

THE DEER HUNTER: SAVING THE TROPHY
THE TUBES: TV IS KING

May 1979

\$1.95 (Canada)

CENTERFOLD

A photograph of a baby lying in a crib, covered with a pink blanket. A stuffed animal is hanging from the side of the crib. The background is a light blue wall with a decorative border of orange and yellow circles.

Contemporary
Music:
Who calls it
A hobby?

Performance:
Rose English
And Sally Potter

Body Politic:
Yes, then maybe
No.

Understanding
Media:
Our first mistake.

Art Politics:
Never an Election.

General Idea.
Colin Campbell.
Flash Theatre.

WOMEN & INFANTICIDE



Videonet presents a programme of new video work by Elizabeth Chitty, Margaret Dragu, Antoni Muntadas and Martha Rosler, plus a video workshop conducted by Noel Harding.

Programme:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| March 13 & 14, 9 am - 4 pm | Tapes from the Gallery video tape library.* |
| March 15, 12 noon
& March 16, 8 pm | Elizabeth Chitty, 'Social Studies - A Work in Progress', performance.
Margaret Dragu, 'T.V. Hertz II', performance. |
| March 17, 8 pm | 'The Works', work by Calgary dancers, choreographers and performance artists. |
| March 20-23, 9 am - 4 pm | Antoni Muntadas, 'Between The Lines', installation. |
| March 27 & 28, 9 am - 4 pm | Tapes from the Gallery video tape library.* |
| March 29, 12 noon
& March 30, 8 pm | Martha Rosler, 'Getting The News', performance. |
| April 3 & 4, 9 am - 4 pm | Tapes from the Gallery video library.* |
| April 5-8, 9 am - 4 pm | Noel Harding - Video Workshop. (Closed to the general public). |

"It's not really people's work that affects me much, it's their politics and life attitude. Basically the performance ends up as being an index of change, or some pointing to blemishes. Even if the content is not really political it doesn't really have to be - if your structure of working is different, that is also political, and that is, I think, the biggest influence lately." Margaret Dragu.

"We have to reach the point where an artist exercises a social function in our society. It is very difficult to define. Many artists are now working on a new structure. Galleries, museums and that which they represent, are obsolete; but they are being used until we can find a better structure. Some people who are analyzing the Art Market have produced studies which are critical of the existing structure. They are very concerned with the ideological issues. Another structure must be developed. The interrelationship between sociology, the media and the theory of communication is the goal of my work. Art had no methodical organization. Perhaps the possibility exists that scientific knowledge will enhance the development of the ideological-social human condition, in conjunction with political ramifications. Everything is interrelated, nothing is isolated." Antoni Muntadas.

"I'm concerned with art and evolving art forms, but I still consider my work to be dance because it has evolved from dance. And, of course, it is tied to its roots. It all comes down to the role art is seen as having in our society; it is still seen as a luxury for the upper classes, a decoration to cover up some of the hard parts of life." Elizabeth Chitty.

"My work is representational. I am interested in presenting a coherent content, often in the form of a narrative, and thereby to reassert the rootedness of art in social life; in doing so I find it necessary to call attention to form, and simultaneously, to raise some questions about artist and audience as a communication network. My work manifests a sociocultural or psychocultural bias - I look for causality and commonality rather than idiosyncrasy in people's attitudes, ideas and behavior. I hope that my work challenges the mythical explanations of everyday activities, explanations that serve as ideological justifications for them. Rather than providing 'amusements' or 'experiences' for viewers, I would prefer to spur the development of a critical understanding of our daily lives. I'd like to help make evident how the conditions of one's life determine what one thinks about and even what one's opinions tend to be." Martha Rosler.

* The following video tapes will be available for viewing on demand.

Willoughby Sharp:	1973-75	Colin Campbell:	'This is An Edit/This is Real'
Noel Harding:			'Hindsight'
			'Hollywood and Vine'
		Don Graham:	'Performance/Audience Sequence'
			'Past Future Split Attention'
		General Idea:	'Pilot'
		Lisa Steele:	'Juggling'
			'Facing South'
Ronald Nameth:	'Voyage Into The Golden Screen'		'The Ballad of Sam Peoples'
	'Popcorn'		'Atlanta Georgia/Cold Sprint Hbr. L.I.'
	'Electric Tantra'		
	'Electric Mandala'		
Gerald Byerley:	'Light Problem'	Willoughby Sharp:	Joseph Beuys
	'Knocking Around'	Videoviews:	Vito Acconci
	'Drag Bag'		Dennis Oppenheim
	'One Sync'		Chris Burden
	'Paidley'		Van Schley
	'Pacing & Removing Lids'		Bruce Nauman
	'Fiesta I'		
	'Two Blue Pitchers'	Joseph Beuys:	'Public Dialogue'
	'Two Buddhas'		
	'Fiesta II'	Videonet:	Mac Adams, Bill Beckley and
	'Mashing/Returning'		James Collins
	'Seven Squashes'		Interviewed by Eric Cameron
Noel Harding		Arton's:	Portafiliou - Robert Filio
Video Workshop 1976:	'Selected Student Tapes'		

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INFORMATION/DIFFUSION

ARTEXTE

UMBRELLA

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GLENDALE, CA 91201
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UMBRELLA, a newsletter on current trends in art information and art views. Annual Subscription: \$12.50

Videonet welcomes submissions from artists regarding the production and exhibition of new works in the areas of video exhibitions, installations, performance, etc. We pay fees comparable to C.A.R. fee schedules, and have funds available for on-site production. All tapes or documentation produced in the gallery remain under the copyright of the artist. A copy of any material produced on site will be retained by the gallery for in-house use. Tapes accepted for exhibition will be rented or purchased at current rates. A catalogue documenting Videonet activities will be produced annually.

Letters

Mail correspondence to be published to: **LETTERS**, Centerfold, 2nd floor 217 Richmond St. W., Toronto, Canada M5V 1W2.



... TIME no icon?

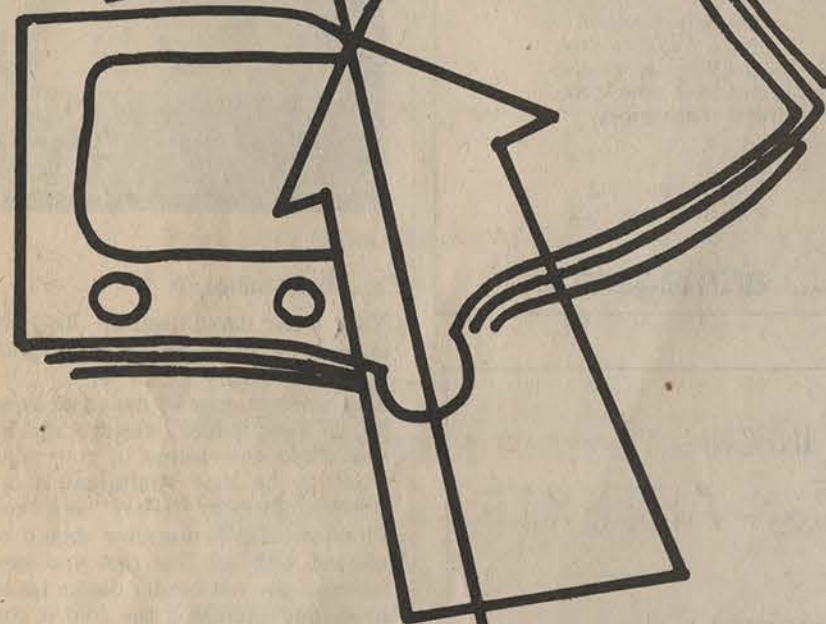
Your letter dated January 30, 1979 arrived today in an envelope post-marked February 21, 1979.

You refer to graphic design as being by its very nature eclectic, and by that I take the essence of your argument to be that "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery" and that, therefore, TIME magazine should be pleased with the fact that you have imitated the red border design trademark and simulated the folded corner device which are elements of TIME magazine trademarks. Unfortunately, your position, while it may have merit in the art world, has no substance in the area of trademark protection. Similarly, your statement that TIME magazine "has allowed your house design to become a common and public icon" is without merit.

Finally, had your reproduction of a TIME trademark been confined, as was Andy Warhol's, to artistic endeavors, rather than a publication of a periodical magazine, you would have received no objection from us. Needless to say, your change in the cover design of CENTERFOLD magazine is acceptable and, therefore, I conclude that this matter between us is settled.

Kent G. Smith
Associate Counsel
TIME Incorporated, New York

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... the flavour and meaning of the trial ...

Thank you very much for the copy of the *Centerfold* Magazine. I did send a copy to Dr. John Money and I am sure he will be pleased with it. I found the articles on the trial and the coverage of the issues surrounding it to be excellent. You are quite correct in your hint that your legal reporting might not be completely accurate; there are a number of errors in the reporting, but complete accuracy is not the essence of good legal reporting. The strength of your article is that it accurately conveys the flavour and meaning of the trial in detail. This is what contemporary journalistic coverage does not do and I can only congratulate you on your work.

Clayton C. Ruby
(Defense Counsel for
Pink Triangle Press)

Body Politic issue superb — *Centerfold* fast becoming one of the best. I enjoy every issue and read every word. You're doing important work.

Jerry Dreva
S. Milwaukee, Wisc.

Just a note to let you know how much I enjoyed and appreciate all the work that has gone into your current issue of *Centerfold*. The Body Politic coverage is excellent and informative — as are the shorter stories — all of which I've been reading over breakfast and supper for the last week or so.

Anna Banana
San Francisco

... preparing for the future.

I resist your implied dismissal of A Space's plans and actions. Using terms like "well-leaked candidates", "tempting honoraria", "a limiting if not limited perspective", the "normalisation of artists", suggests suspicion on your part combined with a subtle condescension.

A Space has talked about becoming a "museum without a collection". This does not mean we are aiming for the acquisition of an "important" building, social stature, corporate interface. It implies rather a belief in current art activity as serious, important work, and is a statement of our commitment to professional responsibility and intent. We are preparing for the future: consciously, rather than by coincidence.

Peggy Gale
Executive Director
A Space, Toronto

Centerfold, April/May 1979

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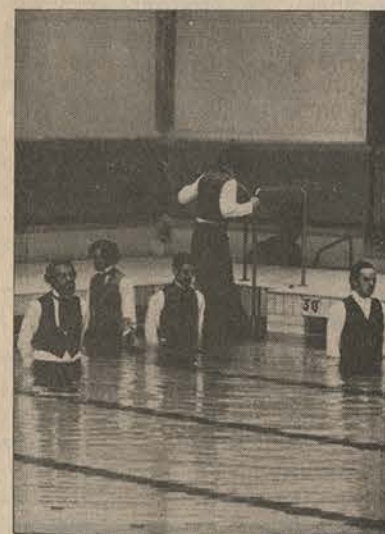


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Editorial

This time around, we are the magazine with the baby on the cover. Infanticide is not a very pretty issue. It is an aspect of human behaviour that has long remained clouded by an ignorance compounded by misinformation. Healthy public discussion on the subject, even in this "Year of the Child", remains steadfastly taboo. The mass media continue to obscure the issue by reporting the murders of infants and young children in the same 'tone' as all other sensational 'newsworthy crime'. This 'tone of newsworthy crime' can be more clearly seen as 'stories that will evoke emotional reactions in the mass society'. The publishers and broadcasters of the popular media see fit to tease the public into emotional involvement because it effectively 'holds' the attention of the mass audience. On the basis of a 'just the facts' rationale, through the seemingly 'objective formula' of the action news report, they deliver these unfortunately true 'horror stories' while wearing the clean white gloves of the well respected press. It is time for these concerned citizens of the media establishment to begin to take the responsibility of looking deeply enough into these incidents of family violence to shed some light onto the darker social ills that plague the society we live in. The information exists. We cannot afford to leave it lying dormant in the academic communities. No matter how hard it is to take, we must begin to see the relationships between family violence and larger social and political issues. While the tendency in this day and age is to 'turn off the bad news', we must struggle to 'read all the news' with greater comprehension.

In the February-March issue of CENTERFOLD, we pointed out the role the popular press of Toronto played in actively distorting the basic questions posed by *The Body Politic* Trial. Can people make public their own 'image-building advertising?', specifically when they find they are being victimised by the slanderous attacks of the all-pervasive public media. Such was the situation as the homosexual community weathered the smear campaign ministered by the popular press and broadcast media following the Emanuel Jaques murder and subsequent trial. In this case, the press had managed to whip up such an oppressive climate of anti-homosexual sentiment that any such aggressive article of counter-propaganda (the now twice-published *Men Loving Boys Loving Men* for instance) would immediately be seen as an attack on public morality. What choice did the editors of *The Body Politic* have? but to 'heat up' their material while the fire of public hate, fanned irresponsibly by the media in control, raged all around them. After all, it was the 'image' of the homosexual that was being twisted by the same media establishment 'responsible' for molding the heterosexual stereotypes our present consumer society is based on. *The Body Politic* had no choice but to publish an article with enough strength to re-shape the homosexual 'image' as they themselves saw it. In this issue of CENTERFOLD, we have included an update of *The Body Politic* story. We feel it is important to display with clarity the procedures of the legal system of the Province of Ontario as its practitioners go about their business of defining immorality as one side of their

larger role of determining the public morality. *The Body Politic* Trial can be seen as a procedural model for any number of future morality trials where the government may focus their corrective legislation on any imaginable societal deviance. As artists, we have been quick to point out these recent judicial activities, as we fear the possibility of similar morality trials leading to the direct legal restriction of our creative work. More importantly, we realise that these public trials influence insensibly our very processes of thought. There is no way around it. Whether or not we are arrested by censorship, we cannot pretend we do not hear the charge.

We think the artist of sound mind will find the Mass Media's distorted amplification of all social conflict a clamor most difficult to sleep through. We also see clearly the necessity to work directly with the media and methodologies best suited to formulate and distribute our developing artistic ideology. The 'traditional' media, though often used ineffectually, have not lost their inherent qualities. Print has not been eliminated by photography, any more than the painter's and sculptor's studio has become the radio and television studio. But why are there no artists in the control room? Is it simply because the age-old model of the truant artist persists in holding us up? How often is this truant artist mixed well with craft to produce the 'gifted individual' redundantly supported by the cultural funding agencies? Do these government agencies expect these wild and predictably bohemian artists to take the money and run? back in time to their hideouts where they live to produce an art pure of the contamination of the confusing external world. What are the odds on these 'fine' artists actually doing something on government money likely to embarrass the party in power? 1000 to 1. Good for the government.

If you are an artist, how ineffectual is your art? Honestly, does your art produce the intended or expected result? Please do not answer by simply claiming your art is a brand new form of high value currency. If you make 'fine' art, do you see yourself working in the Treasury Department? so to speak, with the new money. As such an artist who slaves to produce these new forms of currency may wake up to find the market has closed forever because of something 'personal' he or she has said, may we suggest you learn to master your own affairs? Is your art too sexy to be tolerated by the administrators of public taste? Why do you have to show it to them? Let's face it, we are almost all in the same unhealthy position of depending on the support of one or maybe two sources of so-called 'public money'. Whether provincially or federally kept, as an occupational minority, the artist has never fared very well in terms of public esteem. When the government officials are told to limit their cultural spending, the artist gets it just as anyone on the bottom of any hierarchy gets it. Yet sometimes it appears that these cuts are made to limit the production of certain kinds of art. It appears as though there is a 'class structure' based not on family or money, but on the history of art as the politicians know it.

This 'class structure' determines who gets funded. And unfortunately, for a number of us, this history does not include an art that is based in either the new media or the new methodologies, let alone the developing ideology.

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Our thanks to Ken Gass, Rosemary Donnelly and Miranda for their co-operation.

CENTERFOLD

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Editorial

When the cutbacks come, they won't affect all artists the way they will affect artists not included in this politicians' history book of art. And, of course, if your kind of art is not in the book they covet, then your art is very unlikely to be included in the book they plan to write. As things tighten up more and more, the cultural administrators will cease to supplement their historic knowledge with an up-to-date art and its ideology. The government will stop asking the artist what is happening. They will choose to make all the decisions on the basis of their own information. The jury systems will no longer include artists except on a token level. The government will control rather than support the artist and his or her activities.

This has been happening for some time in England. In this issue of CENTERFOLD, we offer you a look into the near-future of Canada with a multi-faceted report on artists' activities in this year's economically crippled Great Britain. These reports from England may offer some insight into recent decisions to cut back certain activities by artists in Canada. For instance, the direct threats of cutbacks to hit the Music Gallery in Toronto, whether withdrawn or not, may preview the general strategies the administrators of these funding agencies will employ to determine the provincial, national and international cultural policies of Canada as we move into the eighties. It is our future they are working with. For those of us who operate under the assumption we belong in this future, the time has come for developing sound tactical maneuvers for maintaining control of our own activities. If we hope to survive the difficult years to come, we must re-enter the greater society artists have somehow traditionally dissociated themselves from. The first step on the road back to full societal integration is the fundamental realization that we, as artists, inhabit a much larger world with no special status. There's a whole world out there. Watch that first step. It's a long one. ■

Tom Sherman

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Centrifuge

NO JOY AT THE TATE

by David Hockney



The Sunday Observer, London

One of our leading painters talks candidly to MIRIAM GROSS about official British attitudes to modern art

ART is not just a luxury or a self-contained activity. It is their duty and their job. And it seems to me that it is a job which has a profound influence on other aspects of our lives, both in recent years they have been doing rather badly.

Citizen Logic

As we all know, art bureaucracy defines and validates its own bizarre logic, and we are constantly presented examples of this process. We thought that our readers might enjoy a particularly classic recent example of the genre. It seems that a short time ago London's Tate Gallery invited veteran pop artist R.B. Kitaj to become a trustee of that institution. At the last moment that invitation was withdrawn — when it was discovered that Kitaj remained, despite more than 20 years residence, contribution and commitment to the British art scene, an American citizen.

David Hockney, in a penetrating article featured in the prestigious Sunday newspaper *The Observer*, analyses what he maintains is the failure of the Tate to meet its social and cultural obligations both to the public in general and the art community in particular. He demands what are the criteria for defining a "British" subject and reminds us that Handel was undeniably part of British music though never a British subject.

Raising this question in conversation with Tate Director Norman Reid, Hockney reports that he inquired why, if it was a matter of legal nicety that trusteeship of a public institution fell under the

same understandably nationalist-orientated directives as the civil service, did not Norman Reid, as a senior interested cultural bureaucrat, attempt to get the law changed. The mandarin reply, Hockney reports, was simply: "Why don't you do it!"

Import:

Filliou, Beuys & Bailey to Visit

The Canada Council on behalf of the Department of External Affairs recently awarded grants to a number of Canadian cultural organizations for the purpose of hosting distinguished foreign artists. Exact visiting dates can be obtained from the individual organizations. The following list is a selection, namely those granted in Visual Arts, Video and Contemporary Music. Alberta College of Art: Patrick Hughes, U.K., (4 months); Nova Scotia College of Art & Design: Daniel Buren, France, (1 month); Satellite Video Exchange Society, Vancouver: Keigo Yamamoto, Japan (3 months); University of Lethbridge: Hamish Fulton, U.K. (2 months); Western Front, Vancouver: Robert Filliou, France (3 months); A Space, Toronto: Jannis Kounellis, Italy (6 weeks), and Joseph Beuys, Germany (6 weeks); The Music Gallery: Derek Bailey, U.K. (1 month); University of Victoria: Jo Kondo, Japan (4 months).

Export:

Non-stop Ideas

General Idea recently gave a performance and showed tapes at De Appel, Amsterdam; gave a small but effective (sold out) exhibit at Saman-gallery, Genoa; performed for Southern Italian artists at Lucio Amelio's, Naples and returned to change clothes. In May and June they will be back at Sonnabend, Paris; and exhibit at Lucio Amelio's, Naples; a performance in Geneva, Switzerland; performance, video and installation at the Basel Art Fair, a likely performance at the Kunst Museum, Zurich and a possible video production at Ingrid Oppenheim's in Köln.

Arton's Atomizes:

Arton's, Toronto (formerly The Parachute Center for Cultural Affairs, Calgary) recently gained spiritual enlightenment and is giving away its worldly goods? The cold truth of the matter is that Arton's Electronic Publishing, a potential small scale publisher of artist's audio and video cassettes is a born-again believer in the grants cuts. Last year it received a 46% cut in funding from The Canada Council and a total cut-back of 57% Such electronic publishing potential evaporated before it had time to condense. Trinity Video, Toronto — a video access group received Arton's \$16,000 worth of

Centrifuge

video equipment as a voluntary permanent loan. Arton's is also donating its recordings of Performance on video to Western Front Video, Vancouver which has a similar collection for in-house viewing only. Arton's is also donating to Art Metropole, Toronto a 1/2" deck and the artist-object portion of its archives. All announced audio cassette publications have been cancelled though the current catalogue will continue to be distributed. Arton's, the publisher of *Centerfold* magazine wishes to thank all those who invested their time and labour in our past lives.

Cool Hand Luke?

Luke Rombout, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery, and former Chief Administrator of Canada's Art Bank, has been receiving some very unfavourable and untimely press in the midst of a major fund-raising drive slotted to raise \$14 million to build a new VAG in the old Georgia Street Courthouse.

In the March 16-22 edition of Vancouver tabloid *Georgia Straight*, staff reporter Ben Metcalfe penned a scathing critique of the administrative practices of Rombout. Specific incidents provoking this attack include Rombout's overt and gross manipulation of his Staff and perhaps, his Council (board of directors) as well. Rombout, in the role of Director in Control, insists that all Gallery business is his business. On more than a few occasions, Metcalfe says Rombout has threatened to dismiss any member of 'his' Staff found talking Gallery business with any member of 'his' Council.

In mid-February, the VAG Staff Association (a limited organization,

not a true union) decided to exercise their constitutional right to nominate two candidates, Neil Berecny, an amateur, and Peter Malkin, a curator, for the Council elections to be held at the VAG Annual Meeting on March 29. The Staff met, voted, and filed the papers for such nominations. Rombout and Dr. Sheldon Cherry, President of the Council, went to work immediately to prevent such a possible Staff-Council mix. A rush Council meeting was called where the VAG constitution was altered (legally) to prevent such nominations. And Rombout, in virtually a simultaneous move, called a second Staff Association meeting, where he used questionable tactics to pressure a majority of the Staff to vote for their own withdrawal of these unprecedented nominations, secret ballot and all. One of the two ex-nominees, Peter Malkin, continued to remain vocal in protest of the unsavoury and frustrating situation. Metcalfe used Malkin's words to insinuate that Rombout would do anything to get his new \$14 million Gallery in the Courthouse. Of all the accusations directed at Rombout in this seething article, it was Malkin's reported statements (Metcalfe did not quote him, but represented him) that irked Rombout. Here is the quote from Metcalfe's story that actually drew blood. "Rombout responded to Malkin's protest by saying that ethics and morality come second to his own desire for that \$14 million gallery in the courthouse." Rombout demanded a public apology from Malkin, his curator. Malkin refused. On March 29, the Annual Meeting took place. Not a word was uttered about this whole miserable situation. The next morning, Peter Malkin was fired.

This month it's business as usual at the VAG. Staff morale is down in the dumps, but Spring is in the air. The fund-raising effort continues to press the people for at least \$2 million by June, or else there will be no new VAG. So say the two independent Vancouver businessmen in charge of the campaign, Calvert Knudsen, head of Macmillan Bloedel and John Pitts, head of Okanagan Helicopters. During the height of this paper scandal, Pitts told Metcalfe he personally dissociated himself from the Rom-

bout/Cherry strategy. He pleaded, "All I'm trying to do is raise money." Thinking, of course, that an institution like the Vancouver Art Gallery is a *building*, and not the values of the staff and the community they directly serve.



John Sinclair

How do you spell relief?

John Sinclair, revolutionary poet of the late sixties and former Chairman of the White Panther Party of America, has recently turned his attention to a career in commercial advertising. Sinclair, who served nearly two years of a nine year sentence in a U.S. Federal prison (for possession of two sticks of marijuana) also managed the "Motor City 5", a radical rock 'n roll band based in Detroit, Michigan towards the end of the 'hippie movement'. The MC5 embodied the concept of "the guitar army" and their performances served to stir up mass audiences for his 'free speeches' before he was jailed in 1969.

Sinclair has now surfaced as President/Creative Director of Strata Associates of Detroit. On their promotion material he is described as a "modern-day 'Renaissance Man' . . . bringing a wide range of experience and professional expertise to Strata in advertising, public relations, arts and artist management, design, journalism, publishing, production of concerts, clubs, recordings and major events." And now this 'real-life' street performer of yesteryear may be the invisible controller behind today's scene.

This section was compiled and written by Kenneth Coutts-Smith, Clive Robertson and Tom Sherman.



The Georgia Straight, Vancouver

Appeal in acquittal of Body Politic

PAPER SEEKS PUBLIC GRANT



Body Politic plans to rerun kid-sex story



So they're free to print filth

A COURT VICTORY FOR ZANIES

CLAIRE HOY

8 The Toronto Sun, Thursday February 15, 1979

members of the media have wrongly considered the trial to be a decision on such things as homosexuality, homosexual acts, child abuse and abusers, pedophilic acts or pedophiles, obscenity, freedom of the press, the right of TBP to continue to publish and distribute, any offence under Section 159 (Offences tending to Corrupt Morals), any offence under Sections 22 or 422 (Counselling an Offence, and Counselling an Offence not Committed), or many of the attitudes, moralities, and ideologies of certain members of the public. He states that the core question to be decided lies within the meaning of Section 164 of the Code under which the charge was originally made by the Crown. This may seem somewhat overly precise or limiting in some peoples' view (especially the Crown's), but it is an extremely important point in a case such as this to limit the judgement to the specific charge at hand, and come to a decision that helps to protect all Canadians from selective prosecution by the Crown when it (the Crown) feels some activity, subject matter, or ideas will not be accepted by the community. As he says in the Judgement, "I am not prepared to have the Crown use Section 164 as a last refuge in objectionable language cases in the same way it now uses conspiracy charges as a last refuge where the specific wrong doer cannot be pinpointed."

When the trial opened the Crown sought to amend the Information by adding the word "obscene". This motion was not requested until almost a year after the Information was sworn and would have enabled the Crown to bring into play Section 159. (Offences Tending to Corrupt Morals; CORRUPTING MORALS — Idem-Defence of public good — Question of law and question of fact — Motives irrelevant — Ignorance of nature no defence — "Crime comic" — "Obscene".)

In his statement about the lack of Parliamentary definition of the term "immoral", Judge Harris posits, "Since in matters of morality, different times bring different limits of tolerance, I find it impossible to determine as a matter of law what is moral or immoral — and I think that any attempted proscription based on immorality calls into play factors that cannot be determined with legal

Parliament to particularize its definition, 2) that section 164, under which the charge was made, does not really aim itself at situations such as the distribution of a newspaper like *The Body Politic*, and 3) that he could not take lawful action when the Crown's witnesses failed to provide him with sufficient evidence to determine the community standard of acceptance of the publication charged.

His judgement starts off with a clarification of the charge, saying that in events occurring during but extraneous to the trial, many members of the public and especially

The Judgement

'Immorality': an imprecise standard
by Robin Collyer

On February 14, Judge Sydney Harris acquitted Pink Triangle Press, publishers of *The Body Politic* newspaper, and dismissed the charges (using the mails to transmit indecent, immoral, or scurrilous material) against three of its officers, Gerald Hannon, Kenneth Popert, and Ed Jackson. The acquittal was an extremely important step in the testing of limits of public expression in Canada. In a strong 45 page judgement Harris used a combination of three approaches to dissolve the charges: 1) an inability to convict anyone charged with something 'immoral' because of the failure of

precision in the absence of a legislated definition of what Parliament intended. There is no definition of interpretation of the word 'immoral' in the Statute. . . . for no one can be expected to govern his conduct, (particularly if the result may be criminal charges) according to such an imprecise standard . . . whatever else it may be, Exhibit no. 1 (Dec. 77-Jan. 78 issue of *The Body Politic*) cannot be legally immoral."

The third main area of reasoning by Judge Harris was insufficient evidence to determine a "Community Standard of Acceptance" or "Limits of Community Tolerance" (even from the evidence of 'Expert' witnesses of the Crown and Defense). "This is a criminal case — the onus of proof is on the Crown, and the Crown would have to satisfy me by evidence beyond a reasonable doubt, that on a community standards test, Exhibit no. 1, as a whole, is either indecent, immoral or scurrilous." He lists all the 'expert' witnesses and deals with each separately, concluding that they were helpful primarily in general education of the court about homosexuality, pedophilia, theology, the craft of journalism, and literary criticism but not helpful on the issue of a community standard. "Professors, journalists, a police officer, psychiatrists, psychologists and ministers of some religions are not representative of the community has a whole, and even so, they all differed in varying degrees and ways . . . there was no real agreement as to the morality or the immorality, the decency or indecency, the scurrility or otherwise of the article as a whole, including its preface, nor of Exhibit no. 1 as a whole." In his final comment, Judge Harris continued to exhibit the fair-mindedness that presided over the trial, stating, "As a person, I am appalled and disgusted by the acts of Simon, Peter and the others (the men discussed in the Article) — but my feelings are subjective — and as a Judge, I must judge with objectivity and with concern for the right of free discussion and dissemination of ideas. Unless there be a clear incitement to unlawful action. Such a clear incitement I cannot find in Exhibit no. 1 — I find it rather to be a plea for understanding addressed to the willing and limited audience of the subscriber to *The Body Politic*."

On March 6, 1979, the Crown officially announced an appeal against the decision of Judge Sydney Harris. Within a few days Sgt. Mike Jennings (of the Operation 'P' Squad) delivered the following notice of appeal to the three defendants.

The following are the Grounds of Appeal:

- (1) That the learned trial Judge erred in law in holding that in order to convict he must find that the whole of the December 1977-January 1978 issue of the *Body Politic* Journal was indecent, immoral or scurrilous matter, and not just a part of it;
 - (2) That the learned trial Judge erred in law in applying the test of community tolerance;
 - (3) That the learned trial Judge erred in holding that "expert evidence" was of no assistance in determining the "limits of community tolerance" and that in the absence of public opinion surveys he was left with no real assistance in this branch of the case;
 - (4) That the learned trial Judge erred in law in restricting the application of Section 164 of the Criminal Code to certain classes of offenders;
 - (5) That the learned trial Judge erred in law in holding that in order to come within the purview of section 164 the matter must be capable of causing clear incitement to unlawful action;
 - (6) That the learned trial Judge erred in law in refusing to interpret the term immoral in Section 164 of the Criminal Code;
 - (7) That the learned trial Judge erred in law in interpreting the terms indecent and scurrilous;
 - (8) That the learned trial Judge erred in finding that the publication in question had not been proven to be indecent beyond a reasonable doubt in view of his findings that the publication was shocking and offensive to the community, and disgusting, upsetting, distasteful, sickening, unsettling, and appalling.
 - (9) Such further and other grounds as Counsel may advise and as this Honourable Court may permit.
- The relief sought is that the Appeal Court set aside the Order dismissing the Information, enter a verdict of guilty, and upon hearing representations, pass a sentence that is warranted in law; or, in the alternative, set aside the Order dismissing the Information and order a new trial.

The nature of an appeal is totally different from a trial. The proceedings will be heard by a different Magistrate. No new evidence can be presented by either the Defense of the Crown; only evidence that was heard in the original trial is admissible to the Court in an appeal. The onus of proof is still on the Crown, this time to establish that "the learned Judge" erred in his ruling. Looking at the Appeal, it seems that the Crown is still counting heavily on Section 164 of the Criminal Code, to reverse the acquittal of *The Body Politic*. The appeal will probably go to court in the fall. There are three possible outcomes to this appeal: 1) the judgement will be found by the new magistrate to be correct and within the law, in his opinion, and the verdict of acquittal will stand, 2) the judgement will be found to be totally in error, considering the evidence, the verdict reversed, and *The Body Politic* found guilty, or 3) the new magistrate will feel the judgement to be questionable to such an extent

that a new trial will be ordered. Although technically, any of these three could be seen to be equally possible outcomes, no. 3 seems to have taken the lead out of the starting gate. According to reliable sources, when *The Body Politic* Defense Counsel, Clayton Ruby, went to the police requesting that the material seized from the TBP office during the original raid (subscription lists, books, private papers and other unrelated material) be returned to his clients, he was told no; the police said they were saving the material for the new trial. We can only speculate on the sources for this confident statement. The possibility of a second fair trial is also speculation at this time. However we can be assured of one thing: the right of all "marginal" publications to print material that might possibly contravene some unknown, undefined public standard is still very much in question. And the subscription list of *The Body Politic* is still in the hands of the police.

—Lisa Steele

WOMEN AND INFANTICIDE



A STUDY BY LISA STEELE

photo: Robin Collyer

This is The Year of the Child. Within this framework we have heard children referred to as "our most valuable resource", "a precious commodity", as if children were some untapped Athabasca tar sands. It would be more accurate to admit that it is the idea of "youth" that we value and hold dear, not children themselves and certainly not the children of the poor. Within the middle class, children are a privilege; a choice to be considered with all the personal, psychological and economic effects weighed. Women living in a marginal economic situation, poor women, do not have that luxury. It is not just a question of the availability of birth control and abortion to them. It is also a question of currency. Children are the currency of women — especially women who do not have the educational or economic resources of society available to them: women living on public assistance, women

working at low paying jobs, filling in the untidy corners of the job market, working where no one else will work and doing it for less money than others. For these women, reproduction is production. It is a way of entering the "main stream" of the society, of making a contribution that is denied to them in the marketplace. This desire to reproduce must not be degraded or trivialized. It is no less admirable than the desire of the middle class to reproduce. If the outcome is less acceptable: if baby doesn't have her own room let alone her own library of Children's Classics to expand her young and curious mind, it should not be seen as bad planning on the part of her mother. It has to be seen for what it is: that the failure is not the failure of an individual, but rather the failure of a society to provide a climate, primarily economic but also social, where women are not subordinate to men, and where all members of that society have an equal access to the resources of the society.

