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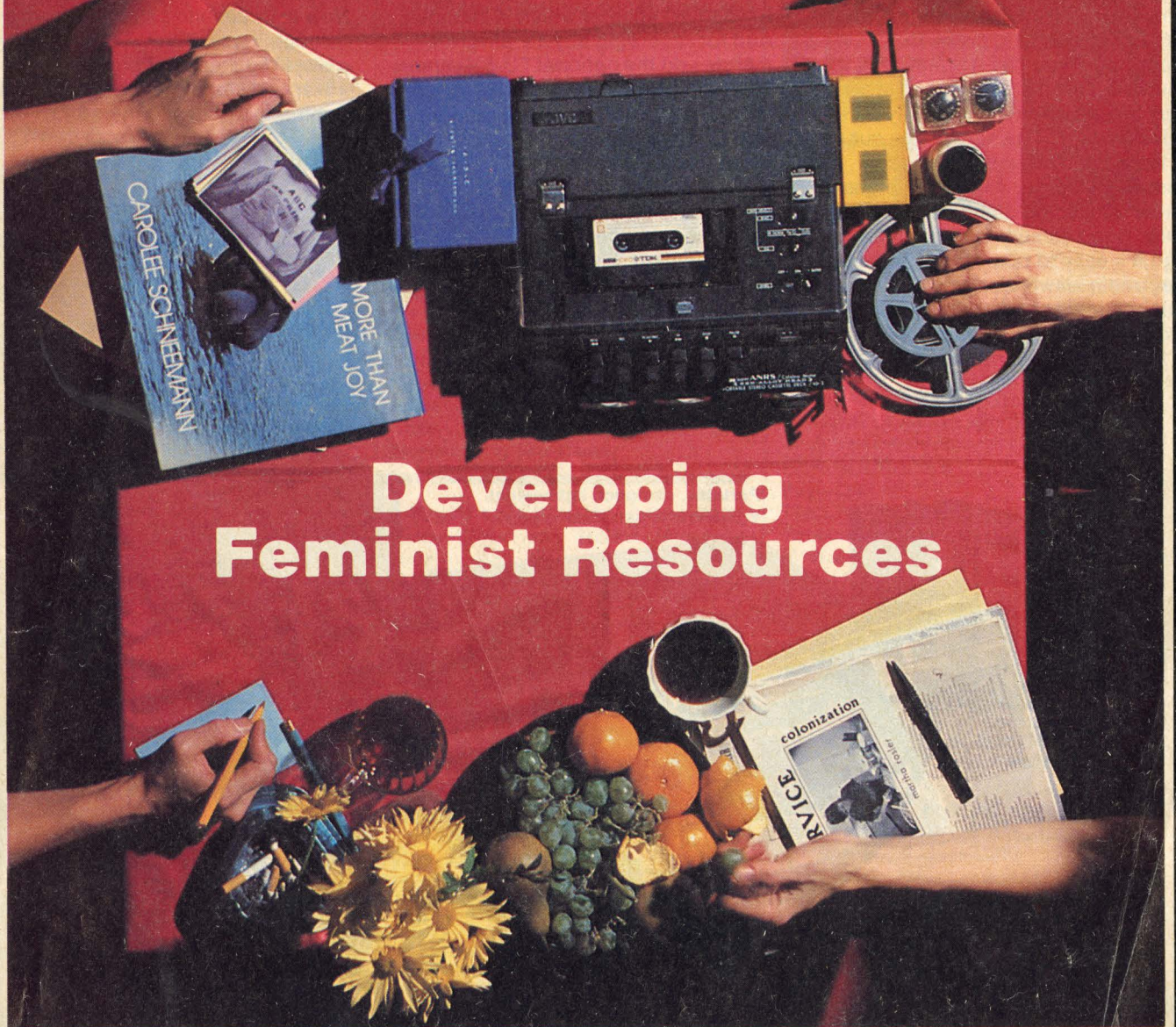
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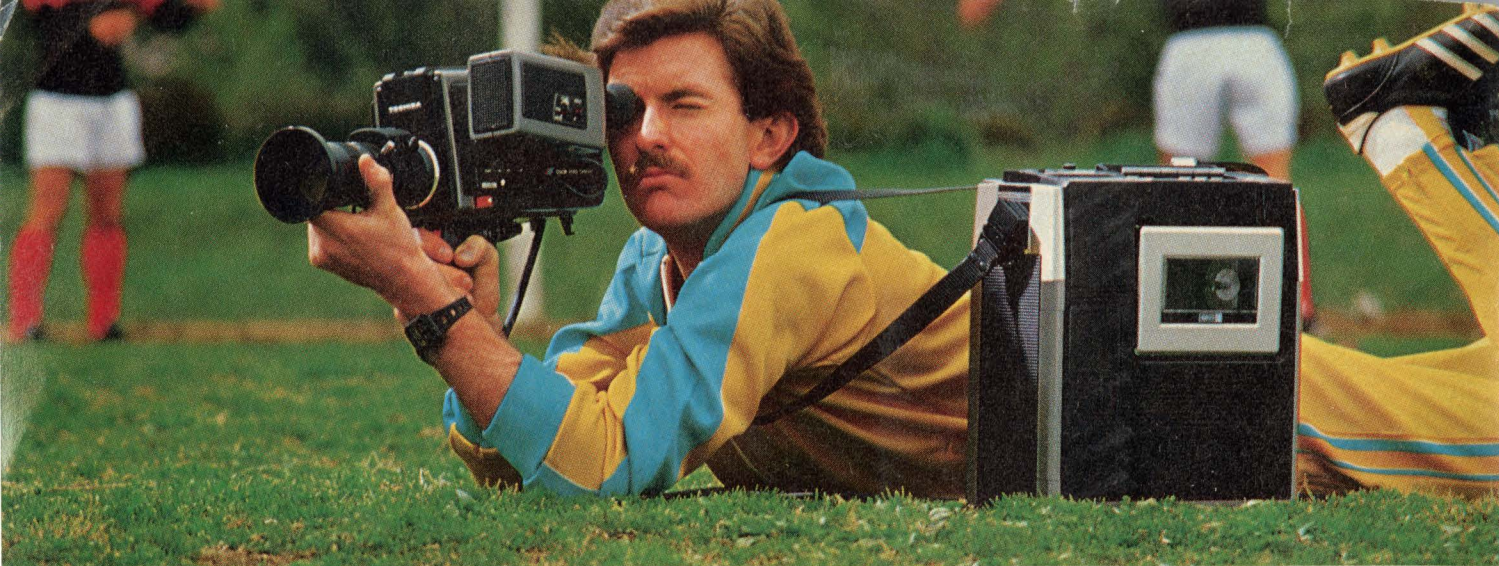
**LEADING UP
TO THE
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the continuation of **CENTERFOLD**

January 1980



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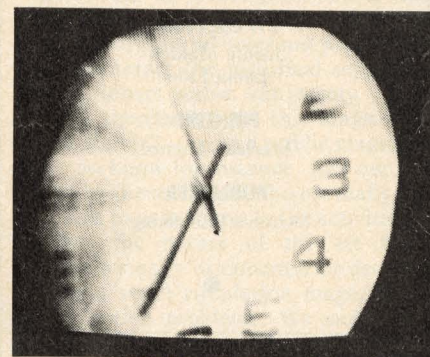
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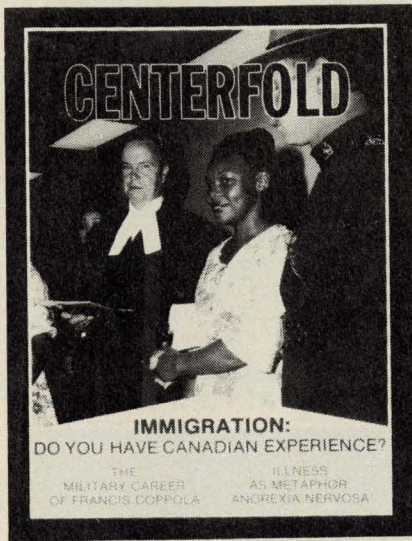
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Letters



A Christmas Message?

Was very impressed with the articles in November's issue, in particular "A.G.O. Union Drive" by Karl Beveridge. Have often thought to write and ask if you have ever considered doing an article on the Muckamuck Restaurant here in Vancouver. It is a native Indian restaurant with Indian employees owned by Doug Christmas also owner of ACE Gallery here in Vancouver.

The restaurant was certified with the Service Office and Retail Worker's Union of Canada (S.O.R.W.U.C.) in early 1978. When Christmas refused to negotiate a first contract the employees (those who hadn't already been fired) were forced to strike. That was in June 1978 and the strike is still on. Christmas has lost all legal battles (decertifications and an injunction) but has won legal cases of assault charges laid against present scab workers. Although Muckamuck workers are supported by the B.C. Union of Indian Chiefs, Christmas has actively encouraged dissension among the Indians scabbing and the Indians on strike. If I remember correctly, he was able to persuade Russell Means to come here last summer to try and persuade the striking workers to give up the union. He has also had the help of Ben Paul (and family), an official with the Department of Indian Affairs, as strike-breakers. There has been a lot of violence. From hot water being tossed at picketers, buckets of water being thrown over the roof, a senior citizen picketer being pushed down, nightly verbal abuse, picketers being beaten up. Christmas still refuses to negotiate.

Apparently he is also well known in Venice, California. There are several groups organized to try and stop his real estate gouging and tenant evictions. He has two ACE Galleries in California, one

right in Venice. He will have nothing to do with the active art community there or show local work (same as here). Yet for all his charming attributes, the art community here seems loathe to do anything but support him. His shows are actively reviewed on radio, in the newspapers and in *Vanguard*, (Vancouver Art Gallery mag). Quite a dichotomy!

P.R. Brown, Vancouver

The Art of Bureaucracy

Under the Civil Service Act, employees of the Alberta Provincial Government are "forbidden to discuss, communicate or argue about 'internal' problems within the civil service, outside of their immediate working environment, either to the media or the public at large." Brian Dyson, an artist and senior Curator of The Alberta College of Art Gallery is also a civil service employee. Dyson's farsighted curatorial programme has been continuously opposed or harassed by The Alberta College of Art administration. The Alberta College of Art has a long history of staff abuse and interference with the general process of education. Dyson sent us this letter detailing some recent events. (ed.)

...The best art of the past ten years has been in the expression of consciousness and conscience through media-related activities, ranging from an inter-personal level to a broader socio-political level, and much of this activity has been happening in Canada. (This is understandable since we are such a media-reliant country). If the government of Alberta insists on conducting art education programmes on an arm's length basis, to the continuing detriment of the province's future artists, then they are going to force people to become politically involved in determining their own future. You see, because a lot of my programming is appropriately critical of bureaucratic and corporate barbarism, there's a very strong reaction against it here.

So we have these intellectual geriatrics who are supposed to be direct managerial links to senior, elected, public officials who again are supposed to serve the best interests of the people. And these middle management turkeys are too ignorant and afraid to allow their own appointed experts in their field (art education) to get on with the job. Artists are the traditional 'free spirits' of society and they know it. They must also know that when this freedom is threatened or denied for partisan, politically expedient motives they will be threatened by possible subversive activity.

(continued on page 126)

FUSE

the continuation of Centerfold Magazine

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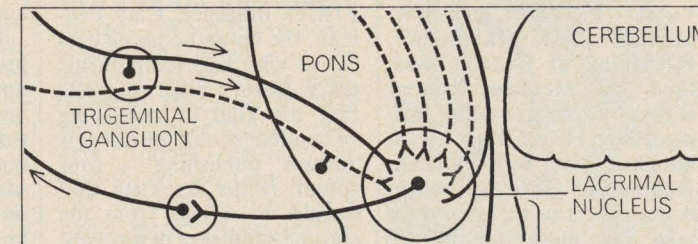
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Sources



In the last issue of *Centerfold* we knowingly omitted to mention that the organizational structure of the magazine had changed. Given that this is the first issue of *Fuse*, it now seems appropriate to explain some of the behind-the-scenes operation.

During the last year the content of the magazine has been written, solicited and selected by three editors -- who were also responsible for most of the production labour. Currently, the editorial board has been expanded to ten people. While not a true collective, all of the production and distribution work and editorial control is now carried out by this enlarged editorial board. The final acceptance of material for each issue and future directions for the magazine are decided by consensus. Internal contributions by the editors are discussed and criticised with the same degree of analysis as the external solicited and unsolicited contributions. There is no house prose style and such uniformity is not encouraged.

Occupationally, seven of the ten editors are practising visual artists, one is an archivist, one a factory worker and one a video distributor. While one of the editorial requirements is that each editor must also write for the magazine, the most essential of many tasks is the soliciting of external contributions. Last year we published essays, reviews and reports from over seventy different writers. We publish research and essays on social and cultural issues -- some of which exist as 'news' at press time. Unlike other general cultural magazines, we also publish reviews and features on the new arts, specifically art performance, video, artists' television and radio, artists' publishing and all other art processes enacted in a broad social context. At this stage, after three years of publishing, we understand that *Fuse* magazine functions without a comparative model. We do not welcome all problematic aspects of this awkward hybrid. We could exist more comfortably as a full-circulation art magazine or better still as a marginal artists' magazine. However, we choose this difficult mix given what we see as the continued failings of cultural magazine journalism and most importantly to counteract the historical separation of artists and other practitioners within our society.

We therefore want this magazine to be clearly "on the newsstands" -- to be a public magazine rather than a journal. We do know for instance that our 'new art' content is being seen by those readers who normally wouldn't seek or wouldn't be able to gain access to the activities of an artists' community unless the nature of the art happened to be a more conventionally ornamental or decorative.

As a small circulation magazine we experience common distribution problems. We must continue to demand more shelf space, most specifically from Canadian newsstand chains who maintain control of magazine access and therefore consumer choice. Large circulation news and lifestyle magazines sell less than 50% of their circulation (the other half is finally shredded). This means that stacks of "Playboy" and "Time" are wastefully taking up valuable display and storage space. Small magazines could use this space. By controlled, selective self-distribution, we sell on the average 60% of our

distribution. In gross sales volume, we cannot compete with these totally commercial magazines. But in terms of space-cost efficiency, we are much more effective.

For many readers who have observed our continual content changes, we must resemble a helicopter hovering tentatively over a large territory - unable to land. For this inconsistency we can offer some explanation. We cannot give you a true (sic) alternative news (sic) magazine for two reasons. We lack the money and we need a much deeper labour pool. We acknowledge our finite capability. However, because of our unique situation (being a public magazine produced by artists), we can offer you two magazines in one. For we are committed to discussing openly the specifics of certain political and social issues -- including civil rights and all forms of dangerously oppressive public media propaganda, and we are also committed to discussing the specifics of our culture through the creative process of critical analysis which often emanates from the work of artists and frequently emerges in the work and activities of those who do not consider themselves artists. In terms of writing, the true strength of any magazine, we encourage our readers to contribute with all relevant material. We are always interested in more information. We need your news and views if we are to continue to enrich this magazine with ideas.

Ideally we would like *Fuse* to be completely supported by its readership through subscriptions together with community service advertising. At the moment this is not yet a reality. The changes in paper stock and increase in print run that occur in this first issue of *Fuse* were made possible by the assistance of The Saidye Bronfman Foundation who support the insert of "The 1979 Independent Video Open". Beginning with the next issue, we will have to raise additional revenue to offset increased printing costs. Our funding from The Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council presently covers only part of our material expenses. There is no money for labour except through advertising revenue and direct subscription. Don't be fooled by our new gloss. Our total advertising revenue for this issue of *Fuse* barely covers our typesetting costs. Obviously, we need your support.

Because we care most about exchanging information, the basis of our financial problems stem from our selective distribution of promotional copies of *Fuse* internationally. If our readers would contribute by subscription and advertising, we could easily become self-sufficient. *Fuse* cannot function properly without your advertising, your subscription, your information, your participation: If we already have your subscription, we now need to ask your friends to subscribe. Please send us their names and addresses and we will gladly send them a free sample copy.

We wish you all a satisfying New Year.

Clive Robertson
for Editorial Board



SHAH PURCHASED BY ALBERTA?

Edmonton — Roloff Beny, the photographer well-known for his picture book on the Shah of Iran, was recently offered \$545,000 by the Culture Department of the Alberta Government. The offer to buy the 60,000 color and 22,000 black and white negatives is rumoured to have extra hidden archival preparation costs of between \$500,000 - \$4 million dollars.

Culture Minister Mary LeMessurier was questioned by opposition members in the Alberta Legislature. Walter Buck (Social Credit) offered a rhyme during LeMessurier's shaky performance while the deal was under scrutiny.:

"Mary, Mary quite contrary,
How do your answers go,
with friends in Spain
And Shahs in train,
And 82,000 slides in a row."

Walter Buck tabled a private member's motion that the Provincial Government cancel plans to buy the (Alberta-born) Beny collection. Coincidentally the Alberta government has sponsored an exhibition of 14 Alberta photographers. Four of the photographers were reported to have sent a letter to Mary LeMessurier threatening to boycott the show's opening ceremonies if the Beny purchase is made. However the four later corrected the report saying that the letter merely suggested more research on the purchase by "nationally recognized photographic experts." Livelier noise was made in the Legislature where opposition MLA's took delight in the government's latest cultural folly. ■

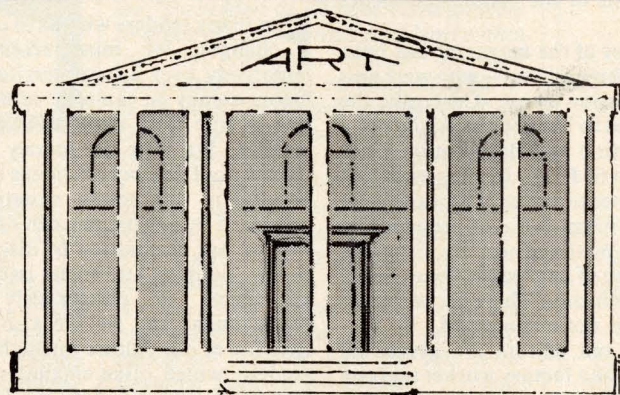
RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?

Toronto — Bill Baker, long-time president of Macmillan Publishing of Canada, was fired by McLean Hunter without warning or notice this month. Macmillan was bought out by McLean Hunter two years ago, when American firms threatened to take the publishing house under their own wing and were stopped short by the Foreign Investment Review Agency. However, one

wonders about the use of FIRA's diligence. Clay Fellman, the up-and-coming executive who has 'temporarily' taken Baker's place, suggests that the kind of publishing Macmillan should be doing is 'market publishing' - four colour recipe booklets that dangle on strings from the chrome handles of new stoves. Claiming that at least this way the company will have an assured turnover, Fellman is reducing the status of a major

publisher to that of a printing house.

Canadian publishing is at a pretty pass when the indigenous publishing houses are being co-opted by the indigenous communications moguls. When Burns and MacEachern, a Toronto publishing and distribution house, sold out to McLean Hunter, the mogul also gobbled up a number of small press distribution contracts previously handled by Burns



BIENNALE SHARES DROP 20 POINTS

Ottawa — The National Gallery of Canada organizes the Canadian exhibit for the Venice Biennale. More than one artist has been disappointed by the results of being chosen. This year (1980) the irritation grows.

The National Gallery, whose funds are currently frozen (due to a \$300,000 deficit), wanted an inexpensive solution for this year's exhibit and they found one: video art. Normally one or up to three artists have been honoured. This year there are six for the price of one.

The National Gallery owns the Canadian exhibit pavillion - a shabby cliché of Canadiana which now needs a roof job and new paint, all of which costs money.

As is normal with large institutions in bargaining with artists, the procedure is to guilt artists by telling the sad stories of how the institution is floundering, how the budgets have been cut, etc... This year Bruce Ferguson (who has now left the National Gallery) began

honourably by meeting with the participants, asking their advice about installation design, catalogue requirements and other necessary details. Brydon Smith, Assistant Director, who has supervised the last three Canadian exhibits at Venice, then played the dark side of the duo telling the artists what they could not have.

Remembering, if we still believe the tale, that the Venice Biennale is a large international promotional tableaux, it is difficult to believe what The National Gallery is *not* prepared to do. With a 1979/80 budget of \$5,767,768 The National Gallery at least has cash flow. They will not be paying fees to the artists because they recently purchased the videotapes for their collection at \$350 per hour. As the tapes will be playing daily for four months they were persuaded to buy second copies. What does emerge is that video artists who have been working for seven years currently sell their work for 96.5% less than the equivalent painting or sculpture (average price

\$10,000).

As a result of this and other experiences, video artists should realise how institutions circumvent reasonable payment and should raise their prices on such sales accordingly prior to any commitment.

Because the tapes are essentially narrative the artists requested that Italian and French transcripts be made available to viewers in Venice. The National Gallery - who could get such work done for free through External Affairs - questioned the necessity of translation. Their interest is concentrated on the first two weeks of the show rather than the complete run of four months when visitors, who are mainly Italians, would see the exhibit.

Though for publicity purposes The National Gallery would like the artists to be present, they say that they have never paid for travel expenses which supposedly are picked up by The Canada Council. For the last Biennale Ron Martin, one of the artists selected, paid his own fare.

The whole affair is abusive and a clear reflection of institutional cultural diplomacy at bargain basement prices. If the artists selected don't like the deal, there are many others who would take their place. Though the Biennale is only one of many current 'problem areas' for The National Gallery, it is evident that the Canadian exhibit at the Venice Biennale should in future be taken out of their hands. Curatorial careers will not be built on empty promises. ■

photo: George Smith



THE BARRACKS TRIAL

Toronto — When thirty police officers thundered into the Barracks Baths in the early hours of December 9, 1978 they may have thought they were simply 'getting the queers'. At the time of the raid, dubbed by many as a 'make work' project for the Criminal Investigation Squad of 52 Division, it was apparent that harassment was a motivating force. As it turns out, their actions have resulted in a court challenge of the constitutional nature of the 'bawdy house' laws.

Morris Manning, QC, and co-counsel Gary Curran served notice on the Attorney General of Canada and the Attorney-General of Ontario before the first hearing of the case on November 13, that they are challenging the law on three counts:

► They are demanding a trial by judge and jury which is not

normally accorded "bawdy house" charges.

► They are challenging the legality of the "bawdy house" definition in the law.

► They are insisting that a Provincial Court judge (a magistrate) does not have



FOR WHOM? THE BELL TOLLS.

Bell Canada wants you to make fewer local phone calls. They are currently proposing experiments they call Usage Sensitive Pricing to the Canadian Radio-Television and Communications Commission (CRTC). The CRTC has approved tests in two cities - one in Ontario, one in Quebec. USP would mean no more "free" local calls. Bell Canada is already notorious for the strategic way in which they plan new "services" and new equipment purchases for

oversophisticating an already adequate service. Each time the customer is made to pay heavily for their monopolistic expansion. Ron Devaney, supervisor of news and information for Bell's Ontario Region said "There might be opposition from some people. Families with teenagers who phone a lot might be unhappy." What an understatement. The proposal should be strongly opposed. Bell estimates the cost of installing necessary measuring equipment to monitor local calls will be in excess of \$100 million. ■

jurisdiction to try such a case under the British North American Act. The law has not been challenged in this way since the time of Confederation.

No prostitution is involved in the Barracks trial. However, the section of the law being applied comes under the definition of common bawdy house and reads: "a place that is kept or occupied, or resorted to by one or more persons for the purpose of prostitution or 'the practice of acts of indecency'."

As Judge Harris pointed out in his judgement on *The Body Politic* trial, "acts of indecency" has never been defined. Furthermore, as the law stands, the bedrooms of the nation are *not* safe, nor is any other place previously thought to be a private place safe. Under the law as it now stands there is no right to privacy.

The five "keepers" and the twenty-three "found-ins" may, in fact, never have their day in court. This case could very well take many months and end up in the Supreme Court of Canada. That court would then have to examine all the laws concerning sexual rights. If they were to find the laws unconstitutional, then the Barracks case would simply disappear.

Though less dramatic, the question of the right to a jury trial is a fundamental aspect of the case. This right goes back to the Magna Carta. Under our law any indictable offence ordinarily leaves the accused the option of trial by judge, or by judge and jury. Currently people charged with certain indictable offences such as keeping a gaming house, theft under \$200, some instances of fraud and *all* bawdy house charges are denied the right to a trial by jury. The decisions reached may set precedents for all Canadians; challenging this situation is a precedent in itself.

(from a report by Norman Hay in *Newsbreak*, a special publication of the Right to Privacy Committee and *The Body Politic*.)



photo: David Fleisher/courtesy artmagazine

Adele Freedman receiving First Prize for artmagazine's Best Writing on Art Award.

MEDIA

Turning Pride Into Cash

Journalists and the 'new' art

"Then there is the special breed of artist who gets this weird look in his eyes at parties, sniffs publicity in the air and rushes over to spill out his entire life-history and philosophy of aesthetics - topped off by an urgent request for a major article. Luckily, most of the others are content to throw you significant glances from afar." - Adele Freedman, *Toronto Life*, September 1979.

Adele Freedman is an entertainment writer for the *Globe & Mail* - she entertains her readers by writing about art. She also writes monthly art columns for *Toronto Life* - a thick advertising magazine that caters to the youngish and rich at heart, to a passive audience that receives monthly instructions on how and where to be chic and exciting. Freedman began writing on art just two years ago yet she recently won an *art magazine* critic-of-the-year award (1978). Such was the surprise that anyone outside of an art magazine could saturate the art review market. An adequate lifestyle writer, Ms. Freedman can turn the words and ideas of artists into instant cash. The eager artist, art gallery, art project gets the column space and the journalist gets the sauce.

In November 1978 *Toronto Life* ran her eight page story: "Off The Wall Images" (cover title: A Critical Guide to

The City's Hot New Art Scene), and before you could blush there was Ms. Freedman on educational TV struggling with the meaning of "avant-garde" in art. Alive or dead? Well she stood a fifty per cent chance of getting the answer right.

Slowly enter John Bentley Mays. Mays talks of Freedman as a know-nothing and takes the credit for informing her of what-was-what and who-was-who in the artscene. Mays gave Freedman names and phone numbers and watched her well. John Mays has published one novel and was formerly the Board Chairman of A Space, the Toronto artist space. A self-acclaimed student of historical culture he has just finished a long stint as full-time student administrator at York University. Now John Mays wants to follow Freedman down the pipeline. But in two years Freedmania has spread. Two or three of her articles a week can be read in various newspapers or magazines. Claiming to work under potential sexual danger from euphoric artists, Freedman writes from the house of Peggy Guggenheim, the classrooms of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design and the studio of Michael Snow.

John Mays, meanwhile, bragging how quickly he can write and how much editors "love my stuff", had drawn inspiration from a spring issue of *Newsweek* featuring an article on a decade of new American art and is knocking on the editorial doors of *Maclean's* - Canada's weekly news-magazine. He suggests a similar article on a decade of new Canadian art, plus another exclusive article on the Vancouver Living Art Performance

Festival. Armed to the teeth with old contacts and a warm welcome in Vancouver, the story is written. Somewhat like a pizza, both toppings have been combined. *Maclean's* Magazine hits the stand with a lurid cover and the title: IS IT ART? Inside is a dense nine-page 'promotional' essay on new Canadian art, a little history, a little performance festival but mostly short pastry. It's written in the style of a speedy cheerleader.

Mays had formerly written within the artist community for the tabloid *Only Paper Today*, where he had established a small reputation as a hawk. Mays wrote of video art:

"At this time, a video art devoid of empty personalistic fantasies, the fraud of 'documentary objectivity', or the lie that reality is the surface it presents is almost unthinkable." *OPT* Vol.4 No.3 1977.

Born again for *Maclean's*, Mays-the-dove must have been throwing up at his every fresh superlative:

"...the next step, from notebook to documentation, was a natural one and, in amazingly short time, video emerged as a key field of artistic experiment." *Maclean's*, Nov.5th 1979.

But more in character, Mays was recently seen playing *The Brat*, loudly disclaiming the value of a Kate Craig award tape during a Toronto gala screening. Similarly, Mays made his public presence felt when, rushing out of The Cabana Room during a performance by the Matchbox Purveyors, an English Performance Group, he sneered, "This is so disgusting." The Matchbox Purveyors had just commenced one of the most powerful performances to grace a Toronto stage.

The *Maclean's* article itself is not of much consequence. It is hopelessly inaccurate and for that it is irritating. General Idea, for example, did not work their way up through "the Canadian underground". From the AGO pageant in 1971, their work has continuously been seen in large public institutions or commercial galleries. The overall tone of the article is both simplistic and misleading. It creates an impression that as long as artists work with technology and popular imagery they will have escaped the vacuum of modern art and become, once again, socially relevant. Mays' grocery list of artists and their activities is devoid of any questions. "Is it art?", the cover title, was mere window dressing. What does come through is the way in which Mays approaches art. Remember his job in this article is to push "new art". What Mays formally under-

LABOUR

Strippers Struggle For A Union

To fight against exploitation, the Canadian Association of Burlesque Entertainers is getting organized.

