

**ON FILMS AND VIDEOS BY DEIRDRE LOGUE, SHAWNA DEMPSEY AND LORRI  
MILLAN**  
By Jenny Bisch

*Curatorial essay accompanying the Nonsense? Nonsense! Films and Videos from Deirdre Logue, Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan program screened at the Winnipeg Film Group's Cinematheque on July 22, 2009.*

There are worlds of moving images out there that flout the conventions of television and Hollywood. Made with tiny (sometimes solo) creative teams they connect with audiences at the individual level – as opposed to ‘the masses’ – giving us an intimate look into the minds of the artists behind them. Rather than deploy the tired tropes of cinematic illusion to represent narratives, these hand-crafted images express colour and shape, light and darkness with dense, imperfect, and human qualities. They seek a connection to the world off the screen. An experimental film or work of video art often uses nonsensical and absurd imagery to make that connection.

But behind the absurd hides a genuine reality.

Film and video are thin. Crack open a VHS tape or look through reels of childhood super 8s and you will know what I mean. The medium is thin – almost nothing – but sometimes the images it holds run deep. This is especially true of the best in experimental film and video art. I swear, I could dive into Peril’s waterfall or feel the rocks grinding my knees on the Road Trip. Why? Because they invite us to a place beyond the story and its presentation to the root of these things: to our desire to tell, to be heard, and to listen to the response. They do not ask you to sit back and passively take what they have to give. Rather, they ask you to meet them halfway, to participate, and to find yourself in the play on the screen. This is the intimacy that emerges from great performance: ultimately, you in the audience (yes, you) become a part of its world.

These are images that originate from a real, lived place and are trying to make their way back into the world that exists outside the confines of their medium. Unique in their specific expression, each film in this program takes internal conflict and turns it out, using repetition, humour, or monologue not to resolve, but to give body to subjective discord. Through the physical manifestation of these struggles within can we finally come face-to-face with ourselves.

**PERIL!**

Dir. Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan | Canada | 2000 | 9:06 min.

Peril! charts the dangerous territory of women's everyday lives. The tightrope walker vacuums across Niagara Falls while pondering employment; the bearded lady waits by the phone while holding up the world; the human cannonball hurtles through space, unsure if she will ever land, but making the best of things. Using video imagery from Dempsey and Millan's performance, "The Headless Woman" (The Western Front, January 1998), this video features acts of daredevilry by Sharon Bajer, Lorri Millan and Debbie Patterson. Full-sized back drops by Eleanor Bond. Music by Marilyn Lerner. Note: this video was made using stagecraft, not keyed effects!

**MEDUSA RAW**

Dir. Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan | Canada | 1992 | 10:00 min.

The story of Medusa concisely symbolizes the shift from matriarchal religion to patriarchal spiritual, economic, and social power. She is the all-powerful goddess, the snake her familiar and her consort, who is vanquished by Perseus (the male hero). In Medusa Raw, the Gorgon tells the story of her decapitation and its ramifications, from her own point of view. With all the wit and wisdom of a goddess who has been around the block a few times, she reflects upon fashion, family ties and her future.

**ENLIGHTENED NONSENSE**

Dir. Deirdre Logue | Canada | 2000 | 22:00 min.

Enlightened Nonsense (1997-2000) is a series of ten thematically related film works that were each shot, hand-processed and edited within a total of approximately one week. Each beginning with a specific action, the works express both the physical manifestation of different states of being and a desire to understand one's complex relationship to our psychological limitations. Sexual deception, humiliation, injury, fear and failure are common themes, however, humour plays a critical role. Though dark, there is a funny, nonsensical quality, which provides distance from the complexity of this work as well as some comic relief.

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**About Jenny Bisch:**

*Winnipeg filmmaker and curator, Jenny Bisch, has been involved in many filmmaking projects and has become cultivated a passion for short, experimental film. Her films, The Arousing Adventures of Sailor Boy, and Praying Mantis Upskirt (with Allison Bile), have been enjoyed by audiences around the world. She has curated many short film programs and successfully organized the first annual GREENMOVIEFEST for Earth Day, 2009. Her curatorial involvement with the 2006 Sugar and Splice Film Festival led to a strong interest in exhibiting the work of contemporary women filmmakers.*