

# Dear Video Diary

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June 10, 2003

An embedded reporter within Andy Warhol's pocket world of eager exhibitionists, Michel Auder recorded endless video diaries after acquiring an early portable camera in 1969. Over subsequent decades, he continued to tape his own life, which included marriages with Factory superstar Viva and Cindy Sherman, as well as a long-standing heroin addiction. Video allowed him to shoot obsessively, downloading a chronicle of the world as it unfolded around him. From these image banks he created discrete works that range from under 10 minutes to several hours, some formed completely in-camera, others edited years later. Collectively, they provide not only an intimate portrait of the New York art world, but a form of autobiography: a means of documenting the self through others.

In the late '60s, Auder filmed two features with Factory regulars. One is included in Anthology's series: *Cleopatra* (1970), a lolling *Lonesome Cowboys*-style epic, shot in Rome and upstate New York with Louis Waldon, Nico, Taylor Mead, Gerard Malanga, and Viva as Egypt's queen. Like the Mankiewicz movie it camps, Auder's *Cleopatra* courted production disaster, and exists today as a scratchy work print transferred to DVD—a record of its own failed making.

Auder abandoned film for video, in the process creating his own sui generis art form: looser than cinema, but more engaging than contemporary video art performance tapes. One does not simply watch Auder's diaries; one enters them, like a secret sharer in a social circle whose members have long since been apotheosized into cultural mythology. *The Cockettes, New York City 1971* (edited 2002) shows the San Francisco troupe's arrival in a flurry of glitter and drugs, shocking airport passersby. *Chelsea Girls With Andy Warhol* (1971-76, edited 1994) begins with some déjà-vu—Brigid Polk rapping impromptu philosophy in a Chelsea Hotel suite, then speaking with Andy on the phone; the rest displays Warhol in various settings: a Lennon-Ono party, a Larry Rivers interview. *Chronicles/Morocco* (1971) and *Morocco 1972: The Real Chronicles With Viva* (edited 2002) are both crafted from a trip Auder took with his then-wife, complete with Paul Bowles-ish teen-Adonis native guide. The first edit removes Viva entirely; the second restores her. *The Vanuatu Chronicles* (1998) provides a latter-day coda, with Auder traveling alone, following his divorce from Sherman.

Not all are art-world family movies. *TV America* and *The Games: Olympic Variations* (both 1984) remix Reagan-era television; the latter zooms in on a collection of androgynous crotches and chests from the Los Angeles games. *Voyage to the Center of the Phone Lines* (1993) sets pirate recordings of cell-phone conversations to romantic images of landscapes and sunsets. Yet both continue Auder's larger autobiographic project: They are likewise portraits of the artist as consummate listener and voyeur.