

CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART

ONE OF THE FOUR CARNEGIE MUSEUMS OF PITTSBURGH

Independent Filmmaker, Stan Brakhage, Lecture

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Sally Dixon: Good evening. It's a great pleasure to welcome you back to the lecture hall in the film series. We're starting this year in a way that brings us full circle from where we were last September.

We have Stan Brakhage back again this year to introduce and discuss with you three films that the museum has just bought, that the first films that we've acquired for the collection and I think major, major works. Certainly *Dog Star Man*, if any of you have seen it before. It's owned by many of the best film collections, film archives throughout the world, all of the major ones certainly. Now we have it, too. It's good that it starts our collection in that while Stan was here last year, he made a film called *Eyes*. He rode for two days and nights in a police car. Some of you may have seen that last spring.

He returned in February after we got permission for him to make a film in West Penn Hospital that he calls *Deux Ex*.

We now have all three of those films. You'll see *Dog Star Man* tonight and *Eyes* and *Deux Ex* next Sunday. We bought the three films through a generous grant from the A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust. We're most grateful for this because it really starts us out in a very good way. I hope we'll be able to add to it.

These films will be shown again and again over the years. You'll have access to them and they're the kind of films that really bear lots of looking. It's much more akin to a piece of music that you would listen to again and again.

Many of you may not have seen this kind of film. It's not a movie in the Hollywood sense or the narrative sequential sense. If you could just hang free on it and not expect meaning to come out in order or in sequence, much the way you would listen to a piece of music. Just let it happen. Let it go through your eyes, as it were and the meaning emerge when it's ready.

They're difficult films, Stan's style is, I would say, far out, farthest out possibly. Many of the independent filmmakers but well worth it. They're extremely rich and will repay you many times as you view them again and again. He's here again. I introduce you to him. Stan Brakhage.

Stan Brakhage: Thank you. Thank you. I'm very, very happy to be back in Pittsburgh. It's a very strange experience for me that as of a year ago, at this time, I've never seen Pittsburgh. Even though, in working in commercial films many years ago, in fact about 15 years ago, I was an assistant director on a film made to show the changes in Pittsburgh, that is the attempt to clean up the smog and to change some of the building fronts and build new buildings and so on. The new image of the city. At that occasion, I never saw the city. They sent a union crew here and they took for the most part rather normal footage of the city. I sat back in an office in Princeton, New Jersey. It was sent to me. The footage was so normal and gave such a little impression of the changes in the city

which I could judge because I was very firm watcher of the documentary school of filmmakers. One of the greatest films of that series by Willard Van Dyke, *The City* was something that I had seen many, many times.

I knew there was some change in the city but I had footage that didn't say what that was or didn't demonstrate that. As a result of that, I had position enough to bring in Len Lye and Stan VanDerBeek, which at that time was completely unknown. I had seen only one of his films in Brussels at the World's Fair. I brought in Gene Smith, who was a friend of mine. I had met him several months previously in Switzerland. I brought in, in other words, all the people that could deal with this footage to at least give without hopefully lying to give an image of a change in a city. We worked very hard on it. [00:05:01]

The film, like so many in that area, I don't even know what institute it was here for. It's vanished utterly. Nobody can find it and maybe it's just as well. I don't know. I had this passionate relationship. If that wasn't enough, then there was Gene Smith. Those of you who know that work know he came here on a very brief assignment. This would be 15 years ago-approximately. He got so excited about the city that he spent six months and shot over 10,000 negatives here in a very painstaking way. He couldn't find anybody to particularly publish them or make anything out of them. Some of them were printed in little magazines here and there. There are some of them in the aperture issue which was just devoted totally to his work but I remember very well Gene's enthusiasm and talking about the city and his excitement over it as a city, to deal with a city.

When I came here a year ago, I was excited. Finally, I joked with my wife. I said, "Well, at last, I'll see Pittsburgh after all the excitement." Almost immediately through the help of Mike [Chikiris 00:06:15] and Sally Dixon and others here, it was possible for me to photograph in a police car. Then, they made arrangements and arranged a grant to help me to come back and do the hospital film.

I shouldn't really be talking this long about those two films because they're not being shown tonight. That's next Sunday. Is that right, Sally?

Sally Dixon: Yes.

Stan Brakhage: But I'm filled with that kind of enthusiasm and feel this to be as-I won't be so corny or so wrong as to say, "My city" in any sense. In fact, the happy thing is I come here very much as the stranger with the disadvantages of that position but the advantages for the artist that I am premised on site.

Now, the case is, this is exactly the same with the film you're going to see tonight, the *Dog Star Man*. I will say-It's very simple to say how difficult the *Dog Star Man* is but and everyone does. Sally's right to mention it. It's not a movie.

We all know what we mean by the movie. I mean and those that want that should be seeing-My choice would be Charlton Heston in *The Andromeda Man*. At the moment of what's in town or *Gunfights* with Johnny Cash and Kirk Douglas but [pause 00:07:54] I would love to deal with the simplicities of how this film was made, hoping that in this first initial viewing, what'll be the first viewing for most of you, you just simply enjoy it as a fresh, maybe unusual experience.

[pause 00:08:09] A little biography might help. I had just finished working on that Pittsburgh film as a matter of fact. I was finding it increasingly difficult to do justice to a commercial film job in as much as my imagination would begin to run away with me too much. I had had the ideal that I would hold commercial jobs during the day and then at night do my work or do what I hoped achieves an art but increasingly, my imagination would begin running away while working on the commercial work.

I didn't never have that presumption that I thought that was right. I mean I felt that the commercial standards were quite clear and it was the business of people so employed to live up to those standards and to increase them slightly in proportion to what an industry could take, not to suddenly come in and say, as you might in a canning factory overnight, "Well, we should put these beans in square cans," and with no particular reason behind it.

The commercial standards are like a traditional standard which is as solid and as basic to the society as the tribal African dance is to the natives of the small village that if suddenly someone goes berserk in the tribal dance, it threatens the whole village. This is a fact. I mean it leaves them in a very vulnerable position because the magic that was to accomplish, keep preventing the lion from killing the next hunter has been destroyed.

On the other hand, the tribal dance, if it doesn't slowly change and evolve even in that African village, that also leaves the people vulnerable because then it ceases to be anything that has meaning in their daily lives.

Now, one can argue endlessly as to whether commercial cinema is evolving fast enough or not. [00:10:22] My guess is it evolves too fast, that it has become the arena of trickery and presumption but then, on the other hand, I'm not to judge the men who've done this because the case was the same as myself.

When I worked on that Pittsburgh film, I remember very well that there was a sequence that was to show how the wealthy people in this town got together to make a decision to change the city. And we had the union cameramen had shot a shadows of men behind windows and large, impressive offices and porticos and so on but they had done no drama sequences at all, thank heavens. There was nothing but this to show this that a transformation had

occurred because of these rather ordinary looking shadowy figures and meeting behind rather impressive glass.

One day, I got to working on it. I cut that footage up. I wasn't even thinking. I just had a problem and I had the images. I was stuck with these images and what to do. Suddenly, I looked back at the roll. I saw that I was putting in a splice line every three or four frames. Then, that bothered me but I thought, "Well, what else are we going to do? This footage expendable." If you can't do something with it and I kept doing that so that these shadows meet and light breaks open and to have a city solid walls rather a chosen rather sooty and disheveled-looking walls. Suddenly, a being exposed by fast clips of movement.

