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About Marey.

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Interviewed by Alfonso Crespo and Francisco Algarín Navarro



Décomposition du vol d'un goéland (Étienne-Jules Marey, 1887)

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F A N**

In fact, on the subject of your way of seeing things that has gone against the grain of traditional cinema history, I wanted to show you that famous sculpture by Marey, a name you often mention in your lectures and master classes, and who unveiled – also from the basis of science – a new way of thinking about time and movement that many people have since simplified, describing it as a mere precedent to the work of the Lumière Bros...

P K

We must talk about Marey. Yes, I had this sculpture reproduced in Vienna's Filmmuseum, and it's one of the most important objects in modern art for me. When I came upon Marey it was one of those wonderful events... to see a great *antenato* [forefather]. He is the real source of cinema, because he was able to see that it is not movement, and he dissected it into phases. He is also interesting in terms of the history of art, because he was a modern artist, and if his work was not recognized as the first great work of modern art, it was because he did not call himself an artist. He was a physicist, and did not claim to be anything else, and that enabled Marcel Duchamp to simply use him later as raw material when he made his *Nu descendant un escalier*... Looking at this picture, you wouldn't

believe that it is 1886, that it preceded the futuristic paintings and sculptures by more than 20 years. The art historians gave no importance to it because Marey was a scientist, but he was like an encased bomb that has exploded, and now everyone has to know what it really is. With Marey we come back to the beginning of our conversation: the double existence of a three-dimensional object and of a projected object, though nowadays it makes no sense to project in 35 mm what Marey got from his optical rifle.

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And also with Marey, we return to an idea that both of you share – that it's a waste of time to use machines to restore the way we see reality if these appliances cannot open up other dimensions for us...

P K

It's even more radical than you say. With Marey, the essential question is: is there movement? A while ago we talked about brain activity, and it turns out that inside the brain there are only single events, no continuous events; there is no movement in the brain. There are – we might say – *frames*, static light events, just that they are much faster than in cinema... cinema is a very old-fashioned, mechanical tool... 24 events per second is not that fast... certainly not fast for the brain. When I discovered E. J. Marey, I already had my idea that cinema is not movement... my hands already knew, and then my head, that it always comes afterwards. All analysis comes afterwards; and so afterwards that I have only discovered very recently what is essential for my filmmaking. For example, my ideas about the projector, which highlight how unfair it seems to reduce it to the restitution of movement. As you know, with my collection of objects I have been able to provide proof that practically all the tools that have been produced by the human animal have models – for example, a spoon is always a model of the forearm and the hollow hand. The inventors of the spoon did not philosophize about this. So I found out that there is also a model for the cinema projector, and that model is our cosmic situation of the Earth circling the sun. Now, in the projector you have a steady source of light... a sun... which always illuminates... and in front of this light, you have the shutter, a turning device, which interrupts the steady flow of light, just as the turning Earth does with the sun, stopping our activities. We are an animal that sleeps by night and lives by day, and all the events of our life are hacked... in half, every day. We need the light of the day, and our fate, so to speak, is divided by this flickering situation of our life's history.

Everything – birth, marriage, war, peace... everything goes tack-tack-tack-tack-tack... day and night. And now comes the projector, which repeats this situation exactly without the knowledge or the purpose of the people who invented it... they didn't want to depict the cosmic situation of the Earth... they wanted to show movement, and the illusion of movement is, of course, very simple. But I don't need to see the movement, my brain fills in anything that's lacking in the film projection. When you summarize your past life, you don't think of the hacking of the events... you don't think that after meeting your beloved and then saying goodbye there were eight hours of nothing. But these facts come back through inventions, which are then called genius, but they are really biological, as I say.

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What you show once again is that for you, cinema is connected with everything, and that the metaphor is much more than a rhetorical device...

P K

I learnt to think from cinema, namely from the fact that we have a series of images, one after the other, and between each of these two images (and I stress the word “between”) is what I want to say. And that is the principle of the metaphor. Painters have metaphors, and musicians have metaphors, though they are called differently; musicians call the metaphor an interval. I use the term “metaphor” literally, as translated from the Greek, in its meaning of “transport” – to take something to another place. This principle of speaking between elements is practically universal, and in analog cinema it is demonstrated in an incredibly clear way, because you have image A and image B, and you have sound A and sound B, and you execute this event of articulation with simple tools like scissors and glue... and you separate, and you join...

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