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POLITICAL REALITIES OF THE WORLD AROUND US.
HOLLERAN HAS CREATED A WORLD THAT IS NOT
AROUND US, OUT OF HIS OWN IMAGINATION.
THAT, I'D MAINTAIN, IS THE ONLY EXCUSE
FOR WRITING A NOVEL.
ART, IN THE END,
IS ITS OWN EXCUSE."

"TO TELL A PARTIAL TRUTH IS OFTEN
TO TELL A LIE: MERCENARY JEWS AND
"HYSTERICAL" WOMEN DO EXIST, BUT TO
DEVOTE ENTIRE WORKS TO THESE TYPES WITHOUT
COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE SOCIAL CONTEXT
WOULD BE RACIST, OR SEXIST.
IN THE END, ART IS NOT ITS OWN EXCUSE.
AFTER THE WITCH-BURNINGS AND THE
CONCENTRATION CAMPS, YES, WE MUST INSIST
THAT ARTISTS BE RESPONSIBLE."

Do artists owe anything to others or is it their duty to
express private visions? Where is the line between individual expres-
sion and social irresponsibility? Between political relevance and agit-
prop? Between critical censure and cultural censorship?

In the June issue of *The Body Politic*, American activist Scott
Tucker looks at these questions through the filter of two popular
"gay" novels, *Faggots*, and *Dancer from the Dance*. His answers,
strong and subtle, demand attention, reflection, and response.

Also in this issue: Jane Rule on teaching sexuality to children; a
look at the hidden agenda behind the new "science" of sociobiology;
battling macho hype at, of all places, ballet school; cruising the
parks; fending off the porn squad, and a report from the inside on
the home of annihilation by blandness, the Netherlands.

THE BODY POLITIC.

We do it ten times a year. You can subscribe by sending \$7.50 for ten
issues (\$10.00 outside Canada) to TBP, Box 7289, Station A, Tor-
onto, ON M5W 1X9. Make sure to give us your full mailing address.

Letters

Mail correspondence to be published
to LETTERS, Centerfold, 2nd floor
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ada M5W 1W2.



What do you consider effective art?

Here are a few details that might add
extra information to your insight into
the work:

1) *Press Conference*, our videotape of
1977, was more concerned with the
language of power than with 'effective
art'. The piece is a re-work of an ad-
vertisement for an advertising agency
in *Fortune* magazine. As such its im-
plications are somewhat broader than
you suggest. Using it as a critical base
for your article is interesting, but
could be argued.

2) The sculptural piece 'Proposed
Video Surveillance System' is compos-
ed of two alternating sets of photo-
graphs set into a grid system. The first
set of photos are installation shots of
completed fragments from the 1984
Miss General Idea Pavillion, including
the Luxon VB, the Escalier d'Honneur,
the room from the Pavillion presented
in *Reconstructing Futures*, and so on.
The second series of photos scans the
human body in isolated close-ups.
Similarly to *An Anatomy of Censor-
ship*, images of public control are jux-
taped with images of the lover's obs-
ession, images of public surveillance
with private surveillance.

3) The sculptural piece *Autopsy* was
completed before *An Anatomy of
Censorship*, and not after, as you sug-
gest. As such, *An Anatomy of Censor-
ship* was an elaboration of the original
piece.

Letters

4) Eighteen texts were used in *An Anatomy of Censorship*. Three of these were rewritten from the performance piece for the showcard piece. One of the original texts paraphrased the text you quote, and remained unchanged in the second version.

5) The sculptural piece *Geometry of Censorship* is not intended as 'an object of confrontation'. The male nudes have their genitals cut out, rather than covered, to reveal the stainless steel on which the photos are mounted, behind. Another piece, which remains incomplete, was planned to incorporate the cut-out geometric cocks as design elements. In day-to-day conversation we referred to this piece as 'the European version'

6) You've ignored those objects in the show which did not relate to the contents of the last issue of *Centerfold*. The sleeping piece, especially, we consider one of the key pieces in the construction of the show as a whole, and we are surprised you do not mention it. It's description of group context and negation of the myth of the individual genius seem to us important issues.

7) Yes, all the pieces were designed as 'objects for sale'. Whether they immediately sold or not was not important. The fact that they successfully isolated and utilized the language of 'being available for purchase' was initially our first concern. (In lighter moments we considered installing tape-recorded messages, such as 'Buy me, buy me!', and 'Pssst, Pierre, I'm over here!') Of course we realize that the true success of these objects must finally be judged by their buyability over the next five years.

8) We notice with interest that you discuss neither aesthetics, nor sensibility; also your repeated interest in 'functionality' and social unity. What do you consider effective art?

General Idea
Toronto

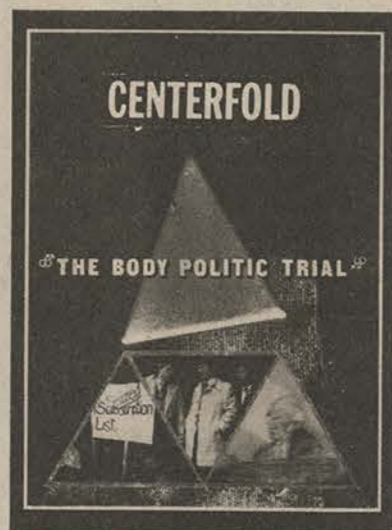
... Suggests the disturbing source

Just read the 'Women and Infanticide' article. I sit here childless and supposedly 'liberated', going through my morning mail which does include the *New York Review of Books*, as well as *Centerfold*, wondering how many people will read your article. I think it's excellent from every point of view — I suppose one couldn't really publish something which actually says something and suggests the dis-

turbing source of the problem in a more 'popular' magazine? There's the trap — that's part of the syndrome too. Anyway, congratulations. I recently read about a volunteer agency in the U.S. for battered children — their techniques do not involve further punishment of the parents by taking children away etc. Anyway perhaps you know about it — are there Toronto chapters?

Jessica Bradley
Ottawa

(Ed. Note: In Toronto there is a chapter of Parents' Anonymous, a self-help group for parents who abuse their children. But the already-limited efficacy of this group will be further restricted by the new Child Welfare Act just passed in Ontario (see *Centrifuge*, p. 223.)



... after the verdict ...

Coverage of the *Body Politic* trial by *Centerfold* could not have been more informative or enlightening. It reached part of the community that *TBP* would not have for social-sexual reasons. Freedom was and is being attacked: freedom of the press, freedom of women to control their own bodies, freedom of expression, etc. Those guardians of our very varied society who instigated the proceedings against *TBP* assumed that the article (*Men Loving Boys Loving Men*) more than objectively described sex and emotional relationships between men and boys. Rather, it was construed as encouraging pedophilia. The

rest is history and excellently covered in your pages.

Sociobiology, the study of the genetic aspects of behaviour, proposes to pull from sociology the belief in kin selection. Basically, we help our kin: parents help their offspring, aunts help their near relatives and the Canada Council helps artists. Each community finds support within itself. *The Body Politic* fills this role in the Canadian gay community. When we are attacked by critics we need support. At the time the article was printed, gays were being attacked in one form or another by the media. "Pedophilia" and "molestation" of children were bantered about in uniformed ways. People refused to dissociate the gay community with some of its variants; in fact all gays were suspect. Doubt was everywhere. "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" was an attempt to clarify the facts and fallacies of pedophilia to the gay community.

It was all a question of conformity. Artists whose work may not meet what the artistic community considers acceptable should still be free to create. There should never be any question of conformity. In fact, a select group may find this freedom extremely innovative. I can recall several shows in Toronto that received the ire of the morality squad. Hopefully, the artistic community rallied in support.

What is freedom? Should there be license in expression and of information? Most definitely yes! The verdict of the trial supported this.

Alan Miller
Canadian Gay Archives

ERRATUM

In the May 1979 issue, "Channel Irons" from Open Series Group, Kingston was credited to Michael Bélanger. In fact, Michael Bänger wrote the piece. Our apologies.

DEADLINES

for August/September: July 16, 1979
for October/November: Sept. 16, 1979

Articles and reviews to be considered for publication in *Centerfold* should be accompanied by photographs and/or appropriate illustrations.

CENTERFOLD

THE ARTISTS' NEWS MAGAZINE

JULY 1979 · VOLUME 3 · NUMBER 5



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Hank Bull reports from Vancouver on the religion for the '80's. It's nothing for something.



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by Clive Robertson. Young King Joe I — did he lose a 'political election' or win a 'media event'?



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by Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker. As TV news is edited, something is lost. Muntadas' recent videotape tells us what that is.

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Editorial

Though the cover shows differently, the lead story of this issue is the CBC-Riel analysis written by Kenneth Coutts-Smith. Once we begin to look at any item there is never a natural resting place. Two days ago we read that Canadian films were selling well in Cannes. One of the successful sales includes a new version of the CBC's "Riel" that was trimmed of its historical weight and edited for more action! By now it must be so light that they will experience problems keeping it in the gate.

The "One Camera, One Vote" story was originally supposed to look at the political election TV ad's as video art with one clear eye on the TV Debate. The dailies and monthlies beat us to the most obvious anomalies of the ad's and their products. There was however a slight twist to the end of the election and we have attempted to briefly record it.

This issue, quite accidentally, is loaded with TV screens and their contents. The postal-delayed Venezuelan Festival information finally came and Tom Sherman translated the Spanish. Sherman also constructed a piece around The Western Front tape of our late friend (approaching legend), Larry Dubin. We don't know if the Front is planning to distribute the tape but if you're ever in Vancouver you're advised to drop in and have a look at their unique video document collection.

Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker's report on Muntadas' "Between the Lines" presents another facet of the news and its complex effects. She writes: "though not objective (the news) is not necessarily subjective. It reflects another set of modified, mutant, dominant values which are never neutral." *Centerfold* is continuously interested in receiving videotape analysis from potential contributors as well as critical pieces on individual artists' work.

In this issue we are finally printing the previously announced essay on Lisa Steele's tapes. It now completes the cycle of the artist-editors of *Centerfold* having their own work disassembled alongside their contemporaries. Other reports featured include René Blouin's interview with Parti Rhinocéros candidate Jacques Gauthier. Gauthier was unsuccessful, though Secretary of State John Roberts, his opponent was defeated.

Hank Bull reports on Relican's recent "middle-class wedding" ceremony/performance at Pumps, Vancouver. Relican is the light-spirited ingredient that its founders presume we lack, underlining the *cult* in culture. From Florence we have a brief report from Zona, the five year old *spazi artistici alternativi*.

From Calgary, Paul Morris writes about a media department's usage of the Bosch BCN 1" equipment. This new broadcast format has a sophisticated digital editing system. If you can get access to such a set-up you can use your old stopwatch to stir your coffee.

The review section of this issue includes a look at two relatively new spaces in Toronto: TPS written by John Greyson, and YZY by Lisa Steele. Victor Coleman supplies a pre-party script for Rumour: a new publications collective facility. Isobel Harry and Karl Beveridge question an artist's publication and a tape respectively. Tim Guest looks at the recent Carole Condé/Karl Beveridge show. Performance reviews this issue focus on Elizabeth Chitty and Polish artist Marek Konieczny.

Beginning with this issue we are running and paying for news wire stories. We know what we are looking for, international wire reports that don't appear in Canadian newspapers. The wire service in Canada decides what is "relevant for a Canadian audience". Please be patient while we work out the necessary detour. We would like to alter these stories with some editorial comments, but we have made an interim agreement not to do so. This means we sit with our tongues in our pockets. We do ask all *Centerfold* readers to assist in the compilation of *Centrifuge*. It could easily be expanded to cover international reports.

The newsstand distribution of *Centerfold* is increasing rapidly with each issue. Any readers that are currently receiving complimentary copies of the magazine will unfortunately be cut starting with the next issue. We are revising our mailing lists so that a new batch of potential subscribers can receive sample copies of the magazine. So, now is the time to subscribe if you wish to continue following our saga. Unless, of course, you would rather hunt for us on the stands. ■

Clive Robertson

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Taken in the studio of CJOH, Ottawa,
May 13, 1979.

CENTERFOLD

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Centrifuge

The Public Hearing Silence

Recently, in Hull, Quebec, the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) cancelled a scheduled public hearing on cross-ownership and concentration of ownership in broadcasting (see *News wire*, page 224). On close examination of the list of parties who filed briefs to the commission, it is obvious it is in the best interest of many of these owners not to have public hearings when the drift towards monopoly control is all too apparent.

An abbreviated list of corporations submitting briefs: *Premier Cablevision* — the largest cable system in the world (based on total subscribers) . . . recently acquired yet another cable system in British Columbia. Last year Premier staved off a takeover bid by Rogers Cable TV. *Rogers Telecommunications Ltd. and Canadian Cablesystems Ltd.* — Rogers recently acquired CCL, which owned 45 per cent of Famous Players Ltd. (movie theatre chain). Combined, this is one of the largest telecommunications systems in the world, with several radio and cable TV stations in Canada. Rogers is presently buying cable systems in the U.S. *Macleane-Hunter Ltd.* — one of the largest magazine publishers in Canada, also owns several radio chains and cable systems across the country (*Macleane-Hunter Communications, Ltd. and Maclean-Hunter Cable TV Ltd.*). *CHUM Ltd.* — primarily in radio, CHUM also owns several TV stations and recently bought CITY-TV of Toronto. *Southam Inc.* — used to be called Southam News. Next to Lord Thompson's empire, it is the largest newspaper chain in Canada with in-roads into the telecommunications industry. *Canadian Cable Television Assoc.* — essentially an industry lobby group, it has always backed the 'bigger is better' concept. *Canadian Association of Broadcasters* — as more and more independents are swallowed up, this association will predictably reflect the opinions of the larger conglomerates. ■

Brutal Act

The new Child Welfare Act, Bill 114, becomes law in Ontario on June 1, 1979. Taken literally (and we must take it literally, since failure to do so could result in a \$1,000 fine) Bill 114 turns all of Ontario's citizens

into a policing agency, whether or not we are in direct contact with children.

This act defines "abuse" as: (a) physical harm, (b) malnutrition or mental ill-health of a degree that if not immediately remedied could seriously impair growth and development or result in permanent injury or death, or (c) sexual molestation.

Who is responsible for reporting any of the above named forms of abuse? "Every person who has information of the abandonment, desertion or need for protection of a child or the infliction of abuse upon the child shall forthwith report the information to the (Children's Aid) society." Every person.



What about the teacher, the social worker, counsellor, doctor, the worker in a hostel — anyone who might receive information about child abuse during a conversation in confidence? The worker is obligated (Sect. 49 of the Act) to report this information to the C.A. Society, and a trust is destroyed. Failure to report results in a \$1,000 fine for the worker.

After a report is filed the Children's Aid Society must investigate that report, *within one hour* of receiving it. Where it appears to be valid, in the opinion of the worker, the child is to be removed from the parent while further investigations are made. In other words, unlike any other situation in our legal system the accused "abuser" stands guilty until he or she can prove him or herself innocent. In the words of one Children's Aid lawyer this legislation makes the C.A. workers into quasi-policemen, whose prime occupation will now entail the investigation of all reports of abuse, and the removal of children from the home.

What happens to the report of abuse? It is filed with a central

registry where the information is supposedly kept confidential. Confidential and secret, but doctors, lawyers, workers in child welfare agencies, researchers, coroners, police officers, have access to the names and information in this registry. So this supposedly confidential registry of *accused* child abusers is no more secret and confidential than our OHIP records and we have seen what happens to them. The onus is on the individual whose name is entered onto the registry to prove that it should be removed, via hearings, appeals, etc. It is important to remember that a person's name goes onto the child abuse registry when the report is made, not after proof has been established.

Needless to say, Bill 114 will be difficult to enforce. But even minimum enforcement will mean more children in already over-loaded foster home care and more parents in the courts. ■

America Dumps on Canada First

Armed with some good hard information on international television sales, freelance journalist and broadcaster Joyce Nelson has been doing some 'dumping' of her own. On CBC-FM's "Ideas" programme, and in articles in *Cinema Canada* (April) and the current issue of "This Magazine", Nelson has been telling Canadians just how bad it is. Nelson is concerned over the American television industry's domination of world airtime.

As of 1977, Canada became the top foreign market for U.S. TV programming. Canadian networks fork out an estimated 100 million dollars for American programming annually; this accounting for more than one-third of all international US-TV sales. Nelson cites a 1978 Council of Canadian Filmmakers brief, delivered to the CRTC, which claims the CBC paid over \$25,000 per show for 're-runs' of the Mary Tyler Moore Show in 1978-79. Figuring 26 episodes a season, this contract alone will bleed off from 10 to 15 per cent of the English Service division's programme procurement budget.

But we shouldn't feel sorry for ourselves, for as Nelson points out, we are not alone. By 1976, only five countries in the world did not broadcast any American TV shows: Mainland China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Albania and Mongolia. ■



By Eric Murray

OTTAWA (CP) — Lack of public response caused the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to cancel hearings scheduled this week on cross-ownership of the media.

Announcement of the commission's intention to hold the hearing resulted in 25 briefs on the subject but few persons asked to appear.

The commission is interested in two aspects of cross-ownership: Common ownership of television stations and cable companies and common ownership of daily newspapers and television companies.

The issue may get more response when TV sets are linked to information banks through such devices as Telidon, developed by the department of communications, and Bell Canada's Vista.

People then may be switching to TV for such things as classified ads and detailed stock reports now obtained from newspapers. If that happens, newspapers, in an effort to maintain revenues, may look to cable TV as a logical investment venture.

Examining Briefs

In any case, consideration of media ownership issues is a continuing process, the CRTC now is examining various arguments made in 25 briefs.

The question bothering the CRTC is whether the same individuals or groups should own television stations and cable companies, especially in the same market. It's particularly concerned about cross-ownership between broadcasting enterprises and news-

papers.

Although there are several cases of media cross-ownership, the CRTC generally discourages it. However, it wants to know whether there are grounds for relaxing that policy in view of the changing environment in broadcasting.

Most of the briefs suggested the CRTC should continue to assess all cross-ownership proposals on a case-by-case basis. But some argued for joint ownership of TV stations and cable without restriction. Others felt jointly-owned TV stations and cable systems should operate in different markets. Some favored newspaper involvement in broadcasting; others opposed it.

In the case of cross-ownership of broadcasting and daily newspapers, the CRTC says there's a potential for reduction of independent editorial voices, particularly where newspapers and broadcasting stations operate in the same market.

But Southam Incorporated, Canada's largest newspaper group, says there's little evidence that newspaper companies now in broadcasting have had any negative effect on the expression of news, opinion and information.

Broadcasters Differ

The Canadian Association of Broadcasters found its members split. Some broadcasters associated with newspaper publishing say cross-ownership does not affect the public interest. Others say it does. Association president Ernie Steele, in a brief to the commission, says the test seems to be whether a degree of competition — the best defence of the public interest — can be maintained.

FP Publications, acknowledges diversity of news sources in local communities must be guarded. But it says many of the large centres can withstand concentration without significantly impairing competition.

FP publishes nine dailies, including *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto. It says scale is needed in the broadcasting industry to challenge current foreign domination over programming. It maintains that in this regard, newspapers can provide considerable financial resources.

A major aspect of FP Publications' argument hinges on technological developments in the communications

industry.

It says ownership of broadcasting undertakings is the most constructive way of hedging FP's future against such change. It argues many of the information services now being considered for delivery on home TV sets will compete directly with newspapers and erode newspaper revenues.



OTTAWA (CP) — Three out of every four artists in Canada take second jobs, a Statistics Canada survey released Friday shows.

The federal agency also found that 80 per cent of the country's artists are earning less than \$5,000 a year in direct art sales.

The survey covered approximately one third of the 3,500 artists in Canada and was conducted in February, 1978.

Key findings were:

- Approximately 60 per cent of all artists are male.

- Almost half live in Ontario, but the Atlantic provinces have a higher percentage of the country's artists than their population would suggest and Quebec has a smaller artist-to-population ratio than the national average.

- Of those with additional employment, more than half reported art-related jobs, especially teaching art.

- Two-thirds of those with outside jobs worked part-time.

- Half of these artists had jobs in art-related fields, mainly teaching.

- Only 20 per cent of artists reported incomes of \$5,000 or more from selling their work.

- The most frequent complaint about their working environment was that dealer commissions are too high. The second major deterrent they reported was the high cost of imported materials and equipment.

- Only one in seven artists is self-taught. About 25 per cent have a university degree or college diploma in applied or performing arts.

- When asked to choose the most important factor for the improvement

of visual art, the largest proportion (37 per cent) chose improved public education and appreciation for the arts.

MOSCOW (AP) — Six Moscow artists who planned to display their works at an unauthorized exhibition were sentenced Saturday to 15 days in jail on charges of hooliganism, sources reported.

They said the artists were removed Friday night by police and were detained for refusing orders to end their sit-in. They are members of the semi-official Union of Graphic Arts, which was set up for artists who do not belong to the official Artists' Union.

At a news conference for Western reporters last week, they announced plans to hold their own exhibition on April 28 to coincide with showings in New York, Vienna and Paris.

REFUSED REQUEST

They said the Union of Graphic Arts turned down their request to stage the exhibition in a public gallery so they planned their own showing without official permission.

They locked themselves in when Lyudmila Kuznetsov, a member of the group and owner of the apartment where the news conference was held, was taken away by police after the reporters left.

Miss Kuznetsov was sentenced Thursday to 15 days in jail for resisting authorities, members of the group said.

The six sentenced Saturday were identified as Valery Akks, Vitaly Dlugy, Iosif Kiblitky, Vladislav Provotorov, Vyacheslav Savelyev and Vycheslav Sysoyev.

Under Soviet law, a judge may pass a summary sentence of 15 days for the misdemeanors of hooliganism and resisting authorities.

WASHINGTON (REUTER) — A magazine said Tuesday that a UN commission is considering proposals for licensing journalists and imposing penalties for "incorrect" reporting.

The magazine, *Freedom at Issue*, said the prime mover behind the proposals is Sean MacBride, head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) commission for the study of communication problems.

In an interview with the magazine, MacBride said the proposals covered creation of a journalistic code of ethics, an international press council, licensing of journalists and the matter of penalties for coverage of stories deemed inappropriate or insufficient.

He added, however, that the commission had not reached any conclusions.

The magazine is the organ of Freedom House, a New York group which monitors political and civil liberties throughout the world and recently reported favorably on the conduct of the Rhodesian elections.

MacBride, an Irishman who has received both the Nobel and Lenin peace prizes, was a founder of Amnesty International and a former UN Commissioner in Namibia (South-West Africa).



By Cathy McKercher

STANFORD Calif. (CP) — Canadian culture is so overwhelmed by the United States that Canada has become "a four-per-cent nation," Canadian professor Ronald Sutherland said Friday.

Statistics Canada has found that only four per cent of the magazines and paperback books sold in Canada are Canadian, Sutherland told a Stanford University seminar on Canada-U.S. relations.

In the music industry Canadian records account for four per cent of sales in the country, he told about 60 students and faculty members at the final sessions of a three-day seminar.

And in the film industry, less than one per cent of the \$240 million generated by Canadian movie theatres

in 1970 was reinvested in Canada, he said.

"Profits of course are at the root of the problem, and they head south with the regularity and near totality of the annual migration of the Canada goose," he said. "The geese at least have the decency to return and lay their eggs."

Sutherland, author of two novels and a professor of literature at the university of Sherbrooke, Que., said Canada's share of its domestic cultural markets is so low it "is not even tokenism."

By Janice Hamilton

MONTREAL (CP) — Five filmmakers from China have arrived in Canada to make a documentary film for distribution in theatres back home.

The four middle-aged men dressed in black suits with small round collars buttoned to the neck and a woman wearing a western-style blazer and slacks told a news conference Wednesday they will be in Canada about four months.

Director-cameraman Zhuany Wei said they will visit Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Quebec City as well as the wheat-production areas of the west.

"Our country is still backward in the areas of agriculture, industry, science and technology, so we hope we can learn from Canada and quicken the pace of modernization in our own country," said Zhuang through an interpreter.

"Our main objectives are to film things that are related to the friendship between China and Canada, and to show Canada's experiences in the building of a country."

Mechanized agriculture is an area where China is backward, noted Zhuang, and the film crew is interested not only in the daily lives of Canadian farmers but also in agricultural research and manufacturing plants.



Media

One Camera, One Vote

At the "throne" of the Young Pretender
by Clive Robertson

Every day I walk past construction site hoardings. It's a reasonably short walk but there is usually more than enough to read. During the election the posters changed. As I read newspapers and watched the news, one

hoarding poster kept superimposing its message: "If voting could change the system, it would be against the law" (Toronto Anarchist Coalition).

The Progressive Conservative Party's election slogan was: "It's time for a change," their word 'change'

having been stripped of all its political meaning.

I am not a "political" analyst, but the recent election was not a political event. It could have been; there were more than a handful of urgent issues, but it wasn't. It was a media event.



1. Hello, I'm Ed Broadbent, your host of "The Press is Right". Gentlemen you know the rules, whosoever answers the most questions indecisively wins.



2. O.K. Joe, your first question for 136 seats is: "What did you mean in your M.A. thesis when you said the Tories could have put Riel to rest?"



3. Two for you Pierre. "How did you lose 27 cabinet ministers through resignation? And: What happened to the 'Just Society'?"



4. We're out of time. Joe, you're the winner and you have the chance to come back next month and try for 'Double Your Majority'.

photos Clive Robertson

From the TV Debate of May 13th until election day May 22nd we witnessed an unusual inversion. "Media Event" normally connotes a false event constructed by the media which is almost what the election had been up to and

including the TV Debate. But following the television spectacular both print and TV journalists attempted to re-instate the notion of 'a political election'. This educational process, if it can be called such, failed. It was

too brief and too late. The Tory and Liberal Party strategists continued to hand out nothing more than autographed portraits.

Ontario was the place where the Tories would have to 'burn rubber' to

Media

form a minority government and Toronto became the asphalt. The Toronto *Globe and Mail* supported the Tories, The Toronto *Star* supported the NDP. The CBC attempted to disguise its Liberal preference, CTV and GLOBAL TV were only interested in supporting the winner and the closer we came to the election, the closer they both moved towards condoning the Tories. Naturally immediately after the election, the public media that 'serves the public' will support "the people's choice".

Both the *Star* and the *Globe and Mail's* pre-election support was published complete with reservations. But on May 19th, three days before the election, The Toronto *Star*, Canada's largest circulation newspaper, printed a story by their Ottawa editor, Richard Gwyn, titled: "Heads you lose, tails you lose." It could have been construed as support for the NDP as the only choice. It was more. It gave clear historical reasons why a Tory or Liberal government could presently be a pivotal mistake for Canada.

Gwyn further suggested, "If Trudeau goes, the Liberal Party could go with him. . . the dissolution of a party that has governed Canada for virtually the past half century seems unimaginable. Yet the Liberals have always occupied an unstable middle between the NDP (Social Democrats) and the Conservatives. He refers to the Liberal's past strengths in two words: "Quebec and Patronage". Traditionally, only the Liberal Party could lead Quebec into a pan-Canadian partnership, and by possessing power the Liberals have possessed the patronage that attracted many of the best and brightest of Canada's post-war generation, who then paid their dues by keeping them in power."

Gwyn spells out the rest. The Liberals were out of power in every Province for the first time in this century. Quebec, without the Liberals, is about to make its own decisions and Trudeau, the millionaire 'landlord', fails to repair the country's plumbing.

But the Tory party meanwhile had burned the word CHANGE into the undecided voters' minds. Gwyn's comments fell on deaf eyes.

It's old news that Canada now has its own "Iron-Lady", young King Joe I, flashing his tricky-dicky-v-shaped hands over his head. Through the power gap of a spark plug came the nervous-laughing Joe Nixon from High

River, Alberta. Clark admitted on CBC radio a week before the election: "Without bragging I can say that in the past three years I have brought together a party that has spent most of its past committing suicide." It is Clark who said: "Once Canadians get to know me better, they'll learn to like me." Prime Minister Clark did not win the 'political' election. He admits that he is not a philosopher, neither is he a political scientist or a statesman. He won a media event and he won it with Nixon-like statements, i.e., his belief that the RCMP could, under certain circumstances, continue to break the law. He won the media event, constantly fumbling like Gerald Ford. Clark's media advisors who, post-election, are trying to match the Jimmy Carter — "throw - away - the - limousine - let - me - walk - down - the - street" look, also advised Clark not to take part in the TV Debate. Clark lost. Every Canadian admitted he lost but Clark won the media event — the election.

