



*etching a new subversive ground -
formal directions in experimental video*

a selection of videowork from

retArded eye

SAM LANDELS - RICK MASON - CAM MERTON - VIKKI WILSON

"Etching a New Subversive Ground - Formal Directions in Experimental Video"

Albie Thoms (and many others) have repeatedly stated that we have yet to even begin to start exploring the potential of film in specific, and the moving image in general. Perhaps more so than any other form of visual/aural art, the moving image remains securely placed within a 19th century tradition of linear narrative. In many ways, creative speculation with/in moving imagery has been left to those few who have personally articulated a developmental vehicle to explore terrain ineffable by any other means. In the cinema there was always the possibility of entering into exciting new areas of creative endeavour particular to the direct image/light/sound /time relationship that it consists of - unfortunately these areas have only been touched in the past 90 years. With film production, there has always been a restrictive right of access to the very tools of the medium - at various points in time, through various strategies, these have been subverted (or overcome to a certain extent) permitting experimental based developments to occur. This is not entirely true of video however - (and there is a difference no matter how often they are spoken of as one and the same) - perhaps because of the technology it is constructed from.

For many, technology remains the emancipating instigator of new forms and developments - for others there is a displacement of the apparatus into a whole new range of possibilities not necessarily similar to those before - perhaps more exclusive and particular than it is enlightening. Through the past century, many moving image developments have been encountered and accepted, cultivated and employed in many different forms - at present we stand on the cusp of exciting new developments that many say will promise a potential emancipation from those crippling market driven exhibition and distribution factors that have submerged (if not crippled) speculative film initially, and recently that of video. Yet, it would be foolish to believe that this technology alone can enlighten makers and audiences alike - more appropriately (I suspect) it will further politicise itself along much the same avenues and principles of capital/market development that have impoverished most other forms of creative exploration this century.

Video based technology has granted far wider access and much greater flexibility to methods of production than the cumbersome and costly photo-chemical based film production could ever hope to permit -this has facilitated an ever increasing range of concerns and ideas to be explored and expressed with relative ease. For many, this proliferation of purpose has led to a restriction based not with the structures of the technology itself (as with film), but rather within the ever narrowing of the contextual framework as it has been identified within, and apparently viewed from. As articulate as we have become to the variety of pronouncements within this reflective hall of mirrors, there are those that find that the creative potential for the tools available to be subservient to the directives of exclamation alone. In this sense, the term 'experimental' or 'speculative' represents little more than a motif. Perhaps because of this there has appeared a marked presence of emerging work that refuses to embrace specific thematic areas of illustrative discourse - many of those that have become commonplace over the past five years. In refusing to embrace these directives, it can be assumed that these developments constitute a position of avoidance.

This screen-based exhibition will sample the speculative formal developments accomplished over the past four years by the Perth metropolitan based group RetArdeed Eye. Working together for a number of years, this group of video artists have resolutely maintained their progress despite the lack of local generative support in this state. Similar to any group of individuals working in close relation to each other - whether it be collectively or alone - there is a variety of ideas and approaches surfacing and intermingling with each other. At times in stark contrast to each other, at times noticeably similar, the collective work of this group proposes a pursuit greater than any one direction alone. Although the differences may be only initially noticeable through nuance alone in such a visually demanding programme of works, it is within this unusual framework that all of the work within this programme has been developed and therefore seen. By negating much of the need to contain and discuss, this work is indicative of those exploring the peculiar range of attributes possible only in video in a manner that permits viewers to develop a more subjective relationship with than that provided by the maker(s) alone. As such, this work samples a resistance to limit experimentation to a mere execution of content or communication driven imperatives - widening the field into a new subversive terrain of avoidance that incorporates elements of the sensory as a stimulant to the intellect itself.

