

A photograph of a man with dark hair and a slight beard, shirtless, standing against a dark background. He has large, white, feathered angel wings attached to his back. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his torso and the texture of the wings.

Wrik Mead: Local Hero

With a moving-image practice spanning 30 years and a stalwart, ongoing dedication to the molding of young artist minds at OCAD University, Toronto-based media artist Wrik Mead is truly a local hero. His distinct short-form works combine an animator's patience with the reflexivity of the DIY psychodrama, producing brilliant first-person narratives of desire, difference and accommodation. Mead's intelligent, sensitive parables are an intoxicating, visceral mix of painstaking pixilation, fairy-tale allegory and queer-identity.

Christine Lucy Latimer, Pleasure Dome



PLEASURE DOME IS AN EXHIBITION COLLECTIVE DEDICATED TO THE PRESENTATION OF ARTISTS' MOVING IMAGES.

JULIA CREET

In 2013 Wrik Mead produced what he considered to be his first work of autobiography, *1975* (2013). It opened as a gallery installation at PayneShurvell Gallery in London, and it was utterly mesmerizing. The gallerists expected that the people attending the opening would stay 10 or 15 minutes. And there we stood at the end of the hour loop, transfixed by the story that emerged in minute segments, told by rotoscoped figures that animated a turning point in the life of the young Mead. You will see 10 minutes of it in this programme as the culmination of this compilation: a woman turning, dancing, spinning on the soundtrack of that summer; wasps swarming, threatening pain; a car crashing, spinning out of control in perfect circles; bottles of alcohol streaming behind a screeching woman; boys dangling from a line, hanging on for life until finally letting go; a bear, lumbering, insensible in his movements. These are the images that stick for me, each deeply symbolic of Mead's turmoil that year.

By the time we reached *summer 1975* (2014) at the end of Pleasure Dome's February 2017 retrospective of Mead's films, held at OCADU, many in the audience were in tears. Though I had seen every film before, and was amused that I appeared in the credits of so many of them (sometimes just for moral support), I had not been prepared for the emotional impact of seeing them in sequence. There, through the vulnerability of his friends, many of us stripped bare physically and emotionally, was the story of Wrik's life running just under the surface. Each of us acted out a story that was both ours and his, animated by a master puppeteer. We struggled with desire, with identity, with power, with friendship, with illusion, with unbearable loss, with love and care, again and again.

Each film in *Local Hero: The films of Wrik Mead* is of its moment and yet not anchored to it. The whimsy, humour and unexpected turns of pixilation twist allegories of life out of improbable scenarios. And yet, strung together, these fantasies provide a very material history of Mead's lifelong fascination with manipulating movement and media to tell deeply personal and moving tales. These far-fetched scenarios are, if you look closely enough, close to the bone and close to home. These are intimate encounters, some shot at Mead's house or the homes of friends, in which all us played our part in acting out slices of his life, ours—and yours.



"Known internationally for his short animations that follow the smoke of Genet's *Un chant d'amour* through endless poetic circles and spirals of desire, Mead's corpus signifies the resilience and seduction of queer culture as it navigates the gaps in mainstream culture. The straight description of the new work would be that it is a biographical treatise that fixes a year 1975 as the point of origin for the artist's identity. A point not so much of birth but of becoming."

excerpt from *Wrik Mead Draw the Line* by curator/author Mark Waugh.

LOCAL HERO: THE FILMS OF WRIK MEAD



What Isabelle Wants (1987, super 8/16mm blowup, 3 minutes)
Utilizing human pixilation, Isabelle's demand to nurture conjures a variety of sensations... perverse, kitsch, sweet witch voodoo?



Warm (1992, super 8/16mm blowup, 5 minutes)
Suggesting the comfort of an embrace, a pixilated naked body flailing against a crumbling ruin is released from the anguish of containment by another man's touch.



