

# ART SEEN: The Arthur Lipsett Birthday Party celebrates a 'great national artist' of Canada



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Arthur Lipsett from the Arthur Lipsett Project: A Dot on the Histomap by Eric Gaucher.

“It’s not just an interesting experiment,” said filmmaker Arthur Lipsett, sounding a bit defensive. “. . . it moves people. It’s not ‘arty.’ Ordinary people enjoy and understand it.”

Lipsett was talking about *Very Nice, Very Nice*, his seven-minute collage film and most well known work. The quote is from an article on Lipsett’s work by Brett Kashmere in the online journal *Sense of Cinema* (<http://bit.ly/1T81jet>).

At the age of 25 while working for the National Film Board of Canada (<https://www.nfb.ca/>) in Montreal, Lipsett struck gold with *Very Nice, Very Nice* when it was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Live Action Short. (The Oscar in 1961 went to *Seawards The Great Ships\**, a celebratory documentary with traditional narration about the shipbuilding industry in Clyde, Scotland. Let’s say I would have voted for *Very Nice, Very Nice*.) With *Very Nice, Very Nice*, the sound came first. Lipsett added his own photographs and various found images later.

Not winning an Oscar didn’t stop *Very Nice, Very Nice* from having a big impact. In an article on a National Film Board blog (<http://bit.ly/1T4yK13>), Stanley Kubrick described it as “one of the most imaginative and brilliant uses of the movie screen and soundtrack I have ever seen.” He wanted Lipsett to direct the trailer for *Dr. Strangelove* but it never worked out.

George Lucas also praised the abstract quality of *21-87*, another film by Lipsett, which the *Star Wars* director saw 24 times. He honoured Lipsett by labeling the cell where Princess Leia is held captive as 2187 in *Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope*.

Lipsett would have turned 80 yesterday – on Friday, May 13. (He committed suicide just before he turned 50 in 1986). To celebrate Lipsett and his work, filmmaker Eric Gaucher and the Iris Film Collective are holding a birthday party for him.

“It’s a birthday party for a great national artist of ours,” Gaucher said. “He just deserves every bit of recognition.”

The Arthur Lipsett Birthday Party takes place Saturday at Gold Saucer in the Dominion Building starting at 8 pm. Suggested donation is \$5.

Gaucher will be screening his documentary about Lipsett called *The Arthur Lipsett Project: A Dot on the Histomap* along with Lipsett’s *Fluxes*, a 24-

minute film.

"With Fluxes, (Lipsett) starts taking time with ideas, expanding on thoughts. It's more transcendental," he said.

"Oddly enough, that was the beginning of the end of his career at the National Film Board."

Also being screened is Circa. 1967, a new experimental film by Gaucher built from 8 mm footage shot by anonymous filmmakers in New York in the late 1960s.

Lipsett's work is also part of MashUp: The Birth of Modern Culture (<http://bit.ly/1Ykw0LL>) at the Vancouver Art Gallery. The gallery is screening Very Nice, Very Nice, 21-87 and Free Fall. They're on the Third Floor as part The Post-War: Cut, Copy and the Quotation in the Age of Mass Media which continues to Sunday, June 12. (The first two floors of MashUp close Sunday, May 15.)



\*Title corrected Monday, June 16.

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