

# FILM

# VIDEO

## JUNE 1985

## CANADA HOUSE

## CINEMA

Canada House  
Trafalgar Square, London SW1Y 5BJ  
Telephone 01-629 9492 ext. 243/215

## A SEASON OF SUPER-8 FILMS



Super-8 film is having a good deal of exposure at the moment – a package of British Super-8 is currently touring the country through the Film and Video Umbrella, the 2nd International Leicester Super-8 Film Festival begins on May 26th and Channel 4 has committed airtime to a programme on Super-8 filmmaking. But the medium is not new and has been used widely by artists working in film; for instance, think of Stan Brakhage in the States, Klaus Wyborny in Germany and Derek Jarman in Britain. However, its recent incorporation into more mainstream film – **THE ENIGMA OF KASPAR HAUSER**, **MAN OF FLOWERS**, **IN THE WHITE CITY** and **PARIS, TEXAS** to name but a few – is a significant departure from tradition. The reasons for working in Super-8 are many, not least because it is far cheaper to shoot and process on Super-8. But in the films mentioned above it is the grainy, dreamlike quality of Super-8 which is important and in these instances it is the effect of Super-8 which is sought and achieved. However the Super-8 format does present difficulties for the filmmaker who wishes the finished product to achieve a conventional look. Only the most technically proficient Super-8 filmmaker can edit and lay on sound to make a piece of work that begins to approach the quality of 16mm.

It is for this latter reason that we are looking forward to showing the work of Susanne Swibold and Helen Corbett on June 7th, the opening night of the Super-8 Season. These two filmmakers will come to Britain for the Leicester Super-8 Festival, will do a short workshop tour and then join us at Canada House for a screening of their work. This programme of films and the final programme, Super-8 film from Québec, are both being screened at the Leicester Festival and we are pleased to be able to bring them to London audiences. Included in the season are two programmes curated by Dot Tuer and Michael McLean of THE FUNNEL in Toronto and the whole season is designed to show the film range that is possible with a Super-8 camera – documentary, fiction, experimental and animated films are all represented.

TEST RABBIT Programme Two

## PROGRAMME ONE

June 7th 6.30 pm

SUPER-8 GOING ON 16

The completed work of Susanne Swibold and Helen Corbett of Flying Tomato Productions, an all-woman outfit which operates from Alberta, has been transferred onto 16mm and videocassette and will be shown on these formats in Canada House. Susanne and Helen have pioneered techniques of Super-8 filmmaking which result in prints of astonishing quality, indistinguishable much of the time from film made directly on 16mm. Susanne and Helen will both be in Canada House on June 7th to talk about their filmmaking work; in both its technical and content aspects. Their work is wide-ranging and includes poetic/expressive projects and documentaries on conservation and wildlife. Their present and uncompleted project on the

Pribilof Islands in Alaska has received much attention for its documentation of the life of the Aleuts — basically a struggle for survival — and Canada House is pleased to be able to present two films from a projected series of four. The programme on June 7th includes:-

**AMIQ: The Aleut People of the Pribilof Islands, A Culture in Transition.** 1981-3, 58 minutes, colour/sound Super-8 blown-up to 16mm. A portrait of the Aleut communities of St. Paul and St. George, their island environment, their history of servitude and survival and their determination to project their island environment. Narrated by Ilarion Merculieff, St. Paul Island.

**GALAPAGOS ISLANDS** 20 minutes, colour, Super-8 blown-up to 16mm. Wildlife and birds of the islands, used as a stage set for a modern dance group.

**THE STAIR EVENT** 20 minutes, colour/sound Super-8 blown-up to 16mm. Made for the National Research Council of Canada, depicting the public use of stairs in the Commonwealth Games Stadium, during the 1978 Commonwealth Games in Edmonton — Addresses the public safety of stairs in general.

