

FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF...

When I filmed *From the Notebook of...* in 1971, I had already developed the use of mattes with colored filters as a structural and expressive means of composition. My earliest films, made between 1967 and 1970*, presented various erotic or spiritual themes in the context of the places where I was living. I began to see the film frame as a many faceted whole that could unite a quantity of diverse visual elements in the same composition. I superimposed images, editing on several bands of film, each with its own rhythm, and brought these layers together in printing the film. I also tried to edit directly the optical sound track, using the same measures as in the image. The result was a dominance of the image and its rhythm, but, in accepting this editing structure, I nonetheless developed the patterning and positioning of image fragments within the film frame that led to *From the Notebook of...*

In all of these early films, it was as if I were creating the film in the small compendium that held both the filters and mattes in front of the lens; I concentrated upon moving the focus between the extreme nearness of the colored filters and the scene in front of the camera, and, by changing the exposure, the shapes of the mattes appeared and disappeared. Through these manipulations both inside and in front of the camera, the image began to breath, and this eventually suggested a more appropriate use of sound.

At the center of these early films, I often placed a male figure, and the mattes with colored filters helped me to suggest particular psychological state(s). My first three or four films juxtaposed the isolation of these figures to a prismatic abstraction of color. In 1970, I chose to replace such figures with my own presence as filmmaker and to balance exterior views of a city or landscape with a direct view into the space of my filmmaking. The first example of this is *Diminished Frame* (1970) with its black & white images of West Berlin and the movements of my hand placing colored filters inside the camera.

The starting point for *From the Notebook of...* was more complex. Through Gregory Markopoulos's undaunted commitment and painter/filmmaker Silvio Loffredo's generosity, I was able to live in Florence for several months. During this period, I began to prepare a film, inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks and by my reading of Valéry's text about Leonardo's creative method. Details from Vasari's biography of Leonardo led me to my first location; the scene of doves set free from a shop near the Bargello was suddenly transposed from Vasari to the Present. The flight of doves is carried forward in the turning pages of my handwritten notes and juxtaposed to my opening a window onto the Florentine rooftops. Beginning with the bird's wings and turning pages, the sound developed through natural image/sound metaphors.

I showed myself as an active observer in these various Florentine locations, quickly gathering image and sound in darting movements, and then I returned to my room and placed details from each of these locations next to my notes by using the mattes. There is a reflective and graphic development of the film frame as page; I used the mattes to superimpose diverse elements of color, text, sound and image into one composition. Moving the matte in imitation of turning the page is also part of an elaborate play between the horizontal notebook and the vertical window in front of my desk.

One of the central points of inspiration from Leonardo's notes was his observation of shadows; I used the surface of my notebook and desk to translate some of these observations into film and discovered that the shadow is also a place for sound. Both the matte and shadow are vehicles that join together details of image and sound in ways that could not be done in nature.

I realized later that my written notes place the spectator in the position of being a reader while seeing the film; there is a constant movement between the different way of seeing an image or reading a text. The film is also a hybrid between silent film and sound film because, when we read, we are creating our own subjective sound in reading, and each of the written notes on the screen may become an occasion for the spectator to reflect with his or her own voice.

The darting camera movements are an equivalent for the glancing of my eye in search of points of interest, but it is the interior of my room and notebook that allow me to transform the image or sound through new associations. I connected the Arno's whirling water to locks of hair, or a horse's paces to details of human anatomy and the sound of a bells with the vaulted shapes of a church dome and archway.

Towards the middle of the film, I placed a Bolex camera on my table; looking inside it and through its aperture becomes another threshold for sound. The sound of the whirring camera mechanism joins the rushing water of the Arno, or the click of a single frame becomes like the tapping of a hammer. And because Leonardo was also a musician who created his own string instruments, I added a few tones of the viola.

As the film progresses we pass from the apparent stillness of reading to seeing movement through the rhythm of editing; it is the counterpoints within the composition of the page that establishes the film's form. The same handwritten notes are accompanied by a different image or sound each time they are seen. At the end, I close both the notebook and the window shutters; the last note states, "Film all of my actions that have nothing to do with filmmaking." then a final glimpse shows my filming Gregory Markopoulos, who is seated before me and looks directly into the camera.

* *Winged Dialogue* (Greece), *Plan of Brussels* (Brussels), *The Count of Days* and *Palinode* (Zürich), *Diminished Frame* (Berlin) and *Still Light* (Greece & London).

For further details consult the website www.the-temenos.org where three pages of the actual filming notes for this film are posted.