Joe Clark was trained as a journalist, his father owned and published *The High River Times*. But rather than choose the long term 'power' of the journalist, he opted for the short-term power of the politician. Clark has been cheated, for eleven-year leaderships are, for Canada, a thing of the past. Clark talks about "a team" not because he wants to share the leadership but because he knows he will have to cushion the inevitable criticisms. As we have seen from the Trudeau governments, a team of cabinet ministers is not synonymous with a team of experts. For Clark, his choices will possibly be more fragile due to the geo-political realities that face him.

Since Cabinet ministers switch jobs more frequently than most Canadians take vacations, we cannot expect much expertise. (As artists, we know that citizen experience doesn't reach The Secretary of State's office, so why should we assume that it's any different for any other portfolio?) But what can we expect from the team leader?

Political Science Professor Grant Davy painted a picture of Clark the student when he was attending the University of Alberta: "I never heard Joe say very much about the fundamental aspects of human life in a political context. I don't think he'd thought out the options." ("Now Joe Who Really is a Somebody", Toronto

Star, May 23rd.) Professor Davy's comments, as reported by *Star* writers John Honderich and Stephen Handelman, point out that: "Clark used university as a way-station in the very, very limited sense of learning how to get power and how to get elected."

We could see that. All of us that watched the TV Debate. Trudeau didn't need to win this election to survive. Clark did. As Richard Gwyn predicted: "Clark's future, if he loses, is the easiest to predict. He won't have one. The famous Conservative circular firing squads, at present shooting outwards, will turn inward."

Clark's appearance in the TV Debate was as a contestant in "The Price is Right." He had to guess the answers and the tension was pure TV game show. Of course we now know that he walked off with the matching washer and dryer, the plane tickets to Hawaii,



the new Datsun, and more. But will it change his everyday life? And more importantly how will it change ours?

The question remains. It's easy to understand how he won the political event, given the massive Tory provincial strengths, but how did he win the media event? Looking at the last Nixon victory does not ease the pain.

Perverse though it may sound, there is hope in the fact that the new government will have to face the still existing political realities. The new Tory bureaucracy has more headaches than just the outgoing Ottawa mandarins recently putting their filing cabinets through a paper shredder. The news media's romance with Joe Clark will be, I predict, shorter than the American news media's inaugural romance with Jimmy Carter. If Clark continues to be so desperately 'open with the media', he will, so to speak, be hacked to pieces. When a federal leader wins an election by default, as Clark did, it creates an embarrassment for the electorate, but an even greater embarrassment for the 'interpretative' news editors. The 'post-election hang-over' will require strong media medication.

Television



Raymond Cloutier stars as Louis Riel.



Louis Riel, 1870

Montana Historical Society

CBC's "Riel"

Who gains from this rewriting of history? Certainly not 1 million Métis.

BY KENNETH COUTTS-SMITH

Between 1869 and 1870, Louis Riel headed a Provincial Government that was established in the Red River Valley as the result of the abdication of administrative power on the part of the Council of Assiniboia, the governing body of the Hudson's Bay Company who previously held the territory as a fief from the British Crown for some two centuries. The Provisional Government was set up to protect the political and cultural rights of the inhabitants in the face of both an imminent incursion of settlers from Ontario and a threatened annexation of the area by the Government of the United States. Fifteen years later, under analogous circumstances, Riel was to briefly head another Provincial Government further west in Saskatchewan. This second attempt to ensure a degree of local autonomy ended in the face of massive armed intervention and the execution of Riel.

Now credited as the founder of the Province of Manitoba, Louis Riel is also honoured as one of the great

heroes of the Métis people, a distinct and uniquely Canadian racial and cultural minority who stand clearly defined between the aboriginal amerindians and the euro-american whites. Some weeks ago, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation featured a "docudrama" on the life of Louis Riel which was an extraordinary distortion of historical truth. The crude characterisation of Riel as a simple-minded personality leading a band of romanticised "primitives" has been vigorously denounced by the largest Métis organisation in the country, the Native Council of Canada. Centerfold correspondent, Kenneth Coutts-Smith does not believe that these historical distortions and half-truths were either accidental or merely the result of vulgar concessions towards the structuring of a profitable media product. He explains below that this teleplay is being seriously proposed as a learning "text" in the school system, and expands upon his conviction that this misrepresentation of historical truth was in fact motivated by deeper political considerations than are at first apparent.

Television

Six weeks or so after the event, the partly spurious authentic barrage of press items regarding the 2.2 million dollar CBC teevee spectacular *Riel* is only now just beginning to die down. Letters-to-the-editor pro and con still occasionally trickle into the correspondence columns, and the occasional press release is still issued, either puffing the ratings or promoting a further "educational" spin-off product.

The actual timing of the teleplay's release is significant, occurring as it did during a federal election campaign in which the outcome was far from conclusive. Beyond this particular factor, is there any justification for further comment on

a subject that appears to have been long since driven into the ground under a mountain of press commentary?

It seems that there is; since, although many voices (sometimes magisterial voices) have objected to the blatant distortions of historical accuracy throughout the teleplay, little attempt has been made to analyse the implications of these distortions other than from the sectarian (and often equally historically inaccurate) vantage-point of ultra-left publications that observe the whole phenomenon as a predictable imperialist distortion of a "peoples struggle".

While there are unquestionable elements of truth in such an analysis, they are not elucidated, however, by the simple asseveration of marxist-leninist-type slogans. On the other hand, the popular press has by and large restricted itself to an analysis based on media conventions; isolating cultural manifestations in order to consider them in terms of an apolitical and, fundamentally, ahistorical vacuum.

This perspective accepts as legitimate the presentation of "national" history in the artificial and stylised genre of the Hollywood B-feature cowboy movie. Of course, here the press is simply meshing with a structure of assumptions already defined within the electronic media; and, in terms of the CBC, this structure of assumptions can hardly be said to constitute a new departure.

Programmes with pretensions to historical sanction such as *The Masseys*, *The Newcomers*, *The Great Detective* (not to mention, also, non-historical sit-coms such as *The Beachcombers*) have long since developed a tradition of romanticising and revising the uniquely Canadian experience of land and community under frontier conditions in such a way as to homogenise that particular experience

Riel's authority represented a collective interest. Secretary of State Thomas Bunn, Assistant Secretary Louis Schimdt, Treasurer W.B. O'Donoghue, Chief Justice James Ross are hardly comic French backwoodsmen in funny furry clothes.



The elected council of the provisional government of the Métis Nation, 1870

with the entirely disparate one that took place south of the border.

In terms of traditional show-biz (e.g., *The Beachcombers*) it would seem evident that for a Canadian media product to command an international audience — that is, circulation in Europe and Australia as well as in the States — it must to some extent model itself on the Hollywood "shoot-out individualist" conventions of frontier life.

It must also, as did Hollywood during the formative period of these conventions, base itself on a general myth of rural innocence (even if the action is ostensibly contemporary); a myth that reinforces romantic nostalgia for a social order

(one that, of course, never existed anywhere yet on earth) in which individualised democratic liberalism is seen to transcend all pain, all vice and crime.

Clearly this development of the ideal Canadian media product is internally logical to the structures of an entertainment industry dependant on the fluctuations of a free market. But, when that industry is operating under a massive state subsidy conditioned as it must inevitably be by political exigencies, then such a development takes on a distinctly more ambiguous colouration.

From this perspective, the *Riel* phenomenon is hardly unique nor unprecedented, though it evidently presents the most ambitious and blatant example to date of the process that may be charted, in a minor mode, through *The Masseys*, *The Newcomers* and similar recent programmes. This genealogy is not merely restricted to an ideological understanding of the black-white confrontation between the immanent individual and the social and physical milieu that he is celebrated as manipulating. It is also evident in a developingly intense edifice of pseudo-nationalist and pseudo-historical public relations.

The ascendancy of the press release as a validating criterion of cultural authenticity would appear to be firmly established in the contemporary media. The subsumption of history into myth, a process that was restricted in the past to the traditions of folk and popular culture, has long since expanded to dominate media entertainment. The distinctions between historical fact and media invention have become so blurred as to destabilise, even to de-structure, the very concepts themselves. This process has, of course, been notable for many years in the realm of apparent reportage; the tendency towards fictionalising

Television

"news" is countered by that pushing "fiction" towards docudrama.

A phalanx of paramedics, doctors, policemen, lawyers, psychiatrists, teachers and other authority figures as teevee situational dramatic characters have stepped off the electronic flux of magnetic tape and now tend to inhabit the wings of collective social awareness as paradigms, exemplars of real-time action. In this way commodified media culture has achieved a fetishisation of role and character. Individuals as masks transcend individuals as the fictionalised trace of historical being.

Such relativised "truth" becomes the very antithesis of real truth, wherein objective record is transformed into an act of dominance.¹ In one sense, the public relations office of the CBC is not lying, at least not consciously so, when it maintains that the *Riel* teleplay is a "slice of Canadian history with minor concessions to drama", because the existing conventions within the media community are defined by an extreme relativism that thrusts the potential conflict of value beyond questions of actual truth and falsehood.

When the executive producer of *Riel*, Stan Colbert, remarked in a press statement that "say there are 20 versions of the Louis Riel story. Well then, ours is version 21", he was subscribing to a view of history that is so extremely relativistic as to deny any possibility of objective judgement. The subjective view is invoked that assumes parity between each and every separate interpretation. Divergence from recorded fact is permitted in the light of the ostensible authority of the personal overview.

These are not quite "versions", however, in the form and scope that Colbert invokes in order to justify the teleplay's blatant distortion of recorded event, but rather ones that fall into two distinct and clear categories, the historical and the ideological. Concerning the first, inasmuch as the particular individual historian achieves a scientific method, there can be little flexibility for a multiplicity of viewpoints: a fundamental unitary characteristic is usually rendered obligatory from the historical documentary evidence.

This understanding, of course, may mutate as further historical evidence is uncovered, or as cross connections

Macdonald at an early stage assured an amnesty but was later forced to defend his Protestant votes and commit himself firmly to one side of the confrontation.



Middleton's encampment at Gabriel's Crossing (before Batoche)

are revealed; as indeed has occurred with the recent discovery of further Riel diaries. Variations within the spectrum of historical actuality can, in the long run, only operate in respect of essential focus or emphasis. The new book by Thomas Flanagan of the University of Calgary, for instance, relocates Riel within a long tradition of dissident millennial religious leaders, and thus complements, rather than contradicts, the "classical" text of George Stanley or the more popular one of Peter Charlebois.

"History", however, is not merely the record of what happened, but also the record of what men believed to have happened — not only the record of verifiable facts and events, but also of symbols and the political passions that those symbols have evoked and reinforced. In this regard, there are two further fundamental "versions of the Riel events: that one subscribed to by the Catholics and that one subscribed to by the Protestants, by the French and by the English, Lower and Upper Canada, Quebec and Ontario.

Without question, the past significance of the "rebellions" lay in this political confrontation, this confrontation that still remains unresolved. The Provisional Government that was formed in the Red River in 1869 (quite legally in the power vacuum resulting from the Hudson's Bay Company's abdication of responsibility) was done so within the context of that confrontation.

Riel's authority represented a collective interest, not only of the French-speaking Métis of the district, but of a broad coalition that also included English-speaking half-breeds, Indians, English, Scots and Catholic-Irish settlers. This coalition was opposed by a small band of Orangemen who saw themselves as the advance contingents of a destined expansion of Ontario Protestant culture.

Riel's concern was for the protection of the cultural and material status-quo of the Red River Valley, the maintenance of land rights on the one hand and of the Catholic religion, the French language and French schooling on the other, in the face of inevitable changes the new settlers would bring. The proportional figures of these contending parties in the Red River (figures completely distorted in the teleplay) are revealing. Those who openly supported the Provisional Government, or who did so tacitly by



NATIVE COUNCIL OF CANADA

(MÉTIS and NON-STATUS INDIANS)

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GLORIA GEORGE

26th April 1979

Mr. A.W. Johnson,
President,
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation,
1500 Bronson Avenue,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Although we spoke after the screening of "Riel" at Rideau Hall regarding my concerns about the movie, I must say that it showed a flagrant disregard for the valuable contributions that the Metis have made in the development of Canada. The Metis were depicted as savage buffalo hunters who only found a cause with the arrival of the literate Riel. The blatant inaccuracies and distortions served no good purpose other than to arm racist Canadians against our just cause.

We, the Metis nation, cannot tolerate or accept this kind of treatment from a publicly financed medium. We shall be seeking a redress for this insensitive interpretation of history. I would suggest that you realize the inevitable; that "Riel" is an artistic and financial flop and should be buried in the archives with less notable works.

I am enclosing for your information a copy of our Press Release of April 18 which further outlines some of our concerns. I shall be communicating with you again on this matter at which time I will further enumerate some of our views.

Yours sincerely,

Harry W. Daniels,
President.

HWD:jw
Encl.

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¹This development, incidentally, has recently and effectively been explored on the artistic plane in the Australian movie "Newsfront" in which the distinction is maintained between the old 1950's movie-house newsreel that dealt with objective actualities and the subsequent teevee newscast that deals with subjective persuasion.

Television

remaining neutral, numbered some 1,200 persons, while the dissident Orange group never totalled more than 300 individuals. The actual political struggle, however, was waged elsewhere, through public opinion and mob pressure in Eastern Canada.

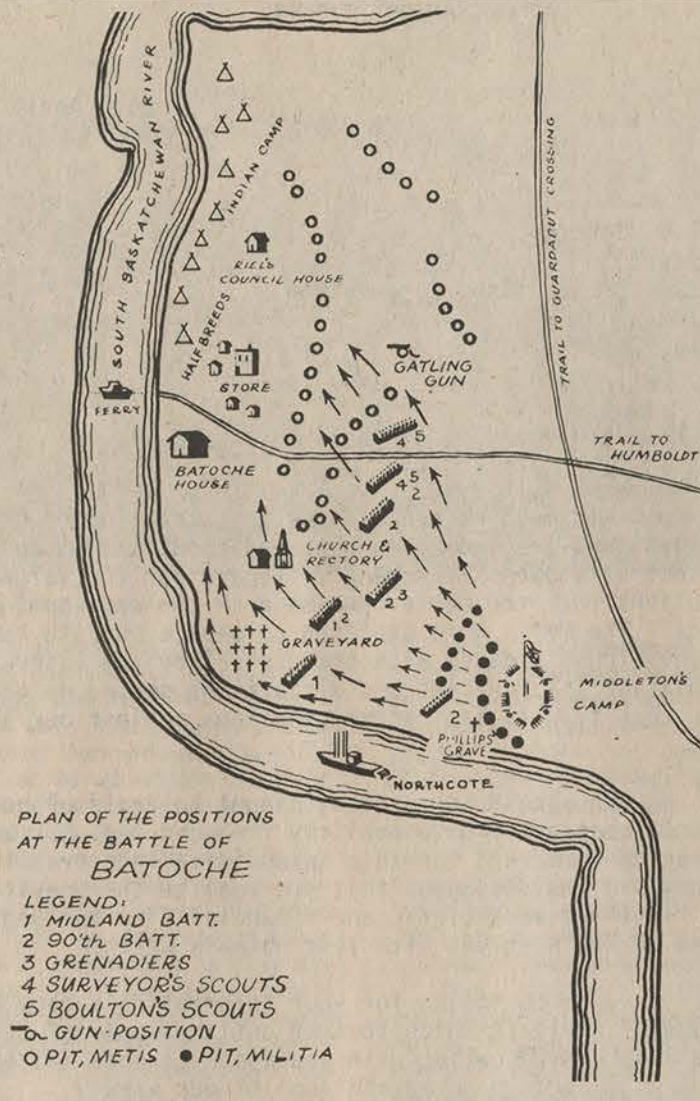
CBC's *Riel* teleplay not only fails to escape the earlier unresolved ideological conflict, but it also introduces a new and contemporary dimension into an ongoing conflict. With this understanding, the historical distortions in the script acquire a significance beyond a mere concession to dramatic efficacy. Again, we may observe a process working on two levels, but, this time, the duality is now between a vulgarisation of events designed to conform to established media stereotypes and a distortion of events designed to persuade by allusion and by implication.

The first aspect of this duality is demonstrated by a total trivialisation of history wherein a stereotypical character or event is proposed as the medium and symbol of a particular reading of historical "forces". For instance, Gabriel Dumont, played in the genre of Zorba-the-Greek, is proposed as representing one aspect of the "genius" of the Métis nation; Louis Riel, moody and scholarly, awkward and citified, the introspective intellectual to Dumont's forthright embodiment of the "life-force", is proposed as the complementary and complementing aspect.

Rose Marie's sing-along-with-snowshoes was hardly more extreme. The collision of wills between the noble-savage and the weakling-with-the-nerve-of-steel is played out in an arm-wrestling scene in which Riel's hand (predictably) is severely burnt while his resolute expression never flickers. In this time-honoured way, the intellectual wins the respect of the man of action; and the latter

The CBC version fails to tell us that the 150 Métis defending Batoche against Middleton's augmented force of 1,600 were only overrun when they had exhausted their ammunition.

drawing Public Archives of Canada



PLAN OF THE POSITIONS
AT THE BATTLE OF
BATOCHÉ

LEGEND:
1 MIDLAND BATT.
2 90th BATT.
3 GRENADIERS
4 SURVEYOR'S SCOUTS
5 BOULTON'S SCOUTS
○ GUN POSITION
○ PIT, MÉTIS ● PIT, MILITIA

Middleton's troops attacked Batoche, 9 a.m., May 9, 1885

instantly replaces contempt with a passionate brotherly love. Together the two of them stride off back-lit into the future, comrades and co-symbols of an oppressed people — "zee 'ead and zee 'eart of zee Métiss peeples ..."

Stereotype here comes full circle, since the insulting characterisation of the Métis as a comic French backwoodsman in funny furry clothes was itself a completely modern media invention, that of Hollywood's vulgar imagination throughout a slew of patronizing movies made during the 40's and 50's. With the CBC teleplay, there is the clear implication that *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon* rides again.

The second fundamental category of distortion resides in the persuasive dimensions of montage and the implied extrapolation of script events. Though it is not necessarily presented as an overt factor until the second half of the teleplay, Riel's millennial sense of religious mission is hinted at during the very first moments of the production. Imagery, perhaps apposite to a society based on religious conviction, es-

tablishes to a contemporary audience the implicit anticipation of Riel's mental disturbance, his incipient religious mania.

Here the encoded theme of the film is laid down: the equation of religion with deviance, and its contrast to pragmatic practicality (even the subtle hint of an all-too-human minor degree of corrupt self-interest in the person of jolly old Sir John A.) which equates to normalcy. Ideologically, the most significant scene of the whole movie is the totally imaginary meeting between Macdonald and Mgr. Ignace Bourget, Bishop of Montreal.

This meeting never took place in fact, since the Prime Minister negotiated Manitoba's Provincial status through

Taché of Rupertsland; however its dramatic requirement becomes evident to the coded message of the CBC teleplay, since who better to symbolize divisive French Canada than this intractable reactionary cleric who was the main proponent in North America of the principle of Ultramontanism, that Catholic faction which accorded temporal infallibility to the Pope and proposed the restoration of the principle of submission of the State to the Church, of the political to the pastoral.

In this scene, the Protestant-Catholic national dichotomy is embodied in the very role characterisation. Macdonald, the vehicle and principle of Confederation with his dream of a single nation stretching "from sea to sea", the personification of unity and social homogeneity, is contrasted in his open and clear declarations to the scheming machiavellian priest who is constantly manoeuvring for French advantage, for special status, for separate schools, for religious incursions into secular life.

The scene between Macdonald and the Bishop crystallizes the unspoken implied subtext, together with its contemporary allusions, since we inevitably see (as no doubt we are expected to) lurking behind the faces of Christopher Plummer and Jean-Louis Roux the shadow faces of Trudeau and Lévesque.

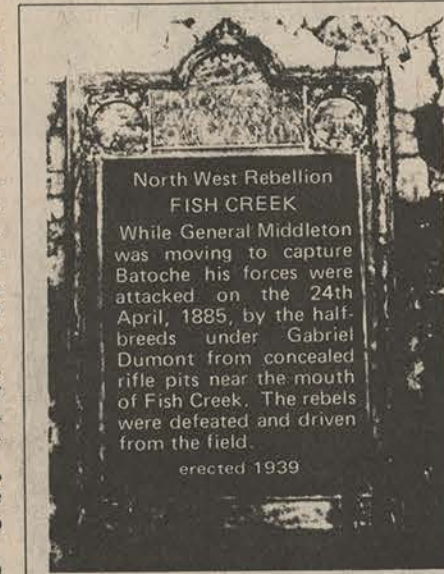
One factor here is quite revealing: the CBC has taken remarkable pains in casting and makeup to present the majority of the characters realistically on the visual plane, as comparison between the actors and original photographs of the characters they represent easily reveals. Dumont, Donald Smith, Colonel Wolseley, Scott, Schultz, Ritchot, Lépine, Father McWilliam are all recreated with painstaking accuracy in terms of make-up and costume.

The only blatant exceptions to this are the characters of Riel himself and the Bishop of Montreal; the latter, in real life solid, dignified, with the square magisterial face of a Renaissance Pope is substituted in media life by Roux's thin, witty, calculating, Voltairean features, dominated by an expression at the same time nervously mobile and secretively withdrawn — the only element lacking in the characterisation is that of the chain-smoker.

It is around this central "incident" that the tragedy is played. Macdonald even blurts out to Donald Smith (played here as a factotum to the P.M., rather than as the leading financier of the period) in scandalised shock when he first hears of Riel's assumption of governmental power "God, man! This means Separation!" One stands astonished at the CBC's apparent assessment of its audience as being composed of morons and illiterates, as it appears convinced that the viewer would note no discrepancy in the dialogue despite the fact that the Terri-

Television

CBC's *Riel* like the American movie *Roots* promotes the values of the dominant white society.



Métis referred to as 'half-breeds'

tory of Assiniboia can hardly "separate" from a confederation to which it does not yet belong.

It would be impossible to detail in an article of this length the truly astonishing extent of the historical distortions, the twisted half-truths and loaded allusions. They literally riddle the script from end to end, and many appear completely gratuitous, bordering even upon the whimsically perverse, such as the Mounted Police officer saluting his superior in the American rather than in the British manner (or Colonel Wolseley's inexplicable promotion to general). To attempt to catalogue this travesty would require at least the length of text similar to the published "novelisation" of the teleplay, a grotesque volume written in a kind of breathless and simplified prose more appropriate to a Harlequin romance.

One particular complex of falsehoods, however, ought to be referred to here, and that is the distortions covering the military events leading up to the eventual suppression of the "Exovate" government at Batoche. The teleplay tangentially alludes to, but does not pursue, the fact that Mac-

donald raised a public scare-hysteria concerning the second rebellion and mobilised a military force that he admitted privately was quite out of proportion to the "threat to national security" (prior echoes of 1970?) in order to stampede a reluctant Parliament into financially bailing out the bankrupt and stymied trans-continental railroad enterprise.

What the movie does twist in its pure Hollywood travesty of frontier military adventure is the fact that a force consisting of some 6,000 men with 8 nine-pounder cannons, 2 gatling guns, 586 horses, 2,000 supply wagons and a steam riverboat was mobilised to oppose a Métis force that never at any one time amounted to more than 300 men armed with antiquated trade-store shotguns. Indeed, General Middleton's staff of commissioned officers outnumbered the whole Métis force. This impressive and full-blown military expedition (which cost the Canadian taxpayer, it seems some \$4,500,000) in fact suffered several severe military defeats.

A considerable amount of the mass hysteria demanding Riel's subsequent execution as well as blatant perjury committed by prosecution witnesses during the trial resulted from attempts to cover up these defeats and to validate reputations in military circles. It seems scandalous that at this late date the CBC should apparently be party to an ongoing attempt to continue this whitewash. Certainly General Middleton is shown as somewhat of a bungling incompetent (but then, his movie characterisation is that of a fatuous British anachronism. So what will you? Naturally he was incompetent!), but the recorded military defeats are glossed over.

The movie shows, for instance in the Duck Lake

Television

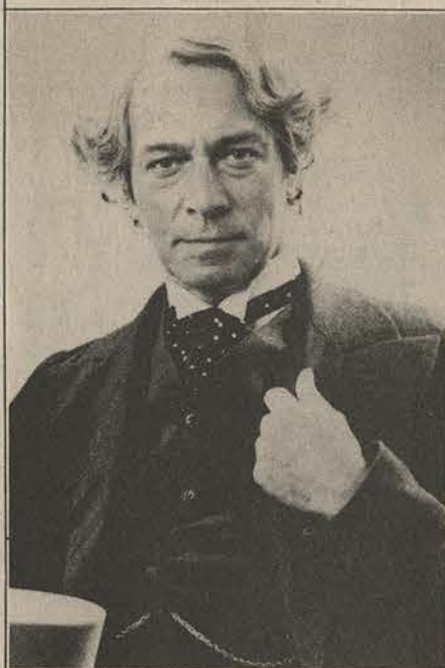
incident, that Superintendent Crozier (a good policeman who cares about the simple misguided folk in his charge) retreated after a treacherous ambush when his small force was outnumbered and surrounded. In historical fact, a column of 130 counted police and volunteers was soundly defeated in battle by 35 Métis. Equally, the movie does not allow that, in the Fish Creek Battle, Dumont's superior tactics permitted some 130 Métis to rout Middleton's force of 800 men armed with cannon and modern weapons. (Incidentally, despite numerous protests, the Saskatchewan Government's bronze plaque which commemorates the incident still informs interested tourists of the same canard that the movie perpetuates.) Finally, the CBC version does not tell us that the same 150 Métis defended the town of Batoche against Middleton's augmented force of 1,600 men supported by an armed riverboat for three whole days, and that their positions were only overrun when they had exhausted their ammunition.

In respect both of the Red River and of Batoche, the movie's implication is of an irrational world of nature and savagery beleaguering the defensive world of culture and order. An altered focus, however, defines a twist that massages liberal guilt without proposing any radical perspective. Some of the whites are shown to be villains, and they put upon their peers as well as oppress the "natives" — Macdonald, after all, has Schultz² as an unfortunate cross to bear! All of the savages are noble though they suffer unjustly, even if they are ultimately misguided in their stubborn struggle to hang on to a social order and to a life-style that progress has already rendered obsolete.

The teleplay would persuade us that the wild, free and admirable Métis, roamers of the plains, were unable to adjust to the inexorable march of "civilisation", and finally feel victim to the advent of industrial and technological social relations that thrust inexorably into the wilderness in the wake of the permanent way. To support this tenuous thesis, it becomes necessary to present the material culture of the West as primitive in the extreme, and postulate the Red River as a huddle of squalid mud huts and a rickety log-wood church clustered around a diminutive Fort Garry.

It was necessary to eschew any presentation that suggested material sophistication, any analysis that recognized that 30 years previously there had been built a twin spired stone cathedral at St. Boniface, or that long before the events of the "rebellion", the Grey Nuns constructed an elegant two-storey stone convent that still today serves as the municipal museum and archdiocesan archive — unquestionably the finest public building presently located

Was the confederalist lesson in "Riel" proposed as a cautionary model to the Parti Québécois?



Christopher Plummer as Sir John A. Macdonald

idental, nor are they gratuitous. It is clearly impossible to accept the official proposition of the "slice of history with concessions to dramatic requirements"; the distortions are far too focused, far too much the vehicle for myth and ideology. One is constantly reminded while watching the teleplay of the tragic split between event and political partisanship that took place at the time of the historical actuality. The authentic struggle of what was at first the whole multi-racial Red River Community, then that of the Batoche area Settlers' Union, then finally the Métis people alone, was historically subsumed by the larger Protestant-Catholic Canadian confrontation. The very rights won by Louis Riel in 1870 were abrogated by 1890, for instance, when the Provincial Government of Manitoba (under now, ironically, the Lt. Governorship of the carpetbagger Schultz) voted the rescission of the Act that provided a Provincial public school system in the French language, an injustice still to this day unrepealed.³

Now, however, with the abdication of the church from the field of political contention, can it be that the *Riel* epic is seen as an element, a focus of reconciliation, but "reconciliation" naturally in terms of our interest, in terms of English interest? Riel as a symbol of the contemporary confederalist stance, proposed as a cautionary model to the P.Q.? The idea seems preposterous. Preposterous or not, that indeed is the coded and sublimated message of the CBC teleplay.

