

THE CAPIANO REVIEW



space is actual;
time is conscious turning

—JACK CHAMBERS

JACK CHAMBERS FILMS

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ASSISTED BY

Dorothy Jantzen

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The Capilano Review wishes to thank Olga Chambers for the permission to publish facsimiles of portions of Jack Chambers' film notebooks. The extra assistance from the Film Division of The Canada Council for the monographs is also appreciated.

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THE CAPILANO REVIEW

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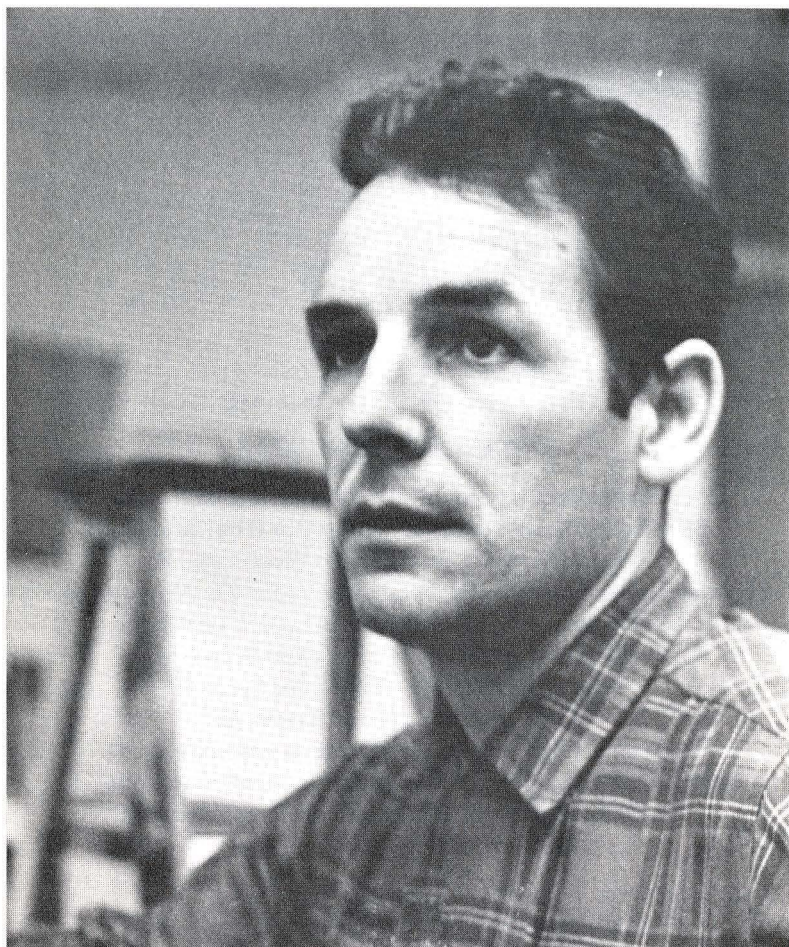
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Detail of *The Hart of London*

COVER

photography:

Ian MacEarhern



JACK CHAMBERS FILMS

is presented as a companion publication to the *Jack Chambers Film Retrospective*, curated by Tom Graff for Pacific Cinematèque Pacifique of Vancouver. The films will be available as a complete package for presentation through that agency. The prints are provided by the National Film, Television and Sound Archives of the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

FOREWORD

The Jack Chambers I was acquainted with made art and film very much by hand. His determination and unflagging self-editorial scrutiny were his most useful tools. His correcting and recorrecting gave his work both a clarity and a density necessary to art which constantly stepped into the ontological truth of our finite existence. If Chambers was a mystic, he was a clear-headed one and tough. Long before his own early knowledge of his fatal leukemia, he was obsessed with “the life-death-life cycle” as he always called it.

As for his film-making, it was strictly organized and seems to me more immediately exemplary of his experience of his central philosophy of “perceptual realism” than are most of his other works. In a 1972 conversation, he said that he “would never make any money to speak of with films,” but that “the medium is time-based and defies the restrictions of the canvas.” And “that was the thrill.” For Chambers, film became more than moving pictures on one surface. By building up image upon image with the optical printer and combining these with the infinite possibilities of cinematic collage, Chambers could plan projects which yielded an intensity unlike that achieved by other realists of his time.

In one notebook entry dated October 23, 1974, Chambers quotes from Whitrow’s *Nature of Time*. He read it to me once:

The camera has brought accurate observation to replace the blindness of art convention. Realism not only *can* but must depict reality as it is observed, not as art permits us to see it. The whole point is to turn the viewer back to nature to the miracle of his own creativity—the affirmation of things as they appear.

The notebook continues with a reference to Isaiah 55:10 & 11, which I cite here as a kind of inventory of how Jack felt about art:

For as the rain and snow came down from Heaven,
and return not thither but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish what I purpose,
and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

This special issue of *The Capilano Review* demonstrates that Jack Chambers' previously unpublished film notes offer concrete illustration of his cinematic thought process. Further, for those who try to grasp the essence of the collage impulse, the passion to juxtapose, and what Jack drew from the idea of "the affirmation of things as they appear," some pertinent poems, letters and philosophical notes are included. Critical appraisals by Avis Lang and Ross Woodman of Chambers' film work follow the primary materials in this monograph. It is hoped that in pursuing this publication you will gradually have the experience of seeing thought and plan "prospering in the thing" for which Jack "sent it."

As Bruce Elder states in his 1981 article on the film *Circle*, "Chambers' fame rests largely on a series of canvasses completed between 1968 and 1971. . . . Curiously, the films Chambers made during these same years are hardly known." They are "rarely shown and less frequently written about." I agree with Elder that this is sad, and that the films deserve wider attention. While it is obvious that they are an integral part of Chambers' *oeuvre*, I am convinced they are strong on their own as cinematic works.

It is ideal to see the films. Prints are being made of the originals that have been placed in safe storage in the Public Archives, by the Chambers Estate. By the time this issue is published, it will be possible to rent the *Jack Chambers Film Retrospective* through Pacific Cinematèque Pacifique (1616 West Third Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1K2).

TOM GRAFF

Vancouver, March, 1985

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In my mind the project was simple: I knew Jack; I had produced many screenings of his films; I thought more people should be able to see them. In fact, without the help of many individuals and agencies, the idea for this publication and film distribution would have remained as a vague notion wrapped in naive assumption and possibly shattered by the realities of hard financial times. These projects owe their existence to:

The Chambers Estate

Diego, John and Olga Chambers, Jack's family

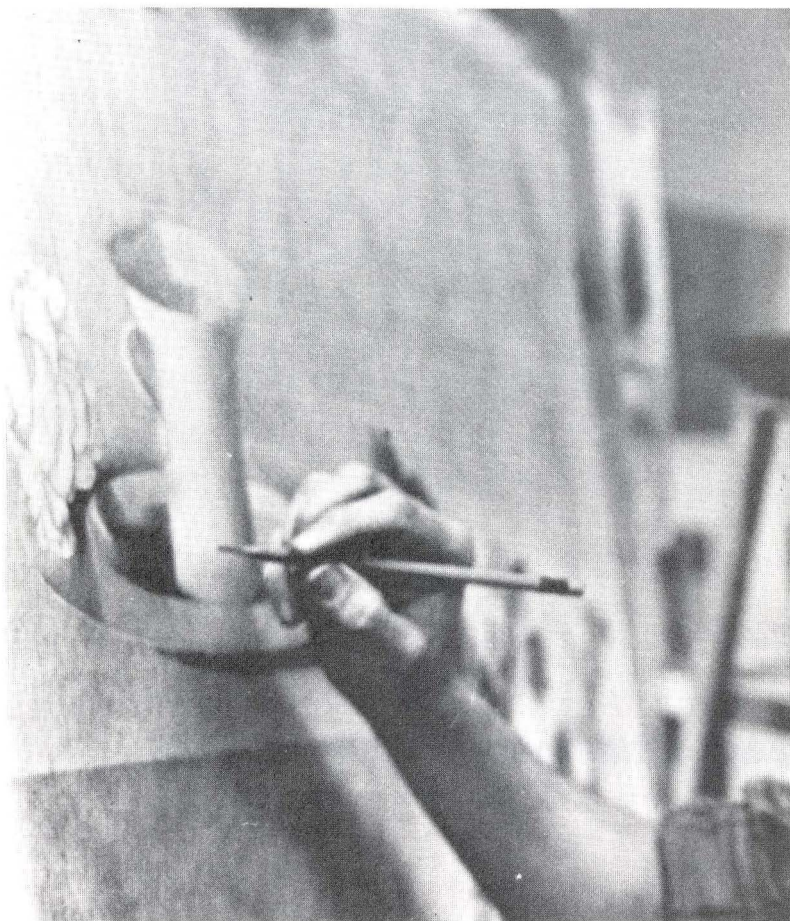
Elizabeth Klassen, editorial assistant

Sam Kula, National Film, Television and Sound Archives, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa

Avis Lang, writer, Chambers historian

Don Mowatt, logistics

Paddy O'Brien, Assistant Director & Head Curator, London Regional Art Gallery, London, Ontario



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Ann Rosenberg, Editor, *The Capilano Review*

Andrew Smyth, logistics

Rosemary Tovell, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Prints & Drawings

Brenda Wallace, Director, London Regional Art Gallery

Jeremy Wilkins, editorial assistant

Pearl Williams, Pacific Cinematèque Pacifique, Past President & Chambers Project Advisor

Marion and Ross Woodman, Chambers family friends for many years

Jack Chambers / FOUR POEMS

1

and in a moment—

and in a moment this I heard
 falling from the womb into light;
 this and the kettle of hoofs,
 the goose's horn,
 the drop of the cloth
 to the clock's earth.
 this, and the rip of flesh,
 the tug of the leash
 on the dog's heart.

2

it was difficult—

it was difficult to waken.
heavy with sleep my eyes drew back
into the soft dark caves and slept.
I coaxed my waking self to linger,
entertained my restiveness with dreams—
—a package for me?—made of wood?
—with a carved horse's head?—on a string?
I awoke.
I must go to town this morning for a parcel
brought in from Palma by a friend.
I opened the shutters wide.
the sky laughed.
the sun walked into the woods
and last night's rain dazzled the trees.

3

Pasternak's Images

When the rest attacked the trees
pursuing leaves,
he made a boat
and with a lady and the family cat
blessed the current
and they moved on.
Some time later
arriving at the sea
they raised a toast
to the river and the stars
to prepare longer voyage
in the same company.
But the din of chopping and
of falling trees
angered, saddened him enough that
he made a narrow path
into the circular of hatchet-work
and set free two or three.

4

Inmate #2

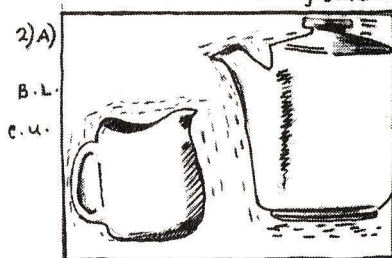
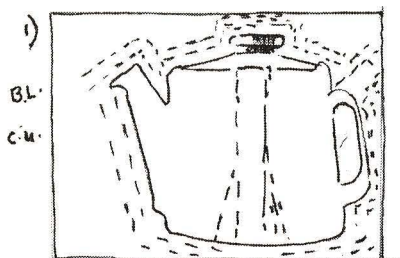
just let me lie quiet behind the bars
with my hands bound.
outside cones fall from the trees
and the ground is black and green
after a rain.

others talk in the ward and I whisper to one;
—evil angels have overrun my kingdom
while I slept; I can't go back.

but here there are beautiful things around me.
over the cold stones I go barefoot to the window.
the cold bars in my hands make me shiver.
I cannot get out, I am mad the walls say.
it is the middle of the walls that speak,
there can be no mistake.
the corners are warm and still and beckon me.
I lie down in the corner but I'm shivering.
I cannot get in, I am mad the corners say.
I get up and look out at the trees and the field.
you cannot get out say the bars
you cannot get in say the trees
you are mad says the field retreating
to a light in the sky.

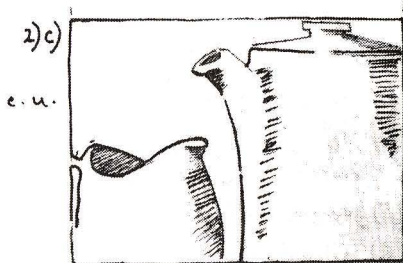
NOTEBOOK AND IDEAS

- 1) single shots , pot, cream pitcher cups - kind of presentation
 - jiggle up and down continuously - NOTE: still fotos of all utensils -
 2) group of two cups
 2)- " " pot, cream -
 - white on white -
 - short from below ground level



- 1) Sound - interior of moving train.
 2) A) " " " "
 2) B) " " " "

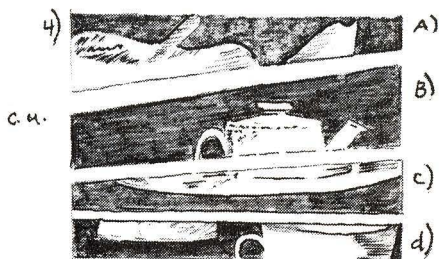
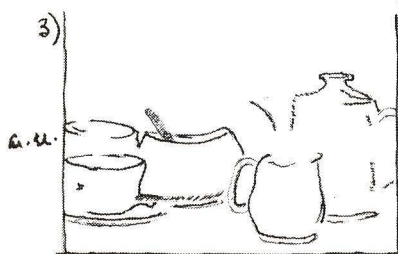
- 2) B) still foto - line of comment - "it's so much cheaper"
 2) c) still foto - " " " - "tickets, please, tickets!"



2) sound -

3) first grouping - still foto

4) fragmented arrangement #1, - (arrange 3 or 4)
- arrangements with alternative black to white filler
and black to white horizontals - C.U. - M.S. - C.U. - M.S.



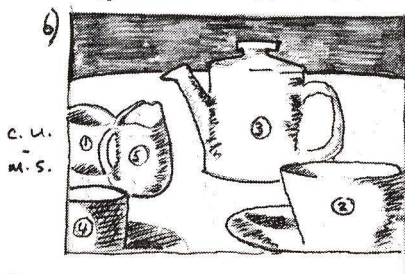
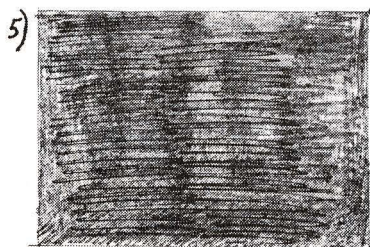
3) sound - train sound in distance

4) sound - click, clack of passing box-cars etc pulling into station.

5) Black-out -

6) reassembling of pieces in quick order ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
C.U. - of ① draw back as each piece enters

18 frames each - 5 sec. hold on comp.

