

It wasn't...pristine: (Re-)visiting the New York Film Festival Downtown

Marie Sophie Beckmann, Goethe University Frankfurt

Abstract

The New York Film Festival Downtown (1984-1989) was, in the strict sense, not a film festival. But then again, it depends on how film is defined. On three nights, on the stage of a downtown night club, films were shown unfinished, as excerpts or slides, they alternated or shared a stage with performance, theater and dance pieces involving projections, or experimental live happenings. This essay articulates that the festival's messiness—that 'it wasn't pristine', as festival organizer Ela Troyano described it—should above all be considered as its most productive structural element: The New York Festival Downtown both reflected and encouraged the downtown scene's mixing of media, and its collaborative, experimental, and interdisciplinary practices. In doing so, it not only pushed the format of the film festival, but challenged the notion of film itself. And while remaining a local artist-curated initiative, the festival's program also traveled, thereby bringing downtown to Berlin, Bielefeld and Buffalo, and stretching the scene's local boundaries.

Going Down To See It

'New York Film Festival New York Film Festival New York Film Festival New York Film Festival New York Film Festival New York Film Festival'. The four black lettered words are repeated six times, shrinking from top to bottom on the neon pink paper, like an echo, until they make room for 'DOWN TOWN', in capital letters, as if the moniker of Manhattan's southernmost part was being shouted out loud. At the top, we read the declaration 'The Film Society of Limbo Center presents' and on the very bottom, wiggly letters form the name 'LIMBO' and seem to be dancing out of the lines of the triangle that surrounds them.

So it's a film festival in New York and you have to go down town to see it. But what does that actually mean? And what else do we learn from this flyer (fig. 1)? Let's flip it over. The back informs us about the dates ('21–23 October'); the presenters of the festival ('Ela Troyano and Tessa Hughes-Freeland in conjunction with LIMBO ARTS INC.');

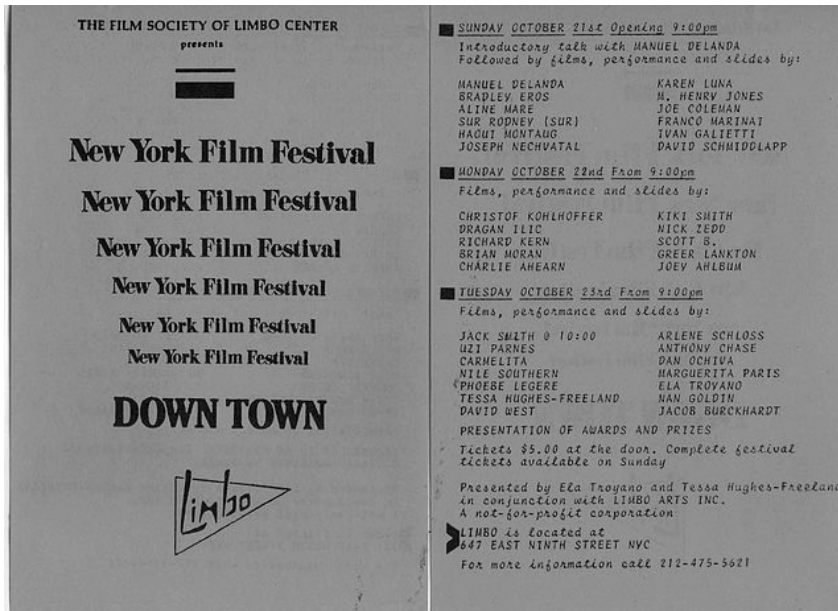


Fig. 1: Flyer for the New York Film Festival Downtown 1989
(Courtesy of Tessa Hughes-Freeland & Ela Troyano).

Street NYC’); a presentation of awards and prizes; and the ticket prices (‘five USD at the door’). What first appears to be a regular film festival could actually turn out to be an event of a different kind: what we also learn — or rather, don’t learn — is what exactly we would get to see at this festival. On Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, from 9pm onwards, there will be ‘Films, performances and slides by’ a list of a total of 36 names that may or may not be familiar to you. There are no further specifications on titles, formats, lengths, or the running order, but you can call 212-457-5621 to ask for more information.

In 1984, these pink xeroxed flyers promoting the New York Film Festival Downtown (NYFFDT) were laid out in clubs, cafés, bars, copy shops, and film labs like Rafik Film & Video¹ in downtown Manhattan, or at the New York Film Festival in midtown, which closed that year on 14 October with *Paris, Texas* (Wim Wenders, 1984). For the New York Film Festival’s regular visitors, our pink flyer must have evoked familiarity. Not only did it use the font of the midtown festival

¹ Rafik Film & Video was founded in 1974 by Rafic Azzouray. It’s a post-production facility for video and audio duplication, transfer, conversions, and editing which also lent filming equipment to local filmmakers. Rafik sponsored the fourth and fifth edition of NYFFDT. The same location housed O-P Screen, a screening space that could be rented for a 15 USD rental fee to show 16mm films. In an advertisement published in the East Village Eye in 1979, it says ‘O-P Screen will show anything, just contact Rafik a minimum of two weeks in advance’. This opportunity was used by many of the Downtown filmmakers.

It wasn't...pristine: (Re-)visiting the New York Film Festival Downtown

and simply added 'DOWN TOWN', but it also mockingly assumed its air of institutional formality by exchanging 'Lincoln' with 'Limbo'. Founded in 1963, the New York Film Festival is, since 1969, presented and hosted by the Film Society of Lincoln Center. This institution supports various film festivals and theaters, publishes *Film Comment Magazine* and makes up one branch of the prestigious Lincoln Center for Performing Arts. The Limbo Lounge on the other hand was a small East Village gallery and performance space with no associated society whatsoever. Indeed, the very notion of 'society' would seem to belong more to 'Lincoln' than to 'Limbo' Center.

The NYFFDT was founded by the filmmakers Tessa Hughes-Freeland and Ela Troyano in 1984 and it was not by accident that its first edition immediately followed the midtown festival. Rather, there was the 'vain hope that someone from there would come down to see it',² that the NYFFDT could piggyback off the influx of visitors generated by the more established festival whose name they boldly appropriated, and to receive the attention of international critics or programmers. Until its last edition in 1989, the NYFFDT established itself as a recurring annual event. At least to a certain extent it took on the functions, structures, and rituals related to the long-established film festival format, ultimately aiming to bring local films into wider circulation.³ However, the fact that the audience of the NYFFDT had to 'come down to see it' must also be understood in the sense that the festival grew out of the downtown scene, where film, performance, and music shared the stages and screens of night clubs.