It is interesting to note that, while the English-speaking media in Canada bombarded the public with

in Winnipeg. It is understandable that sophisticated building technology could be overlooked, but, how many viewers of the CBC teleplay wondered that such an apparently primitive community could record itself photographically? The Provisional Government posed for official group photographs, and these photographs were used in the publicity for the movie. A mere moment's thought reveals that it demanded a high order of social and community cohesion to support a photographer at that stage in the development of "frontier" culture.

Nevertheless, the CBC script insists on the myth of primitivism, not least in the characterisation of minor roles in the teleplay. The Rousseauian *bois-brûlé* becomes occasionally extended by the "dignified-Indian" stereotype, irrespective of the fact that the scriptwriter is blatantly mixing racial metaphors. Moïse Ouellette, a significant participant throughout the events, is played by Don Francks as a sort of sub-Dan-George-patriarch with a disconcerting habit of waving feathers about while muttering aboriginal medicine.

These travesties are hardly accidental, nor are they gratuitous. It is clearly impossible to accept the official proposition of the "slice of history with concessions to dramatic requirements"; the distortions are far too focused, far too much the vehicle for myth and ideology. One is constantly reminded while watching the teleplay of the tragic split between event and political partisanship that took place at the time of the historical actuality. The authentic struggle of what was at first the whole multi-racial Red River Community, then that of the Batoche area Settlers' Union, then finally the Métis people alone, was historically subsumed by the larger Protestant-Catholic Canadian confrontation. The very rights won by Louis Riel in 1870 were abrogated by 1890, for instance, when the Provincial Government of Manitoba (under now, ironically, the Lt. Governorship of the carpetbagger Schultz) voted the rescission of the Act that provided a Provincial public school system in the French language, an injustice still to this day unrepealed.³

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It is interesting to note that, while the English-speaking media in Canada bombarded the public with

what was unquestionably the largest and most extensive publicity hype this country has ever seen, the French press more or less ignored the occasion. There was little or no advance publicity, and a brief survey of the Montreal papers during the two weeks following the première revealed one somewhat superficial review in *Le Devoir*, and no reviews at all, only a gossipy article-interview with Senator Maurice Riel, a distant descendant of the Métis leader, in *La Presse*.

The wider implications and intentions behind the teleplay are evident in the spin-off material, wherein a whole industry devoted to educational tools and teaching kits appears to have come into being. The N.C. Press are publishing school teaching aids based on the teleplay. They are also issuing a hard-back illustrated school textbook-version of the official and grotesque "novelisation" of the film which we have already discussed.⁴

As well as this, the record company G.R.T. of Canada Ltd., is releasing a record, one side of which will contain the musical score of the movie while the other will feature Riel's speech from the dock as it was presented in the film. This "version" does not appear to contain even one phrase from the actual published speech which is readily available to the interested in the trial transcript published as *The Queen vs. Louis Riel* (edited by Desmond Morton) by the University of Toronto Press.

It seems monstrous that such a travesty as Roy Moore's emotionally-charged script (read so passionately by Raymond Cloutier) should ever be used as a teacher's aid. Clearly, no amount of exhortation by the individual teacher that this is "fiction" will make much impression on a child's mind; what will remain after the teacher's comments have faded from memory will be the primitivis-

³With no apparent connection to the present public interest in the Manitoba Act of 1870 negotiated by Riel, the Manitoba Court of Appeal brought down a judgement on the 25th April of this year finding "inoperative" the 1890 law that struck down French as an official language of Manitoba. It seems that an unconstitutional law (unconstitutional, since it violates the BNA Act) is apparently being finally redressed after a lapse of 79 years. Predictably, however, Stirling Lyon's present Manitoba Government has announced that it will appeal the decision in the Supreme Court of Canada. It seems the protestants remain adamant that neither the French language nor French schooling shall be accredited in Western Canada.

²Schultz, a major figure in the Orange "Canada First" movement was the senior agitator against Riel's government.

Television

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culture. This right is written into international law. But have the Métis yet achieved this right? Does it look likely that they will do so in the near future? Of course not. It is one thing to mouth liberal sentiments, quite another to enact or permit their realisation.

Liberal sentiment obscures quite consciously the repressive processes that are endemic to the capitalist forms of exchange: land appropriation and property speculation. Riel's actual historical speech was, to a considerable degree, a penetrating analysis of this very process, and referring to the original it is easy to understand the contemporary imperative to trivialise his words and to substitute within the educational domain this trivialisation for the actuality. The real speech still retains the capability of being politically dangerous to particular political interests.

The cynical distortion of historical truth, the subtle

Television

transformation in which a blatant lie is established with all the weight and authority of historical precedent is demonstrated to a marked degree in an extraordinary pamphlet issued by the Canadian Association for Adult Education. This influential body is also, it seems, not immune to political partisanship. One of its enterprises is the teevee programme *People Talking Back*, in which a spurious but totally emasculated safety-valve-type participatory "democracy" is encouraged.

The Association has recently committed itself and its undeniable prestige to the support of *Riel* as an educational tool; in other words, it has placed its imprimatur behind the essential authenticity of the events depicted. The pamphlet⁴ proposing that the movie should be used in discussion groups contains as its motto the following:

"Must every issue large or small, provincial or federal, become the test of the very identity of this country? Pray that we will mature and that future generations will be spared such a destructive spectacle — Sir John A. Macdonald from the CBC film *Riel*."

Note the disingenuous form that this quotation takes, employing the very tactic used throughout the teleplay itself and across the whole spectrum of educational "tools" based upon it. The words were never spoken by the real Macdonald of course, yet it appears to be he that is quoted. The phrase "From the CBC movie. . ." does not clearly indicate the fact that the words are totally invented; and even if this fact is noted, the sentiment remains in the mind after this fact is forgotten, reinforced and sanctified by the authority of Macdonald's myth. Clearly what we here understand is the subliminal coded message that addresses us from a contemporary partisan political perspective — what we are persuaded by is the authority of history.

Without question, the programme of the Canadian Association of Adult Education is firmly allied to the Liberal Party position in regard to the present and future political relationship between English Canada and Quebec. Though the overt religious issue has long since become sublimated into the language and economic issues, the Association is taking a stance in the ongoing confrontation whose essential parameters have remained the same since Macdonald's day: the opposing forces of the contending Protestant and Catholic cultures.

Riel himself was a personal sacrifice to party politics. Macdonald, at an early stage negotiated with him and assured amnesty in apparent good faith, but was later forced, in the light of massive Orange agitation, to defend his Protestant votes and commit himself firmly to one side of the confrontation. Finally he was obliged to utter the infamous statement that, issued as it was during Riel's appeal after sentence, constituted a gross interference with the processes of justice: "He shall hang, though every dog in Quebec bark in his favour."

One illusion raised by the CBC teleplay is the one that proposes that the Métis people are at last receiving public recognition of their heritage, of their national identity. This view was taken up with enthusiasm by the leaders of a recent sit-in that occupied the offices of Canada Manpower in Winnipeg. In a short-term perspec-

Of course, it is once more the Métis themselves who lose out. As Trudeau once remarked "There is no Indian problem since we are all Canadians." The Métis drama is understood as being safely shelved in history.

tive the publicity surrounding *Riel* probably helped this particular demonstration, since the immediate demands (the reversal of a decision to cut back certain social programmes) appear to have been settled to the demonstrators' satisfaction.

But, in the long run, the movie, being false through and through cannot in any way contribute to either an enhanced Métis sense of cultural cohesion or an increased respect on the part of whites for that culture. It remains, rather, a specifically Canadian version of *Roots*, and, just like that movie, presents merely a superficial sop to native social self-awareness while actually promoting, as its essential subject-matter, a self-view of the native person that is defined from outside, that is defined absolutely in terms of the values of the dominant white society.

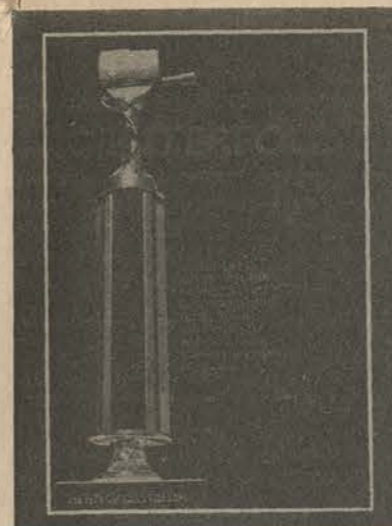
Of course, it is once more the Métis themselves who lose out. Insultingly travestied, patronised, depicted as admirable but incompetent primitives, the racist stereotypes pile up. In its confederalist stance, the movie attempts to band-aid and obscure the ancient Quebec-Canadian rift; however, it only serves to exacerbate the growing social chasm between the native peoples and the whites in this country. Trudeau once remarked that "there is no Indian problem since we are all Canadians". That essentially remains the dominant view of Canadian society; the CBC teleplay clearly speaks to a consensus view. The Métis drama is understood as being safely shelved in history; it all took place in the past — further, it took place in a never-never past defined by the stereotypes of Hollywood somnambulism.

There are the two million odd Canadians of mixed blood who have to a great degree lost their traditions and their language and become assimilated into the dominant culture. Many of these may well read the teleplay as a positive contribution. Yet, as a recent survey undertaken by the Native Council of Canada reveals, there remain more than one million fully culturated Métis living in over 600 separate and definable communities across Canada. They certainly are not likely to mysteriously go away, nor, are they likely to become assimilated and begin to enjoy the benefits of consumer society. Quite clearly, they are not likely, either, to regard this movie as anything other than what it is, an impertinent ploy to once more manipulate the Métis people as a pawn in the broader tactics of Canadian national politics. ■

Kenneth Coutts-Smith, art historian and artist, former Associate Editor of Art & Artists is currently teaching at Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, Halifax.

⁴This is surprising since, as a left-wing publishing outfit, they are responsible for both an excellent book by Peter Charlebois on Riel and an educational slide-tape kit that is unusually sensitive to the Métis' concerns — contemporary as well as historical.

⁵Some 200,000 copies of this pamphlet were circulated to individuals and educational authorities throughout the country.



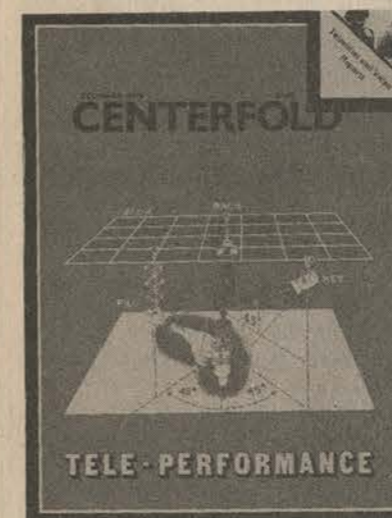
Vol. 2, No. 4 April 1978. The 1978 Canadian Video Open; Catching a Hearing Aid to the Airport — Michael Snow — Interview; 'Towards an Allusive Referential', Dick Higgins; 'Retention of the Audial Form'—Audio Arts Interview; 'Videoview 1: Susan Britton', Peggy Gale; 'Videoview 2: Rodney Werden', Peggy Gale; 'Art and Social Transformation', Kenneth Coutts-Smith; 'Robert Filliou, Part Two: The Gong Show Transcript'; 'Cloning Closes the Gap Between Clones', Clive Robertson; John Oswald: In Between the Stations — Interview; Reviews.



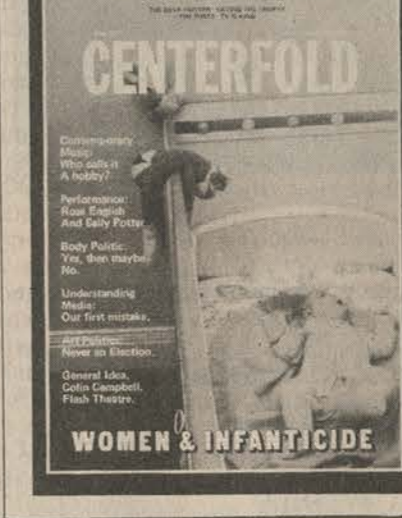
Vol. 2, No. 5 June 1978. Discussion: The Penultimate Perspective; Review: The New ArtsSpeak Conference; Interview: Linda Covit, Powerhouse, Montreal; Videoview 3: Paul Wong talks with Michael Goldberg; The Photographer's Ball performance document and scripts by Margaret Dragu; Reviews: Performance: Chevrolet Training: The Remake; As The World Burns; Film: Theatre for Strangers; Books: Wie Alles Anfang, Revisions, The Ballad of Dan Peoples, The Woman from Malibu; Discs: 33/3, Hot Property, and more . . .



Vol. 2 No. 6 September 1978. The Poland Report, Brian Dyson; Videoview 4: Taka Jimura; 'The Artist Attains Ham Radio Status..', Tom Sherman; 'Know No Galleries!', Clive Robertson; Rodney Werden's 'Baby Dolls', Lisa Steele; 'The Terms: Limits to Performance?', Bruce Barber; '9 Individual artists' views after the 'New ArtsSpace Conference', ed. Dorit Cypis; 'Imagine A Space As Karen Ann Quinlan', AA Bronson; 'And in the Blue Corner from Toronto, Canada', Clive Robertson; plus Reviews.



Vol. 3, No's 1 & 2 December 1978. Tele-Performance Issue, guest editor Kenneth Coutts-Smith; 'Elizabeth Chitty' an interview by Peggy Gale; General Idea, by Joanne Birnie Danzker; Tom Sherman, by René Blouin; Clive Robertson, by Vera Frenkel; David Buchan, a report by Colin Campbell; Dennis Tourbin, interview by Glenn Lewis; Another State of Marshalore, an interview by Nancy Nicol; Jean-François Cantin, une analyse par Rober Racine; 'Valeur Extra Rule', Paul Wong; 'Centre of a Tension', Clive Robertson; The Hummer Sisters, by Willoughby Sharp; 'The Government' an interview; 'The New Triumverate', Tom Sherman; 'First Experiment in Writing and Reading Video', Scott Didlake, plus Reviews.



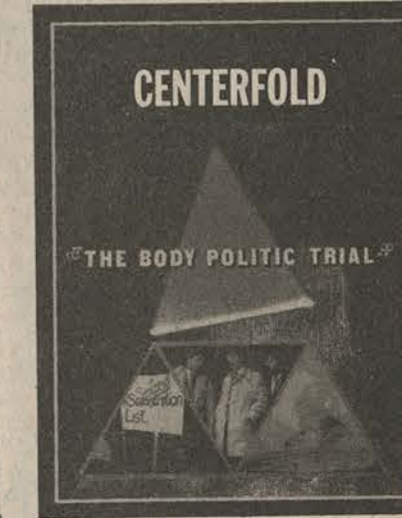
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Vol. 3, No. 3 February 1979. 'The Body Politic Trial', a 24 page report; 'Censorship and Women', by Patricia Gruben; 'The TIME Design', by Clive Robertson; 'Susan Britton: New Tapes', by Lisa Steele; 'Walking on the Line?', by Carole Condé; Nell Tenhaaf on Powerhouse Gallery; 'Digital Video, Elizabeth Vanderzaag; 'Are We The News?', Tom Sherman; Reviews: Exhibitions: Lynn Cohen; Joseph Kosuth; Television: The Gina Show; Publications: Black Phoenix; The Glenn Lewis Publications; Performance: In Ten City; Hugh Kenner, by A.S.A. Harrison; Individual Release; 11th International Festival of Sound Poetry; plus Centrifuge, a new pulse section.

Technology

1" Video Returns

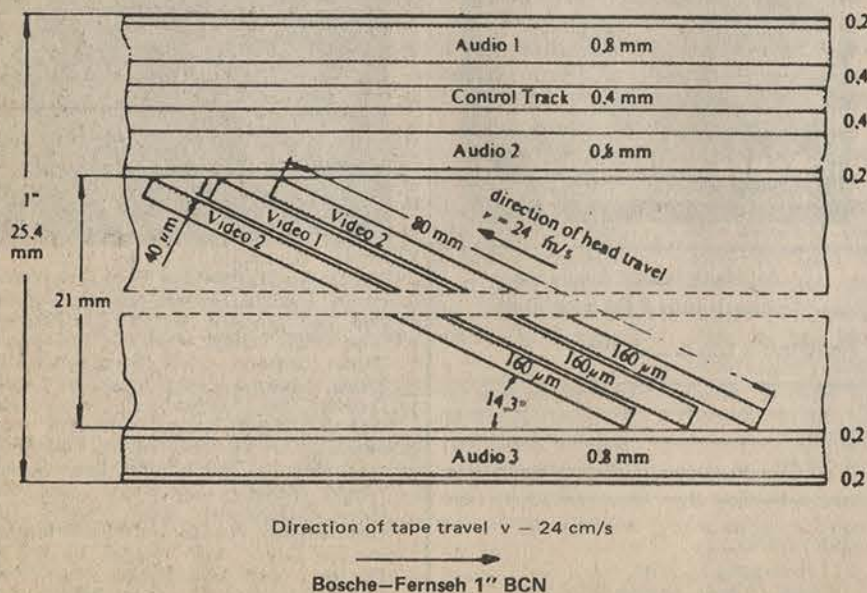
Fast editing with single frame accuracy
by Paul Morris

Paul Morris is Senior Producer with the University of Calgary's Department of Communications Media, Calgary, Alberta.

photo Commedia, Calgary



Technical producer Jack Filuk setting an edit point on the "master" machine, "slave" recorder in background.



What does every video producer need? — good, reliable equipment; stimulating program content and the most flexible editing equipment possible.

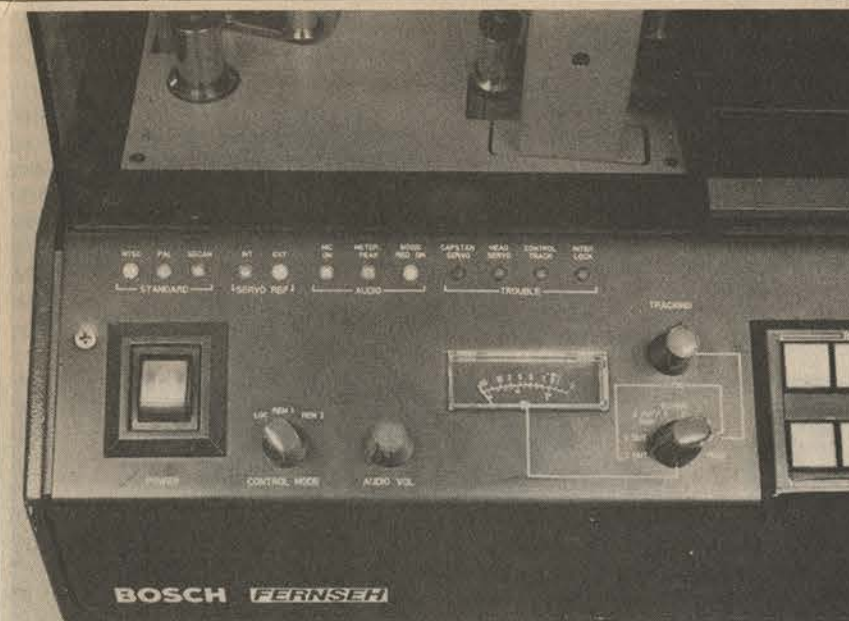
This article discusses some aspects of the last requirement by examining the current state-of-the-art. In producing a variety of video-tape materials for instruction, review, public information and broadcast, we have moved to a system of editing using two Bosch-Fernseh 1" BCN machines, paralleling (but not compatible with) broadcast industry's increasing use of the Ampex VPR 1" series. Although we will leave aside our recording and delivery systems which range from 1/2" Betamax to 2" Quad, our main editing is achieved on the BCN 1" format.

As a producer/director concerned with the whole process from concept to delivery, the hang-ups ("I know what I want but can't seem to get it") usually happen in the editing. What has always been needed is the flexibility that flat-bed multi-reel film editing offers, with the speed and immediacy of television. The new 1" format machines are now approaching this.

The process usually starts with the laying down of video (from camera/telescope sources direct with or without effects, or from pre-recorded material on our EFP 3/4" Sony BVU via time-base corrector) to the BCN. A control track is laid, with time code, which takes up 1 of the 3 audio tracks. Sync audio is also placed onto the other two Dolbyised audio tracks (channels 1 & 2).

A 3/4" U-matic dub is simultaneously made of all mastered material, on which the time-code is displayed, and the producer can then disappear with a U-matic player and monitor, and review his material to his heart's content, utilizing the 'pause' button to select in and out points for scripting and subsequent editing. An additional facility is the ability to off-line edit — to use the 3/4" copy and make rough or clean edits to a view tape to check "if it works".

By the time the producer gets back to the 1" BCN machines for final editing he knows roughly how it all fits together. With other sources still available such as audio narration



Machine status control panel.

photo Commedia, Calgary

and effects tapes, music, graphics (camera, slides or electronic character generation) and film as well as the original dubbed copies, the editing script will look like a jumble of stock market prices. But, the advantage is that it can be timed to 1/30th of a second, 1 frame of video.

We find that nearly all our work is edited in video to a sound track, mostly spoken word, and that the editing is done in two stages.

Stage 1 is the basic edit — assembling each scene from 'slave' to 'master' in sequence — on the master shots and narration. Stage 2 is the cutaway edit — inserting sync and non-sync visual sequences with a second audio track if necessary. Sometimes an extra pass will be required to pre-mix audio channels together (for balance) to a new master.

In addition, sync audio can be dubbed off with time-code, re-edited or pre-mixed, and re-inserted to frame accuracy onto the master.

So what's new so far? Well, it's the speed at which it can be done, and the single frame accuracy. We've completed 30 edits per hour in some instances because, with time-code, the machines will display, and cue to, a pre-programmed time, but more than that, by setting an in-point on both master and slave machines, and an out-point for the master on either the master or the slave, the edits are made simply by pressing the 'search' button on both machines (which give locked-up 4-second roll-up to the in-points) and then 'play' and 'record' only on the master. The edit is done. If in

doubt, cue up and press 'play' only to see a rehearsal of the complete edit — and if either or both points are not satisfactory, simply add or subtract frames and press 'search' for the new cue. The speed of editing is increased by using the old out-point as the new in-point on the master.

If your next source is a way down the tape, it can be quickly reached with the shuttle pot control. The master tape is also time-coded for this system, and so elapsed time can be checked during stage 1 editing for reference in stage 2.

This system has been tried for simple animation, by programming for frame by frame editing, and now with an enhanced TBC, we have noise reduction and slo-mo/still frame capability when dubbing up. Other capabilities are setting for non-simultaneous video and audio edits, programmed or manual, and audio editing on either of the two Dolby channels. So for normal use, the challenge is back where it should be — with the user to apply his ingenuity, not with the restrictions of the machines.

The main advantages of speed and accuracy ensure that the single producer/director can retain the feel of pacing (both of action within a shot, and of edit rate) for the whole program usually within one working day, but can retain the option of changing his mind with the rehearsal mode. The old phrase "that's good enough for television" has taken on a new and more positive interpretation. ■

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.

Video

Larry Dubin: a video portrait

Stealing the show on tape
by Tom Sherman

photo Judy Whalen



Dubin with CCMC at the Music Gallery.
Once Larry got started he never stopped drumming.

was talking on the phone late one night with Hank Bull in Vancouver. He was working at the Western Front with Al Mattes of the CCMC (Canadian Creative Music Collective) on the Larry Dubin portrait. A videotape memory of a dead drummer. A portrait of a beautiful man who played very well. Sincerely, Hank said they were cutting together segments of Larry talking about time. His own notion of time. A "drummin' man's" brand of physics. As Dubin

himself had said, "time is conscious movement through space." He died on April 24th, 1978. His blood diseased, he left this world 'middle-aged'.

Al Mattes played for a few years with Larry in the CCMC. With Snow and Sokol and Anson and Kubota. On some of the video they cut into this picture of Larry, there was a horn player named Bill Smith. No longer with the band, Smith played very well on this tape. This edited video por-

trait of Dubin is half an hour long. The tape consists of excerpts from three CCMC concerts videotaped over a couple of years in black and white at the Front. March 16, 1976. November 7, 1976. And December 8, 1977. Each concert is cut down (compressed) to show off Larry on drums and everything possible is done to show him pretty. He was such a drummer to see. When he played with the CCMC, he stole the show, visually. Without saying much at all, he says plenty on the tape. To my mind, here is some of his message.

Larry said it started when he saw Krupa in the movies. In the features and the countless shorts. He got the call. Like it comes to a priest. He always wanted to be the drummer. Saw Gene Krupa in the *Drummer Man*. A 15 minute short by Will Cowan made in 1947. Some called Gene "Tom Mix without a gun". Krupa was the first to bring drums into prominence. Larry saw Krupa leading his band through "Drum Boogie" inside the feature length *Ball of Fire* directed by Howard Hawks. 1941. Krupa was backing a vocal by Barbara Stanwyck, switching from drumsticks to matchsticks for the final coda. More features: *The Benny Goodman Story*. Valentine Davies. 1955. *The Big Broadcast of 1937*. Mitchell Leisen. 1936. *Syncopation*. William Dieterle. 1942. And *Drum Crazy - The Gene Krupa Story*. Don Weis. 1959. Sal Mineo as Krupa. 'Gene' going crazy on the screen. That's where Larry got started. At the movies. In his head.

Once Larry got started he never stopped playing. He played 'commercial' in Dixieland bands. He started playing 'free' in Dixieland bands. Started leaning in and out of the time structure. Where the front line would play, he wouldn't be with them. It worked. Larry started putting his own time on the Dixieland bands. And it worked. Mike Snow and Larry played 'free' in Dixieland bands and it worked. Long before the CCMC. Dubin says his influences were the Bird and his friend Mike Snow. Larry's friend Mike Snow. Krupa, Parker and Snow. Larry didn't study music. He heard it and he made it. He heard it coming from his own hands.

Dubin dressed like a cab driver. Saw Krupa everywhere playing dance music. Swing. Then he heard the Bird

Video

playing 'free'. Larry couldn't see them dancing to art music either. Serious jazz. Found Mike Snow. A friend to play 'free' with. It's on the tape. In one shot of Snow's face. Love. Dubin's playing Krupa on the tape. All Larry's music is in his face. Emotion. You can hear Parker everywhere.

Larry didn't look like Krupa. He wore turtleneck shirts and sweaters.

even being a jazz musician, he just wanted to be the musician that he wanted to be. He was. I'm just changing the tense of his words. Making him speak in the second person. When I met him (several times) he always wanted to talk. Larry wore long sideburns and a mustache. A very 'tight' mustache it was. He must have trimmed that mustache every day he shaved. His sideburns grew long and

than most can imagine. His expressive eyes closed tight. Closed forever in these concerts. The cymbals shine. He works hard. His hands, his sticks, his brushes blur. Without his sticks, he plays with his bare hands for awhile. The tape cuts back to his sticks pounding. Then back to his fingertips. Soft on the skin of his drums. He draws a circle on the skin of his drums. At the end of the jazz band



Brian Molyneux

(left) Don Moye of the Art Ensemble of Chicago (right) Gene Krupa, Chicago drummer. When he was a kid, Dubin saw Krupa drumming in the movies.

photo CODA Magazine

He was thick in the middle. He was going bald. He parted his hair low on the left side (just over his ear) and he combed his long hair from the side over top his balding head. He would have said it was to conserve energy. To prevent heat loss. He would have looked me in the eye to see if I thought he was being funny. He never looks at the camera in this portrait. He never looks out. We watch him. A dead man playing drums with love.

He said on the tape, he never even thought about making a living playing drums. He had to make a living doing something. He knew that. But with him it wasn't simply a question of being in the music business. He would be a musician, money for playing or not. He would play drums no matter what. He never wanted to be a studio musician. He just wanted to be a jazz musician. But more than

gray and unruly. He wore his watch on his left wrist. There was a ring on one of the fingers of his right hand.

Don't get me wrong. He was cool. He was drumming with his eyes closed. His lips were moving the whole time. Counting. Larry would 'sing' the beat inside out. Talking music to himself, hearing his numbers inside every sound he ever played with. Dubin's mathematics. More numbers in a second

photo Clive Robertson



song. The whole band just done playing 'free'. With the fingertips of his left hand, Larry drew a silent circle on the skin of his drum. Watching Larry play, there were times I couldn't hear a sound.

As I write this, the CCMC is in Europe playing without Larry Dubin. Without their drummer. I understand the French people love to listen to the CCMC. Improvisational music from Canada. The American improvisational band, the Art Ensemble of Chicago (who write their music and play it over and over) went over big in Paris in 1969. They played for a couple of years over there. Everybody knows, those French people are crazy about North American jazz and Jerry Lewis movies. And ten years later, the black band from Chicago is playing better than ever. So I've heard with my own ears in Toronto.

