

## SACKVILLE, I'M YOURS

Canada's first masterpiece of video art, *Sackville, I'm Yours* (1972) was made by the great Colin Campbell while teaching at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. In this 15-minute, bare-bones tape – shot with early analogue video equipment borrowed from the university's Phys. Ed. department – we see Campbell expertly take on the persona of one Art Star, a local artist famous in his own mind.

Seductively androgynous and apparently nude – as if to assure us he has nothing to hide – Art Star is framed from the shoulders up as he patiently sits to answer questions from an imagined off-screen interviewer. Employing his already well-honed sense of irony as a subtle survival strategy against social isolation, Campbell's dryly Warholian creation gossips about his lofty status in Sackville. Art Star name-drops shamelessly, and speaks very highly of the town's garbage dump, the Marshlands Inn, and the tuna casserole dinners he is invited to at the university President's house. Coily evading the question of his sexuality, he identifies as a "minority" in the town due to his being the only Art Star listed in the phone book.

Campbell brings to life an unforgettable character here solely through his body and his voice. The artist would soon relocate to Toronto, where he would create an illustrious body of work in video spanning four decades. Irreverent and ambiguous, always attuned to the playful shifting of genders and desires, Campbell's videos chart how we perform and self-fictionalize in day-to-day life. Following Art Star, he would go on to channel other iconic personas like the Woman from Malibu – a high-strung dowager haunted by the glamour and violence of Southern California – and Robin – a naïf from Thornhill astray in downtown Toronto's New Wave scene.

Alongside artist-friends like Lisa Steele – who shared with her comrade a strikingly nuanced performance and storytelling style – Campbell was instrumental in establishing Canada's reputation at the forefront of international video art. Campbell also mentored many young artists as a professor at the University of Toronto, and was a co-founder of video distributor Vtape. Campbell died in 2001.

Jon Davies