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ALIVE & KICKING?

FILM IS DEAD!
LONG LIVE FILM!
SPECIAL ISSUE
25 MANIFESTOS
KEEP CAMERAS ROLLING

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Programming Rendezvous With Madness

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Su Rynard on the hardest part of filmmaking

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Peter Gruzca's **Beach Carousel** (Cover) and Benny Zenga's **Ski Boys** (above) for Films is Dead! Long Live Film!

FILMPRINT

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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.

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EYE WEEKLY

■ EDITORIAL

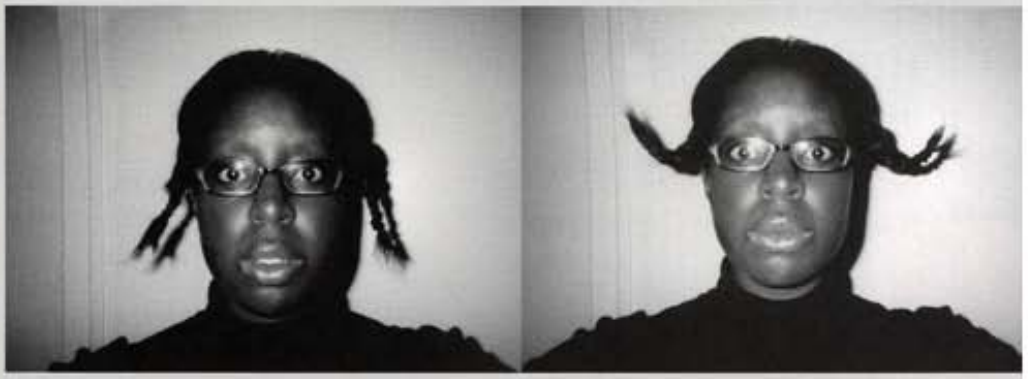
PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED

It wasn't the film's fault.
It was me who didn't understand
what I needed to do

I had big hopes for my film. And because I had big hopes for my film, the whole idea of creating a work for the **Film is Dead! Long Live Film!** Programme was terrifying to me. I've done little films before. Randomly filming with Super 8 and Regular 8, but this was the first time I was going in with a plan of exactly what I wanted to achieve.

I got a group of women together and one little girl to come over to my unfurnished home – we had just moved – and help me make a film about elaborate African hairstyles. We had to start first thing in the morning. The idea was that with the power of stop-motion, I would film various extended hair braiding sessions. The film would only be about three minutes long, but I would show the creation of several elaborate styles in several seconds.

We filmed – and did hair – for the whole day. Adeola worked on her dreads. Kai-Kai had her hair done in cute little braids. Ola used extensions to transform her hair into voluminous,



dramatic twists. Even I got in front of the camera to get my chemically straighten hair braided into neat and tight cornrows. We could hear the film whir and click every few seconds in the camera. The lights heated up the room. Kai-Kai kept asking me "Auntie Bunmi" if she could play with the camera to which all the other Aunties briskly replied, "No!" I felt the terror draining away and thought, "Ah, this might work." Renata, who I trust implicitly and who had been helping me for more than eight hours that day, had to go home. She gave me a quick lesson on how to read the light metre and headed for home. Completely alone with the camera, I panicked a little, but felt okay. Filming continued for another few hours without a glitch.

A few days later, I found out that I had the camera on the wrong settings. My film was overexposed. After the planning, after the sweating under the lights, after braiding miles of hair, and after feeling that this was really turning into something, I had 200 metres of white light. A whole day of nothing. Is film dead? Hell yeah! I'm going to put my hands around its scrawny, little neck and squeezed the life out of it! How can something that you work so hard on go so wrong?

Making a film is like raising a diabolically evil teenager. You've done your best to nurture her, help her grow into something wonderful and meaningful, but she doesn't listen, she breaks your heart. She does some abhorrent thing and she has totally disappointed you.

After the pain had dissipated, I understood that all was not lost. My baby could be fixed in the processing. Another filmmaker told me I could colour and manipulate the footage. It wasn't the film's fault. It was me who didn't understand what I needed to do.

Madi Pillar calls the whole business of making movies a learning process. Pillar says during her interview with Radha Menon, "I love film and use it as much as I can. You have to know your material, know your camera. It's a process you have to learn. You are investing in your learning process. You have to do tests, you have to train yourself in the art of filmmaking."

We talked to over 25 artists about their projects, about their thoughts on the future of celluloid, and about their use of digital media in their work. Some of the responses are laced with worry. Some are jubilant. Some defiant. Others are flippant, taking a whatever-will-happen-will-happen attitude. So once again I ask, "Is film dead?" I leave that for you to decide.

Bunmi Adeoye
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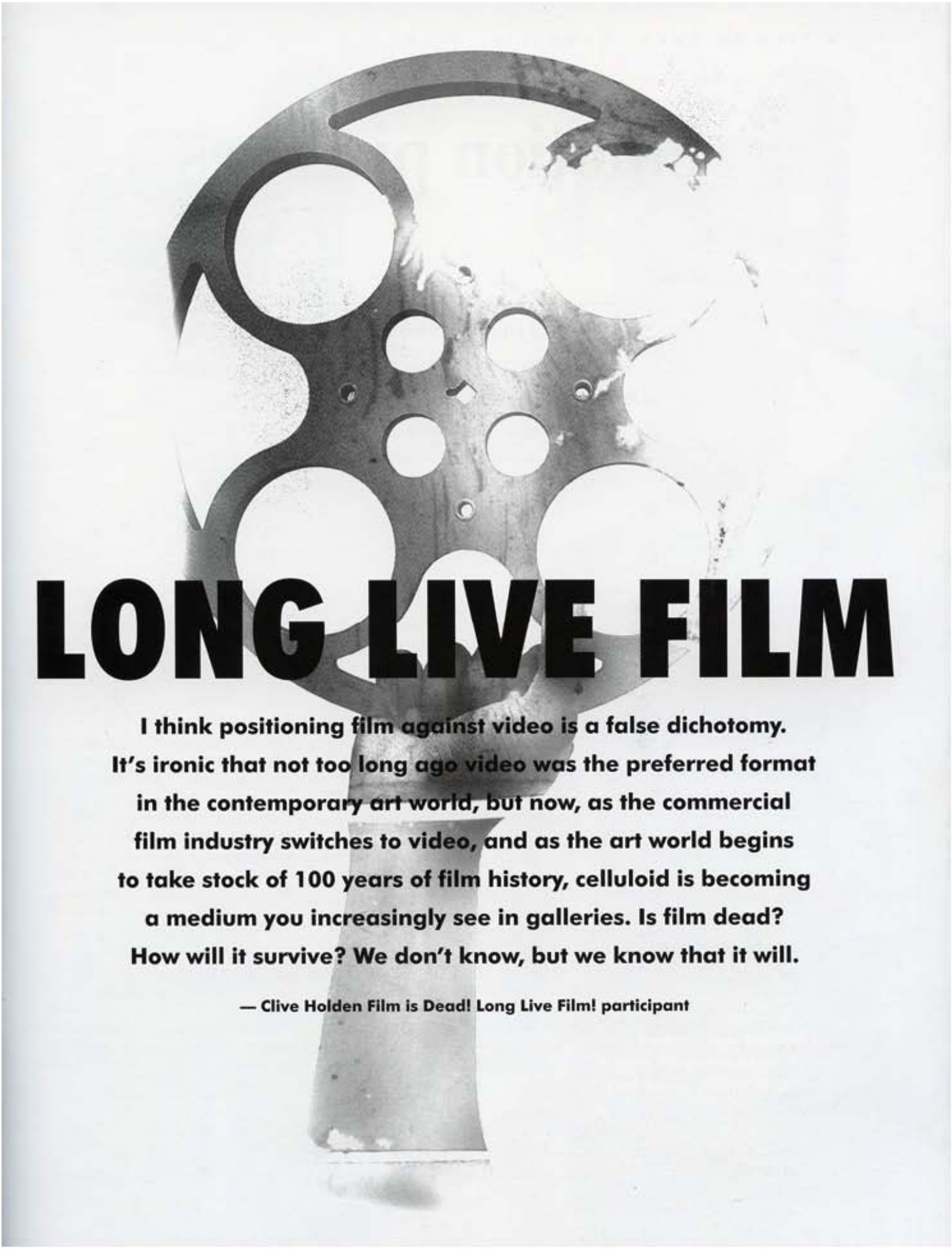
FILM IS DEAD

"Independent film today does little except try to emulate the mainstream, and experimental film has been completely eclipsed by video art. Working in 16mm or 35mm film is prohibitive financially, and, let's face it, the medium of film looks tired and has major distribution and exhibition problems compared to video."

— from Tom Sherman's "Video 2005: Three texts on video" in Canadian Art (Spring 2005)



LONG LIVE FILM

I think positioning film against video is a false dichotomy. It's ironic that not too long ago video was the preferred format in the contemporary art world, but now, as the commercial film industry switches to video, and as the art world begins to take stock of 100 years of film history, celluloid is becoming a medium you increasingly see in galleries. Is film dead? How will it survive? We don't know, but we know that it will.

— Clive Holden Film is Dead! Long Live Film! participant

emotion pictures

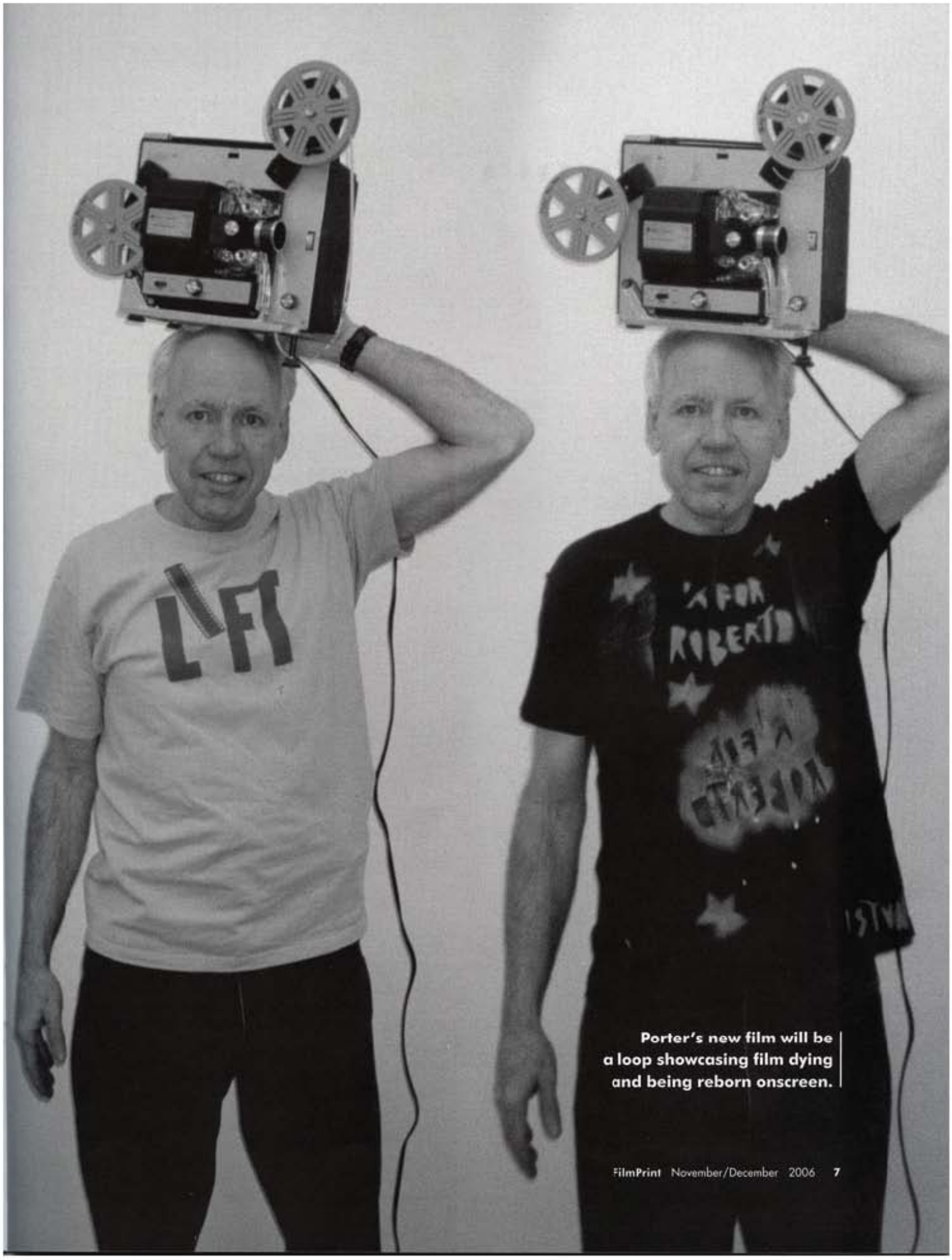
In honour of LIFT's quarter century birthday, 25 film projects were commissioned. Despite the celebration, a veil of uncertainity rests over the future of celluloid.

