

BRANDY BAYES AS BERNICE



▶ **The Eye Like a Strange Balloon Mounts Towards Infinity (A. Edgar Poe 1882) By Odilon Redon**

Directed by Guy Maddin; Koninck Productions (U.K.); 4 mins.; 16mm.

The appearance of a new film by Winnipeg's Guy Maddin, however short, is almost in and of itself cause for celebration. Since 1992's *Careful*, Maddin's startlingly inventive cinematic imagination has been conspicuous by its absence. This new short film was commissioned by two British producers for BBC 2's *Picture House* series. Maddin was asked, along with Atom Egoyan, Raoul Ruiz, Paul Schrader and Krzysztof Zanussi, to choose a painting, drawing or sculpture and make a four-minute film about it. Maddin selected a drawing by 19th century French artist Odilon Redon, who illustrated Charles Beaudelaire's translations of Edgar Allen Poe. Densely textured and poetically compressed, *The Eye Like a Strange Balloon...* is the tortured tale of a ferocious struggle between a sub-aquatic railroad engineer and his son for the affections of the beautiful, orphan snail girl, Bernice. With its marvelously murky *mise-en-scène* and haunting evocation of a *fin-de-siècle* world warped by desire and irrationality, Maddin's film is a miniature masterpiece of *l'amour fou*. Often wrongly compared to American director David Lynch, this short work confirms that Guy Maddin is more accurately a modern Canadian counterpart of Luis Buñuel or Jean Virgo. Here's hoping it also confirms that one of Canada's most original cinematic talents will create his extraordinary images on a more frequent basis in the years to come.

Unbound

Directed by Claudia Morgado Escanilla; Ojos de Luna Productions; 19 mins.; 16mm.

Vancouver-based filmmaker Claudia Morgado's *Unbound* is an intelligent and amusing exploration of a culturally contradictory part of the female body politic. A playful and politically potent documentary on women's relationships to their breasts, *Unbound* is also a revealing record of how

restrictive cultural attitudes towards the female anatomy can be subverted by simply removing a piece of clothing. More than a set of interviews, Morgado's imaginative film is really a self-consciously stylized and (dare I say it?) post-modern cinematic breast self-examination. Posing in replicas of well-known works by Da Vinci, Kahlo, Velázquez and Caravaggio, 16 different women directly address and undress for the camera while discussing, with humour and insight, the significance of their breasts in their lives and in their various cultural traditions. Joyous and witty, *Unbound* is an impressive affirmation of female sensuality delivered with equal measures of delight and defiance.

Shore Lines

Directed by Dan Sokolowski; SOK Cinema; 7 mins.; 16mm.

For over a decade, Ottawa animator and independent filmmaker Dan Sokolowski has been quietly assembling an accomplished body of work. His sixth and most recent film, *Shore Lines*, is an understated and effective investigation of the cinema's ability to represent the world while simultaneously altering our perceptions of it. Sokolowski integrates these open-ended theoretical questions into his filming of three metal sculptures (a man, a bird, a caribou) by Ontario artist William Conly. Filmed on the rugged shores of Lake Superior, the three sculptures are observed, recorded, even sculpted cinematically by Sokolowski's acute sense of composition. Regarded by the camera from various angles and in varying degrees of proximity, the sculptures are also juxtaposed in Sokolowski's editing to suggest imagined interactions. In its deceptively simple construction, *Shore Lines* explores the rich implications of context, perspective and spatial orientation in manufactured images. The film also ponders how the camera affects how we see what we see in surprising ways. Within its minimalist and seemingly conservative style, Sokolowski's *Shore Lines* asks radical and relevant questions about how we look at the world, with or without a camera.

Sisters of Influence

Directed by Dana Warren; See Level Ltd.; 25 mins.; 16mm/video.

A missed opportunity is the most appropriate way to characterize Dana Warren's *Sisters of Influence*, an earnest but disappointing look at a fascinating fragment of Newfoundland cultural history. Describing itself as "an obvious celebration" of the Sisters of Mercy of St. George's, the film does usefully and lovingly describe the important work done by women for the Catholic church, work often barely acknowledged in official church history. *Sisters* chronicles the educative and social influence of the many dedicated nuns over a 100-year period with interviews, archival footage and dramatizations. Despite illuminating the role of the church in educating remote sections of Newfoundland, the film's reliance on oral history and personal memory reduces to reverential silence any possible criticism or skepticism about the role of the church in Newfoundland's social, political and cultural development. Made, as Warren states, "in a climate of church-bashing," the film attempts to celebrate the accomplishments of its subject. That it does so is valuable; how it does so risks exchanging one form of silence for another.

▶ *Correction: In TAKE ONE NO. 8's Shorts column John Hopkins's PORTFOLIO was misdated at 1980. It was made in 1990.*