Wavelength (Snow, 1967)

*Wavelength* is the most well-known film of Canadian experimental filmmaker Michael Snow. It won the Grand Prix at the 1967 Knokke Experimental Film Festival and was hailed by Jonas Mekas as a “landmark event in cinema” upon its initial, private screening. Influenced by conversations with filmmakers at Mekas’ Filmmakers’ Cinematheque, Snow intended to make a narrative film that would draw attention less to the events on the screen than the author’s intention behind the camera*.* *Wavelength* comprises a 45-minute long zoom set in a New York loft, shot nearly continuously with only a few edits, and ending on a framed photograph attached to the wall at the far end of the room. There is no conventional plot and minimal action takes place within the filmed space, though there are four scenes where characters enter and exit the loft, as well as the apparent death of a man. The zoom is accompanied by a glissando tone that rises and falls at particular moments, and this sparse music is complemented by both diegetic and non-diegetic sound. The film’s simplistic set up belies an opaque nature that has lent itself to a variety of interpretations that focus on the film’s formal qualities, particularly its foregrounding of the filmic apparatus and the restrictions of the camera’s limited perspective. The film theorist P. Adams Sitney described it as a “structural film,” due to its foregrounding of film technique and subversion of audience expectations, while Annette Michelson argues that its structuring of time “redefines space as a temporal notion.”

List of Works:

Legge, E. *Michael Snow: Wavelength* (Cambridge, MA: Afterall One Work Series, 2009).

Michelson, A. (1971) "Toward Snow," P. Adams Sitney (ed.) (1978) *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, New York: New York University Press.

Paratextual Materials:

Wavelength

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBOzOVLxbCE>

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