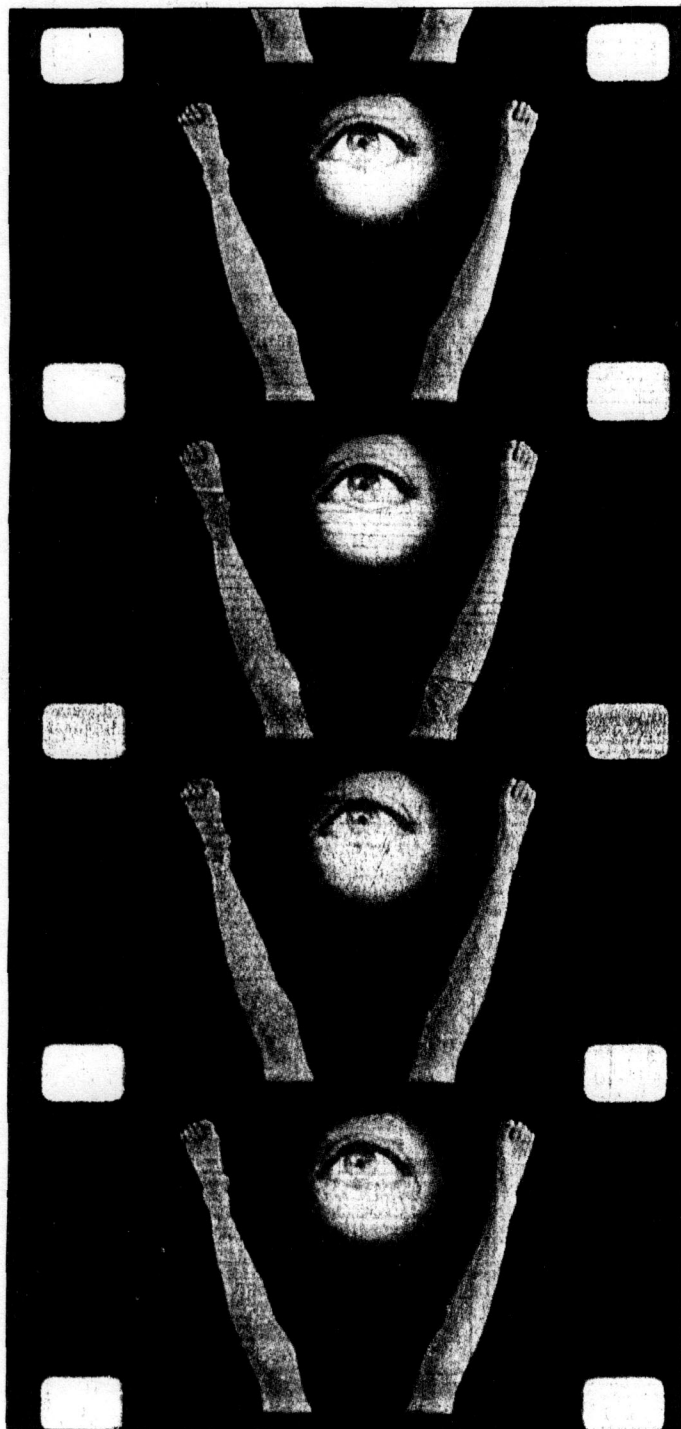


The ARTS

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BODY PARTS: Four frames from Victor Faccinto's *Body Parts*, which will shown in a program at SECCA on Tuesday.

taming a low-tech beast



JOURNAL PHOTO BY JESSICA MANN

AT SECCA: Faccinto watches as one of his loop films is added.

By Tom Patterson
 SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Victor Faccinto likens his role in the film-based "projection performance" he will present on Tuesday at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art to that of a lion-tamer.

The beast that he'll have to control is a group of five modified 16-millimeter projectors set up to show a series of film loops — strips of film joined end to end so that they recycle through the projectors until he removes and replaces them.

To the front of each projector's lens he has affixed small mirrors, oriented so that the imagery in each film loop appears on the screen as two pairs of mirror-images. All aspects of the program have to be carefully choreographed and synchronized for it to work successfully, and therein lies its performative aspect.

Taking a break from a recent rehearsal at his studio in a prefabricated aluminum building on the western fringe of Winston-Salem, Faccinto ex-

Artist uses 16 mm film loops and projectors to create a carefully orchestrated and unusual look at the female body

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FACCINTO

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plained and demonstrated the techniques he developed to create the unusual series of pieces that make up the program. He also discussed the process by which he arrived at this way of working.

"These projections are very low-tech," said Faccinto, who, for more than 20 years, has made his living as the director of the Wake Forest University Fine Arts Gallery. "The equipment is old, and it's all operated by me. It's an imprecise medium, but it takes a lot of focus and a lot of precision to operate it so that everything comes together the way it's supposed to. At times it almost gets out of hand."

The primary subject matter of Faccinto's film loops is the female body. He directs his models to move or pose in particular ways, and he films them as they carry out his instructions. Then he edits the footage, cuts it into strips that last from 30 to 90 seconds and joins each strip end to end to create a loop.