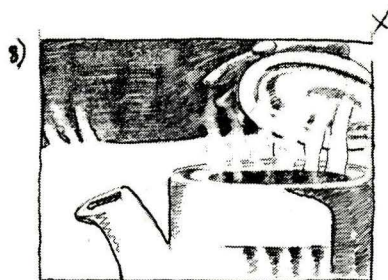
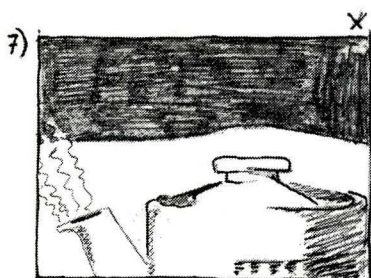


5) sound - train in tunnel -

6) sound of train slowing down, letting off steam -

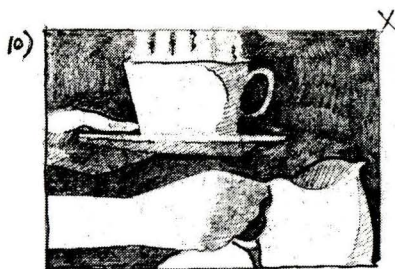
NOTE: Total value dark grey to light almost white -
so #4 might alternate in black to white background
+ black to white stripes -

- 7) zoom slowly to close-off pot for view of steam -
 8) hand lifts pot lid -
 hand replacing lid, cut to ⑦ before lid touches pot -



- 7) sound of train brakes, slow movement -
 8) sound " " gushing steam from train -

- 9) hand pouring tea - (still foto)
 10) milking tea - - still foto -



- 9) line of comment "when I keep my eyes closed my ears see things"
 10) " " " " "like when you are sitting down, the eyes do more walking"
 - sound of cup on saucer, etc.
 (preceding visual)

- 11) A) B. drinking tea - front view
 - swallows, lowers cup, drinks again -
 12) - O. in speaking gesture - still foto - side view
 12) A) - O. front view
 13) - completes movement of pushing back hair -
 - various movement of cups going to lips & coming down.



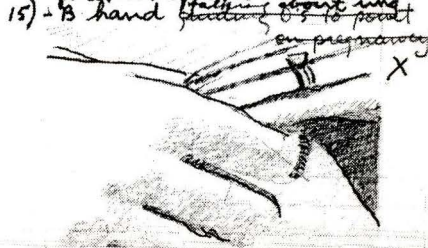
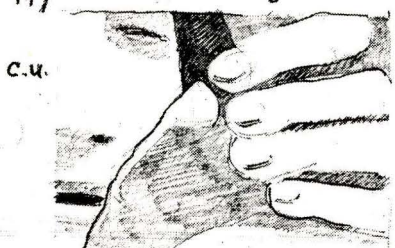
11) sound - silence

12) sound - comment repeated

15) sound - babies heart-beat



14) - hands gesturing in conversation 15) sequence of hands indicating fullness of stomach



C.U.

O - drinking tea -
B - silent looking away -

16) zoom to 17

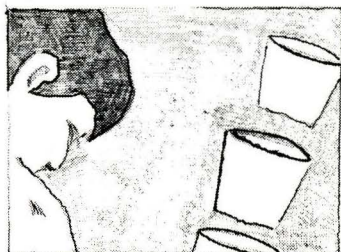
M.S.



~ elevator movement steady
flow upward of cups -
zoom = to c.u. of B. and cup.

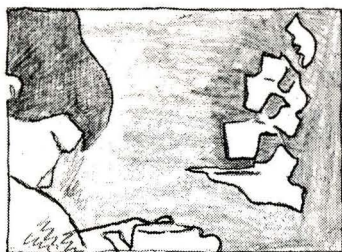
17) fade to 18

c.u.



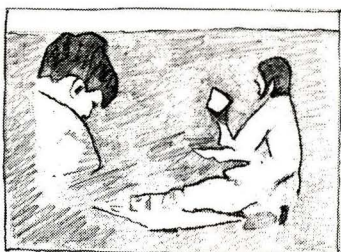
B. in C.U. O. in M.S.
- O. drinking tea - fade to 19

18)

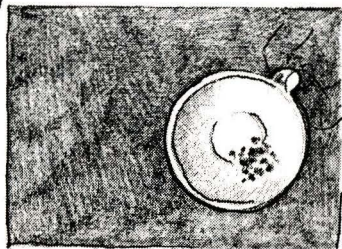


B - still " zoom to cup -
O. moving -

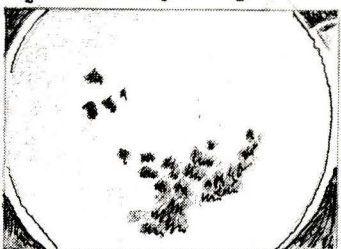
19)



M.S.
20) tea cup - zoom to 21)



c.u. of cup & t. leaves -
21) - gradual lightning of tone -



- fade to 22)

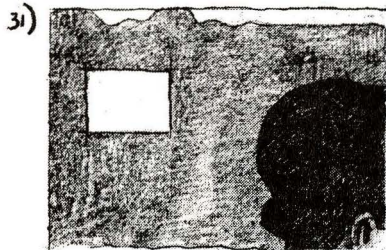
22) - fade to 23) 24) 25) 26) 27) 28)



- 22) ① sound: analogous electronic noises to personality of leaves formation -
 ② sound: superimposed voice in broken account of prophecy -
 - c.u. Bernice lighting fog -

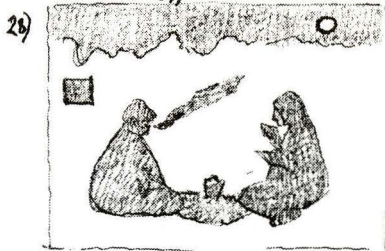


- dissolve to 30)
 29) sound: "and if a girl?" "We'll call it Charles Frederick."
 - fade to 32)



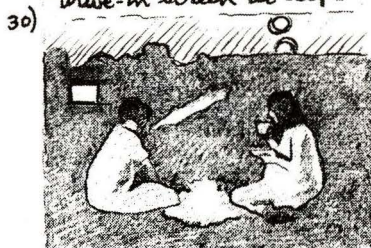
31) sound: same as 30)

- cut to 29)

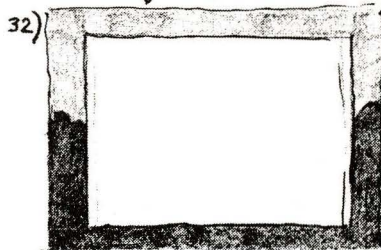


28) distant sound of train -

- same group as 28)
 - sun sets in rapid time
 - Drive-in screen at left.



- zoom to screen at left. 31)
 30) sound: night sounds, of countryside -
 - hold for 33)



32) sound: same as 30-31)

M.S. - Zoom in on head to fill frame
& cut to 34)

- draw back to 35)
c.u.

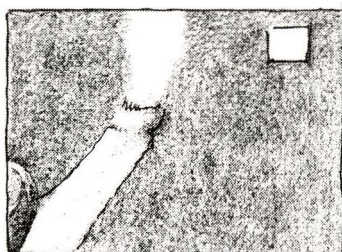
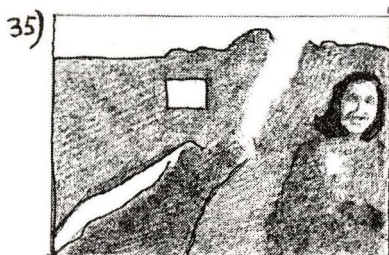


33) sound: "and if it's a girl?
" we'll call it - - - -

(voice trails off into 34) sound: exhaling smoke -

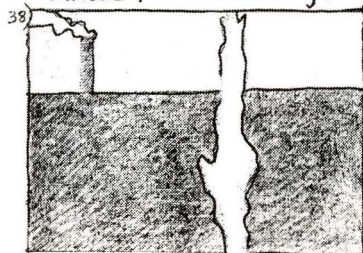
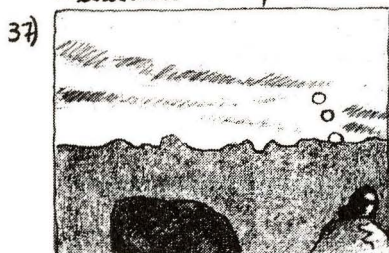
- zoom to 36)

- fade to 37)

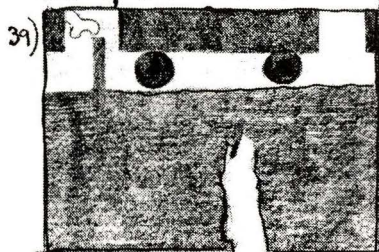


- fade to 38)
- sun sets in rapid time

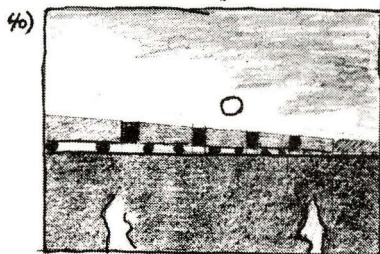
- hold for 39)
- smoke from chimney + smoker.



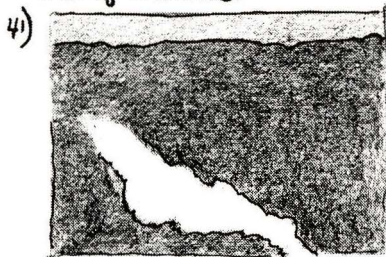
- fade to 40)
c.u. of train wheels.



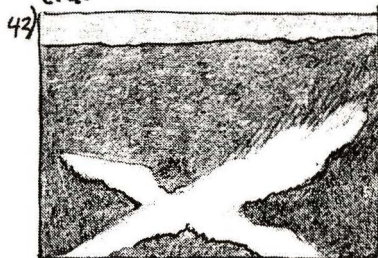
- fade to 41) hold till train
l.s. goes out of sight -



- hold for 42)
c.u. of smoke.



- hold for several seconds -
c.u.



end -

36 Cathart St., Apt.4
London, Ontario,
Jan 29, 1964.

Dear Mr. Dukes,

Av Isaacs, a friend of mine, suggested I contact you concerning a project which I will begin this Spring...a film about some aspects of life, death and pregnancy. The conception is cyclical: life begins, ends, begins again. Details for shooting are being worked out in my spare time. My purpose in writing you is connected with possible distribution of the film once it is finished. If you are interested in the outline I would be grateful to hear your suggestions. In that case, I will send you more of the details as the script develops, as well as a ... sample. Sound effects are not referred to in the outline but will be added when the filming is done.

Yours truly,
John Chambers

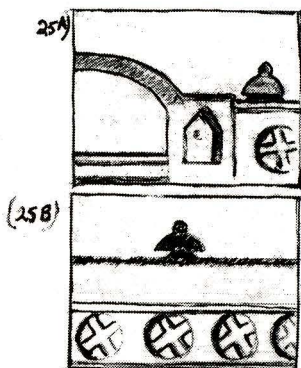
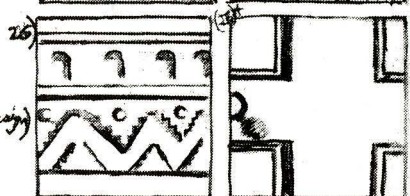
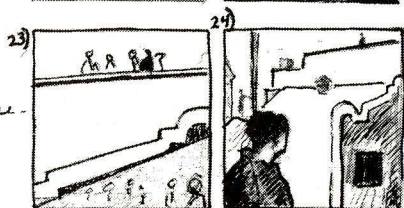
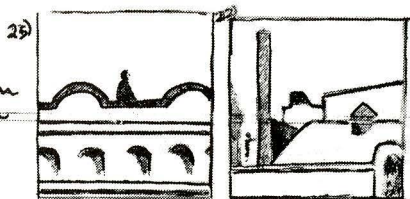
night: —aerial view of a city —hospital corridor, nurse distant from camera passes into room within touching distance of camera — a second nurse is pulling sheet over body —bare feet are left uncovered —street view near dawn —street lights in parallel perspective go out —lights come on here and there in the house windows —newspaper night-shift at work —morning route paper boys cycling out - railroad workers shunting and uncoupling cars - factory night shift coming off - Port Stanley, morning fishing boats —city buses leaving garage —milkman, solitary groups at bus-stop —several children one after the other come tumbling out of obsolete fire-escape tube —nuns and leashed kids —children filing across street with guardian —feet on pavement, descending vehicles, ascending stairs, moving into buildings —interior of bank, employees ready at their posts a moment before opening, pose for camera —gynecologist's waiting room —assortment of female patients —nurse pulling out files, fingering cards —lips move with card in hand —profile of young expectant mother, dark clothes against light wall, reading —close-up of back-sounding by doctor —examination takes place as shadow on the wall —a running shadow passes budding trees —hands make a sphere-like gesture of wonderment around bud —horizontal shot of pregnant-shaped hill against sky —shot of sky and clouds —slowed motion of figure running in sky —her arms go up, out, joyfully to baby seated on ornate chair in Christening robes —she embraces the child and gyrates happily holding the infant up high —loud, strident sound of the school bell —children rushing out in clusters push and shuffle after ball —ball is thrown into air —camera follows ball and remains focused on windows as ball descends —interior shot of woman looking down at children in playground —tap water filling vase, fresh-cut flowers placed in vase, scrap-

book and invitation to baby shower on table —feeding her fish — pregnancy reflected in aquarium —fish approaches glass, veers sideways to stare out — onlookers at shuffleboard games in park — her strolling by checkers players, persons snoozing on grass —old men watch her pass by —construction worker power drilling — dentist drilling tooth —her seen in distance on golf course — guys shooting pool glance out of doorway at her passing — gardener planting shoots in ground —switchboard operators plugging in connections —students reading —guy absorbed in pin-ball machine —victorious player gestures enthusiastically at shuffle board —similar surprised gesture completed by her at baby shower over gifts —women greet her, embrace her, place their hands on her belly, present her with gifts —they present her with a large naked doll —tea being prepared, unwrapping gifts, paper accumulating around doll —they all help dress doll with gifts she received —laughter, doll is finally dressed, present her with diapers —amid laughter, a child is crying —camera turns to pile of wrapping paper where a real baby has replaced doll and sits dressed with its gifts, crying —sand, sea, sky at dusk —back view of nude, female torso, semi-distant, apparently concealed from full view by sand dune —as camera closes in, figure's obviously embedded in sand to the waist, struggling to get free —arms pushing against the sand, beads of sweat on brow —profile of her pregnant figure in semi-darkness —belly heaving, hand clutching and releasing bed sheet —heavy breathing— male figure sleeping at her side, breathing easy —her hand clutches at his figure —rapid, obscure patterns of movement — momentary glare of light bulb becoming an arching streak of light as it falls to the floor —street lights shot from rear of car, converging in streaming lines towards centre of frame — speed becomes faster and faster, terrifying, forward shot of objects and lights disintegrate into camera —man's figure alone looking out of window —raindrops fall on glass —rain beginning to stream down window, then shot horizontally — rivulet invading dry ground —swollen stream overflowing its trench —huge body of water rushing forward, culminating in a section of the falls at Niagara — body pulled into life — her hand wrenching sheet upward, face knitted with pain — female figure in low distance running over landscape,* series of small hills etched on sky-line —her hand lying limp, exhausted —new mother at rest feeding child —a girl running up hill towards camera, her figure gradually approaching the hill-top. camera at an angle so her head finally covers the sun— mature young girl, fresh candid expression —full-blown summer dress —sun behind head illuminating its outline, her face still breathing heavy from climb turns periodically as though looking for something.

I expect the film to be about thirty minutes long.

*perhaps a subliminal image interjected throughout

- 40) found package of nappies
 41) shot of real baby, crying --
 3) * Shoot first building facade 25) then 25B) then
 25) 23) 24) perhaps leave out 23) then
 26) then (26A)
 12) shot of her on roof between
 chimney & shed (distant)
 hold shot empty for a few seconds
 then her movement is noticeable --
 23) her on upper roof, (closer), same dress --
 24) torso of her, same dress looking
 down sight to street --
 across at second figure --
 first figure close up shot --
 25) seated on building in front of
 studio --
 26) her standing in sky or (building design)
 on rectangular (high) building
 27) door opens to her (close-up).
 28) arrangement of women's group at
 baby shower, (semi aerial shot)
 29) rearrangement of women when she
 enters -- (everyone standing --
 analogous with bowling balls)
 30) greetings and embraces --
 31) gifts and doll presented to her --
 32) observing gifts and other women
 taking it and putting (hat) on doll --
 33) close up of smiling faces
 34) some standing, drinking tea, cups
 raised -- same as (33)
 35) shot of ~~the~~ wrapped gifts closeup
 shot of doll dressed, pinned paper
 36) opened package displays doll
 laughing for a huge pile of diapers
 37) shot of doll becomes real baby --
 38) all join to dress doll.