Video

The Art Ensemble, after 15 years together, are finally making money playing 'free'. Meanwhile, a white band from Toronto is playing improvisation music in Paris. To very good audiences, I am told. In 1969, while the Art Ensemble was playing in Paris, they found their drummer, Don Moye. This year in Paris, I suspect the CCMC is still missing theirs.

For further reading on Larry Dubin see: "Larry Dubin's Music", by Michael Snow, *Impulse Magazine*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1978, and "Larry Dubin" by Mark Miller, *CODA Magazine*, issue 166, 1979.

"Larry Dubin and CCMC", a double album (MGE 15) of "the great Toronto drummer's greatest recordings", is to be released in June 1979

by Music Gallery Editions, 30 St. Patrick Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5T 1V1.

Other film shorts featuring the Chicago drummer Gene Krupa: *Gene Krupa, America's Ace Drummer Man and His Orchestra*, 10', Leslie Roush, 1941; **Thanks for the Boogie Ride*, Soundie, 3', 1942; **Let Me Off Uptown*, Soundie, 3', 1942; *March of Time*, 10th year no?, 16', 1944; *Follow That Music*, 18', Arthur Dreifus, 1946; *Drummer Man*, 15', Will Cowan, 1947; *Beat the Band*, 67', John H. Auer, 1947; *Featuring Gene Krupa and His Orchestra*, from the "Thrills of Music" series, 10', 1948; *Deep Purple*, 15', Will Cowan, 1949; *Feather on Jazz*, 18', Leonard Feather, 1967; *Born to Swing*, 50', John Jeremy, 1973. This information was

obtained from David Meeker's *Jazz in the Movies, a Guide to Jazz Musicians 1917-1977*, Arlington House Publishers, London, England, 1977.

*Soundies were short films produced during the war years for use in a sort of visual juke box. Eight of these films were spooled together and projected one at a time via a complicated series of reflectors onto the rear of a glass screen. The Mills Panoram Soundies machines were rented to thousands of locations — to bars, hotel lobbies and the like. A dime for each three minute selection, this visual juke box phenomenon peaked during the war and was over by 1946. ■

Tom Sherman, artist, performer and writer, lives in Toronto and is an editor of *Centerfold*.

World

Zona: information, production, exhibition

*A non-profit art space in Florence, Italy
a report by Carlo Bertocci and Maurizio Nannucci*

It seems appropriate to send some words about ZONA's location in Florence; even though we must refrain from drawing over-simplified conclusions about the relationship between a group of artists in an alternative space and the neighbourhood. There is, nevertheless, some common ground: a marginal situation, a tendency toward political aggregation, a need for a collective dimension of experience.

The city-Quarter of San Nicolò is one of the few neighbourhoods — maybe the only, beside San Frediano — that still has a working class 'feel' stemming from the many artisan-shops on the street. The Quarter is squeezed in between the river and the hills. It is basically one street. During the daytime heavy traffic and rows of parked cars hide much of the activity of the artisans. Their opportunities for work seem to be diminishing. In any case, the neighbourhood's workers are losing their contact with the larger economic environment of Florence.

The decision to open ZONA's space in San Nicolò was not determined by abstract populist ideas or a

nostalgia for the sweet memories of manual work. There was already a Quarter-committee with people (artists included) interested in exploring issues concerning this specific neighbourhood. Most of these artists had been invited to participate in last year's May-festival; a festival designed to unify the neighbourhood.

Even earlier, in January/February

Presentation by Gianni Melotti



of 1977, the series "ZONA/Musica/Suono/Ambiente", co-ordinated by Albert Mayr, made use of the urban spaces of San Nicolò, particularly Palazzo Vegni. Close to ZONA, Palazzo Vegni is occupied by casuals, always a receptive audience. Thus ZONA's focus on the urban context is more a matter of individual initiatives evaluated 'post factum' than simply part of its programmatic outlook. ZONA started in 1974 as an artist-press center. A year later it began focusing on documentation and on presenting exhibitions, presenting very different work than that presented in the established galleries.

ZONA had been one of the first spaces in Italy run by an artists-collective and it is the only one still active after five years. As much as such an organization allows a collective social consciousness to grow, it presents constant organization problems. In the absence of precisely defined programmes, ZONA's activities unfolded as a result of the efforts of individuals and groups, curatorship changing constantly. In retrospect, this has proven to be a very positive

Centerfold, June/July 1979

World



(above) Exhibition by B. Raven—A. Mayr
photos by Gianni Melotti

(below) Video installation by Bill Viola.



1976, a series of artists' films co-ordinated by Andrea Granchi and Maurizio Nannucci; and "Small Press Scene", documents of the alternative press/piccola stampa/documenti/edizioni, December 1975, co-ordinated and edited by Maurizio Nannucci. For the first time in Italy, marginal publishing activities, including artists' books, underground press and literary editions were seen as an artform. It was an attempt to present, in an organic way, documents dating from 1960 on which helped to spread the word about visual art, music, poetry, publication, and architecture, which "presented one of

the rare moments of synchronism between creation and communication."

Information, in its extraordinary importance in today's art, cannot be totally ignored in exhibitions. Recent art practices have drastically enlarged the possibilities of exposition through the use of the new media beyond the traditional four-walled space. A non-profit art space, which must see itself as an alternative to both public and private institutions, cannot help being involved in the same problems that galleries and museums face if it continues to make use of its walled 'box' for conventionally formatted exhibitions. In contrast with the practice of these official institutions, where long-running shows develop a temporal continuity contributing to a sort of idolatry of the artist and his product, at ZONA the presence of single artists hardly even extends beyond one evening. The short-term presence of individuals corresponds better to the criterion of information. Here we can cite the presence of Joseph Kosuth and Sarah Charlesworth (Sept. 1978) on two evenings where they presented recent works. Also, we cite "Monografie", co-ordinated by Mario Mariotti in May/July 1977. "Monografie" was a complex image of art created by the contributions of over 50 people. These artists presented their work individually, in twos, or in groups; the show extended over 28 evenings. And we mention a series that officially opened ZONA in 1975: "Per conoscenza" / documentation of visual works by artists of Florence, which also adhered to this time schedule of rapid turnovers.

Besides the activities already described, ZONA is also into production, i.e. a small publishing activity including catalogues of ZONA events, some books, audio cassettes and portfolios by artists: including Daninos, Monselles, Moretti, Masi, Chiari, Maurizio and Massimo Nannucci, Salvadori, Bartolini, Mariotti . . . and ZONA is involved in archiving all new art activity.

All of us in the collective feel the need for continuous activity, but financial problems often jeopardize the survival of the space. It is well known that Florence's art officials display much more inclination for commercial celebrations than for keeping in touch with the continuously evolving reality of new art. ■

Carlo Bertocci, critic and Maurizio Nannucci, artist, live in Florence.

Centerfold, June/July 1979



"Yo Soy La Patria"
Video performance by Carlos Zerpa

"Fantasia Video Plastica"

10,000 viewers at Festival in Caracas
a report by Tom Sherman

Caracas Venezuela

10,000 flock to see video and performance!

February 2nd through the 9th, 1979. Margarita D'Amico, working with many of her fellow Venezuelan artists, put together a very strong and positively impressive display of video and performance art in Caracas this winter. Working within the time-frame and energy of the massive cultural *Festival de Caracas*, this relatively small band of video and performance artists were able to celebrate with very high visibility their current involvement with small format television. Tape and live performance. The live performance found the audience, initially. The tape held them steady. D'Amico's *Muestra de Video* found a live mass audience, estimated at 10,000 viewing-listening partici-

pants by the time the full week-long show had run its course. D'Amico has since received invitations to organize similar events in other Venezuelan cities later this year. In Valencia, San Cristobal and Ciudad Guayana.

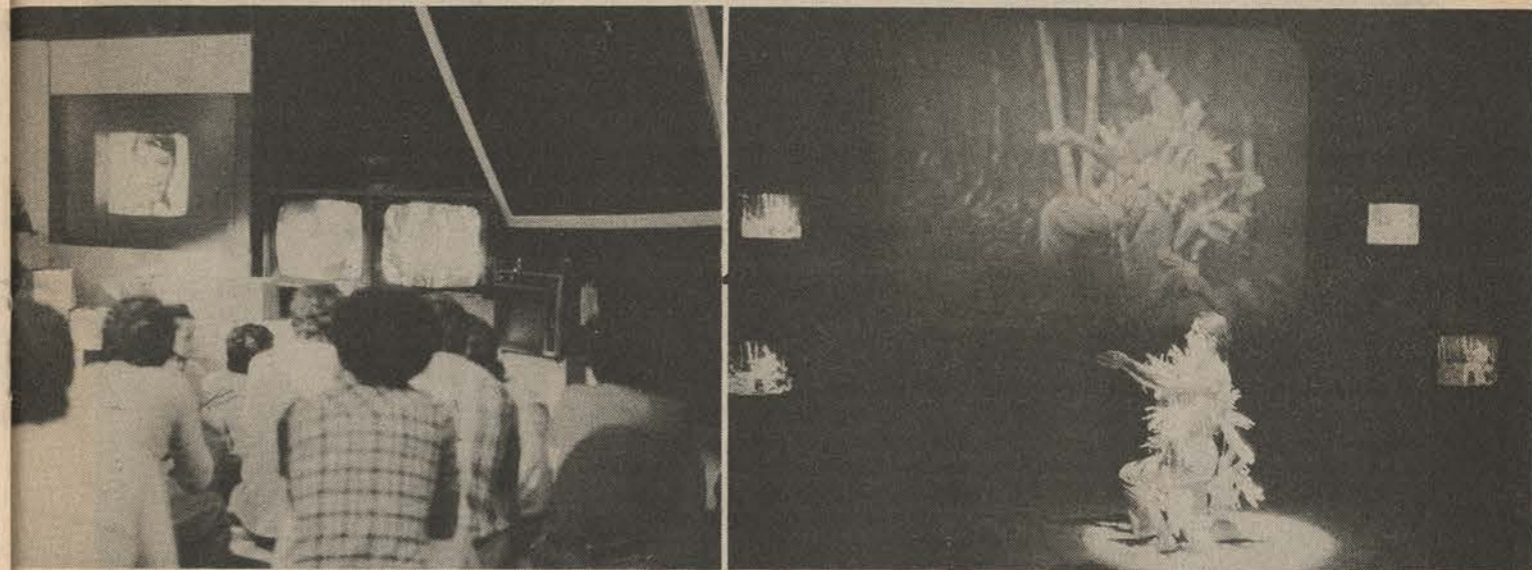
Margarita D'Amico

Margarita D'Amico has been making videotapes and writing about the medium throughout the seventies. She is a professor at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, as well as being a staff journalist for the *Diario El Nacional*, one of the most influential daily newspapers of Caracas. Her great abilities to organize and promote video activity in Venezuela deserve attention and appreciation. Months before the seven days of *Muestra de Video*, D'Amico launched a media campaign very clearly defining video and per-

formance art in the popular press. Articles appeared in many newspapers and magazines. Thus the incredible attendance figures. The exhibition featured approximately twenty hours of videotapes (for closed-circuit viewing) produced by forty artists. All were Venezuelans, excepting Pola Weiss (Mexico) and Antonio Muntadas and Aldo Vigliarolo (United States). Each afternoon and evening of the exhibition, there was "accion en vivo con video" (video performance). Live performance employing video. In this case, these performances were not televised. These artists were involved in examining and displaying the potentials of simultaneous closed-circuit video 'imaging' of their live performance actions. Combining their live-video presence with their in-person performance. There were seven differ-

World

photos by Irene Sosa



(left) "Videos de Cuba" by Margarita D'Amico. (right) "El Hombre Del Maiz", Diego Risquez (middle) "Actores", a video performance by Hugo Marquez (below) Sonia Sanoja's video performance

ent performances. Each performance was conceived and actualised specifically for this exhibition. *Muestra de Video* was held in one large hall of the main library of the University of Central Venezuela (center city Caracas). UCV has a modest video studio (3/4 inch colour) serving a communications department of the university. UCV provided the equipment (what they didn't have, they borrowed) and the technicians necessary to manage such an exhibition.

Fantasia Video Plastica

The theme of *Muestra de Video*, "Fantasia Video Plastica", was conceived of by the artistic directors of the show, Servio Tulio Marin and Luis Villamizar. As an activity, video is looked upon by these Venezuelan artists in much the same way as music is looked upon by most open-minded people. All forms of music are seen as music. Everything being video is video, this exhibition recognises the many 'images' of video, conceptual video, live video-performance video. Video as music, dance, as a plastic art. Video as poetry, theatre, photography-choreography.

10,000 Viewers

As far as the audience is concerned, the people of Caracas watch a lot of television. Only black and white television. There is no colour transmission. There are only four channels.

Two are owned by the government and two are privately owned. Other than the news, almost all the pictures are film. Programming is imported from America and Europe (some from Mexico and other S.A. countries). Virtually all the shows are dubbed. A couple of dramatic translators get all the work. The same voices play everybody. Bad voice tracks make for horrible television. Meanwhile, home video recorders (Beta and VHS formats) are stocked in the stereo stores for the people who can afford them. The Venezuelans with money have colour images with their new closed-circuit systems. The people on the



Arellano

World



"Cada Salida Necesita De Un Conjuro"
Luis Manzo/Waldemar Delima.

photo Irene Sosa

street are fascinated with the 'new' colour television. They love to watch Elvis movies and disco TV shows on tape from Los Angeles.

Video for the 'Rich' and 'Poor'

North Americans often complain that there is no real choice in respect to programming even in their comparatively 'rich' television environment. Clearly, the South American television viewer faces a media 'poverty' incomprehensible by North American or Western World standards. It could be expected that closed-circuit video, the present alternative to standard broadcast television, would have a very limited potential audience where electronic media literacy remains 'low', i.e. in the Third World. The impressive attendance figures for this video-performance art festival in Caracas present a hopeful view for artists in so-called 'underdeveloped' countries around the world. In the Third World, where broadcast television is still in its infancy, perhaps video has a much better chance of finding its audience. ■

ACCION EN VIVO CON VIDEO (Video Performances)

- Sonia Sonoja*: La máxima figura de la danza contemporánea en Venezuela.
- Hugo Marquez* y el grupo "Tiempo Común".
- "Cada Salida Necesita de un Conjuro"*: acción en vivo de Luis Manzo y Waldemar Delima.
- "Gesto y Huella"*: Novedosa experiencia de integración de la danza, plástica y música Luis Villamizar y Servio Tulio Marín.
- "Yo Soy La Patria"*: Ritual mágico de Carlos Zerpa.
- "El Hombre Del Maiz"*: acción en vivo de Diego Rísquez.
- "Mural-Vitral de Videoxerox Dedicado a la Memoria de Renny Ottolina"*: La obra, producida por Margarita D'Amico destraca el trabajo del Teatro "N" de París.

VIDEOS PARTICIPANTES

- 1) *Caracas Siempre*, Grupo Saltamontes, Radio Caracas TV. 22'
- 2) *Reflexiones*, Antonio José León. 20'.
- 3) *Somos Mujeres*, Pola Weiss (México). 8'.
- 4) *Todavía Estamos*, Pola Weiss (México). 8'
- 5) *Arte, Carburo y Sobriedad*, José Luis Briceño y María Casado. 25'
- 6) *Sonia Sonoja*, Danny Guarenas, presentado por la Dirección de Bibliotecas y Dirección de Cultura de la UCV. 50'
- 7) *Actores*, Hugo Márquez. 28'
- 8) *Poema Para Ser Leído Bajo el Agua*, Diego Rísquez. 27'
- 9) *A Proposito de la Luz Tropical*, Homenaje a Armando Reverón-Diego Rísquez. 20'
- 10) *A Proposito del Hombre del Maiz*, Diego Rísquez. 15'
- 11) *Dos Pueblos de Arena* (selección), Grupo Cinevideo-UCV. Cuatro horas.
- 12) *Videos de Cuba* (selección), Margarita D'Amico. Dos horas.
- 13) *Videos de San José*, Margarita D'Amico, Manuel Manzano, María Josefa Pérez. Dos horas.
- 14) *Videoxerox Teatro "N" Paris*, Margarita D'Amico. 45'
- 15) *Color de la Vida*, Luis Goncalves. 10'
- 16) *Mario Neira*, Alejandro Kirk. 25'
- 17) *Sensorial*, John Moore. 3'
- 18) *Expresiones*, Diego Barboza. 10'
- 19) *Videolíticos*, División Audiovisual Biblioteca Central UCV, Cinevideo UCV y Grupo Gaspar Marcano. 45'
- 20) *Shhh...*, Luis Villamizar. 20'
- 21) *Gesto y Huella*, Luis Villmizar, Servio Tulio Marín. 30'
- 22) *Cada Salida Necesita de un Conjuro*, Luis Manzo, Waldemar Delima. 30'
- 23) *Festival Folklorico de Guayana*, Corporación Venezolana de Guayana. 23'
- 24) *Musica y Belleza*, Corporación Venezolana de Guayana. 10'
- 25) *Il Viso*, Aldo Vigliárola (Estados Unidos). 9'
- 26) *Il Passato*, Aldo Vigliarolo (Estados Unidos). 11'
- 27) *On Subjectivity*, Antonio Muntadas (Estados Unidos). 30'
- 28) *Altar Latinoamericano*, Alfredo Portillos. CAYC de Buenos Aires. 20'
- 29) *Earth Oven*, Víctor Grippo. CAYC de Buenos Aires. 8'
- 30) *Phitotron*, Luis Bénédict y Jorge Glusberg. CAYC de Buenos Aires. 30'
- 31) *Taller de Animacion*, María Cristina Capriles y Alberto Montegudo. 27'
- 32) *1978*, Gustavo Schwartz. Grupo Viba de Buenos Aires. 30'
- 33) *Dance Studio*, Mario Cabrera. 5'
- 34) *La Llegada del Columbus*. Cantv. 8'
- 35) *78 Cultural*. Cantv. 30'
- 36) *Una Nueva Op*
- 36) *Una Nueva Opción*. Cantv y Elia Rodríguez. 7'
- 37) *Los Capullos del Jardin*. Cantv y Elba Avendaño. 30'
- 38) *Anti-Smoking Publicity*, Tito Rojas, Universidad de Nueva York. 30'
- 39) *The Venezuelan Cuatro and His Music*, Tito Rojas, Universidad de Nueva York. 11'
- 40) *Germinacion de la Huella*, Geo Ripley. Presentado por el Instituto Universitario de Tecnología de Coro. 8'
- 41) *Pijao*, Geo Ripley. IUTC Coro. 8'
- 42) *Creando Imagen con el Hilo de la Memoria*, Geo Ripley. IUTC Coro. 7'30"
- 43) *Meditaciones Breves*, Geo Ripley. IUTC Coro. 8'
- 44) *Yo Soy la Patria*, Carlos Zerpa. 25'
- 45) *Señora Patria, sea ud. Bienvenida*, Carlos Zerpa. 25'
- 46) *Bichos Bichos Bichos*, Carlos Zerpa. Una hora.
- 47) *De Como Panchito Mandefua Ceno con el Niño Jesus*, Blanca Guzmán, Sixto Pérez Sosa. 24'

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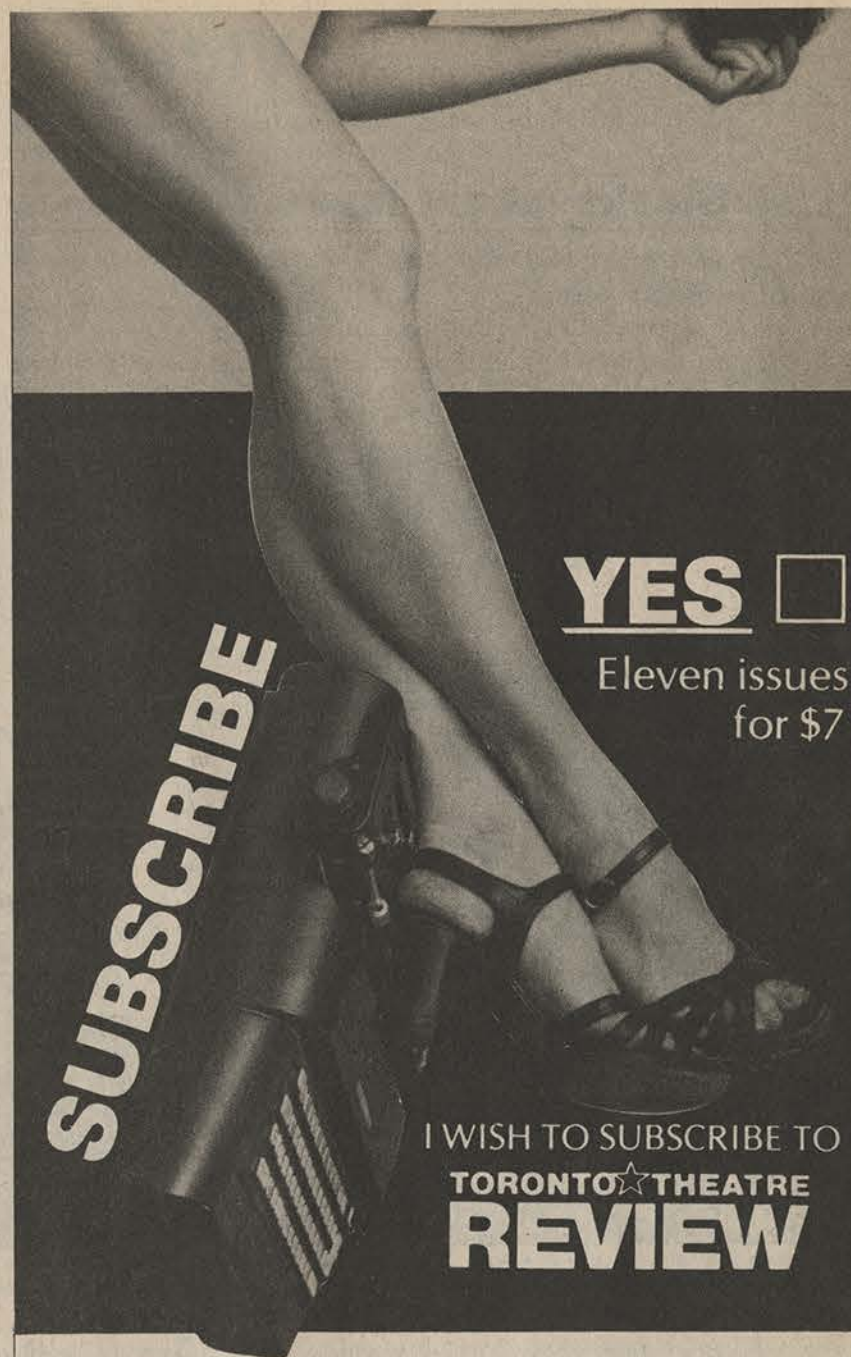


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Video

Lisa Steele: recent tapes

The novel, the science report and the case history
by Clive Robertson



Production still from "Tunnel of Love". The gynaecologist, Blanche Polk (left) examines Gloria and tells her something is wrong 'down there'. photo Clive Robertson

Statements credited to Lisa Steele were transcribed from three discussions recorded November 1978, February 1979 and March 1979.

Lisa Steele's videotapes have often been described as being 'personal' or 'autobiographical'. In "Looking Very Closely" (*Video by Artists*, Art Metropole, 1976) Peggy Gale writes of "Facing South" (1975), "(It) continues the investigation of female activity and response."

Steele, no doubt still stands by the autobiographical function of video. In a catalog statement last year ("Autobiography", AGO, 1978) she

wrote: "To convert one's life into a product is the process of autobiography. Throughout a lifetime of work in video, especially tapes that are specifically autobiographical, a viewer will be presented with a progression, perhaps through decades, of a physical body — a record of change. . . witness to the breakdown of the frail machine." Recent content of Steele's tapes builds on her analytical experience as we watch her focus on "specific female activity and response" within a social reality.

To observe this development I will discuss the following tapes: *Waiting for Lancelot* (1976-77), a series of seven tapes; *The Scientists*

Series (1977-78), consisting of four tapes; and *The Damages* (1978), *Makin' Strange* (1978) and the recent *Tunnel of Love* (1979).

Steele's production technique has changed little since she began making tapes in 1972. If the tape requires mutual investigation on the part of the viewer and the performer she will orchestrate her material around the frame, making you exercise both your eyes and your powers of observation. Similarly, if you are being told a story, you will be looked at through the camera. You will be treated less like a consumer and more like an accomplice. In both instances the style is direct and secure. However you are rarely presented with a "smooth package". You are shown how to make your own lists, references and comparisons. The stories and the investigations often overlap, whether the content is a welfare mother relating a child's death or a clinical microbiologist describing an imminent disease.

Steele discussed her own ways of conveying personal experience. As she often "plays" the characters in her tapes, Steele utilizes memory more frequently than acting or performing. After making a number of autobiographical tapes she discovered in Proust an explanation of the differences between voluntary and involuntary memory:

"Voluntary memory is the conscious memory — what you call up as in 'the last rainy Bank Holiday in August'. Those kinds of solidified, concretized memories of your life. They are mineral deposits basically, they are polished. There are no edges to them. They are what you remember either from being told what to remember or from being instilled in your consciousness, a memory that is your past.

"The contrast with that is the involuntary memory that you don't have access to under normal circumstances. Proust was interesting in that he didn't use any extraordinary circumstances to call it up. I sometimes think that I have been able to do it, I think anyone does it. It's memory that's been filed, memory that you can't normally remember. But the body remembers it and it is completely unstructured in that it is not a smooth package of what you think you remembered. It in fact presents you with what actually happened. This involuntary memory

Video

frequently is uncomfortable — the effect being somewhat like psychological pimples."

What Steele used as involuntary memory in *A Very Personal Story*, a tape in which she relates coming home from school as a child to find her mother dead, and *The Ballad of Dan Peoples*, the enactment of her grandfather's voice also re-appears in *The Damages* and *Makin' Strange* where she records on tape the speech and behavioural patterns of women she has known. Since 1974 Lisa Steele has worked at Interval House, a Toronto shelter for battered women and children. From both her statements on the body as memory tool and autobiographically as a record of change, we hear re-inforced a clear

TAPEOGRAPHY

- Juggling. 1972, b/w, sd, 6 minutes.
- Lisa With The Egg. 1972, b/w, sd, 10 minutes.
- Ross Street Tapes. 1972, b/w, sd, 11 minutes.
- Sleep/Dream Vigil. (2 channels), 1973, b/w, sd, 30 minutes.
- Birthday Suit: Scars and Defects. 1974, b/w, sd, 12 minutes.
- A Very Personal Story. 1974, b/w, sd, 17 minutes.
- Outlaws. 1974, b/w, sd, 20 minutes.
- Internal Pornography. (3 channels), 1974, b/w, sd, 30 minutes.
- Facing South. 1975, b/w, sd, 22 minutes.
- The Biography of Tom Sherman. 1976, b/w, sd, 21 minutes.
- The Ballad of Dan Peoples. 1976, b/w, sd, 8 minutes.
- A Life's Story. 1976, b/w, sd, 20 minutes.
- The Scientists Series:
 - Atlanta Georgia/Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island. 1977, b/w, sd, 17 minutes.
 - By Commercial Airliner. 1977, b/w, sd, 17 minutes.
 - En Route to Las Vegas. 1977, b/w, sd, 17 minutes.
 - At A Later Date. 1977, b/w, sd, 15 minutes.
- The Damages. 1978, b/w, sd, 11 minutes.
- Makin' Strange. 1978, b/w, sd, 17 minutes.
- Waiting for Lancelot. 1977-78, b/w, sd, 90 minutes.
- Tunnel of Love. 1979, col., sd, 12 minutes.

