

# Dorothy Macpherson, ou la démocratisation de l'art par le film

## Dorothy Macpherson or the Democratization of Art Through the Film

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# DOROTHY MACPHERSON, OU LA DÉMOCRATISATION DE L'ART PAR LE FILM

René Rozon

Il faudrait trinquer — le Centre Canadien du Film sur l'Art célèbre, cette année, son 15<sup>e</sup> anniversaire — mais le coeur n'y est pas. Motif? L'existence même du Centre est en péril. Pourtant, son directeur, Dorothy Macpherson, œuvre, depuis plus de 25 ans, à promouvoir le film sur l'art. Pour faire le point, demandons-lui de nous dévoiler sa pensée.



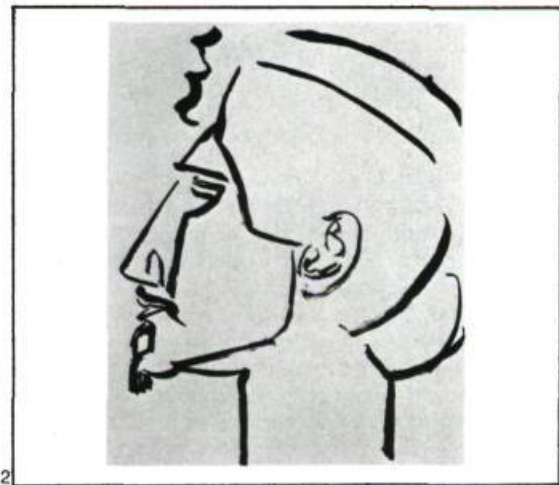
1. Dorothy Macpherson, Directeur du Centre Canadien du Film sur l'Art.

2. Ezra Pound dessiné par Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (Arthur Cantril, 1968).

3. L'Électeur Clément-Auguste, qui a fait construire le palais de Brühl, dans son costume de chasse au faucon.

René Rozon — Quels détours vous ont amenée au film sur l'art?

Dorothy Macpherson — Mon travail antérieur m'y avait préparé, le hasard a fait le reste. En Angleterre, à la fin des années 30 et au début des années 40, j'étais secrétaire d'une association de peintres et de sculpteurs, le London Group, et ma tâche principale consistait à les faire connaître du public. Au départ, j'étais donc liée au milieu et à l'éducation artistiques. Grâce à cette expérience, à mon arrivée au Canada en 1944, j'ai été élue cosecraétaire, avec Jules Bazin, de la section québécoise — je m'étais installée à Montréal — de la Fédération des Artistes Canadiens. Par ailleurs, j'avais déjà rencontré à Londres John Grierson, devenu entretemps premier commissaire de l'Office National du Film. Il apprit que j'étais au Canada, me convoqua et me fit entrer à l'ONF. Par la suite, deux facteurs conjugués ont tracé mon avenir. D'une part, mon premier visionnement de film sur l'art, qui a été pour moi une révélation. Il s'agissait de *Il Dramma di Christo* (1941) de Luciano Emmer et Enrico Gras, basé sur les fresques de Giotto à l'Arena de Padoue, film formidable parce qu'il recrée le climat de l'œuvre avec une grande économie de moyens. A ce jour, ce document m'a profondément marquée. D'autre part, ma nomination comme agent de liaison de l'ONF auprès de la Galerie Nationale du Canada, où j'étais appelée à faire l'acquisition de films sur l'art. Bref, deux événements dont la convergence allait m'ouvrir une voie extraordinaire. Le Canada n'est pas l'Europe, qui regorge d'œuvres d'art qu'on ne voit jamais ici. Je compris très vite que le film allait devenir un outil essentiel pour exposer aux regards







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des Canadiens les chefs-d'œuvre de tous les temps. D'où la nécessité de monter une solide collection de films sur l'art. Alan Jarvis, alors directeur du Musée, m'a accordé une grande liberté. A tel point qu'à la fin des années 50, la collection comptait près de 500 titres.

