

Transcendental Cinema:

A treatise on the use of film as a tool of mystical understanding

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Introduction

Content & Context

Conscious Expansion

Subliminal Layering

Set & Setting

Technique & Application

Closure

Introduction

For over a century man has explored the creation of abstract imagery through the use of film. In that time many artists have utilized film's illusion of motion to develop painterly abstractions of color and light. Filmmakers like Len Lye, Harry Smith, Stan Brakhage and many others have painted directly on film, exposed film rolls to raw light, and developed pieces through optical printing that reveal the inherent nature of film's illusion of motion and chronology of form.

Since it's the birth of film a wide range of filmmakers have shown an interest in the symbolic and speculative practices of occult and magical ideologies. Kenneth Anger, Alejandro Jodorowsky, and others have depicted the symbolic imagery associated with occult practices in their films, to varying degrees of detail and accuracy. Not to mention the entire field of entertainment based cinema associated with the occult. Jodorowsky in particular reveals the hidden secrets of several occult orders in films like *El Topo* and *The Holy Mountain*. Though these filmmakers depict the symbols and images of the occult in their works none have yet developed films that give us an applicable tool for the practice of occult/magic rituals.

As we shall explore in this brief treatise, film (cinema, video, etc), possess a very powerful ability to alter one's state of consciousness, and with the correct variables one can in fact utilize this medium of film in order to achieve an expanded state of mental perception. Thus opening the doors of the mind to allow for the practical interaction with outside forces required in any occult ritual.

Though the use of occult film in the practice of ritualized magick can be approached by both the layman and the initiate this treatise has been designed for use by those with a more than passing knowledge of the variables involved in an occult ritual performance. The explanations of the rituals themselves are intended to be brief and only to cover the potential of use, not to outline any specific ritual or practice. Instead this text offers an

introduction to those who seek to utilize the occult film as a practical tool for the expansion of the conscious mind and the refocusing of the sense of self to a higher plane of perceptual reality.

It is my hope that students of occult philosophies will begin to find interest in the field of occult filmmaking, both as practitioners of occult rituals and as filmmakers developing works for the exploration of the human conscious.

Content & Context:

Though much of the outward understanding of many occult sciences speaks of a narrowing of the sensory input in order to channel specific energies for practical application, in fact, it is the combined field of sensory input created within the theater of the ritual (*see my Architecture of the Occult) that refocuses the mind in order for this expansion of perceptual awareness.

Our senses are the input devices that shape our perception of the world in which we exist. Much in the way that many drugs have the effect of retooling the input data at the neuron level of the brain we can control the actual source and form of the input data around us.

Technology has given us the ability to control our perceptual input via a wide range of devices. The mp3 player (ipod) is just another step in the chain of devices that have given mankind the ability to have access to music and other audio in a portable fashion. By blocking out our natural environment and replacing the sonic input field with a controlled audio source we are in affect changing the way our mind perceives the world around us as we travel through our day.

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Of the range of senses man possess the human eye is our most powerful and absolute input source. Culture itself has been shaped around this source of input. Almost every aspect of human civilization is rooted in the visual input field. We are surrounded by a stream of designed and controlled visual environments, from restaurants, shopping centers and institutions to the devices we own, the television we watch, film, cinema, everything we do in our lives has been designed for a specific visual aesthetic.

Yet the actual range of input for the eye is limited to a very narrow band of light. We see only a small percentage of the actual light around us and the band of color we have awareness of is tiny in relation to the actual spectrum of light that exists. Bees and other insects for instance see a range of color several times larger than humans.

Studies in the 1950s and 60s show that man has several levels of visual input, based on the clusters of cells in the human eye. Each area of cell structure occupies a different input field in order to process as much of the world around us as possible. Our periphery represents a separate set of inputs from our foreground vision.

Data received via the eye is broken into several paths, each going from the retina to different places within the brain. Data is filtered, dissected and stored by the brain in a continuous stream. The brain is also capable of "lying" to our conscious mind, filtering out data as it comes in, altering the data flow to make navigation and physical balance more stable for our bodies.

In conjunction with the visual input our mind overlaps the audio input from our ears to help create a higher resolution model of our environment. Here too the mind is capable of filtering data (eliminating unwanted reverb, etc) in order to create a more stable representation of our environment. As the audio and visual data are received the mind combines these two data streams in order for the body to react to its environment in the fastest and most reliable way (to avoid danger, hunt food, etc).

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In the context of the occult film the field of input data is something that is controlled by the filmmaker in order to further push the conscious mind out of its shell and toward a state of expanded self awareness. Utilizing abstract imagery to alienate the mind from its sense of self allows the filmmaker room to explore the vast sets of shifting color and light forms capable of achieving this push away from our sense of self.

