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SPRING 1987

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Feeling the Heat
of Censorship

by Varda Burstyn

Zainub Verjee Talks with Hanif Kureishi

Lesbians & Representation *by Colin Campbell*

Toronto's Anti-Apartheid PART II *by Norman 'Otis' Richmond*

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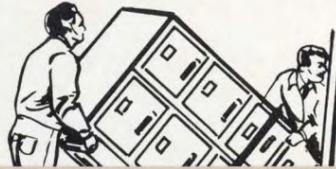
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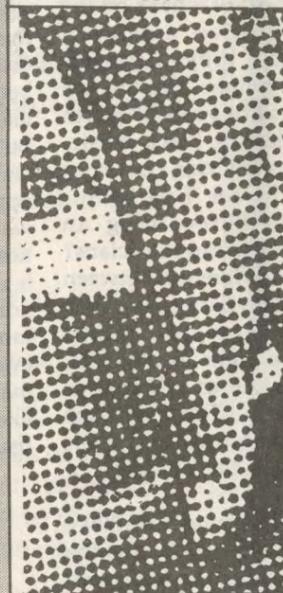
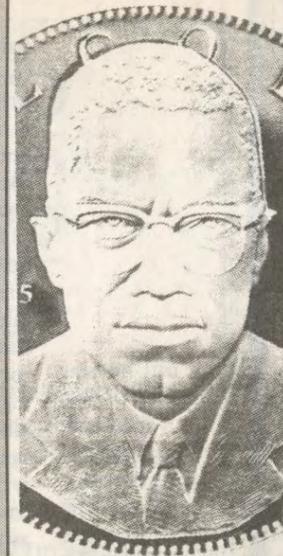
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INFORMATION/DIFFUSION
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Unravelling Nitpickers

ALTHOUGH GOSSIPY RANTS LIKE Clive Robertson's ("Three's Company: CBC-Telefilm-CFDC," No. 43, Winter 86/87) prove petty Toronto infighting still infects *FUSE*, that issue's request for regional input implies it wants to be a national magazine in a field hard to do this in.

Indeed, Joyce Nelson's intelligent critique of Canadian Broadcasting ("CRTC: Asleep at the Wheel," No. 43, Winter 86/87) leads to the conclusion that Canada needs a few strong, export-minded producers and broadcasters, and publicists of Canadiana; rather than advocates of a free-for-all by malcontent fringes lurching at the meagre public trough. Robertson nitpicks the symptoms, while Nelson unravels the disease.

Still, contrariety within one magazine is welcome in this age of the cautious, corporate press afraid to jar readers' illusions.

—Michael Wynne,
Fort Providence, NWT

Leave It To Roots

REGARDING STUART CRYER'S critique of *Graceland* — is Cryer trying to single-handedly take leftist art criticism back fifty years? "(T)he ideological line of monopoly capital," "a powerful ideological message...of racism and imperialism," "the music of oppression," indeed. Marxists are always suggesting that others be dialectical, something they seem least capable of being themselves.

Paul Simon was the author of well-crafted and engaging songs in the 1960s. His subject matter wasn't par-

ticularly deep or original, but he was talented at what he did. In the 70s, his songwriting became more vapid. He began trading on Latin and gospel themes, while his songwriting remained empty and puerile. Then came the *Graceland* album. It's certainly more interesting than most of what's on the pop charts, but it drives critics like Cryer into a frenzy. Why? Cryer offers three main points: Simon has broken the cultural boycott of South Africa, he is exploiting Black music, and he is decontextualizing it.

With respect to the first point, what's wrong with recording an album with South African musicians? Surely, there's a difference between that and playing Sun City (à la Linda Ronstadt). There's no rule against people recording albums in the U.S., which hosts a regime as criminal as that in South Africa. The musicians themselves get exposure, and their music is brought to the attention of the world.

Secondly, as white musicians have done historically, Simon is making money off the music of the oppressed and making it more palatable for a commercial white audience (at least he had the decency to give the musicians credit for their contribution). Simon is driven to dabble in musical patois because of the vacuity of authenticity in white culture. If Simon decontextualizes the music of struggle, all new music is thus decontextualized because form is the product of such cross-pollenizing. Mariachi music is very popular in Nigeria. What could be more uncontextual than that? Zydeco music, which Cryer refers to, was the product of the French, forced to move from Acadia to Louisiana. Traditional folk songs cross-fertilized with the music of Black people, and so on. Dialectic is the basis of language, and ethnicity is the basis of music. Rock n'

roll continually needs to refresh itself by getting in touch with its roots. The problem with performers like Simon is they have no roots. They bastardize and commercialize roots music, but they can never appropriate the joy and spirit that makes such music unique.

It's no secret that artists produce their best work in times of social ferment. The musicians who produced the socially conscious music of the 60s were not flaming radicals; they were a medium for the times. There's a fresh wind blowing, and some of the tracks on this album express this urgency, Simon's apoliticism notwithstanding. Simon's lyrics are not a statement of the "monopoly capitalist" position so much as they reflect the fact he has nothing to say. His music is no more apolitical than most of the musicians showcased on the album. This is only partly because of repression; popular music, like it or not, has always been apolitical. But it remains, through its ambience and its affirmation of the culture of the oppressed, a music of resistance. While we need to examine the social and political matrix from which art emerges, art is art and must be treated as such and not forced into some abstract political mold. In music, as with art, form is every bit as important as content, maybe more so. Criticize him if you like, but I'd rather listen to Simon than the Red Berets.

—Don Alexander
Toronto, Ontario

Uplifts

I JUST READ YOUR COMMENTS on the death of the BP in the latest issue of *FUSE*, and want to let you know what an uplift it was.

I can face not getting the Order of Canada. But it was hard to face both the end of the BP and some of the mean-spirited jabs that seemed to come from everywhere once the news was public. One *does* want someone to say that, all in all, you did a good job.

Thanks.

—Gerald Hannon,
Toronto

Letters
Continued page 8

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL

The Ontario Arts Council offers grants to professional artists who are residents of Ontario, working in the following media:

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- Projects: assistance for new projects or work-in-progress.
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- to assist with the production of original video art.
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- to facilitate creation of works of art using electronic media; to facilitate research of potential significant benefit to the arts community into the creative possibilities of electronic media.
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- to assist with the production of documentary, dramatic, animated or experimental films.
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VIDEO NEWS

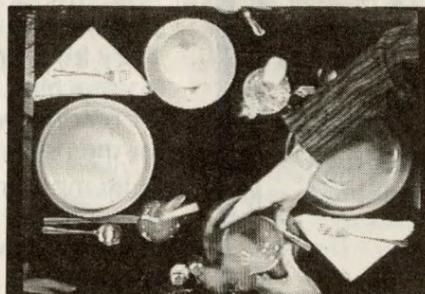
THE MEDIA ARTS SECTION OF THE Canada Council has hired Glen Lewis previously of the Western Front, Vancouver to head its section. Mr. Lewis was hired by a selection committee choosing from a number of applicants. He follows Tom Sherman, who recently resigned as Head of Section (Media Arts). This is the section responsible for film, video, media arts and holography. Hopefully Lewis will bring much needed new energy to this severely underfunded section of the Canada Council.

THE NEW CENSORSHIP BILL BEFORE the Canadian government at this time (under the guise of pornography legislation) spells disaster for film and video makers. The bill would outlaw all explicit depictions of sexual activity and would turn librarians, gallery curators, archivists and distributors into censors by setting up rigid definitions of what can and can't be seen by "children" — that's anyone 18 years of age and younger. If this bill is passed, anyone charged under it — and you can bet that film and video artists would be among the first in court — will be subject to a different "onus of proof." That is, they will be assumed to be guilty simply by reason of their name being on the offending work (not innocent until proven guilty as with other criminal charges). Days of Resistance Coalition (Toronto) has sponsored an ad in this issue of FUSE with contact names for groups across the country who are opposing this bill. Looks like we're in for another fight.

HARBOURFRONT JUST OPENED its new gallery called the Power Plant here in Toronto. They plan on including video in the regular exhibition schedule and in fact have 5 video artists featured in their initial show entitled *The Play of History* which opened May 1, 1987. Unfortunately, this in-



Stills from, ABOVE: "Oh Nothing" video by Dennis Day, and BELOW: "Within Dialogue (Silence)" video by Su Rynard.



augural exhibition is a study in how not to showcase artists' videotapes, with tech problems such as full-strength room lights up all through the screenings! Video artists and the public have become used to technically excellent viewing situations, such as appear during the Festival de Nouveau Cinema et Video in Montreal and the New Work Show in Toronto. Obviously video art should be included in the Power Plant's exhibitions, but they will have to try a lot harder when it comes to displaying the videotapes themselves.

THE 5TH EDITION OF THE FESTIVAL International Cinema Giovani will take place in Torino, Italy from October 15 to 23rd, 1987. Entrants must be under 30 years of age as this is a youth festival. Several Canadian tapes were featured last year with Commercial Culture by Popular Projects of Halifax, winning a \$1,000 prize. The deadline for entries is July 31, 1987. Write to them for entry forms at Piazza San Carlo, 161, 10123 Torino, Italy.

SAW GALLERY IS PLANNING A Festival of Canadian Video Art for the fall of 1987. Rob McFadden is curating the tapes by touring the video centres in Canada. If you have a new tape you would like McFadden to see, send it to him care of the SAW Gallery, 55 Byward Market Square, 2nd Floor, Ottawa K1P 5B6.

KIJKHUIS WORLD WIDE FESTIVAL is programming for its festival which occurs September 5 to the 12th, 1987. Kijkhuis responds to tapes submitted to it, with a selection committee, rather than through the curatorial route. The tapes which are included in the festival receive a fee, there is no charge for entering tapes and it is one of the most respected festivals in Europe. To enter your tapes, contact Kijkhuis, Noordeinde 140, 2514 GP, Den Haag, Netherlands. Deadline for entering your tapes for the Kijkhuis World Wide Festival is July 1, 1987, but they encourage entries to go earlier.

INDIVIDUALS INTERESTED IN more information about videotapes by artists and independents are encouraged to look in *Parallelogramme* for the video centre nearest them. *Parallelogramme* is a good source of information. Get in touch with them at 183 Bathurst Street, 1st Floor, Toronto, M5T 2R7.

Kim Tomczak

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From Sea to Shining Sea

CURATED BY
A.A. BRONSON

Artist-initiated activity in Canada from the post-war period to the present: festivals, symposia, artists' magazines, TV and radio programming, temporary public artworks and artist-run spaces. In this artistic vacuum called Canada, it has been the artists themselves who have pointed the way in all media toward developing a Canadian culture.

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ART

Life At The Legislature

TORONTO — The Independent Artists Union rallied at the provincial Queen's Park legislature this April in an attempt to push the Ontario Arts Council into negotiations.

The IAU continues to demand a living wage as well as equal access of opportunity for minority artists to the granting systems.

Many such artists are unaware that grants even exist. Other artists' works, such as those by women and Natives, have not been considered 'real art' (perhaps the phrase 'real art' should come to have the same implications as 'real women').

Charles Sheppard, a Cree Indian and spokesperson of the IAU local in Hamilton says, "Indian experts deny that Indian people produce contemporary works of art. They often say our work is ancient and primitive or even worse, that our work is a manufactured recollection of the past and accordingly, that it lacks creative, artistic and aesthetic values." The National Gallery in Ottawa has just recently had its first exhibition of work by a contemporary Native artist. Before this, all Indian art, both ancient and modern, was only purchased by museums.

Marjory Cohen, Vice-President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, spoke at the rally to give NAC's full support to the IAU. Cohen noted the great contribution women artists have made to the women's movement over the years. She quotes statistics that say only 15% of Ontario galleries have a woman's name on it. The Joyce Wieland show, currently at the AGO is that gallery's first-ever retrospective by a Canadian woman artist. Titled "Canada's foremost woman artist," it begs the obvious question, "Who is Canada's foremost male artist" — all of them?

Susan Ditta, coordinator of the

Mayworks Arts and Labour festival and newly appointed curator of the National Gallery's film and video section, beautifully summed up the plight of minority artists: "I believe one of the end results of the work the Artists Union is doing, is going to be to give voice and picture and life to a whole part of our history that is silenced now by the economic conditions artists live in... Until people believe in the possibility of making a living as an artist... a part of Canadian culture will always be excluded."

The President of the Labour Council of Metro Toronto, Michael Lyons, said that the IAU has the full support and backing of the Council. "We know that

the vast majority of artists find it extremely difficult to make a living and we believe a union is what they need to help improve that situation."

The labour movement and artists are becoming even stronger allies these days in our fight against the free trade talks. Lyons said, "I don't know how you can protect the cultural industries in free trade talks but then starve the artists out of the industry. It just doesn't make sense."

About 150 people attended the rally and besides the speakers, there were several excellent agit-prop performances. Scott Marsden played the role of the banker who offers economic aid to artists with strings attached. For housing, he offers cardboard hats in the shape of houses and an economic management plan that two artists were tied up in. But the 'artist-rebel' rips down the oversized painting of a business suit that the banker hides behind.

In another performance, Janine Fuller played the donkey ass of the arts bureaucracy and Shauna Dempsey played the artist, equipped with her own picture frame. Their satirical one-liners were both extremely funny and appropriate to the complex issues at

Scott Marsden (rear) plays the banker hiding behind his suit, flanked by thugs Elizabeth Schroder (l.) and Stan Denniston (r.).

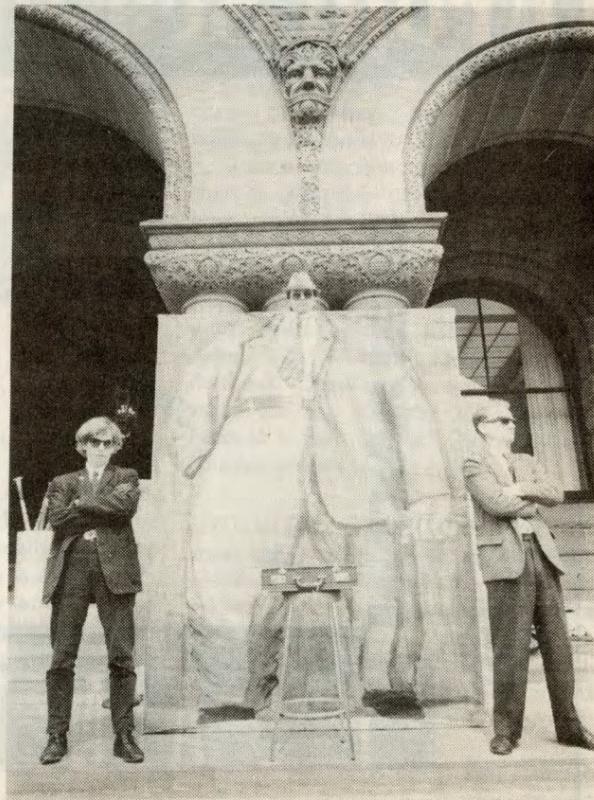
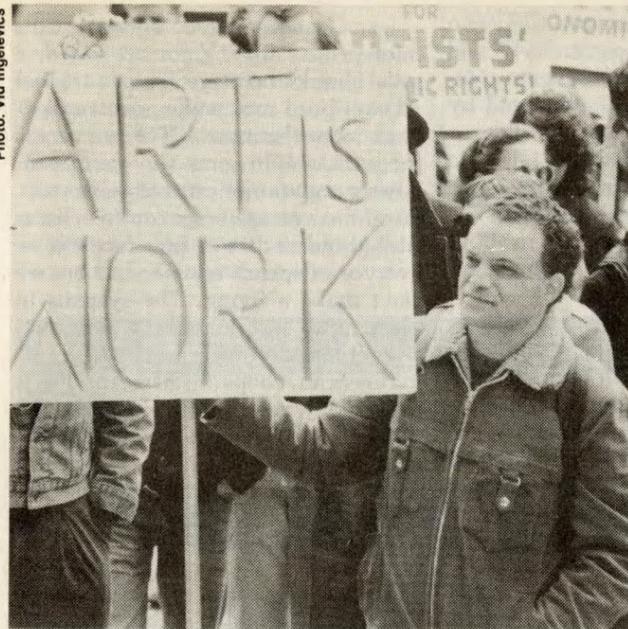


Photo: Vid Ingelevics

Photo: Vid Ingelevics



Peter Karuna of the Hamilton local demonstrates at the IAU Rally, Queen's Park, Toronto, April 1987.

hand. The ass says, "there are only a dozen real artists in Canada — and seven of them are dead."

The Company of Sirens sang about work and "a living culture, a living wage."

After the rally there was a benefit for the Union at the Rex Hotel. Love Among the Savages, the Clichettes and the Heratix performed to a packed house.

Over a thousand dollars was raised, making this the most successful fundraiser the Union has had. The Rex Hotel kicked in a hundred dollars at the end of the evening, which was graciously received by the audience with wild applause and a "yee ha."

Money was also raised by asking for ten dollar endorsements for a full page ad in *Now* magazine that listed the endorsers' names under the slogan, "There's Nothing Creatively Rewarding About Not Being Paid."

Despite this success, Jim Miller, the part-time office coordinator for the Union, says: "as we enter into negotiations with the government, we'll need to do more fundraising to keep things going."

The Department of Communications recently awarded a research grant to the IAU as a follow-up on The Status of the Artist Task Force. The Union will be researching self-directed benefit programmes for artists.

Although there was a poor turn-out for the press conference prior to the rally, the event was well-covered in all

the major media. It's always impossible to know what the mainstream press will do with any given story once they get it, but they did get this one. Stories appeared in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* which were informative, even though the *Globe* focused on our supposed eccentricities (we're so cute). We were described as "mostly black-clad artists" and spokesperson Chris Martin was described as "spokesman Chris Miller...behind her Buddy Holly glasses and neon blue eyebrows."

The *Toronto Sun* ran a picture with no story.

City-TV gave extensive coverage to the rally, although looking at the rest of their day's line-up, we were probably the heaviest story they carried that day. The other major networks also ran brief stories on the rally. CBC radio had stories running for days about the IAU and the Hamilton *Spectator* has recently covered the Hamilton IAU local.

Perhaps the most frustrating thing about this coverage is the focus on the economic demands and not on the affirmative action that the IAU calls for. The living wage is our end goal, but it will not be complete if artists from the regions, minorities and women are not included in the economic reforms of the arts. This was overlooked by the media, or perhaps they didn't understand the concepts.

The Union is calling for a democratization of the arts through adequate and stable funding for all artists. That

includes both well-established artists and artists who have never even heard of the OAC. Of course, 'well-established' tends to imply 'well-established financially.' As we know, even artists who exhibit internationally are played off from grant to grant, never knowing if they'll receive another one. Artists are constantly under pressure to produce unique work, to be good boys and girls (but they usually aren't girls) or to get lost. The various governments need to firm up the flow of monies to artists so that we can know that it will be possible to be an artist for an entire lifetime. At this point, we have no such guarantees. We are merely left to read the papers and speculate nervously about the falling economy, the rising economy, the side-stepping economy or what-have-you.

For most of us who must take on secondary employment to support our work, we know that part-time and contract jobs are the first cut in any financial squeeze. We know that people who live in the regions, minority artists and women are even further away from any viable forms of funding. In this environment of reckless cultural management, it is not surprising to find that those people who are least represented in all areas of Canadian society are equally invisible in the art world. This is directly related to a feeling of alienation (the only 'real' artists are white men) and a lack of monies to begin to change this.

In the art world only the fittest survive, but unfortunately, the 'fittest' do not often produce the best art work. Canada has an immense number of talented and important (by anyone's standards) artists but one gets the impression that the government would rather keep this a national secret.

Art work, of all kinds, does not fall from the skies. It costs money to produce work: money for supplies, studio space, education and experimentation. The government sees no problem in displaying art in swishy surroundings, but appears completely oblivious to the real hardships artists face trying to survive economically, and, at the same time, to be oh so creative!

The Independent Artists Union's public rally was an important step in laying the groundwork for change in the arts grant systems.

Elizabeth Schroder

Artists & Television

RE: YOUR ISSUE ON BROADCASTING (FUSE, Vol. 10, No. 4). I attended the *Artists and Television* conference, and by that I mean the first two panels; the evening was full of famous video people defending and exerting their turf. Certainly, the audience was not preaching to the converted and the panel was left to defend other people's policy. No questions, or almost none were asked of Michel Oulette and Jean Gagnon, the two non-bureaucrats who had succeeded in some ways to use the systems in place.

As a personal anecdote, I have a one hour drama in film that has support from the council (Canada Council) and

was pretty sure it was not a CBC two hour special Sunday night. TVO said they had no money and made no comments on the outline I presented by mail.

I met with Jim Burt and we talked in his office. He spelled out what he might need, what his mandate was etc. The idea, about 30 pages, was read in about six weeks and I got a letter saying they, the Sunday night feature slot, wasn't interested. A reader's comments were attached and were of some acuity, insight for me. A woman's name (Rena Kavanagh) came up once or twice during the panel. My partner saw her, she read the outline while he waited, talked to him, said she liked it and was prepared to give it some support; she wanted to see a later script, plus the film, and she'd then decide whether to slot it in or not. Her show is called *Canadian Reflections*, I think. I have not met her, only talked on the phone.

