

# FUSE

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N O V • D E C 1988 N° 52

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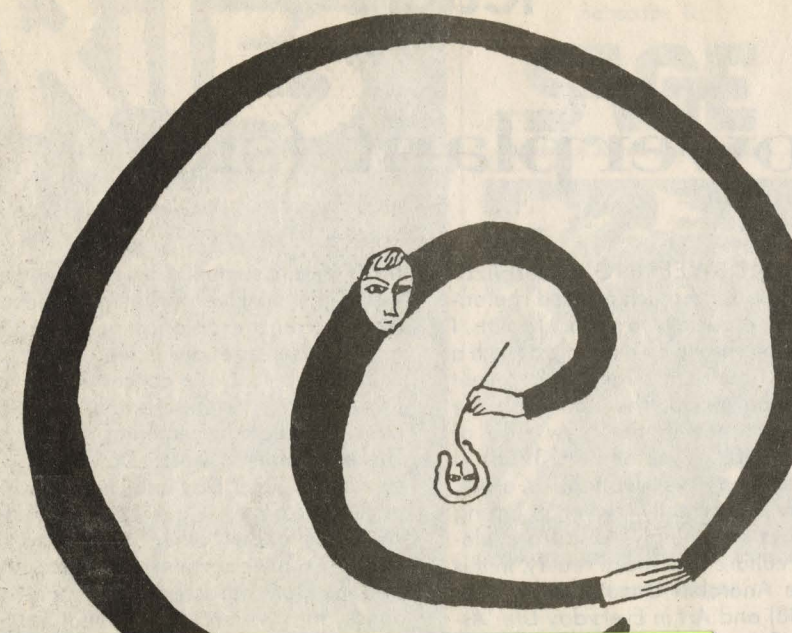
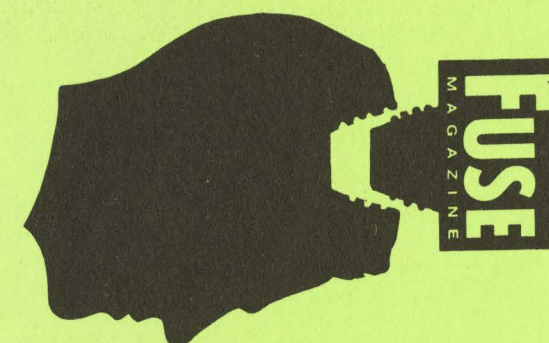


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NOV•DEC 1988  
VOL. XII NO. 3

Cover images:  
(Left)  
Stanley McCook of the Def and Ready Crew with posse member Dude Hayward.  
(Right)  
Teenagers outside Flemingdon Park Community Centre.

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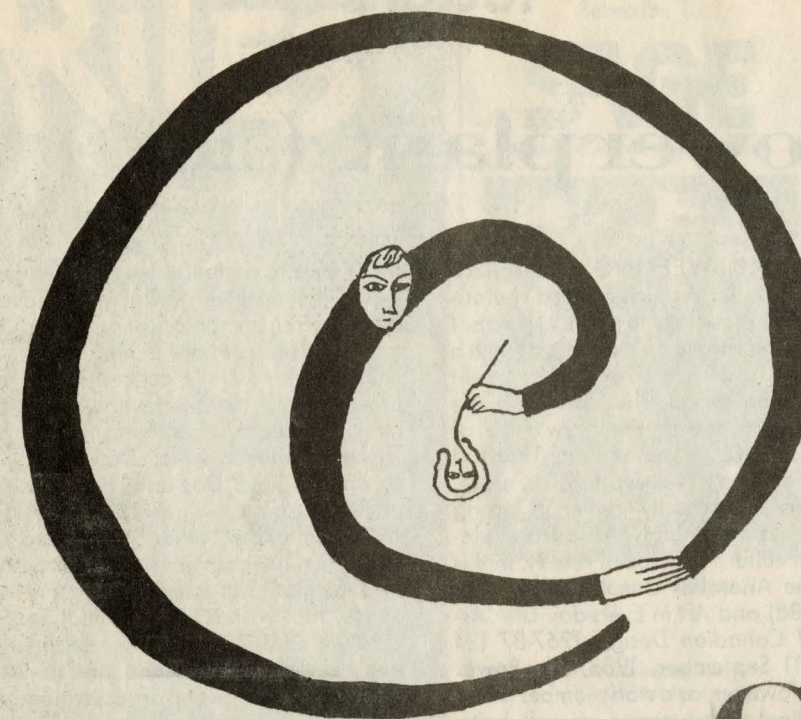
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# letters

## Powerplant (sic)

ALTHOUGH SWEEPING generaliza-  
tions often offer a much needed rhetori-  
cal flourish, especially to political points, I  
must take offense to an example of such a  
rhetorical flourish in Dot Tuer's recent  
article "The Good, the Bad, and the  
Ugly: Resistance in the New Age of  
Everyday Life" (September, 1988). I  
found her essay well written, as usual,  
and more importantly, clever in linking  
the always (seemingly) disparate ele-  
ments of culture and social reality, in this  
case, the Anarchist Unconvention (1-4,  
July, 1988) and *Art in Everyday Life: As-  
pects of Canadian Design 1967-87* (24  
June - 11 September, 1988, The Power  
Plant). However, as a staff member of the  
Power Plant and someone, as well, hold-  
ing a similar position to Dot's on cultural  
analysis, I found myself uncomfortably  
implicated in the following conclusion of  
Dot's essay:

... the Anarchist Unconvention  
offered a weekend where the notion  
of the "margin" was not a  
trendy word to fling around in art  
magazines, but a healthy opposi-  
tion to Powerplant's (sic) vision of  
art in the everyday life of Cana-  
dian citizens.

"Vision" indeed seems problematic  
here. For one thing, "Powerplant" is ac-  
tually "The Power Plant." The insistence  
in referring to the gallery by this mis-  
nomer — there are incidences in other  
journals and art magazines — is incident  
of not mere lack of pedantry but "blind-  
ness" perhaps. For those who decried  
The Power Plant's logo splayed every-  
where, buoyed up by corporate sponsor-  
ship during its inaugural exhibition, it  
seems odd that no one would look behind  
all the fanfare to clearly read it. This  
"blindness" results in the "insights" of  
OCA classes on the The Power Plant as a  
tool of corporate culture without a thor-  
ough investigation of the very complex  
(and in much need of analysis) relation-  
ship between corporate funding and  
cultural activities. This "blindness", to  
employ a bit of rhetorical flourish myself  
(however toward an example with much  
graver consequences) leads to dominant  
media to persistently label AIDS as AIDS-  
virus, a move that not only confuses a  
virus with a syndrome but offers an imme-

diate death sentence to anyone diag-  
nosed HIV-positive. As Dot would have to  
agree, given the rhetorical premise of her  
essay, these issues are indeed linked.

To return to Dot's conception of The  
Power Plant's vision: it is not, as she im-  
plies, singular, hegemonic, monolithic.  
The exhibition to which Dot refers was  
curated by Peter Day and Linda Lewis —  
part of the gallery's guest curatorial pol-  
icy which allows other voices into the  
Gallery's programmes and allows as  
well, as Dot characterizes it in this inci-  
dence, the "vision" of the meat-eating,  
life-style consumers. This is not the "vi-  
sion" of The Power Plant, per se. As a  
public and non-profit organization, we  
present many points of view and articu-  
late many (and sometimes contradictory)  
positions. We, in effect, do not support  
censorship.

Rather than criticizing such institutions,  
it would make more sense to find ways in  
which to constructively engage them. The  
Gallery will offer politically informed dis-  
cussions of contemporary culture as well,  
ones perhaps, that will name names  
(hopefully spelled correctly) and ones  
that will not retreat behind the "insights"  
of blander generalizations of the sweep-  
ing pointing of a "blind" and trigger-  
happy finger.

— Tom Folland  
Assistant Curator  
The Power Plant

## RESPONSE:

TOM FOLLAND, among the diverse con-  
cerns he raises in his letter regarding my  
review of the Anarchist's Unconvention, ap-  
pears upset about the 'rhetorical flourish' I  
employ to reach a conclusion that has 'un-  
comfortably implicated' him in the The Power  
Plant's vision of art in the everyday life of  
Canadian citizens. Yet if he indeed shares my  
position on cultural analysis he must recog-  
nize that most Canadians (except for the  
homeless and those facing institutionalized  
poverty and racism) are implicated as cit-  
izens in an economic and militarized North-  
ern hemisphere whose consumerism, com-  
modification, and intensification of capital is  
directly resulting in the starvation of our not  
so materially developed 'trading' partners.  
Whether we like it or not, we live in a country  
where a conservative government embraces  
(continued page 4)

# RITES

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(but everything else is real)

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# FUSE

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PRESENTS

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the 'hegemonic' strategies of a corporate culture. We live in a country with an election platform of Free Trade which will further implicate us in the aggressive and dehumanized vision of slave labour, expendable lives, and interventionist military policies against those countries who have the audacity to imagine another vision of the future. We may personally vote for the NDP or work with solidarity groups or fight for alternative cultural representation, but we still do so from a position inside an economic infrastructure which ensures that we will be able to continue to live in a land of plenty where we eat too much meat while more than half the children of the world suffer from malnutrition and where citizens of the global village have the 'privilege' of watching the fantasies of our lifestyle unfold in serial form on satellite broadcasted reruns of *Dallas*.

To claim an outside position as Canadians, to claim a colonized status as a nation brutally assaulted by the televised ideology of Reagan's America, and to further imagine that we can create a specifically Canadian culture without a commitment to changing the exploitative conditions of our social and material reality, is naive at best and imperialist in its implications. If Mr. Folland has indeed reached a similar position on cultural analysis, he will recognize that the 'vision' of The Power Plant's design exhibition, from the barbeque set to the installation devoted to the packaging of Bell telecommunications to the Loblaw's no-name campaign is uncomfortably aligned with a product orientated, aggressively capitalist conception of design innovation. For this vision, I do not fault either The Power Plant or the curators. After all, they were simply reflecting the social reality of a majority of citizens of this country, and in no way attempting to claim the 'notion of the margins flung about in art magazines'. Where The Power Plant's 'singular, hegemonic, monolithic' vision comes in is not in this exposition of a commodity system's products for an overstuffed populace, but in the distance between the rhetoric of 'many points of view and articulation of (sometimes contradictory) positions' which Mr. Folland embraces as his gallery's mandate and the reality of their programming strategies.

The Power Plant's track record to date since its grand opening on May 1, 1987, is as follows: *Toronto: A Play of History*, curators Louise Dompierre & Alvin Balkin; *From Sea to Shining Sea*, guest curator A.A. Bronson; *The Architecture of Frank Gehry*, Walker Arts Centre traveling show; *Crimes Against Nature: Prent/Cronenberg*, curator Louise Dompierre; *New Video: Japan*, curator Ihor Holubizky; *Active Surplus: The Economy of the Object*, guest curator Bruce Grenville; *The Architectural Series: Larry Richards*, curator Ihor Holubizky; *Brian Goombidge*, curator Ihor Holubizky; *Antonia Muntadas/Jana Sterbak/Genevieve Cadieux*, curator Ihor Holubizky; *Montreal: History/Perspective*, guest curator Chantal Ponttribrand; *Art in Everyday Life*, guest curators Peter Day & Linda Lewis; *Architectural Series: Murray MacDonald/Alexander Pilas* (in house); *Blind Portage: David Griggs*, in house sculpture installation; *Ian Wallace: 1970-1987*, Van-

couver Art Gallery traveling show; *Andrew Forster: 1982-1988*, curator Tom Folland.

Upcoming shows until January 1990: *Enchantments/Disturbance*, guest curator Renee Baert; *Nancy Spero: Works Since 1950*, Everon Museum traveling show; *Louise Noguchi: Selected Works*, curator Louise Dompierre; *Alan Belcher*, curator Tom Folland; *Robert Fones: Selected Works*, curator Louise Dompierre; *Ed Poiras: Indian Territory*, Mendel Gallery traveling show; *Contemporary German Artists*, curator Louise Dompierre; *Christina Boltanski: Poland, Lessons of Darkness*, MOCA traveling show.

While the list of above exhibitions include a number of well-known Canadian artists, some of whom address the intersection of aesthetics and politics, the scope of these exhibitions do not clearly demonstrate to me the inclusion of 'other voices' capable of presenting many points of view, insistent upon the relationship of cultural practice to social reality. Tom Folland has pointed to the 'blindness' of the dominant media to label AIDS as AIDS virus. Where in the exhibition schedule of The Power Plant are the voices of the homosexual community who are actively fighting this 'blindness' on an extensive cultural front? Tom Folland is concerned that there has been no 'thorough investigation of the very complex (and in need of analysis) relationship between corporate funding and cultural activities.' What better place to launch such an analysis than at The Power Plant, a public and non-profit gallery that receives substantial arm's length funding from the federal state and Canada Council. Many of the cultural critiques of the last ten years have emerged around issues of class, racism, and sexism. Where are the exhibitions at The Power Plant that focus on the relationship of these activist struggles to the emergence of a critically informed artistic practice? What shows at The Power Plant speak directly to and give voice to the black communities, the immigrant communities, the psychologized, the indigenous nations, the refugees of this city and this culture? Why, with all the resources and profile which The Power Plant enjoys, is there no attempt to bring to Canada exhibitions of artists working outside of the corporate economic infrastructure of the industrialized world? Where are the 'visions' of the Central Americans, Latin Americans, African nations, the Pacific Rim, and India? Where is the representation of cultural practice emerging in the context of decolonized and revolutionary struggles?

In order to empower and give space to these 'other' voices, it is not enough to include in an exhibition well-meaning white heterosexual artists whose analysis of social realities and culture offer a well-meaning white, heterosexual, vision of difference. As much as this perspective is important, without a conscious effort to place these artists in a context where direct dialogue and confrontation with those they speak about emerges, we do not have a pluralism of contradictory positions but, in fact, an institutionalized censorship which claims dialogue where there is only a silencing through an isolation of cultural practice from its social and political roots. This structure of co-option

and the smoothing over of the differences in Canadian culture is the non-rhetorical meaning of appropriation; this is, finally, the reality of a post-modernism which claims an immobilization of the 'real'.

Mr. Folland suggests that 'rather than criticizing such institutions, it would make more sense to find ways in which to constructively engage them.' He states that 'The Gallery will offer politically informed discussions of contemporary culture.' If, by 'The Gallery' he means The Power Plant, I am eagerly awaiting the exhibition schedule for 1991. There are a lot of points of view out there and guest curators who would like a crack at The Power Plant; who would like to see a rupture in the official walls of culture. I, for one, would love to curate a show which focused on issues of revolution and art; which could bring to the walls of the Power Plant the issues of participatory culture; which would feature artists from Latin America actively working to change a capitalist infrastructure which has exploited their countries through a spiral of debtor economics, multinational branch plants, American aid to military dictatorships, and when that fails, CIA intervention. As to the corporate sponsorship of such an exhibition, I leave that end of the politics to Tom Folland, since in my 'blindness', I have previously assumed that the Power Plant's reliance on corporate and state funding would not have left them particularly amenable to the endorsement of such an exhibition proposal.

In closing, I would just like to reassure Mr. Folland that the 'blindness' which has led to the misnomer of the Powerplant for The Power Plant is not a rhetorical plot. I personally believe that this 'blindness' will be miraculously cured when the materialization of Folland's promised pluralism gives cultural communities the incentive needed to correctly identify the appearance on the Toronto scene of another gallery besides A-Space whose commitment to 'politically informed discussions' is not merely the sentiment of cultural practice, but its manifestation. I, for one, in my excitement over this future possibility, have taken great efforts to spell The Power Plant correctly all the way through my letter.

Dot Tuer

FUSE Magazine welcomes letters to the Editors. Short letters are more likely to be published and all letters are subject to editing.

#### Errata

The following is a correction to Shonagh Adelman's review *Maryse Holder Liked to Fuck* (FUSE Vol. 12 no. 1&2)

p. 34: "Don't scream at me . . ." should read: "Don't scream penis at me . . ."

poster design by Fritz Buhler, Basel, 1943.



## Island Artists Go Union!

BY JOAN SULLIVAN

*A lot of the artists practicing in Newfoundland draw on the traditional source, on traditional art forms. There's also a cross-pollination, a level of diversity, that was not part of the traditional form. It's not a unique debate, it is a debate; it's what I call the discourse of a people who are still alive.*

Edythe Goodridge, past executive director of the Newfoundland Arts Council, and present head of Visual Arts, Canada Council.

Newfoundland — When over 100 artists met in the community college of the small town of Stephenville for the last weekend of July, they brought a number of troubling issues with them. Indigenous art, government funding (or non-funding) of the arts, the increasingly marginal role of the arts council and the new \$7 million Fine Arts College have all been topics of discussion whenever artists got together over the past few years. The community

has often felt frustrated, angry, even fearful about their present situation and their future.

But they also arrived determined to set up a provincial union for artists (indeed, the formation of the association was written into the agenda). While there were moments of division or unfocused, stiff dialogue, a union was what they wanted and a union was what they got.

On Sunday, July 30, while a thunderstorm, knocked out the

power, the Artists Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador was formed. It is the first multi-disciplinary artists union in the country. With its direction to agitate, lobby and educate the government and the general population, it's designed to "better the social and economic status of professional working artists in all disciplines in Newfoundland and Labrador."

This organization has been the goal of three conferences held since 1975. The first eventually created the arts council. The second, two years ago in Gander, began the tentative formation of this organization, but was stymied by conflicts over the arts council.

At that time, the council members had resigned en masse to protest their treatment at the hands of the provincial government. They had many real problems. As an illustration, the then Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth, Bill Matthews declined to attend the conference, sending his As-

stant Deputy Minister Bill Frost to apologize and explain that he was attending a national conference of Culture Ministers in Montreal. Conference participants opened their weekend *Evening Telegrams* (the St. John's based daily) the next day to see an article stating that Matthews was attending an athletic banquet in Grand Bank.

That Ministry is considered a "revolving door ministry," where politicians cut their teeth before heading on to bigger and better things. But even among a group of ministers who don't give much priority to their cultural portfolio, Matthews stood out in his disregard for his duties.

When the council resigned citing many fundamental differences of opinion over government policy, it was months before Matthews announced replacements — or released the bi-annual allotment of funds. With cheques bouncing, the then executive director Chris Brookes even held a



turkey raffle to highlight their desperate situation. The new council, stepping in shortly before the conference, placed soothing government/council relations high on their "to do" list.

It was because of this fiasco and a perception that the council was moving farther and farther away from the people it was supposed to represent, that the conference voted for an elected council and a jury system to decide on grants. Neither has happened and the council continues to drift. They still have many of their own problems to deal with — among other things, their offices recently caught fire.

But at this summer's conference, the provincial government had a higher profile and a much more active role. Minister of Culture John Butt was there with several staff. Also attending were Minister of Justice Lynn Verge, Liberal MP Brian Tobin, NDP member Gene Long and NDP leader Peter Fenwick.

Butt opened the conference with a speech over a dinner of shrimp salad and roast beef. While artists leafed through their packages of conference material (complete with packages of crackers and cheese and welcoming letters with origami suggestions traced on the back) Butt made a fairly brief statement that repeated the word "cooperation" at least a dozen times.

"I want to make a whole lot of changes," Butt said. Reviewing his department's budget was his first promise. (This was suggested in a private member's bill submitted by Gene Long and adopted by the House of Assembly earlier this year.) Butt also gave strong hints that he was considering changing his department's handling of the five provincial Arts and Culture Centres, which currently occupy much of their budget.

"I want this review to take place as quickly as possible so that any constructive changes can be made in the next budget. That's my commitment to you tonight."

The Minister also recognized that the community would have diverse views on many topics. A small point, but it was welcomed by the artists. Previous ministers had often excused their non-action by pointing out that not everyone in the community agreed on specific issues. Mary Walsh of CODCO had often pointed out that "not all farmers always agree on everything, and no one expects them to."

And disagreements were appar-

ent in the discussions over the next two days. The first panel was titled "Arts and Identity," with listed topics that included indigenous vs. international culture. On the panel were Patricia Gratten, curator of the Memorial University Art Gallery, visual artists Gerry Squires and Mary Pratt, and from theatre, Mary Walsh and Edmund MacLean.

Defining a Newfoundland artist quickly focused the discussion. "I need this place, it is my home. I get my inspiration from this place," said Squires. "If it is eroded or removed, I panic and when I panic, I end up on panels like this."

Squires feels a "creeping Canadian mediocrity" is covering Newfoundland's vivid native culture. What the federal government chooses to fund is combining with the province's internal sense of inferiority to slowly erase a culture almost 500 years old.

While not everyone present agreed, support for his statements was raised on different panels, over the two-day conference. Several panelists were concerned that some artists feel a need to gauge their work by its tourism potential and implied that others should take the same route if they had any sense. Art with a strong sense of place is universal. Squires and others, stated. Why downgrade your work into corporate art instead of reflecting your own rich culture? But Squires' co-panelist Pratt took the opposite view.

"The center, which for us is Toronto, sucks the best out of the region," she said. "That is as it should be, the work that is done in the regions is taken to the center and celebrated."

This comment was much discussed in the hallways — in some ways, most of the important conversations happened outside the lecture hall, as people clutched cups of coffee and waved their hands in the air, or sat on the back steps away from the summer heat and the no-smoking signs. Even without this release, the question of "who is a Newfoundland artist anyway?" was in the spotlight in the next panel which explored arts education.

On this panel were Mary Tulett of the arts council; Wayne Oakley of the Department of Education; Rising Tide director Donna Butt; and four arts educators: Michael Coyne and Ray Mackie, fine arts; Ken Livingstone, theatre; and Don Cook, music.

