Visiting Filmmaker, Hollis Frampton, Lecture, Part 1

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Bill Judson:  This is Hollis Frampton, presenting his film *Vernal Equinox* on March 21st, 1978.

Good evening. It's a great personal pleasure this evening, to have in the city Hollis Frampton, a man who's no stranger here. He's, in fact, done a good deal of filming here, part of which is for a major film in the cycle of which this evening's film is a part, the *Winter Solstice* film ... of course, at U.S. Steel plant here. And it's, I guess, for me, most a pleasure because Hollis is a man who has both his wits and his wit about him. I'll make a personal confession, which is that, in the dead of winter, and especially in these days with the depression of lack of heat and all sorts of things in this building and elsewhere, when things are really bad, I pull a tape – sometimes three, four, five, seven years old – off the shelf, a tape of an appearance of Hollis Frampton here, and simply put it on a tape recorder. And within about ten minutes, I am revived.

The pleasure of following the discourse that is on ... And this is an arbitrary selection, and I run those tapes – I'm not kidding, I do this – I run those tapes anywhere, and simply begin in the middle of things, and listen to these things. And in about ten or a dozen minutes, I feel as if I know why it is I'm doing what I'm doing, and what in fact, [00:02:00] this film art is about. So it's a great pleasure, Hollis, to have you here this evening.

Hollis Frampton:  Thank you. Finally an answer to the energy crisis.

Well, this is ... the time is slightly out of joint since the Sun crossed the Equator at 6:34, I believe, yesterday evening, Eastern Standard Time. So that we have come to the end, right now, of the first day of Spring. And we all see what that is like. Full of sunshine and flowers. First an anecdote, and then a little bit of pre-cinematic history. Something I was thinking about as I was wandering around here today, was a Jules Feiffer cartoon, from perhaps 12 or 15 years ago, on this same occasion, on the first day of Spring.

It was a cartoon that had Feiffer’s ubiquitous little modern dancer in her black leotard and her long hair. And she came out as if addressing an audience, which she was, and said, "A dance to Spring." In this dance, she goes on talking about it, in kind of unctuous and Graham-esque tones for several frames about how it celebrated [00:04:00] the rebirth of life and all those kind of Dionysian, daffodil things. And then the dance begins, and she begins with a leap.

And she goes up, and she goes up. And the little boy wanders into the frame, and her feet disappear, clean out of the top of the frame. Little boy stands there, looking up in the air, and then himself addresses the
spectators and says, "Some dance." Well, I cannot do that this evening. I can offer a curious piece of history, a personal history that has a certain kind of savage charm of its own, which is about the ... not the genesis of this film, of the feature attraction, at least, the *Vernal Equinox* film, but rather its antecedents in my own experience.

They took place on the first day of Spring, 1957, which was 21 years ago, before I had ever laid hands on a movie camera, in Washington, DC, which is of course, by this time of year, a usually rather torpid place. It was a sunny day. I was 21. I had 1 of the more soporific forms of Spring fever. I was living above a Chinese restaurant in Anacostia, for those who have the misfortune to know Washington, DC, and I was hanging out in Washington, mostly because Ezra Pound had not yet been released from St. Elizabeth’s Federal Madhouse, and visiting there a great deal.

So I took a nap in the damp Spring sunshine of Foggy Bottom, and I had a dream. And in the dream, the wall opened up, the wall of my dingy room, like an iris or something like that, and there stepped out of it, a magical apparition – let's just say an apparition. Magic be damned. A creature of pure montage, who vanished, reappeared, transported herself about instantaneously. Needless to say, she wasn’t wearing a stitch. And as I woke up, I equated this vision with some or other kind of Aphrodite: Anadyomene or Cytherea or [Geneaphex?] or whichever one you choose, I was feeling very aroused and benevolent about the whole thing.

That afternoon, it was visiting hours at St. Elizabeth’s, and I went up and told Pound about this. I figured he was a poet and he’d be interested in this sort of thing. He immediately wanted me to describe the color of her hair. And there ensued a very interesting discussion about the color of Aphrodite's hair. We agreed that it was red, we fell into an altercation about the exact shade of red, and I was so sure of myself that I finally accused Tom of settling for Botticelli, instead of thinking the matter out for himself, at which point, the discussion became more feverish. Eventually, a piece of furniture was broken.

