

# TRIUMPH OF THE WALL

102 minutes, Blu-ray/ProRes, 5.1/Stereo, English, Documentary



## FIRST RUN FEATURES

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# Synopsis

## Short Description

*Triumph of the Wall* is a film about expectations. It's the story of two guys who embarked on an eight-week journey and spent the next eight years trying to figure out how to finish what they started...

## 200-Word Synopsis

As fascinating as it is meditative as it is hilarious, *Triumph of the Wall* begins as a filmed chronicle about the construction of a 1000-foot dry-stone wall by a novice stonemason in rural Quebec. The stonemason, Chris Overing, is to complete the stone structure within eight weeks; the filmmaker, Bill Stone plans the film as a straightforward telling of this laborious yet creative task. But after Overing realizes he has woefully underestimated the time and energy required to construct the wall, both projects evolve into something altogether different.

*Triumph of the Wall* is a film about expectations, about two guys who embark on an eight-week journey and spend the next eight years trying to figure out how to finish what they started...a reminder that sometimes art (and life) is as much about the process of creation as it is about the finished product.

## 400-Word Synopsis

As fascinating as it is meditative as it is hilarious. *Triumph of the Wall* is a documentary film that begins as a chronicle of the construction of a 1000-foot dry-stone wall by a novice builder on a large property in rural Quebec. The builder, Chris Overing, sets out on September 11th, 2001 to complete the stone structure within eight weeks. The filmmaker conceived of this film as a straightforward telling of this laborious yet creative task, but both projects evolved into something altogether different.

Almost immediately, the neophyte stonemason realizes he has woefully underestimated the time and energy required to complete his task. After years of frustration, filming is wrapped. At that moment the wall is less than two-thirds complete. During the preceding eight years, the filmmaker's expectations for his film project unravelled as Chris' expectation for his building project were challenged and revised. During this process, their respective artistic projects confront them like monstrous children grown out of proportion, threatening their sense of personal identity and their sense of creative effectiveness.

The film is presented in a chronological narrative fashion, following each progressive year of work on the wall and the characters that lend their labour to the endeavour. Chris is joined by

others seeking personal deliverance through dedication to this monumental physical and creative challenge. However, the film moves away from documenting the orderly progression of the wall, and turns toward exploring the emergent relationship between an increasingly frustrated filmmaker and his diligent yet thwarted main character. The filmmaker seeks his own artistic deliverance through other “artists” in Scotland and New York. As this occurs, his own reflections and commentary on the process trickle into the film, revealing the deeper motivations driving his relationship to the subject and his own creative expectations.

***Triumph of the Wall*** is a film about expectations. It’s the story of two artists who inadvertently link their creative forces in a relationship that is at once co-dependent, antagonistic and profoundly rewarding. By the end of the film, Chris struggles with the possibility of abandoning his first major artistic project, as the filmmaker struggles with a documentary vastly different from the one he had initially conceived.

***Triumph of the Wall*** takes viewers through the insane and passionate journeys of two artists questioning the unexpectedly massive undertaking of their chosen "art" projects; reminding us all that sometimes art (and life) are as much about the process than they are about the finished product.

## Character Bios



### **Chris Overing, The Stonemason**

Chris is an incredible character. Artist, philosopher, savant, he's impossible to pigeon-hole; a true renaissance man. Yet he's so absolutely interested in so many things that it often seems impossible to keep up with his mind. Described in the film as a "mental explosion," Chris is currently finishing his wall, nurturing a budding vineyard, an apple cider orchard, farming

bees for honey all the while training for his pilot's license! What else can we do but stand in awe!



### **Bill Stone, The Filmmaker**

Standing in awe is often what first time filmmaker Bill Stone found himself doing. His poetic film about the nature of work and commitment was being usurped by a seemingly uncooperative character, or at least not cooperative in the way Bill expected a character to be. Realizing that the wall that he'd been waiting for over the years was a long way away Bill

took a different look at what he had and realized that he in fact had a film vastly different than he had expected to make. That is the story of process, that is also the story of all of our lives.