Art education may not appear to be an explosive topic, but there has

been some controversy over the new Fine Arts School. No Newfoundlanders were hired to teach and Coyne, as head of the Fine Arts section, tried to explain.

No Newfoundlanders had applied for teaching positions, he said, and thought it might be linked to the need for applicants to have an MFA; "which is considered a standard for teaching positions."

"I was very surprised there were no applications from within Newfoundland," he added.

Coyne also spoke of the "rumour mill" which had been processing rumours about the college since its inception. Some were outlandish and some merely catty, but they seem connected to a sense of frustration in the arts community. Many questioned the relevance of such a college to the existing community and thought it would be developing a fine crop of students who would head straight for the mainland.

Thus, the lack of applications might be linked to "the language of silence," some artists speculated outside the lecture hall.

With so many conflicting opinions, organizers began to worry that the association might not be formed after all. Just when the dialogue seemed on the verge of becoming dangerously unfocused, Andy Jones opened a discussion on arts funding and policies.

Jones is well known for his work with CODCO and Resource Centre for the Arts and he helped organize the past two conferences. He once interrupted a live broadcast of the arts council's award show to protest the government's attitude towards the arts community.

"We're being very polite and there's not much of an edge to the discussion," Jones said. "We're fighting the same thing we're always fighting, that inert feeling that what we do as artists is not important. We feel tense, immobilized by depression."

He felt that the Minister's speech was "lacklustre" and that Coyne's explanation for no Newfoundland staff was just not good enough.

As for defining good work, he too urged participants to avoid structuring their work for its tourism potential. "Good work, somehow, simply hooks into some truth," he said.

Also on the panel were Bill Frost, the Minister of Culture John Butt, visual artists Pam Hall and George Horan and arts council chairman Paul O'Neill.

The artists spoke of basic concerns, the present state of the arts council and the need as Hall expressed it, to see "more money going directly to the creator."

The government representative ran through the department's budget, reiterated the need for a review and hinted that the Arts and Culture Centres might be leased to their resident cities.

O'Neill delivered a riveting, if confusing, speech to justify increased arts funding. The confusion came from a perception that O'Neill is, as one artist later said, "an arts council chairman who doesn't believe in grants." However, O'Neill is a prominent and respected member of the arts community with years of work as a writer, actor and historian to his credit. Here, he was obviously taking the artists' side, not the government's.

Arguments that the arts community was important because of its importance to tourism or its employment potential were "peripheral at best" he said. He also rejected arguments that funding was usually given to "non-entities" to produce "mediocre work . . . done without passion or commitment."

These statements were "a public slap" to the arts community. Running through his presentation was the argument that the existence of the arts community inherently justified its support and the importance for artists to stand together. He reminded people that the very first artists conference had happened during the Smallwood (former premier) era and resulted in the government taking no action whatsoever.

This panel closed with a reminder from Jones that nominations for the executive were open and people who were elected could expect "a fair bit of work."

Over dinner that evening (salmon, with strawberries for dessert) Paul Siren of the Canadian Conference of the Arts spoke of the artists' need for official recognition as "self-employed persons" with "economic rights that are currently denied them." Most of those present were only too aware of problems with Revenue Canada and other government departments, with artists constantly slipping through the cracks between designated categories.

While the adoption of the updated copyright act [see Susan Crean's "Circling the C," this issue *FUSE*] has helped artists in a fundamental way, a great deal of work remains. Stacks of reports

and dozens of committees — even the advisory committee on the status of the artist, he sadly concluded — "had made no progress at all."

With this in mind, artists arrived at the Sunday morning session determined to vote their union into existence. With the power knocked out by an electrical storm, they half stood, half crouched in their chairs to hear and be heard (and wished desperately for at least one working coffee machine).

One of the first decisions was to limit membership to professional working artists. Arts administrators and other interested persons could join as associate members but running the association and the power of decision making, would be left in the hands of artists.

Other constitutional knots took some time to untangle. How much advance notice should be given for annual general meetings? (Three months.) Was residency in Newfoundland enough to justify someone as a Newfoundland artist? (Yes.) But as the lights flickered back on and the morning passed, moderator Adrian Fowler reminded people of the long drives ahead and suggested that details be left for the next meeting as the board had yet to be elected.

Nearly twenty people were nominated for the twelve positions. As the hours-old constitution stated, all efforts were made to include people from all parts of the province and from all disciplines. They succeeded in this, electing Squires, Horan, Jones and MacLean, Shirley Montague, Ken Livingstone (head of the theatre section at the Fine Arts College and a conference organizer), Sheila Harvey, Donna Butt, Eric West and Mavis Penney.

While the executive began their first official duties by posing for photographs, conference organizers Jones, Livingstone and Donna Ewing began to relax after months of fundraising, travel, mailings and meetings. The fledgling organization was underway and many issues had been raised, even if few were settled. But as Edythe Goodridge, quoted at the beginning, said, a little diversity is a sign of the community's heartbeat.

The conference was funded by the Department of Culture, Communications Canada, the provincial arts council, and the Department of Secretary of State, with more than twenty private and corporate sponsors from the CBC to Labatt's Breweries. ■



Eternal Flame, Paternal Mountie, 1988.

## NDP Landslide:

### A LOWER CASE REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

BY CLIVE ROBERTSON

**OTTAWA** — Every day for the past twelve months I have taken the bus to work (and, when late, the taxi), past Parliament Hill — a place which is mediated for Toronto folks, and for others even further afield, by all sorts of non-Ottawa residents.

Well this time, just to be sure, as the closest thing to an Ottawa correspondent *Fuse* can afford, I want to get you into the mood for participating in a landslide NDP victory. (A summer report from the Hill of the expected Anarchist-CP coalition bowling through the middle of the three standing pins is, regrettably, false.)

Now, as far as I can remember, *Fuse* has never come out for any one political party during a federal election, probably assuming that 95% of its readers will vote NDP (which really stands for Now! Damn it! Please!).

Forget what the pollsters, bagmen, and other clever dicks (who make more money in a year than you and yours will make in three) predict. (Which are the three swing ridings outside of Stanley Park?)

So you're smart, and want to serve your country in a more dramatic way? Maybe on the board

of the CBC, NFB, CRTC, Canada Council or some specific commission with legislative clout. You're intelligent and have so much community experience that it's trickling out your ears and drowning your brain. So which parties will never ever ask you to serve? The Gliberals and the PCB's. Which is the only party with elected representation that *isn't* anti-union? The NDP.

Now admittedly, from here on in the convincing gets tough and requires a smattering of maliciousness. Hands up all those who would like to scare the CBC-TV anchorpersons out of their \$600 suits? (Hurricane Gilbert could up and blow through their studios and they wouldn't even skip a smile.) A good NDP landslide would clear the smug that hangs over all of them.

And what about those of you that will never have what you really think printed in a letter to the *Globe & Mail*. Would an NDP landslide mean that Jeffrey Simpson and others like him would deliver us from despair and go running back to Auntie Maggie?

Aren't you sick and tired of having to work out why Bourassa is on Mulroney's side, or whether or not

Sink Stevens is comparatively ethical enough to run for Bay Street?

I know the NDP won't recreate the public sector in our own image, and that the Right Honorable Ed is unlikely to conscript Lillian Allen into his cabinet as the Minister of Communications in his first term.

For one thing, the NDP need some chillin' slogans like: "Vote as if your life depended on it." And all of us whose lives *do* depend on it will vote NDP, and then at least in Fuseland, one of the smaller territories. . . "hold on right there. . . Look at that last word: 'territories'. . . What's that thing at the end, the suffix? . . . No wonder it's so hard to get provincial status. . ."

At least in Fuseland, one of the smaller 'constituencies' in the Dominion, we will be one hundred per cent on side. And don't forget to wear your glasses when you mark your vote. A landslide for the Gliberals or the PCB's would be a cruel twist of fate. ■

Clive Robertson is not a member of the NDP, but will be voting for Sean, make that Michael Cassidy in the upcoming federal election.



# A Screening Room of One's Own DEC OPENS NEW THEATRE

There is no independent film coming to a theatre near you because there is no theatre near you.  
Ron Mann, Independent filmmaker.

**TORONTO** — The lack of theatres in Toronto for independent film and video, especially Canadian work, may be alleviated soon by the opening of The Euclid, a two hundred and fifty seat multi-media theatre. Built by the Development Education Centre (DEC), the theatre should open sometime in November. The Euclid will be equipped with top quality 16mm film projection and high resolution large screen video. The wheel-chair-accessible space will also be available for other cultural activities such as small concerts, meetings and readings.

The recent closing of The Funnel experimental film theatre exacerbates the problem of screening space in Toronto. Canadian artists do not have adequate access to Canadian theatres and are still waiting for a bill from Flora MacDonald (Minister Department of Communications). Despite the obvious need for a theatre, fundraising has been difficult, and DEC is still trying to raise \$120,000 of the \$550,000 budget. Most of the money is coming from the Cultural Initiatives Programme of the DOC and the Ontario Ministry of Culture, with some operating funds promised by the City Council of Toronto. Small amounts have been donated by individual artists and arts organizations, and by corporations who are often reluctant to invest in anything that does not provide the opportunity for direct advertising. Money is still desperately needed to complete the theatre.

Richard Fung, who is a staff member at DEC Films, says the initial research into building the venue began around ten years ago. Fung explains that DEC, rather than a broader coalition of artist run centres or community groups, undertook the project because of

DEC's fundraising track record. DEC was able to accomplish the large amount of administrative and bureaucratic work necessary to see the theatre completed. DEC submitted the original proposal over three and half years ago.

Fung notes that the mandate of The Euclid will be broader than that of DEC Films, which distributes work about the Third World and Canadian social and political issues. Programmes at The Euclid will highlight this sort of work, but also include all types of independent film and video; experimental, feature, documentary, regional work, labour oriented productions, work by and about women, with an emphasis on Canadian productions. These types of work, usually confined to festival screenings, university classrooms, and art galleries, will

BY GILLIAN MORTON

offer audiences a respite from the overwhelming number of commercial American and European productions. Many of the programmes to be shown at The Euclid will attempt to truly reflect the multi-racial character of Toronto, and thus begin to redress the neglect of work by people of colour.

Previously called The Community Visual Arts Theatre, the new name is a result of DEC Films' relocation to the corner of College and Euclid. The concept of community remains the emphasis, however. The Euclid's advisory board is made up of individuals such as performer and playwright Salome Bey, video/film curator Susan Ditta, the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women's Carmencita Hernandez, video art-

ist Lisa Steele, and filmmaker Patricia Rozema. DEC plans to ensure accountability to Toronto's diverse communities by creating a programming policy. This policy will be carried out by a yet-to-be-hired programme coordinator who will also encourage community generated projects. DEC is still in the process of developing the programming policy.

The theatre will be available for bookings during the day as well as for two hundred nights of the year (DEC will programme the remaining evenings) at both standard and community rates, \$400 and \$200 per evening, respectively. DEC anticipates that both community groups and artists' organizations will take advantage of the space. In the meantime, DEC is trying to complete the fundraising and to increase the as yet limited involvement of community groups and of film and video artists. To this end, DEC has tentative plans for an open house and tour which will provide the opportunity to raise questions and concerns. "More artists will become involved when they realize that they can have an impact," says Fung. Community and artists' involvement in The Euclid would be part of the realization of DEC's aspirations to offer a real alternative to dominant culture and a forum for political and social issues. Programming suggestions and general comments are welcomed by DEC. To make a donation or to obtain further information, write The Euclid, 394 Euclid Avenue, Toronto, M6G 2S9, or call Debbie Field at (416) 925-8104 ■



COMING SOON: A theatre near you

Photo by Peter Steven

# Subterranean Homesick Blues HARD TIMES FOR THE FUNNEL

BY MARK ROGERS

**TORONTO** — Lurching from controversy to crisis, the Funnel — Toronto's experimental film co-operative — has been forced to close down its Soho St. location. Volunteers who had laboured over the renovations for a year were obliged to tear down the theatre they had built. The space was vacated in July and the equipment moved to the basement of Funnel Director Gary McLaren.

Early statements by Funnel board member Pascal Sharp alluded to an increased tax assessment as a central factor in the board's decision to give up the space. However, there are indications that, even without such an increase, the co-op was in over its head. A dwindling, over-worked membership, already saddled with the high overhead costs associated with prime Toronto real estate, was dealt a crippling blow when two arts funding agencies failed to commit monies.

The Funnel outgrew its spawning ground at the Centre for Experimental Art and Communication on Duncan St. in the late '70s and moved into 507 King St. East. First listed in *Parallelogramme* in July 1980, the Funnel billed itself as "primarily a theatre for the exhibition of experimental film." The 2200-square-foot space on King St. included a 100-seat theatre, a gallery, editing room, darkroom, offices and a library.

During the seven years on King St., Funnel staff and members sustained an intensive and varied programming schedule, screening films twice weekly. Under pressure to do more programming in order to get additional funding, staff and membership invested enormous amounts of time and energy. Longtime staff person, former member and past director Anna Gronau characterized the achievements of the co-op during this period as nothing short of

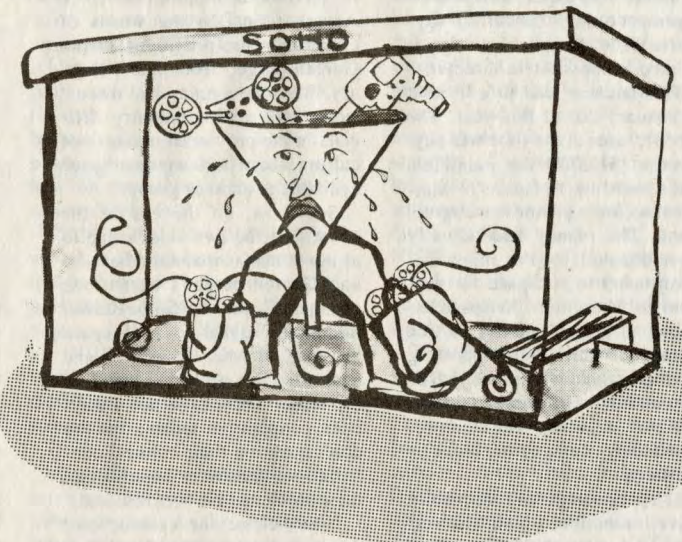


Illustration by Frederica Lowe

"amazing." Eventually, the Funnel outgrew its King St. location. It was found to be somewhat out of the way for its clientele and was short on space for production and workshops. So the Funnel moved to 11 Soho St. in the heart of Toronto's Queen St. strip in the fall of 1987 and began to renovate the 5010-square-foot space. Founding member Ross McLaren describes the Funnel's ambitious plans for the Soho St. facility as an "heroic effort that resulted in tragic implosion."

Renovation costs were absorbed by the operating budget in the belief that a federal Department of Communications (DOC) capital grant would be forthcoming. But Funnel sources claim that a bureaucratic gaffe at the DOC (Funnel claims the application was lost — a charge denied by the DOC.) resulted in a long delay before the grant application was considered. The result was that the application became a request for a retroactive capital grant. The

DOC does not award retroactive capital grants. The effect of this bureaucratic misadventure snowballed when a previously approved Community Facilities Improvement Programme (CFIP) grant fell through. Sources at CFIP claim that the application was withdrawn.

As unforeseen costs mounted at the Soho St. location, and without the grant money, it became apparent to the Funnel board of directors that they simply could not afford the space. Board member Mikki Fontana allows that they had been "naive in dealing with the building management people. The board is comprised of artists and filmmakers who didn't have business experience."

As the dust settles, some members of the experimental film community express frustration over the fact that the labour of so many artists had been wasted in a failing proposition. The months leading up to the final collapse had been trying for all involved. The

stress of renovations had a negative impact on the Funnel's ability to operate smoothly; equipment access was occasionally curtailed and the publicity for shows became haphazard. As well, support for the Funnel waned in the face of the demands it made on volunteer labour and the perception that the board had become hidebound.

Longtime member Jim Anderson attributes some of the Funnel problems to a "matter of bad image" and suggests that they had to "breakdown the idea that the Funnel was controlled by all the same people." This perception was furthered in no small measure as a result of the 1986 annual general meeting. Some of the membership brought forward a motion to extend voting rights to the associate membership. Such a move, these members argued, would increase the support base of the Funnel and encourage broader political involvement. The motion received one vote less the necessary two-thirds majority and was defeated.

The vote against the motion was seen as stemming from a fear that the Funnel would fall victim to the problems encountered some years earlier by the Toronto Filmmakers Cooperative. This scenario saw the Funnel being subverted by more mainstream filmmakers insensitive to the aims and structure of the Funnel. The voting structure of the Funnel was designed to prevent such an occurrence.

Those who sought to change the structure felt that the Funnel was well enough established and that it could reach out to the community with assurance because its aims were well known. In any case, when the motion was defeated, an already small community was further divided. Those who remained became overworked and the ones who left felt that their interests were no longer being served.

Still, the aims of the Funnel continue to receive broad support. "The original concept of the Funnel is very important," says John Porter, author of the motion to expand voting rights. "It tried to supply all the services needed by experimental filmmakers." In this respect the Funnel was unique in Toronto. Whether or not the Funnel will be able to continue to provide production, distribution and exhibition facilities in the future seems doubtful. As it stands, space for exhibition is not a priority in the Funnel's plans to relocate. More importantly, it must be wondered whether sufficient numbers of the experimental film community will support a new endeavour. ■



# Marathon Man Polices Lease:

## ARTSPACE THREATENED BY LANDLORD

BY JEFF GREEN

PETERBOROUGH — The staff and directors of Artspace, a centre for art, performance, and communication located in Peterborough's Market Hall, are waiting anxiously as Marathon Realty contemplates their application for the renewal of their lease.

Relations between the two organizations have been stormy over the past year, culminating in an attempt by Marathon to have Artspace evicted last winter. Only a last-minute agreement on the eve of a court date prevented a legal confrontation between them.

Much has happened since Marathon, a division of Canadian Pacific, agreed to virtually donate the space, which forms a corner of Marathon's Peterborough Square shopping mall, to Artspace in 1984. Artspace was founded in 1974 by a group of artists and had functioned in a variety of smaller locations until the Market Hall deal was struck with Marathon. Renovations costing over \$1.2 million were undertaken to transform the Market Hall into a multi-faceted arts centre that includes two galleries, a theatre, and offices. Most of the money for the renovations came from capital grants from the provincial and federal governments.

Almost as soon as Artspace opened the new facility, problems developed. Bill Kimball, Artspace performance director points out that it was difficult for the board of directors and minimal staff to manage a facility three times as large as the one they had previously occupied. Ambitious programming in 1986 did not attract a large enough audience and Artspace found itself with a crippling operating deficit of \$59,000 for that year alone. As well, relations with Marathon worsened as a result of Artspace's lassitude in responding to Marathon's demands on a variety of relatively minor matters.

"I think it could have been because we were consistently late. Most organizations of that size ex-

pect a quick response, and a day to them is late. It doesn't matter what the issue is, be it dirty floors or whatever, they expect an acknowledgement of their concerns," says Marie Slade, Artspace's newly appointed administrative director.

This lateness led to a lockout on January 26, of this year. The specific issue at the time was payment of \$13,000 for municipal taxes owed by Artspace to Marathon according to the lease agreement. The money had actually been donated by the municipal government to Artspace for payment to Marathon. Artspace intended to use the money to tide them over until their operating funding arrived later in the year as they had done in previous years. However, this time Marathon responded by changing the locks on the doors.

Artspace sought and received a court injunction which allowed them to occupy the Market Hall

until March 2nd, 1988, when the eviction issue was to be decided in court. Marathon seemed resolute in their determination to force Artspace out. In the words of company vice-president Julian Guntensperger from late February, "We've already had discussions with senior ministry officials in the provincial ministry of culture about making that space available to another group."

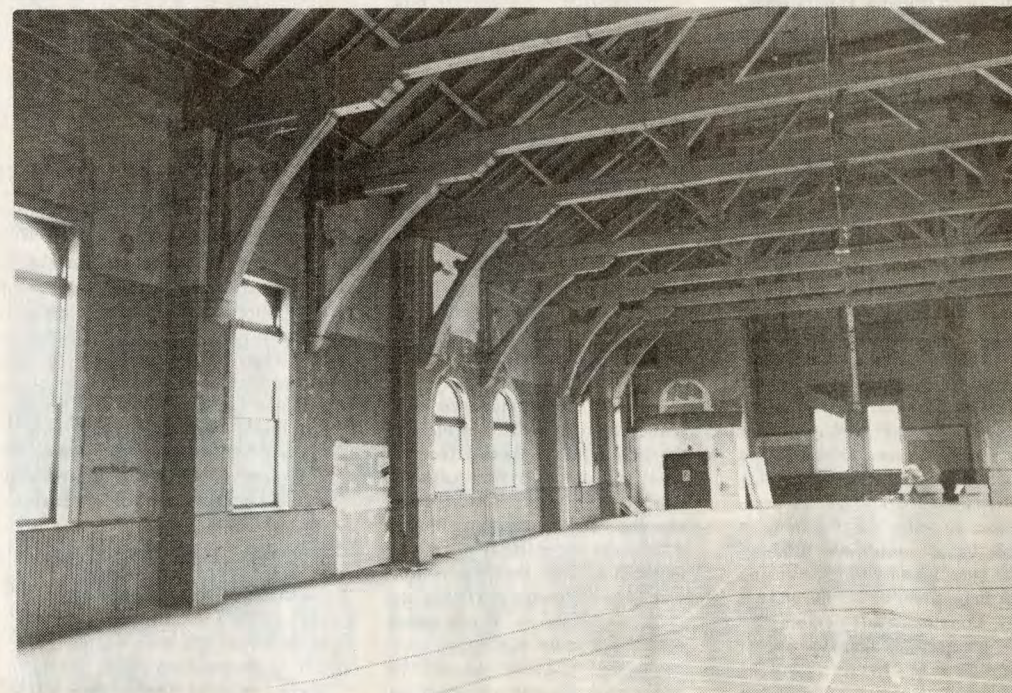
Somehow, on the eve of the court date the two sides came to an agreement to maintain the lease and Guntensperger's harsh tone changed. He told the *Globe & Mail* on March 3rd that "... Artspace has paid us what it owed us and agreed to live up to the terms of the lease. They have not always been cooperative tenants but we don't question their cultural contribution, and we're hopeful that these problems have been resolved."