**R.R.** – Films qui allaient constituer le noyau de la collection du Centre Canadien du Film sur l'Art?

**D.M.** – C'est exact. Le Centre a été fondé à la suite d'une résolution de la Commission Nationale Canadienne pour l'Unesco formulée lors du Festival et Colloque de Films sur l'Art que j'organisai à la Galerie Nationale, en 1963. La collection du Musée a été intégrée au Centre, qui compte aujourd'hui 1500 films sur tous les aspects de l'art.

**R.R.** – Quels critères ont influencé vos choix dans l'élaboration de la collection? Au fait, quelle est votre conception du film sur l'art?

**D.M.** – Paradoxalement, je mise d'abord et avant tout sur la quantité et la qualité de renseignements que le film transmet. S'il renferme une valeur artistique, tant mieux, mais c'est par surcroît, un attribut supplémentaire qui vient se greffer au film, et non un a priori. Cela dit, je m'empresse d'ajouter qu'en pratique, ces deux pôles ne sont pas irréconciliables et souvent se rejoignent, l'un appelant l'autre. Et là, je suis de l'avis de John Grierson: il faut travailler son film le mieux possible, et, s'il est réussi, l'esprit qui l'anime fera surface automatiquement. Il en va de même du film sur l'art. Il était interdit aux réalisateurs d'utiliser le terme *beau* quand ils discutaient avec Grierson, tant il était convaincu qu'en traitant un sujet convenablement, la beauté perce inévitablement. Je crois fortement à cette conception cinématographique. D'ailleurs, j'ai horreur des films à la guimauve ou à l'eau de rose. Ajoutons à cela trois autres critères que je place par-dessus tout. D'abord, la vérité historique, conforme aux dernières recherches, est fondamentale au film sur l'art de qualité. Je déteste l'anecdote, surtout quand elle n'est pas fondée. L'honnêteté et la sincérité du cinéaste sont ici de rigueur. Ensuiv-

te, le film ne doit pas trahir l'état d'esprit de son sujet, notamment l'amour que l'artiste a transmis dans son œuvre. En la transposant à l'écran, le film sur l'art doit donc véhiculer une émotion. Enfin, en dépit de son contenu didactique, le film doit atteindre à une dimension poétique — nous sommes après tout dans le domaine de l'art — qu'il acquiert s'il ne cerne pas de trop près son sujet, qui doit être à la fois implicite et explicite, et s'il procède de la connaissance et de l'appréciation du sujet.

**R.R.** – Quels films, selon vous, rejoignent ces critères?

**D.M.** – Les meilleurs films sur l'art sont français, d'origine belge, phénomène attribuable au fait que la Belgique fourmille d'œuvres d'art qui sont très appréciées du public, notamment des créateurs et donc des cinéastes, et que ce pays a encouragé la production de films sur l'art. Il convient de mentionner ici l'œuvre globale d'Henri Storck, dont *Rubens* (1948) et *Le monde de Paul Delvaux* (1946), et les films de Jean Cleinge. Inutile d'insister sur le premier, vous avez déjà parlé de ses films dans un numéro précédent<sup>1</sup>. Quant à Cleinge, *Encre* (1964) est un document important dans lequel on voit trois peintres — Alechinsky, Appel et Ting — créant chacun une lithographie. Captant l'essentiel, Cleinge a réussi à combiner trois styles différents en un film cohérent. D'autres pays ont néanmoins réalisés de remarquables documents. *Sculptures de la cathédrale de Naumburg* (1935) de Rudolph Bamberger et Curt Oertel, l'un des premiers films sur l'art, demeure l'un des plus beaux, tant par son style — éclairage soigné et subtils mouvements de caméra — que par son contenu, de superbes sculptures. *Images médiévales* (William Novik, 1949) séduit par la simplicité de sa présentation, où s'éclipse le cinéaste. C'est aussi un film original, les manuscrits du Moyen âge étant perçus dans l'esprit de l'époque. Bien documenté, *The Totem Pole* (A. L. Kroeler et S. A. Barrett, 1964) révèle avec perspicacité tout ce qu'il faut savoir sur les totems des Indiens de la Côte Ouest — origine, évolution



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1. Henri Storck, ou *La peinture retrouvée* dans *Vie des Arts*, Vol. XXII, N° 89, p. 57-59.





