

Morgan Fisher

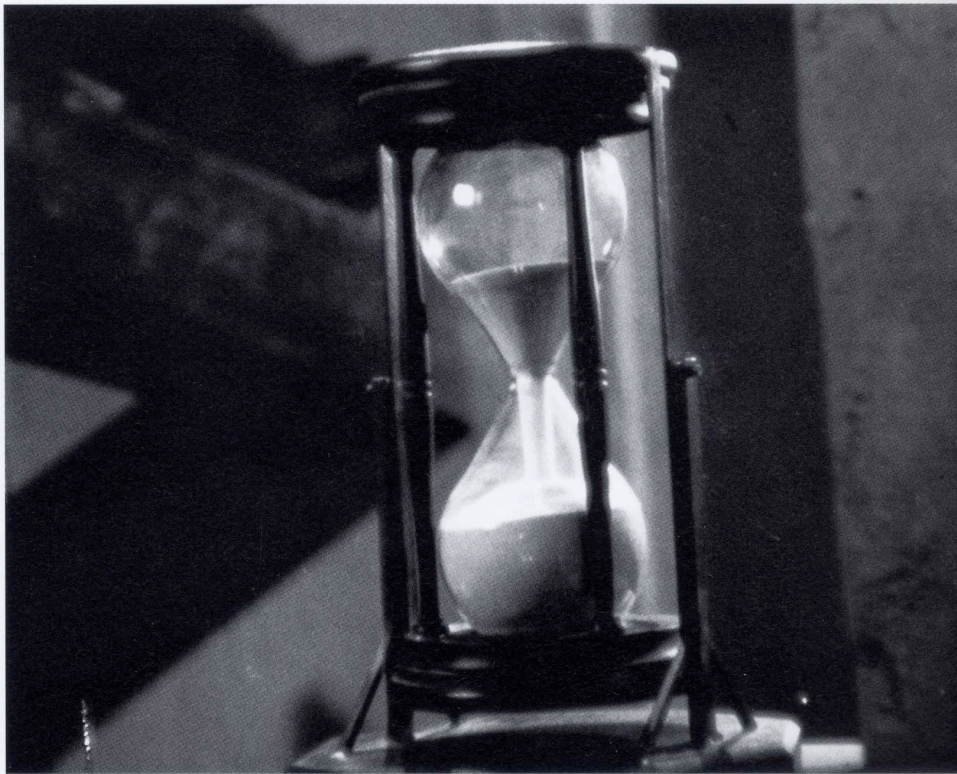
Born 1942, Washington, DC

Lives in Santa Monica, CA

Working in film, painting, drawing, and installation, Morgan Fisher explores strategies of composition and forms of self-description that first emerged in Conceptual and Minimal art of the 1960s. Fisher's works, which treat the conventions of film in a radical and paradoxical way, refer to both commercial films and 1970s Structural film, in which he was a key figure. His film *Production Stills* (1970) was shot on a sound stage using a Mitchell, the classic Hollywood camera, as well as a pack of Polaroid still film. The subject of the film is the means and procedures of its own making, thus undermining the allure of the commercial film industry with a subversive compositional procedure. *Picture and Sound Rushes* (1973) systematically explores all the possible basic combinations of image and sound in synchronous sound film. Its ruthless logic proposes the possibility of a film with neither sound nor image, a work that acknowledges the events unfolding in front of the camera but refuses to register them. *Projection Instructions* (1976) is a score that the projectionist performs. By turning the usually hidden projectionist into the protagonist of the event, it follows the convention of a Hollywood film in its dependence on a star but subverts this convention by keeping that person's picture and name from appearing on the screen.

In his film *Standard Gauge* (1984), Fisher shows a succession of scraps of 35mm film—leaders, run-off between takes, trailers, old television shows—that he scavenged while working in the film industry. The film follows the form of a photo album, a succession of images with a commentary, and functions as an autobiographical sketch while also considering various aspects of commercial film history, such as the disappearance of Technicolor and the long take in Alfred Hitchcock's movies.

Fisher's most recent film, *()* (2003), continues his critical engagement with narrative filmmaking. The film consists entirely of inserts that Fisher found in commercial feature films. An insert is a standard shot in the syntax of narrative films that shows a detail so essential to the story that the scene cuts from the main action to include it. In a narrative film, an insert's only purpose is to tell the story clearly; *()* removes the inserts from their narrative context, stripping them of their original meaning. Organized without narrative or thematic logic, the film has a strict compositional principle that maximizes the autonomy of each shot. As *()* liberates inserts, it also liberates its audience from the need to construct meaning from a sequence of images. In its embrace of chance juxtapositions, *()* joins Hollywood with Surrealism. **CR/MF**



Still from *()*, 2003. 16mm film, black-and-white and color, silent; 21 min. Courtesy Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne, and China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles