

FILMOGRAPHY

Ending and Altered

DV, color, sound, 9:30, 2007

“But the fact is that each increase of stimulation is taken up into the preceding stimulations, and that the whole produces on us the effect of a musical phrase which is constantly on the point of ending and constantly altered in its totality by the addition of some new note.”

--Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (1896)

Fifteen singers are arranged in an 18th century room. A small pipe organ stands behind them. After a short warmup, the choir takes a collective breath and sings the first note of a Bach chorale. But it doesn't continue. Instead, the music changes to a wall of dissonant tones. Each singer has been asked to hold the individual note until he or she runs completely out of air. Only then can the next note be started. The singers are getting tired. They seem to fall into a kind of trance, listening and singing intently as their air runs out again and again. At the very end, the two last singers complete the music, breathlessly. After a stunned silence, laughter, coughing, surprise.

Ending and Altered draws inspiration from several sources, John Cage's *ASLSP (As Slow As Possible (1985/1987))*, writings of the French philosopher Henri Bergson, and Sol Lewitt's *Sentences on Conceptual Art*, specifically Sentence #29: “The process is mechanical and should not be tampered with. It should run its course.”

Cage's famous piece is currently being performed in Halberstadt, Germany, as *ASLSP/Organ²*, by a programmed organ that intends to perform the work over a 639-year period. The mechanical expectations of the machine in the Cage performance is in direct contrast to the limits of a singer's physical body in this work. The complex relationships between individual and collective (the choir), mechanical and organic, experiential and measured, and conceptual/chance methods of creative production are also part of this work.

Box Office

16mm, b/w, silent, 2:25, 2007

This short, hand-drawn animated film begins with a quote by current U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker. In July, 2007, the New York Times quoted Crocker as comparing the current war in Iraq to a three or five-reel movie, depending on where one is living. In contrast to this quote, a list of the top-ten grossing films at the U.S. box office from the same day presents itself onscreen, along with other animated panels of related drawings.

Interval

16mm, b/w & color, silent, 12:00, 2007

Every 15 minutes from sunset to sunrise (10:09pm-3:29am) on the shortest night of the year in Stockholm, Sweden (midsummer night), I shot 30 seconds of black and white film. Flickers and jumps between the slow descent from gray to black and back to gray present the photographic failures of the mechanical device used to capture the images. After sunrise, I filmed the first ½ hour of the day in lush color celluloid at a rate of 30 seconds filmed every five minutes.

Transcript

16mm, color, sound, 11:25, 2006

The text comes from an October 1953 transcript of a dinner party that took place four months after the Rosenbergs' execution. On October 30, informant NY-964-S eavesdropped on two couples having a dinner party at an apartment in the West Village, New York. Both of these couples had been friends of the Rosenbergs, and were being called to testify in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee about their roles in the “Commie spy ring.” NY-964-S cannot hear many details of the conversation and fills in words he cannot understand. Most of the text is inaudible, but one gathers that the guests at the dinner party know they are being spied on. The fragmented text reveals clues to the culture in which it was captured, and by extension, to current conditions. I hired actors to re-create this fragmentary script to compose a soundtrack to accompany desolate, minimal images of a mysterious corridor in a New York apartment building.

Inaudible

16mm film, b/w, silent, stop-motion animation, 4:00, 2006

Inaudible is an animated film that makes visible all the words that the FBI could not hear or imagined were being spoken in the film *Transcript*. Most of the discussion, inaudible, is dutifully transcribed, as the word “inaudible” comes up again and again on screen.

Notes

16mm, b/w, silent, 3:00, 2006

Harry Gold, codename "GOOSE," was convicted in 1951 for passing secrets of the atom bomb from physicist and spy Klaus Fuchs to Soviet agents. The animations in this film are copies of Gold's absentminded drawings, scribbled over drafts of his resume and cover letter to the Atlantic Refining Company, Personnel Department, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1948. This film is an abstract stop-motion animation.

Copies

16mm, b/w, silent, 3:00, 2006

Copies utilizes a special kind of paper, sold through police and spy websites, that dissolves instantly on contact with water, to present a parallel vision of the scribbles in the film Notes. A hand copies the absentminded drawings by Harry Gold as quickly as possible, and immediately plunges them into a bowl of water, dissolving the evidence as quickly as it appeared. This is a live-action film.

