

Lunenburg Documentary Film Festival : Second Impressions

In the beginning it was dark, and then there was light, and it was good electric light projecting a beam of inspired imagery onto a silver screen at 24 frames per second.

The films in this contemporary collection are intuitive points of view and if thoughts could be seen, this is what they might look like.

Combining live action film with direct or cameraless animation is a unique and unorthodox technique both revealing and reveling in the centre of its own aesthetic universe. The mixing of these two techniques adds a special quality of artistic invention first by shooting a live action film then unrolling the film and applying handmade images frame by frame.

Scratched, drawn, hole punched and painting directly onto the film goes beyond the trend of today's fascination with smooth digital animation.

We are presented with an assortment of personal, raw and poetic visions transcending traditional documentary filmmaking as if the filmmakers are documenting their minds' inner visions.

The fact that these films are silent aligns them closer to paintings in an art gallery. These motion painted films offer a visual alternative in a radical way and challenge the viewers perception much like punk rock revolutionized unconventional music.

In this age of instant information, these films present information in a contemplative state of awareness through exploration of personal expression and imagination allowing the viewer to interpret.

There is a direct and energetic urgency in conveying the messages that are contained within each film.

Doug Barnford's 'Rock' is hypnotic with waves of tranquil tidal surging plants. It contains over laid messages using a typewriter directly typed onto the film. Eye massaging images rocking back and forth as if the film itself is alive and breathing.

'Grandfather Kwitin' by Melissa Labrador creatively documents the construction of a birch bark canoe. Hand written subtitles and energetic patterns scratched into the emulsion give life to the still images providing a unique way of storytelling without dialogue. Handmade canoe building is pared perfectly with handmade filmmaking.

'Picasso had his Blue Period, I have my Blue Rocks' by Laurie Swim, transports us through a portal of time and space toward a small building at waters edge. The building is resilient and defiant of change much like the films techniques withstanding natural elements including a cosmic particle storm painted onto the film.

Saundra Vernon's 'Lunique' captures the vibrancy of a small town through colourful transformations and descriptive handmade subtitles. It is as if we are taken on a subconscious tour celebrating the towns illuminated highlights and special places.

'Wooden Dreams' by Jay Langford presents the passion and motivation for constructing a schooner through an inspiring dream of sailing the boat with bright red sails to an exotic tropical island. In a single pan we observe a before and after effect of the raw materials to completed schooner.

Anna Bald's meditative film 'Drawn to Life described to Death' focus's on a derelict car decaying in a field. An extraordinary phenomena appears to give the car life when its headlights turn on and it dreams of traveling a blue road that morphs into a sacred snake symbolizing transformation in the circle of life.

Each of these films is independently different yet they all share an exploration in storytelling with an experimental design that is both original and informative.

Considering that each of these new filmmakers came from other artistic disciplines demonstrates the power of creative forces within each individual.

My second impression of this collection of films is one of absolute delight.

Richard Reeves