

Hollis Frampton: Recollections/Recreationsintroduction by Susan Krane, essay by Bruce Jenkins
MIT Press/128 pp./\$15.00 (hb).Exhibition of the same title at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery,
Buffalo, N.Y., Sept. 29-Nov. 25, 1984and at the Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, Calif.,
Feb. 10-March 24, 1985; the Neuberger Museum, State Uni-
versity of New York at Purchase, Purchase, N.Y., April 14-
June 10, 1985; the Laguna Gloria Art Museum, Austin,
Texas, Aug. 2-Sept. 27, 1985.

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The show, "Recollections/Recreations," mounted by the Albright-Knox Gallery, both fulfills and piques a fascination for Hollis Frampton's thought and works. I first became aware of him as a figure of intrigue through his writings in *Artforum* and *October*. Those essays that dealt with still photography struck me as an ongoing attempt to rescue photographic criticism from its general levity and inconsequence. Just as importantly, I realized, those texts were the voice of an artist working out his concerns in theory. Seeing some of Frampton's films and learning what an important contribution they are to structuralist film strengthened my intuition about the functional edge to his writings. He showed me how theory and philosophical inquiry could cut deeply into an artist's ongoing work.

This exhibition catalogue helps bring him to more light. The introduction by curator Susan Krane draws out the show's material (what Frampton called his "other work") apart from his film/theory work and projects it, in an interesting way, on Frampton's own background and cultural context. We learn of his influences and involvements with modernist and pop artists of the 1960s, such as Frank Stella, Carl Andre, and James Rosenquist. Krane aptly points to Frampton's alienation from the art establishment, though she could have been more emphatic. She weaves the fabric of Frampton's thought into the prior texts of dada, assemblages, and collage with attention to the exemplars Joseph Cornell and, especially, Marcel Duchamp. She then competently discharges her art-historical duty by showing how the work prefigures so-called postmodernist activity: "Frampton and his associates, (artists in various media such as Ken Jacobs, Yvonne Rainer, Michael Snow and Twyla Tharp) had assimilated the reductivism of minimal art with integral concerns for illusionism, historic reference, autobiography and the use of vernacular forms."¹

Further into the catalogue, Bruce Jenkins's written "tour," in effect, lays out the logic of the show's organization by elaborating on its divisions: "The Early Photographic Works," "Portraiture: 1958-1966," "Street Scenes: 1959-1963," "Art Documents/Still Life: 1961-1965," "Anomalies/Hermeneutics: 1964-1967," "Xerography," "Reasonable Facsimiles: 1971," "False Impressions: 1979," "By Any Other Name: 1979-1983," "Serial Photography—The Return of the Muse," etc. His biographical descriptions, behind-the-scenes reports, quotations, and commentaries are informative and relieve a ponderous sense of intellectual scaffolding that organization by groups sometimes has.

I find the chronology put together by Krane most delightful, and it will probably become an invaluable reference source along with the exhibition check list, illustrations, and bibliography. It conveys much pertinent information about Frampton's time journey from March 11, 1936, to his untimely death in March 1984. Unlike other historical-critical forms, it also wonderfully involves some perhaps impertinent points:

- 1943: makes primitive movie out of six-foot belt collaged with images from Sears, Roebuck Company and farm equipment catalogues.
1958: works briefly as a framer at the Renaissance Print Shop.
1960-61: lives in thirteen locales over a period of nineteen months.²

