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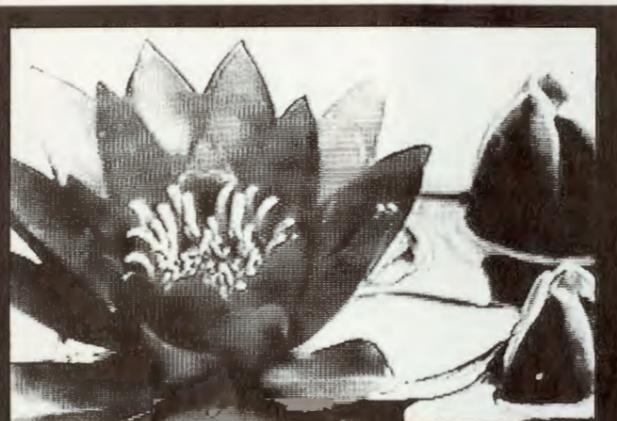
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A video exhibition on view at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa from 6 July to 4 September 1989

Single-channel videotapes and multi-screen video installations by 16 participating artists from Canada and the United States will be on view.

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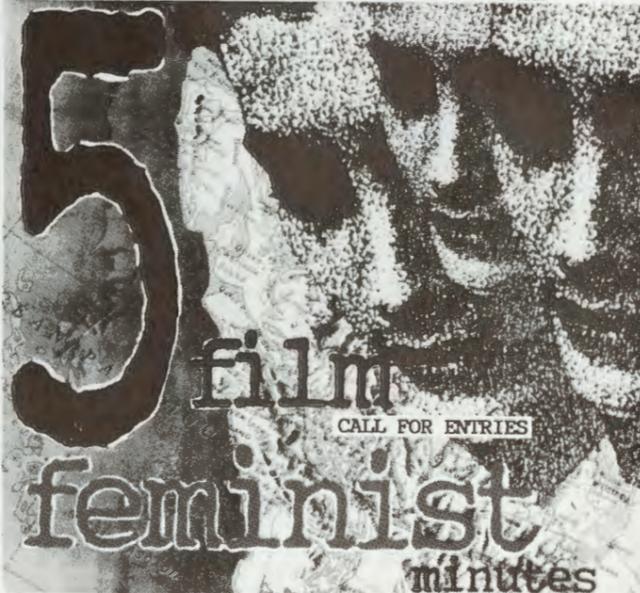
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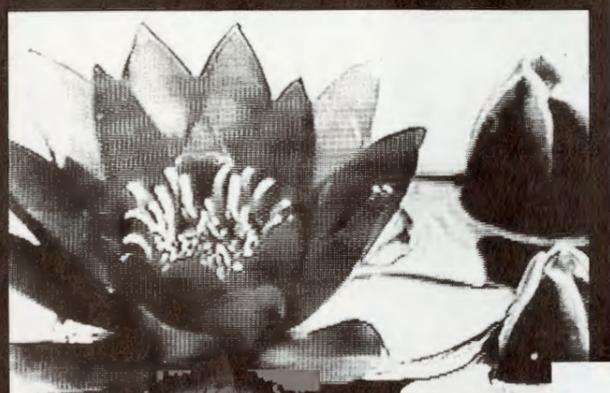
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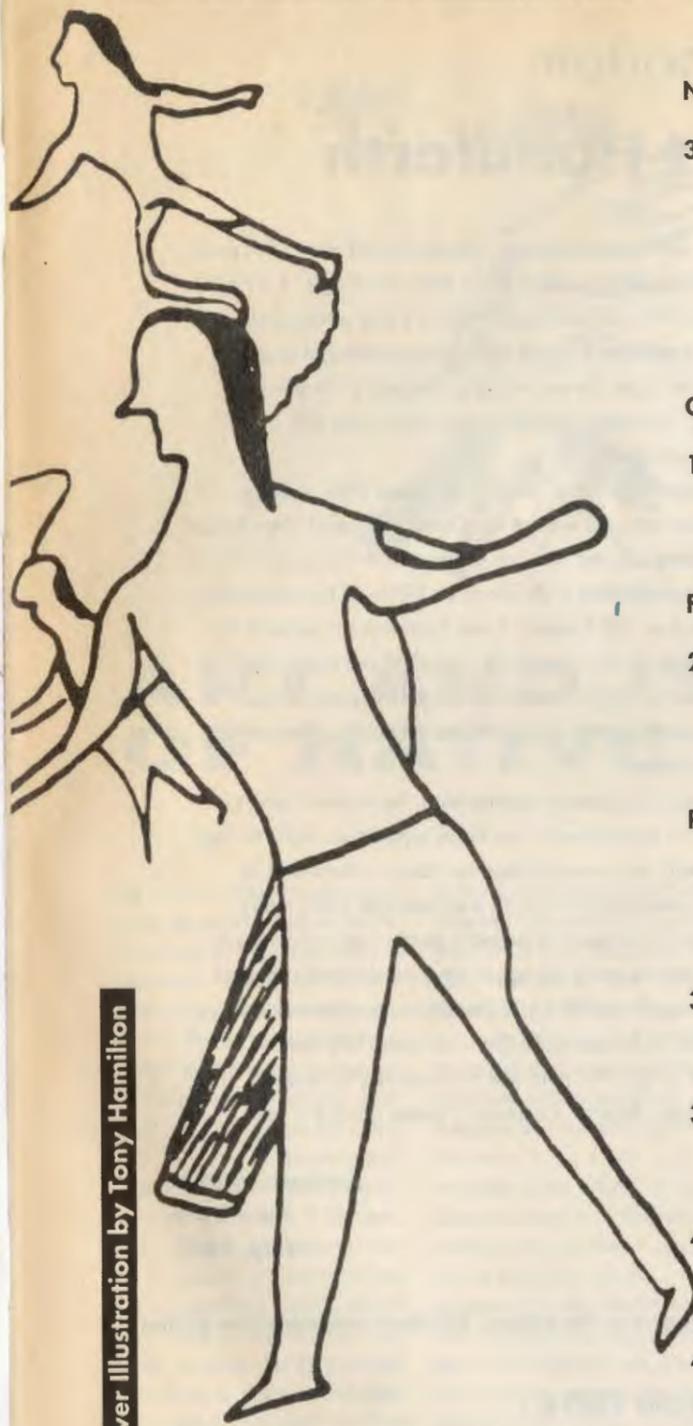


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In Memoriam Robert Handforth

The contemporary arts lost a thoughtful colleague and friend this past April when Robert Handforth died in New York at the age of 39 after a prolonged struggle with AIDS. Known for his wit and perspicacious mind, Robert was a strong advocate of the unconventional and the new. Throughout his career he remained committed to developing audiences for risky, inter-media works—those that often lack a firm foothold within the art marketplace.

From his bright beginnings in the theatre in the late 1960s, Robert moved into the visual arts. He was at the Canada Council, then helped to establish Art Metropole and went on to become the director there in 1974-75. He was coordinator at A Space in 1976-77 before moving to New York to run the 49th Parallel. From there Robert became the Cultural Affairs Officer at the Canadian Consulate in New York. This position allowed him to support and develop joint Canadian/U.S. projects that examine the parallels as well as the subtle differences between the two cultures.

Knowledgeable and unabashedly opinionated, he worked hard to make connections, to stay in touch and to be supportive. Right to the end Robert remained curious and concerned about others and in passing, he gave considerable strength and courage to his many friends. As a further inspiration, he willed a portion of his savings to Canadian artists. Friends and colleagues have established a Robert Handforth fund to supplement this gift. Donations may be sent and made payable to A. A. Bronson c/o General Idea, 136 Simcoe St. Toronto, Ont. M5V 1W2. This fund will be awarded by Jessica Bradley, A.A. Bronson, Regina Cornwell, Ydessa Hendeles and Barbara London.

**Barbara London
New York
July, 1989**

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Image: Picture letter from a Cheyenne man of the tortoise clan to his son. From Signs, Brands, Marks.



ART AND ISSUES OF NATIVE IDENTITY

by Clive Robertson

OTTAWA—How many native artists are represented in the National Gallery's contemporary art collection? Where is the only native-controlled university college in North America? How is being a young native woman artist filling a very vacant spot? What did Expo 67 do for native art? These questions and others were answered at a panel discussion entitled Issues of Contemporary Native Art, presented by the University of Ottawa's Fine Art Department and Gallérie SAW Vidéo. Hosted and introduced by Fine Art Department head Francine Perinet, the guest artist panel consisted of Bob Boyer, Chair of the Visual Arts Programme, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Regina; Rebecca Belmore, co-founding

member of the gallery Definitely Superior, Thunder Bay; and Ottawa artist Ron Noganosh, who also teaches at the CEGEP Outaouais in Hull, Quebec. It's not exactly news that there have been long-standing tensions between anthropologists, ethnologists and self-determined indigenous peoples who wish to maintain some control over the dissemination and interpretation of their past and present artwork. It was therefore refreshing when Francine Perinet framed the debate as a learning process by asking: "What are the consequences of my gesture saying I recognize contemporary art has a responsibility towards the production of native arts; should I identify that production as contemporary Canadian art and what are the ques-

tions arising from that position?" Bob Boyer initiated the discussion by saying: "It's my position that the history of white people in North America over the past 400 years is a very short segment of Indian history. There have been people known on this continent producing art for the past 100,000 years. Without any real influence from other parts of the world, civilizations developed here with languages, art forms, systems of education, mathematics, some very wonderful forms of architecture—from the very complex to the very practical and environmentally sound. It confuses me when I keep hearing of people thinking of Indian culture in a simplistic manner, such as: Indians think in four, Indians couldn't count past four, Indians

only thought in four directions, they could only think in circles. Over a period of time, the Indian nations on this continent, and there were no other cultures but Indian cultures, developed systems of expression that equalled the pre-Roman period in Europe. Ideas of art from the Renaissance ignored all forms of 'people's art,' whether it came from the Celts, Ukrainians or Indians. Those art forms which we still have imbedded in our development of contemporary art became known as the 'folk arts' or the 'soft arts.' "

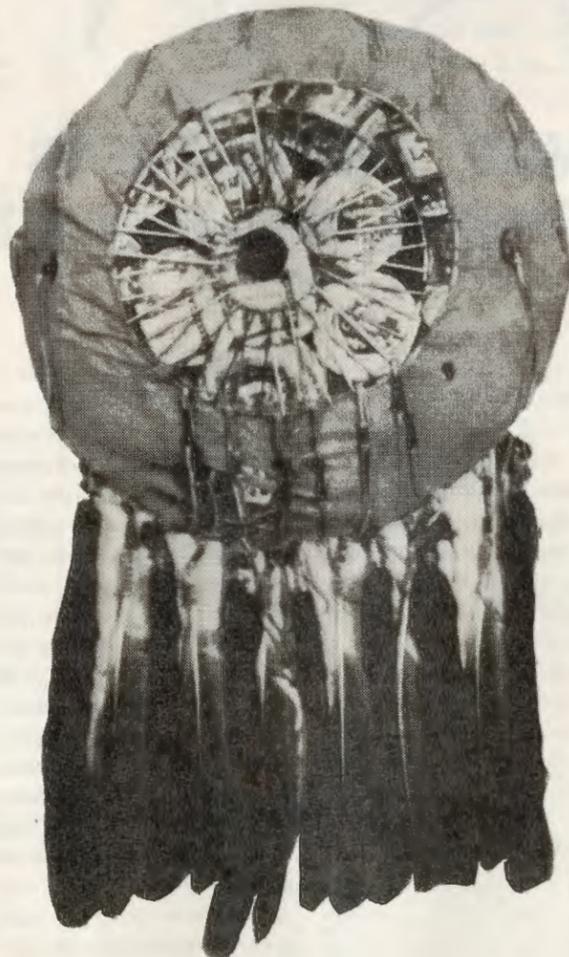
Boyer later went on to explain how the unique native arts programme at the University of Regina came into being. According to Boyer, practising Indian culture was officially discour-

aged. Then Montreal's Expo 67 precipitated some changes by inviting native participation. To secure native (native being the accepted term that includes both Metis and treaty Indians) cooperation a change of guidelines, if not laws, brought into being a number of Indian cultural centres in Thunder Bay, Saskatoon and other regions of the country. In Saskatoon a coalition of five treaty groups known as the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians decided to expand their cultural centre into an Indian-run college at the University of Saskatchewan. Both the Anthropology and Native Studies Departments successfully opposed the application, so the Federation went to the University of Regina where Dr. Loyd Barber accepted the college proposal, again against the wishes of the department of Anthropology. The college now has three elders on campus and respects the advisory input of 56 bands in the province. The college offers a visual arts degree where students study the history and production of native art.

The three hour discussion matched frankness with wit. When the University of Regina's Art History Department wondered how the Indian Federated College was going to teach the history of native art without native art galleries, Boyer responded: "Same as you guys; we'll use slides. You don't have easy access to Rembrandts either."

Ron Noganosh introduced himself as being born Ojibway-Algonquin: "According to the government of Canada," he said, "the number assigned to me is BO47957 and my band number is 99. This has helped me find my place in the world because without this information I would

not, in all probability, know that I was an Indian." Noganosh learned mechanical drafting and graphic design in Toronto and eventually studied art at the University of Ottawa. Like a number of contemporary native artists, his work is shown as much outside Canada as it is domestically. Noganosh works with found objects and often makes collaged works using garbage. All three artists referred to the stereotypes of native art and their experience working in non-traditional forms. Hence one of Noganosh's pieces fabricated with hair and flattened beer cans called *Shield for a*



Shield for a Modern Warrior, or, concession to beads and feathers in native art by Ron Noganosh.

Modern warrior, or, concession to beads and feathers in native art.

All three artists referred to the central functions of identity. Performance artist Rebecca Belmore spoke of being one of three native students out of 1,500 students at the Ontario College of Art, and her experiences as what she considered to be an assimilated young Ojibway in the Experimental Art Department. One instructor in critiquing her work asked: "Do you think your native ancestry will get in the way of you making art?" Belmore also referred to an assessment of a

performance done in a class of 15 where an instructor said: "You're very lucky that you have something to make art about, something to fight for." Belmore articulated a concern, shared by other artists of colour; that of a misbalanced responsibility to address issues of race and economics while white artists and art students can feel absolved of equal responsibility. She spoke of her preference for working in institutions that have a representational structure, and the use of performance art in her own Ojibway community: its empowerment and healing acceptance by other native women. Boyer also mentioned a native-sponsored commission given to a native artist to commemorate an archaeological site in the Fort Kappel District of Saskatchewan that was in danger of being dug up.

In the end what proved invigorating about the discussion was that naïve questions were often answered and that problems of assimilation and identity were addressed. One member of the audience discussed the issue of funding social "minority" (i.e. feminist or native) art within its real context. The history of arts funding shows that there shouldn't be a dichotomy between marginal (i.e. experimental film) and minority access to funding. If assimilation is to occur at all it should take place through exhibition and not through funding practices. Though Bob Boyer's work is in the National Gallery's contemporary art collection (which is not labeled by nationality, native or otherwise) along with other native artists (Robert Houle, Carl Beam, Pierre Sioui, Robert Davidson, Ron Hamilton and Joe David), the learning exchange is clearly in its infancy. ■

Photo courtesy Ron Noganosh



Still courtesy CBC VI

Still from *Anita* by Rassoul Labuchin of Haiti. The CBC VI screening was the film's North American premiere.

Celebration of Black Cinema

by Glace W. Lawrence

BOSTON—Celebration of Black Cinema Inc. began in Boston in 1981 when Marcia Lloyd, an artist and professor at the Massachusetts College of Art, wanted to "highlight the breadth and depth of cinematic expression by black film artists." And, although film historians and scholars have always been a mainstay of the festival, the emphasis has been and continues to be on contemporary filmmakers and their work. The festival benefits the public by affording them access to films and filmmakers rarely visible in the mainstream.

Since 1986, the festival has expanded in scope to provide support documents on the history, aesthetics, and dialogue of

independent black cinema. This resulted in the 1988 publication of *Blackframes: Critical Perspectives on Black Independent Cinema*. Edited by Mbye B. Cham, Associate Professor of African Studies and Research Programme at Howard University, and Claire Andrade-Watkins, Assistant Professor, Film Department, Emerson College, *Blackframes* contains original essays by noted scholars and critics of African descent. It examines the uniqueness and commonalities of the history, context and aesthetics of black independent film practice in anglophone Africa, the U.S. and Britain. Watkins came on board in '86 as Director and President of Celebration of Black Cinema

Inc., and she has been a major force behind the development of documents and scholarly discourse on black independent film practice. This fall CBC Inc. plans to publish the second instalment of *Blackframes* with a focus on film and literature in the Caribbean basin entitled *Film and Literature in the Caribbean Basin: Dynamics of Exchange*.

Celebration of Black Cinema VI (CBC VI), held April 11-15, 1989, featured films and filmmakers from the Caribbean basin as well as black American filmmakers. The festival also facilitated roundtable discussions which, I felt, were a vital component to the screenings. There were two sessions "Production, Recep-

tion and Impact of Caribbean Film" and "Film And Literature in the Caribbean: Social and Aesthetic Perspectives."

Looking specifically at women filmmakers from the Caribbean and the U.S., the first panel was asked to address the conditions that make it possible for the production, reception and impact of Caribbean film. The problems, challenges and advantages expatriates face in producing their work in exile and the difficulties of working in their homelands were also addressed. Haitian filmmaker Elsie Haas (now residing in France), the only woman on this panel session, was asked to address what moderator Dr. Selwyn Cudjoe called the "peculiar prob-



Still courtesy CBC VI

Still from *Perfect Image?* by Maureen Blackwood of Jamaica.

lem of gender concerns," i.e.; being female and black and working in France, and the impact of this "peculiarity" on her work.

