

televised sales pitches is far from outlandish. And it is certainly plausible that the inventor of a particular line of TVs could be bribed by those same corporations to include such a short-circuiting "device" in his design. It is on this credible foundation that **L'Affaire Bronswick** builds its case, "documenting" the histories of unfortunate consumers whose psyches were invaded by waves from their Bronswick television sets. Indeed, the credibility factor accounts for much of the film's success and a good deal of its wit; what we are ultimately laughing at are the seductive powers of both the medium and the format. The topical nature of subliminal advertising has been beautifully exploited here, but so has the documentary genre. Interviews with victims of the conspiracy are shot and performed with absolute fidelity to the mimicked style, and the narrative track perfectly replicates the doomsday voice so essential to this type of "report." But the broadest swipe has been taken at those inimitable "reconstruction-of-event" sequences that are all too familiar; here, Monty Python-like animation has been substituted for live action, and with lovely results. Awad and Leduc, together with Jean-Michel Labrosse have created a moving collage of photographs that are as delightful as they are informative. Attention to detail is immaculate: arrows and instant replay help indicate precisely how several dozen bottles of salad oil tumbled from a victim's hands onto the floor one story below, to graphically illustrate the story or both the victim herself and the janitor, who narrowly missed decapitation by Mazola. An added assortment of official-looking charts and graphs give the animation a wonderfully silly legitimacy.

A return to "straight" satire is made near the end of the film, through a series of "public service commercials" supposedly aired by the government to assure a fearful public that the Bronswick Affair has been brought under control. Just how television stylistics have been beautifully captured is nowhere better illustrated than here: the ads feature (among others) a hockey player skating up to the camera to announce that "L'affaire Bronswick; c'est

reglé!" and there's no better proof that these filmmakers know their target.

It is the accuracy of the send-up that accounts for its impact, because there is relatively little (outside of the animation) to separate it from "legitimate" documentary. It seems as though "look-like" parodies have come into new popularity now, what with television's "Saturday Night Live" specializing in takeoffs on TV advertisements and such. But these spoofs are a golden opportunity for the viewer to reflect upon what one sees and what one believes. The swaying power of format is extraordinary and is certainly borne out by the National Film Board's experience with **L'Affaire Bronswick**. It appears that more than a few people were scandalized that such a story had not surfaced before '78 and demanded to know why they had not previously heard of the "conspiracy."

**L'Affaire Bronswick** is first and foremost delightful entertainment, but another quality may be attributed to it. Its affectionate "nose-thumbing" of familiar forms may make us more sensitive to our gullibility and warier of our tendency to believe what we see because it "looks right." If lessons continue to come in such delicious packages, the learning process won't be hard at all.

Barbara Samuels

## DUNMOVIN

d. James B. Kelly, C.S.C., sc. James B. Kelly, ph. Florence Van Voast, Shirley Van Voast, Alexander Kelly, James B. Kelly, ed. James B. Kelly, sd. ed. Len Abbott, sd. rec. James B. Kelly, p. James B. Kelly, p.c. Mountain, Giraffe Films in Motion, Ltd., Toronto, col. black & white 16mm, 1970, running time 58 min. dist. James B. Kelly, C.S.C., 1 Brule Terrace, Toronto, M6S 1M2.

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"For some years now the activity of the artist in our society has been

*trending more toward the function of the ecologist: one who deals with environmental relationships. Ecology is defined as the totality or pattern of relations between organisms and their environment. Thus, the act of creation for the new artist is not so much the invention of new objects as the revelation of previously unrecognized relationships between existing phenomena, both physical and meta-physical."*

— Gene Youngblood,  
"Expanded Cinema"

Of the many functions of cinema, it is perhaps the "ecological" function as described by Youngblood which comes closest to characterizing **Dunmovin**, the very personal film recently completed by Jim Kelly. The work is an exploration of both linear and cyclical time, memory, and the recurring patterns within the fabric of life. It is also an examination of personal engagement with history, a revelation of the ways in which the lives of ordinary people are intricately connected with the larger workings of historical change. In the filmmaker's words, **Dunmovin** explores "the underside of history."

