

New Technologies/New Visions

Looking at the properties of advanced technological media, and more especially at the interactive potential, we may very well compare some of the future art-forms, based on advanced technological processes, with quantum theory.

Using the term 'future art-form' does not imply that I expect every future art-form to be an interactive, electronic system, neither do I expect the evaporation of the traditional arts. Painting has survived photography and film. It will most surely survive advanced technology as well.

The principle of interactivity, however, added to the certainty that it will be applied with growing subtlety, means as decisive a break with accepted arts-tradition as quantum theory proved to be a break with classical, Newtonian physics, and, consequently, with accepted views and beliefs about such issues as 'reality'.

Interactivity simply means the possibility of a material, physical relation between various elements, in this case, between a work of art and a person, or a number of people, confronted with it.

Normally, the act of looking at a painting, for instance, doesn't change the painting itself; colors and structure remain exactly as they are, whatever the person looking at it may feel or do.

It doesn't matter whether this person is jumping up and down with sheer excitement or anger, whether he laughs or trembles with fear.

The painting has been painted and will remain the same forever and ever, unless people use knives and guns in order to demonstrate dissatisfaction with it.

Usually, this type of interactivity doesn't happen very often.

Paintings gain in value because of the fact that it is dead certain they will remain the same forever, whenever and wherever.

Nobody is willing to pay \$ 70 million, as one Japanese gentleman did, for a painting by van Gogh, if he weren't absolutely sure that it would be the same vase of flowers the next day.

He most likely would not pay anything at all if somebody told him that probably the vase of flowers would change into something else, for whatever reason, especially in view of the

MEDIA

▲ R T
development

new technologies/new visions

-2-

fact that nothing really could be said about what it would turn into. Could be a motorbike, a screaming fakir, a voluptuous queen, Bob Dylan on the run or it could turn into a Barnett-Newman painting, breathing hard. Depending on the circumstances.

It is clear that looking at a painting, does not affect the painting itself. On the other hand, we assume that paintings do affect people who are looking at them. Through whatever mechanism, people experience emotion, esthetical satisfaction, just by looking at paintings.

In Newtonian physics and in Newtonian society, reality was regarded as being objective, absolute and 'out there'. From René Descartes came the notion of the Universe as the Great Machine, governed by god-given laws that were, in essence, eternally true, and to be discovered by mortal beings, scientists for example.

Whatever the scientist, his observations, his emotions and speculations, his jumping up and down, reality remained as it always had been and as it, most likely, always would be. And, as in the case of the person looking at a painting, scientists, like everybody else, were most surely affected by being confronted with reality.

In both cases there is a one-way direction of traffic: from the art-work to the spectator, and from reality to the scientist.

In science, this one-way system was shattered by the principles of quantum theory: there is no such thing as an objective and absolute reality 'out there'. It is physically impossible to observe a system, to 'look' at a nuclear or sub-nuclear particle, without interfering with the observed system itself. Looking at a nuclear particle means to add energy to the observed system. Adding energy to the observed system, which constitutes the act of observation, physically changes that system and what is being observed is, consequently, an interaction between the act of observation and the observed event.

Reality, in other words, in quantum theory came to be understood as being the creative act of man, rather than an impartial, absolute and unchanging state. Reality in the Newtonian sense, had become defunct.

M E D I A

A R T
development

new technologies/new visions

-3-

Of course, such a discovery is a tremendous shock, a traumatic experience, comparable to the discovery of the earth not being flat, as had seemed to be quite obvious for as far as man could remember, but a sort of round ball, floating in empty space without anything to support it.

In general, people have not recovered from that shock. Instinctively we like to, or need to, believe in an 'out there' type of reality that is unaffected by the creative act of man. It is emotionally and existentially almost impossible to picture humanity, we ourselves, as the sole creator of reality.

As quantum theory put it: 'Reality is a free concept of the mind.', our mind, that is.

This is quite a change from the believe that reality had been put before us by a mystical, godlike being who had created all of it.

And what's worse: 'Free concept of the mind' implies, there is no logic or conscious premeditation to it either, it just so happens.

Reality is our own invention and we shape it the way it appears to be for the one and only reason that we want it, or need it, to be this way.

And as Robert Graves, a british poet, put it: 'The translation of the original meaning of the word 'reality' is: everything that one can dream of'.

