

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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No. 58
FOR RELEASE:
Thursday, May 2, 1963

Surrealism and Poetry, an evening of films by James Broughton and Sidney Peterson, will be shown in the Museum of Modern Art auditorium tonight (Thursday, May 2) at 8. Broughton will be represented by Mother's Day, The Adventures of Jimmie, and Loony Tom the Happy Lover; Peterson by The Lead Shoes and The Petrified Dog; both, in collaboration, by The Potted Psalm. The two film makers are members of the San Francisco school of avant-garde cinema. Broughton is also a leading West Coast poet. Peterson is author of the novel, A Fly in the Pigment. Presented jointly by the Museum Film Library and Cinema 16, this is the second program in The Independent Film series, productions made outside the commercial motion picture industry.

Tickets for the film evening, \$1.50 for Museum and Cinema 16 members, \$2.00 for non-members, are available at the Museum, 11 West 53 Street. Tickets include admission to the Museum, open Thursdays until 9 p.m. Dinner and refreshments are available.

Mr. Broughton's films are shown at the Museum through the courtesy of Film Images, Inc.

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Additional information available from Herbert Bronstein, Associate Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CI 5-8900.

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May 2, 1963

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART FILM LIBRARY and CINEMA 16

present

THE INDEPENDENT FILM: Program 2 - SURREALISM AND POETRY

THE POTTED PSALM by Sidney Peterson and James Broughton

18 minutes

These films by Sidney Peterson, one in collaboration with James Broughton, have earned a secure place in the repertory of the avant-garde film; in fact, as historic and pioneering they deserve, I think, the title of classics. Peterson, making two of the films on his own (under the auspices of the California School of Fine Arts), appeared as a most enterprising artist at a time when commercial standards dominated film-making much more than now, a decade and a half later, when we have the urbane antics of the Nouvelle Vague and LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD. At first sight Peterson's work, stemming from both Surrealism and the Joyce of FINNEGANS WAKE, may seem difficult or merely bizarre. But genuinely sympathetic attentiveness will make clear his legitimate, indeed commanding, derivation from the first international avant-garde. His chief point of interest is that, like the early Cocteau, he assumed film to be an instrument able to synthesize photography, painting, theatre and literature into an efficient artistic whole.

According to his comment on THE POTTED PSALM, his collaboration with Broughton, the theme evolved from an abandoned play script, and its filmic impetus, step by step, came from word and image associations as they eventuate in dreams. Even then, this procedure could be called orthodox; essentially, in 1929 and 1930, it had been the method deliberately used by Dali and Bunuel (as the latter recorded) in UN CHIEN AN-DALOU and L'AGE D'OR. In practice, automatic creation, however, must be a moot issue since automatism in art, prohibiting conscious invention, limits itself schematically to variations centered in a now widely known and accepted mythic-erotic symbolism. For example, in John Huston's current film, FREUD, we find renderings of dreams with very recognizable motifs of this kind, among them snake-symbolism; the same motif is represented in THE POTTED PSALM by the caterpillar's odd undulation, which happens to pun with the title word, psalm, the latter (as Peterson once explained) originating in the Greek word for twitching. Subconsciously arose, from this connection, the total pun in the title, playing on the potted palm as the arch Victorian ornament symbolizing the polite suppression of root animal-impulses.

Parker Tyler

THE PETRIFIED DOG by Sidney Peterson

17 minutes

Like Maya Deren's films, although less personal, Peterson's first film on his own, THE PETRIFIED DOG, is a half-spoofing, half-grim comment on childish attitudes toward art and runs along the lines of old mystery rites as these survive in dreams to contemporary times. Like Joyce's literary masterpieces, THE PETRIFIED DOG takes a known classic, ALICE IN WONDERLAND, as an armature for a sequence of modern, automatically sought variations. The features of very ordinary life become the product of a little girl's subconscious, perhaps also conscious, fantasy; at one remove, of course, and as in Lewis Carroll's case, it is also an adult's fantasy. Peterson shows his flair for filmic emblems: a sculptured dog, as "petrified," is a sign for stop-motion and repeated motion as basic psychological devices, capriciously modulating the mind's flow and automatically reflected in the film reel. This, like THE POTTED PSALM, is a relatively "primitive" Peterson work, yet authentic, resourceful and natively cinematic.

Parker Tyler

ADVENTURES OF JIMMIE by James Broughton

12 minutes

This "amorous fable in documentary style" lightheartedly spoofs the overworked autobiographical subject matter of contemporary literature: the lonely young man seeking companionship and self-fulfillment in an unfriendly world. From Thomas Mann to Truman Capote, the sensitive young protagonist usually winds up muddling along in his frustrations, committing suicide, or, more recently, being psychoanalyzed - not very successfully. Jimmie presents us with a slightly different side of this vital problem of loneliness and obsession with the personal fantasy in an impersonal world. He is a plucky fellow, reasonably healthy, certainly modest. His only trouble is that he is a bit confused. But he has persistence of a high order and so perhaps deserves to find his secret dream fulfilled in the end.

