

REVIEWS

UIC benefits, and are uncultured beer-drinking boozers to boot. Maybe and maybe not; but as Brecht once asked, what would you do, dissolve the people and elect another?

Arcand, now 40, whose *On est au coton* and *Québec: Duplessis et après* were outstanding filmic moments of pre-referendum *cinéma engagé*, has come full circle. In this lofty judgment, though, he does more than damn the idols of yesterday. He confronts the viewer (Canadian as much as Quebecer) with History. And if from this perspective, that of Canada is particularly damning, precisely because of its comfort and indifference, Arcand at least has done what the artist can only do: raise questions.

That he has chosen to do so in terms of the reigning *Kulturkritik* paradigm of rich vs. poor, capitalists vs. workers, dreamers vs. walking dead can be taken

as a way of better raising those questions; that is, of questioning the paradigm itself since it was it that produced the dream.

Yet this is only a suggestion, for Arcand only touches upon it obliquely in one moving interview with Greek social worker Irene Typaldos who explains, crying, why she voted No. Because she felt a debt of obligation to those who accepted her when the Québécois would not. It is Typaldos who suggests that there is/was something wrong with Quebec nationalism from the very beginning.

And that, ultimately, is the question. Would Arcand have made such an acerbic film as this had the Oui won? It is the inability to clearly answer that question that makes Arcand's film hypocritical. But then again this is the Baudelairian hypocrisy of *mon semblable, mon frère*.

Arcand's *Le confort et l'indifférence* is a film that invites the most serious self-questioning. That alone makes it totally worthwhile.

Michael Dorland ●

LE CONFORT ET L'INDIFFÉRENCE

d. Denis Arcand ed. Pierre Bernier d.o.p. Alain Dostie sd. Serge Beauchemin p. Roger Frappier, Jean Dansereau additional cam. Pierre Letarte, André-Luc Dupont, Martin Leclerc, Roger Rochat, Bruno Carrière, Jean-Pierre Lachapelle, Pierre Mignot additional sd. Yves Gendron, Claude Hazanavicius, Richard Besse, Esther Auger, André Dussault, Jacques Drouin, Jean-Guy Normandin mix. Jean-Pierre Joutel cam. asst. Séraphin Bouchard, Michel Caron, Jacques Tougas, Daniel Jobin, René Daigle, Serge Lafortune, Jacques Méthé, Simon Leblanc, Robert Martel ed. asst. France Dubé administration Michelle Mercier, Denise Deslauriers, Diane Leblanc, Evelyn Regimbald p. asst. Lucie D'Amour, Huguette Bergeron consultants Bernard Gosselin, Pierre Perrault, Tahani Rached, Gilles Groulx, Jacques Bensimon, Jacques Godbout, Guy L. Côté l.p. Jean-Pierre Ronfard col. 16mm running time 113 minutes p.c. National Film Board of Canada.

may fix the setting, the next zoom in for a close-up. The lighting also changes according to scene (indoor-outdoor, daytime-nighttime) and mood. Earnshaw exploits this beautifully. Presently a freelancer, his past experience in 10 minute shorts for the Nature Conservancy of Canada, commercials and as a cameraman for Global news have taught him the tricks of the trade. Technically he is quite competent. Minor flaws, such as panning too quickly in the scenes before Caiphas, are more than compensated for by his surprising treatment of Peter approaching the High Priest's palace or his examination of the sleepy disciples at Gethsemani. The paintings themselves partially determine the camerawork but there is ample evidence of one disciplined mind communicating to another. Earnshaw shows fine discernment, self-control and a good eye in his selection of an attention to relevant and striking detail.

As producer and director, Earnshaw deserves a first class grade. The running time of 28 minutes seems like 10, no mean achievement when confronted with still lifes. From his stunning opening achieved with a juxtaposition of colour and images, to the concluding shot of "the consummation of the world", there is a tightness of control over material which, in lesser hands, could easily have slipped away. Earnshaw never loses sight of his story. The \$35,000 production cost was well spent. The colour, especially working from paintings with so many night scenes, is excellent. The narration of the gospel is by Len Cariou and here, except for an unfortunate substitute of a "Jeremy" for a "Jeremiah", there can be no complaint. His pace is steady, his inflection considered and, as one should expect, his rendition is professional. His voice moves the film along. The music is a further embellishment. Composed by Frank Felco (York University) and his wife, Jane Fair, both jazz musicians, their score subtly keeps the action progressing, sets the mood and yet never intrudes. Joining all of this to special sound effects was the work of Wally Weaver of PFA labs.

An English version of the film is ready, and French and Spanish versions are projected for the very near future. For church groups or for television viewers, Earnshaw's film is a worthwhile work and one to be eagerly anticipated. For Kurelek lovers around the world, it marks the completion of Kurelek's dream for the series. And Kurelek would have been pleased with Earnshaw's production. But just as Kurelek's original paintings seem hidden away in the little-known Niagara Falls Art Gallery & Museum on a service road of the Queen Elizabeth Way, so English Canadians may wait awhile to see an important part of their heritage. The religious programming department of the CBC has rejected the film as too "anti-semitic". Maybe Kurelek would point out that "a prophet has no honour in his own country," but English-speaking Canadians will have to suffer the deprivation of such censorship in the interim. Kurelek's paintings and Earnshaw's production deserve a better fate.

