

## from *Epiphanies*

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My intention in putting the stories together in an unplanned way was to suggest that all things—stories, incidental sounds from the environment, and, by extension, beings—are related, and that this complexity is more evident when it is not oversimplified by the idea of a relationship in one person's mind.

—John Cage, *Silence* (1961)

*My multimedia project Epiphanies began as a large collection of single-sentence stories, each of which was meant to be the epiphany, or revealing moment in a longer story. My assumption in writing Epiphanies was that the remainder of each story—the parts before my sentence as well as the parts after—should be left unsaid, ideally to be imagined. Selections of these stories have appeared in over two dozen literary magazines. Over a thousand (of two thousand originals) were translated into German and collected into a book. Other selections of these Epiphanies also became the texts of two different, forty-five-minute theatrical performances (one director using twice as many stories as the other, her performers often speaking two or more stories simultaneously). Epiphanies were also the stuff of a long radio play (which may be cut apart into a series of shorter radio plays); and the principle of Epiphanies informed the production of a film. Here the stories, spoken by many readers, becomes the sound track; the visual track consists of cinematic moments varying in length between one second and over two minutes. Since each visual epiphany is meant to stand by itself, absolutely without reference to the film moments before or the film moments after, and without reference to the stories spoken on the sound track, I decided not to shoot fresh footage but to gather “out-takes.” Had I instead shot my own footage—the conventional way to “make a film”—the style of a single cameraman or director would inevitably impose a consistency contrary to my purpose of making each sequence an independent unit. Thousands of feet of film, gathered from the widest variety of sources, were viewed to find the few hundred I used. These clips were then edited into a film that, at last count, has nearly three hundred discrete segments and runs over seventy minutes. (If the film is eventually to fulfill my original plan of being four hours long, then it would need over a thousand clips.) The Cultural Department of Sender Fries Berlin commissioned a twenty minute version whose parts were taken from the longer film. The following text is a script of the film's visual elements—a script composed as an experiment, after the fact. It is a summary in words of what is seen and by itself should give a sense of the leaps in time, in place, and in subject that characterize this film, if not make it radically different from all films previously made. However, this text is best read as one would read an ordinary film script—by trying to imagine not just the individual images but the unusual style of the film. With nearly a hundred visual stories on the screen, and approximately as many stories on the sound track, all within twenty minutes, this film, like Epiphanies as a whole, is very much about the exhaustive experience of the experience of fiction.*

A middle-aged man, thin and bespectacled, emerges from a "Peep Show," recognizes that a camera is observing him and then, annoyed and perhaps angry, walks toward the cameraperson, with his index finger beckoning the camera person to come to him.

At the center of a group is a beefy, well-dressed man, perhaps a politician, eating finger food heartily.

Four young boys partially hidden in the bushes beside a railroad track, watch a woman with laced boots and a long skirt run hurriedly over the ties.

On a sheet of white paper is typed, one letter at a time, the inscription "page 1."

A cartoon figure resembling Isaac Newton, with a sudden flick of his finger, pushes a cartoon boulder down a cartoon hill.

An office with some two dozen clerks empties out in fast motion.

A fair skinned nude woman, lying on the floor with her knees up toward the camera, turns on her side, as if digressing in her dream.

A plump stick figure of uncertain sex skips over the inverted face of a bearded man.

As a formidable machine drills a hole through a wooden floor, its spinning bit is seen to emerge from the other side.

A downhill skier falls into slow motion, his loss of control becoming ever more emphatic.

As the waiter leans over the restaurant table, a female patron turns it over and, as the other customers disperse, she runs to the back of the room as if on the way out.

On the screen flashes a bright light out of which progressively emerges the word "People."

A hound is leaping across a field, apparently chasing a light blue vertical line that likewise moves from right to left across the screen, until there appears on the ground a little rubber ball which the dog clasps between his jaws.

Clocks are rapidly superimposed over one another in an animated sequence composed of real pictures.

A family (in color negative), dressed as though it is on vacation, leisurely walks along a street and then up a hill.

A black man whose face fills the screen opens his mouth wide, as if he were on the verge of making an important statement.

As a World War I soldier is shot, he throws up his gun and falls back into the shallow water.

A man bends over to examine a rock that has on its face, in white, an inscrutable inscription.

On a wall are light bulbs that illuminate in a scattered fashion to form a rough map of, first the USA and then the world.

A little girl hopscotches through chalk rectangles in which are written the clichés of Marxist polemics.

Through a close-up lens we intimately view a caterpillar munching various solids with gusto.

Two stick figures come together in a dance and then meld into each other, forming a single stick figure that retreats into the white background.

In double exposure is a nude baton twirler performing over several images, most barely recognizable, including one of a tuba player.

Out of the word "one" emerges the slogan "one on one."

On one screen appears the letters "SFB" (for Sender Fries Berlin, the television station) and then the numbers from 5 to 1 in an evenly measured countdown.

Nail-polished fingers slowly pull a pleated white skirt out from the belt of a supine figure, the move suggesting an initial step toward making love.

A family dances upside down (in black-white negative).

A little girl, with not just her lips but her entire mouth painted lipstick red, ignites a candle.

A naked man tickles a naked woman with a peacock feather.

A gray ball, heavy looking as though it were lead, with a chain attached, suddenly takes off from the ground and sails into the air.

The individual elements of the energy cycle appear full screen in sequence and then return, in much smaller sizes, to form a single image of an energy circle connected by arrows.

A basketball sails high into the air and, as the players under the backboard jump up for a rebound, goes through the hoop.