Some of us heard about of it, others chose to ignore it, and others are out to fight it. Tom Sherman's "Video 2005: Three texts on video" essay in the magazine *Canadian Art* last year was an old fogey's rant – and a wakeup call. Those who have ever dabbled in making films have probably heard friends or family probably issue the same bystander advice: "Stop fucking about! Save some cash and get a DV camera and let's get this show on the road." Many segments in Sherman's essay were just bits of know-it-all bias, thus easily brushed off as such. But it did serve to shake up some people to the real situation. When Final Cut Pro is the dominant editing force, when many great modern filmmakers are dumping their Arri's for lighter handheld gear with contained pixilated screens, and when the demise of certain Kodak stocks are happening on a monthly basis, the real question begins to arise: "Is film truly dead?"

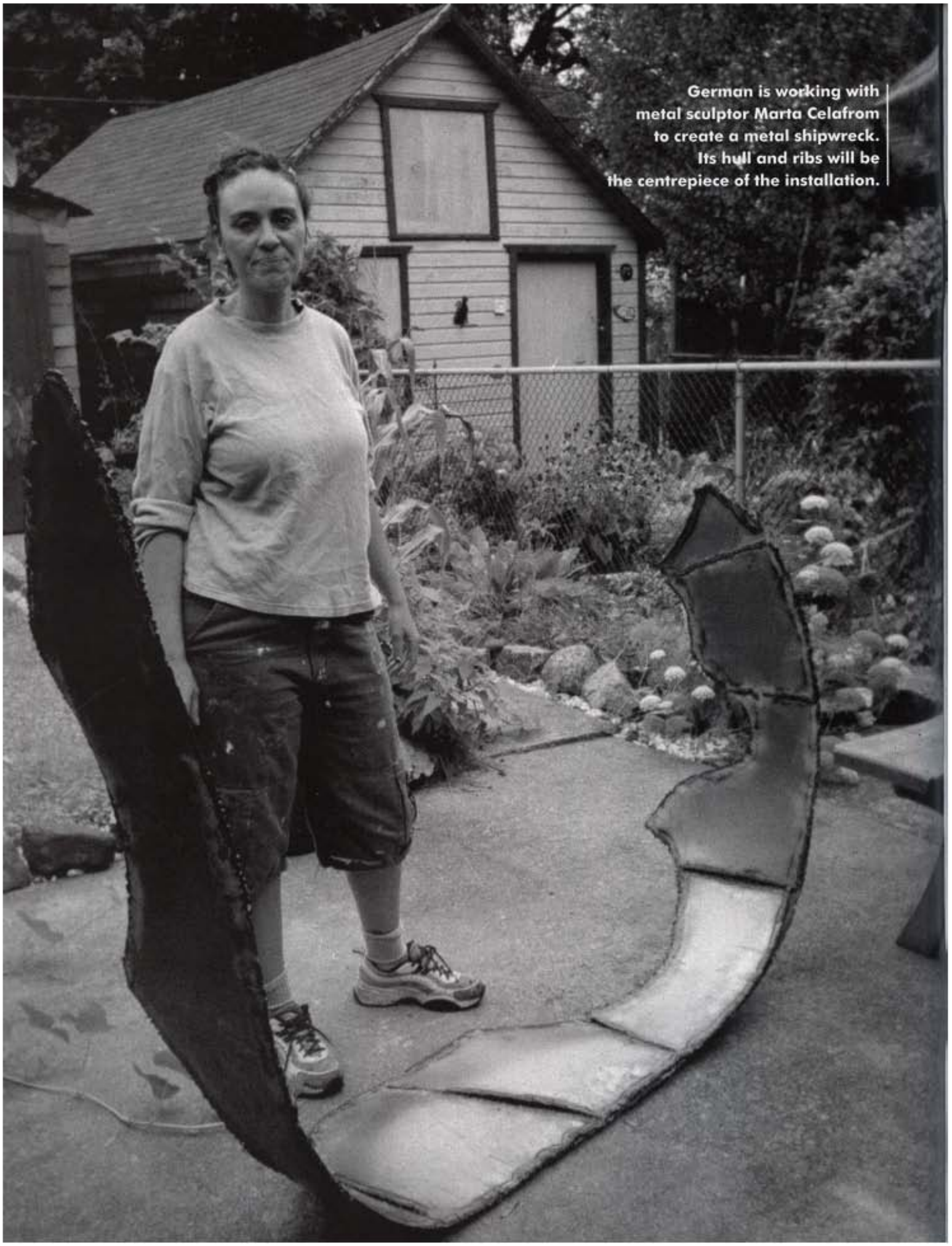
"No," says John Porter. "I see it being used and see young people beginning to pick up [analog] cameras. The young and new filmmakers are the ones keeping it alive." Porter should know. Showcasing his new film **Beauty: Film, Death.**, Porter, who leads many workshops and classes on Super 8 filmmaking, says there is a continued interest in both North America and Japan for the film medium as it is a tactile media and has a appeal for young people akin to collecting vinyl records and rediscovering other art forms of the past.

Ottawa-based filmmaker Penny McCann holds a similar stance to Porter. Her new film **Lake Ontario (In My Head)** will utilize both 16MM and Super 8MM film and will contain a vista/horizon of Lake Ontario as she would remember it like a memory from the past. While she is optimistic like Porter about film's ongoing life and going so far as to say that film still has a quality like a memory and she too sees people using film frequently, she does acknowledge that film is very much "a challenge". Video has come in as an accessible medium and become prominent in the filmmaking industry. But she then explains that HD and other video forms do not have the visual consistency and natural visual beauty that film possesses. The key for her is that people still continue to shoot on 8, 16 and 35MM as that will keep the interest alive.

"Film is more like a craft. Like printmaking. It's becoming less like a way to tell stories, less narrative based, and more a specialized visual craft," says Vancouver-based filmmaker Amy Lockhart who shoots on video, using it for animation and short narratives. For the short, tentatively titled **Tell Mumsy I Love Her**, Lockhart explains the look of her new work – a postcard-like rendition of Lower Canada – could only be made with the aid of film.



Porter's new film will be a loop showcasing film dying and being reborn onscreen.



German is working with metal sculptor Marta Celafrom to create a metal shipwreck. Its hull and ribs will be the centrepiece of the installation.

Toronto talent Tracy German, like Lockhart, also points to the unique qualities of film, and how its images cannot be recreated using any other medium. She also talks about the high price of making films. German echos Lockhart's comparison of film to printmaking by suggesting its costliness is like painters using expensive oil paint for specific visual effects. Her new film, **Impeded Steams and Stains: Series Two including Isis' Altar** is being made with 16MM, black and white, high contrast film and is being hand processed, tinted, toned, and optically printed. German is working with metal sculptor Marta Celafrom to create a metal shipwreck – its hull and ribs will be the centrepiece of the installation. Her film will be projected as loops onto the ship's skeleton, accompanied by an experimental jazz soundtrack by composer Jean Martin.

The subject of hand processing and optically printing film has been apparent for years in the work of John Price. Whether hand tinting frames or cutting his own negatives, Price has achieved a high regard in the local film community as someone who stays to loyal to all avenues of film-based filmmaking. His latest work **View of the Falls From the Canadian Side** is currently being developed as a single channel projection with an anamorphic lens. All film will be hand processed and shot on different stocks. Price humourously makes the observation that film is not dead "because we are still making it." Price continues to see the use of 35MM stock as the primary shooting medium in his work with film crews. He also uses his work to introduce the medium to aspiring filmmakers. For Price, the key is both film's continual reintroduction to youth and the commercial industry's commitment to using it for their work as well.

– James Burt

While McCann remains optimistic about what is to come, she admits the medium can be a challenge.

Artist as projector Blaine Speigel

TRANSCENDING THE MEDIUM

Film has been described a mediation of reality. Following that definition, Blaine Speigel's work can be described as focusing on the possibilities in that mediation.

Blaine Speigel's works include site-specific installations, multi-projector environments at electronic music festivals and non-narrative elements of film – where expression is found in the formal elements of the photographic image, or the chemical/technological processes involved in the creation and projection of that image. In the tradition of Stan Brakhage and Hollis Frampton, Speigel adapts old and new chemical, physical processes and manipulations on the photographic image that acts on the film in unique, abstract, and often unpredictable ways – offering new possibilities in how that image is perceived. Speigel's describes the initial idea for his installation **Sparks** as something that had been fermenting for years. "This piece evolves out of constant experimenting with organic and material processes and studies in mystical traditions and experiences. [It] uses a projected film loop. In a darkened space, the projector beam travels through four layers of cascading fabrics."

These works disregard the notion of film some describe as a form based on artifice, as it displays the processes acting on the medium as its very subject. The debate on the future of film in the digital age is much less relevant for artists like Speigel – whose tools of expression are the same film-specific, physical and chemical processes that define film in the first place.

– *Vic Fan*

Over easy or just plain over? Piller fries to get the most out of film.

HIGHER EDUCATION

"Money seems to be going down the drain, but no! You are investing in your learning process."

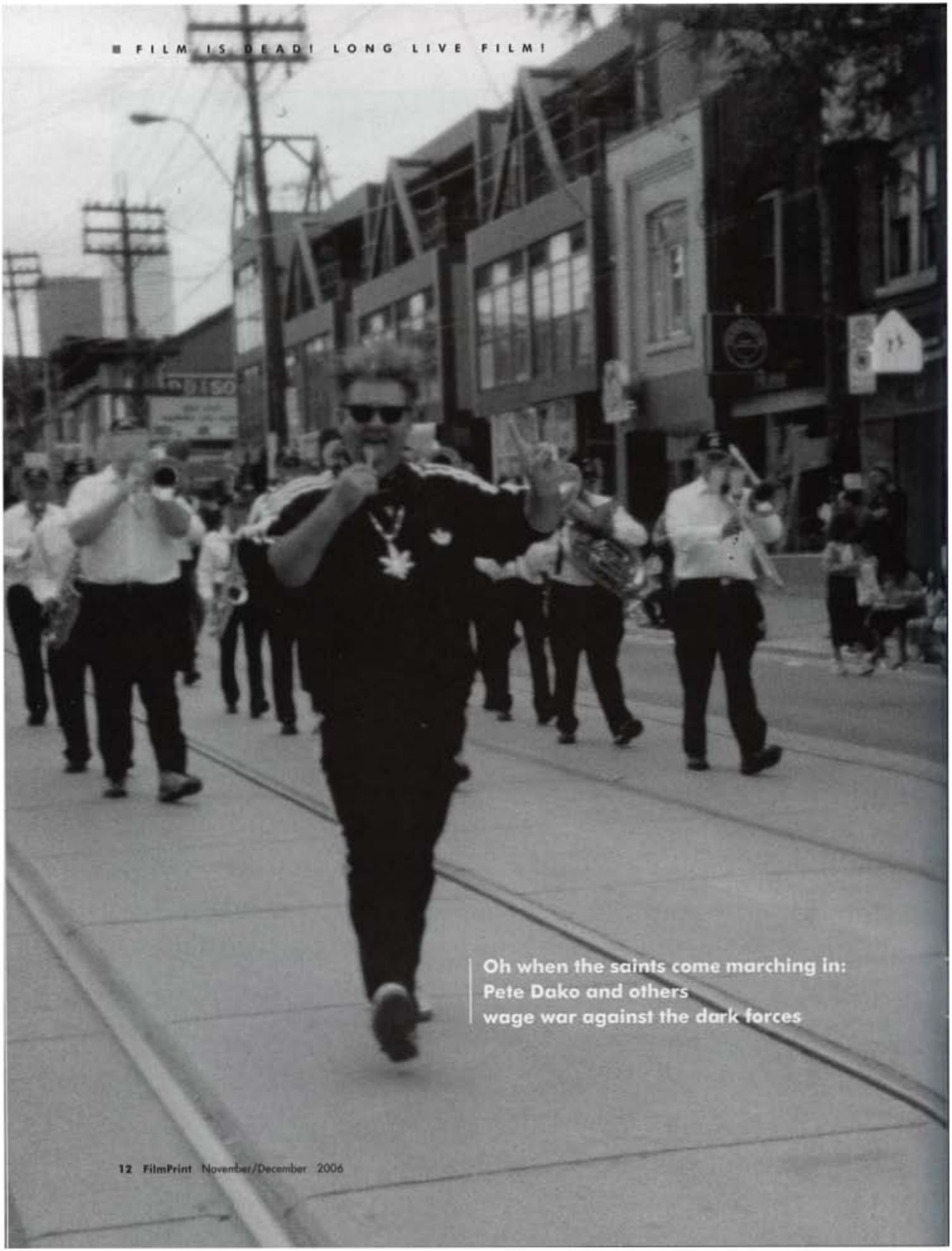
Experimental filmmaker Madi Piller's corner of King Street is crammed with her work. Striking photography with vivid colors and images plaster her walls.