## Crew Bios



### **Bill Stone, Director/Cinematographer/Narrator**

With a Fine Arts Degree in film production from Concordia University, (Montreal), Bill has spent the last 20 years becoming one of the more ambidextrous filmmakers in Montreal. He's been the DOP and/or editor on a number of documentaries (*Refuge, A Film about Darfur* - SRC, CBC 2008; *Men in Red Suits* - SRC 2006) and feature fiction (*Song* awarded best Editor- Fantasia 2003; *Summer* - 2000). *Triumph of the Wall* is Bill's directorial debut.



### **Frederic Bohbot, Producer**

In 2002, Frederic Bohbot, an independent film producer/director founded Bunbury Films in order to make the documentary film *Once a Nazi...* (2006). On the back of its critical success Bunbury Films expanded its production slate, producing a number of documentaries including *Bigfoot's Reflection* (2007) and *Leaving the Fold* (2008). In 2010 Bunbury Films released three documentaries: *Burning Water, Land of Destiny* and *Underdog Plaza*. Bunbury Films is now developing two new television series *Age of Persuasion* and *Mont Royal* as well as two feature fiction films *Cabane à sucre* and *Police Force*.



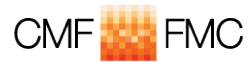
### **Carl Freed, Editor**

Carl Freed is a Montreal-based editor. He has edited and/or co-directed over 50 hours of series and documentary television, including the Gemini-nominated and internationally acclaimed series *Mystery Hunters II*. Most recently, Carl has focused on editing long-form documentary films, including Bunbury's *Bigfoot's Reflection* and *Leaving the Fold* and the NFB feature *Club Native*. Carl's next project will be to direct a documentary on the left-handed experience.

## About the Production Company

Bunbury Films, Inc. was founded by Frederic Bohbot in 2002. Its first release was *Once a Nazi...* in 2006. Since then Bunbury has produced *Bigfoot's Reflection* and *Leaving the Fold*. 2010 was a breakout year with *Burning Water*, *Land of Destiny* and *Underdog Plaza* being released. 2011 sees the epic *Triumph of the Wall* come to life. Bunbury is also developing the TV adaptation of the popular CBC radio show *The Age of Persuasion* as well as two fiction features.

## Produced in Association with:



## Credits

<b>Directed &amp; Photographed by</b>	Bill Stone
<b>Editor</b>	Carl Freed, Bill Stone
<b>Written by</b>	Bill Stone
<b>Creative Consultant</b>	Chris Overing
<b>Additional Writing</b>	Carl Freed
<b>Production Supervisor</b>	Valerie Shamash
<b>Associate Producer</b>	Andrea Feder
<b>Additional Editing</b>	Glenn Berman
<b>Photographs by</b>	Chris Overing, Bill Stone
<b>Produced by</b>	Frederic Bohbot, Bill Stone
<b>Original Score</b>	Julie Theriault, Mikael Tobias, Eric Harding Trio: Featuring: Dave Watts, Michel Berthiame and guest: Jeff Kyle
<b>Post Production</b>	Technicolor Creative Services - Montreal
<b>Account manager</b>	Lyne Lapointe
<b>Colour Correction</b>	Vince Amari
<b>Sound Editor</b>	Marie Claude Gagné
<b>Dialogue Editor</b>	Guy Pelletier
<b>Mix</b>	Louis Gignac
<b>Titles &amp; Graphics</b>	Riccardo Cellere

### Special thanks to:

Chris Overing, Peter Overing, Marie Potvin, Danielle Charlebois, Andrea Gluck, Atif Siddiqi, Magnus Isacson, Sebastian Lange, Gerard Betts, Nelson Gauthier, Robert & Judith Stone, Desiré Murumbi, Ryan Curry, Jamie Nicholls, Chris Gregory, Michael Weitzner, Norman Haddow, John Hughes, Duncan McLaren, Paul Wyndale-Drouin, Scott Ryan, Jean-François Champoux-Lemay, Lena Buchinger, Darren Costello, Evelyn Hornblower, Mark Mendel, John Shaw-Rimington, Anne Cusson, Issa Kohler-Hausmann, Paul Van den Boom, John Shamash, Tod Van-Dyk, Asma Khan, Forde Cooper, Keith Paddington, Sergeo Kirby, Valerie Bohbot, Bruno @ Entreprises Video-Service

## Music Credits

FAC 21

Written and Performed by **Stars of the Lid**  
Published by Lid Music (BMI), 2001  
Appears Courtesy Kranky, Ltd.

