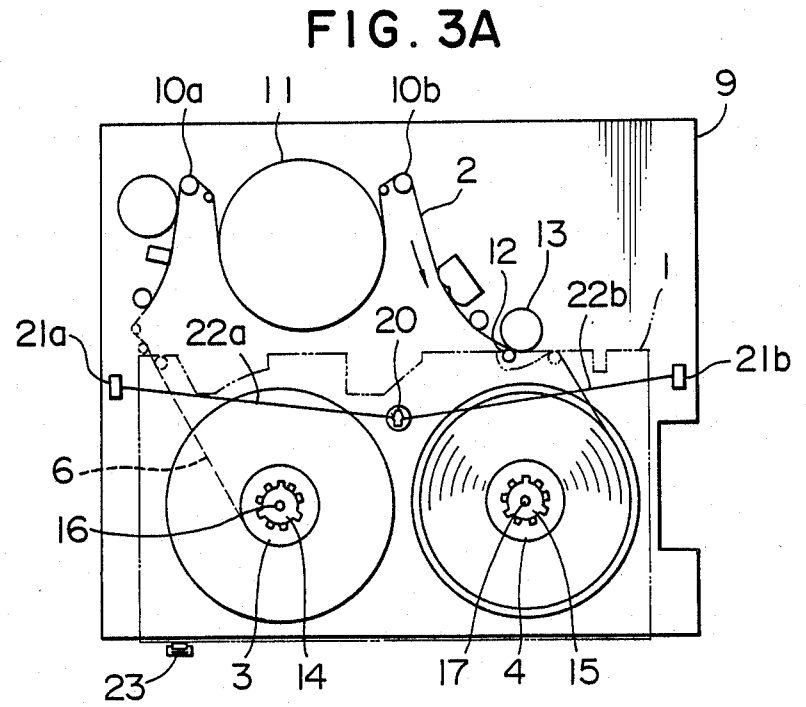
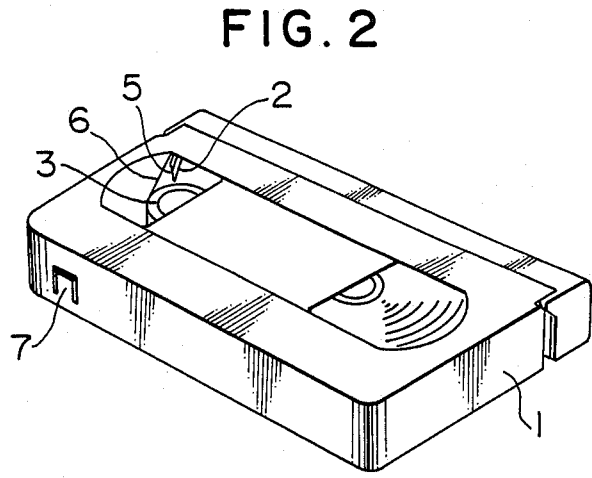




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PROGRAMMING REPORT 2009-2010

As usual, programming at CFAT, more or less beginning in September 2009 and ending in September 2010, was an eclectic mix that focused on our mandate of exhibiting video, audio and new media. I would like to thank the Programming Committee for all their volunteer time that brought ideas and inspiration to this year's line up of events. Thanks to Robert Bean, Suzanne Caines, Paul Hammond, Claire Hodge, Marie Koehler, Léola LeBlanc, Leslie Menagh and Khanhthuan Tran.

Suzanne Caines, Claire Hodge, Léola LeBlanc and Khanhthuan Tran met in September 2009 as the selection committee for *Caustic Assets* at the Dalhousie Art Gallery. Their deliberations resulted in a provocative screening of nine videos from across Canada. Thanks also once again to Robert Bean for his excellent essay, *The Echo of Code*, written for the catalogue for Nina Levitt's installation *Little Breeze*. This year was the first time for the curatorial team of Silöen Daley and Dylan Edwards in the selection of animations for their screening *Animation with Love*. They came through with flying colours, so kudos to them.

Suzanne Caines and Claire Hodge were selected as co-curators for the Local Curatorial Residency, and have therefore resigned from the committee. I would like to wish them bon voyage in the curatorial process they have initiated. As well, in September Leslie Menagh will commence studies in museum management and curatorship at Fleming College, Peterborough, ON. We wish her every success in this new career endeavour. In October of 2009, Brendan Dunlop was hired as CFAT's new Programming Coordinator. Brendan is a graduate of the NSCAD Media Arts Program and continues to work as a multi-disciplinary artist. He was involved as a photographer in documenting the *Sometimes Always* exhibition at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and as an artist for CFAT's Nocturne presentation entitled *Picture Promenade* in October 2009. His spirit of community activism is a welcome addition to the CFAT team.