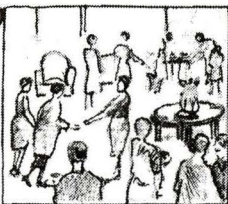


4) She enters, all move to greet her —

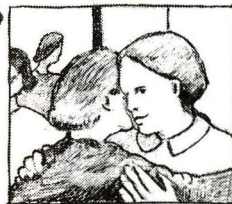
28)



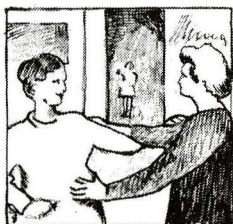
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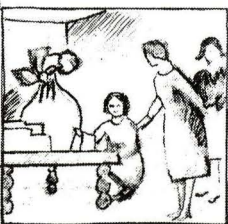
30)



31)



32)



33)



← darker face than background
Two or close up of laughter

34)

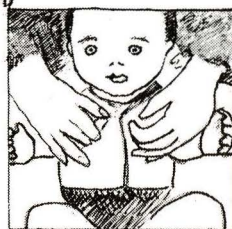


face lighter than background

35) against black background



36)



37)



38) this to precede this ↑

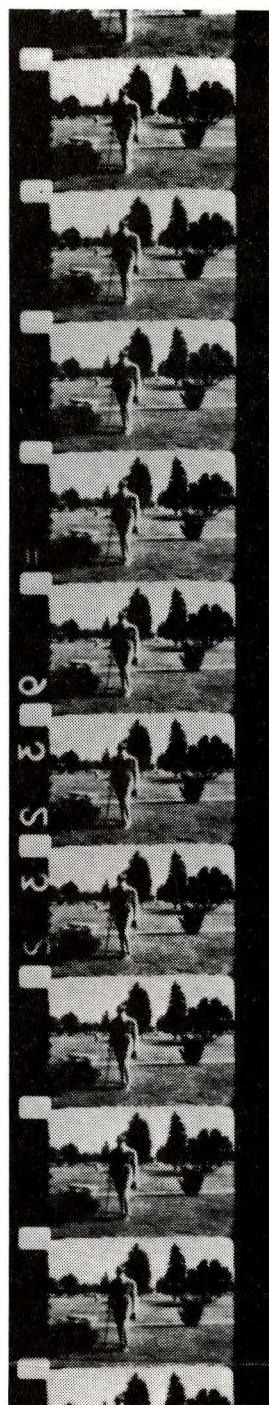
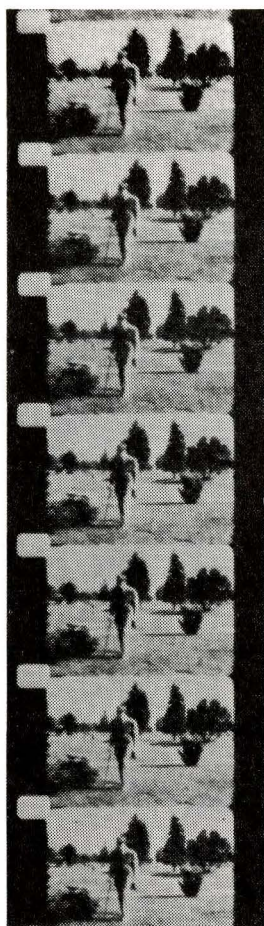
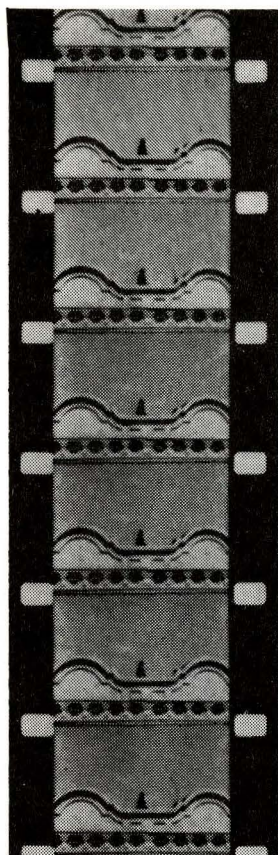


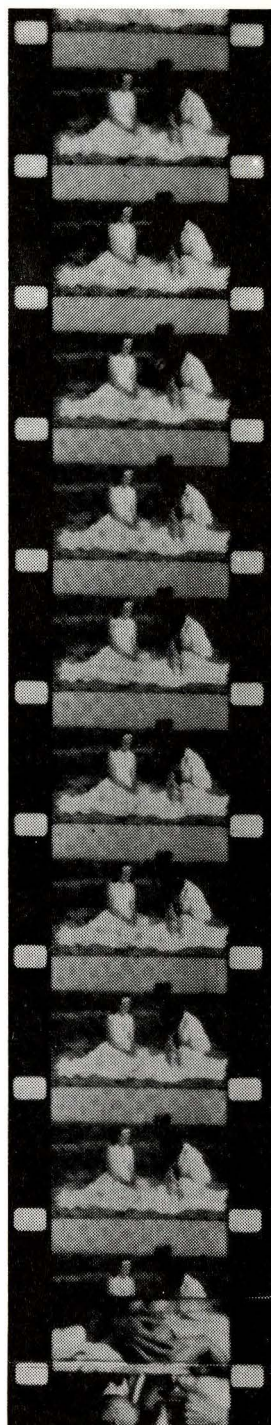
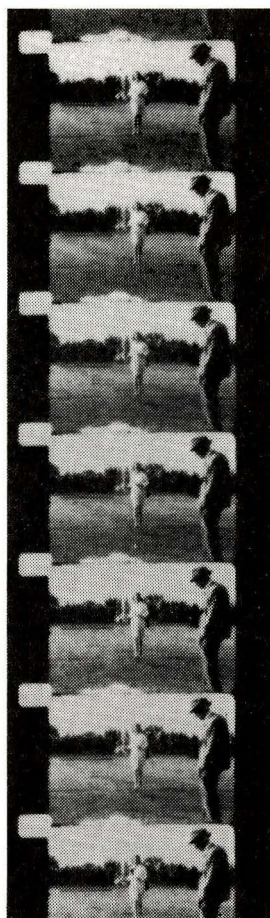
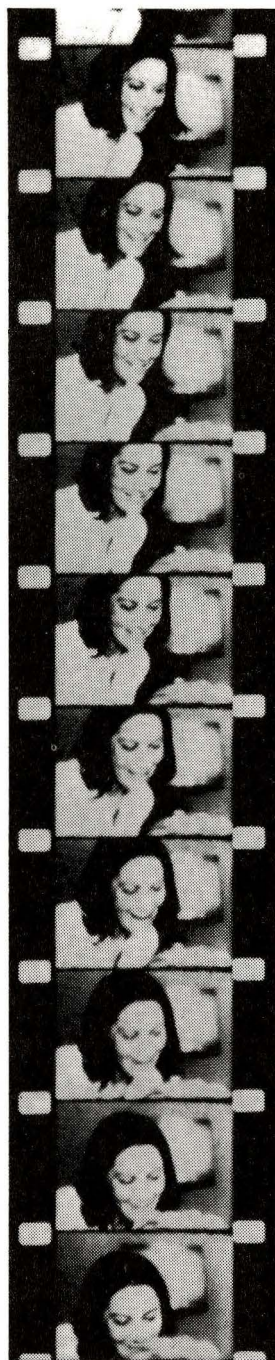
39)



Note: still photo to be taken of doll and paper arrangement for placing baby later —

* Close up of dolls etc. on wrapping paper





TORONTO-LONDON

ONE WAY GRAY COACH LINES

SHE

It's too big to go in—(HIM *at overhead rack with luggage*) It's too big to go in there—(*passengers lining up behind him*) you won't get it in it's too big to go in there—

HIM

(*turning to passengers behind him*) Oh, sorry, heh, heh—

SHE

Where do they have the—

HIM

Eh?

SHE

Where do they have the—

HIM

Where do have the what?

SHE

Oh, you know what I mean—

HIM

The washroom—it's right there.

SHE

I don't mind sitting in these seats, they're comfortable.

HIM

Eh?

SHE

I don't mind sitting in these seats, they're very comfortable.

HIM

The seats are comfortable?

SHE

Yes, I don't mind sitting in them.

HIM

(*to ticket taker*) Do these things go down?

TICKET TAKER

Yes, they do, sometimes they get stuck.

HIM

We're not used to such fancy gadgets, heh, heh.

TICKET TAKER

I'll get it in just a minute—punch your ticket—

SHE

We won't get to London by two-twenty.

HIM

Eh!

SHE

We won't get to London by two-twenty.

HIM

What time is it?

SHE

It's 11.10 now, we won't get in till two-twenty.

HIM

What time do we get into London?

SHE

We won't get there now till two-thirty, it's already 11.10

silence

They never got there on time last time we were down around here.

silence

—tall buildings, what a beautiful city—the buildings almost touch the sky, ha, ha.

silence. . . .

SHE

The p-r-i-n-c-e—

HIM

Eh?

SHE

The Provincial Police back there.

There's Stienberg's.

HIM

Eh?

SHE

Stienberg's.

There's Clark's Discount store there.

HIM

What's the name of it?

SHE

CLARK'S Discount Store there.

HIM

Quite a big place there.

SHE

Bus terminal here.

You never see Brantford on anything.

he

Is it Bramford or Brandford?

SHE

BRANTFORD—it's a big place isn't it?

(woman two seats ahead)

How long do we stop for Mr Forbes?

(repeated louder)—How LONG do we STOP for Mr Forbes?

MR FORBES

Just as soon as we can get out of here.

WOMAN

'Cause I want to put a call through, here.

she

She said she wanted to put a call through.

MR FORBES

We're leaving just as soon as we can get out of here.

she

She must know him, she called him Mr Forbes.

Salvation Army—social service wherever you go.

Look at the fruit in that old store.

Brantford—BRANTFORD—1.18 CORRECT TIME.

Seems like Hamilton but I know it's not.

It's an old town—yes, it's a bigger one than I ever thought.

Three people in that little doorway.

silence

he

There's a lot of money in tabaka.

You've got to know what you're doing to grow tabaka.

she

You've got to know how to grow anything with a farm.

silence

she

I was dreaming of Bert Burry last night and he's been dead for years and years—I don't know what—

I'll be ready for a cup of tea when we get to London.

There's a little place without a—

NOTE: This excerpt from an apparently verbatim conversation is included to illustrate Chambers' delight in the observation of the seemingly ordinary.—T.G.

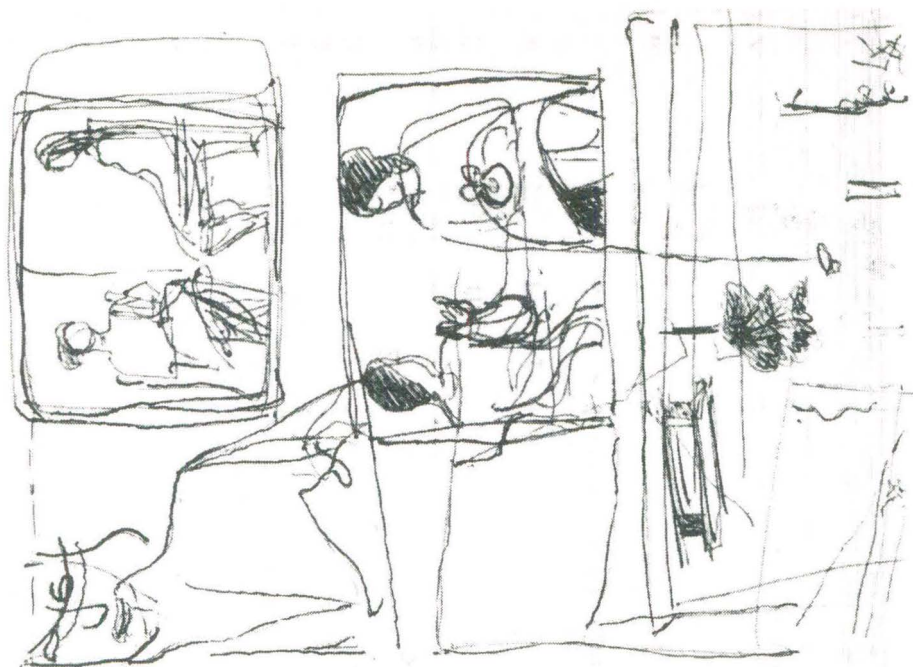
19) two side - sits by window looking out, shot
also from outside of her looking out window -

- 1) shot of gathering storm clouds above panorama Victoria Hospital overlooking parking lot
- 2) labour begins on bed; hair over face, turned on her side ^{man} putting clothes in satchel; helping her up and then ^{out} door -

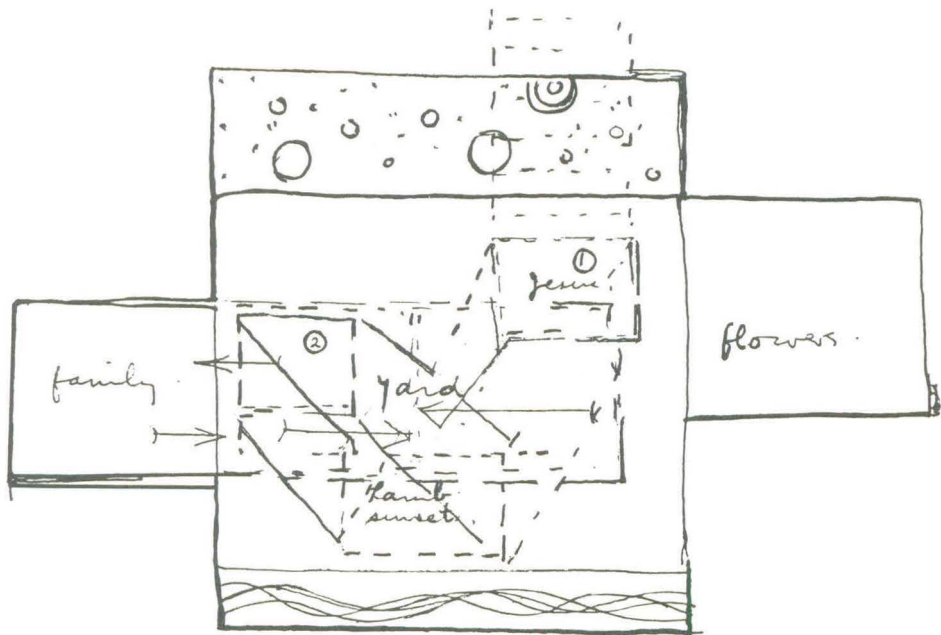
3) camera dollies slowly past kitchen door to bedroom, light left, around empty bed, over impression left by body on the bed, ~~out to kitchen~~ hear entering car, reclining on side (taken from inside car, dolly out to kitchen up to window, rain on window, (silence all through interior), rain on car window, wipers working (appropriate sound) rain drops collect in runs on window -

Sept. → { spring steam full and moving on cloudy day, fast river on cloudy day, beginning of facial labor discomfort, section of Niagara, cloudy weather, sound of falls and woman (overlapp sound of falls to woman's face a few moments then bring sound of her discomfort by itself, then mix sounds of both together and superimpose the image of her face on falls;)

- 4) camera fastens on delivery position and stays there - each contraction is a drop down falls, then the progress of emerging child (sound of the doctors involved comments, etc) and complaint of mother in background - again drop down falls, roar plus complaint or scream, ^{at contraction} progress of emerging child - holding up born child woman at rest -



Early notes for The Hart of London.