We have to admit our prejudices: the unsuccessful are outcasts and their children are worse in our eyes. The class system reproduces itself along class lines; that is, no matter what the hope of the mother and father that their child will have a better life than they, the chances of this happening are unlikely if the child is born into poverty and a marginal existence. "Upward mobility" is only a realizable ideal within the middle class, and even then only moderately. Poverty does not happen overnight, or in one generation. Poverty is the result of the unequal distribution of the society's resources among its members for generations. And as long as we sanction this inequality, we will continue to be horrified by problems we identify as "social" — problems such as child abuse and infanticide. And we will continue to lay these problems with the individual and punish these individuals in the name of alleviating the problem. We must recognize that professionals create new categories of concern in order to create new jobs for themselves. Within this process a public education does occur and this is helpful; also there definitely is some relief of the suffering of individuals and this has to be seen as

"... infanticide, as it has manifested in the last 200 to 250 years is a direct result of the economic exploitation of the poor in general, women in general and women who are poor in spectacular particularity."

good. But overall causes have to be examined, even if this is more depressing and larger in outlook than most of us want to attack. Our society must be re-structured. Jobs, wages, housing, education and opportunities have to be distributed equally among us all. And women can no longer be subordinated, kept in dependent roles either within the family or within the economic world. Without these changes, we will continue to respond in isolated, alienated ways to problems we see as "social".

Infanticide is the only crime in which women are the major perpetrators.^{1,2} To view infanticide as a "sick" response of a "sick" individual is to miss the point, because infanticide, as it has manifested in the last 200 to 250 years is a direct result of the economic exploitation of the poor in general, women in general, and women who are poor in spectacular particularity.

EQUAL PAY? NOT YET.

Are women more "poor" than men? Judge for yourself. Working women for instance: According to the U.S. Labor Department's Women's Bureau, in 1955 the average pay for women was 63 per cent of the average pay for men. But by 1977, the average working woman's pay had dropped to only 58 per cent of what the average male was earning.³ Similar figures are available for Canada and most of Europe. No doubt the disparity is even greater in economies where the education of women is still a questionable practice, thereby eliminating most women from higher paying jobs. The surprise of these figures is that this drop in average wages as compared to men's salaries coincided with the rise of the Women's Movement and its attendant agitation for more jobs and equal pay. It is likely that more women have entered the working force in the last 20 years, but they have entered at the bottom of the wage scale and are more likely to stay there. Equal pay and advancement are not yet realities for most women.

What about families living on public assistance? According to the Family Benefits Work Group,⁴ a Toronto-based coalition, a woman

living in Toronto with two children who receives Family Benefits (Mother's Allowance) can expect a yearly income of \$5,248.32. Statistics Canada's 1976 Poverty Line figure for that same family, a mother with two children, is \$7,613.00. This means that the provincial government is providing an income for this family that is more than \$2,300.00 a year below the national government's recognized bottom-line definition of poverty. Below poverty.

Of course, the government here in Ontario has graciously conceded that a woman who receives Mother's Allowance can supplement her income — to the tune of \$100 a month, perhaps by babysitting in her home or some other part-time employment. 12 x \$100 brings this woman with two kids at least within shouting distance of the Statistics Canada Poverty Line. Not quite there, but closer. However, any income over the prescribed \$100 a month is thereafter taxable at the unbelievable rate of 75 per cent — that is for every \$1.00 over the \$100 monthly allowable extra income a woman might earn, the government takes 75 cents. That is a higher taxation rate than any corporate executive will ever be subject to in this country. So much for providing incentives to work. It should also be mentioned that recipients of Family Benefits will be getting a 6 per cent increase in their benefits this year. This announcement came shortly before an announcement by the federal government that food prices had risen 22% in 1978. Inflation takes on a different meaning in a family with no frills to eliminate.

But what do these figures have to do with infanticide? Surely all women whether they are working or on welfare don't kill their children? No, they don't. Only a tiny percentage of parents seriously harm or kill their children, but the correlation of children who are seriously hurt or killed by their own parents with the serious economic stress those families live in is well documented.^{5,6,7} To call infanticide a personal response of an individual psychosis, an isolated anti-social act, by definition occurring outside the social order is to again miss the point.

WOMEN AND INFANTICIDE

The difficulty in looking at infanticide is that, when the actual act is considered, it is the act of an individual: a parent, usually the mother of the child, causes the child to die either directly and wilfully by violence, or indirectly by neglect or criminal negligence, such as leaving a child unattended in a house that catches fire and burns, killing the child.

LIBERATION OR NEGLECT?

Somehow it is easier for us to relate neglect, and the subsequent death of a child to economic causes. It is more obvious. It should also be obvious that neglect is a relative term. What is "liberation" in a middle-class home may be classified "neglect" in a poor home. Those living on public assistance are held to a stricter moral code than their more independent counterparts. With divorce almost as common as marriage, a middle class woman is urged to establish "new relationships" after her marriage breaks up. A woman living on Mother's Allowance who does this will be cut off her welfare benefits, taken to court, fined a substantial amount of money, possibly put in jail, and she can also be evicted from her house or apartment if she is living in public housing. So much for "liberation". Economically, a woman living on public assistance doesn't have much leeway either. Living on welfare with children to support means being a good manager of your money — a good manager with lots of self-control. Any impulsive "splurge" will not mean just cutting back on treats for next week; there may well not be enough food at the end of the month before the next check comes. And children need to eat. Likewise, getting out of the house is a problem for a woman living on a marginal income. Whether she needs to get out for practical reasons, like grocery shopping or a doctor's appointment, or for entertainment and relief from the responsibilities of childcare, a mother who is poor is more open to the charge of "neglect" if she leaves her house than is a middle class mother. The most obvious reason being that a woman with a sufficient income can probably afford to hire a babysitter. But even if she chooses

to leave her child unattended, a middle class mother probably lives in a safer neighborhood, in more adequate, less dangerous housing — a house less likely to catch fire and more likely to have screens on the windows — a safer place to raise a child. For people with limited incomes, "safety" and "neighborhoods" are choices of luxury not available to them. Housing is a question of what they can get for the least amount of money.

But if neglect is understandably linked to economic deprivation, I would suggest that so is the harsher, more brutal nature of child abuse — the actual physical injury of infants and children sometimes to the point of death. I offer this not by way of excuse but more to establish a cause underlying this seemingly inexplicable fact — those who have given us life, our parents, are most likely to take that life away when we are least capable of defending ourselves, when we are children. The complete helplessness of human infants and the long, protracted dependency of childhood makes infants and children vulnerable to physical force and violence. Most of this violence occurs in families where one or both parents have experienced beatings when they were children themselves and in families living in either a temporary or, more likely, a chronic state of material deprivation — that is, poverty. These two circumstances, either separately or in combination, occur in an overwhelming percentage of the cases of child abuse that result in severe injury or death to the child.^{6,8} Sadism and outright psychosis do not. Neither does altruism, which is sometimes given as a "cause" for infanticide. Infanticide does not proceed from an excessive love or caring for one's child — it is a disturbance. And sometimes that disturbance is within the survival instinct of the adult. Infanticide is high during times of war and famine.⁹ We can understand this; somehow it seems reasonable. But we

should be aware that this is not parents killing children to save them from suffering. It is usually the killing of newborn infants for whom there isn't enough food and the starvation of selected children, usually the youngest in the family so that the older children and the adults can survive. But what is the disturbance that is occurring in this culture, (here I am talking about North America and Europe) that continues to make infanticide a major cause of death among infants and small children. Says Urie Bronfenbrenner, professor of child development at Cornell University, "Infanticide in North America has been increasing since 1957. Infant homicides accounted for 3.1% of total homicides in 1964, but the rate of 5.4 deaths per 100,000 was higher than that for all persons 55 and over. The 74% increase from 2.2% in 1957 placed infanticide in 1964 at the highest record level since 1945."¹⁰ Since our culture is neither engaged in a war nor enduring a famine, this figure is hard to understand. In reading about family violence in general, I came across a curious fact in several different sources:

"In this country (England) murder is overwhelmingly a domestic crime in which men kill their wives and (then) their children (in that order of frequency) and women kill their children."¹¹

A Harvard University study found that, "The total sample of 148 murder-suicide offenders included 53 mothers who killed their children under sixteen, 62 men who killed their wives . . . 15 men who killed their children and in some instances their wives as well, and 3 women who killed a husband or lover."¹²

An earlier study done in France: "J. Delay writes that infanticide appears to be the commonest expression of pathological aggressiveness in women, but is rare in men, where infanticide is generally accompanied by murder of the wife and is seldom accompanied by attempted suicide. Delay quotes Naacke's work comprising 161 'family' murders, perpetrated by men with homicide of their wives in 66% of the cases, of a child in 6.4% and of their wives and children in 6.4%; whereas

women, in 76.5% of the cases killed the child and in only 6% of the cases, the husband."¹³

MARRIAGE AS OWNERSHIP.

There is cross-cultural persistence in these findings: in family murders, men are most likely to kill their wives, and women to kill their children. But, I do not think for a moment that this is a "kick the dog" causal relationship — that family violence flows downward from man to woman to child, balancing neatly into an equal equation. Men murder their wives because they believe there is an ownership clause in a marriage license. In murdering their wives, men are exercising their patriarchal control within the close biological system of the family. Although poverty and the stress of deprivation no doubt contribute in a large number of these murders, statistics suggest that there is indeed a "classlessness" about wife-beating and the murder of wives by husbands.¹⁴ This is to say, that crime of all kinds is more common in the lower socioeconomic class, but this particular crime shows up more democratically distributed throughout class strata. The rich and the middle class do it too. This is not the case with child abuse, particularly when the abuse seriously injures or kills the child. I am suggesting that the causes for violence between husbands and wives, mostly directed toward the wife, and violence of parents toward their children is of a different origin. The subordination of women within the society makes them targets for the violence of their husbands, no matter what economic class they are in. This subordination is both psychological and economic. Therefore any consideration of Feminism must contain a reevaluation of the class system as it exists now and has for hundreds of years. Economic redistribution needs to take place not only along class lines but equally along sex lines. If all members of the social body were able to realize their potential economically as well as socially, women as well as men, there is reason to believe that there would be a dramatic drop in the domestic violence rate.

(Within this general context of "family violence" another statistical

finding is noteworthy: Sociologists have defined victim-precipitated homicides as those in which the victim is the first to produce a weapon or resort to violence in a conflict that leads to a killing. Using this as a definition, 85% of victim-precipitated murders between spouses involve a wife killing her husband; whereas in non-victim-precipitated murders between spouses, 72% involve a husband killing his wife. Thus, in victim-precipitated homicides, husbands are much more likely to provoke their wives by use of force and themselves end up the fatality. This should be kept in mind when reading the current popular press clippings about "battered husbands". In light of this statistic,¹⁵ the issue appears to be a true red herring.)

Early in 1977 a local Los Angeles television station presented a program on child abuse. There was the now-familiar but still shocking, sickening catalogue of beating, intentional burns inflicted on toddlers, drownings from neglect, children starved and locked in closets for weeks — all detailed by doctors and social workers, those representatives of the social body who have first-hand contact with these small victims. The program was well-presented and clear and a good illustration of how "child abuse" has become a public issue.

These professionals who have exposed the effects of parents' violence to an initially disbelieving public were motivated, at least in part, by a genuine humanist outrage at the pain and suffering inflicted on society's most vulnerable group — those too young and small to defend themselves. Child abuse is a volatile and emotional issue capable of raising the righteous indignation of most citizens, once they have seen the effects. Presenting these effects and channelling this indignation has been a problem for those concerned with child abuse and the killing of children. For some reason, most of the people of North America and Europe, when presented with — the "Battered Child Syndrome" — chose to ignore the reality of children being injured by their own parents. It simply wasn't happening, they said. And if it was happening, it was definitely happening to someone else — not in

"Men murder their wives because they believe there is an ownership clause in a marriage license. In murdering their wives, men are exercising their patriarchal control within the close biological system of the family."

their neighborhoods. A look at the bibliography of literature on child abuse reveals a 6 year gap between Dr. C.H. Kempe's identification of the Battered Child Syndrome (1962)¹⁶ and the first article to appear in a popular magazine, an article in *Newsweek* called "The Battered Child" (1968).¹⁷ This 6 year period saw numerous articles published in medical journals about the phenomenon, but little general media coverage other than the occasional sensational photo spread in *The National Enquirer*. It is interesting to note that after several lurid so-called 'photo essays' in *The National Enquirer* — usually consisting of pictures of bruised infants, a black band across their eyes, always seriously injured, sometimes dead — that same paper ran a survey about child abuse. The resulting answers from the readers of *The National Enquirer* were published in an article entitled "Average Americans Tell What Should Be Done to Parents Who Beat Their Children," (1970)¹⁸. The 'average Americans' were an uncharitable lot, even considering them to be readers of *The National Enquirer* and not the *New York Review of Books*, their answers were harsh and Islamic: parents who beat their children should be either tortured, jailed indefinitely, put in solitary confinement, or killed, but always, definitely, they should have their children taken away forever.

THE BATTERED BODIES

These answers confirmed what doctors and researchers working in the field of violence toward children already knew: that simply showing people the effects of the violence — the battered bodies — was the wrong tactic if the public was going to be educated as to the extent of the problem and also be supportive of agencies created to label, service, store and rehabilitate this deviant segment of the population, the abusing parents and their injured children. It should be remembered that these doctors and researchers were of course going to be available to staff the new agencies they were proposing. That is what I meant when I suggested that humanist outrage was only part of the motivation for bringing the issue of child abuse to

WOMEN AND INFANTICIDE

the public: the other part was professionalism and job creation. A problem that is exposed and defined by professionals, to the media, then has to be administrated and serviced; thus creating a need for the specialized services of medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, researchers in sociology, social workers and all of the attendant administrators. But first you have to create the need. And this cannot be done by simply showing the physical damage. Looking at a beaten child is horrible. Without other information, the viewer will probably conclude the person performing this outrage to be 'bad'. And only other people can be 'bad'; however anyone can be 'sick'. It is this transition from 'bad' to 'sick' that the practitioners need to accomplish. This can be done by easing the perceived 'problem' out of the lower socio-economic class (where people who deviate from the normal behaviour and in need of punishment are seen to be 'bad') into the middle class (where the people with the same deviations are more likely to be seen as 'sick' and in need of treatment.) But in doing this the professional and public media have put forward a distorted belief: the belief that both child abuse and neglect are equally distributed throughout the whole society, suggesting that their frequency and severity are unrelated to socio-economic class. Essentially saying that it could happen to anyone — much like influenza. Statistics and studies of child abuse do not support this position.

The television program broadcast in Los Angeles that I mentioned before is a good example of how this distortion is carried out and possibly why, in the face of contradictory facts, this half-truth continues to be put forward. We pick up the program in progress, after the professionals have catalogued the physical horrors of the "beaten child". Next a representative of a local self-help group for abusing parents was interviewed. His group is similar in purpose to Parents Anonymous. When asked to give a profile of an abusing parent, he sketched a composite Citizen of the World — a black-white-rich-poor-white collar-blue collar- happens-in-any-neighborhood kind of person. He concluded by looking into the

camera and saying, "Anyone can be an abusing parent." And of course he's right — in a way. Child abuse and neglect do occur in all classes of society. But to imply a democratic distribution throughout the society, existing *outside* of economic realities, is to ignore the evidence.

In every study of the subject done in North America a strong statistical relationship between poverty and child abuse and neglect is drawn. The American Humane Association's 1976 data based on 19,923 validated reports made to central registries of child abuse turned up these figures:

49.6% of the families had incomes under \$5,000. 65.4% were under \$7,000. 42% were receiving public assistance at the time of the report. Only 14.9% had incomes of \$11,000 or over and only 9% of the families had incomes of \$13,000 or above. The median family income of the whole sampling was \$5,051 (which is the 1976 poverty level for a family of 4), as compared with the \$13,900 mean income for all American families in 1976.⁵

In Leontine Young's book *Wednesday's Children*, 300 families with abuse history were studied. In her sample only 10.7% of the families "were financially comfortable and able to meet their physical needs." Few of the families lived in adequate housing: "Poorly heated, vermin-ridden, much of the housing was a hazard to health."⁷

And Delay's 1957 study concluded that infanticide occurs most frequently under difficult circumstances caused by financial worry, the unemployment of the breadwinner and poor housing.¹³

POVERTY AND INFANTICIDE

This relation between infanticide and poverty is important because it counters the "public scrutiny" argument offered by those who maintain that child abuse is a problem that knows no class. According

to this argument, the lower classes are more likely to turn up in these statistics because of greater public scrutiny of their lives. While there is no doubt a greater involvement of the poor with social agencies and hence public scrutiny, it cannot account for the overwhelming correlation of low economic status with infanticide. As David Kaplun and Robert Reich found in a study done in New York City in 1968 involving 112 children who had been murdered (over two-thirds by a parent), "Most of the families (70%) lived in areas of severe poverty and almost all were known to the city's public welfare agency."¹

And David Gil (1970) found that injuries of children were more likely to be serious or fatal among families whose annual income was below \$3,500.⁶

These figures could not be any clearer. No matter how "under-reported" abuse and neglect are in the middle and upper classes, severe injury and death of their children could never be hidden to the extent that discovery would bring these figures into a true democratic distribution across all economic class lines. The evidence sits too heavily on the lower end of the socio-economic scale.

So if the evidence is this clear, why does the media continue to put forward the myth that child abuse occurs *without* regard to economic status and is proportionately present in all classes? A look at the conclusion of the Los Angeles television program may give some indication. We pick up the show after the statement, "Anyone can be an abusing parent," has been delivered. The scene changes to a park. A young woman is sitting on the ground under a tree. She is of ordinary appearance. A voice-over tells the viewer that about 3 years ago this young woman killed her child, a 3 1/2 year old boy, by beating him. She speaks:

"He came into the room and he'd messed himself and I hit him, a couple of times, hard. Just slapped him and then he started to cry and cry and I just kept hitting him, only with my fist and then both fists. And I know he was trying to get away from me and he was on the bed and I was hitting him. I just kept

doing it. He fell off onto the floor and I kept hitting him. I guess I was mad but I just couldn't stop. Then when I did stop I could see he was dead and I felt so bad. I remember he said, 'Why are you doing this' and I remember hitting him."

The effect on the viewer is extraordinary. As she speaks, we search her face for tell-tale signs of abnormality — excessive in-breeding, mental deficiency, 'badness' — anything would do. But it isn't there; only an overwhelming ordinariness. Her voice is flat and emotionless. We see her in an ambivalent natural setting. There is a passing reference to the fact that she was a single parent at the time of the murder, but no other demographic information. We do not see her in her home, at the scene of the crime. There are no clues, visual or otherwise, to place her in a socio-economic class. There is no reference to possible stress, economic or otherwise, she might have been suffering under at that time. Just an isolated individual who raged out of control for a few moments and the result was death to her child. Infanticide.

Possible causes for this particular act of violence can only be inferred by the viewer in remembering back to the beginning of the TV program. Here doctors and social workers laid out not only the physical effects of child abuse and neglect, but also speculated on the reasons for it. By far the most prevalent causes in their analyses, were psychological ones — the failure of people to be 'nurturing', the parents' need to be 'mothered' themselves, treating the child like a plaything and rejecting him when he made demands. Poverty along with a lack of education were mentioned as causative factors in child abuse but mostly in connection with neglect. No mention was made of physical deprivation over a period of years, unsafe, inadequate housing, or an almost total lack of educational and employment opportunities — conditions that many people experience daily from birth until death, as possible stress factors contributing to the abuse of children by their own parents. Only individual psychological inadequacies aided and abetted by "our violent society" are given the implied responsibility for the

"So if the evidence is this clear, why does the media continue to put forward the myth that child abuse occurs without regard to economic status and is proportionately present in all classes?"

death of this child.

Thus we view the young infanticidal mother on the television screen with a combination of guilt (since we are all potential collaborators in this crime or a similar one, at least according to the previous speaker) and regret (for the child who died, the mother who killed and ourselves for having to hear about it). As viewers we are emotionally mobilized and yet powerless to act — that is, we feel anxious. I would suggest that is what was intended by the producers of this program on child abuse and is also intended by the general and medical media in their presentation of this issue. They want us to be both educated and made anxious by the information being put out. Because, in order to get funding for research into social issues, the issues have to first be defined as "problems" but very specific kinds of problems — that is, ones that can be solved, usually by the application of professional expertise and management. Poverty on the other hand can only be solved by a restructuring of the entire economic distribution system. So the media and the professionals have continued to put forward the myth of "classlessness" when talking about child abuse and the killing of children. It is a way of involving the middle class, those with personal guilt and heart-felt humanist concern, in an issue that they might otherwise have felt alienated from at first exposure. "It could happen to you" is a powerful mover, psychologically and socially, to any group of people who have the luxury of time for self-reflection. And of course this has not been an entirely wasted effort.

IN THE NAME OF LOVE

For example, the issue of wife-beating has brought to public attention the role of women within the family and hence the society. Wife-beating as an act clearly illustrates women in an owned and occupied territory — not just an attitude but a physical reality. By being such a clear illustration, 'wife-beating' as a defined problem has allowed women to mobilize and direct a challenge at the heart of the society — the family and its hierarchy. In the process of this challenge, a more diffused public education about the issue

has occurred and the individual suffering of many women has been relieved at least temporarily. This is progress of a sort. Likewise the issue of child abuse, especially as it has been defined to the middle class, has exposed the violence that we all direct toward children in the name of discipline. No one would dispute that parents do not have the right to kill their children; but only recently has it been suggested that parents also do not have the right to exercise rigid authoritarian control over the lives of children, enforcing this control physically and psychologically. The most frequently occurring form of child abuse in any class of society is the discipline ministered in the name of love: the slapping, yanking, merciless scolding, screaming, threatening, pushing and shoving of children that forms the collective experience of 'growing up'. Recognizing and challenging this authoritarian streak in ourselves has been an important function of the move to expose child abuse and neglect.

But why the persistence of the finding that serious injury and death are more likely to occur in combination with economic deprivation? Parenthood presents problems no matter how much or how little money you have. The little bundle of joy is also a bundle of responsibilities. Being unable to provide physically for a child puts a parent under strain. People living on a marginal income have very few resources to fall back on. They are more likely to be physically ill, less likely to live in adequate housing, their children are less likely to be well fed let alone well educated. They are more likely to drop out of school, they are more likely to be unemployed, and less likely to have a close family to support them emotionally or physically in times of crisis. Calling child abuse an *individual* problem means that these equally serious and crippling problems of childhood can be ignored and the unequal distribution of the social and economic resources in society can continue to be masked. As 'child abuse' is packaged for the social services market, public awareness increases, and the appearance of an 'epidemic' is introduced. Writing in 1938, Tannenbaum said: "Societal reactions to deviance can be characterized as a kind of 'dramati-

WOMEN AND INFANTICIDE

zation of evil' such that a person's deviance is made a public issue. The stronger the reaction to the evil, the more it seems to grow. The reaction itself seems to generate the very thing it sought to eliminate."¹⁹

Thus the 'epidemic' is created — an epidemic of monstrosity. One that entails mass confessions, individual atonement, selective punishment and generalized 'help' in the form of social agencies created to administer the assistance. The danger is that the public view of the problem will follow the plotted curve of a fad: a starting point of relative low-awareness, the sudden mushrooming of interest and subsequent knowledge resulting in a disproportionate bulge in the curve followed by a rapid dropping off of interest — the market of 'concern' has been saturated. Then the 'issue' will be left with whatever institutions that have been set up to administer the help, but public interest will have passed on to some new problem. If during the 'fad' the real causes were not brought forward, there is a good chance they will remain hidden and masked forever. That is why it is important to look at the statistics of child abuse and the killing of children now while public interest in the 'problem' is high.

MYSTERIOUS X-RAYS.

A look at the history of child abuse research provides a good illustration of this 'curve of interest'. In 1962, Dr. C.H. Kempe 'discovered' child abuse.¹⁶ I say this facetiously, because of course he didn't discover it, child abuse and murder have been going on for centuries in most cultures. What he did was to label it for the modern citizen — in 1962 Dr. Kempe and his associates published a paper on "The Battered Child Syndrome" in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. In this paper he tells doctors how to recognize battered children through a combination of case studies and x-ray reports. But the first medical reports of x-rays of small children which revealed healed fractures and other apparently unexplainable lesions had been published 75 years earlier.²⁰ Over half a century, 1888-1946, passed before these mysterious x-ray pictures were interpreted as resulting from repeated in-

jury to the children (causes of the injury still unknown) and not a rare and exotic form of disease as had been proposed. The next 15 years, 1947-1962, saw the mounting evidence that the repeated injury done to children that was showing up on x-rays was in fact being inflicted by their own parents and Kempe's term 'The Battered Child Syndrome' became public.

The surprise in this chronology is how long it took before the medical profession put the puzzle together. Consider the title of one of the first 'mysterious' x-ray articles, "Acute Periosteal Swelling in Several Young Infants of the Same Family" (1888, London).²⁰ Periosteal swelling results from untreated fractures, usually of the long bones, that don't heal properly, causing infection and inflammation of the periosteum, the tissue covering bones. Now periosteal swelling or the detection of any untreated, healed fractures in x-rays of infants or small children is considered to be sufficient evidence for the doctor to label the child a Battered Child. What about the "several young infants of the same family" who were the subject of Dr. West's paper in 1888? What kept him from diagnosing their problems as injuries suffered during beatings? Was child beating an unheard-of occurrence in Victorian England?

Not if we read Dickens as an accurate social reporter rather than a quaint novelist with a hit Broadway musical to his name.²¹ And not if we consider that poverty was widespread and child-labour rampant; so rampant that it was a cause of much concern among the middle class reformers of the period. But this concern took on the evangelical tone of the Victorian middle class which dictated production to be for the good of the state, i.e. Capitalism as a natural law, and the Family to be the sacred bulwark on which this production could depend. Of course production and industrialization could depend upon the Family, es-

pecially the working-class family and the poor. Everyone was reproducing dutifully. Infant mortality rates were finally dropping at the turn of the century and the workers were available in necessary numbers. Big wheel keep on turnin'.

If however, the poor saw fit to beat, maim and murder one another, it was seen at the time to be a reflection of their moral character, or rather their lack of it, and never as a consequence of the overwhelming degradation in which they lived, the over-crowded, dirty, unsafe housing, the long hours spent in factories and the inhuman working conditions. That is, the problem of family violence was seen as an individual weakness and not as a consequence of an economic system built upon the exploitation of cheap labor, women and children being the cheapest of the cheap labor force. Sally Alexander writes in her essay "Women's Work in 19th Century London": "Both evangelicalism and political economy attributed the sufferings of the poor to their own moral pollution. Their viciousness was variously ascribed to drink, licentiousness, idleness and all manner of vice and depravity, for which religion, temperance, thrift, cleanliness, industriousness and self-help were advocated as the most potent remedies."²² Today these same remedies for "viciousness" are still advocated, along with liberal (in both senses) doses of individual psychological diagnoses.

So if Dr. West didn't suspect that his young patients were being beaten, it wasn't because beating was an unknown. It was more because child beating had not defined itself as a 'problem' yet, whereas 'disease' had. Pasteur had made a very big name for himself with germs and it was a large field to cover. If doctors continued to look at these fractures of children's bones as possibly resulting from an exotic childhood disease, it was understandable in a way. Disease represented a threat to children's lives and any research was valuable. We also can't overlook the particular 'curve of interest' within the medical profession at that time, especially in research. And disease was a fad then. Discover a new one and it might be named after you. The social services were not a

prestigious field during the first half of the 20th century. But that is changing. Now the social service agencies are on the rise. Now there is an elegant web of legal, medical and welfare professionals surrounding each 'client'. The major function of these professionals is to record data, much of it overlapping, about this 'client'. But at times of crisis, the 'client' has a way of falling through this web, of acting alone, without outside resources. Sometimes a crime is committed. Sometimes this crime is infanticide.

THE SCAPEGOAT

In Canada it is estimated that 150 children are killed by a parent each year.²³ Most cases involve the mother killing the child. As I suggested earlier, the violence of a husband against a wife is of different origin than the violence of a parent (mother) toward a child. Whereas the former is a result of the misguided sense of ownership of wife by husband, the latter is a result of a very real sense of responsibility felt by the parent, not only toward the child but also a responsibility toward authority in general. Infanticide as practiced by women is almost always the act of a woman in isolation. In the society as it exists now, women are in a subordinate position. Women who are poor and have children are many times more subordinate to the power structure than just women in general. They are at the bottom of the economic scale and yet their children have exactly the same needs as any child: they

need to be fed, clothed, kept warm, kept safe, loved and cuddled. Generally it is the mother's responsibility to do all of this. If she is on public assistance, if she is alone and working, if she is managing the home while her husband works, or if she and her husband are both working, it is still the general rule that a woman does most of the child care. The responsibilities of caring for one child or for several children are awesome and yet women do it every day, sometimes by choice, mostly by necessity. And yet, only a tiny, tiny percentage ever kill a child. What makes a woman infanticidal? Poverty and deprivation certainly, but I would also suggest that the social body itself plays a direct role in this continuing statistic of women and infanticide by continuing to place women in a subordinate economic and social position while delegating more and more responsibilities for the care of the society's children to the individual woman, locking her even more tightly within the hierarchy of the nuclear family. If a woman with few personal resources, a woman who is poor, with no personal support system to rely on, a woman rendered passive from years of dealing with institutionalized 'helping' agencies — if this woman kills her child it is both a personal breakdown and a crack in the society. As the society exists now, it is the personal breakdown that is administered to; the woman is either jailed (punished) or institutionalized (helped). Either way she is the scape-

goat. The society is able to recoil in horror at the unspeakable act and shortly after to feel absolved. Balance is restored; a sore has festered, broken, and healing seems possible. In the course of the public inquiry, either new institutions and recording-registries will be recommended or existing ones will be reprimanded for incompetence. (Interestingly, the agencies reprimanded are usually those staffed primarily by women, i.e. The Children's Aid Society, Public Health Nurses and social workers in general; doctors or lawyers are seldom seen to be 'responsible' in infanticide.) But this process is essentially a hypocrisy. The child that the society cares so passionately about in death was little more than an administrative problem in life. It is not that individual people don't care; they do. But the economic structure of this society does not allow for anything other than stopgap measures to deal with child abuse and infanticide. The fundamental support structures that women need, right now, to enable them to climb out of their economic subordination are not there: jobs are either unavailable or low-paying, daycare is not available in sufficient quantity and isolation continues to put the real responsibility for children onto women, perpetuating the dependence of women on inadequate social agencies.

In the distant past, the society at large was responsible for infanticide. Babies and young children were systematically killed or neglected to the point of death for religious

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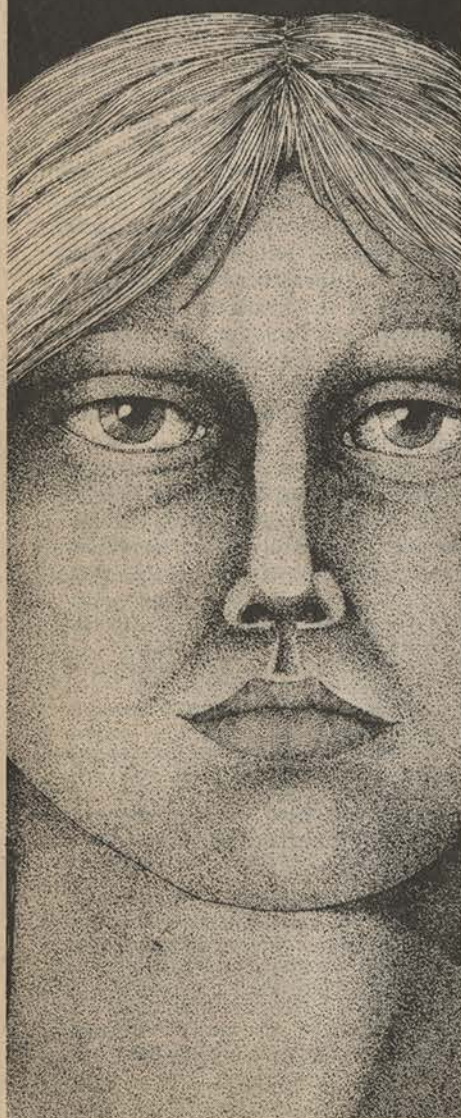
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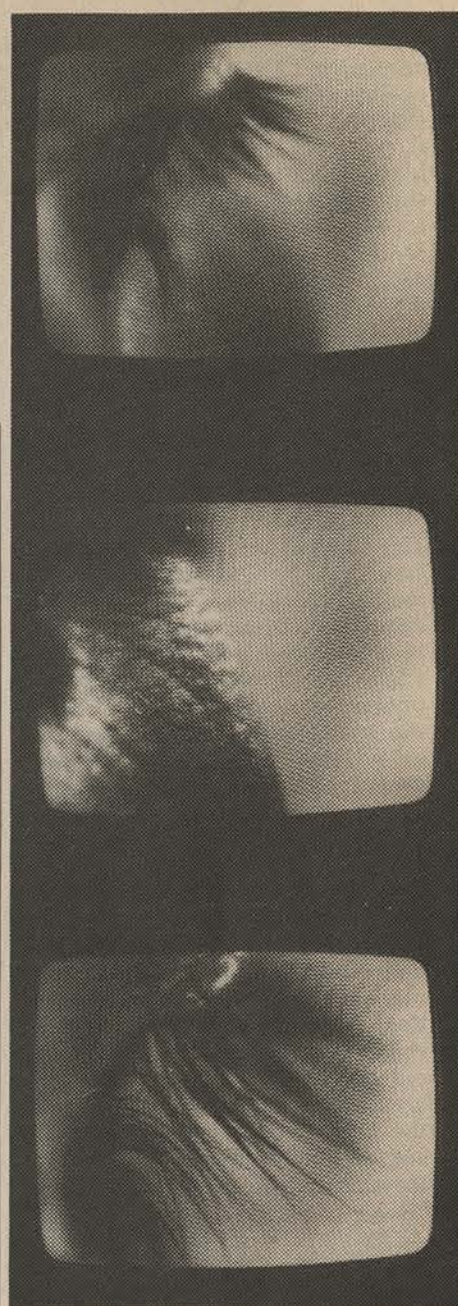
WOMEN AND INFANTICIDE

reasons or, more likely, for economic need. It was a form of birth control. Christianity, which frowns on murder, gave the responsibility of infanticide to the mother. And there it has stayed. In the past it was a crime punishable by death for the mother, always. Now it is a problem of administration. And still, although we are more humane than our ancestors, although childhood is not quite so dangerous as before, we must admit to the fact that we really care very little for our children. The Year of the Child will pass. A new 'social problem' will present itself and child abuse and neglect will fade from our collective memory (remember 'juvenile delinquency'?) because, really, it is just a symptom.