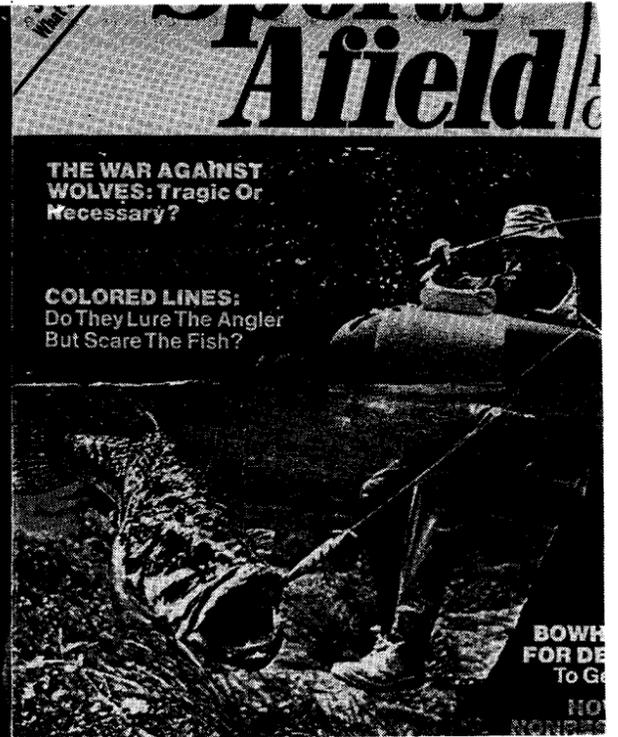
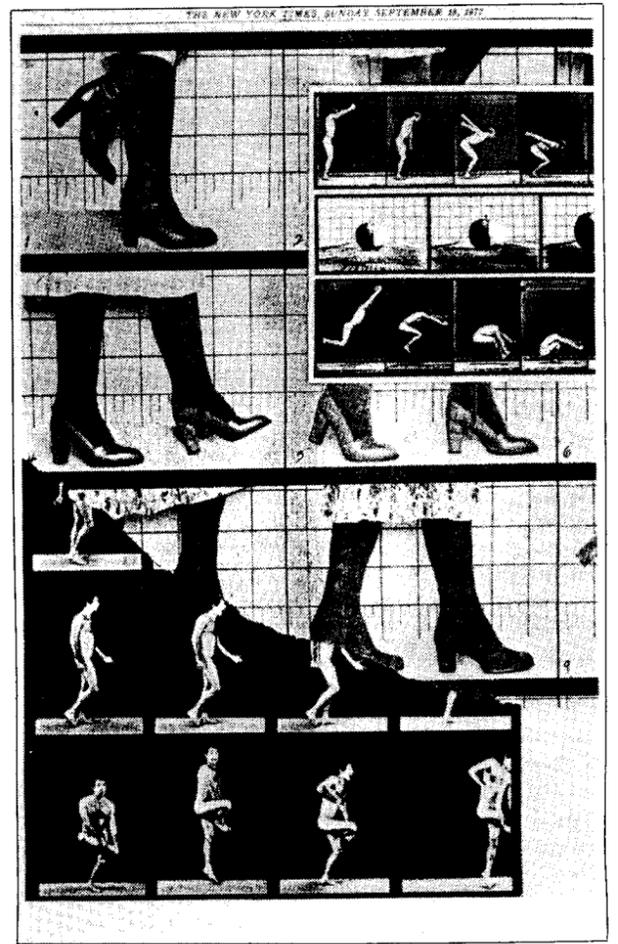
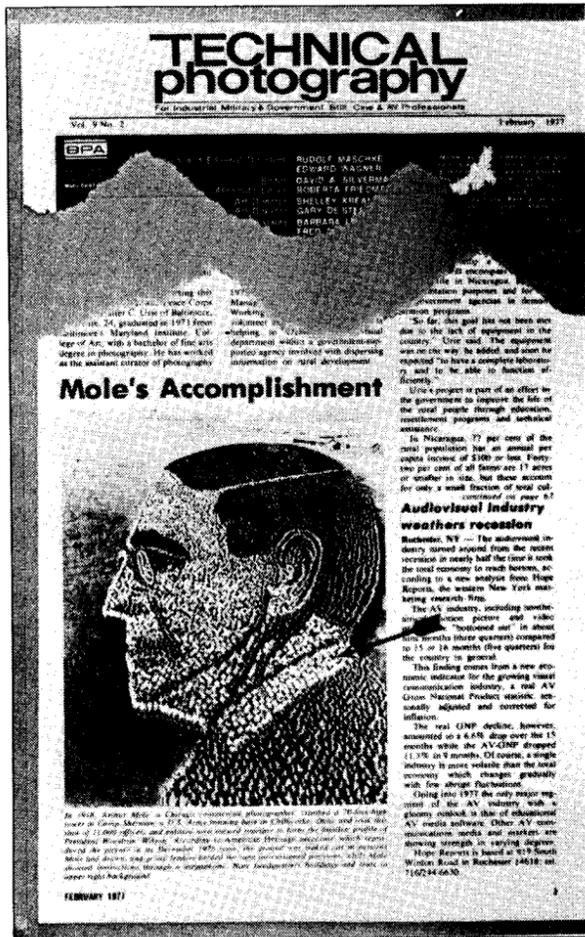
The chronology works as a complement to the front page of the *New York Times*, March 10, 1936, hung in the gallery; titled, *Not Yet*, it shows us time-bound matters that barely miss the target of relevance: just before.