Color represents to the mind a visual cue of emotion. Rhythm and form allow the filmmaker to convey complex sets of meaning through various shapes and shifting patterns within the color field. The viewer achieves a state similar to hypnotism by staring intently into the field of visual input. Blocking out the setting in which the viewer resides and making the imagery of the film fill the full visual field of the viewer creates an abstract landscape of movement in which the viewer is immersed.

This immersion within the visual field is the ideal state in which to approach the expansion of the mind. Having shed the input of the mundane world the viewer explores the abstract color-field. Moving within this field the viewer becomes free of the physical form and can explore the patterns and forms of abstraction that unfold within the film. Free from the convention of 3 dimensional space the developing film draws out the minds need to realize depth within the visual cortex. The mind in affect creates the illusion of 3 dimensional space out of the shifting field of color and form.

Conscious Expansion:

The state associated with the expansion of the conscious mind is something that is common to all forms of occult and magical practices. Freeing one's self from the body and pushing the state of mental perception outward away from the physical form is something that one finds as a common link between all forms of magic, both ancient and modern. By being able to perceive the larger pattern of life and movement in the universe to which we are connected and shape one can exercise the potential force of the will to change the evolution of movements to conform to ones will.

By becoming aware of this larger shape that life inhabits the mind loses its ability to focus on the concept of the ego, one's sense of self becomes unfocused and often gives in to the larger push of energy that one has become aware of perceptually. (Keep in mind that other wills are continually pushing and pulling at the fabric that is this larger sense of life force in the universe.) The overall form that this expanded sense of self-takes is what is regarded by most orders (is SYSTEMS a better term than orders?) as the "Holy Guardian Angel" or "Manifestation of God". In fact this being is your own expanded sense of self, an awareness that is much further beyond the state of normal perception, giving one an awareness of a much bigger picture of the form of life.

Many cultures have relied on the use of organic modifiers to control the structure of the perceptual input data of the mind. For 30,000 years man has found that by ingesting or smoking a variety of plants that we can alter our perceptions, retooling our ideas of self and broadening the concept of self into a larger shape. In the 20th century man found the key to synthesizing these active chemical modifiers in order to channel the energy of the will into reshaping who and what we are. Our long-term use of chemical modifications to the psychological soup of the mind is altering the path we are taking on the evolutionary journey of life.

The control of the visual input field in the use of occult ritual is nothing new. In the Dionysian rites of the ancient Greeks the cavernous halls of the temple were transformed into an orgiastic ritual of theater in order to push the minds senses to the limit and allowing the freedom from the physical form so often sought. Long underground caverns were used as complex stages to enact a theatrical performance for the initiates. The use of the ergot fungus (the organic source for LSD) on bread further amplified the performances for the initiates, creating an overloaded sensory experience.

Subliminal Layering:

The use of subliminal images in film dates back to the early days of cinema. Over a period of 3 decades Hollywood developed the use of subliminals to boost sales of popcorn and candy at the box office. By the 1960s subliminal imagery in film had gone from a crude flash of popcorn to sophisticated content hidden within the film scenery. At this point the US government declared the use of subliminals for commercial gain illegal.

Much study has led to various opinions on the effectiveness of subliminals in any media. Controversial trials over "back masking" (playing sounds in reverse within the musical mix) in heavy metal music in the 1980s led to a revived interest in the potential of subliminals as a control device. (Though subliminals have remained illegal for use in commercial media they have a very close (and legal) counterpart in "product placement.")

Subliminal imagery is believed to act on the subconscious rather than the conscious mind. Creating an awareness of the input data without the conscious mind's recognition of that data. By flashing some icon or word before the viewer at a rate too fast for the viewer to consciously recognize, the

subliminal has the effect of passively influencing the viewer's perceptions.

Within the context of the occult film the use of subliminals allows the viewer access to the incantation or words that are required to focus the mind on a specific task (say the conjuration of an entity). The viewer need not recite these words or even be aware of them, they merely allow their mind access to the stream of data being presented by the film and absorb the incoming data in a meditative state of awareness.

Through repetition of use and practice the viewer is able to achieve the expanded sense of transcendental self-awareness. The mind grows accustomed to the triggers of the input data, both in the subliminal and the liminal content of the film. The sound sets these two visual variables together to create a cooperative unit.

The form of the incantation often takes a repetitive cycle (especially in conjuration) in order to drive the mind out of its shell and focus the energy of the will on a specific entity or task. In the works of the Kabbalah these words are used in a more meditative way, like a mantra around which one contemplates some specific ideal. The form the subliminals take (quantity of repetition, location in the visual field, color, font, etc) and the content of their source (incantations, sigils, treatise, etc) decides the shape of the experience of the film.

