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1636 Buchanan Street  
San Francisco, Cal.  
April 4, 1950

Dear Miss Rebay,

I was certainly glad to get your letter yesterday, for when I did not hear from you I was afraid that my paintings had not reached you or that you had not liked them, but instead you were in Europe teaching and discovering. I hope that your trip was in every way successful.

I cannot state precisely how much the film I visualize would cost, as there has been no investigation in this field before. I must solve certain problems in order to approach the final goal. The slides that I sent you represent the solution of most questions to be answered as far the actual drawing is concerned; I can now compose third dimensionally free-hand and almost as quickly as I can two dimensionally.

By great luck the funds have been provided to solve this one other, most important, problem. The museum here is giving me a small amount of money for rental of my films; (see ad enclosed) not much, but it together with the fifteen dollars from yourself will be enough to make a special film for them to show next month. It will have no forms in it, just carefully composed rhythmic and spectral sequence for the musicians to improvise on. This film will very easily answer the questions concerning the plane on which a color will appear when appearing for only a second or less between other different colors. It is most important that this question be settled at the first, because in composing colored moving forms in three dimensional space all factors affecting the precise plane of the form must be controlled in order to keep out unwanted forces in the three dimensional inbetween space.

If you feel that there is a possibility of money being available to continue these investigations, what I would like to do first of all is make a series of perhaps three hundred or so double thirty-five millimeter slides designed to be projected at a rate much slower than an ordinary motion picture but still rapidly enough to give the impression of motion. I have worked out a method of slightly rebuilding a standard model of slide projector in such a way that very beautiful results can be got with much less complicated equipment than would be required for films at regular speed, although, of course, that is the next step I will take.

The ideal plan for me to follow would be for me to be able to devote my time for the next few months to working with this simpler system and with it solve all technical problems

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COPY OF LETTER FROM HARRY SMITH

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connected with this new medium. As I mentioned when I saw you, I am going to come to New York at about the end of June. This would make it possible for me to learn from you exactly your feelings as to the many compositional problems to be decided in the third dimension for the final film.

The reason that I don't come to New York right away is that Dizzy Gillespie, the band leader who made the records I use with my paintings is going to be in town about the first of next month and I think he quite probably will be interested in using my film with his band at concerts, dances, etc. This would do much to make non-objectivity known to a very large number of people who not only are in need of its spiritual influence, but who are at the same time much less prejudiced in their thinking than are many of those who come in contact with the so-called "art" world.

The projection system that I want to use requires that spectators wear lightweight and inexpensive polaroid glasses (in frames similar to sun glasses) to assure that light vibrating on the right plane for each eye gets to that eye only. This system is the most perfect in that it gives exquisite clarity of form and color, and is not indistinct as are some earlier three-dimensional systems. The wearing of glasses, instead of being cumbersome, makes the spectator feel as if he is on an adventure, and causes him to look at the forms with greater penetration and perception.

To do what I have outlined above would require buying a special projector and having it partly rebuilt, getting film, colors, etc., etc., and sufficient money to make it possible for me to devote all my time for three months to actual work.

I believe that five hundred dollars would cover all expenses. For this you would get the slides I will make and you will also own a projector powerful enough for auditorium use and suitable for ordinary thirty-five millimeter slides as well as my special ones. Just because this projector costs less than a regular motion picture machine, do not think that it is in any way inferior or unsuitable for public showing, as it will be very, very beautiful as well as educational.

Jordan Belson recently gave me some books and reproductions you had sent to him. I am studying the two Kandinsky books very carefully. I also particularly enjoyed the catalogue of your exhibition and the comments in the hostess reports. The mimeographed sheet "New Age" by yourself is also very valuable. If I could get a few more copies of this I would appreciate it very much as I know lots of people I would like to give them to.

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COPY OF LETTER FROM HARRY SMITH

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I hope you are rested from your trip and that you are in good health.