Well, I'll never forget when I ran that sequence. As I walked into the room to show it, at the end of the day, all the men I was in charge of to show the sequence that they had worked on to the head of the company. When it came time for mine to run, I became quite frightened in fact. Rightfully so because on the screen suddenly came shattering light and movement and you had a sooty wall. You had shadow figures moving, light breaking up and you had a cleaner wall and not the cleanest.

I had made the mistake of getting carried away while I was on the job. There was a terrible silence after the film ran through. [laughter 00:13:04] Then, I remember very well the producer said, "Well, you've got to admit. It's impressive." [laughter 00:13:14:] Then, the other men were asked to leave the room and the boss and they were asked, I remember, to leave the door open as they left. The boss hurriedly gathering his papers, said, "Stan, I really think you've been working too hard and you should take a, you know, a week off or something." And I was very gently fired.

Then we set across country and we arrived at my wife's parent's house. I began setting about to try to get another job in the industry. It was getting more and more difficult because of such incidents. I must emphasize, they were not ever deliberate. My intention was always to make the finest thing that I could for whatever, without being dishonest. That got me fired often because I would not put soap suds in the beer to make it look better. I had principles but it fell out that I was stuck living with my wife's parents.

We had one baby at that time, another on the way. There was nothing for me to do. Her parents went to work, their teachers, she had the baby to raise and I was just the shiftless bum around the house.

I asked them at some point, "What can I do? Is there anything I can do?" They said, "Well, yes. You could chop some firewood. We have a fireplace and, you know, in the winter, we like a little backlog of wood."

I became the most enthusiastic wood chopper in the world. They are probably still burning logs that I gathered from that period. I climbed mountains. I chopped dead trees. I was not very good at it but most men aren't what you could call very good at what they normally do. [00:15:09] Rather sloppy, really. They're too busy living. They do the best they can as you'll see for yourself in the film. Those of who know something about chopping wood, it's a sloppy chopping but that was all I had to do.

Then, I began to get the idea in me to make a movie about a wood chopper, wood gatherer. It's a rather traditional role in the history of man and that this would stand for all men having trouble with their jobs. You see, it was always very specific. Working out my own problems and destiny. I thought I had maybe a little 10 minute film. I'll show this man climbing up the mountain a little and he chops up some wood. We equate this in the film as a man holding a job or a man's pride in his work or whatever.

Eight years later, I ended up with an hour and a half long film and-but that's the simple root of it. I'll let my hair grow long because my, at that time which was long before anyone else I'd seen except some of those old men down on the bowery and in the Western movies, I'd never seen men with long hair but I had in mind the traditional image of the wood cutter.

I let the hair grow long and this caused a lot of problems at that time as it still does sometime. Then, Jane became photographing me climbing the mountains under instructions from me. I began carrying the camera up. Then, this began to spread out to me more than the man and his job.

Finally, I think everything that I knew has something in it in this film of the whole history of man. That's where one can say it gets difficult. Like, if you want to be difficult about it, you can look to give just one hint. You can look when the man climbs this mountain, particularly in part one, you can watch to see that the trees are so photographed that they give an approximation of the evolution of the whole history of architecture and that finally at some crowning moment, he even smashes some modernistic fragment of that.

They are even, at times, intercut with things that stand for that stained glass windows from churches and a window top from an aviary but just the branches themselves are so ordered in the putting them together that not exactly. I mean I didn't go out and bend branches to get an exact Gothic cathedral out of them like Walt Disney might have done but that they hint at this. They are there as hints and they're in the order of their evolution, that is you pass from the earliest mud hut which was usually made of branches bowing over each other up through very-You pass up through Greek. You pass in fact and up to the modern which then has intercut Greek columns to remind you of that whole evolution.

Then, in fact, there's levels of modernism that are exact approximates, particularly in America of the Greek column. Someone who's interested in architecture, now for them, that wouldn't be difficult once they are looking for it. In fact, they might find me very too much simplistic.

Again, if there's a surgeon in the house, he would understand if he were looking for it that I used certain chambers of the heart in certain orders, in certain ways to make a statement about the heart, particularly in Section Three. For him, that wouldn't be difficult. I'm sure he'd see me in very simplistic and he wouldn't find it a rather sloppy surgery that was photographed.

Still and all, I was attempting to pull on everything you see so whatever your area is of interest, you can get difficult there, if you like, right? At the first and find me too simple but if it's not your area, you sort of have to take my word for it and/or more importantly, when the images are on, you have to take the images being there as enough. Someone who knows stars can see, who is used to astrology or astronomy, either one, may notice what star configurations are photographed when in relation to the *Dog Star Man*. For them, there will be no difficulty to see that at the end, his very last star configuration, he sits down, you can say, into Cassiopeia's chair. And they can trace their stars throughout, if they like.

Where one calls this difficult is if you say that any given person is expected to tackle all these things in one viewing at once. This is why art is often called difficult because somewhere snobs give people this expectation. [00:20:04]

Really, the idea of the work of art is that it is so true to whatever levels are in it that anyone can find it simple on some level. At least that was my intention and hope in making it and I hope you enjoy it in that fashion. Thank you. [applause 00:20:23] [end speech]

[00:20:38] [questions and discussion] I'll be happy to entertain any questions but those that are content with the film and please feel free to go because that's the important thing. The rest who wants some questions, I'll be happy to do that as soon as we get the others a chance to take the film and go.

-Gene Youngblood's book and that in that book, he stated that one is not supposed to interpret this film or for symbolism or so on but just look at it and let it happen. She's wondering if that's my viewpoint of it also. Let's see. First of all, I don't ... That's not a wrong thing to say because I think in fact, for most people, the first viewing of the film, that's the best thing to do is just have it happen as an experience, I mean very much as if you have a dream like that or as if you encounter. In fact, the best would be if you had just encountered that. You turned a corner and encountered that kind of experience with your eyes but then also the film is structured so a lot of interpretation. That is, I

think I don't object to Gene Youngblood's statement except that he ended there then.

I might go on to say that for that reason, I don't much like that book, that is not what he said about my film. I thought he was very nice to me and so on but the book itself is premised on an idea that I think is shallow. That idea just to give my own paraphrase of it is that the light experience is enough, that is that a really whimdinger good light show done by whatever means, particularly chance operations or by some damn computer, is sufficient for the human creature.

That idea I think is a very pernicious, we can say post McLuhanistic idea, which I very much object to because my sense of it, of living, aside from making films is that, [pause 00:23:32] well, to begin with, I think it's no more good to say that the whole of something is its intellectual appreciation than it is to say it's an emotional one. We went through a lot of suffering in the 19th century. It hung over particularly in America clear up into the forties, let's say, and in some vestiges still hang over. That is you cannot enjoy a work of art unless it's been diagramed by a German professor and you've taken four semesters in it, at least.

This idea was like all extremes, really has caused everybody a lot of suffering. Now, we're in danger of having an opposite idea of which Mr. Youngblood's book is one of the first major statements of this idea, that it is enough to just have feelings. He doesn't even differentiate. We had a mid period which is also terrible where people were separating feelings from intellect which is ridiculous but now that pendulum of human extremes have swung clear over to where everyone just want to have an experience and that the having of it is just how excited or visceral or as thrilled or whatever you feel.