Closest Case (1995, super 8/16mm blowup, 3.5 minutes)
"In this quintessential 'coming out' film, a grinding rhythm leads us through a passage of closed doors, as a man struggles to break free from his literal and social confinement." – (Images Festival catalogue, 1995)



frostbite (1996, super 8/16mm/video, 16mm blowup, 12 minutes)
A lonely lighthouse keeper rescues his fantasy: a frostbitten man on the rocks.



guise (1997, 16mm on digital video, 10 minutes)
Arising from the earth, a body discovers its nakedness. A suit of armour becomes a metaphor for the trappings of identity. An adult fairy tale for the 90s, accompanied by a good-natured verse, 'guise' is by turns dark and humorous.



Manipulator (2002, 16mm on digital video, 4 minutes)
A master brings out his slave and attempts to control him. Things go terribly wrong. Every touch of the slave produces a distortion that encompasses the master. Who exactly is the manipulator? The slave, the master, or the filmmaker?



grotesque (2002, 16mm on digital video, 7.5 minutes)
A devil makes a violent attempt to change himself into a heavenly creature. His evil process backfires when he is confronted with the creatures from within.



Filth (2004, 16mm on digital video, 4.5 minutes)
The housecall in 'Filth' doesn't go quite as planned when a simple cleaning job becomes a nightmare. A pixilated tale which combines both the action in the film and the action on the film.



bare (2008, digital video, 3 minutes)
Through pixilation, a male centre-fold attempts to embellish his features – only to take on more than he can handle.



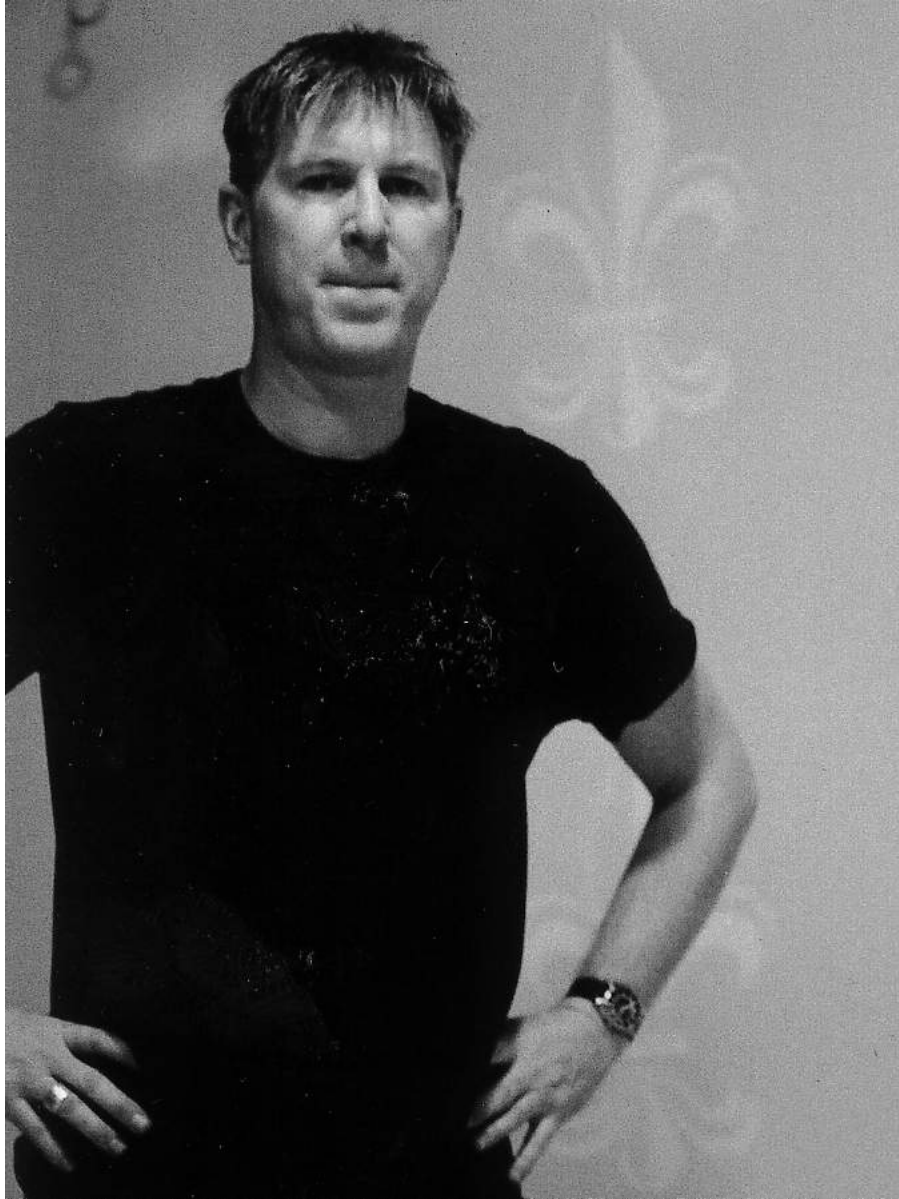
prick (2008, digital video, 3 minutes)
Stop-motion animation is used to manipulate a penis whose desire become its own demise.



