
Michel Auder.

Interviewed by **EDUARDO GIÓN**
Introduction by **JONAS MEKAS**
Self-portrait courtesy of **MICHEL AUDER**

In memory of Jonas Mekas (1922-2019)

Michel Auder is a poet, he isn't a realist. A poet of moods, faces, situations, brief encounters, tragic moments of our miserable civilization, the suffering. And yes, also human vanity, ridiculousness. Cities, people, animals, culture, nature – everything is reflected in Auder's continuous video. When I used to visit Michel at Chelsea Hotel, around 1970, a video camera was always there, always going, a part of the house, a part of his life, eyes, hands. It still is. A most magnificent love affair - no, not an affair: A life's obsession.

You started making movies in the mid-60s in Paris with independent artists, a group called ZanZibar. What was that creative moment like?

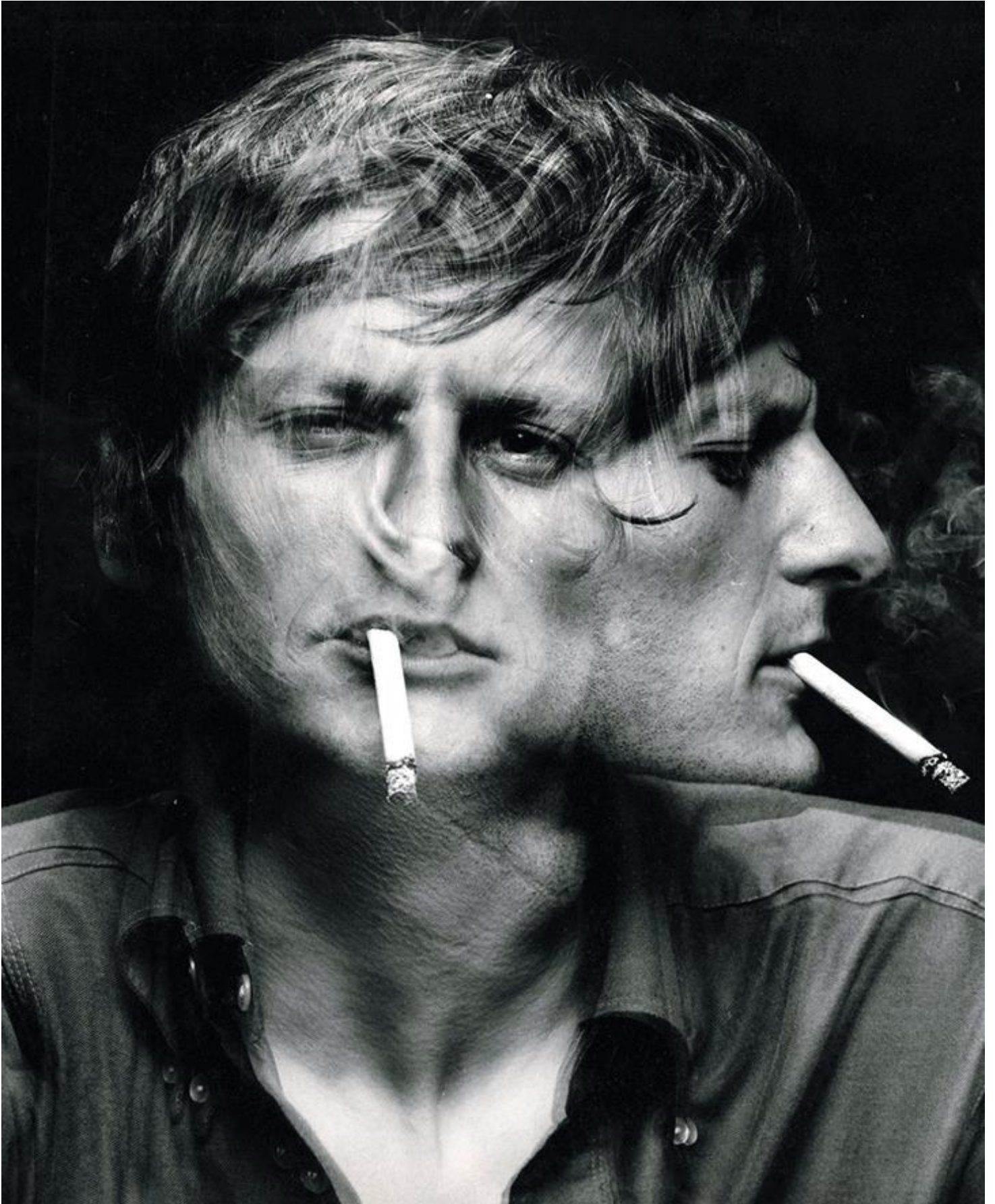
It was not easy! ZanZibar was funded & protected by Sylvina Boissonas, a generous, young *mécène*. She offered to produce my film *Keeping Busy*. It became the best day of my life up to that day in 1968!