Before I read the catalogue (while in flight to see the show), I reread Frampton's "Impromptus on Edward Weston."³ I found the concluding lines of the essay difficult to comprehend. This was surprising since, though the theoretical issues he raises may subject both writer and reader to some torments of confusion, I generally find his prose elegantly clear. I take as deliberate one dubious sentence construction: "If it is so that the spectator or reader may understand more from a work than the artist understands, it is also true that the spectator or reader may understand other. For the consequences, in this writing, of exercising this last kind of understanding, I offer no apology."⁴

Grammatically, *other* switches parts of speech from adjective to pronoun. As a pronoun, it seems an incongruous direct object; as an adjective, its object is missing. The question mark, which I penciled into the essay's margin, remained, even in the midst of the exhibition. Indeed, I found the excerpt and its question mark a kind of pretext for looking; I tied the work's revelations and mysteries to that switching term, *other*.

Radical phenomenologists (deconstructionist philosophers or critics) have developed an epistemology to describe a condition where knowledge of self always invokes, dialecti-

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FRAMPTON'S
OTHER WORK

Work by Hollis Frampton from his "False Impressions" series. Top left: *Uncle Rudy at the fourth cervical vertebra* (1979, color xerograph). Top right: *If Muybridge were alive today, he'd turn over in his grave* (1979, color xerograph). Bottom: *The conquest of culture and nature* (1979, color xerograph). All work by Hollis Frampton from *Hollis Frampton: Recollections/Recreations*.

cally and contradictorily, an alien, external term of difference in relation to an absence. Presence of one is an effect of difference (otherness) from absence. In the scope of the show, I did not see Frampton's *other* quite so gravely but, with a more casual eye, as *another*. Rather than implying a vicious alterity, I see Frampton working it as a kind of conjunction that adds something to something else. Everywhere, conjunctions (either real or implied, visual or verbal) link ideas, postures, attitudes, forms, categories, modes, and terrains to one another.

In obvious cases, Frampton conjoins his multifarious elements by abutting them to one another. Abutment occurs in *The conquest of culture and nature* from "False Impressions." He abducts illustrated covers from the *Filmmaker's Newsletter* and *Sports Afield*, where each uses the same fisherman-hooking-fish image to connote their respective conquests. The lateral abutment, fixed by a xerographic scan, relates to a vertical, natural abutment of land life above and submarine life below the water line. The twice-pictured fisherman struggles to pull a creature of one realm into his own, while the original, anonymous photographer (like Frampton on another

level) straddles the boundary line between both.

Sometimes, Frampton straddles terms of difference along lines not neatly straight and neutral but markedly jagged. In *Two Exemplary Applications of Applied Color*, the tear lines are the telltale signs of the advertisement's abduction. Frampton's eager hands definitely did not rip the ads from the same page, but since the tear's ridges and valleys are complementary and match up, it seems as if they were. Consequently, the shade of the "red" tree seems coordinate to the open prairie of the "blue" swimming pool. As the ad boasts about its miraculous tree, the binary collage is (and is about) a "two-in-one" sign. In the case of the tree, it is about both "beauty and speed"; in Frampton's xerograph, it is about two icons of yard mythology strangely matched.

