



GOREFEST 2004

Stitching Together Cinema's Harshest Moments

"All you can do is cling to your obsessions.... Construct your own personal mythology out of them.... Follow those obsessions like stepping stones in front of a sleepwalker.... [Because] if you compromise with your own obsessions, that way lies disaster."
—J.G. Ballard

BALLARD WOULD LOVE ARA PETERSON'S NEW SHORT FILM, a montage of the goriest parts of your favorite horror movies. (You can easily spot *Evil Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead*, and even that part with the melting Nazis from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.) He calls it *Ultra Violence*, and in just under twenty minutes he reminds you of the most grisly murder, mayhem, blood, guts, and gore you ever saw. Then he collides it with hypnotic and gorgeous animation (Ara is part of the Forcefield collective, after all). He manages to make violence appear beautiful, and to make beauty almost impossible to watch. And in the end, it's not the violence that's gratuitous, but the repetition. It's like George Romero with such intense OCD that he can only shoot the violent parts of his movies.

Great films have the power to immobilize an audience, and

Ultra Violence plays out like an instruction manual on just that. It opens with a black-and-white sequence of starbursts/fireworks, each accompanied by an explosive sound, which induces this first stage of surrender. Then comes the montage, with all the original audio tracks. Blood spurts from the neck of a beheaded man, faces melt and are pulverized, cops are riddled with bullets as they sit in their patrol car, a TV news anchor blows his head off, a saw glides across a woman's neck. Green slime and entrails bubble up, weird screams ring out, pus gurgles. The images are so tightly edited that Ara describes the process as "exactly like making a stop-motion animated film."

The collage ends with a scene from a Dario Argento film. A woman whose hands have been lopped off drags her arms across a wall, creating an intense arc of blood that cascades down. The scene repeats nearly 80 times, and your attention is drawn to different parts of the image, and to Ara's eerie manipulation of the original soundtrack.

The final section, which is silent, is composed of stroboscopic images—geometric patterns and vibrating orbs of super-saturated color. It's incredibly hypnotic, a kind of psychedelic violence. You begin to think of those Japanese kids having epileptic fits from watching *Pokémon*, but Ara insists it's not as sinister as that. "The end part is there to clean off the audience's mind" he says. Like a true obsessive, Ara always tidies up after himself.

BOB NICKAS