

# CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART

ONE OF THE FOUR CARNEGIE MUSEUMS OF PITTSBURGH

## Stephen Beck, Robert Haller and Sally Dixon in conversation

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Stephen Beck: There's 2 aspects to my being here, or really just 1; that I'm working as an artist, primarily up to this point, with video. For the past 2 years, since I've known Jordan Belson, we've become very good friends. This past year, we've begun working in collaboration on a new work called *Cycles*. Partially from a working collaboration with Jordan, and partially because we feel that we share a lot of the same aesthetic or world views about what is expressed through our art, I'm here to talk about not only Jordan's films, to try and give you some insight into them; most of the films you'll be seeing will be Jordan's own personal films, but I will also be showing the work in progress from our collaboration on *Cycles*.

I guess this afternoon; I'll be showing you one film entitled *Shiva*, which is a kinescope of my work from videotape.

Robert Haller: You're showing your video things tomorrow?

Stephen Beck: Tomorrow night, yeah, I'll be showing with the videotape; be concentrating more on my own personal work with the video synthesizer.

Robert Haller: Is Belson doing any video work?

Stephen Beck: With me, he is. He's never really done too much with it in the past. He has, on occasion, gone into the rented time at the local TV studios, and tried to work with the existing studio equipment. In a couple of his most recent films, you might see a few passages of imagery that contains some video elements, but he's never had as thorough an experience with it, as he's had with me.

Robert Haller: Does Belson draw much distinction between video as a source for images in films-

Stephen Beck: Good question.

Robert Haller: -As opposed to his unusual methods? He uses an optical printer-[talking at the same time [00:02:00]

Stephen Beck: He uses a lot of techniques. One of the things you see we both share, is a lack of any dogmatic insistence on using either film- entirely film-based or film-derived imagery, or entirely video-based or video-derived imagery. In other words, whatever source we see an image in that suggest we could use it for a certain expression of idea, then we'll take it.

Before I was working with video, I never worked with film directly myself, but I had worked with filmmakers. To me and to the artists, I think we see it more

in terms of color. Admittedly, there's big differences between video color and film color, but as we've been working with video, it's been more in terms of complementing film and video. In other words, what can be done with film? What can be done most easily with film? What can be done most easily with video, or what can be done by combining the 2 in new, imaginative ways?

In the work *Cycles*, we can't even recognize now which image came from video and which image came from film; they've become so well-mixed. There are certain technical differences, but from the image-fabricating point of view that we work from, there's not that great of a practical difference. We don't try and fabricate one. A lot of other people feel that there is, and that's just a different approach.

Robert Haller: Would you rather show *Shiva* on a video-type player, as opposed to in kinescope form, or are you just trying to-

Stephen Beck: Actually, I have equal- I have, for that work-it is equally unique, in both video and film. One of the interesting things is, is that to show it in video and show it in film, is to see the different qualities of it. Actually, for that work, it was originally composed for what is called a "video projector", that has the capacity to make a video image as large as the film image on the screen. I composed it for a large surface, not a tiny TV screen.

Particularly, with *Shiva*, I'm pleased to see it at a larger scale, that can be afforded by film. At the same time, on video, when you see the work, maybe you'll appreciate that it's more a work- someone commented on it at Yale, they called it a film that was a dance, as opposed to a film of a dancer, or about a dancer. In that sense, I think as either a film or a videotape, its quality of being a dancing flow of images, still comes through. In that case, I don't have any preference.

With *Cycles*, I haven't yet seen it on video. We have the work in progress here, which is to say the work- it's not finished, there will be changed, but I don't know yet what that will look like, when we transfer it onto video. With *Shiva*, I like seeing it both ways, before it gives more people-some people can see video, and they can't have access to film. A lot more people, even, have access to film, who don't yet have access to video playback. It's a means of having more people see the images, than if they were to be restricted. It kind of has a social consequence as well.[00:05:26]

Robert Haller: You said, I think in *Shiva*, that there is dance imagery?

Stephen Beck: Yeah, in *Shiva*.

Robert Haller: Are you particularly attracted to dance, and for a special reason related to the medium?

Stephen Beck: I was attracted to utilizing and incorporating human form into my work, which at first consisted pretty much of non-objective, so-called abstract elements, but which flowed and moved in what could be described as dance-like fashion.

I appreciate the dancers' sense of choreography, which is to say how they move themselves through time, how they're conscious of flow, as opposed to starting at position A and then moving to position B. I think there's strong connections.

In *Shiva*, I took an opportunity to work entirely with the human form in my synthesizer, and to get a literal presence by this body, to the flow of the images. Another interesting point; a lot of criticism that I get, and that Jordan gets a lot of times from people, is that our work is highly symmetrical, or that it's too balanced, that it's mirror image, which implies that it's therefore weaker than something that is less, or supposedly asymmetric, which incidentally is a concept that has always referred to symmetry anyway.

I don't feel that way, and I think with the dancer, whose body is symmetrical-bodies are mirror images-they start out with something symmetrical. Part of the challenge of the dancer is to transcend or go beyond that symmetry in the body. When they move and dance, they're working with a symmetrical body, but they're not-They're trying to use it in ways that don't make it limited by symmetry, and yet still ways that are based on the body being symmetrical, so I think there's a lot of connections.

I did light a dance company, before I got into the videographics. I worked on stage lighting, and so I was working with dance companies there. I guess there is a thread. My girlfriend's a dancer, so yes, I am interested in dance.

Robert Haller: The thing is, that dance comes up in so many different films. Emshwiller has returned to it repeatedly. Hilary Harris did the film *Nine Variations*. When he was here, he said that he -the girl who was in the film, liked the film very much, but didn't feel it was an accurate representation of what she was doing. In other words, a dancer's world is not the world that the film camera has ever really captured, or ever is likely to.