Venues such as Max's Kansas City (1965–1981), CBGB (est. 1973) or the Mudd Club (1978–1983) had already encouraged the cross-fertilization of music and filmmaking in the fields of Post-Punk and No Wave.⁴ The subsequent wave

² Tessa Hughes-Freeland, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 13 September 2018.

³ The film festival format has taken on various shapes and forms since its emergence in post-war Europe. The first festivals in Cannes, Locarno, Venice and Berlin, not unlike art biennials or large scale exhibitions like documenta, had political agendas, and they also account for the recognition of most national new waves and *auteur* directors. As Thomas Elsaesser argues in *European Cinema. Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), these early festivals were crucial for the generation of these very categories. Further, attracting both tourists and local audiences, film festivals are historically linked to the strategic (re-)branding of a city as a cultural center. The 1960s saw the rising of festival sub-circuits for minor genres (such as events targeting a feminist, gay and lesbian, or Black/African American community), and in the 1980s, the format's proliferation shifted the traditional centers and turned the festival circuit into a global one. Borrowing from the vocabulary of modern system theories put forward by Latour or Luhmann, Elsaesser conceives the festival as a complex but also porous network 'with nodes and nerve endings.' Taken together, international festivals form yet a larger network, which amounts to a global platform that increasingly determines distribution, exhibition but also the production of films outside the Hollywood network, becoming more and more its powerful counterpart, or rather, interface. So when the NYFFDT was launched, film festivals already constituted a complex but ubiquitous reality, one that, with Bill Nichols, provides a 'continuous, international pattern of circulation and exchange for image-culture,' sustaining a certain 'traffic in cinema' which 'allows the local to circulate globally.' Bill Nichols, 'Global Image Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism', *East-West Film Journal*, 8.1 (1994), 68–85 (p. 68).

⁴ For a general account of the No Wave music and filmmaking scene, see Marc Masters, *No*

of clubs, including Danceteria (1979–1986), Club 57 (1980–1983), and Pyramid (est. 1981), as well as Limbo Lounge, Darinka, and 8BC, which all opened between 1983 and 1984, took an even more ambitious, or rather, liberal approach to programming: Scheduled or unscheduled concerts, film screenings, drag shows, readings, slide projections, and all kinds of dance parties deliberately or coincidentally blended into one another. And although ‘[i]t wasn’t all happening at the same time, but on the same night and at the same place, [...] it had this sense of continuity. You wouldn’t be going to see this one thing, but the ongoing, the whole surrounding.’⁵ The experience of a continuous flow of events was enhanced by the fact that most clubs were located within the same neighborhood, namely the East Village, making club-hopping easy. As crucial sites for ‘socializing, for entertainment, for doing things’,⁶ these clubs operated ‘as both a scene unto itself and also as a scene generator, or a place where it was possible to make connections and begin collaborations.’⁷

The NYFFDT began as precisely such a collaboration. Hughes-Freeland and Troyano met at the Pyramid, where Troyano worked as a projectionist. Between 1982 and 1984, together or each themselves, they organized irregular screening events featuring their own work along that of other Super 8 filmmakers and collaborated on doing multiple projections, which they later referred to as live expanded cinema performances. East Village clubs functioned as hosts for their screenings, such as Danceteria, Limbo Lounge, Club 57, or Chandelier Club, which Troyano ran together with photographer, filmmaker, and multimedia performance artist Uzi Parnes.⁸ It was after their weekend film program Celluloid Cantina at the Limbo Lounge that they decided to found the NYFFDT. First, because dragging a projector and rolls of film from one place to the next for single events became tiring and second and more importantly, because they had the wish to adopt a format that would allow for a more dense and concentrated

Wave (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007); Duncan Reekie, *Subversion: The Definitive History of Underground* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2007); Thurston Moore and Bryan Coley, *No Wave: Post-Punk. Underground. New York. 1976–1980* (New York: Abrams Image, 2008); and *Captured. A Film/Video History of the Lower East Side*, ed. by Clayton Patterson (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), especially the essays by Harris Smith (‘No New Cinema: Punk and No Wave Underground Film 1976–1984’, 173–178) and Matthew Yokobosky (‘No Wave Cinema, 1978–87. Not a part of Any Wave: No Wave’, 179–183). For the historization of the No Wave scene, see Mark Benedetti, ‘Canonization and No Wave Cinema History’, in *Downtown Film & TV Culture 1975–2001*, ed. by Joan Hawkins (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2015), 265–281.

⁵ Ela Troyano, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 7 September 2018.

⁶ Tessa Hughes-Freeland, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 13 September 2018.

⁷ Tim Lawrence, *Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor. 1980–1983* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 22–23.

⁸ The reason for putting on screenings at clubs was mainly that their owners were considered to be more open to experimental formats and a cross-medial program than venues with a curated film focused program. Ela Troyano recalls that at the Pyramid there was blind trust, while, for instance at the Millennium, ‘you had to explain what you were doing’ (Troyano). Also, since the clubs made revenue at the bar and often charged a small entrance fee, filmmakers would get paid, which wasn’t always the case in non-profit venues.

It wasn't...pristine: (Re-)visiting the New York Film Festival Downtown

presentation of the East Village's filmmaking and its pairings and mixings with other media.

It is important to note that by the mid 1980s, 'East Village' and 'downtown' respectively had already come to denominate highly visible cultural genres, loosely defined 'by the production and consumption of the various forms of style concentrated below Fourteenth Street'.⁹ Tim Lawrence notes that the downtown club culture of the early 1980s, in which 'everything seemed to be tied to everything and nothing really had a name',¹⁰ was intriguing precisely because of what he aptly calls '*indisciplinarity*'. So rather than generic coherence, it was, with Joan Hawkins, 'the neighborhood itself that provided a sense of artistic cohesion'.¹¹ It is however crucial to note that the labeling with geographic epithets such as 'downtown' and 'East Village' resulted from an interplay of ascription (by local and international media) and self-ascription by the scenes themselves. And it was these labels' identification with cultural innovation which was then exploited by real estate developers who increasingly invested in the area. As Christopher Mele summarises this process, 'the downtown scene was transformed by media, spectators and participants from the marginal and rebellious to an urban genre well suited for urban revitalization.'¹² Moreover, these geographic prefixes can be misleading if they suggest that a scene is essentially local and formed by actual physical encounter. Will Straw reminds us that as 'default label for cultural unities whose precise boundaries are invisible and elastic', the term 'scene' may circumscribe 'local clusters of activity' but may also 'give unity to practices dispersed throughout the world.'¹³ In the pre-digital age, zines, letters, or VHS mail order were just as crucial for the sharing of knowledge, the dispersion of tastes, and the circulation of, in our case, films. Equally, while the NYFFDT emerged as and within a local cluster of activity, it also repeatedly acted as a catalyst for new connections and joint activities that expanded and dispersed the scene beyond its local realm, as will be shown at a later point.