If Diane Michaels, the petite and powerful force behind CABE, sees her dream realised, Canada will soon witness the emergence of its newest trade union - The Canadian Association of Burlesque Entertainers. The events that led to its formation are re-told here from the transcript of an interview between Michaels and Toronto performance artist, Margaret Dragu.

In March 1979, Michaels, in consultation with Paul Siren of ACTRA, took the first steps towards forming a union. Exploitation, harassment and poor working conditions were the basis of the Toronto strippers' grievances, in conjunction with no wage guarantee. (Strippers can be verbally promised one fee per show by the club managers, while receiving far less at the end of the week.)

While several agents had demonstrated support up to this point, Siren explained the illegalities of having management within the union, which turned many of the agents hostile. This, according to Michaels, caused bad feelings and a breakdown in communications between many agents and their clients. Several meetings were held, and the executive of CABE self-

appointed. (Incidentally, Michaels is the only working member of that original executive). A bank account was established, and the dues began trickling in.

With a handful of members, CABE charged a club called Le Manoir in Mississauga of "counselling to commit an offense". The club was firing dancers who refused to remove their G-strings during the performance. During the police raids on strip clubs this past summer, while several establishments were charged by police under the same offence, Section 22 of the Criminal Code, the dancers themselves were charged, under Section 170, with "nudity -- clad in a way to offend public decency". These cases have still to be heard in court.

A benefit for the union under the provocative title "A Hot Night in July" helped raise over \$1000 towards CABE's coffers. At the same time, a formal letter of application was sent to the Canadian Labour Congress in an attempt to establish CABE as a direct chartered local of the CLC. This was rejected, and attempts to affiliate with established unions such as ACTRA,

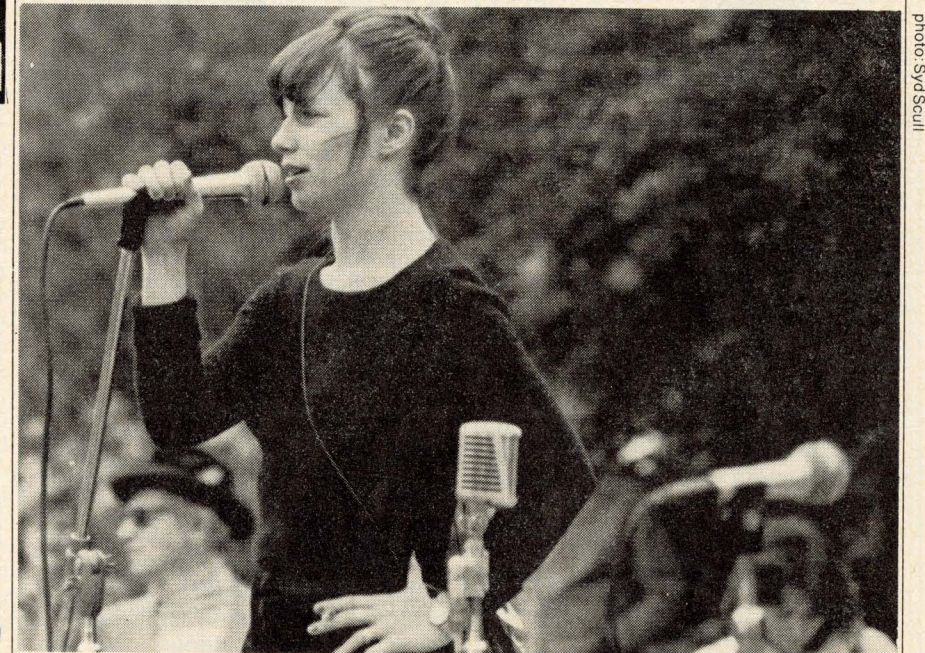
stands in contemporary art he dismisses as being conservative, yet he inflates to the level of human miracles that which he cannot classify. The illustration of this approach appears in the two inserts, one on Mark Prent and one on John Mitchell. Prent, the traditional sculptor whose work nonetheless is disturbingly relevant is described as "an art school product moving along a career as conservative as it is predictable". On the other hand John Mitchell is seen by Mays to be "outside the traditional (sic) modern art-world...positioning Mitchell centre-stage in the eccentric new art scene of the seventies." Someone should tell Mays that there is no such polarity, that no artist really gets "outside" of their own cultural history. And just how significant is freedom from modern art within the total cultural web?



By placing a strong focus on Toronto and Vancouver and omitting any record of seminal activities in Quebec, the Maritimes and the Prairies Mays further reduces history for journalistic convenience. Mays plays with space in the article as if he planned to invoice each of the artists for 'taking-out' two-line classified ads.

Ironically, in this mild battle for writing contracts Freedman is better placed to win. Unbound by cerebral tautologies, art-writing is just a job for her. It takes a little knowledge and a lot of style. The commercial task simply requires turning artistic pride into journalistic profit. Both Mays and Freedman remain indebted to artists who believe, like their entertainment 'cousins', that any press is good press.

Clive Robertson



Diane Michaels, the force behind CABE, at the rally for the fledgling trade union.

photo: Syd Seull

NABET and EQUITY were also turned down, leaving CAFE no option but to go it alone.

The wheels were set in motion, and the group began to formalize itself further. Guest speakers at a meeting of strippers held at ACTRA included Ed Wright of the CLC, representatives from the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labour, and Abbie Hoffman of the Human Rights Commission. CAFE drew up some "Proposals of Action" which included the investigation of disability insurance to include sickness and accidents on and off the job. Michaels hopes for a swell in numbers to warrant this, and anticipates the day when employers would pay such insurance. Their second proposal concerned complaints by strippers of

attempts to form a trade union. This refusal is against the Labour Relations Act. She also charged The Pretzel Bell with refusing to hire her or any other members of CAFE. Both cases were settled out of court, with the clubs paying one week's salary, promising to re-instate her at the next possible opportunity, and further promising to hire any member of CAFE without prejudice in the future.

Negotiations with the CLC were reopened, and working under the guidance of CLC lawyers, CAFE drew up their application of certification as a trade union to the Ontario Labour Relations Board, and a decision on CAFE's application will be known sometime this month. If it is successful, the first trade union for strippers will be



Clubs have refused to hire dancers who are CAFE members.

photo: Syd Scull

inadequate dressing room and stage facilities: claims of second degree burns from unsafe lighting onstage, and in some cases no dressing room facilities whatsoever, where strippers had no option but to change in the kitchens, in full view of the kitchen staff.

These minimum standards were drawn up and submitted to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Frank Drea, who then re-directed the proposal to the Ministry of Labour's Dr. Elgie, who said Drea should handle the matter, promptly shuffling the papers back to Drea's desk, where presumably they now sit, pending action.

But Michaels was still working. Through the Ontario Labour Relations Board, and on behalf of CAFE, she charged the Toronto club Le Strip with refusing to hire her because of her

established.

While progress to this point must have been encouraging to CAFE president Diane Michaels, a rally held in Nathan Phillips Square on October 6 to spread the word to the press and general public must have been a bitter disappointment for her. Few strippers turned out for the event. This must have been quite a blow for Michaels, who has fought so long and hard for the rights of her fellow entertainers. At the rally, speakers in support of CAFE included Ed Wright, Paul Thompson of Theatre Passe Muraille, and Margaret Dragu, but Michaels will need much more backing from many more strippers if CAFE is to gain the credibility and respect it needs.

Jackie Malden

TRADE

Art Publishers Conference

Rochester meeting a success

I missed the Felipe Ehrenberg talk, and heard the taped cassette of it later in a room littered with plaster. It was a rambling journey that started in England with his Beau Geste Press and *Schmuck Magazine*, and ended in Mexico, where he currently teaches publishing at a university. "Small press, by its very nature, is subversive." He talked of a friend who was sentenced to 14 years in a Chilean jail for owning a Mimeograph machine. When Ehrenberg arrived in Mexico, he didn't have the money to buy a hopelessly overpriced Gestetner, so he worked out a way to build one with soup cans for \$6. The first thing he ran off were the plans, which he distributed throughout South & Central America & Mexico. The growth of the underground community presses in Chile, for instance, owes much to this.

He works between the legitimacy of the university, which paid his way to Rochester, and the illegitimacy of his publishing activities. Several years ago, the Latin-American countries were invited to the Paris Biennale. The official organizers curated a show of typical, western-influenced work. Ehrenberg, hearing of the show, came forward and offered to do the catalogue. As he was a 'professor', they accepted, relieved to have it taken off their hands. The essays he then wrote and solicited had nothing to do with the show - they discussed instead the very vibrant and contemporary art activities that were flourishing, illegally and underground. The deadline arrived, and the officials started calling. Don't worry, he said, I'll take it to the printers myself to save time. Fine, they said. The catalogue was printed and bound. The opening of the Biennale was days away, and the officials still hadn't seen the catalogue. Don't worry, he said, I'll take it with me, I'm going tomorrow. Fine, they said, relieved. He arrived and gave it to the museum officials, who proudly handed out the 2000 copies to the official visitors. Eventually there were questions, and complaints, but it was too late.

He talked about the social network of travelling, the importance of talking and meeting and working and sharing, of collecting and connecting people. That's why Rochester ultimately made sense. It created a sort of instant three day community of 300 people that was totally energizing and frustrating. Top on a short list of complaints: the complete

lack of opinions expressed formally by a group of highly articulate and opinionated people. There were 22 presentations, and several thousand slides shown. Half were surveys of every type: Canadian Magazines by Artists, Artists Books from California, Books from Europe, Dada & Constructivist Publications, The Photographic Book, The One-of-a-Kind Book, the Last Ten Years, and so on. Every slide had a title, a name, a few terse comments, and then on to the next. It developed like a contest; who could mention the greatest number of artist publications in the least amount of time. The effect of this was a misplaced sense of business, until it sounded like the books were marketed as consumer items instead of aesthetic statements, which hardly applies to an audience of fellow publishers. Analysis? Opinions? Not much & not too many. The criticism panel summed up the void. The panel included Peter Frank, editor of *Collation*, a new magazine "dedicated to the criticism of artists books" and, Ken Friedman, contributing editor of the *National Arts Guide*. After half-heartedly mumbling about distribution problems for half an hour, they cut the open discussion period off before it began because of the looming party and their desire to get drunk.

Clive Philpot, head librarian at the MOMA in New York, managed to get a word in. He mentioned that the various reviews and articles he has written in the past were consciously promotional, even if he didn't like the work, simply because of the fledgling and totally unsupported status of the field. The same applies to the reviews in *Umbrella*, currently the only publication in North America specifically devoted to Artist Publications. Editor Judith Hoffberg stated that she has a policy of only reviewing artist publications that she likes. This function cannot be over-rated, because both these efforts and others attempt to educate the public, within and without the art community. The granting organizations are a problem too - they don't know whether to give art publishers the brochure for printmaking or literature. Reese Williams of Tanam Press talked about LINE, an arts service organization he and several others set up that deals directly with this problem - almost. They receive money from the National Endowment for the Arts in the U.S. and redistribute it in the form of grants to book artists. When asked about proposals from writers as opposed to artists wanting to do a book, and how LINE defines the difference between artists writing and writers writing, he became very vague and began talking about distribution.

Hoffberg's speech, one of the few that

spoke directly to the people gathered as publishers, was tough. She gave everyone shit. "You have got to stop your open-mouthed attitude towards the medium, and start admitting that of the vast body of work being produced, much of it is bad. No one should be afraid to say so. Much of it also, thank goodness, is good."

She went on to tell us what bad business people we are. Her main suggestion was one of networking, small groups banding together to deal with specific problems: to buy tables at librarians' conferences, to send someone around with a suitcase to bookstores, to share facilities like typesetting or space or cut down costs. Many of her sentiments were echoed in the two distribution panels that were held. The consensus was a do-it-yourself set-up-your-own-group approach. One factor that wasn't discussed much was the already existing distribution channels, both large and small - to collectively lobby them for



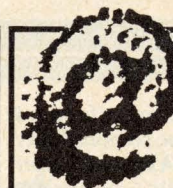
Ken Friedman

photo: T.M. Langdon

recognition and support.

Ingrid Sischy, former director of Printed Matter in New York, and current editor of *Art Forum*, revealed that Printed Matter, a non-profit corporation which distributes some 4000 Artists publications, has just been accorded educational status by the New York State government. This means tax-exemption. It also means that selling books (and they do nothing but) is now, in this one example, an educational function, a thing small-press literature never achieved. This decision could become a landmark for both publishers and public attitudes - what has been considered a non-essential fringe is now information and a social service.

During the Conference, the Associated Art Publishers Network was disbanded. This continental organization's aim was to "confront the multiple problems that have arisen in the renaissance of publishing projects by artists and art-oriented organizations throughout the world." It was decided by the board members present that the A.A.P.N. wasn't fulfilling its function,



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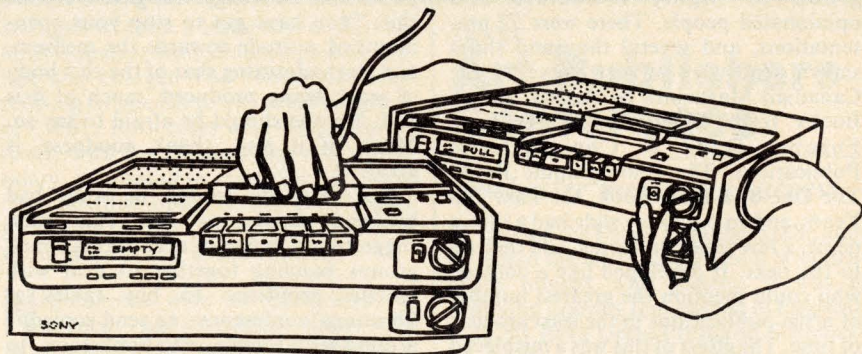
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and as there was no one coming forward who wanted to take on the responsibility of such a function, the AAPN was better buried. This is hardly surprising, considering the multiple-occupations of most of those present. The publishers are in many cases the producers, the distributors, the archivists, the promoters, the critics, the board members of several organizations, as well as being practicing artists in other disciplines. Nobody has any more time or energy. Yet a continental lobbying front for support and recognition is vital at this time. The bookfair gave perhaps the best indication of this "renaissance" the AAPN referred to. There were fifty exhibitors (publishers, both book and magazine, bookstores, distributors, and individuals) and the number could have been triple that. Though the public was invited, they didn't come, at least not in droves, so the money that changed hands (some \$14,000) stayed in the same room, going from the left pocket to the right. The fair's real function became a place to see the work first hand.

Back to the lectures: within their context of edited information, they had value, because realistically the information isn't available anywhere else. Jacki Apple and Martha Wilson, directors and curators of the Franklin Furnace Archive in New York, both gave interesting talks on various book work shows the Furnace has held. Their slides were more visually based than others, at times distinctly sculptural - for example, Alice Leeds' cloth books whose texts, illustrations and designs are all sewn by machine. Dick Higgins gave a highly entertaining and necessarily personal account of the legendary Something Else Press, which he founded in 1965. It published an amazing range of artists books, avant-garde literature, and reprints (most notably, the works of Gertrude Stein).

The question of next year's conference location was raised. Atlanta and Toronto were two suggestions. The feeling was understandably unanimous that it should and would happen. The sense of community this year demands an annual event. In terms of a building and a group of organizers the Visual Studies Workshop and its occupants will be a tough act to follow. Indeed, a large number of those present expressed their willingness to return to the Workshop next year. However, this community's most oft repeated words were/are: "networking, travelling, distribution", which demands a new location. It is hopeful that next year "critical perspective" will be added to the list. ■

John Greyson



Elmo Marks

VIDEO

Illegal Dubbing

Who's doing it?

In the endless list of problems of distribution and copyright which all artists confront daily, the problem of illegal dubbing of videotape is perhaps a relatively small one. But it is growing, and ironically it is tied to the growth of video art distribution. Videotapes can be duplicated by anyone with two machines and a handful of cables. That's not news. But what follows is. These examples of illegally copied and/or circulated tapes show that where there's smoke, there's fire.

Some time last year, Martha Rosler, performance and video artist living in California, was asked to sign a release for an unedited master of one of her tapes. Carl Loeffler of Lamamelle made the request. Loeffler was travelling across Canada on a lecture tour and wanted to show the tape as part of his presentation. Rosler refused to release the tape, stating that it was unedited and that it was a risk to play a master more than the few times it takes to edit the tape. However, she later heard that a copy of this tape had been shown by Loeffler on his tour, regardless of the fact that she had not signed a release. Rosler has recovered this illegally made copy of her tape, but thus far has received no remuneration for the showings.

Early in 1979, the Cultural Affairs division of Canada's External Affairs Department bought approximately \$2,000 worth of video by artists from Art Metropole in Toronto. The work was purchased to exhibit in Lyon, France. Though purchase agreements accompanying the invoices stated that the tapes were not for distribution by External Affairs, the tapes turned up in a travelling exhibition in Geneva and Rome. Neither the artists nor the distributor were informed of this. It was

Martha Fleming

conjectured that the invoice and agreement were thrown out with the packing material when the tapes were opened.

In a recent letter to Dorit Cypis and Christina Ritchie (Foundation for Art Resources, Los Angeles) from John Riddler, a student intern of David Ross' at the University Art Museum in Berkeley, Riddler reveals that there is at least one illegally made dub of an artist's tape in UAM's possession. Riddler says he expected to receive three cassettes containing Colin Campbell's tape *Modern Love* for an advertised showing at the museum. On receiving three unmarked cassettes, he panicked and, assuming that he had no dub of *Modern Love* to show the audience, went to the cupboard and pulled a dub of Campbell's *Woman From Malibu* off the shelves. That tape had been rented to the museum a year before and returned. Riddler showed an illegally made dub. He showed it twice. It would have been at least fourth generation and very poor quality and it was a transgression of copyright law for him even to have it, let alone show it. Campbell would not see a penny from the showing. Where was David Ross while his 'apprentice' was blithely writing letters and exposing Ross' blatant piracy of art work? And how many other illegal copies are in his possession?

Video has reached a certain stature which gives the artists a leverage they did not have before. Distribution economics have been compromised in the past in order to gain the medium the exposure needed to gather strength and purchase as a valid medium. But now, with recognition growing, the progressive enlargement of the network, and the hard-headed discussions of distribution tactics at Kingston in March, perhaps it's time to set a precedent. Instead of trying to change the structure by changing the attitude, perhaps we should be trying to change the attitude by changing the structure. ■

QUEBEC

Scenes From A Referendum

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Scenes From A Referendum

by Robert Schwartzwald

When the *Toronto Star* smugly greeted the publication of the Québec government's White Paper on sovereignty-association with the headline PQ PLAN WOULD FOOL ONLY MARTIANS¹, it inadvertently alluded to a basic truth: To the degree that this will be the first time in over 200 years that the Québec people will be formally consulted about their political destiny, there is indeed something unearthly about this spring's referendum. What has it been like living in Québec as all sides escalate their campaigns in preparation for this historically unprecedented vote?

Le Canada. J'y Suis, J'y Reste. "Canada: I'm here and I'm staying." It's supposed to sound patriotic, but here in Québec it comes across like a threat. And as Québec's Office de la langue française points out, the slogan is also grammatically incorrect (it should read AU Canada...) - "probably because it was conceived by an anglophone". In any case, the billboards are absolutely everywhere. Sometimes, there are even two or three in a row. To what do we owe this abundance?

As the Pro-Canada committee explains it, they were duped into thinking the referendum would take place earlier this year. Since they had already reserved all their advertising space, they just *had* to use it. No tears should be shed for this group who seems to have jumped the gun. They will have no difficulty paying for a second wave of their campaign. A partial list of Pro-Canada sponsors includes Northern Telecom (\$125,000), Bell Telephone (\$75,000), ALCAN (\$75,000), four Bronfman-family companies (\$125,000), as well as the Mercantile Bank, Kraft, Rothman's, and Dupont.²

Before the 1970 provincial elections, the assets of many of these corporations (and others) were supposedly withdrawn from Québec banks and transferred to Ontario in the famous 'Brink's parade'. This was meant as a warning to anyone contemplating voting for the Parti Québécois. A few months later, many of these same businesses and the neighbourhoods of Montréal's élite were guarded by troops brought in from Ontario and Alberta during the October Crisis. As in the Conscription Crisis earlier this century, the War Measures Act was again being used to curtail democratic rights in the name of 'saving Canada'. But none of this apparently embarrasses the federalist forces who have been running ads such as: "Will we always have the freedom of speech we do now? If Québec separates...**THERE IS NO GUARANTEE!**"

From June 1-3, the Parti Québécois held its 7th congress in Québec City. Joined by the international press (including *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Le Monde*), guests from Québec socialist and nationalist parties looked on as government ministers skillfully intervened in plenaries and workshops to guide 1800 delegates through the process

of bringing the party's official program into line with their project for sovereignty-association. Virtually all references to "independence" were struck, the idea of a customs and monetary union with Canada accepted, provisions made for a "second consultation" should negotiations fail, and commitments to NATO and NORAD affirmed.

Delegates (half of whom were attending their first-ever PQ convention) were obviously impressed by the aura of competence projected by the party leadership. But the sociological composition of the delegates spoke most eloquently of what interests ultimately inspire the party's program: 60% of delegates defined themselves as white-collar workers, professors, or professionals. Only 2% were unemployed in a province where the jobless figure is chronically high.

"Today, the party's program and public language are much more in line with the real internal configurations of power. Most 'radicals' have either been reconciled or reduced to silence."

The Parti Québécois will be financially prepared for the referendum campaign. Its fund drive raised a well over-target \$2,500,000. 90% of the individual contributors were for amounts of \$100 or less, showing a remarkable popular base of support.

Immediately after the congress, PQ-sponsored billboards appeared that reflected the adopted "Between equals" theme of the pro-sovereignty campaign. Two advertising agencies have been commissioned to prepare the campaign under the direction of Pierre Maheu, among others. Maheu was a founding member of *Parti pris*, the groundbreaking journal for "an independent, secular, and socialist Québec" that appeared in the 1960s. Its producers who were part of a broader layer that drew inspiration from the successful anti-colonial struggles in Cuba and Algeria, debated how to bring about the national emancipation of Québec. Lesson: Nobody should underestimate the degree to which the PQ has been able to predominate over the entire national movement. In its years in opposition, it allowed freer public rein to its more radically nationalist wing. It also mobilized in support of certain strikes. Today, the party's program and public language are much more in line with the real internal configurations of power.

Most 'radicals' have either been reconciled or reduced to silence.

The Québec media's almost culinary zeal for ridiculing the independence movement ran unbridled after the release of an official government-commissioned opinion poll on attitudes in Québec toward the national question. On September 28, tabloids ran headlines touting the Québécois as spoiled children (**QUEBECOIS WANT EVERYTHING!**), cowardly children (**QUEBECOIS WANT CHANGE WITHOUT RISKS**), and difficult but ultimately obedient children (**QUEBECOIS REMAIN ATTACHED TO CANADA**). "You may pout", the press seemed to be saying, "but deep down you *know* federalism is good for you!"

The results, although contradictory, did not in themselves justify this derisive response. 54% of those polled - and 64% of francophones - said they *would* give the government a mandate to negotiate sovereignty-association. 34% of francophones said they would like to see some kind of "renewed federalism", while 35% were already committed to sovereignty-association or independence. Only 5% of the anglophone community supported either of these, while a full 73% supported either renewed federalism or the status quo.³ 53% of the francophones said they "identified" first with the government in Québec City, while 73% of anglophones saw Ottawa as "their" government.

Pierre Desmarrais' flagship newspaper *La Presse* (\$34,000 to Pro-Canada) did not let the obvious language-group polarizations and other complexities of the poll get in the way of the following incredible interpretation: "Québecers are more preoccupied by the size of the country than by notions of majority and minority. They prefer being a minority in a big country to a majority in a small one!"⁴ Nor did *La Presse* lose any time in playing on the hesitations and uncertainty any dominated people feels before the task of securing its national independence: "When we consider all the confusion among the people at the origin of and most concerned by the constitutional debate...how can we be surprised that people outside Québec have difficulty figuring out what's bothering us?" The Québécois were being labelled a deadweight on the otherwise "dynamic" project of revamping Canadian federalism. The exasperated tone of the editorial raises that familiar and most bullying question of all: **WHAT DOES QUEBEC WANT?** but this time from

inside Québec itself. The press is well-aware of the demoralizing impact of such masochism.

It isn't very often that an audience begins singing a performer's compositions before the curtain even goes up! But that's what happened throughout Gilles Vigneault's most recent tour of Québec. Of all Québec's artists who have made use of traditional folk rhythms and melodies, and woven these into people's contemporary experiences, Vigneault has perhaps been the most successful in giving back to the Québécois an image of themselves that enhances a will to emancipation, a crucial feature of any national liberation struggle. Now, he is throwing his energies behind the OUI campaign. The second half of his most recent performance was almost entirely devoted to a brilliant series of poems, tales and songs centred around "the relative virtues of the words OUI and NON".

But not all of Québec's artists feel as willing to so directly identify themselves with the PQ's campaign. In the early 70's, culture in Québec seemed to speak with a single voice in helping define a national identity *in opposition to Canada*. The basic underlying experience to the Québec nation in Confederation gave this movement its power and reality. But with the arrival of the Parti Québécois in government, the pressures to ignore *fundamental* class and sexual divisions in Québec society became greater at the same time as the policies of this government "of all Québécois" began making these divisions more obvious. Paul Piché is one of the most popular of recent singers to integrate the daily ways in which national oppression is experienced with a broader call for Québec's liberation. Unemployment, urban decay, ecological disaster, sexism, and police repression all figure prominently in Piché's songs. So does the phrase "Il faut s'organiser" - we've got to get organized. For him, the Parti Québécois is obviously out of the running when it comes to looking at how to do this. The energy must now come from somewhere else.

Lise Payette is sometimes disarmingly cynical about her appointment as the *Ministre de la Condition Féminine* in this fall's cabinet

reshuffle. She knows as well as anyone else that the government dragged its feet on women's concerns during its first two years in office. It even refused to comply with the spirit of the Parti Québécois' own position in support of free abortion on demand. Instead, it merely complied with the minimum requirements of the federal law. The therapeutic clinics since established in some areas have become known as the "cliniques Lazure", named after the Minister responsible for them.

Yet now, Payette is travelling around Québec expressing her own, often militantly feminist views about the situation of women. She tells groups of women not to come crawling to the government for crumbs off the table, but to mobilize and show their strength. She even openly admits that because the government needs women's votes to secure a OUI victory next spring, that this would be a very good time indeed for

"Almost 300,000 public and para-public workers are grouped in the Common Front to try and defeat austerity proposals that former Premier Bourassa never would have dared impose."

women to step-up their campaigns. She is realistic enough about the chauvinism among her male colleagues to speculate that any concessions wrested by women in the coming months, like her own Cabinet appointment, will be "presents for the referendum". At the same time, Payette insists she is sincerely committed to Québec sovereignty, and always devotes part of her speeches to trying to convince women in Québec that it is also in their longer-term interests to vote OUI.

Despite the initial popular reception of the PQ by most social movements, the women's movement in Québec continued organizing campaigns around their own issues; anger at the government's inactivity became increasingly vocal. This year, the government sponsored official International Women's Day celebrations at which its newly-released report "Equality and Independence for Québec Women" was promoted. The report contains some pertinent analysis and a staggering number of proposed reforms. Despite the fact that it tends to concentrate more on the need to "change attitudes" than on the basic causes of women's unequal place in Québec society, and has a gradualist approach with regard to the reforms it envisages, the report is aimed at winning back the confidence of the most active feminists.

The appointment of Lise Payette simply confirms these intentions. Payette's open criticisms of the government indicate the price it is willing to pay in order to enlist her in the OUI effort.

The federalists are the people who refuse to acknowledge the guts of the people...who look at our pulsating heart...through the wrong end of a telescope." So says René Lévesque in the concluding "Call to the Québec People" to the government's "Québec-Canada: A New Deal", the White Paper released on November 1. Federalist forces inside Québec who bring forth tedious arguments about the "economic unviability" of independence or the impossibility of reaching a satisfactory agreement with Canada are regarded as defeatists. As for federalists in English-Canada who promise a renewed attempt to accommodate Québec more equitably in Confederation after a NON vote, the White Paper cannot resist pointing out their fundamental hypocrisy: "These very same people who did not budge an inch in response to Québécois demands...who fear more than anything else a YES vote...are now saying "Say NO and we will say YES!"⁵

The White Paper certainly elicits national indignation, but is very careful about how it does so. Despite a lengthy chronicle of national oppression (and resistance) and an unworkable Confederation, the *current* federalist offensive against Québec is treated as so much hot air. But people in Québec *do* get nervous when they hear Trudeau threaten "to use the sword", when Clark refuses to recognize Québec's rights to self-determination, and when businesses close or factories relocate elsewhere. The White Paper says that none of this should be taken too seriously, and it produces three pages of "counter-quotes" to show that negotiations *will*, in fact, take place. "These Canadian citizens and leaders are realists", coos the text.

