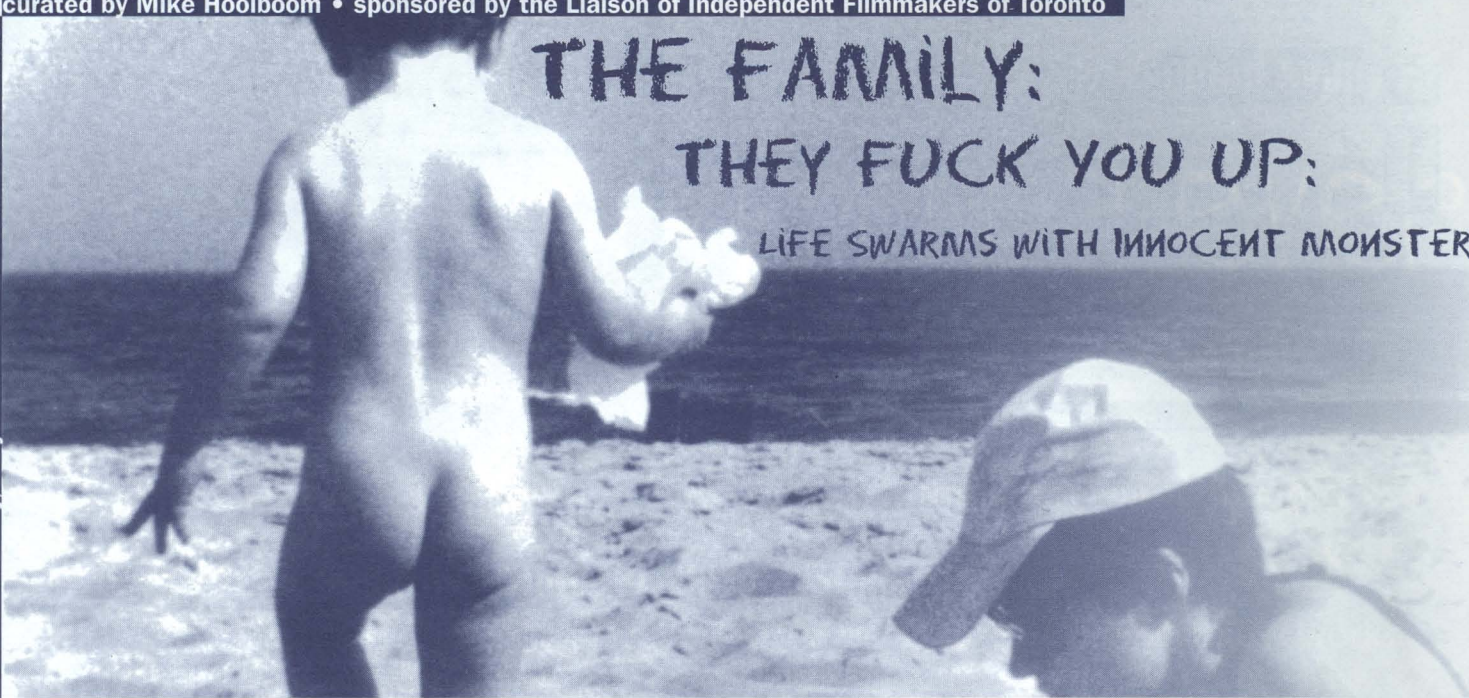


THE FAMILY: THEY FUCK YOU UP:

LIFE SWARMS WITH INNOCENT MONSTERS



*When we were little, maybe six or seven, my brother and I would get up in the middle of the night and sneak downstairs to watch the midnight mysteries on television. It sounds funny to say now, but we loved to watch people die. In the daytime we'd practice for hours on the front lawn, crawling and gasping our way towards a perfect death, trying to get it right — until our mother would call us in, embarrassed that the neighbours might see. But every night, as we watched the tube, we knew we shared a secret with broadcast television: it was preparing us for our own end. It was our own death we rehearsed as we pored over **Columbo** and **The Mod Squad** and **Starsky and Hutch**. And we knew also that no detective could solve the mystery of our flesh; that even as children we were already growing older, already dying.*

This two-part programme shows the family at the end of its tether. Here, independent artists draw on the materials of their own lives and refashion codes of intimacy to examine the bewildering mix of chromosomes we call family. Assembled here are some of the very best film and video makers working today, whose images continue to illuminate situations rather than stars. As death, incest, S/M and the trials of growing older are explored in astonishingly rich variety, these works underline Lenin's dictum: that ethics are the aesthetics of the future.