Growing up in Peru as a producer in advertising, Piller had good training in all types of formats and explains that she was always interested in the photographic side of the process. "Taking pictures shows you the art of filmmaking," she says. "I love film and use it as much as I can. You have to know your material, know your camera. It's a process you have to learn. Money seems to be going down the drain, but no! You are investing in your learning process. You have to do tests, you have to train yourself in the art of filmmaking."

A member of Toronto Animated Image Soceity (TAIS), Piller uses the Oxberry camera for her 35MM project **Vive le Film!** Piller is positive that film will not die because it is an art form that cannot be replaced entirely by video's point-and-shoot execution. "With film, you have to be accurate, organized and trained. You have to keep notes about what you're doing. With video, you turn it on and flip the monitor. 'Do I have a picture?' Yes, so you shoot. But video makes the process sloppy!"

Projection is the only way to show a film, says Piller. And now that most theatres and festivals project digital formats, the process has been adapted, but has changed "the emotions of the creation of the film." A visceral layer ripped away leaving only a shadow of the original creation.

– *Radha Menon*



Oh when the saints come marching in: Pete Dako and others wage war against the dark forces

VYDEEO VS FLM?

GUD EEVL

Enter the frenetic world of Pete Dako and bill bissett

Tell us about your film.

Peter Dako: SARSDUST [More Mosquitos Than Oxygen] Chapter $6.66 from "Porn Stock: The Missing Reels", the cast featuring bill bissett, Pete Dako, Rose Cullis, Fastwurms, John Pagani, Lisa Pereira and others. It is Super 8 and digital video on DVD. The original soundtrack poetry is by bissett. Music by Dako. Here's a synopsis: During a folk mass revival, the late Elizabeth Taylor is exhumed resulting in a classic battle of good vs. evil. Christians stand-off against witches and hilarity ensues!

bill bissett: elizabeth taylor is th gud witch n she subsumes christyan soldyeers sew they can feel pleysur eksatsee mewsik langwage poetree xcellent cooking love lafftr loyaltee th gud magik arts n can breeth deeplee agen

Is film dead?

Dako: No books and print media appear to be dead and/or dying, but moving visual images are stronger, more powerful & more plentiful than ever. i love the look of film ...i love the immediacy, spontaneity and ultimately CONTROL of video especially FINAL CUT PRO. Either i transfer film stock to digital for post production in FCP or i just shoot in video, and skip the film part altogether.

How do you think film will continue to "live", transform, grow?

Dako: DIGITALLY – e.g. HDTV, iPods, LCDs, PDAs, laptops, projection screens, satellites and cable broadcasting systems, holograms and things we haven't even imagined yet will carry on the visual language of film long after actual organic film stocks become extinct.

MEDIUM OF REVOLT

"We have to create a revolution that puts the art of cinema back into revolution."

When Istvan Kantor won the 2004 Governor General's Award for Visual and Media Arts, there must have been more than a few raised eyebrows. Art's ultimate poster boy for rebellion, a provocateur, and outrageous performance artist has been arrested and thrown out of the Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Canada, the Musee d'art contemporain de Montreal, the Ludwig Museum, and most recently ejected from the Art Gallery of Ontario for marking their walls with blood during the Warhol exhibit.

Not that the man hasn't won numerous international awards in his thirty-year career from the 2001 Transmediale Prize in Berlin to the 1998 Telefilm Canada Prize. And say what you like, he has always garnered attention. His work has been described with various levels of loathing and reverence as controversial, disgusting, sexist and transcendent – sometimes all in one breath – and compared to such polar opposites as Buddha and Dracula.

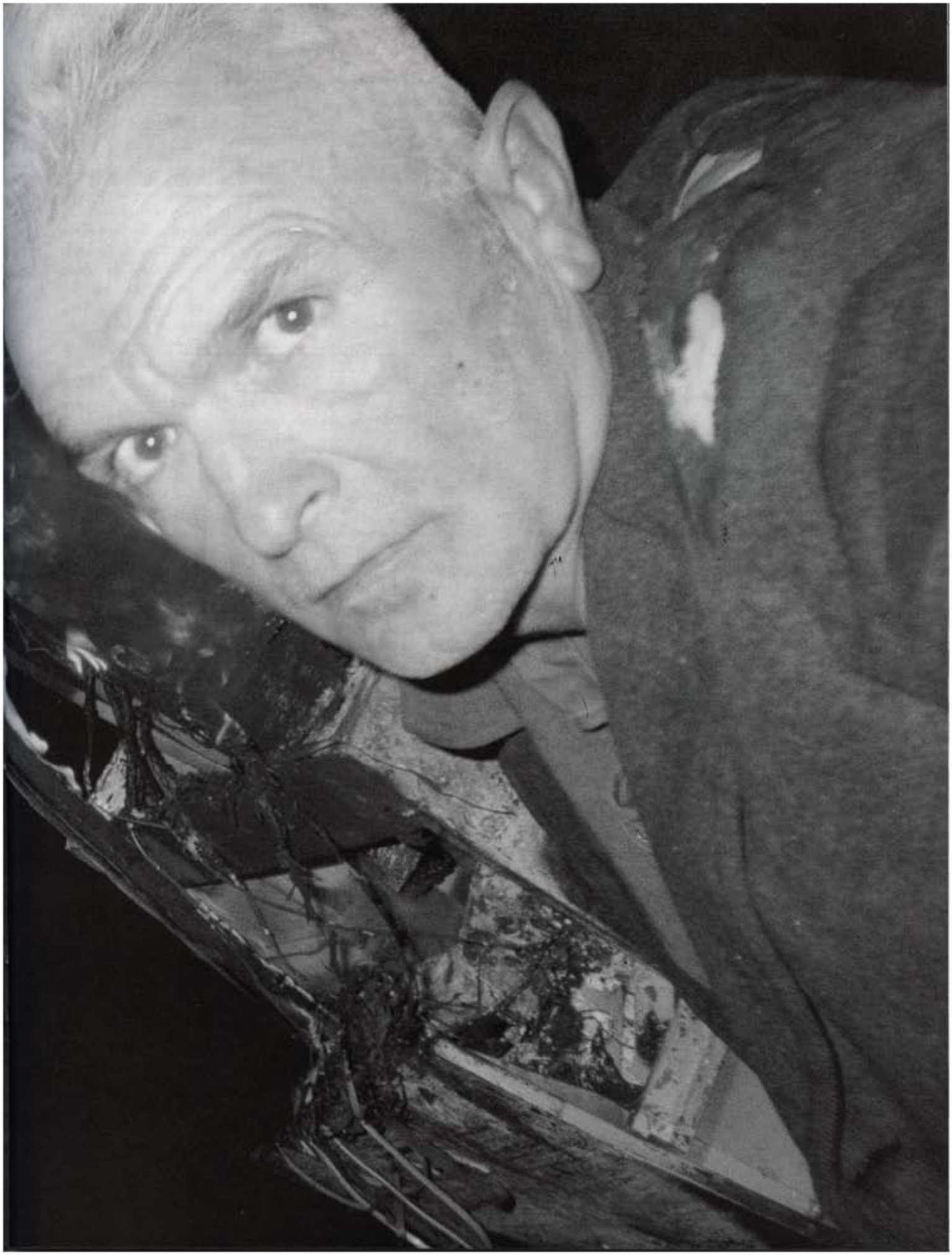
He is fascinated with the body as a transmission device, which has caused him to create such brutal video images of twitching women strapped into electric shock devices and while the use of his own blood as an unapologetic slap in the face of establishment is not original to him (the Vienna Actionists are one influence on his work) surely what takes his work beyond the level of convulsive, Epileptic shock tactics is his ability to take the piss out of himself. In the LIFT/Pleasure Dome-commissioned work entitled **Sweet Sixteen**, Kantor, with his characteristic style of manifesto lyrics, chants his desire to smash his father's head in for making him get his hair cut with a dead-pan humour that can only be described as tenderly self-mocking.

And as much as his critics may gasp at his audacity and grossness, there is also a romanticism that most miss. He is a true believer in revolution, with a touching faith in art as a medium for change. Why else bother to continue to challenge authority? Most in his position would have succumbed long ago to the machine of respectability. Instead, he continues with his museum interventions, participates on a grass-roots level with artists, and makes video work that decries the dehumanization of society.

Kantor's latest work entitled **The Blood of Many Filmmakers** is a homage to Jean Cocteau's 1930s film **The Blood of a Poet**. Using original film footage from dead filmmakers' film transferred to video, Kantor tells the story of the dead filmmakers' uprising against the dictatorship of broadcasting systems. A multi-structural screening extended with live performance, Kantor is considering incorporating Super 8 footage on a second screen.

As for the death of film, he cites the continued popularity of printed books. Even with technology, he says, books are still the most perfect devices for information. Kantor believes film will survive because it is a revolutionary medium. "We have to create a revolution that puts the art of cinema back into revolution."

– Gloria Kim



THE BACKWARD GLANCE

"I think of the different relationships I've been in and how they seemed so important, all consuming and passionate at the time, yet when I look back at them I can hardly remember most of what went on."

Reverse Chronological Encounters with the X/Y Chromosome is Christina Ray's exploration of the complex and intricate details of the past. Ray's film moves backwards through time to take a look at one woman's relationship history with various men over a twenty-year period. Using 35, 16 and 8MM film, Ray sets out to capture the nuance of memory as the story moves in reverse order through a series of short vignettes: "The first scenes are in big, clear saturated 35MM. As you go back in time, the images become grainy and desaturated to emulate that sense of distant memory." Ray uses very little dialogue to convey the subtleties in each scene. Her treatment of the unspoken goes a long way in proving that although brief, the moments selected as memory are often replete with significance and meaning. "I find with each relationship there's at least one scene or one brief memory that sticks out with crystalline clarity and summarizes the whole of that relationship."

Film's unique ability to capture with "crystalline clarity" is one in a long list of reasons for its use. For Ray, it may be the most alluring. "For me and for those who love film, there's something intangible about its quality and the way it captures light that feels more alive and real."

– Laurie Townshend

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

Next steps for film

At the last minute Graham Hollings had to change his game plan for his film. He gave some of his thoughts on the future of the medium:

"I'm beginning to wonder if film is going to end up as a medium for artists and experimental filmmakers. I don't pay enough attention to where the industry's going, but I've just been hearing that it won't be all that long before movie theatres are screening digital and a lot of people are saying that HD is starting to look hot, including people who two years ago wouldn't touch video with a ten-foot pole. So I am thinking it will be a specialist medium that's just used by artists, and big film production will all go digital."

"I think it depends on what people are doing with it. The Dogma filmmakers' stuff looks great like the **The Celebration** all shot on video and blown up to film. It depends on what you're working with. At the same time, I just watched **Barry Lyndon** [by Stanley Kubrick] for the first time and, you know, I can't picture getting that look out of video. You might get other interesting looks out of an electronic medium, but I can't see that you're ever going to get it to look that rich."

Hollings is hard at work on his revised project for the upcoming event.

– David Owen

GENESIS

Resurrecting the past

Perhaps to grasp the ultimate fate of film as a medium, we must first explore its beginnings. The past has a manner of illuminating the path of the future by providing insight. The first thing experimental filmmaker Franci Duran ever filmed was a black and white documentary on the Take Back the Night movement as an undergraduate student. She has decided to explore the roots of the first 'films' that were documented.

