

a year of pedestrian Cinema

X

Memo to our screenwriters. Your plots are too thick. They need to be thin enough to be applied layer upon layer, like hundredfold leaves of papyrus recording the slightest idea that stands up on two legs. You need the eyes of flies, not snakes. Your jokes are not fast enough, they arrive like the next highway gas station: 30 miles to go, 15, 5, next exit.

X (CONT'D)

Memo to our casting directors. Remove a person from their life, stuff their head full of impossible desires, then force them to into an image outside of them. Film is cruelty, an instrument of torture. Your job is do decide whether a person is good enough or not good enough material to film with. Whether their bodies can sell tickets, whether they offer something new but not so new that it's strange. If someone cannot make it in a reading or on a screen test, send them back out into the street. There is no room for leniency or kindness in your metier.

X (CONT'D)

Memo to our editors. A film, like the conscious mind, is a repressive device. It shuts out a large portion of the world effortlessly, thoughtlessly. The budget and the script are the first barrier between the unconscious repressed and repressing consciousness. You, as editors of the film, are the second and final barrier. Your job is to make sure that the slip-ups stay on the cutting room floor, to gloss over the neurotic tics with Dolby surround sound and special effects, and as always, to make sure there is no deviation from the script.

X (CONT'D)

First there's the problem of the screen preceding the story. Then there's the contemporary time-history-narrative that is also a screen problem. What happens to the idea of a screen in the immediacy of now, this overgrown desert where bodies no longer have fictions (and vice versa)? What happens to acting? How can there be method acting when a body loses its history? Maybe this loss itself has to be method-acted, maybe that's the only sense-memory left.

X (CONT'D)

Shooting in city streets can sometimes undermine the distinction of actors from non-actors, stars

from pedestrians, the set from the everyday. Rouch and Marker played on this in the old days, and what's striking today in a film like *Le Joli Mai* is the innocence of early-60s Europeans as filmed subjects. Looking at those faces it's clear what's been lost in the meantime. Now there is no such thing as a non-actor. It's no accident that cities demand permits from crews. If film crews had free reign a lot of fights would happen. Everybody would be like Sean Penn or paparazzi, except maybe there wouldn't be any Sean Penns then... just crowds and cameras... Would they be Vertovian Bolshevik crowds or Jackass? How much are the police and laws required in order for something like Hollywood glamour to exist, or how criminal do you have to be to pull a decent fiction out of reality?

X (CONT'D)

The generosity of an underground film is that it produces cheap or free glamour in the midst of a crowd. The pretentiousness of a documentary is its benign eye letting reality be (yuck), as if reality was some kind of nature to protect. The fascination of reality TV is in how it forces reality to act itself as such, and how stupid it is to see. So the best thing to do is lure the pedestrian back into fiction, reappropriate the image of the city and glamorize its passing, but there's something to remember: the post-cinematic city does not know how to act.

X (CONT'D)

Bobby Bloom wakes up early to the alarm clock. He goes to see the sunrise in the cemetery next door. He calls his mother collect on a payphone and tells her it is the best day of his life. Later, he goes to the Virgin Megastore Times Square - then McDonalds - then Virgin Union Square - then another hamburger restaurant - then a cheap department store. All day, he is eating fat fried food, listening to music on his Mp3 player, and directing music videos on a notebook in his head.

X (CONT'D)

We are all moving images colliding with other moving images. Pedestrian Cinema sets itself up as a place where one image moves another, where images can get together and move if they feel like it. Here we hope to become moving images moving images.

X (CONT'D)

There is Korean cinema, Burkina Faso cinema, Uzbek cinema, U.N.-safeguarded future cinema. There are film festivals that are zoos for

endangered species, where dying breeds can survive without really living. And there is the 100th cry for resistance against the Hollywood war machine... But there is also walking down the boulevard, hypnotized by row upon row of faded Xeroxed bootleg DVD covers plastered across lightweight metal grids, soundtracks blowing out in fragments from taped-up speakers next to a TV set with its screen blacked out by the sunlight.

X (CONT'D)

An early Edison production filmed a technician introducing the magic of moving image with sound in person, performing this announcement on a violin while two assistants danced with each other. The Black Maria was giant, sweaty box mixing up vaudeville and science: casting bodies that moved in certain ways (acrobats, Apache Indians, dancers, bears) just to prove that these movements could be made into movies. The early Kinetoscope attractions featured the "beast of light" in the middle of the audience so that it was as much a part of the show as the image it projected. Warhol's return to a Black Maria-like approach in the Silver Factory (the kiss, screen tests, Horse). Godard's SonImage. The production of production. Introducing a sort of fold into the image, and causing image proliferations, images between images. Cinema seems like his subject but it's more a question of re-subjectivizing cinema via this fold.

