

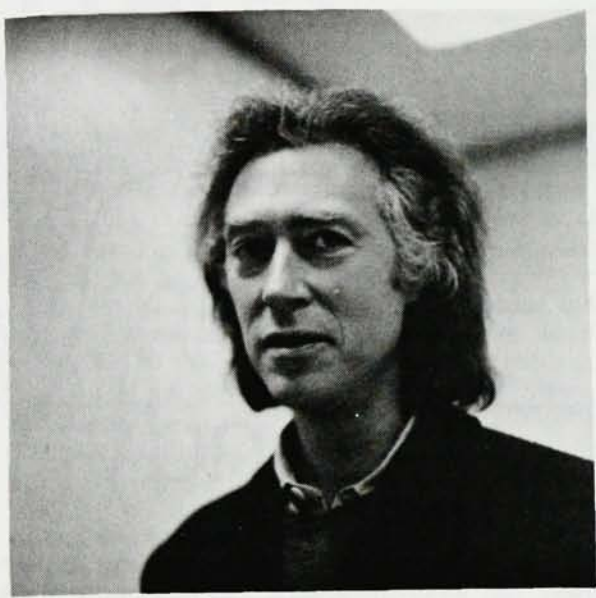
**LA RÉGION CENTRALE
THE CENTRAL REGION**

By **MICHAEL SNOW**

In Person
Tuesday only

at the **POOR ALEX** theatre
296 Brunswick at Bloor

the message of a rotating body



Nine O'Clock (P.M.)
One hundred and eighty minutes
Three hundred and sixty degrees

AUGUST 22-27

INTERVIEW

by **george csaba koller**

“... my understanding of the medium itself is that the material that one uses to make these things is light and time ... you do have a strip of acetate and so on, but ultimately what you're handling is light and time.”

This is in no way meant to be a comprehensive discussion of Michael Snow's work or life as an artist. For a fuller view of the man and his art, please consult Volume 3 Number 3 of TAKE ONE magazine, published in April, 1972. All that is attempted here is to present a conversation with Snow, which took place on the day after LA REGION CENTRALE opened at the Poor Alex theatre for a week-long run in late August.

It would even be unfair to try and describe LA REGION CENTRALE the film, to someone who hasn't seen it. Bob Cowan in the aforementioned issue of Take One does give a vivid description, but **The Central Region** is the kind of film that evokes every conceivable response from its audience. Cowan's mind trips while watching the three hour visual tour de force might or might not be your mind trips, and there is no reason why they should be. All one can do is to explain that the film was shot on top of a mountain in northern Québec utilizing an intricate mechanical, computer operated gadget to move the camera in predetermined patterns, horizontally, vertically, diagonally, and at varying speeds. The combined effect of this technological feat is to create the illusion/reality of a "bodyless eye" as Snow calls it, careening freely in space around a centre spot, which is never seen and is The Central Region.

In more mundane terms, the film is the artist's attempt to paint a landscape with the camera, more correctly to record a given landscape, skyscape area not with brushstrokes but with lens movements and light variations. The introductory scanning sequences, where we are painstakingly forced to explore every inch of ground in a circular pan pattern until the slow elevation adjustments of the mechanism reveal the ragged horizon and the sky, immediately remind a space age viewer of astronauts exploring the surface of the moon. Later on, when gravity is thrown to the winds and we are soaring upside down within the image, it's not so much a landscape that we see, as a crystal clear field of ice (the sky) through which the rays of the sun shine and illuminate it from below, with the ragged rocky horizon and the black edge of the earth becoming the sky above. And when the film enters its final spin phase, the landscape becomes abstract, the global roundness of the earth is revealed, as smears of earth and flashes of sky eject our tumbling minds into another dimension, one either created by the artist, or perceived by the visionary, Michael Snow.

It was unfair to say even this much, because two paragraphs could hardly cover a three hour total experience, which itself is a condensation of universal distances in time and space.

Snow: I try to surprise myself if I can. I don't like to hear myself saying the same thing, so if you ask me a question I've heard before, I'll try and make up something new.

Question: Might as well ask you a standard question then. How did you get into the visual arts?

Snow: It's hard to say, 'cause it's sort of mixed up in a way. I don't know where to start, at what point specifically.

