FUSE MAGAZINE

WINTER 1989·90 Vol. XIII No.3

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DISTURBING THE PEACE
Commentary on the 54th International PEN World Congress by Joyce Nelson Marlene Nourbese Philip and Ayanna Black

Royal spoils

imperialists missionaries and the royal ontario museum's african collection by hazel a. da breo

MUSIC • PHOTOGRAPHY • FILM • PERFORMANCE • VIDEO

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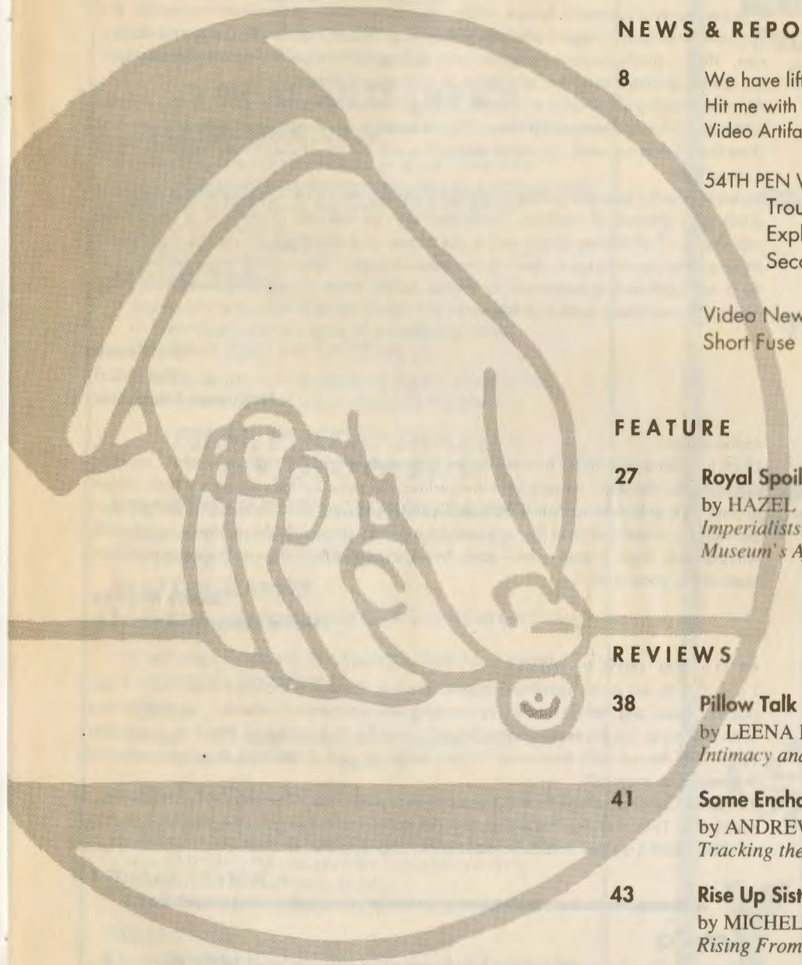

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COVER IMAGE:
Power figure, made of wood, iron, clay, resin and glass from the Kongo people of Angola/Zaire.

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FUSE MAGAZINE

WINTER 1989 • 90
VOL.XIII No.3

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letters

FUSE welcomes letters to the Editors. All letters are subject to editing.

Seeing Red

RE "In The Red" (*FUSE*: XIII No. 1&2)
In Joane Cardinal-Schubert's feature article, amongst a nest of generalized insinuations and slurs, she specifically charges Fastwürms with making "blatant copies of the Sundance ceremonies." This is a totally unsubstantiated fabrication. If, as part of a general argument, Joane feels the need to slander Fastwürms, why make up such absurd allegations?
As to the coupling of our success in public funding with our white racial purity, it may surprise Joane that within our membership there is Native ancestry on the matrilineal side. And so what! Does this validate our work, our moral relationship with nature, or our ethical independence as a social unit?
But aside from the false and inaccurate personal attacks, what is really disappointing about this article is its direction of emphasis. Joane starts with an overview of centuries of racism and exploitation of all Native culture and in the course of a nine-page article she manages to telescope the important issues down to one personal gripe: "I was unable to get funding . . ." As a self-appointed spokesperson for Native artists, Joane Cardinal-Schubert, and *FUSE* magazine, could have done a lot better.

Dai Skuse
Kim Kozzi
Napoleon Brousseau

To the editors:
I think the editors of *FUSE* do a wonderful job in producing one of the more essential Canadian publications of the day. I can only hope that the financial aspects of the magazine will allow them to continue to publish for some time. Articles such as Joane Cardinal-Schubert's "In the Red" must be widly circulated and read by more and more people (especially those who generally stick with *Saturday Night* or even worse—some American publication). Again, I must say in closing, keep up the good work.

Sandy MacKay
Middle Musquodoboit, N.S.

Re "In the Red" (*FUSE* XIII 1&2)
I was glad to see Joane Cardinal-Schubert initiate a discussion around Native cultural and political issues, and I felt the article was brimming with worthwhile information, explication and cultural critique. For this reason I was shocked to read such a vociferous attack on myself and Fastwürms. Are we really the enemy? Who is served by such a reductive, distorted reading of our respective projects?
To counter Cardinal-Schubert's veiled accusations of plagiarism, I can only say that I have slides dating from 1985 that show the preliminary, developmental drawings for the Sweatlodge panel of 1986. I think it is unfair to decontextualize that image from the rest of exhibition (*Western Flesh*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Errata

On page 26 of Joane Cardinal-Schubert's article "In the Red" (*FUSE* XIII 1&2) the paragraph describing the exhibition "Cross Cultural Views" conveyed the impression that "North American Iceberg" by Carl Beam should have been included. This was not the writer's intention and *FUSE* regrets the error.

Recycle FUSE !

For those of you who prefer not to preserve your back issues in red morocco leather binding we suggest recycling your favourite magazine. Simply discard the cover and recycle with your newspapers.

...Seeing Red

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

and Blood, Garnet Press, 1986) which attempted to deal with cultural memory through hallucinatory, dream-like personal memories.

I was born and raised in Cardinal-Schubert's native Alberta. The first art museum that I ever visited was The Museum of the Plains Indians in Browning, Montana. I was eight years old at the time and, for better or worse, the experience had an incredible impact on me. Much of what the 1986 show was about was the oddity of displacement of this child, whose first language (now lost) was Hungarian, getting tangled up in the mythologies and histories of the West. The discourse inherent in my work was about the colliding of Native American cultures and European cultures (both being pluralities: non-colonial Hungary was a very different nation from either England or France) and the permeability of all cultures. Not only were Native artifacts depicted, but also historical Greco-Roman and technological artifacts to ironic effect. Because I traveled extensively in British Columbia as a youth, I also pictured B. C. landscapes and Northwest Coast Indian pieces. This confused the usually impeccably accurate critic Linda Genereux and she erroneously identified the Sweat-lodge ceremony as being a Northwest ritual rather than a Plains one, in spite of the information I provided.

If it is necessary to reduce my life's output to one sentence, it would be more accurate to say that I have dealt with issues of identity and representation, particularly how societal ideologies are inscribed on the bodies of gay men. This is quite far afield from Cardinal-Schubert's assertion that my work of late "seems to focus on the mining of art by Natives." To the contrary, my most recent work has dealt with the AIDS crisis and how it has affected us personally and collectively.

While I certainly believe that all artists are in constant discourse with the images (historical and contemporary) that surround us, I don't feel that I cynically reduce the work of others to "giant K-Marts for my privileged shopping." Yes, money does strange things to people in and out of the art world, but my work has always been predicated on a notion that there are values other than monetary ones.

The unfortunate thing about Cardinal-Schubert's polemic, in which she tries to obliterate any possible worth in what Fastwürms or I have to say, is that she attacks us as enemies when we are such likely allies. We endorse her issues and, out of sincere interest, keep as informed about Native contemporary artists as possible.

We are well aware that there are several generations of artists working with strong voices who will have an even bigger impact on the national and international scenes in this last decade of the 20th century. Such artists as Edward Poitras, Rebecca Belmore, Jimmy Durham, Ron Noganosh, Lance Belanger, Jane Ash Poitras, Peter J. Clair, Faye Heavyshield and Joane Cardinal-Schubert herself, to name just a few, loom large in my mind and I continue to seek out their work. It's as normal to be interested in this work as being interested in New York Neo-Geo, Spanish painting or Vancouver photo-conceptualism.

Andy Fabo, Toronto

◆◆

To the editor:

I let my *FUSE* subscription lapse but have renewed on the strength of "In the Red" and Richard Fung's insights into China.

What about some information on current political/social philosophies among Czechoslovakian intellectuals?

Please—increase coverage of arts activism, both abroad and in Canada.

Yours truly,
Leslie Fiddler

◆◆

Editors:

Your fall issue was impossible to put down. Congratulations.

Ron Benner, London, Ont.

◆◆

To the editors:

The article by Joane Cardinal-Schubert entitled "In The Red," was well written and addressed the concerns of many Native people in the Maritimes where, I feel, we have been almost fully assimilated. I spent 2 years studying photography at the New Brunswick Craft School here in Fredericton, N.B. and during that time I was constantly wondering if I could make it as a "Native" artist with my photography. Photography as a medium is by no means traditional to my people, nor is it considered "fine art" by all critics. So where was my identity? Native artist? Native photographer? artist? Just plain photographer?