Best wishes,

signed Harry Smith

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1636 Buchanan St.  
San Francisco Calif.  
June 17th 1950

with the great source of creativity. Some of them had ever heard of  
 movies making and they all appreciated it at once. The trombone  
 player (I forgot his name), for example, pointed out many remarkable  
 Dear Miss Rebay - I am now sending you the films I promised last month, so that,  
 when you have time, you can look at them and tell me of changes and  
 improvements possible in my next work. I have taken longer to get  
 these to you than I expected because with the money you sent this  
 month I remade parts of "Interwoven" to follow out your suggestion  
 of having movement originate within the screen rather than moving  
 across it. This one simple change (that seems so obvious and natural  
 now that I learned of it) improves the film many hundred percent.  
 Also I was delayed because I had wanted to make duplicate prints of  
 these for you to keep, if you wanted them, but by the time I made  
 the changes mentioned above, I was out of raw film to print on.  
 Naturally your comments are much more valuable to me than having  
 the films here, so I am sending you my master prints at this time,  
 with the hope I can get them back soon. I would not ask you to re-  
 turn even these, if it was not for the interesting developments I  
 outline below. The color ones you want a little later, but right  
 now I can not do so, as I must live totally on the \$5 dollars a  
 month. Since I showed my films at the museum here using live musicians  
 improvising from the images rather than from a score, the musicians  
 who gather nightly in the back room of a cafe near here, to play for  
 their own amusement, after they have their regular jobs, have asked  
 me to bring my projector to their "Jam Session" several times, be-  
 cause now everyone wants to try playing while looking at the films.  
 I am sending you some photographs taken at the museum of the musicians,  
 who played there, and who are the most advanced here. These people  
 are now intuitively creating a new kind of music that will not be  
 accepted by the public probably for 50 years. They are all really  
 poor, sometimes hungry, because they would rather express what they  
 call "soul" in their playing than hurt themselves by changing it to  
 fit the backward standards of today's listeners. As you probably know,  
 all the popular musical developments of the last hundred years  
 (spirituals, ragtime, jazz, Blues, "Boogie Woogie", Swing, Be Bop etc)  
 were made by intuitive, but uneducated, geniuses (sic) who died with-  
 out getting any money or recognition because they were leaders and  
 ahead of their time by fifty or seventy five years. All of the types  
 of music I list above are worthless because of their vulgarity and  
 striving for effect. But now, due to the same forces that gave birth  
 to real art after five thousand years of objective attempts, a great  
 change, unsuspected, to the world is about to occur in music. This  
 is too complex to discuss here, but I hope to be nearer to you soon  
 and will then describe the evidence I have. But to return to musici-  
 ans - Stanley Willis, a piano player (wearing an Indian hat in the  
 photographs) saw my music diagrams about a year and a half ago and  
 told other musicians about them. Those in the photo group all got  
 very interested in my work at that time and most of them had played  
 with the films long before the museum showing. Hardly any of these  
 people can read music and many have trouble even reading and writing  
 English, but for these very reasons they are often in unknowing contact  
 with the valuable in the rhythm of the stars and so on to the  
 naturally physical, perceptible and. The integration of all these

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with the true sources of creativity. None of them had ever heard of modern painting but they all appreciated it at once. The trombone player (seated far right), for example, pointed out many remarkable things I myself had not noticed in your "Royally" the very first time I showed it to him. Last month I luckily borrowed a tape recorder (sic) and made records of about thirty different performances of musicians following the films. By comparing these tapes with each other and with the films it has been possible to make a start toward an investigation of intuitive creation. By investigating these observable forces which effect man, but which are scorned by pedantic science, it will be possible for us soon to realize the final stages of man's development. It is not impossible that your Institute of Light is the "Fire" spoken of in the Bible (and in Leonardo's prophecies) as heralding Armageddon and the beginning of the new world. I am using part of each day on these investigations and one of my most useful tools has been comparison of individual reactions to the films, which is why I ask you to return them as soon as it is convenient for you to do so. The ones I need are the color films on the large reel. I have several copies of the black and white one on the small reel, so you can keep it now if you want it for your files. I will make prints of any of the color ones you want a little later, but right now I can not do so, as I must live totally on the 65 dollars a month I get from you, as time is short and I can't waste it bothering with trying to get money. I eat only two meals a day now, but drink lots of water and eat nothing with white flower or sugar in it, so I save money and I hope improve my health at the same time.