Haas spoke about being a feminist filmmaker and the problems that many women, not just black women, face in the director's chair. "They expect your film to be feminine, light! In this work—in this profession you find exactly the same kind of relation that women walking in the street find: you really have to choose between being either the mama, the seductive woman, or the little girl who's looking at the papa (the producer) saying 'yes, yes.'" So now, Haas says, she has become an agent.

Haas's film, *La Ronde De Voodoo* presents a unique perspective on voodoo in Haiti that challenges the traditional concept of voodoo as evil "black magic." Haas is currently looking for funding to make a feature film about the bush

people in French Guyana.

Other films by noted black women filmmakers screened at the festival were *Omega Rising: Women of Rastafari*, directed by D. Elmina Davis, who worked in conjunction with the Ceddo Film and Video Workshop in Britain; *Perfect Image?*, written and directed by Maureen Blackwood, a founding director with Sankofa Film and Video Ltd. in London; *From Rags To Reality*, the first commercial feature film directed by a black American woman (Joy Shannon) to hit mainstream American audiences; *The Cruz Brothers and Miss Malloy*, directed by the late Kathleen Collins; *Homeland*, written by Valerie Thomas; and *Sugar Cane Alley*, directed by Euzhan Palcy of Martinique, France.

Overall, black women filmmakers face sexism, racism, lack of funding and lack of distribution. Also, there is a scarcity of

black women in the film industry. In Janis Cole and Holly Dale's Canadian production *Calling The Shots*, Euzhan Palcy was the only black woman featured speaking about her experience of calling the shots in filmmaking.

Speaking at the festival, Palcy reiterated the experience of black women in filmmaking: "It's very tough in general for young directors to get the door open to make their first movie, and it's more difficult when you are a woman, and three times more difficult when you are a black woman to get a movie done, because it's a very tough world and they are not used to women directors or women producers, but in the last 10 years things have changed. There are so many women directors or producers and technicians, it's great."

Palcy made the internationally acclaimed *Sugar Cane Alley* in 1983 when she was in her early

20s. She has just finished her new film *A Dry White Season*, based on the novel by Andre Brink. Palcy will be attending the *Festival of Festivals* in Toronto this fall to promote her film which opens in October.

In view of the success of CBC VI and its focus this year on Caribbean Cinema, the inevitable question seems to be why isn't there such a festival in Toronto?

The impetus has to come from black filmmakers and scholars in this medium to create a foundation that will set a critical framework for the examination of independent black Cinema in Canada and nurture new black filmmakers. The urgency of this hit home recently with the death of Jennifer Hodge, a black Canadian filmmaker who was based in Toronto. She is best known for her film *Home Feeling: Struggle For A Community*. ■

An Interview with Filmmaker Valerie Thomas

by Glace W. Lawrence

Homeland made its New England premiere at the Boston-based Celebration of Black Cinema's (CBC) sixth annual festival. *Homeland* is described in CBC's programme notes as a dramatization of "a black American farm family's struggle to survive the financial, social and psychological stresses of rural life in America in 1960." Conflict arises when one of two brothers, who jointly own the farm left to them by their father, returns home with a decision to sell his share of the farm in order to attend law school.

I could not help but compare this film to *Home to Buxton*, produced and directed by Toronto independent filmmakers Claire Prieto and Roger McTeair. Both films, albeit one a drama and the other a documentary, deal with blacks in a farming community. When I saw *Home to Buxton* last year I was left with a feeling of pride and joy for the blacks who continued to farm on the land passed down to them by their ancestors, despite a dwindling black community. In *Homeland* I saw the conflict but I did not feel moved by the struggle between the brothers. It was not until the question-and-answer session that I discovered the screenwriter's view of what happened behind the scenes of *Homeland* which undoubtedly affected the end product.

What the film could not explore was the real-life conflict that occurred before, during and after the filming of *Homeland*

between the screenwriter, Valerie Thomas, and her co-director James Jordan, both students at UCLA film school at the time this project was undertaken. The organizers of CBC VI were very much aware of this conflict and invited Valerie Thomas to speak to the audience after the screening. Ms Thomas began her question-and-answer session with the audience by reading the following statement:

*My name is Valerie Thomas. On the film that was screened the credits list me as secondary screen writer and member of the sound crew, and from there, I just want to say that for me the bed-rock of *Homeland*, the title, is the African diaspora and that this story explores a historical situation as a metaphor of African-American history in terms of its characters' isolation and their survival. In a way, the film is a study of what society and the media have typically done to portrayals of African culture with respect to thematic content, production conditions, and now its process of presentation.*

Its context is the subtle mechanisms by which we have historically been subverted and sidelined as subjects in our own lives and how it is incumbent on black filmmakers to oppose that objectification.

The same racism that surrounds the family in this film moved its white director to exclude a number of blacks from production credits, alienate the actors both during and after production, and finally to claim co-authorship of the script on the basis of his having made certain minor, rather questionable editorial changes. The director's chronic insensitivity towards cast and crew reflects a dissolving inability to deal with the film's subject except in abstract terms. If my remarks seem bitter it's because my remembrance of the produc-

tion is tainted by feelings of rancour and betrayal. That the director arrogated to himself primary creative credit is somewhat humorous, and by that I mean ironic given that I wrote the script, co-produced, assisted in directing and casting, also catered and dressed sets and of course, recorded sound as he [the director] generously noted.

It appears that old massa ran the plantation without the slaves, and like such a voiceless one, I had completely written this film off until the kind invitation of CBC to present it now at this event.



Valerie Thomas

Photo by Glace Lawrence

GWL: How could something like this happen? Was it because you were a student at the time?

VT: To some extent, I'm still wondering how it happened and I think that my initial reaction to that is that I was perhaps naive and trusted that the director had the same respect for the material and for me that was being verbalized and presented at the outset. I had the feeling that that would ensure the careful handling of the project throughout. I think part of the answer is that many of the situations that seem like they should be over with are really continuing. We find them over and over again. Not very much has changed in the nature of the treatment of blacks as subjects in entertainment or in the media. The complexion maybe changes, the face of it changes and you find people seeming to have benign interests, but then you find the same patterns of wanting to maintain control, and wanting to maintain control of the interpretation. This became a big issue for me in the way that the characters and the film were being interpreted and the way my interpretation was changing.

GWL: There's the question of economics: he had the money, you didn't; but I need some clarification on the thesis.

VT: To major in film production, one of the requirements is to produce a 16mm film that is directed and edited by the filmmaker whose thesis it is—which is why it did not end up being attributed in any way as a thesis credit for me. I just agreed to be the writer on the project because it would be a writing credit for myself.

GWL: So the general idea was his? He came to you, he needed a writer to author and develop the script?

VT: That's right. We were actually friends at the time so it seemed reasonable to expect that the collaboration would work. I know it's

kind of passé to say ethics are important but I think they are! As far as it being an exchange situation, the exchange for the people who worked on the film—let's say the actors—was to be in the film. For my part it was the writing credit, which was altered. Well, I also co-produced and was assistant director on this film and there's no mention of that at all in the credits. The bottom line is that I didn't finance it. I don't own the copyright—it was his film, it was his thesis project. And, if no one had asked me about it, I probably wouldn't have said anything about it. If you take the metaphor that filmmaking or doing stories presents a mirror of the artist in some way, I felt like I had looked into the mirror and what looked back at me was some kind of Norman Rockwell painting of myself...that was the last thing that I expected to find there. I saw something that someone else had re-interpreted and completely re-shaped. That's something that happens whenever a writer hands over a project. But, I think if it's an independent production and there's no contracting going on, and there's no financial remuneration going on, then ethics are a very central issue. Everyone is contributing their resources to the film—it's a cooperative effort. Those kinds of films are labours of love, really, and they don't get made without a lot of people somehow believing in the project.

GWL: Based on your experience, what advice would you give to a writer, or a filmmaker volunteering to do an independent production because they believe in a story?

VT: I would say first of all that I don't recommend collaboration. If you have a vision that's yours then I would say stick with it. Don't let it go before its ready on the basis of just trying to get a credit or trying to get the production done. I think there's a real need for establishing a better set of financial resources to be made available for the production of those kinds of projects. Sometimes it's a question of desperation. You feel that the subject may be worthwhile to you or to other people and you feel like there's no other way to get it done and you'll make a decision. That's a risk that I took and it didn't work out.

GWL: What was the ratio on the crew; male to female, black to white?

VT: Male to female, I would say it was about a third women at different times and the crew kind of came and went because it was a long shoot. Women were in technical roles in all aspects of it, and as far as black to white, it was a much smaller ratio. It was predominantly white students in technical roles, but the cinematographer was black, as was the production manager. Then there were people who came in just to do PA [production assistant] work. They wanted experience on the set and contributed, but they didn't get any credits, which I'm sort of sensitive about at this point, but it's not anything that you can do anything about. There were other people who just came in and helped when they could—people who did electrical work, people who did a day of sound recording or something. So there was active participation and active interest and it was a very cooperative effort. I'm sure everybody had different reasons but I know from having dealt with it pretty closely (I was there through the whole production) that the black people who were involved with it were very interested in making it a success because of the subject.

GWL: Do you think that there can be more black women

working in various aspects of this industry?

VT: I think there's a crying need for more black women. It's very disturbing to me as a black woman to have gone through an experience like this, which was very demanding and involved a lot of time and sweating blood, to feel at the end of it erased and voiceless. You begin to wonder if you're real or not. So it's not only the physical aspect of being present in the industry and doing the job; it's also making it an expression, it's also giving it a voice that expresses yourself, and not being rendered invisible and not collaborating in unconscious ways with being invisible. I feel that's why I now have to look back at it and really take a stand that represents a strange relationship to a project that initially I felt very positive about. I just feel a need to say no to that kind of on-going collaboration. I think it's a good thing to say no. Even if nobody pays attention to you or even if you get more kicked from it I still think it's worth it. Most black women whom you talk to who are involved in filmmaking say what a hard time they have. It's a fairly isolated field for black women to be in, but that shouldn't keep people from wanting to do it. There is a certain amount of mystification that surrounds it too, not only for women but for black women.

GWL: Do you mean the industry itself?

VT: Yes, and being able to get access to other roles—to roles that aren't traditionally associated either with women doing them or with black women doing them. For every one film that is actually brought to completion, there probably should be 10 more. There's a tendency to think that, "Well, one person's view of the subject is the whole subject," when really you can do the same story with different perspectives and find something worth seeing that maybe wasn't expressed in another one. That's the reason we keep re-telling tales. In the oral tradition of African culture, the same stories are told over and over again with the patterns somewhat changed. Each time the interpretation kind of changes depending on the context. I think you can apply that to the need for more voices from women.

GWL: What are you working on now?

VT: I'm concentrating on writing right now. I have a project in development that concerns contemporary American Indians, which is an area that I'm interested in because I have some background in American Indian literature. The thing that attracted me to the project was that there are so few realistic non-stereotypical portrayals of contemporary Indians. One film that has come out recently which kind of goes against that trend is called *Powwow Highway*, which is doing well which I'm happy about. It's very different from a lot of films that tend to stick with 19th century romantic stereotypes. In some ways what has happened with the images of Indians to me seems pretty interesting as a reflection of what happens when non-white people are put on screen. They're commodified in a way that Indians have been commodified. So I just wanted to explore doing some characters instead. It's just entering into the development process where the producer is trying to raise funds for it. I'm not as discouraged as I was before coming here. For black women filmmakers who get discouraged you can get re-invigorated if you meet enough people. ■

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Application forms for each program are available from the OAC Literature Office.

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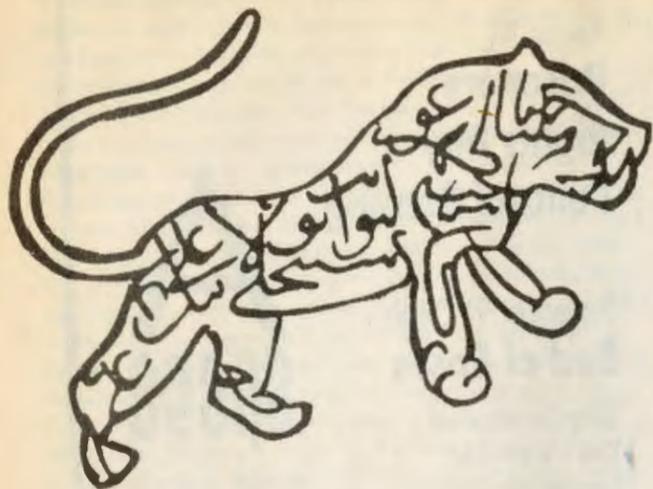
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Waiting for WOMAD

by Errol Nazareth

TORONTO—All the world on a stage. An apt description as any of last year's North American debut of the World of Music Arts and Dance (WOMAD) Festival in Toronto, a cross-cultural clash that dazzled those who turned out en masse to hear an array of world music performances over the space of a week.

Undoubtedly a highlight of the nation's music calendar, the global music event that will visit five countries, including the U.S.S.R., this year will once again transform the city's waterfront in August with its potpourri of sounds and dances from here and everywhere.

World Beat or World Music has by now etched itself into our collective consciousness. Whether it be the uplifting jit of Zimbabwe's Bhundu Boys or the evocative sounds of China's Guo Brothers, World Music is a catch-

all phrase that embraces music from every corner of the world without committing the all too common injustice of pigeonholing an artist.

Inventive programming and hard work led to sold out shows and massive crowds last year. The stage set, the Toronto edition of the unique festival founded in Britain in 1982 can only be bettered as years go by.

"The timing of our event was very appropriate because the city was ready for a World Music explosion," says WOMAD (Toronto) artistic director and Harbourfront's music programmer Derek Andrews. "It (Toronto) had its mind open to the idea, having been introduced to Bob Marley 15 years ago and having pop culture people dragging the world into people's homes on the coat tails of pop records. Local concert promoters

who brought in these types of artists to the city were also instrumental in helping us break the ground for WOMAD."

Andrews says that although this year's five-day festival is shorter than WOMAD '88, "it is a deeper fest because we're introducing two significant venues: a 400 seat tent that will be a concert venue where the Asian events will likely be held, and the Premier Dance Theatre where it appears that Billy Bragg (English punk-folk troubadour) will be appearing for six shows with a guest artist from the programme." The majority of the shows are free and ticketed events will cost between \$12 and \$15.

While Andrews and others involved in bringing WOMAD to Toronto were obviously excited by the results of last year's fest, they are the first to admit that it did have its shortcomings.

"When we did have a chance to analyse how we could improve it, there were several things that stood out. Getting deeper into the (ethnic) communities was one, and having a stronger native Canadian and Québécois representation was another," Andrews says.

"When you're trying to spread the cultures of the world across a week, you inevitably miss some people and we missed some people in our own backyard. All you can do is make your best effort to be objective and be aware of the things that are of significance," he adds.

To that end, an advisory committee sensitive to the various cultures in Toronto was set up hot on the heels of last year's festival.

Committee member Rob Bowman, an ethnomusicologist and journalist said that two areas that needed to be strengthened were the performance workshops and the use of local talent. "We want

local performers to be integrated into the overall fabric of what WOMAD is and we hope, with the programming, to mix local people with performers from other countries," says Bowman, who founded a history of rock 'n roll course at York University and an r'n'b course at George Brown College—the only two such courses to be offered at the university and college level in Canada.

Bowman says that there will be "a significant representation of native talent" at this year's fest. "We hope to have them perform on main stages with an imported act thereby showcasing them to a much greater extent," he says.

Listening to tapes of local performers, discussing how best that talent can be integrated into WOMAD, and offering suggestions and advice to committee members whose responsibility it is to find out what the city's ethnic communities have to offer musically is a primary role of the advisory committee, Bowman says. The committee also held an informal meeting with representatives from the communities and media to find out if they were on the right track.

"The committee meetings have lasted six hours or longer and there's an amazing amount of work and follow-up involved, but all of us believe enough in what WOMAD is," Bowman says. "For me it was six of the greatest days of my life. It was a magical week of surprises, delight and wonderment at the riches of the world."

Andrews says that although he doesn't know if there's enough space to increase the representation of foods, arts, crafts and exhibits at the festival, he says that there are some structural changes to fill in some of the holes left last year.

A gallery will be home to a

record store featuring albums from the Real World Records catalogue and those of artists appearing at the festival. At the end of last year, WOMAD Records joined forces with Peter Gabriel's Real World Records to form a new label which will release international music to be distributed by Virgin Records. Another gallery will feature an information display that will help give the event more depth and assist those who want to know more about a certain culture.

Andrews describes WOMAD as "a refreshing sociological experiment that's a by-product of a very innocent approach to world diversity."

"There's nothing political or philosophical in the charter of WOMAD but inherent in its approach seems to be a very internationalist philosophy, (along) with its statement of culture as a statement of tolerance and acceptance of something you're not familiar with."

He says that as "people's awareness of world culture has increased in Toronto, we want to push that tolerance and bring a few things that are stranger or more exotic."

An unconfirmed list of performers that includes Prahalad Natak, a 10-member dance troupe from India, Quebec's Alain Lamontagne, Mozambique's Eyuphuru and China's Folk Musicians of Shaanxi, is proof enough of WOMAD Toronto's commitment to presenting the cultural expressions of the world while simultaneously encouraging an interaction between cultures in Toronto.

"To expect the unexpected, that's an integral part of what this festival is all about," Andrews says. "Our challenge is to keep surprising people and to keep that challenge alive." ■

Is That Critical? Blurring Genres in Calgary

by Mary Anne Moser

CALGARY—*Blurring Genres*, a conference on alternative forms of critical practice, was held this spring in Calgary. If this were criticism, I would have very little to report. But this is a report; I have very little criticism. The practice/criticism distinction, as the conference revealed, is a difficult one to maintain.

