

AUTO OPHTHALMOLOGY

Once lived, the immediacy of a primary experience does not allow itself to be recreated and it is with this common observation in mind that I have managed, for a good while, to *unrealise* a film:

It had been my intention to stage a series of images for the camera as a means to explore one such primary experience that occurred a few years back, when I suddenly grew suspicious that my eyesight was deteriorating. With no prior warning, sneaking headaches had begun to develop, the optic nerve quivered like an un-tuned violin string, swollen and inflamed, and my unrivalled ability to spot busses from miles away was failing to impress. Since this agonizing symphony coincided with a period of particularly low activity in the studio, when ideas weren't flowing readily, I conveniently excused my lack of vision in the more general sense as being caused by the same increased intracranial pressure that was impairing my sight. It appeared beyond doubt that the *unrealising* artist could simply be a person in need of specs. And so, with aching eyeballs I set out to find an Ophthalmic Optician.

At this point I request that any art-curator who might have been appointed to intervene with the project kindly refrains from reading the following part of the document, and instead jumps directly to the final paragraph below. In doing so please accept that the exclusion serves in the project's best interest.

Consequently I left the studio and walked my usual route towards the apartment as I had done hundreds of times before. Where the road bends by the newsagent, I stopped to buy half a pint of milk, and upon exiting the shop, halted for a moment on the pavement. As my sore eyes slowly accustomed to the sharp sunlight, I gradually made out the contours of a street sign, a pair of specs cast in metal on the opposite side of the street which, to my surprise I had never noticed before. I crossed the afternoon traffic, took a quick glance at the red and blue eyeglasses, and walked in. The polite, elderly secretary methodically browsed through an entirely blank appointment book, and arranged for an immediate examination with Ophthalmic Optician Dr. F. [B.Sc., F.B.O.A., F.S.M.C.]. He received me, impeccably dressed in a woollen 3-piece suit despite the midsummer's heat, and I was pointed towards a tired barbers' chair in a corner of the examination room. Before I had a chance to take in what was around me, the light was turned off.

And so it is with the sound of that light-switch, in the jet-black examination room, solely entertained by the unchanging hum of an electric fan that my perception glides out of focus altogether. Despite numerous exasperating attempts, I am still to this date incapable of producing more than a glimpsing account of the events that follow: The sensation of a solid metal phoropter gently put to rest on my nose; a double mirror soaring about in gravity-free space, momentarily reflecting the flickering light of an electric eyechart with animals silhouetted on it. In quick succession, an indecipherable multitude of viewpoints is offered to me through the changing phoropter-lenses; a horse in full flight escaping the eyechart; Dr. F.'s woollen-clad arm reaching out to catch it; a hammerhead shark gracefully transporting a hare twice its size. A ragged fox sniffing eagerly at the barbers chair which I have long left behind, hovering as I am amongst the eighty-eight constellations; the great bear, the scorpion, Hydra the sea monster. A barely audible whisper flutters across the eardrum; "you see, my wife, she...I sometimes call her a seer. She's an artist." He sounds strangely distant despite his breath sweeping against my cheek. "There is nothing impaired about your sight whatsoever. The trouble you are having should pass. Stand up, and go to your studio."

It had thus been my intention to ask a person with no prior knowledge of the above events, to arrange a personal appointment with Dr. F. at their convenience. After the finished session they would leave Dr. F.'s practice, and instantly capture the immediacy of the experience in as minute detail as possible, in a medium of their own choice. No recording devices would be allowed during the appointed session. Entering the experience on unbiased terms, they would catalyse the paradox of restaging my primary experience by producing another, different one. Contact details of Dr. F. shall be discretely provided.