Reality, in short, is the result of our creative interaction with the universe.

If we wouldn't be here to create reality, reality wouldn't be here either.

Although this is true in all circumstances, future art-works, based upon interactivity, will demonstrate this principle in a physical, rather than metaphysical, way.

Interactivity here means that the spectator materially may influence the painting itself: colors, imagery.

Depending on parameters, set by the artist, the painting will assume this form or that form, will go through a series of changes, or whatever is given as a possibility of the system.

In fact, it may even run away, yelling for help, or come up and kiss an admirer.

Technically it is possible. We have arrived at a state of technological achievement, where almost anything that you can dream of, is possible, where almost every free concept of the mind can be turned into material existence.

MEDIA

▲ R T
development

new technologies/new visions

--4--

Sensors of various kinds look at the world according to the technical specifications that are being given to them. They translate observations into a special kind of language, mathematics, computer language, and relate this to other equipment which, in turn, will generate other processes, resulting in images, sound, movement or other.

This process changes van Gogh's \$ 70 million painting into a genuine Warhol, actually reciting a poem by Taylor Meade.

In fact, as in science, the spectator is a decisive element of how a work of art becomes manifest, it is the spectator who generates the work of art, according to a set of possible parameters, constructed by the artist into the system.

The future media artist no longer will be the person who creates a fixed form for eternity to come, a one and only true reality, but he will store huge amounts of abstract information into memory-banks. Some of this information may concern imagery, some produces sound, movement, or generate smells. Other information controls other equipment, both in the room nextdoor and at the other side of the universe. The way in which this information may be retrieved, is controlled by specific protocols, usually designed by industrial software-engineers.

Since most protocols are dedicated programs, directed at the consumers market for functional use, they have their limitations and very soon the media-artist will need to learn the language in order to make his own protocols and to build his own, personal conditions, the parameters, into the system.

Among these conditions may be instructions to react in specific ways to information, coming from sensors, for example. Sensors sort of 'look' at particular conditions, such as heat, sound, movement, smell, vibrations, light, and report changes in these conditions.

These reports will influence the retrieval program, which, in turn, causes a physical change of the art-work.

It is very well possible to produce a painting which shows red imagery to redheaded females and blue stripes to businessmen. Redheaded females and businessmen together may cause the painting to blush, if this is an instruction to the system.

Future art-works, by consequence, will be 'tendencies to exist'. They may look this way or that way, depending on all

MEDIA



new technologies/new visions

-5-

kinds of conditions and circumstances, one of those being the spectator.

In fact, it is the spectator who decides upon the retrieval-program, it is the spectator who causes the art-work to appear as it does.

His act of observation, his presence, is giving shape to the work of art. The work of art is the result of the interaction between the observer and the specifications of the observed system, as designed by the media-artist.

This structure shows a remarkable resemblance to quantum theory in a number of ways:

Newtonian physics assumed an objective and impartial reality 'out there' versus the I in 'here'.

Quantum theory describes the observer as an integral part of scientific experiment, as part of 'reality'. There is no such thing as 'out there' and 'in here'. There is a space-time continuum, an all-encompassing quantum field.

Technically and substantially, a spectator of an interactive work of art is not separated from it.

He is connected to the system through the use of equipment like sensors and computers. In fact: he is part of the system itself.

Then: the act of observation, interfering with an observed event, creates a certain reality.

In the world of physics this reality may be called a particle, an electron or meson, in the world of the arts, this reality may be called a painting.

In both cases we are not dealing with objective reality, with objects of stable form and content, but with 'tendencies to exist'.

People are willing to pay \$ 70 million for a traditional painting, for 'objective reality'. Who will be ready to pay one penny for a 'tendency to exist'?

The author of the traditional painting, his essential being, can be read from the unchanging image.

The author of a 'tendency to exist' may be known through interacting with the art-work itself, by causing the art-work to react, by experiencing the routes the artist has designed as possibilities of the system which he has fed with every type of information.

MEDIA

ART
development

new technologies/new visions

-6-

Traditionally, the artist has been the creator of form. In the future, new technologies will allow the artist to be the creator of possibilities, to be materialized by the observer.

Apart from all other consequences, this is the dramatic, the monumental breaking point with traditional art and art-history, the fundamental awareness that will, eventually, change our perception and understanding of 'reality' and 'art'.

