

## Afterword

My memories of David go back to the Spring of 1968 when we first met at the Kansas City Art Institute as he was winding up his final term for the BFA. At the suggestion of Gerald Ferguson who was teaching there at the time, I approached David to see if he would be interested in joining NSCAD's faculty to teach primarily in the foundation program. He showed me his work – two pieces of sculpture that I remember quite well – one, a low piece of sectioned aluminum square tubing that stretched about 60 feet across the campus lawn, and the other, a more compact work of anodized coloured aluminum with step-like slats. Both pieces were clearly the work of mature thinking – of an attitude that was sensitive to the changing art directions of austere Minimalist sculpture to a somewhat more elaborate approach. With confidence that his work was exceptional, I invited David to Halifax for an interview resulting in his appointment to NSCAD's rapidly expanding faculty.

David's contributions to the College's historic place in contemporary art of that exciting period were twofold – as a committed teacher and as an active artist. As a teacher he introduced his students to the new concepts associated with video, film, sound and performance which he managed to do through his own example of making some of the most innovative artwork of that time (Is there a better video work from the 70s than David's *Fill?*). He also used the example of other artists through his now legendary Projects Class whose visitors included James Lee Byers, Joseph Kosuth, Lucy Lippard and Lawrence Weiner, among the most significant artists of the late 60s and 70s.

Around 1975, David left the full-time faculty to give more attention to his professional career which was attracting interest in central Canada, the States and Europe. Off and on over the years, he returned to teach at the College and in 1986 made his home here again with his companion Norma Ready who worked extensively as his editor and frequent collaborator. David often exhibited here in Halifax and otherwise became a staunch member of the local art community while

maintaining a strong national and international presence. David also had teaching stints in California where his influence was felt by such well-known artists with whom he collaborated, Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler.

Aside from our association as faculty colleagues, I enjoyed a close friendship with David and with his families, Christina Ritchie and son Ben Askevold and Norma and daughter Kyla Ready-Askevold. Wherever he travelled, throughout the years he was not in Halifax, he mailed me regular updates about where he was and what he was doing. I feel so fortunate to have spent a pleasant afternoon with David last Fall. We combined a delightful afternoon of his fine cooking, an air gun target practice in the backyard, ending with David showing me his latest videos of downloaded 'B' movies seen through the oval opening of empty, flowery, decorated tissue boxes. What could be more David?

Garry Neill Kennedy

*The staff at The Centre for Art Tapes would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to this project:*

Norma Ready, Doug Porter, Peggy Gale, Garry Neill Kennedy, members of both the Programming Committee and the Board of Directors.

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# David Askevold

## A Video Retrospective



Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March, 7pm

Presented By

**centre  
for  
art  
tapes**

Windsor Theatre  
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia  
Corner of Bedford Row & George Street  
Halifax.

# Introduction

We are pleased to present our fourth in a series of retrospectives by senior artists who have been associated with the Centre For Art Tapes. David Askevold was a Board member at the Centre from 1986 to 1988. In 1992, the Centre produced *Red Rider* a book about his videos. David made a significant on-going contribution to the experimental and archival aspects of media production in this region. It was his dedication to these activities that prompted our Programming Committee to choose David for this retrospective. His positive reaction to our invitation was immediate; over the summer he provided descriptions and biographical material that appear on this DVD. Since David's death, we decided to continue with this retrospective as a posthumous celebration of his significant artistic career.

Our thanks go to Norma Ready who ensured that the videos and images were available for this DVD compilation. I would also like to thank the staff, the Programming Committee, and the Centre's Board for bringing this project to its timely completion.

*James MacSwain*  
*Director of Programming*

## David Askevold 1940 - 2008

David Askevold was born on March 30<sup>th</sup> 1940 in Conrad, Montana. He studied art and anthropology at the University of Montana and in 1963 won a Max Beckmann Scholarship to study painting for a year at the Brooklyn Museum School of Art in New York. He enrolled at the Kansas City Art Institute in 1966 to complete a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Sculpture. His artwork moved through a multi-disciplinary trajectory using text, photography, video, performance and most recently digital imaging. His media work relies on happenstance and collaboration with a sensitivity to the supernatural, the unexplained and the barely visible.

Beginning in 1968, David taught at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD University) where he developed and led the innovative Projects Class that involved international conceptual artists. This class was important in forging NSCAD's reputation as one of the leading conceptual art schools in North America. In the late 70s and early 80s he taught at the Art Centre College of Design in Pasadena, California, as well as at CalArts in Valencia and at UC/Irvine. David's contributions as an artist and teacher influenced many artists through his active engagement with interdisciplinary media practices. He died on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

## David Askevold A Video Retrospective

**Nova Scotia Fires** 1969 2:30min.

Along the South Shore of Nova Scotia, I poured a mixture of gasoline and oil on various stone configurations and along some beaches, lit them and filmed the results.

**Fill** 1970 8:20min.

The screen is filled by laying sheets of aluminum foil on a microphone and wrapped one at a time and then unwrapped. The audio implodes during the wrapping and explodes as the sheets are pulled away from the microphone. This was my first video.

**Rubber Band** 1971 3:18min.

Holding a rubber band between my thumbs and forefingers, I strum as fast as I can close to a microphone. The camera is static and ran until the S8 cartridge ran out. The sound is recorded on tape separate from the film, so the audio which sounds like a drum, slowly moves out of synch with the image.

**It's No Use Crying** 1972 3:30min.

The performer's upside down face and head fills the video screen, staring into the camera trying not to blink for the duration of a recording of Ray Charles' 'It's No Use Crying'.

**Bliss D.F.**<sup>2</sup> 1979 8:25min.

The performer describes how to shrink a head using an avocado and its pit. This is recorded on one audio channel. The other props include a tablecloth, a pan of water and a wine cork. The second audio channel plays a tape by Tamara Rand, a sex therapist who describes how to maintain an erection.

**Rhea** 1982 6:50min.

Rhea opens and closes with a wandering spotlight in a dark interior. Faces appear against vague landscapes or without settings to speak the names of others. A panning movement links the faces, allowing them to combine in essence, then in form. As the visages transform, the other implied in the spoken name loses otherness and all names come to denote a commonality and singularity.

**1/4 Moon** 1986 8:30min.

A musician plays a violin to a black dog, a white horse, a sheep, lamb and chickens in a barn yard while it is raining at a small farm yard in Clam Harbour, Nova Scotia. The hand held camera wanders, documenting the violin player and the animal audience.

**Two Hanks** 2003 25:30min.

This piece is about placing two major recording artists on the same stage together after they have been dead for some time. Since Hank Snow and Hank Williams never performed together during their lifetimes this was a way to bring them together with their two songs, 'Rambling Man' and 'I've Been Everywhere' The thereminist, Scott Marshall, takes the two songs to another place. Footage of the audience, which was built into the construction of the work, constitutes an component of the video.