

CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART

ONE OF THE FOUR CARNEGIE MUSEUMS OF PITTSBURGH

Independent Filmmaker, Tony Conrad, Lecture

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Speaker 1: [pause 00:01:18] Testing 1, 2, 3. Testing 1, 2, 3.

Sally Dixon: Okay, we need a little silence here, one and all. We're going to play tonight, but in a very serious sense. The Goldsteins, a Pittsburgh couple, were kind enough to have a few of us for dinner. They have a library of toys for the serious business of play with children, and I couldn't help but think about tonight, having run through it this afternoon and knowing and anticipating what's coming, thinking that you're all going to deliciously enjoy the events of the evening. Tony Conrad graduated from Harvard in math, was always very interested in music, so his film is informed by many things but very strongly by those two things.

His fame or his renown in film was established first by a film he made in 1966 called *The Flicker*, and he's been developing questions that were raised by that film ever since, exploring them and taking off from that point with, of course, additional questions, inquiry into the definition of film itself, and I would venture to say at this point, after a day with him today, is perhaps the most fundamental filmmaker, and I'm not going to define or describe that. I'm going to let the evening reveal what I mean by that or what he is seeking to mean or to understand by that. I think his explorations are far beyond what most other filmmakers, any other filmmaker to my knowledge, is doing, though a number are working, are pursuing this kind of inquiry. I think a lot of similar urging is happening and seeking is happening in England. I see similarities there, certainly, and Malcolm Le Grice, who was here last year, also recognized and wrote about this in Tony's work. I give you Tony Conrad. Begin the evening.

Tony Conrad: Thank you very much. It's really nice to be here, and it's really nice to share with you this new hall, and I'd like to begin relating to this new hall by suggesting that I would enjoy relating to the space a little more informally than the lights and the circumstances would necessarily suggest. Maybe I can begin by introducing to you an important part of my family and my life, my wife, Beverly Grant Conrad, who's here and who I'd like you to meet, too. [applause 00:04:36] I'd also like for you to meet a filmmaker with whom I've worked for a year or so now, Barry Archer, who will be assisting me in the program and who you will be able to recognize in a number of situations as the evening goes on. Barry is here, too, and I'd like for you—Oh, well I guess I can encourage a hand for Barry, too. Perhaps Barry will have the occasion at some time to share his films with you, and I'll try to make the best of this opportunity on my part to share as much of my recent work with you as I can. [00:05:32]

One disappointment to me and perhaps hopefully not too great a disappointment to you is that a new work which I'd hoped to be able to

premiere here, which I found a very fitting idea, is not ready in spite of an almost super-human effort to make it so. A film entitled *Articulation of Boolean Algebra for Film Opticals*, which has been in progress perhaps as long as 3 years in one guise or another, still resists my efforts to complete it by a factor of maybe 2 weeks or 3 weeks. On the other hand, I think that that's, in a sense, a piece of good fortune in another way in that not having used up that 75 minute chunk I'll be able to share that with you in a much more complex and perhaps more entertaining way, and yet it will also mean a certain amount of running back and forth and scurrying about, picking up materials, and signaling back and forth to our projectionist, and I'd like you to bear with such efforts, either through a function of your indulgence or, if you will, have a good laugh at our expense as we get ourselves straightened out here.

The first film that I'd like to show is a film that has come out of work that I've been doing for the last year and a half in teaching, which in fact was executed in the course of a class of mine at Antioch College last year. I would like to be able to tell you the names of the participants in this venture, but I neglected to bring the names of all the people in this team with me. An oversight. The film is entitled *The Third Feedback Experiment or Third Film Feedback*. It's rather a nebulous title, and it acquired that title in sort of an organic way as the excitement relating to this particular film surrounded the production circumstances more than it surrounded the integrity of the film as a work as such, and I think that's in a way comprehensible considering it's one of the few instances in which film has ever been worked with in such a manner as to make image visible before the roll of film has been completely shot.

That's not necessarily a particularly notable accomplishment. It's sort of like getting a medal for speedy typewriting or something like that, but the gist of the film project is outlined in the program notes, and I'd like to support that by suggesting that even though there's a certain sense of feedback about this film, that that act as a kind of concise way of characterizing the whole project, which nevertheless doesn't really get to the heart of what the intent is in this particular film, which one might say has more to do with uncovering a particular quality of the production relationship to film that's very, very hard to make clear except that one relates to this circumstance in such an intimate way that one is actually recording one's efforts as one goes along.
[00:10:20]

It's a little confusing, so let me say that the processing, which is described in the notes, represents positive type processing, and that's confusing, too. That means that the image that is exhibited as a part of this image is negative. Now, if that's not confusing, let me try to say it

this way. We shot a picture, and when the picture was projected you could see it on the film. It's projected after the film runs through the solutions and comes out and is projected. It's all one strip of film, so, say here's the film starting here and it's being shot in the camera, and the camera's running, the film spills out, and then it goes down here and it runs into a tank of developer.

