

interests of his latter life. The plant-lists at the end of each chapter are litanies of plants and birds and mushrooms; they root the narrative in places and time. They are not simply specimen displays either of his botanical knowledge or of that violent earlier world in which much of his life was spent.

Although the sexagenarian Lane is my age, he seems very much a creature of an older time and space: as far away as my father's generation, scraped knuckles and poor rations. His recollective mind lives in a dense and often violent past in which it does not seem extraordinary to come upon the description of his strangely deracinated mother gazing transfixed at his teenage self masturbating in the garden of his early home. And he writes of his disadvantaged youthful self, pawed by old men for ice cream and small change, as if their propositions (and his clever evasions) were no more than the dandelions and purslane in his garden. If Lane has transcribed himself into the various selves that compose this book, it is with the insights of Proust and Wordsworth, but translated into the discourse of botany that holds his award-winning book together. There is nothing of the sentimental onanism that characterizes too much of contemporary garden writing. If his sight is micro, his scope is macro. What might be (and often is in writing of this kind) merely mystical is grounded by the botanic. (DOUGLAS CHAMBERS)

Steve Reinke. *Everybody Loves Nothing: Video 1996–2004*
Coach House. 200. \$21.95

It approaches gospel to state that Steve Reinke is the most influential figure in contemporary Canadian video art. As a professor, Reinke has nurtured no small number of prominent young artists, from his collaborator Jean-Paul Kelly to Vey Duke/Battersby and Jeremy Drummond. There are also the devotees Reinke has acquired from his presence on video art history syllabi in our universities. After weeks of earnest explorations of personal identity or head-splitting manipulations of the electronic signal, a screening of Reinke's *Excuse of the Real* (lamenting his inability to find the perfect subject for his AIDS documentary) introduces a richly cerebral, ironic stance towards all representations that had come before, a suspicion towards the po-faced confessional mode, and above all, an absurdly comic voice. *The Hundred Videos* – a six-year project Reinke claimed would compose his work as a young artist – was a revelation that guaranteed his place in the pantheon regardless of what came after, a series of shorts making generous use of found footage, exploring a wide variety of themes from television to biology to pornography to serial killers. *Everybody Loves Nothing: Video 1996–2004*, Reinke's second collection of scripts (after *The Hundred Videos*, published by The Power Plant in 1997), testifies to the vitality of his mature

work, now unhampered by the relatively strict rules governing his bold, 'fast and cheap' earlier project. Each video is now longer, but not only that, episodic: in epics such as *Sad Disco Fantasia*, Reinke works in 'modules.' He goes from digital animation to decayed home movie to obscene Polaroid to obscure text excerpt to DV footage, juxtaposing each element into micro-narratives. These works culminate in the last piece in the collection, *Anthology of American Folk Song*, which claims to be a catalogue of collected fragments, the first in a series called Final Thoughts that will only be completed at the moment of Reinke's death. Other work shows his fascination with conceits of structural film: a lengthy piece consisting only of the most banal and anonymous chapter titles from the book *Incidents of Travel in the Yucatan (Incidents of Travel)*, or another with narration inspired by Jeffrey Dahmer illustrated solely with vertical pans over Kelly's strange, ungainly line drawings of his victims (*The Chocolate Factory*).

Everybody Loves Nothing features the texts for thirteen recent videos as well as an interview with long-time friend Mike Hoolboom that succinctly contextualizes Reinke's work while touching on most of the individual videos included. The interview is a sly balance of the elusive 'real Reinke' and a meticulously constructed performance that is as completely untrustworthy as the persona crafted by the videos. The scripts are copiously illustrated by black and white stills from the work and Reinke's pithy statements reward multiple rereadings owing to their immense complexity: often speaking in the voice of academic or cultural authority (always in the first person), he diverges into absurd, unexpected directions – paradoxes, non-sequiturs, inadequate hypotheses, cruel jokes, and queer metaphors. The impossible is described in excess detail in a quest to create new forms of storytelling; Reinke is extremely self-conscious – to the point of embarrassment – of the tired conventions and clichés of existing creative forms. He has a fondness for publishing video and film scripts which emphasizes the writing – always Reinke's greatest strength – at the expense of the moving picture, occasionally to strange effect. For a gag such as that in *Spiritual Animal Kingdom* where Reinke says 'I hate epileptics. I'm having the screen strobe at different rates so they'll have to leave. I don't want them in my audience,' the strobe is translated into print through illustrations of a black rectangle and a white rectangle. *Everybody Loves Nothing* allows Reinke's oeuvre to reach a larger audience, but can only be a supplement to the original videos. Unlike a voice-over, the page permits greater reflection on the words of an artist whose density and daring of thought increases with each passing year. For a body of work built on gestures of detaching – truth from indexicality, affect from authenticity, voice from body, author from text – removing the moving pictures from a video and leaving only stills and words has a perverse logic to it. (JON DAVIES)