Nonetheless, we begin by looking at the NYFFDT in its local context. In downtown Manhattan, the festival was hosted by 'extra-theatre venues [that] lent themselves to the creation of layered texts.'¹⁴ Its cross-medial program never started earlier than 8pm and downtown performance artists were employed as masters of ceremonies (MCs) to entertain the audience while the stage was prepared for the next act. Each festival ended with an award ceremony. And

⁹ Christopher Mele, *Selling the Lower East Side. Culture, Real Estate, and Resistance in New York City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 217.

¹⁰ Lawrence, p. ix.

¹¹ Joan Hawkins, 'Downtown Cinema Revisited', in *Downtown Film & TV Culture*, ed. by Hawkins, pp. xi-xxix (p. xii).

¹² Christopher Mele, 'Forging the Link between Culture and Real Estate: Urban Policy and Real Estate Development', in *The Gentrification Debates*, ed. by Japonica Brown-Saracino (London: Routledge, 2010), 127-132 (p. 129).

¹³ Will Straw, 'Scenes and Sensibilities', *Public*, 22.23 (2001), 245-257 (p. 248).

¹⁴ Hawkins, p. xix.

just as Hughes-Freeland and Troyano followed a decidedly open, experimental, inclusive, but however highly subjective agenda in terms of curation, their award ceremony had neither specific categories nor a jury.¹⁵ Based on their own judgment, they awarded selected filmmakers with a cheap ‘Oscar’ candle figure, a tongue-in-cheek reference to the golden über-prestigious ‘Academy Award of Merit’.¹⁶ The festival nights themselves did not follow a rigidly scheduled program, but rather had the quality of an ongoing experience, where one performance or screening blended into the next. The two organisers stated that programming the NYFFDT’s first edition implied making a long list of ‘all these things that wouldn’t fit into the more established art culture,’ and putting them together ‘in such an order that always kept it moving, in an environment which on every level wasn’t pristine’.¹⁷

With the above described circumstances in mind, I want to propose that this messiness — that the festival ‘wasn’t pristine’ — should above all be considered as its most productive structural element. But what does it mean to take ‘messiness’ as the defining structure of a film festival? As will be shown in the following, the NYFFDT both reflected and encouraged the downtown scene’s mixing of media, and its collaborative, experimental, and interdisciplinary practices. The fact that the festival displayed film and performance in the context of a messy club night¹⁸ also meant that film itself wasn’t treated as a pristine object either. Rather, films alternated, shared a stage and were mixed with performance, theater and dance pieces involving projections, or experimental live happenings.¹⁹ Films were shown as work-in-progress, as excerpts, or as slides. And if someone was

¹⁵ ‘We only said no to one entrance. I don’t even know the name of it anymore...but it was flowers...for a long time.’ Ela Troyano, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 7 September 2018. However, being inclusive not only meant having a relaxed curatorial agenda, but also a political one. Female, queer, and non-white filmmakers and artists were explicitly invited to show or perform their work. Further, since the selection committee included only the two initiators, the programming of the festival was first and foremost based on personal taste and personal relations.
¹⁶ ‘[W]e just decided on random reasons.’ Tessa Hughes-Freeland in an E-Mail to Marie Sophie Beckmann, 7 December 2018.

¹⁷ Ela Troyano, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 7 September 2018.

¹⁸ ‘In instances where the films were projected behind bands, the story was not the point — and people rarely stopped dancing in order to gaze at the movie. When the film was shown in a backroom, people did watch the film in pretty much a traditional way — but there was more coming and going [...] and the audience was vocal — yelling out opinions and questions, and cheering whenever someone they recognized came on-screen.’ Hawkins, p. xix.

¹⁹ Of course, the pairing of live music, dance, performance and film wasn’t a novelty when the NYFFDT was launched, but rather an already common practice in the downtown scene which in turn had its roots in multimedia events and expanded cinema performances of the 1960s. What comes to mind are for instance Carolee Schneemann’s multimedia/kinetic theater performance *Snous* (1967), where live performers and the on stage installation were covered by a projection of her anti-war film *Viet Flakes* (1965), or Andy Warhol’s infamous multi-part expanded cinema production *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, which was orchestrated from 1966 to 1967 and included a vast array of projections, recorded and live music, on stage dancing. The most comprehensive theorization of such works can be found in Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: Dutton, 1970).

It wasn't...pristine: (Re-)visiting the New York Film Festival Downtown

working on a film and hadn't finished it in time, she or he would be encouraged to show it anyway.²⁰ In the 1986 program, the listing of David Schmidlapp's *a place to beware* comes with the following comment: 'This is a title I came up with last night. I don't really work towards a finished product. There could be a lot of excuses for this: but the truth of the matter is the more I work, the less I finish'. In the case of Andy Soma's film *White Rabbit* however, the film not being finished in time meant that no actual film was shown at all at the NYFFDT's third edition in 1986. Rather, by getting on stage and describing the images that should have appeared on the screen, Soma spontaneously turned the film into a performance *in situ*.²¹ Collaboration, improvisation, and the welcoming of the unfinished were thus sometimes born of necessity, but often they were inherent elements of the film (as) performance as well. In the following, we will take a closer look at three cases of collaboration and cross-disciplinarity at the NYFFDT which led to film being merged with performance, dance and music and to film sometimes *happening* 'without ever making it onto celluloid'.²²

Film happens

The following discussions must be preceded by a remark. The ways in which the films and live events happened at the NYFFDT were very specific to the festival's spatial and temporal context and were, in most cases, not documented via photograph or film. In fact, many of the performances that happened in the downtown clubs of the 1980 weren't documented at all.²³ I will not elaborate on this extensively here. However, if we follow Philip Auslander's thesis that performance documentation is performative in so far as it constitutes performance art (whether it had an initial live audience or not) as such,²⁴ then a reason for the lack of documentation in our case could be that these live events were in fact never meant to be embedded in a history of art and performance. In order

²⁰ Tessa Hughes-Freeland, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 13 September 2018.

