afternoon. Bellevue kept the film. In the safe, they said. The doctor gave Rice the usual farewell sermon: "If we are letting you out, don't get an idea that you are better or more normal than you are. . . ." Ron promised the doctor to have a special screening of his films for the Bellevue doctors. "It's about time," he said when the doctor was wondering why he should see Ron's films. All this time I kept shooting with a hidden 8 mm. camera, and if I got anything, you'll see it at the Gramercy Arts in a newscell entitled Ron Rice at Bellevue. (A show of Rice's films is coming to the Gramercy Arts soon.) We left Bellevue. Outside the sun was shining. Inside was the sadness, dirt, ugliness, the unbelievable sadness of people mistreated, mishandled, and unloved as only human beings can be unloved.

February 6, 1964

ON THE EXPANDING EYE

Is our eye dying? Or do we just not know how to look and see any longer? The experiences of LSD show that the eye can expand itself, see more than we usually do. But then, as Bill Burroughs says (I quote from memory): "Whatever can be done chemically can be done other ways."

There are many ways of freeing the eye. It comes more to removing various psychological blocks than to really changing the eye. We never really look at the screen directly; we are separated by a misty ocean of our inhibitions and "knowledge." Experiments which Brion Gysin is doing in Paris with his "flicker machine" (read Olympia magazine) show that without the help of drugs, with a light flicker (even with your eyes closed), you can see colors and visions you were not able to see before and the memory of which (as with LSD) remains after the "experiment." A series of blocks has been removed. As Professor Oster, who is conducting similar experiments in Brooklyn, says (again from memory): "The eye is inhibited. In some cultures more, in some less. We do not properly use the moire patterns of the retina, because we think it is not practical. Our practical culture has reduced our vision." Salvador Dali believes that "the Greek and Arab artists had this training of the eye, of releasing the inhibitions of the eye. Only after the burning of the library of Alexandria, the education of the eye was gradually neglected."

We say the single-frame technique in Markopoulos' film Twice a Man bothers our eyes. People have told me, after seeing Robert Breer's film Blazes or after Stan Brakhage films, that they have headaches. Which is very possible. Others among us, those who have been watching these films more often, feel that the movements are too slow—we could take so much more. Our eyes has expanded, our eye reactions have quickened. We have learned to see a little bit better.

But still our eyes are so limited! Some people can still see sprites and pixies. I saw an item in a recent issue of The New York Times about a woman in London who can read colors with her fingers. Brion Gysin writes:

What is art? What is color? What is vision? These old questions demand new answers when, in the light of the Dream Machine (flicker machine), one sees all of ancient and modern abstract art with eyes closed.

Writes Stan Brakhage (in Metaphors on Vision):

Imagine an eye unrulled by manmade laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each new object encountered in life through an adventure of perception. How many colors are there in a field of grass to the crawling baby unaware of Green? How many rainbows can light create for the untutored eye?

Writes Ian Sommerville (in Olympia):

I have made a simple flicker machine: a slotted cardboard cylinder which turns on a gramophone at 78 rpm with a light bulb inside. You look at it with your eyes shut and the flicker plays over your eyelids. Visions start with a kaleidoscope of colors on a plane in front of the eyes and gradually become more complex and beautiful, breaking like surf on a shore until whole patterns of color are pounding to get in. After a while the visions were permanently behind my eyes, and I was in the middle of the whole scene with limitless patterns being generated around me. There was an almost unbearable feeling of spatial movement for a while, but it was well worth getting through, for I found that when it stopped I was high above earth in a universal blaze
of glory. Afterwards I found that my perception of the world around me had increased very notably. All conceptions of being dragged or tired had dropped away. . . .

All these loose thoughts concern the new film language that is developing, a new way of seeing the world. Louis Marcourelle, one of the editors of Cahiers du Cinéma, wrote me a week ago, talking about the New American Cinema: "Suddenly, I can't look at the ordinary cinema any longer, even when it is signed by Godard." Yes. But mostly even critics are blind. We have a number of talented men and women creating a new cinema, opening new visions—but we need critics and an audience capable of seeing these visions. We need an audience that is willing to educate, to expand their eyes. A new cinema needs new eyes to see it. That's what it's all about.