Nude Eel - (Rick Mason/Vikki Wilson, 1993 - 3 mins., colour/sound)
Johnny - (Sam Landels/Cam Merton, 1991 - 4 mins., colour/sound)
Blatter - (Vikki Wilson/Sam Landels, 1995 - 2 mins., colour/sound)
Coec - (Sam Landels, 1992 - 6 mins., colour/sound)
In - (Cam Merton, 1992 - 4 mins., colour/silent)
Fugue - (Cam Merton/Rick Mason/Vikki Wilson, 1994 - 8 mins., colour/sound)

Metholyte - (Sam Landels/Rick Mason/Cam Merton/Vikki Wilson, 1995 - 14 mins., colour/sound)
Journey to the Sleeping Sun - (Cam Merton, 1992 - 6 mins., colour/sound)
The Illuminated Man - (Sam Landels, 1992 - 5.5 mins., B/W/sound)
Without Sleep - (Cam Merton, 1993 - 3.5 mins., colour/sound)
Nerve Bells - (Sam Landels, 1993 - 8 mins., B/W and colour/sound)

An awareness of retarded vision may have come to you once as an amber blemish burnt over the retina, a flow in the eyes clarity caused by prolonged exposure to brilliant light. It may have arrived in charcoal grain and drained hues during a potent illness, or a buzzing field of colour soaked phosphenes in periods of exhilaration and drug induced sensitivity. You may have at various points along your life, experienced eidetic visions that serve to expand and liven up your perceptual repertoire. These may have constituted memories, traces of events, nostalgic impressions of past, even projections of future by colouring and texturing the 'material' world so that it gains significance as shimmering 'immaterial'.

These are autonomous works that deny individual commentary, that seek to locate an amorphous universe and fill it with optical phenomena that is felt by the senses and always understood.

(Sam Landels)

Ex-stasis.

Sired by a man in a suit.

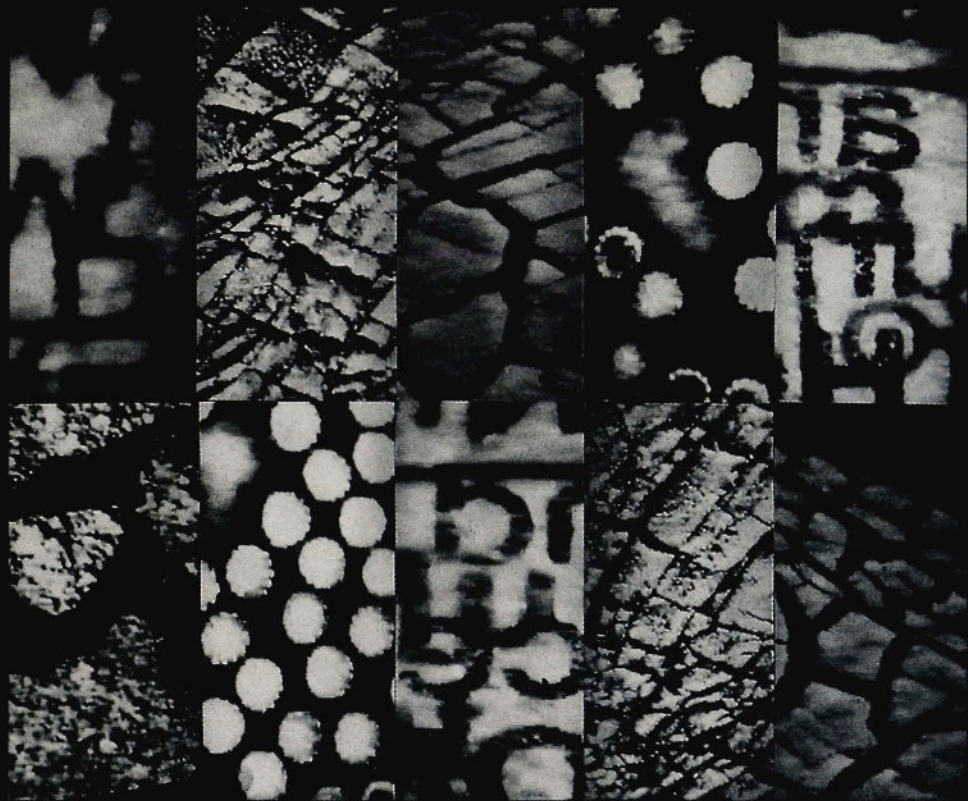
Out of the womb of industry, we were born to be entertained.

The television tube gave us suck, the cinema warmed and pleased and disciplined us.

We are the heirs. Our legacy is three generations of chemical and electronic stimulants; dangerous riches of all kinds. Ex-stasis occurs for us in these terms.

This is our pedigree. This is the audience we find ourselves part of. This is our audience.

(Cam Merton)



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