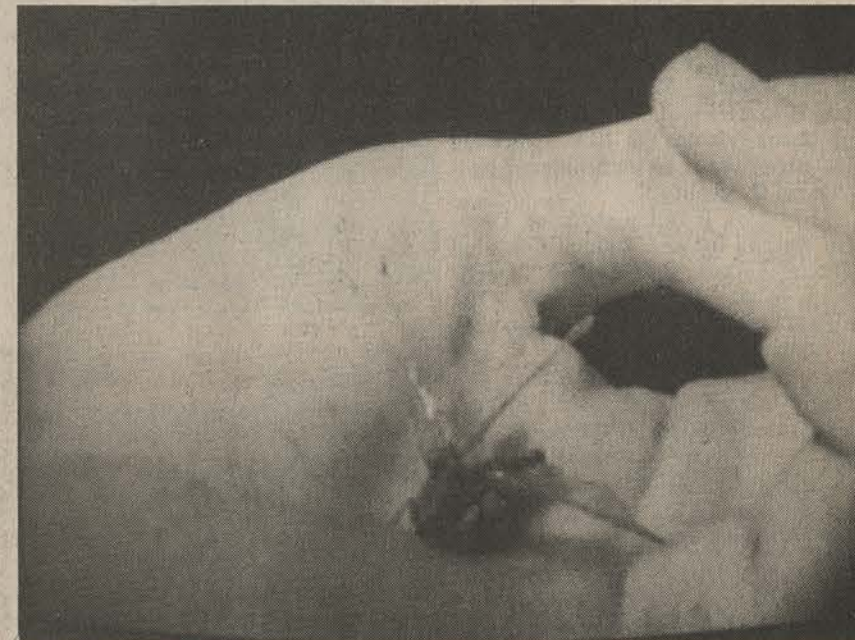
explanation for this artist's action. Does this suggest that in Steele's tapes the body is de-consumerized from being a hanger onto which one's 'personal image' may be stored?

Waiting For Lancelot

Waiting for Lancelot is 90 minutes long. It was made between May 1976 and March 1977. The work is in seven distinct parts: 1) "G's Dream", 2) "I'm Having Trouble With My Heart", 3) "186,000,000 Miles Per

Second", 4) "The View", 5) "Domestication (Arthur Speaks)", 6) "At Snake Spring", 7) "The Witness (The Testimony of Lancelot).

Lancelot is a dense fabric of fiction, observation and legend. The tape is unusual in that it has all of the characteristics of a novel. Narrative video has often been compared to literature, but mostly the analogy has been limited to the short story. The video itself is not linear, from one section to another. In "G's Dream" we see insects



(Above) "G's Dream", (Below) "I'm Having Trouble With My Heart" (Waiting for Lancelot). *Waiting for Lancelot* is a 90 minute tape in seven distinct parts.

photos Clive Robertson

Video

on plants, we see an arm with dead specimens as the camera pans from the hand to the elbow and back. What we hear as narrative not only serves to explain what we are looking at but acts as a distinct and separate plot in itself.

We learn that a woman (Steele) has been tied up in a forest and left for dead. In seven days a man returns, blindfolds the woman and places dead insects on the woman's arms, adhering each specimen with saliva. The video and the narrative have been separated. We don't see anything I've just described except for the woman's arm supporting the insects. The word 'narrative' itself is insufficient. Steele says "talking about 'stories' is like suggesting that narratives is an embroidered bedcover on the reality."

Lancelot is not a story of a woman waiting for her "knight in shining armour". Apart from *Lancelot's* testimony in the last segment of "The Witness" there are two other men that are identified in the narrative. The function of *Lancelot* in the tape is a possible metaphor for male violence. In *Lancelot's* speech at the end of the tape, he admits difficulties after killing the woman: "Since I murdered her I've had no feeling in my right arm, from the shoulder to the wrist; my hand, however, responds when I stick pins in it." Steele refers here to a form of psychosomatic polio suffered by those who cannot forget their own violent acts.

We can look at the rest of the tape as a thesis leading up to the violent act. Steele deals frequently with the sources of violence against women. But what else does the tape convey?

Steele has a 'weakness' for statistical information. There is subjectivity, there is fiction and to balance them both there are statistics. The second tape in *Lancelot* — "I'm Having Trouble With My Heart" opens with the statistical details of the heart as an organ. Steele has admitted a science documentary influence. In this case she also plays with the romantic symbolism of the heart. In the narrative the woman tells her doctor that there is something wrong with her heart. The doctor replies: "But the heart is not the seat of the mind." Again the tape does not visually show the doctor or the woman talking. We do see Steele's heart, or we see the skin just above



Production Still from 'Tunnel of Love' (1979)

the heart. We do see a knife, we see the woman lying down for a heart operation. There is an open book covering both breasts. The narrative has the doctor say: "The only imperfection in this heart is a set of words grown into the muscle walls of each chamber." He reads the words and tells the woman to rest. We see Steele pacing up and down. She bends down out of the bottom of the frame and re-emerges lifting a set of weights above her head. The image of 'medieval' woman in the white dress changing into a modern gymnast creates a dislocation of time. The words found in the heart sound like some alchemical code. The suggestion of alchemy is further re-inforced by the opening of the next section. The soundtrack is a song by The Silver Convention, with the refrain, "Save me, save me by the fire of your love." The video image is out of focus and remains so during the song, finally focusing on a hand turning a volume control, so fading out the song. Not only has time been dislocated, we have also been given alternating codes of submission and emancipation.

To disentangle this tape, even descriptively, is no easy task. The woman is, after all, going to be violently punished in the end. The woman's anxiety is explored. And when necessary explored with humour. The song opens "186,000,000 Miles Per Second", the third tape of *Lancelot*. The

photo Clive Robertson

video shows a bee alighting on a flower, we hear: "The sex thing is overrated even at the speed of light." The tape cuts a close-up of a vagina with a penis being inserted. We hear: "This is not a metaphor it is a chronology." The tape cuts back to the bee. And back to the sex. We are witnessing evolution? Against a feminist backdrop Steele seems to be telling the viewer that biological and political systems are two non-exclusive components of evolution. We are further warned: "This is not a metaphor, it is a simple descriptive phrase. The penis enters the vagina with ancestral accuracy."

The tape cuts to a woman's face. She is talking but it is Steele's voice. The woman's voice has been erased to make it seem like she is lip-synching to Steele's words: "I know you have a craving for realism. You want to know what really happened. You long for synchronized lip movements denoting real-time experience." The tape is not 'a slice of life'. The bees and house-flies are real. We are about to see a cat as an object of real domestication. The human sex is real. But our ears are still being pushed backwards and forwards over a period of eight hundred years. This section ends with another modern love song: "Love Hurts". Musically we are again in the present. Emotionally we are in an historical vacuum.

Video

In *Lancelot*, Steele is visually articulate and pushes video, a soft focus medium, to its limits. In "The View" we see a snappy visual pun take on an unprecedented turn. Look for it, it is part accident, but there nonetheless. The narrative line is: "My ancestors had such pretty hands." Steele's hands are together filling the screen. She lifts them to display a pair of crab's claws. As the claws are revealed, an ant moves across the screen from right to left; the claws attain the scale of dinosaur parts.

The fifth tape is titled "Domestication (Arthur Speaks)". We see a cat being fed, playing, being caressed. This is not a home movie. The cat moves in and out of the frame in much the same way as Steele does in other scenes. The cat is a stand-in. Steele does not want to show herself domesticated. She lets her cat do her dirty work for her. The cat becomes a diary of the perversity of domestication.

"At Snake Spring" is where the woman is stoned to death. The narrative explains the means of violence: The voice is submissive: "In less than four seconds his right arm is in motion bringing the granite sphere in the general direction of my head. I am moving too late."

Waiting for Lancelot is a historic novel. If you wish to look at the tape for one specific issue you will be disappointed. To say that the tape has sub-plots is not to make excuses for its position. It does contain information pertaining to the evolution of romance, the evolution of biology and the evolution of the social expectations of women. It is also a structurally interesting tape and yes it is almost devoid of 'personal image'.

The Scientist Series, 1977-78, 72 min.

A tape in four parts. The first three were shot in California: 1) "Atlanta, Georgia, Cold Spring Harbour, Long Island, 2) "By Commercial Airliner", 3) "En Route to Las Vegas". The fourth tape "At A Later Date", was made in Toronto after *The Damages*.

Steele describes the background to the tape: "I lived in the United States for eight months in 1977 when the controversy over genetic engineering was just breaking. There were daily accounts in the newspapers and popular magazines discussing the issues. Simultaneously, the Center for



Still from *The Scientist Series*. The Scientists are a microbiologist (Lisa Steele) and a genetic engineer (Colin Campbell).

photos Clive Robertson

Disease Control was hitting the media with the post-Legionnaire's-Disease publicity. It was the first time since the atom bomb (or the moonwalk) that scientists had such a public voice."

In *The Scientists* we can see an interesting inversion. Steele has said that as the content of her work becomes more issue-oriented it moves from being a factual to a fictional statement. This is true if *The Scientists* is compared to autobiographical work. But as we have just seen in *Lancelot*, tape can be used in a filmic sense to provide allegorical meaning.

The two characters in *The Scientists* are a microbiologist (played by Steele) and a genetic engineer (played by Colin Campbell). Neither are portrayed with much sympathy. The characters are members of an arrogant professional class, alienated from society by their specialisation, pander-

ing to each others' separate needs. They look directly into the camera and speak slowly. Their speech patterns are derived from press conferences, they use words like politicians on free political TV time.

As a tape there are problems that are ultimately connected to the viewers' lack of empathy with the characters. And yet the scientists create a tension for the viewers. To make a good 'disaster movie' a believable script is essential. The script for the tape holds up, though the shooting of the Mission Control sequence in "At a Later Date" is awkward.

The tape begins with passion and absurdity: "I have a white bisque ceramic dog . . . life-size . . . there, in front of the window. At night when I close the drapes, I move it away from the window." Following these lines the woman introduces herself as a twenty-nine-year-old clinical microbiologist who works at the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia. This pouting, sultry scientist then embraces her man gently but as if at a banquet. The man pulls himself away and introduces himself: "I am a research worker in the field of recombinant DNA techniques at Cold Spring Harbour, Long Island. I have never conducted a shot gun experiment and never will." Wearing their crisp T-shirts, The Scientists look at us and they look at each other. Their speech is crisp and swings continuously like the pendulum of an old clock. We could be undergoing hypnosis.

They take turns to talk about the public ethics of their jobs. When she talks, he is licking her neck and ears. When he talks, she returns the compliment. The details of their information is immaculate. They are too good to be true. Their passion is too slick to be good.

The second tape opens with a song: "Hollywood" by Rufus. The camera shows us a suitcase being packed. The shot is tight. We see hands placing objects carefully in the case: clothes, cassette recorder, papers. The lid closes towards us and we see the research worker. He tells us that he is going to a meeting on genetic engineering in L.A. He will stay in one hotel, his girlfriend will stay in another. We learn that they will both rent cars. They spend their days apart and their nights together.

Video

The characters discuss science in much the same way that mathematicians discuss mathematics or that artists discuss art. They talk about mutations, infections and the interdisciplinary nature of viruses, which they concede: "are not trying to wipe us out but are merely living their own lives."

Steele attempts to answer the public question, "What are Scientists really like as people?" Somehow this tape is more regional, we appear to be looking at California even though the scientists supposedly live elsewhere. There is a direct link between "The Scientists" and Campbell's tape *The Woman from Malibu*. Both tapes were made when Steele and Campbell were living in California. The woman from Malibu could easily be the mother of either of the scientists.

The microbiologist in "En Route to Las Vegas" tells her lover that there has been "spillage" in her laboratory. She believes she is infected. "I'm optimistic but I do have fears." The couple are shown to be a mixture of raw objectivity and naive idealism. She has contracted a disease for which there is no cure. She must go to the desert?

The video up to this point has been very bare. The tape is shot to show a depth of field of about four feet. Occasionally there are minimal props. Two coffee cups and an end table. Steele knows that printing images on video is best achieved by treating tape like newsprint. The information must fill the frame. Simplicity reads best.

When we have heard a list of what she will take to the desert, the tape cuts to the desert with Campbell sitting in the front seat of a car looking outwards. He is giving us a 'rap' about wanting to be a member of the Whooping Crane Network. The scientist is shown to have environmentalist concerns at a time when his girlfriend is dying? Is this confusion pinning down the public confusion between environmentalist concerns and scientific development?

The presentation of the scientists attempting to publicly validate their acts is fragile. There is a suggestion that scientists are irresponsibly playing with biological disease. And yet we know that Steele has sympathy for the discipline itself. The tape is simultaneously critical of the manner in which scientists explain themselves



(above) "By Commercial Airliner" (below) "The Damages", photo: Lisa Steele

publicly and critical of the public hysteria that leads to such displays? The difference between artists and scientists is not mentioned but if their research functions were compared we would perhaps be told that scientists wield more power. Unless we think of creative propaganda, specifically advertising. But this conjecture is outside of the tape.

We are shown irony. We have been led to believe that an unknown virus (of her own mixing?) has caused her sickness. We see her lying in bed listening to a tape message from her lover. He reveals that she was bitten by a tick and has contracted American Spotted Fever. The doomsday concern of a leaking experiment is defused.

Having somehow survived this setback, the characters re-appear in "At A Later Date". They have different hair-dos. They are in space. They look up at the monitor/camera. The lighting, the framing, the angle makes the couple look like movie stars. They are happy in space. "No more long distance phone calls." Weightless sex. No laws. They live in a two-person utopia. Our "scientists" have been transformed to become new-look hippies. We find out that in space they are mutating. They seem excited to be recipients of a new exotic disease. They love to adapt. Mission Control puts out a timid call for the two run-aways without success. And away they drift.

The Scientists text used direct quotations from the popular media coverage of three actual events. The first was the debate over genetic engineering, the second was the American public's discovery of incurable communicable disease and the third was the discussion surrounding the re-emergence of the American space program through the Shuttle project. The tape also predicts the 'hysterical' concern over the falling Skylab. Of

course the tape is built upon the residue of these concerns. The dichotomy of scientific spin-off continues for a public that both demands a halt to nuclear energy plants yet still supports the development of home computers and other labour-saving electronic products.

Therefore, "At A Later Date" is a logical but unsatisfying ending. The scientists seem successful but their "image of success" changes from passion to glamour. They have completely jettisoned their objective. The glamorous personal image that *The Scientists* presents is its main weakness. We are left to conclude that what is informationally important has been debased, thus making the tape an essentially trite statement.

The Damages (11 mins.) 1978.

The Damages, *Makin' Strange*, and *Tunnel of Love* seem similar. Their common content should not be exaggerated. Just as *Waiting for Lancelot* perhaps uses an extreme of discontinuous narrative, so too in *The Damages* all that can be assumed is that the beginning and the end are in correct chronological sequence. In the sense that we can look to *The Damages* for social commentary, we must not forget that we are listening to a 'story'. Whatever constitutes "scientific accuracy" in literature is really what Steele continuously places in her tapes.



Clive Robertson

The tapes cover a period of time as we watch an adolescent become a mother with a small child. In the final sequence, the mother tells a police officer about a baby that fell from a balcony two floors above her onto the street below.

Steele plays the girl both as adolescent and as mother. The visual clues of the age change are thin. The time covered is at most a seven year

Video



Production still from "The Damages".

photo Colin Campbell

period. The girl is wearing horn-rimmed glasses, a crucifix, a hairband. She stands in front of a door and as an annoyed girl makes a report to the viewer. The story she tells was taken from an account written by an eleven year old child staying at Interval House:

"They leave dirty diapers of poo poo in the bath tub or on the ledges of it. That's how they make the whole floor stink. And they're rubbing some of the poo poo on the walls, but they're also writing with blood. And the toilet seats. They rubbed poo poo on that too. And they wake up early in the morning and talk loud. Really LOUD! And of course they sneak into other people's rooms and steal things. Nately (sic) once said that she saw them sneak into Delore's room and stole a doll. They love starting fights and they always lose. They call people pigs and use the "f" word. They once said that Verna was an "f"-ing pig. That's not nice! And when we were playing a game he said that people were pigs. And one thing. Not one of them press the toilet whether they poo poo or pee pee. . . ." (excerpted from girl's speech in *The Damages*).

The break from the adolescent to woman is represented by the tape

going to black. The final story (about the child's death) is improvised. It unfolds in an amazing non-linear sequence of personal detail mixed in with recountable observations. Immediate comparisons could be made to the accurate portrayal of *Mary Hartman* as a character — Hartman being perhaps the only character in *Mary Hartman*, *Mary Hartman* whose anxieties overrode the programme's interest in satire. Steele is not presenting a televised version of a real story. If I haven't yet made this clear I should point out that Steele's use of video in these later tapes is not low-budget imitation of the TV docu-drama. The format and execution of *The Damages* is more minimal and abstract than *Mary Hartman*, *Mary Hartman*. The other characters in the tape, the plain clothes policeman and the boyfriend play very subdued and, in contrast, prop-like roles. In *The Damages*, the effect is that, unlike *Mary Hartman*, though the lines of disaster trigger humour, we find it more uncomfortable to laugh, even though laughter is not a censored reaction.

From *The Scientists* tapes onwards we are being presented with both occupational and social stereotypes. It is as if the artist leaves the camera and looks

out of the studio window. We also become conscious of the artist becoming actress. Technically Steele has almost always made her tapes in the same way. They are black and white. They are assemble-edited. Each sequence is shot and if necessary re-recorded, but most sequences are shot in one take. This means that the improvisations or the involuntary memories are fresh. Steele has honed this technique over a period of years. There is a distinct difference between a tape that has been assemble-edited and one that has been shot like film — meaning that it is edited later as a stage of post-production.

Makin' Strange (17 mins.) 1978

Makin' Strange uses the same character, and in some ways it is Part Two of *The Damages*. The woman's name is Mrs. Pauly. She is on welfare and has a child and a boyfriend, Wayne Buchner. The tape also includes a social worker (Blanche Polk). In *Makin' Strange* and *Tunnel of Love* Steele is assisted by several women that she works with at Interval House. While these women don't play themselves, they are very familiar with the characters that they portray. They therefore add authenticity and complement Steele's own usage of direct recall.

The tape opens in the woman's kitchen with a visit from her social worker. The social worker notices a man's shoes on the couch and proceeds to bully Mrs. Pauly into admitting that her boyfriend lives with her. The accusation is serious for it contravenes one of the conditions of receiving welfare. Mrs. Pauly presents her defence: "Well, I can explain that. You see, Wayne . . . Mr. Buchner . . . was living over on Sumach Street for about nine months and then there was this fire on the third floor of the house, it was a semi-detached house and his brother-in-law and his cousin was staying there with him, and there wasn't even facilities there. I mean no washroom or anything, well there had been before — but not after the fire. Well actually the fire was at 153 Sumach . . . that's next door actually and where was I . . . oh yeah. Well, after the fire and then there was too many tenants in one apartment. And so the landlord he put their stuff out on the street. Just out on the



(above) "Makin' Strange"
(right) "Tunnel of Love"

street. And I mean their chesterfield got ruined and most of their clothes. And Wayne's . . . Mr. Buchner's pills for his epilepsy. . . everything just out on the street. And then his cousin was going to Nova Scotia and so I said that if he wanted to have the cheque that was due him, you know the one that was coming by rights and he was plannin' on going to look for work down to Nova Scotia with this cousin and well I just said, Wayne, you can have it sent here." (excerpted from *Makin' Strange*).

In many ways the tape shows Mrs. Pauly dealing with social and legal authorities through an evolved defence system. She is shown to be a courageous victim, but she is still a victim. Her undeniable ability to deal with a bureaucracy, which is well-paid to erase her as an embarrassing statistic, is short-lived. We see the authorities' methods of re-defining Mrs. Pauly — they re-define her as a criminal. In the last scene she is taken into custody, her child is removed and put into the care of the Children's Aid. Steele uses telephone conversations to fill in the details. Two with a girlfriend, one conversation between two police officers. The police want to "clear up this welfare fraud business". We also hear that Mrs. Pauly "has a tendency to go a little strange", and that she is scheduled for psychiatric assessment.

The tape is re-inforced by scenes that show her boyfriend and girlfriend themselves unable to give her any significant support. While this tape is a linear story,

it is by no means a documentary and yet its script is as accurate as any social investigation. There are times when Steele overplays Mrs. Pauly, a problem that occurs directly from improvising the woman's language pattern. It is a minor distraction.

Tunnel of Love (12 mins.) 1979.

Tunnel of Love is shot in colour. The central character is called Gloria. The treatment of this story is different. The support characters provide more definition and strength, allowing Steele less need to compensate. The story is simple and shows for the first time the welfare woman in relationship both to her boyfriend and father.

The gynaecologist (Blanche Polk) examines Gloria and tells her that something is wrong "down there". Gloria (played by Steele) has difficulty assimilating the medical information. Her doctor is insensitive to the depth of Gloria's ignorance about her own body. The doctor herself is confidently unsure about the state of gynaecological information. ("We don't really know what goes on down there.") We see Gloria attempting to tell her boyfriend what is wrong with her. He is understanding, but wants to know if they can have sex and if she can "spot him a 10". We next see her with her father. They both discuss 'hereditary' defects. Her mother had heavy periods. We see her with her public health nurse (Jenny Stewart), who gives instructions to her about how to wash her baby. Gloria has

fears that cleaning the baby is dangerous. The last scene shows Gloria before her operation, surrounded by trainee doctors as her doctor explains the clinical details of her impending operation. Gloria is still worried about cleaning her baby's ears with Q-tips. *Tunnel of Love* juxtaposes the level of Gloria's knowledge of women's medical problems and that of her gynaecologist. There is not much difference. Gloria does not have the economic security to cushion her concerns and is visibly more of a victim of her own ignorance.



Tunnel of Love is most likely an experiment for Steele. Sets were simply constructed for each sequence to allow visual separation of place. The colour chosen was predominantly green. The content has been introduced but not resolved. We can assume that like the separate tapes that make up *The Scientists*, there is probably more to follow.

Overall, Lisa Steele's new tapes demonstrate new areas of concern. There has been no dramatic switch; the sweep of observation has been widened. Just as in *Birthday Suit* or *A Very Personal Story*, *The Damages* and *Makin' Strange* debunk the myth that video cannot come across with undistracted information. We see that the medium itself allows the viewer a form of personalized concentration which is difficult to experience with television or the theatre. In *Waiting for Lancelot* we are shown the achievement of re-mining the inherent characteristics of literature in general, and the novel as a form in particular.

Steele's work remains valid because she continues to maintain control of her specific observations. As well, some tapes succeed as social propaganda. She has chosen to document the experiences of herself as a woman as well as the women around her. It is not the workings of some artist's 'career'. It is the product of an individual's life and so essentially continues its bibliographic path. ■

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Reading "Between the Lines"

Preparing the news
by Joanne Birnie Danzker

Antonio Muntadas is a Catalan artist from Barcelona, Spain who works in New York and teaches at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, M.I.T., Boston, Massachusetts. He recently produced a videotape entitled, *Between the Lines*, which specifically addresses itself to the selection process by which a two hour ten minute event (in this case, a news conference with the Mayor of Boston) is reduced to a one minute forty second news broadcast. It also focuses on "the role and the responsibility of the reporter as a transmitter between the facts and the T.V. audience".

Between the Lines records the process of preparing a news item for broadcast by WGBH-TV, a PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) station in Boston. Reporter Sharon Stevens is followed from a press conference, to discussion with the News Editor, into the editing room, and to the final broadcast itself.

Muntadas presents some of the material excluded from the final news item, interviews Stevens, and records some of the "personal" subjective comments of the staff as they prepare the item. This information is juxtaposed through editing, and sometimes through multiple screens.

The result provides a fascinating opportunity to match: 1) original intent with final product; 2) stated personal ideology with implied ideology of the final news item; 3) the visual information (video/film) with the verbal information (news/commentary) during broadcast.

It also provides an opportunity to observe any discrepancies between the actions and product of an articulate, obviously intelligent reporter, and her personal view of what she is doing.

In order to make these assessments, some background information is necessary. Kevin White, Mayor of Boston, had consistently refused for the past two years, to meet with ABCD (Action for Boston Community Development), a group representing various minorities.

On January 30, 1979, White final-

ly agreed to a meeting, which Sharon Stevens was sent to cover. Stevens, who is black, was an appropriate choice because of her personal interest in minority rights. As she herself says in *Between the Lines*: "... to a certain extent, I have a special direction — that is, besides all that stuff about wanting to tell the facts and get the information out . . . I try to relate to a special kind of audience within the greater audience — that is, minorities, particularly black people."

Given Stevens' stated personal interest in, and support of, minority rights, and the fact that WGBH is a PBS affiliate, it would not be unreasonable to expect that the news item would be, if anything, biased towards ABCD — focusing on specific issues raised during the meeting, perhaps even reflecting on why the Mayor would finally agree to a meeting at this particular time.

The final news item, however, strongly reinforced the Mayor's position as a figure of authority and control and presented ABCD as essentially passive (giving grudging but "due" respect to the Mayor), preoccupied only with issues which concern most Boston citizens — the price of water bills and, litter in the streets.

If we look at the schema (see next page), we can observe how the news report was structured verbally and visually.

As we can see, only the Mayor's statements are recorded. While White (as one can see from Muntadas' selections) made other quite controversial statements, the only ones quoted relate to: (a) his being a liberal, and (b) his self-acclaimed record as a supporter of minority rights. ABCD's questions are not recorded and the "exchange" between the Mayor and the group suggests (visually and verbally) a weak passivity which acts as a foil for White's dominance.

What information was excluded from the report, and why would Sharon Stevens bias it towards a white authority figure, and not towards the group whose rights and sentiments she herself has stated she is committed

to defend?

Firstly, let us consider the information excluded from the final news report. Muntadas' tape itself is just under half an hour long, which a considerable portion is committed to interviewing Stevens. We cannot in *Between the Lines* identify the exact nature of the press conference, or even have access to more than one of the questions asked. However, sufficient information remains that we can attempt to answer the questions above.

Mayor White: "I say with some pride, a decade is a long time. But we started out together — like it or not. Some of the diversity starts from the fact that ten years ago, plus, born out of the frustration, the turmoil, the hatred — I want to refer back to the hatred of the sixties as opposed to the disdain of the seventies.

What we shared together at that time is that we were welcome — in a way it was big to be a Mayor then — the limelight was on you — there were the Lindsays, the Stokes, and the Aliotos — we were very big then — and you were very big . . . there was some place to go and when you went even if you never got as much as you expected, the door was open and you were welcome.

We shared that — the limelight. We were addressing what the public cared about and we were on the front lines.

Well, ten years later we share another thing in common — we are not welcome today. You knock on doors and they do not open — for minorities or for me!

In these statements, White, clearly an astute politician, acknowledges that the rights of minority groups are no longer dominant in the minds of the voters. White, meeting with ABCD, comes armed with the Proposition 13 mentality, the recent backlash against Affirmative Action programmes that culminated in the Bakke case and the realization that ABCD is no longer the powerful lobbying group it once was.

If White is so openly aware, it is not unreasonable to believe that ABCD (and Sharon Stevens) are also aware. If ABCD was passive (as Stevens calls it "mild mannered and thoughtful") is that because the Mayor is an admirable, dominant, powerful



Sharon Stevens: "The relationship between Action for Boston Community Development or ABCD and Mayor White has not always been a happy marriage but today's up-beat encounter suggested that a reconciliation may be possible. The Mayor fielded questions ranging from litter on the streets and the high price of water bills to his future political aspirations but the questions were not angry or harsh rather they were mild mannered and thoughtful. And when and if the Mayor does decide to stand for the re-election he made it clear that he wants the votes of a group that he believes shares his philosophy."

Mayor White: "We share being liberal or progressive — it still means something to us — that we are not collectively caught up on the course of conservatism and the cuts in CAPS — not from my mouth, nor from yours. I am still proud to be a liberal."



Sharon Stevens: "In what sounded like a vote-for-me speech, White used his political glibness to remind the largely minority audience that he had hired more minorities than any politicians including the Kennedys and President Carter."



Mayor White: "No Federal agency I know, other than one committed exclusively to minorities has done as well as I have — not at all. In my opinion, outside of Newark and Detroit, nobody has tried or could do percentage-wise as much as I have in a (?) hostile city."

Sharon Stevens: "If Mayor White feared that his audience would be hostile, these fears seemed groundless. He left them laughing prompting one member of the audience to say, 'He's very good but I'm not going to vote for him.'"

Video

personality — a “liberal” who supports their interests — or because they too have recognized the weakness of their position and the current political climate?

Even in *Between the Lines* we are given almost no exposure to the questions and personalities of ABCD except for a young Indian woman. In reply to her inquiry (the plight of urban Indians), White denies any knowledge of the group and/or their problems and admits that prior to his election he knew no black and not two Spanish speaking people.

Mayor White: “You’d be surprised what I learn at a meeting like this.” We asked earlier what information was excluded from the news report, and why Sharon Stevens would bias it towards Mayor White and away from ABCD.

In *Between the Lines*, Stevens makes some enlightening statements about her perception of her role: “I don’t think there is any such thing as total objectivity. You can take one story and four reporters will write it four different ways — using the same facts. But it is a matter of style — how you speak, how you write, see things from a personal perspective. Another reporter may have a special kind of insight. You can’t help but put some of yourself into a story.”