A rosy-cheeked, blond-haired girl eats a hamburger with advertisement-level enthusiasm.

Several apartment buildings collapse into a chorus of exploding dust.

Peddling a bicycle on ice is a clown dressed in the outfit of a lion; and as he bicycles off, out from behind the side curtains comes a figure, dressed like Humpty Dumpty, peddling a low unicycle.

A fleet of motor cycles, their headlights ablaze, retreat up the street in upside-down synchronicity.

A handsome blonde woman, visible only from her nose up, raises her eyebrows solicitously.

A “closed” sign dangles over an aisle, as waiting people are annoyed.

A group of dancers, visible only from the waist down, move through a rectangular pattern in unison.

An olive-skinned boy, dressed in a white robe, is submerged in baptism.

An animated hand waves from the edge of a screen.

A pole-vaulter, using an old-fashioned stiff pole, successfully clears the horizontal bar.

A cartoon woman lowers her eyes demurely.

Two horses at a wooden fence move their heads from left to right in utter unison.

An animated star flashes across the black sky.

Three kids—one boy and two girls—scale up the side of a single-story building to peer into the windows, the boy pulling up the top of trousers that might otherwise fall down.

Before a painting of Christ, several men, their arms raised and hands clasped, walk rhythmically in a circle.

As a medical researcher peers into his test tube, he has a revelation.

Colored lights flash on a helmeted man.

While the boss is talking on the telephone, his secretary gets his attention by knocking on the window separating them.

In a football scrimmage, the center hikes the ball not to the quarterback but, in an unusual switch, to the halfback coming across the center, toward the camera. In dark space candles move like dancers.

The bicycle racers turn an embankment.

On a blueprint of urban real estate, an autonomous pen draws a white triangle that encloses a whole city block.

A little girl in a swing looks up gratefully at her father who beams back at her.

The camera pans rapidly through a double exposure that never becomes clear.

An ocean-going ship encounters a squall at night.

Checkerboard stick figures propel one-man machines.

An insignia on a large crate is painted over.

A bugler on horseback halts and raises his instrument before waving an American flag.

Fingers place the letters for the word "ball" on a scrabble board and then count up the points.

Chips of different colors fly around in black space.

Little Chinese girls, heavily dressed, do basic exercises in a ballet class.

A pink animated woman, quite chubby, falls from the sky to the earth.

A handsome woman, nude across the shoulders, with her tongue between her teeth, writhes in sexual ecstasy.

A team of women, dressed in white and standing on a green field, catch eggs that are thrown at them.

On the screen flashes "\$60 billion."

A pretty woman, clearly outraged, pumps her arms, as though sprinting, while she is actually standing in place.

On screen flash, one word after another, the handwritten words, "Come / And / Make / Love / To / Me."

Young boys in swimming suits sprint enthusiastically into the sea.

A squad of men with ropes wrapped around their hands and bodies tug on a Mercedes limousine.

A class of Caucasian ballet dancers, dressed in leotards, bob up and down in place.

A rifle, held across her chest by a handsome woman, is thrown aside.

As the camera's eye approaches a helmeted man, the image blurs.

Feet in white sneakers spin around on the ceiling.

Clowns (in color negative) go through a routine that culminates with their taking binoculars out of their cases and peering through them in various directions until, surprise, they look directly at each other.

An elegantly dressed woman, visible only from the waist down, emerges from a limousine, the fold of her skirt separating up her left thigh as she takes her first step.

The camera pans across embroidered cloth that reads "mor" and then "morgen," the shapes outlining the letters filled with images of nymphs.

Two pairs of index and middle fingers, one with nail polish, visibly belonging to a woman. The other pair belonging to a man, behave like legs doing a series of erotic dances on a mirrored floor.

A centripetal line, in a cornucopia pattern, unwinds into nothingness.

Late afternoon sunlight flashes through a farm scene.

Pearls, suspended between a bright red v-neck shirt and her breasts' crevice, are fingered nervously.

A riot on the streets of Berlin (in the 1920s) encounters resistance.

On a cloth is embroidered, in German, the motto: "The best sugar for a man is a woman who can cook."

Abstract geometric shapes metamorphose in a kinetic pattern that moves from right to left.

Ocean-going merchant ships, aflame, are sinking.

A white figure with white top hat dances amid white scaffolding.

Adjacent to a man talking on the telephone—on the same level—is a woman's foot that he fondles and kisses.

The image of a dock disintegrates into chips that spin around space until forming clearly the words "finding time."

A bunch of boys stalk up a railroad track.

Chinese people, warmly dressed in colorless Communist fashion, stare inquisitively in the direction of the camera.

A nude couple walks a large ball back and forth across the camera's eye.

The parts of a female face change place and then in second stroke return to normal.

Cheerleaders go through a unison move.

Barely protruding from the surface of the water is a face resembling that of a monkey who, in its hysterical turnings, reveals a struggle to stay afloat.

The 45-rpm record, with its large center hole, is lifted by a shiny metallic jukebox changer.

In a picture frame are metamorphosing images that portray the stages of a life.

A blinding spotlight shines upon a man who shields his eyes with his forearm.

An agitated woman, fingering the skin of her chin and her neck, is surprised to notice a camera has been observing her.

A gypsy girl, dressed in white, does an erotic dance more typical of a woman above her in years.

A stadium crowd cheers over an inscription that reads, "Filmed at Glendale High School, Glendale Arizona."

Across the screen reads an unusual conclusion—not "The End," but "More to Come."