In order to get the Québec population to vote OUI, the Parti Québécois must mobilize the very national sentiments they have tried to keep dormant for the last three years. On the other hand, they must never let these sentiments get "out of control" to the point where they begin to directly point the finger at the socio-economic relations that have been at the base of Québec's oppression. The PQ's basic strategy has always been to try and convince Canadian and American government and business that they have full control over the national movement. Their project, as the desperately pro-

business economic development White Paper "Building Québec" shows, is in no way designed to threaten the economic interests of these outside parties. But what the PQ also needs - and tries to demonstrate - is that an agreement by these parties to effectively *dismantle* their present state set-up would not result in serious political instability both inside Québec and beyond its borders. How does the PQ handle this delicate operation? By insisting that the Québécois are "ready" and "mature" enough to assume it. The White Paper particularly stresses this theme. The message seems to be directed outward at the 'international community'. But it is just as certainly directed at Québec's volatile working class, women, and youth. In this context, it reads: "Strikes and demonstrations leave a bad impression. Please behave yourselves! Entrust the negotiations to us, act responsibly, and vote OUI massively on referendum day!"

On the other hand, the Fondation des Québécois pour le OUI is now running large ads in Québec newspapers under the heading **ON SAIT CE QU'ON VEUT** - We know what we want! The ads are obviously meant to counter the charges of confusion and indecision among the population being levelled by the federalists. Each ad gives a succinct definition of sovereignty-association and then discusses its implications in specific areas. An ad in the English-language *Montréal Gazette* takes up the need for common Québec-Canada institutions and job security for federal civil servants; one in *Le Devoir* assures that only laws passed by the National Assembly will be valid in Québec, and goes on to discuss the advantages of a single 'national' budget.

In any case, ringing calls to national liberation are certainly *not* the order of the day. Even when the White Paper evokes the long history of resistance in Québec to federalist domination (which it portrays as *continuous* and fundamentally undifferentiated by class or even political party interests) and lays out the stakes involved in the present referendum campaign, it is always most careful to solicit support for the specific constitutional project which the Parti Québécois has been perfecting for a decade. There could well be a return to more forceful populist rhetoric as voting day nears, but the PQ is in no hurry to embrace it.

The key role of the Québec labour movement in the national struggle has long been appreciated. It is no coincidence that the War Measures Act was used to teach many of Québec's most militant trade unionists "a lesson" by arresting and detaining them without charges. And just as it was Québec's francophone working population that voted the Parti Québécois into power in November 1976, it will ultimately be labour that decides the outcome of the referendum next spring.

At the moment this article is being written, we are witnessing another confrontation between the Québec trade union movement and the Parti Québécois government. And it is the biggest one yet. Almost 300,000 public and para-public workers are grouped in the Common Front to try and defeat austerity proposals that former Premier Bourassa never would have dared impose. The difference is that Bourassa was universally regarded as a puppet of Ottawa and international business. The PQ, on the other hand, has always claimed to be the party "of all Québécois". Throughout the years of Bourassa's government, the unions generally accepted this claim and were satisfied to let the PQ speak for them on the national question. At the time, the PQ even mobilized in support of certain strikes if it appeared opportune to do so. In 1976, the working population threw Bourassa out, and many showed their expectations of the new government by dancing in the streets on election night. Just as disillusion has been slow in mounting, so has any political alternative to the PQ that could present a credible left-wing alternative for national liberation. The PQ has always had a greater ability to manoeuvre because of this. But cracks are beginning to show: Over 80% of the workers in the Common Front have rejected the government's offers to date, and significant numbers are now defying legislation that has suspended the right to strike for 15 days.

On November 14, the Parti-Québécois suffered a triple by-election defeat. The most serious was in the working-class riding of Maisonneuve which awarded the traditionally PQ-ist seat to another party for the first time in nine years. In the National Assembly the next day, Premier Lévesque admitted, probably correctly, that the vote expressed the anger of people faced with a "deteriorating social climate". In the case of working people, this could be read as the clear failure of the government to live up to the expectations it has raised. Lévesque also failed to mention that local

riding organisers by resigning had all but urged supporters to vote *against* the party in this by-election because the leadership has parachuted its own candidate in and stacked the meeting to get him elected!

All this has caused delirium in the federalist media. Quarter-page photos of Claude Ryan, four-page spreads on the PQ defeats with the banner **THE LIBERAL TRIUMPH** repeated across each page - no effort has been spared to depict Ryan as the *de facto* Premier of Québec and the referendum as good as lost. When placed alongside the broad coverage given to the hostile reactions of English-Canadian politicians to the White Paper (for whom Québec's determination to retain exclusive rights over laws and taxes makes the proposal totally unacceptable), the overall effect can be dizzying indeed! Only *Le Devoir* has urged a certain prudence.

They have a point. While many disillusioned PQ supporters may initially vow to vote **NON** in the referendum, out of revenge, most will likely be careful not to confuse a protest vote in a by-election with the opportunity to show Ottawa that they are really serious about exercising their right to self-determination. The federalist campaign is all but saying to the Québécois "Don't you dare vote YES!", and even the current Common Front campaign shows that many here are in no particular mood to be pushed around. The PQ has now created a situation where it can no longer expect to enjoy the same degree of uncritical confidence. Even if people do vote YES to "give the PQ a chance" to put into practice its project for national sovereignty, the test will now be applied in a much more severe fashion. Others may vote YES to say NO to Ottawa *in spite* of the PQ, with the view to moving beyond it in the future. Nobody can say right now what the actual attitudes of the Québec working class will be on referendum day. But undoubtedly, this will be a major source of tension in the coming months of the campaign.

Robert Schwartzwald, Quebec City, is studying the para-culture of Quebec.

1. *TORONTO STAR*, Nov. 2/79. 2. from *SOCIALIST VOICE*, after an article in *La Presse*. 3. As reported in *Le Devoir*, Sept. 28/79. 4. *La Presse*, Sept. 28/79. 5. "Québec-Canada: A New Deal" *Gouvernement du Québec*, 1979. Pp. 104 & 76.

A Twenty-Six Page Catalogue
THE SECOND INDEPENDENT VIDEO OPEN 1979

RETRIEVE
 FUTURE 4
 (SAVE)
 RENAME
 FUTURE 4
 ORIGINAL
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 DO DUMMY READ
 DA DA D A DA
 RESAVE FUTURE 4 2
 FUTURE

Free the SLAVES

Bakeries
Hotels

I WILL TELL YOU A STORY WHICH WILL INCREASE YOU IN THE PITFALLS OF AUTHORITY AND PLOT. THERE WILL BE NO OUT, NO ESCAPE FROM THE WEB UNTIL YOU REALISE THE DECEPTION. I WILL LEAD YOU DOWN

INTRODUCTION

BY CLIVE ROBERTSON

This is the second consecutive year that a video competition has been organised in Canada by video artists.

The Video Open adds to the number of screenings which take place across the country in access centres, galleries, on Cable TV and at conferences. The event was conceived to be analogous to a film festival - where work can be introduced, celebrated and given some economic recognition - to stimulate both circulation and rentals. After two years, in conjunction with the ongoing efforts of everyone that is involved in video, we could say that this slow process is "moving".

Though home video entertainment systems and videodiscs have entered the public vocabulary, the video medium, as used by artists, is still largely underground. When screened outside of its immediate community video has often been downplayed by art curators, sneered at by filmmakers and dismissed by the larger media. And yet the amount of video activity in Canada increases and the quality of work produced improves with each passing year.

historical gap between video art and video as social documentary is closing. The latter has become more sophisticated. The former is often less precious or precocious. As an art form, the language of the medium itself can no longer be usefully limited by descriptive terms such as "narrative", "personal", "structural" or "social action".

Video, as made by independent producers, is still different from television. At first those differences were seen to be romantic or technical in origin - now they are becoming differences of strength. As an example, we can see that documentary video tapes often demonstrate an involvement which suggests a specific function for a known and specific audience. The excitement is not so much generated by the size of the production, or by the five, six, seven or eight figure budgets of film or television, but by the immediate effect on the community and re-stimulation generated by the project. Video documentaries, with few exceptions, are not sterile products which wait to be fertilised by the commercial market. To talk generally about the current health of video art per se has always been more difficult. The four essays that follow tell their own story; the fifth essay discusses the educative tape, *Chaperons Rouges*. The descriptions of the twenty-four tapes following the essays serve to stimulate the reader's curiosity. We do hope that this section will be used to develop contact with the producers and that subsequent

Over the last few years there has been much excitement generated by the development of video inter-

faces with tele-communications. These developments are no more or less miraculous than radio astronomy or electron microscopes. Hot new media 'language' still requires content that gives out more than just its techno-structural characteristics. At one point in its history video was attacked as being merely 'old wine in new bottles'. If the phrase can be returned we can see that we now have new wine in old bottles - an accomplishment unthinkable for most of the publicly known arts.

But let's not wave more flags. The 1979 Independent Video Open has been seen in Kingston, Toronto and Calgary and is to be shown in Vancouver, Halifax and Montreal. The five tapes had the ignominious distinction of having to pass through the Ontario Board of Censors before they could be shown at Cineplex. Two tapes were passed for general release, two for adult audiences and one restricted for audiences over 18. We hear the censors used random tables.

It is unfortunate that all twenty-nine tapes could not be toured across Canada. It is unfortunate that all of the public media in Toronto were absent from the event. But the absence does underline the non-entertainment value of the independent video medium no matter how entertaining some artists work may be within the context of its own community. We can still learn more from showing tapes than we can from gathering to discuss where and how tapes might be shown.

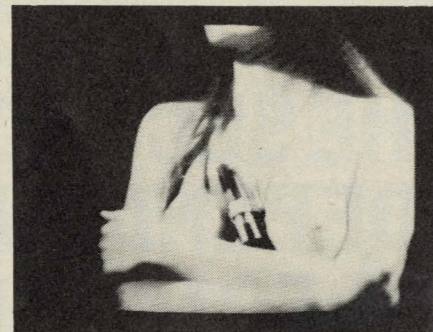
The success of this event is attributable to the video producers who entered. It was further successful due

to the honest and knowledgeable work done by the jury of René Blouin, Elizabeth Chitty, Tom Sherman and Lisa Steele. Support was willingly supplied by The Canada Council and (with a few extra phone calls) The Ontario Arts Council. Organisational work was invaluable provided by Paul McGlashan, Toby Anderson and Tom Harpell in Kingston and additional labour was provided by Trintiy Video.

This catalogue insert was made possible by assistance from The Saidye Bronfman Foundation, Montreal.



The two award tapes from last year's Video Open, (left) *Interference* by Susan Britton and (right) Rodney Werden's *May I, Can I?*



Video as a portable independent medium is ten years old. The 92 tapes that were entered into this

year's Video Open demonstrate a wide range of achievements of both a technical and creative nature. Thankfully, the

tape showings and lectures by the artists will be solicited.

The five award tapes this year create a balanced programme. The twenty nine tapes in total that were chosen by the jury do give a reasonably accurate portrait of recent video activity in Canada. There are tapes included by artists who work solely with the medium and there are artists who may produce only one or two tapes to make some aspect of their work both portable and accessible.

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CHAPERONS ROUGES

A videotape by Helen Doyle and Helene Bourgault.

Available from: La Femme et le film Inc., 10 McMahon, 3 etage, Quebec, P.Q. 1/2". B&W. 45 min.

ESSAY BY RENE BLOUIN

Women addressing the issue of rape and aggression on women does not by any means constitute a new phenomenon.

Neither is the use of video as an animation and documentary tool very new. In fact, through the seventies so many women's groups dealt with these issues in such a variety of approaches that even an inventory becomes problematic. An extremely wide range of subjects has been touched upon in an extensive use of the various media. *La Femme et le film* is a group from Québec City which has worked in the last five years producing and distributing videotapes and films by and for women about the feminine condition and the improvement of "quality of life" in general. Helen Doyle and Héléne Bourgault have been involved in several video productions with *La Femme et le film* and other groups, such as *Le Groupe d'intervention vidéo* in Montréal. Some of their best known productions are "Une nef et ses sorcières" (Hélène Roy and Helen Doyle) and "Partir pour la famille" (Hélène Bourgault).

"Once upon a time, there was a little girl..." Fairytales always seem to start the same way, with the same connotations of danger, fear and vulnerability of the little girls. Such is the opening line of *Chaperons Rouges*, and these connotations are the premises of the analysis which it proposes. "The little girls are asked to go through the woods and they become women raped while crossing the park..." But rather than remaining at that level of emotional reaction against men's behavioral patterns, Doyle and Bourgault treat the issue in a more global manner. Although rape remains the most direct and absolute form of aggression toward women, this tape attempts to deal with the other types of aggression found in daily life. Francine (the accordion player on the tape) refers to these when she says: "I have been raped twice in my body but thousands of times in my head". In some way, *Chaperons Rouges* deals with this perhaps more persuasive trauma: the non-literal forms of rape.

Consciously and after months of work, in an attempt to formulate the exact grid of analysis

which would allow them to comprehensively deal with the issue, Doyle and Bourgault decided to begin with an analysis of the phenomenon of victimisation, what Doyle describes as the dog syndrome: "Confront three people with a dog; if one of them is afraid, the dog will automatically go to her". The second step was an identification of the roots of this syndrome, of auto-victimisation as experienced by women, or for that matter, by numerous human beings. Logically, this led to a consideration of the education system within which one grows up, formulates one's idea of the universe, and one's notions of society and its operational schemes. For the same reasons that fairytales seem banal, that is that they are a fundamental part of our culture and our upbringing, they have enormous impact on our collective (we are all told the same tales) and individual (through the very specific connotations of the individual learning context) sense of danger and fear. *Chaperons Rouges* proposes awareness of this as a first step towards overcoming the more debilitating effects which the stories may have.



Pick-up attempt on the street

Whether it is Francine's reconstitution of her three rapes through acting,

whether it is Francine's recall of her first sexual experience at the age of twelve and her consequent feeling of guilt, the testimonies of this tape touch us directly. However, their value lay elsewhere than in the emotional impact. They punctuate an evolving process of analysis which is grounded in the reality of experience. We

are presented with real human beings who have experienced intense fear. The dramatic qualities of their experience shed light upon the more dogmatic parts of the tape. Inevitably, in dealing with such issues, one cannot avoid the reference to dogma and morals. They are part of the analysis, whether or not they are stated in the conclusion. Reference to the structure of values within our educational systems and their conditioning impact, in the context of an analysis of aggression constitutes a moral statement regarding that system. For instance, the choice which is often presented between being raped or being disfigured indicates quite precisely the moral tone of the values implied. But in order not to fall into preconceived attitudes and perceptions, the grid had to be very rigorous but flexible enough to enable Doyle and Bourgault to deal with the universality of the issue. The editing, in this regard, was crucial. It meant a reduction from some fifteen hours of material to some mere forty-five minutes.

The overall information presented in *Chaperons Rouges* is not new. We all know from police reports

and various independent surveys that most rapists are known by their victims; that rapists do not suffer from any specifically identifiable form of mental illness. We also know that women usually refuse to consider that any male may be a potential rapist, and that the victims of rape habitually experience extreme guilt feelings. But this tape has an undeniably innovative character which resides sometimes in its directness of presentation, the fundamental nature of its content and the vitality of its treatment. It does not aim to present us with a single solution but rather with keys to a new analysis. The centre of this work lies in a reconsideration of the issues rather than in an inventory of statistical information set against emotional manipulation through media. *Chaperons Rouges* is a tape about fear and how it is cultivated in peoples' minds.

After all that variety of material and emotions, the conclusion of the tape is brief. It deals with individual levels of energies, the development of awareness of one's own potential and the effective control of those energies. A possible direction which may be taken is illustrated by a Wendo group session. However, this is not presented as the only solution but as a possible solution. The Wendo



photo: McClashan/Molyneux

The centre of this work lies in a reconsideration of the issues rather than in an inventory of statistical information set against emotional manipulation through media. *Chaperons Rouges* is a tape about fear and how it is cultivated in peoples' minds.

philosophy may be disputed and it is clear that it is presented here as a stimulus for discussion and the consideration of new courses of action.

The real challenge Doyle and Bourgault were facing was not to present just another tape about this

issue. This challenge was a difficult one. They had to avoid the gender stereotypes to which many documents have succumbed. Whether they succeeded in accomplishing this may be open to debate. Maybe *Chaperons Rouges* is indeed falling into these stereotypes. However, this tape deserves serious attention for its simplicity of approach and depth of analysis. In this tape, women are asking fundamental questions about themselves, in a very simple language perhaps at times with a tone of naivete. It's neither dogma nor propa-

anda. Doyle and Bourgault have not sensationalized this explosive material.

The analysis goes beyond the distrust between sexes and can be extrapolated to a consideration of the full problem of paranoia.

Helen Doyle and Héléne Bourgault are independent video producers who have worked with both le centre "La Femme et le Film" in Québec City and Groupe d'Intervention Vidéo.

Rene Blouin is a free lance writer currently living in Ottawa.

MINIATURE THEATRE

A videotape by Nancy Nicol.
Available from: 620 Richmond St. W.,
Apt. 506, Toronto, Ontario.
3/4". Colour. 28 min.

ESSAY BY ED SLOPEK

The story in this tape is presented by a rolling character-generated text and a voice-over narration. The primary imagery is of water and the surface patterns of reflected light. The text proposes a researcher's experiences in a lab. She has been hired to assist the other scientists in their study of a microcosm housed in a flask. When examining the flask under intense magnification, the researcher is able to see not only the activities of the lab itself and those who are working there, but also all things that occur in life are placed in a visual relationship - only in miniaturized form. (Ed.note. This text has been edited for length.)

In the first chapter of Genesis it is written, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The Yuchi Indians of eastern Tennessee begin their account of the origin of life, "In the beginning, there was only water..." These 'myths of origin' were a combination of what took place and what should have taken place. The fourth century philosopher, Salustius declared, "Myths are things which never happened but always are". Myth "transforms history into nature"¹.

In 1952, Stanley L. Miller, an American chemist, attempted to simulate the conditions necessary for the formation of life on Earth 3500 million years ago. To a flask containing a solution of water, methane, and hydrogen he applied an electrical discharge that represented the energy supply of ultraviolet light composing Earth's earliest atmosphere. At the end of a week he found that organic compounds had formed spontaneously.

What is observed depends on the state of the observer. Heisenberg, in his Uncertainty Principle, states, "The act of measuring, whether it be of electrons or brain states, itself affects the variable being measured in such a way as to limit the precision of any possible statement concerned the particular variable."² In systems theory

"there can be no such thing as the (unique) behaviour of a very large system, apart from a given observer".³ In Heisenberg's terms, "What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning". We live in our description of nature. "The eye does not see: the eye is a lens for the mind to look through. Perception, then, is not something we do with our senses; it is a mental act."⁴ As William Blake wrote:

This life's dim Windows of the Soul
Distorts the Heavens from Pole to Pole
And leads you to believe a Lie
When you see with, not thro', the Eye

"There is a qualitative difference between the sensation of red and the sensation of blue. That is a fact of experience...it is a joint product of a complicated transaction...between photic radiations, sense organs for picking up these radiations and translating them into nerve impulses, nerves for transmitting these impulses, and finally a particular part of the brain for translating these into the particular experiences we call colour...all the elements, except the last, are purely quantitative."⁵ Mind transmutes quantity into quality. The digital is organized in the analog. The organism operates on its environment by degree of match or mis-match between the analog re-presentation and the incoming 'news of difference' from its receptors. It has been shown that "nerve pulses", i.e. the digital part of the mechanism, may control a particular stage of such a process, e.g. the contraction of a specific muscle or the secretion of a specific chemical. This phenomenon is one belonging to the analog class, but it may be the origin of a train of pulses which are due to its being sensed by suitable inner receptors."⁶ Visual analog representations are "momentary brain states that are akin to the holographic patterns that can be stored on film."⁷ These must be addressed by the brain with programs that assess the appropriate 'bits' of information. The optical re-presentation on the retina is useless unless acted upon.

Nancy Nicol's videotape, *Miniature Theatre*, is an exercise in 'cognitive organization'. Nicol, like Stanley Miller, constructs her own flask powered by the luminescent sparks of the video screen. But, unlike Miller, she is an alchemist and has hermetically sealed her flask. It has become the Philosophic Egg, placed in the Athanor, the furnace of the Philosophers. The tape, the solar Materia Prima, interacts with the audience, the lunar mercury. In a metal-linguistic discourse it 'putrefies' and the opposites dissolve in the liquid nigredo. The nigredo phase ends when the microcosm of the Philosophic Egg is infused

with the purifying influences of the celestial macrocosm. When this happens "a great number of beautiful colours appear, corresponding to a stage known as the Peacock's Tail."⁸ In the nigredo the WORD is born.

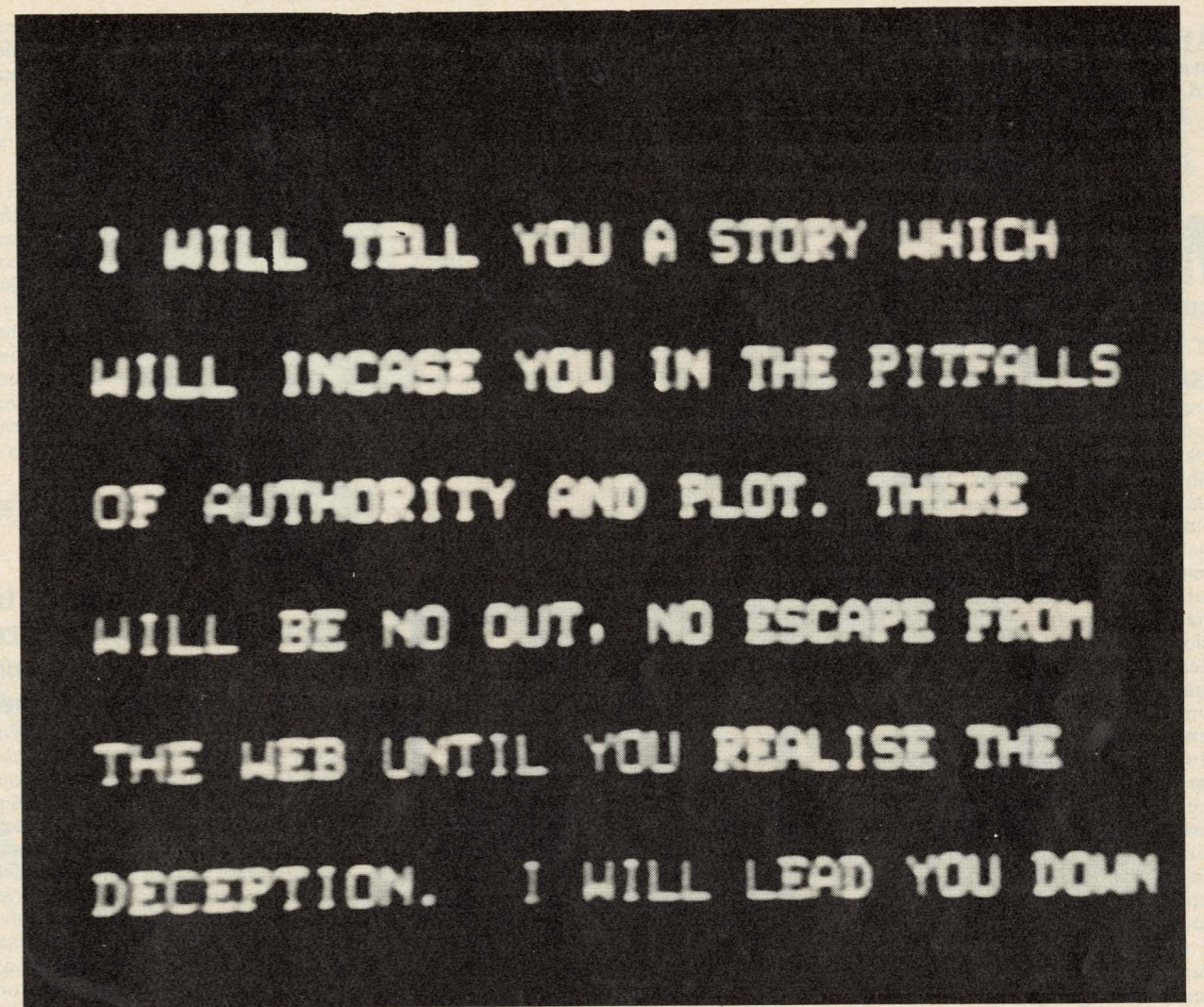
The significance of water as the womb, as a symbol of transformation, is best exemplified in Jung's inter-

pretation of a poem by Holderlin "where one is united with everything that was dear to one and yet cannot enjoy the happiness of the reunion because it is all shadowy, unreal, and devoid of life."⁹ To ascend from the underworld, "the descending soul drinks the 'innocent' water, the drink of rejuvenation, that he may grow wings and soar up again into life, like the winged sun-disc which rises swan-like from the water."¹⁰ The danger in the descent into the solar Materia Prima is that the water, the womb, is contained in the electron flask of the videotape. Daedalus warned his son, Icarus, "My son, be warned! Neither soar too high, lest the sun melt the wax; nor swoop too low, lest the feathers be wetted by the sea..."¹¹

In *Miniature Theatre* the image of the pebbles being organized in a straight line indicates the passage from the probable to the improbable. It is a metonymic expression of the evolutionary reversal of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The law explicitly states that the universe is 'running down' like a clock, its energy dissipated into the random motion of molecules in a gas. Evolution runs contrary to this law. In considering life as an 'open system' "we see in the evolutionary process (what) may be described as the use of energy to segregate entropy. Entropy can also be thought of as a measure of chaos-which may be defined, oddly enough, as the most probable state of a system. Evolution moves the world towards less probable and more complicated arrangements, patterns, and structures, whether in biology or in society."¹²

The origin of differentiation is in the womb. The human embryo contains all the information it needs to begin its journey along its chreod, its 'necessary path', within the genetic code, the double helix of DNA. Only four organic compounds make up the spiraling helix. "The properties of an individual's heredity depend on the way in which those four bases are arranged and ordered in their molecules; all the genetic diversity of the species stems from them, just as all our literature is written with

photo: Nancy Nicol



twenty-six letters and all our music with seven notes."¹³ The double helix is the sin qua non of miniaturization. "Nature's achievement is comparable to printing the Bible on one's fingernail."¹⁴

The labyrinth of the *Miniature Theatre* "tricks the eye".¹⁵ It twists its streams to the sea or fountainhead, the dubious waters turning left or right...and as one entered it, only a wary mind could find an exit to the world again."¹⁶ Concealed in the center is the half-beast, half-human, Minotaur-the mismating that 'taints all honours'. The wary mind must not confuse the 'unity of contraries' with the 'identity of

contraries'. The former resides in the realm of difference, the latter in that of opposition. Intuition-versus-logic, subjective-versus-objective, as opposites these identities dissolve in the liquid negredo of the *Theatre*. As difference, an oscillatory dialectic is established between contrary levels of abstraction. Nancy Nicol's videotape, although clothed in the trappings of identified contradiction, intends the opposite. In opposition we have paradox, and paradox is timeless. When Epimenides, the Cretan, said, 'Cretans always lie', he generated an infinite sequence of quotations within quotations, each classifying the previous. But such logic cannot model causal systems because it is timeless: it is incomplete. Difference contains time. The *Miniature Theatre* exists in time and only in time, and as St. Augustine pointed out, "It is in thee, my mind, that I measure times."¹⁷

FOOTNOTES

1. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957).
2. Steven Rose, *The Conscious Brain* (1976).
3. W. Ross Ashby, *An Introduction to Cybernetics* (1956).
4. Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (1969).
5. Julian Huxley, *Evolution in Action* (1953).
6. John Von Neumann, *The Computer and the Brain* (1958).
7. Karl H. Pribram, "Some Comments on the Nature of the Perceived Universe" (in Robert Shaw and John Bransford (ed.), *Perceiving, Acting and Knowing*, (1977)).
8. Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *Alchemy* (1973).
9. C.G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation* (1956).
10. *ibid.*
11. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths: I* (1955).
12. Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Meaning of the 20th Century* (1964).
13. Vance Packard, *The People Shapers* (1977).
14. *ibid.*
15. Ovid, *The Metamorphosis*.
16. *ibid.*
17. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*.

Nancy Nicol is a media artist living in Toronto. Her previous titles include: *Waves - Coneracting Sync (film)* and *Untitled Film Work*.

Ed Slopek is a video artist living in Halifax.

MODERN LOVE

A videotape by Colin Campbell.
Available from: 4th Floor,
241 Yonge St., Toronto, Ont.
1/2". B&W. 80 min.

