

Chapter 1 : Top 10 Avant-Garde Filmmakers - Listverse

Experimental film, experimental cinema or avant-garde cinema is a mode of filmmaking that rigorously re-evaluates cinematic conventions and explores non-narrative forms and alternatives to traditional narratives or methods of working.

Definition[edit] The term describes a range of filmmaking styles that are generally quite different from, and often opposed to, the practices of mainstream commercial and documentary filmmaking. While "experimental" covers a wide range of practice, an experimental film is often characterized by the absence of linear narrative, the use of various abstracting techniques—out-of-focus, painting or scratching on film, rapid editing—the use of asynchronous non-diegetic sound or even the absence of any sound track. The goal is often to place the viewer in a more active and more thoughtful relationship to the film. At least through the s, and to some extent after, many experimental films took an oppositional stance toward mainstream culture. Most such films are made on very low budgets, self-financed or financed through small grants, with a minimal crew or, often a crew of only one person, the filmmaker. Some critics have argued that much experimental film is no longer in fact "experimental" but has in fact become a mainstream film genre. First, the cinema matured as a medium, and highbrow resistance to the mass entertainment began to wane. Second, avant-garde movements in the visual arts flourished. The Dadaists and Surrealists in particular took to cinema. These films combine narrative experimentation, rhythmic editing and camerawork, and an emphasis on character subjectivity. Soviet Union[edit] The Soviet filmmakers, too, found a counterpart to modernist painting and photography in their theories of montage. While not experimental films per se, they contributed to the film language of the avant-garde. However, much pre-war experimental film culture consisted of artists working, often in isolation, on film projects. Painter Emlen Etting — directed dance films in the early s that are considered experimental. Commercial artist Saturday Evening Post and illustrator Douglass Crockwell — [11] made animations with blobs of paint pressed between sheets of glass in his studio at Glens Falls, New York. Smith and Bute were both influenced by Oskar Fischinger, as were many avant garde animators and filmmakers. In appears the magazine Experimental Cinema with, for the first time, the two words directly connected without any space between them. Early American Avant Garde Film Meshes of the Afternoon by Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid is considered by some to be one of the first important American experimental films. It provided a model for self-financed 16 mm production and distribution, one that was soon picked up by Cinema 16 and other film societies. Just as importantly, it established an aesthetic model of what experimental cinema could do. Meshes had a dream-like feel that hearkened to Jean Cocteau and the Surrealists, but equally seemed personal, new and American. Pilgrim followed in a similar vein. Significantly, many of these filmmakers were the first students from the pioneering university film programs established in Los Angeles and New York. Arthur Penn taught at Black Mountain College, which points out the popular misconception in both the art world and Hollywood that the avant-garde and the commercial never meet. Structural film The film society and self-financing model continued over the next two decades, but by the early s, a different outlook became perceptible in the work of American avant-garde filmmakers. Adams Sitney has pointed out, in the work of Stan Brakhage and other American experimentalists of early period, film is used to express the individual consciousness of the maker, a cinematic equivalent of the first person in literature. On the other hand, Kenneth Anger added a rock sound track to his Scorpio Rising in what is sometimes said to be an anticipation of music videos , and included some camp commentary on Hollywood mythology. Some avant-garde filmmakers moved further away from narrative. Whereas the New American Cinema was marked by an oblique take on narrative, one based on abstraction, camp and minimalism, Structural-Materialist filmmakers like Hollis Frampton and Michael Snow created a highly formalist cinema that foregrounded the medium itself: Adams Sitney in the late s, many of the filmmakers named in the article objected to the term. A critical review of the structuralists appeared in a edition of the art journal Art In America. It examined structural-formalism as a conservative philosophy of filmmaking. The —'70s and today. Time arts in the conceptual art landscape[edit] Conceptual art in the s pushed even further. Robert Smithson , a California-based artist, made several films about his earthworks and attached projects. Yoko Ono