The matter was never settled, but of course, I was right, as history has proved, since I have survived. In any case, that daydream, which was only marginally erotic – the eroticism was in me, of course – stayed around and simmered, or did whatever it did ... It matured, I suppose, long enough that I made a piece of footage, or four rolls, four 100-foot rolls of footage in January of 1970 – about four months before the editing of *Zorn’s Lemma*, my albatross, so that this film, in its physical form, predates that film – which then sat on the shelf, like a kind of a lucky egg waiting to hatch until the end of 1974, I think, or early 1975,
when, at a moment when I was thinking through the ritual films that would attend four great solar calendar dates for celebrations of the coming and going, the heights and depths of the sun, and had 3 of them, as I felt, pretty much in my pocket, if not in the can.

I quite suddenly realized that I had the fourth, that it had been sitting there, somewhere in my thalamus, or – nobody owns their own thalamus – in the crocodile mind that we all share, for 21 years, and had, in fact, physically, in at least an embryonic form, been sitting on my own shelf for five. And, at that point, of course, it simply became that process of brute labor by most films are made.

That took some time. So it has a genesis; curiously, it reaches back over almost exactly half my life. The first images that I saw that had to do with it came in my 21st Spring; this is my 42nd. In a sense, then, it is the oldest film that I have made, as well as being [inaudible 00:11:45]. As a selected short subject, however, to precede it – as if it were, a cartoon – [00:12:00] there's something of a short segment, 14 minutes long, also from the *Magellan* Cycle, which bears the name *Otherwise Unexplained Fires*, which I allege is about roughly similar things, and perhaps a slightly less abstract form.

In this case, it has, perhaps, something to do with courtship, and other things as well, accompanied by the melting of the snow, or in this case, the melting of the slush, from a certain time, which was finished late last year. The stars of the show are Jane Brakhage’s chickens, probably, along with a few other things. And I would, I guess, offer a footnote about the title, since it has confused some people. I like to shop through dictionaries when I'm stupid, in the hope that I’ll learn something. Because you always find wonderful groceries, wonderful inedible intellectual groceries lying around in the corners of dictionaries.

And one time, long ago, I discovered, in somewhere, I guess, in the crannies of the OED, the word womt, which is an old Saxon word that means, "An otherwise unexplained fire occurring in a house inhabited only by women." And they say the Greeks had a word for everything. Along that model of word construction, you can imagine that we could build whole languages that were ... "otherwise unexpected [00:14:00] accidents occurring in countries populated only by millionaires." Which would explain, perhaps, a certain amount of our present predicament. Only a certain amount of it.

In any case, first, *Otherwise Unexplained Fires*, then *Vernal Equinox*, both of which are silent. I'm sure some of you will be supplying a soundtrack. After which, in the usual manner of these show-and-tell rituals, I will return in my black leotard to rejoin you, and leap to the
ceiling, whatever else you feel like doing. Okay. First the film, then whatever else ...

Today, of course, is also J.S. Bach’s birthday. Not quite as happy an occasion as it once was, because it has lost its original celebrant, but we can still remember. [00:16:00] Well, Spring has begun, in any case, believe it or not. The sun has crossed the Equator, and is now in our part of the planet -- to hell with the Australians. What can I do for you, if anything? Yes, in front.

Audience: I was wondering about frame of the dotted line, what was going on with that?

Hollis Frampton: Well, what's going on with it? I wonder if I should give you an elaborate answer. It doesn't have any insides, if that's what you mean. I don't think there are any secrets. That dotted line is a double re-entry point between this film and a previous film cycle, that was finished in 1972, called *Hapax Legomena*, in which the last section, which had the subtitle “Special Effects,” consisted only of that dotted line. At the first screening of that, I was sitting in the second row, and somebody said, "What's that dotted line?" Not I. And someone, not I, answered, "That's where you would look for the movie, if there were one." [00:18:00]

Alright, that film tends to empty the space of the frame, and this provides a re-entry point, kind of in the geometric center of this present film, for that film, it’s an empty frame, which, once more has become populated by this rather ambiguous figure. Harry Smith’s *Heaven and Earth Magic* has a little ringmaster; this lady might be a kind of ringmistress, who makes things happen, or who does things herself, in the midst of a limbo – that is a technical term for a black, indeterminate space in cinematography – into which she brings a few things.

Which is repeatedly, then, affirmed, not just as any old space, but as the space of the movie frame, which I have carefully outlined so you can see where it is, in the otherwise darkened room, where it’s easy to lose track of things, you understand. Then it jiggles some; that is, of course, to show that a person made it, you see, since people jitter. It's my way of trying to be expressive, without being absolutely bleating about it. I just leave in a little bit of personal marker, so that I have something to share with people, when they say that I’m a cold, intellectual engineer or something like that. “See, it jiggles, and who else in all the world could jiggle in exactly that way, at exactly that time?”

