

movie JOURNAL



by Jonas Mekas

Akiko Jimura: "I saw your film 'Diaries' three times, and I cried every time."

Jonas: "Really? Really?"

Akiko: "Yes, I did. I also cried during 'Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son.'"

Jonas: "I have to tell this to Ken Jacobs."

Akiko: "I also cried during 'The Central Region' . . . it was so moving . . . Maybe I am very emotional . . ."

JUNE 11. I read Amos Vogel's piece on Cannes, in *The Voice*. It's very funny. It's funny because Amos is looking for good cinema at Cannes. He knows he's looking for it in a wrong place. Still, when he doesn't find good cinema at Cannes, he's disappointed. As a matter of fact, he gets so depressed about it that he asks: "Will film survive?" Yes, Amos, it will survive. It will survive despite the stupidity of film festivals and their selection committees. The Cannes Selection Committee people came to New York and looked at films (that is, in the way they look at films can be called looking) and chose films. You know what they chose. Here are some titles they rejected: Michael Snow's "The Central Region," Stan Brakhage's "Deus Ex" and "Eyes," Nancy Grave's "Izy Boukir," Robert Breer's "70," Kenneth Anger's "Rabbit's Moon," James Broughton's "This Is It," History

will prove that all the films selected and shown officially at Cannes this year aren't worth a single one of the above listed and rejected films, as far as the art of cinema goes.

June 13. At the Kitchen. Videotapes from San Francisco. Don Hallock's tape "83." Five color monitors. Mandalic forms treated with color modulator. Golds and yellows dominate. Pleasant. Rock music ruins it all.

Stephen Beck's tape "Conception," a montage of images and sounds. "Illuminated Music," a live piece, swarms of dots and arabesques. Average.

I liked the tapes of William Roarty. His tape "Passage" I count among the few original and effective video pieces I've seen. There is some kind of passage-like dark shape in the middle of the frame. It is swarmed by color energies and shapes in a very intense way. The sound: electronic noise. "Passage" pushes the video thematic beyond the usual abstractions and conceptual games. Roarty's tape has connotations that are multi-level. Most of the tapes one sees are restricted to their graphic meanings. In any case, I thought Roarty's tape gave a dimension to the video similar to that of where the cinema was around 1965—out of the graphic and into the personal.

June 3. At the Kitchen. Videotape. Skip Sweeney and Video Free America. Mostly video-graphics, abstractions, feedbacks, oscilloscope forms, prismic, and concentric forms and movements. But they are all doomed because of their attempts to imitate musical rhythms, their pop and classical music soundtracks. I have a feeling that I might enjoy these tapes, if they'd only cut off the sound. A face, somebody speaking, a political speech. The face abstracted, the voice doesn't fuse with the image; nor does it clash with it in any interesting way. Some straight tv documentary footage, Frisbee contest, more abstractions, electronic sound. Imagery: second rate McLaren. It's all on eight black and white and two color monitors. Whenever I catch myself liking some parts, I find I like them not because of the image values but for the repetition aspect on the different monitors.

At the end of the evening, a piece by William Walker with no title. It's about Captain Video who comes into the room straight out of the tv set, speaks from the set to a woman in the room, and proceeds to make love to her as she crawls on top of the set—by far the most original video piece I've seen yet at the Kitchen.

June 6. At the Kitchen. Videotape. Benedict Tatti and Dimitri Devyatkin. Tatti shows two tapes. He introduces them. "I use the medium for the sake of the medium," he says. Image is an electronic abstraction, very minimal and controlled. I count that to Tatti's credit. Sound: distorted voices, music, which have nothing to do with "medium for the sake of the medium." Further complication: Images are shown on nine monitors, four vertical and five horizontal, same image on all. The monitors are arranged in the shape of the capital letter "L." This arrangement brings in such enormous visual complications that soon the whole show ends in disaster.

Video abstractions and film abstractions face the same problems as those in painting or sculpture. It's not enough to draw a line or to make one or other electronic movement. They must work aesthetically. And that's another story.

Tatti's second tape shows a hand, a palm. Themes and variations on the image of hand. I liked the tape, I thought it was very fine. But again, it was very difficult to watch it, because one had to eliminate from the eye's view