

Brandon Rowe
Prof. Besser
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Manfred Kirchheimer: An Interview

Manfred (or Manny, as he prefers to be called) Kirchheimer has been a filmmaker for about half a century, working as an editor, director, cinematographer, and documentarian. Extending from his earliest works like *Claw: A Fable* in the sixties through his larger works during the eighties such as *We Were So Beloved* to his most recent film, *Canners*, Manny's body of work has explored the various cultural and spatial facets to his adapted home of New York City and the people who inhabit it.

The son of a German graphic artist, Manny was influenced early on by the world of visual arts, specifically the German painter and graphic artist Hans Richter. As a Holocaust refugee, he immigrated to New York and attended the Community College of New York. With his mentor and the head of the department being Hans Richter, Manny was led into the film industry with an emphasis on documentary work. As for why he swayed toward documentaries, one reason was that he was "a religious Jew" who was "fearful about going out of town" and making documentaries meant he would be able to work within New York. While he quit religion in his final year of school, he held onto that sentiment and began work in editing. Joining the industry in 1952, he started as an assistant editor on Richter's film *8 x 8*. Three years later, he became a union editor.

Working as an editor for other people's films left him dissatisfied, however. To remedy this, he and Walter Hesse, another refugee and freelancer who he grew up with, decided to make an independent film together. They started to work on a feature script in 1958, which they titled *Dream of a City*. Shooting by themselves with 16mm black and white reversal, they wound up capturing 22 hours of footage on 3,000 feet of film. Not surprisingly, editing posed an issue - with both of them having equal say over the results. One of them would cut one scene and the other another, but ultimately Manny pulled together a large batch of the footage and edited himself. The result of this venture (and the first result of this footage), *Claw: A Fable*, was completed in 1966, by which time Manny had already completed his first 15-minute film, *Colossus on the River* about ship docking in 1965.

Following *Claw*, Manny was able to make his sole fiction film, *Short Circuit*, which was a reaction to the civil rights issues erupting during the time. However, in the years following *Claw*, which he used his own savings for in order to complete the film, Manny struggled to get grants or financing for any other projects. Despite being accepted to several festivals and receiving positive responses, he never took any action to get *Short Circuit* shown. In these years, Manny simultaneously worked union jobs as an editor for other people's films and taught part time at the New York Institute of Technology and Columbia University. Depressed with his work situation, he sought to make another film...

Manfred Kirchheimer: So after a while, not being able to stand not being in films, I made a short film out of that material that I told you about.

Brandon Rowe: The footage from *Claw*. The shooting of *Claw*.

MK: The city footage that *Claw* was made from, right. So I decided to dig in and, since my friend wasn't doing anything with it, and I made a film with it called *Bridge High*, which just took this one short section in the film in which there is a kind of a... what would I call it? A sort of mystic travel from the mystical country to the mythical city. And so I just took that and made a whole film out of that little section because I had shot, we had shot some very beautiful material, traveling material across several states and bridges. And so I combined those bridges and made a film about bridges, which starts in the country and that was *Bridge High*. And that went to the Whitney Museum and went to MOMA, you know, but again I never tried to do anything with it. I never marketed it, so it had a very small life.

A year after *Bridge High*, he quit the film industry to pursue teaching full time. Following years at the New York Institute of Technology and Columbia University, he finally began working at the School of Visual Arts, where he continues to teach after 38 years.

The two film Manny would make after his departure from the industry during the 1980's would be *Stations of the Elevated* and *We Were So Beloved*. *Stations* documented the graffiti work thriving on the subways of late-1970's and early-1980's New York. He switched subject matter with *We Were So Beloved*, the film he made five years later about the Jewish community of immigrants established in Washington Heights...

MK: *Stations* had gotten into the New York Film Festival, I think I told you that Janet Malcolm... no, what's her name... the one that does the book reviews now for the Times. She was the film critic at the time and she... Maslyn. Janet Maslyn, was late with her lunch and never came to review it at, you know, they review their films a day in advance at a press screening at Lincoln Center and she didn't come and so of the 31 films in that year's New York Film Festival, mine was the only one not reviewed, which hurt me a lot because I turned 50, I spent four years on this film, I finally made it big into Lincoln Center and it was dead. And of course it meant that when I later would try to promote it, I had wonderful reviews from all over the world, people would think, 'Yeah, there's no New York Times review there so it must have been lousy.' But of course there never was a review, so that was a great disappointment. But anyway, that film took me a while to make because it was very difficult to cut because it was cut like a musical structure.