Stephen Beck: Perhaps with my Maya Deren, it came, I feel, the closest, most beautiful fusion between a dancer's consciousness applied with film consciousness, but go ahead.

Robert Haller: That was my other question; have you been watching very carefully, or are you very aware of what other work has been done about dance in film?

Stephen Beck: Yeah, in fact at home, with my video, I have a video cassette player.

Frequently, I scout out programs that will be on television, for example, about dance, and I like to record excerpts, kind of notebooks on dance. I was very impressed with the McLaren film *Pas de Deux*, where he used the simple idea-simple technical idea-to achieve a very beautiful effect, whereas Emshwiller's approach to dance. I would say, when I work with a dancer, I make it clear that I'm using them, or to say, "I'm using your image in this- I'm using the image of your dancing. I'm not maybe even going to ask you, or be interested, in what you're interested in as a dancer, because I'm looking from the point of view of what will be seen on screen."

In that sense, I'm not even trying to reproduce or convey the dancer's experience, as much as to use an ability for controlled and precise movement, that a dancer possesses. In the case of *Shiva*, which is not-I don't even know if you would really want to call it a dance film, but it is about-see, the idea of *Shiva* is part of a trilogy that stems from a Hindu or East Indian vision or view of the world, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the sustainer, and Shiva is the destroyer. This is a cycle, that continues going on and on.

The work *Shiva*, I use this presence of the human form, and I combine it with synthesized elements to suggest or convey this idea of Shiva, the destroyer; not destroying in a negative sense, destroying absolutely, but rather like when you burn something, in fire. You're destroying it, but you're just really reducing it back to the principle, or the basic atoms so that it can start again and form something else.

I was using the human for here, more to express that particular idea. In *Cycles*, we're using the human form. I think there's a clarification between a dance film, and the human form and the human element present in a film, or a graphic work. Probably what I'm doing is more into that second genre, than in the first, although I could see approaching the other.

I would see it would be hard, because the dancer's experience happens in 3 dimensions, and happens to her or him, and the film experience happens to an audience. The imagery of that film is what guides me in deciding what to use.

I had a very talented dancer that agreed to work with me once, and I directed her very carefully, and almost meticulously, for one sequence, that probably as dance goes, was just an essentially elementary, uninteresting dance move.

When I combined it-this was with the video-in the process of her moving, and I synthesized another element onto that, and it became a very magical image. I'm talking of a sequence from *Conception*, which I guess you'll have to wait until tomorrow night to see.

In that case, the dancer herself had agreed to become what I was asking her to become. I was really using her ability to control her body, rather than her ability to dance in an expressive way, to make this magical illusionistic image.

Maybe that helps clarify; there's kind of the human element and the dance element, and where possible, I've been using this human element. In "Cycles", we've utilized the human element in a few places. I don't really know why; there seems to be this time to use these elements, and a lot of other artists are incorporating the element of the human form. I think in a way, it's an affirmation of us or our presence, in the context of these other images, which maybe to some people might be very bewildering, or they might not have a basis or frame of reference. The idea of combining the human form with non-objective elements, has very exciting possibilities. We're trying those equations.

Robert Haller: I'm inclined to agree with you; combining the human form with non-objective elements is full of potential. In seeing Belson's films in the past-I can't remember precisely, but the one film I can think of is *Re-entry*-the weaknesses of Belson's films that I've tended to sense, have been precisely when he has gone from the purely abstract images-purely non-objective images-into things in *Re-entry*, say, when you'd say, "That's where the capsule hits the atmosphere."

To me, that's been the weakness- the principle weaknesses of Belson's films-when you can say, "There's a face," or "That's supposed to be a human being." While I can see going to abstracting a dancer, I wonder if it's as wise to go the other way; that is, to objectify the abstract.

Stephen Beck: No, that's a good point that you raise. At best, we're hypothesizing, we're experimenting, with these combinations of images. I know that from 1 work to another, 1 work to the next, the artist is constantly re-evaluating and reconsidering what he's done in the work before, and perhaps thinking and hypothesizing of new image combinations.

I'll be interested to see what your reaction is to *Shiva* after you see it, because I think after we run *Light* during this film, we'll run that second film I gave you, the "Shiva" film.

Speaker 1: [Inaudible 00:14:50]?

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Stephen Beck: Yeah, and-

Robert Haller: What does Belson feel about this, though?

Stephen Beck: The human form? His feeling-

Robert Haller: Not human, necessarily, but the object developments-

Stephen Beck:-The deviation from the non-That's a good question. He, himself, is very open to the possibilities for meaning contained within combinations of certain imagery. In other words, there's a fundamental connection between the non-objective and the objective, if you want to speak in those terms, that they both, in a sense, meet in us, and that for years and years, art was dominated by objective, and then for years and years, it was dominated by the non-objective.

Now, perhaps, if we can combine the 2 elements in some convincing way, in some meaningful way and some magical way, we'll be achieving a unification of the inner and the outer, the objective and the non-objective, which is to ultimately say, "All of these things we've been showing you for years, are really still going on within us." There's an excitement in seeing the combination of the two.

I think what you are hitting on is that if a work is decidedly moving in one direction, or carrying you in a certain direction, via non-objective type of imagery, and suddenly the thrust of that carrying is lost or dropped or momentarily weakened, by an element brought in from a new category, then that's a grave move. That's a serious move. The artist has to be prepared to follow that up in some way, to avoid letting you fall down and lose the thrust.

