



## Oh, What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me!-- Edmund Carpenetr

A film by **John Bishop & Harald Prins**

Text Read by Nicholas Hormann



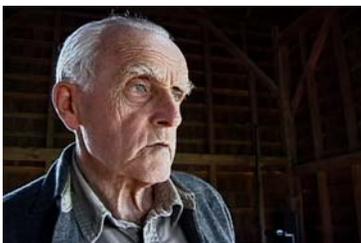
*Electricity has made angels of us all. Not angels in the Sunday school sense of being good or having wings, but spirit, freed from flesh, capable of instant transportation anywhere. The moment we pick up a phone, we're nowhere in space—everywhere in spirit. That is Saint Augustine's definition of God: a being whose center is everywhere, whose borders are nowhere.<sup>1</sup>*

### Edmund Carpenter

And when the word telephone came in, the word phony followed. It means an unreal voice, something that is devoid of—of physical being. It's a spirit; it's an angel; you know, it can be anywhere and everywhere.



I cannot think of any group that emphasizes individualism more than the English language. We even make first person pronoun upper case; something we reserve for, you know, editorial or for royalty and it may have been an accident of design that brought that in but it is not an accident that kept it in.



In Eskimo for example, first person pronoun is rarely used, it's regarded as highly aggressive. You wouldn't say "I'm getting angry," you'd say, "ah, this igloo may witness anger." Or they wouldn't say, "I killed that bear," they'd say "an old bear walked by and a harpoon chanced to embed itself in its flank." And I think that for one thing, living in an igloo, everybody in a small area, man you better mute aggression and

identity and individualism. But, I think these things come out of literacy. I don't see them prior to that. Anyway...

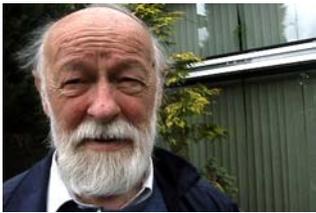
### **Richard Rogers<sup>2</sup>**

The egotism comes out of literacy?

### **Edmund Carpenter**

I think individualism, yes. I think chronology comes out of it, sequence, causation, pretty basic things. It's not that other peoples don't have that, but they don't emphasize it the way that we do.

### **Colin Young<sup>3</sup>**



My memory of Ted is a kind of generalized one of extraordinary wisdom and reticence, which was occasionally made available to me and the wisdom was occasionally made available to me. And I always knew there was far more of it around, if only I had the right to plug into it. It was—and I was grateful for the bits I got.

### **John Bishop**



I'd heard about this film that Ted and Addie had shot in 1969 in New Guinea, and when Ted was visiting out here I asked him what had ever happened to the footage, and about two weeks later, four steamer trunks arrived on my door step. And I opened them up and they were moldy, they smelled of camphor and ammonia, the cans were rusty, the film was all shrunken, but at the bottom of the trunk all the negative was still intact and in pretty good shape. So I telecined it and as I watched the scenes unfold, I realized that I was watching all the things he described in "*Oh, What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me!*"



"...profile shot, Mintima, 11/2/69, using clap board."

*I think media are so powerful they swallow cultures. I think of them as invisible environments, which surround and destroy old environments. Sensitivity to problems of culture conflict and conquest becomes meaningless here for media play no favorites; they conquer all cultures.*

## THERE'S NOTHING MODERN ABOUT POST-MODERNISM

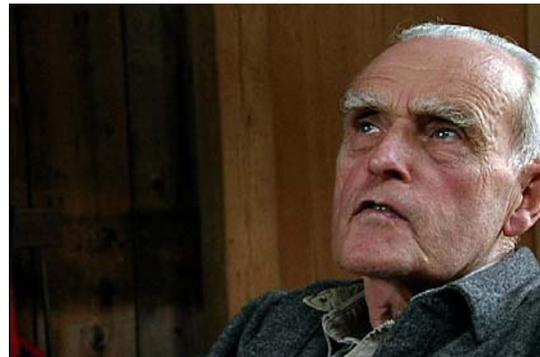


### Robert Gardner<sup>4</sup>

There's nothing modern about post-modernism.

### Harald Prins

Actually that's true because I have always found "*Oh, What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me!*" a very post-modern piece of work. And then I look at the date—what was it, 1972? And somehow you must have faked the date. It must have been 1992 that you wrote it.



