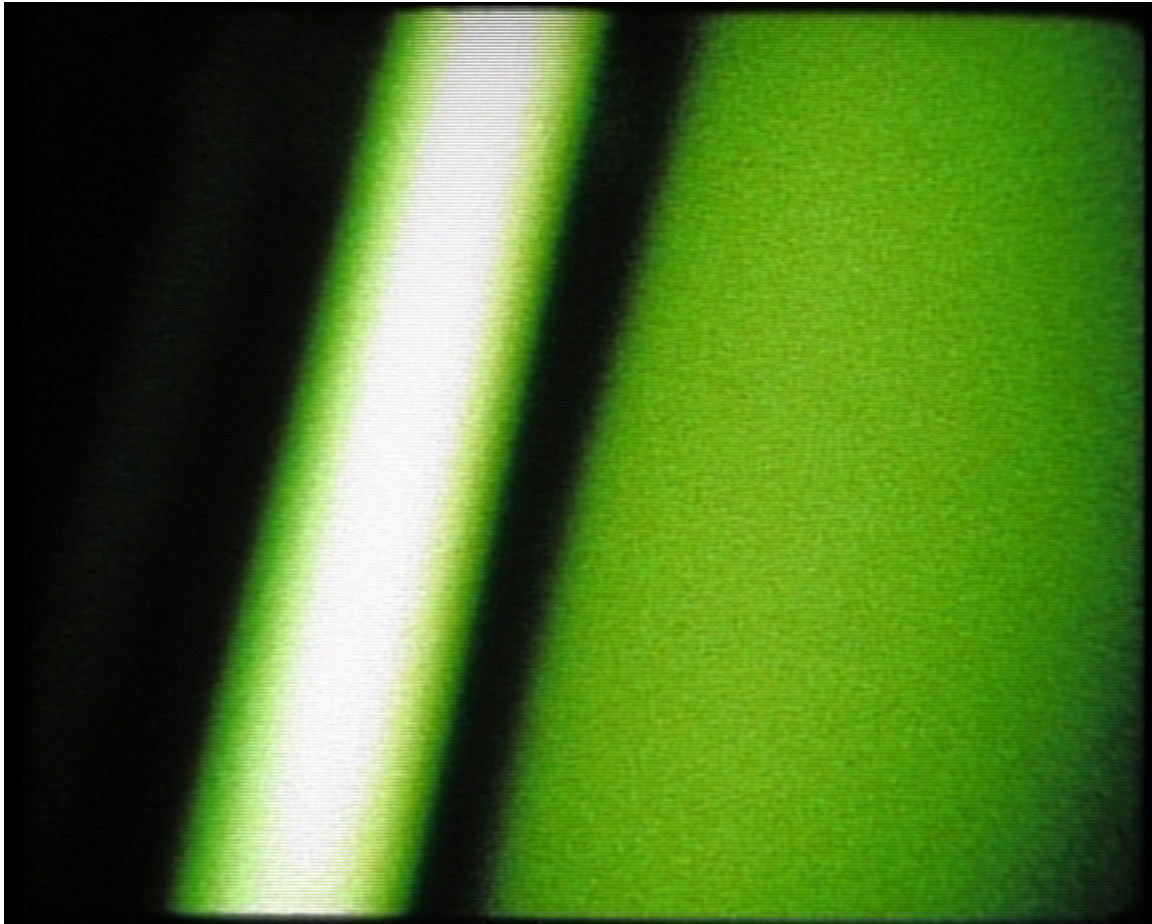


## Albert Triviño's Super 8 films.

Super 8 was introduced in 1965 as a replacement for Standard 8, also known as Regular 8 or Double 8. The latter name for this so-called home movie format arose from the fact that it used existing 16mm wide film in cameras much like the semi-professional Bolex. After 8mm-wide exposures down the two eight-metre longitudinal halves of the 16mm wide strip, the film was split down the middle to create one strip, 8mm wide and sixteen metres long. The Super 8 frame, though the same width as the Standard 8 filmstrip, was redesigned to give a larger frame area and the film came in a cartridge that is very quick and easy to load, in contrast to the older format, which had to be threaded into the camera manually. Just as 16mm film had been adopted by artist-filmmakers after WW2, initially in the USA, then in Europe, so Super 8 has similarly been adopted, if not to anything like the same extent. When used by artists, the format retains something of the intimate quality associated with the "Home Movie", but there has been a small number of artists; Stan Brakhage, John Porter, Margaret Raspé, Helga Fanderl, Melina Gierke and a few others, who have effectively exploited the portability of the camera, and the particular qualities of grain and colour that Super 8 film uniquely offers, and showing that if treated seriously the medium offers as much potential within its natural limitations as any other film or video format.

