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Bob Pike - Creative Film Society

JORDAN BELSON - transcript of tape (DEC. 14 1959)

DECIDED TO  
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ TAKE UP YOUR SUGGESTION, BOB, AND INSTEAD OF WRIT-  
MAY  
ING YOU ~~XXX~~ TO RAMBLE ON THIS TAPE, WHICH ~~XIXX~~ NOT BE TOO EASY; IT'S  
THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER TRIED IT, BUT I DON'T THINK I'M UP TO SUPPLY-  
~~XXX~~ YOU WITH THE INFORMATION YOU WANT FOR THIS MASTER'S THESIS, THESE  
STATEMENTS YOU'RE GOING TO BE SENDING OUT. ALSO, I'D JUST AS SOON  
PROVIDE YOU WITH A FEW FACTS ~~THAT~~ <sup>AND</sup> YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WISH WITH  
RATHER THAN START MAKING A LEARNED STATEMENTS ABOUT MY BACKGROUND OR  
MY MOTIVES OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT. ANYWAY, BEFORE I GET INTO THAT,  
THERE'S A FEW THINGS I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT REGARDING THESE  
THINGS WE'VE BEEN CORRESPONDING ABOUT: ONE IS: VORTEX ~~IX~~ WILL BE OVER  
NEXT WEEK AND I THOUGHT THAT THE FIRST THING I WOULD DO WOULD BE TO  
TAKE MY FILM X "SEANCE" AND SYNCHRONIZE IT EXACTLY AS ~~IXXIX~~ <sup>I'VE DONE</sup> IN THE PRO-  
GRAM, WHICH SHOULDN'T BE TOO HARD TO DO, BUT YOU SORT OF INTRIGUED ME  
WITH YOUR COMMENTS ABOUT THIS NEW SOUND REPRODUCTION PROCESS THEY'RE  
USING AT COLOR REPRODUCTION, WHICH/REFERED TO AS A ~~XXXXXX~~ "PUSH PULL"  
THING SORT OF THING AND I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA OF WHAT YOU'RE TALK-  
ING ABOUT AND I WOULD REALLY APPRECIATE SOME INFORMATION ABOUT IT BE-  
CAUSE I'D JUST AS SOON HAVE THIS TRACK ~~XXXX~~ AS GOOD AS IT CAN BE DONE.  
AS FAR AS THE FILM ITSELF GOES, THE REASON THAT I AM PUTTING IT TOGETHER  
WITH THE TRACK IS BECAUSE IT IS VERY CONVENIENT TO SHOW WHEN YOU DON'T  
HAVE A VORTEX SYSTEM AROUND; BUT ALSO BECAUSE ~~IX~~ I WANT TO GET IT DIS-  
TRIBUTED, AND AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, YOU'RE THE BEST POSSIBLE DISTRI-  
BUTOR THAT I WOULD EVEN CONSIDER AND SO NATURALLY I ~~XXXXX~~ WILL SEND IT  
TO YOU, NOT ONLY FOR YOU TO HEAR BUT PROBABLY TO CHANNEL THRU COLOR REPRo-  
DUCTION LIKE YOU'VE BEEN DOING. WELL, WE CAN GO INTO THAT AT THE TIME.  
AND REGARDING WHITNEY'S FILM, THE ONE YOU TALKED ABOUT ~~KXXX~~ IN THE  
LETTERX HERE, I BELIEVE IT'S THE SHORT THING THAT HE SENT ME WHICH I'VE  
USED IN THE PROGRAM UNDER THE TITLE "HIGH VOLTAGE", AND I DON'T THINK HE



JORDAN BELSON (2)

CAN USE IT BECAUSE I DO RUN THE FILM AT 16 FRAMES AND THE TIME AND FEEL-  
ING WOULD BE ALL OFF AT 24, I FEAR. BUT WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST  
IS THAT/VERY SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THE SOUND TRACK I'M USING WITH WHITNEY'S  
"YANTRA" AS A PERMANENT SORT OF X THING, OR AT LEAST ~~XXXIX~~ PERMANENT UNTIL  
JIM COMES UP WITH A TRACK OF HIS OWN WHICH PROBABLY WILL BE JUST RIGHT,  
BUT IN THE MEANTIME I DON'T THINK YOU CAN POSSIBLY DO ANY BETTER, AND  
ACTUALLY I'LL SEND YOU THE TAPE. YOU AND WHITNEY CAN VIEW IT TOGETHER  
AND DISCUSS IT, BUT NATURALLY THE TAPE IS MEANT FOR HIM, IT'S MY WAY OF  
LETTING HIM KNOW OF WHAT I'VE DONE WITH THE FILM AND I ALSO THINK THAT -  
WELL, IT'S REMARKABLE SYNCH., EVERYONE THAT'S SEEN IT IS JUST ASTOUNDED  
AT THE CONTINUOUS SYNCH THAT OCCURS; IT'S NOT JUST AND THERE, IT'S EVERY -  
WHERE. WELL ANYWAY, I'LL SEND THAT. UNFORTUNATELY I DON'T HAVE ANY  
SOUND COPYING EQUIPMENT ANYMORE, SO I'LL HAVE TO GET JACOBS TO DO IT,  
AND THAT MIGHT TAKE A DAY OR TWO. ~~XXX~~,