Jean Gagnon received a grant to do a pilot project for TV for art video; a good chunk of change. Things are bad all over but I took some positive feedback from the panels. The we versus them thing is in some ways artificial. Artists argue amongst themselves too. Sure, the average wage for an artist is five grand — we're like farmers — everyone depends on us to live but we can't make a living. The systems in place now, and I'm talking about access centers, screening facilities, granting agencies, coops are all recent; this is a shakedown period for them and us; the net is much bigger now, it supports many more producers; so is the network — bigger and more fragile — so the problems of repair and maintenance are greater.

—Rick Raxlen,
president, Main Film Coop, Montreal
(independent video & film producer)

away at regional services.

Mary Sparling evidently felt no need to pontificate on broadcasting issues; she preferred to use Stompin' Tom Connors' invocation to assist Canadian talent — "We Have No Canadian Dream" — as her mouth-piece. Connors left the music industry in 1978, frustrated with the difficulties facing Canadian performers.

While the overall response to the Task Force Report seemed very favourable, there was considerable concern as to how seriously the recommendations would be implemented or compromised, as well as the ability of the CRTC to enforce and regulate the industry in a more responsible fashion.

John Gillis

NEWS & REPORTS

ART

No Art Like It

HALIFAX — The newly formed Canadian section of the Media Action Group, a group of Halifax-based artists and cultural workers, organized a boycott of the United Technologies Corporation-sponsored exhibit *American Folk Art* which opened at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia on March 12th. MAG picketed and issued leaflets during the exhibit's opening which stated that UTC's sponsorship was designed to present a benign appearance of the corporation's activities by appearing before the people of Nova Scotia with a 'folksy,' 'pure,' 'naïve,' and 'wholesome' image. MAG's broadside also contained information on the UTC revealing its extensive military involvements (UTC is by its own esti-

mate (1983) the seventh largest manufacturing company and second largest defense contractor in the U.S.).

The *American Folk Art* exhibit was opened by the vice president of operations for Pratt and Whitney, Canada, one of UTC's major subsidiaries. The Media Action Group's concern is that the support of Pratt and Whitney on this occasion may signal increased involvement with the board of the AGNS and UTC's extensive Public Relations (Communications) division. Pratt and Whitney is soon to open its new facility at the Halifax Aerospace Industrial Park.

Bruce Barber



Photo: Gary Wilson

NEWS & REPORTS

MEDIA

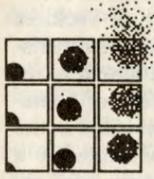
"We Have No Canadian Dream"

HALIFAX — A public forum on *The Future of Canadian Broadcasting* was held Wednesday, March 18th at the Henson College auditorium of Dalhousie University, Halifax. The Halifax stop was one of eleven on the cross-country tour by members of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy. A follow-through session was held Thursday, April 2nd at Henson College.

Sponsored by the Canadian Association for Adult Education in conjunction with the Nova Scotia Coalition of Arts and Culture and Henson College, the workshop featured a panel consisting of Parker Barss Donham, freelance journalist; Mary Sparling, Nova Scotia Coalition of Arts and Culture; and Finlay MacDonald Jr. and Gerald Caplan, both members of the Federal Task Force. Chairperson of the forum,

Dr. Theresa MacNeil, opened with an introduction of the panel and stressed the importance for participants to deal with the "key issues." This factor was stressed because of time restrictions as well as the fact that there were live interactive links with other Maritime centres such as Sydney, Charlottetown, Fredericton, and Wolfville.

Many regional concerns were evident from the question period. Parker Barss Donham pointed out that one out of every three people in the Atlantic provinces is beyond the reach of cable TV, something which would have to be dealt with before such proposals as TV Canada or an all-Canadian news and public affairs channel could be of any benefit to 'backwater' regions. He also blamed the two successive federal governments for continually hacking

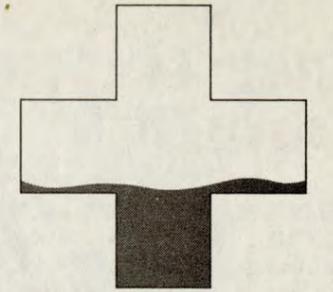


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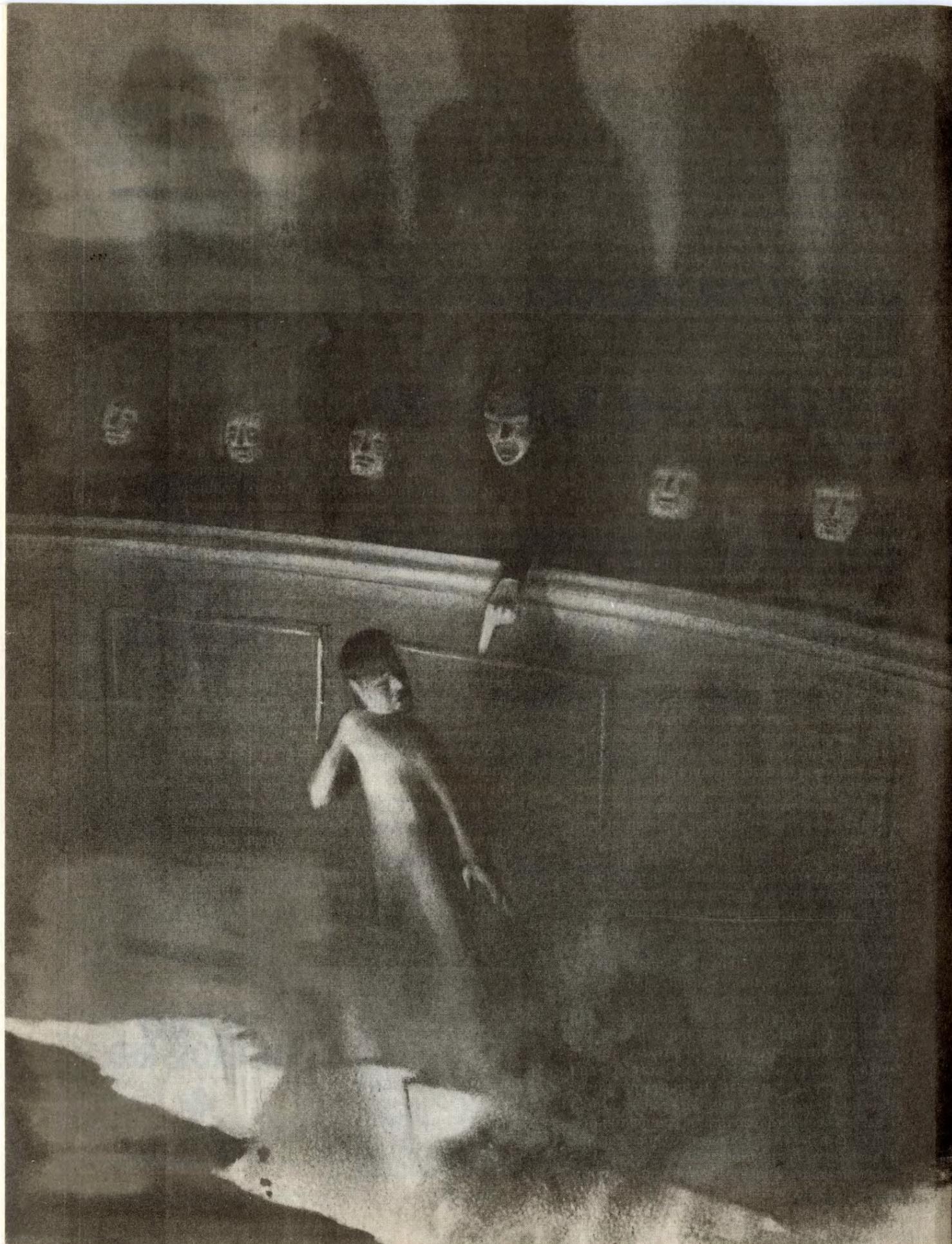
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PORN AGAIN

FEELING THE OF CENSORSHIP

HEAT

by Varda Burstyn

IT'S TRUE that Catherine MacKinnon

anti-pornography feminist extraordinaire and architect of the so-called Minneapolis Ordinance, can still draw 700 people to a Saturday afternoon meeting in Toronto. And it's true that had you witnessed her tear-filled speech at the auditorium of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education on February 28, and seen the enthusiastic response of the hundreds of women assembled, you might think that little has changed since the mobilizing days of the anti-pornography movement in the early and mid eighties. Many of the faces were the same, and so were the horror stories about pornography and the arguments in favour of her form of legislation for Canada.

Illustrations this article by TONY HAMILTON

In fact, though MacKinnon's approach hasn't changed in five years, the character of anti-pornography activity has. In the late seventies, the movement was incubating — gathering strength in, respectively, conservative and feminist camps. In the first half of this decade, it burst into the larger political arena, galvanizing the energy of women from church basements to universities to unions, and creating a new mini-wave of feminist radicalization. Simultaneously, it gave a boost of energy to conservative and explicitly anti-feminist forces. Other feminist activists turned green with envy over the media coverage extended to anti-pornography feminism. Indeed the noise was so loud, that as part of its swan song, the Liberal government in Ottawa even created a Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (the "Fraser Committee") to solicit the views of the Canadian public, and to recommend changes in law in accordance with their findings.

The hearings that took place across the country in the winter of 1983-84 constituted the high-water mark of the anti-porn mobilization. Every church, every women's organization, every academic group, every arts, civil liberties and gay outfit, every mayor, city council and police department spent weeks, sometimes months, debating their submissions and drafting their reports. And then it was done. The Canadian body politic had taken stock of its views, and passed them on, as is its wont, to the government-appointed specialists, whose job it was to sift through the melange and put it into legislatable form. From that time, though debates continued to rage while the accumulated momentum gradually decreased — the grass-roots, 'mobilizational' moment was over. It had taken seven years to gather to its full strength; it may take as many to ebb. But from 1984 on, the anti-pornography movement entered a new period whose chief characteristics were no longer democratic debate and evolving analysis, but the codification of laws and the consolidation of programmes based on the views — feminist and anti-feminist — that had represented the vocal majority at that peak moment.

The results of that mobilization are ambiguous at best. The general position of the Women Against Pornography groups — most popularly articulated by Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon in the U.S., and Maude Barlow and Susan Cole in Canada — well established by 1980 or so. These groups generally operated on the premise that "porn is the theory, rape is the practice," and if I may paraphrase the ensuing strategic conclusions, "some form of legal action and government censorship are important parts of the solution." But though this view was never, in its entirety, accepted by many feminists, differing analyses and strategies, represented in collections like

The Powers of Desire: Pleasure and Danger and *Women Against Censorship*, entered the wider feminist debate only in the past four years.

In effect, these analyses, now usually termed 'anti-censorship feminism,' arrived too late to have a decisive impact on the way feminist concerns and strategies about pornography were expressed at the height of the anti-porn movement. The most important programmes in the women's services and government organizations, the legislation that's been passed and that's being proposed by different levels of government, and the behaviour of customs and police all indicate the strength of the ideas of the feminist and conservative anti-porn currents relative to the 'anti-censorship' group. Not surprisingly, the weight of the conservative current is heavier the 'higher up' one goes on the government ladder.

The Women's Services

THE MOST ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENTS to have been given impetus by the anti-pornography movement are the programmes in education and media literacy now in the works at municipal and provincial levels. They're the result of the convergence of many different efforts.

First, they're based in the calls for media literacy that began coming many years ago from progressive cultural producers, feminists and educators. Barry Duncan, a teacher who has been working on high school curriculum for many years, and who heads the Media Literacy Association, has been the central figure in drawing together ideas, personnel and funds. He's been supported by a variety of feminist groups, including the YWCA and the Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on Public Violence (METRAC — an official-sounding group which is, in fact, not a part of the Metro Toronto government). The agreement to proceed has been made in principle (unlike the situation in the rest of the country, and especially B.C. where the most elementary forms of sex education are now embattled). Now the challenge is to find the resources to make the kind of material that can actually have an impact on children and teenagers who've grown up on a steady diet of mass media. The crisis of funding for progressive cultural producers investigating alternative forms of sexual representation and expression is a significant factor here.

The YWCA also provides workshops on pornography for groups of women, based on guidelines drawn up by Margaret Smith and Barbara Waisberg, and organized around a slide-talk presentation by Denise Gardian, who is working with Susan Cole on a video adaptation. The

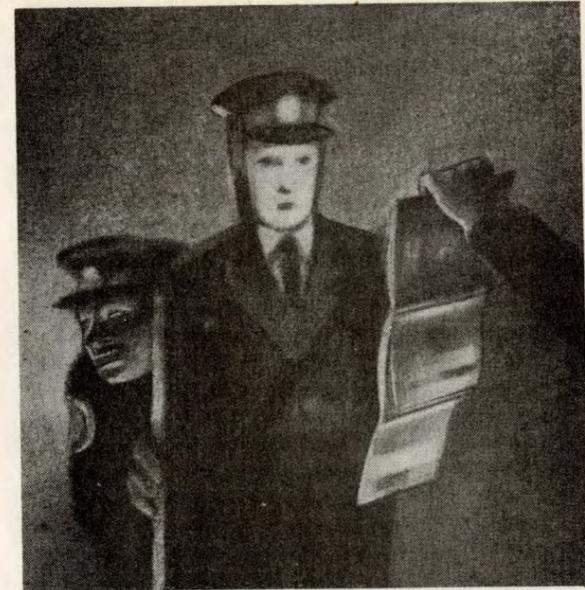
slide show has three strong features: a powerful example of sexist pornography, a good critique of the exploitive use of women in advertizing, and a good discussion of the link between the two genres. Its major weakness is not providing space for a plurality of sexualities. Many women would not recognize themselves in the portrait of 'women's' sexuality — equated with 'erotica,' the obverse of 'pornography' — and feel unsafe in expressing this fact, even though they might agree with aspects of the critique. The absence of lesbian imagery and the unproblematic eliding of bondage with violence are two connected problems.

As well, though women involved in the anti-pornography network have joined forces with others in taking good initiatives for action against violence against women, a group of women has also been working hand in hand with Catherine MacKinnon on adapting the Minneapolis Ordinance or the so-called "civil remedies approach" to Canada. Pat Marshall of METRAC described the effort in the context of "post charter-work, product liability, tort law, all forms of civil law." But if the definitions of pornography and the trafficking clause remain the same as those in the original ordinance (which has failed in four major cities and in the U.S. Supreme Court), whatever the proposal's other features, it will amount to a recipe for sexual censorship, with all the attendant dangers in a society still dominated by masculinist institutions.

The Porn Patrol

IN THE MEANTIME, THE (UNAMENDED) Criminal Code with its section on "obscenity," as interpreted by Toronto police, remains the basis upon which action is taken against sexually explicit publications, toys, etc. The officers in the various police divisions across Metro do the confiscation of the material, and if necessary, arresting; but they may seek the advice of Project P, a six-officer unit drawn from Metro Morality (whose beat is prostitution and pornography) and Ontario Provincial Police's General Investigations unit. All of Project P's members are relatively new to their work, though the unit has been in existence since 1975. Detective Sergeant Jim Hutchinson heads the unit. Three other members were also present the day I went to talk with him — Sergeant Wendy Leaver, who worked extensively with the Badgley Commission, Constable John Mathews, Constable Darylene Foster — all of whom spoke with me.

They explained that in 1986, Project P was responsible for the laying of 72 charges, covering material with a retail value of \$150,000. They



said that they do not advise for the prosecution of any sexual imagery except that of "explicit sex" (which they qualified as close-up views of genitals, where actual penetration was visible), child pornography, violence and bestiality. Auto-erotic, long-shot and simulated sex was, according to their reading of the "community standard of tolerance," now acceptable.

During our conversation, the officers expressed a number of concerns. First, Sgt. Leaver said there was much more child pornography than the Badgley Commission had thought, and that it was now more than a "cottage industry," though it remained clandestine. Detective-Sgt. Hutchinson showed me two examples of what he called child pornography. One featured three lads who appeared to be post-pubescent, in explicit (homo and group) sexual frolic. It seemed acceptable to me, if not particularly agreeable. The other example showed young children engaged in oral and genital contact with an adult man. My anger at the second example was intense. I also worried about the way that depictions of what appeared to be consensual teenage-sex were included in the same category as coerced child-adult relations.

Constable Mathews said that violence in pornography had been steadily increasing. Detective-Sgt. Hutchinson said they were often called on to draw what he called a "thin line" between violence and bondage. He showed me a *Playboy* centre-spread of rock singer Wendy O Williams, tied up in ropes she was holding herself, and said that Project P had advised customs against prohibiting importation of this issue because the photos were of voluntary bondage, not violence. I concurred, and was glad to hear that indeed

they were sensitive to these distinctions. He also said that Project P had advised against busting Pages, the bookstore with a feminist art display, including paint-splattered menstrual pads, in its window in May 1985. Sgt. Leaver said that as far as she was concerned explicit sex, without violence, "man and woman, woman and woman, man and man" was okay.

But...Toronto Police Division 52 did bust Pages; the Wendy O Williams issue was banned; Constable Mathews said "violence" characterized "nearly all" gay material; and all the officers agreed that "violence was out." Yet while Project P members can sometimes push the criteria in the Criminal Code a bit, as they said, "You've got to remember that we're police officers and we enforce the law." In addition, their more enlightened views on some matters are not characteristic of other police officers or forces. They complained that as members of the only pornography unit in the country, they are also the only officers "trained" to deal with pornography. As a rule, the distinctions they made, as well as their ability to see a certain amount of sexually explicit material without experiencing moral outrage or visceral clutch, are unusual in their field. In other words, though many anti-pornography feminists point to the changing attitudes of Project P as evidence that law enforcement apparatuses are reformable, the reform is narrow and shallow, and doesn't qualitatively alter the major problems with the system or the Criminal Code.

Keeping Up (Conservative) Community Standards In Liberal Ontario

TODAY, WHAT HONESTLY USED TO BE called the Ontario Board of Censors, but is now euphemistically named the Ontario Film Review Board is presided over by Ann Jones, a former deputy mayor of Hamilton and chairman of the Hamilton Wentworth regional government. In the one-and-a-half-year-old Liberal government the one-and-a-half year old Liberal government as successor to Mary Brown, the dragon lady who struck fear in the hearts of all freedom-of-expression loving artists, due to her ongoing harassment of galleries and film distributors.

The censor board is part of the Ontario Theatres Branch, housed in a one-story, late 40s or early 50s typical Ontario government building in Leaside. There are two sizeable screening rooms, one for video, one for film, both comfortably fitted out, where panels of five censors ("reviewers") sit, five days a week, and process the extraordinarily prolific output of film and video that comes from near and far. There are 35 people who rotate on the reviewing panels,

selected from volunteers who "represent" different parts of the community. These people put in an average of 3-4 days a month at \$100 a day, making the budget for censors' salaries about \$135,000 out of the \$240,000 that supports the Branch as a whole.

Ann Jones told me that 40% of films and 60% of videos are what's classified as "sex films" — exclusively concerned with sex. The day I visited, there were no such productions being screened, so I was not able to see how panels judge this kind of material. Mrs. Jones did, however, supply me with the list of films and videos reviewed in February 1986, complete with classifications, information pieces (for example, "brutal violence," "horror," "sexual content"), requested eliminations and outright rejections (bannings). All but one of the eliminations came from sex films, some of these related to bondage, violence, and degradation (it wasn't always easy to understand what constituted degradation in the written descriptions, for example "eliminate woman degraded by sexual activity, plus erect penis"); the others, simply scenes of explicit sexual activity (for example "eliminate explicit cunnilingus," "eliminate withdrawal of penis"). "Eliminate all scenes of burning chicken" was the demand placed on a film called *Kinmen Bombs. Class of Nuke 'em High* and *Backdoor Brides* were banned outright, though without explanation.

In addition to the fact of censorship itself, what's most disturbing of course is the equal footing on which everything from cunnilingus to burning chickens is placed. Explicit sex forms the content of clause (e) in the Board's mandate of reasons for which it may refuse to approve a film for showing in Ontario, and it's linked with torture, crime, cruelty to humans and animals and physical abuse in other clauses. The afternoon I was there, one of the films being screened was a home-market video called *Truth or Dare*. With no discernible plot, production values or even actors, as far as I could tell, it was essentially a homemade succession of mutilation, cruelty, horror and, even, yes, human degradation, at least according to *my* definition. There was no sex at all in the first hour, after which I was simply unable to continue watching, though most of the panel, more experienced ("desensitized"?) than I, valiantly persevered in the call of duty.

When I called back the following week, I was told that the panel had given the film an "R" rating (restricted to 18 years and over), even though the classification guidelines state that the film or video can include only "graphic *non-exploitive* portrayals of torture, abuse, horror, blood-letting and sexual violence, which are *essential to the plot*" (my italics). The violence in this video was entirely and exclusively exploitive, and there was no real plot at all. The entire pro-

duction was an exercise in gratuitous violence, geared to cash in on an ugly, gruesome little corner of the late capitalist market.

It's become a cliché to say that there's something wrong with a culture that can find a film like this acceptable but needs to censor images of sex. Nevertheless it bears repeating. There's something equally wrong, and as ideologically dangerous, with a censor board that can pass a video like *Truth or Dare* with a couple of information pieces ("horror," "cruelty"), and demand the elimination of the scene from the American documentary *Soldier Girls*, in which a drill sergeant bites the head off a live chicken in a demonstration. This image, a piece of *documentary* evidence, though only a few seconds long, is indeed essential to the film. But the Board, citing clause (h) of its mandate "where an animal has been abused in the making of the film" (!) chose to demand its elimination.