made conceptual films, the most notorious of which is *Rape*, which finds a woman and invades her life with cameras following her back to her apartment as she flees from the invasion. Around this time a new generation was entering the field, many of whom were students of the early avant-gardists. Leslie Thornton, Peggy Ahwesh, and Su Friedrich expanded upon the work of the structuralists, incorporating a broader range of content while maintaining a self-reflexive form. Andy Warhol, the man behind Pop Art and a variety of other oral and art forms, made over 60 films throughout the 1960s, most of them experimental. Their response was to resist narrative in a way to show its fissures and inconsistencies. Chantal Akerman and Sally Potter are just two of the leading feminist filmmakers working in this mode in the 1970s. Video art emerged as a medium in this period, and feminists like Martha Rosler and Cecelia Condit took full advantage of it. In the 1980s feminist, gay and other political experimental work continued, with filmmakers like Barbara Hammer, Su Friedrich, Tracey Moffatt, Sadie Benning and Isaac Julien among others finding experimental formats conducive to their questions about identity politics. The queercore movement gave rise to a number of experimental queer filmmakers such as G. Jones a founder of the movement in the 1980s and later Scott Treleaven, among others. Experimental Film and the Academy[edit] With very few exceptions, Curtis Harrington among them, the artists involved in these early movements remained outside the mainstream commercial cinema and entertainment industry. Many of the practitioners of experimental film do not in fact possess college degrees themselves, although their showings are prestigious. Some have questioned the status of the films made in the academy, but longtime film professors such as Stan Brakhage, Ken Jacobs, Ernie Gehr, and many others, continued to refine and expand their practice while teaching. The inclusion of experimental film in film courses and standard film histories, however, has made the work more widely known and more accessible. Exhibition and distribution[edit] Beginning in 1957, Frank Stauffacher ran the "Art in Cinema" program of experimental and avant-garde films at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. From 1963 to 1977, the New York-based Cinema 16 functioned as the primary exhibitor and distributor of experimental film in the United States. Under the leadership of Amos Vogel and Marcia Vogel, Cinema 16 flourished as a nonprofit membership society committed to the exhibition of documentary, avant-garde, scientific, educational, and performance films to ever-increasing audiences. Soon similar artists cooperatives were formed in other places: Following the model of Cinema 16, experimental films have been exhibited mainly outside of commercial theaters in small film societies, microcinemas, museums, art galleries, archives and film festivals. There is some dispute about whether "underground" and "avant-garde" truly mean the same thing and if challenging non-traditional cinema and fine arts cinema are actually fundamentally related. Sixteen mm prints are still available through these organisations, and some archives. Title design and television advertising have also been influenced by experimental film.

Experimental and avant-garde film is cinema made outside of the film industry on an artisanal basis, largely without regard to the structures and demands of traditional narrative film. While experimental film as a separate mode of film practice is international, its most prevalent manifestations.

Divided essentially into three periods, each avant-garde has been connected to its predecessor by aesthetic and personnel continuities, constructing over significant gaps in time and space a discourse on the evolution of personal expression in the film medium. While appropriate for polemical argument and aesthetic legitimation, such a view of avant-garde film history has eliminated the gaps and fissures, discontinuities and dead ends, which necessarily mark a film form based on individual and essentially isolated modes of production. The American film avant-garde established itself in the 1920s and 1930s, contrary to the standard histories, which date its beginnings to 1929 with Maya Deren. Supporting these filmmakers, at least in the early 1930s, was a network of exhibition outlets, including art theaters, galleries, and amateur film clubs, as well as film publications, all of which constituted an avant-garde movement. The historical reception of the first American avant-garde is usually characterized by the judgment that it was essentially European in outlook and derivative of 1920s European models, aping expressionism, following the style of the constructivist documentaries, and filming American versions of European avant-garde ideas. *Caligari*, and Soviet revolutionary narratives, like *Battleship Potemkin*, in the mid 1920s that spurred American filmmakers to attempt the production of experimental films. In these American films, as well as in the European avant-garde films trickling over to the United States, film lovers perceived a clear alternative to the generic conventions of Hollywood. A crucial difference to understanding the dynamics of the 1920s and 1930s avant-garde in relation to its post-World War II American experimental film successors involves the self-images and material conditions of the two generations. Both defined themselves in opposition to commercial, narrative cinema, privileging the personal over the pecuniary. However, while the 1920s avantgardists proclaimed themselves to be artists of cinema, actively engaged in the production of "art," those of the earlier generation viewed themselves as cineastes, as lovers of cinema, as amateurs willing to work in any arena furthering the cause of film art, even if it involved commercial productions. Its aesthetics expanded into a political position opposing any utilitarian usage of the medium, be it commercial, instructional, or ideological. Of his own generation, Jonas Mekas noted, "To former generations film art was something still new and exotic, but for this generation it is part of our lives, like bread, music, trees, or steel bridges. Earlier filmmakers, in contrast, thought of themselves much more as film amateurs rather than as professionals. Avant-garde filmmakers in the 1930s defined themselves in opposition to the professional, who was an employee of Hollywood, for hire to produce a profit benefiting the corporate hierarchy rather than the cause of film art. Given this self-image, the agenda of the first American film avant-garde was much broader: These cineastes moved freely between avant-garde film and other endeavors—documentary, industrials, Hollywood narrative, film criticism, film exhibition, painting, and photography. Lewis Jacobs, for example, then a member of a Philadelphia amateur film club, noted of his group, "Our club is composed of painters, dancers, and illustrators." It is our aim to emphasize a direction that will result in cinematic form. In the late 1920s and early 1930s he worked as a manager for a "little theater" in Baltimore, wrote film criticism for various magazines, and made avant-garde shorts. As a result of such factors, it is extremely difficult, for example, to separate avant-garde film production from the production of documentary films in the 1930s. Numerous filmmakers, including Roger Barlow, Paul Strand, Willard Van Dyke, LeRoy Robbins, Henwar Rodakiewicz, and Ralph Steiner, not only earned their livelihood during the Great Depression through organizational, governmental, and private documentary film production but actually perceived such activity as a continuation of their experimentation with cinematic form. Ironically, the desire to improve the status of the film medium on many different fronts was characteristic of both the 1920s European avant-garde—a fact that has been often suppressed by later historians—and the first American avant-garde. Both European and American avant-gardists entered film as amateurs, because economics dictated it. Whether "city films" by Joris Ivens or Wilfried Basse or scientific views of sea life by Jan Mol, these documentaries

