this vein too often shared the docility and preciosity of Weston's latter-day followers. The stultifying quality of such photography, Frampton later concluded, "produced a stasis in me, too, because to a degree I identified with it and got myself up a tree that I was never quite able to climb down, until I got completely out of it."[5]

Frampton's initial explorations in filmmaking after 1962 were accompanied by a corresponding diminution of his photographic activities. Shards of earlier photographic projects were frequently incorporated into the films themselves. His series of black and white photographs of environmental words, *Word Pictures* (1962–63), served as the germinal idea for *Zorns Lemma*; *nostalgia*, which features the burning of twelve of Frampton's early photographs to the accompaniment of an asynchronous, mock-confessional, spoken narrative, can be seen as the filmmaker's interim judgment on his prior incarnation as a still photographer.

5. Scott MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton: The Early Years," *October*, no. 12 (Spring 1980), p. 105.

It is essential to note that the period of Frampton's early filmmaking was also that of photography's emergence as an object of new attention; not merely as the generator of a new line of "masters" and "masterworks" (a development about which Frampton retained a healthy skepticism), but as a form of investigation in the hands of artists with interests similar to his own. The years 1962–66, for example, brought forth such works as Michael Snow's *Four to Five* (1962), a group of sixteen photographs showing his "Walking Woman" in urban environments; Ed Ruscha's *26 Gas Stations* (1962); Ben Vautier's photograph-and-text documentation of his swim across the Nice harbor (1963); Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965), which juxtaposed on a gallery wall a chair, a photograph of a chair, and its dictionary definition; Dan Graham's *Homes for America* (1965–66); and the first of Bruce Nauman's Duchamp-like photographic works such as *Bound to Fail* (1966).[6]

It seems likely that Frampton's identification with a particularly insular and narrowly defined art-photography tradition all but closed off for some time the possibility of his striking out along the main lines that were being explored by other innovative artists of his generation using photography.[7] Beginning in the 1960s Michael Snow, for example, carried out an important series of photographic works rigorously examining the cognitive processes of visual perception (*Sink*, 1970), the effects generated by formal variation in camera placement (*8 × 10*, 1969), the relation of language and image (*A Casing Shelved*, 1970), and the interplay of memory and representation (*Authorization*, 1969). In a noticeably different vein, John Baldessari, at the close of the '60s, adopted photographic imagery as a central component of his work, often combining photographs with printed texts in witty commentaries on the processes of selection, framing, and narrative.

Frampton's initial reluctance to embrace photography as no more than what Baldessari termed a "dumb recording device," his hesitancy fully to contaminate the image with language, and his lingering affection for the craft of the fine print finally served to propel him out of photography altogether and into a medium better suited to his own expansive talents. Only after his film work was well underway did Frampton again turn serious attention to photography, producing the series of remarkable, speculative essays which appeared

6. For a useful survey of artists' photographic activities during this period, see Rolf H. Krauss, "Kunst mit Photographie," in Rolf Krauss, Manfred Schmalriede, and Michael Schwarz, *Kunst mit Photographie*, Berlin, Verlag Frolich & Kaufmann, 1983.

7. In the dialogues with Andre, Frampton invokes the then-reigning dogmas of the "specifically photographic sensibility": "The practice of photography is a peculiarly deliberate sort of activity. . . . The photographic process is a recapitulation of a process in the mind of the photographer, which must have been carried through to an end before the shutter is released. We say among ourselves of a photograph that it is 'well seen.'" Responding to Frampton's effusions over print quality and the "delicate object," Andre witheringly observed, "He [the photographer] is not an outrager of decayed sensibilities by a conserver" (*12 Dialogues 1962–1963*, p. 23).

in *Artforum* and *October* in the '70s, and in periodic projects—in collaboration with Marion Faller—which made use of photography and xerography. These projects, which he now firmly identified as his "other work," were often derived from his filmmaking concerns or suggested by his continuing archaeology of early cinema. As such, Frampton's later photographic pieces, which I shall examine in a moment, can be convincingly placed within the larger matrix of ideas animating his cinematic project.

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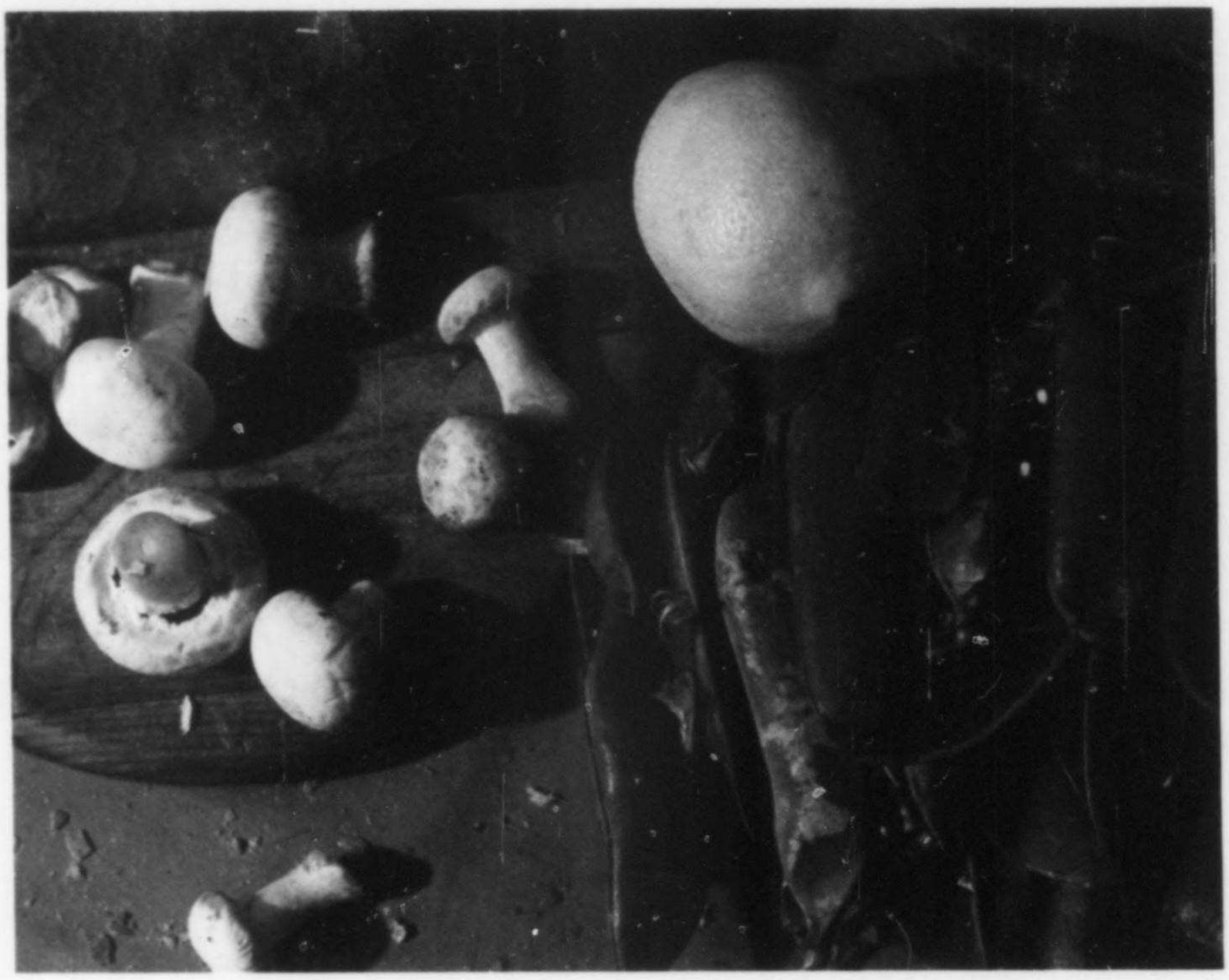
Frampton's regard for the literary generation of the 1880s was not inconsiderable. In a 1981 lecture sketching the dynamics of what he called "cultural Oedipalism" in the arts, he observed that "to say you were going to write poetry, that you were going to be a poet . . . in the shadow of Eliot or Pound, was almost to transgress against it. They owned it, so to speak."[8] In turning from poetry to photography in the late 1950s, Frampton seems immediately to have grasped both the paradoxes inherent in the photographic process and the wider cultural implications of the medium's ceaseless reproduction of the world's appearances. Yet ultimately he chose to apprentice himself to a strain of art photography personified by still another representative of the modernist generation of the 1880s—Edward Weston. Frampton's rueful catalogue of the difficulties imposed upon the disciple of such a master, in his "Impromptus on Edward Weston," simultaneously proclaims and denies Weston's authority as predecessor. As an intellectual forebear, Frampton despairingly concludes that Weston revealed himself as "one of those frowning, humorless parents who teaches his progeny his trade and then prevents them from practicing it by blackballing them in the union."[9]

Frampton was drawn especially, and almost exclusively, to the photographs of Weston's middle period—the work of the early 1920s through the mid-'30s. Here, typically, a familiar object—a pepper, a urinal, a human figure—appearing in close-up in an ambiguous space, is astonishingly transformed into a monumental sculptural object or fragment. In the insistent tension between the volumetric rendering of the object and the almost hallucinatory play of tone and detail at the image surface, Frampton glimpsed a limit-case of one modernist pictorial concern: the contending claims of perspectival illusion and material surface. While Weston's virtuoso contact prints from 8 × 10 negatives thus encouraged a proliferation of quasi-autonomous surface incident, they

8. Hollis Frampton, "Totem and Taboo in Photography," lecture taped at the International Center of Photography, New York, November 18, 1980.
9. Hollis Frampton, "Impromptus on Edward Weston: Everything in Its Place," in *Circles of Confusion: Film, Photography, Video Texts 1968–1980*, Rochester, Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1983, p. 159.



Hollis Frampton. Untitled. 1961–62.

conveyed, at the same time, an overwhelming sense of tactile immediacy that served to guarantee the illusory presence of a physical object in space. It was his obsessive pursuit of tactile value as the spatial foundation of his photographic images that accounted for Weston's particular *Schaulust*, his "torrent of visual concupiscence," culminating in what Frampton called his "sexualization of everything in sight."

In Weston's definition of art photography's objective as the awakening and renewal of perception, Frampton may well have heard distant echoes of Pound's earlier notion of the poetic Image. Pound's call for the direct treatment of the "thing," unmediated by intervening rhetoric; for a severe economy of means allowing of no extraneous ornament; and for presentation ("make it new") rather than representation might easily find a partial analogue in Weston's search for a photographic means of revealing the quintessence of the "thing itself."

Through photographic strategies of displacement and condensation, Weston's transfigurative images might thus furnish an arena for what Pound called *logopoeia*, the play of ideas; they could not, however, provide for that

other characteristic element of Poundian poetics, *phanopoeia*, the play of successive images.[10] Whereas both the individual poem and the overall form of the *Cantos* are structured by means of a temporal succession of images that Pound himself described as cinematographic in effect, Weston's photographs are the sites of the eternal present. A present not of production, moreover, but of revelation. As Frampton later described it, Weston's photographs are all noun, no verb.

It was, ultimately, Frampton's wish to establish in his art the dual sovereignty of space and time that led him to regard the still photograph as, for him, an unsatisfactory form. It was, in large part, his desire for expanded structure and a temporal reading order that underlay his exploration of photographic series in such works as *The Secret World of Frank Stella* and *Ways to Purity*. From this vantage point, it can be seen that Frampton's search for a means to control reading order and reading time, and for an encompassing structure that could clarify the relation of the part to the whole, necessarily propelled him into film in the early '60s.

Looking back from the end of the '70s, Frampton recognized Weston's constrictive Law of the Father as an instance in which "the mysteries are offered, but the rites of passage are withheld." Indeed, the patriarchical figure was raised even more explicitly in his 1981 lecture, "Totem and Taboo in Photography." In a characteristic mixture of erudition and barbed wit, Frampton extrapolated from Freud's essay to conjure up a vision of an art world in which the young are "surrounded on all sides by the claims of the absent parents, the illustrious dead." His own youth is described as a period when his artistic contemporaries (Stella and Andre prominent among them) banded together to overthrow the reigning figures of the previous generation and to redefine the laws of painting and sculpture. It should not need emphasizing that in this particular mythology, Frampton resolutely heroicizes the very act he chose *not* to carry out within the parameters of art photography during the same years. He devoted the bulk of what proved to be a controversial lecture to an infatuated commentary on the photographs of Leslie Krims. On what grounds could the precisely calculated abrasiveness and conspicuous sexual resentments that inform Krims's imagery warrant such unreserved praise? Only on the grounds that it be regarded, as Frampton obviously did, as a final, shattering blow to the stifling decorum of F64-style photography. For most young photographers, of course, the power of these conventions had long since dissipated. But for photographers of Frampton's generation, the reputed "transgressive" value of Krims's photographs lay in their claim to exorcise a lingering and particularly baleful shade.

10. On Pound's poetics, see Joseph Riddel, "Pound and the Decentered Image," *Georgia Review*, no. 29 (1975), pp. 565–591.

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In a particularly influential essay of 1923, Eliot foresaw the demise of those artistic forms which were incapable of expressing the pervasive discontinuity of modern life. To provide an ordering frame for what he termed the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy" of contemporary experience, to accomplish the hard task of "making the modern world possible for art," he advised the employment of mythic or historical motifs as an especially promising formal device.[11] Certainly it is possible to see that Frampton's adoption of Magellan, circumnavigator of the globe, as the controlling metaphor of his epic film cycle, follows directly in this line.

Yet it is equally possible to discern, running throughout Frampton's cinematic and photographic work, an obsession with another, particularly potent modern myth—that of language. Frampton saw in language both the code of codes and the veil of veils. For his generation of artists language loomed as a field to be scrupulously shunned or else systematically reckoned with. One might seek, like Andre or Stella, to emphasize the purity of the material signifier—wood, or paint and canvas—and thereby expunge any vestigial representationality as a "literary" contamination. Or, like Frampton, one might choose to call the processes of signification itself into question by exploring the convergence—or radical nonconvergence—of multiple signifying systems within a single artwork. Here the purposeful combination of word and image in a "mixed object" offered a means to short-circuit the otherwise inexorable movement of either element toward a "naturalizing" closure.

The photographic image, so easily regarded as coterminous with its referent, covers the traces of its own constitutive process with extraordinary agility. Like Benjamin and Barthes, Frampton found in the rapid and uncontrollable dissemination of photographic imagery over the last century and a half a particularly striking index of the modern temper. "In that indistinct moment when photographic representations, scarcely less abstract than the graphic signs of written language, became for the naive or unreflective citizen (and we are all that person a good part of the time) associated with things as intimately and automatically as their names, our culture had passed an epistemological point of no return."[12] Thus, for Frampton, the variable combination of scriptive and photographic elements gradually emerged as a privileged formal device, one allowing the manipulation of precisely those channels which organize and articulate so much of contemporary experience. As revealed in the xerographic work *By Any Other Name*, the seemingly chance encounter of word and image on

11. T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich and Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975, pp. 175–178.
12. Hollis Frampton, "A Talk on Photography and History, Time, Space and Causality," *Exposure*, vol. 21, no. 4 (1983), p. 33.

a product label may well serve as a paradigm for the paradoxes inhabiting operations such as naming, describing, classifying, and narrating.

One perspective from which we might consider Frampton's "other work," then—one that bears especially on his cinematic production—involves distinguishing an array of combinatory strategies for joining words and images. A cursory survey reveals, I believe, at least six distinct techniques.

Word as image. In the photographic series *Word Pictures* (1962–63), Frampton sought to exploit the oscillation that takes place between our consciousness of the materiality of the script—here, environmental words isolated from the visual continuum of the urban landscape—and the evocation of its signified. Unable to devise a satisfactory presentational form for these still photographs, Frampton ultimately transposed the idea to cinema in *Zorns Lemma.*

Images containing words. A witty look at the folk poetry of capitalism, the xerographic series *By Any Other Name* (1979–83) explored the production of meaning in an unlikely quarter—consumer product labels. The rules for Frampton's selection of the labels stipulated: first, a two-part product name

Hollis Frampton. Lemon Brand Meteors *from* By Any Other Name—Series 2. *1963. (Original in color.)*

consisting of a noun that specifies the product, and an unmotivated accompanying adjective; and second, the presence of an illustration derived from the adjectival component. In a striking inversion, the titles that Frampton assigned to the individual pieces invite us to imagine an alternative reading of the label (Meteor Brand Lemons, for example, becomes Lemon Brand Meteors) and to ponder the fragile line distinguishing sense from nonsense.

Titles assigned to images. Typically Frampton's titles function as an integral part of the artwork, providing indispensable clues to its decipherment. The title of his 1963 poster *L. Poons at Green Gallery*, for example, deftly keys our reading of Frampton's portrait of the artist punningly pressing two s-poons against his eyes. Similarly, in the 1959 series *Ways to Purity*, the title's implied metaphor of a journey toward spiritual expression via a number of contemporary art styles is abruptly deflated when the final image reveals the artist's mundane destination: the Purity diner.

Texts paired with images. In 1984 Frampton reprinted the twelve photographs burned in the film *nostalgia* thirteen years earlier, and prepared a portfolio which brought together these photographs and the texts read by Michael Snow in the film. This recasting of the work eliminated one of the film's most remarkable formal devices—the "triple present" produced by the filmic image, the photographic image, and the asynchronous spoken text. The passage from spoken text to scrutinizable printed text revealed more clearly, however, Frampton's calculated manipulation of the confessional mode. This device allowed him to delineate a number of aesthetic postures—Poundian *personae*?—by means of the dramatization of a revealing "series of accounts of my life, my youth."

In one of his last photographic projects, *ADSVMVS ABSVMVS* (We are here, we are not here), Frampton presented color photographs of animals and vegetable specimens with anecdotal texts recounting the circumstances in which the specimen came into his possession. The texts organize this particular collection of residues, or traces, around the notion of varying degrees of edibility—classification by way of an idiosyncratic *pensée sauvage* rather than a scientific taxonomy.

Texts evoking images. At a Toronto symposium in the early 1980s, Frampton announced a lecture entitled "Erotic Predicaments for Camera." Those who may secretly have anticipated a voyeuristic *frisson* were doubtless chagrined to find that his elaboration of four "predicaments" depended upon the showing of not a single image. Instead, four photographs were evoked entirely through Frampton's verbal description, set forth in (fictionalized) first-person accounts by the photographers themselves.

Images containing texts evoking images. The translation of *Poetic Justice* (1972) into book format in the following year entailed a necessary loss of the film's reflexivity; at the same time, it extended the general point that mimesis by no means depends upon a reality effect, and that the production of sense in narra-

Hollis Frampton. L. Poons, T. Poons and Spoons. *1963.*

tive is hardly automatic, but requires a ceaseless exertion on the part of the spectator. The succession of film-script scenarios which appear on a page set on a table top, casually flanked by coffee cup and potted plant, leads the reader/viewer in breathless pursuit of a narrative closure that is endlessly and ingeniously deferred. The scenario sets in motion an elaborate play of imaginary images within images—in the repeated interruption of the "filmic" space by a hand holding a still photograph, or in the long erotic encounter between "you" and "your lover" which takes place while the bedroom window opens onto a parade of phantasmagoric images.

*

It was, recall, Frampton's dissatisfaction with the very stillness of the still photograph that prompted his initial turn to filmmaking. By the time that he outlined his "metahistory of film" in the early '70s, he had ambitiously identified film's prospects as an art form with "the founding of an art that is to be fully and radically isomorphic with the kineses and stases . . . of consciousness."[13] In this view, the other camera art—photography—seemed never fully to have clarified its own artistic task. Frampton saw one important tendency in photography's history as stubbornly antitemporal, exemplified by Fox Talbot's early photographs and Weston's later monumentalizing efforts. Another view of time can be discerned within the lacunae of photography's past, and it is not difficult to imagine why Frampton, in his continued fascination with that past, should have been increasingly drawn to the work of E. J. Marey and Eadweard Muybridge, two proto-cinematic photographers of the 1870s–1880s.

During the 1970s Frampton paid photographic tribute to each. *A Visitation of Insomnia* (1970–73), is a homage to Marey's chronophotography, the recording of sequential states of a moving figure on a single photographic plate. In the essay "For a Metahistory of Film," Frampton proposes Insomnia as film's own muse—one appropriate to his speculative "infinite cinema" that has always already devoured the world's appearances and from them fabricated a vast filmic artifact for our eternal perusal.

Sixteen Studies from Vegetable Locomotion (1975), Frampton's first major collaboration with the photographer Marion Faller, extended Muybridge's analyses of human and animal movement into hitherto uncharted regions of the organic domain. Before a ubiquitous gridded backdrop similar to Muybridge's, Frampton and Faller solemnly staged a series of intricate and hilarious vegetable maneuvers. The deadpan titles tell the tale: *Tomatoes descending a ramp*, *Watermelon falling*, *Savoy cabbage flying*. Several studies—such as *Mature radishes bathing*, *Sweet corn disrobing*, *Dill bundling*—pointedly satirize Muybridge's penchant for weaving erotic fantasy into his supposedly scientific investigations.

13. Hollis Frampton, "Incisions in History/Segments of Eternity," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 100.

Frampton's speculations regarding the ways one might map time onto space now yielded an unexpectedly productive historical intuition. His own filmmaking experience and his discovery of the striking plasticity of narrative time in early cinema had convinced him that time is, in large degree, a cultural construct: "our supreme fiction." Closely reexamining Muybridge's motion studies, he found that their illusion of a complete analytic decomposition of uninterrupted movement depended largely on a presentational format which obscured the gaps and discontinuities within many of the sequences. In a recently published study begun under Frampton's direction, Marta Braun has catalogued the astonishing lapses, anomalies, and manipulations that come into view upon careful consideration of the visual logic of Muybridge's sequences.[14] Henceforth Muybridge's work can no longer be regarded as a simple extension, via the photographic method, of the analytic techniques of scientific observation; rather, like Frampton's cautionary *Vegetable Locomotion*, it must also be recognized as proceeding from the use of narrative structures that impart an illusory unity to disparate images.

*

In his most important writings and photographic projects, Frampton valued photography not so much as an art form as one of our culture's central instruments for transforming experience into knowledge. In this sense, he lent considerable substance to the notion that the photographic apparatus should again be placed in the category to which the nineteenth century initially assigned it—that of "philosophical instruments."

He was, moreover, extraordinarily adept at teasing out photography's submerged metaphysic. On this count, the response to a fable spun in the essay "Digression on the Photographic Agony" is revealing in its palpable absurdity. Frampton solemnly related that, some years before, a vast monolithic sphere had been discovered off the coast of England; its surface bore a single word: *Atlantis*. The first investigators, however, had been disheartened to learn that the sphere's interior held only a mass of ordinary photographs, most on paper, a few on metal or glass. Judged worthless, the photographs were dispersed to provincial museums of technology. A generation later, a doctoral candidate sifting through a box of these images in Rochester, New York, hit upon a startling hypothesis: Atlantis's inhabitants had directed the whole of their civilization's energy to devising a scale model of another culture, one which served as the object of their ceaseless photographic activity. The details of the model, moreover, were constantly modified to suggest the passage of time. As a final stroke, the Atlantean artificers portrayed the fictitious inhabitants of this culture

14. Marta Braun, "Muybridge's Scientific Fictions," *Studies in Visual Communication*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1984), pp. 2–21.

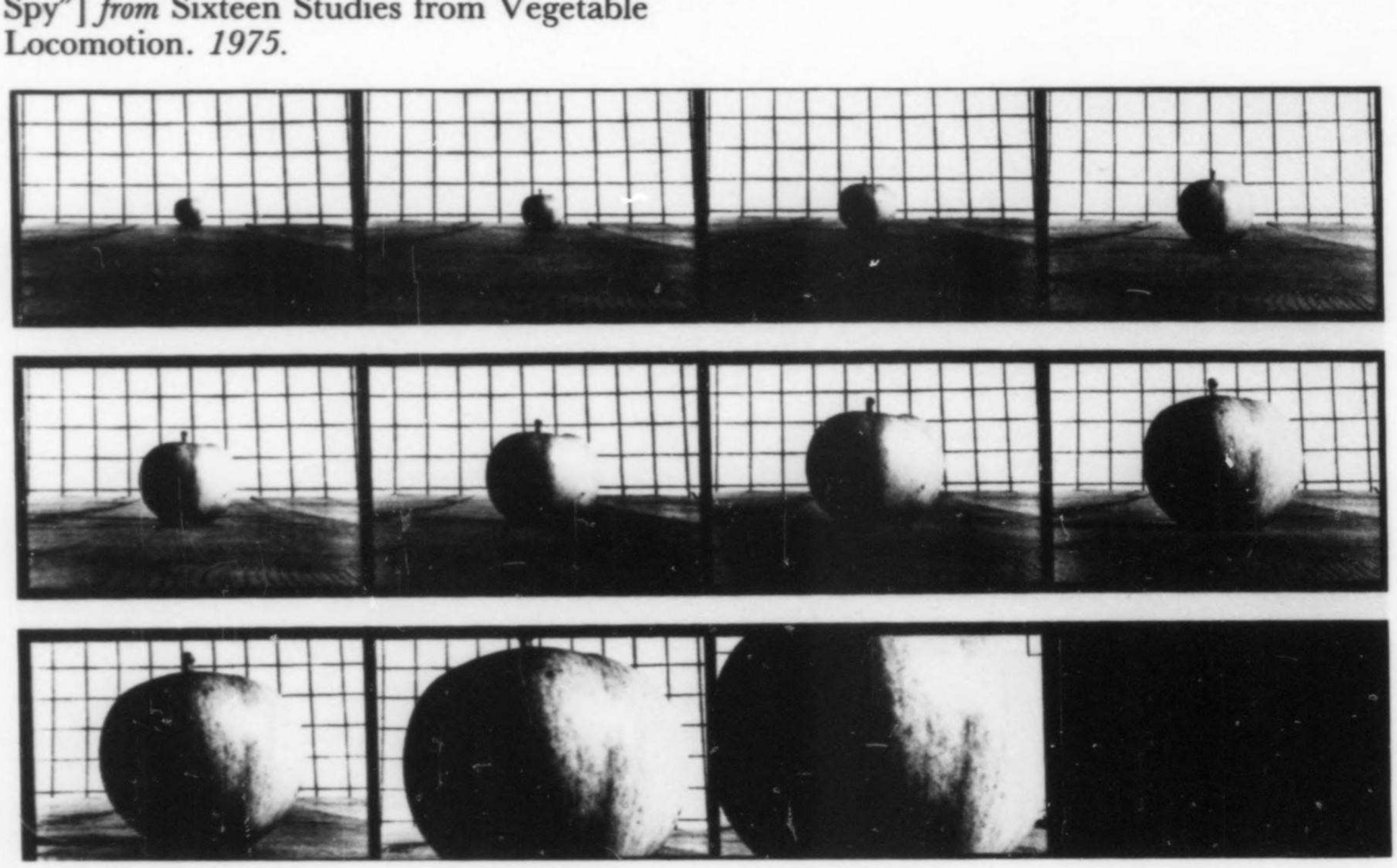
as themselves the haphazard creators of the photographic Artifact—an artifact, Frampton assures us, that reveals a culture uncannily resembling our own.

So powerfully did Frampton's prose evoke this artifact—which effectively distills our own obsession with the photograph's status as reputed simulacrum of lived experience—that at least one couple immediately set out on the eight-hour drive from New York to Rochester. There they announced to an incredulous curator at the George Eastman House that they had come to be shown the fabulous "Atlantis photographs" just revealed in the authoritative pages of *Artforum*.[15]

Their gullibility in regard to the photograph's promise differs only in degree, assuredly not in kind, from our own. Thanks to Frampton's example, and to his luciferous wit, we may now begin to unpack an important piece of conceptual baggage, one that we have unsuspectingly carried for these 150 years.

15. See Hollis Frampton, "Digressions on the Photographic Agony," in *Circles of Confusion*, pp. 177–191. For the response to Frampton's essay, see Robert A. Sobiezek, "The International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House: The Research Center: A Brief Introduction," in *University of Rochester Library Bulletin*, 1976, pp. 109–127.

Hollis Frampton. Apple Advancing [var. "Northern Spy"] *from* Sixteen Studies from Vegetable Locomotion. *1975.*



The Red and The Green

BRUCE JENKINS

Critical assessments of the cinema of Hollis Frampton usually revert to his work of the early '70s, to such films as *Zorns Lemma*, *nostalgia*, and *Critical Mass*, all justly celebrated since they rehearse the terms of a dialectic central to his enterprise. The analysis, in isolation, of these privileged texts does not, however, fully illuminate that dialectic, grounded as it is in three decades of consideration of the cinematic apparatus and the conditions of an ontology of film.[1] It is, rather, by studying the works located at the edges of his enterprise that we may chart the singular movement that propelled Frampton from his early engagements with the mechanics of film to later elaborations on the possibilities of what he termed the "infinite cinema."[2]

To enhance the visibility of this trajectory, I have elected to color code its terminal points. I shall label the initial stage red (the first of the primary colors, emblem of corporeality, symbolic hue of revolution, the tint of the first of his films to be released, *Process Red*) and the final stage green (the glow of the video display terminal, the tint of *Gloria!*, the last completed film of the project known as *Magellan*). The Red and The Green is a tale of spectral shift that begins with a young man of letters seeking, in the mechanism of the moving image, another mode of writing. It ends with the mature artist's inversion of those terms in the service of a complex project, at once personal and historical, expressive and analytic. This is the tale already twice told in the allegories of artistic practice that emerge from the tripartite structure of *Zorns Lemma* and the comic thumbnail metahistory of film sketched in the sections of *Hapax Legomena.* It is a tale, nevertheless, that bears retelling.

1. For Frampton's commentary on the critical reception of his work, see Scott MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton: *Hapax Legomena*," *Film Culture*, nos. 67–68–69 (1979), pp. 174–176.
2. See Hollis Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses," *Artforum*, vol. 10, no. 1 (September 1971), pp. 32-35, reprinted in *Circles of Confusion: Film, Photography, Video: Texts 1968–1980*, foreword by Annette Michelson, Rochester, Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1983, pp. 107–116.

The Red

We do not receive wisdom, we must discover it for ourselves, after a journey through the wilderness which no one else can make for us, which no one can spare us, for our wisdom is the point of view from which we come at last to regard the world.

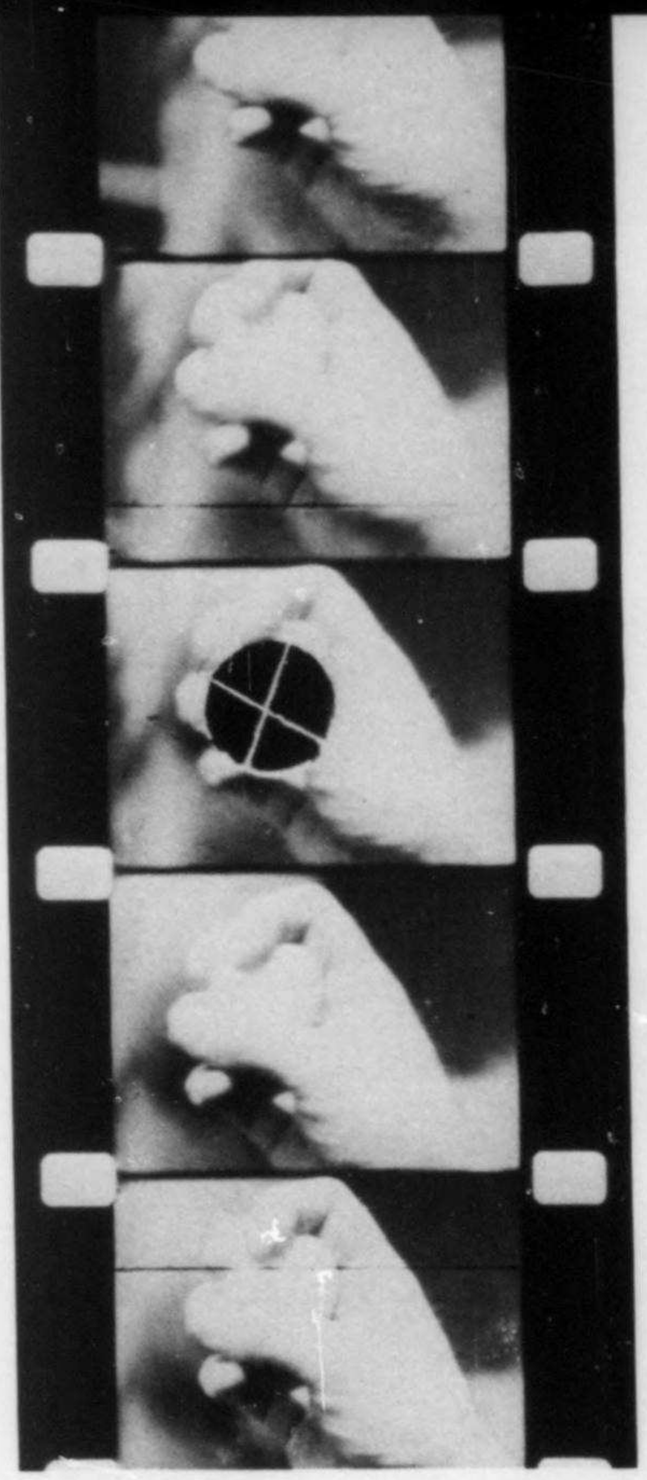
—Marcel Proust, *Within a Budding Grove*

The earliest films suggest that his training in "living and dead languages" and his literary ambitions had predisposed Frampton to seek out and develop the linguistic dimensions of his newly adopted medium. In what appears to be his first film, *Clouds Like White Sheep*, language was introduced directly within the image by way of poetic subtitles affixed to evocative shots of clouds and sky (tinted "Mallarmé azure"), while in *Obelisk Ampersand Encounter*, a linguistic device was appropriated to resolve a problem of cinematic construction (a male voice utters the word *and* at the juncture of two rather disparate shots: one depicting Cleopatra's Needle and the other an ambulatory collision at lunch hour on Third Avenue). In yet another early work, Frampton simply labeled a set of shots taken from a moving elevated train a *Ten Mile Poem*.[3]

These juxtapositions of film image with text were followed by a series of investigations through which Frampton sought rather to establish cinema-specific principles of construction based on the material nature of the medium. His breakthrough in this regard came with the completion of *Process Red*, one of a trio of "first films" released in 1966, which revealed a Frampton deeply immersed in mapping out an ontology of filmmaking and formulating the practice that I have termed The Red. He chose in the film to focus upon a perspicuous emblem of artistic intervention—hands. They form not only the principal content of the film, but also inform directly the manner of its production. A rapid succession of manual activities—hands holding cigarettes, raising glasses, lowering coffee cups, peeling hard-boiled eggs, screwing in bolts, wiping down tables, at rest on knees or in pants pockets—is presented through shots which are hand-held, on stock that appears hand-tinted, and in an order so complicated that even the filmmaker described it as "manhandled."

Process Red's hand-crafted aesthetic is based principally on the radical use of montage which produces an almost physical assault on the filmstrip. Its Eisensteinian character derives from the deployment of paradigms of spatial

3. For these descriptions of Frampton's lost "earlier-than-early" films, I am indebted to the work of Scott MacDonald in his "Interview with Hollis Frampton: The Early Years," *October*, no. 12 (Spring 1980), pp. 103–126.



Hollis Frampton. Process Red. *1966.*

conflict such as oppositions between "close shots and long shots," "pieces of graphically varied directions," and "pieces of darkness and pieces of lightness."[4] The context in which these experiments with montage are conducted, however, remains quite distinct from the Eisensteinian program: the film's silences, its steadfast refusal to speak of its actors, to elaborate upon their activities, to depict them within a continuous space of action (that is, outside of the continuity born of their copresence on the filmstrip), all serve to announce the emergence of a practice at once nonnarrative and temporally determined, representational and replete with graphic events erupting on the celluloid surface.