In The Form Of The Letter "X"

In 1985 director Cartmell began **Narratives of Egypt**, a four-part series that deals with the father (**Prologue**), the son (**In the form of the letter "X"**), the lover (**Cartouche**) and the mother (**Farrago**). Throughout, the act of naming doubles as organizing principle and thematic undertow. The second film in the series, **In the form of the letter "X"**, is a signature — a filmic equivalent of Cartmell's name (which is reduced by exhaustive transcription to a simple X). X is the mark of those who cannot write, or who do not know their own names. It is also a crossroads; a meeting place.

Photographed over time against a backdrop of the Canadian Shield, "X" shows Cartmell's son running in slow motion towards the camera, and, in the film's second half, away from it. The music is taken from a Zombies tune whose opening riff is looped and repeated, held in suspension until the song breaks into its opening lines over the final image: "What's your name? Who's your daddy?" Intertitles lifted from Melville's *Pierre* relate the tale of a graveyard search, a hunt through pyramids only to find that the caskets are empty. The search for ancestors is foiled. There will be no return.

Mike Cartmell • 6 min • 1985 • Toronto, ON • CFMDC



H is for House

In this, one of Peter Greenaway's early short films made before **The Falls**, his mature style is already very much in evidence. Though obsessed as usual with order, systems and the means of classification, **H is for House**, unlike his later set pieces, is about home. This is a structuralist's home movie, its alphabetic accounting not yet marking our inexorable progression towards bodily decay and ruin, as Greenaway's camera creates a pastoral frolic suffused with the light of an English countryside.

Peter Greenaway • 7 min • 1976 • London, UK • Zeitgeist



Alpsee

Alpsee, Müller's latest offering, is a frank revisitation of his own **Final Cut**, rendered now in an elegant, high-gloss style and shimmering colour palette borrowed from the 50s. Like **Final Cut**, **Alpsee** revolves around the relationship between mother and son, but while the former devolves into a granular first-person universe, the latter uses dramatic rhetoric to narrate the rhythmic interplay between a young boy's longing and his mother. Photographed with restless inventiveness and an exquisite eye for interiors, **Alpsee** stages a boy's coming of age; the painful shift from infant dependency to mature individuation.

The gorgeous chromatic scheme and high-key lighting mark a significant departure from Müller's narrow-gauge efforts of the 80s, yet he maintains his characteristic syncopation, his grand eye for detail and his resolute focus on the traumas underlying his subject — he reinvests the everyday with a trauma that is alternatively historical and familial. That his empathy with his subjects is so perfectly borne into the apparatus of a materialist film practice makes him one of the fringe's most powerful and most perfect artists.

Matthias Müller • 5 min • 1994 • Germany • Canyon Cinema

In the Form Of the Letter 'X'



TORONTO
PREMIERE

In No Sense

For those who thrilled to Schillinger's previous short, **Between**, this will come as a surprise. While **Between** featured a grainy, hand-processed take on gender-bending, dildos and subversive desire, seen always in a night-time dreamscape, **In No Sense** is cast in the vivid light of day. Photographed in high-gloss colour, it narrates, with haunting ambiguity, the relationship of a father and his young daughter. While the film luxuriates in a pre-adolescent sexuality, it manages to negotiate the treacherous divide between love and lust. Exquisitely shot, with an uncanny sense of framing, **In No Sense**'s immaculate direction offers its audience a darkly-drawn portrait of home.

