

# Marcus Guidance

## Intermittent Musings on Minnesota Motion Pictures

by John Akre



Saturday, January 5, 2019

### CAVE 3 Day 2



Day two of the third year of CAVE (the Festival of Cinematic and Audio Visual Experimentation) featured the work of two visiting artists at Bryant Lake Bowl brought to us by Cellular Cinema.

The first show was composed of short videos by Anaïs Duplan of Iowa City, Iowa. Duplan introduced himself as someone who came to video through poetry, and the director's credit used in most of Duplan's films was, "A Poem by..." Duplan's spoken poetry was never narrated, but presented as text on-screen. Instead of carefully placing text at the bottom of the screen so as not to challenge the image as is traditional, Duplan boldly smacked text dead center, blocking the image with a black box, challenging the pictures with words.

The combination of text and image in Duplan's work sometimes teetered on the brink of narrative, but never went over to that side completely. Duplan's first film, "Hickory Hill," at times threatened to turn into a spooky forest movie, but instead followed its subjects through the woods with no clear mission. At times Duplan's camera followed its subjects so closely that it almost got tangled in their clothing. "Cocaine Barbara" parallel cut between a murky grocery store and a light filled bedroom and "The Lovers are the Audience Who Watch" put its text in all corners of the screen to challenge found images that made me think about family trauma, truth, and the curse of having to look at that screen right in front of you.

In the second program, Carl Elsaesser of New York City, Maine and elsewhere, set up his computer on the stage and invited us into a tour of his work and concerns. He was a genial and open host, holding a candle in one hand and walking through the theater, standing in the projector light to declare his connection with the images, hunting through his hard drive to find the right file to play to us. I had seen some of Elsaesser's work before at Cellular Cinema and have to admit that I left feeling a little baffled; his unpretentious and playful exposition at CAVE 3 provided deep insight for me into his concerns and methods.

Central to Elsaesser is the notion of Ambience, all the things that go on in the background that we don't ever really notice. He strives to make films about Ambience, and also which are ambient themselves, which means that to him the idea that his film might play in the background and only occasionally be noticed by its audience is fine with him. His ambient subjects included mapping the portions of Maine zoned for strip malls, and exploring methods of file management used by artists.

#### About Me



**hubertzork**

John Akre writes, draws, animates, makes videos and teaches. He believes that he is a living, breathing, thinking and being human animal, but his creator, Dr. Hubert Zork, one of the nation's least well-respected mad scientists, will tell you otherwise.

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His "Exercises in Resistance" are one hour gestures meant to be a middle finger to the Current Occupant. In one, he sits beneath a public restroom hot air hand dryer, reaching up to turn it back on every time it goes off. In another, a camera outside his house watches him dance deliriously to unheard music while framed by doorways and windows and the sound of crickets.

In "Exercises in Looking," he frames both himself and what he is looking at side by side, also for an hour. He showed a portion of one where he looks at his lover, covered completely by a blanket and motionless, in bed. He frames the shots to defy standard eye-line match, so Elsaesser appears to be looking at something off-screen, something that isn't the body in bed. The connection and disconnection in those side by side images of looking and object play havoc with our expectations and create both peace and unease. Elsaesser's emphasis on Ambience dares us to look away, or look at the thing that we are trained not to look at, and that forces us to look a little more inside than we might want.

And with that, Elsaesser turned off his shadows and put away his computer to clear the stage for the third and final day of CAVE 3.

Posted by [hubertzork](#) at [6:24 AM](#)

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