February 20, 1964

ON THE MYSTERY OF THE LOW-BUDGET "ART" FILM

The new important event on the New York movie scene is the opening of the 55th Street Playhouse as the first commercial theatre devoted exclusively to the showing of "experimental and avant-garde" movies. With the low-budget film showcases appearing all over town, someone had to start something bigger, for the uptown people.

Somewhere around Hollywood, often disguised as "independents," there are the old-school directors such as Ford, Fuller, Hitchcock, Donen making first-rate entertainment movies on million-dollar budgets, movies like Donovan's Reef, Underworld USA, The Birds, Charade. On the other extreme, there is the low-budget underground cinema with its own bustle of creativity. In the middle is stuck the $100,000 to $400,000 movie, the so-called American "art" film, movies like David and Lisa, The Balcony, The Greenwich Village Story. It is this middle that is the most anemic and unimaginative. Variety says there are about two hundred low-budget "art" movies waiting for distribution. I have seen a good number of them, and the best ones are dogs. American cinema remains in Hollywood and the New York underground. There is no American "art" film.
lobby. Lobby full, one red-faced guy very agitated, says I have 30 seconds to give him his money back or he'll run into theatre and start a "lynch riot." "We'll all come out here and Lynch you, buddy!!" Nobody stopped him when 30 seconds were up; he ran back toward screen. In fact, the guy who had said he didn't want to make a scene now said, "Come on, I'll go with you!!"

I finally yelled at him to wait a minute. Mario Casetta told crowd to give us a chance to discuss it. Mario and I moved into outer lobby. Thoughts of recent football riot in South America. People angry as hell, a mob on the verge of violence. Red-faced guy stomps toward me: "Well, what are you going to do?"

"I'll give out passes for another show." Over two hundred passes given out.

Decided to make an announcement. "Ladies and gentlemen. I believe that Sleep was properly advertised. I said in my ads that it was an unusual six-hour movie. You came here knowing that you were going to see something unusual about sleep and I think you are. I don't know what else I could have said. However—[shout from audience: "Don't cop out!! Don't cop out!!"]—however... . . ."

Sleep continued on. Projectionist kept falling asleep. People are not able to take the consequences of their own curiosity. Woman calls at 11. "Are you still there?" "Sure, why?" "I was there earlier. Heard people in back of me saying this theatre's not going to have a screen very much longer so I left." Fifty were left at the end. Some people really digging the movie.

ON DREAM MACHINES

Lili Vincenz, from Washington, D.C., sent me the following notes in connection with my mention of the flicker and dream machines:

When I was small I used to rub my eyeballs with eyes closed when in bed at night. The fantastic patterns generated by the pressure on the eyes delighted me often; it was a great game. The more pressure applied, the lighter and brighter the colors, until it was a splendor in yellows and whites in perpetual motion, so bright finally that it was "blinding." Then I added my imagination to the procedure and "projected" objects into the color masses. I saw beautiful baroque interiors or flowers or shining castles. Once, when in need for a birthday present for my mother, I scientifically went to work, noting the particulars of the images before my eyes. It was a delicate tree with an aura of green and purple hues radiating from the center. I memorized the
design and colors and as faithfully as possible reproduced everything on wood, sawed it out with my jigsaw, and made a round wall plaque. It still exists. It didn’t lose by being transcribed from imagination to reality.

A few minutes ago I tried the procedure again, with no specific goal in mind, however, except the one of seeing. I sat near a lamp and varied the pressure on my eyes also moving my face toward and away from the lamp. The effects were beautiful—as usual. The nearer the lamp, the brighter the colors (releasing the pressure, incidentally, causing extraordinary, luminous contrasts of light and dark). By moving my head and “playing” on my eyes, I must have approximated the effect the flicker machine had on Mr. Sommerville [see “On the expanding eye,” p. 118]. When I finally opened my eyes, a wonderful surprise awaited me. I was under water, seeing everything in a hazy, illuminated blur. Or was I inside an impressionistic picture? It took several minutes for my normal vision to return, but I didn’t mind waiting and enjoyed wandering around in the bright haze.