²¹ This was apparently common practice for Soma. On the closing night of 8BC in October 1985, he presented one of his films in a similar manner. A journalist from the New York Times describes it as follows: 'A room full of 1980's Bohemians laughed knowingly at a movie screen that showed only white light. Sitting nearby, Andy Soma declaimed the 'script' of his 'film'. "Shot of the Jefferson Airplane on the cover of Life magazine," Mr. Soma intoned. "Pan across a shot of Frank Zappa. There he is. Face of Verushka holding a crystal ball. Timothy Leary cutting his lawn."' Michael Gross, 'The Party Seems to be Over For Lower Manhattan Clubs', *The New York Times*, 26 October 1985, p. 1.

²² Cynthia Carr, *On Edge. Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), p. 82.

²³ 'In the 80s I saw a lot of performances that nowadays would be recorded and should have been recorded. Back then, it just wasn't something which was automatically done'. Tessa Hughes-Freeland interviewed by Zora von Burden, in *Women of the underground: Art. Cultural Innovators Speak for Themselves*, ed. by Zora von Burden (San Francisco: Manic DPress, 2012). n.p.

²⁴ Cf. Philip Auslander, 'The Performativity of Performance Documentation', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 28.3 (2006), 1-10.

to discuss these contributions I therefore draw on impressions and memories of festival visitors, organizers and participants, and especially on interviews I conducted in Berlin and New York in 2018. Textual and oral documentation, festival ephemera, newspaper clippings are collected as fragmentary, sometimes conflicting documents of a scene that itself is constructed by ephemeral interaction. Structural ‘messiness’ therefore also pertains to the material and methodology, or rather, to the messiness of memory and history. Not attempting to (re-)construct historical order or coherence, this text is rather an offer to let different, often seldom heard voices speak with each other, cut each other short or finish each other’s sentences.

Since the organizational effort for the festival took up a lot Hughes-Freeland’s and Troyano’s time, little was left to finish their own respective films. Instead of showing films, they often did performed their collaborative multimedia projections at the NYFFDT such as *Playboy Gold Noon Cult Digger*, which was announced as an ‘expanded cinema experience’ in the 1989 program. This practice had its roots in what Hughes-Freeland describes as an improvised jam session:

[Ela Troyano] was doing projections at the Pyramid together with John [Zorn] and other musicians, and there was one night at Chandelier when we started jamming together and did it all night long, and then we decided that that was a fun thing to do, so we’d do it in lieu of finishing a film. [...] The projectors are like instruments. We play them like that.²⁵

As for material, Troyano used three-dimensional everyday objects like color transparencies, homemade slides, and found images which she arranged on several projectors at once, manipulating the image by hand and oftentimes based on scores provided by musician and composer John Zorn. Hughes-Freeland, Troyano and Zorn collaborated on several films and live projections, such as *Playboy Voodoo* (1991) or *Elegy for Jean Genet* (1994–97), which involves multiple projections of Super 8 and 16mm film, 35mm slides, original and found imagery of 1970s gay, S&M porn, and pop culture. The visual score is improvised to the four tracks of Zorn’s *Elegy* composition and footage manipulated by the artists through the use of colored gels, mirrors and other materials. A brief excursus into Zorn’s practice will help to gain a better understanding of how notions of improvisation and collaboration from the field of music have informed the performance of moving images at the NYFFDT.

Zorn’s work in composing is known to be eclectic, experimental, and genre-transgressing, with a vast output that oscillates between jazz, rock, hardcore punk, classical, extreme metal and klezmer music. Between the late 1970s and mid 1980s he developed a series of ‘game pieces’, one of which is *Cobra* from 1984. Borrowing its name from a 1977 World war II simulation game, *Cobra* is played, quite literally, like a game. Its score consists of a set of cues noted on cards,

²⁵ Tessa Hughes-Freeland, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 13 September 2018.

which are held up to the players by a prompter and rules corresponding to the cues, which can signify body motions, a change in tempo, a pause, or a fading out. The players can react to these cues individually, or call for a change in actions themselves; pointing to one's nose while holding up one finger and making eye contact with another player means requesting a duo, for instance. One can also become a 'guerrilla player' at any point in the game by putting on a headband. If the prompter puts on a headband as well, the player has the freedom to do almost anything he or she wishes, ignore the cues, make any calls or order other players to stop playing. These are just examples for the many, often quite complex and abstruse rules. In any case, as the number of players, the instrumentation and length of the piece are indeterminate and the players always improvise, *Cobra* will not only sound but also look entirely different from performance to performance. John Brackett quotes Zorn in saying that his game pieces deal much rather with form and relationships than with content or sound. Indeed, it is a piece that is made to be watched, to observe the hectic gestures and excited facial expressions of the players, the interaction between them.²⁶ In this sense, *Cobra* emphasizes a performance-based understanding of music²⁷ and renders visible the social aspect of live music in general and improvisation in particular, where scores are offered not only as framework for artistic interpretation, but also for social interaction.²⁸ Zorn is not only a composer who collaborated with artists and filmmakers (such as Jack Smith, whose performances and slide shows Zorn often accompanied with music), but one whose 'poetics of composition'²⁹ is argued to derive from the structural and unifying possibilities associated with filmic montage.³⁰

So while Zorn applies the filmic stylistic device of montage to compose music, Hughes-Freeland and Troyano choose terms from the field of music to describe the work on their multimedia projections, where projectors are being played like instruments and the multimedia projections come together via the logic of the indefinite 'jam session'. What emerges from this are 'unrepeatable movies made on spot',³¹ that come together momentarily as a live event.

²⁶ New England Conservatory, *John Zorn: Cobra* [YouTube video], 21 January 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdNdSJUf_8I> [accessed 4 December 2018].

²⁷ Nicholas Cook urges to shift from a text-based to a performance-based understanding of music, which means to acknowledge it first and foremost as a social phenomenon and to derive from the notion of a work that exists above its instantiations. Cf. Nicholas Cook, 'Music as Performance', in *The Cultural Study of Music. A Critical Introduction*, ed. by Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (New York: Routledge, 2003), 204–214.

²⁸ Nicholas Cook, 'Scripting Social Interaction: Improvisation, Performance, and Western "Art" Music', in *Improvisation and Social Aesthetics*, ed. by Georgina Born, Eric Lewis and Will Straw (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 59–77 (p. 67).