Of course, both all extremes are lies. They'd become immediately dogma. I just hope that as long as I'm on Earth, I'm not going to have to suffer through this new dogma but it may be so. [00:25:09] It may take until the 21st century that the pendulum begins to swing back again, then we may get a lot of super brains for a while in the arts and messing in the arts and gradually because in human history, you live in such a little tiny period and that we're always somewhere being sliced by that pendulum.

I think that what we call the renaissances and the great periods of art in any culture are those periods where the pendulum is more or less in the middle. I have no objections to Youngblood's statement as a beginning or his book as another idea but it rather unnerves me because it's such a popular idea.

Of course, machines can make ... One of the ironies is that a machine can throw out so many colors and so many flashing things and such exuberance that people can sit. A machine can hypnotize people. It's very easy to build a machine to hypnotize this whole room full of people. It's been done. It's very

easy to subconsciously affect people by flashing at subliminal speeds, signs at them like, "Buy popcorn, or, "Vote so and so." That's all very terrifying.

The only defense that the human creature has against this is to be a whole creature because a whole creature is never satisfied with any extreme. On the one hand, I love art and I love highfalutin intellectual discussions. On the other hand, I'm very dependent on the Hollywood movie or on Travis McGee.

On the one hand, I can certainly appreciate a very finely cooked dinner. On the other hand, I'll absolutely go out of my way to buy a hot dog with mustard. There are different parts of my being that is being drawn in these ways. There is no such thing as a creature that's purely emotional or purely intellection.

Now, the film, I think for a first viewing, it's quite normal that people go on their intuitions and what we call their "feelings". Those are in the forefront at a beginning of anything, if it's at all interesting.

Then the creature immediately ... By immediately, I mean instanter, within the split second begins to think about this and that's, by the way, in my opinion not only attributable to human beings. I think that's true of at least all the mammalian kingdom that inexperience immediately hatches a thought about it and that this thought is a conditioning. We'd like to think that we think so much more than a beaver or that New York City is such a much greater achievement than a beaver dam but I'm not convinced that it is. In fact, I think it's becoming apparent that most beaver dams are better suited for the creatures that live in them than almost any city we've managed to build.

One capacity that the human creature that might differentiate him and her is that people tend to get enslaved rather easily and these enslavements are all under the aegis of an idea that is it. Among the two and so there's always dichotomies fighting. In among the two most viscous in western history are feeling and intellect.

Now, this film, I mean, one can be very intellectual with this film and I think very emotional but my hope would be each person is somewhere in between. Then, maybe some night, a person could have this, see this film when they are very emotional person when they're very dry. Then, they can sit and be the critic and just look at this and that and see are the rhythms right and are the cochelic acrobatics of the thematic contortions of this digital development evolutionary proportionate to their circumspection. That's a dance, too that's lovely. [00:29:50]

I would be as disturbed, though, as that of the only possibilities would be by someone just bursting into tears and screaming and carrying on all the way through it. Every now and then, there's someone like that in the audience who goes, "Oh," like that and provides a soundtrack from beginning to end.

Any other questions? Yes.

Audience: [Inaudible 00:30:01] ...the film has eminence detailing and everything was there -and I was wandering if you were ever try to say show this closer as to television and not as film to present as images? [inaudible 00:31:00]

Stan Brakhage: First, to answer the question, it has been shown over television. Parts of it have in this country. All of it has in Germany and I think several other European countries, in Belgium.

Now, for the second part of the question, I, myself, don't like to see my work on television. It's because I'm specifically involved in film. Film, when it's used to tell a story, you see, as in the average movie, just a story, that it's just really a photoplay as they call them, a photograph drama. That's already a usage of film. Then, if you pipe that over T.V., you know it works not as well as in the theater but it works well enough but even there we know how much less well it works. If people had the choice, if both were free and they had the choice of watching the television or watching the movie on the screen in their house and either was of equal ease, I don't think there's very many people that would chose to watch the television because the image is blurry. It is not up to the standards of even poor projection in a movie theater or in your home.

For that reason, I don't like to see it. Also, I'm very nervous about television as an art medium because intrinsically and this is something you will find in your McLuhan, too, although I had studied it with many other people as well, It's intrinsically a hypnotic instrument. We all know this by the difficulty people have of tearing their eyes away from it but it's a simple trick. The light is behind the image. You're staring into the light and the light is being interfered with by rhythmic patterns. This is intrinsically hypnotic.

For that reason, it's an excellent medium for propaganda, for selling people things. It's an excellent escape box because you already have the job half done when you turn the set on, that is to get people to be sucked up into the T.V. set is much easier then to get them to be sucked up into the screen because on the screen you're dealing with bounce light. Bounce light just physiologically doesn't hypnotize or what we'd say, "Grab people," quite as dangerously. \

Now, the problem with television. I mean, the problem in the case of an art is that as I understand it, the whole major drive of an art is to create a balance which does not hypnotize so that someone to create an art for television would have to create something that fought very hard against this natural proclivity of television.

Now, at the beginning of film, people had to do this with film too because there's also something intrinsic about an interrupted light that will hypnotize

people. Film at the beginning was about eight frames a second that you had a darkness and light flickering.

In fact, it's quite true that if you take a projector and you start at eight frames a second and you slowly enough bring that up to 32 frames a second, you can hypnotize automatically 40% of the people in the average audience. That is, the rhythms will pass through their brain wave mechanism which we'll cover on the average about 40% of the people if you move from eight frames up to 32.

Almost immediately, people did move, I mean, individual makers to prevent this kind of hypnosis. The first, I think, is Georges Méliès. I think for myself, I have never seen a work of art made for television tape. [00:35:21]

It's also quite different than movies because tape image has a very plastic feeling. Film is always on and off. It is always a flickering fire but television is this dot scanning thing, the dots are much more intrinsic. They move in a way to create an image that's more like taffy. You cannot, for instance, have a cut in film so all of Eisenstein's film ideas are thrown out when you work with T.V. You can't have a montage idea in television.

Now, particularly in these middle period films, I was very involved in Eisensteinian montage. They are, for instance, defeated intrinsically by television screening. I permit it. It's not my nut to permit but as long as we're discussing it in detail, I would say that it's always a very disturbing experience for me to see it on television. Yes.

Audience: [Inaudible 00:36:16] Is this part of the reason for why you set up the role [inaudible 00:36:29]

Stan Brakhage: You see, it's very interesting about things like that because you can set up a- Let's say we're setting up an ideal wood cutter. He's to stand for all the wood cutters in the world, all the men working. What's really interesting about symbolism is that if we go in your direction, we do end up with symbolism. We say, "Well ... "

Symbolism is very close to realism. Realism is a style and under the style of realism which is an art style essentially. Of course, I mean, if Marlon Brando were playing it and they say, "Well, shall we have him chop some wood?" Everyone would say, "No. Of course, I mean, if he were a wood cutter then he'd have his wood already."

But the truth of the matter is, something that gets closer to life but far removed from the style of realism is that most wood cutters in my experience and I know some, don't have their wood cut by winter. They're busy chopping wood for the rich people up the hill or for someone else here and there or

they're normal and human and they get drunk too much and they fall to pieces and they haven't got their wood together and they're out slopping around in the snow getting wood for themselves and for the people up the hill that didn't order it in time.