Well, for some reason or other I went to the Ontario College of Art - whenever it was, I don't know when it was, centuries ago - and before that I started to play music and I played the piano professionally when I got out.

I didn't know what I was doing and I met George Dunning who was running a film company here - one of the first ones. He'd been at the Film Board and he was starting this company and it was the first one to make TV commercials in Canada. There were a lot of talented people working there and he'd seen some drawings of mine and he thought that they showed something. He thought that whoever did them would

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be interested in films, which I wasn't, I hadn't any specific interest in it at all. Anyway, he gave me a job there, so that was my introduction to film. I worked there for a year and a half. And I was also playing music then (with a jazz combo) too and I was painting.

I made my first film in 1956, just to make a film. I don't know, that doesn't seem to be how I got into it, just to be an artist in the first place, or something.

Question: How do you approach the different media that you work in?

Snow: Well, things are inter-related. I still do music and I still do a few of these sound things, but some of the things that were previously separated are now joined. Incidentally, it used to worry me, like when I first got out of art college, I thought that I had to make a decision whether I was going to be a musician, or a filmmaker, painter, sculptor, I didn't know what I was going to be, and I kept on doing all these things. And like a few years passed and I looked back on it and it seemed it was all right somehow to do those different things you know, and they have contributed to each other.

Question: In any medium, when you start a work, do you have something to say and then you say it?

Snow: No, not at all, no. It's not a question of having something to say. You see, the experience of seeing a film is a thing in itself. I use them to make an experience or a phenomenon of some kind, I'm not selling anything with them in the sense that they should convince you of something other than your experience of seeing the film. Seeing something is not like material that you use to make something, as far as I'm concerned.

Question: With any work you have to start out with a concept.

Snow: Yeah.

Question: But does the concept concern itself with the technique or does it concern itself with the content?

Snow: No, it's not technique in the sense that what I've been trying to do since I started to get a clear idea of what seemed of interest in film - since '63, I guess it was, or when I made **New York Eye and Ear**

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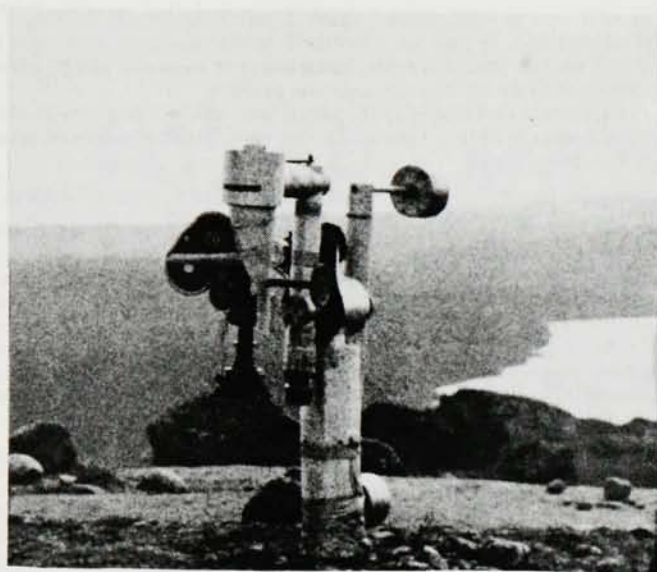
Control in '64 - it seemed to me that some elements of the medium have possibilities of contents of their own that have only been used for some other purposes, in a way. Like for example the film that has the title double arrow (\leftrightarrow), I don't know whether you've seen that, **Back and Forth**, is the camera panning back and forth and that itself has in it possibilities. Panning; not just following the hero to the door which is what panning is usually used for, you know. It has the possibility of contents that are peculiar to films. I'm not using it to describe but to make something happen through film. I'm really trying to bring out not so much the documentary aspect of it which is important in all kinds of conventional films, even if it is acting - the reporting aspect of it - but the possibility that there are things in the medium that are special, you know. Do you understand what I mean, or is that all garbled?

Question: Does the technique make them special, or is there a special content inherent in the technique?

