

## STUDY GUIDE

# WINTER KEPT US WARM

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### INTRODUCTION

The CFMDC's Seminal Works project examines five key works from our collection: *Moose Jaw (There's a Future in Our Past)* by Rick Hancox, *Hookers on Davie* by Janis Cole and Holly Dale, *In the Gutter and Other Good Places* by Cristine Richey, *The Inquiry Film* by Jesse Nishihata and *Winter Kept Us Warm* by David Sector.

These films were chosen for their capacity to raise issues and questions relevant in a variety of educational settings and across disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

The five works were made between 1965 and 1993, spanning almost three decades of film production in Canada, the oldest of which is 40 years old this year. Examining the films in 2005 will provide both an opportunity to see how history has changed our understanding and interpretation of the works themselves, as well as the opportunity to examine how we now understand the issues the films explore.

Four of these works are social issue documentaries dedicated to specific regional, community and cultural concerns and one is a dramatic feature which was the first-ever film produced in Canada that addresses gay sexuality. As a group of films, they all challenge previous cinematic theory and practice—formally, aesthetically and conceptually. They use filmic and narration devices unusual for their time: surveillance technology, first-person perspectives, personal memory, and multi-level excavation of subjects, as well as forbidden themes and contentious political history.

With this project, CFMDC inaugurates a process of rejuvenation for Canadian film and documentary. Given their cultural significance, we believe that these films will be engaging for educational audiences and will generate renewed interest and discourse. Our goal is to increase public exposure of what we feel are some of the most important works produced by Canadian media artists.

For discussion of the four documentaries, it will be useful to read these definitions of cinema vérité and “new documentary:”

**Cinema vérité** is a style of documentary filmmaking that emphasizes the showing and telling of the ‘truth.’ The cinema vérité approach is employed to present reality as it really is, enabling ‘objective’ observation. A cinema vérité movement emerged in the 1960s simultaneously in France, USA, England, and Canada with different philosophies to the practice emerging in each locale. The practice that emerged in North America is often referred to as direct cinema. Cinema vérité, as a method, gained significant repute since the making of Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin’s *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961).

(See: Callison, Candis. 2000. “Truth in Cinema: Comparing Direct Cinema and Cinema Verité.” [www.web.mit.edu/candis/www/callison\\_truth\\_cinema.htm](http://www.web.mit.edu/candis/www/callison_truth_cinema.htm))

In his discussion on the evolution of Canadian documentary filmmaking, Peter Steven describes the period of the 1980s and 90s as one in which filmmakers departed from merely documenting the ‘observed’ truth to employing a hybrid form that married art and social-issue documentary. A significant and defining feature of the “**new documentary**” is the departure from ‘neutral’ observation and ‘balance’ of viewpoints.

#### FILMMAKER

**David Secter, 1965. 81 minutes. Black & White. Sound.**

#### FILM SYNOPSIS

*Winter Kept Us Warm* has been discussed as “the first gay movie from English Canada.” A University of Toronto student production, *Winter Kept Us Warm* was shot on a shoestring budget and garnered international attention at Cannes in 1966. It is a homoerotic melodrama in which Doug, the man about campus, meets and develops a friendship with Peter, a Finnish-Canadian freshman from rural Ontario. They spend the winter months experiencing campus life and exploring the “alternate” scenes in Toronto. Doug, who has a girlfriend, realizes that his feelings toward Peter is ambiguous and is developing into something else. He becomes jealous when Peter becomes romantically involved with a young woman.

The film’s narrative reveals queer identities that only existed on the fringes of the Canadian imagination.

**LESBIAN/GAY/QUEER  
FILM STUDIES**  
(eg in North America,  
US and Canada)

**QUESTIONS**

1. *Winter Kept Us Warm* was produced within a political climate of censorship that pervaded North American society. Motion Picture Industry Production Codes regulated how sexual perversion which, included homosexuality, prostitution and race could be represented on screen in the United States in the 1960s. Discuss the ways in which Hollywood of the 1960s portrayed homosexuality, homosexual desires, and homosexual characters in film. How do these portrayals reflect larger social and institutional (medical, religious, political) attitudes toward homosexuality?
4. The category "buddy film" is used to describe films in which there are two male protagonists. Buddy films usually focus on the nature of the friendship between the two characters. The characters are usually different from each other in significant ways such as class, ethnicity, race, or in terms of their personalities. As you watch the film, identify three scenes that shape the ways in which we think about the notion of "buddy" and the nature of male friendship. Name three ways in which the buddy narrative functions as a hidden "code" for gay experience in this film.
3. The film pre-dates the 1969 New York City police raid of the Stonewall bar. This event marks an historical turning point in gay and lesbian liberation and image making practices. At what point historically can you begin to identify changes in lesbian/gay rights reflected in the Hollywood, TV, and independent filmic representations of l/g/b/trans identities and culture?

