

# Pittsburgh Film-Makers

Hollis Frampton: Photography Commentator

3/20/78

Hollis Frampton was born in Ohio, on March 11, 1936, towards the end of the Machine Age. Educated (that is, programmed: taught table manners, the use of the semicolon, and so forth) in Ohio and Massachusetts. The process resulted in satisfaction for no one. Studied (sat around on the lawn at St. Elizabeths) with Ezra Pound, 1957-58. That study is far from concluded. Moved to New York in March, 1958, lived and worked there more than a decade. People I met there composed the faculty of a phantasmal 'graduate school'. Began to make still photographs at the end of 1958. Nothing much came of it. First fumbblings with cinema began in the fall of 1962; the first films I will publicly admit to making came in early 1966. Worked, for years, as a film laboratory technician. More recently, Hunter College and the Cooper Union have been hospitable. Moved to Eaton, New York in mid-1970, where I now live (a process enriched and presumably, prolonged, by the location) and work.

—autobiographical note

During the 1960s, as his film-making activity increased, Hollis Frampton's still photograph-making decreased; this was symbolically announced in his film Nostalgia which is built around Frampton's out-of-sync incineration of a handful of prints made over a decade's time. But Frampton had not totally given up on the medium. In the mid-1970s he would, with Marion Faller, re-stage the animal locomotion photographs of Eadweard Muybridge—with vegetables. Frampton also, at this time, began to appear in print as a commentator on still photography, most often in Artforum: "Digressions on the Photographic Agony" (Nov. 1972), "Eadweard Muybridge: Fragments of a Tesseract" (March 1973), and "Incisions in History/Segments of Eternity" (Oct. 1974). Witty, perceptive, written with the same dry tone of understatement that characterizes his speech, these essays are soon to be collected in book form.

Tonight's discussion of Edward Weston is, I presume, another in this series of commentaries.

In 1965 Frampton briefly mentioned Weston in an essay that, to my knowledge, has yet to be published ("Some Propositions on Photography"). Of Weston he says that his was "a lifetime in which nothing short of absolute accuracy was at stake every time he went to his ground glass." The same could be said of Frampton's writing and his films. Of course it cannot be said of his recent photographs. They are part of a grand hoax—transparent but fascinating—a great deal more than they seem.

—R.A.Haller

Note: tomorrow evening at 8 Hollis Frampton will show his film Vernal Equinox at the Museum of Art Theater at Carnegie Institute.

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