On the other hand, though, one can't stress that too far. What you try to do, you see, for instance, one says, "Well, I wanted this film to be as it could happen in a day, in a lifetime or in the whole history of man." One says, "How can you do that? In the first place, it's either snowing or it isn't, right?" Wrong, because where I live is quite possible in a day to start in a valley very deep with snow because the mountain shadows it and the winter snow hasn't melted it. Climb to certain plateaus and arrive at spring because the snow was a late winter snow. The snow came and the little flowers were up and they got a little cold but they're still making it and they're having spring on this plateau. Climb higher yet and you're into fall, because you are into places where the fall leaves predominate or sheltered coves. Climb higher yet and you are up to the glacier which is winter all year round.

One can climb to a whole year in a way where I live. Wood cutters can have their wood cut or not depending on what kind of wood cutter they are and most of them don't.

Anyway, this wood cutter is like most wood cutters, incompetent. He's not really a professional wood cutter. There's very few real professionals in the world, that is men who absolutely are on top of it all the time and those few I have known are extremely miserable creatures. Life is more rolly polly like that.

I certainly could never have played a professional woodcutter. I remember thinking about things a lot. I had all the time I was after the most exacting symbolism I could get but life defeated me, like that I wanted only that I would be ... Well, I'm naked in the summer sequence. I call it the summer sequence. Jane and I are both naked throughout it. Then, in Part Four, I said, "Well, its fall. I put my pants on at least." [00:40:26]

But then, I needed images that were stark naked in Part Four also and of course, how narrowly you can think when you're being pedantic. At all times of the making, there was always a pedantic level. I was reading carefully. I was studying everything that would go into the film but always there were sloppy things and they would bother my pedantic self. I'd fuss and fuss. Sometimes I'd be stopped working or editing for three days over whether or not I could have the boots off or some ridiculous thing in this scene.

But why I say life defeated me, it defeated me in that beautiful way that life defeats us all. When you give into that, then whole new realms of symbolism appear. The world gets much larger and it does not become chaotic. It just gets larger whereas Hollywood's idea of a woodcutter of course is rather

straight. You even know there's like, if they've got enough money, there are seven men who will play it. There's seven characters to choose from to play wood cutters ordinarily. They will behave in these ways.

That's the difference between the ritual dance and an art. The ritual dance is always trying to assure everybody that they are like everybody else and give them a standard they can try and live up to. The work of art is always busting this up and thereby, extending the possibilities of the ritual dance. Yes.

Audience: [Inaudible 00:41:56] There comes a time in all four parts-Did you work on them all simultaneously your part one first and then go onto the last four parts of the film? [inaudible 00:42:09]

Stan Brakhage: No. I'd say 80% of the footage is used in the whole film is shot within a year and a half before any editing began. Then, I made the prelude first. Then in consecutive order through to Part Four. That took six and a half more years. I always had in mind that the story was a simple story, this man climbs the hill and he chops away at a tree, which in fact is existential, really. I try to include then in the process some of the other footage which is to say, to give hints as to why he would do this. Even though they're in there, they don't really answer the existential situation of the man that he just climbs and chops away ineffectively at this tree. Yes.

Audience: Did you ever consider releasing the film only as the film [inaudible 00:43:14] the second half, the parts of the film have a narrative structure whereas the first part is much more abstract in mind, immensely more successful than the first part where the second part, the narrative is almost forced on you. It doesn't feel nearly as good as the first part.

Stan Brakhage: I would only say to you that preludes are always more popular. In that sense, it's a true prelude. There are those people that for instance only listen to the preludes of operas. There are whole LP records that are like the preludes to such and so.

The prelude to my mind was something like a teaser. I had an idea in mind. I said, "What is it in the history of film that makes a natural prelude," because we don't have any previous to this to my knowledge. I said, "Well, in a way the teaser's a prelude," so I will make a teaser so in that sense, too, you see the prelude is set up to have all the exciting moments in it that will be in the extended drama.

To me, I think Part Four is the most successful. I think Part Three is abstract as the prelude. In fact, Part Two and Three, certainly three is as abstract in the normal usage of that word as the prelude. There was an attempt to make a balance in that sense but my idea of the prelude that it would be very flashy. It was the dream that prompts all the rest of it.

Now, in that sense, how I take your statement for instance maybe in your life, you were one of those people like Jung was who loved his dreams more than the rest of the day. When we wrote his autobiography, he wrote only his dreams was the substance of his autobiography. [00:45:09]

Prelude to me is, from an aesthetic standpoint, is the least of the four but then that's my opinion and that may have to do with my ... It's flashy like preludes are and in that sense it may be more available in the first viewing also, like often preludes are.

But Part One, for instance which I think is the most narrative in the conventional meaning of the word of the five is to me the most mysterious. You can almost tell that because it's the longest of the sections. It holds up with a kind of mysteriousness to me that the others, that stronger over the years. This is after seeing-I suppose I've seen this film since I made it, easily 150 times and probably I've seen certain parts of it more than that. I don't know what else to say. Yes.

Audience: [Inaudible 00:46:22] What did parts of the woodcutter-you know I haven't, not to think that there was no importance, many time you go to make a film like a film this [inaudible 00:46:53] I don't know watching that, if I thought anything it looked like a low minded woodcutter going out on a smelly.

Stan Brakhage: Yes. The woodcutter's only a start anyway because actually the figure, he becomes a warrior in Part One. In a very mysterious way, he battles with the trees which is one of the oldest kind of wars there is that poets have written of. He fights with the trees.

He's a warrior in every sense of the word. He has his ax. He might kill anything in his path at that moment. He's a lover. Certainly, all of Part Three is devoted to that and sections throughout the whole work. He's a father. He holds up his child and he watches his child crawling on the rug of the floor. He is hopefully a metaphor for all man. Play is really the key. I always try to be as pedantic as I can be, just like in fact, I always try to make a film as normally as I possibly can.

It's life that defeats me there. I give into it as all that happens really. I just give in but I never let it go so far that that other side of me won't be satisfied either because then I'd end up with a very disgruntled critic in myself. "Well why you had him sit down on Orion's Belt at the end. What does that mean?" because I also study those things. I know he shouldn't be sitting on Orion's Belt. Orion's Belt should be around his middle maybe when I have those star configurations. I don't throw things in by chance but in this work, I also did my chance.

I had studied with John Cage when I was younger. I never felt very easy with chance operations in creating but I had decided that I would start with chance

operations in the prelude. I threw in what by chance operations, I made a whole A roll. Then I went through with the B roll and locked all those operations into a structure of meaning. A and B roll means merely that you're editing two rolls at once, usually, and they go through a synchronizer. You mark them for the lab A and B. The synchronizer keeps every single frame on one roll, having an exact correspondent on the other. You punch the film at both ends at the beginning and at the end. Then, every frame, when they print it will be superimposed exactly as you want it.

My A roll was made through chance operations because I had the sense, "Well, that was the best way I could get it to start on a dream," and then went through and locked them in very, with that other side of myself, that same side that tries to struggle to interpret dreams which again is the oldest play again in the history of man. Yes. [00:50:21]

Audience: If you were to begin this exact film now, would it be similar, same or entirely different?