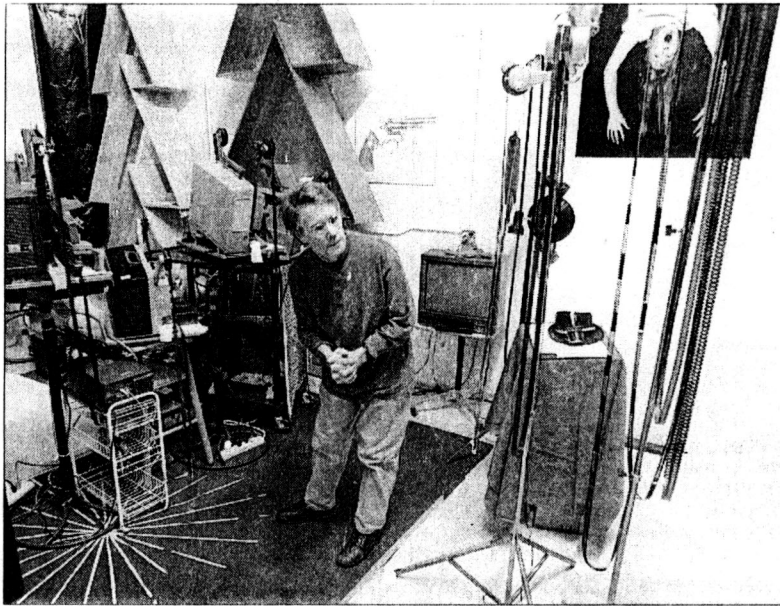
During a performance, various combinations of four loops are usually projected simultaneously onto a large screen, which is, in effect, subdivided into a grid of 16 smaller screens because of the strategic placement of the mirrors in front of the projector lenses. The result is a constantly shifting series of kaleidoscopic patterns in which the bodily imagery takes on an almost abstract quality.

Each of the self-contained pieces that make up a performance has its own tape-recorded soundtrack. Some of these were composed by Faccinto, but most of them were created by Rhan Small, a composer and performance artist with whom Faccinto has often collaborated since 1990.

Adding another visual dimension to Faccinto's performances are the reel stands he uses to hold his film loops when they're not threaded through the projectors. He made these stands from such components as aluminum hardware, bamboo poles and empty cat-food tins. Each stand is surmounted by a painted doll's head that has been modified to incorporate tiny red lights are activated by sound.

LARGER COLORED light bulbs wired to the stands that hold the film projectors are also sound-activated, so that they blink and flicker in response to the tape-recorded soundtracks and any other noises that occur during the performance.

In a career that spans 30 years, Faccinto has worked in a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, photography, kinetic art, sound composition, performance art and digital art. He started making films early on, while he was a university student in his native California during the late 1960s. His artistic aspirations grew out of his interest in psychology, the field in which he majored as an under-



JOURNAL PHOTO BY JESSICA MANN

AT WORK:
Victor Faccinto shoots his film and practices putting the pieces together in his studio in western Winston-Salem.

graduate at California State University in Sacramento. By the time he earned his bachelor's degree, in 1969, he had decided to pursue graduate studies in that school's art department.

His early forays into the cinematic medium were animated films that he described as strongly influenced by "the open, uninhibited behavior that was going on in California at the time."

Faccinto's early films feature cutout characters with interchangeable heads and bodies interacting in front of elaborately painted backdrops, and he said that they combine aspects of his personal experience with elements of his imagination.

In somewhat the same vein as the underground comic books published on the West Coast during that era, those early films are characterized by extremes of sexuality and violence. They had their first important screenings in the mid-1970s in New York, where Faccinto was living at the time, and several of them are archived in the Film Study Collection of New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Faccinto curtailed his film work after moving to Winston-Salem in 1978, and for more than 10 years he focused his creative attention on painting and sculpture. The chaotically cartoonish narrative relief paintings he made during this phase of his career were widely exhibited, including showings at prominent commercial galleries such as Phyllis Kind Gallery (New York and Chicago) and Helander Gallery (New York).

In 1990, he teamed up with Small and Sylvia Bognar, both of whom then lived in Winston-Salem, to form a multimedia performance-art group called Three People.

Their collaborative efforts marked a major turning point in Faccinto's career.

In the process of creating videotapes to incorporate into their performances, Faccinto resumed working with 16 mm film and, while experimenting

with the medium, discovered the split-screen effect he could achieve by strategically placing mirrors in front of a projector's lens.

"One thing led to another," he said, "and then I started working with two, three and four projectors at a time. I continued to experiment by making films that would interact, and the film loops were a logical extension of that process. They allowed for a situation where you could create while you're projecting a work, and eventually a sense of structure would begin to develop."

Faccinto completed work on his first projection performance, *Motion Picture #1*, about five years ago. Since then he has presented programs of such works at film workshops and perform-

ance-art festivals in New York, Orlando and Cleveland. He has presented relatively brief examples in conjunction with Wake Forest's art-department faculty exhibits at the university's Fine Arts Gallery in 1995 and '96, but Tuesday's program at SECCA will be Faccinto's first extended presentation from this body of work in his adopted hometown.

■ **Victor Faccinto's Multi-Screen, 16-mm Film Projection Performance** — part of SECCA's 1999 Spring Film Series, "Extreme Measures" — will begin at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in SECCA's McChesney Scott Dunn Auditorium. It is recommended for adult audiences only. Admission is \$6; for SECCA members, students and senior adults, \$4. For more information, phone 725-1904.