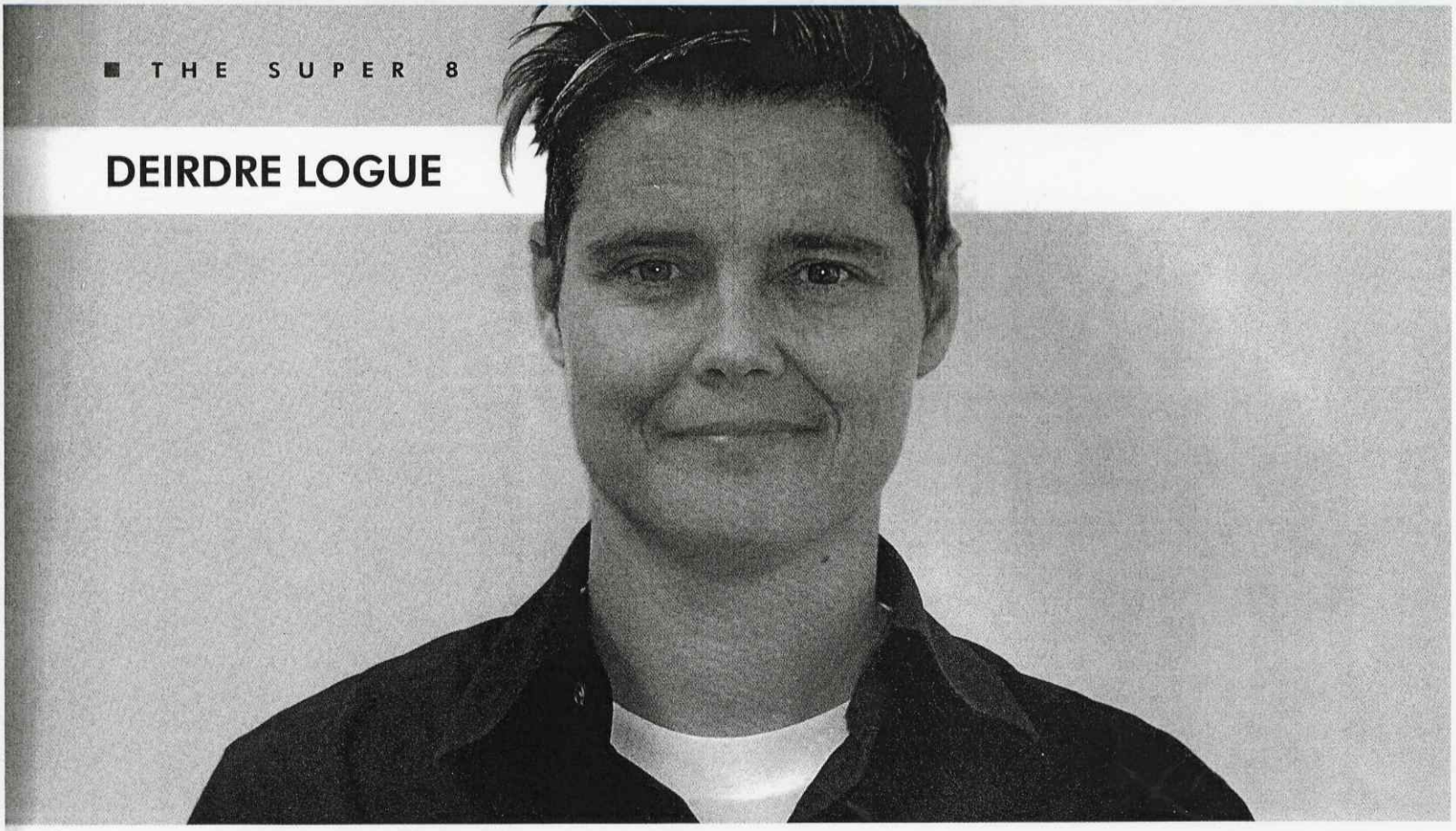
DEIRDRE LOGUE



❶ What kind of films do you make?
I make autobiographical, short, performance-based, experimental, often handmade, sometimes repetitious, films and videos as art—first and foremost.

❷ What are you working on now?
Getting a few shorts resolved in time for the LIFT New Directions in Cinema Series screening on November 4TH.

❸ What's your preferred medium?
I love the rapid action and delirium of Kodachrome 40 Super 8 but, alas, my true love is a dirty, unpredictable bucket overflowing with high con, hand processed 16MM.

❹ How do you finance your work?
I try not to think about it.

❺ How is your work distributed?
My work is available through V Tape.

❻ How does LIFT benefit you?
Truth is I make work very rarely. As a result my experience of LIFT is not particularly tangible, meaning I'm not in there every other weekend renting gear. As a result, for me it's a philosophical relationship. LIFT benefits me because it supports, it survives, it protects, it makes possible, it's family, it just is.

❼ What's the best advice you've received in regards to filmmaking?
I told myself years ago not to expect my work to increase my popularity.

[Editor's note: Deirdre tries to get away without answering eight questions, so *FilmPrint* asks her this:]

❽ What's the one question that *FilmPrint* should have asked you, but didn't?
You're pretty tough, aren't you. OK, I guess you should have asked me why I just ignored the 8 thing… thinking I could get away with it? The answer: a resistance a day keeps the doctor away.

Deirdre's work will screen as part of the New Directions in Cinema taking place November 4 at the Gladstone Hotel.

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video

Queering sex and love

Queer Here videos preach free love but make it really unappealing By LEAH SANDALS

QUEER HERE/QUEER NOW at VTape (401 Richmond West, #452), to February 2. 416-351-1317. Rating: **NN**

IN THE FIRST PART OF QUEER HERE/Queer Now, a three-part curatorial series, local theorist **John Paul Ricco** focuses on redefining queer love. But overall this show raises red flags rather than red-hot admiration.

Ricco says he chooses works that "voice the unavowable gap between desire and image that is the space of love" and "make a queer antinormativity that does not look back to domesticity."

This concept is manifested in a group video program ranging from an IM exchange between long-distance lovers (**Doug Ischar**) to linguistic tongue-tying about the impossibility of communication (**Deirdre Logue**) to an art doc on love among queer Lebanese men (**Akram Zatari**). There's also a Genet-inspired installation featuring a separating wall as key to two men's love (**Silvia Gruner**).

First flag: though Ricco's arguing for cruising and distant or anonymous sex as a model for liberated love, these videos make that seem rather unappealing. Ischar's look at a supposedly fun public sex fest comes off more gloomy than glorious, and Logue's cryptic-ness evokes claustrophobia more than come-ons.

Second, in outlining an "anti-normative, non-domestic" ideal for queer love, Ricco's work restricts the types of relationships it's okay for queer folk to choose. No one wants wholesale Disneyfication of same-sex pairings, but the idea of "anything goes between consenting adults" must apply to baking cookies and raising kids as well as shooting up and playing rough, right?

Third, it's my experience that seeking out relationships where a "wall" of unattainability fuels desire is a formula not for love but for disappointment. It's painful to see such walls eroticized here as "the answer" to the "problem of love" for everyone.

For whatever reason, I'm not feelin' the love. Maybe those who are "queer enough" will.

art@nowtoronto.com

Doug Ischar's take on public sex in Queer Here/Queer Now is more grim than hot.

QUEER VIEW

ase you hadn't noticed, Images is a very queer festival, specially s this year, with several local and international queer artists note. Here are a few highlights.

A Space, national treasures **John Greyson** and **Stephen ws** each show new work alongside German superstar **Hito rl**. Greyson's piece 14.3 Seconds is an incredibly poignant and native meditation on the US forces' bombing of the Iraqi film e. A journalist salvaged from the rubble eight pieces of film ng merely 14.3 seconds which Greyson acquired. The video ts of a wide range of speculative narratives cobbled together o fictional characters, a US soldier and an Iraqi translator, the task of "restoring" the entire archive from the scraps.

rews' work is a selection of some of his stunning drawings on found digital photographs from the Iraq War. Many of these s are "toxic" in their original forms, almost impossible to look intaining their power to implicate us, he transforms them h the abstraction of a grid of four-colour dots into objects of ion, compelling us to, in Andrews' words, "take it personally." e artists excel at reframing, reimagining and recontextualizing images to create new stories, ideas and feelings (Fri, Mar 28 to 401 Richmond St W, #110).

rdre Logue is represented in the strong, all-women group Ceremonial Actions at Harbourfront with an installation of her g performance project Rough Count. She has set herself the intentionally impossible task of counting (and recounting) every piece of confetti in a bag. Her bound-to-fail game is spread over eight monitors, each showing Logue on a different counting day at various stages of her obsessive project. The monotony and repetition of her self-imposed task is nicely undercut by her hesitations and mistakes, which remind us that she is an all-too-flawed human and not a calculator (till Sun, Apr 27, 235 Queens Quay W). Nearby at the Power Plant is **Sadie Benning**'s two-screen, animated tour-de-force Play Pause (see page 23) and at the Brigantine Room is cover boy **Daniel Barrow**'s live animation performance (see page 25).

Showing with GB Jones's The Lollipop Generation is the delightful stop-action animated short Foodie by **Fiona Smyth** and **Allyson Mitchell**. The fest also offers a special performance by legendary New York artist **Charles Atlas**, the debut of a new collaboration with a fellow New Yorker **Alan Licht** (9:30pm, Fri, Apr 11 at Workman Theatre, 1001 Queen St W), and screening Atlas's Hail the New Puritan, a feature on choreographer Michael Clark and 1980s bohemian London (7pm, Wed, Apr 9, Workman). Undertones, the **Nelson Henricks**' video retrospective continues at Gallery 44 (till Sat, Apr 12, 401 Richmond St W, #120; RM Vaughan interviews him at 3pm on Sat, Apr 3). And closing the fest is **BH Yael**'s video essay on the environment and apocalypse, Trading the Future (7pm, Apr 13, Workman Theatre).

Finally, look for the jaw-dropping video projection Maid in South Africa by the ferociously iconoclastic South African artist **Steven Cohen**. The artist somehow convinced his family's elderly black maid (who has been in their employ for more than half a century) to go about her cleaning routines gussied up like a Las Vegas showgirl, doing a striptease as she motors through her chores. The piece is a spectacular condemnation of racialized economic slavery and an intimate collusion between a man and the woman who raised him (Sat, Apr 5 to May 10 at V-Tape, 401 Richmond St W, # 452).

Cohen's audacious video is sure to provoke not just gasps but heated debate — just as the Images Festival should.

Jon Davies

ROUGH COUNT. By Deirdre Logue.

IMAGES FESTIVAL.
Thu, Apr 3-13.
(416) 345-8181.
Imagesfestival.ca.

The Anxious Images of Deirdre Logue

Despite our closeness, I feel the camera can sometimes be very quick to judge. In fact, I've recorded lots of things that I felt the camera simply didn't like.
—Deirdre Logue

Deirdre Logue's *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes* series of twelve videos forms a self-portrait of excruciating obsessions, anxieties and reluctant self-revelations. The series, made over a two-year period, from 2003 to 2005, follows *Enlightened Nonsense* (2000), a suite of ten films in which Logue situates her body within/against nature. Utilizing a hand-processed, filmic aesthetic, the films of *Enlightened Nonsense* are quirky, endearing and at times humorous. *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes* is markedly different, adopting a more hard-edged video aesthetic in keeping with the series' disconcertingly obsessive tone.

Set primarily within the domestic space of Logue's home, the videos form a series of small, intimate and guarded confessions. Logue feels compelled to confess, but just how much should she say? The first video in the series, *Per Se*, reveals the artist's conflicted position:

What I really wanna say is private, so what makes it so hard to say is that I don't really understand it, Per Se. And so what I really wanna know is how I can say it even though it's still private and you can know it without me telling you, Per Se.

Her face close to the camera, Logue speaks slowly and carefully, her words disjointed and out of sync. The intimate act of confession is magnified and made strange, becoming a carefully constructed act of self-portraiture that undermines the supposed truth of subjectivity.

Beyond the Usual Limits, Parts I, II, and *III* reveal Logue engaged in small feats of daring. In *Part I*, Logue crawls under her mattress, slowly making her way between the mattress and the box-spring towards the other side. Logue's journey is uncomfortable and calculated. The video ends not with Logue reaching the other side but at the point when she completely disappears under the mattress. It appears that her objective is not to crawl to the other side, but to hide from the camera's insistent gaze.

As if in respite from her subjective stance before the camera, Logue seeks other ways to render herself invisible. In *Beyond the Usual Limits, Part II*, Logue bandages her hand with dozens of bandages. The metaphorical wound being covered requires many, many bandages and will, it seems, never be satisfactorily covered. In *Part III*, the final video of the series, Logue painstakingly paints her ears black. After the paint is applied, we see the image in reverse. With sleight of hand, the black paint miraculously disappears, revealing the artist as whole once more.

There is much that's hard to watch in this series—the murky, obscured finger-sucking in *Suckling* is literally difficult to see—but a clearer image would not make the action easier to watch. Through murky darkness Logue is glimpsed sucking her finger. As she pushes her finger deep down into her throat, time after time, sensuously, then too deeply, the viewer's gag reflexes rise. The video is compelling in its intimacy, yet too physical to watch.

Eclipse is perhaps the hardest video to watch. In a nocturnal session before the camera, Logue obsessively cracks her jaw. Sharply illuminated in the nighttime light, Logue looks demonic, possessed by her compulsive, furtive habit. After each crack of her jaw, Logue asks "Did you hear that?", implicating the viewer in her secretive, obsessive act. The viewer is asked to share Logue's anxiety, which seems to be present always, not just sometimes.

In *That Beauty*, anxiety runs beneath even moments of unself-conscious joy. Shot in Super-8 film, Logue dances in her kitchen, headphones on as a man's voice repetitiously says "that beauty right there." Answers in text flicker in response on the screen: that beauty feels helpless, afraid, embarrassed, insignificant, ashamed. Logue dances on, lost in the music, as over her shimmers a superimposition of sparkling lights and water.

Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes has been exhibited both as multichannel installations and as a theatrical screening on several occasions. The installation of the work during the 2006 Images Festival featured six monitors situated in a small gallery. The twelve videos played off each other in varying sequenced loops, allowing the viewer's attention to be drawn from one piece to another. In this conception of the work, the videos retain an intimate, close-up quality. A theatre screening of *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes* creates a different relationship with the viewer. In *Per Se* and *Eclipse*, Deirdre's contorted face appears

massive, freakish and grotesque, and in *Beyond the Usual Limits, Part II*, her bandaged hands are the hands of a Frankenstein. Before the camera, Logue is transformed into a freakish spectacle, compelled to reveal intimate inadequacies, anxieties and obsessions. In these revelations, the artist herself disappears, leaving a replica to persist on the screen, long after the camera has turned off.