MK: And then what happened - oh, my friend, same friend, but he was no longer making independent films. But we were both refugees from Germany, from Hitler, I think I told you that. And I felt, since that whole community that was created in Washington Heights was dying; my parents were in their eighties and so was everybody else, so I decided I wanted to make a film about those people, those people who had created this remarkable community in Washington Heights, although I think that all immigrant communities are probably equally remarkable. But this was the one I knew. So I made a very long film, a

two and a half hour film, called *We Were So Beloved*. And that did create some, you know, got a review in the New York Times, and a very, very fine review. It opened at the Film Forum and went on to other theaters and onto a DVD life, which still has an afterlife. It came out in 1986, it's first showing was at the Berlin Film Festival. What is that, fourteen plus thirteen - twenty seven years ago. And I get royalties every half year from First Run. You know, it went onto a DVD life.

MK: All right, well *Tall* was the last film that I shot on film.

BR: Okay.

MK: And *Tall*, we spent about six weeks shooting in New York and then another two in Chicago, one day in Buffalo and it was the first film I made outside of the city. And I had gotten a grant, a small grant for it, I think \$10,000 or so, something like that, which allowed me to travel and pay my crew of three, you know, a hundred dollars a day or so. Very little, I'm ashamed to say. However, after all that shooting, despite the fact that I had something of a script - not a complete script but a script that was really a lot of notes - I couldn't figure out how to structure it and year in and year out I would fiddle, I would work as hard as I ever worked and as consistently as I ever do, and yet it took me fifteen years to make that fucker, an hour and a half film that exists on DVD and got onto a couple of television channels but never did anything big. But I love that film, *Tall: The American Skyscraper and Louis Sullivan*. All about the Chicago Louis Sullivan.

MK: My son urged me to find a way to get *Stations of the Elevated* re-released and he said the only way that you could do that, since it's 45 minutes long, was if there were a good extras section so that people could go from it to the extras and he proposed that I interviewed some of the better graffiti writers. But it became apparent even after I interviewed the very first one that there was a film here, that this was not only extras. And besides, I didn't have the money to pay for the music rights for *Stations* to put it on DVD because now we're talking about serious business, on DVD.

Contrary to the lack of distribution of some of his films, *Stations* is especially accessible to audiences: a third party uploaded a VHS copy of the film onto Youtube without Manny's consent. Despite an initially negative reaction, Manny ultimately came to see this as a way for the film to gain publicity. And in turn it did: Jake Perlin, a programmer at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, championed the film and helped see that it made its way to independent theaters. This included taking care of the \$30,000 in music rights for the Charles Mingus soundtrack. But in his actions to prepare a DVD release of that film, a new project emerged...

MK: Oh, so as an interim thing for the extras [to *Stations*] I made a film called *Spraymasters*, in which some of these great writers get interviewed. And that was a fun film, very easy to make. It was the easiest film I ever made, but it was feature length and got a distributor right away and is out on DVD.

And that was followed by the film that I really wanted to make, *Art is... the Permanent Revolution*, which you've seen.

BR: Right.

MK: Right, because my passion outside of filmmaking, the other thing that interests me the most is graphic art. And I pick it up cheap on eBay or I got a nice guy in Germany - I go there every year for a film festival - who runs the shop where I buy stuff, so my house is littered with these graphic pieces and since I am also on the left and since a lot of these pieces are political, I made that film to connect the politics and the art and the art of making the art into that film you saw. And that was followed by the present film [*Canners*].

MK: So the last three films were all shot on digital. I abandoned film and happy to do it, and so the last one was *Tall and Tall*, of course, was transferred. So we got *We Were So Beloved* and *Tall*, both on DVD and in distribution and *Claw* on DVD in high definition but not in distribution, but *Claw* is going to be on a double bill with *Stations*, I told you that, in the early spring or late winter, that's going to go on tour... They're gonna be combined. My earlier films, *Colossus on the River* - I talked about that, right?

BR: Right.

MK: Right, and that one plus *Short Circuit* plus *Bridge High*... they're in my closet.

