

## Daniel Steegman Mangranè

(Barcelona, 1977)

Entering a tropical forest can be a daily necessity, an adventurous, sensual experience, or it can coincide with a struggle for survival. For many, particularly those accustomed to the urban dimension, it may be approached as an encounter with an unknown dimension, capable of eliciting the most ancestral fears. Daniel Steegman's *16 mm* confronts viewers with a situation that is simultaneously physical and cultural. Immersed in a small, dark room, they find themselves catapulted into another dimension - that of a forest with no way out - the image of which, transmitted by a 16 mm film projector, unwinds incessantly. Paying attention seems inevitable: the slow and constant advance of the movie camera within the forest offers the changing vision of nature in preponderance, which the eye seeks to decipher as it also is on the lookout to catch possible threatening signals. At the same time, the constant rhythm with which the image is presented to the glance abstracts the experience from the specific theme, posing questions that relate to cinema and its structure.

The totality of significances of *16 mm* is closed off conceptually within its constituent elements. Steegman has used a standard-length (60.96 m / 200 ft) 16 mm reel, which corresponds to a projection time of 5 minutes and 33 seconds. With the help of engineer Stefan Knauer, he modified the mechanism of a movie camera and built a mobile dolly in order to have the camera move along a sliding cable, positioned three meters from the ground in Mata Atlântica, in southwestern Brazil. The modifications allowed that a unique motor made the camera film and propelled it forward with a total correspondence between the velocity of the film's advancement inside the camera and the advancement of the camera along the cable; as a result, the more than sixty meters traversed in the forest correspond to the length of the film employed. "The result is a continuous single take, a long shot traveling with constant speed through the jungle, going deeper and deeper inside it, for the duration of the roll of film, feet by feet. *16 mm* is both an essay on cinema and on the forest and the crossings that occur in it. A film about time and the nature of the creative act. An exercise of penetration that is not without psychological connotations. A tactile look. A conceptual and physical work."

Steegman continues: "This structural analysis of the medium was made in the jungle because even today it is one of the ultimate depths and it is from the impact felt entering the forest that the whole idea emerges. But this impact is not only physical or psychological: the Mata Atlântica rainforest is also, geopolitically, one of the densest places in the world. Since the time of the 'discovery' to the 'post'- colonial day of today, in the jungle happen a succession of conflicts: economic, ecological, geographic, human, scientific, historical, territorial, etc ... crossing each other, creating a network of relationships as complex as the geometry of the vines, branches, and trunks, and so difficult to equilibrate as it is to penetrate its natural thickness".  
(MB)