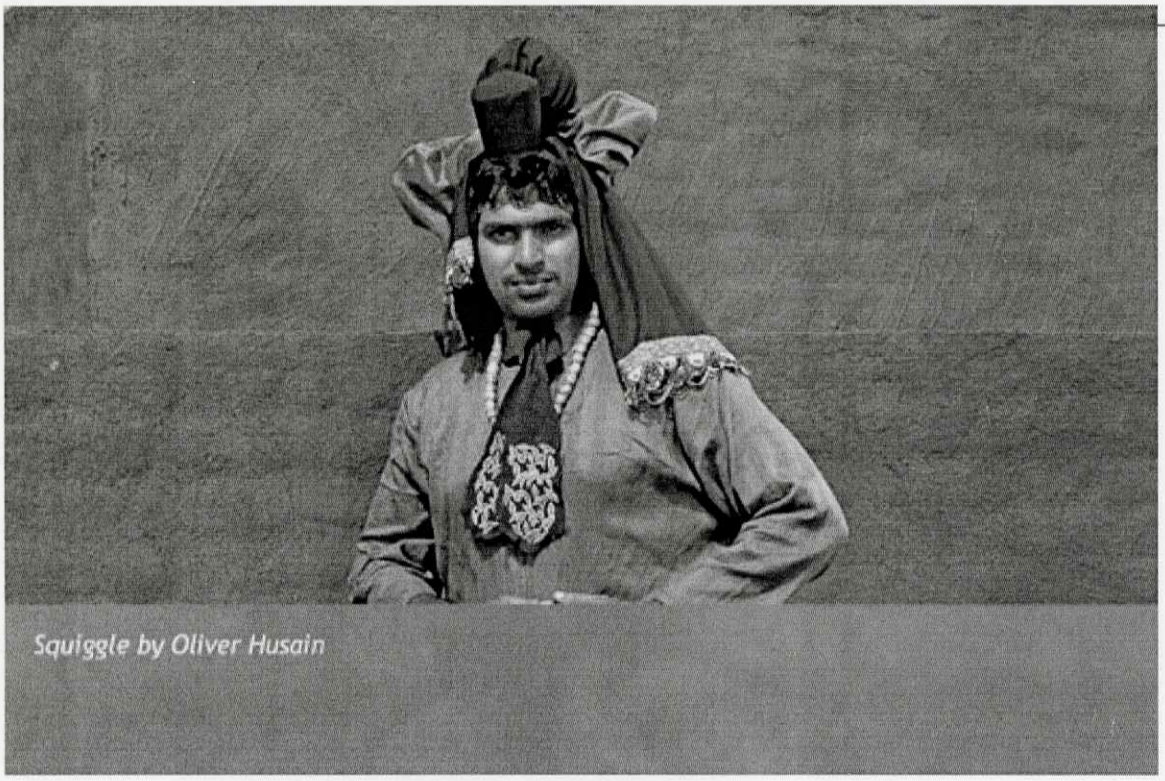
—Penny McCann, Curator

Deirdre Logue has spent the past fifteen years working on behalf of media artists by organizing independent film, video and new media festivals, by founding collectives and by participating in forums and symposiums on the future of independent artistic practice. She was the Executive Director of the Images Festival of Independent Film and Video from 1995 to 1999, and the Executive Director of the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre from 2001 to 2006. She is currently Director of Development at V tape. As a filmmaker, she has actively exhibited her work since 1990. Logue is perhaps best known for her series of short, handmade performance films entitled *Enlightened Nonsense*, completed in 2000, and her 2005 series *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes*, which has screened at the Canadian Embassy in Berlin as part of the 2007 Berlin International Film Festival, and at the 2006 Images Festival, where it won two awards, the Best Installation / New Media Award and the Images Prize. Logue's individual films and videos have been exhibited nationally at YYZ Artist's Outlet in Toronto, Neutral Ground in Regina, the Agnes Etherington Art Gallery in Kingston, Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery in Halifax as well as internationally at the Centre d'art contemporain in Basse-Normandie, France, the Museo Nacional in Buenos Aires, the San Francisco Cinematheque, Video Ex Festival in Switzerland and Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania, to name a few. Her work is distributed by V tape in Toronto.

SAW Video Director and media artist **Penny McCann** has curated several media art programs over the years, including several for the Available Light Screening Collective, of which she was a member from 1999 to 2006. Her curatorial credits include: *Despair and Other Anxious Moments: Video Work from Ontario* for the Centre for Art Tapes, Halifax (1999); *Gaining Equilibrium*, presented at Struts Gallery in Sackville, New Brunswick (2000); *(B)raised on Religion* (2000), *Accelerated Landscapes* (2000) and *Enchanted Chaos: The Work of James MacSwain* (2001) for Available Light; and *The Pleasure Program* (2000) and *The Teleculture of Chris Mullington* (2006) for SAW Video.

PICA

TBA:07: Event Details



Squiggle by Oliver Husain

Simple Actions & Aberrant Behaviors

Curated by Pablo de Ocampo

Go See It

- Northwest Film Center Whitsell Auditorium at Portland Art Museum
- 1219 SW Park
- Portland OR 97205, Map
-
- Capacity: N/A
- $6 Members
  $7 General
- Mature Audiences

Sat . Sept 15 . 4-5:15 pm

Sun . Sept 16 . 4-5:15 pm

- Add to Your ListWhat is this?
- Buy Individual Tickets
- Get a TBA Festival Pass

In placing oneself both behind and in front of the lens, an artist creates an inescapable connection

between the work and their own lives, regardless of the actual corollaries between that "presence" caught on tape and the lives of the performers making those actions. In this collection of recent videos, artists use a variety of strategies as they play out their scenes for the camera; the program moving in an arc from simple endurance based actions to more elaborately staged events representing a spectrum stretching from the very real to the completely imagined.

Through discomforting and disorienting poses and actions, Patty Chang, Deirdre Logue and Reza Afisina speak to both the fragility and strength of the human psyche through their performances to the camera. Their actions are at once spectacularly mundane and incredibly perverse, from self-flagellation to being embraced (or is it eaten alive?) by a mattress. The other four works in the program represent a more "traditional" view of the performer as actor, singer and dancer: from Joe Gibbons' monologue to a flower; to Oliver Husain's juxtaposing of an actor reading his diaries with an elaborately staged "traditional" folk dance; to the restaging of an old Madonna tune in Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay's piece and a call and response blues ballad by Kalup Linzy.

Untitled (Eels), by Patty Chang; *Beyond the Usual Limits: Part 1*, by Deirdre Logue; *What*, by Reza Afisina; *A Time to Die*, by Joe Gibbons; *Squiggle*, by Oliver Husain; *Lollypop*, by Kalup Linzy; *Live to Tell*, by Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay.

> "A video camera feels to me more like a mirror than a mirror. With a mirror, once you step away, your image leaves with you. With a video camera, your presence or absence is caught quickly like a fish on a hook." *Deirdre Logue*

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A Pop Art ® Production

Enlightened Nonsense: 10 Performance Films About Repetition About Repetition

Interview with Deirdre Logue, By Karyn Sandlos

KS *Rumor has it that you are obsessed with the British Film Institute's series of books on film. Why the fascination with this series?*

DL I do like those books...because they're short. And I like them because they're books written by writers, not people that are necessarily used to writing about films. The series I like the best is Modern classics. It's the one where they have writers write about their favorite films. I have a whole bunch of Modern Classics, like Seven, and Easy Rider, and Bride of Frankenstein and Terminator II. They provide a lot of context, and I like context.

KS *Do you have a favorite?*

DL My favorite is the Exorcist. Do you know the Exorcist was released on Boxing Day in 1973? The book describes the feelings that were predominant in America at the time, and that creates an interesting way to interpret the film. It's all about the American dream. And then, I like all the gross parts.

KS *Could you give me one gross example?*

DL Well, you know Linda Blair was very young at the time so they had to have body doubles, because she was too young to touch her privates, and cram crucifixes up herself. So I imagine the logistics of the shoot. I guess I like the idea of a child thrashing about on the bed in possession make up and as soon as she touches herself they yell, "Cut, bring in the body double!" to do the really gross bits. I like the idea of possession, and how complicated it was to make the movie.

KS *Enlightened Nonsense is the title of a series of ten short films that you are in the process of completing. These films explore complex themes through repetitive patterns of self-abuse – you fall down, pick burrs out of your underpants, take hits to the head from a basketball, rip your face off, and drown yourself. Your films are as hilarious as they are dark. Can you talk about the juxtaposition of masochism and humour in your work?*

DL You mean apart from masochism being inherently hilarious? I think it's important to say that I would never use a word like self-abuse. Because for me the films are performances, not necessarily abuses. The fact that the performances rely on a certain level of found masochism in the performer or in the setting is important. But I wouldn't think about the films with masochism as a singular source. If the films were just about humour and masochism I think the juxtaposition would be a natural one.

It's like cynicism, and cynicism is a kind of wit that draws on despair. Not all horrible things are funny – only the funny ones. So if there is a connection between humour and masochism in my work, I would say that it's a connection only when it's funny. Moo-Head and Fall aren't meant to be hilarious movies.

KS *I think your films make people laugh and wonder why they are laughing at the same time.*

DL Yes, but that's not about my masochism. They're laughing because they don't understand. I think people laugh sometimes because they would rather not think about what they get thinking about when they look at the work. And then I think that sometimes they're supposed to be laughing. Fall is supposed to be funny, in a vaudevillian kind of way. H2 Oh Oh isn't. But when humour and masochism are juxtaposed in the work, it's like a kind of cynicism for me, rather than a joke or a punch line.

KS *Do you think humour makes it easier for the viewer to deal with the subject matter of the films?*

DL Sometimes, yes. It helps me make the work. But that aspect is not necessarily intended to help the audience out. Having said that it's not my intention to make it difficult for an audience either. But there is an element of the ridiculous, and there's an element of nonsensical stupidity in the films, and I suppose being able to see that in the work does make the subject matter more digestible. I don't want to make work that people can't stand to watch.

KS *How would you describe the subject matter of your films?*

DL I'd probably make a list of themes for you. I would say the films are about testing one's physical limits. Masochism would be the second, and number three would be humour. Number four…I would say that the films are about dreaming, and I don't mean that in that get me the fucking unicorn way, I mean that the subject matter of my dreams is translated into the films sometimes. I would say that the films are about sex and sexuality in a very confused way. They are about sexual discomfort, perhaps. They are very much about despair. Each film is about the body versus fill in the blank…so water, tape, whatever. The films are about relationships: me and the world, me and somebody else, me and my job, me and my friends. You'll notice in the films there is always a pairing of at least two things. And they're about repetition; how we proceed through various stages of our psychic life having to reconstruct and redefine the same things from a few years ago. It's about habit. Love it or hate it, repetition for me has been a pretty profound concept. And, number ten; the films are about filmmaking.

KS *What about fantasy?*

DL Well when I first started making films I was describing them as fantasies of my own demise and in fact that's written in may descriptions of my work. And I would say that's still quite true. But fantasies of one's demise are very complex. They don't come in a tight little package. So my fantasies of my own demise might be a film about me going shopping. It's not necessarily what you would think. So I think fantasy plays an important role, but now that I'm ten films down the road, maybe not as much as it used to. Maybe it's reality now. I mean, rip tape off your face for two days and tell me that's not about reality.

KS *Can you talk about your method? Do you know what film you are making when you start shooting?*

DL No. No more so than one might have a million ideas before one goes to make something. For me it's usually whatever idea knocks the hardest, or is most easily accessed on a given day.

KS *At what point do you know what film you are making?*

DL Well there are two answers to that question: One is when I start and one is when I finish. I might wake up in the morning and think, 'ok I have an afternoon and I want to shoot something, and I thought maybe I would shoot this but it's going to be too hard, or I don't feel like getting wet. Maybe I'll just try this one thing'. And I might find somebody to help me out, or I might just go sit in a field, or I might just whip out my camera and try it.

KS *So it's quite spontaneous?*

DL Totally spontaneous. And the process loses its spontaneity when something doesn't turn out and I have to reshoot. But I usually use every scrap of film I have that's worth looking at. That's an aspect of my filmmaking that I have imposed. I tell myself that there's only so much I'm allowed to do. I'm allowed to do whatever it is I'm going to do for the film, and I allow myself to shoot it a couple of times and after that it's like three strikes you're out. After that if it's too hard, or I can't get the shot, or it's like it wasn't meant to be, I just trash it and do something else. I try to remain very committed to the experience of what it is to shoot the films and how I see that contained in action.

KS *Do you work alone?*

DL I try to work alone as much as I possibly can. There are occasions, especially when I use a Bolex, when I can't work alone because when I

wind the camera and get set up to do whatever I'm going to do, by the time I'm doing it the camera's wind is over. There are times when I can't stay close enough to the camera, and there are other times when I'm too messy or too where I can't see.

KS *Do you prefer to work alone?*

DL Absolutely. Because I think it does something to the relationship between me and the camera. What you shoot yourself it always looks and feels different than when someone else shoots you. When I made Fall I shot 500 feet of film of myself running away from the camera, throwing myself on the ground and then running back towards the camera. And all that stuff in between is some of the best stuff I shot. In the films where I'm right in front of the camera and I have to lean forward to turn it on and off... so much gets made there.

KS *Have you always worked this way?*

DL As an artist generally it's hard to say because I've done a lot of collaborative work. I would say that my practice has been split fifty-fifty: Work of my own and work that I've done with other people, which I really love. The work that I've done myself has been primarily performance based, self-sufficient, process based and narcissistic.

KS *Filmmakers tell personal stories in many different ways, but it strikes me that your work represents quite a unique form of diaristic filmmaking. You are always the subject of your own films, and as the subject you are typically engaged in some bizarre performance. Can you talk about who or what has influenced your work?*

DL Psychoanalysis has influenced my work. I see my films as autobiographical, but I don't see them as stories. Cumulatively they may tell a story, but individually they tell things, stuff, ideas, feelings. They are autobiographical, but not in a traditional narrative way. I don't think they tell you as much as autobiographical work typically would. The films tell you a little bit of something about me, but it's so specific that it's almost as if you are looking at my arm as opposed to all of me. I think there is something withholding about the work. I'm not giving that much away, because I only give the viewer a certain range and quality of information about myself. So the films tell the audience things that I have been thinking about over the last few years, which are the result of spending five days a week on an analyst's couch trying understand a few things about myself that are complicated and rather dark. And I think that it is inevitable that those things would have to find a voice outside of analysis eventually. It's really hard to talk about that stuff and although it's cliché, I feel like I'm better at talking about it as an artist than I am as

a human being. Eventually I felt as though I was going to have to get down and dirty with some skeletons in the closet, with some things have been unconscious fuck ups for me. I'm not as interested in psychoanalytic theory as I am in the process of talking about oneself in a concentrated way for a long period of time, and what the implications of that are for the psyche, and what the implications are when you leave that room. What does it do to you? That's a question. And I think making these ten films has been about asking that question.