(negative film printed as negative - light coming thru... plane for burst)

- JESUS: comes in from dark down into yard (descending, descending) (1) knocking at door (2)
- (2) becomes family entering gate into yard - Olga and kids in snow, etc: C.U. of yard objects - C.U. kids & Olga etc: B & W - move out of yard in spring - Al mowing grass.
- (2) = (3) sheep waiting for slaughter - lambs and sheep being stuck, bled - sheep on slab - skinning
- (3) = (4) sunrise on lake (R)
- (4) = (5) animals: cows, horses, dogs, birds, etc: chickens at roost - sunset on hills
- (5) = (6) Good Shepherd card - round glass, milk pool, cupped by John's hands, white sun-yard seen thru

FAMILY: Olga & boys in house - C.U. activities, running visual (big) - (after move into yard slide projector puts on objects: chair, record player, stove, sink, toys) (still fotos) - move up tree

to seeds, to wind, seeds on snow, —(after moving out of yard)—continued going up town with kids in carriage (cars, people, expressions etc.) —pencil marks on wall, etc: sun shines on fridge —sun thru window on boys playing —

FLOWERS: bouquets; (R) C.U., various groups & bunches (year cycle (ask Ann) —flowers to vegetables in gardens — (Note: time exposure flowers opening) —to vegetables in supermarket —to tins, to wax fruit to flower being made by hand

YARD: one hour FLOWERS: one hour (3/4 hour)

FAMILY: 3/4 hour

JESUS: descending and at door _____ 10 mins. (16 frames or 10 frames speed).

(sheep - slaughter - skinning -) _____ 10 mins.

sunrise _____ (16 frames

animals, birds, etc., _____ 5 mins.

sunset _____ 10 mins. (16 frames

or ten frames speed).

Good Shepherd _____ 5 mins. (total 40 mins.)

children's blocks - letter color & animal

animals: cows, horses, lamas, deer, foxes, elephants, peacocks, etc:

Note: (enquire about film-clip libraries).

family: sleeping children —

order of making: —moving around the house, etc:

(100 ft. per second).

500' { lions, peacocks, etc. (100 feet per month)
between Dec.-Feb. —moving into backyard —
(slow motion)
between Dec.-Feb. —playing in yard: snow
(coats on) —(slow motion)
total { between Dec.-Feb. —moving out of backyard: —
shots of Spring (coats on)

APRIL - MAY —emerge from yard summery
(no coats) —getting into buggy etc, for
market —legs of Olga pushing buggy, hands,
coat wrinkling etc.

NOTE: moving out of backyard dissolves from
slow 64 to normal 24 speed



c.u. of foto - draw back, change foto



Finally: no picture on chair -
fotos aged in c.u. you in L.S.

1) Olga & Mary Visiting -

2) Three Sisters -

3) The Bush -

(get animal in snow strip from commercial
depot - Olga & boys - woods from L.S.

" " inside

woods L.S. ----5 mins.

" " draw back to meet woman

pulling sleigh (with J & D) crosses camera,
camera closes in before she exits.

-C.U. of woman and kids, double print.

- inside of woods, 10 - 15 mins. on consecutive
days (shooting for one week) in s.

- hunter L.S. stalks around L.S.

- camera running

— bleeding bird or animal M.S. - C.U.

4) assassination

5) (60 faces) —Screen Test

Car Box —Racing driver — (R)

*yet to do " cars -

Exley C.U. (R)

Doukhobor girls —

*magnet to move car —racing cars—

(painting) " " (reverse)

*swishes on orange Doukhobor girls —
driver painting - racing driver C.U.

" cars (reversed) —

2 left-right

right-left

" " —

racing driver L.S. (reversed)

*swishes in red *racing cars on track —

" " blue

" " yellow

" " green

Doukhobors

Exley C.U.

Oswald being shot

for cars -

Accident on track —

*flames etc.(foto) —

series: fotos of Exley

Doukhobors kneeling —

*Extinguishing driver

Exley L.S. — (R)

Coke add driver — (R)

Exley foto (3) beer bottle —

" " singing O Canada —

Nihilettes playing —

Fotos of Spasm band —

Holman spilling

M. King's smile — (R)

Stones laughing —

Robart's teeth —

love button -

Trotsky —

Nihilistic painting — (R)

Dr. Buck etc: — (R)

" " — (R)

" " — (R)

Oswald being shot —

Luis Real [sic]

Stones C.U. M. King getting jolt — (R)

" " " — (R)

" " " — (R)

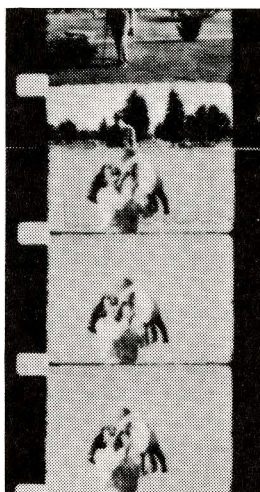
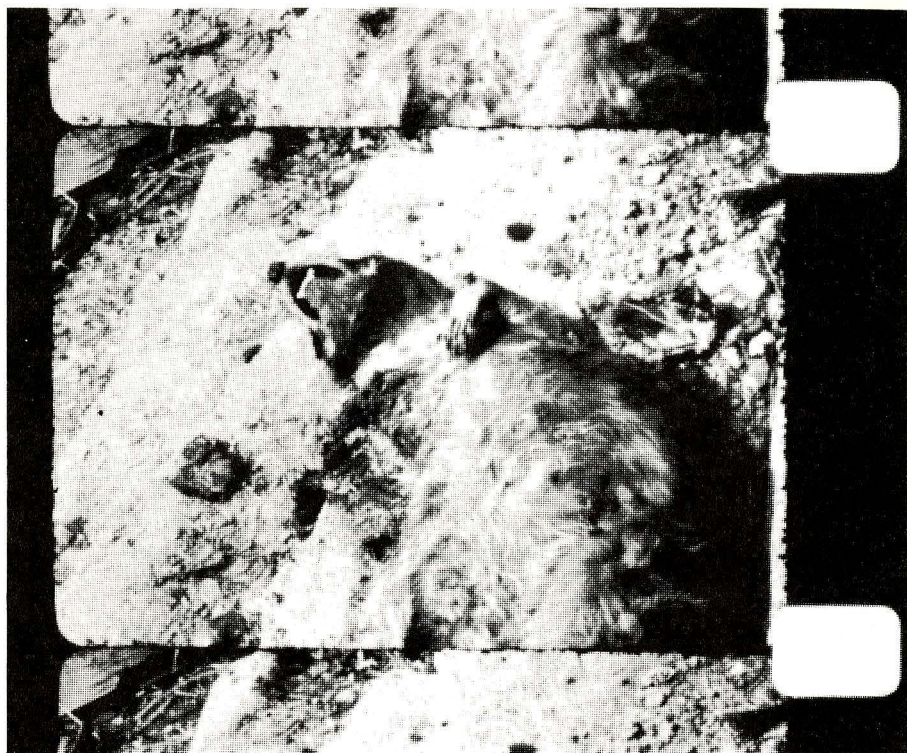
Robart's eyes

I remember this game we had going between us. He yelled the work I had to do like a million doors for a hundred million door frames at the rate of two cents an hour. I could hear his hee-heeing and see him washing his hands under his chin, his fingers all-entwined, strangling one another for joy. Then a long (E) that ended in a high short (i), a quick gasp, a loud drink of excess saliva, then into a "Hee-hee, you've got to have them all done by morning, Juan." More laughter, more wringing the hands, more orders to fill before dawn.

Flies were already at it around the room -- a square room, high ceiling the sun never got to, a little one; two-tilted windows framed with four iron bars cross-hatching; all the walls white-washed except the stone floor; ... door, off-angle, unpainted, aged wood like the windows and bolted. "Hilame, let's go to sleep." Up came the E's and the i's, the hee-hees again while I poured water into a pan. And there was the sun like a modern art spider reduced to a glaring geometric plane imperceptably invading over a cool wall.

Unbolting the door noiselessly, into a little room where Antonia kept her garments of felt and velvet embroidery in a large chest. Hilame was getting on a sock. They were black socks but the soles were soapy and high. "Well, I'm asleep, what about you?" I ... helped on his coat then went over to the school for breakfast.

sounding off
in CAPITAL
LETTERS



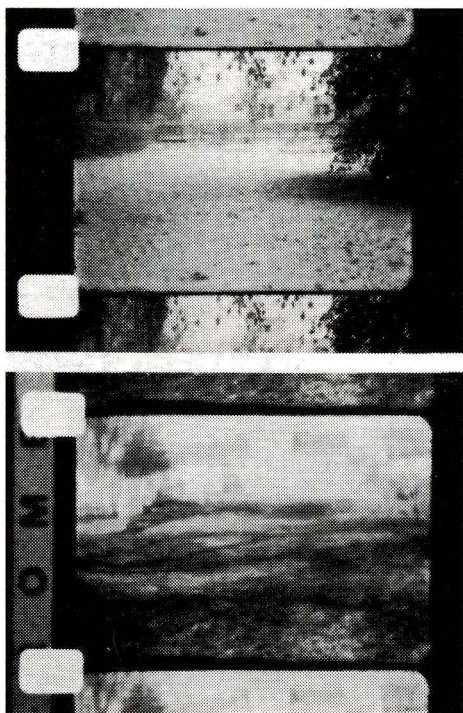
MOSAIC (1966): a lyrical treatment of birth and death



HYBRID (1967): an indictment of war and the physical suffering in war



R 34 (1967): a rhythmic collage of the life and works of Greg Curnoe



CIRCLE (1968-69): a film composed of four-second exposures of Chambers' backyard taken at the same spot every day at 10:00 a.m. for a year.



THE HART OF LONDON (began 1970): a circular-type statement of life, death and transitions

NOTE:

In a letter dated September 11, 1959, Jack Chambers described what he saw at the slaughter-house at Chincon, Spain to Olga, his wife-to-be. He returned to Chincon in the late 1960's to take footage of the killing of lambs for The Hart of London.

los carniceros son
carnívoros de tres comidas, el cuello
ancho, fuerte y morado; las manos y
los pies están mojados de sangre.
En el ayuntamiento es distinto;
hay una bombilla muy pequeña para iluminar
una sala grande de piedra; la luz es
enfermiza, los carniceros desnudos de
pecho puntalan en silencio; la sangre
corre rojo ~~de~~ luminoso marcado en
negro; hay un ambiente bochorno y
humido; al salir uno vele a sangre y
a sudor.

[...the butchers are butchers of three meals, the neck thick, strong and purplish; the hands and the feet moist with blood. In the hall it is different; there is a very little light bulb to illuminate a large stone room; the light is sickly; the bare-chested butchers stab in silence; the blood flows a luminous red marked in black; there is a suffocating and damp atmosphere; after coming out one smacks of blood and sweat.] - T.G.



August 28, '77

Dear Jack,
I'm in a rush to get to my airplane; but I went to the office to make sure you would get these copies of the Program and the Catalogue.

Over the years I'll be writing about your films, as I'm enabled to see them again and again: but, far a start, "The Host of Jordan" is among the few GREAT films

of all cinema - "great" in the meaning of the word which suggests the breadth and depth it contains within the length it supports... i.e. R34 seems in every other way equal, and perhaps CIRCLE will too when I've seen it enough. This is, as I told you, more than I expected (a rare pleasure!)
Thank you.

Blessings,
Alan

Stan Brakhage
Box # 170
Rollinsville, Colorado
80474

Sept. 16, 1977

Dear Edith,

Okay (and neccessarily in haste) here's a couple clarities on Jack Chambers' works (a distillation, actually, of MUCH thought):

Jack Chambers is one of Canada's most famous AND greatest living painters. Why then have his films been as neglected as they have been? I feel that it is because his films do NOT arise as an adjunct to his painting (as is true in the case of most other painter film-makers) but that, rather, Jack Chambers has realized the almost opposed aesthetics of paint and film and has created a body of moving pictures so crucially unique as to fright paint buffery: thus his films have inherited a social position kin to that of the films of Joseph Cornell in this country. The fact IS that the four films of Jack Chambers have changed the whole history of film, despite their neglect, in a way that isn't even possible within the field of painting. There are no "masters" of film in any significant sense whatsoever. There are only "makers" in the original, or at least medieval, sense of the word. Jack Chambers is true "makar" of films. He needs no stance, or standing, for he dances attendance upon the coming-into-being of something recognizably NEW: (and as all IS new, always, one must question the veracity of all works, whatever medium, which beseeem anything BUT that truth).

His films can speak for themselves, so I'll be brief:

"R 34" is the greatest film on the creative process I've yet seen.

"The Hart of London" is an epic in consideration of city, and I find it good kin to Vertov's "Man With A Movie Camera", Ruttmann's "Berlin", and especially Cavalcanti's "Nothing But The Hours" in that it makes an absolutely unique (and contemporarily terrifying) contribution to the field of dreams of The City, holy or otherwise, which have haunted humans since earliest writ. Perhaps only a writer-of-movement COULD extend full consideration, as I believe Chambers has done, to Charles Olson's "polis is eyes".

Okay, Edith -- that should do it for now.

Blessings,
Stan

Sept. 26, 1972.

Dear Simon,

Here are some pages on films, painting, perceptualism. I'm in the process of compiling my notes over the last couple of years about perceptualism, seeing etc. and these pages here are excerpts from them. The two positive fotos enclosed are stills from CCCI and the transparency is of a painting finished a while ago: Lake Huron No.1, 72" x 72" oil on wood. Would you please return the fotos and transparency when you have finished with them. Thanks. Would you please send me a copy of the magazine when it comes out. Best wishes,

Jack Chambers

- 1) in the margin refers to artscanada article.
- 2) " " " " " recent notes.
- 1) The idea for perceptualism first appeared in artscanada mag. Nov. '69 and I've been adding to them bit by bit since. There are three steps in the process from perception to art:
 - 1) Perception is the instant intake of Real energy from objects in the outside world.
 - 2) Experience is the record of that in-take on the nervous system and then the process of substantiation of the energy input by the mind into the object "tree."
 - 3) Description is an accurate memory object (colour foto) of the experience to replace invention and style. Style was the hallmark, necessarily, of all painted realisms before the modern (camera and) colour foto. Without the facsimile, they had to try to piece together what they saw by notes and human memory. Style was the result....

* * *

Art is a lower case word. It is a craft of the natural like fruit growing on a tree is a craft of nature....

* * *

Everything and anything that one sees in its actual presence more than we can in any way understand it to be. The more we become aware of the experience that perception brings, the more we become aware of an inherent gentleness in the interior union of oneself with things. So gentleness of reception is also a communication that influences the outside world. Finally, perception itself becomes a "forgotten" awareness that just is with all those common things seen out the window or inside the house or anyplace.