Adopting the emblematic color of revolution, *Process Red* radically challenges the dominance of the diegetic (the power of the image to depict and project the environment of manual activity) through an explicit acknowledgment of the nature of the film material. The Red emerges most palpably in these physical attempts to generate expressive force from a film-specific lexicon composed of the visible signs of editing (tape splices, framelines, punchmarks) and such direct graphic means as scratching, gouging, and tinting the filmstrip. This is a labor-intensive, hand-crafted practice in which the corporeal presence of the maker is inscribed within the work's constitutive movement and montage.

4. Sergei Eisenstein, "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949, p. 39. These were not Frampton's first borrowings from Eisenstein; he had attempted in *A Running Man* (1963) a remake of the "Odessa Steps" sequence from *Potemkin*.

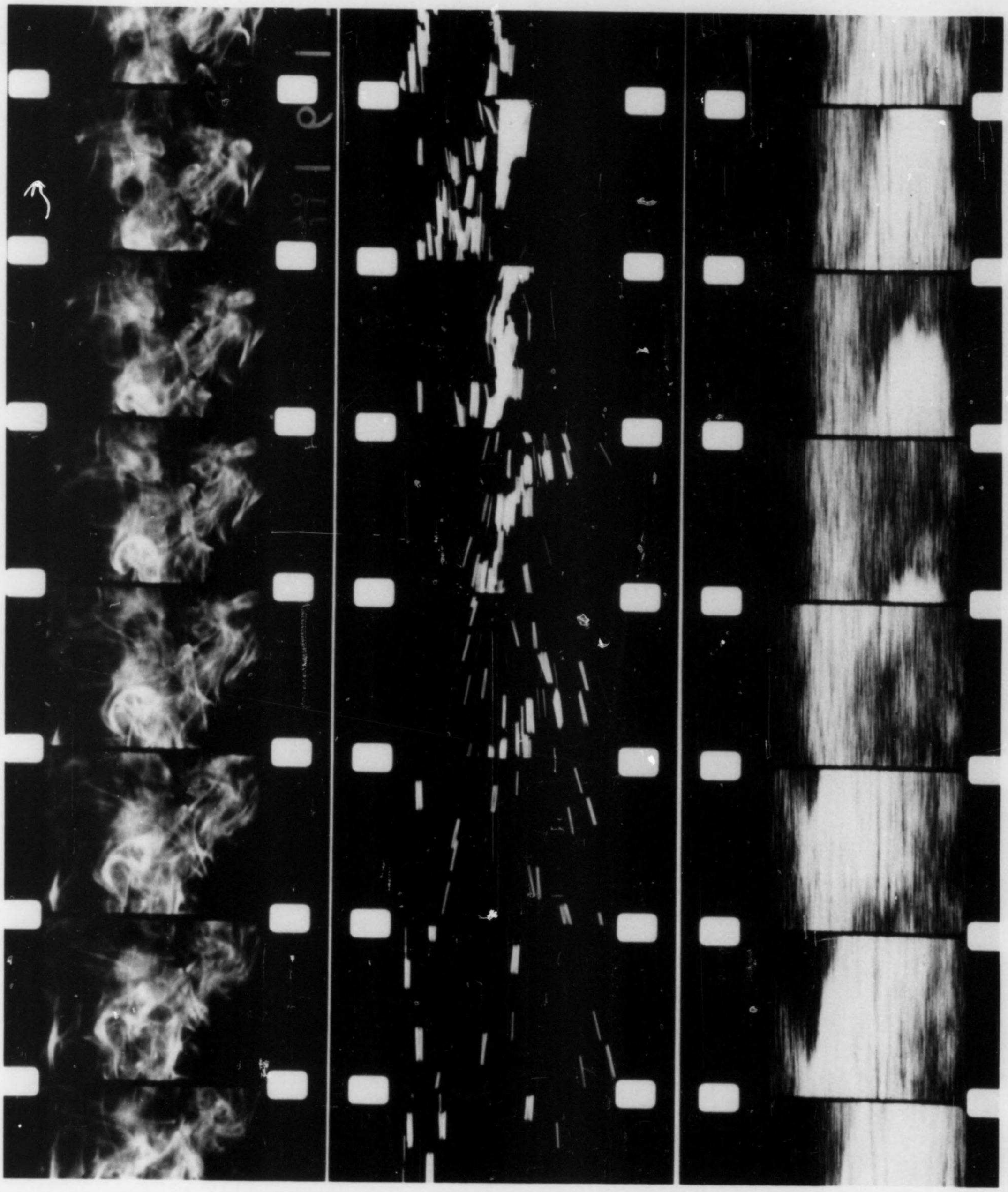
Much of Frampton's early film work turns upon this material practice and the interventional, physical strategies of The Red. *Manual of Arms*, for example, in its presentation of fourteen kinetic, highly edited portraits of Frampton's friends, employs many of the same shooting and editing techniques used in *Process Red.* Here, however, Frampton's handling of the camera and his elaborate montage experiments assume a signifying function, as well. His humorous censure of Carl Andre's consumption of caffeine and nicotine is accomplished through a montagist sight gag that collapses the two activities of drinking and smoking into a single, apparently continuous movement. Similarly, Lucinda Childs, seated, is virtually animated across his loft through a series of canted angles and rapid cuts; the random movements of Twyla Tharp are converted by loop-printing and a circular shooting pattern into a kinetic pirouette; and Michael Snow, sipping coffee, is transformed into a prestidigitator by a series of trick effects that cause an ordinary coffee cup to disappear and reappear under his casual gaze. These and other techniques inflect the simple document, transforming each object while referring to the presence of the subject behind the camera.

In these two early examples, The Red operates principally on a formal level (though also maintaining a semantic dimension in *Manual of Arms*). In others it operates on the level of content, metaphorically informing the imagery of the films. Thus in *States* Frampton offers an elegant equation between the constitutive elements of all matter (the three "states": solid, liquid, and gas) and those of film (the frame, the cut). His serial displays of images of cascading liquid, rising vapor, and falling grains function as cinematic analogues for that other basic substance which Michael Snow described as "the sliceable, arrangeable film material itself."[5] In *Maxwell's Demon*, his first systematic experiment with color and sound, Frampton derives the color spectrum from the six additive and subtractive primaries and cuts the sound of sprocket holes to coincide with the synthesis of color. The considerable effort expended in generating these filmic elements analytically is projected onto the film itself in the figure (taken from a "found" instructional film) of Frampton's Demon—a man performing a series of Canadian Air Force exercises.[6]

The Red continues to dominate Frampton's film practice, assuming its most rarefied form in *Artificial Light.* The exhaustive range of shooting and editing strategies employed and the kind of imagery used are strongly reminiscent

5. *Film-Makers' Cooperative Catalogue*, no. 5, New York, The New American Cinema Group, 1971, p. 108.

6. An equally felicitous metaphor of film practice emerges in another "found" film of the period, *Works and Days* (1969): appropriating the imagery intact from an instructional film about planting a Victory Garden and taking the title from a classical treatise on agriculture, Frampton draws a humorous analogy between gardening and filmmaking as physical activities involving the segmentation of long, narrow strips which must be sutured via serial strategies—"nurtured and cultivated, hoed and so forth."



Hollis Frampton. States. *1967, revised 1970.*

of *Process Red* and *Manual of Arms*. It has again, as its cast, a group of Frampton's friends performing simple gestures: Carl Andre sipping wine, Twyla Tharp munching food, Rosemarie Castoro smoking, Lee Lozano mugging for the camera, Bob Huot conversing animatedly. *Artificial Light*, however, is subjected to a second level of articulation by the repetition of the principal imagery in twenty variations based on physical interventions and/or optical processing—"a cookbook," as Frampton envisioned it, "of things to do to a piece of film."[7]

At the first level of articulation is the film that resembles *Process Red* and *Manual of Arms*, a 1¼-minute work systematically organized around the mechanics of film construction and six basic connective devices: the cut, superimposition, fade, dissolve, long take, and camera movement. In the film's first ten seconds, Frampton joins more than fifty shots with straight cuts. Carefully matching the sightlines of each artist's closeup, he constructs (or rather reconstructs) the spatial continuity of the roundtable arrangement of the performers. This continuity is then challenged through a rapid series of mismatched angles, only to reemerge through the use of superimposition; fades of brief, portraitlike shots of each artist; and finally a series of distended lap dissolves. The film phrase concludes with two other continuity devices: the long take, which Frampton uses in a single protracted long shot of the five artists and, in a remarkable interpolation, a single continuous zoom into a rather artificial-looking image of the moon. This apparently anomalous final image actually serves to complete the array of continuity-producing devices by demonstrating the mechanism of camera (focal) movement as a simple linear means of linking spaces.

It is this same basic sequence of shots—a work in its own right as materially complex as any of Frampton's finished films—that is repeated twenty times in the course of *Artificial Light*. While the first level of filmic articulation organized the footage according to film-specific conventions of editing and shot transition, the second level of articulation subjects the footage to a series of external modifications derived from the basic materials and processes of filmmaking. Frampton presents visible sprocket holes (overprinted in the second repetition) and black leader, and uses optical processes such as superimposition (of the footage onto itself with a slight temporal lag), reversed images, negative printing, and colorization. Applied serially to the original imagery, these devices inflict a violence on the material, effecting a continual shift in the balance between the hegemony of the diegetic content and the intrusive visibility of the presentational, intervening forms.

This confrontation between the materials of the medium and the representational imagery in each section of the film effectively summarizes the thematic and formal concerns of Frampton's earlier filmmaking—so that *Artificial Light*, insofar as it is his most materially inflected work, becomes a most "typi-

7. MacDonald, "Interview: The Early Years," p. 124.

cal" film. At the same time, however, it functions as a limit text for the practice I have called The Red. For beyond presenting a virtual anthology of shooting and editing strategies, graphic devices, and interventional techniques, the formal system of double articulation established creates the possibility of an endless cycle of material intervention. With *Artificial Light*, Frampton seemed to have reached the logical boundaries of a practice predicated on the material conditions of the medium and a mechanical comprehension of the *act* of filmmaking.

A Monochromatic Interlude

That *Artificial Light* brought Frampton to a sort of cinematic cul-de-sac is suggested by the extent to which the next two films took as their subject matter (on one level) a reexamination of the formal development of his own filmmaking—retracing terrains already covered before mapping out new areas of investigation. Thus, for example, *Zorns Lemma*, in addressing the aesthetic impasse, recapitulates Frampton's passage from an artificer of language to a maker of images. In a similar act of retrospection, *Hapax Legomena*, in its seven serial parts, systematically recounts the discrete moments of his emergence as a filmmaker and, ultimately, proposes a new direction for filmic practice.

It was in *Remote Control*, the sixth section of *Hapax Legomena*, that this new direction was first suggested. An intentionally unwieldy work, it is divided into five parts, each of which recycles a 2¾-minute (100-foot) loop of commercial television imagery. The apparent enigma at the center of the film involves the displacement of Frampton's typical repertoire of material interventions onto the textual presence of a set of numerals (0 to 40, numerical notations for the "five ways of making" and/or the "five ways of knowing").[8] Not unlike the old joke about penitentiary humor (in which the tedium of the telling of a limited repertoire of jokes is resolved by a notational system requiring only the calling out of a number to elicit laughter), Frampton reduced the set of all possible physical assaults upon the filmstrip, camera movements, editing strategies, and so forth, to a series of numbers. While this comic encoding of artistic means recapitulated Frampton's then-current practice (in such works "made by the numbers" as *States*, *Artificial Light*, *Zorns Lemma*), *Remote Control*'s mode of production—"right off the tube"—indirectly suggested new formal and conceptual terrains that went beyond the mechanics of the moving image toward the electronic pathways of mental activity. It was *as if* the interfacing of cinema and

8. For a meticulous description of the textual display of this numerical series and a section-by-section account, see MacDonald, "Hollis Frampton's 'Hapax Legomena,'" *Afterimage*, no. 5 (January 1978), p. 12. It should be noted that, my section title notwithstanding, the first movement of *Remote Control* concludes with a color version of the television roll, a "surprise," according to Frampton, "out of Haydn (or S.M. Eisenstein's IVAN, II)."

video had invigorated the older medium, providing it not so much with a new content (the detritus of commercial television) as a new practice of imaging.

Special Effects, the final section of *Hapax Legomena*, confirms *Remote Control*'s function as a clearinghouse for the older materialist forms and mechanical options. Here Frampton loosens his formalist constraints, signaling a new practice as he wipes the slate clean, leaving visible just the bare outline of the film frame. *Special Effects* consists solely of moving shots of the white, dotted outline of a rectangular frame and a piece of synthesized, quasi-musical accompaniment. The frame appears to float within the shallow space of projection, assuming the guise of an animated character, replete with its own machinelike voice. The virtual absence of content or action ("one expects something to happen") serves to announce (as the ultimate proposition of *Hapax Legomena*'s serial account of the metahistory of film) the emergence of a new form, as well as a new protagonist—the spectator. The Framptonian photographer-protagonist of the earlier sections vanishes, and a new character is addressed by the filmmaker, who asks him or her to "people this given space, if you will, with images of your own devising."[9] In so doing, he effectively reverses the direction of cinematic articulation, for it is the spectator who now projects content *onto* the screen, which is thereby transformed into a locus for conceptual discourse.

The Green

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Brahma*

That Frampton had chosen to embark on a new, uncharted direction in his filmmaking is evident in the figure of the eponymous protagonist of virtually the entire post-*Hapax Legomena* output—Magellan, who during his five-year voyage "trespasses (alive and dead) upon every psycholinguistic 'time zone,' circumambulating the whole of human experience as a kind of somnambulist."[10] The explorer serves as the central metaphor of a vast film series which attempts a complete tour of the imaginative world. As in earlier artistic travels, however, the focus is as much on Frampton himself as on the aesthetic ground he covers. *Magellan* diverges from previous work in its move toward a metahistorical

9. *Film-Makers' Cooperative Catalogue*, no. 6, New York, The New American Cinema Group, 1975, p. 91.
10. Hollis Frampton, "Statement of Plans," n.d., Files of Anthology Film Archives, New York (photocopy).

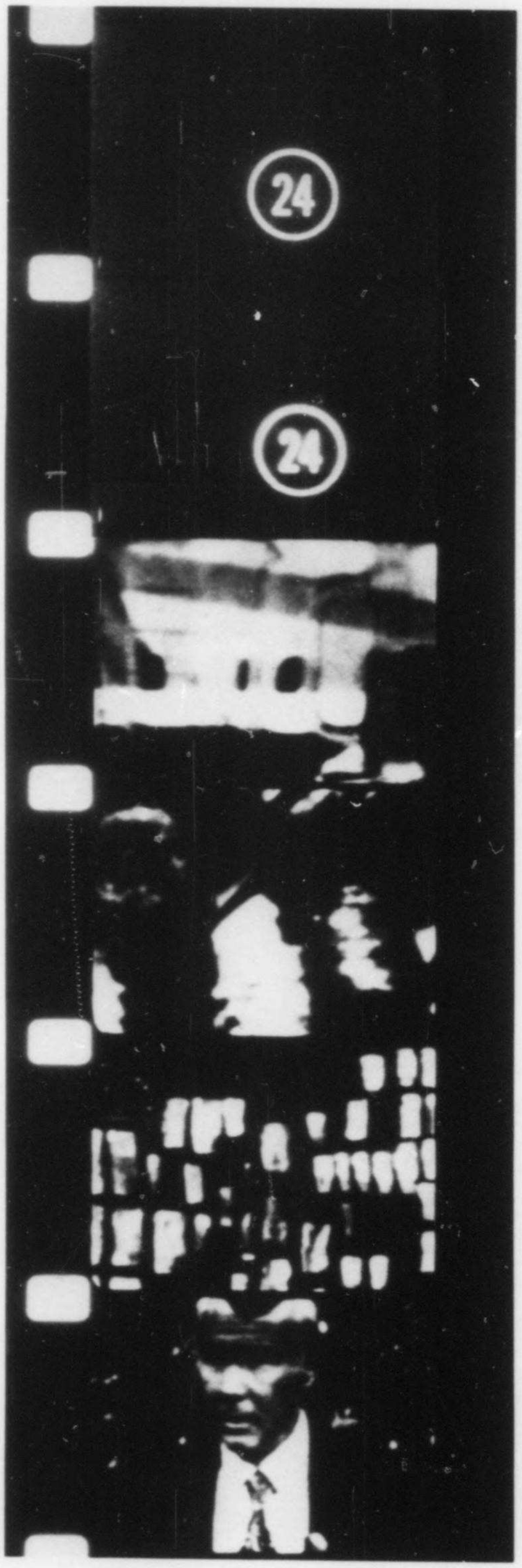
model that focuses on the diverse range of materials (still and moving, real and imagined) produced by that "polymorphous camera [which] has always turned, and will turn forever, its lens focussed upon all the appearances of the world."[11] In *Magellan*, Frampton was to become the metahistorian of this "infinite film," charting its flow and accessing it in all of its dimensions.

The practice I have called The Green emerges in the films of *Magellan* as the direct result of Frampton's postmechanical, metahistorical model of filmmaking. This shift is accompanied by a new technological orientation already evident in the videographic imagery of *Remote Control* and the synthesized score for *Special Effects*. Moving beyond the film-specific repertoire of forms and techniques that had characterized The Red, *Magellan* is aglow with the phosphorescent possibilities of an electronic mode of image and sound production. In an outline of his work on *Magellan*, Frampton described this new set of resources as:

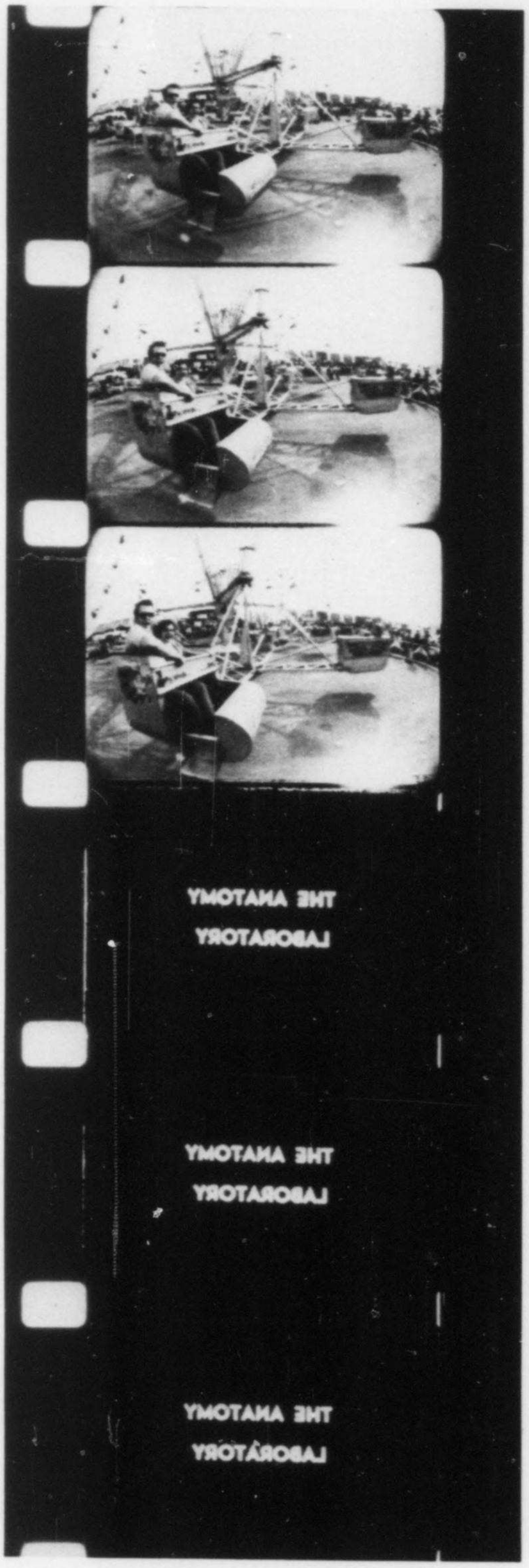
> rhetorical options available to film art through such image-forming and -manipulating tools as optical and video synthesizers, electronic means for synthesizing and modifying sounds, and the digital computer. I am particularly interested in these devices in proportion as they make available to film, within a framework that has some discoverable relation to "real time," generative or metamorphic options that once lay outside the possibilities of film art simply because they could not handily be entertained during a single lifetime. I am not in the least interested in wandering among the 'infinite possibilities' of such devices; I want to press them into the service of cinema as directly as others have done with the mechanical camera.[12]

The extent to which Frampton actually availed himself of these electronic options in the construction of *Magellan* remains a matter for further research. Yet, given the speculative nature of the "infinite film" model, the metaphorical force exerted by these new technologies is evident even in work clearly constructed by more conventional means. Such is the case in early portions of *Magellan*, which consist of films that derive from the materials and methods of early cinema. The short *Cadenza I*, the first segment of *Magellan*'s year-long screening cycle, interpolates through parallel montage two sets of images that stem from opposite ends of film history: an informal color portrait of an outdoor wedding, accompanied by the sound of canned applause, and footage from a very early silent comedy. In combining these two disparate sets of images, Frampton dispenses with the conventional connective repertoire of straight cut, dissolve, or fade, developing instead a new form of shot transition: "That will consist in deriving from any given photographic 'shot' a purely *graphic* composition, which will then mediate with a subsequent 'shot' through means more

11. Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 111.
12. Frampton, "Statement of Plans."



Hollis Frampton. Remote Control. *1972.*



Hollis Frampton. More than Meets the Eye. *1979.*

akin to those of animation than of classic *montage.*"[13] *Cadenza I* employs a set of moving graphic forms that, while marking the point of cinematic articulation, create the sense of continuous transition, miming perhaps the continuous turning of that "polymorphous camera." These primary-colored opticals function much like an electronic cursor. For at the core of Frampton's facility in retrieving these fragments from the "infinite film" is that originating aesthetic desire to write in images, to exercise what Astruc had termed the "camera-stylo." As in much of Frampton's early photography and mixed media work, the constructive force behind the film is language-based—namely, here, a cinematic pun that pays humorous homage to that touchstone of artistic modernity, Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even.*[14]

Frampton makes frequent use of such filmic quotations and aesthetic homages throughout *Magellan*—simulating a sort of high-tech retrieval system able to key up disparate fragments of visual discourse stored on the reels of the "infinite film." In *Public Domain*, for example, he recapitulates cinema's infancy in a series of direct quotations from such notable primitive works as *Record of a Sneeze* (*Fred Ott's Sneeze*) and *Sandow Flexing His Muscles*, two 1894 Edison kinetoscopic shorts, as well as literal pieces of cinematic juvenilia (child wading at the beach, another throwing a tantrum at home, three women merrily blowing bubble pipes, and the finale, a melodramatic weighing of a newborn attended by anxious father, doctor, and nurse)—all readily retrievable/quotable fragments from our finite federal version of the "infinite film," the paper print collection at the Library of Congress. Similar sorts of early footage bracket later works in the cycle, as in *Otherwise Unexplained Fires*, where red-tinted images from an antiquated scientific demonstration are inserted as an emblem of Frampton's meditation on the relationship between the mechanics of film (a nineteenth-century invention) and its pyrotechnic possibilities (as a twentieth-century art form).

Citations are on occasion more figuratively drawn, as in *INGENIVM NOBIS IPSA PVELLA FECIT*, in which Frampton re-creates a Muybridge-like portfolio of human motion studies that features a nude woman engaged in various forms of ambulation and serial encounters with jump ropes and rubber balls. Similarly, *Magellan*'s massive central section, *Straits of Magellan*, which was to encompass hundreds of small, one-minute films, was conceived as "an homage to film's very beginnings, the protocinema of the brothers Lumière."[15] The sampling of forty-nine such pieces that now constitute *Straits of Magellan: Drafts and Fragments* includes a number of direct invocations of the early Lumière

13. Hollis Frampton, Notes on *Magellan*, n.d., Files of Anthology Film Archives, New York (photocopy).
14. The pun derives from the juxtaposition of the wedding footage and the primitive comedy, in which two men play a practical joke upon an unsuspecting matron; while one engages her in conversation, the other picks a thread from her skirt and unravels it until she is stripped bare.
15. Frampton, "Statement of Plans."

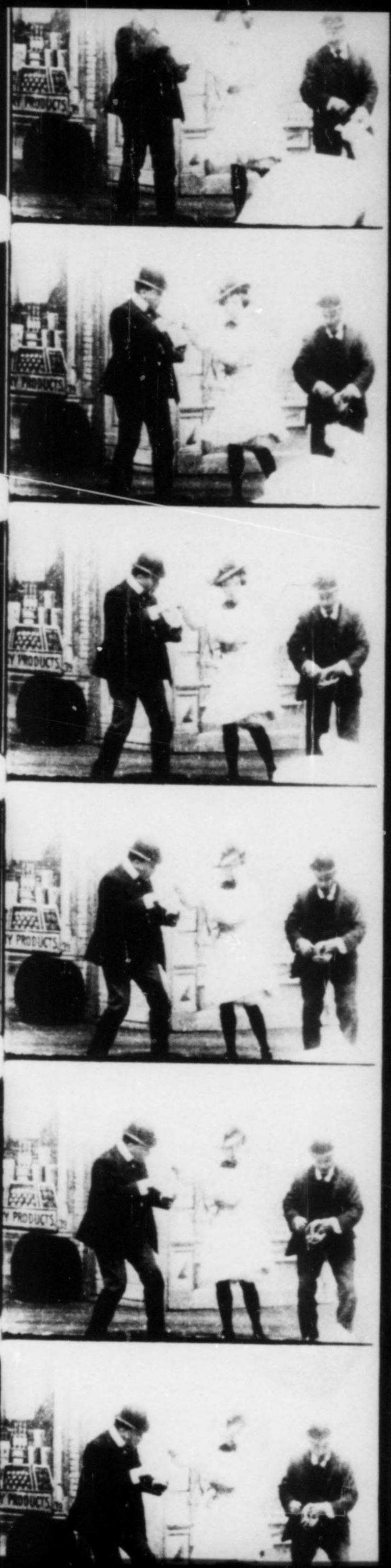
actualities (the most striking a reworking of *Démolition d'un mur* [1896], with a farm silo hauled down in place of the Lumières' wall). It includes, as well, direct references to Frampton's own films, as in the quotations of one of *Zorns Lemma*'s replacement images, the solid state from *States*, and a pixilated passage from *Ordinary Matter*. Some of Frampton's films even return in their entirety, most appropriately, as *Dreams of Magellan*, a section of the larger work that includes his *Palindrome* and a complex reweaving of the three seasonal sections of *SOLARIUMAGELANI* into *Dream I: Matrix*.

The "infinite film" which provides material for the practice of The Green is not only quotable for Frampton, but analyzable. Thus the recycling of filmic texts in *Magellan* is accompanied by the reappearance in his work of linguistic content and an exploration of the semantic dimensions of sound and image. In *Mindfall* Frampton inaugurates this work on a preverbal level, experimenting in the film's two released sections with a full range of contrapuntal, nonsynchronous sound/image configurations. Mindful of the seminal 1929 Soviet "Statement" on sound,[16] he freely juxtaposes a set of sound effects—"specimens" from typically urban, technological, and man-made aural environments (car crashes, jackhammers, sirens, pinball machines)—with lush footage of tropical flora and fauna, of coastline, and of Spanish architecture recorded in and around the town in Puerto Rico where Columbus landed on his second voyage to the New World. What results is a discursive comedy which demonstrates not only the comic potential of the soundtrack itself (through sound effects set into humorous dialogue), but the complex range of comic effects generated by vertical pairings of sound and image. In dissecting "the oscillating *width* of that disjunction [of sound and image],"[17] Frampton foregrounds the independent semantic status of the soundtrack prior to the merging of sound into either language or music.

A similar sort of semantic speculation is focused on the image in *More Than Meets the Eye*, in which Frampton travels to the purported birthplace of the Eisensteinian model of cinema, the fairground, with its "montage of attractions." *Magellan*'s tour of the "infinite film" becomes momentarily peripatetic in the ambulating, wide-angled portrait of the fair, its throng of participants, its array of attractions (Belgian Waffles, Walk Away Sundaes, Flying Bobs, the Toboggan, a Hall of Health). Interpolated within this walking tour are nine optically reversed passages of text which are briefly flashed on the screen and framed by a repeated image of a ride known appropriately as "The Scrambler." Not unlike the spiraling texts of Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema* (1926), these flickering, reversed texts, by virtue of their graphic presence, challenge the compelling illusions of depth and movement generated by the camera's incessant circling of

16. Sergei Eisenstein, V. I. Pudovkin, and G. V. Alexandrov, "A Statement," in *Film Form*, pp. 257–259.
17. Hollis Frampton, personal correspondence, October 1978.

Hollis Frampton. Cadenza I (The Birth of Magellan: Fourteen Cadenzas). *1977–80.*



the fairgrounds. And as with Duchamp's punning texts, Frampton's intertitles bear little relationship to the images to which they are appended.[18] Both texts and titles give a didactic edge to the work—suggesting a system of visual interpretation—and yet, ironically, the conventional loci of information, the explanatory titles, require more deciphering than do the images they purportedly describe. What is "more than meets the eye" must reside in the tension between the film's graphic and plastic elements and their modes of reading. For it is within that dialectic—spatial and conceptual—that Frampton locates what he termed "the onset of cinematic thought."[19]

Perhaps no single work in *Magellan* more elegantly exemplifies the writerly weave of aural and visual citation leading to the "onset of cinematic thought" than *Gloria!*, one of a trio of films set for the final day of the entire screening cycle. The film recasts the multiple metahistories of *Magellan* in the relationship of two figures: Frampton's maternal grandmother, to whom the entire film cycle is dedicated, and her grandson, the filmmaker himself. Their identities are inscribed within the materials of the work in the form of citations from early cinema (like the grandmother, products of the nineteenth century) and a videographic display of textual materials (like the grandson, a twentieth-century product). The film begins with the former, a fragment from a primitive comedy that recounts misadventures at an Irish wake. Against this comic backdrop Frampton presents a series of sixteen "propositions" that include a rather extraordinarily varied inventory of personal recollections of the grandmother, ranging from the matter-of-fact (THAT SHE WAS OBESE; THAT SHE WAS MARRIED ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 1909, A FEW WEEKS AFTER HER 13TH BIRTHDAY; THAT SHE WAS A NATIVE OF TYLER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA, WHO NEVER KNEW THE EXACT YEAR OF HER OWN BIRTH TILL SHE WAS PAST SIXTY) to the charmingly incredible (THAT SHE KEPT PIGS IN THE HOUSE, BUT NEVER MORE THAN ONE AT A TIME. EACH SUCH PIG WORE A GREEN BAIZE TINKER'S CAP; THAT HER CONNOISSEURSHIP OF THE EROTIC IN THE VEGETABLE KINGDOM WAS UNERRING; THAT HER FINAL REQUEST WAS FOR A BUSHEL BASKET FULL OF EMPTY QUART MEASURES).

Frampton's inventory includes one of his grandmother's own recollections in the penultimate proposition:

> THAT SHE REMEMBERED, TO THE LAST, A TUNE PLAYED AT HER WEDDING PARTY BY TWO YOUNG

18. Some of the titles seem to describe another tour in their cataloguing of scenes and activities (ADVANCED STUDENTS AT WORK IN A BALANCE ROOM, A TEA AT THE HOUSE, INTERIOR DECORATION). Others seem vaguely interpretive of the imagery at hand (HERE, UNDER GREAT TENSION, STEEL BARS ARE PULLED APART; REHEARSING FOR A PLAY; THE ANATOMY LABORATORY).
19. Frampton, "Statement of Plans."

IRISH COALMINERS WHO HAD BROUGHT GUITAR AND PIPES. SHE SAID IT SOUNDED LIKE QUACKING DUCKS; SHE THOUGHT IT WAS CALLED "LADY BONAPARTE."

It is this doubled recollection that determines a final element in the film, a transition from the silent text (consisting of computer type on a green videographic field) to an aural citation of the recollected wedding tune played in its entirety against the blank, green screen. A second early Irish-wake comedy follows, ending with the deceased arisen and dancing a wicked jig, while the text of Frampton's dedication concludes the film.

The aural and visual citations of which *Gloria!* is composed—indeed the film exists solely as citation—set the terms for a more global meditation on death, on memory, and on the power of the photographic image and recorded sound to resurrect the past. In so doing, the film seems to acknowledge what Frampton himself once characterized as the "resurrection of bodies in space from their dismembered trajectories."[20] The figurative resurrection implicit in the film's textual weave, however, exacts a certain price in the death of another figure—the author.

The Green is predicated upon this postauthorial understanding of cinema, of its generative capacity, its constant reinvention of itself from the materials and knowledge of an ever-advancing past. Seeking a future for filmmaking, Frampton returns the film author, in one sense, to that original role as recorder *and* presenter inherent in the conceptual and mechanical basis of cinema's own first device, the cinematograph, which functioned both as camera and projector. The filmmaker, so visibly present in the practice of The Red, all but vanishes in The Green, serving primarily as a conduit for the projection of the "infinite film" ("or of all knowledge, which amounts to the same thing")[21] onto every available surface.

Epilogue: The Red and The Green

The movement from The Red to The Green in Frampton's conceptual understanding of the cinematic enterprise was inconvertible, yet in practice these were not mutually exclusive forms. Midway through the making of *Magellan*, The Red and The Green converge, resulting in a work that was able to reinstate Frampton's labor-intensive, material methods while pushing at the limits of the "infinite film." *Magellan: At the Gates of Death* consists of two complementary parts, *The Red Gate* and *The Green Gate*, representing "twenty-four encounters with death" that were to have been dispersed in small segments throughout the screening cycle. In their present state, seen together and roughly the length of

20. Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 112.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

an average feature film, they constitute one of the most extraordinarily powerful and complex works in the Frampton oeuvre, a film "as ponderous, endless, uniform as its subject."[22]

The anatomy laboratory serves as the visual threshold onto Frampton's subject, ever present in the figures of a half-dozen cadavers, a bisected skull, and an empty cranium ("Death's Head"). Through the mechanical intervention of the movie camera and the postmechanical random accessing of images, Frampton sets about resurrecting these fallen bodies and simultaneously casting them into complex trajectories through a physical space. The body of the film consists of images of these remains of the human form, seen still or moving, singly or in superimposition, in black and white or tinted red or green, all bound together in virtually isomorphic sections. Within the single-layer material, Frampton presents inventories of the senses through initially amorphous images that shift, as he pans or tilts the camera, zooms or racks the focus of the lens, to reveal recognizable features (eyes, ears, noses, fingers)—a shooting strategy effectively linking physical change with a representation of mental activity.

It is out of the endless weaving and reweaving of the cadaver footage into concrete forms and abstract circulatory patterns that The Red is placed in the service of The Green—death emerging as the grounds for a discourse, both material and textual. Such a synthesis of the two practices (effected elsewhere, though perhaps less dramatically, in the seasonal films of *SOLARIUMAGELANI*) represents the ultimate, though largely unacknowledged and regrettably unfinished, accomplishment of Frampton's filmmaking—to initiate a complex cinematic practice where previously only boundaries had existed.

22. Hollis Frampton, remarks at a screening of his work at NAME Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, April 7, 1977.

Interview with Hollis Frampton

PETER GIDAL

London, May 24, 1972.

Gidal: What do you consider *Zorns Lemma* to be about?

Frampton: Oh, dear! Are you asking that question?

Gidal: Absolutely.

Frampton: Well, I can, at least, tell you what the film came out of, and how it reached its present form. I first began using a movie camera at the end of the fall of 1962. At that time I was, in a way, being systematically forced into cinema by my work in still photography. I'd been working for a long time in series, sometimes long ones, and there were things about the still series that began to trouble me. For example, if you have a bunch of photographs that you believe cohere even in book space, let alone on a gallery wall, there's no way to determine the order in which they're seen, nor the amount of time for which each one is seen, nor to establish the possibility of a repeat. So that already had me thinking of film, as a kind of ordering and control, a way of handling stills.

Gidal: So the control element is time?

