François Bovier

TONY MORGAN'S *PERFORMATIVE* CINEMA IN THE AGE OF THE "CINEMATIC TURN": "RELATIONAL FILMS" (1969–1970), "STRUCTURAL FILMS" (1969–1971) AND PRODUKT CINEMA (1971)[1]

Tony Morgan's oeuvre draws on a variety of media: painting, sculpture, performance art, publications, photography, video art, artists' cinema and film environments, as befits the principles underpinning *intermedia*[2] and the diverse international group, Fluxus, to which he was close. The British-born artist produced imaginary structures and recurring formal motifs which verged on the obsessive, breaking down the boundaries between the different means of expression he exploited at different times. This led him, in the late 1960s, to move from painting to performance art and adopt a variety of means of expression capable of reproduction and of producing multiples.

His work is arguably a prime example of the "cinematic turn" in contemporary art[3]. Research in the French-speaking world places this "turn" in the

[2] See Higgins, "*Intermedia*", *Something Else Press Newsletter* 1966, 1(1), reprinted in *Intermedia, Fluxus and the Something Else Press: Selected Writings of Dick Higgins*, ed. S. Clay, K. Friedman, New York 2018, pp. 25–28. From this perspective, it was hardly surprising that Tony Morgan took part in the exhibition and series of action events significantly entitled *Intermedia* in Heidelberg, in 1969. See *Intermedia '69*, eds. J. Goetze, K. Staeck, Heidelberg 1969.

[3] On the cinematic turn see, for example, E. Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*, Amsterdam 2013; *Polish Cine Art or the Cinematographic Turn in Polish Contemporary Art*, eds. J. Majmurek and Ł. Ronduda, Warsaw 2015.

late 1990s, when Jean-Christophe Royoux popularised the category of "exhibition cinema", and probably even coined the term to refer to the space between cinema and contemporary art open to experimentation[4]. However, to describe and conceptualise this type of interaction, we must return to the 1970s. Take, for example, a special issue of *Artforum* on artists' cinema that appeared in 1971[5] (and featured, on the front cover, a frame from *Tom Tom, the Piper's Son*, 1969/1971, by Ken Jacobs). Or the *New Forms in Film* exhibition mounted in Montreux in 1974 by American art critic Annette Michelson[6], part of which was included in the *A History of Cinema* event[7] curated by Peter Kubelka at the opening of the Pompidou Centre in Paris. Admittedly, numerous avant-garde artists have taken advantage of the *medium* of cinema since as far back as the 1920s and film has featured in exhibitions in galleries since the 1930s. Nevertheless, we should distinguish between different periods and avoid placing historic avant-gardes and contemporary art on the same artistic continuum. In our view, the dematerialisation of the artistic object, which Lucy Lippard attributes to the 1966–1972 period[8], was propelled by an increasing use of films in an exhibition context. The fluid and immaterial nature of the screening, the introduction of continuous loops and the need to activate the work via restrictive technical equipment all disrupt the exhibition medium. More specifically, film contributes to the tension in performance, minimalist, conceptual and post-conceptual art between the dematerialisation *and* the re-materialisation of the work[9], whether reconfigured via physicality, theatricality, the utterance of protocols or wordplay.

Admittedly, the use of categories such as "exhibition cinema" or "relational art" may seem anachronistic, as they date from the 1990s. Yet I find these methodological tools appropriate for describing Tony Morgan's film activities in the 1960s and 1970s, because it is clear that there has been a tendency for cinema to be absorbed into the contemporary art field in the context of the neo-avant-gardes, particularly in galleries that specialize in the acquisi-

---

[4] See J.-C. Royoux, "Pour un cinéma d'exposition", *Omnibus* 1997, 20, pp. 11–12; "Cinéma d'exposition: l'espacement de la durée", *Artpress* 2000, 262, pp. 36–41.

[5] See *Artforum* 1971, 10(1), ed. A. Michelson.

[6] See *New Forms in Film*, ed. A. Michelson, Montreux 1974 (exh. cat.).

[7] See *Une histoire du cinéma*, ed. P. Kubelka, Paris 1974. On the links between these two exhibitions, see A. Mey, *Dispositive and Event. Exhibitionary Experiments and Experimental Moving Images in Europe around 1970*, PhD Thesis, Lausanne 2017.

[8] See L. Lippard, *Six Years: Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966–1972*, New York 1973.

[9] On the process of dematerialisation and re-materialisation of the art object, see P. Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at all: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, London–New York 2013.

tion and sale of film and video. Cinema and contemporary art clearly interact, even if they do not yet merge through specific forms occupying an in-between space, such as installation art[10]. I will argue here that all the conditions for an "exhibition cinema" to exist had already been met in the early 1970s, but that it did not come about or become institutionalized, because of technical constraints (it was not until the 1990s that systems such as the LCD projector were used to deploy moving images in museums and art venues).

I thus subscribe to a "minor history" methodology, as articulated in such an exemplary manner by Branden W. Joseph [11], and apply it to Tony Morgan's trajectory and archives to offer a renewed reading of minimalism. For, indeed, who other than Tony Morgan could be a more minor and more disruptive figure? This is an approach that should, I believe, shed new light on structural, or minimalist, cinema, which is inseparable, in itself, from experimental expanded cinema and the counter-cultural public sphere.

My purpose here is to conceptualize this "turn" on the basis of Tony Morgan's "relational" films (as in relational art), within the context of expanded cinema (*Structural Films*, 1969–1971) and the cinema he used to screen films specifically designed for it (*Produkt Cinema*, 1971); these (para)cinematographic practices precede his use of video, particularly in staging performances. I shall use the notion of *displacement* – both in the sense of a vector of deterritorialization, following Deleuze and Guattari[12], and of leaving a site, for the Ancient Greek *ekstasis*, following numerous scholars and writers from Heidegger[13] to Bataille – as a determinant of the *intermedia* process of hybridization and transgression to create a link between these different aspects.

---

[10] On installation art, see C. Bishop, *Installation Art; A Critical History*, London 2005; *Installation Art*, eds. N. de Oliveira, N. Oxley, London 1994; A. R. Peterson, *Installation Art: Between Image and Stage*, Copenhagen 2015; J. Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, Berlin 2012; J. Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art*, Cambridge, MA 2001; E. Suderburg, *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, Minneapolis 2000.

[11] B. W. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts After Cage*, New York 2008.

[12] See G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis 1983 [1972]; *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis 1987 [1980].

[13] "*Temporality is the primordial 'outside-of-itself' in and for itself. We therefore call the phenomena of the future, the character of having been, and the Present, the 'ecstases' of temporality. … Temporality is essentially ecstatical. Temporality temporalizes itself primordially out of the future.*" M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Oxford/Cambridge 1962 [1927], p. 377, p. 380.

It should be noted that Tony Morgan's approach indiscriminately and inseparably wreaks havoc with two supports that are usually opposed: the white cube of the gallery[14] and the dark space of the cinema[15]. These models were effectively first developed from a critical perspective and were used both to contrast the commercial logic of galleries and to deconstruct the illusion of transparency commonly found in the films of the major studios. Moreover, these positions rarely featured together in publications of the time, each being confined to its own specific disciplinary field of study. It is only in retrospect that these paradigms have been constructed to form an adversarial relationship[16]. Tony Morgan problematizes the definition of the devices of the white cube and the black box by taking a new approach to their distinctive or constitutive features, and radically blurring their supposed identities. The opposition between the freedom of the spectator of an installation and the coercion, as it were, of a film screening – a reprise, in a sense, of the opposition between attraction and absorption as theorized in the field of cinema[17] or between theatricality and absorption as debated in the field of contemporary art[18] – seems in this case rather hard to sustain. The *displacement* strategy systematically mobilized by Tony Morgan reminds us that these two paradigms are merely theoretical constructions, which refer to a state of cinema and art that no longer existed as such in the late 1960s. The "between" events that he organizes between exhibitions at the Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf (more on this later) hyperbolically embody this displacement strategy, which could be defined as a *being-in-between*. Moreover, *displacement* also takes place between genders, with Tony Morgan, in his performances, challenging the stable assignment of a masculine or feminine identity through his performative character Herman, whom he explicitly conceives of as a "media being". I therefore understand *displacement* here not as it is used in the psychoanalytical lexicon, but rather as an attack strategy (rather than a defensive strategy), to some

---

[14] For a critical definition of the economical and falsely neutral gallery space, see B. O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space, Part 1", *Artforum* 1976, 14(7), pp. 24–30; "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space, Part 2: The Eye and the Spectator", *Artforum* 1976, 14(8), pp. 26–34; "Inside the White Cube, Part 3: Context as Content", *Artforum* 1976, 15(3), pp. 38–44.

[15] See J.-L. Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus", *Film Quarterly* 1974, 28(2), pp. 39–47; M. Pleynet and J. Thibaudeau, "Economic, Ideological, Formal", in: *May 1968 and Film Culture*, ed. S. Harvey, London 1978, pp. 155–156.

[16] See, for instance, L. Manovich, *Black Box – White Cube*, Berlin 2005.

[17] See T. Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Cinema, its Spectator, and the The Avant-Garde", *Wide Angle* 1986, 8, pp. 63–70.

[18] See M. Fried, "Art and Objecthood", *Artforum* 1967, 5, pp. 12–23.

extent similar to deconstruction: it seeks to undermine representations and preconceived ideas through a performative dynamic and an exacerbated theatricality.

DISPLACEMENTS – CINEMATISM, ENVIRONMENT, PERFORMANCE

The film device, characterised by movement, projection and reproducibility, is the ideal medium of expression for anyone wishing to work on the interstices and intervals between environments, and Tony Morgan's protean body of work clearly belongs to *intermedia* art. Tony Morgan started to work with 16mm film in 1967, when he shot *29*, which he described as a "student's dream"[19]. However, he was not to use this *medium* for performative purposes until the following year. In 1968, he set up the Nagrom Film production company with Daniel Spoerri to make *Resurrection*, which was co-produced with Creamcheese Düsseldorf Production, an artists' collective run by Günther Uecker, Lutz Mommartz and Ferdinand Kriwet.

