Koyaanisqatsi, a film by Godfrey Reggio, music by Philip Glass, cinematography by Ron Fricke. A Frances Ford Coppola presentation, now playing at the Sack Charles and Harvard Square theaters.

Koyaanisqatsi begins without a single word spoken. It ends the same way. In fact, the only things one hears through the entire 87 minutes of this "odyssey into wordless cinema" are the tumultuous score and exclamations of "oh, wow" from an awed audience.

Producer/director Godfrey Reggio attempts to show us the world we live in as we have not previously perceived it. His chief artistic tool is the use of time-lapse photography, a time-worn device transformed by cinematographer Ron Fricke into a new medium by applying it to fresh subjects. We've all seen time-lapse shots of suns rising and flowers growing, but Reggio and Fricke turn their lens to less obvious images: cloud sequences, desert buttes, shadows of buildings creeping over other buildings, cumulus clouds spilling waterfall-like over mountain peaks, and other seen-but-not-seen landscapes.

The nature shots, even the surreal cloud sequences, are among the most beautiful on celluloid, but when Reggio turns his attention to cities and "life in turmoil" he tips his hand, foreshadowing his socio-ecological sermon like a rookie boxer telegraphs his left hook.

What follows the initial time-lapse sequence could be predicted by any first-year film student: The audience will be treated to assembly lines, commuters in Grand Central Station, buildings being demolished — all intercut with slow-motion shots (Contraire, get it?) of the time-ravaged, dehumanized inhabitants of the industrial age frequently photographed by Diane Arbus.

Not all of Reggio's themes are treated so heavily. A shot of a 747 landing is underscored by a heavenly choir — his socio-ecological sermon like a rookie boxer telegraphs his left hook.

"Koyaanisqatsi is a paean to the machine age. He pans back from an idyllic beach scene to reveal a few sunbathers seeking refuge in the shade of a lowering oil storage tank, and the assembly line sequence showing Twinkies being manufactured recalls Charlie Chaplin's cake-packaging shot from Modern Times."

As intent as Reggio seems on reworking the Chaplin classic in his own image, the message has not changed since 1936. Trite though the message may be, Reggio has achieved an ideal visual/musical synthesis, which in itself makes Koyaanisqatsi a worthwhile viewing experience. Keep in mind, however, that just as you should not expect entertainment with your sociology, you should not expect sociology with this entertainment.

David Shaw

Latacarta, 53B Whipple Street, Cambridge, 334-2865.

Latacarta is a charming, relaxed, natural-foods restaurant hidden in Harvard Square next to the Crimson Galleria. It is located on a half-flight below street level — consequently it has no windows — but this actually enhances the serene atmosphere. Appetizers at Latacarta include mussels, pasta, and enchiladas, most of which are simply smaller portions of the entrees, making it possible to have a nice meal solely from two or three appetizers. In the past, I have had Latacarta's mussels, which are offered plain and in a variety of sauces. The steamed variety were some of the best I have ever tasted. They were delicate, coming easily out of their shells. In a word, exquisite.

The menu at Latacarta consists of a standard menu and a nightly menu. Recently, one of the nightly specials has been a dish consisting of mussels and pasta. The pasta was served in the center of a deep dish, with the twenty mussels arranged around the side. It was hearty, a little heavy-handedly. A shot of a 747 landing is underscored by a heavenly choir — his socio-ecological sermon like a rookie boxer telegraphs his left hook.

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