- 2) Circle (16 mm. colour, silent, 35 mins.) was my fifth film out, the first one I've done where the viewer must make objective sense out of what's shown him. By giving him only the objects out there to look at he is led out of himself towards nature rather than inwards to the invented, symbolic or memory meanings. The inward look I call aesthetics because it has to do with taste, dramatic emphasis, invention, and its purpose and end is art. And when you aim at art in life you hit well below the target. Art should somehow take care of itself in our primary pursuit of life....

Circle: "The essential form of this film is circular, the passing of one year day after day focused on one point in my beautiful backyard. The aperture remains constant thereby recording the daily changes of light and colour. Approx. 4 seconds of film shot each day at 10 a.m."

Perception in process is like a sound movie. Suddenly (the) a picture freezes and loses focus. The sound dissolves. The defocusing brightens and becomes white light (in the mind). Then the focus returns, the sound comes back and the film (starts) is moving again. That's a slow-motion version of what happens. The moment of the "white light" is the moment of perception. The frame returning to focus and the first returning sounds are the registration of (object world) objects on the nerves as the senses recover the mind's ability to identify and be conscious. What the senses record and how they record it (is an example) imitates Creation projecting its pattern into the world: (from invisible mystery into visible matter). Creation is the Energy that (informs) infuses sensory reality (in) with the object-world as it transcends the object world in perception. Our encounter with reality is usually at an appropriate and (substantial) conventionality at the material point along the emanation, attenuation (of that Energy as the vitality of material forms). On recovering the senses after the perceptual impact, one feels the stark wonder of the world and the uniqueness of all its appearances (forms). We feel a deep and abiding affection for the physical. What stays with us from day to day more or less consciously are the recurring echoes of perception - this sense of gentle astonishment that reveals the world as it is.

* * *

Perception is (the) a peak instant (before) between consciousness; it precedes and influences the conscious identification of objects. It is the instant of vision. "Everything begins and everything happens through contact with matter." I think that perception occurs when the senses constellate in response to matter and the impact generated on the mind neutralizes consciousness; for an instant there is no (mental directive) to see something, hear something etc. The mind is alerted into a state of receptive passivity that somehow releases a higher or "composite sense" into play. The consciousness thus neutralized is then able to perceive the (Invisible Body) unity "behind" the world. The (Invisible Body) condition of oneness - (is energy and) is a more vital reality than its material attenuation (of it)... ... our sensory world.

* * *

We already know the Mysterious but our minds are not conscious of it. When we open onto the Mysterious we do not do it consciously. But only by doing it do we perceive and only by perceiving can we experience the wonder of familiar appearances

* * *

Our consciousness of the material world is not the ultimate reality but rather the attenuated features of Reality as it persists through into matter. At different points along that attenuation appropriate materializations are revealed. We see the trees in the sunlight, but we perceive the Invisible Body projecting optical reality.

When perception occurs, the impact unfolds the senses from around the creative centre drawing them out and holding them open just as the forces in nature combine to open the bud, releasing to life the seeds of its continuing mystery. The Mysterious in nature is acknowledged in that instant by the release of Mystery at the centre of man. The Mystery which energizes nature is only perceived by the Mystery that energizes man. The alert passivity of the five senses triggers an opening through which our own creative energy appropriates energy from the Spirit in nature

* * *

C.C.C.I. is a colour, sound, 16 mm. Film in progress, approx. 20 mins. After most of the film had been shot, I began to see the connections it has with perceptualism. I used a design as shooting guide consisting of a Circumference (a circle with eight rectangles equally spaced around the circumference), a Centre (a circle), a Curve (a curved line to the left and right of centre), an Insert (a rectangle comprising four smaller rectangles). This design repeats itself for 20 mins. so that the shooting of the script is actually a frieze. The design, however, corresponds to specific views in landscape. For example: Circumference : the camera is the axle at point A, it turns in a circle and records eight points at evenly spaced intervals on the circumference; each point is held for 3 secs. Centre: the camera looks down on the ground, pans up the landscape, across the sky, down landscape to the ground again. Curve: the camera looks at the subject for eight seconds then veers off to the left of centre; it repeats its look at the subject then veers off to the right of centre. Insert: four subjects are looked at separately for eight seconds each. Each character of the design, circumference, centre etc. are shot on the same day and the shooting takes place every ten days from Dec. 1970 to Dec. 1971. The film then is a series of "substitutes," landscapes, people and things in place of circles, squares and curves. The intention is to see if the invisible design will appear "somehow" to the viewer in spite of the real world he is being shown. The design then, is like Reality. It is the invisible pattern or energy which in its attenuated material form becomes trees, river, people, sky.

Creation redeems us continually in many ways and perception is one of them. Perception redeems our experience of reality for ourselves and others. It redeems for us the world so we can know it as "more," as "other" and thereby experience the wonder of its matter and form. It is this spontaneous sense of wonder at such unique reality that perceptualism tries to give.

Ross Woodman / JACK CHAMBERS AS FILM-MAKER

INTRODUCTION

In 1962, Jack Chambers published in *Alphabet* a short piece of lyrical prose entitled "Aircraft" which he had written first in 1949. It deals with life in a garden which is at once the garden of Eden and a graveyard where innocence is both celebrated and corrupted, allowed to thrive and buried in the earth. The narrator who inhabits this garden is the prisoner of it. He is an inmate, a convict, who longs to escape but cannot because it is the place where he sows and is sown. It is the place of continuous dying and perpetual rebirth into a series of erotic images which have the nightmare quality of ungratified desire. It is Chambers in London, Ontario before he left for Spain.

In certain respects this garden is the psychic scene or setting of much of Chambers' art up to the advent of "perceptual realism" in 1968-69. It dominates his films, reaching something like an apocalyptic climax in *The Hart of London* (1968-70) in which Chambers finally and fully orchestrates the nightmare vision of his home town that had haunted and pursued him all his life. In *Mosaic* (1966), it is the graveyard where his young wife moves towards her newborn child while an old man moves towards a bench and a male athlete sprints along a road. It is a place, too, where she scatters petals from her womb onto a decaying raccoon. In *Hybrid* (1967), it is a rose garden where roses open



to reveal the deformed faces of napalmed Vietnam children. In *R 34* (1967), it is the interior of Greg Curnoe's studio, where the artist-gardener assembles collages from the refuse of garbage cans and holds his child inside the womb-like interior of one of his own art works, a pyramid-like construction. In *Circle* (1968-69), it is the artist's own backyard shot for what Chambers describes as "a couple of seconds" from the same spot every day for a year. In *The Hart of London*, it is the city itself seen as a trap which a deer accidentally enters to be captured and killed, a city that finally narrows to the London Zoo at sunset where a child moves unsteadily towards a deer as the camera revolves in circles from sky to earth and a voice warns, "Diego, you must be very careful."

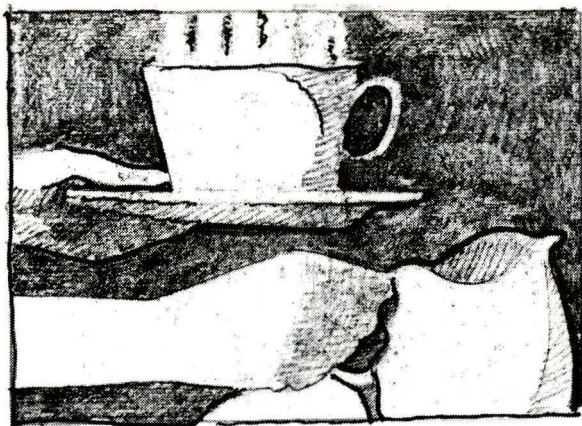


Chambers' films are what he himself called "personal" films. He began making them at a time when he felt the need to escape his professional commitment to painting, which, he believed, was now blocking the flow of his feeling by freezing it into the resolution of purely painterly issues. He was becoming disturbed by the acceptance (not reflected in sales) of his art (partly because it was "realistic") by a society which he still believed was "utilitarian, puritanical, indifferent to anything that was not a 'safe job' and a 'proper way of living,'" and therefore fundamentally rejected everything for which he as an artist stood.

How strong this feeling was can best be seen in the silver paintings which were in large part an outgrowth of his increasing interest in the film as an exploration of the perceptual process. In commenting upon them, Chambers made it quite clear that he had grown tired of "painting space through interacting colours"² because increasingly the concern had become not the subject matter but the space itself. . . . Chambers believed his art was encouraging people to take up temporary and aesthetic residence in a world of illusion which allowed them to avoid the necessity of "self-awareness." He was playing into the hands of the real enemies of art. In the silver paintings, which he described as "instant movies,"³ Chambers attempted in his usual ruthless and uncompromising way to break out of the aesthetic trap into which his training and professionalism had led him. He was determined to destroy the image as a spatial form seducing the viewer into certain illusory notions about the nature of reality. He would for one thing stop mixing colours and use instead aluminum paint directly from the can, spraying directly onto the board. "My use of colour had become too subtle," he commented; "silver is refreshingly neutral from the tense calculating that goes into controlling colour effects."⁴ As for painted surface, he would destroy its fixed form, that peculiar stillness which had offered a resting place for minds that did not want to work. "The painted surface changes when you move," Chambers explained of the silver paintings. "It's a light medium—an optical medium." He then continued, drawing out the connection between the silver paintings and the film:

I observed that silver gives a positive-to-negative image reversal depending on the source of light or where you view it from. As you move, the positive forms become negative and vice versa coming back. The shift is to the physical sensation of seeing—as in seeing double when you don't expect it. . . . Time as a new dimension has come into view. The temporal insistence (the time it takes to view the variations as a whole or the time spent in waiting for the variations to be revealed) is the real difference here. It's a different realism: space has become time.⁵

In his films, Chambers moved deliberately from space to time in an attempt to liberate the mind from the illusion of rest by forcing it to enter a temporal process in which change or flux is the condition of perception itself. Chambers' films explore the dynamics of the act of perception. They are attempts to wake up an audience which he feared his paintings might now be putting to sleep.



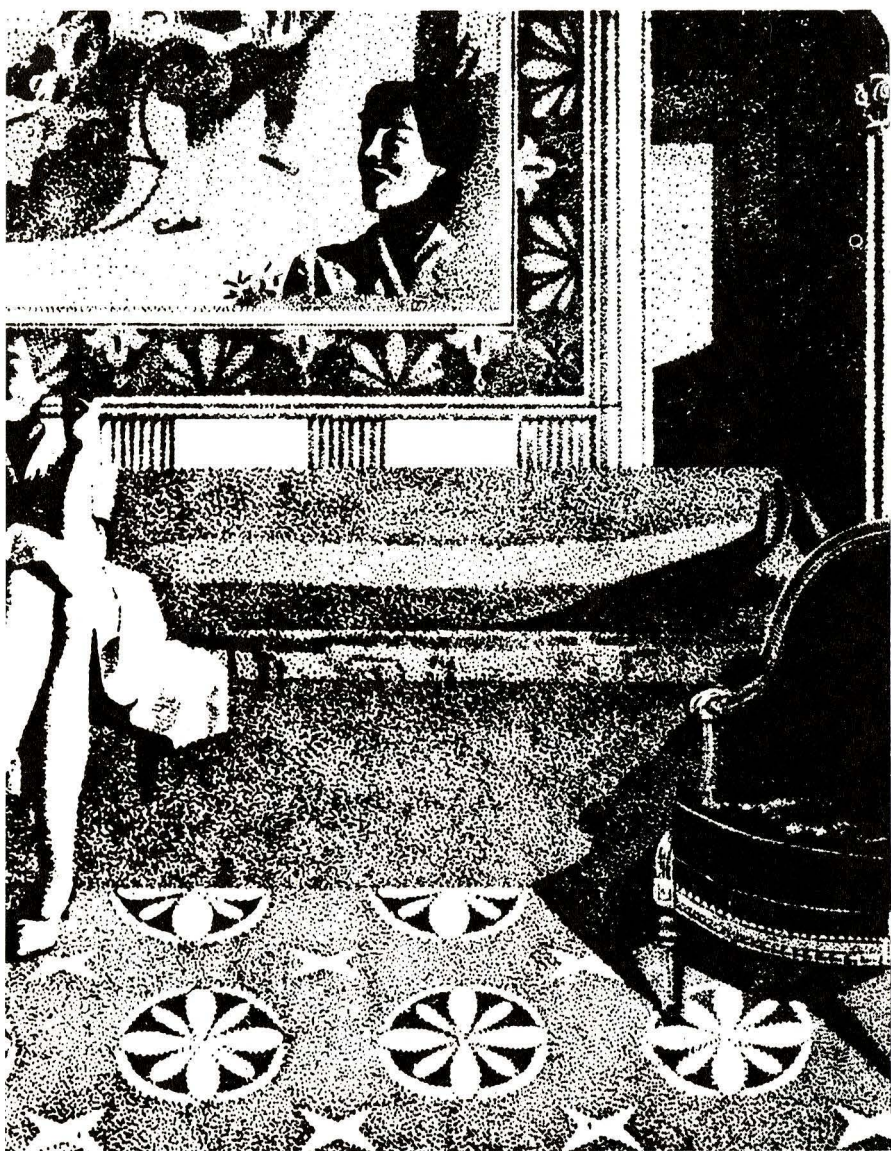
Part of Chambers' initial interest in film-making resided in his attempt to come to grips in a more immediate way with painting as a process rather than painting as a product, with painting less as a revelation of *what* is perceived than with how it is perceived. "A painting gets put together just like an experience-in-particles," he once commented. "*Olga and Mary Visiting* isn't the description of a visual moment; it's the accumulation of experienced interiors brought into focus." Chambers then continued, describing the way a painting gets put together as if it were very much like a film:

You are in a room, then in another room where you see an object being held this way, then you see it in motion, a week later a cup is tilting, the next day a finger curves in air against a background, you hear a little clink, you swallow a cheese sandwich, something fragile, a cup touches its saucer, you see white . . . a woman rests one leg over the other, pink . . . the thick rug is buff-orange. Sense combinations complement one another to enrich perception.⁶

This account of, among other things, the kind of perceptual experience that is brought into arrested focus in *Olga and Mary Visiting* which he painted in 1964-65 when he was actually at work on his first film, *Mosaic*, suggests that the painting itself derives from, and is a distillation of, a film-making process. What Chambers describes is really the film-maker editing his own film by splicing and reassembling his footage to produce a certain effect that faithfully records his own complex act of perception. The film, unlike the painting, becomes a collage spread out in time sequence, rather than a collage organized in space. Thus *R 34*, which concerns itself with Greg Curnoe making collages by pasting images on pieces of paper, is itself a collage. The spatial arrangements in Curnoe's work become the temporal arrangements in Chambers' film. Curnoe, the artist, and Jack Chambers, the film-maker, intersect and interact as Chambers explores the relations between film and an art of a more traditional, spatial kind.

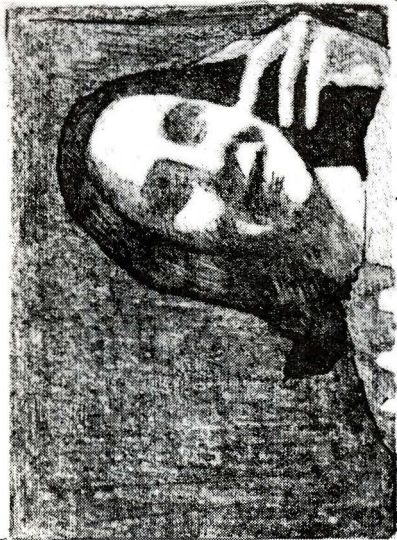
In the temporal collage which constitutes a Chambers film, Chambers was breaking out of the pictorial space of his own paintings in order to release his mind from the frozen moments in which, in his paintings, thoughts or images were arrested.







