

REVIEW

Dancing for people who sit

Madison Brookshire *Number Series*

Cinema Project

PICA TBA Festival

SOCIETY

Ido Radon

We sit in rows in the half-dark. The man with the biggest hair sits in front of me. The projectionist clicks the projector on on its high stand, and the lights fade out. An almost rectangle of colored light appears with rounded corners, edges blurred. He turns on a second projector and a slightly smaller quadrilateral in a paler color is projected within the first. The projectionist adjusts the position of the projector to position this second within the other.

The sound of the projectors clattering is emphatic, mechanical. I think that in addition to the sound of the projectors themselves, one hears a recording of same, a doubling, but one can't be sure.

We wait. For the title maybe. For something to happen. But nothing does. Or almost nothing. And when the almost nothing happens, it's almost hard to ascertain whether or not it did, happening as it does in such a very incremental manner. Very very slowly one color has turned into another. And you have to check your recent memory to be sure you aren't making it up. Like watching Santa Cruz quicksilver Pacific on a windless evening where it meets the bluegrey cloudless sky at the horizon after the sun has set. It was peach-tinged lavender moments ago. Visually, you can call to mind a simplified Joseph Albers Homage to the Square meets a Rothko. But skewed a bit, fuzzy, and in which the color fields are ever so slightly dynamic...minute variations of color over time that we can ascribe to the nature of the material of film itself.

I think of the effects of the nothing of John Cage's 4:33. The reduction in entertainment or action emphasizing the every-other-sound that is not the piece. Or the similar effects Robert Morris' 1964 Green Gallery show might have had on a viewer looking for the art and then looking at the rest everything else in the room in context of these bodily-scaled rectilinear forms in painted plywood.

Sometimes there is a very dark grey rectangle within another even darker. In Godard's *King Lear*, the director's character holds a cardboard box with light bulb installed in one end, a rectangular hole opposite. He says, "No, from the back." He unscrews the lightbulb to move it, and the screen goes dark. And this is film at the base of it, light shining through and onto something.

What does it mean to make work of this nature in 2022-2024, some 50+ years after structural film works such as Tony Conrad's *The Flicker* which calls attention to the frame-nature of film? It similarly uses economy of means to produce effect if the effect could be said to be gentler and more lovely (free of seizure-induction

possibilities). It is related, certainly, drawing attention to color rather than form and the fact that color after all is just light. But rather than the structure of film, it perhaps demands attention to phenomena and perception, not unlike Robert Irwin's scrim installations.

Walter Benjamin writes about simultaneous collective reception made possible by the medium of film. I thought of this ritual of sitting in the dark together in the theater, our faces illuminated by the reflection off the screen. A communal experience with no talking. With nothing to receive. I thought of the other small rectangles of light with rounded corners we had left black in our pockets during this time. I thought of going out dancing for people who sit.

Finally, it's all manual, analog. The projectionist is the artist it turns out. This work of art in the age of its technical reproducibility is indeed not a screening but a performance. See the descriptions of the works:

No. 1 (2022)

One 16mm film on six reels, overlapping projection, color, sound, about 12 minutes.

or

No. 8 (2024)

One 16mm film on two reels, overlapping projection, color, sound, about 18 minutes.

Interesting that color is listed as a material independent of the 16mm film.

Godard's character speaks lines about image and the real world and the difference between them. In the darkness, Godard's character says "Something is missing."

The following intertitle reads: "NO THING."