Frampton: Yes. Then at the same time I was thinking a lot about photography's standard paradoxes. You have all these spatial illusions, and even tactile illusions, whereas somehow a cultural reflex has you believing that when you're looking at something, it's real, let's say. Even if you're assembling the impression from only the barest, most abstract kind of thing, at the same time the thing is absolutely undeniably flat; it doesn't have impasto; it has nothing; it is perfectly superficial; it has only an outside. That paradox seemed to me most strongly embodied in some stills I had made of words, environmental words, in which the word as a graphic element that brought one back to reading (and being conscious of looking at a mark on a surface), emphasized the flatness of the

thing. And at the same time the tactile and spatial hints that were compounded with it, the presence of the word within the image, were full of illusion. So that I'd begun to make a bunch of these still photographs, and I thought, "Well, I'll make them into a film," and I shot more than 2,000 words in 35 mm still with the idea that I was just going to put them on a stand and shoot them. And I did a little of that, as a matter of fact. It's perfectly dead. It was simply going absolutely no place.

Well, that's how the thing began: as a concern with that spatial paradox or set of spatial paradoxes, and the kind of malaise generated as you get further into it. There still are a few of those original black and white photographs. They all have some real object lying on top of them. The oldest one is the word *Fox*, from the old Brooklyn Fox Theater. I think it is the first one I made . . . dark blue sky, some little straw flowers or paper flowers on top of it as a memento to the sentimental nature of the occasion.

Gidal: Before you go on about your concerns in *Lemma*, could you briefly, descriptively give an idea of *Lemma* itself?

Frampton: Can I describe it?

Gidal: Yes, and then go on to the conceptual source of the actual film. But first clarify somewhat the film itself.

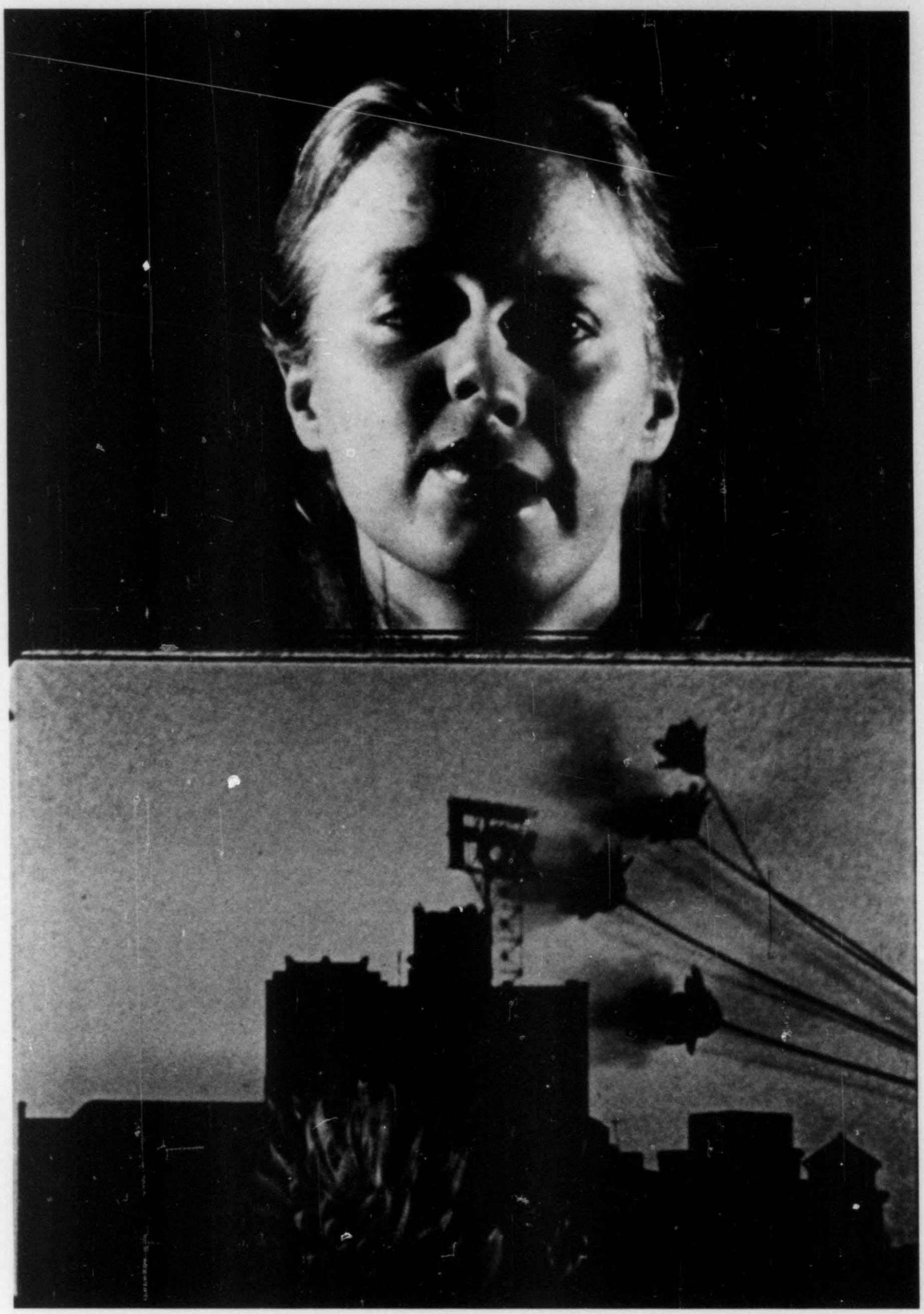
Frampton: Well, that's easy. There are three parts. The first part is five minutes long, soundtrack with no image. A woman recites in a schoolteacherly voice twenty-four rhymes from the *Bay State Primer*, which was designed to teach late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century children the alphabet.

It's: "In Adam's fall we sinned all." The primer is oriented towards death, towards acceptance of authority, a kind of rote learning in the dark, I suppose. The second section opens with an enunciation of the roman alphabet itself, with as little context as possible. The letters are made of metal. Actually they were typed on tinfoil and photographed in one-to-one closeup. That's how it developed. They weren't cast.

Gidal: They look like huge, cast, three or four feet tall, silver . . .

Frampton: In the body of the second section, the main section of the film, which is forty-five minutes long, there are 2,700 one-second cuts, one-second segments, twenty-four frame segments, of which about half are words; the words are alphabetized. The reason for alphabetizing them really was to make their order as random as possible, that is, to avoid imposing my own taste and making them into little puns or something like that—much as the encyclopedists of the Enlightenment thought they could somehow categorize all human knowl-

Hollis Frampton. Zorns Lemma. *1970.*



edge, or a large part of it, under the initial letter of the name of the subject. So that it just happens that quaternions are found in volume so-and-so under *q*. It's crazy when you think about it, though it does generate some intelligible phrases, some odd pairings. Let's see . . . there's a Hart Crane sort of line early on that reads, "nectar of pain"; there's a phrase of Victorian pornography, "limp member," which sticks out like a sore thumb, a limp thumb, perhaps, straight out of *My Secret Life* or *A Man and a Maid.* That happens of course. Most words (not all, but most) were from the environment; they're store signs and posters and things like that, and one finds out very quickly that very many words begin with *c* and with *s*, and so forth; very few begin with *x* or *q*, or what have you. One quickly begins to run out of *q*'s and *x*'s and *z*'s. Essentially one is using a chance operation. And, as always with a chance operation, along with some things that you want, it also generates holes. Fate has problems. It's always true. And, having taken care of the operations, one has to think a great deal more about the holes. I don't know at what point the notion supervened of substituting other images for words as they disappear in each alphabetic slot. I first thought all the images would be different. It would be what John Simon called (fake Slavic accent) "just a jumble of imaches!" You see . . .

Gidal: May he rest in peace.

Frampton: Well, whatever. And for quite a long time I held that notion of the film. The greatest bulk of time was spent shopping in Manhattan for the words themselves. I can't say I did it every single day for seven years, but I did it for seven years, and I shot actually four times as many words as I used, as well as duplications. The word *shot* comes up again and again; I think I used it five times. It was difficult to choose, but some just didn't work for one reason or another. Rather than make 1,350 entirely different shots, I found that I could achieve the same degree of randomness by using twenty-four and dissecting them, exploding them. Once that occurred to me, the possibility of developing an iconography . . .

Gidal: As separate . . .

Frampton: Yes, as separate from the words and what they were doing . . . presented itself; from then on it was easy. I still remember the images I shot and didn't use. There was one of sawing wood, sawing a board, that I tried several times to get together. Many of the images are in some sense sculptural; they have to do with generative acts concerning three-dimensional space rather than two-dimensional space.

Gidal: But each image is one second long, so that whether the image is visual or visual-verbal, the time span is the same.

Frampton: Yes, that's right. They're all one second. Well, in actual fact they're not all one second. I suppose I should talk about this. All of my work contains mistakes. Presumably everybody's work contains mistakes. Sometimes I find mine when I'm making them and lock into them in one way or another; sometimes I find them out later. Some people think the whole thing is a mistake. But if you think about any long and comparatively ambitious work, you'll see it contains errors of some kind or other. The *Divine Comedy* contains metric errors where Dante got locked into the text and had to fight his way out of it; it doesn't always come off so well. So I decided to incorporate deliberately a series of kinds of errors.

Gidal: A system of errors?

Frampton: Right, so that I'd know where they were, since they were going to be there anyway. I won't go into this at the moment, but there is one class of metrical errors. There are twelve images which are twenty-three frames long and twenty-four which are twenty-five frames long. I don't think I generated those myself. The person who was helping me cut the footage down into one-second lengths, determined—by his own chance operations—where they were, and cut them.

Gidal: I noticed the "errors" while watching the film again. Still, it comes across very clearly that it's one-second segments. You feel a certain tension at moments when it breaks. But not to the point of mystification, so that one thinks, "Is it a second or not?" The basic time segment is one second.

Frampton: But then that's an elastic interval. It depends upon how much there is in the frame to see. Some are very simple and very graphic so that you almost start to get bored. There are others in which there is at least a suggestion that if you saw that one second repeated fifty times, you would still be frantic, that your eyes would be crawling around the frame still trying to extract stuff from it. Anyway, let's try to get on with the description of the thing. All of the words are finally replaced by images. The last one, *c*, a red ibis flapping its wings in the Bronx zoo, is seen for only one second in the film's entire hour. Then finally there's a section, ten or eleven minutes long, in which a man, woman, and dog walk from very near foreground across a field of snow, a distance close to 400 yards, disappearing finally into pine woods. This is, for all intents and purposes, a continuous take, although it is not, in fact. It's made up of five 100-foot rolls. Suggestions of fogged ends are left in and dissolved, so—if you're at all into the materiality of film—it suggests several times that it's about to end, then dissolves into a new image, then finally goes out to white.

There's a track on the last part which consists of six women's voices reading a text by Robert Grosseteste, who was Bishop of Lincoln. The text, *On*

Light, or the Ingression of Forms, is a beautiful medieval Latin treatise which is variously translated—translated, vulgarized by me, then cut down to about 620 words. It's read—pocketa-pocketa—at the rate of one word per second. The text itself is, I think, apposite to film and to whatever my epistemological views of film are. The key line in the text is a sentence that says, "In the beginning of time, light drew out matter along with itself into a mass as great as the fabric of the world." Which I take to be a fairly apt description of film, the total historical function of film, not as an art medium, but as this great kind of time capsule. It was thinking about this, which led me later to posit the universe as a vast film archive (which contains nothing in itself) with—presumably somewhere in the middle, in the undiscoverable center of this whole matrix of film-thoughts—an unlocatable viewing room in which, throughout eternity, sits the Great Presence screening the infinite footage.

Gidal: Screening unshot negatives.

Frampton: Well, whatever! It is, then, the infinite intelligence which, in the act of screening, imagines the images into the frame so that they reflect back into the projector. You can, one can, make a whole religion out of this thing! (Laughter from Marion Faller, Frampton, Gidal.) We're trying.

I plan later to have more to say about that. This is my metaphor because I am a filmmaker. Borges has a wonderful story called *The Library of Babel*, in which the entire universe has been transformed into a library of books. While conjecturing as to the actual structure of the library, he manages to reconstruct the entire history of human thought. All through this one metaphor! The cinematic metaphor seems to me to be more poignant, more meet.

Gidal: Speaking of Borges, I find important and beautiful in *Lemma* the fact that it's not mystificatory, not labyrinthine at all, and that on one level it denies logic. In that sense it's really an anti-Calvinist film.

Frampton: Let me tell you a bit more what this film is for me. A couple of other people have also noticed it: the film is a kind of cryptic autobiography. In a way, I had the standard midwestern protestant American education, in which one does learn by precept and rote, in the dark—although it was not perhaps so puritanical, authority-ridden, death-saturated. Presumably many of my contemporaries had very much the same kind of experience. It was predominantly oriented to words, but words only in the most superficially denotative sense.

Part two has a great deal to do with something that happened to me between the ages of twenty and thirty-two, thirty-three, or thereabouts, a decade and a half that I spent mostly in New York. It represents—one can see it this way—a kind of long dissolve, a very attenuated dissolve, from primarily verbal to primarily nonverbal concerns: the last part of the film. And, of course, the

middle section was all shot in Manhattan. It's pointedly urban in its visual style —a conglomeration of visual styles imitated in the individual shots. This part is still very much a distancing of itself, in various ways, from Renaissance spatial representation, from a sort of urban rectilinearity.

An interesting fact, finally, about the last part: it turned out to be prophetic. Simon Field (I think it was he) wrote to me in the summer of 1970 asking if the film was autobiographical and if its final section had something to do with a move towards leaving the city, as a lot of artists were doing then. At the time of the filming I had no such conscious plan. It was only in January 1970 that I formulated such an idea while I was staying at a farm a friend of mine had just got twenty-five miles from where my place now is. I was in the country looking for a place. This section of the film turned out to be prophetic.

Gidal: The second segment of the film already hints at that. By ending with earth, air, fire, and water, it points in that direction.

Frampton: Sure, very much so. I suppose I do most of my work in such a way that I supply a certain amount, I make a container, and for the rest of it, the film—the work itself—generates its own set of demands and its own set of rules. In the end, if possible—and this is the very oldest of ideas, not new at all —it consumes itself, uses itself up, leads to a stasis of some sort. I can't precisely say how. I get to a point where I've done as much as I know how to do. Then I wait. After awhile something comes. I tend to wait around for some insight into how to do the next thing. Where does the insight come from? I don't know. I'm not here to make explicit appeals to the muse or the angels.

But it wasn't simply a question of, say, getting more ambitious, wanting to order larger and larger amounts of material. There are ways of doing that. Rather it was a question of finding some way the material would order itself that would have something to do with it and that would also seem appropriate to my own feelings about it. My feelings, I suppose, are partly genetic, partly generated by my own understanding of the medium. Also by the more distant tradition within art that has moved me specifically. But that, too, may be genetic. Some things appeal to you and some don't. I know that some of those Egyptian things in the British Museum are great sculpture, but I am unmoved by granite colossi. I may at the age of seventy be moved by granite colossi; I may have been moved by them at the age of five.

Aristotle talks somewhere about six kinds of intelligence. We've whittled it down to one. That which enables us to talk (writing is a kind of talking). To articulate. That leaves five kinds of intelligence as recognized by Aristotle shivering in the cold. One of the kinds he talked about was *techne*, which is the kind that allows people to make things, presumably good things. We get *technical* from that, but we now say "that's merely technical." But Aristotle didn't limit this intelligence to that which pertains to craft. He meant it as the whole faculty

of mind that makes it possible for a Brancusi to be able to march up to a billet of bronze and get the *Bird in Space* out of it. Whereas, if I were to march up to the same billet of bronze, whatever my powers are, I would get a pile of filings out of it. Yet all Brancusi had to say about sculpture—to my knowledge—was ten sentences, none of which an art reviewer would recognize as rational.

Gidal: Your film has duration, pieces of time, visual and verbal. The tensions are basically in the pieces of time.

Frampton: I like your word *duration*. That's a word that means something. When you say *time*, you're floundering. Duration is how long something lasts.

Gidal: From point *a* to point *b*.

Frampton: From point *a* to point *b*. Something that is concretely measured by counting the number of frames on the strip.

Gidal: I don't mean by this narration. Point *a* to point *b* in *duration* as *opposed* to narration, because everything moves forward in time. That's an important distinction.

Frampton: Okay, what about time? Presumably, since so much of my work seems to deal with notions of time, it's something I've thought about. What are these views of time? There's time as the universal solvent. We're dropped on the surface of the tub which is corrosive; we slowly rot away and sink down and disappear. Or: there's time as an elastic fluid. The frog Tennyson leaps into the elastic fluid and creates waves which ultimately joggle the cork Eliot. Or, in Eliot's view, the elasticity travels in both directions: tradition and individual talent. Eliot, of course, says that Eliot has changed Tennyson, and that is clearly true. Or: there is the DNA model of time, the spiral in which it's possible in four dimensions to have every turn of the helix cross every other turn of the helix within one lifetime or some other finite thing. Or: Pound's view of time—the continuous copresence of everything. That is essentially the view of time of the generation of the 1880s.

There is—what would you call it?—an incubus that settles over any attempt to think about time as a phenomenon like gravitation, radiation, or what have you. Phenomena are directly sensible and the intellect can devise direct ways to measure them. "Thirty-two feet per second per second" is a statement about gravitation. Which leads me to suspect that time is not a fiction, you know, nor a phenomenon, but rather a condition of intelligibility, of the perception of all other phenomena.

Gidal: Now how does that relate to *Zorns Lemma*? Specific pieces of time which are also pieces of space . . .

Frampton: In *that* film I have made the cut in duration (the pointed sense of the passage of time) explicitly a condition of perceiving everything that's going on in the film. That's one view of the matter. Of course, I've gone on with this black and white thing (the new films) to elaborate other possible views.

Gidal: Since you mention the black and white films, five of those six films are part of a larger film, *Hapax Legomena.* What interests me is the projected fourth part, as you described it last week at the London Filmmaker's Co-op.

Frampton: Okay, here we go, describing the two channels again, separately. To begin with, there is an object in Philadelphia, a posthumously constructed object by Marcel Duchamp, called *Given: (1) the waterfall, (2) the illuminating gas.*[1] I think I need not describe that here; suffice it to say that it is not only impossible, in the mode of the construction of the thing, but also illegal, in the terms of Duchamp's testament, to photograph the thing. One has had, therefore, to get by with verbal description of it. And I began to notice that no two people describe it in the same way. Well, so far we have six blind men and their elephant. But of particular interest is the fact that everyone who has described it has left something out.

Gidal: Please describe it.

Frampton: Okay. I'll describe it: You walk up to a pair of big double doors, very weatherbeaten, heavy, scratched timber doors; they look like the entrance to a medieval speakeasy. At a height which is that of the average person, there are two peepholes which you look through. Inside the wooden doors you see a brick wall which appears to have a regular hole blasted through it. On the other side of the brick wall, immediately on the other side, is what appears to be the edge of a kind of ravine, covered with leafless brush. It appears to be fall and the foliage has more or less fallen to the ground. Beyond that, over the ravine, at a considerable distance, there is a painted background, in color, trees and sky, very flat, looking very much like the renderings of very distant landscapes in some Renaissance paintings. In the middle of which, achieved by some kind of polarized gimmick, there's a little waterfall which appears continuously to run. It's motorized. You can see the water. The water's running over, presumably down into this ravine. In the immediate foreground, lying on the brush in the ravine, supine and spread-eagled, is a nude woman. Both of her feet, her right hand, and head are cut off from view by the boundaries of the hole in the brick wall. Since you're looking through peepholes, it's impossible to shift your view

1. The work referred to is *Etant donnés: 1e la chute d'eau, 2e gaz d'éclairage*, 1946–66. Duchamp's last major work was posthumously and permanently installed in a gallery adjoining that of the Arensberg collection in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

to see if in fact she has a head, a right hand, or feet. Her left hand is elevated and she holds in it a burning gas lamp. It is a very, very lifelike nude woman, kind of wax-museum lifelike.

Gidal: I think she's made out of pigskin.

Frampton: Pigskin? Terrific! Well, Duchamp didn't make it; it was made by Madame Duchamp and Arnold Poore, presumably according to precise instructions left at his death. It is impossible to say why the woman is there, what has happened to her, whether she's dead or alive, or anything else. It's rather striking that she has no pubic hair, but that she does have abundant blond hair under her one visible armpit. What does this all mean anyway?

Gidal: This interview is finally getting funny.

Frampton: Marcel does it again! You know, the work keeps nibbling at my mind with very profound suggestions of cinema, particularly the curious enigma that the frame . . .

Gidal: Yes, the frame as cutoff . . .

Frampton: The frame as a strange model, both negative and positive, for human consciousness . . . just the frame itself. I'm now working on putting together twelve descriptions of twelve sentences each—that's 144 sentences of plain description—of this object from various people. Six descriptions will be written by men and six by women. They will be read again, aloud in the following manner: all the number one sentences will be followed by all the number two sentences, followed by all the number three. They will be read by two voices, a man's voice and a woman's voice, with the roles exchanged. The descriptions written by women will be read by a male voice and vice versa. That's the whole substance of the thing. There will also be an image which will consist of a more or less continuous time lapse journey, a dolly from Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain to the kitchen of my farmhouse in central New York state via a number of other landmarks. The dolly will come to rest on a still photograph of my face, lying on a small table, between a potted cactus and a coffee cup next to a window. You can see that it will have keystones linking it to *Poetic Justice.*[2] Anticipatory, since *Poetic Justice* follows it. I'm shooting the whole thing on grainy stock, 4x reversal, and it'll be printed in high contrast. What will happen, of course, is that there will be a very jerky frame: one frame every four or five feet

2. For information regarding Frampton's films mentioned in this interview, see the filmography, pp. 167–169. A printed edition of 150 copies of *Poetic Justice* was issued in 1973 by the Visual Studies Workshop Press, Rochester.

or so when there's walking. Also, shots from an automobile. Velocity carried through a landscape. There will be a hold or freeze frame in the image for each word in the soundtrack. For short words perhaps no more than three frames or so; for longer words, four or five. I regret in anticipation that this film is going to be made. I haven't entirely taken the path that leads to getting the most fun out of life in that respect. Well, as far as I can go, that explains it.

Gidal: Okay. What is *Hapax Legomena*?

Frampton: Hapax Legomena, section four. The title of which is *Ordinary Matter*.

Gidal: The six titles are?

Frampton: The six titles, in order, are: *nostalgia, Critical Mass, Travelling Matte, Ordinary Matter, Poetic Justice, Special Effects*.

Gidal: Now the title.

Frampton: Hapax Legomena is Greek scholarly jargon; it means "said one time." Things said once. It refers to words that are found but once in the entire corpus of a literature. Sometimes they are found just once in the entire body of work of a poet. In some languages this amounts to a very large class. There are several hundred—perhaps thousands—of words that occur only once in Homer's work. They are always very problematical because it is difficult to say what a *hapax legomena* means. You have only one context, so the denotation of the word is always conjectural.

The sense of the whole phrase may or may not be clear. There are, in effect, words which are *hapax legomena* in English, too. No poet, I think, since Shakespeare has dared to use the word *incarnadine.* He really sapped that one dry. By default, a kind of vividness. For all intents and purposes *incarnadine* is a *hapax legomena* in English even though we know precisely what it means. We'll never use it again.

Gidal: I have a few questions which relate to narrative. Can you destroy narrative by encouraging a participatory narrative completion on the part of the viewer? Let me clarify the question. In *Poetic Justice*, by presenting images in words, giving a script scene by scene: "lovers on a bed, an arm being amputated outside the window . . ."

Frampton: Two surgeons amputating a *limb*; that's the word. They could be tree surgeons.

Gidal: Right, they *could* be, but for me the question and problem (in what we

have to call "structural" cinema) are to what degree does *Zorns Lemma* produce a shift with respect to the other films of *Hapax Legomena*?

There seems to be some sort of shift—even a break—but perhaps not a definitive one. I find that *Zorns Lemma* does not demand a narrative fulfillment of the anticipation it establishes and uses. It doesn't offer answers, no matter how abstract, to a goal-oriented, narrative consciousness within the viewer. And for me, something like *Poetic Justice*, although very abstract and ambiguous, is possibly a "narrative"; it has narrative tendencies. *Do* you have narrative tendencies? (Laughter.) I *suspect*, I suspect . . . that's the question. . . .

Frampton: Am I coming out of the closet?

Gidal: It's not just some abstract intellectual question about narrative. It's the whole idea of using the viewer as a voyeur, as a passive respondent to your very abstract ideas and feelings. Or do you demand of the viewer a total break with the past cultural system?

Frampton: Okay, let's talk about that. First of all, say we're at the end of history or even somewhere in the middle of it. Suppose then that we were at the other end?

Gidal: Which other end? (General laughter.)

Frampton: Suppose we had all history to contemplate as an object. Suppose all the film, all the art that ever will be made had been made. Here we are, let's say, disembodied spirits trying to make some sense out of it as anthropologists, as it were. It strikes me that there would be a very large category we could call film. Or a category that contains film and some other things. It would seem that there were a number of cinemas that had to use more or less the same material. There would be a narrative cinema that essentially mapped literature onto cinema; there would be perhaps a retinal, a purely formal, retinal cinema: Conrad, Kubelka, Sharits, three very different artists who made flicker films,[3] and so forth. We could go on for thousands of years. We could reach an extraordinary level of phosphene orchestration.

Gidal: All three of the filmmakers you mentioned deal with narrative in some way.

3. Among the films referred to are Tony Conrad's *The Flicker*, 1966, 30 minutes; Peter Kubelka's *Adebar*, 1956–57, 1:50 minutes, black and white, sound; *Arnulf Rainer*, 1958–60, 6:30 minutes, black and white frames, black and white sound; Paul Sharits's N:O:T:H:I:N:G, 1968, 36 minutes, color, sound; T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G, 1968, 12 minutes, color, sound.

Frampton: That might cast itself loose finally, later on.

There might very well be a tactile cinema—I see signs of this in Andrew Noren's work—that would deal almost entirely with the sensory cluster we call tactility and which also has to do with things like kinaesthesia, the sense of your own weight and the weight of other things. I suggested another sort in order to get an argument going at Millennium,[4] and someone took me up on it. Taking the view that cinema was the youngest of the arts, I proposed a cinema of "special effects" that would be a cinema of the ear, popularly known as music. If music is only the cinema of the ear, sound ordered in time to perceptual ends, we could say the cinema of the eye is light ordered in time to perceptual ends. Then, of course, cinema becomes the oldest of the arts. Music is not in the main a product of the central nervous system; insects make music, for example. Hundreds of millions of years old . . . a cinema of the ear. Remember now, we're clear out at the other end of history at this point, and that 350 million years have gone towards bringing music to its present form. It may seem very brief when we contemplate the other cinemas that I anticipate.

I know it's customary to say that we have a cinema which is the mapping of literature onto film, but it is nevertheless true that film and its conventions and discoveries over the last eighty years have had a very powerful effect on narrative form. It has begun to turn the other way around; even narrative film is much more influential *on* the novel.

Gidal: Film is a determinant of consciousness rather than . . .

Frampton: Absolutely, rather than a version of . . .

Gidal: Right.

Frampton: It would seem then that narrative is simply a category. Now, we say *nonnarrative* and *narrative* film. That's because there are those tin cans full of celluloid in California or in Pinewood, all those negatives of Greta Garbo. It's as though narrative film were a vast, barbaric Asia, and a tiny Europe of what we call nonnarrative film were appended to it at the northwest corner. This presumably will not always be the case. We notice that the term *nonnarrative* film contains the term *narrative.* Post-Freudian psychology speaks point for point to Freud; essentially it says, "Here, Dr. Freud is right; here, Dr. Freud is wrong." It spends all its time talking about Dr. Freud. I would rather—to take this back to film—simply talk about *film.* Narrative film is a category, a subset

4. The Millennium Film Workshop, founded by Ken Jacobs in 1966 and directed by Howard Gutenplan, is one of New York's important centers for the exhibition and discussion of independent film production. Frampton and his contemporaries cited in this interview appeared frequently to present work in this forum, and to discuss issues central to production and theory.

within the set of all possible films that have been made. In that case, if I'm making a film, it seems to me I needn't necessarily concern myself with whether it has overtones or scents or narrative or narrative myths in it. In fact, it does. These new films are very concerned with, not making narratives, but with the problems and paradoxes of narrative, as with other things. Viable or nonviable ready-made views of knowledge. If you put something in the form of a story, if you cast something you believe you know in the form of a narrative, that narrative says whatever it says. The very fact, however, that it is recognizable as a narrative in itself, entirely aside from its specific content or your own version of narrative theory, already suggests a specific epistemological cast. It says essentially that you do subscribe, if not wholeheartedly, to a certain view of knowledge, a certain view of the way things happen in the world, which is the structure of the English declarative sentence.

Gidal: It's authoritarian.

Frampton: Obviously.

Gidal: By breaking down traditional narrative, are you not making an effort to combat that authoritarian structure? You may believe in those "wonderful" moments when the black light floats out of the bulb in Sharits's film N:O:T:H:I:N:G, or when the chair falls. Or in an analogue of the short story, in Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer*, which restores traditional modes of seeing despite a basic structure in opposition to that. The question is: can one just break down narrative and say that this is like a combat, a real combat, in which the actual film process demands that the viewer be much more than a recipient of a quasi-narrative?

Frampton: Let's say we agree we're against a certain kind of passivity. A certain feeling that you're sitting at the table and roast beef is falling straight into your mouth and down into your stomach.

Gidal: And you're made to believe you like it and want it that way.

Frampton: But that view is not necessarily and precisely congruent with a position against narrative. Consider the situation in painting now. Here is a presumption which is not true: painting has at this point supposedly cast off its illusionistic references.

Gidal: As you say, supposedly.

Frampton: It ain't so, by and large. Stella's work is as illusionistic as that of any painter I can think of, including most action painters—totally concerned with deep space. It's virtually impossible still, except by fits and starts, to see action

painting, for example, as not referring to deep space. Somebody has said that Pollock paintings are thickets and masses of leaves and so forth. It's even been done. All those Kline paintings *were* done by Mark di Suvero.

Gidal: Take this back to film. Take it to Kubelka and Sharits as opposed to *Back and Forth*[5] and *Zorns Lemma.* A strict break in the "structural" (that word again) cinema, a total dichotomy, which no one seems to recognize.

Frampton: I recognize it. But what I'm arguing against, you see, is what you seem to suggest: that the faintest hint of anything that could possibly be construed as narrative, or having to do in any measure of distance with narrative, is a no-no.

Gidal: No, no, well to some degree, yes. Yes. I am saying that. Not duration, but narrative.

Frampton: You are saying that. This is like somebody saying—Rimbaud or somebody—"*Il faut être absolument moderne.*"

Gidal: But you, with one film, have also drawn a very firm line. With *Zorns Lemma* you are saying it is a "no-no." You say, "You must be this way, one way." You're saying this in one film and Mike Snow says it in *Back and Forth.* So whether one says it in words or in practice, it's there.

Frampton: Are you implying by hints and tags that in this new work, ghosts, phantasms of narrative . . . Are you saying that I've backtracked to sin and corruption?

Gidal: No, I'm asking whether the written script of *Poetic Justice*, which is very ambiguous but which nevertheless forces the viewer to make his or her own images, to construct his or her own attenuated narrative—I'm asking whether you see *this* as separate from your concerns in *Zorns Lemma.* As *Back and Forth* is a separation, a break from the concerns of *Arnulf Rainer.*

Frampton: Oh, no, no.

Gidal: No? Well, explain with regard to *nostalgia* and *Poetic Justice* in particular.

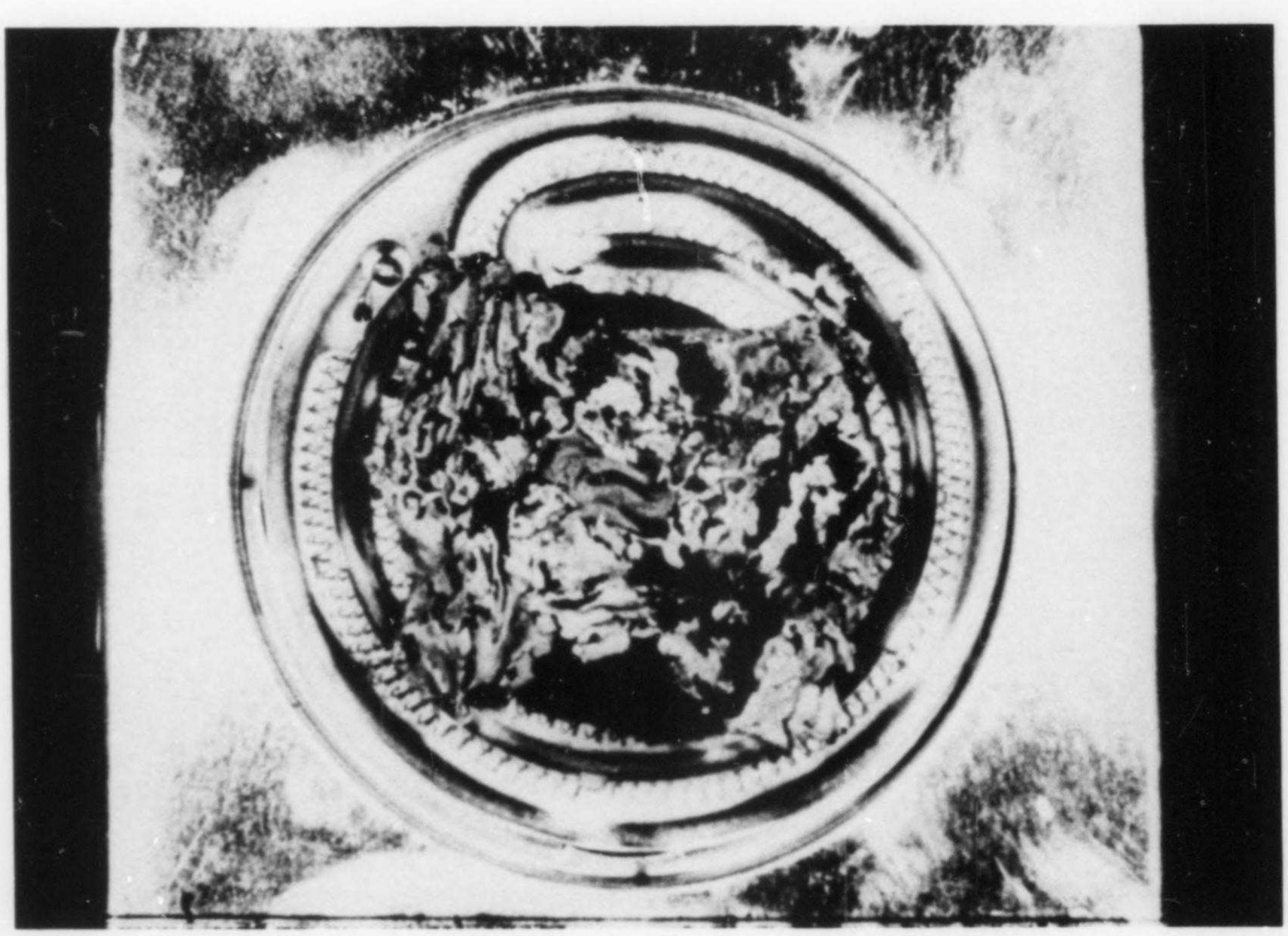
Frampton: One has always on one's mind not one single thing, but a dozen or so . . . (long pause). Let's go back to *Zorns Lemma. Lemma* is, in a way, a very

5. Michael Snow's film designated as ⟷, 1968–69, 52 minutes, color, sound.

didactic work, to my mind at least. It's essentially prescriptive. It denies at the outset that there could be any other view of the matter, that there could be any other way. It hits very hard at the suggestion that there could be any other way of dealing with this mass of material. By "this mass of material" I mean a box full of footage. This is the world view that this mass of material suggests. More than suggests. Fully implies. That is one work in which I describe the alphabet as a colossus . . . or something like that.

The new stuff, unlike *Lemma*, is not in that way prescriptive. It suggests other views. In *nostalgia* I corrupt—well, I say "corrupt"—a series of, not descriptions, but reminiscences that turn old photographs of my own into a kind of atemporality, a history of aesthetics and sculpture. Very, very static, it gets better as you go on, represents a series of aesthetic postures . . . disguised as a series of accounts of my life, my youth. There is, at the same time, a double or triple present in that film, as in a number of films I did not make. In other words, the posture of the film is, rather than prescriptive, critical in a certain sense.

