



M I C H A E L
S N O W



MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

[FROM JANUARY 27 TO APRIL 23, 1995
WORKS FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA
AND FILM RETROSPECTIVE]

MACM/MÉDIATHÈQUE



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WORKS FROM THE
COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL
GALLERY OF CANADA



MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN
DE MONTRÉAL
MÉDIATHEQUE

27 JAN. 1995

Since the nineteen fifties, Michael Snow, a major figure in Canadian art, has been pursuing a multi-disciplinary approach whose rigour and originality have brought him international recognition. This exhibition consists of thirty-one pieces (drawings, collages, paintings, sculptures, photographs and installations) selected from among the sixty-five works by Snow that belong to the National Gallery of Canada.

Acquired over a period of nearly thirty years (between 1965 and 1993), this collection bears eloquent witness to the cohesiveness of Snow's work and to the way he has succeeded in affiliating a remarkable intellectual curiosity with an acute sense of the possibilities inherent in the various disciplines explored. The thirty-one works on view illustrate the main stages of Snow's career from its inception to the late seventies, including the large body of drawings produced during the fifties, his abstract paintings from the end of the same decade, the *Walking Woman* series (1961-1967) and his work from the late sixties and early seventies, which makes extensive use of photography and three-dimensionality.

Snow's is a practice that, taking various forms and employing diverse techniques, focuses on some of the most important issues raised by twentieth-century art. For example, much of his work explores the simultaneously simple and complex relationship that exists in the representational realm between form and content (the figure). This is notably the case of the *Walking Woman* series, in which the artist investigates the conditions of readability of the figurative form and, more generally, the way in which visual perception is structured and affected by framing and viewpoint, the materials and techniques used, and the form/ground dichotomy.

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The series, which was undertaken in 1961 and consists of some two hundred works executed over a period of more than six years, is based on a single motif — that of a typically "sixties" female silhouette — that reappears in each work under a variety of formal guises. The silhouette may be represented once or several times in a single work; complete or partial; spread to its full height, folded or rolled; in either two or three dimensions; contained entirely within the work or cut off by the frame... A wide range of variations is presented, in fact, each one offering a fresh view of the basic motif.

Never entirely abstract nor truly figurative, the works in this series are situated on the borderline between these two options, where form seems to be on the point of blossoming into figure or, conversely — under the joint effect of materials and formal structure — of blending into the work's compositional space. Whatever the visual operations performed by the artist and their impact on the silhouette's degree of readability, the motif is always at least partially discernible. However, its repetition in different works, and even within the same work, has the effect of reducing the expressive charge, already attenuated by the silhouette's stereotypical form and the omnipresence of the body, especially the female body, throughout the course of the history of art.

The *Walking Woman* series, which both represents the body and banalizes it for the sake of the work's materiality, has clear links to the artist's earlier creations, especially the drawings from the fifties in which he uses particular motifs (the table, the chair and the human figure, for example) to explore the degree of con-



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2 - Above:
Clothed Woman (In Memory of my Father), 1963
Oil and lucite on canvas
152 x 386.2 cm
Collection:
National Gallery of Canada

1 - Title page:
Authorization, 1969
Black & white photographs and cloth tape
on mirror in metal frame
54.6 x 44.4 cm
Collection:
National Gallery of Canada

cordance between the object or figure represented and the visual techniques employed to portray them. In 1959-1960 (immediately prior to the *Walking Women*) this preoccupation with visual means was expressed in a group of resolutely abstract works that includes *Lac Clair* and *Self-Centered*, two paintings whose internal structure is directly related to their format and surface.

The radically different-looking works executed by Snow after the *Walking Woman* series reaffirm the artist's interest in the various parameters of visual experience. *Scope* (1967), *Snow Storm* (1967) and *Blind* (1968) offer a wide-ranging and extremely powerful analysis of the fundamental conditions of perception. Beyond their apparent coldness and the highly theoretical nature of the questions they raise (framing, viewpoint, temporality) — which are closely linked, incidentally, to the experimental films Snow has made throughout his career — these works appeal directly to the spectator's experience, even soliciting interaction (*viz.* *Scope* and *Blind*). And although they may appear devoid of all expressiveness, they occasionally include an autobiographical dimension, as witness the titles of *Snow Storm* and *Blind* (the latter is an implicit reference to the blindness of the artist's father).

