

SPLICE

Winter/Spring 2017



Gerald Saul Retrospective at the AGR
The NFB & Saskatchewan
The Land of Rock and Gold

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Splice Magazine is a publication of The Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative. The Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative is a non-profit artist-run centre that supports, encourages, and assists independent filmmaking in Saskatchewan.

The Filmpool is committed to developing an awareness and appreciation of independent film that reflects the individual and collective cultural expression of Saskatchewan people.



LETTER FROM THE FILMPOOL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Within the last few years, the Filmpool has seen a significant growth in both the numbers and quality of independent films made in our province. This is extremely encouraging! There is a feeling now that in Saskatchewan, we are not only increasing our independent filmmaking activity, but we're also taking positive steps in recognizing and celebrating our own filmmaking talents and accomplishments. It's important that we take notice of what we can do - both individually and as a community.

Thank you for supporting organizations like the Filmpool and for publications like Splice Magazine, and for keeping our independent vision, spirit and voice alive for many years to come.

Once again, congratulations to Splice editor Wanda Schmöckel and to all the contributors for another outstanding issue of Splice Magazine!

Gord Pepper

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



It is our pleasure to present you with the Winter/Spring 2017 edition of Splice Magazine, featuring stories about filmmaking and film happenings around the province, including a production diary from Janine Windolph and Daniel Redenbach's *The Land of Rock and Gold*; a response to Atom Egoyan's *Steenbeckett*; an exploration of Gerald Saul's retrospective *Anecdotal Evidence*; an interview with the NFB's new Prairie Producer; and a profile of cinematographer (and champion of local independent filmmaking), Layton Burton.

This issue also happens to coincide with the launch of the Saskatchewan Filmpool's 40th anniversary year - and there is much to celebrate. The Saskatchewan Filmpool is one of Canada's longest running artist-run cooperatives, and this anniversary year promises great things for Saskatchewan filmmakers and film enthusiasts province-wide, with year-long programming and events to mark the occasion.

Over the next few months, we'll be busy preparing a very special anniversary edition of Splice, set for release in the Fall of 2017.

Bon cinéma!

Wanda

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Anecdotal Evidence

The Work of Gerald Saul

BY **CHRYSTENE ELLS**

PHOTOS BY **CHRYSTENE ELLS**
AND BERNY HI

The doorway impression of Strandline Curatorial's retrospective of the work of Gerald Saul is of an enticing, multi-artist show: paintings, prints, old telephones, display cases, stereoscopic viewers, iPads, videos projected on four central screens, and a life-sized cardboard cut-out where visitors may insert their face and have a portrait taken, shaking hands with one of Saul's alter egos: *Canister the Robot*.

As with Saul's work in general, curiosity beckons from every corner, and there is no wrong way in. I start with a wall of 28 crude, playful, and beautiful watercolour paintings on yellowing paper, ripped from coil bindings. Gerald will join me later and explain that they are from Brian Stockton's film *Agoraphobia* (1987), in which Saul plays an artist terrified to leave his studio. The paintings, bordered in black to reflect the character's psychosis, were taped to the walls.

Below are display cases containing various materials related to Saul's films: photocopied posters, a film strip of a man with dancing eye sockets (animated in the film by the emulsion being scratched away in each frame), and an enigmatic card with a phone number and the message: "I want to hear your fears. Be a part of *Dread*."

A couple of steps lie between Saul's oldest material and his most recent: *Canister the Robot*. The *Canister* films remind me of the scripted scenes that brilliant children force on their playmates, but teeming with literary references, philosophical arguments, and enigmatic witticisms for the few (as when one character is chastised for his "Magoo-vian sense of direction").





*"Some days I am a purist,
but most of the time I'm not.
All's fair. There's no such
thing as cheating."*





The next piece is startling: seventeen sock puppets, the cast of *Sock-Vile*, Saul's puppet film collaboration with students, stare out from two display cases: googly-eyes, yarn hair, and gaping sock mouths press against the glass, heads jammed together and bodies folded behind. Only Gerald Saul would exhibit puppets like this, and I find it simultaneously funny and horrible; feeling a mounting claustrophobic panic, I hurriedly count the puppets for my notes and move on.

Five brightly coloured rotary phones sit on a table, with one hour of the many anonymous calls from the *Dread* answering machine tapes piped into each receiver. I can't resist the tactile, memory-laden experience of rotary dialing and curling the cords around a finger while listening in on archival confessions, rants, songs, and, yes, fears of strangers. The recordings have the whisper of analogue, and the phrasing and inflections hint at a historical dialect from another time-county, in another century. Saul has created a time machine, with voices reaching out of the past:

*"Bats, or snakes, or anything coming up from the toilet." *click**

*"I don't know what this line is for. Could you explain who you are and why you do this?" *click**

Gerald has arrived at the gallery. We go back through what I've seen already and the tour becomes a bit more of a Q&A.

What is this show about for you?

SAUL: It's a retrospective—and beyond. I have been re-envisioning the work by prepping for the exhibition. I'm rethinking my life's work. But am I done? Is your life over once you have the retrospective? This could have just been nothing but the work, but because the way I make work changes, I wanted to rework the work. For example, the 3-D stereoscopic viewers on the wall reveal images that I reconstructed from the film *Angst*. The film was shot in 1989, and I shot these stereoscopic reconstructed images from that film this summer, 27 years later. The actress is gone, moved away, and not much is the same, but I went back to the same environments, the same graveyard, and I recaptured those images.

I like restrictions. I like limitations. This show is restricted to being a retrospective, so any new work I created for it was limited to exploring ways to improve or re-envision the old work. *Angst* was reconsidered with the stereoscope, *Dread* was reconsidered with the old phones and the original voicemail recordings, and *25 Short Films In and About Saskatchewan* was re-envisioned by capturing images from the actual film strips using a microscope and turning them into large wall prints. *Wheat Soup* (Saul and Brian Stockton's first feature film) was finished in 1987 and I just re-shot the final 10-minute sunset shot. I recently got the same lens we used for that shot, and I put two characters from that world in the sunset and captured the 10 minute sunset shot again, 30 years later, but, you know, in the future. I hope to edit this shot tonight and add it to the exhibition tomorrow. I know it's the last day, but I am going to try to slip it in.



