

## Feminist film: Striptease

# Body talk

Elliott Lefko

When a leading Canadian magazine recently asked Kay Armatage if she wanted to portray strippers as real people in her new film, *Striptease*, Armatage snapped back at the ridiculousness of the question. "Well—aren't they real people?!"

*Striptease's* argument is that stripping is a profession and strippers should be proud of their work. The 28-minute film presents strippers talking about their need for a union. The "talking heads" are interspersed by a striptease that demonstrates the art at its highest technical level. Armatage feels that the film's purpose was two-fold:

We think of strippers the way we think about most women's work: unskilled work done out of an inside desire, rather than as a profession."

Armatage doesn't consider the film an expose about the seamy side of striptease. "I wanted to make a film about the female body that wouldn't pander to voyeuristic tendencies," she says. "I hoped to confront the audience, to ask, 'What are you looking at?'"

Although she tries to make a film a year, Armatage doesn't just make films. For the past eight years she has worked in the University of Toronto film department, first as a part-time staffer and then as a teacher in the film department and in the Women's Studies Programme.

*Striptease's* budget was \$30,000, half of which came from the Ontario Arts Council. So far, with the support of the government, Armatage hasn't found it too difficult to make her independent, statement-oriented films. Each film, she feels, is an outgrowth of the others.

"My last film, *Speak Body*, was about abortion, and it featured women speaking on the subject. Previously I had never seen a film that had women speaking about

their bodies. I wanted the body to speak. *Striptease* is the body talking."

With each film, Armatage chooses a particular style that would best suit her message: "I try to experiment," she explains, "in order to learn how

## "What are you looking at?"

to do things. By playing with conventions, and defying them, you can design an appropriate style. "In *Striptease* I tried to reverse the role of audience and film. I had the strippers looking at the camera, as if they were peering in on the audience."



Anderson Lookkin

Director Kay Armatage

At the heart of her film is the message, and *Striptease's* message is a convincing one. Strippers need to band together, in order to raise the consciousness of the public, so that conditions can improve. "You should see the conditions, it's appalling," Armatage sighs. "I went to a bar to do some research, and there were three guys, sitting at a table filled with bottles of beer in front of them, and a lonely stripper trying to keep her balance on a couple of shaky tables. When I went to the bartender to ask where her dressing room was, he laughed at my naivete, and directed me to the basement, where I waded through this slimy area, and found a dirty closet that she was changing in."

"There should be certain standards for working. Strippers shouldn't be thought of as fetishists, they're legitimate workers."

## Wolfe slams aurora shut

Lloyd Wasser

Morris Wolfe has been for many years, one of the top critical voices of literature in this country. His writing has appeared in such publications as *Saturday Night*, *Books in Canada*, and *Canadian Forum*. However, it is in his role as editor that Wolfe has garnered the most praise, with books such as *A Saturday Night Scrapbook*, *Toronto Short Stories*, and three editions of *Aurora*.

*Aurora* was Wolfe's dream—a vision of a book in which the promising new Canadian authors could be published alongside the best of the established writers. The dream took on a physical form for three years, but with its newest edition, Wolfe has announced suspension of publication.

"One of the reasons I'm giving up the editorship of *Aurora* is out

## Video rotundo

Ann Daly

Joseph. Beuys. The man who brought you fat sculpture. Felt suits. Action Performances.

Through Nov. 14, the Art Gallery of York University brings you 28 of Beuys' graphic works and a video of his 1968 action, "Eurasian Staff". The show also includes slides of Beuys' other works and a video of an interview.

Beuys (1921- ) is Germany's Andy Warhol, as art historian Carla Gottlieb has called him. He is most popularly known for his fat sculptures, metaphors for man's potential to be formed and his consciousness developed.

About the message of his art, Beuys has said that it provides "information on political, philosophical, theological relationships, which cannot be worded in a rational way, but can be produced in a rational way."

As can be seen in the show's graphic works, Beuys uses traditional symbols such as animals

and the Cross. In the "Eurasian Staff", you can see his use of new symbols such as fat and the staff.

The show includes six lithographs which are actual images and marks from the blackboard he used during lectures at the University of Minnesota in 1973. So, Beuys has given us a direct record of that art event...

Which he also gives us in the video of "Eurasian Staff". His actions and props (the Eurasian Staff, fat, a metal and felt plate tied to his shoe) are supposed to be directly converted to metaphor; Beuys is unabashedly a didactic artist.

The show also includes ten of his postcards and prints of the artist himself. Beuys' is a complex oeuvre; no show on such a modest scale could really do anything but scratch the surface.

The show, organized by the Goethe Institute Chicago, is open 10 to 4:30 weekdays.

of a sense of frustration," he says. "Although I think it's an extremely good and worthwhile project, we can't seem to get the damn thing into the bookstores."

"A great pleasure in doing *Aurora* was being the first person to read the writing of some of these people—to open up an envelope sent by someone you've never heard of and read some first-class material."

Obviously, *Aurora* is a much-needed publication in this country, both in its showcasing of new talent and well-known writers.

Why then is the annual ceasing publication? How can a showcase like this be allowed to disappear? Wolfe thinks the problem lies in three areas: the apathetic attitude of the public towards purchasing Canadian literature; the publisher's feelings on Canlit; and the reaction of the bookstores towards *Aurora*.

"There's a certain problem involved with bookstores ordering two copies of *Aurora*—the paperwork, the business of finding space on the shelf for the two copies, then, if they only sell one copy they've got to either remainder the one left over or return it to Doubleday for a refund, and that's all a pain in the ass.

"It's easier to order 46 copies of *How to Screw Your Wife*, or whatever self-help book is particularly popular at the moment, and know that they're all going to go. So we sold 2200 copies of the first edition but slipped back to about 1500 in our second, and a lot of bookstores who ordered the first edition didn't bother ordering the second. So one feels one's pissing at the stars with projects such as this."

Morris Wolfe has been involved

in the world of Canadian Literature for a long time. His career began with teaching (grade one to fourth year university) and he still teaches film history at the Ontario College of Art. Writing followed when he became tired of the classroom, and his first jobs were writing book reviews for *Saturday Night* and *Books in Canada*.

"Book reviewing is not a way for anyone to earn a living but it's a hell of a good way for somebody to learn how to read and write," says Wolfe.

"I don't think I ever really learned how to read until I started reviewing books. And I don't think I ever really learned how to write until then, either."

His reviewing soon turned into a monthly column on television criticism for *Saturday Night*, something which he's only recently decided to discontinue as new projects loom on the horizon. He now works frequently for the CBC and is the creator of the "Literary Map of Canada." Morris Wolfe seems hopelessly enmeshed in the universe of Canadian culture. And rightly so.

"I think we've been in the most interesting period of our writing history. The real problem is that our culture continues to be invisible to most Canadians. That's because as little as ten per cent of the Canadian public are aware of all the exciting things that are happening in our culture. It's very difficult to break out of invisibility."

### Cab - ray

**Audition.** Ric Sarabia (6047) has fifteen male roles and five female roles open for his production of Woody Allen's *Death*. Auditions on Fri., Nov. 14 at 12:30 p.m. in the Sam Beckett Theatre. Prepare a one and a half minute Woody Allen monologue.

## Hebrew University

Dr. Dov Friedlander of the Hebrew University will discuss study opportunities at The Hebrew University School for Overseas Students in Jerusalem on Tuesday, November 18, 1980 from 1 to 3 p.m. at York University, Vanier Senior Common Room, and on Wednesday, November 19, 1980 from 4 to 6 p.m. in Room 1085, Sydney Smith Hall, U of T.

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