July 19, 1964

AN INTERVIEW WITH STORM DE HIRSCH

A determined pixie woman, Storm De Hirsch, went to Rome, got mad, grabbed a camera, and made a feature-length movie. She had never touched the camera before. Then she cut the film in pieces, hid it in trunks, smuggled it back to New York, closed herself in a midtown loft, didn’t show herself for a year, then came out with a finished brand new movie, Goodbye in the Mirror. The film was shown out of competition at Cannes. The Locarno Film Festival saw the film, liked it very much, and invited it to represent the United States at this year’s festival. Storm’s film will be shown at Locarno on the 27th of this month. I caught Storm on her way to the plane, waving her ponytail, and we had the following conversation.

JM: How did you come to make Goodbye in the Mirror?
SDH: Seemingly, it grew out of a series of personal notes and observations that I made while on a visit to Rome in 1961. But actually it wasn’t until later, while the shooting of the film was under way, that I realized it had been germinating for a long time and stemmed from a poem I had written called “Geography of Home.”
we had to take the losses. It may be shown, eventually, but at the moment it doesn’t fit the networks’ appetite.

JM: What happens to your movies after they are shown on television?

AM: We own them all, but we have no official permission to show them in theatres. They are all in various states of restriction.

JM: You shot your Capote film around New York. But there was one cemetery shot in it, from Kansas. Was it stock footage?

AM: Oh, no! We went to Kansas just for that one shot. We felt we had to do it. As a matter of fact, while shooting it, to help ourselves, we had a small tape recorder on us, with Capote’s voice on it, reading that part. For authenticity of feeling.

JM: Are you planning another film?

DM: We are still looking for a good story that would sustain itself for an hour and a half. We are going to make it as soon as we find it. It is funny—we are working the same way, Capote and us. We buy newspapers, magazines, we look through all the items. One thing is certain: This story will have something the other films we did till now didn’t have—it will be because it is a good story, but not because it’s about a “famous person.” It will be a person and a story that nobody knows anything about.

March 24, 1966

AN INTERVIEW WITH TONY CONRAD: ON THE Flickering Cinema of Pure Light

The Flicker, a thirty-minute movie by Tony Conrad, is one of the most violently discussed movies in town. I say violently, because some viewers do not even consider it a movie. If you ask them what it is, they say they do not know. It may be an optical experiment. Or it may be a medical test for the eyes. Introduction to the film warns that those with epileptic tendencies should stay out. During the shows at the Cinematheque a doctor was present at all screenings.

Then, there are the others, the minority—I myself belong to that minority—who think that The Flicker is one of the few original works of cinema and a most unusual aesthetic experience of light. To clarify some of the matters, I had the following conversation with Tony Conrad, the maker of The Flicker.

JM: Why did you make The Flicker?

Tony Conrad: For a long time I have been interested in the type of things that you see with your eyes closed. Some people have tried painting this—but such paintings can be only very bad imitations of what we see. The seeing with your eyes closed is a very different type of sensory experience from the visual impressions that you get with your eyes open, when your eyes are focused on an object. The only way to have such impressions is to use a device that produces them—doesn’t project them, but actually produces them in the eye.

JM: Is The Flicker a movie?

TC: I don’t think of The Flicker as a movie as we know it today. It is a piece of film that is experienced by a group of people in various ways—depending on how they choose to approach it. There is a variety of effects that I am investigating, effects that act on your eyes so as to produce the actual imagery directly within the observer rather than in a normal way of having the eye interpret the light patterns on the screen.

JM: Is your work in cinema connected in any way with your work in music—I mean, specifically, your collaboration with La Monte Young?

TC: In The Flicker, I was working within a form of light that is broken down not into areas or into colors but into frequencies. So that there is a numerological way of thinking about it. But outside of that there is really very little connection, except for certain stylistic ideas that La Monte Young and I have in common and which have naturally affected the overall organization of the film.

JM: Your film is a complex orchestration of white and black frames?

