

At The Movies

By Edward Rubin

FALLING IN LOVE AT FILM FESTIVALS

The 9th New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film/Video Fest

The 9th New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film/Video Festival, not to be confused with its younger, more mainstream and less political sister, The New York Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, changed my life. I willed it so. For ten of the festival's eleven days - some fifty hours during the first two weeks of November, I spent evenings and weekends soaking up film, video and filmmakers. I was subsumed by audiences, staff, ambiance, attitudes and ideas. I kept asking myself as I plopped down in the same seat each night (second row center), at the Anthology Film Archives, the festival's main venue, "Hey how can I give a well-rounded, well-founded critique if I don't see everything?"



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At the top of my list, perhaps the "Best of the Fest" are two films that focused on the human body and bodily functions. San Francisco filmmaker, Vicky Funari's film *Skinesthesia* (video, color 10 min.) which features performance artist Hannah Sim both as herself and as a nude dancer in a peep show was mesmerizing. One rarely gets to see the female body in such detailed contortions. An ode, if anything, the film examines the construction of gender through body parts and movement. It is a rap piece that is dangerous, poetically enlightening and ultimately enthralling.

Equally compelling was Canadian artist, Steve Reinke's (video, color, 11 min.) *Minnesota Inventory*. Billed in the program as "the J/O solo video to end all J/O solo videos," the film starts out on the toilet. We are confronted with "one naked, beefy, regular joe, spewing an unending absurdist commentary of run on sentences," in an effort to explain or justify who he is or isn't to climax. Here the male body, though seemingly taken at face value, is actually being worshipped. Both films, while paeans to the human body, can be interpreted as apologies for our right to live. Both films are angry, confronting, daring, humorous, highly political, totally human and in your face. The same can be said about the entire Festival. It was a joyous and profound experience. ■