

# Thomas Erben Gallery



*Beyond*, 1970, digitized 16mm Ektachrome film, 4 minutes

## **BARRY GERSON**

### *The Parting of the Clouds*

Extended through March 28, 2015

Thomas Erben Gallery is pleased to present four works by seminal New York avant-garde filmmaker Barry Gerson (b. 1939, Philadelphia, PA), dating from 1970 to 1975. Grounded in an acute sense of the spiritual in the physical world, Gerson explores the fundamentals of perception of both the camera and the eye, using slow movements and small changes to give his images a mesmerizing quality.

Using a basic human impulse – to watch and try to understand what we see – Gerson tricks us into examining the foundations of our own perception. He does this through subtle manipulation of various aspects of the filmmaking process. For example, the opaque field seen in many of his images are mattes, placed in front of the camera, which serve the dual purpose of focusing our attention on one particular part of a scene, and emphasizing the image plane. While any storyline is withheld, as is a comprehensive field of vision, we are forced to adapt our viewing to the particular paradigm of each film and give in to the rhythm of shifting scenes. The result is a strange combination of soothing and unsettling: a meditation on the unfamiliar.

Similarly, predating current digital possibilities, Gerson collaged images from National Geographic into his own “constructions” – surreal scenes where perspective is simultaneously deepened and flattened. Here, the disconnect between our impulse to make sense of what we see and the inherent impossibilities of the image results in a struggle between content and surface, corresponding to that of the films. In an era where we are constantly required to maneuver through a never-ending torrent of images, Gerson quietly pulls us in and makes us shift our focus just slightly, from *what* we are seeing to *how*.

Barry Gerson, whose current practice includes video, cinematic fragment pieces and mixed painting/photo works, is most noted for his films, which have been on display in solo exhibitions at The Whitney Museum (1976, 1978), MoMA (1970, 1978, 1985), The Guggenheim (1971) and many other venues internationally. His work was included in *The American Century*, The Whitney Museum (2000) and in shows/screenings at Montreux Film Exhibition, Anthology Film Archives, Leo Castelli Gallery, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Denmark), Moderna Museet (Stockholm) and Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), to name just a few. Such institutions as MoMA, the Museum of Modern Art (Stockholm), and the Centre Pompidou (Paris) have his work in their collections.

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