

(Pdf free) Direct Theory: Experimental Motion Pictures as Major Genre

## Direct Theory: Experimental Motion Pictures as Major Genre

*Edward S. Small, Timothy W. Johnson*

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**Edward S. Small, Timothy W. Johnson : Direct Theory: Experimental Motion Pictures as Major Genre** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Direct Theory: Experimental Motion Pictures as Major Genre:

Making the case for the significance of experimental motion picturesUndulating water patterns; designs etched or

painted directly onto clear or black film leader; computer-generated, pulsating, multihued light tapestries the visual images that often constitute experimental motion pictures are unlike anything found in either fictive narratives or documentary works. Thus, *Direct Theory* provides an historical and theoretical survey of this overlooked and misunderstood body of international films, videos, and digital productions that offers a strong case for the understanding of experimental motion pictures as a separate, major motion picture genre. In a radical revision of film-theory that incorporates Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic system, and adds to it historian Raymond Fielding's technological determinism, Edward S. Small and Timothy W. Johnson argue that experimental moviemaking constitutes a special mode of theory that bypasses written and spoken words. By exploring the development of experimental motion pictures over nine decades, they trace the practice from its beginnings in the European avant-garde movement in the 1920s, through American underground productions, into international structuralist works that marked the experimental films of the 1970s, and finally the digital experimental innovations of the twenty-first century. To demonstrate that the aesthetic of experimental motion pictures is best understood separately from other major film genres such as fictive narrative and documentary, Small and Johnson highlight eight defining technical and structural characteristics of experimental productions, including the autonomy of the artist, economic independence, brevity, and the use of dreams, reveries, hallucinations, and other mental imagery. They also highlight a number of films, including Ralph Steiner's 1929 *H2O* and Bruce Conners' 1958 *A Movie*, and provide a sampling of frames from them to demonstrate that the heightened reflexivity of these films transmit meaning through images rather than words. A deft historical interweaving of experimental production and scholarly discourse, this thought-provoking work firmly establishes the importance of experimental motion pictures in the discipline of film studies (theory and history) and production.

**About the Author** Edward S. Small is an emeritus professor of film and media studies at the University of Kansas. He is a motion picture theorist specializing in semiotics and a motion picture artist concentrating on experimental production. Timothy W. Johnson's career includes English teaching, a PhD in cinema from the University of Southern California, and more than two decades as editor and production supervisor for computer and printer manuals. He is an editor and a digital media artist.