Snow: Like, I'm so much into this what I'm talking about, that it's really hard to pick a point and start talking about it. Like my understanding of the medium itself is that the material that one uses to make these things is light and time - those are the things, that's the material - you do have this strip of acetate and so on but ultimately what you're handling is light and time. And that's apparently unusual because most of the films that I've seen have been like a painting made by a painter that didn't think about using paint. Do you see what I mean?

Question: Most other films?

Snow: Yeah, I think by and large they just don't use the material, they just don't use the material, that's all. They use the mechanism, but they don't use *duration* and they don't use *light* for the qualities and contents that are possible from using those things as the actual material of the medium. The material of the medium isn't, you know, showing somebody killing somebody, or whatever the usual subjects are; the material is shaping light and shaping time, and that's what you do when you make a film. That's the basis from which other things have come in trying to do the films I'm doing.



Question: Do you believe that a concept for a work of art is enough by itself or does it have to be carried out?

Snow: Well, my own things aren't – my films are films, they're not concepts. Behind them are ideas and concepts but what people see and hear is films. The readings they may make are theirs, not mine – and that's not what's on the screen.

Question: Let's say that *La Région Centrale* turned out technically disastrous. Would you still be satisfied with the work because your concept was in a sense fulfilled or would you go back and do it again?

Snow: Well, if I wasn't satisfied with it, I'd do it again, yes, sure.

Question: The reason I'm bringing this up is I had a discussion a while back with someone who claimed that for him it would be enough to think of a concept for a work of art, he wouldn't necessarily feel bad if it failed in execution or if it never materialized.

Snow: Well, it sounds more like the art of conversation than the art of making films. I mean, you can make all kinds of speculations, but that isn't a film. I'm interested in making an experience that is unique to the medium and thinking about it is part of making it but that isn't what you see on the screen, that's what gets it there.

Question: In what sense – conceptually or otherwise – is *La Région Centrale* related to 2001?

Snow: I don't think it's related at all but I know some people have said they felt it was.

Question: I had this strong feeling of that connection last night.

Snow: Well, I don't know exactly what that is. I mean I don't see that there's really any connection at all.

Question: What about the *Chariots of the Gods* thing, God as an astronaut coming down to Earth?

Snow: Well, see, I don't work with ideas like that. I mean that's an interesting thing but it doesn't have anything to do with making that film. That film comes out of a line of things I've been doing. Like I made a circular pan film called *Standard Time* in '67; an eight minute film, it had the germs of various ideas in it. It was just a circular pan in a closed space, a room like this. And like I work with and think about the spaces that I'm using and about whether things are slow or fast or bright or dark.

Question: There's your preoccupation with the technique.

Snow: That's not technique, that's making the film. Like talking about *Chariots of the Gods* doesn't have anything to do with anything. You can make a film about anything, but . . . that's the kind of reading you can make from the phenomena which I made and okay, you're right. But it's not something that's on the screen.

Question: In the program notes to the showing, you made the statement that you're more interested in a 30,000 year span with this film than . . .

Snow: No, I'm just talking about the reaction. That was an attempt to prepare people for it, which I've never done before. To try and tell

them that the experience of duration in it is not meant to be that kind of entertainment thing where it's a compliment to say that the film lasted three hours but it felt like thirty minutes, I enjoyed it so much. The fact is I want you to experience the long duration of time because I'm dealing with it. In film you have *time* to use, it's not like sculpture, where you have scale, weight – the weight thing in film is temporal. And I'm dealing with planets for one thing, and with gravitation for another. I mean three hours is not very long, you know. Like particularly in the middle, there's a whole section that's like a saucer or something, it really stretches out. And that's really a fantastic thing to cross over, as far as I'm concerned, but I don't know what anybody else feels. It's like really experiencing the passage of time – shaped, molded time – and it's kind of a mental brace that you're put in. It isn't like entertainment. It's a phenomenon that you can experience in various ways. So that's what I meant by that 30,000 span thing. Some people came up to me and said they couldn't understand it, so I guess it didn't help very much.

Question: So you're not particularly interested in the trips people take while watching your films?

Snow: Oh, sure, but I can't be in their heads, I mean I just make that thing and I know what I put there and I know how it feels to me and that's the end of that. And if other people groove on it any way they want, that's fine, that pleases me. But I don't know what they're doing, how can I know?