A similarly autobiographical element is central to *Authorization* (1969), a work whose title (which contains the word "author") and structure embody direct references to the artist's work process. Using a *mise en abîme* technique (which involves an image-within-an-image-within-an-image), *Authorization* reproduces/documents the succession of shots of which it is the outcome. Spectators are thus simultaneously confronted with the artist's work process and its result, just as they are faced (in the mirror that provides the work's support) with their own image as spectators perceiving the work.

[5]

This preoccupation with the work process is also evident in *Plus tard* (1977), an installation composed of twenty-five photographic prints which, aligned on the wall, "reproduce" the gallery devoted to the Group of Seven (a group of Canadian landscape artists active during the second and third decades of this century) in the old National Gallery building. The photographs are blurred and show for the most part only fragments of the various canvases. This partial and highly modified reproduction of a group of works that are among the most cherished in the history of Canadian art is actually a commentary on the reproduction process or the mediation of experience — a process that involves the participation of several players, a certain distancing from the original, and its interpretation (in this case by history, via a particular form of Canadian nationalism, by the "staging" that necessarily underlies any museum presentation, by the photographic work effected by Snow himself, etc.).

Michael Snow's artistic practice has always been closely linked to the contemporary world. Beyond its formalism and the abstract form it occasionally takes, it is an approach that has succeeded in analyzing, often with astonishing simplicity (although never reductively), all the complexity of visual experience. This work, which seems at first view to deal essentially with the structure of things, is actually a demonstration of how inextricably form and content are invariably bound together. ■ PIERRE LANDRY

L I S T O F W O R K S

The Table, 1955
Metal plate, metal wires
and found objects
covered with putty and metallic paint
on a painted wood base
26 x 39.3 x 31 cm
Purchase, 1986

Three Figures in a Book, 1955
Pen and coloured ink on wove paper
35.6 x 21.9 cm
Purchase, 1970

A Portrait of Kierkegaard, 1956
Pen and black ink on tracing paper
41.2 x 28 cm
Purchase, 1970

*I Think Brushes Should Be Big
and Pens Small*, 1956
Pen and black ink on tracing paper
28.1 x 43.5 cm
Purchase, 1970

Dance, 1958
Brush and black ink over
graphite on wove paper
35.4 x 48.9 cm
Purchase, 1970

White Figure I, 1958
Graphite, brush and black ink with white
gouache and collage on wove paper
20.2 x 13.9 cm
Purchase, 1970

Blues in Place, 1959
Oil and paper collage on canvas
203.6 x 127.9 cm
Purchase, 1970

Theatre, 1959
Charcoal on wove paper
41.2 x 32.3 cm
Purchase, 1970

Shunt, 1959
Wood with paint
274.3 x 18.5 x 335.3 cm
Purchase, 1970

Studies for "Quits" and "Shunt", about 1959
Green ballpoint pen on wove paper
29.8 x 45.4 cm
Purchase, 1985

Lac Clair, 1960
Oil and paper adhesive tape on canvas
178 x 178.3 cm
Purchase, 1967

Self-Centered, 1960
Oil on canvas
126.5 x 101.5 cm
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Strutt,
Lucerne, Québec, 1980

Title, 1960
Charcoal on folded laid paper
35 x 24.5 cm
Purchase, 1975

Window, 1960
Wood, acrylic, polyethylene,
glass, paper, cotton, wire, sheet
metal, chrome-plated sheet metal
86.4 x 67.3 x 10.2 cm
Purchase, 1970

Top Woman, 1961

Brush and black ink with graphite
and collage on buff wove paper
60.6 x 64.8 cm
Purchase, 1973

Two Walking Women, 1961

Graphite on buff wove paper
46 x 36 cm
Purchase, 1975

Alice, 1962

Pen, brush and black ink
on heavy Japanese paper
153.7 x 92.7 cm
Purchase, 1968

Clothed Woman

(*In Memory of my Father*), 1963
Oil and lucite on canvas
152 x 386.2 cm
Purchase, 1966

Sketch for "Clothed Woman

(*In Memory of my Father*)", 1963
Graphite on wove paper
27.5 x 37.8 cm
Purchase, 1969