As many of you know, I am leaving my position as Programming Director at CFAT. I was interim Director from the summer of 2004 to January 2005 when I was hired as the Director. It has been a challenging and gratifying six years in maintaining CFAT's high quality programming. With the establishment of the Electronics and New Media Lab, programming has woven another component into the fabric of our expanding digital environment. With the formation of several festivals including Photopolis, Sound Bytes, Nocturne and the Halifax Independent Filmmakers' Festival, CFAT has consistently played a role in providing provocative programming for these events. CFAT produced screenings and DVD compilations of the work of five of our senior artists. As well, CFAT has been successful in four out of six applications to the Visiting Foreign Artist Grant since it began in 2004. I am sure that in the future, given the imaginative direction provided by our programming committees, programming at CFAT will continue to adjust to new demands with continuing success.

- James MacSwain

Programming Highlights to Date

Caustic Assets, Dalhousie Art Gallery, October 23 - November 29, 2009

Caustic Assets was the fifth screening initiated between CFAT and Dalhousie Art Gallery. A national call was disseminated across Canada with a theme that related to the recent economic crisis and the boom and bust ideology of capitalism. The videos were screened in the Dalhousie Art Gallery's Media Room as a looped, continuous program. A fold-out

brochure with an essay by Léola LeBlanc was produced for the screening.

Out of the Centre: Twenty-First Media Arts Scholarship Screening,

Neptune Studio Theatre, January 23, 2010

Daniel Boos, Aimée Brown, Charles Currie, Krista Davis, Tanya Davis, Hamish Lambert, Léola Le Blanc, Crystal Melville, Rebecca Singer and Susan Wolf were the ten recipients of the Scholarship Program that commenced in August of 2009. After a series of workshops and meetings with various mentors, the artists premiered their work to an appreciative audience.

Little Breeze, Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, March 6 - April 11, 2010

Nina Levitt, a Toronto artist and professor at York University, presented her interactive installation *Little Breeze* in a collaborative exhibition between CFAT and Saint Mary's University Art Gallery. The installation was a two-part electronic interactive audio and video piece about British women spies who worked in occupied France during WWII. The piece utilized vintage suitcases that, when opened, trigger stories of war and death through projections and soundscapes that evoke an era of sacrifice and courage. A fold-out catalogue with an essay by Robert Bean was produced for the exhibition.



Curator Bob Bean with Artist Nina Levitt

Visiting Artist: Daniel Cockburn, the North Street Church, April 12 - 26, 2010

Toronto media artist Daniel Cockburn was a visiting artist at CFAT for two weeks in April 2010. From April 12 -17 the Halifax Independent Filmmakers' Festival (HIFF) took place and Daniel presented a program of his films and videos entitled *You are in a maze of twisty little passages, all different*. As well, Daniel presented an artist's talk entitled *All The Mistakes I've Made*, first conceived and presented in Berlin, which contained performance, video and spoken elements. There was a public Q and A after both presentations. In the remaining week of his residency, Daniel worked on a number of his own videos and also had one-on-one discussions with several members concerning their creative practices.

Visiting Foreign Artist: John T. Davis, the North Street Church, April 13 - 19, 2010

John T. Davis, a documentary filmmaker from Northern Ireland, screened two of his works, *Shell Shock Rock* and *Hobo*, at HIFF. His films cover many subjects that are drawn together by some common threads: travel, the parallels and links between Ireland and America, concern for the underdog and music. John also presented a public master class at the Film Department of NSCAD University, utilizing a screening of *The Uncle Jack* as the focus of the talk. There was a public Q and A with the artist after the presentations.



Visiting Foreign Artist John T. Davis

UNDER THE VOLCANO

Sebastian Harder is wrapping up his time as CFAT Local Artist-In-Residence this July. He is working on an experimental narrative video using green screen technology and is available through July to meet with CFAT members who are interested in speaking with him about his project.

Under the Volcano is a video that will explore what it means to be stuck in an untenable situation—a situation which is familiar, though, and in some ways comfortable, at least in the short term. The city in which the story takes place resembles Halifax, but is built on the side of an active volcano. The volcano is symbolic of the erratic, unstable world of big business, in that while the city runs on the geothermal energy generated by the volcanic activity, it is also threatened by it. In contrast to the strangeness of their environment, the characters behave rationally and in their own self-interests. The film focuses on the sometimes comedic ways in which real people are forced to adapt to their environment.

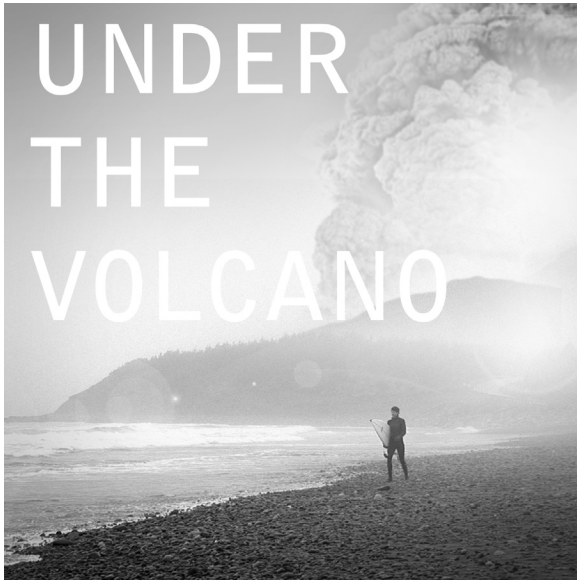
The volcano is a metaphor, but is something that could plausibly exist in the real world; Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, is heated and powered by geothermal energy which exists because of volcanic activity on the island.