Shortly before the *Soldier Girls* incident, the Board also chose to demand the elimination of a film clip, in which a woman was being tortured for entertainment, from the feminist film *Rate It X*. The hue and cry raised by the press, arts and feminist community resulted in a reversal of the decision in the appeal process. But it showed that the orientation of the ancient regime was still alive and well. The Board still persists in seeing the critique of violence, sexism, whatever, as equally, or perhaps even *more* unacceptable, than its uncritical filmic depiction.

At present, galleries are not being overtly pressured, though film festivals and galleries must continue to submit the films they programme to the Board, and the Board continues to demand cuts. Ann Jones believes that Mary Brown did a very good job, and was treated badly by the arts community for no good reason. Though cordial enough, Jones seems to be unaware of the complexity and political import of the debates around censorship and representation. This in turn reinforces the increasingly strong impression that while leading liberal politicians make sophisticated off-the-record comments about how odious they find Ontario's puritanical and ignorant censorship laws, in practice they refuse to take even the smallest step toward change.

The proposed new guidelines for provincial censorship that were supposed to have been drafted by last Christmas have disappeared into thin air. The first drafts, circulating in August and September 1986, indicated a desire to exempt galleries from the procedures of the Board. The arts community would not welcome this attempt to buy it off. But even this timid step, which does not affect producers, distributors or "non-gallery" exhibitors, seems to have been put on indefinite hold.

Finally, at the Ontario Women's Directorate, it seems only the politics of the "anti-porno-



graphy" current has much clout. Donna Hackett, who heads its Justice unit, informed me that the Directorate has been funding the investigation of the adaptation of the Minneapolis Ordinance to Ontario, and a project headed by Susan Cole, investigating "the linkages between pornography and family violence." Given Cole's very clear, public and already formed views on the subject (namely, pornography causes violence against women, period), I am less than confident about the reliability of the study results.

The Directorate is also funding Allison Kerr to run a "sensitivity training programme" for women's groups, which, according to Hackett, helps women to explore, at the "experiential level of feeling and response," their reactions to pornography. I've not participated in this program, so I don't know if it leaves more room for women to express feelings that run contrary to the Cole-Dworkin position on pornography, than say, the Y workshops. Perhaps. But the overall impression one gets of the government and government-funded women's service organizations to date is that of a reductionist, radical feminist rhetoric in the analysis of pornography, coupled with liberal (and also very much, Liberal) strategies and tactics in dealing with the problems targeted by the analysis.

Maintaining The Cordon Sanitaire

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, GUIDED in these times by Brian Mulroney and a caucus which includes some very right-wing MPs, has two ways of dealing with sexual representation on a day-to-day basis. Through the Prohibited Importations Tariff Service, Canada Customs monitors what comes into the country and confiscates and bans what it judges to violate the guidelines in the legislation that governs it. At the same time, the *Criminal Code*, enforced by the police and the courts, acts as the guardian of Canadian morals vis-à-vis material that's already present within our borders.

More than any specific verdict of guilt or innocence (though this is important), the practical and financial consequences of bucking customs and/or the law, including the high cost of legal defence, are responsible for the chill cast by these forms of censorship.

Of course, the poorer you are, the more you feel the cold. For *Penthouse* or *Playboy*, both involved in recent court battles over issues containing bondage pictures, there's no real chill to speak of. They are too insulated by layers of profit-filled fat. The lawyers on retainer simply go to court and do business as usual, while a loss produces no appreciable dent in the corporate coffers. For Glad Day Books and Little Sisters, on the other hand, two gay and lesbian community bookstores in Toronto and Vancouver respectively, or for Pages, the Queen Street West bookstore, or for *Bad Attitudes*, a struggling lesbian cottage-industry tabloid, or for the *New York Native* or the *Advocate*, gay newspapers with the most up-to-date coverage of AIDS, all currently embattled outlets and publications, all modest "alternative culture" operations, the blast is very frigid indeed.

How does the current record look after seven years of public feminist consciousness raising? Let's look at Customs first. Before 1985, it was impossible to know just what Customs had actually been doing. Not only did they censor importations, but they censored the record of their censorship. CBC Radio producer and anti-censorship activist Max Allen succeeded in discovering that, for example, in the years 1979, 1980 and 1981, the only years for which figures were then available, Canada Customs had made 26,357 separate seizures involving 317,641 magazines and books, comic books, photographs, films and videotapes, newspapers and playing cards. "Almost all that material was seized because of its sexual nature," says Allen "though racist, seditious, and anti-religious material is also sometimes confiscated." Much of that material is recognizably racist, and especially anti-semitic.

But when the British film *Mandela* (a portrait of the great anti-apartheid fighter) was seized late last year because it "might be racist," its distributor, DEC Films, was not amused.

Allen's careful monitoring has shown that the amount of material now on the list of "Prohibited Importations" (the material that's seized and banned, as opposed to "Released Importations," material that's seized, then released) has grown substantially.

Until 1985, Customs used to seize anything which they, in their own wisdom, considered "immoral and indecent." But in 1985, the Federal Court, trying the Thomas Luscher case, ruled that this definition was overly broad and hence unconstitutional. The Customs law remained struck down and the country wide open to a flood of pornography for several days, but the ensuing panic was alleviated when parliament passed a temporary law which declared Customs could seize material that was "obscene," according to a set of 11 specific definitions. This legislation has expired and has been renewed, again temporarily, and its final dispatch awaits the definitive criteria promised to us in the amended Criminal Code.

In the meantime, the prohibitions and seizures continue on an ever more ambitious scale. Before the "emergency" legislation was passed, newsstand magazines usually came in without difficulty. But when the new regulations were passed, a new protocol was instituted. American publishers began to submit their magazines for pre-publication clearance to a committee of Customs, who then advised them what text they needed to pull or what pictures to cover with black dots, without, however, any guarantee that following this advice would actually get the material past the individual Customs officers. In effect, this kind of censorship was not enough, and distributors found they had to hire people to sit in warehouses and tear sections out of the magazines which had already been pre-censored. Finally, a number of publishers and distributors decided it wasn't worth the hassle and stopped sending the stuff.

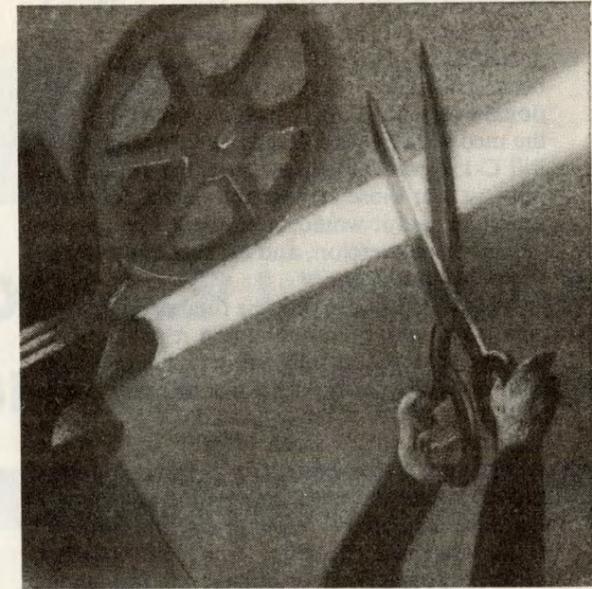
Customs officials, accused in the context of the Glad Day and Little Sisters cases, of harassing the gay community, have recently denied the charge with injured innocence. Nevertheless, it so happens that the amount of gay material seized, banned, or held up for months at a time is impressively out of proportion to the amount of straight material that suffers a similar fate. A number of raunchier heterosexual men's magazines like *X-Rated Movies* now appear irregularly where once they arrived without trouble. But all of the big ten gay magazines — including *Blue Boy*, *In Touch*, *Mandate*, *Torso* and *Stallion*, are now gone from the newsstands. This is because, though no clause specifies gay sex as such as pro-

hibited, anal sex is a major — if not the major — taboo at Customs, and let's face it, folks, it features more prominently in most gay erotica than in heterosexual material, *Backdoor Brides* notwithstanding.

Speaking at a fundraising benefit for Glad Day Books in February, NDP MP Svend Robinson said, only partly tongue in cheek, that Customs and this government have an anal fixation. Anal sex was the issue at stake in the prohibition of the *Joy of Gay Sex*, overthrown in March after more than a year of due process, and anal sex was behind the bizarre sight that greeted readers of the February issue of *Inches*: the features were intact, but most of the personals had been individually blacked out with magic marker, because they implied anal intercourse. And this meant, of course, that all the AIDS-related "safe-sex" ads were gone. So extensive has the censorship of anal sex been that even the National Aids Centre, a division of Health and Welfare Canada, has protested, leading to yet another perversion: a new Customs memorandum, issued in January, that permits the non-explicit treatment of anal sex for educational purposes, but not for pleasure. God forbid we should have them together.

Customs opens everything bound for Glad Day Books, and probably every other gay bookstore in the country. And while Glad Day's court challenge on the *Joy of Gay Sex* has finally won a qualified victory (the legal fees are still to be raised), the judge stopped short of ruling on the law which had permitted its banning. The harassment of gay and lesbian material goes on unchecked. Even curios like the California lesbian punk band ASF's ("Anti-Scruntly Faction/A Sure Fuck) record have been stopped, this one for a funny song about horny girls entitled "Slave To My Estrogen." Customs didn't get the joke.

At present, there's no evidence of any change of direction for the better under the impact of the feminist anti-pornography movement at Customs. Certainly, for lesbians and gays, things are worse. And that's because, in addition to whatever weight has been given to the concerns of anti-porn feminists, those of the conservative, "anti-sex" constituency are codified in legislation and felt even more strongly by both government and bureaucracy. An explicit picture of cunnilingus, in the April issue of *Penthouse*, has recently made it through Customs and to the newsstands. This is a first for Canada. "If it had been in a lesbian magazine or a picture of fellatio in a gay magazine," says lesbian anti-censorship activist Chris Bearchall, who has recently conducted a survey of the blank spaces and black dots in publications that do make it across the border, "it would have had a black dot, or it would have been seized." Time will tell whether this is an anomaly or a harbinger of, as it were, things to come.



The Final Word

WHATEVER ENTERPRISING CUSTOMS officials choose to do in the interim, their policy is ultimately dependent, just as the activities of police forces and courts are, on the new amendments to the Criminal Code which are imminent as we go to press. If these amendments are anything like the trial balloon floated by then-Justice Minister John Crosbie in June of last year, this picture and others like it will be strictly *verboten*. This bill proposed to criminalize definitions of every sexual act known to the species and then some. And sooner or later, these amendments must affect provincial censorship as well, since a challenge to the constitutionality of two separate standards of censorship in the country is inevitable.

Again, many anti-pornography feminists, from Pat Marshall to NAC Pornography Committee chairperson Donna Stefonia to Donna Hackett at the Ontario Women's Directorate, insist that the Federal Government, far from being tied to doggedly patriarchal and puritanical forces, is taking feminist concerns into account in re-drafting the legislation. Certainly those concerns, if they were to be represented in recommendations like those of the Fraser Committee, would be a lesser evil than the unbelievable list of forbidden practices which constituted the Tories' first run at "updating" the Criminal Code. (While the Fraser recommendations were problematic, they avoided much of the worst of the "anti-sex" camp's views, and proposed to avoid hopelessly subjective terms such as "pornography" and "degrading" so

prominent in the anti-porn lexicon.) Though many feminists across the country had supported at least some form of regulation, and been echoed by judicious editorials in the national press, both the women's movement and the media threw their hands up in horror when Bill C-114 was introduced, because it read, oh no! just like those cynical anti-censorship feminists had said it would: a phrase or two about violence and coercion, and the rest like a Moral Majority manifesto.

All indications are that the final proposal will look much like the original and it seems likely that the government is listening to the right wing of its own caucus, looking for something to give them — puritanical sex legislation — that won't sink the economy or finish off what's left of the government's credibility. It's likely the Conservatives are listening to the National Citizen's Coalition and REAL Women and the Catholic and evangelical churches, who, put together with the people who've bought the line about porn causing violence against women and the need for censorship, now form a social majority in favour of legislation like C-114. I suspect too, that the government has caught the subtext of acceptance behind the views of some important individual feminists, such as NDP culture critic Lynn MacDonald and NAC's Donna Stefonia, who've said from the moment the legislation was introduced that, if it came down to this or nothing, or even this or the status quo, they'd support the legislation, giving the prize away even before the battle commences.

Let's hope I'm wrong. Let's hope that the government will come to its senses and take a different approach. With some very hard-line and very committed anti-censorship organizing, it might be possible to force a compromise on something closer to a Fraser Committee-type solution. Within such a framework, we can at least struggle more successfully against the prosecution of pluralistic and oppositional sexual expression. But we've got to face the fact that the pro-censorship forces, from the conservative and feminist camps, are way ahead. Only some very determined organizing, right away, combined with ongoing legal challenges, is going to change the combined impact of these two groups.

At present, a number of organizations are involved in fighting sexual censorship in a variety of ways. Arts organizations like OFAVAS, the Ontario Association of Art Galleries, the Coalition for the Right to View and ANNPAC are on record as being opposed to this kind of legislation. As well a variety of civil liberties groups, librarians' associations, and gay and sex education organizations have expressed concern and/or determination to fight anything which resembles C-114. But so far, there's no coordination

form of informal, individual consultation between local groups. The anti-censorship forces have no public presence as a whole, either regionally or nationally. The Writers Union is planning to set up a censorship watch position for the written word, an important step forward. But nothing like this exists for film, photography or video, even though these are the most heavily censored mediums.

On March 19, 15 individuals representing a partial cross-section of anti-censorship forces met in Toronto to discuss the possibility of pulling together a larger coalition to fight the expected federal legislation. They discussed proposals for a basis of unity and activities, and agreed to contact a broader sample of anti- (and potentially anti-) censorship groups during the coming month. Another meeting, following the reach-out, was held on April 16, to see if there's enough energy and commitment to launch a local coalition that could, given enough resources, also begin to link up with others in different parts of the country. Everything will depend on the willingness of members of established groups to commit time and funds to the undertaking, and their willingness to work across previous jurisdictional lines. Let's hope that something will come of this, so that the power of progressive anti-censorship forces will amount, at the very least, to the sum of its parts. ●

VARDA BURSTYN is a feminist writer and activist living in Toronto. She edited the book, *Women Against Censorship*, and has produced a number of radio programmes for C.B.C. "Ideas."



The NEW

SEXUAL CENSORSHIP LEGISLATION — JUST AS BAD AS BEFORE IF NOT WORSE.

ON MAY 4TH Federal Justice Minister Ray Hnatyshyn introduced the Tory government's revamped anti-porn legislation. Aside from a few shifts in categorization and terminology, it is much the same as the legislation introduced last June by John Crosbie that was condemned by feminists, artists, civil libertarians and many others.

While the legislation has dropped the reference in the definition of pornography to "other sexual activities" it has added a new definition of "erotica" which basically refers to visual depictions of nudity. Nudity, says the new legislation, would be okay if it was not contained in material sold to those under the age of 18 and if it was not publicly displayed (this last stipulation requires opaque wrappers and prominent warning notices). This actually extends state regulation of depictions of nudity and human bodies.

The definitions of the six different prohibited categories of porn would continue to include "masturbation," "ejaculation," and "vaginal, anal or oral intercourse." Any sexually explicit material could not be sold to anyone under the age of 18, and the depiction of anyone under the age of 18, or who "appears to be" under 18, would also be criminalized. Other categories of porn include "attempting to cause or appearing to cause... impairment of the body," "sexually violent conduct" and a "degrading act in a sexual context." "Degrading" porn would continue to include "bondage," "any person who ejaculates onto another person...whether that person appears to be consenting to any such degrading act" and "lactation or menstruation in a sexual context." As well, "any matter or commercial communication" that "incites, promotes, or advocates" any activity referred to in four of the prohibited categories of porn (excluding simple masturbation, ejaculation and oral, anal and vaginal intercourse) would also be included so that textual material without images would also be covered in a series of

areas. For instance, the gay safer-sex education campaign "Cum on me, not in me" could be constructed as a form of incitement of degrading porn since it advocates that men ejaculate onto another person's body in order to avoid possible exposure to the AIDS virus. The search and seizure provisions would continue to be very broad and the onus would be on the persons charged to prove that they were innocent by using "artistic merit" or "an educational, scientific or medical purpose," defences that are not even available for two of the prohibited categories of porn.

This broad-ranging sexual censorship legislation has many dangers. It continues the problems of obscenity legislation which censors on the basis of the sexual character of the material — this time however it is not only the explicitness of the sex, but which category of sex and with whom. It is, therefore, as the newly formed coalition against the new legislation in Toronto says, "a major attack on freedom of sexual information in this country" and "will serve only to stifle sexual speech and sex education at a time when Canadian society needs more discussion about sexuality and more education on sexual issues."

The legislation will do nothing to fight sexism or violence against women and children but is instead about policing and regulating the types of sexual images people in Canada can see, discuss and use. The legislation will stand in the way of the sex education of young people and particularly, given the AIDS crisis, of safer-sex promotion. The legislation could also extend forms of censorship of lesbian and gay materials which are already under attack by Canada Customs. For instance, under the terms of the legislation even though *The Joy of Gay Sex* was recently declared not to be "obscene" under obscenity legislation, it would be declared a prohibited form of porn for visually portraying anal sex. ▶

Opposition to the Bill

Across the country there was immediate opposition to the legislation from opposition MPs, civil libertarians, feminists, artists and others who most often suggested that the legislation simply went too far and "threw its net too wide." Much of the mainstream media bought the government's line that this legislation was actually some sort of improvement over the Crosbie bill. Most of the Liberal opposition has basically accepted the categories laid down in the legislation. Some, like Louise Dulude of the National Action Committee On The Status of Women, have suggested that all that is needed is to include depictions of vaginal, anal or oral intercourse, masturbation and ejaculation in the category of "erotica." Yet this would leave aside the prohibitions in the legislation against all sexual materials for young people as well as the ambiguities in such categories as "degrading" porn (which still includes bondage per se even if consensual), ejaculation onto another person's body, and lactation and menstruation "in a sexual context." Who will define what this sexual context is? Are not once again women's bodies being labelled pornographic? Will not these sections be used to clamp down on feminist explorations of sexual pleasure and danger?

A broader and more consistent form of opposition to the legislation has come from the new coalition recently formed in Toronto, the Canadian Committee Against Customs Censorship, as well as the Coalition for the Right to View in Vancouver. These groups reject the basic terms of the legislation since they do not believe that sexual explicitness or activity should be grounds for censorship. In Toronto the coalition against the new sexual censorship legislation — which brings together feminists, lesbians and gays, writers, media workers, sex-trade workers and artists — organized a press conference on May 5th to oppose the new legislation. The speakers included Pierre Berton of the Writers' Union, John Frizzell, a representative of the Ontario Film and Video Appreciation Society (the group that has taken the Ontario Censor Board to court); Lisa Steele for the Association of National Non-Profit Artists Centres; Gary Kinsman for the Canadian Committee Against Customs Censorship; Thelma McCormack, a sociology professor; Valerie Scott of

the Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes; and Mariana Valverde of the International Women's Day Coalition. In response to the media coverage which suggests that this legislation is necessary to combat "kiddie porn," it was pointed out that while the coalition opposes all abuse and violence directed against young people, this legislation defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. Rather than "protecting" young people from sexual abuse, it is really about "protecting" young people from their own sexualities — denying and policing adolescent sexual activity.

Opposition to the bill is growing. The next step is to organize visible public activities to activate and broaden this opposition to the bill. Part of this will include making deputations to the government committee that will study this legislation and will include the public display of materials that will be prohibited under the new legislation so that more people will understand why we need to oppose this legislation. An important example of such an initiative is the "Visual Evidence" video screenings and discussions on sexuality and sexual images currently taking place in Vancouver organized by the Coalition for the Right to View and the Vancouver Artists' League. The screenings are part of a protest against the new B.C. censorship legislation as well as against the new federal legislation. By openly showing and talking about erotic images and the importance of these images and discussions to our various communities, "Visual Evidence" is making a very strong point that feminists, lesbians and gay men, young people, sex educators and many others need to have access to such sexual material. We must be clear that minor amendments to this bill are not what is needed — no form of censorship based on sexual explicitness or sexual activity can be in the interests of artists, feminists, lesbians and gay men.

Gary Kinsman is a member of the RITES collective and currently a member of the Canadian Committee Against Customs Censorship.

MEDIA STATEMENT OF THE COALITION AGAINST THE NEW SEXUAL CENSORSHIP LEGISLATION

"This legislation will do nothing to stop violence against women, and children, nor does it address the problem of sexism in the media. It will serve only to stifle sexual speech and sex education at a time when Canadian society needs more discussion about sexuality and more education on sexual issues. If the government wishes to address the serious social problems of sexism and violence against women, it should instead be making more funding available for rape crisis centres and battered women's shelters, funding education programmes that develop positive attitudes towards women and minorities, and encouraging responsible sex education." (Excerpt)

A R T

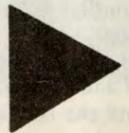
Lesbians ON THE LOOSE

■ SIGHT SPECIFIC
LESBIANS & REPRESENTATION
EXHIBITION - A SPACE
MARCH 4th - 28th, 1987.