### Edmund Carpenter

I was working for an organization that was not overly enthusiastic about what I was doing. And I became convinced that they themselves were part of the problem and it might help if their budget were cut. And so I realized that any report that I submitted to that effect would have limited distribution. So, when I came back, I wrote it up as an alternative—the title comes from *Don Quixote*, "*Oh, What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me!*" is the windmill, but it's modern invention—technology—that the blow is struck.<sup>5</sup>

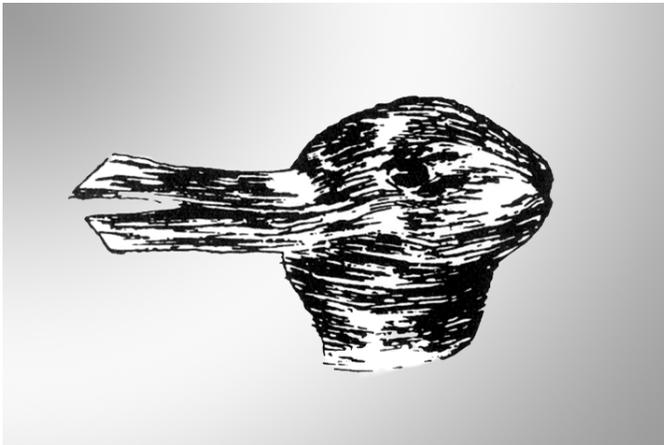
### John Bishop

Ted published two books in 1972; *Oh, What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me!* was like trickster tales, full of irony about his engagement with media in Papua New Guinea. *Eskimo Realities* evoked his earlier work in the arctic and the profound realizations that he experienced living with the Aivilik.



### Edmund Carpenter

First briefly saw the Arctic on my way back from the second war, returning home in the Pacific. I saw the Aleutians briefly, but the—the first long experience I had was 1950—I went among the Aivilik. I wintered there in '51, '52 and returned in '55 to find most of the people were dead that I had contact—previously known. There's an Eskimo named Aninouek who I was very close to. Most of the insights—I won't say they came from him—but without him, they wouldn't have happened.



There's the famous Wittgenstein image, the rabbit or the duck? And his thesis is that you can only experience one at a time. But supposing you experience both of them as a single image, and I think this is what native peoples did. They recognized rabbit-duck, not as alternatives, but as a single form, so that the rabbit was always in the duck and the duck was always in the rabbit.



With Eskimo masks, everything is there together; it's a pun in which all elements co-exist. So it's not something becoming another thing, it's being, it is, all at once, simultaneously, it is both things together or maybe three or four things.

Eskimos make these forms move, they pass them around, they stand them up, they will let them—they will imitate

cries of birds and different things; and they pass them from hand to hand and people

admire them or ridicule them—they can be tough critics. And then, somehow, the thing just gets lost. It's like a song that's been sung. It's over, the fun was in the carving and releasing the form, and welcoming the form back and passing it around, it was admiration or the

In the spring, when the walls of the igloo fall in, you—you move down to the beach. But I used to go back and—and look at these places where I lived. And you would find these little carvings, spotted around, stone lamps would be left there—who was going to take them?

### **Harald Prins**

If I recall, you've had difficulty with the Netsilik films.<sup>6</sup>

### **Edmund Carpenter**

I don't feel these films ring true. For one thing, they—they turn every igloo into a Santa's workshop, you know, all these cheery, jolly Eskimos doing string figures and listening to stories and playing with a baby and so forth. That isn't what an igloo is like. It drips, you shift from one buttock to another and you wonder what in God's name you're doing there. Somebody belches, every fart is lived with collectively. The place is very depressing. They simply hibernate and then when they come awake, they come awake and there's a signal that goes up, you know, the cry, "woooaaah," like that, and they rush, they come to and they rush out with their—their weapons, and it's an astonishing thing to see.

"Ladies and gentlemen, tonight's lecture deals with a remarkable change that took place in the animal kingdom, some one to two million years ago..."

### **Edmund Carpenter**

I think that whenever there's a break through in technology, it offers a new window. And it carries tremendous conviction initially. I had a radio show beginning in 1948, and then in 1950, the show became a television show. I remember I was paid \$75 a week for the show.



“For hundreds of years, men have been fascinated by Mona Lisa’s smile, and they will continue to be fascinated by it as long as they are fascinated by women. For it’s the enigma of womanhood: the smile of the mother, the mocking smile of the unattainable mistress, the smile of the virgin, and of the woman who knows too much...”

### Edmund Carpenter

I was also writing review—book reviews for a newspaper, and different articles and so forth, and I became aware of the fact that when I tried to reuse something, things didn’t fit. And it wasn’t simply that they might be the wrong length—the wrong emphasis would be there. And it became increasingly clear to me that different media would be sympathetic to different ideas and it’s true, it is possible I think in any medium to say—transmit almost any statement. But you have to distort the message often to do it or distort the medium.