Albert Triviño's Super 8 films fall within this tradition. He engenders a reflexive mode of viewing through a strategy that allows various aspects of the pro-filmic; forms, frames, durations, to determine aspects of the film's structure. In each case the work arrests and foregrounds something that so often goes unnoticed in cinema because it is an integral part of a mimetic world of representations. Triviño fully exploits the ease of use that the light-weight Super 8 system offers, while combining

this with a rigorous approach to structure and composition.

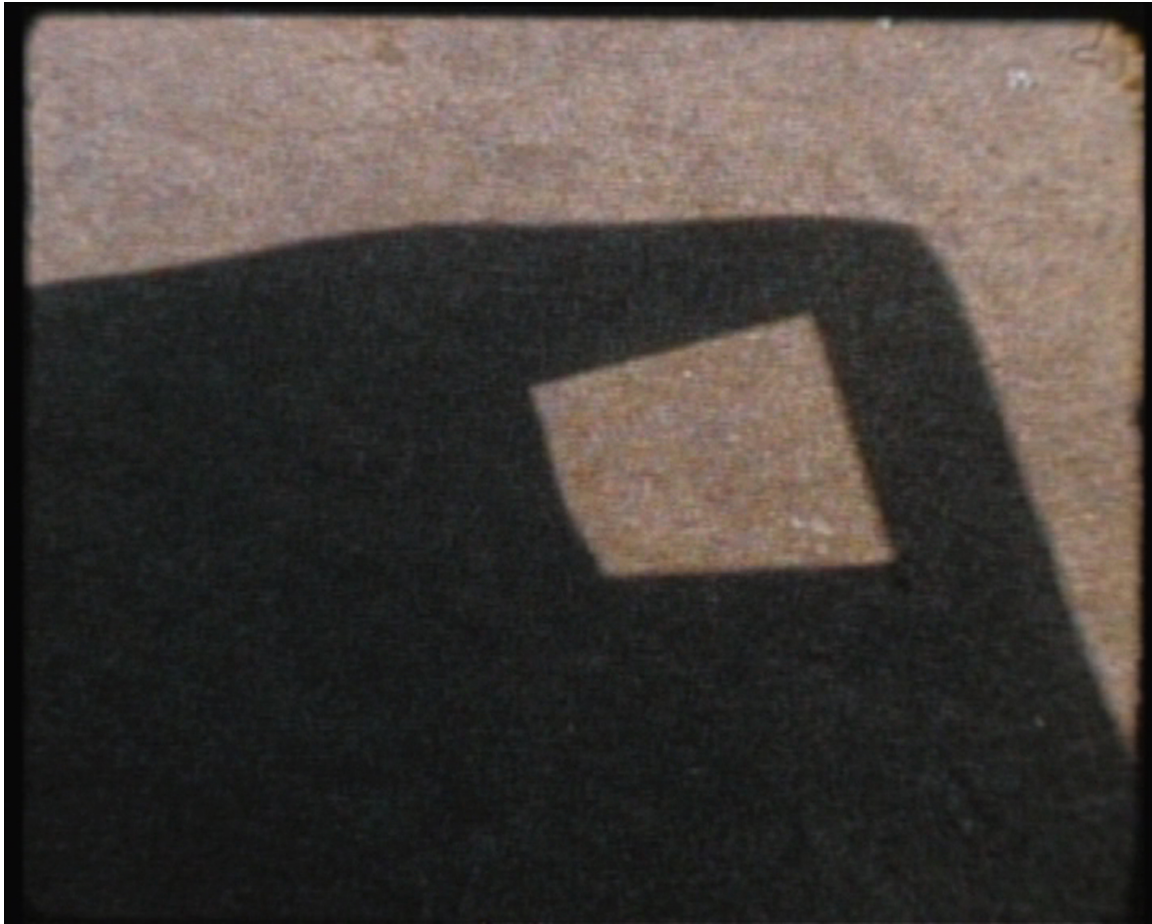


In *Las Vegas* (2008, 3 minutes, silent), repetitive and rhythmic motifs figure film's intermittent movement through the projector, which animates the image from a series of discrete moments. In the first three shots we see the same sharply defined shape in a succession of different colours, floating dramatically over a black background. Triviño captures these near-identical shapes in isomorphic framings. They are then contrasted with softer, more expansive forms, then flashing white lights that again figure the on-off functioning of the projector lamp in its presentation of individual frames. *Las Vegas* fits clearly into a tradition of *Lichtspiel* –Light-play- evoking predecessors like Man Ray's 1924 film *Return to Reason*, which contains shots of illuminated fairground rides, and Stan Brakhage's seminal work *Anticipation of the Night* (1958), which is similarly composed from shots of car headlamps, illuminated signs and other features of the nocturnal urban landscape.