NOW, ABOUT THE INFORMATION YOU WANTED. I HAVE A THING I TYPED OUT FOR  
SOME OTHER REASON <sup>ABOUT</sup> A YEAR AGO WHICH HAS SOME PERTINENT FACTS ON IT, ~~XXX~~  
AND ALL SUCH  
BUT I PERSONALLY FIND THESE DATES/A COMPLETE BORE, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ SUCH A  
NUISANCE, (I HAVE TO CHECK UP ON EVERYTHING) THAT I WISH YOU CAN SOMEHOW  
WITHOUT HAVING TO REFER TO DATES CONTINUOUSLY. BUT THE HIGH POINTS OF  
THE RESUME ARE: I AM 33 YEARS OLD AND I WAS BORN IN CHICAGO ON JUNE 6,  
1926, AND MY EDUCATION THRU THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM CULMINATED IN A  
B.A. DEGREE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IN 1946. BUT PREVIOUS TO  
THIS TIME I HAD SPENT A COUPLE OF YEARS STUDYING PAINTING AT THE CALIF.  
SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS. AND I SETTLED ON PAINTING AS A CALLING RIGHT FROM  
THE VERY START AND ALL ~~OF~~ <sup>MY</sup> ~~XXX~~ TRAINING AND ~~XXX~~ BACKGROUND HAS BEEN



JORDAN BELSON (3)

DIRECTED AND MOTIVATED BY MY INTEREST IN ART. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE  
I SUPPOSE, OF MY BACKGROUND AND MY CAREER  
WHOLE THEME/FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW/~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

IS THE DEVELOPMENT FROM PAINTING INTO FILM AND IT'S BEEN A VERY CLEAR-  
CUT ONE. ~~XXXXXX~~ I PAINTED FOR ABOUT FIVE YEARS BEFORE I MADE MY  
FIRST FILM, BUT X MOST OF THAT PAINTING WAS DEFINITELY OF THE STUDENT  
VARIETY AND X IT'S LAST ASPECT HAD A SORT OF PICASSOESQUE QUALITY,  
BUT I THINK FROM THE TIME THAT I ATTENDED ART IN CINEMA AROUND 1946  
AND SAW NON-OBJECTIVE FILMS, MY WORK FROM THAT TIME ON BEEN CLOSELY  
RELATED TO MY FILMS. WHAT AM I SAYING? WHAT I MEAN TO SAY IS THAT  
MY WORK IN PAINTING WAS THOROUGHLY EFFECTED BY ART IN CINEMA AND FILM  
ART. WELL, THE FILM THAT IMPRESSED ME THE MOST ~~XXX~~ AT THAT TIME WAS  
RICHTER'S "RHYTHMUS 21" AND I ALMOST IMMEDIATELY SET OUT TO MAKE A FILM  
AFTER SEEING THAT AND I MADE A B&W SILENT FILM WHICH I DUBBED (WHAT  
DID I CALL IT?), "TRANSMUTATION", AND IT'S NOT THE LEAST BIT RICHTER-  
LIKE IN APPEARANCE, BUT THAT WAS, I BELIEVE, THE STRONGEST INFLUENCE.  
AND THEN I STARTED TO,-- I CONSIDERED THIS SOMETHING QUITE SEPARATE  
FROM MY PAINTING ACTIVITIES AND WHEN I RESUMED PAINTING AFTER MAKING  
THIS FILM, WHICH REALLY DIDN'T TAKE TOO LONG, IT TOOK ABOUT A YEAR -  
WHAT AM I SAYING? IT TOOK ABOUT TWO MONTHS. AND FRANK STAUFFACHER  
HELPED ME TO MAKE IT. I GOT THE IMPRESSION HE WAS JUST LEARNING TO  
USE THE CAMERA HIMSELF AND UP TO THAT TIME ~~HE~~ HADN'T MADE ANY FILMS THAT  
I KNOW OF. AND HY HIRSH WAS ON THE SCENE HELPING FRANK LEARN SOME OF  
THE RUDIMENTS OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND IT WAS A VERY CRUDE SORT OF FILM. I  
DON'T KNOW WHETHER YOU EVER SAW IT OR NOT. ANYWAY, MY PAINTINGS SOON  
AFTERWARDS WERE SOMEHOW INSPIRED BY THIS FILM I MADE AND I STARTED  
MAKING ~~THESE PAINTINGS~~ ~~THINKX~~ CALLED "CINEMATIC PAINTINGS" AND THEY WERE SOMETIMES JUST



JORDAN BELSON (4)

