

# WORLD FILM LOCATIONS TORONTO



Edited by Tom Ue





# WORLD FILM LOCATIONS TORONTO



Edited by Tom Ue

First Published in the UK in 2014 by  
Intellect Books, The Mill, Parnall Road,  
Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 3JG, UK

First Published in the USA in 2014  
by Intellect Books, The University of  
Chicago Press, 1427 E. 60th Street,  
Chicago, IL 60637, USA

Copyright ©2014 Intellect Ltd

Cover photo: *Cosmopolis* (2012)  
Alfama Films/Prospero Pictures/  
Kinology/ The Kobal Collection

Copy Editor: Emma Rhys

Typesetting: Jo Amner

All rights reserved. No part of this  
publication may be reproduced, stored  
in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in  
any form or by any means, electronic,  
mechanical, photocopying, recording,  
or otherwise, without written consent.

A Catalogue record for this book is  
available from the British Library

**World Film Locations Series**

ISSN: 2045-9009

eISSN: 2045-9017

**World Film Locations Toronto**

ISBN: 978-1-78320-195-2

ePDF ISBN: 978-1-78320-287-4

ePub ISBN: 978-1-78320-288-1

Printed and bound by  
Bell & Bain Limited, Glasgow

---

# WORLD FILM LOCATIONS TORONTO

## EDITOR

Tom Ue

## SERIES EDITOR & DESIGN

Gabriel Solomons

## CONTRIBUTORS

Corey Waite Arnold

Noel Brown

Sheri Chriqui

Michael Da Silva

Richard Dennis

Lai-Tze Fan

David Fleischer

Steve Gravestock

Piers Handling

John James

Fiona Luck

Georgia Rushing Macey

Robert McGill

Tyler Shores

Will Straw

Carl Wilson

## LOCATION PHOTOGRAPHY

Sheri Chriqui

Lai-Tze Fan

Kevin Harrison

Fiona Luck

Robert McGill

Will Straw

Tom Ue

Ontario Media Development Corporation

## LOCATION MAPS

Jo Amner



## PUBLISHED BY

Intellect

The Mill, Parnall Road,  
Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 3JG, UK

T: +44 (0) 117 9589910

F: +44 (0) 117 9589911

E: [info@intellectbooks.com](mailto:info@intellectbooks.com)

Bookends: *Enemy* (Rhombus Media/ Roxbury Pictures)

This page: *Pompeii* (Constantin Film Produktion)

Overleaf: *The F Word* (No Trace Camping/Caramel Film)



---

# CONTENTS

## **Maps/Scenes**

---

- 10 **Scenes 1-6**  
1966 - 1984
- 
- 26 **Scenes 7-12**  
1984 - 1995
- 
- 42 **Scenes 13-18**  
1996 - 2000
- 
- 58 **Scenes 19-24**  
2000 - 2002
- 
- 74 **Scenes 25-30**  
2002 - 2004
- 
- 90 **Scenes 31-37**  
2005 - 2009
- 
- 108 **Scenes 38-44**  
2010 - 2013
- 

## **Essays**

---

- 6 **Toronto:  
City of the Imagination**  
Tom Ue
- 
- 8 **Raw Youth**  
Steve Gravestock
- 
- 24 **The Yonge Street Strip**  
Steve Gravestock
- 
- 40 **Distilling Toronto History:  
How a Victorian Industrial Site  
Became a Hollywood Backlot**  
David Fleischer
- 
- 56 **The Toronto New Wave**  
Steve Gravestock
- 
- 72 **At Home in Toronto:  
Houses and Apartments  
that Signify the City**  
Richard Dennis
- 
- 88 **Everywhere and Nowhere:  
David Cronenberg's Toronto**  
David Fleischer
- 
- 106 **The Anonymous Metropolis**  
David Fleischer
- 
- 124 **The Toronto International  
Film Festival (TIFF) & the City**  
Piers Handling
- 

## **Backpages**

- 126 Resources  
127 Contributor Bios  
128 Filmography

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first and deepest debt is to my doctoral supervisor Philip Horne. I have been immensely fortunate to have Professor Horne as mentor, critic and example as teacher and writer; and I dedicate this book, my first, to him. I have benefited immeasurably from the intellectual and practical support of students, teachers and researchers, past and present, in the Department of English Language and Literature at University College London, and from the help of its administrative team, Carol Bowen, Stephen Cadywold, Anita Garfoot and James Phillips. Philip Schofield from the Faculty of Laws welcomed me warmly into the University College London Bentham Project, and I thank my colleagues there for their generosity and camaraderie.