Associated

16mm, b/w, sound, 12:25, 2006

Filed at my neighborhood corner store, a former Associated supermarket, from opening to closing on July 4, 2004 (Independence Day, U.S.). One roll of 16mm film shot every two hours or so reveals little except the unchanging patterns of the 14-hour workday. Interview with owner Charles Leem reflects on the history of his store and his favorite musicians

Amend

16mm, b/w, silent, 5:00, 2005

16mm stop motion animation, combining the Oxford English Dictionary definition of the verb "amend" with the index pages of a 1927 book titled "The Invert," and lists of sodomy laws recently stricken from the books of numerous U.S. states. Film created for the exhibition *Log Cabin*, at Artists Space, January-February, 2005

Possible Models

16mm, b/w, silent, 10:45, 2004

"The 16 mm stop motion animation, Possible Models (2004), looks at capitalism's attempt to purchase paradise through three "case studies": the Mall of America's failure to live up to its potential as a utopian complex; the Mall of Dubai as the new global super-mall; and the "freedom ship", a floating self sustained mall-based community/commune that encircles continents." --Jeffrey Uslip, *The Project*, New York, NY, July, 2004

Sight Reading

3 channel video installation, 7:00, 2004

A three channel video projection depicting three professional pianists attempting to perform a piece of music that they have never seen before. Each pianist is shown in a separate projection, and each starts the piece at the same time. They then continue playing at their natural speed. The work, Robert Schumann's piano concerto in A minor, is challenging, and the pianists make mistakes. After a mistake, the pianist's screen goes dark for five seconds, and their music stops, while the other pianists continue uninterrupted. Then the projection resumes, and the pianist continues playing. The more challenging the piece becomes, the more mistakes the players make, and the more the three projections turn off. In this piece, the editing itself becomes the taskmaster; the act of cutting determines a player's presence as performer. The players struggle through the work, attempting to perform perfectly. *Sight Reading* is instantaneous performance, engaging brain, eyes, hands, and the entire body. The installation heightens the intensity of this activity by focusing on its failures.

Review

16mm, b/w, sound, 2:25, 2004

Commissioned by the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Connecticut for "Aldrich at the Movies," an exhibition in local cinemas and at the museum. *Review* was screened as a trailer in cinemas before regular commercial films, May-September, 2004, and was on view in the renovated Aldrich Museum from September, 2004-January 2005. The film combines headlines about the war in Iraq with interjections from major classical operas, and receipts from movie tickets and film rentals from the fall of 2003. The dates from the headlines are reflected in the film ticket receipts from the same day, connecting the daily experience of news with the subsequent escape into cinematic entertainment.

All-American Dinner

16mm, b/w, silent, 3:00, 2003

Menus and lists of foods culled from research describe the “typical All-American Dinner.” The lists range from the banal to the elite to what might be called “the extremely unappetizing.” Ironies appear in the use of non-American terms, and the repetition of a surprising number of foods reworked from their “foreign” roots and presented as “typically American.” The film points at the way “All-American” reinforces the stereotype of the U.S. as a mono-cultural entity. The film is to a humorous and pointed look at one so-called “classic” trait of American culture.

The United States in a Chaotic World

16mm, b/w, silent, 3:00, 2003

The United States in a Chaotic World takes as its starting point the title of a 1950 history book and uses it to begin a series of stuttering black and white animated panels, accumulating meaning by association. The film presents images of oil derricks, territorial acquisitions in the US, restricted trees, oxygen tanks, and recently coined American terms, such as “freedom fries” in place of “French fries.” These images allude to aspects of the history and of the present mindset governing the United States today.

