

Re: Vision

STAN VAN DER BEEK

Vision undergoes re-vision; intention, symbol, reality
are the factors that undergo constant change
in the appearance of any art form.

Motion pictures—
pictures in motion—
seem most suited to the metaphysics of change,
to life in motion,
and as such cinema is becoming the most significant of art forms.

"One thing that is new is the prevalence of
newness, the changing scale and scope of change
itself, so that the world alters as we
walk in it. . ."

(Robert Oppenheimer, from "The Open Mind")

I like to think that life is a dissolve. . .

. . . and that seeing is the real illusion, that a sense of reality
is a sense of the senses. . .
that a sense of reality is a sense of non-sense. . .
that movies should delight the eye and rearrange the senses. . .
that movies are changing the art of seeing. . .
that movies are an art of seeing. . .
that movies are an illusion. . .
that seeing is believing.

The irony of art and life reminds us that "motion pictures"
are really a series of "still" pictures, which are being replaced
in the projector at less than 1/24th of a second . . . reaching
our eye at 186,000 m.p. second.

That we see the illusion of motion is based on the retention
of image, or the eye's inertia.

Motion pictures are apparent motion. . .

The film worker deals with "visual velocity" and "visual inertia,"
laws of sight that seem similar to laws in physics—
or at least to definitions of sight that contemporary
artists are exploring.

If movies and "vision" can assume the same meaning
then visions take the path of least resistance, that is,
intuitive logic, intuitive geometry, image-symbol making, art-
city planning of the mind, a form of research
that is just beginning in motion images. . .

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(Retinal art such as stroboscope stimulation that produces colors from black and white images . . . the possibility of mental movies. . .)

"If confusion is the sign of the time, I see at the root of this confusion a rupture between things and words, between things and the ideas and signs that are their representation. . ."

(Artaud)

The apparent image and the approximate image interrelate in our national sense of photo-reality. It is not inappropriate that we have a magazine called "Life"—that we take for granted that movies are reality. . .

That we take for granted much of our American life as it is reflected in photo-reality is evidenced by a lack of self-criticism and satire. . . .

Paul Klee said:

"Satire is not an excess of ill humor, but ill humor resulting from a vision of something higher . . . ridiculous man, divine God. Hatred for anything stagnant out of respect for pure humanity. . ."

Malraux pointed out that life has no real walls . . . and no real museums. . .

The World's Fair is an example:

It was not very interesting to people, and was a commercial failure, perhaps because it was designed as an object in the museum tradition. . . .

But if it had been designed as objects, books, textures, smells, sounds, motion pictures, that were sent in boxes to each person in America to own and keep in his possession. . . to give each of us continuous research pleasure and the stimulation of international ideas. . .

a direct 20th-century stimulus made possible by mass production, that would serve as reference material until the next Fair. . .

In other words a kit of communication tools sent to 150,000,000 Americans—projectors, tape recorders, books, slides, films, display cases, *et cetera*—designed by the artist designers of the world, mass-produced so that the budget for this kit would cost no more than a pavilion's installation.

Since one had to pay to get into the Fair, the citizen could have sent this money in return for the kit. For a suitable time period the Fair would have sent him continuously changing displays

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and materials from all over the world . . . some to keep and some to exchange, like books from a world library.

The World's Fair was at best merely fair. It reproduced the ideas of 1939, not 1964 . . . It could be anticipated that audio-visual conditioning will produce new results. . . .

I like the process of making films, because it is a way for me to have dialogues with myself.

I work in a small studio-dome, which I built myself from a silo top.

I work in the painter's tradition and do everything by myself as much as possible, which includes home development of my negatives, camera work, editing, *et cetera*. . .

I often make my films without too much conceptual preparation, using the film process of animation itself as a means of note-taking.

Thus in the making of one film, a process or idea for another film often comes about.

I also like to work on a variety of films at the same time (often as many as six) and don't expect to see a finished film for several years. . .

Editing a film, often inter-editing from one separate film into another, continues the conversations with the self. . .

Cinema, like significant painting, must be made on the basis of self-expression and necessity. . .

There are no geniuses in film-making, only desperate men. In my opinion the audience cannot be considered as the final target for their film work, but it may be implicated. . .

The major failure of commercial films made by the film "industry" is that they represent the range of public-accepted vision that cannot be made private . . . whereas the film poet is confronted with the dilemma that his private vision can in no way be made public. . .

Motion pictures are just now beginning to come out of the literary perspective of the novel and staged drama they were born in. . .

It is interesting that after nearly 400 years of art that was preoccupied with realism—growing mostly out of the theory of perspective and its effect on the senses—this preoccupation has at last reached its ultimate form in photography, particularly motion-picture photography.