How did you go about deciding how to re-envision these different films?

I do things out of convenience. For example, the images I made of frames from the films that I shot through the microscope: I didn't seek out a microscope. That's not how it started. Rather, the microscope was made available to me. In other words, techniques present themselves to me and I think, "What can I do with that?"

Are you able to pick a favourite piece in the show, or one that might help a person who doesn't know you at all to get a feeling for your work?

You know, other people have asked that. The show has been up for two months and I don't have an answer. What I like seems to change from day to day. The pieces I like are not necessarily the best ones. So many of them have to do with the memory of making the work. The time I spent with the actress in *Angst*, that was a whole summer of getting up at 2 in the afternoon and going to the studio. We had a studio with big windows, so we shot at night so we could control the light. Those three months, that summer, it was one of those great summers. So *Angst* for me is partly about that time in my life.

Gerald invites me to continue around the gallery to watch the things I haven't seen yet. "I'll just stay here and be a resource for you if you need me," he says, and I immediately plug into *25 Short Films In and About Saskatchewan* (1999). Each of these short films deserves its own review. Some of the scenes are just things he was doing that day, going to a talk, driving or walking around, and yet there is something about the way everything is shot, the way the images are cut together, that is foreign to my own perception. I am not looking through my own eyes. I am somewhere in Gerald's head, way back there in time and in distance, watching him participate in his life. Some of the imagery pushes my heart to the point of bursting: snow in a graveyard, a young Gerald Saul falling back into the snow and making a snow angel, the empty snow angel, a burst of red flowers on a cold grey gravestone. And some of the narration in these short films brings a stabbing longing too: "We fed foxes right out of our hands."

I make a quick circuit of the four video screens in the centre of the space, watching snippets of each of the films: *Angst*, *Doubt*, *Dread*, and *Toxic*. A dancer

in an orange graveyard, a lab-coated man leaping in triplicate through an enchanted forest then clawing at his eyes with animated explosions leaping from the sockets, happily spinning animated surgical staples from Gerald's 2001 operation.

Saul's work teems with vampires, robots, beautiful women, professors, inventors, dancers, madmen and saints, all trapped willingly in worlds generously created especially for them, gyrating on threads of tension suspended between image, rhythm, sound, and narration in churning parallel universes conceived of heartbreak, humour, myth, meaning, chaos, screams, and piano.

Regrettably, I don't have time to watch everything (the entire show constitutes over 12 hours of material) and I join Gerald, who is sitting on the couch, hand-sewing a small green figure while watching his 20-year-old self in *Wheat Soup*. I ask him what it's like to watch this film now.

SAUL: I actually love *Wheat Soup*. Look at this: I love how he scratches his leg. We shot this in the university studio. Our budget for this scene was two pieces of wall paneling. Some of the writing in *Wheat Soup* bothers me, though. We found everything funny and we just threw it all on the table and it's still in there.

How important is cinematic theory and narrative to you as an experimental filmmaker?

It's the root of it all. You can't experiment without knowing the rules. If you start by experimenting, you're just playing in the sand. What a four year old and an architect do in a sandbox are very different things.

(Of Saul's sewing project) What are you making?

SAUL: A monster. I'm going to set it on fire. I need one that burns. He'll be filled with flammable material, and he needs a face, and shorts. It's for my German Expressionist film, but I'm running out of time. I need another month to finish the film. Or I'll just make it on Monday.

Anecdotal Evidence: The Work of Gerald Saul was on view at the Art Gallery of Regina from July 7 – to August 27, 2016.





Our Man in Winnipeg

The NFB and Saskatchewan

BY MARK WIHAK

The publicly funded National Film Board of Canada has developed a worldwide reputation for its documentary and animated films. Founded in 1939, the NFB was created in response to Hollywood's dominance of our movie screens, with the intention of bringing Canadian stories to Canadian audiences. In recent years, the NFB has made much of its outstanding catalogue of films available for free downloads and online viewing.

While we celebrate the NFB's accomplishments, some of us have also felt frustrated by the NFB's modest engagement with Saskatchewan filmmakers. Since shutting down their Regina and Saskatoon offices in the early 1990s, the NFB has had a thin presence in Saskatchewan, with a Winnipeg-based producer making forays across the border to meet with Saskatchewan filmmakers. In 2011, a Saskatchewan-based Producer was hired by the NFB, but that office was shuttered after a couple of years, and once again Saskatchewan filmmakers are being



served through the Winnipeg office, which is a part of the NFB's North West Studio, with its main office in Edmonton, and Calgary filmmaker David Christensen serving as Executive Producer. The North West Studio's territory includes Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.

Despite the NFB's modest track record in Saskatchewan, there are reasons to be hopeful. At the moment, the NFB is involved in two projects with Saskatchewan filmmakers, Tasha Hubbard's *Birth of a Family*, and Robin Schlaht's interactive project *Convictions*. And we have a new Producer in Winnipeg. I first encountered Jon Montes at the 2016 Yorkton Film Festival. Jon followed up with trips to Saskatoon and Regina in June, and had a busy few days in Saskatchewan, meeting with a number of filmmakers and

organisations and checking out the old NFB office in the Soundstage; he promises to be a regular visitor.

Originally from Newfoundland and Labrador, Jon got his start in film working for the St. John's International Women's Film Festival before moving to Toronto for graduate school and more festival work there at the Regent Park Film Festival and TIFF. St. John's NFB producer Annette Clarke brought him back to associate produce the feature doc *Danny*. After working on a few more projects in St. John's, he moved to the NFB's Montreal office, working on animated and documentary projects, and he jumped at the opportunity to be a Producer at the NFB's Winnipeg offices.

What is your role with the NFB and your responsibilities?