THE QUESTION RAISED BY THE SIGHT SPECIFIC EXHIBITION curated by Lynne Fernie at A Space — "Does this exhibition address itself primarily to lesbians?" — resonates with other implications: "If it does, why make it open to the public?", "If it does, is it art immersed in sexual politics, thereby one dimensional (limited) art?" and so forth.

A number of (if my antenna was properly tuned) 'straights,' both men and women, have described the show as "aggressive," and when pressed to elaborate, refer to the use of the word "cunt" in Jude Johnston's and Stephanie Martin's works, or the soft-core sex in Marg Moores' videotape, **Frankly, Shirley**. The choice of the word "aggressive" seems to imply anger at best, or morally reprehensible behaviour at worst. It's bad for men to be aggressive, worse for women to be aggressive; the worst being an aggressive lesbian.

The reaction of one of my classes to **Frankly, Shirley** hovered around 9 on the discomfort scale of 10. To paraphrase the text on one of Nina Levitt's works, is this a "savage (exhibition of) lesbian(s) on the loose"? As provocative as that might be as an exhibition, **Sight Specific** challenges the viewer in a more complex and subtle manner.



The works were commissioned for the show, not chosen out of the artists' studios. The criteria: "...a desire to see specific lesbian references in visual art, and to raise questions about the relations — political, cultural, racial and aesthetic — between sexual practice, the production of images and the economies within which images circulate," has resulted in a wide range of intent and content. All the works explore some aspect of this criteria. Some function as strong works of art that both contain and transcend the criteria of the show.

Comments about the show range from, "It's too in," "too blatant," to "It's too obscure." One woman was puzzled by the laughter generated by the cat in Marg Moores' videotape, *Frankly, Shirley*. Others, who get the cat joke, are disgruntled by Lynne Fernie's economically sensual *The Spectacular Body*. Some works raise (potentially) embarrassing questions, such as Stephanie Martin's *Is It True What They Say About Col'd Pussy?* (if you know the answer, are you complicit with 'They?'), or you may reveal your sexual bias along with your sexual preference by assuming that, of the two women wearing bras in Nina Levitt's *Conspiracy of Silence*, the one smoking the cigarette is obviously the lesbian. Almost all the women on the covers of the 50's novels chosen by Levitt appear in some form of underwear.

Levitt has superimposed some basic cotton knit underwear over the images and text of two of the covers, obliterating descriptions of "How does a girl know whether or not she is a lesbian?", seemingly updating and answering the question, simply saying "by DOING it."

Jude Johnston's two photographs, by their scale and by the banality of the two images, subvert the viewer's expectation of easy comprehension of the work. The first image is of two people in an embrace on a couch. The second image is a photograph of people walking on a street, with a text superimposed over the photograph. The last line of the text states "When I realized I am lesbian we discovered each other," thus summing up the content of what up until then could be interpreted as a somewhat ambivalent narrative. The people in the first photograph are not gender specific. They could be two men, two women or a man and a woman. Similarly, the text, up until the last line remains ambiguous (some men refer to their male lover's



Photo: Peter MacCallum

Colour print and photogram from "Conspiracy of Silence" by Nina Levitt, 30" x 40", one of a series of 5 prints.

asshole as 'cunt' or 'pussy'). The second last line appears to eliminate two men. What Johnston seems to be addressing, along with her own sexual preference, is the commonality of all people's sense of discovery and sense of belonging embodied in an emotional and sexual relationship. Johnston displaces hierarchy with experience.

Grace Channer's dramatic *But Some of Us Are Brave* addresses a number of issues. Channer's black and white painting deals with political, racial and cultural

inequities in a highly emotive fashion. The narrative depicted in the three panels shows women and children in the throes of the anticipation, experience and aftermath of murderous physical violence. At first we read the painting as racial violence, then violence against women and children, and in the context of the show, violence against lesbians. The women in the painting all extend support and protection to one another. Channer is adamant in her imagery. She draws no distinctions: the pain of the women in this



Photo: Peter MacCallum

Installation shot: l. to r. "Untitled," by Jude Johnston, black and white photomurals with text, two murals, 48" x 55" each; "But Some Of Us Are Brave," by Grace Channer, acrylic on canvas, three panels, 38" x 45", 65" x 45", 38" x 45".

work is the same. To be a woman is to be unequal; to be a black woman is to be more unequal; to be a black lesbian is to be the most unequal.

Cyndra MacDowall's eight black and white photographs titled *Some notes on ending* depict the pain of a breakup through images that represent the absence of the departed lover. The photographs are all about aftermath, and range from the poignant to the unbearable. A woman is seen crouched on the floor, hands held open. This is not supplication; it is about emptiness. In another photo, the woman's hands attempt to touch a shadow on the wall, and in another, the woman is crouched on the floor, pounding a pillow in frustration and anger. The fifth photograph is the

only photograph where the woman is still. Face cast in shadow, she gazes into the camera, her expression questioning, uncomprehending. These are forceful photographs which capture not only the most volatile emotions but also the ephemeral nuances of loss.

Frankly, Shirley shows video artist Marg Moores in top form. The tape is charming and witty. A beautifully modulated voice narrates the story of two women whose relationship is sexual, but who never make love in bed. The narrator's voice melodramatically cracks at the appropriate moments: "We promised to call, kissed, parted, and" (voice cracks) "never called." Long after, they meet again by chance. The lovers proceed to make love in the shower, on the cedar

deck, and then decide on a 'tour of passion' around the city, making out on roller coasters, warehouse loading docks, at Casa Loma, Allen Gardens, and eventually in the change room at Club Monaco. Their lust seems unstoppable, whetted by riskier and more outrageous locations for sex. Surely the elevator to the top of the CN Tower is next! (Apparently this was considered.) Then their desire ebbs, and they begin to talk. "Frankly, Shirley," one of the women confides to the camera, "we didn't have much to say." The final shot is of the two women at snow-swept Harbourfront, embracing, then parting and walking off the two sides of the frame as the camera pulls back. "And then it was over," narrates the voice-over, "Nothing said, and



Photo: Cyndra MacDowall

"Some notes on ending," No's 4, 5, 6, by Cyndra MacDowall, three of a series of eight b & w photographs.

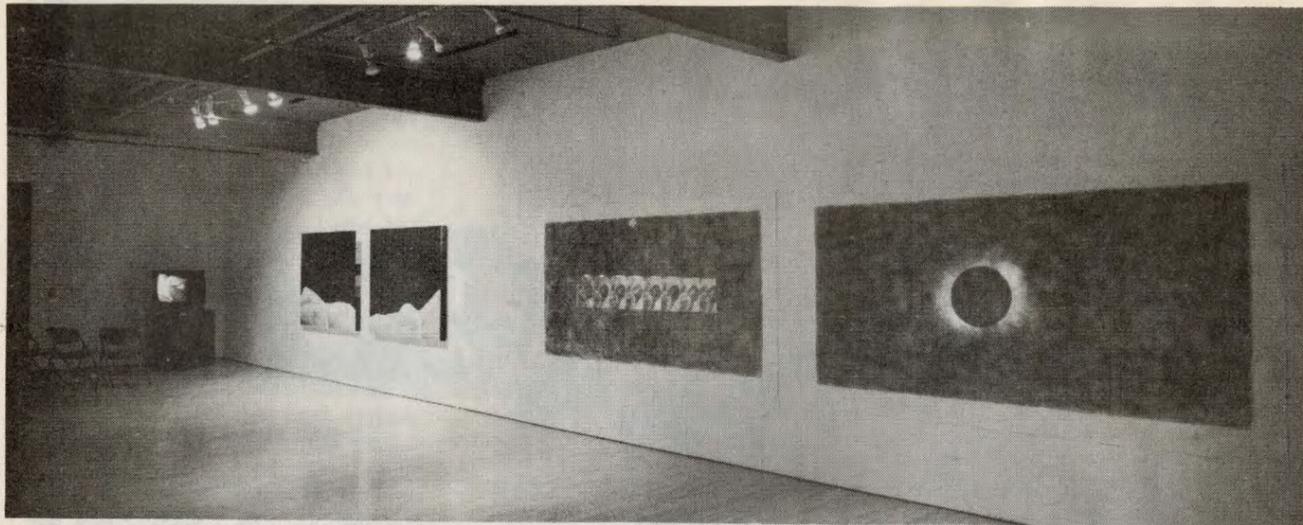


Photo: Peter MacCallum

Installation shot: l. to r. Video installation, "Frankly Shirley," by Marg Moores; "Is It True What They Say About Col'ed Pussy," by Stephanie Martin, acrylic & graphite on canvas, two panels, 48" x 60" each; "The Spectacular Body: Two projections for a lighted room. Proj. 1: Lesbian Body in Public. Proj. 2: Eclipse" by Lynne Fernie, two slide projections on 4' x 8' ink drawings.

no place to go."

The humour in the tape is warm and ironic. The lovemaking scenes are sexual and affectionate, and it's humorous to watch the women being 'bad' at Casa Loma in the snow, as one undoes the other's pants and slides her hand down into the other's crotch. The tape is a celebration of lesbian sexuality, poking fun at the clichés (they first make love when they go over to feed a friend's cat), while at the same time underlining all the taboos about the public expression of their sexuality.

Lynne Fernie's *The Spectacular Body* is in many ways the cornerstone of the show. An installation piece, it consists of two 8' x 4' densely ink-washed grounds on paper, upon which a slide is projected. One slide is of a solar eclipse, centred in the drawing. The other slide is nine frames from *The (S)word Swallower*, a film Fernie was commissioned to make by A Space in 1984 around the theme of developing women's erotic language in film. The image is a medium shot of Fernie, nude from the waist up, body make-up accentuating her features, looking at the viewer over her shoulder through all nine frames.

The two pieces have a compelling, beautiful presence. The rich ink wash threatens to absorb the fragile projections, so that the images seem embedded in, not merely resting on, the surface. The drawings are framed by a border of blank paper around the edges, and then attached to the wall in a fashion that speaks of the momentary, not the permanent.

One can examine the single image of

the eclipse (an event that takes place at a vast distance) at close range but as one moves across the nine images of Fernie, the viewer's body begins to cut off the images from the projector. If you want to see the entire nine images of Fernie, you must stand back and maintain the proper distance to view; if you want to examine the images intimately, you obliterate them.

The work is allegorical. The images of Fernie are fragile in actuality but her stance speaks of being guarded, skeptical, and questioning. Her portrait is mediated by the body make-up, which masks her, making her appear exotic and removed. Yet she stares out and engages the viewer in her gaze. She is being looked at, the viewer is being watched. There is a sense of timelessness in the moment, the gulf between Fernie and the viewer unbreachable, treacherous and as old as history.

The eclipse piece resonates on a different level with the first. The moon, long the mythological symbol for the female, blocks out the light from the sun. It is a powerful and rare event. We are instructed to view such celestial occurrences with great caution, otherwise blindness can result. Fernie presents us with an image we can in fact never see with the naked eye. A solar eclipse is made manifest by the sudden darkening of the daylight, where birds confusedly begin their night song, and shadows fade under a cloudless sky. We don't "see" an eclipse, we experience it.

The work by Channer, Fernie, MacDowall and Moores, while addressing the

criteria of the show, at the same time demands a response that no viewer can sidestep by specifying gender or sexual preference. The tape by Moores, while very specifically operating within the parameters of lesbian sexuality, also incorporates the wider concerns of the representation of the sexuality of all women, lesbian or heterosexual.

The images and texts appropriated (in some cases altered) by Levitt both present and comment on the repressive attitudes lesbians have historically endured. What remains unclear is whether those attitudes have changed all that much. Levitt's use of underwear discarded on top of the images seems to imply they have. This requires a leap of faith by the viewer. The 'Fabulous Fifties' (what a misnomer!) have been replaced by the reactionary eighties. "Lesbians On The Loose" being embraced by society at large still looks like a somewhat distant achievement. To represent history does not mean we are free of it.

Johnston's and Martin's work uses language to describe what the images don't reveal unlike MacDowall, who employs images where words fail.

Sight Specific is a timely show. The show is a signal, a benchmark. Although much of the work is celebratory, there is an equal amount of tension mixed in with the confidence. With good reason, as the eclipse in Fernie's work so eloquently addresses. ●

Colin Campbell is a senior video artist who teaches video production and theory.

PART TWO

A HISTORY OF TORONTO'S

1921-1986

ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

Norman 'Otis' Richmond

Norman 'Otis' Richmond is a widely-published Toronto columnist, radio broadcaster (listen to CKLN, Thursdays 8 pm) and President, Black Music Association (Toronto Chapter). Richmond's previous articles for FUSE include: "The Secret History of Black Music in Toronto," December 1980, "The Political Thought of Archie Shepp," March 1982, and "Crossing the Apartheid Line (interview with Thabo Mbeki)," December 1982.

IN PART ONE OF THIS ARTICLE (FUSE, April 87), the roots of Toronto's anti-apartheid activism were traced back to the early 1920s, when visits by Marcus Garvey and Sol Plaatje to Toronto's African-Canadian community laid the foundations for work concerning South Africa. Through the 50s and 60s the local UNIA and newly formed Toronto African liberation groups like the Canadian Anti-Apartheid Committee (CAAC) through demonstrations and fundraising, organized solid links within the widening Black community, including the establishment of a local Black press. By the 70s the broadened African and Caribbean community had grown to support many politically active groups including the Black Study Group, the African Liberation Support Committee, TCLPAC, TCLSAC, CCSA and SACTU. The work of these groups has been consolidated nationally toward social change in Canada and the continued struggle against South African apartheid.

In Part Two, Norman 'Otis' Richmond focuses on the anti-apartheid work initiated in the 80s by Toronto's community of Black cultural associations, including the Biko-Rodney-Malcolm Coalition, the Black Music Association, the Black press, and Canadian musicians organizing against apartheid.

Medallion in tribute to Malcolm X.
Medal sculpted by Gilroy Roberts



Biko-Rodney-Malcolm Coalition

The BRMC has been the leading force in the cultural boycott movement in Toronto. The group takes its name from Steve Biko, who was assassinated in South Africa on September 12, 1977; Walter Rodney, who was murdered in Guyana on June 13, 1980; and El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X), who was shot down in broad daylight in Harlem on February 21, 1965.

The BRMC was formed because the organizers felt the time was right to move organizationally against artists who had violated the U.N.'s boycott of South Africa. The BRMC concentrated almost exclusively on the cultural boycott until December 1984. At that time the executive of the organization decided to broaden the scope of the group and do general anti-apartheid work as well as to continue to emphasize the cultural fight.

The organization has initiated demonstrations against Millie Jackson, Tina Turner, Ann Margret, Helen Reddy, Susan Anton, Frank Sinatra, Pia Zadora, Air Supply, and Ray Charles, as well as Chick Corea. It has directly or indirectly assisted in gaining public pledges from Pia Zadora, Air Supply, Chick Corea, Tina Turner, and the Temptations, not to return to South Africa until apartheid is abolished.

The BRMC has also shown its appreciation to artists who have refused lucrative offers to entertain in South Africa. The idea to award artists was inspired by Roberta Flack who turned down an offer of \$2.5 million to perform in Sun City.

Since initiating the campaign, the BRMC has given awards to artists from five countries. Five recipients of the BRMC Award — Gil Scott-Heron, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Bobby Womack, David Ruffin, and Eddie Kendricks — performed on the Sun City album. Dan Hill, Ann Mortifee, Four the Moment, Phyllis Hyman, Melba Moore, Third World, The Mighty Sparrow, Eddie Grant, UB40, Steel Pulse, Holly Near, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Randy Weston, Ron Ayers, The Commodores, Kool and the Gang, and Gladys Knight and the Pips have been honoured by the BRMC.

Since broadening its scope, the BRMC has organized protests to mark the Sharpeville Massacre, Soweto Day, South African Women's Day, Steve Biko's assassination, Chief Gathsha Buthelezi's visit to Toronto and other relevant events. The BRMC has commemorated the deaths of non-South Africans like Malcolm X, Walter Rodney and Samora Machel. The BRMC has also collected thousands of signatures from Canadians calling for the Canadian government to employ sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa.

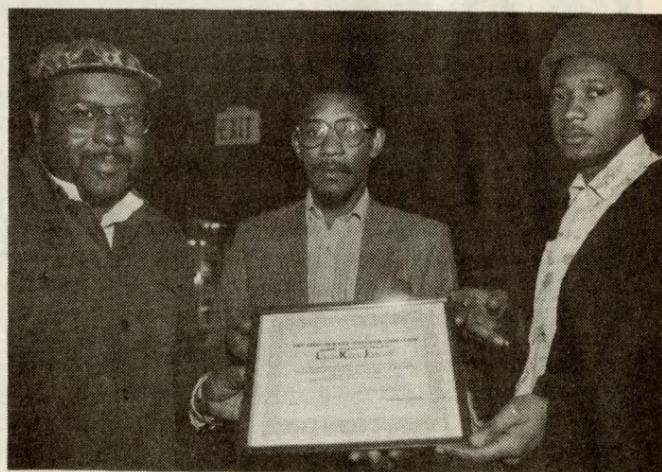
The BRMC is a broad coalition of organizations and individuals in Toronto, united specifically to build the cultural boycott of South Africa. The BRMC's membership is drawn primarily from the African-Canadian community, but all progressive forces have been welcomed to join in the struggle.

Anti-Apartheid and Toronto's Black Press

Contrast, a weekly newspaper that once saw itself as "The Eyes and Ears of the Black Community," published an African Liberation Day special issue in May of 1972. Al Hamilton, who started publishing *Contrast* in 1969, fondly remembers the African Liberation Day special as "our first colour cover." *Contrast*, when it was owned by Hamilton and Denham Jolly, played a significant role in publicizing the anti-apartheid issue.

Under Hamilton and Jolly who bought the paper in 1983, *Contrast* played a progressive role compared to its competitor *Share*, which had come into existence to publish the "good news about the Black and West Indian community." *Contrast* went as far as putting principle above profit when the publication was owned by Jolly and administered by Hamilton.

The publication refused one thousand dollars worth of advertising for a Millie Jackson concert that took place



Linton Kwesi Johnson (centre) accepts award from BRMC reps Norman 'Otis' Richmond (l.) and Clifton Joseph (r.).

Courtesy of Norman 'Otis' Richmond Archives

at the O'Keefe Centre April 29, 1983. At that time Jackson was under heavy fire from the anti-apartheid movement for her two visits to South Africa. While Hamilton confessed that the paper could have used the cash, he was concerned about coming out on the right side of history. Said Hamilton, "In the short run the money would be helpful, but in the long run it would come back and haunt the publication."

A number of other Black publications took the money and ran. Toronto's other weekly, *Share*, has a less glorious history on the issue of apartheid than *Contrast*. It took *Share* five years before it editorialized against the apartheid state. While *Share* came out firmly in support of the Toronto Arts Against Apartheid Festival which took place in May 1986, two of its columnists, Dwight Whyllie and Robert Payne, have come up shaky on the issue of South Africa. For example, both editorialized against the progressive forces who rightfully protested the visit to Toronto by professional bootlicker Gathsha Buthelezi.

Buthelezi has had worse things happen to him back in South Africa. He was expelled from the funeral service for Robert Sobukwe, Head of the Pan-African Congress, as were other Bantustan personalities. An eye-witness of the event, Peter Brown, reported, "My own view is that he (Buthelezi) was lucky to get out of there alive. One stumble, one better-directed stone, and anything might have happened...." Whyllie and Payne should be informed that this intense hostility is all the more significant since it was directed at Black collaborators only; sympathetic whites, of whom Peter Brown was one, were not asked to leave.

Hamilton is disturbed by the current stances on South Africa and Namibia (or rather, lack of) at both *Share* and *Contrast*. He feels *Contrast* has retreated from his original vision. Says Hamilton, "I believe the Black press is now following. There is no comment. There is no opinion. Some of the things they say could be written by the *Toronto Sun*. When I want to find out about South African issues now I have to go to the ANC office or I have to read what the (*Toronto*) *Star* says. I don't even want to read what the *Star* and what Reuters have to say anymore since the total censorship of the South African press."

The Black Music Association

The Black Music Association / Toronto Chapter (BMA) has been actively supporting the struggles in South Africa and Namibia since its formation on May 5, 1984. Formed by Milton Blake and this writer, the BMA openly talked about assisting the liberation process in South Africa and Namibia when it held its first meeting at Ryerson.

When the International BMA was formed by Kenneth Gamble and Ed Wright in Philadelphia in 1978, the question of supporting Southern African liberation movements such as the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the South West African People's Association (SWAPO) was not on the front burner.

CONTRAST's May 27, 1972 ALD special issue cover.



While the National Alliance of Third World Journalists did address the BMA's conference in New Orleans in 1983, and the New York City chapter under the leadership of Hilda Williams organized a forum at RCA headquarters in 1983, it wasn't until 1985 that the BMA officially endorsed the position that South Africa should be completely isolated.

The Toronto Chapter of the BMA helped move the BMA to its current position. In 1983, this writer attended the BMA's conference in New York City and put forth the position that the BMA should contribute to the liberation process in South Africa. In January 1984 then-President of the BMA, Dick Griffey, also Chairman of the Board of Solar Records, responded to that appeal with a letter pledging active support.

