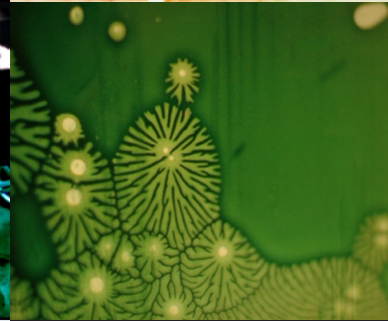
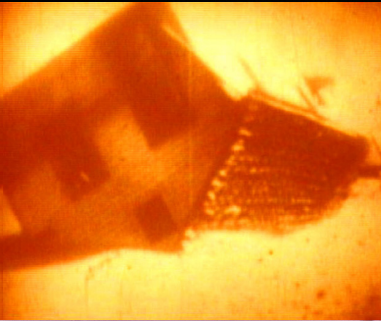
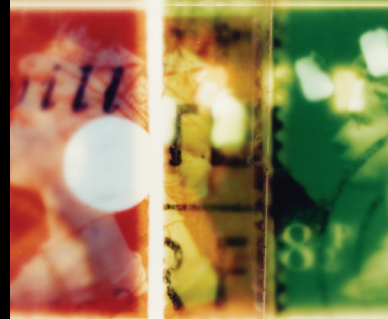
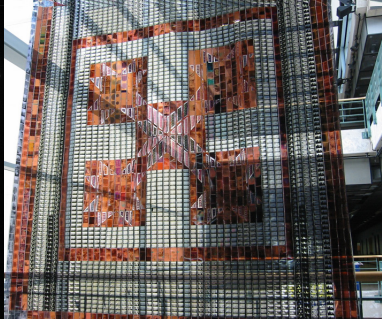
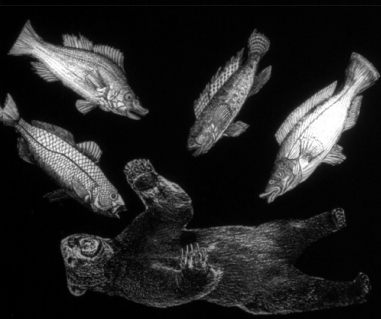


Strategies of the Medium v:
Go Big or Go Home



STILLS (L TO R FROM TOP LEFT):
three hours, fifteen minutes before the hurricane struck, Christina Battle; *c:won eyed jail*, Kelly Egan; *A Firefly*, Kelly Egan; *Post Mark Lick*, Sonia Bridge; *Going Back Home*, Louise Bourque; *ten thousand dreams*, John Price; *Love in the White City*, Clive Holden; *Blue Tide, Black Water*, Eve Gordon & Sam Hamilton; *The Babble on Palms*, Steven Woloshen; *View of the Falls from the Canadian Side*, John Price; *Editorial*, Steven Woloshen.
COVER STILL: *Blue Tide, Black Water*, Eve Gordon & Sam Hamilton

Strategies of the Medium

Presented by the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT), this six-part screening series reflects on current and historical practices in the use of specific material and technical strategies in artist-based film production. The screenings and accompanying panel discussions complement LIFT's series of advanced workshops and production courses on the topics of animation, optical printing, the Bolex camera, photochemical processes, and 35MM artist film.

Part I: **Animating Analogue**

Part II: **Printed Light**

Part III: **In the Dark**

Part IV: **In 27 Seconds**

Part V: **Go Big or Go Home**

Part VI: **Pieces of Eight**

Part V: **Go Big or Go Home**

8PM, Saturday, February 27th, 2010

Cinecycle, 129 Spadina Avenue (down the lane)

Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada

EYE WEEKLY

Strategies of the Medium is supported by the Canada Council for the Arts.

Strategies of the Medium v: Go Big or Go Home

This installment of the Strategies of the Medium series is dedicated to artist film in 35MM. Often perceived as an inaccessible format and/or one geared towards industry uses, there is a growing circle of DIY filmmakers from around the world using 35MM in affordable, creative and unexpected ways. This screening explores the diversity of their practices from cameraless animation to sparse structural works. The program complements 35MM courses offered in the LIFT winter 2010 workshop season: *35MM Filmmaking: An Overview* and *Introduction to the 35MM Animation Stand*.

