

iMAGO film festival

At Judson College

In order to bring attention to worthy films, the Imago Film Festival was designed and debuted on the campus of Judson College in 2006. With ideas drawn from other faith-based film-festivals such as the Damah Film Festival and the City of Angels Film Festival, the mission statement describes film as an inherently spiritual artform and a popular medium that requires our careful consideration. "The Imago Short Film Festival emphasizes two things: image and story. Without these, culture cannot be engaged or explained. We encourage filmmakers from diverse backgrounds and perspectives—students and professionals alike—to provide image and story about the spiritual journey of the human experience. We encourage films that experiment with the wonder and struggle of this journey." The festival runs a week and includes film presentations, film discussions, workshops, and lectures. The prizes are \$1000 for the "best of show," \$250 for the best in the 1-10 minute category, \$250 for the best in the 10-20 minute category, and an ipod nano for the "audience choice."

Overview of the 2006 Festival



With much anticipation, we came to the opening night of our film festival on Monday, March 20th. Terrence Wandtke opened with a description of the Latin word used as the basis for the festival ("imago" meaning "image," "image-making," or "imagining"; he used it as a connection to truth-seeking storytellers of the past). Darren Wilson followed with a meditation on the first chapter of Genesis which describes us all as made in the likeness of the greatest of image-makers. After an introduction to the festival plan as a whole and an introduction to festival judges, the program of short films commenced. (Festival judges included Dale Simmons, dean of academics; Paul Mouw, chair of the division of communication arts; and Mike

McKeever, co-director of the Reel Conversations film series; along with Terrence Wandtke and Darren Wilson, the festival directors.)

On the second night of the festival, our first speaker (filmmaker and Judson alum), Kelly Dolan, used various film examples to enliven his discussion of story-telling in filmmaking; with the idea that story is a fabric that ties all people together, he suggested that story-telling was the transcendent thread that makes film a religious form of expression. After Kelly's session, the second program of short films commenced.

On the third night of the festival, we featured a special presentation of the Reel Conversation film series. (Reel Conversations takes place monthly throughout the regular school year at Judson College; the series shows feature-length films followed by a discussion usually led by a Judson faculty member.) On this night, we showed the



Millions, a film about a young boy who talks to saints; after finding a bag of money, he struggles against those

around him to try to change the world for the better. The discussion was led by J. Robert Parks, film critic for the Hyde Park Herald and Paste magazine. The discussion centered upon the place of money in Christian social activism and the attitude toward mystical experiences in the modern world.

On the fourth night of the festival, our filmmaker's workshop featured filmmakers Mike Hertenstein, director of the Flickerings Film Festival, and Dave Hudson, founder of SkitzNSketches Arts Academy. Each filmmaker showed an original film and invited questions from the audience concerning the process of filmmaking and the nature of Christian filmmaking. After the filmmaker's workshop, the third and final program of short films commenced.



On the fifth and final night of the festival, we opened with pre-show entertainment of performances by local bands. For the keynote address by James Wall of the Christian Century magazine, the audience grew as the weather grew more inclement. Focusing on the essence of a film's meaning, Wall encouraged the audience to discover Christianity in film's ability to connect with the viewer: an incarnational experience that reminds us of Christ's presence in our lives. Thereafter, awards from the judges

and the audience were announced and winners were screened.

For the great success of the film festival, Professors Wandtke and Wilson have many people to thank. Thanks to the staff, judges, and speakers; thanks to those who submitted films; thanks to the financial supporters; thanks to those who attended the festival; thanks especially to those who helped with the simple belief that they were contributing to something special. We look forward to seeing you next year.