The elves and geniuses who operated this fantastic mystery chess-playing machine functioned by passing the film between one another in a very metronomic fashion, in fact using a metronome, and wiping the film and dipping the film in the various solutions in the dark as time went on, so we had a team of about 8 people who functioned at this painstaking pace, dipping the film in the developer, passing the film onto the fix, wiping the film dry which sounds like a frill but really represented the greatest part of the effort involved in this thing as the film had to be dry by the time it was projected. It took 3 people wiping the film to get it dry, in spite of which it does stick a bit in the gate.

Now, when it comes out, you see that what ran through the projector is then the negative, so that it tends to flip flop back and forth in a way that I can't describe any clearer than by showing the film to you. I'll be walking over to a box on the wall, and that means that I'll signal the projectionist to start the film. Can we run the first one?

Projectionist: Okay. [end of discussion 00:12:56]

Tony Conrad: Thank you. What kind of nerve do I have, in a way, showing a film that maybe it took right at an hour to make, you know? It's very funny about that, and it's sort of hard to explain, but in a way I find that this film satisfies me a lot more than some other films that I can think of having made or thought of making that might have taken a year to make, in addressing some amazing problems of film and art that have the greatest relevance to me, seem to have the greatest importance. In fact, then again, in thinking about it I realized, "Well, maybe I wasn't really cheating. Maybe it wasn't that it was so quick to make." In fact, the immensely human circumstances in which the film is made lend a kind of reference to the frailty of film as a human extension. It was fantastic the way that every person involved in this team had an input into the film, even the wipers. The thing is scratched and oh, it's a mess. It's really an unbelievable kind of record and document of this particular situation.

Similarly, I think that there are other ways of getting at the question of producing film or any work in any medium. The next film I'd like to show is called *4x Attack*, and there's some reference to it in the notes again, which is extremely helpful, for which I want to thank Bob Goldstein. Bruce Goldstein. I actually know a guy named Bob Goldstein. Sorry,

Bruce, but there's no comparison. This guy is much superior. Yeah.
[00:15:35]

4x Attack is an attempt to go at making a film in another way entirely again. This film did only take an hour or so to do, but it took quite a long time in conception and setting up and organizing, producing. Maybe a few months, and not a constant effort, but it's possible to put this kind of effort that's so characteristic of film work into other areas and aside from the dictated procedures of official editing, official splicing, official concatenation of frames, and to have an image result perhaps that bears some fruitful resemblance to that effort in the way that's more customarily thought of as suitable. As a matter of fact, it was this idea that I was getting caught in the whole systematic framework of being forced into a life of cutting and splicing and going down to the store and buying Eastman Kodak's film, and then coming back and putting it in my camera, and then going out, and I got to do this. This is about all I got to do, and then I got to do this.

That really drove me up the wall after a while. I couldn't really stand the thought of that. It seemed like such a dictatorial situation, and what is film? An army of frames? So almost in an expressionistic frenzy I got into this other film, and the outcome is interesting for more reasons than that. One, it's sort of topical, is the fact that I always respected, for example, among people who have done a whole lot of this kind of editing, Stan Brakhage's work, and there's places in which he has done editing jobs that just leave one gasping at the detail and finesse of what he's engaged in.

This film turned out to be a very, very curious editing job in that it did wind up as a roll of film in a sack and splintered apart into 1000 pieces, and it took me 3 weeks working all the time on this 50-foot film to edit it. The curious part of this particular editing job was that when the editing job was finished, the film was back the way it had started. I thought before I showed this to you that what I'd like to do is I'd like to show you the original negative of the film, which I don't project, but I'd like to let you see it. Could you get that, Barry, and let's hold it up?

Because one thing that struck me about the film was that the working of the material began to take on a particular interest, almost a topographical interest, and an interest that stretched beyond the translation by the projector into frames. I don't know how much you can see of this, but I think it's sort of curious to have a sense of the fact that this is a piece of film that's 50 feet long and that the thing that has happened to it is something that-it does result in an image, but it also relates to this actual piece of film which is the piece of film that was spliced up in this particular way. It does have a few holes in it

you will see along the way. I don't know if there's a tape running over there, but hopefully. [00:20:06]

Projectionist: We measured it.