Stan Brakhage: No. I couldn't begin it, because the process of art really is working out of necessity so I don't have any of those same necessities. I have others now. Right now, the biggest necessity seems to be to see the city, certain institutional aspects of the city.

I have no energy for making a *Dog Star Man*. Again, that's something Hollywood could do. They could do *Son of Dog Star Man*, *Wife of Dog Star Man*, *Dog Star Man meets the Wolfman* and so on but for me it's finished now and I couldn't even guess what even saying, if you meant, if I went out to photograph myself doing something in snow and on the mountains and so I mean, this is very likely that I would do that but I have no idea what I would do with it or even if I will.

I don't believe works of art can be commissioned, least of all by the artist himself. It can fall out that the pope wants you to do a picture of Christ and you can be in yourself so religious in the way similar to the pope that you can, following your own instincts create an image that's a work of art that will satisfy both the pope and you. That we call a renaissance. That's almost inconceivable in America at this time. Therefore, it's more than ever hard to in any sense commission.

About the only way it can be done is the way *Deux Ex* commissioned. They knew I wanted to come and photograph a hospital here. Sally asked the hospital and they finally consented. They gave me some money to help me do it. They gave it with the understanding that I might come and photograph and get no film at all and destroy it. That's the only way I can work. Every instant in that hospital or in any film I make, I may be nowhere, I may get nothing. I may have to throw it away.

Unfortunately, it makes it very hard for people who want to support the arts as well as the artists on the other end of the stick because society doesn't operate in that nebulous way.

Now, the problem would be settled if Americans would all agree on something and if they all got agreed on any little thing that was a tremendous importance to all of them, then whoever commissioned would be close enough to whoever was making that he could do it but really one of the beauties of America is that nobody can agree on anything. That's the thing that probably saved us from fascism, if anything will. Can't get Americans to agree. You can't have a renaissance.

As to the real heart of your question, I can't ask myself to do something. I have to set myself, I have to analyze my feelings and see what's troubling me and put myself in the way of it and then hope that it'll fallout in such a way that I get a passionate film, a meaningful film. Yes.

Audience: [Inaudible 00:54:01] I found myself rather than watching you, I was watching the dog more. And I do not know if you are the best person to ask this to but do you watch the dog more than yourself? I ask the question. I don't know what to make of it.

Stan Brakhage: I don't either. I don't know. Yes. Yeah.

Audience: [Inaudible 00:54:31] I kept waiting for a commercial.

Stan Brakhage: Yes. I actually found those annoying, myself tonight. I was annoyed at the "By Brakhage," particularly, which was in such elaborate letters. My normal is to just very quickly sign a work, scratch on the film directly. In fact, I often sign it, "By B."

In fact, I don't see that much reason to sign anything at all except that when you sign something, you promise yourself, really, that you're living up to a standard but it happens, you see, that this film was released, each of these parts as separate films and over quite a period of time. They came in this fashion. I think I'd like to keep them that way only because I also would like people to feel free to look at each of them as separate parts because they're intended to hold up as separate parts.

Audience: [Inaudible 00:55:41]

Stan Brakhage: Yes. There's that also. Normally, one would say each movement of a well-made symphony holds up by itself. You can make a whole evening of just playing that movement. There are even better examples in music, certainly. But for myself, I felt that work-It's an interesting form, in fact, a work that will hold up in each of its part and it's whole.

There's another version of this film that is four and a half hours long that's called *The Art of Vision*. In fact, that is a work that shows each of these A and B rolls separately and it has no intervening titles. It's just four and a half hours of this imagery spread out, so to speak, in a thematic musical fashion. I would say that I think ideally, if you're going to show the work, it would be better to show it without titles in between when the projections can do that, he can set his film up, not that this one had any such instructions tonight but that would be a way to show it to. I would have been more comfortable to that tonight.

It's hard to say. You see, you get so many different moods in audiences when you show films. For some audiences that's a positive relief to have the thing starting all over again. I've been in places where they absolutely sigh with relief. Everyone can rustle, tussle and shift in their seat and feel like they're starting over again. I'm sure there must be some people that felt that way about the titles, too. Yes. I mean tonight. Yes.

Audience: When you make a film of this type, do you ever find yourself counting the reigns and working in some kind of mathematical way with numbers?

Stan Brakhage: Always. Oh, I shouldn't say, "Always." 90 percent of the time that's so, yes.

It's interesting. Counting the frames is really getting very close to music because you have absolute beat by your interrelation and frames but of course it can tip over. It can tend to make the work very dry so that what I tend to do usually is a combination of both. I count the frames continually and try to see if the thing can't end here to achieve this rhythm. Most usually, it can't so then it sets up another rhythm and then I start having as many as 30 or 40 rhythms going on in the head. I'm always letting the shot tell me where it wants to end and I'm at the same time, I'm trying to get it to be articulate within the frame of the whole but there's a lot of mathematics in all this work.

Any other questions? Yes.

Audience: Are you finding a distance between yourself and this film now? What I'm thinking, are you looking upon the man who made this film as something a stranger to you?

Stan Brakhage: Yes. Yeah. In fact, I think I refer to him as I say, "Well, he does this and he does that." In fact, I think I did that, though, from almost the beginning when it was released because for me, what ends up on the screen is never a person. It's a creature created of light. It's only very secondarily a portrait of me at this time and that was a long time ago. The shooting is, remember, 15 years ago. Not that long. Oh, let's see. It'd be- I'm thinking [Marina's 00:59:33] 13. Twelve years ago. See, it seems longer ago to me than it actually is.

Any other questions? Yes.

Audience: You mentioned Eisenstein. Is this one of your influenced works?

Stan Brakhage: Apparently, everyone is very influenced by Eisenstein's montage to more or less degree so it would be but that would be nothing special among my own generation of filmmakers. Is this more so than other works?

Audience: [Inaudible 01:00:07] Well

Stan Brakhage: I don't ... Yeah.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:00:08] It depends on how-

Stan Brakhage: I don't think particularly.

Audience: You're influenced by your interpretations of his works or writings [inaudible 01:00:16] with this film or this-

Stan Brakhage: Oh, both. I would always be more involved in the work of a man than his writings. I had the interesting case with Eisenstein that I was able to read, though, his theories long before I saw his films. I was reading his book *Film Sense and Film Form* when I was 18. I think I was in my early 20s before I was able to see anything he'd made.

I was working in those early years under the influence of his ideas without having to seen any of the films. [1:00:50]

Audience: [Inaudible 01:00:54] But I was going to ask, a lot of all the things like the rhythmic editing with your films struck me as examples of gross misinterpretation of Eisenstein works like just seeing it. Maybe it really basic stuff, like it's something more than that you talk but his work holds true very strong like it but still to things like it should be people in it, more the less visual things.[inaudible 01:01:36]

Stan Brakhage: Gross is a painful word for you to use but then, of course, one expects you to follow it by saying as if you were speaking with the voice of Eisenstein as to what he intended.

You see, you criticize me. Now, I'm going to criticize you back. I wouldn't presume to speak for Eisenstein what he meant but I can presume to speak for myself and say that I never meant to imitate Eisenstein and that maybe your idea's that I should have and I am therefore I'm a gross departure from what he did and in that sense always-

Taking a musical analogy, Beethoven seems like a very gross misunderstander of Mozartian rhythms. It's always too easy to decide that something is invaluable and is the cornerstone and is the "it". To me, the

whole honor you give to another artist, I don't know how to say it but Peter Kubelka was here last year. One of the most brilliant things he ever said to me was, "You see, when one artist is inspired by another, you'd never know it."

