

Journal

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News of The Cultural
Council Foundation
CETA Artists Project

Independent Video & Film: Finding an Audience

By ELYSE NASS

Can independent video and filmmakers receive government support without compromising their autonomy?

This is one question that the Foundation for Independent Video and Film (FIVF) hopes to answer in the affirmative during the current year.

Fourteen independent film and video makers are employed by the foundation, through CCF/CETA funds, to make films and tapes on New York community life, to document the work of other CETA artists, and to pursue their own individual media projects. The name of this CETA program, administered by FIVF, is *Media Works*.

The foundation itself has a dual purpose: to provide outlets and information for film and video artists and to make the public aware that there is an alternative to commercial movies and television. FIVF has begun to educate the public about the independent film and video maker through the Short Film Showcase, a pilot project sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, which places short films in commercial theatres. For example, a theatre can show a six-minute independent film before a picture such as *Star Wars* goes on.

In addition to film, public television is a crucial concern of FIVF. They've been studying the independent film and video maker's relation to public TV at both the national and local levels. Tom Lennon, the foundation's director, reflected on this problem during an interview at their busy Soho loft headquarters. "Why don't most TV stations use independent material?" he asked. "How can we educate the stations to what an independent can offer? We are only trying to open up and free the system more. The CETA Media Works project is developing ties with various television outlets such as Channel 31, where we hope to produce a show on street theater."

Media Works is primarily engaged in creating documentary works in and about



Detail from Bronx River Restoration Project.

New York City. One important long-term project is a documentary on the future of the South Bronx. Marc Levin, producer of *Media Works*, commented on this film: "We are working with The People's Coalition to Rebuild the South Bronx, an umbrella group of fifteen to twenty community organizations. After President Carter's visit, there's been a lot of focus on the future of this area as one example of the urban policies of the Carter and Koch administrations. It also happens that two of our people working in the project grew up in the South Bronx. In fact, one is still living there. So we know a lot about the area. And we've gotten a lot of interest and support."

Media Works is operating throughout the five boroughs. It provides film and video workshops and advises groups on how to use the media. It is documenting performances of "The Kitchen", a Soho-based experimental arts program, the avant garde Performance Group, and Boy's Harbor, where a number of CETA artists are performing and working. The *Media Works* artists are also working at long-term projects with municipal agencies, non-profit broadcast facilities, educational institutions, and community organizations. In addition to documenting the entire CCF/CETA Artists' Project, and collaborating with CETA actors, dancers, and musicians on productions, *Media Works* artists are doing a documentary on an 83-year-old Japanese-American painter; on Latin music; a fictional script about young drug addicts; a documentary on the elderly; on the city housekeepers' attempt to unionize, and on the People's Firehouse in Brooklyn.

In addition to supervising all these projects, the foundation has another major and formidable function — that of supplying information. Lennon spoke about one difference between the painter and the filmmaker: "An independent film or video maker needs a helluva lot of information in order to operate. It's not like a painter who essentially has a canvas and a few tools. You have to get plugged into a whole network. You have to have an industry relationship to survive. You must know grants, be tied into foundations, know festivals. It's really a complex field."

FIVF provides these links of information, education, and support. It grew out of an effort to get independent film and video makers into a collective body that could give

Robert Gurbo
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Verse

Alpha Ray, Beta Ray: Sundown

Day struck us together.
Swarming, late sunlight
shook down the houses of our eyes.
Leaf porches
wore shields in burning afternoon;
rose-green bloomed ardent autumn.

Leaf into leaf
the gold leaves ran in circles;
lemon red, lemon mauve, lemon scarlet.
They wildered:
they trembled in their pauses.
Taxed beyond stillness in the winds,
they fell,
were grounded among our fingers.

They moved whoever it was that heard us,
whatever listened, lonely, to our silence.

Light, all that four o'clock was furred;
beat bronze against your dog's back.
Emptied of bright violet
it clinked and cindered
under wan scoop of sinews in the trees;
beyond the sun's braid
prickling through the marshes.

What we two give each other, now,
shall dwindle.
Sky of your eyes will dip, fall far away.
Your brain's deft azure will abdicate
my sight.

New evenings must come.
By their long wick and claim upon us,
twined, the hours will uprush;
will burn out love among their endings.