When I attended a Native Arts Symposium at the University of Maine, a more experienced artist (Native), pointed out that title does not have any bearing on the validity of your work, nor does it have any bearing on how we express ourselves or in which medium we choose to work. If you feel a need to express yourself through artwork, it does not necessarily mean that your work has to be representative of your culture by design.

I must agree with Joane on her view of "The Spirit Sings." While attending the "Native Youth for Business" workshop in August of 1988, I visited the "The Spirit Sings" exhibition at a local museum. In the very first part of the display I saw a black and white photograph of my reserve, it was a photograph taken on the shoreline of the St. John river which flows through our land. The image shows men, women, children, and of course, Catholic priests. Some are dressed in traditional attire, and some in the dress of the day (pants, shirts, shoes, etc.). They are celebrating Corpus Christi Day, a Catholic holiday. As a photographer, I can appreciate how people interpret photographers and my interpretation of this one was not good. The organizers have chosen to show my people at a point in time that would indicate they have already been "adjusted" to the religion and ways of the "whiteman." Is this how our culture and traditions will be represented abroad? Like we have always participated in Christian rituals by choice? I am Catholic myself, by choice, but probably only because any other religion(?) that the Malecite people practiced was eradicated by the same kind of men (priests) in that photograph. I wonder, how does a Native person, that still practices the original ways of his/her people, feel when they see the various symbols that they used through the centuries in ceremonies and totems, hanging on some wall, for no more reason than to please the eye of the beholder, or worse yet, to represent their culture in some foreign place as if our whole story could be told in one work.

The organizers must have shared a common vanity to put this collection together as being symbolic of what Native people are and how concerned Canadian society is that we maintain an identity; which they can generate by showing *their* choice of Native workmanship from the past; all this without a look at today's contemporary art by Native people existing in the "new world of the dollar bill."

I am sure that the organizers only meant well, but next time some deep thought on what Native art really is, what it means to it's creators and what it represents for Native people in North America, would help.

Patrick M. Polchies
Bil-lik Nation (Malecite)
Fredericton, N.B.

LETTERS CONTINUE ON PAGE 6

Smarty Boys

◆◆

Dear editors:
Selfrighteous Sorfleet sounds like he co-opted Folland's style which he however rightly decries. This discursive contamination is mediated by the institution common to the background of both critics: OCA.* While jumping from deciphering Folland's essay to deploring Lypchuk's review through discussing briefly *Homogenius* itself, Sorfleet calls for "a history of local gay [sic] art." But he misses the opportunity to compare this show with *Site Specific* or *Showing Our Face*, thus constructing lesbian invisibility.
Shame on *FUSE* for printing a piece that presents such disparity between its rhetoric and its practice. Shame on Sorfleet for lack of self-reflexity. His cut-up technique of quotation sandwiches an "education" excerpt between to extracts from the "culture" section. In the Chicago Gay Lib Manifesto, education belongs in the section on social institutions, culture has its own section. The didactic and entertainment functions of culture are connected but not conflated. Dialectical relations exist between agents and institutions. How else do things change?
Measuring the extent of social change requires some sensitivity to the specificity of the institutions involved: an artist-run gallery is not a state funded museum is not an educational institution is not a shopping mall. Make the enemy visible too for dish disguised as transformative discourse is akin to camp but without self-awareness it's kitsch.

Francois Lachance
(homo rhetoricus)

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Tom Folland is a graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

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RE: "HOMOMYOPIA" (*FUSE* XIII NO. 1&2)
In Andrew Sorfleet's review of my essay "Stigma—Gay Politics, Gay Aesthetics?" and the exhibition *Homogenius* (Mercer Union, June 22 - July 22, 1989), he states that the former was "commissioned by the Collective to complement the exhibition as a history of local gay art practice." He then devotes an inordinate amount of space to criticizing it because it was not what it was supposed to be. In fact, Sorfleet hurls at both my essay and the exhibition innumerable "supposed to be's" and "was not's," all of which leave me wondering what exactly he wants from the exhibition. He declares that the artwork requires too much art history for him then goes on to say my essay was not art historical enough; he complains there were no lesbian or straight women in the exhibition but continually discussed the need for a gay male art history; he argues that my essay is not about culture, communities, for, or of gay art, while denouncing it for being about political and sexual theory—everything to do with culture, communities and gay art! My essay, however, was neither intended nor commissioned to be a history of gay art in Toronto. I disagree that as gay men we need a gay art history. I also disagree with Sorfleet's idea of a gay aesthetic cultivated out of political struggle. Why reduce political struggles to aesthetics? Especially given what such a reduction ensures for any politicized cultural practice; it ends in the Museum and history books reduced to stylistic innovation, severed from any resemblance to politics. As for a traditional art history for gay artists, I, for one, cannot see its use apart from legitimating artists' careers. Why repeat conventional art historical narratives for goy artists? Is this not the lesson that feminism has taught us? It is virtually impossible to write a history of gay men making art in Toronto outside of the essentialist, liberal and idealist concepts of art history, especially since the content would largely be the most conventional of art forms. Why not write instead about the political struggles? But Sorfleet wants something different. He goes as far as to invent gay art historians who claim for all of this a "natural gay aesthetic." What we need is a social history of cultural and political events, one aware of the very problems of historicizing that Sorfleet unproblematically reproduces. Which is, by the way, what I attempted to do with my "tangled web of sexual, political and literary theory."
Some of the other "supposed to be's" and "was not's": Sorfleet is critical of the exhibition for not including lesbian artists. While there are definitely valid criticisms that could be made Sorfleet does not make them. He makes instead a bid for liberal egalitarianism; if women and men were both in the exhibition all differences would be erased. He does not recognize the theoretical and social colonization of both feminist and lesbian issues by men. Gay men and lesbians do connect on a shared ground of oppression but the way in which that oppression is structured is extremely different for gay men and lesbians. Lesbians are not oppressed by "their lack of representation (dominant or otherwise)" as Sorfleet claims but, in part, by that visibility. The problem centres upon self-representations in and around "dominant" representations—I am thinking here about *Penthouse* and *Playboy* which pirate images of lesbian desire for straight men's pleasure. The recent *Bed of Roses* exhibition at A Space attempted to deal with the difficulties of representations of women's desire by women. Rather than incorporate the "added complexities of the construction of lesbian desire" as Sorfleet felt I should, I drew parallels between the experiences of gay men and straight and lesbian women. I also emphatically stated in a radio interview on CKLN that *Homogenius*'s predecessor *Sight-Specific*, an exhibition of lesbian artists at A Space in 1987. I certainly was not going to speak for them as Sorfleet does when he suggests that I privilege a "dominant mode of sexuality" by giving the phallus too much symbolic importance. Unfortunately it is not me that gives the phallus its importance. If, as Sorfleet claims (all the while confusing the penis with the phallus), it could simply be "deflated to the position of a sexual organ," we could all pack up our bags and go home. The idea that sex could be an emancipatory practice (severed from all relations of power) is as much a redemptive fantasy as a "Toronto gay art history" (severed from all relations of power); both cannot exist outside of the workings and relations of power and both must somehow be negotiated within those relations.

Sincerely,
Tom Folland

A word from your sponsor

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Re "Strategic Manoevres" (*FUSE* XII No. 6):
Kellhammer's piece was a useful analysis of the powerful interrelationship of corporate behaviour, artistic sponsorship and ethics. The number of charities, advocacy groups, and arts institutions that are applying "ethical screens" to corporate donors in Canada is growing rapidly.
You might suggest that he follow the lead of major cultural institutions in Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Vancouver: there is a one-of-a-kind data source from which he could have benefitted. A query through EthicScan Canada's 1500 companies DataBase will provide a lot more information—on environmental, occupational health, hiring and promotions, sales to the nuclear industry and military, and dozens of other topics—than single articles in newspapers.

David Nitkin, Toronto

Ian Wallace (Nion) and Ida Carnevali (Hostess) in Jeremy Podeswas's *Nion in the Kabaret de la Vita.*

We Have Lift Off

by Naomi Riches

TORONTO FILMMAKERS CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF INDEPENDENT FILM

TORONTO—*Lift Off*, a ten-year retrospective of films by the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT) at the Euclid Theatre (October 12/13, 19/20) presents the opportunity to review the history of a co-op artist-run centre. Understandably, the programming emphasized LIFT's successes, measured in terms of national and international exposure. Unfortunately, focusing on LIFT members such as Atom Egoyan and Patricia Rozema obscured vital political questions the organization has perhaps only begun to confront.

Given the exorbitant cost of making and distributing films, some kind of solidarity among independents is necessary. LIFT has been performing valuable work to this end for a decade. In the March '89 edition of the bi-monthly LIFT newsletter, Janis Lundman, a founding member, says that LIFT has evolved into "a place to exchange ideas with other independent filmmakers, to view films, to increase skills through workshops and seminars and to get financial and equipment assistance for films." LIFT's characterization of its own history as the growth of the independent film movement in Canada—"the cinema of resistance" as Francoyse Picard of the Canada Council calls it—is as telling for what it omits as for what it reveals.