STILLS FROM MY FILM PAINTED IN OILS AND ELABORATED IN COLOR AND ALL. AND I CONTINUED MAKING "CINEMATIC PAINTINGS" FOR QUITE A NUMBER OF YEARS , INCLUDING THE TIME <sup>DURING WHICH</sup> ~~WHEN~~ I MADE MY SECOND FILM, WHICH WAS ABOUT TWO YEARS LATER, I GUESS, FROM "TRANSMUTATION", AND THAT FILM WAS CALLED "IMPROVISATION #1" AND IT WAS A B&W FILM AGAIN, SILENT, WITH GEOMETRIC FIGURES, SORT OF, <sup>BACK & FORTH</sup> ZOOMING/IN SPACE. THESE FILMS WERE DISTRIBUTED BY CINEMA 16 AT THE TIME AND I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW THEY COULD BE, THEY WERE SO INCREDIBLY CRUDE. STILL, MY PAINTINGS WERE REFLECTING MY FILM WORK BUT I DID MORE PAINTING THAN FILM WORK SO I WAS STILL ESSENTIALLY A PAINTER IN THOSE DAYS. AND I THINK THE NEXT MAJOR INFLUENCE IN MY FILM-MAKING, BUT MORE DIRECTLY ON MY PAINTING WAS FISCHINGER'S "MOTION PAINTING #1", WHICH HE HAD JUST FINISHED AROUND THAT TIME, AND I ~~XXX~~ WASN'T SO IMPRESSED BY THE MOVEMENTS IN THE FILM, BUT I FOUND THE FORM PARTICULARLY ~~XXXX~~ INTERESTING AND I STARTED <sup>DOING</sup> A SERIES OF PAINTING USING THAT STRIATED TYPE OF FORMS THAT HE USED IN THAT FILM. INCIDENTALLY, HE MADE THAT FILM, AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, WITH A SERIES OF PAINTINGS, NOT JUST ONE PAINTING FOREVER BEING COVERED UP, BUT HE WOULD DEFINITELY STOP AT A CERTAIN POINT AND THEN PLACE A BLANK PIECE OF LUCITE OVER THE PAINTING AS IT HAD BUILT UP TO THAT POINT AND THEN PROCEED ON THIS NEW PIECE OF LUCITE SO THAT HE COULD COVER OVER <sup>ACTUALLY</sup> THE OTHER ONE WITHOUT/DESTROYING IT FOREVER. AND HE HAD A RATHER BEAUTIFUL EXHIBIT OF THESE THINGS ACCOMPANYING ONE OF THE ART IN CINEMA SHOWINGS. IT HAD A VERY BIG INFLUENCE ON ME, BUT I DON'T THINK IT EVER REALLY INFLUENCED MY FILMS VERY MUCH. INCIDENTALLY, THEY'RE USING A PIECE OF THAT FILM *RIGHT* NOW, I NOTICE, OR THEY HAVE BEEN USING IT UNTIL VERY RECENTLY AS THE CLOSING TITLES FOR THE STEVE ALLEN SHOW. SAD COMMENT ON THE STATE OF *Things*.



JORDAN BELSON (5)

AND  
~~XXXX~~ / ~~XX~~ WHITNEY ALSO HAD AN EFFECT ON MY FILMMAKING AND MY PAINTING,  
BUT I WASN'T TOO AWARE OF IT AT THE TIME. I THINK JUM HAS A COUPLE OF  
VERY  
PAINTINGS THAT WERE/DEFINITELY INSPIRED BY MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE  
"STRANGE WHITNEY BROTHERS". ANYWAY, (I'M GETTING SORT OF INVOLVED IN  
THIS), WHAT I STARTED TO SAY WAS AS A PAINTER I HAD A BRIEF AND UNNOTE-  
WORTHY CAREER, BUT I DID HAVE A FEW HIGH POINTS, SUCH AS: MY BEING IN  
THE PASADENA NATIONAL OF 1945 WHICH WAS A KIND OF AN HONOR INASMUCH AS  
IN  
THE PASADENA NATIONAL IS AN EXHIBIT WHERE/EACH STATE THE LEADING ART  
EXPERT IN THE STATE RECOMMENDS TWO CANDIDATES TO APPEAR IN THE SHOW,  
YOUNG MATURE  
ONE A ~~XX~~ PAINTER AND ONE A MORE/PAINTER, AND I FILLED IN ON THE YOUNG  
PAINTER BIT THERE. AND THEN I WON SOME RECOGNITION AROUND SAN FRANC-  
ISCO IN THE ANNUALS THEY HAVE HERE AND FINALLY I MADE IT AS A BIG-TIME,  
ANYWAY. SORT OF  
YOU MIGHT SAY, IN THIS MUSEUM BIT/ I BECAME /INCORPORATED INTO THE  
MUSEUM OF NON-OBJECTIVE PAINTING IN NEW YORK WHICH AT THAT TIME WAS  
RUN BY A HYSTERICAL CHARACTER BY THE NAME OF HILIA RODAY. AND SHE WAS  
A FANATIC ON THE SUBJECT OF NON-OBJECTIVE PAINTING IN THE KANDINSKY AND  
BAUER TRADITION. AND I WAS RELATED TO THEM FOR ABOUT 3 YEARS DURING  
EVERY MONTH  
WHICH TIME THEY SENT ME A SMALL AMOUNT OF MONEY ~~XXXXXXX~~ TO  
SORT OF KEEP ME ON THE PAYROLL, I GUESS. AND THEY WOULD ALSO EXHIBIT  
MY WORK. AND IT WAS THRU THAT THAT I EXHIBITED IN PARIS AT A SORT OF  
INTERNATIONAL SHOW. THAT'S ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT AS FAR AS PAINTING GOES.

THE  
WHAT HAPPENED (AS I KEEP HARPING ON) IS THAT/PAINTINGS AND THE FILMS  
BECAME  
SOON ~~XXXX~~ INSEPARABLE INSTEAD OF BEING DIVIDED, AND WHEN THAT HAPPENED  
(I THINK) MANDALA,  
THOROUGHLY, THAT'S WHEN I PRODUCED MAMBO, /CARAVAN, AND ~~XXXX~~, WHICH  
WERE ALL DONE ONE RIGHT AFTER THE OTHER OVER A YEAR'S PERIOD. THE  
SCROLL TECHNIQUE IS JUST SORT OR A NON-STOP PAINTING THING FOR ME.



JORDAN BELSON (6)

(AS IT DID)

I THINK WHEN THAT IDEA PALLED/AFTER A WHILE, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ BECAUSE IT'S A TREMENDOUS EFFORT TO WORK IN THAT WAY, I STOPPED MAKING FILMS AND PAINTINGS, AND ONLY LAST YEAR HAVE I REALLY GOTTEN BACK TO IT. I THINK THE REASON I COULD GET BACK TO IT IS BECAUSE I WAS ABLE TO DIS-ENTANGLE THE PAINTINGS FROM THE FILMS AGAIN.

