

Descriptions of our curatorial criteria and film selection process

Here we present selections from our proposals to Canada Council for the Arts as a media arts presentation organization. We often struggled to fit our approach to selecting films into the arts definitions or curatorial criteria as well as the evolving definition of what is an independent Canadian film. There is disapproval of showing films just because they often showed themes related to mental illness – and not necessarily selected for their artistic merit. Our strategy was mixing in popular films that people really wanted to see in our theatre, building new audiences for the whole eclectic program.

However, the arts funding would change as politics and governments changed over the years and there would be greater interest in inclusive programming as well as media arts with a social objective.

By the end, we were told that our media arts proposals were consistently the highest ranked in our competition and we indeed were a credible arts organization while operating in a mental hospital theatre.

Canada Council's juries accepted that our eclectic programming, salting in a lot of Canadian content in critical, usually including interactive artist presentations, was a great way to build audiences for Canadian film. In 2019 we were awarded \$25,000 yearly for the next four years. Unfortunately we closed because, after March 2020, COVID made continuing and using that funding impractical.

Circa 2003

Selecting films

Throughout the year, we are actively seeking new film titles. The process for selecting films includes:

Looking for titles. Because we now have a history of programming independent films, we are increasing having films submitted to us by the filmmaker for screening (unsolicited). We regularly ask our network of supportive filmmakers and curators for titles. These filmmakers attend many festivals and they report back on films that they consider to be of artistic value and that provide a unique view on a community issue. We also search Canadian festivals outside of Victoria for titles. For example, we have selected films from the Vancouver Film Festival, Hot-Docs and Toronto's Rendezvous with Madness festival (primarily through their websites and programmes).

Previewing films. The task of screening films is shared by the two staff with support from the board. It is always surprising how much time and energy it can take to track down some titles and the make actual contact with the independent filmmakers, and of course then to arrange the shipping of a screening copy and follow-up.

Selecting films: The Director, Bruce Saunders, is ultimately responsible for the selection of films with support and input from the Coordinator and the Board. When we have decided to include a film in our programming, we contact the

filmmaker and seek their participation, confirm the fees and request background interpretative materials and images for promotions.

There are several festivals and organizations that have become significant contributors of possible titles for our programs. We will continue to work with these outlets, while always expanding our network of media artists. These include:

- Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival
- Shadows of the Mind festival
- Moving Images
- Video Out
- Gumboot Productions
- Cinevic
- Media Net
- Video Pool
- May Street Group
- Asterisk Production
- Across Borders Media
- Victoria Independent Film Festival
- Gulf Island Film School
- Victoria Motion Picture School
- V-Tape
- BC Mental Health Division's Audio-Visual Library

Curatorial Criteria

A unique style we have developed over the years is a very mixed fare, purposefully programming “popular films that anyone wants to see” while also introducing that audience to independent films coming-up in the upcoming weeks schedule, or adding an independent short film with a “popular feature” that would otherwise likely be seen only by a “festival” audience. In this way we are intentionally integrating Canadian independent films with “popular” films and exposing new audiences to traditionally film festival fare. Similarly, we have a strong record of bringing out audiences for films that have had a brief television life and turning these shows into rich community events. Examples include *49 Degrees*, *My Left Breast*, *Crimes of Compassion* and *Standup Samurais*.

Many films are rejected through the selection criteria. Films are not selected simply because there is a focus on mental illness and recovery or a related community issue. Films must have artistic merit. We are looking for films that provide new insights into complex issues. We look for entertaining films that have been rarely screened in Victoria, B.C. and films of regional importance created by local (or B.C.) filmmakers.

When selecting documentaries, we look for the grassroots story, from the perspective of those who are most affected by the topic. In dramatic presentations, we look for strong character development, characters that the audience can use as a point of discussion in the post-film discussions.

We give preference to filmmakers who make films based on their telling their own story or struggle, such as Clive Holden's films focusing on his relationship with his brother who has severe schizophrenia, Carol Halstead's "*Why?*", David Yoon's *Post Concussion* and Lulu Keating's early films of self-exploration. These are films that convey “authentic voices” which

we present with sensitivity in our unique setting – a psychiatric hospital theatre – with respect for an audience that includes many with shared experiences with the filmmakers and their subjects. It is through these thoughtful presentations of independent films that we can critically look at mainstream (Hollywood) depictions of marginalized communities while promoting independent perspectives.

Finally, we remain true to our original objective of providing an alternative to the mainstream (Hollywood) depiction of people with mental illnesses. We enjoy programming controversial films that introduce new ideas and stimulate discussion. And we respect a filmmaker that can exude compassion and truthfulness in their art when approaching subjects that are traditionally marginalized or demonized by popular media.