—REE DRAGONETTE

Lights out, they're kissing

Lights out, they're kissing
The dark has to eat too
Swallowing these beasts we live in
The kiss that eats all life leaving property

Still talking about how shocked
A thief watching his hand get cut off
Turning away from where you were
Into the sleep we all are

—BOB HOLMAN

At Cinnaminson Alternate School

the kids around here believe in love
look for love's face eye love
wear love on the backs of their jackets
write love on the walls of the city
write ballpoint love on their hands
they believe in love
what can i teach them
that will bring them through it alive

—DOC LONG

External Technique Internal Vision

By VERED LIEB

This piece is from Ms. Lieb's catalogue introduction to the current exhibit at the Bronx Museum of the Arts.

It has been said that the "meaning" of a work of art consists of the relations among the elements, and not the elements themselves. That is to say, that the means of doing what we do in art, is as important as the ends, perhaps more so. What we look for in a work of art are those qualities that are expressive of our experiences as human beings.

The artist must attempt to take the material of his/her experiences and translate, as honestly as possible, his inner world into the medium of expression (paint, metal, stone, etc.). The artist is limited only by the characteristic properties of the chosen medium of expression and by the clarity of a vision heightened by dedicated labor. Art is in a sense the end result of a profound internal process of development, a process that can take a lifetime to realize. If an artist has successfully merged his understanding and sympathy with his subject, a work of art emerges that is essentially spiritual. The subject matter of a picture or sculpture rarely matters; what moves us is the very real presence of a "truth". Thus the spirit in art (the spirit in man) is not confined to stylistic considerations.

The diversity of the Bronx Museum exhibition assumes coherence upon the application of qualitative criteria. Every artist in the show had to stand at one time or another in front of a white canvas or in an empty studio and courageously begin to make a mark on that canvas, or to assemble his materials. The first line, the first movement upon the paper is a commitment to some creative entity. Eventually the artist will search deep within himself and discover the strong, elemental feelings that give impetus to this touch. There is no content to art without this feeling; technique and high levels of discipline are extensions only of the artists' sensitivity to life. Every artist hopes that the viewer of his work will also be as sensitively endowed.

However, visual art ultimately must be judged by its visual appeal alone. This may sound overly simplistic, as in any truism, e.g., a rose is a rose, a picture is a picture. If the artist has indeed charged his work with all the vitality of his being, why then may we feel confused and anxious in front of his work? Have we failed somehow? Are we, the audience, doomed to hours of boredom in the face of overwhelming "culture"? It is doubtful that this is meant to be our fate. The insight of the artist is destined for our comprehension. The magic of the artist is woven from the world of our senses, a world we all participate in. What appears before us so various and so new represents ourselves as we might be or as we have been. Thus all art remains incomprehensible to those who cannot look within themselves and value the humanity therein.

If we judge art by the mere symbolism it presents to us, then the varieties of artistic expression, each individual painting, compete with the other. Such a point of view belittles the unlimited power of comprehension and enjoyment of our visual lives. The yellow of the taxicab on the street is the same yellow that one artist has chosen for a still life, the same yellow that another has painted into a highly textured surface of an

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Lower East Side Print Shop.