**Additional Question**

4. What does the term "self-censorship" mean? List five reasons a filmmaker might censor the images and sounds s/he produces

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Benshoff, H., and S. Griffin (Eds.). *Queer Cinema: The Film Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Dyer, Richard. *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

Gever, M., Greyson, J., and Parmar, P. (Eds.). *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993.

Kinsman, Gary. *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada*. Toronto: Black Rose Books, 1987.

Russo, Vito. *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers Inc., 1981.

U.S. Supreme Court Case: JACOBS V. NEW YORK, Case #: 388US431, NO. 660. DECIDED JUNE 12, 1967: [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/supcrt/index.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/supcrt/index.html)

\*\*\*Note that you must enter 388US431 in the CASE NUMBER box, click SUBMIT and then on the next screen click TEXT under JACOBS V. NEW YORK

L/G/B/Q  
SOCIAL ISSUES  
IN CANADA

**QUESTIONS**

5. In describing the Canada of the 60s, political scientists Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel state that the expansion of social programs such as education, welfare, health, and unemployment insurance were high priorities for the governments of the day. Groups such as queers, women, Aboriginals, and people of colour who were excluded from full participation in society were concerned with social justice and equity. What was the socio-political and legal climate that existed in Canada in this period regarding homosexuality?
6. Up until the 1960s, Canada's immigration policies favoured European immigrants. In the 1960s immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa, and other developing countries began arriving in Canada in increasing numbers due to the removal of discriminatory policies toward non-European immigrants. Identify three scenes within the film that provide information about the racial and ethnic makeup of Canadian society in the 1960s. Compare and contrast the ways in which Europeaness is represented in the film to the ways in which Blackness is represented. In your discussion, consider the film's title and its origins.
7. This film documents particular Canadian narratives about immigrant experience and assimilation. Identify what narrative is being told about Peter and his immigrant experience and three cultural representations of his Finnish background that are used in the film. How does he desire to assimilate? How is his cultural identity "valued" by Doug? How does the film interweave the boys' relationship to Peter's culture into the love story? What might you say about how this film uses Canadian myths about immigration and assimilation as a way to make gay experience more acceptable?

**Additional Question**

8. The film alludes to social unrest on the university campus. Identify two images that portray activism. What impact did the women's liberation movement and the civil rights movements have on the development of g/l/b/trans liberation movements taking place in the mid 1960s in Canada?

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Evans, Gary. *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1948 to 1989*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

Marchessault, Janine. "Reflections on the Dispossessed." *Screen* 36, No. 2 (1995): 131-146.

Waugh, Thomas. "Fairy Tales of Two Cities, or Queer Nation(s)/Urban Cinema(s)." *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 10, No. 2 (2001): 102-125.

L/G/B/Q  
FILM STUDIES  
IN CANADA

**QUESTIONS**

9. Discuss the types of images and narratives about Canada that were being produced in the 1960s. Discuss the ways in which sexuality does or does not fit into narratives about Canadian national identity/ies.
10. *Winter Kept Us Warm* was made in 1965 on a shoestring budget and went on to become Canada's first English language gay feature to screen at the Cannes Film Festival. What types of funding opportunities existed in Canada in the 1960s for the production of independent films?
11. Since the 1980s a new group of L/G/B/T and queer filmmakers have emerged on the Canadian scene. Their works span the gamut of genres, are hybrid in their sensibilities, and give voice to Aboriginal and people of colour. The works are now seen on television and are accessible at local video stores. Discuss the ways in which the multi-channel cable network and the accessibility of production equipment have enabled more diverse representations of sexualities both in the mainstream media and alternative venues.

**Additional Question**

12. Discuss the role the National Film Board of Canada in the 1960s and now, in the development and dissemination of images and narratives about Canada.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (Political Science/Sex Worker Rights)**

Bad Object Choice (Ed.). *How Do I Look?: Queer Film and Video*. Seattle: Bay Area Press, 1991.

Dyer, Richard. "Seen to be Believed: Some Problems in the Representation of Gay People as Typical." *Studies in Visual Communication* 9, No. 2, (1983).