*Since around 1960 I put cameras in a variety of hands. The results generally tell more about the medium employed than about the cultural background of the author or cameraman. In each case, I had hoped the informant would present his own culture in a fresh way, and perhaps even use the medium itself in a new way. I was wrong. What I saw was literacy and film. These media swallow culture. The old culture was there all right, but no more than residue at the bottom of a barrel. I think it requires enormous sophistication—media sophistication—before anyone can use print or film to preserve and present one’s cultural heritage, even one’s cultural present. Sensitive autobiographies and films come from men of the utmost media sophistication, men un-housed in any single culture or medium.*



### Edmund Carpenter

McLuhan used to say that he only read alternate pages of the book or that a book was no more than ten pages in real value. And that’s largely true I think if you take—if a book has one idea and then just illustrates it like Veblen’s **Theory of the Leisure Class**, that’s a single idea with a thousand fantastic illustrations and—and so is **Das Kapital** and so is Darwin. Darwin is reduced to a minimal thing that all life belongs to a single order, subject to a single principal.

I met Marshall McLuhan in 1948 when I went to the University of Toronto and he had just been appointed as well. We taught a class together for ten years and we wrote together and we turned out quite a few anonymous things and sometimes we'd sign them, sometimes we wouldn't. And Marshall was not only handsome, but exceptionally witty. I mean the puns were coming out and the wit and the humor and then he burst into song, and he wasn't John McCormick, but he was not bad. And he seemed to have this astonishing memory and everything can be turned into a joke, a pun into a so forth. I'd never seen anything like this before, it was remarkable.

But in the 34 years that we were friends, there was never the slightest friction. For one thing, nobody was listening. Nobody, I mean—you almost had to make a fool of yourself to get anyone to pay attention to what was being said. And nowadays, this material is so basic it's become part of the language.



In the field of art, an object cannot be other than itself. And therefore there is no such thing as a fake object, there's only a fake attribution. We have what is called Eskimo or Inuit art. This has nothing to do with the Eskimos. It was not conceived by them. It was not used by them, it's simply—they have been employed to make these objects. They play no part in Eskimo life. To describe them as Eskimo art is really misleading. So my objection is not to the object, the point is, a deliberate fabrication of their provenience and their origin.

You know, we—we put natives to work for us. We call them forth and ask for them to dance for us at lunch.



*This tiny village on the Sepik has been signed up by a travel agency. A chorus line of ancient crones with withered tits and grass skirts, two bald and all bored, shuffle back and forth in front of eleven tourists who sit in aluminum lawn chairs eating lunch from plastic boxes. One tourist, with pith helmet and safari jacket, complete with Explorer's Club insignia is taking notes. "Aren't you eating?" asks a companion, "No," he replies, "I haven't had a bowel movement in three days." Turns out none of the others had either.*

*In the world of electronic technology we humbly encounter the primitive as avant-garde. This search for the primitive is surely one of the most remarkable features of our age. It's as if we feared we had carried too far our experiment in rationalism, but wouldn't admit it. And so we called forth other cultures in exotic and disguised forms to administer all of those experiences suppressed among us.*

### **Edmund Carpenter**

We write the script, we costume the people, we have them play the thing out for us, and we applaud or we condemn. It has nothing to do with them—has absolutely no connection with them.

*Since he was first contacted by the west, primitive man has been forced to serve his conqueror's many needs, not the least of these being aesthetic. In New Guinea, the time element is so condensed that collectors of primitive art can in comfort penetrate prehistory arriving with gin and tonic in hand. Both banks of the middle Sepik are now aligned with workshops where tourist art is turned out on mass.*

### **Adelaide de Menil**



It was like Ted made a beeline for the great piece. He said to the patrol officer, “Well Wayne, what do you want for this piece?” He said, “Oh no, no, no, no, it’s not for sale,” and Ted said, “Well if it would be for sale, what would you want for it?” And I think he said \$7500, and to me at those days it just seemed—oh, that’s a lot, you know! But anyway, we bought it, and it’s now in my mother’s museum and it’s one of the best oceanic pieces there.

### **Edmund Carpenter**

Adelaide was talking about this Yipwon or Karawari figure and we took it back to the village to document it. And the people became very upset and asked us not to bring it ashore, to get it out of there, because they had made a replacement, the spirit had been transferred from it into this new carving and the last thing in the world that they wanted was to have this challenger come in.

### **Harald Prins**

And you have been involved with the Museum of the American Indian and have for a long time been troubled, not only the loss of genuine, authentic artifacts, but also by the replacement of these artifacts by “fakes.”

### **Edmund Carpenter**

You can generally spot a fake—it will stand out when it’s maybe forty years old, when fashion has changed and the faker’s no longer addressing himself to the prejudices of the buyer. And sometimes we look at fakes and we wince that anyone could have fallen for that. Well they fell for it because they share that view.



