

Sheepman & the Sheared – programme notes

A film in seven parts by Mike Leggett for continuous single screen projection with an approximate running time of 2 hours 15 minutes. (Can screened as distinct reels: Part 1 + 2; part 3; part 4; part 5; part 6; part 7.)

The film takes Landscape as Object in front of the filmmaker and the Medium; it is not about rural life or the mythology of The Land, neither does it seek to present a personalised impression visual or otherwise of the state of residing in a rural district of the South West of England. The coincidence of flora, fauna and man-made object, processes and activities, with the film frame are in no way paramount to an inspection of the total film process by which an observation of this kind is made possible- specific conditions to do with both Nature and men's activity with Nature are recorded with the camera but is essentially a subject to the observation and reaction to its operator.

What is subsequently examined in the precise activity of assembly of the camera rolls; assembly such as in Window almost entirely dictated by the length of time the camera ran on each occasion or in Farm which takes into account the pre-determined sub-assembly systems within each of the rolls before arriving at any final order, a decision more determined by a process of inspection and adjustment over a period of time.

1.) SHEEP

1970-75, silent, colour, 3 mins

Remains of a cut roll of rushes; images of sheep, splices, grease pencil marks, flash frames, images of marker boards and man talking to camera without sound.

2.) SHEEPMAN

1970-75, silent, colour, 10 mins

Assembly from same found material altogether with other found footage and including humans, motor cars and other machines. Governed by a constant 12 frame/half second linear measurement of celluloid & being the durational basis for the selection and re-ordering of material originally destined to be ordered according to the dictates of an explanatory script. At an early stage the inclusion of opaque or partially opaque durations of celluloid, the rapid repetition of selected images,

ordering according to binary system, all confound the interpretation of the passage of images.

3.) WINDOW

1970-75, sound, colour, 45 mins

The camera and operator record 40 seconds of film each weekend throughout a period of twelve months from the same vantage point; each period finishes with the camera framing the area in front of the window in the same way as when the shot commenced. Selection of the part of the area with the use of zoom lens and camera movement or decision about time of day (or even day itself) and precise length of run were not pre-determined. The footage obtained is assembled in order of shooting, (April 1973-74), each camera run being indicated by the blanking of six individual frames spaced; 12 + 12 + 12 + 12cut + 12 + 12. A twenty minute continuous sound recording made at the same window is printed twice onto the ungraded final print with a five minute gap before the repeat.

4.) LANE

1970-75, silent, colour, 18 mins

Film is shot from a moving vehicle; from its roof pointing forward, from its rear pointing backwards. This occurs on two occasions; the summer of 1973 and the winter of 1974. The camera runs at either 24 fps or 12 fps The film is assembled according to pre-determined factors; (i) the 12 frame / half second bias as observed in Sheepman section; (ii) a double binary - alternating apparent movement away from and toward the surface of the screen, (a function relying on the perception of successive frames); (iii) combinations of one or other of these. The primary function of the 12 frame opaque film is, as in the Sheepman section, not so much as markers of time but as a constant factor comparative to those frames they surround.

5.) FARM

1970-75, sound, colour, 25 mins

An assembly of eight rolls of film each in different ways examining spatial relationships; object/camera film/projector film planes-the walls of a barn, the surface of a tilled field, the surface of the screen bearing the image of a wall in movement, the screen with an image of movement towards moving animals, movement of tractor on which a moving camera is mounted.

6.) BLUE PLUS GREEN PLUS RED

1970-75, silent, colour, 15 mins

Colour 'generated' from the sky, the grass and berries, a system of graphic loops synthesises in the printer, not only changing hues of complementary colours but white light itself.

7.) SHEEPWOMAN

1970-75, sound mag stripe, colour, 16 mins

Return to the camera image of Sheepman together with control of camera and then examines the image resultant in conjunction with synchronous/non-synchronous sound and written word image.

Part 5 (Farm) made with the financial support of the South West Arts Association.

"In Sheepman & the Sheared, Leggett delicately negotiates a dialectic between creation of images, and stripping the images of their illusionism. The comprehensiveness of his task provides the film with its interest: the evident intelligence and diligence make the film an imposing work in the canon of the British structural film."

Daryl Chin, New York Soho Weekly (1976).