The usual randomness of tearing paper obscures the artifice of two, unlike sheets made to match cleanly. The color applied over the tree foliage and the pool speaks of a naturalness subverted by the misregistration of the graphic overlay. Frampton's work interests me here, as elsewhere, by conjoining the random events and purposive acts involved in the social context of picturemaking. Image designers hide their



Left: still of Hollis Frampton from the *nostalgia Portfolio* (1971). Right: *Zucchini squash encountering sawhorse* (1975), from "Sixteen Studies from Vegetable Locomotion" series.

purposeful hands behind seemingly random, natural conjunctions and give "false impressions." Overt mistakes, unpredictable mishaps, noise, unauthorized alterations by artists multiply any number of readings or false impressions. Hitherto, a viewer may carry a false impression innocently or unaware of its construction. Made over to expose randomness and purpose, Frampton's shifting conjunctions link us to "another."

Linkages occur throughout most of the exhibition by conjunction-like elements but also by various organizing systems. Frampton appears to be a man carried away by a most pervasive system—listing. Lists abound everywhere. The ads of "False Impressions" parade selling points flagged by a red ball. The series, "Reasonable Facsimiles," carries lines and columns of word-pictures, which Frampton lists as if performing subtractive sculpting by extracting the items by razor cuts or red marker. The canned-food labels, which are flattened and framed like skinned animals (tanned by Xeroxing), were probably from items on his shopping list. As if making an inventory, he laid out his coded T-shirts in "Protective Coloration," as a list of integuments for today's social chameleons. "Nostalgia," especially in the film form, can be experienced as a list of photographs/memories fading.

Frampton seems driven to list-making by a central preoccupation with time and its representation. Listing is just one representation of time, which may be thought of as a succession of events or movements on a list. Frampton wrote of list-like time as "incremental time" and explained that with this sort of clock, there is an implied "and then" with each tick.⁵ Nowhere is "and then" more implicit between frames than in "Rites of Passage," where life's successive chrono-symbols (institutional portals, baby carriages, rocking chairs) punctuate social time from blank cake top to blank cake top. Each set of Muybridge-like motion analyses in "Vegetable Locomotion" implies an "and then" that has no origin and no closure. As with Muybridge, the objects of Frampton's scrutiny lie within a limitless, open set, matched only by the photographer's infinite desire to itemize everything. I feel the sixteen studies to be an excerpt of a series bracketed only by "and then."

Frampton speculates in "Eadweard Muybridge: Fragments of a Tesseract" that, paradoxically, his infinite set of action-events culminates in a sole, missing one: Muybridge's shooting of the man who cuckolded him.⁶ The speculation comes to mind when looking at "If Muybridge Were Alive Today, He'd Turn Over in His Grave," a collage construction of animal locomotion spin-offs, including Frampton's own. In the gallery's background, sounds of gunshots crack from the videotape monitor showing *Shots* (1978), done with Patrick Clancy. The periodical crack relates the segmented and listed time, which Frampton represents, to the actual viewing situation.

Still, another viewing situation is possible, just as other forms of time and linkage are possible; Frampton's written theory introduces the alternative by explaining "ecstatic time."⁷ The viewer can experience its stilled, non-sequential time by simply walking out of earshot of the video rifle and into the adjacent exhibit room containing the series, "ADSVMVS ABSVMVS." The series stands for linking or ordering elements across time rather than through it. Our attention is cut from incremental time and organized by external systems such as typologies, numerological forms, or alphabets. The photographs of dried, pinned, animal/vegetable specimens hung by labels, which combine objective definition and personal anecdote, project a zoological imagination charged with poetry. I am reminded of Jorge Luis Borges's *Legendary Creatures*, which catalogues real/fictional specimens alphabetically as if they arose oneirically from each letterform itself. The alphabet orders and relates a timeless kingdom.