As an eruption nears in the film, the pressure and quantity of steam produced by the volcano also increases. Utilizing this steam is highly risky, indicating a looming catastrophe. Those profiting from industries built upon this natural resource have incentive to downplay this risk and cover up any alarming data. Crucially, harvesting steam by drilling into the volcano also exacerbates the danger of an eruption.

The tone of my video is light and occasionally comedic, again in contrast to the dreariness of the scenario. The work is essentially a light-hearted critique of capitalism, seeming more prescient given the chaos and collapse in the economy over the past two years.

- Sebastian Harder

Léola Leblanc is CFAT's second Local Artist-In-Residence. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays this July she will be wrapping up the audio component of DAMMSel Day, a new media artwork that explores the history and local sites of Dartmouth. This site-specific work draws on the collection of the Dartmouth Heritage Museum and utilizes 7scenes, a mobile storytelling platform.



ELECTRONICS RESIDENCY

The Electronics Lab Residency at CFAT was a great opportunity for me to discover new possibilities for kinetic sculptures. The knowledge I have gained using different circuits will definitely be helpful for my future projects. I wanted to learn to design and build permanent circuits using the equipment in the electronics lab, and during this residency I focused on three projects.

The kinetic installation *Poussières de langage* has its foundation in the metaphor of the “river bed.” A woven porcelain surface is activated by motors with long shafts that make it move in a subtle way at random intervals. The movement triggers the sound of seven thousand small porcelain pieces clicking together and is juxtaposed with the low humming of the motors.



Amélie Proulx, *Poussières*, 2010. Detail

The installation *Ébauche d'un nuage de pluie* consists of hundreds of porcelain “drops” hanging from a transparent lexan board. Some of the porcelain drops are attached to one of the twelve solenoids installed on top of the board. These solenoids are triggered at specific intervals by a microcontroller. When one solenoid is triggered, it pulls the thread attached to one of the drops and causes it to click against the other drops surrounding it, suggesting a potential sound that could be experienced inside a rain cloud. The microcontroller is programmed in a way that the intervals between clicks are at first long—as if it were slowly starting to rain—and progressively become shorter to suggest a cloudburst. This subtle sparkling sound of a rain cloud produced by the porcelain drops is juxtaposed with the percussive vibrations in the lexan board produced by the solenoids triggered at specific intervals. This live sound is captured with a piezo microphone and amplified through a speaker.

The last project is still in progress and is based on the metaphor of the “forest carpet.” I am currently making little pieces of shag carpet that I will eventually combine with fungus-like shapes that will refer to elements of the forest ground. These will be woven together in a piece the size of a welcome mat. The final piece will rise and fall slightly with the use of different mechanical devices I am currently working on to suggest a breathing movement or a geological movement of perpetual sedimentation and erosion. This kinetic sculpture will be part of the exhibition of all the Electronics Lab Residents organized by CFAT at Eyelevel Gallery this October.

- Amélie Proulx

Amélie Proulx, as well as Chris Myhr, Scott Saunders and Will Robinson, took part in this year's Electronics and New Media Residency. Work produced through the residency program over the past two years will be on view at Eyelevel Gallery October 16 - November 20, 2010 as part of the exhibit Input/Output.

REPORT FROM CANNES

Daniel Boos was one of ten Media Arts Scholars at CFAT this year and recipient of the Cannes Film Festival Youth Competition. In May he attended the prestigious festival, supported by the Consulate General of France, the Atlantic Film Festival and the Alliance Française of Halifax.

The twelve of us were lodged at the Collège International de Cannes, located a fifteen minute walk to the Palais des Festivals on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. The youth winners formed a very diverse cultural group from a variety of countries, including Canada, the U.S., Morocco, Algeria, Greece and Singapore.

I attended more panel discussions and Q and A sessions than workshops. The one that stands out as having the biggest impact on me was the “Diversity at Cannes” discussion. The way I managed to get invited is kind of a funny story. My friend Emile and I were walking along a deserted, narrow street in Cannes, map in hand, badges around our necks, trying to figure out our schedule for the day. Suddenly, this ornately dressed woman appeared, called us over, and offered us free invitations to “Diversity at Cannes,” which she was hosting for the first time this year in the prestigious Hôtel Majestique. As it turned out, very few people showed up and we had the honour of engaging directly with three esteemed international directors with screenings at Cannes—Felipe Branganca from Brazil, Tracey Rector from the U.S. and Michael Rowe from Australia.