It is part of the interesting nature of art that at this same juncture in the crossroads of art, with the perfection of a means to capture exactly perspective and "realism,"

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the artist's vision is turning more to his interior, and in a sense to an infinite exterior (photos of Mars), abandoning the logic of aesthetics and springing full-blown into a juxtaposed and simultaneous world that ignores the one-point-perspective mind and the one-point-perspective lens.

Another factor of particular interest is that movies represent a kind of international decompression chamber, being the only international art form that is portable, reproducible and universal in popularity. . .

I am fascinated by one of the current theories about dreams which holds that dreams are a way for the body to get rid of body poisons (which get burned up in the dream-act).

If this holds true, it seems likely that motion pictures might be a way for us to burn up international and national "toxic" attitudes. Perhaps this is an aspect of the moviegoing ritual, and of the value of the Hollywood "dream factory". . . .

Clearly, movies help us to re-experience our experiences, which seems to be a basic human need.

Motion, metamotion, kinetic identity, body-motor response, homeostasis, continuity. . . the movement of the spheres. . . are to be pinned like a moth stuck in the axis of the mind, to relieve the tensions of change (doubt)—of the movement of life itself—by studying it. . . by changing it into a symbolic form that is as real and meaningful as life itself.

I have emphasized that motion pictures are the unique art form of the 20th century, that they have produced a revolution in worldwide aesthetics, (namely, that motion pictures have produced the new aesthetics of anticipation, as compared to the older idea of painting and art history as "meditation"). . . that cinema is just beginning to come into its own. . .

The future holds unknown combinations of some of the present loosely knit ideas. . . integration of cinema, theater, dance, drama, electronic sound and sights, movie-dromes, video tape, libraries of film, kinetic and "expanded" cinema, "movie-murals," "movie-mosaics" . . .

Some of the ideas that are of particular interest to the current film-maker are:
simultaneous images and compression,
abstractions, superimpositions,
discontinuous information,

social surrealism,
 episodic structure,
 loop film (continuous projection),
 film as a reflection of private dreams, hallucinations. . .

Some of the vastly expanded techniques available now include:

8mm (some 6½ million 8mm cameras in America)
 super 8mm
 16, 35, 70, 120mm (over one billion dollars for photo-services
 annually),
 video tape for home use,
 computer-generated graphics,
 stereo and laser pictures. . .
 television (4½ hours viewing-time per average family per average
 day).

The contemporary artist, facing many opportunities in America,
 must find ways to cut across definitions and precensorship of
 techniques and medias.

The artist must make use of the force of art, with its influence
 on human psychology, to communicate and to announce. He must find
 ways to come out of his isolation from his community. He must
 find ways to unite technology and the human condition. . .
 He must find ways to investigate, to document, to decorate,
 to criticize, to love . . . and so add meaning to the life we are all
 shaping.

My own work leads me into multiprojection and the
 building of the "movie-drome" in which I plan to
 develop a sight and sound research center, a prototype
 theater of the future, exploring motion pictures,
 image transmission and image storage, video graphics,
 electronic sound and music, drama and experimental
 cinema-theater.

I foresee motion pictures as the tool for a new form of
 world communication (via satellite) about to open
 the future of "ethos-cinema."

We are on the verge of a new world—a new sense of art,
 life and technology—when artists shall deal with the
 world as a work of art, and art and life shall again become
 the same process. When man's senses shall expand,
 reach out, and in so doing shall touch all men in the world.

In my view I see that art and life, man and technology, unite
 and seek to renew and re-view. . .

In particular I see that motion pictures will become
 "emotion-pictures", and will generate into a new structure,
 a new context, becoming a nonverbal international picture
 language, in which we can talk to each other. . .

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More important, inter-culturally, art and life
must do something about the future; the world is hanging
by a thread of verbs and nouns.

I see that certain films, made in a certain way and presented
in a certain way, will help us and will be used as a technique
to understand and balance the senses.

The development of a nonverbal international picture
language that makes use of cinema and other image-
transmission systems is of utmost importance in the
consistent crises of world peace.

But to realize the possibilities of this new art form
(cinema is only approximately sixty years old) many more
artists and poets must become aware of this media and
attempt to work with it.

I hope that artists from all over the world will do so
and quickly, so that we can realize and enjoy our differences
in a "Culture-Intercom."

Sights and sounds, the changing illusion of the world in which
we live, and the world that lives
only in the mind, are the basic materials of film creation.
The full flow of color, sound, synthesized form, plastic form, light and
picture poetry have in no way begun to be explored in man's
range of experience.

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mental film-making since 1955 and is currently teaching film production at Co-
lumbia University. This is another of the Vision 65 speeches.