

An experimental film in the flesh

BY SUSAN TOLUSSO

Flesh Angels

Director: Bruce Elder
Co-filmmaker: Alexa-Frances Shaw
Director of photography: Bruce Elder

January 1989

BRUCE Elder wrote proposals that described the attributes of this film, which has since been loosely categorized as experimental. The film is part of a larger cycle of work Elder has been working on for the past 15 years entitled *The Book of All the Dead*. The project built up around *The Book* involves, as Elder says, "going back and mingling with all the vanished figures of history."

Flesh Angels' contribution to *The Book* has been loosely based, Elder says, on "that part of Dante's *Divine Comedy* when Virgil bids the poet farewell at the end of *The Purgatorio* and moves into *The Paradiso*." The film examines, says one review, "the terrible predicament of the artist in a century where faith is all but impossible."

March 1989

Elder applies for development financing from the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council.

June 1989

He receives financial approvals from both councils at this time.

Summer 1989

Work begins on composing the computerized musical score. Recording engineer Paul Nieman functions as a music editor, taking the computer data files, reworking them and laying down the music tracks.

July 1989

A programmer, Mike Hems-worth, is brought in to take care of custom computer programming in order to allow mixing of

live action video footage and to develop the needed graphics. His work continues until December 1990.

Late summer 1989

Elder wrote an outline for the progress of the film rather than a script; 40%-50% of the film is composed of computer graphics and animation and Elder begins developing these at this time.

September 1989

Elder begins collecting live action footage for the film in "the vineyards and villages of Germany."

November 1989

By now Elder has brought in an assistant to help him with the computer graphics and animation work. The assistant, Alexandra Bal, works on the assignment until December 1990.

May-June 1990

Elder continues to collect live footage, once again calling on vineyards for some of his shots. He begins in wine country, California, specifically the Napa Valley. He then travels to Mt. Shasta in the northern part of the state, and also visits the Colorado Rockies.

Early September 1990

Production is complete and the film is handed over to Piroška Hollo who spends nearly four months conforming and cutting the negatives.

December 1990

The film is shown for the first time at Madrid's Reina Sophia Museum of Modern Art as part of its reopening event.

February 1991

Flesh Angels runs as part of an experimental film series at University of Toronto's Innis College. Elder says this 117-minute feature has received no press coverage to date.

Sept., 1991

Flesh Angels is part of the Perspective Canada section at the Toronto Festival of Festivals.