

ARTHUR HAROLD LIPSETT

Born: May 13, 1936

Died: April, 1986

To most people Arthur Lipsett will always be an enigma. He was unique. His idiosyncrasies bred myths, and, these myths were so strong that they pass on, like fairy-tales. During the last week of April 1986, Arthur Lipsett ended his life, two weeks before his birthday. He would have been 50 on May 13.

Lipsett was a filmmaker, philosopher and eccentric. He grew up on Hingston Street in the west of Montreal. At 21, fresh from the Museum of Fine Arts School, he was "adopted" after a fashion by The National Film Board, where most of his creative years were spent. Early in Lipsett's film career, his life seemed exuberant. Producer Colin Low, who first hired Lipsett, describes him as a "lively, wide-eyed, bushy-tailed kid. He had a knack for randomly gleaming what interested him."

He discovered film by working on short clips in the Animation Department. He made blooping cartoon films for sponsors in Ottawa, spots for TV, illustrations to be used as inserts for live-action films -- what was known as "service work."

Lipsett began collecting bits and pieces of "outs" or film discarded by other filmmakers, unearthing these scraps in editing bins and garbage cans. Working late at night, he meshed these odd shapes and sounds together to create his greatest film, "Very Nice, Very Nice." The film was composed almost entirely of stills and cost about \$500.00. The technique was different because Lipsett was putting pictures to sound. The soundtrack came first: an assembly of disparate voices spliced together. Other people worked the other way around, tacking sound onto images; only animators started with the soundtrack.

Lipsett questioned middle-class values. He felt victimized by them. He puzzled over people's obsessions with objects. His films view life as a living hell.

"Very Nice, Very Nice" was nominated for an Academy Award in 1961. Lipsett was 25 years-old.

Source : [A Clown Outside the Circus](#) by Lois Siegel