Perseverance & How to Develop It

16mm, b/w & color, sound, 14:10, 2003

Perseverance & How to Develop It takes the viewer on a journey through obsession, the drive for success, 1915 self-help tricks, and strikes at the Ford Motor Company. The film explores how the growth of industry in the 20th century relied on self-help to instill a drive for success in young workers. *Perseverance & How to Develop It* was a book published in 1915. Its concluding chapter, “Practical Exercises,” outlined five tasks to be practiced on a daily basis. Untangling yarn, counting grains of rice, measuring oneself against a watch--these tasks made for success, by disciplining the mind and body. These exercises bear a striking resemblance to movements along an assembly line. *Perseverance’s* publication came at the same time as the perfection of the Ford Motor Company assembly line. In the same period, Sigmund Freud wrote “On Mourning and Melancholia,” describing a phenomenon which we now call depression. The appearance of these texts--at the height of American industrialization and World War I--was not a coincidence. To become a productive member of society, whether working in the city or preparing for war, a young man needed to manage his moods and develop self-control. The same issues come into play today. Workaholism, the widespread use of psycho-pharmaceutical drugs, self-help books, and an insatiable quest for happiness all resonate with *Perseverance*, written nearly 100 years ago. The cycle of work, success, depression, and back to work, continues to this very day.

Schumann

16mm, b/w, silent, 7:25, 2002

Schumann uses the piano concerto in A minor by Robert Schumann as a structuring element. Schumann suffered greatly in his life from nervous breakdowns, obsessions, and manias. The music in visual form is used also as punctuation for the various moods in the film. The film begins with a series of phobias, fears, statistics and drawings of the Brooklyn Bridge. The second half of the film presents information from numerous websites about how to control anxieties, and images of trees cut or tied down to train their growth. The last image in *Schumann* is the only live-action section, showing two shots of the changed Lower Manhattan skyline with the Brooklyn Bridge in the foreground. This reflects the time, space, and sensibility in which the film was created.

Washing

16mm film loop, b/w, silent, 10 second loop, 2002

Washing is a 16mm film loop depicting the apparently simple image of a hand cleaning a window. Beyond the window in the background, a foggy landscape is visible. It is the landscape of Lower Manhattan, in the year 2002, the Brooklyn Bridge in the foreground, and the gap in the skyline in the background where the World Trade Center once stood. As the film runs through the projector, it becomes dirtier and dirtier, acquiring scratches and dust. The hand continues its simple, repetitive gesture, trying to clean a landscape--and a collective memory--of trauma. The gesture is essential, though the task inevitably futile. The original presentation of *Washing* was as a site-specific installation; it was projected on 16mm film between the windows from which it was originally filmed.

View from Elsewhere

16mm/DV, color, sound, 22:00, 2002

What kind of violence is exile? There is the exile by choice, and the one who is forced from home. There is the refugee who later becomes an exile. There is the visitor whose country dissolves in his wake. There are families and individuals, separated by space, by politics; by history. An exile lives a double life, here and not-here. Who speaks in this film? Teachers, workers,

students, parents, long-term residents, asylum-seekers, people with families and with friends. Songs from Kosovo resound loudly in a Geneva community center; a call from Sierra Leone transforms a refugee center classroom; landscapes blur into daydreams of home— these images contrast with the difficult issues of discrimination, incessant bureaucracy, and threats of deportation. Migration, intolerance, and violence have been seen as inevitable consequences of global culture. *View from Elsewhere* reminds us that border closings, forced deportations, and travel restrictions have real, tangible effects on peoples' lives.

Rorschach

16mm, b/w, silent, 7:20, 2002

Rorschach is a 16mm black and white animated film which uses a laborious and intensive process of drawing to create a cyclical narrative of images and texts motivated by considerations of exile and displacement. A Rorschach test, judged poorly, can have terrible results, affecting a psychological assessment and the course someone's life might take. The banalities of an immigration document can mean whether or not a person can stay or leave a country that has become a new home. And even the most banal of texts, a fortune cookie, could be a motivation for someone to make life-changing decisions. *Rorschach* ends with a fanfare of fortunes, followed by a sequence of receipt animations, documents of a specific life in a specific place between the now-historic months of September 2001 and December 2001, the end of a year we wish had not occurred, which imposed such drastic changes on mobility and civil liberties throughout the world.

Capsules

16mm, color, sound, 6:10, 2001

Capsules is a portrait of Flushing Meadows Corona Park, home of time capsules buried there for the 1939 and 1964 Worlds' Fairs. Interviews with visitors to the park about what they would put in a present-day time capsule are juxtaposed with the decaying relics of the fairs. Commissioned by the Queens Museum of Art, "Crossing the Line" exhibition, and Omar Lopez-Chahoud.

