

Although it may be true that the experimental film is difficult to define, and although it may embrace every kind of mood and treatment--sometimes poetic and lyrical, sometimes anecdotal or documentary, occasionally satiric, often abstract-- its functions have never been in doubt; they are, to open up new paths to affirm the freedom of art, to re-invigorate, as much in content as in form, the means of filmic expression.

ANTICIPATION OF THE NIGHT

USA 1958, 41 min (1480ft) silent

Stan Brakhage

"Summary of the Subject:

The daylight shadow of a man in its movement evokes lights in the night. A rose bowl, held in hand reflects both sun and moon-like illumination. The opening of a doorway onto trees anticipates the twilight into the night. A child is born on a lawn, born of water, with its promissory rainbow, and the wild rose. It becomes the moon and the source of all night light. Lights of the night become young children playing a circular game. The moon moves over a pillared temple to which all lights return. There is seen the sleep of the innocents and their animal dreams, becoming their amusement, their circular game, becoming the morning. The trees change color and lose their leaves for the morn, becoming the complexity of branches on which the shadow man hangs himself.

This 'summary' is written for identification purposes only and it is not intended as a statement by the artist on his work. If a film is a work of moving visual art, it is its own subject and subject only to itself. If the 'summary of the subject' of a film can be interpreted as that which is intended to inspire perception in the viewer, rather than as that which attempts to describe the film for the viewer, then 'Anticipation of the Night' is my 'summary of the subject.' " ---- Stan Brakhage

"..... In any case this extraordinary assault of images, so fiercely concentrated, so complex in their relationships, is not unlike the assault of a fugue. It gives one so dazzlingly much to watch and proceeds with such stunning swiftness, that the effect is extremely exciting, immensely demanding and yet neither bewildering nor mystifying for all that Brakhage has put much more into it than any viewer can expect to extract from a single seeing. If it was his intention to consider night and 'the world in relation to children', the night is clearer since the children (although the camera will rest briefly on a face or watch a whirling circle of them, briefly before cutting again) are themselves nearly as 'abstract' as the rushing trees or the opening door. "

---- James Sandoe

"Two factors dominate 'Anticipation of the Night': the contrast and interplay of light and shadow, night and day, sun and moon, doubly contrasted by the opposition of colors; and the geometrical pattern of motions, circular and semi-circular, centrifugal and centripetal, vertical and horizontal opposed linear motions..... However, the very elaborate interweaving of geometrical forms is but a means to an end made up of variations on a theme of light-shadow oppositions. The pattern of these variations is very complex and is narrowly tied up with the 'subject' of the film. The subject consists in a series of evocations derived from different luminous sources, more exactly a series of alternate transformations of light into various objects and forms and back into other lights..... 'Anticipation of the Night' gives the impression of being made of pieces, each somehow arbitrarily connected to the main theme by the recurrence of identical motifs. The relation of the different parts to the subject matter is not clear at all, and one has the feeling that, at times, the visual form is more an illustration of abstract ideas into discursive symbolism, than a genuine expression of feelings..... there is a very remarkable unifying factor in the film: the geometrical pattern which connects all shots and sequences. The purely formal aspect is so dominant that one is tempted to say that this pattern creates a sort of giant geometrical foil, made of landscapes, trees, nightlife scenes, natural and artificial lights, water symbolism, children, animals, carousals, moons, shadows, etc., all fused in vertiginous motions, which by these very movements give them new forms and integrate them in a dynamic whole, that is, a whole which derives its form from its very motion."

---- Bertrand Augst