

Introduction to the Lower East Side Trilogy at MoMA

By Ernie Gehr, January 2021

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Ron Magliozzi, as well as to all the other curators and non-curators from the Film department at MoMA, for the support and friendship they have extended to me over the years, as well as for selecting the Lower East Side Trilogy for this special occasion. To everyone, thank you.

The Lower East Side Trilogy is composed of three independent yet interrelated digital works.

The first piece, **Autumn**, is composed of glimpses of parts of the Lower East Side that I have frequented since the 1960s. The work highlights some of the changes that have taken place there over the last 25 years or so.

The second piece on this program, **Aproposessexstreetmarket**, is what I consider to be the heart of the trilogy. It offers glimpses to the kind of activities I often encountered inside the old Essex Street Market, and I dedicate this screening to all the people who appear in the work—shoppers as well as vendors. My sincere thank you to all of them for making market-life so human and pleasurable in that urban space.

The concluding work is **Circling Essex Crossing**. In this piece, what arises out of a series of images documenting the construction of Essex Crossing is, for me, a metaphor for the evolving transformation of the Lower East Side.

When I work, compose a work, be it in the recording process or the editing stage, one of the things that I strive for is that the work be flexible and open-ended. I am interested in creating a work that not only welcomes accidents or chance happenings, but where the character of the medium or the

recording process is allowed to come forth and intermingle with the life representation depicted on screen.

For example, in *Autumn*, there are frequent images of reflections on glass. Glass and reflections on glass are very much part of our contemporary urban architectural environment. And if we acknowledge them, they can form part of our experience of a place, just as much as concrete, three-dimensional objects. Within *Autumn*, these more ethereal glass reflections are also a gentle reminder that we are looking at projected moving images that can be shaped, composed, and recomposed in a variety of ways for either abstract or representational considerations.

In addition, the three pieces that make up the Lower East Side Trilogy move, or at least I hope they do, at a pace that allows one to explore, savor, and perhaps even reflect upon the situations depicted on screen.

Hope you enjoy the work.

Thank you.