

**AUGUST MONTHLY SCREENING**  
**Monday, August 28th, 8 pm**

**LIFT GRAB BAG**

**A veritable cornucopia of cinematic delights!**

***MEDIASHUN***

by Patrick Moore, Rick Lines, Clare Scott-Taggart, & Mary Rudden

A documentary that rips apart the illusion of the media and its treatment of important issues through an examination of America's involvement in Nicaragua.

COL., 13 MINS., 1986.

***STOP DARLINGTON***

by Robert Kennedy

The material and technological substrata of mass communication is the focus of this experimental comedy. The film is a burping, hiccuping relay of a message that is at once simple to grasp and difficult to transmit.

COL., 3 MINS., 1987.

***FIRST MOVEMENT***

by Bob Stampfl

A theatre actress is on the violent edge between ecstasy and decay, Nietzsche's legacy for the fin-de-millennium, a place between peaceful silence and piercing blasts.

B&W, 29 MINS., 1988.

***SHATTERED IMAGES***

by Erika Schengili

A chiller that sets out to subvert the traditional cinematic notions of woman as victim.

COL/B&W, 5 MINS., 1989.

***THE STREET WHERE WE LIVE***

by Nancy Eagles

The history and activity of Allen Street in Toronto's east end is the focus of this documentary.

COL., 24 MINS., 1987

**Screenings are held at the NFB Theatre, 1 Lombard Street.  
Free to LIFT members; non-members by donation.**

## LIFT FILMS AT THE FESTIVAL OF FESTIVALS

Again this year an unprecedented number of LIFT filmmakers have had their films chosen for screening in Toronto's Festival of Festivals, presented in two showcases: PERSPECTIVE CANADA and SURFACING: CANADIAN WOMEN'S CINEMA. The festival takes place SEPTEMBER 7 - 16. For further information about either showcase call Maureen O'Donnell, Kelly Alexander at 967-7371. At press time the following LIFT filmmakers and films had been chosen for the festival:

*Black Mother, Black Daughter* by Claire Prieto and Sylvia Hamilton  
*Brand* by Mike Hoolboom  
*The Dark Island* by Ross Turnbull  
*Elegy* by Gary Popovich  
*Evelyn, Be My Valentine* by Virginia Rankin  
*Fragments* by Paula Fairfield  
*I've Heard The Mermaids Singing* by Patricia Rozema  
*Las Aradas* by Janis Lundman  
*Our Marilyn* by Brenda Longfellow  
*Passion: A Letter In 16mm* by Patricia Rozema  
*Reading Between The Lines* by Martha Davis  
*River* by Phillip Hoffman  
*Roadkill* by Bruce McDonald  
*Speaking Parts* by Atom Egoyan  
*Tending Towards The Horizontal* by Barbara Sternberg  
*The Top Of His Head* by Peter Mettler  
*Transitions* by Barbara Sternberg  
*Stealing Images* by Alan Zweig

## GRANTS, AWARDS AND MAJOR SCREENINGS

The following LIFT members were recipients of The Toronto Arts Council's Research/Development Awards To Writers: Bianca Brynda to complete a screenplay entitled *Brother Dread*; Ross Turnbull to continue to work on his screenplay *Morgan's Fall*; Martin Waxman to continue work on his comedic novel entitled *USA*. Keith Hlady received an OAC grant to make a film called *Efram*. And...The Canada Council recently received an additional \$8 million increase to its budget which will be maintained next year! LIFT

films invited to festivals include: at Osnabruk, West Germany—Marsha Herle's *A Little Older*, Michael Hoolboom's *Was*, Josephine Massarella's *No. 5 Reversal*, Gary Popovich's *Caress*; at Lifesize in Halifax—Kalli Paakspuu's and Daria Stermac's *I Need A Man Like You To Make My Dreams Come True*; the Filmtrek tour of Ontario artist run centres, parks, beaches, etc.—Ed Ackerman's *Primiti Too Taa*, Colin Brunton's *Mysterious Moon Men of Canada*, Philip Hoffman's *On The Pond and passing through/torn formations*, Michael Hoolboom's *Bomen*, Richard Kerr's *Last Days of Contrition*, Gary Popovich's *Caress*; at the Vancouver Film Festival, Philip Hoffman's *passing through/torn formations* and Michael Hoolboom's *Was*, Marsha Herle's *A Little Older*, Ross Turnbull's *Dark Island*; at the Festival of New Canadian Cinema in Indianapolis, Indiana, Philip Hoffman's *passing through/torn formations*, Lori Spring's *Inside/Out*.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW LIFT COORDINATOR

I wanted to take this opportunity to simply say hello and to express my pleasure at being hired on at LIFT. I've been here since the beginning of June now and bit by bit I'm becoming more familiar with my new environment and finding some terra firma (not to be confused with that soft green earth in the neighbouring lead zone just west of here). Some of LIFT's members I've had the chance to meet now and a few already seem like long-time acquaintances. A lot of you I have yet to meet so I look forward to that occasion.

LIFT has grown considerably both in strength and numbers in the 10 years since its inception, but we still have a lot of work ahead of us. We must continue to voice loudly and with conviction the importance of LIFT, the needs and concerns of independent filmmakers, and demand for Canadian independent film the recognition and respect it so rightly deserves. So when you have a chance drop by the office. There's a lot to be done. Just please don't all come on the same day!

—Robin Ecclou

## ERIKA SAYS GOODBYE

Our Special Events Assistant and Membership Coordinator Erika Schengili, who assisted Susan with the LIFT Retrospective, "and I do all kinds of other shit...and have alot of fun too," will be leaving us at the end of August. But...you can still see Erika at the next LIFT screening August 28, where you can wish her success in her future filmmaking endeavours. By the way, she'll be looking for work next summer—she's returning to Queen's in the fall. LIFT gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Arts Council and Ontario Experience '89 for their assistance in making this summer employment program possible.

How many Torontonians does it take to change a light bulb?

Two. One to screw in the light bulb; the other to go to New York to see if it's been done right.

## ARE YOU REPRESENTED ON THE BOARD?

The LIFT Board of Directors set policy for the co-op and discuss future directions. The present Board is encouraging filmmakers from ALL styles of filmmaking (animation, documentary, dramatic, experimental) to consider running for the Board at the next Annual General Meeting in October (you must be an associate or full member to join the Board). To ensure that the co-op is truly representative of all styles and forms of filmmaking we must have candidates from all areas. Talk it up in your communities, and encourage those who you feel will make a good representative for your areas of filmmaking and for the co-op.

## SUMMER WORKSHOPS

Over forty people are attending our four scheduled Workshops. Phil Hoffman's Film Sound workshop and Kim Derko's Basic Camera workshop were a great success. Participants were seen leaving with glazed looks in their eyes compulsively repeating "Life's a Film, Life's a Film". Good sign! ...cont...



Harald Bachmann and Steve Munro will be leading a second set of Basic Camera and Film Sound workshops. The attendance is full for both of these, however if you are interested in taking Basic Film workshops give Greg Woodbury a call at LIFT. If there is enough interest more will be scheduled.

A very special thanks to Medalion Labs and Production Services for donating their services and equipment to LIFT for our summer workshops.

#### MEMBERSHIP FEE INCREASE

A reminder to LIFT members that as of July 1, 1989 membership fees were increased to:

\$30/year for Affiliate  
\$60/year for Associate  
\$120/year for Full

The increase in fees was instituted in response to rising administrative costs.

#### ACTOR WILLING TO ASSIST ON PRODUCTIONS

Extremely hard working, energetic actor with loads of tenacity willing to give services to productions. Picture and resume on file at LIFT or call Lance Johnson at 266-3795.

#### THE ADVANTAGES OF SHORT FILMS

During the June Bloor screening of LIFT films Lori Spring overheard and passed a comment on to us that gives us hope for the future of the short film: "I like short films because I don't get bored as quickly."

**How many Torontonians does it take to change a light bulb?**

**Just one. S/he grabs a hold of the light bulb and the world revolves around him/her.**

#### TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL GRANTS TO VISUAL ARTISTS

The TAC's application forms for grants to visual artists will be available Monday, June 5. Eligible projects must have a total budget in excess of \$10,000; maximum grant available is 50% of project costs up to \$15,000. Applicants must be Canadian citizens or landed immigrants and residents of the city of Toronto for the past two years. Deadline for receipt of applications is October 13, 1989. For applications contact: Toronto Arts Council, 27 Madison Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5R 2S2. For more information call Doreen Dotto or Beth Johnson at 392-6800.

#### FESTIVAL OF FESTIVALS TRADE FORUM

The Festival of Festivals will again be holding the TRADE FORUM—featuring workshops and international speakers—SEPTEMBER 10 - 13 at the Park Plaza Hotel. For further information contact the Trade Forum office at 533-8606. LIFT is once again trying to receive a limited number of passes for this event, but as of press time nothing has been confirmed. Interested LIFT members may contact the LIFT office for more information on the possibility of shared passes.