The screening will be followed by a panel discussion with filmmakers Kelly Egan and Steven Woloshen.

Panelist Bios:

Kelly Egan holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Mass Communication from Carleton University (2001), a Master of Arts in Communication and Culture from York/Ryerson University (2003) and a Master of Fine Arts in Film/Video from Bard College (2005). Her films have been screened at major festivals across North America, including the Toronto International Film Festival and the New York Film Festival. Kelly is currently working towards a Doctoral degree in the York/Ryerson Joint Graduate Program in Communication and Culture.

Steven Woloshen is a Montreal-based cameraless animator who has been making films since the late 1970s. He initially worked with Super 8MM and video at Vanier College, then studied 16MM independent film at Concordia. Since 1999 he has worked primarily in 35MM, often in CinemaScope—an oddity in the independent film world that is made possible by his

otherwise thrifty means of production. His works have screened worldwide at festivals including the Montreal World Film Festival, Tampere International Short Film Festival, Annecy Animated Film Festival, Ottawa International Animation Festival, and I Castelli Animati in Rome.

Dreaming in 35MM:**35MM DIY**

8MM and 16MM film gauges have long been the stand-bys of independent filmmakers, in large part because of their relative affordability and accessibility, while the commercial standard, 35MM, is generally thought to be out-of-reach to artists and independents. This is primarily due to its expense—not only is the film stock and camera equipment more costly, but all of the associated steps of production and post-production, such as processing, sound and printing, are as well. And because the cameras are bigger and heavier, there are greater demands in terms of transportation (a car rather than a bike or transit) and crew (you likely can't carry the gear yourself). For artists who are accustomed to doing everything themselves with minimal resources, these requirements can seem daunting. The focus of this program is to demonstrate the creative ways in which independent filmmakers have gotten around these

obstacles to produce work in 35MM. They are not only artists but scientists, inventors, and scavengers.

One ingenious method is to dispense with the need for a camera altogether. Sonia Bridge uses photogram animation to sumptuous effect in *Post Mark Lick*, a process which involves placing objects directly on the film strip and exposing it to light, which when processed gives a negative image of the objects. For *A Firefly*, Kelly Egan painstakingly glued letters and words directly onto clear leader to create an animated representation of a poem by Souvankham Thammavongsa. The soundtrack is also “animated,” produced by using the text of the poem as the optical soundtrack, the shapes of the letters translated into sound. Both of these films are examples of “direct animation,” usually associated with drawing, painting and scratching on film à la Len Lye or Richard Reeves, but a term that also applies to other methods of cameraless filmmaking,

such as adhering images or objects directly to the filmstrip (famously, moths in Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight*), photogram exposures, or even cutting shapes through the film (the hole-punch is a favourite tool for this).

Other films in this screening use found footage in combination with handmade film techniques as a means to “reduce, reuse, recycle”—cleverly transforming cast-offs from the commercial film industry into art. Louise Bourque's *Going Back Home* is composed of archival footage which she reprinted, hand-processed and coloured. Using carefully selected images and sound, she manages to concisely convey a sense of loss and fragility in only a minute. Kelly Egan collected 35MM still images and lengths of 35MM motion picture film which she collaged together to form *c:won eyed jail*, a several-month process carried out in her living room, demonstrating that even 35MM films can be home-made. Steven Woloshen uses off-cuts

from commercial films (parts of the film that the cameraperson uses for tests, partially covering the lens with their hand) as the base for *The Babble on Palms*, and then draws and scratches on the film to give it his own personal “handprint.” For his new work, *Editorial*, he re-worked found footage by gluing individual frames onto clear leader and making contact prints using a flashlight, enabling him to make a film in widescreen CinemaScope with minimal means. What these films lack in funds, they make up for in labour and invention!

In some cases, artists have shot on other formats and finished on 35MM: 16mm optically printed to 35MM for John Price’s *ten thousand dreams*, and video transferred to 35MM for Clive Holden’s *Love in the White City*. This enables them to take advantage of the characteristics of smaller, lighter shooting formats while still having the benefits of 35MM exhibition. It can also have unique effects on the image—

the film grain in *ten thousand dreams*, for example, becomes much more pronounced in the blow-up from 16mm to 35MM, making the material properties of the film as much a part of the work as the subject matter. While Price celebrates this grain, it is the opposite of the clean, seamless look that most commercial productions value 35MM for. *Love in the White City* was shot at the other end of the spectrum from 35MM, with a small consumer video camera (described by Holden as “the size of a deck of cards”), then digitally composited into a four-part split screen and output to film. It is by no means trying to masquerade as film, for its video characteristics are part of its intimacy and visual texture. Instead, the combination of the two provides an interesting tension between small and large, personal and public.