Tony Conrad: It has a few holes in it where things washed down the drain, but there are some parts I'm very proud of, such as this part right here where the most amazing small details I will vouch are in the right place. This goes on. It's a 50-foot piece. I just thought I'd like to hold this up. If anybody hasn't seen the film, this is what it looks like, and I'd also like to go on to project the print of this negative. Maybe before we do that we can just roll this up quickly. You want the tinsel and then we can-Sorry about that. I'll coordinate with that-

Sally Dixon: No, go ahead. We're [crosstalk 00:21:07].

Tony Conrad: I will coordinate -maybe a little better. Yeah, this is [leader 00:21:11]. I'll just ... Can we run that short one now?

Projectionist: Okay. [end of discussion 00:21:31]

Tony Conrad: -to include from time to time, and one of them is this next film, which is a successor in the series that was initiated with *4x Attack*. This one is perhaps a little less interesting imaginatively, but it's the pleasant idea motivating it, the idea being that I decided to approach the film material by a process of electrocution, and I was interested in both stimulating the material to the point of producing image and also possibly, if it worked out that way, going so far as damaging the material. The electrocution was conducted in two ways, one involving a 9000-volt source and one involving an extraordinarily high voltage source. The 9000-volt source tended to result in very unspectacular kind of footage. These are then 4 short sequences, each of which is a separate 50-foot roll of film that's been exposed in this way. I just call them the second series of electrocutions that are selected from a larger sequence.

Also, indulge me while I ask the projectionist a question about the sound. I'm ready to run that other roll, the other short roll, but also I wondered if you had pulled the sound plug out?

Projectionist: I don't know. You mean on the film?

Tony Conrad: Well, I was wondering if the one after this you could run the sound.

Projectionist: Yeah, I think so.

Tony Conrad:

Okay. That's great. We'll run this one silent-[end of discussion
00:24:10][pause 00:24:15-00:25:48] [applause 00:25:50]

Those of you who think about film in terms of pieces and wholes and so forth, you might have noticed that the frame line in this film was transposed to the middle so as to exhibit the fact that those things that are happening aren't something photographed. They're actually on the film material itself, but they do tend to bunch up, as it happens, around the sprocket hole, which makes it seem to form an image, which is a very curious kind of thing. It's as though the intermittency of the exposure has to do with the sprocket holes being on there, not show the time at all, almost as though the spark picked its time by being switched by some physical circumstance around the sprocket hole. Maybe it's purely a photograph of a sprocket hole. I don't know what to tell you.

Let's see. Now, I'd like to try at this time to share with you a few very peculiar films that I cannot really project for you, but you'll see that there's kind of a problem here. Let me tell you the story, and I think you'll get the idea. I was babysitting for our son Teddy, and I felt kind of hung up about it because Antioch had just set up a new processing facility, and my students and associates were frantically busy experimenting with processing film, 8, 16, super 8 film, doing all kinds of amazing things to images. Some quite startling things came out of the whole thing, and there I was stuck at home babysitting. The kid was taking a nap and so forth, and I decided that that's a big problem, babysitting. Beverly has it even worse than I have it, but somehow I couldn't feel that there couldn't be some way around this, that I couldn't develop some way of coping with my urge to find a way of involving myself creatively in the processing thing while staying at home.

As time went on, it occurred to me that it would be really actually very interesting to carry the idea of processing manipulation beyond the bounds which are normally imposed on it, to go perhaps beyond reticulation and putting it in a cold bath or a hot bath. To make a long story short, the first film that I made according to this new procedure was a curry film, which was made with a very good curry made by Marian Zazeela, who is an artist that I have a lot of respect for. Barry, do you have the curry films? Yeah? Right.

This was a short film, folks. This short film is very dear to me because it was the first one that I started to work with this way, and it came out extraordinarily well even though it is short. Again, I was very, very interested in the way that this began to be as film not only interpreted through a projector, but examined under all kinds of circumstances. In fact, the curry, the substance of the curry itself, there's something very

peculiar about this material that causes it to look different in different kinds of light. The material began to be richer than projection alone would support. It's an extraordinarily varied technique, and I'd like to un-wonder this a little bit so you can take a little better look at it. Maybe that's about- It's going to run out, I guess. Well, yeah.

[00:31:15]

I'd like to be able to project this. The fact is, I must tell you, it has been projected several times, and some of the films in this series have begun to deteriorate severely under the duress of projection, and the last time I showed it I told myself, "Yes, it does look good just like this, and I won't show it by projection anymore because it just doesn't make sense. It'll be destroyed." There are parts that are destroyed, even though, like this seeming destruction here is part of the currying. Okay, let's roll this one.

