

ISA TOUSIGNANT

The 22nd edition of the Festival International du Film sur l'Art is as plentiful as one would expect it to be, with no less than 240 films in its roster this year. International in provenance, multidisciplinary in scope, they are all united by their (sometimes tenuous adherence) to the arts, be they visual arts, dance, literature, theatre, film, music or architecture. More than anything, the selection boasts boundless – if occasionally aimless – variety.

The guest of honour this year, **Robert Wilson**, is therefore appropriately multidisciplinary. Born in Waco, Texas, Wilson integrated dance, sculpture, music and text into his avant-garde theatrical practice to create work that has revolutionized myriad fields, from video to opera to theatre. In what is bound to be one of the festival's most exciting events, Wilson will be discussing his life's work after a screening of the film *La Mort de Molière* on Tuesday, March 16, at the Musée d'art contemporain. (Surf to www.artifa.com for more details.)

There are other special sections of particular interest at this year's FIFA, like the program on Canadian video art curated by Nicole Gingras, part of the experimental program titled *Miroirs de l'art*, or the spotlight on Scandinavian art called *Lumières du Nord*. As for FIFA's competitive section – which comprises 50 films and is meant to exhibit the international best in recent film production on art – well, it's pretty much a crapshoot. Here's a sampling of what you can expect.

During the End. Directed by João Trabuço, this doc offers an intimate investigation into the peculiar universe of Portuguese sculptor Rui Chafes. While the work shown is in itself quite interesting – massive geometric structures made of metal and inserted into the rich forests of the mountain in Sintra – the documentary is tedious and annoyingly self-indulgent. The beauty of the occasional shot is ultimately undermined by the interminable aimlessness of Chafes' meandering thoughts and references.

feature



913: WORK YOU CAN COUNT ON

Mark Rothko, 1903–1970: Un humanist abstract There's a palpable desire on director Isy Morgensztern's part to replicate the ethereal effect of Rothko's colour washes by layering shots of artworks atop documentary footage, which is a pleasing sort of formal homage. But as a whole this monograph is dry and lacks poignant information, remaining disappointingly superficial in contrast to the works discussed.

913 Directed, written and featuring Quebec artist Bertrand Camère, this film is an inspiring relief. Tracking the creation of his ephemeral installation project inspired by the 60th anniversary of the Dieppe raid, Camère blends art theory and practice in his film with historical footage and interviews. In order to honour the 913 Canadian soldiers who died at Dieppe, the work consisted of 913 portraits of present-day soldiers that

were planted on the beach and then washed away by the tide.

Hieronymus Bosch: Les Délices de l'enfer It would be a challenge to present a boring analysis of the work of the medieval Dutch master, the depicter of human sin and debauchery par excellence. Though absolutely classical in its adherence to documentary conventions, this academic treatise is a thrill for the mind as well as for the senses. The incontrovertible expertise offered by the talking heads makes their obsession and pompousness not only forgivable, but also enriching. A pleasure.

Lumières et ombres One of the oddest art documentaries I have ever seen, this monograph on Slovakian photographer Olga Bleyová directed by Vladimír Krajník superposes a supremely sentimental and at times heartbreaking interview with the

artist on "seductive" shots of the female nudes she is known for, the whole smothered in wah-wah music that would be better suited to a circa 1982 episode of *Bleu Nuit*. Very, very strange.

Rafael Moneo: Courage and Conviction On the architectural side of things, this film offers a portrait of a space shifter of particular sensitivity. Unremarkable as a film – what is it with documentaries and bad music? – director Manuel Martín de Blas's work is effective in communicating the grandeur of the places it depicts and the thoughts of a remarkable man. The Spanish-born Moneo seems to sidestep the pretension and machismo intrinsic to the system of architectural patronage, demonstrating a soothing, humanistic approach to environment.

Beijing, Beijing Henri Seng's dynamic film vibrates with life, focusing on three avant-garde artists and their troubled, contentious relationship to the city they inhabit – sprawling, engulfing Beijing. As captivating for the sociological picture it paints as for the specific issues explored by the artists examined (Zhu Ming, Hè Chengyao and Zhang Daili), the movie breaks with conventions just enough to hint at what all the other titles in competition at this year's FIFA could be doing.

Watch for: *Exercice de la liberté*, Gerhard Richter, *Imagine Imagine*, *Les Lampes Akari*, *Living Architecture: The Work of Tadao Ando*, *Ordinaire ou super: Regards sur Mies van der Rohe* and *Tina in Mexico* ()

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