

The Films of Dušan Marek

An appreciation by Arthur Cantrill

Independent filmmaker, long-standing lecturer, teacher and advocate for the Australian film industry (particularly manifested in ‘Cantrill’s Filmnotes’, published in collaboration with his wife Corinne) and enthusiast for experimental filmmakers, Arthur Cantrill here introduces the work of Surrealist painter and filmmaker Dušan Marek, speaking through the authoritative voice of a longtime friend of the artist.

Dušan Marek came to Australia from Czechoslovakia in 1948, aged 22, with his brother, Voitre, also an artist. After settling in Adelaide they exhibited their surrealist work together. On the ship Dušan met his wife-to-be, Helena Jakubová– having survived the Nazis, they were now fleeing from the Communists. Marek had studied painting in Northern Bohemia and also at the Prague Academy of fine Arts, under an important advocate of modern art, František Tichy. Marek had become familiar with the work of the French Surrealists when they were exhibited in Prague in the mid-1940s and had begun his career as an artist before he fled.. He had to abandon his Prague work, but en route to Australia in a German refugee camp and on the Australia-bound ship he produced some accomplished paintings in a surrealist mode.

In their first years in Australia the Mareks moved between Adelaide (1948-51), Hobart and Sydney (1951-54) and then Papua-New Guinea. (1954-59). The nature of time was always important in his art, and wanting to develop his surrealist image-making in a time-based medium, Marek embarked on a series of animated films, the early ones being arguably the first Australian avant-garde films. In 1952 he made two remarkable films in Sydney, **Light of the Darkness** (5 mins., colour) and **Fisherman’s Holiday** (2 mins 45 secs., black and white), and while in Rabaul in 1956 he made **Nightmare** (also known as **The Magician**) (6 mins 38 secs., colour). These are all 16mm, silent, three-dimensional puppet or plasticine animations. They were never printed with soundtracks, just existing as rolls of spliced 16mm original reversal film. There were technical challenges in achieving good optical sound on reversal prints in the early years, and Helena Marek explained to me that the problems of organising soundtracks with the Sydney film laboratory were insuperable, given their difficulties with the English language, and besides, she said, when Dušan completed anything, including a painting, he tended to leave it, to go on to something else. Perhaps he felt the films were adequate without sound, as they are.

The settings of these first films often suggest Eastern Europe, and there are echoes of expressionism and cubism, especially in the design of the carved heads in **Nightmare**, which prefigure the stylised characterisation in his later cut out animations. The animation and design is advanced – certainly not like the work of a beginner. The strong Czech tradition of puppetry (there were 1500 puppet theatres there in 1938, most of which were destroyed during the German invasion)¹ and puppet films doubtless

influenced Marek's work. Joseph Skupa's father-and-son puppet characters Spejbl and Hurvinek (designed by sculptor Karel Nosek in a stylised form not unlike Marek's puppets) were famous in Czechoslovakia, and Jan Malík's work at the Central Puppet Theatre in Prague was greatly admired. Czech animated puppet films by Jiří Trnka and Karel Zeman, which appeared before Marek left his homeland, were known internationally by the 1950s and often shown at film festivals in Australia.

In **Light of the Darkness** Marek used plasticine figures, and it is the most surreal of his early films. Strange events are orchestrated by a wizard-like figure with a live human hand at a lectern decorated with occult characters. He generates a large mystical egg that reappears in the scenes that follow. There is an altercation in a police station that has a checkerboard floor in exaggerated perspective (as in the painting Marek did on the way to Australia in 1948, *Perpetuum Mobile*, AGSA), then we see an animal playing a mouth organ in the moonlit street. (This could be inspired by the line, 'evening like a harmonica player makes the weeping doors creak', from Vítězslav Nezval's 1936 poem *Praha s prsty deště*, 'Prague with Fingers of Rain.' Marek would certainly have known of this avant-garde poet.) The film continues with a male-female encounter, which becomes the central theme. Although the town scenes have an Eastern European flavour the action is firmly set in Australia: a man is shown lounging outside a milk bar displaying a Peter's Ice Cream sign – itself a bizarre touch. Then, to his amusement, a passerby's head tumbles to the ground – heads are prone to detachment in Marek's animations. A woman appears and drops a handkerchief – the clichéd attention-gaining strategy – but as the man returns it to her it momentarily turns from white to red and white again, suggesting sexual attraction. Inside the milk bar he dances to a jukebox, and by turning his pockets inside out, indicates he's spent all his money. Then, as if this is being dreamed, they meet again on a yellow sandy beach, with a striped beach umbrella and a boat sailing in the background. There the male, lying on the sand, becomes a sexually charged striped animal.