Nonetheless, the episode cost Artspace dearly. Their legal fees

came to \$7,000 raising their accumulated deficit to over \$100,000 and they were forced to cancel a major performance project in conjunction with the dance company Le Groupe de la Place Royale in February. As well, their reputation with city of Peterborough and with provincial and federal granting agencies was damaged.

Since March, Artspace has undergone organizational restructuring. They have been working to improve their public image, and get a grip on their finances. The deficit has been cut down to \$80,000 and its projected elimination date is 1991. They are beginning to look like an organization that is in control of its destiny, rather than one that is scrambling to survive. Now, they must convince Marathon realty their lease should be renewed next March. The original lease was for 15 years subject to renewal at five year intervals. If Marathon decides not to renew, they are bound by the lease to pay Artspace a percentage of the value of the improvements made by Artspace to the Market Hall. This would amount to approximately \$190,000.

Artspace applied for renewal of the lease at the end of August. Initial response from Marathon is expected soon. ■



Inside Peterborough's Artspace.

Photo by John Moffat

# Thanks For the Advice O.A.C. DENIES OPERATIONS FUNDING TO NIIPA

BY LISA CELOTTO

HAMILTON — In June Yvonne Maracle Director of the Native/Inuit Photographer's Association (NIIPA) received a one and a half page report from the Ontario Arts Council's Film, Video and Photography office. The report states reasons why NIIPA was denied operations funding based on their request for \$15,000. Shortly thereafter, however, NIIPA did receive the same amount from a one-time-only multicultural grant for which the OAC campaigned on NIIPA's behalf. The council found it only fair and responsible to share the advisors' comments with NIIPA's board and administration, feeling that they represented some "very genuine concerns." In turn, Maracle opted to share the comments with the NIIPA membership hoping to facilitate some dialogue to improve the position of NIIPA in both the members' and the OAC's eyes.

Though arguably both acted in the best possible interest of NIIPA, two points of conflict arose. Firstly, the advisors' comments were, by the OAC's own admission, "presented in curt precis"; secondly, the repercussions of sending the comments to the members were that the OAC received much negative feedback in the form of letters, particularly from (non-native) associative members and local arts organizations. To clarify the first point, the comments were a summary from a six-page report prepared for the Council by Film, Video and Photography Officer Judy Gouin. The OAC describes the report as "curt", the membership of NIIPA describe it as "alarming", amongst other things, and letters from NIIPA's supporters have rightly caused the OAC some concern.

Letters from the NIIPA membership in response to the advisors' comments showed a marked perplexity with the OAC's discouragement of NIIPA's endeavours. What course of action would the advisors recommend to an organization after stating that "its location is an accident of history" and whose "board is a re-

flection of a ... totally unsophisticated community"? And having made the questionable observation that "there appear to be few resources within the community to bring critical assessments to their own work," the advisors might optimistically have projected that NIIPA's substantial achievements in the past three years have laid the groundwork for such critical foment to follow. Instead, the advisors in their wisdom recommended that the exhibition component of the organization simply fold.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the advisors' comments lies in the report's rhetoric which presumes to draw a line between NIIPA as Cultural Centre vs. NIIPA as Art Centre. The OAC's failed attempt to categorize NIIPA is strongly felt in the statement:

*"It's activities are not sufficiently relevant either to the provincial sphere or to the professional arts. What is created at the present time through NIIPA's auspices is less important in terms of photography than native self-expression."*

Adding to this, one advisor was quoted as saying:

*"In terms of the rest of the community they are back in the 60's and the yuppie generation of curators will not have time for them."*

Given that NIIPA serves members in both Canada and the United States, responses were also received from American artists commenting on our system of funding. As Bernice Morrison (Anchorage, Alaska) wrote: "If the OAC finds the board 'totally unsophisticated' they should think of providing funding for training or offer training themselves. This would work towards a stronger organization (or is this what they do not want?)." And as Tim Johnson (North Tonawanda, New York) states:

*"They reflect the perpetual ignorance and ethnocentric position*

*from which the mainstream arts councils continue to make assumptions based on incomplete knowledge and cultural limitations."*

The role of a constructive and useful advisor for an organization like NIIPA demands at least a familiarity with the organization's goals, literature and monthly exhibitions housed in its gallery space — and in terms of a statement quoted above, an understanding of contemporary curators. Since the distribution of the advisors' comments and subsequent response to the OAC and NIIPA, the Council has recognized this problem and has requested names for future advisors from the gallery director herself.

Though this is a positive step, we are faced with the bigger question regarding NIIPA's perceived "crisis." NIIPA and its neighbouring art centres hope that discussions at the forthcoming conference will provide a course of direction in dealing with this issue without compromising NIIPA's aims and objectives.

NIIPA became incorporated as a national non-profit organization immediately following their first

conference on Native Photography, March 9-10, 1985 at the Photographers' Union in Hamilton. The conference spawned "Visions", NIIPA's inaugural touring exhibition which traveled to seven galleries across Canada. One year later, NIIPA sponsored their second annual conference in Thunder Bay, Ontario, toured their second major exhibition "Silver Drum" and opened the doors of their new gallery in Hamilton. Since that time, NIIPA has become a useful resource to museums, curators and artists, housing a comprehensive and biographical directory of native photographers in Canada and the United States. NIIPA, the only organization of its kind in North America, is represented by a Board of Directors comprised of both native Canadian and American photographers.

The NIIPA Gallery is focal point and home base for the organization whose goal is primarily to set up an Inuit/Indian photographic educational network and to promote photography as an art form. This is done through publications, photography classes, in-house exhibitions, touring exhibitions, workshops by visiting native photographers, and annual conferences. This year's conference on October 28-29 will take place in Hamilton in the "Blue Flame Room" of the Union Gas Building. One main issue which will be addressed in this forum is NIIPA's re-evaluation of their organization based on the recent advisory report from the Ontario Arts Council. ■

## Position Available Production Coordinator

FUSE Magazine is currently seeking a production coordinator. This position involves coordinating all aspects of production of the magazine. The production coordinator is primarily responsible for producing a yearly production schedule for 5 issues, acting as a liaison for the editorial board, overseeing copy editing, mark-up, proofreading, and the printing of the magazine. The production coordinator will work in collaboration with the designer and other production staff.

Interested applicants should have a good general knowledge of all aspects of magazine production and should be computer literate (special knowledge of Word 3.01 and Pagemaker software applications for Macintosh would be an asset). Excellent copy editing and organizational skills are essential.

**Application Deadline: December 2, 1988.**

Submit resume to:  
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## VIDEO NEWS

by Kim Tomczak

VIDEO ARTISTS Sara Diamond and Gary Kibbins have curated a three programme show of recent Canadian video. Programme I *IN FLAG-RANTE: Canadian Video Caught in the Act* includes: *The Bisexual Kingdom* by Elizabeth Schroder; *Lettre a un amant* by Marc Paradis; *The Story of Red* by Rodney Werden, *Censored: The Business of Frightened Desires* by Vera Frenkel, *Accessory Transit Company* by Jorge Lozano; *Amherst* by Jim MacSwain; *Frankly, Shirley* by Margaret Moores; *The Survival of the Delirious* by Andy Fabo and Michael Balser; and *Ati Atihan* by Marlin Oliveros. Programme II *TOTAL RECALL* includes: *Histoire Infame* by Nicole Giguere; *Holy Joe* by Joe Sarahan; *On The Way To My Father's Village* by Richard Fung; *Comptines* by Diane Poitras; *Jungle Boy* by John Greyson; *Pie Y Cafe* by Jan Peacock; *Out of Air* by Robert Milthorp; *Nez, Gorge, Oreille* by Elsa Cayo; and *White Dawn* by Tomczak/Steele. Their third programme is still under consideration but will be concerned with portraiture and characterization. All three programmes will be available for exhibition from Sara Diamond c/o the Video In, 1160 Hamilton St, Vancouver B.C., V6B 2S2, (604) 688-4336 or from Gary Kibbins c/o V Tape, 183 Bathurst St, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2R7, (416) 863-9897. The American Film Institute Video Festival and the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) will host the first two programmes in late October of this year.

ENTRIES are now being accepted for the 19th annual competition of the National Educational Film and Video Festival. The entry deadline is November 1, 1988. Contact: National Educational Film and Video Festival, 314 East 10th Street, Oakland, Ca., 94606.

NAMAC (National Alliance of Media Centres) is an American service organization whose purposes are threefold: communication, mutual assistance and advocacy. Their growing membership includes over 100 primarily non-profit institutions engaged in the following: production, distribution, exhibition, preservation and education activities relating to film, video, intermedia and audio arts. Of particular interest is their 1988 Member Directory which includes a Field Study (1986-87) based upon the responses of 87 organizations addressing collections, exhibitions, publications, distribution and education. This directory can be ordered from NAMAC, 135 St. Paul's Avenue, Staten Island, New York, 10301 (713) 727-5593.



Still from *Hot Chicks on T.V.* by Elizabeth Vanderzaag

A LARGE SURVEY show of recent Canadian video tapes entitled *Video: New Canadian Narrative* opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Curated by Barbara London the show runs from September 8 to November 1, 1988 and includes the following tapes: *To Whom It May Concern* by Alex Poruchnyk; *Tristesse model reduit* by Robert Morin; *Quartet for Deafblind* by Norman Cohn; *Exclusive Memory* by Tom Sherman; *Heroics: Definitions* by Sara Diamond; *Work* by Paulette Phillips and Geoffrey Shea; *Frankley, Shirley* by Margaret Moores; *Mother May I?* by Jeanette Reinhardt; *Black*

and *Light* by Colin Campbell; *Auld Lang Syne* by Doug Melnyck; *The Story of Feniks and Abdullah* by Luc Bourdon; *L'Incident Jones* by Marc Paradis; *Lamented Moments/Desired Objects* by Vern Hume; *Oh Nothing* by Dennis Day; *Le Chien de Luis et Salvador* by Bernar Herert; *Monsieur Leon* by Francois Girard and Bruno Jobin; *Within Dialogue (Silence)* by Susan Rynard; *Manufactured Romance: Beauty, Passion and Power* by Anne Ramsden; *Make a Wish* by Diane Poitras; *The Lament of the Sugar Bush Man* by Rhonda Abrams; *Sirensong* by Jan Peacock; *Hot Chicks on TV* by Elizabeth Vander Zaag; and *Private Eyes* by Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak.

THE ALLIANCE is a national organization of more than 40 groups engaged in the production, exhibition and distribution of independent film and video. The objectives of the Alliance are to provide a national network linking such groups from all parts of Canada for the purposes of discussion and exchange of issues and strategies in areas of mutual concern. This year the members of the Alliance elected their board of directors with strong representation from the video community and include: Lisa Steele, President (V TAPE), Peg Campbell, Vice-president (Cineworks), Elizabeth Hagen, Secretary (NIFCO), Alexis Roshuk, Treasurer (Le Videographe), Michael Balser, Director (Trinity Square Video), Pierre Anderson, Director (Spirifilm), Grant Poier, Director (Em Media) and Glenn Walton, Director (AFCOOP). In addition to their well attended annual general meetings which take place in a different part of Canada each year, the Alliance publishes a bulletin six times a year. Contact: The Alliance, The Bulletin, P.O. Box 545 Stn Desjardins, Montreal, H5B 1B6.

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Vol. 4 No. 1  
July 1988

# Southern Africa REPORT

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This special issue of *Southern Africa REPORT* looks at manifestations of "people's culture" in South Africa and the mobilizing role which culture plays in the liberation struggle.

Southern Africa REPORT is produced five times a year by the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa (TCLSAC). Subscription rates: Individuals one year \$15, two years \$30, Institutions \$30 per year. Membership in TCLSAC (includes subscription): Regular \$30 per year, Unemployed, student, senior \$15, Supporter \$30-\$100, Sustainer \$100+.



# AN OPEN LETTER TO PREMIER DAVID PETERSON

## Artists Concerned About the Ontario Arts Council

### Dear Premier David Peterson:

This letter is written by members of the arts community to raise concerns about the Ontario Arts Council.

Two recent events at the Ontario Arts Council have raised serious questions about the operation and accountability of the OAC. The first concerns the resignation of the former executive director Christopher Wooten. The second concerns the hiring process of the new Film, Photography and Video Officer.

Although the circumstances surrounding these two events are widely known in the arts community, this letter does not concern itself with the details, politics, and personalities of those involved. Nor does it intend to address the merits of the specific decisions made. Rather, this letter wishes to address the larger questions of process and accountability these events raise.

As practicing members of the arts community, many of whom have received support and recognition from the OAC, these events point out the lack of say that artists, as a community, have in decisions that affect our livelihoods and work. It should be noted that these events are only the most recent in a series of concerns that have been raised about the OAC. They include the representation by artists on the Board of the OAC. (There is currently one artist on the Board. The only other artist to serve resigned in frustration 8 years ago.); funding priorities; the process of decision-making (including the process of selection of jury members); etc.

Although it is true that the OAC holds soundings, uses "peer" juries, and has a representative of the arts community on hiring committees, it is the OAC who selects these people, and it is the OAC who make the final decisions, as these people have no representative authority. In practice, this leads to selective consultation. You ask those who will give you the answers you want. This practice has been criticized in the past. Grant applications are often assessed on the basis of phone consultations by arts officers with members of the arts community who remain nameless. The potential for abuse is staggering.

There is a profound paradox at the root of the OAC. The OAC is legally accountable to the Government of Ontario, yet it claims an arm's length relationship to that government. The OAC serves the arts community, yet it claims an arm's length relationship to that

community. The mandate of the OAC states that it should serve the people of Ontario, yet the members of the Board are selected by the Premier's Office through a process that is neither public nor democratic. Who, then, is the OAC accountable to? The answer, it would seem, given current practice and as long as its books are in order, is to itself.

Is this an absolute paradox, or are there methods of accountability that would not jeopardize the principle of arm's length and impartiality.

It would seem that this paradox, could be solved by allowing true representation of the interested parties, without any one party dominating. That is; impartiality could be maintained by balancing the various interests while allowing them representation. This would seem to be a democratic alternative to the present system which is arbitrary and, in the end, elitist.

First it would seem reasonable that a significant proportion, but not a majority, of the Board be made up of artists from the various disciplines. As many decisions made by the Board, such as the recent 5-year plan, have a direct bearing on the arts community, it does not seem unreasonable that representatives of that community sit on the Board. It would also make sense that an advisory panel of artists, reflecting different expertise, be selected to work with the Board. It would also seem advisable that advisory panels be set up for each discipline section to assist the officer concerned in policy decisions and with the selection of jury members. These advisory panels could also make or solicit the recommendations presently done by officers on the phone (mentioned above). Selection of these representatives should be facilitated through arts and artist member organizations.

As the OAC serves the people of Ontario, it would seem reasonable that representatives of the various communities be placed on the Board. These would include people from the regions, native people, people of colour, and representatives from various communities of interest such as the labour movement, senior citizens, the women's movement, the business community, etc. Again, these selections should be facilitated through the various community organizations.

Just as the OAC has recently limited the tenure of senior officers to five years, membership on the Board should be limited to a

five-year term.

One impediment to participation on the boards of such institutions by members of the community at large is economic. This is particularly true in the arts. Many artists could not afford to serve on the Board, particularly when it means they cannot apply for grants. Remuneration for those who would be selected for the Board, but cannot afford it, should be implemented.

This letter started out to raise certain concerns about the OAC. It has ended by suggesting a number of reforms. It is our belief that it is not enough just to complain, but to suggest certain solutions to those complaints. The suggestions contained here deal with the Board level of the OAC, and do not cover other areas of concern. However, it would seem that fundamental change at this level is a prerequisite to other changes, particularly if the democratic character of the institution is to be strengthened.

While we fully support the role and activities of the OAC, and applaud its many achievements, it must also be recognized that the OAC needs to change and grow.

We feel the Ontario Government should initiate a review of the structure and representative accountability of the Board of the OAC. This review should be undertaken in consultation with representative artists and community organizations. It would also seem important that this review be undertaken in the light of the OAC's five-year plan proposal, which the undersigned support in principal. The implementation of this plan under a more democratic structure would seem essential.

We look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Ric Amis  
Tanya Mars  
Colin Campbell  
Carole Conde  
Elaine Carol  
Lisa Steele  
Scott Marsden  
Katie Thomas  
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Flemington Park teenagers outside community centre. Image from *Going to the Top with Hip Hop* (1988). Video tape produced by Itah Sadu and Kwesi Haneef for Tropicana Community Services.

# Hip Hop

## Inflects Toronto

### Territories

In Scarborough you can feel yourself in Mississauga. In Rexdale, Weston. Toronto's suburbs feel like suburbs anywhere; both expansive and claustrophobic, anonymous and particular. Suburbs frame our childhoods; their organized regularity comforts and encloses our pasts. A suburb's time-cycle and a suburb's geography — discrete subdivisions repeating in an almost viral manner, intersecting at malls — may seem banal compared to our urban cauldrons of neurosis, but every regularity provokes a resistance. ►

■ by Cameron Bailey





courtesy Rogers Cable

**Culturally**, suburbs are thought to produce nothing of interest but future city-dwellers. The commonly held notion among urbanites is that the suburban populace mindlessly consumes mass culture and creates nothing of its own. To counteract this, suburban politicians in Toronto have renamed their domains cities and now strive to conjure a cosmopolitan buzz around chain stores and overwrought Civic Centres. So far, it's not working.

But there *are* traditions of creating culture in suburban areas. In Brooklyn and the Bronx, in Scarborough, Rexdale and elsewhere, disenfranchised black youth have developed subcultures amidst the dominant white culture that produce vibrant forms in music, visual representation and dance. The suburban base is due mainly to economic pressures. One of America's permanent underclasses — the black poor — have in the last two decades been relocated from the city centres to the suburbs through both skyrocketing rents and government housing projects. In Toronto, where most of Canada's black immigrants settle, the same forces on a smaller scale have resulted in a significant change in the cultural make-up of the city's suburbs. Once the dreamland of the white middle class, Toronto's suburbs have in the last 20 years swelled with immigrant families from southern Europe and from the Caribbean and Asian countries who until the early 1970s were restricted by Canada's racist

(above) **Rapper Andrew Mahoney of the Def and Ready Crew with posse member Chris Jackson performing at Late Night With Fuse Nov. 1987.**

immigration laws. There also remain among some immigrant families, and I include my own, the desires for home ownership and *space*, the same ideals by which the suburbs were sold to their original inhabitants. Dreams of a new start appear more likely where the sidewalks are fresh and the plazas keep growing. At the moment Scarborough and Mississauga and Thornhill are feeding those dreams.

Largely the product of West Indian immigrant youth, Canadian hip-hop music and its other cultural articulations — clothing, speech, gesture — work here as a metaphor for assimilation. If West Indian youth choose to acclimatize themselves to this country it tends to be through black American culture — adopting American speech patterns, buying the music, wearing American running shoes and floppy Kangol hats. The generations-old black communities in Canada, in Nova Scotia and parts of rural Ontario, lack the cultural visibility that would make them identifiable to black immigrants. In the central cities, and certainly in the suburbs, young black immigrants *had* to look to the United States for a culture with which they could identify; certainly the dominant white culture offered them nothing that was familiar or attractive. And although the black appropriation of black American culture is related to the general Canadian appropriation of (or colonization by) American culture, there remain distinct differences. For example, black culture does not flood Canada as American movies and television do; it must be deliberately sought out. Buffalo radio station WBLK typifies the relationship: difficult to find on a Torontonians' radio dial, often interrupted by static, it is nevertheless one of this city's most important connections to black American culture. This tends to be the process of building black culture in Canada: take from America and inflect with something from "home." In crossing the border, hip-hop gains something in the translation.

### Cultural Studies and the Souls of White Folk

In its early stages the study of popular culture is nearly always wracked by guilt, torn by the idea that, for an intellectual, working in popular culture amounts to slumming. Responses to that guilt tend to take two forms: either one adopts an ironic tone — "I know it's only rock and roll, but I'll deconstruct it — heh heh," which is the tenor of much undergraduate teaching of popular culture; or one submerges one's hostility in "rigorous critique," showing how popular culture must, by its very popularity, be a repressive agent of capitalism and patriarchy.

Marxist critic Theodor Adorno's essay on jazz stands as the best-known example of this latter kind of criticism. "Anyone who allows the growing respectability of mass culture to seduce him into equating a popular song with modern art because of a few false notes squeaked by a clarinet; anyone who mistakes a triad studded with 'dirty





notes' for atonality, has already capitulated to barbarism." Adorno writes in *Prisms*. His analysis of jazz is as stunning in its inattention to the cultural specificity of the music — its history, and the social and aesthetic contexts from which it developed — as it is steadfast in its desire to make of jazz a totality which could represent for Adorno everything that is wrong with twentieth-century popular culture. Adorno's rage is indicative of a large amount of published work by academics on popular culture.