Myself, just in the case of *Shiva*, it took 9 or 10 takes on the work to get it convincingly so. All I can say is that we keep trying. We're very excited by this possibility of combining and therefore expressing new meanings, by putting non-objective and objective elements together.

For example, in *Cycles*, there's a human element which appears symbolizing the Brahma, or the feminine, creative principle. There's the human element in the form of Shiva, again, symbolizing the masculine, or the destructive principle. There's a kind of constant human element that occurs at certain points in the cycle, representing all of humanity, or the sustaining of the human process.

We felt quite justified, and we felt that the beauty of the imagery itself, when we saw it, was validified; our moves of putting the elements in tandem, non-objective and objective. I do know that there's a delicate balance there, like what you flashed on. Before you can identify and recognize specifically, "That's a face, that's an arm, that's a body, such and such," to perhaps already have ephemeralized that image as something else.

Maybe we can run the films now, because I think that would be a good time to do it.

Robert Haller: I have to ask you this one question; was he influenced by Blake Edwards?

Stephen Beck: Good question. I don't think he was influenced by Blake Edwards, but I'm trying to remember the name-Rodney Collin, whose quote-a quote Jordan used to describe this film that goes something along the lines that, "Life is divinity itself." Were you thinking of a particular work?

Robert Haller: Yes; well, this is almost a joke, but at the end where it says "light", and there's a flash of light. In "The Great Race", it's the same, where Tony Curtis winks, opens his mouth, and the light-something glitters off is eye.

Stephen Beck: I thought I'd seen that. It's hard to say.

Robert Haller: A lot of the directors have used it since then- Hollywood directors. It's a sort of "in" joke about Tony Curtis. People don't generally [inaudible 0:19:06].

Stephen Beck: No, I didn't know that. I don't think he knew that. I think he was looking there for a -instead of saying "end", like we've realized that in all the new films we'll be making, instead of putting "end", we're just going to repeat the title, which will make the title clear ... It will make the end clear. It'll be like a parentheses; one more touch of that idea.

Robert Haller: Is there an authoritative filmography of his works; a listing of precisely what was made, when?

Stephen Beck: I don't think so. This is the kinescope of *Shiva*, which is not in focus entirely here. It didn't have a protective coating. When I return, we'll lay my projects out, to prepare the-I've got about a dozen requests for this as a film now ...

Speaker 2: Yeah, exactly.

Stephen Beck:-Showing it. I'm going to put the titles on there, and put the track ... put a good track on there, and put a [inaudible 00:20:02].



Speaker 2: Good, [inaudible 00:20:04].

Stephen Beck: Put the framing on it, yeah. You see, I don't know -I don't think of it as a dance film, per se. The context it originally appeared in- If you can imagine, the same guy that was in there dancing around the front of it on stage, that's what was happening, to an extent. He kind of danced into it, by a very clever use of light and shadow. It looked like he went right in there, and he kind of disappeared, and it worked. It was very effective. This was the scale that the work was originally presented on, as opposed to smaller scale. That's a sample of some of the work that I've done.

Robert Haller: The quality of the image seems much sharper than kinescopes I've seen elsewhere.

Speaker 2: Yeah, they didn't look kinescope to me. Why is that?

Stephen Beck: Yeah, part -Yeah, that's a good question. I've noticed that. I think one of the reasons is that I was working with a lot of fine elements in the video, to start out with. In other words, the form is almost entirely defined by line, and the only texture you see in there, is tiny little particles and color that-this flaming substance, flaming color substance is, I've discovered, the larger it gets, the more beautiful it looks. It's a video phenomenon, video feedback, which is normally seen on the small screen.

One of the reasons I selected it to use at this scale is because when you enlarge it, you see more of it. I think it was a combination of good elements in the basic material.

We took a lot of care, in the kinescoping of our work. In fact, we're trying to build our own kinescoping facility, because there was a lot of problem even with the studios. Palmer Studios, who I understand makes most of the kinescoping cameras people use anyway, but this is, out of all the works I've transferred onto film, the best. It's come through the best, and it's probably the only one that really has any-

Speaker 2: Comes through the best as a film?

Stephen Beck:- As a film, mainly because I think it was originally conceived with the scale in mind. I didn't use video elements that I knew would break down, so to speak, at that larger scale. There's also a constant movement; he's always moving, or something's always moving. I think he-

Speaker 1: Want those slides out yet?

Stephen Beck: Sure, yeah. Why don't you run them.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Stephen Beck: I think a lot of things add up. It's not like kinescoping a straight video program, which is so often the case. These slides, now, are just ... these are actually stills that were shot down at the studio where we were working on *Cycles*. You'll see the synthesizer panel there on the right. These are some stills from *Cycles*.

Let's see, I think what I did is, I showed these slides and then showed *Cycles*, yeah.

Speaker 2: He doesn't know whether he's in or out, or what.

Stephen Beck: Yeah, it doesn't have a slot. It's electronic; called electronic airbrush technique. This is one technique that's pretty new to my own synthesizer.

Speaker 2: [Inaudible 00:23:55]

Stephen Beck: Uh-huh. Jordan has told me about a dozen times, it's [inaudible 00:24:04]. He thinks that I'm a reincarnation of Durer-Albrecht Durer.

Speaker 2: That's exactly what I was thinking of. It's [inaudible 00:24:12].

Stephen Beck: He's not the only one who's said that, really. There's been some other people, at other places in time, quite separate from that.

Speaker 2: That's exactly my ... I didn't say Durer because I thought you might not know who I meant.

Stephen Beck: No, I'm getting used to it now. I do use a lot of [inaudible 00:24:24]. Here's one of the circuit cards. After those words slide off, I'm going to edit those others to go closer in on the circuit cards, which are quite beautiful. I've got to edit this.