KS *Does the unconscious speak directly?*

DL No. The unconscious is very tricky. It doesn't always speak directly. For instance, it can take on years to decipher a tic, or a symptom. What does having a psychosomatic pain in your leg mean? It might be related to something specific, but something so defended against that is so complicated that you may never know what it means. The unconscious is like someone went in and pulled all the plugs out and then put them all in the other way.

KS *Are your films like performances of unconscious expression?*

DL Yes. But I wonder about your use of the word 'bizarre' when you describe the performances in the films. Why bizarre?

KS *I chose the word bizarre because I think that it describes the nonsensical quality of your work, the feeling of not quite knowing what you're up to when you are doing what you are doing on screen.*

DL Can you give me an example?

KS *For instance, when you are standing in the middle of a field getting hit in the head by a basketball that someone is repeatedly throwing from off screen.*

DL Well that happens, that's not so bizarre. But the notion that something is bizarre implies that it is completely out of the ordinary. And I would like to suggest that the things that I do in my films are not that out of the ordinary and not that bizarre. I use fairly common objects and scenarios that are familiar, and in some ways it's simply the repetition of the interaction with the object that makes it unusual. Basketballs, packing tape, water whip cream, dirt, underwear - these are objects of the everyday. It's the relationship and the intensity that gets made through repetition and through the scenario that is unusual. If there is anything bizarre it's in the experience of making the films.

KS *Why does it bother you to imagine that your films might be taken as bizarre?*

DL Because I think that can make them freakish, and I don't think the things I'm trying to articulate in the films are freakish things. Humiliation or discomfort or any of the things that might be experienced by me in the making of the works are pretty normal kinds of feelings. I suppose the majority of people would see the films as bizarre or weird or masochistic and self abusive. I'm not trying to suggest that the works aren't complex, but I want them to be accessible.

KS *Do you see this as a tension in your work?*

DL I fully accept the responsibility for a level of masochism in the work. What I object to is the focus people have placed on the idea that the action in the films is self-abusive. I just don't find that a very useful or productive description and I don't think it reflects much on the content of the work. I don't make films where I stick my head in a bucket of cold water over and over again so that I can prove my machismo. I don't make films to show people how much pain I can take. I would say that ninety-five percent of the things I do in the work are not painful.

KS *Any other influences on your work?*

DL I hate this question.

KS *Why?*

DL Well, I mean Barney influences me more that anyone I can think of offhand who is worth any respect.

KS *Barney the purple dinosaur?*

DL The purple guy, yes, because I hate him so much. I don't want to start citing artists, and movements and practices and concepts that I find inspiring because there are all sorts of things that have totally influenced my work, but I don't know that it means that much to tell you that abstract expressionism is an influence for me. It feels pretentious to start listing and prioritizing influences. Daytime television is a big influence. I'm a terrible sponge. I love television, but you can't see it in my work. I love commercials, and noise, and rapid fire eye candy, and terrible sit coms with melodramatic oversensitive characters with empty lives and bad track pants.

a human being. Eventually I felt as though I was going to have to get down and dirty with some skeletons in the closet, with some things have been unconscious fuck ups for me. I'm not as interested in psychoanalytic theory as I am in the process of talking about oneself in a concentrated way for a long period of time, and what the implications of that are for the psyche, and what the implications are when you leave that room. What does it do to you? That's a question. And I think making these ten films has been about asking that question.

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KS *I chose the word bizarre because I think that it describes the nonsensical quality of your work, the feeling of not quite knowing what you're up to when you are doing what you are doing on screen.*

DL Can you give me an example?

KS *For instance, when you are standing in the middle of a field getting hit in the head by a basketball that someone is repeatedly throwing from off screen.*

DL Well that happens, that's not so bizarre. But the notion that something is bizarre implies that it is completely out of the ordinary. And I would like to suggest that the things that I do in my films are not that out of the ordinary and not that bizarre. I use fairly common objects and scenarios that are familiar, and in some ways it's simply the repetition of the interaction with the object that makes it unusual. Basketballs, packing tape, water whip cream, dirt, underwear - these are objects of the everyday. It's the relationship and the intensity that gets made through repetition and through the scenario that is unusual. If there is anything bizarre it's in the experience of making the films.

KS *Do you have a favorite film star?*

DL Well you know whose performance just totally rocked my socks? The abominable snowman in Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer. He was so ferocious initially, and then once he got all his teeth taken out he became really helpful. And I thought to be able to play both the dark and sinister and aggressive monster, as well as the loving, caring, big fuzzy-wuzzy character was quite a challenge. And there was a great supporting cast in that film as well. The little fag dentist was excellent.

KS *Your films come out of years of participation in the Phil Hoffman Independent Imaging Retreat. Why do you keep going back to Phil's farm?*

DL I'm fond of the farm for all sorts of reasons. I'm fond of the people that go there. I have an emotional attachment to the people and the place. And I haven't really got any time to make work in a given year. So I'm attracted to the idea of going somewhere for a week where that's what I'm supposed to do. You could call it a condition of my process that I have to be extracted from my life. And I respect the principals of the farm. I have a lot of admiration for what is taught and learned there, and I prefer that to other institutions of learning. There is a cult of Phil's farm, and its reputation has been built on something very positive. It's a process based learning environment that has a very collective body. People go there to spend a week learning the Bolex and hand processing. Then there is the other ninety-five percent of what you experience at Phil's, and that has to do with a shared investment in the importance of making films through processes that are outside of industry norms and outside of institutional norms. It's a complicated place with complicated people, and I find that very attractive.

KS *What kind of conditions do you seek out in order to create? What would be your ideal set of conditions?*

DL You mean like a big bag of money? I would keep making films the way that I make them, but what I would want is more psychic time, and more physical time. I don't need a lot of money. Having said that, without all the chaos I don't know if I would make films in the same way, and if I wasn't making films in this way I don't know if I'd be making films. Someone asked me the other day if I have ever thought about making a feature. And I thought, 'Sure I could make a feature but I'd have to make it in two weeks or I wouldn't know how to make it'. The conditions that I have applied are spontaneous and performative but at the same time they are very disciplined and very rigorous. I shot and processed over the two weeks that I was at Phil's in June, and I did a tiny bit of cutting, and then I

went ahead and made seven films in eight weeks at home. Without the discipline of time as a container of opportunity I'd probably be sitting around at home with my thumb up my ass trying to figure out which roll of film is in which box. The ultimate conditions would be that I would dedicate one week per month for the rest of my life to shooting, processing, cutting and finishing a film.

KS *Do you enjoy making your films? How would you describe the experience? How do you feel before, during, and afterwards?*

DL I feel mixed up. Sometimes the things that I deal with in my work make me feel very confused. Generally I feel physically hypersensitive. Sometimes I get really goofy and nervous, and I run around like a chicken with my head cut off. Or I run out into the bushes and I come back and I forgot my light meter, and I run back over there and I need a pen, and I go over there and I realize I haven't got any film in my camera. I can be very scattered at times, especially if there's something that I'm going to do that I'm not sure about. That's always there, but it's overridden half the time with a fair amount of ease because I don't rely on anyone else and what I need to do is usually not very complicated. So there's me, a bucket of water and a roll of film. I try to make it easy on myself to execute the plan. With that comes a kind of calm that can override feeling freaked out or panicked about something psychically. It's helpful that people I know have supported the kind of films that I make. The more I make films with that kind of support in place the less mixed up I feel about making them. Having said that I don't expect that the confusion will ever go away and I don't expect that it should.

KS *How do you feel about watching your films?*

DL It depends on who I'm watching them with. Part of me wants to say that anybody who says that they don't enjoy watching their own films is a liar. For me there is something fundamentally important about making films: You have to be interested in your own subject matter. If you're not interested in what you made your film about then I can't understand why you made it. I can't deny being truly self-indulgent on that level. I like to watch my films, especially in the dark by myself. When I'm watching them with large groups of people who I don't know I feel like it's just a matter of time before somebody in the audience recognizes me and comes up and says something really weird. So I try to sneak in and sneak out. I'm totally open to feedback about the films. If you are going to be an artist you should be able and willing to talk to people about the work. But I can't help feeling insecure about it sometimes because the subject matter is very personal. So sometimes watching my own films is uncomfortable.

KS *Is it important that your films are hand processed?*

DL As often as possible, yes. I like the way it looks, and I also feel very attached to manipulating the work at that stage of the process. It's like drawing. It really accentuates the subject matter. The fact that the surface of the film has been touched so much makes a big difference to me. If I had no choice but to take it to Exclusive, who I love, but who don't make my films all scratchy, I just put them under my boot when I get them home, so that there is something of the surface that is alive.

KS *Is it important that you cut your original footage on a flat bed?*

DL Yes. I think that working with your original footage is like working with an object that you should get to know really well. I'm not afraid of working with the original footage, although sometimes I make irreparable mistakes that make me wish I didn't work on the original. But boy you sure learn fast how not to make that mistake again! There's no interface. Nobody's fooling anybody. You've got an original print and an hour or two to work on it on your Steenbeck and you'd better be sober and you'd better be clear about what you'd like to do.

KS *In the film Scratch, we see rapidly cut found footage of cups breaking and a bed being made and unmade. In Moo-Head, we see little kids ogling their Jell-0 spoons. In Always a Bridesmaid, Never a Bride of Frankenstein, we see a mother and daughter having an awkward conversation on the phone. In fact, there often seems to be a rather enigmatic conversation going on between the found footage in your films and the footage you have shot. Can you talk a bit about this interaction?*

DL When I use found footage I prioritize the sound over the picture. I'm actually after the sound. But obviously I choose sound with pictures that are interesting. Moo-Head would be the best example of how I work. The sound head and the picture head on a Steenbeck are in different places. There is two frames difference, so your picture is running at 24 fps and your sound is running at 26 fps. In Moo-Head I used the difference to synch the found sound up with the impact of the ball. The image became relevant, but it wasn't as relevant as the sound. I would make equal cuts: five frames of found image, and five frames of my image. When the found footage is going through the sound head my image is going through the picture head. I try and synch the two by linking the found footage soundtracks up with my action. So you see the found footage and there is no sound. I want the found footage sound in my image. I've tried to take the soundtracks off and put them on my films, but they fall off. The next thing I would like to try and do is to optically print some soundtracks and use them in my films.

THE BIG PICTURE

Wong scores a highlight reel goal

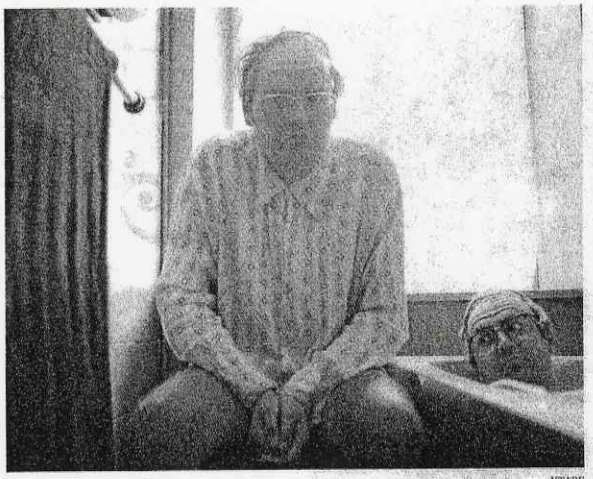
RM VAUGHAN

Years ago I curated an exhibition of new queer video work for a gallery in New Brunswick, and from that humble non-event I learned a valuable lesson: When assembling a collection of short films for the public's delectation, don't imagine that you'll please everyone.

Watching films is an intensely subjective experience that we nevertheless engage in as a group. Most of us watch films daily, via the cheap medium of television, and are therefore far more comfortable acting as critics of film-based art than we are of painting, sculpture or dance. We are familiar with film, steeped in its strategies, practices and language. If everyone who looks at art is a critic, everyone who looks at film is Pauline Kael.

Pity Paul Wong, the curator behind Vtape's intriguing but uneven new exhibition, *Split Decisions*. After a months-long curatorial residency at Vtape, Wong has assembled a collection of works that come from, he states, a "place of two minds — tapes that examine conflict both exterior and from within the deep recesses of the human psyche." I've done some vault-diving at Vtape myself, and the above description could easily be applied to every single video in the joint. Why didn't he just try to push a streetcar up Bathurst Street instead? It would be less demanding.

For the most part, Wong pulls it off. *Split Decisions* is a lively collection of recent short films that amply explores Wong's curatorial agenda but also offers some unique variations. No two works feel the same, despite their thematic similarities, and Wong has not made the perennial curator's mistake of selecting works from within a single, narrow tonal range. There's everything from pop-music video takeoffs and serious short narratives to non-linear experimental oddities. Some of Wong's choices would not be my choices, but, as I noted earlier, that's par for the course. If I liked everything I saw, I'd take it as a sign of my own personal End Times.



VTAPE

Shabby British geeks inject some realism into pop-music fantasies.

Of the dozen works on display, my favourites begin with Nelson Henricks's *Satellite*, a campy reworking of vintage education films into a nihilistic music video. The film doesn't really amount to much — the cranky text plastered over the stock footage consists mainly of empty aphorisms and, overall, the work is more a triumph of clever sampling than a true re-contextualization of the borrowed materials — but *Satellite* is still enormously fun to watch and the punchy score is dementedly cheerful. Fun is always appreciated, especially in the context of short film anthologies, which tend to be rather dour when they aim to illuminate serious topics.

Equally fun, and beautiful to look at, is Deirdre Logue's succinct, aptly titled short *That Beauty*. The film opens with a screen full of brilliant sparkles and fades into a heavily shadowed shot of an unidentified person (Logue, I suspect) dancing in his/her kitchen. As the figure rocks out to a looped beat and repeated upbeat refrain, her/his body grows increasingly covered in the bright speckles of light, until the dancer looks like Tinkerbell on an ecstasy high. This film is so joyous, and so neatly self-contained, that it deserves to be viewed twice, if for nothing more than the giddy high it induces. Logue's films have always had a playful bent, despite her reputation for making meditative, introspective work, but *That Beauty* is her *Flashdance*.

