

From Dream to "memory"

research to find images.

by Elsa Stansfield

Moving out from these more abstract concepts to find images that relate to and evoke everyday experience is a common journey or theme in the works which I have been involved with during the last three years. It could be longer, but that is another story . . . lifestory.

The photographs presented come out of the idea and film of "awakening" and relate to a sequence on daydreams.

Threading this back to the theme of lifestory, the photographs were shot by Elsa Madelon Hooykaas with whom I have been working since 1972. *Filmmaking is teamwork* — to a great

extent this is true, and more so when one has established a basic working dialogue. Our dialogue starts out from the basic ideas and continues throughout the whole production. Madelon is camera, I am sound and editing, although there are no hard and fast rules . . . on this basis we have realised three short films and some video pieces.

I will try to clarify our main areas of interest, through relating some aspects of our last films which are:

"about bridges" a non-narrative documentary which explores *'The bridges the perception, the experience*

possible in three different ways: the artist, the worker and the user . . . 'A film for Pandora' an essay on curiosity, and "what's it to you?" our current project about Glasgow peoples attitudes to themselves, each other and their city.

One common theme in these projects is in some way attempting to unravel the grammar of filmmaking . . . the I to the We, the filmmaker to the subject and audience process which emerges when one starts to present material (without wishing to wallpaper it over with commentary) and say something through relating fragments which represent the whole. This process is not to be articulated by me, but I feel that it is something important that is at work . . . *'all the while'*. To move specifically towards our current activities involves a little indication of what "memory" is about.

To find a language of images that stimulate and refer to memory is the subject of research . . . this may involve the use of simple film techniques built up to approach the feelings and emotions which are difficult to articulate in any other language. For example, the rhythm experienced in memory can be recreated within the editing. Again different rhythms in the editing between the sound and picture can create the basic emotional harmonies and discords which are in relation to memory often the stimulance if not the source.

It grew initially out of the Glasgow project in which there is a sequence called *'dream of the past'* about conflicting memories of the myths we grew out of. Visually this sequence was conceived as being black and white, still archive material, with a series of interrelated and intercut dialogues running throughout. The voices speak in a mixture of tenses . . . reminding us of how conflicting these experiences (of what is basically the same situation) can be.

Out of this grew another seed which became our "memory" research. It should be emphasised that this is practical research, the intention being to produce a film script and pilot on video. It follows more or less the same pattern as our other projects, with the main difference being to start more or less in the beginning with images instead of all those pieces of paper covered with words . . . I wonder where they all end up?

Bedmaking



What follows are the words we allowed ourselves in the beginning . . . what are the images of memory like? A still photograph; a sequence of stills. A special perspective on what otherwise looks like reality?

There is often the absence of narrative and memory at this point relates to dream, having its own vocabulary of images.

How the research would be carried out:

- 1) Establish a basic structure of ideas, accessible to a wide range of people.
- 2) Record people talking about their memories, without mentioning the word itself.
- 3) Edit this material down, and produce (photographic) images which relate to the source material.
- 4) Begin to find and build up a vocabulary of images and sounds relating to memory.
- 5) Transfer this material in different forms onto ½ inch video tape.
- 6) Show this, to both the people who contributed to it and to new people, recording their response.
- 7) Using this stimulation to produce the script/storyboard for a larger and more thorough project on film. Perhaps involving the same people.

After this 'one can not see the wood for the trees' and it becomes apparent that the progress is not simply to move from stage one to stage two and so on . . . but that one will keep starting out and like snakes and ladders return to square one.

So far the first five stages have all been begun . . . and something new has emerged. This is a need to relate the whole thing to a common situation, which everyone can relate to. That situation was immediate and directly in front of us and is called '*moving*'.

What are the images that relate to memories of '*moving*', of being uprooted?

We are in the process of video taping our own chaos as we move from one community in Covent Garden to another in Wapping. It may end up like "*Three men and a Wardrobe*" or the "*Grapes of Wrath*", whatever it looks like we may catch a glimpse of the promised land.

Elsa Stansfield has been awarded a 'fellowship' for this project under GLAA's current film and video grant aid scheme. She will be working with the support of the Slade Film Department.