What was more remarkable about this experience, though, is the fact that Michael Rowe, with whom we were able to have an intimate conversation and exchange contacts, went on to win the Caméra D'Or for his first ever feature *Año Bisieto (Leapyear)*, which screened in the Directors' Fortnight selection. A topic of our discussion, which played a large role in Rowe's film and personal career, was the complex issue of a cultural or national identity. Born in Australia, Rowe moved to live and study in Mexico more than ten years ago, and has since adopted its language and culture as his own. While superficially *Año Bisieto* might seem like an erotic film about an unusual relationship, on a deeper level the film is a personal attempt by Rowe to present an honest and accurate depiction of the social lives of underprivileged Mexican citizens and the precarious economic conditions on which their lives depend. Rowe explained that although 80% of Mexicans today bear indigenous heritage and features, almost all actors and actresses appearing in Mexican film and television are hired on the basis of their having European characteristics and physical appearances. This was something Rowe discovered upon entering the country's film industry to begin his career as a director - something he has since tried to change with *Año Bisieto* which stars an ordinary, indigenous Mexican actress with little previous film experience. In this way, Rowe's film is a noble attempt to represent and preserve an authentic Mexican identity by challenging the misleading Western ideals of beauty which dominate the Mexican film and television industry and suppress the reality of the majority of Mexicans' daily lives. What makes this doubly interesting, however, is the fact that Rowe identifies as an Australian, not Mexican, which in turn challenges the authenticity of this complicated film.

Overall, it was a joy to speak with Rowe about his work and the social utility of filmmaking. He is a very intelligent and articulate filmmaker, very careful with his words, and I could tell that he invests a lot of his own personal thinking into his productions.

I had the privilege of attending the premiere of Xavier Dolan's new film *Les Amours Imaginaires* (title *Heartbeats* in English) which was screened in the Un Certain Regard category. For those who don't know, Dolan was one of two directors at Cannes this year

representing Canada (the other being Haligonian Noah Pink). He's from Québec and this is his second feature film (his first film having won several awards at Cannes last year in the Director's Fortnight section). Despite these early successes, though, what makes him a really extraordinary figure is his age—he's twenty-one, the same age as me. *Les Amours Imaginaires*, which chronicles the lives of three young Canadians caught up in an imaginary love triangle, was easily one of the best pictures I saw at the whole festival. And the screening was almost as inspirational as the film itself—just knowing that Dolan, his cast and his collaborators were seated in the audience, and that we were sharing in the film's official, first-time unveiling, created an atmosphere that was so energetic it was electrifying. The whole experience was a thrill, and the applause was so powerful that I was deeply moved.

After the screening, I had the honor of meeting Dolan and congratulating him on his work. He was being swamped by the media and a mob of fans, so I didn't get to speak with him for very long, but even just a shake of the hands following that incredible cinematic experience was enough to inspire and motivate me in my own filmmaking pursuits. Later, I had the pleasure of meeting and mingling with his director of cinematography at a nearby bar, a graduate from Concordia's film production program. She was wonderfully kind and modest, and I took all her advice to heart.

When I arrived at Cannes, I found myself surprisingly calm and composed. I really felt like this opportunity was too rare and miraculous to be wasted, and so I took on a confidence I didn't really know I had before. I made every effort I could to network with other filmmakers and marketing professionals, and ensure I didn't come home empty handed. Overall, the experience was hugely beneficial and influential to me, and I even made some essential connections with Canadian professionals from Halifax.

In the fall I will be returning to King's for my final year in a Combined Honours Degree in Contemporary Studies and English. Though I look forward to school (and my thesis-writing), I can't wait until I graduate so that I will have more time to focus on my passion for filmmaking. As for future projects, there are some I hope to realize this summer, one being a low-budget music video for a local musician, which I'm currently in the process of planning and coordinating with a crew of generous volunteers. I have other ideas still germinating in my mind, but they are too ambitious to complete before September. The music video is set to shoot (hopefully) later this month.

- Daniel Boos



Daniel Boos, *So Far Apart*. 2010. Video Still

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

It has been nearly a year since I started working at the Centre for Art Tapes. My transition into the organization has been relatively smooth due in part to the tremendous guidance of the past CFAT Board including Catherine Phoenix, Ilan Sandler, Janet Hawkwood, Daniel Hutchinson, Stefan Hancherow, Paul Hammond, Rebecca Young and Stephen Kelly. For those of you leaving the Board I thank you for all your assistance, and for those staying on I look forward to working with you in the coming year. I also must acknowledge the tremendous support of our staff including our Production Coordinator Tom Elliott and Programming Coordinator Brendan Dunlop. Adam Kelly, with his dedication to the Electronics and New Media Lab, has also been an excellent addition to the team.

