

showing of Debbie Douglas's and Gabriella Micallef's *anOTHER love story*, a video about women and AIDS that features an interracial lesbian couple, reestablished the question. One of the audience members disagreed that racism and homophobia had anything to do with the reluctance of school boards or white feminist organizations to show *anOTHER love story*. Her thesis was that, by not including enough documentary information, Douglas and Micallef had given the establishment an excuse to reject their video.

If they wanted to succeed as videographers, she maintained, they would have to satisfy all possible criteria that the Board of Education, or anyone else, might demand. She refused to understand that if someone with power is looking for an "excuse" to reject a work, they will find that excuse no matter what. Her argument, however, also made clear a group of assumptions about "empowerment." These include: Empowerment means mainstream recognition. Empowerment means leaving the margin and becoming part of the societal centre. Empowerment means making money. Douglas and Micallef were quick to point out that financial success was not their main motivation. Had it been, they "would have made *Porky's Three*." At least, they would have known better than to start a political lesbian feminist production company. Their purpose is not "trying to get a piece of the mainstream pie." Rather, their goal, their vision of empowerment, is "to change the structure so there is no margin."

The next day, Joy Asham Fedorick picked up the theme of defining and dealing with being

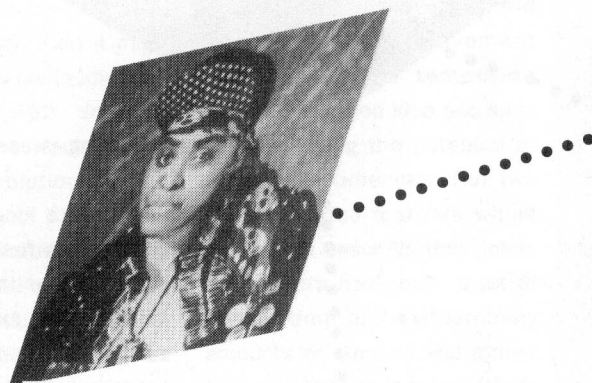
marginal to mainstream culture. In her experience, "being in the margin is like having one foot in the bush and one foot on asphalt. There you can see things other people don't see and experience things that others do not experience." She spoke eloquently of the pain inherent in being marginalized. Despite this, she clearly believed margins give us the outlook necessary to perceive the emperor's nakedness. Most importantly, they can also be the best vantage to find those who might be our allies in the emperor's overthrow.

In effect, then, the question of the meaning of "Empowerment and Marginalization" depends on whether one desires individual or collective empowerment. Cultural producers have a choice. We can throw energy into gaining attention from mainstream consumers, and, if successful, reap the rewards of mainstream success. The alternative is to celebrate the clarity of vision inherent in our position. We can link with other "marginal" peoples forming a margin that is a more vibrant, exciting, and creative space than then the mainstream could ever be. It may be true, as Joy Asham Fedorick said during the closing panel, that given time the mainstream tends to move to the margin, and take upon itself marginal values. This only makes it more vital that we who are already here be responsible for creating the best damn margins possible. We must learn to see, as Debbie Douglas put it, "living and working on the margins as a powerful place."

Anne Vespry is a Queer, Black writer and member of the scandalous *Rites* collective.

(many different) IMAGES 91

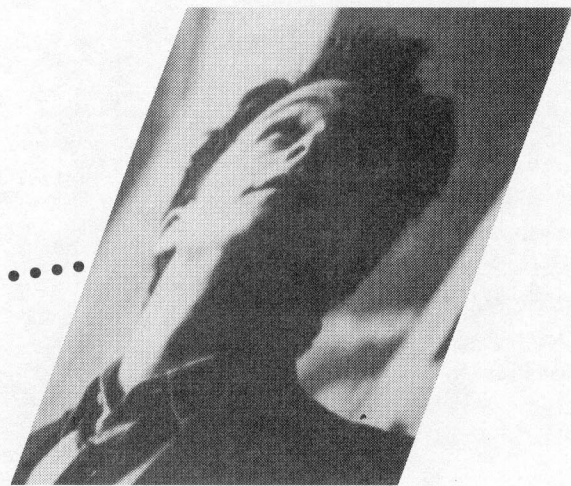
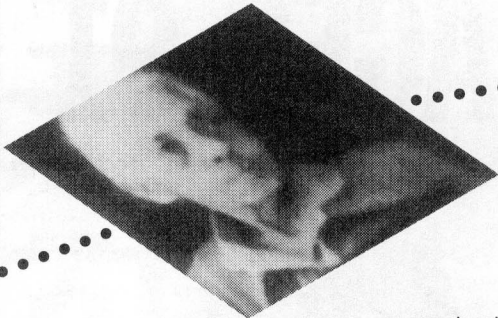
BY ANDREW J. PATERSON