BR: And is that literally in your closet or Manhattan Mini Storage?

MK: Literally, literally. They don't exist in distribution.

BR: Okay.

MK: You know, somebody someday may make a box set or something, which is my dream, and then of course those films would be in there because they're kind of nice, but none of them are in distribution. So that's the rundown of my films, about a dozen films.

BR: Okay. And for the films that you've kept in your closet, have you maintained them or checked on them often?

MK: Well, let me see. *Bridge High* and the ship film [*Colossus of the River*] I use in my classes.

BR: Okay.

MK: So I know they're fine. *Short Circuit* I ran about a half a year ago for someone and that's fine too. They all look like the day they came out of the lab. I keep them in cans, they're not that old, you know,

thirty, forty years old, and the ship film is the oldest - that was finished in '65, so that's 35 and 13... 48 [years old] and it's pristine, it looks like a brand new print. So right now they're all okay, they don't smell, nothing of that kind.

BR: Okay.

MK: Now I just want to say that until 1976, I was also working in the industry and I was editing films and occasionally directing or shooting films during that time. Some interesting films, but they're not in my possession except for one color film, which I haven't looked at in years. It's probably okay, although since it was made in 1972 and it's on negative, the print may have turned red as those films did. You know all about that, before Scorsese made a fuss. You know about that, right?

BR: Yeah.

MK: So then things got better but I'm not... I think this is still with the old... I don't know, when did they get better? Do you know the year?

BR: That's a good question. I don't know the exact time.

MK: Yeah. Well anyway this print would be from 1972, '73.

BR: Okay.

MK: And like I said, it's the only one in my possession... well, there's one other, but it was done on reversal. Reversal is not a problem. Reversal never was a problem. As a matter of fact, that film, which was a kind of a music video before there were music videos, was made a couple years before that, like 1971, and it was recently at the last election, of the Obama election. It was on Youtube briefly. I haven't played my own print of it, but it looked good on Youtube. That was called *Telling the World*. That's a film I directed and edited. But that was for the industry, as I said. I got paid for that job. So I was making films until '76, until I left the industry and became a teacher full time. But I was doing these things simultaneously, my own films and the industry films.

BR: How did you feel about the films you made for the industry?

MK: You know, mostly I was selective. I turned down films, particularly films that I didn't agree with. I never worked for a cigarette company. The first film I was ever offered to edit after two years of apprenticeship I turned down. It was kind of a daring act because it was my first film, I'm dying to edit! But it was called *You and the Germans* and at that time - we're talking 1954 - at that time I was boycotting German goods because of the war and here was a film made for army personnel telling them how to treat Germans, how to be really nice to them and everything. I just couldn't stomach it. That was the script and they gave me the film. I said sorry, I can't work on it. And subsequently there are other films I turned down. But the saddest part is that the films that I did do were always corrupted by the producers. I would get sometimes fascinating material, I would pull it together, make a nice rough cut for

them to see, and for the first time they understood the films because, you know, when producers see a whole lot of footage, they don't quite know what's going to happen. And then they come in and say 'do this, do that,' so the careful preparation laid down for the rough cut preparation for where it could go from there would not happen. You know, they just saw the surface and not the potential and I would say 90% of the time the film then got very mediocre when it had much more potential. There were a couple of exceptions I would say, maybe five films out of the 300 I worked on as being kind of nice. Not great but kind of nice. The others I wouldn't want to show you.

MK: And... the good part of that is that it prompted me to make my own films. You know, you go into the industry as a kid. I was twenty-one, going there with stars in my eyes. 'Oh boy, wait till they see what I can do!' And then you get disillusioned more and more and you can't express yourself. You can't bring films that have a piece of potential, you can't bring them to fruition and they become quite ordinary. We editors - I don't know how much I told you last week - but of the various crafts in film, I always felt the editors were the smartest. The directors, you know they can bullshit their way and tell the cameraman 'shoot this and that.' I'm talking about the documentary industry and they could do that. The producers could do that even more because they could just say 'go out and get me something.' The camerapeople were often very talented camerapeople without a complete sense of how to shoot for the eventual editing. But they were okay, the camerapeople were okay by and large, not always. But the editors, they were really smart. They really knew how to envision something out of all this morass and, you know, they would make - they were alchemists, they would make a bulb out of shit. So I always felt the editors, you know... and I being an editor, became very... and the other thing is that you become close to your material because you're living with it for three months or so. Whereas a camera person, you know, one week gig, shoots this and that, goes onto another job and doesn't have the same investment. So you're in the editing world for months and this is your baby and your baby gets taken away and crapped up. So anyway, that meant that I had to in all my - since I was freelancing - all my free time meant I had to do my own work. It was the only way I could control where it would go.