Although the imagery is clearly derived from such features, these are picked out, isolated and recomposed into an abstract kinetic-colour film, where the notion of “abstract” in the context of film is clearly understood as being “impure”, that is, derived from the real world, but no longer of it.

In *Chillida* (2009, 3 minutes silent, super 8), the camera interacts with some large rectilinear sculptures by Eduardo Chillida. The reflexive strategy unfolds through the way the sculpture is filmed. In a number of shots, rectangular openings, seen either directly or as cast shadows, refer explicitly to the camera’s framing edges, thereby creating frames within frames. Elsewhere, Triviño traces, through camera pans, vertical and horizontal lines and axes of the sculpture, so that they run parallel to the framing edges. Thus a dynamic contrast is established between rectangles that are inherent to the pro-filmic situation, and rectilinear events that are synthesised through camera movements. There are also passages in which texture is emphasised, reminding us that sculptures are both formal and material. In a film the material textures cannot be experienced in a directly tactile manner, but this lack can be compensated for, or replaced, in the way that film can isolate texture, or awareness of texture, from its formal aspect or realisation. Related to this is the way in which shadow- forms come to play an enhanced if not equal role in the configuration of the work, in contrast to the direct experience of the work itself, where shadows are subordinate or secondary –immaterial, ephemeral, transient- relative to the sculpture itself. In a third strategy that creates an experience specific to film, Triviño turns the camera on its side and ultimately upside down, in order to pursue further formalisations that would be otherwise unavailable to the

sculpture's physically constrained spectator.



Thus Triviño addresses in various ways the perennial question of how to render a two-dimensional time-based experience from a three-dimensional static object. There is no attempt to capture the object as it might be experienced in person: a kind of simulation of a real experience, translated into filmic terms. Instead, the sculpture is made to function as a co-producer, so that what emerges is a result of a tight interplay between the two.

The use of shadows as formal-structural elements in a work is found in a very different way in the installation-projection *Bricks* (2008, 3 minutes silent), in which an image of a white painted brick wall is projected back onto its subject. The rapid flickering and general instability of the high contrast image makes it impossible to disentangle that image from the surface upon which it is projected and which gave rise to it. Whereas in *Chillida* the shadows functioned as additional formal elements



in a work composed from granite shapes, here the shadows disrupt, even obliterate, their own pro-filmic, as it were kicking away the ladder by which they came into existence. This dramatic effect is achieved partly by the simple method of rapidly alternating the direction of the light source necessary to create the images in the first place. The resulting flicker effect, in which, by definition, frame-to-frame differences are maximised, stands at the opposite end of the spectrum to conventional film shots, which are defined by minimal differences between one frame and the next. In another sense though, Triviño takes seriously, insofar as he uses, conventional lighting methods to illuminate a scene. There is thus a direct reference to cinematic conventions even as they are dramatically undermined.



The oblique reference in *Bricks* to a key aspect of all narrative film construction, in this case “lighting”, connects us to another of Triviño’s films, but one that takes a very specific formal device as its starting point. *Fiction/Reality* (2008, 3 minutes,

silent) turns on a familiar trope –actually a cliché in the context of narrative cinema– in which an apparently direct image turns out to be a reflection in a mirror within the diegesis. In the cinema this trick, which functions partially (and retrospectively) as a brief visual interlude in the narrative flow, almost immediately exhausts itself, so that we may return quickly and safely to the momentum of the story. In *Fiction/Reality*, however, the revelation is gradual, and the mirror image is but one element in an unfolding set of revelatory moments, that we would conventionally expect to be resolved by the film's end. However, we come to understand, through what is implied by the film's successive moments, that this end point of view must also be questioned, or understood as provisional. We are invited to think that we are seeing a car from inside a doorway, and it is only gradually that we come to understand that the door-frame is itself framed by a mirror whose own frame is closely aligned to the doorway's. At this point, about two thirds of the way through, the film continues for another twenty seconds or so, holding at the end on a fixed framing so that we have time to further grapple with the spatial array of elements within the frame; car, human movements between car and doorway, mirror and bannister rail. In the numerous cinematic examples that exist, there is always a moment of revelation, at which point we shift from apparently direct but actually reflected image, then quickly back to image, so that a spurious distinction is implied between reflection and direct perception. In *Fiction Reality*, by contrast, the image of the car is established at the outset as mediated, by virtue of the frame within a frame composition of the shot. However, when the shot settles on its final wide framing, this sense of the car as image is somehow reinforced: we see it as even more mediated, perhaps because it is even more distant, and trebly framed, by the

doorway, mirror and the darkness of the interior space from which is was filmed.