In response to Muntadas’ enquiry as to how she feels about reducing a two hour and ten minute conference to a one minute forty second broadcast, Stevens replied: “Oh well, you’re always going to lose a little something just because there are time constraints and sometimes that’s too bad. . . . you try to get in what are the most salient points and you just have to let the others go sometimes.”

How has Stevens’ “style” and “personal perspective” (which she believes to be oriented towards minority groups) been transformed during the production process so that the “salient points” reinforce White’s position; and the information “let go”, is that pertaining to ABCD?

While it could be expected, and is probable in other situations that commentary is modified by other staff members, e.g. the News Editor, it would appear from *Between the Lines* that Stevens has had considerable freedom in preparing the story. Muntadas records an exchange between Stevens and the female News Editor which is quite revealing (although there is a

curious sense of an almost instinctive awareness of the presence of his camera).

Editor: “Why didn’t anyone call him on the sins of his administration?” Stevens: “I can’t answer that — I don’t know.” Editor: Well, Jesus, they will reap what they sow then . . . The thing that makes me angry is that this group has been known in the past also to have a very considerable clout in the wards of the city, and they’ve been able to do a lot of heavy damage to Kevin. And it’s people like them that have forced him to get his ass down to Freedom House and protect those black kids on those buses. If they start kissing ass now . . . The story’s fine, it just angers me.”

Even in this “private” exchange, ABCD is presented as passive and destined to “reap what they sow”. Other than a later comment by the Editor in which she wonders “if it has anything to do with the fact that they have been ignored by political



leaders for so long . . .”, there is no sophisticated discussion on minority rights and the current liberal backlash. Blame is placed directly on the shoulders of ABCD, and at no point, is it considered that the News Report itself could be biased against the group.

Again, we have returned to the critical issue — how is information transformed (despite the stated intent of the transmitters of this information) into a form which clones and reflects the dominant ideology (in this case, liberal backlash) of the group to which the person transmitting the information is attached.

This process, which is true for personal, institutional, and bureaucratic structures, as well as those of mass communication, is one in which we all participate.

It is too easy to cry “co-opted”. It is obvious that the process is more subtle than this. What are the “in-

visible mechanisms” (as Muntadas terms them) which facilitate the transformation of a representative of one group (minority blacks) into a mouthpiece for the dominant power group?

Is it simply a process of identification — the hostage whose survival instincts drive the captive to identify with the captor? In this case, unconsciously identifying with what is perceived to be the dominant “liberal” values of PBS employment, or with dominant American “work-ethic” values — if they do not help themselves, they are not worth helping.

Is it the instinct of the “survivors” of this world — to function, unfettered by the weak? Is Sharon Stevens, whose presence at PBS as a reporter on camera is probably a direct result of past Affirmative Action programmes, now unconsciously disassociating herself from ABCD?

We have too often assumed that if the mass media is to be used as an ideological tool, that certain forms of



photos Jim Gorman

information must be consciously proscribed or advocated. However, it would appear that the ideological consistency of our mass media belongs more to the fascinating area of subtle, unconscious consent than to a set of values used during selection processes whether they are scripting, editing or programming. When the shared goals of one’s society are committed ideologically to non-manipulation of thought (i.e. freedom of speech, action and faith), it is difficult to believe that one has participated as either a receiver or transmitter of information in such a selection process.

If the News is not objective, it is not necessarily subjective. It reflects another set of modified, mutant, dominant values which are never neutral. ■

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The Girls' Club



Middle-class marriage.

Religion

The Relican Wedding

A special report from the Homunculus by Hank Bull

Religion Canada, an invention of Vancouver-based HP Productions, describing itself as “the new religion from Canada in the 80’s”, has, after two years of radio broadcasts, cablecasts and performances in Toronto and Calgary (birthplace of the Homunculus) performed its first Wedding. What follows is a special report from the god of Religion Canada, aka the Great Homunculus, the Reverend K-Borde.

In the name of the Beaver the Moose and the Holy Goose, I am the Great Humunculus, born in Calgary on March 18, 1949, and it is my pleasure now to welcome you all to this Special Report. I want you to get the feeling as you read it, to feel the Northern Light coming at you from the land of the Chinook and the White-out, to feel the energy of Trance-Canada expressed from my pen as it flows continuously, smoothly over the paper and inscribes this message on the body of the earth like a tattoo on a sailor’s arm.

Now you may wonder just what is a Homunculus. A Homunculus is a little man, created by Scientific means, who is capable of displaying great magic and who stands at the amazing height of twelve inches! At this size, he is the perfect size to fit onto your television screen, a fact that insures Relican’s position as True Religion for Canadian home viewers. I, the Great Homunculus, imboginate into this religion all the people of this planet,

just as the amoeba imboginates its food. Everyone is a member. There is no obligation. We revere the great venerable religions of the world and welcome you to take your pick of any, old or new. In fact, you may do as you please, for Relican itself offers you basically nothing. This is not a false religion like the ones you sometimes find on TV. We do not ask you for your money or try to trick you out of it with promises of happiness, wealth, peace of mind or any such thing. We just demand your money direct. It’s clean and simple. Direct communication with the supernatural. Send in your donations and we’ll give you absolutely nothing in return. Here’s the address:

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Let Relican enlighten YOU of your money. Any other kind of enlightenment you can find for yourself. This is straight ahead, no mumbo-jumbo, no double-talk. No belief in anything because there is no thing. Others offer you life after death, we offer you death after life! And for those of you who think this is ridiculous, absurd, I will now prove, here and in print, my magic power. If you really do think this ridiculous or in any way unworthy, a-Hey and a-Ho, and a Holy poop-poop I DARE YOU NOT TO READ ON! i.e. STOP READING if

this is indeed heresy. OK, that got rid of some dead wood. We may now continue with the Report. And if there are any left among you with any doubts, Hey hey an a-Hup and: ALL THOSE OF YOU WHO STOPPED READING, GET BACK HERE AND READ ON. Good. You’re back. Even when you weren’t reading, my message still came through. You came back and now you are completely under my control, so relax and scope these polar-void pix of the fabulous Relican Wedding.

This is what happened. The future was examined closely and a time was chosen — Midnight on April Fool’s Eve, right after a No Wave fest at the Helen Pitt Gallery. In this way we could be sure of getting a good crowd. As the night grew closer, I felt through the mystery of the mails the presence of a choir, which materialized in the form of the Girl’s Club, a high energy gang of Vancouver women, from whom you’re bound to hear more. I told them the idea: that Gina from Delta would be wed to Gary from America and that together they would become a truly international intelligence unit. The Girl’s Club immediately liked the idea. They cast spells and found pink plastic Fiorucci raincoats for the occasion. Piranha Farms was summoned from the deep to play his Submarimba, and Ken Chang came from Big-O-Tires to

Religion

drive the Thunderbird Chariot. Flowers were gathered. I put out a telepathic call for Bachelors in black suits, that they might operate the machines. There would be video to catch the overflow crowd, and a Special Cake Committee. There were synods and secret meetings, but no rehearsals. Everything would fall together perfectly at the appointed time. And so it did. As midnight approached, more and more guests arrived, certainly the largest congregation in Relican's short history. Midnight came. Reverend Tina appeared on the rostrum, with flaming hair and flashing eyes. The spirit came upon her. She spoke. She worked the willing crowd into a frenzy and together they swayed and moaned their invocation of the Mighty Homunculus. I appeared, by this time totally gone on pure performance energy, not a thought in my head, just pure, mad swinging. I love to perform, and let me tell you this mob was hot.

"Do you believe?"

"No!", they shouted.

"Do you want the double negative?"

"No!"

Well alright. I explained how we have nothing to offer, demanded their money and then, to prove the doctrine of self-enlightenment, I gave a demonstration of self-levitation by actually pulling myself up off the ground. This was accomplished by means of a block and tackle which the Bachelors attached to a harness on my divine body. The very idea that this could even be possible had surprised even me somewhat, and the effect on the crowd was stunning. Cries of, "Miracle! Miracle!" and "How does he do it?" rose from the floor. In years to come there will be many displays of magic in the Western world. And then I disappeared, and Reverend Tina took over. The people were in the palm of her hand, which she raised and opened, allowing them all to take flight. Ken Chang appeared, driving the Mighty '79 Thunderbird like a float, covered by the glorious choir singing like the Arab women in *Battle of Algiers*. A strange and unearthly sound filled the room, mixed with the goose-like honk of the car horn and the shower of rice. By now, the car, hard and sparkling, filled the room. It was decorated. Its engine was checked by the Girl's Club and its doors of perception were cleansed. Then it too vanished into



The Great Homunculus soars.

the April Fool's night. A momentary hush fell over the room and then a great cheer, as, crowned with the antlers and satin disc of the Pink Goddess, dressed all in pink robes and riding a bicycle, the most efficient conversion of energy into motion, more efficient than a Thunderbird or even a Salmon, miracle of miracles, into that place came the Great Homunculus in all his ceremonial splendor.

I, the Reverend K-Borde, opened the kick-stand and placed that bicycle beside the lectern. I fopped. I arranged my notes and prepared for the Wedding itself. I pronounced that this would be a wedding of forces combining the Love Boat, the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle and the Tesla

photos Cory Wyngaarten



Coil. I called for the Bachelors. They came forward and moved the Love Boat into position. This was a sailboat, beautifully filled to the gunnels with rare flowers of all colours and the central bouquet was made of frangipani flowers. With the Love Boat in place we raised our arms together to summon the Bride herself, who appeared on the stairs with an attendant behind her holding a large mirror which doubled her radiant image and reflected it into the crowd. Gina stepped into the Love Boat.

I surveyed the scene. "Has anyone here seen Gary?"

"He's right over there," someone pointed.

The Groom squeezed through the throng, dressed in the uniform of a British army lieutenant. He took his place beside Gina in preparation for blast off. This would be a real wedding. The photographers stepped forward to take the final photos, the Bachelors hoisted the Love Boat into lift-off position so that, from the audience point of view, it resembled a church window, with blossoms instead of the usual stained glass. Sister Julie led the Girl's Club in a moving rendition of "The Hawaiian Love Song" and then the Tesla Coil was ignited to its full luminance of 200,000 volts. The couple, fused together, was hurtled into space, presently coming to rest over the Magnetic North Pole, at which point the gravity of their own thoughts caused them to fall to New York City where the wedding guests cheered their arrival. A great feast ensued, the Best Man delivered his interminably drunken toast and the cake was cut.

Here ends my Special Report. I am The Great Homunculus. Many thanks to Pumps and all the participants. This is a videotape. ■



Politics

Parti Rhinoceros

Running on art
an interview by Rene Blouin

The artistic practice, for its inextricable insertion into the socio-cultural and political fabric, and for the very nature of its concerns, is always to some extent a political gesture. Either formally, through the content and the context of the work itself; or informally, through its articulations and systems of organization, the work of art constitutes a stance inevitably subscribing to some kind of ideology. Even if the content or the context do not formally deal with political concepts as such, it is still possible during the reading



photo Serge Grenier

Jacques Gauthier — Parti Rhinocéros.

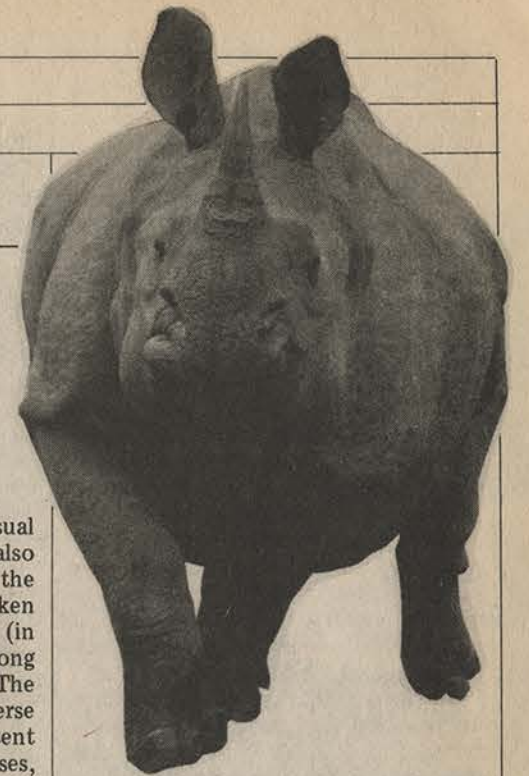
operation to situate the parameters of the analysis which lead to the creation of that particular work. Since "Art" has been encircled as a specialized activity, its practitioners have been producing works which formally analyse and criticize the political systems and the dominant ideologies of our society. In general, the works of artists who have been using language — the word — as the main vehicle or tool, have been more noticeable. On the one hand, the codes used were more recognizable, i.e. they requested a less abstract reading process than for example the Visual Arts in general; and on the other hand, the main channels used to disseminate their analysis were well appropriated to these codes. Although the electronic media have slightly modified this situation, a political play or novel will still get more attention than any work

classified under the rubric: "Visual Arts". The electronic media are also based extensively on the language, the difference being that it is now spoken and complemented with visuals (in the case of television). There is a long history of artists using the media. The cases are far too numerous and diverse to enable us to draw any consistent inventory. However, some cases, even arbitrarily chosen as examples allow us to identify specific interventions where the media of the time were formally used as channels. For instance, Aristophane used the theatrical play. For in his time it was the best tool to disseminate his harsh criticism. Jules Valès used the barricades of La Commune de Paris and later the novel and other print media to bring his comments to an audience, and so on. In the present decade, we have witnessed an interesting proliferation of cases.

Of course, the process of appropriation of electronic media is complex. This implies some specific procedure and technics. Two common approaches are consistently employed to secure such appropriation: one is to attract the media through its inherent thirst for sensationalism; the other is the conception of works explicitly designed to be formally acceptable for inclusion into the mass of information channelled to the mass society daily. The second case is far more interesting. In the current election campaign, an artist is running in the riding of St. Paul, in Toronto (the riding of Mr. Culture himself: John Roberts). He presents his candidacy as an artwork. His platform is art. Jacques Gauthier runs under the banner of the Parti Rhinocéros. He explains here the context of his action.

RB: What is exactly the Parti Rhinocéros?

JG: The Parti Rhinocéros is an



apolitical "political" party. It is apolitical in the sense that it does not defend one ideology. It is not formally looking for power, as such, but is rather a criticism of the political system of this country. Its creation has been inspired from a Brazilian experience of the late fifties. It took place during a municipal election in Sao Paulo. The citizens were absolutely fed up with the corruption at City Hall. Some journalists presented as a candidate the rhinoceros of the Municipal Zoo as a symbolic gesture to clean up that mud. It was perfectly legal: the rhinoceros had a name, was old enough to vote and had a legal address in the municipality. It was elected (so the legend goes). At the occasion of the 1968 federal campaign, Dr. Jacques Ferron, one of Québec's most prolific writers, decided to found the Parti Rhinocéros in order to underline the incoherence of the major parties' programmes and the idiocy vehicled through these electoral occasions. He was immediately joined by a group of artists of all disciplines. Most of them were well known. Since that time the party has grown considerably and in each election it has gained more supporters. There are now sixty-three candidates for the present election; fifty-nine in Québec, three in Ontario and one in British Columbia. The name of the party will be on the ballots. We are an official party.

Structurally, the party does not

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Politics

function as the traditional political formations do. Every candidate is a vice-president and is absolutely responsible for his programme and style of intervention. It is a kind of network which formalizes itself on occasion; in a way, a little bit like the Fluxus network. You can't really point out its exact profile; some people join and leave. It presents some interventions periodically; some are public, some are private. The headquarters of the Parti, in Montréal, is called "La Centrale Nucléaire" and is mainly a device to provide technical information to the candidates. The name of the headquarters can change from one election to the next. It is part of the process. "La Centrale Nucléaire" is an information centre and every candidate is proud to report his interventions so other candidates as well as the public are aware of them.

RB: What convinced you to run for office in this particular campaign?

JG: Well, first off, as you can read in my press releases, I define myself as an artist. For more than twenty years I have been working with electronic media. Therefore I have acquired a vast experience in the media. Politics is mostly a media game. I am a media artist. I am well qualified to play the role of the politician. I must admit that at the beginning of the campaign, I did not immediately think of running. But during a conversation with my old friend, Serge Grenier, we gave it serious thought. He decided not to run, claiming that in his riding of Rosedale (Toronto), former Mayor David Crombie was a good enough Rhino. On my side, I could not say so about John Roberts; and besides, I became terribly excited by the idea: it could be a great work of art. Then I got the registration forms, paid the \$200 registration fee and got twenty-five electors of my riding to sign my forms. I am now a legal candidate in this election and as such I have access to some fantastic tribunes. When you think about it, anybody or any artist in this country could run. It costs only two hundred dollars and any bank can lend that kind of money. If you are good enough, this deposit may be reimbursed to you after the election.

The second thing which helped me to decide was the chance to run under the Parti Rhinocéros. . . (You will note that we always refer to it in French, because it has no English

name) . . . Indeed, it is a party of artists. Its candidates are of my generation, most of them, and we have been together through so many fantastic events of the Québec history. For years we have been doing interventions, not always conceived as works of art formally, but which present the same characteristics as art. These events and manifestations were conceived more as a way to lighten some socio-cultural and socio-political contexts in order to facilitate the analysis of these contexts. Most of the time, the audiences at these events were very limited. Art was then really and totally confused with life: we never made that formal cut by declaring these actions works of art. This campaign is an excellent channel to disseminate my ideas as an artist. Therefore, I had to take advantage of such an occasion. The potential audience you can reach through the prime time offered to you as an official candidate is absolute fascinating. You get access to the major networks. The laws of this country force them to award you this time. How could I let that pass?

The third aspect to consider is that it is a lot of fun. You can at last let yourself loose . . . and word your analysis in the formats you wish. In my case, I decided to supply my audiences with political analysis articulated through a specific reference to the absurd in the various situations I talk about. For instance, I will promote the purity of English, which should not be spoken with any noticeable foreign accent, as an answer to the idiocy of the present language quarrel. Or, the present monarchy is absolutely a sexist symbol. . . I play on this . . . and so on . . . of course, not all voters will find my arguments funny or amusing, but they may come to certain conclusions later on. . .

RB: Do you base your interventions on an analysis of the workings of the media?

JG: Of course. But you see, I am now outside of the media. I am not part of it anymore. Through all this, I come to the same conclusions as before. In a way, this is an occasion of reassessing my position from a totally different point of view, for a totally different purpose. For instance, I have participated as an announcer and commentator in some debates. The issue of the televised debate between the leaders of the three main parties constituted an excellent entry for me,

a good starting point. For awhile, the "debate" became an issue in the media. It was nevertheless a false issue of this electoral campaign. Indeed, there was nothing else there. It was a TV show. A TV show on the same scale as an 'important' sports event. This case alone shows very well the workings of politics and media. No one cared much about what was going to be debated on the programme; everything dealt with the format — not the content. Was there even a need for a debate? Television is a great leveller. It brings everything it eats to the same level where it is submitted to the same rules: ratings and reviews. An event becomes an issue. In the media, there are no differences. TV-wise, it was boring. The actors were not artists but lawyers. According to my own statistics, the number of lawyers in the federal deputation is slowly diminishing. Other professions are getting involved, and it is time that artists also get involved and use the political platform. These new faces, these politicians who are not lawyers, they all have a little experience in the media.

I mean, everybody was on TV doing a commercial for their car sale business, their insurance company; everybody at one time had a little radio experience as an announcer, somewhere like in Portage La Prairie, etc. Some others were journalists. The media-conscious people are taking the power, slowly. Artists, the media people "par excellence", must also be part of this. They have a very important role to fulfill, especially in view of the gross manipulation of reality we are witnessing more and more in the media. Because of such media, politics have changed considerably over the last ten years. I feel comfortable in saying that presently, for me, it has become an art: the media being the support structure, the activity in itself becoming an art activity. I should be . . . I will be the first artist to be elected for being an artist.

RB: Do you have doubts about your chances of winning the election?

JG: Well, it is like buying a lottery ticket. Your chances to win are as good as those of the person beside you. I bought my ticket for the elections and I met all the conditions. In fact, the comparison stops there. But I claim that I will be the first Rhinocéros to be elected in Canada; that I will hold the balance of power: the major parties being evenly split. I will then request to be appointed

Politics



René Blouin interviews Jacques Gauthier on the eve of the federal election. photo Serge Grenier

Secretary of State as a condition for support of any government that may be formed. Then I will request that all funds from Loto Canada be transferred to the Secretary of State and all those funds will be directed to the arts. Professional sports, after all, generate enough money so they can pay for amateur sports. You cannot say so of professional artists. The Canada Council will be forced to fund only ballet and symphonic music. We will deal with the arts in a better context. Also the good name of the CBC will have to be re-established. It is not going to be easy . . . is it? But that is my programme for the "arts".

RB: Tell me more about your background.

JG: I have been involved in radio and television since 1956. I started in New Carlisle, then moved to Québec City and then Toronto. I was mainly a reporter, and what you call an announcer. I announced all kinds of things for fifteen years. I call this my announcing period, like all artists have some kind of period.

RB: How did you get involved?

JG: As the extensive use of electronic media was then quite new, one did not need any special preparation. One just needed to be audacious, I mean . . . one only had to have a good voice and a propensity to bullshit. After a while, people in Québec

started to tell us: "Ah! You are 'un artiste de la télévision'." And then, as they say, you are "un artiste de la télévision". At the time, it did not mean much to me. What is an artist? What is l'Union des artistes? It re-groups singers, actors, people involved formally in performing arts and television. But I was not doing any acting nor was I singing. It is only after leaving the CBC that my consciousness dramatically re-oriented itself. I started to understand fully the meaning of being an artist, the potential power of doing things in a very special way.

RB: But how do you define the parameters of what is artistic and what is not?

JG: At first, I think art is a global process. It is not defined by a certain type of object, with a frame around it and so on . . . Art, for the one who produces it and for the ones who receive it, is a tool of learning, teaching us more about ourselves and how we function. It also provides some kind of model for investigating things, phenomena. For instance, I am doing this particular art piece, my running in this election. In the precise context of the election, I provide an elucidation of the modus operandi of the media and how they can modify our perception of some realities. It is a long term action. Its premises reside

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Politics

in an intimate experience I went through, a privileged experience that provided specific knowledge. As the subject concerns us all, I share this knowledge with you. (All of this is without pretention.) In a way, I attempt to modify a specific rapport between you and your social environment. It is therefore quite clear to me that no objects I could have made would have possibly achieved the results I aim for, through these "political" interventions. Only these interventions could achieve the results, and I declare my "political" interventions works of art. Don't they offer all the characteristics of an artwork in its essence? Maybe my definition is not shared by a great number of people. Everytime I try to define art, I come up with a different definition. One thing is sure, the possibility of art does not reside in an unanimated object, but rather in the person who encounters it, and in the very encounter itself.

RB: Is one of your purposes to confuse the issues?

JG: No. There are simply no real issues involved. They are all topics. For example, I was discussing this with somebody at the CBC. This man is in charge of keeping in touch with the themes of each of the major parties. He is going crazy. The three parties have all kinds of topics in their programmes. On that level, the Rhinos are more creative. We beat the traditional parties by the number and interest of the multitudes of topics we are proposing to the population. We don't try to convince people that unemployment is an electoral issue. In most cases, those who insist that it is, they don't personally know one single unemployed. That does not mean that unemployment does not exist. That may mean that those who make an issue of it do not know what they are talking about. On the other hand, it does not bother me if some people decide not to work. I am not paranoid about that. I am not frustrated. It is their choice.

RB: What are the next steps of your interventions?

JG: I don't know yet. It is too soon. It mainly depends on what happens on May 22nd. If I am elected . . . I will continue this piece while being in office in Ottawa. If not, the material will be gathered in some kind of format on which I cannot yet take decision. Simply, because I am too far into it now to foresee precisely any

type of documentation as a continuation of the artwork itself. There surely will be something. Something will happen. It will most probably lead to another intervention, in another context. Maybe a text, or a play. But for the moment, I must concentrate exclusively on that particular action. Each step must be significant and well prepared. I play a lot on ambiguity and that alone requires a lot of attention. On the other hand, it is a very great experience in itself and I want to enjoy every moment of it with my electors.

One thing is sure: I will have reached a great number of people with my work. Their thinking will be inevitably influenced. Either in reinforcing their present position through their rejection of my proposals, or in feeding them with some information which in the long run will modify their



photo Serge Grenier

thinking. Who knows? I am quite impressed and satisfied with that possibility. Am I not like any artist?

RB: Finally, Jacques, do you see yourself as a subversive member of society?

JG: Subversive under what terms? I think not. Am I subversive when the RCMP is opening letters, listening to telephone conversations, etc. . . . I do not think that we would be doing this interview. We are not dangerous. Besides, they have not yet burned down my garage, nor have they stolen the list of people who have requested information from me as an official candidate, as an artist candidate in the present federal campaign. I am not undermining the electoral system. It is true that I am preoccupied with transmitting to the people some elements of information. I point out some facts or aspects of the process of election and its intimate relationship with the media. I am only acting as a catalyst for people to analyse some important issues by which they are confronted. If this is subversive, then any activity worth being looked at as art is then subversive.

René Blouin, writer, critic and broadcaster, lives in Toronto.

Film



Stephen Lack, star of *Rubber Gun* models his black leather 'sculpture'.

The Way They Were

THE RUBBER GUN

A feature length film directed by Allan Moyle. Written by Moyle, Stephen Lack and John Laing

reviewed by David Rothberg

When I was a student in Ottawa in the late sixties / early seventies, I used to look to Montreal and New York as vacation spas. My friend Danny and I would scrape up as much money as we could get our hands on, make our way to either city and then suck in as much art, romance, and trouble as our luck could uncover. New York at the time was exotic women at the Chelsea Hotel, out-of-focus movies projected on sheets in the west village, maniacs in St. Mark's place, and very exciting group theatre in Soho. Montreal was the dealers being cool at the Café Prague on Bishop Street, jazz, and very serious conversation about life and literature at and around the Swiss Hut on Sherbrooke. There were lots of different drugs and never-experienced-before sex at the Hotel Nelson and the scene around the Main. That scene had much of Montreal, and for that matter, much of the spirit of the time packaged neatly within one small area. You could get all the art, romance and trouble you wanted in the

apartments and lofts of the people who lived on and near St. Laurent, near Schwartz's Delicatessen.

This is the "scene" described in *The Rubber Gun*.

The Rubber Gun is a movie made by Stephen Lack, Allan Moyle, Pam Holmes, Pierre Robert and Peter Brawley about themselves in the early seventies. The principals all play themselves; they use their own names. Stephen Lack is an artist. He's Jewish. He's gay. He's a clever and thoughtful and somewhat self-stylized personality. Pam Holmes is a tough but attractive woman in her mid-twenties, the mother of Rainbow, an infant girl who is raised collectively by all the principals. She is the wife of Pierre Robert, a sleazy and pretty little Montreal street kid who hustles dope. He's strung out. He's bisexual, though his wife doesn't find out until the end of the movie. Peter Brawley is a wonderfully typical junkie; his character is soft, he's consumed by the desire to consume. Finally, Allan Moyle is a disarming sociology student who

uses Holmes, Robert, Brawley and especially Lack as the subjects of a research paper.

The group, not including Moyle, works together in the drug business in order to economically sustain itself.

The loosely defined story-line of *Rubber Gun* is, if not literally true, passed off as a record of actual events. Drugs arrive in Montreal and are stashed in a suitcase in a locker at Windsor Station. When the group goes to take possession, they realize the cops are on to them. It's too hot. Deprived of its lifeblood, the group disperses into its individual parts. The movie then deals with the individuals and their relationships with each other and with the scene. Briefly, Brawley keeps looking to get high and denying it. Lack would like to rescue him but, it is clear he's on a one-way street heading toward a dead end. Pierre Robert gives us an entrée into Montréal's demimonde, as he hustles to make money, hustles to avoid being caught and hustles the group into going for the suitcase. His frail features and almost girlish voice contrast poignantly to his life on the streets. Pam Holmes becomes tired of the scene. She's literally burnt out. She recognizes there is no money and not much of a future for her with a junkie husband who can't make love to her but who, at the same time, has been having quick turns with several men, including, perhaps, though not quite clear, the very cop who's out to bust him.

Stephen Lack is the central character of the film. He has more time on screen than all the others combined. It is Lack who understands that the inability of the group to take possession of the cache in the locker means the end of the group and the end of a certain chapter in his life. In a series of conversations with the others, which are really soliloquies, he eulogizes the scene he's already decided to leave and puts it into his art. Moyle, the student, examines the group Lack is leaving as though it is some type of tribe. It is a fault of the movie that he never loses his naiveté despite partaking of the "tribe's" rituals. At one point he is not unwillingly seduced by Stephen Lack.

