

MAY 27, 1976

Movie Journal

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Had a busy week. Managed to see only few of the many good shows taking place in town this week. That's what bothers me: here I am, writing a column on the Avantgarde-Independent Film, and I stare at the week's ads, notices and posters covering my wall—and there are so many of them that I couldn't attend them all even if I lived in five different bodies.

But I'm supposed to be dutiful, and just, and responsible, and see and review them all. So they tell me. Ever since I started writing for the Voice, they told me that. Now they tell me that in the Soho News. I mean, delegations come and tell me that. But I am neither very dutiful nor very logical nor very responsible. That's what's so

good about the free countries and a free, independent press: what's good about them is exactly what's good about the Avantgarde-Independent Film: they are personal, independent and not too logical. What I do I do because I am driven to do so, because I find some pleasure in what I do. I do my "reviewing" casually, irrationally, in an unplanned manner. The only planned act of mine when I joined Soho News was to ask the publisher—and he gracefully agreed—to take me with my two bodies: myself and Fred Camper. I felt that it would be too silly to attempt for one person to do even an irrational justice to all the different Avantgarde-Independent Film activities taking place in New York weekly today. Thus we came as a

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team, Fred and myself, and we plan to remain so. We think that our temperaments and interests differ enough to allow us a maximum range of "coverage" of the area. Still we'd like the various showcases and film-makers to know that no matter what we do, we'll never be able to see all the shows; we won't even try to do so. Our decisions won't be guided by the machine of justice and fairness: our choices will be our personal choices.

It may be true that one should expect from the daily papers such fairness and justice. They should review all shows of independently made films. After all, the daily papers are supposed to serve as records of all public events taking place in this city, and there are as many—if not more—independently made films premiered every week as there are commercial films. But the tradition—and the practical realities—of weekly publications has always been one of selected coverage, which means, personal coverage.

Anyway, as I said at the beginning, I saw only a small fragment of this weekend's activities. Last Wednesday I saw the tail of one of Andrej Zdravic's film's (Films to Remember series at Fine Arts, 105 Hudson). I have never seen any of Zdravic's work before but what I

saw last Wednesday left me so intrigued that I am anxiously looking forward to seeing more of his work. I saw part of his surgery room film, shot in Yugoslavia. It has an extraordinary visual and emotional power. I also saw a new work by David Hykes the description of which escapes my capabilities. It was dominated by a slightly but constantly varying, changing light and color source (field). Hykes also sang, and he sang beautifully. I have to admit that I was expecting something embarrassing—like when Ginsberg sings—but I was pleasantly surprised. Hykes has an Azerbaijan teacher, and he sings with a kind of lung voice, by exhaling the air—the way they sing in Asia. I found it very beautiful.

I also managed to see Paul Sharits installation piece called simply "installation", at M.L.D'Arc Gallery (15 East 57th Street, through June 16), a two projector piece in which he formally manipulates two brief images (loops) of induced epileptic seizures—images taken from a science film. The images and sounds are orchestrated into a convulsive, relentless symphony in Sharits familiar (flicker, color, single frame) technique.

I also managed to sit through two hours of discussion between David Ross and Hollis Frampton (at Anthology)—last Saturday—on the subject of Video and Film. It was an entertaining but depressing af-

ternoon. All I can hope is that David Ross doesn't represent the thinking of the majority of video makers. It was depressing to hear video art reduced to distribution and production—it was so much like Hollywood.