**PLUS WORKS IN PROGRESS...**



LOBLAW'S CHECKOUT GAME  
Programme Three

## PROGRAMME TWO

June 14th 6.30 pm

### A DECADE OF SUPER-8 IN TORONTO The Spirit of Independence.

While enjoying universal appeal, varying economic and socio-political climates have stimulated different modes of Super-8 production in different centres. Super-8 first flourished in Toronto in the mid-seventies shortly after Kodak introduced single system, sync-sound cameras. The existence of production, exhibition and distribution facilities

accommodating the format (such as the Funnel) and recognition from the arts council have been contributing factors in its continued popularity. Michaelle McLean and Dot Tuer have selected two programmes that cover a decade of activity and trace a history which reveals both constancy and innovation, each in its own way a testament to Super-8's inherent anarchic spirit.

**WEATHER BUILDING** by Ross McLaren (1976)  
**IN CAMERA SESSIONS** by Anna Gronau (1979)  
**TREES AND GRASS** by Villem Teder (1980)  
**DOWN ON ME** by John Porter (1980-81)  
**POMEGRANITE CHIC** by Nicolas Jenkins (1982)  
**TEST RABBIT** by Carolyn White (1982)  
**BEAUTY - FOR CONNIE** by Adam Swica (1983)

10 minutes  
5 minutes  
10 minutes  
4 minutes  
10 minutes  
5 minutes  
13 minutes

TOTAL RUNNING TIME: 57 minutes



Not surprisingly, it was in the mid-seventies that Super-8 became a popular format for artists in Toronto, for it was in 1974 that Kodak introduced the first sync-sound, single system Super-8 cameras. Because it was designed for a consumer market (the one-person crew) it offered portability; unobtrusiveness; an astonishing range of sophisticated in-camera special effects in the top of the line models; and was free of institutional/industrial codes or standards. Relatively inexpensive, the format also allowed filmmakers the possibility of owning their own equipment to an extent not possible in larger formats.

Relatively quickly the interest in Super-8 generated support structures such as the Toronto Super-8 Festival (since folded), the Funnel (an artist-run production, exhibition and distribution facility for 16mm, Super 8mm film and related media), and eventually recognition as a viable artistic tool from the provincial and federal arts councils through grants to individuals and organizations. While institutional support has been important, independently organised screenings at bars, cabarets, concerts and in studios, as the artists preferred or the work demanded, have been a constant occurrence.

By choice and for technical reasons, the selections in this programme represent relatively traditional projection modes, and do not indicate the full scope of super-8 production in Toronto during the last decade. It is ironic that such a vital body of work should be so difficult to survey. Its unique traits at once contribute to the vitality of a practice and conspire to limit its visibility.

The flip side of the format's advantages is its fragility; dearth of lab facilities for decent duplication (in the Toronto area at least); and difficulty in distribution. It is not unusual for Super-8 users to never pull prints, and some strong work from the last ten years is no longer available because magnetic sound stripes have disintegrated or images have been severely scratched. There is also a tendency to unique production procedures that has put much Super-8 exhibition in the realm of performance: its presentation requires the presence of the filmmaker to choreograph changes in speed, or a switch of sound tracks or colour filters during projection. Notable examples of such casualties are the work of the Fast Würms duo (Kim Kozzi

and Napo B.) and Rebecca Baird. Their work in the late 70s & early 80s stands out as some of the best of a group of filmmakers whose aesthetics bore the invigorating effect of the punk music scene.

Local use of the format has also included work as, or as a component of, performance or installation such as that by Sandra Meigs, Stephen Niblock, Kim Tomzack and Paulette Phillips. A stunning example of a film performance piece only possible in light and portable Super-8 is **SCANNING** (1981) by John Porter wherein he stands in front of the audience and, cradling a small Super-8 projector under one arm, draws out on the screen the filmed facade of a building in vertical steps that duplicate the filming action. In doing so he reverses the traditional role of the projector and temporarily defeats the hegemony of the frame line by placing the entire 3 minute length of film within a larger image.

The seven films in this programme have been selected for their diversity, but as a whole they trace an evolution in the Toronto film arts from a focus on the apparatus of the film medium to a concern with the construction of images themselves as within the social/personal surrounds. Produced between 1976 and 1983 they eloquently attest to the innovative and lively presence of super-8 in the Toronto cultural arena.

