

Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou
Musée national d'art moderne
75191 PARIS cedex 04

ALIBIS

Salle de cinéma du musée, 3ème étage, tous les jours sauf lundis et mardis.
renseignements : 277 12 33 poste 47 21

Cinéma du Musée

JUILLET 1984

SEANCES DE 18 HEURES :

les 4 et 5 : pas de programmes .

du vendredi 6 au vendredi 13 : **ALIBIS**

Programme conçu par Yann Beauvais, en prolongement de l'exposition «Alibis»

le 6 :

George Landow : «Institutional Quality» . 1969 . 5 minutes .
Georges Rey : «La vache qui rumine» . 1970 . 3 minutes .
George Landow : «What's wrong with this picture?» . 1970 . 10 minutes .
Hollis Frampton : «Special Effects» . 1972 . 10 minutes .
Michael Snow : «Wavelength» . 1967 . 45 minutes .

le 7 :

John Smith : «The Girl Chewing-Gum» . 1976 . 10 minutes .
Ken Jacobs : «Doctor's Dream» . 1978 . 20 minutes .
Erika Beckman : «You The Better» . 1982 . 33 minutes .
Barbara Broughel : «The Frigid Heiress» . 1982 . 17 minutes .

le 8 :

Gary Hill : «Primarily Speaking» . 1981-83 . 18 minutes .
William Wegman : «The Best of Wegman» . 1970-78 . 20 minutes .
Bob Wilson : «Stations» . 1983 . 50 minutes .

le 11 :

Pascal Auger : «La petite fille» . 1978 . 9 minutes .
Hollis Frampton : «Critical Mass» . 1971 . 25 minutes .
George Landow : «On The Marriage Broker...» . 1978 . 17 minutes .
Peter Gidal : «Silent Partner» . 1975 . 25 minutes .

le 12 :

Jean-Pierre Bertrand : «Faces» . 1971 . 12 minutes .
Malcolm Legrice : «After Lumière-L'arroseur arrosé» . 1974 . 16 minutes .
Paul Sharits : «3rd Degree» . 1982 . 25 minutes .
Hollis Frampton : «Nostalgia» . 1971 . 36 minutes .

le 13 :

Elsa Cayo : «Qui vole un oeuf vole un oeuf» . 1983 . 15 minutes .
Elsa Cayo : «Nez, gorge, oreille» . 1983 . 6 minutes .
Max Almy : «Leaving the 20th Century» . 1983 . 11 minutes .
Tony Oursler : «Grand mal » . 1982 . 32 minutes .

Richard Artschwager
Gérard Collin-Thiébaud
Gérard Garouste
Luciano Fabro
Pierre Klossowski
Robert Longo
Carlo Maria Mariani
Cindy Sherman
Jan Vercruyssen
Didier Vermeiren
William Wegman

The cinematic apparatus, even for experimental cinema where it is often excluded, in itself favors a staging. It is by itself a staging: first as a process (24 frames/second), then as the use of a repetition that will be more or less modified according to how one works its potentialities or according to the uses that are pulled from it. Obsession reigns, the beautiful repetition realizing itself until the end of the projection time. Often, however, this mechanism is masked for the profit of the narrative usage founded on the simulacrum. This is what explains the widening gap between experimental and traditional cinema. The scene, and thus the staging of the scene, is not the same, even when it is a question of the same thing.

Since 1978, we have noticed new tendencies in experimental cinema. These have in common a certain rejection of formal academism (Structural, or Post-, Structural Materialism, Expanded). These practices are being raised against the dominant current that was established during the 1960s. These trends, however, cannot be applied to one type of films, the field is larger than in painting (New Figuration, New Fauves), or in music (New Simplicity, etc.). It can be said, however, that narration comes into it quite frequently under diverse forms.

In this re-evaluation of the art of the preceding decades that could indirectly favor post-modernism, we can finally see the possibility of the resurgence of significations that until now have been concealed. Among them, humor, irony, game playing and the simulacrum as elements constituting the fundamentals of minimalist practices. These significations appear to favor processes that introduce these orderings, differentiating pleasure, and that are often found in a more traditional cinema, under the form of the Borgesian tale. The dogmatisms of the 70s swept away, certain significations

come back up to the surface of the screen. First irony—the screen is not the receptacle of the depth, the relief and the reality of traditional cinema, it is only a surface to activate, to take—one had until then minimized the importance that, for certain people, the brief narrative knots assumed in glorifying only the process(es) and the chains of repetition and the differences that accompanied them, averting, by the same processes, all asperity.