We were talking earlier today about a man who lived less than a mile from here—Chief Red Thundercloud<sup>7</sup>—he claimed to be the last speaker of the Catawba language. In fact he couldn't speak the language. And all claims he had to even an Indian ancestry turn out to have been false. He was in fact a black man, he came from a very distinguished black family, but you see, he failed in the fact that he didn't get the possessives right in Catawba. He didn't get pronunciations right. He was not—even though he was hired by Chomsky at MIT, to preserve and save the Catawba language forever and ever, he was not a gifted speaker in Catawba.

### **Harald Prins**

And yet the Catawba retained him a few years ago ...

### **Edmund Carpenter**

—when their last speaker disappeared and they—they knew even less than he did, at which point they hired him to advise them on their dances, their language and their customs.

I remember one story he told me about how he took a dance group from here—a dance group from here—to Germany, and the first day they—he looked out and the whole audience was Indian. He thought my God, you know. Well he thought they were Indian, and they thought he was Indian, and [laughs] and I suppose at that level it didn't matter.

### **Edmund Carpenter**



I met Dean Oviatt, and he was interested in the idea of combining anthropology and theatrical productions and different media studies. I was particularly interested because I've often always felt that for every kind of experience, there is a proper format. And one of the things is to try to find that format. It is often difficult in anthropology because we are dealing with unusual

experiences.

People like Knud Rasmussen who started in theater and then borrowed from literature in whatever form to try to properly translate these forms, to preserve them without distortion. And people like Frank Speck tried all kinds of things, he filmed, he

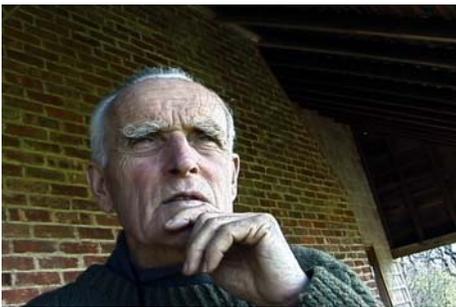
recorded, he wrote plays, he even wrote poetry. And anthropology I think initially was more receptive to that sort of thing.

Then there came the tradition that all experience was to be encompassed in a book and a particular type of book with a particular type of format and so forth and you were not to depart from that. And it—it didn't really attract me. I don't know if they still have it in Northridge but they might have it—we made a film called **College**, and it was narrated by Vincent Price, and the script was by Bronowski and the music was by Fred Katz, there's some great footage in there, and it was about the Northridge campus.



“The traditional college can no longer serve as model. It's been bypassed on three fronts. Shaping attitudes has been taken over by entertainment and advertising; job training by industry; applied research by defense. What function does a college have in this new setting? Clearly it's the creation of basic knowledge. Youths come not to acquire knowledge, but to join in the exploration for truth.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Edmund Carpenter**



But at the time we were making it, then everything fell apart and,—there were student protests and the college was very anti-anthropology. They felt it was the center of sin, sodomy and...

**John Bishop**  
Gomorrah.

### **Edmund Carpenter**

Anyway...

### Harald Prins

“We put these films together with ‘spit, polish and love,’ commented Dr. Carpenter who doubles in brass as...”

### Edmund Carpenter

Whoops.

The film, “*Throw Me Anywhere Lord*,” what—what they did was, they would throw down a coat and then they would begin this dance, “throw me anywhere Lord, in that old field,” and so forth. And then they would move closer, and closer to this in imitation of buzzards, it’s right out of West Africa.



### Bess Lomax Hawes

And I remembered talking the whole idea over with them, trying to explain that we would be shooting them in a different kind of a way so that people could possibly be able to learn their steps. This film was going to show the kind of thing that you can’t film when you are filming in a community. And the issue of filming them out of context was at that time very serious and very important. I remember we talked about it a lot.

### Edmund Carpenter

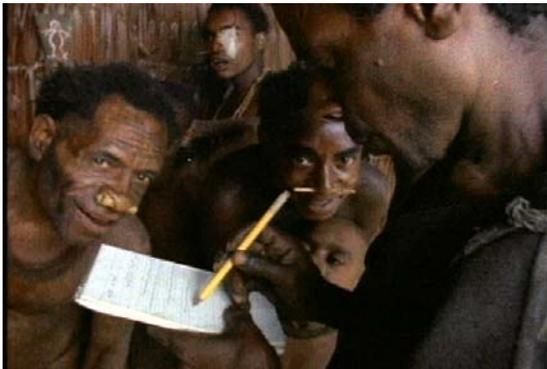


We had a golden opportunity that we could do what no one else was doing. Unfortunately not all of the faculty shared that view. I think many of them had gone to Ivy League places, they'd been Phi Beta Kappa, they thought of this as a place—they were embarrassed to be here. They waited for the phone call to take them back to Amherst or Williams or Harvard. And they were embarrassed to see the

experimentation that we were doing.

