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THE LIFE AND WORK OF JAMES BROUGHTON
AND JOEL SINGER

Tonight the Cinematheque honors the 75th birthday of poet filmmaker James Broughton and the 40th birthday of his partner Joel Singer. The program will be a selection from their collaborations of the past twelve years, beginning with TOGETHER from 1976 and concluding with SCATTERED REMAINS of 1988. Singer will also premiere part one of his solo work-in-progress, EXPOSURES.

Herewith are some tributes to this occasion.

* * *

LIGHT UP THE CANDLES

When James Broughton was still a teen preening the tragic comedians anointed his pate with myrrh and rosemary when he asked for pedicure and foot massage. He grew up to organize sand castle seminars, to come under suspicion, to wriggle, and move east looking for the true entrance to unused silence. Now for this guy who squints and laughs, light 'em up!

Edward Mycue

James Broughton does everything from beyond wit's end, turning all his difficulties into The Delightful. He has hoisted a god's-eye-view of the world of human follies and has developed a rhythmic complexity to sustain it. He is the only filmmaker I know who has been equally true to Poetry, Theater and Film, transforming all three into an act of lifelong montage.

Stan Brakhage

It was always nice to know that James Broughton was around to make movies and the year was not complete unless there was something going on that James popped up in. Special fun were his birthday celebrations. The world seemed okay when James was up there trying to agitate the audience with his visual contributions with Joel Singer. I hope he just keeps on having birthdays and we can go and everything will seem all right.

George Kuchar

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POEM FOR JAMES BROUGHTON
On the Occasion of His 75th Birthday

Arise and celebrate the Day of the Broughton!
Bogeys high on champagne, crimson gods
brooding in opal,
the tiger's dream, the dwarf in love
all hail this Shaman Psalmer,
beloved James to the Broughton born.

If a ghost, sit him in good light.
If a ram, let him run like an omen.
And if some nights
are too damn dark,
set a candle burning for the myth.
Hooplas for the Day of the Broughton!

We extol this three-score-fifteen years
of Human Folly, this Hermes Bird
who carols The Singer,
who spawns Divine Madness,
who gallops across the spider's web
upon the True/False Unicorn.

Back to pivot, back to weaving words,
he grins and spins Ecstasies
of A Long Undressing. Creating hymns
and rhymes and schemes of joy,
swaying to mnemonic tangoes,
he arrows Life Lines to Orion's brain.

He is here, there, everywhere, nowhere,
now and then,
a waterbug skimming the surface of attention,
a black dot on a secret scoreboard.
He is caught in the act, the ultimate Androgyne
at one with stump and tree.

As prayers and flairs salute him,
he watches final rushes of an age
focused and defined,
completing Water Circles, Seeing the Light
beyond the mink-soft hills,
Godbody of the Song.

Ruth Costello
10 November 1988

FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW

James Broughton, the Godbody Godfather
less macho than Marlon Brando
and much nicer (kinder, gentler)
than all the bloodshed patriarchs
of history,

Oberon of all the Good (yet naughty) Fairies,
Fairy Godfather who waves away War
& all such nasty foolishness
with a phallic magic wand.

Pater Ecstasticus of non-prudish Paradisos.
Elder yet still cherubic cupid.
Broughton proves ecstasy can belong
to old age as much as youth, that
age can be a blessing not a curse
(as in Whitman's "Youth, Day, Old Age,
and Night"), that our last years can
be ravished by joys rather than
ravaged by decrepitude.

Geronto Terrible as terrible as any enfant
terrible. Punster-Funster-Bunster
terrible.

Broughton's Ecstasies are invincible inspiring
testament to the rejuvenating powers
of Love, that the sincere devoted love
of a younger friend who believes in one
is medicine any aging person needs
more than any Geritol.

James Broughton and Joel Singer are cross-
generational astronaut explorers of
the universe of Love--immortal camerados
in the tradition of all the immortal
camerados of male-to-male fame: noble
exemplars of the beauty and dignity
of male-to-male affection.

Androgyne Journal is a Walden of androgeny.
Hail the headfirst-heartfirst courage
of Broughton's fearless beaming of
his unabashed being Who Him Am. "My
kundalini runneth over," indeed!
Pulling our daisies and legs.

Making love spurt ecstasy through our hardon-
softon-hardon-softon hearts, thrilling
to the thrill of living-dying-living-dying
thrilling through our living-dying bods.

Hail the high priest of peter pantheism
--hail James Broughton full of grace!
Pater Ecstasticus in Aeternam. Amen.

--Antler and
Jeff Poniewaz,
July 1987

WOULD YOU LIKE TO DANCE?

James Broughton is a scary poet. Behind the word play, high spirits, and doodles lurks an inescapable challenge from the professor of pleasure. After all, "he offers you nothing less than the risk of everything." Walt Whitman confronted anyone who picked up Leaves of Grass in like manner:

The whole past theory of your life and all conformity to
the lives around you would have to be abandon'd,
Therefore release me now before troubling
yourself any further...

Consider what appears to be a mild invitation in "The Gardener of Eden":

Every day I grow a dream in my garden
where the beds are laid out for love
When will you come to embrace it
and join in the joy of the dance?

When the poem is experienced as the film The Gardener of Eden, the "joy of the dance" is revealed as nothing less than the pulse of the cosmos. A narcotic slow dance it is not. Images of lotus, leaf, and lord time lapse, zoom out and in, flash from positive to negative and back again. All that we are not will be consumed in this intensity. As we are usually quite attached to that preponderous baggage, to join in this searing joy is terrifying.

Yet what are the options?

Honor one another
or lose

Abandon your rivalries
or mourn

Value one another
or fall

Ripen one another
or rot

Love one another
or die

Where the stakes are high, the death/debt is great, as Heraclitus would have it. Paralysis in the face of such a choice is a peril but Broughton uses every means he can to propel the reader across the threshold before he knows it. Metrical miracles renew a childhood innocence out of adult malaise. Like William Blake, Broughton makes his poems songs, then he sings them. Or we do as the uncanny rhythms built into the poems emerge. Like Blake would have if he could have, Broughton uses film to create his visions. All for sweet liberty's sake.

James Bogan

DOUBLOONS

for James Broughton

THERE'S A PIRATE'S CHEST THAT'S FILLED
WITH WINGS OF MOTHS
and pink-green moss and eagle's thoughts
with knobby, dripping candles on the lid
in thickest darkness
just before the dawn.
The panther and the fawn
that gnaw and kiss
its cracking leather straps
and fumble at the clasp

will

spread

THE
THINGS

within

like golden coins

before the morning sun.

-- Michael McClure