Sarah Wells



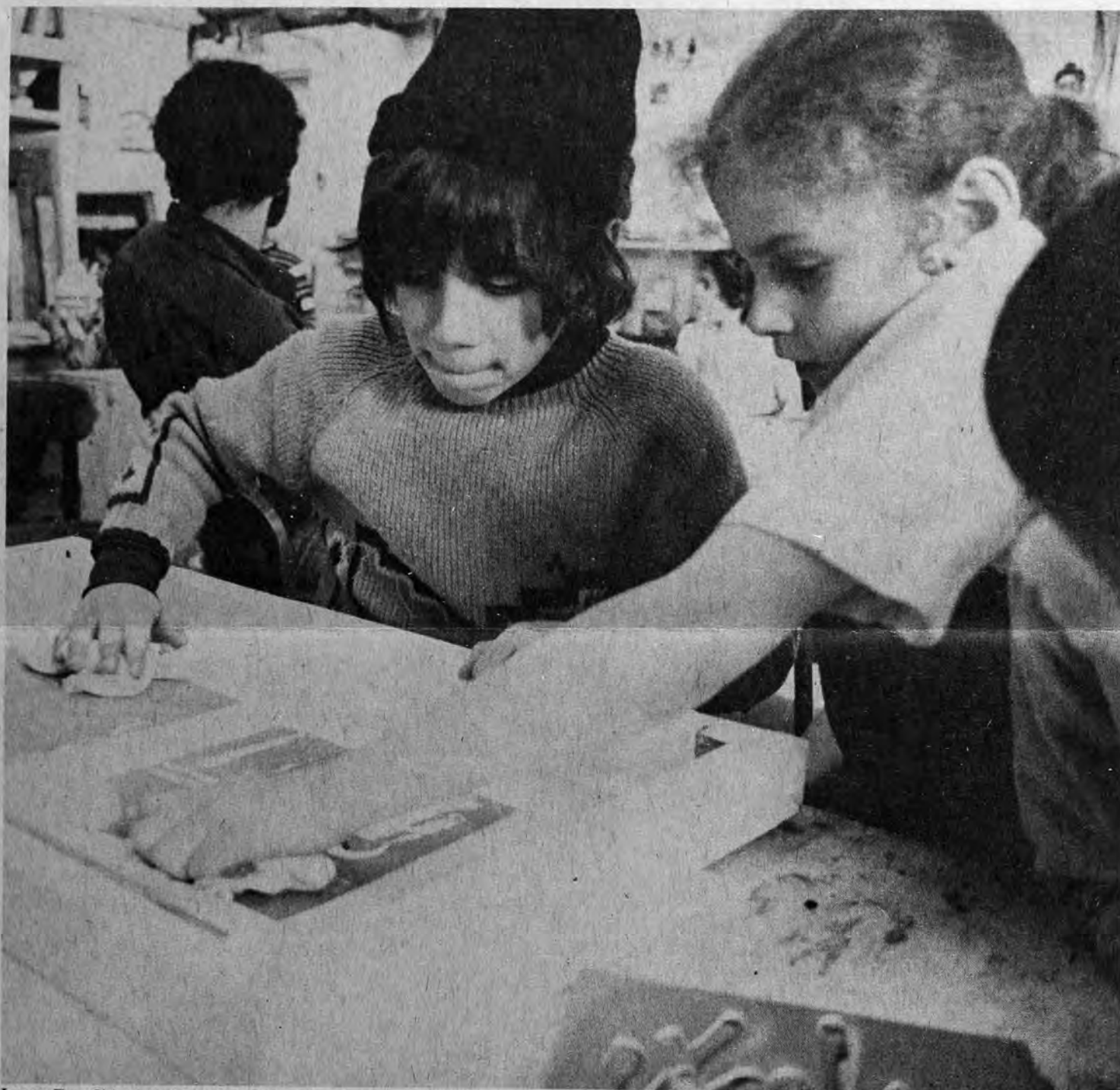
Ceramics class at Notre Dame Academy, Staten Island.

Sarah Wells



Puppetry class at Boys Harbor, Manhattan.

George Malave



Lower East Side Print Shop.

Sarah Wells

Outdoor Sculpture Show to Open in Battery Park

One of the largest outdoor sculpture exhibitions to be shown in New York City will open in Battery Park on April 30.

The show, being produced jointly by CCF/CETA artists and by the Organization of Independent Artists, will continue through July 1. It will contain twenty large-scale sculptures, twelve by CETA artists. The exhibition will be presented inside the Castle Clinton national monument area, along Eisenhower Mall, and in the park adjacent to the mall and castle.

According to the show's curator, CCF/CETA sculptor Ursula von Rydingsvard, many of the pieces are being especially designed for the exhibition. Von Rydingsvard said, "A number of the artists selected space in the park and are creating a piece just for that spot. The work ranges from thirty-foot-high inflated plastic shapes to large steel geometric pieces."