winter's end (2010, digital video, 7.5 minutes)
A wintery sun sets on a scene of loss and mourning. The grieving protagonist plummets capriciously from one state of sadness and confusion to another. Battered by forces malevolent and absurd, mirroring his unpredictable emotional states, he repeatedly falls into an avalanche of ice. Down into a barrage of helping hands, down into a winter forest, down into rooms full of memories, and finally down into the place where he must accept the truth.



summer 1975 (2014, digital video, 10 minutes)
An animated film based on one year in the filmmaker's fractured life. Hand drawn rotoscoped figures create an open narrative based on events in his life that took place in 1975.



Wrik Mead on the set of Filth in 2003. Photo by Don Pyle.

Education

2004-2005 MA Fine Art, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK
1984-1988 Honours A.O.C.A., The Ontario College of Art, Canada

Representation

PayneShurvell Gallery, 16 Hewett Street, London, UK, EC2A 3NN, Tel: +44(0)2000 114 115, email: james@payneshurvell.com web: www.payneshurvell.com
CFMDC, 401 Richmond St. W., Suite 245, Richmond Street West, Toronto, ON M5V 3A8 email: cfmdc@cfmdc.org web: www.cfmdc.org
Light Cone, 12, rue des Vignoles, 75020, Paris, France. email: lightcone@lightcone.org web: www.lightcone.org

Gallery Screenings and Exhibitions

2016 in/future, Art Spin, Ontario Place, Canada; *Le Silo*, Galerie Colbert à L'Inha, Paris, France
2015 *Filmideo*, Index Arts Center, New Jersey, U.S.A.; *No Tears for the Creatures of the Night*, The Center for Sex and Culture, San Francisco, U.S.A.
2014 *A Bright & Guilty Place Part II*, PayneShurvell Gallery at the Hosptial Club, London, UK; *Art Spin Exhibition*, Toronto, Canada
2013 *Draw the Line*, PayneShurvell Gallery, London, UK, (Solo Exhibition); *K-Town*, Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, Canada
2012 *Art Spin Exhibition*, Metropolis Factory Warehouse, Toronto, Canada; *Rebels Rule*, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Canada
2011 *Rojo*, Galeria Omar Alonso, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico; *Art Now*, Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, Toronto, Canada; *Art Spin Exhibition*, Gallery 99, Toronto, Canada
2010 *A Bright and Guilty Place*, Payne Shurvell Gallery, London, UK; *Video ArtBox*, The Artist Project, Toronto, Canada; *Art Spin Exhibition*, Median Contemporary, Toronto, Canada
2007 *Massive Art Party* (Curated by Michelle Jacques), AGO, Toronto, Canada
2006 *Flow*, Truck Gallery & CSIF, Calgary, Canada; *Queer Takes Film Series*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, U.S.A.
2005 *Goldsmiths Degree Show*, London, UK
2004 *Where I End And You Begin*, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Canada
2002 *XXX Testimonial*, Mercer Union, Toronto, Canada
1997 The Art Gallery of Windsor, Canada
1996 *Closet Case*, Redhead Gallery (showcase), Toronto, Canada
1995 *Haven*, Optica, Montréal, Canada; *The Pressing Of The Flesh*, Toronto Photographers Workshop, Toronto, Canada
1994 *Screening: An Installation*, Neutral Ground Gallery, Alberta, Canada
1991 *Stag Party*, Niagara Artists' Centre, St. Catherines, Canada (Solo Exhibition); *Images For Life*, Evelyn Amis Gallery, Toronto, Canada; *Group Show*, YYZ, Toronto, Canada
1989 *Homogenius*, Mercer Union, Toronto, Canada; *Latent Images*, Gallery 44, Toronto, Canada; *Beyond The Document*, Forest City Gallery, London, Canada
1988 *Visions Beyond Censorship*, Idee Gallery, Toronto, Canada