WHILE

SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE ~~WHEN~~ I WAS MAKING THOSE THREE FILMS I MANAGED TO SQUEEZE IN BOP SCOTH, WHICH FOR SOME REASON HAS SOME FATAL CHARM FOR EDUCATORS AND THE LIKE. I THINK THE REASON I DID THAT ONE WAS BE-  
IN  
CAUSE ~~XX~~ THE SCROLL TECHNIQUE I ALMOST INVARIABLY USED THE STRAIGHT THREE EXPOSURES PER FRAME PER DRAWING TECHNIQUE AND DISCOVERED THAT YOU COULD GET A PRETTY CONVINCING MOVEMENT EVEN IF THE FORMS WEREN'T REALLY TOO CLOSELY RELATED AS THEY ARE IN TRADITIONAL ANIMATION.

I APPLIED THIS SAME PRINCIPLE TO TEXTURES AND OBJECTS IN BOP SCOTH, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ WHICH ALSO, BY THE WAY, ~~WAS~~ UNDERLIES THE REASON WHY I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING THOSE TWO FILMS OF PAT'S. SHE HAD THESE COMPLETELY UNRELATED PAINTINGS AND ~~WAS~~ WAS ABLE TO SOMEHOW PHOTOGRAPH THEM IN SUCH A WAY AS TO MAKE THEM MOVE FAIRLY CONVINCINGLY. THAT'S TRUE OF BOTH "THINGS TO COME" AND "CBMARU", WHICH ARE THE ONLY TWO FILMS I PHOTOGRAPHED FOR HER.

WELL, VORTEX, (YOU MIGHT MENTION THAT IN THIS THING THAT YOU'RE WRITING) I THINK THAT'S ~~XXX XXXX~~ PROBABLY THE MOST SIGNIFICANT RECENT EVENT, NOT ONLY IN MY CAREER, BUT SOMEHOW I FEEL ITS' GOING TO EFFECT ALL NON-OBJECTIVE FILMMAKERS AND I THINK WHAT WE'RE DOING RIGHT NOW ~~IS~~ <sup>STARRED (?)</sup> IS STARTED IN THAT DIRECTION, ALTHOUGH I THINK THE PLANETARIUM SHOWS



JORDAN BELSON (7)

WERE EVEN FURTHER ALONG, ACTUALLY, AND BOTH JACOBS AND I INTEND TO PURSUE THIS THING AS FAR AS POSSIBLE. RIGHT NOW WE'RE THINKING ~~OF~~ ABOUT GETTING ~~XXXXXXXX~~ THEATER OF OUR OWN AND I HOPE THAT WE CAN TALK BUCKMINSTER <sup>US</sup> FULLER INTO DESIGNING IT FOR ~~XXX~~ AND ON THE STRENGTH OF THAT MANAGER TO RAISE THE FUNDS TO PUT IT UP HERE IN TOWN IN SOME COOL SPOT.

WELL, I GUESS THAT'S ABOUT ALL. WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD MENTION SOME OF THE FILM FESTIVALS THAT I'VE BEEN REPRESENTED IN: THE EDINBURGH FILM FESTIVAL 1952 - MAMBO; BOP SCOTCH WAS IN THE EDINBURGH FILM FESTIVAL OF 1954, AND MAMBO, CARAVAN, AND MANDALA WERE GROUPED TOGETHER AS A TRILOGY AND SHOWN ~~XXXXXXXX~~ AT THE VENICE FILM FESTIVAL IN 1955. OTHER THAN THAT, I HAVE NO HONORS FOR MY FILMS.

IT MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT I TRIED AT VARIOUS TIMES TO CREATE FILMS IN MY OWN STYLE FOR COMMERCIAL REASONS AND SUCCEEDED ~~XXX~~ ONLY ONCE IN GETTING IT BEFORE THE PUBLIC ~~AT~~ ~~XX~~ AND THAT WAS A FILM ~~OF~~ A <sup>PROMOTIONAL</sup> NON-OBJECTIVE FILM FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE. I GUESS <sup>REALLY</sup> THAT WAS ABOUT SIX OR SEVEN YEARS AGO ~~XXXXXX~~, ~~I~~ I/CAN'T REMEMBER. AND THEN THE ILL-FATED LOGOS FILMS ATTEMPT WHICH WE DID SNAG A COMMISSION AND THE FILM WAS <sup>USED</sup> ~~SHOWN~~ ON TELEVISION, BUT JANE WAS THE ACTUAL DESIGNED ~~OF~~ THAT FILM AND THAT WAS ALL THAT WE EVER ~~XX~~ DID PRODUCE. I SUPPOSE IN TERMS OF MY OWN CAREER IT'S ONLY IMMEDIATE RESULT WAS ~~XX~~ IT WAS MY FIRST EFFORT AT WORKING WITH HENRY JACOBS AND IT SEEMS TO HAVE CONTINUED FOR QUITE A LONG TIME, UP TO THE PRESENT MOMENT, AS A MATTER OF FACT.