Elsewhere, the first museum exhibit of works by CCF/CETA artists, at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, will continue through April 30. It opened March 13. Seven CCF painters and two sculptors join 38 other artists in the show entitled *Personal Visions: Places—Spaces*. It includes a wide range of disciplines from photography to painting and from sculpture to found objects. The exhibition was selected and produced by CCF/CETA artists Wyn Loving and Art Guerra, the Organization of Independent Artists (OIA) and the staff of the museum. Located in the rotunda of the Bronx County Courthouse at 161 St. and Grand Concourse, the museum is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sundays from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

A third joint CCF/CETA and OIA exhibition has opened in the public cafeteria of the Federal Courthouse, 40 Centre St., in downtown Manhattan. It is part of a series of exhibitions in public buildings being sponsored by the OIA. The show, curated by CCF/CETA painters Francine Halvorsen, Alan Kleiman, and Deborah Rosenthal, includes abstract and figurative painting and drawings, photography and jewelry. It will run through May 10. The Federal Courthouse is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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Video . . .

them a voice. Formed in 1974, it was spawned as an offshoot of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF), a membership organization of 650 film and video makers, producers, directors, writers, technicians, and craftspeople, most of whom are in the New York City area. FIVF is the educational non-profit arm which sponsors programs that help independent film and video to flourish.

Lennon explained that their monthly newsletter is the crucial core of their work. It focuses on issues that deal with the independent film community, such as new policies in public TV, new marketing trends, new developments in technology, or how to copyright a film. The foundation also provides a series of monthly seminars on such topics as *How to Self-Distribute A Film*. "That seminar drew about 300 artists to our loft," said Lennon. "Everybody was taking notes on it." In addition, there are monthly screenings of independent work which filmmakers show to one another, resulting in valuable feedback. There are two ongoing workshops — one for screenwriters, which consists of reviewing one another's scripts, and another for directors, where actors and directors can work together doing videotaped scenes.

Finding projects has never been a problem for FIVF and its independent filmmakers, but with Hollywood cranking out million-dollar budget and million-dollar-making movies, it

might take a while for independents to earn a living. Lennon acknowledged this and added, "We have to develop better outlets for independents. CETA is a prime example of developing new resources for the arts." But, as Marc Levin pointed out, the major problem with the CETA Artists Project is that there are no funds for equipment, material, or production. Looking at this severe obstacle more as a positive challenge, Levin said, "It's forcing us to reach out to every possible place in the city that could help us." So far, they have established cooperative relationships with groups that have the funds, equipment and want, in return, the media know-how. Levin is hopeful about developing more of these fruitful contacts in the months ahead. "Our overall goal," he stressed, "is to really show how valuable our work is. Public TV has quite clearly not fulfilled its responsibility. There is no media service for community groups, no access, no way to pursue ideas. We share a common commitment to produce work which contributes to a better understanding of the city's problems. In fact, it may be the creative spirit in the midst of all this chaos that keeps New York City from total collapse. It is the great untapped resource we must work on."

In addition to Marc Levin, the other thirteen CETA film and video makers are: Christa Maiwald, Larry Bullard, Jacqueline Cook, Dan Ochiva (program coordinator), Jeffrey Byrd, Cara de Vito, George Diaz, Michael Jacobsohn, Yoshio Kishi, Marvin McLinn, Jessie Maple, Emilio Murillo, and Paul Schneider.

CCF/CETA Calendar of Events

Art.....

Ellsworth Ausby is participating in a three-man show at the New York Art Consortium, 36 W. 62 St. Through April 30.

Banerjee: *Carbontransfer, Origami-Collages*: Just Above Midtown Gallery, 50 W. 57 St., May 9 through June 4.

Personal Visions: Places—Spaces; collective show sponsored by Organization of Independent Artists at Bronx Museum of the Arts, 851 Grand Concourse, Bronx. Guest curators Wyn Loving and Art Guerra of CCF/CETA project. Also includes other CETA artists. Through April 30. Monday through Friday 9-5. Sundays 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Cynthia Mailman, *Recent Paintings*; one-woman show, Soho 20 Gallery, 99 Spring St., Tuesday through Saturday, 12-6 p.m. Through April 26.

Exhibition organized by Ann Marie Rousseau of photographs by women from the Shelter Care Center for women at the Metropolitan Museum, 81st Street Entrance Gallery. Through April 30.

Robert Sherman; series of clay mask rituals at Brooklyn Museum, with guest musicians, dancers, and poets. Performances at 2 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. the following Sundays: April 16, Hall of the Americas; April 30, the African Focus Gallery; May 7, Korea and Japan Galleries; May 14, Sculpture Court, Fifth Floor; May 21, Sculpture Garden.