ESSAY BY KERRI KWINTER

Modern Love, more than anything else, is a story, a traditional tragic tale. But it isn't like a Soap Opera.

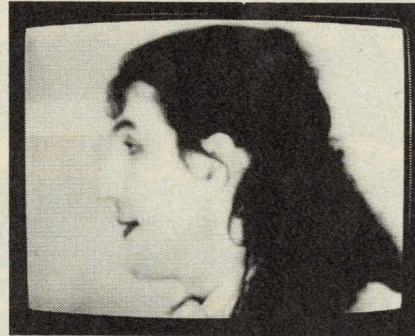
Soap Operas don't have beginnings and endings - *Modern Love* does. Instead, it asks to be compared to the film genre it alludes to: Neo-Realism. The elements that differentiate the video image from a film image, suit the use that Campbell has made of the medium. The video image being more immediate, less rich and detailed, as well as significantly smaller than a film image, is conducive to the 'close-up-on-real-life' intention that the Realists worked for. Other of many similarities, the use of open frames and long takes, are purported to allow quietly sentimental emotions to spontaneously erupt without the intervention of an energetic editor. Most Neo-Realist films (i.e. those of De Sica and Rossellini) also tend toward a 'pity the little guy' attitude. Like *Modern Love*, these films are magnifying glasses on a previously unnoticed victim of a larger, established powerful group. In *Modern Love*, Robin is the victim and the new wave/post-punk/suburban gone warehouse-urban 'scene' is the group.

The tape is perfectly narrative: essentially narrative. Given the many forms of 'making meaning' that video-art has coined and evolved, it's significant that Colin Campbell chose a strict traditional narrative vehicle. Stripped of all secondary and tertiary story telling tricks, *Modern Love's* narrative is bare, and totally conscious of itself, and of its audience. It's a simple story about a girl's attempted penetration into the cosmo life. Her name is Robin and she is played by Campbell. She leaves the suburbs to live alone in the city and work at a mundane job. She spends her leisure time with other self-exiled Thornhillians looking for collectively defined glamour and unconditional love. She has a hard time fitting in, and ends up being dumped by her boyfriend (Lamonte, as

played by David Buchan.), fired by her employer and evicted by her landlord. In the end she forecasts a re-attempted integration, only this time, with the guide book.

In *Modern Love*, all of the characters are in drag (this includes David playing his alter ego Lamonte, the hot show biz entertainer). Having characters in drag highlights Campbell's interest in understanding the meaning of codified, institutionalized gestures, that are particular to each sex, or to each faction. Everyone is playing what they apparently are not or cannot be. It's like the French Sunbather in the opening shot, who uses a wig as a bathing cap, stretching it over her hair - that is also a wig.

The first sequence, the French Sunbather, establishes the camera-lens as mirror. Lisa adjusts herself, the way women are apt to do, into the lens-mirror. She then puts on her protective coatings, the way women have learned to do, and goes to find the warmest spot in



Robin: she's brave but ill-equipped.

the ocean to bathe in. The second sequence is simply a man stroking his non-existent goatee, which is all that is necessary to denote maleness. He tries, unsuccessfully, to understand road directions from an off-camera female voice. In fact, misunderstanding recipes and directions is what the story is largely about. Although these two sequences are not part of the narrative, they establish the major themes in the story, and the storytelling.

The third sequence declares the man-woman love relationship: The camera is on Heidi, a German woman who later meets Pierre, a French man. (Heidi is played by Rodney Werden and Pierre by Susan Britton.) The Camera pans up her body like it did the sunbather's, starting at the crotch. Only this time the crotch is obscured by all the paraphernalia of 'breakfast for two' (indicating that sex is over, it's time to eat). As Heidi's face comes into frame she mechanically begins to serve.

The Heidi-Pierre love relationship is not connected to the Robin-Lamonte liaison, except in a formal way. Although

they share the same fate, they never meet. The strong sense of establishing gender differences, in ritual, activity, dress and demeanor, is the grand gesture of this tape. Everyone does this depressingly well. Polar differences are increased by the characters playing off each other.

Susan's Pierre is straight. His shoulders are straight, his hair is straight. His moustache and cigarettes are straight. Only his eyebrows and smirk are crooked, and Clark Gable taught us what that meant. Rodney's Heidi would have it that 'female' is denoted by a wig that doesn't fit, wide red lips, little binding bras, delicate sweaters 'that forever need ironing' and shoulders with motorized joints. In short, Heidi is an hysterical, vacuous blood-red orifice, centred in a fluid but tamed circle of fluffiness.

The incredible ability to reverse roles, synthesize the 'others' personality, and portray it, kindles a hopeless sadness. First in the ironic pathos of the story's resolution and second in the 'sad-but-true' points it makes about women understanding men not understanding women, and, men understanding or seeing why women hate men.

The reversal of roles has another effect: it confuses audiences responses to stories like these. In a story so much about love and sex, told in such a visually personal style, it is difficult not to fall, even in an unarticulated way, for one of the actors or characters. If for example, you fall for a man in the story, you are falling for a man played by a woman, and have to justify that. If you fall for a woman, you are falling for a woman played by a man, and have to be conscious of that. In the end Campbell is discussing irreconcilable differences in love and further undermines our desire to be attracted to anyone anyway. So any response is invited to question itself.

As viewers, we can perhaps 'identify' (for lack of a better word) with Colin's Robin. She's brave, ill-equipped and destined for oblivion. But because she is on screen, she's *not-us* - besides, we clap to the music, Robin claps *not* to the music. And because we know that Campbell has fashioned Robin, he *is-not* Robin either. For Campbell and Robin the lens is mediator. Each stands on opposite sides of the camera defining and crystallizing him/herself for the other. While recording, Colin makes Robin more Robinish for Colin. When its played back, Robin tells Colin she's **ONLY** Robin. She acknowledges him in

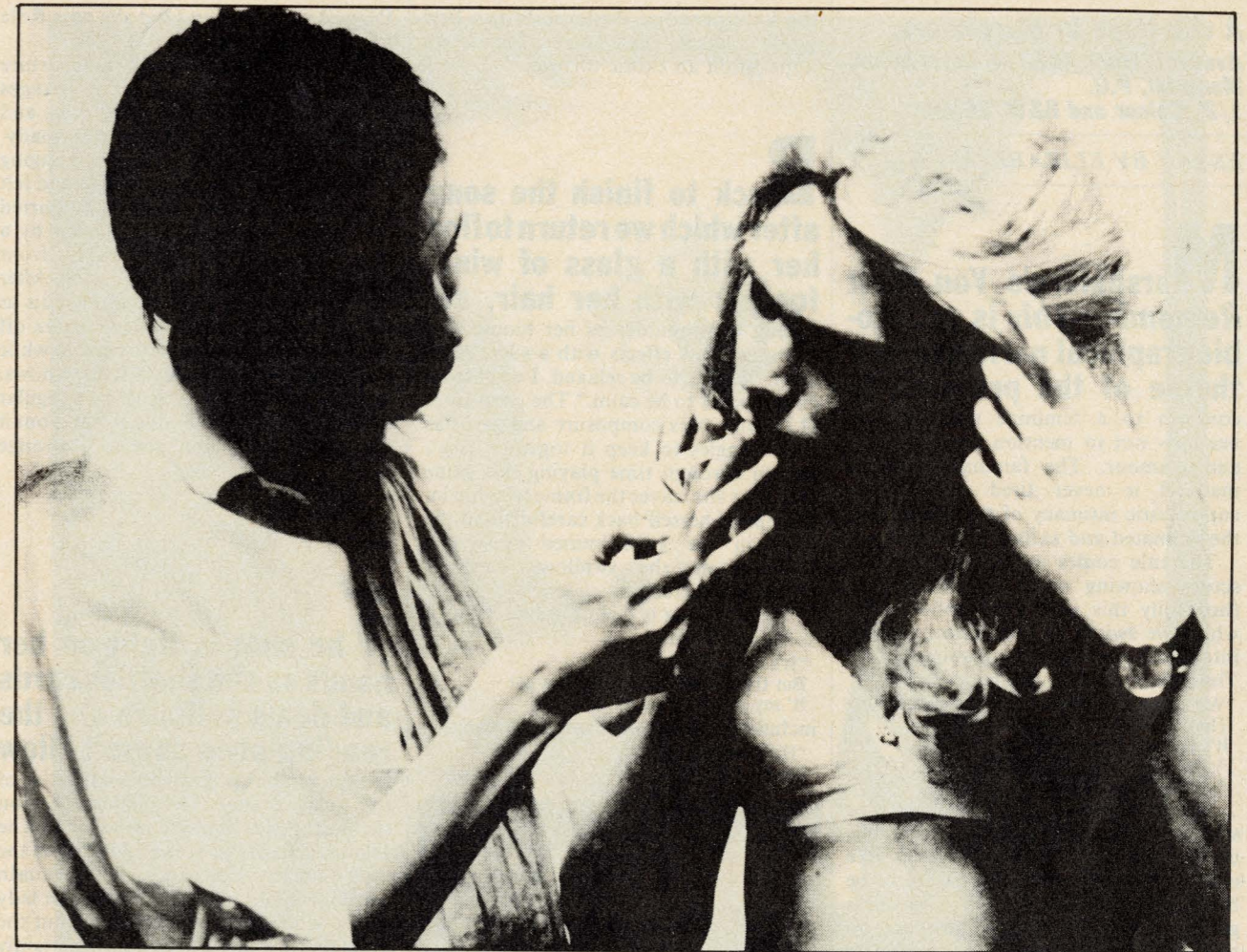


photo: Colin Campbell

All the characters are in drag...having characters in drag highlights Campbell's interest in understanding the meaning of codified, institutionalized gestures, that are particular to each sex, or to each faction. Everyone is playing what they apparently are not or cannot be.

the zerox room and says "Oh, Colin, he's so cute, But he's married." At the same time Campbell, by being both character and creator, tells us that the two of them stand together but are distinguishable.

Modern Love isn't pointed criticism of the world it is trying to portray or the people in it. The empathetic

treatment of the characters and the non-editorialized presentation of the dilemmas undermines any hardline judgements that might have been detected. Portraying characters and creating a story that is as rich as this one

is an often unrecognized major achievement. It is not simple to tell a simple story. Campbell's clear and brutal method is rare and admirable. There are a few problems though. One is the use of an Aristotilian tragic form. Even if it is the most effective disseminator we know, it still eliminates choices and predetermines the outcome. The structure of the characters' relationships allowed the potential for change, but was restricted by the prejudices of narrative form. The understanding of the 'other' that was demonstrated by the actors could have lead to a more sympathetic, less misunderstood or typical end than the inevitable pain-and-loneliness-for-all declaration that tragedy makes. Campbell may have chosen this classical

form, precisely for these qualities, but we have to remind ourselves of its origins (totalitarian, patriarchal aesthetics) and limitations. People acting as 'others' rejecting themselves, or absolving themselves of guilt incurred or pain felt is marvellous catharsis, but in a political way, irresponsible to its audience. But these are not new problems, only more irreconcilable differences.

Colin Campbell has taught video art in Canada and the U.S. and is currently living in Toronto. Some of his previous titles are: *I'm A Voyeur, Secrets, Hindsight, The Woman From Malibu* (series of 3 tapes), *Hollywood and Vine*, and his most recent series, *Bad Girls*.

Kerri Kwinter lives in Toronto.

YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS

A videotape by Marshalore.
Available from: 4412 av. Henri-Julien,
Montreal, P.Q.
1/2" Colour and B&W. 26 min.

ESSAY BY ELIZABETH CHITTY

Marshalore's *You Must Remember This* is an autobiographical narrative on a theme of the pressure to

conform to a feminine stereotype of beauty - not to mention sophistication and glamour. The familiarity of the material is never tired due to the enthusiastic intimacy of the format and the animated and skilled performance.

The title comes up over a television screen showing urban guerilla action, (hopefully this isn't a metaphor) after which we switch to Marshalore singing into a mic to piano accompaniment, "As Time Goes By":

"Woman meets man, a man must have a mate
 That no one can deny.
 It's still the same old story
 A fight for love and glory
 A case of do or die -"

The scene changes to Marshalore as schoolgirl. She's drinking milk and tells us, "I really don't like milk. I don't like milk at all. Mother says if I want to be beautiful I must drink milk." This kid is getting the run-around. There are no baby pictures of her, a fact that can't help but make her ask, "Do you think it's because I'm not beautiful?" After some more goods on Mother (the bitch) she lets us know there's no way they're going to put 'those things' over her teeth and demonstrates how to smile to get around the problem. Then she remembers the threat that if she doesn't shape up at school they'll take away her waterpaints. All precociousness is dropped and she freaks - it was kind of funny seeing video-artist go nuts over losing waterpaints. The way she grasps the cup and drinks, the wide-open eyes, the way her lips press together and the spontaneity of the pacing of the action evoke a super-realistic picture. It is effective expression of a child's simple but keen perception and responses to being vulnerable and manipulated.

Back to the vocalist, singing a few bars from another romantic love-song:

"It's nor the pale moon that excites me,
 That thrills or delights me
 It's just the nearness of you"

then into a scene with adult Marshalore applying make-up with the brave resignation of a condemned woman. Holding

the kohl pencil as dexterously as a first grade pencil, she makes make-up application an exotic torture.

Back to finish the song after which we return to find her with a glass of wine, fooling with her hair, adjusting the shoulder of her blouse and trying various effects with a silver lamé scarf. "I want to be relaxed. I want to be cool. I want to be calm." The pressure is O.D., she loses composure and gasps as she struggles to keep it together. She's having a rough time playing this game and after she leaves the frame to zoom in, she places herself back carefully and the tears in the kohl-rimmed eyes start trickling as she swallows hard in restrained surrender.

The last song is one of the classic girl-songs of all time:

"It's cost me a lot
 But there's one thing that I've got -
 It' my man, my man"

including the spécialté de là maison:

"He beats me too
 What shall I do?"



Marshalore, doing classic girl-songs.

The vocal sections of the tape are marked by a style that is eccentric and unlike the performance style of the

rest of the tape, one of self-conscious mannerism. She sings with lowered soulful eyes, her lips molding their way around words with the conviction of a contortionist; a style that is certainly perfect for the theme. She has the gestures and mannerisms of the lounge songstress down pat and yet something's not quite right. Did Marshalore attend

Peggy Lee school and did she pass Role Model 101?

The final sequence marks a departure from the rest of the tape. She changes persona to that of a young man and delivers the monologue more formally. In the story she tells, he was hanging around the store where he works and felt horny. Picking up a girlie mag he started masturbating but was interrupted by a customer coming in. He goes out front and a lady orders a cup of coffee. After describing her to us at length, he tells us he was struck by a great idea - to jerk off in her coffee. He serves it to her and while she savours it he wonders if she knows. Anyway, he's picked this up as a regular habit and does it with his girlfriend but it doesn't beat slipping one to a strange lady.

The shot is tight on her hands as she shuffles cards and deals solitaire and the reading style doesn't allow

for the kind of performance expertise of the earlier scenes. The impact relies on the outrageous humour of the story. The relationship of this scene to the rest of the tape is unclear, there are certainly hints in the description he provides that the lady in the store may be Marshalore but the hints are only a tease as we are certainly not led in any direction as to the significance of this fact and any number of conclusions could be drawn. The scene wasn't handled effectively from a structural point of view but it works, not only because of the humour but because of the juxtaposition of its raw raunchiness with the earlier sections which framed sexuality or sexual appeal so artificially. If this was the intent, however, then the change in persona gender is a pessimistic statement.

The vocal sections are shot in black and white and the narrative in colour. While everything is shot in

close-up, the vocal parts are hand-held with languorous motion that imitates the musical phrasing and mood. This is sometimes sensuous and sometimes ironic - as when the camera lingers on her hands caressing her body and yet makes



photo: McGlashan/Molyneux

The narrative sections are stationary. Marshalore uses the distance between herself and the camera by leaning in or settling back and when she wants to give us a particularly close peek she gets up and zooms in. Not even a cameraperson intrudes upon the intimacy and yet it is not a closet relationship she is establishing but the strength of one-to-one, of performer to audience.

the mic cable seem somehow demonic. The narrative sections are stationary and shot without a cameraperson. Marshalore uses the distance between herself and the camera by leaning in or settling back and when she wants to give us a particularly close peek she gets up and zooms in. Not even a cameraperson intrudes upon the intimacy and yet it is not a closet relationship she is

establishing but the strength of one-to-one, of performer to audience.

Much of the success of this tape is owed to the tight text and inspired performance. The True Story nature of it is effectively highlighted with the footnotes to popular song. And certainly part of its power is drawn from the simple directness that comes from a comfortable facility with the medium.

Elizabeth Chitty is a video artist and dancer who lives in Toronto.

Marshalore was an organizer of video programming at Vehicule in Montreal for several years. She is currently working Amsterdam. Her previous titles include: *Janet Sees Herself*, *Street Actions*, *Ruelle - en perspective*, *Vers le capitalisme* and *Orpheus in the Nether Land*.

DELICATE ISSUE

A videotape by Kate Craig.
Available from: 303 East 8th Ave.,
Vancouver B.C.
3/4". Colour. 12 min.

ESSAY BY MARGARET DRAGU

As a producer, Kate Craig has made over a hundred tapes--documentsof events at the Western Front, special community productions, collaborations with other artists visiting Vancouver.

In her own tapes, Craig has always used close-up camera work. *Delicate Issue* is a twelve minute exploration of the artist's body with an extreme close-up lens. The soundtrack includes twenty-four voice-over questions posed by Kate

against us? Can information actually be transferred? Accurately? How close a relationship can there be between a person and a machine, or between a viewer and a videotape?

In twelve minutes Craig allows the viewer countless chances to be close with her -- close to her body, close to her mind, deep inside her privacy, intimate with her through this videotape. The viewer is taken in close, so close as to be removed, time and time again -- in and out of focus by camera, in and out of intensity with her voice. And how does the artist feel about being so exposed? She answers this question by asking herself, "when do I cut out?" In this tape Craig clearly displays the artist being self-conscious. Self-involved, assuredly and tentatively. Her questions confidently attack the viewer's privacy and yet Craig is not afraid to admit the problematic aspects of her visual-verbal investigation by asking one too many questions. "The

process. You must repeatedly decide how you feel (what you think) all the way through the tape. She makes you share. She tries to make the video 'two-way'. This is difficult with video, almost impossible with TV. But closed-circuit video has that intimacy. It speaks not to an audience but to the individual. One-to-one. As in a conversation. You have to participate or drop out. You have to make the choices. Craig pushes for connections.

In *Delicate Issue* Kate Craig has decided to get very close! Some people might feel she wants to be too close for comfort. The artist is simply asking, "Where is the dividing line between public and private?". This "dividing line" could be the material surface of the video screen -- or more appropriately in *Delicate Issue*, it could be transparent magnifying lens of the camera itself.

In all relationships, most people need their distance. No matter how personal

How tight are you with the technology? How sensual can technology actually be? Is technology ever really an extension of our bodies? Is technology working for or against us? Can information actually be transferred? Accurately? How close a relationship can there be between a person and a machine, or between a viewer and a videotape?

they get they need to objectify. They can think clearly only by maintaining their distance. With her tape, Kate Craig asks the viewer to define this distance. When viewing this *Delicate Issue* you must ask yourself, is this too close, how much of this experience do I want? You have to decide how far you'll go. As the viewer you have to answer these questions right on the spot. Is Kate Craig being too aggressive? Does she ask too much of the medium? As she controls the depth of this investigation, does she demand too much of the individual in the audience? As the viewer of this tape, you alone know the answer.

Kate Craig has been a director of the Western Front Society in Vancouver since 1973, where she works as a video director of artists' tapes. Some of her previous titles include: *Skins*, *Still Life*, and *Clay Cove*.

Margaret Dragu is a dancer and choreographer who has worked extensively with video. She lives in Toronto.

about this idea of closeness, on and off the screen. She asks "at what distance does the subject read?". "How close can the camera be?". For awhile, as it gets closer and closer, the image becomes clearer and clearer. Then it crosses the borderline. The viewer can no longer tell what the image is. Body parts slip in and out of focus. The image becomes obscure. Just shapes and shadows. The camera moving slowly over a knuckle-or is it a kneecap? The images becomes at times abstract -- at times clean, sharp, almost scientific, but still unrecognizable. Ironically, what you see is distanced by your closeness.

Craig's voice relentlessly continues to pry. "Who is willing to be in the frame?" "Who is willing to watch the frame?" Her choice of questions suggest other kinds of 'close-ups'. How close can you be with the people you work with? How close is too close? How cozy are your politics? How tight are you with the technology? How sensual can technology actually be? Is technology ever really an extension of our bodies? Is technology working for or

CONVERSATION PIECES

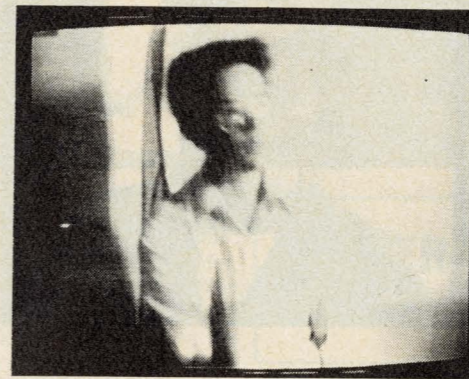
A videotape by Michael Banger
187A Princess Street, #4,
Kingston, Ont. K7L 1A9
3/4". Colour. 17 min.

The passage of information along informal channels is the subject of this tape. The setting is an ordinary kitchen. A group of five or six people are gathered around a table, drinking coffee and talking. The tape is divided into three sections and clues suggest that this tape is a result of several

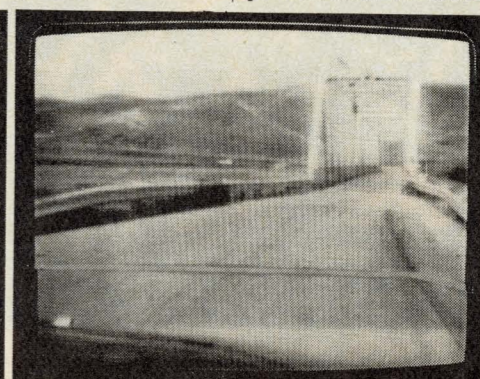
wedding party go by the house; a man says he is drunk. A discussion begins about a proposed park that had been vetoed by the city government. In the middle of this, a record is put on and, although announced to be "something mellow", it in fact drowns out the conversation.

The third section of the tape is in contrast to the audio anarchy of the first two parts. The voice-over is no longer present. We see the group speaking directly to each other, without a mediator. No longer distracted by music and jumping so extremely from topic to topic, they begin to question and answer each other. The possibility of change through action is implied. Now they no longer just identify problems, they actually exchange information. The movement in this tape is subtle, but it does show that all group discussions are not just cocktail parties.

Michael Banger is an artist who works in the Open Series Group in Kingston, Ont.



The group moves from personal, disconnected observations to a self-education. right: Conversation Pieces



It is as much about the need for marking distance, as it is about the landmarks themselves. left: Barn Bridge House Trestle

meetings of this group of people.

Banger has constructed their conversations in a way that a process of self-education seems to be taking place within the group of people. The first two sections have a simultaneous translation mixed over the audio track. But it is not actually a translation since both the speakers and the voice-over 'interpreter' are speaking the same language - English. This structure formalizes the casual conversation by removing that which is personal. We can still see the people gesturing as they tell a story or make a point, but the inflection of voice is lost as the translator takes the words right out of their mouths. This tactic keeps the viewer from settling in and eavesdropping on individuals, and instead makes us much more conscious of the group as a whole and the topics they are discussing.

The direction of the conversations is a mirror-movement of the shift from a strictly individualized consciousness to a group consciousness, and thus one of self-education. In the first segment, there are a lot of 'observations' by the speakers. There is a long story of watching a

BARN BRIDGE HOUSE TRESTLE

A videotape by Alan Barkley.
6243 Oakland Road, Halifax, N.S.
3/4". Colour. 17 min.

Structured very formally, this tape reveals landmarks on the surface of terrain. It is as much about the need for marking distance as it is about the landmarks themselves. The tape is divided into four sections. Using titles to bracket each section, we drive (3 times) and walk (once) toward the object of our visual desire - the landmark: The barn, the bridge, the house, the trestle. But it is *vidi interruptus*, because just as we attain

the object, the motion freezes and the end title appears over the still frame. We are left with one of four prepositions: We went towards. We went over. We went into. We went across. Barkley breaks the rigidity of this pattern by varying the length and visual context of each section. At all times, the camera is the eye of the viewer.

The Barn. We know we are looking out the passenger-side window of an automobile. The landscape is flat cultivated farmland. Ahead is a group of farm buildings. A barn (quonset hut) reflects the sun in its silver surface. As we draw nearer, our vision begins to move to the right to keep the gleaming barn in focus. We are beside the barn. Stop. *We went towards.*

The Bridge. This time the drive is longer. We are staring out the windshield, driving on a two lane road. The landscape is flat and unmarked at first and then slightly hilly. We round a gradual curve and suddenly the bridge appears, an open canopy of steel girders painted blue. We are on the bridge itself.

Turning to the left, looking across the invisible driver, we see the bridge reflected in the rear-view mirror on the drivers' side of the car. Stop. *We went over.*

The House. We see an abandoned house. The land is overgrown with tall grass that moves in the wind, land no longer in cultivation. We walk toward the open doorway of the house. We enter. Our eyes adjust to the darkness as we walk through to an open window in the rear of the house. Our eyes adjust again to the bright light of the outdoors. Stop. *We went into.*

The Trestle. We are standing a long distance from a long, low trestle. A train travels across the trestle from right to left. Our eyes follow. Cut. We are standing on the back of the train on the trestle looking down at the tracks. There is a jerky movement as the train backs up. Cut. Now the train we are on is moving forward. Still standing on the back of the train, we see the track drawn out in front of us like a long unrolling scroll. With no drama, we reach the end. Stop. *We went across.*

B-84

A videotape by Byron Black.

287 East 26th Street, Vancouver, B.C.
V5V 2H2.
3/4". Colour. 30 min.

Assuming his character of Baron Infinity, Byron Black has

lodged a complaint against the irrationality of national borders, the 49th Parallel, in particular, with humour, wit and more statistics about the Canada-U.S. border than you're likely to come across this side of the National Archive.



"Do not collapse into the arms of your anxious suitor to the south. Keep the border intact."
right:
B-84.

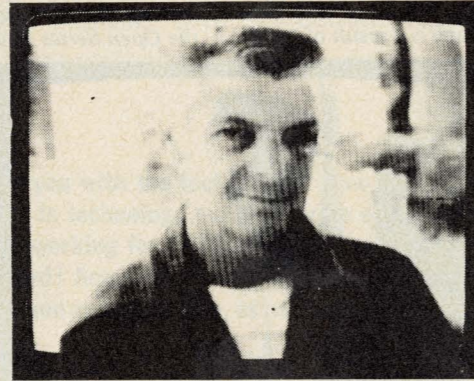
Black has been a resident of Canada since 1970, when he left the United States after eating his draft card. "B-64," subtitled "The Snowback Caper" is also a comment on the recent attempt by CAR (Canadian Artists Representation) to render non-citizens ineligible for Canada Council grants. He asks, "Why should long-term residents slip out of the picture? The Baron is armed and silly. He didn't run from LBJ's crooked war wampum tribe to get snubbed and left to freeze by certain crafty subjects of the Queen's dominion. He will hold his soggy ground." And thus begins the Baron's criminal act.

In protest, Black makes an illegal number of border crossings in the space of 84 seconds, carrying with him his American passport and a Canadian flag, all for the Guinness Book of Records. After stumbling, leaping, crawling, and vaulting his way to a world record, the Baron is exhausted. "After all, I'm a white, middle-aged, male" - but triumphant. "I have achieved a state of Transcanada," he pants.

For Black, the absurdity of the border

is epitomized in the customs officials who guard the artificial boundaries picking through cars, clothes and orifices in their search for "naughty pleasures" in transit between countries, while money and television signals pass quietly through, unregulated. If there is a threat to Canadian identity, it is not posed by the non-citizens living within the country. Canada is much more likely to be seduced by what she sees as 'exotic' in the USA - wealth and power. And in mock-serious tones he beseeches Canada: "Do not collapse into the arms of your anxious suitor to the south. Keep the border intact in spite of the unnatural acts of border officials."

Byron Black makes films and videotapes and gives performances. His previous titles include: *Fort Infinity*, *Hikari Anada*, *Bits of Infinity* and *Images From Infinity*.



"If you just look out for yourself, for your own needs, you're not working class anymore."
left:
Work and Wages

WORK AND WAGES

A videotape by Tom Burger and Bill McKiggan.

c/o Atlantic Filmmakers Co-op,
1671 Argyle Street, Halifax, N.S.
3/4". B&W. 45 min.