Organized by the Canadian Studies and Communications Research Project, at the University of Calgary (John Brown, Pamela McCallum, Brian Rusted and Aritha van Herk with Janice Hillmo administrating), the conference offered a look at the changes taking place in criticism and representation in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

It is no longer necessary, nor sufficient, to categorize work by genres. Nor is it necessary or sufficient to criticize work according to criteria that characterizes a particular genre. Boundaries are being questioned—this was the central message of the three-day programme.

How can we criticize work that cannot be defined according to standard criteria? The implications of "blurring genres" for critical study and cultural practice were considered. Are genres blurring? A critic might say it while an artist might think it, so what is the difference? Framed this way, the difference becomes indistinguishable.

Romanticism, impressionism, post-impressionism, cubism, dadaism, surrealism, abstract impressionism, feminist art, video art and performance art—all fell prey to parody in Vancouver artist Chris Creighton-Kelly's reflexive performance of *The End of Art*. He picked apart the packaged rituals, unspoken rules, and misguided protocol of the "art scene" in a two-hour interactive performance piece. Artists laughed at art that laughed at artists who laughed at critics who were the artists, and art and criticism blended into one.

Both artist and critic are embodied within Calgary novelist Aritha van Herk. For her, the fictioneer is also ficto-critic. With considerable cadence, van Herk danced a tale of the tension that goes on while writing. There is the reputation of fiction to worry about, the ficto-critic within her exclaims! "[One] couldn't betray the boundaries of the genre!" But on the other hand, it is the fictioneer, after all, telling the story. And she happily blurs her genres.

Boundaries were questioned from the individual level to a macro-social scale. According to Simon Fraser music sociologist Martin Laba, commercialism and culture have become one within Western industrialized societies. Sliding coolly into the topic with a mainline claim, Laba started out

with the observation that, in general, commercialism and culture are seen as conflicting interests. He then set out to refute this notion arguing that pop culture is product culture.

"The pleasure principle has become synonymous with the purchase principle," Laba said. As an example, he pointed to the resemblance of music videos to advertisements. Save for a few frames devoted to the product tacked on at the end of an advertisement, the difference is minuscule. Much of present culture, including rock, film and fashion, has its "roots in the bald profit motives of the product industry," he explained.

Papers, presentations, exhibitions and performances offered a common ground to explore work that blurs critical and representational genres. Panel sessions included writers, critics and artists such as B.W. Powe, Janice Williamson, Brian Boigon and Louise Rudnicki, on behalf of Sara Diamond and the Women's Labour History Project. With performances ranging from *The End of Art* to *The Geometry of Indifference* (by John Brown, Anne Flynn, Richard McDowell, Decidedly Jazz Danceworks and Studio Zero), to the exhibition *Interior Presence: Projecting Situations* (video and installation works by Marcella Bienvenue, Geneviève Cadieux, Wyn Geleynse, Jan Peacock, Grant Poier and Tom Sherman) to the screening of Kay Armatage's *Artist on Fire: The Work of Joyce Wieland*, a wide range of alternate forms of critical practice were examined.

Consumerism and criticism both function as means of support for the arts. They provide a context for the making of art. The nature of this context is no doubt worthy of much further investigation. Is that critical? ■

Black Artists Make Successful Bid for Conference

by Ayanna Black

TORONTO—The executive of a U.S.-based African-American arts organization has recommended to its membership that Toronto be chosen as the site for their 1992 conference. The National Conference of Artists (NCA) executive voted on May 14th to accept a bid for the conference put in by the Canadian Artists Network Black Artists In Action (CANBAIA).

CANBAIA made a strong presentation at the NCA's national conference in New Orleans in March of this year, demonstrating the support of the City of Toronto and other organizations. Toronto's accessibility to the U.S.-based NCA membership and sectors of the African diaspora—particularly the Caribbean—was also a factor in the successful bid. The 1992 conference will use the occasion of the quincentennial of Columbus's discovery of the "new world" to address the history and culture of African peoples throughout the Americas.

In the fall of 1988, a group of Toronto's black artists, art historians, art entrepreneurs and other cultural workers came together to develop their creative forces and to collectively improve the position of the black artist in Canada. One of CANBAIA's primary on-going activities is networking with other groups, both here and in the U.S. After winter discussions with members of the NCA, it became clear that closer links with the 30-year-old organization

would open many doors. As talks progressed with executive members of the NCA, it became apparent that the location of their next international conference had not yet been confirmed. Realizing the opportunity, CANBAIA decided to bid for the 1992 NCA international conference.

In March 1989, with financial support from the Toronto City Council, 11 artists and cultural workers represented CANBAIA at the NCA's 31st annual conference held in New Orleans, Louisiana. The conference, entitled *The Power Of Art-The African-American Experience In The 21st Century*, opened with an invocation from the great master drummer Babatunde Olatunji and a speech by poet Kalamu Ya Salaam. Artists from across the U.S. and abroad displayed their work at a public art market and participated in panel discussions, seminars and performances. The highlight of the last day of the conference was a fashion show featuring African-influenced designs.

The CANBAIA presentation included a historical overview of Canada's diverse black community written by Adrienne Shadd, and a 7 minute video about Toronto's contemporary black artists' community by film critic Cameron Bailey, filmmaker Glace Lawrence, writer Karen Tyrell, Basil Young, Michael Connolly and photographer David Zapparoli. The Ontario Black History Society's video *A Proud Past, A Promising Future* was

also screened. CANBAIA resident art curator Hazel Da Breo shared her slide montage depicting the works of some of Ontario's black visual artists and relevant exhibitions.

Most NCA members who attended the presentation were unaware of Canada's large black population (600,000). This information strengthened the bid for the conference because in the past NCA international conferences have been held in predominantly black countries: Dakar, Senegal

in 1985 and Bahia, Brazil in 1988. Other bids for the 1992 conference came from Trinidad and Tobago and Togo. It is anticipated that over 1,000 delegates from the African diaspora will attend this conference.

The NCA was founded in 1959 at Atlanta University. It has chapters throughout the U.S., the Caribbean and Africa. The NCA brings together visual artists, writers, art educators, art administrators and others interested in the arts. ■



Non-traditional CASTING

by Nigel Hunt

TORONTO—Talent Over Tradition, Toronto's first national symposium on non-traditional casting, presented by Canadian Actors' Equity Association in cooperation with the Ryerson Theatre School, took place here on March 20 and 21.

Despite the fact that many of our most staid businesses and bureaucracies have taken steps to become equal opportunity employers, the arts in general—and theatre in particular—lag disturbingly behind. To help remedy the present situation where, regardless of individual talent, actors of colour (not to mention the handicapped) are usually not even

considered for roles on our publicly-funded stages unless the play happens to contain a part written specifically for a member of an ethnic minority. This symposium brought the issues convincingly to life through a series of panels and (non-traditionally cast) play excerpts.

What non-traditional casting asks is that talent be considered first and foremost, regardless of an actor's looks or background. This concept really shouldn't be so revolutionary since theatre involves a willing suspension of disbelief on the part of its audience: a play is carried on the strengths of the actors ability to

convince us that they are who they are not. Unless a play deals specifically with race, gender, physical disability or the like, why should we close our minds to interesting and talented actors who may be able to bring the play to life in new and enlightening ways? The fact that Canadian society is increasingly multi-racial and multi-cultural serves to heighten the need to recognize ourselves upon our stages, if for no other reason than to realistically reflect contemporary society, and for audiences outside of the white middle-class mainstream to identify themselves in our theatre. Of course, equal opportunities for actors is no substitute for the much needed cultivation of plays written and staged by those currently in the margins in order to express their own cultural, racial, sexual or physical reality.

In spite of the "common sense" value of this approach, the testimonies of a few American artistic directors who report that their audiences easily accept it, and the fact that actors of colour are not in short supply, non-traditional casting will not appear overnight. While the symposium was well attended, many mainstream artistic directors were conspicuously absent, or only put in token appearances. One of the worst offenders, the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, didn't even show but sent their "best wishes" to the conference.

Clearly, the prejudices run deep enough that one conference can only raise the issues and start the ball rolling. But, judging by the energy of the organizers and the anger of the many actors who stood up to share their frustrations, our theatrical institutions may yet be dragged, willingly or unwillingly, into the twentieth century. ■



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video news

by Kim Tomczak

The National Gallery of Canada is in hot water with film, video and performance artists. The 1989 Biennial, set to open on October 5, at the N.G. will feature works by approximately 25 artists from across Canada.

Over the next 10 years, the Biennial will be held at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Musée d'art contemporain in Montreal. To quote from a *Globe & Mail* article, Dr. Shirley Thomson, the N.G.'s director says, "Every two years we will be able to see the best our artists have produced." The "best" in this case seems not to include the work of any film, video or performance artists. Is it the N.G.'s opinion that film, video or performance art just doesn't fit into their definition of important work or what? It's particularly surprising in light of the recent N.G. show *Rebel Girls*. The survey of Canadian feminist videotapes, curated by Susan Ditta, was one of the most highly regarded exhibitions to have taken place in any gallery or museum in the country. The National Gallery should wake up and smell the coffee. Dr. Shirley Thomson can be contacted at the N.G. of Canada, Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0M8.

Deluding Documentary, curated by Sara Diamond, was a complete success. I hope Vancouver's Video In hosts this event on an annual basis, and congratulations to all involved.

The Department of Supply and Services (DSS) is entertaining applications for support of non-theatrical film and video productions. Several video and film artists have been successful in obtaining funding from the DSS so it's well worth a try. For guidelines and application forms, contact Jack Horwitz, Supply and Services Canada, 150 Kent Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0M9, (613) 996-7704.

The IFVA (Independent Film and Video Alliance), a national lobbying organization that represents film and video production, distribution and exhibition centres across Canada, recently held its AGM in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The newly elected board is: Ed Riche, Newfoundland (President); Alexis Rochuk, Quebec (Vice President); Claude Ouellet, Quebec (Treasurer); Brenda Owens, Saskatchewan (Secretary); Loretta Todd, British Columbia; Bonnie Baker, Nova Scotia; Elizabeth Hagen, Newfoundland; Tanis

Kyle, Manitoba; and Michael Balsler, Toronto. One of the presentations at the AGM was from Loretta Todd of the Chief Dan George Society of Vancouver. Ms Todd, a Cree filmmaker and video artist, defined cultural autonomy for native peoples as the "jurisdiction and ownership over our images and representations." The IFVA supported the concept of autonomous cultural representation and endorsed the actions of the native community in this regard. Martine Sauvageau remains coordinator at the Montreal head office: #1-397 Boul. St. Joseph Ouest, Montreal, Quebec, H2V 2P1, (514) 277-0328.

The Video Data Bank (Chicago), in a co-distribution project with V Tape (Toronto) proudly presents *Video Against AIDS*. Consisting of 22 individual pieces on three separate cassettes, *Video Against AIDS* is available for purchase on VHS by individuals and by institutions. Curated by John Greyson and Bill Horrigan and produced by Kate Horsfield, *Video Against AIDS* may be ordered in the U.S. from Video Data Bank call (312) 443-3793 and in Canada from V Tape: (416) 863-9897. ■



Pamela Matthews in Elizabeth Schroder's new tape, *A Place With No Name*.

Still courtesy V Tape



COLUMN

Corporate
Money
Laundering
Through
the
ARTS

Strategic Manœuvres

by Oliver Kellhammer

During this past year, considerable controversy surrounding the corporate funding of art events has come to the forefront of the mainstream Canadian press. The fracas surrounding the exhibition of Hans Haacke's *Voici Alcan* at the new National Gallery as well as the passing of Bill C-51, prohibiting cigarette advertising at cultural events, provoked unprecedented headlines. Shell Canada's cynical sponsorship of the mammoth exhibition of stolen native and Inuit artifacts entitled *The Spirit Sings* while they simultaneously assisted in the slow ethnocide of Alberta's Lubicon tribe was, of course, outrageous enough to garner media attention. Add to this the passing of the socio-economically ham-fisted free trade agreement to which Canadian progressive organizations and cultural groups were almost unanimously opposed and one realizes that we have experienced a tumultuous year.

In keeping with the Tories' Orwellian policy of economic "rationalization" (some call it bifurcation, i.e. into rich and

poor) government support has, according to the *Globe & Mail*, "either been decreasing or kept at a plateau since (the Tories) slashed \$85 million from the cultural budget in 1984."¹ This shortfall, coupled with an exponentially increasing level of Canadian artistic activity, and an equally steady increase in the curatorial aspirations of our art institutions, has understandably resulted in a gaping financial vacuum. Enter the multi-national corporation. With the rustling of funding dollars in one hand and a shiny new marketing plan in the other, the corporate advertising and sponsorship manager finds an eager audience in the already hard-pressed cultural sector. In fact such support has already become indispensable to our National Gallery. Regarding the mounting of the upcoming Survey of Contemporary Canadian Art exhibition, a gallery spokesperson was quoted as saying that "this exhibition could not be realized without Xerox's (a large American multinational) help."² Under the guise of charity, the corporation sponsors the

event, the fund-raiser gets out from between "a rock and a hard place" and we all get that nice warm fuzzy, feeling of seeing yet another "world class," "blockbuster" exhibition happening in our very own back yard. This wonderful private sector support, which we cultural types are constantly being urged to pursue, is being presented to us as a virtual papacea by governments and corporations alike. It is seen as the means to justify the slow strangulation of the Canada Council in the name of deficit reduction and trimming the fat while simultaneously promising a thriving artistic climate nurtured in the unfettered bosom of the marketplace. But this utopian symbiosis is as unattainable in the present context of (late) state capitalism as is that ultimate of oxymorons—the free market. As we have all known since early childhood, nothing in a marketplace is free.

Arts sponsorship funds are generally allocated from the advertising and public relations budgets of corporations because, in the words of one major corporate



communications manager, "We try to get (our) value back from it."³ In this way corporate sponsorships implicate their funding recipients in the corporation's advertising process: implying a considerable level of advocacy by the recipient on the corporation's behalf. This might not be so inherently evil except that it is those very corporations with the biggest image problems that are most in need of the redemptive publicity afforded by advertising themselves in alliance with a major art event. And how does a corporation get these public image problems in the first place? This is achieved primarily through unflattering media coverage of such corporate activities as: use and/or endorsement of violence, exploitation of workers through the denial of basic human rights, defrauding the consumer, contamination of the environment, involvement in government corruption scandals and various other nasty forms of behaviour.

At this point, I would hasten to add that some corporations are making a concerted effort to be more socially and environmentally responsible. They should be noted and publicly commended for doing so. In the U.S., with its long history of corporate arts sponsorship, fairly comprehensive "good-guy" lists can be obtained from any of the various ethical investment advocacy groups. Notable among these groups is Peacenet (3228 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA/94115) which distributes such lists on frequently updated consumer diskettes. I have as yet been unable to locate any comparable lists specifically detailing Canadian corporations, but in view of the post free trade American multinational absorption of our economy, this might well become a moot point. The periodicals section of any large public library is a very good place to start, since most of the more flagrant corporate violators are adequately represented in the public record. If they employed such tools with diligence, cultural fund-raisers could make a real difference to this whole sticky question of the arts tacitly advocating the activities of such corporations. There are indications in the U.S. that at least some fund-raisers are beginning to pay more than just lip service to the ethical history of their corporate sponsors. Back here in

Canada however, with our sparse history of substantial corporate arts support and our traditional reliance on arms-length government funding bodies, such scrutiny of corporate practices is not yet common. It is not surprising then that many of our leading art institutions have allowed the funding gap—caused by deteriorating government support—to be filled with the help of some of the world's most nefarious corporations. For the record, I believe it would be useful to present a brief summary of some of the more blatant examples of mega-corporate money-laundering in connection with recent major Canadian art exhibitions.

THE "BAD GUYS"

Perhaps the most repugnant sector of the corporate world is the one which participates in and profits from organized repression and the denial of basic human rights. This is usually achieved by foreign subsidiaries operating in the world's many police states, but is also quite apparent right here at home. In this first category, we can easily place Shell Canada and Alcan; both huge multinationals with a long and sorry record of involvement in racist South Africa. Also implicated is the much smaller Toronto-based Fleck Manufacturing Corporation.

Shell Canada

The case against Shell Canada is well documented. Royal Dutch Shell, Shell Canada's parent company, is instrumental in fueling South Africa's brutal apartheid regime. It also co-owns such notorious facilities as the Tietspruit coal mine, where armed guards have been used to force striking workers back to work. On the domestic front Shell Canada, in the words of Bernard Ominayak, chief of Alberta's Lubicon band, is "actively seeking to destroy our aboriginal lands and way of life"⁴ through oil exploration and drilling activities. The Lubicon's land claim has been drawn out by the industry-backed Canadian government for almost 50 years, in a slow war of attrition against a dwindling indigenous culture. In this light, Shell Canada's sponsorship of the 2.1 million dollar native and Inuit artifact exhibition *The Spirit Sings—Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*,

was a truly contemptible propaganda ploy. It was clearly designed to divert public awareness from Shell's *real* corporate agenda which promotes the subjugation of both native Canadians and South African black workers. Just what any native spirit would be singing after this abuse of their cultural heritage would be an interesting topic for conjecture. Fortunately, not everyone was taken in by the glossy publicity. Widespread boycotts against *The Spirit Sings* were initiated by the Lubicon and other native bands and supported by the Canadian Ethnology Society, several prestigious European museums and numerous national and international aboriginal advocacy organizations. While these boycotts were insufficient to stop the exhibition in its tracks, they did much to raise the public consciousness of Shell Canada's dirty deeds and spur the desire to look deeper into the motivations behind their cultural funding efforts.