To understand the intent of this film, it should be analysed within its context of production. Creamcheese[20], a Düsseldorf nightclub founded by Uecker, Kriwet and Mommartz on 20 July 1967, the name of which alludes to *Son of Suzy Creamcheese*, a song by Frank Zappa, provided an *environment* in the artistic sense of the term. Uecker took his inspiration from the performances by "The Exploding Plastic Inevitable", which he had attended at the Dom in New York[21]. The entryway into the club was lined with wallpaper by Kriwet; upon arrival, guests discovered a kinetic sculpture by Uecker (*Elektrische Garten*) and objects by Ferdinand Spindel attached to the wall; Heinz Mack had designed an aluminium bar; the wall behind the dancefloor was decorated with a gigantic painting by Gerhard Richter of a nude girl, and Adolf Luther had installed, in the same room, a sculpture of mirrors; inflated rubber ducks designed by Konrad Fischer-Lueg hung from the ceiling. During the concerts (predominantly Krautrock), Ferdinand Kri-

---

[19] See *Szene Rhein-Ruhr '72* [Bildende Kunst, Räume, Aktionen, Multimedia, Film, Fotografie, Musik, Architektur, Dukumentationen, Autoren-Lesungen, Diskussionforum], Essen 1972, under the entry for Tony Morgan.

[20] See T. Caianiello, *Der Lichtraum (Hommage à Fontana) und das Creamcheese im Museum Kunst Palast. Zur Musealisierung der Düsseldorfer Kunstszene der 1960er Jahre*, Bielefeld 2005, pp. 95–164. Groups such as Kraftwerk and Can, and artists such as Joseph Beuys and Valie EXPORT, regularly appeared at Creamcheese. Kriwet and Uecker published a "Creamcheese Manifesto" in 1968.

[21] See J. D. Ketner II, *Witness to Phenomenon: Group Zero and the Development of New Media in Postwar European Art*, New York–London 2018, p. 196.

wet flooded the public with light projections and Lutz Mommartz screened films and slides; 24 monitors also displayed live images. Performers such as Beuys started to appear in 1968. Creamcheese, a space for a total work of art, with sessions of expanded cinema and rock concerts, epitomised the celebratory nature of counterculture. *Resurrection* was created under the influence of this oppositional and transgressive public space. It should be remembered that this film (shot in 1968, in Krefeld, in Germany) traces the trajectory of a steak in reverse motion from the toilet seat, to the finished meal, to cows grazing in a meadow, not forgetting the abattoir[22]. Furthermore, and this is a telling story, when Tony Morgan and Daniel Spoerri first met in 1967 in Paris, Spoerri criticised the "sensible", clean look of the sculptures that Morgan had displayed at *Junge Englishe Bildhauer*, the exhibition curated by Harald Szeemann at the Kunsthalle Bern, contrasting his work with the "aesthetics of shit", which characterised French art[23]. Consequently, *Resurrection* can be found at the intersection between an "aesthetics of shit" and the Creamcheese nightclub. On the one hand, the aim is to make art "dirty" – the materiality of faecal matter and meat is contrasted with the formal purity of young British sculpture. The film is processual in the sense that it reveals a production and consumption process and traces it back. On the other hand, it is arguably a performance much more akin to a "happening" than to a traditional exhibition (as when it was screened at 4. documenta, in 1968). *Resurrection* was first screened in October 1968 at Creamcheese, alongside *Hot Apple* (1968) and *Hello Goodbye* (1968) by Tony Morgan. In this context, the film was clearly considered to be a performance[24]. In May-June 1969, when Tony Morgan participated in *Intermedia '69* in Heidelberg, he showed the film again alongside a number of actions, particularly *Fifteen Hung Red*, a performance consisting of hanging paint to harden, which had already been shown at the Indica Gallery in 1967; *Four Hung Grass*; and *Block of People*, with Morgan signing the wall of a student hall of residence[25]. This film formed part of a series of performance events,

---

[22] In 1982, Tony Morgan described his film, which he had renamed *Beefsteak*, in these words: "The *Beefsteak* Film is a universal film in that its main subject is something we all need, *food*. In 1969 Daniel Spoerri opened his long wished restaurant in Düsseldorf. In Paris 1967 I had jokingly agreed with Daniel to film the Life Story of a Beefsteak. On seeing this film in 1982 again I hope that the public will think twice before eating *meat*." (Transcript by Tony Morgan, March 1982, TM Studio)

[23] See T. Morgan, "The Media Explosive Years 1960–1980", *Mediamatic* 1986, 1(1), p. 23.

[24] Tony Morgan screened *Suntan* at Creamcheese in 1969. See *Tony Morgan: Some Films (and Videos) 1969–1973*, London 2011, n. p.

[25] See *Intermedia '69*, eds. J. Goetze, K. Staeck, Heidelberg 1969. The sub-header of the catalogue, which opened with the afore-mentioned manifesto by Dick Higgins, clearly

with the apotheosis of this type of performance art possibly represented by the restaurant opened by Spoerri in Düsseldorf, in 1969.

Tony Morgan, represented by Galerie Denise René-Hans Meyer, in Düsseldorf, an institutional artistic and economic network (he also showed films at this gallery[26]), regularly participated in *intermedia* events. This was particularly the case at Aktionsraum 1, an alternative space for performance art. In 1969, Eva Madelung, Alfred Gulden and Peter Nemetschek rented a former factory in Munich, which hosted artists and bands. This collective venue favoured performative practices and collaborative projects and fostered social criticism of the function of art. In 1969, it was the venue for actions by Klaus Rinke and Ben Vautier, a performance of music by Paul and Limpe Fuchs, performances by Hermann Nitsch, Günter Brus and Dieter Meier – outrageousness and provocation are clear for all to see, particularly in the interventions by the Viennese Actionists. On 18 and 19 October 1969, this space was inaugurated with interventions by Klaus Rinke, Lindow-Borlat [Christian Lindow and Clement Borlat] and Tony Morgan. On 18 October, Morgan exhibited *Seven Hung Yellow* (first shown at the Indica Gallery)[27] and *Grass Mass*; at 8 pm, he projected *The Rock* (1969), *The Can* (1969), *Resurrection* (1968), *Poured Red* (1969), *Black Corner* (1969), *Floor Drip* (1969), *Paper Drop* (1969) and *Grass* (1969); he also offered interventions at the space, with *Covered Window Piece*[28] and *Poured Red Corner Piece*[29]. Finally, on 18 and 19 October, he exhibited film environments (*Brick Wall Projection* and *Grass Projection*, consisting of the continuous projection of a patch of grass on a stone wall and[30] onto the bare walls of the alternative space), shot a film (*Munich People*) and put on a performance

---

demonstrates a desire to hybridise practices: "environment, objekte, film, aktionen, happening, exp. musik, information".

[26] In February 1970, a solo exhibition was organised of Tony Morgan, who presented *Munich People* and *The Corner*, alongside some screen prints which were for sale (*Munich Grass* and *Munich Wall*).

[27] Tony Morgan said about this work of hardened paint: "I wanted to split up the single object as in an explosion, each piece being something to do with the first one but not a replica." *Aktionsraum 1*, Munich 1969, p. 30.

[28] "brown paper nailed over a window so that no-one could see out. you need light to look out of a window you need light to look in."

[29] "this piece could not be there without walls. i like that it needs the walls in order to come down. the film *black corner* describes a corner through light: the poured red piece describes a corner through paint."

[30] Tony Morgan thought deeply about the status of the projector, which he compared with that of the camera: "a projector is a sort of reverse camera, it can see things with its own light but has no way of recording what it has seen. it can only see when its light is on. it cannot record something. a projector can only be actual. what it sees is reality itself".

(*People's Presence*). The exhibition space looked like a recording studio, reversing the passivity of viewing a film in a darkened room. *Munich People*, which Tony Morgan described as "a record of the people who came into the building and accepted to be documented"[31], thus turned the exhibition visitor into a film actor during a shoot. The object displayed is not completed but is in the process of completion; it will only be seen *after* the exhibition (it was broadcast on the German broadcasting network, WDR, and included in *Information*, an exhibition held at the MoMA in 1970). The film depends on the presence of the spectator, who becomes the very subject of the film – visitors, shot from the front in close-up, provide their names and the date and time when they were filmed. The issue is not so much to document an action or fix the identity of these people as to reverse the roles of the subject of the viewing and the perceived object. *People's Presence*, which Morgan referred to as a "confrontation piece", is a variation on this device, paradoxically without a camera. Tony Morgan considered this performance to be a process of abolishing time, as he described it in the Aktionsraum 1 catalogue:

> The film *Munich People* is about you in front of the camera and me behind the camera looking at you. Now in the piece *People's Presence* there is nothing between you and I. Only you in front of me and I in front of you and you in front of the person next to you. *People's Presence* is about people's presence. Face to face. Vis-a-vis.
> People confronted with people. POINT BLANK. Nothing in between. I look for that special vacuum between you and I where we are both at ease and free from time. To find together that moment where there is no time. That moment of ease and beautiful emptiness where we touch for a second or may be longer the no time land of awareness of being present.
> In *People's Presence* I stare at you for sixty seconds or more. There is nothing between us. What we find in that time, whether that time can be opened up to no time is why I make the piece *People's Presence*.[32]

By doing without a camera, Tony Morgan was able to reduce his work to a simple meeting, exchange or mutual gaze: to a phenomenological experience of being-with [*Mitsein*] and being-there [*Dasein*], to use Heidegger's ontological categories – or a pure "relational" experience, in terms of the artistic practices promoted by Nicolas Bourriaud[33]. He focuses on relationships between people, people who are nevertheless well-known public figures. *Relational* art re-

---

[31] Documentation for Aktionsraum, 1969, n. p., Tony Morgan's personal archives, TM Studio.

[32] Documentation for Aktionsraum, n. p.

[33] See N. Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle*, Dijon 2001.

lies, as one of its conditions of existence, on a situated, or *situational* art. Tony Morgan, not without irony, thus highlights the need to *create situations*, without which relational or social and even "sociological art" could not exist.

Tony Morgan, who is part of an informal network of artists closely or remotely linked to Fluxus, is fully committed to the counter-cultural scene in Düsseldorf: he finds resonances with the idea of a network whose ramifications know no end (as in Robert Filliou's "The Eternal Network"[34]), and the specific link of his work with rock music and performance allows him to re-anchor his own artistic approach in an "aesthetics of shit". His interest in mediums such as film and video is thus boosted by their integration into festive evenings and performances. *Düsseldorf ist ein guter Platz zum schlafen* (1972), a film from Tony Morgan and Robert Filliou, shot by Christopher Kohlhöfer, which shows Filliou lying on a street pavement, pretending to be asleep, is exemplary in this respect: Morgan appropriates and realizes a project conceived with Robert Filliou, showing the artist himself *in situ* but at the same time absent from the streets of Düsseldorf and its counter-cultural stage, because he is asleep or rather mimicking sleep.