Water From the Same Source

Performed by **Rachel's**  
Written by Frederickson, Grimes, Noble  
2003 Quarterstick Records

Piano Concerto No. 27 in B flat major, Op. 17, K.595

By **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**  
Performed by Concentus Hungaricus  
Courtesy of Naxos  
By arrangement with Source/Q

Asia

From the Album "Travelling Lights"  
Music entirely improvised by **François Carrier**,  
Paul Bley, Gary Peacock & Michel Lambert  
© 2003 Colya-Koo Music/SOCAN  
© 2003 Justin Time Records

From 553 West Elm Street, Logan Illinois  
Composed by **Max Richter**  
Published by Mute Song (PRS) c/o Embassy Music  
Corporation (BMI)

Even (Out) +

Written and Performed by **Stars of the Lid**  
Published by Lid Music (BMI), 2007  
Appears Courtesy Kranky, Ltd.

Bach Fugue 2 in C Minor (Piano)  
Performed by Dmitriy Lukyanov  
Publisher: Shockwave-Sound.Com Royalty Free  
Composer: **Bach, Johann Sebastian**

Symphony No. 29 (Movement 4)

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**  
Recorded by the RFCM Symphony Orchestra  
Arranged and Conducted by Keith Salmon  
Published by Lynne Publishing  
By arrangement with Shockwave-Sound.com

Ballade Op. 118 #3

**Johannes Brahms**  
Performed by Steven Massicotte  
Recording Courtesy of Julie Theriault

Americas

From the Album "Travelling Lights"  
Music entirely improvised by **François Carrier**,  
Paul Bley, Gary Peacock & Michel Lambert  
© 2003 Colya-Koo Music/SOCAN  
© 2003 Justin Time Records

Symphony No. 45 in D major, K.95/73n

By **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**  
Performed by the Danish National Chamber Orchestra  
Conducted by Adam Fischer  
Courtesy of Dacapo and Naxos  
By arrangement with Source/Q

Sidecar

Written by Paul Wyndale and Scott Ryan  
Performed by **Speedhair**  
Recording courtesy of Wave or Particle? Publishing, (c)  
2008

Kill 2 Live Die 2 Survive

Written and Performed by **Zombie Death Machine**  
Recording courtesy of Rene De La Muerta, 2008

Even If You're Never Awake (Deuxième)

Written and Performed by **Stars of the Lid**  
Published by Lid Music (BMI), 2007  
Appears Courtesy Kranky, Ltd.

A Family Story

Performed by **ARTiria Productions**  
Publisher: Premiumbeat.com

Air-stream Envy

Written and Performed by **Erik Friedlander**  
Courtesy of Skipstone Records  
Courtesy of Arconomics Publishing (ASCAP)

Dream Song

Written and Performed by **Erik Friedlander**  
Courtesy of Skipstone Records  
Courtesy of Arconomics Publishing (ASCAP)

NY Snow Globe

Performed by **Rachel's**  
Written by Noble  
2003 Quarterstick Records



<http://variety.com/2013/film/news/film-reviews-opening-this-week-may-27-31-2013-1200490179/>

# VARIETY

## **Triumph of the Wall**

**Distributor:** First Run Features

In 2001, jack-of-all-trades Chris Overing began constructing a 1,000-foot dry stone wall on a Quebec estate and cinematographer/editor Bill Stone began documenting the eight-week process. Eight years later, the wall remains uncompleted, with first-time director Stone obsessively questioning why Overing continued to toil away at the project and why he himself kept filming the endeavor. A wryly absurdist meditation on art, obsession and pure stubbornness, “Triumph of the Wall” lingers on grass, rocks, trees, birds, caterpillars and dragonflies to underline the back-to-nature rationale for the years-long task. Daunted by the difficulty of seamlessly fitting together oddly shaped rocks, assistants come and go; Overing often disappears to work on other landscaping jobs, while Stone treks to New England and finally Scotland to explore more intricate dry-stone structures and interview articulate, accomplished wall-builders. Audiences should enjoy the comic contrast between the film’s serenely Zen-like imagery and the soundtrack’s fragmented disquietude.