Sometimes the ordering gives the kingdom a seeming universality despite its arbitrary nature. It may be accidental that as real things, an apple comes before a bat. But, as alphabetized words, the order is universal and determined (timeless), and the universality teases the accidents of reference. Ironically, he even attempts to visualize lists of schemes for lists. From "Reasonable Facsimiles," we find, out of several repeated lists of schemes, "Group, Array, Cluster," circled in red. Whatever scheme he used to derive the three universals across an eye-balled diagonal is not given.

Whatever one would call it in metatheory, replication would be part of the scheme's program. All the forms Frampton uses replicate or repeat an image and seem to say "in other words." Replications, even as close as hi-fi color photographs, have significant alterations that let you know that the same thing is being said in a different way. Xerox copies replicate lists, as in the case of the schemes mentioned above, but they never quite match. The writing appears statically charged, and, of course, color and texture are removed or altered. The replication of the fisherman-hooks-fish image is as important as its abutment. We expect magazine covers reproduced by thousands within an edition. But, Frampton has given us a trans-publication replication, as if somebody else's lips were to repeat a word. In addition to any subtle differences of cropping, tone, or color that survive Xeroxing, *Filmmaker's Newsletter* "utters" the image differently than *Sports Afield*, drastically so for Frampton who humorously derives a disparity as great as nature and culture.

He understood that "to use an image is to make another."⁸ Any use of a pre-existing image is a kind of replication, because one involves the sameness of identity; and any replication is another statement, because one involves the difference of framing. Where sameness and difference are paradoxically involved, replication is impossible just as it is unavoidable. Even contradiction in a two-sided world of repli-

cation is to say "in other words."

Frampton seems especially fascinated by the replicated two sides that any supermarket abundantly displays. The cans laid out repetitively in rows repeat themselves front to back. The series of Xeroxed can labels in "By Any Other Name" undoes the structure and lays front to back from side to side. *Bamboo Shoot Brand Globes* is my favorite example. It privileges the front side with cleaner, bolder, more alluring graphics and dumps the untidy gibberish of ingredients' list to the rear. The globe rises above, showing China on its privileged face. I thought perhaps North America would be on the label's verso, but alas, this label has not broken through the two-dimensionality of signs—China repeats.

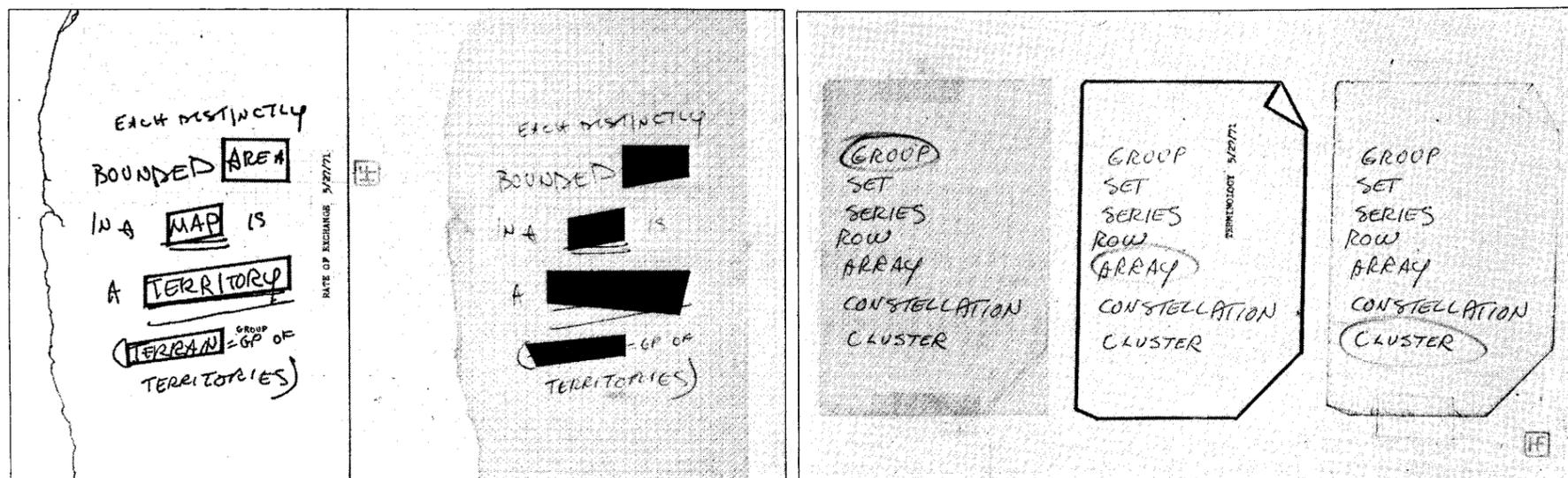
In front-to-back or recto-verso repetitions, memory commonly intervenes and overlays its own systemic mediations. Memory's disregard of some details and its superimposition of others comes into play with the can labels, but it plays more strongly in *nostalgia*. The portfolio of stills calls to mind the film, itself based on earlier versions of those stills. Within the film, narrative captions were temporally disjunctive, causing the viewer to experience a picture in anticipation of its narration and the narration in reference to a memory of the preceding photograph (which was burned on a hotplate). Memory repeats, Frampton seems to be saying, just as mechanical systems can repeat, but it does so on its own terms of difference, "in other words."