X (CONT'D)

Tony Conrad could project a film by throwing cooked meat and vegetables at the screen.

X (CONT'D)

Bastard Cinema. Barefoot dirty orphan. Unemployed cinema standing in the welfare line.

X (CONT'D)

Always forced to grow up in the shadows, the porn film had a moment that was almost like cinema during the rise and fall of European & American filmmaking. Projected in dirty underground theaters, faded movie palaces, and drive-ins, when this time ended, it could not turn to television for life support. So porn went into cinematic hibernation, on videocassettes lining shelves in adult book stores.

X (CONT'D)

It also went back to the early days of cinema with clusters of video booths at the back of these

bookshops, Kinetoscopes in toilet stalls with sticky floors and glory holes. But digital resurrection was soon to come. Freed from physical, public space to be available on private download and live home streaming; only porn could quickly capitalize on the flexibility and speed of internet distribution, to reach the closest thing there is to a consumer orgy.

X (CONT'D)

Distribution is the business of circulating products. Dispersion is something else. To disperse a film is to scrap the notion of a complete and finished product. By undoing the linear logic of pre-production/production/post-production, a system of multiple films and relationships can be improvised. One film-in-progress can be usurped by or added to another at any point. Material from any production can be recycled and put to new uses by any other. The making of one film can unmake the others.

X (CONT'D)

Making images mobile. So they can take off as quick as any thought, whim, or misunderstanding. Making an excuse for a scene, discovering a half-cocked actor, being confused by a partial effort. Getting rid of all the formalities. Subject cinema to that. Subject cinema to the smallness of that.

X (CONT'D)

Make your media... Be your media... The medium is what we have in common, a common situation, a common misery.

X (CONT'D)

Staying open-ended, a means without an end, an adjustable frame to make some possibility possible again.

X (CONT'D)

Build it on the not-this.

X (CONT'D)

Take-back. Empty out. Excavate. Un-produce. Bring out the blanks. Take them. Squat them. Fill them up. Compose. Populate.

X (CONT'D)

Open a door, hang a strange sign of production over it, and then go on vacation.

X (CONT'D)

We wanted a place, a place that means something

and does nothing. Doors to walk in and out of. Influx, outflux. High activity that only spells chaos.

X (CONT'D)

How to keep the air circulating without fans, without the power of the audience?

X (CONT'D)

A film studio on strike. Strike meaning not only a work stoppage but a suspension of the relations that support what we normally think of as cinema. Suspending the relation that enforces our distance from professional cinema with words like "underground" "indie" "DV-dork" "militant" "crunk" "artworld" "zombie" "amateur" "beatnik" "nutcake"

X (CONT'D)

Studio, factory, laboratory, experimental workshop, travelling circus, backpack with wires and cables sticking out, a piece of carry-on luggage.

X (CONT'D)

Look, from the start it was all about speed.

X (CONT'D)

We wanted to shoot in the afternoon and screen at night. We wanted to produce and consume simultaneously, bake the bread and eat it, build and burn in exciting idiotic non-time.

X (CONT'D)

A 100 hour cinema. Thousands of 20-second cinemas. The first never ends and is impossible to see. The second is always tracing a whole without showing it. There is no end, just quit.

X (CONT'D)

Whatever is local material, at the end of the table, on the floor, in front of your face, behind your back. Not films about something, but films that run into something.

X (CONT'D)

What does a film ever really encounter? If it encounters something, it has no choice but to become specific. Then it is no longer a film but the girl at the back of the bar, the need for speed, the need to get out of here, depression in December.

X (CONT'D)

While waiting for the encounter to happen, begin with a preemptive deployment of cinematic signs: animated studio logo, credits, locations, stills, and posters. Later, when everything is finished,

all that's left to do is publicity for missing or unmade films. In the meantime a vast territory of unproduced property has been accumulated: classic novels, books of poems, stacks of magazines, invitations, coloring books, camera manuals, unpaid bills, telephone directories from around the globe.

X (CONT'D)

MGM would look at a year as a set number of pictures, some big, some small, some for this or that actor, this or that audience, made from this or that acquired property. The whole year was like a machine composed of parts trying to fit together and do something specifically MGM. A year counted in fictions not months.