It’s all sort of to tell you that it’s a film [00:20:00], or to repeatedly reassert that, just in case you get to believing in my little muse too
much, in spite of her transformations and so forth. That dotted line is clearly a dotted line drawn on something, and that something, of course, is a surface. So you see, there isn't any deep space there after all. Fooled you again, just like the movies always do. You thought it was real, but no, you were just looking at a blank wall and exercising your imagination. Is that enough about the dotted line?

Audience: I'd like to hear more.

Hollis Frampton: Oh dear.

Audience: I mean, if you have more to say ...

Hollis Frampton: Oh, I probably do, but after that, it becomes academic and school's out, for me, at least, for the moment at least. Yes.

Audience: Were you at all influenced by Warhol's theory of redundancy with pictorial images, to a degree? I don't mean that in a cold way.

Hollis Frampton: Oh ho, go right ahead. But be my guest, there's still a few vestiges. “Warhol's Theory of Redundancy” sounds like this kind of wonderful scientific formulation, like the Kuleshov Effect. First of all, although other people may believe so, I was not aware that Andy had a patent on redundancy. Nor, indeed, was I aware that Warhol had ever had any theories in particular. I don't think he's that kind of person, or ever was. However, your question, I assume, was a serious one [00:22:00], and I would guess that you mean by "Warhol's theory of redundancy" that, whatever you're going to do, you might as well do lots of it. Is that the general drift? I mean, is there actually something called "Warhol's Theory of Redundancy" that I ...

Audience: Someone, apparently in one of his early films, *Batman and Dracula* - not the final *Dracula* that Morrisey did ... It wasn't shown, I think Beverly Grant was in that piece. People were doing different things, kind of like walking around, jumping on [inaudible 00:22:33]. eating, and then, I think, the film was kind of switched backwards, so they would move backwards again, and forwards and ... I don't know.

Hollis Frampton: Sounds pretty fancy for Andy. It's not something I've seen. I think I, except for ... this almost sounds like some complicated that it would predate even *Couch*, which I think is the first film I saw, which, of course, has been ruthlessly suppressed, by time, if nothing else. In a word, no. There is a single influence in this film, of course, and a very important one. And it is that of Eadweard Murbridge, as he called himself.
Andy Warhol got fairly famous for saying, "I like boring things." Well, of course, we all like boring things. We like sleeping and eating and brushing our teeth and fucking and walking around, and so forth, which are extremely redundant things to do. They constitute most of what we do. We do lots and lots of them, and most other people find our repetitions – our endless, cyclic repetitions of these things that we seem to like to do so much – very dull. It's real dull to watch somebody else eat or sleep. And even, of course, erotic voyeurism can be kind of dull, in fairly short order. Muybridge, on the other hand, liked those things, too, but he liked them because he didn't consider them boring. He considered them fascinating.

The camera of Muybridge, instead of performing that immense distancing that Warhol's camera does ... You stare at anything long enough, and it disappears, or is devalued or denatured. Harry Smith said that Warhol should've gone on from the Empire State Building to make a film a year long of Mt. Fujiyama, which would presumably just gradually subside – that most spectacular of volcanoes would just sort of sink down flat and disappear, under the scrutiny of the Warhol camera. Muybridge's camera, on the other hand, functions as a kind of temporal microscope: instead of providing a distance, it brings things into extreme close-up for us, by dividing time into units that are visible to our perception.

So that one begins to feel, after a time, I think, with Warhol's personages and animals, even the most ordinary of them, very intimate, very familiar. There are all those people with those strange, obsolete bodies. We don't have bodies like that anymore, of course, because they went out of style 80 years ago, or so. [00:26:00] We have tailfins and that kind of stuff. Bullet headlights, and so on. It's possible to begin to feel quite at home with them I think, whereas there's always this grand suggestion that what is special about Warhol's personages is that they are even more boring than we are, that they transcend us into some special paradise of boredom, to which we can never have access, you see.