4. Palais baroque de Brühl, film de Carl Lamb, 1959-1960. Le palais du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'après les plans de Robert de Cotte, sa pièce d'eau et ses jardins.

5. Joachim parmi les bergers, détail. Les fresques de Giotto à la Chapelle Scrovegni, à Padoue, ont inspiré à Luciano Emmer l'un de ses premiers films sur l'art, *Il Dramma di Christo* (1941).

6. Intérieur du palais de Brühl.

et rôle — tout en nous faisant entrer progressivement dans leur univers. *The Shadow Catcher* (Teri C. McLuhan, 1974), réalisé par la fille de Marshall McLuhan, témoigne d'une grande sympathie et d'une vive compréhension envers son sujet, les Indiens de l'Amérique du Nord, tels que photographiés par l'anthropologue Edward S. Curtis. *Piet Mondrian, A Film Essay* (Nino Crama, 1973) traduit la passion et l'enthousiasme du cinéaste pour le peintre. En dépit d'un sujet difficile, le film n'est pas intellectuel, mais direct et intuitif. Démarche valable que l'on retrouve également dans les films d'Arthur Cantrill (*Henri Gaudier-Brzeska*, 1968), de James Ivory (*Venice, Theme and Variations*, 1957; *The Sword and the Flute*, 1959), et de Carl Lamb (*Palais baroque de Brühl*, 1959-1960; *Les Danseurs à la mauresque d'Érasme Grasser*, 1955). Tous sont des films accomplis, c'est-à-dire agréables à voir, tout en facilitant et enrichissant notre compréhension de l'art.

R.R. — Comment le public, lui, réagit-il au film sur l'art?

D.M. — L'art est pour une élite, et statique, on l'accroche au mur des musées. Mais le film sur l'art, lui, est démocratique: il rejoint le spectateur le plus ignare *directement*, parce que dynamique, l'œuvre étant ranimée à l'écran. D'où sa faculté de le toucher et d'exercer une profonde influence sur lui. Au fond, ce qui fascine le public, ce n'est pas de voir l'œuvre à l'écran, mais de voir *comment* elle a été réalisée, ou *comment* elle est interprétée. L'engouement du public est proportionnel à la qualité du film, qui est d'autant plus valable qu'il dispose du pouvoir d'étonner ou d'émerveiller, et ainsi ouvrir les yeux et séduire l'imagination du spectateur. Et le film sur l'art aura plus d'emprise sur le public si ce dernier en a vu non pas un, à l'occasion, mais plusieurs, car une fois habitué au genre, il aura le loisir de lire le film sous plus d'un angle.

R.R. — Vous sera-t-il possible de continuer ce travail méritoire?

D.M. — Hélas! le manque de fonds a toujours rendu difficile le bon fonctionnement du Centre. Diverses sources gouvernementales ont été alertées au sujet des problèmes de survie du Centre, démarches qui demeurent stériles. Si, il y a eu de l'argent, exceptionnellement, en 1967, l'année du Centenaire de la Confédération. Le projet consistait à établir dix cinémathèques régionales à travers le Canada, chacune étant dépositaire d'une vingtaine de films. Depuis, l'ONF assurait un budget de subsistance au Centre, qu'il vient de lui retirer. Que faire sans budget ni pour l'acquisition de films, ni pour l'entretien de la collection, sans oublier les frais d'administration?

R.R. — Pourtant, même l'American Federation of Arts reconnaît que le Centre est unique en son genre et dispose d'une grande collection, puisqu'elle vous a commandé la compilation d'un répertoire de films sur l'art distribués aux États-Unis et au Canada.

D.M. — Preuve tangible de la valeur du Centre et de son rôle capital dans l'éducation de l'art. Intitulé tout simplement *Films on Art*, il s'adresse à la fois au spécialiste et au profane. Car, d'après mon expérience, l'homme ordinaire, assoiffé d'information, a besoin de documentation. Il est vital de lui transmettre au moins une feuille de papier avec notes lorsqu'il assiste aux projections. Ce livre comble donc un besoin, le même qui est à l'origine de la création du Centre: répondre à la demande quant aux sources, à la nature et à la disponibilité des films sur l'art. Le volume renferme plus de 450 titres de films, y compris la plupart de ceux que j'ai mentionnés plus tôt.