The vis-à-vis device explored in *People's Presence* was also investigated when Tony Morgan participated in an exhibition entitled *Strategy: Get Arts*, at the Edinburgh International Festival, from 23 August to 12 September 1970, when he again presented *Seven Hung Yellow* alongside some polyester sculptures. Here, he basically showed films involving spectator participation, namely *Munich People* (1969), *Us* (1969)[35], *Please Put Your Tongue Out* (*Düsseldorf Tongues 1970*, 1970)[36] and *Vis-a-Vis* (1970)[37]. In the introduction

---

[34] On the "Eternal Network" ["la Fête permanente" in French] that replaces the movements of the historical avant-gardes in Robert Filliou's system of thought, elaborated in collaboration with George Brecht, see *Eternal Network. A Mail Art Anthology*, ed. C. Welch, Calgary 1995; R. Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, Cologne 1970.

[35] Tony Morgan described his film in the following terms: "In my film 'Us' [Ursula Bornhauser] I filmed Usu, my girlfriend, for ten seconds every three days during six weeks in Spain and she filmed me in the same way." (Edinburgh International Festival, *Strategy: Get Arts*, Edinburgh 1970, n. p.)

[36] In the case of *Please Put Your Tongue out*, Morgan wrote: "Having been to the doctor a week or so before the opening of the 'Between' show in the Kunsthalle on the 14th and 15th of February, the doctor had said something to me in German which I had not understood. He kept mumbling 'Zunge zunge zunge raus! [Bitte stricken Sie di Zunge aus]' … So during the *Between* show I invited every visitor to sit in a chair and I mumbled "Zunge zunge zunge raus!" at them. This film was the result of a documentation of about 100 visitors." (*Strategy: Get Arts*, n. p.)

[37] "In the film *Vis-à-vis* two spectators to my documentation on the 10th and 11th of March 1970 in the Kunstverein in Munich, were invited to sit opposite each other. I filmed

to the catalogue, under "People as Art", he defined a new form of relationship between the spectator/actor and the camera, the ultimate purpose of which appeared to be that of performance. He wrote:

> In the film *Munich People* the camera really looks at the people. The People's presence is felt for they feel looked at by the camera. They do not avoid its presence. It is evident in *Munich People* that the camera sees far more than I could have ever whished to see [*sic*]. It is a straight portrayal of the presence of eighty or so people in front of the presence of the camera. People as people. People as Art.[38]

In the performance, the artist's body becomes the medium of the work. In Tony Morgan's participatory films (with or without a camera!), the spectators/actors create the work – the *public* emerges *as art.* Using the technique of mise en abyme that he had already explored during his participation in Aktionsraum 1, Tony Morgan shot a film during *Strategy: Get Arts*, which he entitled *Description 1970 Düsseldorf* (1970) [fig. 1]. This time, he docu-

1. Joseph Beuys and Usu in *Description 1970* (film 16 mm, 1970), Tony Morgan, © TM Estate

them looking closely at one another in profile. I repeated this system with each pair of visitors. There are about eighty people in the film. The sound is a free phrase by each visitor which is synchronised with their image." (*Strategy: Get Arts*, n. p.)

[38] Tony Morgan, at the Edinburgh International Festival, *Strategy: Get Arts*, Edinburgh 1970, n. p.

mented the organisers and artists (Beuys, Polke, Filliou, Rincke, Palermo, etc.) invited to Düsseldorf on 23 April 1970, showing them in their relationships as a couple; on the soundtrack, the woman (shot in profile) described the man (shot full-face). This allowed him to contrast the limits of verbal description with the multifaceted expressiveness and polysemy of filmed images which are ambiguous and, in a sense, opaque.

These films, which were shot in alternative art spaces and designed for exhibition spaces, are a kind of *relational* cinema (this is not a term that Tony Morgan uses, as far as I am aware) and a further institutional criticism of art, in the sense used by Benjamin Buchloch[39] to describe certain artistic practices that aim at undermining the institution of contemporary art from its very place of enunciation. They involve bringing together a film operator and sound recorders, on the one hand, and an audience who do not know how they are supposed to interact with this film crew on the other. The commercial ideological space of the *white cube* is thus both revealed and suspended. The conventions of the gallery and its market economy are parodied here, in line with the logic of Fluxus, an informal group not to be confused with those artists who, for Buchloch, embody an institutional critique of contemporary art and its legitimization. In Tony Morgan's relational films, the supposed neutrality of the white cube is deactivated, and the gallery is transformed into a film studio. The movements and the moving gaze of the spectator who is merely passing through are contradicted by the fixity imposed upon him, the pause he must take. The silence commonplace in museums and exhibition spaces is contradicted by an injunction to the actor to reveal his identity, an injunction directed rather at his companions who do so, and who should be all the more silent according to the social conventions of the time.

TONY MORGAN'S "STRUCTURAL FILMS"

Between 1969 and 1971, Tony Morgan wrote and directed a series of "structural films" that can be described, retrospectively[40], as film installations that destabilise the impersonal ethos of minimalism through their performative nature. A diagram from 1971, which Tony Morgan later used as a header for writing paper [fig. 2], likens a series of "structural films" to a *film environment*. Three 16 mm projectors are placed on plinths in a *white cube*. The first pro-

---

[39] See B. H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions", *October* 1990, 55, pp. 105–143.

[40] As far as I know, "installation" is a term only used since the 1980s. In the 1960s, "environment" was more commonly used.
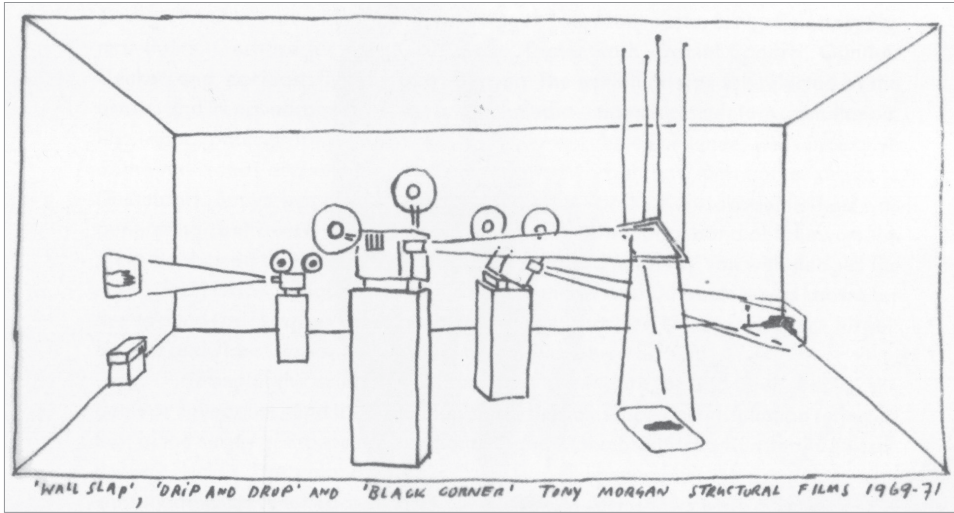
2. "Structural Films" diagram (1969–1971), Tony Morgan, © Tony Morgan Estate

jects a film against a mirror hung from the ceiling of the gallery with the image reflected on the ground. The work is entitled *Drip and Drop*, and combines two films, *Floor Drip* (1969) and *Paper Drop* (1969) [fig. 3], on a single reel. The second projector screens an image straight onto the wall, a short distance away – this is *Wall Slap* (1971) [fig. 4]. The third projector shows a film at the intersection of the two walls, with the image occupying the ground and the lower part of the walls – this work is called *Black Corner* (1969) [fig. 5]. The circular temporality of the loop contributes to the repetitive and jerky nature of the filmed actions. Paint drips onto the floor (*Floor Drip*), a handkerchief falls (*Paper Drop*), a hand slaps a wall (*Wall Slap*, the only "structural film" to have a soundtrack), a corner of the wall is painted in black and then in white (*Black Corner*). This film environment was probably presented in a similar configuration at Produkt Cinema, on 15 April 1971[41]; the 1969 films, as we have already said, were produced for Tony Morgan's intervention at Aktionsraum 1. This *environment* reconfigures individual films into a new whole, in a relationship of simultaneity and reciprocity. The "neutral space" of the *white cube* is transformed into a synthetic "work" subject to various modes of projection, and related to the actions documented or, more accurately, deliberately reconstituted for the camera (*Paper Drop*, for example, took its inspiration from a real situation, when a handkerchief was accidentally dropped and Tony Morgan saw
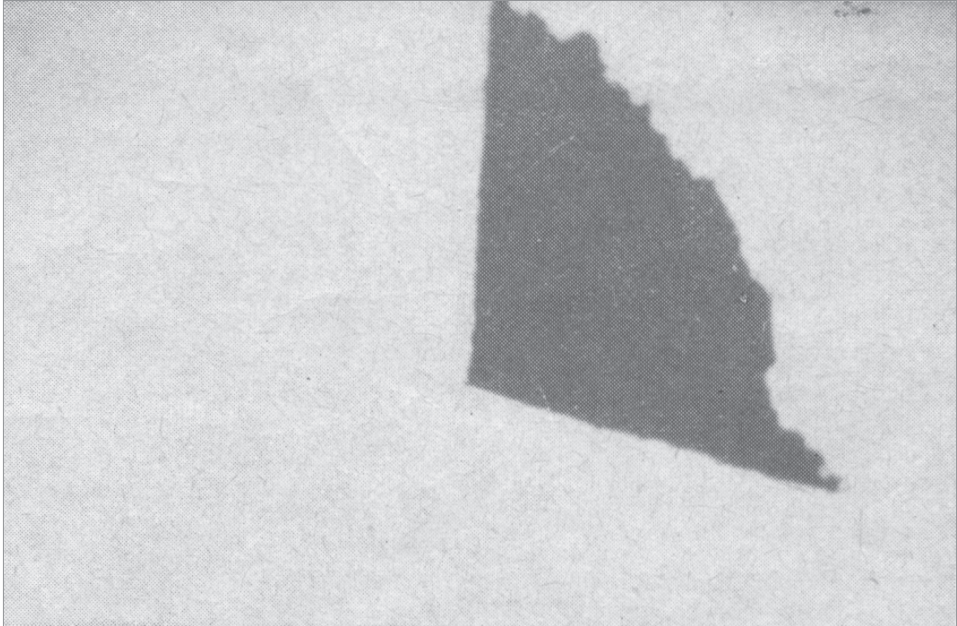
---