You shot your first film in France, *Keeping Busy*, with the artist from the Factory Viva. After that, you moved to New York and settle there permanently.

Keeping Busy, 1968/69, was my first film with Sync-Sound starring Viva Superstar & Louis Waldon, it was mostly shot in Rome.

As I was shooting the end of *Keeping Busy*, Agnès Varda called for Viva to come to Hollywood to star in her new film *Lions Love*. I followed, we got married in Las Vegas in a church drive-in.

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When the shoot was over, we moved to New York and settled in the Chelsea Hotel for the next 5 years... It's 2019 and still in New York.

Is it true that you met Viva in Paris one morning while she was walking with Nico?

Just like that. 3.00 am, rue de Buci... Paris, 1968. Viva and Nico walking together... I recognized them! Me: "Viva! Where are you going?" [it was the first time we met]. Viva: "We are going to a party, come with us..." Me [following]: "Viva, I want you to star in my film" - I had just gotten some production money for *Keeping Busy*. The rest is history.

Her films and audiovisual pieces really reflect the lives of people, without actors, with real people and not fictional characters. What do you want to demonstrate with that way of filming? Can we call it "Cinéma vérité"?

I use the "Cinéma vérité" style and the "Documentary" style to gather the content then I re-configure these "materials" by melding fact and fiction, sometimes beyond discernment, to illustrate and

There can be no film or video artist without voyeurism. I see looks, peeps etc. through windows, curtains, doorways, TV screens... I like to be close, very close.

I achieve immediate intimacy with my "subjects." They don't stare at me with serious (or suspicious) faces: they laugh, they communicate, they play. This "sickness," this voyeurism enables me to see everything, to pick out little, invisible but essential details, like a tuft of grass on the edge of a roof, trembling in a winter storm, invisible and unimportant to everybody, maybe to the whole world – but not to me; to me it's of monumental importance.

What differences do you see between experimental cinema, documentary or video art? Three concepts that are included in your work.

I just make films from the 60s to the *now*... the film world, the TV world ignores me. The artworld and its artists paid attention to my works, they became my viewers.

My first official commercial exhibition was with the famous Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery in Soho, New York, in 1994. I was 50, that is maybe when I became officially an artist?

I NEVER WORKED WITH ANDY, I JUST LOOKED AT HIM

describe my personnel-critical-subjective views and thoughts about our culture.

I feel closer to being a writer... to writing than being a filmmaker... but I use films and make films. Go figure.

When I interviewed Jonas Mekas, he explained to me that he always carried a small video camera with him and recorded everything that happened. Do you also record film diaries every day?

I use the "Diary" style, I don't do diaries.

I capture visual notes daily to be manipulated later to fit my partial observations... there is nothing wrong with diaries, especially if they are created by Jonas Mekas, the master of all diarists.

I have read that you are obsessed with the television images that you record directly from TV, and then you use them for your work. What is for you television and that obsession with televised violence?

Television is violent, not me. TV, to me, is just like any other reality – I totally change it.

I watch TV like a psychotherapist sees a patient. When TV arrives at my chamber, I automatically sift through the information.

It's like having a very narrow-minded, very opinionated patient, a great storyteller, a genius gone mad, there is nothing to believe or disbelieve... pieces of lies and truth laying all over the place... a broken mirror shoved into my face.

You also document the lives of artist friends and their families such as Alice Neel, Larry Rivers or Cindy Sherman.

How do you prepare a recording of so many hours with these artists? Are you just a 'voyeur' camera that you are there but you cannot be noticed?

My goal is to translate the appearance of my time according to my appreciation of it.

How was it working with Andy Warhol?

I never worked with Andy, I just looked at him. From the late 60s to the early 70s, he was confiding to Viva, my wife at the time. I became an insider by marriage and Andy became the subject of some of my films.

