

The exhilaration — and tedium — of desire

GALLERY GOING GARY MICHAEL DAULT

Marco Brambilla at Artcore Gallery
Price on request. Until Oct. 7,
55 Mill St., Toronto; 416-920-3820

I'm tired of desire. Not of my own, of course, but of having to encounter the desires of others as they are endlessly enacted in the public realm.

It is for this reason that the maniacal, three-channel video installation called *Sync*, by Toronto and Los Angeles-based artist Marco Brambilla, now at Toronto's Artcore Gallery, is both exhausting and, if not exactly exhilarating, then at least hectically diverting.

It's exhausting because of the hurtling pace of what is so tumultuously displayed on the three huge screens that form a kind of triangulation in the middle of the darkened gallery. One screen carries images culled patiently — and I'd say laboriously — from dozens or maybe hundreds (it feels like thousands) of Hollywood and sub-Hollywood sex flicks — two frames at a time (apparently you can *evade royalty payments if you lift only two sequential frames — that's 1/24th of a second — from any commercial film*).

The second screen offers an equally hysterical montage of two-frame bits from a whole truckload of violent action films. The third screen — and this is where the enterprise is almost rescued from the terminal bleakness of inevitability — is showing movie audiences, also frantically cut, so that they appear to go from horror-stricken to happy-stricken (and even to standing ovations!) in the blink of an eye. All this happens to the merciless rattle of a soundtrack which gallery owner Fabrice Marcolini tells me is by drummer Buddy Rich — though it doesn't sound like Buddy Rich to me (what would a nice guy like him be doing contributing to a video sex-and-violence extravaganza like this?).

But way back before all the video upheaval, I referred to *Sync* as diverting as well as depleting. For despite the fact that the juxtaposition of video sex and video violence (and their audiences) seems a wearisomely threadbare one these days (regardless of the pace of the editing), the extreme tightness of the piece's construction nevertheless works to make the thing seem less like a document or a display or an exhibit of behavioural excess than a solid, fleshy artifact all on its own: It does not mean, but rather is.

What is also ruefully amusing is that, as the stuff flies by in two-frame packets — an absurd frappé of whirling breasts, lolling mouths, tensed buttocks, bloodied eyes, jackhammer fists, and the rapt or roaring faces of an audience homogenized by the rapidity of its responses — you begin to notice how tediously conventionalized both sex and violence (and laughter and shock) are. Does everybody really do it the same way? Does everybody get pummelled the same way? And do we all laugh and cry like clones?

I guess we do. And that I suppose, is the real meaning of the work's title.



Marco Brambilla's exhausting but diverting video installation features three screens, each of which carries a film spliced from two frames from maybe hundreds of movies.