More basically and from an overview, Frampton's explorations of forms of replication twists the Aristotelian law of identity and contradiction. The law states that an entity is itself because it looks like itself and that the entity cannot be itself and something else at the same time. Frampton cut up the axiom when he linked replications within and without time. He constructed visual and verbal puns where something does indeed look like something else, and that something is itself and the other at the same time. I doubt he made paralogisms just for the sake of a hilarious instability but did so to indicate another way to restate or revisualize identity and contradiction. He acknowledged that "the reader or spectator may understand other."

I have used Hollis Frampton's *other* as a pretext for considering kinds of linkages in *Recollections/Recreations*. But the term has another dimension where one can explore the position of the work in relation to Frampton's total, creative activity. He called it his "other work" implying a marginal position for a more central text. Before I qualify the "other work" as a marginal space, I want to show how Frampton envisioned his main task.

On a metatheoretical level, he saw film as a master metaphor, as an infinite cinema that included not only every film (whatever passes through a projector) but also everything filmable.⁹ The history of art is but a footnote to his imagined metahistory of film.¹⁰ Human experience and percep-

From the "Reasonable Facsimiles" series. Left: *Rate of Exchange* (1971, applied color on xerograph). Right: *Terminology* (1971, applied color on xerograph).



tion amount to mile after mile of unedited footage and only partially decoded information. He marvelled at Ray L. Birdwhistle's analysis and conclusions drawn from 36 frames of motion-picture footage. The scientist's examination of 1½ seconds of a mother diapering her baby showed him a double bind in kinesic communication. Frampton wondered at how so many more uncountable moments in real time composed the total film.¹¹

His own practical attempt at least to approach the total film seems to be the *Magellan Cycle*. He wanted its 36 hours (viewed over the span of 371 days) to match metaphorically Magellan's five-year circumnavigation of the globe. He tried to turn his "polymorphous" camera onto all possible appearances within its Magnum Opus horizons. I believe this major ark moved in the mainstream of Frampton's attention.

Yet, throughout his theory and practice, he was always ready to point out the other half of the dominant figure of attention: in the running of film (his master metaphor) "you're actually watching an illusion of only half of what took place. The camera's shutter was closed the other half of the time. So that there is another cinema of equal length that could have been made precisely at the same time."¹² I see the work in "Recollections/Recreations" as the other side of the flicker, the dark side that the show lights.