JORDAN BELSON (8)

WHAT

I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING MORE THAN/I'VE SAID -- START LAPSING INTO SOME SORT OF A PSYCHO-ANALYSIS OR STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS, THAT I PREFER NOT GOING INTO - I'M SURE YOU DO TOO. SO WHY DON'T I SIGN OFF AND LET ME KNOW IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE I CAN ADD TO THIS. IT MAY NOT BE THE KIND OF THING YOU WANT AT ALL. AS FAR AS THIS MR. E. HUGH DE JONGE GOES, HE SENT ME A KIND OF A WEIRD LETTER, TOLD ME QUITE A BIT BUT HE NEGLECTED TO GIVE ME ANY INDICATION AT ALL WHAT KIND OF A SHOW HE WAS HOPING TO PUT ON AND BEFORE I COMMIT MYSELF IN ANY WAY AT ALL I'D LIKE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT IT, BUT THANK FOR THE TIP ABOUT THE BUDGET. ACTUALLY, THERE ARE ~~XXX XXXXXXXXRIKXXX~~ TWO FILMS ON THE PROGRAM THAT DO HAVE TWO CHANNEL TRACKS, AND ONE OF THEM IS YANTRA AND I COULDN'T VERY WELL NEGOTIATE WITH HIM REGARDING THAT FILM WHILE YOU'RE THE DISTRIBUTOR OF IT AND JIM IS ONLY TOO AVAILABLE HIMSELF, SO IF I DO WRITE TO HIM I'LL MENTION ALL OF THESE FACTS AND HE CAN TAKE IT UP WITH YOU AND JIM IF HE WANTS TO. THEN I'LL TRY TO GET THAT TRACK OFF TO YOU PRETTY SOON SO YOU'LL KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT SHOULD ~~XX~~ YOU DECIDE TO PUT THAT TRACK ON IT FOR YOUR PRESENTATION REEL.

OKAY, BOB, I'M GOING TO SIGN OFF AND LET ME HEAR IF YOU ESPECIALLY WANT ANSWERS TO SOME OF THOSE QUESTIONS I ASKED THE BEGINNING OF THIS TAPE.

OH YES, ONE MORE THING - VERY IMPORTANT - IS ~~XXXX~~ PLEASE LET ME KNOW IMMEDIATELY WHAT I OWE YOU FOR THE LAB WORK ON THIS LAST BATCH OF FILM I SENT DOWN TO YOU BECAUSE THERE'S NOT GOING TO BE TOO MUCH PROFITS FROM THIS VORTEX PRESENTS SHOW AND I'D LIKE TO PAY YOU IMMEDIATELY,

AND I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THE BILL IS. OKAY? ALL RIGHT. - LATER.



JPRDAN BELSON (9)

'I THOUGHT OF A COUPLE OF MORE THINGS THAT I WANTED TO SAY: ONE IS REGARDING YOUR REQUEST ABOUT BORROWING ONE OF MY COPIES OF RAGA FOR YOU TO SEND TO REVEREND EMERY STEGMAN OF DON BOSCO COLIEGE. ACTUALLY, I ONLY HAVE TWO PRINTS OF THE FILM YOU KNOW, AND ONE ~~XXXXX~~ HAS BEEN COMPLETELY CUT UP AND PUT TOGETHER IN A DIFFERENT SORT OF WAY AND I RUN IT SILENT ON THE VORTEX PRESENTS PROGRAM WITH A NEW TRACK ON IT, SO I DON'T THINK YOU'D EVEN WANT THAT EVEN IF I COULD GET IT BACK TOGETHER AGAIN, WHICH I DON'T THINK I CAN. AND THE OTHER FILM I NATURALLY WANT TO KEEP MYSELF FOR LOCAL SHOWINGS OR WHATEVER. SO I'M AFRAID THAT YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO WORK IT OUT SOME OTHER WAY.

AND THE ONLY OTHER THING I WANT TO SAY IS: SEND THIS TAPE BACK, RECORD YOUR NEXT COMMUNICATION ON IT IF YOU LIKE. ALL RIGHT, DEFINITELY THE END.- LATER.



FLITE WAS MADE ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF LAST YEAR, JUNE, 1958, AND RAGA WAS MADE ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THIS YEAR, JUNE 1959. AS FAR AS THE MOTIVATION GOES, I SUPPOSE THEY REPRESENT MY FIRST EFFORTS TO ~~BE~~ CREATE FILMS THRU OTHER MEANS THAN ANIMATION. THAT'S ONE REASON WHY I WAS SO FASCINATED BY THE SOURCE MATERIAL OF FLITE BECAUSE SIMPLY A MATTER OF PHOTOGRAPHING THE BUBBLES AND EDITING THEM WITH A NON OBJECTIVE NARRATIVE THOUGHT IN MIND AND ALSO WITH THE MUSIC, THAT'S PART OF IT. IT WASN'T, AS YOU KNOW, TOO SUCCESSFUL, MAINLY BECAUSE IT WAS TOO LONG AND IT'S ALSO A LITTLE BIT TOO QUIET FOR WHAT MOST PEOPLE COME TO EXPECT IN NON OBJECTIVE FILMS.

AS FAR AS RAGA GOES, THAT'S ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF MY INTEREST IN PRODUCING IMAGES BY MEANS OTHER THAN ANIMATING THEM, IN THIS CASE A KALIDOSCOPIC MECHANISM. IT STILL TOOK A LONG TIME TO MAKE THE FILM AND REQUIRED JUST AS MUCH CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ACTIVITY BUT IT DIDN'T HAVE THAT DISTRACTIVE ELEMENT THAT ANIMATION HAS WHERE YOU ~~KAYE~~ YOU'RE ALMOST DEFEATED AT THE OUTSET BY THE AMOUNT OF WORK THAT HAS TO GO INTO AN ANIMATED FILM. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~.