I also must thank our newly retired James MacSwain for all his support as Programming Director. It was wonderful to get to know him this past year as a colleague and friend, and I wish him best of luck in his future endeavors as an artist.

There have been many highlights for me this past year, including memorable artists' talks, screenings, and exhibitions. Perhaps the most moving moment for me was the night of our Scholarship screening. Seeing through the completion of a program that was made in part due to the time and energy of so many people including scholars, mentors, instructors, tutors and staff felt great. I was so pleased with the buzz of enthusiasm by the audience, and felt such a sense of the CFAT community.

We have many exciting events planned for the upcoming year including *Broadcasting for Reels*, a twentieth anniversary Scholarship celebration, Local Artist-In-Residence talks and more. I hope you are able to take part in all (or at least some) of these engaging activities.

- Siobhan Wiggans

CFAT OVERVIEW 2009-2010

Funding

For the 2009-2010 fiscal year, CFAT received \$76,380 for operations and \$15,000 for equipment acquisition from the Canada Council. This was second of three installments, and we will receive the same amount again in 2010-2011. Additional funding from the Council included \$51,700 for program assistance; and \$2500 for the Visiting Artist Program, which covered some costs associated with John T. Davis' visit.

The Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage contributed \$20,000 in operational assistance. NSTCH awarded an additional \$6000 for the celebration for our twentieth anniversary of our Scholarship Program; this project will be completed in November 2010. We received \$2500 from the Halifax Regional Municipality for development of the Electronics and New Media Lab.

The National Film Board provided a \$5000 donation, and Nova Scotia Film Development Corporation provided \$8500; these funds were directed towards the Local Artist-In-Residence and Scholarship programs. The estimated value of the CBC's donation of space and facilities has increased to \$27,000.

Partnerships

Collaboration with local communities and organizations continue to be key to the success of CFAT. In 2009-2010 we partnered with the following organizations: the

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Eyelevel Gallery, AFCOOP, Dalhousie University Art Gallery and Saint Mary's University Art Gallery. Upcoming partnerships include CKDU 88.1 FM, Kitpu Youth and the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre and the Khyber Institute of Contemporary Arts. In 2009-2010 we also participated in the following community festivals and events:

Nocturne: Art at Night, the Atlantic Film Festival, ViewFinders International Film Festival for Youth and the Halifax Independent Filmmakers' Festival.



CFAT Scholar Rebecca Singer and General Manager Siobhan Wiggans

Acknowledgements

Many thanks go to the Centre's 2009-2010 Board members including Ilan Sandler, Daniel Hutchinson, Stefan Hancherow, Janet Hawkwood, Paul Hammond, Stephen Kelly, Catherine Phoenix, and Rebecca Young. For those of you stepping down from the board including Janet Hawkwood, Catherine Phoenix, and Rebecca Young, thank you for all your support.

We must also acknowledge the hard work of our committees, including the Programming Committee led by James MacSwain and Brendan Dunlop with members Robert Bean, Suzanne Caines, Paul Hammond, Claire Hodge, Marie Koehler, Léola LeBlanc, Leslie Menagh and Khanhthuan Tran, as well as the Equipment and Access Committee led by Tom Elliott with members Lukas Cardona, Chuck Clark, Sym Corrigan, Todd Jackson, Lukas Pearse and Timothy Barron Tracey. Rebecca Young and Erin Fradette must also be thanked for their dedication and hard work in the Archive.

Thank you to the mentors, instructors, and tutors of the Scholarship Program including David Clark, Lukas Cardona, Eryn Foster, Sebastian Harder, Matthew Hollett, Liz MacDougall, James MacSwain, Lisa Morse, Ariel Nasr, Solomon Nagler, Marley Parker, Lukas Pearse, Nick Rudnicki, Chaz Thorne, Timothy Barron Tracey and Khanhthuan Tran. Adam Kelly's leadership in the development of our Electronics and New Media Lab, and its subsequent residency program, must also be commended.

Finally a huge thanks must go to our outgoing staff member James MacSwain, Programming Director since 2005. Jim has been active in our community shaping our programs and activities. His outgoing personality will be greatly missed by all, but we are sure he will remain an active presence in our community.

- Siobhan Wiggans

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Fueled by high quality work being produced by members and the tireless hard work of staff and volunteers, CFAT remains a vibrant force of media arts in Halifax and beyond. The success of our screenings, exhibits, and residencies all reflect the current health of the organization.

The Board held a very successful Visioning Session on March 17, 2010. Under the careful leadership of Siobhan Wiggans and Catherine Phoenix, board members and staff came together for a full day of brainstorming and discussion. Many fantastic ideas were shared relating to the future direction of the Centre from which a strategic plan will be produced.

Spearheaded by board member Stefan Hancherow, regular Mix Tape nights began this year as a venue for the CFAT community to gather, drink, talk, and listen to music and other audible fare curated to cassette-tape by prominent CFAT members. Watch the email newsletter for upcoming dates and please come out and join us soon!