In a certain sense, art reflects on the nature of it's tools and the nature of future tools may best be described as dynamic and constantly changing.

It will not be the static image, the frozen moment in time, that will be the relevant aspect of the work of art, what will be relevant to art is the nature of it's changes.

And with this, I have transferred future, technological art from western thought, western philisophy, to eastern thought: it is not the meaning of the static, it's the experience of dynamic change, it's not the singer but the singing, it's not the goal that is important, it's the journey, the path, the way, Tao.

MEDIA

ART
development

recent history and
video-art developments

1. The Netherlands, history

Around 1864, a law, created by the Liberals, put the arts under special protection of the state government. Before that time, the arts were regarded as a normal craft, much like any other craft or trade. For whatever it was worth, the arts became the concern of the Dutch government and this general principle holds to this day.

After the second world war, more substantial measures were taken: the government would, under certain conditions, provide artists with production budgets as well as income.

Ministeries, responsible for Culture, had to take care of production, distribution, promotion. The Ministry of Social Affairs would provide professional artists with additional income, if this was needed.

2. The government

In the Netherlands we know three levels of government, responsible for conducting arts-policy.

Most dominant of these, of course, is the state government. Of lesser importance are the provincial governments and city or local governments: their degree of independence varied throughout the years, and was mainly dictated by the budgets allotted to them.

Although there is no proof of this, lower governments seem to gain a greater degree of freedom and independence at, financially, difficult times.

3. Recent history

Although the Dutch government is responsible for the arts, it is not to have an opinion on the quality of art works. A ministry is not supposed to know anything about the arts and is supposed to be impartial.

The Ministry of Culture, which is to provide for production budgets, distribution and promotion facilities, hands out grants to artists and arts-institutions. Law requires of the Minister to ask the advice of the state's Arts Council, consisting of experts, representatives of artists-unions, individual artists and people, appointed by the government itself.

Artists income, concern of the Ministry of Social Affairs, fell under special regulations, set by this Ministry, independently of arts-policy as conducted by the Ministry of Culture.

In return for income, artists, at times, had to give work to the government.

One of the results of this quite unique situation was a financial one-way track: the arts, in general, flourished, as well as institutions like arts academies, and the number of a great variety of artists increased rapidly. As a consequence, the state acquired an enormous amount of art works, which had to be stored, insured, distributed, promoted, sold, sometimes repaired etc..

Unluckily, the amount of art works was greater than society could possibly use and costs of upkeep, storage and the likes soared to tremendous heights, as did the expenditures for production budgets and artists income.

This became a bottleneck situation with the government paying through the nose. In fact, the government seemed to be the most important customer of the arts world.

MEDIA

ART
development

/2

After the 1973 oil-crisis, with a rapidly deteriorating economy, the government felt that something drastic had to be done in order to control costs and to further a more direct relation between the arts and society. A number of restrictive measures were taken and the relation between Ministry and Arts Council sometimes became a little harsh.

This process has continued up to this day.

Last year the government took the drastic step to stop providing artists with an income in return for work. The Ministry of Social Affairs transferred 4.60 million to the Ministry of Culture, which then was charged with conduction an overall arts-policy (production, distribution, promotion, income). At this present moment a total of 400 artists are allowed to claim additional income grants for a period of 6 months at the most. Around 3000 others were put on dole.

4. The Rise and Fall of Video-art

Although the government restricted the production of, in particular, the traditional arts, hoping expenses could be put under control, it nevertheless tried to keep an open mind as to new developments. Video, traditionally, had fallen to the department of film of the Ministry of Culture. A situation that nobody liked very much.

By 1982, the Arts Council formed a special committee to produce an advice as to what to do with video. Since the Arts Council itself could not provide for expert opinion, outside experts were placed on this board. Among those was the legendary Wies Smals, founder of the Appel Foundation which had a long history of using video as a means to record performances held on the Appel's premises. Later, when the more creative aspects of video became apparent and other institutions came into existence, new experts were born, many of whom found a seat in the special committee. By april of 1983 the committee had formulated it's ideas and recommendations. For some reason or other it took over a year for the report to reach the Ministry.

Main element of the advice of the special committe was that video was to be regarded as a true and valuable addition to the traditional fine-arts. The report contained a number of recommendations as to a possible infra-structure: it suggested a subsidized production system which would allow video-artists to produce work at relatively low costs. At the same time, a start was made with support of distribution and promotion efforts.