Gidal: Describing the burning photographs leaves a lot open, leaves a lot that has *not* been described or presented.



Hollis Frampton. nostalgia. *1971.*

Frampton: Sure, there are other ways to describe them. It's possible to understand the thing—and one man has—as a diary, a series of revolutions—no, revelations, not revolutions—of my melancholy state of mind ten years later. That's in there, too.

Gidal: But to what degree? To what degree is the main thing not the size, the length of each image, the size of each image within the frame, the piece of time against another piece of time, the length of time to burn an image and reclaim the frame? Are the other concerns of equal importance?

Frampton: Here I am, three blocks from where Wyndham Lewis lived most of his life. As I recall, he pointed out that art has no insides in the sense that all the qualities of the work of art are what you can see; there's nothing hidden. While I do carry along a ghostly freight of possible films that could have been made with the same material, the film I made is nevertheless the one you see. And presumably I have made the specific film out of the directly implied possible films. Not your guess, but my direct implication, for a specific purpose, you see.

At this point I'm very interested in the *why* of a specific thing, the *why* of the cloud, the cluster of films that exist virtually . . . like the old analogy of the stone that contains a certain number of sculptures.

Gidal: So you want to leave that open? You don't want to deny or subsume those things?

Frampton: I think that by not making any of them I positively *have* denied them.

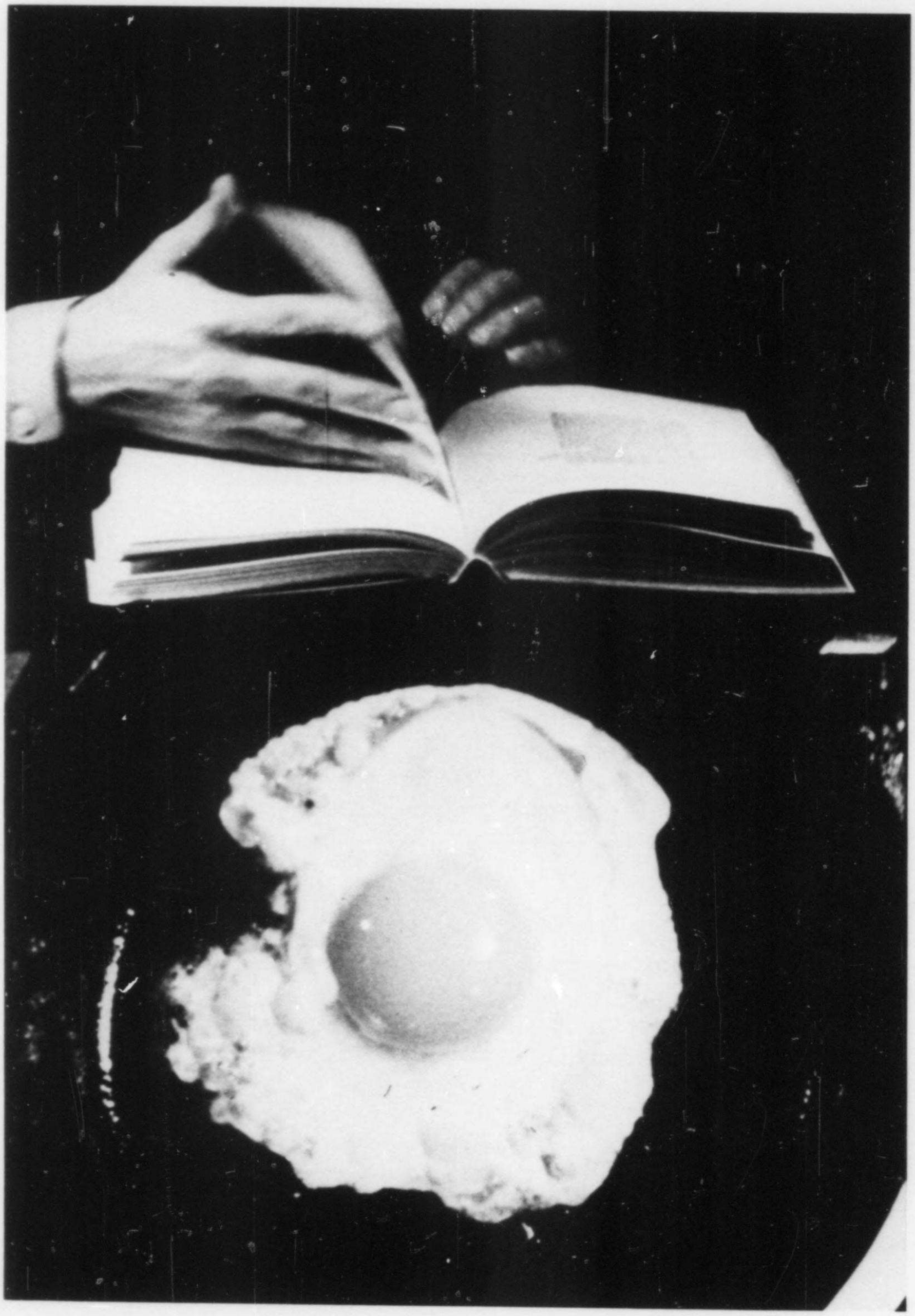
Gidal: Not by leaving it to the viewer? Not through narrative completion on the viewer's part, as opposed to a denial of that whole completion, through pure structure? You seem to be open to that; you're not offended by a viewer reacting in that way.

Frampton: I'm not offended. I feel that anyone who is actually bending with warm precision over the work that is present to him, that such a person, if he makes a conventional narrative out of the film, has really twiddled his head a whole lot.

Gidal: Would you feel the same about any narrative that he might come up with? I'm referring to the possibility that the viewer would come up with not only a conventional narrative, but that he might even get out of the film the old story of the "artist's experience," the presentation of a sensibility, rather than a sense of process, of segments of time, perceptual relativities, relationships.

Frampton: Let's just stop right here! To make a work of art is to involve yourself

Hollis Frampton. Zorns Lemma. *1970.*



in some risk. At the worst I suppose that when you're committed to a work and it fails, what you risk is your sanity. The fuses burn out, the wire-ends are hanging there, and you're a catatonic for the rest of your life.

Gidal: That's one possibility.

Frampton: Let's just accept that there are risks. I'm not very interested in the audience, finally; things find their audience or they don't. Dante was eclipsed for 500 years; it was no concern of his. Let's say that in *Zorns Lemma* the risk is concentrated within a single massive hole in the ground into which a few people have actually fallen. If you do not immediately begin to build the film for yourself as you perceive it, then there simply is no film. There is no work at all, and you have only a meaningless jumble of images.

Gidal: Total risk.

Frampton: A straight on/off situation. In these new black and white films, it is more precarious; the risks are of another kind. Unlike *Zorns Lemma*—where either you see it or you don't—these films have a penumbra. You can end up driving on the shoulder of the road, and I accept that. In fact, it is something that interests me very much. I think, for instance, of the fate of *Madame Bovary*, which was prosecuted specifically as though it were an exaggerated version of precisely that kind of romantic slush the reading of which doomed Emma, precisely the kind that drove Flaubert to a frenzy or ecstasy of disgust in the writing. He well knew that except to the highly disciplined sensibility, it would be indistinguishable from the thing it distances itself from. But now, at this point of history, it's very visible because we don't have books like that any more. It has survived the garbage, the waste out of which it was made.

Gidal: We're back in the garbage, really.

Frampton: I've seen *Madame Bovary* displayed in a paperback edition in bus stations and other places just as though it were some sort of dirty book, and I'm sure it could be read this way (except for its sad ending) by middle-class women on long bus rides—along with short stories in the *Ladies' Home Journal*—who would get the same kind of tickle out of it.

Gidal: Or the men who read Norman Mailer.

Frampton: In this maze of misdirection there is, you know, a real ecstasy in finding your way through the traps that lie on either side. The only way you can go wrong, in fact, is to fall into some reverie of your own rather than looking at what is there. For I do believe that in all these films, it's all in front of you, es-

sentially. In *Poetic Justice* there are four models, let us say, for four modes of consciousness. In the first tableau there is a straight, very low-grade, high-school instruction scenario of action. It's what's being talked about within that illusory action which doesn't exist. This is something else entirely, but leave that out. In the second tableau there are two things going on. One is a kind of illusory cinema, a kind of fooling around, a sort of seduction . . .

Gidal: All written down . . .

Frampton: All written down again, but you have to wait for the still photograph to find out what's happening in the movie, because all of the cinema shots are empty, and then the hand holds the still up, and so forth. But none of that is actually going on either. So you have a kind of memory thing working, and that again is part of the hierarchy of parities, I suppose. Everyone has seen the sentimental documentary visit through the house where George Washington lived; the camera dollies in through the bedroom and he's *not there.* Then you have the painting by Gilbert Stuart or Stuart Gilbert . . .[6]

Gidal: The frame within the frame within the frame . . .

Frampton: Yes, of course.

Gidal: Even in your film you have the film frame; you have the sheaf of paper on which the scenario is written page by page; you have the window described. That's already three frames.

Frampton: Okay. And in some cases, four.

Gidal: And in some cases, four.

Frampton: In the third tableau, essentially surrealist, in which "You and your lover are making love on the bed," the big window is seen as a screen or as a real window or as a Renaissance imaginary window within which an image can take place. A kind of hypnagogic series, you see. Another mode of understanding. The images there are patently hypnagogic. In the fourth, it is impossible to see the lover's face. Instead there's a series of ambivalent postures in which "oneself" or "You and" are perfectly interchangeable, a kind of dream.

Gidal: Are they that open? How do you see these things?

6. Frampton's sustained and intensive interest in Joyce informs this playful and ironic reference to the early exegete of *Ulysses.*

Frampton: I see various forms. Someone has said that that script is a kind of virus that seemed to float off the screen and infect the whole auditorium, that it is impossible not to enjoy it. But why, at the same time, is it not simply a script to read? Why didn't I issue it as a booklet or a pamphlet? Well, there is, in fact, a film to see. And the film you're supposed to see concerns itself with a couple of things. One is a quite real and, oh, melancholy, but not unpleasant, still life in which a number of things are happening. Reflections on the sides of the flowerpot and the coffee cup change, and so forth. There are flares, a couple of repetitions. There is, then, a photographic image which is further worked upon by the fact that one is called upon to read. Rather one is coerced into reading the space within the frame, or part of the frame. The eye cannot wander around the frame as it does in a picture. It has to march back and forth as it does on the page.

And then the photographic image is there to mediate, as it were, between what is actually seen and the script which is imagined. That's why it would have to be, in my mind, a film, you see. Now, having thought about the possibility of mediation, of using the sentences not just to deliver or reinforce a sequence and duration of pieces, for instance . . . Those sheaves of paper are also a way of mediating the still life which we see and the imaginary film which you do not and which is totally loose, of course. Each one will presumably have a different illusion of an illusion . . .

Gidal: Or interpretation of an illusion.

Frampton: If you will. Then that immediately begins to suggest other things. So that I was giving, immediately on the opening of the film, the illusion of an illusion of a cactus and a coffee pot sitting on a table. Is that part of the script or is that the film you're watching? It goes back and forth between those two and I hope that, eventually, this contradiction between the apparently boring richness of the actual photographic images that you see and the apparently interesting, total paucity of the script you're visualizing cancels itself out again into something. The whole run of the work: an examination/criticism, a mocking of all sorts of art theories. One is left feeling pretty much cast out into a perceptual void where you yourself have to look at things and imagine them because none of the theories work, essentially.

Gidal: How did the response at the London Co-op screening compare with responses in the States? Is response of any value to you or is it generally too hostile?[7]

7. The London Filmmakers Cooperative, which distributes independently produced film, has organized, as well, exhibitions and discussions of new work by both British and foreign filmmakers.

Frampton: It's all different. I was most interested in what Malcolm LeGrice[8] said about watching himself in the act of fitting *Travelling Matte* into the scheme of the other films, wondering at what point it was going to become another segment of the film. That indicated to me that something had been seen and understood. As far as the general response goes, there's everything from the most overt kind of hostility, people yelling and screaming all the way through, to people who refract the work through a completely different index, through criticism of a shape different from mine.

Gidal: How do you feel about the general basis of understanding? Seeing *Zorns Lemma* three years ago, I thought it was a great film but also something very rare in that it was accessible. I don't understand why it would be seen as inaccessible. It is difficult at times.

Frampton: I think a lot of people find it inaccessible, but we're dealing with a special kind of audience, almost like a certain kind of audience for literature. Nobody, but nobody now professes interest in painting and comes to Ken Noland, for example, totally ignorant of everything done in painting in the last 100 years. People may be a bit puzzled, they may have been only peripherally aware of modernism, but at least they know that surrealism existed, for example. In film, on the other hand, there are any number of people who believe they're passionately interested in film . . .

Gidal: And they know nothing about it.

Frampton: Yes, they have spent absolutely all their time looking at . . .

Gidal: Rubbish.

Frampton: They may have seen Resnais's films, for example, but not only are they ignorant of the 1940s psychodramas, Maya Deren, early Brakhage, Willard Maas, these sorts of films, they are also completely unaware of what was done in the '90s. They've never heard of Lumière or, in this century, of Vertov. You see, one has a problem of education.

Gidal: Every film becomes an educational one.

Frampton: Yes. In fact it makes for very curious dealings with audiences. Of all the artists working today, filmmakers are the only ones who have to deal with their audiences. When John Cage comes on the stage, the audience does clap, clap, clap.

8. Malcolm LeGrice, British filmmaker and author of *Abstract Film and Beyond*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, MIT Press, 1977.

Gidal: Or even boo.

Frampton: Or even boo. He does his thing, the audience claps or boos or hisses; he walks off the stage. He's not in the position of explaining his own work, expounding or criticizing his own work, distributing it, or anything else. He may be a performer, but he is not, on balance, in the business of being a magician and trained chimpanzee and a traveling lecturer or hellfire preacher.[9]

Gidal: At the same time, people like us are less alienated precisely because we're involved in those situations.

Frampton: That's probably true. In fact the gulf between a man's painting or sculpture and his audience may be the most tremendous. If you read interviews in art magazines, as even the poor bastards who make the stuff occasionally do, then, of course, you find the largest gap between any quality the work has and anything the supposedly high-powered critic is talking about ninety percent of the time. It's very often like looking at a different work.

Gidal: Not to mention the audience. That's the positive aspect of this kind of filmmaking, in one way.

Frampton: It can be. It can be very defeating, but one has, at least, some notion of the size of the cultural lag that's involved.

Gidal: Well, you *see* the chasm; you get some notion of its scale.

Frampton: Since film has such a compressed history—we are already at the point where it is as if we were Augustine, let us say, and had an audience that was absolutely unfamiliar with Virgil and Homer—that it makes for a totally bizarre situation. It's grotesque. Except that there are now film courses. Perhaps it's a sham—giving supposedly literate people supposed literacy in yet another part of their lives. This may be what it's about, or it may not; I tend to doubt that it is. Then there's this other phenomenon—TV. Everyone in the United States has seen 15,000 hours of TV and 500 feature films by the time he or she is eighteen. Aside from the late shows. They all believe they know all about film because they can recognize Paulette Goddard on sight.

9. John Cage is, of course, noted for his extension of Gertrude Stein's transformation of the lecture into a form of performance. Frampton is, however, voicing the fatigue generated by the radical constraints of independent production which have forced the undercapitalized filmmaker into the routine of the lecture circuit.

Gidal: And three minutes of Warhol still freaks them out completely.

Frampton: Of course. There's still astonishment at screenings of Brakhage's *Window Water Baby Moving* and that's a film that's going to enter high school next year, right?[10] It was born in 1959. My God, that's a long time! The special theory of relativity was published in 1905, sixty-seven years ago; people have lived and died in this time, and the theory of relativity is obviously the supreme commonplace to any working physicist.

Gidal: And to us, without our necessarily knowing it.

Frampton: It has obviously entered consciousness in a mythic way, but kids at school are still taught essentially Newtonian physics. In fact the whole thing is such bad news that I wish you'd go on to another question.

Gidal: Right. Who's work do you particularly like, and why?

Frampton: Do they have to be alive?

Gidal: No. They can be alive, dead, or coming. Not only in film. You're obviously very interested in photography; you write a lot about it and you deal with it in your films. You've been a photographer. But film first, photography later. Give us your *Sight and Sound* "best ten" list.

Frampton: A number of names that you presumably would expect: Brakhage, Kubelka, Ernie Gehr, Mike Snow, Andy Noren, Joyce Wieland. Ken Jacobs's *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son* has still not had the notice I think it should have.[11] It's a seminal film. These are all people whose work—there are perhaps others—I feel has had or will have some importance for my own work.

Gidal: When you mention these people, you mean their work as a body.

Frampton: I could pick some specific films out, but I wouldn't. I wouldn't want to run the whole thing through a very fine sieve.

Gidal: Sailboat as opposed to *Rat Life and Diet in America*?

Frampton: No, *Sailboat* and *Rat Life*, in fact . . . and a little film called *Hand Tinted*, for instance—these films by Joyce. I have difficulties of various kinds with

10. Stan Brakhage's *Window Water Baby Moving*, 12 minutes, color, silent, was made in 1959.
11. Ken Jacobs, *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son*, 1969, 86 minutes, black and white and color, silent.

Reason over Passion, a film that I admire and respect tremendously.[12] I find that the movement of this film is very important to me, but there are other parts of it that I'm still chewing over, for one reason or another. There are three or four of Mike Snow's films, the three large ones—*Wavelength*, *Back and Forth*, *Central Region*—and one shorter film called *Standard Time*. Those four in reverse order. On the other hand, I have recently seen *Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film* two or three times and (this has nothing to do with Mike Snow, it has to do with me) I need that film like I need a hole in the head. That film doesn't come to me at a time when I have a vacancy there. One could weigh everybody's work in fine balance.[13]

Gidal: Right. Like Kubelka: *Schwechater*, *Adebar* or *Unsere Afrikareise.*

Frampton: Well no, you can't do it like that.

Gidal: You see it as a total?

Frampton: Yes. Again, I suppose in that case I could happily live the rest of my life without *Mosaik im Vertrauen.*[14] I did see *Mosaik* at the time it was made and there are, presumably, certain things that must be done for one. American films that did those things were available before that came along. And that's that.

Gidal: But not *Afrikareise*?

Frampton: It's almost . . . it really is *sui generis*—in a class by itself. I haven't very much to say about the film at all. I would hope to see that film at least once every three months for the rest of my natural life. If it doesn't fade, or something like that.

Gidal: There'll always be another negative.

Frampton: That is a work that is so dense, made with such patience, it has hardly begun to make its presence felt. That's true, too, of a lot of the work I mentioned. It's certainly true of what Stan Brakhage has been doing for the last five years. Well, there it is. It's like the profile of the Hindu Kush . . . or something like that.

12. Joyce Wieland, *Sailboat*, 1967–68, 3:30 minutes, black and white printed on color stock, sound; *Rat Life and Diet in North America*, 1968, 16 minutes, color, sound; *Hand Tinted*, 1967–68, 5:30 minutes, color, silent; *Reason over Passion*, 1968–69, 80 minutes, color, sound.
13. Michael Snow, *Wavelength*, 1966–67, 45 minutes, color, sound; *The Central Region*, 1971, 3 hours, color, sound; *Standard Time*, 1967, 8 minutes, color, sound; *Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film*, 1970, 20 minutes, color, sound.
14. Peter Kubelka, *Schwechater*, 1957–58, 1 minute, color, sound; *Unsere Afrikareise*, 1961–66, 12:30 minutes, color, sound; *Mosaik im Vertrauen*, 1954–55, 16:30 minutes, color, sound.

Hollis Frampton. Zorns Lemma. *1970.*

Frampton's Lemma, Zorn's Dilemma

ALLEN S. WEISS

Copulation and mirrors are abominable. For one of those gnostics, the visible universe was an illusion or (more precisely) a sophism. Mirrors and fatherhood are abominable because they multiply and disseminate that universe.

—Jorge Luis Borges

I do not believe there is such a thing as a perfect appearance. Even an epiphany is not in the theological sense a perfect appearance. . . . Appearance itself is imperfect.

—Hollis Frampton

To the abominations of copulation and mirrors one might add cinema. In a world where error, as Nietzsche teaches us, is the very precondition of thought, truth and beauty are always proximate to sophism and illusion. Cinema disposes of yet another set of codes which are available for ideological misappropriation. This disposition by means of seriality, exemplification, listing, and cataloguing operates within the limits of two antithetical functions. Either such listing is a subversive activity, destroying all taxonomic schemes, or lists serve as formal imperatives, constituting structures and systems. In the former case, a hermeneutic schema entails a de-centering and de-totalizing logic of events, operating according to the aleatory conditions of existence. In the latter, a hermeneutics entails a centering and totalizing logic of structures and formal systems, constituting a determinate axiomatics.[1]

1. Apropos of this gross schematization of lists, consider the following set of analogies: closure : overture = conjunction : disjunction = homogeneity: heterogeneity = fusion : diffu-

Hollis Frampton's film *Zorns Lemma* is structured according to a twofold axiomatic system. The first axiom is indicated by the film's title, which refers to mathematical set theory: "Zorn's lemma. The maximal principle: If T is partially ordered and each linearly ordered subset has an upper bound in T, then T contains at least one maximal element." The second axiom derives from the mystical philosophy expounded by Robert Grosseteste in *On Light, or the Ingression of Forms*, which offers a combination of neo-Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy to express a theology, ontology, and cosmology of light. A section of this text is read in the third part of the film.

These two axioms are already figured within the text recited in the first part of the film, the eighteenth-century Massachusetts elementary school lesson book called *The Bay State Primer*. The production of the sets and subsets in the second part of the film is determined by a system of substitutions and progressions ordered by the (abridged) twenty-four-letter alphabet of the English language used in the primer. The mathematical axiom is operative in the alphabetical order of the text; the theological axiom is operative in the biblical content of the text. Thus the twofold axiomatic system is articulated according to a double coding: structural and ontological.[2]

In both cases, the axiomatic systems postulate a maximally ordered universe and generate a maximally ordered film. We may compare the implications of Zorn's lemma and Frampton's theory of narrative in this respect. A corollary of Zorn's lemma is that "any set can be well ordered." This accords with Frampton's claim that narrative is one of the axioms of cinema, defined as Brakhage's Theorem: "For any finite series of shots ['film'] whatsoever there exists in real time a rational narrative, such that every term in the series, together with its position, duration, partition and reference, shall be perfectly and entirely accounted for."[3] This narrative ordering obtains not only on the cinematic and meta-cinematic levels, but also on the micro-cinematic level, wherein every shot is already an ordering of the very frames which constitute it. Recognition of this fact (already made manifest in the single-frame work of Robert Breer as well as in Frampton's own film *Ordinary Matter*) permits Frampton the radical

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sion = parity : disparity. On the relation between categorization and epistemological structures, see especially Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, New York, Pantheon, 1970. On textual and libidinal subversion, see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, New York, Viking, 1977.

2. Thus Annette Michelson is correct to claim that in this film Frampton "translated the contradistinctions between lyric and analytic modes" (Annette Michelson, "About Snow," *October*, no. 8 [Spring 1979], p. 116). Here, the lyrical is an expression of the mystical praise of God, a poetic mode of knowledge; the analytic is an expression of the mathematization of sign systems, a "scientific" mode of knowledge. Both modes are expressed by Grosseteste's onto-theology, and the rhythmic and transformational system is further delineated by the mathematical exigencies of Zorn's lemma. Both are subsumed by the all-encompassing province of Brakhage's theorem.

3. Hollis Frampton, "A Pentagram for Conjuring the Narrative," in *Circles of Confusion: Film, Photography, Video Texts 1968–1980*, Rochester, Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1983, p. 63.

conclusion that "a still photograph is simply an isolated frame taken out of the infinite cinema."[4] (It is indeed the rare frame that does not meet the condition of a hapax.) This is the antithesis of Eisenstein's theory.

> Why do we use montage at all? Even the most fanatical opponent of montage will agree that it is not merely because the film strip at our disposal is not of infinite length, and consequently, being condemned to working with pieces of restricted lengths, we have to stick one piece of it onto another occasionally.[5]

For Eisenstein, cinematic montage necessitates a thematics, an ordering principle; otherwise montage is nothing more than an empiricism on the formal level. Montage theory is a special case circumscribed by the general theory of dialectical materialism: the central trope of both theories is antithesis. Thus Eisensteinian montage does not entail a formally heterodox film practice, but rather a cinematic orthodoxy in relation to the meta-theme of dialectical materialism.

Frampton's theoretical stance is the guarantor of intertextuality within the de facto open system of cinema. His filmic practice is the generatrix of ordered systems which are subsets of a disordered universal cinema, wherein empirical conditions give rise to diverse metaphysics and metaphysics informs cinematic hermeneutics. Frampton's meta-thematic is the imaginary of individual consciousness; Eisenstein's meta-thematic is collective revolutionary praxis.

The specific configurations of the unavoidable narrative algorithms are generated by diverse rhetorical strategies. The antithetical epistemological functions of such algorithms (that is, the de-totalizing destruction of taxonomia or the totalizing construction of systems) find their prime structures in the respective figures of *accumulation* and *enumeration*. Accumulation is a mode of listing independent of any necessary formal or material connection between the constituent terms. Enumeration is a listing of attributes, a mode of predication, defining a central term by means of ancillary terms. Hence, enumeration implies a mode of subordination and determination, a systematization of terms. While the relation between terms in an accumulative list is *disjunctive*, the relation between terms in an enumerative list is *conjunctive*.

Within any enumerative system what must be determined is the central

4. Hollis Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 111. As a corollary to this claim, consider Peter Kubelka's statement, "Cinema is not movement. Cinema is a projection of stills—which means images which do not move—in a very quick rhythm. And you can give the illusion of movement, of course, but this is a special case, and film was invented originally for this special case" (Peter Kubelka, "The Theory of Material Film," in *The Avant-Garde Film*, ed. P. Adams Sitney, New York, New York University Press, 1978, p. 40).

5. Sergei Eisenstein, "Word and Image," in *Film Sense*, trans. Jay Leyda, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1947, p. 4.

term. The importance of this determination for filmic practice was recognized by Eisenstein: "Just as in the case of a homogeneous ideology (a monistic viewpoint), the whole, as well as the least detail, must be penetrated by a sole principle."[6] Frampton expresses the same principle with a concrete example by explaining that in Japanese culture the supreme metaphor is Mount Fujiyama, because of its inevitable, central visibility. Thus, "all things were to be construed according to the number of qualities they could be seen to share with Fujiyama."[7] The ultimate ontological generalization of this principle is stated by Merleau-Ponty: "Any entity can be accentuated as an emblem of Being."[8] This claim may be emended with the corollary: any rhetorical trope or figure may serve as the organizational structure of a text.

Traditionally, in Western epistemology, there have been two such supreme metaphors: consciousness and God. Thus in a sense, all axiomatics are reducible to these terms: all accumulation is achieved in relation to them, and all enumeration is a determination and expression of their attributes. For Frampton, consciousness is the supreme mediator,[9] organizing the dynamic codes of cinema, a cinema which can thus be nothing other than the expression, symptom, and enumeration of the qualities of consciousness. What, then, is the central metaphor of *Zorns Lemma*?

Every day is the beginning of the world.

—Hollis Frampton

. . . that harmony which makes every composition steadfast.

—Robert Grosseteste

To determine the narrative characteristics of *Zorns Lemma* according to Brakhage's Theorem, we may account for the "position, duration, partition, and reference" of the shots, sequences, and segments by means of the film's rhetorical structure. The topography, chronography, and prosography of its

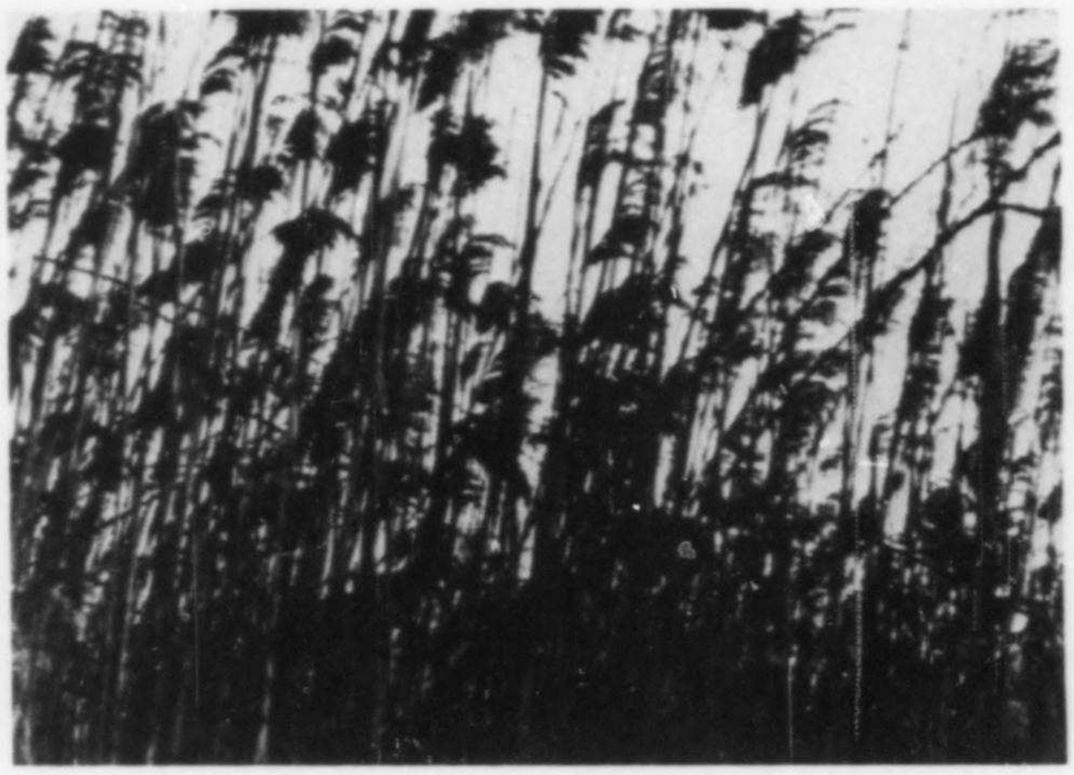
6. Sergei Eisenstein, "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," in *Film Form*, trans. Jay Leyda, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949, p. 48.
7. This fascination with Mount Fujiyama is of broader interest within American experimental film. One may note Robert Breer's film *Fuji*, as well as Harry Smith's avowed desire to have Andy Warhol make a film of the mountain (see Frampton, "A Pentagram for Conjuring the Narrative," p. 61).
8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1968, p. 270.
9. See Hollis Frampton, "Notes on Composing in Film," in *Circle of Confusion*, p. 124.

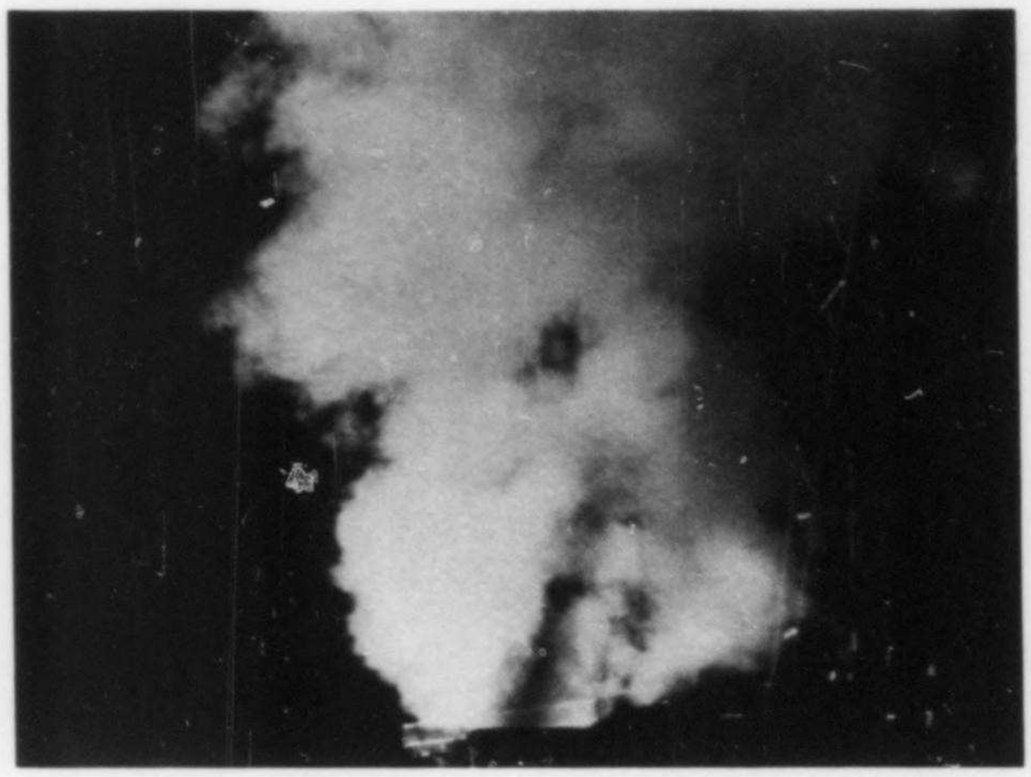
terms must be determined. This will simultaneously reveal the contours of consciousness and a divine cosmology.

The film begins as darkness, with the first enunciation a statement of collective guilt and responsibility read from *The Bay State Primer*: "In Adam's Fall, we sinneth all." This text, read over a black screen, provides the zero degree of subordination of the sound track to the visual track. (This lack of subordination will be strangely reversed in the second part of the film, which is silent but which presents words visually, perhaps to be recited.) The text is read by a female voice, maintaining the authority of enunciation within the disquieting paradigm of a voice unmediated by the presence of a body, a paradigm central to biblical theology and the iconoclastic tradition. This particularly happy disquietude vis-à-vis the tradition is due to the fact that it is a female voice which speaks; but the scenario will become even more disconcerting when the recitation of Grosseteste's text in the third part of the film is performed in rondo, one word per second, by six different female voices. This destroys the illusion of homogeneity of the enunciation's source, just as the visual track of the second section achieves the fragmentation and heterogeneity of narrative structures.[10] Spectatorial pleasure is here a function of heterodoxy, where narrative is a function of secondary process ratiocination and allegory is a condition of truth.

The phrase, "In Adam's Fall, we sinneth all," bears as its referent both the Bible and the subsequent filmic texts and structures. Consequent to the Fall is the infinite distanciation of God from humankind, which entails a form of knowledge based upon sense perception in a world fragmented by the ordeals of Chronos. Henceforth, God was manifest only through the Divine Logos, which had the dual referent God/world: it is precisely the significative rupture between these terms that necessitated hermeneutic procedures, and which led to the reductio ad absurdum of a God with either an infinite number of names or the name of God as the most general tautology. Yet it is precisely this name which is lacking in the film, but which is revealed by *pronomination*, that is, the designation of a thing by means of its attributes, qualities, and actions rather than by its proper name. This structure of absence is also supported by the last enunciation from *The Bay State Primer*: "Zacharias, he did climb the tree, his Lord to see." This futile task, to see the invisible, provides the articulation of the film's three parts: from Zacharias's tree we do indeed see the forest depicted in the third part of the film. But before that we are presented with the transformational complex of the film's second section, which is composed of sequences of one-second-long shots, ordered according to the alphabetical system already provided by the primer. The first sequence depicts only words; in subsequent sequences a shot of a word will be replaced by a shot without words, of a per-

10. The split-screen image of a woman speaking (in the second part of the film) serves as a figuration of the subsequent multiplication of voices in the third part, as was indicated to me by Chantal Khan Malek.