**WEATHER BUILDING** (1976), Colour, Sound, 10 mins, by Ross McLaren

The first half of **WEATHER BUILDING** shows an empty room. Through the window is seen the film's central emblem, the lighted tower at the top of an office building. A series of lighting and camera manipulations cause the planes of light in the room to shift and dissolve into one another. This and the soundtrack of footsteps (of someone who never appears) open for consideration a range of conceptions of filmic space. Part two repeats the "script" of the first half of the film—using a video playback of part one in the 'role' of the **WEATHER BUILDING**. There is no window in this second room, and these variations, together with the repetition, simultaneously explicate and complicate the spatial assumptions established earlier.

**IN CAMERA SESSIONS** (1979), Colour, Sound (18fps), 5 mins, by Anna Gronau

There's a phrase in this film—"Whoever has their finger on the trigger makes the decisions." The trigger of the camera passed between filmmaker (female) and filmmaker (male); the camera is unreliable and distorts images. A power structure is indicated: camera over subject, representational over non-representational, but this order is subverted and called into question by the irrational and material conditions beneath. (Judith Doyle).

**TREES AND GRASS** (1980), Colour, Sound (18fps), 10 mins, by Villem Teder

**TREES AND GRASS** renders visible certain random, semi-random and regular patterns of energy that are usually sensed, but not seen. Using a pixilated shutter motion the stationary camera picks up the quivering of a tree, the fluttering of a section of lawn or clouds going by. Teder likens this investigation to a type of



## PROGRAMME THREE

June 21st 6.30 pm

### THE COMING OF AGE

Toronto Super-8 in 1984-85

scientific research into mathematical models of semi-random patterns found in nature and known as Brownian movement. The soundtrack of notes combined into chords by a random process acts as a counterpoint to the rushing flow of energy depicted in the images. The after image of the final magnificent shot serves as a reminder that it is this very quality of human vision on which the illusion of movement depends. The distinction between still photography and film make **TREES AND GRASS** a uniquely cinematic meditation on nature and natural energies.

**DOWN ON ME** (1980-81), Colour, Silent (18fps), 4 mins by John Porter

The audience shares the camera-eye view of flying up and falling back into the hands of the filmmaker. A cone of illusionary space accords in and out as we ascend and descend in a number of different locations. At times the wildly rotating camera reduces the photographic image to a blur of whirling coloured light. Porter takes full advantage of the portability of Super-8. "Most impressive...unique in my experience of movies" (Jim Hoberman/Village Voice).

**POMEGRANITE CHIC** (1982), Colour, Sound (24fps), 10 mins by Nicolas Jenkins

The mass media, which has appropriated images of sex and violence to entrench the status quo, is the subject of this film. By manipulating this imagery and placing it in new contexts, Jenkins questions the inevitability of film's alliance to dominant social and representational structures. In the filmmaker's own words "My intentions were...to show people a collage of imagery centred around issues that concern me. These issues being fascism, feminism, apathy, homosexuality, masculinity, the mass media, art and entertainment."

**TEST RABBIT** (1982), Colour, Sound, 5 minutes by Carolyn White

An abstract portrait of a young girl's physical and mental journey through the experience of abortion. Against the narrator's voice (female) we see the figure of a girl facing the camera and moving agitatedly, her gestures often threatening the stability of the camera. The sense of confinement in the image and the personal in the text combine to evoke the experience without becoming polemical.

**BEAUTY - FOR CONNIE** (1983), Colour, Sound (24fps), 13 mins by Adam Swica  
Beauty - For Connie is one of a series of five films that Swica produced that deal provocatively with the issue of authority, at work both in the conventional modes of cinematic representation, and in content. Wife Constance Buck is seen dressed in an elaborate wedding gown and very obviously reading from cue cards - prepared speeches on beauty and romance, delivered by Ms. Buck with a very earnestness. "Not the obvious product of any current academic theory of representation, these films make their points through humour, variations in acting technique and by playing artifice against our expectations of authenticity." (Peter Chapman/Opsis).

Michaelle McLean 1985.