Domestic murder is an inefficient way to control the growth of the population. By this I mean that the poor will never kill off one another in great enough numbers to rid the society of poverty. And yet this is what we're asking by continually ignoring the real causes of our so-called 'social' problems and continuing to create programs around the symptoms. Family violence, the beating, abuse and murder that occurs among husbands, wives and their children of which infanticide is a part, is a symptom of two greater maladies: the unequal distribution of this society's resources among its members and the oppression of women within this society. Is it possible to imagine a society where the 'symptomatic' relief of these sufferings is not necessary? Yes, but it cannot be a society built on the privilege of dominance that exists today. ■

Lisa Steele, video artist, lives in Toronto. She works at Interval House, a women's shelter, and is an editor of *Centerfold*.

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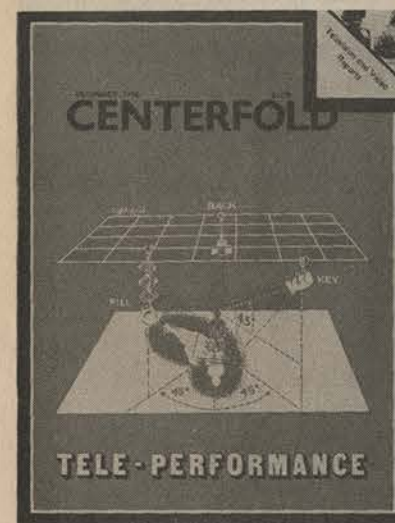
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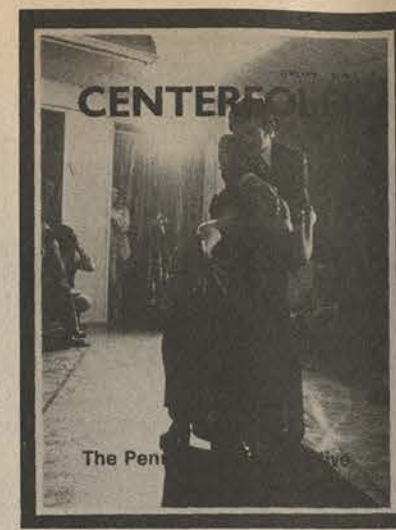
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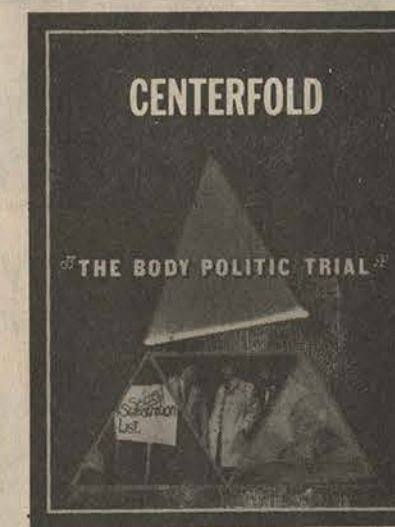
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New Music



(left to right) Toshinori Kondo (Japan), Henry Kaiser (U.S.), John Oswald (Canada)

photo: Ian Stewart

The Music Gallery

Have they been too successful?

The Music Gallery is an artist-run space in Toronto that emerged some three years ago. It is run by the CCMC, a group of artist-musicians: Al Mattes, Peter Anson, Nubuo Kobota, Michael Snow and Casey Sokol.

The Music Gallery has held an average of 160 concerts a year, its record company — Music Gallery Editions — has a catalogue of 28 albums, its professional recording facilities are used to the extent that you can still get a booking between midnight and seven a.m. The Gallery's funding is under attack. Have they been 'too successful'?

Like other artist-run facilities in Canada, The Music Gallery has challenged, among others, The Canada Council, a federal arts funding agency, to recognise and financially support their internationally recognised accomplishments. But, unlike other artist-run galleries, The Music Gallery had to open a reticent clam which has recently shown signs of prematurely closing. The Music Section of The Canada Council allows only 2 per cent of its \$6.5 million budget to be used for contemporary music — and that 2 per cent is in danger because of the planned growth of the symphony orchestras,

opera companies and chamber orchestras, a growth that cannot be contained within the Council's frozen budget. The Council's apparent solution is to stop ordering fresh flowers for the banquet table and make do with plastic replicas.

The Music Gallery is one important focus of Canadian contemporary music that can be affected. However the symphony scare is one that could be transferred to other disciplines. Pilot interdisciplinary programmes can be and have recently been shelved. There is at this time an understandable amount of jostling and shrugging from the funding agencies. However for Franz Kraemer, the newly appointed Head of the Music Section of The Canada Council to visit The Music Gallery and defend his policy by referring to The Gallery as, "A lab where performers and artists come to indulge in their hobbies.", is not only irresponsible and slanderous but it is a statement of unnecessary provocation.

The following interview with Al Mattes and Peter Anson took place in mid-March. The transcript was edited for length.

a CENTERFOLD interview

Centerfold, April/May 1979

New Music

C: What have been the rumoured cuts as they affect The Music Gallery?

AM: We have nothing absolutely definite yet. The latest words we heard were that its going to be a difficult problem to fund us next year. That is what Franz Kraemer said to Tim Porteus at a meeting we had with the two of them at The Music Gallery about three weeks ago. This was a meeting that was initiated by ourselves to meet with the new head of the Council's Music Department (Franz Kraemer), and with Tim Porteus (Head of Canada Council's Art Section).

We've been underfunded since our inception and we were applying for an increase this year. The end result of the meeting was that Kraemer and Porteus said that we were unique in the country in terms of the Canada Council funding a space from the Music Department funds. Other departments, such as Visual Arts, Dance and obviously Theatre, fund spaces. Dance funds only one space — most of their money goes to

troupes. Visual Arts funds, of course, a large part of the parallel gallery network. The Music Department funds only one space: The Music Gallery. They felt it was unusual for them and not part of what they wanted to be doing. They went on to question funding some of what we consider to be essential programmes, such as our record company, Music Gallery Editions. Their rationale being that if they gave Music Gallery Editions funding through The Music Gallery then any other record company in the country could come to them for funds.

C: How many albums has The Music Gallery published?

AM: We have on sale right now, fourteen.

C: And these have all been produced without Council money?

AM: Up to now there has been no money from the Council which has gone into production. Last year we did receive an Explorations Grant for a special series of four albums which were a departure from our normal programming content. We described the series as indigenous Canadian music; it involves a record of Six Nations Indian singers, some old-time folk musicians from Quebec, Eskimo throat singers from Cape Dorset, a record of live recordings of whales in Canadian waters. Three of those records are in production, the Eskimo record won't be recorded until this summer.

C: The Saidye Bronfman Foundation had originally assisted the records of Music Gallery Editions?

AM: The Saidye Bronfman Foundation gave us two grants which is an unusual thing for them. They initially gave us a matching \$5,000 for the production of 5 records; this past year they gave us a grant of \$2,500 which did not have to be matched and we will produce four records with that money. Of those four, one is out. The catalogue which lists our current twenty-eight records is projected to September 1979.

C: Did the question of The Music Gallery's records as a form of publication ever arise?

AM: That was never really discussed. Our discussion with them centered around the fact that to our minds their argument was unsound. With us they were dealing with a record company which has a history, which has produced fourteen albums with another fourteen in production, has never received any money from the Music Department of The Canada Council, in fact gave back a grant of \$1,000 which they offered us for a record. If another record company came to them with the same kind of track record we believe that they should deal with them seriously just as they should deal seriously with our request for funds for the Director of The Music Gallery Editions. However that wasn't too well received.

C: What else happened? Are they in fact phasing your funding out?

AM: Well it's not so much phasing out, but it is phasing out operating funds.



Evan Parker (U.K.) with the C.C.M.C.



Michel Waisvisz in performance at The Music Gallery

photo: The Music Gallery

Centerfold, April/May 1979

New Music



The New Music Co-op

photo: Vid Ingelevics

C: Which means it would be difficult for the organization to exist?

AM: It would probably be impossible. Franz Kraemer did say that he would speak to David Silcox about the possibility of Metro Toronto picking up the short-fall in funding. Their rationale was that they should provide programming funds. When I add up our programmes I get to \$44,000 which is exactly \$1,000 less than we requested. But they immediately don't agree with the fact that \$10,000 of that was for the director of Music Gallery Editions, \$10,000 was also for myself as a salary, another \$10,000 was for our technician's salary. I see those as programme expenses not operating expenses. Now if they are willing to provide our complete programming expenses, that's fine with us — they can label it however they want. I did send them in a combined budget which showed both the operating expenses of the space combined with the programming expenses; the total budget for next year would be \$145,000.

C: So their argument about operating expenses being funded within Metro Toronto shows somewhat of a misunderstanding of your function which is national as opposed to regional.

AM: That was basically what Kraemer said. He thought it was a local facility, he described it in somewhat unflattering terms: Basically a

lab where performers and artists come to indulge in their hobbies. At the time that he was here, there was a composer working with the eight-track tape recorder who has put in a lot of hours in preparation for an upcoming concert here. This is a composer who was recently broadcast on C.B.C. radio's "Two New Hours". It felt somewhat strange for his work to be described as a hobby when he has perhaps spent one hundred hours over the last month and a half preparing for a single concert.

It's true that 85 per cent of the people that come to give concerts come from the Toronto region; the remaining 15 per cent of the people come from across Canada, from the U.S., we've had people from Japan, people from Holland, people from England. . . . Whenever people are planning a cross-Canada tour — musicians or in many cases performance artists, we do run a series of Performance Art.

C: How many other places in Canada have comparable recording facilities, accessible to artists?

AM: The Western Front, Vancouver would be the closest and their recording facilities are not nearly as extensive as ours. We have a fully-equipped eight-track studio, four channels of playback, sixteen channels of mixing capability. Of course commercial studios exist but there is nothing else in the realm of alternate spaces.

C: How about Sonographe

(Montreal) did that ever re-emerge?

AM: Not to my knowledge. I feel that in terms of our emphasis on contemporary music, specifically contemporary Canadian music coupled with the recording and concert hall facilities that we have, that we're unique in Canada. I have travelled in Europe and in the United States, and people from the States have come up here and they are all extremely, I was going to say envious, of the facilities and the programme that we operate here. The Bindhaus in Amsterdam for instance offers a concert programme roughly similar to what we do — although they have a lot more imported stars than we do and they are able to pay fees which we've never been able to do, other than for special events. But they have no recording facilities at all.

PA: I think one thing that the Music Department has problems with is the populist basis that we have. We cater to musicians who simply say they are musicians and are working at being musicians and are doing music. We don't require that people have quote, unquote professional credentials. I think that is very important — we couldn't possibly give that up. Which isn't to say that there may evolve a small, relatively small group of users of the space because it's a limited facility. It's not that the space serves everybody; that's not what I mean by popular. I think we take an attitude that the aura of respectability that certain

New Music

In 1976-77 (last available figures) The Canada Council music dept. gave grants to groups and organizations totalling 6 1/4 million dollars, divided as follows (percentages): Symphony orchestras and associations: 61.5, Operas and assoc.: 18.5; Chamber orchestras and ensembles: 4; Choirs and chamber choirs: 4; Canadian League of Composers and Canadian Music Centre: 3; Contemporary Music Groups: 2; Publications: 1; Misc. Festivals, Competitions and groups: 6.

* For its 1977-78 season the Music Gallery received \$21,000 from the C.C. Music Dept. This operating grant, along with \$11,000 from the OAC, paid the costs of renting the building, utilities, insurance, 2 \$7,000 salaries, publicity and general office expense. * In this period the Gallery presented 160 concerts of contemporary Canadian music, 80 of these were by the CCMC from which the Gallery received 100 per cent of the gate (\$500), and 80 were by guest artists, with \$1,800 going to the Gallery (20 per cent of a total gate of \$9,000). * All concerts were taped for the Gallery archive. * 375 children attended workshops at the Gallery. * 4 issues of Musicworks were published, in co-operation with Only Paper Today, to provide a forum for Canadian views on contemporary music. * The Gallery provided access to its rehearsal and recording facilities to a membership of 50, receiving dues of \$1,000. * A series of 8 interdisciplinary performances by artists from outside Toronto was held with the assistance of a \$6,700 grant from the C.C. Visual Arts Dept. (Parallel Galleries program). * 9 records were produced by Music Gallery Editions (MGE) with the help of the Bronfman Foundation and with private loans & donations. * Private donations, with a \$10,000 matching grant from Wintario, also helped equip the recording studio.

For the 1978-79 season the Gallery received \$22,500 from the C.C. music dept, and \$12,000 from the OAC. Operating costs are higher in this period in all categories except staff salaries. To date there have been 79 concerts: 32 by the CCMC with receipts totalling \$461, and 47 guest artist concerts with the Gallery receiving \$1,692. * The tape archive was catalogued and is available, along with a growing record library made possible thru exchange by MGE with other record companies. * The children's workshop program continues 1 per month. * Musicworks has become an independent new music periodical. * Member use of the recording facility has now increased to virtually 24 hrs. per day. 5 other groups also use the Gallery on a regular basis: U.H.F.O., The Monday Orchestra, New Band, The Glass Orchestra, New Music Cooperative. * Recording studio is being upgraded thru donations and a \$13,000 matching Wintario grant. Another series of interdisciplinary events is being funded by the C.C. visual arts dept. * Music Gallery Editions now has a catalogue of 28 records of contemporary Canadian music, 14 currently available, others in various stages of production. 4 of these are being produced with the aid of an Explorations grant.

kinds of academic music has is irrelevant — it has nothing to do with anything. I think this creates a political problem, in that it is an unprofitable idea to say that art is not the province of a specifically designated class, a self-designated class.

C: I think the connection between the Western Front and the Music Gallery is important. Because of a spoken fear by the Council that other music galleries could emerge in Canada (and require funding). Both spaces offer a wide band of programming. The Music Gallery's function as you have mentioned extends beyond the limits of just being a space for contemporary music. I think both spaces respond to an urban center of a certain size, so it is not as easily imaginable to foresee the same amount of music centers in Canada as there are parallel galleries.

AM: No, but there could be. There is a group in Vancouver right now who received an Explorations grant to set up a facility which they have. A group from that facility recently played two concerts here. They have nowhere to go for funding next year. The Western Front was told that their request for additional funding for their contemporary music programme next year would not be met; they would receive what they got last year. Two groups in Montreal have applied on numerous occasions to the Explorations Programme and to the Music Department for funds to set up a space, to run a concert series, to do research into the design and building of new instruments. This is focused around Raymond Gervais and Yves Bouliane who would be dealing with the concert series, and musicians from Sonde who would be involved in the design and research of new instruments. They were turned down. Definitely in the three major population centers: Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto a music gallery or something similar to it could exist. In Vancouver, ARC Publications has been talking about putting together such a facility for a number of years. Eric Stach from London, Ontario wanted to set up a contemporary music center but because of lack of funds he combined forces with Forest City Gallery, which is fine, but once again he doesn't have any funds for a music programme. And he's not about to

get any funds. Whatever he does get has to come from Forest City Gallery's general operating funds, which of course comes from the Visual Arts section.

C: Isn't there a contradiction here where the Council is supposed to respond to growth and development both social (in terms of numbers) and aesthetic from the artist community? It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the Music Section of the Canada Council has shown minimal interest in the development of contemporary music.

PA: The Music Section has had far more problems in dealing with contemporary activity than any other section. It's partially because the culture that the Music Section has been supporting has been mostly a very official culture, it's a nineteenth century culture. The point is not that there is a likelihood of someone forming another music gallery somewhere else, but it's something they want to compute and can't compute. I think that's the problem. When they say we are afraid because we have no control, what they mostly mean is we can't control popular movements like this. We have no way of officiating these kinds of things. There's no standard. The terror of the conservative is the loss of standards. We might have no standards to evaluate this and therefore anything could happen. Of course from my point of view that's wonderful.

AM: That's not to say that it's a situation with a lot of amateurs coming in. Not only do we exercise a certain kind of control, we definitely exercise control in terms of content. This is not a facility for folk music or jazz, nor is it a facility for rock and roll music. Notwithstanding that fact, people bring to us, all the time, tapes of music they would like to perform in concert and we make judgements as to whether or not we feel that it's appropriate to have them give a concert within our regular concert series. That's the kind of thing that the Council is worried about in terms of control. One of the things that they are worried about, and again these are their words, is a lack of control. . . . I pointed out that we are subject to the same controls as everyone else: they get audited financial statements from us, they get year-end reports from us, they get applications once

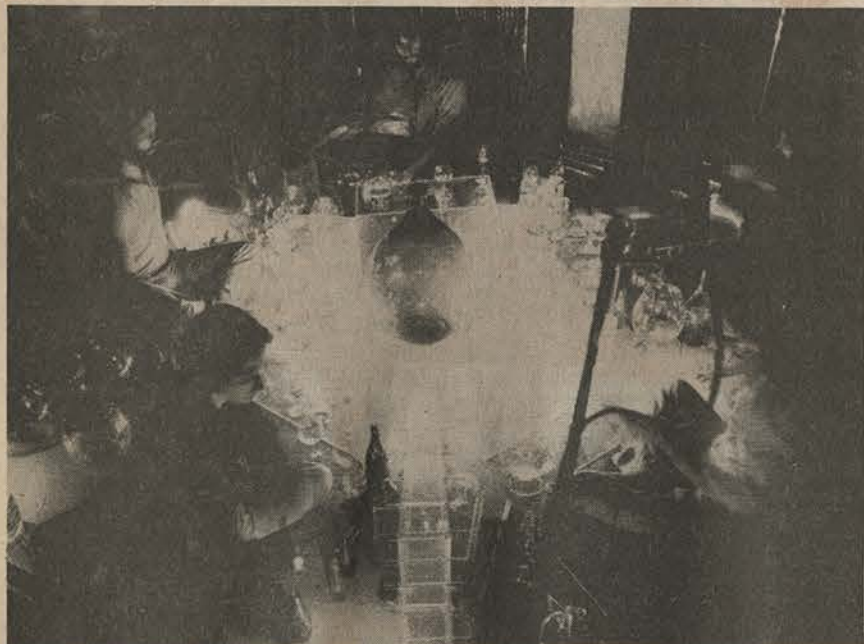
New Music

a year for funding. Kraemer questioned who made the artistic decisions. Despite the fact that we've been running a concert programme of 160 concerts a year for three years — that includes 80 CCMC (Canadian Creative Music Collective) concerts and 80 outside concerts. It was a question of who makes that decision, like it was a question of who makes the decision as to who puts out the records. That speaks very well to Peter's point of populist, or we don't come from the right schools, even though one of the CCMC's directors teaches music at York University. Somehow the question was, could we really make those kind of programming decisions? Further to that in terms of control, he also voiced concern that three years down the road they have no guaran-

tee that we wouldn't be coming at them for \$100,000. Now to my way of thinking that's terrific. If we can programme and justify programming and there is enough of an evolution of growth in contemporary music activity in this country that \$100,000 is a realistic amount of money to request from The Canada Council and to receive from The Canada Council, it's very exciting. However, they are afraid of that. Now they have to deal with the fact that their projected budgets are not going to increase — the heyday of 15-20 per cent increases in Canada Council's own budget is long since past. It went from 15 per cent to 9 per cent and last year it was frozen. And realistically not only they, but the people that they find, have to deal with this.

I quarrel though with their choice of what to do in the case of a frozen budget. I had a long talk with Albert Grenier (Music Officer, Canada Council) who said some very nice things such as when it comes to looking at the activities that The Music Gallery programmes, that the Council can only stand back and applaud. He also said that they were astounded, he did not use that word but its sense, at the success of our activities. That there was a whole new area we had pointed out to them of music that they had not been serving — and those were his words. But he did go on to say, "How do we deal with the symphony orchestras who last year received 65 per cent of Council's music budget?" We are talking about 65 per cent of \$6.5 million that goes directly to symphonies. (This 65 per cent does not include further individual awards to individual musicians and composers.) He said the symphonies are tied to contracts. They had to give their performers 8 per cent increases a year. Symphony musicians make about \$400 a week (\$19,200)*. At The Music Gallery, a few of us make \$7,000 a year. How are they going to deal with those contracts? They've poured millions of dollars into the funding of the symphony orchestras and the operas and the chamber ensembles. So if they (Council) give them a 4 per cent increase which is half of what they need, all of a sudden instead of being 65 per cent of the budget it's up to 67.5 per cent. If they do the same thing for opera companies and opera associations who take 18 per cent of the budget you are looking at about 85 — 87 per cent of the total budget gone. Chamber ensembles get another 8 per cent, you're up to 95 per cent. Do the rest of us scramble for that? The Council is having to deal in a hard way with the demands on its frozen budget and their choice according to Grenier is to cut back 25 per cent of commissions to Canadian composers, eliminating the recording programme and the contemporary music budget was going to be either cut or frozen at 2 per cent of the total budget. Now The Music Gallery is the third largest funded contemporary music group in the country. The New Music Concert Series from Toronto is the largest.

* Atlantic Symphony Orchestra's musicians receive between \$9,500 - \$11,500 per season (Maclean's, Apr. 20, 1979).



above The Monday Orchestra, below The Glass Orchestra

photo: Ian Stewart

photo: The Music Gallery

New Music

La Société de Musique Contemporain du Québec is second, The Music Gallery at \$22,500 is third.

Now granted we don't serve as large a population at the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, but on the other hand we don't get anywhere near the same amount of money. The point that we made to Porteus and Kraemer was the fact that if you get that sort of money you can get corporate donations.

C: *The pattern of saving a heritage culture surely is reinforced by musicians who see that means as the only way they can make a living. The Council appears to be saving the symphonies, the chamber ensembles, the opera companies at the expense of any further development. The only way to survive as a musician is to be an animateur of a heritage culture. It's programmed in such a way that it's very difficult to turn it back.*

PA: It's not only the symphonies but the educational and economic structures that support the symphonies.

AM: By and large, educational institutions do not have much of an emphasis on contemporary music at all. Here we have a situation where York University used to have a very strong contemporary music programme, which is fading. The Head of the Electronic Music Studio is leaving this year. Now they will maintain their studio, as they do at Queen's University, at Victoria and other universities, but the approach is academic. I know of one teacher in Canada that teaches improvisation at University level and has turned out some fantastic musicians because of it. He teaches them a lot of musical and technical chops, they work from structured and unstructured improvisation. His students are good not only in terms of improvisational music but also in terms of all other kinds of music. But that's an isolated instance. By and large the music programmes are training people to enable them to plug into Brahms and to play Beethoven and Bach. They come in and learn and they get their degrees. There are a lot more points and a lot more money invested into dead music. It's museum music.

I am not saying that that tradition should be stopped, I am saying that it should be looked at in light of what's happening in other areas of musical performance in the country. There are a lot of people working

and of course I have access to them because that's the field I work in.

I question raising the percentage of funds going to the symphony orchestras, if you're cutting aid to Canadian composers. It seems to me that the function of The Canada Council should be to encourage Canadian art, music, dance and theatre. Perhaps they will have to look at that. They'll have to say that the symphonies will have to find their funds somewhere else because the Canadian activity shouldn't be cut. Now that's a radical change from what they're doing; it would shake the functioning of the Council to its foundation, if that were the case — particularly in the Music Section.

PA: Maybe the oil companies should fund the symphony orchestras and the Council should fund chamber orchestras. Half the violin section, half the viola section, half the cello section. You can play the same music with one viola, one violin, one cello, one bassoon, one flute, and so on and it was done of course before the nineteenth century, when things got extremely out of hand because they were being supported by very, very rich individuals who were competing for how much volume you could get in the hall. Labour was very cheap. It's almost that that kind of cancerous development of the orchestra in a particular period of time has become the norm and standard, so that no one can conceivably suggest that the symphony orchestra can exist in any other way but the full 19th century large orchestra. And yet the music can be played by a dozen people. And played very effectively. I suppose that if you are a connoisseur to hear 50 violinists play the same passage in unison, absolutely perfectly, so that it sound like one violinist, you can get off on that, but is that worth \$600,000 a year for an orchestra?

AM: The oil companies are dealing with dead organisms so perhaps it would be fitting for them to fund other organisations that also encourage dead organisms.

What has been presented to The Music Gallery is definitely the tip of the iceberg. We are the tip because first of all we represent a certain kind of contemporary music activity which The Canada Council freely admits. But there's a much larger

political process happening in this country, as elsewhere, which is a backlash. The pendulum is swinging to the right. You have the Conservative culture critics who condemn the Canada Council, condemn the Secretary of State for some of the activities of the Canada Council. They say if the Conservative Party forms the next government, the Canada Council is not going to exist in the form that it's in now. That it's going to be a political vehicle. That it's going to be directly under the control of the Secretary of State. So the whole principle of arms-length funding of arts organisation and the artist-jury system is threatened. The Liberal Party has to deal with that. If the feeling is that the population agrees with the fact that Pulp Press is wrong to publish a specific book, or that The Music Gallery is the home of a group of narcissistic individuals who just indulge their fantasies, then they will be very quick to cut the funding. They have to meet the political challenge. The Council in turn is aware of this and they have to protect their own autonomy. So perhaps they're reacting to this same political pressure in a way which they think is appropriate.

I don't know what is going to happen to The Music Gallery. If they maintain our funding without increase we will have to cut our programming, we have still to catch up with the inflationary rate. Our funding has increased from \$20,000 to \$22,500 over three years... We have survived by generating income from other sources, which The Canada Council asks us to do and which we do. Our budget last year was \$125,000, which from the combined Councils I think we got about \$70,000, the remaining \$55,000 we generated on our own. That includes figures attached to free labour on the part of the musicians who played here for a percentage of the gate. It did not include the people who were employed at the gallery, who are doing a job which in the private sector would cost considerably more. The new budget does not include that. In the symphony orchestra the musicians get paid to rehearse. At The Music Gallery people play for 80 per cent of the gate. And in some cases they actually lose money. And I don't think that's acceptable. ■

State Art

Subsidy in the U.K.

The naked form of control
by Jeff Nuttall

Climbing out of half a gallon of anaesthetic alcohol to assess the situation of myself and others still starry-eyed enough to call ourselves artists in 1979, the best I can do for the minute is stifle, or anyway modify, a phlegmy croak of "I told you so."

The arts in Hubbempireville are staggering around in the posture most common to small boys on railway stations who can't read, not through any compression of the bladder but (draw close — see the bloodstains) through the effects of a gelding knife most effectively slid into their pants in Subsidy packaging.

I don't know whether you have Subsidy in Canada. I do know they don't have it in the States (*Editor's note: In the U.S. the N.E.A. provides subsidy on a national scale, as well as most individual states having Arts Councils.*) where the arts are doing very well thank you. They have lots of it in Northern Europe and pretty handsome it is, pulling no strings, naying no nays. But here in Hubbempireville, Subsidy has shed veil after veil until the naked form of Control is revealed.

Ten years ago only the granddaddy art activities got state money; the major opera companies, stage companies, municipal art galleries. In 1968, as some of us may recall, the kids got out on the streets to make the world over anew. Amongst those who panicked in the halls of power were the English Lords Eccles and Goodman (Goodman was uncle of Burroughs then junky lover so he had special worms of concern crawling through his preoccupations) — These worthies summoned to the House of Commons a small group of people who had been active in the (then) Underground. I had just published a book called *Bomb Culture* so I was held to be something of an authority on Underground art. I got my invite along with the rest. The purpose of the meeting, it was quickly explained, was to "find out what sort of art these young people (i.e.



photo: Lawrence Lawry

Jeff Nuttall lives in Bradford, U.K. Author of *"Bomb Culture"* (1968), Nuttall is also a poet, assemblagist, jazz musician, and playwright.

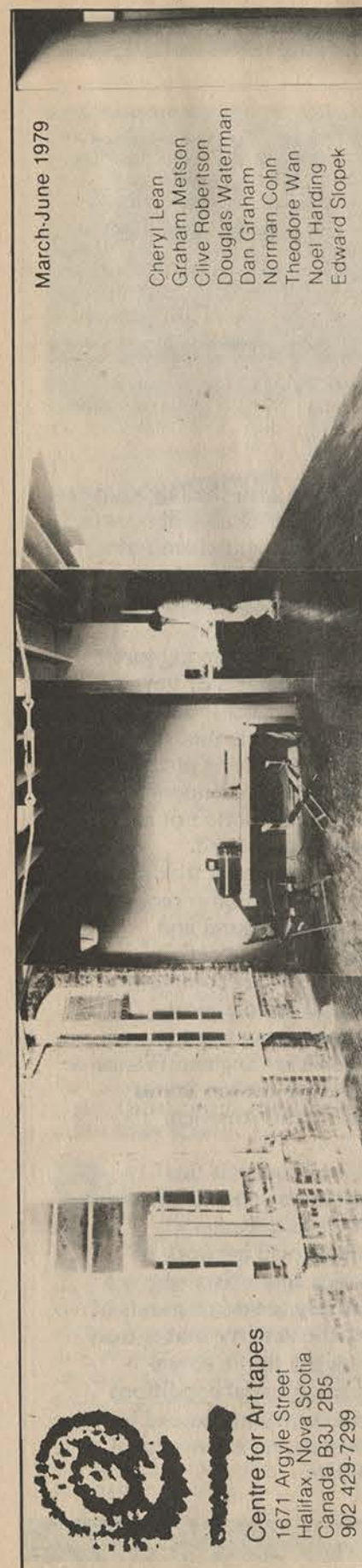
the street demonstrators) enjoy." The idea was to "channel all this idealism into constructive activities." I said my say pretty aggressively and departed. I walked the land asking artists to ignore the carrot, the tiny stipend offered by the National Arts Council. Hopelessly. Here was the opportunity to stand up in a socialist state and say "I am an artist. That's what I do and that's what I get paid for." One of the more vulnerable misconceptions of naive socialism. Within two years, between 1969 and 1971, what had been a formidable phalanx of guerrilla artists had split into factional groups vying with one another and generally bitching about the injustice of comparative awards.

In the early 70's however some cosmetic devices still held firm. I for instance sat on the Literature Panel of the Yorkshire Arts Association. So did radical poets Ulli McCarthy, Paul Buck, David Tipton, performance artist Rose McGuire, small-press director Tony Ward. A host of good (i.e. audacious, adventurous, inventive, militant) poets moved into the National Poetry Society, multiplied their voting power and took over. Bob Cobbing, Lawrence Upton, Bill Griffiths, Chris Cheek, Barry McSweeney, Tom Pick-

ard, Roy Fisher set up workshops, set Eric Mottram (arguably the most important figure in GB just now) as editor of the *Poetry Review*, set up Poet's Conference as a democratic body to handle poets' professional affairs, leaned on the Arts Council until the National Poetry Secretariat had been formed to subsidise individual readings all over the island. The Arts Council itself allowed a Performance Art panel to be formed where a substantial number of artists including Roland Miller and Stewart Brisley decided how that particular activity was to be financed. A number of small arts festivals sprang up in provincial towns and the same team of poets, performance artists moved around for fees and expenses — fee varied between 20 and 40 quid per gig. For a while there was the illusion of growing artist-administration. For a while we were left alone. For a while we were most strangely comfortably off. However, our political standpoint had been subtly altered not by the heavy tactics of making us recant but by the light tactics of plucking us out of an embattled situation and setting down in a filial situation. They elected me Chairman of the Poetry Society. In 1975 we were no longer an Underground but there did seem that we had a growing democratic power.

The organs of Subsidy in Hubbempireville are structured thus: the Arts Council of Great Britain is situated in London and carries responsibility for the whole nation. Some of this responsibility it dispenses directly, some through the Regional Arts Associations which are supposed to give the arts their proper local inflections. Slowly but surely the bureaucrats have manipulated this structure to harness the arts to their own bourgeois standards. "Quality" they cry, meaning tradition. "The gentle art of patronage" they cry, quoting Arts Council Secretary Roy Shaw, meaning quietism. "Art in the community" they cry, meaning leisure activities, and the end result is that the radical, the audacious, the inventive, the militant must cut its suit according to the public cloth or find itself cut off.