This next project was a Creole. This is what I'm talking about. The Creole was a recipe of mine, devising. I was working now with the material trying to devise some sense how to relate to film as an ingredient. Somebody, say, for your birthday, gives you a pound of-what is it? Jerusalem something powder. There's artichokes, something like that. If you've never heard of that before, then you say, "Oh, well what is it like? Is it like sugar or baking soda, or does it act like yeast or flour or what? What is film like?"

I was developing an intuition of this and working with it, and the recipes it included, these are all very carefully documented. This was a very elaborate recipe that involved tomatoes and capers and chicken and beef broth and many days. Cooked for a long time, and this one has been projected a number of times, and it's a disaster. It's a extraordinarily charming film to project, and I wish I could do it but you can see that it does get mangled because it did shrink.

The first few times this film was projected-That's enough. That's good. The first few times this film was projected it left a lot of meat and vegetable matter in the gate, and it's very oily. It's very peculiar. It also has stalled often in the projector, so it's all full of holes, but it was interesting to me that the film actually had an old factory aspect. The actual image on this film happens to be-it's very good, this all sort of caked with this residue and just amazing to look at. In fact, let's leave this out here so that-I'll put this down here if people would like to look at it in better detail at the end of the night. It's very attractive, and it's very good by projection. It's rich with orange and yellow images, but as I say, I'll have to give you something else instead. [00:35:14]

Now, as this progressed, about this time I figured out that in fact film was behaving very much like onions for me, and it had something of

the cooking aspect of onion-something. Yeah, that whole pile would be good. Also, the Creole was beginning to confront projection difficulties in a very head-on way, and this next series carried that to some kind of, sort of-well, this is a deep fried film. This was the first deep fried film that I processed. This particular film is exquisitely gorgeous, but it's designed for very intimate viewing circumstances. I'd like to leave this one up here also in case you'd like to take a look at it. It's short. It's also extremely crisp.

I then was interested in making some films that would be more suitable for a larger presentation situation, and working with this deep fried recipe or processing idea, and that resulted in a series of-That's the deep fried 7360 named after the material, Eastman Sony 360. I made a series of deep fried 4x negatives, a number of which became so brittle that they were transported only with great difficulty and they tended to break apart. I took the risk of bringing one larger one here today, which is a deep fried 7360 again, but in a 200-foot format which is about 10 times that size.

This, I think, suggests some of the richness of possibilities that are actually inherent in this way of working. With this same material and the same exact recipe, it's really possible to get a tremendous amount of variety. Let's see, just a bit of a trick. Just a minute. Yeah [applause 00:38:51].

Audience: What oil?

Tony Conrad: Pardon?

Audience: What oil?

Tony Conrad: What oil? Well, yes. These were prepared in a safflower oil, actually. Yeah, I used extremely high-grade ingredients at all points and health food oil, and in fact I preserved the oil which absorbed some of the elements of the film and I felt might partake actually in the film, in a sense. You can see how this is so crisp that it's really coming apart.

Audience: What is the raw stock?

Tony Conrad: This is a Eastman 7360, which is normally somewhat red tint stock, which is why-Let's see. The next in this particular series of efforts was a film which was designed to further articulate the sense of the fact that in some logical way the film, for me, during this process had grown away from being a commodity that conformed to the requirements of mass media presentation and had taken on new attributes of enormous interest to me. Namely, for one, it's very difficult to conceive of the material of the movie as being either a projectable or be

reproducible, which begins to throw a lot of question on some kinds of things had normally been thought of as intrinsic to the medium and in a way that seemed very exciting to me. [00:41:07]

The series of 12 films that are about almost a year old now, pickled 3M150, of which I have brought one, attempted to deal with this isolation of the film from the projection situation in a more forthright way. In other words, I felt it was suitable then not to even leave the shadow of the doubt about perhaps in some way cramming this crisp film through a projector. I wanted very much to refer to the projection process through a lenticular reference and at the same time to remove the film from any sense of consideration. This 3M150 is the stock that was used in the electrocution, and this series has- I followed Fannie Farmer's recipe for pickled onions, and that struck me as the way to do it. I even felt that the Fannie Farmer cookbook recipe required perhaps that one would best not use new jars, that it would be better to scrounge jars, and I went out and scrounged old jars which I prepared properly.

I had a lot of discussions. These were exhibited. It's very dark. It was a nacreous yellow white, pearly white, like pearl onion looking when it was first pickled, and it was exhibited for a period of 3 weeks during the course of which the whole set turned dark. Some of them turned clear. This particular one turned very dense. There's again a tremendous variation in the- During that time a lot of women came up to me and said, "Oh, I put up some pears myself this year," and I had very funny conversations about this. These have, in the time since I've done them, I think zinc tops is a mistake. They've corroded in this. They're going. The first problem I had was they unsealed on airplanes, and then on about a quarter of them now the tops are eaten all the way through. It seemed to me that this was a mechanism for permanently implanting the film in a situation where it would be clearly unapproachable. The mystery, for example, of the fact that the middle part of the film is never seen. Here, I'll put this on here.

