

7-7 G.D.



File Diamond
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Videos have become a most common commodity in our society. Walking to your neighbourhood 7-11 or one of the mega video libraries is a daily activity for many people. But in the age of the commercial video there is also a large amount of art videos that are created not for the comfort of the living room, but rather for special exhibitions. Sara Diamond's Paternity, which is on display at the Vancouver Art Gallery until March 3, changes quite drastically the experience of watching a video. This is a work of art that tries to hammer home a clear message. This "personal testimonial which explores the relationships between fathers and daughters," comprises three different two hours videos which are screened simultaneously on eight monitors. As we enter the exhibition room at the gallery we are at once confronted with a newly created environment in which every object becomes a part of the exhibition. The large and comfortable white sofas, for example, are decorated with maps of New York City, the very location in which Paternity takes place. The eight monitors project three or two images at any given moment. The viewer then has to choose. Do we concentrate on Diamond's father as he

appears on the screen and retells us the stories of his childhood; do we focus on the images of the city and the descriptions of how it changed or did not change; or do we watch the perpetual image of a woman's hands--which is initially striking--retelling a story in their own language.

The monitors are set in a way that if you sit still and watch the images in front of you, you will never see more than two of the videos. In order to watch the third one you need to turn to the side. Which makes the watching experience less comfortable. Add to that the fact that on one side videos there are long, at times unfinished, written statements, and you can understand why Paternity becomes more an exercise in concentration than anything else.

The storytelling power of Jerome Diamond, the artist's father, is unquestionable. Even his screen presence is impressive. But listening to him for two hours is no easy task simply because we can never concentrate just on his story. And so one wonders what is the point of Paternity after all. Diamond has said that "feminist visual artists have centred on the reconstruction of the mother, but the space of Oedipal identification and transition is of equal importance." Her reconstruction of her past is an intriguing mirage of images which grips you for a while. But it never captures your interest for its entirety. Somehow, about half way through, we seem to lose interest.

This is ___ for Michael Ajzenstadt and QM entertainment