

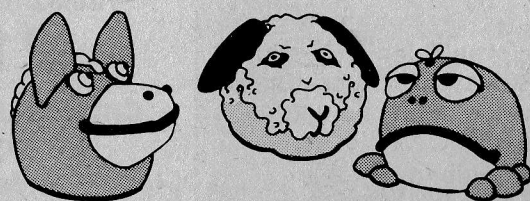
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THE

GUARDIAN AFTER DARK

continued from previous page

"During the early- and mid-'70s, it was easier to get new works shown," Gerstein continued. "Film-as-art was a popular art form. The people running the film houses were more interested and audiences more receptive. This kind of film has been replaced by a return to more traditional genres. People have less patience for experiencing difficult art, and they are less willing to take chances."

But for the month of August, the Cinematheque hopes to recapture some of the attention for film-art and film-in-performance, starting with the thousands of people who will pass through Larkin Hall during the Arts Festival. In the rest of August, installations and performances that are part of the "Perforated Spaces" series will fan out over the city to New Langton Arts; the San Francisco Art Commission Gallery, the San Francisco Art Institute and even to the north slope of Bernal Heights for San Diego artist Louis Hock's *Illuminated Landscape*, a commentary on how advertising co-opts public space (viewable Aug. 24th and 25th, 8:30-11:30 pm).

Moving beyond the flat screen

The planning for "Perforated Spaces" began a year ago. According to curator Lipzin, a film artist and faculty member at New College and San Francisco State,

to-\$50,000 pot subsidizing special local arts activities this summer.

The filmmaker as performer

Although Stark's *Matte IV* was completed only after his proposal was accepted, for other artists the exhibiting of their installations as part of "Perforated Spaces" represents the culmination of months of work. Al Wong, a visual artist and film teacher at the Art Institute, has been working on his *Moonlight* for the past year-and-a-half. The 30-minute piece (scheduled for Aug. 12th at New Langton Arts) involves him as a performer when he sprinkles water on the plastic sheeting beneath the white disc that provides the focus for this exploration of film and real space and illusion. Images appear on the disc,

Peaks, a contemplative film that takes the idea of a journey as its form, with the camera set inside a car traversing a desert area between two peaks. *Lace*, performed in Los Angeles in 1981, used live performers as props. One scene featured a standing microphone onto which was projected a film of a woman in shadow lip-synching a Billie Holiday recording into an identical microphone. The image was followed by the shadow of others, who approached the microphone with apparent reluctance and stage fright.

'Inspired by toilet paper'

In this series, Lipzin will have two of her performance pieces staged Aug. 31st at the Art Institute. *Government Property* is a three-projector film the artist described as

'People have less patience for experiencing difficult art, and they are less willing to take chances.'

—David Gerstein
SF Cinematheque

whimsical ones like finger shadow animals, then the shadow of the artist's hand

"inspired by the imprint on each sheet of toilet paper in the British Museum." It in-

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"We'd hoped to make this a national event, highlighting people using film in conjunction with video, with performance, with sculpture — people dissatisfied with the limits of the single projector and flat screen." But limited time restricted the planners to a smaller California survey, and Lipzin headed the process of contacting film-related institutions, periodicals and artists already associated with the Cinematheque, the oldest organization in America presenting independent art film. She collected a bank of some 30 names, selecting 16 participants after examining their proposals and holding discussions.

"We then began the task of finding sites in town, and then matching artists and facilities," Lipzin told the Bay Guardian. She found that other arts institutions became enthusiastic about cosponsoring the installations and performances once the Cinematheque had established itself as the base organization.

Funding for "Perforated Spaces" was a bigger problem. "Film is chronically under-funded," Lipzin explained. "Film production projects invariably go over budget, so funding sources are reluctant to get involved. They don't always understand the difference between film production and producing a film performance event."

Major financial help for the series came from the San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. The Cinematheque was awarded \$4,500 from a close-

creating the animal and a shot of the artist creating the animal, on the disc, on the white wall, on the film. Wong obviously delights in discovering filmic tricks — like draping a red cloth across the disc to create a sunset effect, then exposing his method to members of the audience, who have the choice of watching his disclosure, the drops of water dancing in the projector path or the next frames darting across the wall.

Wong, who still works actively in other art media (including his large mesh pieces, which also play with light and trompe l'oeil), has been involved with film-as-art for the past nine years. Before that, he was making what he apologizes for as more conventional, "personal films, like *Discount House* and *Yo-Yo Paradise* — very California-style, silly, dramatic love stories. I wanted to be more like an extension cord in my art, not so much Al's cherry personal problem pie, but all of us eating the same cherry pie."

He had become bothered by the autobiographical preoccupation in his own films, as well as the manipulation he felt watching traditional story films. Wong's film art now reflects this concern with distancing Al the person from his art, as well as concentrating on the distinct elements artists have always isolated: light, forms and perspective. Among earlier pieces were *Shadow and Chair*, a mixed media installation dealing with shadow tricks and effects, and *Twin*

involves two stationary projectors and one mobile projector, with footage of government-related monuments, including the queen and public buildings in England, the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan and visual materials about the attempt as reported in the media. According to Lipzin, "It is only a slightly exaggerated package of the way the media reports events, especially violence."

Other Reckless Things, co-created by Lipzin with musician/film artist Ellen Zweig, is a 20-minute piece prompted by a newspaper account of a street woman in Ithaca, New York who in the seventh month of her pregnancy successfully delivered her own baby by cesarian section. Lipzin and Zweig have used footage of a vaginal birth and sensational media reports as well as a soundtrack incorporating prepared childbirth instructions.

Re-establishing film-as-art

By the end of this month of celluloid in the gallery, on stage and on the hillside, the organizers of "Perforated Spaces" hope to have re-established the niche for film-as-art in the Bay Area. It may be unrealistic to expect to capture the fans of *Ghostbusters* and *Conan the Destroyer*, but the adventurous, growing audience for performance art in warehouse spaces is a likelier target.

Film-as-art has been going on here quietly for 15 years, observed Wong. "It is now time for it to get into the mainstream." ■

JULY SPECIALS