

do with the making of motion pictures) please send me such advice. I am already at work on N.B.C. and am planning to advertise my abilities in the New York Times. My plan is to take two weeks in early fall for a visit to N.Y. for whatever interviews I can arrange, and then to move permanently as soon thereafter as possible.

[hw] Stan

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### Conversation with Stan Brakhage, 11/30/96

**Scott MacDonald:** I understand that there was a break between you and Amos Vogel because he would not show *Anticipation of the Night* (1958) at Cinema 16. Is that true? What was your experience with Cinema 16?

**Stan Brakhage:** Well, that's true about Amos and *Anticipation*. But it wasn't as simple as that. I mean all along, Amos was the one hope. He had an audience of five thousand people to whom he would show works that my friends and I regarded as art. That was wonderful, but he showed the films we admired in a mix with scandal movies and documentaries of various shocking subjects. In a way, Cinema 16 programs often didn't look all that different to me from the newsreels I had attended as a child during the Second World War.

Amos's main concern and consideration was to show things that you couldn't see elsewhere, and that was what attracted his audiences. They felt very special; they were seeing things that weren't allowed into the local neighborhood theaters and later that you couldn't see on television: censored things, sexual subject matter, dog heads kept alive on tables in Russian laboratories—a mix into which was stirred some of the great American independent films.

Of course, the independent filmmakers felt Amos wasn't showing enough of *their* work and other work that they felt related to, and they often felt like they were being used in a freak show environment. In fact, the book Amos finally wrote [*Film As a Subversive Art*] does show the freak show sensibility he had about film.

When the 1958 Brussels World's Fair showings of American independent film occurred, I went to Amos to get money to buy a ticket so I could go to the events. So at that point I was still friendly with Amos and Marcia, and *am* still friendly with them. I think of them *very* affectionately. And that permits me to be not too angry that Amos couldn't go as far as *Anticipation of the Night*. At that point, he just couldn't *see* it. His view was that the film would destroy my reputation. I didn't see that I was having any kind of reputation anyway, but in any case, *Anticipation* was the end for Amos. But, again in fairness to Amos, it was also the end for Parker Tyler and for many other people. They said, "Okay, that's it: Brakhage has gone completely crazy and this is just degenerate work"—not "degenerate" because of subject matter, but formally.

**MacDonald:** I can certainly see how Amos, audience-aware as he was, would have trouble with the film. He didn't program to make his audiences happy, but he

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**Brakhage:** Ol shown. People

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was certainly conscious of their boredom, and *Anticipation* would have seemed, especially at that time, a long, boring film, so slow as to be impossible to show.

**Brakhage:** Oh, that's all true. It created riots in Europe and wherever it was shown. People came apart and threatened the projectionist.

But the break with Amos wasn't about his refusal to show or distribute *Anticipation*. There were other films that Amos refused to show or distribute, like Marie Menken's new work; and I told Amos, "Until you distribute Marie Menken's new work and *Anticipation of the Night*, I won't give you any of my new work." There were other films he wanted. So that was the break that finally led to Jane and I advertising that we would distribute films, and that we had an agreement with Bruce Conner and other people we knew about, to distribute from our home in the mountains in Colorado.

At that point, I arrived in New York to begin showing some of my work that Amos was distributing and some work by other people, and at that precise moment, Jonas and Adolfas were deciding to create Film-makers' Cooperative. So we more or less came to an agreement to pool our resources and that's how the New York Coop began. Jonas and Adolfas were in a better position to do distribution than Jane and I were: they were in New York and they had backing of some kind or other—



Illustration 61. Marie Menken at work. Courtesy Anthology Film Archives.

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enough support for the moment, and eventually they also came to have the support of Jerome Hill. Or perhaps Jerome was already involved. So I just became part of their efforts.

Then gradually—and I think to Amos's bitterness—they pushed him out and occupied the Cinema 16 offices [the Cinema 16 offices were at 175 Lexington Avenue; this remained the address of Film-makers' Cooperative until 2000].

**MacDonald:** There were—and are—some bad feelings about that.

**Brakhage:** I'm sorry that it created that bitterness for Amos and Marcia, because they did a great thing: they opened the gate without which there probably would have been no American independent film movement. But Amos wasn't dedicated to the possible art of film as we understood it. Jonas at times wasn't either; in those days, he could be very unsteady in that respect, but by and large, Jonas has been more aesthetically inclined than Amos. Aesthetics just wasn't what Amos cared most deeply about. So as our determination became more to see what an art of film might be, Jonas became the obvious person to take over.



### Program Announcement: Fall 1957/Spring 1958

October 1957

*A Moment in Love*

A startling and lovely dream pastoral, subtly colored, unites two lovers in their moment of passion. A dance drama by Shirley Clarke. Special Citation, Creative Film Foundation; Prizewinner, Edinburgh International Film Festival 1957.

"A rare, striking fusion of movie imagery and choreography (Anna Sokolow's), beautifully designed and realized!"—*The New York Times*

*The Children Are Watching Us*

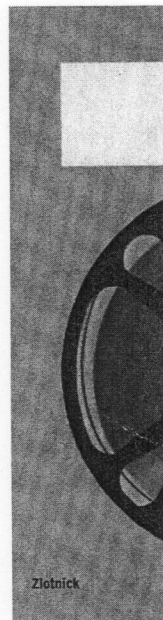
At last available, Vittorio de Sica's first masterpiece, preceding *Shoeshine* and *Bicycle Thief*: A delicate and intensely moving exploration of marital discord, adultery and suicide as seen through the eyes of a tortured child who becomes both the observer and protagonist of the domestic tragedy. Mingling bitterness and pity, pathos and satire, this compelling achievement clearly reveals de Sica's genius at transforming simplest emotions into deeply disturbing human experiences of universal validity. Complete English subtitles. A Brandon Films Release.

"Deals for the first time with the themes which bring out De Sica's finest talents—the fears, passions and solitude of children. In the same rank as his later masterpieces!" The British Film Institute

November 1957

*Twentieth Century*

John Barrymore and Carole Lombard, in one of their best and most hilarious performances, scream their way through a great screwball comedy classic of the thirties:



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