### Colin Young

His lack of patience with orthodoxy became evident and I was aware that nothing is more orthodox than the University department, so I could see that there wouldn't be much coherence between the two. But, however, I still was surprised because I was taking him much more seriously as a non-anthropologist than anthropologists were.



### Edmund Carpenter

I then went to New Guinea and spent about a year there. That was one of those amazing moments where suddenly you could see the very best of New Guinea. And native groups were extremely friendly. The landscape was just fabulous, amazing. Different languages—800 mutually unintelligible languages, and different physical cultures. And no one was borrowing anyone else's culture or costumes. Some of the architecture was absolutely extraordinary. We could step in and out of different media worlds, different periods of time. You could actually see literacy coming in and how it was first handled: people often trying to make up their own alphabets, their own glyphs to cover their language. You might be going down a trail and some guy comes racing up and he hands you a note or something and he's written this thing out, he's devised it, he's very proud of it, but you can't read it. But I think this was true all over the world.

It was possible with the greatest of ease, with just an outboard motor and a dug out, to go right up into prehistory where you actually saw stone axes being used, and not by choice.

*Over a thousand worshippers came to mass this Sunday, many decked with feathers and flowers, their faces painted, their bodies covered with clay. A few old men were armed for display not defense. One woman nursed a baby on one breast, a puppy on the other. One man wore a photograph of himself on his forehead; friends greeted him by examining his photograph.*

*Marvelous singing filled the high old church with its earth floor and log pews. Men with large shells hanging from their noses had to lift these to take communion.*

### **Edmund Carpenter**

I have an idea that native peoples were by and large very pleased to give up warfare and give up magic and give up witchcraft. You know. In anthropology we say “oh, we have to preserve this and do that.” I think that with the coming of the three big religions, Buddhism, and Islam and Christianity, with the whole notion of resurrection and so forth, I think it was—they embraced it with enthusiasm. No, I think it must have been a great relief to give up fighting.

Well I’ll tell you why I first went to the Sepik. I was told that they had a thing there called the Cine Canoe, and it had been winning awards year after year, it was the pride of the agency that hired me. I thought, okay, I’ll get aboard the Cine Canoe and we’ll go around and they’ll show movies in the villages and we’ll film with infrared...

### **Adelaide de Menil**



Well it turned out the Cine Canoe was stuck in the mud and it hadn’t gone up the Sepik in months, if not years.

### **Edmund Carpenter**

With the help of a carpenter there, we finally got the Cine Canoe to the point where it could float, and we took off. And I remember some of the films that were being shown; there was

one film on traffic control in Sydney.

“In some big cities, to help the police keep traffic moving smoothly, there are television cameras at the busiest spots. They send pictures back to a television traffic control center to give the police an overall view of city traffic.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Edmund Carpenter**

We wanted to film groups and then have them film. We would simultaneously—using infrared—we would film them watching the film. We did this repeatedly in different places.



**Robert Gardner**

I think people can't be unaware of something like a camera in their face—you know I really, —I'm speaking from very painful personal experience at the moment, but I think the world is so photo conscious and so sophisticated in terms of the equipment that's used daily by everybody, that there's no way not to know what comes out at the other end.



**Harald Prins**

In your article on the terror of self-awareness<sup>10</sup>, you were precisely interested in how do people react when they are for the first time confronted with themselves.

**Edmund Carpenter**

Well I think groups of that sort are so few in number, it's such a rare thing now to meet someone who is not quite sophisticated and that sophistication can be acquired so rapidly. We went out of our way to seek people in remote areas and we were successful in finding some who really had no acquaintance—I wouldn't know where to find such a group today. I doubt very much that such a group could exist.

**Harald Prins**

But when they see the first images of themselves completely, and you actually describe their physical reaction, could you complement it?

**Edmund Carpenter**



Well the impact would be so startling to them, once they understood that they could see their soul, their image, their identity outside of themselves, they were startled. And invariably they would cover their mouths, and then turn away. And then take the image and look at it again and hide and so forth. But all of that passed. Within weeks,

people were walking around with their images of themselves on their forehead and I don't think there's any return to the initial innocence.

**Harald Prins**

And on the other hand, when Bob Gardner sees the footage that we just shot, we will see him suddenly covering his mouth and turning away and saying, "Oh my God, what was this."

**Robert Gardner**

It's to keep the soul inside.



### Edmund Carpenter

Surrealists are able to seize on certain basic ideas I think and they were interested in the coexistence of contraries. Essentially I think what they did was to extend our notion of what is natural.



The surrealists collected ethnographic art, but they didn't bundle it by cultural area. They were not interested in history, in culture, in chronology, in function. They were interested in juxtaposing these things to see if there were any patterns that connected. The anthropologists say an object takes its value from the culture that produced it, that it has no value outside of that. Well the surrealists

go beyond that. They say that it may contain within itself elements that will declare itself.

