

REVERB

Disappointed

I attended the Seventh Canadian Student Film Festival in Montreal last week and thought you might be interested in what the local press had to say about it. *Clippings were enclosed.* - Ed.

The jury withheld many of the prizes and re-structured the festival with little consistency and incomprehensible intent.

Many people felt that there was a sufficient number of good films to have awarded all prizes, and that the jury should have encouraged student filmmakers by making all the prizes available to them, rather than withholding awards on the basis of the jury's personal criteria of "excellence".

I felt that a number of very good films did not receive the recognition they deserved. Sheridan College's **Dr. Climax** and Barry Greenwald's **Metamorphosis** were two of the audience's favorites.

Rena Destonas

Collective blindness

When I read Clarke Mackey's letter to a group of assembled friends, a chorus of cheers went around the room. Mackey is not just another disgruntled filmmaker grumbling about not getting money from the government; the problem he has touched is fundamental and a mirror image of the experience of dozens of serious filmmakers around the country, myself included.

Mackey asks the question, why does there seem to be so much money around for personal films by inexperienced filmmakers, and seemingly nothing for serious filmmakers who wish to say something about the society which we live in. I think part of the problem lies with the basic attitude of the entire film & video division of the Canada Council. They see themselves as funding films which expand the "art" of the cinema and video. Unfortunately, they themselves are a small division of a larger organization which funds the graphic and visual arts as well as the performing arts. It is there that most of their money goes. Their view of cinema is therefore understandably clouded by what they consider to be the sister arts. Thus, if you wish to dunk clear leader into a bathtub full of butterfly wings, you will get funding from the Canada Council, particularly if you are already a recognized artist in other fields. If you wish to make a documentary on a serious social issue, it is not considered that you are "expanding the frontiers of the art," and therefore you are of no interest to the jury. I was told with great seriousness by members of the council, "If it weren't for us, where would people like Micheal Snow get any funding!"

The tragedy lies in their collective blindness to what film and video is. What in fact the "art of the cinema" is. Cinema is one of the few art forms that is still alive and kicking in the twentieth century, it is an art form which still has a creative inter-

action with the world around it both in terms of subject and audience. Films are still about things and people pay to go see them. Film has also successfully resisted the entropic, "playing with the medium" tendencies of its sister arts. (It was with great pleasure that I watched the "New American Cinema" touted in the sixties as the great frontier of cinematic art, disappear up its own asshole, never to be heard from again.)

Siegfried Kracauer, in his book **Theory of Film**, points out that if film is to be considered an art form, "the medium of cinema is physical reality as such." The outside world is to the filmmaker what clay is to someone doing sculpture and this is something which we as Canadians, with our superb documentary tradition, should understand more than anyone else. Film, by its essential nature, involves the life around it (you got to take pictures of things) and when we talk about expanding the frontiers of the art of the cinema, we mean something very different from expanding the frontiers of painting or music. The very aliveness of the medium is due to its involvement with the social and political world around it and it is just this involvement which is being denied by the aesthetes at the Canada Council.

So Michael Snow gets to contemplate the space between his sprocket holes and Clarke Mackey and the many others like him are denied the possibility of doing something meaningful. It's as simple as that.

Ronald H. Blumer

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