Not everyone was very happy with the committee's advice.

Especially the statement that video was to be regarded as a new element of the traditional fine-arts hurt the fine-arts section of the Arts Council. Still, the directional body of the Arts Council approved of the recommendations and this made the advice a formal advice of the Arts Council to the Minister, who accepted it for what it was.

One of the consequences of this was that a large budget had to be created and there was only one obvious source: the fine-arts section.

Various elements then coincided: on the one hand the fine-arts were very seriously threatened by government measures to cut on the income of artists and on the other hand another portion of the already limited budget had to be spent on video artists and institutions.

And all of this because of the advice of a special committee, in which the regular fine-arts section of the Arts Council had had very little, if anything at all, saying.

I assume this caused sore feelings at the fine-arts section of the Arts Council, which, in the following years showed very little consideration for what became

MEDIA

▲ R T
— development

/3

to be known as video-art.

So this was the situation in 1984: general expectations about the value of video-art were high; the Ministry of Culture was more than willing to get along with it; there were three major institutions functioning in the areas of promotion, distribution and production (Kijkhuis/the Hague; Time Based Arts and MonteVideo/Amsterdam); there was a very hostile Arts Council that felt that a new and expensive nitwit had been forced down its throat.

The exhibit THE LUMINOUS IMAGE, organised by Dorine Mignot of the Municipal Museum of Amsterdam, saved the year.

A number of artists, presented today at SPIRAL, also showed work at the Amsterdam exhibit: Dara Birnbaum, Francesc Torres, Shigeo Kubota and Tony Oursler.

The exhibit inspired quite a number of Dutch video-makers. There was a general feeling that it marked a new beginning in the area of video art in the sense that the sculptural aspect, the installation, the environment was very eye-catching. Many hoped that especially the sculptural aspect of video-art would convince the traditional arts that weird, one-channel tapes were not the only thing, offered by the new art-form.

Inspired by the success of the Luminous Image exhibition, the government granted an extra \$ 100.000 to be spent on display equipment which was meant to be used by video-artists at extremely low costs. This transaction was made possible through the active support of SONY-Holland, which had lent a staff of around 10 highly qualified technicians to prepare the Luminous Image exhibit. This staff worked at the Municipal Museum for a period of more than one week, from early morning until late at night, assisting each and every artist with the adjustment problems of the equipment.

It seems like a fairy-tale now: MonteVideo received a grant in 1984 of \$ 85.000, of \$ 200.000 in 1985 and, finally, a grant of \$ 240.000 in 1986.

Its personell grew from 1 man in 1983 to 10 fully employed in 1986.

Time Based Arts developed into a well-organised, creative distribution/promotion institution, receiving a government grant in 1986 of around \$ 150.000.

For a short while, everyone forgot about the Arts Council. It's fine-arts section consisted of 24 people. Twenty two of them could be considered as belonging to the traditional arts. Only two had shown interest in video art: Elsa Stansfield, who is a video-artist herself, and Loek van der Sande, former chairman of the Appel-foundation.

Although the Arts Council put up a violent resistance against further grants to the video-art institutions, the Ministry, intent on developing future art-forms, was prepared to engage in a furious debate with the Arts Council on this issue in 1985.

The next year, various elements coincided, however.

First of all there was the general cutback in expenditures on the arts which forced the members of the Arts Council, fine-arts section, even more to defend the traditional arts by getting rid of this expensive toy by the name of video-art. As mentioned before: it was a majority of 22 versus 2, or rather 1, since mr. van der Sande, disgusted with the debate, had left the Arts Council;

Then: since 1983 a large number of new video-artists, graduated from the arts-academies, had stepped up, producing and exhibiting work abundantly, aided by the institutions and by supportive museums like the Municipal Museum of Amsterdam. Unluckily, most work was not very mature in terms of quality and could not live up to the expectations that had been aroused by the Luminous Image exhibit. Most work consisted of one channel pieces,

MEDIA

▲ R T
development

/4

with clearly post-academy quality and the interest of museums started to dwindle.

Just a few artists were able to catch up with quality work of international standard.

On top of that the founder and director of MonteVideo Foundation proved not to have the managers-capabilities, needed to run a large and complicated organisation, which, in fact, he had never wanted to do in the first place.