were considered to constitute avant-garde cinema. Thus, both Europeans and Americans shared a broader, inclusionist, rather than exclusionist, view of good cinema. While the first avant-garde pioneered alternative forms that survived on the fringes of institutional power, it was unable to support itself economically, because the avant-garde itself had not been embraced by institutions that could have created the material conditions for its continued survival. A history of early American avant-garde, then, cannot help but broaden its definition to include other noncommercial film forms, such as amateur film and documentary, as well as unrealized film projects, film criticism, and film reception. Early American avant-garde film indeed identified itself with amateurism. Adolph Glassgold wrote programmatically in *The Arts*, "The artistic future of the motion picture in America rests in the hands of the amateur. The new technology was not only cheaper and safer than mm nitrate film but also in many ways more versatile, allowing for hand-held cameras, location shooting, and filming under ambient light conditions. The Cine-Kodak allowed every man and woman potentially to become a film artist. For Herman Weinberg, the avant-garde constituted itself everywhere beyond the realm of Hollywood narrative. The amateur film enthusiast was seen as the most ardent supporter of an avant-garde. Even professionals could become amateurs, as Weinberg explained in the case of Robert Florey: Such a discourse clearly identified personal expression with formal experimentation, a dualism repeated continuously in aesthetic manifestos and reviews. The emphasis on formalism is echoed by Frederick Kiesler: By June , there were an estimated thirty thousand amateur filmmakers in the United States alone. The league had begun to organize a lending library as early as *Photoplay* and *Liberty* magazines and other organizations also staged amateur film contests, which offered public exposure to independent filmmakers. The establishment of art cinemas was apparently first suggested in March by the *National Board of Review* magazine *Exceptional Photoplays*. Directors and actors, stimulated by what they had seen in this theatre and encouraged by the reception of new work, would feel impelled to try their hand. Within a few years little cinemas sprang up all over the United States. This was followed by the Little Theatre of the Movies in Cleveland in late , followed almost immediately by one in Chicago. Newman, director of the Cleveland cinema, specifically referred to the exhibition of short films, which "represent important experimentation," as a part of its mandate. Bogatin, operated the theaters in Philadelphia, Buffalo, Cleveland, and Rochester. Not surprisingly, art cinema programs often paired American avant-garde films with European, especially German and Russian features. Indeed, it was not inferior foreign films, but rather the worsening economic climate that contributed to the demise of little cinemas. But that would take a few more years. Art galleries were another potential site for avant-garde exhibitions. Presenting European avant-garde films as well, Julien Levy in fact built up a substantial collection of avant-garde films, which he hoped "to display on request. Symon Gould, the founder of the Cinema Guild, did apparently set up some kind of distribution network, renting films to both the little cinemas and commercial theaters. However, any profits realized never made their way back to the filmmakers. Strand and Sheeler, for example, complained that their film *Manhatta* disappeared after Gould got the print. Robert Florey was even more specific about promises made to him: Symon Gould, then manager of the 8th Street Cinema Playhouse in New York, offered to give World Wide exploitation to my experimental shorts and to that effect I gave him all the negatives and prints that I had. I regret to say that I have not heard from Mr. Gould since , and I have never received an account of the rentals or sales of my pictures. Meanwhile, film magazines, including *Close Up*, published in Switzerland in English, and *Experimental Film*, edited by Seymour Stern and Lewis Jacobs, functioned as critical voices in the discourse around both European and American art film. *Close Up*, in particular through its American contributors, Harry A. Potamkin and Herman G. Weinberg, documented the achievements of the American avant-garde from to *Experimental Film*, which published between and , concerned itself more with leftist filmmaking, but also wrote about avant-garde efforts. *Amateur Movie Makers*, the official organ of the Amateur Cinema League, also reported on the avant-garde, but became aesthetically more conservative in the mid s. The charge that early American avant-garde efforts emulated their European colleagues was not totally without merit, given the intense reception of European modernist films in America. Further-more, the American avant-garde evidences antimodernist and romantic currents, which not only separate it from European models but also connect it directly to the later American experimentalists, like Stan Brakhage and Kenneth Anger. Those filmmakers