I produce films for the North West

Studio. That means working closely with filmmakers to find creative ways of telling engaging stories and making sure those stories get made in the most interesting way possible. I'm not a director and that's not my job. As a creative producer, my job is to push you as a director to articulate your point of view in as clear an essence as possible. Of course, budgets, administration, and paperwork come with the job, but it's the creative storytelling part of it that make those bearable.

Even though I'm based in Winnipeg, our studio's main office is in Edmonton and we cover a huge geographical territory: Right now, I'm looking primarily at Saskatchewan and NWT, two areas where I'd love to see more NFB projects get off the ground.

What type of projects is the NFB interested in being involved in?



The Grasslands Project. Photo courtesy NFB.





Oof that's a big one. We work principally in documentary, animation, and interactive storytelling. Because we're a public producer, we have the ability to work outside some industry constraints. We don't shape projects according to broadcast norms and we're not limited to only working on projects we think will sell. Everything is on the table, from micro-short animation and documentary to feature length to VR. Ultimately, I'm interested in stories that change the way we see ourselves in the world. Usually – especially in our documentaries – there is a strong social issue context to our films. But we can only understand that context through story, often intensely local and character-driven. That's the hook I'm often drawn to, what does the micro say that illuminates the macro in a new light?

Should filmmakers pitch you at the development stage even if they feel the project is ready to go into production?

For sure! We're not a film funder, we're a creative producer. That means we prefer to come into the filmmaking process at the ground floor of creation. If you're coming to the NFB to round out your production financing, it's a tough sell. If

you're approaching us at a very early stage to work with you as a creative collaborator, then absolutely we should talk.

What can the NFB provide at the development stage?

It's in development that we start drilling down into the hard questions of what the story is, why we're telling it, and how we're approaching it. Those are three simple questions, but are really at the heart of our work. We'll work with you throughout development to answer these questions and can support that process by building interesting creative teams that will help us see the story in new and exciting ways. Depending on the project, we'll usually begin to do some shooting (or animating or designing) to start articulating how the project will work on a visual and emotional level. It can be a long process, but the resources we commit in development go a long way to sharpen what we do in production.

What are you expecting to see at the pitch stage and how should filmmakers approach you?



Honestly, pitches scare me. It's so much pressure to expect someone have a fully formed project that's ready to go! And if it's all ready to go, what room does that leave for me to contribute creatively as a producer? I really appreciate pitches that are just a way of starting a conversation, which is where, as a creative producer, I can start working with you. All I'm hoping for in that kind of conversation is an idea or a story that might have legs and that speaks to the filmmaker or creator who is bringing it forward.

Can filmmakers pitch you a specific content and form (i.e. can they pitch a documentary film, or an interactive project or an animated project)?

Totally, though we tend to look for story first, not form. As my colleague Alicia Smith puts it, "We are technology agnostic, meaning, we will use whatever technology suits the story best." Sometimes that's virtual reality, sometimes that's linear documentary, and sometimes it's scratch on film animation. Form always follows story, and we spend a lot of development time talking about this. It's also in development that we start thinking concretely about what the goals of each project is. So if we're making films for a group of people with limited internet connection, for example, maybe it doesn't make sense to tell the story as an interactive project. That's a long-winded way of saying yes, you can certainly pitch content and form, though you should also be open to exploring other possibilities as you tell your story.

What's the difference between working with the NFB on a co-production and working on a project where the NFB is the sole producer?

Creative collaboration is key for the NFB and something we expect as either the sole producer or a co-producer. So as a creator, you can always expect me, whether I'm the only producer or one of two or more co-producers, to be asking you about story, pushing you on form, and looking to find creative ways to challenge how we understand the project as storytellers.

You can find the more granular details of financing, copyright, and distribution on our corporate site, but co-productions usually mean that our financial contribution won't exceed 49%. Co-producers



have to secure the majority (51% or more) of financing. That can come through broadcast licenses, crowdfunding, etc. Copyright is divvied up pro rata, and we negotiate distribution rights based on what makes sense for the film on a case-by-case basis. If we're the sole producer on a project, all copyright and distribution rests with the NFB.

Can you outline what is available to emerging filmmakers through the Filmmaker Assistance Program (FAP)?

The Filmmaker Assistance Program (FAP) is a fantastic – if sometimes overlooked – program open to emerging filmmakers. While we don't provide cash funding, filmmakers can apply for post-production support, either from the NFB or from a post house. We can pay for a mix, film transfer, colour correction or other post-service, up to a max of \$5000. Preference is given to projects in documentary or animation, but we also fund drama as well. As you can imagine, we have a limited envelope for this, so it can be a competitive selection process. You can find out more on our website or email Esther Viragh (e.viragh@nfb.ca), our fantastic Production Supervisor, for more details.

Jon seems eager to engage with Saskatchewan filmmakers in a way that we haven't seen from the NFB for quite some time. Don't pass up the opportunity to say hello to Jon when you get the chance, and if you have an idea for a project you can reach him at: j.montes@nfb.ca and/or 204-983-5852.





THE VIEWFINDER

DIRECTOR MATT YIM
PROFILES CINEMATOGRAPHER
AND CHAMPION OF INDEPENDENT
FILM, LAYTON BURTON

BY **MATT YIM**

Layton Burton's social media presence, once overtly political, has become increasingly dedicated to self-portraiture featuring his legs as they're outstretched on an assortment of lounge chairs by his swimming pool. With each picture I can see the sun reflected in different parts of the water as its coordinates constantly shift with the rotation of the earth. But the legs, they never move; they only darken. Meanwhile, he writes captions like "Is 11:30 AM too early for a Caesar?" He tells me he's a full-time student at the University of Regina, enrolled in the film department's master's program, but when I was in school I recall doing a lot more studying and a lot less 'sunning'. I imagine if I were to lean over his chair and ask what he was doing, he'd answer like Benjamin Braddock in *The Graduate*: "Well, I would say I'm just drifting." Layton Burton, I conclude, is a fifty-five year old millennial and an ideal embodiment



of the generation he's assimilated into.

