

copy for Sally

March 12, 1971

Dear Clayton,

For twenty-four hours now I've been disturbed by the hesitations in my writing you yesterday apropos changes in my orders of making, disturbed about the wind-beggingness of that writing (utterly inappropriate in consideration of the exactitudes I actually feel): the writing yesterday was too much of a nebulosity springing from social fear: I was continuing to 'hold back' my writ from even you, one of my closest friends, because (to put it simply) I was afraid you'd read the extreme of my feelings as insane: this is, of course, because I am fearful of the meanings, the very means, I've come to of late. I write, on the one hand, that I have abandoned those aspects of Intellect which would sit in Editorial judgement upon the FULL experiencing of creative moment, momentum; and, on the other hand, I am naturally enough afraid that this can be read as 'losing my mind'.

All this last day, William Carlos Williams': "I declare it boldly": rings in my head, his: "with my heart in my teeth: but I declare it".

Very well, then, I am, and always have been, what this society mostly describes as "crazy": there is, ~~and never has been~~ no help for that; and there never has been any help for it, although I have spent a major part of my life attempting to make the creative processes, as I experience them, reasonable to the aesthetic persuasions of this century, or at least explicable within that tiny arena left to us for what is considered, say, 'the dailliances of art interest': this many years' 'talkathon' of mine has been as honest as I, or I think anyone, could be able within the field of rhetoric, as honest as any persuasion (or "apologia" as P. Adams described "Metaphors On Vision"); and yet it was limited to politics, aesthetic politics, all the same, and thus locked into a system far too narrow (like a railroad, as in 'railroading') for full consideration of the matter at hand (the Universe itself, as the hands actually feel it, 'feel Cosmic and timeless in their motions, when making'): in short, ALL my writings and speakings (with the possible exceptions of a few passages here and there, especially several in "The Brakhage Lectures") were not honest-enough to begin to satisfy as record, even, of what is KNOWN (as distinct from what is thought).

I declare it, then (with Williams' voice ringing in my ears, as much as his words) that, for instances:

Artists are born, and thus destined (unless destroyed) to be instruments of creation incomperable and outside Time or Place: (W. D.'s: "Write! / Write or die!": burns thru my thought as encouragement): Aesthetics is that social structure which attempts to root the manifestations of these Artists to Place, the very 'pots' of Style, and to limit them<sup>th</sup> Timewise, to make a very Sport of them for competition, etc.

No!, I don't want to get bogged down in these old arguments . . .

I begin again . . .

I declare it boldly:

Artists are born . . .

They are receivers of specific instructions from The Unknowable . . .

They have no choice in even The Matter of their accomplishments . . .

They are not to be credited with more than that they manage to remain alive so long as it is allowed . . .

Their instructions are as specific as the movements of atomic particles and stars, galaxies, The Universe itself, shot thru with shoots as sure as grass and comets and fallingnesses and peppered with free radicals beyond any comprehension . . .

Their working orders, when They are fully true to them, are beyond All that Choice which every institute accords to Man for his Pride, his 'flock's' sake, and are also as explicit and substantial as the existence of every object and non-object, every warp and woof, of tangible experience: their working orders are at one/indivisible with every vestige taken as subject-matter!

I will declare it more personally yet:

I have always depended absolutely upon "the angels" (my term for "The Unknowable" as it seems to reach me in varieties of specific, 'angelic'-seeming as-if-personages); and I have depended upon these 'persuasions' (rather than 'forces') to affect their wishes throughout the interstices of every daily happening as well as the particular materials of creation as well as thru the moves of me, my moods, and my every movement when creating . . .

And I have failed, in the making of every work, to lend myself fully to these persuasions, have failed to be star-enough or wheat-stalk-like or, in final fact, fully human (for I believe, with The Dogons, that Man's fullest 'flowering' is as Appreciator of The Universe), thus failed in all but those unforgettable 'passages' of any film FOR which the whole rest of the film acts as 'frame' or supportive structure (it is very much as in Ballet made clearly visible -- so much dancing for those few brief instances when all the Appreciators suddenly recognize the experience of . . . what can one call it? -- the inspired movements they've all, dancers and audience, been working and waiting for) . . .

And I know now that The Angels, patient as they are about all my hesitations and the with-holdings my Ego has prompted to shore itself in fear of spaciousness (these Angels having no stop-watch upon me, none but The Big Clock beyond all Time), are all the same, as they ever were, butt-hurrying/but hurried (I have not words, which leads me to think I put it wrongly: yes!, that it was simply that I have been behind myself) and playfully harry my every movement (as I would have it be, with all my heart) for some more full usage than ever before!