who eschewed the symbolic created documentary portraits or fiction shorts infused with lyrical realism, the latter often leading directly to a Hollywood career. As a paradigmatic case of the amateur avant-gardist working in different genres, one can look Dr. Born in to a prominent Rochester family, Watson was a medical doctor by profession. In he collaborated with Melville Webber on *The Fall of the House of Usher*, which was shot in his garage with a homemade optical printer. *The Eyes of Science* was in fact shown at amateur cinema clubs as an example of avant-garde filmmaking in the educational field. It continued to play in gay theaters throughout the s and s, becoming in the process probably the most commercially successful avant-garde film of the era. Herman Weinberg wrote ecstatically about the film: Another important avant-garde filmmaker to emerge in the early s was Lewis Jacobs, whose article on avant-garde filmmaking in America remains a seminal piece. Together they produced *Mobile Composition*, a film that apparently has not survived. Jacobs described the film as a story about a love affair in which "significant details, contrast lighting, double exposures, and large close-ups depicted the growing strain of disturbed emotions. While shooting footage for the Film and Photo League and working as a cutter for advertising films, Jacobs began a project, *As I Walk*, which remained unfinished, except for a fragment, later called *Footnote to Fact*. It is a portrait of a young woman expressed in images ostensibly flashing through her mind, with documentary shots of street life in New York. Bouchard, who was best known for his photographic portraits of well-known theater personalities, probably brought Jacobs and Bovington together. According to an ancient rental catalog, Bovington appeared in a solo dance in the film that could be interpreted as "an artistic attack on the type of machine-made thinking which produced the Nazi menace in Europe. They attempted to recreate the subjective views of the two lovers, defining them metaphorically through objects rather than actions. The film was hailed as a revelation by critic Harry A. Potemkin and the National Board of Review. True to the surrealist creed, *Rose Hobart* is ambiguously meaningful without meaning. Jerome Hill, later known for his film animation, began his career in the s. In contrast to the earnest metaphors of Watson and Webber and others, parody was the preferred genre of Theodore Huff, another prominent Amateur Cinema League member. Later known as a film historian and Chaplin biographer, Huff directed mm spoofs of Hollywood genre films in the early s. His first two productions, *Hearts of The West* and *Little Geezer*, starred children, burlesquing the conventions of Westerns and gangster films, respectively. He shot them under the pseudonym of D. Both films imitated the conventions of silent film, its stereotypical characters and naive plots, the sentimentality of D. Griffith, and the innocence of the era. About his use of child actors, Huff wrote, "We have found children under twelve best suited as actors for these pictures. The contrast in size with the original adult actors brings out, more sharply, the incongruity necessary to satire. Living in an abandoned car that in fantasy is a limousine taking him to Wall Street, where his business is located an apple stand, the hero suffers through the crash of and the Depression. After working as a film curator, Huff returned to filmmaking in the late s. The photographer Ralph Steiner, who had been making abstract avant-garde films in the late s, contributed his own parody of American economic life with *Panther Woman of the Needle Trades*, or the *Lovely Life of Little Lisa*. It then follows her career from childhood seamstress to Parisian designer of haute couture via a college education at Vassar. In the film, two working-class heroes embark on a quest through society, again represented as a garbage dump, to find something to fill their empty stomachs, but are only served slogans by various authority figures, such as a socialite charity person, a priest, and a welfare bureaucrat. The "piece of the pie" remains elusive; the heroes die of starvation and go to heaven, where they encourage the audience to participate in a sing-along a favorite Depression-era activity in movie theaters. Using polemical statements like just so many advertising campaign slogans, the film indicts the church, the state, and public figures, such as Father Charles Coughlin, as apologists for ruling-class neglect of poverty.

Chapter 3 : Experimental film - Wikipedia

The avant-garde's co-option by the global capitalist market, by neoliberal economies, and by what Guy Debord called The Society of the Spectacle, have made contemporary critics speculate on the possibility of a meaningful avant-garde today.

Though the eagerness to innovate can be traced through different stages of history, the emergence of Avant-garde manifestations occurred at the final stage of 19th century. Those manifestations met a golden age of development as well as periods of decadence and invigorating refreshment through 20th century. As they changed the standard ways of approaching different phenomena, their influence can be traced in our days. Avant-garde manifestations gravitate under the tense relationship between art and ideology; a space that not always leaves them in a good position. As a consequence, since their development, Avant-garde manifestations have faced the risk of falling in a snobbish discourse about creativity or in a manifest ideology with a lot to say but nothing to produce. The avant-garde interest in Cinema can be traced in the modernism obsession with photography. Though the positions of Avant-garde manifestations at this issue vary, most of them found in photography and especially in Cinema a suitable media to divorce Art from its institutional canons. The amount of films regarded as Avant-garde is huge. Today, as a term applied to films, Avant-garde is used in a more open sense to refer all movie experimentally produced. Moving through the limits of narrative, time and technique, those movies are a matter of great interest to Cinema students and dilettantes. The next is a list of twenty Avant-garde films. Its intention is merely to work as brief introduction to the richness of Avant-garde Cinema. The first three reels constitute an exploration to the stages of death and afterlife. Anemic Cinema Marcel Duchamp, An ambiguous but playful exercise from the overall acclaimed genius of Marcel Duchamp, who upon his time escaped from every defining canon including the Avant-garde manifestations themselves, Anemic Cinema is an experimental succession of animated drawings, rotoreliefs as Duchamp fondly called them, alternated with alliterations held by nine revolving disks. Perhaps there is no better way to describe Anemic Cinema than appealing to its title. For instance, he approaches his shots to show his characters pass into the underworld through mirrors and, running those shot backwards, he carries on their return to life. The Orphic trilogy is an exploration upon the complexity arisen between artist and his work. Orpheus is the central part of it. The film consists of nothing more than two shots of an office hallway, meticulously carried to explore the spectatorship experience as few films have done. Serene Velocity entirely lacks of plot, its success lies on its virtuous treatment of movement; a treatment in which some have found a major one about cinematographic ontology. Its detriment of movement sequences got it a Prix Jean Vigo for short film.