LAST SPRING, THE SECOND annual Northern Visions *Images* festival was held June 6th to 11th. In 1990, all of the screenings were presented at the Euclid Theatre, Toronto's own theatre for the alternative or experimental film and video community. In 1991, The Euclid was still the main site of screenings during the festival's formal duration, but the retrospective of Quebecois filmmaker Jean-Pierre Lefebvre's features was held at the NFB's new John Spotton Theatre. Workshops and panel discussions were also presented at the Spotton. Expanding upon a 1990 initiative of "satellite" screening of tapes and films by First Nations producers at the Council Fire Native Centre, in 1991 Northern Visions decided to enlarge their satellite programming.

Over the past few years, Toronto has witnessed a marked increase in film/video festivals and/or combination festivals with panels and lectures. Just

last March we were treated to our first *Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival*—hopefully it will become an annual celebration of the diversity of work by and for gays, lesbians, and gay-positives. Earlier in the winter, we had the opportunity to attend Full Screen's *Race To The Screen*—nine days of screenings, presentations, and panels intended to (among other objectives) explode the monolithic notion of "colour" in classical, and indeed a lot of experimental, time-based work, as well as celebrate the plurality of colours. *Race To The Screen* positioned itself as a pluralistic rather than multi-culturalist event and attempted to combat liberal-entrepreneurial tendencies towards generalizing and thus homogenizing "others." The Full Screen collective intends to continue with such a mandate. *Desh Pradesh*, the festival of South Asian culture, is yet another example of such conferences and festivals where activist-pro-



gramming is asserting itself into Toronto.

From its inception in 1988, the *Images* festival has had a mandate for the inclusion of voices either excluded from, or seldom contextualized within, larger, more mainstream or "general" festivals such as Toronto's mother of all festivals: *The Festival of Festivals*. However, in comparison to the more "site-specific" festivals

and/or conferences mentioned earlier, *Images* is itself rather "general."

Its mandate has included a balance of film and video

(both throughout the festival and within all programmes, excluding the retrospectives), a commitment to showcasing national, racial, and sexual diversity, and an acknowledgement that different artists work with many different aesthetic modes with wildly varying budgets. These mandates are honourable, and even wonderful, but implementations are dependent upon resources, the choices of programmers, and the range of submissions—particularly within the "Open Call" or

"New Works" programmes.

To my own eyes and ears, although I was unable, of course, to attend each and every individual programme, the quality of exhibited works was an improvement over any of this festival's three predecessors. There were not the glaring discrepancies between the guest-curated programmes and the "Open Call" programmes, which have marred previous *Images* festivals. *Images 91* contained a greater degree of international content than ever before—perhaps due to the lower quantity of works submitted by Canadian and particularly Toronto-based producers.

Zainub Verjee's "Media Mirage" programmes were curated to allow a pluralism of representations of Arabs. This pluralism stood in contrast to the dominant Western media's stereotypical characterization of "the Arab," which the United States and its allies have been employing for years as if in preparation for their inevitable war in the Persian Gulf. The two programmes of two works each formed tightly focused and portable entities; they were well received within the main festival, as well as at the satellite screenings.

The five programmes curated

by veteran film/video buff Claude Forget occupied a position somewhere in between the "Media Mirage" and the "Open Call" programmes. Forget's programmes had thematic links, but they also seemed to be connected on a more abstract basis—for example, certain visual motifs would reoccur throughout specific programmes. Each programme had a feel to it as well as a theme or subject. The "New Works" programmes, in parallel, seemed less thematically forced than they did in previous years.