Let's see, there is this other one. Let's see. Yeah, I'd like to sort of get this out of the way. Am I getting ahead of myself here? No, okay. This is one that the first few times I showed this to audiences I felt sort of as though I didn't even want to call it a work. I felt it might not even be my work, and in the months since, I've come to feel that I really like this very much because it has this peculiar quality that I don't even know if it's my work. This is raw film, and maybe it's by Eastman Kodak. I don't know, but it's something that I like very much about the film, that it's a configuration that's important because it's the one that I used for making the deep fried film. All of these movies were set up in this way and then had to be very, very carefully centered in the pan, but the particular character of this configuration I found to be something very

special that went beyond-well, I don't know. I just offer this to you. Raw film. Yes, raw film. Okay. [00:46:19]

One reason that I found this to be very important to me, this is an important film to me because around the time of the pickles I did become very interested in the fact that I was suddenly manipulating the material with complete disregard for the image on the film. There I was, just playing with the film as a plastic material in a way that was related intrinsically and inherently and bonded to what I had been concerned with in film all along. The procedures were being metamorphosed. There was still, however, the complete metaphor of film present. The whole system was following along with me, but I was working with the medium in a completely alien manner, and I was quite excited by the fact that I could work with material topologically.

One configuration that has interested me for some time is the one that's involved in the pickles. I was, as I said, very concerned with the fact that the pickles were isolating the film forever from projection, decisively. There it was in a jar. One curious fact of projection is that in order to project film, you see, you have to wind it up on a reel so you can sequentially get it off, and in order to wind film on a reel, you have to twist it because every time it goes around the reel it twists. Now, if you wanted to say, "Okay, well we'll wind the film up by putting all the ..." You know that it's twisted if you ever knock film off a reel. You know it's twisted when it's on there. It's twisted a lot, but how much? You know you can straighten it out, but how twisted can it be? There's a limit, and the fact is that if you have a big roll of film like a lot of film, then when you get toward the outside you see it goes around only once in the 5 or 6 feet, maybe. You can only put so many twists in a roll. No matter how small you start or no matter how tight you make it, there's only so many twists you can get on there.

That seemed very interesting to me, so I started. I thought, "Oh, well okay, if I'm going to pickle it then I get to twist it more than anybody ever twisted it before," and I started off by twisting the film like 3000 times so that the roll would become extremely tight and it would act like a spring. The material was beginning to act in a very, very funny way. It's imposing its own conditions on the circumstances, and it wanted to unwind, so I would let it unwind and it would twist on itself, release a little of its energy and twist on itself and make a double helix to my astonishment, mimicking DNA structure. Very striking. The pickle wind, actually, is a wind which is made by tightly winding up this film just in a straight line and then releasing a little energy and letting it twist over on itself into a double helix, and then bending over again and letting it wind up again, and doubling that over and winding up into a 8-way helix and so forth, until it got like this. Then it was stuffed in the bottle.[00:50:37]

I might first of all show you a film that's made that way, made using this wind alone. It's a little longer than the one in the pickle jar. Could you get the oh. Oh yeah, here it is. This is a roast Kalvar film. Kalvar is a material that I worked with in these particular films because it's an extremely slow material that can be worked with in room light without exposing it. I could take it out in this light, and it's like safelight conditions under these bright lights. It has to be exposed for about 5 minutes in direct sunshine or high ultraviolet light conditions. This is an initial roast Kalvar.

A duplicate of this is in Europe at the present time, and I'd like to put this up here. You might want to take a look at that, but I'd also like to recommend to you that when I produced the second roast Kalvar film, which as I say is now in Europe, an associate of mine, Alan Jones, documented this process with a series of photographs which I have laid out on the front step here, and I'd be happy to have people take a look at that if they'd like to after the we project more films. After that's over, if you would like to take a look, I would appreciate it very much if people would take some care because I'd like to-well, I don't know how to explain it, but I'm not too interested in getting them all dirty. It's about a series of 190 pictures that follow through the entire process of winding the film, and exposing it, and developing it. Kalvar material, by the way, is a film that in standard processing is developed by roasting to 225 degrees, and so ... Let's see, where am I coming out here. I'm getting tangled up, but I'm coming out to a projectable film.