[41] See the aforementioned brochures: all these films were presented at Produkt Cinema on 15 April 1971.
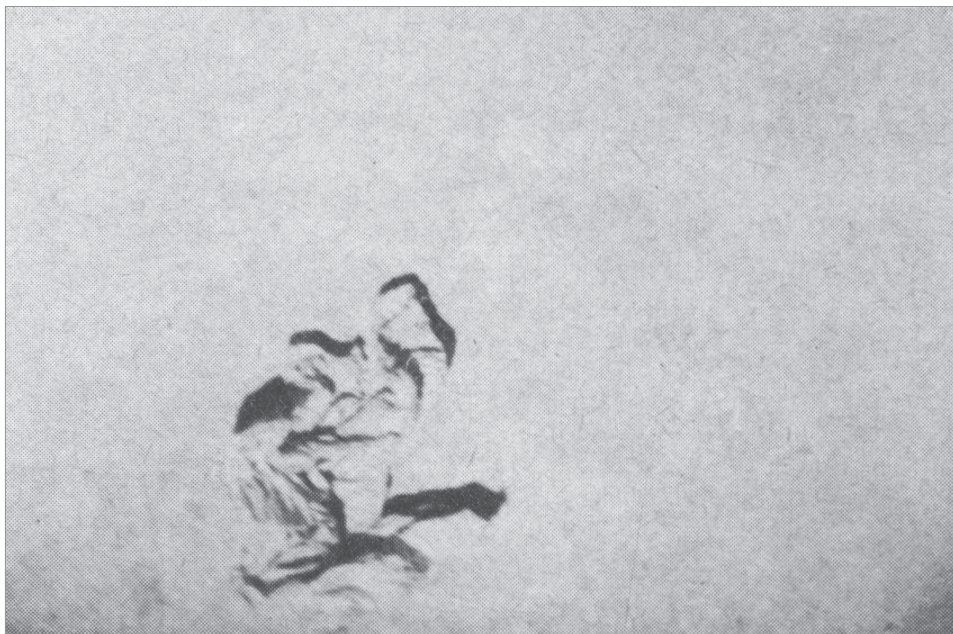
3. *Paper Drop* (film 16 mm, 1969), Tony Morgan, © Tony Morgan Estate
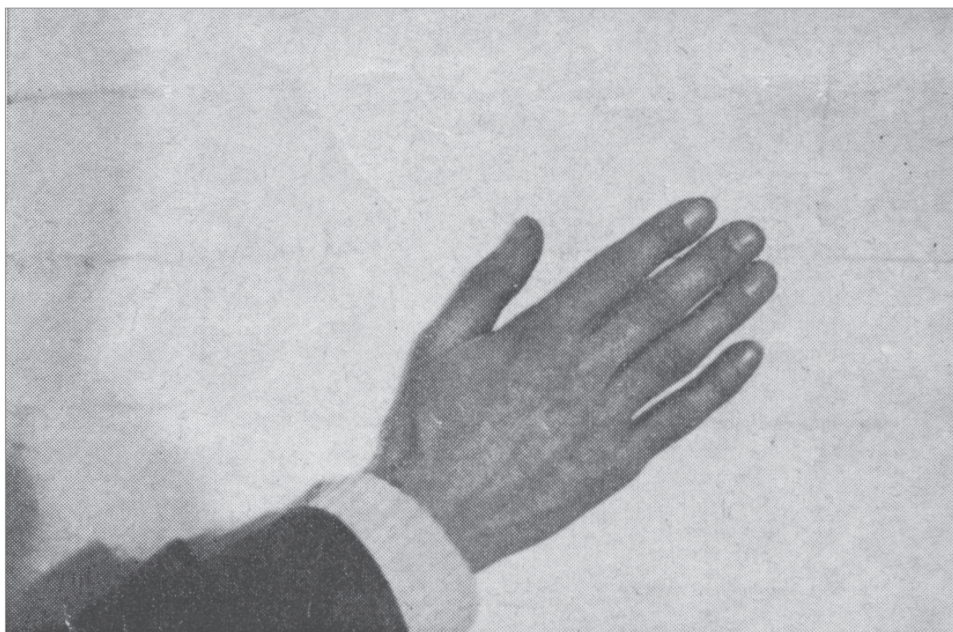
4. *Wall Slap* (film 16 mm, 1971), Tony Morgan, © Tony Morgan Estate

5. *Black Corner* (film 16 mm, 1969), Tony Morgan, © Tony Morgan Estate

this as a soft "sculpture"). Vertical projection is associated with the act of falling, whether the object is a handkerchief dropped on the ground or paint dripping without our being able to observe the effects of its accumulation (which remains off-screen, because of tight framing) – this would appear to be a clear reference to Pollock's *dripping* and *action painting*. Horizontal projection is associated with the action of slapping a wall, the hand alluding to the action of grasping, one variant of the workshop performances given by different (post-) minimalist artists (I am thinking in particular of *Hand Catching Lead* and *Hands Scraping*, 1968, by Richard Serra, and some of Bruce Nauman's actions, such as *Bouncing in the Corner*, 1968); the circular rhythm of the loop accentuates the effects of repetition and destroys any tension in the action (unlike the more "dramaturgical" films of Serra or video works of Nauman). Diagonal projection breaks with the rectangular shape of the screen (as assessed and tested by Serra in *Frame*, 1969) and contradicts the flat and centred space of Alberti's metaphorical window on the world; the act of gradually covering the field framed by the camera lens with paint, in fits and starts by starting and stopping the camera (*stop-motion animation*), moving from one wall to the other before covering the ground, overrides any unitary perception of space. The film machinery, reconfigured through a fragmented and repetitive environment, jams, blocks and gets seized up, revealing simple events, movements guided by action

and objects and materials which enter an entropic process (falling, covering and erasing). The discontinuity in each of these films, based on the repetition of an identical single gesture, through a compulsive iteration effect and accumulation through the editing process, makes these "structural films" into a machine to destroy the symbolic order, undermining the mission of arthouse cinema to be figurative, signify and narrate.

There is clearly a certain irony, even contentiousness, in using the category "structural film" to describe these film environments. The term "structural film" is closely linked to an article by P. Adams Sitney, which appeared in *Film Culture*[42] in 1969, where he described a new type of Elementarism in film forms (he systematically avoided the term "minimalism", a potentially apt expression in this context). In so doing, Sitney sought to identify a paradigm shift in North American experimental cinema practices involving a rejection of expressionism, subjectivity and the interiority of the subject. Sitney's definition comes from an insider's view of independent American cinema, which he tends to see as an autonomous entity, disassociating it from the contemporary art scene. Opposition to this model soon became apparent, in the voice of George Maciunas[43], the spokesman for Fluxus, or as a direct result of these practices (Peter Gidal[44] and Malcolm Le Grice[45] in Great Britain). It is very likely that Tony Morgan, who inaugurated this series of film environments in 1969, chose this name deliberately to go against the grain. Evidently, the decision to call this entire cycle "structural films" in 1971, is an antiphrase of Sitney's definition. Yet, significantly, the underpinnings of Tony Morgan's structural films undermine all Sitney's attempts at classification and definition, which tend to present these practices as quintessential cinema, the purest expression of film as a medium (Clement Greenberg's view of the specificity of the *medium* was an important reference point for Sitney). The fact that Tony Morgan makes multiple reference to mediums other than film (namely painting, sculpture and performance) is only of minor relevance here. Effectively, his film environments, by using a double displacement on the spatial level and involving performance,

[42] See P. A. Sitney, "Structural Film", *Film Culture* 1969, 47, pp. 1–10. The American theoretician advocated a reduction in the structures of the work combined with impersonalising the film utterance, by isolating three recurrent formal procedures: loop printing, the flicker effect and the re-photography.

[43] See G. Maciunas, "Some Comments on 'Structural Film' (by P. Adams Sitney)", in: *Film Culture Reader*, ed. P. A. Sitney, New York 1970, p. 349.

[44] See P. Gidal's refinements, "Definition and Theory of the Current Avant Garde: Materialist/Structural Film, *Studio International* 1974, 187(963), pp. 53–56.

[45] See M. Le Grice, "The History We Need", in: *Film as Film: Formal Experiment in Film, 1910–1975*, London 1979, pp. 113–117.

question Sitney's assumptions even more radically, assumptions that are not limited to the films he discusses, as it is hard to dissociate "structural cinema" from "expanded cinema" and audio-visual performances.

Firstly, film environment form presupposes a spatialisation of projection which runs diametrically counter to the concentration of attention on a screen. Tony Morgan's "structural films", even when presented independently of each other, appear to dislocate representation, with attention being paid simultaneously to the projected image, the projection medium, the projector itself and the spectator's body moving through the exhibition space. In any case, the film cannot stand alone, and its form derives from the exhibition space in which it is shown. Tony Morgan expressed this clearly when he described *Black Corner* in the following terms:

> A structural film that can only be shown in a corner. I painted the corner black and then I painted it white which was painting out light with darkness. It had a relationship to sculpture as much to painting, so it was questioning new ground.[46]
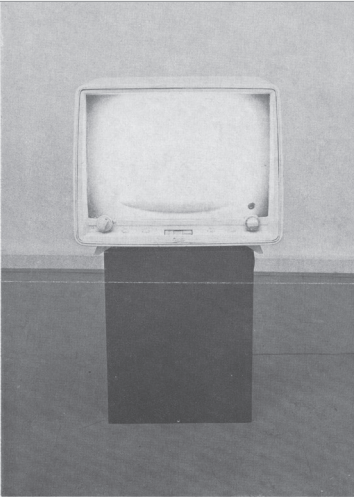
This new territory can be described as a process of spatialising projection, reconfigured in the exhibition space (as are the primary colours of the film – light and dark, black and white). Secondly, the autonomy of the film's structure is contradicted by the staging of occasional repetitive movements, reflecting bodily actions. Any attempt to investigate the elementary structures or constituent features of the film is challenged by the purposeless theatricality of the movements that the film manages, at most, to mechanise and fragment through framing (which has a metonymic function) and editing (which heightens the discontinuity or absence of closure of the action). "Structural film", as Sitney defines it, is based on a systematic exploration of filmic processes, which invite the viewer to experience phenomenologically the act of perception and the activity of intentionality, and even provide a lesson in seeing. There is none of this present in Morgan's *Structural Films*: all action is incidental or insignificant, and the short, jerky rhythm of the shots and the looping process prevent the viewer's attention from being focused on his or her own act of perception. The paradigm of action is essential at this point. The jamming movement is twofold: the multiple spatialisation of films dislocates the linear and centred projection mechanism that characterises the cinema experience in a movie theatre (be it a film club, a commercial theatre or an alternative venue). The film environment, which does not distinguish, in broad terms, between the medium and the world of the representation, the plinth and the sculpture, the frame and the painting, questions the neutrality of the space of the *white cube*.