²⁹ Brackett mainly refers to Zorn's practice of adapting, modifying and incorporating music by other composers into his own work, his avoidance of features of development, and therefore the creation of a unity that is associative rather than seemingly organic. Cf. John Brackett, *John Zorn: tradition and transgression* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), p. xvi.

³⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*.

³¹ Carr, p. 82.

Marie Sophie Beckmann

For the next two cases, I'd like to turn to an account by the writer and critic Cynthia Carr. Her text should not so much be considered as delivering historical evidence as be read as the 'documentary traces'³² of the events that it conveys to us and through which we can establish a relationship to them. Carr reported regularly on experimental art and performance for the *Village Voice* and her impressions of the NYFFDT's second edition in 1985 begin as follows:

I'd gone to the Downtown Film Festival at the now-defunct 8BC [...] and found the place to be packed to the bricks. [...] Took me ten minutes to squeeze within view of the stage. Jo Andres appeared midway through the evening's dozen films and slide shows for an "expanded cinema" performance. This is a dance for people who hate dance. [...] At the Film Fest, she worked with slide projections on four layers of tulle-like fabric, fat human outlines in red yellow green blue, stretching and playing with the figures, lifting the veils to show that only on color was visible on each layer of "alternative screen". [...] The piece ended with Andres, Steve Buscemi, and Cynthia Meyers squiggling over their black clothes with phosphorescent liquid as they danced, splattering phosphorescence over the stage and out into the audience, covering the first rows in glowing spots.³³

It is noteworthy that Carr framed her visit to the NYFFDT as being essentially connected to the evident shift from what many still liked to describe as underground to a more and more tangible gentrification of the East Village. In the face of a waning club culture, Carr dedicated her text to 'Illegal Performances', namely those taking place in venues that were either already shut down or on the verge of losing their licenses. That the critic also took the visit as a very physical experience becomes noticeable not only when her body squeezes through the crowded space, but also when she describes the performance as a series of physically connoted acts of stretching, squiggling, splattering, as something that, quite literally, spilled over the stage.

Andres frequently performed her film/light/dance shows at the NYFFDT.³⁴ In her pieces, bodies dressed in black are swallowed by the darkness of the venue. Their movements only become visible once the bodies turn into surfaces for projections, setting the images in motion, distorting and twisting them. The dancers smear themselves with light and bathe in the eerie glow that emanates from a TV screen, as described in Sally Barnes's impression of *Liquid TV* at one of Tom Murrin's monthly 'Full Moon Shows':³⁵

³² Amelia Jones, "Presence" in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation', *Art Journal*, 56.4, (1997), 11-18 (p. 12).

³³ Carr, p. 74.

³⁴ Jo Andres is featured in the NYFFDT programs as follows: Jo Andres, *Devil's In The Dish* (Film/Dance Performance) (1986); Film from performance piece *Lucid Possession* (with Jo Andres, Cynthia Meyers, Rebecca Moore) (1988); *Expanded Cinema Performance* by Jo Andres (1989).

³⁵ Tom Murrin performed his 'Full Moon Show' in honor of his moon goddess, Luna Macaroon. When he had a club date that fell on the full moon, he invited other performers to the stage of a.o. Performance Space 122 and La Mama Experimental Theatre Club for a variety show; when there

It wasn't...pristine: (Re-)visiting the New York Film Festival Downtown

Andres, Lucy Sexton, and Anne Iobst look like Amazons in their short haircuts, black sleeveless T-shirts, black jeans, and black combat boots. They seem to stand six feet tall. They rock their hips as they advance in a kind of chorus line then drop their dancery demeanor to walk back and begin again, in what struck me as a very tribal manner. Later they dance in front of TVs that face them, not us, so the effect is of an eerie, other worldly light bathing these other-worldly maiden-warriors. And, still later, one reason for their sinister costumes comes clear when the lights go out and slide projections of a human figure dance and multiply through layers of cloth borne and twisted by agents now made invisible in their black garb. They rip apart a glowing figurine and smear themselves with his light.³⁶

Andres projected moving images onto 'alternative screens' such as moving bodies and flimsy fabrics, and blended the action of a film with live action onstage.³⁷ Her frequent collaborators Iobst and Sexton also performed together as the duo Dancenoise in downtown clubs, theaters, at Murrin's 'Full Moon Shows' as well as at the NYFFDT. Their frantic, music- and dance-based performances were usually short (often no longer than 10 minutes), featured an array of props and costumes, and while they could enter the stage with their bodies entirely covered in gift wrapping,³⁸ many written accounts of their shows mention that the finale would usually involve fake blood and nudity.³⁹ By giving the stage to such ephemeral, genre-transgressing happenings, the NYFFDT decisively presented itself as a platform for 'any kind of moving image,'⁴⁰ thereby not only pushing the conventional understanding of a film festival but also of film itself.

For the last case, we will squeeze again into 8BC's auditorium with Carr...

The next night, that first row was in danger of more indelible spots, when a naked and shrieking Brian Moran poured a bucket of blood over his head. It was Cinema of Transgression night, a real droolfest of current underground gore, plus two performances. Filmmaker Nick Zedd, wearing a black dress, Cleopatra wig, and the

was no booked event he often performed his ritual on the street. Cf. <<https://www.howlarts.org/event/the-full-moon-show-2016-11-16-2017-01-14-2017-03-14/>> [accessed 15 December 2018].

³⁶ Sally Banes, 'Moon Over Loisaia (Revenge of the Full Moon Show)', in *Performance Art and Paratheater in New York, 1976-85*, ed. by Sally Banes (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1988), 254-255 (p. 255). Originally published in *Village Voice*, 7 August 1984.

³⁷ 'At times, the films were blended with action onstage. As patterns swirled across the screens, a figure in white emerged from the darkness, and some of the same patterns swirled across her robes. All three screens showed a woman dancing under el tracks. Suddenly, however, there was a live dancer moving in front of one screen while the el stretched away on film behind her'. Jack Anderson, 'Review/Dance; Movement, Live and Filmed', *The New York Times*, 22 October 1990, p. 18, <<https://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/22/arts/review-dance-movement-live-and-filmed.html?module=inline>> [accessed 01 March 2019].

³⁸ "Dance Noise" Performance Art at The Pyramid Club's 7th Birthday Party [YouTube video], 13 June 2011, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Fn6koxuaPU>> [accessed 14 December 2018].