I sort of wondered whether all of this stuff was going to have any payoff in terms of movies in the meantime, and one of the things that has come out of this that has been most interesting to me is the film which I've done in two different ways. I'd like to show you both of those. One is called *Pickled Wind*, after the wind in the bottle, and one is called *Boiled Shadow*, and it's described in the notes a little bit. Basically what I've done with these films is to wind this film up into this multiple helix and then using the Kalvar material, take the film and in this configuration such as these be, and set it out in the sun to expose it, and then rush it and put it in the oven to develop. Then I've unwound these others, thereby rendering them projectable, and I was very interested in the fact that by manipulating the film, I would be able to then form a record of an alternate configuration of the film that would have a multiple kind of structure.

In the first film, *Pickled Wind*, you get to see the tight wind structure of the first wind reflected as image, and then you get to see the increasingly broader winds of the larger and larger helical pattern reflected as rhythmic compositions, rhythmic articulation of the images on the screen. What happened? Is it down here? [00:55:27]

Audience: [Inaudible 00:55:27].

Tony Conrad: Oh, I see. Okay. Hmm. Wow. That's amazing. [Inaudible 00:55:46].

Audience: Ouch.

Tony Conrad: I think we can show these next two, just one after another [inaudible 00:55:54]. The second film, *Boiled Shadow*, is as the note indicates an instance in which the record that's been made by the sunshine on the film of itself, and I used to give homage when I showed the film to Man Ray, but then as I got more into photography I discovered that he was a big rip-off insofar as the rayograms, but this is a nice idea of direct recording on the film, and the film itself recording on itself. I think it's a nice, succinct way of making that kind of a statement. The fact that it's the sun and it's the film and so forth that is causing this recording and that it's rendered an image, I consider to be a little bit common, and I wanted to lend the feeling that perhaps the sensuality of the image was not so directly important as a record. You didn't have to see the film, but the fundamental structure of the situation would be rendered adequately if it were translated through deliberate disruption of the image-forming process.

The second film here is boiled instead of roasted, and so it's not so clear, but it's also original. The first one is a print and the second one is original. It's designed to be shown only in original, and so you get to see some of the nice color that this black and white material has. It may break down a little bit, so if we'll bear with the projectionist a wee bit, you can understand that this film has been bent like that and cooked like that, and so I don't know if he's aware of what he might be facing. I'd like to let the sound run along with this as it's not really intrinsically designed to be a projected film. It's a record, and it's on film. It can be projected and it's looks very interesting that way, but it could also be considered that the soundtrack area is as interesting as the picture area, and it can be rendered perceptible to all of us in another interesting way, so that's why I've recommended that we include sound in these two films.

Hello? Can you do these next two-Yeah?

Audience: [Inaudible 00:58:49].

Tony Conrad: Right, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Audience: [Inaudible 00:59:01].

Tony Conrad: No, that's purely a function of the way that the wind occurred. Yeah. It's entirely an automatic thing. In other words, there's a very specific

preparation that's involved, but in a sense what I'm doing is deliberately drawing away from an involvement with the image as such, as a deliberate articulation. I happen to be very pleased with the fact that one can feel so confident about image as to find it in so many places, but I think that's part of the message that filmmakers have worked with for a long, long time, is that humble force can be extraordinarily fruitful in terms of its image properties. Maybe there are other questions. I meant to say at the beginning that if people have questions it's be very nice to entertain them as they come up. Yeah?
[01:00:32]

Audience: Did you find some other [inaudible 01:00:33]?

Tony Conrad: Well, there have been things along the way, yeah, that have sort of passed into the dustbin. For example, have I had a kind of a standard cutting ratio in my work. Could that be a way of looking at that? Yeah. What are you getting at?

Audience: [Inaudible 01:01:09].

Tony Conrad: The question was, in case anybody didn't hear, whether I might have tried things like- if I can borrow from Bob, right? Bob?- putting the film in sugar or castor oil or some other situation that might suggest itself. One reason that I did urgently try to develop some metaphor, like a consistency having to do with, as I said, ultimately dealing with the film as onions, was to try to find some way to prevent myself from swimming around in this new territory. After doing a few of these things, I had a definite sensation of lightheadedness that I couldn't begin to think about doing anything I wish with the film, but I needed some principle to constrain my direction as I felt that it could just become kind of a big party for me without much direction or intent. I felt that I then needed to, if you will, replace the boundary conditions of normal film operation with some others that would allow me something to reflect my thought off of. I avoided a number of things that might have been interesting but didn't seem to follow along a track that I had set for myself. Yeah?

Bob Haller: The reason why I'm interested in [inaudible 01:02:58] the film as you projected, it would then be essentially just scattered. It would be a one-time experience [inaudible 01:03:12].