Shortly after this letter, Griffey, this writer and others from around the world were invited to testify at the United Nations on the cultural boycott. This meeting once again helped Griffey move to the left on the South African question.



African Liberation Day march through downtown Toronto, 1975.

Courtesy of Norman 'Otis' Richmond Archives



DICK GRIFFEY PRODUCTIONS



SOUND OF LOS ANGELES RECORDS

January 26, 1984

Mr. Norman Otis Richmond
P.O. Box 6777
Toronto, Canada M5W1X5

Dear Otis:

Thank you for sending me the newspaper. I want to inform you of something I've decided to do which was inspired by your questions at the BMA. Dick Griffey, Solar Recording Artists, and our Publishing companies are going to donate all of the profits from records sold in Africa back to the twenty million South Africans who are virtually in slavery in their homeland to help finance the revolution and gain their ultimate freedom. I strongly support their quest for freedom as an individual, and as President of the BMA, I intend to challenge other companies, artists, and publishing companies to join in this support of the African National Congress, Trans Africa and enslaved people of South Africa.

It is now time for all African descendants around the world to stand up and be counted and challenge these atrocities. We must as a people embrace each other and finally reach for the unity we need to banish these kinds of injustices. I will be able to give you more details when we have the specifics worked out. Again, thank you for helping to raise our consciousness with your inspiring questions at the BMA Conference.

Yours in peace,

Sincerely,

Dick
DICK GRIFFEY
Chairman
Solar Records

cc: African National Congress
Monsieur Asouman Bangoura
Rev. Jessu Jackson
OAU Office at the U.N.
Mr. Randall Robinson

DG/bm

9044 MELROSE AVENUE / SUITE 200 / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90069 / (213) 859-1717

At the 1985 New Music Seminar in New York City, Griffey and the International BMA official came out in support of complete sanctions against South Africa. Ewart Abner, who was the BMA's president following Griffey from 1984-86, made it clear that the organization was completely in support of the liberation process in South Africa.

Canadian Musicians Against Apartheid

"Apartheid is Wrong, Wrong, Wrong," chanted over 300 musicians and their friends outside the South African Consulate in Toronto in October 1986. Toronto's musical community let the world know it opposes apartheid in South Africa.

Organized by the Black Music Association / Toronto Chapter, the demonstration attracted reggae, calypso, R'n'B, rock, pop and folk artists. Afro-Pan, one of the city's most important steel bands, was also represented.

Archie Alleyne, Salome Bey, Bruce Cockburn, Leroy Sibbles, Joe Sealy, Ron Small, Jayson, Mohjah, The Parachute Club, M + M and manager Gerry Young, Messenjah, Crack of Dawn, Jimmy Reid, Ishaka, Syren, Clive Robertson, The Sattalites, Compass, Aubrey Mann, Cécile Frenette, Molly Johnson, Esso Jaxxon, Jaribu Cason, Ahdri Zhina, Dimitri Cornell, Muhtadi and others joined the BMA in protesting apartheid.

Toronto Apartheid Songs

Toronto musicians have responded to the cries of the Black majority inside South Africa. Aaron Davis, Xola Lololi, Jayson (John Perez), Leroy Sibbles and Esso Jaxxon have all written, produced and performed songs about the deplorable conditions in South Africa.

Aaron Davis' song "Mandela" was released in 1982. The tribute to the imprisoned South African freedom fighter featured lyrics in Zulu, written and sung by Basi Mahlasela. Davis' video of the song received airplay on

MuchMusic and MTV in the United States.

Xola Lololi, a foundation member of Truths and Rights, organized the Maple Front in 1985 to address the subject of South Africa. The song "South Africa" featured Afua, Juno-winner Lillian Allen, Diane Braithwaite, Carol Brown, Devon Haughton, Clifton Joseph, Ahdri Zhina Mandiela, Tony 'Raffa' White, Ovid Reid, and She Sherie. Musicians on the session were Tony Campbell, Reggie Paul, 'Chunky', Tony White, and Lololi. Unfortunately, this recording is only available on cassette.

Jayson's song "Free South Africa" (which was inspired by the BMA's "It's Wrong" demonstration) was nominated for a Juno Award in the Reggae/Calypso category. "Free South Africa" is still getting airplay on all radio stations across North America.

Leroy Sibbles has included a song entitled "South Africa" on his Attic album *Meanwhile*, and Esso Jaxxon has also recorded a track by the same name.

The apartheid regime in South Africa has always understood the role that writers, artists, playwrights, musicians, entertainers and other cultural personalities can play in the struggle for national liberation. The April 18, 1949 issue of *Time* Magazine pointed out, "The South African Broadcasting Corporation, a semi-official company under a race-conscious government banned all recordings of Negro actor-singer Paul Robeson."

Since the banning of Robeson, the apartheid regime has banned recordings by Randy Weston, Max Roach, Sonny Okosun, Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand), Peter Gabriel, Pink Floyd and numerous others. When Stevie Wonder accepted his Oscar for the song "I Just Called To Say I Love You," in the name of Nelson Mandela at the 1985 Academy Awards, the SABC announced it would no longer play Wonder's music. The ban has since been lifted on Wonder's recordings.

But the apartheid regime understands clearly that culture is a weapon that can be used for justice or injustice. In the past few years, the apartheid regime and its supporters have undertaken a massive effort, through deceitful propaganda about 'reforms' in South Africa and offers of exorbitant fees to lure prominent artists to South Africa.

Dan Hill understands the role of culture just as well as the ruling class in South Africa. The Juno-winning artist has quietly made a monetary sacrifice because of his strong views on apartheid. Hill surprised his former record company, 20th Century, several years ago by refusing to allow them to release his smash hit "Sometimes When We Touch" in South Africa.

Says Hill, "My attitude is very simple. Just the thought of my records being sold in a record shop where Blacks couldn't walk in was just unfathomable to me. I just said, 'Forget it. You can't release my records there.' And they (the record company) screamed and hollered but they didn't release them. I'm not known there because I wouldn't let my records be released. But even if I was offered a million dollars I wouldn't go." Hill made this decision before apartheid was a mainstream issue.

Norman 'Otis' Richmond

BMA HONOUR ROLL

Below are partial lists of those recording artists who have:

- 1) been made offers to go to South Africa but refused to go
- 2) those who have gone but have apologized
- 3) those who have publicly stated that they will not go to South Africa.

Invited But Refused

Phyllis Hyman, Third World, Barry White, Roy Ayers, Natalie Cole, Gladys Knight and the Pips, The Jacksons, Diana Ross, Odyssey, Brass Construction, Skyy, Cameron, Roberta Flack, Bill Cosby, The Commodores, Kool & the Gang, Tony Bennett, The Whispers, Shalamar, Lakeside, Carrie Lucas, Solar Records Chairman of the Board Dick Griffey (won't allow any of his label's artists to perform in South Africa).

Those Who Have Gone But Publicly Apologized

The O'Jays, Lori Donaldson, Dakota Station, Jimmy Cliff, Stanley Turrentine, James Moody, George Benson, Betty Wright, Shirley Bassey, The Main Ingredient, Millie Jackson, Queen, Rod Stewart, Liza Minnelli, Tina Turner, Kenny Rogers, The Temptations, Pia Zadora, Brook Benton, Air Supply, The Staple Singers, Curtis Mayfield, Barry Manilow, Stephanie Mills, Howard Hessman, Elton John, Cliff Richards, Bonnie Tyler, Jimmy Smith, Chicago, Chick Corea, Julio Iglesias, Michael Love (Beach Boys), Carl Wilson (Beach Boys), Paul Simon.

Those Who Will Not Go

Dan Hill, Ann Mortifee, Four the Moment, Harry Belafonte, Miriam Makeba, Letta Mbulu, Lena Horne, Gil Scott-Heron, Stevie Wonder, Nina Simone, Hugh Masekela, Caiphus Semenya, Dollar Brand, Smokey Robinson.

PARTIAL LIST OF ENTERTAINERS IN THE U.N. REGISTER

Susan Anton, Boney M, Glen Campbell, Ray Charles, Cher, Billy Cobham, Rita Coolidge, Eartha Kitt, Goldie Hawn, Janis Ian, Ann Margret, Johnny Mathis, Olivia Newton-John, Dolly Parton, Tim Reid, Helen Reddy, Linda Ronstadt, Telly Savalas, Frank Sinatra, Weather Girls.



Photo: Isobel Harry

Social Barbarism and the Spoils of Modernism

MARLENE NOURBESE PHILIP

The auditorium of the McLaughlin Planetarium was a spacious and bright place; I was there to learn about African art: a four week series of lectures sponsored by the ROM. Around me the room was full of people, all white with the exception of five — including myself — Blacks. I didn't miss the overwhelming irony of my being there to find out about something — and I don't mean African 'art' since that was a Western construct, but African culture — that I should have been as familiar with as I am with the beliefs and practices of Christianity. And I wasn't — familiar with African culture — at least not beyond what I had gleaned from books and other media.

I felt my presence in that room to be deeply rooted in the very events and circumstances that had brought the pieces, now on display, courtesy of the ROM, to the West and Canada: the same events that had brought the 'primitive,' the savage, the African — the Other — to the West in the form of 'art' or aesthetics. The supreme irony in these events was that while the African aesthetic was being appropriated and manipulated to the West's own purposes; while African 'art' was being ex-

tolled and praised — and at the same time being evacuated of any ritually appropriate meaning — the peoples of the continent from which these cultural objects originated were being oppressed, enslaved, and denied basic human rights.

It's pretty much received opinion now that the "art of tribal Africa was a

NOTES FROM THE MARGIN

major influence on Western art early in this century and has remained so for decades."¹ For "major influence" I would substitute *indispensable debt*, for by the time the moderns came upon the idea of the 'primitive,' their artistic tradition had been depleted of much of its energy and vitality. "At the turn of the century European art had reached an impasse in its search for a new visual language sufficient to express the dynamics of the time. There was a growing discontent with the increased industrialization of European life. These two factors forced artists to look elsewhere for inspiration and spiritual solace — they turned to the ideas of

primitivism and the exotic."² This statement is, however, incomplete, for their turning to the ideas of primitivism and the exotic would not have been possible were it not for the aggressive, expansionist, colonial policies of European powers. The two developments are inextricably linked — as linked as I was to those ROM pieces — and must be seen and understood together.

Erasure — levels and layers of erasure is what we get instead. Beginning with the artists themselves. Many of these artists — Picasso included — who drew their inspiration from the work of Africa and Oceania were later to deny and rationalize the influence of this work on their own work. Picasso for instance denied ever having seen any 'primitive' art until after he had painted "Les Femmes d'Alger" in 1907. There is evidence, however, that Picasso had seen examples of African sculpture in the studios of Matisse and Derain in 1906, and by 1907 had begun to build his own collection.

Constantin Brancusi initially extolled the qualities of African sculpture; he was later to disassociate himself from its influence: "One must not imitate the Africans," he said, as well as describing African sculpture as charged with "de-

¹Christopher Hume, *Toronto Star*, Saturday 12th April, 1987.

²Daniel Mato, "Gauguin to Moore: Primitivism in Modern Sculpture," *Artmagazine*, Nov/Dec/Jan 1981-82, p. 12.

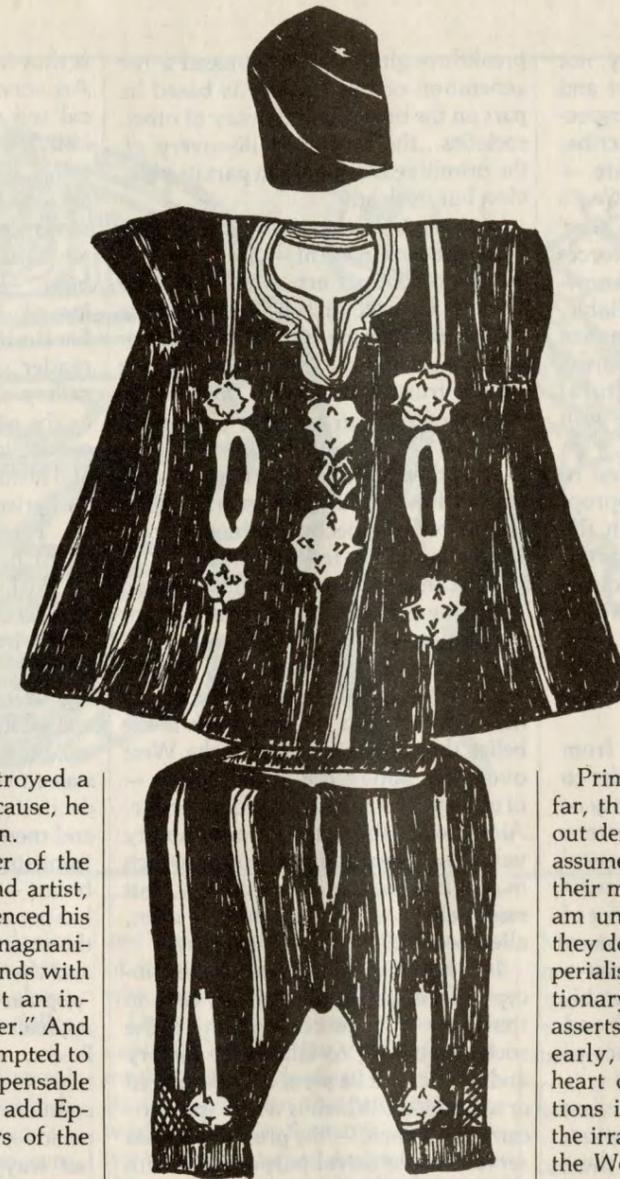


Illustration: Beatrice Bailey

monic forces." He even destroyed a number of his early pieces because, he claimed, they were too African.

Jacques Lipchitz — another of the moderns — both collector and artist, denied that African art influenced his sculpture, but did concede — magnanimously — that "we shook hands with Negro art, but this was not an influence — merely an encounter." And what an encounter — I am tempted to say an encounter of an indispensable kind. To these three we can add Epstein, Archipenko and others of the same period.

The trend to erasure still continues, for in 1984 the MOMA³ exhibition on modern and primitive art went to great lengths to assign responsibility for cubism to the West: in the development of cubism, as curated, tribal art would play a minor role, with the identification of affinities rather than causal influences.

Why this denial of the African? Writing early in this century, on the subject of African sculpture, Roger Fry unwittingly provides some clue. In his opening paragraph of an essay titled "Negro Art," he writes: "So deeply rooted in us is the notion that the Negro race is in some fundamental

way not only inferior to others but almost subhuman, that it upsets our notion of fitness even to compare their creations with those of a people like the Greeks who we regard as almost super human."⁴ He goes further, in fact, than any critic I have read in articulating the impact of African art on the West: "Modern art owes more to the Negroes than to any other tradition...the contribution of Africa to the spiritual inheritance may turn out to be of the greatest importance." But the white supremacist approach he identifies in the opening paragraph explains much of the erasure.

Primitive — primitivism. I have, so far, thrown these words around without defining them, not at all because I assume there is shared agreement or their meanings. These are words that I am uncomfortable with, carrying as they do so much of the connotative imperialist baggage of the West. The dictionary meaning of primitive merely asserts the concept of being first, or early, which is at the etymological heart of the word. Today's connotations imply the savage, the illogical, the irrational, the dark side — all that the West wished to project outwards on to others.

My sense is that if the primitive did not exist — as in the early peoples — non-industrialized, with non-capitalist modes of production, the West would still have found it necessary to invent the concept of primitivism. There is a quantum leap from the early peoples and their cultures to the concept of primitivism, the underpinnings of which is colonialism. As Hal Foster argues in his essay "The 'Primitive' Unconscious,"⁵ primitivism became a device to manage the primitive which the West would have found too disruptive or 'transgressive.'

What the West sought and go from

³'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern.

⁴Roger Fry, *Last Lectures* (Cambridge University Press: London, 1939), p. 75.

⁵Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Port Townsend, Washington, 1985), p. 181.

Africa and Oceania was necessary, not only from the perspective of art and aesthetics, but also from the perspective of the psyche. Identify, describe, catalogue, annotate, appropriate — these words best sum up the West's relationship with Africa — the Other, against which are arrayed the forces of reason, rationality, logic and knowledge as possessable and certifiable. European powers would rationalize economic exploitation of these areas by theories of racial and cultural superiority, equating the Other with all that was inferior.

With the 'approach' of the West to these early cultures, with its appropriation of their aesthetics, with the development of primitivism, went another sort of erasure — a double erasure: erasure of the context within which these objects existed, and erasure of the circumstances of their removal from the places where they belonged.

The African artist or sculptor from Africa or Oceania "carved in order to secure specific ends of ritual activity or to represent nature."⁶ The Western view of these works were antithetical to this approach, the Western artist caring little for the ritual significance of these objects. The chance for Western art, Hal Foster argues, to "reclaim a ritual function," to "retain an ambivalence of the sacred object or gift and not be reduced to the equivalence of the commodity — was blocked."

The second erasure by primitivism was that of the barbarism, aggression, and exploitation that produced these spoils. The modernist experiment, successful as it was in art, was squarely based on rape, pillage and murder, the common currency of colonial wars. The masks, effigies, totemic figures were all spoils of war, and nowhere is this fact ever articulated — least of all at the MOMA exhibition where the curators were interested in showing the affinity among the human races, and how primitivism as manifested by the modern artists is a result of this affinity. Simply put, primitivism is the result of theft. "To value as art what is now a ruin; to locate what one lacks in what one has destroyed: more is at work here than compensation... a

breakthrough in our art, indeed a regeneration of our culture, is based in part on the breakup and decay of other societies...the modernist discovery of the primitive is not only in part its oblivion but its death."⁷

I started this essay by locating it within a certain event — the ROM lectures on African art, which gave an honest account of how many of the ROM pieces came into its possession. It was during those lectures I heard one of the truisms that form part of the canon of African art, and one which helps to foster another type of erasure — this time about Western art. It also reveals how useful African art and the primitive have become as countercultural alternatives to Western art.

African art is functional, inseparable from the social order, the argument goes, vis-a-vis the Western art tradition where art by designation is what we have come to understand art to mean. Integral to this approach is the belief that art exists here in the West over and above the social order — often apart from the social order. Along with the artist, a commodity value has been assigned to art which makes it a part of the economy, but essentially it is a thing apart — *alien*, alienated and, at times, alienating.

It is however as integral to the concept and understanding of art here in the West that its connection to the social matrix — to labour, to history and politics not be seen, acknowledged or articulated. Which is where the African and Oceanic — the primitive — has served such a useful purpose, for with the primitive, the cultural connections between art and the social fabric — although irrevocably torn — could be clearly seen and held up as a significant difference from the Western tradition. On the one hand, the cultural object forcibly torn out of its context, assigned artistic value and meaning and reinterpreted as functional — an integral part of the social order; on the other, the cultural object still within its context, but with its connections to the social fabric hidden or obliterated. What are, in fact, flip sides of the same coin are presented as radical difference.

"All art has its roots in social barbarism, and an 'emancipatory' work of art

is thus in a sense self-contradictory.... Art survives by repressing the historical toil which went into its making, oblivious of its own sordid preconditions; and part of the point of radical art is to lift that repression and help us remember. We only know art because we can represent its opposite — labour."⁸ Erasure — whether we're talking of African art or Western art. For the Western consumer of art — the reader of literature as much as the gallery devotee; for the poet as much as the novelist or visual artist — that connection between art and labour, art and history or politics, between art and barbarism, has been completely erased. The consumer must see art as at worst neutral, at best transcendental — existing over and above, standing over from any of the more crass aspects of our lives. For the practitioner, art is often the manifestation of the everlasting, overworked ego, dehistoricized and existing in a vacuum.

And what of political art? It often states the obvious; becomes overly didactic in preaching to the converted; and merely serves to induce that most transitory of emotions in the liberal breast — guilt. Each person, I assume, has her own method for grappling with the utter and banal irrelevancy of art and the artist: Eagleton talks of being "popular and experimental...undermining realist (ruling class) ways of seeing"; Foster, of resisting the "commodification of culture" and constructing counter-representations. Each artist and person — if so concerned — has to find her way of resisting the erasure and amnesia — the resulting irrelevance — of art today; of blowing wide open the myths and hidden assumptions — the knowledge that continues to foster the practice of forgetting.

