

FILMPRINT

The Magazine of the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto Volume 25 Issue 5 September 2005 \$4



Infinite Connections: **An interview with Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof**

Show and Tell: **Cassandra Nicolaou on SHOW ME**

Gone in 60 Seconds: **The Novosibirsk Extra Short Film Festival**

After the Fire: **Carl E. Brown on the Making of URBAN FIRE (Part 1)**



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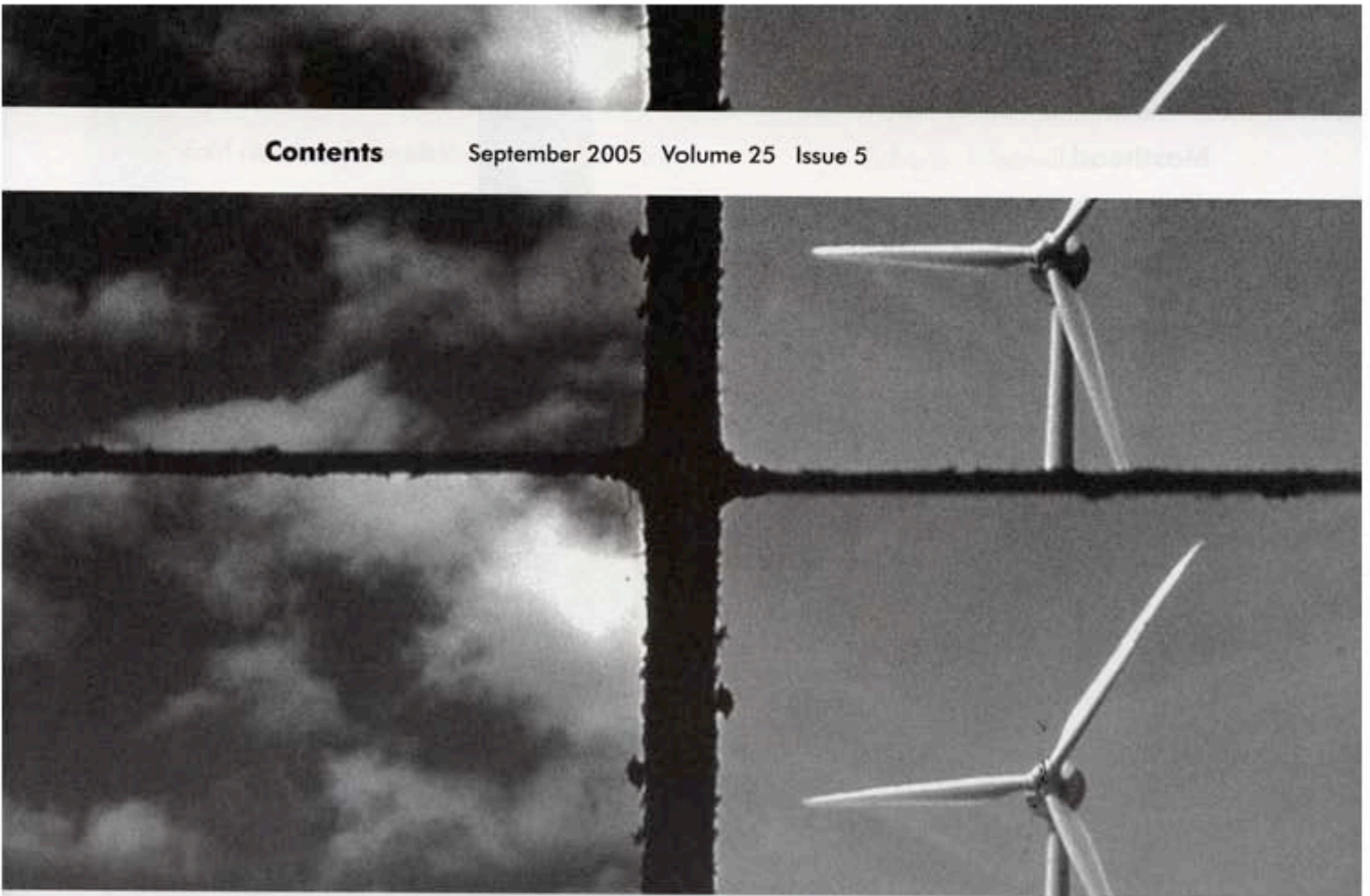
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(Cover Image) *Show Me* by Cassandra Nicolaou;
(above) *Coming + Going* by Larissa Fan

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Masthead



LIFT Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto
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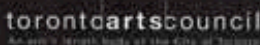
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The Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto is a non-profit charitable organization that provides Toronto's vibrant independent filmmaking community with affordable access to production equipment and post-production facilities, educational services, film screenings and much more. For over two decades, LIFT has played an integral part in advancing and promoting the art of independent filmmaking in Toronto.

LIFT is supported by its membership, the Canada Council (Media Arts Section), the Ontario Arts Council, and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council. Articles published in the LIFT magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the LIFT membership or the board of directors. Letters to the editor can be sent c/o LIFT, 37 Hanna Ave., Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1W9, tel: 416.588.6444; fax: 416.588.7017; www.lift.on.ca; email: office@lift.on.ca. Our readership's feedback, suggestions and ideas are always welcome, please call the LIFT office or email: magazine@lift.on.ca.



Editorial Jason McBride

It's been just over a year since I started editing Film Print and, sadly, I must already say farewell. It's nothing nefarious, just other work not allowing me the necessary time to devote to this magazine. I will miss the magazine, but I am pleased as punch at the developments Film Print has undertaken during my tenure (especially the adoption of an actual name), and I look forward to seeing it develop even more over the coming months and years. I know that my successor will take the magazine in exciting and new directions, but he or she won't be able to do that without your help. Film Print always needs good new writers, fresh ideas and constructive criticism. With some time, I hope that the magazine will become the forum for independent and non-commercial filmmaking activity in Toronto (and beyond), but to do that it will need a substantial contribution from the filmmaking community as a whole. So, when you get a minute, put down your Bolex and splicer and pick up a pen or laptop. Write about your fellow filmmakers; tell us the best ways to cheaply light a set; describe for us your experience attending that film festival on the other side of the world. There's a lot to write about; we just need people to do it.

Jason McBride
Editor



Message from the Executive Director

Roberto Ariganello

Three important developments will occur this September, and they will all have a profound effect on the independent film community in Toronto.

First and foremost, Shine it On!, LIFT's annual celebration of filmmaking, will take place, for the first time, at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (MOCCA), a venue all too appropriate given our continued emphasis on filmmaking as an artistic practice. This year's fundraiser will feature our largest silent auction to date, and we will be auctioning off everything (and we mean everything) that one could need to make a film. For filmmakers and non-filmmakers alike, a wide variety of wonderful services (massages, yoga lessons, dinners for two from fine restaurants) will also be up for auction.

Of course, the jewel of the evening will be the 12th Salon de Refusés—our annual showcase for all the loveable losers who had the misfortune of getting their short films rejected by the Toronto International Film Festival. LIFT will continue its tradition of reimbursing the TIFF entry fees for all participants in the Salon. All films screened at the Salon are chosen randomly—we draw the rejection letters from a hat—and then shown in the order selected. This anti-curatorial festival is always filled with great surprises. The festivities take place Tuesday, September 6th at MOCCA.

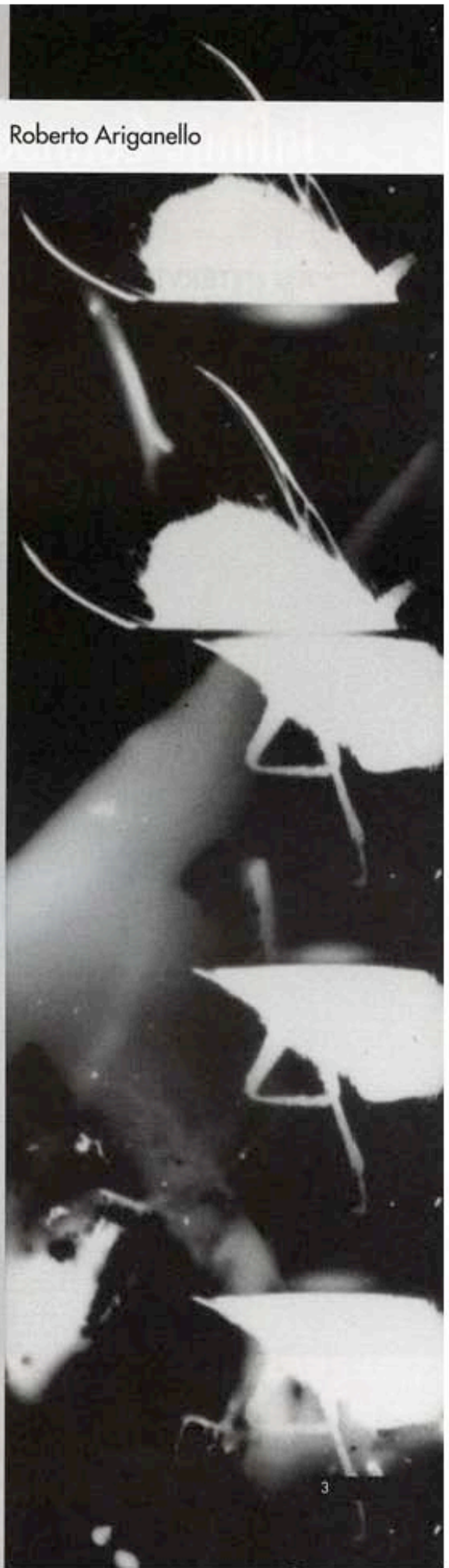
The second notable event this month—it is my pleasure to announce—is that Sami van Ingen will be LIFT's 2005 Artist in Residence. Sami will be arriving in late September to create a new 35MM film on our optical printer. Sami's most recent film *Fokus* was one of the highlights of the Images Festival last April. With *Fokus*, Sami demonstrated the remarkable ability to create a wonderfully meditative film from archival Super 8 footage shot in India. Under

the auspices of our popular exhibition series New Directions in Cinema, LIFT will co-present, with Pleasure Dome, a retrospective of Sami's incredible films in early October.