David Fleischer has been an invaluable resource and his knowledge of Toronto on film is a constant inspiration. Kevin Harrison's location photography in many of the pages that follow brought the city to life. I have learned a lot from all of the book's contributors, especially Steve Gravestock, Fiona Luck and Tyler Shores, who made the editing process a pleasure. Noel Brown, Professor Horne, Robert McGill and Gravestock were tremendous influences on the book's introductory material. Over many years, the Toronto International Film Festival has nurtured me to be a much better film scholar, and I am grateful to Lina Rodriguez for her unflagging support. I have profited from the kindness of the many institutions represented in this book, and from Marsha Herle and Anna Shipton at the Ontario Media Development Corporation.

My particular thanks go to Gabriel Solomons, an exemplary designer, reader, colleague and friend, for inviting me to edit this project, for his unnerving perspicacity, and for his meticulousness; to Emma Rhys for her copyediting; and to Intellect and the University of Chicago Press for their scholarly care. For their encouragement and their votes of confidence, I am indebted to the Canadian Centennial Scholarship Fund; the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada; and University College London.

T O M U E



---

# INTRODUCTION

## **World Film Locations** *Toronto*

**ERIC PACKER (ROBERT PATTINSON)** reveals to his wife Elise (Sarah Gadon) in David Cronenberg's *Cosmopolis* (2012) that the cork lining that he had built into his stretch limousine failed to shut out the street noise:

*The city eats and sleeps noise. It makes noise out of every century. It makes the same noise as it made in the seventeenth century, along with all the other noises that have evolved since then. No. I don't mind the noise. The noise energizes me. The important thing is that it's there.*

The sounds that Cronenberg, through Packer, describes here gesture towards the historicity and the vitality of the city, a site of convergence between the past and the present, and of negotiation between distance and proximity, between estrangement and intimacy.

The rise and the proliferation of modern cities, which coincided with developments in photography and film, the symbiotic relationship between these two dynamics, and the issues in identity and representation that they provoke, form the strategic core of the *World Film Locations* books' collective thinking. This series explores the cultural relevance and the allure of cities for film-makers and audiences by contextualizing and by analysing how the medium has framed and informed our perception of the wider world.

This volume traces Toronto's historical progression into an international city; demonstrates the narrative interests that it has inspired amongst film-makers, both Canadian and international; and celebrates the city's 180th anniversary. It brings together over forty reviews of scenes from different films, each of which is accompanied by images of the scene, and, where possible, of the location today. The films represented here encompass a wide range of genres and periods – from family classics like Bob Clark's *A Christmas Story* (1983) to musicals like Adam Shankman's *Hairspray* (2007) – and of film-makers, from Don Owen (*Nobody Waved Good-bye* [1964]) to Edgar Wright (*Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* [2010]).

Alongside reviews, this book features 'spotlight' essays that explore the rise of films made in Toronto in the 1960s; the Yonge Street Strip and the Distillery District, at different periods, as two of the city's central movie locations; some of the masterpieces of the Toronto New Wave film-makers and their links to the theatre scene; domestic spaces in films; Cronenberg's use of Toronto, a city with which he is powerfully bonded; the rise of superhero films made in the city and its own hero in the character Kick-Ass; and the Toronto International Film Festival. As a whole, these essays, along with the reviews, provide us with both a framework for thinking about the city and an opportunity to look back and to look forward on Toronto's 180th anniversary. And if we listen, we too can hear, share and join in the symphony of voices that have stirred the imaginations of Guillermo del Toro, Atom Egoyan, Roland Joffé and Sarah Polley. †

