

Hand processing, Fine Arts Presentation, Gerald Saul, September 13, 2002

Thanks for coming, this warm Friday the thirteenth of September.

Luck

I believe in luck. Luck is the understanding that we do not control everything around us.

Bad luck is when we do not want to accept what has come our way.

Good luck is when we appreciate what lands in our laps, when we allow ourselves to enjoy the chaotic randomness of life.

I'm here to talk about my work with hand processed film, a technique which many practitioners say is based firmly in the realm of luck.

Before I discuss the specifics of why I work this way, I feel it necessary to demonstrate what I do.

Explain how commercial processing machines work,
purpose of achieving predictable, quality results quickly and efficiently.
Profitable for the lab
reliable for the filmmakers.

Hand processing is when a person does not use automated machines to do the development of film but rather will develop rolls of film in a darkroom in buckets or using small tanks built for this purpose.

*****BUCKETS AND DEMO*****

Buckets do same thing, develop, fix or develop bleach flash develop fix.

Why, Why, Why????

The How and the Why are intimately Connected

Cost: this is cheaper in that the chemicals cost less than your lab costs.

Economically, this doesn't hold up very well. I have, on more than one occasion, spent four hours and come out having lost multiple rolls and gained nothing. The value of my time certainly outweighs the price of the lab.

Time: We are far from all labs, we can therefore see results much quicker. (Motion tests) Europe. Note Rob Butterworth's story (Belgium?)

While this is true, in fact if you were to go into my office you would find exposed rolls dating back months, still undeveloped. I could have sent them via the pony express and had them back by now.

Aesthetics: The image is unlike anything the lab would give you.

Counter to the established norms, the expected nature of film as a reproduction of reality. With this reason, the choice to use buckets rather than tank is obvious. The desire to have an image which is corrupted and unacceptable by the mainstream, is the goal and the buckets will give you that.

I work the film to maximize the damage to it.

Shows the hand of the creator.

Results are random but are not uncontrollable. The Beauty of the Surprise.

Mixture and corruption. Eventually, chemicals wear out and begin to give different results.

This is where Luck comes in. Depending upon temperatures used, accidental corruption of one chemical by another, and frequency of use of the chemicals, they may wear out at differing rates. I try to push every solution to its limit, so finding that limit and testing the results of using it beyond that limit is unpredictable. I try to enjoy the results.

Solarized bad bleach effect. (Solarization = Sabattier effect)

Conclude (More than Luck, Attitude! - have fun - there will be disappointment
If you approach too seriously - the occasional failures will devastate - Enjoying the process helps you roll w/ pain
Punk

Choice of film stocks further enhances both the cost and aesthetic properties of this method.

Film stocks used: high contrast, low speed, orthochromatic (opposed to panchromatic)
mylar/polyester/estar vs acetate

Kodak only source.

Market small and they won't support fringe work.

Stocks changing.

A reprieve to one last year, but it has been delisted again, for good this time.

Qualities, starkness, surrealness,

My history

thesis (doubt)

at school, realization that many students never use film due to cost.

Try to create easy methods so they can:

I believe that film forces a certain discipline that video does not. It has a unique aesthetic and students who learn to use film will be able to use all media with a higher degree of skill/craft. Instant gratification, the surprise, the feelings that drew me to this medium.

Through hands on involvement, students gain a greater intuitive understanding of the materials of their medium. Also, it allows them to create a work which can be presented publically in a forum similar to "happenings" in the sixties.

The six film cycle for Toxic.

History of changes.

Theme: The act of creation, the darkness and discovery is akin to creating life.

The images are so transient that death seems ever close.

Writing about this: Bruce Elder

much written by filmmakers about personal experiences, such as LIFT newsletter

Also Helen Hill's CC funded "Recipes for Disaster"

distressed style, popular??

Reflects destiny of film stocks.

Reflects destiny of film stocks.

Cross processing

What have I done with this research?

Film pool workshop
classroom demonstrations

Latent Image

Themes of episodes

Where am I going: continuing with heavier emphasis on the chemical compounds with Tanya as well as a collaboration which will have more public impact (dance, demonstrating the dichotomy between "dance" and "film of dance").

Conclusion:

We, we filmmakers, touch the film because we need to. It helps to make it real.

thank FA research fund, Film pool, SAB, Steve Cameron, Tanya Dahms, New Dance Horizons (Robin Poitras).

to do
label buckets
get dummy reel
find specific prices for lab processing
get tangled mess of film

also to document / explain the found differences between a reality that is filmed and the artificial nature of film itself - old hat or painting - ongoing struggle in Media

What are the aesthetic concerns?

degrade image convey sense of the past of decay and most importantly for me, THE FRAGILE NATURE OF MEMORY

1st film "Begin" is constructed as seemingly random glimpses of my life, of acts of destruction as well as birth. It is how beginning + ending co-exist and are not independent of each other.

Poppa will be about vibrancy of memory but not rooted in reality - colours are intensified with tinting techniques.

Begin
Poppa
untitled dance work
Tourist
the three letters
Finish