Carol & Ferd

Carol Rowe and Ferd Eggan, the "stars" of our story, were former lovers and co-creators of a soap opera. In 1978, they came together to escape their hurried lives and work as pornographic filmmakers for the world-renowned Sutter's Gate. Their story was a tale of frantic activity, trying to get a closer look at everything. After a while, they turned to a rheostat to increase the light level, knowing that the subtlety of all things is increased rather than decreased. A certain harmony percolates through the holes in the fabric of their lives. There is a certain lightness that seems to increase with the clarity of the general tone of their lives.

It seems that as time goes on there is a certain increment in the clarity of the general tone of my life. There is a disclosure of things that are not quite there yet in the room. If I try and get a closer look, I soon run into sufficient illumination. I can only get a closer look if somehow I increase the illumination. So I move back to the rheostat and step up the light level. Suddenly a whole new order of detail presents itself. Anywhere I might look there is more information that I can gather about that or any other area. If I choose to zoom in, then the detail is there with enough light now to see. But at the same time, I begin to lose the ability to take in the large patterns. I lose the ability to see the whole. This piece would have to be performed "live" by 2 operators (a distinct disadvantage) and would deal with the concepts of voyeurism through media, effects of media on behavior, personal space, and more. If it is any piece of media? why are you watching it? and why did we make it? Also we'd probably tell the story of Carol and Ferd.

Recently on a tour of 5 colleges, we tried a watered down version of this last approach, and reactions, while varied, gave us direction as to where we should go. The system was utilized at some point to a media event being created. Simultaneous tracking in time (showing action happening concurrently in two different locations) - contrasting the banality of the wedding reception with the nervous humor of the uptairs preparations for the consummation. Double tracking to collide information, i.e. demonstrating both the physical and psychological relationship between shooting up and "the sex act" by playing back these events at the same time; affectionate footage of early tapes contrasted with later alienated behavior; a visual metaphor of a cross-over, sink pipe with discussion of marital difficulties. In print these examples seem quite obvious, but to experience them on combinations of 8 monitors is another thing entirely.

The two live cameras were utilized as follows: one, providing an input of a wide picture of the audience watching the monitors (radio and TV), the other input remained in silhouette until lights were turned on and the viewers themselves became the viewer; the other camera interfacing from a nine inch preview monitor, at times pulling back to show the image of a TV within a TV, as a reminder that the whole thing was being done for public consumption (a recurring verbal theme), and at other times zooming in to pick up a detail of a picture, a close-up, or a close-up fragment of the image into the enlarged scan lines of the obvious constructed electronic image with the similar but apparently real one next to it.

The ability to move any one of these images into any of the 4 inputs onto any displacement on 8 monitors by use of the matrix switcher created endless potential for both emphasis and experience, which sometimes, by accident or design, was well exploited (excuse the term). I shall not make the mistake of verbalizing further about the electronic grammar of environmental video (matrixing, simultracking, double tracking, interfacing live camera input, etc.) because it's a visual tactile experience, a grammar which we are just beginning to explore with no counterpart in words.

After reading this, you might be aroused either about The Continuing Story of Carol and Ferd, or about the techniques we intend to explore in presenting it, I can only recommend that you watch for tales at your local neighborhood Video Free America.

Arthur Ginsberg
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