Alcan

Alcan Aluminium is a major funder of many Canadian arts groups and events. Alcan's Canadian labour relations have at times been characterized by some pretty heavy-handed tactics including the use of paid strike-breakers and "police helicopters (which) rained tear gas bombs on strikers" during the 1976 strike at Arvida, Quebec.⁵ Up until 1986, when the mounting outrage of shareholders forced them to divest, Alcan owned a 25 per cent interest in a South African subsidiary called Hulett's Aluminium PLC. Designated a "keypoint" (strategic) industry by the South African government, Hulett's output of specialized aluminium products for the South African police and military clearly did (and still does) contribute to the perpetuation of the brutally repressive apartheid regime. Hulett's pays its black workers below the poverty line and refuses to recognize a trade union formed by them. There were allegations from Alcan's own shareholders that Hulett's was training employee militia units and storing weapons on its premises for possible use against a worker insurrection. A representative from Hulett's sits on the South African Defence Advisory Board.⁶

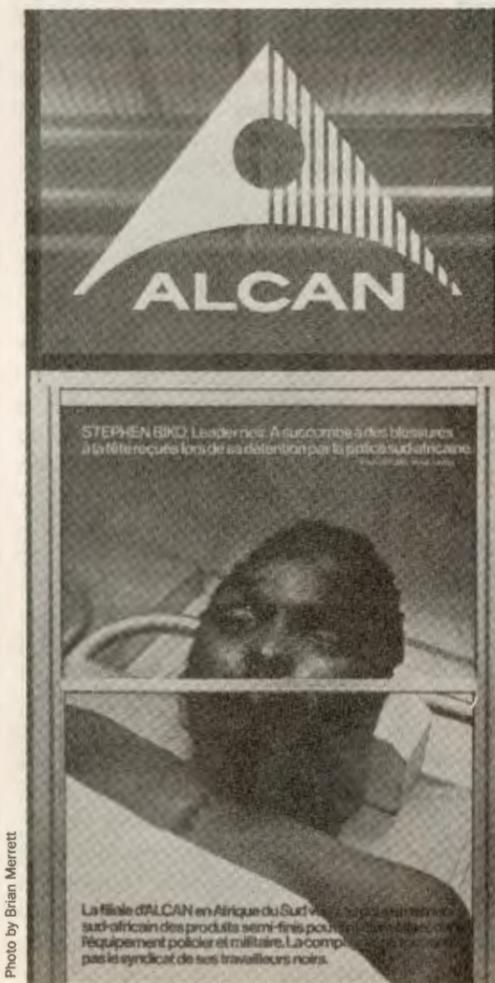
Although Alcan now declares that it

no longer has anything to do with its South African apartheid-loving affiliate; as recently as a few months before the shareholder instigated pullout, Alcan's Canadian spokesperson was quoted as saying that "Alcan has no plans to divest itself of its interest in Hulett's Aluminium...its presence there is helping to improve conditions for black workers" and that "Alcan divests only where an investment no longer suits its business purposes."⁷

In this light, it is strangely ironic to witness the outrage voiced by Alcan spokespeople over the exhibition of Hans Haacke's work *Voici Alcan* at the new National Gallery. Haacke's piece, which contains an image of Stephen Biko in the morgue juxtaposed with text (prepared by Haacke and derived from material on public record) about Alcan and South Africa, had been shown several times before Alcan finally unleashed its dia-

tribe over the 1988 showing. Declaring Haacke a "pseudo-artist...portraying Alcan as a bunch of murderers and thugs" and denouncing the National Gallery as "having gone along with libel,"⁸ Alcan staff hurriedly tried to mend this chink in their public relations armour. This was after all the brand new, highly publicized, multi-million dollar National Gallery—the perfect place to propagate public amnesia over a sorry corporate record. Inexplicably, even *Globe & Mail* critic J.B. Mays got into the act, denouncing Haacke's work as "undocumented gossip" and "tittle-tattle"⁹ in a manner that was clearly defensive of the corporation. Whether by this Mays was merely trying to secure his place in the wine and cheese line of future gala corporate openings is up for debate, but I must say I found his stance truly disturbing.

It is however to the National Gallery's credit that members of its staff have gone



"...portraying Alcan as a bunch of murderers and thugs": detail from Hans Haacke's *Voici Alcan*.

antitank systems). This little unit, on which Canada is spending \$600 million, consists of a missile, anti-aircraft guns and a tracking system, all of which is deployed on a tank or all-terrain vehicle, where it can be aimed to achieve optimum carnage and death. Despite the high cost, ADATS have been criticized for not functioning properly in bad weather. In fact its turret conspicuously froze at a recent gala demonstration for dignitaries and military officials, stubbornly refusing to rotate towards a "target" of admiring press photographers.¹⁵

Oerlikon itself has been at the centre of a major Quebec land flip scandal in which a junior cabinet minister in the Mulroney cabinet had to be sacked under allegations of fraud. But now that all the turmoil has been smoothed over, Oerlikon is sponsoring a blockbuster exhibition of Impressionist paintings, scheduled for the summer of 1990 at the Montreal Museum of Fine Art. It seems that the late Swiss industrialist Emil George Buhle, founder of the holding company that owns Oerlikon, had a penchant for investing his ill-gotten gains in major masterpieces by Van Gogh, Picasso, Cezanne and Renoir, among others. This priceless collection, which the MMFA has in the past unsuccessfully tried to exhibit, will finally make its way there because, in the words of an Oerlikon spokesperson, "it was logical that we would come here, where we do business."¹⁶ In addition, this exhibition will help to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Emil Buhle's birth. It is a sad fact that this, the world's largest private collection of Impressionist art, continues to be utilized as advertising for organized merchants of violence.

INTELLIGENT CHOICES AND CATCH 22S:

In this article I have attempted to illustrate how corporations, extensively involved in the abuse of human rights and/or world militarization have used their sponsorship of Canadian arts events as a form of advocacy advertising. Such propaganda efforts (or, as they are known these days, "public diplomacy" campaigns)

seek to direct public focus away from the inherent violence of their corporate agendas by associating the corporation's public image with the humanitarian connotations of our cultural institutions. Regrettably, the acceptance by our institutions of this type of sponsorship directly involves them in the process of public deception, often helping to prolong the promotion of intolerable injustices both at home and abroad.

Given the current climate of right-wing politics and the agenda of free trade, with its concomitant erosion of government arts support, many would understandably argue that all independent cultural production is threatened in this country, and that any help provided by the corporate sector could be vital to our cultural survival. We should, however, remember that it is the corporate sector that has pushed so relentlessly to achieve this free trade status quo, and that its goal of continent-wide, socio-economic homogenization is in itself antithetical to a regional diversity of non-commercial culture. It is clear that the current Tory government is, on behalf of the corporate sector, actively trying to privatize our non-commercial public culture through the financial strangulation of our arms-length funding bodies. The potential for abuse is obvious when, in order to gain funding, cultural activities and institutions will be judged according to their willingness to be milked for their corporate image enhancing potential. Must our art-culture become a part of corporate culture's takeover of Canada? It will be if we let it. Perhaps we should start asking what in some circles might seem heretical questions. For example: what place do these monolithic blockbuster exhibitions (requiring the mega-dollars of multinational corporations) have in Canada? Our cultural identity has traditionally grown out of the diversity in our regions, on a scale that has reflected a community orientation. These sorts of values are clearly not what is espoused by the fanatical bigger-is-better attitude so characteristic of current multinational corporate philosophy. If corporations are to have a role to play in the financial support of Canada's cultural institutions, this role should develop as a role of subsidization

not of cultural appropriation. By denying the multinational war-mongers and human rights abusers (as well as environmental polluters, which I am now researching) the opportunity to use artists and our arts institutions as handy instruments of propaganda, we could do much to legitimize our galleries and museums as community institutions—sensitive to the social ecologies in which they exist. To achieve this we have to, at the very least, demand that the fund-raisers of these institutions accept sponsorships only from those corporations whose public record can stand up to a reasonably conscientious ethical scrutiny. We must vigorously campaign for the retention and support of our arms-length funding bodies. To do anything less is to endorse a deep and irrevocable debasement of the value of Canadian cultural life. ■

¹ Liam Lacey, "Courting Culture", *Globe and Mail*, April 2, 1988, pp. C1, C3.

² *Globe and Mail*, April 24, 1989.

³ Irene Davis, "Corporate Support and the Arts", *Performing Arts*, July 1986, p. 15.

⁴ Wendy Smith, *Ottawa Citizen*, April 29, 1988, p. A 10.

⁵ Kent Rowly, "Fighting Alcan: A Case for National Unity," *This Magazine*, January, 1977.

⁶ Rosalind Krauss, "A Conversation with Hans Haacke," *October*, Vol. 30, pp. 46-47.

⁷ *Globe and Mail*, March 13, 1986, p. B 17.

⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, June 11, 1988, p. E 7.

⁹ *Globe and Mail*, June 14, 1988.

¹⁰ *Ottawa Citizen*, June 30, 1988, p. A 9.

¹¹ Maureen Hynes, "Cheap Labour," *Branching Out*, Vol. 5, #3, p. 5.

¹² Ellen Tolmie, "Fleck—Profile of a Strike," *This Magazine*, October 1978, pp. 22-29.

¹³ Doris Anderson, "Trade Deal Let Employer Walk Away," *Toronto Star*, Dec. 17, 1988, p. J 1.

¹⁴ Statistics assembled by Campaign Against Arms Trade via WEB data network.

¹⁵ *Montreal Gazette*, October 15, 1988, p. C 1.

¹⁶ Ann Duncan, *Montreal Gazette*, September 7, 1988, p. B 5.

Oliver Kellhammer, artist and co-director of T.E.R.R.A., is currently exploring a bi-coastal lifestyle.

Packaging the Populace

Polling in the Age of Image Politics

by Joyce Nelson

When a television director once suggested to Harry Truman that his tie was inappropriate for TV, Truman stared pityingly with those blue eyes for about ten seconds. 'Does it really matter?' he asked. 'Because if while I'm talking about Korea, people are asking each other about my necktie, it seems to me we're in a great deal of trouble.'

Edmund Carpenter

Some 40 years after this exchange between Truman and an unknown TV director, things have changed. Now a "focus group" would be convened well in advance of the telecast, to determine the appropriate colour symbolism and patterned motif, the shape and precise knot of the presidential tie to match the intended mood of the televised speech. The results of an in-depth, psychographic survey would be shown to Harry, indicating that 42 per cent of the upscale, influential populace consider this particular tie troublesome.

The contemporary media advisor would answer that of course such things really do matter, that in the age of image-politics, they can make the difference in the perceived credibility of any political leader. Indeed, a complex apparatus of media expertise exists primarily to ensure that such tiny details do not sabotage the smooth unfolding of the political will. It is as though during the past 40 years of television's rise to socio-political hegemony, things like Truman's tie (was it polka-dotted? A bowtie? A polka-dotted bowtie?) have expanded to fill the entire screen of our collective, imaginal brainpans. And yes, we are in a great deal of trouble.

But the term "image-politics" can be misleading, especially because it tends to direct our focus to effects rather than causes. Thus, the term makes us think of things like John Turner's speech-coach during the '88 election, or George Bush's cowboy hat and hang 'em high rhetoric, mouthed to combat the wimp and sleaze factors plaguing him in the early days of his campaign. The conventional understanding of the term "image-politics" was nicely summarized last autumn by media consultant Patricia Adams: "Mulroney is so damn well packaged that you could turn him around and expect to see a list of ingredients on his back."

But the real basis upon which image-politics necessarily proceeds is the coded images in our heads. As veteran U.S. political media advisor and adman Tony Schwartz puts it: "The goal of a media advisor is to tie up the voter and deliver him to the candidate. So it is really the voter who is packaged by the media, not the candidate."

To understand the full implications of this tantalizing statement—which applies equally to both consumers and voters in contemporary life—we must delve into the dismaying complexities and hideous obfuscations of that key linchpin and primary mediator between the public and the power-bloc: the pollster. Over the past two decades, in-depth attitudinal polling (otherwise known as "psychographics") has become absolutely central to every aspect of public relations and business-as-usual, especially political business-as-usual.

In the current era of the "sound bite," the "process event," the "photo opportunity" and "image doctors" for every corporate and governmental media event (sometimes euphemistically known as "communications"), attitudinal polling is the crucial first step in a sequence of events designed to address the images in our heads. Not surprisingly, the layers of mystification surrounding the politics of polling are as thick as the leather of Allan Gregg's trademark jacket.

TELEPHONIC DECIMATIONS

The telephone interviewers hang up their backpacks and athletic tote-bags, their umbrellas and Eaton's shopping bags, and gather in the posh sixth-floor meeting room of Decima Research Ltd., Gregg's polling firm, located in the Rosedale area of uptown Toronto. It's 5:00 p.m., the time when most people are finishing the daily grind, but for the 50-or-so members of the Decima telephone staff—many of them high school and university students—the working "day" is just beginning.

The supervisor hands out the evening's questionnaire. This time it's an attitudinal survey being conducted for the major chemical companies, who want to know how Canadians feel about their industry. A quick glance at the graffiti scrawls in any urban area would provide an answer, but the companies are interested in a far more detailed and in-depth psychological grasp of the public attitude. Not just the numbers pro and con, but the mindset behind the opinion: the feelings, fears, beliefs, mental images, bits of information and knowledge, the media clichés and the prevailing attitudes that generate the respondent's opinion.

The supervisor goes through the questionnaire section by section, pointing out the potential trouble-spots in the 23-page survey, and she informs the crew that the optimal time for completing this particular in-depth probe is 37 minutes per respondent. Obviously, to get a good representative sample of more than 1,000 completed surveys, the crew is going to be dealing with this particular questionnaire for a couple of nights running.

As the briefing finishes, the interviewers pick up their sharpened pencils and their stacks of questionnaires and retire to their individual cubicles, where a long list of phone numbers waits beside each phone. The numbers have been randomly selected by computer, but they all accord with the base line demographics sample frame chosen for this survey: urban middle class. Across Canada, the first round of 50 telephones starts to ring. "Hello," says the Decima interviewer in each cubicle, "today we're talking to people in your neighbourhood about issues facing us all."

Decima Research Ltd., chaired by Canadian polling wunderkind Allan Gregg, is part of the massive and sophisticated polling apparatus that has been erected across North America since the early 1970s. Official pollster for the Tory party, and with an impressive



Illustration by Tones Antlick.



battery of corporate clients, Decima is the leading company in Canada specializing in psychographics: meticulous profiles of consumer/voter attitudes matched with conventional demographic data (sex, age, race, income, education, occupation and location).

"I try not to use the word 'psychographics,'" Gregg tells me. "More simply, people have a shared psychology and shared beliefs, that's all." Nevertheless, five nights a week, every week of the year, year-in and year-out, Decima (and similar companies) telephone thousands of people who are willing to bare their psyches to some telephoning stranger during a 40-minute probe.

The phenomenon itself would be worthy of analysis for what it may indicate about societal anomie and/or the telephone as terrorist weapon of modern-day marketing, but more important is the question of what happens to the resulting psychographic data. The answer is that it is the first step in a chain of media events that are now entirely typical of our times.

An historical example from the early days of Decima's 10-year rise to success can be used to indicate the sequential elements in the chain. In the summer of 1980, the Ottawa lobbyist for the Canadian Petroleum Association, Jamie Deacey hired Decima to conduct a survey of the public's attitude towards the oil industry. Gregg's resulting probe revealed that, by and large, Canadians perceived oil companies as rich, greedy, untrustworthy tax-dodgers who could not be counted on to supply Canada's energy needs. While these results may have been some-

what shocking for the corporate sponsor of the survey, the findings were crucial for taking remedial action.

The association launched a national advocacy advertising campaign in newspapers, magazines and television—fronted in the early years by former CBC-TV newsman Ken Colby. The ads extolled the virtues and achievements of the oil industry, and particularly addressed (for the purpose of remedying) those weak points in the institutional image revealed by the attitudinal survey. Colby's familiar presence (his "recognition factor," to use the jargon) was useful for lending an aura of objectivity, and even news value, to the ads.

Meanwhile, Decima continued to poll for subtle shifts in public opinion during the initial ad campaign. This allowed for the fine tuning of imagery and language used in subsequent ads so as to speak to the concerns and beliefs of the desired demographic constituency. Similarly, the psychographic data was useful for designing other aspects of the PR campaign, especially the "news management" side: press conferences, press releases, speeches by corporate spokesmen and photo opportunities to generate favourable press coverage. As John Sawatsky reports in his recent book *The Insiders*, the result of this lengthy but dedicated PR campaign (dutifully tracked by Decima for its client) was that "the oil industry's 'honest' rating rose from 32 to 54 per cent in three years."

What must be emphasized about this now typical chain of events is that attitudinal survey findings do not necessarily lead to any real changes in the sponsoring client's actual behaviour. Feedback from the public vis-a-vis the oil industry, for instance, did not noticeably generate any industry housecleaning in those problem areas uncovered by the survey. Instead, the housecleaning was directed at the perceptions in the public mind: the images in our heads. Paraphrasing Tony Schwartz's dictum, we could say that it was the consumer-citizenry that was repackaged by the media campaign and delivered over to the corporate client.

Thus, the rise of psychographic polling has generated a standard sequence of events for corporate and governmental PR activity: 1) conduct an in-depth attitudinal survey; 2) mount an advocacy ad campaign which remedies any image-problems revealed; 3) track throughout the ad campaign to fine tune for opinion shifts; 4) take other PR steps (including "news management") to help alter perceptions; 5) keep on polling to stay on top of things.