Did he show the black and white film when he was here? *ARNULF RAINER* is just black and white frames. It's inspired by the *Dog Star Man*. Who would ever know that? Whereas, of course, one always knows when people are imitating, because imitation is very easy and one can be very exact in imitation.

Audience: I see you point where it was diplomacy and yet but then just you mentioned it was back for misinterpretation by your listeners pause that they didn't, like they might not think you're breaking the swan doesn't mean that what you're into, just like I say your influence was quite changed but then like you mentioned him simply [inaudible 01:04:01]

Stan Brakhage: Then, I couldn't speak at all then. They'd think I mean that I'm Beethoven or great as him or something. We speak as best we can. I've somehow offended you and your sense of Eisenstein. I don't know how to apologize without being ridiculous. I'm very inspired by Eisenstein's work. *Ivan the Terrible* I think is the greatest film that was ever made until *The Art of Vision*. I think that egocentric and wild as that may sound, you're asking for a fight because you have your Eisenstein and I have mine. We're both very passionate about him.

Audience: But what I was going to just go is rather than just saying you were inspired by Eisenstein, that you were inspired by your interpretation of Eisenstein, which right off would seem [inaudible 01:05:10]

Stan Brakhage: You see, it's a sense also-the word that bothered me almost as much as gross was what you said, "The true Eisenstein."

Audience: [Inaudible 01:05:20] I was just going to say-

Stan Brakhage: I've been in both experiences. I have had [malia's 01:05:25] and Eisenstein and Griffith picked up by critics, by teachers and by students and beat over the head with them, have them beat my works down with them. That's painful, particularly when someone picks up the work of someone you love to beat your own work down with. It's very easy to do.

Similarly, I've lived long enough now to see my works picked up to beat the young over the head with. That, believe me, is even more painful. I've seen people say, "Well, how can you call yourself involved in Brakhage's film when you make a piece of shit like this," and, "have you see *Dog Star Man*, you didn't really see it." Then, if they say something, say, "I was looking at so and so," the others say, "Well, that's not the true Brakhage."

Well! If you see, I'm not speaking against you so much as to warn you that if you go on through life like that you, you find yourself making statues of people and things and making an avenue in your head that looks like Versailles or something. That would be okay if you weren't presumptuous about it, if you just went and did it my yourself but if you start pushing that idea in the world, that's a very dangerous idea and very easy to do to push that kind of idea.

What it does is, all it can possibly do is hurt people and try to keep people from seeing or experiencing new things by using old things in a way that if the makers of them were here, they would tar and feather you for it.

Do you think that Eisenstein's dedication was to having at last arrived, having made *Ivan the Terrible* and that that was it and that the world should have it from then on? Eisenstein, like every maker, was reaching out for life and growing and changing. Every inch of his evolution was, if there's any it in Eisenstein, it is that he continually changed and grew and changed his work and fought and fought and fought against-

You see, ordinarily, one would say, "Well, this is not an important debate unless you've studied Russia and what Eisenstein was up against." You know that that kind of idea got him going, that there's some moment in the past history of art, be it even yesterday that is it or that that's the true representation of a man, well, then, bureaucracy loves to feed on that. They can pick that up and they can beat everybody over the head with it and then you will truly have nothing that are in a most ungross way imitating something in the past over and over again, they're doing it with increasing perfection. In fact, machine can do it better.

I'm going to fight a little bit here and claim the inspiration of Eisenstein and the real deep meaning that Eisenstein showed me as much as maybe hundreds of others, of artists of all fields. How can I say this? The simple human level really is that the heart of this inspiration that one man gets from another is the courage to be himself.

Audience: That's a valid point but I was again with the first [inaudible 01:09:05] like I do see your point in putting our this is very problematic idea with films taking but I was speaking in the beginning always been very non-technical but semantic against the grinding, like how make what I believe one quick, what I feel like well [inaudible 01:09:36] and if they do, that's good but in itself it is but then by this [inaudible 01:09:56] what you do see is stop to say, "Well, he's different than me." It's like, [it's typical what to inspire. It's not like- 01:10:06]

Stan Brakhage: You're not going to let me off the hook, are you? All I wish is that one day you have to stand on one of these stages and listen to somebody else who's talking off the top of his head who doesn't really know much about what he's talking about.

I came here this evening, I said to Sally, "Jesus Christ, I'm so tired in a way. It's been some time since I've been on a lecture tour. The first person to go ask a stupid question, I think I'll just go bite them." You are my candidate for the evening. Yes.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:10:40]

Stan Brakhage: Yes.

Audience: Thank you.

Stan Brakhage: Yes.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:10:49] Tell me what you think of [inaudible 01:10:50]

Stan Brakhage: I think it's wonderful. It's a very great work to me. I spent last year-I really enjoy very much more and I'm much less cranky actually when I'm talking about other people's work. I'm now teaching at Art Institute of Chicago. They very graciously have made arrangements to fly me in every other week to deliver a series of lectures which are written lectures. I was very interested, not in the kind of spontaneous chit-chat that's going on now but in a very concentrated form of lecture which is the 19th century delivered, written lecture.

Last year, I chose four names as just the major starting point that would really be a base for whatever else I'd go on writing and lecturing about there. They were Méliès, Griffith, Dreyer and Eisenstein.

I would be very much more comfortable, if I was talking about Eisenstein work and we've just seen the film and then I could be enthusiastic in a way that and articulate also in a way that's very hard when your own because your ego's involved in your own. You know that, that someone sits really is very painful. Unless you're really tough guy and I'm not. Most people that grow mustaches are not really tough guys. They're really hiding behind something.

You stand here. I've just had the experience of looking at this work and I'm amazed how it holds up. I'm disturbed at scratches in it and various other things. I'm disturbed that things aren't quite as sharp as I wish they could be. Then you get in front of people. It's very difficult, whereas if it's Eisenstein work, is it position's much different so I really enjoy that.

This year, I'm doing Chaplin, Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, [Jontheago, Broughton, 01:12:52] Peterson, Chris McLain, Conner, Ken Jacobs. I'm ending that whole series on tragic comedy on Ken Jacobs. Maybe you were the guy that gave him such a rough time when he was here, huh? He told me about that.

Ken's a very shy person. He got appear someone just cut loose in the audience, they ask a timid question at first and then built up and built up and finally, they were slashing him to ribbons on stage and saying, "There is no art of the film at all."

Audience: I was there when that happened.

Stan Brakhage: Yeah. You didn't do it. Okay.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:13:32] I asked about [inaudible 01:13:36]

Stan Brakhage: It was very painful, very painful for him. This is no joke. I'm not telling you not to blast lose if you want to, actually. That's okay, too but it's not to be done lightly. Yes.

Audience: This is not meant to be a ridiculous question but can you give a reasonable short definition of cinema for you?

Stan Brakhage: Light. It is a track of moving light would be. That's one I thought a lot about. I'm not inventing that at the moment. The two principles are light and movement and so really, you're talking about leaving a track, in fact, of light and movement and to be more-Go into it a little further, you're leaving that in a track of stills. That's the basis of film is light and movement.