For pure silliness, turn to John Beagles and Graham Ramsay's *Trilogy* — the funniest films I've seen all year. The concept at work here is simple enough: Find two shabby-looking British geeks (perhaps Beagles and Ramsay themselves?), place them in an even shabbier-looking British hovel, then ask them to give deadpan recitations of upbeat pop song lyrics, without music.

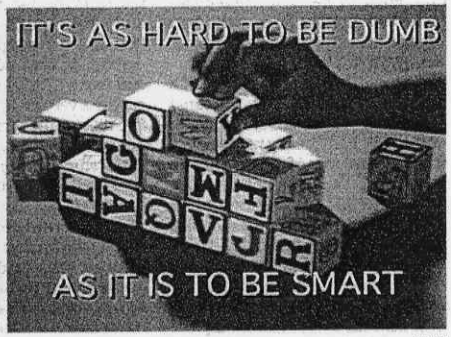
In the first film, the two men sit on a ratty chesterfield while one of them recites the lyrics to Prince and Sheena Easton's dirty hit *U Got the Look*. The performer might as well be reading a vacuum-cleaner instruction manual for all the sex he puts into his delivery. The next two works feature archetypal Madonna songs, first the power ballad *Borderline* followed by the especially strident *Express Yourself*. *Borderline* is recited from a bathtub, with one sad sack sitting pants-around-ankles on the toilet while the other talk-sings. In *Express Yourself*, the songbirds share a damp-looking bed, covers pulled up to their chins like frightened children, while one man incongruously recites Madonna's anthem to courageous self-determination.

The conflation of the men's pathetic run-down lives and the glamorous pop lyrics is hilarious, but also acts as a sharp critique of the gulf between the fantasies pop music sells and the realities lived, or endured, by its millions of buyers.

Who are Beagles and Ramsay, and where can I get their album?

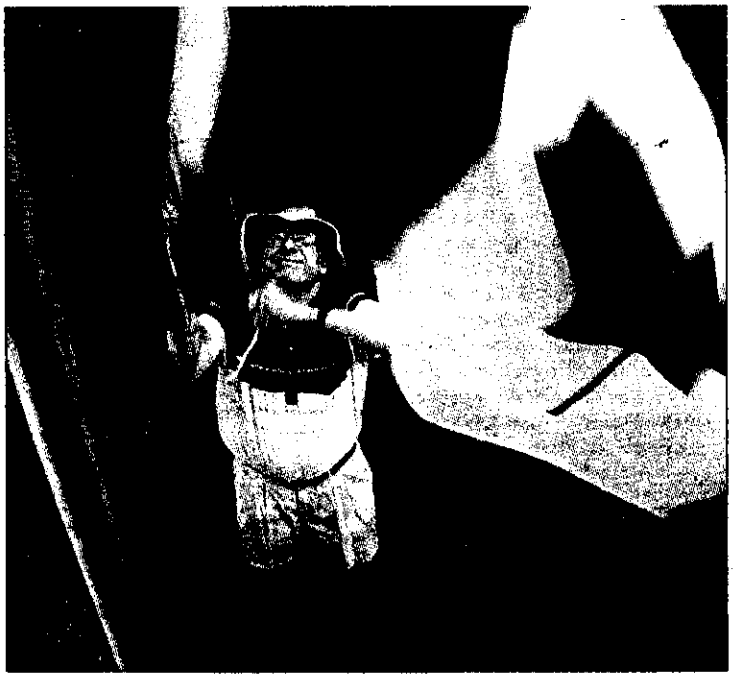
▮ *Split Decisions*, curated by Paul Wong, Vtape, 401 Richmond St. W., Ste. 452, through Jan. 13.

National Post



VTAPE

Left, a dancer becomes like "Tinkerbell on an ecstacy high." Right, a campy reworking of an educational video.



David Bolt waves his freak flag as Bob in Christy Garland's wily *Dual Citizen*

The organizers of Parkdale's third annual REHAB film festival promise an evening that will make "even the Olympics look dull." Strong words, perhaps, but if the sneak peeks are any indication, an evening of REHAB will be far more entertaining than taped biathlon highlights.

Originally conceived as part of Parkdale's yearly ArtBeat festival, REHAB — the name is a playful jibe at the neighbourhood's notorious reputation — has seen its profile rise considerably since its inception in 1999. This year's lineup includes some 40 shorts and videos culled from Parkdale's thriving film community, divided into three hour-long programs showcasing a remarkable diversity of styles and subject matter.

Festival co-curator Carolynne Hew says REHAB is meant to introduce audiences to the "intoxication of film and video, and the sort of high one gets from viewing them."

The first program includes Christy Garland's wryly funny *Dual Citizen*, a 13-minute deconstruction of Canada-U.S. relations produced with help from the National Screen Institute. Shot on a high-quality 35 mm stock that wouldn't look out of place on *The Sopranos*, *Dual Citizen* focuses on Bob (David Bolt), a good-natured Toronto senior who trades in his shovel for some sunblock and heads for Florida. There, he is pressured by his patriotic neighbours to join in the Fourth of July celebrations. Bob resists, leading to an unlikely denouement in which an American flag is surreptitiously barbecued. While the social commentary (Americans = genial imbeciles; Canadians = resentful doormats) is somewhat facile, the relaxed pacing and understated performances elevate it above the rest of the competitive field.

The second program is, on the whole, far stronger, highlighted by Dana Inkster's beguiling and technically accomplished docudrama *Welcome to Africville* and Elida Schogt's touching Holocaust memorial *The Walnut Tree*. The first film is a character mosaic set among the ruins of Africville, the once-thriving African-American community in Nova Scotia that disbanded in the late 1960s. At first, *Welcome to Africville* looks like a simple remembrance of a lost community, but the staged interviews yield fascinating revelations about love, loss and sexuality, making it apparent that Inkster is mining far deeper and more compelling territory.

The Walnut Tree transcends its straightforward voice-over narration with visuals that are alternately contemplative and kinetic; it's a wrenching document of one family's loss, pitched gently to avoid any sweeping generalizations. Also worth catching in the second series are *Traces*, Christina Zeidler's elegiac remembrance of her departed dog, Micha, and the television-slick music video *Corners*, directed by Rob Pilchowski.

The must-see of the third program is an instalment of Stacey Case's gloriously unhinged *¡Arriba! the Parkdale Wrestler* series, in which the eponymous grappler — played with slovenly conviction by Carlos Domingues in and out of his mask — lays the smack down on a variety of hopelessly overmatched opponents. *Return of the Wrestler* features silent-movie-style title cards, saucy flamenco music and an elaborately choreographed brawl in a Mexican restaurant that finds ¡Arriba! in tough against a cowboy-hatted short-order cook. The grainy Super-8 photography and haphazard editing are perfectly suited to the material, and the film wisely ends on a high note before the one-joke premise wears out its welcome. (Another worthwhile entry, *BBQ Wrestler*, is being shown in the first series.)

Part of the same program, Liz Rosch's *The Orange Number* is only about a minute long, but it's howlingly funny. And while the arty, single-and-proud tract *Licked* lacks coherence, its rock 'n' roll soundtrack propels it along nicely.

REHAB FILM FESTIVAL
Sunday, June 17. 7, 8:30 & 10pm. Club OV's, 1302 Queen W. Free admission.

Perhaps the most striking entry in REHAB is *Enlightened Nonsense*, an evocative collection of 10 short films "about repetition and repetition," directed by and featuring local performance artist Deirdre Logue. What most distinguishes *Enlightened Nonsense* is Logue's uncanny sense of rhythm. The staccato plunk of *Moohead*, in which the filmmaker is repeatedly and inexplicably beaned in the head by a soccer ball, gradually gives way to the scorched-earth feedback of *Road Trip*, which finds her literally eating dirt.

While the masochism of the pieces is occasionally difficult to endure, *Enlightened Nonsense* — which will be shown in a separate viewing location as an "ongoing installation piece" — is ballsy stuff, a departure from convention that speaks not only to the talent of its creator but also to the generally subversive spirit of the festival. ■

Reel addictive

BY ADAM NAYMAN

JUNE 14-20 2001 NOW

Dual Citizen's David Bolt joins Canadian retirees in Florida.

PARKDALE HEAD TRIP

REHAB (various, 1999-2001) flaunts the orgy of filmmaking talent living in Parkdale, where posh old houses cozy up alongside treatment centres. The third year of this free event features freakishly accomplished short films and videos. There's no overriding theme or aesthetic, so you're liable to see Curtis Wehrfritz's Icarus, a poignant modern dance film steeped in gold, spliced into the black-and-white dementia of Stacey Case's Parkdale Wrestler series. It's a bit of a head trip, but then so is the neighbourhood. On the arty side we have Deirdre Logue's Enlightened Nonsense, 22 minutes of a woman splashing water, taping her head, being hit by a baseball, etc. Don't know what it means, but the hand-tinted images are lovely. Christina Zeidler puts more substance into Traces, a kaleidoscopic city tour that plays over a woman telling stories about her dog. Over on silly street there's Dual Citizen, Christy Garland's shrewd comedy about Canadian retirees in Florida, and Liz Rosch's operatic satire of catwalk models, The Orange Number. Best of the lot is Elida Schogt's The Walnut Tree, an evocative documentary about a Dutch family's Holocaust experience. It's been acclaimed at bigger film festivals – now pop your head into a pub and catch it. NNNN (June 17, Club OV's) KIM LINEKIN

Logue's work heady stuff; [Final Edition]

Jack Anderson. **Leader Post**. Regina, Sask.: Oct 25, 2001. pg. D.3

Abstract (Summary)
The insistent reference to and repeated degradation of her own body here suggests that [DEIRDRE LOGUE] is attempting to crack open its smooth surface, to specifically identify the disturbances, dislocations and disgusts that lie beneath the surface of the female body. If Frankenstein, a brief performance in which Logue draws thick scars all over her skin, is any example, she understands the discomforted, uneasy, assaulted body as a text on which experience is written: here, the physical encodes the psychical. Logue metaphorically equates her own body with the "body" of the film stock itself. Her filmed bruises and abrasions are paralleled in the scratches she inflicts on the film.

In Logue's work, the technical `flaws' and wounds disclose the fundamental structure and baseline language of film. And indeed the notion of language is crucial to Logue's work, where literal language is not as important as the unspoken language of the body, of its occurrences and remembrances. Aside from the hisses, clicks and other sounds that constitute the accidental "soundtrack" to these films, they are films without a spoken text: they are ostensibly silent. Metaphorically, however, these ambient noises coming from the film stock itself can be read as utterances emanating from the body of film. And consequently we understand that the human body too (and here specifically the female human body) has its own codes, its own unspoken texts.

Full Text (695 words)

DEIRDRE LOGUE:

Enlightened Nonsense

Neutral Ground

Until Nov. 9

The 10 short scratchy silent films that comprise Toronto artist Deirdre Logue's 22-minute film projection Enlightened Nonsense record her repeatedly performing a succession of simple physical gestures that seem at once nonsensical and disturbing: in Milk and Cheese, over and over she pours a carton of milk into her up-turned open mouth faster than she can swallow it; in Tape she wraps her head and face with clear packing tape and then painfully unwraps it; in Scratch she undoes her jean zipper to pick out prickly burrs; in Moorhead a basketball is bounced off her head.

Closer to dreams than waking life, these brief meditations assault many stable traditions. Clearly not resembling familiar narrative film at all but more resembling the 1970s conceptualist performances of Vito Acconci and Chris Burden, both of whom subjected their bodies to danger and humiliation as repeated tests of endurance, Logue subjects herself to self-inflicted assaults as a test of both physical and emotional endurance. Using strategies of absurdity and fear in order to activate the discomfort already present in our lives, she points away from a smooth unperturbed world toward an inner world of dissonance.

The insistent reference to and repeated degradation of her own body here suggests that Logue is attempting to crack open its smooth surface, to specifically identify the disturbances, dislocations and disgusts that lie beneath the surface of the female body. If Frankenstein, a brief performance in which Logue draws thick scars all over her skin, is any example, she understands the discomforted, uneasy, assaulted body as a text on which experience is written: here, the physical encodes the psychical. Logue metaphorically equates her own body with the "body" of the film stock itself. Her filmed bruises and abrasions are paralleled in the scratches she inflicts on the film.

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human body) has its own codes, its own unspoken texts.

It is clear that Logue is in part attempting to decode the text that has been written on and through her own body here and the 10 filmic occurrences she produced are propositions either for different experiences defining who she is or for different ways of being who she has become. While clearly autobiographical, these brief gestures though can also be understood as wilful acts of female strength resisting personal and cultural history, resisting dislocative events, conditions, values and attitudes from whatever source that give rise to disintegrated female identity.

Filled with impossible events that never head towards resolution, Logue's short monochromatic films may be repetitive, but they are hardly monotonous. Humorous, insistent, biting, sad, vaguely creepy and poetic all at once, they are internal monologues that, like dream remembrances, defy and deny the safe and orderly. Indeed, they bristle with friction, abrading away at fundamental questions about sex and sexual orientation, about pain and pleasure, about what and where home really is, about one's "text," who writes it and how it is written.

Through the mirror of her camera, Logue gazes at herself. And in the gallery, she provides a condition and a space that permits and even prompts the viewer to gaze, not just outwardly at her text, but more inwardly toward their own. This is heady work that addresses complex questions about female identity and more broadly about the politics of identity. Ultimately it points toward physical and psychological integration, to knowledge and acceptance of the body and its own internal languages.

[Illustration]
Photo: Deirdre Logue, still from `Frankenstein,' black and white film, 2001. ;

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Pg 26 Arts October 5 2000 Xtra!

Pride Toronto needs a theme for 2001

Each year, a new theme is selected to represent Pride Week in Toronto. Last year's theme was "Heroic Past, Proud Future." We need your help to develop a theme for 2001. Your brilliant idea could shape and inspire one of Canada's largest cultural events. Here's how to submit your themes:

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The theme will be chosen at our General Committee Meeting, Tuesday, October 10, 7 p.m. at the 519.

PLEASE JOIN US AND HELP SHAPE PRIDE WEEK 2001

XTRA!

Dream weaving

GALLERY A GO GO

KIM FULLERTON

I RECENTLY WATCHED Alfred Hitchcock's Spellbound again, in which Ingrid Bergman plays psychoanalyst to Gregory Peck's amnesiac. Pursued for a murder he didn't commit, but unable to remember who he is or what really happened, Peck's character (Dr Edwardes) falls under Bergman's (Dr Peterson) spellbinding probe for the truth.

Over and over again she prods him with questions, but he is too convinced of his guilt, too fraught with anxiety to answer. He slides into a trance and faints often. His memory is finally cracked open when he recalls a dream to Dr Peterson; it's through her interpretation of the dream that the case is solved.

