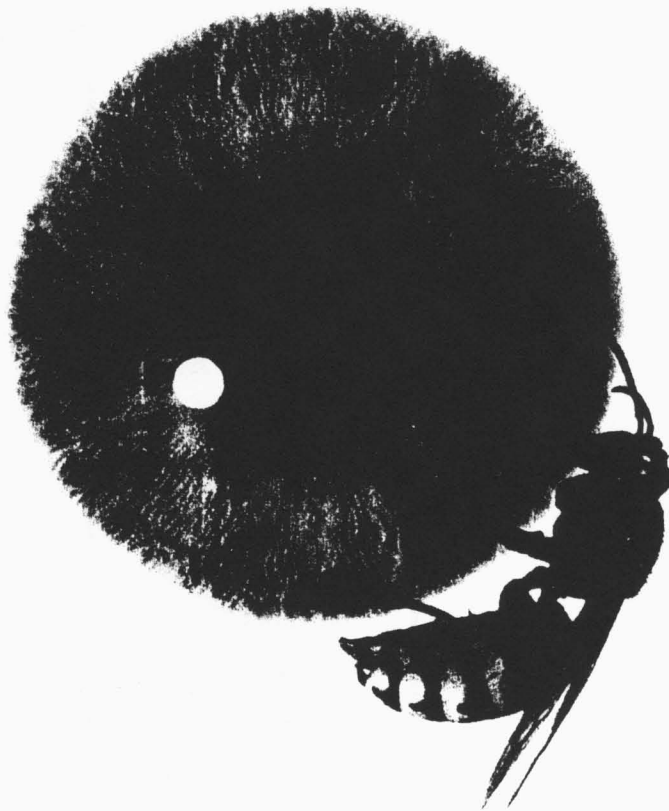


experimenta



FEATURE

Earwitness:



Excursions in Sound

Experimenta Festival
Catalogue 1994
Melbourne

Archaeologies of Gender:

recent Canadian experimental film

(Curated by Mike Hoolboom)



The films in this program, among the best produced in Canada over the past decade, examine the construction of gender identity. While many of the works are intractably personal, their depictions of gender give them an undeniable political efficacy and relevance. The multiplicity of forms and carefully wrought designs of the eight films are testimony to the continuing richness and relevance of experimental film.

Gary Popovich
ARCHAEOLOGY OF MEMORY

(13 mins, 1993, 16mm, col)

Begun with a series of scratches on emulsion then rapidly mutating into a condensed history of representation

Archaeology of Memory filters home-movie memoirs through the century-long practice of public cinema. Lavishly coloured and featuring a multiphonic montage of six image rolls printed together, the strategy to 'begin at the beginning' soon gives way to a phantasmagoria. Two lovers moving in a staccato embrace mark the centre of this centrifuge while beasts roam a universe of images. Frenetic passages of

Super 8 pixilation unwrap pictures of home — Niagara Falls to this filmmaker — as a grotesque public sphere stuffed with wax museums and bad hotels. Beyond these illuminated receptacles are images of a more personal order, where the filmmaker marries the home-movies of his father with his own.

Mike Cartmell
IN THE FORM OF THE LETTER 'X'

(5 mins, 1985, 16mm, col)

As an orphan, Cartmell, ignorant of his origins, adopts this X as his signature. The letter 'X' is derived from the Greek 'chi' (hence Carmell's prod-

uction company: Chiasmus Productions), a term used in rhetoric to denote phrases which 'cross' in the mouth, like 'the bitterness of defeat and the defeat of bitterness'. In the form... is structured like a chiasmus — its images are doubled and reversed. It features two sets of texts, one a chiasmatic rewriting of the first. And two sets of images, one right side up, the other upside down. Photographed over years against the Canadian Shield, In the form... shows Cartmell's son running in slow motion towards the camera. He runs towards the source of the image and of himself, attempting a return to origins the filmmaker insists is impossible.

Steve Sanguedolce

SWEETBLOOD

(13 mins, 1993, 16mm, col)

'Sanguedolce' in English means 'sweet blood'. This resodding of old world heritages marks the passage from father to son in a diary film of immigrants.

Driven by a montage of fragmented voiceovers, *Sweetblood's* pictures are drawn from a family's history of self-representation — the endless heap of family photographs rapidly reshuffled between the filmmaker's lens. Mounting a series of snapshots on foam core boards, then photographing them in single frame abandon, Sanguedolce presents a synoptic personal history. Super-imposed over his photographic frenzy are dream texts presented one line at a time — culled from the maker's dream diaries, they serve as reminders that family history is strained through language, and that the order of the read, the legible, remains the province of the onlooker, the audience.