#### OAC RECEIVES ADDITIONAL \$2 MILLION

The Ontario Arts Council has been allocated \$2million to its base operating grant by the Ministry of Culture and Communications "in recognition of the economic importance of Ontario's cultural sector and its unique ability to foster creativity and innovation." The Council has been seriously campaigning for a significant increase to the funding of the arts in the province for several years, most recently making a bid for tripling the Council's budget over a five year period. \$70,000 will be allocated to the Film Production Program to better respond to the needs of the growing independent film sector.

#### SOUND EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

Nagra SNN Miniature Tape Machine with lav mike and carrying cases, all connecting cables and accessory cables. Nagra SMR pre-amp for SNN. AKG CK 22 Omni-directional mike capsule. AKG CK 5 Cardioid mike capsule. 10Db and 20Db mike pads. Sennheiser 816 Model T shotgun mike, with power supply, 80Db base roll off filter. Shock mount, pistol grip, zeppelin wind screen and wind sock, and connecting cables. All in excellent condition. Complete: \$3000 or best reasonable offer. Will sell separate. Call Randy Smith at 536-7891.

#### COPYRIGHT AND CONTRACTS

Artists' Legal Advice Services (ALAS) is offering two seminars: COPYRIGHT on Wednesday, September 27, 7:30; and CONTRACTS on Wednesday, October 25, 7:30. Both seminars take place at Gallery 44, 183 Bathurst Street, Toronto; admission \$7 or \$5 for members of professional artists' associations. For advanced booking and more information call 360-0772.

#### ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART (OCA) HOMECOMING

The OCA Alumni Association Homecoming will take place on November 4, 1989 at OCA, 100 McCaul Street, beginning at 5:00pm. For tickets and further information call Margot Jeffrey at 977-5311 ext. 261.





## UNIATEC CONGRESS

For the first time since its inception in 1957, the International Union of Technical Cinematograph Association will hold its congress on the North American continent. The 17th UNIATEC Congress will be hosted by the NFB. From October 14 - 18 delegates from UNIATEC's 30 member countries will come to Montreal and deliver technical papers on a variety of topics. This year's theme is: The 1990's—The Challenge of Change. For further information contact: UNIATEC—Montreal 89, National Film Board of Canada, P.O. Box 6100, Station A, Montreal, Quebec, H3C 3H5; or phone 514-283-9434.

**How many Torontonians does it take to change a light bulb?**

**40 IATSE members. Got a problem with that?**

## LETTERS

Alan, Alan, Alan..... Perhaps if I'd been wearing my pink neon sneakers, black track suit and spiked hair back at that initial Showcase Theatre meeting you may have noticed me. But I wasn't, and you didn't. In fact, it seems you didn't notice me at all until a year later. Perhaps all the applause and back slapping that you received during that first meeting brought on a state of obscure chronology and blurriness as you suggested. However, your article to the contrary, I was there, as were a lot of other people. And, surprise of surprises, I'd even made a film by that time—in fact, 3 of them—also contrary to your article. They weren't nominated for an Oscar or a Genie, and distributors weren't beating down my door for prints, but nonetheless, they were films.

Now, given the nature of memory, I recognize everyone's tendency to improvisation. But even keeping this in mind, I was surprised by your suggestion that I "jumped" at the chance to go to a film conference in Winnipeg in May of 1980. You pointed out that I had "learned my lesson" although I can't figure out what lesson would propel me

into black fly country at the height of the season. You also stated that I returned from this conference the new national secretary of the Independent Film and Video Alliance. This is not true, once again contrary to your article. Of course, you'd think that with all my years of experience doing temporary office work (which I did to support my filmmaking—the feminine equivalent of driving a cab) that I'd be an obvious choice for the job of a national secretary. But life being what it is, the choice was not so obvious to others. (I wasn't even asked to join any of the committees!) However, what I did come back with was a lot of information which helped immensely and saved a great deal of time when LIFT was putting together its own constitution—and structure—and workshops—and, etc.

Remember all that work Alan? — those discussions, debates, arguments, fights, etc. which seemed to go on forever? I remember you being there. I also remember you leaving and a lot of other people joining, and working on the co-op, and leaving, and other people joining, and... LIFT has had more rebirths and founding members than I thought possible of any organization. And it continues to this day, with new members, new ideas and more changes. Which brings me to the present—Alan, you're back—welcome! I hope your next installment as a co-op member is more enjoyable than your first, and that you have fun meeting and talking with all the other founding "mothers and fathers" of LIFT.

—JANIS LUNDMAN



Bruce  
and  
Colin

at  
the  
Genies



I must say that I find Alan Zweig's article in the March issue of the LIFT newsletter in rather bad taste. His claim that he is the founding father of LIFT when he was only present for the first year and never contributed to the work that really got the co-op off the ground is, in my opinion, a rather blatant exercise in self-glorification. And to do so in the vein of making light of the efforts of people who really got the "ball" rolling is grossly unfair. I refer to his comments about Janis Lundman volunteering for a national meeting of film co-ops. Zweig writes: "...by this point at least Janis had learned her lesson and didn't have to be asked twice. She jumped at the chance. ...I remember thinking at the time that I should do it. I was still the only one who had actually made a film and the one who had been around the longest."

This is not only inaccurate—Janis had made a few films by then—but also a bad case of sour grapes on his part; I wonder if Zweig himself "learned his lesson" here.

Zweig also describes filmmakers in the co-op as being largely self-serving. I agree—but let's not forget that many of these self-serving filmmakers have put and are still putting in hours of volunteer time to bring the co-op to a level which benefits many other "self-serving" filmmakers. It's obvious that Zweig wants to reap the glory of founding a co-op without paying his dues. My question to him is: "Where were you in the wee hours of the morning when members were putting in torrents of volunteer time to complete the many grant applications which kept the co-op alive?"

If you want glory Alan, you're going to have to work for it.

—ADRIENNE MITCHELL

Board Member 1985-1986  
Coordinator of one of the first LIFT screenings at the Bloor Cinema held in 1985  
Full Member since 1984



## OPEN LETTERS TO THE MEMBERSHIP

*The spring winds brought about the departure to new and different roads of two LIFT office staff: Coordinator Rob Pazdro and Technical Manager Marc LaFoy. We wish them success and thank them for their contributions to LIFT. Printed below are their respective letters of resignation to the membership.*

### GOOD-BYE, BUT NOT FAREWELL

As I prepare to depart my position as LIFT Co-ordinator, I would like to leave you with two things in this letter. From Gary Popovich, John Porter and others I have learned the importance of documenting our history as we create it, so I would like to leave a record of my tenure at LIFT. As well, I want to pass on my thoughts about LIFT's future since no one is as well acquainted with this organization, its strengths and weaknesses and its membership, as I am at this point in time.

Back in January of 1987, a hiring committee of Janis Lundman, Bay Weyman and Camelia Frieberg offered me the job of LIFT Co-ordinator. I met the qualifications they had set: proven arts administrative capabilities and no background in filmmaking! They grilled me about who I knew in Toronto as they were wary of hiring anyone who might have filmmaker friends in need of "favours". Having only arrived in Toronto a month before I was able to assure them that I knew no one here! That clinched it! The job was mine! I hesitated—the pay was abysmal (and still is)—but I plunged in and two and a half years later I am ready to move on and pass these enormous responsibilities to Robin Eecloo.

After receiving a half day's orientation, I was left, alone, in the LIFT office with the phone ringing nonstop with inquiries about the three Job Development positions for which Janis Lundman had obtained funding. I began digging through the office and what did I find? A bank account well into the red, equipment whose state I hadn't a clue about, and an office that seemed to be lacking even the essentials like a functioning typewriter.



What I want to make clear is that no blame should be cast on my predecessors (there were four in 1986 alone). In fact, as I began to understand the nature of the job, I was amazed that each of them, working alone and part-time only, had managed as well as they had. I had the advantage in that I could fill the place with eager staff: Kim Derko, Paula Fairfield, and George Groshaw and their successors. I have just stopped to count how many staff there have been during my stay and discovered that 13 have been on the LIFT payroll in two and a half years—no wonder things always felt unsettled! (Want to know who they are? In addition to the above, Annette Manguard, Marc LaFoy, Randy Zimmer, Luis Ceriz, Rebecca Rutland, Jennifer Whitehead, Cindy Lewis, Susan Norget, Gary Popovich and David Jefferson have worked or are currently working here.) Greg Woodbury, our new Technical Manager is #14!

