

Another handful of recent independently-made films from the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre in Toronto.

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### SLOW DANCE WORLD

A mixture of live-action, animation, cut-outs and effects linked to an Indian dancer and his world of colourful living things. Through his eyes, delightful visions are conjured up – beads, clouds, birds, butterflies and leaves, then on to the lizard and snake, and an underwater rainbow of fish. A feather swirls in the air and transforms itself into the eyelash of the dancer, who continues to gyrate against constantly changing backgrounds.

Skilfully executed, with an engaging track of tinkling bells and drums. Pretty to look at, easy on the eye, but not much substance.

d./sc. Ellen Besen, Lonnie Baumholz anim.cam. Gordon Petty. ed. Fraser Steele. mus. Ben Mink. 5 mins. Col/b&w. 16mm.

### A BRIGHTER MOON

A young man is delivering Chinese food – his voice-over asks, "Why am I here?" Mikey shares a room with his friend, Valentine, in a student house that shelters young people from Hong Kong who come to Toronto to study. Some of their parents are wealthy, but they all pay high tuition fees for their offspring to learn, and many students help to support themselves.

## MINI REVIEWS

by Pat Thompson

Mikey and Valentine cope in their own individual ways – Mikey slaves away in a Chinese restaurant until 2 a.m. most days, while Valentine takes to the street selling cassettes and radios of dubious origin. Mikey studies relentlessly, is fully aware of his family obligations, and nurses an unrequited (but mild) passion for a Toronto-born Chinese girl who works in a nearby coffee shop. His not-so-studious friend talks of making big bucks and buying a red Porsche, and is into clothes and partying with the girls.

An interesting look at an area not yet fully explored on film in this country – Asian students existing in a foreign land, supported by families, but out there on their own grappling with loneliness and the foreign. However, this competent presentation is hampered by a screenplay (apparently written by a committee of four) of such blandness, and with dialogue so 'explanatory', that one longs for an emotional peak, however low it may be.

d. Keith Lock. sc. Keith Lock, William Koon, Jean Yoon, Winston Kam. cam. Nao Hiko (Kuri) Kurita. ed. Keith Lock, Kam Kwong. mus. Chris Alexandra, Hedy Wong. 25 mins. Col. 16mm/video. Made with the assistance of the Ontario Arts Council.

### DIVINE SOLITUDE

A single supple dancer in a long red clinging robe stretches and turns to reveal... one strangely elongated arm. The title comes up.

The dancer, now in white tights against a black background, manipulates her hands which seem to have a life of their own. Now in long black tights, her trunk a white deformed shape, she moves to frenzied drumming and then to the slow and quiet rhythm of a single piano.

The dancer's costume is black and casts a shadow against the white background, revealing one built-up shoe. Once again, hands are highlighted and the soloist, now in black, now in red, undulates to the quickening music, voices, drumming. Again in the clinging red robe, the dancer continues her solo with an elongated arm.

A fascinating first-time look at the solo performance art of dancer-choreographer Nana Gleason. With a wide-ranging dance training – classical, modern (with Martha Graham), plus jazz and tap – she creates an eerily macabre world that's full of beautiful insights into dark torments, fantasies, and other hidden things.

Right at the very end of the film there's a candid shot of crew and

dancer in the studio, laughing, and obviously discussing her performance, which brings everything back to earth.

d./ed. Jean-Marc Larivière. cam. Kemp Archibald, Peter Mettler. dancer/choreographer: Nana Gleason. 28 mins. Col. 16mm.

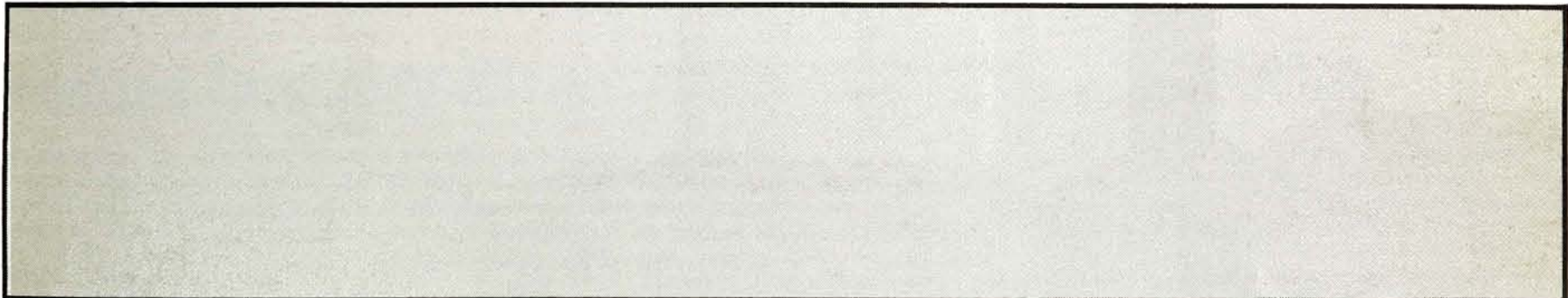
### REFLECTIONS

A girl runs after a boy on a street, calling his name as he goes into a building. Jim says to his girl-friend in their apartment, "You should pay more attention to me – a strange woman followed me today."