**Tom Ue, Editor**

# TORONTO

## *City of the Imagination*

Text by  
**TOM  
UE**

**WALLACE (DANIEL RADCLIFFE)** sits on the roof of his three-storied apartment, looking from the sloping hills of Riverdale to downtown Toronto, lost in thought about the girl (Zoe Kazan) that he has met at a party earlier that night. He studies the slip of paper with the scrawled-on phone number that she gave him before he lets go of the page and a breeze carries it far away. For Linda Hutcheon, Canada speaks a doubled voice, something that incorporates irony, though not necessarily in a defensive or offensive way (1991, p. 1). Rather, it enables ‘speakers to address and at the same time slyly confront an “official” discourse: that is, to work *within* a dominant tradition but also to challenge it – without being utterly co-opted by it’ (1991, p. 1–2). Nowhere is this more evident than in the films made in Canada, and especially Toronto with its cosmopolitan and international make-up. Michael Dowse’s and writer Elan Mastai’s *The F Word* (2013), as we have seen, harkens back to the American rom-com – Wallace and Chantry are subsequently brought together by chance in a screening of *The*

*Princess Bride* (Rob Reiner, 1987) at the Royal no less – while situating the city in the genre’s rich and vibrant history. Torontonians will resonate strongly with the film’s ‘geographical integrity’, that is, its filmic locations’ close approximation to where they are based in the real world.

Toronto’s standing in for another city, though it is itself a modern one with its identity emerging in its own right, is part of its rather paradoxical presence in the global imagination. While the earliest recorded film footage that we have of Toronto is from George Scott’s 1904 *The Great Toronto Fire, April 19, 1904*, which shows part of the massive blaze that destroyed 122 buildings, the city’s cinematic self-image was not firmly established until the 1960s, with the emergence of Don Owen’s, David Secter’s, David Cronenberg’s and Don Shebib’s work (Handling, p. 15). Owen’s *Nobody Waved Good-bye* (1964) captures the vulnerability and the frustrations of Peter (Peter Kastner) and Julie (Julie Biggs), 18-year-olds who aim not to emulate their constantly fighting parents. In a pivotal moment in the film, Peter reprimands his future brother-in-law, a dentist, for his capitalist values, and for his going to see Joseph L. Mankiewicz’s highly-publicized *Cleopatra* (1963), with its star Elizabeth Taylor. Peter’s desire to define himself against the dentist finds correlation in the film’s desire to define itself against the more commercial American feature, and this is apparent in the stark realism of Owen’s film. For all Peter’s idealism, he is unable to escape the capitalist culture that he criticizes. The film repeatedly uses, as a visual cue, roads and the subway – Peter and Julie take the train from the Rosedale to the Davisville Stations in the early hours – to remind us that the characters are in transition, both physically and emotionally.





Above ©2007 New Line Cinema/Ingenious Film Partners  
Opposite © 2006 Founndry Films/ Capri Releasing/ HarWay Films

**Toronto's standing in for another city, though it is itself a modern one with its identity emerging in its own right, is part of its rather paradoxical presence in the global imagination.**

The city's film scene in the past thirty years changed, importantly, with the rise of Canadian cinema, the founding of the Montreal World Film Festival in 1975 and the Toronto International Film Festival (known originally as 'The Festival of Festivals') in 1976, events that have the potential 'to help shape and confirm as well as contest the canon' (Czach, pp. 78–80). Toronto has inspired the imaginations of numerous film-makers since. Its representation as Boston in *Good Will Hunting* (Gus van Sant, 1997), the titular city in *Chicago* (Rob Marshall, 2002), Lyra's world in *The Golden Compass* (Chris Weitz, 2007), New York in *Cosmopolis* (David Cronenberg, 2012), and the ancient city of Pompeii (Paul W.S. Anderson, 2014) are just some of numerous instances in which the city is disguised as somewhere else. Indeed, a cursory glance at filming statistics would indicate the sheer number and range of film projects at home in the city and the number of masks that it wears: in 2012, expenditures for on-location filming

in Toronto reached an approximate \$1.2 billion; for major productions (inclusive of features, television specials, series and movies of the week), \$1.0149 billion; for 103 television series with a combined 1,009 episodes, \$707.33 million; and for 40 features, \$278.1 million ('Film, Television, Commercial and Music Video Production'). The

dual identities of the city as both itself and, more often, as another place contribute to the informed viewer's experience a far-ranging kind of irony by imbuing it with multiple ways of reading.