Tony Conrad: Wow that sounds fantastic. I don't know if that came out on tape, but I'd really like to see that. To be perfectly frank, I have this feeling that some of these areas that appeared to be developing as I went through this particular period gave me a feeling of offering much, much more than I could cope with alone. It seemed as though it was like opening up all kinds of regions for free articulation of many, many kinds of

things that would be vastly exciting. That also occurred with the yellow movie series which is mentioned in the notes and which I would like to show you a couple examples of in that other people began to tell me, "Well, my feature turned yellow." Just the most amazing kinds of things began to be put into the hopper as possible movies, and I finally had to say that I really wasn't setting about trying to establish a claim over this who territory or to set myself up as the department of agriculture for movies, but that I really had a certain interest that drove me in a certain direction and that it seemed as though the area was fuller than could possibly be fully explored by one person. [01:05:01]

That's very exciting in itself. I very much thrive on the feeling that there may be a lot of things that I've overlooked that could perhaps represent implications of some of these ideas or ideas that are related. I'm not really in any way interested in trying to stake out any territory or anything like that because I feel that one thing that's vitally important to me in all of this, aside from trying to establish a rather entertaining programmatic content, is to deal very seriously with the question of whether effective communication can come out of a very, very serious work with the material in a way that lies a bit outside the custom channels. Not a very succinct answer, I guess, but you know. I'll have to struggle with that a little bit. That's really a fantastic idea, though. I'd really like to see something like that. I don't know if it would work. Do you think it would really work?

If anybody else has a question, I'll just keep my eye out for hands. In the meantime, I'd like to show you another film that begins to suggest the manner in which one might begin to then come around at projection again through this kind of an approach. This film is called *Flicker Matte*, and it's the first Flicker film as such that I had made in a long time. This movie, it's called *Flicker Matte*, and it's, okay, a pun if you will, but matte is in fact spelled M-A-T-T-E, and matte is a technical word in film which refers to a strip of film used to delineate an image within another strip of film. In this case, the pinkish strands that you see at the top and bottom of this *Flicker Matte* film are not the film itself, and they're not perforated. The horizontal strands are perforated and they are the film and could be removed from here and projected, but I thought that for me it made a much, much more effective and intimate kind of viewing experience in this form, so it remains in this form.

It has kind of a curious story, so if you'll indulge me I'll just tell you how it was made. It was woven in normal room light, and it's made of this Kalvar material, which I was very excited about at the time, in the horizontal direction. It was just a Kalvar movie. Then the vertical is a normal silver film except it's a perforationless microfilm. This is exposed in the room light and proceeded to darken as I wove the film.

It's very interesting, the fact that filmmaking and basket weaving would come together.

Actually, this is the emulsion side over here. Both emulsions are carefully displayed on this side, and then-oh, I'm sorry. It's on this side, yeah. Then, you see, after the film was woven it happened that some of the emulsion of the Kalvar was exposed to the light and all of the what's now pink film was at that time dark, so then I put on my trench coat and imitated a shoplifter or something, went out in the sun, and one of these trench coat things where you- I opened my trench coat and threw it out in the sunlight for the appropriate amount of time to expose the Kalvar, but you can see that the Kalvar's exposed only where it was open to the light. Then to render the other part clear, it was necessary to put this through a hypo bath, which is the normal solution which removes the silver emulsion. Prior to that the Kalvar was processed. [01:10:14]

It went out in the sun and it was stuck out in the sun for a few minutes, and then it went in the oven and it was baked to develop the Kalvar image, then it went in the bath-tub and with six. I was very, very pleased to see this emerging. This film, as I said, is projectable in a limited sense in that it's very nice viewed in transmitted or reflected light, and again it's a rather intimate artifact, but I'd like to - maybe if we can put the lights out and turn on the projector lamp, and I'll show you an image of the film. Would you be so kind as to turn the projector on for me? I don't know how -

Audience: [Inaudible 01:11:12].

Tony Conrad: There's a certain [coherent 01:11:23] image that's possible. I don't know if ... [Inaudible 01:11:37]. Well, there's some other clever remark I thought of saying. Oh, it is a flicker film because it actually would flicker if you projected it. The yellow movies which are referred to in the notes are, as it says there, a longer period project of mine. It's been going on for, intermittently lately, but over about-wow, let's see, about 2 years now. Most of the yellow movies are very large and what they consist of is an attempt to act as a film artist not through this manipulation of the normal instruments like the camera and so forth, but to articulate the idea through the manufacturing process, if you will, in that I wanted to preempt my normal association with Kodak and with [Agfa 01:13:26] and so forth.