There are scenes showing a monstrous black creature crawling menacingly over the landscape and two enclosed kangaroos leaping, their heads detaching and returning. Next, the couple are in a forest, apparently on a quest. Settings here are reminiscent of de Chirico. Before a frame-like background with exaggerated perspective, similar to those in several of Marek's paintings, the male figure floats upwards, disintegrates and dissolves, to the horror of the woman. We return to the wizard's face, intercut with flashing single frames of the contorted face of Dušan Marek, as if to indicate the subconscious contribution of the artist in the work (he inserts himself again in the later **Adam and Eve**). The entire film is pervaded with a powerful sense of unknown, dark forces, despite the occasional touch of humor.

Light of Darkness was shot on 16mm Kodachrome reversal, the stock intended by Kodak for amateur home movie use – the positive camera original was projected – but it was taken up by the international experimental film movement because of its rich, saturated colour, especially when a print stock was developed for it. Kodachrome's colour would have pleased Marek – he used similar strong, vibrant tones in his paintings. He did not print the film, but projected the original – there are signs of wear – but unfortunately the film strip is now too shrunken to be projected.²

Fisherman's Holiday is shot on black and white reversal, the monochrome contributing to the dark, shadowy atmosphere, and Marek uses articulated figures in the

Jiří Trnka tradition. In what appears to be a medieval European town, possibly inspired by the artist's memories of small Czech towns, a man fishes from an arched bridge surmounted by a nude female statue. He accidentally catches a passing cyclist as he casts his line, swings him about, and uses the detached head of the cyclist as bait. The cyclist's friend, accompanied by a dog, turns up with a bottle of wine and joins the other two – the head is now replaced – and in high spirits they push over the statue, the cyclist posing on the base in place of it. The film has a grim, farcical mood.

Nightmare (The Magician), again shot on Kodachrome, uses carved wooden puppets made by Marek, with costumes by Helena Marek (she told how Dušan became impatient for her to finish them), and is most related to the tradition of Czech puppetry. When they are shot in close-up, or from the waist up, the figures are operated in real time by manipulating their wire armatures. In wide shots the freestanding figures are animated a frame at a time.

A cozy, small-town hotel is disturbed by a strange event. A mysterious green-faced visitor arrives and shocks the staff and guests by ordering and drinking sulphuric acid. A cynical waiter takes it in his stride, but the manageress' hair stands on end when she watches the drinker. (Later she does her make-up by taking off her lips and replacing them with those of a different colour.) A revolving ceiling fan suggests that the atmosphere is hot and humid – perhaps we are in Rabaul. The manager dozes over a game of cards with the manageress (the cards are decorated with soft-porn girlie photos). One of the guests passes out from his drinking, falling on the record player, and scattering records. The mysterious visitor leaves, but returns, knocking on the hotel door. The manager collapses when he sees who it is, and there is a view through the keyhole, as seen by the unwelcome guest, of the manageress trying to revive the manager. The film evokes an uneasy sense of foreboding.

In Adelaide, 1956, on a two-month holiday from Papua-New Guinea, he made a short, imaginative colour animation about a space traveller, **Spaceman Number One** (2 mins 22 secs., colour) the first to use the stylised two-dimensional cut out figures which Marek used in the subsequent films. A man is reading a newspaper story about space travel and imagines himself travelling in space, or rather, only his eyes leave his body to occupy a space craft (just as the eyes leave the figure in Marek's 1948 painting *Equator*, AGSA). He sees space monsters (rather like the surrealist creatures in a Marek painting, *Carnival Metropolis* (1989)) including one who is guiding space traffic. He visits a cratered landscape, similar to the volcanic craters in Marek's Rabaul-inspired paintings, and finally his eyes return to his body. The man's face in tight close-up expresses extreme horror at this 'out-of-body' experience. The film shows a vivid flight of the imagination, and has similarities to Marek's painting *Man Emerging From an Idea*, (1975). **Spaceman Number One** just predates the first satellite launched by the USSR in 1957, and spaceman Yuri Gagarin's pioneering trip in April, 1962.