BR: I just wanted to ask, what was the first film that you got actual distribution for?

MK: *Colossus on the River*, the ship film.

BR: Okay, and how did you wind up being able to get distribution?

MK: My original thought, since I was coming out of a commercial industry, my original thought is I would sell the film to a sponsor once it got made and the United States Lines. The film was about the ships to the United States. And United States Lines... and I put a very small price on it, I put a price of \$20,000 on it, a very small price for a film - and the United States Lines said 'okay, we'll pay half of that and co-sponsor it with someone else.' So I tried to get the tugboat companies that I was connected to to do the other half, and that never worked out. So instead I went to a couple of distributors of educational films. The biggest one at the time was something called Coronet. And the second biggest... [laughs] I forgot their name, is the one who took it on and gave me a royalty until they went defunct. That was good for ten years or so. So I just wrote these letters, I had no connections whatsoever, I had no agents, no nothing. And I didn't know how to market anything back then, so that's how that happened. And they

changed the name, the name of the film, to something I put on. It was *Colossus on the River*, they changed it to *A Boat Arrives*, or *A Ship Arrives*.

BR: I know that a lot of your most recent films have automatically been picked up by First Run and Cinema Guild.

MK: That's correct.

BR: And obviously *Stations* and *Claw* are going to be re-released... Would you like to take some actions so that your films are able to be seen by people, even if it's not like mass distribution? At least having them preserved so that in the future, people can still have access to them?

MK: Absolutely. I'm very eager and nervous about the digital world. I feel that my films are in good shape. I have some of them here and some of them in my storage as film and I think... You know, I'm 82, if I'm not around after ten years, I think I'll leave a note to my children. I have two sons in their fifties and I would hope, since they do admire my work, I hope that they would occasionally look at the films and make sure that they're okay. The digital stuff is much scarier because there's much constant change in the systems. Now for example, on this present film that you saw [*Canners*], I'm advised by my studio company, the one that did the mix and the color correction on it, advised that I needed a backup on an HD10SR tape. Why? Well, because if my hard drives go, then that's a good backup, that's the best tape system at the moment. But you know, five years ago it was a different tape system and five years hence it's gonna be another tape system and that tape is only gonna be good for as long as it lasts, in the first place, and in the second place, as long as somebody has the machinery to play it. What it means is that there has to be constant... When you go from tape, even though it's digital, to some other system, there's inevitably a loss. So yes, that makes me very nervous. One day I take... [George] Lucas has said it, one day they'll be a system that will really be a preservation system. And of course the best thing to possibly do right now would be to have the money to put these digital films on film because film has at least a life of sixty years. But that's very expensive. Somebody would have to do that for me. Unless you have a better idea.

BR: Let's see. I mean one option would be, for example, if your sons are going to look after your celluloid films, they could also, at least in some way, keep up to date on digital technology and make sure that your digital films are on a storage system that is of decent quality.

MK: Right. But you know, what you've got going right now, you've got TCM, whose prints are as beautiful as they ever were, throwing millions into this and doing this. But for us little guys, I think it's going to be hard to get the equivalent preservation.

BR: Right.

MK: Unless, of course... I mean that's why I would love to, like I say, get a box set, because somebody's going to pay attention.

BR: Right. And even if you do get a box set of DVDs or Blurays, even those will only be of a certain quality as oppose to having the original.

MK: Yes, but you'll have people who will make... if someone made a box set, let's say Criterion, those people would - and people like them - would probably honor the films by trying to keep them well for a while. That's what I meant. Not the system they would put into the box set, but in honoring the person by doing that, they would probably also honor them by trying to preserve the work. The Donnell [Library], before it folded, made new negatives of *Claw* and of *Stations of the Elevated* because they got a grant for preservation and they wanted to do that for my films. So I'm thinking of that kind of thing where other money gets thrown in and not my own.