Hawaii, 1964

Enamel paint on canvas
149.9 x 309.9 cm (assembled)
Purchase, 1973

Two Skirts, 1964

Spray enamel on Bristol board,
mounted on plywood
61 x 90.6 cm (overall)
Gift of the Douglas M. Duncan
Collection, 1970

Seen, 1965

Pulpboard with enamel paint
154.5 x 52 x 226.5 cm
Purchase, 1991

Scope, 1967

Stainless steel, mirror
5 x 8.4 m (approx. installation space)
Purchase, 1977

Snow Storm, 1967

Collage of photographs
over enamel paint on masonite
122.1 x 119.8 x 5.1 cm (each element)
Purchase, 1968

Blind, 1968

Steel and aluminum
246.4 x 245.7 x 246.4 cm
Purchase, 1969

Authorization, 1969

Black & white photographs and
cloth tape on mirror in metal frame
54.6 x 44.4 cm
Purchase, 1969

Tap, 1969-1972

Framed black & white photographs,
framed typewritten texts
on paper; tape player; speaker;
wire and sound tape
Photographs with frame: 106.8 x 156.3 cm
Typewritten texts with frame: 65.1 x 40 cm
Speaker: 48.3 x 38.1 x 25.4 cm
Purchase, 1970

Field, 1973-1974

Black & white photographs
179.1 x 169.6 cm
Purchase, 1974

Red 5, 1974

Dye coupler print
63.2 x 79.2 cm
Purchase, 1976

Plus tard, 1977

25 framed Ektacolor prints
86.4 x 107.2 cm (each element)
Purchase, 1977

The Squerr (Ch'art), 1978

Oil on canvas
194.7 x 209.2 x 5.5 cm
Purchase, 1979

All the works are from the collection
of the National Gallery of Canada.

F I L M R E T R O S P E C T I V E



↔ (*Back and Forth*), 1968-1969
16 mm, 50 min., colour
Collection of the National Gallery of Canada
(detail on cover)

Starring: The Camera. Watching Michael Snow's films is a genuine adventure: for all the spectator's presumptions and expectations concerning development, contextualization and spatialization are deliberately thwarted. His films are conceived with the specific purpose of exploring and analyzing the fundamental principles of cinema — light, time, movement, sound. In fact, the *rules of the game* imposed by these works stimulate our curiosity and challenge our capacity to decipher and respond to them. The experimental films of Michael Snow, classified as structuralist, push the medium's potential to its very limits and breathe new life into our perceptual faculties.

There is little action, at least in the sense normally understood in film: which is to say there is virtually no narrative structure, no intrigue or conclusion, few actors, no hierarchical distinction between the presence of humans and of objects, places or phenomena. In most of these films, movement is created by the camera itself. It sculpts the space it travels through by moving in unforeseen ways.

...I've been working from "ideas" since I started thinking I was an artist, but I've always been conscious that the "idea" is just the beginning and the "principle" also has a life of its own, which will manifest itself in unimaginable ways by being set in motion...¹

Michael Snow's major film works — which include amongst many others *Wavelength*, 1967, ↔ (*Back and Forth*), 1968-1969, and *La Région Centrale*, 1970-1971 — offer clear evidence of the artist's preoccupation in the elaboration of his films with the *actions* performed by the camera and the effects they produce, events that occur within the cinematographic process. What we see is an extension of the camera's movement, which becomes part of the spectator's experience.

[9]

There soon develops a reciprocity between our vision and the direction imposed upon it by the eye of the camera. This unambiguous relationship sparks a reaction that is physical, sensorial — even visceral — on the part of the spectator, who is experiencing in an unusual way his/her involvement in the unfolding of a film whose overall scheme remains unknown. The effect of the camera's movements through space is to alter shapes, colours and textures by endowing them with an almost plastic quality. Moving forms take on an apparent malleability, sometimes reminiscent of the distortions achieved through animation and computer graphics techniques. The line separating abstract and figurative form becomes blurred.

This phenomenon undermines both our ordinary relation to space and the reliability of our own perceptions. In *La Région Centrale*,² for example, the northern landscape is gradually transformed into an indefinite area of light accompanied by a flat disk-like shape apparently possessing neither mass nor volume that rotates crazily on the surface of the screen. While in ↔ (*Back and Forth*), the filmed wall gives an impression of volume created by the camera's lateral scanning, which leaves memory-traces on the film of images captured during the movement — an optical effect revealed over time.

