

# **freymond- guth & co. fine ARTS**

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Mi – Fr 14 –18h  
Sat 11 –16h  
Or by appointment

## **STEPHEN DWOSKIN**

\*1939 in Brooklyn, USA

Lives in London, UK and New York City, USA

see back-side for more bio information

### **Me, Myself and I**

1967/ 68

16mm transferred to DVD

18min

b/w, sound

thank you to Stephen Dwoskin and LUX, London, [www.luxonline.org.uk](http://www.luxonline.org.uk)

**Stephen Dwoskin** is an avant-garde video artist and experimental filmmaker, photographer, painter and writer.

Since the 1960s, Stephen Dwoskin has obsessively examined the relationship between the feminine body and the masculine perception. He uncovers the most disparate rituals, the performances that are both extraordinary and minimalist, the least-shared intimacy, the infinite series of possible abstractions.

Until today, he is one of the most visually rich and emotionally intense and yet underexposed filmmakers in British and American cinema. His films were characterised by an obsessively intense scrutiny of the (mostly female) figures in front of his static or slowly moving camera, and an attention to image textures, printing processes and hypnotic soundtracks. Whereas most of his contemporaries in the world of avant-garde cinema espoused a modernist aesthetic focusing on the properties of the medium, Dwoskin explored the relations of desire that can be woven between the camera's way of looking, the subject's wish to be seen, the filmmaker's irrevocable 'separation' from what he wants to see and show, and the viewer's relation to this intricate network of imbricated desires.

In *Me, Myself & I* (1967), Dwoskin shows a couple confined in a bathroom. The genesis of the research on the relation between what is visible and imaginary is found in a continual work on body movements, on the interstices of determinations, on the sketches of actions in a precise direction, that always call into question a sort of diegesis or a logic of acts a viewer would like to find there. In the same way, a large place is given at the start to bodily details (mouths, eyes, hands, etc.) and to the fragmentary montage that captures movements, gestures, and expressions as they evolve. The dispersion, the lack of logic and of chronology contained in these fascinating movements alternate daily necessities and the absurdity of accomplished activities. The vision is pushed even farther in a mental space that continually returns to something else, to other intimate and subjective situations. For the viewer, in fact, the experience of watching the film is a perpetual wait, mixed with the pleasure of a progressive immersion in the cracks left by concrete intentions, in the intimate space opened by long exchanged glances. In Dwoskin's films, all is contrast, paradox, disorientation though strong and unitary experimental ventures in which shots, rhythms, lights, and sounds are magnificently mastered, destined to engender in the viewer all the intrinsic dimensions to the act of watching.

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From the film's screening in London  
organized by Anne-Sophie Dinant, 2005

*The beginnings of the prevalent theme - or question - 'what keeps us apart, even when together?' This question becomes in the later film not just the question, but as a statement...'S.D.*

This is the first screening in years of 'Me Myself and I', one of the early films by this influential filmmaker from the 60's London film Underground scene. With long lasting shots the camera is analyzing a situation. A long observation interrogating communication between the characters leads to a persistent observation of the body and its gesture. Trying to reach intimacy and to analyze the inside, filming appears to be more an attempt to read a state of mind. Slowly revealed to us is a sense of play and eroticism so characteristic of Dwoskin's work.

'Dwoskin began making films in New York in 1959 when the avant-garde was led - in contrasting ways - by the twin poles of Jonas Mekas' Film Co-op and, a little later, by Andy Warhol's Factory. Dwoskin identifies himself more with the beat cinema that produced Shadows (dir: Cassavetes), Pull My Daisy (dirs: Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie) and the films of Ron Rice. He brought an authentic whiff of this heady climate to the UK when he moved here in the mid-1960s. Here, around 1966, a cluster of cineastes, social radicals and artists made up the first audiences and makers of the new experimental film. Internal battle lines had not yet been drawn between the factions, so that European New Wave fiction, international political documentaries and underground movies all jostled for attention among the diverse enthusiasts for a new cinema. Dwoskin remains faithful to this inclusive vision, where film culture meets social activism.

The libertarian wing of this movement weakened over the next decade, as bigger hopes for revolution faded. The film groups reformed in stricter and straighter guise in 1976 as the Independent Filmmaker's Association. Its message, and similar pleas for cultural cinema, spread into the television policies that, already in Germany and soon in the UK, funded major experimental films - including some of Dwoskin's - in the 1970's and 1980's. But while Dwoskin has long made the transition from improvised Co-op screening to TV output, he is loyal to the first phase of the underground movement. He preserves a fiercely personal stance with a wider understanding of film beyond film, in its social and documentary aspect. His latest and also more private films are still examples of this.

When attitude becomes form might sum up one of Dwoskin's key insights. Both elements are expressed in his incisive account of the experimental film, Film Is, of 1975. An early exponent of the structural film, especially in the related transgressive themes and styles of the Austrian Kurt Kren, and a pioneer of the UK Co-op avant-garde along with Malcolm Le Grice and Peter Gidal, he became disaffected with the theoretical turn made by the movement in the mid-1970s. Increasingly, his films made room for psychodrama, or inner life seen at the extreme. The tilt and pan of the moving camera, or the abrupt patterning of shots that make up his editing matrix, caught the flux of live action.

While his peers and younger filmmakers took this new film rhetoric to more formal and objective ends, Dwoskin remained fixed on the performative act in film. Where Gidal excluded the human figure altogether, avoiding the sense of merged identity between viewer and screen image, Dwoskin courted the human face and body. As with the girl covered in paint for Take Me, or in the implied masturbation of Alone, the discomfort of the woman's stare at the camera in Girl matches the viewer's own gaze at the screen. This Sartrean look of exposure is underlined by the direct address of an actress who calls out for aid in Dyn Amo. By taking private acts and making them public, the film elicits the viewer's uneasy participation. "To use the camera as a character", he said in 1978, "to use the camera so as the viewer is within the action." The voyeurism of cinema is made visible. Absorption becomes theatricality'.  
Al Rees

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### **Education**

Parsons School of Design

New York University

Stephen Dwoskin is a Founder member of the London Film-makers' Co-op.

### **Screenings in Film Festivals (include):**

Cannes, Berlin, Rotterdam, Toronto, Locarno, Pesaro, Mannheim, Oberhausen, Sydney, Melbourne, Hamburg, San Francisco, Turin, Riga.

### **Films broadcast (selection):**

Channel Four, UK; ZDF-TV, Germany; INA, France; RAdio-Television Suisse Romande, Switzerland; ARTE and La Sept, France.

### **Awards (selection):**

The Rockefeller Foundation Intercultural Film/Video Fellowship ,  
L'Age D'Or prize, Brussels Film Festival 1982; The Solvey Prize, 4th International Experimental Film Festival, Knokke, Belgium.

### **Lecturer:**

at London College of Printing and Royal College of Art, London; San Francisco Art Institute and San Francisco State University, USA; University of Geneva and l'Ecole Supérieure d'Art Visuel, Switzerland

### **Collections:**

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. (Graphic Design & Film).  
Centre National D'art et Culture, George Pompidou, Paris. (Film)  
Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels. (Film)

### **Books:**

"Film Is" (on the International Free Cinema) pub.: Peter Owen Ltd. UK and Overlook Press, USA; 1975.

"Ha, Ha!" (La solution imaginaire) with Photography; pub.: The Smith, New York, USA; 1993.