The Mareks were in Papua-New Guinea from 1954 to 1959, and Dušan worked as a photographer, on plantations and also as an engineer on cargo boats (despite his lack of engineering expertise – he depended on the Papuan crew for this!). Before leaving Europe he was attracted to the idea of experiencing the landscape and culture of Papua-New Guinea via the 1929 Surrealist Map of the World in which New Guinea dominates the Southern Hemisphere, being three times larger than Australia. He wanted to immerse himself in this strange world, so different from the European, and this was a

reason for choosing to immigrate to Australia. Among the films he made there was a documentary on a copra plantation: **Copra and Cocoa** (which was suppressed by the plantation company; 20 mins., colour, 1957) and another: **Mountain Festival in New Britain** (16 mins., colour, 1958) as well as several informally shot films. Lively, tropical plant forms appeared in his subsequent painting, their strangeness contributing a surrealist resonance.

Back in Adelaide in 1959-1960 he continued animating with a series of around 15 short films on nursery rhyme themes, some familiar and others little known, taken from the Oxford Book of Nursery Rhymes. **Three Wise Men of Gotham** (1 minute, b&w, silent, 1959-60) is an early one, showing the rather grotesque, bourgeois men hopelessly mishandling a boat, and finally drowning, despite their wisdom. **The Nursery Rhymes** are all animated in a strong, unsentimental, unpatronising style, the equivalent of Roald Dahl's writing for children, and refer to the sinister meaning lurking behind many nursery tales. The cut-out artwork is distinctive, rather expressionist/cubist.

Adelaide was becoming a centre for experimental filmmaking in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1956 Stan Ostojka-Kotkowski, who arrived from Poland in 1949, had made a 20-minute live-action surrealist film, **The Quest of Time**, a 7.5 minute abstract film, **Translucencies** and a 10.5 minute abstract/dance film, **Four Movements**, before he launched into multi-media 'Sound and Image' performance works. Also from Poland, Ludwik Dutkiewicz was to make in 1964 **Transfiguration**, an accomplished 4-minute live-action 'film poem' with fine photography and intricate editing. They were assisted in these films by Adelaide photographer and filmmaker Ian Davidson.

In 1962 Dušan Marek made his most celebrated film to date, **Adam and Eve** (colour, sound, 10 minutes) a near abstract animated allegory on humanity 'from the creation to the bomb', male-female relationship and loss of innocence. It was an immediate success and added to Marek's reputation by winning the Australian Film Institute Grand Prix (the first time the award was given since its inception seven years before), and awards at festivals in Vancouver, Venice and Chicago.

For this film he used cut-out geometrically stylised human figures with several replaceable decorative elements, mainly circular, of various colours and textures, apparently cut out from magazine illustrations, which were rapidly alternated frame by frame, as were the coloured backgrounds, to create a vibrating energy field that interacts optically with the viewer's retina. The colours in flux, mixing in the eye, often become white. Marek noted:

'...the basic colour was white, there was no colour for much of the time. When I kept changing the colours of the background it always went back to white, at the same time interchanging the colours on the circles on the bodies themselves. And very often it became not white any more but a transparent fluidum.'³

Of all his animations it is the most abstract and closest in appearance to his painting – there are similar forms in *The Time Man Becomes Invisible* (1963) and *Absit Invida* (1968). However, with the film medium he achieved a complexity of colour relationships played out in time, which could only be minimally developed in a

painting. The frame by frame optical colour mixing is similar to that achieved by Oskar Fischinger in his 1942 abstract film **Radio Dynamics**.

Ian Davidson has told how he collaborated with Marek on the sound composition accompanying **Adam and Eve**, an intermittent mix of music, (sometimes deliberately distorted and fluctuating in volume) and sound effects: 'Knowing he liked improvising, and was very good at it, I came up with the idea that we use four sound tracks (two tapes and two records). These would be coupled to four morse code keys, and mixed into a synchronous tape recorder. The film (original!) was projected with a synchronous motor, and Dušan would instinctively bring in the various tracks when he felt the image called for it, by pressing the keys. After a few tries it went like clockwork.'⁴ This unusual method seems to prefigure the 'sampling' technique now used in sound composition, and was clearly an ideal technique for Dušan Marek. The track is an important early Australian experimental sound composition.

