

ON (EXPERIMENTAL) FILM

by B. Sternberg

The Ontario Film and Video Appreciation Society (OFAVAS) was in Divisional Court in Toronto last week (September 15-19), represented by lawyers Charlie Campbell and Ellen Murray, in round number two of their struggle against censorship which began in 1982. Using the film *Amerika* by Al Razutis as their test case, OFAVAS is waging the battle on three fronts: firstly, appealing the Film Review Boards decision that *Amerika* can not be screened without cuts; secondly, arguing that this power of prior censorship infringes upon "freedom of expression" and is thus unconstitutional; and thirdly, that under the constitutional division of powers, charges of obscenity are

criminal and therefore come under federal jurisdiction. The board of OFAVAS, David Poole, Michelle MacLean, Anna Gronau and Carol McBride, have been joined by the Motion Picture Theatres Association as co-applicants and have received support as well from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association which received 'intervenor status' during the trial. If you wish to help with the court costs, please send your much needed donations to OFAVAS, 30 Wellington St. #1805, Toronto, Ontario M5E 1S3. The case has been tried before a tribunal of judges. Now we await the verdict.

I've been reading notices announcing the death of the Avant-Garde – and that Modernism, in its acceptance by the institutions it challenged, is complete or has run into a dead end, and we now discuss the attributes of Postmodernism (which is sometimes written as anti-modernism). Since the term experimental film is commonly interchangeable with the term avant-garde film, what does talk of the 'end of the avant-garde' mean for us filmmakers?

I read and try to keep the terms clear: Is Avant-Garde synonymous with Modernism in the motivating principle of 'new,' 'challenging'? Does Avant-Garde refer only to the historical or, as Peter Burger refers to it, the 'original' avant-garde of Dadaism and Surrealism, and films like *Un Chien Andalou*, which challenged Modernism's aestheticism and shocked the public as

well, or does it also refer to movements such as Conceptual art and Structuralist/Materialist film? Do these movements associate avant-garde with the Modernist aspiration, as Jurgen Habermas proposes in *Modernity – an Incomplete Project*, of bringing art into a more direct relation with daily life? Is identification with popular culture and the political Left concomitant to or an essential feature of the Avant-Garde? And do these attributes associate it with the Modernist project as just stated or with Postmodernism and its response to the 'new conservatism'? Are rock videos really enough? Or is there still the necessity for, the imperative of a Vangard?

If, as Habermas argues, modern society is suffering from the separation of cognitive, moral and aesthetic ways of experiencing the world due to the specialization of science, religion and art, and identifies

the goal of Modernity with the re-integration of these modes into our daily living, can we think that a solution to this problem lies in the linking of art to popular culture? There seem to be two problems with this; one, that the content, and spirit of work gets watered down, lost, or de-fused when it is co-opted or incorporated into the mass media; and two, that the 'cultural industries' or popular art actually reinforce the dominant ideology of modernized, capitalist, Western society.

Mainstream narrative films, not only in their content, but in their very structure, (notions of linearity, a progressive line of events that lead to a conclusion), and, in the illusionism they project, support the lifeview of the culture to which they are economically tied. This view of life has turned out to be unsatisfying in human terms if not down-right anti-human. 'Art Films,' in as much as they are a part of the same commercial market as 'Hollywood' films, might comment upon narrative cinema, but cannot radically challenge it nor present alternatives to it. It remains to experimental film to offer us different experiences in perceiving.

Festival Internazionale Cinema Giovanni has selected the following Canadian films for competition: *Linda Joy* by Bill MacGillivray, *Ten Cents a Dance / Parallax* by Midi Onodera, *Dark Lullabies* by Irene Angelico and Jack Neidik, *Knock! Knock!* by Bruce McDonald, *Framing Factory* by Cindy Gavel, *Upstair/Inside* and *Art Academy* by Kathleen Maitland Carter, and in video: *Commercial Culture* by Popular Projects, *Fiction* by Bernard Hebert. The festival will be held in Torino, Italy from October 11-19, 1986. Luca Gasparini coordinated the Canadian selection in Toronto. He wishes to especially thank the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution Centre, The Funnel, V/Tape, and Piers Handling of the Festival of Festivals.

TORONTO – Anne M. Brown has been appointed as director of marketing and sales of Pathé Video.

The appointment of Ms. Brown who has occupied senior posts with Telefilm Canada and the Canadian Film Development Corporation was announced Sept. 25 by Stuart Cobbett, president of Astral Film Enterprises Inc. the parent company of Pathé Video.

Prior to joining Pathé Video Ms. Brown was senior distribution and marketing officer for Telefilm Canada.

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