



KIOSK 8

Melbourne Super 8 Film in the 1990s

Saturday 3 September, 2pm

Art Gallery of New South Wales Domain Theatre

\$8/5 SIN members free

A KIOSK is a light, open, out of doors structure for the purveyance of a range of goods. These goods are often small and quickly consumed, like ice lollies or canned drinks; some are fatally addictive but nonetheless partaken of with irresponsible alacrity, like cigarettes; others, when brought home, lie around for days, weeks, months even, to be returned to, mulled over, like magazines or paperback books. A kiosk is many things to many people. It is an interesting word to exercise the mouth employing both hard and soft consonant and vowel sounds. On the page it is deceptive giving the appearance of a palindrome with its unusual pairing of the k at the beginning and end, but the i and s deny symmetry. It is a word that is both familiar and strange conjuring up many associations, images and metaphors.

KIOSK is the umbrella title for the **8 Melbourne Super 8 Film Group's** thrice yearly series of ostentatious projections of Super 8 film. **Kiosk 8** has now acquired wheels and is being towed, caravan style, up the Hume Highway to Sydney, stocked with a selection of Super 8 films from the first four years of the 1990s.

This selection is far from exhaustive; such a small portable vehicle has nothing like the capacity to contain the warehouse full of goods that have been produced since the last **Melbourne Super 8 Film Group** program presented in Sydney (at the Harold Park Hotel in September 1990). Instead it provides a sample, a taster of the work of some of the filmmakers who have chosen to use Super 8 film within the context of the group.

Some of these filmmakers work has spanned more than a decade, others have emerged more recently. This program represents a range of the work produced in the 1990s and points to potential directions for the practice as the decade progresses.

PROGRAM Part 1

Eiffel Tower Sponge Film

Chris Windmill/4 mins/1991

Over the years Chris Windmill has made a number of quite unique Super 8 films which are typified by a wry dead-pan humour combined with stylistic sophistication and effortless mastery of the medium. Perhaps what is sometimes overlooked in his films is the absurdist satirical commentary on some of our more equally absurd practices and institutions: advertising (**The Bowel-Houndromat**), the church and materialism (**The Miracles of Hilda**), the art world (**The Cuttock Heads**) and more recently popular capitalism (**O Elusive Sparrow**). In **Eiffel Tower Sponge Film** he turns his attention onto some rather fascinating kitsch souvenirs that he and Pinry picked up on their visit to Paris.

Gritty

Maeve Woods/7 mins/1991

Maeve Woods is one of a number of members of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group for whom filmmaking is but one aspect of their activity. Her output encompasses painting, installation and multi-media performance. Most of her film work is typified by longer-than-average Super 8s such as **Flashing Flesh and Bones Parts 1&2** (46 mins) and **Out of Place** (52 mins). These have concentrated on exploring the minutiae of a number of natural, and more often not-so-natural, environments and phenomena. The duration of each of these films has allowed her to linger over a range of subjects and images drawing unlikely, and yet strangely familiar, connections and metaphors through collagic juxtaposition. It is as though, as she says in the case of **Out of Place**, "this film was made by an insect", and indeed winged creatures are the "stars" of the film! **Gritty** is more singular in its subject matter and observes the behaviour and appearance of those other strange creatures, humans, in the unnatural habitat of Bondi Beach.

Soft

Jennifer Pignataro/4.5 mins/1991

The film work of Jennifer Pignataro represents an example of a practice not uncommon in Super 8. She is, like many members of the group, someone for whom filmmaking is as much a recreational activity as anything else, and yet this orientation does not diminish the integrity of her work. Her films are very much personal documents which examine particular experiences and events such as a visit to a football match (**Wild Day**) or the other worldly strangeness of a beauty parlour (**Face Job**). **Soft** is a film which, through using images of objects precious to the filmmaker and shots of esoteric hand signs, and by concentrating on the resonance of their colour and form, becomes a poetic study of light and atmospherics.

Michelangelo's Dream

Bill Mousoulis/5 mins/1991

One of the founder members of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group, Bill Mousoulis has been one of its most vocal advocates as well as one of its more prolific filmmakers. In the 1990s however, Bill decided to retire from direct involvement in the organisation of the group, preferring to concentrate on his own film work. This resulted in him moving away from a short film format to fulfill his ambition to make longer narrative films. In the last two years he has made two feature length Super 8 films (**Open City** and **Ladykiller**). **Michelangelo's Dream** is his last short film to date and finds Bill in a philosophical mood. Perhaps deliberately Godard-esque in structure and theme the film is an essayistic narrative exploration of relationships between individuals and their being-in-the-world.

Midsummer

Ooni Peh/4 mins/1992

One of the most efficacious properties of Super 8 film is its well known lightness

and portability. Often these properties lend themselves to the production of films which are subtle and agreeably 'slight'; such a refreshing change from the bombastic ambition of so much contemporary cinema. In just a couple of years Ooni Peh has made a handful of films that utilise this quality, films in which the ego of the filmmaker takes a secondary role to the simple but essential task of reflecting the mood of a time and a place. **Midsummer** is such a film. Brief and quiet it is a study of an inner Melbourne garden, an oasis of calm in the midst of the urban bustle.