— Ronnie Scheib

[http://filmmakermagazine.com/71680-five-questions-with-bill-stone-director-of-triumph-of-the-wall/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+FM\\_Blog+\(Filmmaker+Magazine+RSS+Feed\)](http://filmmakermagazine.com/71680-five-questions-with-bill-stone-director-of-triumph-of-the-wall/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FM_Blog+(Filmmaker+Magazine+RSS+Feed))

# FILMMAKER

## Five Questions with *Triumph of the Wall* Director Bill Stone

by David Licata in Directors, Interviews on May 28, 2013

Like many documentaries, Bill Stone's *Triumph of the Wall* began its life as one thing and transformed into something else. Initially Stone sought to document the construction of a 1,000 foot dry-stone wall by Chris Overing, a young man with an impressively diverse resume that lacked one necessary skill for the project: masonry. Overing estimated the project would take two months and Stone decided to chronicle Overing's effort. The filmmaker had at the time "a vague idea of the film exploring commitment."

But Overing underestimated a bit: eight years later he was still constructing the wall and Stone was still filming him. During that time the film found its focus; *Triumph of the Wall* became about calling, work, and legacy. It is still about commitment, but by the film's end the notion that commitment and completion are inextricably linked was dispelled. A commitment to the process, not the completed object, was the point. *Triumph of the Wall* isn't much about the destination, but very much about the journey.

*Triumph of the Wall* opens May 31 in New York City at the Quad Cinema.

**Filmmaker:** The personal voiceover narration can be deadly or brilliant. I think *Triumph of the Wall* uses it very effectively. Was it something you intended to employ from inception?

**Stone:** Initially, the narration was not conceived as part of the project. I foresaw — vaguely — upon beginning the film a more detached, almost austere, "poetic" approach — like a film I enjoyed very much, *Etre et Avoir*, by Nicolas Philibert. Of course it didn't turn out that way. The narration element came on as a kind of soft-revelation after viewing Ross McElwee's *Sherman's Marchand Time Indefinite* in the early-mid 2000s; Agnes Varda's *Les Glaneurs et La Glaneuse* was also an inspiration. Those were lightbulb moments, when I realized this type of personal approach with narration could fill a significant gap that I felt was very evident. That being said, approaching narration of this sort at the outset is intimidating. You approach it like you would approach a wild animal, with some fear and respect. That process of developing the

narration was certainly based on reams of writing, themes, and ideas I had conceptualized and observed over the years, so I wasn't shooting blindly. However, turning that into a feasible, engaging, and coherent narrative flow was a longer process, with a great deal of trial and error.

In the end I'm glad it worked out that way. Had I conceived the narration from the beginning of the process, I suspect I would have approached it less with the vulnerability and honesty that (necessarily) occurred, and more with a more controlled and (arguably) egotistical faux-poetic approach, which, frankly, would have made the film boring. It was the lack of control over the process that gave it the effectiveness.

One thing I did do while recording narration — and I'm glad I did — was to get a good microphone and set myself at home to be able to record VO whenever I needed to do it. This is a decision I'm happy with, as I feel the tone of our expression and feeling has to be right, and having that mic right in front of me during editing allowed that immediacy to be captured. Sitting in a studio under a clock months later, trying to recreate that was not something I wanted to do, and I think the film would have suffered had I chosen to do that.

**Filmmaker:** One thread that goes through *Triumph of the Wall* is the subject-filmmaker relationship. There's a wonderful moment where you admit that at times you were exasperated by your subject. I think the line is: "I want to throw a rock at him." How did you temper those moments and not do some irreparable damage to the relationship, and therefore to the film?

**Stone:** That's a good question. One of the frustrating elements while working on the project was Chris's "niceness" or his almost perpetual positivity about, well, pretty much anything. When you're out there — concerned about creating a dramatic or emotionally compelling experience for the viewer — you want to have friction through conflict, whether internal within the character or between the filmmaker and the character. And generally, it's easier to work with conflict when it is seen or heard externally. Well, that didn't happen. There's a scene in the film where I'm (trying to) pillory Chris for not doing anything on the wall — but "trying to" is the key phrase here — and I say something to the effect of "We're both trying to keep this enterprise from collapsing." I, too, was confined by my own insecurities and "niceness" that kept me from being aggressive or overly challenging. Like him, I too was hemmed in by my niceness and a fear of rocking the boat. And of course my niceness had consequences for my film — something that really bothered me at times. So there was really little chance, despite my fears, of irreparably damaging the relationship. I did, at times, get shorter and sharper with Chris, but nothing anyone would consider aggressive. I guess I'm oversensitive in this regard, for one.

