

VISUAL ARTS

TIFF nurtures its crossover capital



PETER GODDARD

It's a wrap today for the Toronto International Film Festival. But for Future Projections, TIFF's outreach program connecting to the visual arts, the future is ongoing.

Opening today is "Candice Breitz: Same Same," a Power Plant-commissioned exhibit continuing at the Harbourfront gallery until Nov. 15. The Berlin-based Breitz decodes pop culture's visual tropes and trajectories, from Hollywood at its glitziest to ubiquitous TV.

Two of Future Projections' more intriguing installations are likewise up and running for some time. *Picture Start* by veteran cinematographer Christopher Doyle is



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the movies out of their darkened theatrical space and pasting them just about anywhere it wants on the city's skin. Making downtown the newest big screen is precisely the kind of breakthrough that occurs whenever established art mediums evolve, because "technology has reached a new level," notes Walter Benjamin in his defining essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

Just check out the exterior of the Bell Lightbox tonight — for the last time — where Future Projections is plastering the side of the building facing John St. with Oliver Pietsch's *The Shape of Things*, among other films.

"The arts have always been way ahead of us in this regard," says Cowan. "We have to keep moving. Film festivals are like sharks. If you don't keep moving forward, you die."

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showing at INDEXG gallery (50 Gladstone Ave., indexg.com) until Oct. 11. In this patchwork mystery-thriller, fashioned from outtakes and assorted film ephemera, we detect a woman's body, revealed in a bathtub, then being washed down in a lab, and eventually covered with clothes. A narrator's distant voice-over describes his monstrous and hilarious appetite. "I ate all of the plants in the garden," he drones on at one point.

"Mark Lewis: In a City," Canada's visual arts representation at this year's Venice Biennale, continues until Oct. 26 at University of Toronto's Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, where this trilogy of films by the Hamilton-born, London-based filmmaker is having its North American premiere. A parallel exhibition, "Three Films by Mark Lewis," is at the AGO until Jan. 3.

These gallery shows would likely be launched without any TIFF involvement. Indeed, it's entirely possible that the festival needs them more than they need the festival. "The business case for film has changed over the past 10 years," says Noah Cowan, who as the director of TIFF's \$196 million Bell Lightbox headquarters doubles as Future Projections' lead curator.

"We're still going to have huge tent pole Hollywood movies. But any film-oriented artist makes a film with an eye to addition media possibilities. An example is (Thai director) Apichatpong Weerasethakul, who makes films specifically for installations."

Weerasethakul's meditation on the bloody 1965 revolt in the Nabua area of northern Thailand was contextualized as film in *A Letter*

to *Uncle Boonmee*, shown at the AGO's Jackman Hall last weekend as part of TIFF's Wavelengths series. *Phantoms of Nabua*, the artist's gallery installation approaching the same subject matter but from an entirely different trajectory, closes tomorrow at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art.

Imaginary Lovers by Don McKellar, ending today at the Stephen Bulger Gallery, encapsulates the film-art connection in the form of a series of cellphone-shot mini-films, each fashioned as the sort of visual love letters that pop up these days on any smartphone's screen.

In some instances, the recorded messages in McKellar's five-monitor installation are little more than "Hi, how are you?" delivered by a pert young woman with a penchant for giggling. Yet to watch these cozily intimate messages rendered so publicly makes one recall French artist Sophie Calle's use of consoling letters for *Take Care of Yourself*, a Venice Biennale prizewinner in 2007.

Future Projection's ability to provide one-stop shopping for the art crowd as well as the movie and

new media people has been good news for TIFF, which is always looking to broaden its audience base.

It also makes good business sense. TIFF is traditionally sponsor-driven, "and our donors tell us that no art form can survive alone at this point," Cowan continues. "Increasingly, activity between various cultural bodies is the way of the future."

Indeed, the National Film Board, a defining force in the country's documentary making, co-produced Lewis's installations and films.

The NFB wants to be seen as "reaching out to visual artists and

new media folks who don't see themselves as documentary filmmakers," said veteran NFB producer Gerry Flahive as we walked past Canada's Venice pavilion some months ago. "They just see themselves as doing really interesting work. As long as there's a factual base to it" — Lewis's installation meditates on Toronto in bitter winter — "we're interested."

But something deeper is emerging from this year's Future Projections: signs of the arrival of a new form of artwork, one which is not exactly film and not exactly a visual art, but something utilizing aspects of both.

Future Projections is dragging