

MAGNETIC NORTH

*The Kelowna Art Gallery is pleased to present **Magnetic North: Canadian Experimental Video**, a traveling exhibition which brings together 40 independent videos produced by a wide range of nationally and internationally recognized Canadian artists.*



Allan Harding MacKay,
Somalia Yellow, 1993
video still

Magnetic North is co-presented by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and Video Pool, Inc., Winnipeg, with assistance from Plug In, Winnipeg. Generous support is provided by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Canadian Consulate General, Minneapolis, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada, the Donner Canadian Foundation, and the Millenium Arts Fund of the Canada Council for the Arts.

Curated by Jenny Lion for the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and Video Pool Inc., Winnipeg, *Magnetic North: Canadian Experimental Video* premiered at the Walker Art Centre in 2000 and has since traveled internationally to venues in England, Holland, Scotland, Taiwan, the United States and Canada. The exhibition is not intended to be a historical survey of Canadian video. Instead the curator gathers together a diverse body of work and provides a unique opportunity to view a "collision of genres, a range of eras and regions, a diversity of languages, production contexts and artist's intentions" and to, thereby, encourage an awareness and appreciation for the richness and complexity of Canadian video.

Artists have been using video since the early 1970s when the lowering cost of equipment and the rise of multi-media artist-run centres across Canada made the technology more accessible. For over 30 years, artists working with video have made significant contributions to the development of contemporary art in Canada and around the world. For many artists, video is a natural medium to use to respond to our contemporary society, which is saturated with technology and the images it produces in the form of television, movies, surveillance cameras, computer and digital imagery. In addition, video as a medium was born at a time of increasing societal complexity when national, cultural, individual and sexual identity was, and continues to be, questioned and challenged. Several videos included in this exhibition deal with such issues and some are difficult (but still important) to watch for their honesty and candour.

Magnetic North includes videos by artists such as Kate Craig, Lisa Steele, Paul Wong and Kenneth Fletcher, who are considered pioneers in Canadian video art. Videos by well-known Canadian artists who have established themselves in other media but who have also embraced video – Donigan Cumming, Jana Sterback and **Allan Harding Mackay** among others – are included as well as works by a generation of artists who have established themselves in this media such as Dana Claxton, Stan Douglas and Zacharias Kunuk.

Magnetic North is comprised of nearly nine hours of videotape divided into six thematic programs of about 90 minutes each. The thematic programs are entitled *Seen on the Body*; *Performing a Self*; *In the Flesh*; *Subject/Object*; *Making Strange*, *Making Familiar*; and *The Medium Is....* The videos range from two to forty minutes in length and include original documentary film projects, works of conceptual art, experimental narrative and performance-based art.

There are two monitors set up for viewing this exhibition. One monitor presents a 27 minute compilation video of all six programs. Watching this will give the viewer a brief look at many of the videos included in the exhibition. On the second monitor two thematic programs are featured each day.

MAGNETIC NORTH

MAGNETIC NORTH TOURING PROGRAM OF EXPERIMENTAL
CANADIAN VIDEO PREMIERES AT WALKER ART CENTER
OCTOBER 12-27, 2000



Programme excerpt:

Subject/Object

These works interrogate the complex and delicate issues surrounding representation and imaging, exploring self-disclosure, surveillance, objectification, subjectivity, and individual agency. Ranging from subversive documentary to explicit performance, they explore the possibilities and limits of representing both self and other, often overtly implicating both maker and viewer in the act of imaging.

Programme includes:

Somalia Yellow, directed by Allan Harding MacKay, 1993
[above video still]

PUBLICATION

Magnetic North

In this full-color 384-page publication, critical essays by Peggy Gale, a Toronto-based writer and independent curator, Nicole Gingras, a Montreal-based writer and independent curator, Bruce Jenkins, curator at the Harvard Film Archives, Bill Horrigan, Curator of Media Arts at Wexner Center for the Arts, Victor Masayesva director of *Imagining Indians*, and Chris Straayer, Associate Professor of Cinema Studies at New York University, among others, create a rich context for the work, while artists, filmmakers, and writers such as George Lipsitz, Yvonne Rainer, Catherine Opie, George Kuchar, Sara Diamond, and Carrie Mae Weems provide personal response to works in the series. Edited by Jenny Lion, jointly published by Video Pool, Walker Art Center, and the University of Minnesota Press.