The 35MM animation stand is an incredibly versatile tool for those wishing to work in 35MM. If carefully planned and executed, the shooting

ratio for a film can be as low as 1:1. Christina Battle’s *three hours, fifteen minutes before the hurricane struck* illustrates what can be done with minimal means—black-and-white, silent, and mostly edited in camera, it is about as spare as a film can get. Using only collaged still images and text, Battle creates an otherworldly reverie, full of threat and foreboding. *Blue Tide, Black Water* ups the ante slightly with colour and sound, but still uses basic household materials (liquids plus heat) to create what has been described as “an epic in miniature”—a gorgeous, glorious study of movement, texture and colour.

The only film in the program to be shot “on location” in 35MM is John Price’s *View of the Falls from the Canadian Side*. It is notable for the fact that it was shot with a hand-cranked camera almost identical to that used by William Heise to film the same scene in 1896—no electricity needed! Price re-creates/re-imagines Heise’s original

film in a combination of colour and black-and-white stocks which he hand-processes, avoiding the need for a lab. While the panoramic view is stunning, the technology is decidedly low-key.

Small Is Beautiful

In stark contrast to what we associate with “big screen” films—action-adventure flicks, sweeping historical dramas, science fiction fantasies—these artists often use the format for small, intimate subject matter and personal topics. Price, for example, frequently records events from his daily life such as his son’s birthday party, a camping trip, or a parade—what we might think of as “home movies.” But instead of Super 8MM, the usual home-movie format, he films in the larger-gauge 16mm or 35MM, and then often enlarges the 16MM to 35MM in post. Screening in this program, *ten thousand dreams* records his newborn son sleeping, mostly in close-ups of his face and tiny hands. It is a simple, quiet, intimate

moment, an every day miracle.

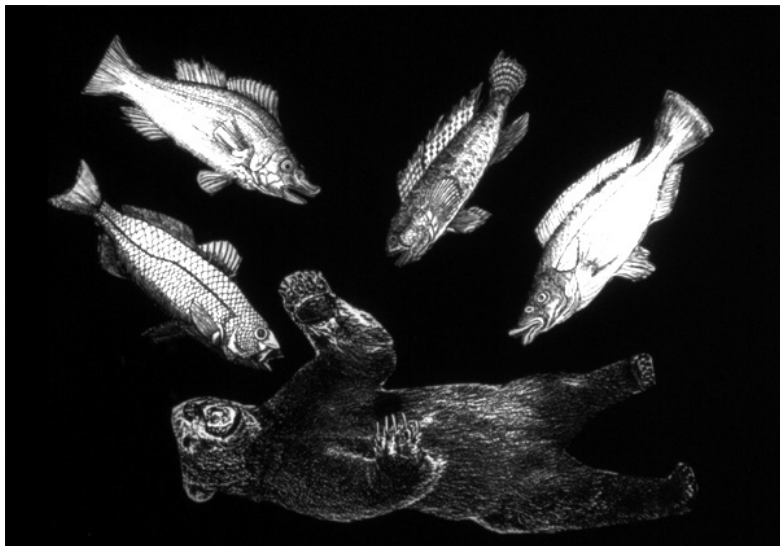
Other films in the program similarly focus on small subjects writ large. Sonia Bridge’s *Post Mark Lick* gives pride of place to a literally tiny subject, the postage stamp. It is a celebration of stamps and postmarks, which fill the screen with their colours and textures. In *Blue Tide, Black Water*, macro-photography records the minute reactions of common liquids such as honey and wax to heat. The interaction creates intricate bubbles, patterns and textures in colours ranging from muted grey and amber to vivid red, green, violet and blue. *A Firefly* uses tiny objects (letters) to evoke a tiny creature (the firefly). What these films have in common is that they revel in and marvel at the beauty of the everyday. By capturing it on film, and not just any film but 35MM, they strive to hang onto ephemeral moments and objects, to present them to us as gifts.