City Walk

Moira Joseph/3 mins/1992

City Walk is another 'sense of place' film, this time immersed in the grime and traffic. Moira Joseph worked as a photographer for a number of years before being introduced to Super 8. Her background in photography and knowledge of the photo-chemical process has lead her to experiment with home processing and applying chemical cocktails to Super 8 footage with often spectacular effect; a practice for which she has coined the term "film abuse". This film is ostensibly a documentation of one of Melbourne's busiest intersections, but the processing and chemicals inflicted on the film produce a second layer of grimy smog infused images which enhance a sense of chaos, subjective urban anonymity and alienation.

Off Off On

Steven Ball/4 mins/1992

This film was an attempt at a study of claustrophobia and interiority. It is perhaps my most (my only) deliberately 'personal' film to date. The film combines images shot at night around my home suburb, getting the most out of available (street) light, with distorted photocopies of limbs. The soundtrack features a voice-over drawing on personal experiences from over thirteen years ago and notions of the duality between travel and stasis: going nowhere fast. A friend once described it as "photocopy film-noir".

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Sides of Sea on the Shortest Day of the Year

Sandra Munro/15 mins/1991

Sides of Sea on the Shortest Day of the Year has, for me, become one of the landmarks in recent Melbourne Super 8 filmmaking. Sandra Munro set herself the project of documenting the seascape of Port Phillip Bay from Brighton Beach on the years shortest day from dawn to dusk. "I approached this film like a painter, recording that which excited my senses then and there and so selecting images according to my own rhythms of spontaneity" (Sandra Munro, *Cantrill's Filmnotes* 65/66, October 1991). This intuitive approach results in a film that synthesises a poetic fluidity of representation and movement with the pro-filmic elements of Super 8: variations in exposure and focus, bursts of the ambient sound, which is often nothing more than the sound of the wind on the microphone, punctuated by the millisecond gaps and clicks between shots. That the inherent qualities of the medium are such an integral part of the filmwork, make this one of the best examples of what used to be called "Structural Materialism" I have ever seen, with a difficult beauty that transcends illusion.

INTERVAL Part 2

Arnold West

Gary O'Keefe & Deborah Warr/
13 mins/1992

Gary O'Keefe makes home movies with a difference. His earlier films *Ormond* and *Rosstown Road* both feature his family and domestic environment in suburbia, and yet he brings a rare sensitivity to his subjects that transforms the everyday into a poetic experience. He employs a mode of shooting, editing and production more usually found in dramatic fiction films (combining the play of light, framing, colour, sound and the use of music); indeed he readily admits that he attempts to fictionalise life. Yet of course these are no more simply narrative than they are straight documentary, rather a highly refined hybrid. *Arnold West* was made in collaboration with his partner Deborah Warr and was shot on a visit to her grandmother's home in central Victoria. The sheer artistry and care taken in its construction makes *Arnold West* one of the most indescribably moving Super 8 films of recent years.

Summer Slide

Mark La Rosa/6.5 mins/1994

Mark La Rosa is an extremely interesting filmmaker. For a number of years his work was typified by a fairly conventional narrative film practice. In films such as *Darling for a Day* and *Working Week* he weaves subtle, neo-realist tales of the rites of passage of outer suburban adolescent life. He has continued to work in a narrative form, but in the more conducive 16mm format, on films such as *Paper Chains* (with Richard Tuohy) and the nearly completed *Cafe Lobos*. In spite, or perhaps because, of this his recent Super 8 work (*Bridget Among the Ten Thousand Things & Untitled*) has become far more 'experimental', certainly more exploratory, both in terms of his approach to apparently personal documentation and the handling of film material. In *Summer Slide*, his latest film, he uses home shot footage with snatches of a re-shot Hollywood B movie and film leader, scratching, colouring, manipulating sound into a film, which as the title suggests, slides into the haze of a long summer afternoon.

4 Pitches for Saxophone

Barry Brown/4 mins/1994

Barry Brown is a relative newcomer to the group. The title of this film indicates the acoustical quality of images; a number of diverse abstract and blurry representational images in a continuous flow which meld with the sustained sonorous layered saxophone pitches (played by Chuan Lim) of the soundtrack.

Lunnettes

Norma Pearse & Pete Spence/
8 mins/1993/4/-

It would not be unfair to describe Norma Pearse and Pete Spence as committed experimentalists. They have both produced some remarkable and elegant films over the last three or four years. Norma tends to use a variety of materials and techniques in her work: computer and cell animation, drawing and scratching film, refilming 16mm, working with sculptural forms. Her *Ficheing* (re-shot Ortho film in a microfiche reader) and *Islamic* (an investigation of Islamic philosophy and symbolism which Jim Bridges recently

described as "...one of the best films ever made in this country"!)) both display a finely tuned sensitivity in their handling of material and subject. Pete Spence is a veteran of the local small press and visual poetry scene and a motivated cultural activist. His activities include publishing and mail art and his output in these areas is dizzyingly prolific, as is his filmmaking. Pete's films have at various times included the use of recopying, home processing, found footage and, more recently, animated collage and text in a process that relates directly with his work as a 'visual poet'. In 1992 his film *Diction* achieved the rare distinction of being selected for the Oberhausen Film Festival. As partners it was only a matter of time before they collaborated directly on a film and *Lunnettes* is that film. It draws on elements of both of their work, primarily utilising animated text and re-shot images, and is an 'additive' work in as much as it is continually 'in progress': for each screening they add more film. As they say "the filmmakers are one-eyed about this work".