This is the video synthesizer that I built out in San Francisco. I learned about the film, when we were down here at Palms ... yeah, see, that's the kinescoping camera that we were using. You want to hold that slide, please? Joe, is that his name?

Speaker 2: Joe.

Stephen Beck: Joe? Yeah, so then there was a set of ... [inaudible 00:25:05], being picked up by that video.

Speaker 2: [Inaudible 00:25:09]

Stephen Beck: That's the wrong one. It was just pointed like that, the second color TV set, and one in the background has the tape on it and everything. That was connected up to the video synthesizer. We just had ... at any moment we wanted to, we could start filming the image that was coming out of the synthesizer. One of the things it's enabled us to do is to get colors that could not have been recorded on video tape.

One of the problems I had was that, you'll see a screen that it looks like I'm looking at, which in fact they have a completely different picture from the other one. The film emulsion is so subtle, and so sensitive, that there was no way to match the 2 images. Could you go to the next one, please? No?

Speaker 2: He can't hear.

Stephen Beck: It's a long afternoon of "Shiva" taking ... the hardest part of that for me was to light the studio properly, so that the figure would be existing separately from ...

Speaker 2: Which is part of the effectiveness, I think, of this.

Stephen Beck: Yeah, right. He's isolated, and it was important that he be isolated. You're never seeing a photographic image of him. You're always seeing an electronically processed image of him, so that everything happened at one pass. With my synthesizer, I had 4 channels of image capacity, which means I can, in a sense, superimpose or in other ways besides superimpose, handle as many as 4 separate components of the image at once, which on a film, I guess would take an A, B, C and a D roll, and then a print.

I didn't approach it that way. I pretty much approached the video work as a real-time phenomenon. One of the things, why I'm interested in working with film, is because of the possibility for editing and manipulating the imagery, so that there's not this pressure to do it right, once. I felt that that was a good discipline to take on, and I've worked that way for about 2 years now. It's enabled me to get very direct in terms of-

Speaker 2: It's clear in your intentions.

Stephen Beck:- Yeah, right. So many people working with video, you'll see a shortcoming in the work as it's very un- to the point; it's un-centered.

Speaker 2: It's casual.

Stephen Beck: Yeah, it's very casual. It took a lot of practice to be able to refine it to that point.

Speaker 2: It's great, though, because now you can go either way.

Stephen Beck: Right.

Speaker 2: You're free.

Stephen Beck: That's it. Why don't we-

Speaker 2: My question, first to you and about Jordan, or Mr. Belson ...

Stephen Beck: Jordan.

Speaker 3: How conscious are you of the early abstract filmmakers, Eggeling, Richter, Man Ray and Fischinger? Whitney, I suppose.

Stephen Beck: I think there's a line between Fischinger and Whitney. Myself, I was not that conscious of the early filmmakers. When I saw my first Fischinger at Sheldon's place in [inaudible 00:28:53], I freaked out that some of the imagery that he had used was exactly the same that I had been concentrating on with the video at the time. It happened to be done in chevron forms.

I was very impressed with the precision of Fischinger's work. Jordan knew and spoke with Oskar Fischinger before Fischinger passed away. There's a direct link there between what you might call the first school of abstract non-objective expressionistic filmmakers, and the present situation, which I think you could begin with the Whitney brothers, and Jordan Belson, and perhaps a few other figures that I wouldn't really know about; maybe sometime calling that the 50s-end of the 40s, early 50s.

I know nowadays that there was almost ... the trust was handed to Belson, I think, through Fischinger. Jordan has told me a lot about the times going down here, and having his ear bent by Oskar Fischinger. There's a direct fusion, a direct connection, between Fischinger and Belson.

I would say, to the extent that I've been influenced by Belson and other filmmakers, from Fischinger to myself. Furthermore, I think Fischinger was directly influenced by Kandinsky as a painter, and the whole non-objective school of painting. A Fischinger film, to me, looks like a Kandinsky painting, moving. If Kandinsky could have painted moving pictures, it would have done what Fischinger's films do; not that Kandinsky didn't succeed at creating the sensation of movement in his paintings, which is a mastery in itself.

I was very early influenced by Kandinsky and his paintings, and indirectly I think, [inaudible 00:31:03] spawned the whole non-objective school of artists. There's a direct personal linkage between Fischinger and Jordan, in terms of their having met and conversed many times before Fischinger died. There's an early affiliation between Jordan and the Whitney brothers who-I guess Belson lived in Berkeley, in San Francisco, for about 25 or 30 years now. In the 40s, I think he made a trip to Los Angeles and met the Whitney brothers. I'm not sure on that date, but there's a direct lineage, almost, handed down from person to person.

If Fischinger were alive now, I'd probably go meet him. I feel a lot of links. I feel that there's never-there's nothing absolutely new or original that happens. There's cycles of certain ideas and qualities that emerge, and others recede. Now, perhaps, as filmmaking artists, we are working under a certain set of criteria that's emerging, that was growing and needed the foundation of the non-objective artists of the early century. It's important, I think, to make the distinction, too, between non-objective, abstract, abstract expressionists and impressionists. There are very subtle differences, but reflect, I think, some very basic world views that are different, than the non-objectivists are approaching their painting, which might look to the casual observer, no different from an expressionist, but with a very different premise on what that painting is, what the relationship between themselves, as the artist, and that painting is, and what the relationship between that painting and eternal qualities is.

I've never tried to get too hung up on those distinctions, but a lot of times, people accuse me of being an abstractionist. I try to clarify it, not because ... I don't care what I'm called, to a certain limit, but it's important for people to refine their thinking in terms of, if they're going to categorize, they have to realize there are more categories, and there are differences.

