

## FOREWORD

The Jack Chambers I was acquainted with made art and film very much by hand. His determination and unflagging self-editorial scrutiny were his most useful tools. His correcting and recorrecting gave his work both a clarity and a density necessary to art which constantly stepped into the ontological truth of our finite existence. If Chambers was a mystic, he was a clear-headed one and tough. Long before his own early knowledge of his fatal leukemia, he was obsessed with “the life-death-life cycle” as he always called it.

As for his film-making, it was strictly organized and seems to me more immediately exemplary of his experience of his central philosophy of “perceptual realism” than are most of his other works. In a 1972 conversation, he said that he “would never make any money to speak of with films,” but that “the medium is time-based and defies the restrictions of the canvas.” And “that was the thrill.” For Chambers, film became more than moving pictures on one surface. By building up image upon image with the optical printer and combining these with the infinite possibilities of cinematic collage, Chambers could plan projects which yielded an intensity unlike that achieved by other realists of his time.

In one notebook entry dated October 23, 1974, Chambers quotes from Whitrow’s *Nature of Time*. He read it to me once:

The camera has brought accurate observation to replace the blindness of art convention. Realism not only *can* but must depict reality as it is observed, not as art permits us to see it. The whole point is to turn the viewer back to nature to the miracle of his own creativity—the affirmation of things as they appear.

The notebook continues with a reference to Isaiah 55:10 & 11, which I cite here as a kind of inventory of how Jack felt about art:

For as the rain and snow came down from Heaven,  
and return not thither but water the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish what I purpose,  
and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

This special issue of *The Capilano Review* demonstrates that Jack Chambers' previously unpublished film notes offer concrete illustration of his cinematic thought process. Further, for those who try to grasp the essence of the collage impulse, the passion to juxtapose, and what Jack drew from the idea of "the affirmation of things as they appear," some pertinent poems, letters and philosophical notes are included. Critical appraisals by Avis Lang and Ross Woodman of Chambers' film work follow the primary materials in this monograph. It is hoped that in pursuing this publication you will gradually have the experience of seeing thought and plan "prospering in the thing" for which Jack "sent it."

As Bruce Elder states in his 1981 article on the film *Circle*, "Chambers' fame rests largely on a series of canvasses completed between 1968 and 1971. . . . Curiously, the films Chambers made during these same years are hardly known." They are "rarely shown and less frequently written about." I agree with Elder that this is sad, and that the films deserve wider attention. While it is obvious that they are an integral part of Chambers' *oeuvre*, I am convinced they are strong on their own as cinematic works.

It is ideal to see the films. Prints are being made of the originals that have been placed in safe storage in the Public Archives, by the Chambers Estate. By the time this issue is published, it will be possible to rent the *Jack Chambers Film Retrospective* through Pacific Cinematèque Pacifique (1616 West Third Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1K2).

TOM GRAFF

Vancouver, March, 1985

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In my mind the project was simple: I knew Jack; I had produced many screenings of his films; I thought more people should be able to see them. In fact, without the help of many individuals and agencies, the idea for this publication and film distribution would have remained as a vague notion wrapped in naive assumption and possibly shattered by the realities of hard financial times. These projects owe their existence to:

The Chambers Estate

Diego, John and Olga Chambers, Jack's family

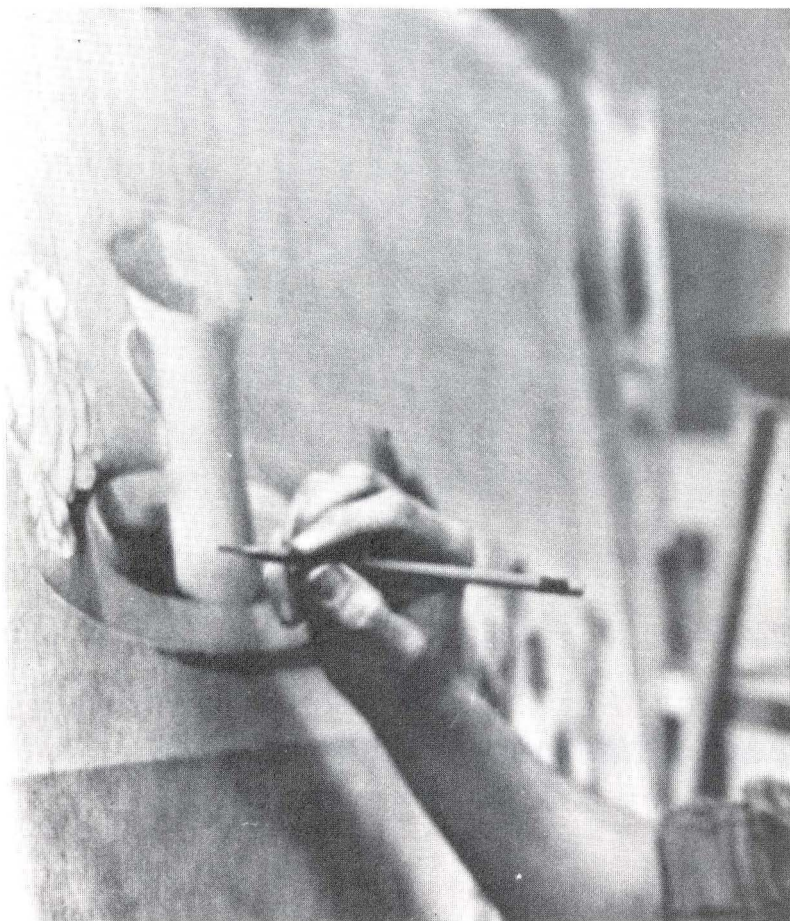
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