Question: What about the obvious cybernetic overtones, man as a robot kind of thing. That machine is very curiously shaped like a man, the shadow especially. It couldn't have been an accident, or was it?

Snow: Yeah, it was an accident. That was the way the machine got made to do the job that it had to do. I never thought of it looking like a man. It sort of stands in for a man in a certain sense. All films are made with machines and what I did was design another machine; it's an instrument that I played on and made movements with that haven't been seen before, really. Like the vertical pan thing has never been done before as far as I know and that's really a fantastic thing; you're looking at the horizon, it rises into the sky like that, and it comes down here, and when it's down here it's upside down, somewhere here, you know, then it goes over the ground again and it's really like a bodyless eye. The technology was just a way to have that happen, because it didn't exist – it doesn't photograph itself.

The film is in complete three dimensional space. The technology is an aspect of it, and there are three places I guess where there is a hint of what it is that's making the film because you see that shadow. But that's like a passing thing where you might think about that because that is the truth of it and so you should think about it, but in other places I'm sure you don't think about it any more, you're just getting into what's happening, the states that the film puts you into. And there's a lot of feelings in the film that can only be made by that machine. You know, there's all kinds of driftings and fallings and floatings and things like that, all made by the illusion of your gravity being, your sense of gravity being changed, altered.

Question: I could really get off on seeing that film at Cinesphere. Have you ever considered making a film in the IMAX process?

Snow: Yes, well Graham Ferguson asked me if I'd like to make something for there with their thing and I might do it. But I don't know about seeing that film there, because the frame is very, very important for this film. You really have to see the frame and see how it reacts to the image. And even seeing the rest of the theatre is nice too because there are parts where the camera's on its side and it rises for a long, long time – sometimes it makes the whole place sink. Did you notice that? It's just fantastic, and that happens on the frame, too, so the whole thing has a lot to do with the frame, so it isn't like an overall Cinema-scope type thing at all. It's built on the frame being like eyelids.

Question: And yet the effect might be tremendously heightened at Cinesphere.

Snow: Well, it wouldn't be heightened so much, because you wouldn't have the reference, the up-down reference that the frame gives you. You see, you'd have this thing happening in front of you, and like I've looked at it on close to a big screen one time and it was okay, but you didn't have that visual reference of a fixed thing, the only reference you had was yourself sitting in that seat. But if you have this visual reference of a fixed thing which is what the cross is too, like that seizes the screen shape and holds it still so that like there's a transference there. There's all kinds of different transferences, like you might keep on going with the motion that you've been put in before where you see the whole thing do all kinds of reactive things, because all of a sudden it's halted, you now. And that's what the frame's doing too so it's very important to it.

Question: How long did it take to make *La Région Centrale*?

Snow: Three years to do the whole thing, like to get the money, get the machine built and do the shooting, and finally to get the thing put together. But I've been thinking about it in some ways for quite a long time. I started out by thinking about how you could make a landscape film, you know, how you could make a film that was – in terms of film – like a landscape painting. But it would still be a film, and how you could structure a thing like that and how it could have some development and so on. It wouldn't have to do with the usual human activities, but would be an actual film – a picturing. So I've been thinking about it since '67, or something like that.

Question: Did you have the concept for the machine, or did Pierre Abbeloos and you work it out together?

Snow: We worked it out together. Like I'm not a technician, so basically he solved all the things... like I knew what I wanted to have done and I thought of ways that it could be done, but I couldn't go much further than like the simplest sort of basic ideas. It seemed to me you could make a sphere with the camera on the sphere but then you had to solve how to support that sphere because I didn't want any sign of any support at all. And then another way was a kind of ball and socket joint thing which I thought might be possible, like a set of arms that could move in any direction. And another one was cylinders that joined and it turned out that Pierre thought that was the one that was most feasible and that's the way it's done.

It all ends up not photographing the base. Like at the base is an area that never gets photographed which is the central region. It's not only geographic, it's the spectator too, like you're at the centre of this whole thing that you find going around you.

Question: Would you like to be liberated from that restriction, like could you get off on having a flying machine with jets attached to the camera doing the same intricate patterns, but in addition being free to move away from that centre?