R.R. — Un livre qui concrétise l'une de vos préoccupations fondamentales: rendre l'art accessible à tous?

D.M. — Comme en littérature, le film permet d'apprendre l'alphabet de l'art avant d'aborder la lecture des œuvres. D'ailleurs, à une époque où l'on préconise la décentralisation, quoi de plus pratique qu'un film? Les expositions itinérantes sont coûteuses, et plusieurs chefs-d'œuvre ne circulent pas. Économique, à l'épreuve des restrictions, le film circule librement. C'est vraiment le catalyseur de l'art démocratisé, à la portée de tous. Le Centre actionne ce processus culturel. Son but ultime? Rendre l'homme plus civilisé, plus éclairé et plus sensible par le film sur l'art.



*Free Fall* soars 70' vertically in the eight-story sky-lighted atrium of the Plaza Hotel, hub of the Renaissance Center complex. Forty handwoven panels of silver and mylar ascend and descend simultaneously, modulate the interior space with the serene pattern of sequential textile planes, gently cascade to the first floor level, where they are reflected in a half-acre indoor lake. Although surrounded by cantilevered balconies, jutting escalators, trees, greenery, and various elements guaranteed to distract attention from a work of art, the coruscant fabric sculpture holds its own, interacting with the light-filled courtyard and the water, lending the human touch to an over-architecturized setting. The balconies afford vantage points from which to perceive subtle tonal variations from bluish gray to yellow to violet and magenta.

Similarly, Knodel's *Gulf Stream*, 110' long, fills the horizontal glass box passageway to the library at the University of Houston, a visually pivotal area at the heart of the beautifully landscaped campus. Illuminated at night and reflected in the enclosing glass, 120 yards of paired linear ribbons twist and move in symmetric rhythm, at the same time affording a sense of enclosure and comfort. Energy diffused from the torquing strips symbolizes the forces at work amid the intellectual ferment of this center of learning.

Knodel's predilection with fabric as sculpture has been germinating since his student days at the University of California at Los Angeles, where, as early as 1961, he began to manipulate textile lengths. At that time he was studying the design of the fabric surface by means of silk screening, batik, flocking, etc., and later the actual weaving of fabric by the interlacing of two sets of elements on the loom. He displayed his delicate, often transparent, fabrics as canopies, supported by aluminum rods, or as revolving forms over metal framework on spring tension poles. His fabric construction, *Something To Do With Trees*, four flat tree-like shapes, each 6 x 17 feet, of wool, silk, nylon and polyester, portends what was to come. By 1971 his concern for the environmental enclosure was manifested in his woven dining habitat, shown at the Pasadena Art Museum. He literally wove a room, 8 x 12 x 8 feet, of narrow linen strips, incorporating mirrors within knotted cylinders. Rather than blocking the outside world, the space had a sense of openness, articulating with its surrounding ambience, a "special" area, separating yet inviting. Later, in 1974, Knodel wove another enclosure, *Act VIII*, this time of gossamer sheer threads. The surface was a chromatic treat, accomplished by the painstaking tie-dye resist method, three ribbon candy panels suspended side by side by means of hundreds of vertical neon pink cords in a parabolic curve of delicious, sensuous intimacy. This writer, while viewing the exhibit *Fiberworks* at the Cleveland Museum of Art last year, happened on a conducted tour where a group of schoolchildren had paused by *Act VIII*. The ingenious guide, having instructed her entourage not to touch the work, told them to blow on it instead, which sent the diaphanous surface into a shimmering torrent of ripples. Further, she demonstrated that the entire enclosure could be pushed to the side out of the way and housed along a wall. A practical, kinetic sculpture!

The clue to this flexible traversal is the cord system by means of which panels are suspended. Each cord originates from a horizontal track parallel to the ceiling, travels vertically to the fabric where each perforates the surface at periodic intervals and is stopped on the inner surface by a simple, terminal knot. The length of the cords is calculated to control the amount of curve to the fabric plane; the thickness of the fabric determines the amount of rippling or pleating. Another dimension is added by the cords themselves, varying from 1/8" to 3/4" braided nylon in high intensity colors, which tend to capture the light reflected off the fabric planes, and by the columnar effect of the massed cords, through which the viewer must walk in order to reach the quiet interior space of the parabolic hut.