Selected Festival Screenings

2017 *Wrik Mead: Local Hero*, Pleasure Dome, Toronto, Canada; CFMDC50 Anniversary screening: CFMDC Local Heroes Retrospective, Toronto, Canada
2016 *Black Maria Film Festival*, New York, U.S.A.; *Ann Arbor Film Festival*, New York, U.S.A.; *Stockholm Experimental and Animation Film Festival*, Sweden
2015 *FILE Electronic Language International Festival*, *Game+Anima*, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brasil; *artvideoKOELN*, Cologne, Germany
2014 *Sydney Underground Film Festival*, Australia; *Toronto Urban Film Festival*, Canada
2013 *CologneOFF 2013-ArtFilmClub*, Guwahati, India; Contemporary Art Center, Tbilis, Georgia; *MUDAFEST*, Madeira, Portugal
2010 *Montréal World Festival*, Canada
2009 *The International Guerrilla Video Festival*, Dublin, Ireland; *Internationales Videofestival Bochum*, Germany
2008 *The Montréal World Festival*, Canada; *Sydney Underground Film Festival*, Australia; *Anitmatter Underground Film Festival*, Victoria, Canada
2006 *European Media Arts, Festival*, Osnabrück, Germany; *Contemporary Swiss Film Festival*, Switzerland; *15th Festival du Film en Seine-Saint-Denis*, France
2005 *International Festival of Cinema and Technology*, New York, Orlando, Los Angels, U.S.A. & Sydney, Australia; *Uppsala International Short Film Festival*, Sweden
2004 *Toronto International Film Festival*, Canada; *Vancouver International Film Festival*, Canada; *Commonwealth International Film Festival*, Manchester, UK
2003 *Berlin International Film Festival*, Germany; *Toronto International Film Festival*, Canada; *The Commonwealth International Film Festival*, Manchester, UK; *Montréal World Festival*, Canada; *Worldwide Short Film Festival*, Toronto, Canada; *Ann Arbor Film Festival*, Michigan, U.S.A.
2002 *LIFT, Celluloid: Celebrating 20 Years of Independent Filmmaking*, Tour across Canada; *Images Festival*, Toronto, Canada
2001 *International Human Rights Festival*, Nuremburg, Germany; *Toronto Worldwide Short Film Festival*, Canada; *Anti Matter Film Festival*, Victoria, Canada
1999 *Sydney International Film Festival*, Australia; *San Francisco International Film Festival*, U.S.A.; *Vancouver International Film Festival*, Canada; *Ann Arbor Film Festival*, U.S.A.
1998 *Toronto International Film Festival*, Canada; *Vancouver International Film Festival*, Canada; *British Short Film Festival*, UK; *Homo Eroticus: Films of Wrik Mead* (Retrospective), Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Canada, Buffalo, U.S.A.
1997 *Toronto International Film Festival*, Canada; *Sydney International Film Festival*, Australia; *Ann Arbor Film Festival*, U.S.A.
1996 *Toronto International Film Festival*, Canada; *Cinefest*, Sudbury, Canada; *Ann Arbor Film Festival*, U.S.A.
1995 *Toronto International Film Festival*, Canada; *Canadian Experimental Film* (tour), Bologna, Italy; *Canadian Film Institute*, Canada
1994 *Toronto International Film Festival*, Canada; *Ann Arbor Film Festival*, U.S.A.