Liz MacDougall and James MacSwain. Photo by Mark Simkins

James MacSwain, who has been the Programming Director since 2005 retired on May 21, 2010. Jim has been a mainstay at CFAT since the beginning. With his generous spirit, stunning artistic talent, and long history of nurturing emerging artists, Jim is the embodiment of what CFAT stands for and his mark on the Centre is meaningful and permanent. Jim will be traveling to China this summer and maintaining his art practice in Halifax, continuing to be an active member of our vital media arts community. From the Board of Directors and the entire CFAT community, thank you Jim for all your hard work over the years and we look forward to your future projects.

- Stephen Kelly, Chair

TECHNICAL COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Now that Jim has retired, I have imprudently become the most senior staff member at the Centre. I'll miss working with Jim, but will continue to enjoy seeing him around. How could I not? It will remain a pleasure to work with both Brendan and Siobhan as the lean interim CFAT staff over the summer.

It won't be long before the new Media Scholars will be starting; the last group was great (as anyone who attended the screening in January will agree), and my third go-around should at least theoretically be charming.

The Centre has recently acquired a pair of boundary microphones and a matching pair of Sennheiser wireless microphones. Both will make common recording situations much easier to deal with appropriately. As well, we have acquired a lightweight Manfrotto tripod and a small hand-cart for extra-smooth lugging.

We now have improved monitor speakers in the Online Suite. Now members can not only do colour correction there, but actually hear what their projects sound like. Even if such unforgiving disclosure comes as a shock, don't worry—you may have found out early enough to do something about it with Soundtrack Pro; you can then sleep better on the sofa while your project is rendering.

Also, we have new flat monitors (screens) in the Audio Suite, making audio and video editing in that room easier on people's eyes. The room doubles as an overflow Final Cut suite, and as we have also upgraded our Live software from version 5 to 8 (which can incorporate video), it can now be used to better integrate image with sound. One of the underlying ideas going forward is that our suites become more manifold and fluid in terms of their uses. With this in mind, several interesting workshops are being planned.

As well, we have acquired the Adobe CS4 Production Premium suite and gotten several Microsoft Office licenses after a successful application to Tech Soup, a licence broker for non-profit organizations. Thanks to Chris Spencer-Lowe at AFCOOP for passing along information about this program.

There are bigger decisions for the year that haven't been made yet—keep an eye out for the upcoming fall newsletter and don't forget to put it back in when you're done.

- Tom Elliott

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE REPORT 2009-2010

This year saw the Archives Committee continue to plod through the process of getting CFAT's documented past organized. The addition of Erin Fradette has been immensely helpful, as she has volunteered a great deal of her time to initiate the process of assessing and describing the vast collection of files and ephemera held in CFAT's storage room.

In the spring, Erin, along with a group from her School of Library and Information Studies' Master's program at Dalhousie University, came to work at CFAT on a case study project for their Records Management course. The project involved analysing the types of records and documents held in the various offices at CFAT, and determining a system for maintaining them. The group put together a classification scheme and retention schedule, a records management policy, and a list of general recommendations and forms.

For the upcoming year, plans are to transfer documents from their current housing in filing cabinets to a box system, which will make it easier to list documents, and transfer them in the event of a move. We need steel shelving and a few other supplies, and then we will systematically add documents that are no longer in use from the offices. All of this work will make research and retrieval much easier, and will save time and space.

- Rebecca Young

INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL COCKBURN

Daniel Cockburn visited CFAT in April to screen his video work and do an artist talk as part of the 2010 Halifax Independent Filmmakers' Festival. During his visit Programming Coordinator Brendan Dunlop sat down with Daniel to talk about his work. More information about Daniel's work can be found on his website at www.zerofunction.org.

Please introduce yourself and describe your art practice.

My name's Daniel Cockburn, and I'm a filmmaker/video artist/writer. I've been making short films and videos (generally classified "experimental", or "video art") since 1999, and recently completed my first feature *YOU ARE HERE*.

What is your education background?

I got my BFA in Film and Video Production at York University. I thought I would do a minor in music, but that proved too overwhelming... Still, I took music courses when I could and they've really informed the film/video work that I've been doing since then.

Your work straddles narrative cinema and video art and one thing that I feel really grounds your work in video art is how so much of it has an overarching theme. I would describe that theme as the problems and trappings of language. Would you say this is accurate?

Yeah, that's pretty true. It's not that I set out to have a theme, but we all have our habits and obsessions and ruts. And I'm stuck on the enjoyment of words—spoken and written and onscreen—but I also feel this compulsion to criticize what I gravitate towards. So for every unit of language-enjoyment there's an equal and opposite unit of inspecting the dark side, the loops and "wrong paths" that you can go down if you pursue a love of language in an unbalanced way. There's healthy love, and then there's unhealthy love—and the latter is generally a much more interesting subject for a movie.