As with all successful developments in human history, finding the first film ever made is wrought with controversy. There are a number of stakeholders who want to claim the title, but as with all major discoveries, the truth lies in a concurrence of developments, simultaneously in a few places, quite remote from each other. The only fact that is not in doubt is that there were early versions of the technology being developed in the late half of the nineteenth century.

In **The First Thing Ever Filmed**, Duran pays homage to the history of film technology. Filmed in 35MM, the project will be a five minute piece recreating and giving equal time to two early films: Thomas Edison's early camera test which portrays a ghostly image of an indeterminate figure and the second, **Baby's Dinner** by the Lumière Brothers, showcases parents feeding their baby. Both vignettes will be filmed in black and white.

Reaching one arm into the past with a firm grasp on the future helps in the thought process of the here and now. Film, with its staying power and ability to evoke emotion like no other visual medium, must continue on. What must stop is defined by Duran as the death of our sense of wonder to film. The antidote? Return to the feeling of awe that was felt with the first motion picture you ever saw and recapture that emotion.

– Heather Richards

Child's play? Not always. Elida Schogt's little one can slow down the filmmaking process.

FROM THE UNIVERSAL TO PERSONAL
"People still choose media based on expression."

Memory is a fleeting thing – ephemeral, shifting, changing, elusive. Elida Schogt is haunted by it, and it is this, in all its mystery, which informs her work. Her first piece **Zyklon Portrait**, a short experimental film-poem that incorporates archival footage, family photos, water imagery and thoughtful narration, is an attempt to recapture a memory that is not physically hers, but rather a collective memory of an entire people. Of Dutch-Jewish background, Schogt has tried to make sense of the loss of her grandparents who died in Auschwitz during the Holocaust, and her subsequent two films, **The Walnut Tree** and **Silent Song** became an award-winning trilogy that both mourned the loss and celebrated the continuation of her family and her people.

It is the constant interplay between the personal, the universal and the intellectual that makes Schogt's work, all of which accesses memory, especially in its buried and hidden forms, so effective, powerful and, like memory, sometimes intangible. Rather than bludgeoning us with straightforward narrative, Schogt chooses symbols and allegory to take the audience on a journey. In her last completed film **Zero**, Schogt again mines memory in a circular fashion, and in getting to her revelation of childhood trauma, uses the number zero, or emptiness, as both the beginning and end of her journey.

Schogt's lastest work carries similarities to her previous works in its succinct minimalism. It is a simple pairing of optically printed fire footage and a photograph. Entitled **Her Name Was Violet**, the piece pays homage to a girl who once had her whole life in front of her.

Of the death of film, Schogt acknowledges that many have been swayed by the cult of technology and notes that the corporate world's inclusion of planned obsolescence in its selling strategy is perhaps why people need to talk about the death of an artform, but as an artist, her observation is to the point. "Artists are not as concerned with these issues. People still choose media based on expression. So, no, I don't think film is dead."

– Gloria Kim

DANCE WITH ME

Will film go the way of disco?

Even in 2006, when disco has been declared dead for over twenty years, most people would succumb to its infectious beats. It may be in the privacy of their own home, but a head would nod to the beat and, depending on the level of nostalgia, the arms and feet would soon follow.

Since its incarnation in the 1970s disco music has been wrapped in controversy by the mainstream faction of the population, especially in North America. Associated with defined unsavoury behavioural practices and a hedonistic lifestyle, disco could never beat its bad rap.

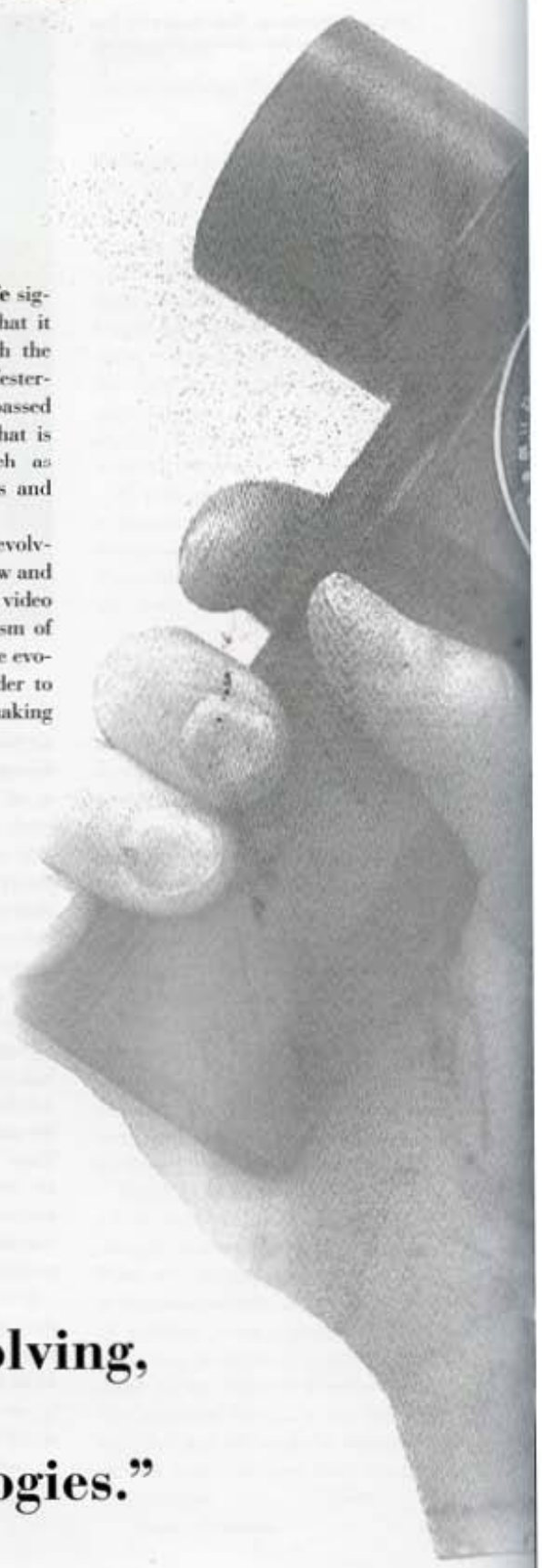
As a teenager growing up in Northern Ontario during disco's heyday, video and filmmaker Roy Mitchell would venture to Toronto with the lure and promise of its disco parties. It is only fitting then that when asked to partake in the Film is Dead! Long Live Film! project he chose to reflect on the fate of disco with the fate of video and filmmaking.

The project is called **The Edge of My Life** is shot on Super 8MM film and edited in video. The viewer can contemplate the parallels between film and disco while watching Mitchell sing and dance to an original disco tune (with music by musician Michael Stelky and lyrics by both Mitchell and Stelky).

The title **The Edge of My Life** signifies a time of reflection on what it means to be no more. Although the anti-disco music movement was festering, disco did not leave us, but passed on the torch, giving birth to what is now labeled urban music such as house/techno, rhythm and blues and rap music.

Film and video, too, are ever evolving; not dying but living on in new and improved technologies. Film and video lay somewhere between the chasm of death and rebirth. This inevitable evolution must be embraced in order to shape the fate of video and filmmaking in the future.

– Heather Richards



"Film and video are ever evolving, not dying but living on in new and improved technologies."

THE SUITE MASTER

From film to video, poetry to prose, Clive Holden doesn't shy away from any aspect of art-making.

Tell me about Mean.

It will be a three-minute video originating from found footage and created from intensive filmic and digital processes. The original video footage will be entirely of hockey fights, but resulting in almost entirely abstract visuals. There will also be an accompanying essay entitled "Mean" available at www.mean.utopiasuite.com. The theme of both the film and the essay will be how we attach sometimes absurd levels of meaning to such things as sports or national identity.

And what about the bigger project?

Mean will be part of my **Utopia Suite** project, which was launched as a website earlier this year at Images Festival and will ultimately result in a feature-length film and a book. **Utopia Suite** encompasses film/video and writing, but the exhibitions or presentations of these works, and especially the audience response that follows, will also be considered active parts of the project.

Similar to your last project Trains of Winnipeg. Are there other similarities?

One consistency has to do with my art practice, in that much of my art-making has a physical aspect mixed with less hands-on digital processes. I like to engage my body as well as my mind when I work, it seems to produce better results. For **Mean** the physical aspect will be in handling actual celluloid in a variety of "handmade" processes before ending up on video.

Where do you stand on the whole film is dead, film versus video debate?

I think positioning film against video is a false dichotomy. Really, it's a question of art versus industry. I've always worked in both media, mixing the two. It's ironic that not too long ago video was the preferred format in the contemporary art world, but now, as the commercial film industry switches to video, and as the art world begins to take stock of 100 years of film history, celluloid is becoming a medium you increasingly see in galleries. Is film dead? It's the same as asking this of art. How will it survive, grow, change? We don't know, but we know that it will. I'm optimistic. We're in the bare beginnings of an explosion of audio-visual art-making, a confluence of celluloid-based art with digital culture that will produce results we can't yet imagine.

– Cait Cantillon

Production still for **Beach Carousel**

"I wouldn't be doing this project in the way that I'm doing it if I thought film was dead."

DAY AT THE BEACH

Peter Grucza's seaside merry-go-round conjures feelings of nostalgia and whimsy

What is your film about?

It's a fluid answer because I'm still trying to find out what **Beach Carousel** is about through the process of making the film. It started off as a very simple idea of a day at the beach following in the footsteps of a-day-in-the-life sort of films that were made a long time ago, you know, **Symphony of the City**. That's sort of what this film is like and it's about an escape from day to day life. It dawned on me that part of the project was going to probably centre around a carousel that I know of that is over a hundred years old, still in operation, still being maintained by craftsmen and engineers to keep it running; its still accessible to the public. It shares very similar history to film just by way of its age and the enjoyment that it brings to young and old people, and I wanted to use that as a starting point for creating the film. It's a wonderfully graphic and rhythmic thing that exists with that carousel. Just the movement of the animals, the colours, the enjoyment it that brings are in many ways related to the whole "Film Is Dead" project in that film isn't dead. It is alive. It still brings enjoyment. It still has history.

What format are you using?

I'm shooting in Super 16MM right now. I hope to finish in 35MM. Super 16MM will give me just enough leeway to finish on 35MM if I want to and it's also a format that I know I can easily hold in my hand and get close, be very personal with the shooting. Rather than having to have a crew and a lot of extras around me, I can just take the camera with me and it doesn't look much different than some guy who is just holding up his video camera.

Do you think film is dead?