All that LIFT has become as an organization has been due to the collective efforts of the above. There can be no doubt that the four of us in early '87 had the toughest time—we were working with a Board burned out from running the organization who were relieved to turn it over to a paid staff. We set to work and dug out policies (and questioned the Board about all the areas where they had not established any); set up workable systems; sorted out membership; had equipment repaired; and planned new programs, workshops, and screenings and on and on..... We found membership lists that told conflicting stories—we were never sure of the exact number of members when we started—about 60 was our guesstimate. And what did I do? I spent a lot of time with the chequebook—devising new ways to fill it. I think that the LIFT budget has increased about 500% since my arrival

and membership has increased to over 400!

But it is not percentages and a bank account in the black that make an organization vital (despite the way some of our funding agencies think). I have given the staff most of the credit for the accomplishments of the organization for which we are entirely deserving. What we can not take credit for, though, are the fine films made by the membership. Without the filmmakers who work so hard to complete their productions despite constant obstacles, bureaucratic and otherwise, that are thrown in their path, there would be no reason for LIFT. I know what an impact all of you had on me when I realized that I had lost my ability to be critical of members' films—I had witnessed people struggling too long and hard—I felt like the completion of any independent film became a triumph in and of itself. You are the core of our organization and reason for which we work so damn hard for you.

But, as the Co-ordinator, the one saddled with some of the most boring tasks of all, I feel I must address those administrative issues that have, on occasion, had me in a death grip. The need for stability in an organization this size is paramount. For stability, the organization needs a permanent staff that can afford to work here. In two years, we've made a quantum leap from having one half-time Co-ordinator to two permanent staff (Co-ordinator and Technical Manager). People are unable to stay at these jobs without being paid a living wage and this is what we must work toward. The reality of our society is that it always comes down to a question of money. Unfortunately, some members feel that because this is an arts organization we should not have to deal with such issues. I am afraid we can no longer run from them. Because we will likely always have to rely on



inadequate short term "job creation" programs, the need for a stable permanent staff is even more crucial for the sake of the organization's continuity.

Also on an administrative note, the Board and staff charge on with their beginnings of long-term planning, not only in terms of specific programs, but also in terms of LIFT's general direction. There are some exciting new ideas cooking in this area which I am pleased to see and will be brought to the membership shortly. As the organization continues to grow, there are endless issues that must be addressed—but, of course, they are the source of our vitality. How can LIFT accommodate the increasingly sophisticated needs of its members? What services can we plan for the growing number of members who will be producing features within the next five years?

LIFT is and must remain an organization for both inexperienced and more established filmmakers. Continuing our current programs is important, but we must create other means of assisting new filmmakers. Recently, I heard author Marlene Norbese Phillips being interviewed on the radio. She mentioned that she wished she'd had a mentor when she was a young writer—what a great idea I thought—mentors for new filmmakers! I would like to see LIFT initiate such a program. It could work quite informally—we could pair interested filmmakers and let them establish their own method of working—perhaps meeting once or twice a month. Another area we could explore is helping filmmakers make that all important first film—the one that it truly is impossible to fund. We should look at what other groups are doing, such as SAW Video, Ottawa, through Jumpstart, a program that provides artists with funds to make their first video.

I can only close with thanks to so many of you: to that hiring committee who had more confidence in my abilities than I did; to staff and members who have supported me through struggles both professional and personal; to Marc LaFoy who supported me through the most difficult year of my life; to our funding agencies and to their officers who took risks on behalf of LIFT; and most importantly to the independent filmmakers for their hard work, fine films

and support of LIFT. I leave a better (and more tired) person than when I walked innocently through the purple door. Amen.

—ROB PAZDRO

### REFLECTIONS OF A RETIRED TECHIE

I'm going to miss this job. As I sit here on my last day at LIFT I realize that a year and 9 months isn't really a long time in terms of jobs. It's not a 25-year, gold watch, office retirement job ending; it's not the end of a long and illustrious career in a top flight executive post. But the end of anything always signals a change...one of many during my tenure at LIFT.

I came to LIFT for the first time back in the fall of 1987 looking for a place that would provide the same sort of support to me as the Saskatchewan Filmpool had provided me. I timidly met the coordinator and other staff and joined up as an affiliate. It was only a few short weeks later that I heard about the job of technical manager being made available with the departure of Kim Derko. I applied and was asked to show up for an interview. Sitting in the hallway I overheard laughter pouring from the office, where another interview was in progress. My spirits sank; surely they would hire this individual. To my surprise the individual emerged (now Board member Steve Sanguedolce) and reassured me by saying, "don't worry kid, the job's yours..." And sure enough, it was.

Since that time I've been working at LIFT pretty much full time with periods of drought brought on by the ends of programs and money to pay staff. There were periods when the "staff" consisted of just Rob by herself, with me coming in to assist with equipment on a contract basis. There were also periods where we didn't have enough desk space to support the many staff all working shoulder-to-shoulder. The lean and the fat times at LIFT. But things always got a little better. Our crises became solutions, our liabilities became a little less liable, and our name got out there to the people. A lot of people. And they poured in. The membership of LIFT has not only doubled but tripled in the short time I've been here. I realized that I've been able to meet

almost 400 new faces in my time here—a lot of different people and a lot of different perspectives on film and filmmaking. Now, when a new member walks timidly into LIFT, as I did one day, I recognize the distance I have travelled in coming to know the diverse and ever growing community of filmmakers here at LIFT.

I'm going to miss this job. I'm going to miss the people that I've come to know from working in and through some extraordinary circumstances. Financial reward hasn't come close to matching the rewards in terms of a sense of accomplishment. When you work in such a meagre environment, all gains are big gains. I think the membership owes a lot to all the individuals who have come and gone through LIFT as staff, Board Members, and other members who have contributed enormous time and energy from LIFT's early shaky beginnings to the much firmer ground it rests on today. A special thanks should go to Rob who, in her two years at LIFT, has worked from the initial groundwork of her predecessors and built up an organization we can all feel proud of.

My job as technical manager has taken me in a lot of interesting directions and I can safely say that there are days when the job description looks pretty thin compared to the actual day to day activities. I guess it really just has ended up occupying all my time and I realized that I wasn't doing some of the things I had intended to when I started. I started to lose the energy that initially got me through the more challenging days and weeks of the job. I'm leaving LIFT to carry on with my "own pursuits". I'll get to see LIFT now from the other side, as a member, filmmaker, former staff member. I'm leaving my job in the very capable hands of Greg Woodbury, a fellow with a lot of energy and ideas. I'll still be as involved as I can; I'll get that day job, serve on my committee, come to screenings, read my newsletter, rent equipment, bug the new coordinator about grant information, go to workshops, shake hands with new members, and read the production board...

Yeah, I'm going to miss this job.

—MARC LAFOY



**MARTHA DAVIS IN CONVERSATION WITH EDIE STEINER**

ES: You have a long history prior to your involvement with LIFT as a filmmaker at the Funnel working in Super-8 and experimental film.

MD: Yeah. I started in 1975 as a still photographer, and after working with many sequences of photographs, I got ahold of a movie camera and made my first film: a friend dropping a bag of two dozen oranges on Yonge St. and whatever happened to occur. From that small, people-oriented event that I staged, I realized that I wanted to make films, and I continued to make work that way. I became involved in the group of filmmakers that I saw would encourage my work, and that was the Funnel.

ES: You've kept up your work in still photography as well.

MD: My recent work has been double exposure colour photographs, and also life-sized Xerox portraits...I see both media feeding off my film work in the sort of choreography of movement and layering of images which are very important in my films.

ES: I've noticed that humour is always a major component in your work, as in "Elephant Dreams", but also in your early Super-8 work as well. Is this a quality you plan to continue using?

MD: My work isn't theoretical; it's not politically didactic, it tends to be more personal, dealing with my feelings about people and events. I deal with what can be found in an ordinary situation and developed out of it, and I guess humour is a natural part of that for me. Some people have called my work ingenuous or naive...that I have a naive humour. Well, I don't start out to make comedy films. I start out with the idea that there's going to be some sad stuff in the film, and then alternately, or by mistake almost, use comic elements. I think that's the best way for comedy to operate, when you're doing things off-the-cuff the way I like to.



Tama Soble and Jeffrey Aarles in "Reading Between The Lines"

ES: Can you talk about your move from Super-8 to 16mm filmmaking?

MD: My last experience with Super-8 was a "Creative Artists in the Schools" project in '87, during which I realized the extent to which Super-8 was becoming obsolete...some equipment was no longer available, stuff was breaking down all the time, I was just going nuts...you can't get Kodachrome 40 processed in Toronto any more. And I thought, where do you go to do Super-8 now? I knew then that I had to start working in 16 to get my work seen. It was my feature PATH (104 mins., 1987) which the NFB PAFPS blew up to 16 for me that got me going in the new format, and the film then got some screenings.

ES: Can you talk about PATH a bit?

MD: I started PATH in 1982 and completed it in 1987. It's a cross-Toronto exploration, starting from Palmerston Blvd. and going to Parliament St., walking and filming. It encompasses many events, situations and people; also interpretations of the events using models and performance, in sections which I call 'memory sequences'.

