



Reply to UNWORD QUESTIONNAIRE : from Mike Leggett.

Transcripts from a monologue tape and added thoughts.

UNWORD script original promised more than the previous event FADING MENU; this had been a series of closed side-shows; UNWORD suggested everything it didn't have: a conceptual clarity combining the visually dominant wordsheets, film and tape, performance and documentation, and an open-ended construction.

Compendium - the bookshop cellar hung with awesome newsprint wordsheets floor to ceiling, wall to wall, cramping the dozen spectators against one wall in a dimensionless room -

"....standing on the bow of a big ship at night with a towering iceberg suddenly looming and then silently, coldly drifting by, with only one tenth visible above the waterline...." -

Prologue: films: Walter and Connie, Biomechanic Man, Sheepman and the Sheared whose visual simplicity and potency matched that of the sheets....planes of sight that disappeared backwards as the wordsheets fell.... film picture growing from small to big....words frozen by photographs/film -

"....cars exploding...." -

camera recording regularly along time sequence idea (like that attempted at Cardiff BUFFET CAR NEWS); exposing at approx 1 second intervals producing clear progression of static blow-ups -

"....not recognisable as human figure to some observers...." -

bashful second performer....anti-climactic ("self-conscious") dress stapling... tentative sheet assemblage....tentative ending ("reassuring") which turned out to be a very important part of the event -

"....it had to go on from there."

I.C.A. intentions were, as a result of Compendium, to build extensions in those areas mentioned, as well as work within a much larger space with more projection opportunities, having larger walls, more throw and two projectors. Sheepman film as before. Engine Destruction film at right angles to it intended as 100 ft continuous loop with emulsion removal during length of event so that by the end clear film would be projected. Instead the loop kept breaking and so it was on/off, burnt, scratched frames hastily taped together in full view of the audience, becoming an unexpected side event in itself.... Ready/Observe tape played throughout instead of the Language Lesson tape which had been prepared from some ready-made recordings.

Documentation visuals now had to be in greater quantities to make the time-scale more relevant....still camera not good, not enough frames, frequent reload....used 16mm Bolex with enough for 4000 separate pictures on each camera loading....but then problem of reproduction....blow-ups from selected frames? ....blow-ups from edited strips?....strip-print whole film so that it would read like Chinese calligraphy?....film-projector would turn it into a Sennett joke....but an Analysis projector would project at a speed corresponding to the exposure time-scale....one frame however often, or two frames a second automatically. Thus the frame exposure rate = frame projection rate = correct time-scale, which meant an exposure had to be made about once every second -

"....in a forest of hanging wordsheets it became easier to take pictures, they were appearing in front of me...." -

the involvement was becoming inevitable....I was soon another performer, stalking around the set with a clicking camera, making a loud click against Ian's muted tearing; ("It wasn't so much the click of the camera that was disturbing out the fact that it wasn't regular" - I.C.A. spectator)....and the performance began to be subjective....the environment, the audience, my assumed role -

"Gradual selection started taking place. I had a tendency to slow down the intended regularity of exposure at points where the action slowed down or where the relationship of camera to performer to other performer contracted. The time-scale became rubberised."

The event was still not fulfilled.

My involvement as performer/cameraman had been emphatic enough for me to be aware after the event that the film I had shot was going to have considerable shortcomings.

The Swansea room was going to generate a different film; the room had strip lighting which produced an overall, even illumination around its low-ceilinged dimensions. There was no reason therefore for poorly lit, inaccurately exposed, and out of focus footage (framage?).

Sheepman projected front to back of room. Rubber Nurses at front on side wall (this was a prepared 10 second loop which must have appeared as almost a static 2D object). Just as the performance started began to realise that maybe I was playing a third role, striding around out front directing the tape/projector operator, switching the lights around - the role of controller apparent....The exhilaration at the I.C.A. seemed lost at Swansea....more conscious of producing a technically better film -

"....getting used to it...." -

which is perhaps why an additional performer in a polythene tent became a strong visual point in the film, though to the audience, unable to approach, he must simply have been another "film-screen" distraction....The time-scale intended at the I.C.A. was by now abandoned as a controlling factor....the intent now was to shoot visually coherent material, though in many sections the film was still being exposed at the rate of 1 frame per sec....everything documented by the camera, even the audience and room dimensions....it was not clear what subsequent editing of the material would eliminate -

"....everything and anything in the can as evidence....not set up for the audience but for the camera....camera into the audience as part of the camera/performer gesture...." -

The evnt finished with the room being completely cleaned, something suggested by the unobserved clearing process that went on at the I.C.A....it seemed to complete a cycle: event-completion, and for me, film-completion.

The Swansea film was the first thing I looked at in Bristol....the first projection of the shot film on an Analysis projector, with the discovered drama of continuous projection at 2 frames per sec....not only truncated animation effect but the visual shock of changing the picture on the screen.

Bristol: "

"....snotty philistines....obstruct them, hinder them....multi-film extravaganza opportunity...." -

Three 16mm projectors, one Analysis projector (showing the fresh shot Swansea film), two Cinemascope projectors all chucking images out over the entire performance area....with the camera was a matter of -

"....gathering as many images as the thing produced...." -

Images from projected film falling onto a drastically changed UNWORD performance, complete with Prologue and Epilogue -

"....forget the time/base scale....gather images to increase impact of final film....which is what the Bristol film contributed to the final film"

In editing these films the apparent need, having seen them all together, was to remove all points of refence in them (audience/room), select the "best" sequences from those points at which action coincided in the three versions, dovetail these sections together so that discontinuity did not become a distraction. Then make a composite tape from all the different tapes used in the events -

"....The film (I.C.A., Swansea, Bristol, final?) is a very fair representation of the event....more successful than the still photographs, which are aesthetic and good to look at but remain stilted and stiff, and lack the drama, the totality of the film."

"UNWORD was about me finding out a little more about film and photography ....and how it is to be observed by an audience....and about how you can start at one point and keep working it until you've discovered a vanishing point."

Mike Leggett.