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INTV.

E R N I E

G E H R

San Francisco 8/23/78

[How you made your first film?]

I was interested in cinema in general for quite a while before I actually began making films, but I didn't think it was possible to make for me to

make any films. I had only seen films that were made in studios, in Hollywood or somewhere else, so I assumed that they had to be made in 35mm or 70mm, with huge crews and million dollar budgets. After going to Filmmakers' Cinematheque and seeing independent films made me realize that I could make my own films in 8mm or 16 mm. It never crossed my mind before that. I never really thought of it as a way of making a living or earning money and am still surprised when I get money for a rental or am invited somewhere. I am pleased by it but it's not something I set out to do.

[High school?] I was interested in art in general. I had no specific interest; I was interested in theater, I was interested in <sup>music, in</sup> painting, in literature. I wrote several simple film scripts, poetry. I was just wandering, from one place to another.

[Where born?] 'Planet Earth'...I refuse to ~~recognize~~- acknowledge nationalistic or state boundaries. I will recognize geographical boundaries...Earth; same planet as the rest of the human race. Born in 1943.

I began to go to college, but then dropped out. Filmmaking I picked up on my own. The only book I read was the instruction book on how to load the camera and after that I learned everything by actually using the equipment. And looking at films. I began to go to the University of Wisconsin; one semester and then I dropped out. You might say more or less that I never went to college. I was seeking something <sup>and</sup> I felt that I wasn't going to find it in school. I wasn't interested in any career, I was interested in finding something meaningful to my own existence...and, I just didn't find it in school. I could read books on my own.



[When did you go to NYC?]

1966...mid May or so. I think that the first time I went to the Cinematheque was about September 1966. I've lived essentially in NY until about 1971 when due to economics I was forced to move to Brooklyn, which is another country. Its just 15 minutes away from Manhattan, but psychologically its further away, really. I began to teach in approximately 1970. I was teaching a summer course at Harpur College...its about 200 miles from NY, somewhere towards Pennsylvania. I was living in Manhattan, and the rents were just going up, higher and higher, and I had no job at the time...I wasn't working and I had no savings, empty unemployment was running out and I had to find a new place. I ~~did~~ didn't want to move back to the lowe East Side where I used to live, so I moved out to Brooklyn. I would like to move back to Manhattan but its impossible, unless I have a job.

I taught (at Harpur) for three summer sources and in '73 ~~and~~ and '74 I was teaching at Binghamton...and I just didn't want to live there it was difficult to commute back and forth between NY and Binghamton every week. I just had no existence. Since then I've had problems finding jobs. I was at Bard College for a year. Actually I left that job to go to Binghamton because it was paying more. Harpur College is part of SUNY Binghamton. Chronologically; Summer of '70 I was at Harpur and '71 and then I was replacing someone at New Paltz for one semester and then I went for ~~one~~ one year at Bard then SUNY Bing. then in '74 I quit that position., and I hadn't been teaching since then. Artist-in-Residence in <sup>University of Hartford (Hogan taught there)</sup> New-Haven and one in Colorado

I've made the films and I tend to look at them in a certain way. I don't ~~a~~ have the perspective that someone else on the outside might have. I am appreciative that someone is interested enough in the work to write about it. I am glad they exist. So its like a good comment; I am glad they are written.



When I began to make films I was working in '8' actually. I was working in 8 for several months and then I switched to 16mm and I shot some footage in 16 and had some problems with the equipment; it's heavier, awkward.

The physicality of the camera and materials began to assert themselves more and more and I found it difficult to work in the way that I began to work. At one point I actually stopped filming, I just wouldn't make any films but I kept thinking about the problems that I was encountering in working with 16, and began to ask myself why I really wanted to make films and what kind of experiences I really was after. Out of that, several months of thinking about that, certain ideas began to crystallize and make themselves clear. Certain problems that I had in dealing with the material began to clarify themselves, and out of that I began to make "Morning". It wasn't like immediate.

[What were you filming in 8mm?]

I guess they were much more representational. They were somewhat abstract, expressive, things around me. Using everyday-life situations, trying to express certain situations in my life. But, I destroyed most of those works. I didn't see any reason to keep them. It's really very difficult for me to describe them because I have no recollection of them. It's been twelve years. [Jonas seemed to describe the conditions under which you made "Wait" fairly well]



["Transparency"??] (refer program notes, MOMA)

["Serene Velocity"; color of light from fluorescents?)]  
I never took any notes. I didn't like the color, I know ~~that~~.

One factor would be that at the impact between frames would be stronger if it wasn't that color; I thought it was too murky and too weak. I wanted a color that was stronger. I wanted a color that had some sensual quality at the same time it seemed to be just the opposite of that; almost like a hospital corridor.

[I find that the gradations in the color, as well as the accents of the red, where it exists, increases the lateral mystery of it, aside from the irresistible axial flow going on. That because of the rhythm and expansion that's going on that it in a sense shocks one's peripheral vision to then ....lose anchor-holds on the edge of the frame and to briefly recognizable ~~a~~...and be humbly grateful ~~a~~ for recognizing an ashtray as ~~x~~ it goes by. It almost has a centrifugal force towards the edges of the frame and from the axis, which "Wavelength" does not, with the exception of the few narrative events which occur at right angles to the actual thrust of the lens.

"Serene Velocity" almost ~~m~~ reminds ~~me~~ of those fun-house rides where the centrifugal force throws you against the edge of the tub as it goes around, at the same time that the occupant is irresistably transfixed by the center of the rotation but at the same time forced into a relationship to the edge of the world which can't be denied. So that in this type of rhythm you set up, which is not as predictable as "Wavelength" there's an interaction between the center of the frame and the edges. If it ~~was~~ were in b & w, that some of that would be lost. With the 'naturalism' ~~of~~ of color vs. 'illusionism' of b & w, these little differences become very important, and become-active and magnified; active rather than passive background elements.]



While I don't make films for an audience, in a certain ~~way~~ sense, I am appreciative of how other people see the work.

"Field" used to be 18 minutes, now its 9 1/2 minutes. It was just too long for me. Originally the film was two prints spliced together. Essentially; you would see the film from head to tail right-side up, and then at the end of it & you would have another print; tail-to-head so it would be reversing it and upside down. Its not representational...like a 'smear'.

Gradations of greys, and black, and white. I felt that perhaps & I was the only person who could the difference between the first print and the second print~~ing~~ and perhaps it wasn't the correct work for doing that, so I just decided to release the single print.

"Still" 1969 -

Usually titles come up for me after I make the films. There were a few occasions when I knew what I would call a film before I finished it, but until I release them I don't want to give out any titles. I may change my mind. If you asked me to describe "Serene Velocity", I wouldn't know what to say. There's something in me that resists describing the other aspects of the work. I think I would just describe the literal image in the film. I don't want to talk before showing the films. I want to release the films first.

[working ~~unconsciously~~ towards the abstract or the figurative?]

I keep shifting. There's always been a shift taking place. You make one work and there's certain things that come out of that work and that you pursue in the next work. Sometimes it leads in one direction, and sometimes in another direction. In one sense they're all abstract works. I just make one film, and then & make the following film. I do what I feel is necessary for me to do. Whatever direction it is they take, I can't determine in advance.

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( "TRANSPARENCY" prefiguration of slit-scan? )