The contents are that which is not filmed—by implication, that which is excluded from the film experience. As vastly inclusive as his film projects are, he recognized that conditions of choice determine to some extent their execution. To choose is to include; to include is also to exclude. I wonder if there are works in the show that were sketches or material for films either rejected or abandoned. Perhaps, the flattened can labels of "By Any Other Name" failed their screen test to be included in a film.

Many works have an obvious connection to the films. We see the gels from *Zorns Lemma*, the images from *nostalgia*, and still photographs of the dance that was shot in motion for the *Magellan Cycle*. Notes modified in "Reasonable Facsimiles" could have been jottings that led to composition in the films. In some cases the "other work," that which is not film, figures in as basis for the films, as with the gels. Some cases, like "Insomnia," could be sketches. In any case, what was once probably a function of filmwork in progress has been left behind. As such, the work has the character of shells or droppings, material left behind after a creature has transformed or moved along. Film cans will hold only acetate and gelatin in a precisely specified configuration. All else falls by the wayside.

Another feature that excludes the work from the filmic is that it is physical. Frampton, for an art theorist, had a radically general notion of what constitutes film ontologically—it merely has to pass through a projector. Yet, I take his use of passing as metaphorical and infer that projection figuratively dematerializes the film substance. A viewer experiences its pass as a moving image. Many of this show's material are, as the title states, recreations and are formed, like Duchamp's rectified readymades, from past examples either lost or never executed. Yet in contrast to filmic experience, they seem quite lumpish. The "other works" would surely gum up the works of a projector.

Frampton would not take the gumminess as bad, and neither would I. He constantly reveled in the physical basis of film, photography, and video, and its connection to different states and ideas. He wrote, I think with some delight: "Taking the film from the projector, mounting it on rewinds, removed it from serial, spectatorial time and returned it to a randomly accessible space, a skeletal emulation of the conditions under which it has been made. . . ."¹³

My primary experience of the exhibition is as if we, the viewers, are looking at either real or imaginary films on a pair of rewinds. In its "randomly accessible space," we have freedom to organize many features of the looking: succession, duration, distance, direction. Also, since viewing a filmmaker's work on rewinds is usually only granted to individual colleagues, by understanding the show this way, one has a sense of privileged access to Frampton.

At the Albright-Knox Gallery, the "other" work is in, of course, a public space, and preparators have spiffed them up in stainless steel frames and hung them squarely on the line. Yet, the pieces' origins are obviously embedded in Frampton's private life. Many works are the product of his homelife and collaboration with Marion Faller. The real contexts for the pieces must have been studio pinboards, refrigerator doors, desk drawers, and the cardboard box "archives." And, if any public were in mind, they would probably be close friends.

Creative work at home and for friends produces a discourse of fragments that gallery production artificially fleshes out and completes. In their original, private situation, segments of work in the show may have been sent off in the mail, traded like baseball cards, misfiled, carried away by dogs—dispersed like pollen. Frampton may have meant "other" as those fragments given over to the laws of chance, rather than the determinant laws of the whole. Although the staff of the Albright-Knox Gallery did a good job in assembling the fragments into wholes (in the way that conservation archaeologists reconstruct artifacts by pasting gap-filling replacements in among actual shards), the real "other works" of time-bound fragments nevertheless resist such totalization.