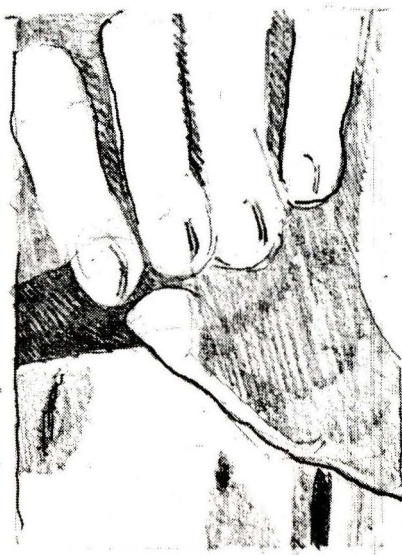
11(A)



12(A)

14) - hands gesturing in conversation

14)

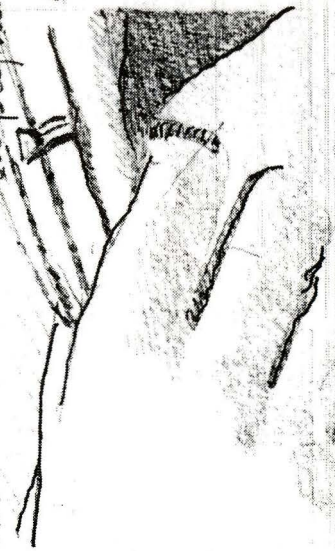


C.U.

15) - sequence of hands indicating fullness of stomach

15)

15) - B hand gesturing to point on pregnancy



X

X

"PERSONAL FILMS"

... in 1961, [Chambers] wrote:

I became aware of de Kooning and Pollock and Klee and Kandinsky. I had never seen their work before and that included whatever had happened since Juan Gris and Picasso.

[He described] the very "eccentric" use he may have made of Pollock's drip method in particular:

I began to texturize the surfaces of my panels with a mixture of rabbit glue and marble dust. Once dry, I could adjust the topography with sandpaper. These surfaces were covered with gesso and then I spilled various colours of house enamels on the gesso surface and sprinkled it with turps to get it running. I then tilted the board this way and that till some interesting effect appeared, and then I laid it flat and let it dry or added more paint and turps. Once the surface was worthy of interrogation, I began to extend and curtail its colours and shapes with a small paint brush. The figures and objects I wanted to appear in the painting gradually took shape within the selected chaos of the splattered surface. They were not painted on the surface—they grew with it.⁷

Chambers, it will be noted, was experimenting not only with surface texture, but with the relationship of images to it. He was transforming the surface into a "motion" picture that functioned as a "pool of energy" out of which images emerged in time rather than in space. The images, that is, became the forms growing out of "the selected chaos of the splattered surface"; they were the "interrogation" that was "worthy" of it.

Chambers, spilling various colours of house enamel on a gesso surface, sprinkling it with turps to get it running, tilting the board this way and that until interesting effects appeared, was deliberately breaking free of methods of painting learned in Spain which were now in Canada making him so tense, because of the concentration they required, that he was reacting physically to the strain. He was trying to find ways of physically as well as mentally loosening up by releasing his mind and imagination into free or spontaneous movement. He began to explore in painting the unconscious body language that had always governed his poems and creative prose. Chambers in the paintings of 1961-62 was trying to adjust his technique to something far closer to his natural way of thinking perhaps best summed up by Paul Klee when he described his drawings as taking a line for a walk.

Chambers interrogating the "selected chaos of the splattered surface" was also Chambers interrogating his life, discovering the memories flowing through his mind (like the seasons flowing through nature), what he called a "fundamental legibility." Thus, when he was asked why he decided to remain in Canada, he replied that:

Over a couple of years the seasons uncovered images of myself still gesturing in the invisible. A few visual appearances possessed a fundamental legibility.



There appeared some boyhood incidents that had a dimension beyond the incidents themselves. Such incidents (diving from a train bridge into the Thames) divided vortex and periphery, the periphery of accompanying memories being absorbed into the centre of the essential gesture. This synthesis, invisible in time, was an experience of an organism within an organism that had accepted me as its centre. That was the basis of my decision to stay in Canada.⁸

The "basis" of that decision to stay in Canada, as Chambers describes it, is essentially cinematic, as if... he decided to stay in Canada to make films about himself, about his own "experience of reality" that had accepted him as its centre. . . .

The "personal" films that Chambers made, eight in all (one incomplete), brought him home to himself in a more immediate and unscripted way than the high professionalism of his painting could. It was a necessary and inherent part of coming to know himself, which in the final analysis was for Chambers always more important than art. Life, for Chambers, was the real form of art, painting itself being the indicators, sign-posts, inventories and probings along a more invisible way that conducted to the Self. Once the act of perception had received the acknowledgement that constituted both a revelation of the world and a revelation of the Self, it could then be forgotten. "Finally," Chambers wrote in his essay on perceptual realism (1969): "perception itself becomes a 'forgotten' awareness that just *is* with all the common naturalness of those common things seen out the window or inside the house or anyplace."⁹

The great advantage of film over painting is that, being bound to time rather than to space, it is best suited to communicating "a 'forgotten' awareness that just *is*." The very essence of film is the swift passage of fleeting images, one departing as another arrives. It had, therefore, for Chambers that very quality of "'forgotten' awareness" that had made his home town a psychic storehouse



of images which in some mysterious way contained and nourished his own identity. That identity his "personal" films share with an audience that he thought of in the first instance as regional, an audience, that is, which could find the fleeting images in time in its own "periphery of accompanying memories. . . ."

In the characteristic Chambers film there is an attempt to escape the concentration on some particular object or image in order to release into action "the periphery things that are going on around it." The immediate, all-at-once spatial presence of a painting that takes it, or tends to take it, right out of time, disallows some of those "subliminal sensations" which images forever disappearing more readily evoke.

The counterpart of frozen or arrested images in space (the "still" life which Chambers first in the silver paintings and then in his films was trying to escape) is narrative. Chambers had seen the way which perspective in painting "confuses self-awareness." He was determined, therefore, not simply to translate perspective in painting to plot narrative in film. What he wanted to avoid in film as much as possible was what he called "descriptive time."¹⁰ He explained the phrase in the following way: "Lawrence on his camel at dawn, equals Lawrence riding his camel all night."¹¹ It was this sense of narrative as linear duration that he believed was the chief characteristic of the commercial movie, the one which above all others conducted to deliberate distraction and wiped out self-awareness, allowing illusion to become all. Narrative as linear duration, locking the mind into chronological time, ruthlessly excluded subliminal activity by keeping the audience in line. Narrative or plot in commercial film, he argued, performed the same illusory function as perspective in painting. "Time," he commented, gets foreshortened by descriptive images. Images again for the sake of the story. You're drawn away from yourself, your own self-awareness, to star in somebody else's fiction. Entertainment equals distraction equals false-life plot."¹²

MOSAIC

... The typical Chambers footage is cut and spliced and put together again "just like an experience-in-particles." It is not so much "the description of a visual moment" as "an accumulation of experienced interiors," which... in the films became Chambers' own "interiors" projected in the guise of images that had accepted him as their centre. These images in the editing rooms of his mind followed as closely as possible the inner unfoldings of Chambers to himself, providing him with small epiphanies, experiences of his own reality.

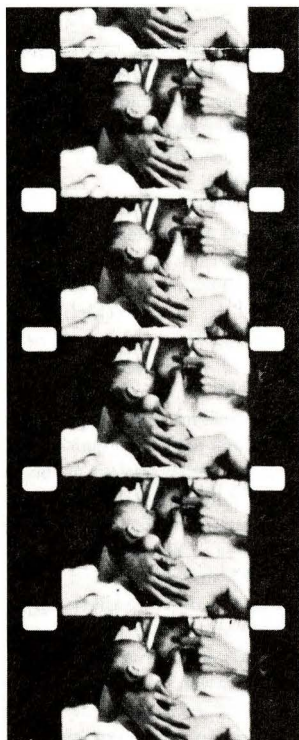
Consider an actual film: Chambers' *Mosaic*, his first. There is a familiar narrative present in *Mosaic*. ... That familiar narrative strung out in images like clothes on a line would look something like this: Olga on the back stoop taking in the laundry from the line; Olga visiting the doctor's office; Olga at the baby shower; Olga having contractions in the front seat of the Volkswagen; Olga feeding her baby. Strung out this way, the familiar narrative is as insistently and expectedly there as the arrangement of snapshots in the wedding or baby album. To turn the pages is to see what does not even require the turning; it is there as an illusion, drawing the viewer away from himself by placing him in someone else's fiction so numbing in its effect that it barely reminds him of his own. Indeed, it is the very "false life plot"—"safe job" and "proper living"—from which Chambers had fled in setting out for what would become Spain. That "plot" is there, as indeed it is there for everyone. Chambers' task was to dismantle it and put it together again in a form that was uniquely his own. The film is an attempt to remain true to himself while apparently settling down to what would obviously appear to be, or become, a perfectly conventional, middle-class, North London, Lombardo Street life.

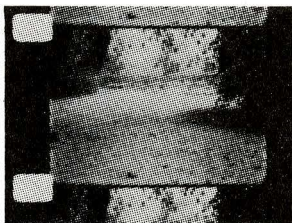
The first feet of the film show a woman opening a door, entering a doctor's office and taking a seat among other waiting women, one of whom is leafing through a magazine which Chambers' Rolex closes in on to provide a close-up of a single page on which appears in very large print, "THE SEA." White shoes enter the room and move along the floor. Olga, pregnant, is throwing flowers. She runs in slow motion toward a baby in a field. A muscular runner sprints along a road. A religious statue can be seen. A dead raccoon lies upturned covered with ants and falling daisy petals. Olga now sits in the waiting room. Before she enters, however, she will gather flowers, again the sprinter will run, again she will move towards her baby, again and yet again she will throw daisy petals in the air, again they will fall on the dead raccoon. She will also remove the sheets and towels and ride a bus.

Such words as "before" and "again" are, in the "experience" of the film, the putting together "in particles," entirely misleading. Nothing in the film happens "before," nothing happens "again": we are, despite the crude elements of familiar narrative, not waiting for the next event. Olga, unlike Peter O'Toole in *Lawrence of Arabia*, is not going to ride all night. She exists in the "organism" taking shape in the "particles" or footage which cannot be spread out in linear

time because Chambers in the cutting and the splicing has destroyed the sequence of time. Olga is being released from time to enter something like the eternal now which Chambers would later describe by the one word, "Wow!" In that eternal now, . . . Olga about to give birth is also Olga blessing the dead from which all birth arises, the old man in the cemetery being the sprinter in another guise intercepting his path as he comes to take up his station behind a nursing mother.

"Before" returning to the examining room "once more," an old man, as the film "progresses," crosses the road, the sprinter runs down it, a nurse appears in the doorway, Olga rises to go in, runs towards her child in a field, throws petals against a backdrop of sky, rides a bus which stops to let people off. "Then" she is "back" in the doctor's office. "Then" she is at her baby shower, "though" the petals "still" fall on the dead raccoon, the sprinter "still" sprints, Olga "still" scatters petals, "still" picks up her baby. The old man stands behind her as she holds up her child. Tea is poured. A cup is raised. A parcel is opened. "Finally" Olga gives suck. Children watch, sitting in a circle around Olga in a field. The sucking continues until the "end," punctuated by empty footage: suck, void, suck, void, suck, void. . .



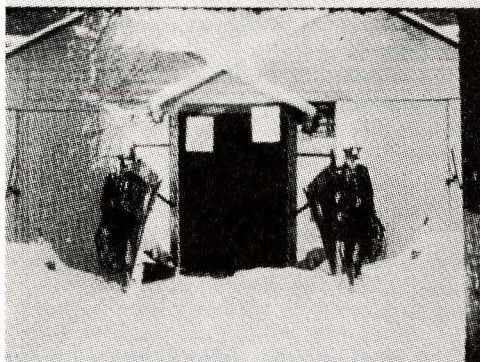
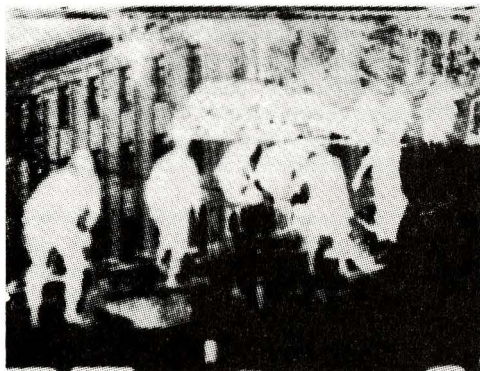
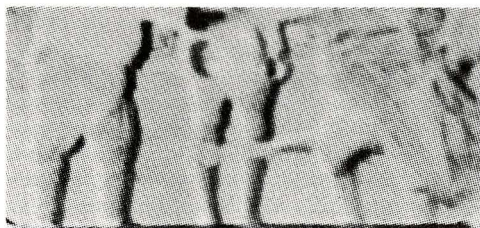


CIRCLE & THE HART OF LONDON

In 1969, the most momentous year of Chambers' life, he completed a 35 minute film, *Circle*, a film that focuses upon one particular spot in his backyard (for a spot of time, each day at a prescribed time) within which he left nature undisturbed, as one might leave a dreamer, to enact its own life cycle of one complete year, nature returning to its beginning only to begin again. To make sure that nature was indeed undisturbed, Chambers cut a hole in the outer back wall of his house, built a small box to fill it, and left his camera there. Every morning at precisely 10 a.m., he turned the camera on for approximately four seconds without adjusting the aperture to changes of light and colour. By keeping the aperture constant, the changes were naturally rather than aesthetically recorded in a manner that made it apparent that in viewing the finished product there was no sense of nature having performed for an audience. It was neither making up nor touching up like an actor in the dressingroom before curtain time.

When the film is read in the context of its creation, which is the context provided by Chambers' manifesto on perceptual realism written in the same year, it becomes apparent that *Circle* is in the medium of film what Chambers' 401 *Towards London* is in the medium of painting: an embodiment of theory. More than that, it demonstrates the way in which the medium of film was in certain essential respects better suited to perceptual realism than painting. Chambers in *Circle* was concerned to give the viewer, so far as that was possible, only the objects "out there" in the newly arrived conviction that when one aims at art by submitting to its conventions, one misses the real, though acknowledged object which is life. Art, Chambers argued, should be left to take care of itself in what he now considered the primary pursuit of life, particularly as the long history of art, itself a history of shifting tastes and conventions, placed nearly insurmountable obstacles in the path of that pursuit, aesthetic conventions unconsciously dictating our modes of perception.

At the same time, however, Chambers believed that when nature is observed disinterestedly, stripped, as it were, of its aesthetic apparel... something more than nature itself emerges. That something more Chambers described as "a mysterious and unique expression of creative Energy."¹³ Precisely here, in the sudden, as yet unnamed confrontation with that Energy, art and nature meet to become one, both of them participating in it, the one (nature) at the unconscious level, the other (art) at the conscious level. The energy discharge emanating



from natural objects when the aesthetic designs upon them have been removed is precisely what the art work should give off, and in precisely the same way that nature gives it off: at a pre-conscious or subliminal level. Chambers initiates a response at this level by his radical method of splicing or editing which turns film into a temporal collage, a collage that becomes incredibly elaborate in his last finished film, *The Hart of London*, where he layers his images, superimposing three and sometimes four images so that none of them remains individually distinct. The struggle between nature and art—as old as nature and as old

as art—thus comes full circle, the two joining to become what ultimately for Chambers they are: one. *Circle*, I suggest, is ultimately about that joining.

