KAFE PITTORESK: *L'Éxperience du Monde Visionnaire*

Kafe Pittoresk: L'Éxperience du Monde Visionaire is an evening presented by Giles Round & Mark Aerial Waller that uses Barbet Schroeder's counter cultural 60s film *More* as a framework for the presentation of actions, music & sculpture. The event presents a tragic hippy tragectory played out through the summer dust of Ibiza. This, the vista of the Kafe Pittoresk constructs its own suggestive narrative based on a psychedelic & disjointed history beginning with Constructivism & terminating with corporatisation of culture. *L'Éxperience du Monde Visionaire* presents a series of increasingly psychedelic experimentations through diversions into key modernist abstract film, a re-working of the soundtrack & spatial/temporal incongruities.

Kafe Pittoresk is a franchise of the universal mega-brand Taverna Especial. Irrespective of Taverna Especial's original singular vision & ideological mission statement, Kafe Pittoresk adapted to become a platform for plurality.

TAVERNA ESPECIAL, A Biography, 2003 to Present

Established in the summer of 2003 Taverna Especial is both a kitchen & a salon for the reception & consideration of a singular art work. Co founded by Giles Round & Mark Aerial Waller Taverna Especial has a dynamic & mythic core, as such it was created through a constantly evolving system of chance happenings. The original premises situated on an Estate parade off Hackney Road closed it's doors in 2006 following the traumatic metamorphosis of the area by the set dressers of dystopic science fiction fable *Children of Men*. With no permanent location the now nomadic kitchen Taverna Especial continues to develop it's ideological stance & adapts it's structure to create situational shifts. Taverna Especial embraces contradiction.

BARBET SCHROEDER, *More*, 1969
1hr 47 min.

Noel Simsolo: Don't you think that More could lead to some misunderstandings?

Barbet Schroeder: Oh, yes, but nothing can be done about it. It is a big risk & it must be accepted. The real subject of the film, in fact, is neither Drugs nor Hippies. The description you give is sufficiently subtle to limit the risks of misunderstandings & 'recuperation' of the film by one side or another.
Personally, if I speak of *More* in esoteric terms, I say that it is the story of someone who sets out on a quest for the Sun & who is not sufficiently armed to carry it through successfully. So, instead of the Sun, he finds the moon or, rather, the black Sun. On his way he is submitted to all the rites of initiation & mystery…
I did not want to deal with the Drug problem. The first chapter of Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* deals with the problem thoroughly & in the fairest possible way. I used drugs in relationship to the characters. Drugs only interfere as an element in destruction, only as a motor in a sadomasochistic relationship between a boy & a girl. Precisely, one of the dangers preying on the film is to limit it only to Drugs. There is a current of paranoia at the moment on the subject, which is reflected in the press & is emphasized by misinformed circles. There is, therefore, a great danger of misunderstanding & of 'recuperation' by the Establishment of the film. Some people will say: 'You see, they begin by smoking & end up shooting!' In short, those people will put all drugs together in the same bag…In fact, Stefan dies the first time he makes love with Estelle, & by the way she closes his eyes the way one draws down the lids of a dead woman. Stefan is passionately in love but in fact is unable to really love. You see that there is not only a drug story favouritising scandal, but a love story in which mythical & psychoanalytical elements find their place.

NS: Why does your film take place in Ibiza?

BS: Ibiza may be one of those centres where the representatives of the avant-garde of a new civilization are experimenting with a new way of life. It is more primitive, more spiritual, & its main goal is no longer a quest for a pre-existing culture, but a total opening, as intense communion with Nature, human as well as cosmic. It is also, for the film, the idea of being trapped on an island in the sun, which is very powerful mythically & psychologically.

NS: Your character is always 'an outsider'.

BS: He is the very opposite of a hippie. As far as he is concerned, there is no pleasure without tragedy, & he says so. Among young people today there is a current of thought where that type of idea has no place. A revolution in culture & in mores is taking place at the moment. My hero feels very clearly that he is not a part of it; he has nothing to do with it.

NS: He is blocked at the level of an adolescent culture in his country.