You have called yourself a writer, and it is clear that your work comes from a strong script. Do your ideas come from your writing and then have visual elements added to them, or do you ever start with the visual aspect and work back to an idea that will fit with it?

I usually start with the writing. Generally they are heavily scripted—with *Metronome*, for instance, I wrote out a ten minute monologue and the final script was in two-column format, with the monologue on one side and an image-list on the other; the images (original and appropriated) were all derived directly from the words. In some cases, though, the visuals and the writing come from two separate places—*The Impostor (hello goodbye)*, for instance, is an on-camera monologue with a very specific camera/projector/performance setup. The story I tell is not directly related to the content of the image—they were two unrelated ideas—but once I realize that I'm going to mash things together, I try to find their points of overlap, and they grow to accommodate one another; it's only when somebody asks me a question like this, and I have to think about it, that I remember that they were once unrelated.

Your work contains some pretty complex ideas and some really interesting theory, but it also has really personal, autobiographical elements as well as quite a lot of humour. Do these three elements share equal weight in your work?

Hmm, now I feel I need to figure out my internal hierarchy. The humour is a byproduct of the autobiography and the theory; I wouldn't say that jokes are my primary goal. But I'll bet that somewhere subconsciously they are; making people laugh is the most instantly gratifying result a moviemaker can get. As far as the personal/theory balance, though, I guess you could say they're equally weighted (but maybe just because that's the easiest thing to say); they're autobiographical in that they're about a character (me-ish) who is wound up in theory-esque thinking, or they're theoretical in that they're autobiographies of fictional theories.

It seems like in much of your work your subjects get caught within these philosophical loops or language traps, yet you seem to allow them a way out. I am thinking of how the subject in *Nocturnal Doubling* chooses to believe that yes, everything in the universe has doubled and that it doesn't matter if anyone else knows this. Or as in *WEAKEND* in which you allow the Arnold Schwarzenegger to speak for himself in the end. How does this reflect on your feelings about the importance of theory in everyday life?

I haven't thought about that—certainly it's true that I trap my subjects in loops and ruts and habits of thoughts and words and pictures, and I (sometimes) give them a provisional escape in part because I'd feel too much of a vengeful (or at least cruel) deity if I didn't give them some sort of relief. Or at least hope for relief. So I guess if I relate that back to theory and life, you could say... I don't know. Something like: "Theory is useful, but if you get too wound up in it, you're in trouble—but even so, don't worry, you're never so far gone down the rabbit hole that you have no hope of coming back." Even though that's a statement, I feel like I want to end it with a question mark.

You have mentioned that you believe sometimes that each time you make a video you are actually creating another person, or another version of yourself, that then goes on to exist in its own universe. This makes me think of the multi-verse theory in physics in which there is an infinite number of parallel universes. Can you talk about the connection your work has to this idea and maybe to math and science in general?

I wouldn't say that I'm versed in the multiverse idea any more than is anyone who's seen a few SF movies; that is to say, I'm not well-read in the sciences (though I was pretty math-and-science-obsessed in my earlier school years). But the idea of possible worlds appeals to (and frightens me) quite a bit, as I imagine it does to many people who consider imagination important. I generally like taking a relatively simple idea and spinning it round in circles as far and fast as it can go, and the ideas that tend towards the SF/fantasy side of things are the most magnetic to me in that respect. Maybe it's because SF/fantasy-esque ideas, like the multiverse, and like nocturnal universal size-doubling, are just extrapolations of more down-to-earth, easily-held ideas. If you take any one concept and go down deep enough into it, you'll come out the other side with something that looks like fantasy. Making that trip in the space of a five minute video seems to me both feasible and rewarding.

Where does the name "zero function" come from?

Oh, right. Most of my videos are tagged with the "zeroFunction" trademark... In



Daniel Cockburn, *All the Mistakes I've Made*, 2010

Grade 12 Finite Mathematics class, we learned about functions, e.g. $f(x) = x^2 + 5$, where you can draw a graph, and it looks like a line or a curve or whatever, a picture of all the possible responses you could get from this function, this black box, based on all the possible things you could put into it. And you can work backwards, so you know that (for example) if the function yielded "21", then x must have been 4. Except in the case of the zero function, which is simply $f(x) = 0$. So whatever you put into that black box, you just get zero back. It's stupidly simple. But in Grade 12 I thought it was awesome, and kind of freaky (I still do)—it's because it's so simple, it amounts to saying "whatever you say, I'll say zero!" But when you think you're learning all the rules of mathematics, and you are gaining this power to extrapolate and work backwards and use these rules to gain more knowledge—and then you see something like this, which totally plays by the rules and is expressed in that same mathematical language, but it does damage to everything you thought you were learning, it's kind of humbling. I think there's some sort of lesson to be learned in that—or some sort of inspiration for a video—but I haven't figured out what it is yet.