What Chambers had arrived at in his manifesto on perceptual realism as well as in the painting and the film that seem best to embody it (*401 Towards London and Circle*) was similar in many respects to what Rilke arrived at in the composition of the *Duino Elegies*. When it is realized that this arrival took place in the larger context of acute leukemia, of which both artists died, one cannot ignore the largest possible meaning attributed by both Chambers and Rilke to their understanding of the creative process at work in nature and the artist. Both artists, though in individually distinctive ways, stress the seemingly necessary sacrifice in which the life of the artist flows back or forward to what both of them considered some final and imageless source, a source which found its most natural analogue in the processes of nature, particularly their cyclical round. Thus, Chambers suggests in a letter to a friend, when a tree is stripped of its accumulated aesthetic history what remains is a revelation of itself which renders the word or the image or the brush stroke a “fellowship with essence,” the artist becoming Adam in Paradise acknowledging in the act of naming or imaging the particulars of a world previously beyond the touch of consciousness.

Chambers continues in that same letter: “When we observe nature disinterestedly inevitably the question rises: What is it? It’s called a tree, I know, but what is it? This preliminary attitude of uncertainty opens the door to experience. The outward look which steps toward nature to find the door to beyond it I call *perceptualism*, because it has to do with seeing nature in this way: as a mysterious and unique expression of creative Energy.”¹⁴ [Compare this with Rilke’s] “Eighth Elegy” as translated by C. F. MacIntyre:

As when sometimes

a child gets lost in silence
and has to be shaken back. Or someone dies and *is it*.
For nearing death, one sees death no more and stares *forward*,
perhaps with the wide gaze of the animal.
Lovers, were it not for the other who blocks the view,
are close to it and marvel . . .
as if by carelessness it is open to them
behind each other . . . but neither gets past, and again
it’s world. Always turned to creation, we see there
only the reflection of the free,
darkened by us.

In *Circle*, by leaving, so far as he could, nature to itself, Chambers sought to remove the obstacles that block the view in order to marvel “as if by carelessness” at what was almost “open” to him (finding “the door beyond it”).

Rilke in this same elegy goes on to describe “reflection on the free, / darkened by us” as a “dumb” beast who “lifts his eyes and looks us calmly through and through.” To be “face to face” with that beast calmly looking at us “through and through” is, Rilke suggests, to be face to face with “Destiny,” for, as he puts it, “That’s what destiny is.” In *The Hart of London*, Chambers’ last completed film and his undoubted masterpiece, the hart is Rilke’s dumb beast in the very “heart” of things, the “Destiny” that Chambers entered when

he returned, drawn by the blood necessity of a dying mother to his home town of London, Ontario, the place where he was born and the place where he would die. The crucial frames of the film, which Chambers placed at the centre with approximately equal footage on either side, are given over to the slaughter of two lambs in the slaughterhouse in Chinchon, Spain, the town where Chambers went to live after graduating from the San Fernando Academy in Madrid.

This slaughter, which he himself flew to Spain to film, is located within a surrounding sequence of approximately the same length which offers an equally graphic or literal presentation of a difficult birth, requiring the use of forceps and the cutting of the vulva. Locating both footages, which many viewers find impossible to watch, within the total context of his 90 minute film built up upon the television news footage of the capture and killing of a deer that had lost its way and wandered into a residential area of London West, it becomes clear that *The Hart of London* is about the artist confronting and finally accepting his own "Destiny," a destiny involving not simply the sacrifice inherent in submitting to the trap of an enclosure (one thinks of the legend of the Unicorn), but the recognition that in that submission resides the emergence of what it finally means to be human. If blood permeates this film—and it does—it is the blood of life flowing into art without being congealed into a crystallized ruby, which is to say an aesthetic object. Thus, in the final sequence of the film made from footage Chambers shot himself, Chambers turns for the last time to his young children. This time they are in the zoo at Springbank Park feeding the deer. The children are tentative at first as they approach the deer; in the end the deer feed out of their hands. And, after they are fed, lick their hands. That some ultimate resolution or coming together is here suggested without being directly stated is reinforced by the film's final footage. The camera, moving away from Springbank Park to Gibbons Park (across from where Chambers lived), makes a series of circular revolutions from sky to earth and from earth to sky, repeating an image that, as in *Circle* and his unfinished film *C.C.C.I.*, Chambers equates with totality or wholeness, a wholeness continuously enacted in nature's life, but only experienced in fragments in the human sphere.

That the slaughter of the lambs set within the footage of a painful, forceps-assisted birth had, for Chambers, religious overtones going back to a Baptist summer school in his childhood and ritually extended to his conversion in Spain to Catholicism is a dimension of the film that is never permitted to obtrude. If it is there, as surely it is, it operates largely at a subliminal level which, for Chambers, is what film can perhaps do best as one image gives way to another in a time sequence that dictates a continuous process of dissolution that painting as painting arrests. A letter written from Spain to his future wife (11 September, 1959) describing the slaughterhouse in Chinchon gives, I think a genuine sense of the quality of the film he was later to make about it:

The butchers are butchers of three meals, the necks thick, strong and purplish, the hands and feet wet with blood. . . .

A small light illuminates a big store room; the light is sticky. The bare-chested butchers stab in silence. The blood runs red and luminous onto the black floor. The air is hot and humid. After leaving one smells like blood and sweat.¹⁵

After leaving *The Hart of London*, one smells the same way. The "blood and sweat" of the slaughterhouse are, in this film, a metaphor that Chambers alone could transplant from Chinchon, Spain to London, Ontario. If there appears to be little or no connection between a lost deer wandering into West London and the slaughterhouse in Chinchon, this film fully and richly dissolves that appearance. London and Canada and the world are able both to view and to absorb it.

NOTES

- ¹ Ross Woodman, *Chambers: John Chambers Interviewed by Ross G. Woodman* (Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1967).
- ² Woodman.
- ³ Woodman.
- ⁴ Woodman.
- ⁵ Woodman.
- ⁶ Woodman.
- ⁷ *Jack Chambers*, edited and published by Nancy Poole, 1978, pp. 93-94. The actual process for preparing his ground was learned at the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. The spilling or "dripping" may have been suggested by Pollock. Thus when asked in a taped interview for The Coach House Press book if he were influenced by Pollock, Chambers replied: "very much. I was influenced by his slopped-on texture."
- ⁸ Woodman.
- ⁹ *Artscanada*, October, 1969.
- ¹⁰ Woodman.
- ¹¹ Woodman.
- ¹² Woodman.
- ¹³ Woodman.
- ¹⁴ "Dear Simon," Sept. 26, 1972.
- ¹⁵ The letter is quoted by courtesy of the Jack Chambers Estate.

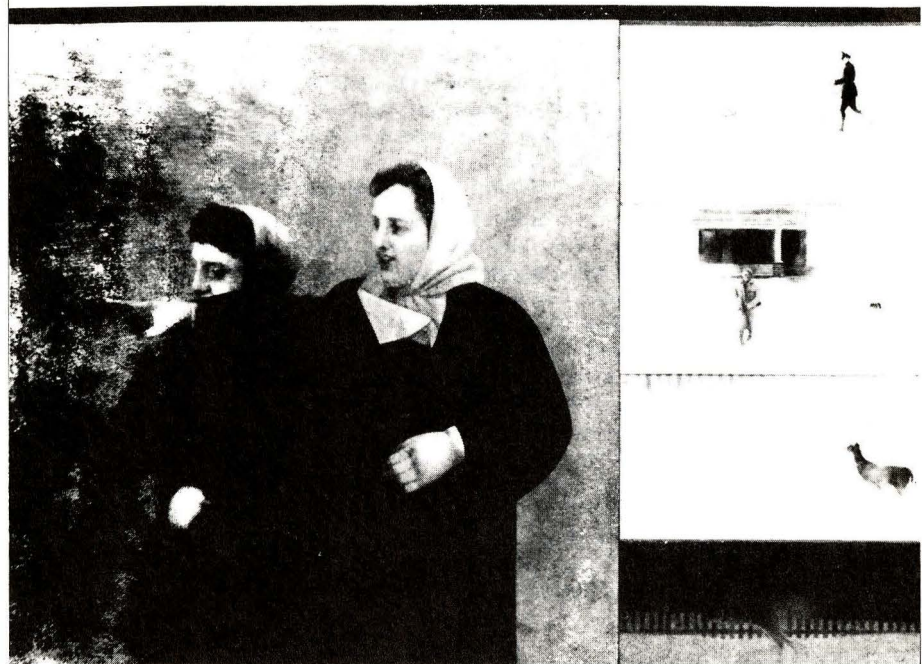
NOTE: This article is an edited version of "Jack Chambers as Film-Maker," which appeared first in *Jack Chambers: The Last Decade*, an exhibition catalogue (London Regional Art Gallery, November, 1980). Ross Woodman wrote a new ending for *TCR* #33.—A.R.

Avis Lang / THE HART OF LONDON



The Hart of London is Chambers' major film to date, structured with the aim of effecting a profound emotional and perceptual transformation in the viewer and rendering him newly capable of participating in the mystery of totally ordinary life in a world where "Everything is being, everywhere there is being and nothing but being,"¹ a world where "there is not a human word, not a gesture, even one which is the outcome of habit or absent-mindedness, which has not some meaning."² It is a world of earth, air, fire, and water, and there is so very much water. It swirls and envelops and covers and gives life and gives disaster and recedes and flows unceasingly, water inside us and water everywhere around us, the waterfalls and the brooks and the deep pools and the vessels of tears and the lazy ponds and the slow quiet streams. Blood and water and spit and shit. The sense of life flows everywhere in fluids of all kinds. The leaking shit of a newborn child is intercut with the spurting blood of a dying lamb. Endless transformation, proliferation, evolution, and flux. Clusters of maple keys in mid-season freshness, not ready to drop or ready to generate, are juxtaposed with the very young Diego. At the beginning is a capture-by-killing of a wild hart that had entrapped itself in the back lanes of London; the initial sense is that the nature of man is against nature. But the film ends in a type of unambitious yet loving and respectful union with nature, in the personae of Chambers' young sons Diego and John hesitantly feeding the deer in a children's zoo. The last frames are given over to another kind of union, the continuity of the elements above and beyond the activity of humankind. The camera pans down the peaceful Thames, again and again, and each time it arches into the high clouds, from earth to air through water. Between the beginning and the end are hundreds of human and natural events, sensations, and images, reflecting the billions of experiences that living things undergo on their way through the world.

The Hart of London is a very difficult eighty minutes long (others of its type are far longer); much of it is exhausting, disorienting, and nerve-wracking, verging at moments on the unbearable. There is extensive use of montage, of repeated cutting back and forth, of in-and-out focussing, and of two-staged superimposition of otherwise identical positive and negative footage, proceeding in opposite directions and occasionally lapsed by a few moments.³ Much of the footage is old newsreel film from the archives of CFPL in London, newsreels being an unparalleled source for images of the human tragicomedy. One rapidfire, almost indecipherable section in the first reel is simply scores of common snapshots that Chambers had solicited through an ad in the London Free Press;⁴ there are faces and faces, gestures and events. Most of the remainder, perhaps half the film, was taken by Chambers himself, ranging from sheep heaving with death on the tables of the slaughterhouse in Chinchon to his two sons feeding nuts to the deer. There is realism and autobiography in the parts, universality in the whole.



The film opens on the hart leaping through open fields, but soon images of hunters, guns, policemen, ropes, and death take over. There is a loud unpleasant periodic sound like the noise of distant shelling; actually it is the crash of breaking waves. We are soon barraged with hundreds and hundreds of images that flash by so quickly and are so unreadable that they seem at times like momentary compositional arrangements of white and grey patches, lacking both intent and content and very nearly devoid of form. What can be identified is always rather ordinary yet important: a hotel, a wedding. Gradually things slow down, images get steadier and quite recognizable, there are more shades of grey. A new sound enters, water flowing with a reassuring gurgle; images become events, occupying time and space. Scenes of factory buildings and assembly lines pass before us, then give way to a dormant maple whose keys lie in the surrounding snow, Olga and the children in the winter out-of-doors, horses plowing, flooded fields. Again the film changes pace, and we are jarred out of our easy perceptions, now by a painfully swift passage through trees. The reel ends in the pruning of branches, with tight close-ups on their lopped and vulnerable ends.

The overall character of the first reel is one of fragmentation, disorientation, and vacillation. A large part of it is intentionally an onslaught of visual chaos, because there is nothing else that can bring a sophisticated eye to the point of desperately craving to see something, anything, a perfectly ordinary bit of the world, just one simple, recognizable, lasting, perfectly focussed entity—which in this case is a timeless, placeless image of life's renewal: a man sowing seeds as he walks barefoot through a muddy furrow behind his two ploughhorses. This is the way Chambers describes his motivation for the structure:

In a way there's almost two kinds of consciousness, isn't there? When you're looking at the first part of the film, I remember when I was looking at it I was feeling that this was dragging on and I became very conscious of the time that I was in while I was sitting here looking up there. And later on when the images became concrete and started to awake another sense, let's say with the help of what I was seeing, I began to experience things of my own through what I was seeing, so that you get another time sense that you're in—your mental time sense, your whole machinery time sense—as well as the time sense of just watching the thing for an hour and twenty minutes... When the images start to congeal, like pulling the cart, then you're prepared for something. You're prepared to really see things. And all that latticework in the front was a preparation to do that, to make the eye think, For God's sake let me look at something. And then you give them something to look at. And that's when you have the best opportunity of really penetrating because the eye will open for you, of course the eye of the mind...⁵

The second reel begins with a flood of barely-processed sensory input. An eye flutters open and then there are feet, hands, mouths, and bodies, exploring and experiencing. A crashing sound underscores the confusion. The next major segment is pivotal: a birth set against a death. They are thresholds comparable only to each other, and it is the one that makes the other real.⁶ If generation is a central theme,⁷ it is nowhere more unmistakably embodied than in the forceps birth of a baby boy that is intercut with vivid colour footage of a bloody expiring sheep. The child emerges with bloated, engorged testicles and an erect penis, and the camera that is held by the man with two sons of his own pans over the remarkable sight again and again, filled with confidence in the endless and ubiquitous perpetuation of life. The Christian links between lamb and infant are unavoidable; soon after the birth/death, there is also a sort of ontogenetic link established at the level of the foetus.

Having been born, all things live in the world, and the world is what Chambers now gives us, just as he did in the first reel, but then perception was hardly possible because we saw through a glass darkly and knew but in part. To say simply that the film is about generation and gestation, or about birth, growth, and death, or about perception, or about the cycles of nature and the human condition, is somehow to negate the extremely pointed quality in the next section of the utter specificity, the utter particularity of the events, that roots the structuralist complexity in a completely non-elitist universe. A teenage boy goes for a swim in the Thames in the dead of winter, while a policeman who was notified beforehand stands by ready with a life-preserver and a paddy wagon. A woman rummages around her still-cold early spring garden for a barely-formed violet to tuck in a buttonhole of her styleless coat. A man with confused and frightened brown eyes climbs out of a mine cave-in while many arms embrace him back into the world of the living. A complacently charitable businessman presents a lively little bird in a cage to a sadly retarded young boy as part of a Christmas-gifts-for-unfortunates campaign. And so on and on.