This isn't a mid-life crisis, but a case of accidental conformity. Lately he's been spending an inordinate amount of time among twenty-somethings, working as the cinematographer on a number of micro-budget projects produced by Saskatchewan's up-and-coming generation of filmmakers. He usually finds himself the oldest person on set by twenty or even thirty years, and for months at a time will see more of his young co-workers than his immediate family. Like many millennials, he often works either voluntarily or at the meager rate of a coffee-toting production assistant, not to mention twice as hard as he's ever had to in the past. But he's not complaining. Instead he describes this as "my renaissance, my new beginning." You'll be hard pressed to find anyone who disagrees.

In the last three years alone Layton has shot four feature films in Saskatchewan – most recently the Telefilm-vetted *Talent* – and last November saw his name printed on the cover of *Canadian Cinematographer*. For someone who took the elimination of the film tax credit very hard – "I fumed and puffed and kicked and screamed and it took me almost three years to calm down" – Layton has managed to not only move onwards but upwards.

Wind the clocks back to the 1980s, when Layton was actually in his twenties, and you'll meet a foolhardy news photographer for CKTV (now CTV), itching, like some of his fresh-faced cohorts today, for all the filmmaking experience he can get. "We, as CK employees, had opportunities to work as P.A.s, grips, electricians, or camera assistants," he explains. "I got to 'play' and experiment and push photographic boundaries." Saskatchewan's film industry was virtually non-existent and practical training for aspiring film technicians was largely restricted to the production of local news, government commercials, and the odd NFB short: "local productions by locals educating the next generation." For Layton and his CKTV colleagues – who included Jack Tunnicliffe, CEO of Java Post; Peter LaRoque, cinematographer for *WolfCop*; and Chris Triffo, CEO of Partners In Motion – these were learning experiences that readied an infrastructure of craftspeople for the booming industry that was to come.

"I was at the meeting in Yorkton where SMPIA [Saskatchewan Media Production Industry Association]

was born back in the early 80s," says Layton. "I remember the room was electric with excitement. I wanted in on this and luckily I was in the right place at the right time."

Things have since come full circle. The sound stages built in 2002, once a major draw for service productions, are now vacant echo chambers. Creative Saskatchewan, which currently occupies some of the building's office space, wasn't met with 'electric' enthusiasm when it was established in 2013; instead, it ushered in a new era of speaking in morbid metaphors: beheaded, gutted, death knell, cut off at the knees. The film industry, in one way or another, was dead.

"We all know it by heart now," says Layton. There's nothing to be gained from rehashing the sequence of events over and over again, which is why he's finally embracing the future. "We need to innovate or capitulate!" he exclaims. "This is an opportunity to take 'local' to a new level, because it's all we have now."

'Local' is a relatively new world for Layton. The history of filmmaking in Saskatchewan, as he tells it, excludes the independent, artist-driven movement that ran parallel with the burgeoning industry; there's no mention of the Yorkton Film Festival, the Saskatchewan Filmpool, or the film program at the University of Regina. That wasn't his scene. He admits that "one of the biggest mistakes" of the industry was ignoring those indigenous filmmakers. "We were so busy facilitating [service productions] that we lost sight of the endgame – that being to serve our local producers and craftspeople in the pursuit of their own productions." It's as if a chasm has always existed between the 'industry' and the 'artists,' and it only widened over time. Layton's dedication to the film community today is bridging this longstanding gap.

He's becoming a regular fixture at the Filmpool, through which he ran his own lighting workshop last June as part of 'The Caligari Project' arts festival. Every so often, he'll work on student films and micro-budget first features, where he acts as both a cinematographer and mentor on set, which is how I began working with him in 2012. He also spends an hour once a week at Mother Theresa Middle School teaching children from grades six to eight the basics of filmmaking. It's an extra-curricular program he started with me, Allan Roeher, and Matthieu Belanger two years ago, but he's kept it going ever since by himself. "It's really why I get





On the set of Matt Yim's *Basic Human Needs*.

out of bed, to tell you the truth,” he tells me. “I’ve gotten so much joy and pleasure from helping out young people and, in turn, I hope I give them something to hang their hats on when they do their next projects.”

With the state of the industry much the same as it was in 80s, it seems as though Layton is re-experiencing his youth all over again, though this time from the perspective of the old pros who trained him. It must’ve been surreal when he met the director of *Talent*, Lucas Frison, who apart from being an emerging filmmaker is also a news photographer for CTV.

On these micro-budget features, Layton has helped many people, myself included, find their vocations. But what, I sometimes wonder, have these young filmmakers imparted on him?

A few weeks ago, Layton unveiled a new picture of his legs on Facebook, with his feet now pointed toward the diving board. The caption this time is written with smug simplicity: “Yup,” followed by a tiny, dare I say cute, cocktail emoticon. Maybe it’s another example of millennial contagion. Or maybe this is what middle-age looks like when you play your cards right. It’s like George Orwell once said, “At fifty, everyone has the face he deserves.” Well, I can’t see Layton’s face in these pictures. But his legs! They look fantastic.



On the set of Matt Yim's *Basic Human Needs*.



THE LAND OF ROCK AND GOLD

Filmmaker Janine Windolph shares a production diary of *The Land of Rock and Gold*

BY **JANINE WINDOLPH**
WITH **DANIEL REDENBACH**
PHOTOS BY **EAGLECLAW THOM**

Development: The birth of *The Land of Rock and Gold* began with a desire for two filmmakers, Daniel Redenbach and myself to come together and make a feature film in Saskatchewan. For both of us, this was our first feature film we were able to co-write, co-direct and co-produce. Daniel consulted with Avi Federgreen who is the Executive Producer.

Daniel shares more, “We were greenlit on a treatment. Though getting the script together looked like a challenge, it turned into a blessing in disguise. We were able to write it in the town of La Ronge, in the company of real life residents. It was an inspiring experience writing with Janine. The story really grew symbiotically and organically - through her storytelling, through the land and residents of the La Ronge region, and through discovering who these characters were as real human beings.