Snow: Well, that's another thing, yeah, I mean I've thought about that, about trying to do something like that. But having it on the centre point – it's like a theme and variations thing – it gives you various understandings of the place that you're in. Because you see that big rock for example, and other things, and they're seen in different ways. And like if I did something that was moving around a lot, then you wouldn't be able to see what's done to the subjects. That's another thing, it's another problem, but I've been thinking about that.

Question: Did you have any hassles with machinery malfunctioning?

Snow: Well, basically it was pretty good. We had trouble with the camera more than the machine. It was much colder than we thought it would be. Actually the film broke a few times, we couldn't watch it at all. We never saw anything until we finally got it all back from the lab, because it was all done by the machine. It was all composed, there was a score, but like we'd go up to change the last reel and the camera was jammed full of film.

Question: Because of all the motion?

Snow: The motion, and also the cold made the film brittle. Sometimes the motion scared up some of the dirt that always accumulates in a camera, and there are a few parts of the original that are pretty badly scratched. We didn't see any way out of that. That was one problem.

Question: Was there no special adaptation made on the camera to accommodate this motion?

Snow: No, it was an Arriflex, you know, they were designed by Hitler for those purposes, so they should be real tough. (laughs)

Question: That's an interesting sidelight, using war technology.

Snow: I suppose the Arriflex people don't want it described that way. It's a good camera, it really is. And it's sort of lightened with an Angenieux lens, a touch of French delicacy.

Question: You were up on the mountain top, you were taken up there by helicopter and you were up there about a week?

Snow: Yes, five days.

Question: Then you got stuck in a snowstorm and couldn't come down?

Snow: Yeah, the helicopter didn't come when it was supposed to, it was quite an adventure.

Question: I was talking to Bernard Goussard in Montréal who was your soundman, and he got back late for a mix of a film I was working on at the time.

Snow: Oh yeah? It's funny that you know Bernard. So he told you all about it? I think he thought it was completely insane.

Question: It's a shame that the location sound recording didn't work out.

Snow: Well, that finally turned out to be okay. Originally I had planned on having a section with the crew there, maybe a thirty minute section and that was going to be the beginning of the film. And I did that thing and re-did the sound – post-synced it – and then when I finally saw the whole thing together a couple of times, I realized it was really damaging to the rest of the film to have that thing with people there. You should have it, you know, just to yourself – you should be absolutely alone – so I just cut that whole thing out. A half an hour, we might use it for something, so that in the end it didn't matter much, except we put a lot of work into it, putting it all together again, re-doing the sound, and so on.

Question: How did you operate the machine?

Snow: One way was with programming tapes so that the instructions were given to the machine in terms of sound, and the other way was a control box with little dials, you know, for each function – horizontal, vertical, rotation, zoom – and speed for each one and so on.

There's a buried cable. It could have been radio connected I guess, but we never got that far, it just took so long. There's a little bit of a valley behind the rock that's on that slope there, and we had all the equipment down there: the control box, the generator, and all kinds of shit, and then further than that we had a tent where we were eating and sleeping.

I was hoping to use the tracks that we made to instruct the machine as a soundtrack because I wanted to have the sound in sync in that sense with the image. Which was something I'd done before in different ways in *Back and Forth*, like the machine sounds in sync with the whole image not with something in the picture. Anyway it worked out that we didn't have enough time to really finish that system. We used it on a couple of things, but it wasn't possible to use it for the whole film, so we did most of it by following the score and using the dials. And then I wanted to use that kind of sound, so I really re-constructed the electronic sound – the tapes as they might have been. And what happens is that we have this very quiet electronic beep-beep-beep sound, and it's in sync in the sense that you might have a 200 cycle tone, or something like that, when the thing is moving horizontally – I can't remember which way it goes – and when there's a higher tone, 1,000 cycles or so, it goes vertically, and then you combine in various ways.

There's also a byproduct to the sound which I didn't realize before. It seems to affect your inner ear a little bit, having that low tone going on for three hours and it somehow or other gets involved with that whole balance thing. I sort of think of the sound as being a kind of nervous system thing in a way. It's going on all the time, it's supposed to be very quiet, but it's hard to get that when you're projecting in a theatre. If you put it too low, the people in the back row couldn't hear it.

Question: The repetition of the beeps is very hypnotic, I found myself blinking in sync with the sound.