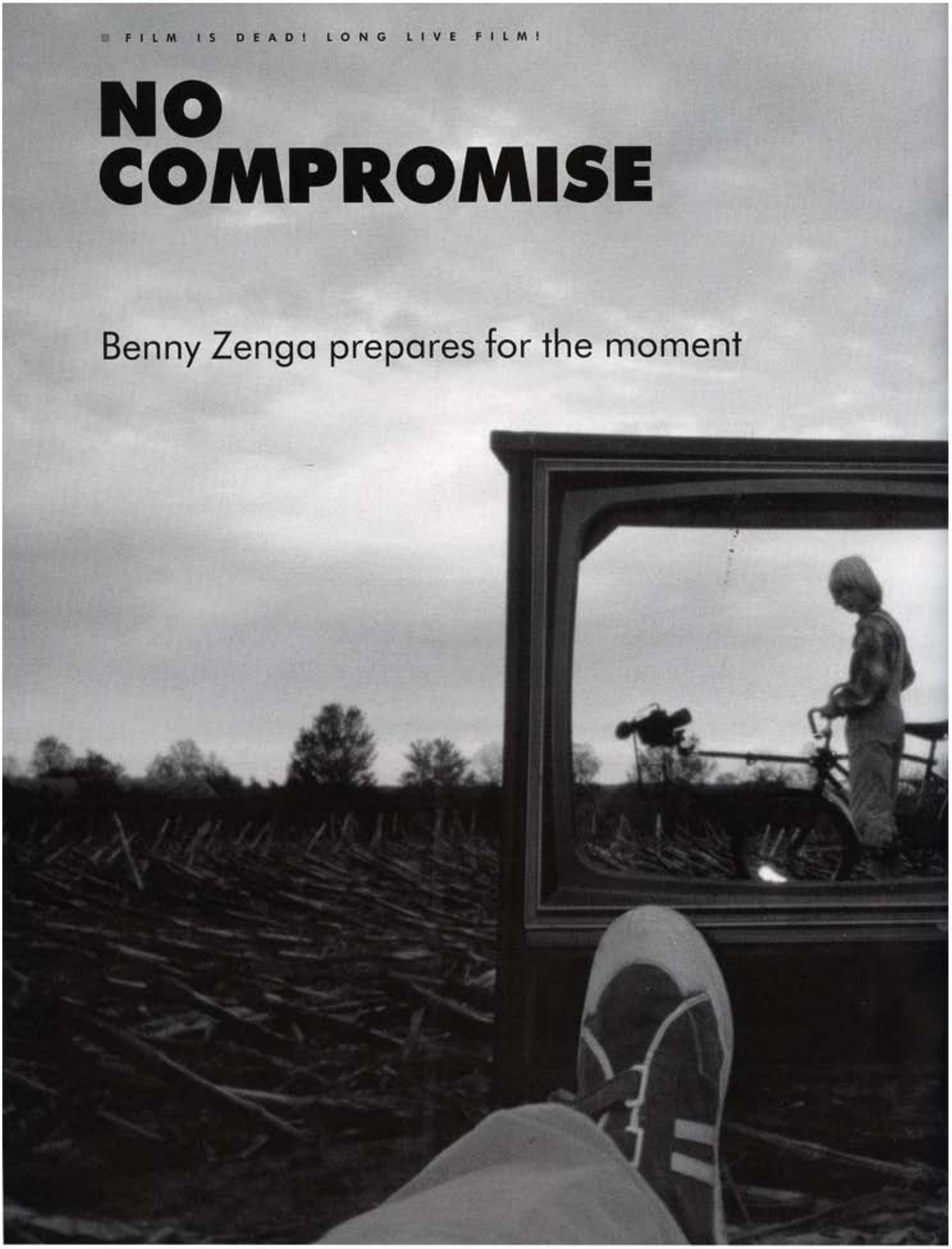
Well, isn't the title for the whole project actually "Film Is Dead, Long Live Film?" It is a bit frustrating to always hear people talking about the project as "Film Is Dead." I think it would be much more appropriate if people said "Long Live Film" is the project. I wouldn't be doing this project in the way that I'm doing it if I thought film was dead. Film is changing. Film is still vibrant and it has a unique character to it that video doesn't have. And I think that anybody who is shooting video will say they are different mediums, and there is nothing wrong with having two different mediums, and so I think "Film is Dead" is not quite the way that it should be approached.

It is definitely changing, when you have a harder and harder time being able to get prints for a film. One of the things I realized was if I just shot the film on 16MM I may not have an easy time being able to get a projectable image. Although, you can still do it. There's going to be more and more digital aspects involved in film and that's part of where I'm going with this project. I've decided to try and incorporate the organic nature of film historically and combine that with digital tools for manipulating the frame-by-frame aspect of it so that rather than using an optical printer, I'm going to probably do a lot of my work digitally. I'm likely going to construct the entire film frame by frame, but in a digital fashion so that it's an experiment with the older medium and a newer medium to see where they're going to go, and I don't think anyone knows for sure where everything's going to go. Distribution formats are changing, and the actual way that film is going is going to be up to individual artists. They're going to be the ones that drive how its shown and in what format its shown in, whether its 35MM, whether its shown on some sort of digital camera, there's a lot that you can still do with this old media. It's not really an old media, it's still something that has potential for exploration and I think people are going to keep exploring it.

– Glen Wylie

NO COMPROMISE

Benny Zenga prepares for the moment



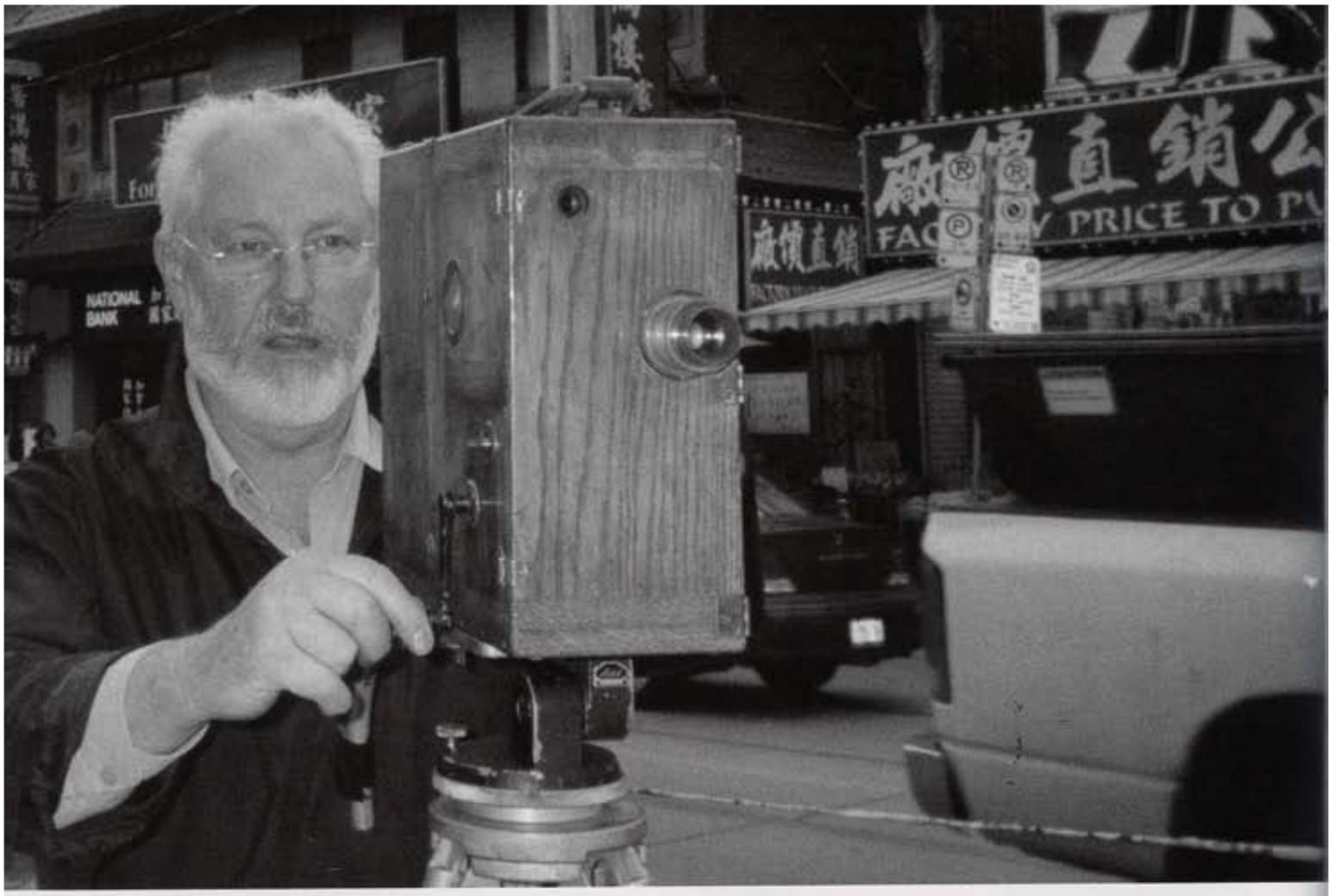
In **Ski Boys**, a daring group of "folk stunt" artists ride, surf and silo dive their way into the imagination of grade school teacher, Steve Kang, when he discovers the Ski Boys, "lost footage" at an auction. The dynamic and inventive nature of the stunts inspires Kang and propels him on a journey to learn more about the boys and their ideologies.

For filmmaker, Benny Zenga, shooting **Ski Boys** on Super 8 required careful preparation and planning as to avoid having to make compromises. "The ultimate is when that compromise doesn't happen because you've nailed the shot off the top," says Zenga of capturing the stunts that figured so prominently in the plot. "I like to shoot single shots that move along because it's about the immediacy. It's about that moment."

Each scene of **Ski Boys** benefits from Zenga's belief in film's unique capacity for capturing the truth and energy of the moment. "The camera is in on the action," he explains. "When you see this footage, you are aware that the action is unfolding for the first time. I think that energy translates really well. I think that Super 8 captures that energy unlike any other medium."

Despite the seductiveness of video and the endless pursuit to make video look like film, Zenga believes that film is here to stay. "I get caught up in [video] too," he confesses. "It's something that I'm always coming up against, but film has this magical quality that can't be emulated by video. Film is this viable, important medium that shouldn't be forgotten by any means."

– Laurie Townshend



Gillespie shoots with German 35MM hand-cranked camera.

BETWEEN THE FUTURE AND THE PAST

James Gillespie finds new life in an old camera

What format are you using for your film?

I chose the 35MM black and white format for **Shadow Tracing**. This gives the maximum amplitude of possibility for a film that accomplishes dream-like qualities through hand processing, tinting and toning. Although produced as a silent film, I am considering the possibility of the film being "played to" and/or "spoken to" during performance.

What is your film about?

A very early German 35MM hand-crank movie camera, made in Dresden in 1908, but recently discovered in the dark corner of a Toronto junk store, is found to bear a Chinese inscription in addition to the maker's marks. This film will indulge fantasies of events in the history of both cultures that the camera may have witnessed and recorded. The camera itself ultimately records impressions of life in Toronto's present-day China-town in the hands of its new owner, a young student challenged by identity and history, but enchanted with film, in a digital world.

The historic camera belongs to me. It is a Heinrich Ernemann 35MM Kino A. The body is made of oak and the magazines of mahogany. On the steel plate that mounts the shutter mechanism, and where Ernemann's logo is inscribed, there are also Chinese characters translating as "China Film Company". It is the discovery of this inscription, indicating that the camera has spent part of its life in China, that inspires both the scripted student and myself to bring this camera to life again in the production of a short experimental film that plays with the idea layered experience and cycles of the framer being framed.

Can film be replaced?

Film could never be replaced, but knowledge of it would persist forever in memory, and in legend, and the telling of stories that reminisce on its glorious days. Thus, film will never truly die.

– Bunmi Adeoye

OLD HEAD ON YOUNG SHOULDERS

"A new generation of filmmakers needs to be acquainted with old-school techniques."

"I don't think film will ever die. I think film will live on, but the environment that it lives in will change," says Mishann Lau. "As digital technology gets better and more popular, people will rediscover film and it will become new technology again. Like fashion, everything old becomes new again, just slightly different."

Using a variety of media – Super 8, 16MM, digital video and a final print of 35MM – Lau tells a tale of love, loss and memory in **Robot Love**. And despite the threat of newer, "shinier" technologies, she sees the possible advantages for film as a result of the rise in video and digital.

"The new generation of filmmakers– the kids today – need to be introduced to the old-school techniques of animation and optical printing," says Lau. By taking advantage of equipment offered by coops like LIFT, young filmmakers will learn the creative process of movie making as a hands-on experience. "We now have the opportunity to learn how to use machines that were reserved for professional labs because many of those labs have since closed down due to the spread of digital technology."

While Lau uses multiple formats in **Robot Love** to move between memory and reality, she acknowledges that in the end it is hard to compare. Despite the added expense – and occasionally finicky and time consuming qualities of film – her heart is clearly on one side. "Film is beautiful and magical in a way that video could never be."

– Kathleen Olmstead

IN THE BALANCE

A fitting sign for the motion picture

Brenda Goldstein's new project **Horoscope** attempts to predict the future of film by popular divination methods. While so far in Goldstein's findings, its future is not looking so good as forces are interfering with its ability to progress, we can rest assured that film's astrological love life has potential. Goldstein mirrors society's turn to the esoteric to find answers. Using the debut of Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope as a departure point, Goldstein probes into the complexities of filmmaking by utilizing found footage and optical printing techniques. After graduating from OCAD, Goldstein's practice has been focused on video and installation partly due to accessibility, a process she finds meditative. It is in this slowing down that one can see nuances and beauty; a meditation that is compromised, she argues, in video's immediacy. Video production is more focused on developing a "product" Goldstein explains. This is a sentiment that she is happy to disregard in exchange for film's process-oriented focus – planning and thinking about the content a bit more.