ES: Has it been screened outside the Funnel and experimental venues?

MD: It actually had some success last year, when it got into this group of multimedia work called the "Diary Exhibition". It's toured Canada and has had eighteen screenings in nine different galleries and artist-run centres, which were just the venues in which I wanted exposure. Thirteen people saw it in Newfoundland, so I was quite excited.

ES: Can you talk about your new film? Is it made "off-the-cuff" as well? I know you're using actors.

MD: Yup. I'm using actors for the first time. But I didn't start out with a script as we conventionally know it.

ES: But you planned and directed the action?

MD: I would decide on a loose, simple scenario, like "two of them walk down the street carrying a pumpkin". We'd choose the location and improvise our way through the scene. We'd work on it till I was ready to shoot. Fast and intense, that's the way I like to operate.

ES: And the dialogue was improvised at that time?

MD: There's no dialogue in the new film. Just voice-over, which was all done later. This allowed me great freedom and mobility while shooting—a



crew of 2— so I could work fast.

ES: Quite different from the way you worked in "Elephant Dreams".

MD: That was different in that it was storytelling. They were telling improvised stories, but I knew more or less what they were going to tell, so I had them do their thing and did several takes. But I felt really encumbered with the sync sound then.

ES: What's the new film about?

MD: It's called "Reading Between the Lines". It has to do with a woman who places a personal ad in the paper and three men respond to it. Reading their letters, she imagines what they're like. She imagines herself in various scenarios with each of them, both nasty and nice.

ES: Where does the nastiness come in?

MD: The second guy comes across to her as very arrogant. His letter has lines like: "I like to be in control" and "Clutter restricts the imagination. I don't like restrictions."

ES: Where did those words come from?

MD: I wrote them.

ES: So you do have scripted content.

MD: Yeah, but I shot all the material first. I had a long list of scenarios that I wanted to do. I shot freely and had all my images. I almost had a fine cut and then I wrote the letters.

ES: So everything is narrated after the fact.

MD: Exactly. And it's her voice-over reading the men's letters. The men's voices as she imagines them float in and out occasionally as well. The lines she's reading don't necessarily correspond to the image at that moment. That's why I didn't write the letters first—so I wouldn't be tied to their content.

ES: There are some rather violent scenes?

MD: Yeah. During the second man's scenes I hired a stuntman to fall down the stairs. It's very violent and dramatic. He also rips pearls off her neck, overturns a scrabble board, overwhelms her in the Jacuzzi...

ES: Some of these images repeat themselves.

MD: I've constructed the film so that her imagination works not in a linear form but in fragments. So there isn't a narrative continuity. Pearls are ripped off, given as a gift, and ripped off again in slow motion, as she rethinks the possible scenarios. And by the time the third man's letter is read, there are myriad flashbacks to the first and second man.

The film weaves a whole web of associations and comparisons by the end. So it's as much about imagination, about how we perceive things, as it is about the joys and traumas of being in a relationship.

ES: But why the images of violence? What do these images mean to you?

MD: I placed a personal ad a few years ago and got 56 replies to it. Some of the replies were pretty wild; some were quite ordinary. Some men talked a lot about their material possessions and I reacted very

negatively to these letters. I guess I'm projecting these feelings in my treatment of the rich second man in the film. But she's not perfect, either. She imagines herself smashing plates, pushing him down the stairs. Her own aggression comes out with him. It's definitely not a man-hating or a woman-hating film, but shows the complexity of experience. Also, the film is playing very much with stereotypes in relationships, the imagining of what the person is like *before* you've met. Of course we think in stereotypes: the dinner, the dance, the gift, the bath, the bed. Each of these scenarios is repeated in different manifestations with each of the men...

ES: And it deals with how these idealized fantasies can turn into their very antithesis, the shadow side, the dark counterpoint...

MD: I guess so, but I'm not *trying* to make any big statement like that. People will have their own interpretations, which is great. I just make the stuff.

ES: It's interesting to see filmmakers that are not didactic or analytical and that use film as an expression of feeling.



Tama Soble and Jeffrey Aarles in "Reading Between The Lines"



MD: Feeling, yeah, personal experience...This film is definitely my most accessible because it's topical, it's got narrative elements, although you have to work as well.

ES: Did you do all your own cinematography?

MD: Absolutely. I hand held the whole shoot which was terrific. It was easy and flowing and beautiful, because I dislike tripods. After the stiltedness of "Elephant Dreams" with the sync sound and the Arri BL, I was so sick of it, I wanted to get back the hand held feel. So I bought a lightweight Beaulieu R-16 and it was just like working in Super-8 again, only with that great image quality.

ES: Could you elaborate on some of the audio elements?

MD: The voice-over reading the letters is going throughout, a soft, slow interior voice which is only interrupted by the quick flashback images, which accumulate like momentary reminders. Sound effects are cut harshly at the end of images, adding to the fragmented feel. Music is very sparse and never used extra-diegetically. How's that for a term from my old film theory days? (Laughs) Look it up!

ES: Speaking of which, you plan to go back to school this fall?

MD: Uh-hunh. I've decided to quit letter-carrying at the Post Office, which has been my part-time job for the last six years. It's given me lots of time off to work on my filmmaking, but it's

getting harder and harder for me to work there now, for a bunch of reasons. So I'm getting my teaching certificate. I've been accepted at the U of T, and I guess I'll be teaching Primary/Junior in the fall of 1990.

ES: You'd rather do that than work in the industry or administration?

MD: I think so. I want to keep being able to make my own personal work with total control over every aspect, even if that means staying fairly small. I hope after a few years to get into the alternative school system and teach part-time, maybe teach filmmaking to kids again and incorporate my interests more fully. Teach for a few years then take a year off to make a film...or take a few years off. It's stability city—I think we can all use some of that.



Sully, a storyteller in **ELEPHANT DREAMS** (16mm, colour, 17 mins, 1987) by Martha Davis



## TOUJOURS DES HISTOIRES BY GARY POPOVICH

### *Ledger Lines*

When Godard talked about the tyranny of the bookkeeper as father of the narrative screenplay, with the literal ledger unfolding the costs of, "D. Fairbanks, lead actor, \$10.00, walks past garden gate," he didn't forget the irony of his own *histoires*. Nor can we forget ours. Nothing beats a torrid tale of birth into poverty, a tortured adolescent romp with indifference, only direction home is last night's trail, completely unknown rebel without a grant(ed wish) and a style to match a racing wounded bull. This is a story looking for love, somewhere.

### *Lines of Love and Hate*

Wounds have a way of needing comfort, and attracting companionship. In 1987, in Toronto, only weeks before the Funnel's history on King Street folded, Stan Brakhage mused about using combative energies against institutional guillotines rather than other artists you can't agree with. With more money than ever in the Canadian film industry, and the future of film artists uncertain, the screens and speakers of a handful of clubs, independent theatres, art galleries, film societies, cinemathèques, co-ops, and festivals have begun wedding hillbilly communities together, under the rubric "independent". Having to measure our independence against our capitulation, we watch each other's steps like curious neighbours.

### *What's Your Line?*

As the Canadian film production, distribution, and exhibition co-ops pass through adolescence (most are around 10 years old, the oldest being 22 years of age), the film artists working out of these co-ops have discovered the advantages of making overtures to each other, and to other regions. Though we see the differences, the individual love affairs, the jealousies and dislikes, the press and the industry see "independent community". Our film life seems to be increasingly fed from the banquet table of this shotgun wedding of communities.



*The Building of the Tower of Babel (detail of painting on the nave vault).  
Early 12th century. St.-Savin-sur-Gartempe*

### *Skylines and Groundlines*

But as we talk about a "wedding of communities", it would be premature to talk about births when nothing's been consummated. There's still too many whose desire it is to work on towers of Babel—wish fulfillment in the upward ascension. But this way lies desire in ruins, the willing intent to sacrifice curiosity for comfort and a little place of one's own (wherever it may be on earth or in "heaven"), the heavy investments that many make when they come to thinking they're the guardian of time.

### *Reading Between the Lines*

We have good reason to continue to support diversity, plurality, in the cinema—that is the only formula of our aesthetic. At the same time, a knowledge of the political, economic and aesthetic concerns and problems of other independents across the country (best discovered through watching their films, reading their publications, and talking to them) allows us to find some common ground from which to carry on our struggle against the powers that would banish our existence. Without this understanding our work will be nothing more than another fond memory, unable to take root in the collective cultural imagination of this country. But our expansive geography requires us to be inventive when it comes to communication (our history's inextricable ties to technology bear this out).