The early stages of cultural studies — and in Canada cultural studies is in its early stages — are marked by guilt, confusion, resentment, and ignorance. This is a contribution.

My aim in this article will be to begin to explore the cultural traditions that produced hip-hop, its status as a network of oppositional gestures, and to sketch something of the development and future of hip-hop in Canada. Because hip-hop is ignored in both mainstream and alternative media, and because the people who purport to teach popular culture in our universities have yet to discover what hip-hop is, any published analysis of the culture will suffer from the anxiety of comprehensiveness. I have tried to cover as much of the culture as possible without becoming breathlessly superficial. And so a variety of approaches — interview, informal guide, formal analyses — are brought to bear on a cultural practice with very little in the way of a critical tradition, and no critical tradition at all in this country. If my path is erratic, it's because it's the only dance I know to this song.



Chuck D of Public Enemy performing in Toronto 1987.

Photo by Rick McGinnis

## History: A Sample

Any survey here of the roots of rap in black oral traditions will necessarily be brief and incomplete (see Robert Fraser's *West African Poetry: A Critical History*, Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, or Ben Sidran's *Black Talk* for more detailed, though still brief introductions). What follow are some propositions plucked from history and remixed here.

At the moment of slavery, knowledge is communicated orally in most African cultures.

The genre of Anglo-Saxon boasting poetry goes out of literary fashion after *Beowulf*; with it goes an important link with English literature's oral past.

Sometime during the mid-seventies Bronx deejays discover that a turntable can be used as a pitched percussion instrument.

In the black diaspora, the relationship to the European languages that shaped slavery and colonialism results in word-play, a process of encoding the colonizer's language that both subverts the "standard" tongue and marks off a new space guarded by dialect and idiom.

Jesse Jackson rises to prominence during the eighties on the strength of black Christianity's messianic fervour and the force of his oratory, which draws on African traditions of call



Image courtesy of Going to the Top with Hip Hop 1988.

Impromptu performance by Toronto's Rascals for *Going to the Top with Hip Hop*.

and response, and black American traditions of rhyme and boasting. (If Jackson ever takes to wearing a Kangol he will be a big, big star.)

The increased use of blank verse in 16th century English drama and epic not only destroys a key element of aural pleasure (rhyme), it also further separates literature from performance and art from popular culture. Not long after this, regular rhyme becomes associated with doggerel.

It is *after* the major race riots in America that American liberal arts universities allow Black Literature into the curriculum and Jimi Hendrix experiments with noise.

In Jamaica, deejays take to talking over recorded ska and rock steady records, bridging the gap between recorded music and live dances with their social comment and nonsense rhymes. Lord Comic's "Ska-ing West" is one of the first records to incorporate this "toasting." It is 1966.

In 1921 T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" is the first English poem ready-made for the classroom, marking the destruction of the last links between "serious" and popular poetry. At the same time it authorizes scavenging and theft as legitimate art practices, its "heap of broken images" ushering in modernist appropriation and pastiche.

In American rhythm and blues music of the late 60s and early 70s, songs often begin with a "rap," a spoken segment setting the tone for the lyrics. In these songs, speech counterpoints melody; moving from one to the other signals a shift in emotional intensity.

Forms of verbal combat in urban black America, known as the dozens or sounding, often act as controllable representations of real, uncontrollable violence. Of course these ritualized boasting and insult contests sometimes lead to real violence.

The African trickster figure of oral lore, known under variants of his Yoruba name, Esù-Elégbà, prefigures a whole range of smart-ass black men, from Eddie Murphy to L.L. Cool J. Esù's weapon is his facility with language.

The British dance remix industry of the early 80s evolves from the "extended single" of the disco era and reggae's "dub" records. Bands like ABC and Heaven 17 give over their hit records to outside producers who remix them using overdubs, repetition, scratching, altered pitch and backward tracks, paring away layers of the song and extending its length in a process that could have stood as a radical analysis of pop music's seamless gloss, but for the sanctity of the *beat*. Any deconstructive effects always work within the strict economy of the dance floor.

In the 1980s murder is the number one cause of death among young black men in the United States.

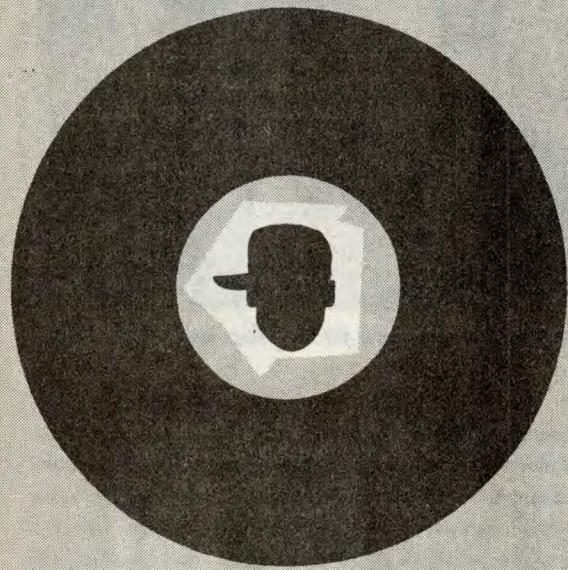
## Slave to the Critics: The Black Avant-Garde

What Adorno reacted to most strongly in jazz were its repetition and its syncopation. To him these strategies were ideological, bludgeoning the minds of audiences into unquestioning conformity with techniques that only *appeared* to be revolutionary. Of jazz he writes, "its rebellious gestures are accompanied by the tendency to blind obeisance." In more than one place he hints that obeisance may be a common trait of blacks, a remnant or a pre-condition of slavery.

(continued page 23)



# A Hip-hop Primer:



## 16 Necessary Records

**Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud) & In the Jungle Groove** — James Brown Hip-hop is to contemporary funk as James Brown's 60s recordings were to Motown. Brown's willingness to court chaos in his arrangements, his experimentation with rhythms, and the concern for the social status of black men (not women) in his lyrics are reflected in hip-hop today. Not surprisingly, James Brown remains the artist whose work is most often appropriated (sampled) in hip-hop.

**Rappers Delight** — The Sugar Hill Gang (1979) Promoted as a novelty record, "Rappers Delight" introduced rap to a wide audience.

**The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five on the Wheels of Steel (1982) and The Message (1983)** — Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. "Wheels of Steel" is one of the best early recordings of scratch technique, using a song that was to be the basis of many early rap releases, Chic's "Good Times." "The Message," a hard-hitting portrait of despair among urban blacks, awoke hip-hop to its potential for powerful social comment.

**Duck Rock** — Malcolm McLaren (1983) A dizzying aggregation of musics by the former Sex Pistols promoter who later became either a punk ethnomusicologist or a cultural imperialist, depending on point of view. The hip-hop tracks on the album, particularly "Buffalo Gals," experiment with collage techniques and feature rapping by New York's World Famous Supreme Team.

**Run DMC** — Run DMC (1984) One of the first ever rap albums. Previously the music had been released only on 12" singles, a cheaper, more immediate form. This album, which ranged from minimalism to metal hip-hop, signalled the large-scale commodification of the music.

**Radio** — L.L. Cool J (1985) The first album by hip-hop's second major star is characterised by Cool J's (James T. Smith) inventive, rapid-fire rhymes, and a minimalist production style — drum machine, scratching and voice are the only elements on most tracks. Along with the Beastie Boys' *Licensed to Ill*, this record is probably the best example of producer Rick Rubin's work.

**PSK** — Schoolly D. (1985) Philadelphia-based Schoolly D. broadened the geographical base of hip-hop, representing a thriving scene outside of New York. He also represents the hard edge of the masculinist, "outlaw" bravado always evident in the music, speaking, accurately or not, from the black underclass living in American urban cores. With Schoolly D. acts of street violence became popular signifiers in hip-hop.

**Raising Hell** — Run DMC (1986) This third album by rap's most widely successful group includes their version of Aerosmith's "Walk This Way," which gave them access to a white rock audience, and MTV's playlists.

**Licensed to Ill** — The Beastie Boys (1986) Notable for its insufferable frat sensibility (it includes the single "Fight For Your Right to Party") and Rick Rubin's production, which cemented the connections between heavy metal and hip-hop. Hip-hop's first white stars.

**Rough and Rugged** — Shinehead (1986) The best sustained example of the cross-pollination between hip-hop and Jamaican toasting.

**Yo! Bum Rush The Show** — Public Enemy (1987) The first rap album to directly appropriate the language and style of 60s black radicalism, the first to use electronic noise as an integral part of the music, and the first to include a lyric sheet. It was comparable in its effect on youth culture to the Clash's first album.

**Hot, Cool and Vicious** — Salt 'n' Pepa (1987) The best of the late eighties women hip-hop artists, Salt 'n' Pepa employ different styles of black music, including house ("Push It") and go-go ("My Mike Sounds Nice").

**Gary Clail's Tackhead Sound System** — Tackhead (1987) A record released under one of the many names of a group of musicians (which includes the former rhythm section at pioneer rap label Sugar Hill Records) responsible for what's now known as industrial hip-hop. The Tackhead group use the found sound and electronically distorted vocals of avant-garde industrial music recorded over hip-hop beats.

**On This Mic** — Michie Mee and L.A. Luv (1987) One of three singles available on cassette by this Toronto group, it's notable for the blending of American and West Indian oral traditions, and its specifically Canadian context.

**It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back** — Public Enemy (1988) Public Enemy's second album furthered the group's radical stance, polarizing popular and critical opinion. The group's compositional and lyrical sophistication made them favourites with certain sections of the urban intelligentsia, but lyrics supporting black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan and a sour misogyny offended just as many.

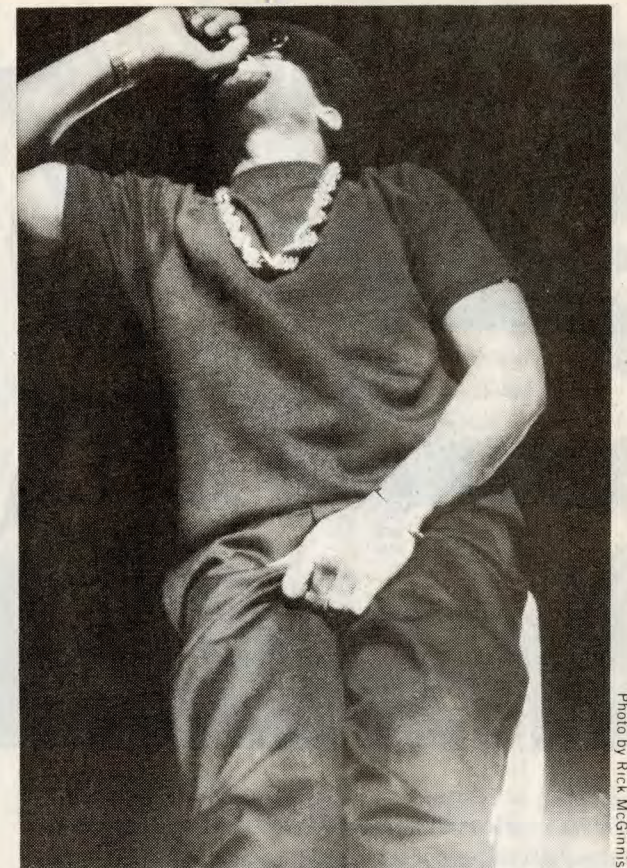
**Follow The Leader** — Eric B and Rakim (1988) One of the densest, most complex hip-hop albums yet recorded, its experimentation with rhythms, textures and sampled sounds marks the current state of the practice. Rakim's lyrics, employing intricate internal rhymes, are among the most rhythmically varied in hip-hop.

(continued from page 21)

With such a leading figure in the tradition of Marxist cultural studies writing from a position of such ignorance, it becomes easier to understand how cultural studies and the study of black culture developed in the West as two entirely separate areas. When the white critical establishments have approached black culture at all it has been from the interpretive frameworks of anthropology or sociology, in other words, as other. Some sort of separation — in time, or across culture — has been the requisite for examining black culture; the cultural production of the present has always exceeded the white critic.

All of this helps to explain why hip-hop has rarely been met with informed critical responses. And although there are some exceptions — the writings of Greg Tate and Harry Allen in the *Village Voice*, for example — black critics have also been slow to interpret hip-hop. There remains, both within and outside of black culture, a resistance to the idea of a black popular avant-garde, based perhaps in a mistaken opposition between populism and "bourgeois" obfuscation. Hip-hop straddles the line between pop culture and the avant-garde by both appealing to emotions and ideals common among young men (self-aggrandizement, mastery of technique, sexual neurosis) and coding itself and its audience as a separate, racially and culturally defined social group. The mere use of up-to-the-minute Black English ("def," "dope," "skeezer," etc.) is enough to separate the initiates from the outsiders in the reception of hip-hop. Hip-hop is simultaneously both populist and obscure. By contrast, Black American pop music deliberately works within standard musical forms and "standard" English: Whitney Houston's lyrics will never confuse.

Hip-hop is the only cultural product produced and consumed by a non-university-educated audience that uses "avant-garde" techniques. To take one example, scratching (where a record is moved back and forth under the needle) is analogous to speaker swinging, where musicians attach speakers to rope and swing them around a room creating a tone (and a Doppler effect) on top of what the speaker is already transmitting. The process is the same — technological formalism. If one is to accept that the avant-garde consists of formal experimentation, ideas (maybe myths) of originality, and an awareness of the pressure of popular culture ("vulgarization"), then hip-hop qualifies, even though its audience is not limited to the urban educated elites commonly associated with avant-gardes. The music's deliberate and aggressive use of repetition, fragmentation and technology, its experimental use of language (see "Cold Lampin With Flavor" on Public Enemy's *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, where language is largely physical, and hence absurd), and its reworking of black oral traditions all mark it as avant-garde. But the beats make it popular.



D.M.C. of RUN D.M.C.

Were one to reduce hip-hop to a checklist of formal characteristics,

it might read like this:

- **Speech:** Hip-hop talks rather than sings, rejecting the formal basis of the popular song, melody.
- **Boasting:** Most rapping takes the form of self-affirmation, in essence saying simply "I am."
- **Naming:** All rappers take on new names, or modify their given ones. In the wake of slavery, where blacks were removed from their land and culture and given the colonizer's names and languages, naming oneself takes on tremendous significance. There seem to be two general patterns to this practice: 1) descriptive names, eg. Salt 'N' Pepa, Love Bug, Flavor Flav; or 2) initials, eg. L.L. Cool J, DMC, Chuck D of Public Enemy. Besides facilitating rhymes, the initials also reinforce encoding (what do they stand for?).
- **Verbal self-reflexivity:** rapping about rapping, about other rappers, and about the elements of the music industry: production, audience reception, record sales, radio play, critics, etc.
- **Musical self-reflexivity:** In the early stages most raps were set to rhythm tracks from previously released songs. Recent hip-hop uses tapes and





Image courtesy of Going to the Top with Hip Hop 1988.

Teenagers  
rapping outside  
Flemington Park  
Community  
Centre for *Going  
to the Top with  
Hip Hop*.

sampling — a technique made possible by digital electronics where a short piece of sound can be isolated and repeated in different keys — to introduce “found music” into new recordings. The canon of American rhythm and blues is most often sampled (including “rare grooves”), along with previously released hip-hop records. The legal pitfalls of using previously recorded music are aggressively ignored. Technological self-reflexivity: Scratching and human beat box technique — a short-lived phenomenon where the human voice was made to imitate a drum machine — draw attention to the technological basis of contemporary music production. By turning technology to an unintended use (scratching) or by presenting a human simulation (one might compare black American dances such as the robot or the electric boogie to human beat box in both purpose and effect) these forms subvert, if only momentarily, technology’s standard economy, where “function” is strictly determined by codes of design and advertising. They also question the notion that information flows smoothly through these “neutral” conduits of technology.

- **Fragmentation:** Many hip-hop records appropriate fragments of previously recorded music and sound and break down the meaning previously associated with them through repetition. Some records fragment and/or repeat original elements of the song in which they appear; for example in L.L. Cool J’s “I Need a Beat” the rapper’s vocal has been recorded, scratched, and recorded again, foregrounding the record’s status as “always already” recorded sound.
- **Originality:** A whole lexicon has been invented in hip-hop to describe newness, originality, and appropriation. “Biting” (stealing) rhymes or beats from other hip-hop artists is widely criticized and ridiculed in the

lyrics of hip-hop records. Pride is taken not in the maintaining of tradition (as occurs in rock and roll between paradigm shifts such as punk), but in constantly overturning it. In hip-hop’s short history, styles have come and gone with dizzying rapidity.

Where it exists, the critical appreciation and analysis of hip-hop in America is currently struggling against the desire to posit the music as the aesthetic and political successor to jazz. However many ways the comparison fits, hip-hop is unlike any other musical practice in that it has been grounded in fragmentation, quotation and self-reflexivity — the modernist and postmodernist shibboleths — from its very beginning.

“If I was I book I would sell/ ‘Cause every  
curve on my body got a story to tell.”  
Salt ‘n’ Pepa,  
My Mike Sounds Nice

### Hip-hop’s Gender Battleground

Black cultural production has historically been sharply divided along gender lines. In both America and the West Indies black women’s output has been produced in opposition to conditions that deny the voice of women. But black culture’s sexism is not simply a reflection of dominant white patriarchal oppressions. According to the standard sociological line on such things, because black masculinity was deliberately squashed under colonialism and slavery, because we haven’t the social power patriarchy dictates men should have, black men often act out an exaggerated

maleness imposed on, and at the expense of women. Partly for these reasons, black masculinity, especially among the working class, values an excessive, almost performed male behaviour that excludes women and strongly enforces the expected taboos on homosexuality.

Hip-hop is perhaps the best advertisement for this colonized black masculinity. When combined with the bravado of adolescent boys, a powerful masculinist dogma is bound to result. Both the beats and the voice — the elements of hip-hop — are judged within a mythology where masculinist principles of potency and originality are the ultimate goals.

Much of the lyrical content of hip-hop is concerned with economics — “getting paid,” “sporting gold,” boasting about one’s car(s) or running shoes or “crib.” There is a revolutionary impulse amidst what may seem crass capitalism (conspicuous consumption is a spit in the face of a system that denies economic opportunities to blacks), but hip-hop lyrics require an appearance of social empowerment that carries over from mastery of the economic system to mastery of women. But black women tend not to be willing victims; gender relations in hip-hop are conducted at a pitch close to warfare.

When the lyrics of women hip-hop artists move beyond the content of their male counterparts, it is most often to answer records, where they respond in kind to the fear and hatred in songs like L.L. Cool J’s “Dear Yvette” or Public Enemy’s “Sophisticated Bitch.” Cool J’s adolescent misogyny is sickening enough: “Something’s smelling fishy and they say it’s you/ All I know is that you made it with the whole damn crew.” What makes such records even more galling is that they are written as correctives, slices of advice to wayward women who make the mistake of choosing when and with whom to have sex. The women’s responses may match insult with insult (sexual performance is a favourite target,

homophobia a frequent byproduct), but too often women are limited to just answering back. UTFO’s “Roxanne, Roxanne,” like “Dear Yvette” about a “ho,” a sexually active woman, was answered by no less than five records, including “Roxanne’s Revenge,” “The Real Roxanne” and “Roxanne’s a Man.” Rapper Roxanne Shant launched her career on this subgenre.

Women hip-hop artists are only now developing voices distinct from the men’s production. Salt ‘n’ Pepa, though their records sometimes play on the woman-as-novelty aspect (“Spinderella’s Not a Fella [But a Girl DeeJay]”), have still managed to sell records by speaking with a sexual honesty equal to Madonna’s. Toronto-based Itah Sadu’s recent cassette, *Rapping Stories*, might signal the start of another trend, a hybrid of rap’s boasting and the black storytelling tradition, which has often been the domain of women elders.

“I come from Canada/ My area’s good to go/ Don’t you know good things grow in Ontario.”

Michie Mee,  
On This Mic

### Cultures: Canada

In Toronto hip-hop remains largely underground, not out of radical will, but out of neglect and ignorance. The immigrant youth who practice their rhymes in suburban bedrooms or attend concerts in community centres are not outsiders by choice but by necessity. You need access to middle class legitimacy before you can choose to reject it. And while hip-hop does have its own checks and balances — Run-DMC



Photo by Dan Springston courtesy Next Plateau Records.

Salt, Pepa and  
Spinderella of  
Salt ‘n’ Pepa.  
Popular late  
eighties women  
hip hop artists.  
They incorporate  
other styles of  
black music  
including  
“house” and  
“go-go”.



are generally perceived as having become *too* successful, too mainstream — few hip-hop artists would reject a mass audience. As a popular avant-garde, hip-hop has always to grapple with its contradictions.

The apparatuses necessary to contemporary music production and consumption — record companies, studios, record stores, radio, and live venues — are not all available to local hip-hop artists. Only Michie Mee currently has a contract with a record company, and that company is American. Most of the recordings, both cassettes and the rare albums, are done at one studio, Ivan Barry's Beat Factory. Although CFNY-FM has recently begun to play what might be called crossover hip-hop (Kool Moe Dee's "Wild, Wild West," for example), regular airplay of the music is limited to the city's three campus stations, Ryerson's CKLN-FM (88.1), York University's CHRY-FM (105.5) and the University of Toronto's CIUT-FM (89.5). Both CKLN and CHRY air special programs devoted to hip-hop, although CHRY, located in west North York with its large black population plays hip-hop most regularly. The "community" nature of these radio stations plays itself out in the hip-hop programs: the deejays provide information on dances, concerts and local performers in addition to playing the music. And ignorance of the music and a fear of violent outbursts limits major performances to one or two halls in the city.