---

[46] R. Buschmann, "Interview with Tony Morgan", 14 February 1999, p. 7, transcript, Tony Morgan's personal archives (TM Studio).

This failure to differentiate between cinema auditorium and exhibition space, on the one hand, and the work and the environment in which it appears, on the other, was pushed to its limits in a project that is still relatively unknown – Tony Morgan's *Produkt Cinema* (1971).

PRODUKT CINEMA, A FILM GALLERY FOR WORKS SHOWN *IN SITU*

The programmes documenting the activities of the projection, exhibition and production room describe Produkt Cinema (im Keller) as "An open studio which will produce and show its own film pieces (amongst other things)" [fig. 6]. The project consisted of producing artists' films and envi-

PRODUKT CINEMA

An open studio which will produce and show its own film pieces (amongst other things).

Produkt Film 1

„A FLOWER A DAY KEEPS THE DOGS AT BAY" by Tony Morgan.
From 12th February to 28th February 1971 at 18.00 hrs each day.
A documentation on film of 17 flower changes.

PROMOTIONAL OPENING

AT 18.00 HRS ON 12TH FEBRUARY (each day at 18.00 hrs until the 28th February) with works donated by artists towards Produkt Cinema.

In the next months (for a year or so) Produkt Cinema will be showing, almost every day at 18.00 hrs, film pieces by artists and film makers.

PRODUKT CINEMA (IM KELLER)   4 DÜSSELDORF
phone: düsseldorf 788928   Bergerstraße 6

6. Produkt Cinema (im Keller), film program, 1971,
© Tony Morgan Estate

ronments and then showing them in this explicitly purpose-designed space. The room is a work in itself, as are Tony Morgan's film environments. The *white cube* is reconfigured by the constraints imposed by projecting films, without reproducing the institutional nature of the darkened room. Tony Morgan's memos clearly reveal his desire to redesign the architecture of the cinema auditorium, its economics and its functionality. This led him to write:

> *The Space needed*
> To be on the lines of a shop in the centre of the town. A rectangular room with a door onto the street. The front of the shop being blacked out. The room being painted white.
> *Running costs*
> The monthly shows must be able to pay for themselves. This could be achieved through a double barreled entrance fee so:
> 1) A fee charged for entrance which would include joining a cinema club.
> 2) On paying this entrance fee one would receive the monthly catalogue.
> One could also create a series of Film Props. These could be objects made by film-makers in connection with film. This could be on sale in connection with each show. …
> *Production*
> Each production will be a work which is carried out between myself and an invited guest. [handwritten note][47]

The decision to take over a former warehouse was hardly surprising in art circles at the end of the 1960s – several galleries had already occupied former shops and Claes Oldenburg systematically worked in this type of building. By painting the outer walls of the rectangular room black and the inner ones white, Tony Morgan highlighted the autonomy of the *white cube* space – while ironically signaling the conventions of the darkened room outside of the exhibition space. His aim was to make the project self-financing, so he capitalised on entrance ticket receipts (as in a normal cinema) and, more originally, he designed and marketed objects related to the film presented. This allowed him to use the film to finance the gallery's market economy, with any surplus funds earmarked for film production. Finally, this production and distribution structure deconstructed his principle of self-production – the initial (uncompleted) project involved inaugurating the space with a film that Robert Filliou should have produced for the occasion [fig. 7], illustrating both

---

[47] T. Morgan, "Product Cinema", transcript, *Product Cinema* file, Tony Morgan's personal archives, TM Studio.
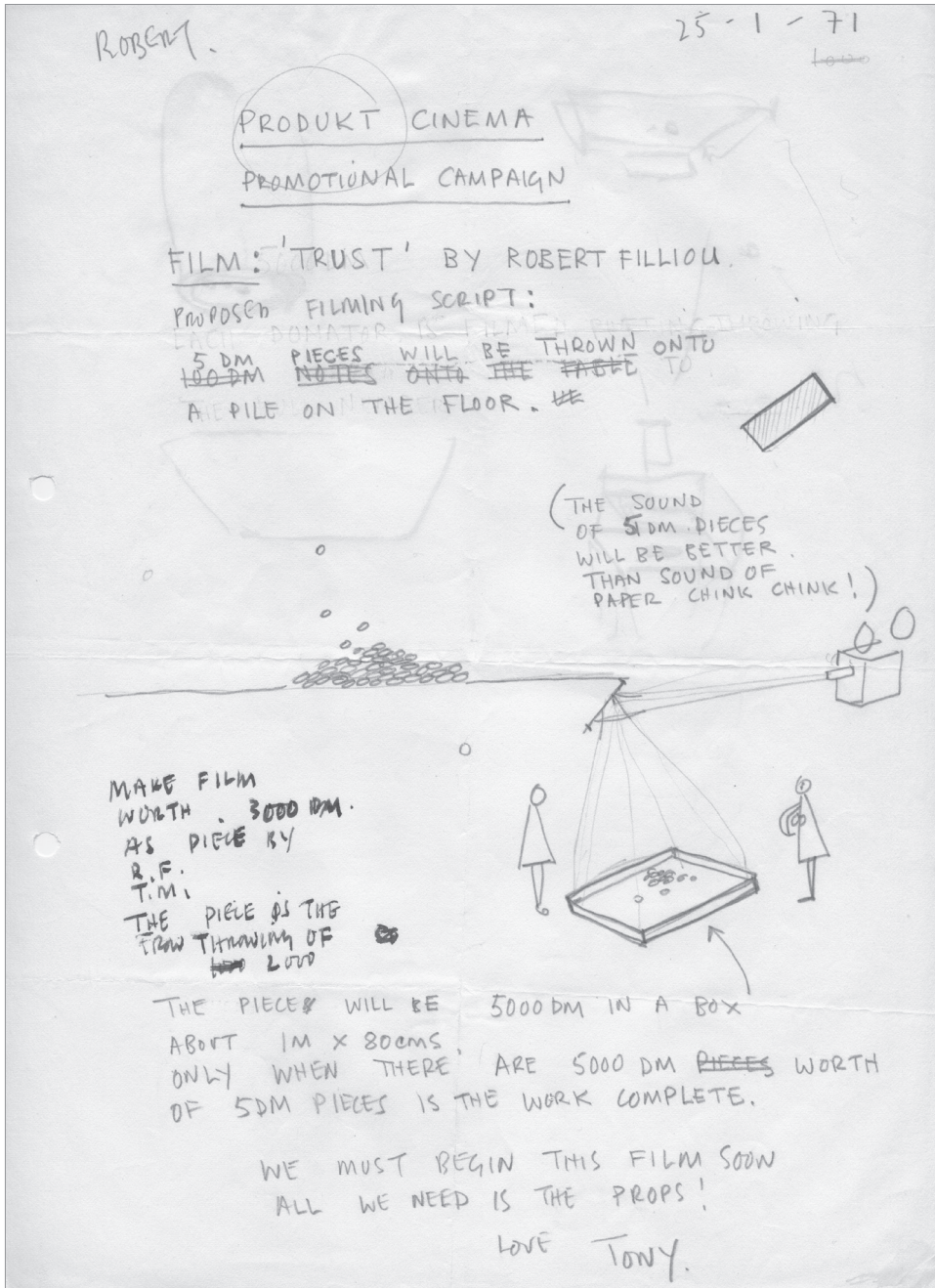
7. *Trust,* a film project that Robert Filliou should have produced for the aperture of Produkt Cinema, © Tony Morgan Estate

reflexively and ironically that the fundraising process[48] was a precondition for opening the venue.

In other notes about Produkt Cinema, Tony Morgan signalled his intention to organise weekly screenings (on Thursdays), focusing on a single filmmaker (with an entrance ticket costing 3 DM). He intended to seek advice from Lutz Mommartz [fig. 8] and Wilhelm Hein (who was managing XSCREEN Cinema with Birgit Hein). He also noted that he had to get hold of a 16mm projector, some cushions and some coat hooks. In September 1970, Tony Morgan clarified his thinking: Produkt Cinema, which he thought of as a genuine *museum*, would commission films from filmmakers who, at the end of each month, would present the piece that they had created. This was a vastly ambitious project similar to that of the Cinema

8. Lutz Mommartz in Produkt Cinema, 1971 © Tony Morgan Estate

---

[48] Tony Morgan proposed a screenplay for this film entitled *Trust*: "5DM pieces will be thrown onto a pile on the floor. (The sound of 5DM pieces will be better than sound of paper chink chink!) *Make film worth 3000 DM. As piece by R.F. T.M. …*

The piece will be 5000 DM in a box about 1 m × 80 cms. Only when there are 5000 DM worth of 5DM pieces is the work complete. We must begin this film soon. All we need is the props!" (Handwritten letter from Tony Morgan to Robert Filliou, 25 January 1971, Tony Morgan's personal archives, TM Studio).

Section of the Department of Eagles of Marcel Broodthaers' Museum of Modern Art:

> … That theoretically the Museum forms 3 *Film Units*:
> 1) Monthly Film Production
> 2) Educational Productions
> 3) Documentary Productions.[49]

While he abandoned educational productions, his intention was to set up a production unit for documentary films in parallel with the unit for artists' films. He designed it on the model of Gerry Schum's *Fernsehgalerie*; the films it produced would be raw, non-didactic documentation of artists made with their collaboration. Indeed, Tony Morgan wrote:

> The ideal director for Documentaries on artists would be Gerry Schum of Fernseh-galerie fame and who has made many films with and about artists both in Europe and the States. I am sure that he would be willing to offer his advice for the forma-tion of a Documentary Unit.[50]

The reference to Gerry Schum shows another paradigm of *intermedia* and *action art*. With *Fernsehgalerie*, as we already know, Gerry Schum offered a radical reconfiguration of the exhibition *medium* via the television set. From then on, television broadcasts produced for artistic purposes replaced the exhibition and the television was now part of museum resources. Clearly, Tony Morgan's project, which only very partially stayed afloat, cannot be compared with that of Gerry Schum. As the name "Produkt Cinema" suggests, its main aim was to produce works rather than distribute them. Nevertheless, the cinema auditorium had been redesigned as a place for the exhibition of films and artists' environments, along with documentaries and contemporary art, and had been divested of any clutter or anything that might prevent free movement (such as seats, a stage or a podium).