Charles J. Stanley. Brooklyn Museum. Large painting, 9x15 feet, hanging in group exhibit *Perceptarium*, third floor lecture hall (only when room is in use).

Martha Boyden. *Street Shapes*. Photographic Book available at Ambrose Arts Foundation, 457 Broome St., Soho.

Dance.....

Diane Grumet will perform with the Joyce Trisler Danscompany at the Riverside Church Theatre, 122nd St., Through April 16.

Holly Harbinger, Merian Soto, and Erica

Everett will perform April 22 & 23 at St. Clement's Church, 423 W. 46 St., with Linday Tamay & Dancers.

The same three dancers will perform at two free CETA performances at New York Community College in Brooklyn with Rachel Lampert & Dancers. For further information call 564-5510.

Midsummer Night's Dream. A Playwright's Horizon Production. Directed by Robert Moss. Choreographed by William Dunas. CCF/CETA dancers David Malamut and Olgaly Jolly in 13-member Equity cast. Queens Festival Theatre, Flushing Meadow Park, April 8, 16, 23 at 7:30 p.m. Free.

Martha Bowers and Mitchell Rose, dance concert, *The Primal Oom Pah-Pah*; April 13-16, 8 p.m. American Theatre Lab, 219 W. 19 St., Reservations: 924-0077.

Music.....

The (CETA) Orchestra of New York Performances: April 16, Harlem YMCA, 135 St. & 7th Ave., 4 p.m.; April 17, Fordham Univ., Lincoln Center, 7:30 p.m.; April 26, Rafael Hernandez Center, 189 Allen St., woodwind octet, 1:30 p.m.; April 28, Queens College, four strings & horn, 8:30 p.m.; April 29, Third St. Settlement House, 235 E. 11 St., 2:30 p.m.; April 30, Harlem Cultural Center, 4 p.m.; May 3, St. Francis College, Joralemon St., Brooklyn; May 6, Third St. Music School, 2:30, 235 E. 11 St., 2:30 p.m.; May 9 & 10, Living Modern Composers Concerts, The Kitchen, Manhattan; May 21, Brooklyn Artists' Day, Cadman Plaza. For further information, call 636-4120.

Poetry Readings.....

Bob Holman, May 13, Dr. Generosity's, 74 St & 2nd Ave., 2:30 p.m.

Sandra Esteves. Poetry Readings: April 16, 5 p.m. Pearl's Place, 96th St. and Second Ave. April 17, noon. Student Union Building, Women's Center of Brooklyn College. May 3, 3:30 p.m. Bronx Women at Lehman College. May 9, 8 p.m. Women's Books, 93rd St. between Broadway and Amsterdam.

Barbara Baracks. Fiction reading. West End Bar, Broadway and 115th St. April 30, 2 p.m.

Special Events.....

CCF/CETA Artists Project Workshops; Artists & The Law; May 12, 1-3 p.m. Copyright & Housing; May 17, 7-9 p.m. Workmen's Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, Contracts, Taxes. Workshops coordinator Carmen de Jesus.

Note: CCF/CETA events for the next calendar should be received no later than April 24 and will cover the period May 15 through June 20. Due to deadlines, this month's listings are not complete.

Journal Seeks Articles

Journal welcomes submissions from all CCF/CETA artists in the form of articles and article ideas on the visual, performing, and literary arts. All inquiries and suggestions, addressed to Grover Amen, *Journal*, CCF/CETA Artists Project, 326 W. 42 St., N.Y.C. 10036, will be answered promptly. Or call days 564-5510, nights, 643-1962, 7-10 p.m.

Technique . . .

abstract expressionist painting, or is the bit of yellow chrome that is employed in a free-standing metal sculpture. As we move about viewing the Bronx Museum exhibition, we can enjoy each artist's statement for what it is — an honest depiction of real values derived from real and internalized experience.

Let us make time to look about us, whether in the museums and art galleries or out on the street. The faculty of vision, as a source of rare delight and information, is a capacity in many whose lives seem to be busy and frantic. The strength of the visual experience, when combined with our ability to contemplate our real feelings, is a daily restorative for our souls. Art then is a necessary part of our lives.

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