In 1960-'61 Marek had made a 3-minute silent predecessor to **Adam and Eve**, titled **One Dotty Adventure**, a black and white animation using virtually the same male and female geometric figures (but with no vibrating effect) plus a figure made of squares, and with different backgrounds and different action. The female figure builds a house, simply composed of black lines, and while the couple are away in the town the square-shaped intruder enters the house, to be ejected on their return.

Also in 1962 he made **The Magic Trumpet**, an animated satire on the evasiveness of those who hold positions of authority, including the media. It was produced in collaboration with Tim Burstall's Eltham films (the credit says 'Produced by Anim-Ad films, Adelaide⁵ and Eltham films, Melbourne'.) Burstall had met Dušan Marek at Kim Bonython's gallery in Adelaide, when the Mareks were living in an adjoining residence, and suggested a collaboration. Tim Burstall scripted the film, and directed the recording of the voice track. The music was by Michael Kenny. In this film Marek also used stylised cut-out figures, less abstracted than in **Adam and Eve**. It tells of a boy, Willy, and his friend, Rufus, a gentleman-tramp with an educated voice who is arrested for vagrancy. He gives Willy a trumpet that he found at the tip where he lives which literally 'turns the world upside down'. It inverts the Governor, the Prime Minister (clearly modelled on PM Robert Menzies of the bushy eyebrows) and the newspaper editor, after each refuse to help release his friend. Seeing military advantage in the instrument, the PM offers Rufus the position of Director of Trumpet Research, but the trumpet is destroyed when everyone rushes to stop Rufus playing it after he's released from prison. The film ends with Willy about to blow a tuba Rufus finds, the implication being that it will have an even greater effect.

Marek's design and animation techniques were formidable by this time – his sense of timing and characterisation is brilliant. A re-assessment of Dušan Marek as animator is required – he was obviously a leading Australian animator, although not working in the mainstream. The characters in **The Magic Trumpet** are economically conveyed by simple cut out paper shapes – rectangles, circles, triangles. The boy's eyes expand, contract and vibrate at moments of emotion by means of the strategy developed in **Adam and Eve** – rapid two-framed animation of coloured and textured discs, 'found' textures. The newspaper editor in particular is stylised to the point where the figure, partly composed of newspaper print, is only just recognizable as a human being. Rufus'

cat, which he gives to the boy when he's arrested, is beautifully designed – the essence of spare feline energy and inquisitiveness.

The backgrounds are collaged photographic elements and original artwork. (Magritte's shoes with toes – from the painting *Le modèle rouge* – are among the debris at the tip. Magritte was Marek's favourite Surrealist.) Tim Burstall remembered that Marek brought a distinctly Eastern European dark tone to the story. However the visual design of **The Magic Trumpet** is too advanced, too powerful for the light satire, and is also stylistically out of kilter with the unexceptional script and the music and effects track provided for the film. The voices for the characters in the film are particularly uninspired, and inappropriate for the artwork.

Working to Burstall's script, Marek was obliged to conform to a conventional linear narrative, unlike his most impressive film work which subverts narrative sequence to arrive at apparently arbitrary juxtapositions of events, evoking a dream state, as in his 1971 **And the Word was Made Flesh** where '...the whole structure of the film could be changed in sections and reorganised in a different chronological order, but it wouldn't change the content', as he observed in an interview discussing this surrealist narrative.⁶

Windmills (1963) is an animated film of children's paintings that evokes the syncretistic sensibility of childhood and is a curious dialogue between this and a surrealist sensibility. This film is certainly not burdened with a linear narrative. It's almost as if Dušan Marek felt he had advanced his animated art to such a level of sophistication that he wanted to stand back and refresh his work with something more primal. The children's drawings, which have powerful *art brut* qualities, were supplied by a friend, the printmaker Udo Sellbach, who was teaching art at St. Peter's College in Adelaide, and Marek combined them with his own artwork, chiefly the backgrounds.

