

The genesis of the Walking Woman – *Biography of the Walking Woman*

Michael Snow – Clip 8

In late 1960 Michael Snow made several naturalistic flat cut-out cardboard figures which use the wall as their background.

In early 1961, to make one of these, he drew, then cut-out with a mat knife a side view of a female figure walking, 152 cm tall within a drawn rectangle on a piece of cardboard. No model was used.

Long story short: realizing that he had a positive and negative stencil, and that this two-dimensional figure was easily reproducible, he decided to use this “mother” cut-out to make some variations on its surface (but not its contour) and its placement.

This cut-out was not made for unforeseen uses, but once started, new possibilities continued to occur to the artist. Thus all his work between 1961 and 1967 used the outline or silhouette of the original cut-out as both tool and subject.

The original contour was always the same but depicted in many ways with many mediums, graphite, ink, watercolour, acrylic, enamel, spray paints and oil on various surfaces: paper, cardboard, canvas and other wood, a car door, etc. Many photographic works and films and performance works were made.

Collages, frottages, pliages, and three-dimensional pieces in stainless steel, tin,

aluminum, wood, plastics, rubber and cloth were made.

He also made many, “lost works” where compositions using the Walking Woman contour were placed (usually clandestinely) in many locations (site being an aspect of their composition) in Toronto and New York and elsewhere, on the street, on lamp standards, signs, in subway stations, on subways, in private homes and offices, in stores, in galleries, as well as on cars and trucks.

The outline was printed and disseminated to be used by anyone, randomly printed in newspapers (not advertising); compositions were sent by mail and friendly travelers took the outline to distant places including the Equator. In that case, a photograph was made. Few of the last works were documented.

Ultimately the artist found himself with an incredible archive of photos, mostly made by others, of the almost infinite manifestations of the Walking Woman contour. This includes those works that were made for gallery exhibition, but then a whole bunch of other, tremendous other range of circumstances like installations and under construction...the construction of sculptures, film stills, studio reviews, etc so....