Chapter 4 : Avant-garde " Art Term | Tate

*The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism (Anthology Film Archives Series, No. 3) [P. Adams Sitney] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers.*

Avant-garde film is often produced in the context of the larger art world, particularly in relation to the visual arts and literature. It is also frequently produced as a critique of dominant, classical Hollywood cinema and functions in relation to political movements and strategies, such as feminism. Although experimental films present myriad structures, lengths, and concerns, filmmakers have traditionally favored 8 mm and 16 mm formats. Currently, filmmakers are using video and new media of all kinds as well as including film in larger multimedia installations. Scholarship and writing about experimental film run the gamut from deeply personal and casual in tone to highly dense and theoretical. Unless otherwise noted, the material in this bibliography is suitable for undergraduate and graduate students who have some knowledge of film history. Given the paucity of material written about experimental film as well as the countercultural nature of the films and the filmmaking practices, some original texts are included that have been supplanted with revised versions of film history because they are inaccurate or unsubstantiated; yet, they remain useful for the obscure material and historical perspectives they provide. Anthologies Given the broad range of films that are called experimental, no single anthology can cover the entire field. MacDonald " , a formidable five-volume collection of interviews with a wide range of avant-garde filmmakers, is the most inclusive source, while Dixon and Foster and Graf and Scheunemann are single volumes that include the work of filmmakers who are unavailable for interviews. Michelson is an indispensable volume for its brilliance and coverage. Posner is a short but rich guide that accompanies a seven-disc DVD set of restored films. MacDonald examines the blend of documentary and avant-garde film through interviews. The Sitney , Sitney , and Sitney edited volumes all cited under P. Adams Sitney are essential, given P. James and Hyman covers postwar experimental film in Los Angeles. London and New York: Covers the field of experimental and avant-garde cinema from the s onward, concentrating on movements and varied key figures, with a concentration on issues such as gender, sexuality, and race, as well as the impact of technological innovation. Graf, Alexander, and Dietrich Scheunemann, eds. Amsterdam and New York: It establishes a continuum between the contemporary moving image and the classical experimental film that preceded it from the s onward. James, David, and Adam Hyman, eds. Experimental Film in Los Angeles, " Indiana University Press, In addition to scholarly work, the book includes historical documents, photographs, and information about postwar film series. Interviews with Independent Filmmakers. University of California Press, " These five volumes of in-depth, perceptive, truly enlightening interviews with a multitude of filmmakers offer a veritable history of the field. Intersections of Documentary and Avant-Garde Cinema. Oxford University Press, The Rise of a New American Cinema, " On the Eve of the Future: Selected Writings on Film. Early American Avant-Garde Film " Anthology Film Archives,

Chapter 5 : Naming, and Defining, Avant-Garde or Experimental Film

Avant-Garde Film: Forms, Themes and Passions examines the variety of concerns and practices that have comprised the long history of avant-garde film at a level appropriate for undergraduate study.

Show results in search Term applied since the end of the nineteenth century to theatre as well as other arts and practitioners involved in introducing original and experimental ideas, forms and techniques. A loose term, often meaning Experimental Theatre, that has been widely used since the middle of the twentieth century and has gone by many other names: They have been unable to develop a vocabulary which can cope with the physicality and volatility of experimental performance or its multiplicity of meaning. The work of Robert Wilson, for example, was reviewed in one paper early in his career by its dance critic. A glance at the history of world theatre, however, reveals the dramatic play as a comparatively recent and primarily European preoccupation. Such theatre has always been "and still is" a compromised art of process, a mucky, mutable, dirty, competitive, collaborative business. From within this ancient and variegated work, the development of printing permitted the recording of just one element: Theatre no longer had to be discovered or taught in the body. It had achieved a means of distribution through the immutable word from which other productions could be reconstructed. Soon, the word preceded production, the solitary task of the writer was born, and the intellectual domination of the play took hold. The making of a play can be the most authoritarian theatre process: There is a less authoritarian approach which leaves more to the individual conscience " to the actor, for instance, at an extreme in the devised theatre work of Mike Leigh. But even in comparison with this approach, experimental theatre is truly heretical. For here, at the beginning of rehearsals, there is no word " there is nothing but the artists and the potential work which they will uniquely create together. By the end, the music may drown out the text, the performers may be reduced to ciphers by the design, the demands of the choreography may condition all other aspects of the work. And the most successful experiment is likely to allow equal significance to design, music, performance, choreography and text. Just as the process of experimental theatre differs from playmaking, so does the product. Ask ten different members of an audience about this meaning, though, and paradoxically they will probably come up with ten different interpretations and ten more if they go to see it again. That is one of the joys of the richness of theatre, and one which experimental work turns to advantage. For here there is a conscious multiplicity of meaning. The work is poetic, allusive, ambiguous, possibly contradictory, certainly asking its audiences to trust their own perceptions as to its truth for them. Discoveries are made through performance, and the final showings are likely to be very different from the first. Thus each performance is a development of the work as product. By comparison, a play is fixed. In an age dominated by the recorded media of film and television " dead drama " experimental work keeps live theatre at its liveliest. The confusion between experimental theatre and dance is innocuous; the confusion with performance art, however, is not. Performance art is a term of the fine arts, with a fully documented tradition of its own, and, at the end of the twentieth century, displaying a vigour which experimental theatre lacks. Here, artists use themselves as material. They do not necessarily adopt the mask of character, nor make fictitious use of time and space. These are qualities of theatre. To misunderstand such distinctions is not simply professionally inept " it points to a history of journalistic criticism which has constantly ducked issues of theoretical analysis. Experimental theatre is born of long creation periods, and the single-minded commitment of genuine ensemble companies has become a rarity " such circumstances have long since become a financial impossibility. Many of those who might once have advanced experimental theatre now work in the equally innovative and collaborative fields of opera, video, television or film. Those few who continue to experiment do so increasingly intermittently, or as solos or duos. Colin Chambers London,