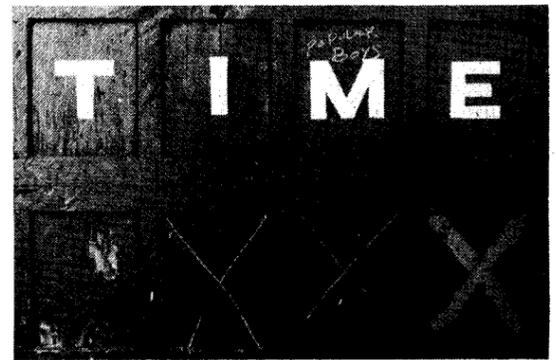
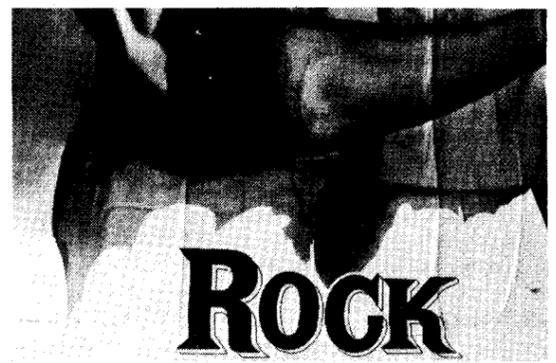
Thinking of the work as time-bound fragments and as marginal to his work in films and theoretical writing may seem demeaning, but this work has fundamental importance. Margins open space for testing the assumptions of a principal discourse. "Marginal" (or "dilettante") too often implies being non-essential, peripheral, non-privileged, supplemental, and of a lower station, with all the deprecating connotations of the above terms. Deconstructionist criticism has begun the work of showing how binomial hierarchies inform discourse and

ideology. Hierarchical assumptions that relegate the "other" as secondary are overturned by Frampton.

From what I know of his life, Frampton constantly learned about something through equal attention to something else: poetry by painting, painting by still photography, still photography by film, film by video, and video by digital arts (I mean no hierarchy or evolution here). The stereoscopic willfulness to get to a matter through something else motivates a cross-disciplinary discourse. For Frampton, if disciplines had separate muses, they had to make a polyphonal chorus. Perhaps his own muse, insomnia, was this multiple voice. I was touched by the relic "Torments of the Text," a rusted, derelict typewriter beat up by the four elements. Frampton argued in *Circles of Confusion* that most people learn to write by reading, and, with this in mind, I was struck when the catalogue's chronology informed me that his aunt taught him to read by typing.

NOTES

1. Susan Krane, "Introduction," in *Hollis Frampton: Recollections/Recreations*, p. 13.
2. Susan Krane, "Chronology," in *Hollis Frampton: Recollections/Recreations*, pp. 107, 110, 111.
3. "Impromptus on Edward Weston: Everything in Its Place," in *Circles of Confusion: Film, Photography, Video: Texts 1968-1980*, by Hollis Frampton (Rochester, N.Y.: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1983), pp. 137-160. (First published in *October*, no. 5 (Summer, 1978): pp. 48-69.)
4. "Impromptus on Edward Weston," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 160.
5. "Incisions in History/Segments of Eternity," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 95. (First published in *Artforum*, Vol. 13, no. 2 (Oct. 1974): pp. 39-50.)
6. In *Circles of Confusion*, p. 79. (First published in *Artforum*, Vol. 11, no. 7 (March 1973); pp. 43-52.)
7. "Incisions in History," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 94.
8. Hollis Frampton, "On James Rosenquist and Other Inquisitions, September 22, 1963," in *Carl Andre/Hollis Frampton: 12 Dialogues, 1962-1963* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and New York: New York University Press, 1981), p. 87. Quoted in "Introduction," by Susan Krane, in *Hollis Frampton: Recollections/Recreations*, p. 11.
9. "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 111. (First published in *Artforum*, Vol. 10, no. 1 (Sept. 1971): pp. 32-35.)
10. "Notes on Composing in Film," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 123. (First published in *October*, no. 1 (Spring 1976): pp. 104-110.)
11. "Incisions in History," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 103.
12. Simon Field and Peter Sainsbury, "Zorns Lemma and Hapas Legomena: Interview with Hollis Frampton," *Afterimage* (London), no. 4 (Autumn 1972): p. 66. Quoted in "Chronology," by Susan Krane, in *Hollis Frampton: Recollections/Recreations*, p. 114.
13. "Ox House Camel Rivermouth, a Preface," in *Circles of Confusion*, p. 7.



Top: from the "Word Pictures" series (1962-1963). Bottom: *Grass Frog* (1982, original in color), from the "ADSVMS ABSVMVS" series.