³⁹ Cf. John Kelly, 'they stripped with their boots on: REVENGE WITH REPRIEVE', *movement research performance journal*, 34 (2009), n.p.

⁴⁰ Tessa Hughes-Freeland, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 13 September 2018.

Marie Sophie Beckmann

gaze of a dying starlet, drifted across the stage, accompanied by a schmaltzy soundtrack that might ordinarily signal the entrance of a mutant B-movie crab. Richard Hell narrated.⁴¹

...who is noticeably unimpressed with the 'droolfest' featuring Richard Kern, Brian Moran and Nick Zedd. The first act, which seems to be inspired by the provocations of Viennese Actionism, is announced in the festival's program as follows: 'RICHARD KERN. *Submit to Me* or *From Sex to Death*, new film in progress. Performance with Brian Moran. *Manhattan Love Suicides*.' The short description for *Manhattan Love Suicides* is put in quotation marks, indicating that the filmmaker has written the text himself:

New York City 1985 — A churring world where the realities of poverty and sex among the desperate musicians, artists and scene makers dictate a mutated parody of normal lifestyles. Consumed with bitterness and hatred, the characters of *M.L.S.* stalk their objects of attention through the depths of the Lower East Side [...]. [T]his film contains four vignettes featuring NYC cult stars Nick Zedd, Bill Rice, Adrienne Altenhaus, David Wojnarowicz, Tom Turner and Amy Turner.⁴²

While other film descriptions adopt a more sober tone (such as Manuel DeLanda's *ISM ISM: Documents graffiti from 1975-1978*), Kern frames his films specifically as products of the Lower East Side and additionally supplies a narrative of its 'realities of poverty and sex and desperation.' Fittingly, the text is accompanied by a still from *Submit To Me Now*, depicting a half naked Tommy Turner. Tied to the floor as if crucified, sharp wooden sticks are goring his flesh. After mentioning that the film was shot in 'dazzling black and white Super 8' and includes a soundtrack by J.G. Thirlwell, Kern introduces its performers as 'NYC cult stars', half-mockingly alluding to the fact that the stardom of most of them, except maybe Wojnarowicz, is limited to the downtown scene.

Kern's first Super 8 film *Goodbye 42nd Street* in 1984 was only four minutes long. But since you 'needed 20 min. to be in a club,'⁴³ he began to collaborate with Brian Moran aka Blood Boy on live events. These sometimes incorporated Kern's later films such as *Zombie Hunger 1* and *Zombie Hunger 2* (both from 1984), which were screened while the men were 'on stage shooting up and fainting, or dying, whatever.'⁴⁴ Moran also appears as Blood Boy in Kern's *Submit To Me* (1985–86), of which excerpts were shown at the NYFFDT in 1985. Here, we watch the slender bodies of young women move and undress to the guitar sounds of the rock band The Butthole Surfers, their gaze is directed straight into the camera which circles around them. As the film progresses, we see scenes

⁴¹ Carr, p. 75.

⁴² The program appeared in the October 1985 issue of *East Village Eye*.

⁴³ Richard Kern, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 4 October 2018.

⁴⁴ Richard Kern, interviewed by Jack Sargeant, in *Deathtripping: The Cinema of Transgression*, ed. by Jack Sargeant (London, San Francisco: Creation Books, 1995), p. 98.

It wasn't...pristine: (Re-)visiting the New York Film Festival Downtown

of increasing violence, a couple is choking each other with tightropes until the blood gushes out, someone is 'overdosing,' and a naked male body, the head covered by a latex mask is held on a leash. In the final scene, we see a naked, blood covered Moran screaming silently.

What Carr described as Nick Zedd drifting across the stage with the 'gaze of a dying starlet [...] accompanied by a schmaltzy soundtrack' is announced in the festival program as an 'Ordeal he co-wrote with Lydia Lunch.' This piece called *SHE* is based on a script originally entitled *The Perfect Woman*. Musician Richard Hell, who also starred in Zedd's *Geek Maggot Bingo* (1983), read the text on stage, while Zedd performed as Nichole Z., a drag character he sometimes assumed for a night out,⁴⁵ on stage (in his piece *ME MINUS YOU*), or in the film *Thrust In Me*, a collaboration with Kern. Excerpts of that film, in which Zedd plays both a suicidal woman and her necrophiliac boyfriend, were in turn used to depict a dream sequence in *ME MINUS YOU*.

Film and performance are interrelated in various ways here. Kern and Zedd made films specifically to be screened during performances, re-used existing material in a performative setting, or turned performance into film, with both director and performers appearing on stage as well as in the film. But film was also *acted out*. Nick Zedd stated that because he lacked the money to shoot a film in 1985, he decided to perform *ME MINUS YOU* as a 'live movie'.⁴⁶ After all, shooting on Super 8 is fairly cheap, but doing a performance is even cheaper. In the script for *ME MINUS YOU*, we find detailed information of when which tape should start playing, or which slide should be shown. For the other performers the script includes stage directions, indicating that certain lines should be spoken 'frustratedly,' or with an attitude that is 'impassive to the audience.'⁴⁷ But even with a script that leaves little to no space for improvisation, a live situation invites uncontrollable elements. When *ME MINUS YOU* was performed at the Pyramid, one performer forgot his script, was thrown off the stage by an enraged Zedd, and went on roaming the audience searching for his knife he had lost in the meantime. Though this part obviously wasn't scripted, Zedd said he was 'pleased that occurred,'⁴⁸ because the confused audience couldn't tell whether the performance was still happening or not. Although the aspects of immediacy and incalculability of a live event was intriguing for both Kern and Zedd, the practice of performing a film live or combining it with live elements was often also a pragmatic or economic decision – similar to Hughes-Freeland and Troyano doing projections at the festival if the time for finishing a film was lacking.

⁴⁵ 'One night, after I got made up in drag, a bunch of us went to a girl named Tessa's apartment, high on dope, vodka and mushrooms.' Nick Zedd, *Totem Of The Depraved* (Los Angeles: Two Thirteen Sixty-One Publications, 1996), p. 54.

⁴⁶ Cf. Nicholas Zurbrugg, 'Nick Zedd: Living Performances/Filming Transgression. An Interview with Nicholas Zurbrugg', *Art & Film*, 49.11 (1996), 42–47 (p. 44).