I USED FOOTAGE FROM RAGA IN THE VORTEX PRESENTS PROGRAM. ON THAT SHOW IT WAS CALLED MUSKAKU, BECAUSE THAT WAS THE NAME OF THE MUSIC THAT WE SYNCHED IT WITH AND IT'S ACTUALLY A MUCH MORE CONCISE AND EFFECTIVE FILM THAN RAGA IN A WAY. IT'S SHORTER & ~~XX~~ THE EMPHASIS IS MORE ON THE KIND OF MATERIAL THAT IS SIMPLY INTRODUCTORY IN RAGA. THE INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL IS THE REAL SUBJECT OF THIS MUSKAKU, SO IT HAS A DIFFERENT QUALITY COMPLETELY, ~~XXXXXX~~ IT HAS A TREMENDOUS RESTRAINING AND DIGNITY ABOUT IT, IT'S MORE OF OF A ~~X~~ CEREMONIAL EFFECT ABOUT IT, AS OPPOSED TO RAGA WHICH IS MORE SENSUAL, RHYTHMIC. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

LIVELY ARTS FESTIVAL SHOWED FLITE & RAGA IN 1959, FLITE AT THE FIRST ONE & RAGA AT THE SECOND.

MANDALA HAS A VERY SPECIFIC REASON FOR HAVING THE FORM & TITLE THAT IT DID. I SUPPOSE IT'S A PRECURSOR AS WHITNEY'S YANTA. IT'S A DESIRE TO CREATE IN CINEMATIC ~~XXXXX~~ A MANDALA, AN OBJECT FOR MEDITATION, ONLY INSTEAD OF THE ~~K~~ FORM

MEDITATION BRINGING ON THE MOVEMENTS, THE ARTIST, IN THIS CASE MYSELF, PRESENTS IT IN ~~XMOTION~~.

THE OTHER FILMS DON'T HAVE AS DEFINITE A MOTIVATION. MAMBO STARTED OUT AS A FREE FORM FILM, A FILM THAT TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT THAT IF YOU WORK DIRECTLY ON FILM OR ON A SCROLL THAT REPRESENTS THE FILM YOU CAN SPREAD YOUR DESIGNS OVER A GREAT LENGTH OF THE FILM & IN THAT WAY PRODUCE A NEW KIND OF MOVEMENT THAT WOULD BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLY DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN IN CONVENTIONAL ANIMATION ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ METHODS & IT JUST KIND OF GREW FROM THAT POINT INTO CARVAN WHICH IS THE BETTER EXPRESSION OF THAT IDEA OF THE TWO FILMS. OF COURSE MANDALA HAS NONE OF THAT WHATSOEVER, MANDALA IS A FRAME BY FRAME KIND OF FILM, BUT WORKING ON THE SCROLLS I WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE COMPOSITION OF EACH SCROLL SO THAT EVEN THOUGH THERE AREN'T ANY FREE FORM MOVEMENTS EXTENDING OVER LONG STRIPS OF FILM THE COMPOSITION OF THE VARIOUS SCROLL UNITS WERE CONCEIVED ON TERMS OF A LENGTH OF FILM RATHER THAN A FRAME OF FILM. I WAS VERY INTERESTED IN ALL THESE THREE FILMS TO CREATE FILM THAT WAS PERFECTLY COMPREHENSIBLE AND UNAMBIGUOUS IN EVERY WAY AS A FILM AND YET MAKE PERFECT SENSE AS A PAINTING AND I THINK THAT I WAS SUCCESSFUL AT LEAST A HUNDRED TIMES BECAUSE I HAVE A HUNDRED SCROLLS THAT I CAN STAND BEHIND ~~XX~~, SUPPORTING THEM AS MY OWN WORK APPROVING OF.



I CONSIDER MAMBO BEING "DISCOVERY", CARAVAN BEING "ANALYSIS", AND MANDALA WAS "SYNTHESIS". ~~XXXXXX~~ IT PUTS ME IN MIND OF DISCUSSING MY MOTIVATIONS AS A FILMMAKER IN MORE GENRAL TERMS, ~~IT~~ WOULDN'T LIKE TO LIMIT IT TO ANY GIVEN FILM BUT THE MORE I CONTINUE TO WORK IN FILMS THE CLEARER THE IDEA BECOMES AND I THINK IF NOT THE TOTAL MOTIVE BEHIND MY RATIONALE BEHIND MY WORK AT LEAST AN IMPORTANT PART OF IT IS A BELIEF THAT MOVEMENT IS INHERENT IN GRAPHICS EVEN IN STILL GRAPHICS ( WELL, THAT'S SORT OF THE THE MANDALA IDEA), BUT ~~MAXX~~ MANY OF THE MEANS BY WHICH I HAVE OBTAINED MOTION ON FILM ESPECIALLY WITH THIS NEW WORK OF MINE, IT'S A MATTER OF EXTRACTING MOTION FROM DESIGNS THAT WERE NOT INTENDED FOR THAT PURPOSE BUT JUST ~~XX~~ NORMALLY CONTAINED MOTION IF ONE KNEW HOW TO RELEASE IT -