Frequently — particularly in *Wavelength* and ↔ (*Back and Forth*) — the actions of Snow's camera quite flagrantly mimic those of the human body, indulging in a series of manifestly anthropomorphic movements: movements that echo those of the head and eyes, body-like movements through space, and visual focusing. The machine/camera is employed, in fact, as an extension of the body as regards

positioning (camera at waist-level, or at the eye-level of a standing or seated person — a reference to the spectator), side-to-side and vertical movements, back-and-forth movements (dolly shots, zoom in, zoom out, focusing...) and framing (central and panoramic visual field...). This technique highlights the relation between the way the filming is accomplished, what is filmed, and how we perceive the combination of the two.

La Région Centrale, on the other hand, invites us to enter into a realm of fictitious movements that disregard the law of gravity — spirals, zigzags, circles, figures of eight — that transcend the mechanical capacity of our own body. The artist confronts us with perspectives that we cannot actually experience under our own physical steam. The technique employed in this film increases our visual power and, in so doing, enhances our perceptual awareness and our experience of the world.

Michael Snow impels us to break with our habit of approaching the film medium through its message rather than its form. His films invite us to re-see seeing, to experience in the immediate the instability of our own perception. ■

YOLANDE RACINE

1. This quotation, which comes from a conversation between Bruce Elder and Michael Snow about the artist's music, is also relevant to his films. "On Sound..."; *Music/Sound, The Michael Snow Project*, Art Gallery of Ontario/The Power Plant (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), p. 219.

2. Filmed north of Sept-Îles with a camera mounted on a device called *De La*, which enabled it to swivel in every direction through 360°, at varying speeds and without human assistance. What was filmed was thus seen for the first time when the film was developed.

The event *Michael Snow — Works from the Collection of the National Gallery of Canada and Film Retrospective*, organized by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, is presented from January 27 to April 23, 1995 ■ Curator of the exhibition: Pierre Landry ■ Curator in charge of the film retrospective: Yolande Racine ■ This publication is a production of the Direction de l'éducation et de la documentation ■ Editor: Chantal Charbonneau ■ Translation: Judith Terry ■ Secretarial services: Sophie David ■ Design: Lumbago communication visuelle ■ Printing: Bowne de Montréal ■ The Musée d'art contemporain is a provincially owned corporation funded by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec. The Musée receives additional financial support from Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council. © Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1995. 185 St. Catherine Street West, Montréal, Québec H2X 1Z8. Tel: (514) 847-6226. ISBN 2-551-13434-X. Legal Deposits: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, Bibliothèque nationale du Canada, 1995. Cette publication est également disponible en français.

S C H E D U L E
S A T U R D A Y A N D S U N D A Y

January 28 and 29

A TO Z, 1956
NEW YORK EYE AND EAR CONTROL, 1964
STANDARD TIME, 1967
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening times: 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m., and 3:30 p.m.

February 4 and 5

↔ (BACK AND FORTH), 1968-69
ONE SECOND IN MONTREAL, 1969
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening times: 1:30 p.m., 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

February 11 and 12

DRIPPING WATER 1969 (COLLABORATION WITH JOYCE WIELAND)
SIDE SEAT PAINTINGS SLIDES SOUND FILM, 1970
BREAKFAST (TABLE TOP DOLLY), 1972-1976
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening times: 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

February 18 and 19

SO IS THIS, 1982
SEATED FIGURES, 1988
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening times: 1:30 p.m., 3:05 p.m. and 4:45 p.m.

February 25 and 26

(SEE YOU LATER) AU REVOIR, 1990
TO LAVOISIER, WHO DIED IN THE REIGN OF TERROR, 1991
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening times: 1:30 p.m., 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

March 4 and 5

WAVELENGTH, 1967
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening times: 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

March 25 and 26

LA RÉGION CENTRALE, 1971
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening time: 1:30 p.m.

April 1 and 2

RAMEAU'S NEPHEW BY DIDEROT (THANX TO DENNIS YOUNG)
BY WILMA SCHOEN, 1974
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening time: 1:30 p.m.

April 8 and 9

PRESENTS, 1980-1981
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening times: 1:30 p.m. and 3:45 p.m.