### *Lines of Attack*

By all accounts the June Annual General Meeting in Halifax of the Independent Film and Video Alliance (the umbrella organization that brings together film and video artist run centres involved in production, distribution and exhibition) has shown that the Alliance has moved from being an organization finding its footing in the unmapped jungles of independent film to being an organization that can now exert a minimal but growing amount of political clout. The co-ops across the country are not homogeneous in structure and philosophy, but many face similar problems—lack of funding for the co-ops and the artists, inequitable support from organizations such as the NFB, the need for copyright protection for the makers of work and a system for royalty collection, the lack of exhibition spaces, the need for more and better equipment, the need for more staff, and the need for money to provide better wages in order to keep good staff on their jobs. Other issues were often regional, and it was discussion and consensus on most of those issues that allowed most of the groups to go home feeling that their concerns had the backing of an organization representing over 7500 people—and that this was political clout worth fighting for, regardless of regional differences.



### The General Line

Martine Sauvageau, Coordinator of the Alliance, found that this organization has taken her from perceiving national, linguistic, cultural, political and other differences, to being able to perceive a shared sensibility that is now taking shape and definition. Two years ago the government took little notice of us; recently Sauvageau was able to meet with Marcel Masse, Minister of the Department of Communications, and others, to strongly argue our position in an increasingly unpredictable relationship between government and arts groups.

### Lines of Information

At nine years of age, the Alliance now has several members who have committed time and energy to independent film and video—Lisa Steele, Ross Turnbull, Ed Rich, and of course, Martine Sauvageau, and numerous others who have demonstrated the kind of sensitivity and knowledge of regional, cultural, political and aesthetic issues that are invaluable for the continuation of the Alliance. Documentation and the exchange of information is crucial if we are indeed to ward off mainstream co-optation, burn out, and finding our dreams in ruins.

### Across Cultural Lines

Joy Federick from Monitor North and Loretta Todd from Chief Dan George Foundation made a presentation at the Alliance meeting entitled Native Issues: Autonomy and Cultural Representation that placed all its listeners in the position of having to address contradictions and confusions. It was argued that just as TV appropriated and defused forces of opposition to popular culture, rendering the political left and the avant garde impotent, so too did white Europeans and other mainstream cultures use native cultures. It was stressed that each individual as a member of a particular culture should find his or her own forces of opposition in their own culture, for their own self-determinism, and not use native cultures to define their positions (the most pointed example being the use of native myths in our new found perceptions on environmental issues).

Stressing the need to work with what is closest to you, the argument was a subtle but sobering reminder that the conditions of production in this country, in terms of the economic, the historical, and the cultural, do not find their self-determinism by being co-opted by industrial forms of film and video making.

### Post-Line

For now the media saturated landscape finds "independents" critically testing the tools of their discourse against their "peers", a tiny portion of the press, arts administrators, and a handful of enthusiasts, groupies, and strays...(it is an audience). As contemporary critical discourse puts the idea of unity under suspicion, our wedding of convenience may find that it breeds a film discourse and practice sustained of our differences. What crawls waiting to be born of narrative, political advocacy, linguistic differences and cultural differences, sexual differences, formalism, documentary, landscape, technology, CBC, NFB, CC, Telefilm, the numerous provincial funding bodies, Free Trade, romanticism, cutbacks, co-ops, animation, social programs, the environment, video, our writing, post—, and everything we don't know?

### Signing on the Dotted Line...

In Toronto, in May, during Images 89 Independent Film and Video Festival, and in June during the Experimental

Film Congress, forgetful of the cold concrete kissing the sky, forgetful of the corporate fictions of Hollywood North, between seminars and screens, some other scene was happening—people were talking, not about some other place, but about each other. It's becoming less difficult for us to confine from each other our arguments with each other...and here a discourse finds its early terms. Our wedding of (in)dependen(ts)(ce) now faces questions around the worth of the wager, the length of the engagement, the form of the pledge, and the cost of it all.

### Break-Line

With nothing left to live up to, we can take some comfort in no longer looking up...but just looking around...more than ever...amidst the rubble, where we clear bricks and tell stories, pass on images, and carry on. A good story stays the hand of death. It's a story about making something worth wanting, saving something from oblivion (a way of life) and celebrating. The best stories put you to sleep before they've consummated their end with you, before you're able to drag them down to some bureaucrat to register, before you start looking for sums. The reverie of tale and teller lies in the open book, the book without margins, or lines...

Good luck; I hope you make it.

## Breakfast Theory: A MORNING METHODOLOGY





## RICHARD KERR TALK RECORDED MARCH 3, 1989 AT LIFT

Richard Kerr spent several years in Toronto, teaching, making films, and promoting film art through his curating and writing. Two years ago he accepted a position as Assistant Professor in the Film Department at the University of Regina. Kerr recently flew into Toronto mid-way through a tour with his film work that would take him next to San Francisco where he would collect his Golden Gate Award and cash prize for winning best film for *The Last Days of Contrition* in the New Visions category of the San Francisco International Film Festival. On a cold, dark Friday night in Toronto he led a lively and witty discussion on matters concerning film schools, film co-ops, the NFB, exhibition of independent work, among numerous other topics. Kerr began the evening with a screening of Roy Cross' *Through the Looking*, and two of his own films: *Canal* (1981) and *The Last Days of Contrition* (1988).

The letter "A" denotes an unidentified audience member. Where possible members of the audience are identified in this transcript. The transcription and editing are by Gary Popovich.

Judy Gouin: Richard, you said that you selected your first film of the 80's and your last film of the 80's; it leaves the question hanging in the air of why you didn't choose any of the films you didn't include and also what do you see as being the relationship of these two?

Kerr: They're about places; and in order to make them you have to go there and record the images and bring them back and re-work them. You can't pre-theorize or pre-plan that sort of activity. A lot of it is waiting for the subject—whether waiting for the boats or waiting for the trains or waiting for the jets...waiting for the light. You can't buy the light that a filmmaker would wait for. Garth Drabinsky can't order it up. I think those kind of things are similar—the patient waiting for things to happen, and if you wait long enough accidents will happen.

A: For me they are such completely different films not just in terms of style, but thought, focus, feeling, everything.



Kerr: *Canal* was made at a point in my life when I was putting someone in the ground...in my family. The other film was made on the advent or birth of a new family. So there's two different mind sets there. Now maybe the question is—why does the first film look like the happier film (to use a simple term) and the second the negative? What I'm trying to say is that any film like this is overtly personal and that has to be accepted. This is no different in my mind than if I read poetry up here tonight about my life. And it depends how far into my life I go; how much I hang it out there.

Mike Hoolboom: I was wondering why it took four years to make this film?

Kerr: There's only a certain amount in this world that I'm interested in committing to film and committing that time to. It takes me a long time to become accustomed to the images. I really hate sitting in an editing room. I resent that at this point in my life. Don't get me wrong, I'm committed to it and I do it, but I can't sit in there in that dark room with those images, any images, for a protracted length of time...it kills me, it's too lonely, it's too scary. Rather than looking at the image which is the past, which is death, I could be out livin' and getting new experiences. I'm not willing to lose much of my life over the stuff; but I'm willing to give a lot of my life to it. I think there's a difference there.

Gerald Packer: The main thing I saw in both films is that you're making your own story from the moments you capture; the things you feel. There is a definite story there; you're doing that without actors.

Kerr: I'm happy you said that, because there was a time when I think audiences in the early 80's or the 70's wouldn't be able to extract any sort of story or narrative out of these type of films. But it tells me that maybe people are thinking differently about narrative. But I don't do actors. I've learned that. Some day maybe I'll try it, but to me it's not a vertical climb. I mean other people do it so well; it's not a validation of my experience as a filmmaker that I work with actors.

A: I would just like to say that your photography, your images, are very beautiful.

Kerr: A bit of that is that waiting, and slowing down and looking at the world. Taking that little bit of the world...the detail in the wall, and valuing that, and committing it to film. It took a couple of films to realize that the best light was in the first couple hours of the morning and the last couple hours of the day.

Phil Hoffman: I think it's something else I see in *Contrition* that's in *Canal*, and that 's the thing about going out to the



canal more than one day to get the thing in the can. It's two years of going there, couple times a week. If the light wasn't right or there wasn't anything interesting there wouldn't be any filming done. It seems to me that it's the approach that you take that brings out those kind of images that you were mentioning.

Kerr: Once again, with no money you can have total control. I can control when I want to shoot...and a lot of these people in this room do it too, they're only making films about what they're really interested in, and they're not a camera for hire.

Maybe it's hillbilly filmmaking, I don't know. [laughter] My teacher in film school showed a lot of American 60's avant-garde films that were very modest in their means. They put value in these small personal 10-minute films and they were about the oddest things and about the oddest places. To me it connects very much with how I perceive a poet works; there's no huge market. To me, this crowd is huge and alive. There isn't a vertical ascent to a bigger crowd, a bigger venue, a glossier poster. I don't need to know Telefilm's telephone number. That's for someone else. I think I was lucky in the sense that I figured out what I wanted to do and it didn't need to be done in Toronto. So I could go out to Regina where they don't give a shit about Toronto [laughter] and live cheaply, live a quieter lifestyle, and I've found good people to work with...there's a fair exchange—they help me and I help them. Now it's a thrill to come back to Toronto. It'll always be home. But there is a time when it's impractical to make your films and to exist here.