Yet what was it in reality? The cinema opened on 12 February 1971, with a first "Produkt" film and works donated for sale by artists. It shut up shop one year later, on financial grounds. The first film presented ("Produkt Film 1") was produced for the occasion by Tony Morgan: *A Flower A Day Keeps the Dogs at Bay* documented the growth of 17 flowers (showings from

---

[49] T. Morgan, "Thoughts after a conversation with Dr Vogt and Dr Honisch", 17 September 1970, transcript, *Product Cinema* file, n. p.

[50] T. Morgan, "Notes after a conversation with Dr Vogt and Dr Honisch", 17 September 1970", transcript, *Product Cinema* file, n. p.

12 to 28 February, at 6 pm)[51]. Some of the films that followed will undoubtedly have been shot specifically for this showing, but others, indeed the majority, already existed and may even have already been shown. If we take a closer look at March 1971, which is when the regular cinema programme began, we can see that films were projected on a regular basis. From 5 to 7 March, at 6 pm, the audience could attend a session combining *Events* by George Brecht (using event scripts from the beginning of the 1960s, shot by Tony Morgan in 1970), *Words* (1970) by Hartmut Kaminski with a screenplay by Robert Filliou and *Double Happening* by Robert Filliou and Emmett Williams (a 1968 performance shot by Tony Morgan in 1970[52]). From 12 to 14 March, at 6 pm, Tony Morgan presented his latest films, *Wall Slap* (made in January 1971), *Lisson Corner* (made at the Lisson Gallery on 14 January 1971) and *Chair* (made at the Lisson Gallery in 1971, with 50 participants).

Tony Morgan effectively used this structure as a production space. He made several films here and produced, as had been his initial intention, a variety of objects, not all of which were necessarily for sale. At least four of Tony Morgan's films were produced through Produkt Cinema: *Beethoven Girl* (a girl listens to Beethoven on a television set), *TV Strip* (a couple argues in front of a broken television set, an electrician arrives and repairs it, allowing the couple to watch television again)[53], *Pose* (a nude young man, Adolf Clemens, takes a break, staring at the camera, with his posture faintly reminiscent of Manet's *Olympia*) [fig. 9] and *Chair Move* (a film for two screens, one showing the camera circling around a chair, and the other showing the filmmaker who gets up from the chair in slow motion, which was shown at *Prospekt 71: Projektion*, an exhibition organised by Konrad Fischer at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf[54]). This film is related to a series of ac-

---

[51] Produkt Cinema, opening programme, February 1971, Tony Morgan's personal archives, TM Studio.

[52] In 1968, Robert Filliou and Emmett Williams presented this performance by George Brecht in Stockholm: when asked, sitting on the toilet, "what's happening?" they said: "We happen to be taking a shit". In the version filmed by Tony Morgan in Düsseldorf, Filliou and Williams responded to the same injunction: "We happen to be making a film." The final version of this performance consists of watching the film in front of an audience: Emmett Williams, Robert and Marianne Filliou, drinking champagne, say at the end of the film: "And now we happen to be watching the film, and raise our glasses to your health." See G. N. Kennedy, *The Last Art College: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1968–1978*, Halifax/Cambridge, MA 2012, p. 226.

[53] This film, if ever it was shot, is now lost. A film script and diagrams illustrate this project in detail (with written dialogues).
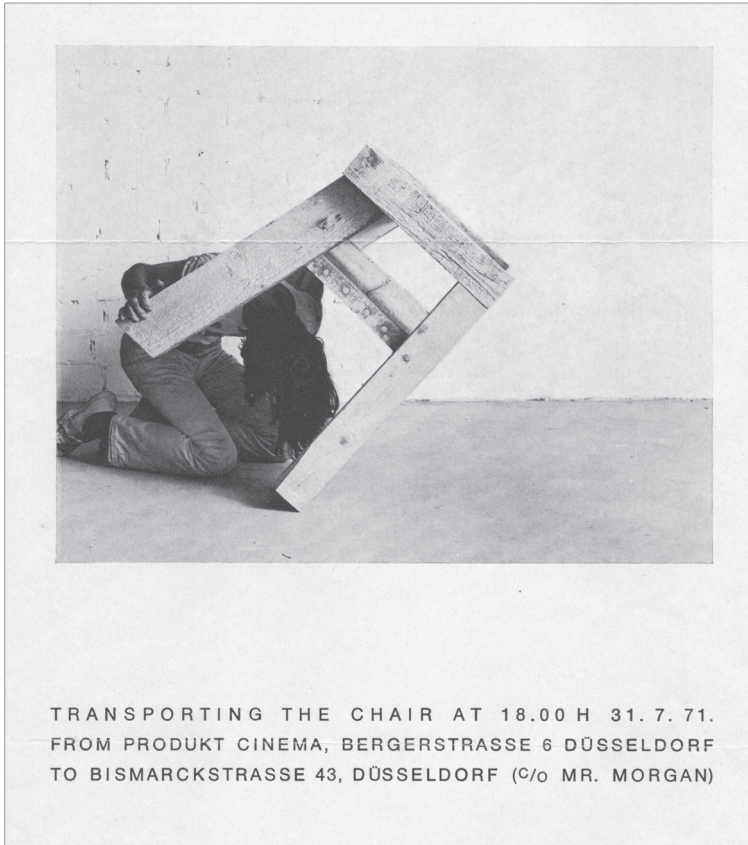
[54] See *Prospekt 71: Projektion*, eds. K. Fischer, J. Harten, H. Strelow, Düsseldorf 1971.
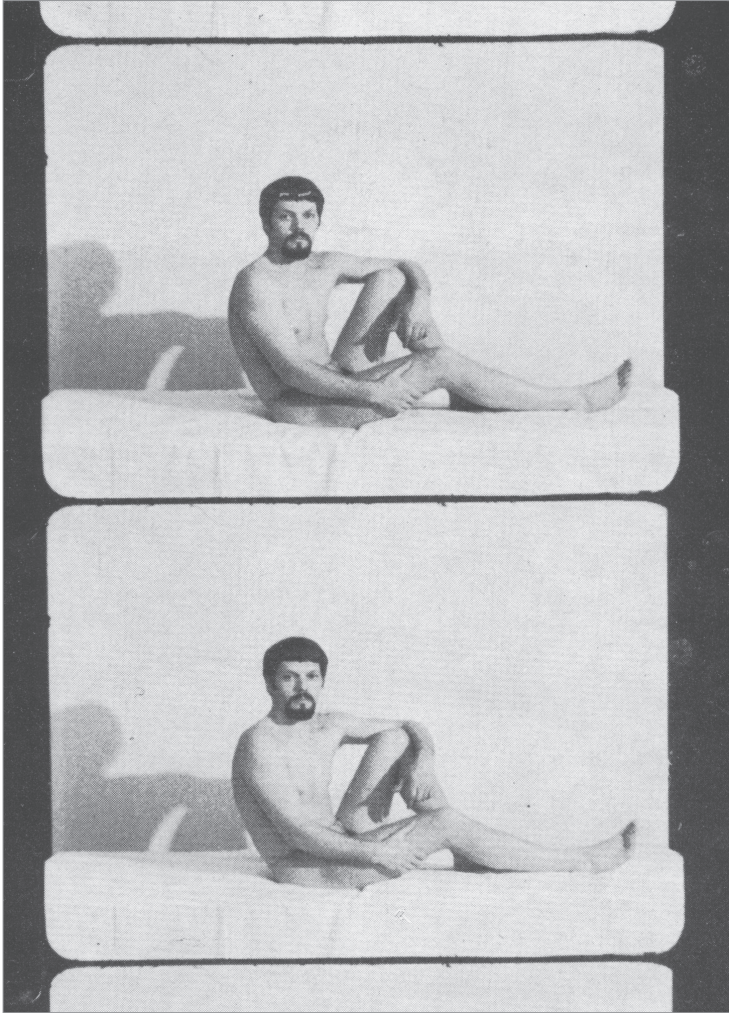
9. Adolf Clemens in *Pose (Olympiad)* (film 16 mm, 1971), Tony Morgan, © Tony Morgan Estate

tions with a chair, or rather involving different chairs, which Tony Morgan was experimenting with at the time. Indeed, he built a chair, between 11 and 17 March 1971, in Produkt Cinema. On 31 July 1971, he offered a performance using this chair, which he took home from the cinema (normally a walk of some eleven minutes, as Tony Morgan notes in a text documenting this performance). The action started, like most of his screenings, at 6pm. Yet everything happened in slow motion in such a way that he finally managed, with the help of several people, to reach home after six and a half

hours of performance. This is a cinematographic process, as can be seen in the use of slow motion[55], and yet clearly an action, a performance, and similarly takes place without the presence of a camera (only one photograph documents this journey [fig. 10]. However, that same year Tony Morgan

TRANSPORTING THE CHAIR AT 18.00 H 31. 7. 71.
FROM PRODUKT CINEMA, BERGERSTRASSE 6 DÜSSELDORF
TO BISMARCKSTRASSE 43, DÜSSELDORF (C/o MR. MORGAN)

10. *Chair Move* (1971), Tony Morgan, © Tony Morgan Estate

[55] "…. The walking time from my studio cinema to my home is about eleven minutes. … I decided to move through the town transporting my own chair so that I was only just visibly moving away. It took me two and a half hours to move the chair from inside the cinema to the street pavement. I concentrated to keep the transport slow but continuous. … I had mentioned to Usu that my move may take two or three days but that she wasn't to tell anybody. I began to hear people arguing about how long I was going to take. … We arrive at Königs Allee. I am tired and we put the chair down. It is about 10 o'clock and we started at 6. … It has taken me, with the help of five men, six and a half hours to transport the chair by man power from the Cinema, Bergerstrasse 6 to Bismarckstrasse 43."

had already made two 16mm films that rested on a chair, the first, *Chair*, shown at Produkt Cinema, and the second, *Chair Move*, at *Prospect 71*, which had double face-to-face projection).

The films produced were intended for sale. The presentation sheet for *Wall Slap* indicated that "Film pieces by Product Cinema are all for sale and are sold only once with full commercial rights (worldwide) as unique works with photo documentation, negative and signed certificate"[56]. Tony Morgan offered *Paper Drop*, *Floor Drip*, *Black Corner*, *Lisson Corners*, *Hand Slap*, *Chair Move*, *Events* and *Double Happening* for sale. I am unaware if any of these films were purchased by collectors or galleries. Needless to say, it is particularly difficult to sell reproducible works when the installations require specific conditions (16 mm projector, looper, stand and enough space to accommodate the projection).

