

Visual Arts

AT THE GALLERIES

Picture the young men at Dieppe

913, a 29-minute film by Montreal photographer **Bertrand Carrière** (screening today at 3 p.m. at Stephen Bulger Gallery, 1026 Queen St. W.) shows a stretch of Normandy beach in France, with photos of 913 young men arranged like so many poppies in a field as the tide swells around them. The photos — all of young contemporary Canadian men — are standing in for the Canadian troops who died on the very spot during World War II.

The film will be screened again — tickets are free — the next two Saturdays. It is part of Carrière's homage to the disastrous Aug. 19, 1942 Allied raid on Dieppe, the Normandy town where some 1,400 Allied forces lost their lives, 913 of them Canadian. (A Canadian Veteran Affairs' account indicates that 907 Canadians were killed and 1,946 captured. Carrière's tally of 913 comes from French military statistics. Both sides agree, however, that many more Canadians were killed than is accounted for by either statistic.)

The film details the various steps it took Carrière to complete the installation in 2002, on the 60th anniversary of the Dieppe raid which involved a total of 6,100 troops — some 5,000 of them Canadian. Positioning the 913 photos initially took Carrière an entire day, with many of them being destroyed through the night. The following day, he placed the remaining photographs at the nearby town of Varengeville-sur-Mer, where they lasted for more than two months.

The film accompanies "Caux," an aching melancholic exhibition of Carrière's Normandy beach photographs ("caux" is the regional word for the area's chalky soil), where man-made objects from World War II have come to resemble the rock-strewn beaches they're slowly sinking into. "Caux" is on to May 6.

More than most other photographers, Carrière understands photography's capacity for capturing elegiac moments. His last Bulger Gallery show was "Signes de jour," with a grid-like array of commonplace images (graves, domestic architecture) all in sumptuous black and white. Likes "Signes" before it, though, "Caux" is utterly alive with questions.