An on the street look at unemployment in Halifax, originally shot on 1/2", mostly with a portapak, this tape is the first edited version of 25 hours of interview and location shooting.

There are interviews with older men who can't get jobs, young people who realize that the problem goes beyond their own individual situation, and organizers who have worked within workers' groups and unions for years. Most of these interviews are conducted

on the street, in cars, in Manpower offices and classrooms. There is a pessimism about the future and a bitterness about the actions of government and business that have resulted in the poverty and lack of stability in Halifax. But running through all the discussions is not only a real commitment to change, but a recognition that for any meaningful change to come about there must be organization and a group consciousness. As one teenage boy says, "We should start working together to find a solution to these problems. If you just look out for yourself, for your own needs, you're not working class anymore."

Burger and McKiggan were on hand when the RCMP raided the CUPW offices on October 25, 1978 under authorization from the federal government. This raid came just after the postal workers' legal strike had been

outlawed. As the RCMP coolly go through documents and snapshots, the union members photocopy everything that is being removed from their office. When the interviewer asked who had sent the RCMP to the office, Corporal Bishop replies, "No comment."

Along with these interviews, there is a complete examination of the situation at the Halifax Shipyards, where 1000 men had recently been laid off. HawkerSiddley, a British owned company, was pulling out, and the Nova Scotia government decided against public ownership of the shipyards. When the yards were finally sold to a conglomerate of Eastern Canadian and Dutch owners, only 200 workers were rehired. As decisions like this are made, the workers of Nova Scotia understand more and more each year that working people need to control the means of production before any real change will take place in the spiral of unemployment and poverty.

Tom Burger and Bill McKiggan previously produced the tapes *Charley Murray*, and *The Finest Kind*.

MR. KLEIN

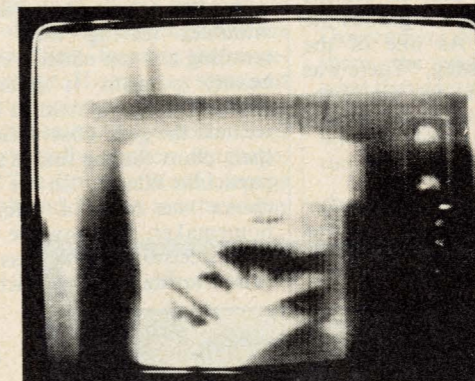
A videotape by Peggy Cady and Chris Creighton-Kelly.

203 Raynor Avenue, Victoria, B.C.
3/4". Colour. 17 min.

"Y"oung Criminals Go Into Computers" reads the banner

headline of the newspaper thrown on the

But we do see his slow-scan video death just before he goes to the window and jumps.
right:
Mr. Klein



bed in the first action of this tape, and the stage is set. We have entered an anonymous hotel room with Mr. Klein. We never see the mysterious Mr. Klein, but instead see through his eyes. The camera seems to have taken the place of his head. A satchel is unpacked on the bed. A travelling clock is taken out and set up, papers are removed. Hands dial the telephone, eyes look around examining the room - the chair in the corner, the window with venetian blinds drawn. No answer on the phone, receiver returned to its cradle. Portable radio taken out of satchel, turned on. Move to the television, television turned on, switching channels, daytime programmes probably late afternoon by the look of the content. Up until this point, the sound is natural room noise.

But the image on the hotel television changes. It becomes a black and white video still, abstract for awhile until it becomes a picture of a man looking out a window. Simultaneously, the sound of the room has disappeared, replaced by a high-pitched oscillating tone. The noise of anxiety. The noise fades abruptly and sound in the room comes up again. Mr. Klein moves away from the television and goes to the window. And the pattern is established.

In between the new recurring black and white video images that pre-empt the regular programming of the hotel TV, Mr. Klein moves restlessly around the

room. But when an action is indicated in the black and white dot pattern, he performs it immediately after: placing another phone call; washing his hands, falling on his back in bed. And each time the video image appears on the television in the room, it is accompanied by the high anxiety electronic noise. But is he programmed by the television, or is he creating the image with his own thought patterns? We don't find out. But we do see his slow-scan video death just before he goes to the window and jumps.

Peggy Cady is an artist and the former video curator at Open Space in Victoria. Chris Creighton-Kelly is a video artist.



"I taught her that girls should be pretty, inoffensive, and always do what they're told."
left:
Mother Daughter
Mother Daughter

MOTHER DAUGHTER MOTHER DAUGHTER

A videotape by Sally Dundas.

410 Queen Street West,
Toronto, Ont. M5V 2A7.
3/4". Colour. 27 min.

There is a stylized, formal 'politeness' evident in the open-

ing scene of this tape which is set in a comfortable middle class home. A young woman comes into a living room and sits down in a chair to read a book. When a middle aged woman enters the room, she stands. When a white-haired older woman enters, they both stand. Together, they form three generations of a family. The youngest woman reveals that she is expecting her first child in a few months in a speech to the camera. This fact is significant at the end of the tape.

The story, told in a series of addresses to the camera and also through straight dramatic scenes, is a complex history of women living in quiet privilege. The

matriarchial older woman, Victoria, grew up in England in a household with enough wealth to include two servants. She is quick to point out that her middle-aged daughter's husband has never made enough money. But Mary has never had to work. However, Mary's daughter, Tina, is a working woman, by choice as much as from necessity. For these women, especially the older two, their station in life has been entirely determined by their husbands. The only power struggle they have been party to in their families is intra-female, as daughter fights against mother only to grow up and trade roles with her mother as she seeks to instill 'values' in her own daughter. The rigidity of this pattern is

remarkable.

The grandmother says of her instructions to her daughter, "I taught her that girls should be pretty, inoffensive and always do what they're told. That way they'll grow up and marry well and never get hurt." Her daughter says, "I exchanged my dreams for those of my husband." She uses this fact to rationalize being hard on her own daughter - so she will hang onto her dreams. And Tina, the youngest, says, "It is entirely possible that I have spent my entire life trying to be as far out of earshot of my mother as possible."

When Tina marries, her mother is upset. In a conversation with her own mother, she says, "Now she's going to turn out just like us." She didn't raise Tina just to get married and have babies. And of course we remember Tina's statement at the beginning of the tape - she is indeed pregnant. The family ties of these women seem to be strangling each one in turn. There is an ever-repeating pattern of rebellion and eventual capitulation for self-survival: the inevitability of the birth cycle. Reproduction creates new material to be molded by the former generation who are already too crippled by the 'creation' process of the generation before them to ever be healthy.

Sally Dundas is a video artist. Her previous titles include: *Marriage, Part I* and *Marjorie*.

THE SECRET LIFE OF CORNELIA LUMSDEN

A videotape by Vera Frenkel.
228 Maplewood Avenue,
Toronto, Ont. M6C 1K2.
3/4". Colour. 60 min.

The sub-title of this work is **Her Room in Paris.** Frenkel uses video to reconstruct the life of a little known Canadian novelist who lived in Paris between the wars. It takes the form of a detective story of sorts, with bits of evidence surfacing through the narrative. Frenkel plays all of the female characters, friends, rival, an expert, and a CBC announcer, with Tim Whiten taking the

Cornelia Lumsden, there is much contradiction. She may, in fact, still be alive. She may have been involved in blackmailing schemes against her lover's father. She may have been involved with a prime minister, and on and on. The structure of the tape is such that all the evidence falls like a shuffled deck of cards onto the table: some cards are face down and obscured, other cards are covered, just the edges peek out. No card tells the whole story.

Frenkel uses our familiarity with popular story formats and the conventions of television to reveal the strange, the hidden. In the end it is not the facts of Cornelia Lumsden's life which are revealed, but the structure of what causes that life, or anyone's life, to remain mysterious, no matter how rigorous the examination of it is. As one of the characters says of Lumsden, "There was a certain discontinuity in her conversation, but people took it because she was modern."

Vera Frenkel is a sculptor, printmaker and visual artist who works in film and video also. Her previous titles include No Solution - A Suspense Thriller.

"What happens in exile is slow and relentless, but it does happen." right: The Secret Life of Cornelia Lumsden



"Kelly has won over 1200 awards for baton twirling. She is planning a career in law and politics." left: Automaton 79

AUTOMATON 79

A videotape by Luce Gauthier.
39 Sullivan Street,
Toronto, Ont. M5T 1B8.
3/4". Colour. 12 min.

The scene opens on a beauty pageant. We know this because we hear the singing of "Miss America" on the soundtrack and see a grinning, dinner-jacket-clad master of ceremonies. His grin is fake and covers the lower half of his face. "I am your host, Spurt Barks", he says, his voice just slightly distorted. He has been processed. As the tape continues, there are scenes of Spurt

spouting off, gesturing grossly about how 'big' the contestants are, telling corny jokes and gradually becoming inaudible as his words are eaten by an audio synthesizer.

Intercut with the gruesome humour of Spurt, are shots of the 'contestants'. They bear a remarkable resemblance to each other. They are, in fact tiny toy robots. Their diminutive size enhanced courtesy of a macro-lens, they appear as big as life on the screen. With randomly blinking lights for eyes, square plastic bodies, legs jointed stiffly at the torso ending in pink moulded rubber space-boots, they march around the stage like a Star Wars float in the Rose Bowl Parade. Natural beauties of the future.

As the robots strut (and sometimes stumble, leaving their stumpy legs treading air), an edited version of a real beauty pageant is heard. Via that wonderful p.a. system in Atlantic City, we hear the girls' observations about life, their plans for the future and their own particular talents. "In the past, the only choice was to be a wife, mother and homemaker. But now we have to make other decisions," says Miss Kentucky (or Miss Florida, or Miss Michigan, or Miss

Ontario, for that matter). Perhaps this is the same contestant who is "...a trained paramedic, majoring in speech communications. Kelly has won over 1200 awards for baton twirling. She is planning a career in law and politics."

But as the beauty contest script-writers rush to catch the last train of the Women's Movement, they discover that, alas, it has left them behind. No matter. They can dig up one last 'relevant' answer for the paramedic-speech-major-baton-twirler. Yes, she says brightly, women have made some significant advances of late - "the freedom to vote and the freedom to be ourselves." A round of applause for this Jill of All Trades and a final shot of all the little beauties, as their once luminous highlights blend into a uniform tone of nauseous green.

Luce Gauthier studied film and video at OCA and is a member of Interspecies Music. Previous titles include: Whale-scapes and Piggit.

THE CANAMAMA LECTURES

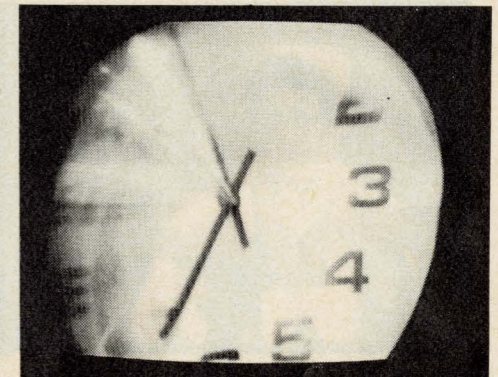
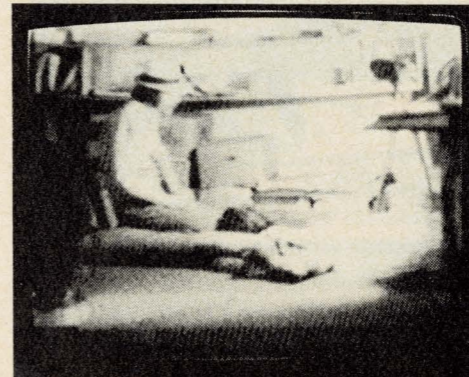
A videotape by Gerry Gilbert.
358 Powell St., Vancouver B.C.
1/2" B&W. 30 min.

Gerry Gilbert is a poet. This tape is comprised of seven sections, each a record of Gilbert performing his work. Some are straight documents of gallery readings. Others are private readings, forming the voice-over for an image. His reading style and his writing style coincide. In both there is a gentle insistence on the importance of language, especially spoken language. One piece, "The Spoken Word", opens with, "English and French are the major

never just a 'laundry list' of events and objects. It is a record of the activities of several days in his life, ordinary days. Somewhere in the text he says, "I put these lines wherever I can find them." And he does. The rising, the going to bed, the meals eaten, the words read, the food prepared, the shopping done, the hat bought, the looks on the street...all get their line. The flow of the simple phrases is such that the experience is never 'named' and thus crystallized. Instead, each event, each object is freed from its separateness; they are allowed to stream together. Contained within this record of life as it is lived is a parallel record of life as it is felt and considered. Being broke is not just buying... "half a dozen eggs for fifty-one cents. Brown ones." It is also knowing that, "I think about subsistence. Government doesn't think about that. To them, the problems are affluence and what that does to them." And it is looking at the city skyline and seeing, "Loggers all laid off. Hotels all gone silent. Vancouver too cold. Intelligent death."

Gerry Gilbert is a poet and video artist.

"Loggers all laid off. Hotels all gone silent. Vancouver too cold. Intelligent death." right: The Canamama Lectures



"The best time spent is probably the time wasted." left: Juan Geuer: The Unknown As Function of Space and Time

languages of Imperialism and as such are here to stay." He goes on to recommend that for any language to be truly representative of Canada, it would have to encourage the development of the many languages now spoken here. It would not necessarily be a hybrid of Urdu, Portuguese and Finnish, but rather a recognition of their particularities and differences, taking into account that each different language is uniquely capable of articulating certain ideas and feelings and this must not be lost in assimilation. "Revolution not by the written word, but by the spoken word."

But Gilbert's work is not, by any means, communications theory. In one piece, "Preface", he illustrates an alternative to what he sees as the basic failure of our language to connect us with our lives. The piece is read, almost in a whisper, over a single image referred to in the text. The image is of Gilbert making a pallet on the floor of a cluttered room, undressing for bed and putting on an old bathrobe. The text is bare and direct, but

JUAN GEUER: THE UNKNOWN AS FUNCTION OF SPACE AND TIME

A videotape by Jeff Hemmings.
R.R.2, Battersea, Ont. KOH 1H0.
3/4". B&W. 28 min.

This tape was begun in 1979 at the exhibition commemorating the Einstein Centenary at St.

reference system that is imposed over the natural reality. He says; "There is something strange going on -- I do not perceive what I see -- perception and seeing are not really the same thing. It always depends on how you as a human being, when you look at something, you push a reference system over it -- and it's the reference system that you have invented which determines your perception, it is not what you really see."

His work has an outward appearance of simplicity as he proceeds from some of Einstein's ideas about time, especially the fact that time is a property of space. Says Geuer, "The best time spent is probably the time wasted."

Jeff Hemmings has worked as a video technician and coordinator for many groups investigating alternate sources of energy. His other titles include: What is Acceptable Risk?, Living in a Conserver Society, and The Transition to a Renewable Resource Society.

BLUE SKY DIALOGUE

A videotape by Nora Hutchinson.

1090 Jervis Street, #202,
Vancouver, B.C. V6E 2C3.
3/4". Colour. 12 min.

This tape is very much a 'blue sky dialogue', a meditation that seems to imply a consideration of a relationship (between the man and woman in the tape), a series of actions without meaning. Hutchinson defies any linear structure by constantly referencing the action in a circular pattern. Early on

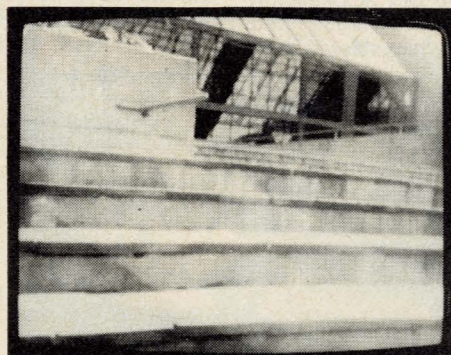
other. We see a still photo of her sitting in back of a bouquet of flowers. Cut to the man sitting at a table, in colour, sitting behind what might be the same flowers. He sits, staring into the camera, and finally begins to chuckle, unable to keep a straight face. She comes in the room, laughing also. But it is implied that she broke his composure in the first place, made him laugh. They illustrate a curious cause and effect relationship.

At the end of the tape there is a circling pan of the two of them. They are arranged, tableau-like, on the staircase. He is standing looking to the right, leaning on the banister. She is sitting on the first step. The camera follows the line of her body to her bare foot, up his legs to his face and then down to her face, and then around again and again, while he reads in voice-over about leading her around blind-folded. "Now we know what it is to be blind."

Nora Hutchinson is a video artist who studied at the University of Guelph.



In sequence, they appear in the frame, sometimes doing mirror actions of the other. right: Blue Sky Dialogue



He reveals that each hour of programming produced by the CBC costs \$31,000. left: Tape Produced at CBC, Vancouver

TAPE PRODUCED AT CBC TELEVISION VANCOUVER

A videotape by Bill Jeffries.

P.O. Box 48113, Bentall St.,
Vancouver, B.C.
3/4". B&W. 13 min.

This tape begins with an awkward, lurching shot of a modern building. A voice-over announces, "This camera is being held by a Canadian video artist. This artist is crawling on his hands and knees from the street in from the

gutter and through the front door of CBC's Vancouver offices." But this artist is no meek mendicant. Huffing and puffing, quoting statistics all the way, the journey traveled resembles that of a wounded bull elephant going after the unsuspecting white hunter.

"Do you know that the cost to the public to maintain this monolith is \$517 million. That's \$22 a year for each Canadian...And where do video artists fit into the plans of CBC to develop more Canadian content?" he asks after reading from their promotional brochure about projects and plans for the future of our national network. "Nowhere", is the answer. He reveals that each hour of programming produced by the CBC cost \$31,000. "And how much of that was spent on video artists, Mr. Johnson?" None, of course. It is an accurate picture of an artist with no outlet, which is often seen to be the plight of video artists in this country.

We never see the narrator/camera crawler, but he becomes very threatening to Mr. Johnson. He snarls, "Why do

you always wait for parliamentary directive before acting...If the United States Television networks started broadcasting video art, I bet you would too, Mr. Johnson. Wouldn't you?"

Reaching the door of the building, he enters. "I'm going to go into Studio Four and make a tape and then I'm going to rip the studio apart," he pants while crawling down the office corridor. Rounding the corner, he meets a security guard. "I'm afraid you're restricted, sir," says the guard politely peering down into the camera. "You mean this is as far as I can go?" gasps the frustrated artist. It is an accurate scenario. Short of seige, the individual artist has no access to the public media in Canada and that's the truth.

Bill Jeffries is a member of TBA/TV, a Vancouver media collective. He is currently working on a tape about cooperative housing, *The Art of Doing Away With Landlords*.

ECHOES OF EDEN

A videotape by Jan Koot.

#5, 1455 West 14th Avenue,
Vancouver, B.C. V6H 1R4.
3/4". Colour. 8 min.

Using postcards in Vancouver-the-beautiful intercut with still shots of graffiti scrawled around the city, this tape examines the gap between those who want to 'sell' the city and those who live there. The voice-over reads from various promotional brochures put out by the Chamber of Commerce, the Hyatt Regency Convention Centre and a stock brokerage firm. Their view of Vancouver is very much one of a 'raw material', a place just ripe for 1) visiting and spending in, 2) moving to and spending in and investing

the screen as the voice-over extols the necessity of a Hudson's Bay fur coat for the true Vancouver experience.

Toward the end of the tape, the voice-over begins reading from the promotional material of C.M. Oliver, a brokerage firm in Vancouver. The implied anarchy of the graffiti is pale beside the scare tactics of this Canadian company. In a chatty history of the firm, a triumph of stability through depressions, recessions and times of economic trouble, the company slaps unions and socialist moves by government - they're bad for business. And business is what C.M. Oliver is all about. They've stayed on top and are committed to this. "We will grow with British Columbia and a united Canada." purrs the ad-man, attempting to lay to rest all voices of dissent in a country racked by unemployment and getting worse all the time.

Jan Koot was a founder and is the present broadcast co-ordinator of TBA/TV, a Vancouver media collective.



According to their brochures, Vancouver is one long sunset over English Bay with lots of nice places to eat... right: Echoes of Eden



"You don't and never have had any real control over your lives in this bogus democracy." left: Convicted But Not Convinced

CONVICTED BUT NOT CONVINCED

A videotape by Antony Lorraine with Another Weigh Imprisonment Cooperative.

22 Kensington Place, Toronto, Ont.
M5T 2K4.
3/4". Colour. 20 min.

Touching upon some recent incidents that have occurred in the prisons, this tape is a collage of real footage and dramatic re-enactments which blend together into a powerful accusation leveled at not only Canada's

Criminal Justice system specifically, but the whole prison system as it exists.

In an early dramatic sequence, we see Jackie Burroughs playing the good bureaucrat, in a white-coat and spectacles, reading from a pile of documents on her desk. As each document is read, she efficiently stamps it and files it in a basket marked "Information". The irony of the scene is that the documents are all statements from leading criminologists on the uselessness of the Penal System as it is practiced now. One goes so far as to say that only 10% of the prison population can actually be considered a danger to society and thus need to be incarcerated.

Intercut with this and other dramatic scenes, are clips from television files: busloads of troops arriving at Kingston Penitentiary in 1971 during the prisoners' uprising there and a prisoners' press conference during the B.C. Pen disturbances in 1976. Here the prisoners point out that while they want to be reasonable and keep violence to a minimum, the fact remains that guards

who have viciously beaten prisoners have been neither fired from their duties nor punished - merely transferred.

A dramatic presentation of prisoner, Andy Bruce's written statement to the court investigating the death of Mary Steinheiser, a hostage who died at the hands of a police marksman in the B.C. Pen, is chilling. He says: "I'll leave all of you to carry on your discussions of capital punishment, longer sentences and tighter security because these are the things that will take your minds off the fact that you don't and never have had any real control over your lives in this bogus democracy."

Another Weigh is a cooperative who produce information and entertainment videotapes concerning prisoners. Further informational tapes expanding on some of these are: *Organising Inside*, *Capital Punishment and Maximums*, *evidence and Violence*, and *Alternatives: programs and decarceration*.

PIRANHA FARMS

**A videotape by
Bruce McCrimmon.**

**c/o B.C. Institute of Technology,
Vancouver, B.C.
3/4". Colour. 29 min.**

Piranha Farms is a made-for-video production of a multi-media performance of the same name written and choreographed by Vancouver artists Eric Metcalfe, Hank Bull and Jane Ellison. It is an intricate collage of old movie footage and soundtracks, dances, mime sketches and actions. At times, the production has the look of Sesame Street for adults, with simple, brightly coloured costumes and

crescendo in the movie clips as a flood sweeps into buildings, and cars careen around a race track. The culture is being washed away in its own accumulated imagery. Airplanes burn, divers plunge one after another into the prepared pool. Esther Williams rises out of the water on a burning alter, skiers chase each other over a treacherous course, until the final death fall - a lone skier plunges down into a seemingly endless valley of snow.

In its accumulated imagery *Piranha Farms* is an homage to spectacle and male sexuality. The spectacles are as much death-denying as they are death-defying. And in the end, the Vertical Venus is silhouetted against a background of constant explosion - in the air, in the sea, in space - until she is transformed into Botticelli's Venus.

Bruce McCrimmon is a producer in the media department at the B.C. Institute of Technology.



The culture is being washed away in its own accumulated imagery. Airplanes burn, divers plunge... right: Piranha Farms



Profits from the Sudbury plant have been used by Inco to finance investments in new nickel mines in Indonesia... left: Winding Down

WINDING DOWN

A videotape by Terry McGlade

**410 Queen Street West,
Toronto, Ont. M5V 2A7.
3/4". Colour. 26 min.**

When this tape was produced, the Steelworker's strike against Inco (International Nickel Company) was still going on. By the end of the long strike action, public sympathy had been aroused for the workers in the mines in Sudbury. But in the beginning, there was little understanding of the causes of the strike and the reasons

for the tenacity of the strikers, who held out for 8 1/2 months. Through interviews and location shooting, this tape examines an industry that is gradually phasing out its Canadian operation, and the effect this winding down has on the people working in that industry.

In 1950, 95% of the nickle consumed in the western world was mined in Sudbury. By 1976, that figure had fallen to only 30%. The whole industry is shutting down in Canada. There are other areas of the world where the investment is more lucrative. Vast profits from the Sudbury operation have been used by the nickle companies to finance investments in new nickle mines in Indonesia and Guatemala. As a result, in one company alone (Inco) 2800 jobs have been eliminated. The layoffs began in February 1978. And in April, 1978, Inco and the Steelworkers began negotiations on a new contract.

The difficulties for the union in these negotiations were enormous. The layoffs had hit Sudbury hard. Many families had left, looking for work elsewhere. Morale

was low. Inco attempted to blame the workers for the current situation, saying that they were finally paying for the period of prosperity in the 70's, when in fact Inco's own investment decisions were closing down the operation. Safety was an issue in the bargaining from the union's point of view. Mining is a hazardous job. In Ontario, since 1935, 1,513 men have died on mining properties.

When Inco offered a poor package to the union, the workers felt insulted. But they were in a bind. They knew the company sitting on a 13 month stockpile of nickle could afford a strike - at least for awhile. And they also knew that for them, it was either strike now and close the company down or have to do it later. The union voted to strike and the workers went out in the fall of 1978.

Terry McGlade works in video and dance. He has produced several series of programs for cable stations in Toronto.

LONG PLAYING

A videotape by Susan MacKay.

**#2, 112 Winchester Street, Toronto, Ont.
3/4". Colour. 22 min.**

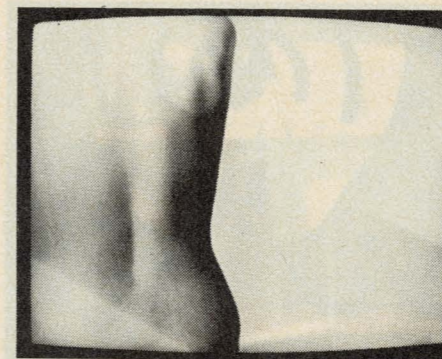
Susan MacKay has assembled a tape of disjointed moments and actions. Different faces appear and re-appear in isolated sequences, making statements. There is a crystallized separateness in each shot.

The tape opens with a downward pan of floorboards. Cut back to the torso and the torso moves slightly. If there is meaning to this sequence, it is simply to point out the arbitrary nature of our

commercials. When reality is broken into little bits, contradictions don't exist.

Running through the entire tape in bits and pieces is a monologue delivered by an anxious woman. She is fretting about the "...85,000 different elements working for one action...I wish I could comprehend it". As shots of her recut, she becomes more agitated and distraught until near the end of the tape she says exuberantly, "It's all here!" With this revelation, the sound track of the Platters stops, and the image continues frame by frame. Instead of a moving image it becomes a transforming image. The minute alterations of her face become tortured, demonic and religious by turns. It takes almost a full minute for the frame by frame recording to complete the gesture of raising her eyes to look into the camera. Time crawls as this ordinary action is broken to bits.

Susan MacKay has organized performance and video events at both YYY and TPS in Toronto.



The torso moved only slightly... yet we register it in its separateness as moving. right: Long Playing



Suddenly, he cuts the hanging leg-form down, pierces the skin and releases the 'blood' which is thin plaster. left: Liquid Legs

perceptions. The floor may be in any position to the viewer. It is entirely determined by the camera. Down and up are entirely relative to the chosen camera angle. The torso moved only slightly. If it had been surrounded by more dramatic movement, we would have hardly noticed, yet we register it in its separateness as 'moving'.

After this abstract beginning, the tape proceeds in a more literal way to examine and break our perceptions into separate parts. In one sequence, a series of faces appear on the screen and individually each says, "I don't know". These statements are enigmatic and completely non-narrative. It is such a fragment that attaching any 'story' to the "I don't know" is impossible. And yet each person is totally believable. Shortly after, however, each face appears again, this time saying "I know". This juxtaposition relies heavily on the Television Testimonial we are familiar with in all forms of tv, from the newscase to the

LIQUID LEGS

A videotape by Gerard Pas.

**P.O. Box 77497, 7007 gl. Amsterdam,
The Netherlands.
3/4". B&W. 15 min.**

A documentation of a performance given at St. Lawrence College, Kingston. *Liquid Legs* begins with an examination of the properties involved in the performance: a leg-like form which seems to be rubber or latex filled with plaster, hanging from the ceiling; a picture of a primitive leg brace hung on the wall; and next to this, a hunting knife stuck in the wall.

Pas enters the performance space. He

manipulates the hanging leg. It seems out of proportion, the foot too big for the thin leg. It is flexible. "This is my foot...sometimes," he says simply. And rolling up his pant leg, he reveals his own crippled leg, whose proportions are very like those of the hanging leg-form.

Taking the knife from the wall, Pas strokes his own crippled leg and the 'liquid leg' with the blade. It is difficult to watch. It seems dangerous. It is. He says, "But mine cuts", as he draws blood. "Yet this is mine", he says, touching the hanging leg form. "Is it so different really?" This is the central question of the taped performance: why the separation of the crippled limb from the rest of the individual's body as something abnormal? and why the concurrent separation of the crippled individual from the social body itself?