BS: Exactly! The extraordinary movement of the current generation does not concern him. He allows himself to be trapped by this girl. That is his death. It is not a new subject.

NS: You are one of the people carrying Stefan's coffin. Why?

BS: It is very personal. It is like an exorcism. While I am burying my hero, I am also burying part of my old self. What I would like to do are films like those of Mizoguchi, where people are struggling within a net of attachments. If my film is against anything, it is against attachments, illusions, selfishness, egotism, alienation… As for myself, I have no compassion for my hero. Someone who destroys himself is very unattractive to me.

Excerpts from an interview with Noel Simsolo in *Image et Son*, 1969

HANS RICHTER, *Film ist Rhythmus: Rhythmus '21*, 1921

"Rhythm expresses something different from thought. The meaning of both is incommensurable. Rhythm cannot be explained completely by thought nor can thought be put in terms of rhythm, or converted or reproduced. They both find their connection & identity in common & universal human life, the life principle, from which they spring & upon which they can build further." Richter

In *Rhythmus '21*, generally considered to be the first completely abstract film, Richter used these principles to create a work of remarkable structural cohesion. Completed by using stop motion & forward & backward printing in addition to an animation table, the film consists of a continuous flow of rectangular & square shapes that 'move' forward, backward, vertically, & horizontally across the screen. Syncopated by an uneven rhythm, forms grow, break apart & are fused together in a variety of configurations for just over three minutes.

In May 1922, Richter travelled with Theo van Doesberg & El Lissitzky to the *First International Congress of Progressive Artists*, where they formed the International Faction of Constructivism. In a group manifesto, written by Richter, they define the progressive artist as one who denies & fights the predominance of subjectivity in art & does not create his work on the basis of random chance, but rather on the new principles of artistic creation by systematically organizing the media to a generally understandable expression.

NORMAN McLAREN, *Dots*, 1940
Produced by Mary-Ellen Bute

Norman McLaren's *Dots* is hand painted on film frames with a soundtrack created by scratching the audio track of the actual film stock in various shapes & lengths to create tones.

The most important National Film Board of Canada animator, McLaren created 'animated sound', a form of visible or synthetic sound made by hand-drawing directly onto the optical soundtrack of the film. The implications of the method have been of considerable interest to electronic composers and have earned McLaren high regard as a sound pioneer.

HARRY SMITH, *Film Number 5 Circular Tensions (Homage to Oskar Fischinger)*, c. 1950
16mm, colour, 2.30 min

Jonas Mekas of Anthology Film Archives has said, 'You can watch them for pure color enjoyment; you can watch them for motion—Harry Smith's films never stop moving; or you can watch them for hidden symbolic meanings, alchemic signs. There are more levels in Harry Smith's work than in any other film animator I know.' Inspired by Native American cultures, jazz, the Kabbala, & surrealism, Smith assembled his own cinematic universe of shape, colour, light & time.

JOHN BALDESSARI, *Time-Temperature,* 1972-1973
Super 8 film loop (originally in 16mm), colour, 4 min 56

In *Time-Temperature*, 1972–73, a small hourglass & thermometer measure properties that are otherwise invisible. Like the camera, these are indexical instruments, but where the camera would ordinarily be taken for granted, these devices seem self-evident. The film industry is another concern in Baldessari's Super-8s. Of course it is implied by the choice of medium, but some works reflect it thematically. This is nothing less than a demonstration of how film works. It implies, among other things, that the cinematic apparatus is less a matter of technology than it is a desire to structure seeing a certain way.

JOHN BALDESSARI, *The Hollywood Film*, 1972-1973
Super 8 film loop (originally in 16mm), colour, 66 sec

Two small circular disks are held by man, one in each hand. One side of the disk is printed with a Hollywood starlet's portrait, & on the other is a mirror, the objects are held carefully as if they are props of a conjurer's trick. First the camera is shown the face of the young starlet's publicity for early roles, then the disk is rotated between finger & thumb, & the foundation of film industry, the hallucinatory light, is reflected into the camera, leaving the starlet in the shadow, on the dark side. The conjuring trick continues & the starlets reappear, this time outshone by the light intended to illuminate them & held for an equal amount of time.