Hollis Frampton. Zorns Lemma. *1970.*

son, place, thing, or event. This is the ultimate pronomination: God is represented by His creation, that is, by the world's diversity of Logos and Physis.[11] Such is precisely the cinematic representation of that "broken and scattered God" referred to by Borges in his tale, "Paradiso, XXXI, 108," which indicates that "something infinite had been lost."[12] The death of God is expressed in an epiphany of His partial representations. What remains is a disjunctive world and the set of arbitrary relations between words and things.[13]

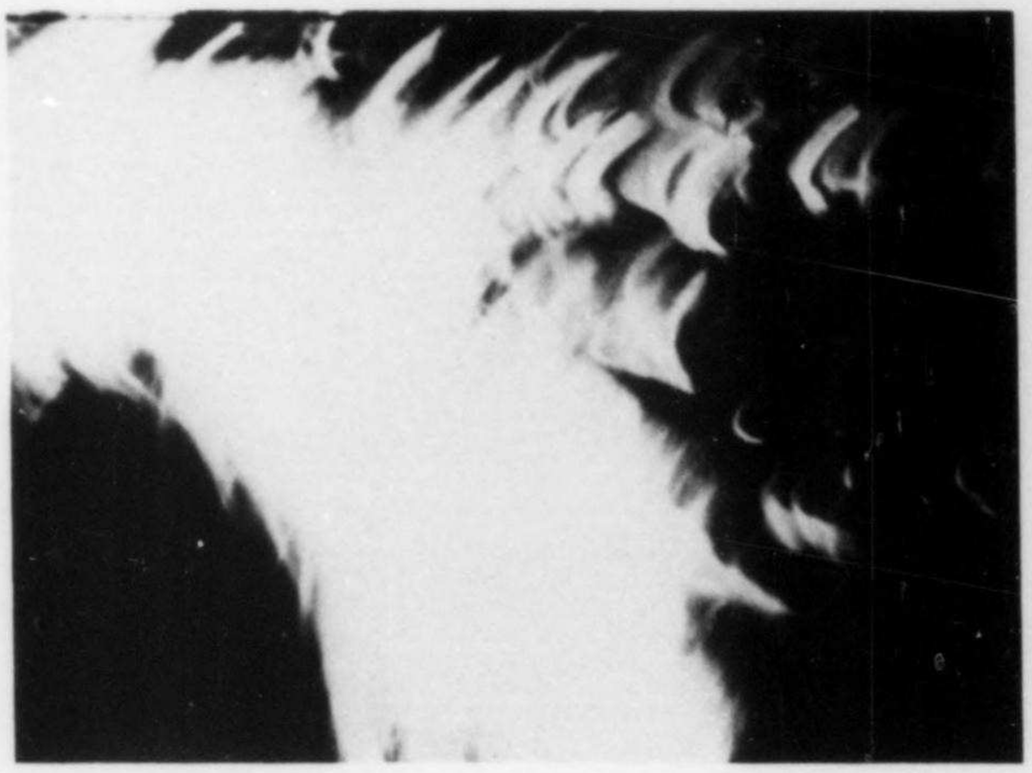
The structure of the first two parts of the film, a system of ordering and substitution based upon the order of the alphabet, is also emblematic of the film's theological referent. It is homologous with hymns to God structured as an alphabetical litany: such litanies offer a multiplication of praise to God, with each letter of the alphabet used to begin a word of praise, a hyperbolic predication of the Divine Being. The particular words do not matter as much as the liturgical structure itself.[14] System as signifier; metaphysics as metaphor.

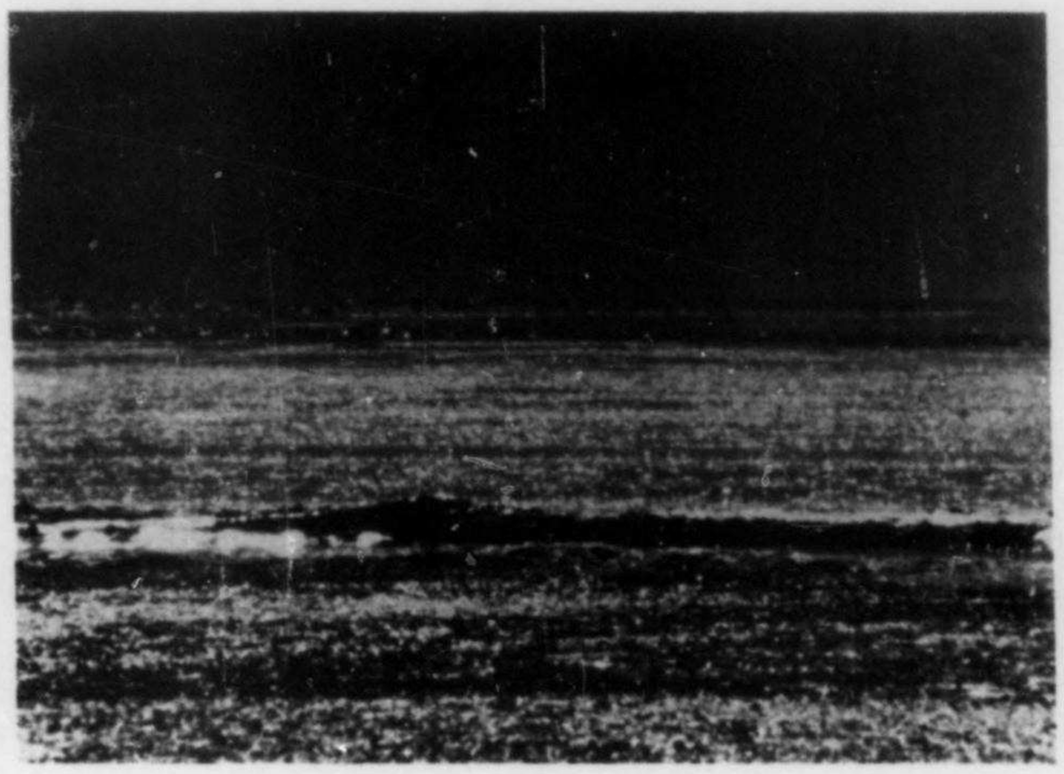
11. That the words *god*, *angel*, *divine*, *church*, and *bishop* appear by no means negates the argument for pronomination (antonomasia): these are merely more signs lost in the plethora of words and images, from which no centering term may be established except *Deo favente.*

12. Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, trans. James E. Irby, New York, New Directions, 1964, pp. 238–239.

13. Such disjunction would become the subject of other films by Frampton, as well as a great part of the avant-garde cinematic tradition. The disjunction between voice and image (as the voice's source) is investigated in Frampton's *Critical Mass*; and while *Zorns Lemma* discloses the world's disjunction in a mode of filmic discontinuity achieved through editing, *Travelling Matte* discloses the world's disjunction in a mode of filmic continuity, where the shifts from abstract to representational images are determined by the variable framing and camera motion within what appears to be one long, unedited shot. Furthermore, the visual series of *Zorns Lemma* are the formal equivalent of the textual lists of *Poetic Justice.*

14. For example, in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, Schocken Press, 1973),





Thus the double codification of *Zorns Lemma*, of structural and ontological modes, respectively generates accumulative and enumerative sequences, which in turn refer respectively to the world and to God. Yet God, as the conflation of the systems of infinite accumulation and infinite enumeration, entails the breakdown of the ontological implications of rhetorical figures: the literalness of "nature" becomes the zero degree expression of truth.

Furthermore, within the primary transformational matrix of the alphabet is expressed a secondary transformational system:[15] in the second part of the

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Gershom Scholem shows how the Hebrew alphabet was found by the mystic Abraham Abulafia to be the perfect, absolute object of mystical meditation. This is the case because the name of God reflects the hidden meaning and order of existence, and the name of God is contained within the alphabet. This notion was derived from the earlier Merkabah mysticism (which had direct ties to neo-Platonism), in which we find hymns structured as alphabetical litanies, such as:

Excellence and faithfulness—are His who lives forever
Understanding and Blessing—are His who lives forever
Grandeur and greatness—are His who lives forever
Cognition and expression—are His who lives forever
Magnificence and majesty—are His who lives forever
Counsel and strength—are His who lives forever
Luster and brilliance—are His who lives forever

and so on, following the sequence of the Hebrew alphabet.

15. These two transformational systems are expressed by Grosseteste's text. (1) Numerological transformation (homologous with the alphabetical system): "Nor are all bodies of the same form though they have their origin in a simple light. Just as all numbers are not of the same form, though they are greater or lesser multiples of unity. Whenever the number one of form and the number two of matter and the number three of composition and the number four of entirety are added together they make up the number ten. Ten is the full number of the universe because every whole and perfect thing has something in itself like form and unity, and something like matter and the number two and something like composition and the number three and something like entirety and the number four, and it is not possible to add a fifth beyond these four.

Hollis Frampton. Zorns Lemma. *1970.*

film the first four images that replace shots of words represent fire, water, air, and earth, that is, the four elements of which the cosmos is composed according to popular pre-Socratic belief, codified by Empedocles, incorporated into Platonism, and subsequently utilized by Grosseteste (in the text read in the film's third part). Every object is composed of a well-ordered combination of the four elements, and it might be noted that according to some mystical iconoclastic theologies these four elements will merge during the apocalypse. As the cosmos is structured between the composition and decomposition of its constituent elements, so this film is structured between the lack of light and the pleni-

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Therefore every full and perfect thing is a ten. But from it it is clear that only the five ratios from between the four numbers, one, two, three and four, are fitted to that harmony which makes every composition steadfast." (2) Ontological transformation: "Matter for the four elements was assembled in the ninth sphere which is the sphere of the moon. The ninth sphere engendering daylight from itself and resembling the mass within itself has brought forth fire. Fire engendering light has brought forth air. Air engendering from itself a bodily spirit has brought forth water and earth. But earth is all the higher bodies because the higher daylights were compressed together in the earth and the light of any sphere may be drawn forth from the earth into acts and operations."

tude of light, between the blackness of the first section and the white light into which the snow scene of the third section fades. Between the darkness before creation and the pure white divine light of the apocalypse, we have the second part of the film, that is, the representation of the diversity of the world and language. The film is composed between the perfect antithesis, darkness and white light, the stuff of all cinema.[16]

So I asked him if he thought angels would speak in a language without images, purer and akin to light. "Angels must be very good to eat. I would imagine they are very tender, between chicken and fish."

—Peter Kubelka
interviewed by
P. Adams Sitney

The heresies we should fear are those which can be confused with orthodoxy.

—Jorge Luis Borges

The shot of the ibis (the final image of the second part of the film) is startling in its color, its placement as the maximal element in the transformational series, and its brevity: it alone among the nonlinguistic images in the film appears for only one second. (This is an eschatology not without humor: the shot of the ibis occurs immediately after the shot of an egg frying on a pan, thus reviving and reconstituting the myth of the phoenix.) The ibis was the Egyptian god of wisdom, symbolic of the spiritual, of the highest level of existence. It here serves as the articulation between the second and third parts of the film, and also serves as an analogue for the phrase articulating the transition between the first, second, and third parts: "Zacharias, he did climb the tree, his Lord to see." Both the ibis and the object of Zacharias's gaze indicate the subject of Grosseteste's neo-Platonic ontology/theology of light, which is related by

16. Peter Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer* is one of several films composed within the strict limits of this antithesis of black and white. As for the narrative structure of *Zorns Lemma*, it must be said that, appropriate to its apocalyptic metaphor, it is highly teleological. The substitutive shots are often those of (necessarily fragmented) brief events (such as tying a shoe, painting a wall, changing a tire), whereby the end of the second section is indicated by the progress of these events towards completion. These true teleologies find their counterpart in Frampton's film *Special Effects*, where the electronic soundtrack provides the anticipation of numerous (false) endings by producing sounds that seem to run down.

the text of the film's third section. That object is God, made manifest in the purity of light, from which all else emanates, especially the cinema.

It is quite appropriate that the initiates of Gnostical and Kabbalistic knowledge are known as *illuminati*, those who have been enlightened. We find, for example, in Lurianic Kabbalism a theosophical cosmogony which explains the role of light in the creation of the universe. As Gershom Scholem explains in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*:

> The first being which emanated from the [Divine] light was Adam Kadmon, the "primordial man." Adam Kadmon was nothing but a first configuration of the divine light which flows from the essence of En-Sof into the primeval space of the Tsimtsum—not indeed from all sides but, like a beam, in one direction only.

To the abominations of mirrors, copulation, and cinema, one might add God. We find here an expression of the infinite cinema of which Frampton writes: God is the infinite film projector; world and humankind and language are the film that is projected by means of the pure, white, Divine light. And my life, and yours, are partially ordered sets of that maximally ordered set. As is that synecdoche of the infinite film, Frampton's *Zorns Lemma*.

Propositions for the Exploration of Frampton's *Magellan*

BRIAN HENDERSON

The *Magellan* cycle of Hollis Frampton is known to us principally from his "annotated calendar for *Magellan*" of December 21, 1978, and from the films of that cycle completed before his death. Several proposals drafted in the mid-'70s seeking support for the project and several interviews granted between 1977 and 1980 provide additional information. One such useful interview was conducted by Mitch Tuchman in 1977, another by Scott MacDonald in Summer 1978, and a third by Bill Simon in January 1980.[1] Even within this short interval Frampton's descriptions of his project vary somewhat; we observe at least some differences in emphasis. These may reflect the varying interests of his interlocutors, but they demonstrate, as well, the evidently rapid development of Frampton's work and thought on *Magellan*, including its overall structure and appropriate mode of presentation.

In Summer 1978, for instance, Frampton seemed to use the concept of *Magellan* as a kind of umbrella for all his films made since the completion, in 1972, of his previous cycle of films, *Hapax Legomena.*

> MacDONALD: Are the short films listed in the Co-op Catalogue after *Hapax Legomena—Apparatus Sum*, *Tiger Balm*, *Yellow Springs*, and *Less*—parts of *Magellan*?
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> FRAMPTON: Yes, with the moderate qualification that *Apparatus Sum* is a very brief study for *Magellan: At the Gates of Death. Less* is a segment of a section that has no other segments yet, so that its place and function are unclear. One of the things I'm going to do soon is to restructure the mode of presentation of *Magellan*—not the film itself, but only how it's presented—in such a way that its shape can begin to become clearer, at least in skeletal form. *Magellan: At the Gates of*

1. Mitch Tuchman, "Frampton at the Gates," *Film Comment*, vol. 13, no. 5 (September-October 1977); Scott MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton; *Hapax Legomena*," *Film Culture*, nos. 67, 68, 69 (1979); Bill Simon, "Talking about *Magellan*: An Interview with Hollis Frampton," *Millennium Film Journal*, nos. 7, 8, 9 (Fall-Winter 1980–1981).

> *Death* is seen, when it has been seen, as a 106 minute chunk. In the calendrical wheel of the whole work, it's divided into twenty-four sections which are seen at considerable distances in time from each other. In the next few months, I'll finish certain specimen days in the cycle. A day or a number of calendrical days will constitute a program. Anyhow, *Yellow Springs* is a portrait, of Paul Sharits; it belongs to a particular section late in the film which is a portrait gallery. *Tiger Balm* is also part of Magellan. There are whole sections of Magellan that are very lightly sketched, that have one or two or three single points; other sections, of course, are more clearly filled out. By the way, you mentioned some time ago that you like *Palindrome*. I'm quoting it in its entirety in *Magellan* as one of the *Dreams*.[2]

Eighteen months later, in January 1980, Frampton speaks somewhat differently of *Magellan* and its structure. He had in the meantime completed his calendar of December 21, 1978, which accounts for each day of *Magellan*'s cycle —more often, it is true, by general headings than by the titles of completed, or even uncompleted, films. At the time of this interview, indeed, he was exhibiting at the Whitney Museum the first calendrically ordered group of *Magellan* segments—about five and a half hours of film. The difference in Frampton's discussion of *Magellan* is now perhaps a matter of tone; he no longer speaks prospectively about a work to be done but rather retrospectively about a work whose design is largely complete, however much remains to be done.

> The very large work in any medium is a special case; it's an odd case. I didn't originally set out to undertake something this big. It grew upon a certain group of films and a great deal of footage conspired among itself to begin to suggest the cycle. But having decided that I was going to do it, I've now spent a certain amount of time going over the problems of the mammoth work of whatever kind.[3]

At the time of his death on March 30, 1984, Frampton had completed approximately seven or eight hours, less than one-third of the proposed thirty-six hour film. Precisely how much less may not be known for some years; besides finished films, Frampton left others in various stages of incompletion. Some of these may take their place in a definitive assemblage of the incomplete *Magellan*, which may be further in the future than completion of the whole work would have been had its maker lived. Particular candidates for later inclusion would seem to be the one-minute films that may be identifiable in Frampton's voluminous footage—for, aside from the (all-important!) cut that begins and ends each one, these films do not depend upon editing. When all is restored to *Magellan*

2. MacDonald, p. 7.
3. Simon, p. 7.

that ever will be, the problems of reading the work will become definitive. Until then, perhaps, we can explore it more freely.

Completed, *Magellan* was to belong to us, its spectators, just as we, and spectation itself, are its protagonist.

> Comic art resolves in favor of its protagonist. Now the manner in which it does that can be very complicated. . . . The spectator [of *Magellan*] is the protagonist when the work is done. I am the surrogate protagonist for the making of the work; I have to be. Somebody has to do it. Presumably there has to be some locus identifiable for the spectator throughout the making of the work.[4]

Frampton believed that he would finish *Magellan*, but he noted that "historically in the twentieth century your chances of finishing a very, very large work, if you undertake it, are certainly no better than fifty-fifty, and they're probably not fifty-fifty. . . ."[5] Frampton did not, as far as we know, speak to the situation of the spectator confronted with incompleted work; we are therefore on our own. Here is a work that has reverted to us prematurely and most of us have had neither the time nor the training for its proper reception. Under these conditions, one can at best stumble ahead, confident only that future work will correct one's worst blunders.

Frampton's plan of December 28, 1978, for the entire *Magellan* project is the only such document thus far available. More than a plan in the usual sense, it is an exact, comprehensive calendar of the entire year's cycle of films, specifying the titles or categories of films to be shown on each day of the year. The *Magellan* cycle as a whole repeats itself every 365 calendar days, but takes 369 days to run its full course. This is so because the first two days of the cycle overlap the last two days of the preceding calendar year and the last two days of the cycle overlap the first two days of the following calendar year.

The films for the first two days of the cycle, to be shown on December 30 and 31, are a group entitled *Birth of Magellan.* The last two days of the cycle, to be shown on January 1 and 2, offer a group of films called *Death of Magellan. Birth of Magellan* overlaps the usual day's screenings for December 30 and 31 and *Death of Magellan* overlaps the usual day's screenings for January 1 and 2. The first day of *Birth of Magellan*, which is also the first day of the cycle (December 30) consists of three intermixed subseries of films, the *Cadenzas*, the *Mindfall* series, and the *Dreams.* Their specific order is as follows:

Cadenza I
<*Mindfall*>, PART 1
Cadenza II

4. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
5. Tuchman, p. 57.

FIRST DREAM: <*Ludus Luminis, Ludus Chromaticus*>

Cadenza III
<*Mindfall*>, PART 2
Cadenza IV

SECOND DREAM: <*Pallindrome*>

Cadenza V
<*Mindfall*>, PART 3
Cadenza VI

THIRD DREAM: <*Natural History*>

Cadenza VII
<*Mindfall*>, PART 4
Cadenza VIII

FOURTH DREAM: [Untitled]

Cadenza IX
<*Mindfall*>, PART 5
Cadenza X

FIFTH DREAM: [Untitled]

Cadenza XI
<*Mindfall*>, PART 6
Cadenza XII

SIXTH DREAM: <*Hexachordum Appolinis*>

Cadenza XIII
<*Mindfall*>, PART 7
Cadenza XIV

The second and concluding day of *Birth of Magellan* takes place on December 31.

INTERLUDE: <*Magellan's Toys*>
<*Master Magellan in the Hall of Mirrors*>
<*Common Knowledge*>
<*Machina Magellani*>
<*La Fotomachia de Don Fernando*>
<*Magellan Is But Poorly Armed*>

At the other end of the cycle, *Death of Magellan*, to be shown on January 1 and 2, consists of *The Death of Magellan* on January 1 (whether this is a single film, a series of films, or a group of films is not clear) and these items on January 2:

INTERLUDE: <*Memoranda Magelani*>
INTERLUDE: <*Pares Magelani*>
INTERLUDE: <*Tempora Magelani*>
INTERLUDE: <*Mens Magelani*>
<*Lamentation*>
<*Alleluia*> / <*Gloria*> / <*Hosanna*>
<*Envoi*>

In between the *Birth* and the *Death* is *The Straits of Magellan*—by far the largest part of the cycle; this is a very large group of films, to be shown over 365 days. *The Straits of Magellan* consists of 720 one-minute films, two of which are to be shown on each day of the cycle (720 = 360 × 2). For most days of the cycle—327 to be exact—the two one-minute films for that day are the entire program.

There are five days in which no one-minute film is shown (360 + 5 = 365). These exceptional days are March 11 (the filmmaker's birthday), the vernal equinox (March 21), the summer solstice (June 21), the autumnal equinox (September 21), and the winter solstice (December 21). For each of the equinoxes and the solstices, there is a special film of the day, appropriately so-called. These films were in fact among the first completed by Frampton—*Autumnal Equinox* (1974), *Winter Solstice* (1974), *Summer Solstice* (1974), and *Vernal Equinox* (1975). Each film is to be shown only on its eponymous day and no other film is to be shown on that day. These four days were, of course, great pagan celebrations. They were, and are, also used to mark the progress of the year and the passage of time from year to year. For these reasons perhaps, Frampton made the four films an autonomous subsection and called it *SOLARIUMAGELANI.*

Vernal Equinox, completed by Frampton in 1974, was taken out of the solstice-equinox series and renamed *INGENIVM NOBIS IPSA PVELLA FECIT.* He planned but did not complete another *Vernal Equinox*:

> I liked the film very much but I was not satisfied at all with its position there. It is clearly and drastically out of decorum with the other three. It's twice their size just to begin with and it's a completely different sort of montage. It's a completely different part of some imaginable universe. So I decided to move it elsewhere. There is a new *Vernal Equinox* which is shot but not edited, which I am planning to hold back for quite some time. Except I will say that, quite appropriate to the season, I think it will be judged to be quite pornographic.[6]

The original *Vernal Equinox*, now called *INGENIVM NOBIS IPSA PVELLA FECIT*, was divided up and spread through the calendar of exhibitions. Subsections of it are to be shown every thirty days—on January 1, January 31, March 2,

6. Simon, p. 14.

April 3, May 3, June 2, July 3, August 2, September 1, October 2, November 1, December 1, and December 31. There are thirteen showings in all because two sections are shown back-to-back, on the first and the 360th numbered days. (Due to the five unnumbered days mentioned, day 360 is in fact December 31, that is, day 365.)

The fifth unnumbered day is March 11, Hollis Frampton's birthday, for which a showing of *The Return of Magellan* is indicated. Whether this is a single film or a collection of films is not clear. There is, however, an additional specification for this day—"Note: The filmmaker will never be present on this day."

There are other films diffused throughout *The Straits of Magellan* also. These include installments or subsections from several subseries of films within the *Straits* as a whole. These subsections first appear on Day 1 (January 1), in which they are "sandwiched" by the day's two one-minute films, called *Panopticons*, abbreviated by the December 21, 1978 calendar to *Pans*:

[*Pan* 1]
Path/Bridge/Garden
<Gates of Death: Red>
The Small Cloud
<Gates of Death: Green>
Garden/Bridge/Path
[*Pan* 2]

The subsections themselves, aside from the *Pans*, always appear together, in this collocation, and in this order. The only exception to this rule is that the centerpiece is sometimes drawn from a series called *The Small Cloud*, sometimes from one called *The Large Cloud*. Thus, on Day 5 (January 5):

[*Pan* 9]
Path/Bridge/Garden
<Gates of Death: Red>
The Large Cloud
<Gates of Death: Green>
Garden/Bridge/Path
[*Pan* 10]

The appearance of this collocation of subsections is specified for twenty-four days spread throughout the year. The table below indicates these dates according to whether *The Small Cloud* or *The Large Cloud* serves as the centerpiece for that day's complex. It is the complex as a whole, however, that is to be shown on each date.

Jan 1	Small Cloud
Jan 5	Large Cloud
Feb 1	Large Cloud

Feb 10	Small Cloud
Feb 28	Large Cloud
Mar 24	Small Cloud
Mar 29	Large Cloud
Apr 25	Large Cloud
May 3	Small Cloud
May 22	Large Cloud
June 12	Small Cloud
June 18	Large Cloud
July 16	Large Cloud
July 23	Small Cloud
Aug 12	Large Cloud
Sept 1	Small Cloud
Sept 8	Large Cloud
Oct 6	Large Cloud
Oct 12	Small Cloud
Nov 2	Large Cloud
Nov 21	Small Cloud
Nov 29	Large Cloud
Dec 27	Large Cloud
Dec 31	Small Cloud

*

Magellan is at once a cycle of films and one large cyclic film, designed to recommence when its annual screening time is finished. *Finnegans Wake* would come to mind even if Frampton had not, in effect, annexed it to his own work by reproducing in *Gloria!* not one, but two, early film versions of the ballad of Tim Finnegan. (Finnegan is a hod carrier who falls from a ladder, apparently to his death, is laid out for an Irish wake, and comes back to life when some whiskey is spilled on him by the mourners.) *Gloria!* is not quite the latest film in the *Magellan* cycle but it is the last of those completed. Most of the self-descriptions found in *Finnegans Wake* apply to *Magellan* as well; for instance, "So you need hardly spell me how every word will be bound over to carry three score and ten toptypsical readings throughout the book of Doublends Jined" (*FW*, 20). Like the *Wake*, *Magellan* is a work of double ends joined—its ending is joined to its beginning in a perpetual loop. Like the *Wake*, *Magellan* is very long, comic in nature, and rises, phoenixlike, from its momentary "conclusion" in the rebirth of another cycle—"none so soon either shall the pharce for the nunce come to a setdown secular phoenish" (*FW*, 4). (Joyce's stress on secularity, shared by Frampton and articulated in his writings, deflects the possibility of a religious interpretation of the death and rebirth cycle.) When Joyce writes of the moment of transition between cycles—"when the fiery bird disembers" (*FW*, 24),

one thinks specifically of *Straits of Magellan*'s ending on December 31 only to begin again on January 1.

Magellan is the largest loop film ever made, the longest film ever looped. If Léger's repeated shot of a washerwoman in *Le Ballet Mécanique* (1926) is the first known—or the best-known—film loop, then *Magellan* is Léger's washerwoman writ large—or perhaps Léger's washerwoman multiplied by Joyce's washerwomen, who in *Finnegans Wake* scrub clothes and gossip from opposite banks as the widening river of history, myth, and everything else flows by and night gradually falls.

Magellan's circumnavigation of the world, 1519–1522, was a global loop. The voyage returned to its starting point and could, in principle at least, have been repeated indefinitely. (In fact no one ever repeated it, not even some latter-day Thor Heyerdal—it was simply too dangerous.) Magellan's voyage proved empirically that the earth was round, that is, loopable.

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Despite its relation to other works, the general structure of *Magellan* is distinct and original. Perhaps its most interesting overall aspect is its superimposition of the epicycles *Birth of Magellan* and *Death of Magellan* on the 365-day epicycle *Straits of Magellan*. Paradoxes and complexities follow from this arrangement. *Birth of Magellan* overlaps with the last two days of the calendar year, coinciding with its end or death; and *Death of Magellan* overlaps with the first two days of the calendar year, coinciding with its beginning or birth. This double inverse mirroring also serves to cancel the apparent linearity both of the year itself and of the *Birth-Death* framing structure of the work as a whole. Frampton's many statements on *Magellan* stress the work's nonlinearity or multi-linearity. (Multi-linearity rigorously proposed and pursued becomes virtual nonlinearity; indeed it is all we usually know of nonlinearity.) Thematically speaking, birth and death are thoroughly intertwined and mutually pervasive. Neither the *Birth* nor the *Death* impedes, or even affects, the continuity and repetition of the year itself, or even the symbolic birth and death of the year itself (just as an individual's birth and death fails to affect the movements of the earth on its axis and around the sun, the change of seasons). The calendar year and the overlaid *Birth* and *Death* are interwoven but separate and distinct epicycles within the whole. At another level, the generalized functions of birth and death feed into the annual cycle and indeed propel it.

Considered as a single revolution of the 369 day cycle, *Birth* and *Death* respectively occur at the very beginning and very end—they are separated by exactly 365 days. (Symbolically speaking, if the protagonist of the work passes through *Birth*, he or she will not have to face *Death* for a full year; and when one does face it, at the end of the cycle, one is already embarked on a new calendar year.) Given the overlay of *Birth* and *Death* on the repeating year,

however, *Birth* is followed immediately by *Death*—the *Birth* of the new cycle by the *Death* of the old. *Birth* (December 30–31) proceeds directly to *Death* (January 1,3). (As Beckett says, "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.") The abutment of the *Birth* and *Death* epicycles means that within four intensive—and intense—days of screening, the viewer is asked to think about birth and death and the relation between them even as the regular screenings of those days, in continuity with the calendar year, lead us to consider the ongoing flow of life.

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The figure of the palindrome, found in many different forms and at many different levels of *Magellan*, its epicycles, and its constituent films, pervades the work, interacting with a number of other symmetries and asymmetries in the work as a whole. The palindrome is a linguistic form, but one with geometric aspects, as it were. The O.E.D. defines it as "a word, verse, or sentence that reads the same when the letters compositing it are taken in the reverse order; [it] reads the same backwards as forwards." There are many Latin palindromes but, according to a nineteenth-century note, only one English one. This may or may not include the presently best-known one: Madam, I'm Adam. (This sentence—an introduction that presumes a prior or de facto marriage between strangers—suggests an interesting link between the palindrome and human reproduction. The two strands of the double helix of the DNA molecule, the genetic material itself, run in symmetrically opposite directions; we may say that it is a palindrome.)

In 1969, Frampton made a twenty-two-minute film called *Palindrome* (969 is a palindrome, so is 22). Making a filmic palindrome is far more difficult than making one of words or numerals or a series of headings; while words, numerals, and headings need not be legible upside down to be palindromes, a film must be so. Assuming the requisite double sprocket holes on a given print, *Palindrome* would maintain its identity shown backwards—not only in reverse order but upside down. In principle, at least, the film need not ever be rewound. (*Palindrome*'s parameters are elucidated in various Frampton interviews and other sources.)

Frampton's offhand indication to his interviewer that he will incorporate *Palindrome* as a *Dream of Magellan* has the appearance of an afterthought, but it was not. The film appears in the December 21, 1978, calendar as the *Second Dream*; it was shown as *The First Dream* in the screening of parts of *Magellan* at the Whitney Museum in January 1980. Given the importance of the palindrome figure throughout *Magellan*, it is entirely appropriate that the film appear among the *Dreams*, that is, in that section devoted to *Magellan*'s unconscious, wherein the material of the cycle as a whole is recycled in condensed, displaced form.

The overall disposition of the work through two days of prologue, 365 days of main body, and two days of epilogue realizes a palindrome. Every day of the 365-day *Straits of Magellan* is a palindrome in that it begins and ends with one of the one-minute films. When, as is the case on most days, there are no other films shown, the palindrome structure is thereby realized, as it is when the two one-minute films "sandwich" an episode of *INGENIUM NOBIS*. No less palindromic, however, are the twenty-four complexes of episodes centering on *The Large* (or *Small*) *Cloud*. Each such sequence is: *Panopticon*; *Path/Bridge/Garden*; *Gate of Death: Red*; *The Large* (or *Small*) *Cloud*; *Gates of Death: Green*; *Garden/Path/Bridge*; *Panopticon*. It is to be noted that the *Gates of Death* episodes as a whole compose a filmic palindrome in the true sense, not just a palindrome of headings, because each section is to be shown rightside up and forwards and upside down and backwards in the course of the annual cycle. Hence also, presumably, the "mirroring" structure in the twenty-four showings themselves. (This arrangement also reflects the work's overarching notion of death as a gate that is passed through, in various ways and senses, in both directions. This, perhaps, is Cocteau's point of entry into Frampton's Magellanic metahistory of film.)

The palindromic aspects of the two-day *Death of Magellan* and the second day of *Birth of Magellan* are not clear from their headings alone and we have, unfortunately, only a sketchy idea of what films are to be shown then. The first day of *Birth of Magellan*, which is also the first day of the cycle as a whole, is, however, patently palindromic. Between each pair of *Fourteen Cadenzas* is sandwiched one of the seven *Mindfalls*, and between each two such groups is one of the six *Dreams*. The center of the day's palindrome is thus *Cadenza I—Mindfall IV—Cadenza VIII*. The twenty-seven headings of the day's films read the same both forwards and backwards.

The palindrome factor also illuminates the actual production of *Magellan*. Of the *Fourteen Cadenzas* only I and XIV, the first and the last, were completed; of the seven *Mindfalls* only I and VII, again the first and the last, were finished. This is not surprising when we consider that palindromes are built not from beginning to end, but from both ends toward the middle.

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The inscription and reinscription of the palindrome figure in the text of *Magellan* poses the larger question of the work's nonlinearity. This in turn poses the question of what Frampton called the metaphor of Magellan, for one complex of temptations to linearize the work derives from the notion of the historical Magellan's voyage and, by extension, from any voyage undertaken in his name. Another complex of temptations, however, has to do with the work's "metahistory of film," which might also, but does not, entail linearity—early film treated early in the cycle, the avant-garde toward the end, and so forth.

In his statements and interviews, early and late, Frampton affirmed the

cycle's nonlinearity. Discussing his decision to divide *Magellan at the Gates of Death* into twenty-four subsections to be spread throughout the film, he said:

> Now *Magellan at the Gates of Death* is not a part of the large section called the *Death of Magellan.* It's part of the large section called the *Straits of Magellan.* It can be extrapolated and seen as a single, big work. In fact, it's composed of twenty-four subsections, which are marked off by those elegiac refrains. If the whole work or even all of *Straits* were to be seen as a single unit, those twenty-four sections would be separated from each other by other material. The parts of the whole thing, instead of following each other linearly, are constantly interpenetrating and in the big structure are totally interlaced with each other.[7]

In response to a question whether or not *Magellan at the Gates of Death* might be placed at the Philippines, where Magellan in fact died, Frampton replied:

> If this were a narrative work, and say, you attempted to locate *Magellan at the Gates of Death* in the Philippines, fine—except that it's not a linear work. It is as if anticipated or remembered in its entirety at the same time.[8]

Indeed, if there is a pattern to the successive changes made by Frampton while working on *Magellan*, it is a movement toward a more thoroughgoing nonlinearity. *Magellan at the Gates of Death*, shown originally as a single film, was later divided and distributed throughout the entire work, as it was apparently always intended to be. *Vernal Equinox*, on the other hand, also cut into sections and distributed through the cycle as a whole, was originally shot and edited to be shown in one piece.

The two solstice films and the two equinox films were among the first *Magellan* films that Frampton completed; he also exhibited them rather widely. In this context, not surprisingly perhaps, they suggested a far more linear work than its maker ever had in mind. Hence the need for Frampton's corrective remarks later and his "corrective operations" in breaking up certain blocks of film and interlacing them with other segments. Since most of these operations were planned in advance, the corrective view that they impose is largely a function of the viewer's perspective in receiving piecemeal a work conceived as a whole. (This is not to deny a genuine dialectic between Frampton's "theory," including his plan for the whole, and his practice, mutually modifying each other as composition of the film proceeded.)

Frampton said of one group of films in *Magellan* that they were "subject

7. Tuchman, p. 57.
8. *Ibid.*

a further fragmentation and sandwiching procedure,"[9] a clue to his method of composition generally. No linear interpretation even of the solstice and equinox films, however, has proved viable—even beside the fact that one of the films has been fragmented and distributed throughout the work. We might consider also that in the Southern Hemisphere, the solstices are reversed—the time of our winter solstice, is that of their summer, and vice versa. Non-linearity and palindromicity are built into the work's very globalism; they operate in the Magellan metaphor itself, for to circumnavigate the world is to encounter the reversibility and inversion of all things.