Now about the films - the titles on them were added for the museum audience. Originally they were not titled and I still feel that giving specific titles is destructive because it tensions them to specific emotions, and for these particular films are as out of place as a chemist (sic) naming his experiments according to the colour they produce, rather than the purpose. But, for an audience as at the museum who represent as really stupid element who are prejudiced (sic) against accepting anything unless they are first told what it is, titles are of some value.

To me, the soul is expressed in the relations that exists between the rhythm of the physical world and the rhythm of the spiritual world. In worldly life the limits imposed by the material state keep us from comprehending the ultimate physical unit or the ultimate spiritual unit, however our intuitive preception of the ever-changing relation between the two clarifies them both. My films so far have been examinations of these forces.

My first film made in 1946 and called on the Reel "A Strange Dream" shows what I feel are the links between mans body and the rest of the physical world.

The rhythm of man is the rhythm of his heart. The rhythm of his heart is the rhythm of the Day. The rhythm of the Day is the rhythm of the earth. The rhythm of the earth is the rhythm of the rock. The rhythm of the rock is the rhythm of the molecule. The rhythm of the molecule is the rhythm of the atom and so on to the ultimately physically describable unit. The integration of all these

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physical levels illustrated step by step is shown in this first film.

The Second Film (1946-1948) called on the reel "Message from the Sun" is an investigation of the rhythmic organization of mans (sic) mind. Just as the atom is a small model of the solar system, in that both consist of a central force with circling points around it, the mind of man is miniature of a greater mind. This is part of what the Bible means by saying that God made man in his own image.

This film is like the diary of the earths path around the sun during the two years I worked on it. I feel that certain forces effecting us originate in the sun. It is possible to partially explore these by comparison of creativity among musicians playing, unconsciously, (sic) at different angles to the sun, and also at night when the forces must pass through the earth and be changed in quality for that reason. In making this film I suppressed sensory impulses from my body, as much as possible, and tried to record actual daily changes in the brain. The film divides itself into two general sections. This is partly due to my being able to induce a more perfect trance state as time went on, but is perhaps also because the suns changing position in the Galaxy changes the strength of energy coming from other sections of the universe.

In the film the stationary circle with three squares inside it represents the brain. Change in position of these squares are due to forces from outside the material world. The forces are represented by moving circles. Changes in color of the squares are due to messages from the material senses. The moving circles of four sizes and colors that precede the first statements of the brain symbol correspond to values of thought of four possible kinds. Identification of red, green, blue, and yellow with sections of a circle is the most important mental image known. The Tibetan Mandala is a nearly perfect diagram of this sort which is why it orders the mind so perfectly. It is less accurate than the film, however, because colors are not actual parts of the circle but are on a coincident plane whose exact relation shifts depending on the use - reasoning, memory, preception, intuition. This shows how the motion picture can illustrate facts known earlier but not visible except through movement.

Please remember that these films were not made for entertainment but for exploration and instruction. All the motions across the screen in the second one are unfortunate, but make the clearest two dimensional diagram of what is happening. In a three dimensional film on this same subject I will make someday, the forms will move out of infinity toward the spectator. Also remember that these films are made up of visual percussions in strict time like music, and must be thought of by the mental sequences that integrates strongly rhythmic auditory sensations, for example, and not the ones used for stationary art. Some people who see my movies for the first time say that they move too fast, but this is because they are using the wrong parts of their Brain.

The third film "Circular Tensions" and fourth film "Interwoven" and the Black & White one are imperfect attempts to use the dis-

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San Francisco Calif.  
June 17th 1938

coveries discribed (sic) above. Also in the box are two samples of the original film in two stages of completion.

The rhythm of my films will automatically synchronize with any music having the same general speed. They are best silent, however.

The films should be projected at standard silent speed (16 frames a second) on as large a screen as possible.

I hope that this letter has not been too long and complex, but I wanted to tell you the best I could what I have been doing. A lot of my ideas are, I know, incorrect and will be changed later, but I have tried to say truthfully what I feel now.