During the 70s, the support for independent filmmakers provided by the Toronto Filmmakers Co-op dried up. A meeting (called by filmmaker Bruce Elder) of about 100 filmmakers in 1979 at the Showcase Theatre provided the impetus for a new association. LIFT's first few years saw a rapid turnover of volunteers. Administrative duties, fundraising amidst government cutbacks and the slow process of collective decision-making took their toll on many people.

Due to the enthusiasm and perseverance of a few, motivated by the desire to make their own films, LIFT survived on the unpaid labour of its members until 1987, when the organization secured government job creation funding. At present LIFT employs two full-time coordinators and uses temporary grants to employ publicists, newsletter editors, membership coordinators and other help. In the last two years, membership has grown from 50 to 430, attesting to the importance of a dependable, efficient administrative staff to artist-run organizations. Still, according to coordinator Robin Eecloo, "It's as much a battle for survival today as it was five years ago."

Dominated by Hollywood, the economic climate for film in Canada has never been conducive to the growth of independent filmmaking, particularly for works that challenge conventional narrative. The technical and financial accessibility of video has also been seen as a threat by some documentary and experimental filmmakers. But the struggle to defend one's medium leaves little room to confront questions of race, gender and class that must enter the debate within this obviously privileged art form.

While some films made by LIFT members take up these concerns, LIFT itself seems reluctant to examine its own organization in overtly political terms. At one time it might have been enough to maintain a position of unequivocal support for artistic expression in the face of censorship and economic stringency. But notwithstanding the courage and respect for others that it takes to maintain a co-op with such ideals, the endeavor is meaningless without an understanding of the social context that these "talented filmmakers" work in.

It is time for the Canadian artistic community to recognize its privilege. Graduates of film schools, universities and art colleges do not represent a cross section of Toronto. Poverty as a chosen lifestyle and institutionalized poverty are very different experiences. The self-glorifying ramblings of "heroes" and "martyrs" weaned on "rugged individualism" and dreams of transforming hash-induced visions into cinematic masterpieces do nothing to change the structural conditions that exclude countless people from the creative, educational and political potential of film.

Community outreach programmes are being planned at LIFT. Funds might become available to open the facilities to people who would not encounter the organization in the normal course of their lives. The agenda is new and tentative, but the desire exists to lift independent film out of the hands of heroes and connoisseurs—a worthy project for the next decade. ■

Hit me with your Rhythm Shtick

FROM THE BEAT FACTORY DIRECT TO YOU !

by Errol Nazareth

TORONTO—With a baseball hat sitting atop a slight five foot four inch frame, an Africa pennant hanging around his neck and gold rings adorning his fingers, he cuts the figure of the archetypical suburban b-boy.

But if there's one thing that sets Ivan Berry apart from the average rap fan, it lies in what he has done with his passion for the most vital musical form on the block.

Two years after forming Beat Factory, an independent production/management company comprised of five producers, 25-year-old Berry has signed four local rap artists to First Priority, an independent New York label distributed by Atlantic Records, and another to the U.K.'s G Street Records. (Michie Mee & LA Luv, Ken E. Krush and Skad, Dream Warriors and Young Uprising signed with First Priority; Rumble and Strong signed with G Street.) A fine accomplishment considering there are only 10 artists on the Factory roster, none of whom are over 21 years old.

"Within the next year, we'll have six 12-inch records, two albums and two videos on the market," the young entrepreneur gushes. "We also hope to start a record label and come out with some dope hits."

Berry, who modestly admits that he "never expected to get this far with the project," says Beat Factory's mandate was "to get 10 groups off the street and see how far we could go with them.

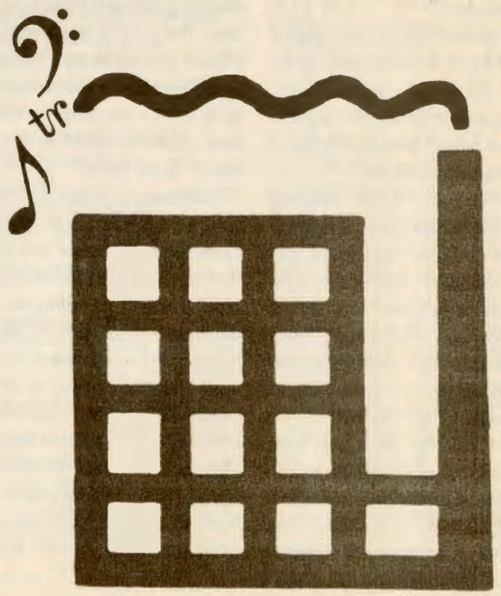
"We wanted to make hip hop a viable musical force in Canada and put the professionalism we had as a funk group into the artists and their work," Berry says.

Before joining forces with Lennox Grant, Howard Brown and Louie Robinson to establish Beat Factory, Berry played in Traffic Jam with Rupert Gayle and Richard Rodwell. Berry describes Traffic Jam as "a funk group that performed for eight years, made enough money to build a studio but never got a record deal.

"We formed at Pickering High and played at talent shows next to heavy metal bands," he says with a laugh. "People would freak when we came on."

The band called it quits in 1986 and the musicians turned to producing aspiring rappers who they knew or met through Toronto's burgeoning rap scene.

"We'd bring them into the studio, drop a beat, get them to drop some lyrics and if it was really happening, we'd do four songs and send them to con-



tacts I had developed in the States and England and shop for a deal," Berry explains.

Adhering to the true spirit that characterizes independent production, Beat Factory's six-man team is involved in every step—from hustling acts to inking deals.

"We get four songs recorded professionally, to the point that it [the demo] is ready to be pressed, then we get individual bios made, photographs of the groups shot, and send about 25 tapes of any one artist to contacts in the States and England," Berry says.

"We then make follow-up phone calls and if we get a good response we meet with the label, if we don't [get a response] we get the act to cut four new songs and to perform around the city. That way, we can get the media to write about them and I can let the label know that there's a buzz around a certain act in Toronto."

Aside from the current crest of popularity that rap is riding, Berry feels the unique Canadian style the rappers possess has helped Beat Factory land deals in the States.

"Our accents are different and our raps are a lot deeper," he states, adding that the subject matter ranges from politics to humour. The Dream Warriors whose raps Berry describes as "very Dungeons and Dragons" are a case in point. They provide a welcome detour from the empty braggadocio and sexism that infests much hip hop, and are able to switch with ease from rapping to reggae deejaying—a fierce blend that wreaks havoc on dancefloors.

The cold shoulder that Canadian record companies have given local rap is a sore point with Berry. "I don't even know if they realize our accomplishments but I want them to realize that there's just as much talent here as there is anywhere else in the world, and they should open their ears and eyes and sign these bands," he says. "We're as good as any other rap groups yet they will spend the money to release American rap acts domestically but will not sign a Canadian act."

To hear Berry announce, "I've given up on them to the point that I don't shop my tapes in Canada" speaks volumes about the multinational record companies who choose to ignore styles that exist outside the bland terrain of the pop charts.

"Aside from WEA Canada (which will distribute Beat Factory artists here) who have been the only label open-minded enough to let Michie Mee happen in Canada, I don't think any of the other labels even listened to what I've sent them!" Berry says.

With plans to form a record label in the next year with Toronto rap promoter and dj Ron Nelson, who has built a state-of-the-art recording studio in the basement of his home, Beat Factory seems destined—like the several organizations that inhabit Canada's indieland—to showcase a truly alternative culture that will flourish despite the incompetence of the play-safe major record labels. ■

Video Artifact

A video journal that will serve artists and academics working in highly visual areas of research

by Mary Anne Moser

CALGARY—Picture this. Art critics could *show* the subject of criticism, rather than describe it. Anthropologists and sociologists could document their research using video instead of text. Paragraphs of portraiture would be redundant.

Within the alternative arts community, the need for time-based arts criticism for the time-based arts has been apparent. Within the academic community, video journals such as *Visual Anthropology* already exist. Now two Canadian artist/academics propose to cross these cultures. The result? *Artifact: A Video Journal of Expressive Culture*.

Brian Rusted and David Tomas have undertaken the prototype for a video journal that responds to the suggestion that highly visual subjects such as art criticism and popular culture should be represented on tape.

"Why translate film into text?" Rusted asks rhetorically. "We tend to see knowledge as something that's written. We should be demonstrating that knowledge functions in a variety of modes." The representation of knowledge plays an important role in the plans for the video journal, as both Rusted and Tomas have ties to academia.

Rusted, a communications professor at the University of Calgary, and Tomas, an anthropology post-doctoral fellow at McGill University, met several years ago at the Summer Institute School of Criticism and Theory in Chicago. Their association flowed from their common bonds: both Canadian artists, both academics trained as anthropologists and both ethnographers interested in criticism and critical theory. A couple years later, the idea for a video journal emerged naturally as a means for applying their areas of expertise, as well as filling an expanding void.

Though the project is still in its infancy, the tentative nature of *Artifact* is beginning to develop. It is hoped that its appeal will cross traditional boundaries between academia and the art community, and possibly to the general public as well.

