

Scheusal

Explicit Aquarium & Heart
Piero Heliczer and the dead language press

With
Calla Henkel & Max Pitegoff
Rosa Joly
Justine Lai
Jack Smith

Scheusal Berlin in collaboration with Sophie Vinet, Les Bains-Douches, Alençon

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Artist, poet, publisher, actor, and filmmaker, Piero Heliczer (1937-1993) lived a nomadic life between Paris, Amsterdam, and New York before settling in France. A figure on the fringes, he is central to the history of the American underground and the international counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1950s in Paris, he founded The Dead Language Press with musician Angus MacLise, publishing his own works as well as those of Beat Generation poets and writers. After a stint in England, where he made his first film with filmmaker Jeff Keen (*The Autumn Feast*, 1961), he moved to New York. There, he befriended Jonas Mekas, Andy Warhol, and Jack Smith, whose artist book, *The Beautiful Book* (1962), he published—a prelude to the making of *Flaming Creatures* (1963), in which he appears and which he edited, and *Couch* (Andy Warhol, 1964). He also collaborated with Tony Conrad, Gerard Malanga, Mario Montez, Barbara Rubin, among others. Cinema was one of the ways Piero Heliczer captured an intense yet fleeting presence in the world, blending film diary, performance, and mythological themes.

Heliczer co-founded The Paris Filmmakers Cooperative with Patti Lee Chenis, Pamela Padyk, and Barbara Rubin, which he described in 1971 as a «non-profit organization devoted to the highest ideals of film creation, without discrimination based on race, color, creed, sex, birth, nationality, or artistic competence.» The Paris Filmmakers Cooperative gained momentum in the late 1960s by acquiring film copies from filmmakers Heliczer had mostly met in New York. Screenings were organized in France, the United States, Germany, Austria, Italy, and more, often accompanied by poetry readings, concerts, or performances. In 1965, Piero Heliczer made the film *Venus in Furs* with The Velvet Underground, during the shooting of which a CBS crew filmed what would be the band's first television appearance.

For the occasion of this presentation of Piero Heliczer's work in Berlin, a selection was made from a private collection built over time by Sophie Vinet, the Director of Les Bains Douches, an art center located in Alençon, France. In Scheusal's first room, flyers, books, posters, and other printed objects are gathered in three vitrines and hung on the walls, along with a *PARADISE* painting by Max Pitegoff and Calla Henkel. In the second room are shown four films, including *Venus in Furs*, a film made in 16mm by Heliczer in 1965. As an attempt to create an echo between different spaces and times, *Explicit Aquarium & Heart* brings together artists whose works resonate with Piero Heliczer's elliptical and collective thinking.