This process has now become typical of every high-powered public relations endeavor. The first step is always to find out how the public feels about something. For example, in 1985 Decima began conducting in-depth attitudinal polling on the issue of free trade. "In 1987," says my Decima deep-throat (let's call her Silkwood), "we did a long survey on free trade—you know, a 23-page questionnaire. We interviewed way over a 1000 people on the phone, probing their hopes and fears, their opinions and beliefs about the free trade deal. It was awful," says Silkwood, "I knew it was being done to help somebody write propaganda, whoever was sponsoring the survey. What people don't know is that these attitudinal polls are the basis for propaganda."

Nevertheless, psychographic polling is now so commonplace that in Canada it has even become a kind of weird and twisted form of pop-culture ritual, thanks to our "punk pollster" wearing the earring and the leather jacket.

MILLENNIAL PROPHECIES

For the fifth year in a row, Canada's weekly newsmagazine again devoted virtually half of its first issue of the new year to the *Maclean's/Decima Poll*—23 published pages of numbers, charts, statistical data and personal interviews gathered by some 50 *Maclean's* staff members and the polling expertise of Decima Research Ltd.

This massive annual cover-story—entitled "A Spotlight On Canadians" in the Jan. 2, 1989 issue—takes up far more pages than *Maclean's* would ever devote to any news story during the rest of the year. Editor Kevin Doyle explains: "For one thing, it provides the most comprehensive post-election analysis of voters and voting patterns, based on 1,500 interviews, ever done in Canada. For another, it is one of the first attempts to measure changes in the attitudes of Canadians as the world rushed toward the end of one century and prepares to begin another—and a new millenium."

But there's another angle from which to view this gargantuan *Maclean's/Decima Poll*, now five years running. It is a component part in the build-up of the necessary psychographic data base—national in scope and increasingly long-term—through which trends in the public psyche may be accurately pinpointed and targeted.

"*Maclean's* is one of our clients," says Gregg. "We do the poll for them. We say the data is ours and the information is theirs. But look. We already have a huge data base. We will merge census data, we subscribe to *InfoGlobe*, we

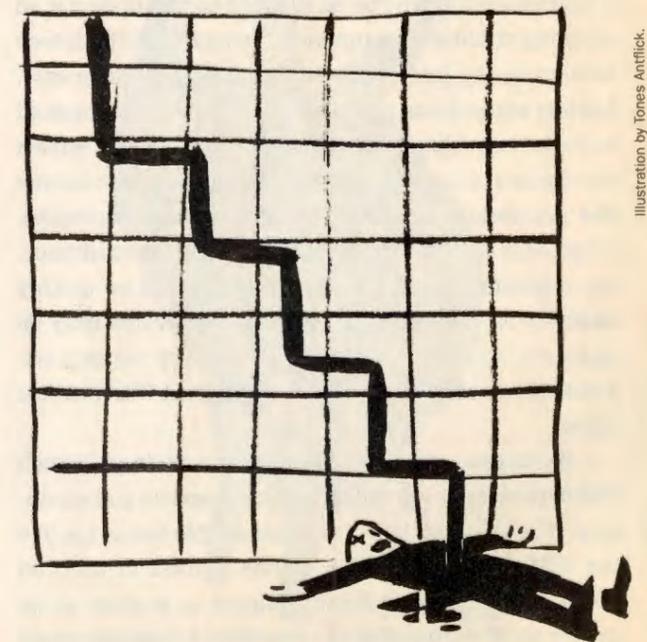
access all kinds of data. But the most important, for our purposes, is always the up-to-the-minute data. The *Maclean's* poll provides historical context." In this sense, the annual survey is a spin-off of Gregg's tutelage under the most important pollster in the U.S.

Hard to believe, but it's only a dozen years ago that Allan Gregg was Allan who? That was before Richard Wirthlin, pollster for Ronald Reagan since 1970, started a joint venture company in Canada and uttered this prophetic remark: "Allan," he said, "we're going to make you the number one pollster in this country. You watch."

POLLING FLASHBACKS

Back in the mid 1970s, political polling in Canada was still in a primitive stage: focussing primarily on so-called "horse-race polls" (who's ahead) and relying on U.S. pollsters and political advisers for campaign strategy. The Conservatives, for instance, had perennially hired Bob Teeter (pollster for Nixon, then Ford, then Bush) to oversee their campaigns. But the feeling within the party was that Teeter tended to simply recycle his last Republican campaign strategy when advising the Tories.

At the same time that the Conservatives were becoming disenchanted with Teeter, a young university student arrived to work in the research office of the Tory headquarters. Allan Gregg impressed his superiors with his abilities and political savvy, and in the summer of 1978, Bill Neville, top Conservative Party strategist



and advisor, nominated Gregg for an exchange programme sponsored by the U.S. State Department.

Gregg applied for a 10-day consulting tour across the U.S. to interview and learn from the leading American pollsters and political consultants. The State Department approved the idea and made arrangements for Gregg to meet the top guns in the field. On his whistle-stop tour through Washington and Texas, Gregg encountered the cream of the crop. But it was in California that he met *la crème de la crème* in that coterie of political advisors which included Peter Hart, Pat Cadell, Lance Torrence, Matt Reese, Stu Spencer, and Richard Wirthlin.

It was Wirthlin, however, who impressed Gregg the most. When it came to polling, nobody in the late 1970s Western world had a better grasp of the intricacies and techniques of the business. Certainly nobody else could even come close in terms of those three primary keys to the polling science: simulations, targeting and tracking. And equally important, nobody had a more thoroughly detailed, psychologically convoluted, and demographically correlated national data base than Richard Wirthlin. By the time of Gregg's visit, Wirthlin had cranked up his Santa Ana polling apparatus to a fever pitch: poised to launch his Main Man right on course to the Big Enchilada.

WARGAMING

Roland Perry's study of the 20-year Wirthlin-Reagan collaboration *Hidden Power*, reminds us that polling is an offspring of military "wargaming," which found high-tech formats in the late 1950s via computer developments. Military and political scientists at the Pentagon glommed on to the marvels of the technology for running complex simulations of battle: giving numerical weights to factors like population densities, opposing military strengths, precedents in battle, specific environmental conditions, etc.—thereby creating scenarios that could be quickly analyzed to yield probability outcomes. Wargaming by computer allowed for detailed, moment-by-moment adjustments to changing factors in the Cold War political scene.

Big business immediately saw the usefulness of such techniques for developing marketing models and strategies. When the new line of more accessible hardware, like the IBM 360 series, came on the market in the mid 1960s, business was already primed to engage in its own form of wargaming. For example, a company could

run a wide range of production variables, demographic factors, market situations and "what if?" scenarios to calculate probable outcomes. (What if we introduce a new brand of breakfast cereal into the market next year? Is the market saturated? Can it stand another competitor if we position our product for the adult market? What if our price per item is two cents lower than the nearest competitor? What if we pitch it to the female "pink collar" market? What if we launch in August? etc., etc.) The computer could handle such factors by correlating weighted numerical equivalents: spewing out model outcomes for each scenario.

Richard Wirthlin had helped develop such market simulation models for business during the experimental years, and he quickly recognized the potential usefulness of such strategies and marketing techniques for the political arena. In 1969, he started his own company, Decision Making Information (DMI), and began to build up the necessary demographic data base. Besides accessing every available statistical agency in the country, DMI hired a large crew of telephone interviewers for attitudinal survey work covering a wide range of consumer/voter issues, concerns and beliefs.

By the time he joined Reagan's team of political advisors during the 1970 California gubernatorial race, Wirthlin was perfecting his "Political Information System" (PINS)—a complex mass of psychographic data on specific target groups across the country. PINS is based on five key elements: up-to-the-minute attitudinal survey work, fixed demographic information, historical voting patterns for every county in the U.S., on-going assessment of political party strength in each state and subjective analysis by Wirthlin's team.

"For 20 years," states Roland Perry, "Wirthlin has computer-filed his own polling data in the hundreds of campaigns he has run for Republicans, along with quantities of census figures, information from 37 federal departments, voting history figures from every county, and extensive market survey work for scores of American businesses." As a result, says Perry, "Wirthlin's computers can provide him in an instant with the political preferences and behaviour of 110 categories of the American electorate."

In 1970, this computer targeting was a pioneering strategy in political campaigning, and was used by Reagan's team to tailor ads, speeches and direct-mail for specific audiences. By the time of Reagan's first presidential race, targeting had become so refined that it could

pinpoint the prevailing psychographics of individual city neighbourhoods.

Another technique that Wirthlin borrowed from consumer marketing to apply to the 1970 campaign was tracking. It was this technique that most impressed Gregg during his 1978 visit. In the product world, once that new breakfast cereal is launched, it must be closely followed to provide feedback on marketing strategies. (In which individual stores within the 50 major markets is it moving? Which TV time slots are delivering the desired consumer groups? What effect is the special display on supermarket shelves having? How is our product-recognition factor? What do focus groups feel about the words "high in fibre" on the package? etc., etc.)

Wirthlin recognized that tracking would help a candidate's team know whether specific speeches, events and "news management" techniques were having an effect on the public or not. This could be determined best by daily attitudinal polling in order to precisely graph the on-going course of a campaign. In the U.S. tracking has now become so standard that it is used continually, while the pollster's client is in office, to monitor his or her performance. "It's like turning on the television set," says Wirthlin. "We leave it on all the time. We don't take our finger off the pulse."

In the mid 1970s, Wirthlin also began using the technique of simulations to develop predictive models for political strategy. This allows the team to run a variety of "what if?" scenarios before and during the campaign, reacting in advance to possible moves by the opposing candidates, possible developments on the international scene, possible changes in the stock market, possible outcomes of TV debates, etc. This technique provides a variety of futuristic scenarios and countermoves to help keep the campaign on top of developing action.

THE NEW PAC MEN

While Wirthlin was perfecting his polling techniques with an eye towards the 1980 presidential race, a few other changes were occurring in the U.S. scene that would boost pollsters to a place of (backstage) prominence. First, corporate business had become fed up with its dismally low "honest ratings" in the polls and blamed it on a hostile press. The first to take decisive PR action was Mobil Oil in 1973. The weapon of choice was the advocacy ad, based on attitudinal survey findings and designed to

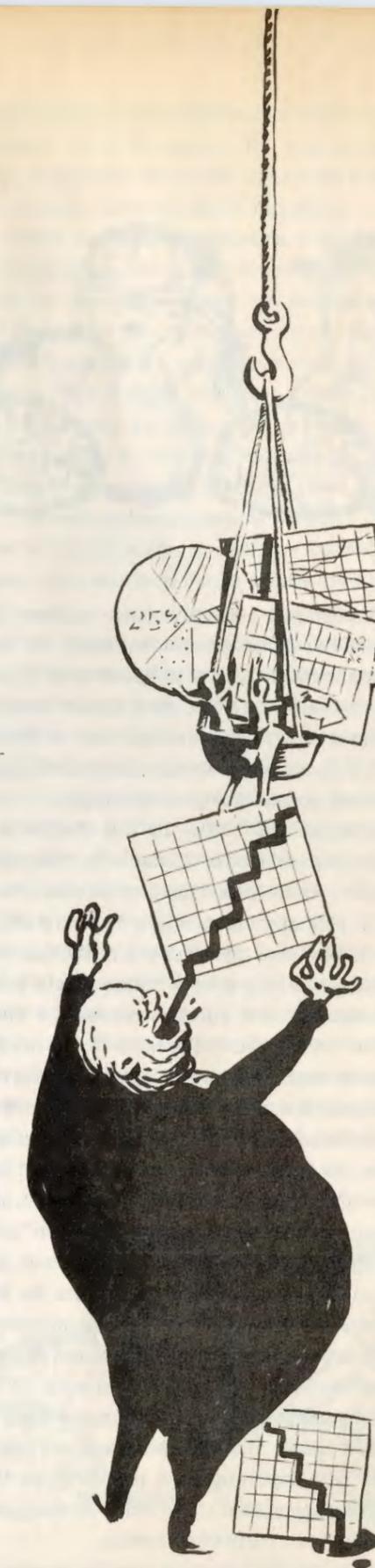
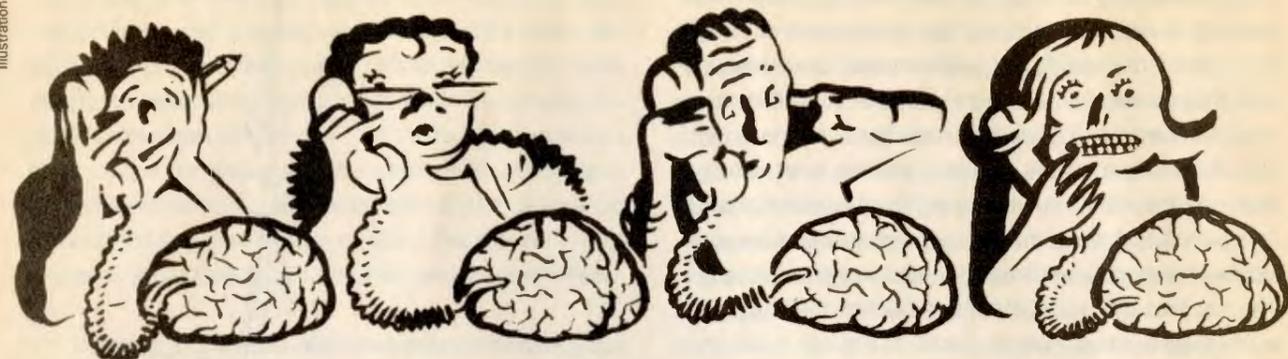


Illustration by Tones Antlick.



address demographic constituencies without going through the filter of adversarial reporters. By buying time and space in the media to speak their corporate minds on a wide range of political issues, companies could engage in some "news management" of their own. By 1980, U.S. business was spending more than \$1 billion per year on advocacy ad campaigns.

Second, in the mid 1970s, the U.S. Census, a division of the Department of Commerce, developed a service which sold complex demographic data about the population to polling companies like Wirthlin's DMI. The data filled in whatever gaps existed in Wirthlin's PINS system, and opened up a new national data base for market researchers and pollsters across the country.

Third, in 1976 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that political candidates may spend unlimited personal money on their campaigns, and "unaffiliated groups" can finance their pet candidates without any restrictions on spending—as long as their activity is not authorized by the candidate's official party organization. As a result, special interest groups quickly began forming their own "political action committees" (PACs) to lobby for their own private agendas and to finance political campaigns. As Joseph Fanelli, president of the powerful Business-Industry PAC, stated early in the game: "We're interested in electing people with the right philosophy." Between 1976 and 1982, PAC funding for candidates jumped from \$22.6 million to \$80 million. By 1986, the figure had soared to \$342 million, with the average U.S. political candidate for office receiving more than three times as much money from PACs as from a party organization.

This, then, was the political scene that greeted Allan

Gregg during his 1978 tour of the top U.S. political pollsters and advisors. It was all a vile travesty of real democracy but, as writer Hunter S. Thompson would say, these things happen. And behind the scenes, busily gathering the data on the vulnerable citizen psyche, was the pollster, whose psychographic profiles provide the basis for fine tuning every political and corporate marketing strategy.

As Allan Gregg could see, there was nothing quite like it in Canada. The first step was to erect a decent polling apparatus, since tracking, especially daily tracking, was the key to every successful campaign.

WIRTHLIN IN CANADA

In the late 1970s, there was another Canadian who was impressed with Wirthlin's work. Tom Scott of Sherwood Communications, an ad-exec and top honcho among the Ontario Tories, had quickly sized up the polling inadequacies of Bob Teeter and decided that it should be possible to build a Canadian polling company that would operate in the private market and also be on call to the Conservative Party.

He talked to Wirthlin and the two agreed to start up a 50-50 joint-venture company in Canada. With Sherwood Communications providing the start up money, and Wirthlin's DMI providing the state-of-the-art computer technology, polling methodologies and expertise, Decima Research Ltd. was created. While the idea was being struck, Scott convinced Wirthlin that Allan Gregg would be a worthwhile partner, not only because of his obvious abilities but also to avoid that old "Bob Teeter syndrome,"

wherein a U.S. pollster was running the show. Wirthlin agreed and Gregg was cut in with a one-fifth share.

Wirthlin moved his vice-president of administration from California to Toronto and sent a technical wizard to get all the hardware—the big phone banks and computers—up and running. There was also the necessary business of tutoring Gregg. While Wirthlin was the ideal mentor, Gregg was the ideal student. Abandoning his dream of starting a rock band, Gregg began to develop an innate flair for the subtleties and intricacies of the polling business. As Gregg later observed: "No one can analyze data faster than I can. I just crunch it up." Very soon Wirthlin was assuring his eager student about his prospects, that he would soon be "the number one pollster in this country." Decima opened for business in July of 1979, sporting the most sophisticated polling hardware, software and expertise that the country had ever seen. Meanwhile, Wirthlin had a little job to do back home. The polls were showing that people thought that his presidential candidate-client might just nuke everything in sight once in office.

POLLING FASTFORWARD

Decima did \$800,000 of business in the first year, \$1.8 million in the second, and \$2.4 million in the third. Despite this healthy growth, investors lost half-a-million dollars. Part of the loss came from Decima's financing of *Decima Quarterly*—a report of research survey findings sold by subscription to corporate and government marketers for \$24,000 a year. No doubt modeled after the similar quarterly developed in the U.S. by Patrick Caddell (private and Democratic Party pollster), Gregg's publication provided the attitudinal

survey results of polls conducted every March, June, September, and December. By conducting in-depth polling interviews with 1,500 Canadians four times per year, *Decima Quarterly* gave marketers a psychographic profile of changing attitudes, insecurities, values and beliefs across the country on a wide range of issues.