BR: Okay. Going back to the issue of film versus digital, is there a specific reason why you made the transition from shooting film to shooting digital?

MK: Sure. Money and the fact that I thought digital was beautiful. I don't have a nostalgia... People have a nostalgia for film. They have a nostalgia for the grain of film. They have a nostalgia for the look of film. For the smell and touch of film. It seems to me that's all not relevant. I mean grain is the sort of thing we tried to get rid of. We always tried to use the finest film, the lowest exposure film, the finest grain film that existed to eliminate the grain. So now suddenly they're making a romance of the grain. I mean you can shoot on video and can degrade your video by pushing a button on a digital editing... You can put scratches on it, you can put dirt on it so that it looks more like film. I mean I think that's absolutely nonsensical. And it's obvious if you watch the BBC productions on Channel 13, it's obvious that with good lighting, beautiful lighting, you get beautiful, beautiful results. And the bullshit about 'grain is organic and pixels all line up,' you know nonsense like that has nothing to do with what the audience receives. The audience receives content and if the content and its presentation is good, then it seems to me that that's all that counts. So when my camera person got a digital camera, a Sony, I urged him to use it to shoot *Spraymasters* and he lighted it really nicely and so the people all look wonderful and it's so easy. It's a smaller camera, it's a lighter camera. The gear doesn't have to be so heavy. I don't have to deal with the fucking labs, which I hate with 16mm. You know, nobody can do anything with 16. My last experience, *Tall*, was a disaster. I spent \$8,000 getting a decent print of my own from that lab, in the course of which the fader broke down, the people who made the machines out in wherever, Grand Rapids or Bellam Howell, no longer had the personnel to know how to fix it. I mean it was a disaster. Film, unless you have a lot of money and you're working in large format, can't be used anymore. 16mm is gone. No one knows what to do with it anymore. I teach my students film still and yesterday we saw the results of their shooting and they did very well and the lab timed it pretty well, but there was a haze about a tenth of the frame in on the right side throughout all the films. Sort of a white, glossy haze, which means that there's a leak or something akin to a leak in the printing machine of the laboratory. They haven't noticed, obviously. They haven't done anything about it and that's the kind of thing you face and you have to pay for this stuff. So I left film with no regrets whatsoever, with the single exception of the archival stuff. And people look at me in wonderment. They say, 'Oh a guy like you, so old school, you outta be the guy fighting for film. I can't believe you like video over film.' And kids are saying this to me. 18 year olds who I teach are saying this to me like film is... nothing better than film. And these kids also have a nostalgia for physically editing the film. They want to bring the Steenbecks back. They want to use

scissors, they want to use splicers. They think that digital is not real editing, which is absolutely ridiculous. I mean, digital editing added years to my life. I don't have to do that damn splicing and unsplicing and plugging and looking through a barrel for a lost piece of film. I mean digital editing is wonderful! Oh my god, I love it so...

BR: How do you go about choosing the subject for your next film? Whether it's been the same all throughout or...

MK: Well I used to, whenever I didn't have to do interviews, I did all of the shooting myself. I taught myself filmmaking on *Dream of a City* [the filming which would result in the footage for *Claw* and *Bridge High*], so *Claw* was really the first film in which I had taught myself photography. So all the films except, like my first, *Short Circuit* in 1970... When did I shoot that *Short Circuit*? 1970. That was the first film where I worked with a cameraman because I was directing actors. Then after that I did *Bridge High*, which is my own shooting. Then I did *We Were So Beloved* and I had a cameraman. Actually it was shot over two years and I had different cameramen each year because one guy got sick. And *Tall* I did all my own shooting because there are no people in it, no talking heads, so I did all the photography. Subsequently, there are always talking heads. Whenever there are talking heads, I like to be off the camera so I can really be intimate with these people. And so starting with *We Were So Beloved*... well no, starting with *Short Circuit*, where I wasn't really shooting, I always used former students as my camerapeople. People who I had found were really talented and good. And in 1975 I joined the School of Visual Arts and since then, in *We Were So Beloved* and again in the last three films *Spraymasters*, *Art is... the Permanent Revolution*, and *Canners*, I've been using former SVA students and they've become fast friends, by the way. They've become good friends, those people I work with. And they're wonderful and you saw in *Canners* how on that spontaneous camerawork. I go up to a guy and I say, 'Hi, how are you doing? Can we film you?' And then the cameraman did work that looked like it was rehearsed. The camerawork was so careful, these guys are good. So I love working with them, I am basically a shy person and originally I was afraid of working with other people, but these guys give me everything I want.