Charles Osborne, whose official title is no more than Literature Officer for the Arts Council, is a



March-June 1979

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State Art

spider to whom an extraordinarily large number of threads in this web of governmental cunning lead. Osborne it was who said to the thriving Poetry Society — "Change your policy, particularly the editorial policy of *Poetry Review*. Accept me as Literary Advisor and you can have lots more money. Refuse and you can have nothing." They voted to accept. I, with Cobbing and Upton, resigned. Gradually all the other good poets left. The Poetry Society is now a graveyard of grey orthodoxy. When a Tory MP kicked up a fuss about performance artist Genesis P. Orridge at the Institute of Contemporary Art (obscenity complaints), heavy tags were put on ICA money and the Performance Art panel was dissolved. All performance art applications were, for a while, considered (and often refused) by Osborne. Osborne has gone on record as saying that an exhibition of the works of Gerard Manley Hopkins was scarcely worthwhile. Osborne has gone on record as saying that he only calls a meeting of his Literature Panel when he feels that he needs advice. Osborne it is who has been instrumental in the appointment of romantic novelist and TV presenter Melvyn Bragg as the chairman of this toothless panel. Osborne it is who has curtailed awards, left, right and centre according to his personal likes and dislikes. Osborne it is who has recently pronounced that the little magazine movement in England (where poetry is, by the way, thriving) is worthless and has thus cut off all money for little magazines. The tight-arsed orthodoxies of Ian Hamilton's *New Review* were subsidised out of all proportion for a while but even here funds have been withdrawn. It should be noted that Osborne's only connection with the arts before he got this job was as an opera critic. An opera critic then has decided that thousands of pounds may go unspent because, as far as he and Bragg can see, there ain't no literature. This at a time when British poetry is healthier than it's been since the early 19th Century.

But still there seemed to be power for the artist on the panels of the Regional Arts Associations, and in particular of the Yorkshire Arts Association. Yorkshire, a vast county to the North of England encompassing

densely industrial cities and wild stretches of hill country, besides genteel rural areas, has been feverishly active since 1966. It has been a source area of British performance art and left-wing theatre. It is the home-county of a large number of leading writers and artists and it had, repeat *had*, the two liveliest arts schools in Hubbempireville at Bradford and Leeds. Both these art schools have now been craftily debolocked by the simple process of setting them in huge administrative structures where their force and power are killed off by gradual withdrawal of money and non-replacement of staff. Also in Yorkshire is (was) Paul Buck's magazine *Curtains*, which specialises in translation from modern French writing. It's the only English source we have if we want to have any understanding of the subsequent effect of Georges Bataille and Roland Barthes. It is, therefore, wildly erotic in much of its content. Recently the Executive of the Yorkshire Arts Association objected to some cunt pictures, photographs by Italian painter Maccaroni (tough luck a name like that, never mind). At the same time there was a similar fuss about a prose-piece of mine in another local subsidised magazine. The Literature Panel did its job and said loud and clear: "This is no porn. This is art and good art too. Shut up and leave it to us." The Literature Panel got sacked. Decisions for literature now rest with the Yorkshire Arts Association Director Michael Dawson (who says he will form a panel of academics — no writers). And who who who is the voice in Michael Dawson's ear? Who is breathing "Get rid of these beatniks or else"? I wonder.

It doesn't matter of course. It doesn't matter a shit. Any artist worth his salt could paint masterpieces on the top of a bus on a diet of stale bread and weak tea. The old militancy is coming back. What will take place now will be strong and consequential as never before. It really is a strange phase to have gone through though. The lesson is: Never expect any health from state subsidy unless you have the Machiavellian skill to infiltrate the structure and take power. Most artists have something better and vastly more important to do. ■

MEN LOVING BOYS LOVING MEN

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ART

IN A SOCIAL FOCUS

Starting with the fall issue, *CENTERFOLD* will publish an extended series of articles edited by Kenneth Coutts-Smith.

It is proposed to explore various aspects of the ongoing reassessment of the visual arts that is presently taking place in which the traditional role and function of art is being questioned.

It is anticipated that this series will publish reports of socio-cultural and socio-political activity across the art community as well as polemical articles from locations as diverse as England, France, Italy, the United States and Latin America.

It is hoped that this collaboration and exchange of views between a widespread network of critics and artists who are actively seeking a praxis of artistic activity that is truly relevant to the actual existing social conditions will contribute to and broaden the existing international debate.

Performance



"Berlin", part three: Remembering the spectacle (in the water)

photo: Paul Derrick

Berlin

*A performance in four venues
by Rose English and Sally Potter*

(Part One was at 41, Mornington Terrace, London NW1 (a large squatted regency terrace house), Part Two was at the Sobell Centre Ice Rink, Part Three was at the olympic pool Swiss Cottage Baths, Part Four was in the house again.)

Part One: The Pre-Conditions (in the house). The audience was shown into the ground-floor of the house by the woman in black carrying a stool, who then sat with her back to the audience between them and the other room. There a bare-breasted woman in a crinoline covered in leaves, with feathers in her hair and wearing a fur muff, was standing by a leaf-covered cradle lit by firelight from the fireplace. A cello was heard playing elsewhere in the house. Eventually the woman in black rose and led the audience upstairs. She opened the double doors leading to the next

room and the same music started. One by one, six men and a naked boy came into the other room, stood briefly, and then left in reverse order. The woman in black shut the double doors, stood in front of them facing the audience and switched on a lightbulb positioned just in front of her forehead. She stood there until tears rolled down her face. The music started again, she opened the double doors and the men again came into the room, this time moving towards each other in a half formed embrace. Again the woman in black shut the doors and stood under the lightbulb until tears rolled down her face. The music started a third time. This time the men entered the room, embraced and the naked boy was led to the woman in black, where water from a wine glass was dropped onto his head by one of the men. The others took handkerchiefs from their pockets

and held them to their eyes. The woman in black shut the doors on them and led the audience back downstairs, where the woman in the leaf crinoline remained immobile by her cradle but started to speak a monologue, relating her own image to the history of the female nude, analysing her part as object and as subject through the act of speaking, breaking silence.

Part Two: The Spectacle (on ice). A week later the audience assembled in an ice rink on the other side of town. The woman in black skated out onto the ice, carrying her stool, and then sat down on it. Eventually she rose and glided towards the audience where she started to tell the story of what was going to happen that evening, as if it had already happened (i.e. in the past tense). Finishing with a description of the cradle bursting into flames on the ice, she then fetched the cradle covered in leaves and placed it in the centre of the ice. The same music as in part one started and the men skated onto the ice one by one, stood, and then left. The woman in black then led the naked boy onto the ice and sat on her stool softly

Performance

talking to him. The music started again and the men skated to the cradle, looked into it and then skated to the far corner of the rink. The third time the music started the men moved off revealing the woman in the leaf crinoline, who they towed around the ice rink three times, eventually leaving her by the cradle in the same position she had taken up in the house. The woman in black then skated towards her and pulled back the coverlet in the cradle. The woman in the leaf crinoline remained by the cradle until it was crackling and ablaze with flame and then slowly skated off.

Part Three: Remembering the Spectacle (in the water). The next night the audience was seated on high raked seats which led down to an olympic pool. A spotlight came on and followed the woman in black carrying her stool. She walked along the edge of the pool to the diving boards, and climbed the ladder up to the top board, sat down on the stool and looked out over the pool. The woman in the leaf crinoline entered carrying a microphone and stood in a spotlight by the metal frame of the burnt-out cradle. She started to speak into the microphone, addressing herself to the woman in black across the pool, recounting an argument they had had that day about ways of reading and interpreting the imagery they had constructed. The music interrupted her speech and lights came up on the men as they came out of the double doors by the pool, stood for a while looking at the water and then went out through the double doors. The woman in the leaf crinoline resumed her speech, developing the argument about their representation in the performance, in the historical context of images of women and nature, earth mother etc. The music started again, the men entered through the double doors, this time without their jackets, made their way to the steps into the pool, slowly descended into the water and stood still with the water up to their waists. The music ended, they got out of the pool and returned, dripping, through the double doors. For the third time the woman in the leaf crinoline continued to speak. For the third time the music started, the woman in black turned to the wall and the men entered. This time they were without shoes and waistcoats, they got

into the water and started to swim. They swam the length of the pool, got out of the water and climbed to the top board where they stood facing the woman in black. The woman in the leaf crinoline then put down her microphone and slowly climbed into the water. As she started to

spotlight came onto the double doors. The small naked boy entered, and stood there.

Part Four: The Arguments (at home). A week later the audience was led into the groundfloor of the house. There, on the piano was a photograph of the woman in the leaf



"Berlin", part four: The Arguments (at home), April 1976

photo: Roger Perry

lose her depth she called out 'Rose!' The woman in black leapt from the top board, plunged into the water and swam towards her. They joined hands and removed each other's costume. The leaf skirt and the black dress sank to the pool bottom. The two women swam to the deep end, continuing their argument. A

crinoline with her cradle as she had appeared in the first performance. She now stood, dressed in black, by the burnt out frame of the cradle which now had a dead swan in it. The floor was covered in wine glasses. The six men were all standing on the mantelpiece over the fireplace. The woman draped the swan around her

Performance

neck and led the audience upstairs. The music started, she opened the double doors to reveal the woman in black in ice skates standing on a block of ice holding her stool. The music ended, the first woman closed the doors and stood under the lightbulb until tears rolled down her face. The music started again and she opened the doors, revealing the woman in black, still on the block of ice, but this time wearing swans wings and carrying a scroll. She

stood underneath the lightbulb, unrolled the scroll, which was a photograph and started a conversation 'Hast du Berlin gefunden?' They asked each other the question and answered with an inventory of all the objects, props, costumes, materials and buildings used in the performances. They eventually led the audience downstairs, continuing to talk. In the room the men were standing, softly talking to themselves amongst the wine glasses

about their costumes. The naked boy was lying in the burnt out cradle. One of the men walked to the boy with a loaf of bread and a glass of red wine and started to feed him. As the women's conversation started to include a list of structures and concepts employed in the performances a blue ruched satin curtain was slowly lowered on the scene of the men behind them. ■

Rose English

*Placing men in the background
an interview by Lynn MacRitchie*

The two performances mentioned here are: 'Berlin' made with Sally Potter in March/April, 1976 and 'Mounting' made with Jacky Lansley and Sally Potter in May 1977.

LM: Why did you chose such exotic venues for Berlin? Was it conscious or did it grow out of the work?

RE: It was conscious. It had grown out of discussions between Sally Potter and myself who at that time had shared a house in which we wished to set aside a room to use as a casual performance venue hopefully untroubled by the expectations attached to performances presented in art galleries and theatres. That located the first venue in our house. The other two venues were arrived at in a number of ways. They were both exciting buildings, both were associated with sport and both were linked by their physical properties — the one holding ice, the other water.

LM: Was there a hope that the audience would be different? I'm thinking of cheering crowds.

RE: Yes — the appreciation sport receives we found alluring!

LM: What about the other content of the work?

RE: Concurrent to the choice of the venues we were engaged on a working process which initially came from pieces of writing. We decided that the other performers in the piece apart from ourselves would be a chorus of men. While working on part one we arrived at a structure which was made apparent through a sequence and a particular piece of music. This structure was used

through all four parts. Interlinked with this structure there was the imagery that was particular to Berlin.

LM: You mentioned that a lot of the content had arisen from writing. Is this usual?

RE: At that time it wasn't, although it is now. A lot of the writing was imagistic but there was also writing specifically to do with ourselves as women artists and also about where we wanted to locate our work at that time. The writing fanned the discussions we had which in turn determined the performances.

LM: You mentioned that there was a chorus of men in Berlin and I'm thinking about Mounting in which there was one particular man — the cowboy — and I am interested to know how you operated with them.

RE: In Berlin the men always appeared together, they never spoke, there was a certain awkwardness about them, they were always separate from each other and during the course of particular actions they made a slight move towards each other that ended in embrace, and there was a hint of tears at the end of part one. In part three in the pool they ended up stranded on the top of the diving board dripping wet and turned away from the audience. At the beginning of part four they appeared all ranged along one mantelpiece (the nearest similar location in that room to the diving board) and were just watching the scene that was happening in the room. Generally they did epitomise a feeling that

we had at the time about what men needed to do now that they were starting to hear about feminism. We had observed them being lost and not knowing where to turn to for nurturance and succour now that its source from women was no longer available to them. They needed to turn to each other. The decision to reverse history and place men in the background to the main action was consciously taken.

LM: What about the cowboy?

RE: The cowboy appeared in Mounting right at the beginning and came in to the performance space and put on his own theme music which was from the western *The Good the Bad and the Ugly*, he then walked around the gallery looking at the paintings and then went and sat at the back surveying the scene. The three women who came into the space in turn enacted various roles from *West Side Story* — one was Tony, one was Maria and one was the leader of the Sharks. During their fight they came together, turned, and decided that they would get rid of the protagonist. In other words they went and stuck a knife in him!

LM: Hurray!

RE: I had wanted to be the cowboy in that performance, I had wanted to be Clint Eastwood, but that role isn't available to me as a woman — (the solo hero, the avenging angel). He doesn't get periods!

LM: What were you dealing with in the cowboy?

RE: Well, we were certainly dealing with the solo male artist — which we couldn't really avoid dealing with even if we had wanted to because the space we were working in was hung with large paintings by Frank Stella so we were confronted head on with it and we decided that we would deal with all the very many issues that producing a piece of work

Performance

in that context brought up. It was very much like a dual in a way — afterwards the reactions to the performance were very interesting. Most of the women who saw the performance were excited about the things that were dealt with and dispatched in it and it was men who were uncomfortable about it and said things like 'Well, we didn't think that you won in that situation anyway, it was Frank Stella who came off best in the end you know.'

LM: Just because he was still on the walls! About the placing of the art work, in Berlin the choice of the places that you did the work was very particular wasn't it? Very much chosen by yourselves and used, whereas with Mounting it was quite the reverse wasn't it?

RE: Yes, when the piece of work appeared as a possibility there were some extremely lengthy discussions between Jacky Lansley, Sally Potter and myself about whether to even do it. Through discussion we decided that it was good to have made a conscious decision to work outside the various contexts but that another approach was to go straight into them and blow open the issues right there. It made for a very much more difficult working situation but I think eventually an extremely satisfactory one. I think that it's important for women to not necessarily always think of other ways of doing things, but sometimes actually to go straight in there and blow those situations open.

LM: The performance was tremendously exciting, I can remember being delighted because it was so clear. I could just laugh and really enjoy it because somebody is up there getting rid of Clint Eastwood! What made it particularly hard, was it that there was a constraint of choice?

RE: It was hard for all sorts of reasons, for instance in terms of how our working process met with distrust in the gallery prior to the performance because we were constructing the piece there and then and were not bringing in a product and setting it up there. Plus all the very particular issues that we couldn't not deal with, vast questions of art and society, large themes like that.

LM: Indeed, very large themes!

RE: In Berlin there was the space to construct something outside but in Mounting we couldn't

shirk any issues. At the same time we did make the space to construct something of our own within that.

LM: Mounting sounds almost like a piece of agitational theatre but it wasn't like that, there was also this tremendously rich imagery.

RE: Yes, it wasn't made only in reaction to the situation at all.

LM: I'd like to talk about other images that go through your work. We've mentioned the men in both Berlin and Mounting, what about for instance the sharks and blood in Mounting?

RE: In Mounting quite a few of the images used were laid out in the book produced beforehand, which in turn had come from writing and discussions between Jacky Lansley, Sally Potter and myself during a visit to the sea. Some of the sources of the images in Mounting were very direct, while in Berlin I think that they were more internalised. For instance the *West Side Story* imagery was prompted by Frank Stella's unconscious use of titles like 'Puerto Rican Blue Pigeon' for his paintings. In the book there are the sharks, shadowy predators lurking in the water as the woman goes down to the sea to wash herself, having started her period. In the performance we enacted the fight between the Jets and the Sharks from *West Side Story*, swapping roles continuously. Throughout Mounting we drew from 'popular' images.

LM: Do you find that working with other people is different to working on your own, is your approach to these images different?

RE: When making collaborative work particular pieces of imagery may be discussed at some length. Sometimes there has been an analysis contained within the piece itself, for instance Sally in Berlin recounting an argument about ways of reading the images we had constructed. But also sometimes they are allowed to stand on their own.

LM: So that sometimes images are presented, obviously with agreement, but not perhaps with agreement as to meaning?

RE: Yes, and it is the dialogue around all those aspects of the piece which make collaborative work particularly different to working alone. ■

Rose English, performance artist living in London, works in collaboration with Sally Potter and Jackie Lansley.

carole condé karl beveridge



april 21 — may 10
carmen lamanna gallery
840 yonge st., toronto

photo: Tobey Anderson

Performance

Channel Irons

Television on trial
a report by Michael Bélanger



"Channel Irons", Yvonne becomes interested in TV.

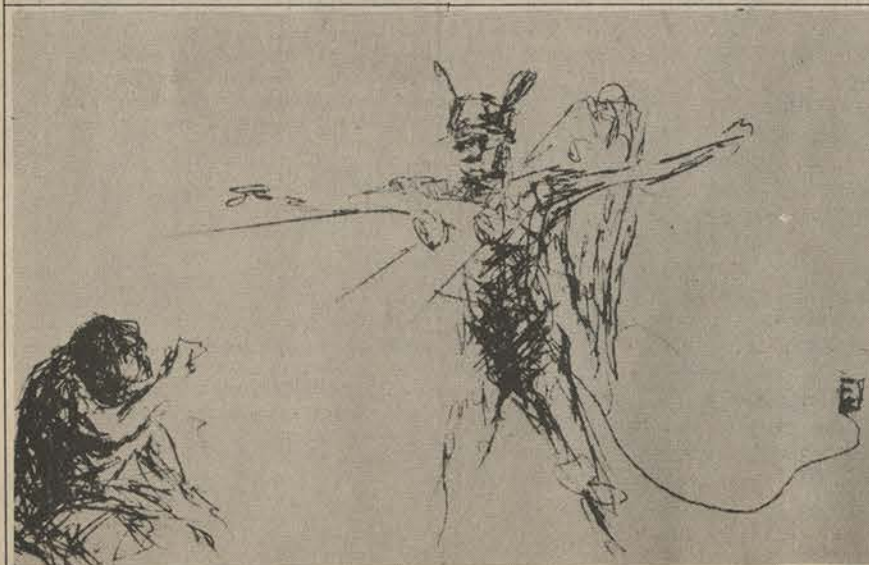
This is an outline of a project which is at present being developed by members of the Open Series Group in Kingston.

The project thus far consists of a sequence of three performance events and attempts to deal with issues relating to widespread use of inspiration, i.e. the practical matter or "How do we (as a culture) en-

courage people who don't call themselves artists to become familiar with inspiration?"

We have used as a fulcrum for this issue the idea of television. Television lingers conspicuously on the border between personal growth and decay. We cannot positively identify whether TV is good for us or not but we suspect that it is very

drawing "Channel Irons"



much one or the other.

For the sake of argument and for certain internal reasons we chose to view television within these performances as a decadent and dangerously deceptive institution — which functions as a major source of repression.

Our first production "Channel Irons", dealt basically with this issue. It was a mock trial in which Philco Microgrid 360 (a television receiver) was being charged with "Breaking the code of ethics which pertains to technological items and which is determined by natural law." This piece took the form of a theatrical event with a script, a set, actors and of course an audience. Since the major complaint against TV has been that it encourages people to be passive observers of someone else's or maybe no one else's reality, we were somewhat reluctant to duplicate the problem by using theatre as our means of expression.

Here is a brief description of the piece. Basically the trial described the nature of the relationship between the key witness, Yvonne, and her TV, a Philco Microgrid. The judge and the jury consisted of several audio-machines and a sheer curtain.

This piece, being a self-dissolving theatrical event, seemed to satisfactorily deal with certain flaws built into the Performer/Observer situation (structure).

The trial was scripted but to avoid the needless pain of memory, the script had been previously recorded on tape. The sound track served as a 'backbone' for the 'mixed' action. This part was a straightforward courtroom scene in which both the evidence and the background of the fictitious character, Yvonne, were examined.

The audience was placed in living room conditions, on couches and chairs. They could view the action either live or on a video monitor which was placed on the coffee table before them. The audience was separated from the playing area by a large plastic curtain.

After the evidence was heard, the jury retired for deliberation and the large plastic curtain was lifted. The audience was invited to relax over tea for a few minutes and were encouraged to wander freely about the space. Not many ventured into the playing area at this time.

The court was called to order

photo: Philip Beesley



Performance



top "Courthouse Song" / "Channel Irons"

and the sentence 'read' by the judge and jury, who blared out electronically produced noises. This behaviour was taken to be a verdict of 'guilty'. The bailiff announced that a public execution would be held immediately and the accused was lifted onto a wheelbarrow and taken to the execution site. The audience followed in the procession.

"A Star is Born" is a sequel to "Channel Irons" in which the predicament of the key witness, Yvonne, is examined more closely. Whereas "Channel Irons" was essentially theatre, this piece became a semi-structured arrangement of real people half immersing themselves in fictitious continuities. Attempts were made to unite with the audi-

ence first by expanding the 'set' to surround them, by making occasional verbal contact with them and most of all by 'imperfect' use of the technical elements. This involved equipment malfunctions, missed cues and other 'extra' ingredients thrown in by the director when it seemed they were needed. These 'flaws' happened spontaneously and contributed greatly to the general energy of the piece. More importantly they prevented any build up of fictitious bubbles and kept our focus on the reality of the situation which, according to the faces of most people afterwards, was quite fun.

"Continuity no. 2: 'The Life of Yvonne' from 'A Star is Born.' Yvonne enters in a housecoat. She prepares to occupy her time. She fries eggs, turns on the radio (FM), and turns on the TV. She becomes interested in the TV. She forgets about her eggs. They burn. She gets mad and turns the TV off. An angel appears and delivers an egg beater and bowl (his feather and cap). The angel is so bright that Yvonne can't look at him. The angel disappears behind a sheer curtain (from whence he came). Yvonne in the aftermath removes her housecoat and proceeds to beat her egg. When she has finished she exits through the sheer curtain. ■

Michael Belanger lives in Kingston, Ont.

Un festival de créations contemporaines regroupant des artistes, poètes, danseurs, et musiciens de Montréal.

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Toutes les représentations auront lieu au centre d'essai CONVENTUM, 1237 Sanguinet, (une rue à l'ouest de St-Denis) à 20h30.
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JE CHERCHE POUR
'Quoi de neuf?'

SALUT!

'Quoi de neuf?'

Theatre

I.O.U.

*A universal language
by Paul Clayton*

I.O.U.'s production has the same effect as a Rorschach Ink blot — it elicits a different response in every member of the audience. The group has the gift of being able to present on stage the essential, infinitely suggestible elements of people, animals, situations, to which the audience responds without realising that they are doing as much to create the gestalt as the players. It becomes difficult to distinguish between the actors, their props, and the space in which the action develops, all these sub-systems totally involved in a process of myth-making.

I.O.U., uses, in one sense, a universal language which appears at first sight to contain many of the universal mythological structures. Communication with the audience is mainly non-verbal, always extremely direct; a significant part of this almost certainly takes place on a sub-conscious level, the gestalt experience elicited by I.O.U. in each observer being private and unique, coloured by each observer's experience and recollections.

The mythological structures apparent in much of the group's work cannot be looked on merely as a borrowing or retranslation from the old mythologies. Rather, they represent I.O.U.'s understanding of, and sympathy for the human condition. But the similarities are certainly not accidental. The two main attempts to account for the universality of the major mythological themes are termed, respectively, the theories of diffusion and common experience. The first theory holds that the early myths were spread through the world by word of mouth, along migration and trade routes. This process has, in fact, been monitored fairly convincingly in the European sub-continent. But to explain the similarities in the mythologies of separate continents one must either postulate a Jungian collective subconscious, or wielding Occam's Razor, suggest that the



"Towers", Brighton Beach, 1977. I.O.U. Theatre

common myths represent attempts to understand and/or control common human experiences, both natural and socio-biological.

I.O.U. are very aware of the contemporary dichotomy between the intellectual and intuitive modes of perception. The dominant Western

world-view promotes the intellectual approach, based on categorisation, at the expense of the intuitive and emotional ways of understanding. Nowhere is this tendency clearer than in the clinical context. Important areas of intimate personal experience are devalued by, for ex-

photo: Mike Lave

Theatre

ample, the increasing trends towards the hospitalisation and artificial induction of births, and concomitant use of local or general anaesthesia (whether these are strictly necessary or not, whether women want these or not) and the discouragement of breast feeding.

There are numerous other examples of this creeping professionalism, a surrender of more and more experiences, or personal freedom of choice to narrow specialists — an invidious pressure on people not to become involved in the decision making process, an alienating and parasitic philosophy. Clinical specialists do not demystify the processes of life and death by making them scientific, they create a new mythology, a new and dangerous opacity. They are not interested in the transfer of information, unless between themselves.

I.O.U. is not trying to replace one mode of perception with another, they do not promote mysticism. Rather, by encouraging the audience to re-examine their own basic mythologies, to re-evaluate them, they attempt to marry the two approaches. They want to remind people of the strength and importance of basic human experience. They want to demystify and decentralise knowledge, and they are basically existentialist in that they demand that their audiences must learn to understand and trust their own experience, take more responsibility for their own decisions, and stop delegating their responsibilities to others supposedly more qualified to do so, and must stop accepting socio-political norms. ■

Paul Clayton, a neuro-chemist, has written about I.O.U.'s theatrical performances.

material from the former version of *Between the Floods*.

I.O.U. built a landscape in the outdoor courtyard of the Arts Lab — dramatic and austere, reflecting Birmingham's surrounding cityscape. Making use of both the ground level and the roof-level, I.O.U. constructed a canyon, with 20 ft. high green and brown cliffs surrounding a red sand ground dotted with muddy pools. On the cliff-tops were constructed many leaning, jagged, derelict towers, a menacing skyline. Directly behind these constructions the monolithic University of Aston towered against the night sky, itself bearing a skeleton tower and its windows starkly lit. Down on the ground level within the canyon the rooftop of a submerged house formed the central construction with a tall spindly tower growing from it and reaching to the cliff-tops. Built into the cliff wall was a living-room, an intimate interior, where three musicians were housed amongst paintings on the wall, clock on the shelf, etc. Then to the right of the canyon stood the wall of a deserted house, with flapping windows and bushes beneath the windows.

1. Lines of white linen are strung across the space, flapping in the wind, and it is in this deserted landscape that the musicians begin, with only their living-room lit, the strident song...

"In answer to the whirlwind
I have opened a path
and laid down his coat of mail.
A fathom-long body
is dying in the grain
of our ladder-climbings.
In answer to the whirlpool
I have made of the bridge
a stone necklace for his neck."

with violin, cello, bass drum and harmonium drone. Its form is an Indian gat on the Lydian mode with much room for florid instrumental improvisation.

2. The light comes up slowly on the ground, skimming the puddles, and several dark and heavily clad men shuffle forward from behind the sunken rooftop, pushing metal balls along the ground with poles, making furrows in the sand, and appearing from amongst the washing lines to finally meet one another.

The music played is "Tui sunt Coeli" — a mellow instrumental piece, using I.O.U.'s basic texture of

Between the Floods

Theatre in the landscape
a report by I.O.U.

I.O.U. includes Steve Gumbley, Di Davies, David Wheeler, Lizzie Lockhart, Lou Glandfield and Brodnax Moore.

I.O.U. arrived at Birmingham Arts Lab in early November to face a series of acute difficulties and restrictions with many and various official and bureaucratic bodies. An escalation of problems had recently occurred for the Arts Lab during the Pip Simmons residency, and I.O.U. inherited this build-up of difficulties and suffered a backlash from them. This meant that during our preparation period of 7th Nov. — 20th Nov. I.O.U. spent much time and energy in ironing out and clearing the way for all the practical requirements of the production of a show, having no choice but to work out of doors in extreme weather conditions and to continually fight obstructions and setbacks involving the police, fire prevention, University administration, and other interested parties. During this fortnight progress was made and a piece conceived and built whilst battling against every adversity. The resulting production — a second version of *Between the Floods: The Churning of the Milky Ocean* — differed greatly from the first version of the piece (Cardiff,



"Between the Floods" photo: Mike Laye
Sept./Oct. 1978), being harsher and decidedly wintry, portraying lives of hardship and struggle, with altogether less emphasis on the mellow or the lighthearted. New episodes, images, songs, sculpture, music were created and interwoven with some

Theatre



"Between the Floods", Cardiff, 1978. I.O.U. Theatre

photo: Mike Laye

two strings and harmonium, through which is discerned a counterpoint of elliptic melody. At one point chime bars take the place of the cello.

A shadowy figure in the midst of the white sheets operates swooping black crows. The figures congregate in the frugal early morning, make some unknown exchange, and disappear.

3. The cello remains. The hitherto rhythmic certainty is challenged and overthrown by eddies from wood and metal percussion. The sensation is of moving from one world to another, the cello making melodic references to "Tui Sunt Coeli" as well as to the song which follows.

A very tall female in black gowns is moving slowly forwards clutching a load and leading a feathery table, with wings, which flaps after her. This sinister pair emerge from among the washing and settle close by the audience in harsh light at the spot where the previous exchange was made. The tall woman crouches and a flap springs open in the table top. Out pops a white-haired young yet ancient head with distorting marks upon the face.

Raging is let loose with the song:

"Look! He waters his horses.
Woe to the trespasser.
Our bows play up and are
restless

Not caring for safety.
Confusion to the thrice-footed
Here you will get no fire
By catechism or din of metal.
Glad god who catches their
wasting limbs in
Baskets of Fire..."

egged on by cello and percussion. The head poking from the table-top mouths agonizingly throughout the song, forming quite different silent words. Musically the climax is at the finish of the song, at which point the tall woman stands up and the percussion reverts to a sinister pulse beneath cello flourishes. Eventually the cello floats in mood away from the savagery.

The tall woman removes her own head, revealing that of a brightly coloured bird beneath. This head she places on the table across from the trapped, mouthing head. The two white faces stare at one another. In between the two the woman deposits a sack and then clutching a large greasy saw she begins to saw the sack in two. Grain spills out. The head in the trapdoor begins straining to speak to the head on the other side of the table. The woman takes a handful of grain and crams it into the straining mouth. There is a sputtering. The frantic mouthing subsides, defeated. The woman grasps the wings of the table and binds them together with rope, then

crams the head back down into the table and leads it away.

4. Alap leading into jor. A new beginning. The washing-lines are drawn away. To the right from a door in the wall of the derelict house, a large sack rolls onto the floor and worms its way across the sand. From the tops of the cliffs another large sack begins slowly rolling down into the canyon, across the ground and up the other side.

The viola drones, and the texture is characterized by the guitar and a peculiar kind of ornamentation. The rag has two symmetrical tetrachords of flat 2nd and sharp 3rd, flat 6th and sharp 7th, associated perhaps with the early hours of the morning and feelings of joy.

5. There appear high up on the skyline strange animals rummaging about amongst the towers. Then two of these animals rush in below, calling. They settle down and finally crawl from their skins, leaving the skins standing like tents, and skulk behind bushes. Uprooting the bushes, they move across the sand holding the bushes in front of themselves, re-positioning to stalk some unknown quarry... Then from behind the sunken rooftop a figure enters wearing a huge animal head, lumbering and circling the space.

The rag, lasting thirteen minutes in all, has been introduced first in its harmonious aspects. The expecta-

Theatre

tions of a major scale are then gradually confounded as the darker ingredients are revealed. Cello and guitar pick up on each other's phrases.

On the skyline a castle rears into view amongst the towers, and an archer rises within it, poised with his bow. The two bush figures reach for bows hidden in the sand . . . From the castle an arrow is fired at the animal, and then many more follow from the bushes. The animal falls to the ground, and then there is darkness below. Suddenly, from one of the towers a babble is heard while the music continues and a cluster of tiny puppet-figures emerge from the top of the tower, clamouring, and hurling hats into the air.

The light brightens again below and the two hunters come out from their hiding places, close in on their prey, prodding it and removing its head. Without its head the animal is human and alike the hunters themselves. The archer from the castle arrives, they all drink together and cut lots, whereby a new prey is chosen from amongst these to be hunted down. In this way the hunters themselves become the hunted. The newly appointed animal blindly makes its way out of the encampment; the rest of the group gather up their skins, bushes and bows and follow after it.

6. The focus of attention is reduced to a minute detail as a light goes on in the sunken rooftop and a hand appears below the chimney, groping its way around. By contrast the music strikes up with a grandly resounding brass Canzona for violin, trumpet and bass trumpet. The hand reaches unsuccessfully towards a nest on top of the chimney and then disappears. The nest shakes, then falls, then a chimney-sweeps brush appears, dislodging the nest, and golden eggs rain down.

7. The sound of whipping. From the end of the derelict house wall a line of four dwarfed 'matrons' are brought on by the viola and cello in unison introtit. The matrons wear decoratively painted masks and stiff dance dresses. When they have formed into a square the sedate music launches them into a dance in which they systematically beat each other. The music — *China Seas* — is in variation form. Cello and viola politely and menacingly entwine to complete individual phrases between

them. Spasmodically the matrons aspire to the music's formal grace, until their dance culminates in the surrounding of the sunken rooftop where the four of them beat out the sound of increasingly dense rainfall. A trapdoor in the rooftop springs open and a stiff dog or hog is hurled out. The matrons drag it forwards and then beat it in turn as they storm out.