Ann Marie Fleming
NEW SHOES: AN
INTERVIEW IN EXACTLY
FIVE MINUTES

(5 mins, 1990, 16mm, col)

Made in response to a call for contributions to an independent omnibus production entitled *Five Feminist Minutes*, Fleming's documentary brief is a harrowing account of death, obsession and fantasy. It relates the story of a friend, Gaye Fowler. After breaking up with a lover Fowler is subject to phonecalls, sudden visits and threats. One day just before going to work he arrives at her front step waving a shotgun.

She tries to run back inside the house but he shoots her in the back. Then he shoots himself. He is dead instantly while she is left behind — to speak and to remember. While Fowler recounts her horrifying experience in a conventional documentary talking head, numerous cut-aways show the filmmaker dressed in fairy princess garb. Coloured shards dance round the princess, lending her a whimsical fairytale air, innocent foil to the onscreen confessional.

Gariné Torossian
VISIONS

(5 mins, 1992, 16mm, col)

Torossian burst onto the Canadian experimental film scene with this hand-made student short, a screaming dervish of wounded sensibilities and riot girl attitudes. Lacking a 16mm camera, Torossian shot a couple of rolls of Super 8 before chancing upon a discarded bag of 16mm clear emulsion and magnetic stock. Using this clear emulsion as a base she began a painstaking montage of her original footage, laying film on film in a kinetic montage of fleeting fragments. The images reveal glimpses of women's bodies, a dancer at work, a woman naked in paroxysms of self-induced pleasure. Breaking the flow of these multiplying vantages are a series of hand-written texts scratched directly into black leader. *Vision's* wounded emulsions are set to a howling extract from Canadian new music composer R. Murray Schafer's *Equus*, a choral swell that lends voice to its outraged inhabitants, howling back from a history of framing and enclosure.

David Rimmer
AS SEEN ON TV

(15 mins, 1986, 16mm, col)

As Seen On TV may be seen as the avant garde's response to television. It is a frank exploration of the effects of televised spectacle, using a variety of stock images to conjure a universe of delirium and death. The film opens with TV's 'Toni Twins', blonde smilers advertising hair permanents who emerge slowly from a door, figured here as the portal of media spectacle. This couple opens and closes the film, moving back through a door at the film's end, providing a frame of greeting and departure, their blank-eyed stare an invitation to the brave new world of electronic delirium. A series of tableau ensue, each similarly transformed electronically. Between these moments of excess, and separated from them by a foreboding audio signature, lies a naked man caught in the grip of epileptic seizure, his pained gestures of recoil simulating masturbation in the enclosure of his solitude.

Kika Thorne
WHATEVER

(20 mins, 1993, video, col)

Whatever takes up the thorny issues of race and identity in an elegant weave of experimental portrait, racial exposition, diary work and 'coming out' film. The effect is an inventory of personal experience framed within questions of colour and its attendant host of invisible ideologies. Rife with a lyrical exposition, *Whatever* evolves around the talking head tales of

Courtney McFarlane, a young black gay male who speaks of his lost patois, the importance of a black lover and the invisibility of blacks in gay porn. Animated, funny and reflective, McFarlane's insistence on the political motivations behind private conceits, on a race-based understanding of his own desire, informs the swarm of white woman images which surround him. Imbued with a rapid and episodic montage, *Whatever* moves between McFarlane's recollections with a deft and restless camera work, lensing a portrait gallery of girls at play. Interleaved with McFarlane's racial expositions it is impossible not to see these friends at play as 'white', engaged in the reproduction of 'whiteness'.

Francois Morin
THE EVIL SURPRISE

(15 mins, 1993, 16mm, col)

"Technology is the knack of arranging the world so we don't have to experience it." Morin labours beneath this dictum to produce a hallucinatory optical printer film comprised of science segments, outtakes of 1950s films and frankly psychedelic releases, all joined in a riotous howl of overlays, wit and imagination. A blistering deconstruction of the utopian scientific vision of the 1950s, *The Evil Surprise* deconstructs from within, assuming a technocratic pallor in its travelling matte montages, each image the ground for the next as hallucination takes the place of rationalism, both figured here as the double-headed spirit that resides within the machine.



Francois Morin's
The Evil Surprise