

Dear Nestor:

It is too damn hot here in New York to go thru all the amenities other than to hope that all goes well with you and that you are having an interesting time. All goes fine with me here.

The purpose of this letter has to do with a movie idea that a friend of mine and I have thought up. Do you remember the movies on Goya, Picasso, da Vinci, in which only the paintings are shown, and where the camera moves around the paintings to give the movement. I remember you had a similar idea for doing a movie on New York using the Jacob Riis photos, and to move the camera around them. Well, we have an idea to do a thirty minute short for television on the Civil War using the Matthew Brady photos, and others. We will have a narrative which will incorporate quotes from soldier's letters, battle documents, etc and also use music of the civil war period, of which much has recently been recorded. The big problem in our picture will be the editing, that is, the overall editing - the script, quotes, and pictures. So much has been written on the war, there are so many thousands of documents, letters, etc, and so many points of view, that it will take a lot of work to bring it all into focus. Also, the Brady pictures present a problem because despite their historic value, they are very static and repetitious. However, I know it can be done. Our chief bit of luck - in fact, it is how we came up with this idea - is that 1961 is the Centennial of the Civil War, and there will be all kinds of things happening that year. Now my question is, how do you take movies of photographs? Since the average Brady photo is about 8x10, would we not need an extremely long focus lens so that we could move in very close, when we wanted to? A lens that will permit us to show say an inch square section of a photo? Also, since there is the problem of grain, we think it should be shot in 35mm, since at best, the Brady pictures are often fuzzy. I doubt we would need more than one of two lenses, and we probably do not need a very fancy camera. The problem of parallax will be very serious, but thru experimentation, I am sure it can be solved very accurately, as there will never be any need to move the camera more than a foot or two. But how to move the camera? I imagine on a very stable, and low geared dolly, as again the movement will not be much, but the movement must be accurate, since we will be working on such a small size object. I would be interested in hearing what your ideas are on the technical aspects of photographing photos with a moving picture camera... We plan to make a 5 minute pilot film on one phase of our subject, such as the Battle of Gettysburg, so that we will have something to show when it comes to raising the money.

Regards,

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