The epoch was advancing in certainty, we had "art in order not to perish from the truth," forgetting that we were initiating an exchange of values. Annihilating the sense of this word of Nietzsche, we forgot the game and the power of appearances. This, opposing truth, destabilized it. The interpretations were to be re-examined, as well as the films. The methods were put forward, to the limit, and the object (here, the filmed object) lost its importance. Any one would do; the sparseness of dealings made it so. Interchangeability was at its fullest. Also, a good number of films, utilized, used up, recipes. The dishes had no more flavor. It was more about repetition than investigation. The game was giving up its place to boredom. The machine was turning by itself, an echo of an ancient utopia, pure methodology, a machine that wanted itself to be (a)significant in some way, thinking it could escape from all determinism, all recuperation. We know that it was nothing, and that the institution was glorified from it, thwarting the most elaborate strategies, drying up its possibilities in the same way, the public included. It is also true that this structuralist and methodological cinema legitimized itself in the death of man, proclaimed after that of God, at the same time defending the machine, abundant like this in the ideology of the technician system extolled by the all inclusive society.

It has developed, however, that beyond their topographical function, these cinematic processes included other aspects, evoked on a higher level.

Conrad, Frampton, Landow and Sharits, four strategies, four uses of laughter, four attitudes: to the image, the witticism without the Surrealist gangrene.

With the series of \$1 films, Conrad started to think about film in a different way. How to make films when one is a housewife. One can prepare condiments or simmer filmic dishes that relate activities that are usually totally separate. This is how the pickled films, the boiled films, etc. were born, diversions of daily activities and the falling back of these activities on a specific practice that flees the household space. The frying, all things considered, works very well, and questions the seriousness of the enterprise of making a film in a cunning, underhanded way. By a displacement of the position that generates a film, Conrad knew, by means of this series, how to renew the spectacular: the spectacle wasn't in the visual rendering any more (even though, when giving them a good look, his films are pretty spectacular), but in the process that destabilizes the illusion of mastery automatically conferred upon the artist. He becomes, contrary to the figure of "Brakhage as genius," an individual like any other.

With Critical Mass, we participate in a desynchronization of the sound track with respect to the image, a series of stutterings that indicate a reversal of the social roles of the partners during a household fight. The stuttering favors the multiplication of meanings, in producing a decomposition of the words. The gestures of the protagonists seem to invalidate the word and its passionate contents. Here the film maker plays the grand manipulator, faking the reality of a scene for the benefit of a dysfunctioning of the word, that unmask the stereotypes of behavior.

Institutional Quality, as well as many of Landow's films, puts forth visual traps on the nature of representation, accompanied by all the games of power that the somewhat ironic

instructions of the off camera voice predicts, staging false methods of learning language by experience. The subversion of the apprenticeship is repeated by the subversion of the image—destabilization of the studious childhood.

With 3rd Degree, Paul Sharits attacks representation, as he had already done with Analytical Studies No. 2. This assault is also concretized by the subject of the film: the face of a woman is menaced by a flaming match. The film itself is burning, and to finish the film of this burn is also burned. There are therefore 3 degrees of burns that create an unimaginable tension, reinforced by the denial of speech of the tortured woman. Even though there is no narrative thread, the spectators (and the projectionist) are carried into a dizziness, an abstract suspension for the least and the most materialistic. Here we are so much and so well urged to use the simulacrum as abyss that we really lose track of what is burning and what isn't. The localisation of reality is short-circuited. The truth becomes a moment of falsehood, indetermination, and the fluctuation of identity and the process of identification are at their limit: the reign of the simulacrum is posed as a questioning.

We will have to decide one day to recognize the link that exists, from all evidence, between Duchamp and minimal art, and consequently not to confuse and separate from the different steps that stage the process as a moment of derealization of the invested medium. We have perhaps now paid enough attention to the game playing dimension that contains a good number of "conceptual" propositions. The critique put forward by post-modernism, if we succeeded in draining the reductive schemes on modernity from it, would permit a re-evaluation of its stakes.

This is how, in using the barriers of a reductive reading of works of art, one often passes by one of the most essential motivations of the work of these film makers. We didn't pay enough attention to the narrative thread of certain films,

and this is because of the process put in place by and in the film. In the post-modernist reaction, the first agreement (even if it were the only) would be the return to fiction. The return, alas, being too often nothing but a parody of pop art and of the Underground Cinema... The gap is of a size in which all the "post (in fact anti-modernist)" reactions should have been swallowed up.

Already in Wavelength, a death, a sordid story takes place while the zoom pursues its journey of conquest and acquisition of space. The course of the zoom is not so far from the general course of a traditional narrative film with its suspensions, its pauses and its starting up again, insofar as, in one or another of the steps, the discontinued proceedings of the filming create a simulacrum of continuity. Narrative in traditional film, procedural in Snow's film. What the latter artistic proposition initiates, is an unlocking and dehierarchization of the process of filming in relation to the filmed actions, instead of the first erasing its traces to put itself at the service of the second. These two processes begin to function autonomously, the fabrication of the film becoming first hierarchically in relation to the narrative accidents. We remember that this zoom is only a simulacrum of continuity, a connection, perceptible to analysis as four zooms. Our wait and outlook, by its movement, are trapped, except in regard to the crossing of the room; it certainly is a crossing because it all ends with a photograph of waves. The film flees toward other banks in the accomplishment of its course. En route, it questions and perverts the zoom. Each time we think we have hold of a certainty, an event, we are ably cut back to the technical procedure, that which starts the machine up again and the desire to see; all is differentiated.