The primary market for the hour or so long tape is thought to be the academic community. Already there are visual anthropology journals and networks for the study of such highly visual areas of research. Rusted said this academic market is a group that is working in highly visual areas that would be better represented on tape (such as time-based art critics) or that uses video or film in research (such as anthropologists). This group would likely comprise a substantial portion of the journal's subscribers and contributors.

Rusted and Tomas intend to archive all recorded material, as well as the edited product, in order to add an element of validity to the method of research. One of the problems inherent in the ethnographical approach, Rusted explains, is that there is no way of validating the quality.

While the unconventionality of publishing in a video format may appeal to some academics, it may not be widely embraced. Academics who are publishing in an effort to earn notches towards tenure may simply not be interested, Rusted admitted. Will a 50-year-old Ph.D. publish alongside a 24-year-old art college graduate? Reputation can be important to both artists and academics. Artists will have to overcome scorn of the structure of academia; academics will have to overcome pressure from their peers to conform to the traditional standards of the discipline. The video journal may emerge with an image like *Border/lines*—that of an unconventional publication, run by academics but with a much wider appeal than a conventional academic publication.

The second major group that the video journal is intended to appeal to is the arts community. Using video to break down the traditional boundaries of art criticism, the ethnographic approach is meant to take into account the social context in which standards, tastes and values get legitimated. Rusted and Tomas aim to look at art criticism in different regions, categories and mediums.

The third, and most questionable market is the general public. "If the stuff is interesting enough . . . it could be put in a corner rental store," Rusted forecast optimistically. Again, the idea is that boundaries are to be broken, that the subject matter should cross over between folk, pop and traditional culture. As a result, it should appeal to more than some kind of elite.

The prototype programme awaits final editing. With the tapes currently on Rusted's living room floor in Calgary, and Tomas busy in Montreal, the two are patiently working out arrangements from across the country to make this project work. Last summer, on travels from Calgary to Newfoundland, they collected most of the material that will go into the first tape, which is intended to get the ball rolling with both contributors and subscribers.

The first issue, tentatively composed of two or three video essays, is based on approximately 25 interviews conducted across the country. The essays include one on Native artists in Alberta, another on curators, based on interviews with curators from the National Gallery, and of the show *The Spirit Sings*, and a third on Newfoundland architecture, based on interviews with architects who deal with the convergence of vernacular and postmodern styles.

While these essays, and perhaps an editorial explaining the nature of the journal, are intended for the pilot tape, the exact nature of the journal that will develop remains unknown. There are no editorial policies or guidelines for contributions at this point, with the exception that quality and depth are important. "It's not journalistic," Rusted explained. The authors should have much more than a superficial understanding of the subject.

continued next page ➢

"The editorial policy will rise to an appropriate level, depending on the audience. It will be tuned to the audience," Rusted said. To date, artists, academics and other interested people have been consulted to get a good sense of the market.

Once the prototype tapes are complete, the distribution mechanism will be established. With plans to advertise in other publications, and to build a text component for such things as translations and bibliographies, the video journal will enter the realm of publication. The estimated cost per issue, in the range of $20, will ultimately depend upon the structure of production. If artists are sustained by grant money to complete a project, then the journal costs will be lower. However, at this point, final financial arrangements have not been determined.

While this project is aimed at academia as well as the art community, it has been the alternative art community that has made it possible. According to Rusted, the video journal would not have developed this far were it not for the media networks across the country that have provided time, space and support for the project. For information about *Artifact* contact Brian Rusted c/o the Faculty of General Studies, Social Sciences 556, 2500 University Drive N. W. Calgary, Alberta T2N 0R9, or David Tomas c/o the Faculty of Arts, Visual Arts Department, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5. ■

PEN, the acronym for poets, playwrights, editors, essayists and novelists, held their 54th International World Congress last fall in Toronto and Montreal. The gathering—dubbed as "the greatest literary party of the decade"—was notable both for its megaproject proportions and the acrimonious debate it sparked.

In a recent press release, The Canadian Centre of PEN notes that it is "not only committed to the principle of free speech and expression" but that it also insists that all members "pledge themselves to do their utmost to dispel race, class and national hatreds, and to champion the ideal of humanity living in peace . . ."

However, the confrontation outside Roy Thomson Hall between incoming president June Callwood and demonstrators, among them members of the newly formed group, Vision 21, made public what was already clear to many; that PEN's professed ideals are at odds with its practice.

While there has been extensive coverage of the literary personalities in attendance, there has been little critical examination of PEN's mandate and the debates that arose during the Congress. In publishing this special section on PEN we hope the discussion continues around these issues.

In "Trouble in Mondo Condo," Joyce Nelson examines the "paradoxes and contradictions" of the Congress and the broader issues facing PEN as a "progressive" organization.

Marlene Nourbese Philip, explains in "Expletive Deleted," what really happened outside Roy Thomson Hall and how the media reported the incident. "Writers of Colour Locked Out By PEN's Invisible Ink," the pamphlet which Vision 21 distributed to delegates, accompanies the article.

Another notable feature of this year's event, as poet Ayanna Black points out in her piece "Seconds Thoughts," was the inclusion of a programme devoted to emerging writers—"The Next Generation." FUSE is also reprinting the The Next Generation's statement which was presented to PEN organizers and delegates in Montreal.

PEN

Trouble in Mondo Condo

Deciphering PEN's Unconscious Agendas

by Joyce Nelson

"Most of us operate outside the mainstream of European and first-world cultures, and we rejoice in and respect our differences as we emerge from the shadows of exploitation, oppression, discrimination and sexism. We know there are no valid models to imitate, least of all in the mainstream of Western tradition and the systems it has generated . . ."

From a statement to PEN by THE NEXT GENERATION participants

At the 54th International PEN World Congress (September 23-October 1, 1989), the paradoxes and contradictions were swarming thick as "no-see-ums," making any analysis of what went down from September 23-26 (the Toronto portion of the event) a daunting challenge in both dialectics and tact. This assignment has "proceed with caution" signs bristling everywhere in its path, so I will state immediately that this Congress was successful for a whole host of reasons, but especially because it highlighted, in unavoidable detail, contradictions that are absolutely central for our society to examine.

Betty Friedan noted that "Consciousness is the first stage of every revolution." I would add that consciousness is necessary at every stage of change, and the Toronto segment of this Congress revealed precisely those areas where consciousness is necessary. Any event that can accomplish this in four short days deserves praise. Thus, the trouble in Mondo Condo was nothing less than an opportunity for growth in consciousness for everyone: organizers, participants, demonstrators and public alike.

One obvious paradox (though by no means the first in sequence) was the mind-boggling incident outside Roy Thomson Hall following the PEN "gala," in which PEN organizer and incoming president June Callwood, outraged by demonstrators carrying signs which read "Canadian Writers of Colour Locked Out by PEN's Invisible Ink," told them individually and collectively to "fuck off." Callwood, introduced on at least one public occasion as "the Mother Teresa of Canada," thereby challenged her public to balance their perception of her with a less saintly dimension.

When this news story appeared in *The Globe & Mail* on the morning of Tuesday, September 26, it prompted Congress organizer Graeme Gibson, President of the Canadian Centre (English-speaking) of International PEN, to issue an immediate press statement which opened with these words:

"As one of the organizers of the 54th World Congress of International PEN, *I regret the attention paid to a small group of protesters*. I am also concerned that this matter will obscure the serious issues we have addressed in our four days of meetings in Toronto, and will continue to address for the rest of the week in Montreal . . . " (my emphasis).

Thus, by day four of this Congress (held for the first time in Canada), we had a spokesperson for an international organization which works doggedly around the world for freedom of the press and freedom to dissent, announcing his "regret" about the press coverage given to this protest. As I say, the contradictions were swarming thick as "no-see-ums." Only in Canada, eh?

Inflated Ambitions

There have been six other PEN World Congresses since the World Congress held in the United States in 1986. At that Congress, Norman Mailer insulted women writers, and Margaret Atwood took up the challenge, promising that Canada's 1989 Congress would be "bilingual and bisexual." The most recent Congress was held in Holland in May of 1989.

"Was that a huge affair like this one?" I asked Sarah Thring, who had attended the 53rd International PEN World Congress in Maastricht, Holland. "It was a smaller programme," she answered, "two days of panels and evening readings." Besides PEN delegates, there were "a few other guests of honour and some Dutch writers. The literary sessions were only open to Congress delegates, while the two evenings of readings were open to the public." By contrast, Canada's Congress was, she explained, "the most ambitious programme that has ever taken place in the history of PEN," with 600 delegates and invited

guests, and "the largest public participation ever scheduled."

It seems, then, that it's only in Canada that a PEN World Congress has ever taken on such megaproject proportions. That decision itself raises questions about unconscious agendas, complicated by all the other signifiers at work in this event. Besides imitating Toronto's hideous penchant for festival inflation—this one, squeezed in between the Festival of Festivals and the Wang International Festival of Authors—the Congress reflected an upper middle-class bias. This was reflected in the choice of venue (Harbourfront, that vile corridor of affluence and scandal that triggers the gag reflex in any decent member of what's left of the Left), in the gala at Roy Thomson Hall (the building itself is a signifier of Canadian upper middle-class ostentation), in the ticket price per event ($7 for anything in the Brigantine Room or the Premiere Dance Theatre), in the selection of mainly media celebrities as panel moderators and in the whole aura surrounding the event, which seemed to lack only diamonds on the soles of its shoes.