In Sarah Polley's *Away from Her* (2006), Fiona's doctor (Alberta Watson) asks her (Julie Christie) what she would do if she were the first person to spot a fire in a movie theatre. Fiona, who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, replies, as she looks to her husband Grant (Gordon Pinsent) for confirmation, 'We don't go to the movies much anymore, do we, Grant? All those multiplexes showing the same American garbage.' This nod to American cinema, its monotony, and its global distribution recalls Peter's in Don Owen's film and reminds us of how much the city and its film culture have changed since. This criticism prompts us to reflect on the film's own beginnings as a short story by Nobel Prize winner Alice Munro that was set in Brant County, Ontario and that was first published in *The New Yorker*; its premiere in the Toronto International Film Festival; and its global recognition through numerous accolades including Academy Award nominations for Polley and Christie. The questions that *Away from Her* and numerous other films raise about irony speak to the doubleness that Hutcheon describes. These metanarrative elements make Toronto and its representations on screens large and small a particularly illuminating space for the imagination. ✚

NOTE: See Robert McGill's 'No Nation but Adaptation: "The Bear Came over the Mountain," *Away from Her*, and What It Means to Be Faithful' (2008) for an insightful discussion about the film and how it 'speaks to the significance of adaptation for a country in which many artists and critics have been preoccupied with building a sense of national cultural heritage' (p. 110).

# RAW YOUTH

Text by  
**STEVE  
GRAVESTOCK**

**ALTHOUGH A HANDFUL** of features were made in Toronto before 1960, most of them were barely, if at all, released. Toronto-based film-makers like Norman Jewison and Ted Kotcheff began their careers working for Canadian television, the only place to learn their craft at the time, and eventually left for Hollywood and London. Others, like Sidney J. Furie and Julian Roffman, made independent features but soon decided that English Canada lacked the infrastructure to support film-makers, and they decamped as well. English Canadian and Toronto-based cinema was essentially born in the 1960s with a series of films focusing on young people.

One of the first serious English Canadian feature films to be set in Toronto, and to break through and reach a domestic audience, Don Owen's *Nobody Waved Good-bye* (1964), was initially intended to be a National Film Board (NFB)-funded short docudrama about middle-class juvenile delinquents. But, according to legend, Owen shot the film in the summer when

his superiors at the NFB were on vacation. He simply kept ordering more film stock and returned to Montreal with a feature-length fiction work. (The NFB, of course, specialized exclusively in documentary.) The film would have been buried and forgotten had it not been successful at the New York Film Festival, which spurred its domestic re-release. Much of the film was improvised and shot on location using 16 mm equipment, which afforded the film-makers an unusual amount of freedom and imbued the film with a documentary aura – so much so that it won the BAFTA for Best Documentary.

Owen drew on his own experiences of the city, to some extent, and especially on the personality of actor Peter Kastner in creating his hero, Peter, an antsy adolescent and nascent artist who almost naturally rubs people the wrong way, but whose problems and concerns are either ignored or dismissed in the most peremptory manner. His elders are so intent on rules and regulations that they seem determined to ruin Peter's life. One of the key players in the film is Toronto, then a sadly mono-cultural city, and stodgy to the extreme. (The hyper-stuffiness of the milieu only makes the hero more sympathetic.)

Owen once referred to the Toronto of the period – where bars, cinemas and restaurants closed on Sundays – as 'Laura Secord' heaven, referencing the long running chain of sweets stores named after an early national heroine. Key scenes take place on Toronto Island; on Highway 401; and in pre-hippie Yorkville, where coffee shops were just on the verge of exploding. A couple of years later, Yorkville will become the stomping grounds for Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot and, briefly, Rick James.