Hip-hop's growth in Canada is unlikely ever to catapult it to the status of mass entertainment; an increased presence on the radio programs that already play it is more probable — on campus stations, and specialized "avant-garde" programs like CBC Stereo's Brave New Waves. Of course this sort of airplay tends to decontextualize the music, presenting it as most black music is aired in Canada, as a special, self-contained, event unrelated to the rest of the station's programming. To their credit both CKLN and CHRY have attempted to move away from segregating black music, but they remain in the minority. Canadian content regulations may result in more regular programming of local hip-hop artists.

Recording contracts will probably never be easily available to hip-hop artists, but the number of people performing will continue to grow. If a specifically Canadian brand of hip-hop can be predicted it will likely be a hybrid form. Michie Mee and LA Luv's hip-hop-reggae blend represents one pole, the VF Crew represents another. Calling their work "an experiment in white rap," the Crew is a group of hip-hop artists associated with Toronto "avant-garde" band Varoshi Fame.

Black diasporic culture has always been a hybrid. American and West Indian black culture have had centuries to assimilate their influences; British and Canadian black cultures are only doing so now. West Indian immigration to the U.K. began in earnest during the 1950s, and when the first large generation of black British-born youth came to political and cultural consciousness during the 80s, they pressed for their own voice in film, theatre, literature, jazz... and hip-hop. These voices were necessarily hybrids —

taking from Africa as they took from British intellectual culture, incorporating black America as they swallowed Europe, remembering the Caribbean as they passed their 'O' Levels. At the same time the pressures of a reactionary political climate and an often racist public service made it crucial that black Britons not hesitate in finding their voice; in the wake of the riots of the early 1980s political pressure was brought to bear on the official apparatuses to recognize the country's black presence, just as underground outlets like pirate radio increased the cultural visibility of blacks.

Black Canadian culture, including hip-hop will have to learn those lessons. But as hip-hop gradually gains a larger audience, it, like jazz and like tapdancing, will be taken up and circulated outside of itself. This is the nature of commodity capitalism, but the question remains the degree of control. The greatest threat to Canadian hip-hop will be well-meaning thieves; its greatest success will be change. Hip-hop's strength has been its ability to rapidly assimilate new strains, and here, where there is no firm tradition of black culture to fall back on, constant metamorphosis is the only choice. As it moves from the suburbs to the cities, from high school dances to radio, hip-hop must keep one beat ahead of the archivists. ■



MICHIE MEE AND L.A. LUV

Photo by Rick McGinnis

**Ron Nelson**, 25, is one of the central figures behind Toronto's (and hence Canada's) hip-hop. Nelson's family emigrated to Toronto from Jamaica when he was 10. In addition to his work as a club deejay, he is the promoter who mounts most of the city's hip-hop concerts, and his weekly show on CKLN-FM is, along with shows on CHRY and CIUT, one of the few occasions when the music can be heard on radio.



Broadcast still from Late Night With Fuse; courtesy of Rogers Cable

**NELSON:** When I started doing the radio show it wasn't even a hip-hop show, it was just a radio job, but I liked black music. Hip-hop wasn't even in existence then, it was just called rap, and it was just beginning. I slotted as much of that kind of music into my programming as I could, which was why I lost that job. I was put off the air for a little while. CKLN wasn't interested in that type of a show at that point, but I got back on the air, this time specializing in what I was interested in, which was black music.

**FUSE:** Why did they let you back on? Was it a change in management?

**NELSON:** Well CKLN is an alternative station. Management didn't change, but the time slot I was in then was Wednesday afternoons, and a black music show did not fit into their format, because they had other people on the weekends doing black music programming. So in terms of a program director's job and how he has to program his station, you can't have one show here and one show there all over the place. They like to put things in a certain structure. Space became available for me to do what I wanted to do.

**FUSE:** And how did you get into promoting?

**NELSON:** I got talked into doing a concert because of my radio job, and it was kind of fun, kind of exciting. The first one I did was a dj from New York, Jazzy Jay, and he performed in Regent Park, and after that I did what was called a Monster Jam, which was a big

concert featuring a lot of acts, a lot of local Toronto acts, and I put that into the Concert Hall. It proved to be quite successful. And then I quit, and after I quit the guys who financed those two projects really needed me to get involved again, so they talked me back into it, and that's when I became stuck in it, because I put my own money into a lot of shows and immediately went into a huge debt. And there was no other way to work yourself out of it other than to keep doing the concerts. It was only December of last year that I actually got out of debt.

You don't make a lot of money from doing hip-hop concerts. It's underground. When I got into concert promotion rap groups were not even releasing albums. The bulk of the groups I brought up only had 12" singles out. They weren't selling in the hundreds of thousands or anything.

The Canadian hip-hop scene is in a sad state because nobody has really broke it big yet. Michie Mee and L.A. Luv will be the ones to do it. She has just signed a deal, and ironically it's with an American label, called First Priority.

**FUSE:** What happened to Rumble and Strong?

**NELSON:** Rumble and Strong were part of the same production team as Michie Mee. They basically became frustrated because they'd been waiting and waiting — they were around before Michie Mee and they were waiting and waiting for a record to come out and it never did. They quit their management and went off on their own and they didn't have any luck. Rumble and Strong are quite talented, and Jam On Strong is still Canada's best street deejay in terms of being a scratch deejay and a rap deejay. But that's the situation here. When I said it was sad, what I meant by that was it's not only Michie Mee that can be ready to make money, to get paid. But no Canadian labels are wise enough to invest in taking a chance with a Canadian group.

If someone like myself, because I could afford it at the time, who knew about the frustration, tries to put out a record on his own, you still suffer from lack of proper distribution. [Nelson's single, "B-Boy Destruction" was released in early 1988.] What I learned from putting out my record was that you can't depend on the Canadian market to sell it. You can only sell them if you have a major Canadian company distributing it for you, and/or an American distribution deal.

**FUSE:** There are Canadian reggae artists and funk artists on major labels. Why not hip-hop? ►



**NELSON:** Hiphop is only now being taken seriously, because now groups are selling hundreds of thousands of albums. [L.L.] Cool J's album going double platinum is an example.

Canada is always playing second fiddle to the U.S. They wait to see what happens first and then they jump on the bandwagon. Sure, they'll start putting rap on their labels, but it probably won't happen until six months from now. It's just the nature of the system here. Also, the Canadian reggae and dance music artists on major labels aren't selling a hell of a lot of records either. There are still the same problems.

**FUSE:** *How has media coverage affected hiphop, and how easy or difficult it is to promote the concerts? Especially in the last year or so people have concentrated on the violence at some hiphop concerts, or the Uzis that Public Enemy uses as part of their stage show. Does that make it more difficult for you?*

**NELSON:** I think the media is always looking for something, and the media is always ignorant. They don't have the time to go and explore hiphop; they'll go and explore their own tastes. The black representation in the media is not great. There is only a handful of people in the Toronto media who I would give any credit to for even trying to understand what hiphop stands for. You say rap music to them and they say 'what is rap?' I run into that all the time.

Any kind of music that's rebellious, and that's underground, and that attracts an all ages crowd that is so-called "rough" in nature, or rougher in nature than preppy kids who behave themselves, will get flack from the media. It happened with punk as well, heavy metal. The sad thing is that when this sort of thing happens at a heavy metal concert, which CPI does, you don't hear the same sort of commotion. A kid gets killed at a Pink Floyd concert, what happens? The mayor declares a war on drugs and says he'll spend any amount of money to curb the problem. A black kid gets killed, beat up by five people in Flemingdon Park, and the media doesn't acknowledge it happening at all. Even the black media didn't run a full story on it. With the Pink Floyd thing you heard about it for weeks and weeks.

**FUSE:** *Is hiphop a male occupation?*

**NELSON:** Hiphop used to be a man's game, but it's not anymore. You put up with a lot of shit when you're in hiphop. First of all everybody in this entire hiphop music industry, well most of them, are assholes. Most of them are out to rip you off, to get the best of you. They're not going to be fair. They're going to try to cheat you and mislead you and talk you into doing things you don't really want to do. So women turn off that; they're usually smart enough to see those things coming up. Also, the lifestyle is very hectic, if you want to be in the spotlight in hiphop. And a lot of women choose not to put up with it. It also has a reputation of being macho, and if a woman chooses to go in it becomes a real pain. And people try to talk them out of it. Hiphop is very rough, and the people

you deal with are just as rough. If a woman is going to stay, she has to be really emotionally prepared to take the good with the bad. Let's put it this way: I buy almost every hiphop album that comes into Canada, and there's probably one out of twenty — worse than that, probably — that involve women rappers.

**FUSE:** *How is hiphop accepted in Toronto, or Canadian culture? What do you think the average white Canadian thinks of hiphop?*

**NELSON:** Hiphop is still fighting racist barriers. Ignorant people will still call it disco music or black music or even nigger music — they just will not tolerate it. But in the last six months there has been a transition, because of groups like the Beastie Boys, Run-DMC, L.L. Cool J, Kool Moe Dee, Eric B and Rakim. Those groups have broken almost all of the racist barriers. Hiphop has become a real alternative in music. The new wave era is over. The non-traditional rock and reggae people are now accepting hiphop just like they accept dance music. Stations like CFNY are starting to play hiphop. I think they're the first commercial radio station in Toronto that's done it, and a lot of the clubs in Toronto have followed that.

**FUSE:** *How do you view the experimentation with noise and scratching and sampling that goes on in hiphop? Some people have compared it to what was going on in avant-garde jazz in the 50s and early 60s, the way people were looking for some new kind of music against the nice, easy-listening stuff that was going on. Do you see hiphop's musical forms as being radical?*

**NELSON:** No, I see hiphop as being a kind of music that is so basic in nature, that if it doesn't change its style every year, it'll fall, it'll go out, because you'll have done everything you can do in hiphop. You can only program drum machines in so many different ways. Deejays have also reached that point. Unless you're [Schoolly D's] Code Money, or Jazzy Jeff, or Grandmaster Flash if you want to give him that credit, there's not that much that one can do. So then we get into sampling, and we get into noise, which has always been there, but now it's being used more strategically. It's what gives the music a raw, ghetto flavour that's important for people to relate to. They don't want to hear a smooth, rounded kind of music. Hiphop isn't streamlined in any way. It's supposed to be irritating. You listen to it for more than ten minutes and it gives you a headache. That's what separates commercial hiphop lovers from non-commercial hiphop lovers. The b-boys will tolerate hours of hiphop. The noise is vital.

**Cameron Bailey is a regular contributor to *Now* and *Fuse* magazines. His most recent article is "Nigger/Lover: *Something Wild's* Thin Sheen of Race," expanded from an article in *CineAction!* and published in the Autumn 1988 issue of *Screen*.**

# circling the c

## copyright act enters the 20th century

by susan crean



The third week of May is a week full of symbolism, synchronicity, and narratives coming full circle with ritual clatter. The National Gallery celebrates moving into a building it can finally call its own — a momentous event in itself after 108 years of shuffling from one arid Ottawa office building to another, sharing accommodation with the likes of the Ministry of Fisheries and waiting for the mandarins to come up with the commitment and the cash to build a suitable ark for the national collection. And the national collection, of course, was where it all started in 1880, when the charter members of the newly created Royal Canadian Academy launched the project by donating their diploma pieces to form the nucleus of a public collection.

Illustrations by Gail Geltner





Illustration by Gail Gellner

©anadian Artists' Representation/le Front des artistes canadiens (CARFAC), also happens to be celebrating its twentieth anniversary with a two-day conference held, appropriately enough, in the sleek new auditorium of the National's crystal palace — PoMo on the Rideau resplendent. Everything looks bright as the artists gather to discuss "The Power of Association" and the achievements of twenty years of action. Action which was incited inadvertently by the gallery back in 1967 when someone decided it would be boss to make slides of works in the contemporary art collection to sell to the public. A letter was sent out in due course to the artists announcing the programme but mentioning nothing about permissions, copyright or royalties. This prompted London artists Jack Chambers, Kim Ondaatje, Tony Urquhart and a group of their colleagues to respond by reminding the gallery it did not own copyright to any of the works in its collection unless it had been assigned to them in writing by the artists — which in their cases at least, it hadn't. By law the gallery was required to secure authorization and the artists were entitled to ask for compensation in return. Meetings were held, frantic discussions took place during which Chambers and Co. had to point out politely to gallery officials several times that they were quoting American copyright not Canadian — the difference being that in Canada copyright is not deemed to be included in the sale price of a work of art. In Canada owning the object does not mean it's yours to exploit however you wish. Eventually, the gallery got the message and conceded the point.

**TWENTY YEARS ON** and it just so happens that the revision of that very same Copyright Act, already grossly out-of-date in 1967, is finally underway. In fact, Bill C-60 has become something of a cause célèbre since it arrived in the Senate and was put under house arrest by a gang of Liberal senators led by Ian Sinclair, chair of the prestigious Banking, Trade and Commerce committee and former head of Canadian Pacific. (And no, not Margaret's father.) This represents a more spectacular display of timing than you might think. For the Copyright Act is a 64-year-old document, passed by the Canadian parliament in 1924 but based on legislation drafted by British civil service lawyers sometime before the outbreak of World War I, before television, computers, tape decks, VCRs, photocopiers and videocassettes were invented. Radio was then in its foetal infancy and the movie industry barely crawling. Revisions have been blatantly needed for decades and the situation was given official recognition (and its very own royal commission) in the mid-fifties.

So Bill C-60 has been an incredibly long time in the making. Thirty-four years to be exact — Mozart could have come and gone in the meantime. And as a result, it is probably the most thoroughly researched piece of legislation in our cultural history. Certainly it's been the subject of intense study since 1977 when the benchmark Keyes-Brunet report on copyright reform was released triggering a decade's worth of white papers, research documents, Commons committee reports, briefs, public hearings and more reports. It didn't, in other words, sneak up on anyone. Bill C-60, the first of a two-stage amendment package, was introduced in May, 1987, went through the usual channels and was passed by the House of Commons with the support of all three parties. In early February it landed in the Senate, where it's been sandbagged for two months. The Liberal senators, in their hastily acquired wisdom have decided that the bill isn't good enough, and with one maverick (Royce Frith) dissenting, have been inviting hostile witnesses to their committee meetings (refusing to hear creator's representatives save for CARFAC), and generally threatening to unravel the whole sweater.

Although the bill is supposed to contain only those uncontroversial provisions on which consensus exists, there has been high-profile, high-powered opposition from universities, primary and secondary schools, libraries, museums and art galleries. The "user" groups, none of whom will say they are against copyright revision or paying artists, nevertheless want special dispensation to use artists' work without payment for their own purpose. Finding willing ears in the West Block committee rooms, the users turned up the volume of their complaints against Department of Communications officials for being unsympathetic and for mishandling the process. Because the bill clears the way for creators to form societies to handle the licensing of their work collectively, the users are claiming they are being forced to negotiate before it is clear what exemptions will be extended to them in the second set of amendments. Instead

of putting their energies into preparing for negotiations, or trusting they will be able to work with creators and negotiate fair licensing terms, the users are trying to end-run the process by asking government to fix prices and set terms by listing exemptions in the act.

Sinclair is impressed though. He allows that the legislation indeed would set artists loose in the land fairly "dripping with power." So he proposes amendments and the senators, sticking to party lines like flies to flypaper, vote en masse to return the bill to the House of Commons: bravely risking the fury of the creative community and the ridicule of other countries should it, as feared, sink without a trace to the bottom of the order paper. Canada has a reputation for having the most antiquated copyright laws in the Western world, everyone else having long since tackled the arduous business of revision. IBM spends a million dollars a year trying to protect its copyright in court and hundreds of millions are routinely lost to the merchants of pirated records and tapes. By the third week in May, bill C-60 is back in the House, dangling over a cliff.



**THE ONE AND ONLY** item in Bill C-60 which the senators singled out for deletion was the section providing for an exhibition right. This would put into law the practice whereby galleries and museums pay artists a fee for exhibiting their work, a practice championed by CARFAC and originally rationalized this way by Jack Chambers: when museums and galleries put an exhibition together, the only people who are not now paid for their work or their time, who are expected to donate their services to the endeavour gratis are the artists. On the unassailable ground that they too should be paid, CARFAC pressured (cajoled and boycotted) Canadian galleries into accepting exhibition fees as standard professional practice.

I was introduced to the power lunch by Chambers in 1974, over gazpachio at the new National Arts Centre restaurant. CARFAC had been in operation for several years, and was in its heyday of organizing; but in addition to lobbying for decent fees and payment for the work artists actually do, Chambers figured it was time to get some solid information together about exactly how artists do manage to earn their keep. This would require money CARFAC didn't have, so off he went to Ottawa to put it to Andre Fortier, then



director of the Canada Council. (Rule number one: always start at the top and get them to take you to lunch.) Chambers talked about the survey idea (I was there with a proposal I'd drafted to go with the idea) and along the way managed to mention that he was not terribly pleased with the service he was getting at the Council and was considering taking his business elsewhere (i.e., to the Secretary of State's department which funded the Canadian Museums Association among other large arts associations). Fortier protested adamantly. CARFAC belonged where it was, he felt and the idea of conducting an artists' income survey had great merit. So the proposal was lobbed into his court, where it incubated for a year or so, to emerge as a new Statistics Canada programme, the first of its kind.

Nowadays, we get power panels instead of power politics. CARFAC has made history and set the pace internationally with exhibition fees but as an association has run into stagnant waters. The "art world" still prefers gentleman's agreements to contracts, and art schools still teach students to believe the "it will be different with me" line, played to the tune of "Here Comes the Bride." On Friday following the CARFAC conference, the National Gallery hosts a friendly little afternoon colloquium as an *apéritif* before the "grande gala" reception being thrown that evening. Four artists are presented on stage in a performance chaired by curator/critic Peggy Gale, more or less addressing the topic "Artists and Museums": Jeff Wall talks about museums being places for unhappy children which fascinates everyone; Vera Frankel mentions the word gender twice and speaks in low tones about the seductive powers of the building and the "occasion"; Guido Molinari rebukes the Senate for sitting on the copyright bill and taking fat salaries while they are at it; and Les Levine does a superb imitation of a sixties artist putting on a eighties art-official, which includes great all-Canadian lines like, "please, no more group shows, okay?"

**AS IF ON CUE**, after a few attempts by people in the audience to converse with dead trees in a desert, Quebec sculptor Armand Vaillancourt erupts, ruffling the ruling calm of the afternoon. Hovering at a microphone down by the stage, he appeals to the audience in the poetics of another time. With his greying shoulder-length hair and beard, his aging leather jacket, he sounds every inch the sixties radical and looks like God, down on his luck and dishevelled, in *Not Wanted On the Voyage*. Some hurling of epithets ensues; Vaillancourt disparages artists who make careers sucking the establishment; Molinari retorts with unkind comments about artists who have thrown their careers after causes. The two men eventually wind down, but not before they slip into English for several telling moments. Vaillancourt's plea for artists who have been cut out of the art system (by cultural politicians of all persuasions) because they have truths to tell is heard, as it can only be heard in the context, as a giant raspberry. But eventually the waves of decorum close back over the breach and propriety

is restored. Peggy Gale readjusts her composure and everyone, including those who would agree with Vaillancourt, breathe a sigh of relief. No dialogue happens; no dialogue can happen. Few of the gallery curators are even present and director Shirley Thomson, after making her welcoming speech, quietly leaves the artists to their elegant soapbox.

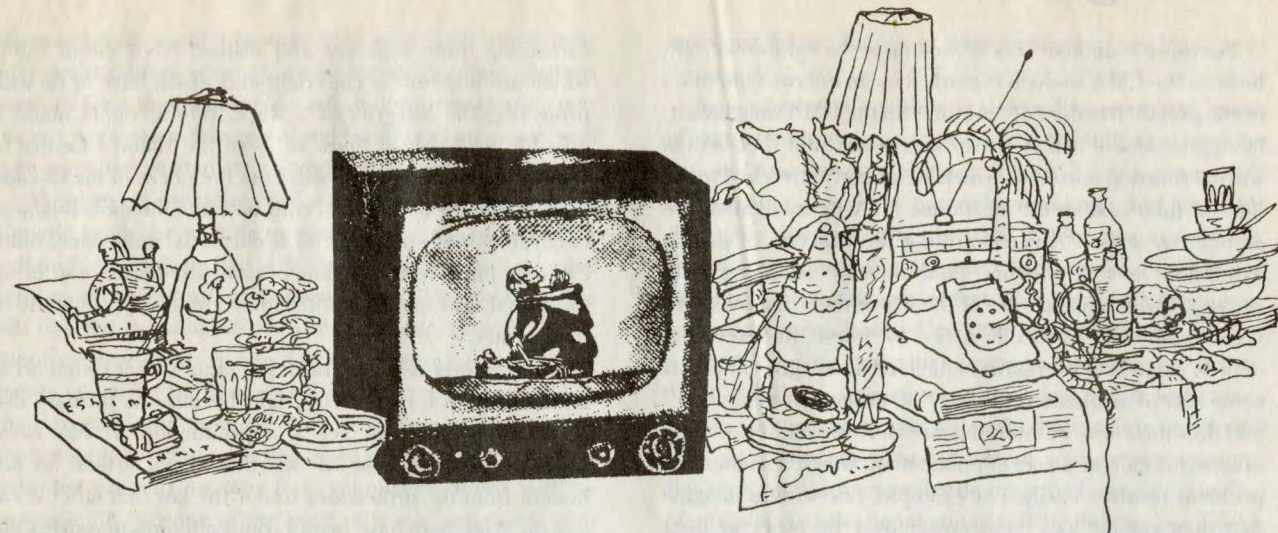
Later that evening, a rumoured ten thousand people show up, dressed to the tens, for the Guinness Book of Openings. A crowd collects at the entrance, waiting for the thick line of celebrants to work its way up the long, cathedral-nave gallery, past yards of tables banked with glasses of champagne, to the rotunda, and the food. More tables piled high with smoked salmon, shrimp and roast beef. Three hours later, the bread's gone but the protein is still holding out and hungry celebrants are reduced to stuffing the meat directly into their mouths. The scene gives new meaning to the term conspicuous consumption. Meanwhile... upstairs where the art is, the party, thankfully, isn't happening at a sickening roar but what is there is splendid. Seduction is the right word.