Perhaps all this was summarized by a quote in Marc Glassman's piece for *Metropolis* (September 21) in which a member of the organizing committee predicted confidently that this Congress was going to be "the greatest literary party of the decade."

Party Politics

The first problem in organizing any party is the guest list, a decision-making process that is an equal opportunity offender in any context. For Canadian PEN, which began to plan this event two-and-a-half years ago, one thing must have been immediately clear: the guests of honour (117 in total, as it turned out) would not include Norman Mailer. Otherwise, the selection process seems to have proceeded quite smoothly until January of 1989, when Toronto PEN members David McIntosh, Patricia Aldana and Ronald Wright recognized that there was a certain hole in the guest list, an absence that, like any deepening void in the universe, threatened to suck the glitz right off this party in the making.

As McIntosh tells it, "We recognized that at least 70 per cent of the invited guests were established, senior writers"—writers who, in his words, "had already lived through their battles for freedom of expression." Moreover, that guest list conveyed "the impression that issues of freedom of expression happen elsewhere, outside of Canada." But according to McIntosh, by January of 1989 "there was no money on hand" at PEN to use in filling this significant gap in the programme.

Nevertheless, McIntosh went ahead in the spring and began the daunting task of selecting writers and finding sources of alternative funding in order to invite seventeen primarily minority and Native writers in their 20s and 30s from 12 countries including Canada. To finance this "experimental programme" called The Next Generation (consisting of two literary panels and three free public readings at the Water's Edge Café), McIntosh tried to find "sources of funding within the countries where these writers live": Nigeria, Guatemala, Mexico, Jamaica, Kenya, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, England and the USA. He also generated some private donations from people in Canada "specifically for this project."

Meanwhile, the (shall we say) non-experimental part of the Canadian PEN organizing committee was working with a budget of $1.2 million—provided by every level of government in Canada, and by corporate sponsors such as Labatt's, Southam, *Saturday Night*, Hollinger and McClelland & Stewart.

With a split in the seam of the pants of this event already underway last spring, it's not surprising that there was trouble in Mondo Condo, and that the trouble tended to expose the unconscious white, liberal, middle-class mainstream agenda in the party planning. But even if the demonstration outside Roy Thomson Hall had never happened (and been reported), that agenda was stamped all over this Congress and was recognizable to many of its participants.

Arguably, Canadian PEN organizers fell into the trap of what cultural historian Daniel J. Boorstin has called "the pseudo-event," hoping to make a media splash with their "greatest literary party of the decade." Not recognizing that this very goal would expose the limitations of their progressive intention, they opted for all the signifiers of spectacle thereby revealing their own unconscious biases. The blame, however, must be laid primarily at the feet of bourgeois feminism, which, over the past 20 years, has rarely been able to think beyond the issue of sex and gender to countenance issues of race and class in its political understanding. Even more problematic, white middle-class feminism has typically assumed that climbing up the Establishment ladder to success is not only everyone's goal, but the sign of revolutionary progress. As a friend of mine put it, "Bourgeois feminism encourages us to want a bigger slice of a rotten pie."

Over at the Water's Edge Café, Black Canadian poet Dionne Brand put it more succinctly. As a speaker on The Next Generation panel called "Freedom of Expression and Access to Audiences," Brand stated: "If the mainstream media ever praises my work, I'll have to rethink what I'm doing." The best part of this 54th International PEN World Congress was that the 17 participants in The Next Generation (ghettoized in every way at this Congress) expressed complete disinterest in joining the mainstream, acute awareness of the co-opting potential in media systems, vital commitment to their work as a political force for change, and obvious solidarity with one another. They also gave their audiences riveting and real examples of literary work forged in the crucible of political struggle here and now. As usual, most of the vital energy was happening at the edge, while over at dead centre in the main event of the Congress, there seemed to be a concern that this Party proceed without any glitches.

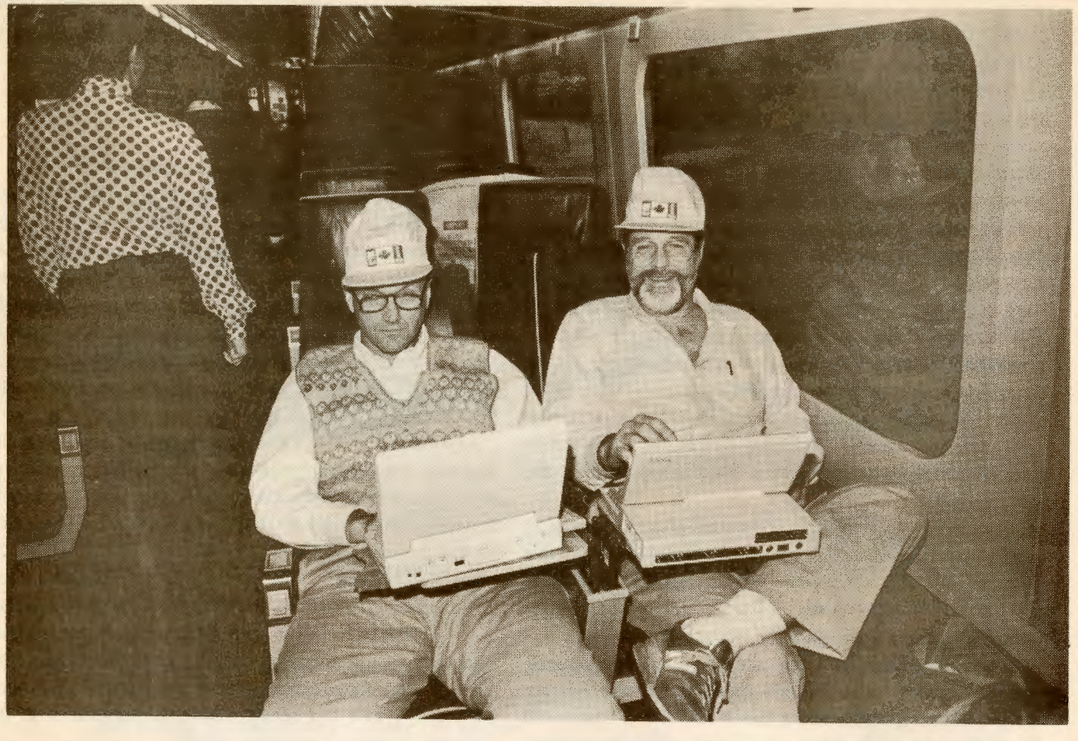


Photo by Suzanne Girard.

John Riley and Digby Diehl (PEN USA West Centre)
take a lap top break on the train to Montreal for the second leg of the conference.

Are we having fun yet?

This was especially noticeable in terms of the impression detected by David McIntosh in the original guest list, that "issues of freedom of expression happen elsewhere, outside of Canada." In Literary Session 1, "The Writer: Freedom and Power" moderated by Barbara Frum, panel member Margaret Atwood used the occasion to say that she always feels "like a jerk on these panels" because, by comparison to what happens to writers in other countries, "we have it easier here." Instead of informing her audience about the unique forms that silencing and censorship take in Canada—forms that are politically connected to the harsher measures taken in other countries and which include racism in the publishing industry, lack of outlets through media colonization, tax harassment, libel suits, RCMP surveillance and pressure, self-censorship under structures of corporate ownership and at times, imprisonment of writers—Atwood spoke of Canada's "post-colonial culture" through which "we now have an audience for literature in this country." Acknowledging that the next step in Canada is access for minority and Native writers, Atwood nonetheless conveyed the impression that freedom of expression is really not an issue in Canada.

That impression was subtly reinforced in other panels. For example, in Literary Session 3, "Creating Mythology" moderated by Michael Ignatieff, Canadian panel member Timothy Findley told his audience that "Writers in this country have taken on a role as spokespersons for Her Majesty's loyal opposition. Our voices are heard." But it was even more apparent in the choices made among those senior, established writers not selected from Canada to be guests of honour.

For instance, in Literary Session 8, "Private Conscience and State Security," moderated by Adrienne Clarkson, the panel members were Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Duo Duo (China), Harold Pinter (England), Miriam Tlali (South Africa) and Tatyana Tolstaya (USSR). While these panelists provided fascinating answers to the question posed—"Does the perceived national security of the state take precedence over

writers' sense of their responsibilities?"—the decision to not include a Canadian on this panel implied that the question is not relevant here. I, for one, immediately thought of Ian Adams and his novel *S*—a vivid example of how that question worked itself out in Canada's own relatively recent past. Similarly, any of the many writers imprisoned during the War Measures Act in Quebec would have challenged the airbrushed picture of Canada being conveyed to the public at this Congress.

In retrospect, that picture seems even more curious because, behind closed doors in the Assembly of Delegates, some Canadian issues of freedom of expression were being raised. In the host of resolutions passed by the PEN Assembly, there were two dealing specifically with recent events in Canada. One resolution condemned the laying of a criminal charge against Doug Small, Ottawa bureau chief for Global-TV News, in the events surrounding the Wilson budget leak. The other resolution addressed the case of Elaine Dewar, the investigative journalist whose work has been deemed unacceptable to the Reichmanns.

