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Art in Review

Barry Gerson

'The Parting of the Clouds'

*Thomas Erben Gallery
526 West 26th Street, Chelsea
Through March 28*

Barry Gerson was a well-known member of the generation of 1960s and '70s Americans working alongside minimalism and associated with experimental — known as structuralist — filmmaking. After exhibiting his work at most of the major museums in the city and following his inclusion in the 1983 Whitney Biennial, Mr. Gerson quit making films for two decades. This small, thoughtful show offers a reintroduction — for many, a first glimpse — of his work.

It is a somewhat compromised presentation, however. The films on view here were shot on rich 16-millimeter Ektachrome film, but only one is projected large scale, as a video, against the wall. That film, the silent "Luminous Zone" (1973), was shot inside a room and focuses mostly on mundane fixtures like the radiator. Opaque mattes appear periodically in front of the camera lens,

reframing the image. Over all, the film is a bit reminiscent of Michael Snow's "Wavelength" (1966-67), the best known of these rigorous, conceptual room-films.

The other three films appear here on small video monitors, which diminishes their effect. But seeing them this way is better than nothing at all. In "Beyond" (1970), the ocean is visible over the horizon of a woman's neck, while "Dissolving" (1970) and "Translucent Appearances" (1975) play tricks with the camera and landscape, comparing film vision to the foibles and com-

pensations of the human eye.

A wall of "constructions" — basically collages — employ images cut from National Geographic magazine and photographs made with the obsolete Nimslo 3D camera. The Nimslo produced images that looked like lenticular prints, giving the constructions a strange, hard-to-place appearance: somewhere between psychedelic '60s and early '80s digital imaging. Like the films, the constructions pique your desire to see more of Mr. Gerson's oeuvre.

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An image in "Luminous Zone," a 1973 Barry Gerson film, shot on 16-millimeter Ektachrome.

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND THOMAS ERBEN GALLERY, NEW YORK