Just preceding the final two sequences of the rather puzzled little boys feeding the rather oblivious little deer and the view down the Thames and up the sky, we watch Chambers mow his front lawn. There is hardly a clearer method than this kind of positioning of letting it be known that what follows is virtually a manifesto of his scale of values and philosophical stance. Furthermore, the "home-movie" technical quality of the filming of the final two episodes, the fact that they are in rather crude colour, and the accompanying sound track of cautionary parental whisperings set them off even more from the rest of the film. Almost everything else is black-and-white, except most of the sheep footage, and there are no human voices. Chambers is summing up by saying what untold numbers of less visibly gifted people have been saying in small voices and without fanfare for centuries: that he is just a man, that his children are the most important thing in his life, and that the world is a miracle. His own comments on the effect of the film as a whole, made several hours after he'd seen it for only the second time, make a similar although more general point:⁸

If you take a thing in a progression, you know, and sort of intuitively work your way through it, mould the thing and have it happen again and again

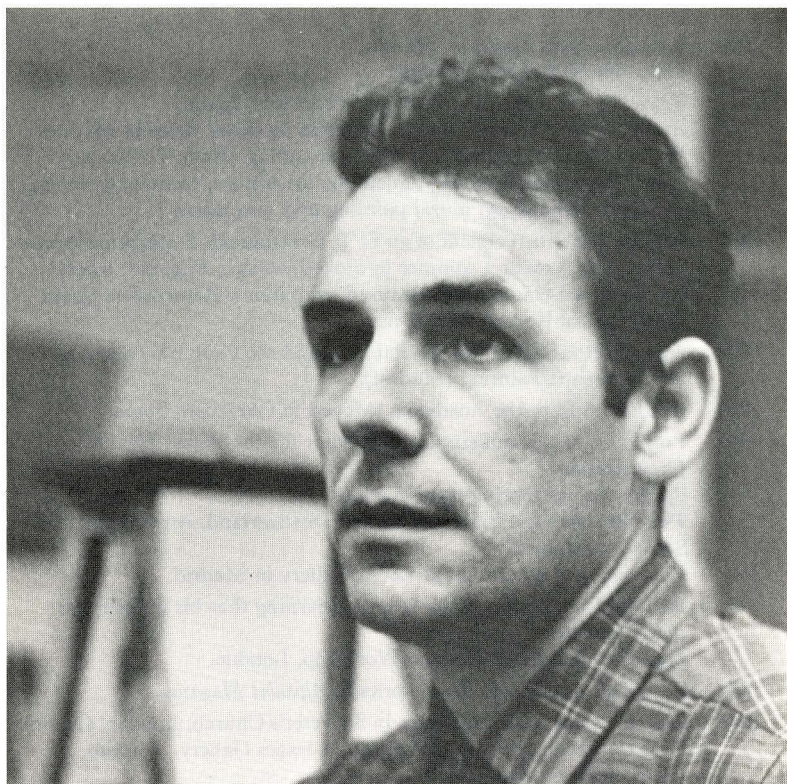
in various ways, it means a lot more at the end of it than if it was shortened up and said in two sequences, as this compared to this. Meanwhile you've gone through an experience of your own self, and you've gone through the experience of something being resolved *in you* because of what you're looking at, as well as what you're looking at seems to be resolving itself too. What I felt today is that there are certain resolutions that take place in you that you're not altogether conscious of, but certain resolutions about life and about life and about things. I found that I was almost saying to myself, Yeah, things really are good and things really are unique, things really are full of wonder the way they are.

Altogether *The Hart of London* is one of Chambers' masterpieces; it is not a narrative unfolding at a suitable aesthetic distance but a metamorphic process that one undergoes, that even the artist finds himself undergoing in the presence of what he has made.

NOTES

- ¹ Teilhard de Chardin, "The Mass on the World" in *Hymn of the Universe*, Collins Fontana Books, p. 21. See next note.
- ² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "What is Phenomenology?" in Alden Fisher, ed., *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty*, Harcourt, Brace, & World, pp. 39-40. I purposely cite Merleau-Ponty and Chardin, because in my first meetings with Chambers in the fall of 1972, he mentioned them again and again as recommended reading for understanding his own point of view.
- ³ Taped conversation between Jack Chambers and Avis Rosenberg, October 19, 1972. "That's why you would never see anything . . . nothing would catch up to itself."
- ⁴ I would like to thank Goldie Rans for initially mentioning this to me. Chambers responds to a question about this in a letter to me of July 27, 1973: "Yes, I solicited fotos from Londoners of anything and received a couple of thousand, all of which I filmed and used in the rapid-fire section of images in Reel No. 1." There are marvellous implications here of the acceptance of randomness and chance, of the equivalence of all information, of the usable meaningfulness of all fragments of experience, etc.
- ⁵ Tape, October 19, 1972.
- ⁶ Ibid. "The baby's born and . . . you stay with the birth. The only other thing you can go to is the death, because it's the only other thing you can compare it with . . . You see, they're both on the threshold of a new experience or a new life. Because it seems to me that just because we die here, nothing's gonna stop . . . It's a perpetual thing, just like energy." And elsewhere in the same tape: "... When the kid is born, you know . . . You've got the lamb dying in colour. Well it's almost like the colour takes the time position forward to another dimension. Like you go forward to you might almost call it a dimension of having lived, as opposed to having just been born, and this again is the preparation for another gestation. And this is a look at the passage into that other sleep, you know."
- ⁷ Ibid. Chambers' own one-word summary: "It's generation, that's the whole thing."
- ⁸ Ibid.

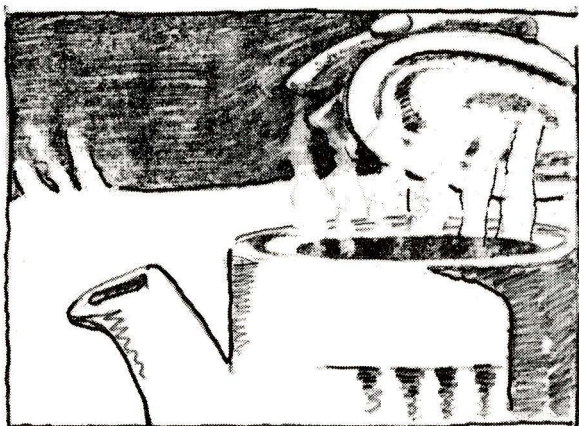
NOTE: This article is taken from "The Hart of London" published first under the name of Avis Lang Rosenberg in *Criterion*, 1974. Missing here are the two introductory paragraphs that provide a general background for Chambers and his films.—A.R.



JACK CHAMBERS: BIOGRAPHY

- 1931 - Jack Chambers was born in Victoria Hospital, London, Ontario March 25th.
- 1944 - Attended Beck Collegiate, receiving art instruction from Selwyn Dewdney.
- 1946 - Continued secondary school studies at H. B. Beal Technical School under the tutelage of Herb Ariss and John O'Henly.
- 1949 - Received Young Artist's Award at the 9th Annual Western Ontario Exhibition, London Public Library and Art Museum.
 - Graduated from Beal.
 - Spent six months travelling through Mexico.
 - Wrote "Aircraft."
- 1950 - Returned to London.
 - Worked in construction; learned the trade of grinding optical lenses.
- 1952 - Enrolled in General Arts programme at the University of Western Ontario.

- 1953 - Withdrew from classes in March.
- Sailed for Naples in September.
- 1953-54 - Travelled through Italy, Austria, France and Spain.
- Applied to the San Fernando Academia de Bellas Artes in Madrid.
- Was accepted in August and began attending classes in drawing, painting, modelling in clay, anatomy, art history, technique, design, pedagogy, engraving, mural painting and restoration.
- 1957 - Became the first recipient of an E. T. Greenshields Foundation Award.
- Subsequently spent a summer in Stoke-by-Clare, England, where he taught art classes and organized exhibitions. Returned to Spain.
- Converted to Roman Catholicism.
- 1958 - Awarded the State Prize for Painting and the Paular Scholarship for Landscape Painting (Madrid).
- 1959 - Graduated from the Academia. Moved to Chinchon, Spain.
- 1960 - Employed as a chauffeur and translator for the World Health Organization.
- Spent summer touring leper colonies.
- Travelled through France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Italy.
- Settled in Madrid.
- First one-man exhibition at Lorca Gallery in Madrid.
- 1961 - Returned to London, Ontario upon learning that his mother was dying of cancer.
- Began teaching at the Artists Workshop, London.
- 1962 - Published poetry and short stories in *Alphabet Magazine*.
- 1963 - Married Olga Sanchez Bustos in St. Peter's Church, London, Ontario.
- First Canadian one-man exhibition at Isaacs Gallery, Toronto.
- Letter to Daryl Dukes.
- 1964 - Exhibited work in the New York Worlds Fair.
- Made *Mosaic*, first film.



- 1965 - One-man exhibition in Forum Gallery, New York.
 - Canada Council Grant.
- 1966 - One-man exhibition at Agnes Lefort Gallery, Montreal.
 - Canada Council Grant.
 - Began experimenting with silver painting.
 - Film: *Little Red Riding Hood*.
- 1967 - One-man exhibition at 20/20 Gallery, London, Ontario.
 - Canada Council Grant.
 - Founded Canadian Artists Representation.
 - Films: *Hybrid* & *R 34*.
- 1968 - Founded London Film Makers' Co-op.
 - One-man exhibition at Gallery III, Winnipeg.
 - Canada Council Grant: Remaco Award for Painting: Labatt's Breweries Award for Documentary Film (*R 34*).
 - Film: *Circle* begun.
- 1969 - Diagnosed as having acute myeloblastic leukemia.
 - Wrote manifesto on "perceptual realism," published in *Artscanada*.
 - Received Honorary LL.D. from the University of Western Ontario.
 - Painted *401 Towards London #1*, first in the style of perceptual realism.
 - Finished film *Circle*.
 - Film: *Hart of London* begun.
- 1970 - Major retrospective of work organized jointly by the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Vancouver Art Gallery and exhibited in both galleries.
 - *Sunday Morning #2* received the highest price ever paid to a living Canadian artist for a single work of art.
 - Finished film *Hart of London*. Started filming, *C.C.C.I.* (never finished).
 - Film: *Life Still* begun (never finished).
- 1971 - National Gallery purchased three of Chambers' films.
- 1972 - Travelled to Texas and England seeking medical treatment.
- 1973 - Spent three weeks as Artist in Residence at Banff School of Fine Arts.
 - Received gold medal from the University of Alberta, Calgary.
 - Travelled to New York and Mexico for medical treatment.
 - Festival of Independent "Avant Garde" Films, Montreal.
- 1974 - Travelled to England for medical treatment.
 - Spent three weeks as Artist in Residence at Banff School of Fine Arts.
- 1975 - Travelled to India for medical treatment.
- 1977 - Received Queen Elizabeth Silver Jubilee Medal and Canada Council Grant.
 - Returned to India.
 - World Film Festival, Montreal.
- 1978 - Died on April 13th at Victoria Hospital, London.

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- Elder, Bruce. "From Painting into Cinema: A Study of Jack Chambers' *Circle*." *Journal of Canadian Studies* (Spring 1981), 60-81.
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- . "Images: Representation and Object: The Photographic Image in Canadian Experimental Film: Michael Snow and Jack Chambers." This article which is the English version of "Bild: Darstellung und Gegenstand: Das fotografische Bild im canadischen Experimentalfilm: Michael Snow und Jack Chambers" published as part of the *OKanada* catalogue in Berlin, 1982/3 is available upon request from The Canada Council, Ottawa.
- Feldman, Seth. "The Hart of London." *Film Quarterly*, 4 (Summer 1976), 54-57.
This British critic offers some negative comment on Chambers' film, yet is generally favourable in his remarks.
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- . "The Hart of London." *Criterion*, 1 (June 1974), 3-4.
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- Woodman, Ross G. *Chambers: John Chambers Interviewed by Ross G. Woodman*. Toronto: Coach House, 1967.
The book contains candid remarks.
- . "The Realism of John Chambers." *Art International*, 14 (November 1970), 37-41.
While mostly concerned with Chambers' paintings, this article offers useful insights into the artist's approach.
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This catalogue to a major exhibition of Chambers' work contains the complete version of "Jack Chambers as Film-maker" that was excerpted and revised for inclusion in this issue of *TCR*.

NOTES & CREDITS

The cover presents a detail of *The Hart of London*, an oil and pencil work measuring 49 x 66 inches. It is reproduced with the permission of The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

The epigram is taken from Anne Brodzky and John Chambers' "John Chambers: recent work," *artscanada*, 8/9 (1967), supplement.

Details of Jack Chambers' portrait shown on pages 4, 7 & 71 are reproduced courtesy of the Canadian Broadcasting Company's *Man Alive* programme.

The poems which appear on pages 8-11 were first published in the University of Western Ontario's literary journal *Alphabet* (#7, December 1963). They are reprinted here with the permission of James Reaney, editor.

The facsimiles reproduced on pages 12-19, 22 & 23, 29 & 30 are made from entries contained in a lined, spiral notebook Chambers used between 1965 and 1970. Xeroxes were made of the original materials and these were reworked in pencil and felt pen and touched up with correcting fluid to increase the legibility of the contents. They are included in this issue by permission of Olga Chambers.

The letter to Daryl Duke is printed on pages 20 & 21 by permission of Daryl Duke.

The film clips published on pages 24 & 25 are excerpted from those which appeared in "John Chambers: recent work," cited above.

"*Toronto-London: One Way Gray Coach Line*" is excerpted from the play as published in *Alphabet* (#8, 1964) with permission of James Reaney, editor.

"Early notes for *The Hart of London*," on pages 31-34 is based on materials contained in the spiral notebook.

"Notes: sounding off in CAPITAL LETTERS" on page 35 is from the spiral notebook.

The film clips on pages 36-40 are republished with the permission of Tom Graff and The Vancouver Art Gallery from the catalogue *Jack Chambers: A Retrospective* (1970). An image celebrating life, that accompanies the dead raccoon, is taken from "John Chambers: recent work" cited above.

The fragment from the letter to Olga on page 41 is printed by permission of Olga Chambers, as are the facsimiles of the other letters published on pages 42-44.

The images illustrating "Jack Chambers as Film Maker" are identified elsewhere in this issue with three exceptions. *Olga and Mary Visiting*, ink on paper, 13 x 21¾ inches, is reproduced by permission of Dr. Ross G. and Mrs. Woodman. The film clip of Mosaic is taken from *Jack Chambers: recent work*. The stills from *The Hart of London* are published by permission of Olga Chambers.

The painting *The Hart of London* and its photo source shown on page 67 are printed courtesy of The National Gallery of Canada.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JACK CHAMBERS was born in 1931 in London, Ontario. He studied there and at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid. During the 60s and 70s, he exhibited his art nationally and internationally, gaining a wide audience. He made films during those decades which are not widely known. He died in April, 1978, leaving six complete and two unfinished films.

TOM GRAFF is an artist well-known for his performance art, private press books and curating. This issue of *The Capilano Review* is a companion publication to Graff's *Jack Chambers' Film Retrospective* which will tour all eight films for three years out of Pacific Cinematèque Pacifique. Graff is now chief curator of fine arts for the Canadian Pavilion at EXPO 86.

ROSS WOODMAN is a professor of English Literature at the University of Western Ontario and the author of *The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Shelley* (University of Toronto Press), *James Reaney* (McClelland and Stewart), and *Chambers* (Coach House Press). Woodman was Jack's mentor and friend.

AVIS LANG is an independent art critic and curator. She has taught Women's Studies and Art History at many colleges and institutions. Her correspondence with Jack Chambers appeared in *Vanguard Magazine* (May, 1982). She resides in New York.

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JACK CHAMBERS FILMS