

THEORY OF THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BIRDS

What is it about birds? In Alfred Hitchcock's *THE BIRDS*, they are a traumatic, inexplicable rupture that irrevocably upsets the stable order of things, while in Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly, Last Summer*, they are the naked cruelty of a vengeful God. Winnipeg-based artist Irene Bindi both fears and loves birds. Evoking the peculiar power and "secret knowledge" they seem to possess, her spellbinding *BIRD STORY* combines animation and live action to chart an ornithological cosmology. New York filmmaker Michael Gitlin's unforgettable documentary *THE BIRDPEOPLE* is a similarly idiosyncratic ode to birds and the humans who look at them. While it follows bird-watchers and their quarry in Central Park, at its heart lies the tragic fate of the great Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, now thought to be extinct in its Deep South habitat. Meanwhile, hundreds of Ivory-Billed cadavers haunt the vast taxidermied collections of natural history museums across America. Whimsical, sad, and wonderful, *THE BIRDPEOPLE* achieves its poetic resonance through a constantly surprising array of sounds, images, and stories that convey the tension between the objective knowledge of science (categorizing, collecting, preserving) and the birders' more personal "pleasures and problems of looking and naming," which can't be so easily classified. Finally, Peter Greenaway's *WINDOWS* offers a more oblique take on the system of birds, which figured so prominently in the enigmatic "Violent Unknown Event," described in his encyclopedic *THE FALLS*. Here he catalogues thirty-seven residents of "the parish of W" who have fallen to their deaths from windows, including a man who thought he could fly. — **Jon Davies**

BIRD STORY

Director: Irene Bindi
Canada 2005 6 min. 16mm

Canadian Premiere!

THE BIRDPEOPLE

Director: Michael Gitlin
USA 2005 61 min. 16mm

WINDOWS

Director: Peter Greenaway
UK 1975 4 min. 16mm

Wednesday, February 21 6:30 p.m.