BR: I'm also curious about if there are any particular topics or subject matters which you've been drawn to over the years... Based on my own observations, the city of New York is a very dear subject for you that you return to a lot.

MK: You're absolutely right, Brandon. For two reasons. One is that I think all my success as it were in the sense of making films was I had a lot of friends who are talented and intelligent and who would like to make films and don't. I think my secret is I do what's possible. You know, doing *Canners*, you don't have to leave home much. I mean the furthest I went is Brooklyn. So it's here, and if I want graffiti writers, they're here and if I want to do a film on skyscrapers, they're here. And the people in the art film [*Art is... the Permanent Revolution*], two of them were here and two of them were in Bridgeport. Okay, but Bridgeport is here, it's an hour and a half from here. So that's the practical part of it, and the other part is yes, I do love New York City and I love the life of New York City and the life has a great deal to offer and to investigate. But I also think the secondary theme, not as obvious, has to do with the clash of natural and manmade forces, and that's most prominent in a film like *Claw*. It's also prominent in *Stations of the Elevated* in which the trains go through landscapes, and certainly in *Tall*, in which the

manmade landscape of high buildings is within the context of something that was once natural. But on the other hand, I consider people natural so when you have a lot of people and you have shadows at midday, there's a clash between the manmade and the natural. In *Canners*, which is kind of a down and dirty film, it's not as obvious, but I think it's one of the things that operates in me. So I think that would be a secondary thing. But there's also a question of humanism. The people in my films are people I like and I don't investigate grizzly stories or sensational stuff. I stay away from that. I don't even deal with topical things because making films in a hurry makes me nervous. I like to take my time and do the film and have it come out the way I want it to.

I asked Manny about how his films have been preserved over the years. For the films released through First Run Features and Cinema Guild, he said that they only take care of the distribution; how the films are taken care of after that is up to the filmmaker. And so Manny has kept his films in one of two places: his closet or in an uptown Manhattan Mini Storage.

But along with his own films, Manny is also endowed with the works of another filmmaker to watch over: Leo Hurwitz. Manny had shot several of his films and after Hurwitz passed away, the prints of his films went to Manny. While he keeps one print of each film in his own personal storage, he has sent the rest up to the George Eastman House for preservation.

MK: When I was dealing with film, I kept one or two... after the approved print, I would make some more because I would have to send them out to festivals or whatever. And so I'd have maybe five or six prints of a film and I would keep two, one or two at home and I would keep the rest in storage as well as my original materials, my A and B rolls, my optical soundtracks, and even work materials like magnetic tracks in preparation for the mix. And of course my leftovers, my outs and trims. When it comes to the new way of working, where I might have thirty DV tapes or in the case on the most recent where it would be on a card that gets reused, the tapes I would seal in boxes simply and label them properly and they would go into storage, although not before the film was finished. So I have all the tapes from this recent film, from *Canners*. It was shot with a number of cameras, so there was tape and cards. And when I worked on my editing system, I put that source material into three different hard drives. So everyday I would back it up in two additional... I would work on one drive and I'd back it up on two others. So I have three hard drives that contain all my material and all my editing. And that is all in my house, from the last three films, so I haven't divided that up yet, although I'm gonna have to soon because things are bursting. And I have a lot of other stuff in storage that isn't film stuff. But basically all my film stuff, all my backup film stuff is in storage. And the storage is on the Manhattan Mini Storage, which I believe is six stories, and they're just about all under the viaduct. Do you know the building, do you know what I'm talking about?

BR: I believe so, yes.

MK: Yes, they're all under the 133rd Street viaduct. So they're in shadow most of the time and the first

floor, being the lowest, is the coolest and it's sort of an even temperature all year round. Obviously, it's a little heated in the winter and in the summer it's not air conditioned, but the first floor is always nice and cool. So I did make sure that that was the case, that the temperature was fairly steady on the materials.

BR: And I believe you said that you were given the works of, I believe it was Leo Hurwitz.

MK: That's right.