So. How far in twenty years? The National Museums Corporation has come and gone, the parallel gallery system has come and stayed, exhibition fees are not thought to be the radical idea they once were... but an exhibition right enshrined in law, fees no longer to be left to the beneficence of curators and directors? At the National Gallery's show panel, one lone curator (Diana Nemiroff, curator of contemporary Canadian art at the gallery) did rise to Molinari's challenge, pointing out that institutions aren't monolithic and she was one curator who supported the exhibition right. But this was not the message delivered at the CARFAC conference the day before by Manon Blanchette, director of the Musée d'art contemporaine. While making mollifying sounds about her dedication to contemporary art and the importance of working closely with artists (and, of course, she's happy to pay artists fees), she stated that C-60 represents a curtailment of the curator's freedom of interpretation and instead of pushing for an exhibition right, artists ought to be supporting the gallery's bid for more and better government funding and doing some volunteer work on gallery committees.

Some things change; some things don't; and as the Quebecois say, the more some things change the more they stay the same, or travel backwards. In other times and places, Blanchette would have been booed out of the room, or she would have been too shame-faced herself to suggest publicly that artists lobby for better working conditions on behalf of curators who return the favour by conducting a ceremonial washing of hands. Two rhetorical questions: Where were the Diana Nemiroffs when it mattered? What possessed the museum community to abstain from active participation in the debate about copyright reform until ten minutes to midnight?

Following the release of the government's white paper on copyright early in 1985, discussions were held up and down the arts community, and a working conference was convened by the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) in

Illustration by Gail Gelner



February. Hearings were held coast-to-coast by a special parliamentary committee which recommended that an exhibition right be introduced in the new act. In its report, "A Charter of Rights for Creators" it was noted:

*In their appearances before the Sub-committee, [The Sub-committee on the Revision of Copyright] witnesses representing gallery curators did not oppose the right, although they expressed concern that some creators might prohibit the exhibition of their work in conjunction with those of certain other artists. Curators, naturally, are worried that their educative function which leads them to organize exhibitions juxtaposing the works of many artists might be impeded by uncooperative creators. The Sub-committee believes, however, that the benefits artists would derive from the exhibition of their works would constitute a natural safeguard against eccentric exercise of the exhibition right.*

Neither the Canadian Museums Association (CMA) nor the Canadian Art Museum Directors Organization (CAMDO) bothered to appear before that committee but two years later both hotly denied any consensus existed and informed the Commons Committee on Culture and Communications that they were utterly opposed to entrenching an exhibition right in the law. It would, they charged, create mountains of bureaucracy, shackle curators and destroy the Canadian art market. In the meantime, efforts by the CCA to bring the visual arts community together to formulate a scheme which everyone could support came to nought. It wasn't until C-60 was in the Senate, that it became apparent that the CMA and CAMDO were not going to accept the outcome of due process. Because they were prepared to jeopardize the whole project and ten years work, a meeting was held which did produce an accord. But a shaky one which promptly disintegrated in front of the wondering eyes of the Sinclair Committee when both the CMA and CAMDO asked for amendments anyway. With that, the museum profession walked straight into the Liberal senator's agenda, providing them with the one substantial charge they needed against C-60 and a whip to use on their Tory colleagues. (And the devil take the creators of the country.)

**WITH ALL THE STURM UND DRANG** accompanying the passage of the copy-right bill through Parliament, you would never guess it is a boring subject. Copyright is a bit like Canada that way, having acquired an unshakable reputation in certain quarters for being tedious and relentlessly uninteresting. Mention the word and watch the eyes glaze over and the minds fuzz out. It's a conditioned response, oddly enough, that seems especially prevalent in the visual arts where a touch of hauteur is added to the dismissal. *Globe & Mail* reporter John Bently Mays refuses to cover the position of creators because he doesn't agree with it; and when pressed about his own newspaper's disregard for the copyright of material it puts into InfoGlobe, exclaims that he doesn't care, not even about his own copyright. Perhaps he can afford not to care or sees his professional interests as an art critic to support the position of some curators and museum directors against artists and other writers. In other artistic professions there is an understanding that copyright, being the legal basis on which all artistic production takes place, cannot be taken for granted. Not something you want to devote your life to, but like death and taxes, something that can't be avoided forever. In the museum profession, however, copyright is traditionally ignored. Few curators have any idea who owns the rights to the catalogues they write. (Answer: the institution, if you are an employee, and you, if you are self-employed and on contract.) For instance, even the editor of *C Magazine* had to scratch his head and guess when asked who owned the copyright to the articles he publishes. This attitude is not unusual among art publications but extraordinary in the magazine publishing world at large. So it is probably not surprising that at the Ontario Museums Association's annual meeting last October, the assembled members responded to an impassioned plea from the CMA's executive director, John McAvity, by voting overwhelmingly to oppose the exhibition right and all it stands for. Presumably none of the curators in the room (if there were any) gave any passing thought to the effect this might have on their own rights as writers.



For there is another way of looking at the exhibition right besides the CMA's which regards it as an encroachment on the academic freedom of curators. As the CMA imagines it, having to secure artists' permission to exhibit their works will overburden museums which are already stretched to the limit of their resources; museums, McAvity maintains, are as poor as artists. And enshrining the practice of paying exhibition fees in the law (and thereby attaching it to copyright which has a term of the life of the artist plus fifty years) will tempt "difficult" artists (or worse, the executors of their estates) to excessive behaviour. It will give all artists some sort of aesthetic veto over "all aspects of exhibition" and thus the entire curatorial process. However, if you think of an exhibition as an act of publication, which it is, then the problem resolves easily. For example, few writers imagine that they should have veto power over the work of their publishers; we may think we could do a better job with one hand tied behind our backs, but we are not really interested in supervising their work. We'd rather be writing. Some writers who have clout may get consultation clauses in their contracts or even the right to approve dustjacket copy and design, but nowhere is there precedent or pressure for copyright to be interpreted as giving creators subsidiary control over other people's work. My right to control the use of my story, for example, does not give me the right to dictate the editorial content of critics or anthologists who may want to reproduce it. And I am sure the Rights and Freedoms Committee of the Writers' Union would swing into action to oppose any such restriction on the free expression of opinion. Moreover, if artists were disposed to playing such a game, they actually have the means to do it right now, as curators cannot reproduce anyone's work for catalogues without authorization. In fact, until Bill C-60 was passed, we had the absurd situation where a gallery or collector could send a work half way around the world, in a leaky boat if it served their purpose, without asking for the creator's permission, but they could not photograph it for the catalogue without asking.

**OBVIOUSLY** one way to settle the respective rights and responsibilities of artists and curators in mounting an exhibition is by the tried and true method of a contract. And it may be the best way to avoid troublesome interference from artists during installation or incessant demands from curators for information and advice, as it necessitates setting everything out on paper beforehand. But even where a contract doesn't exist it is extremely unlikely that a court would interpret the new exhibition right as a right to approve the curator's work which is itself largely protected as copyright work.

And, yes, artists should have the legal right to say yes or no to an exhibition. It is no different than writers having the right to decide when and with whom they will publish. To say otherwise is to favour a kind of compulsory licensing whereby galleries can make unilateral decisions about the use of a work. An exhibition right, in other words, is

something quite separate and distinct from moral rights which are inherent in copyright and which have to do with protecting the integrity of a work. (Moral rights made it possible for Michael Snow to force the Eaton's Centre to remove their Christmas bows from the necks of his Canada geese.) The introduction of contracts into the daily business of curating may spell the end of curatorial innocence, but it can only improve the climate of professionalism, and bring the visual arts into line with other creative professions in the country.

It has, moreover, long been recognized that visual art is an anomaly in terms of copyright because its primary use does not involve the act of reproduction. It has been acknowledged because of this that visual artists do not benefit from the protections under the law that other creators do. And there have been various attempts to redress the imbalance. France, for instance, has had a *droit de suite* which entitles artists to a percentage of the sale price of their works sold at public auction, an arrangement which American artists have been trying to achieve through contracts with purchasers. Another way of approaching the peculiar situation of the exhibiting arts is to think of exhibitions as performances. As Guido Molinari puts it:

*Just because a painter isn't at the gallery every day for the two months a show is running — like actors in a play — doesn't mean he isn't working. His paintings are doing the work. Actors get paid for every performance and so should we.*<sup>2</sup>

In fact, given that many public galleries are now charging entrance fees — in essence a charge for viewing the exhibition — perhaps artists should be demanding a percentage of the take.

Although with the passage of Bill C-60 Canada now has the most effective exhibition right on the books, we are not the first country to proceed in this direction. The American Act passed in 1976 granted copyright owners the exclusive right to display certain types of work, including original works of art. However, the definition of display and other limitations have had the effect of consigning the right to legal obscurity as it has no practical application. France also has a provision for a performance right for works of art communicated by various means including public presentation and it has become a matter of intense debate as to whether courts ought to interpret this as including presentation at public exhibition. Germany is (or was) unique in having an exhibition right, but it is limited to works which have not been publicly offered for sale or put into circulation (i.e. which are "unpublished") and works which are not permanently accessible to the public. Our exhibition right, as it reads now, covers work which is presented at public exhibition, for purposes other than sale or hire, and which was created after the act came into force. Admittedly, the concept formulated by the CCA "accord" is a better mousetrap as it would not discriminate against works of art on the basis of the date they were created and would exempt works owned by a museum when they are exhibited in that institution. At the instigation of the Coalition of Creators and Copyright

Owners (which sprang into being to save C-60 and is now fifty organizations strong), consultation between Department of Communications officials and the visual arts community are now taking place and modifications could well turn up in the second set of amendments due this fall.

Although gallery directors were correct in noting that Canada would be making an international example of herself with the entrenched exhibition right, there are good reasons why we should be leaders in this field. We did, after all, pioneer the scheme of exhibition fees. Like the U.S., there were attempts in the thirties to introduce such payments which failed. But here the idea was resuscitated in the seventies and it stuck. Now it is time to consolidate the project and to standardize the practice. For as long as galleries are left to pay fees voluntarily, there will be injustice. In fact one of the most effective arguments with which the Coalition of Creators and Copyright Owners plied the Liberal Senators in the days leading up to their capitulation on C-60, was the wildly divergent arrangements which the Art Gallery of Ontario made in the case of two artists who had solo exhibitions there in the last six years. One artist was paid the usual CARFAC fees (\$3744) and a cut of the poster sales (\$90) but she had to pay out of pocket for framing and for all the photography in the catalogue and has still seen no royalty payments; the other artist was paid a fee of \$30,000, a stiff percentage of catalogue sales, audioguide rentals, and poster sales. (Interestingly, the senators guessed that the first artist was Canadian, but while they had

heard of Joyce Wieland, they had never heard of Judy Chicago.)

As to whether the exhibition right will so encumber works of art that it will depress the art market, the Professional Art Dealers Association of Canada (PADAC) has come around to believing that it is not only workable, but probably desirable that issues to do with further use (exhibition, reproduction, etc.) be discussed and settled at the time of purchase. The contention that this right will discourage galleries from collecting Canadian art is a familiar one, but no more credible than when it was last used against artists. Most galleries in this country are quasi-public institutions with mandates and heavily subsidized budgets to match. Bill C-60 is now the law of the land. Draw your own conclusions. But such intimidation tactics do raise the hoary old question of ethics and professional attitude. Why did the representatives of the museum profession choose to fight against artists' rights rather than to collaborate? Fortunately for the CMA and CAMDO, Bill C-60 did not die, but they should still have to answer for their actions which forced Canadian creators to crawl through the Senate on their knees. Perhaps it's time for curators with conscience to speak for themselves. Perhaps it's time for the CMA to bone up on copyright law.

1. The Sub-committee on the Revision of Copyright, *A Charter of Rights For Creators*, Ministry of Supply and Services, October, 1985, p. 28.
2. *The Globe and Mail*, March 23, 1988.

Susan Crean is a Toronto-based writer, an editor of *This Magazine* and a columnist for *Canadian Art*. She is the chair of the Copyright Committee of the Writers' Union of Canada.



Illustration by Gail Gellner





By Pat Jeffries

# ART

**C**lass. It's your voice and vocabulary, your hair and your teeth, your shoes and your coat, your father's occupation and your mother's taste in music (on the Board of Directors of the Toronto Symphony or just loves Johnny Cash). If the cash flow at home is a problem, being an artist can be very difficult. Working class people are not artists for the same reasons that non-whites aren't artists: they can't afford it. The only exception is in the music industry, where working class men can make millions and develop drug and alcohol addictions to kill the pain of their alienation.

The average annual wage for a Canadian artist is \$5,000. It seems pathetic to argue over almost nothing, but I will anyway. Although bourgeois artists claim that they have no money, I have noticed that they have time to work and read; they travel; they have computers, vacations, cars, audio and video equipment, books and clothes. And they often have a safety net — if they don't have the rent, Dad will. The downpayment for a house miraculously appears between the

first kid and the last eviction notice, and if an art career doesn't work out, there are other opportunities.

But money and material possessions are only part of it. There's a big psychological difference. A bourgeois artist has more confidence, social skills and business acumen at 13 than a working class artist at 30. And upward mobility in the art world is based on social, as well as artistic skill. The bourgeoisie do business at lunch, dinner, parties, on the golf course and in the back room. But the job at the plant begins and ends at the punch clock and there is nothing to be gained outside those narrow perimeters. Working class artists can be unaware of the social strategies of the art world. They naively believe that the only important thing is their work. They will be working on their art or at a job while their more astute peers are out partying with curators, board members and other artists.

The parallel gallery system mirrors the dominant society from the white male artistic director right down to the immigrant woman who cleans the toilet. Only there's not as much money. There's

the left and right wing versions — the galleries, organizations and magazines set aside for "good" artists and a few galleries, organizations and magazines set aside for "bad" artists — non-whites, women, gays and lesbians and working class artists. To be a "good" artist (in the language of painting), it helps to have the ground (as in background) and the figure (as in Dad's 6-digit income).

Progressive artists who align themselves with the proletariat often don't actually *know* any working class people. They support workers in theory, but if a group of working class people showed up at an art event or party, there would be problems. A class line would be drawn that was so obvious, you'd have to be blind not to see it. "Who are these people?" The representatives of the working class wouldn't necessarily conform to or live up to the advance press. They could be openly sexist or racist (as opposed to having the right line), not dressed properly and think that your paintings, installations and tapes were shit. And they wouldn't want to listen to Philip Glass either.

"Rag doll, daddy's little cutie. Hot tramp, living in a movie. Don't mind. Baby, won't you do me like you done before."

Lyrics from "Rag Doll" by Aerosmith

**A**rtists have made the working class the subject of their work, from Van Gogh's peasants to modern artists' photo, text and video work coming from the left side of Queen St. But the audience for "working class" art is other middle class artists. Even mass media art forms like video are shown in a 19th century high-art context. The few video artists who are even trying to reach a mass audience are denied access, because the right to the air is also the right to power.

Workers, if they even see video art, can be really underwhelmed, offended or bored because artists underestimate the sophistication of their audience, who are extremely video literate. Political work can also contain a bourgeois bias: workers can't "get" art that's subtle,

complex or contradictory, even if it's about themselves, because they are crude, simple and one dimensional.

Working class artists are so rare (or so rarely broadcast their class background) that it's impossible to generalize about what kind of art they actually produce. They make work that's politically engaged and they carve objects that are pure fantasy. They produce work that is labour intensive, as Karl Beveridge suggested in his article "A Fair Day's Work" (see *Fuse* September 1988), because they equate the value of a work with the hours of labour required for its production. They produce art objects that can be sold and they spray paint on the sides of buildings. They follow art world trends in an effort to be accepted and because they are marginalized, they

can produce work that is really original.

And if you are white, you could succeed. Although artists may be déclassé, it's not always forever. You could become famous and rich, although of course, not in Canada, because there's no market. (But that doesn't stop artists in Toronto from reproducing paintings that are selling in New York.) But if you *moved*, you could be Picasso or Andy Warhol. You could enter the ruling class. You could be a working class hero/junkie like John Lennon, who was ordered, along with the other Beatles, to appear at society events where the rich commented on their accents and manners as if they were trained monkeys. Or you could be a poodle on a leash right here at home, except that you really have to eat dog food.

# CLASSES





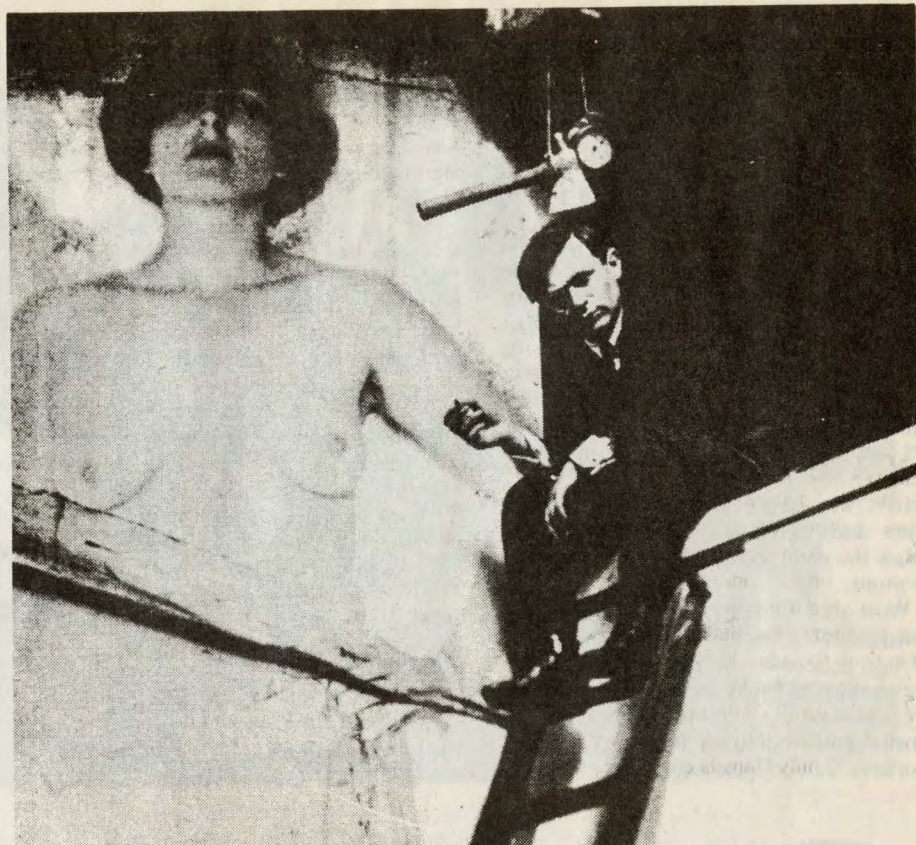


Photo of Tristan Tzara by Man Ray

## Consumer-cum-Cure

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL  
REHABILITATION SERVICES

La Salle University, Philadelphia  
June 27 - July 1, 1988

by Ron Giii

As a schizophrenic artist, being invited to an International Convention for Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services, I had to stop short of angst-disease and question the worth of my going to such an event. Reminded of the Nazi's brutal sacrifice of 200,000 mental patients for slaughter in the Camps, I felt an old tinge of edge biting into my groin as if I had known somewhere in the past that this convention should not be by-passed. Ten years of working with the former and current mental patients in Toronto, using my art background at every turn in the road I said to myself that this is what Joseph Beuys meant when we talked about the Social Sculpture coming up amidst the roar of the Modern Horror. Can one artist affect a social sculpture? Wrong question, old man. New question comes to the front. What did you do? Who are you? Connected on all fronts, entered the Bull-Ring, guns firing with all eyes

centred on the target. The target as always is ignorance, myth, lack of education and that age-old damnable foe of the arts, Capitalism.

### philadelphia, u.s.a.:

Raw world of savage city, sewers overrunning, the blacks as usual camped on the streets, mental patients begging for a Big Mac, white collar chic in white sections only, buses flowing with voltage that is raw and nervy, very much like the Broadway-Nassau pit stop on the old A Train. Que Passa? Yeah, man, you take the street up the hill and you will see La Salle University. OK, feet, do your thing, keep your eyes going in that direction and do not look over your shoulder. Terror?, or are you just imagining you are the only white man around? You got to relax, man, cause, like, brother said you are not exactly your average white man. You see,

brother, you are a bit crazy and so you just have a bit more cool shit to your lines, and that, brother, makes you one of us. Right on.

### lasalle university:

This is it, or as they say up front, you have just found your head, man. Ex-mental patients all over the place, trays filled with food, talking on the last three days of the consumers convention, the new word is out. We are now called "consumers," so that means we have arrived in the status quo of *quid pro quo* society. We are now called consumers. Bad taste in my mouth.

### lecture #1:

How to empower your group and make more money.

Organize your resources, take on small amounts, underfunding, media hype, contacts, all the drivel we all know from years ago. Nothing new, but — just one moment. Man from Florida. We borrow from the State to buy our own houses and pay back the State on resale profit. My mind comes to life. Mental patients buying their own houses. Not bad. If only Canada could hear this idea speak. Dream away.