James Broughton

INTERMISSION: 10 minutes

MOTHERS DAY by James Broughton

22 minutes

This is a playfully nostalgic family album which attempts to recapture some of the pictorial atmosphere in everyone's emotional world of growing up. In exploring certain images of childhood recollection, I wished to visualize that tell-tale realm wherein both the imagined and the actual operate with equal intensity. So that, as with all emotionalized memory, this incomplete family history contains as much distortion as truth, as much dream as fact. Historical time may be said to stand still. Periods and fashions are gently scrambled. The device is deliberate: for with this film we are in the country of emotional memory, where everything may happen simultaneously. This is because the basic point of vision of the film is that of an adult remembering the past - projecting himself back as he is now and seeing his family and playmates at his present age level, regarding them with adult feelings and knowledge.

Though the film's springboard is the remembering of childhood, it more deeply involves the mother's remembering of her own life; her desires and regrets towards her own playmates, her disappointments in marriage, her envy that her children take over her romantic illusions on their own terms and inevitably leave her behind.

The film can be interpreted on many levels - as a personal history, a period piece, a nostalgic game, a malicious rhapsody on the Oedipus complex and so on - I would rather not insist upon its being looked at or labeled in any one specific way. I should much prefer that it evoke for each spectator whatever he wants to find in it or in himself.

James Broughton

THE LEAD SHOES by Sidney Peterson

18 minutes

THE LEAD SHOES, a miniature tour-de-force, remains Peterson's most mature film and his happiest piece of conception, execution and realization. Its esprit and instinctive authority make it one of the rare avant-garde films to posit and justify the montage complex of instrumental music, human voice, vision and aesthetic concept. The fusion of two old British ballads - an "Edward" variant and "The Three Ravens" - with anamorphic photography and jazz was an inspiration to provoke emulation by others. The pith of the story - as must be plain to an alert spectator - is an incest situation, purged by the action of a mythic and fatal rivalry: Cain's and Abel's. A mother and two sons (or at least twin aspects of one son) are involved. The simple mise-en-scene, the kilt as a skirt for males, the orgiastic rhythm of image and sound, fall into place with strange rightness. A long analysis might be written of the Freudian-mythic significance of the anamorphosis and of certain key object-symbols, such as the diving suit. The decisive thing is that birth, love, and death are bound up with magic finality in this film, and that the violence of the style does not dissipate the meaning of this little comi-tragedy, but clarifies and rivets its impact. Observe how retarded motion becomes a vehicle of the psychic precipitation true of dreams; how accelerated motion spins out suspense.

Parker Tyler

LOONY TOM, THE HAPPY LOVER by James Broughton

11 minutes

This little film is an attempt to create a cheerful and simple pantomimic comedy - in theme intended as a testimonial to the loveliness and desirability of pure womanhood, and in style as a lyrical tribute to the pleasures of the silent cinema. What I wanted to recapture was the delight in movement and inventive action that existed in the silent cinema - but making the total effect something much more lyrical than slapstick comedies ever tried to be. Loony Tom himself lacks, deliberately, the violence, sadism and also the pathos which has been a trademark of the form. For he does not need these distortions: his days are devoted to love, and to making lovely ladies happy. He embodies a truly liberated spirit of freedom, one to whom the joy of living is complete and natural - not something effortful or striven for. It is my humble hope that this film is a glimpse into the pleasures of a post-Freudian world.

James Broughton

Parker Tyler is author of THE THREE FACES OF FILM and CLASSICS OF THE FOREIGN FILM.

Films for this evening shown through the courtesy of FILM IMAGES, INC., and CINEMA 16.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW YORK 19

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CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

No. 60
FOR RELEASE:
May 3, 1963

SPECIAL TO WASHINGTON PAPERS

Three Washington members of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art will attend the Council's Annual Spring meeting in Houston, Texas, May 3 and May 4. They are Mrs. Calvert Carey, Mrs. H. Gates Lloyd and Mrs. John Farr Simmons.

August Heckscher, Special Consultant to President Kennedy on the arts, and James Johnson Sweeney, Director of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, will be the principle speakers. Mr. Heckscher will speak on "The Outlook for Government's Role in the Arts."

The International Council of the Museum of Modern Art sponsors the Museum's extensive program of international exchange of art exhibitions and the Art in Embassies program. Mrs. John Kennedy is an Honorary Member of the Council which has sent more than ~~100~~ ⁶² exhibitions abroad since 1958. ~~62~~

Other Washington members of the Council are: Mrs. Robert Low Bacon, Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, The Honorable C. Douglas Dillon*, Mrs. C. Douglas Dillon, Senator J. William Fulbright*, Mrs. John A. Logan, Mrs. Paul B. Magnuson, Miss Sheila Schermerhorn and Mrs. Julius Wadsworth.

*Honorary Members

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Additional information available from Mrs. Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, c/o Rice Hotel, Main & Texas Streets, Houston, Texas. Capital 7-2111