BR: His films, and you sent them to [the George] Eastman [House]?

MK: Most of them, and I have almost one print of every film in my storage. And the rest went to Eastman, yes.

BR: And have you checked on those films recently or as frequently?

MK: Yes, he had a retrospective at Anthology Film Archives and then he had one or two other shows where his films were shown. And each time they came out of my storage and came back again and they were good. And some of those films I shot and I have them at home, too. I never told you about that, that my favorite outside of my own work was making, shooting films for Leo. I shot *The Son of Richard Lippo*, I shot *In Search of Hart Crane*, I shot *Landscape in a Painting*... what else did we shoot? We shot another two films or so, I shot about five films - Oh! *Essay on Death*, right? I guess I shot about five or six films for Leo. *Haiku* I shot. So that was good work because he then edited them beautifully, very beautifully.

MK: Leo did not have big successes with his films, even though his films are wonderful, and being my mentor and role model, I figured 'Shit, if he can't get anything,' and distribution seen back then was not as good as it is today, because if you don't go theatrical, you know, or television, you can go to a place like Filmmaker's Library, who will take your film on if there's any educational value in it. And they're really nice people - have you heard of Filmmakers Library?

BR: I've heard of it.

MK: Sue Oscar and she was there last week. Yeah, there are really three women there and they're really marvelous. And the Donnell Library became a repository for film and helped all of us by paying for prints that they would then distribute. That was a wonderful thing. And these things all happened subsequently. Then with *We Were So Beloved*, which got a distributor immediately and which went theatrical, I was in a different class altogether because here was a two and a half hour film and my film before that was *Stations*, which is a three-quarters of an hour film. *Stations* did kind of well. *Stations* went to the New York Film Festival, then went on VHS and was distributed. So I had made my peace with that because of the role model of Leo. The fact that I'm going to make these kind of 16mm films, just because I want to and not because of a need for them, then I'll be happy building up a body of work that I'll be proud to call my own, whether or not they get out there and maybe someday will get out there. Which often happens in the world of art, where people do not do so well in their lifetime but if the material

has value... I rationalized it that way. Yeah, you know, one wants one's name up there, but that was really not my... I don't think I had daydreams of being famous. I think my greatest wishes were that people of quality who happen to see my films would think well of them. I think that's what I wanted. And still want.

Upon considering what Manny told me about the conditions of his films, I believe that, although Manhattan Mini Storage seems to be an apt place for storing them for the time being, it would be best to seek out an archive or organization that can house them properly in the long run. He did not go into detail as to how the Hurwitz films ultimately made their way to the George Eastman House, but it would definitely be worth looking into to see if prints of his films as well could be placed there. Manny stated that one of his wishes was for the collection of his work to be released to the public, for example through a company such as Criterion. While there might be challenges in incorporating his later works into this collection since they have been distributed by Cinema Guild and First Run Features, I think releasing the body of his early work together could ultimately prove beneficial in making his works more widely known. While simply releasing them on DVD and Bluray could be an option, I think a better way for these films to be announced to the film community is to have a small retrospective of his works. While the eventual re-release of *Stations* and *Claw* will definitely be beneficial, it could be built upon by including the films such as *Short Circuit* and *Bridge High* that have not left Manny's closet save for several festival screenings and classroom showings. Although it might be a more selective audience than wished for, the easiest venue for this to take place would be at the SVA theater, where Manny premiered *Canners* and which he obviously has a great deal of access. Another venue might be the Maysles Cinema up in Harlem because it is a theater specifically for documentary work. Finally, I believe the venue that would provide Manny's work with the greatest attention would be at Film Forum. The ability to schedule his films into the roster of the theater would be much more difficult than the other two venues, but I believe it would help that he has already had some of his work shown there, both individually (*We Were So Beloved*) and as a part of a separate program (*Claw* as part of their "New Yawk New Wave" series in January 2013). The key to gaining attraction for the collection would be the works such as *Short Circuit* and *Bridge High* because of their nonexistence beforehand in the exhibition world. Even if they are not the main attraction for the program as a whole, simply having the description of showing films that have not been seen until now should spark the interest of film enthusiasts. The person who would be best suited to organize such a retrospective would be Jake Perlin, who curated the "New Yawk New Wave" series and is currently looking into getting *Stations* out to be seen.