I will declare it more specifically yet:

The Angels are substantial enough to crack a ball bearing . . .

They are various enough, in their effects, to play upon The U. S. Postal Service as delicately <sup>as</sup> all natural persuasions shape snowflakes . . .

They are playfully helpful enough to make it almost impossible for me to make a splice which will technically hold-together (no matter what my previous experience or what extremes I go to changing splicers, cement, etc.) unless I am completely in the service of my life's dedication (their wishes and mine

as at-once One as the need of the film-strips to be welded together).

I could go on and on with these declarations, which are beyond Belief surely inasmuch as they are one with my Being, beyond Knowledge inasmuch as they are Known/bone-of-me: but it is not given to me (as it is to you, Clayton) to be instrument of creation thru language: (it was, rather, given as an after-gift that I should have language now and again in re-creation, a kind of spill-over of Angelic affection, for my hobby-play): now that I am beginning to learn to do my film work happily (so that there is no distinction between work and play), my writing games will cease. There is a history in all these mutterings. "Metaphors on Vision" contains the declared promise: "I am thru writing thru writing". The playfully mysterious limitations on Splice first came to my attention thru the inexplicable difficulties of Gregory Markopoulos: he reacted by hiring all splicing done for him: and as they were his 'instructions' then (and not yet mine), he may have chosen the right procedure (tho' I suspect he too will be driven to some totally new personal limitation thereby, all in Angel's good time, and driven by Poverty if The Angels can find no other means to keep him from what is, after all, 'the rich man's evasion' of problem, or 'Faust's Out' you might call it). Gregory's problem, mid-1960s, prepared me for consideration of the beginnings of my own to come later: Robert Duncan's contemptuously hurled question from 'the floor' of the Buffalo, N. Y., audience: "What, as an Artist, do you mean by Cohere?": followed by careful reading of Duncan's fuss with that word "cohere" in the issue of Audit, Vol. 1V, No. 3, and finalized as warning to me via Duncan's: "The mystical doctrine of neo-Pythagorean naturalism has become like a Nessus shirt to the translator, and in the translation we hear Heracles' tortured cry from Pound's version of the Woman of Trachis from Sophokles: "it all coheres." My history of Angel instructions via Robert Duncan goes way back (tho' he, understandably, disclaims all responsibility in that sense of the exchange).

Well, I am with this letter putting-off a more scary task -- the beginning of looking again and again and/etc. at the footage of "Deus Ex", as it and its name has finally come fully to me . . . the coming to feeling the need, if there be one, of deleting material . . . the resisting all but the splice grip absolute, beyond coherence -- (I fret over dashes, even, trapped in the habits of "The Brakhage Lectures" . . . of which I imagine, at this time, there will be no others, much as I'd wanted a second series or at least to finish "Chaplin": I too much hobble-horse my angels -- ah!, you see!, "my"! . . . WHAT a miser The ego IS! -- may The Angels, whatever they are, laugh, whatever that is to them, at all such human presumption.)

I had very much wanted to 'set the record straight' in some gawky sense, with this, and to have this be the last such writing come out of me in this (so much)-fashion that has qualified all my years of aesthetic politicking.

I declare it, more explicitly than before: I am thru writing.

Blessings,  
Stan

# CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART

ONE OF THE FOUR CARNEGIE MUSEUMS OF PITTSBURGH

Copyright © Creator, by permission. All rights reserved.

CMOA respects the intellectual property rights of artists and others. The CMOA website and all images and text contained therein are protected by applicable U.S. and international laws and regulations, and are owned by CMOA or used by CMOA with permission from the owners or under fair use or where otherwise specified. Copyright for some items are held by the artists and/or other third parties. You agree not to download, copy, reproduce, publish or transmit, or otherwise use any portion of the CMOA website (including any images or text contained therein), except for your own personal noncommercial use or “fair use,” as this term is defined by applicable copyright laws, without written permission from CMOA and/or other appropriate rights holders.

## **Commercial Use Is Restricted**

Unauthorized publication or exploitation of museum files is specifically prohibited. Anyone wishing to use any of these files or images for commercial use, publication, or any purpose other than fair use as defined by law must request and receive prior permission from the appropriate rights holder(s). CMOA reviews all requests on a case-by-case basis and may require payment of a license fee depending upon the intended nature of such use.

For additional information, see the Carnegie Museum of Art Terms of Use.