Chapter 6 : The Avant-Garde Archive Online | Film Quarterly

Avant-garde is a term used to refer a series of manifestations that openly depart from the canons of the Status Quo. Though the eagerness to innovate can be traced through different stages of history, the emergence of Avant-garde manifestations occurred at the final stage of 19th century. Those.

The purpose of these films is not to achieve world-wide appeal, but to simply share artistic vision. In no particular order: After buying a 16mm camera, he discovered the film media, and the importance of screening his films, which he regularly did at a local cinema after moving to Brooklyn, New York. He was involved in the underground movement of the s, mingling with other artists such as Nico and Allen Ginsberg. It was in the s that Man Ray started to make short films, most of which were only a few minutes in length. Not only did he make his own films, he assisted with his vision on a number of other avant-garde films of the era, usually doing photography or editing work. The film contains many distinct and famous images: The short was filmed with a 16mm camera that was bought with the money left to Deren by her late father. Born in the Ukraine, but moving to New York as a child, Deren not only made avant-garde films, she wrote about them, in books, newspaper columns, in fact, she repeatedly attacked Hollywood for lacking artistic direction and controlling cinema. It seemed as if she wanted all films to have the same treatment to the world. She never did achieve this, however, as in , she died suddenly at age She spent her life making films which communicated with their audience, rather than just give them what they had seen before. Warhol was born to Ukrainians. After moving to New York from Pittsburgh, he remained there all his life. His first move was towards artwork, but with a twist. Several of his prints consisted of soup, coke bottles, dollar bills and shots of famous actors. He started on his short films in the early s, and began making them from The Factory, a studio on the 5th floor of a building on East 47th st, Midtown. He not only made films, but hosted wild parties. His ideas for his film were often very simple and not planned out. For example, for Chelsea Girls, he took a napkin, drew a line down it, put B on one side and W on the other. At midnight, at cinemas like the famous Elgin in New York, his film would screen to an audience not expecting what they were about to experience. A Chilean, Jodorowsky moved to Mexico where he would make his yes work. In , Jodorowsky made El Topo, a surrealistic western, often called an acid western. It was through celebrities like John Lennon and Yoko Ono that the film received a wider release. In , his most famous project, Wavelength, was released. His works in sculpting can be found throughout his naive Canada, but Wavelength shows the true nature of avant-garde. The entire film is one zoom, which passes all the action around it, including a death, but the camera continuously moves past, and eventually to a wall in the back. This wall houses a photograph of the ocean, which was the subject of the zoom all along. He spent his early career making feature length avant-garde films before making critically acclaimed theatrical films like Ali: Fear that Eats the Soul. These films were the first to bring Fassbinder to critical acclaim. From the favorable release of these is what brought Fassbinder to start making films for the masses. These were almost all shot very quickly, on 16mm and with a minuscule budget, but never the less, Fassbinder remained popular internationally from them. He never got to see the premier of his last film, Quarelle, as after a hectic life of strong drugs, he overdosed at age Throughout his career, his films kept these elements, and never did deviate too much. In his 20s, during the s, Lynch experimented with short film. His first feature film, Eraserhead, kept many of the techniques he used in his shorts, apart from giving his film a semi feasible plot. His later films, like Dune, Blue Velvet, Lost Highway and Mulholland Drive, in some ways, keep trace elements of the haunting mystery he used extensively in his early shorts. Fireworks was made while Anger was still young; in fact, he filmed it the weekend his parents were out of town. Never the less, the film stands as the ultimate expression of the underground homosexual culture. Several years on, and Anger continued making these kinds of films. The case of Art vs. Un Chien Andalou is one of the most timeless of all shorts in the genre. The haunting images stay with the audience for times to come. Ants crawling out of a hand, a priest dragging a piano, rotting donkeys, all pointless but incredible images to convey meaning. The clip above is from the wonderfully absurd The Phantom of Liberty.