Even the widescreen films, *View of the Falls from the Canadian Side* and

Editorial, while large in scope, are personal in their approach and method of making. *View of the Falls* takes as its subject a time-honoured tourist destination, Niagara Falls, which has appeared in countless family snapshots and home movies. Price’s film is itself a form of “home movie.” What takes it beyond the genre is its use of the medium: the sureness and scope of its widescreen framing, the hand-processing which creates exposure irregularities and moments of solarization, its meditative and other-worldly visual quality. A response to his father’s illness and experiences in hospital, Woloshen’s *Editorial* appropriates footage from Hollywood film trailers (including *Rambo 4* and *Sniper*) and re-purposes it for very different and personal means. Looped and set against an Appalachian folk song, slick sequences from action films become jittery and unsettling reminders of illness and death. Individual and idiosyncratic, *View of the Falls* and *Editorial*

are so far from the world of Hollywood (and *Avatar*...) that they might as well be on a different planet.

In both these works, and in fact in many of the films in the program, there is a push-pull between big and small, professional and amateur, commerce and art. By elevating the small and quotidian to a large scale, the artists in this screening suggest that these humble moments, these personal observations and feelings, are just as important, just as worthy of our attention as the “big” topics of love, war and politics. Small is beautiful—but even more so when it’s in glorious 35MM!
—Larissa Fan



**three hours, fifteen minutes before
the hurricane struck**

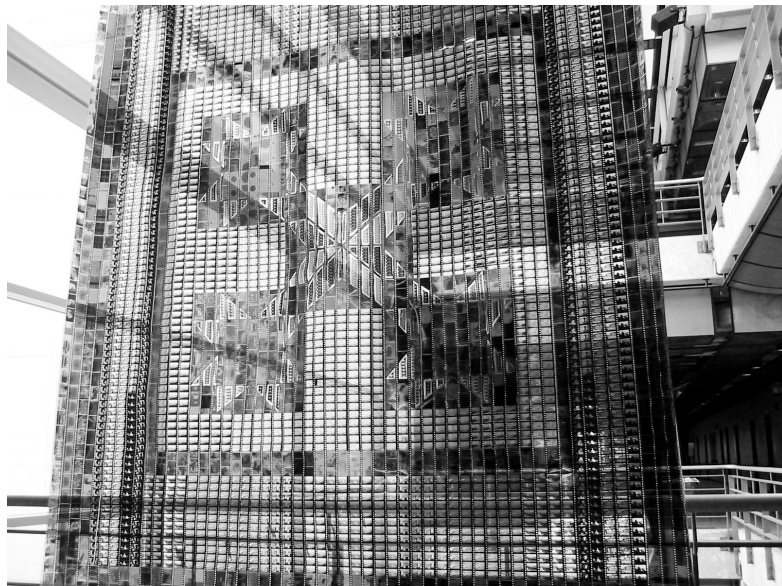
(Christina Battle, Canada, 2006, 5:00,
35MM, B&W, silent)

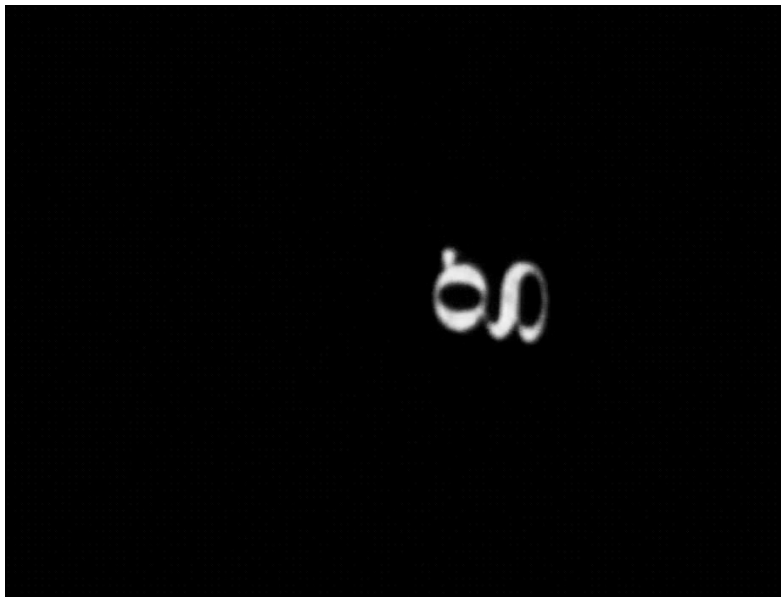
Inspired by the diorama-like boxes of Joseph Cornell, and with text taken from victims of hurricane Katrina, *three hours, fifteen minutes before the hurricane struck* imagines moments just before a violent weather storm. The film is part of a larger project titled *weather series one (hurricanes)*, a mixed-media installation with works on paper, film, video and small objects.

