

Q&A Toby Kaufmann-Buhler



DOMESTIC DREAMS

The 'kitchen-sink' cinema of the Sixties may have combined realism and poetry, but rarely has washing-up featured so literally in film-making. *Digital Creative Arts* spoke to Toby Kaufmann-Buhler about how his Adobe Design Achievement Award-winning piece, *Dishscape*, has brought the domestic drama firmly into the digital age



DCA: How did you first become interested in making films?

TKB: I began studying art in 1997 at the University of South Florida. Before this I had considered going into music, but decided I didn't have the temperament for it. In fact, my first photography teacher convinced me to go into art with the assertion that a music degree is just as useless as an art degree! I came to England and started the Communication, Art & Design course at the Royal College of Art in 2001.

I became interested in video through working with photography and sound. After a couple of years doing this, I began to see video as a natural extension of my interest in sound and images. I felt that my still photography was lacking a certain kinetic element that would bond the sound to it. With video I found that element, which is time.

DCA: What hardware and software do you use?

TKB: My DV camera is a Sony DCR-TRV900. I've also got a Minolta S414 digital stills camera, a Nikon N6006 35mm, a Canon Canonet QL17 and a SX-70 Polaroid

change the 'Dishscape' constantly, building up a structure which in the end will inevitably be taken apart again. You'll see more on this when I complete parts two and three of *Dishscape*.

DCA: How do you categorise yourself and your work?

TKB: I shy away from the title 'film-maker', as it suggests some usage of film as a material. I would probably opt for something like 'digital artist' because this describes the basis of my current activity. I work with images and sound, primarily in the digital domain, but sometimes I feel that the digital world is a bit hermetic, so I'm constantly trying to transcend this tendency.

DCA: So, as a film-maker who rejects the title, how do you feel about the medium of digital video itself; is it just cinema's cheaper cousin?

TKB: No, I feel that digital video is a development that has a distinctive character all its own. When I first came to video what I wanted from it was a way to put sound to images. With digital video the soundtrack is



too. Software wise, obviously I use Adobe Premiere, but I'm also keen on Steinberg Wavelab, AudioMulch, Sonic Foundry Acid Pro and Propellerhead Reason.

DCA: Where did the idea for *Dishscape* come from?

TKB: I had it in my mind that I wanted to create a body of work based in a domestic setting. So I set up the camera in front of the dish rack and left it there. I recorded the whole day's washing-up activity.

The idea was that from the very beginning, there would be a change of 'landscape' within the frame and through the sound as well, which would render the field as an ever-changing tableau. The arm and hand, which act as the 'vehicle of change' in the piece,

at a level playing field with the image, which I feel makes it the right medium for me. I've had very little experience with film, but the little I've worked with it has been very important for my work with video.

DCA: What inspires you?

TKB: In *Dishscape* the movement and the sound really drew me into working with the material. In *Echo Tense*, an earlier piece, it was again the movement (of the trains, the people, and other images) that fascinated me, along with my collaborator's music. *A Fixed Existence* (still moves) was inspired by the idea of creating a fantastic narrative out of everyday observations, including many from my own life.

DCA: What are your ambitions?

TKB: I'd like to find an outlet for my work, in artistic and possibly commercial ventures, which will allow it to grow and mature. Although I have a fine arts background, I'm open to the possibilities of working in the commercial sector, so long as within the work there is a solid creative integrity. I'd also like to continue working on sound projects and, in the future, establish a studio for collaborative practice.

If Toby's work has inspired you, or you're keen to catch *Dishscape* parts two and three, you can contact him at tkbuhler@yahoo.co.uk.