The Land of Rock and Gold. Photo courtesy of production.

effort from passionate, hardworking people who took on way more than their job titles called for, and way above their pay grades. Prep, in hindsight, was a whirlwind: Actor training, rehearsals, location scouting, scheduling, casting, rewrites. Somehow we got through it, but not without the blood, sweat and tears of our producing partners!”

Production: The three weeks in La Ronge’s winter cold, combined with taking on with the challenges of producing and directing our first feature film were filled with learning experiences. Here, we welcomed Phil Doerkson who is integral to our producing team.

Daniel elaborates; “The whole crew lodged together in some cabins outside of town - it really felt like it was just us and the wilderness. We’d all roll out together in the cold morning air, gather around the fire at wrap... it was a really humbling to be surrounded by wonderful people discussing and becoming engrossed

‘Creative Conciliation’ as a mutual collaborative creation became unconsciously integrated, as we simply just worked as two people trying to put together a story that was empowering and truthful to the unique culture of the woodland.”

Pre-Production: We were blessed to have Samantha Crawford come along for the journey as Associate Producer. Our first trip, we spent time in La Ronge at Kikinahk Friendship Centre working with potential actors to play our key characters; Rochelle, Willy and Mikey. After hosting community tryouts and individual call backs there was a mother/son team that stood out; Charity Bradfield (Rochelle) and Dimitri McLeod (Dimitri). Barrett Thomson was casted as Willy.

Daniel adds, “Every day came with excitement and anticipation, but we quickly learned how challenging it is to make a microbudget film. It became a group





in the project, while busting their asses to bring it to life. I think this is a cliché, but you never learn more about yourself as a filmmaker as when you watch your own dailies.”

It was an incredibly rewarding experience to see the decisions you made throughout the day play out in front of your eyes. Daniel recalls, “Charity consistently blew everyone away. Our 15 days continued to escalate - adding more cast members - the incredible Devery Jacobs, Marina Stephenson Kerr and Josh Strait - more nuanced story arcs, last minute changes to the script and schedule. We just had to roll with it, trust in the vision, and drink about 400 cups of tea a day.”

Post-Production: Daniel worked with Jackie Dzuba to edit the story. Together they would put together versions and I would be able to view them and respond with any notes. As I was working a part-time job at this point, my evenings were made more exciting when I





The Land of Rock and Gold. Photo courtesy of production.



The Land of Rock and Gold. Photo courtesy of production.

would see a message with a new version ready for viewing.

Daniel shares more: “They say you make the film three times: The one you wrote, the one you shot, and the one you edit. It’s true – these were three different films – but I knew we succeeded when the heart of that script was present throughout all the elements on the screen. All that movie magic came back once the score was written, once the sound design was full, once the colour grade matched the sublime beauty of the La Ronge we remembered. All the masterful work of Saskatchewan artists - I might add: Drone musician Pulsewidth (Ernie Dulanowsky), Steve and Rob at Talking Dog, Jason at Chromacreative, and everyone at JavaPost.”

After all was said and done, Daniel and I both shared in an intensive experience that showed us both what we can do as individuals, as a partnership, and as community. We also thank the Saskatchewan Filmpool for supporting both of us and the project. Telefilm and Creative Saskatchewan for funding on this project. Now that the film is ready to be shared it will take on a life of its own.



Atom Egoyan, *Steenbeckeff*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2016. Photo: Don Hall, courtesy of the MacKenzie Art Gallery.

Of Strandline and Steenbeckett

Atom Egoyan's moving
installation makes its
North American premiere
in Saskatchewan

BY **GEREMY LAGUE**

A quick search of the word “film” yields a long list of articles about cinema; movements like realism or the new wave, and a list of what is currently showing at the local Cineplex, but that's not what I am looking for. After some more research, I find that the term I *am* looking for is “photographic film”: A transparent cellulose base, which acts as a substrate for the photosensitive emulsion that lies on top. It's created in a long strip, with sprocket holes on each side to efficiently and accurately guide the strip in front of the camera gate – a conduit for light. If properly exposed and developed, it yields a negative, which can then be used to inform a print which can then be projected with stunning quality.





Detail of four-gang synchronizer, part of installation of Atom Egoyan, *Steenbeckett*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2016. Photo: Don Hall, courtesy of MacKenzie Art Gallery

These thoughts were my initial reaction to Atom Egoyan's *Steenbeckett*, the installation that made its North American debut this past November at the MacKenzie Art Gallery as a part of the *Meet in the Middle: Stations of Migration and Memory between Art and Film* symposium. The installation itself, originally commissioned by Artangel in the UK, is comprised of two thousand feet of 35mm film that, thanks to a series of pulleys, takes over the space in a way that can only be described as calculated chaos. The film is draped from pulley to pulley, from the floor to the ceiling, to the wall, back again, across the room, to the floor and on. The large dark space features spotlights that make the rolling film the spectacle of the experience. The gigantic film loop is driven by a 35mm Steenbeck editing machine, which is placed deep behind the sprawl of living cellulose. I was told that the acquisition of the machine itself had been the main challenge to the installation and, as it is no longer the standard for movie editing, I'm not surprised. The print in question features a performance of *Krapp's Last Tape*, written by Samuel

Beckett and performed by John Hurt. The installation is complimented by another screen showing a digital version of *Krapp's Last Tape*.

Steenbeckett was brought to the MacKenzie in conjunction with *Meet in The Middle*, a multi-year project that explores, among other things, the space between the gallery and the cinema. The project was "a curated series of exhibitions, screenings, events and exchanges linked by the theme of trauma that underlies contemporary experiences of migration and its memorialization." The project involves several key elements in the city of Regina, Armenia, and of course, the work of Atom Egoyan. Individual events that make up the project are called "stations." I myself have been fortunate enough to be involved in the #3citylink station in 2014 that formed a space by connecting via Skype the University of Regina, Coventry University in the UK, and Gyumri, Armenia. While my role within the station was peripheral, the formation of a space for discussion, thought, and creation was evident to all of those involved. #3citylink focused on issues of peaceability and citizenship by

linking places that have experienced trauma, and served to create a forum for meditation on these themes. For two weeks, collaborators shared, traded, discussed, created and experimented. Work from the Regina station included a blog, GPS drawings, a performance by the Saskatchewan theatre artist and filmmaker Paul Crepeau, and much more.

