

Episodes of Anomie

Recent Films by Gatten & Stead, Marias & Natkin, Price, Robinson and Worden
Wednesday, February 25, 2009 — Artists' Television Access

In response to the ceaselessness of the contemporary media deluge, many are merely subsumed. Some daring artists find ways to surf the transmitted waves and carve out spaces of connection and tranquility within the barrage in order to send out messages of hope. *Hold Me Now* continues Michael Robinson's project of exploring the poetics of loss and the dangers of mediated experience: daring to find emotion in the cold world of pop songs and televisual melodrama, he squeezes sentimentality from the mundane, prompting an agonizing response between pain and laughter. Equally maudlin, Eli Marias and Amos Natkin's *Daddy*—a bathetic scene of holiday domesticity recalling the familial nightmares of Luther Price—features an answering machine-bound dead beat dad baring his soul on a cold Christmas morning. Drawing on similar sources of pop-cultural pabulum, Fred Worden's *When Worlds Collude* plays like a structural re-edit of *Baywatch*. Finally, David Gatten and Jessie Stead's sublimely intermittent epic *Today!* plays as episodes in an open-ended and wide-eyed adventure series, accumulating meaning even as it becomes increasingly mysterious. In a late addition we include a reprise screening of Luther Price's nature documentary/tv melodrama mash-up *The Mongrel Sister!* (Steve Polta)

When Worlds Collude (2008) by Fred Worden; digital video, color, sound, 13 minutes, tape from the maker

An experimental film structured as a kind of specialized playground in which highly representational images are freed from their duties to refer to things outside of themselves. The images run free in their new lightness making unforeseeable, promiscuous connections with each other and developing an inexplicable, non-parsable plot line that runs along with all the urgency of any good thriller. When worlds collude, something outside of description is always just about to happen. (Fred Worden)

Daddy (2008) by Eli Marias and Amos Natkin; digital video, color, sound, 5 minutes, tape from Eli Marias

Earnest docu-drama advice in the arena of child rearing. Thanks to Nathan Cozzolino. (Eli Marias and Amos Natkin)

Eli Marias and Amos Natkin on YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/vhsmadness

Hold Me Now (2008) by Michael Robinson; digital video, color, sound, 5 minutes, tape from the maker

"Blinds the selected enemy creature so that it cannot move, attack or use any abilities. Blindness disappears if blinded creature is attacked. Spellpower determines the duration of effect (the spell does not work on undead, elemental and mechanical units)."

—List of Dark Magic, *Heroes of Might and Magic V*

Michael Robinson online: www.poisonberries.net

The Mongrel Sister (2007) by Luther Price; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes, from the maker

She is a woman. She is afraid of frogs. K-zupzupzup. The frog stares. The film stares back at us through the frog. Back to her. A '70s room in beige. The pond in the rain. A blunt ugly splice maybe sealed with spit. She looks away. Thapthapthap. Glistening green. Too much rouge, bruised by light on the left cheek. Zukzuzukpfft. Hairspray and yellowing walls on overexposed stock. The humming against the sound head. Tape through the gate or just some crud on the image. It licks its eyeball. The dirt particles sting the projector beam. Clackclackbdumdumffft. The lilypad ducks under the surface. Again she turns away. Exposed, warts and all. In the near future, perhaps "a Luther Price film" will consist of getting a speck of dust in your eye in some dark alley. Late at night. Far from home. That's a compliment. (Michael Sicinski: www.academichack.net/Views2007.htm)

Today! (2008) by David Gatten and Jessie Stead; digital video, color, sound, 37 minutes, tape from Jessie Stead

1. *What's your newest project about and what motivated you to make it?*

I am working with David Gatten on a film called *Today!* David and I met at the 45th AAFF [Ann Arbor Film Festival] and soon after began shooting improvised scenes on location at random. Highlights so far include cameo appearances by the United States Postal Service, a dance in Chicago with some abandoned candy and a recurring pre-occupation with a useful but problematically self-aggrandizing shopping bag.

2. *What's your approach and process for making this film?*

Today! is part transmutable daydream, part pseudo-haiku playground, part epic prop comedy and maybe more. We are working with a screenplay that is only one sentence, more specifically a slogan. Traditionally, most screenplays are many, many pages. And because we are on a tight budget, the screenplay must also multi-task as a prop and a stunt-double, luckily it is inexpensively reproduced.

3. *Is there anything unusual or different to how you've approached previous work?*

I am starring in *Today!*, in one of my most challenging roles to date as "one of the filmmakers who also stars in the film". *Today!* is also a collaboration with another filmmaker, so the film has "four eyes"... actually it has eight eyes because David and I both wear spectacles.

4. *What are the objectives of your project, both internally (for yourself) and externally (for the world)?*

The expectation of a film requiring a pre-determined objective is perhaps a situation *Today!* will be asking future audiences to mildly ponder. In fact, we are going out of our way (literally) to constantly relocate in order to keep our own objectives in constant question. Its perhaps that the presence of media potentially expands our consciousness in ways that we don't experience analogically, and how our imaginations function to inhabit the landscape created by the space in between immediate reality and represented experience.

5. *What are the most challenging aspects of your project content, structure and/or story-wise?*

There is a joy in the very misunderstanding of *Today!* which ironically seems to be easily mistaken for irresponsible filmmaking. The very risk of it being misunderstood is what we think makes it a quintessentially experimental film.

6. *Have you discovered anything unexpected or surprising so far on this project?*

Yes, discovery and unexpectedness *themselves* are notions we are purposefully embodying as the working creators of *Today!* and it is our hope to reinstate these as crucial experiential aspects of cinematic reception and therefore *all perception*... (Ann Arbor Film Festival, 2007: *Filmmaker Focus: Jessie Stead*. aaafilmfest.org/projections/archive/2008_02_01_archive.php)

www.jessiestead.com

www.davidgattenfilm.com