Now for the bad news. It is with much sadness that I acknowledge the departure of Susan Oxtoby as Director of Programming at Cinematheque Ontario. Susan has been named new Senior Film Curator at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Their gain is our loss. Back in the day—we're talking ten years ago—there were only a few places one could go to watch non-commercial films in Toronto. The Cinematheque Ontario played an integral part in the independent/avant-garde/experimental community in Toronto. As a programmer, Susan invited artists from all over the world as well as working directly with local filmmakers. Susan created such wonderful programs as The Independents, a free weekly forum devoted to alternative film (typically bringing the artists in to speak about their work), and Wavelengths, TIFF's experimental film showcase. The Cinematheque is still by far the best cinema in the city for showing 16MM film.

Most importantly, Susan raised the curatorial bar for film in the city. Her passion for programming and her ability to seek out and expose new artists set a standard that will be hard to match. Although there are certainly many more film festivals in Toronto than there were ten years ago, Susan's departure will leave an immense void; we're losing one of film art's greatest and most knowledgeable advocates. Susan, you will be missed. We wish you well.

Roberto Ariganello
Executive Director



Infinite Connections:

AN INTERVIEW WITH

IZABELLA PRUSKA-



Song of the Firefly (2002)

Eliana Frederick has her Bachelor of Arts Honours in Film Studies from Carleton University. She is an aspiring screenwriter and story editor. Her feature screenplay, *Rambling Man*, won the Ryerson Screenwriting II award in December 2003. This fall she will be attending the Lew Hunter Screenwriting Colony.

OLDENHOF

The general public tends to think of creativity as an unpredictable occurrence that strikes a few gifted people. Creativity may seem to appear by magic but in truth it comes from a deep well of information. This quickly becomes apparent when watching the delicate and deceptively simple experimental films of Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof—works fashioned from the most ephemeral of elements: a leaf, an insect's wings, light itself.

Pruska-Oldenhof was born in Poland, where she lived for most of her childhood. At the age of 12 she immigrated with her parents to Toronto, Canada, where she currently resides. A graduate of the Media Arts Program at Ryerson Polytechnic University, where she received her B.A., Pruska-Oldenhof's film and video projects have been recognized and awarded for their artistic merit by various film festivals and arts organizations. During her studies at Ryerson, she co-founded the interdisciplinary Loop Collective, which she is continually trying to expand by

organizing innovative contexts in which to present experimental cinema. She has contributed to the Toronto arts community in various capacities: as a filmmaker, as an administrator, and as a member of numerous arts organizations. Pruska-Oldenhof is currently working towards her doctoral degree in Communication and Culture at York University in Toronto. Her films include *my I's* (1997), *Vibrant Marvels* (2000), *Light Magic* (2001), *Song of the Firefly* (2002), *Scintillating Flesh* (2003), *Her Carnal Longings* (2003) and *sea-ing* (2004). Her most recently published article entitled "The Aesthetics of Menace: Stan Brakhage, Tom Thomson, and the Group of Seven," appeared in the *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*.

I met with Pruska-Oldenhof at her home in downtown Toronto to talk about what inspires and informs her experimental film works.





Fugitive L(i)ght

Eliana Frederick: Historically, many experimental film people have come to film from other arts backgrounds. You began in fine arts, painting. Can you tell us a bit about that progression?

Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof: My initial interest was in painting, and I wanted to pursue painting at a university studying fine arts. My parents, being musicians and not being able to support the family though music in Canada, said to me “Think of more practical possibilities in the arts. Maybe going into applied arts would be more practical for the future.” I was accepted into the Ryerson Media Arts program and this probably was the best thing that has happened to me, because the program itself was interdisciplinary. Rather than just relying on one photographic discipline, it combined photography, video, film, and digital imaging. Today I draw on all four disciplines and also include painting. I guess my sensibility for composition and thinking in terms of relationships between colours and shapes within each frame and shot has its basis in my initial interest in painting. However, my education at Ryerson opened up new possibilities for me to explore composition in a dynamic form as evolving over time.

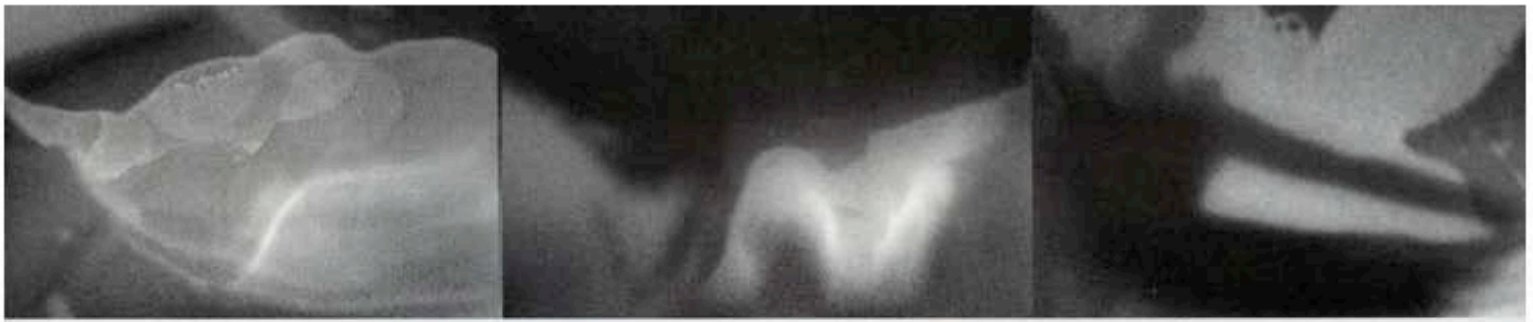
EF: I find it interesting that all your experiences—first painting and now applied arts education—have been integrated in your work.

IP-O: I think that it comes naturally to any maker. You will always draw on your experience in whatever medium you have worked, whatever technique

you have picked up along the way, and whatever works you have been exposed to. My work is as much influenced by my introduction to music through my parents, growing up being surrounded by music, as it is by other artists and filmmakers. You can certainly see the impact of Bruce Elder’s films and theory on my work. This goes hand-in-hand with me having worked for him now for almost a decade as an assistant on several of his films and books. Stan Brakhage is obviously another major influence. Had I not been exposed to hours of his work, and, in particular, his **Mothlight**, I would have never been able to make **Light Magic** and **Song of the Firefly**. Michael Snow was the one who showed me how to be attuned to each medium—how each medium seeks its own way for expression and actually shapes the work. Certainly seeing, in his work, the cross-pollination between the different media—his photographic works always bearing the marks of painting, and the same thing with his cinematic works—has left a lasting impression on me. Not to mention, several others such as [Marie] Menken, [Carolee] Schneemann, and my own peers, Kelly Egan, Shana MacDonald, Annie MacDonell, Colin Clark, and the Loop Collective. All these people, as much as my education, have influenced how I perceive the film image, and where I go with every single project. I think that education is very important, but so are the people in the community, the other makers, along with the works of the past and the works that are currently in the making. It is a very reciprocal, a communal process.

EF: What inspires you to create a film—as opposed to a poem or a painting?

IP-O: Why would I choose to work with film? I almost see this question divided into two parts. First of all, it’s generally some form of an experience or impression of something. For example, with the Loie Fuller film, **Fugitive L(i)ght**, it was actually seeing the footage of dancers in the 1890’s all performing the same dance, the Serpentine Dance, and just being drawn to the repetitive motion and the shapes evoked through the movement of the diaphanous materials of the costume. Another project, **Double Ellipsis**, out of which **Fugitive L(i)ght** evolved, plays with the shape of the figure-eight or the infinity symbol. I saw the scientific footage of motion studies shot by Étienne-Jules Marey of dragonflies, flies, and bees in flight where he identified the double elliptical shape in the movement of these insects’ wings. I began to notice this motion and the double elliptical shape elsewhere in the world and this gave the impetus to the project. In fact, when we try to float or to sustain ourselves in water we make this movement with our arms. The dancers performing the Serpentine Dance at the turn of last century also created the same movements while moving dozens of yards of fabric attached to their arms. In a sense, it was this actual shape, the double ellipsis, rather than the concept of the infinity symbol or figure-eight that guided both projects. I did not want to go that route; I was more interested in fleshing out where I was seeing these movements and



shapes in the world and hopefully uncovering some new connections which don't yet exist as concepts.