A: What are your students like? Do they all want to make blockbusters?

Kerr: I guess it's sort of split. I don't think anyone compared to the students I had in Toronto has the blockbuster syndrome. To them, that is incomprehensible. I do believe that it's totally impractical for us to teach any sort of industry thing out there. There's no lab; there's no post anything. *Post Cereal*, that's it. [laughter] So when I have a student that comes in and says, "I wanna make a blockbuster," I tell them quite simply to go to Toronto, or go to



All frame enlargements from  
Richard Kerr's  
"Last Days of Contrition"

Vancouver. I think film schools are in a crisis right now across Canada. I don't think the administrators know what to do. There's other places in this country where you can learn the industry stuff a lot faster and a lot better. You can probably make money at it while you're doing it too. But the administrators continue to deceive students as they're coming in. I have a department head, and I don't mind saying this publicly because it's very serious stuff, that tells our graduate students to watch the NBC Movie of the Week and read all the magazines and you'll be all right. This is a joke. This is a guy who shows *Anne of Green Gables* as the model for feature filmmaking in Canada. 3.5 million on a Sunday night isn't bad, but I don't think we should be teaching it in our universities. And the students have forgotten how to protest.

Packer: There are always new sheep coming to the corral every year. I went to film school for four years. I've learned more about equipment by renting the stuff myself and by asking

for it than I did from any teacher because most of the teachers knew a lot less about the equipment than the people who were renting it for a living.

Hoffman: But certainly the place of film school is not to learn equipment. What did you want to learn?

Packer: No, but to at least give people the access to equipment, about learning how to shoot at the end of the day or the beginning of the day. It's those things that they didn't teach me that I had to learn on my own and did learn on my own. I don't want to see any virgins coming up who are 18, 19 years old, wasting four years of their life, and spending \$20-30 grand in a school when they could talk to LIFT, talk to me, talk to other people, and say, "Spend the money and make your own film." I think co-ops are the best opportunity for people to learn how to make films.

Hoffman: As long as you can have sessions like this.

Popovich: But this doesn't happen often enough. For awhile Sheridan College was good. It turned out a lot of filmmakers that are in this room right now. The instructors would do things like throw slides or film images up on the wall, then there would be discussions, for hours, about rhythm, composition, colour, relationships like that. Or putting a backpack on your back and loading it up with 500 feet or 1000 feet and going out shooting, and maybe throwing it all away. But just looking, seeing, talking about film stocks, talking about sound, those kind of things.

A: What I picked up during *Contrition* is the sense that institutions tend to breed complacency. If you're mature enough going into an institution, you know what you want, how to go about getting it; I think it's a dandy place to spend your time. You have people your same age to relate to...current issues...you can hash things out. I don't think it's a totally bad idea; what's bad is that if you cause waves you're out.

Packer: You can learn technical things a lot faster by going to the rental house and shooting 100 feet of film. They will make sure you know how to use the camera before you leave their doors. If you go to school it'll take you 2 or 3



years to touch that camera. If you need theory, go to school; if you need technical stuff, go to the rental house.

A: This fellow's comments interest me because I think it's a symptom of many learning endeavours. I mean, probably the quickest way to learn how to take out an appendix is to go down to the morgue and do some autopsies.

Kerr: So you're talking about the act of seeing with one's own eyes here [Kerr is punning on the title of Stan Brakhage's film *The Act of Seeing With One's Own Eyes*, in which Brakhage shot explicit footage of autopsies in a morgue; the word autopsy comes from the Greek *autoptos*, *optos* (seen) *autos* (by oneself). Ed.]

Popovich: You talked about burying one part of your family during *Canal* and starting another family during *Contribution*.

What were you thinking and feeling while you were shooting *Canal*, and later, while shooting *Contribution*? What was the progression from this very personal towards this more political stance that happened in the intervening years?

Kerr: I think with *Canal*, at that time, things like autobiography and personal films were very important to me as a way of getting me on my feet making film—they gave a reason. I could never understand why you'd make a film about something other than your own existence. That's the glib short answer. It was a challenge, in a sense, having seen so much of that American stuff at school, and so much American culture before that, to try to make a film out of St. Catharines, Ontario, Port Colborne, Ontario, blights on the map. So that was part of it—autobiography was in personal films. And then one thing leads to another...then at the end of the 80's, I feel two things: one, I'm just a middle class white boy from southern Ontario, and how interesting is my life? Not too. [laughter] I mean, I've been seen in malls. [laughter] I don't think that's the thrust anymore. Back then I felt that it was interesting to look at my life. Now I think the stakes are a little higher. If I'm going to go out and spend three years, and all this good government money and stuff, I want to make it about something else, I wanna speak up a bit—looking out rather than looking



in. I looked in for a lot of years you know.

A: What does *contribution* mean?

Kerr: Sorrow for your sins. I edited this film at the NFB in Regina, and I think it's the first time that anyone's edited a film there since the war. [laughter] I had this NFB film can that fit my film. I thought this would be great; I could distribute my film with this film can that says *The Last Days of Living* by the NFB and have all the distribution numbers. So I sent this thing off to the PAFPS people and they sent a letter back that said, "If you persist to use this title we won't process your film." [laughter] I've since found out that they have no right to say that; you cannot do that.

Gouin: They're not contrite, right.

Kerr: Not at all. The producer at the NFB has never seen the film. She refused to come in and look at it. She said, "I did experimental films when I went to school." [laughter] It's just a stage, right. [laughter]

A: How do you feel about the category for the award you won?

Kerr: New Visions? I feel fine about it. I go down there on Tuesday to show it for the first time in America and I'm going down there to see what it's all about. I just called Louis from Buffalo with the wide tie and he's coming up to protect me. [laughter] No, I don't think it's anti-American; I think it's a lament. I mean, I grew up on American culture. In grade six I knew all the states and their capitals. I didn't even know who Louis St. Laurent was. I didn't know much about Canada.

A: How can you say *Contribution* is not anti-American? It's obviously against what they're trying to say, and it's totally personal; whereas what they're trying to say is completely defined by some kind of state-run bullshit. Thank god it's anti-American.

Kerr: I'm gonna have to answer this question I guess...[laughter]...sooner or later. The pivotal thing for me right now is the question of the flag. The flag in there is two things: one, the obvious flag is the Robert Frank flag, the flag that blocks, the flag that's in the way, the flag that you can sometimes see through, and not. Then there's the Jasper Johns flag, which is playing with form and decoration and stars and stripes, and that. And I think I'm caught in the middle of those two. When I started and realized this was gonna be a film about America, I went and bought a few flags, and I said, "Okay, when are we gonna burn them?" [laughter] But the reality is I'm a middle class boy who knows his manners and stuff. I had the flags down in the desert, I had them all set up and I had the little thing of gas, and everything that you would need to burn a flag. [laughter] My line, whenever I travel in the States or anywhere, is, "I'm from the National Film Board, I'm making a movie." [laughter] But this would be an embarrassment—too cheap, it's not what I'm about. I'm not about going to Kennedy's grave and urinating on it. I'm not about that stuff; and I don't think this film's about that either. But I think it walks the line, and that's why I wanted to draw the parallel between Jasper Johns and Robert Frank. The American flag is an icon. I had it on my ass for four years in high school [laughter]; I had it on my wall. It's everywhere. I'm not that angry, I'm not that political, I'm not a card-carrying member of any party. I'm truly sad the



way it's turned out, because for me when I was a kid and went down there America was fun, Americans were nice people. To me it's the most exotic place in the world. I think Americans are still nice people. But I think they've been tricked...maybe like Hitler tricked Germany, Reagan tricked America. And I don't agree with it; I think Ronald Reagan's probably a nice guy and I think he's senile as hell...but what other system's going to work, you know...one vote for one person is a pretty good concept. I haven't heard of a better one. The only problem is one out of so many people vote. So who's the problem with? Is the problem with the institutions, or is the problem with us? Or are we being duped and doped and tricked?

Gouin: I think that what's in common with all of these institutions and the way that you've invoked various quotes in the film, is that institutions fail when they become self-interested. And without referring too specifically to any institutions of higher learning, one could also say the same thing about churches. Once they become more interested in the perpetuation of their own survival and the survival and self-interests of those people who have career interests in the institutions, they cease to do the job which they were created to do within the context of the larger society. And I think that is what has happened to government in the United States; I think it is what is in danger of happening to government in Canada, and government in certain provinces very specifically at this moment. And I do see the film as a lament; and I do sense real sorrow in the film, and fear, from the opening frame right through the end—like almost numbing fear. And I'll be very interested to know what kind of reaction you get from an American audience.

