

The Fantastical Faccinto

Depraved Delectations of Animation

BY JOEL SCHLEMOWITZ

Hieronymus Bosch was painting the triptych of *Paradise, The Garden of Earthly Delights, and Hell*

about four centuries before the motion picture apparatus emerged upon the world. But it's not too difficult to imagine these splendid medieval hallucinations as a distant relative of the early animated films of Victor Faccinto. An opportunity to make such a comparison arrives on April 19 at 7:00 p.m. with a visit by the North Carolina-based artist and a screening of his works, as part of Mono No Aware's Connectivity Through Cinema series presented in cooperation with Spectacle Theater at 124 South 3rd Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn. "A Sheep Without a Shepherd: The Films of Victor Faccinto" surveys animated works produced with 16mm film in the 1970s through analog and digital pieces combining costumed human subjects and experimental animation made in the decades following.

In a world of colorful paper doll cutouts we are introduced to Video Vic, an anonymous figure whose face is covered black shroud with two round holes cut for his cartoon eyes to peer out at us. This gumdrop-shaped hood seems as if it should be covering the head of a penitent in an old-world Catholic procession. But rather than sackcloth Video Vic awakens groggily in colorful yellow pajamas and garbs himself in black suit jacket and matching trousers. His actions are accompanied by sound effects produced in the human beatbox manner, although when something more elaborate is needed the sounds of kazoo and slide whistle will accompany Vic as he journeys through an animated bildungsroman of sexual excess and sadistic pious penance, neither of which seems too far removed from the other.

The Bosch-like universe in which Video Vic's misadventures are chronicled in the films *Filet of Soul* (1972) and *Shameless* (1974) is full of diabolical imps behaving wickedly. We rise through a diagrammatic landscape of elevators, winding ramps, and geometric buildings whose facades appear as faces—windows for eyes, and a doorway as a devouring mouth—to visit strange, powerful deities presiding over the heavenly realm, via a control panel of levers, blinking lights, and buttons. The lords of heaven turn out to be just as wicked in their own right. Video Vic himself does not always shy away from mischief by occasionally solving some dilemma or another with the aid of a little spontaneous knife throwing. Flying blobs of paper-cutout blood stream from the neck of the unlucky recipient. His veiled face now seems rather that of a black-hooded ninja in making these pointy retorts. A "whisssh!" voiced on the soundtrack accompanies the stiletto through the air.

Sex is unabashed between the animated creatures of the worlds of delights and hellscape visited by Video Vic. In this respect we see a clear connection between the underground comix of the 1960s and Faccinto's fantastical tableaux. An enormous erect penis appears emerging from the open trousers of some demon or mortal—and naturally enough we hear an ascending glissando played upon the slide whistle to accompany this salacious protrusion. Vaginas (and other orifices) are not only portals of earthly pleasure but can quite literally be portals for entry and exit of various dramatis personae.

Faccinto would later go on to put together elaborate projection performances using 16mm film and kaleidoscopic beam-splitting lenses to create images not unlike the abstracted and geometric overhead shots in Busby Berkeley dance sequences. This continued into the digital realm with works for both the film screen and the art gallery. A blending together of human action and animation is at the center of these pieces, the cowl of Video Vic now echoed in the ski-masked sprites and writhing, entangled flower-creatures in various states of dress and nakedness. The fantastical realm of Bosch-like bedlam in the early films here becomes more enigmatic: in the most intriguing moments of these works it is hard to know where the performer's movements leave off and the animator's intercessions begin.

<http://www.victorfaccinto.com>

<http://mononoawarefilm.com/special-engagements/connectivity-through-cinema-with-victor-faccinto-in-person/>

<http://www.spectacletheater.com/>

Joel Schlemowitz (<http://www.joelschlemowitz.com>) is a Park Slope, Brooklyn-based filmmaker who makes short cine-poems and experimental documentaries. His most recent project, "78rpm," is in the final stages of post-production. He has taught filmmaking at The New School for the past 15 years. Schlemowitz photo by Robyn Hasty.