Is it important for your work to connect with pop culture? Do you make a point to create work that doesn't necessarily exist in a strictly art context?

I don't know if it's important for my work to connect with pop culture per se, but I do try to make work that's accessible... But I also think "accessible" can be pretty broadly defined, and that people are pretty able to follow and engage with plenty of unfamiliar forms. It's less a matter of making it like something they recognize, and more a matter of just considering the audience when I'm writing/making it. It's very important to me that the piece doesn't just follow some internal set of rules, but offers something to the viewer as a linear, narrative experience. I guess all this means that I'm trying not to create work that exists only in an art context, but that's really just an offshoot of my desire to make work that's enjoyable, communicative, accessible, i.e. good.

You have now completed your first feature. From the perspective of a video artist who might be used to working pretty much independently on a fairly small scale this jump seems very ambitious. Can you talk about the process that brought you to this point and how making this feature connects to the rest of your art practice?

Several years ago I started thinking about the exhibition of short video work, and how showing a five minute video as part of a really well-curated festival program can be very rewarding; the curator puts all these different works together in such a way that they speak to one another, and you feel like an overarching theme is being created; the program is something greater than the sum of its parts. Well, I got thinking about this, and thought I'd like to make my own program of shorts—several totally diverse and seemingly unrelated shorts that nevertheless, when shown together, combine in the viewer's mind so he/she realizes that all these movies are actually talking about the same thing. I tried a couple of grant applications for this, was turned down, but eventually was successful in getting a Chalmers Arts Fellowship—this was in 2006—with which I took a year to focus on various art projects, primarily writing the script for this multi-part video project, which is called *YOU ARE HERE*.

The following year I got Canada and Ontario Arts Council production grants to make the project—which in the process of writing had become much more feature-film-y, still crazily segmented but now more of a single-flow movie—spent another year looking for a producer, putting crew together, revising script, going into pre-production, and we shot it in fall 2008. A Toronto Arts Council grant came through shortly thereafter, as well as support from the National Film Board's Filmmaker Assistance Program, which helped us out with post-production... which was good, as the edit took months and months; it's a real jigsaw-puzzle of a movie, way more permutations and combinations than the average single-story narrative film. We finally completed it in March 2010, and we're now beginning to submit to festivals and so forth.

YOU ARE HERE is directly related to my practice in a lot of ways—the use of voiceover, the explicit exploration of philosophical thought-experiments, the semi-absurd realities in which it's set—but it differs in a lot of ways, too: I'd never made something more than twenty minutes long; my short videos are typically starring only one person (me) and I'm also the cameraperson/editor; basically I'm used to a cast-and-crew count of two or three, maximum. *YOU ARE HERE*, on the other hand, was a hugely ambitious project with many, many actors, multiple locations, multiple formats (from 35mm to super 8 and BetaMax)... Basically I went from making small DIY videos to working with a large group of people in a very, very intense three week period... but because of the formally wacky nature of the project, there were ways in which I think the typical industry-filmmaking model got bent and warped in order to accommodate the content and structure of the screenplay. It's way more of a "normal movie" than I've ever made before... but it's way more of a mental experiment than most movies you'll see.

Since much of your work has been shown in an art context and you have experience with different forms of content distribution, have you thought at all about how you will promote and show your feature? Are there any plans to try and distribute it differently than the way traditional features are sent out into the world?

Yes, this all is in process right now: we're starting to send it out to the festival circuit, and looking at options regarding sales agents/distributors; it will certainly be a different distribution model than what I'm used to with my short videos (the artist-run-centre and experimental-festival sphere), but what it is exactly remains to be seen. But yes, we're definitely thinking about ways to get it out there (I'm thinking about online distribution as little as possible). It's a different sort of movie, so it may well benefit from some unconventional (gee, I just typed "unethical"—not sure why, honest) form of distribution. I'll probably have more to say about this in a year or so.

Now that you have completed this feature, do you feel that you will move more into the traditional roles of narrative filmmaking or do you plan on continuing to straddle the worlds of narrative cinema and contemporary art?

Both. I take a lot of inspiration from Miranda July, who created amazing short films and performances for several years, built up a career as an Artist, then goes and makes a very accessible first feature (*Me and You and Everyone We Know*) that wins all sorts of awards and acclaim, and then doesn't make the leap into narrative filmmaking and leave her artwork behind. She goes back to her art for a few years, now she's coming back with her second feature, but she's obviously found a way to straddle. I hate this idea that shorts are a stepping-stone to features, and once you make the short there's no need to look back. I do plan to make more narrative features, but I also have plans for plenty of formally experimental video projects, short- and long-form. I don't think you have to keep going bigger; you just have to keep going farther. And sometimes you can go farther in three minutes than you could in ninety. It all depends on which direction you're headed.



Daniel Cockburn at HIFF, 2010. Photo by Ashley McKenzie