Then, everything else is an interference with that light. Of course, that's the nature of the whole world. Everyone here knows immediately where the light is but that it's in here, right? Everyone carries around a lantern around inside them but we can't quite get at it. Everyone can see it the minute they close their eyes. They can see themselves phosphening, sparks from that lamp and they can feel it in their brain, which is that other sense of light inside oneself, the intellect.

Film is the first way we've had to get it out as movement, that the basis of the medium is light and that it's light in movement. Then we interfere with it, with the things that interfere with our lives. Some young man photographing his girl is doing just exactly that at base. Whatever other excuse you may have. He's on the make or whatever but he's really, it's that light inside himself. The girl really at that point is a problem. That's the problem. She is, until they learn how to share that.

Film is so wonderful to me because we can have an art that at last gets something of that very old struggle out into the open. Yes. [1:15:58]

Audience: Say more about why television has to be an art form and [inaudible 01:16:06]

Stan Brakhage: Oh, I didn't mean to say it couldn't be. I said only that I haven't seen any examples yet and that I thought that it, in order for it to be, one would have to almost instinctively move against the hypnotic effects of it, it's intrinsic hypnotic effects. I'm very interested in that. I'm sure that people are struggling with that right now and some with very deep integrity.

Audience: What would be some examples of-[inaudible 01:16:40]

Stan Brakhage: That's tough because-I can tell you in film. In film, rhythm is really articulate rhythm is the first way to counter the hypnotic effect of film,

Audience: [Inaudible 01:17:00] what is [inaudible 01:17:02]

Stan Brakhage: - but it also, all that articulation of rhythm begins with the basic sense of what the basic rhythm of film is. If you're working in the 16 millimeter just naturally, you work with the sense of 24 frames a second which is a flickering that's very close to a certain size fire, to about a hearth-sized fire. I don't think that's an accident, incidentally. That's a subconsciously very interesting phenomenon to me that film leveled off. They started at eight frames a second, then went to 12, then 16, then 24. It leveled off and it stayed at 24 for a long time and now there's some attempts to go to 32 frames a second. There's one Cinerama process that is even higher, I believe, but the leveling off of film around 24 is no accident, really. There's a very basic thing in, certainly in the 19th century and back then. Human beings around the fire and that is a rhythm very close to 24 frames a second, an average hearth fire, it's overall rhythm is very close to that but of course it has so many in those too. It has slow frames that go like that and it has the little sparks going like that but it's basic-sized hearth is about 24 frames a second.

Now, to keep that from being hypnotic in the film, immediately had to have that as a base and know it, that is feel it. They might not have known it thoughtfully but they knew it instinctively that that was a rhythm was going. Then, everything they did had to be articulate in relationship to that, just the same as when you know when you've got as a base beat, there are certain things you're just going to start doing with the bongo drums.

Now there are other people that went in the other direction, knowing that's the base beat, that it's hypnotic, they went in the other direction to make it more hypnotic. That's by and large the more commercial side of film.

One problem television has, incidentally is just simply that people keep using films on T.V. now. It's only very recently that they've begun to really insist that practically-They still show the old movies but an awful lot more of television is now actually made for television. There are little differences that are showing up.

For one thing, if you're going to have -I can't really answer your question. If I could, I suppose I could be working with it and making works of art in it right now, how to prevent that light which people are looking directly at from hypnotizing.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:19:50] Well, wouldn't that also have something to do with rhythm?

Stan Brakhage: If so, not as intrinsically as with film because, again, you don't have on/off. Film is on/off.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:20:05] but then that wouldn't it make it more plausible in the sense that for the person with the camera to control-

Stan Brakhage: I think it always did,

Audience: But I'm suggesting-

Stan Brakhage: - in both mediums.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:20:14] both off and on is like it.

Stan Brakhage: I'm going to take it back. I'll give you a reference in a way. There's one man that I know that's done some things with television. He hasn't made television films but he's done some things with television sets indirectly which have certainly produced great experiences of art with me. Nam June Paik, P-a-i-k. He makes television sets and he fixes the inside so that whatever's being broadcast at the instant gets turned into an image relative to what he wants it to be. He had some that were light great bulbous shapes. On the background would be the *Johnny Carson Show* or whatever but on the screen you would have these great moving bulbous shapes that have restrictions, electronic restrictions so for example, the bulbous can't move to the left more than so far.

One, he had, I remember, one that was the most beautiful It was a set. Here's your screen, Here was the line and here was a little fountain about half an inch tall in a screen this big. This little fountain was shooting up and going back into that line and shooting up again and shooting up. I guess it shot up at every point that a blackened shape went across that part of the field, in the broadcasting. In other words, he operated on whatever was being broadcast. The whole rest of the screen was white. Very beautiful thing.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:21:59] That's a private experience

Stan Brakhage: No. It's not private at all. These were for sale and people bought them and they hung them on the wall like paintings. Yeah.

Audience: You'd have to buy the whole T.V.?

Stan Brakhage: Yeah. Like a painting.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:22:14] I mean television because it's a dangerous medium

Stan Brakhage: There's the number one problem about making an artist, for someone to say what television is by nature or to say what is the true Eisenstein. Same thing. No one knows what television is by nature because-

Audience: No. I don't mean to [inaudible 01:22:35] to disqualify television but the phenomena of television is that television has in a house [inaudible. 01:22:41]

Stan Brakhage: That isn't even true.

Audience: Almost it is.

Stan Brakhage: There isn't one in my house. I wouldn't have one.

Audience: It's very amorphous so that-

Stan Brakhage: You see, these are all things that people try to convince you of. In fact, I'm in a minority not having a television set but I'm in the company with millions of other people.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:23:02] There is broad means of communication between-

Stan Brakhage: I don't even accept that. I don't think it's a broad means of communication. I don't think television has increased our knowledge of the Vietnamese war.

Audience: It could. It hasn't been tested-

Stan Brakhage: I'm not even sure about that. I do know that practically anything that's material can be created into a work of art but I have never myself outside of Nam June Paik but I do know this. In order to do so, you can't have any preconceived notion as to what the thing is because if you do, what's the point in doing anything with it, you see.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:23:44] But seeing how it and how it is now

Stan Brakhage: What do you mean, though, "How it is now?"

Audience: [Inaudible 01:23:55] Can you recognize patterns, lights, on television sets? Do think that television...[inaudible 01:24:20] simply rude out of the corrupt television.

Stan Brakhage: Because you're struggled so hard to put it and in that struggle is very interesting. You had to really qualify and qualify and you went a long ways to making it so I would say, "Yes." I will say, "Basically understand you," and I will say, "Yes." But next week when I come, I'll expect you to have given it enough thought that you'll have to qualify it a lot further before I'll answer yes to that but the real answer is no. The real answer to that question is no because it's that kind of question that's if I say to you, I say, "Is that a piano?" You say, "Yes." We say, "We both agree it's a piano." We don't have the slightest idea it's a piano but it's perfectly all right in these circumstances where neither of us give a damn whether it is or not to say if it is but I'm sure if Glen Gould were here he would kick it and say, "That's a piece of junk."