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One can make too much of Frampton's Magellan metaphor or, on the other hand, one can make too little of it. It is possible to say, "It's a metaphor," in a way that dismisses the question from critical concern once and for all. Our period has established that the choice of a metaphor, like everything else, is "never innocent." It is also not without consequences, especially in the title of a very large work and especially when the artist has compared his overall metaphor to those of Joyce for *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. The principal problem for critics of *Magellan* is to determine at which levels and in which respects the metaphor operates. This is a judgment, unfortunately, that can be reliably made only after the work has been well explored. As critical work on the film proceeds, in whichever direction or directions, horizontal or vertical, the meaning and operation of the overall metaphor will no doubt shift and change many times over.

Frampton's most frequently cited statement on Magellan is this passage from an early grant proposal:

> I began work, nearly five years ago, upon a project that is subsumed under the synoptic explication of a single metaphor. When it is complete, it will constitute a "serial," or long work in installments, using the elements of peripeteia and discovery customary to the serial mode. The central conceit of the work derives from the voyage of Ferdinand Magellan, first circumnavigator of the world, as detailed in the diary of his "passenger," Antonio Pigafetta and elsewhere. During his 5-year voyage, Magellan trespasses (alive and dead) upon every psycholinguistic "time-zone," circumambulating the whole of human experience as a kind of somnambulist. He returns home, a carcass pickled in cloves, as an exquisite corpse.

There are, curiously, two mistakes in this brief account. Magellan's voyage took three years not five—it left Spain with five ships and 237 men in

9. Simon, p. 25.

September 1519 and returned to Spain with one ship and eighteen men in September 1522. The body of Magellan, furthermore, did not accompany the returning ship. The tribe that defeated Magellan refused all requests to relinquish his body and it was never in fact recovered. In 1971 a European skull that was approximately 450 years old was found on the island of Mactan, site of the fatal battle; it was indeed claimed to be Magellan's skull but there was no way to verify this since several of Magellan's companions had been killed in the same battle.[10]

Joyce said that an artist's mistakes were "portals of discovery"; we are familiar with the notions of creative misreadings. Frampton may have conflated his own five-year journey, mentioned in the first sentence of the passage, with that of his protagonist's journey. The return of Magellan's body to its starting point, ready for another cycle, may have provided a desired symmetry for the work, but it also inscribes the wish, diagnosed by Freud, for immortality—the spectators' wish, since we are the protagonists of the work, that is, we are Magellan.

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Perhaps the most frequently traveled connection in Frampton's statements about *Magellan* over a decade links the notion of a circumnavigation of the world with that of a "metahistory of film." Frampton explored the latter in his 1971 essay "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses."[11] In a 1980 interview he made clear the continuity between this notion and the entire *Magellan* project.

> That article, which is nine years old, was, in my mind, quite openly a manifesto for a work that I was at that moment thinking quite seriously about undertaking, namely the *Magellan* project. [I wrote] that if the necessary films to constitute a full tradition do not exist, then they must be made. Another point very near the end says: while it is perhaps not possible to generate the knight's tour in chess, the absolute tour of the board, it is possible to make a tour of tours, so to speak. In both of those cases, I now serve notice that I was alluding to this project, to at least what I thought its concrete scope of ambition could be. I cannot generate the infinite cinema that I posited then. But I can generate a grammatically complete synopsis of it.[12]

The infinite cinema is defined by Frampton as the sum total of all the films ever made. A grammatically complete synopsis of this total, although Frampton

10. Edouard Roditi, *Magellan of the Pacific*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1972, p. 237.
11. Hollis Frampton, *Circles of Confusion*, Rochester, Visual Studies Workshop, 1983, p. 107.
12. Simon, p. 15.

never defined it precisely, seems to comprise nothing less than an analytic inventory of all extant filmic figures and modes of signification. *Magellan* as a whole was to be this synopsis. Since the cycle will never be completed, how are we to read those sections that were completed? This is no preliminary question; it will remain an irreducible issue for all work on *Magellan* and its constituent films.

On several occasions Frampton wrote about his metahistorical project as a whole. He also spoke occasionally of "the film historical content" of those parts of *Magellan* already completed. He notes in general that "there is a great deal of allusion in it to other films, but that allusion is not necessarily at the surface level."[13] For instance, he calls *Otherwise Unexplained Fires*, "a critique of a part of Brakhagian montage," and says further:

> In *Magellan*, there is everything from overt homage and imitation and retesting corroboration (in the scientific manner of repeating the experiment) to literal workings-out and speculations-in-practice upon suggestions that were made a very long time ago and which have not been acted on for reasons that I wouldn't care to surmise on.[14]

The "suggestions" referred to include, notably, the "vertical montage" notions of Eisenstein and Vertov and their theory and practice of the asynchronous conjunction of sound and image.

> The most interesting single body of suggestions that I have found in film theory which has not been worked out is the rather vague and uncrystallized notion or suggestion or pre-vision of a vertical, as distinct from a horizontal, montage, the most direct debt and the most direct homage—probably not in the customary artistic sense but in the scientific sense—to Eisenstein and Vertov. . . . Vertical montage at least permits—I would suggest, almost enforces—the simultaneous availability of essentially covalent chains of causal linkage of one kind or another.[15]

Frampton's example of vertical montage on that occasion was *Mindfall* (1977–80). The film's vertical montage led him also to the topic of sound-image relations since, his discussion makes clear, the sounds of the film are one of its principal "covalences." Indeed he discussed sound—and the Eisenstein sound manifesto of 1928—rather more than he discussed "vertical montage" as a principle of visual organization. It is unfortunate that Frampton did not discuss vertical montage further, for some version of "the simultaneous availability of es-

13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

sentially covalent chains of causal linkage" seems to underlie many of *Magellan*'s constituent films. These include the *Cadenzas*, the *Dreams*, the *Mindfalls*, *Gloria!*, and even, in a sense, the solstice and equinox films. Vertical montage seems, at this admittedly early stage in the exploration of *Magellan*, one of its most important structural and compositional features, bearing upon the cycle as a whole, its various epicycles, and a large number of its individual texts. (The greatest exception, of course, are the extant one-minute films, which have no internal montage and, as far as can be seen at this stage, uncertain montage relations to one another as whole films.)

Frampton's explorations of sound-image relations remain, alas!, mainly uncompleted. Of the 720 one-minute films 360 were to have sound—none of the extant one-minute films has sound. As it stands at the moment, the *Cadenzas*, the *Mindfalls*, and *Gloria!* alone have sound—enough for careful analysis, correlation, and perhaps extrapolation. Frampton's discussions in the Simon interview suggest both the richness and variety of the sound-image relations that Frampton planned to explore and the difficulties of sound editing. It is perhaps not too early to assert that, aside from the loss of the completed *Magellan* itself, the noncompletion of these films is our greatest loss.

Frampton also discussed on a number of occasions his use of very early cinema in a number of the completed *Magellan* films and his plans to use much more of such material in the films of the cycle to come. This topic evidently bears importantly on the notion of a "metahistory of film."

> I have gone through the paper print collection at the Library of Congress like Levi-Strauss went through the distant cultures of South America and the Pacific, desperately seeking primitive film. Of course I haven't found one yet because all film assumes from the moment it comes into the world, as the child does, that it has a complete grasp of the universe. Later on it revises that, but it is not rejected. [Referring to an early film used in *Cadenza I*] It's a very muddled situation that, given its context, I think someone might get a chuckle out of eventually. There are films in that collection that are interesting now and important now as their other posterities have modified them.[16]

Besides *Cadenza I*, *Gloria!* and an earlier version of *Mindfall* used films from the early cinema. Frampton made clear, however, that he planned to use about 100 of the 125 films acquired from the paper print collection. This was to be a major leitmotif—and compositional principle—in the completed *Magellan*. There were also, of course, many other instances, among the one-minute films and elsewhere, in which Frampton reconstructed or "synopsized" a scene or a film from earlier cinema.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

*

The project of a "metahistory" of film was important for its own sake, but to Frampton it represented the study of the ways humans perceive and know. In studying the history and system of filmic forms, Frampton was also studying the operations of mind; this is made clear in a passage in which Frampton begins by discussing *Zorns Lemma*, notably its "open allusion" to alphabetization and the encyclopedic tradition,

> and the even older tradition of intellectual inventory, the listing of the contents of the world. Now [in *Magellan*] it's not so much a question of things as an inventory of modes of perception and classification that's involved. What I'm after, what I'm building is the largest possible inventory of modes of classifying and perceiving experience.[17]

Frampton tells us, in detail, how one of the cycle's films is to be viewed and, indeed, "thought." In so doing, he also illuminates the relations between his "metahistory of film" and the operations of mind more generally. The text discussed is "a sort of homage to Ralph Steiner" among the one-minute films of *Straits of Magellan*.

> The reflection of a grove of trees in a fairly calm river, which breaks the graphic plane into a series of vertical stripes which wiggle, and at the same time there's enough stuff floating on the surface of the river to establish that as a kind of reflecting plane within the illusion. Very well. The reflected shadows of the tree and the surface of the water are both brought forward to the surface of the screen. They all lie in the same plane. It's possible to do three things, but only one at a time. We can look at the whole thing as a kind of blanket of subject matter and perceive the surface of the screen as a kind of graphic construction; or we can look at the reflection in the illusion of water for the images of the trees; or we can look at the surface of the water itself. The sensation of shifting from one of those things to the other is like the sensation of shifting focus with your eyes. You're not doing that, you're shifting focus with your mind instead.
>
> That process of shifting focus within the mind as a kind of central action and one that is observed by the spectator's mind as it is happening is supremely important to me—and I rather think it is for others as well, and for that matter always has been.[18]

Frampton delineates the complex visual form of the film and describes the

17. Tuchman, p. 58.
18. *Ibid.*

perceptual options it presents to the viewer; this is, however, only the beginning, the precondition, as it were, for the operation solicited from the spectator. The eye grasps the planar and illusionist complexity as a whole, for they are simultaneously available to its gaze. It is the mind which shifts its focus from one layer of the complex to another and which grasps its own operation as it does so. It should be noted concerning the vastness and complexity of *Magellan* as a whole, that the film under discussion occupies but one minute of the proposed 36 hours of film, that is, 1/2160 of the planned cycle and about 1/450 of the seven or eight hours of film that were actually finished.

One might wish, however, to qualify Frampton's remarks about his film: the trained eye and the trained mind will respond in the way that he indicates—perhaps. But precisely such training, enormously varied but also in some respects redundant, is one of the important functions of *Magellan* as a whole, and of its annual repetition. Frampton has written of his interest in the "adaptive" functions of photography, film, and art generally.

> We are entitled to ask, with the neo-Darwinists, what there may be in all this photographic behavior that is "adaptive"; that is, in what way does it promote, actively or passively, the survival of the organism and of the species. . . . How, indeed, does any work of art help us to survive?[19]

*

Frampton's statements, and indeed the extant films themselves, make clear that his metafilmic interests are pervasive. There is no part of the work that does not reflect on the means and/or history of cinema, no aspect of it that is not thoroughly intertwined with that reflection. What of the semantic, mythic, or anthropological aspects of the work, however? Frampton's discussion of these is far less extensive than that of the metafilmic—and this despite his talk of Magellan's trespassing upon every psycholinguistic time zone and circumambulating the whole of human experience as a kind of somnambulist. In his early statement of plans, Frampton briefly recounts "the concerns of my earlier work . . . to clarify the goals of the project to which I am presently committed." These include principally his metafilmic concerns: rationalization of the history of film art and resynthesis of film tradition; the malleability of the sense and notion of time in film; establishment of rigorous procedures to generate the several parameters of filmmaking (strictly analogous in intent to the serial and post-

19. Frampton, *Circles of Confusion*, p. 89. The one-minute film in question is, by my count, #23 of the forty-nine films included in [37] *Straits of Magellan: Drafts and Fragments* (1974), which are all that were finished of the 720 one-minute films planned for this section. Frampton's homage seems to be to Steiner's 1929 *Film H_2O*, a study of light and its reflections on the surface of water.

serial techniques of advanced musical composition); the function of the written and spoken word in film. To this list he adds a fifth paragraph:

> The manner in which it may be understood that a single human life, seen as an intricate but apprehensible 'figure' in space and time, designates and details, literally and metaphorically, a creative life-work. Uses of autobiographical information, seen in stereoscopic focus with the historic canons of one's art, as a source of shaping mythic reverberation. I am applying for aid in making a film that will continue these investigations, and explore four other interlocking territories.

The interlocking territories include the dialectical relationship between graphic and plastic elements with a cinematic closed field: the general "problem of sound" in film; rhetorical options available to film art through such image-forming and -manipulating tools as optical and video synthesizers, electronic means for synthesizing and modifying sounds, the digital computer; and

> the notion of a hypothetical, totally inclusive work of film art as a model for human consciousness. I propose a work of art (not a scientific or philosophical theory) that shall touch upon a sufficient number of shores to cartoon my own affective world. We may assume that each thing implies the universe, whose most obvious trait is its complexity; on that principle, I conceive, distantly, of an art of cinema that might encode thought as compactly as the human genetic substance encodes our entire physical body.

Frampton said in a still earlier grant proposal, "The film will consist of twenty-four 'chapters,' each of which deal with some constant axis of human experience (such as hunger, fate, curiosity, luck, lust, fear, et al." Frampton also touched upon this aspect of the cycle in a number of interview passages as well:

> Aside from the detailed texture of all the things that happened [to Magellan's voyage], the fact of the voyage itself is that it went around the world; that is to say, it more or less circumnavigated the universe as it was available to western man at that time. . . . It was a full cycle with closure that, in one way or another, could be said to have encompassed all human experience. In one way or another it involved most of the dominant concerns of the day.[20]

And:

> There was in the meantime not only geographical but astronomical and linguistic investigation going on. . . . So that it's an extremely inclusive kind of figure, intellectually very inclusive—the notion of a

20. Tuchman, p. 57.

> voyage encompassing the world and returning to the point where it began, but presumably different and presumably finding that world different that it returns to and making it different as well.[21]

Questions about this aspect of *Magellan* are the following: Are these parameters, like the metafilmic ones, a route to mind, to the grasp of thinking itself? Or are they included for their evident human significance? Or both? How do the semantic categories interrelate with the metafilmic ones in *Magellan* as a whole, in the epicycles, and in the individual films? How are the work's semantic dimensions affected by its incompletion? Can we speak confidently, if incompletely, of them in the individual filmic text as (we think) we can of the metafilmic dimensions?

Clearly a manifold metafilmic and metahistorical exploration requires at least nominal subject matters, akin to what Frampton called "a pretextual locus." A shot is always a shot of something. Frampton's desire to rationalize and systematize this aspect of the work is also understandable. Perhaps the problem is simply that, given the work's incompletion, he had not "touched upon a sufficient number of shores to cartoon [his own] affective world" comprehensively.

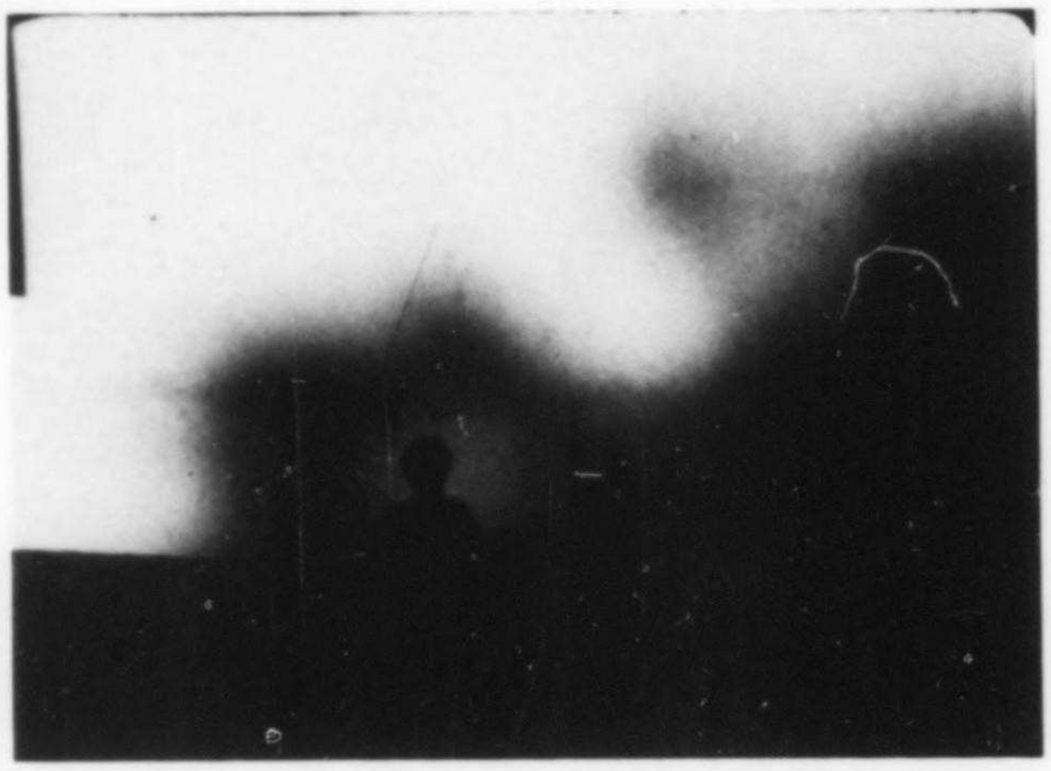
There is, nevertheless—and of this we have had a glimpse—a semantic core embedded in the titles and headings of *Magellan* and its constituent films. Our problem is a critical one—how are we to proceed to further understanding? Probably, by working with as many approaches, on as many levels as possible.

*

Mindfall is a word, coined by Frampton, that is brilliant, that is, shimmering, in its suggestive polyvalence. (In a well-known exchange, someone said to Joyce that the puns of *Finnegans Wake* were trivial. "That's right," Joyce said, "and sometimes quadrivial.") Mindfall suggests rainfall, a shower of the effects of mind, or of mind itself—as in Méliès's images of exploding heads. Rain requires clouds, whether large or small, and *Clouds of Magellan* was, of course, Frampton's first name for the entire cycle, conceived and planned in the early '60s before he had ever made a single film. Rain requires, too, a threshold level of temperature and pressure causing condensation. Whatever the stresses and struggles leading up to this change of state, the quality of mindfall is not itself strained, it falleth as the gentle rain—upon the just and the unjust; no one escapes the effects of mind's fallout, the state of scientific knowledge in one's time.

Mindfall suggests mindful—a full mind, mind spilling over, but also, con-

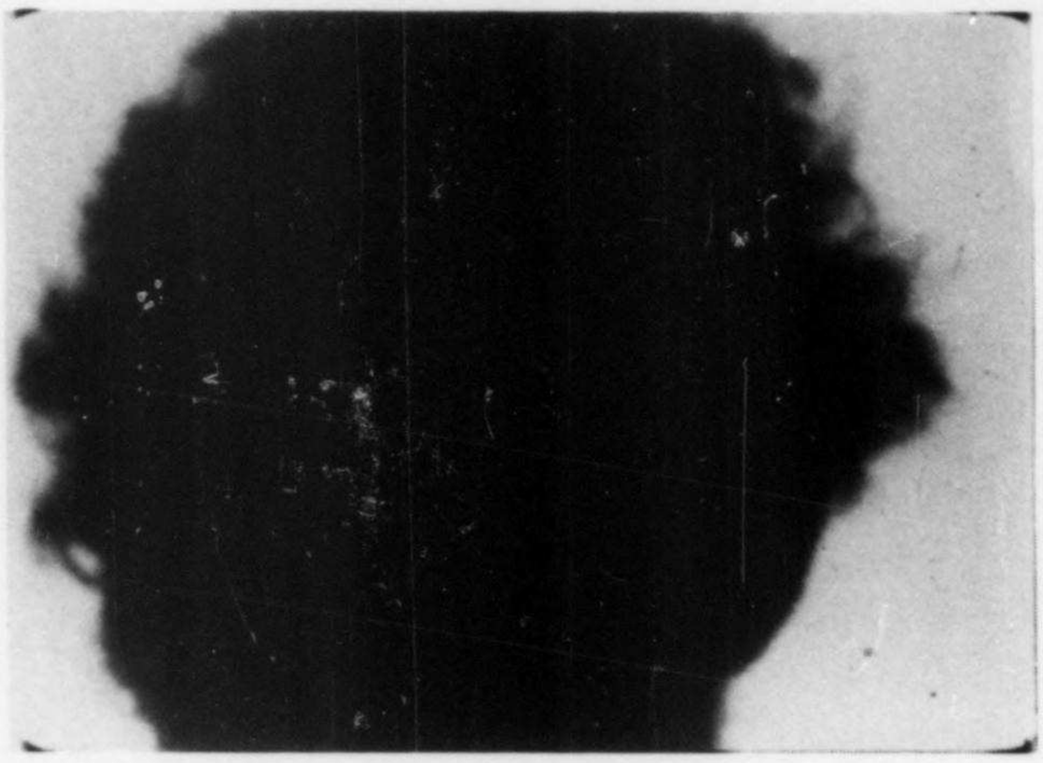
21. *Ibid.*



ventionally, taking thought of, keeping remembrance of. It also suggests, of course, fall of mind, in the sense of the Fall—specifically correlated in *Finnegans Wake* with thunder. (Frampton's *Cadenza I*, the first work in the entire cycle, begins with Genesis-like images of darkness and light—over the sounds of an orchestra tuning up—followed by a great thunderclap and images of sounds of rain in a rainforest, the probable first site of human life.) Mindfall echoes the mythic rain after a drought but also the fall of mind as in *The Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire* or *The Decline of the West*.

Nautical navigation employs the term *landfall*. Magellan's biographers and historians use the term frequently to refer to those occasions on which one or all of his five-ship flotilla—what one writer called "Magellan's Vanishing Fleet"—not only came to land and anchored but actually went ashore. These were crucial occasions for Magellan, as for any explorer. Magellan's brilliance and courage as navigator and captain did not extend to his adventures on land. There he showed poor judgment, leading, on his own initiative, an ill-conceived attack on an island tribe in the Philippines which refused to convert to Christianity. He thereby lost his life. Mindfall, then, is also landfall for mental voyages and explorations, that is, the crucial point at which mind comes to rest from its flights, navigations, and explorations; its speculations and plans; its consideration of all alternatives; the point at which mind comes to conclusions, makes declarations, intersects once again with contingency. Mindfall is the point at which mind's constructions meet the specificity and the resistance of actuality.

Frampton completed *Mindfall*, Parts I and VII. They bear the latest dates of his completed films. All seven parts of *Mindfall* were to be shown on the first of the two-day *Birth of Magellan* on Day 1 of the entire cycle. (Parts II through VI were to include some of the early epileptic seizure films that he had earlier



Hollis Frampton. The Birth of Magellan: Mindfall: *VII. 1977–80.*

edited into *Mindfall I.*) The two *Mindfall* films were shot in Puerto Rico, which was "discovered" by Columbus on his second voyage to the new world. Both films have a soundtrack of modern industrial, commercial, and communications sounds, which contrasts with the lush rainforest flora and fauna, the oceanscapes, and the old buildings of the image track. Frampton discusses in an interview with Bill Simon some of the specific sound-image relations in *Mindfall I.* Such close analysis can, and should, be applied to the entirety of the two *Mindfalls.* This conjunction has several possible general meanings. At the start of a cycle concerned with exploration, the moment of a European's first glimpse of a new world may be suggested. If so, then the industrial and communications sounds against the images of an exotic, possibly "unspoiled" world speak perhaps of the first confrontation between Western technology and the new land. In this confrontation was implied those later stages of technology whose sounds we hear on the track, and perhaps confrontations between the West and the Third World generally. The filmmaker acknowledges the complicity in this confrontation of himself and his cinematic technology in the final shot of *Mindfall VII*, which moves closer and closer to the fused shadow of filmmaker and camera, Western man and his technology become one.

On the other hand, however, this agon of sound against image proposes a struggle whose outcome is by no means certain. Magellan's superior technology of gunpowder and armor did not prevail against a much larger force of determined natives (sixty against three thousand). Magellan, the first Western imperialist in this part of the world, was its first "paper tiger." Not surprisingly, Cilapulapu, King of Cebu, has been hailed as the first hero of Filipino resistance to colonial penetration. In posing this particular confrontation between sounds and images, Frampton suggests, among other things, the imperialist aspect of "exploration," then and now, and the uncertain fate of such struggles.

*

Where was the finally assembled *Magellan* to be exhibited? Perhaps it was to be shown, or premiered, at a newly reopened Anthology Film Archives in New York. One wonders, however, whether a single run-through of *Magellan*, let alone its annual repetitions, could fit into any anthology without breaking its mold. *Magellan* is its own anthology (with its own "logos") and, indeed, its own history of film. A new kind of work has, in any case, traditionally required a new kind of house for its exhibition. The most conspicuous instance is the construction of the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth as the permanent site for the ideal staging of Wagner's operas—*Parsifal*, by its composer's instructions, was to be staged nowhere else. The Bayreuth grounds also included, interestingly, a permanent dwelling for the composer. Where was the *Magellan* cycle to be exhibited? We may, if we please, assume that its maker also framed this question, and that it was not easily answered, for he was well-instructed in the rapidly changing technologies of the image and in those systems of electronic communication that have propelled the notion of a fixed locus for a work of art precisely back into the nineteenth century.

Perhaps Frampton's Bayreuth was, in effect, the computer. (He was still preparing it when he died.) That is where the last stages of the film were to be generated, and the film as a whole ordered and assembled. Perhaps even from that utopic site portions of the film, or copies of the whole, were to be dispatched to farflung sites of local exhibition. Quite probably the computer functioned in senses we do not yet know, in part because Frampton knew, better than we do, both the computer and the requirements of *Magellan*'s completion. He knew that the various technologies of realization, developed annually, might alter the execution—or even the structure of the whole. It was there, within and through the computer, that the work was ultimately to achieve its ideal realization.

Frampton's Sieve

ANNETTE MICHELSON

Hulkes falleth of whan corne is cleansed with a syfue or wyth a Ryddyll.

—John de Bartholomeus de Trevisa,
De proprietatibus rerum

"Frampton," Stan Brakhage in conversation once declared, "strains cinema through language." How are we to construe this assertion, offered some ten years ago in slightly uneasy admiration? Perhaps by initially acknowledging, assisted by the O.E.D., possibly pertinent meanings and variants of *distrain* in its aphetic form? *Strain* will then signify the levying of a distress upon a thing. Or we may understand it as a stretching to an extreme degree of capacity, as tending to pull asunder, to render disjunct from proper use, as subjecting to pressure or exigency. Straining, one may embrace, clasping tightly in one's arms; one may thereby constrict, compress, contract, diminish. One may force beyond an object's legitimate extent or scope; to strain may then be to impair or to imperil the strength of a material thing by excessive tension. In later use and in a wider sense, strain will be force or pressure tending to cause fracture, change of position, or alteration of shape. It is, as well, the condition of a body or a particle subjected to such force or pressure.

We speak, too, of diction or of thought, when labored or affected, as strained.

One may, however, strain by pressing through a filtering medium. We filter liquid through a porous or perforated medium which retains the denser portions in the solid matter, held in suspension; in so doing we free solid matter from the contained or accompanying liquid. By filtration we purify or refine. The brewer would thus strain his juice through a coarse sieve, keeping back its grosser particles. We say that in so doing, he clarifies. Moreover, a variant of the sieve, the coarse-meshed form with circular rim, its base of strong wires crisscrossed at right angles, used for separating solids—sand from gravel, ashes

from cinders, and chaff from corn—is known as a riddle. Might we not then describe a riddle of this sort as a system of geometric relations devised in the interests of clarification?

One further consideration thrusts itself upon us: the devising by the Greeks, in the third century B.C., of that system for the discernment of prime numbers to which they gave the name of Archimedes' colleague, the Librarian of Alexandria; it is known as the Sieve of Eratosthenes.

One begins, then, to discern in Brakhage's admiring, albeit somewhat apprehensive, characterization of Frampton's project the core of a sound and defining intuition. One now wants to say: Embracing cinema, Frampton was to bring to the practice of filmmaking, pursued independently of its industrial constraints, an implementation of language as one system which might extend, reshape, and clarify the limits and parameters of the medium.

The letters addressed to Reno Odlin, from which we publish significant extracts, give us Frampton's early view, in 1964, of Brakhage's enterprise: "Let me say that what of Brakhage's I've *seen*, I admire. It will be necessary to see more, and many times. I cannot pay any higher compliment to a work of art than that, at least without extreme familiarity." And then, "Brakhage may have exceeded in intensity and by several orders of magnitude the ambient of historic cinema; if that is true, what he is doing is now the cinema, and the other stuff is predecessors an' also-rans. . . ." And later, still:

> Suppose I just propose a model that could *include both* of us, rather than one or the other of us, and suggest that Stan has been concentrating for a long time on a different segment of the seeing or perceiving process. . . . There's no question at all in my mind about the debt that I personally owe to Brakhage's work. We all do, or at least many of us do. But I remember very, very clearly having in my still photographs felt that I was being forced into film. . . . And one of the deciding things was a suspicion that there were, after all, some films that Stan Brakhage had not made. Obviously other people had made films, but no-one was important in my own understanding . . . not what film had *done*, but what the ultimate dream of what film art might be, at least as to its magnitude, its pride, if you will, as Brakhage was.[1]

Determinant in Brakhage's project had been the excision—almost, though not quite, categorical—of sound and, consequently, of speech:[2] the decision to

1. Simon Field and Peter Sainsbury, "ZORNS LEMMA and HAPAX LEGOMENA, Interview with Hollis Frampton," *Afterimage* (London), no. 4 (Autumn 1972), p. 54.
2. Brakhage's earlier work in sound includes *Desistfilm*, 1967; *The Way to Shadow Garden*, 1954; *In Between* (music by John Cage), 1955; *Flesh of Morning*, 1965. In 1962 Brakhage made *Blue Moses*, his dramatico-discursive analysis of film narration and film acting, and, in 1965, *Fire of Waters*.

constrain film within the parameter of the image. The reason adduced—a concerted hypostatization of the romantically grounded metaphor of an Adamic vision, rehearsed in the extraordinary textual production of Brakhage himself, and in the ensuing critical literature—offers, beside its own historical interest, powerful instruction in the generation of both theory and practice by the material conditions of production. For the history of independently made film of the postwar period is that of a transvaluation of values through which an enforced reversion to an artisanal mode of production (that of the silent, 16 mm format) enables the conversion of necessity to virtue. It was a modesty of means and constriction of the arena of exhibition which impelled the rethinking of the medium; the consequent inscription of a radical subjectivity within the filmic founds Brakhage's oeuvre as the central, seminal force within the movement. That strenuous inscription, involving the intransigent rejection of the full range of codes which order the dominants of cinematic representation, dictated the dissolution of the spatiotemporal coordinates of representation. The twin fortresses of that representation, in its industrial production, defending it against radical assault, were seen to be those of narrative structure and of perversion, constructed and maintained by corporate control of a rationalized division of labor in industrial production. Film theory of the past ten years has explored the labyrinth of passageways connecting those two guard posts, even when it has been reluctant to recognize the manner in which Brakhage, succeeding Deren, led the assault upon them. If, however, we wish to understand and to place Frampton within this movement, we must first retrace, if only briefly and allusively, the contours and direction of Brakhage's project, as epitomized in his major effort of the late 1960s. (It is, of course, the period of Frampton's first mature work in film.)

Scenes From Under Childhood (1967–70) is a large-scale work in four sections, and its footage, like that in so much of Brakhage's work, records his family's daily life. The characteristically abstractive use of superimposition; of extreme closeup in which the camera isolates, enlarges, and dissolves both detail and spatial definition; the effects of texture, color, rhythm, intensity of light and movement thus produced; the rapid editing pattern joined with the camera's insistent choreography—all these work to produce a seamless, mobile visual field. Add to this a rhythmic interception by "empty" frames, filled, nevertheless, with solid color—mostly black and red—and you have the pulsating flux of Brakhage's extenuation of reference which so confounded, and continues to confound, the expectations of large numbers of even those nominally committed to the rethinking of the cinematic.

Scenes From Under Childhood was, as well, however, Brakhage's final attempt in the late 1960s to come to terms with the parameter of sound. The track of Section One—ordinarily suppressed in projection upon instruction from the filmmaker—has nonetheless a particular interest for our purposes. It is a kind of concrete sound score; its sources, indeterminant, are described as

evocative of the trumpeting of beasts, heavy breathing, rhythmical clicks, percussive sounds of unidentified objects or instruments. This track is actually composed of sounds recorded on tape during the birth of Brakhage's first child. The cries of the emerging baby and of her mother, together with the ambient sound, were slowed, subjected to accoustical variation within an echo chamber. This sound track is not continuous, but intermittent, frequently intercepted by silence for periods of varying length.

The fusion of the two parameters induces that rhythmic contraction and expansion of visual and accoustical space, that plasticity and "presence" of image and sound which reinforce the extenuation of reference already noted. *Scenes From Under Childhood* marks the fullest limit (although by no means the terminal point) of an enterprise which we must now understand in terms somewhat larger and more radical than those of a lyrical cinema. It has been claimed that Brakhage does not, in his filmmaking practice, engage with the "symbolic." The truth, however, is other; it must be quite differently stated. Rather, he has sustained, within an abundant and varied production, a long and quite solitary adventure: the intensive evocation of that phase of the constitution of the human subject which precedes access to language. He has, himself, suggested by implication the Kleinian aspect of a scenario which, like *Scenes*, offers "a visualization of the inner world of . . . beginnings, the infant, the baby, the child—a shattering of the 'myths of childhood' through revelation of the extremes of violent terror and overwhelming joy of that world darkened to most adults by their sentimental remembering of it . . . a 'tone poem' for the eye. . . ."[3]

In her seminal work of the past decade Julia Kristeva has suggested the terms in which we may begin to think the expressive register anterior to the initiation of the thetic function. In terms which echo and elaborate upon Brakhage's own, she warns of the extreme difficulty and delicacy of access to this moment, of the projection of the features of adult memory and adult discourse onto the space of childhood in a spurious myth of continuity in ontogeny.

> In like manner, the function of the familial context in the *precocious* formation of the child (before puberty, before Oedipus, but also before the "mirror stage") tends to be minimized. This is only too evident not only in ego-centered currents of child psychology, but also in that psychoanalytic practice which posits the subject as beginning with the "mirror stage." The most important debates and innovations in psychoanalysis are consequently and necessarily organized around this knot. The point is the heterogeneity between the signifying-libidinal organization in infancy (the "semiotic"—*le semiotique*) and the "symbolic" functioning of the speaker following language ac-

3. Stan Brakhage, in *Film-makers' Cooperative Catalogue No. 5*, New York, The New American Cinema Group, 1971, p. 40.

quisition and the consequent parental identifications. On the other hand, . . . this precocious, presymbolic organization is grasped by adults only as regression—jouissance or schizophrenic psychosis. Thus, the difficulty, the impossibility of this attempt to gain access to childhood: *the real stakes of the discourse on childhood within Western thought involve a confrontation between thought and what it is not, a wandering at the limits of the thinkable.*[4]

I have described Brakhage's adventure as solitary, and in its assiduousness, its obstinate multiplicity of effort, it is indeed. It is, however, not entirely without poetic precedent.[5] Brakhage himself had entertained the possibility of a poetic homology of his cinematic project. "Non-representational language, enchanting non-sights into non-words . . . writing only sound poems, . . . communicating on an emotional level only distantly related to all the known word origins of any written sound . . . the embryonic form of a purely onomatopoetic art." He seems, however, to have been unaware of a full-scale exploration of the register of the "semiotic" already undertaken, that of Andrei Bely, who did produce, in his novel, *Kotik Letaev*, a textual chronicle of the formation of the subject. (Written in 1916, it is therefore entirely contemporaneous with the composition of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.*) I excerpt from this volume of 215 pages, in awkward translation, two brief passages only, from its first section.