c:won eyed jail

(Kelly Egan, Canada, 2005, 5:00, 35MM, colour, sound)

c:won eyed jail is a unique project which exists both as a quilt, patterned out of 35MM still negatives and motion picture positive, and as a film print made from the quilt. It references and pays homage to artist Joyce Wieland, whose work called into question binary oppositions between art and craft and personal and public space.



**A Firefly**

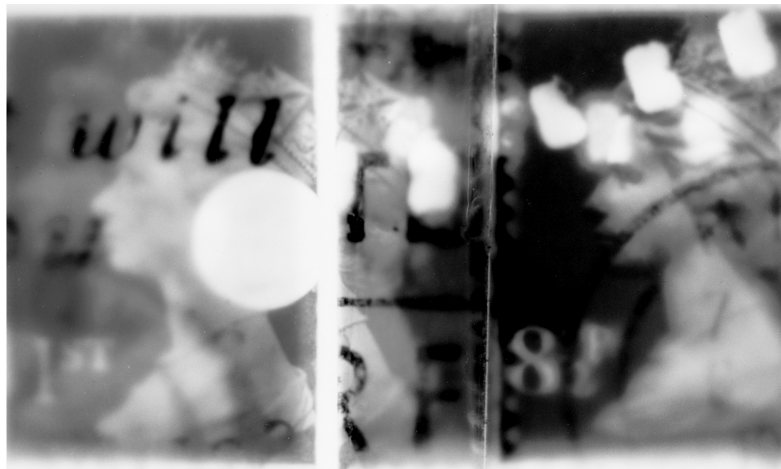
(Kelly Egan, Canada, 2007, 2:05,
35MM, colour, sound)

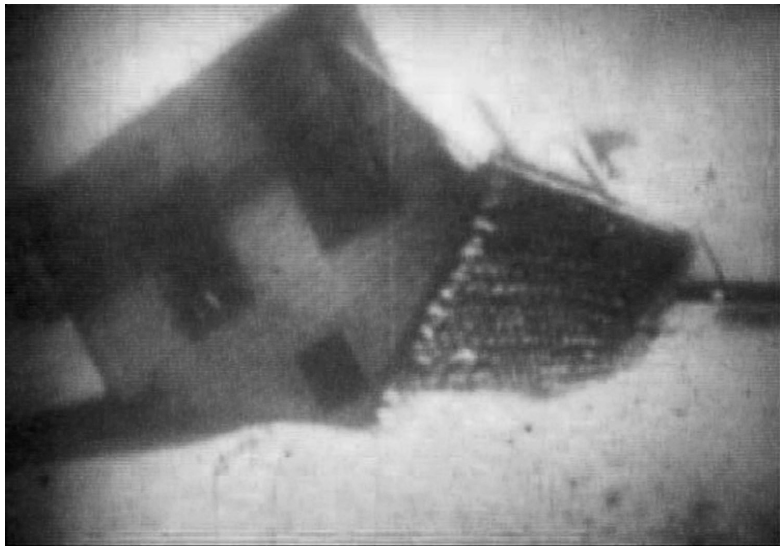
Based on a poem by Souvankham Thammavongsa, *A Firefly* plays with words, letters and optical sound. The image was made by gluing words and letters directly onto clear leader, while the soundtrack is created by an optical light reading of the text of the poem. Originally made for the LIFT Poetry Projection series.