TC: Yes, all frames are black or white. The film is actually divided into about fifty sections each of which consists of a repeating pattern made up of one rhythm of black and white frames. Nevertheless, most people see colors, and that is not unusual at all.

JM: Is there any one way of looking at it?

TC: I don’t think so. Most people are still concerned with what it is. Is it a movie? How do you look at it? Is it the form? Is it the
content and nothing else? What's going on? Is this expanded cinema or no cinema at all? People come to see the movie, and they are used to seeing representational images. They want to see images desperately. So desperately, in fact, that a lot of them hypnotize themselves into seeing imagery. Like, for instance, a brother and a sister, both, seeing The Flicker at the same time, at approximately the same point in the film saw a bird for about the same length of time. Someone else saw a dragon. Another saw cubes, rotating geometrical shapes. These are specific images rather than, for instance, mandala patterns (which is a way of talking about a kind of random retinal activity that you usually feel with your eyes closed or under various other conditions).

JM: Your interest wasn't a hundred per cent scientific?

TC: I had certain ideas which I wanted to see done on film. I had seen stroboscopic effects and I had been stunned by the tremendous impact, the experiences that I had under stroboscopic light. I also knew that stroboscopic light had been used effectively in the productions of rock 'n' roll, like, for instance, what was done by Murray the K in Brooklyn, two years ago. But it seemed to me that nobody had ever taken this in any other way than as an effect in conjunction with something else, and I had always seen it as fantastically beautiful in itself. I wanted to develop it further. The patterns that I selected to use in The Flicker are an extension of the usual stroboscope techniques into a much more complex system. The Flicker employs harmonic relations, speeds, pulses, and patterns different from those used until now.

(At this point in our conversation, James Mullins, the manager of the Cinematheque, where The Flicker was screened, walked in.)

JM: What was the effect of the film on you? You saw it twice.

James Mullins: It gave me headaches.

JM: You never had headaches in your life before?

Mullins: No. I had them always.

JM: That means, anything can cause it. What are the usual causes?

Mullins: I have photogenic migraine.

JM: What is it?

Mullins: It is caused by certain light conditions or effects on the eyes.

JM: Did you know it before, I mean, what kind of migraine you had?

Mullins: No. I found it out after seeing The Flicker, by talking to the doctors.

JM: I see. The Flicker can be used as a detector of the photogenic migraine. That's something—art or not art. What other reactions took place at the screening?

Mullins: Someone threw up.

TC: Is that a favorable or unfavorable response?

JM: That was definitely a favorable response. The man probably had something bad in his stomach and the movie cleaned his stomach out. That's good, no?

Mullins: In general, people felt that it was a very important film. But, at the same time, some of them didn't find it pleasant. It's like looking at the sun.

TC: The intensity of the light as reflected from the screen is in no way comparable to the light of the sun. It cannot produce any damage in any eye. I think that a lot of uneasiness in some people is produced by the fact that they are exposed for the first time to a completely new sensation. I found it strange the first time myself. But the second time I relaxed and went along with it. In fact, there are certain kinds of neuroses, war neuroses, that have been treated with the use of stroboscopic light. On the other hand, the stroboscopes are used to detect certain kinds of epilepsy. At a certain point, as the frequency is being increased, a certain psychophysical reaction begins to be noticeable, which, if the stroboscope would continue, would result in an epileptic seizure. But photogenic epilepsy among adults is very rare—one person in about perhaps 15,000.

JM: Some people asked me in the lobby, after the screening: What's the content of this film? I said: It's the light, don't you see? God is light, so the content is God! Anyway, is The Flicker a work of art?

TC: I was speaking this afternoon with someone who said that for him the transformation that changes a scientific experiment into an amusement, or an amusamental experience—or, in other words, into a work of art—did not take place. It seemed quite different from all other aesthetic experiences. He reacted very strongly, he told me, to the fact that there was no representational
imagery in the film. So, instead of watching the film he turned around and he watched the audience in the light reflected from the screen. He found that the transformation did occur, that it did create an artistic effect in him.