So two years after Luminous Image, the situation had changed drastically: the Arts Council violently opposed further grants to the video-arts institutions that were providing for production facilities; MonteVideo, major production foundation, was in a state of collapse; Time Based Arts, promotion and distribution organisation, was forced to reorganize into professionalism and to give up its activities in film and sound; The Kijkhuis, the Hague, saw a large portion of its grants disappear.

It is remarkable that, in these circumstances, the fine-arts section of the Ministry of Culture maintained a creative attitude. First of all it informally stimulated research into the qualities and possibilities of new technologies in relationship to the arts. It allowed Time Based Arts more than a year to reorganize and it provided MonteVideo with a way out, financially.

In terms of money, the Ministry made an offer of a total of approximately \$ 600.000 to reorganise the structure to both Time Based Arts and MonteVideo. If, and to what extent, the government will, or is able to, participate in the setting up of an art/technology development, is to be decided this week.

As far as the previous periode is concerned, ranging from 1983 up to the beginning of july 1987, there is very little reason for a feeling of achievement: strong and creative organisations in the field of production, promotion and distribution of video-art, have not been able to use the chances that were offered to them by the Dutch government that was willing to risk open and serious conflicts with its advising body, the Dutch Arts Council: MonteVideo has collapsed into a one-man operation, headed by its founder; Time Based Arts, offered over \$ 350.00 a year, has not been able to reach an agreement that would satisfy both government and Arts Council. As a result, the future for this organisation remains highly uncertain for the time being.

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Paper Read at Duke University, North Carolina, USA

September 29, 1986

Kidlat Tahimik
(Revised Paper)

The Challenge of Third World Culture

Cups-of-Gas Filmmaking vs. Full Tank-cum-Credit Card Fillmaking

Author's Note: While writing this paper, I made a typographical error: instead of "filmmaker," it came out "fillmaker." A cosmic message--perhaps the core of this paper. So let the cosmic typographical error be an objet trouve of the visual artist trying to express himself in a paper medium.

Making a film is like taking a long trip. The film voyager can load up with a full tank and bring a credit card along to insure completion of the voyage in as short a time as possible. The voyager can also load up with a few cups of gasoline and drive until he runs out and scrounge around for subsequent cups of gas to get to his destination, without worrying about how long it takes to complete the voyage.

Completing the artwork is the voyage all artists set out to do, whether painter, writer or filmmaker. The length of the trip, TIMEWISE, is a matter of choice depending on the combination of ingredients--inspiration, resources, tools and working materials available, personal circumstances like family or emotional disturbances, etc.

Assuming the filmmaker has the optimal mix of these ingredients to complete a filmic work of art, he can still choose the timeframe: Either to follow the dictum: "Time is money", and battle with the clock to finish his artwork in the shortest period, or to allow time to be his ally and open up to cosmic inspirations provided by a relatively free timeframe.

The efficient path (i.e. timesaving) is the usual mode of commercial productions, whether one is doing a Hollywood Cecil B.

de Mille film or a Third World box-office hit. This is dictated by the laws of the investment world, where films are mainly a consumer product to be served like McDonald's hamburgers. [The McDonaldization of films is a reality I accept and do not want to waste energy fighting it.]

The inefficient road (i.e. time-indulging), full of detours and explorable nooks, is a choice which can be a luxury of artistic filmmakers in the richer countries (i.e. the First World) and can be a matter of necessity in the case of Third World filmmakers.

As a filmmaker, it takes me usually two or four years to complete a film, partly a necessity dictated by Third World realities and partly a choice to avoid the formulas dictated by bankrollers. Some can look at it as a lack of discipline, but discipline is always relative to preconceived "laws" of filmmaking learned in film schools.

Perhaps because film is the most expensive, most technologically dependent art form, there is a need for some form of discipline. One has to discipline oneself to save up for the next cup of gas, to buy a roll of film. One has to have the discipline to have enough light to enter the filmshutter, or to focus to register a good image.

But the discipline of time required in Hollywood is not an essential in the making of a good filmwork, especially if one chooses the discipline of allowing time to be one's co-director.

* It takes a sort of discipline to resist the emperor's-new-

clothes perception that time is an adversary always to be contended with (i.e., finish as many artworks as you can in your lifetime).