So it can be anything from the shape of a leaf to the structure of a fly, such as in *Light Magic*, or something that is already out there and exists in its photographic form, or conversely seeing a film and being inspired by somebody else's work. Not so much always by the content but perhaps by the rhythmic structure of the work, or an experience that it engenders which you can't exactly pin down but which urges you to explore by recreating it through your own means.

I feel that experimental cinema often combines both poetry and painting. The structure of a poem relies on rhythm and uses devices such as metaphor and metonymy to shape the composition. In addition, I find that experimental cinema engenders experience that evolves over time. [It] engages not only the visual sense but also the auditory, and, sometimes through its rhythmic structure, it can also engage the tactile sense or perhaps trigger a memory that will transport you to another place. Or, who knows, maybe pull you into a sleepy state of wavering between being conscious and unconscious. [Laughs]

EF: Do you have a methodology or framework in mind when you create your films?

IP-O: I guess every film requires a different approach. In fact, I'm quite opposed to any kind of "methodology" in creative production partly because I find that imposing a framework or a method can certainly curtail its possi-

bilities. There are, however, some exceptions, such as the use of aleatory processes or chance operations, but that's a whole other topic. Generally, I try to open myself to whatever materials I have gathered.

EF: Do you find yourself drawn to certain themes when you're creating a film or do you find yourself wanting to work from that initial feeling or spark that has compelled you to work on the film?

IP-O: I think it's probably the latter, starting to work from an initial feeling or some kind of a spark or experience or exposure to something, be it an object or a film or a dance performance, or whatever—a great conversation with a friend. I try not to impose a boundary on a project especially in its formative stages, which a theme certainly might. In general, I am drawn to colour, light, and rhythm, just as numerous other experimental filmmakers are. But, at the same time, I think there are themes that come to me after I have completed the work, when I've been away from it and had some time to digest it and look at it with fresh eyes. When these themes eventually surface I think to myself, "Aha, that's what I've been working on!" It's quite an incredible experience. It's almost like finishing the work twice. You finish it once and you think, "There it is, it's finished, that's what it is." Then, years down the road you come back to it, and there you are experiencing it again and you find something else in it, and it takes on a whole new presence for you. Also different people will tease out different themes for me, which I find much

more compelling rather than me telling people what the theme is. Even when I am introducing the films I try not to do that. I learn more from others saying this is what I saw in your work, or that's what I responded to. This certainly helps me learn more about my work and myself.

EF: What's your relationship to story in film?

IP-O: I don't work with stories partly because I'm much more interested in creating a certain kind of experience. Rather than imposing a narrative structure, which is dependent on temporal development or having a beginning, middle and end, I prefer to work with a structure that is more akin to poetry. [That is] rhythm dispersing [the] chronological ordering of time through repetition or sudden shifts in metre. [It] prompts the viewer to make web-like connections between the past, the present and the future with whatever they are immediately experiencing. Creating a rupture in the progression of time, a kind of openness without an end (which a story always curtails because it always tends towards a finish—a finitude, rather than an opening towards the infinite), permits infinite possibilities of connections to be made by the viewer experiencing the work. Narrative structure curtails openness, and the kind of fusion of the two would deny the possibilities of both.

EF: When you create your films do you have a sense of how your film relates to the film viewer and society? Does this affect your creative process?

IP-O: I guess the question that I would ask myself is "What compels me to be drawn to this specific experience, or what has compelled me to create this particular work?" In this sense only, I would think, my work relates or has some universal connection with people. But this is not to say that an audience or their demands direct me. This has never been an objective for me, and I don't think that has ever been an objective for any avant-garde or experimental filmmaker. Quite the opposite. In fact, the whole history of the avant-garde, which by the way I find so compelling, is marked by points of resistance, a rebellion if you will, against the institutions, the public, and culture in general. You hear stories about performances at the Cabaret Voltaire, and the responses of an outraged public who threw tomatoes at Hugo Ball reading Dada poetry and manifestoes in his magic bishop outfit, and I just think to myself, "Wow, this is exactly what experimental cinema is supposed to do." It is supposed to disrupt, disengage, engage and outrage. Experimental films were not meant to pacify the public but ultimately challenge and question our patterns of thought and life.

EF: I think it is quite brave what experimental filmmakers do. People seek instant validation, so to set yourself up for a potential fall is something most people would not want to do; they would find it too uncomfortable.

IP-O: Working in experimental cinema is quite difficult on an emotional level, precisely because you are constantly setting yourself up to be potentially ridiculed and to have your work denied public screenings. This genre relies on this forging ahead, even at the cost of feeling frustrated and disap-

pointed. At the same time, I also don't think that one chooses one's own calling; it calls you and, trust me, it rings really loud until you get to it. I also think that work which emerges from this discomfort zone is often more stimulating and interesting, partly because it is not motivated by the need to satisfy and [therefore] feels very genuine. After all, we already have entertainment on television. And if entertainment should be the sole aim of art, the comfortable zone of mind-numbing content and recycled formulas, then we all might as well glue ourselves to television rather than try to figure out what are we all about, what our culture is all about, and what is the bigger picture. Bravery, I don't know. Maybe. You do get a lot of resistance and I guess it always takes a certain kind of person, a stubborn person. I've always been a resistant and a persistent person, which drove my parents crazy. This is why it kind of makes sense that I'm doing what I'm doing rather than doing something that others think that I should be doing. There is a whole tradition of artists whose works haven't been acknowledged until the last few years of their lives or only after they passed away. It is mind boggling to think that they stuck to their ideals and refused to take an easier path. But, at the same time, if it wasn't for them or other revolutionaries we would be living in pretty horrible times. Probably wouldn't have had the French Revolution or the Russian Revolution, and the Iron Curtain still would be standing.

EF: In a similar way, we wouldn't have works by people like Van Gogh, people who really pushed the envelope.

IP-O: They were the first of the avant-gardes, and it was their Salon de

Refusés (which *LIFT* took on as a tradition and continues) which showed the refused works that didn't get accepted by international festivals. It is this form of resistance that often finds the most brilliant works. And these brilliant works, because they have been overcast by the blinding flashiness of the industry that imposes itself on every structure, cannot shine through. But, if you are persistent, I always say, you get to your destination. I've seen it happen. It is always the invisible people, the workers, who undermine and have the ability to turn over pretty unbearable systems. It is precisely the unbearable of the system that stimulates revolt, so I guess the big guys should watch out. [Laughs]

EF: Do you feel that the artist has a role in society? Not something that they feel indebted to fill, but do you find there is something that compels artists or experimental artists?

IP-O: I think that somebody has said this already, that art connects us with the spiritual dimension of our existence and therefore binds us with each other. And, in this way, creates a social bond that we have seen since the beginning of our civilization. It always served this connecting role between its people and the understanding that there is something other and bigger than us. In a sense, it helps to bring us in touch with that which makes us humble and loving beings.

EF: What role do you see film education playing in the development of a filmmaker?

IP-O: I think that it is important to include, in the film education process, places like *LIFT* and other artist-run centres, cinemathèques, collectives,

apprenticeships—which are of equal importance to film education in universities and colleges. I was introduced to experimental cinema when I was an undergraduate student at Ryerson. I took a course on experimental cinema with Bruce Elder, and he opened up a whole new world of cinema for me, a world of infinite possibilities. I thought that this was amazing. At the same time the “Independents” series started at the Cinematheque Ontario, and the artists that were invited to do artist talks and screen their works were crucial to my development as a filmmaker. I found these talks and screenings just as educational if not more.

Places like LIFT, where else can you learn about film anymore and get the first-hand experience of working directly with film and film equipment? It's sad to say that LIFT is slowly becoming one of the few places in Toronto, or even Canada, where one can have access to film equipment. If I were a film student, or someone who wanted to learn about filmmaking, I would join LIFT and take as many workshops as possible to learn more about this medium.

EF: Many filmmakers today have to wear many hats to launch and sustain their careers—not only film production-wise, but by being contributing members of arts community organizations. Not only are you a filmmaker, you are also a doctoral student at York, a teacher, and a founding and working member of the Loop Collective. How do you balance the creative impulse versus the practical commitments in your life?

IP-O: It is sometimes difficult to balance my time, but, quite honestly, I don't see my film work, my studies, teaching and Loop Collective as sepa-

rate. Each one feeds into one another and all four, in fact, require both the creative impulse and self-discipline to get the work done. For example, my experience working with the Loop Collective and working on my own films has certainly helped me gain a deeper knowledge of experimental cinema, one which cannot be obtained through texts, and now it is going to inform my dissertation. Also, the relationships with people in the collective have informed my theoretical understanding and my practice. At the same time, the theoretical knowledge I acquired as a graduate student provided me with the broader perspective on culture and the arts. Although it may seem like I am taking on different tasks or wearing many different hats all at once, each one of them, however, is indispensable for the other, since they are all interconnected.



Light Magic (2001)



SHOW & TELL

Cassandra Nicolaou on **SHOW ME**

Wanda Nanibush

Wanda Nanibush is an Anishnabe Kwe curator, filmmaker, writer and mother.

