

ON (experimental) Film

Mike Hoolboom's latest film SVETLANA (50min. BL&W. sound 16mm.) had its premiere screening at the Funnel (new Soho St., Toronto location). It is a stunning film; in its use of black and white footage (including very grainy and also intensive hi-con), extreme close-up shots, radiating light, and human and camera gestures, it is tactile, felt. It is a film ostensibly about love and relationships - but, love for what, what relationships and what, if anything, can these terms mean?

Various interconnected stories, lines of thought, metaphors are woven together throughout on visual/kinetic and verbal levels. One feels the unity in the different components and thus can let the play of words hop-scotch through the film's ground.

In an elaborate play, in the best deconstructive style, several metaphors and conceits dialogue: film-maker as mortician, cutting up film, dissects a moribund relationship (one audience member after the screening questioned the association of film artist to mortician, asking how this fits with the notion of artist as creator?); film as a search as personified by two detectives; film juxtapositions (how one constructs, pieces together a film) and the notion of human relationships; light (essential element of film) and the illumination of understanding, coming to knowledge; the filmmaker as protagonist is concretized in this film when the actual filmmaker plays the protagonist (Svetlana's lover) who is the fictional filmmaker Fenway Crane. The "I love you" spoken by the filmmaker^{/P} protagonist to end the film (which refers us back to the film's opening sequence in which a male actor, facing the audience - a mirror?- tries out various inflected utterances of that same phrase) may be taken as Mike sincerely testifying to his love for Svetlana,

finding a way to say these words with meaning. But we know that this is a film and the words are spoken to an audience's ears. Do we understand, therefore, I love you, audience or I love you, film/filmmaking which equals I love me, filmmaker, or maybe I (he) love(s) loving? - or maybe all of the above!

While watching the film, one is aware of Hoolboom's influences/loves: Jean-Luc Godard, Italo Calvino, semiotician Julian Patrick. The film alludes as well, I think, to Peter Greenaway's THE FALLS in the segment where the filmmaker, Fenway Crane, is introduced at the premiere of his film at the Funnel with a biographical film clip of home movie footage with voice-over à la Greenaway detailing deforming occurrences!

The film works for me visually, evocatively (some powerfully fullsome music), sensually - it is love-making, or, at least, it's having sex! -----