I remember listening to friends of mine and other movie-makers who seemed tougher and more direct, and wishing I could be more "aggressive" or "nasty" in my approach to Chris, to dig

out something deep or whatever. I have that capacity in other contexts, but not in this one. In one sense, it's kind of like being with family: you've established yourself as being understood as expressing yourself in some way, and if you suddenly switch gears, people sense that and wonder what's going on because something seems phony and forced. In another way, I think I realized more intuitively that based on Chris's character and the situation, getting "tough" would have just caused him to retreat more fully and would have, in the end, been counter-productive. Then there is the most important question – what could I get "tough" about? It's like getting annoyed at a tree for not growing fast enough.

**Filmmaker:** You also began to find deep parallels, if not directly between you and your subject, then certainly with your effort to finish the film and his effort to build the wall. Throughout the second act of the film you seemed convinced that he needed to finish building the wall for you to finish the film. The world's closets are filled with unfinished films because they reach a similar stage. I'm curious how you overcame those moments when maybe all you wanted to do was put the film in storage forever.

**Stone:** The answer to this has two dimensions. On one level, I was blessed by timing. I shot the film for the first two seasons on my own dime, applying for grants both times. After the first season, I was unsuccessful, but after the second season, I did receive some money to continue. And due to the way these things happen, I heard about the funding during the winter break after the second season was done. This was the first time I got any money like this to do a film, so there was a very practical element that said, well, of course I'm going to continue. I had much insecurity about how the project would turn out — certainly — or even if it would "turn out."

On another level, there's just the drive and determination to finish. Whether that is driven by foolish pride or more noble aspects of finishing what one has started is anybody's guess. I have a habit, over the course of my life, of getting into projects that turn out much bigger than I anticipated. In film school, they'd ask for 2000-word essays and I'd hand in 70 pages; my final film project at the school was so ridiculously ambitious for the resources available that I was forced to eventually drop it. For *Triumph of the Wall*, there was still a fear of failure doing the project, despite my drive or desire to finish. But there is a time in life when, as the movie points out, you're in too deep to quit. What else are you going to do? At the risk of sounding new-agey, there is as well an element of destiny and forming organically into one's natural consequences at work here. The final film is a pretty clear expression of who I am and where I'm at — and where I was at. For many years this type of reflection and questioning things, for better or for worse, has been a big part of my life and character. So on one level I'm sure that deeper sense of things, or knowledge or whatever one wants to call it, was steering the boat. And in that sense, the loss of control, the conceit of my original idea that didn't happen, the

frustration and roadblocks — all of these things forced me to turn inwards in a way that I had been doing for a long time. I wonder sometimes about all those closets. There are some good films in there I'm sure — and a few not so good ones.

**Filmmaker:** Ending a film that is documenting an event or process that doesn't have an ending is a challenge, to say the least. How much agonizing did you do about how to end *Triumph of the Wall*? Did you try out several different endings?

The ending was an open-ended question in my mind for a while — at least specifically how to do it. There were a few themes and ideas I definitely wanted to “come to,” meaning they were bigger ideas that I wanted to express but I knew I had to earn that right to address those ideas. The idea about “there is only work,” was one of them. The original title of the film was “Work In Progress,” so the open-ended quality of the film was probably always somewhere in the cards.

I did, however, struggle for quite a while realizing I had to finish the film before Chris would finish the wall, and this caused my consternation. It took me quite a while to come to terms with that. But in the end I realized, like much with this film, I didn't really have a choice in the matter.

The way the ending came out, though, was one of those inspired moments that one really dreams of having. So much of what we do — particularly in the editing, it seems — involves a long, overly thought out, clumsily laborious approach that lacks the immediacy and inspiration of playing music, for example. It's such a non-immediate art in many ways. Carl Freed, the editor — tasked at one point with trying to put together an ending that was, really, too much to ask him to do — had put together a more general, good-natured kind-of thing which was OK but didn't hit it.