Over and over, Pas attempts to integrate and fuse together the part of himself that is crippled to the part which is 'normal'. Balanced precariously on his

'good' leg, he forces his crippled foot into his mouth, at the same time trying to get the 'liquid leg' in too. Visually, he seems to be turning inside out. Suddenly, he cuts the hanging leg-form down, pierces the 'skin' and releases the 'blood' which is thin plaster. Using this blood/plaster, he writes on the wall in crudely printed letters: TIMMY. As the word appears, there is an instant recall of the yearly poster-child campaign used by charities in their drive for money for 'crippled children'. "Crippled children" - something in the phrase seems responsible, at least in part, for the separation of the leg from the child that Pas has shown us.

This tape was produced at St. Lawrence College with No Studio Product and taped on location at St. Lawrence College Art Gallery, Kingston. Gerard Pas is a performance artist.

PESTICIDES: THE HIDDEN ASSASSINS

A videotape by Shawn Preus, Don Tuck, Cynthia Bodlak, Fred Easton.

c/o The Video Inn, 261 Powell Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1G3. 3/4". Colour. 35 min.

This tape seeks to educate the people (specifically of British Columbia) about the effects of uncontrolled pesticide use in their environment. But the implications are not restricted to one province in one country in the world; pesticides affect us all. The producers' point of view is clear: pesticides are produced and used on a massive scale

chemicals without any warnings about their use. Flea collars for pets, for instance, contain lyndane, a powerful cancer-causing agent. And a common garden spray contains Captan, known to produce birth defects if inhaled or absorbed by pregnant women. Neither of these products has instructions for use that would keep them out of the hands of either children or pregnant women.

Also interviewed are law makers and people who issue permits for the application of pesticides on public land, and the appeal procedure for individuals or groups wanting to halt the use of pesticides in their area is examined. But the tape doesn't stop at exposing the dangers. There are many interviews with people who propose alternatives to the unchecked proliferation of pesticides in our environment.

Shawn Preus was a founding member of the Satellite Video Exchange Society/Video Inn in Vancouver and for the past seven years has been a director there.



Are there alternatives to the use of pesticides in B.C.?
right: Pesticides: The Hidden Assassins



"You are relaxed yet alert", her voice just slightly out of sync with the movement of her lips.
left: Ars Gratis Gratis

ARS GRATIS ARTIS

A videotape by Randy and Berenicci.
255A Queen Street West, Toronto, Ont. M5V 1Z4. 3/4". Colour. 45 min.

Ars Gratis Artis is a low-budget epic. This made-for-video production was drawn from a series of performances by Randy and Berenicci. Making use of many techniques, including rear-projected slides, background 'mood' music, specially constructed models and over-dubbed speaking parts, they examine the creation and continuation of ritual activity.

The tape opens with an underwater shot. A salamander enters the frame. A worm enters the frame. In an instant, the worm has entered the salamander - an unwilling victim of another animal's appetite. Survival. From this point on, we see a civilization in collapse, with its citizens carrying on the maintenance and worship of the now useless instruments of a former strict control. What do they worship? Cameras and the images they produce.

Berenicci, in a flowing white gown, plays the slave/victim who is also the resident hypnotist, as she stands in front of a spinning op-art disc chanting "You are relaxed - yet alert", her voice just slightly out of sync with the movement of her lips. Randy plays the master/witch doctor, performing rites over the bound body of Berenicci such as stabbing a polaroid photo of her. At which point, she writhes and moans appropriately. He chants all the while, "I am your mind." He performs other aggressions against her image, burning it, drenching it in blood (tomato juice) and suffocating it

with earth. Finally, the mutual assimilation occurs: "I am your mind." she intones into the camera and the ritual is complete.

The obviously fake production techniques serve to make the ritual activity a conscious self-contained reality. When the pillars of the civilization, two faintly Grecian-looking styrofoam constructions, collapse, the editing makes the 'fakeness' quite apparent. They crumble and fall. Shot from different angles and edited together in a disjointed fashion, there is no pretense to reality to this sequence. The pillars revel in their styrofoam state. Their fall becomes an action created by the camera, by the act of recording itself, complete with studio sound effects. The artifice reveals itself completely.

Randy and Berenicci are performance and video artists. Previous titles include As The World Burns.

SECRET ACTION

A videotape by R. Dick Trace-It (a.k.a. Richard Hambleton).

40 Cordova St., Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1K2 3/4". Colour. 7 min.

This tape and the performance it documents are essentially a 'video prank'. Hambleton took an audience and 3 accomplices to the B.C. Ferries Dock to create and participate in this secret action. Once there, one accomplice, John Anderson, set up a video camera in back of the video security system used to monitor activity in the corridors leading to the famous Sea Bus. A (real) guard is stationed at this security desk to keep an eye on the five monitors for any unusual activities. As the tape opens we see the video monitors

next monitor as she steps onto the escalator.

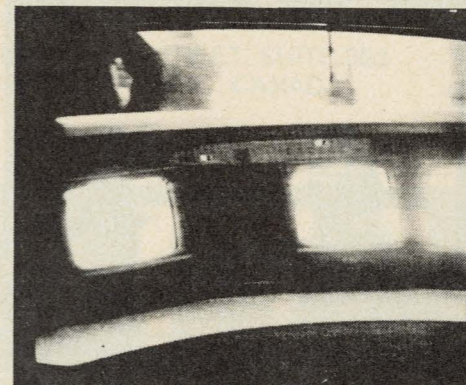
This is where the 'secret action performance' begins. Unbeknownst to the guard, Hambleton and his third accomplice, Doug Colwell, begin their action. Like hell-bent teenagers, they chase one another through an area covered by one of the surveillance cameras connected to the security desk. Up and down the escalators they run, tackling and punching each other and then repeating the action. Their choreographed path guarantees that they will move through the five monitors in their simulated chase.

Anderson's camera, on the guise of trying to locate the woman who disappeared as the chase began, scans the monitors, recording the 'secret action'. Finally, the guard grabs his microphone and announces through the p.a. system of the terminal, "One more time - stop playing on the escalators." Smelling a rat, he turns to Anderson and asks, "Are they doing this for your benefit?" A brief pause, and the harrassed guard takes the

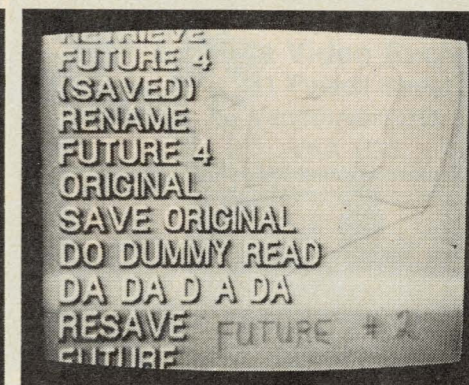
already existing material, creating a new programme. This tape is a continuation in VanderZaag's work on video literacy. Visually, all the material is generated electronically - the colour background, the little line drawings of robots and human heads, and the printed words that roll up over the screen. The audio track is a bilingual reading of statements about The Future; a women's voice reading first in French, followed by a man's voice giving the English translation.

The spoken/read statements start out simply. "In the future you'll never be anywhere, you'll always be going there." And "In the future, there will be no products." There are humorous predictions of our lifestyles, "In the future you'll have to pay rent when you visit people." which would add the unpleasant side effect of poverty to the social stigma of unpopularity.

But soon we get into what is really going to happen to us in the future, at least according to Digit. "Everyone will wear little devices which will record audio and video of their lives...there will



One accomplice set up a video camera in back of the video security system used to monitor the corridors... right: Secret Action



"Everyone will wear little devices which will record audio and video of their lives." left: Digit Recalls The Future

of the security system and hear some idle chatter as Anderson is focusing his camera and the guard is explaining which corridors are visible in which monitor. The unsuspecting guard thinks that Anderson is just there to record his state-of-the-art system. The audience for the performance is invisible, standing somewhere in the lobby, waiting for the subtle conclusion of the action, which appears on a large monitor above the security desk.

Meanwhile, enter The Decoy. A woman, Julie Abbott, has been instructed to walk down one of the corridors toward the Sea Bus. The guard is aware of this proposed action. Supposedly Anderson will be recording her progress on the monitors to show how effective the security system is. The camera pans the five monitors, trying to locate the woman. Anderson and the guard concentrate on finding her. Finally they pick her up. They follow her progress through one corridor to a down escalator and the camera moves to the

p.a. mic again, "Will the girl please come back."

Richard Hambleton is an artist and a director of PUMPS in Vancouver.

DIGIT RECALLS THE FUTURE

A videotape by Elizabeth VanderZaag.

#19, 610 Jervis Street, Vancouver, B.C. 3/4". Colour. 3 min.

Recalling the future would seem as difficult as living in the future - unless you're living in a computer. In that case, recalling the future is simply building predictions on

be a system of tax credits for video creating your own life - one's own life as product." Until finally "They'll edit your life and put it on CBC...The video of your life will be stored digitally in a one year cube." You might say Digit has us where she wants us in the future.

And while this audio story is unfolding, there is a simulated computer programme rolling up on the screen. The relationship of these character-generated words to the spoken text are difficult to determine. For example, "Incorrect Entry" appears on the screen. Does this refer to the statement being spoken when these words first roll up on the bottom of the screen, or the statement being spoken when they roll off the top of the screen? Or another alternative, perhaps the addresses and responses are entirely random and don't have any relationship with Our Future According to Digit.

Elizabeth VanderZaag works in computer animation and video. She functions as a digital technician at the CBC and recently at the Emily Carr College of Art.

NO MASTERS YET

A videotape by Rick Ward.
3/4". Colour. 24 min.

Through a series of interviews and statements, this tape traces the history of video as it has been used by the artists' community in Vancouver. Ward interviews Kate Craig of the Western Front, who has produced not only her own tapes but many others for the visiting artists at the Front, David Rimmer who teaches a course in video, and Don Druick a Vancouver video artist.

There is a print history: the Video Exchange Directory first done by Inter-

that concern video producers are raised: where should tapes be shown, is broadcast an alternative given the self-censorship that would be involved, how can the information best be disseminated? And some conflicting opinions about art and video arise. An unidentified voice says "Most video is very boring. It seems to work best when it has some very valid information about some social group or problem. It seems to work better than as art". This is in contrast to Druick, who talks of "...bypassing the rational process and getting right into the central nervous system...I use video as an art medium". And so the discussion continues.

Whether or not the title of this tape is meant to be ironic or a criticism, it could be said that video is healthy right now because there are No Masters Yet.

Rick Ward has previously produced the tapes: *Merchants of Death*, *Funny Money*, *James Bond on UIC*, and *Surveillance*.



In Vancouver, as in other places, available video technology has improved in the last eight years. right: No Masters Yet



Broken from the banal specifics of phrase, the scene becomes a prototype of domestic squabble. left: Very Delicate Invasion

media. There is a history of equipment: Kate Craig talking about the first portapack bought by Michael Morris and Glenn Lewis at the Western Front in the summer of 1973. And some reference to "...monitors that were smashed so they were spilling their guts out over the floor." There are also shots of an organized, efficient looking 3/4 editing system just to counteract the feeling of 'primitiveness' conjured up by the reminiscing about past equipment. In Vancouver, as in most other places, available video technology has improved in the last 8 years.

There is mutual discussion of people directly involved in video in Vancouver: Michael Goldberg, tape producer and Video Officer at the Canada Council for two years, Paul Wong of The Video Inn, and Gerry Gilbert, poet. Ward also presents video as it is used: Don Druick making a tape on the beach, and Sonja Ivekivic, Czech video artist talking to David Rimmer's class about the differences between performance and video.

In the course of the tape, the questions

VERY DELICATE INVASION

A videotape by Kate Wiwcharuk.

133 1/2 Wyndam Street, Guelph, Ont.
3/4". Colour. 7 min.

The scene opens in a kitchen. A woman is making tea. A man is also present. They are 'having words' with each other. In this case the old fashioned euphemism for arguing is accurate, because the particulars of their argument are not available to the viewer. They speak in invented language. Broken from banal specifics of phrase ("I didn't... You did... don't you dare... please

...don't touch me...if you ever do that again."), the scene becomes a prototype of the domestic squabble. The gestures carry the content. The turn of the head, the attempt to remain rational and in control, the voices rising, the pacing, the hands waving, the finger jabbed in the face, the point being made, the back being turned in the face of aggression, the frustration. It is humorous because it is so familiar.

The second scene is another 'argument' between the two. This time the gestures are also restricted, as well as the language. They stand close together holding cups of water. Taking a drink, the 'talk' is gargling. After each phrase, they spit into the sink. As the heat of the argument rises, the water splashes from their mouths; their heads thrown back trying to make points to each other, they look like big parakeets gathered around the water dish. It is a very primitive disagreement. Finally, the inevitable: instead of spitting his mouthful into the sink, the man spits it into the woman's

face. She is outraged and hurt, she breaks down, she whinily gargles ineffectually for a few seconds until she finally spits a mouthful at him. He spits back, and she does too. Their dripping faces testify to the fact that personal insults in the heat of arguments do not necessarily breed intimacy. This is the delicate invasion.

In the final section of the tape, the man and woman stand before the camera. They are individuals. Cut to scenes of each of them dressing for the outdoors. They bundle into long underwear, pants, sweaters, coats, scarves upon hats, large gloves and finally sunglasses. There is hardly an inch of skin showing. They embrace, looking like two dotty Ukrainian cartoons, and sing "Come out, come out, wherever you are." At last they have found the protection that will allow them to be close.

Kate Wiwcharuk studied video at the University of Guelph and is a member of Ed Video there. Her other titles include *Untitled*, *Causing Sensations*, and *It's Hot Out There*.

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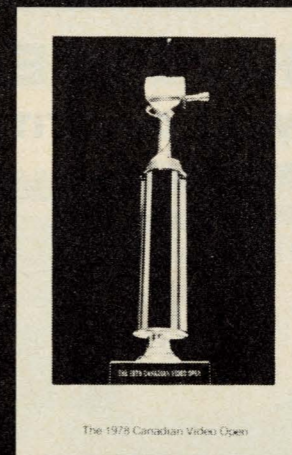
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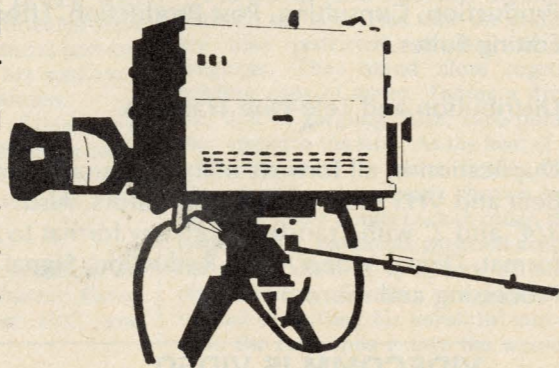
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Developing Feminist Resources

At its strongest, feminist art asks the right questions. Feminist artists continue to expand the full social and economic critique of sexism. They do not simply wish to 'turn the world upside down' -- to replace men with women in the present structure -- when it is the entire socio-economic pattern which must be changed. By "revealing to transform," feminist art illustrates that we have not, on any level, achieved a *post-feminist* society. In the following pages, we look at some recent actions and reactions from feminist artists and the women's community.

The Work Of Carolee Schneemann & Martha Rosler

Jane Springer

Two important American feminist artists showed their work in Toronto recently. Martha Rosler and Carolee Schneemann were here as part of "6 of 1: a feminist series", set up by Nancy Nicol and sponsored by A Space. Schneemann is internationally known as a painter, kinetic sculptor, filmmaker and writer, and perhaps best as an author of "Happenings". She's on the "6 of 1" poster, a painted nude body on its side, legs apart so you focus on the genitals from the back, one foot in a leather strap attached to a long rope. You're curious but nervous, you look closer (underneath the shock there's a sense of freedom to it all) and you see these loose unfeared arms are writing - you notice most, "I am hungry".

Rosler, an artist, author, critic and teacher, is perhaps less infamous; her style less spectacular, though no less riveting. In fact, the expectations generated by Schneemann's reputation were in most cases intentionally thwarted, while the shocked audience to one of Rosler's videotapes faced her for a full three minutes after the lights came up before being able to voice a response.

Not merely because they are women, both of these artists are what you might call controversial. These two are feminists who have focussed vigorously and unrelentingly on women's issues. In the art world, Rosler explains, "nonliberal political views are tolerated only as long as they can be treated as idiosyncratic quirks of personal *style*." In this milieu, then, feminism is 'politics' and feminist art is schematic and predictable 'political art'. However, a closer look at these artists reveals that although they *are* both feminists, only Rosler is political in the sense of actively opposing this society's economic and social structures.

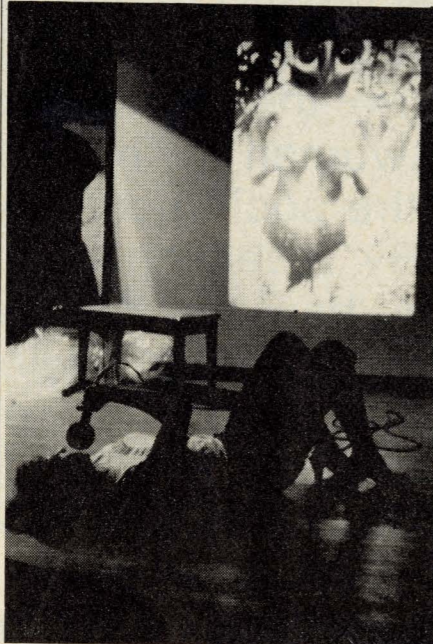
Schneemann's "Homerunmuse", performed at the Music Gallery, plays on the concepts of man-made museum and feminine muse. The former offers us set pieces, things "outside of their own ecological and spiritual context". The latter offers the ancient image of an Equatorial Island Owl Goddess breathing the sensual life into art. This is combined with a dual projection of slides of the work of women artists 1550-1950 while Carolee speaks into a phallic microphone which she periodically slaps into the baseball glove in her other hand. She teases us, "I hear feminism has been passé in Toronto for at least two months now," and alludes coyly to one of her past performances, "Interior Scroll": "They suspect I get messages from my cunt and want to exhibit them." She deftly paints the muse on a mirror and smashes eggs against it; she clinks bottles together over her head harder and harder until they break, making unheard of sounds and forbidden, dangerous messages on the floor. The audience anticipates a revelation, but it never occurs. Soon she's signed the mirror painting, date and all, and it's over.

A disappointment, but perhaps because it's only a fragment. Reading the catalogue of her numerous performances from 1962 to 1978, *More than Meat Joy*, one is struck by the energy, diversity and particularly the tenacity of Carolee's vision. She seems never to have swerved from her focus on the segregation inherent in western culture, which she says is related to the denial of the genital. In all her work she is aiming to jolt us back, force us face on to what we've repressed. Art, nature, the body and sensuality are her subjects.

Thus she pioneered nude performance art. Giving a 30 minute lecture on her own work and its antecedents while dressing and undressing, she tried to ascertain whether a woman has intellectual authority - "Can she have public authority while naked and speaking?" This same unselfconscious energy prompted her Sexual Parameters

Chart in 1969. This device was not meant to humiliate her former lovers, but was an attempt at comprehending the range and limits of sexual response in the men she knew and included such information as how long she had known them, their nationality, whether they had a more active mouth or genital and their taboos. These actions naturally threatened much of the male art and intellectual community.

Schneemann was invited to perform at the "Dialectics of Liberation" conference in London in 1967, attended by David Cooper, Allen Ginsberg, Erving Goffman, R.D. Laing, Herbert Marcuse and Paul Sweezy, among others. As the only woman, she was excluded from



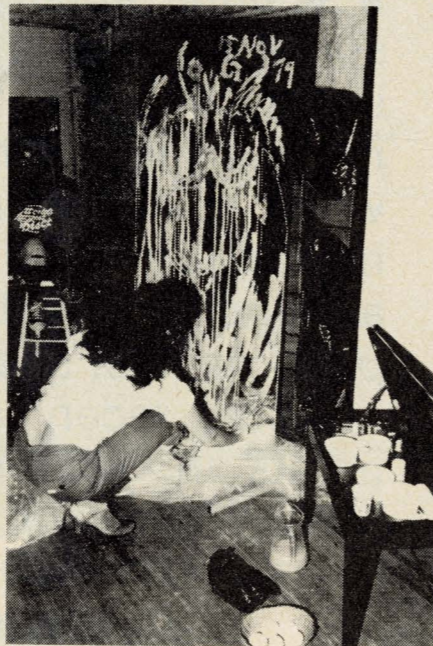
Schneemann in performance of "Homerunmuse" addresses her muse.

official conference functions and ostracised by most of the participants at a time when feminist issues were not yet being widely expressed. A few years later one of the psychiatrists who organized the conference confessed to her:

"...the disillusioning fact seems to have been that we didn't welcome a woman taking an equal space among ourselves, we distrusted a theatrical form, and we certainly didn't want a very young woman putting on a performance which incorporated our own work with a countering physicality." (from *More than Meat Joy*.)

So here they are, all the taboos at once: being female, being a performer, incorporating 'physicality'. This 'physicality' is at the core of Schneemann's work; using her body, she has tried to uncover the remnants and the residue of women's art, to reinterpret what there is of it that hasn't disappeared or been destroyed.

In the past, Schneemann used her own and others' bodies to confront audiences with their sexuality. She tried to point up conservative expectations and the discomforting sense of absurdity that surrounds nudity outside of our private lives. But for Schneemann, nudity no longer has the same emotive power, and she doesn't use it in her performance now. Claiming that she has stopped looking for a 'communal ecstasy' or the 'perfectable performance', Schneemann has an aversion to performance as such. Schneemann clearly considers this new indifference to performance to be a development; if it is, it is still of the reactive sort. Earlier she shocked us with her nudity, now she



upsets our expectations of it. One can understand the desire to keep breaking new ground and to counteract audience expectations, but unless the audience is able to fulfill a certain level of its expectation; there *is* no communication, no art.

Articulate and persistent as she's been, Schneemann is still operating from a radical feminist critique of this society, which views women - as a class. Inherent in her attempts to explore 'feminist culture' is the notion of a distinct and universal female 'way' - a notion which ignores the class differences among women throughout history, not to mention the exploitation of men in this society.

Martha Rosler's work, on the other hand, through its skilled and careful emphasis on everyday life, embodies a systematic critique of capitalist society.

photos: courtesy Martha Rosler



Three photographs from Rosler's "She Sees In Herself A New Woman Everyday," a floor installation of 9 colour photos accompanied by a 17 minute audio recording. "You said I had to wear sensible shoes so my feet would grow right, so I always wore Stride-Rites..."

Rosler centres on the isolation and alienation of women, and consequently, much of her work takes place in the kitchen or deals with women's 'service' relationship to food. The videotape *Losing: A conversation with the parents* shows two upper-middle class parents discussing their anorexic daughter's decline and eventual death. Their attempts to understand their daughter

are chiefly made from an individual and 'psychological' point of view. The wife, at least, is able to point out the irony of the fact that their daughter was surrounded by food and starving while millions of people in the rest of the world are dying for want of the most basic nourishment. The question of world economics creeps in.

North America's imperialist link with

the Third World, which is implicit in Rosler's book, *Service: A Trilogy on Colonization*, is made explicit in her videotape, *Domination and the Everyday*. This tape combines images of the Chilean junta with those of ordinary Chileans and scenes from Rosler's own life, while a subtitled text analyzes the nature of exploitation. The audio is a dinner-time dialogue between Rosler and

"More Than Meat Joy"

The best books on Performance Art are those written (and often published) by the artist. Without a doubt, Carolee Schneemann's new book *More Than Meat Joy* covers works from 1962 - 1978. Schneemann - who has often been portrayed historically as the woman who taught Vito Acconci and other males how to take off their clothes for art - can now be seen as a critical, incisive and humane writer. The book's notes are a joy to read and parallel the early inspirational writings of Dick Higgins (see *Postface/Jefferson's Birthday*) and Robert Filliou (*Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*). Among the scores, drawings and notations from thirty-five works are placed sections titled "From the Notebooks". From an entry in 1965 Schneemann notes that Jim Dine was the first man to use explicitly personal material - his psycho-analytical tape, "uncensored self-exposure." She mentions the fact as a turning point for her that the audience didn't appreciate "that much actuality!"

At the same time that Schneemann shared her explorations and discoveries with her male contemporaries (in Fluxus and elsewhere) as an artist she was very aware of her role in the scheme of things as a woman. It was not so much that her male contemporaries were cognizant chauvinists (though some of them may have been) but that cultural stereotyping of women artists was iron-strong. In 1966 she wrote:

"BE PREPARED:....."

to have your time wasted your intentions distorted the simplest relationships in your thoughts twisted to be USED and MISUSED to be "copy" to be copied to want to cope out cop out pull in and away if you are a woman (and things are not utterly changed) they will almost never believe you really did it (what you did do) they will worship you they will ignore you they will malign you they will pamper you they will try to take what you did as their own (a woman doesn't understand her best discoveries after all)..."

Some of these abuses artists of any gender already shoulder whether it is from galleries, curators, journalists or fellow artists. Schneemann implies why should *she* be served a double when *she* only 'ordered' a single?

One of Schneemann's performances that is documented by the book SNOWS 1967, described as being "built out of my anger, outrage, fury and sorrow for the Vietnamese." The performers entered the imagery of Vietnamese atrocities projected large on the wall behind them. The stage and lighting is set for winter with films of skaters, skiers and related scenery. At the head of the performance document Schneemann has set:

"SNOWS: to concretize and elucidate the genocidal compulsions of a vicious disjunctive technology gone berserk against an integral, essentially rural culture. The grotesque fulfillment of the Western split between matter and spirit, mind and body, individualized 'man' against cosmic natural unities. Destruction so vast as to become randomized, constant as weather. Snowing...purification, clarification, homogenization."

Apart from massive documentation of her performances, *More than Meat Joy* catalogues Schneemann's paintings and sculptures, films and dance and general historical research of the female cultural past, called Istory.

At the end of the book in a section called "Festschrift", there appears a remarkable set of critical testimonies by artists and others. Annina Nosei Weber who performed in *Meat Joy* says of Schneemann that she was a major influence on Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, Whitman and Brakhage - "a major influence that has not been recognised." But what is recognised, not mythologised, are Schneemann's works as *acts of liberation* and at least, and at last, the stories of those acts are now bound together for the feminist, artist, educator or bystander to read and to learn from. And that is what the functional, as opposed to the academic, Istory of art is all about.

Clive Robertson

More than Meat Joy. Carolee Schneemann. Edited by Bruce McPherson. 1979. Documentext, New Paltz, New York. Clothbound. 285pp. 250 illus. \$22.50 Art Metropole, 217 Richmond St. W., Toronto.

her young son while a radio blandly drones a critique of the current art scene in the background. Rosler is displaying the chaotic nature of our everyday lives and the difficulty in interpreting the complex world around us - let alone trying to change it. In spite of the difficulty of sifting through all the information we're given, the overall effect is optimistic and the text assures us that if we organize together we can win. However compelling, the tape doesn't quite work. Played to an audience unsympathetic to Rosler's class analysis, the tape and the problems presented would appear tedious and didactic.

In *Vital Statistics of a Citizen Simply Obtained*, a young woman is delivered to a large, bare room where two men in lab coats systematically measure and record her 'vital statistics'. It begins innocently enough, but by the time the woman has

removed her clothes, three women 'observers' have appeared to acknowledge the measurer's decision as to whether each statistic is above, below, or standard. The tension increases. At the most immediate level, we are struck by the infamies that have been wrought on us while we've stood passive, unable to act. In the final section, image after image of women from medical textbooks flash by while an incantatory voice-over lists crimes against women: "Immolation, infibulation, birth labour, unpaid labour, clitoridectomy, hysterectomy..."

In all of these works, Rosler is bombarding us with 'adjusted' images of our daily lives. She calls this method a "decoy"; she mimics an ordinary cultural form or event, simultaneously rearranging the content in a way which impels us to question the nature of this form. This in *Semiotics of the Kitchen*,

an alphabetic run-through of kitchen tools which mimics a home economics lesson or a TV cooking program, the armament potential of these same tools is revealed. The use of every implement Rosler picks up is demonstrated in a hostile, aggressive fashion. Women's means of production has destructive potential. (And as the statistics show, husbands kill their wives in the bedroom; women murder their husbands in the kitchen.) Rosler's work is eye-opening and evocative in its detailed description of "everyday life in the modern world". It's unfortunate that seeing her work isn't more commonplace, an aspect of everyone's daily life. ■

Jane Springer is a Toronto freelance editor and writer. Currently, she is working with Canadian Women's Studies.

