

# Arts Section

In *Behind Closed Doors* by Anna Thew the subject of death is dealt with in a personal, metaphorical way: mixing images, inspired by Dante's 'Inferno' with recollections and dreams to provide an abstract collage of associations. The voice-over reads from a number of texts (Dante, the film-maker's own diaries & others) while the sound creates a disturbing vocabulary of nostalgia alluding to a variety of spaces and moments which remain fleeting, tentative and uncohesive. The Voice appears in sections disembodied and fragmented while the image, a series of tableaux, has created an aesthetic self-consciousness that precludes narrative codes. *Behind Closed Doors* creates an imaginary world, a mosaic of time sections, of instance revealed, spoken and given over to the act of interpretation.

The narrative tendency of Anna's work is linked with questions of subjectivity and politics; the voice speaks of a subjective experience (in her previous film it is her mother's voice on which the film hinges), the *telling* does not provide the centre of the text but rather its source. The theatrical images are not narrativised in a hegemonic sense but take part in a seductive play, a displacement, of meaning resonant through a dislinear construction which resist any resolution; we are left with a myriad of instances in transit.

*Canvas* by Sera Furneaux, as its title suggests, sets out to create a series of paintings by using life models, surface colour and texture with extreme high definition video. The

statuesque quality of these timeless bodies caught in moments has a haunting and tense quality although the slickness of the image and the posing of the models did border on images from Vogue. The intermittent music worked to play up the expectancy created by the slight movement of the models or the objects around them.

*Chemistry Set* by Steve Hawley and Tony Steyger seem to be in two sections; the first was a remake of Hawley's *Trout Descending a Staircase*; that is, using the electronic paintbox for a series of puns using various items: leeks, electric knives, a trout to 'paint' onto an imaginary canvas (a technique which once understood became academic and predictable); while the second part consisted in a series of excessive video effects with what seems to be the content of an Argos catalogue. The wizzardry or bad psychedelia - 'a spoof on all those pop videos, programme trailers and carpet warehouse commercials' - did nothing to counter the general technological banality of such images and brought little comment on television. It seemed a case of shall we spin, tumble or freeze? I felt like switching off.

As 10 new film and video pieces, this programme is exemplary; not only did it represent the broad section of work being made but it does so with quality, edge and strength. A definite sign of what a little extra funding can do to a generally neglected and underfunded area.

Out of the 10 pieces, 4 have been chosen for transmission as part of the Channel Four *Ghosts in the Machine* series; unfortunately I believe the final four come nowhere near what the 10 do as a group. The final selection seems to represent the most 'acceptable' face of art: apart from *The Hidden Wisdom*, the other pieces - *Waterwork*, *Valtos*, *Man in the Crowd* - hardly challenge paradigms or current aesthetics. Why not be adventurous and show *Uranium Hex*, *The Descent of the Seductress*, *Behind Closed Doors*, or *Troubled Land?* The justification will probably be phrased in the ineffectual discourse of 'what is good' (who wants what is good?) or phrased in terms of viewers' needs.

Nevertheless as the package will be toured by the Arts Council at some stage and the work is there to enter the smaller but growing film/video art exhibition circuit, the announcement of a new joint project, this time between the 11th hour and the Arts Council, for production funding of £10,000 to £20,000, will hopefully deliver as exciting a series of films and videos ●

## Michael Maziere

**Note: C4 which was to broadcast 'Ghosts in the Machine - 2' has just announced that the series has been postponed. Michael Grade wished to put it on in the early hours of the morning, rather than at the original 11pm time. Illuminations, the production company, are currently negotiating for a better time slot.**