



pleasure DOME is pleased to present a screening of work by Barry Doupé, including the Toronto premiere of the emerging Vancouver-based artist's *At the Heart of a Sparrow*. Doupé's classic cel-based and computer-aided episodic animations feature distorted figures and landscapes that appear precisely incomplete, muted, and at times concisely over-determined. His cast of characters and the spaces they inhabit seem like flayed and shifting skins layered uneasily upon their internal structures. Unnerving audio tracks echo the movements of these outer textures, sliding about and flourishing from the terrifying hollow that exists beyond them.

At times reminiscent of the painted domestic tableaux's of Eric Fischl and David Hockney, Doupé's videos likewise render familiar phenomenon ambiguous – his source material is the uncanny. With seemingly rudimentary animation techniques indicative of early video-game design, Doupé at once meticulously refines and works to obfuscate detail, as if what he has shown is only a disturbing stage in process, a process that is familiarly left unseen or disavowed. His animations, which also include *A Boy on a Dock Blowing His Nose* and *Distraught Mother Reunites With Her Children*, are marked with this anxiety, the ambivalence that persists at the knife-edge of symbolization and the unspeakable beyond it.

The environments created in these works are not restricted to the laws of one specific, recognizable environment but are rather temporally linked spaces that operate within limited and obtuse reference to prosaic cultural myths or group memories of childhood places and stories – the park, the swimming-hole, the front yard in summer with sprinklers. These locations and the scenes that transpire within them are always underscored by anxiety and trauma through Doupé's hazy, muffled and dislocated interpretation of these myths.

Likewise, the animated figures found in *A Boy on a Dock*, *Distraught Mother* and *At the Heart of a Sparrow* are often fractured beings – polymorphous creatures that are at once one animal and another and another – simultaneously cobra, sparrow and bat. These are figures whose familiarity gives way to ambiguity – a child becomes a demon but still remain a child; a woodpecker is partially human wearing a lumberjack's fleece coat; a rabbit is a rabbit but also a vaudevillian cop wielding a carrot as its baton. Here, especially in *Distraught Mother* and *Sparrow*, it is as though the root structure ordering the programming of a videogame has become corrupt, suffered a psychic split, and now orders images atop one another – opaque memory atop opaque memory.

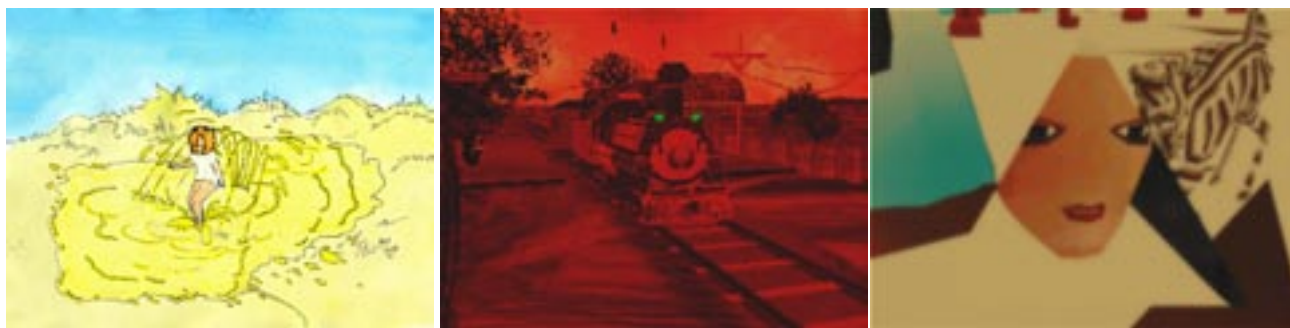
Sequences in these videos coyly mimic and eventually distort the tropes found in adventure narratives like *The Legend of Zelda* or *Final Fantasy* series of videogames or archetypal mythic sci-fi tales by authors like Tolkien or Lewis. In the worlds that Doupé creates there are often totemic figures that provide guidance and dole out punishment to his revolving cast of characters. As his characters reach "stages" or "levels", highlighted by meetings with these overbearing "bosses", Doupé provides some narrative structure but seldom a finite story arch. There are no "lives" or "points" earned – literal or symbolic – for entry into an understanding of the next stage of the work. Again and again, references are given and quickly taken away – there is no way to defeat the "boss" and "finish" the game. Here, the familiar, formulaic scene of a reunion between a mother and her child will always be tainted by the anxious knowledge that they will lose each other again and again.

– Jean-Paul Kelly

AT THE HEART OF A SPARROW

Barry Doupé in Person

Saturday, March 24, 2007, 8pm
Cinecycle, 129 Spadina Ave.



Programme:

A Boy on a Dock Blowing His Nose, 2004, 15:43 min.

Distraught Mother Reunites with Her Children, 2005, 24:30 min.

Intermission

At the Heart of a Sparrow, 2006, 29:00 min.

 pleasure **DOME**