

powerhouse presents

In Montreal, there was another festival, less passionate, perhaps, than Vancouver's Feminist Festival, but important as a show place for Canadian women's films. Jane Dick gives a short report.

by Jane Dick

A selection of films concerning women's issues and made by Canadian women filmmakers was shown at Montreal's Le Cinéma Parallèle October 10-14, presented by Powerhouse Gallery. The main emphasis of Powerhouse is to provide a centre which reflects the trends of women artists. The

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film festival was conceived as an extension of this. Femmedia and Studio 'D' of the National Film Board also assisted in the festival.

Seventeen films were presented, most of them from Montreal and Toronto and they played to packed houses every night. Proceeds were shared 50-50 between Powerhouse and Le Cinéma Parallèle.

Most of the films were documentary though there were a few animated films, including three by Veronika Soul, and two fiction films — Lois Siegel's **Recipe to Cook a Clown** and Nesya Shapiro's **Passages**. Among the documentaries were several portraits of individual women.

Patricia's Moving Picture (Bonnie Klein) talks with a west coast woman



Kay Armatage was among the filmmakers on hand to discuss film



Cross-country skiing isn't what it used to be in Lois Siegel's **Recipe to Cook a Clown**

who, at 40 with seven children, has to deal with a massive state of depression and comes out of it a much stronger and happier person. Designed as a catalyst for discussion, the film presents challenging situations but wisely draws no conclusions.

Jill Johnston... October 1975 (Lydia Wazana and Kay Armatage) follows Jill Johnston, author of **Lesbian Nation**, during one week of public readings and interviews in Toronto. The film captures her in transit, showing a woman at work, and though interesting and sympathetic, is not always flattering. Jill Johnston has since refused to allow the film to be shown in the U.S.

Lady from Grey County (Janice H. Brown and Margaret Westcott) is a well-wrought portrayal of Agnes Campbell Macphail, Canada's first woman Member of Parliament. As the film brings Macphail back to life via old stills, newsclips, and some of her own writings, we see a woman of considerable personal courage and resource. The film is also an important historical document since it chronicles a turbulent period of social and political change in Canada.

D'Abord Ménagères (Luce Guilbeault) interviews several women and one man who work outside the home but are still solely responsible for housework and childcare. Pointed and thought-provoking, it is unfortunately too long and often repetitive.

Some American Feminists (Nicole Brossard, Luce Guilbeault, and Margaret Westcott) interviews some of the more influential feminists in the women's movement. Again, they are seen in a particular place, time and frame of mind, but the historical perspective is clearly defined, and the interviews and their intercutting with one another are very articulate.

Though most of the films dealt with women's issues, **The Thin Line**, made by Holly Dale and Janis Cole, two recent graduates of Sheridan College, takes a look at the maximum security mental health centre at Penetanguishene, Ontario which houses men who have committed some of the most brutal crimes including rape and murder. The men interviewed for the film contributed a great deal to the structuring and ultimate purpose of the film — it is essentially, theirs — and it is a remarkable statement on the human capacity

for understanding and self-help. The NFB has bought ten prints of this film.

On Friday afternoon of the festival a workshop was held at Powerhouse Gallery. It was to be concerned with "Feminist Film Criticism: The Direct Approach." It was not. However, in a loose and relaxed atmosphere, those present were given the opportunity to meet with Holly Dale and Janis Cole, Kay Armatage, Bonnie Klein, and Ardele Lister — director of **So Where's My Prince Already?**, an overdone satire made by Reel Images, a no longer active women's media co-op in B.C., with, happily, a brilliantly funny animated sequence by Floy Zitten. Participants also saw the première of Kay Armatage's latest film, **Gertrude and Alice in Passing**, a charming and intelligent eight minute piece that explores, among other things, the camera as voyeur.

The workshop was not well attended — at least half the people there had to be — they were women involved in the making of the films presented — but discussions were both lively and thoughtful and with more publicity in the future, it has definite possibilities as a forum for women who make films.□



A wall poster in Luce Guilbeault's *D'Abord Ménagères*