A: I think what you were saying was very clear in those little bits from the poem, "They've done it to others, they'll do it to you." [The reference is to "The Second Poem of Mary".] And the billboard: "They Starved Me Off My Land," and the tanks rolling by, millions of dollars worth of equipment, for what? Who is the writer of the poem?

Kerr: Ernest Hemingway. He's a writer I picked up on in my early 20's to



understand how to read writers; he's the one I learned with, and I've read virtually everything, and continue to do so. As much as he's chastised and parodied and all that sort of stuff, there were some things that he did that were virtually timeless. And for me that was one of the things, the religion and the war in the poem. I'm very interested in those old messages that are still applicable in the 90's. Maybe the dressing's changed but it's still the same message.

Hoolboom: So the film is about, or as Judy was saying, against all these institutions and against that kind of administration, and yet experimental film is very much linked with, shown mostly in conjunction with, secondary school institutions, universities, supported by arts councils, and is able to travel because of grants. You're able to do what you do because of government monies. So it's very much linked in with the whole system...

Kerr: Hey, let's get out of the closet, Mac—we're government workers.

Hoolboom: ...you yourself are putting together a program with the Art Gallery of Ontario, large government funded institution, that is going to travel to other places because of monies. Given a marginal expression which without that money wouldn't be able to travel, how do you feel about that relationship between...

Kerr: You mean if it all dried up. If I woke up on Monday and it said in the Sun: No More Arts Councils? It would be really interesting, but I'll tell you, there would be a lot of people in this room that would survive out of that.

Packer: I think it's a good time now to go from experimental film to poetic documentary. I don't consider Richard an experimental filmmaker because there was too much thought and too much time that went...[laughter and jeering] Let's get this out front here. An experiment is a lot different from bearing a project. Richard would have made it whether or not he got government money; and it wasn't because he got government money that he experimented with the medium. He was making a personal statement and he bore it. I'm saying don't show me experiments, something that didn't work.

Kerr: I just came from Montreal where I left this conversation at noon hour and the word is maybe...instead of experimental...is this an avant-garde film?

Gouin: I think it was actually Marcel Duchamp who suggested that the term avant-garde should be given back to the French infantry, which is where it came from.

Packer: I just wanted to verify that from now on, Gerald Packer does not consider Richard Kerr's films as experiments. They are poetic documentaries.

Kerr: Well you and I can drink together now. [laughter]

Gouin: What started off the hackles rising at the front of the room was that you said that you didn't think this was an experimental film because it was not x, it was not x and it was not x. So, in your mind you were associating certain qualities with what you knew as experimental film...which is what these folks were taking exception to. So maybe we can put aside for a moment the whole business of terminology and go back to, if I understand you correctly, what you saw as being different about this film, from other films which you see as being part of a similar body of work.

Packer: In one word: intention. Experimental comes from someone who



doesn't know their intentions—that's what it means to me.

**Popovich:** The word "experimental" comes from the word "experience". These films are not about trying things that don't work; they're about finding forms that relate to our experiences rather than formulaic models. Furthermore, Richard has talked about working with accidents and spontaneity, going to places, looking and feeling out the environment.

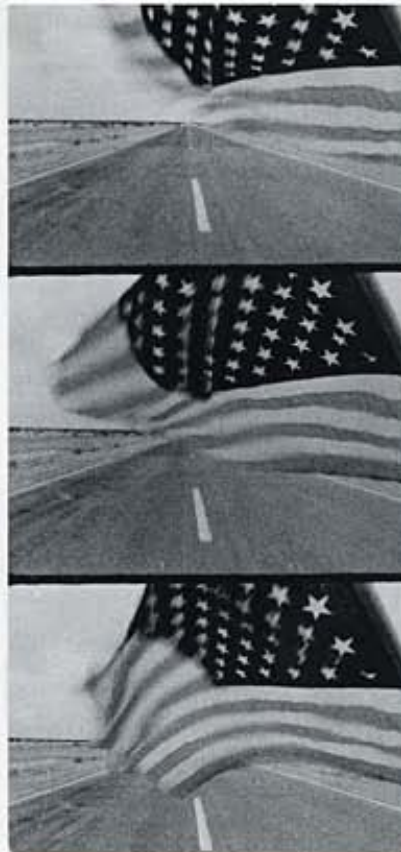
**Kerr:** Maybe we should open up the word documentary a bit rather than experimental or avant-garde. Maybe since we are the keepers of the great tradition in documentary, and that's what we're known as, and since the documentary is dead, and you can read about it for the last 5 years in all the journals, maybe we should start liberalizing that concept...and start admitting that these dinosaurs at the Film Board, and the CBC, are has-beens. They haven't brought anything new to the form in 15 years. There's actually been people in this city that I can't talk to because I'm an experimental filmmaker. There's like a big X—it's this aura of an X, when you walk into the door. It's like you have no credibility because you're an experimental filmmaker. There are experimental filmmakers in this city, in this room, who know more about contemporary sound, about cinematography, about the craft and art of cinema than most industry people. I want to be able to walk up to Don Haig and say, "Hey Don, I make documentary films," and he says, "Okay fine." But if I walk in and say, "Don, I make experimental films, and I happen to like Stan Brakhage." Oh god...you know, that's the kiss of death. And I wonder what that does, and I'm just putting questions out because I'm not resolved on this in my own mind...if there was no such thing as the X word...

**Hoffman:** Experimental is a word, and film is seeing and hearing. We're trying to categorize it with words. Let's get away from it and deal with just what we see and hear.

**Hoolboom:** What word do you like then?

**Kerr:** I'm trying to sell this documentary thing. [laughter] It's what I've picked up

in Montreal and Calgary and as I travel around this country and talk to concerned people about film. An extension of this is what Francoyse Picard calls the cinema of resistance, meaning that there's all these co-ops resisting the vertical climb—up through the NFB, then Telefilm, then when you're done with Telefilm I guess you've got to go to L.A. We're loaded with filmmakers in Canada that are making films that don't want to ascend to the heavens of Peter Pearson and Garth Drabinsky. Those people are irrelevant as far as a lot of filmmaking going on in this country. And the problem is that you've got to sneak in through the locked door to show this stuff. There's very little exchange of co-op films. We could set up a conveyor belt running from Victoria to St. John's and there could be cans of films running endlessly for a year just exchanging. Every co-op could pick them off the thing like donuts, you know. [laughter] There's that much non-market driven film out there. There's a backlog of film at Canadian Filmmakers [CFMDC] that would run a TV station for a year. My instinct is that if there was an adventurous programmer, and I think there's one at TVO [Kerr is referring to Richard Johnson who produces the Moving Images program at TVO] and I think there probably are in the bowels of all these institutions, I think this stuff could work and be programmed to the masses, and



people would want to see it. I don't for a second underestimate the people out there. I think people would love this LIFT stuff, this co-op stuff in general, if it was handled properly. I think it's a shame that the people of Canada aren't being exposed to the 1000 films at Canadian Filmmakers; what happened to the CFI films...what the hell happened to our identity...part of that is rolled into that.

**A:** I don't read any cinema or film magazines, and you referred a short while ago to the fact that they've written about documentary being dead. Is it that in the last 20 years or so documentary hasn't done anything different, so they think it's dead? Was documentary more progressive before that?

**Hoolboom:** We were talking about the National Film Board, not all documentary filmmakers.

**A (same person):** Is the argument essentially that they're just repeating themselves? Hasn't the NFB always been doing a certain type of documentary? Why in the last five years, as you said, have people started to raise questions about all that?

**Popovich:** Beginnings aren't the same as middles and ends. When the National Film Board began it was a lot more vital. Around the late 50's or so Cinema Direct in Quebec, the Challenge for Change program, and later Studio D, had some important things to do and to say; equipment was brought out to people who never had access to it, they were still fairly open to explorations with the form of documentary, at least allowing some filmmakers some creative freedom. Then all that stuff dissipated, and after 25 or 30 years it's become much more institutionalized...so there aren't risks taken, things aren't vital anymore, they've become very safe.

**Kerr:** The form hasn't progressed. This country has such a great legacy. I think it's just slowly eroded over 10 years. When I went to film school documentary was a real happenin' thing; Robert Frank was vital. Wiseman was doing interesting things...there's a number of people, Derek May, Arthur Lipsett and Jacques Leduc and people like that at the Film Board that were alive and were



happening. They were adventurous. But somehow that eroded over the 70's and the 80's. I don't think it's ever stopped. The cinema of resistance was always happening underneath and there's a lot of interesting stuff...I mean people like Phil [Hoffman] here, in my mind, is a documentary filmmaker and I see what he's doing with technique and technology and so forth, and I say, Jesus, this is a documentary and it's so much more interesting to look at than a portrait film of Milton Acorn. That's another thing, and I picked that purposefully because I think the NFB has destroyed portrait films of our great artists. I mean I've never seen anything so bad. I used to show them at school under a Canadian Culture course. Okay let's learn about Milton Acorn today, and you show this goddamn obituary documentary...and this is when the guy's alive [laughter]...and it's so awful. But there are people that are equipped to do interesting things about Milton Acorn or whoever, and I think it's just a real tragedy that we've let it slip. I have the confidence that there's a lot of interesting documentaries, but once again I think you have to liberalize the thing.

