



**THE GEORGE KUCHAR READER**  
 EDITED BY ANDREW LAMPERT  
 by Kalup Linzy

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When I began to read Andrew Lampert's introduction to *The George Kuchar Reader*, the anxieties, fears, and dim career outlook I have often experienced, eased. What resonates with me the most are Kuchar's often handwritten insights and reflections on his life and creative processes. Along with Kuchar's critiques of the '60s underground film world, the reader also includes clippings of reviews from his critics. Kuchar's belief that the common man shouldn't make films to compete with Hollywood or Pinewood studios prompted me to reflect on my own appearance on ABC's *General Hospital* alongside James Franco. The tension between the studios and the common man was very present during our stint, which generated our film *Francophrenia*. Creating something that would not scare away the daytime audience and advertisers, but also stayed true to our artistic practices, caused a bit of a collision, yet allowed us to experiment with an intervention that critiqued the industry's conventions.

Kuchar's engaging letters and emails to his friend Donna Kerness reveal much of his personal life and anxieties. The correspondence begins in the 1960s and ends on August 30, 2011, a day before his sixty-ninth birthday, six days before he passed away. In his final email, he tells Kerness how honored he feels that Harvard is archiving his work. In the fall of 2013, I taught two courses in Harvard's Visual and Environmental Studies department: "Music, Melodrama, and Performance Art" and "A Soap Opera Within Itself." In both I screened several of Kuchar's

KUCHAR

The ~~inner~~ inner beauty of the work will be revealed while at the same time the film-maker will crack and eventually commit suicide. Looking upon the face of ~~one's~~ own evil is enough to bring the sting of acid to an ecophagus that has previously experienced only buttermilk.

That 8mm will become avant-garde is a ~~contagious disease~~ <sup>contagious disease</sup> because we are all avant-garde to the point of ~~complete~~ annihilation and only when we face the after effects of total deformity can we then think more clearly and only because we couldn't concentrate on moral isolation.

Who are we ~~to~~ to ask whether 8mm will be the ~~the~~ avant-garde ~~of~~ of the future when only God and the Vatican know for sure. Moral issues of this nature should never be left for the filthy hands of the beatnik to twist into grotesque of degeneracy. Let the beatnik and the frustrated executive twist ~~the~~ 8mm film into his own image and thereby ~~not~~ give others a chance to sniff the world of narcotics and total spiritual breakdown.

Having worked with 8mm for 12 years, I have seen what it can do to a person, the creative intellect undergoes a great revolt and the bars of restraint are ripped

films. His lo-fi aesthetic and experimentation with music and melodrama helped students contextualize the work of contemporary video and performance artists such as myself, Franco, DJ Spooky, and others who are experimenting with similar issues as well as Hollywood aesthetics.

In an excerpt from "Farewell, My Pet," Kuchar recounts that as his dog was dying, he received a visit from a relative whom he didn't know existed. After a call to his mother, who revealed to him they had no relatives who fit his description, Kuchar became convinced that his mysterious visitor had stepped out of UFO folklore and was the culmination of the strange things that had been happening to him from 1978-80 on. Kuchar writes, "I would like to know who wrote this bizarre show with it's [sic] repeating melodies and curtain calls. Is it just my mind turning random vignettes into a fanciful, cohesive narrative? Some people think so but I doubt it. All that I have told is true and a great deal of it seemed to center around the death of my pet. If it all sounds silly, so be it. It doesn't matter whether you love a human, animal, vegetable or mineral. Love can work miracles; at least that's what I'd like to believe. Otherwise it's all very confusing."

This can be said about life in general or the chaotic artistic process. Being asked to write a response to this book only makes me believe more that some sort of higher beings are always at work. *The George Kuchar Reader* is a powerful reminder that life is full of love and friendship, mysteries, and uncertainties with no guarantees.

— Kalup Linzy is an artist based in Brooklyn. His work is in the public collections of The Studio Museum in Harlem, the Whitney Museum of Art, MoMA, and the Metropolitan Museum.