The first "thou-art" grips me in imageless deliria;
and—
—as ancient kinds, familiar immemorially: inexpressibilities,
nonhappenings of consciousness lying in the body,
the mathematically exact sensation that you are
both you and not you, but . . . a kind of swelling
into nothing and nowhere, which all the same is not
to overcome, and—
—"What is this?" . . .
Thus would I condense in a word the inutterability
of the advent of my infant life:—
—the pain of residing
in organs: . . .
—there

4. Julia Kristeva, "Place Names," *October*, no. 5 (Fall 1978), pp. 97–98.
5. Peter Wollen has briefly alluded to the notion of the semiotic in reference to Sharits's work in his essay "'Ontology' and 'Materialism' in Film," *Screen*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Spring 1976); reprinted in Peter Wollen, *Readings and Writings*, London, Verso Editions, 1982. I do, however, consider that it is, in its psychoanalytic resonance, more exactly and extensively applicable to the corpus of Brakhage's films under discussion here.

was no division into "I" and "not-I" there was
no space, no time. . . .[6]

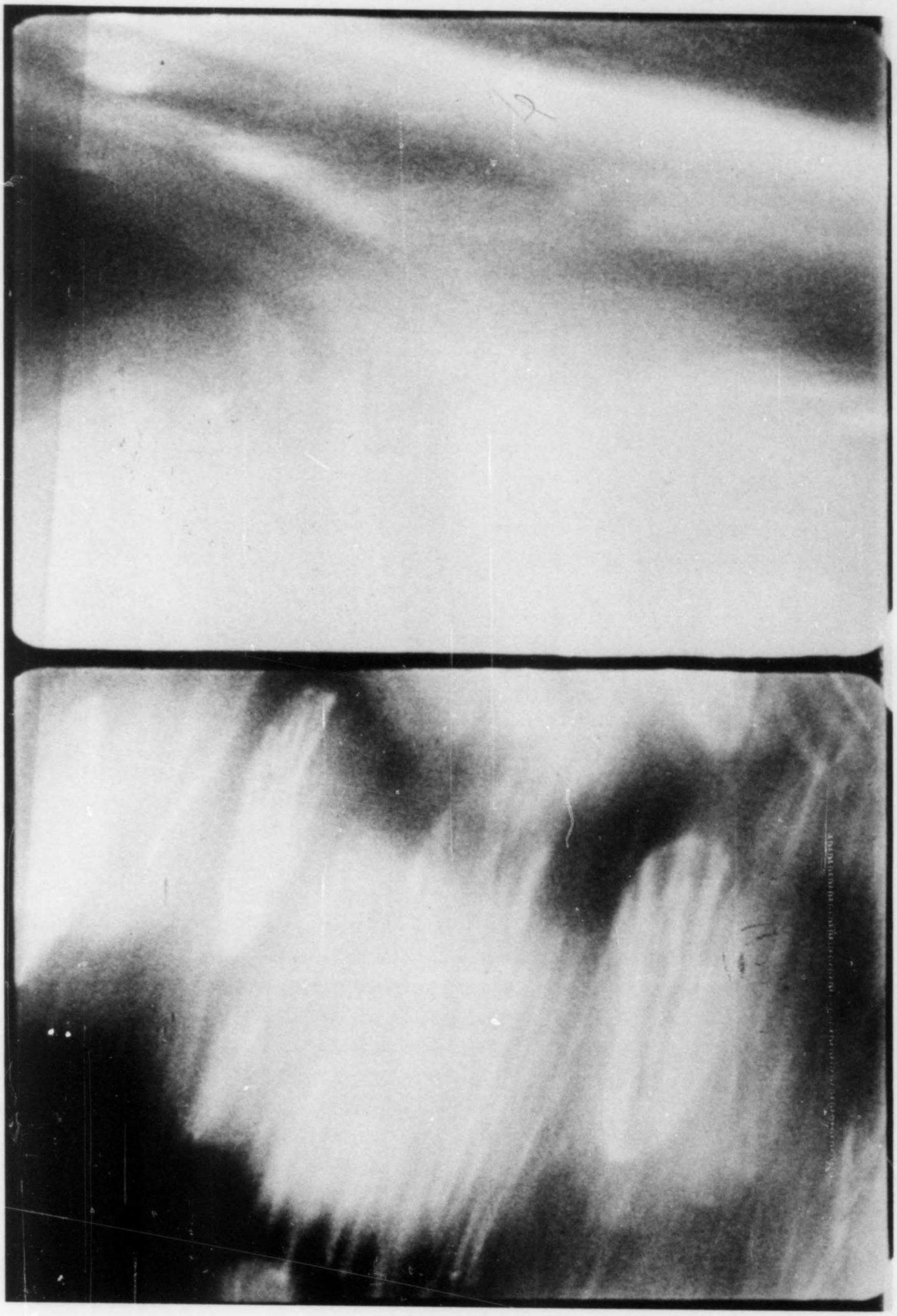
The first conscious moment of mine is—a dot; it
penetrates the meaninglessness; and—expanding,
it becomes a sphere, but the sphere—disintegrates:
meaninglessness, penetrating it, tears it apart . . .
Flocks of soapy spheres fly out of a light straw . . . A
sphere—would fly out, quiver, lose brilliance; and—
burst; a tiny drop of viscous fluid, puffed up with
air, begins to play with the lights of the world. . . .
Nothing, something, and again nothing; anew something;
all is in me, I am in all . . . such are my first moments . . .
then—
scarcely visible torches flashed; gloom (like snakeskin
from a snake) began to crawl from me; sensations
separated from skin: they went off under my skin:
out fell lands born of blackness—
—the skin became
for me like . . . a vault: such is the way we perceive
space. . . .[7]

Now Brakhage, in *Metaphors on Vision*: "Forms merge, as the fingertips closing to touch, closely viewed, reach a blur of their color, changing their contour, visually merging with each other before physical contact. . . . Within this aura of nonshape, shapes reshape . . . until one is involved purely with the innards of what one once knew only as an outline."[8]

Most radically at issue throughout Brakhage's project is the exploratory reconstruction of a *topos*, that of the prethetic chora, "neither model nor copy . . . anterior and subjacent to figuration and thus to specularization . . . admitting no analogy except with vocal or kinetic rhythm. . . ."[9] And the condition of access to this *topos* is the lucid, delicate, scrupulously sustained acknowledgment of its heterogeneity with respect to articulate representation. Such a cinema, straining, we might say, at the limits of meaning, abjuring the discursive and didactic function assumed by much recent work, thereby assumes the poetic function. It will therefore choose to dwell in the prethetic, in suspension at the threshold of language.

6. Andrei Bely, *Kotik Letaev*, trans. Gerald Janecek, Ann Arbor, Ardis, 1971, p. 8.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
8. Stan Brakhage, "Metaphors on Vision," *Film Culture*, Fall 1963, np.
9. Julia Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1974, p. 24 (my translation).

Stan Brakhage. Text of Light. *1974.*



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T. W. Adorno, in a text whose title, *Transparencies on Film*, reads rather like one by an American theorist of the contemporary avant-garde, voiced his aversion to the cinematic image, his sense of its radical insufficiency of abstractive power, its irremediable, analogical implication in established and repressive codes of representation.

> The photographic process of film, primarily representational, places a higher intrinsic significance on the object, as foreign to subjectivity, than aesthetically autonomous techniques; this is the retarding aspect of film in the historical process of art. Even where film dissolves and modifies its objects as much as it can, the disintegration is never complete. Consequently, it does not permit absolute construction: its elements, however abstract, always retain something representational; they are never purely aesthetic values.[10]

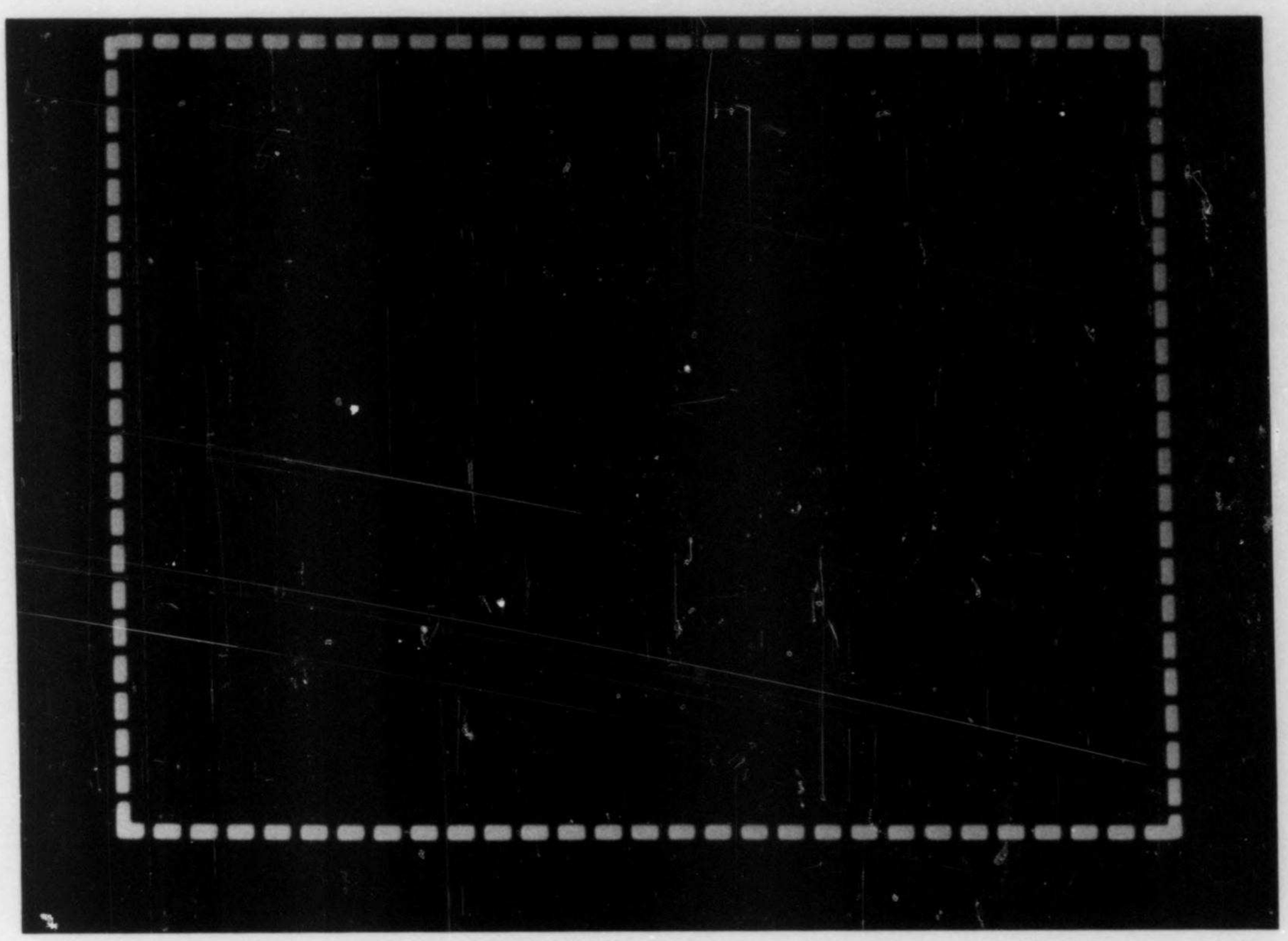
To this account, we might join Roland Barthes's confession of an aversion even stronger, a kind of nausea induced by both the wealth of information within the cinematic signifier and its continuity, its apparent resistance to fragmentation, the seemingly incessant, ineluctable chatter of the image track.[11] (Sound seems not to enter into these considerations.) It is, for Barthes, as though this temporal medium had inherited something of history's hysteria.

The enterprise of the American avant-garde is most clearly understood as directed toward the destruction of those presuppositions as canonically received and established. The production of the 1960s and '70s—epitomized, to be sure, in Brakhage's work but exemplified, as well, in that of Sharits, Kubelka, Snow, Landow, Gehr, and Jacobs—contravenes those presuppositions in its foregrounding of filmic processes and properties (of grain, of light, emulsion, stock, of recording) and in its insistent interception and blocking of diegetic continuity; it advances an asseveration of film as a chain of discrete images, producing, in its concern with the plasticity and paradoxes of filmic temporality, a school of cinema that we may, in more than one sense, term that of stoics.

Working on the threshold of signification, Brakhage was to produce in the early 1970s two films which, by virtue of their very titles, are, one might say, "literally" intriguing. *The Riddle of Lumen* (1972) may be read as an answer to Frampton's resounding intervention of the previous year, *Zorns Lemma*, discussed at length elsewhere in this issue. *Riddle* was followed in 1974 by the work known as *Text of Light*. Both establish as protagonist light itself in its endless

10. T. W. Adorno, "Transparencies on Film," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *New German Critique*, nos. 24–25 (Fall–Winter 1981–82), p. 202.
11. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, p. 59 (my translation).

Hollis Frampton. Special Effects. *1972.*



play of reflection and refraction through a filtering ambience. Light is this *Riddle*'s answer;[12] light is this text's substance. The dissolution of the object is now entire, and both films participate in a movement of evacuation which frees the screen of image in the period under discussion, and which I have elsewhere considered in some detail.[13] White or black or color-filled, subliminal or assertive, weak or saturated, grainy or dense, the screen is image-free rather than empty; it signals most immediately acknowledgment of shape and surface, of the boundaries and luminescence of the screen itself, the impossibility of emptiness. This acknowledgment traverses the development of advanced filmmaking of this time, as though some accelerated implosion had condensed the succession of images generated by the hyperbolic montage of avant-garde practice into the integral, even radiance of a flickering rectangle.

12. The filmmaker's statement accompanying the mention of this film in the *Canyon Cinema Cooperative's Catalogue No. 4*, San Francisco, 1976, states, "It is the film I'd long wanted to make inspired by the sense, and specific formal possibilities of the classical English Language riddle . . . only one appropriate to film and, thus, as distinct from language as I could make it."
13. See "Paul Sharits and the Critique of Illusionism: An Introduction," in *Projected Images*, Minneapolis, Walker Art Center, 1974, pp. 20–25.

Frampton, embracing film in the late 1960s, did so as a member of a generation with an intense interest in the systemic, a fresh confidence in the uses of generative mechanisms and decisions for artistic practice. (Among the companions of his youth were, as the correspondence with Reno Odlin informs us, Frank Stella and Carl Andre.) A precedent most commonly invoked for this generation is that of Duchamp. In Frampton's case, most certainly the Second Viennese School of musical composition was another determinate source of interest. Thus *Palindrome*, discussed elsewhere in this issue by Brian Henderson, derives not merely from its literary model, but just as surely from Frampton's experience of serial composition, employed by Schoenberg and Webern. Frampton's correspondence is, in fact, probably unique in its demonstration of interest in both the constraints of serial composition and the aesthetic of chance. One presumes that Frampton's sustained interest in mathematics and in comparative grammar grounds this openness, unusual for its time within New York's intellectual milieu. *Palindrome*, in any case, owes the complexity and solidity of its structure to the adoption of the retrograde inverson, employed by the Viennese as a variational form.

It is the period between 1968 and 1973 which has, I think, rightfully been claimed as most seminal, and I elect to concentrate upon it, though somewhat differently, here. This is the time of *Palindrome*, but more importantly of *Surface Tension*, *Zorns Lemma*, and the six films that comprise *Hapax Legomena*. These are, in fact, the films with which Frampton explores the terrain marked off, as it were, by Brakhage's uneasy intuition, in which he will bring powerfully into play that variant of the sieve, that "riddle" through which he "clarifies," confirming, redefining the position assumed within the thetic, of the American avant-garde. In so doing Frampton initiated, in solitude—and it is this that defines his singular place within this movement—a dialogue with contemporary theory of language and of narrative.

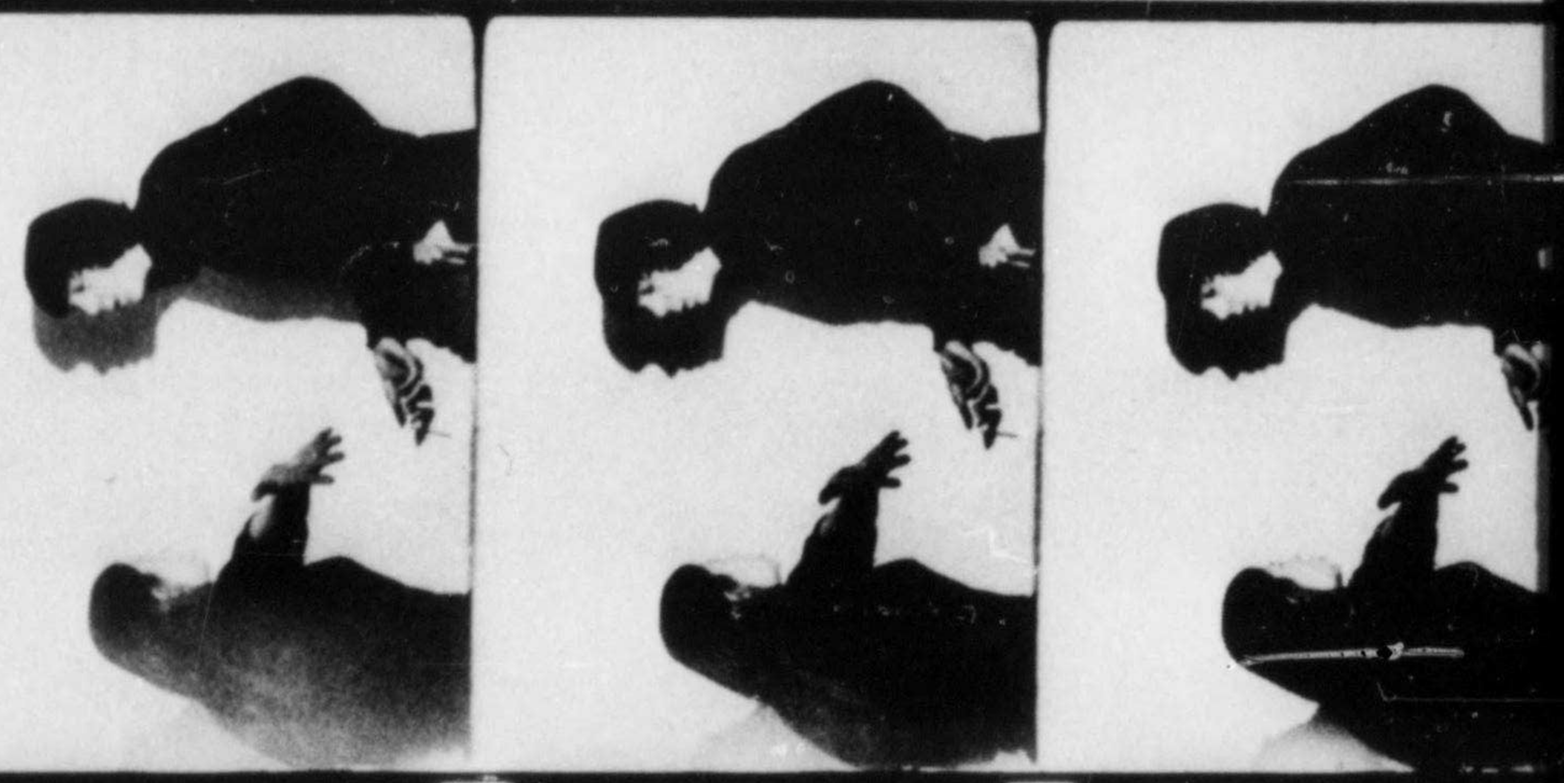
Within the trajectory traced by *Hapax Legomena*, between *Critical Mass* and *Poetic Justice*, the image will be replaced upon the screen by text. And serial ordering of the heterogeneous is replaced by the construction of a diegetic chain in writing. If, therefore, we want profitably to read the work of this central period we must do so along two intersecting axes:

> (1) that of the crystallization of the thematics of a double violence within language and the erotic;
> (2) that of a curiously prompt and constant response (as if in dialogue) to the developing meditation of Roland Barthes upon image, text, and the erotic.

Zorns Lemma responds to, seizes upon, that which Barthes has termed the "temptation" of the alphabet,[14] its manner of connection, of linking fragments,

14. Barthes, pp. 150–151.

Hollis Frampton. Critical Mass. *1971.*


EASTMAN 8

and its fostering of our dependence upon what he terms "the glory of language, that 'which drove Saussure to despair'"; it is an unmotivated order, unmotivated but not arbitrary, insofar as it is a matter of general agreement and acceptance. Its way of dispensing with the necessity of planning and development renders it "euphoric." And it provides, as it were, supplementary effects of meaning that carry a charge of malice. Frampton's adoption of the alphabet as an ordering form for his work may be seen, indeed, as part of that larger, more generally installed predilection for the systemic which did, indeed, infuse the efforts of the 1960s and '70s with confidence in the freshly generative power of the system. The euphoric was, in Frampton's singular case, reinforced by the appropriation of set theory as another source of systemic organization.

Three works of this period, covering two years of production, intersect in a particularly meaningful manner: *Critical Mass*, an acted sound film; *Poetic Justice*, a filmed script; a text on Muybridge (1973), subtitled "Fragments of a Tesseract," an essay, discursive, speculative. It locates the originary impulse of Muybridge's obsessive motion studies in the reenactment of his murder of his wife's lover.

Critical Mass is, principally, the enactment of a domestic quarrel, a "scene." Its title is derived, as was frequently the case, from scientific terminology, and it refers to the amount of nuclear fuel necessary to sustain a chain reaction; in the absence of sufficient fuel insufficiency of neutrons will cause the reaction to fade. This title's wit inhe[illegible]s not only in its general metaphorical aptness, but in the thoroughgoing precision of its pertinence, for this domestic quarrel, like most, does fade out from time to time in its obstinate, draining repetition; it comes apart, leaving a blank, dazzling screen. *Critical Mass* opens, in fact, with the screen black, its audible track that of the couple deep in argument in an exchange of accusation, recriminations, threats. Frampton's editing, on both parameters of this first film involving characters in dialogue, deflects the arguments of this little comedy of suspicion and infidelity, a staple of traditional genre, through interception, fragmentation, repetition, its extravagantly stuttering pattern of gesture and sound reinforcing the hopelessly circular pattern of this transaction. Barthes has pointed out that the horror of such scenes lies in the manner in which they reveal "the cancer of language,"[15] the dynamics of such transactions tending towards an ultimate, essential violence, that of murder, never acknowledged. They are therefore propelled forward in self-perpetuation, each exchange generating yet another, like some terrible and absurd homeostatic invention of science fiction.

The imaged pieces of this film's second section remain constant in length, while the sound pieces were edited so as to expand and contract, in and out of synch. Frampton saw his task as the devising of a rigorous scheme for the or-

15. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

ganization of the material such that it would still "rhyme" in various ways with the enacted incidents. "It had to repeat, to change out of the staggering rhythm, so that each of those cries . . . they really are utterances . . . is handled not as part of a sentence, but as if it were a word, a kind of primal word, having exhausted absolutely the possibility of normal syntax. . . ."[16] The complex polyphony of the dissociative cutting projects the uncontrollable chain of recrimination, of violence suspended, rather than arrested, unresolved, irresolvable.

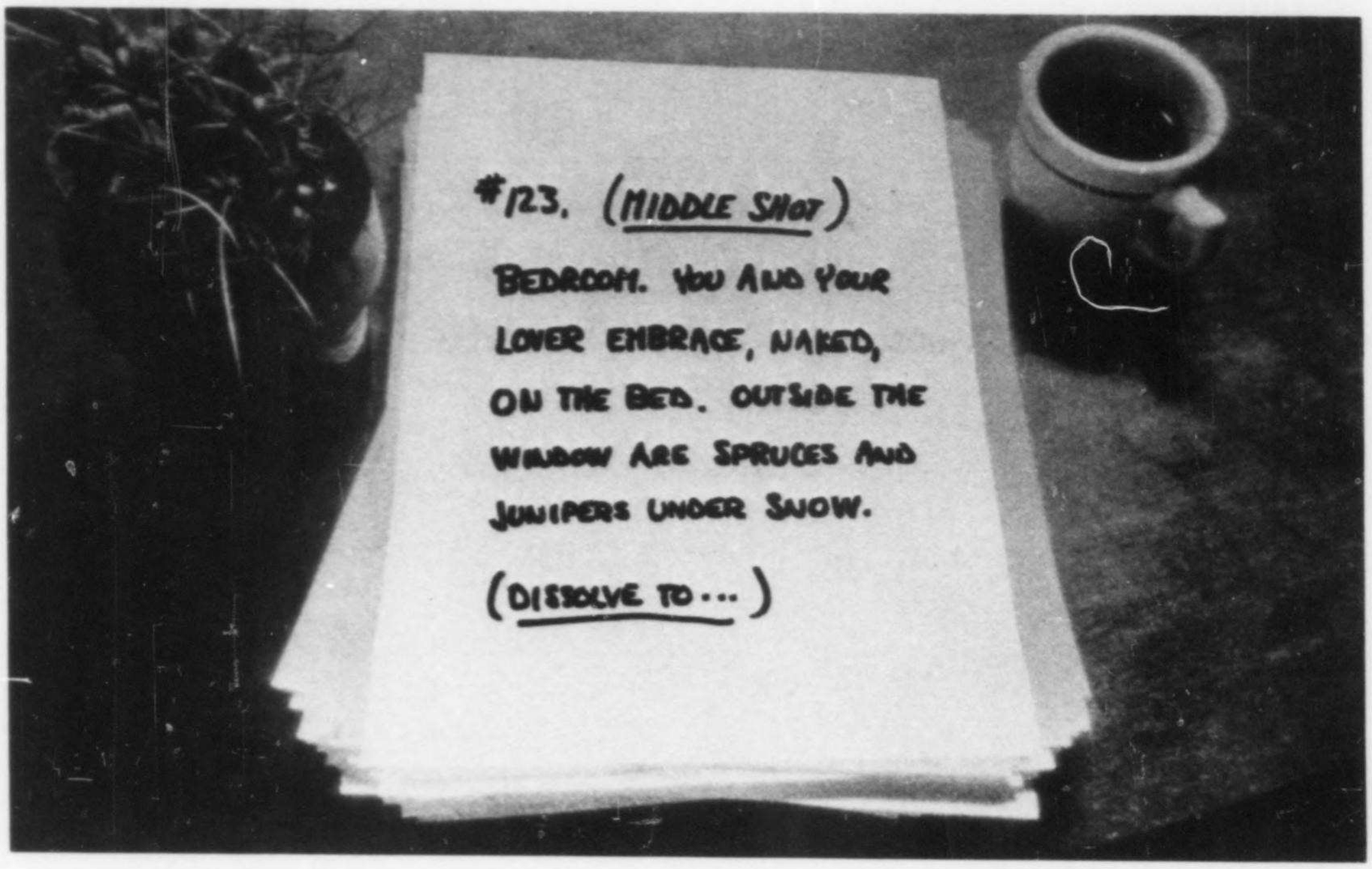
Descriptions of Hollis Frampton's films abound (for most writing about them has been primarily descriptive), and the best are certainly those offered with unflagging generosity in Frampton's recorded interviews.[17] Of *Poetic Justice*, one wants, most of all, to say that it offers the completion of the straining process, Frampton's consummate elaboration of the riddle.

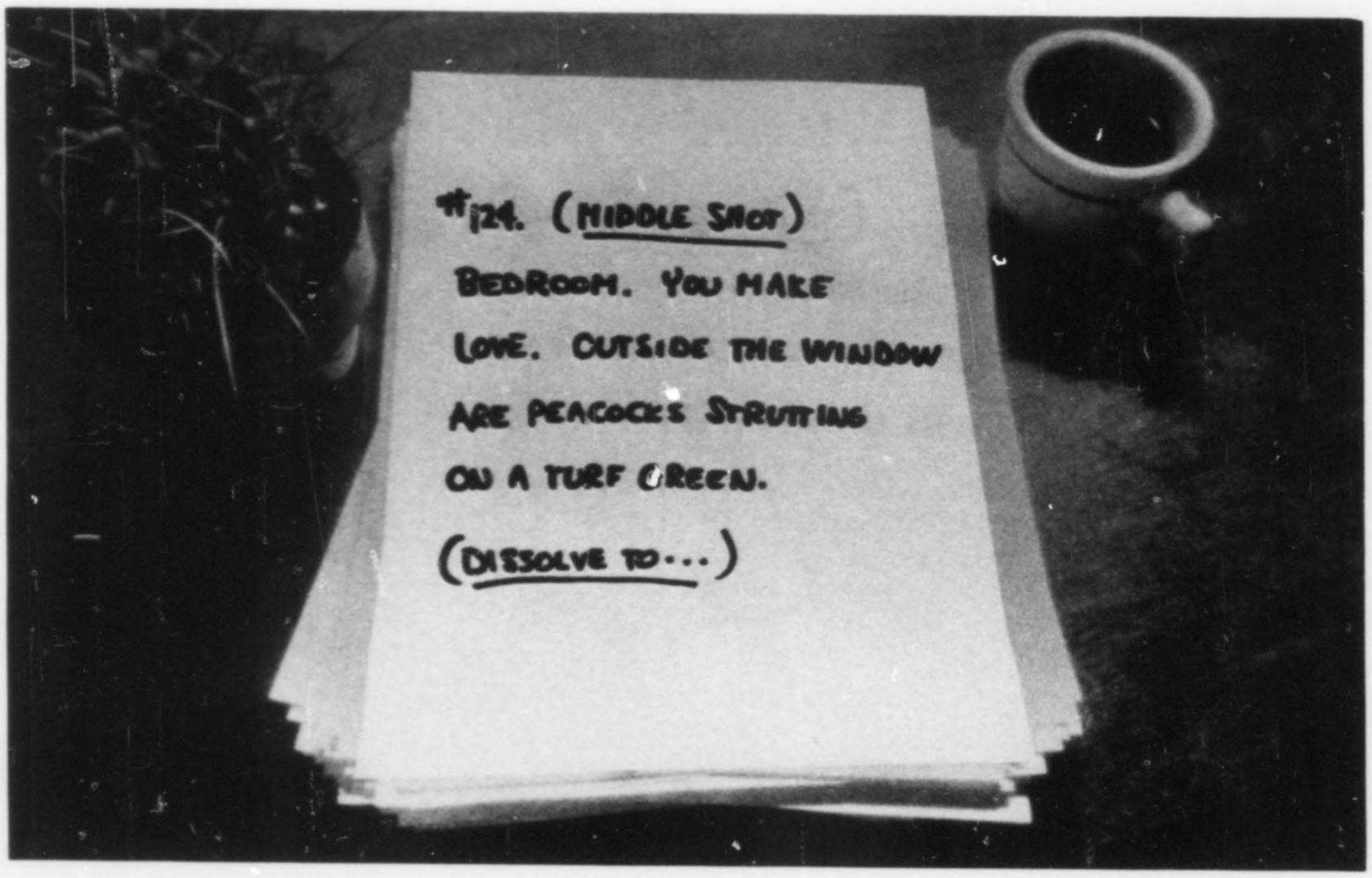
Poetic Justice is, in fact, almost all text; the screen has been almost voided and is now filled with the written script of a film. "Almost all text," "almost voided," for the table upon which this script is placed and its two surrounding objects constitute the materials of a first-order film, the condition of our reading of the script. It is this first-order film which, in its pulse of projection, inscribes light as the medium of both reading and viewing. The reading enables our projection of the imaginary film structured around an apparently triangular series of erotic transactions. In these the architecture of a house and the presence of both camera and still photographs hold out the promise of a spatio-temporal system within which things—the narrative—may take place. It is a promise unfulfilled, however, for the confusion of coordinates and the systematic use of the pronominal shifter works to dissolve and defeat diegetic construction.

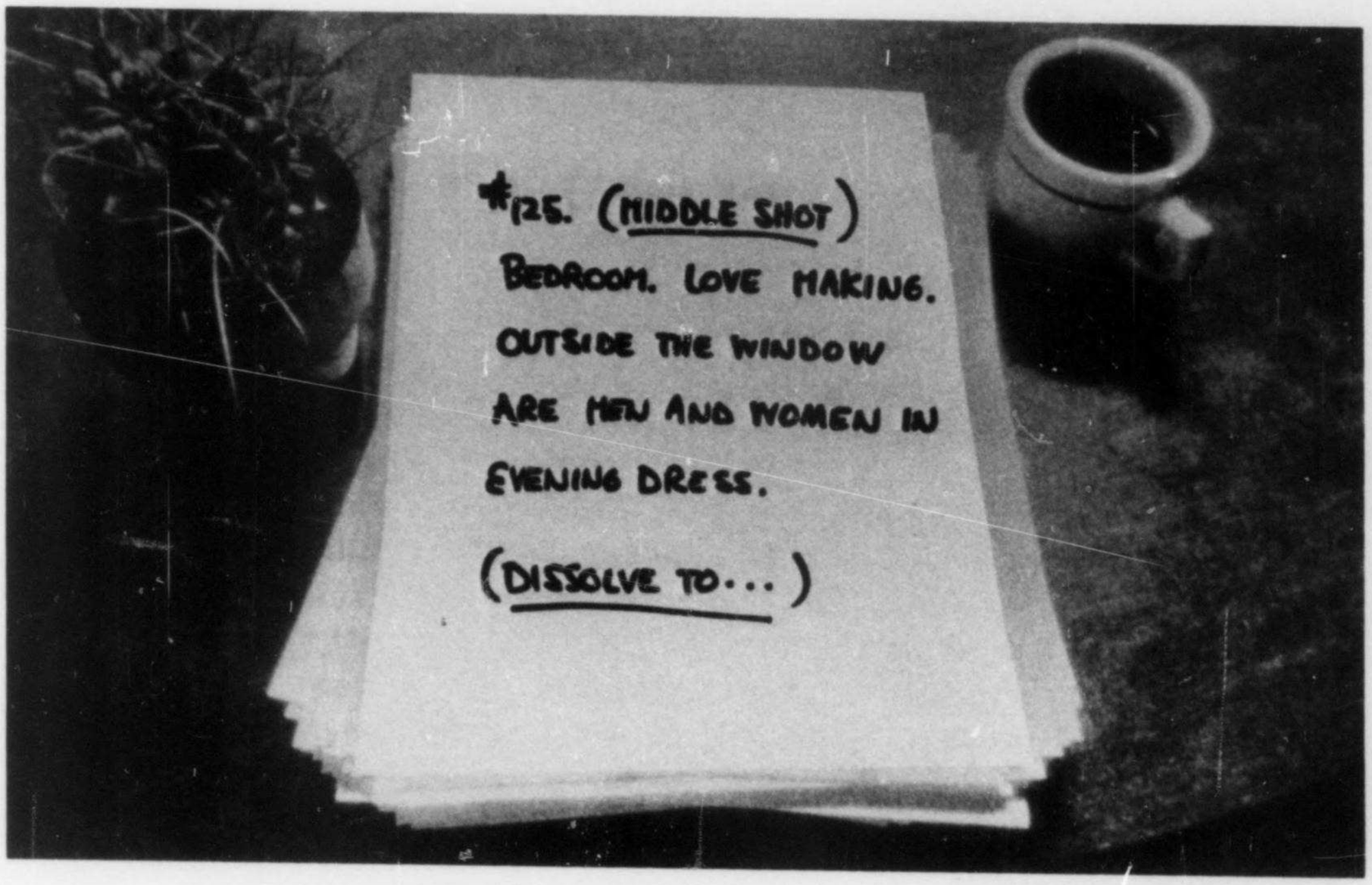
We may gauge the effects of this dislocation by recalling the nature of the shifter. "Pronouns do not constitute a single class, but are rather of different kinds according to the syntax of language; some are typical of what we call discursive instances, that is, the discrete and singular acts through which language is actualized in utterance by a speaker. . . ."[18] "These pronominal forms do not refer to "reality" or to "objective" positions in space or in time, but rather to a singular enunciation which contains them and reflects their proper use. The importance of their function is a measure of the problem that they serve to solve, which is none other than that of intersubjectivity."[19] It is this use of empty forms, together with the synthetic, edited spatiality of architecture which surrounds the third of the script's four "tableaux." The first of these has

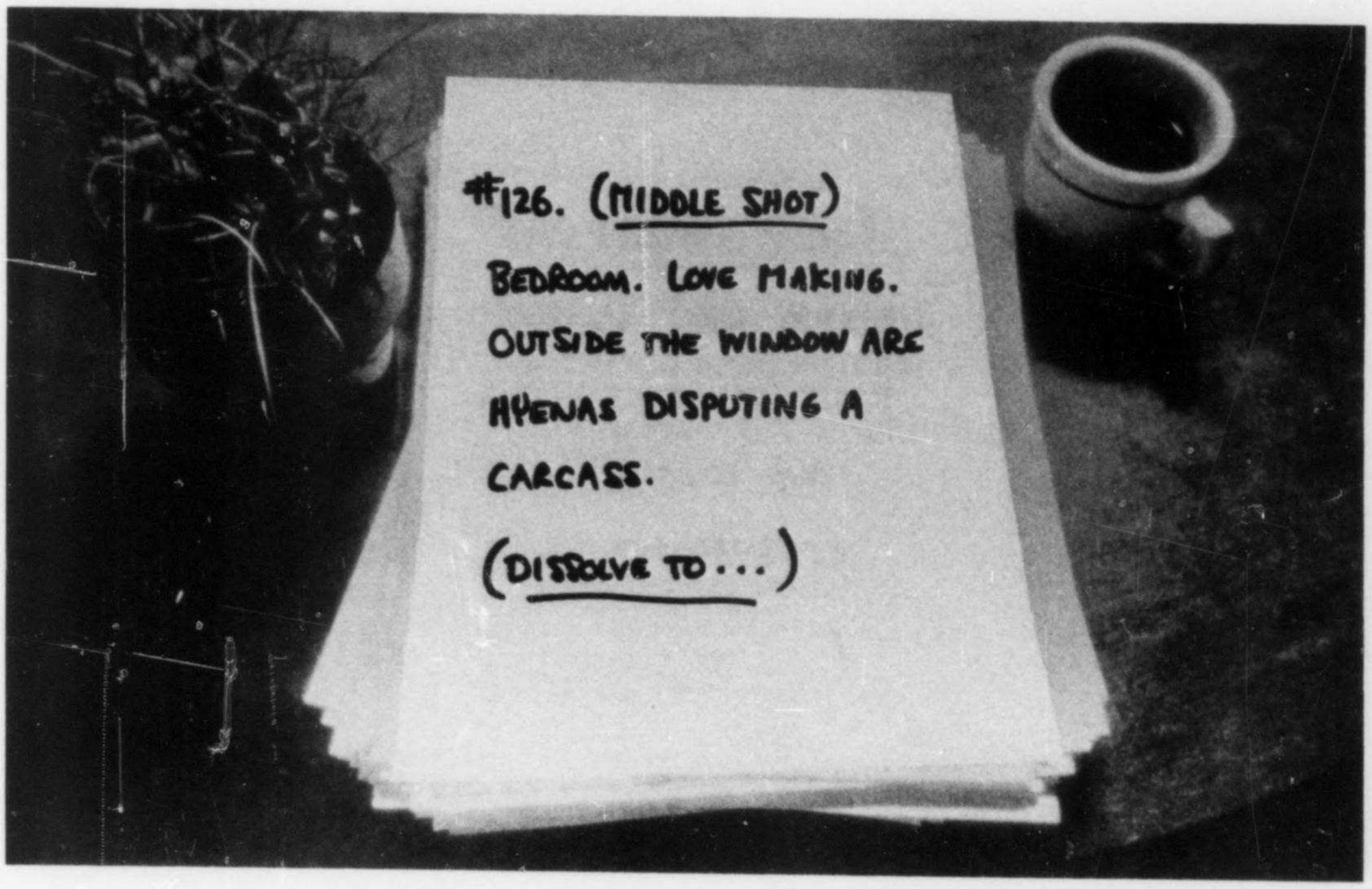
16. Field and Sainsbury, p. 62.
17. See *ibid.*, pp. 69–71.
18. Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique genérale*, Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1966, p. 251 (my translation).
19. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

Hollis Frampton. Poetic Justice. *1972.*






#125. (MIDDLE SHOT)
BEDROOM. LOVE MAKING.
OUTSIDE THE WINDOW
ARE MEN AND WOMEN IN
EVENING DRESS.
(DISSOLVE TO...)


