

Juanita Peters's
I Made a Vow



Ed Gass-Donnelly's
Pink



Ingrid Veninger's
and Charles Officers's
Urda/Bone



The New York films were a refreshing jolt. There remains a tendency at ReelWorld to favour “nice” politically correct films over controversial fare. With filmmakers of colour relegated to the fringes of the industry, it’s here that North America’s most unique and cutting-edge voices will emerge. ReelWorld is in prime position to launch these careers. But will it? Will the industry respond or continue to overlook filmmakers of colour? To be fair, Canadian film and television have recently launched funds and initiatives tailored to filmmakers of colour, but there remains a huge lag between Canada’s real, diverse population and what it sees onscreen. At a jam-packed seminar, seven gatekeepers (all white), facing an audience of filmmakers (all people of colour), wrestled with this notion. The seminar climaxed when a 63-year-old black mother of two told the panel that she heard these same issues discussed 20 years ago. She pleaded with the gatekeepers to have the courage, like ReelWorld, to put more people of colour on-air and onscreen. She hit it on the nose when she said, “When you don’t see yourself, you don’t venture in.”

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Images Festival

(4/15–24/04)

By Lindsay Gibb

The one thing that a festival such as Images (which now includes film, video, new media, performance and installation) suffers from is an overabundance of pretentious work. Another is the lack of tangible storylines to satiate the average filmgoers’ needs. After one screening, I heard the person behind me say, “now I need to go home and watch some television.” For the initiated, however, and those who were willing to try something different, this year Toronto’s Images Festival was full of innovative filmmaking and performance pieces.

Pretend, Julie Talen’s opening-night film, told the story of two young sisters who wanted to keep their parents from getting divorced. Talen created a collage by simultaneously taking moments in the different character’s lives and capturing them in squares scattered across the screen on top of blurry lines of colour. The film, mixed with digital video, was a stunning piece of art. However, with a profusion of abstract ideas at play, many of the films shown at Images truly tested the limits of the average person’s attention span, and many of the feature-length ones would have benefited from a shorter running time. Harun Farocki’s *War at a Distance* was one such film. Using war-training films and footage of bombs dropping, this 58-minute piece showed that in preparation for war, the focus is more on the machinery than on the people. The film ended up feeling like an instructional video and quickly became painfully boring.

The short films are the real gems at this festival. One program, called *A Fine Balance*, began with Shiho Kano’s gorgeous *Lily in the Glass*. Lighting is the key to this film, which pays close attention to the petals of a lily glowing brightly in a glass against black surroundings. Water pours into the glass, and reflects light that twinkles and dances across the table. Each snippet in the life of the lily lasts for seconds and then disappears in a wave of blinding white light. On the same program Inger Lise Hansen used time-lapse photography to show the deterioration and movement of land and sea. *Adrift* captures high-speed shots of ice breaking up and

floating across water and dirt, moving and making new patterns in the earth, all to the sound of the whistling wind. One longer-form film that did manage to maintain interest throughout was a compilation of 14 short films brought together to make a trance-inducing whole. Clive Holden's *Trains of Winnipeg* is a package of art forms that complement each other in captivating ways. Using poems, music and film to wrench a range of feelings from his audience—beginning with cynicism, moving to nostalgia, adding on discomfort and ending with yearning—*Trains of Winnipeg* runs the gamut of human emotions.

While all of the works at Images were programmed to evoke a reaction from the audience, one collection of films was programmed specifically to elicit the audience's disgust. Jubal Brown's *Self Defecating Theatre of Cruelty* was put together by a group of filmmakers and artists who were instructed to think of something that disturbed them severely, and then commit it to film. The films were shown to a (presumably) masochistic audience. Bodily functions shown backwards became an obvious theme early on when a piece called *Structural/Materialist Regurgitation* revealed itself to be about a man vomiting in reverse over and over again. Later an anus sucks back in everything that it previously shat out on-camera in a film called *Penetration*. Though the program did what the creator wanted it to, which was to make the audience feel uncomfortable, it also had its moments of entertainment. One piece called *Over*



Clive Holden's *Trains of Winnipeg*

Inger Lise Hansen's *Adrift*



Shiho Kano's *Lily in the Glass*

the Top (A Brief Hint) began with a montage of "badge and gun scenes," which were scenes taken from cop movies and television shows where the chief asks the main character to hand over his or her badge and gun. It's pretty hilarious to discover just how many scenes like this were put on film.

The finest work of art at the festival was the closing-night piece, which wasn't so much a film as a live mimicry of one. Daniel Barrow's *The Face of Everything* was live using an overhead projector and numerous transparencies overlapping each other, creating action, texture and the feeling of an animated film. Barrow's live narration of the story was so smooth and steady, it felt recorded. While some filmmakers can send their filmic offspring from festival to festival without accompanying them, take away Barrow's presence and his baby would be stillborn.

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Daniel Barrow's *The Face of Everything*

