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 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 Tapyaldis 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 Tapyaldis who suggests that there is was something wrong with Québécois 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? Is it the inability to clearly answer that question that makes Arcand's film hypotential. But then again this is the Baudelairean 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 CONFORTET L'INDIFFÉRENCE


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This awesome "Passion of Christ" series, complete in itself, was part of an even more ambitious project, unfilled 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 Kurelek p.c. Shooting Pictures Ltd. has been pleased with Earnshaw's 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 "Jeremiah" for a "Jeremiah" there is 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 Pelco (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 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-semetic." Maybe Kurelek would point out that "a prophet has no honour in his own country." Unfortunately, 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

The Passion of Christ

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.


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.