⁴⁷ Cf. *Screenplay for 'Me Minus You', 1985*, Nick Zedd Papers, Series I, Subseries A, Box 2, Folder 27, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University.

⁴⁸ Cf. Zurbrugg, p. 44.

Lastly, I want to suggest that we should take the dismissive tone of Carr's text as evidence for Kern's and Zedd's acts being self-referential to a degree that makes them easy to dismiss in precisely the way that Carr did. Rather than valuing or devaluing them for being 'good' works of art or not, I'd argue that these films (and/as performances) must instead be understood as manifestations of a scene, in this case of collaborations within the loosely defined orbit of the *Cinema of Transgression*.⁴⁹ As such, they both create and result from a network in which images, narratives and characters appear and reappear on screen and on stage, and in which the same participants alternately take on the roles of director, performer and curator. In this sense, Kern's and Zedd's work fits well into the program of a festival that can be understood, with Elsaesser, as a 'moment of self-celebration of a community'.⁵⁰ But what do these images, narratives and characters signify once they leave their local context?

From Club To Kino: The NYFFDT On The Move

The first two editions of the NYFFDT were housed by the East Village clubs Limbo Lounge and 8BC respectively. Both venues were closed by 1985 in a wave of shutdowns ringing in the beginning of the end of the East Village.⁵¹ In 1984, part of the NYFFDT's first edition program traveled to the Collective for Living Cinema in Tribeca/Soho, which despite that still being Lower Manhattan, was perceived as 'kind of a different thing'.⁵² Alf Bold, who worked as film programmer at Berlin's Kino Arsenal, spent a year in New York as curator for the Collective, which was founded in 1973 as an artist-run cooperative and multi-disciplinary venue by film students from the Harpur College Cinema Department. After visiting the NYFFDT's first edition, Bold took a selection of its program and

⁴⁹ The founding of the NYFFDT coincided with the launch of *Underground Film Bulletin*, a zine issued by filmmaker Nick Zedd under the pseudonym Jerion Oriko. Through interviews and reviews, it predominantly featured downtown filmmakers and their work. In 1985, Zedd singlehandedly announced, 'a new movement is born' and called this movement the Cinema of Transgression. The now oft-cited manifesto was published in the subsequent issue. The filmmakers whom—whether they wanted or not—Zedd associated with the Cinema of Transgression were friends, collaborators or like-minded artists who had been making Super 8 films in the Lower East Side more or less since the late 1970s. These films explored forms of transgression and excess. Textually, this often meant the display of physical abuse, violent sex, and the squirting of body liquids both real and fake. Many of the films were produced on a low or with no budget at all, they were highly music-based, conceived as part of art installations or performances. The films were thus defiant not only because their content matter was meant to challenge the audience's aesthetic sensibility, but as they are by their nature extending into different practices, media, and genres, they are difficult to pinpoint. Both initiators of the NYFFDT belonged to the orbit of this grouping and the festival would become an important platform for the filmmakers associated with the Cinema of Transgression as well.

⁵⁰ Elsaesser, p. 95.

⁵¹ Cf. Gross, p. 1.

⁵² Tessa Hughes-Freeland, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 13 September 2018.

It wasn't...pristine: (Re-)visiting the New York Film Festival Downtown

showed the films at the Collective. Since the 1970s, Bold had been interested in the ongoings of the US-American film avant-garde and in 1978 he dedicated a weekly program at the Arsenal to Anthology Film Archives. After his return to Berlin, he expanded the Arsenal film collection around the focus on US avant-garde and underground film.⁵³ Viewed in this light, the NYFFDT became a node in the transatlantic network of institutions, curators and filmmakers. And in 1986, that network expanded further when the NYFFDT crossed the Atlantic itself. The NYFFDT entered Germany's *Kino*-circuit when German filmmaker Jürgen Brüning invited Hughes-Freeland and Troyano to take a selection⁵⁴ of the festival's second edition to Germany and organized their tour, starting in Berlin's Eiszeit Kino,⁵⁵ to Kommunales Kino in Hanover, Kino Lichtwerk in Bielefeld, Dusseldorf's Filminstitut, Mal Seh'n in Frankfurt/Main, Cologne's Filmhaus and Werkstattkino in Munich between March and April of 1986. Brüning had entered the downtown scene in 1983 when he showed his own Super 8 films and those from local Berlin filmmakers at the Pyramid Club. Troyano attended the screening and approached Brüning, remarking that the Berlin films were 'similar to what we do here.'⁵⁶

'Super 8 activity there [in Germany generally and Berlin specifically] has no center. It has, rather, a multiplicity of centers which can be connected only by imaginary lines,'⁵⁷ writes filmmaker and theorist Keith Sanborn in the introductory text for *Super-8/Berlin. The architecture of division*, a group show he curated at Hallwalls in Buffalo in 1983. The various centers of this rhizomatic⁵⁸ structure were formed by the *Kinos*, many of which were equipped either for showing Super 8 alone or alongside 16 and 35mm, as well as by individuals or loosely structured groups providing the technical equipment,⁵⁹ and of course by the filmmakers themselves. Those were said to prefer Super 8 over 16mm

⁵³ Cf. *On the Collective for Living Cinema*, press text for exhibition, April 2007 <https://www.47orchard.org/exhibition/The_Collective.html>; *Edit Film Culture!*, press text for screening program, July 2018 <<https://www.arsenal-berlin.de/en/arsenal-cinema/current-program/single/article/7299/2803.html>> [both accessed 8 December 2018].

⁵⁴ The selection included films by Mary Bellis, Michael Oblowitz, Michael Manna, Ivan Gallitti, Manuel DeLanda, Richard Kern, Tessa Hughes-Freeland, Ela Troyano, Uzi Parnes, Erotic Psyche, Jo Andres, Tommy Turner, M. Henry Jones, W. Robinson, Edit DeAk, Sandy Tait, Julius Klein, Terry Stacey, Sokhi Wagner, Susan Pitt, Nick Zedd, Ellen Fisher, Ron Dumas, Cassandra Stark, and Penelope Wehrli.

⁵⁵ Eiszeit Kino was co-founded by Jürgen Brüning in a squatted building and moved locations in 1985. Next to the presentation of Super 8 films, Eiszeit also presented concerts and performances.

⁵⁶ Jürgen Brüning, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 7 November 2018.

⁵⁷ Keith Sanborn, *Super-8/Berlin. The architecture of division* (Buffalo: Hallwalls, 1983), p. 2.

