

Felicity - here is the copy of my letter  
to Brakhage -  
see you soon  
Simon

1 Birnam Rd,  
London N4 3LJ  
Oct 9

Dear Stan Brakhage,

I have been invited by David Curtis, now working for the Arts Council of Great Britain Film Department to assemble a series of programmes of your work with an accompanying catalogue. This is the first of a series of such projects that David is initiating to encourage interest and enthusiasm for independent film by offering potential venues - film societies, colleges, museums, art galleries throughout England - assembled programmes with a specially prepared booklet that offer both an introduction and some detailed commentary on the work, ideas and context of the film-maker(s) being screened.

In the case of your work, for instance, we would like to offer venues an 'exhibition' involving a choice of two, four or six programmes, from an hour to eighty minutes in length. Each set, be it two or six, would be intended to offer a perspective on your work. The set of six would include a number of longer films such as Dog Star Man and Scenes From Underchildhood. We dream of an exhibitor that might take an even bigger collection, verging on a retrospective. As far as the accompanying catalogue is concerned David has asked me to provide a 10,000 to 15,000 word essay, which would both act as introduction and 'overview'. I hope to make it fairly diverse in content, demonstrating the importance of your work, the issues it raises and offering a considerable amount of contextual information on independent film in the States from the late 50's onwards. With your permission I would very much like to include sections of your own writings (and interviews) as well. The catalogue probably will be 48 pages or so in length, would also include visual material, a bibliography and filmography and so I'm speaking of about a 5,000 word selection, for which the Arts Council would pay their standard re-print fee of £20 per thousand.

I'm very excited about the project and I'd obviously appreciate your blessing on the idea as a whole but there are also some specific permissions I'd need and I would like to ask other favours as well. But first let me outline the schedule of events. David would like to have the first screenings at the end of March, with six to ten venues anticipated through April, May and June. This means the catalogue must be ready for the printers by January. I've already started work on the essay and in fact I plan to be in New York in the first two weeks of December to do some final research at Anthology and if possible look at recent films that I haven't seen. If it were convenient I'd appreciate the opportunity to meet then - to check some of my facts and discuss a number of topics - and would happily travel out of New York (since I've never been further out that Fallisades to see Bob Breer ). I would certainly not want to intrude on your travel or work plans.

To return to some specific questions. David and I have spoken to Felicity Sparrow and she is sympathetic to the project. We intend to book everything, on behalf of venues, from the Co-op or from the Stones at the usual rates (we hope that the event - with the catalogue still available - will also generate bookings well into the future). There is one problem. In order to be able to offer the 'exhibition' to venues we'd need to reserve the prints involved for the two or three months for which the offer is initially being made. This might mean

mean the loss of one or two bookings but we are confident that they will be considerably more than counterbalanced by the number of guaranteed bookings (subsidised by the Arts Council Film Department if necessary) that ~~our~~ plan will involve. Would you be agreeable to our doing this sort of block-booking ?

I will be booking prints to look at shortly - partly to check on their quality - and I was wondering if you would be prepared - in the case of Mothlight, for instance, which I know is getting very worn - to provide replacement prints for the Co-op that could be available in time for our exhibition, bearing in mind that you will be sure of six immediate bookings at least. Furthermore there are one or two films that I know already I'd like to include - Wonder Ring and parts of Scenes from Underchildhood - that are not available here at present. Scenes... we could possibly rent from Germany but would you be interested in providing for the Co-op a print of something shorter, like Wonder Ring or Machine of Eden? Two last questions. Is there any way we could include some of the Songs in a programme? And secondly, would you be willing to send over a programme of new work for such a period with full rentals and us covering the shipping ? I suppose there is no likelihood of your being in Europe at that time ?

I think I've covered the main issues. I will be in touch again, of course, particularly about selected texts. In the meantime I hope our project meets with your approval and I look forward to hearing from you soon,

all the very best,

Simon Field