My film being made now might just be an extension of a "film" I lived in some previous life, or just a transitional sequence to a "film" I will experience in my next life. So why rush this life's scenario? And if I don't finish the film in this life...it's only a film. So my cups-of-gas drifting can continue into the next several lifetimes.

The Full Tank-cum-Credit Card (FTC) method of filmmaking is not confined to Hollywood, of course. If we consider Hollywood a process determined by an infrastructure, then one can say the FTC filmmaking is also done in the Third World. The result of this FTC filmmaking is the same formula films (formula: sex, violence, crashing cars), only with Filipino actors, and a more awkward way of crashing the cars.

With hindsight, I can say I have taken a detour from cliches because I have avoided the FTC=using OPM, or Other People's Money formula, which makes the real director of the film the comparative cost of capital in time deposit. Who directs the big budget films?

The efficiency required by the OPM formula dictates time, deadlines, schedules like a a taxi meter. Time is money. My lack of resources can become a blessing because my time frame escapes this deadline obsession, and allows me to discover motifs¹. The film becomes an interaction between me and the

cosmos, because I have escaped the straitjacket of FTC filmmaking.

Sour grapes? I could conceivably look for some FTC funding in my own country, with the credentials that Perfumed Nightmare has picked up. But looking back, I am beginning to discover ten years after I started making my first film that the shadow side of establishment filmmaking is not worth making 20 blockbusters in a decade.

Of course I could use a little more money to give me elbow room, but the drug of big budgets can restructure my whole way of expressing myself. For instance, originally (or, looking back, not so originally), I had conceived Magellan in my current film Memories of Overdevelopment [the story of Magellan's voyage from the viewpoint of his Filipino slave, the first person to circumnavigate the globe and return to his place of origin], to buy his slave in a Malacca slave market, examining him like a horse during the transaction--a traditional, clichéd view of the slave-master encounter.

The cups of gasoline for that scene came six months later. I happened to gather odd furniture from different friends' houses to fill a market stall. Instead of the original scene, what now happens is that Magellan, while buying furniture for his cabin, discovers the slave hiding in the chest from his angry Chinese master. In the process, the slave ends up in a buy-one-take-one deal. Time and the cosmos provided this new sequence. So who is to say that time is my adversary?

To take another example, trying to create a castle scene in Memories, I could have hired top notch production designers to make a cliché-acceptable, "realistic"-looking chateau. Instead I used a little chapel in my neighborhood, whose main richness is a beautifully tiled floor. *(I had to avoid framing the chapel wall which ~~of~~ looked modern).*

Many spectators would be disturbed by a floor-dominated chateau visual, but the suggestion is enough. And by permitting an objet trouvé to determine a scene, I manage to break out of clichés of what the royal courtroom should look like. What may provoke viewers to feel that Kidlat Tahimik is caricaturing "reality" is actually a free act of shooting the tile floor that was ~~there~~ *beckoning to be filmed.*

Another example: The American boss in Perfumed Nightmare in my original conception ^{was to} ~~looked~~ like a Madison Avenue executive going to the Philippines for a Miss Universe beauty pageant. But in shooting, the only Caucasian available was my clumsy-looking cameraman. So I forced him to go in front of the camera in a Boy Scout suit--the Boy Scouts are a very big movement in the Philippines--since that was what was available. And now film buffs say, "What a great caricature."

In Perfumed Nightmare, little Kidlat, the hero, is fascinated by Werner von Braun's world and Cape Kennedy and hi-tech society. He comes to realize that his strength is in his own Filipino identity. For the music in Perfumed Nightmare, I had a Kidlat theme. It's a piece from the Koran. I had been provided with tapes of ethnographic music, including three tapes

of Muslim music from Mindanao. But of so many tunes I instinctively chose ~~one~~ ^a particular ~~one~~ ^{tune,} without understanding the Arabic text, and repeated it throughout the film. After my first screening in Paris, an Egyptian student excitedly asked me how I had chosen the music and said that the words were so relevant. Then he explained that in the song, after Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice his son, he is confused about why God would ask for blood. In trying to understand God he sees the moon and asks, "Is that my God?" The moon disappears; he is disappointed. Likewise the sun provokes him to ask "Is that my God?" The sun rises and sets. He continues questioning. The stars come and go, ^{Finally,} and he concludes that God is within himself.