An analogous questioning takes place in Doctor's Dream by Ken Jacobs, but this time it is focused on the procedure of montage. Starting with found footage, he reintroduces an erotic reading of the original narrative. What is he returning from? The banal narration is totally subverted. The film begins with the section which originally was in

the middle of the film, followed by the section which preceded it, which in turn is followed by the section which followed the middle section, and so on in sequence until the end, where the film ends with the beginning section, followed by the last section of the work torn into pieces. How do you situate the original when you are talking about film? We are in the realm of the simulacrum par excellence, insofar as it more or less always has to do with a copy of a copy. The causes and effects of meaning are inverted. The clinical look of the doctor is transformed into a lascivious one...playing with significations, the original stake is sacrificed. We know everything in advance, even before its legitimization by the narration. Once again a game, a staging, to another degree (here the montage), comes to sponge off the normal course of events. By this reorganization of found filmic materials, the narrative is carried by another logic, and there invites other significations. We could even ask ourselves if there isn't an additional game, this time with experimental cinema itself as the object. With *After Lumiere L'Arroseur Arrose*, Le Grice introduces a new form of simulacrum and an original that stages one of the very first simulacra of the history of the cinema: a playlet. Here the illusionistic functioning of the simulacrum, by the repetition of recordings out of sync with the action going to designate, by their gaps of point of view, the arbitrariness of the process (positive, negative, color plus addition of sound track; *Les Morceaux en forme de poire* by Satie).

Even more directly, the game belonging to these short stories where it is impossible to decide the truth of what one is seeing, in the manner of Ruiz in *Les Divisions de la Nature*, Peter Greenaway plays fiction in *A Walk Through H* by means of a sound track that invalidates, confirms, thwarts, destabilizes the statements made before. It has to do with a narration without a character. Very often these games of recalling are accomplished with the sound that contradicts and balances

other statements, other powers. the sound, and therefore the word, which here constitutes a great part of the slipping toward a more traditional cinema is facilitated, the image becoming a possible support for the language. It is therefore less questioned, less played with and documentary. Becoming in this way a moment of fable, it is put to light, not for what it represents or reveals, but for what it masks, therefore what it succeeds in deferring. We will notice later that this delay doesn't refer to anything tangible. The enterprise of masking can go even further in a radical practice of the cinema. This is a little bit what happens when we see a film by Peter Gidal, where we don't know if the film is the alibi of theoretical discourse or the inverse. In this hesitation, the film maker trifles with the spectators and their waiting. The partner is silent, but what is the nature of this silence? Can't we think it is about a spectator frustrated in his waiting who has been deprived of speech, sent back to the void of his identification? The sham is in full swing.

Not to see the work of humor or of game playing in these artistic practices is to make oneself vulnerable to not understanding their modernity. In this sense, a great part of the post-modernist point of view, holding on to a reductive critique of form, misses one of the characteristics on which it is founded: a mind-game by means of an investigation on and of representation. The formal is not attacked simply by parody or the accumulation of cliches, a good number of "punk" film makers have gotten burned this way, confusing a refusal of form with the multiplication of stereotypes; the revival isn't the same. This is why the films of Ericka Beckman are so different from the New York currents that have revealed themselves since 1978.

Her most recent film *You The Better* stages, in the manner of a game, a game. The structure of the film is linked more to the game than to narration. But the dice are "loaded;" consequently, even though it is closed—to the extent that

the interactivity of the game as it is understood here between the house (power) and the spectators (the betters) is impossible—the structure floats. Nevertheless, the game must always move ahead, it can't stop, it has no end; it returns to infinity in the chain of signification. From the game to power, passing by winning, we ourselves become actors of a game where the rules are unknown. Escaping from fatalism, Kafka's universe is near. As soon as we think we're holding on to something it escapes, by means of a subtle slipping of the signification of a word, an image or a symbol.

What happens from then on to the player (the better) when the rule of the game is taken away from him? He enters into the age of the enigma and confusion. The terrain of the game is mined, pure alibi, the mechanical functioning working on the too many significations that the non-determined rules authorize. In this game, nothing holds and the simulacrum rises. One by one, the players go from one role to another in a perpetual movement that won't stop perpetuating itself, throwing back new powers and figures of discourse each time.

The games, the staging of the simulacrum weren't absent from the cinema of the preceding decades. The post-modernist critique, blind to multiplicity, was only attacking artifices; it forgot that the apparatus put into place was not insignificant (nor single), but that it was (is) too significant. This excess is always aside, outside, untimely, apart, but nevertheless on the picture, not in between. To see it would perhaps necessitate ridding oneself of certain barriers to reading.

Certain film makers think that the work of the undermining of the simulacrum (via the questioning of) has been exhausted, all the alibis are good, in order to reinvest in illusionistic representation, but they are doing it in a roundabout way, putting forth logical systems that by successive dispatches induce a plurality of significations, of scenes, of languages.