ROBERT BREER, *Recreation*, 1956-1957
16mm blow-up to 35mm, colour, 2 min

Featuring a commentary by Noel Burch (in nonsense French), *Recreation*'s rapid-fire montage of single-frame images of incredible density & intensity has been compared to contemporary Beat poetry.

'Single images one after another in quick succession fusing into motion... this is cinema.' Robert Breer

Breer is a consummate master of cinematic space. Like Hans Richter, he constantly provokes a sense of depth through changing the scale of his shapes. We see space as constantly shrinking & expanding... the metamorphosis of things &space is located in the spectator who actively participates in creating the meaning of the image. Breer celebrates the freedom endemic in animation by giving the spectator a creative role in the process of metamorphosis. Noel Carroll, SoHo News.

JOHN LATHAM, *Speak*, 1962
16mm, 11 min, Distributed by LUX

'Latham's extraordinary coloured-disc animation anticipates the psychedelics of the high sixties. A retinal assault with a circular saw soundtrack.' flat time house

Through the 1960s Latham developed his ideas into a complex cosmology that he termed 'Event Structure' linking it to philosophy, literature & contemporary art practice. He stated that art's trajectory reached its last event in 1951, when Robert Rauschenberg displayed an unmarked canvas as an artwork. In his writings he asserted that language, being object based, could not adequately describe an event based reality. The ideas of event-based art were hugely influential in the emerging fields of Performance art & happenings. In 1966, Latham took part in the Destruction in Art Symposium in London, along with Fluxus artists such as Yoko Ono & Gustav Metzger. He constructed three large 'skoob towers' (towering piles of books), dubbed 'the laws of England', on the pavement outside the British Museum, & then set fire to the structure.
John Latham, like many artists, made films in the 1960s & early 1970s as an extension of his process-based work in painting, sculpture, installation & performance. He made Speak (1968-69, 11 mins) with his young son Noa, who helped him move around the cut-out coloured papers into different configurations. John told me that he projected Speak at a Pink Floyd concert at the UFO Club in the Tottenham Court Road.
Chrissie Iles (email suppressed)

Towards the end of 1967 Pink Floyd recorded a soundtrack for Latham's film *Speak*. The completed recording was submitted to Latham nevertheless he rejected it. Latham finally used the circular saw recording of one of his own book destruction events for the soundtrack.

HENRI MICHAUX, *Images du Monde Visionnaire*, 1963

An educational film by Henri Michaux & Eric Duvivier, produced in 1963 by the film department of Swiss pharmaceutical company Sandoz (best known for synthesizing LSD in 1938) in order to demonstrate the hallucinogenic effects of mescaline & hashish. It is the only venture in film of notable French writer & painter Henri Michaux who wrote several accounts of his experiments with drugs. In charge with the filmic translation of Michaux' prescriptions was director Eric Duvivier whose other films include an adaptation of Max Ernst's collage novel *La femme 100 têtes*. Sceptical from the start about the success of such an undertaking Michaux was said to be quite disappointed by the result.' Ombres Blanche

CHARLES & RAY EAMES, *Black Top*, 1952
11min

'A story of the washing of a school play yard.' Charles & Ray Eames

Charles Eames shot *Blacktop* at a schoolyard near the designer's office in Los Angeles. Filmed on a 16mm hand-held-camera, an office colleague was given technical charge of the hose, directing the movement of soapy water across the asphalt. Charles edited the film on homemade equipment, synchronizing it to Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

STEVEN A EALY, *Spongebob Squarepants, Surfin Bird*, 2007
2min 24 sec

A complex set of temporal & cultural references are set up in this work. The heterogeneous animated character SpongeBob SquarePants appears to sing *Surfin Bird* in his own voice. However a sharp observation on the part of the director Ealy, brings the similar sounding voice of the Trashmen's lead singer to the part of SpongeBob. This exceptional appropriation bridges forty years of low cultural history, not only is SpongeBob apparently dubbed to a garage rock classic, but it seems that SpongeBob is not miming, but actually singing the tune. It seems that in fact the inverse is happening, the lead vocalist is singing in a SpongeBob SquarePants voice forty years before its creation. Kafe Pittoresk

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