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# Movie Journal

## Jonas Mekas

It's summer, New York independent film showcases are closed, their directors are busily working on their fall programs. For us New Yorkers, this is good, we need a break, some of us. But to the out-of-towners and visitors from other countries this is disastrous. They have time, during the summer, and they come to New York, Mecca of the avantgarde film, and they look through the ads and they call friends: nothing, absolutely nothing, everything's closed.

Everything's closed. But yes, somewhere, behind the heat of New York's summer, the empty streets of Soho, and the dry, unwatered, dying trees in front of 420 West Broadway galleries. . . somewhere, behind it all the secret, unseen activity of the art of Cinema, the heart of the Avantgarde Film, is constantly, ceaselessly beating. . .

Ricky Leacock came to New York to show his newest work to his friends. *A Visit to Monica* it's called. Monica is Robert Flaherty's daughter. The film was shot originally on Super-8 and then transferred to video tape. I saw it on tape, and that's how Leacock intends to show it. This, of course, will confuse and upset the film and video purists. To me, this caused no confusion since I belong to the avantgarde camp. . . The advanced thinking in this area considers film and video cameras as only two (of many more to come) tools of making moving images.

*A Visit to Monica* is one of Leacock's most lyrical works. It's about seven minutes long. In color. The image: friends walking on Flaherty's Vermont grounds, talking, remembering. One brief shot of Flaherty's grave. Trees. Indoor, some photographs on the

wall. Somebody plays piano, the music behind the images. Practically no talking. The road, the trees. Friends.

I found the film extremely poetic, intense, and elated. Leacock considers it a diary film, there will be more visits, and they'll be all strung together into one collection of visit notes, visit poems.

Yvonne Rainer's new film, *Katrina's Talking Pictures*, was previewed to a group of friends about a month ago. I feel it's her best film to date. I don't know how Yvonne Rainer herself feels about it, but my preference for it comes from the fact that *Katrina* is less dependent on Rainer's performance art, less than her two earlier long films. With *Katrina*, Rainer leaves the performance behind and enters the cinema proper.

In one place in the film, Rainer pays her homage to Godard. But my feeling is she has improved upon Godard. The techniques used by Godard to popularize, to exteriorize, to simplify political and personal experiences are used by Rainer to internalize, to personalise, to complicate (question) her own social and political experiences.

Another important difference between Godard and Rainer: while Godard's people are all mindless, nitwitty, plant-like cardboard figures upon which Godard splashes, paints and pirouettes his slogans—Rainer's people are complex, intelligent—some will find them even too intelligent — people caught in an existential quest, trying to locate themselves, to gain footing — without giving anybody any prescriptions or slogan politics. (The film, I understand, will be premiered during the fall season of Whitney Museum's film series which will begin in mid-September.)