

this is a story

2005 4mins *prod* Picture Plant, *p/d/sc/narr* William D. MacGillivray, *ph* Kent Nason, *ed* Christopher Cooper; *with* Joseph Rutten, Morgan Salter (voice).

Nova Scotia-based director William D. MacGillivray's (*Life Classes*, *Understanding Bliss*, et al) latest work is a short film as startling in its simplicity as it is vertiginous in its thematic possibilities. As the camera passes slowly over a naked male body (Rutten) lying perfectly still upon a deep black background, MacGillivray's voiceover speaks eloquently about the body, time, memory, identity and the imperative of narrative. "We are all longing for light in the darkness," he intones, and so, he continues, we sing songs, tell tales and move through vast solitudes with stories toward one another and then apart again. Recalling his previous short *Linda Joy* (1985), a film that explores with breath-taking economy matters of life and death, *this is a story*, composed entirely of a single graceful shot, evokes the relationship—in life and in art—between the ephemeral and the permanent. It also underscores the cinema's paradox of showing life as it records life's inevitable movement to death. With its clear Canadian echoes of Samuel Beckett and Robert Bresson, MacGillivray's work is a modernist marvel in miniature that speaks of itself as it speaks to us. It's the drama of thought made manifest in sounds and images.

Escape

2005 19mins *prod* Canadian Film Centre, *p* Lea Marin, *d/sc* Sean Frewer, *ph* Samy Inayeh, *ed* Gareth Jones; *with* Stephen Bogaert, Kimwun Pehinec, Michèle Duquet.



SHORT TAKES



Out there in the scrubbed suburbs of Anywhere Canada, where *The Adjuster's* Noah Render used to live, a nameless couple is dealing with the death of their child. The fastidious interiors of their huge home now house a riot of emotional pain, confusion and anger. While he (Bogaert) goes off to work, she (Pehinec) becomes increasingly involved in an underground culture of death, sneaking out of the house at night to watch what appear to be snuff films at a clandestine cinema to which she was introduced by a seemingly equally troubled neighbour. Images of extreme violence are absorbed, replayed and internalized as she drafts a personal classified ad to find release from her pain. Aside from its Egoyanesque overtones, the film weaves together elements of Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*, Cronenberg's *Videodrome* and Leon Marr's *Dancing in the Dark*. Austere and absorbing, *Escape* is a convincing descent into a maelstrom of anguish and, ultimately, deadly despair. While the occasionally mannerist soundtrack threatens to drown all the quiet desperation with denotative musical distress signals, promising writer/director Sean Frewer wisely never permits it to linger too long. There is a great, appalling sadness at work in this film, an unflinching vision of lives unlivable.

Gary's Touch

2005 26mins *prod* Independent Filmmakers Cooperative of Ottawa, *p/d/sc/ph/ed* Ken Takahashi.

When you think of Ottawa, what comes to mind? Quiet, orderly streets, the boring bustle of bureaucrats, pampered politicians, Paul Anka? Think again. Ottawa is also a place of lonely, marginalized figures haunting its postcard cityscapes. Cinematically speaking, we need only recall the works of Ottawa's late Frank Cole and, in more antic versions of marginality, the films of Lee Demarbre. Ken Takahashi's dramatic short, produced at the Independent Filmmakers Cooperative of Ottawa, is the disturbing tale of Gary, a grimy and sad character who brings a bag lady back to his cramped, subterranean apartment for some of the most awkward and decidedly twisted sex in all of Canadian cinema. *Gary's Touch* flirts with the pornographic as it pushes deep into the psychoses of its protagonist. And Gary's is indeed an obscure psychology, a slimy admixture of narcissism and self-loathing; his obsession with his own semen (he keeps, *à la* Howard Hughes, the stuff in a freezer) reflects both his isolation and his pathological obsession with reproducing himself. Reminiscent of the creepy early works of Guy Maddin and Jeff Erbach, and mining similarly febrile veins of desire and disgust, *Gary's Touch* is a gritty, realist work that impresses with its consistency of tone, *mise en scène* and rigorous, troubling intelligence. All this, plus a version of the Immaculate Conception worthy of Luis Buñuel.

Sean Frewer's *Escape*