I would just say that; there's that link between the non-objective school of painting, which influenced Oskar Fischinger, which influenced Jordan Belson, and certainly influenced me.

Speaker 3: Are there any film abstract-or whatever you want to call them, whatever they would be called- non-objective filmmakers who aren't well known, like a person as influential as Oskar Fischinger, but only known by people like Fischinger or Belson or you?

Stephen Beck: Good question. There's a number of people who I've seen their films in San Francisco. They'd come by Jordan's place and show a film. It's very exciting to see that there's budding fruit, so to speak, along these lines. I couldn't really come up with a name or anything like that myself, but I would say that ...

Speaker 2: The [inaudible 00:34:38]?

Stephen Beck: Yeah, I'd say they're all over, and probably they're just waiting for recognition to be given, and encourage them to go on. Wherever possible ... We had some guy come by one night with a film, the title of which I won't mention, that was just the weirdest film I've ever seen, and he showed it. We tried to be polite, and yet not to be deceitful in terms of giving a fair critique of the film. Yet, it was clear this guy was just-he had a long way to go, in coming to terms with the medium, before he was going to be turning out well-shaped, complete entities. That wasn't any reason to put him down, because of where he was.

We're always seeing people whose work-We see work where there's maybe a moment or a passage of exquisite, non-objective imagery, but it's enmeshed in a confused idea in total, or it's combined in a potpourri of a lot of other graphic approaches. You see that flash in there, but as a totality-as a recognition of itself as a totality -it's not developed. I'd say there's very few people around who probably have been able to develop a cognizance of the totality and the validity, and what it means to be working with this kind of imagery, as opposed to people who-Like when I started, when you start, you don't know what it is. You just feel this attraction to a certain kind of imagery, and you feel that this is substance, this is significant.

It might take a few years before you begin to connect deeper ideas, historical qualities and historical trends, with your own attraction to a certain kind of imagery. That's what happened to me, and you kind of have to keep on trucking, even if nobody is-bats an eyelash at you, which probably makes it harder to go on after getting recognized, but still- or easier. I'll tell you, yeah, there's a burden to the recognition. There's a real burden to it, to the extent that you become almost a spokesman for what you're doing. You're put on the spot, and you can't just say, "I don't care." You try as best as you can to elaborate, give some kind of insight into the process.

I was quite happy to just watch the colors and the shapes myself, and then I found I was showing them to people, and they would get more and more

interested in it. When I approached people for support, and showed them what I'd been doing, they were convinced that there was something there, worthwhile supporting. Now, thousands of millions of people are seeing these works. What do they want to know? Who is the guy making them. They always want to know what's behind it.

We come out and we say, "This is what's behind it." You can't really argue with it, because this is what-these are what we're working-these are our working premises." At worst, we can destroy someone's own interpretation or sense of the work. We're still-I was tape recorded on a program 2 years ago, and when I see that program and hear what I said, half of it is out of date. I no longer hold that view of things. It's almost not unlike the artist to say one thing, and not even while he's gotten out of his mouth, to be considering the value of the opposite, because there is no-In essence, it's not an absolute universe. It's relative.

There is morality. There is trust. There is growth. That's where the judgment comes in. Anything I say out there, I'll say exactly the opposite maybe next year, which is not to say that doesn't mean anything. It's just to say that our world view is changing. We consider these ideas, and then we consider the opposite of these ideas, and from doing that, get a very rich sense of what we're confronting.

It's like, you don't meet someone and consider what's good about them; you consider what's good about them, and what's bad about them. You don't just meet someone and consider what's bad about them; you consider what's good about them, too. That way, you recognize the yin and the yang of it.

Speaker 3: One last question; has Belson destroyed his early work, or has he simply buried it for 20 years or something?

Stephen Beck: He hasn't destroyed anything. He might say that he has, and I probably shouldn't be saying that he has works in [inaudible 00:39:39] on his shelf that he's never showed. He tends to play up the passion role a little more than he would actually execute. When it comes time to make a cut, he's really the most cautious person, and I know he would never throw an image out. He wouldn't do that.

He's got a lot of work sitting around that he won't show, or he won't make known about, but I know he will never show them out. He showed me a few of the early works, and they're really beautiful. They're maybe a little chunkier, or they're not as polished, they're not as lyrical as the compositions that he's turned out lately, but the imagery in them is as fascinating, and as rich and as beautiful as anything else.

Even when he was working with frame-by-frame animation, there were films, like he showed me a film that was done with some early be-bop music of some type-some early jazz music. It was, compared to what he's doing now, very elementary. It was still, within itself, very complete. To me, that's how I judge the work. Probably someday, all his works will get out; an edited version of them. I think they will. I think it's just a matter of time until he's known a little more, until maybe people push him, pressure him and beg him, or say the magic word [inaudible 00:41:14] and get him to show those out.

At some point, there will be this-He'll probably be one of the- Fischinger, there's a lot of works of Fischinger's around. You can almost see Fischinger develop from an early filmmaker into a final, mature artist. With Belson, there's going to be a very rich collection of works, from the very first to the very last, that will detail his development as a person, as well as a filmmaker, in a very good way. There's some talk of reviving the Vortex concerts.

Speaker 2: At the [inaudible 00:41:50]?

Stephen Beck: Yes, I guess [Camille Cook 00:41:52] and some people are interested in doing that. I think they'll be ... if anything else, they'll come to rest in an archive somewhere, and it will be possible for someone who might want to really study the whole history, to do this.

Another possibility is in the still collection. One of his objections to showing the early works is that such things like pacing, flow, technique and the dynamics is so coarse, that it's embarrassing to him to show them. His stills ... his sequence of stills, where that element is removed, they might take on a different significance. In fact, they might be more useful to somebody that way, than having to look at all the films.