This body of animation produced in the decade from 1952 represents much work for one lone, independent animator, and must have left little time for painting. Helena Marek explained that at this time Dušan Marek was disappointed with the lack of acknowledgment for his painting, and felt inclined to work in a medium that may be more accessible to the public. However, only **Adam and Eve** achieved the success he hoped for. A newsreel story was made of Marek at work on this film, as the awards the film earned made it a news item for a short period.

One feels a sense of loss that, apart from an animated section in **Cobweb on a Parachute**, Marek never completed another animated film. Perhaps he felt live-action filmmaking offered a more fruitful arena to explore his surrealism – finding the miraculous in everyday reality – because he then embarked on the feature-length experimental narratives **Cobweb on a Parachute** (colour, 35mm, 70 minutes, 1966-'67, released in black and white 16mm after a disagreement with the production company), along with **And the Word was Made Flesh** (b&w, 16mm, 70 mins., 1971), and, while teaching in Hobart, **Glide if You Can** (b&w, 16mm, 30 mins., 1972). These films are more connected to his surrealist painting than the animations, being works in which, as Bernice Murphy put it in 1979, "...the most abiding themes of his art are interwoven in a fabric of abstract and 'live' (but rarely naturalistic) sequences."⁷ Wanting to bring the irrationality of the dream into everyday events was a typical surrealist endeavour.

Cobweb on a Parachute was made while Marek was working in Sydney at Fontana films, which was owned by a fellow countryman. There he made advertising films for such products as Caltex Oil, Speedie Electric Jugs, Lucky Strike cigarettes, Lifesaver sweets, Bank of South Australia, etc., with the understanding that he could use the company facilities for his own filmmaking.

Cobweb is an intensely personal statement: Marek, plus his alter-ego, or his subconscious, a figure wearing a de Chirico-like mask, is the sole personage in the film, except for a fleeting vision of a nude woman, a reference to the sexual life of the protagonist. Marek's voice is heard throughout offering a poetic commentary on a crisis of conflict between the conscious and the subconscious, (or, as Jung would have it, 'a struggle with his instinctual shadow self.'⁸) 'they were more or less my own problems – very personal'⁹, and his final liberation:

'You are like a wind
That makes the roots grow stronger
And makes the new very fine roots grow –
And through them find new solutions – new qualities –
The roots which then are the veins of my body . . .'

This opens the film, first spoken in a whisper, and repeated twice more during the film. The voice is mixed with bird-calls and other sounds of nature, and occasionally other elements such as rhythmic percussive beats and music. In his image structure he was inspired by the example of music: 'I think it is very important in film to use a musical way of composing, a musical structure – for then the difficulty that the film is not easily understood should slowly vanish, because the film will become like a musical composition, a form with which we are already familiar.'¹⁰

In **Cobweb** the images are arranged in a music-like composition of slow passages suddenly interrupted by near-abstract clusters of exquisitely composed montages of movement, texture and light, informed by his experience with animation, as the final inter-action of the conscious and the subconscious renders the artist 'very much part of nature, the natural law itself.'¹¹ He intercuts shots of strange objects found in the bush, an empty chrysalis case in tight close-up, smoke curling out of a seed pod, unfamiliar plant and flower forms, similar to the plant forms in his paintings such as *Perpetuum Mobile* (1948, AGSA), lit and juxtaposed to give a surrealist resonance.

'Take a tree on a cliff above the sea.
A root growing through a curved hole in a rock –
A beak of a cockatoo –
What are we going to do about it?' – (Spoken by Marek in **Cobweb**.)

His treatment of found objects is similar to that of the Czech surrealist photographer Emila Medková, active from the late 1940s to the early 1980s in Prague, who often used the detritus of civilization in her unsettling compositions. Medková was a member of a large group of Czech surrealist photographers¹² and painters that remained underground during the communist years, and which included Karel Teige, the architect and surrealist photo-montagist, who illustrated the aforementioned Vitezslav Nezval's books of poetry. Marek would undoubtedly have been involved with the group had he remained. More recently the Czech Jan Svankmajer has continued

their tradition in his animated films, which were shown in connection with a 2001 Medková exhibition in Prague, seen by the present writer.

