

Anti-100 Years of Cinema Manifesto - Jonas Mekas

As you well know it was God who created this Earth and everything on it. And he thought it was all great. All painters and poets and musicians sang and celebrated the creation and that was all OK. But not for real. Something was missing. So about 100 years ago God decided to create the motion picture camera. And he did so. And then he created a filmmaker and said, "Now here is an instrument called the motion picture camera. Go and film and celebrate the beauty of the creation and the dreams of human spirit, and have fun with it."

But the devil did not like that. So he placed a money bag in front of the camera and said to the filmmakers, "Why do you want to celebrate the beauty of the world and the spirit of it if you can make money with this instrument?" And, believe it or not, all the filmmakers ran after the money bag. The Lord realized he had made a mistake. So, some 25 years later, to correct his mistake, God created independent avant-garde filmmakers and said, "Here is the camera. Take it and go into the world and sing the beauty of all creation, and have fun with it. But you will have a difficult time doing it, and you will never make any money with this instrument."

Thus spoke the Lord to Viking Eggeling, Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, Fernand Leger, Dmitri Kirsanoff, Marcel Duchamp, Hans Richter, Luis Bunuel, Man Ray, Cavalcanti, Jean Cocteau, and Maya Deren, and Sidney Peterson, and Kenneth Anger, Gregory Markopoulos, Stan Brakhage, Marie Menken, Bruce Baillie, Francis Lee, Harry Smith and Jack Smith and Ken Jacobs, Ernie Gehr, Ron Rice, Michael Snow, Joseph Cornell, Peter Kubelka, Hollis Frampton and Barbara Rubin, Paul Sharits, Robert Beavers, Christopher McLaine, and Kurt Kren, Robert Breer, Dore O, Isidore Isou, Antonio De Bernardi, Maurice Lemaitre, and Bruce Conner, and Klaus Wyborny, Boris Lehman, Bruce Elder, Taka Iimura, Abigail Child, Andrew Noren and too many others. Many others all over the world. And they took their Bolexs and their little 8mm and Super 8 cameras and began filming the beauty of this world, and the complex adventures of the human spirit, and they're having great fun doing it. And the films bring no money and do not do what's called useful.

And the museums all over the world are celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of cinema, costing them millions of dollars the cinema makes, all going gaga about their Hollywoods. But there is no mention of the avant-garde

or the independents of our cinema.

I have seen the brochures, the programs of the museums and archives and cinemathèques around the world. But these say, “we don’t care about your cinema.” In the times of bigness, spectaculars, one hundred million dollar movie productions, I want to speak for the small, invisible acts of human spirit: so subtle, so small, that they die when brought out under the clean lights. I want to celebrate the small forms of cinema: the lyrical form, the poem, the watercolor, etude, sketch, portrait, arabesque, and bagatelle, and little 8mm songs. In the times when everybody wants to succeed and sell, I want to celebrate those who embrace social and daily tailor to pursue the invisible, the personal things that bring no money and no bread and make no contemporary history, art history or any other history. I am for art which we do for each other, as friends.

I am standing in the middle of the information highway and laughing, because a butterfly on a little flower somewhere in China just fluttered its wings, and I know that the entire history, culture will drastically change because of that fluttering. A Super 8mm camera just made a little soft buzz somewhere, somewhere on the lower east side of New York, and the world will never be the same.

The real history of cinema is invisible history: history of friends getting together, doing the thing they love. For us, the cinema is beginning with every new buzz of the projector, with every new buzz of our cameras. With every new buzz of our cameras, our hearts jump forward my friends.

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