“Telefomin village, early in the morning, long shot looking at village life.”



AND I CAME INTO THE FIELDS AND WIDE PALACES OF MEMORY

*Radios chance juxtapositions lead to interesting interpretations. At Barapidgin, a remote village on the Wagameri, I picked up a broadcast direct from Apollo 11. The interpreter, a Christian convert, listened intently and then*

*said “getting closer to God is good.” Apparently Werner von Braun shared his assumption that man was voyaging to other planets to search for God for in this same broadcast he said, “Through a closer look at the creation, we ought to gain a better understanding of the creator.” I have no idea what the villagers thought, but in a deeper sense, it didn’t matter. What mattered was that these media were changing the environment itself.*

“Sigo village, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1969.”

*In the past, songs were inseparable parts of sacred ceremonies and dances. They remained the identifiable property of local groups. Radio made them common property. The sacred and obscene now go out over the airwaves stripped of meaning, pure music; the only thing meaningful about them is the relationship of one musical note to another. They achieve the musical effects of geometrical abstraction.*

### **Edmund Carpenter**

When I think of 30 years ago, the way that we imagined that we would change the whole world with film. Well it hasn’t happened and it’s not going to happen in our time.

### **Harald Prins**

Isn’t that a contradiction between what you said earlier that media do transform culture...

### **Edmund Carpenter**

They do and they’re transforming it in their own way. We haven’t harnessed them; we may as well stop the ocean.

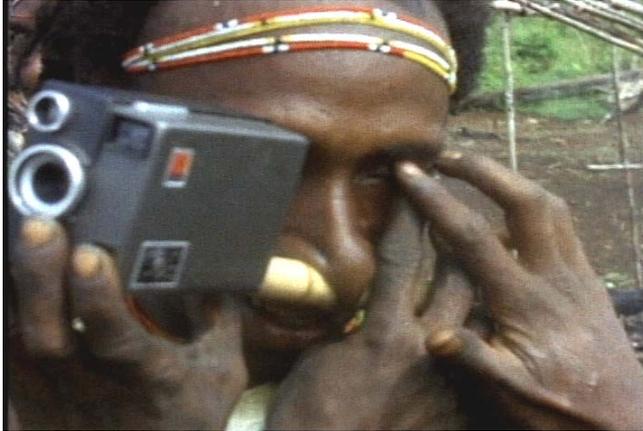
Levé Strauss gives that wonderful example of a hypothetical case: if some celestial body was to briefly approach the earth and for a 20 year period be available for study, he says that we would harness every bit of scientific energy and equipment to record this event, but we’re not recording the disappearance of culture, or disappearance of languages and so forth. There’s no record really that’s being left behind for that.



It’s one of the ironies that the art that is destroyed survives much longer than art that is preserved.

These were very fragile things, which were used in the ceremony and then burned, or destroyed, or left out in the tundra exposed. One effect of that sort of thing is that it is

highly conservative because you renew and you repeat, repeat, repeat. If you store things, you might think with a library or a museum and so forth that things are preserved, but the best place to preserve something is in a human memory. As fragile as that is, it's better than any effort at permanency.



*When we taught the Biami how to use cameras, they found it difficult—at times impossible—to close one eye at a time. There was much fumbling as they held down one eyelid with one hand while trying to hold and operate a camera with the other. Sometimes friends assisted by holding down an eyelid allowing them the use*

*of both hands. Closing one eye soon became a daily game. One morning a group approached us pushing one man ahead. He stepped forward grinned broadly and to the delight of his companions, closed one eye. Soon, the 'Big Wink' became a daily greeting.*

*The ability to close one eye at a time seems to be associated with literacy. Literacy involves a unique sensory pattern. It shatters the natural orchestration of the senses and permits far greater control over individual senses, especially when one sense is used in isolation. Preliterate peoples don't write books or make films. We may train them to do so but we must always ask at this point, are they still members of their old culture or have they become in this particular area at least, members of our culture?*



“Karawari, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1969, recording a scene with the Karawari horn.”

### Edmund Carpenter



It was an amazing moment, and I remember when I returned and I felt there was something significant to say and I found that the American anthropologists were not interested in hearing it. I gave a talk on—showed some of the footage at Albany, and without any warning, suddenly Marvin Harris attacked the whole thing as preposterous and so forth and so on. And then I published an

article—a brief article—in *TV Guide*<sup>11</sup>, and it drew almost limitless disapproval from Clifford Geertz and a dozen others.