At the end of *Rubber Gun*, Brawley and Pierre Robert desperately go for the suitcase in the locker and are caught. Pam Holmes is last seen hitch-hiking out of town with Rain-

Courtesy Willhurst Communications

Film

bow. Lack is right. The scene is over.

The Rubber Gun is its testament. A particular culture that existed in a particular place and time is described, and described eloquently. Montreal in the late sixties / early seventies did have a unique feel. It was one of the few cities in North America at that time that didn't try to emulate New York or San Francisco or London. It had its own individual tastes, its own rhythms, its own vitality. The

Lack scene was certainly a part of it. They were unique. They spoke differently. They had a peculiar type of accent that was as recognizable as someone's from Brooklyn or Alabama. They lived differently. They were sophisticated, urbane and materialistic while, at the same time, their homes and their daily routines were structured simplistically, and almost primitively. All of this is captured in *The Rubber Gun*. Another and perhaps much more important thing is captured as

well. The Lack culture was tough. It was hard to live the way they did. Either one survived by learning from it and moving on as Lack did or one becoming, like Brawley and Pierre Robert, its victims. I remember the scene fondly and am very happy Lack and Moyle survived and that Holmes, Brawley and Pierre Robert came back to make the movie. ■

David Rothberg is a stockbroker, filmmaker & scriptwriter living in Toronto.



Rifle in hands, Princess Dior guns down Imam on his own throne.

The Peoples' Princess

CEDDO (OUTSIDERS)

Colour, 16mm film, Senegal, 1977, 120 minutes. Director/Screenplay: Ousmane Sembene. Photography: George Caristan. Music: Manu Dibango reviewed by Isobel Harry

Ceddo is an important film both for understanding elements of local African culture as well as the more universal issue of cultural aggression and domination. A historical drama set in a village in 19th century Senegal, the tiny set consists of villagers' huts in a desert environment, flanked by the hut/chapel of the Christian priest on one side and by the enclosure/mosque of the Imam of the Islamic faith and his followers on the other. The villagers are caught in a crossfire of religious warring that is forcing them to opt for either conversion to one of the religions, or exile.

After the Christian priest and the tribal king are killed, the Imam steps in as new ruler. To 'unify' the tribe the heads of humiliated tribesmen are shaved, prohibitions are listed, and African names changed to Moslem ones like Ibrahim, and Ismael. The families are divided against themselves by the demands of a religion that has invaded. In all cases, there are no options open to the peasants except to conform to the dictatorship. Their role is to be supportive of the regime, in return for which they can live in relative peace and utter subjugation.

The king's daughter, Princess

Dior, is kidnapped by revolutionary peasant forces to protest religious repression, and her confinement to a hammock outside the village radicalizes her. After the death of her suitor, her brother, and the assassination of the king, she is brought back to the village to find everyone in abject submissiveness to the Imam. Taking a rifle, she kills the Imam on his throne as her first gesture, striding amongst the people in fierce reaction to their shaven degradation. This is also her last gesture of the film, which ends at this point. In this way Sembene poses an optimistic future for the action of women in radical thought in African liberation. In captivity, the most the princess could do was react with fear, covering her head with her arms in cowering self-defense. Formerly the most unlikely one to protest, she becomes the new liberator in her recognition of the injustice of domination.

Ceddo is artful in many ways. It is shot with restraint by Georges Caristan and directed with utter simplicity by Ousmane Sembene, who has made five other films in Senegal. The dusty heat and total lack of amenities are well documented. The villagers are weavers and dyers who fabricate flowing vivid robes, and the tribal dress provides the only colour in a sandy landscape. Sembene has achieved visual continuity in this riot of colour by dressing the Christian priest and the Imam in 'white missionary' cassocks. The Moslem followers are forever bleating "Allah, Allah, Allah" as their only response to any situation. The Ceddo (peasants) all carry bundles of kindling on their heads as they cross the screen or line up for the king. The women go down on their knees to proffer water. Actions are repeated and emphasize the outward simplicity of the lives.

Sembene uses 'flashforward' in a startling way as the Christian

Film

priest has a hallucination of a Christianized Africa of the future: the villagers are all consecrated priests and nuns receiving communion at his lavish funeral rites while vigorous, frenzied Afro-Christian drumming and Allelujah-singing is heard. As the only type of 'African' music I heard in school as a child, I was chilled to hear it from the revolutionary African standpoint as the music of cultural defoliation.

The revolutionary peasants are seen as good, honest, proud ancestors who fear the takeover of their ways and their replacement by foreigners' rule. The portrayal of the relentless religious leaders, especially the Imam, illuminates the recent 'religious war' of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran as being of the same 'conversion-mania' nature. African history is thus revealed in a moving way, exposing imperialist notions of divide and conquer,

whether under the guise of religious persecution or tribal dictatorship.

When we learn that almost 90 per cent of Senegal is Moslem, we can admire Sembene's integrity and daring in exposing the mentality that governs his country to this day. The film (which is banned in Senegal) is a metaphoric tale that raises questions of autonomy not only for self-determination but in all areas of a people's social expression. It is a cri-de-coeur of an artist who is himself a product of invasion and manipulation. (Sembene has a part in the film as a tribesman who is given his own name, "Ousmane", by the Imam.) The Africans own nothing, so all the invaders want are their minds, to harness their creative imaginations and culture for their own use, and to ensure dependency. Sembene feels that the true African people have a stronger history of their own which they must unearth

and understand before they passively accept false and foreign gods as their own. His strong affirmation of the determining role of women underlines a resolution to include rather than exclude in revolutionary rebuilding and therefore to smash centuries of superstition, whether induced by the tribes themselves or by invading religions. He shows the Africans' readiness to accept almost any other authority than their own, and exposes a subordinate culture mentality that Sembene repairs in his own work.

This film was shown Sunday May 13 at the Ontario Science Centre in association with a conference held there by the International Development Research Association (Ottawa) on Science and Technology in the Third World. ■

Isobel Harry, photographer, performer and writer, lives in Toronto.

ART monthly

An independent magazine, 40p a copy. 10 issues a year. ART MONTHLY covers the British scene, London and regional events, and international subjects.

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There have been interviews with various contemporary artists and art dealers, articles on the question of Nationalism in Art, the likely effect of devolution on the arts in Scotland, and the present scope of art magazines in the U.K., Europe, the U.S., and Canada.

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Performance

Out of Order

ELIZABETH CHITTY'S "SOCIAL STUDIES"

Performance and videotape at The Western Front, Vancouver, April 1979
reviewed by Hank Bull

Spring comes early to Vancouver. With any luck you can plant spinach early in March. And walking along the beaches of English Bay you'd be surprised at the premature tans, not to mention the elaborate tinfoil sun-catchers and windbreaks. You can watch the wheat boats heading off to China or look up at the mountains and imagine skiers. They seem just beyond eyeshot, barely visible.

Meanwhile on the streets the cops are waging open war against the punks. They tolerate the art bands, new wave bands and no wave bands but bands like DOA and the Subhumans really get their goat. On Friday night a flying wedge of uniformed cops invades the Smilin' Buddha nightclub and drags sixteen innocents out of their seats, into the paddy wagon and off to jail for the night. It's the same old story — the police versus rock 'n' roll. Punk Rules. The story gets front page treatment. Joey Shithead goes on CKVU-TV for fifteen minutes and straightens a few things out. The Pointed Sticks make a clip for the CBC. The new show "Chaos" on Cable 10 is quite hot (with a tip of the video hat to Cable 10's excellent editing facilities).

Into the middle of this, banks blowing up, reactors melting down, arrives Elizabeth Chitty, dancer, writer, performer, to "do a residency" at the Western Front, and thundering in her wake come the Paul Bunyan footsteps of her delightfully greedy boyfriend Hugh, who wants there to be noise at all times and gleefully picks all the shrimp and avocado out of the salad. A real Dennis the Menace, he's worked in tv himself, as a switcher for a commercial station. He tells great stories about putting the wrong show on air or rushing around madly trying to find something to put on after this "paid political announcement"...

AND NOW THE NEWS: Elizabeth worked with Paul Wong and Jane Ellison to produce a performance and a video tape. This was part of a work called *Social Studies* that she had been developing for some time. Everything was done twice, once for the live au-

dience and once again for the cameras. The name of the piece was *Telling Tales*. Both performance and tape made skillful use of prepared and closed-circuit video, (video within video like the story within a story) to switch from theme to theme. Starting from the basic premise that the work would be "about narrative", a collage was constructed out of different kinds of stories and story-telling. The frame of one narrative or monitor would be broken or telescoped by the intrusion of another.

The story opens with Elizabeth

reading a story about a woman writing a story. It develops into an all inclusive fiction about a man, Simon, who goes through an endless series of careers, religions, and entertainments in search of who knows what. We watch her reading the story. We hear her excellent voice. We get good close-ups of the text. This is the beginning, a good place to start the story — with the text. They say history begins when people start to write things down. With history a certain kind of story-telling is borne, and we have the wonderful complex of cross-references between all the names and dates, endlessly rearranged by academics to prove one point or another and all jostled together in Finnigan's Wake as he stumbles into the land of fast forward and instant replay.

photo C.K. Tomczak



Performance

To rewind a bit, just before the performance, Elizabeth confides in me that she wasn't too sure about this one; she didn't feel quite prepared. This meant to me that she was in that wonderful state of insecure suspension, about to fall or perhaps rise in any direction, free to allow any association to emerge, like chaos swirling around itself trying to become atoms. I know from experience that the navigation of this treacherous void is a risky and exciting business that demands a lot from both the performer and the audience. Like stage-fright or audience rioting, this is when theatrical convention changes into something that is very real, a story in the making.

"Use your mistakes," said Larry Dubin about improvising. He also said, "Time is conscious movement through space." In other words there is no such thing as time itself. Now what does that do to your notion of history? When Matisse was asked if he was influenced by Rembrandt he replied that no, Rembrandt was influenced by him. Which is a way of saying that story-telling has as much to do with reading as with writing. T.S. Eliot talked about how every new event changes all the old ones. Glenn Lewis is an artist researching the history of Paradise. He went down to the bottom of the garden, planted his feet firmly on the roots of garden lore and then the ground gave way. Feet first, he's beyond words. This is the realm of pre-history.

Which gets us back to *Telling Tales*. . . A rather brutish face in tortoise shell sunglasses fills the screen as someone soulfully sings "Smile". You know the song, when your life is collapsing all around you, just smile. Then back to our story teller with a list of old wives' tales like "masturbation causes cancer". We see her crossing out the text as she reads. Flip through a few pages to a store window view of boring Queen Street. A series of unsavoury characters parades by looking through the window at us with sneering remarks like "You'd look good with your balls nailed to a DOOR." Then we get four or five seconds of a couple making out on a couch with Three Mile Island on the tv. Then shots of Elizabeth setting up video equipment. What kind of story is this? Documentary? Surveillance? In terms of the history of video, it exists somewhere between so-called "narrative" video — stories, dramas, fictions — "structural" or conceptual



Social Studies

video with its analytical insights into the nature of the world and art, and "documentary" video, long denigrated as "after the fact", useful merely as a record. *Tales* is all and none of these. In fact, these descriptions are obsolete.

How is video different now than it was two years ago? There is more colour, more editing, more entertainment, more political comment and more of it. A lot more. The 1979 Canadian Video Open will be swamped with entries. There is an increased awareness now of the syntax of video, that it is a language not to be dealt with in traditional literary or art history terms but in its own terms, the terms of information, culture, networking, and picture language. It is a post-modern reflex, post-historical.

So let's go back, back to the story. Back in the story to before history. Oral history. The story-teller yawns and prepares to tell the memorized epic. Enter Elizabeth onto a disco stage, and here's the post-historical touch: She doesn't tell us herself but rather falls into lip sync with Gloria Gaynor's hit tune "I Will Survive," in gold lamé pants and black t-shirt. "I will survive" with warlike glance and impeccable movements. "I will survive" as the eccentric video switcher surrenders an impressive collage of dayglow effects. "I will survive" in the words of Jeff Nuttall,

"painting masterpieces on top of a bus on a diet of stale bread and weak tea." This scene always brings a tear to my eye. I think it's a combination of the sentimental lyrics and the alienating lip sync. The lip sync is a trap. It pins us where we are, between the word spoken, the word written and the word recorded. Give up. The song sings itself. We just mouth the words.

I enjoyed the performance totally. I loved the unsuccessful search for an impeccable purpose, which is more than can be said for many who were there. People said it didn't hang together. The story fell apart in a series of short circuits, loose ends and disconnected vignettes that never really got "into" anything. Maybe she'll pull it together on the tape, they hoped. I wondered.

The video tape was finished the night before Elizabeth and Hugh were to fly back to Toronto. And as they did leave Hugh whined that he didn't want to go. The whine became a sob and by the time the cab came it was the full fledged wail of a complete brat. But to return to the night before, as soon as the tape was finished, phone calls were made and a crowd gathered for a spontaneous viewing. We saw basically the same show with a few additions. There was a long gossip phone call about phone calls "... but then she said it was an unlisted number," a twentieth century history quiz

Performance

and some great coverage of Elizabeth's hands dancing through a box of file cards; bright blue and making nasty loud scratching noises on a piece of sandpaper; masturbating in the hallway; and by way of inversion, aiming a camera at her high-heeled foot as it flipped through a magazine. Post-modern dance. All of which further left the impression of a book hastily flipped through backwards. People still thought it didn't work.

But whether the story was a good one seemed unimportant. The interesting thing was the idea behind it.

Just as the boring parade of text book history is not as interesting as the model of the world beneath it. Just as the interesting thing about tv is not the story it's telling; we've heard it all before. Like the pygmy's yarn which delights its audience again and again, our landscape of media images delights us for invisible reasons, the music of it, the dance, the articulation, and especially with mass media, the endless series of coincidences, the marvellously unintended correspondences that happen between the ads and the shows, between the reruns and the re-

plays, and the conversation in the room, like when you switch channels and the new channel fits perfectly to the old. This of course is dream story. They say it's only when you wake up that the images string themselves together into a narrative. One should note here that the word chaos is Greek for yawn, as if to suggest that the cosmos was created at the edge of sleep, or perhaps out of boredom. ■

Hank Bull is an artist, performer, musician and writer. He is living in Vancouver.

Think Crazy

PERFORMANCE BY MAREK KONIECZNY
A report by Monika Szwajewska

Warsaw, Poland.

photos Marek Konieczny



an artist. This uncanny contrast among the elements of the performance (the cusp of the pyramid against his cue-ball head) was crazy in itself.

"Millions of Pyramids" consisted of three parts: *Stability*, *Thought*, *Craziness*. First, the audience found the *Stability* and shortly thereafter the *Thought*. The golden cusp touching the artist's temple, as if piercing his mind — as if the gold metal was coming out of his head, spreading to its full three metre length — in space, in time, in *Thought*. This silent concentration and tension was suddenly and unexpectedly broken by extraordinary expression — extravagant and destructive — *Craziness*.

It was an unusual experience for the guests participating in the artist's

The artist himself was something unusual and extraordinary that evening.



In a space (Gallery Studio) I attended a 'meeting' with Marek Konieczny. I call it a 'meeting' because it cannot be defined as an exposition in the traditional sense of the word. The occasion was the artist's performance, "Millions of Pyramids". This performance was part of the evening's 'meeting'. Konieczny titled the whole 'meeting' "Think Crazy".

The artist himself was something unusual and extraordinary that evening. In a dress coat, skin-headed with one foot bare, Konieczny was concentrated and intense. The golden cusp of an elongated pyramid was the artist's attribute. This object pointed him out

Performance

soirée. Ideas and experiences are the main value of Marek Konieczny's art. In Konieczny's art, experience is of a very specific kind. He moves in the unknown as if he knows everything. Under the cover of his rationalism lies craziness. The idea is *Craziness* itself.

"Think Crazy" is not unlike the majority of Marek Konieczny's artworks. Some titles of his other works include "Self Portrait 1672-1974", "24012008", "Concert for a Dog", "Orion's Sickle", and "Dialogue with a Pyramid".

Two weeks after the first 'meeting' of "Think Crazy", the artist proposed a continuance of the opening evening. The elongated golden pyramid hung in the space by itself for two

weeks. The performance that had taken place two weeks before was reproduced, this time backwards from the end — from *Craziness* through the concentration of *Thought* to the peacefulness of *Stability*. It was as if it was a video playback of the performance reversed, but watched by us live. The attributes remained the same, but the artist's activity was different.

"Think Crazy" affects the imagination, making the audience more flexible, their thinking less restrained. As Konieczny sees it, crazy thought gives us a chance for self-realization. Man gets an opportunity to free himself from the patterns to which he has grown accustomed. The psychological field for experimentation is in the

artist himself. The experiments come from the inside as well as they question the inside. The activity results from self-manipulation and deep speculation. He supplies the audience with impulse, expanding their consciousness or even creating it by acting unusually. It is important here to cite the artist himself. Konieczny said, "it is not important to submit to all levels of craziness or insanity, but it should be possible to expand our reasoning by becoming aware of the uncontrolled regions of our mind, thus involving the whole sphere of our reasoning and enriching ourselves by doing so." Marek Konieczny invites us to all "Think Crazy". ■

Monika Szwajewska is a writer and critic living in Warsaw, Poland.

Video

Colonialist Chic or Radical Cheek?

MESSAGE TO CHINA

A videotape by Susan Britton, 22 minutes, colour, 1979

A Western Front Production

reviewed by Karl Beveridge

Political art is becoming fashionable, and so it should. Curiously, any art that has something to say is now considered 'political', which only attests to the perversity of our social dialogue. Of course there's politics and there's politics.

Susan Britton makes 'political art'. I recently saw one of her video tapes, *Me\$\$age to China* (1979). We begin with Britton made-up traditional Chinese-like, toying with a fan, and a sound track of her voice stumbling through a contemporary Chinese political slogan. Past and present, a woman oppressed, no subtlety here. Both alien, both authoritarian. Nothing changes. The second to last shot is that of Teng Hsiao-Ping looking mildly disgusted while a punk band tuning-up is heard on the sound track. No aspiring punk rockers in China. This sequence is clinched with the one liner, "The dialectic moves in mysterious ways, China has invaded Vietnam." The inscrutable East, nothing changes. In between are various sequences; advertizing (cosmetics), cameos of terrorists, Teng in Washington (with Nixon), the theme song "Hello China" played as a beer commercial, etc. etc...

One thing for sure is that Britton is disillusioned. Her idealism got rack-

ed up somewhere along the line. But the idealism that once informed a political involvement is the same that now informs her anti-political hysteria. The image is that of a bright, lively, middle-class woman unable to distinguish between the meaning of 'the working class must organize itself' on the one hand, and 'magnum ale is a new taste experience' on the other. That both are structurally similar statements tells us little. To say that advertizing trivializes everyday life, and that political dogma trivializes real oppression would have been more to the point, but less poetic. After all, any statement of commitment is propaganda (thus authority). 'Real' poetry is the refusal of history.

The issue of authority is a real one. But without recognizing the determining role of economic organization on social relations, that is the alignment of social classes (which serious anarchism does recognize). Authority is reduced to a question of psychological perversion or 'power'. (The relative ideological impact, for example, of a heavily funded advertizing industry, and an impoverished, marginal left terrorism is of little concern to Britton, as is the media consumption of terrorism itself. As for

the Chinese, Britton presents nothing of the context from which her statements originate. In fact, her relation to this material smacks of a colonialist attitude — the 'mysterious orient'). Most 'anti-authoritarians' consider themselves 'humanists'. Clearly it is more human to see people as performing socially conditioned roles, than as social/psychological deviants. Fascism, rather than being a specific form of political-economic organization, is seen as a natural condition of life. (The conclusion of which is the inevitable destruction of life itself — see a review of Britton's "Tutti Quanti" in *Centerfold*, Feb./March 1979.) Interestingly, this rejection of any social-economic organization is seen as a poetic description of the 'human dilemma'. In reality it is the romantic individualist's rejection of the collective nature of existence. Ironically, this romantic individualism, a product of middle class idealism, when pushed against the wall forms the ideological basis for that which is ostensibly opposes, fascism. *The punk sensibility treads a very thin line.*

Susan Britton's confusions would be of little concern were they not formally wrapped in political phraseology. As such they need to be answered politically. What could constitute an informed analysis of political language and practice becomes an adolescent rejection of rational thought. But of more importance is the question of who these tapes are made for. I mean, who would be delighted to hear we're all pseudo-fascists at heart? Not the Chinese anyway. ■

Spaces



"Untitled group performance" organized by Jorge Lozano (above).

photo Jean Wai

Initial Response

EVENT 1 — PERFORMANCE AND VIDEO AT TPS

May 17, 1979, Toronto

reviewed by John Greyson

No longer a church, 124 Lisgar doesn't have any stained glass, and there aren't any icons left, except the shell of the architecture and the front steps which speak of Sunday morning. Thursday evening (May 17th) there wasn't a service but an event, *EVENT 1*, which performed a double function: the launching of a bi-weekly series of events and the opening of the Television Production Studio.

There was cheese and raisin rye, and a morality squad officer showed up at eight because that's what the posters said, and he left because no one was there. Lily Eng's videotape 'Defending the Motherland' started at nine. A documentation of a performance: she exercised for eighteen minutes: she was eight and a half months pregnant. Her movements were brisk, at times regimental. The camera kept its distance, playing observer to the strict discipline displayed in the honing of a physique. The exercises seemed to center on the strains involved in the rounded stomach, until a subtle relationship grew between the mother and the unborn child. Every action became a message for the baby, in some ways a challenge to the growing bulge, proof that

pregnancy would not hamper the trained body and habits of Lily. Then, a switch: the actions were a sign of strength and work, a pact promising the child all the work and strength she can give him or her. She talked at times, her sentences were casual, a duality developed between her relaxed speech and the strenuous training. Certainly I wondered if the exercises would hurt the child. Defending the motherland by challenging the clichés of motherhood — every movement a denial of the traditional passive role of pregnant women waiting nine months for deliverance.

The tape was edited at the Television Production Studio, which is a non-profit organization under the umbrella of the Kensington Artists Association. Its founders, Brian Blair, Paul Doucet (who acted as Master of Ceremonies Thursday) and Saul Goldman, originated the idea of a commercial studio supporting an artists' space when the CEAC was still in the Whalers Wharf building last winter. They bought the Lisgar Church and moved in three months ago. The television studio in the basement was the first thing they built — it is spacious, tailored on professional standards, and stocked with the CEAC's equipment.

It operates as a commercial production studio, doing work for businesses and corporations like training programs, conferences, and the marketing of products on cassettes. Their prices are very low for the facilities offered, and the success they've met with already promises an expansive future.

Brian Blair and Paul Doucet make it clear that the first concern of the TPS is to keep the space and the equipment alive and available for artists. The studio has reduced the need for grants, and the paper work and headaches they involve. Paul is in charge of the commercial side of the TPS, while Brian and Saul act both as coordinators and technicians. Now that the studio is in operation they are turning their energies to the rest of the basement, which will soon include a darkroom, a graphics studio, and a separate editing facility (right now it is in the TV studio). If potential can be measured by the amount of space, certainly the TPS has potential.

Between floors is a small room that will one day be a viewing area and archive for artists' tapes. On Thursday it housed an installation by Brian Blair: two monitors mounted on stands, facing each other with the same tape playing on both, a pan of a black and white suburban landscape, mass-produced foliage. Slowed to the search function on the editing system, the dual image became hypnotic in the darkened room: standing between the monitors and the double landscape clamped you into the slow progression, frame by frame you were moved. The electronic track of monotonous sound caused oppression; not many people stayed long, for the room assumed the atmosphere of an alien train.

After Lily Eng's tape came Joanne Deanes' "Esthesis", a short piece involving the technical manipulation of a girl's head. The girl was used as a 'composition' to distort the image, the manipulation turned her into a piece of electricity being explored. A strange sense of non-presence. "L.P." by Susan Mackay followed, which was similar — the non-presence was achieved by filming a group of naked people milling in a room, cut by the camera from neck to crotch. Her tape was worked on in part at OCA and edited at the TPS, and certainly the connection is there. Some of the equipment used Thursday

was from OCA, and both Saul Goldman and Brian Blair will be teaching there next year. However, the TPS is not another 'annex'; its membership draws from all over, and is open to anyone. The annual fee for artists is \$25 and then nominal booking fees for accessing the equipment (studio time: \$10 a day). At present there are about 25 members but they expect this to grow.

Peter Dudar's film "Dogs of Dance" was next, comprised of two segments of martial arts interspersed with long quotes from Mao and other sources in red and black ink. The flow of the piece became meditative, and since the statements were presented without trimming or propagandic techniques they had to be digested on their own terms. The relationship of dance to fighting: one segment had a man and woman fighting, the other had three men. In the first was an inescapable sense of competition, and a consciousness of who was losing, because when there are two, there is a winner and a loser. In the second, that factor was removed: it was a cooperative effort, the roles and rules constantly shifted because there were three, and the opponent one minute was the partner the next — the different possibilities of two on one. Like sex.

At present the TPS (strange how accessible initials are, it becomes part of the role call: YYZ, ACT, AM, GI, OCA, OAC, TFT. . .) as an artists' outlet has bi-weekly events on the slate. Future plans include intensive orientation workshops with their video equipment, conducted sometime this summer by Saul Goldman, as well as in-house artist production. Any graphic jobs that come up will go to members: the emphasis here is on support of the space, no profit. Same with the commercial studio. Paul Doucet believes implicitly in a self-supporting system. "It means we don't have to answer to anyone but ourselves." He feels very positive about the commercial work coming out of the studio, saying it is some of the most interesting work he's done. The TPS works with each company, and the emerging project is a collaboration that both sides feel good about. It's a question of idealism with a solid base in reality, and compromises don't exist, they're a matter of attitude. He points out the factors that made the studio possible in the first place — the major one being that the equipment was available

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and paid for; without it 124 Lisgar would not exist.

Jorge Lozano was a major force behind organizing *EVENT 1* — his group performance followed the intermission. The upstairs hall where we were sitting, the church area, is like a school auditorium, and it was used, all, literally. Overhead projector shooting statements onto the ceiling; four monitors spaced around the walls; super 8 film on the stage screen; two ladders with a sheet suspended between at the back of the room, for slides and a shadow show; wall to wall tech. Eight performers: Susan Mackay, Robin Cass, D. Martinovic, Katherine Thornley, Debra Carter, Patti Wilson, Bob Williams, Jorge Black. Girl on ladder with the Bee Gees in cassette recorder strapped to leg, dust mask on face and flashlight. Super 8 starts super slow, transit in city, and boy wanders in front of screen. Boy is asleep on mattress on stage. Boy sits in middle of room, girl in bathing suit and rain coat starts to cut hair. No, first there were slides on the sheet. Video tape. Every so often there's something new to read on the ceiling. Bee Gees girl descends, begins to crawl over the audience, passing out notes and caresses. Man rushes about like a butcher giving miscellaneous directions. Behind sheet light ignites, shadow of girl writing on her body. On two monitors close ups of her and her body words. Hair cut, chair cut; the chair legs are sawed off. The illusion of tight choreography created by the assurance and spontaneity of the eight. Photographer everywhere. When there are so many signals of every type you can relax, because you are allowed to

miss things. This outline is incomplete, of course. The pyjama boy wakes, "the Present" he calls, he opens a parcel, walks to centre of room, fragile bird wing shoulders, sets down, opens the box, a music box and walks away, music goes until it stops.

Without a title the performance was about the potential of everything. Its success lay in its overwhelming abundance of stimuli; interpretation of the elements just doesn't work. It was loose in the best possible sense — the details, substance, and aims of the piece were all very clear in the performers' minds, they were acting from a very definite direction, that allowed for freedom, for fun. The audience was under no compunction to decipher that direction, (though we tried), for that sort of process became meaningless. A deluge on the senses, like a waterfall, and you don't analyze a waterfall from an objective point of view.

The performance bestowed a certain magic on the hall, using all six surfaces and most of the space in between. The potential was in the individual reactions, the varying degrees of involvement each had with them while there, the potential of the space explored. The space was the TPS. Paul Doucet talks of a satellite dish, and an artists' broadcasting station, without flippancy. A church it is no more. ■

John Greyson, Toronto, is an artist & performer & author of "Red Mittens".