**VILLE QUELLE VILLE?** by Midi Onodera (1984)

**HER IMAGE; PRIVATE CONSTRUCTION/PUBLIC DISPLAY**

by Kathleen Maitland-Carter (1985)

**AT THE END OF THE LINE** by Ron Edding, text by Terry Favro (1985)

**1985** by Joseph Tabah (1985)

**UNIONVILLE** by Gloria Berlin (1985)

**CHRONICLE** by Edie Steiner (1985)

**152 PICTURE POSTCARDS** by Nicola Wojewoda (1984)

**FOREVER YOURS** by Sharon Cook (1984)

**LOBLAWS CHECKOUT GAME** by Ferguson & Pascal Sharp (1984)

**THE IDEAL ARTIST** by Peter Gress (1985)

3.5 minutes

5 minutes

13 minutes

10 minutes

8.5 minutes

10 minutes

9.5 minutes

6 minutes

6 minutes

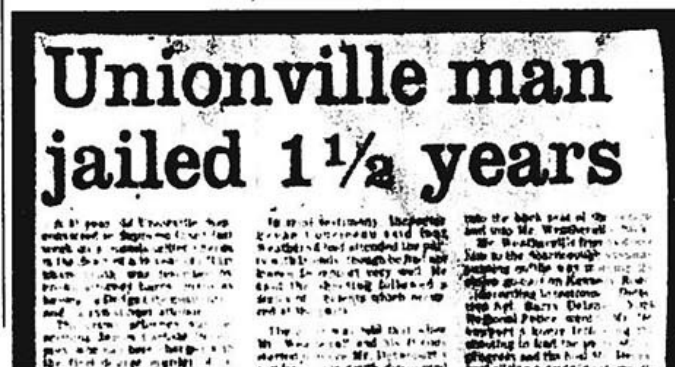
3 minutes

TOTAL RUNNING TIME: 74.5 minutes

Ten years after the availability of the super-8 format created the impetus for sustained production in this medium, an aesthetic specific to the apparatus is emerging. The possibility of locating such an aesthetic arises from a history particular to Toronto and from the diversity inherent in the medium itself. As Michaelle McLean has pointed out in her introductory notes to Programme Two, super-8 was quickly adopted by Toronto artists and filmmakers for its inexpensive, portable, and non-institutional characteristics. Cameras could be easily obtained and utilized; screenings were not limited to a theatre context and often occurred as a personal venture among friends in an ad-hoc setting of someone's home or a local bar or gallery. For filmmakers concerned with a larger dissemination of their work, however, the limited distribution of the medium ultimately proved frustrating. Thus many of the more established Toronto filmmakers work in a combination of super-8 and 16mm, often using super-8 films as sketches for more ambitious projects or transferring them to video or 16mm formats. One notable exception to this practice is the work of John Porter (see programme one). As a result, super-8 becomes a medium which reflects in an immediate and visceral way the shifting concerns of the Toronto film community and the emergence of younger, less known, filmmakers. The artists working today in super-8 differ in approach from earlier filmmakers and often from each other. They are less informed by an experimental film history and more influenced by their own position as producers in a fashion-saturated, media-proliferated age of communication. Thus current production in super-8 can be seen as more conceptually than technically sophisticated; in which filmmakers turn from formalist strategies towards an interest in the medium as a subject rather than

an object of representation.

Most of the filmmakers I have chosen to illustrate a contemporary range of super-8 concerns in Toronto are relative newcomers to the medium. They are musicians, painters, and writers to whom the super-8 camera functions as a tool of investigation that parallels their exploration of expression in a variety of mediums. In the hands of these filmmakers, the super-8 camera becomes a paintbrush, a typewriter, a solo instrumental; a means of production in the larger concern of the Toronto art scene to locate the creative impulse as a subject of representation. Similar to an explosion of neo-expressionist painting which has dramatically altered the focus of the plastic arts in Toronto in the last five years, many of these films employ narratives which are constructed around the filmmaker and his/her context for social interaction. These narratives take root in a concern for the subject's construction as a simulation in images of representation. As such, these are films of media children, television babies; films which struggle to locate a personal and political context for meaning within the confines of a projected frame of reference. And as such, these films function as inter-disciplinary fragments of a larger post-modernist crisis of authenticity. The search of the 1970's for an alternative imaging which would reveal a revolutionary perception of vision has been supplanted by a focus upon the context for this vision. Tentative, diverse, disruptive in their strategies; these films suggest the interest of emerging Toronto filmmakers to locate themselves and their practice in a subjective field of images which at once undermines and reconstructs the position of the subject within dominant codes of representation.



