

RODIN a film
by Julius Kohanyi

half-hour
16mm, color

music/narration

Nikos Kazantzakis wrote that the essence of life is struggle, and that struggle is basically man trying to turn flesh into spirit. Auguste Rodin spent his phenomenally creative life trying to turn rough rock into smooth essence.

Rodin sparked the art movements of his time by showing man overcoming his primeval nature in a unique way, by showing the perfection that is part of imperfection, by showing the thrust of genius arising from the anguish of man, by showing a perfect, thornless rose growing out of shit.

Nature for Rodin was ugly, beautiful, brutal, crude, rough, merciless, and chaotic, yet the Hand of God rises out upwards from this quagmire, perfectly smooth, perfectly formed — with the ripples of energy-veins-rivers flowing and creating out of nothing, out of rough, crude rock the beauty and the ultimate perfection of love.

The love that Rodin captures in his sculpture embodies the crudeness of lust while at the same time being a gentle, strong, persevering, voracious love which can still protect in embrace. The Hand of God protects The Lovers who are also perfect in their embrace and in their sex and in their form and shape.

The Thinker's kinetic energy — ready to move with taut muscles but being pulled down by gravity and heavy thoughts — is Rodin's way of seeing enlightened man entrapped in the perpetual dilemma of action/inaction, life/death, flesh/spirit.

The spirit of Rodin's sculpture is captured on film in Julius Kohanyi's latest work, simply entitled RODIN. The man who made the widely acclaimed film on Henry Moore has focused his lens on a great artist once again. The major difference between the two works is that while Moore is very much alive and working, Rodin's flesh has withered away long ago. Only his spirit is with us now, but what a magnificent heritage that is!

While the Moore film showed the artist at work in his studio surrounded by his works, the Rodin film of necessity concentrates on the inspiring creations of this innovative genius. We see his statues in museums, outdoors in a natural setting,

and seemingly turning in space, an effect achieved by a turntable and lighting in a studio.

Kohanyi and his cameraman, Les Kaskoto, travelled to Philadelphia to film the impressive Rodin collection in the museum there. Kaskoto's camerawork is sensitive and the expected circular dolly shots to describe the statues are done in such a way as to correspond to the outlines and ridges of the sculptures themselves.

Rodin's own words are used as narration, which is refreshing, since it avoids the use of the voice of authority which plagues so many films on art. The background music is unobtrusive and attempts to put one into a receptive mood for the visual and verbal ideas expressed.

The film also utilizes some old photographs of Rodin and the women he loved and also used as models. The narration, however, discreetly stays away from just how many mistresses he had and other trivial personal gossip, which characterizes some TV portraits of great men.

Kohanyi expects to sell the film to television, but also to have it shown in schools and libraries. He spent over a year working on it, putting his personal money into it, and stands to gain little in terms of profit. But he is satisfied with working this way. Besides, at the same time he was working on his feature script.

The feature is a decisive change in content from his short films. (*Herring Belt, Tevye, Little Monday, Teddy and Images*) The Story concerns a twentieth century man caught in conflict. He works in an automobile body shop and at the same time wants to make films. Kohanyi put many of his personal experiences into the script: his other great love next to film happens to be tinkering with the engine of his sports car.

The CFDC has already approved the script, and production should start in October. It will be shot in and around Toronto. Key scenes will be filmed in Mirvish Village; Kohanyi happens to be living in that artist's enclave on Markham Street.

But Julius Kohanyi has no overblown ambitions about becoming a big, famous feature film director. He would prefer to continue making modest-budget films at his own pace, in his own time. Even the feature budget won't exceed a hundred thousand dollars. His philosophy is not to get rich at doing it, but to go on making films and live in modest comfort. He couldn't see himself going to work for a big studio or production house. That sort of pressure, for Julius Kohanyi, is not worth the sixty-thousand dollars a year he might earn at it.



RODIN