

# Zooming in on Chuck Close

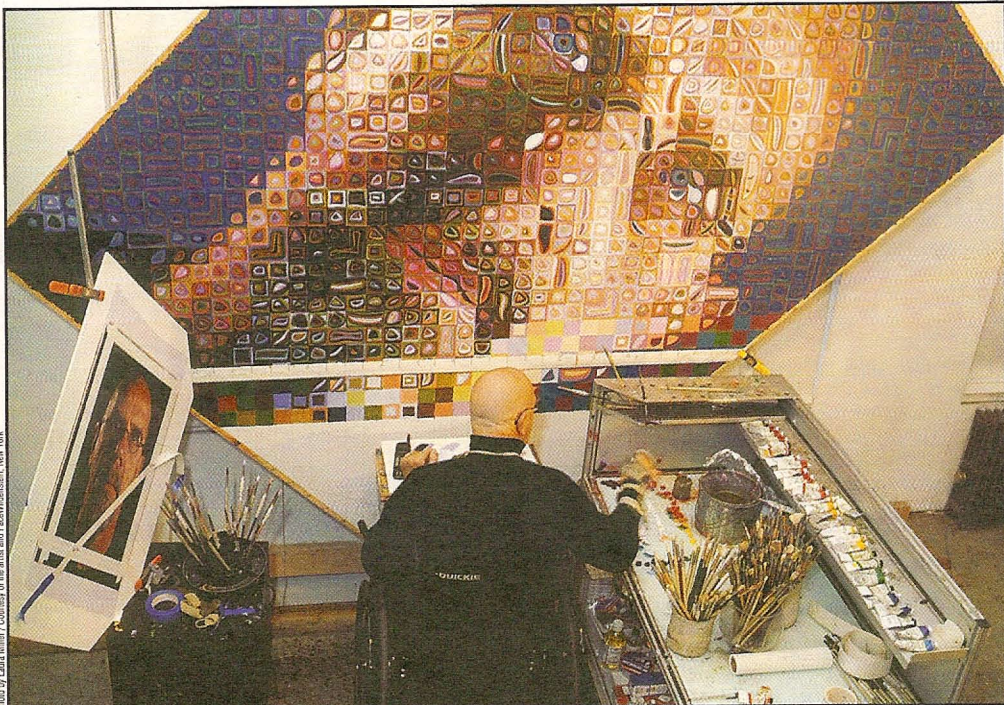
*A film new on DVD reveals a portrait of a warm and profoundly thoughtful artist*

## MEDIA REVIEW DVDS

IAIN MILLAR

The death of the documentary film-maker Marion Cajori in 2006 was a huge loss for the art world in which she'd grown up (as the child of two New York painters), and on which she'd turned her camera for over 30 years. Her posthumously released film on Louise Bourgeois ("The Spider, the Mistress and the Tangerine", 2008), completed by her collaborator Amei Wallach, was a tour de force. Now another work, released a year after her death, is newly out on DVD and we are reminded yet again of what else might have been.

"Chuck Close" is a biography of the painter, related as he makes a self-portrait in his studio. Cajori reveals a far from straightforward artist, whose huge, complex portraits (the painting he makes here takes some three months to complete) are given further depth by the stories and anecdotes told by his many subjects, including Brice Marden, Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Serra, Elizabeth Murray, Philip Glass and Arne Glimcher. The paintings speak for themselves, while the observations run the range from the affectionate to the penetrating. Close reveals that his friend Serra named him "Chucky Fatface" while they were students; Rauschenberg refers to Close's work as a "mystery that we may never decipher". Lucas Samaras, who reciprocated Close's portrait



Up Close and personal: The artist working on a self-portrait in his studio

with one of his own, states: "My camera liked his buttock, his thigh, and his leg."

But while much time is productively given to Close's personal and creative history—including moving accounts from his family about the effect of the spinal blood clot in 1988 that left him wheelchair-bound—Cajori's particular triumph is in capturing the detail of Close's creative process. At one point the artist says that he hopes to make "a beautiful, powerful image out of stupid marks". That his "marks" are so far from that is revealed to great effect, not least when the film-maker

attaches a small camera to one of Close's brushes, taking the viewer right into the work. It's a risky technique that could have seemed pretentious but, carefully handled and not overused, is captivating.

Cajori took her time with her subjects: the film was begun in 1993 and an earlier version of it was originally shown on TV in 1998. Her patience was more than repaid. This portrait in portraits reveals a warm, deeply human, and profoundly thoughtful artist and, as such, is a tribute to both the painter and the film-maker.

Also out on DVD later this

month is a compilation of works commissioned by the UK's **AnimateTV**, set up in 1990 as a joint project between Channel 4 television and Arts Council England in order to support artists' animations. The disc contains 23 short films chosen from over 100 commissions selected from annual open submissions.

Among the highlights is Paul Bush's "Furniture Poetry", a formalist experiment in the visual delights of using stop frame to alter the position, size and colours of chairs and tables, fruit and crockery. Mark Simon Hewis uses a fairground ride to create his "Life Size Zoetrope". Three of Phil Mulloy's bitterly funny and disturbing "Cowboys" series of drawn animations are included, as is a typically darkly comic piece—"Who I Am and What I Want"—from David Shrigley in collaboration with Chris Shepherd. Also included is a 1999 piece by Tim Macmillan, who invented the time-slice technique for frozen motion best known from the "Matrix" movies and numerous adverts since. "Ferment" is a more thoughtful trip in and out of people's homes and events on the street of a town, presumably meant to be happening all at the same time. ■

□ "Chuck Close" is available from [www.newvideo.com/arthouse-films/chuck-close-2](http://www.newvideo.com/arthouse-films/chuck-close-2), priced \$29.95

□ "Animate TV: 20 Years of Experimental Animation from the UK" is available from [www.animateprojects.org/shop](http://www.animateprojects.org/shop) from 13 September, priced £17