After reading Tom Sherman's article in *Canadian Art* that announced the irrelevance of film, Goldstein, while agreeing with some of his points, had the urge to fight him. Her response is to return to celluloid, challenging any notions of decrepitude by ascertaining another perspective. Goldstein takes the date of 17 October 1894, when Edison's Kinetoscope made its debut in London, as the birth of filmmaking and as a basis of the natal chart she is making for her film. So if filmmaking is a Libra, what's your sign?

– Ana Barajas

Rodriguez leads the way.

FLICKERING CARTOGRAPHY

Lina Rodriguez charts shadow and light with live performance

"'Film is dead.' I was trying to think about the subject matter. I was thinking what is film? What is the essence of film? And I remembered Plato's "Allegory of the cave" [in which cave prisoners use shadows on the cave's back wall to decipher what they believe is going on in the outside world]. A lot of film theorists have compared Plato's cave to cinema; cinema as a shadow of reality. Is cinema's mission to represent reality, to document reality, to show you what you see; I decided to go with the essential elements: There is light and there is shadow. I think that's why I love film because of the beauty of how tangible it is. You can touch it and you can put in a projector… It's like a puppet show…

"I am going to be the person that turns on the projector. I didn't want to do an installation that was looped because I wanted to call attention to the fact that images don't happen by themselves. Even when you're in the theatre, there's someone that loads these films into the projector and then there are the lights and they have to rewind the film. It's not mechanical; there's human intervention.

"In the 1800s, photographer Eadweard Muybridge studied movement in animals. He took still photographs. He was obsessed with movement and studying movement. He took photographs of horses running and when you see these images one after the other then there's the illusion of movement. I use a similar approach in trying to study movement in humans [in **InTermitteNt**].

"Cinema is impression, images are impressions, films are impressions. You put an image and a sound together… But then you go and watch a romantic comedy made by Hollywood, there's no space for me to think anything else because everything is so constricted and specific. I want to be a kind of filmmaker that is a mapmaker. So you make a map with options and there's no one destination. I don't want a film where you start here and end there and when you finish, you say, "Yeah, love does conquers all." That's not what I want to do as filmmaker." – *Bunmi Adeoye*

Back to basics: Reeves returns to his roots.

SOUNDLY DRAWN BOY

Richard Reeves
on an audio journey

How does this project relate to your previous work?

Aura uses similar techniques of cameraless animation that have been developed through experiments and my previous works. What makes this project special for me is the returning to the roots of creating a film entirely on film, a colour motion picture with stereo sound, without the use of any camera or recording device. All of the "visuals" for all of my cameraless films have been natural to the technique of cameraless, not using any digital scanners or cameras of any sort. However, with the audio, I have been able to input a library of handmade optical film sounds to a computer and compose soundscapes in a digital environment. Both techniques (digital or direct) are created one frame at a time, and are therefore 'animated' sound. While the computer does not change the integrity of the original optical sounds, it does change the aesthetic of direct-to-film soundscape creation. I have always felt the loss of intimacy with the physical touch of the film once it entered the digital world.

Where does the title Aura come from?

The title for **Aura** arrived while listening to the audio work-in-progress on a moviola. Dust particles create a distinct film sound, perhaps the very aura of the film itself, like grain. This began the process of thought where the screen image has its aura of sound floating in air. Hand-drawn sounds projected into space.

What are some of the technical concerns you are faced with?

Animating sound directly onto film possess limitations: layering sounds is mostly impossible as is adding effects like reverb. The sounds rely on the space between the speakers for natural effect. Working within limitations is a good thing. The direct-to-film sound creation process is quite visual, changing the size or shape of the sounds will change frequency and volume. I keep trying to get the projector to speak.

– *Ana Barajas*

**"No. No, film is not dead.
I don't believe it's dead.
I don't want it to be dead."**

40-YEAR-OLD VISIONS

Peter Stinson pieces together a family member's candid footage in **Gene's Film**

What is your current project about?

It's sort of a tribute to my partner Brenda's great uncle Eugene Strain who was an avid amateur filmmaker from the 1940s until the 70s. He shot a lot of films of his family and boat racing among other things. They're action films, a lot shot on Kodachrome. I am going to take some clips from those films and get them optically printed a little more garishly and slow them down and blow them up and then cut it together with a somewhat industrial soundtrack. He and his boys raced boats. He built boats with his boys and they got into it as they got older. There is this culture of power boat racing: it's a family thing it across North America and Europe actually. There's lots of shots of families sitting around the trailer watching dad fix the motor boat. It's like a scene from popular mechanics circa 1966, the cars, the hairdos. Eugene was pretty good. Much of his footage is totally professional. It'll be three and a half minutes. Just be a small little echo of Eugene's work.

Do you think film is dead?

No. No, film is not dead. The look of it is still irreplacable. I think 16mm is having a hard time, but that nostalgic look is still appreciated by enough camera people and directors that the look itself is still desired and certainly on the big screen you can't duplicate it. I mean you can almost duplicate it – I haven't seen what the latest up to film transfers look like. But I don't believe it's dead. I don't want it to be dead.

How do you see film transforming?

When they create digital cameras that can replace the pixels on film, and they haven't yet, I guess film will be dead, but it's still not economical in movies. The multiplexes, they can't show strictly digital film economically. It's still relatively cheap compared to the highest end digital equipment. Certainly at the consumer level video with DVDs that's the way it's going, but not for the artist. The projection of film, you can't replicate that. The projection of film compared to the projection of video is just better. It's simple. It's much nicer to see a well-shot 16mm film projected on video than a transfer to video. It adds another effect of pixels, it's a different look. But that's for the connoisseur, I guess. The public has become less and less aware of the difference. Certainly young people don't see it... I would prefer film, but then when you want to distribute it that's a whole other story.

How do you distribute your work?

The usual routine of sending it to festivals and galleries and stuff and through distributors, usually the non-profit distributors. I guess what I'm saying is when it gets distributed they'll end up showing a video version of it anyway. It's rare that a festival will want to show film, unless it's on 35mm. When we made 16mm FilmPrints three years ago, it was rare for festivals to want to play the print. I would have to insist on it. I remember the Worldwide Short Film Festival in Toronto could play the print in one theatre and that was three years ago. This year, I'm working print traffic at the Calgary International Film Festival and there's no 16mm. There was 16mm last year. This year there won't be any 16mm prints at all.

– David Owen

BRILLIANT EXPERIMENTATION

A meeting of art and science sheds some light on illumination

A thin white line quivering on the screen as Rick Palidwor describes his film **Pulses of Light**: "The candle light is like a control group. That line is from the shutterless camera because what happens is when you film a light [using the shutterless camera], it streaks. I'm going to shoot candles as a control group because – you see that line? – it's perfectly straight. It's very sharp. It's a very pure line.

"Some lights give you a weird shape and some are very straight. I've discovered that when I shoot with a shutterless camera, different lights behave differently. For example, streetlights are sodium vapour. Streetlights actually emit gas as a pulse. I'm not a total expert on this, I'm going to do some research, but let's say that it emits pulses. So the sodium vapour light puts out a pulse every sixtieth of a second and our eyes don't see the pulse. My shutterless camera 'sees' the pulse. It starts to 'see' the shape because it's not just coming out like the candle, which is pure light, which is not electricity. Candlelight is independent of the electric cycle so it behaves in a certain way and if you film a light that is on an electric cycle, suddenly you see these weird shapes. [Electric light is] not a continuous thing and our eyes are fooling us. The shutterless camera behaves like a scientific instrument. It reads the light cycle. I find that kind of cool because you might think of a camera as only shooting a movie, but it's like scientific instrument; it can see that different lights behave differently.

"I've been shooting lights with the camera sort of randomly, just shooting neon lights, streetlights, whatever. When I got the results back [for the first time], I was looking at it and I was freaking out, thinking this light looks like an aquarium with bubbles traveling out of it. Which light was it? I don't know. There were other lights that looked like they had a barbershop spin. You know those barbershop signs that spin. Well, I had lights that had that weird shape and they were spinning!

"For this project, I'm going to shoot a variety of light sources as a controlled scientific experiment: an incandescent light, a fluorescent light, a follow-spot in a theatre, LED lights, black light, a high pressure mercury light, neon light. I've got access to an HMI light, which is a movie light. Streetlights. Candle flame. I'm going to shoot these lights, but this time I'll know what I'm shooting instead of random lights on the street."

– *Bunmi Adeoye*

**"Film is just beautiful if you
And sometimes even if you
it can be beautiful."**

Chemical accidents make a beautiful thing.

FATE AND FOLLY
Beautiful Mistakes

shoot it right.
shoot it wrong,

"I hear a lot of people talking about the video revolution – video cameras are more accessible and cheaper – but in terms of narrative, film will always be a major tool to tell a story," says Eric Plummer. His project **Negative Space** (working title) shot in black and white on Super 16mm, is a mix of film and still images. An exploration of memory, personal vision and experience, set to an original jazz soundtrack. Plummer is aware that shooting on film may present some difficulties, for example he wants to shoot at night. However, he looks at this as a challenge. "It forces you to be clever and creative, forces you to work around the problem," he says. These constraints also require more focus and planning before shooting. One must have their aesthetic focus before filming begins. He points out that video may be a more manageable medium, but that is not reason enough to use it. "Film is just beautiful if you shoot it right. And sometimes even if you shoot it wrong, it can be beautiful. Chemical accidents make a beautiful thing. There is nothing quite like the projection of light."

– *Kathleen Olmstead*

METHOD TO THE MADNESS

Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival Programmer **Cassandra Hanrahan** on the challenges of programming

This is an extremely fecund time to be working for Rendezvous with Madness (RWM) Film Festival. It is a film festival that continues to grow by regularly examining its history and future directions. A significant move forward is RWM's commitment to and success in becoming increasingly connected to other professional arts organizations and cultural communities.

This year, RWM's submissions count has been the highest ever. The submissions also represent a wider range of material, more genres, including hybrid works. This increased variation in submissions represents a new development and interest in exploring mental health and addiction themes using more experimental, non-traditional approaches. From a programming perspective, this development is extremely exciting. This is not to say that all this new work that has come in is suitable for exhibition. Nonetheless, it's inspiring to preview such work and to observe this new direction in filmmaking and mental health. Traditionally, artists making work about mental health and addiction have favoured more established genres such as the documentary to frame their stories, often using the classic approach of the direct camera address, talking heads, and expert interviews. Filmmakers attempting something new on a subject tend to receive my full attention and heightened anticipation. Still, however, some of these submissions fall short. For instance, exploring therapist/consumer relationship, as a thriller is a harder task than some aspiring filmmakers might think.

The experimental genre also has its own challenges when it comes to framing stories of mental health and addiction. To be sure, some experimental processes, like the characteristics of low budget independent productions, can lend themselves well to the subject matter. However, in some instances, as with all genres, this is not the case at all.

