

*The Hedge Theater*

Early Monthly Segments

Robert Beavers

SWITZERLAND, 1970, 2002

No dialogue

33 minutes ■ Colour/35 mm

The Ground

Robert Beavers

GREECE/SWITZERLAND/USA, 2001

No dialogue

20 minutes ■ Colour/35 mm

The Hedge Theater

Robert Beavers

ITALY/SWITZERLAND, 2002

No dialogue

19 minutes ■ Colour/35 mm

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Robert Beavers's cinema celebrates aesthetic pleasures derived from the traditional arts and architecture. The act of making things by hand is central to his films; often he foregrounds his own filmmaking apparatus – Bolex camera, lenses and filters – to add to the self-reflexivity of his work. They are all originally shot on 16mm and transferred to 35mm, gaining sumptuous image and resonant stereo sound quality.

Early Monthly Segments, filmed when Beavers was eighteen and nineteen years old, now forms the opening of his film cycle, *My Hand Outstretched to the Winged Distance and Sightless Measure*. It is a highly stylized work of self-portraiture, depicting filmmaker and companion Gregory J. Markopoulos in their Swiss apartment. Made in autumn and winter, it functions as a diary, capturing aspects of home life with precise attention to detail, documenting the familiar with great love and transforming objects and ordinary personal effects into a highly-charged work of homoeroticism. The film also reveals Beavers's interest in graphic shapes, a stylistic element found throughout his film cycle.

The Ground uses seemingly simple components – the sun-baked landscape of a Greek island, the blue waters of the Aegean Sea and images of a man chiselling stone – to conjure the fundamental experience of holding something close to one's heart. A repeated close-up of a man pounding his bare chest, then gesturing with hand outstretched, lends dramatic tension to the film's elegant expression of devotional love.

Beavers shot *The Hedge Theater* in Rome in the eighties. It is an intimate film inspired by the Baroque architecture and stone carvings of Francesco Borromini and "St. Martin and the

Beggar," a painting by the Sieneese painter Il Sassetta. Beavers's montage contrasts the sensuous softness of winter light with the lush green growth brought by spring rains. Each shot and each source of sound is steeped in meaning and placed within the film's structure with exacting skill to build a poetic relationship between image and sound.

– Susan Oxtoby

Robert Beavers was born in Brookline, Massachusetts. He began to make films in the mid-sixties in New York City. By the end of that decade, he had relocated to Europe with fellow American filmmaker Gregory J. Markopoulos, who would be his lifelong companion until Markopoulos's death in 1992. Since 1994, Beavers has been recording new soundtracks for his eighteen-film cycle entitled *My Hand Outstretched to the Winged Distance and Sightless Measure*. The series includes *Early Monthly Segments* (70/02), *From the Notebook of...* (71/98), *The Painting* (72/99), *Ruskin* (74/98), *Sotiros* (77/96), *Amor* (80), *The Ground* (01) and *The Hedge Theater* (02).

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