Let's see, I had a list- He was scratching off names, too, of films that he didn't want me to mention, from that early series. I can see that he was going pretty far out at the time, to make things like that. I started working in the late 60s, mid-60s, and already there was a conscious change coming on to the country, in things like light shows. There was a whole consciousness of this kind of imagery emerging, that suddenly made it less shocking to come out with an image of this sort, than it might have been 20 years ago.

Speaker 3: How does Belson feel about *2001*, the ending?

Speaker 1: In what way?

Speaker 3: Does he feel that-I don't know, Emshwiller was asked to work on it, and said he didn't want to because he'd done something similar in "Relativity". A lot of



people said that *2001* seemed revolutionary to everyone except those who'd seen Belson's work, and then they thought it wasn't nearly as revolutionary as they thought. Did he feel slighted that he wasn't asked to work on it, that his ideas had been used?

Stephen Beck: It's interesting that you ask that, because someone else asked that question at Yale. They asked me, did I think that that sequence in *2001* was influenced by Jordan Belson. Unequivocally, I would answer yes, because of the pre-existence to the design of *2001*, which was released in 1968, was probably being written and produced in 1960-

Speaker 3: Six and 7.

Stephen Beck: '66, '67, and Jordan Belson had been doing *Allures* and films like -doing Vortex and films like *Allures* in 1959. There's no way, I think, that you can deny that even from the technique basis, that they was inspired by Jordan Belson's work to take that ending of *2001* the way they did. Also, they were influenced, I think philosophically, by the use of this imagery to convey the experience of now going into inner space, as contrasted with outer space, which is what the rest of the previous part of *2001* was concerned with. To that extent-their sequence of imagery is designed to reflect the experiences of going into inner space, as contrasted with outer space.

I think to this extent, Jordan's work was, from the outset, a journey into inner space and he approached it, becoming with each work, more and more conscious of that quality of it. I don't know if they asked him to work on that in *2001* or not. I don't know if he felt slighted, but I know what it's done. It's opened up-the effect that it had was to open up, to the vast audiences in theaters, the viability of this kind of imagery. If anything, it maybe took *2001* to kind of open up the acceptance for this kind of imagery.

What I'm predicting, or what I'm hoping to see in the next 5 to 10 years, is the acquiring of theaters, on a regular basis, of works like what we saw here. They've pretty much exhausted the audience for all but a set of really classic Hollywood-type production, and the consciousness of the younger people is more able to grasp these ideas, and the consciousness of the older people-I find no boundaries and no limits.

So many artists come, and they have a really-they really have a chip on their shoulder against a certain class or a certain strata of people thinking, "They won't get my work." Whereas, I've always approached it quite openly and I've been always excited to find some unexpected personality type who's been able to relate to these experiences.

Everyone can sense beauty. Everyone can feel good, and everyone can feel bad. If they can be made to feel good, and have an uplifting experience with these images, then that's not withheld from anyone.

Jordan did have one of his films-his film *Chakra* was purchased by the Guru Maharaj Ji to put in their film, *Who is Guru Maharaj Ji?* I don't know if you've seen that film, but it's the best part of the film, quite unbiased.

Speaker 2: Really?

Stephen Beck: There's a few parts of the films that are cinematically very handsome and very smooth, but there's a lot of the film that's very harsh and very coarse and very adolescent, very infantile, almost, in its approach. His film work has been sought by certain producers. There was, I guess, his film on the atom, produced by Encyclopedia Britannica, and they commissioned him for some footage describing inside the atom.

If he was recognized or not, for having put those images on film, other producers have, not in 2001 but in other things. If I can judge the experience of the last few weeks, few months, to be an indication, we're just going to have our hands full in the next couple of years, of doing, in a sense, commissioned image to order for certain ideas that other people are working on; larger films, that might deal with specific topics, where we can in a sense give a special sense of quality of the idea, by imagery that we have, that we've researched these phenomena.

I've studied physics for years, and I was always- the premise I'm working under is the kind of connection between the physical and the metaphysical universes. To study physics, and to see the imagery of physics, it's very beautiful.

Speaker 2: Sort of a film with metaphysics.

Stephen Beck: Yeah, the physics of metaphysics, or something.

Speaker 2: Or metaphysics.

Stephen Beck: Metaphysics, yeah.

Speaker 3: I just thought of 2 other little questions. Are you interested in science fiction?

Stephen Beck: Yeah, I've been getting interested in science fiction the last few years. I've read some really interesting science fiction books. I'm trying to think of the

title of one. I've had 2 people come to me with science fiction scripts for consideration of working on.

What I'm interested in now is almost working on science fact, because the line between science fiction and science fact is so fine, and what is often passed off as science fiction is really scientific philosophy, I would say. It's not scientific method, it's scientific philosophy. Because it's not methodologically right for science to accept on its face value somebody like Velikovsky, who is not a scientist, who many scientists won't acknowledge, but yet whose work is based on scientific philosophy.

Speaker 3: Please, Velikovsky's a bandit in my opinion. One of the interesting things is the way that Frampton has a scientific background, and [inaudible 00:50:56] was fascinated by science. I think science and film are getting very close together all of a sudden. I'm not sure why, though.

Stephen Beck: Who invented photography, the artist? The daguerreotype artists; what science could not exist where it is now without the photography? Astronomy; a case in point where the artists, and a man like Leonardo da Vinci- there was no distinction between the artistic side and the scientific side. It's only been quite recently, within the last 150 years or so, that-

Speaker 2: [Inaudible 00:51:30]

Stephen Beck: Yeah, a man of knowledge was a specialist, as opposed to a generalist. The great mentors of 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> century knowledge were very broad in their learning. Descartes was a poet, as well as a philosopher and a mathematician. If anything, we're perhaps reaffirming this unification of diversity, as opposed to specialization.