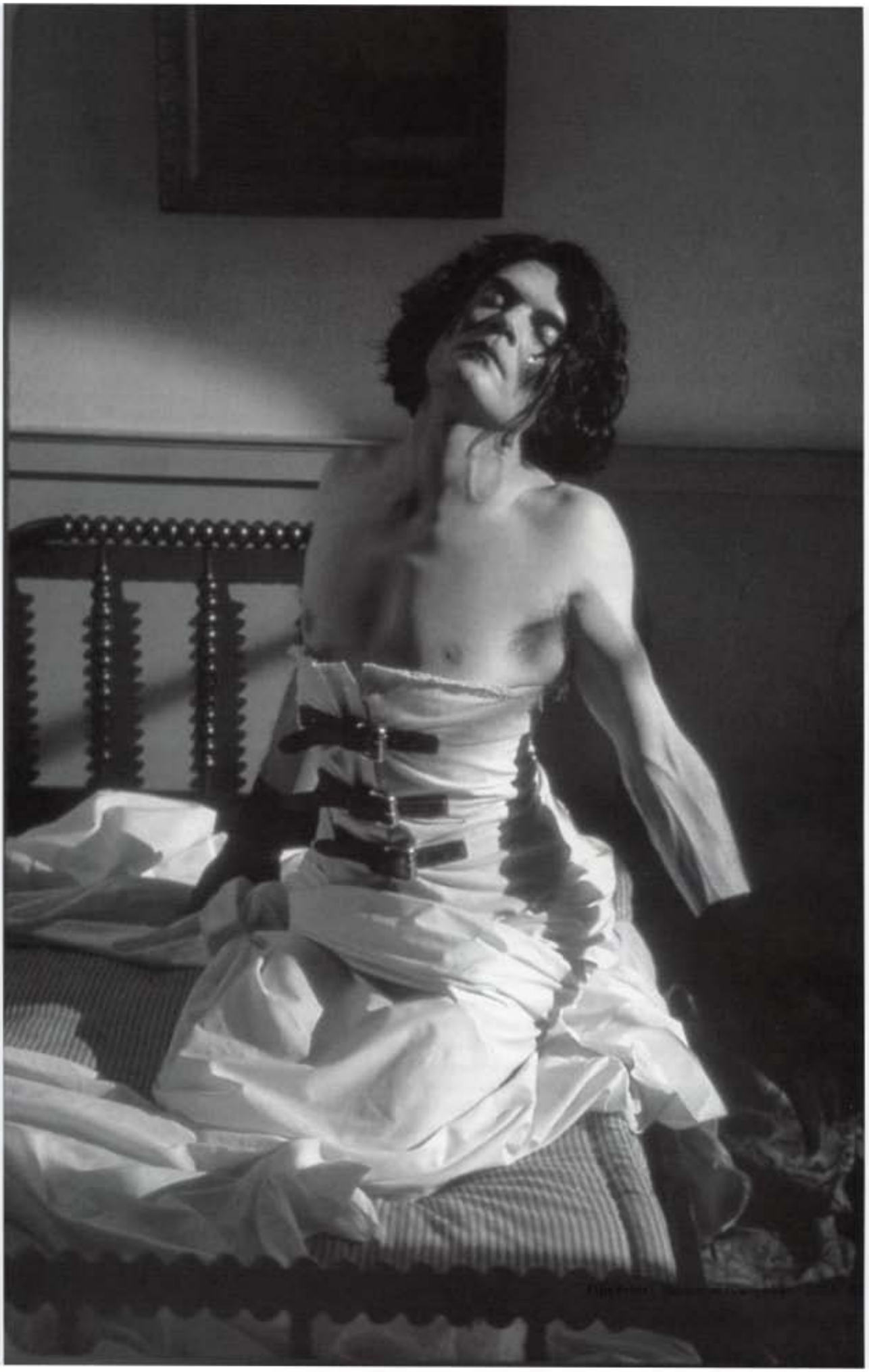
It remains a challenge to find smart comedies addressing mental health and addiction. Although it may strike some as inappropriate, I am interested in exhibiting more comedy in the festival. To be sure, comedy has not been the genre of choice by those taking up the subjects of paranoid schizophrenia or Bulimia Nervosa. Without a doubt, humour can be a double edge sword. Given that mental illness has conventionally been seen as a marginal condition, artists whose work challenge stereotypes and negative preconceptions around mental health and addiction have typically sought to use more earnest genres. One exception is **Our Time is Up**, a comedic short that playfully examines psychoanalysis. When therapist Dr. Leonard Stern finds out he has six weeks to live, he adopts a fresh method of treatment: brutal honesty.

As RWM gets bigger, it is also becoming more visible among Canadian and international communities. This is, in part, because mental health and addiction are increasingly becoming subjects of popular discussion, of mainstream discourse – in other words, less taboo. More and more people are willing to talk openly about their personal experiences with mental health and addiction with emphasis on recovery and survival. The time is ripe; the world it seems is ready to engage seriously in the process of destigmatization of those with mental health disorder and/or addiction problems. While the days of the walled in dungeon-like insane asylums have been and – for the most part – gone from the Canadian landscape since the mid-twentieth century, walls of a different sort continued to separate out the "crazies" from the rest until recently.

While staying true to its original mandate to present engaging, realistic, and accurate visual work that promotes awareness and education around mental health and addiction, RWM has expanded its partnerships and audience base well beyond its initial fanbase of health care providers and other medical experts, and mental health and addiction survivors. In addition to that original audience base, the festival now attracts a wider range of artists who are with or without personal experience with mental health and/or addiction problems, but who are intent on exploring mental health and addiction issues in relation to the creative process. While artists who have mental health and/or addiction problems have found a natural home at RWM for their visual work, more artists today appear to recognize RWM as a unique and accessible forum in which to present and explore the intimate connections between creativity and mental health. ■

The 14th annual Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival is from 9–18 November at The Workman Theatre on 1001 Queen Street West. Visit www.rendezvouswithmadness.com for screening details.

(Facing Page) Still from **Memoirs Of My Nervous Illness** by Julian Hobbs



A BOX FULL MEMORIES

When **Aubrey Reeves** discovers a box of Regular 8 film footage, she embarks on a journey that leads to a network devoted to the preservation of film

This summer I was helping to clean out my parent's basement when I came across a small box labeled "home movies." Inside were a dozen reels with labels such as "PEI vacation", "Christmas 56" and "Cottage." According to my mother, these were films shot by her father when she was a child. My curiosity was piqued, but I didn't know what I should do with them or how to even view the movies.

A filmmaker friend told me about a group called Homemade Movies (HMM), which is the only organization in Canada dedicated to showing and preserving home movies. Since 1999, HMM has been hosting "Bring-Your-Own-Home-Movie" (BYOHM) screenings and clinics. With my box of reels under my arm, I went down to Hart House to attend one of these events and get some more information about what to do with my family's films.

In the dim light of the hall, people were bent over small viewing devices and getting instructions from volunteers on how to repair their films. The attendees came from all walks of life. Some, like myself, had brought in their family's films, whereas others were collectors and nostalgia buffs who acquired home movies at junk shops, estate sales and flea markets. The vast majority of home movies brought in to BYOHM events are 8MM, a format that was immensely popular from the 1930s to 1970s for consumer use because of its rich colour and for the portability of the 8MM cameras (especially exciting in the 30s when at that time all news reels and most Hollywood films were still in black and white). As a result, most people's home movies are anywhere from 35 to 70 years old and will be facing some preservation issues.

The most common problem with old home movies is that the glue-made splices have dried and come apart. Fortunately, this is the easiest deterioration to fix. Regrettably, another common problem is shrinkage, which is irreversible. The acetate base of some films that are over 50 years old dry out, causing the space between sprockets to be shorter. This makes it almost impossible to run the film through an ordinary 8MM projector. HMM has acquired special equipment to deal with this problem and may still be able to project a shrunken film. In addition, if films have been stored in a basement or other damp environment, there is a possibility that mildew has grown on the film, causing washed out colours and the chemical of the film to be permanently altered. If the film smells of vinegar, it has undergone a chemical change and should never be stored with other film since the chemical reaction can migrate to other reels and ruin a whole collection.

Despite these possible deteriorations, film is a very stable medium. I was cautioned that even if I decide to have my family's home movies transferred to DVD to ease viewing, I should always keep the original films. Digital formats become obsolete quickly, whereas films has already lasted 100 years. Besides that, a video transfer will not retain the same intensity of colour, especially if the original is Kodachrome stock. For this reason, HMM is committed to always showing home movies on their original formats, never on video. They want people to know that it is possible to show old home movies on film projectors without damaging them and that the experience is something quite unique.

Indeed, the screening that followed the clinic was an unusual experience. As the HMM crew ran the projectors, the owner of each film was encouraged to tell what he or she knew about it. For instance, one film depicted three small girls as Granby Park in British Columbia. An elderly woman in the audience told us that she was youngest child in the film and the other two girls were her older sisters, now both deceased. As we saw the girls riding ponies, feeding birds and kittens in the park, she narrated her recollections from that summer over 60 years ago. As an audience of strangers, we were privy to a surprisingly intimate account of her childhood and memories, which was a very touching experience.

Not only is the audience experience at the BYOHM screenings quite different than an "art film" screening, but the films themselves have a very unique aesthetic. Liz Czach, a board member of HMM who has written her PH.D. on home movies points out that the aesthetics of home movies is everything that mainstream films are not. They lack story, actors and have no mise-en-scene. "Some see the aesthetics of home movies in negative terms," says Czach. "There's a misconception that one of the worst things is to be invited to someone's house to watch their home movies. But I like to think that the typical mistakes are part of the aesthetic and the best thing about home movies."

What might be considered errors in mainstream films, such as waving and smiling at the camera, add to the charm of these films and what Czach

calls the "strong emotional factor". There's pleasure in recognizing members of your own family in their younger days or even seeing strangers who are recognizable as "ordinary people" doing everyday things as opposed watching to polished actors perform scripted tasks.

Many of the films shown at the screening depicted typical family gatherings and holidays. Through the passage of time, even these glimpses of somewhat banal life become fascinating, sometimes puzzling and exotic to the contemporary eye. For films that were undated on the canisters, audience members at the screening were calling out guesses of the year based on the women's fashions and hairstyles. This demonstrates what many professional archivists and historians have begun to realize in recent years: Home movies represent one of the most vast and untapped records of ordinary life through the twentieth century. Home movies depict lifestyles of all classes of society, typical social mores and behaviours, fashion styles, the intimate spaces of private homes and above all, events that were often unrecorded by newsreels, documentary films or even represented in fictional films. The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) have been behind the movement to get home movies preserved and collected by major libraries and archives for the sake of historical research. The AMIA has a very useful website (www.filmforever.org) that provides considerable information about preserving, storing and repairing home movies.

At times, some home movies even capture historically momentous events that were beyond the reach of the news media. The screening ended with a remarkable home movie shot in 1966 in Peking, China. It was filmed by the father of a woman at the screening. Her father had been a tour guide. His tour was one of very last groups of Westerners admitted to China before the Cultural Revolution came to full force. With mounting tensions in the city, the tour group was not allowed on the streets unaccompanied by government officials. As a result, much of the footage is shot from the balcony of their hotel, looking down on the procession of demonstrators. In stunningly rich Kodachrome colour, he captured images of thousands of Chinese peasants marching up the wide boulevard, brandishing banners of Mao and scarlet flags. Few professional photojournalists and filmmakers captured China at this significant turning point, and even fewer from such a close and unguarded vantage point.

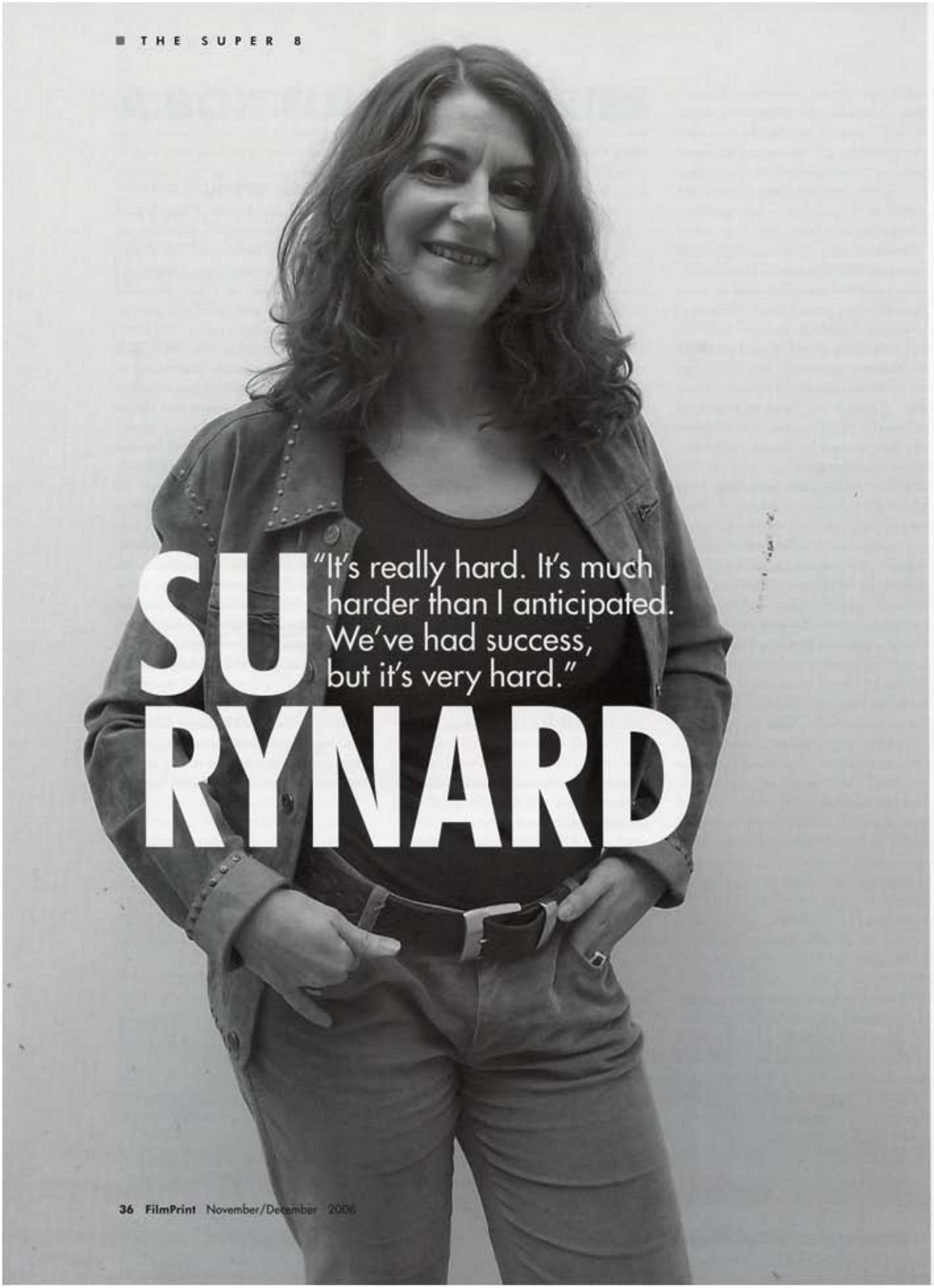
Obviously, a film of such historical significant may be of interest to many different people, not just enthusiasts of home movies. That is one of the reasons, HMM maintains a growing database. Historians, filmmakers or researchers can contact HMM to inquire about certain subjects in the database, but the movies are not held in a collection. When the organization began, HMM realized that a physical collection was not only difficult to finance and store, but also not in line with the wishes of most home movie owners, who want to keep their films in the possession of their family. Instead, the database acts as a way of connecting people who own films with people who are interested in seeing them, as well as archiving information about the films for future generations. HMM encourages all attendees at their clinics to register their films in the confidential database. Soon HMM is moving to an online system, where films can be registered, as well as searched by topic.