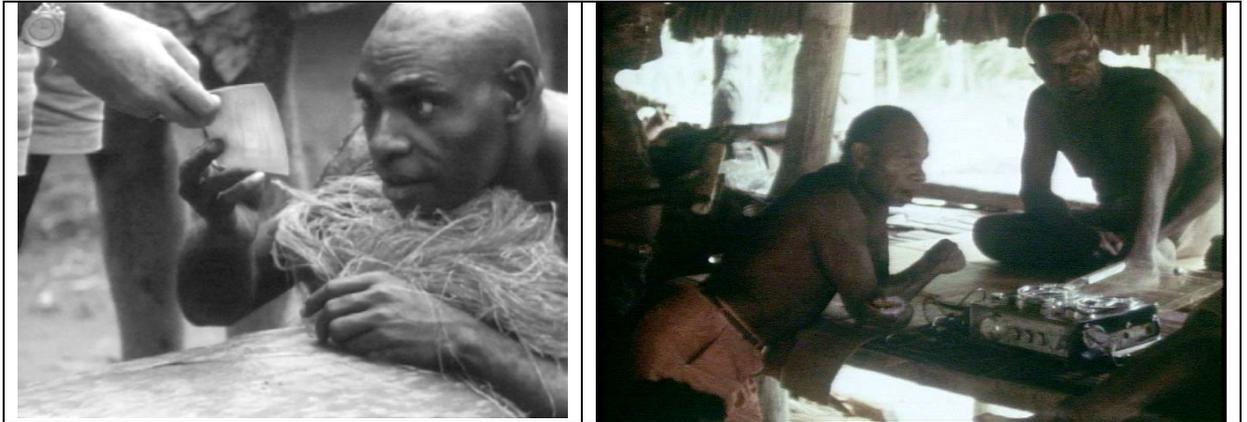
Their objection was that I had used the media to influence and experiment with the culture. They had no objection whatsoever to the use of radio or film or anything else—any other electronic media—but they were not prepared to let an anthropologist go in and run a few test cases on this. I simply withdrew, put the whole project aside, it went into storage, all of the footage.



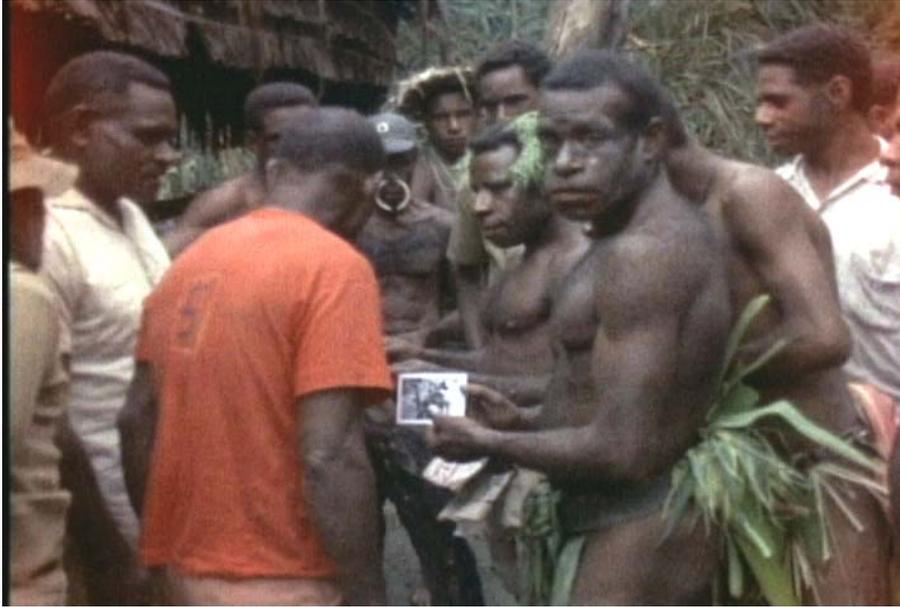
*In Kandangan village, the people became co-producers with us in making a film. The initial proposal came from us, but the actual filming of an initiation ceremony became largely their production. In this area of the Sepik, the male initiation rite is absolutely forbidden to women, in the past on penalty of death. Our chief cameraman was a woman—it never occurred to us to ask if she might film, we assumed such a request would not only be denied, it would*

*offend. But the Kandangan elders asked if she was good, and when told yes, better than any of us, they requested that she operate the camera. Not only did they permit her inside the sacred enclosure, but they showed her where to position her equipment, helped her move it and delayed the ceremony while she reloaded. I'm convinced she was allowed to witness this rite not because she was an outsider, but solely because her presence was necessary for the production of the best possible film.*

*The initiates were barely conscious at the end of their ordeal, but they grinned happily when shown Polaroid shots of their scarified backs.*



*The elders asked to have the soundtrack played back to them. They then asked that the film be brought back and projected, promising to erect another sacred enclosure for the screening. Finally they announced that this was the last involuntary initiation, and they offered for sale their ancient water drums, the most sacred object of this ceremony. Film threatened to replace a ceremony hundreds, perhaps thousands of year's old—yet film could never fulfill the ceremony's original function. That function was to test young men for manhood and weld them forever into a closed sacred society. Now the ceremony and by extension the entire society, could be put on a screen before them, detached from them. They could watch themselves. No one who ever comes to know himself with the detachment of an observer is ever the same again.*