It is misleading to talk about films shown *in situ*: films are designed to be shown in this cinema, but they are rarely designed for the concrete space of this darkened room. As we know, a Land-Art work operates on the landscape or the territory in which it is installed, redesigning and reshaping it. In Produkt Cinema, it is arguably not so much the space of the movie theatre, which in a sense reproduces the classic cinema device with its projector, screen and potential audience, that is being redefined. What is being reshaped or redesigned is the relationship between the cinema and contemporary art media, with the darkened theatre plunging the white space of the gallery into the shadows or the margins of a counter-culture.

HERMAN: SHIFTS BETWEEN MEDIA, GENRE AND EVENTS

The name of the character of *Herman*[57], Tony Morgan's transvestite alter ego wearing full make up [fig. 11], can be broken down, schizophrenically, into the feminine possessive pronoun "her" and the masculine generic noun "man"[58], and is, undoubtedly, the most explicit example of the shift

---

[56] Tony Morgan, card for *Wall Slap* with diagram of the film, Produkt Cinema heading and handwritten notes, Tony Morgan's personal archives, TM Studio.

[57] See the catalogue published for *The Birth of Herman, 1971–1978*, an exhibition held at the Modern and Contemporary Art Museum of Geneva, from 27 February to 30 April 2003: *Tony Morgan, 1960–1977. Who the Hell Is Herman, Anyway?/Mais qui diable est donc Herman?*, Geneva 2003.

[58] At the end of the catalogue entitled *Transformer. Aspekte der Travestie* (eds. J.-C. Ammann, M. Eigenheer, Lucerne 1974), there is a reproduction of a photograph of *Herman Live* (1972–1973: Morgan, wearing white make-up, is screaming in the middle of Mercer Street),
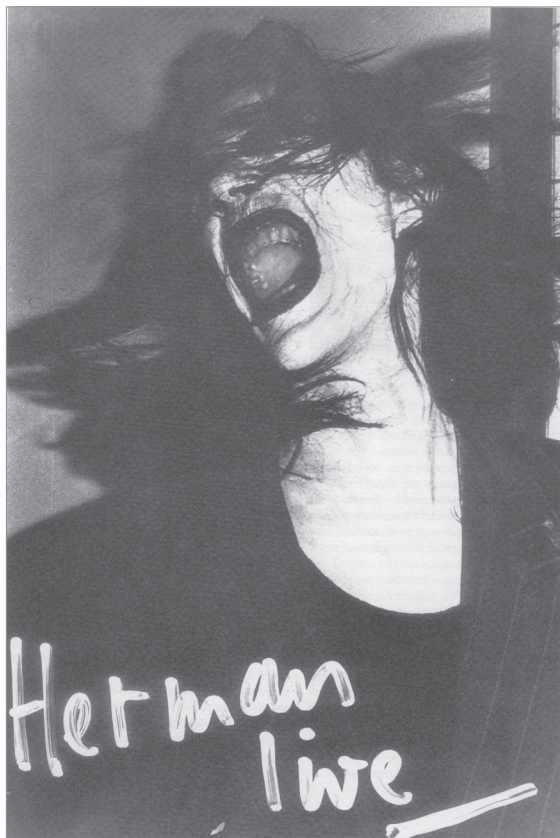
11. *Herman Live* (1972–1973), Tony Morgan,
© Tony Morgan Estate

or transmediation (that could be referred to as *transgender*, as exemplified in the film *Pose*, where a young man poses in the manner of Manet's *Olympia*, his immobility contrasting with the movement normally associated with the medium of the moving image), which typifies his entire approach. Opening act: Herman comes into being in the reflection of an image reconstituted by a photographic shot (*The Birth of Herman*, 1972) of Tony Morgan sporting long eyelashes and looking in the mirror, which helps the shift

without acknowledgement of the author or a caption, preceded by a short text which, significantly, opens with the following words: "One page // one man // / Her / Man". In this respect, see Philippe Cuenat, "I'll Be Your Mirror", in: *Tony Morgan, 1960–1977. Who the Hell Is Herman?*, p. 37. Morgan also reconstituted this action in a video entitled *Lash* (1972–1973), with the camera replacing the image of Herman reflected in a mirror.

in appearance[59]; henceforth, a fictional, highly independent double, as in the romantic mythology of the *Doppelgänger*, roams this side of the mirror, donning a variety of masks as if to reply to the artist's own questions during a (self-)interview[60]. Second act: this character is rearticulated through performances shown to an audience, or designed to be photographed, or, more frequently, videoed[61] [fig. 12]. While the character of Herman causes "gender trouble", to use Judith Butler's term[62], its avatars appear through a multiplicity of media; this "media being"[63] involves a dizzying array of multiples to the point where they become indistinguishable, using, as media, photography, interview, performance and video. More generally speaking, it can be argued that Tony Morgan explodes the unambiguous assignation of identity and the fixed nature of the image through gestures and actions which resist any pigeonholing.

Tony Morgan's first video, *Volcano*, is from 1973; it was prompted by the character of Herman, with video providing a suitable tool for the performance art that Tony Morgan was involved in at the time. In the aforementioned interview with Renate Buchsmann, Tony Morgan explicitly relates the medium of video to the character of Herman: "In New York, when I started making video, it was because I suddenly discovered Herman who is my Alter Ego or the person on the other side of the mirror which was also the person on the other side of this little glass of the videomachine."[64]

---

[59] The reference to the myth of Narcissus is problematised by the interrogation of sexual identity. As Tony Morgan notes, the character of Herman it is born of a mimetic (or doubling) act. Struck by the theatrical gesture of Rebecca Horn who mimed false eyelashes (she did not know the word for them in English) in a beauty parlour in New York, he reproduced this movement with false eyelashes in front of a mirror in his hotel room. The character of Herman is born of a shift in gender identity. This "masquerade of femininity" is, significantly, transcribed in a series of photographs (as this inaugural gesture cannot be limited to *one* single image) which are not intended for exhibition. See, in particular, *Tony Morgan, 1960–1977. Who the Hell Is Herman?*, p. 75.

[60] See T. Morgan, "Herman Superstar", manuscript, 1976–1980, Tony Morgan's personal archives (TM Studio), cited by Philipe Cuenat, *op. cit.*, in particular p. 33. Tony Morgan adopts Warhol's reference to superstars, but to distance himself from it somewhat, his double ultimately prefers to bear the surname of Herman Fame.

[61] See C. Rondeau, "Herman, une face à la surface. Ou la chair des illusion", in: *Tony Morgan, 1960–1977. Who the Hell Is Herman?*, pp. 43–51.

[62] See J. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, New York 1990.

[63] See T. Morgan, "Notes on Magical Doors" (manuscript from 1976). The expression *media being* is reminiscent of Heidegger's Dasein (being there), except that in this instance existence is determined by the media.

[64] R. Buschmann, "Interview with Tony Morgan", p. 8.

12. *Lash* (video, 1973), Tony Morgan, © Tony Morgan
Estate

Even if these memories could be reconstructed, there is clearly interde-
pendence in this instance between performance and video, as the workshop
performance specifically relies on the staging of the artist's body both designed
for and addressing the camera. This is, to a certain extent, what is portrayed
in *Volcano*. There is very tight framing of Herman's face wearing black make
up and straining to see an advertisement for a Ranzoni sauce, with his mouth
full of yoghurt, which he ends up spitting out onto a television screen (the
sexual connotations are explicit, and the work also refers to the double con-
sciousness and twoness of the African American). Self-mockery is a recurring
feature of these distanced self-portraits – the character of Herman superstar
in his rocker garb, portrayed as a pitiful loser are the clearest evidence of this
(see *Herman Dances Alone*, video, 1976) [fig. 13]. We should look more close-
ly at the links in Tony Morgan's œuvre between the body and the eccentrism
of the performer, the rationale behind transvestism and the inversion of the
carnival, the figure of the clown or buffoon and mime, a practice that Morgan

13. Tony Morgan in Herman's costume at De Appel, January 1976, © Tony Morgan Estate

studied in Paris with Etienne Decroux. I will limit my remarks to noting the convergence of these factors, and citing one of Tony Morgan's seminal works, "The Art of Performance", written in 1977. Under the entry "The artist as material", Tony Morgan returns to the birth of Herman, in 1972, in New York:

> Herman, my alter ego, the non-being I was to use as a material. I made seven video tapes between 72/73 dealing with facial identities. Working with the face was OK it was like painting portraits of a state of mind, but the body did not know how to use itself. So, on the advice of John Brady (with whom I began to think about performing, a great help) I flew to Paris to see Etienne Decroux, who since early this century has been working on a new structure of movement.[65]

---

[65] Ibidem, p. 8.

More generally, Tony Morgan explicitly classified all his activities under the heading of idiocy as the only authentic "being there" (his "Manifesto for a Theatre of Idiots" is proof enough of this[66]), arguing for "fooling" as a means of revelation (his declaration of intent can be summed up in one word – "Fooling"[67]).

As Tony Morgan noted in a seminal text in 1976, the "media-being", much like the performance or the event presupposes invention and a present being at the instant of this invention which escapes any prior conception:

> Creation of media-being – someone with a face that I could look at in a separate way. Perhaps this is schizoid but I needed some kind of objective distance from my emotional upheavals and moods. … My performances are about 'seeing', seeing what is already there more and more clearly. So, often, the full motivation of the performance is not understood or known at the instant a piece is conceived. Realisation is not fulfilling something conceived. Realisation is another reality with its own magical doors.[68]

His work is characterised by displacement or a general shift, between figures, genres, cultural spaces and mediums. The gesture at the root of his artistic practice is literally that of a shift. This can be seen in the walk that took him from London to Rome, documented by one photograph (*London Rome Walk*, 1960) and attested by an interview with BBC journalist John Burns upon his arrival in Rome[69]. The performative dimension of Tony Morgan's artistic gesture finds hyperbolic expression in his series of performances entitled *Between*[70]. These temporary exhibitions, based on the lightning flash

---

[66] Tony Morgan wrote: "The Idiot or Idiocy has been for centuries the only true non-hypocritical critic of society for he has no character or personality to defend or uphold. He does not fight against *unreason* for he is beyond *reason*. … The Idiot is not outside of *us* but <u>inside</u>. The *Fool*, the *Idiot* is that part of us we have been taught to have under control. It is only by daring to confront our established characters, *personalities* that we will unearth our own Fool our own *Idiocies*." ("Manifesto for a Theater of Idiots", 16 March 1979, transcript, TM Studio.)