8. In face of this violent order there springs up the sound of a nonchalant lone steel drum. Legs are appearing through the trapdoor as the last of the matrons disappears from view. The legs struggle further to reveal a strange figure who lands on his hands with his feet in the air.

The up-side-down-man walks in curious relation to the already syncopated pan. He retrieves his pet and carries it held high between his boots back to his house. After while a bleak melodic line is laid over the steel drumming by the viola, later to be joined in eerie unison by the cello — *Umber Reaches*.

9. Meanwhile a man enters the landscape, pushing with difficulty a heavily-laden bicycle. It bears a contraption arranged as an abstract group of figures. On arrival he plants a flag at the apex of the sunken rooftop. Then he extricates carlocks from his load and places them in position on the red sand.

By now the melody has subsided, leaving the percussion to take off in rich polyrhythms with the addition of a second steel drum, home-made tubular bells and paraffin tins. With deliberation the man changes his garb and stands, now more imposing, by his bicycle, waiting.

10. As he stands a train enters, moving extremely slowly, close up in front of the audience. A song begins:

"No word for fire —
we dwell amongst parched

papers,
so brittle the skin of our arms.
No sound of water-clocks,
to tempt the afternoon,
nor whet the appetite.
With endless games,
with endless games,
there is no need for flame."

Within the song, the harmonium and strings begin a sequence of block chords with a slow heavy pulse, while the train glides in, disembodied, in silence.

The train has two compartments.

A man and woman are seated in the first, while a brick wall whizzes past their window incessantly. In the second section a woman stands in the corridor. The train is pulled laboriously by a porter. The passengers involve themselves patiently in minute activities and there is an air of resignation and inevitability — a long, long journey just reaching its destination.

As if to cater for the humanness of the newly arrived cargo, the last three musical pieces are full and emotionally loaded. All have the texture of two strings and harmonium. Towards the end of *No Word for Fire*, the violin joins with the impassioned singer in a high bird-like recitation.

As the train pulls in, the curtain is lifted on the window and in the passageway and a brick wall is also visible there. A gush of steam, the train reverses a little and stops. The porter opens the doors and through the doors can be seen the ceremonially dressed man by his bicycle awaiting their arrival. The passengers step out and line up with their luggage. The train draws away.

The 'pardonner' calls them forward one by one and leads them to his construction where they are seated on their luggage on the ground and a pair of oars placed in their hands. During this slow dreamlike sequence *Between the Floods* is sung, a communion hymn, undulating in three-part counterpoint. . .

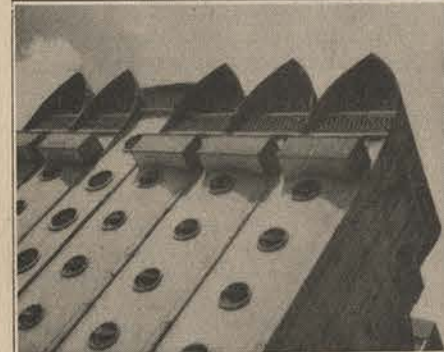
"A year to last night, I have
lodged here in branches,
from the flood tide to the
ebb tide,
naked the rind of me torn,
and pierced with thorns.
God has given me life here,
very bare, very narrow—
no woman, no trysting, no
music,
nor trance-eyed sleep."

The pardonner brings them two oars each and covers them over with a blue cloth. Reaching for his flag he stands waving in time as they start to slowly row. The musicians play *Red hair and wild garlic*, a spacious and poignant air which they vary and ornament as they play. The last rendering of the air has a shadowy substance while the rowing continues in fading light; the illusion of flowing movement, of a journey without end, is at once tragic and hopeful. ■

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA

WAS OUR FIRST BIG MISTAKE

MESSAGE FROM VENEZUELA Tom Sherman



The story begins in Toronto in the Winter of 1979. I had just come back from a month in Venezuela. The cabbie told me it had been below zero (Fahrenheit) for a couple of weeks. My eyes were watering from the cold in the back of his orange and black Plymouth. And the cold wouldn't let up much in the weeks to come. The Body Politic Trial was over. Toronto's reaction still popped around in the media. The local media starves over the winter in Toronto. Due to hibernation there's not much lifestyle to mirror. Things were very slow and the announcement of the Federal Election wouldn't come for a couple of months. From The Big Trial on, things were winding down. The first week in February, the cold wave broke just in time to leave everyone in Toronto in a State of Severe and Hopeless Depression. Various strains of influenza crystallized in the throats and on the lips of the wet and cold. And in and on the dry and warm, as well as on the slick and business-like. Plenty of stomachs were upset. From my perspective, I could have sworn it was worse than it actually was.

Toronto is the City in North America with the Absolute Corporate Look and Feel. The "ACLF" is

pinned down by the penultimate Male Totem of Power and Potency. The Sex Symbol of Control. *The Canadian National Tower*. And its skyline companions, the Banks, are the skyscrapers. Metro is clean as a dream. Meanwhile, down at the base of the highest form of Corporate Iconography, the Immigrants scurry around capturing neighborhood after neighborhood. The common architecture is British-Americanese, like everything else. When it's not too cold there are swarms of people on the streets. Toronto is a safe city. The city is protected by a 'European style' Police force. That is, the Police are high profile. They are everywhere in their bright yellow cars. More Police than the officials know what to do with. The crime rate simply hasn't gone up in Metro the way it has in the other urban centers of the West.

Since the beginning of the new year, most New Yorkers have been afraid to go down in their subways. Gangs of vicious teens are beating commuters into bloody corpses and pushing senior citizens onto the tracks (thank you Anthony Burgess for your book *A Clockwork Orange*) or setting women on fire after they've raped them twice (thank you Alain Robbe-Grillet for your *Project for a Revolution in New York*, another book). The newspapers are blaming a couple of movies. I thought there was a major epidemic of rape in Toronto's newspapers, until I took a stroll through Washington Square. The word 'rape' was in almost every sentence of graffiti I read. The writers were threatening to kill. The women were promoting the idea that as a sex they were armed to the hilt.

Graffiti on a whole in New York was becoming less decorative and much more than a territorial signature. There were messages a good paragraph long. In English and

- 8:00 **2 RADIO ROCHELA.** Programa cómico. Con Tito Martínez del Box y el elenco cómico del canal.
- 4 TIGRES VOLADORES.** Serie de acción.
- 5 LOS GRANDES EXPLORADORES.** Hoy: Stanley.
- 8:30 **8 CADA NOCHE UN ESTRENO.** Largometraje.
- 9:00 **2 EL ANGEL REBELDE.** Telenovela. Con Mayra Alejandra y Miguel Angel Landa.
- 4 MARIA DEL MAR.** Telenovela de Delia Fiallo. Con: Chelo Rodríguez, Herminia Martínez y Arnaldo André.
- 5 GRANDES CLASICOS.** Programa

Spanish. These messages were as bound to embarrass the liberals as they were to be completely ignored by the swanky upper class. Some of these social critiques were signed both by name and copyright sign.

As insignificant as this may seem at this moment, Canadians control the humour of America through their unqualified success in New York. From *The National Lampoon* to NBC's *Saturday Night Live*, Canadian writers and performers have been able to pass for 'Americans' laughing at themselves. Americans do find these other 'Americans' laughing at themselves very funny. This is because an American cannot laugh at himself. American women used to be better able to find humour in their own behaviour, but those days are gone for quite a while. In the service of teaching Americans to find their very 'Yankeeeness' amusing, the Canadian humourists, like the Brits, have cashed in on their own sadistic and masochistic love of American humiliation. The Americans can take the tease of the whip so long as there is blood drawn from the races of lower International esteem within their mass. The Jews of New York are certain *Saturday Night Live* is a local TV show because of the number of minutes of degrading attention they regularly receive. Americans and Canadians have trouble making



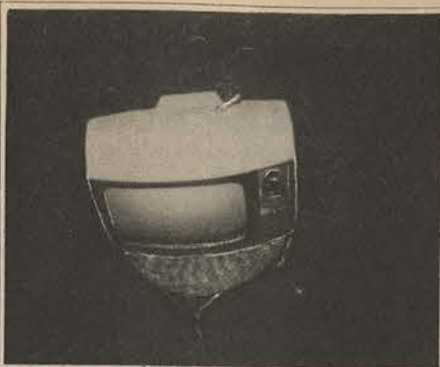
photos: Tom Sherman

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fun of the British because they can't do British accents. Canadians feel as though they have an identity problem because American humourists do not pick on them. They are overlooked simply because Americans have trouble picking up Canadian accents. Through their very limited exposure, Americans know about the Mounties, the Beavers, the Eskimos, and the Margaret Factor and Prime Minister Trudeau and his struggle with Quebec. And of course they know the Montreal Canadiens. I've deliberately left the Quebecois out of this, as I feel there is a whole other story in the Montreal, Ottawa and Washington relationship. Perhaps there will be yet another time for these other places.

While the greatest living Canadian humourist is unquestionably Marshall McLuhan, not Dan Aykroyd or Michael Snow or Donald Sutherland (nominated for his grim fascist performance in Bertolucci's *1900*), Mr. McLuhan used to be a much funnier man than he is today. While "The Medium is the Message" is still a top-notch one-liner, McLuhan has been guilty recently (he should be ashamed) of mystifying human perception with the cheap synap(sic) jingle, "The gap is where it is at". A younger, more sensitive McLuhan might have cracked instead, "The imagination lies somewhere between body language and mental telepathy." Or, he might have informed the many Americans who still take him seriously, "the all-time greatest American humourist was not Samuel Clemens, but was his good friend Nichola Tesla, a Yugoslavian immigrant." A scientist and performer by profession, Tesla had a laboratory in Manhattan on Houston Street. On one evening in particular, he was shaking material things up on a vibrating platform to find their resonate frequencies and to study their behaviour under such sympathetic vibrations. The writer Mark Twain requested a personal demonstration. Twain stood on the platform and begged for a healthy buzz. His wish was granted. The platform was really humming and Twain could do nothing but squeal for more. Tesla warned him to get off before it was too



late. Due to the exact frequency of the platform's vibration, Twain shit his pants laughing in one suddenly involuntary sphincter release. Nicholas Tesla, Yugoslavian immigrant, scientist and great American humourist.

So . . . (as the Canadian influence packages New York from the inside out). . . Meanwhile way down South, at the very tip of the North American continent, we find the oil rich Venezuelans purchasing whatever a half million Cuban refugees don't want in Miami. I'm not exactly saying that the Hispanic way is in the States to sway, but there is some kind of powerful Latin influx. . . just as strong as direct migration can be. It makes me wonder if the threat of killer bees was a profane racial slur injected into the public domain by Media Scientists taking up office space in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington. The men we see in U.S. propaganda films wearing white lab coats, sporting stiff sprayed back dry-look-disco hairstyles anchored to their set jaws with those awful Early American sideburns. What a cultural history to have to protect! And what better way to keep the Latino's down than through U.S. Government endorsed entomological metaphor. But wait just a minute! Of all the horrible rumours the Americans have managed to spread to the discredit of the Hispanic people, the most common misconception promoted by the authors of these sick cultural jokes has been that the Latin Americans are basically inept when it comes to advanced technology. I've heard Americans argue many times, "not only do they lack the technology and the knowhow, they will never know how." In order to find the embodiment of the conflicting truth, I had only to go as far as Miami.

We Move Closer Technically Speaking

Is it Video or is it Film? Sunbathing in the winter. Here I am. Sitting up here on the 5th story sun roof of a White Motor Hotel. Taking in the (squint-eyed) panoramically framed view of the quiet middle of the afternoon light. Laid back in a chaise longue, drinking a gin and tonic, interviewing Maria Del Mar, greater Miami artist and successful media entrepreneur. I'm the one who is staying in this Hotel. I'm living it up on the magazine's expense account. Maria preferred to come to meet me. She said she was looking for a reason to get out of the house. As well as being the 11th wonder of the world, Maria is a very active artist who works directly with the highest forms of available technology in a potentially full creative sense. She loves her equipment and the machinery she designs really puts out for her. Skip Olson, a flashy micro-programmer from Boca Raton (educated at Cal Tech under Harold Proctor) does most of Maria's super tech. It was actually Olson who put the 'final touches' on Maria's "Spinal Ray Gun". The "SRG" is an electro-acoustic transducer that literally makes the body, as Maria says, 'speak in tongues' from head to toe. This 'fun gun' is based on Olson's patented (1975) digitally focussed transductive 'floating head assembly'. Make no mistake, the "SRG" was Maria's own invention, and still is.

She has been working with various acoustic transduction techniques since emigrating to the United States from Caracas in 1974. Maria explained that she had felt stifled by the total lack of activity in the experimental technical arts in her native Venezuela. She originally landed in New York where she found work with Pan American Airlines (on the ground) while she looked for the access she needed to continue her work in the States. It took only six months for Maria to decide New York was not for her. Her move to Miami in the winter of 1975 was based on the weather, and as it turned out it was a stroke of good luck. She ran into Skip at a mini-computer conference that same winter. He was lecturing on his developing digital focussing mechanisms. His 'floating head assembly' proved to be the missing interface between Maria's transductive ideas and the spine of the general public. . .

. . . As she has just taken the real thing out of her purse, Maria Del Mar's "Spinal Ray Gun" looks like a cross between an electric 'finishing' sander and a 'Princess phone' at this reading. Ivory. Although they have taken the idea quite a ways, the machine is obviously still at the prototype stage. What the "SRG" is, in plain English, is a very articulate and powerful vibrator held firmly in place at the base of the spine by a thick nylon belt around the waist. A smaller control unit, looking a lot like a miniature cassette recorder, is connected by cable to the "SRG". When I say the "SRG" is articulate, I mean it is capable of 'injecting' a wide frequency of vibrations into the central nervous system with a sophisticated articulation of power far beyond the actual surface transduction. I am not talking about fancy massage. As I have said, this 'floating head assembly' developed by Olson, without practical application before Maria figured out the way, bestows the "SRG" with its awesome potential. Olson's 'head' enables vibrations to be injected into the sensitive base of the spinal column with just about all the depth and power you can imagine. The physical interface of the transducer itself is a 4 x 7 inch soft rubber pad, perfectly smooth on the surface. Apparently, underneath this pliable pad, which fits any lower back perfectly, is over an inch layer of 'liquid crystal membranes'. These 'membranes' undulate under directive electrical stimulation to form concentrations of pressure 'local' by frequency. This 'locality by frequency' is the key to the "SRG". It is as if this 'floating head' is an electrostatic body of liquid pressure. Behind this 'floating head' is the power transducer, which is an electromechanical vibrator set to a control frequency of approximately 15,000 cycles per second. Maria wouldn't tell me the exact frequency of her control vibration. These 'localities of frequency' set up in the 'head assembly' are directed by digital computer according to the programme Maria chooses to insert into the cable connected remote control unit. That's right. Maria creates her own programmes for the "Spinal Ray Gun" to play back in any body. As I thought out as much as she would tell me about the specifics of the "SRG", I came up with a hitch in her sketchy elucidation. She wanted to strap the thing on me — I just wanted to talk

it through a bit more before I committed myself. I told her I thought the rubber interface pad would transfer with restrictive uniformity any such diversity of said to be 'local frequencies' behind it. Why? Because of the absorbent qualities of the rubber interface itself. It was at least a quarter of an inch thick. So that makes the "SRG" just a vibrator. So "thanks, but no thanks, Maria." She told me I did not understand how the machine worked and unfortunately she could tell me no more. I did get her to admit that the control frequency functioned as some sort of bottom for a deep shaping of these various 'frequency locales'. I can only speculate that the device induces a sympathetic flow of bio-electrical current through the deceptively fluid channel of the spinal cord. As resonance is achieved, the initial charge is in all probability reissued on the neuro-microscopic level of the ganglia and below. But in order to make *only* the smallest things move, this would have to take us into the radio spectrum. And the fact that the thing is called a 'Ray Gun'. I don't know. I don't trust her.

The first time I was under the 'Gun', I was lying face down on my bed with only my swimsuit on. Maria sat in a chair by the open balcony window. She held the control unit in her lap as she talked me into her first programme. As gentle as her voice was, I was very apprehensive. "Ataques de amor" (my translation, "Needles of Love") was just another mini-cassette until she ran it through the "SRG" and into my entire body. It was the first tape she had ever made for the "SRG". She explained how rough it was as she turned up the volume. It was all I could do to keep from inhaling the sheet I was laying on! "Oh my God" was what I would have said, had I been able to exhale. I can't begin to tell you what she was doing to me. "Ataques de amor", she told me after, was just under 4 minutes long. I had no sense of time, as I had never been on top of the sensation. I asked her why the word 'love' was in the title. She said there was 'love' because of the 'hug of the chest' effected by the 'needles' penetration. From the smile on her face I knew I should get up, but this was the most interesting position I had been in in a long long time. I asked her what was next. She seemed to lower her voice for "Un hombre que está muriendo nunca se

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equivoca" ("A Dying Man is Never Wrong"). It was only 2 minutes long, but all I can remember coming out of it was that my hands . . . wait, my arms were straight out to my sides and my legs were also straight with my feet resting slightly apart. All I can remember is that my hands and feet seemed to press *themselves* into the mattress and I felt like I was rising from my centre as if my ass was being lifted by a crane. After I had come down, I checked the bed. I could tell from the lack of wrinkles in the sheet that I hadn't moved an inch. Then she took me through a piece called "El ultimo suspiro" ("Swan Drive"). It made me cry. It was very beautiful, in its own way. On the way out of "El ultimo suspiro", I could remember being briefly conscious of a plateau of pleasurable sensation before the plunge I had to forget. She was explaining to me that these things she did (through me, in this case) did not have composition in a normal sense, but that time was simply filled until it passed away. I never even considered getting up from the bed. I wanted "El ultimo suspiro" again. The second time through I found myself dancing — at least I thought I was dancing. My eyes felt as if they were opened, but I could not see. I remembered — actually I heard her voice playfully chanting "Me divierte ver el gringo bailar" ("I love to see the stranger dance"). How was I to know "El ultimo suspiro" was a comedy? It was over. Maria was sitting with her eyes closed, her lips cracking a smile as she laughed with her arms and legs crossed. I rolled over on my side. I could feel the power cord of the "SRG" twist between my thighs as I undid the belt and removed the heavy "Gun". All I could think to ask her was what did she do before she did this. She had done video and she had done TV. In Caracas in the early seventies. What was it like there? She said, "the television in Venezuela is very bad. The video in Caracas is not bad." She said, "take my word for it. Not bad but is." I left the next morning on a flight to Caracas. I had a story to write there. This is it. Here we are. At the end. ■

Ideology

Political Content in Art

The erosion of "internationalism"
by Kenneth Coutts-Smith

During the last week in February, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design hosted a joint conference of the University Art Association of Canada and the Canadian section of the International Art Critics Association. One of the highlights of the conference programme was the panel Political Content in Contemporary Art, chaired by NSCAD Press Director Benjamin Buchloh. Position papers were presented by Bruce Barber, Jody Berland, Karl Beveridge, Kenneth Coutts-Smith and Greg Curnoe. Both the pertinence and the controversial nature of the subject matter may be gauged by the fact that the ensuing public debate extended a session originally programmed for two and a half hours to a five and a half hour period. This session was only curtailed by the beckoning dinner tables over which the discussion continued to flow. CENTERFOLD here prints one of the papers presented.

At the very outset of this discussion, I believe that it is important for us to disabuse ourselves of the idea (the essentially mythical idea) that it is only a particular type of art which embodies political content, that engages itself with political concepts and assumptions, that propagates and reinforces political attitudes, and that this specific type of art stands in some sort of stance of confrontation with a neutral mainstream of visual culture as a radical and militant art of protest and socialistic propaganda.

Bourgeois ideology maintains (quite logically, if you think about it) that the complex of attitudes and assumptions which go to make up its value-system are somehow rooted outside of history and operate beyond social mutation, that this structure of values is in no way based on political ideas but is one that reflects absolute verities and truths concerning a fundamental and basic "human nature".

It is generally felt that these as-

sumptions (such assumptions, for instance, as propose the para-social and subjective uniqueness of each separate individual and the existence of "territorial" urges towards competitiveness between these individuals) are fundamental to the very condition of being alive; they are also ultimately seen as being common both to a postulated absolute condition and to the value system of liberal democracy.

In this way, bourgeois ideology does not understand itself as an ideology at all, but as the embodiment of the natural, correct, just and inevitable condition of man in his relationship with his fellow creatures. Politics, in short, from the bourgeois focus (a point of view that axiomatically limits legitimate political activity to the simplistic dimension of consensus electoral proceedings) is an activity engaged in by others. It is an activity engaged in by "extremists", by incomprehensible beings who wish, for their own obscure personal and pathological reasons, to overturn the sane and natural order of things. Politics is thus an activity that is regarded as being essentially unreasonable, essentially irrational.

The ideology of the artistic avant-garde (and it is clearly possible to deduce such a complex of validation and reinforcement) with its sanctified models, with its imperatives inherent in the myth of the artist as rebel and hero, with its impetus towards a mystical sublimation of experience, also postulates artistic activity as being absolute, as being an activity that takes place outside of history and social change.

The conventional view of art is one that insists, (though it is true it does so in a veiled and mystifying manner) upon the basic a-historicity of artistic culture. The very discipline of art-history, through a categorisation process that tends to isolate paradigms and exemplars, that defines the parameters of "high" culture as being distinct and superior to the larger matrix of "social" culture,

that isolates and elevates visual style, tends to separate formal manifestations of visual culture from the underlying socio-economic factors which they both reflect and validate.

The de-notation of visual culture, that process which sublimates the socio-cultural referents and impetus of a visual artefact into an aesthetics of pure structure, which subsumes absolutely, in short, content into form, is presently becoming increasingly evident across the whole spectrum of artistic activity. This explicit concretisation of an aesthetic standpoint, which earlier was implicit and obscured, begins to reveal the underlying political focus of avant-garde (or, rather, what should now be defined as "post-avant-garde") ideology.

We are all aware that the organisation and structure of the institutions of visual art have undergone remarkable changes in recent years. The corporatisation of culture which has developed during the last two decades has now achieved, as it were, an extraordinary, and perhaps terminal, state of density and opacity. Museums clearly no longer stand as repositories of historical culture, as the visualisation of the liberal-humanist conception of the inevitable and upward evolution from barbarism to "civilisation", but as shrines dedicated to a static present, to the sanctification of the *status-quo*.

Some years ago, the late-1960s radical sensibility focused its frustration on symptoms, on surface phenomena rather than on the underlying determinate social relations. Agitation was directed towards an attempt to "democratise", to open up for "participation", the various cultural institutions of consumer society — from universities to art galleries, to funding agencies. The demand was for "representation on the Board." The enemy was the market place, the greedy dealer, the corrupt critic or curator.

Now, however, the essential political and imperialist nature of the support structure is more transparent. The supposed "internationalism" of modern art was first put to serious question by Kozloff and Cockcroft six years ago when they analysed the official American promotion of abstract expressionism as a national

tactic in the Cold War *realpolitik*. The revelations of a direct relationship between the mythical (or at least severely limited, due to class considerations) "freedom" claimed by the ideology of capitalist competitive free-enterprise and the "aesthetic and cultural freedom" supposedly enjoyed by the avant-garde, effectively negated the idea of the neutrality of modern art.

With the present complete erosion of confidence in the earlier New York hegemony over "world" art, and the resultant increasing penetration of critical mystification, the notion of an authentic *internationale* of modernist visual culture collapses. In respect of our own immediate reaction here in Canada to this development, the response appears to be one either of complete disorientation or of a headlong flight into regionalism, into the contradictory and paradoxical search for a local iconographic justification of the "international" concept.

Outside of North America the idea of a world visual culture that is increasingly revealed to be based on European models is being severely challenged. The most important global fact today on the political plane is the developing confrontation between the Third and the First Worlds; and the whole issue of neo-colonialism is inevitably being contested on the cultural as well as on the economic planes.

It is pertinent, in this context, to remember that the most important, or at least the loudest and most persuasive, proponent of the dogma of one unifying world visual culture spanning time (all recorded history from the Paleolithic to the present) as well as space (the whole ethno-complex from Shamanism to Computer Art), was André Malraux; he was also De Gaulle's senior lieutenant in the consolidation of neo-colonialism, the embodiment, the very personification of French culture, and thus of the central mystification of modernist cultural ideology. One small incident serves to demonstrate the extent and pervasiveness of this mystification. In 1959, Malraux was dispatched by De Gaulle on a State visit to French colonies and ex-colonies to secure the economic and cultural links necessary to neo-colonialism. On his visit to Fort-de-France, capital of the French Antilles, the roving ambassa-

dor was received by none other than the great revolutionary poet of negritude, Aimé Césaire, who, at that time, was the mayor of the city. The novelist of revolution was received by the poet of anti-imperialism with these words: "I salute in your person the great French nation to which we are so passionately attached."

Can we speak of the political neutrality of modernist 'high' culture? It seems evident that we cannot. Rather, we find ourselves obliged to recognise contradictions that demand to be penetrated and resolved; not least, that particular contradiction evident between the claim of an avant-garde to represent absolute extra-historical value and the activity of that same avant-garde when it operates concomitantly as an ideological factor within history.

The most pervasive and persuasive myth of bourgeois culture is that of the encapsulated individualism of the artist, the notion of the ideal creative posture being that which is adopted by the artist as rebel and hero. The whole tradition of modernist visual culture for at least a hundred and thirty years has insisted on this voluntarist and sacramental role for the artist. The political significance of the myth becomes evident when we consider this complex of role-projection and self-view in the light of the competitive imperatives of the consumer society. The cultural sanctification of the closed world of extreme individualism clearly justifies and validates models for existing social formations.

We are surely all familiar with the process of political reinforcement that appears to have now appropriated practically the whole of television programming. Whether it be the vulgar simplicities of the "Six Million Dollar Man" and "Mary Tyler Moore" or the relative sophistication of "Lou Grant", programmes constantly return to a common thematic preoccupation: suffering and redemption from suffering as the objectification of individual action conditional upon free choice.

There is, it is true, a constant recognition that all is not well in the world, a recognition not so clearly admitted in similar programming a few years ago when the social and class contradictions were not quite so acute as they are today, but, in these fictionalised situations (in the

domain of art), never, never is the social system placed at question: all wrong and all pain is always seen to stem from the actions of villainous individual persons, whereas the redemption of wrong and pain is always accomplished by the actions of heroic individual persons.

Only the most gullible among us can fail to observe the political content of popular Admass culture, yet most of us dismiss this phenomenon as the result of the inevitable vulgarities of popular taste. Art, "high" culture, is surely something different from this. It is elevated immeasurably beyond; it is sanctioned by tradition. Certainly, one is political; but the other is neutral. Observing the extremes — the polarisation of "All in the Family" with, say, the sublime spiritualisation of Post-Painterly Abstraction — it is possible to maintain an absolute distinction of type. But what about the gray areas that connect the two? We cannot observe any terminator, any boundary upon one side of which we may well note a political content that reinforces the *status quo*, while upon the other side of which we mysteriously discover ourselves to be in the heady mental space of complete neutrality.

Of course we accept the notion that some "high" art is concerned with a political content. Indeed that acceptance conditions our very presence here in this room. We are engaged in discussing the implications, the potentiality, even the tactics, of an art dedicated to political action. But, the point is: we tend to see this as a special and contained aspect of the continuum of art. As art historians and as art critics, and the particular junction of U.A.A.C. and A.I.C.A. here offers an interesting and rare focus, we tend to perpetuate this schismatic perspective. Political content in Contemporary Art? Ah! Social Realism, of course, agitational art, murals! In the historical perspective, embedded in the continuum of aesthetic neutrality is found the eccentric phenomenon, phenomenon understood merely as the creation of disparate individuals: Futurism, factographic art, tendentious art!

These, of course, are extremely important issues, and I'm certainly not attempting to denigrate their significance and crucial immediate relevance: I assume, and I hope, that we shall be

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discussing these issues at length throughout this afternoon and beyond. I merely wish to enter a certain perspective into the debate which takes into account the political content (and I mean *content* quite literally) of the contemporary art of the mainstream. For myself, I am firmly convinced that a re-reading of the theoretical texts of Symbolism (I think here specifically of G. Albert Aurier), in the light of the questionable neutrality of modernism, will be revealing in this regard. The progressive sublimation of

content into mystical transcendence is surely a phenomenon that must be explained by a process that is much more complex than the essentially a-historical interpretation as offered by Chipp, by Arnesen and by the others with which we continue to confuse art students.

It is perhaps, the very erosion of the idea of "internationalism" in art that permits us to observe the working of ideology in both criticism and art history: only at the present point of disintegration does it become possible for us to read the political di-

mension; and read it we must in terms of the mainstream tradition if we are to make any headway with what I take to be one of the present central preoccupations of art today; the collective development of both perspective and tactics towards an art practice committed frankly to social and political change in a world that is fast becoming intolerable. ■

Kenneth Courtts-Smith, art historian, artist and former Associate Editor of Art and Artists, is currently living in Toronto.



photo: Robin Collyer

Survival

Replacement or Alternative? by Clive Robertson

Paper presented to the panel "Art and Ideology" which took place at the University of Ottawa, March 31st, 1979. The panel included Karl Beveridge, Carole Conde, Donald Kuspit, Greg Curnoe, Alan Sondheim and Clive Robertson.

Though no specific parameters were requested, a looseness in the title Art and Ideology requires a certain tuning so that one can perhaps make audible a concrete tone. I want to make certain observations about what could be called a near-ideological change that has occurred in Canada. I am going to refer to the growth of artist-controlled organisations, and specifically those who appeared to have obtained control over curatorial, distribution and critical systems. I am going to attempt to indicate why in Canada those artist-run organisations are stronger than those for instance in the States or in England. I am also going to indicate their self-limiting growth and briefly to suggest that

they can fail by not realising their own ideological strength.

It seems important to state from the beginning that ideology as it can be applied to the current state of Canadian art is not some apolitical theory based upon the study of art ideas, their nature and their source. Intellectual theory as it applies to art is not I propose some sweet-smelling, take-it-or-leave-it-valentine but more a form of struggle between cultural ideologists, be they artists, art historians or art educators. These people, ourselves, ideologize their platforms in the halls of private and state patronage and presumably among the artist community at various levels.

As can be witnessed from the make-up of this panel there has been a considerable blurring of what has been called the 'ideological manager's' role. The traditional art historian has evolved to become the practicing critic, sometimes with curatorial powers often engaged as a government investment consultant, functioning as a short-term philosopher with a long-term visibility. The artist has evolved from being artist-autobiographer to artist-critic,

artist-unionist, artist-curator, artist-publisher and again most noticeably in Canada as a government programming consultant, often functioning as a short-term philosopher with a long-term visibility.

The rationale of such ideologists becomes a form of currency within a society that maintains a cultural status quo while allowing a limited envelope of cultural and social change. This simply means that there is room for development in the arts based upon the knowledge that such change will not upset or really affect the balance of the ornamental role of the dominant culture. As we will see this applies also to the real position and achievement of artist-run organisations.

If we look randomly we can see that these organisations have had little or no effect on the educational system. This educational or non-educational system is maintained not by some government plot but merely the conservative and reformist nature of artists in general, who themselves ideologically agree with the status quo — even if they voice illusory objections for they are, and they do, independently work to maintain the

Ideology

value system of a liberal democracy. Some educational programming of video, performance and new music has been sparsely introduced, but the programming itself is not the challenging constituent.

So it can be assumed that the change of practice that I am referring to was not a continuation of the avant-garde. It was not a formalist extension. It cannot be tacked onto the end of a list which includes New Realism, Conceptual Art, Sociological Art, Behaviourist Art, Body Art and so on. The practice of artist-run organisations which in Canada directly affected a change in the means of distribution of art is not infallible, is not indestructible, but its achievement as a practice are worth looking at.

As I have said the growth of artist organisations is substantially different in Canada than it has been in the States. I think the following factors support this observation of difference:

1. There was not an art metropolis, a monolithic center for contemporary art in Canada.

2. There was not a battalion of contemporary critics within Canada who by solidarity could suggest that they knew what would be best for artists.

3. There was for perhaps a six-year period enough economic surplus to allow government funding to be used for so-called 'marginal' art activity. This was not their label. To be fair art such as video, performance and artist publications were to be treated as counter-cultural products to paintings, concertos and novels. That those new forms could be capable of social agitation was recognised perhaps with the prediction that their function would more likely be to de-fuse artists' anarchist dilemmas and romanticised bohemia.

4. The artist population was comparatively smaller in Canada and therefore the available 'new arts' funding could be shared proportionately.

5. The artists who developed such organisations initially were inspired by a true network of exchange and collaboration which had developed prior to the availability of federal funding. Which is to say that artists invested in their own collectives and established them independently.

6. Canadian artists played a direct advisory role in the initiation of new

arts festival funding programmes.

7. That these organisations saw themselves not as alternatives but replacements for the previous system of commercial galleries, public galleries, so-called independent art magazines, so-called community access media facilities and so on.

In the U.S. the artist-run model soon lost its ideological gains. Many of its initiators were merely entrepreneurs who saw a way of curatorial training that would be invaluable when the time came for transferring the new art content to so-called progressive museums. Which is not to say that this process has not happened in Canada. However the curatorial drift here has not been as noticeable as the melting of artists themselves back into an institutional system that treats them tokenistically, with controlled contempt.