Yeah, it's an interesting observation, because my training is entirely ... my academic training is entirely in engineering sciences; electrical engineering. In fact, I'm lucky that I never went to art school or film school. I probably would have been-

Speaker 2: Absolutely, yeah.

Stephen Beck: -Put down long ago. I always believed, in college, that establishing electronic art, as I called it at the time, was just as reasonable a path to follow, as following microwave design or computer circuits or laser amplifiers. To some extent, I've incorporated a little of all of those into my instruments. In class, the difference is getting very slight. You can't make a film without being a scientist. You've got to know about the lenses, you've got to know about light, you've got to know about emulsion. You don't have to, but the more you know

about these things, the more creative facilities are at your approach, or at your fingertips.

Speaker 2: The latest issue of *Analog Science Fact and Fiction* has an article about computer films, which I have glanced at, and it looked to be so bad that I didn't continue reading it.

Stephen Beck: I'm not empathetic with cybernetic aesthetics, as I call it, which is a branch of computer art, computer films, in which the computer is not really an instrument, but which the content of the work is derived from computer algorithms or cybernetic types of algorithms. That's not to say it's invalid or meaningless, but I find that it kind of to me, that work ends with itself. It ends with having to execute it. It's either too advanced for me to appreciate, with my mind, that is still so romantically inclined, or so emotionally inclined that it's not developed enough to realize the emotional quality of these algorithms.

Also, because I've studied courses in information theory and things, I'm very conscious of people throwing these terms around in a very loose sense, and so I'm very skeptical, maybe, of what kind of aesthetic results follow from them. I'll have to see; *Analog Science Fact and Fiction*, I think they have that.

Speaker 3: It's the latest issue, I think it's still out.

Stephen Beck: They've got, I think, a science fiction-I'm trying to think of the book. I just read it. It was great.

Speaker 3: By Clarke?

Stephen Beck: No, it wasn't by Clarke. It was-

Speaker 3: I just got *Rendezvous with Rama*. I can't wait until I-

Stephen Beck: It's about the cosmic-It's written by an Englishman, who takes a trip through the cosmos and assumes all the identities of different planets. The name will come to me, anyway. It was very-

Speaker 3: Not *The Demolished Man*?

Speaker 2: *The Little Prince*?

Stephen Beck: No, it's not *The Little Prince*, and it's not Jonathan Livingston Seagull.

Speaker 2: They're the same thing.

Stephen Beck: They're the same thing.

Speaker 3: I know; by Zelazny or the one where the guy's Christ at one point?

Stephen Beck: No. Doggone it, I just can't remember titles and names worth 2 cents. It'll come to me tonight sometime.

Speaker 2: You can shout it out. It's probably one of the new wave of authors?

Stephen Beck: No, it was written in the 20s.

Speaker 3: Stapledon?

Stephen Beck: Stapledon, that was it.

Speaker 3: Yes.

Speaker 2: Olaf Stapledon.

Speaker 3: "Last and First Men"?

Stephen Beck: No, it was the one before that. It was great. It has great descriptions of traveling at the speed of light, which describes all the relativistic phenomenon that would occur, like the colors, because of red shift, and the fact that at a certain point you wouldn't see anything, because you'd be moving faster than the light would.

Speaker 2: All red-I can't think of the name.

Stephen Beck: It's a classic piece. It was said that this was better than *Last and First Men*.

Speaker 3: You want to read *Billion Year Spree*, by Brian Aldiss. It's a critique of science fiction, and Stapledon gets a whole chapter.

Stephen Beck: *Billion Year Spree*?

Speaker 3: Yeah, it's really good.

Speaker 2: I could send you the tape.

Stephen Beck: Yeah, send me a copy of the tape. I'll put it on my book list here.

Speaker 3: There are all kinds of good books on science fiction just coming out, but *Spree* is probably the best that I've seen.

Stephen Beck: That's from Stanley Slaughter, in case you haven't gotten one.

Speaker 2: I haven't.

Stephen Beck: His marriage is broken up.

Speaker 4: He told me.

Stephen Beck: He's sending out new addresses on the back. He said this photo, which is incredible, high speed frame, of a bullet penetrating an apple, has medieval significance, and an apple represented marriage, and that this bullet shooting through the apple represented the end of his. I love the high speed.

One of the things I like about film, as compared to video, is the ease with which, in film, you can stretch and distort and modify the time dimension. In video, short of going to highly expensive tape machines, it's pretty hard to work on a frame-by-frame basis. Of course, they use those discs in football games to play slow motion, but I'm very intrigued with film's possibilities for showing us, in our time sense, phenomena that are either too fast or too slow for us to appreciate or comprehend. This bullet through the apple is a case of something that happens far too fast for us to perceive.

As well as like, someone who's making a still a day of these buildings going up, and had recorded on film the dialogue of the city growing; a phenomenon that happens, but it's so much greater than our own human time sense, that we miss it. I'm really excited by these kind of possibilities, and maybe in the future, I'll have some opportunities to explore high speed.

I've been- I never-I don't know anything about film technique. I didn't, until 2 weeks ago, know the specific facts of how a camera worked, but I'm studying it and learning, and I'm hoping to-

Speaker 2: Black holes.

Speaker 3: She laid an egg. What is it?

Speaker 2: [Inaudible 00:58:37].

Speaker 3: It's our knob.

Speaker 2: Our knob.