In the first three years of Decima's operation, there were only two subscribers to the *Decima Quarterly*, thus making it a massive drain on the company's resources. But Gregg's idea was simply ahead of its time for Canada: by 1985, there were 52 subscribers together paying a total of \$1,248,000 for the publication. Nonetheless, during the early years both Wirthlin and Sherwood Communications decided to sell their shares in the company to Kinburn Capital, a holding company involved with Public Affairs International Ltd. (PAI).

At that time PAI was a fast-rising PR company specializing in government relations (also called "public affairs" PR—lobbying in advance of legislation) for corporate clients. It had been involved with Decima as a research partner for the *Decima Quarterly*. The feasibility (and efficiency) of a company that combined a polling arm and a lobbying arm was evident to everyone. By 1983, PAI president David MacNaughton, PAI vice president Michael Robinson, and Decima chair Allan Gregg bought back Decima and PAI from Kinburn. It was a very smart move. By 1985, the PAI-Decima partnership was pulling in \$17 million annually.

During the early 1980s, a number of significant changes were occurring in the Canadian scene that greatly helped Decima's rise. Not coincidentally, these changes were also coalescing around the push for free trade—that volatile issue which became the focus of the 1988 federal election. Throughout the 1980s both government and



corporate sectors in Canada recognized the wonders behind that new sequence that had caught on in the U.S.: psychographic polls/advocacy ads/tracking/fine tuning/news management/desired public perception.

A VIRTUAL SHADOW CABINET

The first step was the formation in 1976 of the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI), a lobby group representing 150 blue chip corporations in Canada. By the early 1980s, the BCNI had become a "virtual shadow cabinet" (in the words of critic David Langille), skilled in government relations to the point of determining policy behind the scenes. At the same time, its member corporations jumped on the advocacy ad bandwagon in order to improve image problems revealed in the polls and to promote their own sectoral agendas. By 1982, an estimated 20 per cent of the *Globe & Mail*'s advertising revenues was coming from advocacy ad campaigns, with the figure on the rise.

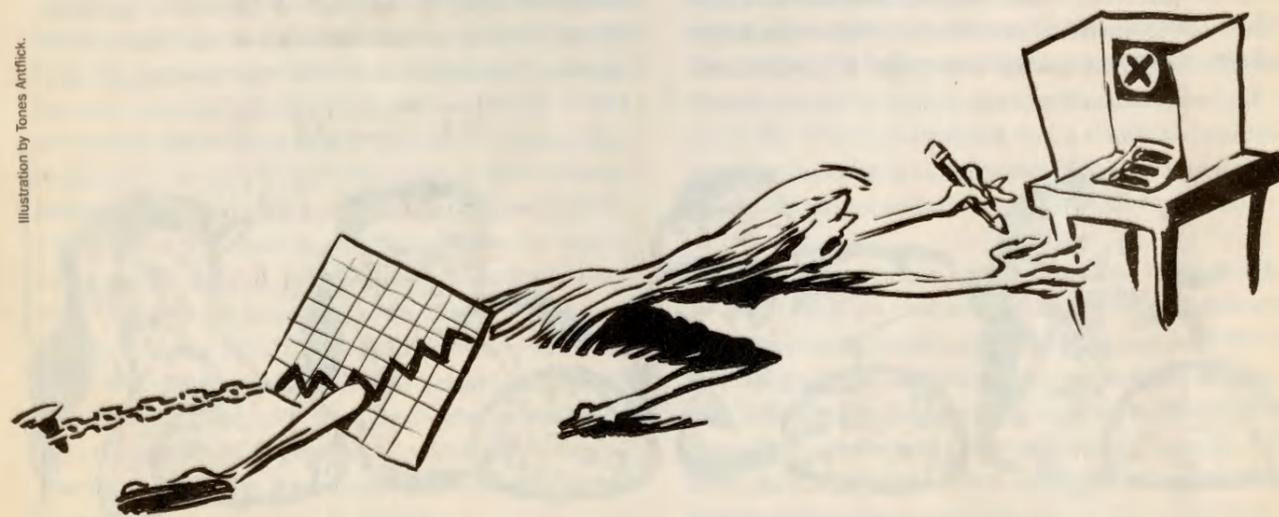
Meanwhile, Decima was starting to do a brisk business, as Canadian corporations caught on to the value of its polling activity and research. The 1984 election revealed the benefits of Gregg's polling apparatus for the Tories, especially his ability to do daily tracking throughout the campaign, while the opposition pollsters limped behind with their weekly and/or spot-polling procedures. Business also noted this distinctive feature of Decima, which was far in advance of any other outfit in Canada. Says Gregg: "Daily tracking is very important for picking up the

edge on things like policy and news management. But it's really important for organizational purposes. I can do 500 interviews a night during a campaign. Over five nights that gives me a huge sample size—2,500 interviews all within the same sample frame. That gives a very complete picture of what's happening across the country riding by riding. Tracking is basic for fine tuning an election-projection model."

In 1984, another change occurred that would be significant to later developments. As the result of an appeal under the Charter of Rights by the National Citizens' Coalition, the section of the Canada Elections Act which had previously controlled activities and spending by special interest groups was struck down. Spending by political parties and candidates remained limited by law, but there were no longer any curbs on spending by special interest groups, nor were they under any obligation to disclose the sources of their financing.

In retrospect we can see that all these factors came together during the 1988 election. In the final four weeks of the campaign, following the TV debates, an influx of advocacy ads, corporate and Tory news management, and a blitz of direct-mail marketing and corporate employee-relations tactics turned the tide for the pro free trade forces and for Mulroney himself. While a more detailed analysis of the campaign must be postponed for a forthcoming book, there is little question that Gregg's polling abilities were central to an election in which one out of four voters changed their minds at least once during the campaign.

Illustration by Tones Amflick.



Part of the fallout of that 1988 election was an obvious flurry of corporate takeovers and mergers, leading to some mighty large corporate bodies in that reverse fat farm called free enterprise. Decima has been involved in its own corporate moves—proving that it doesn't just merge data.

FULL SERVICE PSYCHING

In February of '89, the Decima-PAI partnership teamed up with Hill & Knowlton, the largest independent public-relations firm in the U.S. Ironically enough, Hill and Knowlton's polling arm is Richard Wirthlin's DMI, meaning that the former mentor and investor has now taken over Gregg's outfit.

"As of the third week in February," crows Gregg, "Decima-PAI, which specializes in government relations, and Hill and Knowlton [which specializes in every form of public relations] are under the same roof. We are the only company in Canada which will now be able to deliver full service for a client." "Does this mean you'll be designing advocacy ads?" I ask.

"This means doing advocacy ads, corporate image, speech writing, contacts, media relations, news management, full service. The thing we heard most in the past was clients would say to us: 'We did all this [polling] research and then we didn't do something with it.' Now that has changed."

I can hear the excitement in Gregg's voice and I know why. Hill & Knowlton has been doing PR for nearly 60 years and has a tremendous clientele worldwide: governments, multinationals, industry associations, political parties, you name it. "We are providers of services," Gregg is saying, "and they are looking at their suppliers to come with them..." I tune out momentarily while he's talking. I've just flashed on something else my Decima deep throat told me: that attitudinal surveys are two-tiered.

"During the week we survey the populace," Silkwood had said. "But on weekends a different staff comes in. They telephone individual corporate executives at home, by name, to get their attitudes and opinions on issues. That's a different data base."

You don't have to be Richard Wirthlin to guess what happens with that polling data. It helps to maintain accord between corporate movers-and-shakers and policy decisions of the party in power. That, indeed, is the essence of government relations: PR to effect and impact on government planning and thinking in advance of decisions. With Hill & Knowlton under the same roof, Decima will be

accessing corporate desires world-wide, as well as fine tuning their PR strategies at every level.

Meanwhile, the pollsters will keep their finger on our psychographic pulse, registering every blip, dip, peak, twist and vaguery in our prevailing mind-set, so that full service can be provided for clients.

"Start a rock band!" I want to say to Allan Gregg, who's now recounting his polling successes in Israeli and Australian elections. "Be a real punk," I want to interrupt. But I bite my tongue. I know that things have advanced far beyond the input of just one pollster. An awesome image arises in my mind: Richard Wirthlin's data bank, 20 years in the making, merging with all the accumulated psychographics data of Decima Research Ltd. Full service indeed. ■

Joyce Nelson is the author of *The Perfect Machine: TV in the Nuclear Age* (1987) and *The Colonized Eye: Rethinking the Grierson Legend* (1988), both published by Toronto's Between The Lines Press. She is currently working on a book about the PR industry, for publication in autumn by BTL Press.

UPCOMING IN

FUSE
MAGAZINE

Non-Traditional Casting

Palestinian Posters

Laundromat Art

W.O.M.A.D

& More!



Still from *The Canneries*, a film by Bonnie Devlin and Stephen Insley.

Still courtesy DEC Film and Video

FILM & VIDEO

Independent Images

IMAGES 89

**Festival of Independent Film and Video
Presented by Northern Visions
Euclid Theatre and Harbourfront StudioTheatre
Toronto, May 3-7, 1989**

IMAGES 89 was a sweeping overview of independent film and video in Canada with a splash of those "others" from abroad. This was the second year that Northern Visions Independent Video and Film Association organized a large screening of independent work. This year three curators—Tom Waugh (Montreal), Francis Leeming (Ottawa), and Sarah Diamond (Vancouver)—chose films and videos from across the country. There were two retrospectives: one of videos by General Idea and another of the films of Arthur Lipsett. An open jury call curated by a committee rounded out the IMAGES 89 programme. Films and videos were shown back to back at the Euclid Theatre and at the Harbourfront Studio Theatre.

What's interesting about IMAGES is that it offers a clear alternative to the schtick of the big name/big budget/big bore Festival to define all Festivals. Let's not forget that last year's *Festival of Festivals* offered such "world class films" as *Earth Girls Are Easy*. And yes, they did present a few programmes of independent Canadian work. But alas, there are more of us (especially video artists) than the *Festival of Festivals* can shake a gala at. (For those of you who have never been to this fest, a gala is not a feminist film screening but rather a "let's get out the limo" kind of affair.)

So far, IMAGES has not been able to draw the media attention or the crowds that the *Festival of Festivals* has, but let's not forget that a few years

ago foreign films were as big a yawn to the general public as video art is now. It seems that as the *Festival of Festivals* grew, the crowds got bigger while the films got stupider. Not to blame the audiences, but I would hope that the future curators of IMAGES would take note of this and keep to the excellent sort of programming that was offered this year.

Perhaps the most exciting part of the IMAGES programme this year was not a film or a video, but the opening of the Euclid Theatre. Set up by DEC (Development Education Centre), this theatre provides a much needed screening facility for independent film and video in Toronto.

In covering IMAGES 89, FUSE Magazine chose not to attempt to cover everything at the festival. The programme was very large, spanning five days with approximately 100 films and videos. We felt that overall coverage would have resulted in little being said about a lot. We approached several writers, asking them to choose for themselves the film or tape that they would like to review. What is printed here is a grab bag of the IMAGES 89 programme.

Elizabeth Schroder

INDIA HEARTS BEAT

**Leila Sujir
Video Pool, Winnipeg
Video, 1988**

by Marusia Bociurkiw

Two women kneel at a river—a rippling sari chroma-keyed with images of India—and drink the water. The moon, a yellow circle behind them, becomes a globe, and then becomes a circular wipe through which the lips of the three women's faces become visible, speaking in turn. One describes her marriage, when, as a white woman in India, marrying an Indian man, there was difficulty in finding a minister who would perform the ceremony. Another describes her child-

hood memories of Ceylon, and the cultural influences of English colonialism. The third woman describes an incident in Canada:

When I lost my wallet last winter, I phoned the police. 'What is your name?' they said. 'Where do you live?' they said. 'What colour are you?' they said. 'Colour? I thought we didn't have to answer that anymore.' 'Well,' he said, 'We can tell by your name you're a different colour.' 'Oh,' I said. 'Yes,' he said. 'Just for our files.' I didn't report it until now. 'Her name,' he said, 'told him she was Indian.'

The vulnerability, the sense of displacement and loss that occurs when one is living between two cultures, is powerfully evoked by these and other sequences from *India Hearts Beat*, a 13 minute video produced by Calgary-based artist Leila Sujir. Written collaboratively by the artist, her mother and an Indian friend, the narrative moves back and forth from the imaginary space of the sari-river to footage and remembered accounts of the three women's different experiences of India. Their cultural and emotional attachment to India helps to convey a sensual, almost romantic (but not romanticized) depiction of the country, which is tempered by references to racism and colonialism. The video is not, however, a portrait of India, but rather a delicate exploration of Indian culture as it exists in these women's memories, where it is vivid, layered, and intense:

I experience a withdrawal into the past: into India, into my parents' house; into

the ashram in the mountains; into Materah. These places are with me now. As I start eating the aromatic food, all the images and experiences come flooding into my mind. I have moved away physically, but today, I'm reunited with all these places.

The constructed nature of much of what we remember about our past is strongly evoked by the shimmering, electronically-manipulated sari. Rather than speaking of nostalgia, however, this constructed imaginary space speaks more forcefully of possibility. The two women are of different cultures but their shared experience of India unites them, if only momentarily, in a shared action, and makes their experience visible—if only to one another.

The ramifications of cultural difference are only subtly alluded to in this video: visibility through skin colour, or speech, that places one in danger; and an invisibility of history and custom within the context of a colonialist, dominant culture.

As the video ends, the artist's voice describes her return trip to Calgary from Bombay. The long plane ride makes literal her sense of cultural displacement, existing somewhere between East and West, between the two women on either side of the river. "I become memory," she says. She describes a dream in which Bombay becomes part of Calgary; "so close, you can see it, you can touch it"; like the river, an imaginary territory where difference can exist. ■



Still from Leila Sujir's video *India Hearts Beat*.

Still courtesy Video Pool



Still from *The Canneries*.

THE CANNERIES

Bonnie Devlin & Stephen Insley
Available at DEC Film and Video
Film, 1987

by Bruce Barber

This film combines some of the more irritating features of conventional National Film Board (NFB) style documentary film making. Excessive and paternalistic voiceovers, gratuitous soundtrack and acontextualized use of original footage are combined with what used to be taken for progressive independent film production techniques. In this latter category (some of which are also to be found in NFB films circa 1960) are additive and dialectical montage editing techniques, rhythmic music conjoined with images of work combined with a syncopated (jazz-like) pixilated editing style. Is it the very success of NFB documentaries that keeps these cinematic clichés alive?

If these represent some of the debits of this documentary, there are some strong pluses to recommend it for educational use. The film contains some very useful information about the development of the canning industries in British Columbia. It examines the exploitation of migrant and native workers, institutionalized and state racism and its affects on the

workforce, the unionization of the industry and, finally, its decline in small coastal communities (Claxton, Sunnyside and Port Edward). There are also valuable comments from informants about life in the plants and townships, the disruption of family life, head taxes on Chinese men, the organization of women, the problems of organization generally, mechanization, piecework, Taylorism and health standards. The film also includes information about the internment of Japanese boats and fisherman during the war and the formation of anti-Asiatic groups in British Columbia in the early 1900s. However the lack of information on the owners of the canneries and state and provincial government policy on the industry could leave viewers with the impression that the very real gains of the United Fisherman and Allied Workers' Union (who by 1945 had organized over 50 organizations in the industry) somehow lead to the demise of the small canning operations in the coastal townships. In fact this was more the result of capitalist accumulation than union antagonism, although those too had a part to play in the overall concentration of the industry. The film would have been strengthened considerably by the addition of some information about the ownership and struggles within the industry at all levels of its operation. Too much to ask? ■

VERY NICE, VERY NICE

Film, 1961

21-87 Film, 1963

FLUXES Film, 1967

N-ZONE Film, 1970

Arthur Lipsett

NFB

by Andrew Munger

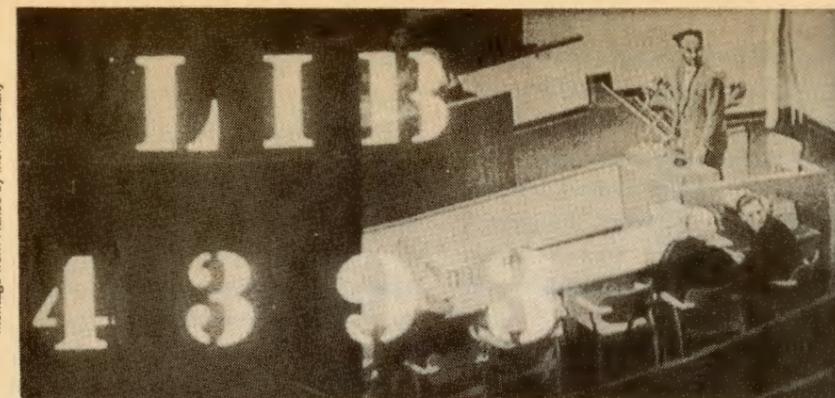
The two ironies that immediately occur to me regarding Arthur Lipsett are these; that I was introduced to his films by the most commercially oriented film teacher at Ryerson; and that a retrospective of his work should figure so prominently at IMAGES 89, a festival of primarily new film and video.

This sampling featured four films from the Lipsett canon; *Very Nice, Very Nice*; *21-87*; *Fluxes* and *N-Zone*.

Lipsett has been labeled as a collage filmmaker, a cubist and a constructivist, each with some justification. His reputation as a collagist has been debated within the academic film community, in comparison both favourably and unfavourably to, among others, Bruce Connor, a filmmaker who worked exclusively with pure form, properties of light and rhythm devoid of content. Lipsett's genius is that he avoids formalism by using and transforming content, representational sounds and images, creating an accumulation of meaning; pure montage, rendering the individual images meaningless.