Another key early film was David Sexter's *Winter Kept Us Warm* (1965). Set primarily on the University of Toronto campus, it deals with





Above © 1964 National Film Board of Canada (NFB)  
Opposite © 1965 Varisty

the friendship between Doug (John Labow), a sophisticated returning student, and Peter (Henry Tarvainen), a naïve freshman from the provinces. Secter cross-cuts between the two characters' arrivals with Doug speeding down the highway in a convertible blasting bebop while Peter emerges from Union Station to stare in wonder at the statuesque Royal York Hotel – now the Fairmount Royal York. Doug takes Peter under his wing and helps him acclimate to big city life, but their friendship hits a snag when Peter takes up with a young girl (Janet Amos) and Doug becomes increasingly jealous and ostracized. Deeply courageous and heartfelt, *Winter* was one of the first films to deal openly with homosexuality and it was one of the first Canadian films to be invited to the Cannes International Film Festival. Stylistically, it suggests a lower budget *Shadows* (John Casavettes, 1959) with a few amateurish flourishes (see the still photo montage of campus life near

the beginning) resulting from the film-maker's attempt to do too much with a tiny budget, most of which was provided by the student council. Boasting almost bucolic footage of the University of Toronto campus (some locations remain largely unchanged), the film famously inspired David Cronenberg, then a science major, to make movies. Paul Hoffert composed the score.

**Deeply courageous and heartfelt, *Winter* was one of the first films to deal openly with homosexuality and it was one of the first Canadian films to be invited to the Cannes International Film Festival.**

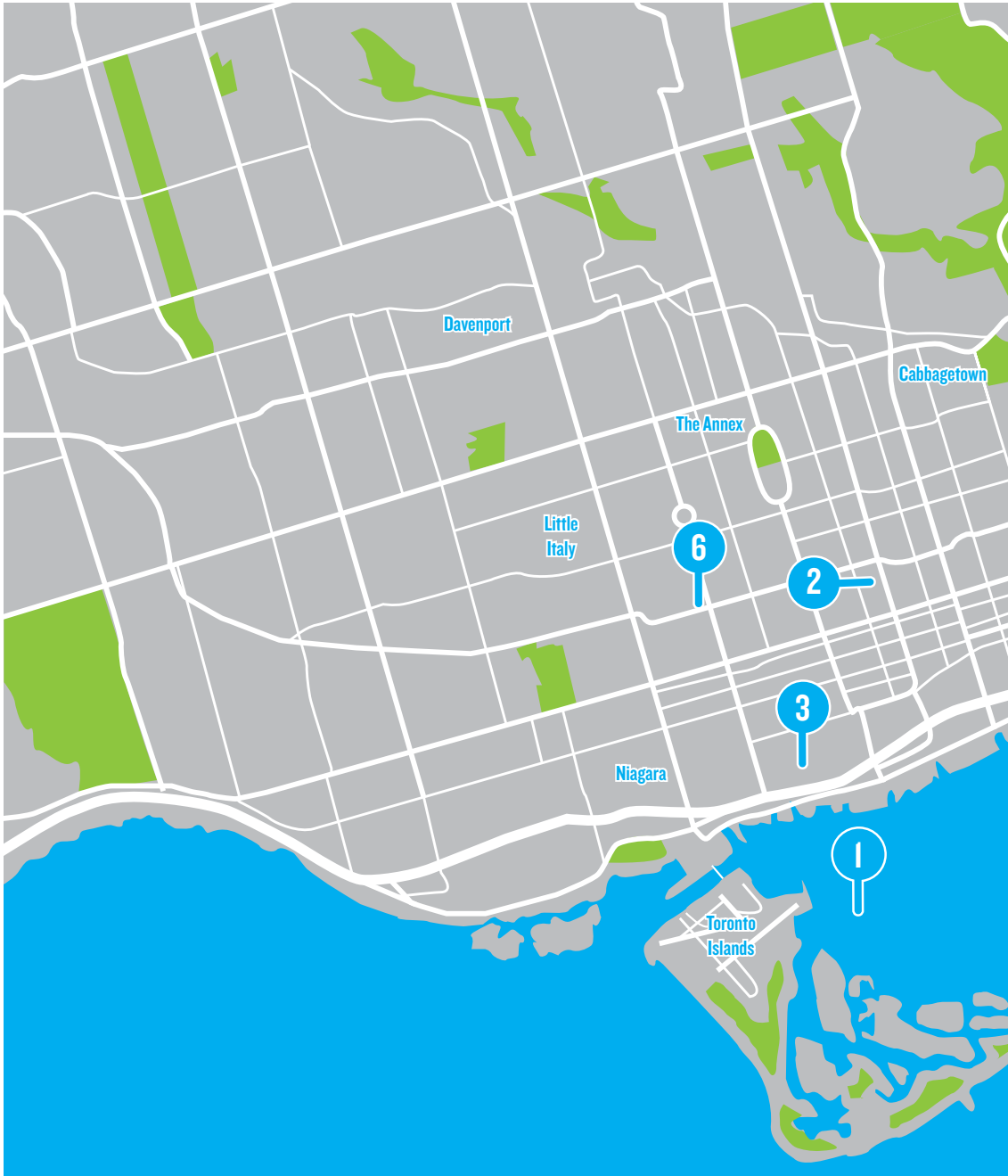
Secter's second film, *The Offering* (1967), was not as well-received, though it dealt with a subject as groundbreaking – an interracial romance between a young dancer from China and a white stagehand at the beloved concert venue Massey Hall. Unlike his fellow filmmakers, Secter seemed genuinely impressed with Toronto, especially its increasingly modern, futuristic look. A tracking shot climbing the front of the recently built City Hall is full of optimism, wonder and even awe.