Gouin: I'd like to make a point not directly on the subject of documentary, just for a moment. I just wanted to throw in perhaps a caution with respect to the idea of this vertical, with Peter Pearson at the top, which of course he no longer is, but we all understand the analogy. What that vertical model presupposes is that success in filmmaking is the feature film with the big budget that is commercially successful. With respect, Richard, I think we all share similar interests in terms of the quality of Canadian film, that to even use that model of a vertical is a destructive thing. And that instead what we want to do is think in terms of our own vertical, if we wish, and leave this model entirely off to the side. Because that is not a pinnacle which we are aiming at, it's something foreign, something other, it's something even undesirable.

Kerr: But surely there's something political at stake here—and that's the bag of money. And I don't know the facts, correct me if I'm wrong, when a festival like the Festival of Festivals gets a lot of money to put on a festival and

do what they do, and they do it well, obviously, but what they don't do under their Perspective Canada show is really give a perspective on Canada. And to me, I'm pissed, I'm willing to talk about it, I'm willing to write the letters to the editor. There's people in this room that are willing to barge into offices and demand that certain films be shown. That's where I get ticked off. Those sort of things.

Gouin: What we want is that the bag of money be attached to a different set of values.

Kerr: Yes, that's a very good way of putting it.

Gouin: One of the real problems with the vertical structure that we're looking at now is that it is industry—it means jobs, it means a whole infrastructure, and so on and so forth, which government sees as being economically desirable. They have not been made to see the value in the kinds of films on which we put value. So it's a matter of arguing an alternative set of values to this business of industry. It's not going to displace industry. Industry is going to continue to be valuable. What we need to do is build a set of values for this cinema of resistance, which I think is a very good term, really.

Kerr: Oh, I think it's being built and I'm quite confident, and once again it comes from the experience of getting out of here and seeing the other parts of the country. And I get very touched when I think of this; there's people sitting in Regina in this old dusty house talking about film tonight, and cutting film. And the last thing they're thinking about is the vertical ascension.

A: I'm not a filmmaker, I don't know anything about film at all, it's not my line of work...I just came to see this film. But it seems, as an outsider, that there's this sort of rip-off thing happening here. There's research and development going on and the mainstream industry bloody well isn't paying for it.

Kerr: You got it. And I think we should end the night on that. That's exactly it. There's a guy in town tonight, he's here for awhile, his name is Stan Brakhage; he virtually pioneered, in an R & D

sense, what Michelob is showing tonight, what Moses Znaimer has got on his TV station...and anyone who knows about Brakhage I don't have to explain. These films are pioneering the language and there's never any credit given to it, and I think that's all any filmmaker wants, the credit given to it.

A: I've never made a film either, but I have to say exactly the same thing, when you're talking about a bag of money attached to some values...at some point you have to abandon that bag of money that's attached to those values; you can't change the values that come with it. I would love to see more films like this, and not being involved in film I find it really hard to find.

A: I come from a town where *Rambo* would play all winter. There are plenty of people all across Ontario who say, "Christ, do we have to put up with this." There is a market for your kind of stuff, and people are interested. I don't think I'm an oddball. I mean, I'm in town on business and I pick up NOW, I look through the thing, I say "Well, what's interesting here..." But you know, those from out of town are not usually going to pick up NOW Magazine; they're going to go to the hotel desk and ask what's happening in town and they'll say, "Go and see *The Mousetrap*," or something like that.

Kerr: I agree with you. Almost as long as I've been making films I've made it a point of packaging other people's films and doing this sort of thing. But if I had a speciality, it would be to small town Canada and to audiences that aren't as sophisticated as this audience, that just want to come out and see something different. And I have seldom come across a negative response when I've shown this stuff...seldom. I mean there's the odd time when I've tried to show something that maybe I was even uncomfortable with, something that was a little esoteric, or abstract, or something...the odd time...but that was my fault for programming that sort of material that I couldn't articulate or wouldn't feel comfortable with. But I agree with you, this stuff is marginal for the wrong reasons...it's a shame. And especially Canadian stuff. It's really nice to hear both of you say something like that.



## THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL FILM SCHOOL BY PAUL MCIVOR

The London International Film School (LIFS) is an unusual institution in that it receives no funding from the British government. It exists solely upon charitable donations and tuitions. This grants the school considerable independence with regards to course content and teaching technique as I will explain later. The unfortunate side effect is of course the high cost of attendance; tuition is presently 2700 pounds sterling (\$6000 Canadian) per term, there being three terms yearly. Ontario Student Assistance Program does recognize the school but is unprepared to grant any aid, and loans very small amounts for study there. This, coupled with the high cost of living in London, makes it an expensive proposition indeed. (Many students, such as myself, were forced to withdraw after the first term.) However, it is an excellent school for practical film training.

At the LIFS, training progresses in a graduated fashion with students forced to attempt all aspects of filmmaking at once during the course. Thus one could direct one film, edit another, sound record a third and direct the photography on another. To ensure a high level of expertise in the students, extensive practical workshops and even practical exams for equipment is mandatory. Available equipment for student use ranges from Nagra III's, Arriflex ST's, Arriflex 35IIC's, and even a Mitchell 35BNC (non-reflex!). The school also has several studios with lights. Editing suites ranging from simple pic-syncs for first term exercises to Magnasync flat-beds for later work are provided as well. The school also has two cinemas equipped for 16mm and 35mm projection for use in the film theory and cinema history courses.

LIFS pursues film along a more or less commercial route. Script consultants seem to be somewhat biased against experimental cinema but one is always free to ignore their advice and pursue an avant garde idea. All that needs to be done is to convince one's group that the idea is valid. This brings me to perhaps the only fault of the school. At the LIFS, students are usually aiming for a career in the technical aspect of cinema. This means that their script-

writing abilities are not as strong as those of other schools that offer separate writing courses. This fault though is not a major one and, although the stories might be weak the films produced at the school are exceptionally good. With staff at the school being mostly professionals (eg. the music consultant is Wilfred Josephs, an established composer as well as writer of television music for works such as *Claudius*) the level of learning is very high and thus graduates are immediately offered union (ACTT) status. In short, the LIFS offers a highly technical course that puts students in a good position both to work in commercial cinema and also to explore their own style in independent film work.

For those wishing to contact the school for more information, their address is: London International Film School, 24 Shelton St., London U.K. WC2H 9HP.

### GRANT DEADLINES

#### CANADA COUNCIL

##### EXPLORATIONS

DEADLINES	RESULTS
January 15	mid April
May 1	end July
September 15	mid December

##### AID TO ARTISTS (INDIVIDUALS)

DEADLINES	RESULTS
A: October 1	January 1
B: April 1	July 1

##### FILM PRODUCTION

DEADLINES	RESULTS
July 15	October 1
November 15	February 1

##### ART BANK

DEADLINES	RESULTS
February 1	mid March
August 1	mid September

#### ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL

##### FILM PRODUCTION

DEADLINES	RESULTS
November 1	early February
April 1	early July

##### SCREENWRITING

DEADLINES	RESULTS
February 1	early May

#### PROJECT GRANTS

DEADLINES	RESULTS
September 15	mid November

#### TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL

##### GRANTS TO VISUAL ARTISTS

DEADLINE	RESULTS
October 13	December

#### FESTIVALS

For more information on these and other festivals, contact Erika Schengili at LIFT.

##### 6th INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL

New Delhi, India  
Deadline: Sept. 30  
Telefilm Coordination

##### 13th CAIRO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Cairo, Egypt  
Deadline: Sept. 15  
No Telefilm Coordination

##### 30th FESTIVAL DEI POPOI

Firenze, Italy  
Documentary films  
Deadline: Sept. 20  
Telefilm Coordination

##### ATLANTIC FILM FESTIVAL

Halifax  
Deadline: Aug. 30

##### INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF ABITIBI-TEMISCAMINGUE

Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec  
all categories  
Deadline: Sept. 1

##### BILBAO INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF DOCUMENTARY & SHORTS

Bilbao, Spain  
Deadline: Sept. 15

##### INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FILM FESTIVAL

Friedberg, BDR  
Deadline: Oct. 31

##### INTERNATIONAL IMAGES

Peterborough, Ont.  
all categories  
Deadline: October 1



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**The LIFT Newsletter**

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