Why, then, was there such a concerted effort to convey an impression of Canada (at least during the public portions of this event) as not just glitzy but a model of freedom of expression for all to see? I suspect the answer has to do with middle-class liberal notions of "freedom" and "democracy," notions that were being signalled (and subtly challenged) in other moments during the main event. As Susan G. Cole recognized in her piece for *Now* (September 28), during Literary Session 4, "Power and Gender" moderated by Mary Lou Finlay, a moment occurred just after Cuban writer Nancy Morejon had explained the process by which her poems had come to be published in her country. In Cole's words, "Finlay pushed in and asked, 'Do you criticize the revolution?' Morejon replied, 'Oh no.' Then, seeing Finlay's knowing nod—a gesture of dismissal of communist-style censorship—Morejon looked her in the eye and said, 'That would be betraying myself.'"

A similar moment occurred during Literary Session 8 when moderator Adrienne Clarkson asked panel member Duo Duo (in exile from China) to "tell us what our freedom looks like to you." Reminding her that "I've been away (from China) only 100 days," Duo Duo then graciously reassured Clarkson that "freedom here is realized."

Pondering what seemed to be a certain self-congratulatory agenda going down in the main event, I also noticed that some guests of honour were patiently, subtly, and very politely making delicate little pricks at the (unconscious) middle-class liberal assumptions underlying the Congress. Nigerian writers Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka were particularly skilled at this, with Achebe reminding his audience (and Clarkson) that "You have to understand the complexity of the world. The world is not the free and the unfree. There is the great excluded, and the excluded are beginning to disrupt things." Similarly, Soyinka noted pointedly that "Third World intellectuals, unlike their counterparts in the First World, tend to examine more critically their own mythologies than do those in the First."

Carrying on

This difference found expression during Literary Session 8 in a comment that might have seemed a non sequitur had I not attended Literary Session 1 the day before. During the opening literary panel Atwood had made a literary allusion to the Hans Andersen tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes" when she stated, "All over the world it has been the writer's function to say 'The emperor has no clothes'." The following day Chinua Achebe picked up the allusion and expanded it: "The emperor masquerades in many clothes," he said. "One problem in the West is that it's less easy to see the emperor."

As soon as he said it, I knew that he knew the ending of that Andersen tale (which Atwood may have forgotten). The emperor, exposed and embarrassed in all his naked vainglory by the words of the child, becomes rigid and defensive: commanding that the parade of his now naked power go on, and that his lords-in-attendance continue to carry the non-existent train of his non-existent royal robe. So much for the power of the writer in this choice of metaphor. But when one looks at the Hans Andersen tale as a message about the conscious/unconscious dialectic (the inflated ego momentarily punctured by spontaneous reality), then this simple tale, twice alluded to in this Congress, provides a necessary insight.

Arguably, at this point in history, every progressive person on this planet is being asked to recognize personal and societal contradictions (best expressed in that saying, "You can talk the talk but can you walk the walk?"). There is no shame in this process, but there is a sting; at which point, as the tale warns, the impulse is to become rigid and defensive, refusing consciousness, refusing change, refusing to let go of an inflated power-agenda.

The most difficult challenge is to live through the sting. To stand naked in one's own human unconscious fuck-ups, recognizing that in this last gasp of the 20th century it is impossible to be politically correct at every level, but that an increase in consciousness is always the desired goal. Since consciousness is the very terrain of the writer, it is not surprising that, even in the midst of this PEN megaproject, consciousness-raising was the real agenda behind everything that happened during this 54th International PEN World Congress. ■

PEN REPRINTED TEXT OF THE VISION 21 LEAFLET CHALLENGING PEN CANADA ➤

WRITERS OF COLOUR LOCKED OUT BY PEN'S
INVISIBLE INK
CANADA

Expletive Deleted

by Marlene Nourbese Philip

". . . it is true that the nature of society is to create, among its citizens, an illusion of safety; but it is also absolutely true that the safety is always necessarily an illusion.
Artists are here to disturb the peace." **James Baldwin**

DISTURBING THE PEACE. That was what a small group of writers, artists and supporters were doing outside Roy Thompson Hall on the evening of September 24, 1989. We were "disturbing the peace" by carrying signs and leafletting the guests as they attended the gala of the 54th PEN Congress. To describe us as an odd bunch would not be amiss. We comprised an Anglo-Canadian student from a prestigious Toronto high school doing a project on racism and writing; a South African refugee; an Afro-Canadian employee of the Women's Press; a Chinese Canadian playwright; an Anglo-Canadian adult educator; an Asian Canadian writer; a couple of volunteers from the rape crisis centre; an African Canadian writer and critic; an Irish Canadian writer and myself.

Some of us were members of a fledgling group, Vision 21—Canadian Culture in the 21st Century, formed a couple of months earlier around issues of cultural representation, racism and the arts. There were also members of Multicultural Women Writers of Canada, a group formed in May 1989 in response to the failure of the Writers Union to deal with racism and sexism.

The more immediate context to our presence outside Roy Thomson Hall on the evening of September 24, 1989 reaches back some 18 months to the split of the Women's Press over the issue of racism in writing and publishing. The debate generated by these events swirled in the media as well as the writing community for many months only to surface once again

1. Canada is a multiracial, multiethnic society. Multiculturalism is the official policy of the governments of Canada, Ontario and Metropolitan Toronto.

2. At its lowest common denominator multiculturalism means the equal access of all ethnic, cultural and racial groups to the resources that the Canadian society has to offer.

3. Contrary to the policy of multiculturalism there is a dominant culture in Canada which is white, middle class and Anglo-Saxon. Racism, in fact, permeates all aspects of Canadian life including writing and publishing.

WRITING & PUBLISHING IN CANADA

1. African, Asian and Native Canadian writers are consistently underfunded by arts councils; publishers are reluctant to publish their works, and when published their works are often ignored by reviewers. CONT.➤

2. Some Native Canadian writers have also expressed concern about the use of their myths, legends and tales by white writers, while their own work remains unpublished.

3. The Writers Union of Canada is an organization which purports to represent most of the writers in Canada today. Its role is to represent writers and advocate on their behalf. Membership of the Writers Union is almost entirely white.

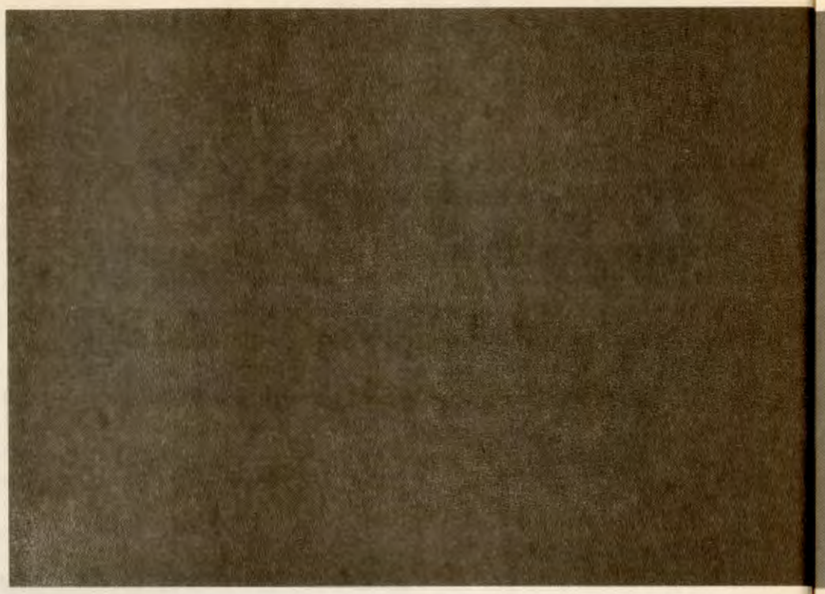
4. In May 1989, at the Annual General Meeting of the Writers Union, the union refused to look at the issue of racism in Canadian writing and publishing.

5. In September 1988 the Writers Union censored the resignation statement of a female member relating to the presence of sexism within the union membership by disallowing publication of this statement in the union newsletter.

6. A significant number of the Canadian organizers of PEN Canada are also members of the Writers Union.

THE 54TH PEN CONGRESS

1. Fifty-one Canadians are



at the annual general meeting of the Writers Union in May 1989. At this meeting, certain members of the union brought a motion to set up a task force to look into racism in writing and publishing; the motion failed to carry. These events are but the high points in a long-standing struggle on the part of many artists and writers across Canada against racism and its manifestations in the practices of cultural representation, and in the structures that manage the various disciplines of the arts. The face-off between the League of Canadian Poets and De Dub Poets some five years ago was one of the more notorious manifestations of this reality. Before that, in 1983, there was the *Fireweed* issue edited by women of colour which dealt with these issues. There was also Makeda Silvera's address at the 1983 Women and Words conference (Vancouver) which dealt with this issue. Racism in writing and publishing is by no means a new issue here in Canada.

As a poet and writer my own personal involvement and contribution to this struggle has primarily been as a critic and writer, always attempting, in the words of James Baldwin, to disturb the peace of those who have an investment in maintaining the status quo. The aim of this involvement has always been to articulate the nature of racism in the arts, to reveal the profound injustices that result from the systemic practice of racism, and to push those who try to manage and diffuse the effects of this practice to respond to the legitimate needs and demands of Black Canadian writers and artists in Canada. Based on this involvement, there was, in fact, a certain inevitability to my standing outside Roy Thomson Hall, along with fellow artists and supporters holding signs and giving out leaflets that challenged PEN Canada for locking out writers of colour.