UNIONVILLE Programme Three

**VILLE QUELLE VILLE?** (1984), Super-8, Sound, Colour, by Midi Onodera. Midi Onodera is a Toronto filmmaker and writer currently working as Equipment Manager for the Funnel Experimental Film Centre. She is actively involved in the production of a local music fanzine Dr. Smith, and writes a regular column on super-8 film production for the magazine. Her earlier work in super-8 filmmaking explored the possibility of imaging women's subjective relationship to a world constructed through male-dominated codes of representation. In **VILLE QUELLE VILLE**, she moves into the genre of the film-poem, utilizing a voice-over to emphasize the disjunction of the documentary image and the subjective impressions which constitute a woman's internal reality.

**HER IMAGE; PRIVATE CONSTRUCTION/PUBLIC IMAGE** (1985), Super-8, Sound, Colour, by Kathleen Maitland-Carter. Kathleen Maitland-Carter is presently a student at the Ontario College of Art where she studies film and video. **HER IMAGE; PRIVATE CONSTRUCTION/PUBLIC IMAGE** represents a sophisticated conjunction of a woman's private obsession with the hidden taboo of menstruation into images of women which reveal while they disguise the power of blood and its connection to violence and sexuality.

**AT THE END OF THE LINE** (1985), Super-8, Colour, Sound on cassette, by Ron Edding, written by Terry Favro. Ron Edding is a Toronto painter whose film, **AT THE END OF THE LINE**, marks the beginning of a collaboration with Toronto free-lance writer, Terry Favro. In their film, the construction of seemingly disjointed images is fused with the fantasies of a woman talking to another woman which she has contacted by random probability through the telephone book. Sexual encounters, anonymous yet intimately connected bureaucracies, paranoid delusions, and mathematical probabilities collide in this metaphor for personal relationships in a modern city.

**1985** (1985), Super-8, Black & White, Sound, by Joseph Tabah. Joseph Tabah is a Toronto painter whose films explore the relationship of visual images to subjective vision and dream-induced states of perception. In **1985**, he employs the conjunction of a video monitor, a sole musician acting out a rock star fantasy, and the static image of a woman lying on a couch to comment upon the media's framing of pop culture, and to produce what he terms a humorous rock musical.

**UNIONVILLE** (1985), Super-8, Colour, Sound, by Gloria Berlin. Gloria Berlin is the drummer for an all-woman band, Fifth Column. Although she has worked in collaboration with John Porter to produce a body of films which are screened simultaneously with the band's performances, **UNIONVILLE** is her first independent production. Based on the 'true' story of a murder committed by an acquaintance of hers in a small Canadian town, the film re-constructs the media's coverage of the event while a voice-over recounts the context for the murder as a dialogue between two women friends of the murderer. Evocative of the publicity which

created a Charles Manson story, the film points to the sensationalism that accompanies modern representation and the inability of the subject to extricate him/herself from the mass media's framing of information.

**CHRONICLE** (1985), Super-8, Sound, Colour and B/W, by Edie Steiner. Edie Steiner is a Toronto musician and photographer whose films explore a personal narrative through college techniques. In **CHRONICLE**, she has composed a soundtrack to accompany the visual documentation of a visit to New York City which becomes increasingly fragmented and abstract as the film progresses. The disjunction/conjunction of sound and image provide a lyrical evocation of passage while suggesting the swirl of images and accompanying anxieties which constitute the re-production of a lived experience of voyage.

**152 PICTURE POSTCARDS** (1984), Sound, Colour, Super-8, by Nicola Wojewoda. Nicola Wojewoda is a Toronto painter associated with the emergence of a neo-realist/expressionist movement. Her film undermines our investment in a factitious representation of the world by constructing a simulation of Canada's east-coast scenic moments, and then erupting this seamless 'beauty' by introducing the soundtrack of a Frank Sinatra love song. Humorous in its mockery of our perception of a reality composed by postcards and pop songs, it nevertheless seeks to reconstruct at the same time the possibility for an authentic relation between the viewer and the clichés of tourism which inform our sentimentality of vision.

