

New exhibition highlights 'shards of time' and space



By Brock Weir

Television wasn't the be all and end all of entertainment as far as Olexander Wlasenko's parents were concerned when he was growing up.

Indeed, although he didn't even have a TV in his house, one thing they did have was a projector, a screen, and an extensive collection of 16mm films from the former Soviet Union collected by his father. Whether it was a passion for film, or simply an effort to keep traditions alive, Olex's father planted very potent seeds that have stuck with his son for most of his career.

"I remember not having a TV when I was growing up, but we had these 16mm films from Soviet Ukraine and the USSR and those are my earliest recollections of visual culture," says Mr. Wlasenko. "When I watch these films, I look at moments in the narrative where something changes and it is right at a moment when something huge might happen."

These split second moments of time, which might only be a single frame on the flickering projector screen, is what Mr. Wlasenko has tried to capture in his new exhibition at the Aurora Cultural Centre called "Somewhere In Time." The exhibition was one of three that officially opened at the Church Street building last Saturday and, for the occasion, Mr. Wlasenko held an artist's talk in Brevik Hall on moments in time from contemporary film "such as Stanley Kubrick's 'The Shining' and David Lynch's 'Mulholland Drive'" and how they have been influenced by art, ranging from paintings of the Italian Renaissance to Diane Arbus' evocative photos of people on the fringe.

"I think it's often the look of these films that really appealed to me," he says. "It is a retinal stimulus. They appeal to my eye at the time when I am watching them. I often think the films are constructed in a way that are quite appealing and have a different look than, say, what Hollywood directors would compose their films with."

Counting filmmakers such as Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, and Sergei Eisenstein among his inspirations, the Oshawa native's work is not just limited to inspiration he's found in the stirring works of eastern Europe. He has followed in the footsteps of Fellini, to warmer climes "including a 2001 series based primarily on cinematic images featuring iconic Italian actress Claudia Cardinale.

While recent years have seen a "retro" trend with looks and fashions of the 1960s coming back into style "think 'Mad Men'" Mr. Wlasenko says he doesn't keep track of "pervasive trends" in particular decades. He doesn't gauge whether it has stimulated an uptick in the interest of his work, but sometimes the feedback he receives illustrates he is on the right track.

"I remember one time when I was on display at the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition and there was a director there from 'The House of Sand and Fog,'" he recalls of a chance encounter with Vadim Perelman, director of the 2003 movie starring Ben Kingsley and Jennifer Connelly. "He recognized some of the work that was not directly from his work. Oftentimes, these sources are half a

century old and they are from Europe, so they can be kind of displaced in both time and space.

?I hope people take away an appreciation for the drawn medium and large-scale drawings. These images are taken out of a motion picture and the circuitry of that motion picture, now they are free-standing islands of interpretation and viewers can bring them whatever they choose. I see these as fragments or shards of time.?

Also opening on Saturday were ?Borderlines?, a collaborative show, bringing together the art of Sheila Davis, sculpture of metal artist Tracey Lee Green, and poetry of Jean Kallmeyer, along with ?Freedom?, showcasing the equestrian photos of Hockley Valley's Ellen Cameron.

?Freedom? and ?Borderlines? run through November 16. Davis, Kallmeyer, and Green will be on hand in the Red and Blue Galleries from 1 ? 3 p.m., this Wednesday, October 30, to discuss their work.