### lecture #2:

Drug therapy and its effect on your mind.

Being there, you know what is going to be said, but wait, here comes a new report on the old report, just like the last report, stating that you will not get Alzheimers disease until you are over 40. Same old drivel, top-heavy theory, terribly Modernized, all stats and numbers, same old numerical lines, nothing new, but a voice from the rear opens up and the lights magically run over the old silver eyes.

She speaks slowly and softly: I turn around to see a face full of grey-green eyes, a small woman with an electric smile, wearing a real dress fired up with lots of brilliant colours and a large bright button which says it all: NO MORE DICTATORS / HOW DO YOU SPELL DEMOCRACY?

### end of day 1:

Back on the bus to the hotel, the same blazing eyes, the gaze, the intensity, the smog, the ultra-Modernized faces, waiting to get dropped off to get the next glare fix. Addicts at the back of the bus, homeless on the prowl, smokes for sale, ah, back to the White Hotel. My paintings are now hung in the Gallery amidst the Main Hall. I dare to take a look at people staring at the anti-conscious new works. I wonder if I should change the daring titles? Will they grasp what I am subverting? A million things to say but I have only two paintings and the text on the Auschwitz Planet. Perhaps someone will read the text.

## CONVENTION

### day 2:

Famous lecturer on Schizophrenia: The Professor from Michigan State, Bertram P. Karon. Take a front row seat, see a few smiles, start taking notes. This could be a bell-ringer. He speaks:

Terror is central to schizophrenia and is in the main line of much oppression and fear that schizophrenics have in their lives. This is not an easy thing to display (terror) and the psychiatrist must form a therapeutic alliance with the patient, otherwise the fear remains in its oppressed condition destroying the mental balance that is the dream of some or most schizophrenics. For example, the woman who wrote *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* changed her name when she wrote the book for fear of being named or maimed by the connotations. The oppression is still very much that way today. The lecture continues, I am starting to get the message that fear is central to schizophrenia. I look back at my own history of work on violence, sadism, cannibalism, erotomania, dementia and I wonder how many years it will take before humanity realizes what a brutal world it can be. Back to the Professor:

There is a great deal of unconscious repression that may have involved early childhood abuse. That is the nature of my own schizophrenia, and it has been hard to deal with. One in six women have experienced some form of child abuse when they were young so that child abuse is a central issue in many if not most instances of schizophrenia. Chronic terror is central to the therapeutic alliance with the Psychiatrist who has to deal with the nature of the anger and humiliation and diminish it, otherwise the capacity to break down will occur over and over again. The problems of medicine are the multiples of the terror and getting the schizophrenic to come out of the foxhole is much like a battle front soldier who, after intense fear, has the look of madness on his face, which is exactly the same as schizophrenia. But these soldiers can recover. It is also quite possible for schizophrenia to occur after 45 years of age, however the older the better in that the consumer has had a chance to live with the terror. Any form of cruelty or humiliation, ridicule or anger by a Doctor to the consumer is the worst form of treatment and shows actual neglect by the Profession. The DSM3\* literature on the treatment is certainly of little use asserted by the Professor and is not highly regarded in European thinking on the subject. The genetic postulates and off-the-wall ideas about the origins are many, but dealing with the illness is the crux of the matter since it was known over 20 years ago that the defective gene would somehow show up sooner or later. Shock treatment causes definite brain damage and permanent side effects such as Dyskinesia. Many doctors are trained only in applying the meds (medication) because the pay is better and analysis is

a low paying way to see the profession. The Professor also recommends medication as temporary therapy in order to maintain the therapeutic alliance. The question of medication is overtly misapplied in the relationship with therapy which is the central art that is often grossly undermined by the Profession. For example, I can walk into the Clarke Institute in Toronto and ask for medication rather than treatment and in most cases that request will be complied with, which is to say, the belief structure in meds by the medical authorities is quite overwhelming, not to mention the economic benefits for the drug marketplace.

The excessive use of Dopamine medication is something that needs to be understood bio-chemically as the brain adaptive process is far more advanced than is understood by the medical world, which once more enforces the need for extreme caution in the use of medication in compliance with the toleration levels of chemical evolutionary law. Natural law versus synthetic materials, and the two shall always fight each other which harks back to the early work with Beuys and the CEAC school. If Darwin or Theodosius Dobzhansky (evolutionary theorist) were alive today and saw what horrors had been created by chemistry they might both be locked up for their views on Science. Once again, the need for the therapeutic alliance is the cornerstone that is the superior model rather than the inferior model which is the quick-action-medication formula which is attuned to an almost knee-jerk economic thirst which is slowly eroding the medical profession.

Delusions are at the heart of schizophrenia and we all have delusions as we all have dreams, however the delusions of the schizophrenics become repressed or locked into a system that prevents the release and once more the vicious circle of repression blocks the functional level of operation. In the myth of catatonia, Kurtson says that catatonics are fully conscious but the fear is so intense that the body lock, which is like being under attack from terror will not let go of that horror. The main transference of this terror comes from the past and is often a religious messianic force connected to a God power that is directly a result of the delusion terror.

The four major aspects of delusions are transference of the past, overt fear of homosexuality, family concepts which have not been dealt with in the real world, and a systematic delusional pattern which persists in a pure paranoid system. Finally in the last mentioned pattern of delusion the subject can be extremely bright in hiding the pattern by covering it in order to prevent the therapeutic alliance from forming. From incest to oral or anal fantasy many of the symptoms are unusual, but in the main the best description of a schizophrenic is the balance act between a fear of loneliness and the terror of being left alone in this world.

End of lecture.

(cont. next page)





That Time of the Year Again, 1976.

Photo by Ron Gili

Fantastic, just what I knew all along, but where to next?

### the white hotel:

Another peek at my works, more and more people are making interesting comments on the work, an interested buyer, have heard that line before, always genuine but short of cash right now, but maybe we can work a deal. Yes. I sure could use the cash.

Exhausted by the intensity of all the talking I buy a bottle of Absolut and dig in for the long night of reading and thinking.

### next morning:

Up early as always catching the sun opening up my heart and feeling the air that may have breezed in from a real tree. Quick glance at my work as I go down to the Main Hall to find out what's up for today. Canadian man tells me about the Ball tonight at the Franklin Museum. Buy a ticket, what the hell, I may learn something about old Benjamin.

### the harding report lecture:

My last lecture, exhausted by the language, I get a view of the woman who has made History in the post-Freudian era, Elizabeth Harding. I sit in a strange fixation as if I know this woman from somewhere. She is directly before me, her glasses touching the tip of her nose as if she actually needed them but that is not important. She smiles like an honest-to-goodness piece of apple pie, all-American-woman from 1952 and I am transfixed as I haven't seen this kind of woman since the early years, 1964, when I visited New York. The audience is full distinguished people from all over the USA and abroad. She begins to tell the Vermont asylum story about how 102 mental patients were let go in 1958 and the story of their lives for the last 30 years. I am sitting there amazed at this woman and this story which is by now an historical event. Of the 102 that left, only one died and the rest are mainly scattered over various parts of Vermont, in most cases taking care of themselves and living with the rest of society. I am taken aback as if jolted by some new positive diamond that has just triggered a signal inside

my heart. Joseph Beuys was right after all. These human beings who are the most fragile of all were also the most alert survivors who could manage to live in conditions that the average human being would die under. I now knew what human fibre meant as I recall the days spent wandering the streets of Montreal looking for food and all that one can overcome simply because we have a will to live, a will to create life and I looked back for a split second and then saw the paintings I had called the anti-conscious. The first title was *Modern Geometric Man* and the other title was *Modern Geometric Camp*. I smiled at the subversion, the name has changed but the same lines rule, the same angles are being played every day, the circle grows smaller, the boxes are stacked higher, the directions have new colours, but in the end it is the same old geometry laws and the geometric social sculpture which is what Beuys knew years ago. Maybe next year in Miami Beach we will meet again and perhaps the Evolutionary world will have unfolded a new coin which can be used no matter where your eyes travel.

Ron Gili is a writer living in Toronto and New York.

## Symptoms & Successes

### WEAPONS OF CULTURE

A Space, Toronto

August 2 - September 3, 1988

by Hazel A. Da Breo

WHILE THE SCOPE of black art forms in Canada continues to grow and encompass a wide range of expression, strong focus has always been on a politically activist point of view. Such is the theme and premise around which the exhibition at A Space, *Weapons of Culture*, is built.

The exhibition's definition leads one to expect something forceful, be it an assault on contemporary culture, the recollection of past struggle or the promise of future impact. A Space's press release advised that "*Weapons of Culture* is meant to depict tools of survival, the methods and means to establish an identity and engage in the struggle to communicate it." Instead, with the exception of the dynamic presence of Grace Channer and Kim McNeilly, artists whose work has given credibility to the concept, we are only nudged into a casual awareness of this particular community of artists. The concept has called for as much character as talent, and *Weapons of Culture* appears not to hold true to its promise.

The curator, Buseje Bailey, was charged with coordinating an exhibition by artists of West Indian origin who now live and work in Canada. It has taken her a year and a half to realize. With the exception of a few artists personally known to Bailey, she said that the response from the West Indian art community to her invitation to submit portfolios for consideration was hesitant at best. The portfolios, once submitted, revealed a startling lack of professionalism or even of completeness. More than one curator has ex-

pressed concern that the very basic requirements of a comprehensive biography accompanied by slides or photographs are not being met by artists seeking or invited to exhibit their work. One does not feel quite certain that all the artists in our community, are accounted for and if a fair representation of their work has been brought to the attention of the public.

This is puzzling. It is not easy to believe that even if the artists have not taken it upon themselves to develop marketing strategies, there is not a community group that will provide advice and assistance for them. Assistance may sometimes be as simple but essential as the provision of the small funding required to produce slides and printed material. But as Bailey confirms, this problem is but a symptom of a greater underlying frustration.

The black artists in the Canadian community have become so used to being refused acceptance to an exhibition that they have become despondent, discouraged, guarded with their artistic efforts and suspicious of juries.

That this is a disturbing condition needs no elaboration. One wonders as well, how many of the institutions approached by these artists are also suspicious, but of the strength of the voice presented and therefore guard the entrance to the exhibition circuit.

However, the same condition is also indicative of a glorious recognition of the magical excellence of some of the artists presented at *Weapons of Culture*. That is, the

faint-hearted amateur artist, on the contemplation of the remarkable talent demonstrated in the work of Bailey herself, and of Channer and McNeilly, might well be moved to surrender his or her aspirations at once.

Channer's canvas gives us the powerful image of work, resolve, dark courage and constant forward movement. In McNeilly's strong lines there is a deeply contemplated accusation and she has furthermore managed to juxtapose a threat of violence with the omniscience of infinite love. These expressions, with Bailey's affectionate depiction of age and youth in an attitude of sharing and community, realize the character, talent and inspiration missing from the show as a thematic whole.

So, the word "competition" has slipped uncomfortably in at this point. In response, it seems, Bailey as curator demonstrates that she is herself as compassionate and supportive as her painting indicates. This is what one determines to be the reason for her having accepted into the exhibition some pieces that are flat, lifeless and without heart or skill. It must be that she is saying that a forum *must* be provided for the artists' growth; they *must* be encouraged to develop confidence in their belonging with us. Furthermore, they must be encouraged, no, *urged* to also relentlessly pursue skill.

So although Winsom's fabric design did not provoke a strong social response, it definitely is beautiful material and she has been imaginative in manipulating it. It should be displayed. Claire Carew's detail and level of social consciousness should likewise be applauded, and Roland Jean's personal vision undoubtedly demands attention.

In this way then, the exhibition has been successful. It has strongly, lovingly demonstrated that we, the black community intend our artists to survive. Bailey at least will actively engage in the struggle to teach, encourage and protect our artists, our collective voice, our identity. ■

Hazel A. Da Breo is a curator of Caribbean Art and a student of Art History at York University in Toronto.



Fabric painting by Winsom Darrel.

Photo by Karl Beveridge



# Difference with a Difference

## WORLD OF MUSIC, ART AND DANCE (WOMAD)

Harbourfront, Toronto  
August 9 - 14, 1988

THE NORTH AMERICAN debut of the World of Music, Art and Dance (WOMAD) festival took place at Harbourfront in Toronto, August 9-14. The festival, which has been held annually in England for the past seven years, arrives here none too soon for an audience that is growing ever more aware of diverse and vibrant forms of music from around the globe.

WOMAD included artisans and dancers as its name promised, and also films, workshops and panel discussions, but the focus was music. During the six-day event, more than 30 bands and soloists from 20 countries and five continents enticed listeners with more kinds of musical styles and instruments than have ever been brought together for a single event in Toronto.

Included on the bill were such highly sought-after performers as Nusrat Fateh, Ali Khan, an electrifying singer of Qawwali, the devotional music of the Islamic Sufi sect; virtuoso string-playing brothers Krishnamurti Sridhar and Krishnamurti Shivakumar; and Tex-Mex guitarist-singer Flaco Jimenez.

WOMAD organizers didn't neglect talent from their own turf: many of the performers were either Canadian-based musicians from other countries, or Canadian-bred ones who've adopted styles from other parts of the world. Acquitting themselves well on the world stage were Celtic fusion band Rare Air; the Toronto Suwa Daiko drummers, who possess the largest collection of traditional Japanese drums outside that country; and Daniel Janke and Jali Lamine Suso, who play the kora, a melodic West African string instrument.

WOMAD also made room for a few cutting edge bands. British saxophonist Andy Sheppard and his quintet, and Toronto free jazz ensemble The Freeunion Collective, ostensibly seemed out of place at a world music event, but in fact blended in rather well. Freeunion is a loosely-grouped collective of highly talented multi-instrumentalists, singers and dancers, whose set seemed closer to performance art than to a concert, as ensemble members roamed through the au-

dience, incorporating found sounds into their highly taut improvised music.

The pace of the festival was frantic, with as many as four concerts underway at any one time, but the mood was relaxed. Most festival-goers tossed away their programme schedules and simply wandered from stage to stage, to chance upon whatever was happening.

Which is exactly the sort of thing co-organizer Thomas Brooman had in mind when he helped put together the first WOMAD festival in England in 1982. Singer Peter Gabriel approached Brooman and his associates for help in setting up a concert that would have featured top African bands but Brooman, who helped Harbourfront organizers programme the Toronto event, turned the affair into a full-fledged world event. His idea was to explore what lay beyond the boundaries of popular Western music in a setting where musical discovery was more important than the lure of top-name performers. To get the English festival off the ground financially during its first few years (England's WOMAD is a paid event, Harbourfront's was free except for a few performances), rock bands were included to draw crowds. The practice ended two years ago after a fallout between organizers and headliners Siouxsie and the Banshees, who were angry, so the story goes, because the floor of their backstage dressing room (which was in a tent) wasn't covered in shag carpeting.

The contrast between rock star tantrums and the way world bands approach WOMAD was as refreshing as a summer breeze off Lake Ontario. A runaway favourite was Farafina, an eight-piece percussion ensemble from Burkina Faso, whose haunting and melodic West African rhythms held listeners spellbound. Throughout the festival the members of Farafina seemed to be everywhere, taking in other performances, attending workshops, chatting with admirers, or just strolling through the grounds, often hand-in-hand.

The feeling of warmth and intimacy at WOMAD was a vast change from what Toronto concert-goers are accustomed to.

Much vitality is lost in the vast distance that typically separates Western performers from their audience. World bands bring with them a more vibrant tradition, in which music is deeply rooted in the day-to-day, and the relationship between performer and listener is as tight as the head of a drum. (Farafina, which tours internationally, still plays at such community ceremonies as weddings and funerals in Burkina Faso).

And then there's Ali Farka Toure, a guitarist from Mali who captivated WOMAD listeners. His music is a simmering, hypnotic Islamic North African blend of call and response chants, Arabic-influenced musical cadences, and African rhythmic punctuation that has attracted worldwide acclaim. Yet he intends to give up performing next year, at the peak of his career, and settle down on his farm to raise cattle and teach music. He said he wants to step down to make room for Mali's next generation of musicians.

In such a climate amongst such musicians, almost anything seemed musically possible, and even festival-goers got into the act. Late one evening on a grassy knoll where there sat several crude marimbas for children's musical workshops, a group of revelers began to jam. Cacophonous at first, the impromptu drummers gradually found a groove, and were soon joined by dozens of passers-by.

The same sort of spontaneity took hold of WOMAD workshops. The hottest ones were for percussionists, at which top world drummers brought together drums from around the world, making for incongruous musical pairings (like a South East Asian gamelan beside a Caribbean steel drum), but sizzling jams. After one workshop, an audience member overcome by his desire to play, leapt on stage and began to pound away on a booming West African drum called a djembe. Not only did the workshop drummers not get angry, a few began to play along.

The same spirit seeped into a few performances. Prior to a concert by the Guo Brothers, two evocative and lyrical wind instrumentalists from the People's Republic of China, a Toronto tabla teacher named Shankar stopped to hear them rehearse back-

by Glenn Cooly



Jim Sky Iroquois Dance Troop



Mahama Konate and Soungalo Coulibaly of Farafina with New York composer David Amram.



Evergreen Club Gamelan Ensemble.

Photos by Carmen Mills

stage. He tried out some tabla riffs on a traditional Chinese drum, and the Guo Brothers liked the result so much they invited Shankar to play a song with them on stage.

Yet if cross-cultural pollination was one of the joys at WOMAD, it also gave rise to a note of discord: the issue of cultural piracy. A panel discussion on the topic addressed it in terms of compensation, and acknowledged that the North American music industry has appropriated musicians at the source. Which is true, but failed to grasp a larger issue out of which cultural piracy arises: cultural hegemony and assimilation, or racism, in a word.

Racism is an unwillingness to accept cultural difference, and the history of North American music puts the issue into focus. The music that this continent claims as its own — blues, jazz and rock — was stolen outright by white cover performers and music profiteers during the 1930s, 40s and 50s from black musicians who were denied record contracts and radio airplay. What black musicians lost in addition to royalties was their cultural voice. The content of their music — by and large an impassioned "no" to racial injustice — was stripped bare by the music industry, which reprocessed lyrics and nuance into a homogenized form that meshed with the tastes of the dominant white audience.

North America and Europe manifest a similar assimilative pressure globally, absorbing cultural difference rather than respecting it, and in a sense WOMAD was a microcosmic display of that pressure. The Bhundu Boys, a Zimbabwean jit band that lives in England, broke with a long-standing tradition and recorded its most recent album in English. The band said it subsequently felt that doing so robbed its music of its cultural uniqueness and identity to some extent.

There was overt racism at WOMAD, too. Midway through the festival late one night, four Caribbean-Canadians, three being Rastafarians, sat talking quietly on a deserted bleacher about how they had been ostracized at a nearby Harbourfront cafe. The crowd inside, mostly urban and middle class, had welcomed world performers earlier that evening, but outside the context of a performance, they resisted the presence of what they evidently perceived as outsiders.

But WOMAD itself was by no means racist, and perhaps the decisive value of the festival was its ability to show off cultural diversity in such a strong and vibrant way, present cultural expression, not as museum exhibits, but as living, engaging forms. WOMAD was an affirmation and celebration of cultural difference and all that can be said to people like the patrons of the cafe who chose to refuse that celebration is wake up and hear the music. ■



## Cultural Fusion

### A SELECTION OF AUDIO CASSETTES BY NATIVE AND BLACK CANADIAN ARTISTS, POETS, AND PERFORMERS

Distributed by Big Door

Canada has a wealth of native performers and artists who deserve to be acknowledged. Some recent releases from Toronto independent label, Big Door, provide an introduction to the work of native Canadian artists. Chief instigator behind these cassette compilations is Jamaican born Pat Andrade, host of Spirit Voices, a native radio show broadcast weekly on CKCU Radio Carleton, an Ottawa campus/community station. Andrade's research into native and reggae rhythms has taken him from the Grand Canyon to New Orleans and back again to Ottawa.

African and Indian people traditionally have shared and appreciated different aspects of each other's culture. A tradition existed in which runaway African slaves were given refuge by Indian people who shared their herbal, spiritual and cultural ways with them. *Poetry is Not a Luxury*, an inspiring spoken word anthology, features several native and black Canadians including Graigg Ing Young, Jeannette Armstrong, Africa Cooper and Ahdri Zhina Mandiela. The issues vary from the situation of native women to "mixed blood" prejudice to racism.

*The Death of John Wayne* highlights the work of Metis writer Lee Maracle, native artist Brian Wright McLeod and the irrepressibly non-traditional group Thom E. Hawke and the Pineneedles. All of the pieces on *The Death of John Wayne* EP have an underlying theme of alternative realities. Maracle's "Nicaragua: Another Vietnam?" deals with America's coming to terms with the "stone invasion" and what the rest of the world learned from the Vietnam experience. In the song "Palestinian Women," she sharply contrasts the suburban North American reality with the beleaguered existence of women in Palestine. McLeod provided the artwork for this cassette and the lyrics for "Mobile Sweat Lodge." He paints an incongruous picture using media stereotypes of Native Americans and a tourist family getting their money's worth of spirituality for sale.

"Two children, eight and ten, run about armed with plastic hand guns avenging Custer's memory. . . modern spiritualism seems to amount to nothing more than an unconscious passing of the wind, lost in a Carl Sagan-like void."



Thom E. Hawke and the Pineneedles in performance.

Thom E. Hawke and the Pineneedles continue the surreal tone relating *The Death of John Wayne*, a controversial story of a larger than life Hollywood cowboy as part-time Indian agent/rock farmer who betrays the Beothuks to the municipal government. Chanting, traditional drums, rumba box and keyboards add to the tongue-in-cheek quality of Hawke's presentation.