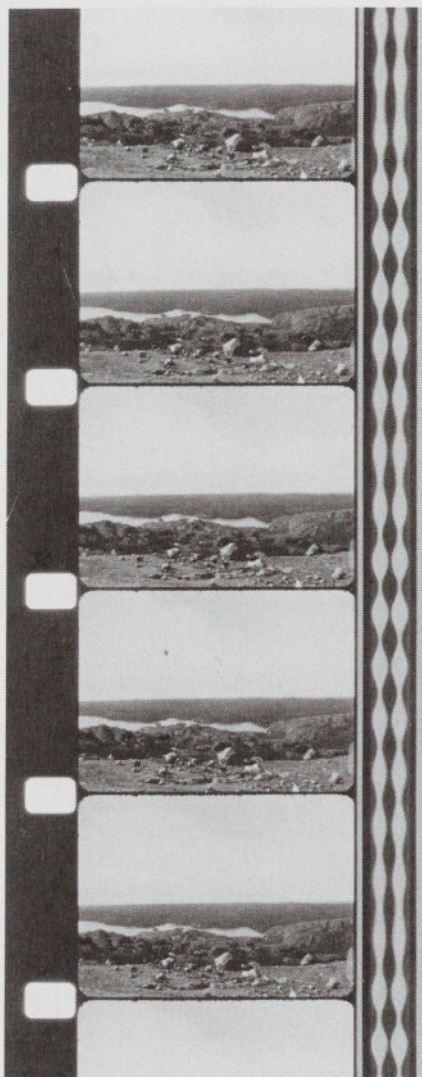
April 15 and 16

LA RÉGION CENTRALE, 1971
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening time: 1:30 p.m.

April 22 and 23

RAMEAU'S NEPHEW BY DIDEROT (THANX TO DENNIS YOUNG)
BY WILMA SCHOEN, 1974
Presentation of video at 1:15 p.m.
Screening time: 1:30 p.m.

F I L M P R O G R A M



La Région Centrale, 1971
16 mm, 3 hours, colour
Collection of the National Gallery of Canada

A TO Z, 1956
7 MIN., B&W, SILENT

Note: 18 fps only.

"A cross-hatched fantasy about nocturnal furniture love. Two chairs fuck." (Michael Snow)

NEW YORK EYE AND EAR CONTROL, 1964

34 MIN., B&W

"One of the major achievements of the sixties. Mike Snow postulates an eye that stares at surfaces with such intensity... The image itself seems to quiver, finally gives way under the pressure. A deceptive beginning — silent: a flat white form sharply cut to the silhouette of a walking woman... More Human images, love-making — a Human epic now still ruled by the after image of the *Walking Woman*..." (Richard Foreman, New York Film Co-op)

STANDARD TIME, 1967

8 MIN., COL.

"In Snow's *Standard Time* a waist-high camera shuttles back and forth, goes up and down, picking up small, elegantly-lighted square effects around a living room very much like its owner: ordered but not prissy. A joyously spiritual little film, it contains both his singular stoicism and the germinal ideas of his other films, each one like a thesis, proposing a particular relationship between image, time and space." (Manny Farber, *Art Forum*)

WAVELENGTH, 1967

45 MIN., COL.

"This film is a continuous zoom which takes 45 minutes to go from its widest field to its smallest and final field. It was shot with a fixed camera from one end of an 80 foot loft, shooting the other end, a row of windows and a street. Thus, the setting and the action which takes place there are cosmically equivalent. The room (and the zoom) are interrupted by 4 human events including a death. The sound on these occasions is sync sound, music and speech occurring simultaneously with an electronic sound, a sine wave, which goes from its lowest note (50 cycles per second) to its highest (12,000 cps) in 40 minutes. It is a total glissando, while the film is a crescendo and a

dispersed spectrum which attempts to utilize the gifts of both prophecy and memory which only film and music have to offer." (Michael Snow)

**↔ (BACK AND FORTH),
1968-1969**

50 MIN., COL.

"Not only did ↔ (*Back and Forth*) expand the possibilities of cinematic framing as postulated in *Wavelength*; it actually expanded the parameters of movie narrative as we'd previously recognized them, expanded them even beyond Godard's bold effects in such films as *Weekend*. For in ↔ (*Back and Forth*), Snow was able to completely suffuse form with content, while not relinquishing the traditional elements of characterization and acting. The relentless back and forth pan stresses similar concepts which Snow had engaged in his sculptures and carries still further the experiments with perception and illusion which began in *Wavelength*." (Gene Youngblood, *L.A. Free Press*)