***The Feature* is a work that collects your works for 40 years forming the whole line of your life through them. How did the idea for this documentary come about?**

The Feature plunges into my memory bank, chasing down fleeting emotions, privileged moments, traces of faded experiences.

"Supplementary footage directed by Andrew Neel, shot on crisp high-definition video, frames this aching autobiography with a fictionalized portrait of Auder's present-day existence."

Fake news. Not a documentary. In *The Feature*, the "documentary" footage seems to be real, and is real, but is not real."

Not real, never was real, or no longer is it real?

What will be the next of Michel Auder?

More of not the same.

Dear Jonas,

Thank you for everything

Your writings "I Had Nowhere to Go"

Your fantastic films "Letter From Green Point"

Your music

Your unwavering support for independent radical film making

Your Poetry "My Night Life"

Dear Jonas, you are the best!

See you soon :) xoxo

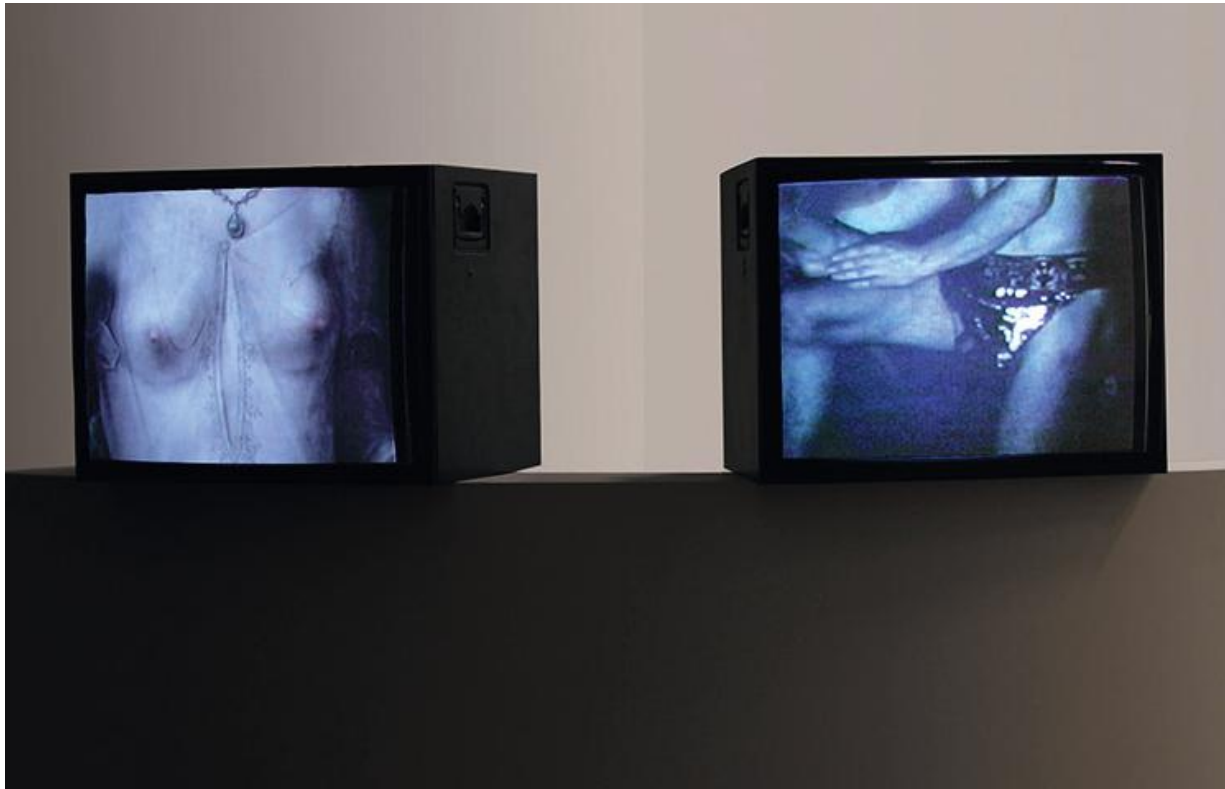
"We do not need Perfection!

We need nervous breakdowns"

Jonas Mekas

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Do You Love Me. Video installation. Scheibler Gallery, Berlin ©Michel Auder



P. Garrel, R. Mapplethorpe, L. Waldon, J.P. Aumont, A. Neel. Photographic composition ©Michel Auder