That's the problem. I made the same mistake myself. I said, "I'm sure." I'm not sure about anything about that piano. When I'm really not sure if it's a piano, I'm in a position either to begin working with it as an artist or appreciate it as a human being. When that becomes a complete mystery that I must go and deal with, fuss with it. Move it around, take the cloth off. My god. There's men who spent their whole life playing at pianos that wouldn't be sure to tell you what a piano is and they're really deeply into it. I'm saying I'm not trying to play semantic games with you because the simple thing would be to say, "Yes, yes, we all know what television is," but we don't.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:25:57] well you have to go into [inaudible 01:26:00]

Stan Brakhage: Yeah. Why I'm troubling myself to this link is I'm hopeful that you or someone else in the room might work with television and try to make a work of art out of it.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:26:11] but it seems like the past mediums of art

Stan Brakhage: You know, it doesn't have to. Radio, there never was any work of art made on radio to my knowledge.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:26:22] but what about the wealth of society?

Stan Brakhage: No. Not even for that. If you want my honest, cranky viewpoint, I think if they shut all the television sets off in the country, that'd be the only thing for the welfare of the country to do at this time.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:26:38]

Stan Brakhage: I don't have to.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:26:50] there is a lot of television and it has been invented better

Stan Brakhage: What's better?

Audience: [Inaudible 01:26:55] I recognize that there should be change in stimulating rhythm [inaudible 01:27:25]

Stan Brakhage: It intrigues me. It intrigues me what you said. See? I didn't mean just to be giving you a hard time but I figured if we stopped being facile and pursue something deep enough, we get to something interesting. Now, when you're talking about rhythms, you're on a very basic level and working with them, I would think that would be the first place to begin, working with television would be on a rhythmic basis which would be very strange but you see, we might not even have the word for what television does because it resists rhythm like a taffy does. Yet, it's possible to make taffy pull rhythmic. In fact, it usually is. It's in the window with things going around like this.

There's something about that in my experience that's very like taffy. In fact, it's like pulling it like this, something but I don't claim to know anything more than that about it. I mean, it's defeated me on a number of occasions. So far, it has not been mine to be able to work with, in fact, in any meaningful way. I worked for educational television station. I've worked a lot with television but I was never able to get work of art out of it. Yes.

Audience: Your films are about very elemental, intimate subjects. Do you ever see things in your films [inaudible 01:29:02] after they're done that disturb you?

Stan Brakhage: Always. Sure. Normal.

Audience: Do you see things that are not ... Does that stop you from releasing films?

Stan Brakhage: Disturbed is a problem because in fact, I see things that disturb me because that becomes the interesting thing about the film. In fact, that's happened but I think the way you meant it is do I see things that I'd like to change or rather have been different? That's certainly true. There's always things that I think are failures or don't sustain the feelings of that moment or fall out, whatever. Yeah.

Audience: I mean things that would be very revealing, that you don't want to show people, something like- For instance, you have a lot of shots of [inaudible 01:29:50] open heart surgery or something and juxtaposing that with other things, people might not think, you might get an impression.

Stan Brakhage: I'm very often scared of people. I have been attacked by audiences, physically by people in audiences. I'm always frightened that they're going to-

I remember, I had a film once that shows my oldest son, when he was a year and two months old masturbating. There was some girl in the auditorium that

had the assumption that I had forced him to masturbate in order to make this film. In fact, when my film *Lovemaking* was shown in New York, it has the children dancing naked on the bed. The reporter went away and wrote that it was a child perversion movie.

These things are dangerous. I've risked my life, had my life put in jeopardy. I don't think I'd ever consciously risk it. I'd consciously risked it because I know there was this attitude towards something I've done that people were threatening to put me in jail or god knows what. I wouldn't change those things for that reason, ever, for the reason that they were given to me. I don't have the sense that I made them by god almighty or whatever made this by myself. I had a sense that these were given to me and they're given to me very much like children to care for and to share with other people. I take that as a responsibility. I will take risks in that sense but people are very much misunderstanding things. I always try just to dance with life as it was given to me. I never really set up anything in that sense that a lot of people think I do. I just went to photograph what I saw in the most completely honest and deeply revealing way that I could. That's always being misunderstood.

I don't quite understand why because everyone knows that for instance that they are cheated by practically every industry in the country. They say it's the best toothpaste and so and you take it home and it tastes terrible and it does not make you smile like the actress did on television. The movie's never as good as the ad is in the newspaper, so on and so forth but people seem to accept this and say, "Well, that's the movies. Better luck next time. Buy another toothpaste."

But with art, people do tend sometimes to get terribly, they get this whole idea as if the artists were the greatest con, they were out to con people or talk down to them or I don't know what all and he was a viscous, lecherous old man or something or dirty middle aged man which is the worst thing you can possibly be, I guess but I don't quite understand that except that there's a false conditioning that's gone along with education in this country about art that's created in that image. You'd go under right away if you were going to let it stop you or really destroying you just immediately wouldn't make it past 18 as an artist if you were going to be stopped by what people thought or misunderstood.

Yeah. Uh-huh. Let me-He's got one.

Audience: [Inaudible 01:33:35] something that looks like a pencil. I wonder if you know what it was.

Stan Brakhage: The point, or yes. That's a clip from an educational-In Section Four, it's a clip from an educational film. First you see a mountain. In fact, it's Mount Hood. Then you see a mountainous shape. This pointer comes and points. This was a drive to include within the sense the didactic.

In fact, what the pointer is pointing to is an ant hill. It's from an African film. People who know ant hills will spot that immediately. It's an ant hill. The pointer's pointing very imperiously, but also it operates very metaphorically there. It's also the magician's wand. He holds it just as I've seen magician's hold it. Haven't you seen? Remember, it goes like that with the kind of grace so it's the teaching, didactic thing. It's a magician's wand.

It states effectively. For myself, it's that thing like in life where you're doing something and suddenly, you think and how would this look to the professional or how would this look, how would this be as written by Henry James or whatever. [1:35:15]

I went for that didactic image but also for the magic sense of it and found that image. It fulfilled something I felt was lacking in the rest of the film. It's also funny, I think. There's people who get to know this work that laugh and laugh all the way through it. It's full of jokes really but it's not as available as Charlie Chaplin but once after a certain number of viewings, it becomes very funny. For instance, the baby touch that people often ... I was very happy about that. He's very funny, really, with all these flashing things. It's hilarious and also it's terrifying to think of that child being bombarded by all these mysterious objects and they make these funny faces, they look at times like the greatest comedian in the world. Some reason, that picked up tonight and people felt free to laugh at that. I was very happy that happened. Yes.

Audience: When this is shown on T.V., where is it now?

Stan Brakhage: I imagine they did. I don't like it. Let's see. In this country, only parts of it have been shown. How I've managed to stop them from using sound here, I asked them to show a shot of a projector being turned on and then they run projector noise through this showing of it because it's illegal. F.C.C. will not permit more than 30 seconds of silence on television. Maybe it's 20 seconds. It's illegal.

One can understand why. People would start calling in the station, the switchboards would be clogged unless you have a breakdown of course. If you have a breakdown, they can't do anything about it but F.C.C. demands continual noise coming out of it. Germany, I imagine, I haven't asked because it pains me too much but I suppose they put it on coupled with Richard Strauss or something like that. Can't do a thing about it.

Is that all? All right. Thank you. Good night.

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