I think that The Flicker acts as a very versatile art object. The observer can really use it to his own means over a wide range of possibilities. The beauty lies within the beholder himself. In most aesthetic presentations—drama, cinema, music—the common attitude is that the amusement or the beauty or the effect of the experience is wholly within the entertainer; that the entertainer is actually creating the impressions or the reactions himself. The Flicker, I think, presents a clean-cut case of the experience lying wholly within the observer. Most of the details, most of the impact, most of what people find in it, what they take away with them from having watched the film, wasn’t there, was conjured up only when they watched this film: It didn’t exist before, it doesn’t exist on film, it wasn’t on the screen. On the other hand, I don’t feel it’s my responsibility to be able to entertain everyone, because no one can guarantee an entertainment for everyone. Even the most classical ballet, for instance, would be loathed by most of the world, because most of the people just couldn’t care less. The Flicker will provide entertainment for people who like different things to happen to them, who like to take a chance and have new phenomena occur, and to perceive a new phenomenon.

April 14, 1966

AN INTERVIEW WITH GREGORY MARKOPOULOS,
ON GALAXIE

For three weeks, Gregory Markopoulos has been busy making film portraits. By now he has over twenty such portraits. The “sitters” include a wide variety of New York artists, poets, and friends, such as Parker Tyler, Jasper Johns, Panna Grady, Alfonso Ossorio, Frances Stelloff, Allen Ginsberg, Storm De Hirsch, Amy Taubin, W. H. Auden. Film portrait is a new film form. Recently, it has been used by Andy Warhol and, in Songs, by Stan Brakhage. I asked Gregory Markopoulos to answer a few questions:

JM: What are these portraits you’re doing?
GM: The color portraits are in the tradition of portrait sittings. To these I have added certain film superimpositions, as befit the individual I am film-painting. Each portrait is only three minutes long, and takes about two hours to complete, depending on the intricacies involved. You see, I also time single frames throughout the filming. This means I still retain what I have learned from the aftereffects of Twice a Man and, even, The Iliac Passion. At the same time, without doing away with editing, I have incorporated what for me is a very interesting departure from my usual procedures in making a film. I would say, too, that my editing may thus become even stronger than before for I am working in that tradition which one might also name as documentary—planned on the spot, inspired by the subject, the surroundings, yet at the same time (because I am also editing in the camera) permitting an absolute freedom.

JM: You mentioned The Iliac Passion. What’s happening to it, when are we going to see it?
GM: The shooting of The Iliac Passion was completed more than a year ago. It was edited from January to August of 1965. And, then, it remained idle in the vaults of the laboratory while I proceeded to find the funds to pay for the very expensive labor fees of printing. Each three minutes, you see, is estimated by the laboratory to be about $500. Happily, thanks to private patronage (this seems to be the only way that a film of this type can be completed) the printing, as I have stated, has begun. I might add that the printing is so expensive because of the complexities involved with the furthering of my own personal film form (my own single frame variations) as a vital clue not only toward a new and much needed narrative form for the film spectator, but, hopefully, even beyond, toward the conception that the film-maker may well be one day the physician of the future. . . .

As for when we will see the film—I would hazard that, keeping in mind the understanding of my laboratory, the enthusiasm of private patronage, and my own efforts to raise some foundation to supplement the funds towards The Iliac Passion, it might be seen in the late fall.

JM: Do you see many so-called commercial films?
GM: I seldom see commercial films unless they happen to be
May 26, 1966

ON THE PLASTIC INEVITABLES AND THE STROBE LIGHT

Suddenly, the intermedia shows are all over the town. At the Dom (Jackie Cassen and USCO); at the Cheetah; at the Martinique Theatre (Robert Whitman); at the Riverside Museum (USCO); at the Cinematheque (Kosugi). Etc., etc. There were artists working with sound-light-multiple projections for a good ten years but they remained in experimental, semi-private stages until the Expanded Cinema survey at the Cinematheque last autumn. When the survey was first planned the idea was to pull out these artists, whose work I had followed privately for years, into the light of day, and see how they will hold. I felt that without such an exposure they were beginning to lose the perspective of what they were doing. Thus the Pandora's box was opened.