Set & Setting (the surround):

Experiencing any film can take a variety of settings. From casually watching a DVD on the television to seeing a film on the "big screen." The set and setting of film viewing can change based on numerous variables including who is with the viewer, how loud the sound is and how big the image is. Outlined below are some basic guides in utilizing occult films in the research of the expanded mind.

As with any film experience "bigger and louder" is generally better, There is a reason people still go to the movie theater. By seeing a film on a screen large enough to fill the periphery of sight the viewer feels more fully immersed in the unfolding imagery. Being able to experience any occult film on a large projection screen with a full sound system is something that is ideal in its input control. On the other hand seeing an occult film in a public place is often a more difficult situation, especially for the actual practice of a given ritual. Viewing the film in the private of one's home or studio gives the viewer the chance to interact with the film. (Slowing down the playback and analyzing the frames, speeding up the play, controlling the volume.) One can also feel more relaxed in private and capable of intoning aloud or performing ritualized movements.

On preparing the setting of the viewing experience one should approach the experience as if they are performing a ritual itself. Cleanse the mind and body beforehand, perform relaxation exercises, select the appropriate time and day for the function at hand.

As we mention above presenting the film in a context that allows for the visual

field of the film to fill the entire range of peripheral vision is important. Unfortunately if the viewer is watching the film on an average television set the experience will be less than optimal. Even large screen sets fail to provide the resolution of image that is appropriate to the experience. Not to mention that both plasma/liquid crystal display and traditional CRT television can cause eye fatigue when viewing the image too closely. Projection is a much more optimal viewing experience for the presentation of an occult film. The reflective light off the screen is much less fatiguing to the human eye and the larger distance between the image and the viewer (due to the larger screen the viewer can sit further back and still have the film fill their peripheral field) creates an easier sense of 3 dimensional space within the evolving abstract form of the work.

The sound system is often as much a part of the experience of a film as the visual imagery. Proper sound (full range reproduction, relative fidelity and an appropriate setup for surround sound) can create a powerful release from the sense of perception, giving the viewer a greater sense of expanded awareness by creating a higher resolution experience in the viewing of the film.

In preparing the room for the performance/ritual/screening one should take all these variables into affect. It is not impossible for a less than perfect setting to still provide an extraordinary perceptual experience but generally the better prepared the set and setting of the ritual the more accurate the experience will be in any practical sense.

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Depending on the goal desired in terms of the practical application of the experience and the film chosen for its content the use of chemical modifiers to amplify the experience is an option.

In utilizing chemical modifiers to enhance the overall theater of incoming sensory input the viewer must take into account the active and passive requirements of the will in association with the task at hand.

For instance, often during a drug experience the mind becomes unable to focus on normal perceptual reality. If the conjuration being attempted requires a great force of will in order to maintain the confinement of an entity then allowing the input data to be altered in a way that unfocuses the will would be dangerous.

That said much of the experience of occult performance is about the exploration of the mental landscape in relation to the sensory input that is reality. Being unfocused is part of the shape of the experience.

Confronted with the vast array of chemical modifiers available one is most greatly assisted by a broad family of hallucinogenic such as LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, DMT (often in conjunction with an MAOI), and the softer experiences associated with cannabis (THC). (Beyond these there are a myriad of barely known experiences for conscious expansion including salvia,

datura, ahayuasca, etc.) *See my Guide to the Extrasensory Drug Experience.

Once some relational boundaries have been set for the drug to film interactions (what parts of the films content are effected by the chemical modifier tweaking the input of the senses on a neural level, etc) a path can be developed for expanding ones awareness beyond the perceptual limitations of both the physical form and the social ego.

As with any occult ritual experience there are risks involved. Playing with the mind's ability to focus specifically on the "now" is a risky undertaking and all attempts to extinguish potential problems during the ritual should be taken. Fear plays an important role in any experience and in combination with drug use can push us into a dark and antisocial place outside of the normal human mental landscape.

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Above and beyond all of the other variables that create a specific occult film experience the mental state of the viewer going into the presentation of the work will determine the total effectiveness of the experience. Not to exclude the use of negative energy in achieving ones goals during a ritual the mind should be at the least stable, free from confusion and not overwhelmed by particular emotional divergences. The capability for one not to fall into paranoid delusions or otherwise be distracted from the ritual at hand is of utmost importance in order to seek the path of light that leads out of the human form.

Technique & Application:

In order that the viewer can achieve the practical use of the occult film in ritual one must begin a series of exercises aimed at the unfocusing of the self and the projected focus of the goal of the ritual (conjuration, contemplation, etc).