Everything in the dream stands for something else. A man on a rooftop holding a wheel (in the Salvador Dali-designed dream sequence) is really, according to Freudian science, a man on a mountain-side holding a revolver. In a reenactment at the murder scene, Dr Edwardes recalls a deadly childhood trauma and we are led to understand that his repression of that memory is the reason for the current attack of amnesia.

Not unlike Hitchcock, Deirdre Logue gives us a set of psychologically loaded circumstances that must be puzzled out in her new show at YYZ titled Enlighted Nonsense: Ten Short Performance Films About Repetition And Repetition.

In each, Logue enacts scenarios that are, variously, masochistic, repulsive, frightening and not, in some cases, without humour. They are indeed about repetition, whether it's to test physical and emotional limits or to plumb the depths of her own repressed memories until something takes the bait.

Each film is between one and five minutes and by hand-processing her 16mm stock they are given a rough and ready look. Camera angles are close, often distorting images that are reversed or negative; colour is monochromatic. The films look like dreams.

In Road Trip, she licks, inch by inch, a gravel road as she crawls across it; a basketball is repeatedly bounced off her head in Moohead; in H2Oh Oh she repeatedly dunks her head in water, gasping for air, only a hair-breadth away from drowning. In Tape, the only one with sound throughout (a crashing heartbeat), Logue takes five long minutes to wind and unwind and wind again packing tape around her head.

A pivotal film is Sleep Study — coming midway through the 22 minutes it takes to watch all 10 films. Archival footage of a young girl (we believe it's Logue herself) playing to the camera is interspersed with scenes of the adult Logue kicking a soccer ball down a road, or with wires taped to her head. Science is studying her dreams, recalling her childhood, connecting past to present.

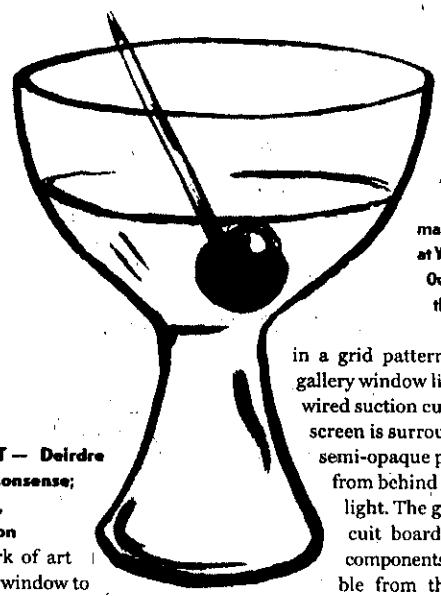
On the surface, the films appear to be about extreme states of adult experience — suffocation, pain, guilt, doubt. Everything in Enlightened Nonsense stands for something else and it's this dream-like quality that eases our way through the symbolic and surreal corridors of Logue's mind.

PHOTO CREDIT

MOOHEAD. One of 10 beguiling films about repetition and repetition.

Say your piece about this story at **www.xtra.ca**. Click "**features**" to air your views.

ENLIGHTENED NONSENSE.
Till Sat, Oct 14.
YYZ Artists' Outlet.
401 Richmond St W, suite 140.
(416) 598-4546.



Alexander Irving's martini glass, at YYZ Artists' Outlet, does the shakes.

YYZ ARTISTS' OUTLET — Deirdre Logue, Enlightened Nonsense; and Alexander Irving, Symptoms of Affection

It takes a great work of art mounted in a gallery window to cancel the frustration of finding a "back in five minutes" sign on the door. But the prelude to Deirdre Logue's *Enlightened Nonsense* is enthralling — and worth the wait.

Nine small video screens are mounted in a grid pattern on the gallery window like hard-wired suction cups. Each screen is surrounded by semi-opaque plastic lit from behind by white light. The green circuit board and its components are visible from the sides, and wires rain down to the floor. Two video tracks run on the screens, alternating across the grid. The videos, originally shot in film for better quality, are tinted in rich reds, blues and oranges that blend to form a shifting grid of light. Inside, 10 videos are playing on a larger screen mounted high and close so that you feel as though you are in the front row of a theatre — too close for comfort really.

The works are about "repetition and repetition." The films have been hand-developed to give them an intentionally scratched surface, choppy editing has been achieved with in-camera cuts and imperfections have been created in the soundtrack to create a cracking rhythmic accompaniment.

In one piece, Logue, who is the central subject in these performance works, wraps and unwraps tape from her head. The cuts are frenetic. Accompanying the piece is a deep, thudding beat created from the popping soundtrack. The piece is unnerving; it feels like a minimalist music video that prods your nerves with its incessant images and beat.

In another work, Logue falls down over and over in a large field. In yet another, she is hit in the head with a basketball repeatedly. Intercut at jarring intervals are images and sounds from a pudding commercial in which children play with the mushy dessert. It's quite an amusing piece.

In the front gallery, Alexander Irving has installed a booze-oriented series of works. Two large neon light works are dancing drinks. A beer bottle does the shimmy and a martini glass does the shake. His numerous drawings are drinks; all manner of booze doodles. Either that or they are Rorschach ink blots and I have a serious problem. □

For exhibition only. YYZ is at 401 Richmond St., Suite 140. (416) 598-4546. The Logue and Irving shows run through Oct. 14.

HOT TICKETS

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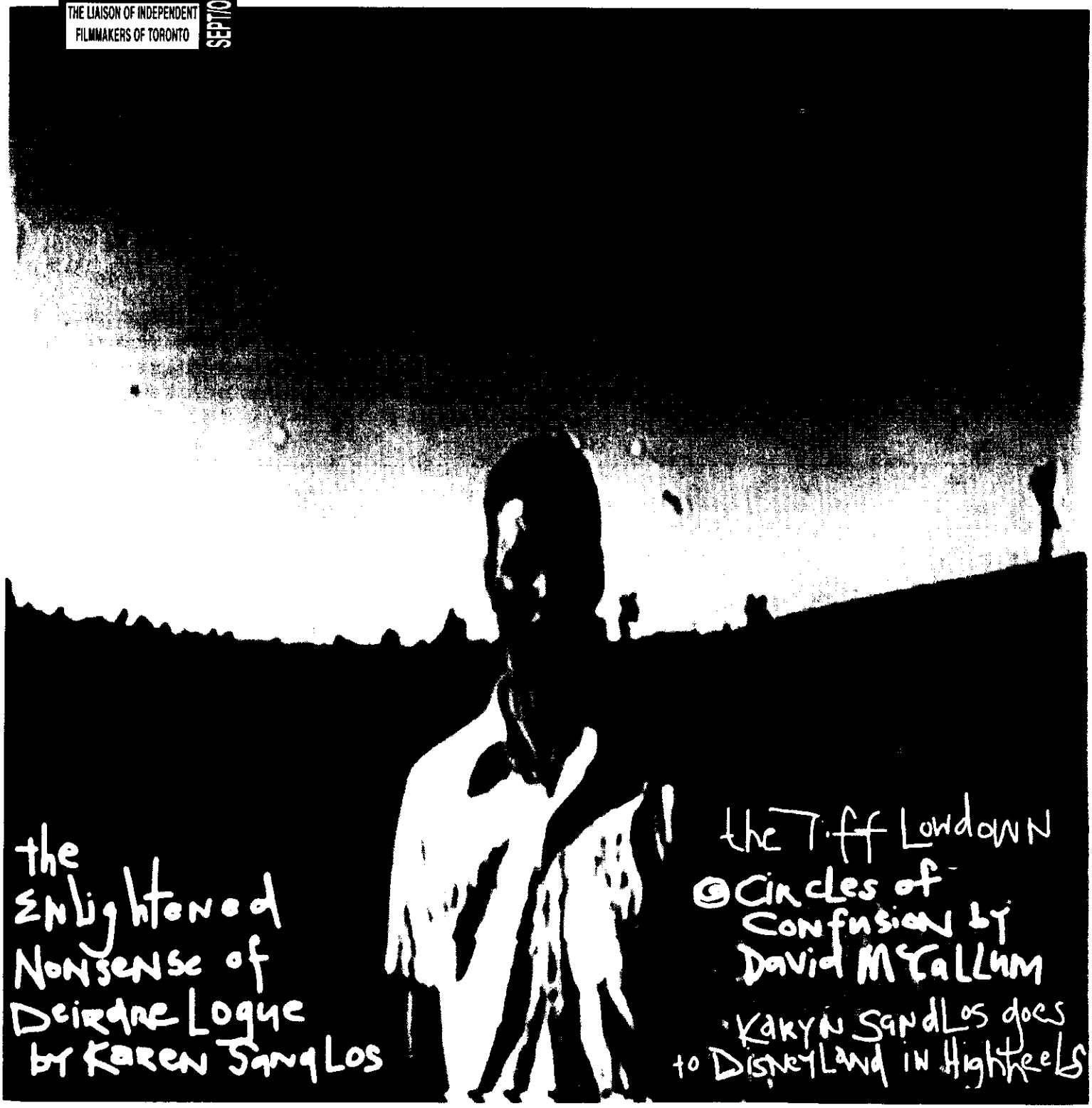
SEPT/OCT 2000 VOL. 20 NO.5



the Enlightened Nonsense of Deirdre Logue by Karen Sanglos

the Tiff Lowdown
Circles of Confusion by David McCallum

Karyn Sandlos goes to Disneyland in Hightreels

an interview with Deirdre Logue
by Karyn Sandlos

KS: *Enlightened Nonsense: 10 Performance Films About Repetition About Repetition* is the title of a series of ten short films that you have just completed. These films explore complex themes through repetitive patterns of self-abuse - you fall down, pick burrs out of your underpants, take hits to the head from a basketball, rip tape off your face, and drown yourself. At times your films are as hilarious as they are dark. Can you talk about the juxtaposition of masochism and humour in your work?

DL: You mean apart from masochism being inherently hilarious? I would never use a word like self-abuse. For me the films are performances. They rely on a kind of 'found masochism' and cynicism that draws its wit from despair. *Moo-Head* and *Fall* aren't meant to be hilarious movies, and yet they are funny at times.

KS: I think your films make people laugh and wonder why they are laughing at the same time.

DL: Yes, but that's not about my masochism. They are laughing because they don't understand, or because they would rather not think about what they get thinking about when they look at the films.

KS: Do you think humour makes it easier for the viewer to deal with the subject matter of the films?

DL: Sometimes, yes. Humour helps me make the work. But that aspect is not necessarily intended to help the audience out. It's not my intention to make it difficult for an audience either. But there is an element of the ridiculous, and there's an element of nonsensical stupidity in the films, and I suppose being able to see that in the work does make the subject matter more digestible. I don't want to make work that people can't stand to watch.

KS: How would you describe the subject matter of your films?

DL: The films are about testing one's physical limits, pairing the body with some aspect of the world developed through repetition. They narrate habits of relationship, sexual discomfort and despair. Each film is about the body vs. fill in the blank...water, tape, whatever. Kind of like wrestling. The subject matter of my dreams is translated into the films sometimes. And very practically, they are about relationships: me and the world, me and my friends, me and my job. The films are about repetition, the way we proceed through psychic life having to reconstruct and redefine the same things from a few years ago.

KS: What about fantasy?

DL: When I started this cycle of films I described them as fantasies of my own demise. But fantasies of one's own demise are very complex. They might include going shopping, for instance. On the other hand, having made ten films, I wonder if the work is more grounded in reality now. There's something very real about ripping tape off your face for two days.

KS: Can you talk about your method? Do you know what film you are making when you start shooting?

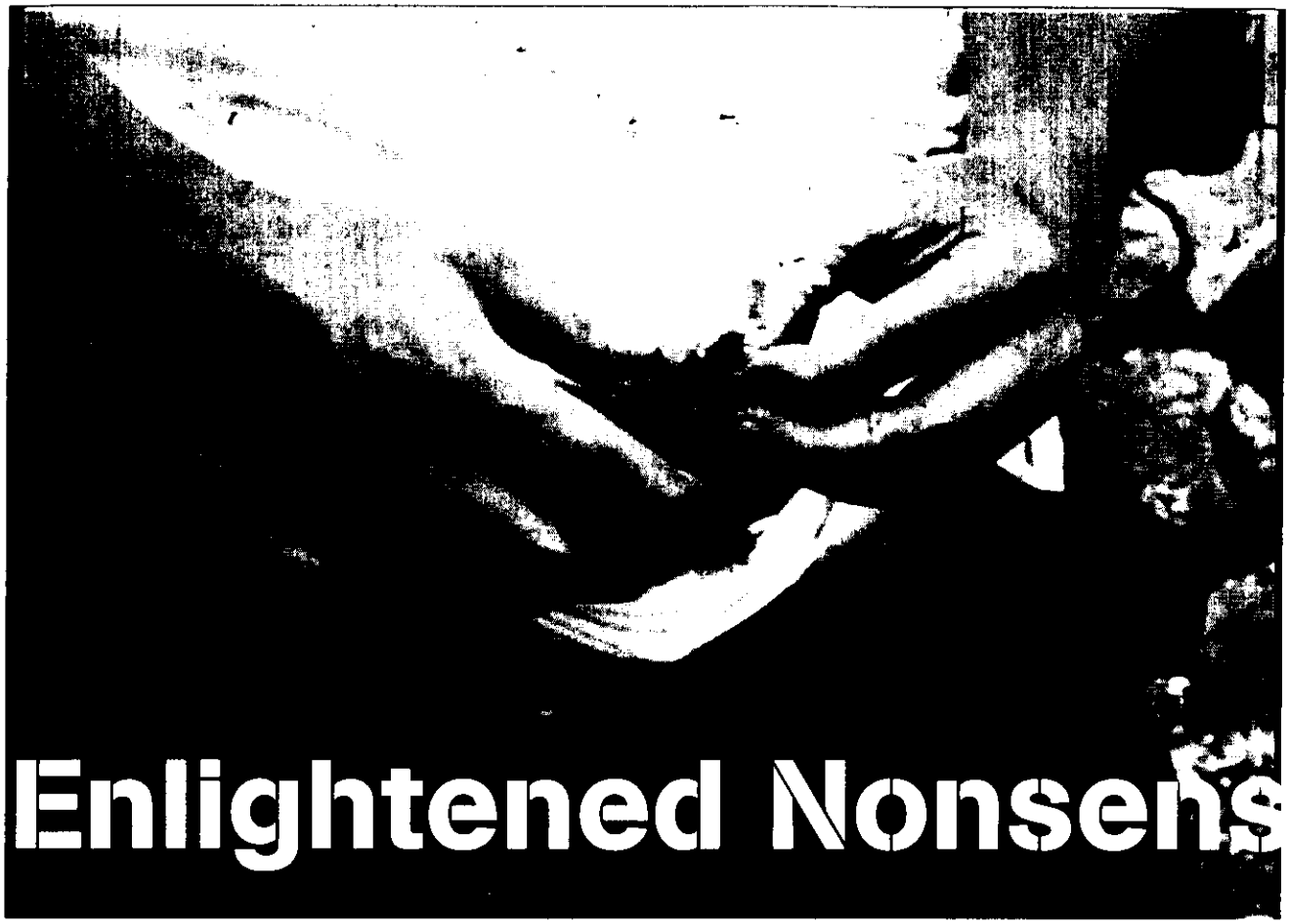
DL: No. No more so than one might have a million ideas before one goes to make something. For me it's usually whatever idea knocks the hardest, or is most easily accessed on a given day. I might wake up in the morning and think, 'I want to shoot myself drowning but I don't feel like getting wet today.' So I'll do something else. I might find someone to help me out, or go sit in a field, or just whip out my camera and try it. I always impose rules. I begin each film with a limited amount of time and filmstock, and I never shoot something more than twice. If it's too hard, or I can't get the shot, I just trash it and do something else. The films arrive spontaneously. They're made in their making.

