

## *The magic turn of making film*

His first studio Frans van de Staak had accommodated on the loft above his father's shoemakers workshop (in which he frequently assisted as a boy), furnished with an etching press, besides a 16 mm Bell & Howel film projector, 16 mm Paillard camera and a small offset printing press on which he printed the irregular issues of film magazine *Cineécri* he founded with his own contributions when he studied at the the Dutch Film academy [NFA] in the early sixties of the past century.

This multidisciplinary approach in working around as a graphic artist and painter was already manifest in his creative thinking from the outset and remains characteristic of his mature craftmanshship as an independent filmmaker: he never accepted assignments.

Labeling his style primarily as '*Indirect cinema*' in contrast to the well known *Direct cinema* (*Cinéma vérité*), although *realism* is absent reality is not completely out of focus [Straub: "...because he is Dziga Vertov's true heir."], but reduced to minimal proportions —such as a cloth waving in the wind, or traffic and other sounds in the environment, i.e. actual incidents interfering with the concentration of actors in their performance, causing hesitations and other distractions— which will probably also discomfort the audience at first sight.

However, this minimalism surpasses classical distinctions such as fiction and nonfiction, appearance and fact, natural and artificial, etc., making way for indirectness resolved to directness and then to indirectness again at an other level, like framing a blank canvas within a landscape creates an image on its own, not of the landscape but of its absence, like a hole, clearing the view of the spectator so to speak. Challenging the audience is by far not a typical but more precisely an *a*-typical landmark of his style, that is to say, an invitation to explore our own entanglements or disentanglements we daily experience in changing contexts as portrayed for example in *Glint* [1996], which therefore one cannot pinpoint as a disclosure of definite [discursive] meaning nor customize his idiosyncratic non-conformism as a familiar habitat residing your own phantasies.

Interviewed by Johan van de Keuken on the occasion of presenting *From the Labor of Baruch d'Espinoza* [1973], when asked for his motives for making films Frans van de Staak said: "I am driven by desire, not by anger" [*Skoop*, 1976 volume12, issue 10]. Basically, he continues, '...this desire arises from the tension between being alone and being together.'

So this desire is not characterized by its directedness or alleged object of satisfaction but by the interplay between indirect and direct, like in a scene an actress acts at first off [only dialogue] and later she becomes visible herself. This desire is the more intense, *the less direct its directedness...* 'For desiring implies an indirect way of communicating, a substantial distance.' For example, it is questionable wether the pursuit of happiness makes one happier indeed, on the hedonist account, or just its direct pursuit makes one unhappier, since not led by reason then, one is less free. [Spinoza]

Now the process of resolving indirect to directness and vice versa cannot be done by just representing desire by its immediate gratification, for that would block the continuous transition in one way or other and in so doing this would end the cycle of the interplay: "The most difficult and most intense part of desire is that part, which is the most indirect."

Direct representation one looks for in vain in films of Van de Staak. In stead of just consuming a classic romantic notion [notoriously self-directed as '*Sehnsucht*'], desiring as an intermediate act does not represent itself as such, but on the contrary requires a certain distance or abstraction from oneself [like in his non-figurative graphic art] which enables us conceiving of its poetic structure in time-space throughout the film as much more persistent than any representation whatsoever. From the perspective of Van de Staak's art of film making grasping this poetic film-sense is beyond recognition, for encoded as a mechanism of self-identification acquaintance by representation does not guide us in our endeavors, but lead us into the dark like a wicked signpost, since it is literally an obstacle in our *seeing*, that is, *desiring to the utmost*, persistent as the '*perfected Imperfect*'.