Edie Sedgwick was superior to everyone else, chiefly because she was infinitely more boring than anybody you knew. No one could aspire to such exquisite ennui as she radiated. So that one watched in a kind of fascination of envy: if you couldn't do anything else, you could at least hope to be as boring as Edie Sedgwick was, or as boring as Gerard Malanga was, or what have you. So my feeling is that I would say, no, rather the opposite direction. I tend to become fascinated with the revelations that stepping outside of time and looking at its moments produces, rather than enraptured by my own ennui, as I remain in time and it is drawn out to unbearable weights.
I would like to be especially clear about that, because there has been a certain amount of noise – although mercifully that has long since, I think, subsided – about how a number of people derive somehow from Warhol: myself, Snow, and so forth ...

Audience: I know in content it was Muybridge that, but ... I wasn't regarding the films as boring in any way, but I was just questioning the events again and again, in that context. I wasn't ...

Hollis Frampton: Oh, I wasn't accusing you of regarding my films as boring, which, in any case, is your business. I just wanted to make that dissociation, which ... I mean, Warhol, to put it simply, was no, not an ancestor of mine. The suggestion that he was an ancestor of mine, or of Snow's, or what have you, at this remove, seems to suggest that Sitney, who first made that suggestion, secretly found my films and Snow's just as boring as Warhol's, which I now find offensive, frankly, since I always thought that was the bottom line.

I mean, Andy managed to make a kind of meter bar, down of which it was impossible to make something less interesting. Put it that way. It wasn't ever difficult to be more interesting than Warhol, but it was impossible to be more boring. Now of course those films don't exist anymore, you see, so we probably remember them as far more boring than they were. It's like the first time you ever had lobster. I probably wasn't as good as you thought it was. Yes.

Audience: To what extent are you interested in the manner in which redefining these [00:30:00] events by putting them on film affects the viewer's perception of those events?

Hollis Frampton: Are you asking whether I'm interested in you?

Audience: Not necessarily in me, but in anyone whose viewing them. I've seen a lot of your other things – I was here when you were here before – and I find that aspect of what you're doing fascinating.

Hollis Frampton: Well ...

Audience: The idea of taking the event, and forcing, to a degree, the person who's viewing it on film, to really evaluate it differently, simply because it's been committed to film.

Hollis Frampton: The verb “to force” troubles me. I would rather say “Let the persuasion be with you.” About spectators: there is now – and I think it is probably healthy, it is probably salubrious – an interest in the spectator as a sentient creature, as a consciousness, rather than as a garbage disposal. It seems possible now to make a distinction between the
spectator and the audience. There used to be something called the “audience,” which was a garbage disposal. If it liked what you had, it would just sort of swallow it, slurp, gurgle, a faint grinding sound, or something like that, and then shut itself off. If it didn't like it, it would make [00:32:00] horrendous noises and its motor would get hot, and it would stink like a bad appliance.

Okay, that’s in your old bourgeois consumer model of movies. Then of course it was discovered that you could gnaw on them and chew on them and suck on them and lick them and so forth, and they would refuse to be consumed, because they're still there. You can rewind it, and it's still there. Which I think, has forced, if you will – although I've not done that – the founding of a new kind of distinction. Okay, spectators are probably interesting, because they are better than garbage disposals, because they do something active.

Now, thus far, I still see no reason to be interested in spectators, except of course that I happen to be one myself, after the work is finished. I am by no means the first person to point this out. The writer, the filmmaker, the painter, or what have you, turns from an author into a reader, would like to be a good reader, very often is, having had a certain amount of practice in the matter, having a certain stake in the situation, being inextricably bound to reading as a kind of content, a social and psychic content of composition. But nevertheless, a reader, and thus one who lives the life of a reader, of a spectator, who [00:34:00] lives by those rules.

I believe, although that problem has been restated many times, I think the first person to state it concisely in this century is Eliot, in answer to the immediate storm of protest about The Wasteland, and the question, "What does it mean?", to which Eliot’s reply, essentially, was that he, having finished the writing of it, had become a reader, and was in the process of discovering that himself.

Since I am my own first reader, and am under a certain kind of obligation to try to be a good one, since my survival depends on it, more or less, if I am not to start repeating myself too soon, then I would like to treat that reader decently, on the one hand, and on the other, I would like to give that reader something interesting to do with me. If I turn around from being the author and have to be a spectator, and find that I have ill-treated that spectator that I must become, then I'm going to have a very unhappy time. I know that. I would rather be happy. Pleasure and happiness are so obviously the goal of life that hedonism always fails as philosophy. Everybody knows that, so we try other postures for ourselves.
And that of course, then, leads me to a certain commiseration with other spectators, that is to say, those who are in the same boat, and who presumably would like to be happy, too, or try to, or pursue happiness, or what have you. However, it also leads me to envy other spectators, because, you understand I am, in a way, a tragic reader of my own work. Since this side of severe trauma – you drive 60 miles an hour into the cement wall and somehow are miraculously saved and remember nothing – one can never have the access to one's own work as a spectator that others can. It's very sad: I make these things because I would like to see them, and know I can never see them, because I am corrupt by my own memory of how the thing was made.