KS: Do you work alone?

DL: I try to work alone as much as I can. But sometimes when I'm using a Bolex, I don't have time to run into the frame and perform before the camera's wind is over. Sometimes I can't see what's really going to happen, or I'm too messy. But I prefer working alone. It does something to the relationship between the performer and the camera. When I made *Fall* I shot 500 feet of film of myself running away from the camera, throwing myself on the ground and then running back. All that stuff in between is some of the best stuff. In the films where I'm right in front of the camera and I have to lean forward to turn it on and off... so much gets made there.

KS: Filmmakers tell personal stories in many different ways, but it strikes me that your work represents a unique form of diaristic filmmaking. You are always the subject of your own films, and as the subject you are typically engaged in some bizarre performance. Can you talk about who or what has influenced your work?

DL: Psychoanalysis has influenced my work. My films are autobiographical but they refuse storytelling. Cumulatively they may tell a story, but individually they tell things, stuff, ideas, feelings. It's like you're looking at my arm as opposed to all of me. The films don't tell you as much as autobiographical work typically would.



Enlightened Nonsense:

I'm not giving that much away. The series is the result of spending five days a week on an analyst's couch trying to understand some things about myself that are rather dark and complicated. I feel like I'm better at talking about that stuff as an artist than I am as a human being. The unconscious is very tricky. For instance, it can take one years to decipher a tic or a symptom. What does having a psychosomatic pain in your leg mean? It might be related to something so defended against and so complicated that you may never know. The unconscious is like someone who pulls all your plugs out and puts them back in another order. But the actions I perform in my films are not extraordinary or bizarre. This simply doesn't say much about the content of the work.

KS: Why does it bother you that your films might be taken as bizarre?

DL: Because I think that can make them freakish. Humiliation and discomfort are pretty normal kinds of feelings. I'm just giving these feelings a different shape. While there is a recurrent masochism in the work, the things I do in my films are not that out of the ordinary. I use fairly common objects and scenarios that are familiar. In some ways it's the repetition of the action that makes it unusual. Basketballs, whipped cream, packing tape, dirt, underwear - these are objects of the everyday. I suppose many people would see the films as weird or bizarre or masochistic. I'm not trying to suggest the works aren't complex, but I want them to be accessible.

KS: Do you see this as a tension in your work?

DL: I fully accept the responsibility for a level of masochism in the work. What I object to is the focus that people have

placed on the idea that the action in the films is self-abusive. I don't make films where I stick my head in a bucket of cold water over and over again to prove my machismo. I don't make films to show people how much pain I can take. I would say that ninety-five percent of the things I do in the work are not painful.

KS: Any other influences on your work?

DL: Daytime television is a big influence. I'm a terrible sponge. I love television, but you can't see it in my films. I love rapid-fire eye candy and terrible sitcoms with melodramatic oversensitive characters who have empty lives and bad track pants.

KS: Rumour has it that you are a fan of the British Film Institute's series of books on film.

DL: The series I like best is Modern Classics. It's the one where writers write about their favourite films. My personal collection includes *Seven*, *Easy Rider*, *Bride of Frankenstein* and *Terminator II*, but my favorite is *The Exorcist*. It's all about the American dream. And I like all the gross parts. Linda Blair was very young at the time - too young to touch her privates and cram crucifixes up herself. So they had to have body doubles. I like the idea of a child thrashing around on a bed in possession make-up and as soon as she touches herself they yell, 'Cut! Bring in the body double!' I try to imagine the logistics of the shoot.

KS: Do you have a favourite film star?

DL: The abominable snowman in *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*. He was so ferocious initially, and then once he got all his teeth taken out he became really helpful. To be able to play both the dark and sinister monster, as well as the loving, caring, fuzzy-wuzzy character must have been quite a challenge.

KS: Your films come out of years of participation in the Phil Hoffman Independent Imaging Retreat. Why do you keep going back to Phil's farm?

DL: You could call it a condition of my process that I have to be extracted from my life. And I have an emotional attachment to the people and the place. I also respect the principles of the farm, and I have a lot of admiration for what is taught and learned there. There is a cult of Phil's farm, and its reputation has been built on a process-based learning environment that has a collective body. People go there to spend a week learning the Bolex and hand processing. Then there is the other ninety-five percent of what you experience at Phil's, and that has to do with a shared investment in the importance of making films outside industry norms and institutional norms. It's a complicated place with complicated people, and I find that very attractive.

KS: What kinds of conditions do you seek in order to create? Can you imagine an ideal set of conditions?

DL: I could use more time, both physical and psychic. But without all the chaos, I don't know if I'd be making films in the same way, if at all. Someone asked me the other day if I have thought about making a feature film. And I said, 'Sure I could make a feature, but I'd have to make it in two weeks or I wouldn't know how.' The conditions that I apply to my making privilege spontaneity and performance, but also discipline and rigour. I shot and processed over the two weeks that I was at Phil's in June, and then I went home and made seven films in eight weeks. Without the discipline of time as a container of opportunity, I'd probably be sitting around at home with my thumb up my ass trying to figure out which roll of film is in which box.

KS: Is it important that your films are hand-processed?

DL: Yes. The manipulation of the film at that stage is like drawing, and I love the way it looks. The fact that the surface of the film has been touched so much really accentuates the subject matter. If I had no choice but to take the films to Exclusive Labs, who I love, but who don't make my films all scratchy, I would take the films home and put them under my boot so that the surface would come alive.

KS: Is it important that you cut your original footage on a flat bed?

DL: Yes. I think that working with your original footage is like working with an object that you should get to know really well. I'm not afraid of working with the original footage, although sometimes I make irreparable mistakes. But you learn very quickly how not to repeat your mistakes. There's no interface. You've got an original print and you'd better be sober and clear about what you want to do.

KS: You've introduced found footage to three of your films. In *Scratch* cups and dishes break, and a bed makes and unmakes itself. In *Moo-Head* children ogle their Jell-O spoons. *Always a Bridesmaid, Never a Bride of Frankenstein* is framed with a telephone conversation between a mother and daughter. Can you talk about the interaction between the found footage and the footage you've shot?

DL: When I use found footage I prioritize sound over picture. I'm actually after the sound. *Moo-Head* would be the best example of how I work. The sound head and the picture head on a Steenbeck are in different places. The picture runs at 24 fps and the sound runs at 26 fps, so there is two frames difference. In *Moo-Head* I used the difference to synch the found sound up with the impact of the basketball on my head. So the sound winds up over images of the performer, instead of accompanying the original footage. I made equal cuts: five frames of found image, and five frames of my image. When the found footage is going through the sound head my image is going through the picture head. I try to synch the two by linking the found footage soundtracks with my action.

KS: Do you think about sound when you are shooting your films?

DL: My films are mostly silent. Apart from the found footage, the sound comes from the film itself, the splices, and the irregularities in the hand processing which cause different kinds of static. Sometimes I use pins and markers to mark up the optical track. That has a sound. What I've done for the films in the

show is create loops for the sound tracks. For instance, I use the difference between optically printed colour stock and 7378. They sound different. There is an ambient white noise with the colour stock, which is clear on the surface of the film. I like the sound of film, so I don't bring in music or other sources.

KS: No folk songs?

DL: No folk guitar, no tambourine, no Beatles records played backwards.

KS: Is there a rhythm in your editing process?

DL: Yes, there is, although it feels more like a nervous tic. I count out frames and footage. I want my films to flow so I cut the material into even lengths and begin building the rhythm that way. I also spend a lot of time deciding how I'm going to cut before I doing it. In *H2O Oh*, I optically printed the original 350 feet that show me taping up my face. Only I printed all the material backwards. In the editing room, I had two equal lengths of 350 feet, so I joined the heads of the forward and backwards takes together in the middle and worked my way out from there. I try to do things with the physical presence of the footage - things that you wouldn't normally do. I don't rough cut and then fine cut and move shots around all over the place. I just start somewhere, anywhere, and hope for the best.

KS: Why are you making a series of films?

DL: Too much spare time. I like multiples. I like ten ears of corn. I like ten films that are related. I like the idea of having one problem and ten solutions. I think there are usually so many answers to a question, and by working in a series I get to see myself play it out in different ways. Some of the work is very brief, just thirty seconds long, and some things reveal themselves best when they're rubbing up against other things. Painters and drawers rarely show one work at a time. Singers don't write one song, they release albums.

KS: Are you finished with this particular body of work, or will you continue making films in the same vein?

DL: I think this particular body of work will have implications. It's going to take me a long time to get through the material that I've dredged up psychically and physically. I suspect that I'll make more work like it. I already have twenty more ideas for films that I wasn't able to execute because I ran out of time and resources. Making the work is tiring. Every time I make a piece it changes things. People have expressed to me that they worry about my work, because with each new film I up the physical ante. I don't think that's true. I think what I'm actually doing is calming down. It doesn't look like that but it feels like it. There probably isn't an end. I don't think I'll ever know with any confidence when I'm finished, and I don't necessarily think that I have to have an answer to that question. But it does cross my mind a lot.

KS: Someone said to me recently that art cures all. Is art a form of therapy?

DL: Having outed myself as an analytic subject, I don't actually think that art is a very therapeutic activity. The relationship that gets drawn between art and therapy really drives me crazy. And the fact that I'm in therapy is actually irrelevant. The idea that art is a cathartic expressive thing that one does to heal oneself is ridiculous. What interests me about art making is that it has things to say that are beyond the self. I think of art as a political activity, and as a complicated personal and psychic activity. It says things about the human condition.

KS: What is political about your films?

DL: Nothing - you don't have to make politically overt work to be a political artist. What comes to mind is the body politic. How we articulate something through the body and through action, be it live or recorded or mediated action. The actions in my films say something about the impact of larger political ideas on the body - on my body. The body is what we have to use as a tool to express our discomfort and unhappiness. And for me has very significant meaning when pe ple choose an art practice over the ci service or a government job in Ottawa feel like artists have a lot of things to d and a lot of responsibility. There are lo of important decisions that we mak when we decide to be an artist for re for life.

KS: Do you think there is a future f experimental film practice, even thou labs are closing?

DL: Sure. Little undergrounds will co tinue to form. Maybe Deluxe won't exi but Steve Sanguedolce will process fil for you in his basement. As long as pe ple have cameras and film they will mak experimental films. It's the only way w have to say no.

KS: What do you make of the curre fascination with low-tech and han processed film?

DL: It has something to do with what needed now. There's a question of se sufficiency in all of this. A lot of peop have suffered enormous crises of con dence with the influence of new compu er technologies on image making. But haven't got a fucking G4 and I don't wa one. These heavy-duty processes a causing people to feel like they can make work. There's an accessibility hand-made films which extends beyor its makers to the audience. I think peop will always be attracted to things th openly show the hand of the maker. T things that are raw.

Enlightened Nonsense: 10 Sho Performance Films About Repetitic about Repetition, opens Wednesda September 13, 2000, and runs un October 14, 2000 at YYZ Gallery, 4(Richmond St. W., Suite 140.

www.interlog.com/~yyz

For additional information contact Tape at (416) 351-1317.

PROMISE

A collection of performance-based video and film dedicated to different states of becoming.

curated by Deirdre Logue with an essay by Kathleen Pirrie Adams

YYZ Artists' Outlet **September 15–October 16, 1999**

LADY IN THE LAKE: FLUID FORMS OF SELF IN PERFORMANCE VIDEO

Kathleen Pirrie Adams

Desire can be so simple. A simple match of qualities, a simple case of right time, right place. Apparently newly hatched geese follow the first moving thing they see. Usually, this is their mother.

A dark helmet of hair, overdrawn liquid liner eyes and a Revlon red mouth formed an emblem of sophistication. Like many others who grew up in North America at the other end of the Doris Day spectrum, my mother modeled herself after Elizabeth Taylor. In this imitation, she found a shield. Being like Liz was a form of sympathetic magic that forced the mirror to return a spellbinding image—glamorous, aloof, correct. With it she could crank up her chin and cover Bacon's creature.

Mimicry can hold evil forces at bay, or capture the strength of the other. It's also how we learn. Following the actions of the other—replicating their gestures, imitating their silhouette, handwriting, speaking patterns, style—transmits experience at the same time as it shapes appearance. Mimetic congress isn't so selective however, and like other bodily exchanges it always runs the risk of contamination.

The works in this exhibition all obsess about and marvel at the complications of imitation and identification: moments of struggle filled with fragility, the nuances and the spectacles of fetish-self, amplified obsessions and idiosyncracies. These are the trophies of its video-mounted hunt.

Unadorned, contextless gestures, each work in this collection has the feel of a specimen. A pinned butterfly that suggests the labia without ever referring directly. Their obscure or minimalist scenarios—park, sound stage, winter field—urge attention to the details of the specific moment, to particular behaviours, and the stories that they might tell. Unmapped spaces offer a ground zero for the reinvention of the dramatic scenario. Hacking away at narrative vision, without much recourse to abstraction or the usual poetic techniques of experimental film or television's dream space, the music video, the works in *Promise* seem to be attacking representation with their own weird brand of formalism.

Orphan images, with nothing grand or trendy about them, they remain at odds with the puffy, speed-driven design that governs much of the surrounding culture—cars, films, shoes, megaplex architecture, etc.

Instead of racy cushiness there are fixed frames, obvious screens and, at times painful, real time duration, qualities that are reminiscent of surveillance, a perspective which promises truth but within which the simple becomes strange, the obvious gains hidden depth, things turn out to be other than they appear to be.

