

Last night brought a short film program to the [Milwaukee Art Museum](#), â€œA Haunting Inspiration: Francis Bacon in Film.â€ Curated by Jonathan Jackson, program director for the [Milwaukee International Film Festival](#), the evening included a range of films, some of whose influence upon Bacon was obvious or openly acknowledged, others of which were influenced by him.



One of the former was the film â€œUn Chien Andalouâ€ by Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali. Jackson, in his introduction, remarked that Bunuel claimed the only rule for the writing of the [script](#) was that “no idea or image that might lend itself to a rational explanation of any kind would be accepted.”

The Pawn, in his artistic past, worked extensively in the theater, mostly lighting and set design, some sound as well. One favorite collaborator was Paul Krajniak, a visual artist who, to all appearances, saw theater as a means to an end. He would mount extravagant shows on grand themes, in which all of the action seemed to drive inexorably towards the most stunning tableau. It may have been said of Krajniak that his only rule for the writing of a script was that no words be used. I more than once received scripts from him that quite literally were picture books. Page after page of schematics and sketches that tried to advance a story, or set a stage, or merely sound a theme.

Paul is color-blind, which made lighting his shows an even more interesting challenge but also brought unparalleled freedom. On his last show, â€œKnee-deep in Atlantis,â€ he brought in a colorist with whom he spent some time in consultation. She then presented a pallet of colors which the scenographer, costumer, makeup artists and I all took as our launching point. The interplay of light, fabric and makeup, all in tune to that minimal pallet, made the the stage visually sing at times. The tableau would unfold in beautiful display and the audience, obviously perplexed by the seeming discontinuity of the words and action, would let off a vibe of contented wonderment at the spectacle.

Oh that pictures of those shows existed...