You see, it's inextricably fused with the flies that were buzzing around my head while I was editing the thing one hot Spring night, or the mistakes I made, or what have you. It's impossible to lose, to cast off, authorship. So that, on the other hand, I would like to be good to spectators, but on the other hand, I realize that, automatically, I already treating all other spectators better than I am treating the one I am about to become, in being perpetually alien to them, and absent to them. So yeah, I am interested. There are, after all, more spectators than there are authors for any given work, always. As long as one person has shared it, you see.

It's one of those questions like, "What would you do alone, on a desert island? Would you still make poems?" The answer, probably, is no, I would not. I think I would not. I would not build my little ... There's a sad thing in a by now fairly venerable Charlton Heston movie called Omega Man, in which he spends all his days going to the movies, and threading them up and sitting there in the dark, like a kind of isolated Queen Victoria or something like that, watching these spectacles. I would not build my Biograph Cinema in the Marianas and make the movies, whittle the projector out of old coconut husks and melt fish for their gelatin and make movies, no. Yes?

Audience: In a slightly different vein, but related, how do you feel about the projection room situation? Because I've found, personally, watching the film that, distance was created. I could sense, by seeing the film and just by being in a room full of people I didn’t know, watching something where I had no expectations before it began, and even just the size of the room, seem to have a lot of influence on the way the film affected me. Which row I was sitting in, things like that.

Hollis Frampton: Well, I think everyone who makes films, probably everyone who watches them, who has thought about it, imagines some ideal circumstance under which they should be seen, yes? Peter Kubelka has gone farther, I think, towards the realization of his particular
dream, than anyone else has: the so-called "invisible cinema," in which it is impossible to see anyone else in the audience, although you can still hear them, and you can kind of vaguely feel up the people immediately adjacent to you. You can hold hands, at least, in these strange, kind of Lutheran pews in which [00:40:00] Kubelka’s cinema isolated you.

The predicament of the spectator in Kubelka’s invisible cinema, his invisible theater, always struck me as resembling, peculiarly, the posture that Beckett’s Unnamable describes for itself, sitting bolt upright in a throne in a black, empty space, staring out with huge eyes into the dark, like a great horned owl, and of course carrying on its monologue. It probably was great for Peter. It was alleged, somewhat cynically, that the entire theater had been built to watch a single film. And that film was Arnulf Rainer. [inaudible 00:40:59] have seen Arnulf Rainer in it and it works quite well. If it goes on to that point, of course, that means that a theater should be built ideally suited to every single film.

If we ever let the United States government hear about this, of course, and realize how many jobs it would create, we will immediately have a grand new renaissance of movie theater architecture. Then it will be illegal to make a film unless there are funds to build a theater to show it in, and one can kind of make grand, paranoid scenarios about that. Then obviously the design of the theaters would become more important than the design of the films to put in them, and the way we are, into an entirely other art form. [00:42:00]

So I try to feel relaxed about it. I try to ... I like good projection conditions. I like the image to be bright and crisp, and the light neutral. Theaters are helpful that are reasonably well-ventilated. For instance, that was always a problem at Anthology Film Archives, that the ventilation is very bad. Oxygen is very important to the brain when it is attempting to think. Reasonable comfort is okay. Being required to sit bolt upright as well, as in in Kubelka’s theater, makes it virtually impossible for me, because I’m a totally unregenerate ectomorph who normally sits on my right shoulder blade and likes to stick my feet out, and so on. See, I can't do that Prussian officer thing for very long, without all my tiniest tendons beginning to wall in chorus.

It is very nice if there's some indication about where the movie is likely to be, like maybe in front of you. That seems reactionary to some. There are plenty of theaters in which the screen is flanked by two huge, red lights that say "Exit." Here, they’re kind of over in the corner of the aisle. That’s still a tiny bit troublesome, but you don’t have to stare right at them all the time. In films that have some real delicacy, of course, you can find yourself spending more time looking at the red
Exit signs than you do at the image. They seem to wink at you. “Come hither,” they say, winking [00:44:00] their red lights at you, like something from Bellocq’s New Orleans or something like that.