This type of hub was again formed during the *Meet in the Middle* symposium which ran November 2 – 5, 2016, and included an Armenian film series; the launch of *Atom Egoyan: Steenbeckett*; panels and conversations engaging the themes of migration, memory, and trauma at the intersection of art and film; performative interventions; a narrative workshop; a Master Class with Atom Egoyan, a film screening of *Krapp's Last Tape*, directed by Egoyan, and a public conversation with Atom Egoyan and writer Noah Richler.

Before the exhibition opened, I met with Christine Ramsay (University of Regina, Department of Film), Elizabeth Matheson (Strandline Curatorial Collective), and Timothy Long (Head Curator,

MacKenzie Art Gallery), three of the four curators of the *Meet in the Middle* project (Rachelle Viader Knowles, Coventry University being the fourth) to talk about expanded cinema, the work of Atom Egoyan, and logistics.

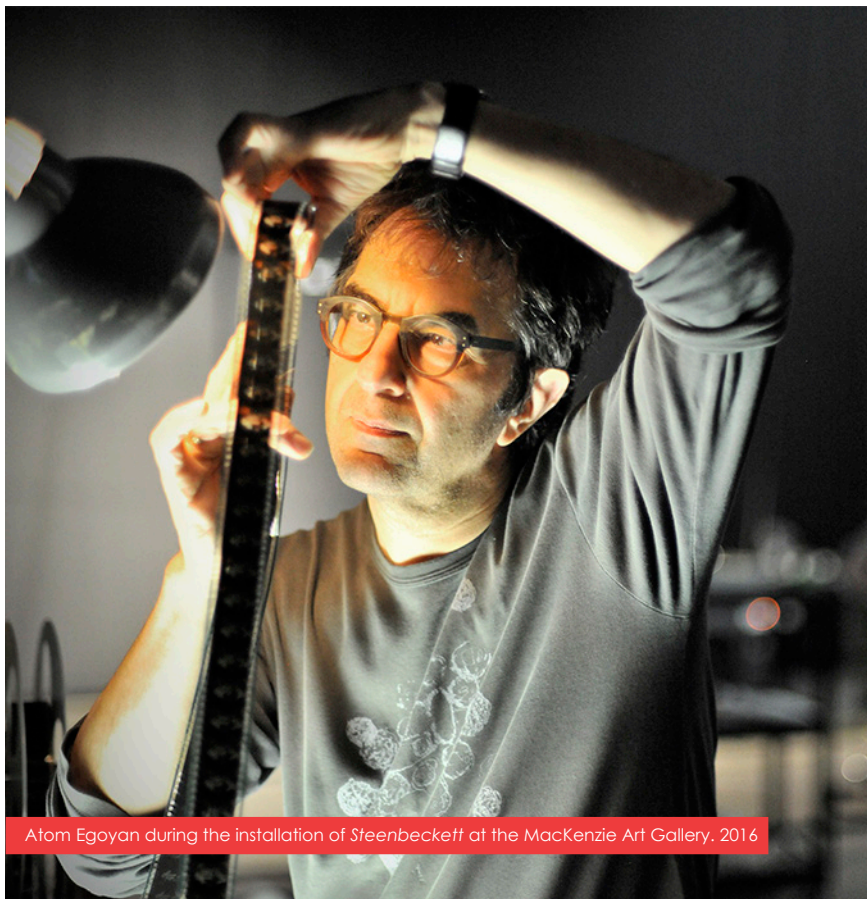
Jeremy Lague: *How was Meet in the Middle formed?*

Elizabeth Matheson: In 2009, Strandline Curatorial Collective was formed and we were looking for projects and programming that could tap into the most important elements of Saskatchewan. One of them being film. I was working on a project with the Prefix Gallery and a Brazilian artist who knew Atom Egoyan. I was speaking to him about film and Saskatchewan and it turns out that Atom had this extensive installation career that he was working on, and he was keen to talk about authorship and audiences. After I returned to Saskatchewan I thought more about this is an opening to create a dialogue here about film and connections to art both nationally and internationally. I approached Christine at the University of Regina because we were using



Atom Egoyan during the installation of *Steenbeckett* at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2016





Atom Egoyan during the installation of *Steenbeckett* at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2016

the screen as a placeholder for the frame within the curatorial field. There is a long love affair between art and film that goes well back in the 20th century but I think for curatorial methodologies there wasn't a lot of interchange between film theorist, filmmakers, curators, galleries and so this in not only a novel project in discussing film and art in Saskatchewan, but it also has impact when we talk about new curatorial methodologies. To bridge out to theoretical film and try and create a real dialogue is something we felt was very important.

Christine Ramsay: I came on because of Canadian cinema. Egoyan is such an important figure in Canadian cinema, and when I was approached by Elizabeth I said

'Sure, what does the project look like?' Elizabeth and her previous partners had already gotten some funding through the Saskatchewan Arts Board for a series of events in Saskatchewan, and this morphed into the *Meet in the Middle* project.

Timothy Long: From my perspective, at the MacKenzie, this is another example of how great Regina is as a community of interesting artists, cultural workers, theorists, and curators – there is such a rich mix of people here, and so many interesting ideas that we have really benefited from at the MacKenzie, by having people like Elizabeth and Christine approach us. In the beginning, we were talking about a full retrospective of every single work Atom had done in lens-based installation. I just

thought, why not? The MacKenzie has a long interest in lens-based installation work, and the gallery is dedicated to showing what the limits of what that work can be. Surely Atom's *Steenbeckett* is helping us to do this. It needs to be seen here. We were fortunate enough to receive the funding we needed through various grants like SSHRC. (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council)

CR: It couldn't be done individually. We needed Strandline, the MacKenzie, and my University connection to come together to make it happen. Certainly, at the University we are committed to bringing these ideas out to the community. For that reason, it's so important to be able to do these collaborative works when you can get pillars in the community and when people work together you get something so much richer than what you could do in isolation.