Speaker 3: My other one little question, and this will be the last, was I wondered if either Man Ray or Richter were ever in communication, or are in communication now, with Belson or people like that, or whether they've ever written to you, if they've seen your work?

Stephen Beck: I'm afraid I don't even know who these men are. Man Ray?

Speaker 4: Man Ray; the filmmaker, photographer.

Speaker 3: From America, from the 20s.

Stephen Beck: Right, yeah.

Speaker 3: *Emak-Bakia*, and films like that.

Stephen Beck: To my knowledge, no; certainly not to me. He hasn't been in contact with me. I don't know if they've-

Speaker 3: One of the weird little things, the coincidences that-Who gave you the postcards?

Stephen Beck: Stanley Slaughter.

Speaker 3: Stanley Slaughter is married to Richter's daughter.

Stephen Beck: That's right. Someone told me that.

Speaker 3: I just wondered-

Stephen Beck :I'm not - I know a thousand times more about like [inaudible 00:59:43] than I do about film history. People are constantly turning me on to connections that I didn't know about. When I get back to Berkeley, I'm going to really lay out [inaudible 00:59:55] and see if he'll open up his archives there to me, and I'm going to try and see a lot of these films. Someone at Yale told me that Marcel Duchamp had done a film on the idea of Shiva, or had some Shiva figure in one of his films, which I want to see. He'd also used the spiraling motif.

Speaker 3: Yeah, he did a thing called *Anemic Cinema* in 1926.

Stephen Beck: *Anemic Cinema*, yeah.

Speaker 3: He also did a film with Richter called *Dadascope*, I think, or *8 x 8*.

Stephen Beck: Did he know Dali? Were they -I saw a film that Dali did.

Speaker 3: I don't think Duchamp and Dali worked together, but Dali worked with Bunuel, and Dali also worked with Richter, on a film in which Duchamp also worked with Richter. I think that's *8 x 8*. You have to get *8 x 8* or *Dadascope*. You don't-

Stephen Beck: *Dadascope*.

Speaker 3: -Yeah, that's what you should get. You could still get that this year, even.

Stephen Beck: *Dadascope*, who's got it?

Speaker 3: I don't know. That's one of Richter's films.

Speaker 2: I've never seen it out.

Speaker 3: I don't either. I don't think I've ever seen it, either.

Speaker 2: [Inaudible 01:01:03].

Speaker 3: I think *8 x 8* is available.

Speaker 2: I think I've seen *8 x 8*.

Speaker 3: It's in that big book I've got on Richter. "*Dadascope*" has got things by Arp, and Dali and Duchamp.

Stephen Beck: There was a big show on Duchamp at the museum.

Speaker 4: That would be the reason to go to Philadelphia.

Stephen Beck: Duchamp? Why?

Speaker 4: He's so good. That much stuff gathered together in one room ...

Stephen Beck: They've got a collection of Duchamp in Philadelphia?

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Stephen Beck: I didn't know that.



Speaker 4: They have a number of pieces. They also have this more extended [inaudible 01:01:45]. What is that, the very famous one, called? The last something-or-other?

Stephen Beck: *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even?*

Speaker 3: These titles.

Stephen Beck: *The Large Glass*? That's it.

Speaker 2: The one that you [inaudible 01:01:59] a little hole in the door; not *The Bride Stripped Bare*. That's written last, right?

Speaker 3: That's broken now. They said it was broken last week, in the class. *The Large Glass*; Jedsen said in his class last week, that "The Large Glass"-

Speaker 2: Said in his class.

Speaker 3: -Duchamp made in '26 was broken in the 50s or something.

Speaker 2: That's right.

Speaker 3: Duchamp was almost happy, because it was painted as a kind of ephemeral art.

Speaker 2: Yeah, he lost-

Speaker 3: The masterpiece is gone.

Speaker 2: I thought you meant, broken in class last week. I thought, "What?"

Speaker 3: No.

Speaker 2: I could picture classes going through and someone throwing something.

Stephen Beck: Yeah, my fantasy is to have the synthesizer go through an incredible short circuit, and it gets itself back to the beginning, when it's lived out its usefulness or something.

Speaker 2: There's a lot of art going on that's exactly like that.

Speaker 3: No one could ever reconstruct it, and your films would be lost, and could never be reproduced.

Stephen Beck: That's the idea.

Speaker 2: That's what happened with [inaudible 01:03:05]. His art is, in fact, a manifestation of [inaudible 01:03:10]. It seems likely that art is right, and that art should also be in space.

Stephen Beck: Yeah, I used to think that was very bad. When [inaudible 01:03:20] BAT exhibit, when their machine in the ultimate finale was that it destroyed itself, I thought, "Thank goodness. This is good." I've seen it differently. Maybe if it had a little more life on it, I would have appreciated it more, because it all happened so quick. That's another stake about the times, I guess.

Yeah, otherwise, artists invariably get sick of having the stuff thrown back at them. Probably the only recourse he has is to destroy it, or to have it destroyed surreptitiously.

Speaker 2: Better possibly that, than to have it betrayed-

Stephen Beck: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 2: - By non-appreciators.

Stephen Beck: Have it turned into a commodity.

Speaker 2: Or exploitation; it would be cruelty. I think even positive suicide, I see that also, that it could be a betrayal of life if one reverts to those circumstances, of betrayal of life.

Stephen Beck: Sure.

Speaker 2: You're not recording this, are you?

Stephen Beck: Give me liberty, or give me death.

Speaker 2: Liberty meaning life.

Stephen Beck: Life, yeah.

Speaker 2: In its fullest sense.

Stephen Beck: Right, exactly.

Speaker 2: Or even its not fullest, but just so it is-

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