All stills on the following pages
are from **Show Me** (2005)

Cassandra Nicolaou is a filmmaker born and bred in Toronto and a graduate of the Director's Lab at the Canadian Film Centre. She has over a decade of screenwriting and directing experience. Her short film, **Interviews with My Next Girlfriend** was produced with a LIFT production support grant and went on to win 11 festival awards and a 2003 Gemini nomination for Best Short.

We met recently at the Victory Café to discuss the theatrical release of her first feature film, **Show Me**, which was produced by the CFC to the tune of \$500,000. The story opens with two squeegee kids, Jenna (Katharine Isabelle) and Jackson (Kett Turton), who descend upon Sarah (Michelle Nolden) and her luxury sedan. Sarah is forced at knifepoint to continue her trip to an isolated cottage where the twisted trio—each of them fragile and violent in their own ways—provoke and ensnare one another. Isabelle—who stole the show in **Ginger Snaps**—provides a portrayal of a troubled, violent and questioning teen that is amazingly tender and nuanced. Nolden is perhaps best known for her roles in the box office success **Men With Brooms** (2002) and as Rachel Hunter on the Showtime series **Street Time**. Nolden is both purposeful and vulnerable in her portrayal of a middle-class white woman who is transformed by a threatening situation. Nicolaou never underestimates the intelligence of her audience, and **Show Me** is an intriguing and unexpected psychological thriller. It opens in Toronto on August 19.



Wanda Nanibush: When did you become interested and involved in film?

Cassandra Nicolaou: I started kind of late. I decided I wanted to make films when I moved back to Toronto from Edmonton. First, I became a LFT member back in 1991 and started by taking some courses. I did some film producing for other people's short films. Then I applied for an Emerging Artist grant with the Canada Council for the Arts and got it. It was one of the few grants out there where you can apply with barely any experience and get started. It's only \$5,000 but it helps. I got it in 1995 and made *Why I'll Never Trust You (In 200 Words or Less)*. I took more workshops and then won a production grant from LFT for my short comedy *Interviews with My Next Girlfriend*. That film won so many awards and definitely has become a festival favourite. I had an amazing cast of people like Ann Marie-MacDonald, Diane Flacks and Cara Pifko. At its most basic, it's a film where I interview all these women for the role of my next girlfriend.

LFT helps me feel like a part of a community. That's why I have always been a member. It's so important to

know that there are people out there making films and feeling like you can too.

WN: Do you always work in 16MM with *Show Me* being your leap to 35MM?

CN: I have always shot and finished on film, mostly 16mm. I shot *Interviews With My Next Girlfriend* on 35MM. I actually shot *Show Me* in Super 16, then used a digital intermediary and then transferred to 35MM. It was nice to have those extra steps. You can fix anything that is even a little off. I am really proud of the way it looks. It looks like it cost a lot more money than it did. I had a great cinematographer, Patrick McGowan. It was his first feature too. He had shot a lot of commercials and short films so he was really into it. It was a really hard production.

WN: *Show Me* was executive produced by Justine Whyte at the Canadian Film Centre?

CN: Yes. I had sent the script into the Feature Film Project (FFP) at CFC and was accepted. The CFC provides 100% of the financing and mentorship needed for the successful development, production and marketing of low-budget

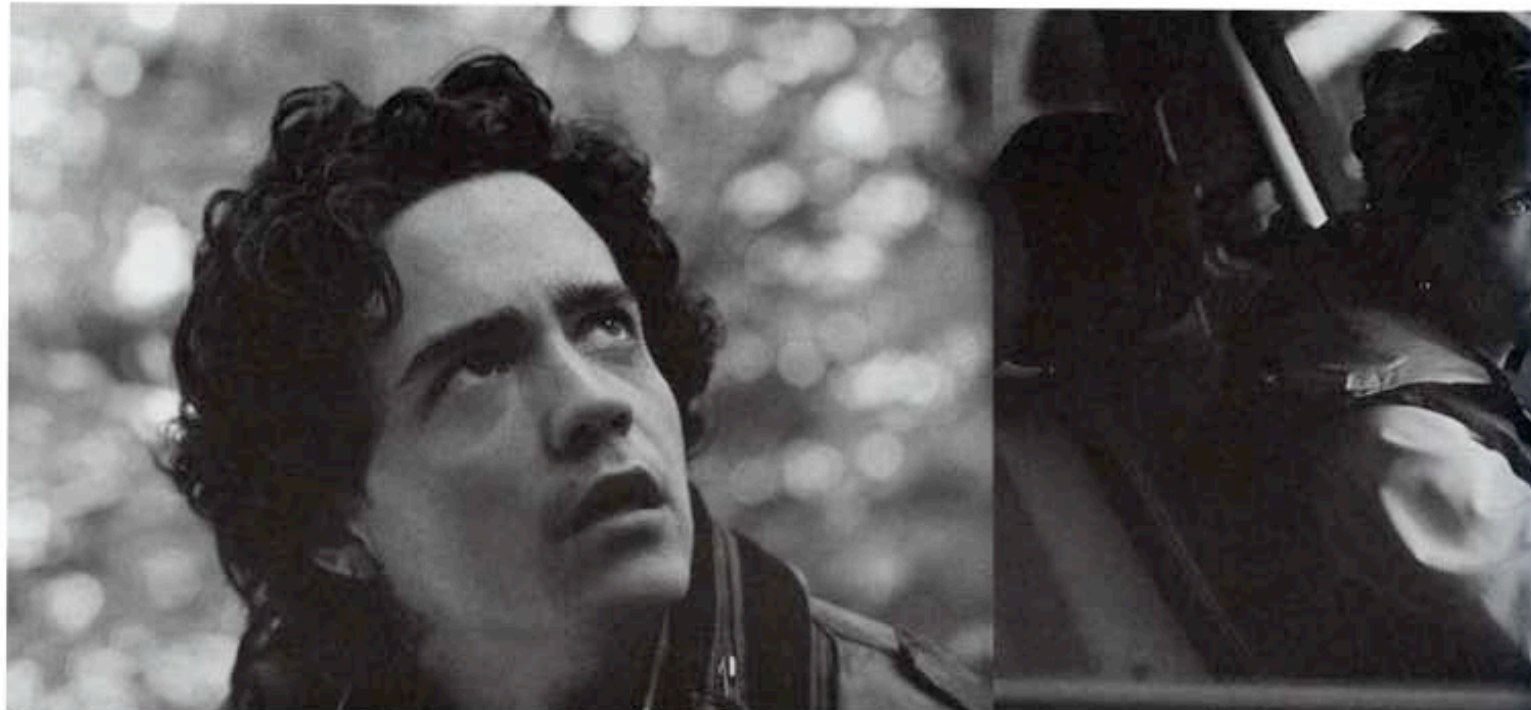
dramatic feature films for first-time filmmakers. It was great, we had \$500,000 from the FFP, we had \$585 saved, and we fundraised privately as well.

WN: How did you fundraise?

CN: It was friends and family donating money because they believe in you and want the project to go ahead. A lot of giving out tax receipts. We held two separate fundraisers, one in pre-production and one in post. It worked out really well. It allowed us to create a community of people who are affiliated with the film. They were all really pleased with the film and deeply supportive of it.

WN: The acting was great! How did you find the process?

CN: Yeah, I think so too. I really love casting and actors. I am definitely not an actor. With my first film, I was just amazed at the difference that a good actor or a bad actor could make in terms of line reading. When I was doing auditions for my first film, I had had no experience but I did real auditions. It was two naked girls in bed together so they had to get along and



look good together. I auditioned pairs of people and then mixed them up in pairs. At first, I auditioned non-union actors—there are some amazing non-union actors—but I remember coming out of the first day of auditions thinking my script is horrible. And then the next day, when I saw some really great actors, I was like, “Okay, phew, my script isn’t bad,” it’s actually okay in spots. I just think it’s a special thing actors have going on. They bring life to a character and transform that character in a certain sense. Like in **Show Me**, each of the actors brought something different to the characters I had written and those characters shifted. It was interesting for me as a director to cope with that shift and make sure it still worked.

WN: Did you use all union actors?

CN: For the *CFC*, you have to hire ACTRA actors but you can hire non-union and union crew. Michelle was based in Toronto, but we had others from Vancouver and Montreal. We actually found Kett through Katherine Isabelle. And she’s amazing. I was really thrilled she was interested in the part. She led me to Kett who was perfect for the role of Jackson.

WN: What and who are your main artistic influences?

CN: On one end of the spectrum, I love Claire Denis and Agnès Varda and Catherine Breillat (French, feminist, New Wave and postmodern). On the other end, I love Mike White, who is the writer behind **Orange County**, **Good Girl**, **School of Rock**, and **Chuck and Buck**. I really love him!

WN: What’s next for you?

CN: The next thing I am working on is returning to mainstream but somewhat subversive comedy, inspired by Mike White. I am writing a mainstream teen comedy with a lovable loser who sort of saves the day. It’s along the lines of **Napoleon Dynamite** and **Rushmore** or **Orange County**, which are all in a style that is quite good. My protagonist is a nerdy baby dyke so it’s not just a mainstream teen comedy. We will see if I can get the financing [laughs].

WN: Do you think it’s hard to get financing because of the subject matter?