GL: So what are your thoughts on *Steenbeckett*?

EM: It doesn't have the industrial size as some other installations. It has immensity in the power of the work. I think what we are seeing is that when cinema goes into a gallery it's somewhat of a spectacle, they are meant to awe you. What we have found, I think collectively, is that this particular work allows you to think. Atom is a very intellectual filmmaker, so when he put work into a gallery that extends into that space. You walk out feeling as if you had a moment to contemplate, and it changes how you think about the space. And that is something that I think viewers will really respond to.

TL: Essentially, it occupies a cube, about 20 m x 20 m in a completely blackened room. You have to walk through curtains, the walls are black, there are maybe 8 LED lights on the floor that point in different directions. First off you hear this chattering of film, and you look up and all around you is this web of 35mm film in motion. It's going wall to wall, ceiling to floor and it extends all the way to some thing at the back of the room. At first, you are not even sure what it is, but it's a Steenbeck 35mm six-plate editing table. This thing was the standard tool for filmmakers for 60 years. There is this little image at the back and you hear the warbling voice of John Hurt playing the part of Krapp from *Krapp's Last Tape*. In that particular installation (at the MacKenzie Art Gallery), there was another room that the film went off to – an archive to film. For me, it has this feeling that I was looking at the aging body of film. Just through a door, in a separate space, a digital version of *Krapp's Last Tape* was also being shown in a crisp white room.

CR: There you could view the hour-long film of *Krapp's Last Tape*. It was very interesting to see three

different areas of perception.

TL: I thought 'this work needs to be shown.'

CR: And at the MacKenzie, it will be installed differently.

TL: Yes, it will be shown all in one space for the first time. The exhibition will host the premiere of the newly re-mastered digital version of *Krapp's Last Tape*, which viewers can watch. This is not a piece of nostalgia for film's past, but a meditation on the presence of film amongst other digital forms.

CR: Well you can think of Atom as an artist that works with concepts of media being rethought, and replaced. And the thing with these film loops is you are seeing the narrative turned into sculpture, so Atom as this remediator becomes a theme. Elizabeth and I were lucky enough to get into the independent curators international project in 2013 and we began to develop the notion of stations and meeting in the middle and Atom's work being the key station in linking Armenia to him and his work, and questions



Steenbeck technician Tom Hood with Atom Egoyan during installation of *Steenbeckett* at MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2016. Photo: Don Hall, courtesy of MacKenzie Art Gallery



about trauma and memory in his work. But it was through these workshops that we got on the train of having these stations.

GL: So the newest station of the *Meet in the Middle* project is the Egoyan exhibition?

EM: Yes. For example, we exhibited Saskatchewan films in Armenia, and now Armenian academics are coming here to present during the symposium. So that's the idea of creating stations with a flow of people in and out. That's one of the things I love about the project. It's a fluid flexible structure that we can incorporate lots into, which creates new conversations.

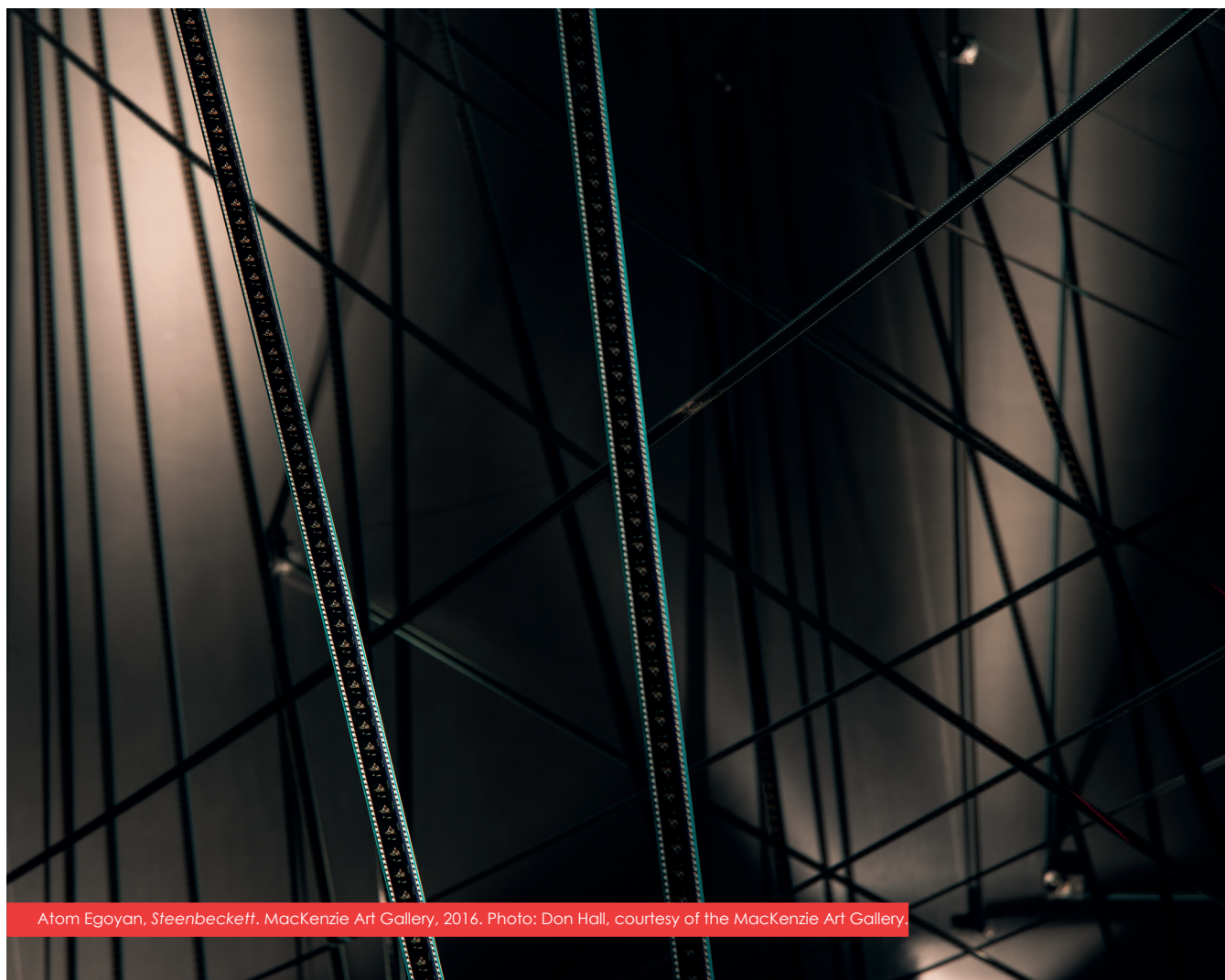
The *Meet in the Middle* symposium opened its latest station on November 2, 2016 and created discussion about the space between the gallery and the cinema