Cobweb ends with a strangely self-reflexive sequence where Marek's subconscious is admitted into his animation studio and left to control the outcome of the film we are watching, through a brief animated sequence, which is intercut with live-action material. The subconscious entity is instructed in how to vary the lighting on the artwork with a dimmer, and shown painted backgrounds for use in the animation. One of Marek's late (1992) paintings, *The Self Observing the Self*, comes to mind.

Flat, cut-out figures are again used in the animation, and here the lack of colour in the released black and white version is particularly disappointing. First we see an effete male with a monocle and bowler hat who, after looking in a hand mirror, dons the black hood of an executioner (hooded figures abound in Marek's paintings), and interacts with a row of male figures with shovels (grave diggers?) who could be self-portraits of the artist. The implication is that a death may have to occur to allow the imagination to be reborn and free. A touch of animism is present in an elaborate large animated bird, perhaps a harbinger of doom, ever present, observing or flying over.

The animation is intercut with live footage of Dušan Marek struggling with a heavy, strangely textured sphere that looks as if it might explode, especially when he locates a key that activates it, then gingerly lowers it to the floor. The hooded figure manipulates a complicated mechanism connected with a cannon, and in a climactic sequence with some very fast, even single-frame, cutting, a guillotine blade, which we've seen rising throughout the sequence, drops, severing a ('real') rope that brings the sequence to a conclusion with a flash of light and an animal roar. This releases the protagonist who is finally seen walking in a lyrical landscape setting – 'Now I am free, so much a part of nature, yet full of excitement...'

Cobweb on a Parachute is an extraordinarily virtuosic piece for a first attempt at live-action experimental narrative. It is a great loss to Australian cinema that it was never released in its intended form due to a disagreement between Marek and the production company, Fontana Films, which considered **Cobweb** its property, at least in part. After an unresolved argument about the division of any profits that might ensue from sales of the film, they seized the uncut negative and all that remained in Marek's possession was a blemished 35mm black and white work print, lacking the dissolves and superimpositions, and the 35mm magnetic sound track. Later he struck a 16mm black and white print with a magnetic stripe soundtrack from the 35mm, and this is the version that he exhibited. (Some years later the 35mm magnetic track was accidentally destroyed.) In 1992, a year before he died, Marek cleaned most of the chinagraph pencil marks indicating the optical effects off the 35mm workprint and a videotape was made of it for the collection of the National Film and Video Lending Service administered by the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra. In fact, all Dušan Marek's film material, and some artifacts including the carved puppet heads from **Nightmare**, were donated to the Archive by Helena Marek after the death of her husband.

In his second feature-length film, **And the Word Was Made Flesh** (1970), he explored themes similar to those in **Cobweb**:

'I died a mineral and became a plant / I died a plant and rose an animal / I died

an animal and I was man / why should I fear / when I was less by dying / I shall become that which no mind ever conceived / let me not exist.’

The aim again was to affirm the importance of retaining one’s inner freedom, despite the pressures and distractions of everyday life: “I think one should allow the outside to be modelled *with*.” Marek wanted viewers to remain in contact with their inner imagination (or subconscious) throughout the slowly paced, floating film-time. He tried to avoid pressuring the viewer with events that would work against maintaining this kind of contact at the moment of perception. Flinders University students appear in this film, and Marek elicited extraordinary performances from them. In the 1971 interview he spoke of their contribution: “. . . the man in the church . . . sometimes it felt that he was almost in a trance . . . the way he would look slowly down with his eyes moving slowly, almost invisibly down and in between there are slight jerks in his body. He was fascinating to watch, he was very young and there was some contact there which was marvellous.” And of the man in the sand: “I’ve seen animals locked in a desperate inner fight with nature itself . . . a fantastic urge to become free, not to just digest and work in a circle [. . .] this man is trying to say something, yet at the same time he goes back to where he came from, back into the soil. The sand can help him express something which he never could do otherwise.” He spoke of the killing in the film: “Why the killing of the girl in the film, why the slaughter? It’s not just that – it’s killing the man’s individual ability to absorb life, nature – this is what has been shown to be killed by the outside, by the gunman. The girl, which could be any thought in the man’s mind, any thought crystallized as a result of his experiences, has been moulded, killed, made to disappear because of outside pressures. So one’s vision and inner life is easily destroyed if one is not concerned about it – one should be concerned about this – one should be alone . . . one does become like this through music, serious music.” Here Marek is using the female as a metaphor for the ‘vision’ and ‘inner life’ of the male protagonist, much as Franz Masereel did in his suite of 83 woodcuts, ‘The Idea’ in 1920 (and which was adapted for a 30 minute animation by Berthold Bartosch in 1932).