Clarke Mackey's *The Only Thing You Know* (1971) picks up where *Nobody* left off, focusing on confused, disenchanted, middle-class youth. Like Don Owen's Peter, high school senior Ann (Ann Knox) is uncertain about and confused by the world around her, and she receives little or no help from her parents who are constantly exasperated by her and openly anxious for her to leave the nest. (If anything, Ann's parents are even meaner than Peter's – berating her within earshot.) In the intervening years between the films, though, the post-World War II/baby boomer generation in North America had been politicized by the second wave of feminism, the sexual revolution and the war in Vietnam, among other things – and these developments figure prominently in the movie. The opening scene, for instance, records a protest against the American presence in Vietnam and Ann's best friend, Laura (Linda Hoffman) complains volubly about the other women in her feminist discussion group. (They prefer to talk about picayune subjects like their boyfriends.)

Ann's conflicts and disappointments are not restricted to the older generation. Laura betrays her; her boyfriend Scott (Allan Royal), a teacher, does not understand her adolescent melancholia and uncertainty; and Scott's hippie draft dodger friend, Paul (John Denos), seduces and abandons her. For all that, the central opposition does not centre on political views but instead contrasts the articulate (and therefore suspect) with the uncertain and confused as in *Nobody*, the film that inspired the 14-year-old Mackey to become a director. *The Only Thing You Know* is set specifically in Toronto with a key scene taking place in the business district where hippie Paul is infuriated and imperiled by the midday rush. The film's version of heavy traffic seems oddly quaint given how much larger and more densely populated the city is today. On the other hand, the fabled blues bar Grossman's Tavern, once the watering hole for 1960s folkies and a regular hangout for blues guitarist Jeff Healey – and where Scott first picks up Ann – seems peculiarly unchanged. †

