who is soon to become her lover, Dietrich obviously gazes of the viewer and the woman walking over the bridge, which are intercut into this scene, do suggest that the dichotomy between male and female, intellectual and natural, can be bridged. In the out-of-focus shots of the two bodies making love, the viewer is opened to an entirely different type of penetration, but the emotion inherent in two bodies melting into each other is clearly conveyed. Repeatedly Gallagher uses what can only be called an abstract expressionist style of filmmaking in the previously described shots, which seem to refer to an alliance between art, nature and the emotions. As in Lacanian psychology, the unity of the self is linked to the Other, and Gallagher suggests a profound sense of awareness. To emphasize this the six scenes are followed by shots of a paint-brush merrily dancing over a blank page, a woman, not a painter, in a paint-splattered robe, a raincoat, a peach dress, a green dress, and a red dress. It seems to us that in this film, society as a whole is seen as a system of signs which bars the male/filmmaker from the bliss of union with emaphis or, be it woman or nature. Indeed, the beginning of the film is a series of revolving signs for modern day commodities: gas, fried chicken, cigarettes, etc... The ending of the film is a series of revolving signs of the impossibility of a relationship between men and women. Gallagher presents the intellectually active man, destroying, eating and burying his sexual fantasies, while a woman cuts off the outside world, presented as the unattainable 'other' in a shot of a female nude, seen upside down, in the roundglass of a photographer's camera.

There are some problems with the film. Undivided Attention is essentially a postmodernist work where Gallagher's influences, such as the powerful statement. However, overall the voice-over does not take the viewer from an object in the world, but instead from the world to the object, the woman artist. After decades of working in Wieland's 'formalist/feminist' films of the '60s and '70s, and an amazement at traditional notions of women's work and woman's art, Wieland has come in from the margins (or the centre has expanded to meet her). Her work is presented with the same degree of polish as in the popular and the art press have been invited in.

Undivided Attention is a highly ambitious, complex and successful work.

Don Terry • Mary Alemany-Galway

Kay Armatage's Artist on Fire

The first thing you see in Kay Armatage's Artist on Fire is a joke. Joyce Wieland - avant-garde filmmaker and Canada's officially-sanctioned radical woman artist, our Joyce - sits in a stuffy chair putting the finishing touches on a portrait of a young man in ancient Greek costume. The viewer and the viewer is locked in by acceptance of the scene. We see Joyce Wieland swimming in a lake, re-creating a scene from her feature film The Far Shore. We see Wieland aiming a hand-held camera at the camera, quoting A and B in Ontario. Armatage's technique is to blend her text with Wieland's words, insinuating commentary into art. She's able to do this partly by not identifying shots from Wieland's films when they appear. They simply form a part of the text, given no more weight than Armatage's own images. In fact, the film's editing style insists on erasing the lines between what is secondary and what is primary material, on knitting a seamless join between Wieland's life (or performed life) and her art: associative cuts may take the viewer from an object in Wieland's home to a similar object in a film of hers, to a new sequence. This is not a distant, 'objective' documentary; Armatage has called it an ode.

Perhaps a chorus, Armatage's use of voice in Artist on Fire is characteristic of her work. She blends the commentaries of Denis Reid, Joyce Zemans, Judy Steed and Michael Snow, which include both critical and personal statements, into a polyvalent voice, speaking about Wieland and her work, overlapping and intersecting one another, working by addition to fill in the picture. Armatage has used this strategy before, most effectively in Speak Body, where the common personal experience of the woman and the emotional resonance of the subject combined to give the voices an irresistible rhetorical force.

The effect isn't as strong here, but the voices do convince, and that causes some problems. Interweaving voices would seem to solve the problem of the 'authority' of the traditional documenta
ry voice-over, but whether or not they diffuse the sight of knowledge within the film, the cumulative effect of voices speaking in complement is still authority, perhaps even more authority, because the voices cover more ground. And as in *Speak Body*, they are just voices: it is not until the end of the film that they are identified. By not identifying them Armatage avoids the specificity that would allow the viewer to place and evaluate what the voices say. As it is, we are forced to accept their words unquestioningly: they have the power of anonymity; they have authority.

But the film never claims to be a cold-eyed appraisal of Wieland's art; it intends to persuade. It echoes the excess that characterizes Wieland's most powerful work with a little purposeful obsessiveness of its own. You don't need to be familiar with theories of the body, or excess, or feminist discursive practice to appreciate *Artist on Fire*, but it is another way into the film. Armatage works with an awareness of current theoretical discussions of physicality and expression, and that knowledge lies behind her approach to Wieland. In its use of colour, and in its unwillingness to be 'proper', the film follows Wieland's sensuous, vivid canvases. Armatage is gifted with an eye for composition that many 'objective' documentary filmmakers lack; she has Wieland's talent for producing erotic, tactile images, and she does it in the same way: by paying close attention to the detail of a thing, by waiting.

In a sequence near the end of the film, she records Wieland and a friend making a peach pie: the camera roves over the kitchen table (looking like a Flemish painting with refreshingly playful sexual symbols scattered here and there) luxuriantly in rich colours and sheer moistness. All the while Wieland and friend chat about art over the soundtrack for the sequence, a Lester Bowie instrumental version of "Blueberry Hill." But the critical commentary does not stop the sequence is intercut with examples of Wieland's erotic art, and the voices' discussion of its place in her work. The dominant element in the sequence, though, is pleasure. So is Armatage working within a 'libidinal economy' here, or is she just having fun?

*Artist on Fire* is a response to Joyce Wieland - to what she means to Canadian artists, to Canadian women artists, to Kay Armatage. It's not the film one might envisage Wieland making about herself (it's not nearly relentless enough, for one thing), but it goes one better: it is a strong, original engagement with Wieland's work that meets the challenge of its subject. And it does it with wit.

Cameron Bailey •

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