Post Mark Lick

(Sonia Bridge, U.K./Canada, 2002, 3:40,
35MM, colour, sound)

The use of letters and postcards as a means of communication has waned in popularity in the age of Skype and Facebook. A “love-song to the pre-digital age of postal correspondence” (Chris Gehman, Images Festival), *Post Mark Lick* explores the materiality of the postage stamp and the intimacy of the handwritten word. It was created without digital manipulation through photogram animation, with objects exposed directly onto the film.



**Going Back Home**

(Louise Bourque, Canada, 2000, 1:15,
35MM, colour, sound)

With only a few images, *Going Back Home* conveys a sense of trauma and loss through re-worked footage of houses collapsing, fires and floods. A beautiful and affecting gem of a film, printed twice because it goes by so quickly.

ten thousand dreams

(John Price, Canada, 2004, 6:00, 35MM, B&W, silent)

Shot on 16MM and blown-up to 35MM, *ten thousand dreams* is a lovely, intimate portrait of the filmmaker's son just hours after he was born. The grainy, flickering images and in-camera multiple exposures take the viewer into the dream world of the baby and the wide-open possibilities of his future.



**Love in the White City**

(Clive Holden, Canada, 2004, 7:30,
35MM, colour, sound)

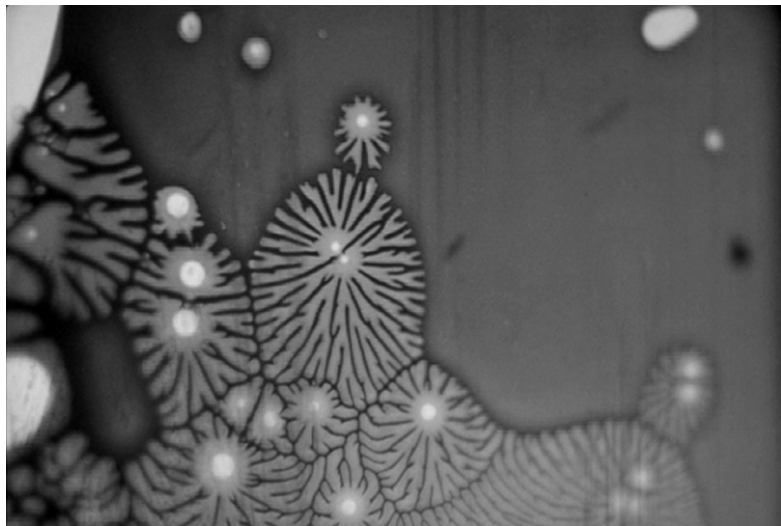
Made with a camera the size of a deck of cards carried in my pants pocket for one year, the “White City” beckons, repulses and quakes with portent. The original poem was commissioned by CBC Radio in 2002 on the theme, “Love in Winnipeg”—it began at 3AM in mid-February at 30 below, on a drive home through an empty, wind-swept, snowbound city. An audience member in my hometown asked me why this film in particular was so dark, so sad. I said I didn’t find it to be so, but I wish I’d said something to her about the beauty to be found in desolation.

—Clive Holden

Blue Tide, Black Water

(Eve Gordon & Sam Hamilton,
New Zealand, 2008, 9:00, 35MM,
colour, sound)

Through macro-photography, *Blue Tide, Black Water* explores the chemical reactions of different liquids to heat. Materials such as paint, India ink, honey and wax are observed boiling and flowering in extreme close up. The resulting microcosm seems a rich and beautiful primordial soup.



**The Babble on Palms**

(Steven Woloshen, Canada, 2001, 4:00,
35MM, colour, sound)

