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FILM

RECENT | ARCHIVE

- Dennis Lim on the 69th Cannes Film Festival
- Nick Pinkerton on "Tales of Cinema: The Films of Hong Sang-soo"
- Amy Taubin on *Eva Hesse* (2016)
- Tony Pipolo on the 16th "Open Roads: New Italian Cinema" at Film Society
- Rachel Ellis Neyra on the art of Beatriz Santiago Muñoz
- Linda Norden on "In Time (The Rhythm of the Workshop)" at the MAD



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Newest Headlines

- Frank Wagner (-2016)
- Lehmann Maupin Plans to Open New Gallery in Chelsea
- Metropolitan Opera Names Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director
- Dominique Lévy to Expand its New York Gallery
- Decorative and Fine Arts Museum Opens in South Australia
- Digital Arts Magazine Triple Canopy Moves to Chinatown
- German Cultural Expert Claims Syrian Troops Are Looting Palmyra
- Yung Ma Appointed Curator by Centre Pompidou, in Partnership with K11 Art Foundation
- Senate Concludes Private Museums "Should Do More" to Merit Tax Exempt Status
- Louvre and Musée d'Orsay Shut Down and Evacuate Artworks Due to Threat of Flood

Shake, Rattle, and Roll

02.04.13



Peter Adair, *Holy Ghost People*, 1967, 16 mm, black-and-white, sound, 53 minutes.

"IF ART IS ONLY A BUSINESS, AS WARHOL SUGGESTS," scrolls boxy, yellow text down a black screen, "then music expresses a more communal, transcendental emotion which art now denies." The words are Dan Graham's, pronounced near the end of his 1982–84 video *Rock My Religion*, an eccentric study which locates rock's origins in Shaker ritual and the born-again fervor of the Great Awakening. Such moments of ecstatic effervescence—that emotional state of which post-AbEx art seems most skeptical—are the subject of two documentaries screening at Light Industry on February 5. The event couples Graham's 1983 video, *Minor Threat*, a looped recording of a November 1982 concert by the titular punk outfit at the Bowery's CBGB, with Peter Adair's 1967 film *Holy Ghost People*, a straight-faced accounting of an evening service at a Holiness church in Scrabble Creek, West Virginia. Apposing the stylized slamming of young punks with the enraptured convulsions of Pentecostals seeking out the Holy Ghost, the pairing humors Graham's alignment of rock and revivalism to provocative effect.

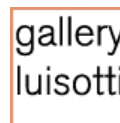
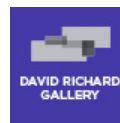
Low-key visuals and a refusal to judge unite the two projects. Shot on a handheld, 16-mm camera, Adair's film nurses the vérité ambitions that so often attended the use of this technology in the 1960s. Yet while Adair plays the impartial observer, Graham is both filmmaker and fan. Now angled up from the mosh pit, now trained in a close-up on vocalist Ian MacKaye, his perspective shifts between crowd and stage in long takes. The club's dim lighting—together with the camera's poor resolution, jerky frame, and intermittent cut-outs to static—mean that Graham's footage is often illegible. Enveloped in black, bodies appear only in pieces: torsos taut as they vault back, then launch forward; fists clenched as they beat the air; legs swung sideways midleap into the pit. Thus fragmented, the video reads as an anarchic, impersonal melee among white males, their violence poised precariously between necessary release and all-out brawl. Order is restored only when a set ends and the surge abates. It's these interstitial moments, where Graham's camera samples comments from concertgoers—"Yo, what's with the video?" "OWW!" "Do you have a napkin?" "Aren't you dying?"—that lend a sense of camaraderie to an otherwise rough scene.

Just as the exuberance of *Minor Threat's* performance hinges on the hysteria of the crowd, so too does worship at Scrabble Creek's Holiness congregation. The hour-long film was Adair's first, shot while he was still in college. His style is direct and unassuming, his camera tracing restless, irregular arcs around his subjects as they shake, speak in tongues, and writhe on the floor. These performances of ecstasy, with each believer drawing on the zeal of others, soon reach a manic pitch where logic empties into tautology. "If God don't want me to die of a snake bite, he won't let me die that way," says a soon-to-be-bitten preacher as he handles a venomous reptile. Interviews with the devout in the film's opening minutes make the dependence of their emotional extremes on collective energy clear. In one, a homely woman appears in an unadorned room, jolting her neck and blinking repeatedly as she recites a spontaneous sermon. Full of lurching, garbled phrases, her monologue seems more stilted than sincere. Rapture, as Graham's punks would attest, is difficult to achieve alone.

— Courtney Fiske

Dan Graham's Minor Threat and Peter Adair's Holy Ghost People play Tuesday, February 5 at 7:30 PM at

links



Light Industry in Brooklyn, New York.

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