**FOREVER YOURS** (1984), Sound, Colour, Super-8, by Sharon Cook. Sharon Cook is a Toronto painter, musician and performance artist whose work is concerned with the relationship of animals, sounds, and the human form that is derived from primitive and amorphous sources. In **FOREVER YOURS**, however, she uses the feline symbol as a signification of our separation from these sources in the social context of a modern society. The film is composed of a number of 3-D greeting cards of cats overlaid with a choral composition of voices which recite the banal

poems that accompany these cards. As the voices join in unison to mark the occasions of death, birth, marriage, and illness which prompt the use of these absurd images, the film suggests the relationship of representation to a consumer society's obsession with both social convention and euphemism.

**LOBLAWS CHECK-OUT GAME** (1984), Sound, Colour, Super-8, by Munro Ferguson and Pascal Sharp. In **LOBLAWS CHECK-OUT GAME**, simulation is encapsulated in cardboard ladies traversing a board of miniature supermarket items while plastic shopping carts pass across the frame full of tiny replicas of consumer products. This is a 'teeny-vision' of the cinema, characteristic of these filmmakers' humorous obsession with the diminutive dimensions of a reality that accompanies a consumer-orientated society. In all their works, models supplant a cinema verité, and narrative becomes a function of a reconstructed representation that operates in a closed system of toys and studio settings. As a collaborative team, Munro Ferguson and Pascal Sharp enter the super-8 arena from diverse studies in philosophy and theatre. Their latest film, **GREEK CIVILIZATION**, is a thirty minute epic which retells the Greek classics of literature using household objects and miniature dolls and animals.

**THE IDEAL ARTIST** (1985), Sound, Colour, Super-8, by Peter Gress. Peter Gress is a Toronto filmmaker who has developed a distinctive style of super-8 production that constantly and incessantly references his own position within the construction of a filmic 'reality'. All his films are concerned with a search to frame himself as both the object and the creator of an image. In **THE IDEAL ARTIST** we are given a satirical glimpse at the clichés which sustain his own production as an artist. The filmmaker's obsession with finding the 'true' image of the artist is constantly deflected by both his own inscription as the simulator of this reference, and the actual mechanisms of editing and shooting which disrupt any affectation of a documentary realism.

Dot Tuer 1985



## PROGRAMME FOUR

June 28th 6.30 pm

### SUPER-8 FILMS FROM QUEBEC

This programme was first shown as part of the recent Montreal Super-8 Film Festival which is organised by the Association pour le Jeune Cinéma Québécois and has been selected for us

from their programme by Laraine Porter Director of the Leicester International Super-8 Film Festival and Jo Comino, independent filmmaker and film critic.

**FORÊT NOIRE** by Richard and Patrick Bergeron and Mario Couturier  
**LA LONGUE MARCHÉ DE BÉNO ET ZÉDA** by Denis Laplante (1984)  
**SHAKE IT** by Oliver Patterton (1984)  
**MEETING** by Claude Lamonico (1984)  
**EN DEDANS DE L'ESPACE** by Mario Desbiens (1983)  
**AU PROGRAMME AUJOURD'HUI** by Pierre Jodoin (1984)  
**PORTRAIT DE SOIE** by Lyne Beaulieu (1984)  
**FOR SANDRA** by Olivier Dyens (1984)  
**ARRIÈRE-SCÈNE** by Pierre Guérin and Louise Thérault (1984)

15 minutes  
 18 minutes  
 4 minutes  
 5 minutes  
 17 minutes  
 8 minutes  
 11 minutes  
 4 minutes  
 19 minutes

TOTAL RUNNING TIME: 101 minutes

The programme notes that follow have been freely translated from the French descriptions contained in the Montreal Super-8 Festival Catalogue.

**FORÊT NOIRE** (fiction/colour) This piece parodies adventure films with their obligatory invincible hero and perilous escapades.

**LA LONGUE MARCHÉ DE BÉNO ET ZÉDA** (fiction/colour) On that particular morning Zéda was certain that only one possible solution remained: she had to leave. But for Béno things were turning out differently. For him, it was clear

that the only real thing, the only thing that now mattered in his life was to follow her... to follow her to the end.

**SHAKE IT** (animation/colour) Using the technique of pixillation, this film traces the evolution of dance through different historical periods.