IT ALMOST SOUNDS LIKE ATOMIC PHYSISS - IT IS SOMETHING LIKE THAT IN A SENSE. INTERFERENCE PATTERNS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF A MEANS BY WHICH THE LATENT INHERENT MOTION IN A FORM OR IN A COMPOSITION CAN BE SUDDENLY ANIMATED BY THE SIMPLE DEVICE OF PASSING A SIMILAR PATTERN OVER IT. I SUPPOSE ROTATION~~XXXXXX~~ OF DUCHAMP'S SORT IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF HOW MOTION CAN ~~X~~ BE DERIVED FROM MATERIAL. THERE ARE WAYS OF INTRODUCING BY WAYS OF IRISING AND THAT SORT OF THING PERFECTLY STATIS FORMS THAT MAKE THEM APPEAR TO SUDDENLY GROW THERE AS SORT OF A MOTION. ALSO IN MUCH ~~HERE~~ CRUDER WAY MY SCROLLS WERE PAINTINGS THAT POSSESSED THE POWER OF MOVEMENT IF PHOTOGRAPHED PROPERLY, DRAGGED OUT OF IT, SO TO SPEAK. MORE AND MORE IIM DISCOVERING WAYS OF ENLIVENING THE STATIC. IT LEADS MY TO THINK THAT MOTION IS AN INHERENT PART OF GRAPHICS, WHETHER THE ARTIST WERE AWARE OF IT OR NOT. IT'S ALMOST AS IF IT WERE AN ELEMENT CONCEALED INVISIBLY WITHIN A FORM, AND PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I'M DOING IN FILMS IS FINDING WAYS OF BRINGING IT OUT, WHICH MAY BE ONE REASON WHY I DON'T WANT TO ANIMATE ANYMORE, BECAUSE ANIMATION IS IMPOSING OF MOTION. WHAT I'M DOING IS DRAWING OUT OF IT. BOP SCOTCH ALSO FALLS INTO THIS CONCEPT, BECAUSE IT IS A VERY ~~X~~ OBVIOUS EXAMPLE OF TRYING TO ANIMATE THE INANIMATE.

I WAS SPONSORED FOR ABOUT TWO YEARS BY THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM FOUNDATION. THE CURATOR OF THE MUSEUM AT THAT TIME WHO WAS INTERESTED IN ME AS A PAINTER WAS DISMAYED AT MY FILM EFFORTS IN THOSE DAYS. SHE SAW IMPROVISATION #1 AND FELT THAT IT HAD NO IMPROVEMENT OVER EGGLENG'S OLD FILMS OVER THIRTY YEARS AGO. SHE WAS THE ONE WHO BROUGHT FISCHINGER TO THIS COUNTRY, AND ENCOURAGED HIM TO MAKE AN AMERICAN MARCH TO SHOW HIS FEELING FOR THIS COUNTRY TO PROVE THAT HE WASN'T A NAZI.

VORTEX IS A NATURAL TIE\*IN WITH INTELLECTUAL, ESTHETIC, PHILOSOPHECAL DEVELOPMENTS OF OUR TIMES WHICH CALLS FOR AN NEW AWARENESS BY THE ARTIST OR THE ESTHETICITIAN OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF SCIENCE WHERE THE SCIENTIST IS UNVEILING VISUAL IMAGERY SO PROVACATIVE IN ITSELF APART FROM ITS IMMEDIATE SCIENTIFIC MERITS THAT ....PHILOSOPHY IS DEVELOPING AS TYPLIFIED BY GEORGIE KEPESH IN HIS BOOK " A NEW LANDSCAPE" AND HIS EARLIER BOOK "VISION IN MOTION", PEOPLE LIKE MOHALY-NAGY, SEEMS TO BE GAINING MOMENTUM AND BECOMING MORE FACTUALIZED. VORTEX SEEMS TO BE COMING IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THIS WITH ITS EFFECTS, BOTH SONIC & VISUAL, AND EVEN THE EFFECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT, SUCH AS THE DARKNESS, WHICH IS SIMILAR TO ISOLATION, AND THE FLICKER, WHICH IS SIMILAR TO THE EXPERIMENTS BEING DONE BY PERCEPTIONISTS AND SENFILOGRAPHERS, AND VARIOUS SHOCK VALUES, HYPNOTIC VALUES THAT WORK. ALL OF THESE THINGS THINGS WHICH ARE RECONGNIZED AS MORE OF PART OF SCIENCE BUT ALSO PART OF ART, SEEM TO PLAY A PART IN VORTEX.

I MAJORED IN FINE ARTS WHEN I GOT MY B.A. AT UNIV. OF CALIF.



THE ONE THING THAT I SAW OF THE WHITNEY BROTHERS THAT PARTICULARLY IRKED ME WAS A CHART, AN ALPHABET OF FORMS. ALL THE SHAPES ON THIS PAGE OF SHAPES WERE DONE FROM FOUR OR FIVE BASIC MOVEMENTS BUT BY DIFFERENT COMBINATIONS THEY WERE ABLE TO CREATE ~~XX~~ DIFFERENT FORMS. AS A YOUNG PAINTER WHO HAD GOTTEN TO THINK IN TERMS OF WILD ~~SELF~~ EXPRESSION IN THE PACASSO TRADITION THERE WAS SOMETHING PROVOCATIVE AND IRKSOME IN THIS SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO ART. IT WAS VERY SHORTLY AFTER THAT I ~~STARTED~~ PAINTING WITH FORMS THAT WERE ~~SIMILAR~~ TO THEIR FORMS, TO THE FORMS USED IN THEIR FILM EXERCISES.