From Rosler's Writings

The most interesting particularity of Martha Rosler's work and writing is that she is able to sustain a strong feminist position within a class analysis of society, especially since the two positions are often seen as antagonistic. And she does this within the realm of 'fine' art production, with its pressures of appropriation, and limited social access. It is easy enough to say that anyone who attempts to work with any integrity in the art world today is beset by contradictions, both politically and artistically. Yet all too often compromises are made, not simply in the interests of a career, which are usually self-evident, but in an attempt to minimize the conflict surrounding such activities. The strength of Rosler's work not only derives from the refusal to compromise, but to face the contradictions head-on, aggressively, and admit that she doesn't have any ready-made answers. She always sees her work as tentative.

Rather than go on to say things Rosler has already said herself, and probably better, the following are quotes taken from various articles she has written. The selection is my own.

“The women's art movement has achieved institutionalization in the art world at just the moment when the women's movement is being declared passé by its enemies; there is the danger of the creation of a new elite of 'feminist artists'. Further valorizing, in the name of 'women's culture', traditional handicrafts developed under conditions oppressive to women (or under pre-industrial relations of production) is liable, at the least, to be misunderstood. Even more, valorizing fantasies of the self and the world born of these conditions may wind up serving repressive ends. And, of course, the proposition that structural changes can be made in an economically based system by some adjustments in people's attitudes and behaviour is highly dubious. What is at issue here is whether consciousness leads or follows socio-economic changes - a classic dispute. The idea of 'the community of all women', which sees sexism as transcending class, is, it seems, an idea more popular among middle-class than among working-class women, who have generally defined a different order of priorities.” (“The Private and the Public: Feminist Art in California,” *Artforum*, Fall, 1977.)

“Under the circumstances, to call oneself a feminist while also doing work that announces itself as feminist is to risk being seen as a tool or a hack doing 'political art'. Some women whose work fits into feminist genres fog the issue by denying its social meaning. Others coyly affirm their feminism while doing blatantly retrograde antifemale work, often uncritically replicating male objectifications of women, usually sexual ones. Quite a few artists have adopted a feminism purged of any activist intent... 'Culture' tends to be counterposed to 'politics', which radical feminists see as a man's game.”

“I think that we artists, who are inescapably bound up in both the production of fetishes and the critique of fetishization, must address these banally profound issues of everyday life; and, whatever our mode of access to a general audience, what we say ought to be accessible - and not taken over by the bohemian nay saying, the private irony, the globe hopping rootless touristic cosmopolitanism, the nihilism, and the inversions of values that tend to inform our utterances in the art-making arena. We should aim toward the construction of a critical consciousness with an eye toward assisting in the development of a revolutionary working-class movement.” (from an article in the “Proceedings of the Caucus for Marxism and Art”, Jan., 1978.)

“Along with other artists I reject the idea of moral uplift as art's social use. I reject the nobility of art. I reject the idea that in making art I must keep my eye trained on 'greatness', on some standard erected by those who profit financially from art or who plan to use it as a social pacifier, which requires us to disentangle our art from the conduct of life in general. Art is not a big-league ball game, art is not magic, it is not mumbo-jumbo, it is not a mere thing, and it is also not 'nothing'. Art is powerful when we make it powerful, and it is powerful in conjunction with a broad-visioned movement for change.” (“Social Works”, catalogue from Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, 1979.) ■

Karl Beveridge

You Can't Rock The Boat With Cold Feet

Elizabeth Chitty

Puritanism as an issue was at its most visible over a decade ago, but lately the term neo-puritanism has appeared. This term can be applied to three separate incidents in Toronto surrounding the printing of various images. The incidents concern *FILE MAGAZINE* and two posters - one designed by Tanya Rosenberg for the *Fireweed* Playwriting Competition and one for the A Space "6 of 1" feminist performance series curated by Nancy Nicol. The following article has been written in conjunction with interviews with David Buchan of *FILE*, Rina Fraticelli of *Fireweed*, Nancy Nicol and Tanya Rosenberg.

Following difficulties with their regular printer, *FILE* was sent to a new printer. *FILE* management received a call from the printer who refused to print the magazine. Objections to twelve images elicited a request that the images be substituted with new ones. The theme of the issue was Transgressions, and the objectionable images were all male nudes. Eventually *FILE* resorted to yet another printer.

Prior to this incident, *Fireweed*, a feminist periodical, had initiated a women's playwriting competition for which Tanya Rosenberg had designed a poster using an image from her photographic series titled "Super-Secretary". It depicts a woman, nude except for stiletto heels and a tousled blonde wig, holding a huge IBM typewriter which covers most of her body. The caption reads: "But can she write?" Posters were mailed all over the country and about twenty letters of protest were received - including posters returned with protesting remarks, slashes, stop signs and so on. Received from across Canada, the protests came from places as diverse as The Newfoundland Status of Women Council, Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, the Women's Student Office at U.B.C. and the Lesbian Radio Collective at Co-op Radio in Vancouver. The heaviest concentration was from B.C. While the

letters varied in the articulation of their criticism, all stated that the poster was sexist and offensive.

Nancy Nicol at A Space had produced a poster for her feminist performance series using a fairly well-known image from Carolee Schneemann's performance, "Up To and Including Her Limits". This image is of the artist, nude, hanging from a harness in front of a wall covered with her writing. Nicol took the poster to feminist locations such as bookstores and bars and was often confronted with criticism of the poster. The position of the body in the photograph was interpreted as being masochistic.

The situation of *FILE* would seem to

be the most straightforward. The objections of the printer, who also bears legal responsibility in publishing, were made on moral grounds. Male nudity was judged offensive within a double-standard framework that found female nudity acceptable. It is likely that the *FILE* material was considered gay in orientation, although such objections were not clearly articulated by the printer. The backlash against the *Fireweed* and "6 of 1" posters is more surprising because much of the criticism was levelled from within the feminist community. Many of the criticisms of both posters drew comparisons between them and stereotypes in mass media. Most of these responses were spontaneous, superficial judgements. For example, in the "6 of 1" poster, no credit was given to either the artist in the photograph or the curator who decided to use the image on the poster for having even the most basic feminist consciousness. Few were interested in the *content* of the art piece being represented or any ramifications the image might have in a broader context. Most were content to reject it on the basis of their initial hostile reactions. Nicol stated, however, that in some instances when she gave some background to the image the hostility softened.

The most perplexing question is how the *Fireweed* poster - so clearly an ironic parody from a feminist perspective - was interpreted as sexist. The inability of feminists to accept and acknowledge the use of humour and irony (or self-critical content) in this instance seems to indicate a rather rigid approach to feminist analysis. Such inflexibility reduces the interpretation of images or information to an artistically and intellectually impoverished literalness. The imagery deals with exploitation; the criticism that it is sexist operates inversely by denying

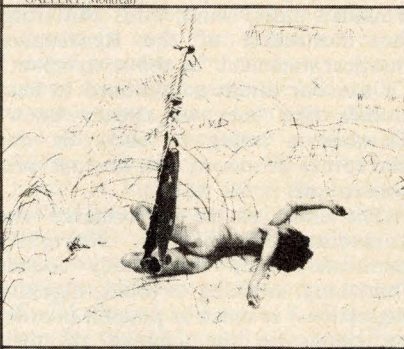
(continued on page 128)

6 OF 1
a feminist series

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS
EXHIBITIONS

MARTHA ROSLER: Nov. 6 - 17, Photographs at A Space, 299 Queen St. West. Opening party: Nov. 6, 8 pm.

WOMEN'S BOOKWORKS: Nov. 20 - Dec. 15, '79, at A Space, 299 Queen St. West. Part exhibition of bookworks compiled by POWERHOUSE GALLERY, Montreal.



SCREENINGS AND PERFORMANCES

Jacki Apple
THE MEXICAN TAPES at the Music Gallery, 40 St. Patrick St. 18-19, 8 pm.

PRIME TIME (video, slide and discussion) at Music Union, 20 Mercer St. Oct. 19-19, 8 pm.

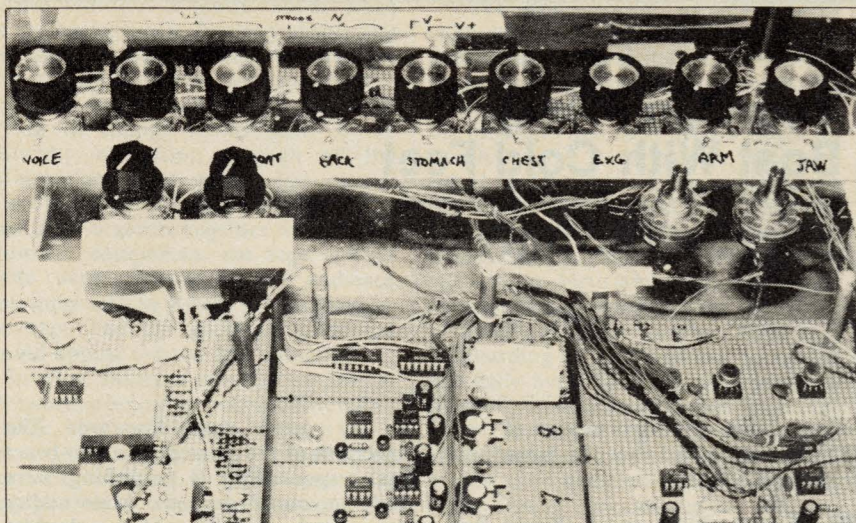
Pauline Oliveros
SONIC MEDITATION at the Music Gallery Nov. 3-7, 8 pm (2 pm workshop).

Martha Rosler
DOMINATION AND THE EVERYDAY (video, tape, screening, performance) at A Space, 299 Queen St. West. Nov. 7-8, 8 pm.

Carolee Schneemann
HOMERUNMISE at the Music Gallery Nov. 13-19, 8 pm.

KITCHEN'S LAST MEAL at the Music Gallery, 50 King St. East Nov. 15-19, 8 pm.

Music



Computer-controlled sound mixer used in "Call Me Interface".

photos: J. Oughton

Live From Montreal

TED DAWSON

With Performer Collaborators at The Music Gallery, Sept. 22, Toronto
reviewed by John Oughton

Ted Dawson is a composer based in Montreal. In conversation he described the three pieces which formed the show *Live from Montreal* as representing the end of a cycle of work for him.

The cycle seemed to be fueled by the contradiction inherent in the fact that electronic and photographic media can give us greater 'intimacy' with a performer than seeing them across the normal audience/performer gap, 'live', from Montreal or elsewhere. Dawson's three pieces were intended to be conceptual as well as musical, encouraging listeners to reflect on the visible (and audible) tools used in the performance and how they influence perception of the music.

The first, and most intriguing, piece was "Close-up", a collaboration with Montreal poet Endre Farkas. Farkas sat in front of the audience, stripped to the waist, his head and chest taped into a maze of sensors, contact mics, and wires. These recorded his brainwaves, muscle response and heartbeat, plus the sounds of gut, breath, nose, and voice heard through several different mic placements. The sound mix was fed into a computer-controlled sound mixer, influenced to an undetermined amount by technician Keith Daniel, and amplified through stereo speakers.

Endre's text was also a mix: what seemed to be immediate comments on his situation as performer, distanced by the attribution "he said"; fragments of sports

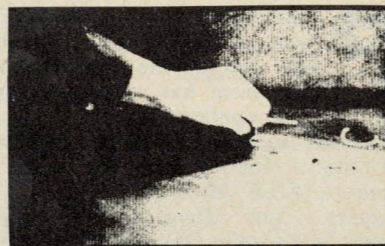
talk; jokes; aphorisms; a dictionary definition of imagination.

He began, appropriately, with "Call me Interface" in a parody of the opening line of *Moby Dick*. At first the accompanying sounds were only a faint warble and breathing sounds. Gradually they rose in volume, at times almost drowning the text. The frequency range of the voice shifted as different mics were emphasized, the clenching of hands became a low rumbling like thunder, stomach gurgles spoke for themselves.

Inside sounds did sound like nature (at least through the patch created here). Thunder, tides, wind, birds chattering. An illustration of the Renaissance mystical statement "as above, so below." Or are our minds conditioned to hear sounds like ones we already know? Dawson is trying to show us our perceptual processes, but are our preconceptions in the way?

The effect of the performance was sometimes unnerving. Normally performers hide their body sounds (breathing, creaking of joints, digestive digressions) as much as possible in order to emphasize the content of their performance. Here, they were the content, and hearing performed such tortuous breaths, subterranean groans, one has an involuntary response -- is he all right? What if the heartbeat sound (is that the heartbeat sound) ends? In fact, of course, Farkas was fine, if a bit cold. His words wove well in and out of attention, of comment on the present and allusion

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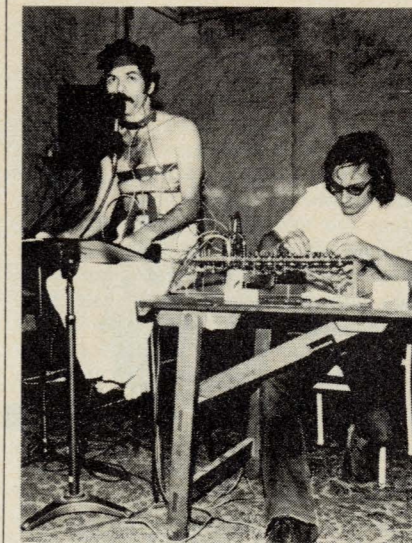
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Music

to elsewhere. The technician deserves credit for a dense pun whose call-and-response was spaced some distance apart in the text: "What did the Zen chef technician cowboy sing?...Ohm, Ohm, on the range."

The electronics did create an unusual sense of intimacy, allowing one's ear inside another's body. Enough so that when it was over, there was a feeling of parting. The soundscape had become comfortable, and here we were, out in the world again.

Next, Dawson and French horn player Jean Letarte were "Exploring the Object." Four microphones were used -- one in the bell, one over the valves, another near the mouthpiece, and the fourth across the room. As Letarte played to a score made of "a selection of fixed events...spontaneously combined with a series of written instructions for improvisation," Dawson sat at a mixer blending and alternatively emphasizing the various 'ears' to illustrate different resonances. There were some fine



Endre Farkas (left) with Keith Daniel.

moments, but the piece did not really come off. Dawson explained afterwards that the acoustics of the room in question

did not differentiate the sound as much as others they had played in, so the variations were less evident to the audience.

Last, a collaboration with visual artist Suzy Lake. A series of slides, slowly zooming in (a la Snow's *Wavelength*) on Dawson, in the corner of a room, contorting his face and stretching his mouth around unheard sounds. Timed and faded in and out by computer, the slides were shown on two projectors focused on one screen. Dawson's mouth gradually filled the screen -- once again, intimacy courtesy of mechanicity. As the slides ended, the sound of a "real-time improvisation wit breath" by Dawson filled the space. The title, "The Clouds of Magellan", refers to an astronomical body named after a famous explorer, one of the discoverers of America. Dawson is an explorer too, and judging by these pieces, one who is drawing some new maps for listeners ears and minds. ■

John Oughton is a musician living in Toronto.

Film

A Crate of Societal Empties

JAMES BENNING'S *GRAND OPERA*

16mm, screened at the Funnel Experimental Film Theatre, Nov. 16, Toronto.
reviewed by John Greyson

After the film, James Benning rather reluctantly talked of his past. Before he began making films on a full-time basis several years ago, he taught math to high-school dropouts in an alternative school which he and five others had formed. Most of those enrolled were alcoholics, so he brought in empty liquor, beer and wine bottles. Together they worked out comparative pricing based on the percentage of alcohol versus the volume of each. Factors like availability and the physical effects of each were added. After extensive research they conclusively, logically, and mathematically proved that a brand of vodka was the most economical and effective purchase.

In a different way, *Grand Opera* echoes this wry sense of irony. He does not attempt to give us back our own bottles. He said that the film was autobiographical; that its content could not approach any sort of social conscience because it was based on personal experience, and that its real contribution was to specific formal concerns shared by a small number of media artists. It doesn't read that way. *Grand Opera* is

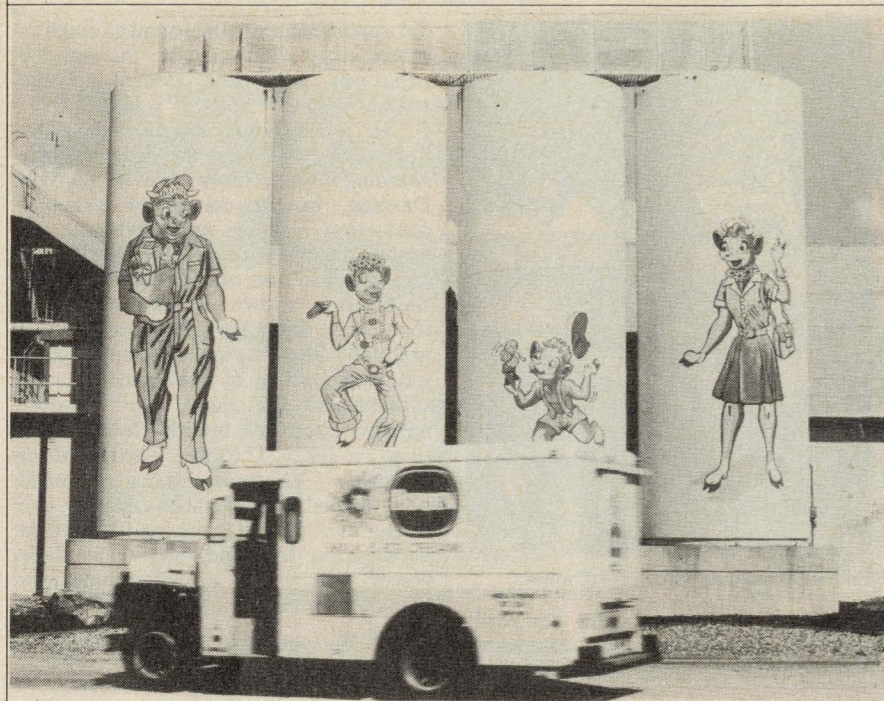
a Grand Tour. We are taken through the industrial and agricultural wasteland of the mid-western states which have been abstracted into a series of technicolour postcards. Like eating chocolate, the lushness has a curiously asexual sensuality. Posed and composed, the objects in each frame become candy-coated parodies of their reality. A turn-ahead road sign against the bluest sky or a water tower, seen at different times of the day from the same position, like Monet's haystacks or Warhol's Eiffel tower. A highway from the backseat, spliced into single-second bursts of travel movement. A little girl reciting the alphabet in front of an oil rig. A Borden's milk truck in front of the storage tanks. A Kodak flag at half mast. A plastic wall hanging of the Mount Rushmore effigies.

These images, strained through a complex five-layered sieve of staging, composition, colouring, editing, and sound dubbing, emerge as exquisite tableaux. Even the sound is visual. America is transformed into a personal sort of Americana, a never never land, a place where Benning's visual analysis can start.

Two parallel narratives thread two series of scene together. The first begins early on in the film, there is a written story, white typesetting on black, about an eight year old boy who pursues the infinite fraction of "pi" in a little red notebook. Later, there is a shot of a building on the main street of an anonymous town. Perched on top of it, a digital sign, (the kind that gives the weather and time) is relating the history of pi to a sleeping population. We learn that someone in the 16th century extended pi to the 577th decimal. Then in the 18th century, someone else discovered that the 493rd character and all subsequent characters were wrong, and made the corrections. The digital sign gives us both versions in about two minutes. The history of pi becomes "American pi". This rather endearing exposé of our collective search for completeness (the circle) works because the digital sign was 'found' in the landscape and was not manufactured for the film.

The second narrative involves four people facing the camera at various times throughout the movie and repeating: "Keep your eye on the brown structure. When the two planes pass overhead, it will explode. A large mushroom cloud will rise over the city." The final scene is a city from four miles away, silhouetted against a clear blue sky. There is a brown building to the right. You know what is

Film



The Borden's storage tanks from *Grand Opera*.

courtesy of James Benning

going to happen - you wait for three minutes - slowly, in complete silence, two planes sweep low over the field, and it collapses in an apologetic umbrella of dust that does not rise over the city.

The four people, I found out later, are the big four of independent (read structural) film: Michael Snow, Yvonne Rainer, George Landow, and Hollis Frampton, an in-house titillation for those in the know. So the destruction of structuralism is the final point of *Grand*

Opera. Right? Well, only if you want it to be. In one way, the formal aspects are the content, in another, they are nothing more than tools.

This is the fourth and last in a Benning series that included *8 1/2 X 11*, *11 X 14*, and *One Way Boogie Woogie*. I saw *11 X 14* last spring at the Funnel. Again, it was a series of Americana postcards, but even more so that *Grand Opera*. There were 'characters' who recurred throughout the film. Some sort of visual narrative was

being played out, involving suburban cowboys, lesbians, a farming couple, a middle-aged polyestered man. They moved through America: driving, getting in and out of cars, lying on motel beds, fighting obliquely on street corners, yet they were nothing more than symptoms in the landscape, decorations involved in meaningless progressions.

Both films explore the concept of visual narration. The difference: *Grand Opera* draws somewhat on a documentary framework of linear progression, presenting facts and statements (his story) without characters, while the earlier film follows the tradition of the feature film, except the 'characters' have no real story. In both, Benning has achieved a synthesis of the structural concerns of his predecessors, the four mentioned and others, and has reintroduced his own sense of narrative to this synthesis. *Opera* is the more successful because the pseudo documentary cues, lacking 'characters' to identify with, reinstate the State as the anti-hero. *Grand Opera* is a crate of societal empties. The real problem is that we are not diagnosed as the alcoholics. A faceless America is blamed, if anyone is, and we are let off the hook. Later, perhaps, his wry humour begins to come through and bite back - the next morning I noticed a factory stack billowing out impossibly sculptural clouds of smoke, and realized his *Grand Opera* has been playing north of the 49th for a long time.

John Greyson, Toronto, is an artist and writer and an associate editor of *Fuse*.

Performance

Emote The Remote

THE LIVING ART PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL

September 27 - October 3, Vancouver

reviewed by Hank Bull

The living Art Performance Festival took place in Vancouver between September 27 and October 3. There were about thirty performances attended by a total of some two thousand people. All the performers were either local artists or had once lived here, so there was a strong feeling of this city and its history. The first performance scene developed during the thirties when Beaux Arts Balls, and other events in and around the Art School, captured the city's imagination and grew to mammoth proportions. Elaborate scripts and large productions by Molly Bobak, Guy Glover, Grace

Melvin and Jack Shadbolt involved sometimes as many as eight hundred people in costume. This tradition achieved professional status with the birth of *Intermedia* in the sixties and has exploded since then into the numerous groups and approaches that were brought together this September by this idea of 'living art.' Venerable masters of Vancouver performance, like Tom Graff, Evelyn Roth and Gerry Gilbert appeared back to back with neophytes, some of whom had never before performed.

Like Dr. Faustroll's sieve,* the performance festival cut through the

waves of time, passing miraculously unscathed from one bizarre realm of history to another. The opening night was a network shipwreck. An audience of 800 watched 130 performers careen and scramble through four hours of rock bands, fashion shows, shadow plays, minimalist psychodramas, mass media mimicry, human sculpture and painting humans (in the form of Alan Wood and Dennis Burton, who painted the show from the foot of the stage). Meanwhile in the audience, the punks booed anything quiet whilst the straight audience got bored by the punk performances. Both groups were in a shambles by the time the BRAINEATERS finished off the night with a semi-nude fertility rite which got them barred forever from the Commodore Ballroom and was, incidentally, their last dance anywhere.

As usual, the media blitz had failed to

Performance

attract large numbers of the uninitiated, but each night found a shifting penumbra of new faces, as out of the shadows came the magazine readers, the friends and the just plain curious. The network expands by one person at a time. Art is not a mass media. A few artists will rise to fame above ground but the real excitement remains underground.

To get the full flavour of the festival one must wait for the catalogue. Sufficient to say that the styles, durations, concepts and qualities varied widely. Circus Minimus for example, whose clowning and children's plays some might be hesitant to classify as performance art, hark back to the low and bawdy street shows. As tableaux vivants or living sculptures, performance artists often resemble puppets, icons, clowns, anthropomorphs. They become objects, props to the idea more than the passionate, emoting actors one finds in the theatre. 'Emote the remote' as they say in the radio industry. The performance artist still draws but what he likes to do most is draw a crowd.

Stuck in my head are two performances, one by Gerry Gilbert and the other by Jim Cummins. Gilbert, often described as 'Canada's best poet'

presented a tryptich. On the left hand side of the stage was a slide projector throwing onto the wall the out-takes of an Edwardian photo session - two strong faced women, sisters. In one image they smile. Centre stage was a cassette tape recorder and a black and white video playback - some room somewhere, some conversation, hard to make out much more than the tones of voice. On the right hand, hanging on the wall in a pool of light was a large white drawing pad. Bright white. The sense of colour was very strong, but very black and white darkness and light, grey, sepia and different intensities of each. Like a shadow Gerry Gilbert moved repetitively among the machines, seldom stopping. First, he would draw a big slug in one, fast calligraphic brush stroke. Then he would pick up a small portable radio, turn it on full blast, hold it aloft for five seconds of the World Series or whatever and then hurl it at the slug. Having done this he might change the slide or the cassette, or occasionally say something. Very noisy, it would have been unrecognizable without the narrator's tips. Gilbert moved with determination. He must have smashed a dozen radios and drawn as many slugs, each of which was torn from the wall and left on the floor.

I've seen a couple of them around town since.

Jim Cummins is a very different kettle of fish from Gerry Gilbert. A painter, rock singer, this was probably his first art performance, but curiously like Gerry Gilbert, he gave us a three piece suite. A rear-screen centre-stage displayed 8mm movies while two slide projectors, one on either side, threw images onto the back wall of the stage, mainly images of his paintings, which are grotesque, and technically accomplished. His films were disreputable fancies like *The Great Cock Cut-off*. Cummins was dressed in black overalls festooned with Xmas tree lights. He programmed music into a child's toy computer-organ, which then repeated its absurd melody over and over. He stumbled from machine to machine and things went chaotically on and off. He said, "You will remember the past, but will the future remember you?" and spent half the time just trying to fix things. When the film froze in the projector and could be seen melting on the screen his remedy was to rip the film out, bite it to break it and re-thread the jagged end.

The two artists don't know each other. They are twenty years apart in age and represent quite different experience and

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Performance

points of view. They probably weren't at each other's performance, but their pieces felt alike. They both used a variety of pictures and sounds collaged together;

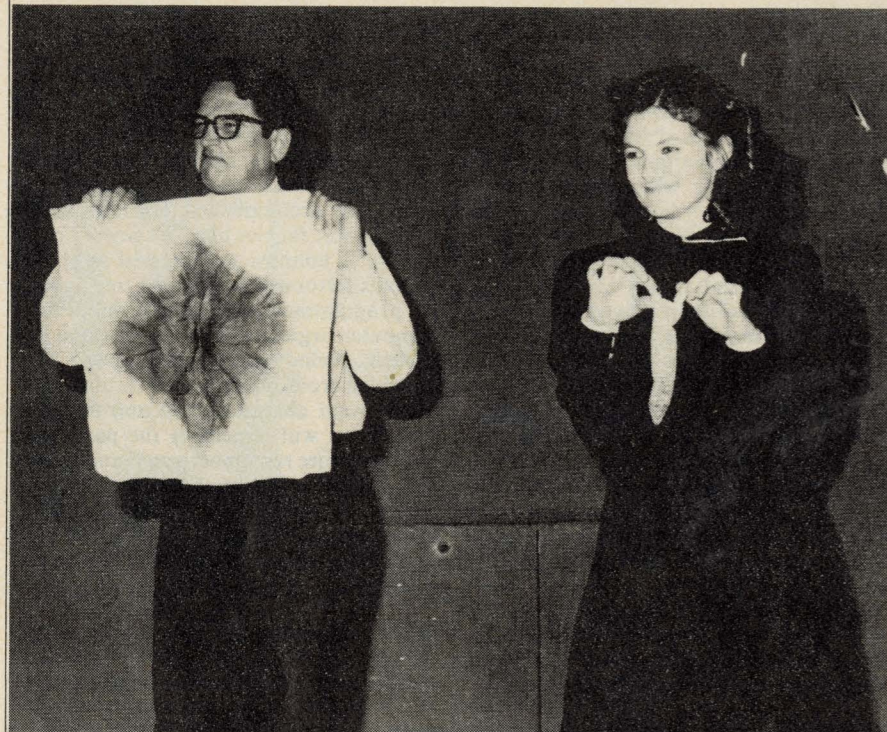
they both played the machinery as stage hand/performers; both seemed to be climbing a Jacob's Ladder of radio static. Neither was very entertaining. It was all

for me one big art coincidence, but the similarities only serve to remind me of the deeper connections - something about Vancouver - that were shared by all the performers, not just these two.