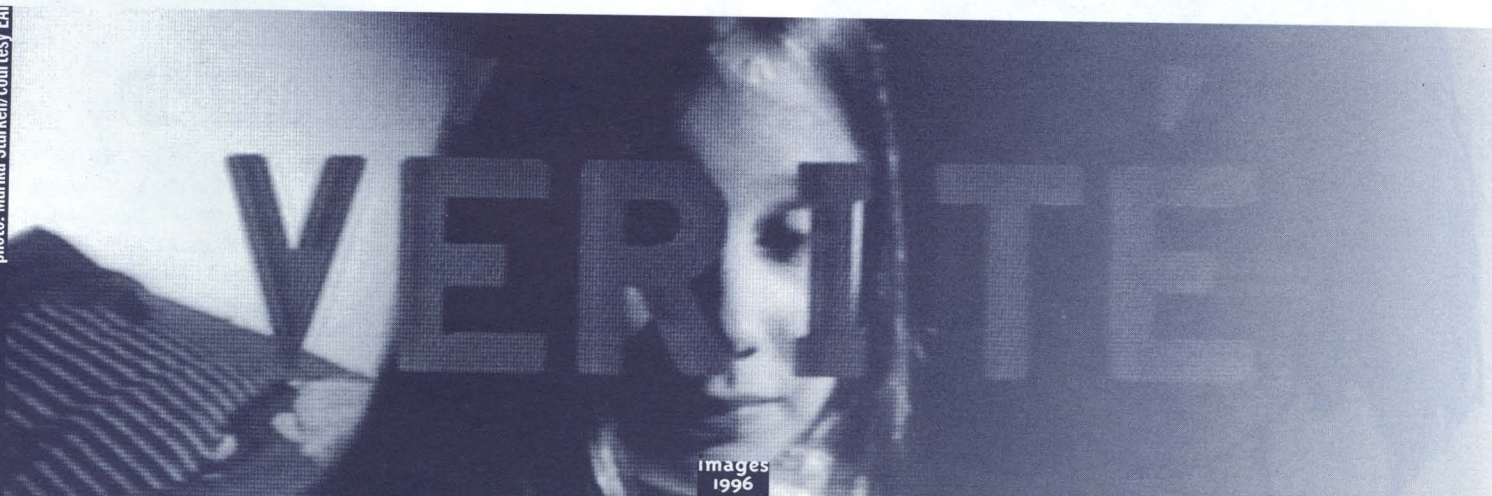
Claudia Schillinger • 10 min • 1992 • Berlin, Germany • artist-distributed

