

T·H·E·K·I·T·C·H·E·N

484 Broome St New York City

February 13, 1983

3 DOCUMENTS

FLOWER Robert Whitman

EMBARA DAMA (ENCHANTING DEATH) Jean Rouch

SOPHIA = (WISDOM) PART 3 THE CLIFFS Ontological-
Hysteric Theatre (R. Foreman)/Ernie Gehr

The films on this program take three different approaches to recording spectacle. By including Rouch's Embara Dama, I do not mean to imply that the Dogon mask ceremony is a 'performance' in the sense that the Whitman and Foreman pieces were, but, simply, that similar problems were encountered in the filming of all three events.

Whitman uses a hand-held camera and works very close to the performers and objects, thus giving a strong sense of gesture and props but little of their spatial or temporal context. Gehr's fixed camera in long shot preserves the continuities of the original performance but, paradoxically, negates the 'cinematic' qualities of Foreman's staging - the way in which Foreman uses scale and placement to shift dynamically 'close-up' to wide-angle within a single space.

Rouch uses a hand-held camera and, for the most part, keeps a good distance away from the event he is recording. But Rouch wants to do more than simply record. The Dogon are performing a ceremony to enchant death. To enchant death means to stop time; and in the last section of the film, Rouch finds, through the use of slow motion, the film

equivalent for the affect of the dance.

Of course, the films were chosen as much for the interest of the 'pro-filmic' events as for the techniques through which they were recorded. In passing, it is interesting to note that the Whitman and Foreman pieces share a central concern - the attempt to formalize a (fearful) fantasy of female sexuality.

(A. Taubin)

THREE DOCUMENTS:

Flower Robert Whitman (1963) b&w, silent, 16mm, 15 min.
Performers: Trisha Brown, Suzanne DeMaria,
Walter DeMaria, Simone Forti, Joseph Schlicter,
Mima Stark, Helen Vasey, Steve Vasey

Bob Whitman did not intend that the film Flower would represent the look, feel or character of the piece Flower as it was (for example, details of space, sound and audience are completely absent). It is, rather, stenographic footage taken at the time of the performance to contribute to a score.

Embara Dama (Enchanting Death) Jean Rouch (1981) color,
sound, 16mm, 70 minutes

Rouch, a major ethnographic filmmaker, has been filming the Dogon people in Mali, West Africa for over 35 years.

Sophia (Wisdom) Part 3: The Cliffs (1972-3) Ontological-
Hysteric Theatre (R. Foreman); production with
camera by Ernie Gehr. b&w, sound, 16mm, 120 min.
Cast: Max (Leo) - Bob Fleischner
Ben Andrew Noren
Hannah Margot Breier
Sophia Linda Patton
Rhoda Kate Mannheim
Karl (Snowman) Jim Hoberman

Workers - Myron Adams, Jim Boerlin, Gregory
Gubitosa, Iris Newman, Bill
Plympton, Allegra Scott

A document of the production presented at the
Cinematheque (80 Wooster Street) December 1972-
January 1973

- There will be a 15-minute intermission after
the second film -

Thanks to Young Filmmakers/Video Arts Film Bureau
for their support.

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The Kitchen is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts (a Federal agency), The New York State Council on the Arts, The New York Community Trust, The Rockefeller Foundation, the Jerome Foundation, Warner Communications Inc., the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the Robert Sterling Clarke Foundation, the Walter Foundation, the Morgan Guaranty Trust Co., the Mobil Foundation, Consolidated Edison Co., the National Broadcasting Co., Inc., the Jerome Robbins Foundation, the Skidmore, Owings & Merrill Foundation, the Fromm Foundation, the Rosenstiel Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Performing Arts and other private foundations and individuals.

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