The Plastic Inevitables (Velvet Underground; Warhol and Company) performances at the Dom during the month of April provided the loudest and most dynamic exploration platform for this new art. The strength of Plastic Inevitables, and where they differ from all the other intermedia shows and groups, is that they are dominated by the ego. Warhol has attracted toward himself the most egocentric personalities and artists. The auditorium, every aspect of it—singers, light throwers, strobe operators, dancers—at all times are screaming with screeching, piercing personality pain. I say pain; it could also be called desperation. In any case, it is the last stand of the ego, before it either breaks down or goes to the other side. Plastic Inevitables give us the most dramatic expression of the contemporary generation—it's at the Dom that its needs and desperations are most dramatically split open.

At the other, almost opposite, end is the USCO show (at the Riverside Museum)—the show that sums up everything that USCO has done till now, and one of the shows that I ask you not to miss. The Riverside Museum show (as was the USCO show at the Cinematheque and is the current Long Island show) is a search for religious, mystical experience. Whereas in the case of

Plastic Inevitables the desire for the mystical experience is unconscious, the USCO is going after it in a more conscious way. They have arrived somewhere, and gained a certain peace, certain insights, and now they are beginning to meditate.

Nevertheless, often I get the impression that the mystical, meditative mood of many of my friends that I meet in psychedelic circles is really not the beginning of the new age or new cosmic consciousness, but the sunset peace of the Age of the Fish, of the Christian era—the sunset meditation. At the Plastic Inevitables, however, the dance floor and the stage are charged with the electricity of a dramatic break just before the dawn. If at the USCO show I feel surrounded by tradition, by the past, by the remnants of the oriental religions—at the Plastic Inevitables it is all Here and Now and the Future.

The Dom, after the Plastic Inevitables left for California, was taken over by women. Although USCO has a hand in it, it is practically run by Jackie Cassen and her team. The show falls somewhere between USCO and the Inevitables. There is the ego and a touch of perversion coming from the performers; and there is the mystical tendency on the dance floor and in the visuals—the kind of color abstraction and pattern play that by now has come to be known as psychedelic. Although much frantic movement and color and light play is going on, the show is peaceful, ornamental, and feminine, most of the time.

The Cheetah provides the most curious use of the intermedia. Whereas the Dom and USCO shows are restricted (or became restricted) to the In circle, Cheetah was designed for the masses. An attempt was made to go over the personal, over the ego, to reach the impersonal, abstract, universal. The smoky color patterns, the hugeness of the place, the shiny aluminum reflector sheets create an impersonal, metallic feeling—as opposed to the sexuality and emotionalism of the Inevitables or the mysticism of the USCO shows. One could say that the feeling at the Cheetah is one of being out—beyond both USCO and Warhol—in those regions where both the mystic preoccupations and the ego are abandoned, where you disappear and become a zero; no more empty body moving to and fro to the rhythms of the amazing Chambers Brothers in the gray twilight of the dance floor.

Very often while watching these shows, I ask myself: What are
all these lights doing? What is the real meaning of the strobos? Where is all this coming from or going to? Do any of the artists know the meaning and effect and power (both healing and damaging) of colors and lights? I have noticed, very often, how suddenly, curing certain surges of colors and lights, I become electrified, my nerves become jumpy as if somewhere deep inside I were pierced with a knife; or, at other times, suddenly the peace surrounds and takes me over. The same with the new sounds.

Yes, but that's what this is all about—partially: We are over the first, experimental, private stage. Now we are thrown into the open, to find out what this is all about, what it's doing to us. Man will find out soon what the light is all about; what the color is all about; what the movement is all about. The Pandora's box of light and color and motion has been opened because the time was ready for it. There are moments, at the Dom, and at the Riverside Museum, when I feel I am witnessing the beginnings of new religions, that I find myself in religious, mystical environments where the ceremonials and music and body movements and the symbolism of lights and colors are being discovered and explored. The very people who come to these shows have all something of a religious bond among them. Something is happening and is happening fast—and it has something to do with light, it has everything to do with light—and everybody feels it and is in waiting—often, desperately.