In his filmmaking, as in his painting, Dušan Marek tried to be completely free of outside influences, including styles of filmmaking. He liked to think of working in the film medium as equivalent to a child playing with an object, discovering its properties freshly without being influenced by another child who may be more familiar with the object. But as it is a matter of individual discovery he felt that one should take especial care to be aware of everything that’s developing in one’s own work.

He combined filmmaking with teaching in Hobart in the 1970s and in collaboration with his students, completed **Glide if You Can** in 1975, his last film.

In his paintings and films Dušan Marek wanted the viewer to appreciate the image as a ‘spontaneous materialisation – the always now experience throughout the

process...'¹⁴, and he saw the potential of film, both animated and live action, as a time-based art, to work with the concept of 'always now'.

His paintings increasingly explored this concept of time, using framed images within images, as in *Window into Time* (1975), or three-dimensional works with the images on contrasting surfaces, as if they existed on different planes of time, an example of which is *When is Now?* (1975).¹⁵

In keeping with the Surrealist project, he intended the image to reverberate with the viewer's 'inner imagination, inner visions, inner reflections', the viewer 'remaining free enough not to let them escape, not to let die away by the continuing pressure of the outside [world].'¹⁶

Notes

1. *News Notes* on puppetry in Czechoslovakia, by Jan Malik, included in *Puppetry 1946-1947 – an International Yearbook of Puppets and Marionettes* edited by Paul McPharlin. Hastings House, New York, 1947, p. 54. During the Nazi occupation illegal subversive puppet performances moved from house to house in defiance of the occupiers.
2. The perforations are also seriously torn from attempts at projecting it. I have made a duplicate negative of the double-perforated film, utilising the undamaged set of perforations to pass it frame by frame through an optical printer. The resulting print allows the film to be seen for the first time in many years.
3. *Cantrills Filmnotes* no. 6, 1971, p. 10
4. In a letter from Ian Davidson, February 1996.
5. Helena Marek thinks this name may have been adopted at the suggestion of a friend, perhaps Tim Burstall. It seems that the Mareks never seriously considered setting up an animated advertising film business. In fact, they seem not to have put a lot of effort into selling any of the films.
6. *Cantrills Filmnotes* no. 6, 1971, p. 7.
7. Bernice Murphy, *Dušan Marek*, Macquarie Gallery catalogue, Sydney 1979, p. 50.
8. As pointed out by Ian Davidson in 'Dušan Marek 1926-1993', *Agenda /Experimenta Supplement* nos. 30-31, p. 9.
9. *Cantrills Filmnotes* no. 6, 1971, p. 10.
10. *Ibid.* p. 7.
11. *Ibid.* p. 10.
12. There were at least a dozen Czech surrealist photographers at this time, according to Krzysztof Fijalkowski in *Emila Medková – The Magic of Despair* – see <http://www.tate.org.uk/search/Emila%20Medková%20%20The%20Magic%20of%20Despair>.
13. From a statement made by Marek in 1977 during his Creative Arts Fellowship at the Australian National University, quoted in *The Australian National University Art Collection*, edited by Sasha Grishin and Myra McIntyre, Canberra, 1997, p. 173. (Thanks to Stephen Mould for this reference.)
14. Other Marek paintings from this period which work with time are *The Eternal Return* (1972), *When is Now?*, *Time Sealed* and *Just Before We Know*, (all 1975).
15. *Cantrills Filmnotes* no. 6, 1971, p. 7.

(Parts of the above first appeared in the 1993 Australian Film Institute's Australian film Festival catalogue, in *Cantrills Filmnotes* #81/82, 1996, and in *ASIFA Magazine*, *The International Animation Journal*, Volume 21 No. 2, Winter Issue 2008.)