It is problematic, however, that the "New Works" jury (Colin Campbell, Betty Julien, and Almerinda Travassos) had to solicit specifically lesbian and gay works through American distributors such as San Francisco's Frameline and Chicago's Video Data Bank, while very little queer content was submitted by both Canadian and international artists and distributors. I don't believe that *Images* has necessarily been scooped by the fresh-faced *Toronto Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival*; I believe there is room for both, or even more. But in the catalogue of the most recent *San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Film Festival*, there was no call-for-submissions-advertisement placed by the Northern Visions organization on



The objectives behind the satellite programming were articulated by panelists during "Critical Frameworks: Programming Work by Producers of Colour." The panelists agreed that, in order to expand a festival's audiences, the festival in question had to centralize itself in a large city or in any other large geographical entity; potential audiences should not be expected to transport themselves into distant neighbourhoods. American panelists writer/curator Coco Fusco and veteran programmer/administrator Tony Gittens were particularly adamant advocates of satellite programming. Too many barriers—such as distance, schedules, histories of either outright exclusion or token inclusion, and language—have combined to create an impression of white-artist-programmed media-arts festivals being inaccessible to producers and audiences of colour.

Satellite programmes extended *Images'* mandate to present films and tapes to specific cultural communities in order to address audiences from which the works originated and for whom the works were (at least initially) intended. *Images* attempted to meet audiences in their own languages, employing simultaneous translation where possible and utilizing appropriately bilingual catalogue notes. *Images* administrative director Sybil Goldstein considered the satellite programming to have been relatively successful in both establishing and then strengthening contacts and working relationships for the festival. Audience sizes were, with one exception, considerable and responses favourable. The one

relatively disappointing turnout occurred at the York Woods Library in North York, where, in retrospect, Goldstein felt that if this particular screening (like others in the satellite programmes) had been organized in conjunction with and co-sponsored by a community group, rather than with an institution such as a library, then it might have enjoyed a larger audience.

For the 1992 *Images*, Northern Visions would like to continue its evolution towards becoming more of an umbrella for variously-situated screenings and activities, rather than simply an organization dedicated to one centralized, albeit sprawling, festival. However, the satellite programming was draining on personnel; and there is a movement among the Northern Visions collective to continue the satellite outreach but on a more informal level. (Filmfest D.C.'s Tony Gittens only half-jestingly suggested that projecting film onto a clear wall in a shopping mall was the most effective type of satellite programming—almost a guerilla-style intervention rather than a tightly-organized community event.) It is unlikely that *Images* will undertake anything that quasi-spontaneous; but Goldstein feels that meeting people in their own languages means doing it perhaps less officially than previously. Northern Visions plans to hold the *Images* festival earlier next year—in April rather than in June. Excessive summer heat may have limited audiences' attention spans both at The Euclid and in the late June satellite programmes at the Council Fire Native Cultural Centre.

Unfortunately the Inside/OUT Collective is planning to hold the

second, expectedly huge and successful *Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival* only one week before *Images 92*. This is not at all good timing for *Images*. Saturation may result from extended filmfest viewing for practically all potential audiences; and *Images 91* had lower attendance figures than did *Images 90*. The movement towards a more temperate weather is a good idea and so is acknowledging the potential of university audiences. But two film and video festivals within one month assumes that potential viewers have both a lot of leisure time and extraordinary amounts of stamina and money (since neither or these festivals are ideologically in opposition to one another, many viewers are favourably disposed towards both). *Images* festivals have been a welcome screening and viewing format for many different enthusiasts since their onset; this festival's move towards becoming an umbrella for the presentation of a diversity of works to an array of audiences is a sound strategy as long as the festival can maintain and challenge its initial base of the alternative or experimental film and video communities.

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the behalf of *Images*. If there is indeed a problem of profile for *Images* among gay and lesbian producers (or, for that matter, among other communities or demographics of producers), a few strategically-placed submission calls could help rectify this situation.

The relative paucity of submissions from a particular demography of producers raises the sixty-four thousand dollar question of who exactly is *Images* a festival for? or, exactly what are this festival's focuses as well as its constituencies? I have always considered this festival's mandate to be one of diversity of independent production, which is not the same as being about diversity(ies). (I have both exhibited and programmed in the context of this festival, albeit in different years.) In order to avoid degenerating into merely an alternative generalist *Festival of Festivals*, *Images* has targeted specific communities and/or audiences. In 1990 posters indicating particular works of interest to specific audiences were circulated to those audiences in an effort to attract potential viewers to the screenings at The Euclid. In 1991, *Images* decided to expand its previously tentative satellite programming.