**MICHAEL SNOW AND JOYCE WIELAND
DRIPPING WATER, 1969**

12 MIN., COL.

"You see nothing but a white, crystal white plate, and water dripping into the plate, from the ceiling, from high, and you hear the sound of the water dripping. The film is ten minutes long. I can imaginé only St. Francis looking at a water plate and water dripping so lovingly, so respectfully, so serenely... Snow and Wieland's film uplifts the object, and leaves the viewer with a finer attitude toward the world around him; it can open his eyes to the phenomenal world. And how can you love people if you don't love water, stone, glass!" (Jonas Mekas, *New York Times*, 1969)

**ONE SECOND
IN MONTREAL, 1969**

26 MIN., B&W, SILENT

"In Snow's... *One Second in Montreal and Dripping Water* (made with Joyce Wieland) we are brought to consider the force of time stripped of spatial interest. A collection of Snow scenes, all still photographs of potential sites for a monument in Montreal (thus distinctly not "artistic" photographs) follow one another for 22 minutes. The film is aggressive, yet haunting. It is too at the

edge, at the point where an image of an actuality provides a firmer ground for meditation than an abstract image or no image at all. This particular film provides the subtlety of Snow's genius, in his ability to locate a precise image of time without resorting to nostalgia or any iconic representation of the past or futurity..." (P. Adams Sitney, *Michael Snow / A Survey*)

SIDE SEAT PAINTINGS
SLIDES SOUND FILM, 1970
 20 MIN., COL.

"In 1970 I had a large retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. For this exhibition I composed/designed a largely photographic book called *A Survey*. This was the first of several works which attempted to use previous work or the records of previous work as the material for new work. Starting with "raw" material that has already been formed by one-self on some other occasions for some other purposes is a very interesting thing. *Side Seat...* is a 20 minute sound film made in 1970 of the projecting and verbal (my voice) identification of slides (made at various times, by various people) of paintings in various media made by myself from 1955 to 1965. It is not autobiographical. The film is a recycling, a conversion which, by employing the illusion of temporal alteration which film and sound recording have made possible, becomes a completely new experience." (Michael Snow)

LA RÉGION CENTRALE,
 1971
 3 HRS., COL.

"This new, three hour film by the Canadian Michael Snow, is an extraordinary cinematic monument. No physical action, not even the presence of man, a fabulous game with nature and machine which puts into question our perceptions, our mental habits, and in many respects renders moribund existing cinema: the latest Fellini, Kubrick, Bunuel etc. For *La Région Centrale* Snow had a special camera apparatus constructed by a technician in Montreal, an apparatus capable of moving in all directions: horizontally, vertically, laterally or in a spiral. The film is one continuous movement across space, intercutting occasionally the X serving as a point of reference and permitting one to take hold of stable reality. Snow has

chosen to film a deserted region, without the least trace of human life, 100 miles to the north of Sept-Îles in the province of Quebec: a sort of plateau without trees, opening onto a vast circular prospect of the surrounding mountains." (Louis Marcocelles, *Le Monde*, Paris, Sept. 28, 1972)

BREAKFAST (TABLE
TOP DOLLY), 1972-1976
 15 MIN., COL., SILENT

Shot in 1972 and shelved until 1976 when sound and editing problems were solved. All the varied and unusual motions visible on the screen are the result of a single camera movement.

RAMEAU'S NEPHEW
BY DIDEROT (THANX TO
DENNIS YOUNG) BY WILMA
SCHOEN, 1974
 4 1/2 HRS., COL.

Scripted and directed by: Michael Snow

Camera: Michael Snow, Keith Lock, Babette

Mangolte, David York and others.

"I started scripting this film in February, 1972 and writing, shooting, mixing, editing continued till September '74. Some ideas used in it date from 1966 when I recognized in myself the ambition to make an authentic Talking Picture i.e. true to its description, it moves for its content from the facts of the simultaneities of recorded speech and image; it is built from the true units of a 'talking picture' — the syllable and the frame. All the possible image/sound relationships centering around people and speech generate the movie-audience relationships: a wide range of emotional possibilities; the experience of seeing/hearing this film..." (Michael Snow)

PRESENTS, 1980-1981
 90 MIN., COL.