Since I work with the written word, I see this process most clearly when I consider how LITERATURE came to the Caribbean societies. The novel, poetry, Shakespeare — all came as cultural appendages to the empire, expressing 'universal' values — the limpid objectivity of Eliot which meant that the little Black girl in the Caribbean should be able to feel exactly what he was feeling when he was writing about cats and fog and Prufrock. And surely that same

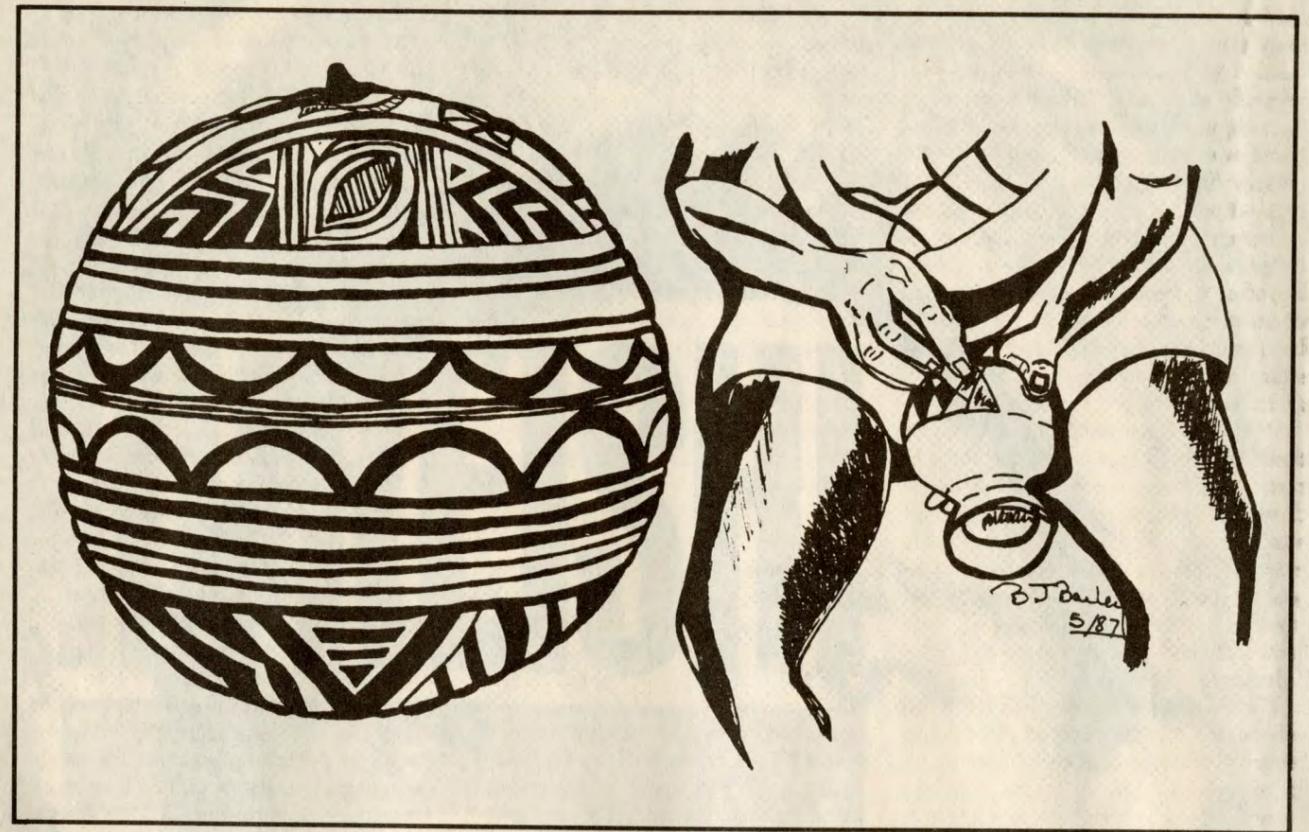


Illustration: Beatrice Bailey

child whose childhood boundaries were constant sunshine, black skins and mangoes could understand about Wordsworth's field of daffodils. Why the hell didn't she?

Of course all this talk of universal values and objectivity was all rubbish — a carefully designed ideology to hide the fact that these art forms were very much a part of middle and upper class life. Their export was an important aspect of empire — as important and probably more damaging than colonial administrative practices.

That epitome of bourgeois art forms, the novel, whose origins, authorship and consumption lay in a class which rose to economic success and affluence on the backs of the white working class in England and the Black labouring classes in the empire, somehow had shed all its more crass connections by the time it came south. But as the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o has argued, "perhaps the crucial question is not that of the racial, national,

and class origins of the novel, but that of its development and the uses to which it is continually being put."⁹

Unless the artist understands that capitalist society has not only commodified the work of art, but also erased the barbarism that underpins the work and allows the work of art to exist; unless the artist understands that this erasure is one of the linch pins of capitalist society which makes the making of art functional — in its own way — in the West, we can never begin to make art that will, if nothing else, challenge the hidden assumptions that underpin the system.

The prognosis appears bleak for artists here in the West: the split between art and labour, between art and historical underpinnings gaping ever more widely. I refuse, however, to accept that all is lost. We may take some small hope from the integrative aspects of African creative works as well as from the tradition in the West, expressed by artists like Blake and William

Morris who saw in art an example of non-alienated labour — and perhaps most importantly, in the work of the many feminist artists who seek and create — admittedly often piecemeal — that integrative and thereby revolutionary context for their work.

At the risk of being linear and logocentric, I return to where I started (unwittingly quoting the objective Eliot) — the ROM, but coming from left field: why the hell doesn't the ROM have a permanent African collection on display? Much as I abhor the history behind collections such as these, I consider it a grave and significant omission. And it's not that the ROM doesn't have the artifacts — it does — but they're all in the basement, in boxes. I say the ROM should either return them to the nations, tribes, or countries from which they were pilfered, give them to Black people here in Toronto or Canada, or display them. Right? But that's a whole other ball game, isn't it.

Marlene Nourbese Philip

⁶Daniel Mato, *Ibid.*

⁷Hal Foster, *Ibid.*

⁸Terry Eagleton, "How Do We Feed the Pagodas?" *New Statesman*, 20 March 1987, p. 8.

⁹*Decolonizing the Mind* (James Currey: London, 1986), p. 68.

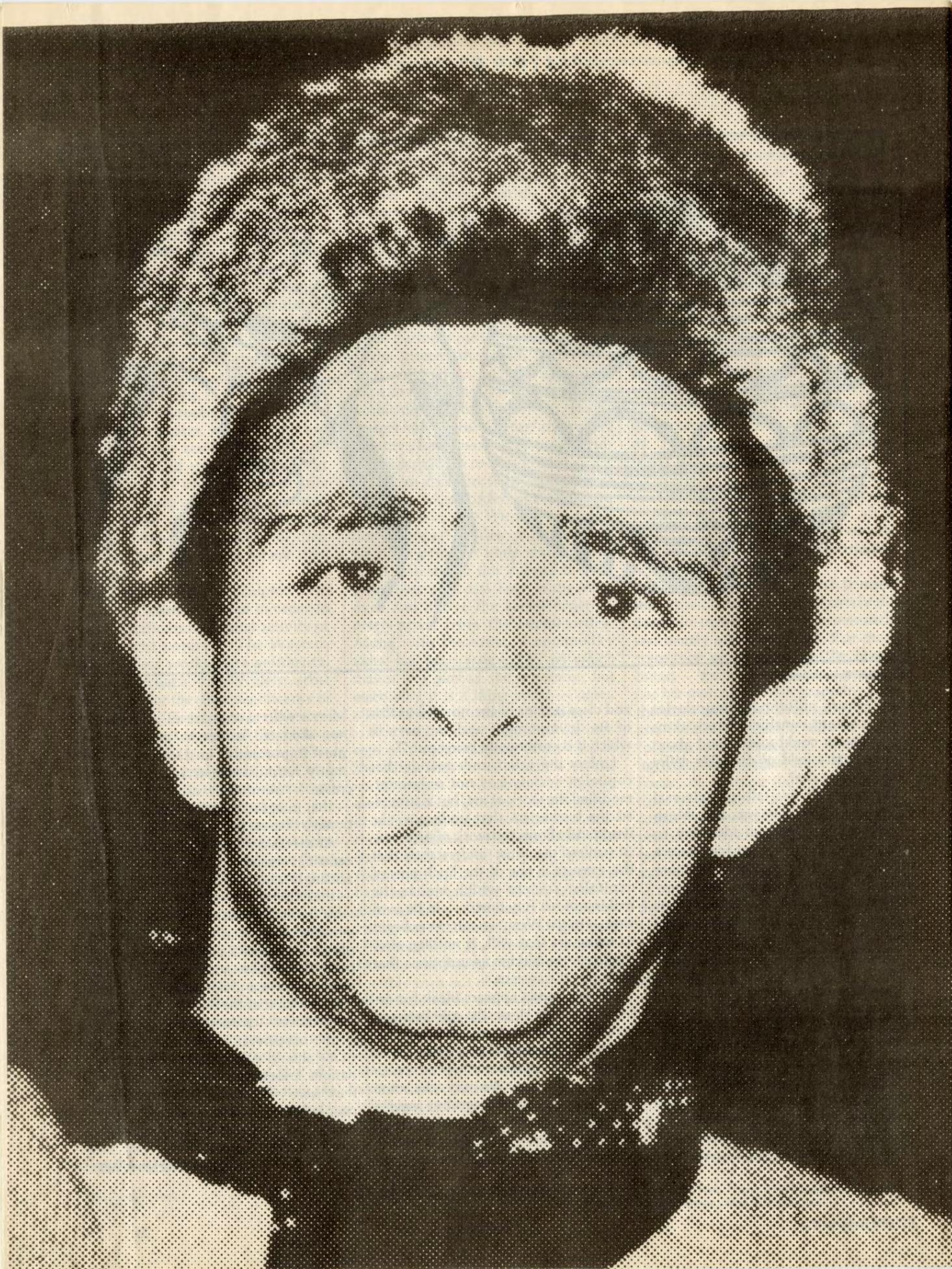
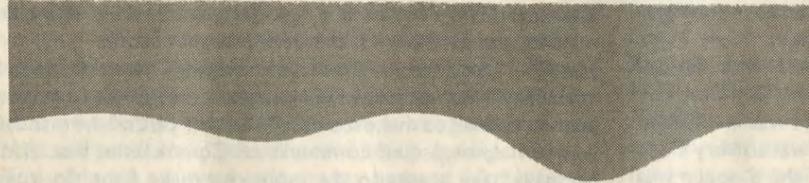


Photo of Hanif Kureishi by Paul Wong.

F I L M

a n i n t e r v i e w w i t h

**HANIF
KUREISHI**



by Zainub Verjee

THE FIRST TIME I HEARD ABOUT THE MOVIE MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE WAS ON THE programme **State of the Arts**, on CBC Radio. Immediately my interest was aroused. When I screened it, I found the film intense, satirically entertaining, and controversial in its approach to racism, class systems, violence, patriarchy and identity, all revolving around a poignant gay love story.

Laundrette, made in the narrative form, is a film about the Asian community in South London and how it survives, oscillating between traditional Asian culture and Western values.

Omar (Gordon Warnecke), Pakistani and gay, finds a role model in his Uncle Nasser (Saeed Jaffrey), rather than in his alcoholic, disillusioned father (Roshan Seth). The latter believes that education is the way to get ahead, while Nasser, a wealthy businessman with traditional Asian wife and white mistress, finds power and recognition in money. With his hand in any money-making venture, Nasser gives Omar a run-down laundromat to manage. Omar solicits the help of his white childhood friend Johnny (Daniel Day Lewis) who now belongs to the National Front, the English Fascist organization. Omar and Johnny transform the laundromat into a dynamic operation called Powders and celebrate the opening by making love in the office.

The extended family, the condition of women, the sexism, the contradictions of being Asian and living in Western society are all inherent in the character of Nasser's daughter Tania (Rita Wolf). Tania finds herself entrapped in the traditional Asian woman's role. Her father's business will go to Omar and not to her. She is left serving drinks at the male parties held by her father. Tania, an intelligent woman, is aware of the control her father has over her and the rest of the family. Frustrated and tired of the family, she struggles for her independence and finally leaves.

The film felt very close to home for me. Tania's struggle for independence and her life of contradictions reflect much from my own experience. Breaking out, from the past, from tradition, from the moulding, is very powerful. I am an Asian woman born in Kenya, brought up in England and now living in Canada. Any film that addresses universal issues of racism, sexism and class systems becomes relevant whether it is made in England or Canada.

The strength of *My Beautiful Laundrette* is that it is a film about Asians written by an Asian. It recently won the New York Film Critics 52nd Annual Award for best screenplay and has been nominated for an Oscar. In this interview, screenplay writer of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Hanif Kureishi, answers questions about the Asian family, Pakistan and the struggle of women.

Zainub Verjee: What is the film *My Beautiful Laundrette* about?

Hanif Kureishi: Two gay guys running a laundrette, really. It's about two boys in love. One is Asian and the other is English. They run the laundrette together. It's about the Asian community in South London and I suppose racism in Britain. It's about the past and its reflection on the present. It tells the story of a guy who was in the National Front, an extreme right-wing organization, and his love for an Asian boy.

Zainub: How closely were you able to work with director Stephen Frears and producers Sarah Radclyffe and Tim Bevan?

Hanif: We worked very closely together. I was involved in the shooting and because the subject matter was so very close to me I was on the set all the time. A lot of the dialogue was improvised on the set. It was important that I was around really, because of my background.

Zainub: Maybe you could touch quickly on your background.

Hanif: My father is Pakistani and my mother is English. I was born and brought up in South London. I attended university in London. I worked in theatre for a while writing plays and writing for radio.

Zainub: Where did you get funding for the film?

Hanif: It was made for England's Channel 4, they commissioned me to write it. And they paid very little. It was very cheap, made in six weeks. It cost £600,000 to make; that's about \$1,200,000 Canadian I suppose. It was all paid for by TV.

Zainub: Were there any problems with Channel 4 during the making of the film?

Hanif: No, no, no, they were very good, very patient. They allowed us to make the film we wanted to make. They didn't interfere at all. They were very supportive, they were excellent. Channel 4 is the main maker of film in Britain today.

Zainub: What was the response to *Laundrette* from the Asian community?

Hanif: The film hasn't gone out on TV yet. It's mostly been seen by young people, by liberal-minded people, people who tend to go and see these types of movies. When it goes out on television we will likely see that the response from the audience is slightly different. In New York there were big demonstrations against the movie outside the cinema every Sunday, by Pakistanis who were objecting to the homosexuality. I'm sure that there

are a lot of Pakistani people who will feel like that as well as a lot of non-Asians.

What I wanted to write was a film about two boys who loved each other, without it being made into a big deal. Just sex and love, in the way heterosexuals love each other. I wanted it to be more than a "I'm gay, how am I going to tell my father" type of film.

Zainub: There has been a need for culture within ethnic and minority groups. How has this been brought about?

Hanif: That's where Channel 4 comes in. Channel 4 does not make any films, but it has the money and they give it to independent companies to make movies. The other part of the mandate was to help neglected communities. Communities that didn't normally have access to the money to make films. So it was important to them that they make a film about the Asian community in Britain. They wanted to make a film about Black people. So they went out of their way to help make this film.

Zainub: Tania's portrayal in the film is interesting because like the others, she too is caught in the contradictions that are inherent in belonging to Western and Eastern worlds. Have you met a Tania?

Hanif: I know a lot of people like Tania, I suppose. I think she is a bit extreme, deliberately so and a little caricatured. A lot of Asians come from very conservative home backgrounds repressing their sexuality. They get married and don't say anything. I suppose she's (Tania) like that, that's her background and she is trying to break away, which she does in the film by trying to find her own life. There are some people capable of doing that; often later on there is a reconciliation between them and their families.

Zainub: Are you aware of the struggles of women in Pakistan and how they have fought sexism, inequality and traditional values?

Hanif: Yes, when I was in Pakistan there were a lot of radical women, a lot of good journalists, a lot of tough women involved in politics. They have a very hard struggle in Pakistan as it's a reactionary country. There's so much legislation which is especially designed to repress women. The women are struggling there, even Benazir Bhutto.

Zainub: What kind of legislation is brought in to repress women's rights?

Hanif: For example, there is a law called "The Law of Evidence" which says that in a court of law a woman's evidence is

only worth half that of a man's. If a man gives evidence there have to be two women to give evidence to equal that of one man's. Women are not allowed to divorce men, only men are allowed to divorce women.

Zainub: In *Laundrette* Omar's mother commits suicide.

Hanif: I know, I know, much to my mother's annoyance!

Zainub: Who is your mother and what influence has she played in your life?

Hanif: People tend to concentrate on my father, him being Pakistani. My mother is there, she is home, she is a housewife.

Zainub: What kind of influence has she had in terms of your work? Has she influenced you in your awareness of women's issues?

Hanif: No, that all came later. She is not of that generation.

Zainub: How about other women? Do you have sisters?

Hanif: Yes I have a sister. She works for a British magazine called *Spare Rib*. All of the women around me have educated me I suppose, about the place of women in our society, about patriarchy, about feminism. They have made me more aware, absolutely. Feminism is the most important new issue to emerge in Britain since the war.

Zainub: You write about the comparisons between the large, old families of Pakistan and the ideals of the new relationships of the West with their freedom plus commitment. You ask the question, "Was the extended family worse than the little nuclear family because there were more people to dislike? Or better — because relationships were less intense." Would you comment on that? For the benefit of Asian women struggling for a place of their own in society?

Hanif: An amazing thing when you talk about the stress put on women — when I went to Pakistan there was this huge family, all these people, and you suddenly realize you are a part of them. This sense of domination suddenly comes over you. You realize that you are a part of them, they see you as being their representative and you theirs. In the West the set up is more atomistic. You might live with your wife or your husband. I find it very depressing, and yet I found the pressure of the extended family very severe and dominating and rather frightening — you were part of it whether you liked it or not. It was very difficult to break away, so you didn't. You didn't go out and set up a flat on your own. And I'm sure it's worse for the women because women don't have any economic power. It's all dependent on men and the women are there to serve.

Zainub: How does your family relate to your work?

Hanif: They don't like it much. My father is fine, but all my uncles in Pakistan don't like me very much. My aunts don't like it. Probably because they feel it exposes them and partly because they don't approve of homosexuality.

Zainub: You mention the National Front in the film. What is happening with this organization?

Hanif: They are still around, but are not getting any bigger; they are also very violent and are operating out of the East End of London. They haven't got a large constituency — people don't vote for them. So they have not become politically influential. The Tory Party is more of a threat really with its racist attitudes, its hatred of Black people, its way of down-playing racism. They don't believe that anti-racism is important.

Zainub: The BBC is known for its censorship policies. Can you comment on censorship in Britain in film, pornography, writing and other issues?

Hanif: There is a lot of censorship in British television. More and more, it is political censorship that is prominent. We are losing a battle because the censors have so much support from the Tory government. We organize, we complain, we do what we can but gradually British television is moving back to the fifties. If the Tories get in next time they will disband the BBC and privatize it, I think.

Zainub: What are you doing right now?

Hanif: I have written a film called *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*. We are casting at the moment and will be shooting in February, for release next autumn. I have written a play for the Royal Court where I teach twice a week.

Zainub: Where are you getting the funding for the new film?

Hanif: It's partly from Channel 4 and partly paid for by an American company. Producers Tim Bevan, Stephen Frears, the director, and myself have formed a company to ensure the profits go to us instead of to somebody else. Our idea is for us to have full control of the film from beginning to end. ●

Zainub Verjee, originally from Kenya, now lives in Vancouver. She is currently on the Board of Directors for The Women's Labour History Project and works at Women in Focus, a distributor of women's video and film works.

Gordon Warnecke (l.) and Daniel Day Lewis in "My Beautiful Laundrette." Says Kureishi, "What I really wanted was to write a film about two boys who loved each other."



Still courtesy of Orion Pictures Corporation

There Is No Category "Political Art"

GARY KIBBINS

This is an excerpt from an article commissioned by the Association of National Non-Profit Artists' Centres (ANNPAC) for a larger project to appear in a special publication. This project will be a collection of articles tracing the history and structure of the artist-run centres in Canada over the last ten years.

There are at least four reasons why the concept and category of "political art" should be refused.

1. Formal characteristics. A work cannot be designated "political" due to the nature of its formal construction, as works both political and non-political in intention can and do employ the same formal strategies. A work can be structured formally so that political themes appear alongside non-political themes, making any attempts to label it "political" or "non-political" futile.