CN: Not if you’re making a low-budget indie film. Right now, my hopes are to make something more mainstream. By which I mean big themes, big soundtrack, that MTV movie glossy kind of look but with this subversive content. It will still be feel-good.

WN: What draws you to combine mainstream and subversive elements together?

CN: I am a fan of Gurinder Chadha who made **Bend It Like Beckham** and **Bhaji on the Beach**. Chadha once said, “I make mainstream films about marginalized people.” I agree with that idea. I feel like, on the one hand, I have a mainstream sensibility, but I prefer to have characters that operate at the margins of society by virtue of their sexuality, etc. It is far more interesting to me. On the other hand, I wish I could figure out a way to get funding for a film that’s less viable commercially. I am trying to figure out a way to get 2 million dollars for a film. I am not sure how people make art house non-commercial films in other countries, but I feel like it’s hard here in this day and age with Telefilm and their requirements of 5% of the box office. When I think about the films of



Claire Denis, I don't know how those kinds of films would get made in Canada.

WN: What do you think needs to change?

CN: I can't answer that [laughs]. I mean I am working on a mainstream subversive teen comedy, but I am also working on a shoot-it-all-on-Mini-DV-with-a-crew-of-three-for-\$200,000 kind of feature. My experience with *Show Me* opened up a lot of options across the spectrum. In the future, there will be no stunts and no swimming sequences. Little did I know when I wrote "He dives in the water" that it would require two safety boats, a diver, a nurse on set and a body-double. That was a good introduction to so-called "real" filmmaking. The CRC is a teaching institution so they demand that you learn how to make films according to the industry rules—which is completely understandable. If I had been making a film on my own for \$500,000, we would have been safe, but we would have had a friend nurse and not a union-approved expensive nurse. We would not have had a stunt coordinator. Apparently, swimming is a stunt. The scene where

Michelle breaks the window of the car, like who knew how complicated that would be? The knife scene had to be choreographed.

WN: Do you enjoy that aspect of it, the increasing complications and increasing crew?

CN: It's fun. I don't know that I would necessarily do it again because I like working with actors and talking about the technicalities of how you shoot a fight scene. You have to cover it from so many angles, it's an art cutting it together. There are so many more people involved. We had a stunt double, stunt coordinator, an electronics guy who sets off the mini-bomb in the car, a nurse. So you're now the director standing by the monitor wondering, "Are you going to roll soon?" I had a really good time though. I am currently writing a TV show with producer Karen Lee Hall. She produced *Ginger Snaps*. I have been working with her for the past year on a TV show idea we have. We'll see what happens with that.

Selected Filmography

Show Me (97 min., colour, 2004)

Interviews With My Next Girlfriend (13 min., colour, 2001)

Dance With Me (9 min., colour, 1997)

Why I'll Never Trust You (In 200 Words or Less) (11 min., colour, 1995)

KODACHROME IS DEAD ★ LONG LIVE KODACHROME!



This month, I have decided to divert from my regular discussions of camera technology in order to discuss something that is certain to be of significant consequence to the independent filmmaking community not just of Toronto, but the world. By the time you read this, however, it will have already become old news. I'm talking about Kodak's announcement of its decision in May 2005 to discontinue the Kodachrome 40 Super 8 stock.

For many Super 8 filmmakers and enthusiasts, this was by far our favourite stock, and its discontinuation comes as a great shock although not much of a surprise. For as far as I can remember, myself, and other Super 8 filmmakers, dreaded the possibility but nonetheless anticipated the fact that this day would eventually come. And here it is. According to Kodak, "the decision to discontinue Kodachrome in Super 8 was driven entirely by marketplace dynamics." Our sources may lead us to think otherwise, but this is a plausible argument regardless of how unpalatable it might be. "Because the 'home movie'

market has shifted to digital, sales of Kodachrome Super 8 film have declined significantly," according to Bob Mayson, General Manager and Vice President for Image Capture products, Entertainment Imaging Division at Eastman Kodak Company.

Ironically, however, the stock is impossible to find in Toronto. If no one is buying it, where did it all go? Perhaps Super 8 enthusiasts began hoarding soon after the announcement. When I called Kodak in search of getting some stock myself, I was told that it had been decided to be discontinued because of so-called "environmental reasons." "In tandem with that decline," Mayson continues, "the availability of processing for Kodachrome Super 8 cartridges has diminished. In other words, fewer and fewer labs worldwide have the machines and the chemistry necessary to process this film emulsion in the Super 8 format."

This is not really a surprise either. If you've ever shot Kodachrome you well know that there are only two or three places left in the world that still process it. Prepaid mailers came with the stock that were used to place our cartridges inside of and send off to Switzerland for processing. Although it was terribly inconvenient, there was a certain bittersweet pleasure about the process: the worrying about the handling and getting the cart there; worrying about its fate at the lab; the sometimes excruciatingly painful waiting; the horrid thought of it being lost or damaged on the way back; and the immeasurable excitement about going to pick it up and then projecting it to see the results. And then finally being extremely satisfied or deeply disappointed.

The discontinuation of Kodachrome is a perplexing, enigmatic and abhorrent decision. Kodachrome was, and is, a fantastic stock and it is a terrible pity that it's no longer available. Alas, what can we do aside from mourn? Will I urge a call-to-arms and demand that we fight the international Kodak machine to not take away our favourite Super 8 stock? No, I won't. I won't, because this decision was made well in advance of its announcement. From a corporate perspective, there is no turning back now for Kodak—even if they wanted to. And this is pretty much the way business decisions are often made. However, if you wish to sign a petition protesting the discontinuation of the stock, you can go to www.petitiononline/k40/petition.html. (As of this writing, almost 5000 people had signed.) For the record, Kodak claims that it "will give customers at least a year to process their Kodachrome Super 8 film with Kodak or seek an alternative." I know of certain people who find this announcement laughable, and others who find just about anything Kodak announces to be laughable.

Other people argue that the death of Super 8 film has been imminent,



Daniel Albahary

Daniel Albahary is a Super 8 and 16mm aficionado. He has worked in the production industry, shoots Super 8, and will shoot his first 16mm short film this fall. His company Nil Motion Digital produces and distributes motion picture content for the web.

and this is but merely one of the last nails in its coffin. Then again, these people have been saying for years that the death of Super 8 was imminent, and more importantly the death of film and cinema altogether. Some people point the finger at Kodak. But, remember, we were and remain beholden to Kodak for fresh Super 8 stock. And I certainly would never agree that Super 8 is on its death bed. In fact, I am a little encouraged by several of the things Mr. Mayson has further said, and also by the fact that Kodak has chosen to add a new colour reversal film to its Super 8 portfolio: "the super-saturated, fine grain Kodak Ektachrome 64T Color Reversal Film 7280 will be available in August of this year." There's a silver lining to the fact that Kodachrome has been discontinued and is being replaced with a tungsten-based film—new challenges will force filmmakers to become more creative. (It also means, as far as shooting outdoors, that you're now going to have to filter and probably light meter in order to get a good image.) In further defense of its position, Kodak offered the following positive yet impassive statement: "Eastman Kodak Company remains committed to providing Super 8 camera users a range of products and creative choices."

The new Kodak Ektachrome 64T film expands the current Super 8 portfolio that includes two black-and-white reversal films in medium and

high speeds covering a range of lighting situations. "It's a great new product," Mayson continues, "with very high image quality and excellent color reproduction, providing our Super 8 customers another creative tool for their toolbox." Kodak suggests that



"Super 8 customers will also find the latest Kodak vision 2 motion picture films available in 200T and 500T speeds, incorporating the highest quality images, improved sharpness and grain, along with a full systems approach, optimizing the entire imaging chain." What Kodak fails to acknowledge, mention or even allude to is that most average Super 8 cameras will not be able to read the ASA of

this film when the cart is placed inside the camera. This could present serious problems to some filmmakers. As well, it will cost much more to purchase and process.

One final point: Kodachrome is still available for 16MM. Its use entails different processing techniques, of course, but those who can't live without Kodachrome, perhaps now is the time to make the leap to the higher gauge. I myself will be carefully using the few rolls of K40 that I have left and probably acquiring a few more to hold onto for posterity. And I shall mourn the loss of a wonderful stock that made Super 8 filmmaking so exciting, rewarding and richly beautiful.

Sources

<http://www.kodak.com/US/en/motion/about/news/super8.html>;

<http://www.kodak.com/US/en/motion/about/news/kodqa.html>

AFTER THE FIRE



Carl E. Brown is one of Canada's foremost avant-garde documentary filmmakers, the creator of such magical and masterful films as *Miner's Bedlam* (1981), *Brownsnow* (1994) and *Le Mistral, Beautiful But Terrible* (1997). In the following, a letter written and sent to such luminaries as Michael Snow, Stan Brakhage, David Rimmer, Al Razutis and Norman McLaren, Brown discusses the optical printing process he experimented with in the making of his 1982 film, *Urban Fire*. Brown's lovely descriptions of

this process are, in professor and critic Bart Testa's words, a "remarkable personal manifesto" and the film itself is reflective of the upheaval Brown was experiencing at the time: a new marriage, the end of his studies at Sheridan College, disconnection from his family, and the discovery of a new way of making films. This letter, here in its original, unedited form, has never been published in its entirety in North America.