*Promenenade* (2009, 3 minutes, silent) is a film of a walk undertaken by the filmmaker, which shows his feet on the ground as he walks on a variety of surfaces, or in a variety of landscapes, as we are invited to infer. One frame of each of his own feet is exposed by the filmmaker every time it lands on the ground. The film is a film about its own making in another sense: it is a documentation of a performance that was made for the film, or to put it another way, it is a record of its own making. The history of this strategy arguably began with Robert Morris' emblematic *Box with the Sound of its own Making* (1961), which is a simple wooden box containing a recorder that plays the sound of it being constructed. Triviño's film is a link in a feedback system that is established between performer, camera, feet and landscape, a link that evidences the other links and is in turn modified by them. The ground on which the feet walk is in effect a screen, and the foot makes an impression on it –an

indexical image- in a manner that parallels that by which the light from the scene makes an indexical impression on the raw celluloid in the camera.



Because the maker is walking, the camera's position cannot precisely be controlled, resulting in irregular framing and blurred images. However, these terms – “irregular” and “blurred”- which have negative connotations in the context of narrative cinema, reflect the work's accuracy as evidence of a particular process in which the supposed inadequacies of the medium (normally described as human error, and thus implying that the technology itself is perfectible, providing human error can be eliminated) are celebrated, not concealed as they are in narrative. “Each step is a frame of the film” (Triviño), which means there is a precise correlation between performance action and film structure, in which film's serial form is again emphasised. The work can be seen as the reanimation of static moments in an animated pro-filmic -the walk- but whose reanimation is strictly in



film's terms, as opposed to the continuous, illusionistic filming of a walk filmed at 24 frames per second. Once a rhythm is established, it becomes possible to focus on details in the image, notably the white flash of the plastic end of a shoelace as it flips around in the frame. The work is centripetal, in that our attention is directed inwards to the shoe in the centre of the frame, but we can also shift to the surrounding surfaces, and eventually perhaps to the off-screen space, and ask ourselves exactly what kind of landscape is this; urban, suburban, rural or coastal?

*Bombolles* (2009, 3 minutes, silent), is another film that enacts the frames-within-frames strategy, as in *Fiction Reality* or *Chillida*, but in a very different form here, as films within a film. It also involves performance of a kind, but this performance generates individual events that constitute self-contained films, which are thus also meta-commentaries on, and analogues of, film, or films. A young woman blows bubbles in a landscape. The camera follows each bubble as it drifts away, until it pops, at which point we return to the woman. Each bubble is also a kind of film in its material constitution. Like celluloid, it is composed of a translucent material through which the landscape can be seen, in a direct projection into the viewer's eye. This medium also imparts something of its own character, so that we experience a particular image quality that can be seen alongside film's material history. Over the years, its various constituent materials; celluloid and polyester bases, Technicolour and Eastmancolour emulsion, have resulted in visibly different-looking images. In this case the image is bluish and unevenly transparent, with prismatic colours at the edges. It refracts the light as it transmits it, something which all film media do to some extent, and this is a characteristic that distinguishes absolutely film from vide whose image is constituted from un-refracted,



unmediated, direct emissions of light.



One could think of the bubble-images as found and contingent, or given, in the sense that they are not chosen by the filmmaker, but occur spontaneously as the bubbles fly through the landscape. The different character of each bubble invites us sometimes to see it as an object, sometimes as enclosing an image of the landscape that is visible through it. There is also a recurring shape in the bubble: could this be the reflection of the filmmaker? If so, the maker is also then inscribed into the work as performer, thus making the whole film a collaboration and thereby linking it to *Chillida*, in which one can understand the sculptures as participants.

In this suite of Super 8 films, a number of aspects of film form and structure are explored; colour - both solid and translucent- space –open and enclosed- shape, texture, rhythm, the indexical, and operations that involve either chance or the giving over of certain aspects of a work to factors outside the maker's control, such

as allowing the life span of a bubble to determine the length of a shot. These concerns are recombined in various ways so as to form a unified body of work that is nevertheless also diverse in respect to subject matter and outcome. Most frequently, Triviño's films renew and develop the trope of the film-within-a-film, perhaps first manifested in Robert Paul's humorous short *The Countryman and the Cinematograph*, (1901) in which a simple peasant, attending a screening of the Lumière's 1896 film *Arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat*, flees from the cinema at the sight of the train apparently bearing down on him. In a different and more relevant example, the trope is elevated to an explicit aesthetic and political strategy in Dziga Vertov's masterpiece *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929), in which we see a film being shot and edited, and the resulting film. In Triviño's work, by contrast, the inner film is subtly incorporated into its container-film, so that the inner film seems to arise organically from the event or situation being filmed. But this subtlety, precisely because it arises organically from a making process, and hence is not explicit or overt, alerts us to the ease with which we can enter a film's illusionistic space. This is where the work has a specific critical address to the psychology of movie watching.