2. Content. Works which have a singularly political intention or content (overthrow the state and seize the means of production; change day-care or censorship legislation) have no more claim to a special category "political art" than do works with a psychological content in laying claim to a special category "psychological art." Criteria for categories of art which are based on content lie outside the conventions of artworks themselves, and are therefore qualitatively different than 'minimalism' or 'expressionism,'

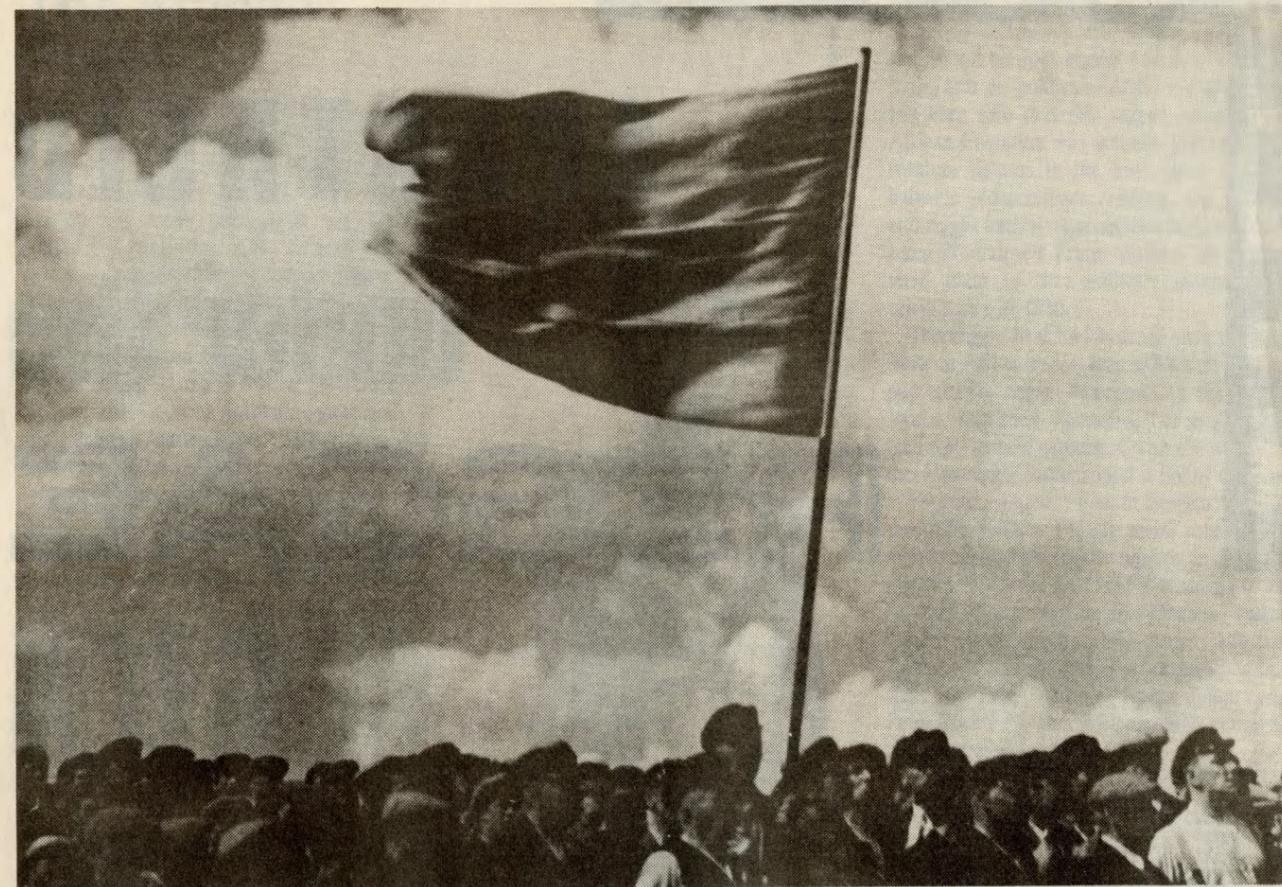
which at least have the advantage of being formal and stylistic categories. The "political" is too far-reaching, which lends a certain truth to the cliché "everything is political," but which also threatens to make it meaningless. While it is true that every articulation has a political component to it, or has political implications, this is no less true of the statement "everything is psychological," or "everything is sociological."

3. The Institution of Art. This useful category, introduced by Peter Burger, describes the historical framework that all artworks are subjected to and are obliged to work within. It points not only to the institutions, agencies and organizations that oversee and regulate the work of artists and the reception of their works, but to the social status and the public perception of art and artists which apply in any given historical period. The institution of art is the central factor defining the artwork, any artwork, regardless of whether or not its content is "political." Because its primary task is to regulate culture, it becomes an historical leveling device which can't be simply sidestepped by placing a work on a billboard or in a union hall (even though such strategies challenge and modify the institution of art). The institution of art, notoriously flexible, has proven innumerable times its ability to envelop and retrieve wayward artworks. It has developed an

immunity to the challenges launched by isolated artists, and won't be overcome by the contents of individual artworks. Even so, the observation that the most successful challenges to the institution of art are mounted by the tradition called "political art" seldom takes into account the fact that these efforts are characterized more by their *process* (invariably collective in nature, embodied in artists' organizations, artists working with other communities, public education, etc.) than by their products.

4. Strategy. Besides the more structural reasons for refusing the category "political art," there are, I think, strategic reasons as well. There is an ironic *restriction* in political usefulness implied in the term "political art." This occurs when the political is privileged over, for example, the psychological, for the possibilities of "psychological" articulations strengthening the politics of a given work is not adequately appreciated. To use the term "political art" at all serves not so much to defiantly insist on its right to exist (and its right to exist distinct from other types of cultural production) but already to begin narrowing its possibilities and hindering its circulation in discourse.

The falseness of the propositions implied in the term "political art" can be verified no more easily than by a quick perusal of artworks thought to be suc-



Film still from "Deserter," V.I. Pudovkin, 1933.

cessfully "political." The "politics" of such works are but one dimension among many others, and are almost invariably produced through an innovative conjunction of many discourses, as well as a variety of aesthetic risk-taking devices, which could never be perceived, much less appreciated, by searching out "the political" as a privileged and solitary discourse.

The term "political art" implies an undue emphasis on artworks as isolated objects. This only serves to downplay process, which includes the political and historical process. (Perhaps the only conceivable substitute for "political art" after all is "historical art.") The political and historical significance of an exhibition may lie as much in who exhibited (artists previously excluded, for reasons of race or gender, for example) as in the contents of the works shown; or an artwork entirely conser-

vative in the manner in which it willingly accepts the general conditions of the institutions of art, may nonetheless challenge a particular hegemonic style, making an important contribution to a local pattern of cultural resistance.

The most damaging result of labelling some forms of art "political" lies in their ghettoization. This is the same ghettoization expressed in the often heard complaint: "preaching to the converted." The implication that those producing "political art" preach, and that their audiences are converted (the religious terminology is not out of place here) is, in turn, one of the contributing reasons why "political art" is sometimes assumed to be unendurably smug. Again, this perception that "political art" is inevitably *moralizing*, while true of some, denies the diversity of politically motivated artworks, particularly those that reject moralizing

explicitly. Nonetheless, this misperception, and many like it, have been in some quarters appended to the programme of the entire "political art community," and are at least in part the result of self-misrepresentations.

Finally, this often self-imposed ghettoization only serves to restrict audience and the potential for cultural exchange. And it seems to work both ways: the number of people unwilling to trudge down the street to see an exhibition labelled "political art" is probably proportionately no greater than the number of people unwilling to see an exhibition which has been designated "unpolitical," even though their segregation may be more a matter of circumstance than substance.

Gary Kibbins

APARTHEID under the REGGAE GUN

THE TWIN ISSUES OF FAMINE AND LIBERATION IN AFRICA have, in the past few years, taken particular significance for pop music artistes in North America and Europe. The benefit record productions and concerts whose sole purpose was to aid famine victims in Ethiopia may well go down in history as a fleeting trend of pop artistes flirting with social activism. Of course not all the participants were 'trendies.'

There is however a cultural trend of another sort, one in which both the musical texture and lyrical content has consistently embraced the theme of Africa: celebrating its victories and sharing its pain under apartheid. This trend is reggae, a musical form which developed in the West with Western influences, but whose soul derives from Africa.

Klive Walker is a reggae researcher and writer who uses the Jamaican origins of reggae to focus on the music's international impact. He lives and works in Toronto.



Illustration: Dawn Phillips

The African Drum

REGGAE'S AFFINITY WITH AFRICA stems from the Jamaican popular forms that preceded it. The earliest of these forms reflected Africa, not with lyrics, but with the rhythm and more particularly the African drum. The continuity of the African cultural tradition in Jamaica in the form of reggae had less to do with the adherents of Rastafari than it did with burru players, whom some researchers insist can be traced back to the slavery period on the island. Burru is a term that describes singing, dancing and drumming practised by the Jamaican 'underclasses.' The term is used here as it relates to African drumming. Burru was the precursor of Rastafarian music, which actually inherited that form of African drumming. Burru within the Rastafarian context still exists today and is played both by purist and secular musicians alike. Bob Marley used the burru beat on tracks like "Rastaman Chant" (from the album *Burnin'*) and "Babylon System" (from the album *Survival*). Third World, a band often criticized by some for 'diluting' the music, utilized the burru beat on their most recent album *Sense of Purpose*.

Reggae & African Liberation

THE DECADE OF THE 1970S SAW A multitude of reggae recordings with themes on Ethiopia and Africa's liberation in general. This analysis looks only at those recordings that have had the most impact internationally and on Africa, itself.

Peter Tosh's C.B.S.-released album *Equal Rights* (1977) contains a track titled "Apartheid," which exposed white racist domination in South Africa and called for Black Africans there to "fight, fight, fight apartheid." The production included sound effects simulating gunfire, thus underlining an already militant musical statement.

Probably the most famous reggae anthem opposing apartheid is Bob Marley's "War" from the 1976 album *Rastaman Vibration*. This song, adapted from a speech by the late Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie, has the structure of a battle cry. Its theme is that until the Black South African breaks out of apartheid's chains there will be "WAR!" "Africa Unite" (from Marley's *Survival*, 1979) captured the yearning of Africans at home and abroad for the unity of continental Africa. It



Reproduced from "Land of Africa" publicity, Music is Life Foundation Ltd.

was, however, another song on that album, "Zimbabwe," which will remain a landmark connection between reggae's socio-cultural activism and the politics of Africa's liberation. It has been said that this reggae statement on African liberation was actually played by the freedom fighters in the bush prior to Zimbabwe's independence. Marley, the Wailers and reggae itself were given their highest tribute when Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Mugabe invited them to that nation's independence celebrations in 1980.

The reggae beat had become such a potent force in Africa by the late 1970s that African pop artistes began incorporating the reggae 'rydim' into their repertoire. The singer/musician who is most associated with the advent of the Afro-reggae fusion sound is Sonny Okosun, a Nigerian, whose "Fire in Soweto" (1977) recording combined biting social commentary with a distinctive reggae bounce in the true spirit of the music. As a kind of corollary to the work of African artistes like Okosun, reggae bands began spicing their songs with the rhythms of African pop. Two examples of this trend are Third World's "Lagos Jump" and Peter Tosh's "Mama Africa," both compositions addressing African themes.

British reggae made its contribution to the anti-apartheid cultural movement early in its evolution through the musical prowess of the band Steel Pulse. This band's second album *Tribute to the Martyrs* (1979) included a track titled "Biko's Kindred Lament," a moving, emotional reggae ballad with a hard-driving beat and a melancholy melody. David Hinds, lead singer and composer, says in the lyrics that he cried when Biko died, and accuses the apartheid system of killing the Azanian martyr. This was released prior to Peter Gabriel's 1980 album which also included a timely composition named "Biko."

The reggae scene of the 1980s continues to 'chant down' apartheid. The dub poets weighed in with Mutabaruka's "Any Means Necessary" from the *Outcry* album, a song which suggests that even obeah and voodoo should be enlisted in the fight against apartheid. Another poet, Oku Onuora, contributed "Wi A Come," a tribute to Nelson Mandela.

In addition, even singers who fall within the 'dance-hall style' idiom of reggae have fired musical shots at apartheid. Sugar Minott's "Nah go a South Africa" is a case in point in which he states his refusal to go to that country until liberation is achieved and adds that he would rather join the freedom fighters. The point of stating and re-stating these examples is to demonstrate, among other things, the inseparable bond between issues affecting Africa and reggae music.

Land of AFRICA

IF YOU BUY They won't DIE

PROCEEDS IN AID OF ETHIOPIAN FAMINE VICTIMS

NOW AVAILABLE ISLANDWIDE

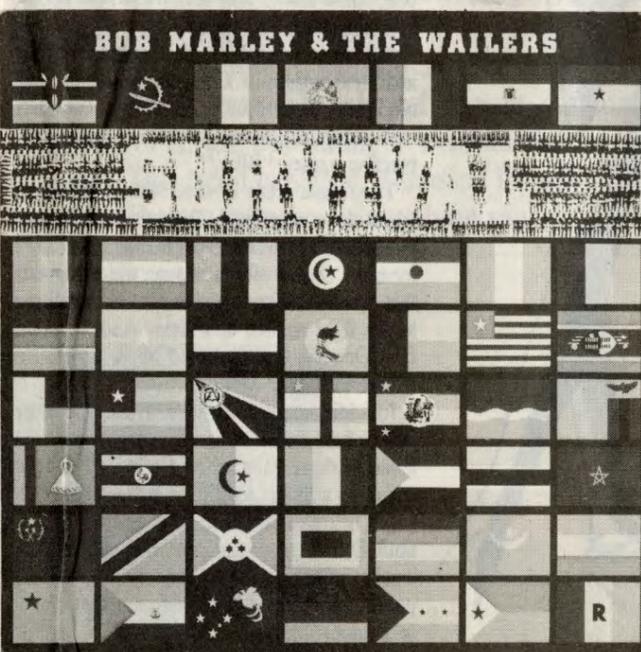
- SUN-ISLAND T-SHIRTS \$20
- BUTTONS \$4
- 7" 45 RPM RECORDS \$5
- 12" DISCO RECORDS \$12

The Benefits

THE FIRST BENEFIT FOR AFRICA THAT attracted international attention was Band Aid's single "Do They Know It's Christmas," organized by Bob Geldof and released in Britain in December of 1984. This effort for famine relief in Ethiopia was given widespread publicity not only because pop musicians were exhibiting a conscience, but mainly because Band Aid drew together the top names in rock music in Britain. A few weeks prior to the release of Geldof's benefit record, Jimmy Cliff launched his single, "De Youths Dem A

Bawl" in Jamaica. The proceeds from this 45 single went to aid Ethiopian famine victims.

The contribution of Band Aid seemed on the surface to be quite honourable and for many of the participating artistes the concern was probably genuine. However, no other country outside of Jamaica has had its popular music affected so greatly by reggae as has Britain. The nagging question must then be: Why were not British reggae artistes included in Band Aid? While the Band Aid single enjoyed a high level of publicity on both sides of the Atlantic, Cliff's contribution went virtually unnoticed outside certain reggae circles in North America and Europe.



Album cover design by Neville Garrick

Canada's benefit effort performed by Northern Lights was also guilty of the omission of reggae performers, excepting the participation of Leroy Sibbles. The Canadian contribution suffered what must be seen as its own indignity when the track, "Tears Are Not Enough" 'migrated' to the States to 'get lost' on the *We Are The World* album.

The well-known U.S. benefit package *We Are The World*, produced and performed by U.S.A. For Africa, began with good intentions but became a vehicle not to complement the previous efforts but to eclipse and overshadow them in the true spirit of the 'American Way.' The U.S.A. choir included several who had played Sun City in South Africa, singing alongside singers and musicians with a track record of social activism, namely, Stevie Wonder, Harry Belafonte and Bob Dylan. But superstar status seemed to be the only factor that most of the U.S.A. For Africa performers had in common.

The hype and spectacle of Geldof's Live Aid international concerts is so well known that it doesn't bear repeating here. However the fact that, at the time, even the staid *Time* Magazine would discuss the issue of racism in Geldof's choice of performers for the benefit concerts is a subject deserving of attention. There were only three Black acts among the twenty-four star performers originally announced for Philadelphia. The lame excuse that the organizers selected from the hot stars on the pop chart (the same criterion as "We Are The World") was used as a defense. The fact is that some Black superstars (Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross and Prince) were asked but declined, while others (Phillip Bailey, who was on the charts, and Run-DMC) were never approached. Injury was added to insult in the case of Run-DMC as they had shown a keen interest in being on the Live Aid roster. It was only after a serious issue was made about the exclusion of Blacks that Geldof and his organizers scrambled to invite a few Afro-American singers. This incident should not take away from those performers and bands whose intentions were good, but there is something seriously wrong with an event organized to assist Black African famine victims that ignores performers of African descent who wish to make a contribution.

In contrast to "We Are The World" and Live Aid came the Artists United Against Apartheid with the album and single "Sun City." This group, initiated and organized by Steven Van Zandt, former guitarist with Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, was the antithesis of the previous American efforts. In fact the "Sun City" project was not really an American affair. The participants came from Jamaica, Panama, Nigeria, Azania (South Africa), Bri-

tain and the U.S., including a large complement of Afro-Americans. The icing on the cake was the inclusion of three reggae artistes — Jimmy Cliff, Big Youth and Linton Kwesi Johnson. The majority of the Artists United Against Apartheid were rebels of some sort, either politically, musically, or both. The street-smart rappers were enlisted including Run-DMC and others. Artistes that had been previously active in opposing apartheid through the cultural medium, such as Gil Scott-Heron, Peter Gabriel, Sonny

video. Notwithstanding these obstacles, the project left an indelible mark on the anti-apartheid cultural campaign. The refrain of the song, "I ain't gonna play Sun City" did not fall on deaf ears as the number of performers going to South Africa to accept blood money decreased significantly as a result of the project.

In late December 1984 at Bob Marley's Tuff Gong studio in Kingston, Jamaica, some of the best reggae artistes of the day produced the most moving and powerful benefit disc to date. That

Studio shot of "Land of Africa" musicians. From l. to r. Marcia Griffiths, Rita Marley, Judy Mowatt, Triston Palma, Freddie McGregor, David Hinds, Cat Coore, Ibo Cooper and Willie Stewart.



Photo reproduced from "Land of Africa" publicity, Music is Life Foundation Ltd.

Okosun and the Malopoets of Soweto, were invited.

Another distinguishing feature of the "Sun City" project was that one did not have to be a rock performer to qualify. Funk, rap, reggae, dj-ing, dub poetry, Latin, African pop and even jazz were all in evidence. Musicianship must also have been a factor with instrumentalists like Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, Shankar and Tony Williams present. The "Sun City" project was truly of an international character and flavour. Both the music and lyrics displayed a street-wise hard edge. The lyrics were pointed and political, singling out President Reagan's apartheid non-policy for special criticism. Of course the effort was not awarded a Grammy as was the case with "We Are The World" but was punished for being too outspoken and for "attacking the (U.S.) President." The record was banned by several radio stations across the U.S. and elsewhere. In addition, the album and single was not afforded the widespread distribution it deserved. The final blow came recently when a public television network refused to repeat the broadcast of the making of the "Sun City"

12" single is "Land of Africa," produced by a Jamaican company of musicians and other concerned citizens, who came together with the aim of easing starvation in Ethiopia. The group, Music is Life Foundation Ltd., had among its members prominent reggae artistes such as Ibo Cooper (Third World), Judy Mowatt (the I-Threes), and Mutabaruka (dub poet).

The component of "Land of Africa" that separated it from the other benefit productions was the genuine sense of African brotherhood. If the spirit of "We Are The World" expressed charity and assistance, "Land of Africa" exhibited the feeling of one family member relating to another within the same family unit. The line within the song of U.S.A. For Africa which states, "There are people dying" is abstract, distant and foreign. The lyrics of "Land of Africa" are clear: "Oh Ethiopia / Though famine is aching your body / Land our forefathers dreamt of / We will never forsake you." This excerpt of the first verse clearly sends a family message. In order to emphasize this theme, the final verse states: "Oh Africa's children / Scattered all over different places / Home will always be home /

No matter how far you roam." Simply put. Blacks of African descent outside the continent must recognize their obligations to the motherland. The chorus says: "There is hope, never give up / We're coming home." The last line of the chorus, while it clearly contains the implication of physical repatriation (a Rastafarian tenet), also reflects the sentiment that Africans 'abroad' assisting Africans at 'home' is a family matter and not just humanitarian aid. The song contains a verse demanding Africa's unity and

another dealing with the issue of apartheid: the only benefit product to unite various issues concerning Africa into a whole.

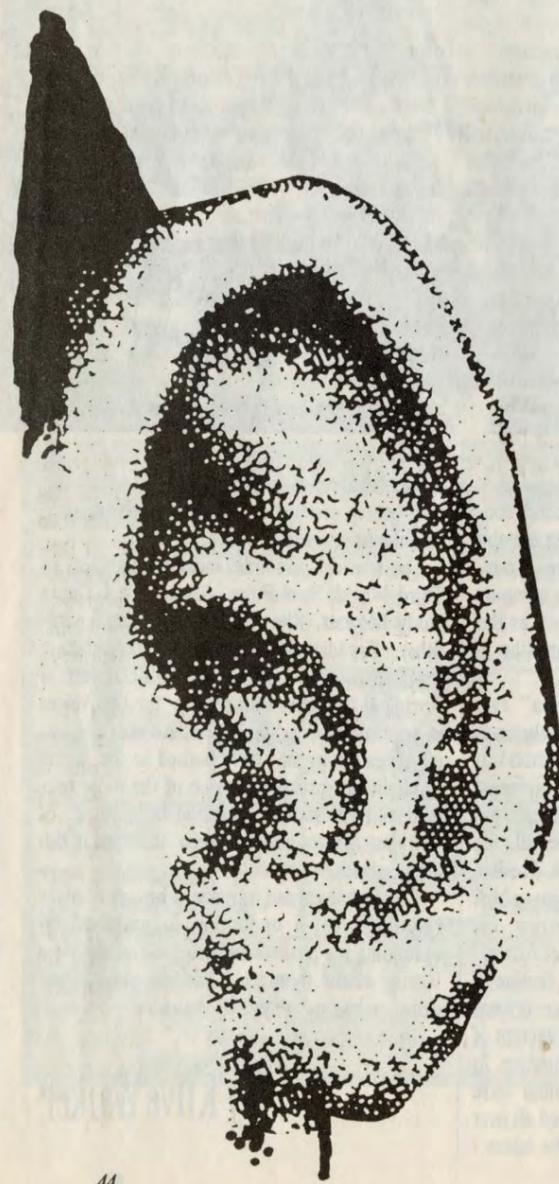
The musical personnel included members of Third World, Steel Pulse, Aswad, the I-Threes (Judy Mowatt, Rita Marley and Marcia Griffiths), Freddie McGregor, Gregory Isaacs Mutabaruka and others. The music is just as stirring as the lyrics with some of the best voices in pop music sounding better than ever. "Land of Africa" may not have bathed in the global spotlight but probably is one of the most relevant cultural statements made by a group of 'African' artistes who had been 'scattered in different places.'

