

ON (EXPERIMENTAL) FILM

by B. Sternberg

There have been a number of films completed recently and quite a few more that are nearing completion. From the West, Kirk Tougas presents **Return to Departure: The Biography of a Painting or Watching Pigment Dry and Other Realisms**, 83 min., 16mm, colour (see *Cinema Canada* #134). The film is competing for a Genie this year in the feature-length documentary category; Chris Gallagher, who teaches film at the University of Regina, has just finished **Undivided Attention**, 110 min., 16mm, colour. Chris describes the film as "an oblique narrative... using a great variety of incidents, moments and passages arranged in sequences, some created for the camera and others real events... a visual/conceptual workout that can be seen more than once." **Undivided Attention** will premiere in Toronto, February 5 at Innis College Film Society;

Al Razutis, presently teaching at Simon Fraser University, made a film, **Splice**, 25 min., colour, 16mm, using footage taken during National Film Week (the event that opened the Pacific CineCentre in Vancouver last spring) in particular, footage of the six filmmaker panelists who spoke on "Avant-Garde Film Practice: 6 Views." As Razutis explains it, he treats the footage of each filmmaker in a style reminiscent of their own work. In progress is an experimental film, **Ley Lines** by Patricia Gruben.

Montreal filmmaker Raphael Bendahan has recently returned from six months in Labrador (he was teaching video production within the Inuit community) — where he shot a lot of footage that will eventually find its way into a film — and has a new film in distribution, **When the Light Grey Man Carries Your Luggage**, 10 min., b&w, 16mm. The film

interprets the poem of the same title by Canadian poet Joe Rosenblatt.

In Ontario there is Gary McLaren's **Just Talk** 18 min. colour, 16mm. "The Church is a centre of delusive guilt, emanating rays of powerful influence over a strange couple's lives. Relationships collide at oblique angles to split thoughts into articulated non-communication. Telephone lines cross, spanning centuries, while people just talk and look on," says McLaren. Also, Sharon Cook has released a 35 min. Super 8 film, **Encyclopedia of Natural Defects**, which she describes as "a quasi-musical... in which famous paintings are re-enacted while most of the dialogue is in pig-latin." Blaine Allen's newest film entitled **3:48** is, according to Blaine, "a film about living and dying in Ontario." It uses mainly small-town television news footage and promotional film in a construct that "writes history like a dream." The film is 25 min., b&w and colour, 16mm.

And there are a lot of films in the works. Phil Hoffman is putting the finishing touches on

Passing Through, 40 min., b&w and colour, 16mm. This film continues Phil's interest in the diary film — this time a 'family' diary as opposed to the more usual first-person singular. "Characters are constructed through a pix/sound design which offers ambiguous characterization; for example, voice and picture are transferable amongst family members so that personalization of the problems becomes defocused." Shot in both Czechoslovakia and Canada, the film has a lot to do with migration and translation.

Midi Onodera is completing a film, **Displaced Views**, 112 min., colour, 16mm, that deals with being a Japanese-Canadian and the experience of the internment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II. The story is told by three generations of women in a family: the grandmother, *Issei*-1st generation; the mother, *Nissei*-2nd generation; and the filmmaker/narrator, *Sansei*-3rd generation. Bruce Elder, on sabbatical this year from Ryerson Polytechnical, continues work on this film cycle which includes **The Art of Worldly Wisdom, Illuminated Texts, Lamentations** and now **Consolations**. The film carries on the alternation of dramatic sequences and montage sequences of **Lamentations** and, I hear, is nearing the same length! Mike Hoolboom has

been hard at work on an experimental narrative, b&w, 16mm, feature-length, which has undergone massive changes but, if grants go well, may be nearing completion. And Peter Mettler has been hard at work getting the funding in place for a feature — the longest and trickiest part of the whole endeavor of feature filmmaking, it seems — which he hopes to shoot in 35mm, beginning in May called **The Top of his Head**. The film, Mettler says, "sets out to construct both a narrative and filmic form that emulate the interaction of intuition and intellect... I am continuing explorations from my previous work in determining the influences that shape one's vision, expression and perception... The narrative quite simply portrays a young man dealing with an everyday world that no longer conforms to his expectations and routines." And there are more even than I've mentioned here.

So work goes on — some continuing directions explored in previous experimental films, some at points of departure within their own work, some shifting towards the 'more accessible' genres of documentary or narrative from a desire to have their work seen by more people.

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