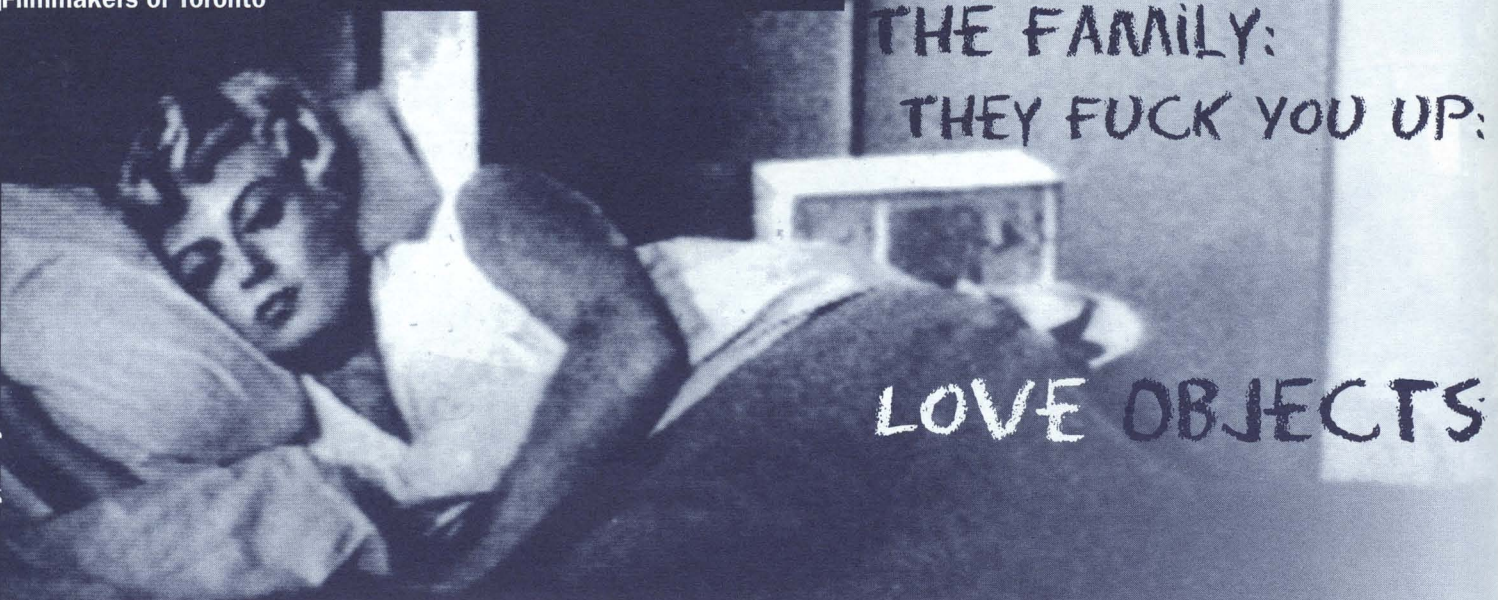


Sink or Swim

This award-winning short has been justly celebrated the world over as a triumph of first-person cinema — a diary whose perfectly measured recollections soar with a grace, intimacy and reassurance rare in any endeavour. Structured as a succession of 26 stories and epilogue, this alphabetic primer of girlhood draws on myth, fairytale and personal reminiscence to draft a painful history of growing older. Impelled by Friedrich's signature grunge photography, **Sink or Swim**'s gorgeously-rendered circuses, muscle-women, brides, Japanese pornography and bathing rituals crowd the screen, as successive voice-overs are recited by thirteen-year-old Jessica Lynn. Her voice takes us backwards through the alphabet, refashioning masculine dictates of history through the rich anecdotal detail and imagination of a woman who has managed to grow older without leaving the past behind; who is prepared to speak again as a child, though informed now by a lifetime of incident and mourning.

Su Friedrich • 48 min • 1990 • New York, NY • CFMDC





THE FAMILY:
THEY FUCK YOU UP:

LOVE OBJECTS

Home Stories



France/tour/détour/enfants Programme 1: Obscur/Chimie

Cinema has always looked at the world less than it has looked at the world looking at it. And when television came along, it quickly replaced the world and didn't look at it anymore. When you watch television, you don't see that television is watching you. — Godard

After his *nouvelle vague* features of the 60s and his polemics of the next decade, in the late 70s Godard hooked up with Anne-Marie Miéville to produce a series of radical television programmes. Miéville had worked as set photographer on **Tout va bien** in 1972, before travelling with Godard to Palestine to co-direct **Ici et ailleurs** the next year. Together they moved to Grenoble and formed Sonimage, a small Swiss studio which would produce several features and some of the most remarkable television ever broadcast.

This is the first of a twelve-part series that imagined television as the new home for the family — the site where "family" was staged and rehearsed. Godard/Miéville visit a single family here whose two young children, girl and boy, form the alternating focus of six pairs of programmes. Tonight's inaugural show focuses on Camille, the blonde innocent who proves an irresistible foil to Godard's hilarious philosophic discourse on being, doubles and the medium of the family itself. Boldly hypnotic and characterized by incisive wit and withering societal critique, **Paris** stands as a testament to the potential of television as it might have been, if spared the task of issuing a pacifying banality.

Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville • 26 min • 1978 • Grenoble, France • French w/ English subtitles • Electronic Arts Intermix



Sorry Suicide Girl

TORONTO
PREMIERE

A low-tech homage to death and desire, **Girl's** symbols of mourning include a photograph of the artist's sister as a teen, months before her suicide. Thorne's hand hovers over the image, looking to reach past the irredeemable divide of death and animate once more her sister's spirit. Thorne's voice sounds throughout, recorded on a failing cassette machine that causes it to run faster and higher in pitch, more closely resembling that of the child she was. Her address is aimed at her present lover, whom she slowly fists. As her fingers enter the other woman's body she remembers her sister, and her lover's cunt becomes a madeleine — source and repository of remembrance.