Circa 2006

Selecting films

Throughout the year, we are actively seeking new film titles. The process for selecting films includes:

Looking for titles. Because we now have a history of programming independent films, we are increasingly pleased to have films submitted to us for consideration by the filmmakers. Also, our network of supportive filmmakers, board members and audience members recommend titles for consideration. We also search Canadian festivals for titles. For example, this year Bruce Saunders attended:

- Victoria Independent Video and Film Festival
- Vancouver International Film Festival
- Frames of Mind (Vancouver)
- Cowichan Aboriginal Film Festival(Duncan, BC)
- Canadian Heritage Film Festival(Gibsons, BC)
- AntiMatter (Victoria)
- Edges Short Film and Video Festival (Victoria)
- Forbidden Fruit Film Festival, Victoria

There are several festivals and organizations that have become significant contributors of possible titles for our programs. We continue to work with these outlets, while always expanding our network of media artists. These include:

- UBC's Frames of Mind (Vancouver)
- Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival (Toronto)
- Shadows of the Mind Festival (Sault St. Marie)
- Moving Images
- Video Out
- Video Pool
- V-Tape
- Gumboot Productions
- Cinevic

- Media Net
- May Street Group
- Asterisk Productions
- Across Borders Media
- Victoria Independent Film Festival
- Gulf Island Film School
- Victoria Motion Picture School
- BC Mental Health Audio-Visual Library at Riverview
- Vancouver International Film Festival
- Sunshine Coast Film Society (Gibson BC)
- Videomatica

Previewing films. The task of screening films is shared by the two part-time staff with title suggestions coming from the board. It is always surprising on how much time and energy it can take to track down some titles and the make actual contact with the independent filmmakers, and of course then to arrange the shipping of a screening copy and follow-up. This is the Director's job

Selecting films: The Director, Bruce Saunders, is ultimately responsible for the selection of films with support and input from the other staff and the Board. When we have decided to include a film in our programming, the Director contacts the filmmakers and seeks their participation, confirms the fees and requests background interpretative materials and images for promotions.

Curatorial Criteria

A unique style we have developed over the years is a very mixed fare, purposefully programming popular films while also introducing that audience to independent films coming-up in the upcoming weeks schedule, or adding an independent short film with a popular feature that would otherwise likely be seen only by a festival audience. In this way we are intentionally integrating Canadian independent films with popular films and exposing new audiences to traditionally film festival fare. Similarly, we have a strong record of bringing out audiences for films that have had a brief television life and turning these shows into rich community events. Examples include Call It Karma, The Life of Me, Crisis Call, My Son the Tattoo Artist Brian Damadj'd and The Take.

Many films are rejected through the selection criteria. Films are not selected simply because there is a focus on mental illness and recovery or a related community issue. Films must have artistic merit. We are looking for films that provide new insights into complex issues. We look for entertaining films that have been rarely screened in Victoria, B.C. and films of regional importance created by local (or B.C.) filmmakers. Because of our unique situation of continuous weekly programming we can also afford to replay films after their premier life, as we did with Protection, From Grief to Action and Rollercoaster. We are continually pleased that we can draw a good audience to reintroduce these still relevant films in a critical context such as government

cutbacks, health policy changes, and harm reduction debates. We realize that although our capacity is only 100, we are reaching a unique audience each and every week of the year.

When selecting documentaries, we look for the grassroots story, from the perspective of those who are most affected by the topic. In dramatic presentations, we look for strong character development, characters that the audience can use as a point of discussion in the post-film discussions.

We give preference to filmmakers who make films based on their telling their own story or struggle, such as Clive Holden's films focusing on his relationship with his brother who has severe schizophrenia, Carol Halstead's *Why?*, David Yoon's *Post Concussion*, Paul Nadler's *Brain Damaged* and Lulu Keating's early films of self-exploration. These are films that convey authentic voices which we present with sensitivity in our unique setting – a psychiatric hospital theatre – with respect for an audience that includes many with shared experiences with the filmmakers and their subjects. And we respect a filmmaker that can exude compassion and truthfulness in their art when approaching subjects that are traditionally marginalized or demonized by popular media. It is through these thoughtful presentations of independent films that we can critically look at mainstream (Hollywood) depictions of marginalized communities while promoting independent perspectives.

Finally, we remain true to our original objective of providing an alternative to the mainstream (Hollywood) depiction of people with mental illnesses. We enjoy programming controversial films that introduce new ideas and stimulate discussion.