To get them a little bit out of the picture, I tried to make my own film, and I was interested in reaching a long durational situations, making films that would last, say, 50 or 100 years, and that would run that long. That really forced me into position of working as a manufacturer, the key to the mechanism that I brought to bear on this was the fact

that having been an artist in New York for many years I had very, very clearly noted that no matter what you did, no matter how often you painted your loft in the matter of a year or two, the thing would just turn yellow and gray and fade away. It was a very, very interesting scale, a temporal scale of events, and so deliberately attempted to work with materials that would imitate this particular circumstance.

The emulsion materials that were chosen were primarily inexpensive house paint and related kinds of pigmented material, and the pigment being a kind of material that responds to light and absorbs light and changes with light exactly the way normal emulsion material does except with a sensitivity that really puts the Kalvar to shame. Kalvar will turn, a developer will, in 5 minutes in direct sun whereas this stuff just takes an awfully long time to change. You can put it in the sun. You know how it is if you paint something and you leave it in the sun, it takes a long, long time to move. You could put yourself in the movies. The viewing had become then a part of the image recording process. Conceivably by standing in front of a yellow movie for a month or so, you could place your own image within the movie [01:15:43]

Even though they're designed for long term viewing situations, I found that large, physical pieces are very hard to exhibit in that way, and so it's been very hard to find situations in which they can remain as they should, and most of them I've just rolled up so that even though they age, it's 2 or 3 years before they may start running out in the open. Most of the heavy action is yet to come. Since they've been rolled up there's a lot of light absorption power left. Some of them have died early deaths. There are about 4 or 5 missing. One was stolen out of a truck in New York City. I don't know what people imagine-

From this particular series I have 4 atypical examples to share with you. [pause 01:16:59]. I've always wanted to make 35 millimeter movies, and so even though the others were much bigger, I tried to make some that were smaller. This particular series has some consideration related to the boundary off the image, which I regard as a little bit of a breakaway from what I'd been involved with before. Also, I had been concerned with the fact that some people had considered these movies as paintings, and in reaction to that I deliberately did these movies over paintings, obliterating the paintings first and leaving traces so that it would be evident that they had been done over paintings. These movies are really designed to be seen, as I said, for month-long intervals, and so I customarily apologize for the fact that I stand up here and present these movies and then I talk through them and so forth, yet at the scale at which the action takes place in these films, it's just ridiculous to think about the fact that I could possibly interrupt them with a few moments of chatter. It's just a single instant in the life of these things.

As far as the slow-changing materials is concerned, there's one other material that I have worked with that's a relatively slow-changing material, a photochromic material. I've had a little problem with that as I discovered that photochromic emulsion is a carcinogenic material, so that applying to the film is absolutely a matter of taking your life in your hands, and I do it only with reticence. One that I've worked with a number of times in the past has given out. It's one that in fact is described in the notes, and you can see that it's just died. This particular loop does restore itself to orange as you see, and it does turn a nice blue when it's projected. I couldn't make this one go again, and I've prepared some new ones with a new material which I'm very hopeful will articulate, will work, right?

I'd like to combine that with a, as I suggest in the program, with another piece which is entitled *Bowed Film*. *Bowed Film* is-let's see. It's hard to talk, but *Bowed Film* is a short piece of film that contains an extraordinarily unusual splice. It's a splice in which the film bends back on itself and it joins in a Y. I've never seen another splice like it. It derives from a piece that I worked on for some time in about 1959, and I had been concerned with presentation and performance involved film activities. For one thing, in presenting these other materials, and this particular piece came together for me in a very surprising way as it joins with a interest that I had had formerly in sound production.
[01:21:30]

Normally, this particular film is played without amplification, but I have set it up so that I can amplify the film for you, to some degree at least, tonight. At the same time, I wish it were possible for you to view the film with me, there's some reference within this particular film to the fact that normal projection-like frequencies, in order to rate at which the actual flickering occurs in projecting film, it's really not in an area that's most suited to visual perception, but it's in a frequency range that's more suited to sound perception, and the simulation of the film material by the bow is an attempt to in some way either act with the motion of the film material with projection light at normal frequencies so that the fluctuation of the image occurs in a way that has some significance to this normative type of film viewing circumstance.

For that reason there will be this loop that will be projected on the film as I play it, and there are two things that I'd like to offer you as just informational backup to the film since they're very hard to perceive at a distance. One is that the film is used in an image way in this case in that the film material is coded with instructions for the performance. On the film there is an image of a bow, and the image is made by panning the bow, so it's little segments of the bow in pictures on the film, but the image itself, in order to get the length of film that contains this panned image of the bow, is just the length of the bow itself that's

to be used in bowing film, and the direction that travels the bow is indicated by the positioning of the image on the film in relationship to the splice. I'd like to try to perform this, please- I think it's going to work out [inaudible 01:26:18]. [end of recording 1:24:12]

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