



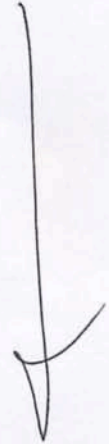
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Introduction

Nine + 20 Grant Application

Nine + 20/Blue is a 16mm experimental dance film very close to my heart. It began as diary footage (16 and super 8 mm) that I shot and hand processed as a personal memory of two close friends who dance and choreograph internationally. In each case, while walking outdoors, I asked them to perform an improv which I shot on film. The resulting material forms the basis of a hybrid that explores both the dance performance and biographical film genres. I recorded intimate conversations on cassette after our walks... about their aspirations... their fears... the choices and compromises that they have made in order to pursue a life of dance... and plan to incorporate this material into the films' aural design.

I have edited the first section - subtitled Nine + 20 - to a fine cut (11 minutes, black and white) with a rough sound mix. Unfortunately the 16mm print that I created by optically printing the original hand processed super-8 negative has been damaged so I need to do another blow-up. I would also like to re-mix the audio with my sound designer Earle Peach. Concurrently, I plan to work on the second section, Blue (10-12 minutes, color) as I see the two portraits playing together as a diptych... of like structure, but of contrasting visual design. This involves shooting some additional material, making a rough assembly, optically printing it on to color stock and hand processing it, making a final internegative, creating a sound design and optical track and making an answer print. I am requesting from the council the assistance to complete the work outlined above.

Project Background

The film was born several years ago while I was living in Montreal. For some reason the apartment in which I had a room was a gathering place for a diverse range of individuals.... circus performers to genetic engineers... painters, writers and musicians. At a Sunday brunch I met Aszure Barton, a dancer who had just begun rehearsals with Les Ballets Jazz du Montreal. We became close friends and spent a lot of time together... we were the same age and were facing many similar issues both personal and artistic. We also shared a deep fascination with each others craft... me with the apparent physical torture she was enduring to communicate emotion through movement... and she with the enormous expressive potential of cinema.

She had grown up at the National Ballet School in Toronto and had dedicated her life to performing. The stories she told of being a young ballerina were tragic... the competition.... the pressure... anorexia... mental abuse... she eventually opted out of ballet and started performing with modern dance companies in Europe and America. After screening some hand-processed dance film material that I had shot with a mutual friend, we agreed to collaborate on a film together. The opportunity arose at Christmas time close to a year later when I visited her in New York City. She had moved there and was dancing freelance with a number of different choreographers. She was also choreographing a piece for Les Ballets Jazz.

Without any formal plan, we took off for the day. Central Park, Lincoln Centre, the subway, Coney Island. I was looking for a similar visual aesthetic to that which I had established in the first dance film that I had made... one of the dancer alone... walking through unpopulated space. Shooting with a Bolex on 16mm black and white film, I hand processed the images and although the texture of the material turned out beautifully, the cold temperature and the presence of others within much of the footage made it impossible to achieve the mood that we were looking for.

I later received assistance from the Canada Council to shoot additional material for Blue as well as to complete another dance film titled nine + 20 which I answer printed earlier this year. After having completed principle photography in New York, I returned to Toronto and hand-processed the footage to a negative. I proceeded to step print the negative on the Oxberry at LIFT and hand-developed it to a positive. I then created an internegative using the LIFT oxberry and assembled a rough cut with the original positive. I have just begun to work with a few sound elements, namely some telephone messages that she left on my machine where I had asked her to recount her story. In addition to the messages, I have some interview material that I may attempt to integrate, but for now I think that I will stick with the messages.

I am submitting a rough cut of the project and plan to complete editing and sound by the end of 2002.

Style and Technique

Because the film is an intimate portrait of two dancers, I want to create a quiet, introspective atmosphere. Both parts will be of similar structure... beginning with images of the subject walking alone through static tableaux... in parks, cemeteries, urban architecture... conspicuously empty spaces which allow us to get acquainted with their natural rhythms. As they walk, we hear them on the soundtrack talking about their lives... their aspirations... their fears... their passions. After spending time observing the character from afar and learning of their innermost thoughts, both the camera and subject begin to dance.

The first part entitled *Nine + 20* (a double system copy is included with the support material) was shot on super-8mm black and white film, hand developed to a negative and then optically printed onto 16mm. The optically printed material was in turn hand processed to a positive which I then used as the cutting copy. The combination of hand developing and optical printing creates a special atmosphere that the subject inhabits... like he was alone on another planet... the graininess of the image and static on the soundtrack contributing to the intimacy of this communication from far away.

In the second section, *Blue*, I plan to shoot on 16mm black and white film, hand develop it to a negative, optically print it onto high contrast color stock and hand develop that to a positive. The opening section will appear quite similar in texture to the walking sequence in *Nine + 20*... spare... monochromatic... and very grainy. For the dance improvisation that closes the film though, I plan to experiment with intensely saturated color through hand processing and solarization (see *Agate's Bidet* in the support material as a visual example). In addition, I plan to use a different editing strategy with the final dance segment.

Whereas there was no cutting when Mick performs at the end of *Nine + 20*... the camera follows him hand-held in one continuous take as he moves around... I see Aszures performance as a montage. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost is the fact that each of these artists have very different styles. The starkness of black and white works for Micks character whereas a continually changing, intensely saturated color montage would more closely suit Aszures' jazz dance aesthetic. I also think that the introduction of color near the end of the piece would add greatly to the overall visual experience.

Most of the dance films I have seen fall into two categories... a document of a performance.... Merce Cunningham, Marie Choinard, David Parsons, *Holy Body Tattoo*, *LaLaLa Human steps* (Velasquez' little museum)... where we witness dancers executing a choreography... or biographies about dancers and choreographers which are composed of talking heads and snippets from various performances. Recently, however, I saw Sarah Abbotts' hand processed black and white dance film *The Light Inside Our Lizard Bellies*. This piece went much further than anything I have seen regarding the use of film to expose layers of meaning which would not necessarily be communicated through the dance performance alone. I am interested in this idea but want more specifically to lend insight into the persona of the dancer. I believe that the communication of emotion through film is strongly mediated by the personal....hence my strong attachment to the diary film form... and as such would like to present as intimate a portrait of these two artists as possible.