

Notes on "THE VISIBLE COMPENDIUM" by Larry Jordan

I believe that my animation comes from the collective unconscious, not just in term of archetypes and specific symbols, but in terms of distorted, mirror-like fragments of ritual, cult and religious practices throughout human history and pre-history. These practices take on the form of what some people call "surreal" incidents and scenes: unusual actions and interactions by characters, birds, animals and things.

Given the cut-out engraved materials I use, these practices, or their distorted reflections are projected forth, not in traditional or historic form, but in dream or unconscious psychological form.

I have always been interested in religion, particularly ancient religion and have read fairly extensively the translations of ancient texts such as the Egyptian Pyramid texts, the Upanashads, the Kabalah and Zohar, as well as many of the heroic epics of ancient Greece, India and the Nordic countries.

One might infer that this reading is what is reflected in the animation. Possibly so. However, I believe and more particularly feel that the reverse is true: that my reading is but a reflection of a predisposition for ancient religion, particularly cult practices, such as nature and fertility rites, funeral rites, and empowerment rites, and that the incidents depicted in the animations come not from conscious reading, but from what has been referred to as both "stream of consciousness" (Joyce) and "collective unconscious" (Jung).

I am aware that I cannot just walk up to the animation stand and begin animating. Nor can I sit down at will and start to "design" an animation. It simply does not work that way. The feeling is that I must "backpack" in to a distant area, land, country, location (of the mind), where everything takes place without my overt inventing. In this place "when I reach it) there is very little equivocation, almost no asking of the question, "Is this any good; what am I doing?" or, "Will this work?" or, "Couldn't I think of something better?"

In this "place", once reached by months of (ritual?) preparation of cutting, sorting and selecting (of pieces and backgrounds--very little note-making), I know how everything works. Both the depicted landscape and its accompanying movable parts, plus the dynamics of how those parts move--all that is perfectly apparent to me (once the crucial "place" is reached). Moreover, the movement always has content, i.e. meaning, though I purposely dodge consciously explaining those meanings to myself--at least at the time of actually shooting the film. I prefer to synthesize only while shooting. And I have never been very interested in post analysis either. Therefore, I cannot tell you the meanings of the incidents in the film; but I know meanings are present.

I prefer the viewer to discover meanings and to interact with the images and incidents, bringing the viewer's own predispositions into play, forming personal stories, personal meanings from the

symbols and signs presented.

In this way the film is not a record of what happened in some past time; but, seen ideally, the film comes to life in present time for the viewer. And the viewer, when fully engaged with the animation, is not asking, "What does this mean?", but rather is saying, "Oh, I know what that is." or, "What a curious story I'm getting here." The film should be a first-hand experience for the viewer, not an after-the-fact rendition of what the film maker once experienced.

"The Visible Compendium" reaches farther than any of my other animations. It goes off in many directions, held together, hopefully, by the sound track, which itself goes off in a number of directions: strange sounds, some recognizable, others not. Some music. No voice, no silence. This is intentional. The film is a compendium, as indicated in the title--a catalog of visible possible experiences, some at normal time, some speeded up or slowed down, some continuous, others broken up. Why? Tough question. Why not? Why not experiment with different modes of visible motion? (And, I might add, totally manufactured bits of motion elucidated by the light from the projector.) For instance, when the nude woman with the towel walks across the screen, the image broken up with flashes, close-ups, erratic zooms, etc. this is partly to find out what such a construct looks like, partly to express the sound track (which was in place before the animation), and partly to express those unspoken "meanings" I mentioned above.

I wanted to construct enigmas for you, the viewer, to puzzle on and delight in. In this sense I have a part-time interest in entertainment, because when entertained, in other than a simple-minded sense, the mind comes to life, exults in its own power of perception, makes something out of nothing. The realm of the Imagination opens!

I abhor the "Roger Rabbits" because they try to make non-existent animals and characters look real. The imagination is subverted. All the work is done by the animator. The viewer has only to be an unimaginative dunce. I believe the artist should do only part of the work, be provocative, challenge the viewer to complete the picture, react with the vision, exert energy trying to cope with it. I feel this exchange is essential to the art making/viewing process. Otherwise we are into creating phenomena, Frankenstein monsters, not communicating or arousing the mind's powers of synthesis, perception or meaning-constructing capacity.

And so "The Visible Compendium" constructs bits of unnamed meanings, fragments of light. Photography is, to me, not about things, but about light. Light is our primary reality when we are at the movies--light which suggests things, the secondary reality, constructed by the mind. "The Visible Compendium" attempts to engage the mind, and particularly what is unknown in the mind, rather than what has been seen and known a thousand times over.