

CINEMANIC



Seven Visions By Four

This Thursday at Canyon Cinematheque are seven films that share a common viewer's point: contemplation. However, these are not contemplative in the static, passive state. They are films in which the film makers have narrowed their subject and proceeded to penetrate apparent limitations until the scope of visual possibilities seems limitless.

Three of the four filmmakers live and work in the Bay Area, Janis Lipzin, Joel Singer and Vincent Grenier. They are young and only within the past year have begun to surface with these films. The fourth member of this program, Walter Gutman, the entrepreneur of the avant-garde during the Sixties who produced such diverse films as *Jazz On A Summer's Day* by Bert Stern and *Unstrap Me*, directed by George Kuchar, is not young and lives on the East coast.

Gutman's *The Adoration Of Suzie* is a beautifully shot homage to a woman who looks as though she stepped from the tan-

gle of relief sculpture at Angkor into contemporary America: the embodiment of the archetypal female form, powerful, laughing, erotic.

Gutman filmed her once removed from slides by a woman photographer. He plays single spotlight over the surface of the slide image, in and out of focus, areas define only to dissolve softly into another arrangement of cream, blue and green. The slides evoke a languid afternoon light that is erupted into incandescence by the flittering spotlight.

Janis Lipzin's *L.A. Carwash* is a work-in-progress employing doubled parallel image and in-camera editing. Her film, with its shards of light reflecting off car's surface and in sprays of water, often evokes reminiscences of Brakhage's work during the time of *Pittsburgh Trilogy*. However, I don't feel this was what she was engaged in. Images on the right precede by several frames those on the left, they meet fusing into a third, hold and go on.

a new force in West Coast independent film making which has possibilities of bringing the Bay area cinema out of the landlocked Sixties.

Vincent Greiner, like Singer, is from Quebec. He was programmer for Canyon Cinema-

The ten minutes of this film left me eager to see more of her work, hopefully there will be more screenings by this film maker.

Although I was told she considers herself a feminist, what I saw was a work by an artist who happens to be a woman. Lipzin puts aside expectations of what a female artist should produce and concentrates on her vision personally and perhaps, daringly, in the face of some feminist rhetoric.

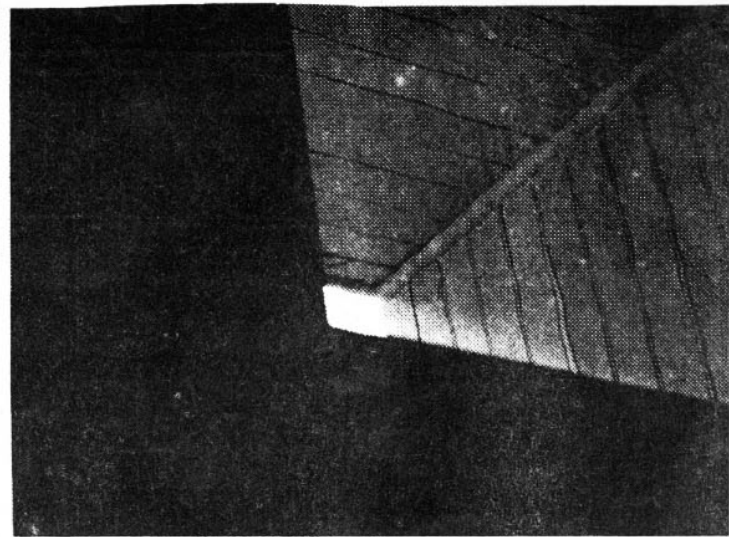
Joel Singer is a relocated artist from Quebec whose two films in this program have as much in common with music as they do with film, though each are silent.

Parasphere is a 14-minute circular pan, shot in single-frame of a northside Berkeley traffic circle that corresponds to the intricate clustering notes of Cecil Taylor's piano. The film begins to resolve itself through an overexposed introduction, then leaps into a horizontal orbiting of the perimeter punctuated by the jacked-up speed of autos, details of landscape firing into the foreground, retreating. The camera rushes in one direction only to stop, fix momentarily then sweep in the opposite direction.

It is a stunning, rhythmically overwhelming film shot in middle-tones of black and white. Though the film is silent, soon into its viewing a music is heard, internally along the neural lines fed by the eyes through the strokes of light.

Singer's second film in the program is a balladic farewell to his family home in Quebec, *Adieu Beause Jour*. Empty rooms, porcelain sinks remembered in winter light, solitary skier slowly gliding against expanse of white outside window.

Along with Janis Lipzin, Singer is a film maker with whom I was unacquainted until recently. I feel fortunate to have ended this ignorance of their work. They, along with the fourth film maker in this program, Vincent Greiner evidence



"Light Shaft" by Vincent Grenier

theque last year and did much in bringing previously unknown film makers to San Francisco, nearly singlehandedly raising the provincial film consciousness of this area. During this same period, Grenier made what was perhaps the most innovative film produced in the Bay area, *Window Wind Chimes*.

This film sent the personal narrative quietly into other dimensions, sort of a restaged "home movie" in which indications of his more recent work surfaced. This film recently showed in New York at Film Forum. The films of Grenier which are included in the "Seven by Four" program are recent works which abandon the narrative and concentrate on the minimal subject and the manipulation of light and on-screen patterning.

Light Shaft traverses the screen with a wedged light formation, usually on the diagonal. Its variations are rendered through arrangements of the tripod while panning the camera. Grenier seems to be fixed on the dominant element of film: Light. (That's what it comes down to, folks.)

Shade is a near-exhaustion of the possibilities between camera (aperture, focus) and nature (sun, wind). It is a beautiful

study-poem on the undying presence that renders the world perceptually. In this minimal area the variations are pursued with quiet doggedness, each frame revealing the secret of the next.

His third film in this program, *Catch* is a fragmented observation on hidden reflective surfaces, the corner of a dormant television screen, a window.

Grenier is leaving soon for an indefinite stay back East, it would be well if you could see his films while you can.

Three of these filmmakers, make up a core of what is to come in personal filmmaking here in the Bay area.

The films have nothing to do with entertainment, they are discoveries in filmed vision. It is a lie that films must be "entertaining" in the conventional sense, filmmakers and audiences who adhere to this dictum with the exclusion of any other possibilities inherent to the working of camera and emulsion, have a destructive, stupefying pedestrian mentality that should be avoided.

If you are interested in "seeing" film, the program is this Thursday at the San Francisco Art Institute, 800 Chestnut, SF, 8:30 pm. -- Mike Reynolds