Reggae has earned its place in history as a key cultural force in opposition to apartheid by upholding the positive values of Africa. What is lacking at the moment is wide-spread international public awareness of that fact.

by Klive Walker

LISTENING IN

by DOT TUER



The Installation

From March 31 to April 4, 1987, it was possible to put your ears to the world of shortwave radio and your eyes to the world of wirepress services and interactive database systems through an installation created by Oliver Kellhammer at A Space gallery in Toronto. On April 1, 1987, I as a confirmed technophobe, entered A Space to investigate this installation. Within twenty minutes I had not only learned how to access these resources, but was hooked on the flow of information available at my fingertips. For the next two days I used the assembled technology (which was inexpensive and by no means exhaustive) to monitor the news as it happened. X-Press, a consumer service offering a selection of wireservices, was connected to a computer at A Space through Rogers Cable. Available to individuals for \$25 a month, X-Press's selection included CP (Canadian), AP (American), Washington Post (American), BPA (West Germany), CNA (Taiwan), Tass (Moscow), Notimex (Mexico), XINCHA (China), KYODO (Japan), OPECNA (Oil cartel) and AFP (France). This service, combined with the shortwave radios which brought in signals from all over the world, and ECONET, an interactive and international database, seemed to offer a limitless vista of information. In using the resources, however, quite another perspective emerged.

Through the X-Press service, one can type in key words and the computer will store reports referring to, or employing, these keywords. The words I listed included Nicaragua, women's issues, Latin America, socialism, left-wing, right-wing, communism, El Salvador, feminism, revolution, terrorism, and peace. Not one story on April 2, 1987, referred to these keywords. I then proceeded to edit all news stories which pertained to business topics. In so doing I reduced the number of reports on line from 425 to 15 within 30 minutes. Shortwave radio, while monitoring signals from around the world, is dependent as an informational tool on the power of the frequencies released. Thus Voice of America and Voice of Moscow had clear reception, and a high-powered station broadcasting from Quito, Ecuador

Photo: Janice Bowley



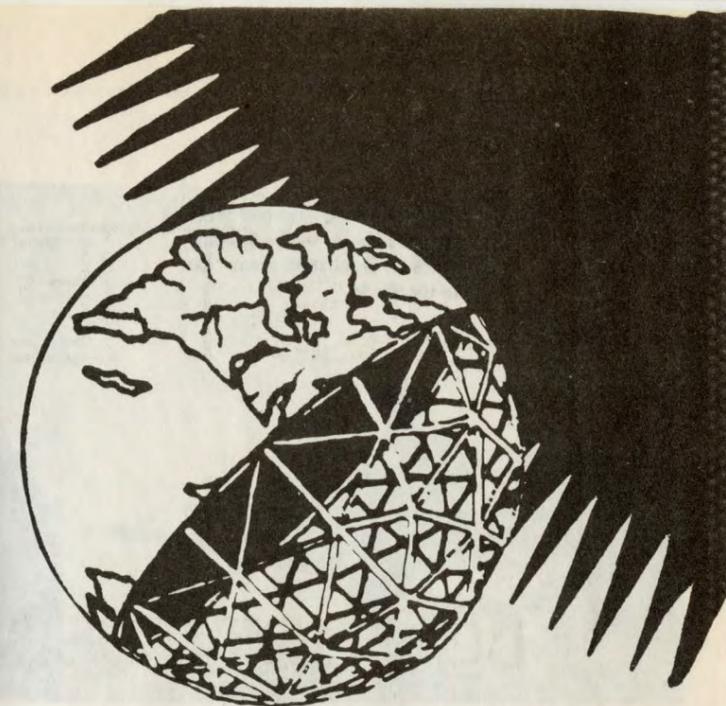
also proved to be an English-based American propaganda station. La Presna, Cuba, could only be received at night while Radio Nicaragua was permanently unavailable due to continuous jamming by the CIA. ECONET, as an interactive database where users from around the world can post stories and responses via satellite for \$15 a month, has the potential to create an inexpensive and alternative media source. But although the bulletin board includes such topics as ecology, Latin America, development, and peace, information posted is limited as there are not yet members in sufficient numbers to provide extensive global coverage. Similar databases in formative stages which also exchange stories with ECONET (California) include Peacenet (American), Alternet (Ottawa), Greenet (Green Party) and GEONET (Europe).

Yet as I discovered in focusing upon one news item concerning AIDS, limited resources are better than no resources at all. In tracing the dissemination of a news story originally run by ECONET, which was subsequently picked up by the wire services through another source, and eventually appeared in a local newspaper a month later, Kellhammer's installation proved invaluable as a means to decipher the twists and turns taken by the 'free-flow' of information. For although *Ear to the World* did not provide an instantaneous and utopian solution to media decentralization, it offered the possibility of gaining a critical perspective.

An Example of Free-Flow Information

AIDS VIRUS MAN-MADE IN THE USA?
Hamburg (taz/g. id 25feb87)

On February 25, 1987, a report on AIDS from Hamburg was transported via satellite to individuals and organizations around the world using the interactive database system, ECONET. The report summarized an interview published by TAZ Berlin between Stefan Heym, a German writer and



Jakob Segal, a former head of the Institute for General Biology at Humboldt University in East Berlin. According to the interview, Segal began his research after discovering a report published in English at a non-aligned conference in Harare, Zimbabwe which suggested that AIDS was an artificial rather than an organic virus. Segal traced this report back to a P-4 high security laboratory at Fort Detrick, Maryland, which had been engaged in the manipulation of pathogenic agents (viruses) since 1977 and used longterm prisoners as test cases, granting them early releases if they survived the experimentation. Culling information from scientific and government sources, Segal arrived at a speculative and circumstantial theory on the evolution of AIDS. Segal begins by stating that the theory that AIDS was originally a harmless monkey virus (HTLV 1) transferred to human beings is "deliberate misinformation" and that there is absolutely no proof that AIDS originated in Africa, dating the first documentation of AIDS in Africa to 1983, versus 1979 in New York. According to research exchanged between the Pasteur Institute and Gallo, a scientist working out of Bethesda, Maryland, the HTLV III (AIDS) virus is genetically related to both the HTLV I virus (monkey virus) discovered by Gallo as well as a Visna virus which produces a brain illness in sheep in Iceland.

However, Segal explained, these two viruses are structurally so disparate that a hybrid could only have been produced by either an evolutionary miracle or genetic engineering. Segal thus concluded that such a hybrid was biologically engineered at Fort Detrick and tested on prisoners. Segal speculates that these prisoners demonstrated a slight infection which appeared to subside, were subsequently released, and headed for New York City where drugs and a homosexual milieu were readily available. The consequent outbreak in New York City (with the first reported case of AIDS in 1979) and the prisoners' release in 1977 coincides with the two to five year incubation period of AIDS. To back up his theory, Segal cited published U.S. congress reports which stated that experiments using radioactive material, viruses, and infectious germs had been performed on human beings and referred

Artist Oliver Kellhammer (near r.) and participants in the five-day hands-on installation event "Ear to the World."



Photo: Janice Bowley

to statistics from Fort Detrick which detailed the number of test persons, lethal cases and prisoners released.

March 30, 1987
18.42 EST

SOVIET-AIDS 1st Ld

1st lead 454 (Updates with U.S. denials, no pick-ups)
Moscow (AP)

On March 30, 1987, AP ran a news wire which reported a TASS wire story on AIDS. TASS stated that an article published in a Soviet military journal claimed that the virus causing AIDS was artificially produced in a U.S. army laboratory and leaked accidentally to the populace. The article, written by Peter Nikolayev, did not identify the scientists but located the source of the virus to Fort Detrick which was once the army's centre for the development of biological weapons. AP reported that such allegations began appearing more than a year ago, and that the Pentagon and State Department has denied them, saying that Fort Detrick never experimented with AIDS. AP ends the article by stating that Soviet scientist Viktor Zhdanov has said that 32 AIDS cases have been registered in the Soviet Union, all but two involving foreigners.

SOVIETS ACCUSED OF AIDS 'MISCHIEF'

The Toronto Star, Tuesday April 28, 1987.
Washington (Reuter)

In this report, appearing almost a month after the original AP wire, Reuter states that American experts, who are not identified in the article, claim that Moscow is waging an effective 'black propaganda' campaign against the United States. According to Reuter, the origin of AIDS is a mystery, but in recent months new publications around the world have lent credence to the allegation that AIDS was a

gene-splicing experiment performed at Fort Detrick which went 'badly awry.' Herbert Romerstein, a U.S. Information Agency specialist on Soviet 'disinformation' claims that this campaign, concocted by the KGB, has been very successful, with the March 30 TASS report published in newspapers in Japan, Jordan, Morocco, Ghana, Finland and the United States. Reuter reports that Fort Detrick is the site of government 'medical' research including AIDS but experts say there is no evidence that the virus was created in any laboratory. Reuter quotes a Soviet AIDS specialist, Victor Zhadnov, as discounting the theory, and states that some scientists have theorized that AIDS originated in an African monkey.

But, states Reuter, the "made in the U.S." story will not die. A State Department report on Kremlin disinformation states that the charge first emerged in the Soviet Literary Gazette in 1985 but had little impact until it was repeated in a study purported to have been done by French scientists and distributed to delegates at a nonaligned summit in Zimbabwe last September. The State Department states that the report's authors, Jacob Segal, his wife Lilli, and Ronald Dehmlow, are not French scientists but East German propagandists. The State Department further claimed that the allegation did not catch hold until it was published in Britain's *Sunday Express*, a conservative newspaper, although it already had been reported in Third and Second World newspapers. U.S. officials state that Moscow's objectives in this blame-America disinformation campaign include:

1. Discrediting Washington in Third World nations where anti-American feelings run high.
2. Discouraging contact between U.S. and Soviet citizens.
3. To increase pressure of NATO allies to remove U.S. military bases due to a fear of AIDS outbreaks originating from U.S. servicemen at these bases.

The three stories listed above, with the first report emerging from an alternative databank network, point to the magnitude with which media now engages in an active practice of disinformation, and the imperative which we as consumers face to establish a diversity of informational sources



if we are to discover what distortions, convolutions, and inaccuracies plague our reception of 'news.' It is not that diversity will guarantee us accuracy or 'truth,' but it will allow us to achieve a perspective from which to ascertain the context in which disinformation is disseminated on a global scale. In reading through the three AIDS stories, none are exempt from generalizations and unidentified sources. But their juxtaposition does allow us to discern what news is deliberate misinformation. The mysterious report tabled at Harare, Zimbabwe is never properly identified. It could either be a classified document leaked from the CIA or indeed a concoction of the KGB. But in gaining access to the Segal interview in TAZ, the degree to which the U.S. State Department is capable of twisting information to identify the original report with Segal when he himself states in interviews that it was a lead which he followed up, is mind-boggling. 'Black' propaganda is clearly not a Soviet invention, but a conscious strategy which both powers are actively engaged in.

Community Access

Oliver Kellhammer's *Ear to the World* installation does not propose a solution to the growing complexity of media issues. But in bringing together informational technology which can be easily accessed by a layperson, and organizing a workshop, a panel, and a lecture on global communication issues, he offers a community the possibility to exercise options within this fantastical morass. By providing access to the wire service, *Ear to the World* allows one to examine the relationship between 'information' as it is reported and the context in which it is reprinted by local newspapers. Access to shortwave radio increases the diversity of information available, circumscribing the very narrow confines of wireservices which are little better than the extensions of state ideologies. Access to interactive databases gives the individual and the local community the potential to confirm or deny mainstream media reports, obtain alternative in-

formation from countries not covered by mainstream media, and *exchange* ideas. And while most of the discussion generated by the panel and lecture during *Ear to the World* emphasized the degree to which doublethink, duplicity, and the economic imperatives of capitalism control our access to global information, little was made of the potential for community organization of resources which the actual installation by Kellhammer demonstrated.

Herbert Schiller, as the academic star of the event, was particularly pessimistic. After all, as he pointed out, video was once heralded as a revolutionary tool of the masses and look where television is now. But if one slides out of his superstructural thinking and back into the concerns and possibilities of a local community, the global picture is not so grim. For as Schiller has pointed out in his writings, before the United States began to control the flow of information in the Western sphere through a commercial empire disguised as the ideology of freedom, Britain and France controlled communication through a vast colonial empire. Yet there have always been alternative sources of ideas and information. Travellers, pamphlets, discussions, letters, and independent reports by journalists all contribute to the dissemination of information which is not framed by the vast resources of economic and political powers. Likewise, Nick Fillmore's analysis during the panel discussion of American correspondents in the Vietnam war operating as extensions of the State Department, and his analysis of the American slant in Canadian newspapers during the Nicaragua elections does not eliminate alternative points of view and grassroots opposition. This is not to underestimate, however, the effectiveness of mainstream media in disseminating official ideologies and positions. But in order to conceptualize the possibility of a community-based flow of information we have to recognize that we do not live in a totalitarian vision no matter how slight or how localized the alternative communication systems are.

The discussions surrounding Oliver Kellhammer's installation pointed to the degree to which a perception of mass media as a monolith chimera creates an atmosphere of

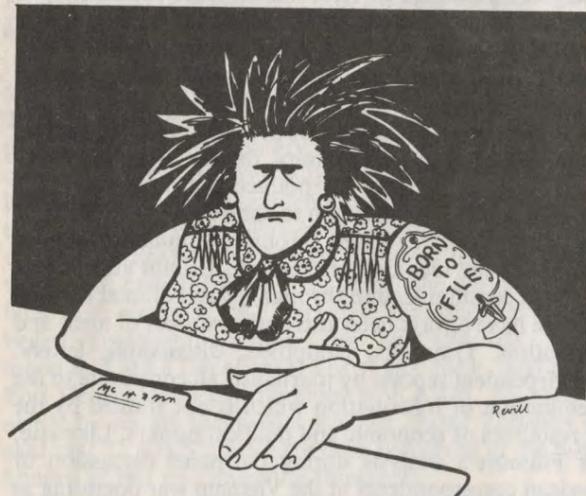
passive resignation and armchair critiques. For if one is looking for the grand revolution conceived in dialectical economic terms, then the degree to which capitalism and disinformation affects mass media reporting will invariably overwhelm and discourage. But if one believes in the possibility of community action, then Kellhammer's demonstration of alternative database systems, wireservice networks and shortwave radio signals provides an inexpensive base from which to build an alternative information system. The title of Herbert Schiller's lecture was "The World Information Order," a political demand being made by non-aligned and emerging nations of the world to redress the 'free-flow' of American information. Emerging nations are demanding regulation of communication and satellite transmissions so that their airwaves are not filled with American TV and their monitors with American wireservices. Needless to say, as Susan Crean points out in an article on the "New World Information Order" in *This Magazine*, May 1982, it has not received much coverage in the great 'free' press network of North America. But in the same way that the emerging nations are organizing as a group to politically oppose American hegemony, so local communities, in a different context but with similar concerns, must begin to organize the right to self-determined access to information. ECONET and similar interactive databases only function through the cooperation and enthusiasm of those who post information on a bulletin board. No one creates the news in this context for you. You create it yourself through interac-



Photo: Janice Bowley

tion. And for a few thousand dollars, Toronto could establish a listening post which would link a local community here to other local communities around the world. This, of course, could not redress the immense power of the mainstream media nor guarantee the election of the NDP, but it could create a very modest, interactive, activist, vision of an alternative communication system.

Dot Tuer is a writer living in Toronto.



Room of One's Own, a quarterly journal devoted to creative and critical writings by women, invites submissions for a special issue: "Working for a Living," to be published Summer 1988. Poetry, short fiction, graphics and reviews (query first for reviews) should be sent with SASE to "Working for a Living," *Room of One's Own*, P.O. Box 46160, Station G, Vancouver, B.C. V6R 4G5. Deadline: 30 November 1987.

c8k8!n F.M.

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

NEWSWAVE

11 am - 12 pm

Toronto's only alternative, electronic, community and current affairs news show. Features include: Eco-Media, Shortwave excerpts, O.P.I.R.G. Radio, European Profile from Radio Netherlands, The City Hall report from Ald Jack Layton, Labour Reports, The Pink Antenna, David Roch — Almost Live, Sky Gilbert's Theatre Beat, Computer Watch, plus many more community interest columns

SATURDAY

FILE 88

10 am - 11:30 am

CKLN's international news magazine with reports and documentaries from The Development Education Centre on College Street, the Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native People (CASNP) and community groups active in world affairs. Other features include specials from Community Radio stations around the world including El Salvador, Chile, Cuba and European stations.

CRITICAL CULTURE

11:30 pm - noon

Host: Ann Gibson

Insight from those who create, effect, challenge or change culture in all its forms. Interviews, documentaries and critical reviews of our culture.

SUNDAY

TITLEWAVES

7:30 pm - 8 pm

Hosts: Gordon Platt, John Ball

Produced by the Canadian Book Information Centre, the show is an up to date look at Toronto's literary scene. Titlewaves reviews new publications, interviews authors and announces local literary events.

Call For Submissions!

Grierson Documentary Seminar '87



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- RECENT BRITISH VIDEO
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Photo: Janice Bowley

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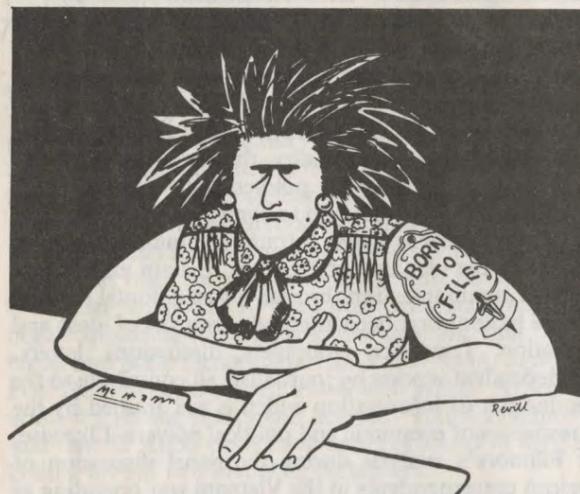
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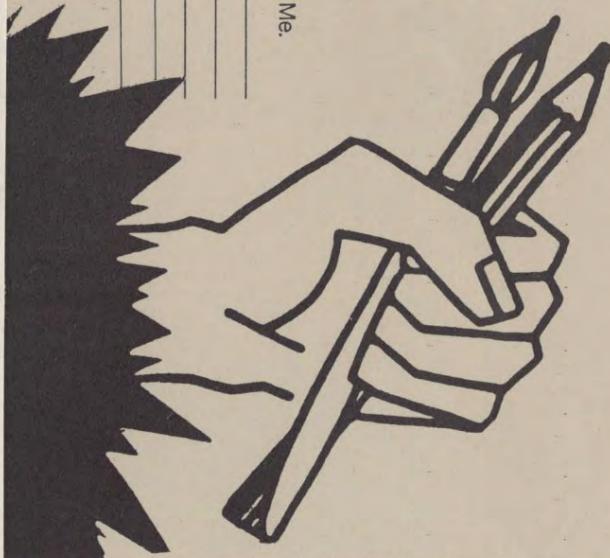
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Call For Submissions!

Grierson Documentary Seminar '87

The Ontario Film Association invites film and videomakers to submit recent productions for the 13th annual Grierson Documentary Seminar. GDS '87 will take place from November 8-13 in Toronto at the Royal Ontario Museum. This year's programmers, Lisa Steele, Geoff Pevere and Tom Waugh, will make selections from applications submitted during the spring and summer months. Canadian (and international) film and videomakers selected to present their work will be guests of GDS '87.

For further information, contact:
Nora Currie
Co-ordinator GDS '87
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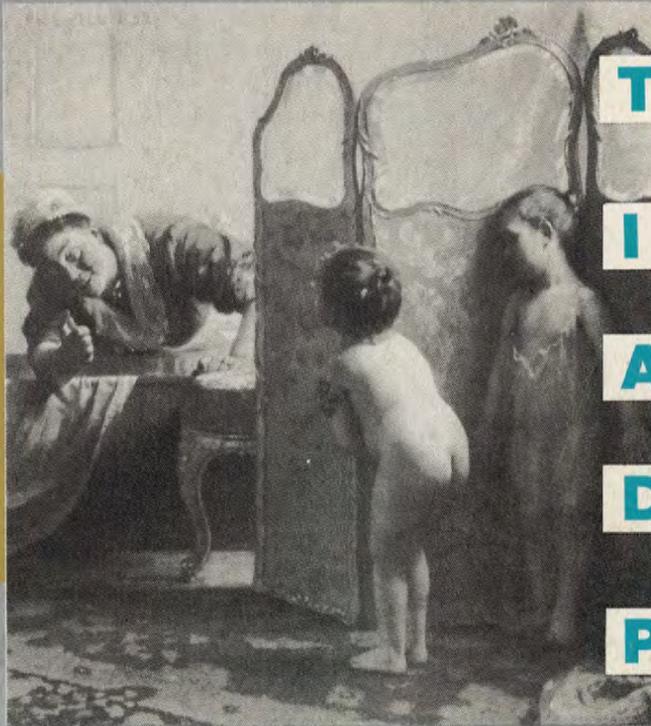
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Sixth Floor Registry, 239 Wellington St., Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0H8

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