

A Personal Note on the Work of Michel Auder

by Jonas Mekas

There are so many things I like about Michel Auder's video work that I don't know where to begin. My list of Auder's good qualities—according to me—represents my critique of what I don't like about most of “real life” video, and by “most” I mean about 99% of it. First of all, Auder has fun when he videotapes, he enjoys it, he likes it, he's totally with it. He videotapes only because he likes what he tapes. Next: Auder doesn't educate, doesn't teach, doesn't inform. When he makes “political” statements, they don't come from any party or wing or fashion: they come from his heart. He likes to look at things, reality, people. He is a voyeur par excellence – there can be no film or video artist without voyeurism. He sees—looks, peeps etc.—through windows, curtains, doorways, TV screens. He likes to be close, very close, and he achieves immediate intimacy with his “subjects.” They don't stare at him with serious—or suspicious—faces: they laugh, they communicate, they play. This “sickness,” this voyeurism enables him to see everything, to pick out little, invisible, but essential details, like a tuft of grass on the edge of a roof, trembling in a winter storm, invisible and unimportant to everybody, maybe to the whole world—but not to Auder; to him it's of monumental importance.

Auder likes to edit. His TV pieces—rescanned from TV—are very intensely edited, they are no longer TV. When one usually sees videos or films derived from TV, they look like filmed television. But not in Auder's videos. TV to Auder is just like any other reality—he totally changes it. And yes, Auder is a poet; he isn't a realist. A poet of moods, faces, situations, brief encounters, tragic moments of our miserable civilization, the suffering. And yes, also human vanity, ridiculousness. Cities, people, animals, culture, nature—everything is reflected in Auder's continuous video diaries that he has been keeping for over 20 years. When I used to visit Michel at Chelsea Hotel, around 1970, video camera is always there, always going, a part of the house, a part of his life, eyes, hands. It still is. A most magnificent love affair—no, not an affair: A life's obsession.

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