To the audience

TAPES AND PERFORMANCE

at YYZ, Toronto, April 26, 1979

reviewed by Lisa Steele

The tapes were short. Not overwhelmingly so. Not like Bill Wegman in his heyday when Man Ray was playing the dog so well. But they were short. In fact, all the piece — videotapes, sound tapes and the performance — were brief. Brief and entertaining. The whole evening, the first in a planned summer series of weekly events for YYZ, was well orchestrated and "audience-oriented". We put our feet up, metaphorically, and watched some TV. Elizabeth MacKenzie mastered the ceremonies, pacing us through the 8 mini-events, introducing the artists who introduced their work. Intermissions eased in and out as effortlessly as commercial breaks.

"Hair cut, chair cut . . ."



photos Jean Wai



"Reality is Black and White but my Dreams are Made of Color" a tape by Brian Blair.

Some of the pieces presented that evening were: Brian Blair's "Reality is Black and White but My Dreams are Made of Color" video-viewed Iran in crisis. Intercutting this color, off-air footage with tranquil black and white Toronto was not so much an overt political statement as it was a comment on the distancing effect of media focus. Random views of (I assume) Queen Street move back and back and back again and boy do we look dull here in northern North America. Reality is placid, on the verge of coma. Six lanes of traffic, three moving in either direction, crest a viaduct in an unending cortage. The post-hypnotic work force — never a change of lane, never a smash-up here in Canada. In TV Iran, however, a revolution is a dream. Equally random views of Tehran are made 'meaningful' through pin-point news coverage techniques: on-the-spot reporter plus 60-second slot plus character generated title equal 'EVENT'. You were there, if only in your media sleep. Color versus black and white? I suspect it's the difference between being a hot spot and a human interest story. The tape is curiously ambivalent. TV about the effects of TV, with no bow to the seduction of its own power.

Robyn and Nadine are girlfriends, in the classic sense. They take a summer trip together in the car Robyn's father gives her while they are all sitting in MacDonald's having a Big Mac ("It's right outside, Robyn. Here's the keys", says Dad). Elizabeth MacKenzie's videotape of the two, "Robyn and Nadine" is a tale well-told, not only by the narrators but by

the camera. Using a gimmick to its best advantage, MacKenzie superimposes the two women's torsos over one another. We see them relating their summer's adventures in tandem, at times four hands gesturing from a single body. Their tale is picaresque in form, with the video and audio fading out mid-sentence and fading in again at a later point in the story. The summer strings together day upon day. The stories break upon the surface of the narrative, detail after detail. Some are hilarious. They get a job on a migrant farm picking roots that turn out to be huge and unidentifiable. All the locals from the town come out in cars to look at the "two girls" that the boss has managed to con into doing back-breaking work. They become sort of feminist curiosities. An experience that would have undoubtedly been a nightmare for either of them individually, becomes a bond because they went through it together. MacKenzie lets the two companions reveal their friendship through their stories. It is a revelation we are not used to as viewers. Men are the more traditional storytellers in our experience of media. Robyn and Nadine could change that pattern.

George Lozano's tape has three characters: one man who is a victim and two men who are aggressors. But it isn't quite that simple. The tape opens with the victim (who may be a suspect under interrogation — but that isn't clear) sitting in front of a blurry background, facing but not looking into the camera. His face is odd, his expression quizzical. He's the character in the comic-strip who always has a question mark drawn in

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above his head. He's a geek. He is disoriented. It's going over his head, literally in this case, because in back of him are two men, pacing, but he seems unaware of them. While his face is in high-relief, strongly lit from the front, the two men in the rear are dematerializing in their motion. As they pace, their heads stream out behind them like high-altitude jet trails in a clear sky. The man sitting in the chair doesn't seem to be all there. I feel bad for him. I know they're going to give it to him. They do. The two men rough him up, push him out of his chair, threaten him. The sound track is loud and abusive. As the tape progresses, the 'special effect' of the streaming heads is explained visually. The man in the chair is, in fact, sitting in front of a large video projection screen. The 'streaming' is a peculiarity of high contrast video where the highlights 'bleed' when there is motion. The scale of the small real-life people in front of the big video bodies is suitably menacing — a backdrop for threatened violence. Lozano's tape is more of a mood piece than a narrative. The violence doesn't seem to have a cause but it does have a presence.

Katherine Thornley's performance was touch and go for the first minute. She'd snap her fingers, get the tempo all geared up, undulate a couple of steps forward to the chant of "I think . . . I think . . ." and then lose it. Her face would register an oh-darn-it expression and back she would go to the wall and start again. In 60 seconds she had the audience in a nervous sweat. Finally the movements took hold and she was able to move away from the wall. Picking her way through the crowd, her body movements a hybrid of the cha-cha and the tango, her chant is cleverly metamorphosed from "I think . . . I think this is out of habit . . . out of habit" to "this habit . . . this habit is out of control". And still she would lose the rhythm, have to stop and start again. There was a controlled fallibility about the performance — which is not to say it was manufactured but definitely controlled. Thornley obviously is aware that the audience wants to surrender to the performer, even an "art" audience. And that cannot happen unless the performer is believable. By showing the audience so clearly the difference between when her performance was 'working' and when it wasn't, she made that surrender a cooperative event.

Exhibitions

17 Photos/24 Drawings

C.K. TOMCZAK AND JOHN MITCHELL
Pumps, Vancouver, April 10 — April 28, 1979
reviewed by Monica Holden-Lawrence

April 10, 1979. I missed the opening.

April 28, 1979, I went to the closing. C. K. Tomczak and John Mitchell were coming off the walls. Rumour loved their exhibition. I had to see it.

I shined my glasses, loaded my Lloyd's Cassette Recorder, bought some fresh white paper and a new pen. I cast myself as late perceiver, slow receiver, last believer and arrived at Pumps. Unabashed, I skirted an item of local colour who had bedded his body on a comfortable piece of pavement and pillowed his head with an empty bottle of Slinger's Zip.

I should mention that Pumps, 40 E. Cordova, is peripheral to both Gastown and skid row. Tourists buy their "art" in Gastown, hide their wallets, lock their car doors, cover their children's eyes and streak past Pumps to the next attraction in the Esso sight-seers' manual.

I stepped into the gallery and was struck by faces. Many of them were familiar. All of them were strong and disconcertingly real. If they hadn't been black and white, I would have approached a friend among them and asked, "Where's the show?"

Slowly, coincidence began to gel. These were photographs by C. K. (Kim) Tomczak. I knew the experience. Two weeks ago Kim took my picture to xerox for posters advertising my reading at Pumps on May 27.

His big black camera is Ominous. (Kim won't talk trade names, but it is not one of your \$14.95 Kodak Instamatics.) This camera sported a villainous black cape that cloaked Kim's head and shoulders while he focused on my head and shoulders — all upside down. I was cool. But then he turned on the Flood light. It was Hell. Remember the nearly successful prison escape where you were almost over the wall, and then they turned on the Flood light?

I forgot where I was going. I didn't know how I looked. I lost my voice and surrendered my image to my

friend, Kim. I wanted to confess everything because I wanted to survive. I glared through the glare in defiant self-defense. Snap shot. But, I survived.

These faces/people in the gallery were also survivors: Susan Britton, D. Ann Taylor, Dalibar Martinis, Bobbe Besold, Ed Bovd, Paul Wong, Sandra Janz, John F. Anderson.



Self portrait of C.K. Tomczak.

Michael Hollingsworth, John Mitchell, Jean Brisson, Hank Bull, Elizabeth Chitty, Sanja Ivekovic, Marie Declaw, Andy Paterson and C. K. Tomczak.

Their 16 x 20" frames lined a hand-rollered band of jagged grey that interrupted an otherwise white wall. Seventeen distinctively different personalities seemed united in confluent and confederate grey. They dressed two of the gallery walls with inscrutable aplomb. Their names did not title the pictures per se, but were listed near the entrance in consecutive but counter-clockwise order. This, Kim told me later, was a deliberate plan to promote circulation around the gallery. It was backwards, in much the same way that Kim's initial focus was upside down.

Rapt in Kim's work, I was very aware of another presence. This

was, lest we forget, a two man show. I was subconscious of 24 Drawings by John Mitchell on the third and last wall. One glance roused my childhood prairie-preference for basic blue-and-white. I refused to admit or indulge my own subjective nostalgia. But, Mitchell's drawings clearly invited investigation. When I concentrated on specific features of Tomczak's photo-study, I realized that Mitchell's colours coordinated both shows.

D. Ann Taylor, wet and wondering, reflected a albumen 'white' in the corner of the eye. Minor-harmony 'blue' veined Hank Bull's upper lids, for example.

Now, Kim was photographing his photographs before they all came down. Different camera. Natural light. My turn. I casually flicked my cassette on.

MHL: How does it feel? Is it over? Is it done?

CKT: It feels a bit undone, actually. . .

MHL: Does it? What don't you like about it?

CKT: I don't think it's a clear enough statement of the fact that I wasn't making a 'statement'. These aren't portraits of people. They're myths about the people.

MHL: But, they're not lies. . .

CKT: No. I believe that each one of them is a truth about that person.

MHL: What inspired these photographs?

CKT: Initially, Dalibar Martinis wanted a poster for his show here on Oct. 17, '78. He posed for some polaroids, picked one and I enlarged it to 8 x 10" . . . made his poster.

MHL: So, Dalibar got the show rolling.

CKT: Yes. All of them were designed for xeroxes. That's why they're all high-contrast.

MHL: But, people are supposed to stand still in photographs, right?

CKT: Mhmm.

MHL: Well, I notice that Susan Britton, who isn't still for a moment anyway, is active in your shot.

CKT: Yes, she's out of focus, isn't she?

MHL: Yeah, but I think that's true, don't you? I mean it works. Hank Bull is a little foggy, too. But, he tells me that's exactly how he was feeling that night.

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CKT: I really should wear my glasses. In the words of Dave Larson, "It's a 20/20 world", and I'm not... I don't have 20/20 vision. So, these pics may be wrong technically, but they're all the way they're supposed to be.

MHL: What do you mean?

CKT: After I'd blown a couple of them up, they looked so different from anything I'd done before. There was a surprising pen and ink quality about them. Drawings, or something. I realized the possibilities of unlimited interpretation. Ink-blot perspective.

MHL: What's the general consensus about this hanging? How is it being received?

CKT: Well, my friends like it and they're the subject-matter of the show, so...

MHL: What determined that Susan Britton is situated next to D. Ann Taylor, who is next to Dalibar Martinis, who is next to Bobbe Besold, etc.? Did personalities decide their position? or...

CKT: Strictly design. I hung the show one night, at random. I had never seen them all together before. Hank was playing piano in the background. We were feeling pretty good. I just stuck them up, and it didn't work. Some of the faces were jumping out at you; others receding. None of the personalities came through at all. It was a design problem that no arbitrary mathematical process would resolve. I found myself placing characters in a complimentary order for individual impact.

MHL: Well, you did it.

CKT: I wonder if people in social situations consciously stand beside people that flatter the way they look. (Of course we laughed.) I think these are all very important personalities. They are people who have merged and survived. They are strong, intelligent and attractive in every sense.

MHL: For the past three weeks these people have had Pumps, Vancouver and C. K. Tomczak in common. But, I wonder if they ever knew they would have one another in common.

CKT: I doubt it. Michael Hollingsworth, for example. He has no relationship to most of these people at all. He's definitely his own person. He doesn't exist with other people. The only relationship he has to these people is my... (My cassette stopped. We didn't say a word while I turned it over.)

You know, a friend of mine went

to some hearing last night about some building they're going to tear down. While the cameras were on, the politicians were all arguing furiously. When the cameras were switched off, they were instantly asking each other how they were doing, if they needed rides home... They were all pals. (We talked around the political performance art platform and back into Kim's show.) I've been doing everybody else's work for the past three years; curating, initiating programs. I never really got to say exactly what I mean. Now, with no funding or government grant commitment to fulfill, I feel that this show is exactly what I mean. Because it was in a gallery that I sort of built, I didn't have to kiss ass

photo C.K. Tomczak



Minimal draftsman John Mitchell.

to get the show. I wanted to express the fact that on some potentially historical plane, I know these people.

MHL: Done.

CKT: Maybe. It feels good. But, if people think these are portraits, it's undone. You know you can walk up to a person and have a portrait in about two minutes. These aren't like that. I am presenting something about each of these people that was revealed to me under very awkward conditions. The situation of taking these pictures was not candid. It was prepared. And each subject chose his own moment of execution. The camera/light confrontation was not comfortable.

MHL: It was brutal.

CKT: Yes, it's brutal. Expressions of self-confidence exaggerated. I loved it. High-contrast needs that. But it's a bit much for someone to stand there and have me make them

up, spray their hair, angle their chin...

MHL: Yes, quite 19th century.

CKT: There was that element of gruelling physical reality. I couldn't ask anyone to do that unless I was confident that they wouldn't mind. I mean if someone did that to me, I would be quite... I would find it... But, I don't feel I have exploited my friends. Instead, I am exposing myself. If this isn't pure expression, I'll never be able to do one.

Then, Kim invited criticism and I lost my voice again. So, I asked him if he was a chauvinist. Kim liked the question and said he probably would be because men are horrible, but women won't have any of it. He knows a few women that keep him in line. He asked me if I'd noticed that there were more men in his show than women. I hadn't. Seventeen isn't an even number, anyway. I really didn't think it mattered. There was only one Oriental in the show, come to think of it. I don't think that's the issue, either.

I was satisfied. Did Kim have anything to add? "Yes," he said. "It was wonderful showing with John Mitchell."

Now, 24 Drawings had my undivided attention. I stood in flirtatiously intimate proximity to John Mitchell's proposal, that I might trace the delicate penmanship of his geometric designs and read the titles beneath them.

These were human blue-prints. Mitchell had coupled the cold and esoteric formulae of eccentric engineer/architect with English sub-titles for the inquisitive and naive. Note: "Bridge over perfect water."

I was delighted. I took off my glasses, stacked my papers, tucked my writer's case and recorder in a corner off tonight's dinner dance-floor. John Mitchell caught me with my props down.

"Hi, John," I said, and fumbled back into costume. "I was hoping to talk to you."

John recapped the fundamentals of the blue-print process for me. So simple, so rudimentary... that I had forgotten. Blue-prints are designed for secrecy. They are technically hard to reproduce. They connote something which needs to be built.

Mitchell developed the drawings from a code that is best transmitted via the already coded blue-print medium. The laws that govern John Mitchell's coding device are systematically arranged in a series of 24

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(two rows of twelve) for easy reference. These function in serial progression, one to another, and are thus interrelated. The viewing audience is challenged to break the code.

J.M. might have made it easier for us, he said, if he had put 36 Drawings on display. There are after all, 10 numbers in the decimal system and 26 letters in the alphabet. Nevertheless, according to J.M., "the complexity of the code is only equal to the information related". That information, or the "secret message", is still

forthcoming.

John Mitchell's draughtsmanship is deceptively simple. Not to be confused with (but, definitely associated with) child's play. Meticulous precision nurses his innocent prodigy. The artist considers his experiment an exercise in abstract pedophilia. He points to his geometrically virginal parody of the traditional: "The Kiss".

John Mitchell will further explore the isometrics of perspective. Sensitive assembly towards mass production is his immediate concern.

Both C. K. Tomczak and John Mitchell will publish catalogues of this exhibition in affiliation with Pumps Books, within the month. John Mitchell has already printed an original and limited edition of 50.

April 10, 1979, I missed the opening.

I have since recovered. I never see the walls at an opening, anyway. ■

Monica Holden-Laurence is a prose writer living in Vancouver.

"Maybe Wendy's Right"

CAROLE CONDE AND KARL BEVERIDGE

Carmen Lammana Gallery, Toronto, April 21 - May 10, 1979

reviewed by Tim Guest

photos Conde/Beveridge



From installation - 2nd & 4th photo of 15 photo series, 17 x 22".

The problem with political art is that too often it comes across as a combination of naive politics and bad art. The idea is that two avant-gardes unite in a common interest, for a politic which entertains an aesthetic and an art which is "socially responsible" - a great formula if only the world was less complicated. Too often political artists offer work which is simplistic, pompous, and uncritical of its own excesses. And the latest unfortunate example is an exhibition by Karl Beveridge and Carol Conde which showed last month at the Carmen Lamanna Gallery.

The show consisted of fifteen sequential photographs with short captions, illustrating a political drama in soap opera/cartoon format. The plot revolves around a small suburban home, Dad works at the steel plant, Mum worries about the grocery bills, daughter Wendy has been listening in on the party-line. She's studying marxism-leninism and what with the lay-offs at the plant and those rising prices, Dad and Mum both wonder, "Maybe Wendy's right". It's a very obvious message, so obvious my initial reaction was to think I wasn't catching the irony behind the dumb allegory. But a careful reading proved there was really nothing written between the lines. I won't mention here the aesthetic failures (like for instance the crooked letraset), what I found most objectionable was the politics of the show.

First of all, this cut-and-dried narrative is an attempt to expose the basic daily contradictions of a working class family, but with the incredible omission that the structure of the nuclear family itself is never drawn into question. Secondly, although Conde and Beveridge try hard to personalize their figures, to the extent of casting themselves in the leading roles (stretch

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wig, etc.), they are never more than cartoon people with cartoon problems. And this reflects, not so much on the contradictions of capitalism, as on the failure of the Left to address those contradictions effectively, in human terms.

It all reeks of so much condescension, appealing to the lowest-common-denominator with watered-down rhetoric, reducing political conflict to a moral tale. In the Beveridge-Condé allegory, working people are the uninspired victims, just normal people . . . ordinary folks. The artists identify with their characters but only as external beings. And like most of the Left in Canada they view the 'working class' quite abstractly, with just so much repressed envy and middle class guilt. Which produces, at least, some remarkable inversions like the sensational glamour of industrial accidents or economic crisis as melodrama. But all things considered it's a moral dirge, without any real understanding of the dynamics, the dialectics of social change.

That said, *who* is the show aimed at? Certainly a work which carries such a heavy message, which tries so hard to be effective, certainly Beveridge and Condé must have a specific audience in mind. It's not trade unionists after all. Carmen Lamanna's is not what you would call a workers' little hive. It's not the Left, that would be preaching to the converted. It must be the 'avant-garde', which I suppose means Toronto artists — which is hardly a cohesive social group. Finally, I don't think the exhibition says anything new to anyone. Rather, it simply re-states basic ideas and shakes the finger.

The paradox here is that despite its naivety, their work is overly theoretical, in a manner which is abstract and moralistic instead of illuminating. I wouldn't say this is always true of 'political art': take for a good example a contemporary feminist artist like Martha Rosler, or historically, the constructivist experiments in the 1920's. I wouldn't say either that Beveridge and Condé are unintelli-

gent artists: it's a poor show because I think they're barking up the wrong tree.

I might speculate their involvement in left politics is not critical enough, especially now, as the "new left" fast becomes just like the old left: conservatized, locked into debate, and sterile. This exhibition is self-conscious propaganda taken from an over-specialized and isolated rhetoric, and here, socialist realism and the fake spirit of 'proletarian culture' is too close for comfort. Maybe next time they should try articulating their own reality instead of someone else's . . . or starting with their own experiences moving outwards, instead of assuming generalities. Political art implies a synthesis which doesn't come from wishful thinking, the best intentions, or even the correct line. Rather I suggest, in the right context it comes quite naturally, almost intuitively . . . just like being in touch. ■

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

Publications

Tribal Expressionism?

13 CAMERAS VANCOUVER
Black and white photographs, size: 9" x 12", 240 pages, 1979.
Paper \$19.79
reviewed by Isobel Harry

The National Film Board of Canada bought an entire photography show that hung in the Vancouver Art Gallery last year. The show consisted of 16 photographs by each of 13 photographers, who were paid \$100 for each of them. The photographers re-invested the total, \$20,800, into the book which I hold in my hand. Excluding travel expenses, etc., it cost them \$16,000 to print 1,500 copies, or \$10.66 per book.

The front cover has 13 larger than life fingers pressing the shutter of an oversized Leica. The spine says 13 Cameras Vancouver, and the back has the same pile of fingers and the camera, only 'backwards', with 13 names listed alphabetically over the fingers.

The photos run into each other throughout. There's no identification

of the photographers, or places, until the end when an index of small photos with corresponding photographer in full-page portrait lets you in on who did what. From this you see that the photos are placed not in order of who did them but in some type of formal aesthetic arrangement.

The intro by Roy Kiyooka says



this book exists "to take another look at our fair city". To do this, there's been a lot of "talking, incessantly, talking, week after week, about images and their processes". This leaves the photos produced "to explain each other, not themselves", to be found "androgynously, sun-struck". The intros are difficult because the binding cuts the large type down the middle, sometimes obliterating whole words. The 'look' is high contrast, and with one and two page spreads, 'large'.

The title is superfluous. The book could have been produced in Toronto, or New York or any other city where photographers photograph their feet, their crotches, their meals, their friends in the toilet, toilets, mirrors, water on windows, sun on ferns, blurred faces, and leave it at that. No doubt all these people can use photographic equipment, but to what end I kept wondering?

The book is free-form, unrelated 'personal expressionism', with the Vancouver theme almost non-existent. The intense, introspective musings make for very elusive-looking images, but this seems to have been the purpose of this publication from the out-

Publications

set. One of the photographers, Taki Bluesinger, reinforced this idea by saying that the book was made not as information, but as a 'tribal expression' by the photographers, who "wrote the scenario and directed" this diverse effort. He emphasized the "Vancouver" or "West Coast" approach in the making of the book, which he defined as loose personal interpretations of local experiences. In fact they look like they could be anywhere, the results of which are intended for viewing by members of the Canadian established art circuitry.

This book represents to me another 'blow' against 'appropriate' or 'relevant' work in favour of form over content, and artistic navel gazing. It illuminates for me the coercion of the government in artists' lives, and it shows how artists will present the benign side of the story anytime for money or promises of fame. Does "West Coast" mean "floating around in abstracted space, snapping impressions of already disintegrating concepts?" Like spoiled children these

photographers feel that everything belongs to them for their pleasure, to be manipulated at their will, the results of which are published in a very expensive colouring book for their friends in government and art. So it is true what they say about the West Coast: it's "beautiful", and you don't need a social conscience.

Is this really a solution to unemployment and de-industrialization, to mention only two serious issues in this country? Is this what artists do when given the money they always need? Retreat into a private world? Does this have any other purpose than to provide a medium for these artists to have their names on? This book leads to other books like this, and perhaps to one's own book like this in future, with one's own name on it, in bigger type. I for one cannot bear open-endedness and limitless inspiration when artists might be expected to exercise their consciousness in more directed ways. It's as if artists are not expected to touch the ground, in times of social crisis especially.

I would like to see some of these dream books supplemented by action books that point to the huge inequalities, illegalities and complacencies in this country. When will photographers use their form and technique not only for themselves but to help us all see some truth? When will these mutterings about "the cadence of light" stop so that we can look at who's doing what to keep people so mute in this land and others? There are already too many publications such as this one, dedicated to promoting careers in the shadowy, the unclear, the non-statement, the hazy metaphor, the visual for visual's sake. At this time in our history, outpourings such as this book are an embarrassment to hard-workers everywhere who are striving to at least remove the blinders put on by the co-optation of our vision.

When I think of who this book is intended for, it becomes even more obvious. No "layman" can read it. It's a self-aggrandizing book for strictly-controlled distribution to like-minded apolitical artists. ■

Rumour

THE RENT PARTY
May 19, 1979, Toronto
by Victor Coleman

Rumour Publications has moved its growing offices from Queen St. W. to 31 Mercer Street (one block South of King between Peter and John) where they're sharing the two-storey Pilkington Glass Showroom, built in the early Thirties, with Permanent Press: Paul Collins and Gary Shilling, graphic designers, Only Paper Today/The Eternal Network: Vic d'Or, prop., and Robert ('Long') Arn's Soft Arkiv, an artists' access computer retrieval experiment. The four companies intend to sponsor and present a varied program of low-profile and semi-private events as a revenue alternative to government cultural funding. To this end, an opening Rent Party was held on May 19. The following comments were recorded verbatim by your reporter:

Wired Punk: Hey . . . Wow . . . I haven't seen this much glass since the bloodbath at CEAC!

Wired Punk's Girlfriend: A lotta these people look a bit too clean, eh? Ya suppose it's some front for the

Jazz conspiracy?

Jack McClelland: These young people are the freshest new thing in the publishing industry since Gutenberg. But the costumes . . .

Andy Paterson (of 'The Government'): First thing Monday I'm gonna see about having some platforms made outta these glass bricks.

Vera Frenkel: You sure this is legal?

John Bentley Mays: This is the most stupendous, albeit out-of-the-way if you live in the west end and seldom come this far downtown, venue for an artists' collective I've ever encountered. If you ever need a Chairman of the Board . . . (inaudible wine).

Lou Applebaum: It's so refreshing to meet people who don't greet me with an out-stretched hand palm up.

AA Bronson: I'll give them six months at the most.

Stuart Murray: Dahling, people in Toronto just don't have Parties this

exciting; where did you rent your guests?

John Robert Colombo: You know, of course, that you'll never get anywhere publishing Americans such as Acker & Coleman.

Willoughby Sharp: Uhhh let's form a corporation next week and start the hard work of bringing the computer Home! Are you with me? Could you turn down that music?

Elke Town: I wish I had an office this big.

Robert Fones: I can have your shelves and bar ready by early 1980.

Rick/Simon: I'd be worried, if I were you, being this close to the Tower.

J. Kit Miller: You absolutely sure Pucci doesn't own this building?

Opal L. Nations: They've got ten buildings just like this one in Boston, mate.

Nancy Kosenka: I flew up from Berkeley this morning on a hunch.

Roy K. Kiyooka: Zitherhood is powerful.

Moe Koffman: I haven't seen this much mirror since working with Woody Herman.

AA Bronson: On second thought, I'll give them nine months with an option. ■

Victor Coleman, Toronto, is an editor of *Only Paper Today*.

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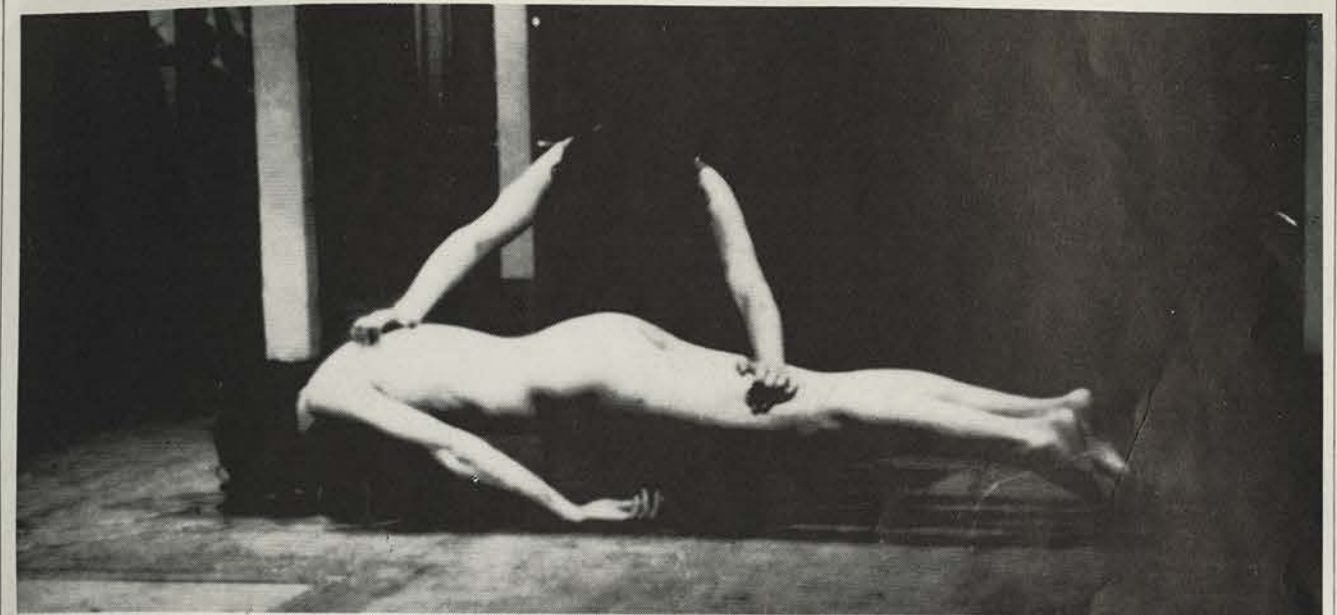
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