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by *Maurie Alioff*

FIFA and Shakespeare's Face

For Montreal actor James Hyndman, spokesman for Montreal's 27th Festival International du Film sur l'Art, the event is "an oasis for the mind and soul in a world where culture must be profitable." FIFA's admirers wholeheartedly agree with Hyndman's description. At the 2009 edition, they were offered nearly 300 movies about art and artists, a selection that ranged from *Mort à Venise: un voyage musical avec Louis Lortie*, a Quebec pianist's tour of Venice's musical history to docs about Annie Lennox and Tim Burton.

A highlight of FIFA 2009, Anne Henderson's *Battle of Wills*, guides viewers into one of the deepest mysteries of western culture: William Shakespeare's identity. Henderson's doc, slated to air on BRAVO, depicts a retired Bell engineer who claims that he owns a portrait Shakespeare posed for in 1603. In fact, Lloyd Sullivan of Ottawa believes that his treasured family heirloom is the only known rendition of the Bard created while he was alive.

The vibrant face in Sullivan's portrait, known as the Sanders, emanates the kind of youthful energy actor Joseph Fiennes incarnated in *Shakespeare in Love*, and bears no resemblance to the sourpuss hanging in England's National Portrait Gallery. Fiennes, who appears in Henderson's doc, sees the writer he loves in the Sanders. Lloyd Sullivan is so committed to his belief that his picture captures the real Shakespeare at the peak of his gifts, he has thrown his life savings into proving his case.



Elegantly shot, fluidly edited, emanating an air of mystery, *Battle of Wills* tracks the scientific testing and genealogical investigations Sullivan initiated. The movie sees him as an obsessed, indefatigable, somewhat quixotic figure who is taking on England's Shakespeare establishment, which has a lot invested in images like the NPG's Chandos portrait. Just before *Battle of Wills* debuted at FIFA, Stanley Wells, the formidable Chairman of The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon, unveiled yet another contender, the 300-year-old Cobbe portrait. The story made the front page of *The New York Times* and got played big in other media. "Shakespeare



Found!" trumpeted the Trust's publicity machine, promoting an exhibition that runs until September.

The gloves are off. Henderson and producer Nathalie Barton are responding to the sudden emergence of the Cobbe by trying to put Battle of Wills back into production. New material would continue to follow Sullivan's efforts to validate his picture, while questioning the "claims of the new painting," Henderson told me recently. "They're really easy to pick apart." While it's unlikely that any image created hundreds of years ago could be authenticated beyond all doubt, "every step of the way, Lloyd Sullivan's portrait has gained traction."



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