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| Smith, Jack (1932-1989) |
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| Known as the ‘King of the Underground,’ Jack Smith is considered one of the most influential avant-garde artists to emerge in the 1960s. Although now mainly recognized as a filmmaker, Smith was also an actor, performance artist, screenwriter, eccentric essayist, and photographer. Jack Smith was born on 14 November 1932 in Columbus Ohio. Orphaned by his father at the age of seven, he lived with his mother and sister in trailer parks in Texas until his mother remarried in 1945. Smith left home in 1951 and briefly settled in Chicago, and then in Los Angeles, where he made his first 16mm film Buzzards Over Baghdad (1952). In 1953 he moved to Manhattan where he began taking film classes at the City College of New York. Throughout his filmmaking career, Smith developed an idiosyncratic style that combined camp aestheticism, Hollywood orientalism, and a taste for kitsch. Smith’s films were produced on extremely low budgets; they were often shot on discarded raw film stock that gave the image a bleached, overexposed look. Smith compensated for his lack of funding with his ingenious resourcefulness, often using inexpensive materials and discarded objects to great aesthetic effect. |
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| Further reading:  (Dyer)  (Fashion in Film: Birds of Paradise)  (Hoberman)  (Leggingwell)  (Stoschek)  (Smith, Flaming Creatures)  (Smith)  (Smith, Scotch Tape) |