There were a few sequences in the film that just came out of nowhere, that were done fairly quickly and seemingly without much hand-wringing or discussion; they just came from a different place, and the ending was like that. I remember the day I had the first version of the ending done — it was something by this point I was editing myself — and I went to show it to Fred [producer Frederic Bohbot], and he just said, “Well, this is great.” It's rare and wonderful and I feel very blessed when certain things come out that way; I like it too because you don't feel it comes out that way because “I'm so brilliant,” but from a distinctly different place of bigger inspiration.

**Filmmaker:** Do you have plans to revisit your subject and the wall with camera in hand, or is this film truly over?

**Stone:** I have no plans to revisit it. It's over, as far as I'm concerned. But what do I know?



## **Triumph of the Wall: PoMo Meditation on Work**

A film about a film about building a wall Darrel Manson | 05/31/13

Filmmaker Bill Stone met Chris Overing shortly before Chris started work on a dry stone wall. The wall was to be two 500 foot sections. After building a test wall, Chris estimated it would take him about two months. Eight years later he was still working on it. Triumph of the Wall is the story of jobs that seem to go on forever: building a wall and making a film.

While the narrative of the film is seemingly about building a wall, this is really a metadocumentary, i.e., a documentary about itself. While we get to see the craftsmanship involved in building a stone wall and meet this interesting, if somewhat flaky, mason, the real focus of the film is the filmmaker's internal discussion and reflection on what he is doing. It is interesting that neither Bill nor Chris understood what they were getting into. Chris had never built a stone wall before. Bill had never made a film before. In one of his early reflections, Bill says that he was "unclear what kind of story I could make.... I tend to film things just to look at them." He certainly does have an eye for nature that comes through at various points in the film. He also explains that Chris' estimated two month time frame made the subject appealing—he wanted to finish a project.

At times the project is very frustrating for Bill. Chris has other things to do (he's managing the estate where he's building the wall). The wall project doesn't move very fast. Year after year, Chris thinks it will be done this year. So much for a simple project for Bill to see through to the end. Bill would love to have wall building be some kind of meditative experience, but just about everyone why does it sees it as work.

So instead the filmmaking becomes a meditative project for Bill. He can use the wall and the work as ways of reflecting on filmmaking, art, and commerce; on what is or is not spiritual. Just as he wants wall building to be artistry with mystical overtones (but is not finding that in his subjects' experiences), he also wants his filmmaking experience to fall in that realm, but we sense that he has not felt that himself.

One of the dynamics of the film is the tension between the somewhat ancient activity of wall building and the post-modern reflection going on in the film. Building a stone wall is something that is very concrete and measurable (both in length and in time). The struggle to find some understanding and meaning in the experience is much more subjective. We can watch the wall

progress, but how can we judge the internal process and growth in either Chris or Bill? At the end of the film we find the revealing subtitle: A Work in Progress. That is true of the wall and of the filmmaker.

<http://www.indiewire.com/article/0000013e-f6a7-d94d-a5be-fef728ee0000#>



### **Where There's a 'Wall' There's a Way: Bill Stone On The Epic Journey Of Making 'Triumph of the Wall'**

In 2001, filmmaker Bill Stone set out to make a documentary about the construction of a stone wall. But like many documentaries, this initial intention morphed as that stone wall took its sweet time being built. The builder -- Chris Overing -- had set out to complete the structure in eight weeks, but eight years later he was still at it and Stone was still filming him. In the meantime, though, Stone's film had gone from being simply about the construction of wall to becoming a rather epic (and at times both meditative and hilarious) look at the process of constructing both projects and personal identity and the journeys we take to get there.

Indiewire spoke to Stone about the film, which some 13 years after he started filming opens Friday at the Quad Cinema in New York City.

#### **How did you get into filmmaking? And how did that lead up to "Triumph of the Wall"?**

My interest in getting into filmmaking started in my last year of high school, in Toronto. I had a drill-sergeant type of English teacher who was passionate about movies; got us reading Pauline Kael, showing us great films and getting me into ways of seeing that had previously been invisible. After that I went to Concordia University, taking a film production program. Since then, my trajectory in the film world has been somewhat inconsistent and unglamorous. I worked on many independent projects over the years as a cameraperson and editor, at times, essentially directing, but the "Triumph" project came out of nowhere. It was my first larger scale, totally authored -- finished -- project that meant anything.