Appropriately, the film sustains several emotional levels during its hour's duration; at times it is splendidly quiet and low-key, then filled with exuberant energy. Its subjects are the filmmaker's grand-parents: their daily rituals, surroundings, their memories which span the century. Kelly wanted the film to "grow out of their rhythms" and at the same time preserve some sense of his relationship to them. Yet he was also concerned to challenge his own theoretical constructs about filmmaking. In this sense, the project breaks new ground for Kelly, who has been involved with nearly 200 films throughout his career, which includes his work as cinematographer in such recent feature-films as **Outrageous** and **Power Play**. Here, he purposely works against the grain of cinematic spectacle, as well as challenging the conventions of the traditional documentary. Fascinated by film's complex relationship to reality and time, Kelly explores these areas through a self-reflexive style appropriate to such a personal film. One of its most intriguing aspects is the use of inter-titles combined with simultaneous voice-over readings, a technique which paradoxical-

ly creates both a sense of intimacy with the audience through direct address, and a sense of distancing the audience from engagement within a flow of narrative. The complex blending of intimacy and dispassionate analysis is the tension within *Dunmovin*, creating slightly disturbing variations of pace and mood that give a fine edge to the experience of viewing the film.



Shirley and Zeal Van Voast: 1908

There are several recurring themes and motifs within *Dunmovin*, including that referred to by the title itself: motion and stasis. The orchestration of moving and still camera-work, and life-death symbologies, subtly conveys a tone of urgency underlying the surface level of ordinary rhythms and patterns explored, an urgency connected with the inexorable passing of time. It is as though the filmmaker's exploration of the familial, cyclic nature of time cannot avoid the knowledge that time is also linear, and all things must pass. This urgency is carefully echoed in the filmmaker's own self-questioning about his role, his intervening presence, his somehow arbitrary selection of what to shoot and how, his concerns about "getting a performance" or not being able to convey the feel of this milieu or these unique individuals. Like a variation on a theme, these concerns are again echoed by the revelation of Kelly's great-grand-

mother's photographic interests and role in preserving local history through this medium. At times *Dunmovin* becomes a celebration or "homage" to photographic reproduction itself, including a film-within-the-film and hundreds of old stills from the great-grand-mother's work. This attention to photographic reproduction is a perceptive and intriguing irony in a film addressed to and made "for you children yet unborn, and for yours." It is an irony which Kelly elaborates and plays with throughout the film, and it is, for me, one of the most interesting elements in the work.

The larger historical framework referred to in the film is the influence of the railroad on society, which we see reflected in microcosm in the lives of this family. A train is a lovely metaphor for the passage of linear time, and Kelly uses it in this way, associating changes in the larger community because of the rise and decline of the railway, with the familial rhythms of birth, growth, maturation, and old age. "I longed to make a film expressing personal concerns to specific, knowable people. I wanted to deal with ordinariness privately," says Kelly. *Dunmovin* has already been shown at the Art Gallery of Ontario as part of a series of "autobiographical" films. It's a work which reminds us of the beauty and pain in family history, and of the possibilities for using film as a tool of personal revelation.

Joyce Nelson

## PAINTING WITH LIGHT

d. David Leach, ph. Philip Eavnshaw, Robin Miller, ed. David Leach, m. Robert Armes, Kit Johnson, Narr. Robert Jerkyl, stained glass: Robert Jerkyl, p. David Leach, p.c. Black Elk Films, Toronto, (year) 1978, running time 14 minutes, 35 seconds, dist. Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, Available in both French & English version.

David Leach's *Painting with Light* celebrates the art and craftsmanship of stained glass making, and the stained glass artist, through the works and personage of Robert Jerkyl. The opening image of a whimsical profile of a face in one of Jerkyl's stained glass designs slowly filling with light, encapsulates Jerkyl's philosophy of using the art of stained glass to manipulate light, a natural source of energy.

What is unique in Leach's *Painting with Light* is that the film circumvents the typical problems that arise when defining a three dimensional artform within a two dimensional medium. The film never falls prey to flattening out the artform, nor does it overwhelm the audience with continuous flashes of brightly colored finished products. Instead, Leach's film is a muted celebration of both the process and the product, a sensitive and highly sensory exploration into the textures of light, sound and colored glass.

By shooting extreme closeups and by layering images through a conscious arrangement of depth and space, Leach successfully explores the sense of touch as well as of sight and sound. Extreme closeups of sheets of slightly opaque colored glass with its air bubbles and imperfections or, for example, one outstanding soft image of fire, molten lead and glass mingling together, allows one to differentiate between and almost feel the various textures, colors, solids and liquids. One wants to reach out and touch the oozing, newly formed lead and the thick treacle used to cement the glass together.

Not only does the film explore the textures of glass, but of sound as well. The music fills and cements the cracks between the artist's voiceover and the silences. The percussive music blends with the rhythms, sounds and scraping of the craftsman cutting glass; the guitars and flute add the element of light to the glass and energy to the film.

Leach bridges the distance between the viewer and the finished product of a beautiful work of art, by demystifying and clarifying the process of the art of stained glass making, thus inviting one to participate in every layer of creation, from the workroom where

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