Kika Thorne • 3 min • 1992 • Toronto, ON • artist-distributed



Asparagus

Rendered in the traditional cel animation style more usually associated with Disney, Pitt's **Asparagus** is a deliriously coloured and carefully-wrought staging of artistic longings, in a distinctly feminist vein. Surreal in application and chromatically delectable, it depicts a woman entering a forest of towering asparagus spears and stroking them slowly — later, she shits them out, their careening toilet-whirl spelling out the film's title. A hallucinogenic meditation on the making of art, **Asparagus'** dark longings and immaculate realization make it one of the hallmarks of American independent animation.

Suzan Pitt • 15 min • 1979 • New York, NY • Canyon Cinema



The Right Side of My Brain

Richard Kern was part of New York's Cinema of Transgression, popularized by chief dude Nick Zedd and fuelled by the porno patois of Lydia Lunch. Here Lunch writes, stars and adds music to this lurid, four-part saga of an isolated nymphomaniac determined to make it with the dirtiest, lowest sleazebags she can find. In a breathy rasp, Lunch delivers a non-stop rap about the body as pleasure palace and torture chamber. She gives a sterling performance as she relentlessly boils down every relation to sex and every sexual act to power. Photographed with rare economy in Super-8, **Right Side** is a primer of the politically incorrect, determined to make its audience squirm.

Richard Kern • 26 min • 1984 • New York, NY • artist-distributed



Sorry Suicide Girl



Mama und Papa: An Otto Muehl Happening

Two major figures of the Austrian avant-garde began their work in the 50s: Peter Kubelka and Kurt Kren. But while Kubelka soon made his way to America and established himself firmly within the pantheon of its burgeoning underground cinema, little note was made of Kren, whose flickering, structuralist studies would receive scant attention until his American migration two decades later. Much of his work applies rigorous editing systems to a carefully-arranged subject, whether photographs of dangerous offenders, trees in autumn or abstract paintings. But he also applied his furious montage technique to collaborations with a pair of notorious Viennese artists: Otto Muehl and Gunter Brus. These performance documents feature a flagrantly transgressive humanity that owes much to Artaud — here, a howling, naked chain of bodies is joined in rituals of blood and sperm, aiming always towards excess, annihilation and ecstasy.

Kurt Kren • 4 min • 1964 • Austria • Canyon Cinema



Pretending We Are Indians

Pretending is a fugue of past and present, as a family's oral history is strained through a sceptical narrator. Deploying an unadorned voice-over, the filmmaker recalls the passing down of stories from previous generations — the myths and secrets that have influenced her own narratives. A succession of step-printed forest walks form the film's spine, its Super-8 original arrested here in a rapid procession of friezes. Between this succession of fall colours are animated vignettes which support the speaker's reminiscences. Beautifully rendered in paint-on-glass tableaux, their evanescence and rapid transformation lend vitality to this recall, as the musings of one generation are scrutinized by the next.

Katharine Asals • 3 min • 1988 • Toronto, ON • CFMDC



Home Stories

Comprised entirely of 1950s Hollywood extracts, **Home Stories** manages an elegant deconstruction of its originals while reconfiguring fragments into a haunting medley of domestic terrors. Discrete scenes of women (peering out windows, running past emptied halls, anxiously turning their heads) are blended ingeniously — with the painstaking craft that marks all Müller's practice — into a single, unified story.

Stripped of their original narratives, these fragments remain nonetheless charged with melodrama and suspense, as their stiff, deliberate blocking moves the protagonists towards the expression of a single heightened emotion. The original narratives have dissolved into the architectures of their surround, which vibrates with a palpable sense of menace. With all of its grand technicolour interiors scrubbed to a uniform shine, Müller reconvenes the home as an architecture designed to contain female desire. His persistent use of frames within frames — doorways, windows and headboards crowd the composition — lends a keen sense of visual enclosure.