

## Synopsis

### PERSEVERANCE & HOW TO DEVELOP IT

A film by Jenny Perlin

16mm, b/w and color, sound, 14 minutes, 2002

*Perseverance & How to Develop It* takes the viewer on a journey through obsession, the drive for success, 1915 self-help tricks, and strikes at the Ford Motor Company. The film explores how the growth of industry in the 20th century relied on self-help to instill a drive for success in young workers.

*Perseverance & How to Develop It* was a book published in 1915. Its concluding chapter, "Practical Exercises," outlined five tasks to be practiced on a daily basis. Untangling yarn, counting grains of rice, measuring oneself against a watch--these tasks made for success, by disciplining the mind and body. These exercises bear a striking resemblance to movements along an assembly line.

*Perseverance's* publication came as the Ford Motor Company assembly line was being perfected. In the same period, Sigmund Freud wrote the important essay "On Mourning and Melancholia," which described from a clinical perspective what we now call depression. The appearance of all these texts during the height of American industrialism and World War I was not a coincidence. To become a productive member of society, whether working in the city or preparing for war, a young man needed to manage his moods and develop self-control.

The same issues come into play today. Workaholism, the widespread use of psycho-pharmaceutical drugs such as Prozac and Zoloft, self-help books, and an insatiable quest for happiness all resonate with *Perseverance...*, written nearly 100 years ago.

The cycle of work, success, depression, and back to work, continues to this very day.

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Direction, Camera, Sound, Editing: Jenny Perlin

With: Pablo Helguera, Tami Jantzi, Terry Perlin, Suzanne Wasserman

Contact: J. Perlin  
280 St. John's Place #4D  
Brooklyn NY 11238 USA  
917 673 4335  
jenny@nilrep.net