



Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson

By P. Adams Sitney

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Sitney analyzes in detail the work of eleven American avant-garde filmmakers as heirs to the aesthetics of exhilaration and innovative vision articulated by Ralph Waldo Emerson and explored by John Cage, Charles Olson and Gertrude Stein. The films discussed span the sixty years since the Second World War. With three chapters each devoted to Stan Brakhage and Robert Beavers, two each to Hollis Frampton and Jonas Mekas, and single chapters on Marie Menken, Ian Hugo, Andrew Noren, Warren Sonbert, Su Friedrich, Ernie Gehr, and Abigail Child, *Eyes Upside Down* is the fruit of Sitney's lifelong study of visionary aspirations in the American avant-garde cinema.

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Review

"With *Eyes Upside Down*, P. Adams Sitney reconfirms his position as the dean of American film historiography. His recasting of the canon as the elaboration of an Emersonian Orphism will transform our understanding of American culture as a whole, not just of its cinematic avatars. The largesse of his critical intelligence, of his erudition, and of his sensitivity to both poetry and film reaches 'peaks of perfect exhilaration' as remarkable in their own way as those in the films he illuminates."--David James, University of Southern California

"P. Adams Sitney is not only the preeminent historian of the American avant-garde film; he is one of the finest critics and theorists of the cinematic image and form working today. In *Eyes Upside Down* Sitney does more than supplement and extend his seminal work, *Visionary Film*, widely recognized as the canonical account of American avant-garde cinema. In this new volume Sitney not only deals with many filmmakers that were not treated in his earlier book, he also provides a new profound approach to the American avant-garde film as part of an Emersonian tradition. In addition, Sitney offers a deep, and deeply moving, expansion of his work on Stan Brakhage, a profound tribute of the critical imagination to one of America's richest and least appreciated masters of modern form."--Tom Gunning, University of Chicago

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"The images produced by Sitney's visionary-his *Emersonian*-company of filmic artists offer in their collisions and challenges the shock of the new, thereby opening different and differing perspectives on experience, on imagination, on the things that surround us all the time."--*ARTFORUM*

"Sitney does a fine job of ferreting out Emersonian themes in filmmakers like Stan Brakhage and Hollis Frampton. Sitney's criticism is brilliant."-*Cineaste*

About the Author

P. Adams Sitney is a Professor of Visual Art at Princeton University. He has taught at Bard College, New York University, The Cooper Union, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the School of Visual Arts. He is the author of *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-1200*; *Modernist Montage: The Obscurity of Vision in Film and Literature*; *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema*; and he edited the *Film Culture Reader*; *The Essential Cinema*; *The Avant-Garde Film*; and Stan Brakhage's *Metaphors on Vision*. In 1969 he co-founded Anthology Film Archives in New York.

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