It was 2001, and I knew I wanted to make a film. Documentary seemed like the best bet. I ran into Chris Overing [the subject] by accident. As I say in the film, I was attracted to the idea of following a large challenging project, getting into the rhythm of it, exploring commitment. That idea of conflict of rhythms and the different paces in life interest me. There were also major elements of intuition, chance and not really knowing where this would lead. I don't know anymore than anyone about how fate or destiny works, but in a way I feel a big aspect inherent in the film -- my whole process through it -- was coming to terms with my own place, style and type of expression in the creative process.

**Tell us about the film and the unique journey it took from idea to end result.**

The initial "plan" behind TotW, if I can call it that, was to make a elegant, somewhat simple "poetic" film about a guy making a wall, filled with lovely shots of nature, profound reflections on work, time, etc, similar in style, perhaps, to "Etre et Avoir" or "Rivers and Tides." I envisioned it from the somewhat neutral position of being outside the process -- the easier, distant, controlling vision that define many clichéd ideas of what a director is and does. I certainly didn't see myself involved in the film as I end up, nor did I anticipate it would take near as long as it did -- man plans, God laughs kind of thing.

As the film chronicles, what happened in front of me did not even remotely being to satisfy my somewhat simplistic ideas, however noble or lovely I thought they were. The film involved shooting predominantly throughout the summer and fall months, so in the winter I had time to reconsider, reflect, and worry. By the end of the second season -- 2002 -- I was getting very concerned that my film was going nowhere and I had a character that I could neither fully pin down nor pull out some kind of "big drama" I had decided was the lifeblood of all films. Strangely, it was after this very difficult year that I received my first arts grant to make the film, so continuing became a no-brainer. I continued, still struggling to find the essence -- or at times even a coherent throughline -- of what I was filming. Until I decided to bring myself into it, I was relying pretty much exclusively on what was happening "outside," and what was happening "outside" seemed random, wildly inconsistent and at times, like nothing. That's not a good feeling. After seeing Ross McKelwee's "Sherman's March," "Time Indefinite" and Agnes Varda's "Les Glaneurs et La Glaneuse," it dawned on me that taking the experience from a personal angle -- my journey and experience through this process as opposed to simply relying on what was "happening out there," was a solid angle. It felt like a natural fit.

That being said, I had never done anything involving personal narration before -- man, it was my first real movie -- so it was intimidating and difficult at the start to go down this route. Mixed in with the sense of you "could be getting somewhere" is the feeling that you "could be fucking this up even worse and making something laughable." So the narrative, reflective process was, well, a process. I had tons of notes and thoughts and started forming something



coherent. In retrospect, what I had working for me is that I've spent a good deal of years and energy reflecting on these type of things -- meaning our own personal relationship to what is around us, our fears, doubts, weaknesses and inauthenticities, and all the corollaries that spin off from that. So it wasn't a stretch to take what my producer calls this "philosophical" angle. It was hard work, grueling at times, it demanded a frankness and honesty that was not always easy to disclose, especially publicly. However, in the end, as one friend said to me, I was lucky that things in the film "went wrong" as they did, because it ended up being a better film because of it.

I can thank my editor Carl Freed and producer Frederic Bohbot for being incredible partners in that process. They were supportive of its angle, but they also talked straight about what did and didn't work, no matter how personal or "wise" or sentimental I became. They really guided me along making sure the film rang true, and I didn't get away with any bullshit.

### **It's clear there were many, but talk about some of the main challenges in getting this film made?**

There were a few "main" challenges -- in fact I would even say the film itself was one big challenge. Being three years into filming and feeling you don't have a viable or coherent subject nor character nor real film is, to say the least, a bit of a worry. Time was, of course, a factor too, and Chris suffered (and still suffers) this as well: the question -- many years in, so many hundreds of hours of work and effort later -- what and why am I doing this? The longer you spend at something, the greater the pressure is to deliver something bigger. I realized this implicitly -- I'm not a 23-year-old first time filmmaker, and I felt the pressure that the film had to deliver something mature, something developed, in a way that reflected the time and effort put into it, as well as my "advanced" age. So Chris as a main subject was a huge challenge, because I couldn't pin him down, and couldn't get him to be visibly emotional, and I had a great deal of trouble trying to figure out how to "get him" to be interesting on camera. He had a pleasant consistency -- overs years! -- that drove me a bit crazy. I wanted breakdowns and freakouts and moments of despondency, something, and I wasn't getting it. And you can't blame someone for being exactly who they are -- isn't that the whole point of documentary, to capture "reality?"