> First there was God. Then we invented the video camera...
> Elyse Gasco, *Can You Wave Bye Bye Baby*

Part philosophical inquiry, part faux confession, *Elizabeth Taylor Sometimes* takes on the media's fast traffic in celebrity images as the source of a bloodless decadence characteristic of our times. It pokes fun at the public's thirst for knowledge about the private lives of stars. It ironically celebrates the irrelevance of the body, and the simplicity, safety and profitability of two-dimensional existence: "...it's such a relief to be two-dimensional. Perfectly flat. No insides....I'm working on losing another dimension. I'm on a dimension diet and I'm aiming for just the one dimension, like Posh, like Scary, like Ginger, like ... Pammie and Dannii and Keanu and Mel, those wonderful creatures with absolutely no breadth or depth but who generate a lot of capital...?" It reminds us of the basic contradiction of mechanical reproduction. The aura of the actual is replaced by the ecstasy inducing power of replication which soon enough, under over-exposure's punishing gaze, turns into a pathetic loss of affect. Poor bloated Liz.

Every anthropologist has a story about their discipline's comic naiveté. At university, my professor told the class the following story. Living in the American southwest within a native community that had a sacred ritual involving snakes, he was permitted to observe and participate in the ritual which was a linchpin of his host culture's cosmology. One day, while walking along the road with the man who had directed the ritual he had witnessed, he saw a snake slither out of the underbrush in the road in front of them. When the anthropologist, attempting to display his respect for local beliefs, assumed an attitude of reverence, the other man looked at him, smiled, and said: "It's just a snake."

Yet, in those moments that Maude Davey is the stand-in star there occurs a vibrant echo: "I'm reminding you more and more of Elizabeth Taylor aren't I?" she asks rhetorically, leadingly. The impression of resemblance is growing stronger. Even as the monologue directs attention to the construction of the media personality and the ultimate substitutability of one for the next, you begin to recognize the Liz in her. Like all desire, this desire for the ethereal and charismatic being, continually seeks out something with which to regenerate itself.

Pipilotti Rist's *I'm Not The Girl Who Misses Much* audaciously dances on John Lennon's grave. Introducing a frantic cheeriness that inclines toward inanity, she twists the whole mess of identification around in order to release herself into another dimension. Seizing the Beatles song with her speedy high-pitched rendering, she works and re-works the first verse into a nonsense boast—"I'm not a girl who misses much. Do, do, do, do, do, do, oh yeah."—with which she steers herself past the shoals of third-person selfhood. Having grabbed some of its maker's fire—Lennon's song unquestionably has enough of its own miracle matter to withstand the theft—she ignites her own spotlight and walks confidently, but comically, into its eye. When Lennon's real tempo version finds its way into the mangled appropriation, Rist quickly cuts him short as the drum cascades and he begins his descent into a none too private theatre of anguish, with its panic, self-pity, righteousness and resentment-lined menace: "I need a fix, cause I'm going down..."

As a visual artist, Pipilotti Rist doesn't have to sing like Nina Simone, or even Gwen Stephani. She has no obligation to deliver beauty in song shape, to match or better her mentor. In fact, the real power of her video lies more in the way it transforms hysteria with its combination of nerdy shadow-boxing and perfectly balanced structure. It's in this composition that she honours her inspiration.

> This is a love song for people excluded by love songs—a fairly large catchment area.
> Giles Smith, *Lives of the Great Songs*

Not The Girl becomes a song of self-invention. The whole ensemble, the nervy severing of artistry from icon, the P.J. Harvey-ish glamorizing of the spectacle of the female body, and the irrepressible swell of the artist's first person to a natural art-life-size, tells the story of a self-made hero. It documents a casual act of being that hovers above a survivalist's scorched earth where every relationship and exchange is one of do or die. It is the leg trap of a paranoid theory of power loosening from the female body and its reflections.

Historically, performance art has often involved communion with the dead and defiled, narcissistic self-observance, or subversion of received wisdom or prevailing ideologies. Whether inserting itself into a traditional theatrical space, or claiming space within the flow of everyday public life, it has often pitched itself in terms of a direct bodily experience (for performer and for audience), or against institutionally regulated time. And, since its earliest days, it has born a strong resemblance to and exercised a strong influence on its contemporary cousin: video art. The human body, and more specifically the

female form, has, however, shifted around a little differently within each practice's frame.

When performance puts one person in the place of another, or some other being or thing, it always enacts a negation. This is its license, its liberation, its philosophical means of production. Live-action performances return the body to its state of non-performative rest, usually somewhere within view of the audience. The body remains and the other thing (persona, routine, gesture) disappears into memory, into the folds of lived space-time. With video art—and this is the same with recorded music—the residue becomes the thing itself. The original body is eaten up by the other, it changes form, loses its original nature.

A body can be broken on a promise, just as easily as a heart. When a promise is impaled by deceit, it sucks in the surrounding air, threatening to suffocate anyone, anything, near and needing to breathe. A broken promise declares that an understanding has expired and divides the future in a way that feels like the threshold of an absolute. Action stops at the break. Imagination can only despise the way lies try to pull it into the service of proof, forcing it to resort to interrogation, cross-checking, the marshalling of evidence: techniques of accountants and cops. A broken promise is a natural catastrophe that freezes meaning: a semiotic Ice Nine that results in silent gridlock.

Temple Guerin lets herself slip inside the hooves and nostrils of a cow on its way to slaughter. She imagines its frigid terror and designs an environment where that creature can keep moving, stay in its body until the last possible moment. Autism and mercy ignite her simulation exercise. Objective reality is lifted by her conceits.

Performance assumes that we need (could use) more than one body, more than one identity. What is may not be enough, and in any event is not all there is. Dressed up, in role, you become somebody else. Yet, the image does not stand apart from real life. Indeed, the artificial life that lives in the image—in theatre, literature, film, the photograph, the computer—is one of the very basic materials of human reality.

Ann McGuire on stage in a black cocktail dress, perched on the edge of a spotlight warmed stool, resurrects the charmingly nervous courage of Judy Garland. But Judy is just one layer, one graft, just one of the many swinger pop icons that have been hijacked for her performance. There are shades of Dean Martin, Lenny Bruce, Ann Margaret, and Ella Fitzgerald—a likely inspiration for the cliché about being able to sing the phone book and still make it sound good—haunting McGuire's performance. The cliché of the singer saints truly gets tested as McGuire does a downer and diet pill rendition of a song for "all those who feel different": *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*. Her exuberant obliviousness seems to just barely stay this side of hysteria.

> I have travelled a good deal in Concord, and everywhere...the inhabitants have appeared to me to be doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways.
> David Henry Thoreau, *Walden*

Even if the routine doesn't break down into a fit of desperation, we can feel it about to veer off in the direction of some other supremely embarrassing moment. Rather than exquisite pain we get a loss of concentration, the disintegration of performance into a series of awkward and distracted gestures which mock the notion of effortlessness so dear to the Playboy mansion ethos that formed the shadow world of the sixties counterculture.

Freud's observation that the performances of his hysterics resembled those extracted through torture, draws attention to the conditions of its existence: repression, oppression, strictly controlled speaking. Just answer the questions. Answer them now, the way you've been told. Others have, however, looked into the hole torn open by the hysterics thrashing and ranting and seen the glory of insubordination and revolt.

Sheer frustration poured into the hollow of a spoon. Tamami Asada's *Scream* offers a one-minute encapsulation of the spirit of aesthetic terrorism. Like Liz in her slip, tearing into Richard Burton or Paul Newman, she makes power out of pain.

The alchemy of imitating and identifying with the defiled is by no means new. Artists such as Carolee Schneemann, Lynda Benglis, Adrian Piper, Maria Abramovic, Hannah Wilke and Ana Mendieta worked this angle on identification throughout the 60s and 70s. Using themes and images of rape, penis envy, bad skin, femininity's debased fluids and monstrous needs, or the animal aspect of flesh, these artists insisted their audiences confront the phobias surrounding female physical being and the identification of women as abject matter.

At the beginning of this decade, works of this kind, which had largely fallen into historical obscurity, resurfaced as the roots of a contemporary Bad Girl sensibility. Combating the overwhelming authority of the images and ideology that proffered itself as the truth of modern life, those earlier responses seem more precise and more emotionally controlled than their contemporary counterparts. Embodying abjection as a strategy for protesting the endangered subjectivity, many works took on an ambivalently forensic quality. On the one hand, there was an identification with the abject. On the other, it was as something external, imposed. There remained a kind of protective distance that disavowed the identification even as it enacted it. Like speaking about the self in the third person.

Current versions seem to recognize media icons as internal phenomena as much as external ones—as parts of the psyche and questions for the self. No longer entirely alien or wholly external, they lose some of their monolithic status. While drawing the image inside makes it more personal—more available to pragmatic and creative responses—it also makes the wearer more vulnerable.

Even without the pop culture television-driven media map, the icon does not disappear. But then, neither does the relevance of the body. The dancer, the athlete, the musician are that in their body. Yet, to possess that identity is to train, to learn that skill through repetition, to become that ideal, that image. Hysterics, children, saints, those possessed by demons—all wrestle with the icon, continually; and with their full bodily weight.

A poem repeated gains meaning. So too does a gesture stretched out. After a minute and a half of Judy Radul's close-up staring and blinking, a steady thirty-two minute stream of yellow liquid begins to pour. *Lemon Sunlight* is a performance in which the artist lies against a background of empty white, letting a constant stream of yellow rain down upon her forehead. Her face serves as a well-manicured oil pan, urinal, drip tray, mirror. The liquid gathers in her eye sockets, seeps into her hair, and slowly consumes the surrounding white.

Metaphorically the stream reads as a golden shower, Chinese water torture, staring into the sun, liquid gold, the yellowing that comes with the passing of time. The duration of the performance pushes the viewer into postures of physical familiarity, disbelief, shared discomfort and a questioning of the self-selected victim's sanity. Like a well-played SM scene, the piece is at once an intellectual puzzle and an empathy test. Occasionally, the ghost of a smile flashes across Radul's face. Beneath the ordeal she seems to have stashed a gleeful private reflection, or perhaps it is just the sheer absurdity of using soap in a ritual of self-pollution that quietly cracks her up.

> To arrive at the "purity" of the gaze is not difficult, it is impossible.
> Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*

In *Lemon Sunlight*, identifying with abjection and identifying the self as abject matter is clearly a question of exercising will. The purpose of the exercise may appear difficult to understand, but Radul's intentions, however murky, are her own.

Her head steams, the flames build, wax rains down. Her face takes on a supplicant's sheen. The camera moves in closer and the screen again begins to feel like skin—that boundary that doesn't work, that boundary that continually transmits invitation. It's always a choice to stay on one side of that thin divide, even if through empathy or imagination you trespass silently.

In her performance *Imbolc*, Louise Liliefeldt employs the symbolism of sixth century Celtic saint Brigit as an invocation of the elemental body and of the ancient exercises and lore of its supercession. A blazing wheel-like mantle balances dangerously on top of her head, threatening possible disaster. But the performance context removes it from any simple association with self-immolation. Staggering to her knees so that others can become ignited from her fiery headdress, her face smoothly holds the impression of benediction—another era's version of the endorphin rush.

> Studying the horse, we understand how hard-core followed the invention of photography.
> Albert Goldburth, *Comings Back*

In the minds of many bridle-wise girls raised in Anglo-American cultures, horses are closer to the gods. Superior to humans in beauty, character and power, one becomes sanctified in their company, elevated in their skin.

Lucy Gunning finds girls who have given themselves to the horse and records their rituals of crossing over. She meets with the respondents to a classified ad she has placed in the paper in hopes of finding her own ideal horse impersonator—a girl she has seen at a nightclub. Her search brings her girls who prance and snort and toss their heads, scaling the wall between species. None stand out as the perfect shape-shifter, the one whose second skin has charmed the artist.

In *The Horse Impressionists* Gunning seeks the fetish, rather than becoming it. Others inhabit its pose and act as the object of desire. Behind her camera she witnesses the spectacle of another's mutant identity. If there is abjection in this ritual loss of self, it exists at arm's length, away from its capturer. In this piece, the status of the artist and the performer have been transformed and the dangers of performing the self have given way to the sharp edges of performing for the other. The possibility that the horse-girls are being set up, that Gunning could have a sadistic streak, might be a tormentor in sheep's clothing, reminds us that every effort to reveal the self is accompanied by the silent plea: Promise not to laugh.

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Man-of-the-year honour goes to Don McKellar

If I see another Canadian film about a hapless slacker sucked into crime, I'm gonna kill somebody. If I see another Canadian documentary about some worthy forgotten hero, well, I'm still gonna kill the person who made the slacker movie.

Talent's not enough. Money's not enough. In fact, even after public money for film and video was

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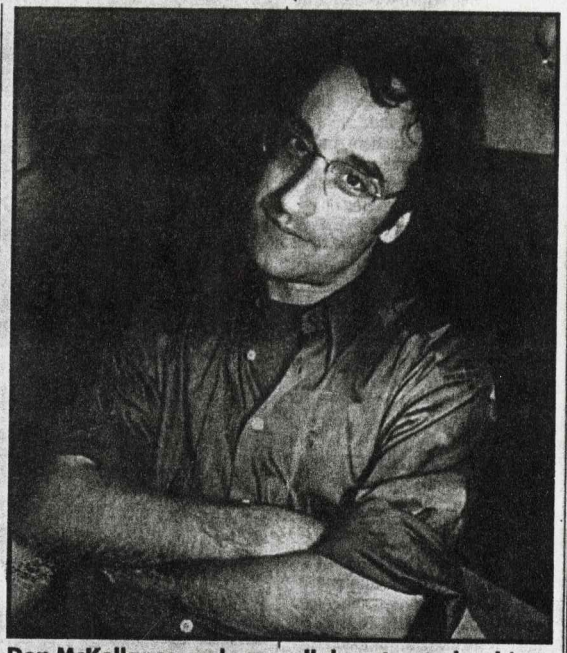
slashed to the bone in the mid-90s, people are making new movies in Toronto, but not generating many new cinematic ideas.

So, no more blinkered coming-of-age stories, no more predictable family trauma, no more noodling around with the video effects box. This year, let's celebrate people with something to say.

1 DON McKELLAR — He exhausts people, but that's not his fault. Ubiquitous enough to make people pull out their tall-poppy pruning shears, he was the man in 1998. He co-wrote the ambitious, fitful **Red Violin**. He collaborated with **Michael Ondaatje** and **Bruce McDonald** on **Elimination Dance**, one of my favourite short films this year. And he wrote, directed and starred in **Last Night**, a surprisingly deft first feature that found precisely the right tone for the end of the world. To the naysayers in the city — McKellar's good. Get over it.