The festival brought many people together for the first time. Since then it seems that the number of new people I meet is accelerating. The music scene is the focal point. At the Smilin' Buddha one can expect to see everything from hard core punk like D.O.A. or Private School, to the obtuse research of AKA or U-J3RK5. New bands appear regularly and there is much exchange with Seattle and San Francisco. Whatever that 'something about Vancouver' is, it's alive and stronger since the *Living Art...* came. More than one person has said, "Before the festival I didn't quite know what to expect. Now I understand. When do we start getting ready for next year's?" ■

Hank Bull, Vancouver, is a performance artist and contributing editor of Fuse.

* The original mountebank was the medieval Italian 'montimbanco' (to jump up on a box), an itinerant medicine man who sold elixirs to a crowd whipped into eager excitement by his hilarious spiel. His friend, the 'cialatano' (chatterbox) was not the first fast talking artist. Picasso often confessed to being a charlatan. Too often artists fall into the trap of swallowing their own schtick.



Eric Metcalfe and Jane Ellison perform their "Oh Yes Oh No."

photo: Chris Gallagher

Standup, Poet And Irritant

THE MATCHBOX PURVEYORS

The Cabana Room, Oct. 5-6, Rumour Publications, Oct. 7, Toronto
reviewed by Andrew James Paterson

Gawd. I mean, I've just arrived back in Toronto and where's the place to go for a young man who needs a bit of fun and a place to stay. The Cabana, if I remember correctly. There'll probably be a rock 'n roll band and an episode of *Bad Girls*. Right?

Well well. The place seems deserted. I hope it hasn't gone under already. No, there are a few people. Thank Gawd for the die-hards. And who in the bloody hell are the gentlemen on the stage. Certainly not a rock band, and they're not the faces of any local performers that I might recognize. I literally walked into the Matchbox Purveyors' last set at the Cabana Room.

By the time I arrived it was solo spot time. The first complete piece I saw was a solo improvisation by David Stephens. Stephens began by defining the stage in terms of the wall being Leonard Cohen and the floor being David Bowie, a decidedly non-sensical coupling. The rest of the room, primarily the audience, were

objects of slight curiosity to Stephens. The man himself wasn't really very curious at all. Either he could pin a derogatory label on every shoe or accent in the house, or else he'd pin a derogatory label on the one that baffled him. Just for being there. Stephens as a performer, for all the chips on his shoulder, comes across as performer acutely aware of his need for an audience that serve both as props and as objects of inspiration. Sometimes the audience is a minor obstacle, because he encourages them to be active, but he counters quickly. He's actually rather invincible.

Roger Ely and Ian Hinchcliffe, on the other hand, are performers whom the audience must work their way towards a bit. Ely is the one member of the touring trio (They disguised themselves as the Three Fishermen for visiting purposes.) who is not primarily an improvising performer. He is a poet from Brighton whose spots were poetry readings, wittily yet aggressively presented.

Hinchcliffe is at once the hardest of the three to comprehend and the easiest. Hardest because he mumbles like a classic Donald Pleasance tramp who knows damn well the others will never understand and the easiest because his performances are the most demonstrative and visceral. Obstinate as hell, he maintains a childish delight in the little absurdities of the everyday. Hinchcliffe is an impulsive performer who doesn't suppress his impulsiveness. Unlike Stephens, he doesn't want to make sense out of the bloody universe at all; he loves its absurdity.

Sunday night at Rumour seemed more formal because of the nature/profile of the space, but the Purveyors took advantage of this formality. They opened very theatrically with lights flickering within the office spaces which at the outset were dark contrasting with the concert light of the lounge. Fred Gaysek's office space was the nasty old boss's (Hinchcliffe's) office. Ely with a plastic bag over his head doing the secretarial chores was the anti-productive absurdist quotient, and Stephens was the maltreated employee, the worker who likes to have his rightful turkey. The roles were the same as the previous evening;

Performance

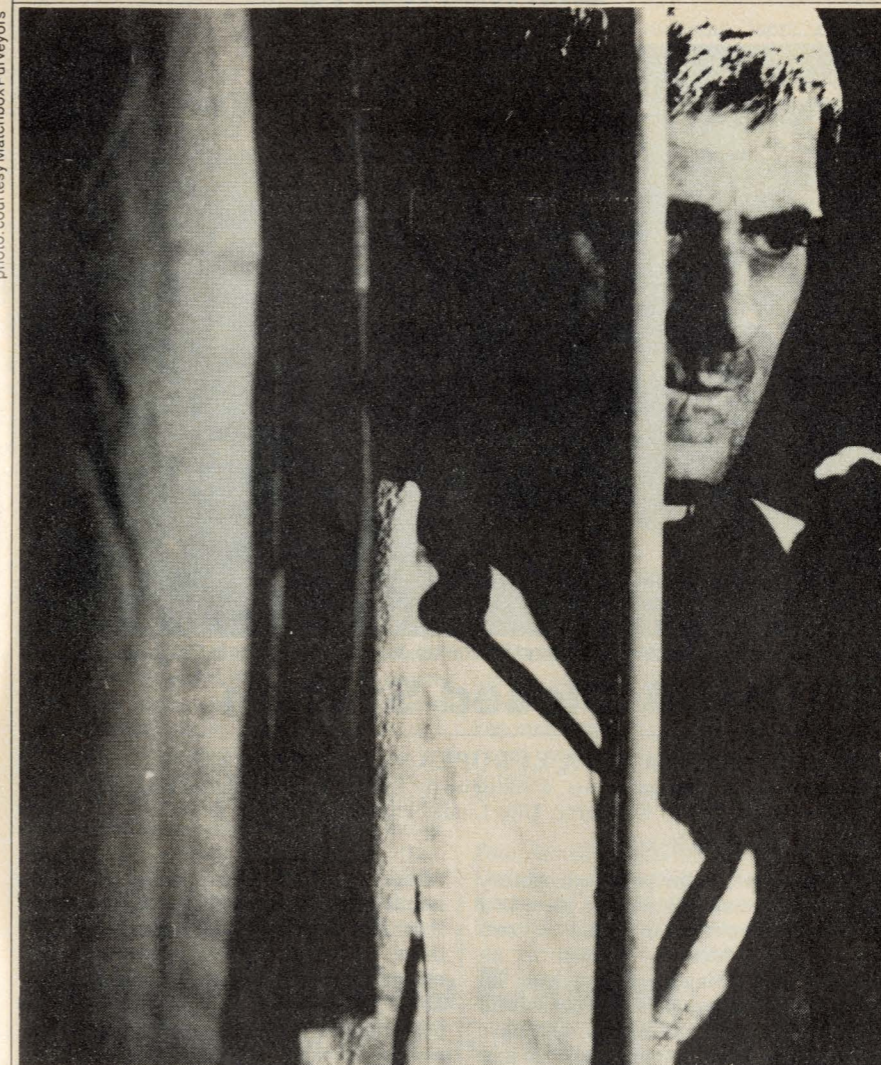


photo: courtesy Matchbox Purveyors

Ian Hinchcliffe of the Matchbox Purveyors, as Jones, in Roger Ely's *Mr. and Mrs. Jones*.

Stephens was a standup with all the time in the world on his hands; Ely was a poet; and Hinchcliffe was the impossible irritant delighting in the absurd facts ("Her great-grandmother was Queen Victoria. I find that extraordinary.") Myself I was in stitches.

The second half of the evening consisted of a collective improvisation. Hinchcliffe and Stephens were old acquaintances meeting on the platform for a train they have to propel themselves ("diddle-bop, diddley-bop, diddley-bop, hey you're not doing your share of the diddley bops"), and Ely was an inexplicable hanger on. Stephens didn't know him, and Hinchcliffe denied all ownership/responsibility. Of course the train is heading towards the wrong destination, or else the one has become a bit taken with the other one, and just where Ely thinks he's going is a bit of an issue. And then the train just has to go off

the tracks at the same time that the three passengers have a violent altercation. And the drinking glasses on the table get tipped over so that Hinchcliffe in particular gets to eat the broken glass. But the improvisation held together like a Beckett play, ending right back where it started from yet full of beautiful holes and some great moments.

The Matchbox Purveyors presented some of the best performance/theatre/literature/whatever that I have ever seen, as loose as the raconteur who can have his drinks paid for in any public house and as challenging as the initial theatre of the absurd. At the moment anyways I can't think of a better way to return to Toronto than to literally walk into a performance by the Matchbox Purveyors. ■

Andrew James Paterson is a performer/composer currently living in Toronto.

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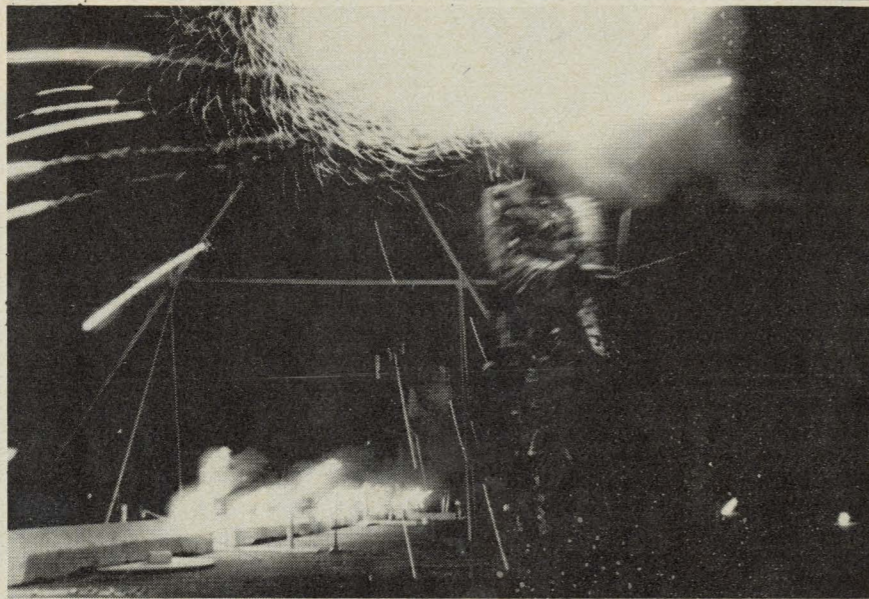


photo: courtesy The Calgary Herald

Pierre-Alain Hubert, Marseille, displays Duchamp-inspired fireworks in Calgary.

Within A Closed System

MARCEL DUCHAMP: A EUROPEAN INVESTIGATION

At the Alberta College of Art. Catalogue by Brian Dyson includes essays by Octavio Pax, Arturo Schwartz, Ulfe Linde, Lawrence Steefel, et al.

reviewed by Paul Woodrow

Like most art in the twentieth century the above exhibitions take place in a room: to be specific there are actually two rooms, one which is devoted to an historic assemblage of replicas of Duchamp's Readymades, and the second room to a number of artists who have made use of Duchampian methods and attitudes as a 'take off' point. I could easily begin this review with a description of the rooms, their contents, the imagined historic or social import of the work in question, or with commentary on the behaviour which results in or is a result of the work and its location in those particular rooms. However, I can't think of anything at this moment which would assume to be so fatiguing or irrelevant. We all know what happens in 'art rooms', we all attended school, didn't we?, and some of us even got to go in the 'art room'. We learned how to behave or misbehave, and perhaps if we were really lucky we were introduced to the ritual of 'aesthetic experience' wherein we learned to keep our mouths shut in front of great masterpieces, or learned how to gasp for air in front of things that at that time of life and persuasion we didn't think humanly possible. "Brave! Bravo Civilization!"

Well, now we've supposedly grown up what does one talk about in polite circles when one is obliged to talk about art? Several things come to mind: one can

discuss posture and posing for the uninitiated, or maybe fashionable fetishism for the flamboyant, that is, those who have nothing to do since the recent death of the avant-garde, or how about, How minimal is minimal? or, Is performance art 'art' or 'performance' or neither, and lastly for those existentialists, Is there life after art? I won't pretend to be a cynic as you all know I'm not! What is important about these exhibitions is obviously not what is there physically, as we could get rid of most of the evidence without really missing anything. Then what we are left with are the issues, to that which the exhibitions and particularly the catalogue make reference. In the catalogue especially an attempt has been made to put Duchamp in his place, that is - at rest. But why is this attempt being made in October 1979, since Duchamp left us as late as 1968, and some would even suggest an earlier date. The obsession with Duchamp for a number of people, myself included, lies in certain problems or paradoxes which we have inherited as a result of Duchamp's activity and which upon investigation seem as relevant today as when they were first posed by Duchamp in the period 1912 to 1923, although there now exists a further complication in that Duchamp himself has become part of the problem or even part of the question, which is

Exhibitions

ironical to say the least.

What then can we identify as some of the major problems which Duchamp was able to recognize, as others had recognized before him, and which still continue to be problematic? In my opinion, it is that Duchamp was able to demonstrate that aesthetic experience is of no more particular value than other forms of human activity and can be understood merely as a mode of taste/preference and that the separation of art from life was based on a false premise, and that art is capable of solving problems in the real world. Still as late as 1979 there are those that look upon art as a panacea for no matter what disease, political or social. Given that art can't save the world from its troubles, why is it then that, in the words of the group Parliament, some of us "love art more than people", more than human relationships, and in some cases more than sex! Duchamp of course was aware of the limitations of art, aware that artistic activity belonged within a closed system and that the artist was incapable of playing the role of cultural anal thermometer, myopic soothsayer or spiritual adviser. That this was the case did not stop him making art or poking fun in the most critical manner. What is remarkable about Duchamp is that knowing full well that art was of little consequence in the grand scheme of things he continued to put his best foot

forward. For Duchamp there are no problems because there are no questions, there is only life and its living, or in the words of Duchamp, "Eros c'est la vie".

There is obviously much more to talk about, but little space. I feel that Brian Dyson deserves credit for the publication of the catalogue which is important in its own right and contains several essays which have not been previously brought together under one cover.

At the beginning of my article I made reference to the fact that art mostly takes place within a room. One person who managed to leave the room was Pierre-Alain Hubert from Marseille who treated the opening night crowd to a display of Duchamp-inspired fireworks. In this light I would like to leave you with a quotation from Ben Vautier which appears on the cover of the catalogue, "The post-Duchampian artist naturally will no longer be interested in continuing art formalism but in questioning the very nature of art. That is to say since one cannot change anything in the room, it becomes necessary to try and change the room itself, or to leave the room entirely." ■

Paul Woodrow teaches art theory at the University of Calgary. He has created the Bureau of Imaginary Exchange and the Imaginair Travel Service.

Not Demanding Enough

FEMINISTISCHE KUNST INTERNATIONAAL

Haags Gemeentemuseum, Nov. 10, 1979 - Jan. 6, 1980, The Hague.

reviewed by Tim Guest

Last month I visited an exhibition of international feminist art at the Gemeentemuseum in the Hague, Netherlands. The work of over 45 visual artists from Europe and the USA was represented and despite my own optimistic expectations, I didn't like the show. There are numerous reasons why, but in general the reaction I had was similar to the one that I have to most 'museum-objects', and most 'political art'. I felt the same excesses, regardless of the feminist context.

First of all, the objects in question were distinguished by three unexplicit categories:

- ▶ collages drawn from everyday 'home-made' materials,
- ▶ conventional paintings and sculpture with either female sexual imagery or a didactic feminist message as subject matter and
- ▶ photographs arranged as sequential comparisons.

In addition, all three types of work also included writing which functioned as 'explanation', or else as autobiographical fragments. (There was also a slide show and some video which seemed more of an afterthought than part of the package.) With the exception of some of the photographs there was very little formal innovation - for instance, in the hyper-realist paintings I felt as though the feminist content functioned as the 'redeeming factor' in work which I would otherwise write off as bad art.

The collages are a bit more complicated to describe. Initially I reacted against them - after all, who wants to see art about household drudgery? But viewed as fetishes, objects, treasures, which ambiguously define an interior life, then they become very interesting. For instance Mary Kelly's collection of insects stuck on pins, combined with pieces of a biography of her baby son.

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Exhibitions

However, of all the work, the photo-series were the most successful. One set by Gertrude Vogler and Alice Arnold, documented Alice's changing image over a decade. Every year, different hair, different make-up, different clothes, but the woman herself is no fashion model. So completely ordinary in her composure, she stresses the point that nothing really changes at all. In another sequence, Vogler and Arnold photographed Victorian tomb-sculptures. Statues of women wailing in stone drapery over the graves of anonymous husbands or full scale carvings of women in the family plot, standing in descending order under the bust of the founding father. Here the traditional themes of sex, death, and the patriarchy worked together in a series which was sophisticated, exotic and compelling, as well as being highly critical, from a feminist perspective.

Even still, the really absorbing work often seemed lost amidst a certain pervasive sense of curatorial democracy. It was as though the exhibition was chosen to be 'representative' without being demanding of the genre.

"Feminist art is committed art with a message", states the catalogue. "It is narrative, explanatory art..." I think there are problems underlying this conception. I don't disagree with the message per se, but with the manner of explanation. There seems to always be a reduction involved in communicating the message, as though things have to be simplified to be understood. But by this process, what is understood is only the simplest ideas, and consequently the real experiences of women's lives are reduced, trivialized into a cliché.



Cover of catalogue by Verita Monselles.

However, this kind of reductive propagandizing is too common a social phenomenon to be solely attributed to feminist art. In fact the same process flows through political propaganda on the left and on the right, through socialist realism as well as modern advertisements. So perhaps I am being overly general in responding to a poor example. There is important feminist activity in video and performance art, for example. Moreover, feminist art is often powerful, compelling, intelligent and useful in the way that it articulates a suppressed culture while unfolding a personal transformation. But having such a large potential leads one to expectations of a larger message, constantly growing, instead of falling short for the sake of easy translation. ■

Tim Guest, Toronto, is an associate editor of Fuse.

Letters

(continued from page 74)

The students are getting sold down the river by an apathetic faculty whose main problem is a total, inexcusable lack of leadership. The art college is a division of The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT). This institute is geared to providing wage earners for industry. We've had courses in mural painting over the last couple of years; there's a proposal for a theatre design course, painting backdrops etc., - you know, employable activities. The Alberta College of Art is totally funded by the Provincial Government. The president of SAIT is the equivalent of a deputy minister. Attempts to secure funding from outside of the institution, when successful, are frowned upon to say the least, and mechanisms for the control of such funding are firmly in place. At

least you would expect some kind of leadership from within the college but no such luck.

I'll give you a specific example; Ken Sturdy, the head of the college, was a member of the gallery task force committee. This task force, composed of three administration reps., three student reps. and three ACA staff reps., plus myself as senior gallery staff member, was made responsible for clarifying the gallery's mandate and objectives within the context of the student population and the artistic community generally. One of the key statements in this document (which I wrote) and which the task force passed unanimously, was that *final responsibility for exhibition programming rests solely with the senior curator, and the curator can exhibit anything he thinks appropriate and take the consequences.*

Letters

What Sturdy did, after endorsing this policy as a member of the task force, was write to Mark Prent, on behalf of the sculpture department, inviting Prent to conduct a workshop on resin casting techniques and also to exhibit in the gallery (which I had already agreed to after talking with the sculpture department). After doing this, and after obtaining a positive response from Prent, Sturdy went to SAIT administration with photographs of Prent's work, and asked for their advice, in consideration of the 'controversial' aspects of Prent's work. Of course, after much stalling, the administration said no, because, to paraphrase, "since the Alberta College of Art is funded totally by the Provincial Government of Alberta, the proposed exhibition might cause embarrassment to the Government of Alberta, and therefore the proposed exhibition is denied".

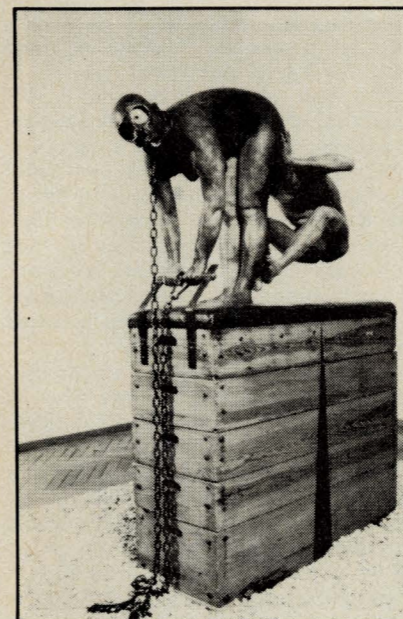


photo: courtesy Isaacs Gallery Ltd.

Prent's "This is Dedicated to the Berlin Zoo"

The irony of the Mark Prent situation is that one week after receiving a memo of rejection, the gallery opened a Les Levine installation called "Deep Gossip" which includes two 6' x 9' slide projections of what some might call a 'pornographic' image. The image (within the limits of SAIT's own criteria of judgement) makes Prent's work evaporate in terms of its 'controversiality'. The point is that SAIT administration don't have a hope in hell, acting in the 'best interests' of the Provincial Government, of censoring gallery activities on any grounds whatsoever. They know this very well. Whilst they can turn down anything they want "according to their interpretation", as long as they are not asked for their specific approval of exhibition material

the gallery can exhibit anything it damn well wants. They are well aware that a pre-screening of all gallery exhibition material by SAIT administration would be totally unacceptable to the college and therefore politically stupid. They can only sit and twiddle their thumbs and cross their fingers at the same time, one of the few difficult tasks they are capable of performing. (Sturdy can't even do this; he's an equal embarrassment to both sides.) They have seen the exhibition and know very well that intervention on their part at this particular time will draw more attention to the College of Art problem than if they simply ignore it. However, they still seem to be living in fear of what they call "one or two fanatics out there" who might cause them to "interpret" policy in order to avoid any potential embarrassment to the "Government". Well, if one or two crack-pots can cause these people to tremble with apprehension it's about time we had a few words from about fifty art 'fanatics' and see what kind of result we get then.

The catch 22 to all this is that staff members, as employees of the provincial government, come under the civil service act. As well as being a Catch 22 for the government it's also a very good out for the faculty, who have been given a very good excuse to keep their mouths shut and not get involved. (Mortgage rates are very high these days.)

I don't care too much for the staff. Generally they're self-serving hypocrites who are either indifferent or else they suck like tomorrow the tit dries up. It will be up to the students themselves to ensure that they are adequately provided with and exposed to ideas in contemporary art, philosophy, etc. and politics. Otherwise they will find, within a year of leaving college, that they have been spoon-fed an aesthetic which to say the least, has been obsolete for about fifty years. And so it goes...

At the present time there is a major confrontation between SAIT administration and the print-making department over totally inadequate ventilation in the silk-screen studio. The administration has been aware of the problem for at least two years and right now students are going home sick and in some cases breaking out in skin rashes as a result of exposure to toxic chemicals. The silk-screen room needs proper ventilation. At the present moment ventilation is non-existent. The administration is playing its usual stalling game.

Art might be habit-forming but it is certainly not intended to be hazardous to one's health. The silk-screen room should be (should have been) upgraded at least to meet the recommendations of health experts. Instead they are going to cancel

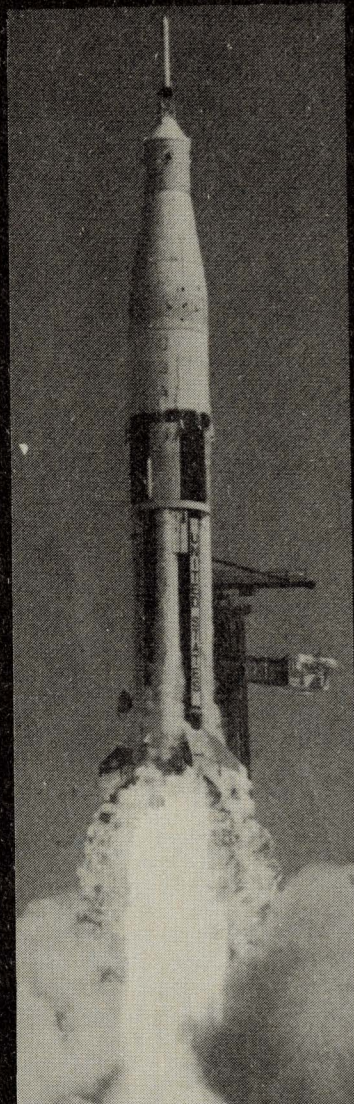
all silk-screen instruction until further notice, beginning next semester. But back to the gallery; if by chance one of these previously referred to 'fanatics' should happen to make enough noise to cause SAIT administration to close the Levine show, Levine's lawyer would be on them like a ton of bricks. Levine has been to court several times on similar issues and has yet to lose a case. When asked by a member of the gallery advisory committee what credibility the task force report had in the light of the Prent cancellation, administration members informed them that it was a question of 'interpretation', and since they had the power it would be their 'interpretation' that counted. And regarding CAR-rated fees payable to staff members for the annual staff exhibition, (which they refuse to pay, again in contravention of the task force report which they endorsed) they said (and I'm paraphrasing again) "We won't pay staff fees of any kind, but like income tax, rules are made to be broken and although I'm not going to tell you here, there's a way in which you can get around our position..." Yes, I was actually told by an ear-witness that somebody at V.P. level actually said that. What they mean is that nothing changes. They have the power and they intend to keep it. We can get away with anything we want providing that we put them in a position where they have been able to cover themselves with memos or obscure policy statements now on file. Otherwise, they are actively committed to maintaining the status quo. It all comes down, as they said, to a question of interpretation. At least that's how I've interpreted them up to this point and they've turned out to be completely predictable. They have the token power but I would think that it's the staff and (especially) the students who have the personal power. Middle-management have been in their positions of 'power' for so long that they are suffering from criminal complacency. That means that they are totally unprepared for any concerted pressure from a bunch of art 'fanatics'. Now, who really has the power - and who doesn't seem to have the courage to externalize it?

Brian Dyson, Calgary

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Cold Feet (continued from page 117)

that it is attempting to explore the issue which it seeks to condemn.

Nicol observed that the women's movement has a history of puritanism going back to the days when emancipation was linked with the temperance movement. She capsulized the history of the imagery of the women's movement as the desire for the heroic. Both poster images offend that standard. Rina Fraticelli characterized the *Fireweed* poster as being a clear image of woman as both classically defined sex object and as support staff. She considered the possibility that its rawness might be an affront to the limited gains of the women's movement - a reminder of tenuous accomplishments. She expressed concern about the available imagery of 70's media on the grounds that little has really changed. Gone is the apron-clad housewife of the 50's, but she has been replaced by an image almost as limited - ranging from the asexual to the elegant businesswoman with beautiful leather attache case to the housewife who now weaves in the back room. Fraticelli sees a danger in this imagery. The variations which were formulated as an acceptable compromise between the demands of the women's movement of the early 70's and the previous stereotypes have instead created an even more confusing image-statement. The 'change' embraced is only superficial.

One part of the parody in the *Fireweed* photograph was the shoes and wig. Standard fashion and taste were not exhibited, a fact that further stresses the parody. Fashion and feminism have not been comfortable partners and the rhetoric of the early 70's could easily be construed as producing as rigid a set of rules concerning dress as the one it replaced. The consciousness of fashion conditioning that reinforced the role model of sexual object was counteracted with a role model of anti-sexuality. Narcissistic adornment and aggressive sexual expression were suspected of being in collusion with the stereotype. The photograph highlights a use of clothes-as-costume that differs from an unaware acceptance of fashion as status quo. However, it must be admitted that this approach to costume is removed from the everyday work world of office fashion and as such is open to misinterpretation.

Rosenberg contends that there is a basic problem: women aren't supposed to deal with sexuality and the image in the *Fireweed* poster is a sexual image. It depicts a powerful woman - the very act of carrying a huge IBM Selectric around doesn't exactly illustrate vulnerability - and the outrageousness of the image has a power of its own, and yet one of the



...but can she write?

The *Fireweed* poster: carrying a huge typewriter doesn't suggest vulnerability.

protesting letters described the woman on the poster as "threatened" and cowering behind the typewriter.

In recent years, Toronto has seen a great deal of concern over pornography, sex-shops, strip clubs and so on. The motivation behind the crackdown is not to eliminate sexual exploitation, but to maintain conditions of sexual repression. The women's movement has exposed pornography representing violence toward women and has had rape named as a crime of violence provoked by hatred rather than sexual desire. These are immeasurably valuable accomplishments. Concern arises, however, when an all-or-nothing attitude takes hold allowing these concerns to become the tools of sexual repression. Feminist opinions can thus provide fuel for the anti-sexual fire. Exposing and rejecting the traditional female sexual stereotype of woman-as-victim as the product of male oppression was the first step women took toward claiming responsibility for their own sexual self-determination - a right which has always been allowed to men. The struggle against the sexual exploitation of women is often manipulated into a tool of anti-sexuality and repressive puritanism and as such affects human beings of both sexes and all sexual persuasions.

Feminism has made some gains for women, both gay and heterosexual. Feminism has been part of the socio/sexual reorientation begun in the 60's. But the accomplishments are still few and the right-wing swing of the late 70's maintains a puritanical status quo. Although sexual behaviour has changed, our moral values have not. It would appear that the only 'freedom' we have is to expose what is still considered to be our 'immorality'. ■

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