(Above) Promotional still from *Urban Fire* (1982)

I have been working extensively with the optical printer, using this as the vehicle for compression and expansion of images. By taking a "real" image and looping it, I can then begin to compress the image by the use of the spring-wound motor of the Bolex camera. I disengage the automatic motor and then begin to re-photograph the image, with both the camera and the projector running simultaneously.

I became interested in this process of making films because it has an interesting paradox. I begin with a "realistic" or representational image, either originally shot by myself, or from compilation footage. I take either the form of the original image, the movement, or the emotional quality, as the impetus for selection, and then begin to take apart (deconstruct) the realism inherent in the image. This leaves me with an abstraction of form and movement, and I leave the emotional quality of the image intact.

From stage one, I then move on to get the pulsing loop, which seems appropriate for the image in question, and as it fits into the scheme of the whole film. A shot may undergo as many as seven or eight transformations before it is ready to be used. The beauty of this elongated process, is that essentially, every stage becomes a new shot within itself, and can therefore be incorporated into a film structure, i.e. one can cut from reversal to negative, and through this create the continuity needed for the film to be coherent. This is an important point to consider, because the film is so abstract in its form that one must insert something in order for the audience to properly follow the film. That something can work on the level of the subconscious, so, as a filmmaker you are able to structure the film in whatever way necessary to bring forth the level of perception the audience can use to

see properly what is beyond the surface of the celluloid structure. This takes film from the seats of the audience, into their minds. By using this as my logic for the structure of the film, I can make the length of the shot as long as required in order for the rhythm of the shot to be embedded in the minds of the audience. As I have merely only begun to tap the potential of this process, I see this technique as limitless in its application to film.

As a person who is lyrical and poetic in my work, I believe that sound in film is as important as image. As I show my films to more and more audiences, I have come to realize that as a viewing audience, the sound is something they can fall back on. As they do, the images pass in front and thru them, in an eye bang or psychedelic effect. Through this music, the images begin to work on the mind more effectively. Through this music, the images begin to work on the mind more effectively. The obvious contradiction here may seem to be that, as a whole the film may be unbalanced because the music is more accessible for the audience. I do not believe that this is the case though, because, as an art form, music has been around for a much longer period of time. Therefore, as an audience, they are more educated to experiments of sound composition. An example outside this discussion is that of the harlequin romance novels. Generally, people nowadays treat that form of literature as trash, and would sooner read something with more substance. This is because, as an art form, literature as music, has been around much longer and is more developed as an art form than film. Therefore, we get back to the original point, that being, the music for the audience is a vehicle for them to see, and feel more through the images. This I have found is very successful. Of course, as I more fully mature as an artist, I may find

that this is not the case, but my hope is that this marriage of sound and image will even have a fuller range of possibilities. Right now, I believe the sound, used in this way, makes the film more accessible to the audience.

Getting back to technique, as I began to experiment with this looping process (cycle imaging) more fully, it led me to another field of motion picture film. In particular, two processes: Sabattier Effect (a form of solarization) and Reticulation. I first encountered these terms through my instructor at Sheridan College, Jeffery Paull, who introduced me to the book *Darkroom Dynamics* by Jim Stone. This is a book designed to take you beyond shooting images into a world of many possibilities, if applied to film. As this book was designed for 35mm photographers, I took the essence of what he said and illustrated and began to apply it to 16mm motion picture. I became aware almost immediately that the results could invariably seduce you into the process as the all, rather than an element of filmmaking. I found this to be case for quite a few of the filmmakers who had previously been involved with material art. This was something I felt that I should be wary of as I became more involved in the process. Looking back on my infant stages of this process, I realize that the most important thing I have gotten from this, is a closer understanding of film as art, (physical and mental), from many hours in the darkroom developing thousands of feet in my clear jug. I saw it happen right there bathed in red light, as the film spoke to me in a language I could understand. I think this is why I continued in my studies of hand-developing.

I began to enter a world that to date has merely been touched upon.

Part two of Carl Brown's letter will be published in the next issue of *Film Print*.

Gone in 60 Seconds:

The Novosibirsk Extra Short Film Festival

The great thing about extra short films, explains Dimitry Bulnygin, the organizer of the Novosibirsk Extra Short Film Festival, is that "if they're shit, they'll be over in a minute." Held on June 4th, 2005 at the Dom Kultury Oktyabrskoi Revolyutsii (October Revolution House of Culture) in Novosibirsk, Siberia, ESF showcased extra short films—all under 60 seconds—from around the world. The genre of the extra short film is as old as cinema itself: Lumière's 1895 film *La Sortie des Usines* is only 50 seconds long. What was once a limitation imposed by technology, however, is now often a choice made for stylistic reasons and, more often than not, a limitation imposed by a lack of funding. But a lack of funding does not necessarily translate into inferior quality films, as this year's Novosibirsk ESF demonstrated.

Bulnygin, a contemporary artist from Novosibirsk, organized the first such fest five years ago as a spoof of more traditional film festivals. "When I was putting together this parody—you know, complete with me in a tutu and my dog giving out awards—we decided on this short length of film," explained Bulnygin a few days before

the festival. As it turned out, the quality of the films was so high that Bulnygin decided to take on the responsibility of mounting a real festival. What started as a gag turned into something "quite special." And Bulnygin isn't the only one who thought so. In the second year of the festival, entries tripled and, this year, Bulnygin received over 200 submissions.

While the majority of the films represented still originate from Russia or former Eastern Bloc countries, this year's submissions also came from countries as diverse as the USA, Croatia, Japan, Bulgaria, Moldova, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom and France. Funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation, Bulnygin has been able to do a tremendous amount in the last five years. The extra shorts have traveled around the world and have also been shown on Russian television, a somewhat incongruous event for a film festival whose motto is "We'll show what you'll never see on TV."

The festival itself is divided into two parts: the non-competitive screening and the competitive screening, although both are shown on the same evening. The films in the competitive program are divided into two categories: video and animation and both must adhere to certain rules. They must be no longer than 60 seconds, and they must follow certain narrative conventions—they must have a beginning and end, as well as a plot. No video loops allowed. The films in the non-competitive showing (roughly 20)

have, for one reason or another, not met the strict requirements for the competitive showcase but which still, according to Bulnygin, merit a screening. Despite this apparent organization, I was frustrated by what seemed to me to be rather arbitrary decisions about which films fell into the animation category and which fell into the video category. For instance, Kyja Kristjansson-Nelson's film, *One Minute Interview*, which was a beautifully animated and compelling interview with a boy, was placed in the video competition, as was *Mutabor*, by Zer Gut Group, another excellent film that combined animation and video.

The jury is chosen by Bulnygin each year from an international array of artists, filmmakers, and film theorists. Bulnygin is quick to explain that a more diverse pool of judges allows for a more egalitarian judicial process. He has noticed how cultural differences play a large part in determining the judges' responses to each film. For example, Maxim Ushakov's *Flight*, an animated short about flying hearts, with bulbous asses, was a huge crowd pleaser at this year's festival and yet left me, and the foreign judges, cold. Cultural differences were also apparent as I watched the festival. Viewed in one sitting, with a three-second pause between each film, the process was an experience unto itself. The hall was packed and the audience was actively involved in rating the films. Favourites—mainly Russian films—were greeted with hoots and laughter



Martha Solomon is a Toronto-based emerging documentary filmmaker. She recently spent seven months travelling in Russia where she gathered material for a short film about the Gulag. She is also currently completing a short documentary about abortion rights activists in Toronto.

and thunderous applause, while others were given a loud "Not bad! Not bad!" or "Pretty good!"

Aside from giving the audience a chance to view over 70 films in one sitting, the genre is interesting for its ability to blur distinctions between beginners and more experienced filmmakers. The work, according to Bulnygin, stands for itself; he asks for no cvs and very little information about the artist. Thus, the filmmakers are an eclectic mix of students and emerging and established artists. For example, each year there have been entries from a tiny town in Croatia called Zaprashich, where students at a local school have mastered the art of extra short filmmaking—winning prizes in both animation and video categories this year. These films are shown alongside those by established artists like Olga Kisseleva's **Seven Deadly Desires**.

The festival ended with a re-screening of the winners—not a big time constraint at five minutes! Since the final scores were so close, the grand prize was split between several films. Chris Daykin's **The Burden of the Eternal Realm**, from Sri Lanka; Jadranko Loptich's **Moses**, from Croatia; and Maxim Ushakov's **Flight**—by far the audience favourite—shared the animation prize. The video prize was awarded to Nes Ruki Group's **Fuck Da Shakin**; Svetoslav Vladimirov's **In the Garden of Eden**; and Davor Birush's **Common Morning in The Courtyard of FKVK Zapreschich**. ■

Martha Solomon's Extra Favourite Extra Shorts

1. Galosh of Happiness, Svetlana Bakushina and Vladimir Kalabin, Novosibirsk, Russia

Admittedly, I have no idea where the "galosh" idea fits into this piece, but nonetheless this is a lovely claymation film. A lump of clay seems to organically produce the shape of vaginas and penises. In a festival that had a number of jejune "penis" shorts (sorry!), this was refreshing.