Seated an appropriate distance from the screen the viewer must relax, close the eyes, and soften the mental landscape much in the way one beings a period of meditation. Allowing the mind to release the hold it has on any specific thought and allow all thoughts to drift away from conscious perception.

Once this state of relaxation has been reached, (prior to the beginning of the film) the viewer should then open their eyes and accustom their sight to the darkened room. It is of great importance that any distracting influence be eliminated prior to the preparations going into the ritual/screening.

As the mind clears and the film begins the viewer must (through practice) hold a particular set of focal depths in their range. Being aware of the full field of visual data and exploring simultaneously the evolving details of the rhythm, form and color of the film itself. Once this ability to master a two-fold path of

vision is achieved the viewer can then being the journey away from the self.

The mind has a natural tendency to force the perception of 3 dimensional space on any evolving set of color and form. This mental trickery on the mind's part can be used against its tendency to avoid the transcendental.

Utilizing the shortcomings of our mental paradigm to transcend the mundane facilities of perceptual awareness allows for the exploration of a broader aspect of time and space. Being free of the confinement of the body's natural tendencies to filter out the unknown gives the viewer the opportunity to come into contact with other entities (either through forced manifestation or by random exploration) and to become perceptually aware of a "larger" definition of the self as it manifests in the universe. (* See my Architecture of the Occult)

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The fundamental structure of the film is one of predefined controlled content. Every moment of color and form is something that was meant to be captured and represented. Even in the documentary form the filmmaker is the control agent for the evolving content. (Often in conjunction with others involved in the film making process).

Any film can control the emotional range of the viewer by presenting a narrative that the viewer relates to. Some narrative films are capable of creating glimpses of the transcendental in the viewer as certain realities become clear to the conscious. But these are merely moments of "I understand!" rather than landscapes offering a different perceptual reality to the viewer.

What the abstract possess as its strength in occult filmmaking is the breakdown of linear space and the visual cortex's ability to force the perception of 3 dimensional space on the incoming data stream (of visual and sonic input).

In the context of each culture there are certain preset ideas within any given community that place traditional roles on the nature of a given color and the mood, tone and emotional content that comes with that color. Even within the individual psyche there can be developmental mental associations with specific colors. These factors place an emotional charge on the use of color in a film.

Paired with the complex control of rhythmic and arrhythmic editing (in both visual editing and sound) the filmmaker can create visual experience that push the mind out of the sense of self into something other.

In terms of a direct translation of a ritual from the book to the abstraction of an occult film the work is based on the references to color, form and natural sympathies associated with these variables. In any occult tradition there exists a set of referable colors, forms, emotions and sound associations that together create the structure of an ecstatic experience. Vodoun, Masonry,

Kabbalism, Sufism, Transcendentalism, any background possesses a complex set of these sociographic architectures. The variables themselves create a complex form within the collective conscious of mankind.

By creating structural content development in relation to the variables of a given sociographic architecture within an occult film the filmmaker is able to project ideas into multiple layers of human sentient awareness simultaneously.

In the context of exploration for the viewer this means that the film can create a complex set of events that force the minds perceptual awareness into a broader definition of self. The achieved transcendental state depends on the content and context of the occult film presented.

Closure:

As the occult film ritual comes to an end the viewer finds their field of sensory input contracting back to that of everyday reality. This feeling of contraction can cause a claustrophobic reaction in some viewers. But after a few moments the perceptions we have grown accustomed to since birth settle back into place and leave us with a feeling of calm and wonder (much like the post meditative state). Once we have regained our sense of mental balance we can begin a short period of contemplation and rest in order to refocus our minds eye on the world at large.

After the experience of viewing an occult film some downtime is inevitable. Like any extrasensory experience the active (rather than passive) viewing of an occult film can be an overwhelming and sometimes exhausting endeavor. Much like the downtime associated with the use of many chemical modifiers this time should be used for rest, relaxation and contemplation of the experience itself.

During this period of meditative contemplation one should look to the variables of the experience as a guide for future development. (Particularly the ease of transition between the passive and active states of viewing.)

Often, with practice, this transition can become an intuitive and almost effortless action.

Each experience of an occult film will leave the viewer with a unique impression of the unfolding forms within the visual field. With multiple viewings a specific film can give a wide range of impressions based on the psychological preparedness of the viewer during the presentation. The versatile nature of some occult films will allow for their use in multiple practical occult applications.

Though the path away from the self is often clouded with uncertainty and distraction the occult film offers a magnificent tool to guide the viewer through the recesses of the mind and out into the abstraction of reality that our perceptions normally filter out.

In conclusion the work of occult filmmaking is an untapped resource for the practice of magickal and occult rituals in the 21st century. By using occult cinema as a tool for the transcendence of being the practical occultist can achieve as yet unheard of results in their exploration of the mysteries of the beyond.