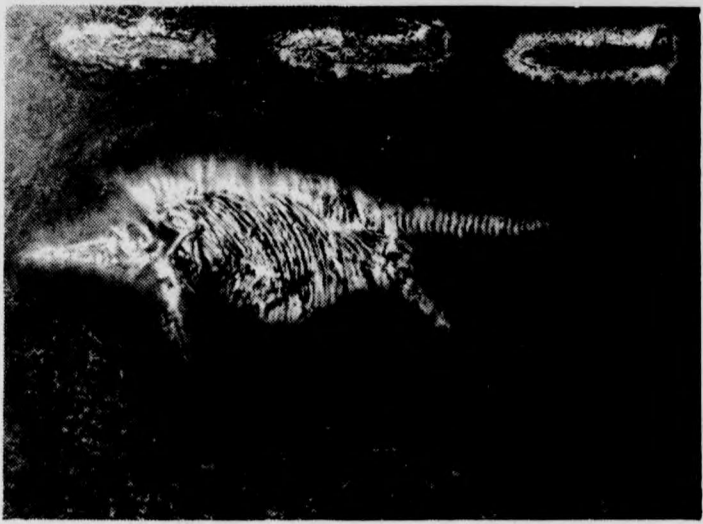


arts

"Aid to artists in Nicaragua."



money aids nicaraguan artists

by Mark Moss

"Aid to the Arts of Nicaragua" held its 7th annual art exhibition and sale last week at the IDA Gallery in the fine arts building. Organized by Professors George Manupelli and Eugene Tellez, revenue from the sale of the diverse array of art went to purchase art supplies in Canada for children, art students and artists in Nicaragua.

It is first and foremost, a noble cause with the organizers and artists sincere about their goals and commitment. Manupelli stressed there is no entrepreneurship involved in the purchase and distribution of the art supplies. "It is a modest effort which means a lot to Nicaragua. It lets people know what's happening in Central America," he added.

Karyn Ross, a graduate student/artist said, "[The exhibition] provides children [in Nicaragua] with the most basic tools to express themselves; things like paper and crayons which we take for granted."

Indeed, art in any form is a powerful outlet for self expression, therapy and communication. In the trying circumstances and the overwhelming plight of Nicaragua, these fundamental outlets, when accessible, do much for the individual's feelings and desires.

That is why this is such an important cause.

"Aid to the Arts of Nicaragua" also provides an opportunity for people, especially students and underpaid faculty, to purchase original art, some of it of very high quality and skill for a fraction of the cost that it would be at a private gallery. Hand printed serigraphs were \$10 and are a welcome alternative to the trite/banal/commonplace posters available everywhere.

Manupelli's miniature framed collages (priced from \$65-\$85, and all were sold) were, by far, the most appealing works and would be as much as 10 times the price in a private gallery. Michael Senate's photographs, accurate and objective in the neutrality of black and white, and Lynn Donoghue's expressive watercolours were offered at an amazingly affordable price. Most of the works, which ranged from enamel to sculpture to drawings, were provided by graduate students and faculty and many voiced a strong political message.

Regardless of ideology, the bottom line is that it was a chance to obtain good original art for a bargain price and at the same time, to benefit an extremely worthy cause — for it is hard to create art without any supplies.

Donations are still being accepted.

Padre de la Revolucion Popular Antimperialista



GENERAL A.C. SANDINO
1895-1934



Rob Cabral

lift off

by Jerry Cowan

In the fall of 1979, the languishing system of exhibition and distribution for independent films had just about given up the ghost. Then, a Sunday afternoon meeting in the Showcase Theatre (then the New Yorker) gave birth to LIFT, the Liaison of Independent Film-makers of Toronto.

Ten years later, it has survived lashing bouts of internal dissension, as well as the roller coaster of arts funding, to become the city's premiere film production co-op. LIFT is a major supplier of information for its members, as well as a source equipment at co-op rates. It provides its members with a variety of services such as, paperwork, publicity and workshops, not to mention emotional support, that is so badly needed in a medium where high costs and a competitive atmosphere can give you those independent blues.