2 JOYCE WIELAND — The local artist and filmmaker died in June this year. Illness had long stopped her output, but when the Cinematheque Ontario hosted a retrospective of her work in October, it all flooded back. Wieland was one of the few artists in Canada to find a fluid channel between film and visual art. Her canvases, quilts and movies all came from the same place — a place where structural rigour, feminist juice and national passion never looked like contradictions.



JOHN SCULLY

Don McKellar scored as a collaborator and as his own man, directing his first feature, Last Night.

3 PHILLIP BARKER — He did two beautiful things this year, at least. He made a brilliant, distilled dance film called **I Am Always Connected**. And he did the sets and film work for **Atom Egoyan**'s opera **elsewhereless**. Barker's ideas shine with deep reflection. He's not just a thinking person's filmmaker. He makes thinking films.

4 DEIRDRE LOGUE — As executive director of the Images Festival, she's corralled the city's top image freaks to program, advise and hang with what's become one of the city's liveliest picture parties. Deeply unflappable, Logue juggles student video, international features and installation art as if they were made for each other.

5 STURLA GUNNARSSON — He came off the 1997 success of his South African documentary Gerrie And Louise to bring **Such A Long Journey** to the screen. Up to now, Gunnarsson always looked strongest on docs, but in adapting **Rohinton Mistry**'s sprawling novel, he's brought his penetrating gaze to a complex story.

6 WIEBKE VON CAROLSFELD — Here's someone who made her first film this year — the gorgeous, observant **From Morning On I Waited Yesterday**. **Molly Parker** stars as a woman dazed with longing. Von Carolsfeld is an editor, so the film's perfect pace is no surprise. What marks her as a future talent is the film's sure insight, and its luminous images.

7 WRIK MEAD — This guy's a perennial, which is only right. Film by film, he's carving out a place for himself, a small, probably confined, room of his own. Mead's queer gems recast enduring myth in underground textures and immerse us in celluloid grain. This year's entry was **Cupid**. More to come.

8 COLIN GEDDES — Geddes is a lifer. Guts are in his blood. In 1998, he programmed the voluminous FantAsia festival, and took over the Toronto International Film Festival's Midnight Madness section from **Noah Cowan**. Geddes knows HK action and Italian horror and all the rest of the international grind circuit. Better yet, he's got strong ideas about what's cool and what sucks.

9 NIV FICHMAN — Fichman doesn't get enough credit for his work outside industry circles, but he's that rare thing — a producer with both good sense and good taste. This year he produced Don McKellar's Last Night and **Francois Girard**'s The Red Violin while still collecting honours for last year's **Yo-Yo Ma Inspired By Bach** series of television films.

10 THE VARSITY CINEMAS — The new eight-theatre venue made it exciting to go to the movies again. I thought I'd hate it when they turned the Varsity into an octoplex. I'd spent years in the old V1 and V2 craning my neck to watch movies, and standing up to introduce them during the film festival. But even with its dubious VIP rooms, there's still a moviegoing buzz at the Varsity that tops any other cinema in the city. Maybe it's the vibe that comes from people watching moist studio fare and sharp, low-budget indies in the same full, accessible, surround-sound luxury. ●

BEST OF 98 FILM

field reports

The Festival that Rocks

Toronto's Images Festival of Independent Film and Video Revels in the Truly Alternative

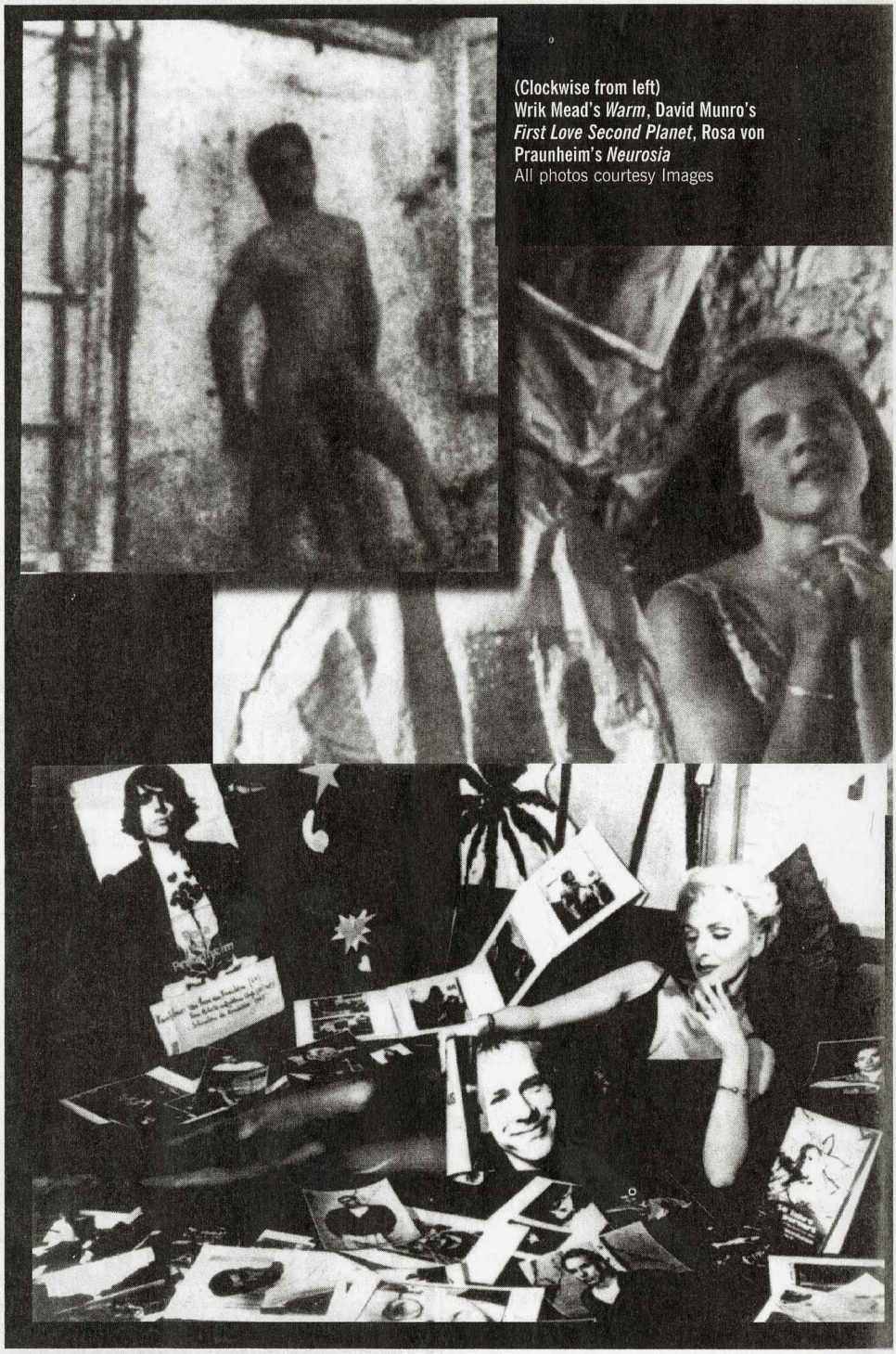
BY BARBARA MAINGUY

THIS IS TORONTO AND THIS IS SPRING, YET A sharp wind blasts through the city streets. The temperature has been forced down to zero, and it looks like it might snow. Everyone's a little cranky. What better way to while away these bleak hours than in a dark, smoky basement watching scratchy black-and-white or super 8 film and video?

Unlike the other film festival for which Toronto is best known, the Images Festival of Independent Film and Video (held this year April 10-20) is not an industry gathering, but a filmmakers' fest that shows truly and exclusively independent work. It's the kind of festival that renews your faith in provocative, riotous, accountant-displeasing, bad-ass films that test your patience, your values, your politics—raw, handmade films that stay out too late, drink too much, and pick fights with conservatives on their way home.

This year—the festival's tenth—the proceedings take place at the Factory Theatre, an Edwardian mansion turned concert hall turned fringe theater turned underground screening parlor. In the makeshift atmosphere, the festival feels like a squatter in a decrepit mansion; there's an enticingly illicit feel to the place, made even better by the black-walled cafe and upstairs lounge that serve beer and wine (not to mention meal-sized slabs of homemade orange poundcake and giant soft-in-the-middle oatmeal cookies). But best is the work—"killer work," festival director Deirdre Logue says. "That's what we were looking for this year."

For its tenth anniversary, Images has a new strategy and a new identity to go with its new location. It also has a new audience. Whether by necessity or whim, the programmers, led by Logue, risked a fundamental shift in vision. At its inception, Images was meant to represent the disenfranchised in filmmaking, those whose voices were unheard at festivals and who were seldom represented on film. But the



(Clockwise from left)
Wrik Mead's *Warm*, David Munro's *First Love Second Planet*, Rosa von Praunheim's *Neurosia*
All photos courtesy Images

subsequent emergence in Toronto of the Asian Heritage Month Festival, the Desh Pardesh Festival for People of Colour, and the Inside/Out Gay and Lesbian film festival left Images with a diminished sense of purpose and feeling past its prime. The low-point in the fest's mid-life crisis occurred two years ago when, following deep government funding cuts, longtime director Karen Tisch accepted an offer she couldn't refuse and left to work for the federal funding magnate, the Canada Council. Soon thereafter the festival lost its venue when the struggling, cooperatively run Euclid Cinema finally failed, suffering the ultimate indignity of being converted to condos.

Logue was parachuted in at the last minute to guide the 1996 event. What she saw troubled her; she sensed that Images had become a diluted version of itself. Mandate-driven programming that in the past had broken new political ground had become safe, with old messages repeating themselves and aesthetic values secondary to intellectual ones.

Taking the reins completely this year, Logue, in consultation with the board and programmer Sarah Lightbody, took the single biggest risk in re-inventing Images: She replaced the peer-jury selection process with a no-apologies curatorial approach, using a pair of programmers who worked directly for the festival—Lightbody and programming partner Stefan St. Laurent. The programmers worked with a loose group of "screening consultants" who acted as advisors only and had no decision-making power. Logue provided support for risk-taking and passionate response to work, but little intervention. Lightbody and St. Laurent began going to other festivals, off-the-wall screenings, and scouring the independent community for hot new indie work. As Logue puts it, "I like it when the film's still being cut the week before the festival."

It worked. This year the festival felt like a war cry for independents—with tight, energetic programs, heated panel discussions, Website connections, video and film installations, DJs and live performances after hours in the cafe, and surprise films (including one that was a surprise even to the programmers: *Animal Love*, the controversial banned-in-Austria documentary about people who love their animals too much, turned up unannounced at the festival office). The end result was nearly double the attendance.

It's the kind of festival that renews your faith in provocative, riotous, accountant-displeasing, bad-ass films that test your patience, your values, your politics.

Images shows experimental narratives and documentaries in (mostly) evening screenings over a 10-day period and invites work from all over the world. This year about 35 filmmakers attended from outside Canada, representing the U.S., Belgium, Latin American countries, France, Japan, Switzerland, Austria, and Finland, to name a few countries. Guests get a contribution toward their travel and are put up at the home of (probably) a Toronto filmmaker (or festival programmer). Half of the festival's programming—altogether 180 films and videos—went to the International New Screen section, which features work no more than two years old. This section packaged titles into programs like Neurotica; Safe-Sex Voodoo Dolls; Petrie Dish Encounters; Urban-a-rama; Astro-Girls and Moon Milk; and Zombies, Sluts, and Furry Girls that Bark. The other 90 were spotlighted as student films, retrospectives, and showcases of work from artist-run video collective Trinity Video, the Quebec-based production collective Les films de l'autre, and the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre.

In spite of the change in the selection process, the community did not have to worry about inclusion; the entire scale of polymorphously perverse independent filmmaking was represented. Extremes ran from David Gatten's *Hardwood Process*, an experimental short that asks you to consider Heideggerian notions of object, time, and "the workliness of work," to Susan Terrill's simple three-minute beauty, *Straighten Up*, in which we witness the literal—and hilarious—claymation birth of a baby hockey star. Bruce Elder's 40-hour epic *The Book of All the Dead* was screened in its entirety. A cycle consisting of individual films of up to four hours in length, with text and images that merge and conflict, it is surprisingly watchable. This played alongside *Slave 13*, in which the insane and naked Koh Yamamoto undergoes torture and ultimately shits liquid poo into a food container and licks it up; it's a work that asks you to consider—well—you decide. (Yamamoto was winner of the Suspect Video award for Most Extreme Film.) The point is, each of the works reflects the passionate engagement of the filmmaker and the programmers' commitment to images that are intense, extreme, and, as Logue says, "go where no one else wants to go."

Besides the Suspect Award, Images presents two Canadian prizes: the $1,000 (Canadian) Viacom Best Canadian Director Award which this year went to Kika Thorne for *October 25th & 26th*, about the Days of Action general protest that shut down the city of Toronto; and the $5,000 Telefilm Best Canadian Film Award—actually a $5,000 deal with Telefilm Canada—which went to experimental video artist Steve Reinke for *Everybody Loves Nothing*, based on found footage from the Prelinger Archives documenting testosterone implant studies performed on effeminate boys. The Director's Choice awards included Best Narrative, which went to the gritty *Snake Feed* by Deborah Granick; Best Experimental, to *Lost Book Found* by Jem Cohen, an evocative story of the discovery of a book containing a schematic to understanding urban life; Honorable Mention went to Bo Myers's *Tiny Bubbles*, and Best Documentary to Diane Nerwin's *Under the Skin Game*, which examined the political use of Norplant contraceptives.

The coveted Marion McMahon Memorial Award is presented to a woman filmmaker who espouses the qualities McMahon valued—handmade, personal, experimental, exploratory film. The prize is a week-long filmmaking/hand-processing workshop taught by filmmaker Phillip Hoffman at his farm north of Toronto. McMahon, Hoffman's partner, died of cancer late in 1996. This year's prize went to Jennifer Reeves for her experimental narrative *Chronic*, a story of psychosis and alienation, where a young girl is swept into mental illness.

There was a rumor circulating at the festival that Bruce Elder had once bet a fellow filmmaker $1,000 that there would never be a Canadian screening of the *Book of All the Dead* cycle that was appropriate to the film's tone. At the conclusion of the three-day marathon session held in the cafe (free coffee provided), Elder lost his bet.

Barbara Mainguy is a Toronto writer and filmmaker. Her four-minute film The Front Seat *won the People's Choice Award. She swears the award in no way influenced the tone of this article.*