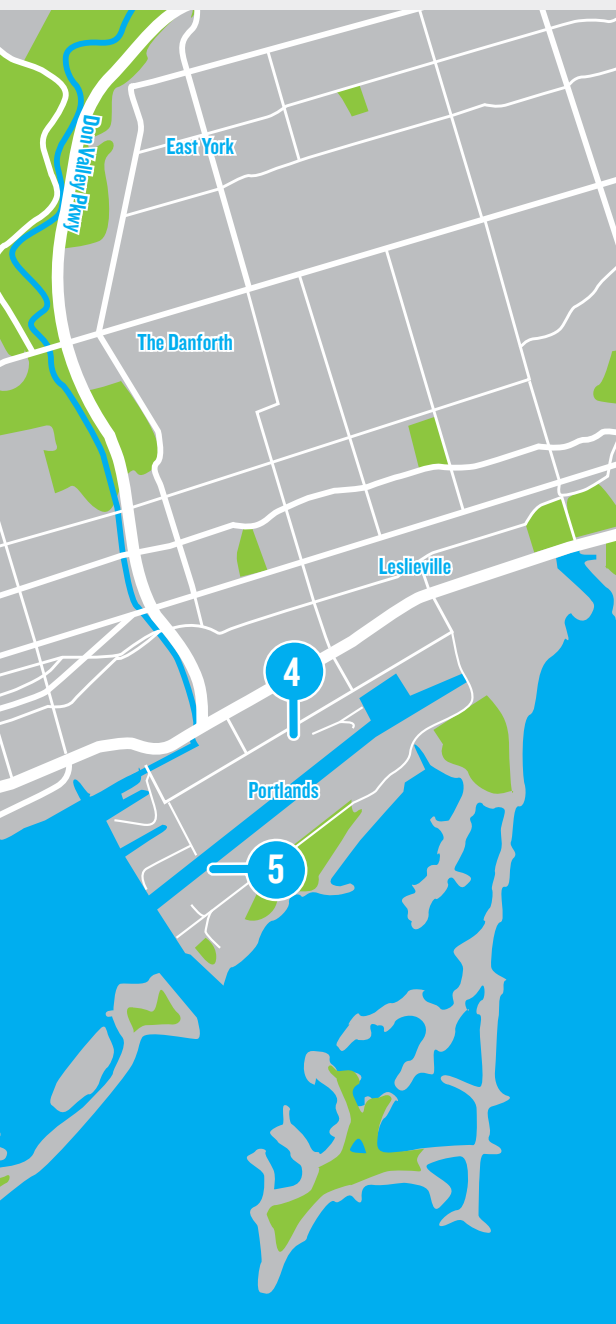
N  
LOCATIONS MAP  
**TORONTO**

*maps are only to be taken as approximates*



# TORONTO LOCATIONS

## SCENES 1-6



1.  
**PADDLE TO THE SEA** (1966)  
Toronto Inner Harbour  
*page 12*

---
2.  
**THE SILENT PARTNER** (1978)  
Toronto Eaton Centre, 220 Yonge Street  
*page 14*

---
3.  
**HIGHPOINT** (1982)  
CN Tower, 301 Front Street West  
*page 16*

---
4.  
**VIDEODROME** (1983)  
Stretch of dockland, Port Lands  
*page 18*

---
5.  
**A CHRISTMAS STORY** (1983)  
Cherry Street, along the  
Cherry Street Bridge  
*page 20*

---
6.  
**POLICE ACADEMY** (1984)  
The Silver Dollar Room,  
486 Spadina Avenue  
*page 22*

---

---

# PADDLE TO THE SEA (1966)

## LOCATION

*Toronto Inner Harbour*

---



**TORONTO'S APPEARANCE** in Bill Mason's classic short is brief and unnerving. The NFB film's hero is a wood-carved Aboriginal figurine named Paddle to the Sea who sits in a miniature canoe, floating from Northern Ontario to the Atlantic through the Great Lakes and the St Lawrence Seaway. After he plunges over Niagara Falls, we are told 'he disappeared'. Cue a 14-second tracking shot that follows the little canoeist at night as he crosses the Toronto harbour with the skyline behind him. Nothing is said. Neither people nor other boats appear. The buildings are grainy outlines topped by neon signs. Is this Canada's version of Hell? of Limbo? The sight of an Indigenous canoeist before a dark, electric city is sublime and haunting. One might recall that Toronto was built on First Nations land, and that while the city now has one of the largest Aboriginal North American populations in the world, it has been represented by Aboriginal writers as alienating and dangerous, a place where far too many Indigenous people have disappeared in one way or another. If Mason's protagonist manages to reach the ocean, it is not least because Toronto fails to snare him. In the meantime, twenty-first-century viewers are unlikely to recognize the skyline the movie records. In 1966, there were no skyscrapers, no CN Tower, no waterfront high-rise condos. Toronto in *Paddle to the Sea* is uncanny, a lurking possibility, its cameo appearance suggesting a city that still awaits its speaking parts and star turns.

◆ **Robert McGill**

Photo © Ontario Media Development Corporation