I am suggesting that at its base the artist-organisations found an ideological strength. The growth of the artist space was "a social rejection of the alienation created in the

sixties that demanded the subjective uniqueness of each separate individual and the existence of territorial urges towards competitiveness between these individuals."* It might not have been seen in Canada as quite that way. The network was however the personal connection of artists finding similar working interests, similar loosely-definable content and ways of complementary support on an exchange basis initially connecting Vancouver with Toronto, with later extensions regionally. However its own initial definition was that of a counter-culture a position that could and would become contaminated from a multitude of external and internal sources. Understandable personal pride in new products created a market for such production, a market which did not necessarily have to be filled. Ironically the control of distribution was subverted by a loss of control of production. The social process itself was strained with the encouragement for the products to become public, to be verified, to be validated, not within their own artists-system but back into the museums, the art magazines and the prestigious overseas showplaces.

By allowing such a social process to become part of the traditional cultural pattern was not inevitable, is not inevitable.

As a long-time participant in that process I can see that the lesson can still be learned. As that past period of expansionist economics is declining, as the content has been robbed essentially from those spaces, there is, at this moment, a very definite need for artists to retract the notion of short-cuts to the established art system. It is not a two-way funnel. The distinctions between the mature and established performing arts block in Canada and the immature art-system and adolescent art system are visible. The relative position of the latter two are now at, I would suggest, a stage of pivotal development with regard to each other, and their individual outcome. Artist-run organisations in Canada are in a position of ideological strength that is *not* dependant on economics. Governments, and government's various cultural agencies have yet to fully comprehend this. ■

*Kenneth Courtts-Smith

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Dance



The Toronto Sun

Stripping - a personal view

An interview with Margaret Dragu by Randy and Bernicci

Editor's note:

In recent months in Toronto C.A.B.E. (Canadian Association of Burlesque Entertainers) has been formed. Presently there are over 50 members, including both male and female exotic dancers, strippers; topless waitresses are not eligible for membership in the Association. Dianne Michaels, president of the Association, says that the most immediate concerns of the group are to get sections 169, 170 and 171 of the Criminal Code more clearly defined by the Attorney General's Office. These sections apply to nudity and form the basis for strippers being arrested. According to Michaels, without a clearer definition of what constitutes 'nudity' (g-string or not, pubic hair or not)

a dancer never knows when she is liable to get arrested.

The Association is also pressing for enforcement of sections 21 and 22 of the Criminal Code. These sections make it a criminal offense to aid and abet the commission of a crime. If these sections were enforced, club owners who make complete nudity a condition of employment would also be liable for arrest, along with the dancer, since they would have aided and abetted the crime.

Whether or not nudity should be considered a 'crime' is of course, still debatable. But in the meantime, the existence of the Canadian Association of Burlesque Entertainers is the first step toward collective action for strippers in Toronto.

M: We all came back to town at the same time. Right after Emanuel Jaques — the murder had happened and it was the beginning of the big clean-up on Yonge Street, the big purge, and they systematically

closed down all those body rub parlors. I was on Yonge Street stripping and the body rub parlors were all closed down and the prostitutes had no place else to go, so they started to work the street. They started

talking about a war on hookers. They said there was an army of hookers between Gerard & Dundas terrorizing the city.

B: Because 3 men killed one boy?

M: Poor Emanuel, may he rest in peace; he has been used as such an excuse for so much that's happened on Yonge Street. They cleaned up all the girls on the street. They were terrorizing the street. There were policemen everywhere. You were constantly being stopped, especially if you were a woman, but it was also a chance to hassle immigrants and blacks. It was a very tough time. Actually the roughest hassling time on the street was after that murder. The girls weren't allowed to work the street anymore. They moved mostly into hotel lobbies where they had been years ago. Nobody knew what was happening about the G-string. At that point we were all dancing with our G-strings on. Though some clubs were taking the G-strings off.

R: When you go to work at a place, do they tell you to take your G-string off?

M: Yeah, they tell you. The owners make the decisions. The owners make all the decisions. And yet when it comes right down to it, it's the girls that are charged. We were working. Some places you would take your G-string off. Some places you wouldn't, some places you would change part way through the week. It was fluctuating a lot during that period of time. (At one point we were given see-thru body stocking to wear so we were looking clothed but actually nude.) At this one club downtown there were girls working late last summer. The owners told them that no one was going to get paid if they didn't take their G-strings off and they were paying the best money in town.

R: How much is that?

M: Money fluctuates anywhere from \$5 a show to \$10 a show. Or sometimes you're paid by the hour. Some places you're forced to waitress which means you have 2 jobs. The bartenders union, which was trying basically to protect jobs for male bartenders, was exerting pressure. It's not fair that someone has to do two jobs for the price of one. It's not fair that someone

Dance

who's a waitress has to dance. There is a profession called stripping and we're performers and we don't want to waitress. That downtown club had the best money in town. The girls were making I think \$5 an hour, which is very good.

R: That's time there — not time dancing?

M: That's time there.

R: \$5.00 an hour is very good?

M: People think that strippers in Toronto make tons of money. In Montreal you can make between \$300 and \$600 a week. The last time I worked in Toronto I was making \$275 a week for doing 4 shows a day. That's 4 twenty minute shows. There's a lot of preparation...

R: How many hours would you work for that?

M: That's a 6-7 hour day.

R: That's 6 days a week?

M: That's 6 days a week. Anyway the 7 women were working. It was a club that everyone really wanted to work. The management was coming on like, this is really going to be a showplace. "We want really good acts." The girls were doing really exciting things like strange yoga dancing and Bridgette was doing the Girl Guide act. And Wonderwoman and the Flasher. There was a comedian working there as M.C., and it was very much a 'showtime' kind of place. It was real performance. It was really hot.

There had been some warnings about the G-strings by the police but the girls were assured by the management that nothing was going to happen. That they had lawyers and not to worry. To make a long story short, the police came in to bust everybody. The owner and manager split out the back door. The girls were charged with nudity. They were busted. Then the charges were dropped. I think they jumped the gun. They had to get clearance from the attorney general. The charges were brought back. They were summonsed for a 2nd time. They took a test case. They chose someone who was the most nervous, the most frightened, the one who had the most to lose — she had children to protect. They didn't threaten to take away her children, but she was definitely frightened and didn't want a long court case. She didn't want her name in the papers. She didn't want to speak at the trial. The club gave her a lawyer, who in my

opinion was working in the club's interest, not in the girl's interest. He even told the girl that if she were found guilty there wasn't going to be an appeal because it took too much time and money to appeal.

The trial was a complete schmozzle. They talked about the Ballet Africain. When they come to town, the women take their shirts off and that's art and that should be all right. But what the girls do on Yonge Street just isn't art and is disgusting and definitely immoral. And that a woman sunbathing in the nude in her back yard is alright, but again, that's not the same thing as the girls on Yonge Street.

R: How many girls do you think work on Yonge Street?

M: We don't know what our working force is because it is a very maverick profession.

R: Is there any kind of unionization?

M: There have been a couple of attempts at forming a union. I heard of one attempt when I worked in Montreal 4 or 5 years ago. There was another attempt a few years ago, there was a lot of police harassment then, and harassment from pimps, and the girls wanted to protect themselves. But it was such a many-factioned group. Nothing really happened.

R: What have pimps got to do with stripping?

M: At that point massage parlors were alive. There was a problem with pimps. There is not that problem at the moment. Stripping is very different than prostitution.

After the first test case went to court and she got her verdict, which was guilty with a conditional release, that's when a lot of media people really started dragging their heels. They felt they were backing losers and wanted to get out of the picture.

R: What were the conditions of her release?

M: She didn't get a fine and she didn't go to jail. But that was because her lawyer really made a plea about her children and everything. I called the Toronto Star. The women there were most supportive. They really understood that I was talking about working conditions. When you're stripping you give your social insurance number. You pay income tax on what you're earning. You are a worker in

Canada and you should have the right to have decent working conditions. Sometimes dressing rooms are so cold in winter that you can see your breath while you're changing. You can be fired on a minute's notice. You can walk in one day and suddenly your pay is half what it was before. Yet forming an association that acts like a union is very hard because you can't tell someone who hasn't eaten for a week that they shouldn't work for half of the rate that everyone else is getting. They're hungry. They really need that job. It's very hard to get solidarity happening in the industry when it is so maverick. I called the Canadian Labor Congress and the Toronto Labor Congress, which sent me to ACTRA (Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists) which I didn't think was the right union to approach. However they were terrific. They gave me the best advice about forming an association. They were incredibly sympathetic. They offered to send someone to a meeting to help organize. We do need a professional organizer because there are so many factions within strippers, with their husbands and lovers and everyone's very frightened because there's so many police around and nobody knows exactly what the law is. Everyone now realizes they are the ones who will get charged. Not the owners. It's a good time to have a coming together but it's very hard. We don't even know how many people are in this industry. There's nothing regulated about it.

I'm very sure this industry is being forced to die. A lot of clubs have been bringing in more pinball, more 7 foot video screens that show pornographic movies. They don't care about our working conditions. When the porn films came in, I was very unhappy. I was still working on Yonge Street at the time. I spoke to the managers and owners. I said, "We don't like to dance while some woman is getting raped in 3 different orifices at the same time. It's very hard to perform while there's a 7 foot video screen of someone getting it like this."

R: It's softcore?

M: Yes, it's softcore, but it's still extremely violent. They said, "If you don't like it, there's the door. If you think you're some stripper star — there's the door."

Dance

A lot of people quit at that time.

What they don't understand is that people need a place to play. Toronto is lacking a place to play and it really upsets me because if I'm going to live here, I'm going to have to deal with this city, and it's so tense, it's like a time bomb ready to go off because you can't do that to people, you can't legislate behavior. You can't try and change how people live and think by making more and more laws.

It's not the police. The police are only acting on orders. But when they are given more and more freedom they become more and more difficult to deal with. If nobody cares about strippers then that means they can treat them any way they wish. It's a very complicated time, and a very complicated issue. There's something very sick happening in this city. It's also, I've noticed, getting worse in Montreal, which really is surprising. Stripping has come down thru vaudeville in Montreal. Stripping has been there for

years. It was always a wonderful place to work. We worked really hard there. We got paid very well and we were respected as performers. There's more Go-Go dancing now. Things are getting seedier.

I wrote a 'Letter to the Editor' about a year ago, complaining about police harassment on Yonge Street. You were just stopped all the time. They wanted to know where you were going and where you were coming from and who you were and what you were doing. Being stopped on the street all the time is a drag. A lot of girls complained of police asking for sexual favors, so they wouldn't get arrested for doing a lewd performance. And having lots of police in the club all the time, the customers are really upset and tense. The customers think they are going to get arrested or the girls are going to get arrested. The police are outside the club all the time when you walk in or out. They watch constantly.

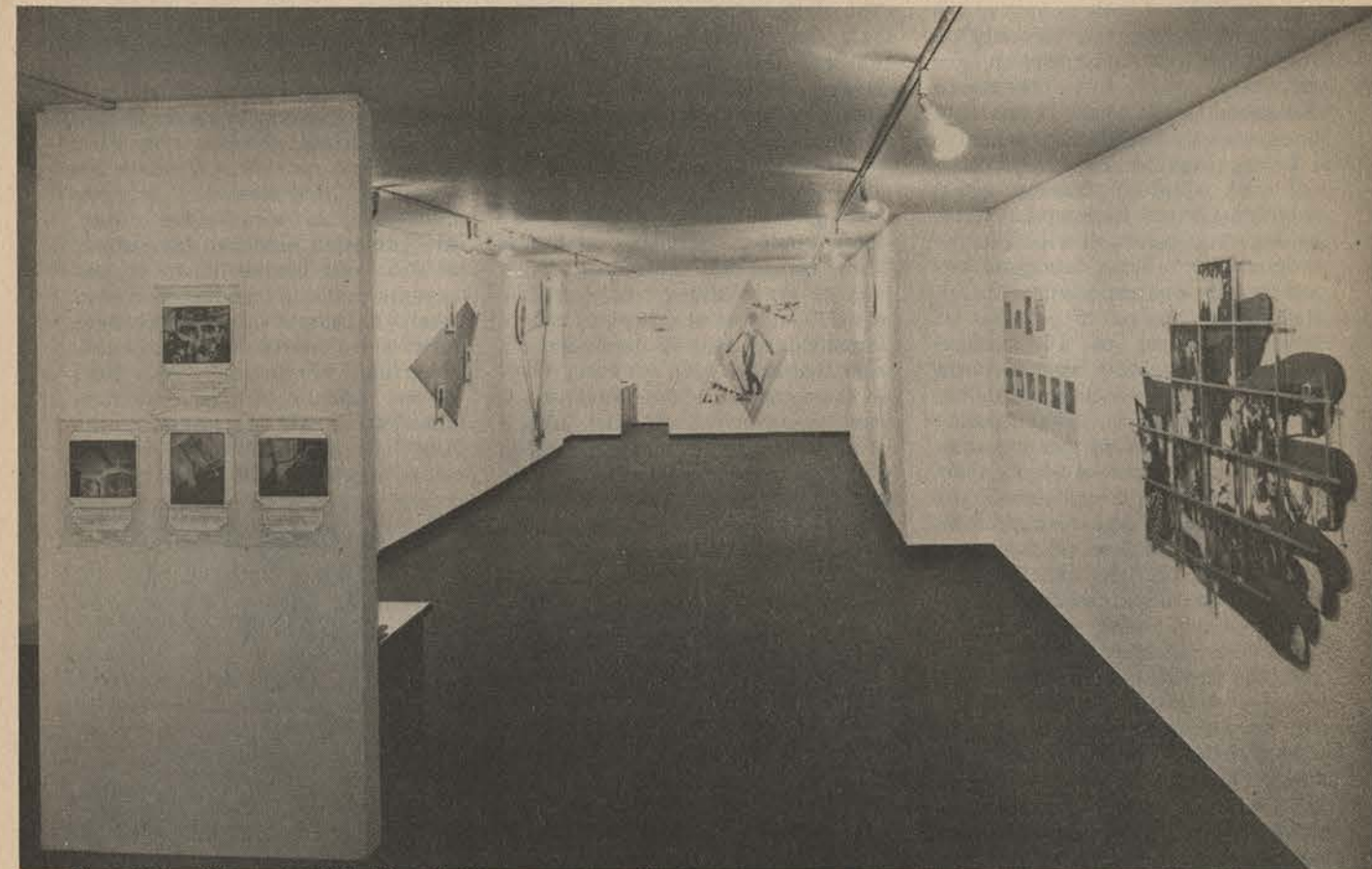
R: Uniformed police?

M: When I was hassled on the street, it was always by uniformed policemen. Harassment inside the club, those are un-uniformed policemen.

I don't want to go back to work on Yonge Street with the conditions being what they are. I don't want to change in a dressing room that's -60. I don't want to work with the threat that I have to screw some manager to keep my job. I don't want to have to work and not get paid, and have no way to complain to anybody that I'm not getting paid. I don't want to have to deal with the conditions I had to deal with at that time. I want it to be better. On top of that, I don't think there's going to be that job anymore. They're going to wipe that job out. Once they wipe that job out, I'm an unemployed, unskilled person. There's no job, no future for me. ■

Randy and Bernicci are performance artists who have worked with Video Cabaret. They live in Toronto.

Exhibitions



General Idea, "Consenting Adults" installation

photo: The Carmen Lamanna Gallery

Consenting Adults

GENERAL IDEA AT CARMEN LAMANNA GALLERY

Toronto, January 27 - February 15, 1979

reviewed by Clive Robertson

(Clive Robertson who wrote the catalogue introduction for General Idea's "Reconstructing Futures", 1978, also reviewed the exhibit "Reconstructing Futures" (Centerfold, Vol. 2, 2 & 3, 1978), and published an interview "General Idea: Architects on the Run," (Centerfold) Vol. 2, 7 & 8, 1977).

General Idea made a decision in 1971 to be exhibiting artists, complementing their performance, video and publishing activities. In Canada the exhibits have taken the form of near-annual reports at the Carmen Lamanna Gallery. 1972: Light-On, 1974: Luxon V.B., 1975: Goin' Thru the Notions, 1977: Artists and Models, 1978: Reconstructing Futures, and this year Consenting Adults. While they have

exhibited elsewhere in Canada (Montreal, Vancouver, Kingston, Calgary), only in Toronto has there been any available sense of continuum. From 1973 onwards General Idea has made self-organised expeditions to Europe (see *Centrifuge*), more often than not waving the fetish rather than the flag. Never having been present at such occasions I can only assume that the European curiosity is a mixture of genuine interest blended with a mutual transatlantic love of the exotic — the "foreign" remnants in the western corporate world.

Ephemeral artists, like any other artists, make collectable art to earn a living — or at least that is the premise or is it the promise? The National Gallery of Canada this year after some consideration decided not to

buy a major work of General Idea's, just one more sloppy curatorial decision by a public art institution. In the context of Canadian art, General Idea are artists of stature and accomplishment (a fact that even the artist-beloved Art Bank fails to act upon) and the overall vitality of the work, in my opinion, far surpasses just any Molinari, Gaucher, or as a "group" comparison, the Rabinowitch brothers.

I cannot subscribe to the notion of artist as hero, national or otherwise, but considering the ongoing imbalance within this country's king-art makers I would go further and say that the developing European interest in General Idea — as inter-medial artists — is the first worthy acknowledgement¹ since the deserved attention given to Michael Snow.

Having said that, I wish to return to the focus of their recent exhibits, the second time in two years that a European tour has fol-

1. Since this review was written I learned that G.I.'s show at Samangallery, Genova, Italy, sold out on its opening night.

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Exhibitions

lowed a spring launch from their Toronto base. I wish to look at the show and its premise critically, avoiding locating contradictions for argument's sake but nonetheless disagreeing with what I can only assume is a rational development.

In a recent article (*The Economist*, 24-30th March, 1979) subtitled "British Rail pension funds halting their excursion trips into the art-market," a harsh lesson on art-investment was reported. British Rail decided to put 5 per cent of their cash flow of 160 million pounds (sterling) a year into works of art, so far spending 28 million pound (sterling) on 1,600 separate items. "The lack of income, compounded over a period of years, becomes an arithmetic millstone," the report stated. "Just to match the risk-free performance of tap-stock, which yield 12.6 per cent until redemption in 1999 a painting, for example, would have to appreciate more than tenfold and that is before allowing for 20 years of insurance, storage, restoration and other costs." The art purchased by British Rail included works like Picasso's "Blue Boy". Whether or not this places a huge question mark on the accepted mythology of the investment potential of any art, let alone contemporary art, is debatable. It does perhaps shed some documented light on buying art and its connection to that illusive attribute: artist-fame.

"We knew great art did not bring

Glamour and Fame

We knew we had to keep a foot in the door of art

We were conscious of the importance

of berets and paintbrushes.

We made public appearances in painter's smocks.

We knew that if we were famous if we were glamorous, we could say

"WE ARE ARTISTS" and we would be.

We did and we are.

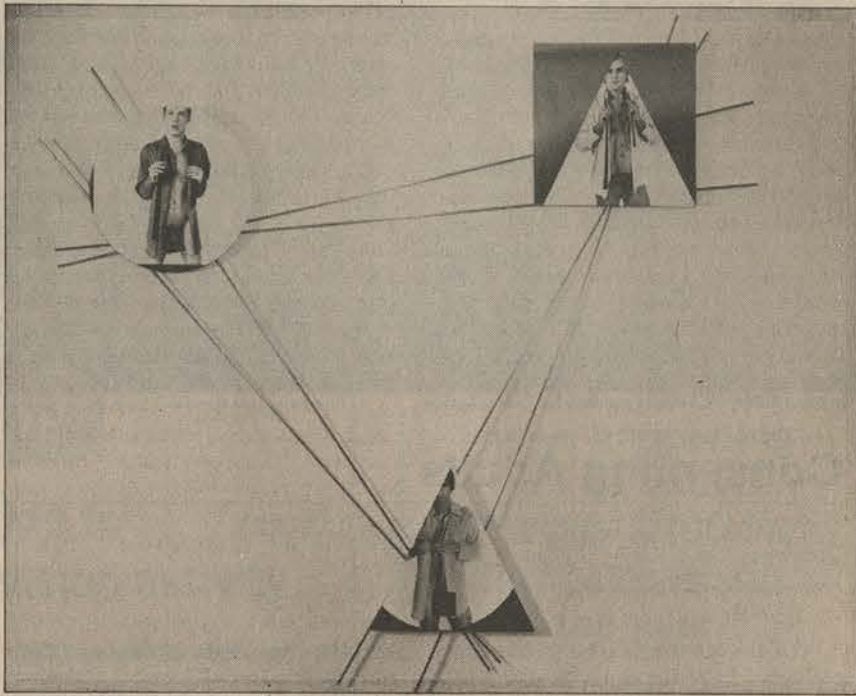
We are famous, glamorous artists."

(General Idea, *Glamour File*, 1975)

Since their formation in 1968, General Idea have valued and made use of the power of suggestion. Knowing the mechanics of the pop culture they worked on the assumption that such positive thinking and audacious posing can produce results

in the form of Fame and Glamour. The above quote is not complete; apart from wanting to be famous, wanting to be glamorous, they also wanted to be rich. We can assume that success in only one or two out of the three categories would be considered a theoretical failure. We can also assume that for practical purposes any advancement of any of the three would be a success relative to their starting point. Anything to get out of the bear-hug of the middle class! Glamour at this point can be discarded, we can say for argument's sake that it has been achieved. Within the context of *Consenting Adults*, can we deduce that artist-fame is (forgetting for a moment British Rail's pension funds) directly con-

print and a limited edition artist publication, the selling price of each card is \$200-250. Apart from General Idea's performances and videotapes the continuum of sensibility and 'vision' resides mainly in these cards, the magazine *FILE* being more sporadic. Which is not to suggest here that G.I. are producing objects to make fast money. The projected model of fame-object in their case can be illustrated perhaps by pointing to Beuys or Warhol where the very interface between artist and material produces a saleable item whether it's the artist's grocery list or just his signature. The fantasy (see "Architects on the Run", *Centerfold*, 7 & 8, 1977) of mass-produced knick-knacks remains



"Geometry of Censorship", General Idea, 1979

photo: The Carmen Lamanna Gallery

nected or at least connectable to economic success?

The endorsement that much of *Consenting Adults* concerns itself with is the production of the object to sell. Up to this point in time the art-objects of General Idea's that I assume sell most consistently are their showcards. The showcards consist of photo-illustrations, with ambiguous but functional subtitles and explicit-exploitative texts; exploitative in the sense that such texts stir up interest. To date there are over three hundred such cards (perhaps more). Their function is mid-way between a limited edition

for the artist just that: a fantasy.

The pivotal question for me is, does any of this time-consuming market planning and market-development have any substantial economic advantage over the mere production of an effective art? Or are the time-consuming activities of General Idea's self-marketability worthy of what could be considered a Duchampian paradox: "We wanted to be famous, glamorous and rich. That is to say we wanted to be artists." The study of such a paradox, artists as a group being mostly unknown, physically uninspiring and poor would not after all be such a com-

plete waste of time.

In *Press Conference*, 1977 a performance-for-videotape work General Idea made another set of explicit statements. The statements presented at the *Press Conference* could have been sardonic; after all, the questions and answers had been rehearsed. However if General Idea can be said to ever make statements of position, which I think they undoubtedly do, then I can justifiably introduce their own notions of "effective" art; because by using their own criteria we can perhaps look more decidedly at their recent exhibit: *Consenting Adults*.

In discussing "What is effective art?" during the press conference Jorge Zontal offered a few definitions. He said that some people think that effective art is art that receives grants and awards. Others, he continued maintain that it is an art that makes people think. And yet others consider that art that is talked about in the media and on the social circuit must be effective. He then states General Idea's position: "For us it is the presentation of a cogent, persuasive idea — stripped of all irrelevant or distracting material — that not only sells the sensibility or vision of the artist but also sells that art object itself (as well)." Felix Partz at the same press conference says that this magic combination is illusive. General Idea would no doubt be the first to admit, forgetting for a moment the selling clause, that not all of their work, as defined by them, is effective.

Consenting Adults consists of a number of wall reliefs, geometrical outlines made by metal-sections supporting photo-pieces, reliefs of large photo-cut-outs and a number of showcards in series.

The first piece as you entered the gallery was entitled "Proposed Video Surveillance System for The 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion." 12 photos placed in a Mondrian-like frame are shots off a video monitor which itself displays a photo image. As a proposal, the content does not have to be significant and it isn't. As an execution of a proposal the work certainly did not receive as careful attention as did the floor plans and other proposals for the Pavillion.

Alongside it is a work entitled "A Clean Well-Scanned Space", three photos, three texts. One of the texts is a quote from Michel Foucault

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(see *semiotext(e)*, Vol. III, No. 2, 1978) which suggests that once the notion of surveillance has been planted and recognised, the individual reaches the economical, non-violent state of self-surveillance. Whether or not this precludes the necessity of having a surveillance system in the proposed 1984 Pavillion is unimportant, what is interesting is that General Idea had already written something along the same lines in 1972 ("Manipulating the Self"): "The act is now complete. Held, you are holding. You are subject and object, context and content, viewed and voyeur." Foucault may be a current hero, but in this case he has nothing to add.

Another work titled "Anatomy of Censorship" consists of nine showcards, each card having two photos and a text. Of all the works presented in *Consenting Adults* this piece is stripped of all irrelevant and distracting material. The photos are similar if not the same as those used in the original Body Politic Performance. In that performance, though I have not seen a transcribed text, there is a direct reference to a section in Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*, from the section "The Other's Body" (p. 71): "I catch myself carefully scrutinizing the loved body . . . certain parts of that body are particularly appropriate to this observation: eyelashes, nails, roots of the hair, the incomplete objects. It is obvious that I am then in the process of fetishizing a corpse." Again the general information is not new to General Idea but the material did give rise to a radical performance. Whereas the performance dealt more with the politics of sexuality, the showcard piece is more ambiguous, filling that broad interpretative synonymy that G.I. revels in:

"What can you do but dish yourself up. I want you — to have and to hold and to keep on holding. Sign yourself over to me."

(from "Anatomy of Censorship")

In a *FILE* editorial (Summer 1978) General Idea wrote: "under your gaze we become everything from frivolous night-lifers to hard core post-Marxist theoreticians." Ambiguity could be argued as being both attracting and distracting, whether or not G.I. are post-Marxist or post-George Woodcock is a dormant ques-

tion that can be saved for a later date.

One of the wall reliefs takes the photos from "Anatomy of Censorship" and trivializes them into the object "Autopsy". Another wall relief titled "A Geometry of Censorship" makes use of three photos of nude males (they are wearing open shirts) covering their genitals, one for each, with a square, a circle and a triangle.

Two observations about these pieces can be made. Firstly, "Autopsy" is a very obvious attempt to make a very decorative piece of art, if you compare it a) with the general functionality of the showcards and b) with the specific functionality of the images as used 1) in "Anatomy of Censorship" and 2) in The Body Politic Performance. Secondly, given the public's confrontation with The Body Politic Trial and the discussions of male sexuality and homosexuality that ensued "A Geometry of Censorship" as an object of confrontation is somewhat retrograde. It is not a vision considering that the public trial reportage itself exhibited male sexual censorship. The location of the piece does not help. If it had been on exhibit in a shopping center no doubt the same objectification of censorship would have been challenged. Instead the piece hangs in a relatively private gallery.

"Does this exercise in self-indulgence have any redeeming social value? (I like the picture of Scott, but come on, let's see it) —Glen." This friendly wrist-slapping was a comment written in the gallery guest book in direct reference to "Anatomy of Censorship". The comment however does suggest a certain conservatism in the object itself.

To make reference to the other works would not be productive. The other card pieces are not arbitrary collections but they are not very fresh ideas. One other photo piece should be mentioned. Three photos of penises one masked by a triangle, the second by a circle, the third by a square with titles, "The Graduated Cock", "Slice of Life", "Father Knows Best" are reminiscent of Nam June Paik's Penis Symphony. These photo-pieces play the part of the gay comic strip in the show and as such are successful.

The wall pieces themselves can be dealt with collectively. One interpretation could be that they are

Exhibitions

the kitsch art to hang in the lobby of the Pavillion. Another interpretation is more related to the central theme, if it's discernible, of this review, which is: How much were these reliefs created to function as recognisable works of art that could sell?

AA Bronson ended the 1977 *Press Conference* by saying: "It's a shame that so many artists are only just beginning to understand what we've known all along, it isn't art unless it sells." In some ways it's a solid thesis: a starving artist is not much use to anyone, let alone to the

artist him/herself. However, whether or not an artist can pre-plan a work that will sell and can still maintain its other effective components remains a fragile proposition. In contrast with the large blow-up photo collages of the "Pavillion Fire" and "The Iron Curtain", a sculpture in last year's *Reconstructing Futures* show, much of *Consenting Adults* was not effective as a vision. Whether either of the shows sold or didn't sell, in critical terms is of little significance.

There is so much that is *not* art that sells on the assumption that it

is art, often an art which panders to its "please me" audience. It is not a sophisticated paradox and is definitely one that should be passed by. *Consenting Adults* seemed to occur at an awkward time for General Idea, the new material was honed too quickly. Having said that, it was a refreshing excursion into censorship and sexuality; there are times when the Pavillion and the Pageant should continue underground. ■

Clive Robertson, performance and video artist, lives in Toronto and is an editor of *Centerfold*.

Video



Photo: Colin Campbell

LaMonte (David Buchan) and Robin (Colin Campbell) from "Modern Love"

Modern Love

THE RECENT VIDEOTAPES OF COLIN CAMPBELL

reviewed by Tim Guest

In a sense 'modern love' is the perfect title, an idea so 'apropos' for an artwork. Say it a hundred times it still sounds good. It's after all, what so many of us want: to be modern, to be in love. A goal so elusive it's impractical, so romantic it's at once the peak of sophistication and the dumbest pretention. Which is the story of Colin Camp-

bell's latest videotape. . . "Modern Love".

The tape is loosely structured around two parallel love stories: Robin and La Monte, Heidi and Pierre. The plot evolves simply enough as a couple of cartoon romances which Colin amplifies by portraying all the characters in drag. For his role as Heidi, Rodney

Werden is transformed into a stunning blonde, a fragile German fraulein who wears tight sweaters, too much makeup, and a man's watch. Susan Britton plays the sultry playboy Pierre, a slightly greasy Frenchman who chain-smokes. La Monte del Monte is David Buchan in a different sort of drag — no cross-dressing, just outrageously tasteless apparel, the failed showbiz smoothie. And Robin, played by Colin himself, is the simple-minded punkette from Thornhill who's too easily impressed.

Despite the extremity of the characters their portrayal is quite suitably low-key. That has something to do with television images, which tend to turn everybody into gray-scale (literally). There are certainly no big production numbers, and the home-made quality of video makes for a nice tension when dealing with such exotic subject matter. But more than that the drag in this tape is very different from the kind you see in "drag-shows". The role-switching doesn't assume a total identification with another (external) image. And while Colin and friends obviously enjoy the reversal it doesn't come across as an obsession. This isn't to say Colin's drag is just a theatrical device; rather any role-switching implies more of a departure from a role than a switch. What's left is an ambiguous identity, one with a heavy emphasis on artifice, a conscious superficiality. Gestures become loaded with meaning, but the meaning is ironic, paradoxical, and banal.

So to make a long story short (in this case it's easy), Robin meets La Monte at the Beverly Tavern where Martha and the Muffins are playing. Robin gets picked up, falls

in love, but he uses her. She loses her job, her apartment, and in the end she loses La Monte. She gets dumped. Meanwhile, somewhere on the other side of the world Pierre is getting acquainted with Heidi. There is a language difficulty, presumably between French and German, so all emotions remain unspoken. They have an affair, Heidi is obviously in raptures, Pierre is just callous. He grows tired of Heidi and bids farewell with only the most calculated gestures of fondness. That's modern love.

There are flaws in the tape, mainly it's too long. Most of the ideas come across early on and what's left is the resolution of the story-line. However it's not boring to sit through, in fact it's very entertaining, only the content could have been accomplished more economically. And although the camera occasionally lingers on details (and there are a million details), most of them are interesting. On the other side of things, some of the imagery is quite successfully romantic. The heavy pathos, the heavy makeup, and the black-and-white still frame all combine for a silent movie effect. The scenes of Heidi and Pierre posing in mock-poignancy are even beautiful.

Actually, given such a simple plot, one can say this tape is more about being modern than being in love, and this 'modern' stuff is perhaps the most interesting dimension in Colin's work. What he projects is a 'modern' sensibility. To begin with, a fascination with anything foreign, sophisticated, exotic, which is always countered with utter disappointment. All of Colin's characters emanate a glamorous image while seeming caught in some continual fall from grace. All the little details revolve around ultra-sophistication and stupid pretention. And in a kind of double-think there isn't ever a situation which isn't faced by its supposed opposite. Every dilemma is funny, every joke is tragic. In this regard the role-reversals are an intuitive clue: as dangerous as it is to try to pin down a 'sensibility' in writing, let's just say that watching Colin's video is like thinking in reverse. ■

Tim Guest, a Toronto writer, is a frequent contributor to *The Body Politic* and *Centerfold*.

Video



Randy in "Burns" performance, Peterborough

photo: Trevor Goring

Mainly Smoke

AS THE WORLD BURNS

Trinity Video Open House, Friday March 23, Toronto

reviewed by Clive Robertson

Trinity Video, the Toronto video-access facility, celebrated a physical re-location (from Duncan St. to Queen St.) by having an "Open House", highlight with the premiere showing of Randy and Bernicci's tape *As the World Burns*, (see *Centerfold*)

The screening was held in Trinity's new "TV" studio ("Trinity" meaning 1st the camera; 2nd the monitor and 3rd the record/playback deck, though Trinity was originally associated with a church organisation.) The well-attended reception stretched from the access office through the corridors into the studio and back again and lasted at least four hours. There were more than enough guests and the showing happened an hour and a half after a few major bottles of Donini, iced beer and some ten varieties of corn chips were consumed.