The use of "found" or appropriated sound and images for this purpose has now achieved common currency, from Michael Jackson videos to the latest Todd Terry megamix, but Lipsett's use of them, creating a collage of new meaning or anti-meaning was unique in the context of the times.

Although Lipsett did create his films at the NFB, they're hardly representative of the NFB, or studio B where he worked. Unlike the social realism of documentary filmmakers like Donald Britten, Lipsett was creating a unique, self-contained unreality, a purely filmic entity, in which



Montage from Fluxes by Ihor Holubizky

Montage of images from Arthur Lipsett's film *Fluxes*.

the images' representational value is outweighed by their complex interrelationships.

Lipsett's films are less "made" than constructed. They are truly created in the editing. *Very Nice, Very Nice* (1960), his first film, consists of still photographs (some made by Lipsett, others culled from magazines and advertisements) organized along very rigorous and specific patterns of associational montage.

The material is arranged according to graphic and thematic concerns and organized by a soundtrack of audio fragments found literally on the cutting-room floor at the NFB.

The still images Lipsett used are a kind of urban hieroglyphic, a dystopian writing of docility, obeisance, fear and coercion engendered by technological advancement, political inertia and consumer surfeit. Images of mushroom clouds compete with corn flakes ads, political hucksters and anonymous urban dwellers; all equally meaningful and meaningless; a miasma of post-industrial iconography.

21-87 (1962) is Lipsett's second and most harrowing film. It differs from his first, *Very Nice, Very Nice* by using moving rather than still images. In certain ways it's a response to the questions posed in *Very Nice, Very Nice*. If *Very Nice, Very Nice* is the cause, *21-87* is the effect. The alienation, frustration and fear created by the "speed of images" has a demonstrable effect in the visible, banal horror of the everyday existence of the

anonymous, cowed characters of *21-87*. The image of an elderly woman boarding a bus is accompanied by a voiceover stating "her" fear that everywhere people are looking at her—watching her. It's this everyday paranoia that informs *21-87*, a film that shares characteristics with the "city symphonies" of Rutman and Vigo, and the constructivism of Vertov. Lipsett shares Vertov's approach to representation. Both filmmakers use documentary form to foreground the unreality, the artificiality of the image.

Vertov's paean to the new Soviet society ensured his entrapment within ideology. Lipsett skirts entrapment by avoiding optimism, predicting the end of Western culture.

For Lipsett ideology, like history, is more raw material; another element to be reduced, critiqued and transformed in the process of writing new meaning.

Lipsett's unique brand of ironic humour manifests itself in *Fluxes*. In *Fluxes* the military motif, religious rhetoric and newsreel footage of the trial of "final solution" architect Adolph Eichman, accompanied by dialogue from a trashy 1950s science fiction film, collides history and popular culture into, to quote from *Very Nice, Very Nice*, "a phantasmagoria of nothing." Sort of a sinister *What's Up Tiger Lily?* For me it's Lipsett's most accomplished film, insightful, jaundiced and humorous.

N-Zone, the final film on the programme, and Lipsett's most personal, is a dense, difficult work, a departure from

the social critique of his previous work, constructed of a combination of live action sequences, overt symbolism and rhetoric. The characters primarily mug for the camera and engage in playful "beat" games. It reminded me, oddly enough, of Robert Frank's *Pull My Daisy*.

Very little has been written about Lipsett. There is virtually no critical analysis of his work, which is perhaps one reason why it remains fresh after so many years. However, curator Ihor Holubizky's notes in the IMAGES 89 programme are an excellent introduction to Lipsett. ■

MARY MARY

Anna Gronau
Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, Toronto
Film, 1989

by Kim Derko

"You have to decide if this is a film or a dream..."

Anna Gronau's film *Mary Mary* opens with a lengthy, haunting, steadicam shot. The camera glides through a meadow, along a dirt road to the doorway of an old white house. Implied in this shot is the enigma of a suspended and floating point of view. What lies ahead is the investigation of a mystery and a search for the identity of this suspended point of view.

Gronau's elaborate formal strategy offers a stabilizing effect (like the steadicam's gyrostat) in a film that resembles a dream. The film is punctuated by a series of lists of text over image and readings. Passages from Victorian children's novels and descriptions of mythological characters are interwoven with writings by and about North American native peoples, and with a recurring linguistic play on the words: STAT/STATE/ESTATE/PHOTOSTAT. The result is an inquest into the power of the "dominant cultural order" as it records and censors its own history.

The leading character of *Mary Mary*

Still from *Mary Mary*.

is M.—a filmmaker played by Patricia Medwid. M. is making a film but she encounters some of the problems inherent in a feminist approach to plot, history and acting. This, of course, is no new dilemma for women filmmakers, but Gronau has M. pit plot against text, history against memory, and dream against image.

In a clever scene that takes place at the underground viewing windows of an aquarium, M. meets A., who is a curious character played by "Anna Catherine Welbanks"—an actress who bears an uncanny resemblance to Gronau and suspiciously shares the filmmaker's great grandmother's maiden name. M. is confronted by A. about the nature of 8mm footage that appears later in the film. M. remarks that the 8mm footage is exactly as she remembers, although she had never seen it before. A. finds the footage disappointing and tells M. that "it must have been a screen memory." M. retorts, quoting Alice from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*: "...if I'm only a sort of thing in this dream, what are you, I should like to know." The camera pans across the windows of the aquarium from M. to a swimming polar bear which has taken A.'s place. We later learn that Artemis/Hecate was a goddess who took the form of a bear and once ruled the stars until Zeus stole them away.

A. establishes, without "dabbling in autobiography," that she wants to re-

claim the stars. M. begins to construct a connection between all of this fragmented information and her (or is it Gronau's) own matriarchal lineage: great grandmother, grandmother, mother. It is from here that M. can develop a logic with which to structure her film and eventually find that position from which to begin shooting.

The memories of these women ancestors, on being identified, begin to assert their status and finally expose the "story behind the story." The dead of M.'s past do not reclaim the stars, they reclaim their history and Gronau reveals the *soul* owners of the suspended point of view.

Gronau's film presents an overwhelming amount of information and I found the second viewing to be more satisfying than the first. *Mary Mary* maintains an elegant lyricism throughout its complex narrative structure: a film disguised as a dream. ■

JACKASS JOHNNY

Alex Busby and David Coole
Atlantic Independent Media,
Halifax
Film, 1988

by Edie Steiner

Alex Busby and David Coole's *Jackass Johnny*, a 25 minute experimental film in the "road movie" genre, explores the

Still from *Jackass Johnny*.

Canadian landscape and mentality in a cross-country, coast-to-coast travelogue. The visual elements rely primarily on a beautiful and effective application of time-lapse photography combined with motion picture "stills" of a particularly evocative quality. Subtle transitions from occupational portraits to industrial interiors and exteriors, combined with reflective changes from colour to black and white, take the viewer inside capsulated tableaux of various events and impressions. The images captivate the eye in a potent and harmonious stream of development; the filmmakers' selection of representations is especially well suited to time-lapse detail.

Random interviews with Canadians across the country comprise the text of the soundtrack. Astute and comical statements illustrate the sentiments of these people in a variety of unusual and contemplative observations. A commentary on the military as corporate welfare: "... there's more productive things to do than throwing money after Jackass Johnny." An art scene seeker's cognition of that old East-West competition: "... Vancouver is a very West-coast scene ..." A raving soliloquy on free trade: "... CPR for world trade, not just the USA... they're not our cousins." These and other pronouncements seem to point to the evolution of a new "economic morality." The patrons of this current philosophy appear

in the ranks of the traditional unknown Canadians that abide outside the realms of the favoured intelligentsia. These are plain folks who comprehend the intrinsic values of economic foresight and independence. Other subjects of a more mundane but equally ironic point of view create a cultural synopsis whose orientation gives voice to the underdog, the little fellow or the loser whose platitudinous testimonies are generally disregarded by the intelligent observer. A country and western singer, video-taped by a camera crew for a television special to be broadcast in the USSR, delivers diffuse advice on "how to sing professionally," the implication being that attention to one's craft and the development of style, technique and originality will bring its ultimate reward of success and recognition.

The threads of political and sociological substance in the narrative provide a vital background for the major ingredients and substance of the film: the images. These arrive in a purity of construction and percipient interpretation that provides the audience with a cohesive succession of consequential information and illuminating communication. In its lyrical implementation of movement from picture to theme, and its spontaneous transmission of process-level perceptions, the work maintains its experimental form and synaesthetic dimensions. ■

TAXI SANS DÉTOUR

Gary Beitel & Mireille Landry
Le Vidéographe Inc., Montreal
Video, 1988

by Susan Kealey

Taxi sans détour chronicles the struggles of a group of Haitian taxi drivers working in the Montreal suburb of Ville-Marie. The tape focuses on the life of driver Georges-Yvon Antoine, one of the many Haitians who fled the political strife of Haiti in the early 1980s to emigrate to Quebec.

Still from *Taxi sans détour*.

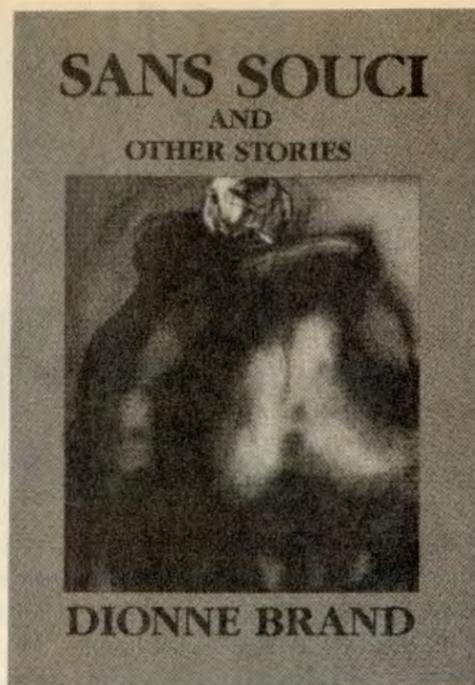
As Antoine drives through the city picking up a series of clients who, with the exception of a few regulars, are either rude, surly, or unabashedly naïve (e.g. one asks why he is driving a cab in Canada when he could be enjoying the sun in Haiti), we are progressively introduced to the racist attitudes Antoine and other Haitian drivers face on a daily basis. Through it all, Antoine remains remarkably cool until an incident at a company taxi stand. There a white driver informs him that the stand is reserved for whites and proceeds to lure away a fare that should have been Antoine's. A scuffle ensues and the police arrive to break up the dispute, letting the white driver—and Antoine's fare—drive away.

When Antoine and his fellow Haitian drivers fail to obtain justice through the police or the management of the taxi company, it becomes increasingly obvious that the racism they experience is not confined to isolated incidents but is instead a deeply entrenched pattern of institutionalized discrimination and oppression that encompasses the taxi business, the police force and the media. This realization is the catalyst for concerted action. The Haitian drivers rally together, stage a public demonstration and eventually leave their racist employer. With a resolve to end further victimization and to control their own fates, they establish their own

community-based taxi service, one that hires cabbies from all racial backgrounds.

As the title of the tape implies, Antoine and his confrères do not settle for a "détour" but rather a direct course of action to improve their situation. This drama of a group of disenfranchised workers gradually becoming politicized and achieving power is compelling. Beitel and Landry's re-staging of these events, which took place from 1986-87, is particularly relevant as a record of non-white labour struggle and victory.

Before the screening of *Taxi sans détour*, Gary Beitel told the audience at the Euclid Theatre that the tape was very much a collaborative effort with Mireille Landry and five Haitian-Québécois taxi drivers who were involved over the three years of the production. Beitel and Landry's commitment to the voices of these Haitian drivers is demonstrated throughout the tape. However, I found one thing bothersome. While the video uses both French and Creole, Beitel inserted a voiceover (his voice) for the primarily English audience at *IMAGES*, obscuring much of the nuances and emotional quality of the original spoken material. Given the nature of this piece and the directors' desire to have minority voices heard, Beitel and Landry would be well advised to subtitle *Taxi sans détour* for future English screenings. ■



BOOKS

Survival of the Pensive

SANS SOUCI AND OTHER STORIES

Dionne Brand
Williams-Wallace Publishers,
Stratford, Ontario
1988

by Karen Tyrell

It is ironic that Dionne Brand would choose "sans souci" as the title for her first collection of short stories. Ironic, for the term means "without care," and the lives that Brand depicts are anything but carefree.

Brand writes about the particularities of the black woman's experience: the maturation of young girls, the physical and psychological violation of women, female friendships and (no)-love affairs are explored here. Her characters hover on the periphery of society—relegated to a state of marginality by virtue of their race and sex. Yet these women survive, a survival which takes its toll on the

body and the mind. Their efforts to resist total victimization are etched in the pain in their eyes and the rough touch of their hands.

In "Blossom, Priestess of Oya, Goddess of winds, storms and waterfalls" Brand focuses on the plight of the immigrant woman. Blossom arrives in Toronto to find that the man who promised to help has disappeared, and she is forced to "babysit snot-nosed children on Oriole Parkway." A similar position on Balmoral Avenue ends when Blossom rejects the boss's sexual advances. Her anger towards him includes the wife who blames Blossom for the incident. Blossom's creative revenge forces readers to consider those women trapped in similar circumstances without a means of escape.

A true survivor, Blossom decides to leave an unsatisfactory marriage. (In Brand's fictional world, there are no positive male-female relationships. Her male characters are predominantly the "fuck 'em and leave 'em" types.) Prompted by a desire to "stay home and figure out she life," Blossom embarks on a spiritual pilgrimage. This metaphysical journey leads to the spirit within herself. She gains "power to see and the power to fight; she had the power to feel pain and the power to heal." Blossom uses these new found skills to heal and nurture others, becoming the surrogate mother for "those who see the hoary face of suffering."

Not all of Brand's characters are as fortunate as Blossom. The unnamed woman in "No rinsed blue sky, no red flower fences" is caught in a relentless struggle. Being an "illegal" limits her means of income and leaves her at the mercy of immigration workers and debt collectors. Paranoid and claustrophobic, she paints and repaints her small apartment to match her shifting moods—"yellow to be bright and then white to be alone." Her job caring for other people's children only reminds her of her own children left behind in the Caribbean while she tries for a better life.

It is hard to imagine that this woman's life in Canada is better than the one she left. Yet she stays, for the pittance she earns feeds her children. She stays for the memory of the "dry hills back home" is still too vivid to be confused with the vision of home depicted by the glamorous tourism poster that she keeps. Acutely aware of her displacement and alienation in a society that only values her babysitting skills, she continues her battle for survival.

There is a distinct revolutionary strain in the last section of the work. The call to arms is most evident in the stories "I

used to like the Dallas Cowboys," "Sketches in Transit . . . going home" and, to a lesser degree, in "At the Lisbon Plate." Grenada's revolution is recreated in "I used to like the Dallas Cowboys" as one of the characters finds herself in the midst of the American invasion, and in "Sketches in Transit . . . going home" a character is travelling to embrace Maurice Bishop's socialist vision. In "At the Lisbon Plate" the narrator imagines herself righting the wrongs of the past with the aid of ancient African rituals and juju. Brand's inclusion of Grenada, Bolivia and Santiago in these stories reinforces the idea that fundamental changes in the existing political/social structures are necessary if the wrongs inflicted on the characters are to be redressed in an effective way.

Long established as a poet, Brand's lyrical sensibility transfers easily to prose. Her occasional use of dialect softens the harsh details while remaining true to the facts. Her joy in language concretizes the harsher facts of her characters' existence and captures the imaginings of pre-pubescent girls, as in "Madame Alaird's Breasts." This evocation of Madame Alaird's breasts illustrates her skill: "our passion for their snug bounciness, their warm purpleness, their juicy fruitedness . . ." Unfortunately, the inclusion of "Madame Alaird's Breasts" seems out of place in this particular collection.

This ambitious first short story collection is not without its shortcomings. It often tries to say too much and instead loses the reader's interest. Such is the case with "Photograph." It lacks the artistic and editorial control that is so evident in the stories "Blossom" and "St. Mary's Estate." What starts as a poignant and loving tribute to a grandmother is disrupted by the introduction of the absentee mother. The issues that Brand seeks to explore in "Photograph" would have better served in two separate stories. That said, I look forward to Ms. Brand's next collection. ■

Karen Tyrell is a Toronto-based writer



Robert McFadden in performance at A Space.

PERFORMANCE

Aliens & Others on the Edge

THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Robert McFadden
A Space, Toronto
May 29, 1989

by Andrew J. Paterson

Ottawa-based performance artist (and former National Gallery Video Curator) Robert McFadden's premiere performance of *The Edge of the World* took place before a small audience familiar with performance art. Although that audience's response was highly favourable, *The Edge of the World* came and went in the manner of other edges of the world, voyages to the centre of the labyrinths or whatever: it was here one minute and gone the next.

Perhaps the premiere of a piece entitled *The Edge of the World* by an Ottawa-based artist in a Toronto parallel gallery seemed somewhat conceptually oxymo-

ronic. Well, it was and probably always will be; and that was one of the points of McFadden's performance. The performance was about the symbiotic relationships between the familiar and the "alien" or other; the relationships between "highly sophisticated technology" and elemental behaviour, between immediate surroundings or environment and distant frontiers, between regional media stereotypes and "local" mythologies. It was about the human fascination with that which appears to be "alien"; and the subsequent need to own and regulate the growth of that other.

The Edge of the World is a universal

title for a universal narrative—whether it is militarism presented in the form of the adventure story, the detective caper, or formula sci-fi. After all, the discovery of “America” (or the “Americas”) was the result of European exploration—a game of one-upmanship among rival nations to see just how far one could travel without falling over the edge.