June 16, 1966

MORE ON STROBE LIGHT AND INTERMEDIA

A few weeks ago, I raised a question: What is the strobe light all about? The strobe has been on my mind for some time now, as it has been on the minds of many other people I know. Last week, while talking with Steve Durkee, who is responsible for much of the USCO show, a few new thoughts came on the subject.

JM: We keep asking this question, “What's the strobe all about?” because, in a sense, the strobe dramatizes the intermedia, the light shows. One could even say that it dramatizes the light itself.

Steve Durkee: Strobe is the digital trip. In other words, what the strobe is basically doing, it's turning on and off, completely on and completely off. You can't do it with the incandescent light, you can do it only with gas. It goes on and off, on and off. It creates a discontinuance so that it looks like the flicks. It's real, no question about its reality; but so far as what's doing—we know little about it.

JM: Since there is nothing but the white light in it, it represents—as some people feel about it—the point of death, or nothingness.

SD: Death? Yeah. We live in the world of magicians, really. What humans have learned to do is to tap into the fifth element, or ether, into this fantastic energy source, and they draw from it for their own use—that's what we see manifested in electricity. I don't think about it either as negative or positive—just an energy that is all around us. We use strobes, and they turn a lot of people off. A lot of people think about it as about DMT: a very metallic, harshly synthetic type of thing. But then, again, it is perhaps only a question of acclimatization. Fifty years from now, everybody may be living with strobe lights. These things are hard to tell. But that death thing is certainly part of it. The on and off. Actually, almost all electric lights go on and off sixty times a second anyway, that's how they operate, the cycle alternation. But the incandescence itself—the filament in the bulb holds the light so that you don't get that harsh on and off. What do you think about strobes?

JM: I am still thinking about it.

SD: Do you like them?

JM: They don't bother me. I have met a number of people who have, they say, gained much from various aspects of the intermedia shows. But the strobe always bothers them. Some of them feel that there is something almost evil about it. But how could the light be evil? But then, when we talk about light we usually think about the sun, and there is warmth in the sun. The strobe is cold. But it's always there at whatever intermedia show you go to—it's always there, in one form or another. Sometimes for rhythmical reasons, sometimes to create the illusion of motion. Maybe it's something that joins cinema and whatever else it is.

SD: The best use I have seen of strobes was at the Trips Festival (at the Dom) where they had them hung up on wires, and
fear of losing the old bag with all the junk that's in it—a fear of death of the old. So it's evil, they say—that's how big the fear is. But light shouldn't create fear if you're open to light. It creates fear only if one holds against it. To me evil is, in art or life, only what keeps us rotating in one place like a record that gets stuck in the same groove. But the intermedia shows and the strobe open us. In any case, I don't see how it could set any aspect of us back, even if it's just one day back. I see our understanding and knowledge of it only opening, like the very fact that we are talking about it, and thinking about it, and reacting to it—and not only you or me but everybody. That means we are going to find it out, that's all. It helps to see ourselves in a new way. Again, like Andy Warhol's movie Eat, where you see a man eating a mushroom for forty-five minutes. Now we are beginning to see ourselves in a different perspective, or in no perspective at all, perhaps, but in the simultaneity of distances—like looking at ourselves from outside and inside at the same time, out of our own body—learning again everything from the beginning. Or something like that. In any case, it's exciting. Like going to the first grade.

June 23, 1966

ON THE TACTILE INTERACTIONS IN CINEMA, OR CREATION WITH YOUR TOTAL BODY

Last Thursday I was watching the Beverly Schmidt Moon-Dial piece at the Bridge Theatre. The piece fell in that category which is known (by now) as intermedia—in this case, dance, plus slides, plus movies, plus sound, plus costumes. It was one of those few cases where everything seemed to work perfectly. The Schmidt-Tambellini piece had a classic perfection and beauty about it. From the period of an experimental chance creation the intermedia shows are entering the period of a controlled chance creation (the same was clearly noticeable in the dancing of Elizabeth Keen and Yvonne Rainer, on the same program). The flashes and glimpses of light and slides and the dancer all together produced an aesthetically unified performance.