Monk, Katherine. *Weird Sex and Snowshoes and Other Canadian Film Phenomena*. Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2001.

Waugh, Thomas. "Cinemas, Nations, Masculinities." *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 8, No. 1 (1998): 9-44.

[cinema.concordia.ca/download/Waugh.pdf](http://cinema.concordia.ca/download/Waugh.pdf)

Waugh, Thomas. *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (General Reading)**

Baird, Vanessa. *The No-Nonsense Guide to Sexual Diversity*.

Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001.

Cossman, Brenda. *Censorship and the Arts: Law, Controversy, Debate, Facts*.

Toronto: Ontario Association of Art Galleries (OAAG), 1995.

Waugh, Thomas. *Hard to Imagine*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.

**FURTHER VIEWING**

*Homo Promo*. Jenni Olsen. 1976. 62:00. USA.

Distributed by Frameline Distribution.

*Where Lies the Homo?* Jean-Francois Monette. 1998. 34:00.

Distributed by CFMDC.

*The Boys in the Band*. William Friedkin 1970. 118:00. USA.

Distributed by 20th Century Fox Distribution

*The Place Between Our Bodies*. Michael Wallin. 1975. 33:00. USA.

Distributed by CFMDC.

*Flaming Creatures*. Jack Smith. 1963. 45:00. USA. Distributed by CFMDC.

*Pas de deux*. Norman McLaren. 1965. 13:22. Canada.

Distributed by National Film Board of Canada.

*The Things I Cannot Change*. Tanya Ballantyne. 1967. 55:05. Canada.

Distributed by National Film Board of Canada.

*House of Pain*. Mike Hoolboom. 1995. 50:00. Canada. Distributed by CFMDC.

*Dark Sun; Bright Shade*. Gin Kwoi. 1993. 57:00. Canada. Distributed by CFMDC.

*fruit machine*. Wrik Mead. 1998. 8:00. Canada. Distributed by CFMD

**FILM CREDITS****Producer:** David Secter**Director:** David Secter**Editor:** Michael Foytenyl**Sound:** Donald Ogner**Music:** Paul Hoffert**Shot on Location in:** Toronto, Ontario

**Film's Funders:** "No one "funded" *Winter Kept Us Warm* – we received small token grants from Varsity Fund, Students Administrative Council, Victoria College Union plus use of a room at University College for the production – almost all equipment, raw stock, etc – was donated (i.e. scrounged). All cast & crew worked free, of course. The bulk of the budget was incurred as debt, primarily to Film House – fortunately the out-of-pocket was so modest we managed to pay it off via original run at Royal Ontario Museum." (DS)

**BIOGRAPHIES**

David Secter is the award-winning writer, producer, and director of numerous narrative and documentary features, TV specials and theater productions. His latest picture *Take The Flame! Gay Games: Grace, Grit & Glory*, a doc feature on the 20 Year history of The Gay Games and homophobia in sports, with narration by Greg Louganis, got glowing notices at its world premiere at NewFest in New York in June 2005. He has completed three pilots for *Rendezvous*, a proposed series of monthly arts specials: *Pacific Passions*, shot at the Festival of Pacific Arts in New Caledonia, and *BURN*, a two-hour two-year trip to the annual Burning Man Arts Festival, now showing on The Discovery Channel in Europe. His latest narrative movie *CyberDorm*, an offbeat campus comedy about webcasting, is ready for release.

Secter began his film career with *Love With The Proper Guppy*, a short sold to The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. His first feature *Winter Kept Us Warm*, made while he was a student at The University of Toronto, was the first English Canadian feature selected for The Cannes Film Festival and won awards in Amsterdam and Montreal. His next movie *The Offering* was nominated for a Canadian Film Award as Best Picture of the Year, screened on national network television, and released theatrically by Columbia Pictures.

Now in California, Secter is developing a number of productions for film, theater, television and the net. He has finished the screenplay for a psychological thriller film *Hide And Seek*; produced the pilot for *On A Roll*, a weekly TV/web travel series; and continues work on *Rendezvous*, celebrating arts and travel discoveries. He is the subject of *The Best of Secter & The Rest of Secter*, a biofilm produced by his nephew Joel Secter, which recently opened to exceptional reviews in Canada and the US. David Secter's biography also appears in various editions of *Who's Who in Media*, *Who's Who in Entertainment* and *Who's Who in America*.

**STUDY GUIDE CREDITS**

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[www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/tps/Boler/index.html](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/tps/Boler/index.html)

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