Broadcast

2015	DeleteTV, LA36, Los Angeles, U.S.A. (<i>summer 1975</i>); DeleteTV, OKTO, Austria (<i>summer 1975</i>)
2008	Propeller TV, UK (<i>Filth, grotesque, Manipulator, prick, frostbite</i>)
2006	Moviola, Canada (<i>Cupid</i>)
2003	Independent Film Network, Canada (<i>Cupid</i>)
2002	Zed TV, CBC, Canada (<i>Warm</i>)
2001	Pride Vision TV, Canada, (<i>closet case, frostbite, Cupid, Hoolboom and guise</i>)
2000	Bravo!, Canada, (<i>Hoolboom</i>)
1998	Dyke TV. U.S.A., (<i>guise</i>)
1997	FSTV, U.S.A., (<i>(ab)Normal</i>); Rogers 10%, Canada (<i>guise</i>)

Selected Awards

2016	Seed Research Grant
2016	Ann Arbor Film Festival, Jury Award for <i>summer 1975</i>
2016	Black Maria Film Festival, Director's Choice Award for =
2014	TUFF, Honorable Mention for <i>1975 (kiss)</i>
1999	Ann Arbor Film Festival Award for <i>Cupid</i>
1997	Ann Arbor Film Festival, Best Sound Award for <i>frostbite</i>
1994	Ann Arbor Film Festival, Honorable Mention for <i>Warm</i>

Other Contributions

2016	AAFF DVD Volume 9, Award Winning Films from the 54 th Ann Arbor Film Festival (<i>summer 1975</i>)
2016	VUCAVU, an online video streaming and research platform in Canada
2008	<i>SUFF 2008 Films DVD</i> , compilation DVD produced by the Sydney Underground Film Festival
1991-1995	<i>Homogenius 2, Homogenius 3, Homogenius 4</i> , artists' book projects published by the Homogenius Collective

Selected Bibliography

2017	Brad Wheeler, <i>The hottest tickets in town: Five things to do in Toronto</i> , The Globe And Mail, February 22
2016	Michael Jackman, <i>Outside the frame</i> , Detroit MetroTimes, March 09
2015	Sara Torres Sifón, <i>LESGAICINEMAD 2015, abre espacio al videoarte</i> , Plataform de Arte contemporaneo, November 3
2013	Leslie Boldt, Corrado Frederici and Ernesto Virgulti, <i>Silence and the Silenced, Interdisciplinary Perspectives</i> , Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature, Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, Volume 119
2013	Abigail Addison, <i>Top Animations of 2013</i> , The Mind's Lost Continent (blog), January 2
2013	Paul Robinson, <i>Wrik Mead Interview</i> , Artlyst, October 11
2013	<i>Our Pick of the latest Emerging Art</i> , Artlyst September 13
2011	Meera Margaret Singh and Luke Painter, <i>K-TOWN: Five karaoke videos by artists</i> , Magenta Magazine Online, Fall 2011, Vol 2, No. 4
2007	Thomas Waugh, <i>Wrik Mead: Queer Fantasies and Pervert Pixilations</i> , CFMDC Spotlight Series, Study Guide
2006	Glen Sumi, <i>Early queer treasures</i> , NOW, Volume 25 NO 22, January 26-February 2
2005	Chris Gehman and Steve Reinke, <i>The Sharpest Point: animation at the end of cinema</i> , YYZ Books, Ottawa International Animation Festival
2000	Steve Reinke and Tom Taylor, <i>Lux: A Decade Of Artists Film and Video</i> , YYZ Books/Pleasure Dome
1999	Peter Godard, <i>Pleasure discovered in Pain</i> , The Toronto Star. April 9
1998	Cameron Bailey, <i>Best Of 98</i> , NOW, Volume 18, December 24-30
1998	Robert Everett-Green, <i>High-concept filmmaking on a low budget</i> , The Globe and Mail, April 24
1997	Bart Testa, <i>Wrik Meads' Guise</i> , Point Of View, Issue no. 33
1997	Mike Hoolboom, <i>Inside the pleasure dome: Fringe Film In Canada</i> , Toronto: Gutter Press
1995	Antonio Bisaccia, <i>In Canada: Rassegna di cinema sperimentale</i> (in Italian) Rome: presso la Cauty Page srl
1995	Mike Hoolboom, <i>Out Of The Closet: The Films Of Wrik Mead</i> , Cantrills Filmnotes, Brunswick, Australia, No. 79, 80 Double Issue, November
1995	Cameron Bailey, <i>Short Films Prove To Be Toronto's Strongest Suit</i> , Now, Volume 15, No. 17, December 28-January 3