Jim knows the agency isn't going to help him find his real parents – he's adopted, and longs to be part of a family. "I saw someone that looked like me today," remarks Jim, "just like my twin." He pursues a young man to the subway entrance but loses him, and his girl-friend suggests it's just coincidence. Jim wanders the streets looking for his twin brother, there's an accident and he wakes up in his bed, screaming. Later, walking by a cemetery, he hears a girl call to him – she is in mourning...

A muddled storyline, rather unnatural dialogue, and the whole burdened by amateurish acting. But still, it looks good, the camera work is thoughtful, and it's technically O.K. So, here's to the next, more polished, effort.

d./sc. Paul Harris. cam. Jens Sturup. ed. Paul Harris, Giovanni Sampogna. mus. Neville Austin. 20 mins. Col. 16mm. With assistance from the Ontario Arts Council.



"Video Art: A production scripted, directed, edited and produced by an artist... prior to interaction with a broadcaster or exhibitor."

– (Clive Robertson, FUSE, Winter 86/87)

"Video Art? Isn't it just bad T.V.?"

– (John Martin, Producer, Much Music/ City TV)

## VIDEO TALES

by Geoffrey Shea

in common? Not much.

That is not to say that VCC is to be blamed for this awkward tension. After all, their expressed aim is to highlight new or innovative uses of this very flexible medium, and since they now exhibit their festival on television, they must try to fulfill the something-for-everyone rule. (Which means whatever your tastes, you are bound to be uninterested in three quarters of the program. Unless of course you are somehow involved in the video industry – as I am, they are and probably you are – in which case we watch for tips, trends and techniques.)

Video art, which has always been a central theme of this festival and others like it for the last ten years, creates the biggest enigma in the McLuhan/communications/technology chain. While artists have not exactly been resistant to the industry's obsession with technological innovation, they have often chosen to describe themselves as 'other-than-television', and to produce, distribute and exhibit in non-television con-

texts. The dilemma in VCC's all-inclusive festival arises out of their oversight of the artists' decision to work *outside of television*. The music and fashion videos and the computer graphics demonstrations were short, up-beat programs; certain to entertain; part of the slowly expanding vocabulary of TV. Even the documentaries, with their challenging images, were made for TV audiences.

The dilemma? The art video seemed out of place, hard to comprehend, or as Much Music producer John Martin said, "like bad TV." The fact that so much of this art exists on videotape has led innovative television producers at VCC and elsewhere to the conclusion that it should be relatively easy to package the stuff into a presentable TV format – *without taking into account that the work was never designed for that audience or context.*

Impressive compilation programs have been produced by Britain's Channel 4, Belgium's BRT and several PBS stations in three states. Some of these

experimental programs have made considerable progress in educating and expanding audiences, but they have only rarely provided artists with the much needed opportunity to conceive and design work specifically for television. Now Canada will see its first attempt at an on-going video and contemporary art show with a long overdue program from TVOntario. (Note: VCC's contribution has been valuable, but it describes itself as a televised video festival as opposed to a video art program.) TVO producer Richard Johnson is aware of the various international attempts at programming artists' works, and he knows that the emphasis *must* be on content. So, as he tries to win final approval for this show from TVO's establishment, he will be stressing new *art* and not necessarily new *technology*. But the biggest possible impact this program will have for artists may not be in its ability to disseminate their work more extensively, but in providing artists with the opportunity and incentive to design and produce work with significantly broader appeal and impact, and to work in conjunction with, and not in opposition to, broadcasters.

What do music videos, fashion videos, video art and video documentaries all have in common? It's obvious – they are all lumped together by Video Culture Canada (VCC) in their fourth annual New Television Festival. This year's festival includes the broadcast component (Dec. '86), the Awards Program (spring '87) and the live festival (summer '87).

But look again. There is something wrong with this picture. How can a screen full of eternally petulant fashion models enacting a whimsical plot be juxtaposed with Jon Alpert's vérité documentary of children and pregnant mothers living in a garbage dump in the Philippines? (This garbage provides their food, their industry and the terra firma on which they build their shacks.) So once again – What do all these have