The Walker Art Center, in collaboration with Video Pool and Plug In, Winnipeg, will present the touring program *Magnetic North*, a six-part series showcasing the recent explosion of compelling Canadian independent video. The series premieres at the Walker October 12-27, before touring internationally. A 384-page book, jointly published by the Walker, Video Pool, and the University of Minnesota Press, accompanies the program. Following screenings in Minneapolis, *Magnetic North* will premier in Canada at Plug In in Winnipeg on November 2, 2001, and then travel to Cambridge at the Harvard Film Archives in April 2001, with additional venues to be announced.

Occasionally shocking, often funny, and above all, genuinely experimental, the body of work presented in *Magnetic North* asserts beyond a doubt that video is alive and well, and that Canadians have produced some of the most energetic work in the international arena. Organized by thematic concerns, each program in the series establishes relationships between diverse works. Including works ranging from innovative documentary to conceptual art, experimental narrative to performance video, the programs create associations across history, regions, languages and genres. Comprised of 40 tapes by nearly 50 artists from the last 30 years, *Magnetic North* is not a historical survey; rather, recent work from the last decade screens alongside art video from the 1970s and 1980s, providing a basis for rich and complex comparisons between eras and modes of Canadian video art. "External perceptions of Canada as a sort of subsidiary or empty suburb of the United States are internally mirrored and extended by inequities in the flows of cultural representations and information," guest curator Jenny Lion writes in the introduction to the *Magnetic North* book. "Hence a central idea of *Magnetic North* -- to export experimental Canadian art video to the United States and beyond."

Featured videos travel a spectrum of story and style from John Greyson's explicit mixing of a gay cruising bust and a 1940s film adaptation of Kipling in *The Jungle Boy* to an Inuit women's collective's storytelling via CB radio in *Piujuq and Angutautug* to the humorous portrait of two Québécois women's obsession with Formula One racing in *Le Beau Jacques* to photographer Donigan Cumming's subversive and powerful video eulogy for his elderly model in *A Prayer for Nettie*. "Many of the tapes in *Magnetic North* take risks--risks of offending, of self-revelation or self-assertion, of political commitment, of resisting censorship . . . or choosing to entertain in the face of catastrophe. As such, 'experimental' is an inclusive term associated with inventive, often subversive approaches to process, context, or content," Lion writes.

GLOBAL VISIONS

MAGNETIC NORTH: Canadian Experimental Video

Magnetic North showcases the recent explosion of compelling independent video from Canada in a six-part series produced by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and Video Pool and Plug In, Winnipeg. Occasionally shocking, often funny, and above all, genuinely experimental, this body of work asserts beyond a doubt that video is alive and well, and that Canadians have produced some of the most energetic work in the international arena. Comprised of forty tapes by forty-seven artists from the last thirty years and organized by thematic concerns, each program establishes relationships between diverse works. From innovative documentary to conceptual art, experimental narrative to performance video, the programs create associations across history, regions, languages, and genres. The featured videos travel a full spectrum of story and style: from John Greyson's explicit mixing of a gay cruising bust and a 1940s film adaptation of Kipling in *The Jungle Boy* to the storytelling via CB radio of an Inuit women's collective in *Piujug and Angutautug* to the humorous portrait of two Québécois women's obsession with Formula One racing in *Le Beau Jacques* to photographer Donigan Cumming's subversive and powerful video eulogy for his elderly model in *A Prayer for Nettie*. As curator Jenny Lion writes in her introduction to the book *Magnetic North*, "Many of the videomakers in *Magnetic North* take risks—they risk offending, self-revelation or self-assertion, political commitment, resisting censorship . . . or entertaining in the face of catastrophe. At stake is the act of invention."

Magnetic North is made possible by generous support from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Canadian Consulate General, Minneapolis, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada, the Donner Canadian Foundation, and the Millennium Arts Fund.

Programme excerpt:

Program 4 Subject/Object

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Programme includes:

Somalia Yellow, directed by Allan Harding MacKay, 1993

[below: video still]