#126. (MIDDLE SHOT)
BEDROOM. LOVE MAKING.
OUTSIDE THE WINDOW ARE
HYENAS DISPUTING A
CARCASS.
(DISSOLVE TO...)

been constructed as a kind of didactic model of narrative script-writing, the second functions as a model of what memory in its obsession and disjunction might resemble. In the third tableau, a window near the lovers' bed becomes the frame through which, or screen upon which, a long cascade of disjunct images is viewed; they compose a kind of surrealist movie, an assertively edited stream of heterogeneous, hypnagogic images.[20] In the fourth tableau, the spatial ambiguities intensify and the author enters the narrative through the revelation that he has been photographing. With the final shot, in which an empty glove is cast upon the script, the collapse of the narrative's authorial "I" into that of the maker of the first-order film is effected, and the full range of the *mise en abîme* is disclosed.

Adorno was known to have said, "I love to go to the movies; what I can't stand are the images." And we have seen why. Barthes, too, complained of the fullness of the image, of the constraints of representation which force one to receive everything presented. "In writing, on the contrary, I don't have to see what the hero's fingernails are like, but the Text tells me, if it so wishes—and with what force!—of Holderlin's excessively long nails."[21] It is that tact and economy, that discretion, that reservation of the linguistic signifier which Frampton offers in this film compounded of paradox and a fine malice. And the discretion is reinforced by the adoption of the shifter as its central rhetorical mechanism.

Barthes, in his later years, increasingly protested against the weight of signification, its tyranny. He dreamed of a world which might be "exempted from meaning as one is from military duty." Or of meaning which could be thought of as "tint," "quiver," "shudder," "thrill." Above all, he saw the shifter (and by extension, all operators of uncertainty in language) as a sort of "utopia," a species of subversions, conceded by language but repressed, nonetheless, by social structuring. It was the fluidity within the thetic, provisional freedom from reference, which he came to prize. Barthes was, like Adorno then, a celebrant of the ritual of filmgoing, but a most resistant spectator; there does, however, exist an imaginary cinema, constructed as if to order for them both, in the textual riddles of Hollis Frampton.

20. For a discussion of other aspects of this section of *Poetic Justice*, see Annette Michelson, "Time Out of Mind: A Foreword," in Hollis Frampton, *Circles of Confusion*, Rochester, Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1983, pp. 18–20.
21. Barthes, p. 59.

Hollis Frampton:
A Complete Filmography

This filmography is a version, brought up to date by Marion Faller and Bruce Jenkins, of Frampton's own listing in an unpublished curriculum vitae of 1982. It conforms to his method of listing films separately within a given series and of listing, in addition, the series title proper. Frampton's films were usually entered according to the dates of their completion.

Hapax Legomena includes the works preceding this mention in the filmography from *nostalgia* to *Remote Control*, although Frampton's listing of the individual films reflects the chronological order of their completion rather than that of the screening cycle.

SOLARIUMAGELANI is composed of the seasonal films *Autumnal Equinox*, *Winter Solstice*, and *Summer Solstice*. In an earlier version of *SOLARIUMAGELANI*, *INGENIVM NOBIS IPSA PVELLA FECIT* was included in the series under the title *Vernal Equinox*.

Magellan includes virtually all of the films listed in this filmography from *Apparatus Sum* through *The Birth of Magellan: Fourteen Cadenzas*, as well as a number of films which were not completed.

Clouds Like White Sheep, 1962.
16 mm, 25 min., b/w, silent. (Destroyed.)

A Running Man, 1963.
16 mm, 22 min., color, silent.
(Destroyed.)

Ten Mile Poem, 1964.
16 mm, 33 min., color, silent.
(Destroyed.)

Obelisk Ampersand Encounter, 1965.
16 mm, 1:30 min., color, sound. (Lost.)

Manual of Arms, 1966.
16 mm, 17 min., b/w, silent.

Process Red, 1966.
16 mm, 3:30 min., color, silent.

Information, 1966.
16 mm, 4 min., b/w, silent.

A & B in Ontario (with Joyce Wieland), abandoned 1966; completed 1984 by Joyce Wieland.
16 mm, 17 min., b/w, sound.

States, 1967; revised 1970.
16 mm, 17:30 min., b/w, silent.

Heterodyne, 1967.
16 mm, 7 min., color, silent.

Snowblind, 1968.
16 mm, 5:30 min., b/w, silent.

Maxwell's Demon, 1968.
16 mm, 4 min., color, sound.

Surface Tension, 1968.
16 mm, 10 min., color, sound.

Palindrome, 1969.
16 mm, 22 min., color, silent.

Carrots & Peas, 1969.
16 mm, 5:30 min., color, sound.

Lemon, 1969.
16 mm, 7:30 min., color, silent.

Prince Ruperts Drops, 1969.
16 mm, 7 min., color, silent.

Works & Days, 1969.
16 mm, 12 min., b/w, silent.

Artificial Light, 1969.
16 mm, 25 min., color, silent.

Zorns Lemma, 1970.
16 mm, 60 min., color, sound.

nostalgia, 1971.
16 mm, 36 min., b/w, sound.

Travelling Matte, 1971.
16 mm, 33:30 min., b/w, silent.

Critical Mass, 1971.
16 mm, 25:30 min., b/w, sound.

Special Effects, 1972.
16 mm, 10:30 min., b/w, sound.

Poetic Justice, 1972.
16 mm, 31:30 min., b/w, silent.

Ordinary Matter, 1972.
16 mm, 36 min., b/w, sound.

Remote Control, 1972.
16 mm, 29 min., b/w, silent.

Hapax Legomena, 1971–72.
16 mm, 3 hrs., 22 min., b/w, sound.

Apparatus Sum (Studies for Magellan: #1), 1972.
16 mm, 2:30 min., color, silent.

Tiger Balm (Memoranda Magelani: #1), 1972.
16 mm, 10 min., color, silent.

Yellow Springs (Vanishing Point: #1), 1972.
16 mm, 5 min., color, silent.

Public Domain, 1972.
16 mm, 18 min., b/w, silent.

Less, 1973.
16 mm, 1 sec., b/w, silent.

Autumnal Equinox, 1974.
16 mm, 27 min., color, silent.

Noctiluca (Magellan's Toys: #1), 1974.
16 mm, 3:30 min., color, silent.

Winter Solstice, 1974.
16 mm, 33 min., color, silent.

Straits of Magellan: Drafts & Fragments, 1974.
16 mm, 51:15 min., color, silent.

Summer Solstice, 1974.
16 mm, 32 min., color, silent.

SOLARIUMAGELANI, 1974.
16 mm, 1 hr., 32 min., color, silent.

Banner, 1974.
16 mm, 40 sec., color, silent.

INGENIVM NOBIS IPSA PVELLA FECIT (formerly *Vernal Equinox*), 1975.
16 mm, 67 min., color, silent.

Drum, 1975.
16 mm, 20 sec., color, silent.

Pas de Trois, 1975.
16 mm, 4 min., color, silent.

Magellan: At the Gates of Death, 1976.
Part I: *The Red Gate.*
16 mm, 54 min., color, silent.
Part II: *The Green Gate.*
16 mm, 52 min., color, silent.

Otherwise Unexplained Fires, 1976.
16 mm, 14 min., color, silent.

Not the First Time, 1976.
16 mm, 6 min., color, silent.

For Georgia O'Keeffe, 1976.
16 mm, 3:30 min., color, silent.

Quaternion, 1976.
16 mm, 4:30 min., color, silent.

Tuba, 1976.
16 mm, 3 min., color, silent.

Procession, 1976.
16 mm, 4 min., color, silent.

More than Meets the Eye, 1979.
16 mm, 7:30 min., color, silent.

Gloria!, 1979.
16 mm, 9:30 min., color, sound.

The Birth of Magellan: Dreams of Magellan:
Parts I–VI, 1977–79. (Only *Dream I: Matrix* was completed, 28 min.)
16 mm, 1 hr., 48 min., color, silent.

The Birth of Magellan: Mindfall:
Parts I–VII, 1977–80. (Only Parts I & VII were completed, 21 min. each.)
16 mm, 2 hrs., 33 min., color, sound.

The Birth of Magellan: Fourteen Cadenzas, 1977–80. (Only Cadenzas I & XIV were completed, 5:30 min. each.)
16 mm, 1 hr., 17 min., color, sound.

Magellan, begun 1972, incomplete.
16 mm, 36 hrs., color, sound.

Monsieur Phot: A Film by Joseph Cornell, begun 1973, incomplete.
16 mm, color, sound.

R, begun 1980, incomplete.
16 mm, color, sound.

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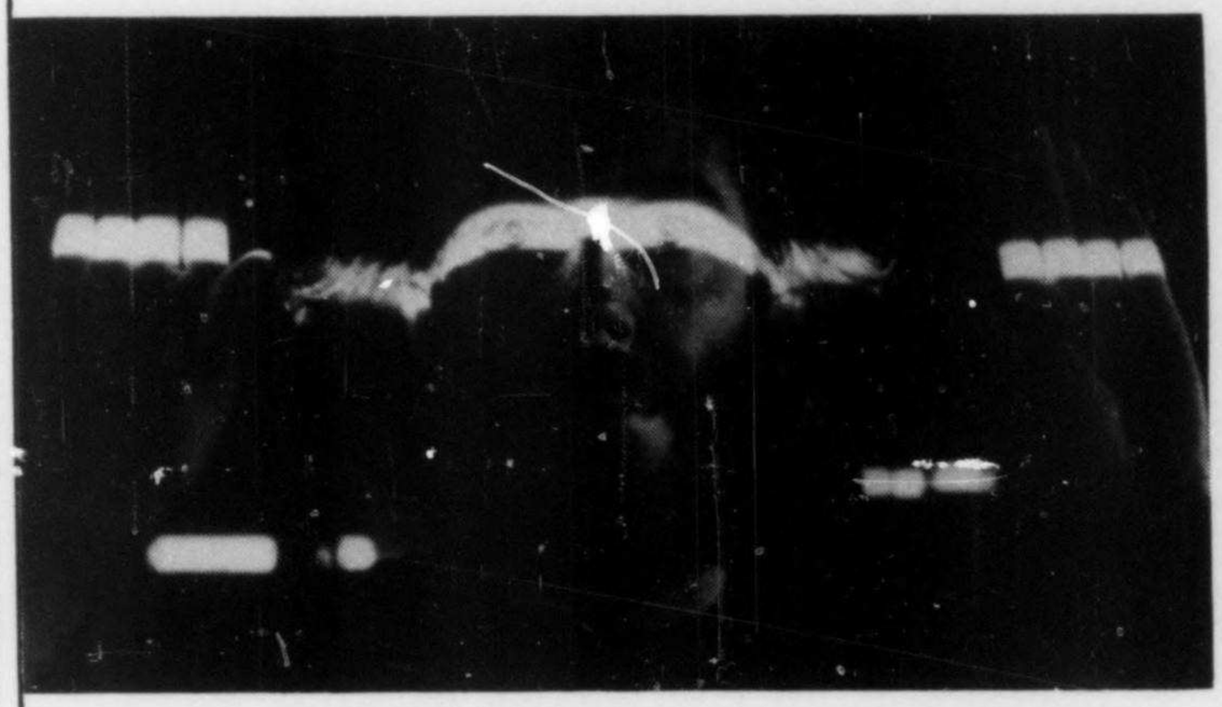

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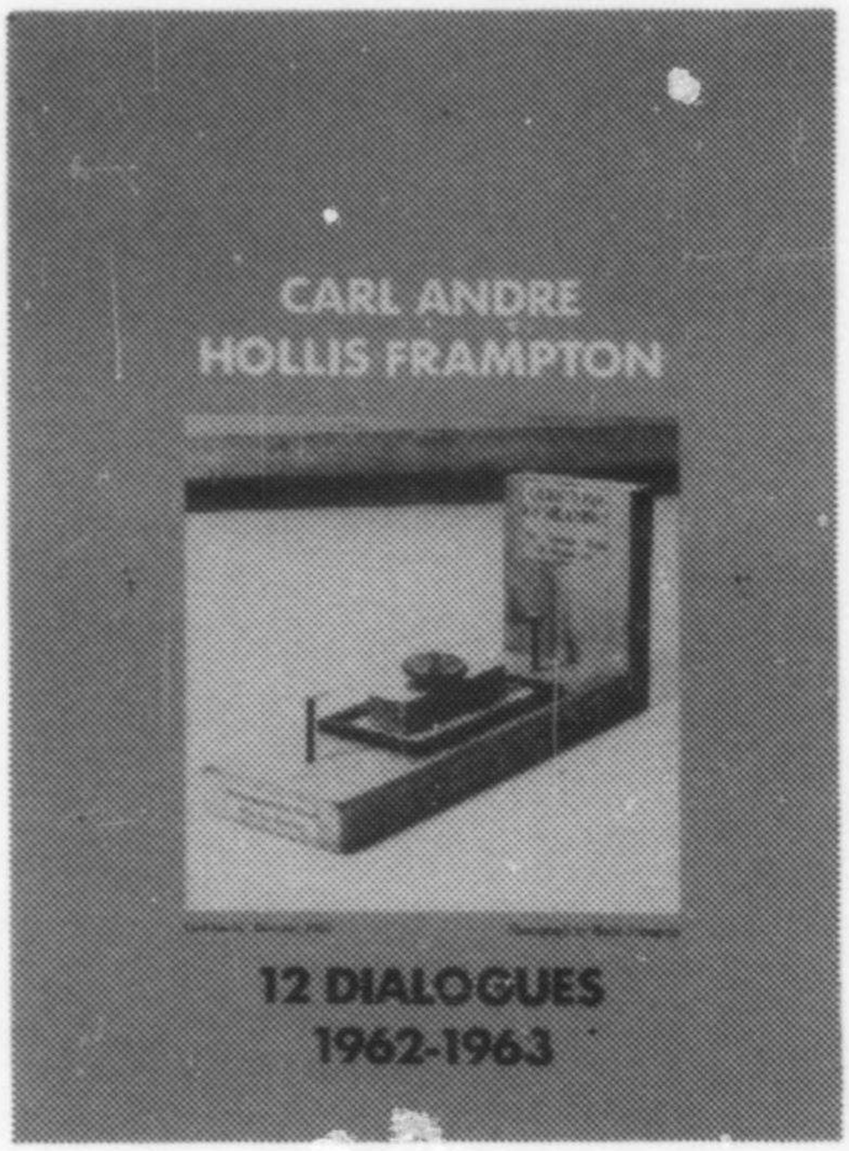

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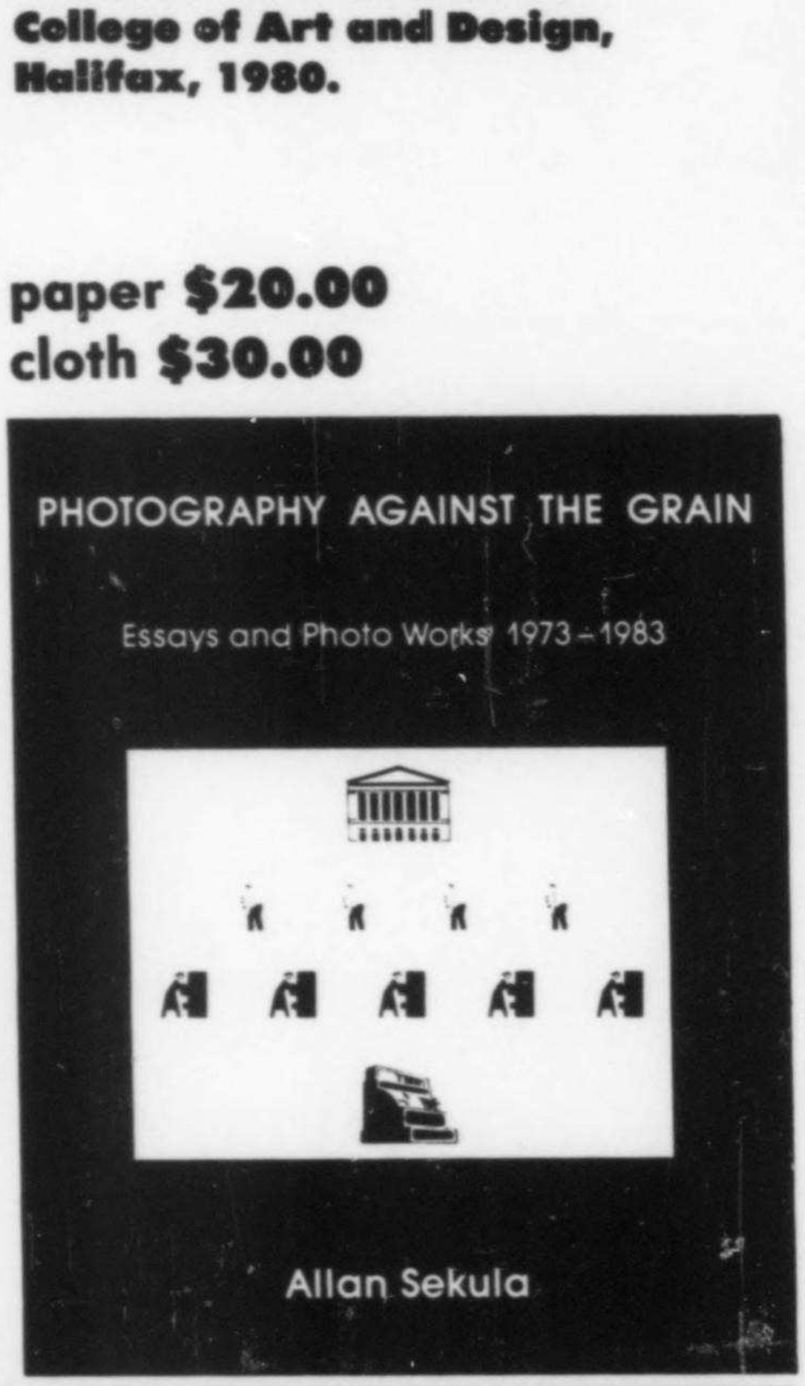

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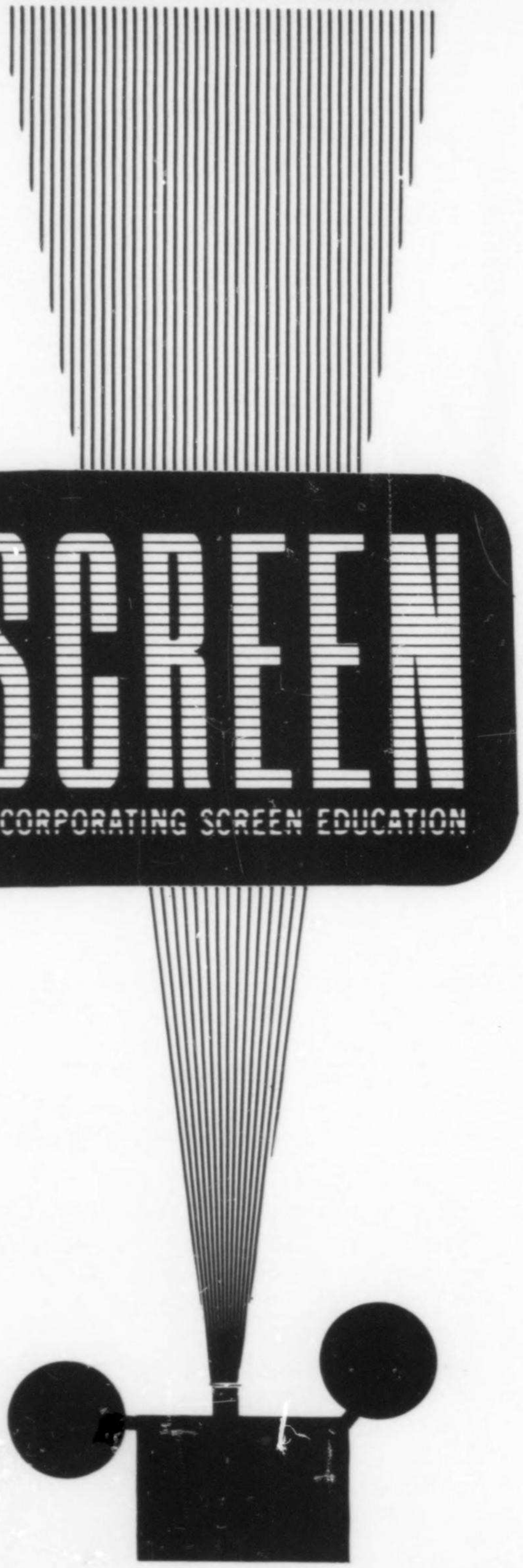

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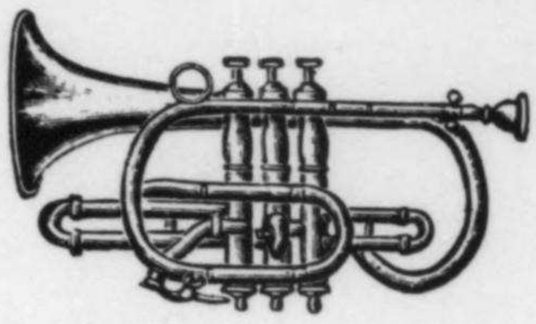

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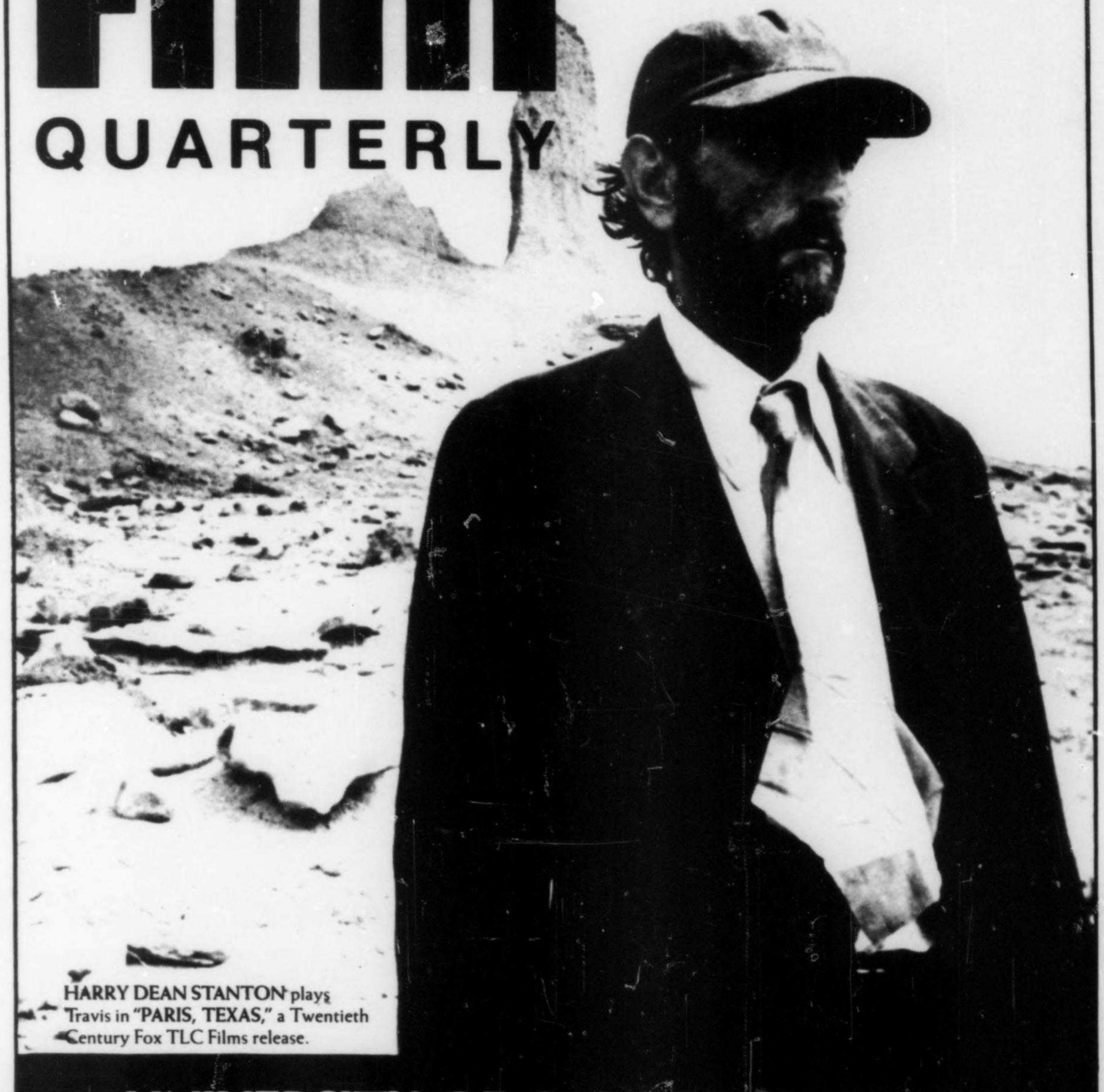

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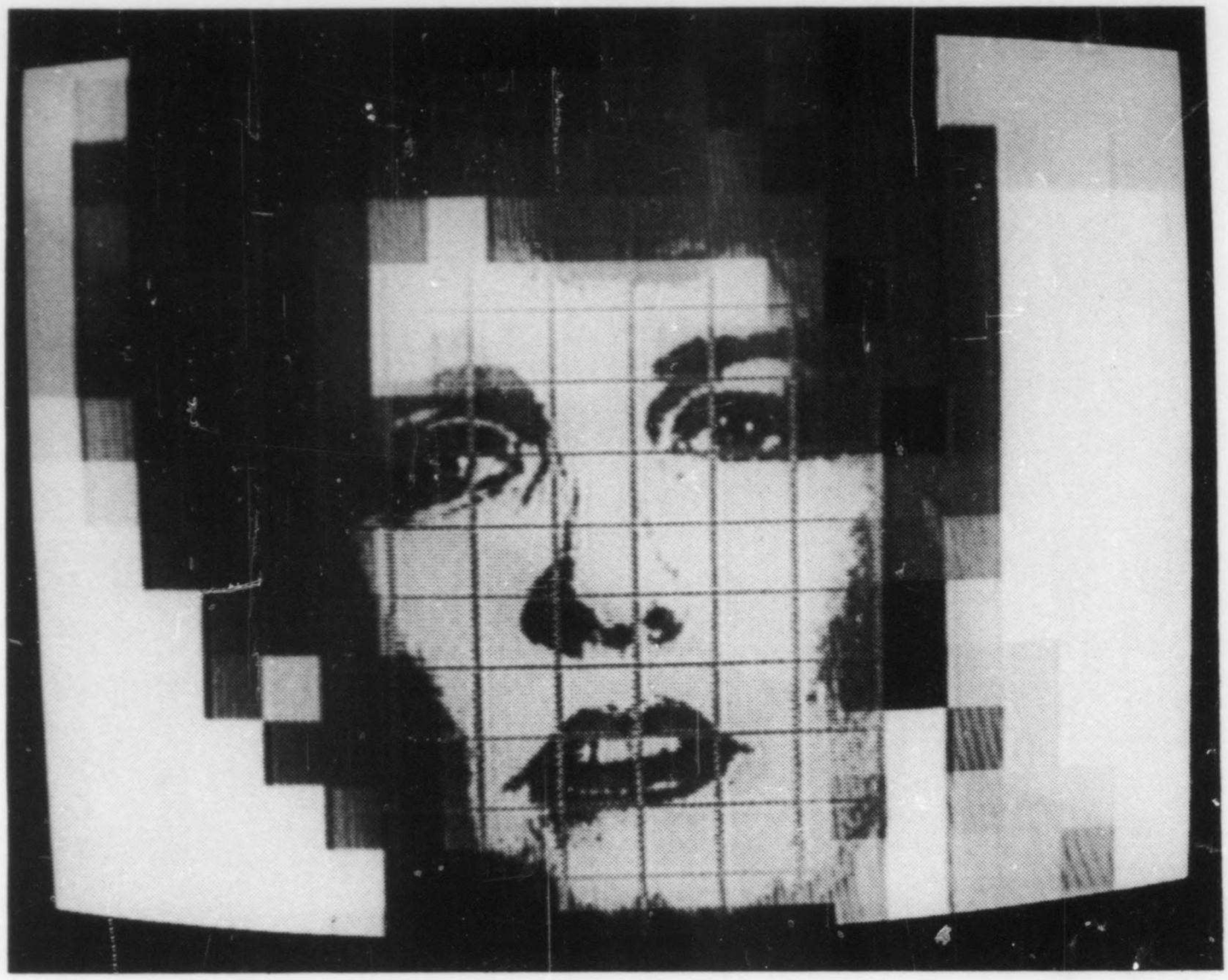

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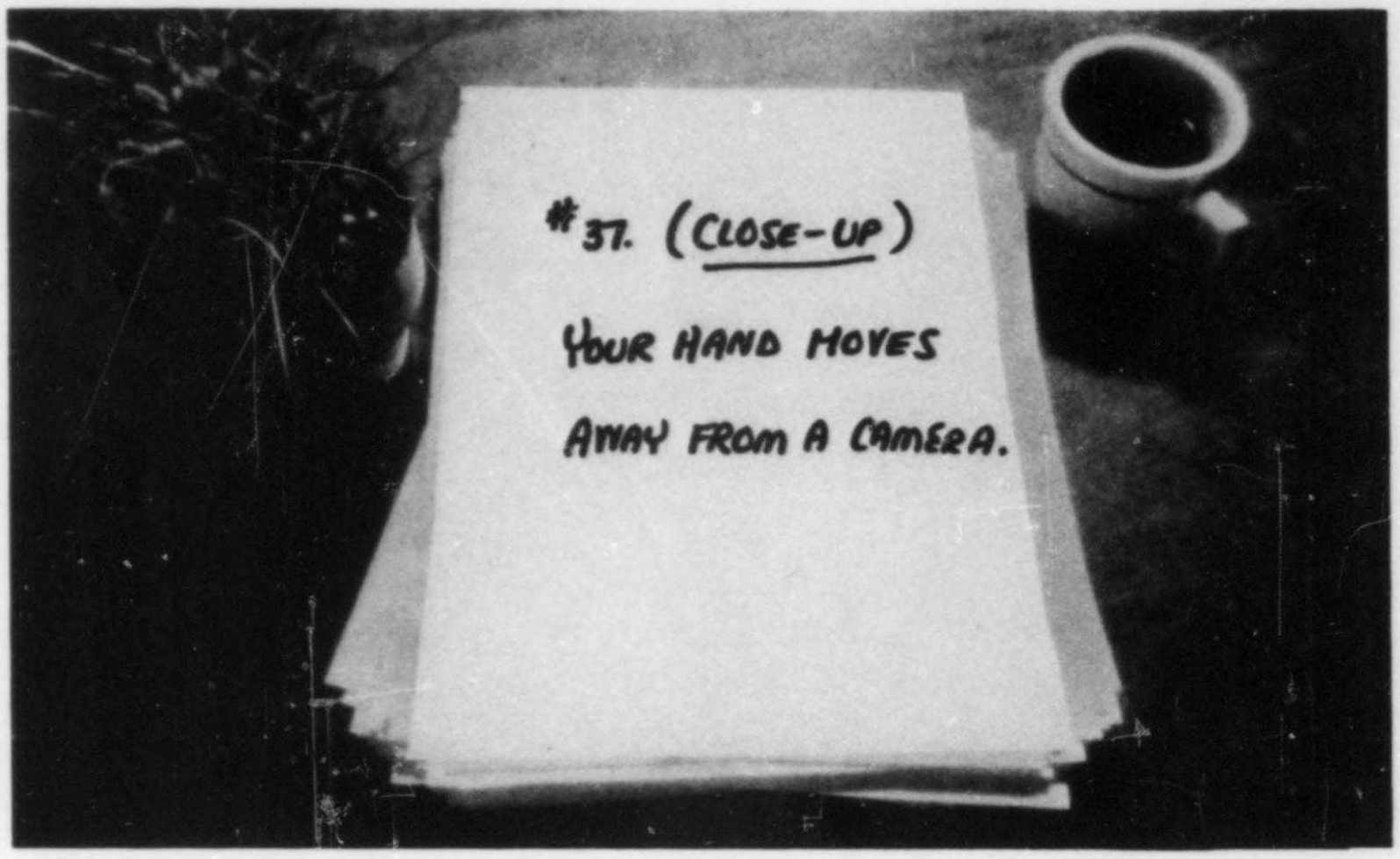

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