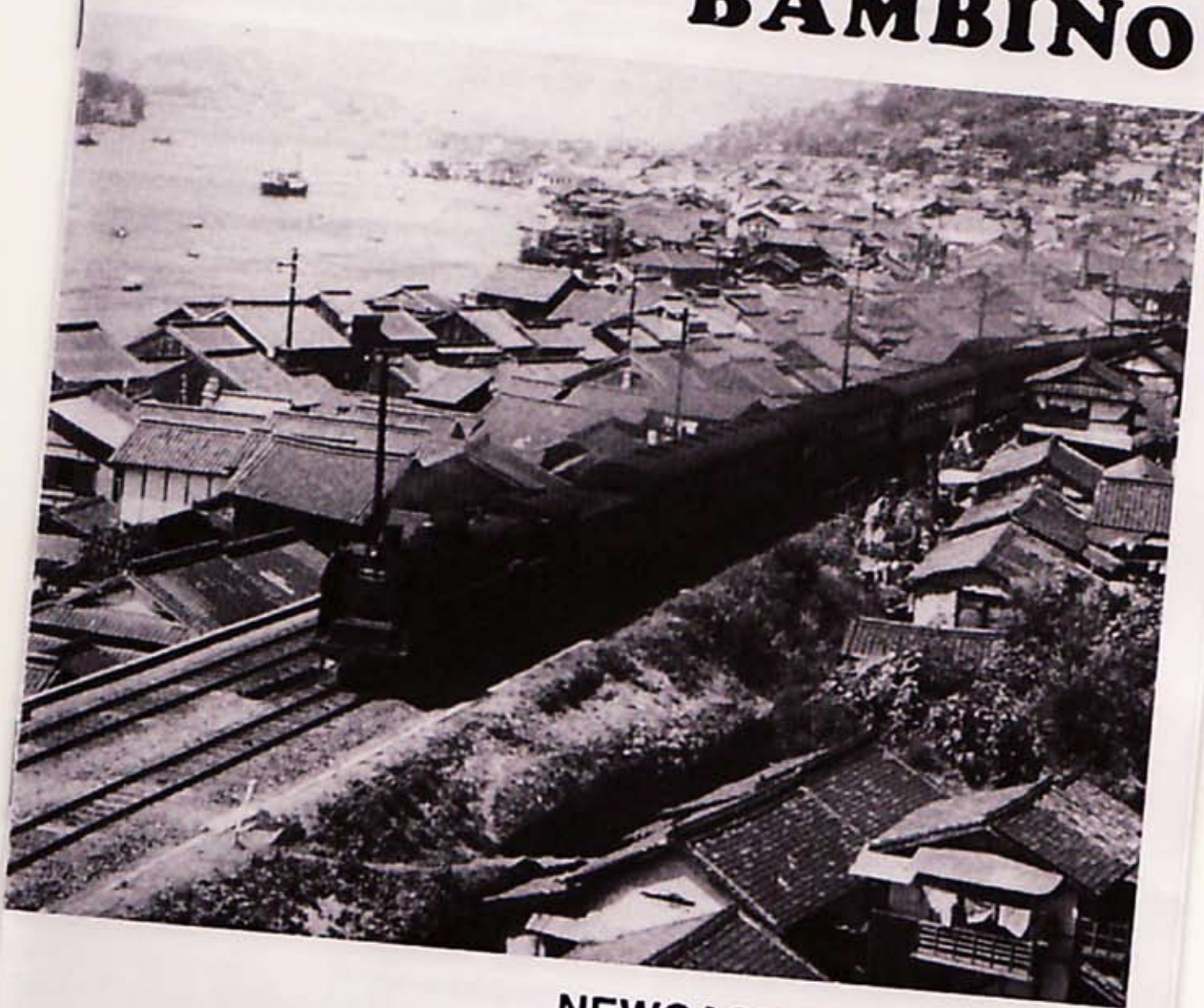


KIINO

BAMBINO



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FILM ZINE

Alex Mackenzie

The Wooden Lightbox: A Secret Art of Seeing

As seen 11th November 2009 Star and Shadow

Alex Mackenzie is a film-maker in the rawest sense. The majority of his film stock is prepared from his own emulsions of gelatin, potassium bromide, silver nitrate, distilled water and acetate strip, which is then shot, dunked by the handful into a processing solution, contact printed by hand and subsequently shown via a hand-cranked projector at an average speed of about 8 frames/sec all illuminated by a 50-watt bulb.

Whilst this might sound like a recipe for disaster, the production washes, blobs and scratches on the film's surface serve to augment the intimacy of its projection, and once acclimatized to this shadowy twilight, the gentle susurrous of the projector, together with an echoey ambient soundtrack (played back from a digital recorder) subsumes the observer into numinous hinterland of atavistic images.

Within the grey gloaming of his ten or so short chapters, the viewer seems to drift as if in a languid hypnagogic fugue. Fragments of landscape natural and urban, merge and mesh. A sleeping child turns on a bed; a woman silently articulates a scream - or a song. A magician performs sleight of hand and a horse's night-mare eye stares unwinkingly at you. We appear to have entered the world in which the spectral shades of Odilon Redon, Francis Bacon, 'Eraserhead' and 'Vampyre' are abroad.

But Mackenzie is a knowing guide and for those who wish to see them, he has placed some shadowy markers. A bird and a cage sequence casts reference to the thaumatrope. The magician opening and closing his hand (done by the beautifully simple expedient of cranking the film backwards and forwards) homages Méliès, while the screaming/singing woman is actually early TV broadcast filmed directly from a laptop screen. Though one does not need to know it, cinema's past, present and potential are subtly conjoined.

You might have ascertained that I liked this performance. You would be wrong. I loved it - this was by far the best thing I witnessed in 2009 and would unhesitatingly recommend all who can to view this extraordinary work.

John Smith