Chapter 7 : Avant-garde theatre - Drama Online

10 Avant-Garde Film. Jan-Christopher Horak. The evolution of avant-garde film, as articulated in the canonical texts of film historiography, has been teleologically structured as a chronological progression toward ever more sophisticated forms of film art.

Fifteen of these individuals are listed below – a multicultural select few who specialise in an engagement with experimental filming techniques; creating alternative works that question the medium we so often take for granted. There remain hundreds of talented avant-garde artists scattered all over the globe, but the list below can be recognised as comprising of key members that constitute the bedding of the cinematic underground, please note this list is ranked in no particular order. Andy Warhol A unique character in every sense of the word, Andy Warhol remains one of the most inimitable figures ever to pick up a paintbrush or camera. Conveying a curious demeanour and pasty complexion, Warhol specialised in the structural aspect of the American avant-garde, utilising a minimalist aesthetic and silent soundtrack to turn images of everyday America into exhibitions of art. But this unflinching exploration of a taboo subject was fitting in its aligned attitude with sixties America. It was a time where the youth of the USA engaged in sexual liberation. Warhol veered in an opposite direction to those demanding a tighter grip on societal conduct, using a camera as a tool to dig deeper for an up-close-and-personal look at the taboo subject of sex that was oozing through freethinking America. Is there even a sex act being performed at all? The most captivating of these characters is a girl named Ann Buchanan, who attempts to return the unblinking gaze of the camera and ends up with tears streaming down her cheeks. The result is a captivating, tragic and beautiful piece of authentic filmmaking. Running for just fifteen-minutes, it is the first few moments of the film that have remained the most iconic, as a sitting woman calmly has her left eye stretched open and slit by a razor. To attempt to unpick it is a waste of time – with Bunuel purposely juxtaposing images against one another to allow for a nonsensical, violent contrast that recontextualises typical modes of both filmmaking and viewing. The screenplay also wrote by Dali which underlined the hypocrisy of Catholicism is brought alive by surrealist techniques, with the story told in a series of maddening vignettes involving sex and violence. Steeped in surrealist themes of death, disfigurement and dream-like qualities, the film was quickly banned by Spanish leader Francisco Franco for its hellish depiction of Spanish land. Bunuel seemingly killed at least two animals during its production; smothering a donkey in honey so it would be stung to death, and forcing a mountain goat to stumble off a high cliff. Surrounded by copious amounts of controversy and conspiracy theories, there is even modern-day speculation that the whole documentary was completely fabricated. It seems fitting that the greatest story about Bunuel remains one shrouded in scepticism. Brakhage created films that documented the pre-linguistic eye; a purer form of vision free from the baggage of language. Indeed, for Brakhage, the capability of the camera to see further was less interesting than the inner vision of the human eye. Brakhage made the film by collecting moth wings, blades of grass and leaves and pressing them onto the film which was then fed through the projector. The result is a visceral experience of nature intertwined with cinema – a document of pure vision. Aside from analysis of the impact of light on vision, Brakhage also sought to foreground our visceral responses to certain images that make us recoil before we have even acknowledged the meaning of the image itself. A fearless examination of the human eyes and body, and the notion of subjectivity, the film contains a plentiful amount of utterly unforgettable images, and is the most enthralling cinematic experience that can never be recommended to anyone. The capricious king of New German cinema lived and breathed film – directing, screenwriting, producing and acting in 40 productions in 14 years before his tragic passing at the tender age of 37; quietly slipping away alone in his room after a typical night of drink and drugs that had become his standard diet. Fassbinder stood shoulder to shoulder with Werner Herzog in his contribution to New German cinema of the seventies; often taking the movement into new, fascinating experimental directions. Her static camera is often regarded with second-glances and suspicion by passers-by. Whilst in reality these citizens are simply wondering what Akerman is doing with her camera, the effect it creates is one of alienation. These New Yorkers appear to be looking at her with unfamiliarity; she feels

acutely aware of her foreign heritage. Yet, as the content of the letters becomes more distant, the soundtrack of the streets gets louder. Even the camerawork becomes a little more fluid, with one segment filmed from the window of a moving taxicab to resemble a lateral tracking shot: To achieve such powerful effects from such minimalistic imagery is hugely admirable, and Akerman is a vital member of the avant-garde whose filmmaking deserves great attention.

Here is a critical and historical overview of unconventional and aesthetically challenging films, all of feature length. The author focuses on the particular forms of contemporary avant-garde films, which often rely on characteristics associated with historical films of the same genre.