Many professionals tell the beginning filmmaker, "You should not take too long to finish a film, because too many changes happen within the individual filmmaker." That is a great rule for time-efficient FTC filmmaking. *But allowing oneself to be capsulized in the cocoon of Time-is-money means closing out the cosmic offerings.*

Time incorporated as an ally into one's filmmaking brings a different dynamic into the film. And therefore the film should be viewed with non-Hollywood filters and should be appreciated and criticized with different criteria. Third World films are perceived as slow by the fast-cutting ~~habits~~ habits we are used to. Perhaps we have to learn to use a time frame similar to the neverending story of ramayanas or odysseys.

But of course in America one doesn't have the luxury of time to watch a 48-hour film, like an Indonesian watching shadow-puppet theater for several days. What I mean here is accepting

the time-frame of Third World filmmakers even if watching a standard two-hour-long film.

Watching films or reading novels is a matter of habit. The visual excitement pumped and overstuffed into FTC films, which today is equated with quality in films, may in fact be crutches to disguise the lack of any inner quality, any profundity of spirit.

Formula films probably get the kinds of audiences they deserve, and even condition them to accept these as the only valid style of filmmaking. And I might add that the filmgoing public also deserves the kind of films they support.

Producers call for a sex scene or a mugging about 45 minutes into a film, because scientific studies of ass-behavior show that Western butts get restless at this point. But when you think about the Indonesians squatting for days on end, is it *possible that the* quality of the performance ~~that~~ affects the restlessness? Should butt-habits determine the quality of the film? Cups-of-gas audiences have to be developed over time. Those who have learned to accept the filmmaker's time framework have probably learned to depose the butt-dictator.

These audiences will continue to grow, because the McDonaldization of films will sooner or later--probably much later--call for new menus coming from the world of Rochester [home of Kodak] spaghetti. Hollywood fast foods will succumb to the Third World lariat (slo-mo banquets). What would you like to

order, sir? The Purple Couscous of Cairo? or The Yellow Big Mac of Texas?

(end of article. To be included as well: sketches by Tahimik, to come.)

Woody —

Kidlat asked me to
send this to you.

I may be in
Tempe, Az. in early Dec.
When will you be there?
Barbara
(LONDON)

THE PERFUMED NIGHTMARE...a commentary

"Kidlat Tahamik's film, THE PERFUMED NIGHTMARE, is one of the most original and poetic works to be created in the 70's".

Werner Herzog

"After spending two years in the Phillipines during the shooting of APOCALYPSE NOW, I discovered a true film of a phillipino filmmaker, which must be shown in the the United States: Kidlat Tahimik's THE PERFUMED NIGHTMARE."

Francis Coppola

"THE PERFUMED NIGHTMARE turned out to be the nicest, unperfumed daydream that I've ever seen on the screen."

Wim Wenders

"After months of miserable cinema-going, THE PERFUMED NIGHTMARE was the biggest surprise, because it showed that innocence, enchantment, impudence and fantasy are still attainable in the cinema."

Susan Sonntag

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ART development

Woody Vasulka

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Amsterdam, august 17 1987

Dear Woody,

Since I didn't know this party was supposed to be a farewell-party I just didn't say goodbye to a lot of people. The next night, around midnight, I drove past Spiral and saw a lot of crates behind the glass-doors. The following morning, Nakaya-san told me the whole of the third floor had been dismantled and all of you had gone to Kyoto.

A pity. I had enjoyed your company and that of Ernie, Tomyo and Gene Youngblood so much: nostalgia and a longing for the old days of experimental film were very strong. It is something I miss in the relatively small world of video-art: those were the days of giants and myths, of poetry and anger. A few of the really great people have survived and sometimes, in faraway places like Tokyo, they meet at weird occasions for a very short time.

I agreed with Ernie when he said that the only thing that was important is the sense among artists that they themselves are the real thing, that video/filmmakers have to show work to each other and derive inspiration from that; and with your remark that we'd have to find our way back to a Renaissance-idea. Sure, that's how we made film around 15 years ago: there were no museum-curators to be concerned about. Hardly any museum at all did know anything about experimental film, with the exception of a few enlightened darlings like Sally Dixon, mother to Stan B..

