

about *Meshes* as being a point of departure. Each film was built as a chamber and became a corridor, like a chain reaction.

You know those puzzle games where, if you draw a continuous line from one point to another, consecutively numbered, you end up with a picture? Well, in this letter, I finally drew those points and got a picture.

Last May I had an emergency operation; it was touch and go for a few hours there, and I came out of it with a rapidity that dazzled: one month from the date of that operation (I had to be slit from side to side) I was dancing! Then I actually realized that I was overwhelmed with the most wondrous gratitude for the marvelous persistence of the life force. In the transported exaltation of this moment, I wanted to run out into the streets and shout out to everyone that death was not true! that they must not listen to the doom singers and the bell ringers! that life was more true! I had always believed and felt this, but never had I known how right I was. And I asked myself, why, then, did I not celebrate it in my art. And then I had a sudden image: a dog lying somewhere very still, and a child, first looking at it, and then, compulsively, nudging it. Why? to see whether it was alive; because if it moves, if it can move, it lives. This most primitive, this most instinctive of all gestures: to make it move to make it live. So I had always been doing with my camera, nudging an ever-increasing area of the world, making it move, animating it, making it live. This is part of the picture. *Meshes* is the warmest of my films; *The Very Eye of Night* is the coolest, the most classicist. Or so it seems, on an emotional, intimate, level. But the love of life itself, in *The Very Eye of Night*, seems to me larger than the loving attention to a life. But, of course, each contains the other, and, perhaps, I have not so much traveled off in a direction, as moved in a slow spiral around some central essence, seeing it first from below and now, finally, from above.

Anyway, this is one way to look at that reel of films. You can't say you haven't been briefed! . . .

My very best wishes,  
Maya Deren

## A Conversation\*

*Storm De Hirsch and Shirley Clarke*

### INTRODUCTION

*The eye of the women's movement has yet to notice talented Storm De Hirsch, veteran experimentalist. A typical concoction from her repertoire is Shaman, a Tapestry for Sorcerers (1966), described fancifully by the filmmaker: "For the magic makers of the world, those who enter the atlas of the soul and rummage through the refuse and flowers of time to weave a talisman for man's rebirth in his house of breath." Her little-known narrative work, Goodbye in the Mirror (1964), is perhaps the first full-length American independent film of directly feminist interest. De Hirsch tells the story of three single women who share a Rome apartment. According to Jeanne Betancourt in Women in Focus, "It sets forth Maria's conflicts with her roommates, her hunt for a man, and her ultimate decision to refuse her knight in shining armor." Goodbye in the Mirror is ripe for revival. Since 1974 Storm De Hirsch has been experimenting with super 8, creating ciné-sonnets from her own poetry.*

*Shirley Clarke became a cause célèbre with The Connection, her 1960 screen version of Jack Gelber's junkie play. In 1963 she made*

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