Wattism '94

Tony Woods/8 mins/1994

Tony Woods is another recent convert to Super 8 filmmaking but no stranger to the world of art. As a painter he has for many years worked with the representation of light in all its manifestations and conditions. In replacing his paint brush with a movie camera and a collection of small refracting lenses, he has discovered a new medium with which to continue this exploration with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. His filmed subjects have included such celestial light emitting bodies as the sun and the moon. *Wattism '94* is in part a homage to Edison as he concentrates on a more earthly light source, the humble electric light globe, in order "...to film my mind's eye...the hope of focussing my own filament to conduct defracted configurations from light."

Rough Geometry

Nick Ostrovskis/4 mins/1994

Nick Ostrovskis has been making Super 8 films for over ten years. In that time his films have gone through a number of gradual changes. From the early time-lapse studies of Melbourne (*Westgate Bridge*, *Optic Youth*) through to his more recent explorations of colour and form (*Colors*, *Brain Surge*) there is a consistent thoroughness to his films. Almost always silent (except for *Brain*

Surge which in its 16mm version features a music track by Chris Knowles) his films have a rhythm that is musical in itself and a kinetic, pixilated vibrancy. *Rough Geometry* is a recent film in which he continues to explore the possibilities of animating etched and coloured slides through his distinctive single frame shooting and zooming technique.

Under a Liquidambar

Michael Kelleher/14 mins/
1994

In his third film to date Michael Kelleher continues his exploration of the possibilities of narrative. Like his previous films *Getting in and Out of a Car* and *Before the Plastic Bag: A History of Shopping Carriers*, *Under a Liquidambar* employs a very particular formal device. In this case, in a first person narrative voice-over, Veronica tells the tale of a meeting under a tree and the places they journey to "far away from the gaze of others". Images of water, space and repeated fragments of landscape, filmed at different times of the year, fill the screen. The device is simple, restrained and effective. The distance between the voice and the images is filled with the resonance of the implications of the tale as it unfolds. "Dealing in the nebulous world of how people treat each other, this film describes the role chance and contradiction play in our lives and asks the viewer to make decisions about their own morality." - Michael Kelleher.

Acknowledgment is due to some of the filmmakers working within the group whose films are not represented by the programme. In particular Richard Tuohy whose concern has been with producing some consistently fascinating narrative films such as *Ordinary Flux*, too long, unfortunately, for inclusion here. Also absent the comically anarchic dramas of Perry Alexander, the silent narratives of Les Hillis (currently interstate), the intriguing Heinz Boeck (currently overseas), the ubiquitous Jim Bridges and many others whose work has and will continue to enliven the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group screenings.

Finally, these notes would not be complete without mentioning Arthur and Corinne Cantrill who have consistently supported Melbourne Super 8 filmmakers through the pages of *Cantrill's Filmnotes*. For expansive coverage of the Melbourne Super 8 scene look no further than *Filmnotes*, in particular Issue 67/68 which is largely dedicated to filmmakers from the group.

Steven Ball, August 1994

SIN-E-SCOPE COMING PROGRAM

Films from the land of 7,107 islands
or how to make movies during a brown-out
Curated by Virginia Hilyard.

Wed 12 October, 8.30pm

Venue: American Express Foundation Hall, Museum of Contemporary Art, Circular Quay, Sydney

\$8/\$6 and \$5-SIN, AFI and MCA members

Please note changed date and location

In association with the National Cinematheque, SIN presents Philippine film & video curated by Virginia Hilyard during her recent residency in the Philippines. The works are mainly from Manila and reflect contemporary issues within the Philippines through the personal experience of the filmmakers - the environment, survival, the family, displacement and post-colonialism. The visions and concerns of the artists are as disparate and scattered in identity as the country itself - an archipelago of 7,107 islands in the South China Sea - yet a unifying factor throughout all the works is the desire to speak out beyond the deeply entrenched values of the church, the family and a culture of obligation and expectation that sustains corruption.

November & December

Art Gallery of NSW

WORKS FROM CANADA AND THE UK

In November and December SIN-E-SCOPE will host programs curated and presented by international guests of *EXPERIMENTA* - Ian Rashid (UK) and Mike Hoolboom (Canada).

Ian Rashid will present *Uneasy Tales of Desire* - contemporary British gay and lesbian works. Mike Hoolboom will present a program of his own work titled *The Agony of Arousal*.