I have also made about a hundred studies for a three dimensional film since I wrote you, but will not be able to do more on this particular project until I have projection equipment. Also I must learn your opinion on certain points before I go on with this. I am going to make every effort to move to your city next month, but unless a miracle happens I wont, (sic) as I am several hundred dollars short of what I need.

Please be carefull (sic) of your health, Miss Rebay, also of traffic, as the city is a dangerous place, and your life is of much greater value to us than even you suspect.

My friends and I pray for you every day.

Respectfully

Harry Smith

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New York City  
Sunday, Nov. 18, 1951

Dear Miss Rebay,

When I woke up this morning I was very depressed, so, impulsively, I went to look at your paintings again to cheer myself up, and when I got to the museum the hostess at the desk gave me your gift, I can't express how moved I was as it means the difference between worrying and acting and not worrying about it this next week.

Now Miss Rebay, it is hard for me to tell you what I feel about your paintings for fear you will think I am trying to flatter you, but what I say is from my true heart. You know that I have never been in the East before, so I haven't seen real non-objective paintings except a few Kandinskys, and while I was prepared for Bauer I did not guess the effect of your work, to me what makes your paintings superior is the rhythm of each brush stroke and also the perfect colour. The lines in Diminuendo and the colours in Black and White (together with Aesthetic) I can hardly believe, I hope that soon you will hang your large painting (name?) to the left of Andante Cantabile to where it can be seen more directly, as it has the three dimensional effect I am so interested in, that Kandinsky describes but never completely accomplishes in his work.

I must admit that to me it is a waste of space to hang so many Scarlett (and even most Moholy-Nagy) but I guess I don't understand them yet.

Mrs. Blasingame told me Friday your message that Fischingers films were completely non-objective. I didn't mean to indicate in my last letter that they were not, as he is certainly the best film maker so far, (especially study in blue), but to me he is handicapped in trying to follow music. In the true non-objective films of the future, non-objectivity of motion, trajectory, and rhythm will be just as important as non-objectivity of form-relation, and this is impossible if the film composer has music in mind rather than his own soul which is nourished by silence and light.

Please get rested and strong soon, as I know your next large painting will be perfection.

Respectfully, your friend  
(signed) Harry E. Smith

P. S. Please forgive my uneven writing, because I am in bed with the flu.  
H.S.



New York City  
May 1, 1952.

Dear Miss Rebay —

When I was in your museum yesterday to try and make an appointment with you, I had not intended bothering you with a note as I know you are very busy with your new duties and painting, but after having seen your magnificent new show I had to write at once and thank you on behalf of all art lovers for the privilege of seeing at one time so very many of the historic masterpieces of Rebay, Bauer, and Kandinsky, also the works of earlier types, particularly the extraordinary Franz Marc group, so advanced for its time in the inbetween rhythm, and the Klee and Heger, surely the best works extant by these usually overdecorative masters.

Of all the paintings my favorite is the large Rebay on the first floor dated 1948-1952. The color themes and dramatic elements are so delicate and yet so powerful in

Organization and Balance. It is also a treat to see your early works. It is obvious to even the casual visitor that from the moment you first started to paint you have been an absolute master of your given space.

I will be back many times to study this great educational exhibit.

Respectfully,  
Harry Smith

C O P Y

1636 Buchanan  
San Francisco, Calif.  
May 9, 1951

Dear Miss Robay -

I can not tell you how happy I was to get your letter of encouragement. I was afraid that you were upset because I have taken so long on your films. I have for you now six three-dimensional films lasting between one and three minutes each. I showed four of those at the art museum Friday (but not the best two, which are for you) and although these films are only the beginnings of what I hope to make next, I got many enthusiastic comments. Even these first experiments will make two-dimensional films made from now on seem pointless.

I have sold just about everything in order to finish these films but I hope to come and show them to you within three weeks.

Also I will bring your two-dimensional color film I am finishing although it seems restricted after the three-dimensional ones.

I know you and your friends will be successfull in everything you do.

Best wishes,

Harry Smith