For films that were undated on the canisters, audience members at the screening were calling out guesses of the year based on the women's fashions and hairstyles.

Following their advice, I have begun cataloguing my family's collection to be added to the database. With a simple form provided by HMM, I record as much information as I can ascertain about each film and then I will need to quiz my older relatives about the identity of certain people in the films. This ensures that the future generation of my family will not find a box of home movies of forgotten people and places in my basement. With the aid of the database information, they will be able to identify their great-grandparents and distant relatives.

More so than any other organization in Canada, HMM does not believe that film is dead. If there's a noteworthy attempt to resurrect film, this is it. "The Future of Homemade Movies is in the past," says Czach. "As long as we can maintain ways to show the [8MM] films, they will live on." By keeping 8MM alive as an exhibition format, preserving and archiving collections of movies, and raising awareness of the rich store of historical information held in each home movie, HMM ensures that film has yet to live a very long life. ■

Homemade Movies can be reached at homemademovies@hotmail.com. Their next BYOHM screening and clinic will take place 20 November, 2006 at 7:00 pm at the Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street, just east of Spadina Ave.



SU RYNARD

"It's really hard. It's much harder than I anticipated. We've had success, but it's very hard."

Still from **Kardia** by Su Rynard

1.

What inspired you to make Kardia?

I would say the inspiration came from several sources. One main one was that I had a freelance job doing some documentary series work where we had to shoot real operations. During this time, I learned of a surgery that had been done in the 1950s. This was at a time before heart lung machines were invented; it was open heart surgery and they would use a real person as the "machine" to keep the other person alive. Say, for example, the operations was on a child, they would use a parent or a donor who would act as a body who would actually keep this other body alive while they stopped the heart and operated on it. So that really struck me that image because it's so symbolic. It's kind of like this external umbilical system. It's a way for this kind of relationship – if it's not with a parent – to be created that wasn't there before. That story really stayed with me. On a personal side I also had a father who passed away from heart failure. So I had an emotional interest in pursuing things around the heart.

2.

You wrote the script for Kardia as well as directed. How do you continue to learn as a screenwriter and filmmaker?

I guess because being an independent filmmaker is a huge commitment and a labour of love. I think you have to find topics that are meaningful to you. So when I'm working on a script, I'm trying to pursue something that is intriguing or fascinating. I guess the most important thing is finding something you're connected with and then each piece will take you on a different journey. With filmmaking, there are other things too. To continue to learn by looking at other people's work and to dialogue with people about work in process. And that's not easy because people are busy, but I think it's really important.

3. What were some of the challenges you overcame?
One of the main challenges was to make a film that is dramatic narrative, but to keep it close to the kind of poetic and ephemeral narrative that I'm interested in. That's very hard because to make a work of a large scale it's much harder to retain a vision and to ensure that the piece stays... pure, stays true, to its intention. While at the same time, I wanted to make a bigger piece that had the possibility for larger audiences and to take the work to another level. I think that was the biggest challenge: making my own work, but also making it on a scale that I hadn't experienced before.

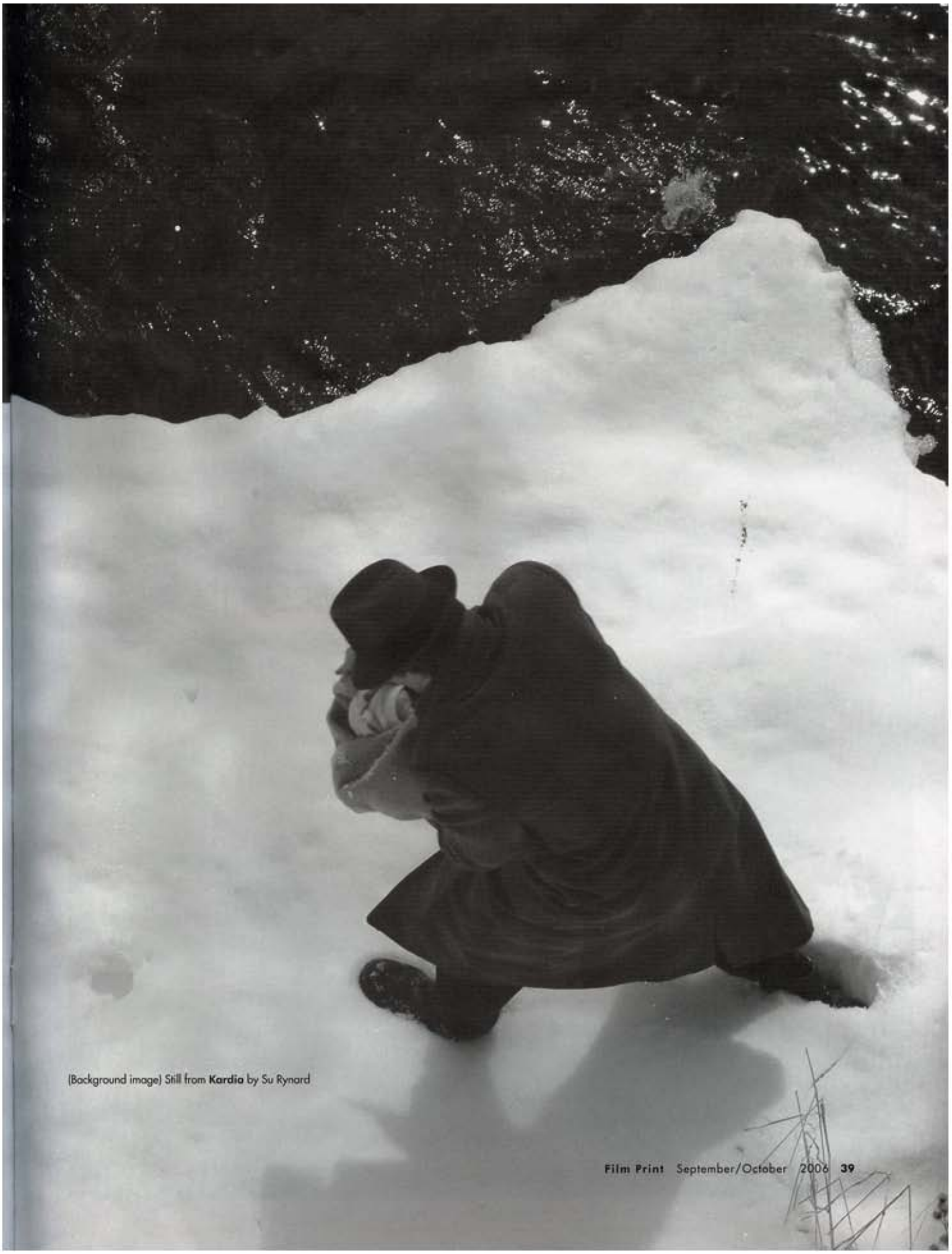
4. What was the format of the film?
We shot it in Super 16MM and blew it up to 35MM. I am very happy with the results. I really wanted to shoot in film and originally, I thought I might have to shoot it in tape. So I was thrilled to shoot it in film. Of course, I would love to shoot it in 35MM, but that just wasn't affordable. This was a way that we could still have the visual qualities that I really felt were important to express the piece. Visual qualities that are part of film, but not really part of the texture of video.

5. Can you outline how much time you spent on each aspect of making your film?
The majority of the work was the development – screenwriting and preproduction – getting to the shoot. That was a huge portion. The actual shoot was very efficient: twenty days. That was a very small slice of the time. Editing had to very efficient, largely because we had limited money to work with. Post was quite efficient. The thing that is very surprising to me is the amount of time it takes to get your film out there. It's way harder and way more competitive than one would ever imagine. It's already so daunting to make a film that you feel like when you're done, you're done. But there's this whole other phase, which is getting the film out there, which is equally difficult. You don't just have to make the film. Once you're finished, you have to enter a whole other phase of trying to get the film screened. So it's not like it's just competitive to get funding, it's competitive to secure ways to get audiences. The festivals are competitive. The screens are competitive. It's like oh my god: I have to go through this again! [Laughs] It's really hard. It's much harder than I anticipated. We've had success, but it's very hard.

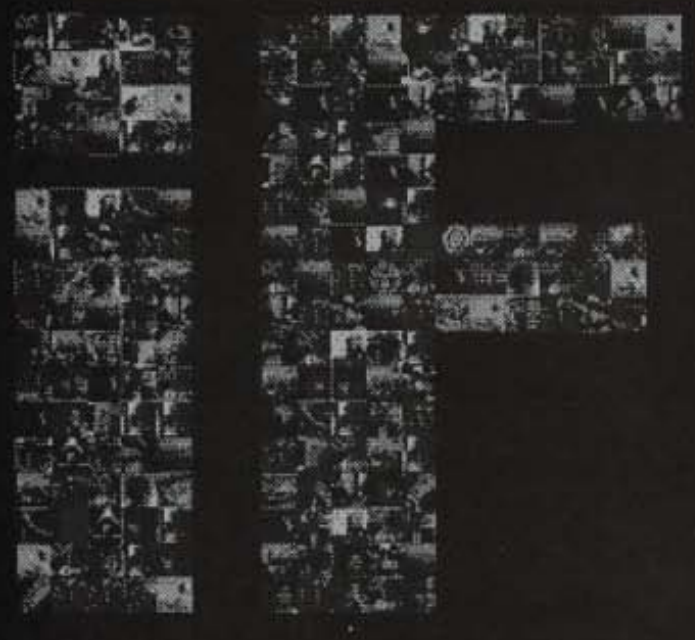
6. Where can we see Kardia?
We had a theatrical release in October. In 2007 and beyond it's on the Movie Network and on CHUM Television. And then in the West Coast it's going to be on Movie Central. And on the Sundance channel in the States.

7. How do you feel about that?
Good. I'm glad. I'm happy that we are going to have it in some theatres in Canada and that it will screen. And I have to find the audience, it's a unique little film. It's also a very visually poetic film. It's not a commercial film; it's kind of an art house film so it's a hard one to find a place for programming.

8. What do you think of the idea of film being dead?
We live in the most visual-media saturated world ever. A certain projector style might be dead, but even the little movies they're making on cell phones now are so much like Super 8 home movies. It's still the same. People will always tell stories; they'll always express themselves visually. One cog in one machine might become obsolete, but the trajectory is going to carry on. ■



(Background image) Still from **Kardia** by Su Rynard



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