The fundamental purpose to our leafletting campaign was to advance the state of the debate concerning racism and the arts here in Canada. Our aim was not to change PEN Canada or PEN International. We merely used the ethnic and racial composition of the Canadian contingent as a startling yet predictable example of the official face of racism in the arts in Canada. None of the individuals demonstrating outside Roy Thomson Hall

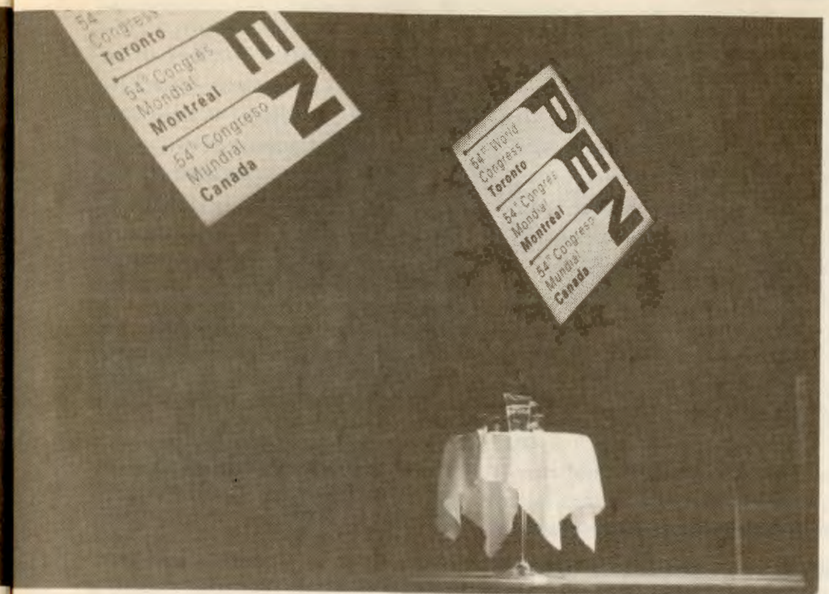


Photo by Suzanne Girard.

wanted to be invited to participate in the 54th Congress of PEN. What we did want to do, however, was to bring to the attention of all the PEN delegates, both from Canada and abroad, the fact that there is a very real problem with racism here in Canada, which in many instances serves to silence Black writers and writers of colour. We argued in our leaflet (see side bar) that such silencing of writers, while not the exact equivalent to imprisonment, was similar enough to warrant the attention of PEN and the delegates to the Congress.

Our initial response to PEN's first published schedule was a letter to *NOW* magazine (September 21) signed by myself, Kass Banning, Cameron Bailey, Winston Smith and Enid Lee, protesting the under-representation of writers of colour at the Congress. During that week there was much discussion about whether we should do anything further, and if so what the best plan was. Being short of time and short of bodies we eventually decided that leafletting was the best approach. The leaflet provided information to delegates about racism in writing and publishing in Canada.

Unaware that there was a reception (courtesy of *Saturday Night*) being held prior to the concert, we arrived at Roy Thomson Hall on the evening of September 24, only to find that many of the delegates had already entered the Hall, although we had allowed ourselves at least 45 minutes to leaflet. However, we were still able to leaflet a number of guests as they went in.

Some supported us, others quite clearly disapproved, and still others stopped to argue—challenging us to prove our allegations. The most common objection was that it was "inappropriate" for us to be there—read impolite, this is Canada, eh! That appropriateness had become one of the trappings of democracy was a revelation to me that evening. At the end of that stint of leafletting we all felt exhausted and believed that despite missing many of the delegates, we had accomplished something.

After the concert we returned to leaflet the guests we had missed and found very similar responses among the departing guests as those expressed earlier. By about 11pm our group

scheduled to take part in the 54th PEN Congress at Harbourfront, Toronto. Only seven of these participants are Asian, African or Native Canadian. There is also a marked dearth of Canadians from ethnic backgrounds which are not English.

2. The overwhelming majority of the white Canadian participants reflect what is, in fact, the dominant culture of Canada—white, middle class, and Anglo-Saxon.

3. These latter writers all appear in events for which an admission fee is charged; with the exception of one Black and one Native writer, all other Canadian writers of colour have been scheduled to participate in panels or readings described as Next Generation, all of which are free.

4. In the two years PEN Canada has had to organize this event, its organizers have made no attempt to involve writers of colour. There have, for instance, been no membership drives among such writers, the result of which is the overwhelmingly white membership of PEN Canada, which is in turn

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reflected in Canada's representation at the 54th Congress.

5. While the numerical representation of women at the congress is an accurate reflection of Canadian society, this representation is overwhelmingly white, middle class and Anglophone.

FREEDOM AND POWER

While the presence of writers from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America is a welcome one, when these writers leave, African, Asian and Native Canadian writers continue to face the implacable face of racism in writing and publishing in Canada.

While we appreciate our relative freedoms here in the West, freedoms which are, at best, limited, we also wish to point out that freedom and power can be effectively and efficiently curtailed without the physical imprisonment of a writer. If the so-called freedom of the marketplace works to silence you as a Black or Native writer, so that what you have to say never reaches your audience, then your freedom and power as a writer is in fact thwarted. The writer is imprisoned—albeit metaphorically.

The Canadian composition of this 54th congress is a telling example of the silencing of the writer of colour. These writers who live and work and struggle in Canada have been made invisible by this conference. Not only is the representation of African, Asian and Native Canadian writers appallingly low, but the coralling of the majority of the visible minority Canadian writers into the Next Generation events is a form of cultural apartheid. In this respect PEN Canada has, in fact, replicated the first world/third world or North/South polarity. We deplore this fact; we deplore the fact that this conference was funded by various levels of government whose policies specifically espouse, and at times even attempt to foster a multicultural, multiracial and multiethnic society. The 54th congress of PEN is a travesty of these policies; it makes a mockery of any commitment to eradicate racism or classism in this society.

CONT.>

had dwindled to five or six tired but satisfied leafletters. Preparing to leave, we were collecting our signs when we noticed two people coming from the front doors of Roy Thomson Hall. I approached the couple, and as I had done on many, many occasions that evening, held out a leaflet to the woman who preceded her companion. I do not recall if I even had a chance to say what I had customarily been saying to guests—"Have you had one of these?" The woman's response was as swift as it was vicious. "Fuck off!" she said to me. That woman was June Callwood, incoming president of PEN Canada. Sheelagh Conway, a member of Multicultural Women Writers of Canada, told Ms Callwood that she ought to be ashamed of herself for saying that; Callwood again replied "fuck off," this time to Sheelagh Conway. As she passed the other members of the group—some three or four people—June Callwood told us yet again to "fuck off." During the course of the entire evening, June Callwood was the only person who responded in such an abusive manner. As incoming president of PEN Canada, Callwood is the head of an organization whose members are sworn to uphold freedom of speech, particularly for writers, the world over.

Contrary to an article, which appeared in *The Globe & Mail* on September 26, none of members of our group accosted anyone that evening, including June Callwood. We were a small, low-key group of people merely distributing leaflets. Occasionally the odd voice or voices would be raised in a chant challenging PEN to "do the right thing." Contrary to the editorial "Penpals" which appeared in *The Globe & Mail* on September 27, Callwood was not tormented by anyone, nor was there a heated altercation. Altercation suggests at least two people engaged in discourse. No one said anything to Callwood before she abused us. Contrary to the suggestion made by Bronwyn Drainie in her article in *The Globe & Mail* (September 30), no one drove Callwood to obscenities or profanity. Callwood's attack on us, for that is what it was, was unprovoked and unwarranted.

A smaller leafletting took place at Union Station on September 27, as the delegates left for the Montreal leg of the Congress. While I did not attend, Sheelagh Conway reported that she met with great hostility, particularly from Betty Friedan, Graeme Gibson and a male Argentinian delegate.

Nicole Brossard, Margaret Atwood and Betty Friedan

Photo by Suzanne Girard.

PEN Canada President June Callwood

June Callwood said "fuck off" in public and thereby used up her fifteen minutes of Warholian fame. In that her profanity and abuse garnered us more media attention, her response, albeit personally distasteful to me, was helpful. However, because Callwood is an iconic representation of liberalism in Canada, the media rushed to find excuses for her. The use of words like "accost," "tormentor" and "heated altercation" by *The Globe & Mail*, and a more recent reference to us as a "gang" by *The Toronto Sun* are all examples of damage control by the media on behalf of Callwood. In the more extreme cases, such as *The Globe & Mail* editorial and the *Sun* piece, there is also an attempt to discredit Vision 21 and our arguments about racism in Canada. The reason for Callwood's response to us is, however, not hard to find. In a *Marxism Today* (August '89) piece on racial turmoil between British Muslims and English people in Bradford, journalist Simon Reynell writes that there is a "fundamental intolerance which ordinarily lurks beneath the surface 'as long as they keep themselves to themselves,' (which) erupts whenever a minority culture impinges on the day-to-day life of the majority." Our group refused to keep ourselves to ourselves, we dared to impinge on the day-to-day life of the majority Canadian literary culture—that was what June Callwood's "fuck off" was all about. In the media's rush to protect her, however, the legitimate issues we raised concerning racism in Canada have tended to be discredited along with us as individuals.