I remember the first time when I met P. Adams Sitney in Amsterdam, where I was a student at the Dutch Film Academy, trained to be a movie-director (I graduated in fact), where he showed things like Dog-Star-Man, Mothlight, Sirius Remembered, A Flower Thief, Jack Smith etc.. The first time I saw anything like film as I had expected it to be.

It changed my life, in fact, and I have never changed back. So finding you there in Tokyo, in a certain sense meant meeting a very dear past and I'm glad that you haven't lost your spirit or your senses.

MEDIA

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Woody Vasuika

-2-

Now back to the future: I will coöperate in trying to do something about the Japan arts-situation. I have asked for a meeting with the Ministry of Culture to see what can be done about it: I need their support to write a clear and not too lengthy summary of the Dutch arts-history in relationship with legislation and I'm interested to know what else I can get them to do, maybe they have suggestions too for an approach through diplomatic channels, when the time comes. Anyway, the Japan-Netherlands Institute in Tokyo has promised to support the effort.

I had a talk about it with Michael Goldberg. He will coöperate, if so asked, and look into Canada. He favors a strong Japanese body to talk to the Japanese government institutions or politicians. He doesn't want to do a lot of work if there is no real Japanese platform to take it further.

What we can do is summarize our own situations and, in collaboration with a Japanese arts-body, try to come up with a model that is suited to the Japanese situation. At the same time we may try to generate diplomatic pressure and see that the whole thing gets the attention of the media. But the important thing is a strong Japanese representation that will stand up to politics. In my view this body should also try to come up with substantial plans, proposals, arts-budgets etc., by way of avoiding theoretical hassle. We are not only dealing with legislation but, immediately afterwards, with reality: funds must be made available, arts-programs be put to work.

I do realize that it is going to be very difficult, but, on the other hand, if you don't start at all, nothing will change. So let's do it.

I also had rather lengthy talks with Dara and Francesc about their mishaps, grief, sorrow and tears as to the organisation at Spiral. In fact, I have never seen Dara cry more often than at the Spiral.

Still, this has surprised me very much for I find their attitudes towards these occasions a bit childish. Don't they ever work with contracts? They are grown-ups and mature artists, aren't they? They should know by now, how organisers of arts-exhibits work!

I put it to them that, because of the way he works, nobody takes a person like Bob Wilson for a ride (contracts and specifications first, then the champagne).

As long as video-artists allow themselves to be manipulated

MEDIA

A R T
development

Woody Vasulka

-3-

in the sense that oral commitments of organisers cannot be upheld, they will be treated as amateurs. They should show more guts and be less happy with the peanuts that somebody throws in their direction. I told them the story of a club in Amsterdam that was about to open, a couple of years back. In order to gain an enormous membership, they almost made it impossible for people to become members. An old trick. Since exclusivity was suggested very strongly, everybody wanted to be in and paid up.

In the periode that I worked for the late-MonteVideo, I did the same thing with artists-tape prices: normally the museums wouldn't pay more than \$ 200.-- for a tape. Only Paik got about \$ 400.--. We set new prices at a minimum of \$ 700.--. Outrageous! Everybody refused to pay that money. As a consequence they didn't get the work either. Pushing and pulling. The old score. Now prices of tapes range from \$ 750.-- to over \$ 1.000.--. Artists usually are much stronger than they themselves believe to be. Tears and self-pity are idiotic.

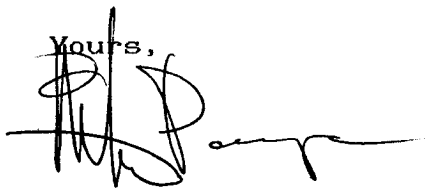
Dear Woody, Steina and you will have a marvellous time in Japan, I'm sure. I have talked with Nakaya-san about it and with Alfred B.. In the first periode it will be a bit hard since you will need more equipemnt and space than is available.

The Japanese artists will be full of uncertainty and frustration and look upon you with great reserve. I'm absolutely sure that both of you carry enough gentleness, creativity and spirit to get them moving in the end. I saw some experimental film through Image Forum (Takashi Nakajima) and it's worth while to work with those people. I'm sure you will find it very worth while and inspiring.

Lets keep in touch. I will let you know from time to time how I am progressing.

Please give my regards and love to Steina. I hope to meet both of you in the near future, possibly in Tokyo.

Yours,



Niko Paape