But beyond that, I try to be happy. I like to look at films in my house, which is rather littler than this, but it’s nice to see things on a big screen. I have films that I distinctly made for very large screen; Lemon is a case in point. The Lemon that Ate Pittsburgh. It’s wonderful when it's 40 feet wide and 30 feet high, or something like that. It's a film I'd like to see in a drive-in. I think it's an important social situation; I think it's an extremely interesting social situation. It is our church, to a certain degree. We must participate in our minds, presumably several of us are gathered together in the name of this thing which is happening up here, a certain magic is performed – that is to say that images are being manipulated.

As in most ritual social elements, there's I dare say, at least in this culture, as many people go to the movies as go to church now. The screen is, among other things, that rectangle is a surface at which a great many people are staring, with high expectation. That's quite special. It is a unique space. One [00:46:00] knows that other people are staring at it. With television, one does not know that. There's impalpable millions that are also getting the vibes off Johnny Carson, but we don't feel them, you see.

We don't have their bodies in the space with us, giving out pheromones and all sorts of wonderful messages and so forth. No one has ever been conceived in the back row at the TV, for instance, although I suppose that even now, in these waning days, the number of people who were actually conceived at the movies would fill a town the size of Omaha.

There's a lot of life in these rooms, and when I was a kid, there was a lot more, of course. They raffled dishes and stuff. There were selected short subjects, there were Pete Smith Specialties and cartoons, previews of coming attractions (a word straight out of Eisenstein), things that would draw you again, predictions of the future, which literally told you what you were going to be doing next week, and that sort of thing. So it’s a social space, consecrated to purposes of concentration, very often – at least to wondering whodunit – that is shared with others in a large social ritual that I personally would be very sorry to see abolished.

Other people are annoying, of course; they make funny noises, and [00:48:00] they smell different. Sometimes better, sometimes worse, but different. And they kind of bump up against you, and that sort of thing. And they don't make your life any easier, but they probably add a
certain kind of variety to it that you would not otherwise have, which is why this persists. It isn't just that it's cheaper, which it is. It's cheaper for 200 people, or 150, to gaze simultaneously upon my twittering features than for one person at a time to do it. So there's a certain economy in the whole thing, but there's a higher significance in it. There is a large sign; this space is traversed by many meanings, which would otherwise be lost.

Yes.

Audience: Are you sincere?

Hollis Frampton: Is that all of your question?

Audience: Mm-hmm.

Hollis Frampton: This is going to take a while. How long do you have?

Audience: I have all night.

Hollis Frampton: So do I, my dear. So do I. So we're off to a good start. In 1958, about April or May, there began in the New York Review of Books - which was then something that was occasionally worth reading; it was itself a young publication - a series of annual interviews with Igor Stravinsky [00:50:00], which went on, I think, for about 15 years, and which slowly became an annual series of interviews about what it was like to be very old. Stravinsky, of course, was extremely witty on the subject, and one laughed when he said, "Look at this: I am so old than I can fly around the world, but I can no longer walk around the block." And like that.

Anyway, in that first issue, in that first of that long series of interviews, which was conducted by Robert Craft, Craft says to Stravinsky, "What does sincerity mean to you?" And Stravinsky replies, "Sincerity is a sine qua non, a without which nothing, an indispensable quandary, which guarantees nothing. Most art is sincere, and most art is bad." Both of those observations struck me as eminently correct.

Yes, madam, I am sincere; I very sincerely doubt that that fact is in the slightest relevant to my work or to its qualities. These things are very laborious to do; it needs a level of sincerity amounting to a serious disorder in the bowels, to undertake to do them at all. This is not a lark. To stand at the bench and make 12,000 splices, while the flowers are blooming and the birds are singing, is not exactly my idea of fun and games. [00:52:00] I am serious about that. I am sincere. So that one has jolly well got to mean it.
On the other hand, some artists are accused of being insincere. Duchamp was accused of being insincere. This suggested that if you cut him, he not did bleed. I like to suggest that, too; this discourages people from cutting me. Hell, he ain’t gonna bleed anyway, why bother? Certain of my colleagues in film are quite accustomed to getting up on the platform and opening the vein to prove that they are sincere, just kind of bleed all over the carpet, "See, I'm sincere." They have had a faucet installed in the vein. And the plasma bottle, the transfusion bottle, is cunningly disguised as a whiskey flask, and is, most of the time, in plain sight.

Now, why did you ask me that question?

Audience: I'm curious. Anyone who creates anything, I like to ask him that, because they say that ... it helps me to understand what I’m seeing.
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