OH, WHAT A BLOW THAT PHANTOM GAVE ME !

a film by  
John Bishop  
Harald Prins

produced by  
Media Generation

photographed and edited by  
John Bishop

additional photography by  
Harald Prins  
Bruce Broce  
Lucien Taylor

Papua New Guinea footage by  
Adelaide de Menil  
Edmund Carpenter

Witness exhibit footage by  
Laurie McDonald  
Menil Archives  
The Menil Collection-Houston

Georgia Sea Island Singers  
footage courtesy of Bess Lomax Hawes

Toronto television clips used with permission of  
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Eskimo Art footage by  
Robert Cannon

still photographs  
Adelaide de Menil  
Herbert Loebel  
Pat Murphy/stockphoto.com  
Franklynn Peterson/stockphoto.com

blues music  
Bill Fowler - guitar  
Sealove - bass  
Jerry Kalaf - drums

rerecording mixer  
Jim Corbett  
Mix Magic, Hollywood

colorist  
Henry Santos  
Digital Film Tree

special thanks to  
Bruce Broce  
Roderick Coover  
Robert Gardner  
Jayasinhji Jhala  
Bunny McBride  
Sally McLendon  
Susan Meiselas  
Adelaide de Menil  
Richard Rogers  
William Sturtevant  
Lucien Taylor  
for their participation in the filming

## End notes

<sup>1</sup> These are the opening words of the book, **Oh, What a Blow that Phantom Gave Me** by Edmund Carpenter, published by Holt Rhinehart & Winston in 1972. All passages in italics in this transcript are quotations from the book, read for the film by Nicholas Hormann.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Rogers is a filmmaker and director of the Harvard Film Study Center.

<sup>3</sup> Colin Young headed the film program at UCLA during much of the time that Carpenter was chair of the Anthropology department he founded at San Fernando Valley State.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Gardner founded the Harvard Film Study Center and made many notable ethnographic films including **Dead Birds**, **Rivers of Sand**, **Deep Hearts**, and **Forest of Bliss**.

<sup>5</sup> The quotation comes from Part I Chapter XVII. A muleskinner had arranged a liaison with the innkeeper's daughter, but in the dark attic dormitory, she accidentally slipped into Don Quixote's bed. As the knight errant explained to Sancho Panza "...*al tiempo que yo estaba con ella en dulcísimos y amorósísimos coloquios, sin que yo la viesse ni supiese por dónde venía, vino una mano pegada a algún brazo de algún descomunal gigante y asentóme una puñada en las quijadas, tal, que las tengo todas bañadas en sangre, ...se me va mucha sangre de la herida que esta fantasma me ha dado.*" [...at the time when I was engaged in the sweetest and most amorous discourse with her, there came, without my seeing or knowing whence it came, a hand attached to some arm of some huge giant, that planted such a cuff on my jaws that I have them all bathed in blood...I am losing much blood from the wound that phantom gave me." (Project Gutenberg's Etext of Don Quixote by Miquel de Cervantes Translated by John Ormsby July, 1997 [Etext #996.])]

<sup>6</sup> The Netsilik Eskimo films were shot between 1963-65 as part of the series **Man A Course of Study** (MACOS) produced by Educational Development Corporation as part of a program to teach anthropology in lower and middle schools. The project was offered to Carpenter but did not come with editorial control and he turned it down. Asen Balikci directed the series.

<sup>7</sup> Red Thundercloud is more complex than suggested in this brief mention. A more detailed account of his life and position can be found in the following articles. *The Identity of Red Thundercloud* by Ives Goddard, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution. This article appeared in the April 2000 issue of the **Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas Newsletter** and is reprinted at (<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/anthro/goddard1.html>) by courtesy of the Society. Carpenter wrote a short piece about Red Thundercloud in **The Easthampton Star**, June 28, 2000 (<http://archive.easthamptonstar.com/ehquery/20000628/news4.htm>).

<sup>8</sup> Spoken by Vincent Price, from **College**.

<sup>9</sup> This footage was on a small reel of 16mm release print that was packed with the 1969 PNG footage and is probably a print of the actual film that was screened on the Cine Canoe.

<sup>10</sup> *Tribal Terror of Self Awareness* in **Principles of Visual Anthropology**, Paul Hockings, ed. 1975.

<sup>11</sup> *TV Meets the Stone Age in New Guinea*. **TV Guide** January 16, 1971 page14-16. Carpenter also wrote *An Anthropologist's Thoughts on TV*, **TV Guide** May 12, 1973 pages 6-9.