Snow: (laughs) Yeah.

Question: But it wasn't as annoying as the track in *Reason Over Passion*, which gave me a headache after a while.



YOU LIVED IN NEW YORK FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS?

Yeah, I'm still there fairly frequently.

DO YOU HAVE AN APARTMENT?

No, I have a studio. I sublet it when I'm not there, like I haven't been there for three months now. Andy Norin has it, he's a wonderful filmmaker too.

IN THE SOUTH OF HOUSTON DISTRICT?

Well, this place is on Chambers Street. It's a lot lower than that. It's down, you know, where the City Hall is. I used to have a studio, where I shot *Wavelength*, on Canal Street at the bottom of that Houston district.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A CANADIAN. LIKE WHEN YOU WORK IN NEW YORK, DO YOU RETAIN SOME SORT OF CANADIAN IDENTITY?

Well, I've never thought about that as an aspect of what I do - I still don't - but I think that it's important in Canada because the country's disappearing - I can see that happening. Personally, I'm a cosmopolite, I guess, but then a cosmopolite likes to go to places that are different and have character of their own and they're not all Howard Johnson's. So like even if I were just a traveller, I'd still have some interest in hoping that Canada could be different. But I'm a Canadian. I think there are values here that really haven't been - like we're just starting to think about, and like it's a defensive thing that we're in but it's really a necessary sort of fight. I think it has a lot more to do with the economic domination by American business than it has to do with the cultural thing, although that's connected.

WHAT ABOUT THINGS LIKE THE QUOTA SYSTEM FOR FILMS, SOMETHING WHICH WE'RE FIGHTING FOR?

Oh, I think that's a good idea. I mean, I think it's too bad that it has to be done, but it's funny that the music thing worked out. Maybe simultaneously there was a rise of effort in, you know, pop music here, with this government order about Canadian content in radio and TV. But anyway, there really are some good things going on in music. It's like the country had to be ordered to do it, and yet it works. So I think that should be done.

IN A SENSE, YOU HAVE TO LEGISLATE CULTURE.

Yeah. I mean this government that's supposed to be so awful has really done some pretty interesting things for culture, like the LIP things and the Canada Council. Really kind of amazing things, they really are, I mean they're things that can be used.

HOW DID YOU GET THE \$27,000 TO MAKE *LA REGION CENTRALE*?

That was fifteen thousand from the CFDC and twelve thousand from Famous Players, which was fantastic, I mean it was fantastic that I got the money at all, really. That's my first film that's ever been financed, I always paid for them myself. It's the biggest budget, too. It's really wonderful.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE NEW PROGRAM OF THE CANADA COUNCIL?

Oh, that's terrific. Any money you can get to do your work is great.

THEY'RE BUYING CANADIAN ART WORKS AT THE RATE OF A MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR. . . .

Oh, the Art Bank thing, is that it?

YEAH, THE ART BANK THING.

Well, I really don't know that much about it. But the idea is that they will buy works and they'll put them in public buildings?

THEY RENT THEM BACK TO THE GOVERNMENT.

They'll be rented to other government departments.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR WORK HANGING IN TRUDEAU'S OFFICE?

Well, yeah, sure. . . . I don't think there's anything wrong with that. He probably has some interesting visitors. Like John Lennon and Yoko Ono have visited him.

HOW DO YOU RELATE TO JOYCE WIELAND GOING OFF ON THIS CANADIANA KICK?

I haven't made it a subject of my work which she has and really successfully, I think. But I really share a lot of things that she's interested in. But, you know, as far as something being in Trudeau's office, I don't know whether that matters that much, I mean, unless it was something of Joyce's. Like have you seen the things that are in the Isaacs Gallery now, there's some drawings and cartoons? There's one about bombing Howard Johnson's that's really terrific, it's really good. She's done some great things. But hanging something in Trudeau's office, what's so bad about that?

I DIDN'T MEAN TO IMPLY THERE WAS ANYTHING BAD ABOUT IT.

Then it might be a beneficial influence. But probably not, nobody ever looks at anything anyway. That's what's going to happen to these public building things in a way, you know, but it's nice anyway to get a chance to do something. I guess it sort of restricts what kind of things you can do, but just the same it's still nice. I think you should get whatever money you can to do what you can do - make films or anything like that.