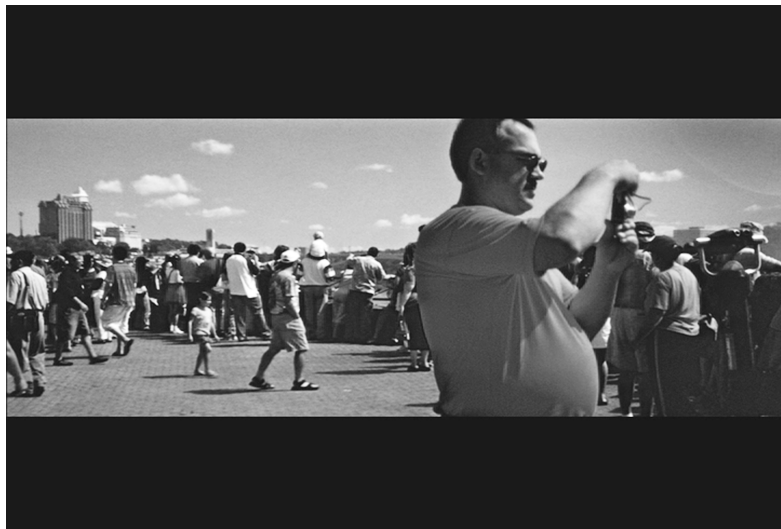
The Babble on Palms is a lush and vibrant cameraless animation, combining found footage with scratch and inking techniques. Each shot features a hand blocking the camera lens, with scenes partially glimpsed behind it. The film becomes not about the obscured images, but about the shape of the hand which is animated with colours and abstract shapes.

**View of the Falls from the
Canadian Side**

(John Price, Canada, 2006, 7:00,
35MM, colour, silent)

In 1896, William Heise photographed the first 35MM motion picture images of Canada at Niagara Falls. The four-perforation camera system he used was designed and built by Thomas Edison and William K. Dickson, and the stock was manufactured by George Eastman to Edison's specifications. This film was photographed using the same essential technology and is dedicated to the visionary ideas of those pioneers.

—John Price



**Editorial**

(Steven Woloshen, Canada, 2009,
10:00, 35MM, colour, sound)

Using found footage loops and hand-made contact prints, Woloshen weaves together a haunting meditation on death and despair. Disparate images of hospitals, war and a woman in white are relentlessly repeated and set to a mournful Appalachian folk song, *Conversation with Death* (also known as *O Death*)—creating an unsettled feeling of entrapment and foreboding.

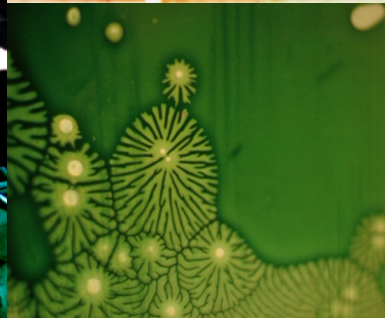
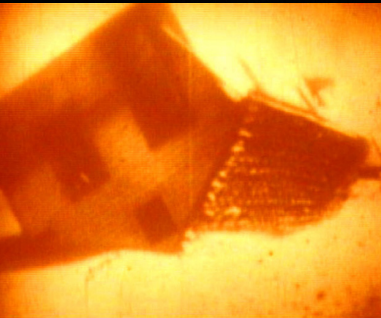
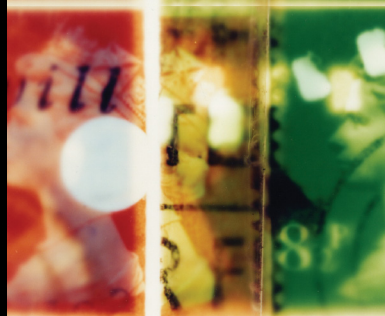
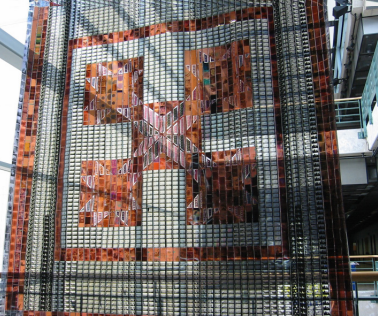
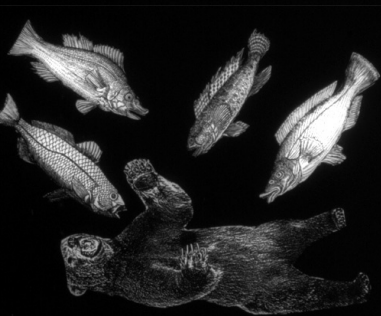
Since 1981, LIFT has been Canada's foremost artist-run centre for independent filmmakers, providing affordable access to film equipment, pre- and post-production services and education, in a creative and supportive environment.

Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT)

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LIFT is supported by its membership, the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Trillium Foundation, and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council.

Design by Martina Hwang



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COVER STILL: *Blue Tide, Black Water*, Eve Gordon & Sam Hamilton

