

AMY HALPERN 1953 -2022

Amy Halpern, A Complete Bright Object in the Dark

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Somehow, the most elementally vital and vividly present person I've ever encountered in our film community (and perhaps in my life) is no longer physically manifest. This seems to be an impossibility, even a paradox. Everyone I've spoken to seems to share in the same single reaction about her passing: sheer disbelief. How could this eternally beautiful, eternally connected soul not be with us anymore?

Of course, in the way one always says, she is still with us, and she leaves us not only her incredible, sensual, adamant, and powerfully defiant body of cinematic work, but also all who encountered her share common yet individual experiences of having been at some point in her extraordinary presence, and gazed lovingly at by those unparalleled eyes.

Amy was hilarious, insistent, devilish, brilliant, and one of the most deeply empathic people I've ever known. She could always make me laugh. In the same sentence she might refer to one person as "a treasure" and another as "a real fucker."

Amy was like undulating tendrils of perfumed smoke that gradually fill a space, redefining the experience of that space and our memory of it after we leave. She was also like the ecstatic fireworks superimposed over color negative footage of celebratory revelry in her dear friend Chick Strand's film *Anselmo*. She lit up a room, really and truly, but also moved surreptitiously through it, creating many stealth connections and moments of humble revelation as she did so. Her greatest passion in life (and she had many) always seemed to me to be making connections with as many people as possible, out of sheer love and genuine interest in any other human being existing out there in the world. I can't count the number of times friends encountered her for the first time and then told me, "I met Amy Halpern, and she is amazing."

Years ago Amy wrote about her own work, referring to her early films with characteristically poetic simplicity as "complete bright objects in the dark." As we tend to say about the legacies artists leave, her soul lies in her films, and anyone wishing to commiserate with her or even encounter her for the first time could indeed get quite a rich sense of her by watching her films. They are beautiful, magical, ornery, provocative, intensely humanistic, unyielding, funny, political, weird, and revelatory expressions, and are true articulations of her essential spirit. Amy always struck me as incapable of being anything other than her utterly absolute self, and as such, her films are unadorned articulations of that self. And with her passing, I miss Amy Halpern dearly, but still feel her presence vividly as a complete bright object in the dark.

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