AND ~~THEY~~ I SHOT IMPROVISATION #1 ON THEIR EQUIPMENT, WHICH MADE IT MUCH BETTER TECHNICALLY THAN MY FIRST FILM. ~~THEYXHEKREXMEXSNOOTHXGTXMYDRAWINGSX~~

IN THE SCROOL TECHNIQUE FILMS THE TRACK WAS CHOSEN AFTER THE FILM WAS MADE, OR AT LEAST AT A POINT IN THE MAKING OF THE VISUALS WHERE IT WAS PRETTY WELL UNDERWAY.- I DON'T WANT TO INDICATE BY THAT THAT I JUST SIMPLY GRABBED AN PICE OF MUSIC THAT WAS AROUND. ALL OF THE MUSIC THAT I CHOSE HAD, PROBABLY, AS GREAT SIGNICANCE AS THE FORMS THEMSELVES, ALTHOUGH THEY WERE NOT PERFECTLY SYNCHRONIZED, THERE WAS AN AFFINITY THERE THAT WAS BORN OF MY INTERESTS. IN THE CASE OF MAMBO, FOR INSTANCE I WAS INTERESTED IN EXPRESSIONISTIC, UNINHIBITED, RHYTHMIC MUSIC SUCH AS THAT. AND THE FILM LOOKED LIKE THAT TOO. IN CARAVAN BOP WAS RELATIVELY NEW THEN AND WAS DEFINITELY THE MOST SOPHISTICATED MUSIC ON THE SCNE AND I LIKED IT VERY MUCH. THE COMPOSITION THAT I USED, OF COURSE, IS NOT PURE BOP BUT IT IS BORN OF THAT ERA, SO YOU SEE THERE ~~WERE~~ WAS A SIMILARITY OF INTERESTS. BUT I ACTUALLY DID SYNCHRONIZE THE TRACKS. BUT I DO BELIEVE IN ACCIDENTALSYNCHRONIZATION AS A THEORY, AS AN IDEA, AND I USE IT ALL THE TIME. A GREAT DEAL OF VORTEX IS BASED ON IT.

I THINK I INVENTED THE SCROLL TECHNIQUE THAT I USED, ALTHOUGH SCROLL FILMS HAD BEEN MADE, BUT NOT THE SAME KIND OF SCROLLS. FOR INSTANCE THE VIKING EGGLING SCROLLS THAT I SEE ~~ARE~~ MADE NO SENSE TO ME AS SCROLLS

REPRODUCED

OR AS FILMS EVEN. MINE AT LEAST VERY CLEARLY REFLECT THEIR PURPOSE.

I ORIGINALLY WANTED TO MAKE A FILM PAINTING DIRECTLY ON FILM BUT I WASN'T PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE AN EFFORT THAT INVOLVED WORKING ON SUCH AN UNSUITABLE SURFACE AS A LONG STRIP OF 35mm. FILM, SO THE SCROLLS CAME AS A LOGICAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM, REALLY REPRESENTING FILM GREATLY MAGNIFIED AND OF A MATERIAL~~S~~ THAT WAS MORE CONDUCTIVE FOR ACCOMPLISHING WHAT I WANTED TO DO. IT GAVE ME A GREATER RANGE OF TONALITIES TO WORK WITH AND A GREATER RANGE OF MATERIALS TO WORK WITH IN TERMS OF PIGMENTS, AND IT ALSO GAVE ME MORE ROOM TO CONTROL WHAT WAS HAPPENING. IT ACTUALLY WAS CONCEIVED OF AS ENLARGED FILM. THE IDEA OF LIGHTING IT FROM BEHIND - YOU SEE THESE SCROLLS ~~WERE~~ WHEN ACTUALLY PUT ON FILM THE ILLUMINATION WAS BEHIND, THE SCROLLS ARE TRANSLUCENT. I CAN'T RECALL WHETHER THAT WAS A CHANCE DISCOVERY OR A RESULT OF MY THINKING OF IT AS FILM, BUT NEVERTHELESS I KNEW ALMOST RIGHT FROM THE START THAT IT WOULD HAVE TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED IN THAT WAY AND IT DOES IMPART A SPECIAL GLOW TO THOSE FILMS THAT ARE CHARACTERISTIC OF THOSE FILMS AND I DON'T BELIEVE EVER BEEN IN ANY OTHER FILMS THAT I'VE SEEN BY OTHER ARTISTS. ANOTHER THING THAT I USED TOWARD THE END OF THAT SCROLL TECHNIQUE WAS AN ACETATE SCREEN THAT I WAS ABLE TO ~~USE~~ INCORPORATE INTO THE FILM WHILE PHOTOGRAPHING IT, GIVING IT MORE TEXTURE THAN THE DRAWINGS ORIGINALLY HAD, BUT A TEXTURE THAT WAS SO SIMILAR TO THE DRAWINGS THEMSELVES THAT IT BLENDED PERFECTLY AND GAVE IT A KIND OF SHIMMERING DIAMOND FLICKERING QUALITY.



IT IMPARTED A KIND OF MAGIC TO THE FILMS. INCIDENTALLY, I BELIEVE THAT THAT'S A TECHNIQUE THAT SHOULD BE CARRIED ~~IN~~ FURTHER, THOUGH I STILL HAVEN'T DONE VERY MUCH MORE WITH IT.

I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CINEMATIC IDEA IN EACH FILM I MAKE, BUT IT DOESN'T ALWAYS WORK OUT THAT WAY, THERE'S ALWAYS A CARRY-OVER, THOUGH NOW THAT I'VE MADE FILMS FOR AS LONG AS I HAVE I'M BEGINNING TO HAVE A GREATER GRASP OF THE COMPOSITION, THE THOUGHT, THE DESIGN, CONCEPT OF EACH FILM AS A WHOLE AND AS THAT BECOMES MORE HIGHLY DEVELOPED IN MY PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES OR IN MY CREATIVE SELF-AWARENESS, I THINK EACH FILM WILL PROBABLY WILL COME CLOSER TO THIS IDEA OF EACH IN ITSELF A SEPARATE STATEMENT OF SOME SPECIFIC CINEMATIC OR VISUAL IDEA, BUT BY AND LARGE THEY TEND TO FOLLOW EACH OTHER, ONE BEING PRETTY MUCH LIKE THE OTHER UNTIL THEY CHANGE INTO SOMETHING NEW.