

## Document Citation

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|---------------|--|
| Title         | <b>Artists and models</b>  |
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| Source        | <i>Village Voice</i>   |
| Date          | 1999 Feb 16  |
| Type          | review   |
| Language      | English<br>English   |
| Pagination    | 143  |
| No. of Pages  | 1  |
| Subjects      |  |
| Film Subjects | "..." reel 3, Brakhage, Stan, 1998<br>"..." reel 2, Brakhage, Stan, 1998<br>"..." reel 1, Brakhage, Stan, 1998 |

VV 2/16/99 p. 143

# Artists and Models

*(...) Parts I, II, and III*  
Films by Stan Brakhage  
At Anthology Film Archives  
February 12 and 13

**BY J. HOBERMAN**

**HOW MUCH TIME** does it take to get a painting? Does one devote 10 seconds to a Jackson Pollock canvas? Two minutes? An hour? Decades? It's a question that naturally arises in the case of Stan Brakhage, a film artist whose work is often believed to be unnaturally demanding.

Brakhage's new series of scratch-and-stain films, known as (...) or *ellipses*, are, among other things, a visual analogue to Abstract Expressionism.

pink lines are inscribed on a white field. In any case, (...) is a cosmos. Rich without being ingratiating, the effect is one of rhythmic conflagration.

A second 20-minute reel is more staccato—mad chicken-scratch calligraphy fluttering out of a yellow void, sketchy lightning bolts or fireworks interrupted by a sudden field of turquoise. The third and shortest section reintroduces camera-derived imagery and, minimal as it may be (sunlight shimmering on water, seagull wheeling in the sky), it's still a shock to see "something." Brakhage continues to play with surfaces, layering the image with scratch bursts and soft-focus superimpositions; sentiment arrives with representation.

For the most part, though, (...) is predicated on a strategy Brakhage introduced as long ago as his cut-and-paste collage *Mothlight* (1962). The camera may be abandoned, but the projector-technology remains. Like the "impossible" presentations of his peer Ken Jacobs, Brakhage is reveling in the considerable power of the individual frame as it collides with other disparate frames. The simple 16mm projector that shows (...) is a hallucination machine, producing flickers and afterimages where none objectively exist. **V**

The onrushing imagery and the spatial conundrums it creates evoke not only Pollock but also the work of Franz Kline, Willem De Kooning, and even Mark Rothko—that is Pollock et al., at 24 frames per second. Eschewing the camera, Brakhage scrapes away the film emulsion to create a thicket (or sometimes a spider's web) of white lines and rich, chemical colors. Some segments of the original footage appear to have been printed on negative stock or perhaps solarized—so that the blue and