Exploring the possibilities of the flexible fabric plane led Knodel to a variety of configurations. An exhibit at the James Yaw Gallery in Birmingham, Michigan, was appropriately titled *Eleven Aerial Acts*. Later he played with the idea of electrically controlled walls of fabric, moving them across a room, stopping movement to produce a change of density or shape. He dreamed of a Gothic cathedral as home for one of his creations. "Think of the drama involved in changing the shape according to the religious season."

In 1975 *Parhellic Path*, 18' x 40' x 8', gained entry for Knodel to the prestigious International Tapestry Biennial in Lausanne, Switzerland, where his pleated panels projected from opposite walls of the spacious Rumine Palace Gallery. It was clear that his work followed his own inner conviction, so distinctive was it in comparison to other innovative fiber concepts, most of which had abandoned the fabric sheet with parallel edges as though the loom product was passé. Almost every weaver had been seduced by the textural possibilities, pushing the use of wire, plastics, inch-thick rope and jute, but

Knodel rejected all this, opting instead for the smooth woven surface, delicately delineated, which he could manipulate at will. Invited again in 1977, he displayed *Arroyo Seco*, six lengths of filmy fabric staggered between two parallel sets of aluminum tubes at waist level. Dipping to the floor at the center where the "river bed" interrupted the surface plane, the whole was screened with the image of the eroded gully.

Head of the Fiber Department at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, since 1970, Gery Knodel personifies the young, handsome artist who works with fiber instead of paint and the loom instead of the palette. Cranbrook is selective, attracting the cream of the crop of college art graduates internationally. The Master of Fine Arts program has turned out pacesetters who have earned coveted positions in academe and industry. Its prototypal standards have instigated investigation in a field already burgeoning with vigorous change, where weaving and fiber art have come into the mainstream of the world of art.

When Knodel first received his commission, he realized that the dimensions for the floating panels exceeded the width of his looms. It was also impossible for one man working alone to weave the hundreds of yards required for the project. He turned for aid to Churchill Weavers in Berea, Kentucky, which had been founded in 1922 by Dr. Churchill, formerly a physics professor at Berea College. Churchill had created employment for local handweavers in an area of downward economic conditions, producing functional items such as ties, scarves, and blankets. To-day owned by Richard and Lily Bellando, Churchill Weavers has a staff of 45 who furnish specialty shops — Saks, I. Magnin, Lord & Taylor and others. Both parties were hesitant at first, but their relationship worked so well during the production of *Free Fall* that Gery went to them again with *Gulf Stream*. He set up the looms himself, over 120 yards of red mylar at 72 threads per inch, carefully dealing with problems as they arose, then turning over the production of the cloth to Churchill Weavers. "The actual time spent weaving," Knodel stated, "was straight throwing of the shuttle with simple color changes. These were true craftsmen in the sense of using their hands and they relieved me of the time-consuming burden. It was a happy linking of resources and energies." The project for Oklahoma City has required 500 yards of 10" wide fabric which Churchill also wove.

With this the narrative comes full circle, and history has repeated itself. In a small Kentucky town, at an establishment reminiscent of a medieval weaving atelier contemporary "tapestries" are being woven, this time with the conscious, articulate spatial perception of Gerhardt Knodel.

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## DOROTHY MACPHERSON OR THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF ART THROUGH THE FILM

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By René ROZON

We ought to drink to it — the Canadian Centre of the Film on Art celebrates its fifteenth anniversary this year — but our heart isn't in it. The reason? The very existence of the Centre is in danger. And yet the director, Dorothy Macpherson, has been working for more than twenty-five years to promote the film on art. To clarify the matter, let us ask her to reveal her thoughts to us.