**MEETING** (fiction/B&W/silent) A young man has a meeting with his girlfriend after work—in the office he awaits this moment impatiently but when he finally gets ready to leave work the boss comes in and...

**EN DEDANS DE L'ESPACE** (experimental B&W) A film without dialogue or narration which puts three people/objects into spatial relationship to each other in an unusual place.

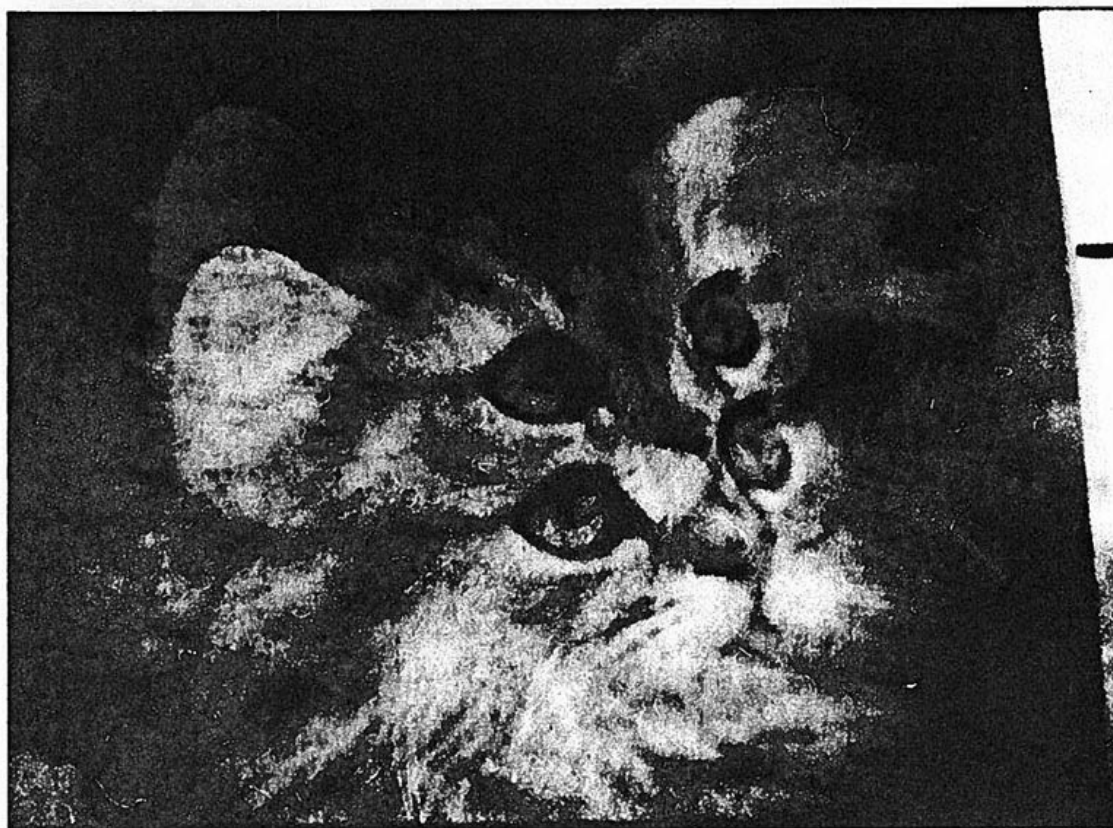
**AU PROGRAMME AUJOURD'HUI** (experimental/colour) A film full of black humour where the absurdity and the stupidity of man are right up front. A contrast between interior tranquillity and exterior madness. But time passes and tomorrow will be another day.

**PORTRAIT DE SOIE** (fiction/colour) A tale for grown-ups. The protagonist tries to find a way of coping with reality through dreams. She meets different people who suggest different ways of achieving freedom of expression and well-being.

**FOR SANDRA** (experimental/colour) About death and separation from loved ones. A film about solitude and time.

**ARRIÈRE-SCÈNE** (fiction/colour) Following an unforeseen encounter Maude discovers through Francois the different aspects of his life as a player.

Many thanks to Laraine Porter, Jo Comino, Dot Tuer, Michaele McLean, Susanne Swibold and Helen Corbett.



FOREVER YOURS Programme Three