Gerard T. Campbell ●



● Kurelek's "Passion of Christ" on exhibit in Niagara Falls

Photo: St. Catharines Standard

Phillip Earnshaw's The Passion of Christ

On New Year's Day, 1960, Canadian artist William Kurelek began work on a monumental series of paintings entitled "The Passion of Christ." It was to take him more than three years to complete them. Although many of his other works are better known, these 160 paintings were very special to him. They were an act of thanksgiving for his conversion to Roman Catholicism, a conversion from being a "practising atheist" to being a committed Christian, a conversion from a state of intense personal suffering and despair to one of reverent acceptance and joyful celebration of life. It was the

turning point in Kurelek's life and career.

This awesome "Passion of Christ" series, complete in itself, was part of an even more ambitious project, unfulfilled because of Kurelek's early death, of illustrating in paint the whole life of Christ. The paintings in this film portray the Easter story, depicting the last supper, the passion, the death and the resurrection of Christ, sentence by sentence, according to the gospel narrative of Saint Matthew. Although Kurelek attempted careful research for historical authenticity, nevertheless, whenever the narrative permitted, he boldly projected his interpretation to times and places other than ancient Israel to show the universal and eternal nature of man's redemption and salvation. No one in the history of painting had ever essayed a project of such epic proportions. Now that effort has been captured on film.

Translation of an artistic work from one medium to another often invites comparison with the original and sub-

sequent disappointment with the translation. Phillip Earnshaw's remarkable production of *The Passion of Christ* provokes neither. Instead, this fine film makes a very fitting complement to Kurelek's paintings. And although the film was produced four years after Kurelek's death, it is entirely proper to rejoice at what is a happy collaboration between Earnshaw and Kurelek.

How does one collaborate with the dead?

Before he even began the paintings Kurelek envisaged the series as one day being produced on film. As a result, his compositions are organized in terms of a dramatic presentation with a camera-conscious arrangement of images. The viewer sees the drama unfold before him. In the trial before Pilot, for example, the viewer sees the action sometimes from Pilot's perspective, sometimes from Christ's, sometimes from among the crowd below or on the porch as a Roman functionary. One painting

THE PASSION OF CHRIST p./d./ cam. Phillip Earnshaw ed. Mairin Wilkinson narration Len Cariou music comp. Frank Falco, Jane Fair prod. asst. Guido Kondrus title design Bill Boyer sd. re-rec. Wally Weaver paintings William Kurelek p.c. Shooting Pictures Ltd. running time 28 min., 16mm colour dist. Magic Lantern.



**National
Film Board
of Canada**

**Office
national du film
du Canada**

NFB NEWS

And the nominees are...

Janet Perlman and John N. Smith will be making the pilgrimage to Hollywood to join in this year's Oscar night. Perlman's *The Tender Tale of Cinderella Penguin* has been nominated for best animated short; and Smith's *First Winter*, for best live-action short. *Cinderella Penguin* is a tale... well you know the story about a delightful porcine penguin who get the glass flipper.

First Winter, a half-hour drama filmed in Algonquin Park, tells a simple, moving story of an Irish immigrant family surviving their first winter in Canada. Fine acting performances are given by Kathleen McAuliffe, Sharon O'Neill and Eric Patrick Godfrey. The screenplay was written by Gloria Demers and Cynthia Scott.



Monique Spaziani, nominated for *Genie*, with Robert H. Thomson - *Les beaux souvenirs*.

Genie Genie Genie

The National Film Board has received five nominations for this year's Genie awards given

by the Canadian Academy of Cinema. The nominees in the feature film categories for *Les beaux souvenirs* are: Monique

Spaziani for best actress; Jean Cousineau for best musical score; and Réjean Ducharme for best screenplay.

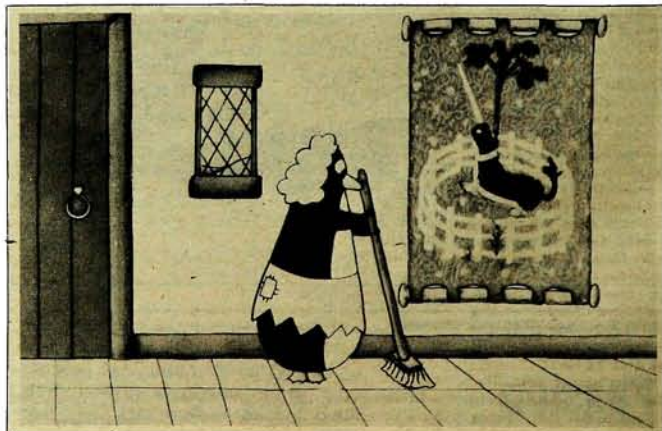
For best short subject film, the Canadian Academy nominated the explosive little film *Zea* by André and Jean-Jacques Leduc; a portrait of a lowly vegetable made magnificent through the magic of film. *Top Priority*, a new animated film by Ishu Patel was also nominated in this category. Patel's remarkable, fluid art style is applied to a story line about third world problems.

P.S.

Eight NFB productions have been selected for the Filmex Festival held in Los Angeles March 16 - April 1. *Devil at Your Heels*, *The Tender Tale of Cinderella Penguin*, *Death in the Spring*, "E", *Zea*, *One Way Street*, *Top Priority*, *Luna, Luna, Luna*.



Eric Patrick Godfrey plays role of young boy in *First Winter*.



Cinderella Penguin hard at work never imagining that one day she will slip her webbed foot into a glass flipper.

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