**René Rozon** — What paths led you to the film on art?

**Dorothy Macpherson** — My earlier work had prepared me for it and chance did the rest. In England, at the end of the thirties and at the beginning of the forties, I was the secretary of the London Group, an association of painters and sculptors, and my chief responsibility consisted of making them known to the public. At the start, I was therefore tied to the artistic milieu and education. Thanks to this experience, on my arrival in Canada in 1944, I was appointed co-secretary, with Jules Bazin, of the Quebec section — I had settled in Montreal — of the Federation of Canadian Artists. Incidentally, in London I had previously met John Grierson, who had meanwhile become first commissioner of the National Film Board. He learned that I was in Canada, summoned me, and brought me into the NFB. After that, two combined factors plotted my future. On the one hand, my first screening of the film on art, which was a revelation for me. This was *Il Dramma di Christo* (1941) by Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras, based on Giotto's frescoes in the Padua Arena, a wonderful film because it recreates the climate of the work with great economy of means. To this day, this document has profoundly marked me.



On the other hand, there was my nomination as NFB liaison officer to the National Gallery of Canada, where I was called upon to direct the acquisition of films on art. In short, these were two events whose convergence was to open an extraordinary path for me. Canada is not Europe, which abounds in works of art that are never seen here. I understood very quickly that the film was going to become an essential tool for exposing the masterpieces of all time to the view of Canadians. From this fact arose the necessity of acquiring a substantial collection of films on art. Alan Jarvis, director of the museum at the time, granted me great freedom. To such a point that at the end of the fifties the collection comprised nearly five hundred titles.

**R.R.** — Films that were to form the nucleus of the Canadian Centre of the Film on Art collection?

**D.M.** — That is true. The Centre was founded following a resolution of the Canadian National Commission for UNESCO formulated at the time of the Festival and Conference on Films on Art that I organized at the National Gallery in 1963. The museum's collection was integrated into the Centre, which to-day has 1500 films on all aspects of art.

**R.R.** — Which criteria influenced your choice in the planning of the collection? In fact, what is your conception of the film on art?

**D.M.** — Paradoxically, I concentrate first and above all on the quantity and quality of information that the film conveys. If it has an artistic value, so much the better, but that is in addition, a supplementary attribute added to the film, and not one of primary importance. Having said this, I hasten to add that in practice these two poles are not irreconcilable and often meet, one calling upon the other. And there I share John Grierson's opinion: One must produce his film as best as possible and, if it is successful, the spirit that animates it will surface automatically. The same is true of the film on art. Producers were forbidden to use the term *beautiful* when speaking with Grierson, so much was he convinced that by treating a subject appropriately, beauty inevitably comes through. I believe firmly in this cinematographic conception. Besides, I have a horror of marshmallow or rose water films. Add to that three other criteria that I place above everything. First, historical truth according to the latest research is fundamental to the high quality film on art. I dislike the anecdote, especially when it has no foundation. The honesty and sincerity of the film maker are indispensable here. Next, the film must not betray the state of mind of its subject, particularly the love that the artist has transmitted in his work. While being transposed onto the screen, the film on art should carry an emotion. Finally, in spite of its instructive contents, the film ought to attain a poetic dimension — we are, after all, in the domain of art — that it acquires if it does not too closely encircle its subject, which must be implicit and explicit at the same time, and if it proceeds from the knowledge and appreciation of the subject.