*The Buffalo Cliff Collection* contains "Death" plus two more songs by Thom E. Hawke and the Pineneedles; "Lubicon Lake" and "Where the Buffalo Roam." The title, "Buffalo Cliff," comes from a "traditional hunting practice of the Plains Indians . . . to provide food, clothing and shelter." Topics cover the benefits of unified effort, the problems at Lubicon Lake to the debilitating effects of colonial attitudes on the native Canadian's struggle towards self-government.

*The Secret War Against The Black Panthers and the Indian Movement in America* presents Andrade's sensitive interviews with Ward Churchill, Lee Maracle, and Public Enemy rap group member Chuck D. Self-realization and self-responsibility are themes which flow throughout each conver-

by Marva Jackson

Photo by Bill Lindsay

sation. Andrade interviewed Chuck D last December and interspersed Maracle's poetry, which he recorded with her in Toronto, creating a rap piece called "Are You Comfortable?"

Instead of being preachy, these recordings provide insightful kernels of historical and current experience made easily digestible by the musical arrangements and vocal interpretations. Many musicians participated in this project but Andrade's main technical collaborator is Chip Yarwood. All of the recordings are richly layered with native and reggae rhythms using electronic and traditional instruments.

Another impressive constant is Andrade's attention to the problems of sexism on each cassette. His goal is to increase men's awareness of their social responsibility in the fight against sexism. For Andrade, who is currently producing a new recording, compiling these cassettes is the best possible affirmative action he knows. ■

Marva Jackson is a freelance writer who hosts a weekly radio show on CKLN 88.1 FM.

## The Melting Face Across the Way

### INSIDE/OUT

DIRECTED BY LORI SPRING

Man's inner concerns do not have their issueless private character by nature. They do so only when he is increasingly unable to assimilate the data of the world around him by way of experience.

— Walter Benjamin

by Gary Popovich

AND HERE THE ISSUE is of a woman, Lori Spring, and her first film *Inside/Out* — the bringing to life of a representation for which narration may replace the incessant chatter she finds around her. To find the voice that sits above the gathering in a window that silently reflects the movement of the street below. And in the grainy video images that begin her story she recalls the fragments of an image much unlike her own representations. Here in the space of resolution she finds her own disquietude.

She unfolds her film in the figure of a woman called Joanna. Joanna makes her way home through the streets. Her image is tied to that of an elderly woman who we see inside an apartment looking out of her own window at Joanna who is going home. They are the only people shot in film in this opening overture that is otherwise constituted by video images. Thereafter, shots of the outside are either from Joanna's point of view (in film) or from her video camera which records incessantly.

Having decided to close herself within her walls, Joanna takes to collecting sounds and images, takes the odd visits from friends. She establishes a video-voyeuristic relationship with Mrs. Ambrose, the elderly woman in the window across the street. It appears that Mrs. Ambrose is confined due to a physical ailment, whereas Joanna is a recluse by choice, a choice which has consumed her, turned her life around inside out. Here begins the matter of resolution — one's image of oneself, one's representations. She is resolved to confine herself within four walls, in camera as it were, to place a lens at the window and to record images and sounds, to turn her whole home environment into a camera, to become the substance on which representations are held, there to piece together the desire to be content, the twinning of desire with mortality within the story.

Spring's *Inside/Out* is a story about the making of a story that in turn generates stories, stories that turn to their beginnings. It is a story about origin, and how "origin," as Heidegger has said, "always comes to us from the future." Stories don't come from nowhere, they must be lived first, in some

form. And that it is death that often lurks within the structure of a story. It shatters the hopes of any other possible end prefiguring the course of the story by awaiting it at some other end of its becoming. It snaps up its victim, by plotting — as the plot thickens the subject becomes content.

What then to make of a subject who equivocally and unemotionally talks of content, ("I feel so self-contained — the beginnings of a sort of peacefulness . . .") and finds within that delusory fullness the speaking of peace or piece as the unfixed fragments of a text she unwittingly pieces together to hold in as it threatens to burst out? There it must be the story that unfolds in one's sex, a sex that announces death as an image of the body in the body of a life's imagining.

"I live very carefully because I'm not carefree," says Joanna. Unable to live carefree she carefully constructs her narrative, orchestrating the messages coming in and going out of her machines (telephone answering machine, video camera and monitor, tape recorder, and computer). At one point the camera pans past a music stand to Joanna at her computer writing letters, trying to direct those outside as she composes some new

beginning for herself — to find the between of subjectivity and the object of desire. And that space between is a passion that lies like the video images, emanating from the street between Joanna's window and Mrs. Ambrose's window, an outside that is electric, charged, grainy, gritty, fast, where there is no narrative, only unstructured phenomena, perceptions that the mind takes, contains, and excretes as representations. Where fiction begins to take hold of these echoes from the body and the re-writing of a life begins.

When friends come to visit her, she seems dispassionate, reserved, and cut off. She plays them her work; she has been videotaping the outside and audiotaping her inside, her thoughts. The two tapings are separate, and the problem is to find the desirable relationship between outside/inside, image/sound, recording of perception/perception of recording, history/myth, images of the body/body of images, to let the word, or gesture, stand alone, naked, and to slowly empty it as you move into and through it, to a place where some more truthful relation might exist.

"My choice has not been to withdraw from the world but rather to have some control



Still from *Inside/Out* by Lori Spring.

Still by David Rasmus



over the nature of my existence in it. The moment I step out my door I'm no longer at the helm of my thoughts, my movements, my desires. The world's voice as it speaks through me from inside me is drowned out and I hear only the incessant chatter and frequent screams of a world which has lost any contact with the wisdom of silence." (*Inside/Out*)

Compare this with a passage from Freud:

Protection against stimuli is an almost more important function for the living organism than the reception of stimuli; the protective shield is supplied with its own store of energy and must above all strive to preserve the special modes of transformation of energy operating in it against the effects of energies at work in the external world, effects which tend towards a leveling out of them and hence towards destruction.\*

It is in the quiet of her home that the re-writing begins in the form of a self-administered tattoo. She dines alone, with lights set at a low crimson burn, candles arranged like a candelabra, a bottle of wine. Awash in a red sea of light she will part her skin as if in ritual prayer to the writing she has begun. She anticipates the pain of the needle that will make its mark on her, adding to the unfinished tattoo. As she is about to enter herself with the needle we watch her quietly suppress a grimace of pain — as if the pain were necessary, yet needed to be contained. Here she writes herself outside of narrative, consummating a new sexual union, situating herself as the place in which is consummated the unconsummated relationships of sounds to images, of the outside that she gathers, where she can interdict, to come between the saying and the doing, to come outside of intercourse, in the cleavage of the body, marked by the intravenous dyes piercing the skin flowing in as they appear out. An intercostal writing that turns a new leaf in the reading of the body.

But she has come to a crisis point in the language of her body, in the tension created between a passionate, dislinear exterior, and the desire to contain, hold in place, to slow down or freeze for a moment experience; where even sexuality is a relation outside of men and women — a slow, painfully re-learned perceptive and apperceptive relation of the body and phenomena. Where the gestures of the body, can best be understood by emptying a physical activity of as many contingencies as possible — to write, to videotape, to ride an exercise bicycle and not move; to stand immobile in the quiet and find silence moving. To find through this language is to move through this language, a perversion, a movement across the habitual, across the well-turned phrases, where to turn thoroughly is not to turn out badly, but to go through completely, to the end, or at least as far as one can.

Amongst the batches of semi-processed information that criss-cross her apartment, the fragments of words written, spoken — images lifted off her monitoring window on the outside, spoken of, spoken for, taken in — coming together in a slow silent unfolding. The raw materials of a narrative consummation finds itself constituted by focusing these fragments on the double, the older woman across the street who sits in her window, a representation appropriated by Joanna. The inevitable union with Joanna suggests a crossing to be made — the crossing from Joanna to Mrs. Ambrose, imaginary to real, from youth to aged, from representation to origins of the image, a crossing that takes us into the street outside of the apartment walls, from the place of generation to the subject of generation with all the weight one invests in such a subject by placing oneself subject to it, a crossing which is by implication the termination of narrative.

When finally the stillness of the old woman disturbs her, and nobody is around to send in her stead, Joanna painfully makes a decision. She steps outside, into the dislinear, to make the crossing in a fragmented array of subjective and objective shots. She arrives only to painfully kneel next to Mrs. Ambrose who is slumped in a chair. Joanna looks out accusingly to her video camera across the street which she knows is recording this very event. The next shot, taken from outside of the window, frames the two women together, but gone are the reflections of street movement that earlier brought this window alive. Dissolving to a long shot the window is seen to be a part of a tower-like apartment building, now both ivory tower and funerary monument. The camera begins pulling back in its long accusative movement to reveal Joanna's apartment window, passing over her video camera which is still recording, past the video monitor on which for the first time we see Joanna as part of the outside action she'd been watching and recording. However, it is an image of death, a static video image that monitors and admonishes her behaviour. The camera continues its movement to the chair she left empty when she moved from spectator to actress — a chair that looks out to the action, a voyeur's chair, a director's chair, a chair from which roles are cast, a chair that now sits in the sun facing the window casting bars of shadows behind it, a chair emptied of the weight Joanna gave it, left now to speak of the confusing set of contradictions spoken against it as it looks out nakedly to the image we twice recall (the action from which the camera has pulled away, the represented action on the monitor). Coming on the recall, she must piece together, remember to find her name. Rememberer, relater, minstrel, narrator — she will take the memory of the delay between event and representation to reify an ambrosial immortality into the mortal Mrs. Ambrose

called up out of the cold, electric video images much too late. Not presented simply as a moral matter, but painfully at odds with the contents of a body leaving history and entering myth — the generation of story, narrative, representation, the construction of a contradiction which allows life to what is dead, which strips or will strip the living body of images only to add it to the ever-growing accumulation of images (of the body).

If Joanna is scared, as one of her guests suggests earlier in the film, it is because she knows she represents her own mortality. She sounds pretentious or far away to her visitors, apostrophising as if it were her own dead self which is embodied in the dead Mrs. Ambrose, riddled with contradiction (only partially resolved by the end of the film): "I've tried to create a kind of world within the contents of my body within the space of these four walls in which I can live freely. Beyond these four walls I become a prisoner of circumstance." Unable to stop her video camera, unable to stop looking, to stop living or being a part of her history, she becomes aware of how inside or out she is still a prisoner of circumstance.

In the film camera's haunting passage from Mrs. Ambrose's apartment to Joanna's, the film has unseamed itself. However, compelled to find a resolution for the images, narrative re-enters to dispose of the body, to introduce Mrs. Ambrose's niece, and to have her spoken for by the narrator, Joanna. The ghosts are all recalled. Joanna is unresponsive; the niece consoles Joanna, invites her home; Joanna declines. As the niece leaves the screen, the film slows down and freezes on Joanna's outstretched hand. By leaving Joanna's arm up in the air, leaving narrative up in the air, suspended, we are encouraged to ask whether Joanna will now finally re-engage with the world. But nothing is suspended, there is no later; we end with a frozen image (a partial truth, at best), perhaps a point of deliberation, the desire to transform the fear of a mortally charged world, a dislinear world, into a carefree foray into what Joanna would call "the density of existence." Here she may grant herself permission, let herself through, send herself. It is this indecision which not only ends Lori Spring's film, but runs throughout it, weaving the threads inside and outside, around each other, wishing passionately to engage with a desultory world, while desperately trying to hold onto a direction, an end, so that something may be constituted, frozen temporarily, understood.■

\* Sigmund Freud, *The Pleasure Principle*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1961, trans., James Strachey, p. 21.

Gary Popovich is a Toronto filmmaker and writer.

# ILLUSION & REALTY

By Oliver  
Kellhammer

WARNING: the following article contains some whining; reader discretion advised.

THIS AWFUL TEST, TORONTO ART TRAUMA, TERMINATE A TENANT. . . These are some of the words that T.A.T. stands for. I write these paragraphs sitting in a back alley amongst a jumble of furniture of yet another friend who has been evicted from their Toronto apartment. It is tempting to compare these recent weeks in old "Hogtown" to how I would imagine the last days before Saigon's fall. This analogy starts to fit quite nicely if you substitute cash-crazed yuppies for the invading Viet Cong and visualize those of us hanging on to our affordable housing as the forces under siege; waiting for some magic helicopter to carry us to safety.

Toronto's psychotic real-estate market has of course been a major kick in the ass to the non-profit arts community as well as to most other groups trying to scabble along the city's economic margins. Just to make their exorbitant monthly rents, droves of our best and brightest seem to be abandoning their art work, flocking to prostitute their talents on the production of low budget schlock movies for the Hollywood propaganda machine. Many more are just packing up their bags and leaving for the suburbs in which they wouldn't have been caught dead a few years ago; further dissipating what has up until recently been a tightly knit community.

Feeling a bit manic about all this myself and sensing that there was really something rotten in the air, I thought I had better investigate. Was I suffering from paranoid delusion or were my fears for Toronto's cultural survival shared by my artistic peers? Surely (I

thought) this city's atavistic slide toward social and economic Darwinism must be fermenting at least *some* slight rumblings of revolution amongst its hard-pressed *artistes*. What would be the signs of such activity? Was it happening right under my nose and (I shuddered) was I missing it?

My work was cut out for me. I would seek out and collaborate with other like-minded individuals in some grand, culturally revolutionary initiative. We would free our fair town from the tyranny of Bay Street, vault our own deserving selves to the helm and steer a course for a just urban paradise of cultural vitality and low rents. (I honestly believed this.)

The first task I set for myself was to clearly define the essence of the struggle, to discover the very *Zeitgeist* of our urban condition. I would set out to research how my peers, Toronto's artistic elite, perceived and described the plight of our city and become privy to what revolutionary solutions were simmering on the back burners of their imagination. Having located this revolutionary nexus, I would be sure that I was not alone!

Initially, I must confess that I could find precious little indication of any such revolutionary fervour, but I doggedly trooped on. After several months of painstaking research and countless impromptu interviews, I came upon the simple and unequivocal reason why this was so. To be blunt, many people referred to Toronto as a "Tight Ass Town." This quality of "Tightassness" was beyond a doubt the most dominant descrip-

tive adjective used to encapsulate the quality of life here by the vast majority of those surveyed. But(t), I thought, this could be the very key to the revolution for which we are so long overdue! This city of superlatives; home to the world's biggest bookstore, the world's biggest Kentucky Fried Chicken barrel and (significantly enough), the world's biggest butt plug (also known as the C N Tower) has finally achieved its most world class accolade. Hogtown can now proudly join Paris "the City of Light," Chicago "the Windy City" and New York "the Big Apple" as Toronto "the Tight Ass Town."

Very quickly, word of my findings has leaked out and I am constantly being accosted by those unscrupulous ones seeking to profit from "Tight Ass Town" tee shirts or "Tight Ass Town" lapel pins. But I am valiantly resisting all such hucksterism, for I now have much grander aspirations. "Tight Ass Town" (T.A.T., for short) will become Toronto's newest artist-run centre. T.A.T. will showcase the creative talents of Toronto's finest artists (you know who they are) in a bid to initiate an arena for a truly indigenous revolutionary discourse. T.A.T. will of course be a truly "world class" institution, exhibiting only the most worthy and most indeniably "Torontonian" artifacts of cultural production.

Proposals are already starting to flood in from the four corners of the city and from artists of the very highest repute. Here is a brief sampling of the treats that will delight you at the T.A.T. inaugural exhibition, slated



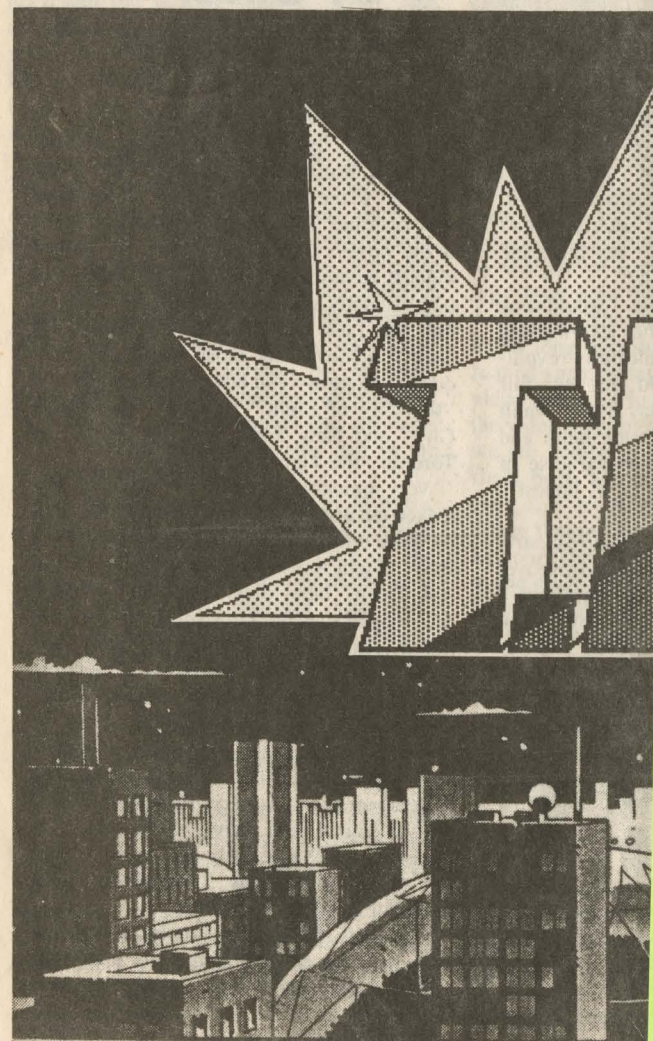
for sometime in mid 1989. Artist "X", in his landmark piece *A View from the Centre of the Fringe*, has rendered several prominent corporate trademarks onto microfilm which can only be observed through an accompanying magnifying glass which the viewer is obliged to have to pay to use. Artist "S" is producing several large brushed aluminum panels each of which frames a gold plated plaque on which the words "World Class" can be seen to have been embossed. Artist "M", enthusiastically appropriating the "tight ass" motif, is currently preparing several tasteful videotapes depicting vigorous gay sex to be premiered exclusively at T.A.T.'s opening night ball. Contrary to rumour, a specially commissioned painting of the martyred "Benji", backdropped by the lapping waves of Lake Ontario will *not* be exhibited. Artist "D" will edify T.A.T.'s vernissage with several readings from her masterpiece of Marxist dialectic — *Artist Run Centres versus Khadaffi's Green Book*. The event's door prize will consist of the uniquely collaborative work, *TIT for T.A.T.*, which will feature a collection of celebrity breast prints of the

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The above descriptions are but a fleeting taste of the phenomena that you can expect to experience at the T.A.T., which will be located within a formerly low rent apartment, whose tenants have freshly been evicted to make way for the demolition necessary for a luxury condominium. Special arrangements are being made to allow the landlord and his work crews to actually be engaged in the act of tearing down the gallery walls throughout the duration of the exhibition, in a fascinating bid to further investigate the interaction of Toronto's art and corporate cultures. Several prominent members of the Canadian military industrial complex will be approached to assist in funding this event, having of course first been assured that such support of cultural activity could go a long way towards the brightening of corporate images that somehow a bit of union bust sales.

T.A.T. will be a groundbreaking event by any yardstick and will further reaffirm the status of Toronto's artists as stalwart retainers of the revolutionary vanguard. Artists are encouraged to submit any proposals that they may have for the inaugural T.A.T. show to me (Oliver Kellhammer) care of this publication. (This is a legitimate request.) Unfortunately, I no longer have my own Toronto mailing address because, during the course of writing this article, I too have been evicted from my premises. In the meanwhile, keep those "T.A.T." words coming for I would like to compile a list. Here are some to get you going: TWIST A TOWEL, TUPPERWARE AGAINST TOPSOIL, THOUGHTFUL AND TOLERANT, TRASH ALL THEORY, TOURISTS ARE TERMITES, TIPTOE AROUND TURDS, TAKE A TINKLE.

Oliver Kellhammer is a former Toronto-based artist, a critic of mass media and



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Oliver Kellhammer is a former Toronto-based artist, a critic of mass media and ecological issues, and a former director of Eye Revue Gallery in Toronto.



T.A.T. logo by Oliver Kellhammer

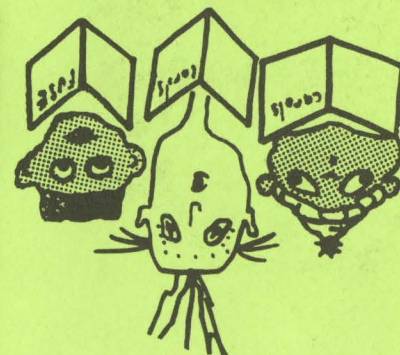


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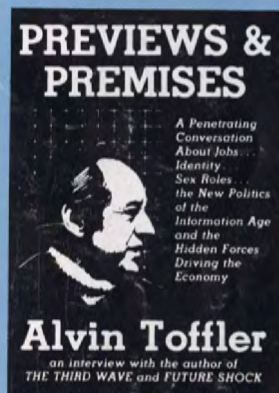
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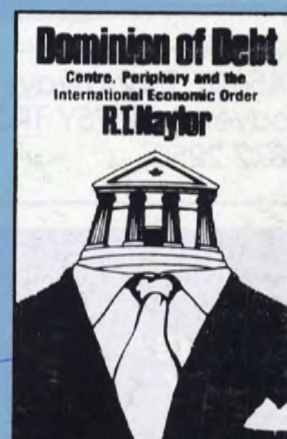
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