2. Seven Deadly Desires, Olga Kisseleva, Paris, France

An innovative indictment of oligarchs in Russia's often confused political and economic landscape told from, what seems to me, an inherently Russian point of view. Kisseleva uses quasi-scientific animated diagrams, and a tone usually reserved for a high school science class, to explain how the pressure created by the seven deadly "sins" (one of which is a desire for tax-free status) will literally make the system go "boom!"

3. Morning, Pavel Shugurov, Saint Petersburg, Russia

In a startlingly simple and refreshing claymation and photo piece, Shugurov muses on the happiness he feels with his wife and daughter.

4. 16 Stones, Radim Labuda, Prague, Czech Republic

A treatise on the corporate and corporeal machine and its system of distribution, and exchange.

5. Episode, Vladimir Logutov, Samara, Russia

In the foreground, an attack on a young man takes place in slow motion, except for the blows, which occur in real time. The passers-by, who barely acknowledge the beating that is taking place, are walking at normal speed and the people in the furthest reaches of the frame are moving at double-time. It's a powerful look at our ability to overlook cruelty.

6. Hanger On, Fernando Baeno, Madrid, Spain

One long shot of a mosquito on an airplane window before departure and then desperately trying to hold on as the plane taxis down the runway. 60 seconds of rooting for a mosquito—an extremely rare event.

7. Rainstorm, Akiko and Masako Takada, London, UK

A visual treat—a reflection of a cityscape in a glass with the carbonation acting as raindrops. It's not until the "storm" passes that you realize you've been watching a shot of a wine glass being filled—played in reverse.

8. Mutabar, Zer Gut Group, Yakaterinburg, Russia

The real world is represented by several frames of surveillance style videos of people doing incredibly mundane things: an old man smoking in his window, a young woman walking with groceries. Then our attention is drawn to one frame, and it mutates into a fanciful animated recreation of what that person might be doing in another time, another place. The old man smoking in his window is now the captain of a large ship, a woman morphs into a bird.

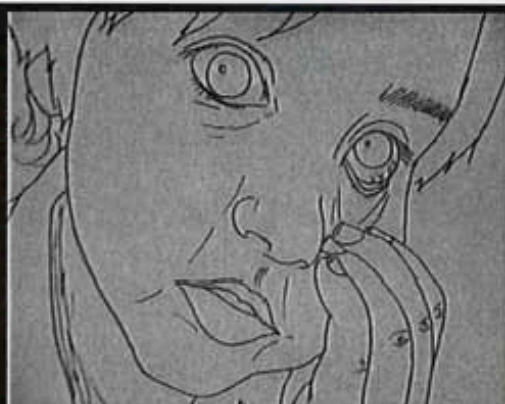
9. Common Morning in the Courtyard of FKVK Zapreschich, Davor Birush, Zapreschich, Croatia

Things are not as they seem—admittedly a common message of short films, but this one pulls it off with imagination. Three cars pull into the drive way of FKVK in Zapreschich, except the last one isn't a car, and we aren't sure where the driver has gone.

10. One Minute Interview, Kyja Kristjansson-Nelson, Milwaukee, USA

A one-minute animated interview during which the subject, a five year-old boy, muses on subjects as diverse as ghost-killing, the cops, guns, vampires and girls.

For more information on the festival and how to submit your extra-short film festival visit www.esf.nsk.ru



LOUDMOUTH

A conversation with MATTHEW TOFFOLO

Matthew Toffolo is a writer, producer and director. More pertinently, for the sake of this interview, he is the organizer of **LIFT OUT LOUD**, a twice-monthly workshop in which members have their scripts (both short and feature-length) read by professional actors and then get feedback from an audience of their peers. William La Rochelle spoke to Toffolo early this summer.

William La Rochelle: So when did you start running **LIFT OUT LOUD**?

Matthew Toffolo: It's been almost two years now. The first official event was June of 2003. In May of 2003, a **LIFT** member and writer, Cameron Groves, set up a reading with another writer to have their scripts read out loud using actors. I attended the event, saw the great potential of it, talked it over with Roberto and said I wanted to keep this going as a monthly thing. My main motivation was to bring creative people together (actors, writers, directors, producers etc.) to an event. In this racket, nothing is more important than networking with your peers for many reasons. The main reason being support and creative stimulation. So many people who've participated in this event have inspired me, and I've also formed a lot of great relationships. And I like to think that others can say the same thing.

Since the change to twice a month, a committee has been formed for the event. We are all doing different duties to help make the event even more popular, plus use it as advertising for the **LIFT** organization. It's already worked. Brenda Kovrig, a **LIFT** board member and a terrific documentary filmmaker, Geoff Kolomayz, a friend and talented

actor, Christina Ray, an established writer and previous collaborator, and Marc Galani, a filmmaker and master salesman, work on the event with myself. We are all determined to raise the scope of filmmaking in the city of Toronto.

WL: Has there been a difference in the approach or the structure or rules over time?

MT: I really have done a complete overhaul with the event. When I started it, I went into it really blind and had no idea where it was going. I was also very busy with my producing and directing career at the start, so I just went month-by-month seeing if it would come to life on its own. But the turnaround for the event came from a suggestion by a friend, Alan Powell, who I consulted with to try to bring the event to the next level. He suggested bringing on a guest moderator, serving as the event's mentor who would facilitate the comments from the audience and lead the event. After a couple of months of trying this, I moulded it, and it became the thing that made the event a success. I've also had to really make sure the scripts were actually ready to be read. I've assembled a group of established writers to help me read the submitted scripts and then we vote which ones to do. But right now I'm hoping that the screenwriter's group that Aron Dunn has formed will help facilitate [that process]. And Pizza Pizza became involved, as they now sponsor the event and give us free pizza to serve at the readings. And there's nothing independent filmmakers like more than free food.

WL: Has any script been read more than once in another draft?

MT: Not yet, but that will change soon. A lot of the scripts have actually moved onto the production stage right after they've been read, so there was no time for that. But a few scripts, because of the feedback they received, undergo a major overhaul and are ready to be re-read at the event.

WL: Are short scripts attracting more audience because there is at least one seat filled per author?

MT: Short scripts are what most **LIFT** members are doing, so there is more of an understanding. I'm very determined to make the feature event just as popular as the short event. And I will. But what I want to do is scripts that will be shot in the very near future. I want the event to be a pre-screening of the script that's going to be shot so the writer and/or director get to hear it, and the professional moderator and audience can tell them what works and what possibly might be a little unclear. If you're going to buy a car, you're going to test drive it, right? It's the same thing with a film. Before you spend the money, you might want to test drive it first. And that is what the event is all about.

WL: Is there a noticeable difference between the reading of ACTRA actors or non-union?

MT: No.

WL: Is it realistic for no-budget filmmakers, most of us in **LIFT**, to set their sights on ACTRA casts when one has to become a member of the Producer's Association to make use of the affordable **TIPP** program?

MT: Let's just not get into this ACTRA thing. I can go on forever about it. That's a separate article that I am more than happy to talk about. Things will change.

WL: Have you sat in on other table readings in town? If so, how does LIFT OUT LOUD compare?

MT: LIFT OUT LOUD is innovative because of the special guest moderator. In this field, we always need a mentor who's been where we want to go, and bringing someone like past moderators Julian Ritchings and David Weaver to the event is what makes it more unique and overall a better event for everyone.

WL: Do you think that, while a table reading with much dialogue may score well as a radio performance, it may mean that a director is stuck with pictures of people talking? Whereas maybe a direction-heavy script which sounds dreadful in a table reading might make for a better film?

MT: No. I like to think that people who attend the event do so with the understanding that the script is going to be turned into a film. We've had a lot of scripts read without much dialogue and they turned out fine. When the story is there, people are visualizing themselves what they are seeing.

WL: What are you getting out of LIFT OUT LOUD as a director/producer?

MT: So much that I don't even know where to begin. But the relationships I've formed is probably number one.

WL: How did you get the likes of Bruce MacDonald to moderate a session?

MT: You pick up the phone and call them. That's Marc Galani's job and he is very good at it. Simple as that. Bruce was a great moderator because he was one of the co-founders of the LIFT organization. If it wasn't for motivated and dedicated people like Bruce, LIFT would cease to exist. It was a great nostalgic trip for him when he attended, and he was very happy with what LIFT has now become.

WL: What are you personally planning for the future? In or outside of LIFT?

MT: I am a planner by nature and LIFT OUT LOUD is just an element of what I'm doing with my career. I've had some success so far, mainly as a producer, and I'm ready to hit the next stage of my career. So far this year, I've directed two short films, one that is starting to hit the festival circuit; and the other that was just shot and is currently in post-production. I've also produced and co-wrote a film I collaborated with The Collector TV series writer Christina Ray (and LIFT committee member) and the actors and DOP were involved in the project from its inception. And I've formed a collaborative group with other writers, directors and actors where we get together weekly and workshop our upcoming projects and basically just have a place to play in a non-judgemental environment. Right now I'm laying down the foundation for the future and I have a lot of things going on. Mainly setting up a feature film I will direct in the fall.

WL: Where do you see LIFT OUT LOUD evolving or changing eventually?

MT: I hope to find a protégé to work with me in the future so there is someone I can pass it onto. I want this event to continue for the next 50-100 years.

I want this event to always be there and I want to still be able to attend it when I'm 90 years old.