within the frameworks of *Steenbeckett*. For me, the conversations and ideas brought up during the installation will continue to question the role of film as an art form in the digital age.

Editor's Note: The catalogue *Atom Egoyan: Steenbeckett*, edited by Timothy Long, Christine Ramsay, Elizabeth Matheson, will be published this Spring by Black Dog Publishing.

Meet in the Middle stations 4 (*Saskatchewan Gothic*) and 5 (*Prairie (Magic) Realism*) took place at Regina's Dunlop Art Gallery between January 16 and February 18th.

This article was guest edited by Mark Wihak.



Atom Egoyan, *Steenbeckett*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2016. Photo: Don Hall, courtesy of the MacKenzie Art Gallery.



THE THIRD ANNUAL SIFAS

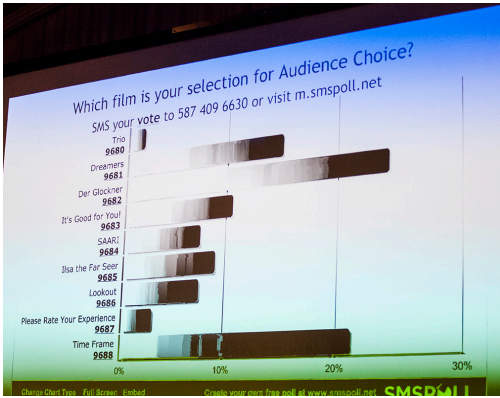
The Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative was proud to announce the winners of the Third Annual Saskatchewan Independent Film Awards (SIFA) which took place on November 24, 2016, at the Artesian on 13th in Regina. The evening of entertainment and screenings celebrated and showcased the best of Saskatchewan's independent filmmakers to a packed house.

Opening greetings were delivered by the Honourable Ken Cheveldayoff, Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. Jon Montes, a producer from the National Film Board of Canada, also spoke. Local improv performers and comedians Andrew Parry and Cameron Chomyn hosted the event, and T.B. Judd provided pre-show music.

Congratulations to all the winners and nominees!







Best Student Film:

SAARI by Ella Mikkola

Best Acting:

Charity Bradfield in *The Land of Rock and Gold*

Best Feature Film:

VOUS ÊTES IÇI by Mark Wihak

Best Technical Achievement:

Ella Mikkola, Picture and Sound Editing for SAARI

Best Short Film:

Der Glockner by Chrystene Ells and Berny Hi

Audience Choice Award:

Der Glockner by Chrystene Ells and Berny Hi (chosen by audience vote)



WINTER AND SPRING PROGRAMMING

Thursday, March 16th | 4 - 9 PM | Filmpool

Filmpool's 40th Birthday

This year marks the Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative's 40th anniversary. Join the Filmpool on it's birthday for an open house event which will unveil the celebratory events taking place throughout the year. This event will include a silent auction, refreshments and cake!

Thursday, March 28th | 5:30pm | Filmpool
Grant Writing Workshop

How to effectively articulate your idea to an arts jury. This workshop focuses on the upcoming Filmpool Production Grants with an overview of the application.

Thursday, April 13th | 7pm | The Club - Exchange
Open Aperture

This installment of Open Aperture will look at improvisation in performance and film. The evening will showcase live improvisation performances as well as films that have used an improvised approach to their creation

Tuesday, January 17th | 5:30-7pm | Filmpool
Cine-Class

Weekly filmmaking classes for students ages 13-17. Students collaborate on screen based art projects.

Monday, April 17th | Filmpool
Grant Application Deadline

Grants and equipment deferrals are available for production, post-production and distribution

Tuesday, May 23rd | 7PM | Artesian
Premiere Screening

The Filmpool Premiere Screening is designed to showcase and celebrate the amazing, creative and diverse film and video works created by the membership.

Sunday, June 4th | 1PM | Filmpool
Annual General Meeting

In addition to electing new members to the Filmpool Board the AGM offers members an opportunity to share their thoughts about the Filmpool.

Thursday, June 8th | 7pm | The Club - Exchange
Open Aperture

This Open Aperture will showcase new collaborative projects between audio artists and filmmakers. The Filmpool has partnered with Holophon to create this production opportunity

Monday, July 10th - 14th | 10 AM | Filmpool
Summer Film Camp

This week long camp takes participants ages 13 - 17 through the production process of creating a short film. Classes focus on visual storytelling and creativity. Students of all experience and skill levels welcome

Saturday, September 9th | 2:30 PM | Bushwackers
Filmpool Retrospective

This event will honour the Filmpool's valuable contribution to Saskatchewan's cultural landscape, and to the thousands of films and filmmakers the organization has supported over its rich 40-year history. This will be highlighted by the tapping of the commemorative Filmpool beer.