Circa 2017

Overall, our activity plan is to sustain and build on our long-standing collaborative partnerships that allow free access to the theatre which enables us to maintain low-costs that facilitates our programming in a uniquely accessible venue without financial barriers to diverse audiences. In this setting we are able to be a flexible and responsive to local media artists seeking an on-going weekly venue and to link media arts with emerging community issues and events. Throughout these activities we showcase innovative Canadian films in an interactive venue where filmmakers engage audiences with stories and images that explore the diverse issues that define our lives.

The artistic vision of Movie Monday includes programming films with artistic merit that provide thematic programs on community issues. We address issues of diversity and marginalization and especially seek out and showcase films and filmmakers depicting the inter-relatedness of mental health issues to topics relevant to Aboriginal peoples, immigrant and refugee communities, gay, lesbian and transgendered communities and others facing stigma.

- To present innovative films in a critical context, specifically by engaging media artists and audiences in dialogues to facilitate the use of film as a medium to explore issues of stigma and marginalization.

- To seek films that convey authentic voices with artistic merit and dignity that approach subjects that are traditionally marginalized or stigmatized by popular media.
- To develop new audiences for innovative, independent films that explore challenging issues facing our communities through eliminating financial barriers to participation for audiences, facilitating the travel and participation of filmmakers to join our audience in dialogue, and by creating a safe, alternative venue welcoming of diverse audiences.
- To provide a weekly program with a mix of films that will be entertaining and engage broad audiences.

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Movie Monday seeks to continue to be a relevant media arts programmer as technologies continue to impact the media arts. We have shifted our promotions increasingly to social media formats while continuing to secure filmmaker interviews in the traditional media (notably radio and print). For many years, we sustained a Movie Monday Video Collection within a local video store. Following the demise of the local video store, we established a collection within the AV collection at the Greater Victoria Public Library with 74 titles donated with Movie Monday acquiring the titles in collaboration with independent filmmakers and distributors with full public performance rights. However, with increasing streaming content, this initiative has ended. Since then we have been linking up filmmakers to LibraryBound, a service that places films in Canadian libraries all across Canada and helps with DVD generation and assuring that they are shelf ready.

Circa 2019

Overall, our activity plan is to sustain and build on our long-standing collaborative partnerships that allow free access to the theatre which enables us to maintain low-costs that facilitates our programming in a uniquely accessible venue without financial barriers to diverse audiences. In this setting we are able to be a flexible and responsive to local media artists seeking an on-going weekly venue and to link media arts with emerging community issues and events. Throughout these activities we showcase innovative Canadian films in an interactive venue where filmmakers engage audiences with stories and images that explore the diverse issues that define our lives. Our key programming activities will continue to be our weekly programming of over 50 screenings a year in our 100-seat theatre to an annual estimated audience of over 3,000 people.

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Movie Monday seeks to continue to be a relevant media arts programmer as technologies continue to impact the media arts. We have shifted our promotions increasingly to social media formats while continuing to secure filmmaker interviews in the traditional media (notably radio and print). Our presentation quality is continually updated and is now fully HiDef with laptop as well as Blu-ray capability.

We are committed to continuing and expand of collaborations with diverse communities as we build audiences for innovative art and seek to engage media arts and artists in relevant ways to the experiences of diverse communities. Outreach and audience development is facilitated by sustaining partnerships with communities and organizations and linking our programming of independent films with communities' events. These partnerships have included PFLAG and Pride Screenings, a media arts partner in the local Asian Heritage Month, University of Victoria's Trans Archives and the Chair in Transgender Studies as well as UVic's Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (CISUR), the Greater Victoria Youth Orchestra, la Société Francophone de Victoria Society, local Alzheimer's and Brain Injury Societies and so many others.

As stated elsewhere in this proposal, our uniqueness is our priority to accessible programming of media arts and the extent that we achieve this objective. Our core mandate remains to facilitate

access to media arts featuring Canadian independent films for those groups less well served by traditional media arts venues. We ensure media artists and their works are presented in a pro-actively accessible venue that is inclusive of people experiencing poverty and social isolation, people living with mental health issues, addictions and physical and mental disabilities, and others who may face challenges accessing innovative films about issues relevant to their life. Activities to enable accessibility include how we manage our theatre space with lobby seats and widescreen TV projection of the show for the few individuals who wish to see the film but face challenges sitting within the theatre setting. The snack bar is operated as a non-profit venture with low-cost popcorn and other refreshments for that “full theatre experience.” Audience outreach includes dedicated promotions at locations frequented by low-income individuals and individuals experiencing homelessness. The Society continues to provide all events ‘by donation’.