



## In Memoriam

2001 18m, 16mm, prod Canadian Film Centre, d Aubrey Nealon

What's going on up on the farm? Is the Canadian Film Centre a hotbed of radical politics? In that unlikely urban bucolic setting, the notion seems preposterous. Nevertheless, over the last few years several short films from the Centre (see last year's *Ernest*, for example) have delivered some of the most incisive attacks on neo-conservative ideology and spirit deadening consumer capitalism to be found anywhere in Canadian cinema. Aubrey Nealon's *In Memoriam* is another example; a droll drama revolving around a junior financial adviser who finally gets his big break. Tom is assigned to the prestigious, if slightly perverse portfolio of a very wealthy client; trouble is, the client is dead. Informed matter-of-factly by his predecessor that "the dead have more money than the living," Tom's task is to manage the lucrative accounts of the deceased magnate and, as explicitly ordered in his will, to spend all accumulated interest on the upkeep of the gravesite. In an uninteresting and predictable subplot, he is also pursued by the late client's daughter, who begs him to ignore the will. Where others in the firm have failed, Tom resolves to succeed for the "loved one" who has, even after death, money to burn. Don't be fooled by its conventional short dramatic structure: smartly designed and executed, *In Memoriam* is an absurdist, subversive take on North American materialism.

## FILM (dzama)

2001, 23m, 16mm, d deco dawson

If you thought *Thirty-Two Short Films about Glenn Gould* was an inventive portrait of the artist as a strange man, wait until you see this murky, messy marvel about renowned Winnipeg visual artist, Marcel Dzama. Winner of the NFB Best Short Film Award at the 2001 Toronto International Film Festival, *FILM (dzama)* weaves its Buñuel-meets-Dali-meets-Man Ray silent era avant-garde dramatic pastiche around a young boy

looking through a keyhole into the warped studio of an artist who labours over a high, distorted desk. Integrating Dzama's drawings into the feverish, downright horny dream-states of the fictional artist and his art, dawson's carnival of scratchy black-and-white *mise-en-scène* is ruptured when the drawings occasionally come to life in living, if rather pale, colour. While the comparisons with Guy Maddin are both unavoidable and appropriate (dawson has worked with Maddin, on the award-winning short *The Heart of The World*), *FILM (dzama)* finds its particular voice in its assimilation of Dzama's aesthetic into its own shabby and dignified cinematic palette. With such talents as dawson and Jeffrey Erbach, the post-Paizs-Maddin era of independent film in Winnipeg looks as disturbing and twisted as it does bright.

## Breath

2001, 9m, Beta SP, prod Zonial Pictures, d Ross Turnbull

Veteran Toronto film and video artist Ross Turnbull's latest experimental work is a haunting, visually rich exploration of life during wartime. A multi-textured skein of sounds and images of a world in flames and in conflict, *Breath* follows a woman as she flees through mist-shrouded autumnal forests and meadows from the carnage around her. Throughout *Breath* there is media imagery drawn from the conflict in the former Yugoslavia juxtaposed with and layered upon arresting images of everyday life. Voices are heard and memories are spoken. (For example, the subdued yet desperate voice of a woman saying that "My children were with me yesterday, I am sure of it.") Somewhere in the whirl of images is a close-up of the eye of a horse, a visual metaphor more terrifying and indicative of the feral madness of war than any in recent memory. While here slightly overwrought and there verging on making despair a little too beautiful, *Breath* is an impressive, affecting piece of work: compassionate, poetic and timely.

## (winter) time

2001, 5m, 16mm, prod Sok Cinema, d Dan Sokolowski

Set to the Peter Togni Trio's imaginative jazz arrangement of George Gershwin's "Summertime," Ottawa independent filmmaker Dan Sokolowski's 10th film is a lively combination of animation and live action. Starting from simple and often startlingly composed images of the Canadian winter, Sokolowski renders various animated versions of the photographic images in equally various styles and techniques of animation. From the terrestrial to the aerial (there is an evocative animated rendering of the aurora borealis), the interaction of images, photographic and animated, creates an original and absorbing portrait of our quintessentially Canadian season. More than just a montage of wintry pictures, however, Sokolowski's film by its formal construction explores that nebulous but critical artistic region where abstraction, by some artistic alchemy, actually becomes representation, and vice versa. Influenced by Lawren Harris and Pierre Hebert, not to mention Michael Snow, Sokolowski's work is an intelligent, even witty aesthetic engagement with not only the landscape we inhabit, but also the protean artistic means by which we represent it. Theory meets practice meets theory: all this, and Gershwin, too!

TAKE ONE