WHAT CANADIAN FILMS HAVE IMPRESSED YOU LATELY?

The best thing I've seen recently, outside of Joyce Wieland's *PIERRE VALLIERES* is *COWBOY AND INDIAN* by Don Owen. It's really quite nice. The two stars give a very good performance. It's really a nice film.

THE CBC'S NOT SHOWING IT BECAUSE OF CENSORSHIP.

Is that right? What's in it that's to be censored?

OWEN SAYS TOO MANY BURPS AND FARTS. (laughter)

Snow: Well, what she did there was a different use in a way. In *La Région Centrale* it should really be subliminal in a way. But it's hard to get that, it's hard to adjust for that, because of the spatial set-up in a theatre. It shouldn't really be too strong. Whereas with some of the other ones, like *Back and Forth*, the sound is supposed to be really powerful because it has a different function.

Question: How did you program the camera to stay on the horizon?

Snow: In some cases we'd start the scene with that reference properly set up, sometimes not looking through the camera, but just lining it up in a general sense looking into the horizon. Then there are reel changes so that sometimes we could make bits of adjustment in there. So that when the cross comes on, sometimes there might be a little bit of a shift so that you get the whole sequence oriented properly. And then sometimes it just happened, which was very nice you know, it just ended up after it made all these turns, it just ended up like that on the horizon.

Question: Accidental art?

Snow: Well in a way. The sequences were set up as far as speed goes, and if it was a circular thing, ending not the right side up would have been okay too, you know. There are about four reel returns to seeing the thing from a 'normal' point of view, so that you really get to believe in the thing again. So that when it does leave again, your sense of gravity is really affected. Otherwise it becomes more or less abstract, and then it becomes realistic, it more or less fluxes.

Like toward the end, remember, it's gone through this whole thing, there's that dawn part, and it goes through that long, repeated kind of figure eight thing, speeds up a little bit because the big tipping sort of thing happens, and finally comes back around again. Then there's the sequence where it goes around and around in the normal kind of thing where you see the place again after you've been there all that time going through all these things, and then after that it goes through the most extreme variations where it goes very, very fast.

Question: Then the zooming. . . .

Snow: Yeah, especially the part where it goes very, very fast. The zooming's in there too, but the zooming's like a real sort of look at the place before it gets to be really consumed by the ultimate speed, sort of, at the end. Like you just get about six frames of sky, six frames of ground, and all the movements all happen at once.

Question: It's like the global thing, the roundness of the earth, was that the ultimate thing in your mind when you designed that last sequence?

Snow: Well yes, I wanted to see a three dimensional space and you can't see it in totality, you have to see it sort of piece by piece, but that's what it is in a way.

Question: You could use a fish eye lens.

Snow: Yeah, you could do that, but then that wouldn't be realistic in a sense. And then the fastest part's sort of interesting, because it's all

these movements – circular, vertical and horizontal – sort of encompassing this three-dimensional scene and squeezing it into that sort of smear of earth and smear of sky. I don't know, there's something kind of interesting about that.

Question: The coldness of the actual location doesn't come through in the film, because of the warm colors.

Snow: No, it doesn't. It's funny, it looks like a fall kind of color, yellows and oranges.

Question: When you're thrown into the upside down thing in the very beginning and you're in sort of a negative space, the sky becomes a big snowfield and the horizon becomes a black sky, it's kind of a weird effect.

Snow: Yeah, you get into some funny readings of what's negative and what's positive.

Question: What kind of trips do you go off on when you watch the film?

Snow: Well, there's those kinds of driftings and sensations of falling and rising that happen, they're really great. It's good to see it high, too. I've done it on grass and hash, but I showed it in Antioch in the States and there was a guy there who was just into his second hour of psilocybin. And I talked to him the next day and Jesus, he really enjoyed it. I'd like to do that some time, but you know, I'd have to have the proper situation.

Question: When I asked you about Chariots of the Gods I only meant that in the sense of my tripping out on the concept behind that book and movie while tripping out on watching *La Région Centrale* and speculating on the concept behind your work.

Snow: Well, you're completely right to do what you do, but I didn't have that in mind.