Perseverance

16mm, b/w, silent, 8:00, 2001

Working from Walter Benjamin's maxim on the usefulness of copying texts as opposed to reading them, which he relates to walking through a field as opposed to flying over it, *Perseverance* closely examines cultural detritus by copying, animating, and observing it. *Perseverance* links the U.S.'s 21st century purchasing power and its promises of happiness with the maxims of early 20th century self-improvement. The 16mm black-and-white animations are generated by writing the texts letter by letter in a laborious and flawed calligraphy. The title comes from *Perseverance and How to Develop It*, a 1915 self-help book which instructed young men how to discipline themselves to achieve a better life.

The Very Last View

16mm, b/w, silent, 6:00, 2000

Handmade film created as a portrait of the residency in Civitella Ranieri, Italy. Fragmentary portraits of participants appear and disappear, as a landscape, in negative, shows the moon as bright as day.

From To Subject Date Reply

16mm, b/w, silent, 3:00, 2000

A film made for the exhibition "Minimal Provocations" at the Betty Rymer Gallery, Chicago, in memoriam to teacher, artist and friend Robert Blanchon. The hand-drawn film re-animated the subject headings of the intensive email correspondence between student and teacher, the fragmentary information describing an epistolary friendship and a descent into illness.

Eichsfeld

DV, color, sound, 11:00, 2000, co-directed w/ T. Scholz

A video created for the MoneyNations exhibition in Prague, Zurich, and Vienna, the tape describes the relationships between long-gone borders between the two Germanys and the ever-present and increasingly militarized border between the U.S. and Mexico.

Dear Jim and Dick

16mm, b/w, silent, 30:00, 1999

Dear Jim and Dick is a text-film created in conjunction with an installation of the same name. The film describes narrative permutations of a 1970s correspondence found in the garbage in San Francisco in the mid-90s. Speculations, fiction and fantasy are structured as postcards, between strangers, Jim and Dick, and myself, reading them at a distance of 30 years.

Lost Treasures

16mm, color, sound, 3:00, 1999

Lost Treasures is an elegy to three teachers, each of whom recently passed away. The film uses hand-processed high-contrast film, whose surface has been damaged by stains of unwashed chemistry, in its effort to express the disorientation produced by loss.

Happy are the Happy

16mm, b/w, sound, 18:00, 1999, co-directed w/ S.J. Lapp

Happy are the Happy traces a journey into humor, guided by the survivors of not-so-funny lives. How does one generation of survivors communicate with the next? Can humor function as a shared language for disparate communities of displaced people—specifically, a difficult diaspora of Bosnian, Jewish, and Romany refugees? *And could you tell us your best joke, please?* Of its participants and its viewers, this experimental, non-fiction film asks these questions and others relating to the matrix of memory, survival, and comic impulse of everyday life-in Prague and beyond.

The Whole History of That

16mm, color, sound, 17:00, 1998

I decided to find the town where my great-grandmother was born. Family rumors claimed that she lived next door to Freud. I found the town, Pribor, and went there, determined to locate my heritage. After three days of wandering around the decrepit village I finally found someone who recognized my great-grandmother's maiden name. Elated, I took the next train back to Prague and called my mother, who told me I had been asking about the wrong name the whole time. By using humor and contradiction, *The Whole History of That* questions the reliability of memory. The film uses complex editing rhythms, sync-sound interviews and non-traditional documentary footage to describe the narrative journey *The Whole History of That* leaves the viewer to ponder the fragments of an imagined history, now turned to dust under my lens.

Nove Hranice/New Borders

Video, color, sound, 22:00, 1994

In 1992 I was in Czechoslovakia at the same time that the country ceased to exist. One year later, I returned to the newly divided country, to interview residents living on the new border between the new Czech Republic and Slovakia. This video not only documents the changes in everyday lives wrought by the so-called “Velvet Divorce” of 1992, but also reveals my status as an outsider, attempting to comprehend changes viewed as ‘sad but inevitable.’ Ten years after finishing this video, both Czech Republic and Slovakia have joined the EU. Little reference is now made to the once-united country, brought together not by the Soviet Union, but by Thomas Masaryk’s hopeful appeal for unification. In the 21st century, this story of the silent breakup of one nation should not be forgotten.