

Chasseur d' Images

From "Chasseur d'Images"

"CINEMA DU REEL AT BEAUBOURG"

Powerful Imagery of Vincent Ward

For one week two projection rooms at the Pompidou Centre were mobilised for the judging of forty new films submitted for the "Cinéma du Réel". It was the fourth year of this festival, which benefited from a more rigorous selection.

It was also the fourth time that the jury shared the prize between two film-makers. Was it a difficult choice, or respect for the system of a vote which would almost certainly lead to a second vote, or an implicit admission of uncertainty as to what type of film to actually show? Up to the organisers to find the answer.

A Fresh Regard from a New Zealander

In spite of the interesting topics available for treatment in the documentary style, a certain boredom, one has to admit, occurs over a long period of judging. Simultaneous translation has something to do with it (no French films were competing) but also, and just as much, is the absence of any real sense of visual impact evidenced by far too many film-makers. Ironic. Surely 16mm cinema, straight cinema par excellence, should throw a rather more direct light on man. This is where films which achieve visual impact remain the exception.

The exception is "In Spring One Plants Alone", by the New Zealander Vincent Ward. He got half a prize. Here, it is the visual which is foremost and not the music or commentary. Visually powerful, an image totally involved with the subject (the life of an old handicapped son ...). Ward holds one unremittingly in a state of total concentration on gestures, daily objects. One feels stifled at times, but it's the subject: there is no way of escaping from the poor hovel Ward has forced us to enter, from this closed universe of the survival gestures of two people. It's almost Beckett. The sequences of tightly-framed shots reveal exactly the mutual dependence of these two people. An exploration of a daily life down to the very breathing process. Cinema without the "cinema".