It first appeared with reference to art in France in the first half of the nineteenth century, and is usually credited to the influential thinker Henri de Saint-Simon, one of the forerunners of socialism. He believed in the social power of the arts and saw artists, alongside scientists and industrialists, as the leaders of a new society. In he wrote: We artists will serve you as an avant-garde, the power of the arts is most immediate: What a magnificent destiny for the arts is that of exercising a positive power over society, a true priestly function and of marching in the van [i. The beginning of the avant-garde Avant-garde art can be said to begin in the s with the realism of Gustave Courbet, who was strongly influenced by early socialist ideas. This was followed by the successive movements of modern art , and the term avant-garde is more or less synonymous with modern. Some avant-garde movements such as cubism for example have focused mainly on innovations of form , others such as futurism , De Stijl or surrealism have had strong social programmes. The development of the avant-garde Although the term avant-garde was originally applied to innovative approaches to art making in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is applicable to all art that pushes the boundaries of ideas and creativity, and is still used today to describe art that is radical or reflects originality of vision. Movers and shakers Because of its radical nature and the fact that it challenges existing ideas, processes and forms; avant-garde artists and artworks often go hand-in-hand with controversy. Read the captions of the artworks below to find out about the shock-waves they caused. Critics and the public were upset by the realism of the work but also because Degas had represented a provocative modern subject Satirical and nonsensical, Dada antics caused outrage, and one of their exhibitions was closed by the police. But paradoxically, although they claimed to be anti-art, the effect of the movement was to open the door to many future developments in art. Although the society was supposed to show everything submitted by members, the work scandalized the board and was rejected. Duchamp is cited as one of the most important figures in modern art, inspiring many later artists and art movements “ notably conceptual art. Many art critics viewed surrealism as absurd or nonsensical but the movement proved to be hugely influential, not just to art but also literature, film, music and philosophy. Although now a recognised and respected art movement which commands high prices on the art market pop art was once considered a serious threat to the art world. Andre and other minimalist artists often used impersonal materials such as bricks or fluorescent lamps to question the notion that the artwork is a unique creation by a gifted individual, and to prevent its commodification. Joseph Beuys Information Action Avant-garde art often has a social or political dimension to it. Joseph Beuys, who belonged to the avant-garde artist network Fluxus, used as his starting point the concept that everything is art, that every aspect of life can be approached creatively and, as a result, everyone has the potential to be an artist. Although a passionate and charismatic professor of art at Dusseldorf Academy his relationship with authority was stormy and he was dismissed in Martin Creed caused controversy in when he presented his conceptual Work No. It consists of an empty gallery which alternates between being lit and plunged into darkness as the lights are turned on and off. The work prompted outrage. One gallery visitor threw eggs at the walls to register her disgust at the piece.

Chapter 9 : MoMA | Experimentation in Film / The Avant-Garde

I originally posted a version of this attempt to define experimental or avant-garde film to FrameWorks, an email discussion group dedicated to avant-garde film, on, in response to a question posted much earlier.

From Film Quarterly Autumn , Vol. With experimentation rejected by the moving-image industry, and moving image shunned by commercial art galleries until the s, film and video artists in the twentieth century relied on film festivals, grassroots film clubs, artist-run co-operatives, and art school curricula as channels of distribution. For anyone interested in avant-garde films outside the charmed circles of distribution in academia and a few metropolitan centres, it could be hard to see anything at all. Since broadband became a domestic reality, the proliferation of moving image online, including a substantial amount of archival material, has swelled to bewildering dimensions. Even the most enthusiastic individual now has access to more than enough historical avant-garde film and video to reward their interest. For the audience, the problem now is less how to see it than where to begin, and how to organize, or even understand, it. For archives, co-ops, and filmmakers themselves, the question is whether a vast new audience for the work comes at an unacceptable cost to the integrity of the works themselves. Imagine that you decide to educate yourself in the history of avant-garde film and video. More than 35, people have watched this particular upload. It looks like this has been taken from a commercial release: The High Definition version is recommended, and pretty good it is, too: Luxonline also provides plenty of biographical and background information on the artists. Nobody has given you a list of required watching, and the works mentioned above are merely a tiny fraction of what you could have watched. Though the archive remains, inevitably, an incomplete and incoherent collection of fragments, the unprecedented level of availability has reconfigured these fragments. Institutional, educational, and informal channels of distribution have been replaced by commercial, public, and personal channels. To understand the effects of this, it helps to look at the platforms and means by which it has become available: Intellectual property rights have inevitably become an issue, but a combination of enthusiasm on the part of individuals, and the limited resources of filmmakers and their estates, means that at any given time there will be an unknowable amount of historical avant-garde material available on YouTube. At the same time archives like the BFI and the National Film Board of Canada have established partnerships with YouTube to deliver high-quality legitimate archival content. While YouTube suits public organizations attempting to reach new audiences, the choice of the avant-garde connoisseur has always been UbuWeb. Less user-friendly than YouTube, the film section greets you with a tightly set four-column list of over artists and filmmakers in alphabetical order. Film and video have been more problematic: UbuWeb has since moderated its stance, and taken a more collaborative approach: Voir work with UbuWeb to make clips available.