⁵⁸ Deleuze and Guattari conceive of the rhizome as a non-hierarchical structure with no predetermined beginning or end, without center, or rather, with multiple centers, multiple points of entry and ongoing potentials of multidirectional connectivity. Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Rhizom* (Berlin: Merve, 1977), p. 21. Originally published by Les Éditions de Minuit in 1976.

⁵⁹ Sanborn refers to groups 'which were formed out of pre-existing friendships, common aesthetic and political interests, and sometimes sheer economic necessity' and notes that, though Berlin did not have its own Super 8 film processing labs at the time, film could be sent to other West German cities. Cf. Sanborn, p. 2.

or video because of its affordability, convenient handling and because it had an existing *Kino* distribution. And since, as in the downtown scene too, ‘many of the films [were] used in multi-media performances in clubs and cafés, [...] there [was] no particular fetishizing of “image quality”’.⁶⁰ In this sense, the films must have reminded Troyano of *what they did there*, not only because they bore resemblance in terms of their ‘cheap’ aesthetics, their non-commitment to genre, and their topical subject-matter (ranging from urban and night life documentation to comments on state violence), but also because they point to a collaborative and interdisciplinary practice. For instance, similar to the collaborations between downtown musicians and filmmakers, we find the songs of German post-punk and new wave bands, such as Fehlfarben, DAF and Malaria, rhythmize Yana Yo’s films; the artist collective Die Tödliche Doris collaborated on films, publications, performances and were also a band; and the filmmakers Axel Brand and Anette Maschmann became Brand-Maschmann, a ‘two bodied system’⁶¹ not unlike Bradley Eros and Aline Mare of New York’s *Erotic Psyche*.

So what happened when the NYFFDT traveled from *here* to *there*? First, the shift from clubs to *Kinos* implied that the program itself became less messy and more pristine, meaning that the films were no longer part of an ongoing program in which they were mixed and blended with live performances, dance, and multimedia events, but were experienced within the more orderly conditions and specific spatial arrangement of the cinema hall. Second, as these screenings were attended by a local *Kino* audience and reviewed in local media, the films’ images produced new imaginings of their place of origin.⁶² From *Bielefelder Spiegel* to *Berliner Tagesspiegel*, from the West to the East, newspapers and magazines reacted with a multitude of reports and reviews. Bielefeld was excited to experience ‘ein Streifzug für Entdeckungsfreudige durch die amerikanische Undergroundlandschaft’ – ‘a journey for explorers through the American underground landscape.’⁶³ While Berlin was glad to ‘[n]ot [see] the beautifully polished, melancholy poetry of Jim Jarmusch or Eric Mitchell [...], but the other, more original, direct, dirty New York.’⁶⁴ In New York, there had been little press coverage of the NYFFDT, except for announcements in the downtown papers and zines. The German media response, which was comparatively sweeping,

⁶⁰ Sanborn, p. 2.

⁶¹ Ivi, p. 17.

⁶² Bill Nichols suggests that once local/national cinemas and the work of individual filmmakers respectively enter a global film festival circuit and are exposed to new critics and audiences, new meanings will be produced which are inevitably different from those produced by an audience familiar with their local context. Cf. Nichols, p. 71.

⁶³ ‘Ungewöhnliche Filme direkt aus New York’, *Neue Westfälische*, 19 March 1986, p. 1 (my translation).

⁶⁴ Anke Sterneberg, ‘Das ursprüngliche New York’, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 16 March 1986, p. 64 (my translation).

It wasn't...pristine: (Re-)visiting the New York Film Festival Downtown

reverberated to New York City and played no small role in the festival becoming a more recognized platform for exhibition as well as distribution.⁶⁵

Further, the fact that most German newspaper articles, though some less enthusiastically than others, accentuated those films that would confirm New York City's, and especially the East Village's, reputation of being a gritty place where crime is high, drugs are cheap and sex is violent, hints to a yearning to see an 'original, direct, dirty New York.' And this yearning in turn brings us to conclusively think about the scene in yet another way, namely in terms of its imaginative structure. 'Scenes make the city a place,' writes Janine Marchessault, referring to scenic descriptions in books, scenes in films, but also cultural scenes. She mentions Flaubert, who turns Paris into a 'series of scenes,' and Warhol, who built a scene around his factory and who himself 'live[d] in a scene that he endlessly document[ed]';⁶⁶ directed at his own mythologization and, inevitably, that of New York City as well. A scene of/in a city thus makes that city *scenic*, fueling desire for an imagined place. Similarly, as the films of the downtown scene circulated, they made New York City visible in a particular way, creating images which anchor themselves more and more in the popular imagination, contributing to the city's perpetual mythologization.

The case of the NYFFDT therefore makes tangible not only how media and practices merge and inform each other within the framework of a local scene, but also how scenes overlap and connect to form an ever expanding network⁶⁷ in which people, institutions and events function as nodes and connectors, and in which images and imaginations are produced and reproduced, interpreted and reinterpreted as they circulate.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ 'We got a ton of press. So when we came back, all of a sudden we were hot. Hot in this... whatever.' Ela Troyano, interviewed by Marie Sophie Beckmann, 7 September 2018. When the NYFFDT took place for the third time in New York in 1986, the 1 October issue of *International EYE* featured the whole program of the festival and noted that even though most filmmakers presented at the NYFFDT still hadn't received funding or grants for the production of their films and screening venues in New York City were becoming scarce, their films were increasingly screened in Europe, Canada and in other US cities, a development that was also due to the increasing success of the NYFFDT.

⁶⁶ All quotes taken from Janine Marchessault, 'Film Scenes: Paris, New York, Toronto', *Public*, 22.23 (2001), 59–75 (pp. 61, 67, 68).

⁶⁷ The network kept expanding when Brüning became film curator at Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center in Buffalo, he co-curated *Angles & Angels. The Buffalo Edition of the Fifth Annual New York Film Festival Downtown* (March 1989), a screening with selected films from the NYFFDT's 1988 edition. He also kept working with Ela Troyano, a.o. as a producer of her film *Latin Boys Go To Hell* (1997) and with Jo Andres, for whom he organized performances in Osnabrück and Budapest. Also Nick Zedd returned with solo screenings to many of the *Kinos* that hosted the NYFFDT and started to work closely with German distributor Uwe Hamm of artware.

⁶⁸ I want to thank Jürgen Brüning, Tessa Hughes-Freeland, Richard Kern and Ela Troyano for sharing their time and memories.