There were obviously the challenges of financing an independent, weird little documentary like mine. I did the first two seasons on my own dime, and then in the third season (2003), some initial tiny financing kicked in. Of course, the shooting and the timeline of the film ballooned -- I remember writing the grant agencies, with great earnest, that the film would be done in 2004 (then 2005, 2006, etc.). Over time, with Fred coming in in about 2007-08, he was able to help put the financing in place, sell to television, etc. I cannot underestimate the amount of tangible

results Frederic brought to the realizing of the film, at the very least in that respect. Before he came on board, I was a bit lost.

It was a challenge coming to terms with the fact that Chris was not going to be done his wall before the end of the film (he still isn't done, and it's 2013). In hindsight, it worked out better, as the film isn't about finishing things, and, in fact, had he finished the wall and had I included that in the film, I think the film would have seemed trite, and the finishing aspect would have killed off a certain spirit the movie heads towards. But it was still a struggle at the time.

The narration and the edit were big challenges. Very long edit, and due to its personal nature, there were limitations my editor Carl Freed came up against -- where he just had to throw up his hands and say: "this is your gig, you gotta do this part." I had to do it myself, and editing your own footage that you shot, listening to your own voice as your editing said footage as you're rambling off reams of personal voice-over about your experience can drop you into pretty deep swirling vortex.

Finally, the technical side of the post was difficult as my film spanned generations of camera advancements and technical expectations. By the time we were in post, using tape was a distant memory, and everyone demanded HD, etc. My film was shot all a variety of 3 CCD DV cameras. Lots of work in that end to squeeze out the best looking material possible. I was very lucky that the film is directly chronological, as I wasn't in the unpleasant situation of having to mix very old footage with new.

### **What do you hope people take from it?**

The greatest thing for me is if people reflect on their own lives, their own large projects/challenges/you-name-it, and get some kind of compassionate or generous perspective on these somewhat maddening pursuits- towards themselves and others. One of the nicest things a viewer said to me was "well, in a way we're all works-in-progress." [The original title was Work In Progress]. I wanted ideally to make a "poetic" film, and in some ways in the end I did, although I didn't get there in a way remotely like I had originally thought. And if people watching appreciate that side of it, the beauty of the work and environment and the simple goodness that we all have when we start out and try to make something lasting, something beautiful, whatever it is -- children, a home, a family, a novel, whatever -- I am extremely touched.

To think about the nature of time and change -- meaning how we're always wanting things to "change" to our way(s) of seeing things, and the strangely complex, even illusory nature of this way of thinking -- if viewers come away thinking about this, well, I couldn't be happier.

### **What would you say to a filmmaker attempting their own passion doc project?**

The first answer is what we all know -- you have to be passionate about the subject or process, or at least see the possibility of being passionate about it. So much of this is intuitive and beyond rational explanation. "Passion" is a funny word, because, personally, I was not "passionate" about walls nor even my subject at hand, but I was passionate (without me necessarily recognizing it at the time) of the other subjects the film brought up: an honest reckoning with the self, time, nature, the search to come to terms with our place in the bigger process. There are people in the world who say "I have to do 'X' or I will die." I don't seem to be one of those people. but I do get driven and determined once my mind is made up. If you are one of these people, you certainly don't need my recommendations.

At the same time, there is the reality that being "passionate" about something is not necessarily your ticket to ride. If one can structure what is being made properly -- meaning put it out there in a way that allows people to respond to it, to get it -- the passion behind it will come through and bring it to a higher level. But "passion" itself is no guarantee that our projects will go where we want it to go. I do believe that the cream rises to the top, despite the many cynical (and perhaps accurate) opinions to the contrary, but the element of "passion" has to be mixed in with so many other things: ability, attention, a need to connect to people.

### **What's next for you?**

I've never really felt like a dyed-in-the-wool "documentary" filmmaker. Documentary just happened to be the way in which I expressed myself in film this time. I'm really a fiction person. I'm planning on doing a couple of short films I'm written; they are, perhaps, similar in the kind-of reflective style as *Triumph*. Ideally, I'm interested in combining the explorative, small-crew intimacy of documentary filmmaking with the openness and inventiveness of fiction -- of working with actors as opposed to "real" people.