[67] "Looking in the mirror at Etienne Decroux Mime School I saw someone 'fooling', trying to be what he was not. Laughing at my self – alone: laughing at myself with others. A slow objectivisation of fooling. At Decroux I was fooling myself – I couldn't stop laughing at the antics of the fool trying to imitate Decroux. I must work positively with what I have discovered at Decroux. To fool. It is in the trying that lies the true self." ("Fooling", 1978.)

[68] See T. Morgan, "Notes on Magical Doors", July 1976, Amsterdam, transcript, n. p.

[69] In this respect, see C.-H. Tatot, "Herman in Pursuit, An Enlightened Retrospection", in: *Tony Morgan, 1960–1977. Who the Hell Is Herman?*, p. 12.

[70] See R. Buschmann, *Chronik einer Nicht-Austellung Between 1969–1973 in der Kunsthalle Düsseldorf*, Berlin 2006.

of an action never to be repeated, not only operate between different *media* but also literally take place between exhibitions at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, between 1969 and 1973. There is everything here ranging from *representations*, to *public events*. When (in 1999) Renate Buschmann invited Tony Morgan to look back at the *Between* events, asking him whether they were initially created as a reaction to minimalism as part of an oppositional political programme, he once again pointed to the role of the spacing between the sudden, lightning flashes of actions placed between two public events: "I was concerned with *process* which led me to performance eventually or to the process of being 'in between' two elements."[71]

It could also be added that it is located, in terms of German counterculture in the late 1960s, between two other elements or media – the cinema and contemporary art, each in interaction with the other, cross-fertilising each other and shifting. Tony Morgan's film work and film environments are one of many pieces of a chessboard where, at the end of the 1960s, a strange game was being played out between film machinery and artistic machinations and where the rules of the game, and the scoring of points, were barely identified or described and even more barely accepted or understood. The shifts and runarounds could lead in one direction, from Creamcheese to documenta 4, in terms of Uecker's environments, or in the other, with the pendulum swinging back to fallow alternative spaces.

Of course, Tony Morgan's artistic career is not limited to the use of film and video. But in the spirit of Fluxus' counter-cultural and anti-artistic strategies (art as a gag, as fun, abolishing the figure of the professional artist, rejecting seriousness and contemporary art as an institution), Tony Morgan has radically reconfigured the mediums of film and video. Herman, according to Tony Morgan, is a "media being" who originates at the confluence of performance and video art. The *Structural Films* series is also paradoxically, oxymoronically, at the intersection of the paradigm of action and the move towards the reduction of the film to its constituent elements. I have already noted that the performativity of Tony Morgan's film work runs counter to the elementarist ethos associated with minimalism. What I have left implicit so far, however, and should therefore make explicit, is that Tony Morgan never sees film or video as mediums to be explored in their own rights. He does not subscribe to the analytical or phenomenological approach advocated by Sitney, who argues that the constituent parts of the film medium should be isolated, while at the same time inviting spectator to experience an *épochè* of the world. Indeed, Morgan – unlike the filmmakers and artists discussed by

---

[71] R. Buschmann, "Interview with Tony Morgan", p. 3.

Sitney, who oscillate between reducing elements of film vocabulary to their simplest expressions and adopting the performative practice of expanded cinema (which, moreover, Sitney does not specify, simply referring to a paradigm that could be described as minimalist, elementarist or literalist) – uses the reproducible medium of film or video with a performative aim, to disrupt genres, vehicles of expression, art and the non-artistic environment, without ever proposing a reflexive look at the medium used. More specifically, Tony Morgan does, in fact, offer both a retrospective and a prospective look at his "structural films": in 2003, Morgan invented the ideal model for presenting his "structural films", enclosing them in a suitcase that he has since exhibited; his project of constructing a black box to exhibit his "structural films" has never, as far as I know, been achieved. Nevertheless, this suitcase is undeniably in keeping with the logic behind the Fluxboxes and other publications by George Maciunas or Dick Higgins. Here the artist is redefined as a peddler, a seller of articles (a clear allusion to Filliou's *couvre chef(s) d'oeuvre(s)*, or a gallery in a cap). "When to say is to do": or rather, in this case, when to shoot is to undo – and let the stupid laughter of the clown or rocker loser be heard, setting the rationality of artistic institutions and the market economy of cinema to one side and pitting them against a wasteland, a vacant space, an in-between: between Herman, bad taste and an eternal network of relationships.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Artforum 1971, 10(1), ed. A. Michelson

Balsom E., *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*, Amsterdam 2013

Baudry J.-L., "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus", *Film Quarterly* 1974, 28(2), pp. 39–47

Bishop C., *Installation Art; A Critical History*, London 2005

Bourriaud N., *Esthétique relationnelle*, Dijon 2001

Buchloh B. H. D., "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions", *October* 1990, 55, pp. 105–143

Buschmann R., *Chronik einer Nicht-Austellung Between 1969–1973 in der Kunsthalle Düsseldorf*, Berlin 2006

Butler J., *Gender Trouble*, New York 1990

Caianiello T., *Der Lichtraum (Hommage à Fontana) und das Creamcheese im Museum Kunst Palast. Zur Musealisierung der Düsseldorfer Kunstszene der 1960er Jahre*, Bielefeld 2005

Deleuze G., Guattari F., *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis 1983 [1972]

Deleuze G., Guattari F., *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis 1987 [1980]

Edinburgh International Festival, *Strategy: Get Arts*, Edinburgh 1970

Eternal Network. A Mail Art Anthology, ed. C. Welch, Calgary 1995

Filliou R., *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, Cologne 1970

Fried M., "Art and Objecthood", *Artforum* 1967, 5, pp. 12–23

Gidal P., "Definition and Theory of the Current Avant Garde: Materialist/Structural Film, *Studio International* 1974, 187(963), pp. 53–56

Gunning T., "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Cinema, its Spectator, and the The Avant-Garde", *Wide Angle* 1986, 8, pp. 63–70

Heidegger M., *Being and Time*, Oxford/Cambridge 1962 [1927]

Higgins D., "*Intermedia*", *Something Else Press Newsletter* 1966, 1(1), reprinted in *Intermedia, Fluxus and the Something Else Press: Selected Writings of Dick Higgins*, eds. S. Clay, K. Friedman, New York 2018, pp. 25–28

Installation Art, N. de Oliveira, N. Oxley eds., London 1994

Intermedia '69, eds. J. Goetze, K. Staeck, Heidelberg 1969

Joseph B. W., *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts After Cage,* New York 2008

Kennedy J. N., *The Last Art College: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1968–1978*, Halifax/Cambridge, MA 2012

Ketner II J. D., *Witness to Phenomenon: Group Zero and the Development of New Media in Postwar European Art*, New York–London 2018

Le Grice M., "The History We Need", in *Film as Film: Formal Experiment in Film, 1910–1975*, London 1979, pp. 113–117

Lippard L., *Six Years: Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966–1972*, New York 1973

Maciunas G., "Some Comments on 'Structural Film' (by P. Adams Sitney)', in: *Film Culture Reader*, ed. P. A. Sitney, New York 1970, p. 349

Manovich L., *Black Box – White Cube*, Berlin 2005

Mey A., *Dispositive and Event. Exhibitionary Experiments and Experimental Moving Images in Europe around 1970*, PhD Thesis, Lausanne 2017

Morgan T., "The Media Explosive Years 1960–1980", *Mediamatic* 1986, 1(1)

New Forms in Film, ed. A. Michelson, Montreux 1974 (exh. cat.)

O'Doherty B., "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space, Part 1", *Artforum* 1976, 14(7), pp. 24–30

O'Doherty B., "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space, Part 2: The Eye and the Spectator", *Artforum* 1976, 14(8), pp. 26–34

O'Doherty B., "Inside the White Cube, Part 3: Context as Content", *Artforum* 1976, 15(3), pp. 38–44

Osborne P., *Anywhere or Not at all: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, London–New York 2013

Peterson A. R., *Installation Art: Between Image and Stage*, Copenhagen 2015

Pleynet M. and Thibaudeau J., "Economic, Ideological, Formal", in: *May 1968 and Film Culture*, ed. S. Harvey, London 1978, pp. 155–156

Polish Cine Art or the Cinematographic Turn in Polish Contemporary Art, eds. J. Majmurek and Ł. Ronduda, Warsaw 2015

Prospekt 71: Projektion, K. Fischer, J. Harten, H. Strelow (eds.), Düsseldorf 1971

Rebentisch J., *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, Berlin 2012

Reiss J., *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art*, Cambridge, MA 2001

Royoux J.-C., "Pour un cinéma d'exposition", *Omnibus* 1997, 20, pp. 11–12

Royoux J.-C., "Cinéma d'exposition: l'espacement de la durée", *Artpress* 2000, 262, pp. 36–41

Sitney P. A., "Structural Film", *Film Culture* 1969, 47, pp. 1–10

Suderburg E., *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, Minneapolis 2000

Tony Morgan, 1960–1977. Who the Hell Is Herman, Anyway?/Mais qui diable est donc Herman?, Geneva 2003

Tony Morgan: Some Films (and Videos) 1969–1973, London 2011

Transformer. Aspekte der Travestie, J.-C. Ammann, M. Eigenheer, eds., Lucerne 1974

Une histoire du cinéma, ed. P. Kubelka, Paris 1974

François Bovier

University of Lausanne / Lausanne University of Art and Design

TONY MORGAN'S *PERFORMATIVE* CINEMA IN THE AGE
OF THE "CINEMATIC TURN":
"RELATIONAL FILMS" (1969–1970), "STRUCTURAL FILMS" (1969–1971)
AND PRODUKT CINEMA (1971)

Summary

This article analyses the films, installations, performances and film projects of British artist, Tony Morgan, who is associated with Fluxus. Focusing on the years 1969–1971, we show the process of dematerialization and rematerialization inherent in his films – a distinctive feature of a cinematographic turning point in conceptual and postconceptual art. We discuss his film gallery, Produkt Cinema, an exceptional venue for producing and exhibiting films created exclusively for this specific location. We finally argue that, through the introduction of performative elements, his installations, generically entitled *Structural Films*, disrupt the minimalist ethos of structural film (a term coined by P. Adams Sitney).