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Film review:

*Gravity Was Everywhere Back Then*; A homespun romance is swaddled in craftiness.

Dir. Brent Green. 2010. N/R. 75mins. Michael McGinley, Donna K.



**PERMANENT WAVES** Characters fish out some meaning out of artifice.

Filmmaker Brent Green's labor-intensive DIY style—a haunting combination of stop-motion animation, sculpture, his own music and light that subliminally flickers like a retro Guy Maddin movie—has produced such amazing shorts as “Paulina Hollers” (2007) and “Hadacol Christmas” (2006). For his debut feature, Green hasn't strayed from these wild idiosyncrasies, but what might have made for a brilliant 15-minute tale grows tedious way too quickly in expanded form.

Taking Green at his narrated word, the film dramatizes the real-life relationship between unknown Kentucky hardware-store clerk Leonard Wood (McGinley) and his sweetheart Mary (Donna K.). Their awkward courtship starts with a car crash—the single most beautiful moment on display—which, through clever wire work, depicts Leonard flying through his windshield and into Mary's passenger seat. Mary contracts terminal cancer after they're married, and in an attempt to heal her, Leonard begins building a strange residence with excessively vaulted ceilings and impractically tiered floors. Twenty years after Mary dies, Leonard is still building the house, until a fall from the roof leaves him debilitated.

Like the steamship Werner Herzog pulled over a mountain for Fitzcarraldo, the story behind Green's production (he rebuilt Wood's home and other giant set pieces from scratch on his Pennsylvania farmland) is more impressive than the output itself. It's a project better admired than enjoyed.—*Aaron Hillis*