

BARTLEBY REVIEW

Issue 6 - November 2012
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THIS IS THE COW Charlie Satterlee

Arvo Leo

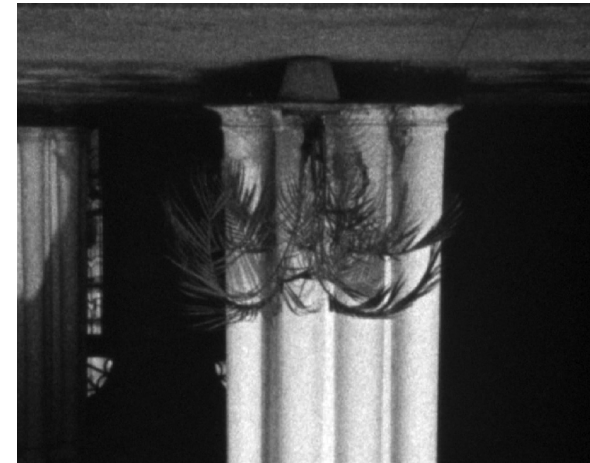
'THIS IS THE COW'

*Western Front
303 East 8th Ave
Through December 22*

In the 45-minute single-channel video projection the artist has culled a number of cultural indicators from the location of where the video was filmed. The harvest leaves for us the principal subject: the holy cow and the environment it inhabits. Although



there are scenes that include humans, the majority of the video focuses on objects, man-made or natural. The video is at once deeply focused yet continuously wandering in a way that questions if the maker is favoring expression and feeling, in closer relation to poetry, rather than a linear narrative. In the video we see many things, the view from a moving train, the sun over water, trees, trees flipped upside down, Caucasian men eating papaya, an alleyway play, a curtain, pipes, chips, a chai shop lit with the reflection of a mirror, cows pissing, plants, cows walking, floating haystacks, and so forth. All of the footage we see is preceded or succeeded by a title card or intertitle: written commentary spliced within the film. For example, in the scene that we see the papaya being consumed the



intertitle states: "A Papaya". However, the connection is not always so objective. The title card stating "The Chandelier" is succeeded by a shot of a tropical plant that has been flipped upside down – not physically but by the flipping of the video frame.

Cultural indicators give information about societies, which may be interesting even when one is not trying to evaluate the cultures of these societies from any normative point of view. Arvo Leo has drifted between views, at times documenting the physical existence of the cow while simultaneously following the side streams related to the interpretation and myths surrounding this sign.

Charlie Satterlee