Question: Also the whole trip of exploring the surface of an unknown planet for the first time.

Snow: Yeah, that really is fantastic. But if anything, I was really trying to show a place that hadn't been touched by us and to record it in a way, because when everything's covered with concrete, maybe that'll be interesting to see. I hope that never happens, but I mean that was an aspect of it because I'm really interested in the idea of preserving as much wilderness as possible in Canada. I mean that's one of the things we have that is really a fantastic thing and it's disappearing.

Question: Yeah, like you could just see the mining trucks rolling in as soon as you finished shooting.

Snow: Yeah, I suppose so, since there wasn't any wood there, so the lumber companies wouldn't be interested.

Question: Why wasn't there any timber?

Snow: Well, it's a whole section, it isn't Arctic, but it's like a kind of pocket that's Arctic-like, about three hundred miles before that starts to occur everywhere.

Question: Why that location?

Snow: Well, it could have been various things, but that one had the long, long view that I wanted. Like a real long distance where you couldn't see anything else but unspoiled landscape.

Question: There's also that long view in time back to pre-history.

Snow: Yeah, and that's another thing. A kind of glacial deposit, all those rocks, they were put there that way a long time ago. And moving the rocks around seems to be like a good thing to reinforce the gravity thing, you know, like the feeling of weight that gets moved around. But I started out with different ideas. One of them was that I wanted to have a stream with rapids in it, an maybe even falls, because moving that around would be very interesting too. Then you'd have that kind of experience of seeing the gravity move, but I couldn't get all the different things in one spot.

It was really hard to find a place that didn't have anything like wood chopped down. It was really amazing, I looked quite hard by car for a couple of months, pretty far north, and I thought that maybe we could go off the road and find something or other that would work. But by car that was always impossible. I guess it's natural, whenever there's a road, somehow, but even so it's sad. It really is. It's like people worry about something like the Louvre and it should be worried about, but the wilderness is just as valuable and should be worried about in the same way. And animals – animal liberation, that's what we should be having – they haven't got a chance. Who's to speak for them? All those species disappearing. It's a serious thing, like tigers. . . .

Question: There aren't any left.

Snow: Probably not. I haven't read the paper today. The obituaries. I kind of have a real thing about eagles. In my next film there's a thing about birds. When you start thinking about eagles, it's really fantastic. Just think about those big wings and the size that they are and how far away they are from us. I mean, they're really big things.

Question: Have you read the Teachings of Don Juan, by Carlos Castaneda?

Snow: Yeah, and I read the one after that too, *A Separate Reality*. It's very good.

Question: Well, in the first book there's the thing about flying around like a crow, like that's similar to your eagle trip.

Snow: Have you read the second one where he stops Carlos from starting the car? That's terrific. The only thing that seems funny about it is how stupid Carlos is. And in the second book, he's even more stupid, and it makes you wonder: he's gone through all this shit and yet he goes back for more and he's dumber than he was when it all started. Is he standing in for the common man, or something? And some of the questions he asks. . . .

Question: You could make a far out film attaching a camera to the legs of an eagle. Anyway, what's your next project?

Snow: Well, I've been writing for the past year an outline, like a whole sort of thing for a new film. The title of it is better to read, than to say. The whole title is *Rimbaud's Nephew by Diderot, thanks to Dennis Young, by Max Knowles*. That's the title of it, and it's a musical comedy. (laughter) Oh, everybody will love it! It's got people in it and they talk. It's full of people, sometimes there's a lot of people, dozens of people sometimes.

Question: Is it a full length film?

Snow: It'll be somewhere between an hour and an hour and a half. It's all written, like everything's sort of pretty well ready, but I'm not quite sure about the money or when I'll be able to get started on it. Probably be something like December or January, or something like that. It's going to be 16mm, color, and some of it will be filmed here, some of it in New York.

Question: Are you in a position to apply for American foundation grants?

Snow: Well, I got a Guggenheim last year. That's still coming and part of it I'll probably put into this film.

Question: What about your experience of being at Yale?

Snow: Well, that was nice in a way. I mean, I don't like to teach unless I have to and I sort of had to, but there were some really interesting students and some of them did some nice things and they're still doing them. They're really turned on, as they say, it's really great. (laughter)