WL: How many of the scripts read at LIFT OUT LOUD have been shot in one form or another? How many of those have you seen?

MT: I was just trying to figure that out myself recently. I can think of ten films already completed and about four currently in post-production. I've seen most of them, and a lot of them turned out really well and have done quite well on the festival circuit.

WL: Is there an eagerness to see each other's projects finished? Is there a sense of community?

MT: I want everyone's projects to be finished. There is nothing that makes me happier than seeing people make movies. I love the process from inception to distribution. It's the greatest medium of all. And what us filmmakers need to do is get together and share with each other what we're going through. If there's one thing I've learned, you can't do it by yourself. You need people around you, your peers, to share, to laugh, to cry, to pick you up when needed and to motivate you when you've think you can't do it anymore. There are so many brilliant, creative people at LIFT who at times don't feel connected to others and feel that they can't go on. I know this because I've been there. And I just hope that LIFT OUT LOUD can help serve as a positive place where people can get together and we can all pick each other up.



The Pride of Parkdale:

James Burt

The Rehab Film and Video Festival

Stills: (from left to right) *Pils Slip* by John Greyson; *Napoleon's Brief History of the World* by Jamie Shannon; *Coolie Gyal* by Renata Mohamed



While others less informed might gripe that the downtown of Toronto has only crime and a busy nightlife to show for itself, such presumptions were buried at this year's 7th annual Rehab Film and Video Festival. Audiences and new and established talent gathered at Parkdale's Fuller Parkette and Club O.V.'s on the weekend of June 11th and 12th to view new short films. (Credit where credit's due, LIFT contributed much of the brilliance on both nights and many of the films had been developed over the months previous using LIFT's services.) Festival director Scott Berry (now Executive Director of the Images Festival) acquitted himself once again with aplomb. Some highlights:

COOLIE GYAL

Renata Mohamed

The personal just got poetic. With no music, an empathetic voice-over, and some very ordinary Super 8 images, Mohamed created a poignant short detailing her coming out to her parents. With a collection of images featuring photos, sewing machines, and wood-working, she dissects what one would imagine the concept of a "family" to be, and places the viewer firmly in her shoes as she confronts this most difficult of issues.

SHAOLIN SISTERS

Mishann Lau

I hope that Lau will accept it as a compliment when I call her film "a hoot." This creative black-and-white short features two clothes-washing sisters duking it out over who left the lipstick in the wash. Lots of "chop-socky" editing and camera work. Lau even plays on one of the clichés of the kung fu film: overdubbing the dialogue so the character's lips move at odds with the dialogue. A very refreshing bit of fun.

PILS SLIP

John Greyson

This short black-and-white video is pretty much what one would expect from Greyson—something both beautiful to watch and well attuned to the brain and heart. A pseudo-musical, Greyson's short provides the viewer with a poetic look at the fight for AIDS treatments in South Africa and the lengths people have gone to obtain such drugs. Never preachy and always eloquent.

NAPOLEON'S BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WORLD

Jamie Shannon

Also quite refreshing, Shannon's video depicts a puppet show of Napoleon discoursing on war and conflict and

reaches a climax with President Bush giving an address to his fellow Americans. Shannon adrenalizes the oft-tired political satire genre. A hilarious puppet of Michael Moore is worth the cost of the whole film. Perfect for the Comedy Network.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Stephen Andrews

A uniquely composed and visually impressive animation of a news clip from the Iraq war. The grainy, stippled abstraction of the images ensure that the viewer gets a graphic sense of both the brutality of war and the cold impassivity of the nightly news. Unfortunately, I saw the version of this film without sound. A soundtrack might have given the film more of an overall visceral impact.

COMING + GOING

Larissa Fan

Regular 8mm film is alive and well, and Fan proved that with *Coming + Going*, a short and poetic film that splits four images across a single screen. Not only does the 8mm film lend the images of windmills, trains, and other urban movements an organic quality, but the experimental electronic soundtrack provides a vibrant counterpoint to the motion of each image. ✦

James Burt is a LIFT member and has just completed his first short film. He has also published articles in *Broken Pencil* and *NOW*. When not working his day job, he travels, finds the city's best Guinness taps, and dreams of actually making a career in the film business.

KEITH COLE



1 What kind of films do you make?

I make short, sweet, sassy films with a definite homo bent—the sexier the boys that star in them the better.

2 What are you working on now?

I am currently working on a short screenplay called *The Art of Making Martin*. It's a musical about my relationship with the very handsome and very talented (and virgin LIFT member) Martin McNenly. I'm sure it's going to be a hit! Sarah Polley, if you are reading this, there is no role for you! So don't even bother sending in a photo/resumé. The Dale sisters (Cynthia and Jennifer) need not apply either.

3 What's your preferred medium? Super 8, 16mm or 35 mm?

I love 16MM. Super 8 is fun and cool but I prefer 16MM. I simply cannot afford 35MM.

4 How do you finance your work?

I self-finance everything. I have made ten or so short films in a decade, and I have probably received about \$7,500 in

grants over that time period. My grant writing skills are *horrible* so I rarely apply. I'd rather spend my time actually making work then writing grant applications.

5 How are you distributing your work?

The good folks at CFMBC do that for me.

6 How does LIFT benefit you?

In every way possible. I use all the LIFT has to offer. That's the trick about these artist-run centres—you have to milk 'em dry for every ounce of excitement they can offer. That's why they exist.

7 What's been your worst film-making experience?

I was working on a short with Michael Caines and our cute but very unreliable actor wasn't showing up. He was over two hours late and we were in a tricky location. I was completely stressed out. Eventually we had to re-cast on the spot and find another cute boy (which we did). Our first actor never appeared. One year later the film, *A Little Death—Cut Keith Cole*, got into TIFF, and our first choice actor who never showed is kicking himself now. Bad

boy! That is why I always star in my own films—I am the most reliable, talented actress I know and showing up on time is paramount to any production. It's like being a divorced father: you have to show up for your son's baseball game even though you know that your ex-wife's new husband will be there and you hate him. You still have to show up.

8 Best?

I have several but working with people like Michael Caines, Hope Thompson, Simone Jones, Laura Cowell, Catherine Rankin and Roberto Ariganello all make it worthwhile. Laura Cowell was my editor on my short *Coyote*, beautiful, and we had a blast in the green room at LIFT on the 16MM flatbed. Usually editing on film is a slow, boring task, but Laura and I had several adventures editing that film.



Bulletin Board

Upcoming Funding Deadlines

Canada Council
1.800.263.5588
www.canadacouncil.ca

Grants to Film and Video Artists
- Research/Creation Grants
- Production Grants
- Scriptwriting Grants
Deadline: October 1, 2005

Travel Grants to Media Artists
Deadline: Ongoing

Ontario Arts Council
416.961.1660
www.arts.on.ca

Grants to Media Artists:
Mid-Career and Established
Deadline: October 3, 2005

Grants to Media Artists: Emerging
Deadline: December 15, 2005

Chalmers Professional
Development Grants
Deadline: December 1, 2005

Integrated Arts
Deadline: November 1, 2005

Toronto Arts Council
416.392.6800
www.torontoartscouncil.org

Media Arts Grants
Deadline: November 15, 2005

Calls for Submissions

2006 IMAGES FESTIVAL OF FILM AND VIDEO

Images is now accepting film and video submissions for consideration for the 2006 Festival, which takes place from April 13–22, 2006. Download the PDF at www.imagesfestival.com and get back to your editing bay, the deadlines will be here before you know it!

DEADLINES:

Early Deadline: November 4, 2005
Late Deadline: November 18, 2005

SUBMISSION FEES:

For short film or video (59 min or less): Before November 4th, 2005, \$15 CAD (\$15 US for international submissions), (After November 4th, entry fee goes up to \$25)

Feature length film or video (60 min. or more): Before November 4th, 2005: \$35 CAD (\$35 US for international submissions). (after November 4th, entry fee goes up to \$50)

Submission results will be sent out by mail or email in late January, 2006.

Classifieds

Classified ads (30 word maximum) are available to LIFT members for the low rate of \$10.00, and to non-members for \$30.00! (Please note, the discounted fee for LIFT members applies only to personal listings regarding cast/crew calls, personal sales, screenings announcements or similar notices—classified ads for goods and services will be billed at the non-member rate) for more information, please contact the LIFT office at 416.588.6444.

Clubs

Camera-less Animation

The camera-less animation club is holding its monthly meeting on Tuesday August 30, 2005 from 6–10 p.m. in the LIFT mezzanine. This is an informal gathering of LIFT members who have an interest in painting, scratching and other DIY techniques applied directly to film. Examples of camera-less animators include filmmakers such as: Len Lye, Stan Brakhage and Norman McLaren. The atmosphere is akin to a craft circle or a quilting bee and was inspired by a similar club, founded by Stan Brakhage. Please bring samples of your work, materials, music, etc. RSVP Andrew @ 416 588 6444 or email lew_ro@yahoo.ca. No experience necessary.

Images Festival ~~2005~~ 2006

FILM & VIDEO / NEW MEDIA / INSTALLATION



film & video call for submissions

www.imagesfestival.com

early deadline: 4 november 2005

final deadline: 18 november 2005



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