**R.R.** — Which films, in your opinion, meet these criteria?

**D.M.** — The best films on art are French, of Belgian origin, a phenomenon attributable to the fact that Belgium teems with works of art which are much appreciated by the public, especially by creators and therefore film makers, and the fact that that country has encouraged the production of films on art. Here we should mention Henri Storck's whole work, among which are *Rubens* (1948) and *The World of Paul Delvaux* (1946), and Jean Cleinge's films. It is useless to speak further of the former since you have already spoken of his films in an earlier issue. As for Cleinge, *Ink* (1964) is an important document in which three painters are seen — Alechinsky, Appel and Ting — each creating a lithograph. Capturing the essential, Cleinge succeeded in combining three different styles into a coherent film. Nonetheless, other countries have produced remarkable documents. *Stone Wonders of Naumburg* (1935) by Rudolph Bamberger and Curt Oertel, one of the first films on art, remains one of the most beautiful, as much through its style — fine lighting and subtle camera movements — as through its contents, superb sculptures. *Images médiévales* (William Novik, 1949) attracts by the simplicity of its presentation, where the film maker surpasses himself. This is also an original film, the manuscripts of the Middle Ages being perceived in the spirit of the period. Well documented, *The Totem Pole* (A. L. Kroeler and S. A. Barrett, 1964) reveals with insight all that it is necessary to know about the totems of the Indians of the West Coast — origin, evolution and rôle — while bringing us progressively into their world. *The Shadow Catcher* (Teri C. McLuhan, 1974) produced by the daughter of Marshall McLuhan, displays a great sympathy and a keen comprehension of its subject, the Indians of North America, as photographed by anthropologist Edward S. Curtis. *Piet Mondriaan, A Film Essay* (Nino Crama, 1973) portrays the interest and enthusiasm of the film maker for this painter. In spite of the difficult subject, the film is not intellectual, but direct and intuitive. A valuable step found also in the films of Arthur Cantrill (*Henri Gaudier-Brzeska*, 1968),

James Ivory (*Venice, Theme and Variations*, 1957; *The Sword and the Flute*, 1959) and Carl Lamb (*Baroque Palace in Brühl*, 1959-1960; *Morris Dancers of Erasmus Grasser*, 1959). All are accomplished films, pleasant to see, while promoting and enriching our understanding of art.

**R.R.** — How does the public react to the film on art?

**D.M.** — Art is for an elite, and static; we hang it on the walls of museums. But the film on art is democratic: it reaches the most ignorant viewer directly because it is dynamic, the work being reanimated on the screen. From this arises its faculty of touching the spectator and exerting a profound influence on him. Basically, what fascinates the public is not seeing the work on the screen, but seeing *how* it has been produced, or *how* it is interpreted. The public's enthusiasm is proportional to the quality of the film, which is all the more valid because it possesses the power of astonishing or filling with wonder, and thus opening the viewer's eyes and captivating his imagination. And the film on art will have a greater hold on the public if the latter has seen not one of these, in case of need, but several, because once accustomed to the style, they will have the leisure to read the film from more than one angle.

**R.R.** — Will it be possible for you to continue this valuable work?

**D.M.** — Unfortunately, the lack of funds has always made the proper functioning of the Centre difficult. Different government sources have been informed of the Centre's survival problems but these efforts remain unproductive. Yes, there was money, for once, in 1967, the centenary year of Confederation. The project consisted of establishing ten regional film-libraries across Canada, each having some twenty films. Since that time, the NFB funded a subsistence budget to the Centre, which it has just withdrawn. What can be done without money either for the acquisition of films or for the maintenance of the collection, besides administration expenses?

**R.R.** — And yet, even the American Federation of Arts recognizes that the Centre is unique in its kind and has a large collection, since it has commissioned from you the compilation of an index of films on art distributed in the United States and Canada.

**D.M.** — That is tangible proof of the value of the Centre and its important rôle in art education. Titled simply *Films on Art*, it is addressed to the specialist at the same time as to the layman. Because, according to my experience, the ordinary man, thirsty for information, needs documentation. It is vital to supply him with at least a sheet of paper with notes when he attends showings. So this book fills a need, the same one that is at the origin of the Centre: to answer the demand concerning the sources, the nature and the availability of films on art. The volume contains more than 450 titles of films, including most of those I mentioned earlier.

**R.R.** — A book that puts into concrete form one of your fundamental preoccupations: to make art accessible to everyone?

**D.M.** — As in literature, the film allows the learning of art's alphabet before beginning the reading of works. Besides, at a time when decentralization is being advocated, what is more practical than a film? Travelling exhibitions are costly, and many masterpieces do not travel. Economical and free of restrictions, the film moves about in all liberty. It is truly the catalyst of democratized art, within reach of everyone. The Centre activates this cultural process. Its ultimate aim? To make man more civilized, more enlightened and more sensitive through the film on art.

1. Henri Storck, ou La peinture retrouvée dans *Vie des Arts*, Vol. XXII, N° 89, pp. 57-59.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)



**Praga**  
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