"The apparent vertical scratch in celluloid that opens *Presents* literally opens into a film within the film. When its figure awakens into a woman in a "real" set, the slapstick satire of structural film begins. It is not the camera that moves, but the whole set, in this first of three material 'investigations' of camera movement. In the second, the camera literally invades the set; a plexiglass sheet in front of the dolly crushes everything in its sight

as it zooms through space. Finally, this monster of formalism pushes through the wall of the set and the film cuts to a series of rapidly edited shots as the camera zig-zags over lines of force and moving fields of vision in an approximation of the eye of nature. Snow pushes us into acceptance of present moments of vision, but the single drum-beat that coincides with each edit in this elegiac section announces each moment of life's disappearance." (Phillip Monk, *Art Express*)

SO IS THIS, 1982

43 MIN., COL., SILENT

"A delightful film, full of humour and sentience, it is also an odd film: a text-film, a silent black-and-white talky in colour; a self-reflexive document and a fictive construct, a non-movie that paradoxically fulfils and subverts the implications in the titles of such books as *The Language of Cinema* and *How to Read a Film...* by a filmmaker of subtle genius." (Michael Ethan Brodzky, *Arts Canada*, 1982)

SEATED FIGURES, 1988

42 MIN., COL.

"The images are distanced — accompanied by the muffled noises of an audience watching a movie. Hence the mysteriously inert title. *Seated Figures* is about its audience. Not only are we sent flying face down over the earth, but Snow reverses the oldest concept in image-making — he juxtaposes our seated static figures against a constantly moving ground." (Jim Hoberman, *Village Voice*)

(SEE YOU LATER)

AU REVOIR, 1990

18 MIN., COL.

Note: 16mm from 1" NTSC video

"...A man (Snow himself) rises from his desk, puts on his coat, says goodbye to a woman typing at a nearby desk, and leaves the room. But what took a mere 30 seconds in "real" time had been recorded with a Super Slo-Mo video camera..., being expanded to a full 18 minutes. With the continuous right-to-left pan in smooth and constant motion, taken from a fixed tripod position, the whole image... is fully equal in interest and importance to the 'event' depicted. The staged

action is intentionally mundane, so the extreme slowness of the change focuses attention on the subtlest of details, to reveal an exceptional grace and beauty, normally hidden. A first viewing for the film can be oddly tension filled... When the brevity and non-drama of the film are confirmed, however, one tends to want to see it again (See *You Later*) and watch for other elements in the image. (See *You Later/Au Revoir*) has been described by Snow as 'a slightly activated Vermeer...'" (Peggy Gale)

*TO LAVOISIER, WHO DIED
IN THE REIGN OF TERROR,
1991*

53 MIN., COL.

Image collaboration: Carl Brown

"Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794) was a French chemist who gave the first accurate scientific explanation of the mysteries of fire. He also proved the law of conservation of matter which states that matter can be neither created or destroyed. His work and this film are situated between modern chemistry and alchemy. The film stages a drama of abstraction and theoretical realism. La vie quotidienne seen photo-chemically and musically. The film is a materialist projected-image conversion of matter." (Michael Snow)

Excerpts from the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre Catalogue, Toronto, 1993



Joyce Wieland. Photograph taken during the making of the film *La Région Centrale*, 1969. Michael Snow can be seen in the photo standing next to the apparatus he designed and built with Pierre Abbeoos. ■ Michael Snow was born in Toronto on December 10, 1929. During an artistic career that began in the mid-fifties, he has worked principally in the realms of painting, sculpture, photography, cinema and music. His work has been the object of numerous exhibitions, both in Canada and abroad. Notable among his most important solo exhibitions are: *Michael Snow / A Survey* (Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 1970); *Michael Snow* (organized by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, and the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, 1978); *Walking Woman Works: Michael Snow 1961-67* (organized by the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, Ontario, 1983); *The Michael Snow Project* (organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario and The Power Plant, Toronto, 1994). His films have been presented at many international experimental cinema events (festivals, retrospectives, etc.), and in 1968 Snow was awarded first prize at the experimental film festival held in Knokke-le-Zoute (Belgium), for his film *Wavelength*. In 1970, the artist represented Canada at the Venice Biennale.