

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Film/Video/Photography



Edited by John Stuart Katz

Art Gallery of Ontario

# Autobiography

Film/Video/Photography

Edited by John Stuart Katz

*This catalogue is published by the Media Programmes division of the Education Branch, Art Gallery of Ontario, in conjunction with the presentation of the programme Autobiography, November 1 - December 7, 1978*

today sexual knowledge is an implicit part of their lives the irony is still there. As it is for boys: often their talk is way beyond their experience or desire.

The 'film within a film' style grew directly from the decision to do a film about a rape. I needed a form which would avoid titillation, and which would give people a chance to distance themselves from the excitement in order to think about the human implications of rape. I also wanted to show how the effects of traumatic events in adolescence can last for years. As a director the most interesting aspect to me of the rape scene would be the rehearsals, where I would see how the actors related to their roles. That's when I decided to shoot that process. Then the confrontation between the actor and actress, though a rehearsal, would in fact be real. I developed the rest of the film as flashbacks from the present day. I looked for actors who could work improvisationally, and who would bring a lot to their roles. This I felt would add more levels of 'reality' to the film as a whole. Thus Michele Manenti who was also raped in high school, Jim Carrington who was a football player, and Anne Mundstuk who was my real roommate, become important characters as themselves. And so do I, a woman director taking control, through her work, of an event which had had control over her for many years.

*Martha Coolidge, Program Notes of the Whitney Museum of American Art, "New American Filmmakers Series," March 31-April 11, 1976.*

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Trojan, Judith. "An Interview with Martha Coolidge." *Feminist Art Journal*, Vol. 5 No. 2 (Summer 1976), 14-18.

*She is Away* (1975, 13½ minutes, color)

Born 1947, Hawkesbury, Ontario  
Lives in Toronto, Ontario

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

*She is Away* (1975); *Breath/Light/Birth* (1975); *Barbara is a Vision of Loveliness* (1976); *Permutations and Combinations* (1976); *Unremitting Tenderness* (1977); *Look! We Have Come Through* (1978); *Before During and After* (1978)

[43

The forms of revolt against the dominant cinema are many. One common form has been to create "autobiographical" films. In direct opposition to the dominant cinema, the subject matter of these films is not remote from life. Rather, these films draw on the simple facts of daily existence. Indeed, I have often thought that many films which are commonly said to be autobiographical films could more accurately be termed "dailiness films;" for they more closely resemble lyric poems or journals than they do the literary form of autobiography.

This revolt takes a second form — one that is sometimes found together with the first. This involves adopting a deliberately simple, sometimes even artisanal, mode of production and to allow evidence of this mode of production to enter the works. In such cases, the individual filmmaker usually assumes responsibility for all aspects of the production of a film. That such films should be of a deeply personal nature is hardly surprising.

No doubt all of this has immense effects on the filmmaker himself. For such a filmmaker, filmmaking is not a task he performs only when sufficient funds have been raised to level mock cities or to hire armies of people. For him, filmmaking becomes one of the simple tasks of daily life, perhaps even the center of his life. And if all aspects of his life become grist for the mill of filmmaking, then naturally his life becomes, if not itself something of an art form, then at least something which is valued and consciously cultivated as the source of his art.

*Bruce Elder, June 1978*

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Nelson, Joyce. Reviews of *Unremitting Tenderness* and *Look! We Have Come Through* by Bruce Elder. *Cinema Canada*, No. 47 (June 1978), 41.