The tape itself was a composite of tapes made during *As the World Burns* and its presentations in various Canadian cities. Shot on different occasions in black and white and colour, the tape had been time-base corrected and synch-stripped (?) so that the monochrome and colour segments would lock together.

So the audience was warm and as they sat in their seats chatting and waiting they were served a little mood music over the P.A. and a little surveillance courtesy of a wide-angle

camera hanging in a string-bag close to the ceiling, which was fed to the viewing monitors in front of the assembled audience.

A Trinity representative introduced the tape to the audience informing them that a short interview with the artists would precede the premiere. The 'interview' in fact was Randy and Bernicci introducing the tape live from a sound booth directly behind the audience, carried over the P.A.. In turn they explained the development of the performance, their relationships to the characters depicted and so on. They explained that the nine episodes of *As the World Burns* (the title is a modification of the soap opera, *As the World Turns*) were sometimes seamless in the tape.

Here come the opening credits, out spatters the low signal-to-noise ratio audio and on, for the most part, the screen we see (again) the birth of video, often unfocused, epileptic in its hand-held capacity — but let's not quarrel with the aesthetic, the slick TV soap opera could do with some hand-held inversions.

From the very beginning, even with the introduction, the tape was not coherent for an audience who had never seen the performance, which is to say you could follow it with expectation but not with understanding. The tape unlike the performance presents a series of em-

Video

blems: the housewife ironing her child's clothes, vacuuming a room, popping pills, waiting by the phone, masturbating while watching a love story on afternoon TV; the husband failing in his promotion, visiting a strip club, riding in the traffic, attempting suicide, exercising before going to bed, being thrown out of a poker game for being a "faggot", turning over in bed from his rhinestone-collared wife, etc.. Even though the alienation and paranoia is visible in the tape, the subtle transformation of emblem becoming meaning is lost. Randy and Bernicci are rare and articulate performers in Canada (see Photo-Performance review) which is not to say that their content is ideologically flawless, but their characterisations have recently been well-prepared and uniformly lubricated.

So what happened to the tape? What happened to the editing? Though they had hours of footage most of it, I suggest, was not suitable for a document as the original purpose of the shooting was quite different from the need to make a tape, so different that it obviously could not be transformed. There is a certain acceptable loose form of video documentation of performance which is rarely good but often better than no record at all. In this case the video (at least in Toronto) was shot for the purposes of VideoCab presentations where details of the performer's hands, faces, etc. were used via closed-circuit to magnify close-ups

for the audience. Such a use of video allows the audience a voyeuristic view, a certain simultaneity as it allows the performers to perform to the camera: the camera from a low position on the floor becomes the child, etc. The resulting edited tapes therefore shows too much detail, not enough overview, and sometimes when it's crucial — exactly the opposite. As just one example, the relationships between the woman, her TV set, her glass of milk and her cheese sandwich are not apparent in the masturbating sequence. The soundtrack from the TV in the performance is just clear enough to understand a quarrel in the middle of the love-sequence she is watching; such crude transformation in the tape — the audio is on its way to becoming a telephone signal — undermines and negates the performance's multi-faceted enactment. The colour footage from the Western Front is clearer but in the bed sequence, what needs to be a close-up is in fact a long-shot — so long that it looks like it was shot on a golf-course.

Other audio problems prevail: The Government assume a certain aural scale in the performance (the band wrote the music and a few songs and in VideoCab plays live) on the tape they appear in the songs so large, much like a magnified mutant from some nuclear waste. The description might be appealing but the effect is not. When the footage was taped at VideoCab, the audience sits close to the performers — the mikes

seem equidistantly placed. The result is that the tape audience has to suffer the live audience's snickering not only where the action is humorous, but also where it's violent, where it's melancholic, in fact anytime anything happens. If justification were to be stretched it is arguable that the live audience's reaction on the final tape can be likened to a studio audience at the taping of a soap opera. Even so, the mix is in their favour. It also means the audience watching the tape cannot really act spontaneously. As it turned out perhaps they needed such assistance.

The audience present at the screening, or at least half of them, were not too concerned; the tape had obviously been validated simply by Trinity Video coinciding the screening with its opening.

The raw footage is salvageable at least for the purpose of getting stills, but the final-edit would sit more comfortably on a bulk-eraser rather than on a playback deck. Performance can often be preserved this way for warm memories. For the audience that missed the live performance, they would be better introduced by another performance. If a tape must exist it would be better to set-up a shoot for exactly that purpose. As a performer it's impossible to be on both sides of the camera at once; it's often inadequate to studioize a performance, but it can be done and the performance can also exist without it. ■

**videocab returns to the
boards in may with modern
living a double-feature
evening which includes
1984 by george orwell
translated for video-rock
theatre by michael
hollingsworth and the bible
II with the hummer sisters
music by the government**

Publications

Art Bank

IS INVESTMENT MORE THAN A WORD?
a review by Clive Robertson

CAR/FAC News, the national tabloid of the Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des Artistes Canadiens presented in their February 1979 issue a cover story on The Canada Council's Art Bank. The Art Bank as a Canadian institution has attracted recent interest as a potential model for funding agencies in the U.S. and the U.K. CAR/FAC News reports the \$800,000 cut by the Treasury Board leaving Art Bank \$250,000 for administration. The tabloid further reports The Canada Council's internal save-the-Bank struggle as it came up with \$300,000 for Art Bank purchases.

CAR/FAC as an artist organisation has made one or two mistakes during its own life. The first was to form as an association rather than as a union. The second was to continually ignore the existence of other visual artists (besides painters and sculptors). These 'others', photographers, video artists, performance artists, etc., have not been well-served by Art Bank or for that matter have not been served at all. Exceptions being the occasional purchase of screen-prints as documentation. Understandably the floating \$300,000 is for those artists of some significance as they watch their own favourite programmes under surgery.

CAR/FAC News divides its "investigation" of Art Bank into nine sections. 1. Why was Art Bank developed and by whom? 2. The role of juries in the process. 3. How Art Bank effected the prices of Art. 4. Should Art Bank buy from artists or from their dealers? 5. Can Art Bank be self-supporting? 6. The politics of the Art Bank cut. 7. Criticism about Art Bank. 8. Should the Department of External Affairs use Art Bank resources, and 9. The buy-back policy pro's and con's.

Also included is a complete breakdown of purchases during the years 1977 and 1978, complete with jury names, prices paid and galleries involved. Following this is what must be considered a complete list of the



1,000 Canadian artists purchased by Art Bank. These last two sections are by far the most valuable.

The first nine read like a paid ad. Under section eight: *Criticism about Art Bank*, there appear two short quotes. One is by Av Isaacs (Isaacs Gallery, Toronto) whose artists received a total of \$38,400 from Art Bank during 1977-78. His comments about Art Bank were comments not of criticism but of modest satisfaction. The other quote was by John Robertson, President of PADAC (Professional Art Dealers Association of Canada). His only objection was the spilling over of the Art Bank into the private sector. Suzanne Rivard Le Moyne explains how Art Bank developed, Luke Rombout takes much of the credit.

Chris Youngs, currently the director of Art Bank contributes a one-page article titled *Art Bank: A Hit or Myth?* He makes mileage out of the Treasury Board's interference, as he should — the Canada Council must be seen to be trying to escape the waiting jaws of the government. He outlines Art Bank's objectives as the seven-year-old "multiple function

institution": to assist artists through the purchase of their work; to strengthen the commercial art market; and to provide an educational stimulus by exhibiting its collection as widely as possible.

We learn that 8,151 works have been purchased from 1,014 artists, which says that a lot of artists could have had up to eight works purchased if not more. We look at the prices of the works ranging from (in 1977 and 1978) \$35 to \$50,000. There are a lot of works in the \$10,000 range that are over-valued, which can be assumed just from knowing many of the artists and their peripheral involvement. There is, no matter what any Machiavellian curator will tell us, a lot of junk in the Art Bank. Chris Youngs, meaning well no doubt, comes totally unframed when he states: "In purely financial terms the value of the Art Bank collection represents one of the most astute public investments in history. The average increase in value per annum is 15 per cent." The first sentence is pure fantasy, Youngs is surely not referring to the Tut collection? The second consists of 6 per cent rentals, which is not to be sneezed at, the remaining 9 per cent annual interest is left unexplained. The 205 jurors over seven years are also questionable. Of course they are regionally representative but their combined aesthetic perspective is not the broad Saskatchewan skyline that Youngs' report attempts to paint. Defensively he says: "If this group of works and individuals represents a conspiracy, it's a damn big one."

I'm sure ANNPAC (Association of National Non-Profit Artist Centres) could come up with a completely fresh list of jurors that no doubt would be unacceptable. The plain fact is that the paying art-system in this country is determined by public institutions, museums and commercial galleries to the exclusion of artist-run organisations. Of course as artists we can all apply for individual grants, but the Art Bank acts somewhat like an institution that gives Christmas bonuses. And sometime those bonuses are tv dinners and sometimes they are a few acres of land. The major client of the Art Bank (that extra 9 per cent?) is the Federal Government who rents Art Bank works for their government

offices in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal according to Jennifer Dickson, CAR/FAC correspondent. Unless I am totally spun around, doesn't this mean that the government is investing in its own (slightly removed) investment? Are we talking about an art-market that reflects on some stock-exchange or are we semantically playing with the word "investment"? In Canada 'Business and Arts' has always had a hollow ring, especially when it comes to the Visual Arts. And yet CAR/FAC chose to innocently become involved in a genuine desire to support the Canada Council's autonomy. No rational artist in Canada would disagree to such support. But does that mean that the Art Bank as an institution is beyond criticism? Does that mean that the CAR/FAC News tabloid should jettison its credibility? Jennifer Dickson ends her report: *A Personal View of the Art Bank* with "Instead of bitching and picking in a destructive egocentric way let's voice our enthusiasm and appreciation for a program that has done more for contemporary art than the combined efforts of museums and private dealers in the last half century." In some ways it defines what Jennifer Dickson means by "contemporary". The Canadian contemporary art I am thinking about wasn't around fifty years ago. However it still does pre-date the Art Bank. There are artists who would rather deal with a credit union than a bank, and there are artists who have deservedly benefited from the Art Bank. CAR/FAC has a lot to learn, it has had the investment at one time or another of a lot of artists' labour and many artists' dreams. "Egocentric bitching and picking" is another name for collectively protecting the individual well-being of artists.

Which Canadian artists, who have shown abroad at least once and have made major visible contributions across Canada have not been purchased by Art Bank? To read please turn this art-system upside down. ■

Rick Hambleton and on and on...
Tom Dean, Evelyn Roth, Fringe Research, Dennis Tourbin, Hummer Sisters, HP, Gerry Gilbert, Paul Wong, Paul Woodrow, Brian Dyson, Byron Black, Rodney Werden, Toby MacLennan, Colin Campbell, Tom Sherman, Dawn Eagle, Isobel Harry, Tanya Rosenberg, Jane Wright, Terry McGrade, Margaret Dragu, Elizabeth Chitty, Badanna Zack, David Bierk, Susan Britton, W.O.R.K.S., Gary Conway, Sean Hennessy, Stephen Lack, Ross Genteman, Michael Kupka, Lisa Steele, Jeremiah Chechik, Pierre Ouellet, Victoria Walker, Martin Bartlett, Noel Harding, Barbara Asman, Raymond Gervais, John Mitchell.

Publications

Censorship in Britain

A DIFFERENT POT OF PAINT CAST IN THE FACE OF THE PUBLIC
a review by Kenneth Coutts-Smith

It is almost a commonplace of British public opinion concerning the visual arts that every now and again an impassioned debate should coalesce in the columns of both the popular and the literate printed media. These sudden and periodic outbursts of bourgeois indignation in the face of a postulated moral subversion of cultural value can be seen to depend on a tradition of confrontation between "progressive" and *retardaire* assumptions that extends back, at least, to Wilde, to Whistler and Ruskin. Recent noisy manifestations of this ongoing circus have centered on the affair of Carl Andre's "bricks", on the case of Cosey Fanni Tutti's ironic pornography.

A brief perusal of British journalism, emanating both from Fleet Street and from the art press, that has come the way of *Centerfold* during the last two months or so, reveals the apparent eruption of a fine new kerfuffle in the London press that has been building up over a period of some years in the art world proper. The essential nature of this particular issue would seem to be sufficiently mutated from the tradition that was first launched when Whistler and Sir John Holker, the Attorney General, bandied brilliant repartee to the delectation of a gawping public, as to suggest a shift in the relationship between the developing value system of an artistic vanguard on the one hand and the general public on the other.

All previous controversies of this nature have invariably been focused on the question of the comprehensibility of art, on the question of its availability, even its pertinence in respect to the values of an audience exterior to the enclosed world of artistic modernism, which world is generally understood to be either decadently elite or wilfully fraudulent. At the earlier stages, of course, the institutions of art demonstrated an extreme polarisation between an "academic" consensus view of the nature of the cultural product and a more circumscribed "modernist" comprehension of the nature and



role of art.

But, since the early sixties at least, the artistic support-structure, the museo-critical complex, has solidified behind the vanguard stance. It is true, of course, that the mass audience nowhere near proposed a total acceptance of modernism in visual culture, and consensus appreciation was transposed 180 degrees, as it were, onto a comparatively limited bourgeois audience persuaded by the myths of the avant-garde tradition. But, the museums, the cultural institutions and agencies, began to subscribe without exception to the notion of the central importance of the on-going evolution of modernism.

Even the most provocative gesture became amenable to being slotted into the established complex of visual culture; despite the fact that it might occasionally abuse and confound the sensibilities of a mass lay-audience. Museum and agency spokespersons invariably congealed in solidarity behind such cultural actions since, no matter how outrageous or innovative the content, these manifestations never seriously proposed anything other than a mutation in the general structure of aesthetic formalism.

It appears, however, that the

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current episode is one that is less in the nature of a confrontation between a "philistine" amorphous non-audience and a monolithic, defined and self-confident vanguard art-culture, than it represents an internal fragmentation of that very culture, inexorably taking place to the accompaniment of derisory external commentary. Certainly, the museo-critical support-structure no longer presents a homogeneous facade congruent to the developing evolution of the new. Rather, it appears to be groping in acute embarrassment as it observes objective factors causing it to renege on one of its most sacred platforms of self-esteem: adherence to a liberal and radical-democratic stance.

Undoubtedly, historical pressures are presently forcing open the contradictions endemic to the ideology of bourgeois visual culture. A structure that has long been convinced of possessing an absolute political neutrality (combined with unshakeable social progressivism) discovers itself obliged to censor works of art because of their political content. The Arts Council of Great Britain may currently be seen to be experiencing an elaborate process composed of entangled liberal-guilt and justification over an event that they themselves precipitated.

Some time ago, the Arts Council, operating somewhat in the manner of the Canadian Art Bank, commissioned the artist Derek Boshier to curate an exhibition in which he was to select and purchase works for a show that was planned to be held in the Serpentine Gallery in Hyde Park (an Arts Council outlet) during this past March. Boshier was assured that he would have a completely free hand in this endeavour. Among the many artists he approached was Conrad Atkinson and Tony Rickaby. It appears that, by early January, all transactions were complete and that all material, both the matter of the exhibition itself and that for the catalogue, were in the hands of the Arts Council.

In February, Derek Boshier was informed that the works of Atkinson and Rickaby would be withdrawn from the exhibition; the explanation being offered that, in the opinion of the Council's Art Advisory Panel, the works in question might possibly be "the cause of litigation". It was

stated that this advice came from lawyers outside of the Art Advisory Panel, though it appears no attempt was made to explain just what sort of litigation might "possibly" ensue.

However, the "content" of the works in question would seem to speak to just that query. Atkinson's contribution was to have been one of an edition of prints originally commissioned by the Slade School (the art-school of the University of London) on the recent occasion of their 150th anniversary. In passing, it is interesting to note that this work has already been exhibited in the Serpentine Gallery in celebration of that event. The print is concerned with the notorious Thalidomide case, and it comprises a socio-political observation on the activities of the

Distillers Company, the firm who developed and originally marketed the drug in 1958 causing widespread genetic damage to fetuses carried by pregnant women who were prescribed the insufficiently-tested tranquiliser.

Atkinson's print illustrates various products, mostly alcoholic beverages, put out by this company, and attention is graphically drawn to the Royal Warrant which states that these goods have been awarded the accolade of "by appointment" to the Crown. It appears that the artist proposed to exhibit this work under the title *A Children's Story*, 1978 (for her Majesty), thus emphasising, along with comments regarding the expanding profits of the company during the last two decades, the fact

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that the Palace refused to withdraw the Royal Warrant despite many petitions that it do so, including a much-publicised one last year comprising a submission by Members of Parliament and thalidomide-deformed children.

Rickaby's proposed contribution was to have been a series of water-colours of buildings that housed the head offices of various right-wing organisations such as the National Front and the ultra-conservative Monday Club. These watercolours were accompanied by statements of the aims and intentions of the various organisations — derived, apparently, from their respective published statements and brochures. These works, also, have been previously exhibited in a public institution: the quasi-parallel and publicly-funded gallery Art Net, and they would also seem to be dependent, to some degree, on a clearly already-established precedent in contemporary art, that one initiated some time ago by Hans Haacke.

The question of "possible litigation" becomes somewhat transparent in the light of the politically-analytical orientation of the works that were excluded from the exhibition. Their withdrawal would seem to mark a significant development in the relationship between the individual artist, under present conditions, and the support-structure which he may well be in the process of learning to regard as a less beneficent one than heretofore; one towards which he will become not so much dependant in a general sense than defined and controlled by in a specific sense.

The shift towards an overt political censorship is a sinister but entirely predictable development. Previously such censorship (in terms of an institutional context) has usually been obscured behind the legal fiction of "obscenity", even when the case could clearly be seen to be considerably more than the result of simple offended good taste or questioned bourgeois morality. Many such incidents spring to mind, but perhaps none more clearly than that suffered by Robert Fraser in this regard. The liberal institutions of visual culture found little difficulty in bypassing and obscuring the contradictions between intent and necessity, achieving this through a technique of ap-

peeling to a putative standard of sexual conformity which either was or was not transgressed.

The extent of the difference in perspective inherent when censorship moves from the plane of sexual morality to that of political refusal is evident in the further developments in respect to the Serpentine Gallery exhibition. Public debate concerning the apparently, as yet, unsatisfactorily-justified action which usurped Boshier's autonomy as curator, was extended by the sudden and unexpected decision to transfer the exhibition from the Serpentine Gallery to the Hayward Gallery.

In effect, this could be seen as

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a type of quasi-censorship operating at a removed level, since the Serpentine Gallery, a converted tea-house straddling the border between Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, has traditionally been a free-entry exhibition space open to a mass audience drawn from the predominately working and lower-middle class week-end users of the park, while the Hayward is a classic rarified and reifying pay-at-the-door museum art-space.

The justification for this further development, it seems, was the institutional nervousness on the part of the Arts Council concerning a further entry, a print called *Rape* by Margaret Harrison, a work which depicted not so much the crime itself but some gruesome implements that were publicised in a recent rape case. Apparently it was argued that

such socially-intense material was such as was not suitable for a "family" audience, e.g., an audience comprised of the lower orders who had a right to expect paternal authorities to shield them from exposure to such brutal realities.

Between the protection of the Crown from the implications of its responsibility for the social violence endemic to capitalist society and the protection of the license enjoyed by ultra-rightist political organisations on the one hand, and the patronising urge to socially limit the "content" of an art consciously provided for a "mass" audience on the other, it is evident that the Arts Council of Great Britain discovers itself to be inexorably pushed by the flow of historical events into a position of moral compromise. A compromise that is totally at variance with any pretensions towards a liberal-democratic posture.

That this is not an isolated incident, but is authentically a part of a historical process operating within the ideology of visual culture, may easily be verified by regarding the broader stream of art-events that have taken place in England over the last year or so. For instance, a remarkable conference was held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London entitled *The State of British Art*. This public forum, which lasted three days between the 10th and 12th of February 1978, is transcribed in detail in the latest issue of the now somewhat ephemeral and occasional *Studio International*.

The debate, organised by a loose coalition of socialist-orientated art critics, consisting of Andrew Brighton, Richard Cork, Peter Fuller and John Tagg, subjected the present situation of the British art community to a searching sociological analysis, a critique ranging from marxist, to social-democratic vectors. What appears, from the transcript, to have been the most remarkable facet of this intensely searching and highly literate discourse was that this event was not the mere mutual self-reinforcement ritual familiar to so many symposia dedicated to a socio-political focus on culture.

The panelists, as well as the authors of interventions from the body of the hall, could be seen to cover a spectrum of established and rising artists of all possible political alignments and persuasions. The

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if the evidence offered by the March issue of the London journal *Art Monthly* is regarded as symptomatic.

A significant amount of the material in the current copy of this excellent magazine (probably the most intelligent platform for art debate presently printed in the English language) demonstrates a clear bias towards a preoccupation with socio-political issues. The editorial lead story, for instance, explores the implications of the Serpentine Gallery affair discussed above. Among the feature articles, Willis Domingo examines the problem of the emergence of a reactionary anti-intellectualism, Colin Booth discusses the official art policies declared by the parliamentary parties, Peter Fuller examines, from a socialist perspective, the *art-brut* exhibition "Outsiders" and Ralph Rumney provides an excellent analysis of an "official"

institutional show at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris entitled *Un Certain Art Anglais*; an exhibition which, on the face of it, is rendered vulnerable, as a result of the inevitable contradictions and dangers of co-option inherent in an officially-sanctioned manifestation of an art of social confrontation.

Art Monthly can in no way be regarded as a "parallel" media outlet for marginal social and political protest; its editor, Peter Townsen, directed *Studio International* through the late sixties and early seventies during that journal's most formalistic and aesthetically-structured period. Yet it clearly and unquestionably recognises the present centrality of the emergent social focus of contemporary art. If nothing else, this fact demonstrates that the London art community offers pertinent experience valuable to the socio-political reorientation that is also struggling to emerge in this country. ■

Remote Control

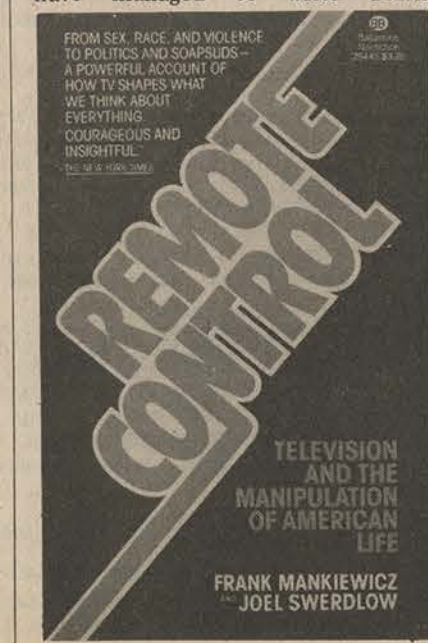
TELEVISION AND THE MANIPULATION OF AMERICAN LIFE

Frank Mankiewicz and Joel Swerdlow
Ballantine Books, New York, 1979. Paper \$3.25
reviewed by Tom Sherman

It is 1979. The American people are watching television with a growing sense of mistrust. Finally, Television has been in most middle-class American homes for nearly 30 years now. Without question. And it has been pouring into the rest of the World from day one. Whenever and wherever the door is left open. May I suggest to everyone who hates American television, from inside or outside the U.S. border — may I ask everyone so inclined to keep his or her critical eye (I) on the current popular demand for the extensive reformation of commercial broadcast television programming in America. Watch the reformists, as others watch the revolutionaries.

How does the analogous or metaphorical world of the television screen sync up with our actual lives and how can we make our relationship with TV a better fit? With *Remote Control*, Mankiewicz and Swerdlow have made their contribution to the presently snowballing "peoples' inquisition" of American

television. I feel I must follow up my reading of *Remote Control* by questioning what it is the authors have managed to write down.



Whether or not I appear to be jumping on the anti-television band-wagon of the closing '70's, here I go into detail on another consciousness-raising media book (television in print) focussing on the commercial broadcast television phenomenon of the mass communications environment of the United States in particular, and the World at large.

Remote Control in overview: the premise of the book: "Television is more powerful than any other institution in America today." The quote opens the book. The authors must be quoting themselves, as no source is given. The basic Contents of the book: chapters 1-8 by title as self-explanatory. "1. Television Violence: Bloody Instructions. 2. Family Hour: The Politics of Television. 3. Television News: Inventing Priorities. 4. Race: Making and Unmaking a Revolution. 5. Sex Roles: Co-opted Liberation. 6. Reading, Learning, and Behaviour: Electronic Childhood. 7. Creating Consumers: The Bottom Line. 8. Life on the Small Screen: Getting Our Cues." And besides a brief Introduction and even shorter Conclusion, there is a comprehensive and useful Bibliography including many widely related sources of contemporary media information in

Publications

print.

This book was written by formula in order to deliver a multitude of already well-developed arguments against the present slate of available American programming. The formula for anti-television best sellers (and all other 'concerned' popular non-fiction) is to string out a series of anecdotal atrocities, such as kids murdering their little playmates after seeing the same on TV, and then through relentless repetition (in order to fill enough pages) there is the heavy handed grinding of the thesis into the minds of the readers. A book like this one has very few new ideas. It merely reinforces the reactionary trend of popular thought by supplying a constant stream of conversational proof that television is making Americans and all other consumers of American television psychologically, and perhaps physically ill. Sick is a better word. Mankiewicz and Swerdlow's objective is to investigate the television picture of the World in search of evidence to establish a totally negative image for this seemingly omnipotent technological reality. In other words, it is their goal to make us believe that money and money alone determines the contents of television. Whatever artistry is involved in programming the actual picture on the tube, a mob of insensitive businessmen only care about one thing. Money. It is true. It takes big money to make popular television and those good ratings will bring in those huge advertising profits. If you have the audience, you have the money. Nothing new here. If you produce a book that says what the people already know — if you tell them what they want to hear, that they can blame television for their bouts with depression and disillusionment; if you write anti-television material today, you will have the readers and, of course, you will have their money.

The authors pass repeatedly through the notion of the pseudo-real, the electronically metaphorical television world. The readers are warned. They should watch and listen to television discriminately. They should not believe everything they see and hear. Just as a good reader doesn't swallow everything he or she reads or sees or hears in print. This line of thought allows us to make some gross generalizations. It

allows us to view the electronic metaphor of television as a lie. We see in television the gross illusion of the original personality or event or scene. A fiction in and out of its place. Watch what the television man says. Don't trust strangers. Don't think like the television (man or woman) thinks.

And don't trust everyone who wants to change today's television. With any comprehensive reformation of television programming, there will be a fresh but overwhelming shower of confusing relationships represented by every new pattern of the electronic metaphor. And with all television controlled by corporate commercial enterprise, the audience will have to continue to endure the dangerous manipulation of basic sexual urges. Subliminal stimulation. The audience will also have to endure the continued promotion of a firm stereotypical physical appearance. The unfortunate limitations of 'above-average' taste. Beautiful women and handsome men who all look alike. Their manipulation of our image. But then again, if we put more control in the hands of the people, through a direct governmental control of the actual programming, a

bureaucratically strict supervision, we may have the tragic denial of sex altogether. We would have a more efficient brand of social control. There would be total-government-television. To make an analogy in an artistic sense, on the one hand there is the Surrealism of the free enterprise system (the whole world's gone sexy) and on the other there is the Social Realism of the benevolent government (see how hard they work for so little for the good of the State.)

So as the authors depict this situation of *Remote Control*, they take it easy in the end by suggesting few alternatives. Independent producers are never taken seriously. *Remote Control* leaves plenty to be desired. American television. We know it is bad. We can expect to witness a power struggle in the 80's between the two opposing schools. The free enterprise system wrestling government restriction and control. Sexual and social fiction in and out of their place. Never the truth. Never an absolute lie. Television. No pure abstraction. Is it ever Super-Real? No, to authors Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, I should say not! ■

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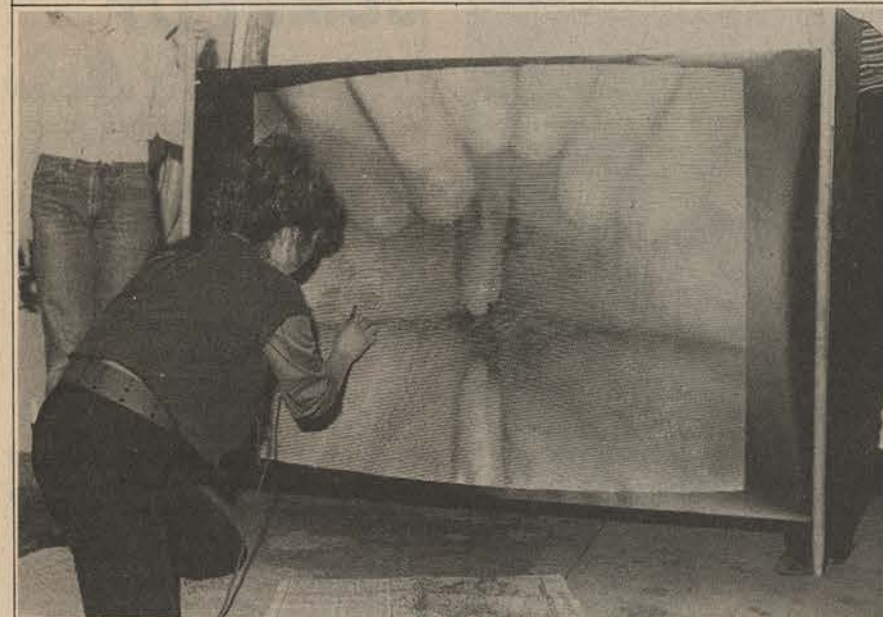
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Performance



Marien Lewis sketching in the oil zones

photo: Isaac Applebaum

The Flash-Cubists

FLASH THEATRE: A MARATHON OF PHOTO-PERFORMANCES

March 2 and 3, 1979, 466 Bathurst St., Toronto

reviewed by Clive Robertson

Toronto is an awkward place for Performance. A Space, 15 Dance Lab, CEAC, The Music Gallery all have at one time or another focused on one or another aspect of art performance. And there have been rumours that a new Performance Gallery is/was in the wings with promised support from the community. Evenings of Performance (soirées?) have also been part of the scene from "Nite Spots" (imported from the west coast) at A Space, to VideoCab, also through A Space and later Factory Theatre Lab. Following the Tele-Performance Festival last Fall and the Body Politic Benefit, the photo-performance artists and *Impressions* magazine organised two evenings of Flash Theatre.

The atmosphere on the second night seemed like a belated Christmas Party, as if nothing serious was to be expected, nothing would actually give birth but it was a family affair and there was warmth: something like a poetry reading for Performance artists.

With this in mind what followed

as entertainment, art, or provocation — a strange mix but they were all present — climaxed with a conclusive performance by Randy and Bernicci.

Gary Greenwood began at the side of the audience with a series of slides project onto his white-out face. The slides were of his face taken from different angles. The crowd showed appreciation as he moved in and out of superimposition. The audience increased in size, drank cappuccino from the bar and were also treated to 3D glasses and a Fringe Research 3D slide show.

Following the slide show, up came the lights and on came The Great Sardini, an escape artist/holographer Michael Sowdon. Heckled and applauded by the audience he entertained with a series of laughable lines and familiar tricks. For his finale he obtained the assistance of a member of the audience (John Bentley Mays) to tie him in knots. Leaving words out of it, Mays the writer, used his hands. Back to the 3D slides introduced by Thadeus Hollownia, special (a) because they

were early 3D slides and (b) because they were taken by a priest who was endowed with an interesting eye for catholic aesthetics.

After those opening acts, onto the stage climbed Kathy Acker. Standing beside her looking like a Chiclet in a bowl of salad was guitarist Andy Patterson, the artist's musician. Acker who had come from New York to give a workshop at Rumour (an artists' space) articulated a sometimes-snarling anarchy, clipping nails from Erica Jong. The audience approved. However as soon as her text reached Tunisia, and some 'real' content, the audience withered. The audience was an interesting part of the evening — they were asked to 'sing along', to 'shout it out' and they did. I was going to say something like the white-collar workers in 1984, but forget I said it.

After the intermission Marien Lewis took the stage in relaxed music hall fashion and kept control as she drew an oil map on her blown-up stat. Reeling off the names of countries (many of which seemed oil-less?) and 'drawing' them in with her felt-tipped pen.

This was further followed by three people dressed in garbage bags which one assumed from their floor level mutterings, were cockroaches complaining about, among other things, their hit and miss diet.

The programme in case you missed it so far was not unlike The Gong Show, minus host, minus panel and it was therefore left to the audience to keep score.

At the Tele-Performance Festival there was much said about artists' attitude towards television and the last three performers had something to add about photographers' attitudes towards photography.

Paul Wong delivered a 'Hate Week' against "Kodak" and its users calling out the names of photographers, and in what must be considered to be a theatrical fit, started to jump on cameras and hurl their private parts into the seated public. Such photo-punk might have been out of place at an otherwise friendly party. Luckily no one was still wearing their 3D glasses, otherwise the illusion might have been more than the audience could take.

Bobbe Besold's piece (lit by candles) was quieter. She asked various audience members if she could

Performance



photo: Isaac Applebaum

Bernicci and Randy, chanting 'I am your mind'

take polaroids and then took the polaroids and projected them as they were developing by means of an epidiascope. Reading a text she took the polaroids one by one out of the projector, set fire to them and placed them back underneath the projector. "Death is a state of mind, flame is the bridge between matter and spirit."