LIFT is constantly seeking venues for exhibition and distribution of its members' films. These have included the Bloor Cinema, the new Euclid Theatre, TVO, CBC and PBS in the States, as well as festivals all over the world. Several of the co-op's nearly 400 members, including a few York graduates, have won awards for their work. Two of the three Canadian prize-winners at the recent Festival of Festivals, Alan Zweig

and Bruce McDonald, are LIFT members.

There's good reason to celebrate the 10th anniversary of LIFT with LIFT-OFF, running October 12, 13, 19 and 20 at the Euclid. LIFT-OFF is a retrospective of some of the best work by LIFT members, capped off by an evening of new work (including Zweig's award-winner, *Stealing Images*). The programme includes documentaries, dramas and both experimental and animated pieces.

Most of the film-makers are enthusiastic about the future of LIFT and independent film-making. To be sure, there are problems; sales of independent films are rare because of their personal, non-commercial, sometimes idiosyncratic nature. As well, their brevity (less than 30 minutes), makes their scheduling problematic for programmers. The potentially exorbitant costs of film-making often rule out the possibility of feature length, unless production values are sacrificed. Also, theme and character development are difficult in a 30-minute format. Meanwhile, the CBC allots only 30 minutes a week for showing independent work and insists on the work's exclusive rights for three years. Under consideration.

Feature length is not necessar-

ily the goal of the independent film-maker. York grads John Detwiler and Renee Duncan think any extra money would go towards improved production values in their films. They are represented in LIFT-OFF by *The Civil Servant*, a half-hour film of quirky humour and disturbingly apt visual style.

The Civil Servant is a tale of a petty bureaucrat who becomes increasingly disoriented and demobilized from his environment by his inner visions and memories. The film's effectiveness is muddled by the bland, recessive performance of the lead actor. Nothing about him gives his character's detachment a context. Nevertheless, the intended impact of this film is achieved, mostly due to the inventive cinematography. *The Civil Servant* will be shown on the CBC anthology series "Canadian Reflections" on November 17.

Detwiler and Duncan are currently working on their next film, *Narcophobia*. They promise it will contain much of their previous work's bizarre quality, reflecting their taste for Bunuel, Cocteau and *The Twilight Zone*.

Rather than subsidize their art by working in commercial film-making, they hold mundane part-time jobs. They have a friend who took the opposite route, and came back with stories of some fairly sleazy situations. Lucky enough

to get an Ontario Arts Council grant upon leaving school, they were financially stable when shooting *The Civil Servant*, but post-production sucked up a lot of their own cash. They, and one other person, were the entire on-set crew. They are understandably admiring and appreciative of the efforts of LIFT's people. Only recently have they found the funds to hire one full-time staffer.

Detwiler and Duncan are happily independent, and so is Janice Lundman, also a product of York's film department and a founding member of LIFT. Her film is *Las Aradas*, a short documentary about an atrocity perpetrated by a troop of El Salvadorian soldiers, known as the Sumpul River Killings. In its entirety, *Las Aradas* consists of a slow track down a babbling brook while a voice-over narrator describes the massacre. The effect is at once simple and subtle. Subconsciously, the gap between the gentleness of the sight and sound of the waves over the rocks conflicts with the savagery of the act described. At the same time, one can't help but see blood spilling over these same rocks, although it's not on the screen.

Las Aradas is labelled an "interpretive documentary," a term Lundman mildly disavows with an artist's usual and sympathetic aversion to seeing his or her work

categorized. She says the term was invented for a sudden contingency, and agrees that "illustrative documentary" may be more suitable.

When asked how she copes with all the vicissitudes of her life: the conflicting advice and counsel she receives as both a woman and an independent film-maker, the question of "why (she's) doing this, why (she's) persecuting (herself) with all this work and no money," (as she asked herself in a March interview in the LIFT newsletter), Lundman replied, "It's really the only thing that makes me happy; it's what I have to do." (However, first she laughed and said, "Excuse me while I take a Valium!").

She endures the lack of funds, the labelling, the pressures to conform, the lack of exhibition and, as a documentarist, the doubts about how her work can effect conditions. She endures these factors for rewards, especially for the satisfaction of sitting at the back of an auditorium and seeing and hearing dozens of people moved to laughter, tears and rage. She's confident that she's making a difference.

The same could be said for many LIFT members. That is why the films in the retrospective are challenging and original. The few pretensions aside, it's invigorating and occasionally intoxicating.