McFadden’s performance resists the video/past tense vs. body present tense dichotomy so endemic to multi-media performance, and thus allows the various instances of on-going expansionism to be displayed in a parallel rather than linear mode. According to the performer, the inspiration for the graphics, which largely make up the video pre-tape, came from a geological survey commissioned by the government of Upper Canada. The survey was intended to “scientifically authorize” the takeover of Northern Canada. He refers to Western culture as having an “obsession about alien creatures arriving one morning on our doorsteps” and expecting the aliens “to possess a highly sophisticated technology, if not a superior understanding of the workings of the cosmos—like our view of ourselves when we arrived on the shores of North America.”

McFadden the performer made a truly alien entrance, with the sound of his snowshoes hilariously audible before he himself appeared as a parka-clad trapper—simultaneously “other” to the audience and dependent upon the existence of others (animals and audiences). The analogy between audiences and prey was comically extended when, after relaxing with a magnetic globe attached to his left snowshoe while appreciating a Lawrence Welk arrangement of “I Talk to the Animals,” McFadden produced a fishing rod and proceeded to lampoon (or harpoon) the audience while the video tape announced a litany of animals—some more Northern or exotic than others (porcupine, snowy owl, skunk, polar bear, otter, lynx, harp seal). As an audience member who had enthusiastically swallowed the



Photo by Leena Raudvee

Good bait—Robert McFadden talks to the animals.

performers bait, it was perhaps inevitable that the line from the fishing rod would become temporarily tangled around my own neck! Both trappers and performance artists must seduce and procure in order to survive.

McFadden has also worked as a musician/audio artist over the years, and his use of sounds and music throughout *The Edge of the World* was absurd yet biting. His own proud representation of Ottawa Valley mythology (a parallel to the way New York artists bring New York with them wherever they go) was augmented by a tape of Ottawa Valley native turned Las Vegas king Paul Anka crooning “Canadian Sunset”—the voice of a man who witnessed his last Canadian sunset eons ago. And more alien still was his electronic arrangement of “This Land is Your Land”—an alternative Canadian folksong which is of course a Canadian adaptation of a Woody Guthrie American populist classic. It was the performer’s

musical sense of timing that allowed an interplay between performer and pretape which made formal sense without having to make obvious linear sense.

When the trapper shamanistically nails his parka to the gallery wall, the voice of a female neighbour lambasts the man for the relentless selfishness of his activity (or art). The association between masculinity and expansionism—whether in the animal world, the solar system, or the art world—is hardly idiosyncratic to *The Edge of the World*. But, just as the performance’s title is an apt metaphor for the unthinking expansionism McFadden critiques, *The Edge of the World* was a thoughtful and witty presentation that successfully posited the possibility of familiarity in fact being alien, and vice versa. ■

Andrew J. Paterson is a Toronto-based fiction writer, video producer and performance artist.



Photo courtesy Buddies in Bad Times

Marcia Johnson as Spike in *Black Friday*.

PERFORMANCE

Parts of 4-play

LESBIANS WHO WEAR LIPSTICK: THE MUSICAL

Written by Marcy Rogers
Directed by Audrey Butler
Actor’s Lab Theatre, Toronto
April 5-16, 1989

BLACK FRIDAY

Written by Audrey Butler
Directed by Bryden MacDonald
Actor’s Lab Theatre, Toronto
April 4-16, 1989

Two very different works, *Lesbians Who Wear Lipstick: The Musical* by Marcy Rogers, and *Black Friday* by Audrey Butler, were both performed as part of QueerCulture’s 4-Play Festival. Taken together, they can provide thought-provoking commentary on the representation of lesbian identities.

Lesbians Who Wear Lipstick is not really a play—it can more easily be described as a cabaret or a revue. Characterization is, however, still at its centre.

Lesbians Who Wear Lipstick consists of monologues by a variety of characters, all played by Marcy Rogers and punctuated by a number of songs.

The highlight of the show is the songs, sung by Jana Reid. She handles various singing styles with ease and puts in two particularly noteworthy performances in *Straight But Curious* and *I’m Not Waiting For Captain Penis*.

Lesbians Who Wear Lipstick is well-structured to suit its two modes: revela-

tion of certain character types and satirization of others. The exposé is largely of the lipstick lesbian; “real women are women,” as one of the songs says. The objects of satire are generally politically correct lesbians, the preppy deck shoe crowd, and those “straight but curious” women who are also seen as desirable. The assertive butch, such as Punk Marlboro, can be a fantasy figure of power and self-confidence for the main lipstick lesbian. This typing of characters is precisely what is problematic. As a vehicle for satire, stereotyping has some value. But the lingering uneasiness about *Lesbians Who Wear Lipstick* is the valuing of certain types, or roles, at the expense of others. What this suggests is a political agenda not much different from that of the stereotyped politically correct lesbian. We are encouraged to value the lipstick lesbian type over others, or at least to admire it. And as justification for our admiration we are presented only with such superficial aspects as clothing style. Perhaps this is because *Lesbians Who Wear Lipstick* does not give any character enough time to develop depth or individuality.

The characters in *Black Friday*, on the other hand, are far more easily identified with, perhaps not so paradoxically, because they are not types. Every character is intensely involved in a number of plots. In the first, Terry returns from Toronto to Cape Breton determined to clear her father of a 20-year-old charge of extorting union dues. She has been told by her father that a letter inside of a letter he wrote to her will clear his name. She suspects both family and friends of hiding this letter from her. She is also returning home with her black female lover Spike, setting up a coming out story. But coming out remains only a potential, and serves as an unspoken source of growing tension until the end.

However, there is a third plot that encompasses the other two and implicates all the characters: the articulation of supposedly secret (and complicated)

by Lisa Pottie

knowledge. Everyone, including Terry's ex-lover Roddy, knows that Terry and Spike are lovers, and that Terry's Aunt Effie is really her mother Rita's mother—but no one will speak.

The position of the audience is analogous to Spike's. She is the bewildered outsider, confused by the incestuous nature of this small community's business, by the old family quarrels and by the deluge of information she is (and we are) subjected to. She begins to make sense of the various relationships and the nature of the silences, and when the silences are broken in the end, she is included, as are we. The ending is a wonderful comic resolution. Terry forces the unsaid to be spoken and the process enables the characters to truly see one another. As Terry acknowledges that there is no letter, she must at the same time come to terms with her relationship to her father and with the rest of her family. They, in turn, must do the same.

Characterization is why this play really works. The intensely personal situations are ones in which we can see ourselves, because the characters have a depth we can recognize and share. Just as they recognize their connections to each other, so too do we recognize our connections to them. *Black Friday* succeeds because it does not attempt to create certain types, nor does it generalize for us; we are inspired to find our own meaning. *Lesbians Who Wear Lipstick*, in its attempt to portray certain character types, and to make sweeping statements, fails to develop a truly personal voice to which the audience can relate.

Articulation, as *Black Fridays* suggests, is a necessary aspect of the process of imagining and exploring lesbian identities. That process cannot be adequately conveyed through the articulation of types rather than the experiences of individuals. ■

Lisa Pottie is in her final year of her Ph.D. in English Literature at the University of Toronto.



Poster for 10th International Festival of New Latin American Cinema

FILM

Turning 30 CINEMA & REVOLUTION IN HAVANA

by David McIntosh

Why beat about the bush and promise and protest all sorts of things? Why not tell the truth and say what is fact—that we want Cuba . . . because we believe that it will add to our national strength and become a purchaser at our bargain counters?

The Washington Post, 1902¹

Nicaragua hoy, Cuba mañana

Contra recruitment poster in Miami²

It is the last day of 1988 and Havana's preparations for the celebration of the New Year are just about complete. Apart from the unlucky few caught in the last minute lineups for bottles of rum to see

them through the night, all of Havana is set to trek from party to party till dawn. The Prado, a long tree-lined boulevard in the heart of commercial Havana and the site of every Cuban transgression, has been transformed into an endless outdoor dancehall where crowds are beginning to form for succulent pieces of barbecued chicken or pork and cups of draught beer poured from enormous shining kettles. In the Parque Central a group of old men argue about their various memories of the time a drunken U.S. marine pissed on the statue of Jose Martí, sparking city-wide riots. Toasts to the New Year with anyone and everyone, laughter, and a boule-

vard of bands tuning up eventually drown out the argument.

This is no ordinary New Year's celebration—in Cuba January 1st marks the day Fidel Castro's July 26 Movement marched into Havana, successfully terminating a six-year guerilla war against Batista. Nor is this just any celebration of the triumph of the Revolution—this is the 30th anniversary. As the only state in Latin America which has managed to exist outside of the influence of the United States for 30 years (despite attempted invasions, assassination plots, dirty wars, and U.S. propaganda beamed in from Miami by Radio Martí and now TV Martí), Cuba finds itself the patron of an international cultural tradition and revolutionary artistic movement which was also finding its footings some 30 years ago—the New Latin America Cinema movement. This movement is celebrated each year in Havana in the form of the Festival of New Latin American Cinema, Television and Video, the 10th edition of which wound up on December 20.

As with anything or anyone that turns 30 (in this case a national revolution and an international revolutionary cinema movement), energies, ideas and radical impulses suffer unless the contradictions and accumulations of age are addressed and processes for renewal are developed. Much as Cuba fights to protect its revolution from increasing external forces of destabilization while struggling internally with a generation born since Fidel's victory (a generation which is extremely well educated, trained to think dialectically and seeking more room in the revolutionary process), the New Latin American Cinema movement fights to maintain integrity and presence in a world increasingly dominated by American film and television at the same time as it tries to create a space for new voices and new realities. And just as Cuba established an infrastructure which provides adequate health care, education, food and accommodation to all citizens, Latin American filmmakers have gained much ground



Still from *Krak? Krak! Tales of a Nightmare* by Jac Avila and Vanyoska Gee.

since their first international encounter in Viña del Mar, Chile, in 1967.³ In addition to the yearly film festival in Havana, there is now the broadly based permanent Committee of Latin American Filmmakers, the Foundation of New Latin American Cinema to assist developing screenwriters, and the Three Worlds International Film School in San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba.

There is one major difference between these two 30-year-olds. Cuban society experienced a revolution which eliminated the primary causes of underdevelopment; the New Latin American Cinema movement, however, finds itself operating in a majority of countries which face much the same underdevelopment which inspired the movement's birth, expressed largely now in terms of an overwhelming foreign debt.⁴ As the following quote from an essay written over 20 years ago by the directors of *The Hour of the Furnaces* points out, much of what was "new" about this movement 30 years ago remains "new" today:

One of the more efficiently accomplished tasks of neo-colonialism has been the separation of intellectual sectors, primarily artists, from national realities, alienating them by promoting notions of 'art and universal models' . . . Ours is a period of hypothesis more than thesis, a period of works in progress, in-

conclusive, violent, made with a camera in one hand and a stone in the other, impossible to measure by traditional canons of theory and practice.⁵

The divergence of the national political-economic contexts for the New Latin American Cinema has had both positive and negative effects on the works being produced and the discourse that results from an international gathering such as the Festival in Havana, where at least 500 individual titles from over 25 countries are screened in a 12-day period. It is impossible to represent the true scope and diversity of work as well as the debates surrounding it, given the size of the Havana undertaking. But it is important to at least lay out some of the contradictions and accomplishments which still characterize the New Latin American Cinema, or at least as much of it as one can experience in 12 days.

A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings by Fernando Birri, the acknowledged father of the New Latin American Cinema, elicited one of the more bitter rhetorical exchanges of the Festival. Based on Gabriel Garcia Marquez's story of the same name, Birri's cinematic version of magical-critical-realism is a highly stylized and satirical parable of the relative seductive powers of religion and money. The film was dismissed by the *Granma*,

Still courtesy Mountain Top Films

The Short Straight Jacket

MOO

Written by Sally Clark
Directed by Jackie Maxwell
Factory Theatre, Toronto
Jan. 13—Feb. 12, 1989

by Nigel Hunt

Out of the darkness two lights come up, one at either side of the stage. Under these lights stand a man and a woman. The man looks at the woman, raises a gun and fires at her head. Black-out.

When the lights come up again, a moment later, the same man and woman are still on stage. The gun has vanished, replaced by a more formidable weapon: a white-coated doctor. The woman, whose name is Moo (short for Moragh), thinks she is visiting her sister-in-law in

hospital. The man, Harry, is discreetly telling the doctor that Moo is insane; she thinks that he is her husband whereas, Harry says, he is in fact her brother. The doctor nods sympathetically as Harry signs her into the asylum. As Moo catches on to what's happening, she screams in protest. Harry shrugs apologetically: "There's no reasoning with her."

A few short scenes later, Harry has remarried and Moo is still in hospital, by now in a straight jacket: "I suppose these

days, it's all in one's credibility. If you are short, you have less credibility than a tall person. If you are a woman, you have less credibility than a man. If you are short, a woman and wearing a straightjacket—well, forget it."

The play then takes us back six years, to 1919, when Moo, an archetypal strong-willed young woman, still lived at home with her family and shot tin cans out of the air with a rifle to amuse herself. Harry arrives to ingratiate himself to Moo's wealthy father and ends up catching Moo's fancy when he demonstrates his own shooting prowess. Soon after, while Harry is flirting with Moo's sister, the gun goes off, grazing Moo's head. After Moo's head is bandaged, Harry suggests they run off together. Moo asks: "Elope?" Harry replies: "No. Run off." Moo presses her point: "Harry, you want to marry me?" Harry finally relinquishes: "Have it your way."

Then we are thrown forward in time again, into the midst of Moo and Harry's marriage, when Harry has already started sneaking home at 4:30 a.m. from his

affairs. Then we are back with Moo in the asylum. Then we are off with Harry and his second wife, an insipid woman named Maude Gormley, who whines about whether she should get a nose job. Finally Harry picks her up in his arms, as she coos in anticipation of being carried romantically across some threshold. Instead, Harry heaves her offstage, and we hear Maude tumble and crash down an entire flight of stairs.

In the audience there is a great gasp, as a collective breath is taken. There is something so horrible—and yet so undeniably funny—about what Harry has just done that for several long moments you can sense everyone looking around at their neighbour to see if it is okay to laugh. Together a consensus is reached, and that exhausted breath is exhaled in the form of shrieks of laughter cascading across the rows.

Sally Clark's play *Moo*, produced this January at Toronto's Factory Theatre (previously seen in Calgary and Victoria and published in *What* magazine #15), is a remarkable achievement. Novelistic in scope and filmic in structure, the play leaps and sprawls through time and space with little regard for either of the classical unities, or for traditional Canadian naturalism. Comprised of forty-eight sharp and snappy scenes, *Moo* takes us on the journey of its central character, from carefree adolescence to senility and death, all the while tracking her masochistic obsession with a rotter who flees cruelly from her all-consuming devotions. At times witty and hilarious (especially if you like morbid humour), and at other moments painful and bitter, *Moo* demands of its actors that they convey the temporal range of a person's life as well as the emotional breadth of their drive and ambitions. For half of its cast of eight, *Moo* also requires that many roles be switched on and off as the episodes occur. (One actor—Michael Simpson in the Toronto production—gets to play Moo's father, her son, and her boyfriend.)



Harry commits Moo to an asylum.

While the play never skimps on plot, it also manages to deliver a disturbing portrait of relationships between the sexes. Although no one deserves the kind of nasty actions Moo falls victim to with Harry, the playwright shows that in some sense Moo is as dangerous for Harry as he undoubtedly is for her. Moo can't live without pursuing her husband to obscure desert islands, just as Harry can't live without taunting her with obtuse messages on postcards. In the end, Moo fails to corner her quarry, while Harry only locates his desert island lifestyle in the form of a barren and banal third marriage. They finish their lives older and hardly wiser, slipping into the everlasting and inevitable separation, but never

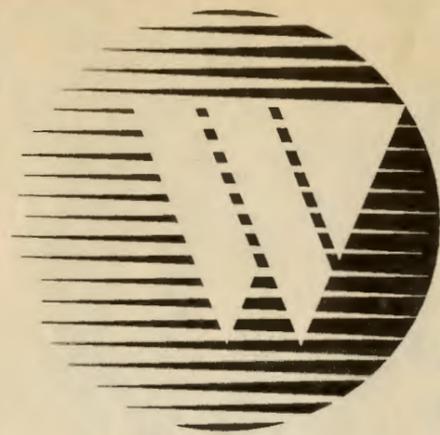
losing their mutual and uncanny ability to haunt each other's memory.

In *Moo*, Sally Clark conjures up frightening and compelling characters speeding through their lives the way we see comets hurling themselves around an orbit, never knowing what set them on their path, forever wondering what collision might lie just around the next curve. This play's hurtful and hurting situations, made endurable by Clark's considerable humour, cannot fail to set us each reflecting upon our own paths of ignorance and knowledge, of logic and desire—seeing the epic ups and downs that plague and delight us. ■

Nigel Hunt is a playwright and editor of *Theatrum*.



Patricia Hamilton
as Moo and
Richard Donat
as Harry.



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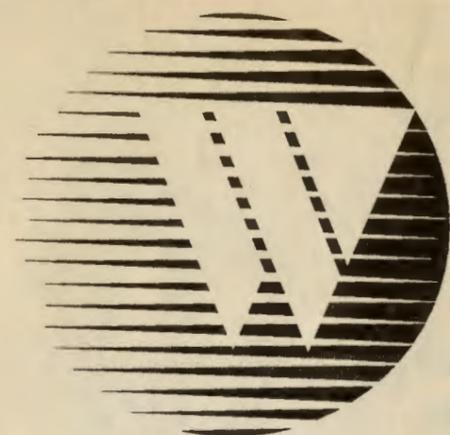
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