After a short pause, and the placing of props, in walks Randy in a white tuxedo carrying the white gowned Bernicci in his arms, she being bound. He sets her down on the table, walks up to a polaroid camera mounted on a tripod looking down at Bernicci and snaps her photo. He fixes the polaroid in a small dish underneath the tripod and flicks the dripping photo over her body chanting, "I am your mind, I

am your mind." There are other bowls surrounding the table and he pours 'blood' on her. We are witnessing the theatrical ritual of the alchemist photographer. At one point he is standing away from the body chanting as he drives a knife into a picture of the bound woman. Bernicci reacts as if she has been stabbed. The metaphysical act of photography was beautifully parodied by the performance. Without moving out of character, *Playboy*, *Life* magazine and the Queen's official photographer were all reversed — the photo as magic, the photo as history, the photo as seance. The Randy and Bernicci piece was one of the most effective performances I have ever seen and it all happened at the end of a jive hop with only seconds left to go.



photos: Isaac Applebaum

Gary Greenwood shows a different face

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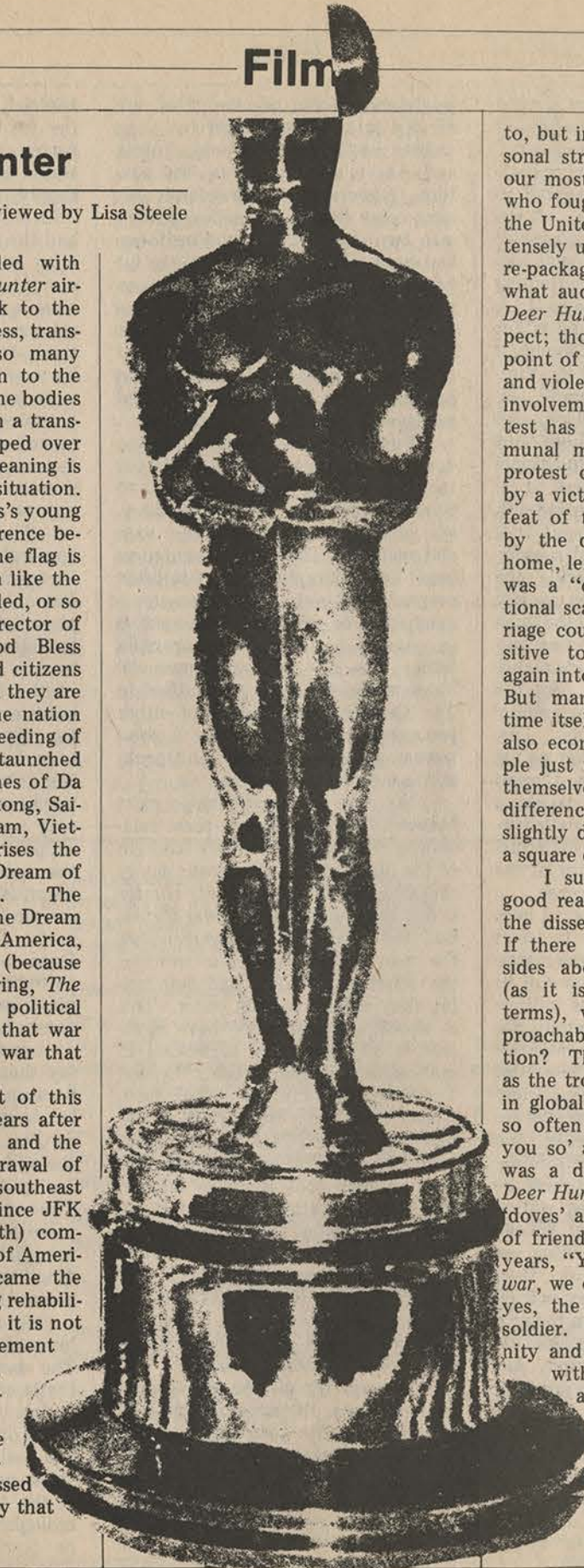
Film

The Deer Hunter

SAVING THE TROPHY reviewed by Lisa Steele

Like a cargo plane filled with body bags, *The Deer Hunter* airlifts the Vietnam war back to the homeland. It is a sad business, transporting the remains of so many young men, returning them to the soil of America. In death, the bodies are just a 'count'. But then a transformation. The flag is draped over the soldiers' coffins and meaning is applied to an unreasonable situation. Massive death of the nation's young becomes a reasonable occurrence because it is called War. The flag is ideology. We can lay it on like the 'laying of hands' and be healed, or so implies Michael Cimino, director of *The Deer Hunter*. "God Bless America" sing the shattered citizens at the end of the movie, and they are healed. The wounds of the nation have been bound up, the bleeding of protest and dissension are staunch by the flag. Out of the ashes of Da Nang, My Lai, Tonkin, Mekong, Saigon — Cambodia and Vietnam, Vietnam and Cambodia — rises the Dream of America. The Dream of the Immigrant Individual. The Dream of Manhood. And the Dream comes home, back to America, bearing a powerful message (because for all its apolitical posturing, *The Deer Hunter* is a profoundly political film) — the message being that war still breeds heroes, even a war that is lost.

But what is the point of this face-lift now, almost 10 years after the invasion of Cambodia and the eventual defeat and withdrawal of American troops from southeast Asia and a good 15 years since JFK (our icon to Eternal Youth) committed the first young men of America to what eventually became the Vietnam war. What is being rehabilitated? In *The Deer Hunter* it is not the war itself, nor the involvement of the United States, the pros and cons of which are left interred in the collective memory, but the image of the individual soldier that is addressed. And this image is dressed anew, not in the cloth of glory that war heroes are accustomed



to, but in the simple uniform of personal strength. A modern hero for our most modern war. The soldiers who fought in a war that was lost by the United States, a war that was intensely unpopular at home, are being re-packaged. But for whom? To what audience is Cimino aiming *The Deer Hunter*? The dissenters, I suspect; those who were critical to the point of demonstration, both orderly and violent, against the United States' involvement in Vietnam. Their protest has left a bad taste in the communal mouth. The effect of this protest could have been neutralized by a victory, but the humiliating defeat of the military effort followed by the deep economic recession at home, left the U.S. in a bad way. It was a "domestic quarrel" on a national scale and it would take a marriage counsellor both clever and sensitive to bring the sides together again into a state of holy nationhood. But many years have passed, and time itself is a great anaesthetic, as is also economic difficulty. And people just forget. Other issues present themselves and the lines of apparent differences are drawn — in only slightly different parallels. Not quite a square dance, but close.

I suggest that there is a very good reason for Cimino's address to the dissenters in *The Deer Hunter*. If there is still bad feeling on both sides about the Vietnam 'conflict' (as it is called in polite political terms), which side is the most approachable for a possible reconciliation? The 'hawks' had to eat crow as the troop-withdrawal left the U.S. in global disgrace. And there's only so often the Left could say 'I told you so' after the end had come. It was a depressing time. With *The Deer Hunter*, Cimino has offered the 'doves' a chance to extend the hand of friendship; to say, after all these years, "Yes, we understand. *Not the war*, we could never accept that; but yes, the struggle of the individual soldier. We can understand the dignity and importance of that." And without question, it is an admirable intention, to rehabilitate the image of the fighting men, to re-patriate these soldiers who fought on the losing side. Because as a group, they have not been very well treated.

Film

After growing up on war movies infused with the worship of heroes who had served their country, the veterans of the Vietnam war returned to a nation not prepared to offer that worship to them. A nation that found it more convenient to ignore them. A nation that had cut back on education and re-training assistance and housing loans to G.I.'s — the traditional 'fringe benefits' for risking your life in war. Of course, it should be remembered that the Vietnam war was fought primarily by the urban poor (mostly black) and the small town boys; those not likely to be eligible for educational deferments and not inclined to be involved in the protest movement. Because the protest movement was, for the most part, a liberal middle-class movement. In offering the liberal segment of American society a chance to reconcile with the men who went to war, Cimino has provided a passageway to understanding, and this is important. But the way in which this 'understanding' is achieved is questionable. Because in a war without heroes, at least in the public sense, Cimino has chosen to not only create a 'hero', but also to outline the 'structure of hero-ness'. And this structure is based on the behavior of the 'dominant male' in a social sense.

Let's look at it this way. A hero is a hero only in contrast to lesser beings. Not all of us are hero material, in a war especially. Some of us will be killed, some of us will be crippled, some of us will commit dishonorable acts, but in the context of *The Deer Hunter*, we are the ones who are already marked, genetically in a way, with the fatal flaw. We are weak. Those who are strong, and they are few, will survive — not only intact, but stronger. They will be decorated with medals, they will be the backbone of the society. We can lean on them in times of stress, especially the stress of combat. They will not let us down. They will return from the war and form the new society — by consolidating what remains. The fittest have surely survived. It is biological. It is good for the race.

If this sounds like a page from Konrad Lorenz or Jane Goodall, you're right. For, *The Deer Hunter* is more 'higher primate' than 'homo sapiens' in its societal structure. Much like a tribe of baboons, the

small-town folk of the film are divided into a strict hierarchy: the women and children (Linda, Angela and Angela's child) are on the bottom, leaners and dependents all; next come the weaker males, divided into two sub-groups — the buffoons and nerds (Stanley, Axel and the fat bartender) being under the males who are strong in body but lack the essential leadership quality (Nick and Stevie); the pyramid is capped by the glorious male leader and protector, the Big Baboon (Michael as played by Robert De Niro).

But how this Big Baboon, the dominant male, is established in the social order is the disturbing part of *The Deer Hunter*. For one thing, the contest is never between men and women. They are presented as being either morally suspect (a bride pregnant but not by the man she is marrying) or physically vulnerable (a woman beaten by her drunken father for no discernible reason). Women are weakness personified in *The Deer Hunter*, in need of either protection or containment. A good woman is a safe woman, and probably a married one at that.

No, the real relationships exist between the men. It is these relationships that are the primary strength of the film. In fact, the most visually shocking aspect to *The Deer Hunter* is not the violence of the war scenes, but the consistent tenderness that the men show toward one another; the touching, holding and comforting they extend to each other. This is shocking because we have never seen it so thoroughly illustrated in our male cultural models before. The men in this film cry often — from stress, from fear, from feeling, just like real life. This tenderness is probably the most revolutionary view of men that we have seen in film and, as such, would justify almost any means and any content within which to present it: any means, that is, except the theatre of war. And this is where Cimino has chosen to play it out. Thus the 'dominant male' is built. Strong over weak. Scissors cut paper.

Because for all the expressions of tenderness, the male-to-male relationships in *The Deer Hunter* build to the inevitable conclusion of an established hierarchy. The first to be cut out of the herd of men are the stupid and the physically weak: "You know I'll be goin' with you

Michael, except for my knees," says the fat bartender on the eve of departure to Vietnam. Stanley, who is stupid and insecure, Axel who is simply a fat slob given to saying "Fuckin' A..." every three minutes and the bartender with the bad knees must stay behind. They are not strong enough, hence they are not *man* enough to go. When Michael returns from Nam, he finds that these former friends and comrades have turned into The Three Stooges — no longer just stupid, now they are pathologically so. He feels "distance". Why? Because he has gone to war and become a man. It's as simple as that. War makes man. No war, no man, right?

What about the war itself, the combat? Three of them went to Vietnam: Michael, Stevie and Nick. But only Michael comes back in one piece. Can survival of the fittest be this clear? Nick and Stevie are both broken by the excruciating torture of the forced Russian Roulette administered by their Viet Cong captors; Stevie loses his legs and Nick loses his mind and consequently his life. But Michael, who undergoes the same torture, survives. And not only survives, but is able to provide support for his buddies throughout the entire horror-show, comforting them, sustaining them, rescuing them, carrying Stevie for miles on his back, performing deeds that would put Duke to shame. Nick and Stevie are extreme casualties of combat. Luck plays no part in their injuries and death; it is not the lucky who survive — it is the strong. Cimino seems to say that they are killed and crippled because they are weak, not in body, but in spirit. And within the context of *The Deer Hunter* only those with the will to live and the will to survive are going to make good leaders. Thus the Big Baboon gets to the top, more 'natural selection' than 'power struggle'. The others have simply fallen away and it is up to Michael to assume the role of leader.

And so the strong, that is, the 'naturally strong' are the leaders. The dangerous presumption of this thesis, so central to *The Deer Hunter*, is that it is such a powerful endorsement of the status quo, the 'dominant male' hierarchy of power that exists now and has for millennia. It is the basis of the so-called sociobiologists' claim that women need to be dominated. (They can't lift as

much, right?) it is the basis of the system that has kept women, gays, minorities and the poor outside the decision-making forum and kept them cleverly knotted in their own private ghettos.

But Cimino goes even further in his endorsement of the status quo. His leader, his dominant male — Michael — is not truly a leader until after he has seen combat, after he has been to war. As if war were still War — still the trial by fire that all men need to experience before they can truly become Men. When this is considered, *The Deer Hunter* is not just a simple and honorable attempt to rehabilitate the image of the soldiers who fought in the Vietnam war, it is also an attempt to rehabilitate the war itself. And not even this Mount Rushmore of a movie can do that.

The hypocrisy is too clear, and the racism is too pervasive to ignore; it shines like a nervous sweat on the brow of *The Deer Hunter*. Cimino attempts to turn the Americans into the real victims of the Vietnam war. They are tortured, and abused, misunderstood and exploited by all the Vietnamese — those they were fight-

ing for and those they were fighting against. The implication is that if Americans performed dishonorable acts, it was because they were somehow forced to by the inhumanity and greed of the Asians they were surrounded by. The Americans suffer against a background of Vietnam. And they stand out in high relief, battered but still heroic. And somehow even a loss is a victory of sorts.

Cimino has given us a profound picture of war as it is experienced by individuals — but it is a one-sided view that stands totally outside of any analysis of the war itself. And this is its primary weakness. It has to be recognized that war is the machine of the state, a machine that uses individuals. No individual can triumph through a war except a President or a Prime Minister. No soldier comes out ahead, ever.

Michael Cimino is able to show us the small town folk singing "God Bless America" at the end of this movie without a trace of irony. This is only possible because the war he has shown us is a distorted 10-year old memory locked in the heartland of the country. A war like a dream of a war where the men who

have suffered have done so for a purpose. And through their suffering they have risen, whether whole, crippled or dead. Risen and been made better somehow. A war where never an atrocity was committed by an American, where no unprovoked attack was ever waged against the enemy, a war where no civilians were ever killed. A dream. Action without meaning. It was a war that never happened.

But what of the central metaphor of this vision — the deer hunt. In the beginning of the film, Michael is shown to be a hunter of deer. "One shot" is his motto. He is good at it. Then Michael goes to war. He is wounded and tortured, forced to play Russian Roulette for the amusement of his captors. He fights and he survives. He returns home. He goes on another deer hunt. He meets his deer. He aims and then he deliberately misfires. The deer lives by his choice. He is a man who has gone to war, who has killed other men and now he returns from that war and he lets the deer live. It bodes well for the population of deer, but what does it say for us humans? ■

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Discs

TV is King

THE TUBES

Produced and Engineered by Todd Rundgren
A & M Records, Inc. P.O. Box 118, Hollywood, California
reviewed by Tom Sherman



Members of the group: Mike Cotton, Roger Steen, Rick Anderson, Re Styles, Prairie Prince, Vince Welnick, Bill Spooner and Fee Waybill.

From the first cut on the A side, this is an LP about TV. The music itself: bright, electric, punchy, intelligently electronic. This is a high tech band with plenty of toys. The synthesizers wrap the television-bound lyrics in a pretty attractive package. It's advanced album rock. Eclectic. Joyfully overdubbed. Industrial strength. In 1979, stronger and better than ever. A fine example of potency conferred American style, via the slick package. The Tubes and Todd Rundgren meet to dress up a couple of the really big questions of our Age. Is television good or bad for us? Is it too late to ask?

This record was conceived and executed by true television addicts. While many recording artists have written songs under the influence of television — Lou Reed and David Bowie come to mind instantly — no one has worked so deeply within the television environment as The Tubes have in *Remote Control*. No one has better articulated with music the mixed emotions of the TV addict as he or she is pumped full of the deadly poison of commercial love. I stress with music as The Tubes live in the same Bay Area which fostered

the media comedy of The Firesign Theatre and the media art of Antfarm. Over the years the cultural formula of a region is resolved by those artists who enter the mass media.

As I have already stated, the music on this album is very impressive. But the narrative carries most of the power. To give you more than a rough idea, from here on in I am quoting extensively from their lyrics. The story goes something like this: Side A. The first song is "Turn Me On". "Put your hand on the power and turn me on." While quite conventional (Leary is a full teenage lifetime behind us), this number is an electronically precise electric power fix. "Make the colours bright." And "Give me a different shot." In other words, deliver the sense of urgency. The high voltage charge of television. "TV is King" follows. This is the hit single. It fills the *Remote Control* concept. Pure media infatuation. "I really love my television. I love to sit by television. Can't live without my television. TV is King. You're my everything." The Tubes probe deeper. "You've got your works in a drawer, and your colour's on track. You have to fade away, but you always come back. You make a hundred changes, but you are always the same. You make me so excited, and you make me so lame. You're just a tube full of gas, and a box full of tin. But you show me your charm, and I want to come in. Oh if only your chassis was covered with skin, cause TV you're my everything." Sex and wires. Sex and machines. "I can't turn off my television. I really know my television." But this love goes beyond the box itself. Video, sound and "I wish I had the girl with the bouncy hair. We'd ride off in a brand new car. Or fly a plane somewhere, like probably Jamaica." And then we move on to "Prime Time". This one is simple. "I'll give you my prime time.

I'm saving my prime time for you." "I Want It All Now". "I want to feel what everyone feels. I just can't wait to have it all now." Now we are spinning in the accelerated time of lifestyle advertising and the promise of a 'normal life' of family, good friends, lots of love and substantial material success. More urgency. And then the last song on the first side. "No Way Out". "There is no way out. I'm stuck here behind the window. Tangled in the wires and burned by electricity. And there's no place left to go for me. And there's no way out for me... Stranded in the great vast wasteland of my TV." This desperate conclusion to the absolute TV indulgence of the A side. Full scale anxiety. "Somehow I don't feel the same. I can't remember my name. If there was only a chance to stumble out of this trance."

The Side B. "Getoverture." An instrumental that implies almost a full night of sleep to get over the dose of TV. Down-time. As if recovery is possible after the hit we've taken. The big band hams it up. They sound like King Crimson with a sense of humour. Then "No Mercy". We are at work. Possibly Monday morning. "Back in my own world, nobody bugs me. But down on the shop floor, they show me no mercy." 9 to 5 is sure tough after the dreamy world of TV. And are we lonely? "Well it's a shame when you got nobody. . . I'm looking for someone, not out to get me. I'm keeping my guard up, expecting no mercy . . . no sympathy." "Only The Strong Survive." "You better wake up from that fantasy. I think it's time you opened your eyes. Don't be afraid to see what you might see." Heavy Frank Zappa influence at this point. And now it is time to meet the girl. "Be Mine Tonight". "Baby be mine tonight. And this whole world will turn out alright. Just to find you took a whole lifetime. I could lose you in a minute's time. Be mine tonight." Yes, it is shallow. But it is authentically shallow. "I would love to take you home, if only I had a home." Then we enter full scale BeeGee-like schlock. "Love's A Mystery (I Don't Understand)." And no wonder with so much TV prep time. The lead singer falls in love with the girl on

the one night stand and on the morning after he finds himself confused and disillusioned and headed for a certain "Telecide." "TV suicide. What a lovely way to die. It's another case of telecide." The girl says, "I used to know him. He seemed like a regular guy." And we get a pretty accurate picture of where he goes. "Please stand by. We're coming to you live. Cause we've got news. Hot news, flash news, sad news, funny news, super news, comprehensive overviews, eyewitness TV news . . ." More and

more definition. Live eyes focus with crystal clarity. The TV World so precise. So consistent. The absolutely vacuous version of the real life we live. Can we afford to appreciate the pure simplicity of television?

As popular culture goes, so seldom does the truth seep like blood through the fancy packaging. For the TV junkie, The Tubes have managed to bandage the ulcer of a lifetime's frustration into 40 minutes of sparkling rock music. Real tragedy underlies *Remote Control*, but I'm afraid it is merely the cutting

edge of the most devastating commodities of the capitalist world. Television and Rock Music. Give this record to a kid who watches too much television and he or she will submerge to even greater depths. Under a set of stereo headphones with this record blasting, my TV never looked so good. 'Real TV' and The Tubes' *Remote Control*. For more than a few hours I experienced the awesome potential of the imminent videodisc. If television is killing us, I for one will enjoy being destroyed. ■

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JOURNEY THROUGH AN EARTHLY PARADISE



Mahun, Iran

Glenn Lewis

Bewilderness

The Origins of Paradise

In the primitive environment man was as free as any animal and had an equal share of nature. This basic equilibrium with nature was drastically altered with the invention of agriculture and subsequent rise of the state. Mankind became a slave to the tilling of land and raising of animals.⁴ His aboriginal freedom was lost but the nostalgia for that lost condition of life lingers on in the myth of a paradise land — a garden/paradise — where man sees himself in a 'naked' association with nature.⁵ The 'fall of man' into agriculture and the State had very serious consequences which are accelerated today. In fact, neglect for preserving the wildernesses that still exist and for the encouragement of the garden/paradise, is a denial of our basic freedoms and origins, and can only lead to dangerous crowding and a bleak, desert-like future.⁶ Richard Leakey fears that man may not be able to cope biologically, that he cannot genetically change fast enough to survive the evermore hostile environment he is creating. He notes however, that man is the only organism with power to reflect on its past and upon its future. That power to reflect, he says, "is what makes us able to plan our future in such a way as to avoid what seems inevitable."⁷ Confronted with this challenge it becomes apparent that the garden/paradise is both a figurative and actual state. It is the home-base of mankind.

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Discs

Music that Hurts

THE NIHILIST SPASM BAND VOL. 2

Music Gallery Editions, 30 St. Patrick St., Toronto, Ont. Canada M5T 1V1
reviewed by Tom Sherman



Band Members: John Boyle, John Clement, Greg Curnoe, Bill Exley, Murray Favro, Hugh McIntyre, Art Pratten.

Off the top of my head with inner ear fatigue, I am hard pressed to write something clear enough to be able to explain what this band does best. This is confusing music. Played loud by a band constantly breaking their own set of rules. As a listener first, from a distance I had to accept a simply chaotic surface. And then as a full participant, I found myself inside a set of stereo headphones blasting deep holes in my sense of self-preservation. As World War II torture music goes, it's more Japanese than German. Orally atonal music or not, I swear this is Canadian music that hurts.

If you read on, you may wonder why I listened to this record a good four or five times before I felt I had the slightest notion of what it was this band of men was doing to me. While they are painfully obvious as an improvisational jazz band, they are at least semi-paradoxical from their name on... The Nihilist Spasm Band... a Spasm Band with a negative philosophy. They reject every convention as purists. This crazy band of men in their forties. An electric band with homebrew instruments. All of these men have careers outside of improvisational music. All but one member of the band has a

family of his own. All admit this music is not the most important thing in their lives. They have enjoyed playing together at least once a week for the past 13 years. I know these specific details because I read the liner notes. In person I know none of these men.

In getting down to business, I must be careful not to review the words on the album cover. Although I'm working exclusively with short term money here, the story of the band (liner notes by band member Hugh McIntyre) continues to superimpose columns of black letters running in lines over the flat white signature of the music itself. Inside the jacket, the vinyl itself. Side A: "No Canada" and "Stupidity". Side B: "Dum-De-Dum" and "Elsinore." *Canadian Men from London Making BANG BANG BANG* would be a better title than *Vol. 2*, and it would be the title if I were filing this recording in my vertical file with my newspaper clippings. The band and its music work fine on paper. The Nihilist Spasm Band, if true to their name, would be a very important and valuable group of musicians. Just as social nihilists would be expected to break the laws and weaken the institutions, a Nihilist Spasm Band might seek to destroy the order or musical convention. Forming the metaphor in one relentless bio-electrical charge. Playing fierce electrical noise loud. Pounding it in. Drumming machine-scale riffs through a din as thick as the soundtrack of a war movie. Close up, a scene with rockets screaming through clouds of grey smoke. In black and white, a slow dissolve through the metal music of the auto plant where the tanks are made to roll off their assembly line of feverish activity. As if there could be a form of entropic explosion. The invention of disorder. The display of a cool transformation of energy under the pressure necessary for spontaneous combustion.

But seriously, this record does make me tense. The only way to faithfully reproduce their live sound

is to push it through a good sound system at very high volume or amplitude. I couldn't hear enough until I put it through a pair of Klipschorns with plenty of power behind them. This band is so aggressive, so mean. Especially on a number like "Dum-De-Dum". Richard Ardrey and Desmond Morris would find this band very interesting. After 13 years of democratic amplitude, this all male band is still attempting to establish a pecking order. As swimmers in a sea of inconsistent behaviour, they are getting nowhere fast in the alternating current of imitation and contradiction. Thrashing around in physical expression. Creating the force the limbs deliver to the medium. The legs kick in the water as the spasm is simply the mechanical action of the muscle in contraction. As sure as a philosophy of rejection is reactionary, this recording is a tantrum without provocation. I'm not writing about rage. I am describing a shock wave from a reflexive contraction. The potential spring in the legs when the teeth are clenched. The state of overload before a discharge.

About 10 minutes into Side B. In "Dum-De-Dum", I felt a definite pressure build up to make my breathing difficult on an autonomic level. Not as if I was on a rocket-sled within a G-force binge, but it was like I was held tight in the form of the couch as the sound rushed into my face as a wind would blow with hurricane strength. They played behind this wall of straight-forward gale wind. I could hear them talking to each other in pairs. Feeling each other out. When they were playing hard against my chest, it wasn't like music. It was talking machines with men behind them. I was afraid they might try to kill me. They were playing awful loud for a long long time. I kept breaking down and breathing and consciously pulling myself back as I found the situation threatening. I thought "Dum-De-Dum" would never end. This record may cause insomnia.

"No Canada" and "Stupidity" on Side A begin with the spoken words of Bill Exley. I found this side of the disc unbearable the second time through because of his writing. A poet somewhere in his forties, the pain of his depression clearly sets the whole session in the Beat Era. The old-style obsession with

depression. Alcohol and aggression. Abstract expression. Noise as the crazy white man's machine-made blues. Not entropic noise as interference on a channel of harmonic order. This is noise as music. A sound message of disintegration. Up and down, the band climbs in and out of the hole of its own excavation.

My opinion is The Nihilist Spasm Band fails when it sounds anything like other improvisational jazz bands. When the noise becomes music, the band becomes suspect on a

conceptual level. The idea is more interesting than the art. Or in this particular case, the story of the band is better than the electronically recorded history of their music. They play too well after 13 years to live up to their horrible reputation. They should consider changing their name. They will never live up to it. In terms of transforming noise into music, I think *Vol. 2* is pretty successful. Not that I will ever listen to it again. All the way through to the end.

Tom Sherman, performance and video artist and writer is an editor of *Centerfold*.

Discs

praxis four

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Discs

Lobster Rock

MODERN MUSIC FROM THE B-52'S
reviewed by David Buchan

“Il faut être absolument moderne” — Rimbaud knew it, and the B-52's know it. An evening with this tacky little dance band from Georgia (self-described) will leave you with images of B-hives, nylons and running shoes, boomerangs and kidneys, and countless other paraphernalia floating around the back of your mind like so much space junk. The *Toronto Star* (S. Davey) said they served up a crazy salad of sixties' sci-fi soundtracks. Tom Carson of *The Village Voice* says they look like “a cubist version of Beach Blanket Bingo” sounding at times like the Ventures “A-Go-Go” album. He's so right. The dailies, the weeklies and even the trade papers named them the best new wave combo of 1978. In 1979 the B-52's take off.

Like so many cult bands that attract art audiences, these kids have more to offer than very danceable music and catchy words to go with them. What we have here is an entire aesthetic, inspired by Americana at its kitschiest. Borrowing heavily from life in the late fifties and early sixties (post *Laverne and Shirley*, *Grease*, *Happy Days* and *American Graffiti*, thank you) yet sounding completely contemporary, we get that synthesis of past and future that always tells us about the present. This is not nostalgia but future shock. It's all very visual. Inspired by tail fins, wire legged T.V.'s with circular screens, clothing, dance steps, hair dos and don'ts and music and language as well, we get taken on a trip through The Twilight Zone, into the Outer Limits, in the back of “a Plymouth Satellite, faster than the speed of light”. You can watch, or listen — best of all you can dance — although practically no one in this town did. (Torontosaurus, 2000 B.C. one of the band members announced.) Yet everywhere were the recognizable pre-Frug spinal twitchings one remembers with a purely physical memory.

Not since Carole Pope has there been such an elaborate network of readable gestures that illustrate song



The B-52's take off, through the Twilight Zone into the Outer Limits photo: Jessica Raimi

lyrics. Like so much semaphore, fingers point, arms jerk, shoulders shimmy and hips quiver to the pre-Disco rhythms. The action on stage never stops. Using the solid foundation established by drums (Keith Strickland) and guitar (Ricky Wilson), the three front members cover more ground than Lada Edmund Jr. in heat. Cindy Wilson sings, dances, plays a variety of musical accessories including the bongos (although the impression created is more sputnik than beatnik) and Kate Pierson, using keyboards as home base occasionally picks up a guitar. Both girls are the band's trademark, their wardrobes are the best definition of Geek/Chic since yours truly coined the phrase. Wearing an assortment of wigs, sometimes helped along with curlers or antennae (day-glo to match the earrings on Saturday night), capri pants, vinyl mini-skirts, or Ben Casey blouses they look remarkably like girls with “reputations”. Fred Schneider, vocals, functions as center man but covers for Kate on keyboards when she plays bass. Fred cannot be described easily. Extreme-

ly stylized singing, with equally bizarre choreography to accompany it. Using walkie-talkies, a toy piano and a very good memory for dance steps he would very well give Bryan Ferry a run for his money as the current holder of the Mr. Style title. You'd never catch Fred in a red leather suit.

It's the combination of all five, however, that gives the music its uniqueness. The three vocals play off one another, harmonize with the organ, and intricately weave in and out of each other, making noise as much as singing lyrics. Abstract expressionist wailings are constantly emerging from the vocal chords of the girls, and Kate has been (appropriately) described as having a sound somewhere between Yma Sumac and Nancy Sinatra. Most songs feature a specific person, with the exception of the drum and guitar which never stop cranking out a pulsating rhythm over which the rest of the music is layered. As Fred frequently announces — “This is a dance tune.” *Dance This Mess Around* climaxes with Cindy screaming “Now doesn't that make you feel

a whole lot better!” while Fred lists dances — real and surreal — The Radiator, The Bugaloo, The Hypocrite, The Camel Walk, The Aqua Velva, etc. “They do all sixteen dances.”

Hot Lava, which takes place in “Krakatoa, east of Java” is indescribably catchy. In the middle of the song Fred announces he's going to jump in a crater, the girls, sounding terminally bored reply — See ya' later. “Turn on your love, lava. Turn on your lavalight.” *Downtown*, the band's only cover (slightly modified) showcases the inherent irony of the music. There's humour to be found in everything the band does. Petula Clark really ought to hear what kind of musical legacy she's left us. *She Came from Planet Clare* and *There's a Moon in the Sky Called the Moon* both feature Kate's extra-terrestrial poperatic talents. The latter is littered with space age references — Kryptonite, Meteorites, Supernovas and the Van Allen Belt. (Come to think of it the girls really ought to call themselves The Van Allen Sisters). All of your favourite planets are mentioned. *Private Idaho* indulges in all the lyrical tangents the band is so adept at following — “Get out of that state, get out of that state you're in.”

6060842 happens over the telephone. Kate and Cindy play the part of the operator, and Fred gets disconnected, accompanied by Cindy's bongos. *Devil's In My Car* and *Dirty Back Road* both have southern references, with *Devil* featuring Fred at an imaginary steering wheel heading for hell, bumping off guard rails and running red lights at ninety miles an hour. This is a man possessed. Other songs include *Girls on Fire*, the dynamic *Strobe Light*.

The only record the band has produced has 52 *Girls* on the B side, and the epic *Rock Lobster* on the A side. *Rock Lobster* just won't quit. This is a production number that goes far beyond being the novelty song so many people think it is. The finale of all their shows, it will most likely be the key that opens the door to that ever elusive record contract most bands never get to sign. Hopefully the B-52's will be an exception to the rule, and soon we all may be spinning their album on our own Sci-fi hi-fis, doing the Dirty Dog until we drop.

David Buchan, performance and wardrobe artist, lives in Toronto where he works with Art Metropole.



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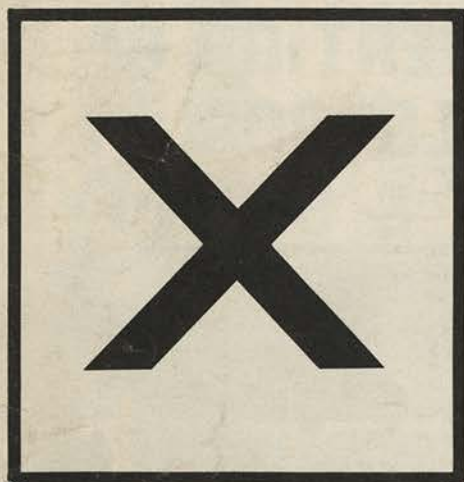
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