By contrast, media coverage of the issues we raised and June Callwood's response has been virtually non-existent. Surprisingly, the exception was *The Globe and Mail* which, in its article of September 26, was the only organ of the media, print or otherwise, mainstream or marginal, that gave the demonstration any reasonable coverage or treated it with the seriousness it warranted. Reporters H.J. Kirchhoff and Isabel Vincent should be given credit for this. However, the *Globe* editorial the following day did an impressive job of damage control; it not only euphemistically referred to Callwood's abuse as an "Anglo-Saxon expletive," but also excused her abuse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge delegates to keep these facts about Canada in mind as they debate the plight of writers in other countries. While it is important to consider the case of writers who are physically imprisoned, it is also important to think of writers of colour in Western democracies such as Canada who often face racism in their daily and writing lives. These writers often live a "third world" reality in the affluent Western democracies. There is often, in fact, a direct link between the power structure that supports the privileged position of white writers in countries like Canada, the circumstances of their writers of colour, and the existence of regimes which imprison writers in other countries.

Since the issues raised above relate directly to your commitment as PEN members to "oppose any form of suppression of freedom of expression," we urge you to raise these issues whenever you can at your panels and readings.

VISION 21
CANADIAN WRITERS
IN THE 21st CENTURY
MULTICULTURAL WOMEN WRITERS
OF CANADA

Aftermath

As representatives of Multicultural Women Writers of Canada and Vision 21 respectively, Sheelagh Conway and I have called upon June Callwood to take responsibility for her actions and to apologize for swearing at us. We have also called for her resignation as President of PEN Canada. In a letter to *The Globe and Mail* on September 29, I called upon her to apologize to me for her abuse. To date, she has not responded. Her silence on this issue speaks more than the clichéd volumes.

Callwood has been quoted as saying she was "outraged" that we had "got our facts wrong" and that we hadn't "done our homework" (*Globe and Mail*, September 26). However, subsequent corrections of our wrong facts by spokespeople for PEN Canada have not shown us to be incorrect in our figures concerning the number of Black writers or writers of colour at the Congress.

Following our leafletting, the emphasis laid by many PEN Canada spokespeople on the presence of writers from developing countries (which we welcomed), exemplifies a particularly pernicious form of Canadian internationalism which promotes Canada as an international do-gooder while, in this instance, practising a racism as virulent as any found in the USA.

During the course of the Congress, I had reason to believe that it was being suggested that I had been invited to participate in the Congress and had refused. In a recent conversation with Jayne Cortez, a Black American poet who attended the Congress, I was able to confirm that, in fact, delegates were told that I had been invited to the Congress but had refused to attend. To date, the source of this disinformation is unknown to me, but the intent is clear: to discredit the group's position by suggesting that I was being irresponsible by remaining outside and attempting to call the Congress into disrepute. I wish to set the record straight. I was never asked by any member PEN Canada to attend or participate in the 54th International PEN Congress. Any information to the contrary was a deliberate attempt by individuals unknown to me to discredit the group as a whole; to diffuse the valid criticisms which we were levelling against the Canadian organizers of the Congress; and to discount our allegations of racism in writing and publishing in Canada. What is disheartening, but probably not surprising, is the fact that an organization like PEN Canada would indulge in these sorts of tactics.

We Canadians live in a racist society. Racism permeates the very fabric of this society; the arts, and in this case writing, are in no way immune to this particular problem. Like an alcoholic who will not accept that he or she has a drinking problem, Canada cannot be helped until there is an acceptance of the problem. The response to our leafletting and demonstration by June Callwood and the media (except for *The Globe and Mail*'s initial article) are all examples of this dissimulation and self-delusion.

What we were doing on Sunday, September 24, 1989 was, I believe, a natural outcome of our lives as artists committed to creating a more equitable world in which the practice of our art can continue. Our actions reflected, in fact, a profound commitment to this country, its future and the future of our children. As Baldwin argues, we must, as artists, continue to disturb the peace in whatever way we are most comfortable with. The peace Baldwin refers to often means the status quo, controlled and/or legalized oppression, a self-satisfied smugness so prevalent in Canada. When peace means those things, not to disturb it means to collude with it. The writer has an obligation, I believe, not only to disturb, but even to destroy that sort of peace. ■

PEN

Second Thoughts:

"NEXT GENERATION" WRITERS BRING INSIGHTS TO *PEN*

by Ayanna Black

Founded in 1921 by Mrs. Dawson-Scott, an upper middle-class English woman, PEN began more or less as a social club where visiting foreign writers could network with English writers. Within a short time similar PEN groups were formed in other European countries and in the United States. With the growing unrest of the 1930s, PEN centres began to protest the persecution of writers and intellectuals in various European countries. It was much later that PEN became aware of the repression of Third World writers imprisoned for their opinions and published works.

However, PEN's new-found sensibilities—reflected by The Next Generation programme of readings and panels by writers who describe themselves as (for the most part) "members and representatives of first peoples "—came into conflict with PEN's colonial past at the 54th PEN World Congress held in Toronto. PEN Canada, like many other Canadian institutions has fallen prey to the old-fashioned missionary syndrome of helping "under-privileged" countries while refusing to examine problems of inequality and racism at home.

While it is important that Canadian institutions continue to offer assistance and set an example, it is hypocrisy if they are unable to face the problems in our own front yard. "Many white Canadian writers at the PEN conference gushed about how free Canada is, completely ignoring the conditions under which Native people live in this country, or the fact that Black people live with police brutality in cities like Toronto, Montreal and Halifax," says Toronto poet Dionne Brand, a Next Generation participant.

The Next Generation panels and readings provided some of the most exciting moments at the Congress, but they were not without controversy—primarily because the programme was not integrated into other PEN events. It was obvious that The Next Generation programme was not planned initially as part of the conference: the programme literature that went out to delegates prior to the Congress did not list it. However, PEN programme coordinator David McIntosh, who developed The Next Generation programme, says "The Next Generation programme was a part of the initial programme [that] was planned, but [it] was not completely developed. When I saw that the programme primarily represented established writers, I put in a special effort to develop the ideas [for The Next Generation programme] and applied for funding."

Photo by Suzanne Girard.

***Next Generation* participant Dionne Brand with Nancy Morejón (right)**

Responding to questions about the segregation of the programme, McIntosh explains that, "Yes they were identified as a group, but they were happy to spend time with people who shared their opinions. If they hadn't been identified as a group before they got here they may not have found each other. They pointed out a lot of things to PEN, and PEN will try to integrate some of their concerns."

However, Toronto writer Victoria Freeman, a fundraiser for the Baffin Island Writers Project, says, "The way the PEN conference was structured was problematic, especially in terms of Canadian writers. Basically the white Canadian writers were in the official part of the programme, while the writers of colour were put in The Next Generation programme, which was organized at the last minute and poorly promoted. The Next Generation panels were excellent but nobody in Toronto heard them. What disturbs me is that the organizers would not admit that there were problems and also that the protesters were treated with disdain. That denial suggests that the organization is not prepared to look seriously and sensitively at the issue of racism."

Despite the controversy, The Next Generation programme brought an energy to the Congress that is often missing from mainstream events. While in Montreal, Next Generation participants recognized that their collective strengths and similarities bonded them in a spirit of solidarity. They drew up a list of recommendations which were presented at the General Assembly. ■

PEN

"THE NEXT GENERATION" STATEMENT :

We are all writers of different nationalities, Native groups, and regions of the world, thrown together by accident, under the banner of The Next Generation. Nonetheless, we have discovered a commonality of purpose which unites us.

For the most part, we are members and representatives of first peoples; that is, native peoples of countries later colonized by a European power. Some of us are also citizens of nations which are still struggling to earn their freedom.

This fact marks us as people and as writers. As people, our common identity lies outside the bounds of the traditional nation state. We spill like coffee stains through many regions, carried by the strength of our people's plight and our need to speak in their names. As a result, we all work in different forms and languages, but our contents are similar. As voices of those who have no voice, our forms support the content of our work.

We are writers striving for peace and freedom. We yearn to be free, and we are empowered by the bonds of solidarity and shared dreams of a better world.

Most of us operate outside the mainstream of European and first-world cultures, and we rejoice in and respect our differences as we emerge from the shadows of exploitation, oppression, discrimination and sexism. We know there are no valid models to imitate, least of all in the mainstream of Western tradition and the systems it has generated, which are essentially responsible for the enslavement and extermination of most of our peoples during the last 500 years.

In the context of our exchange, we have come to a series of conclusions that we feel can only strengthen PEN, given how it conceives of itself in its own charter. These recommendations are:

•that the Next Generation programme become a permanent feature of all PEN Congresses.

•that this programme be integrated into other events, so that all participants have the opportunity to be heard by and alongside all.

•that the Next Generation programme also be maintained and expanded in terms of sponsorship to increase the number of its participants as well as its diversity.

•that the Children's Literature programme also be maintained and expanded, signalling it as an important priority, given that it prepares the literary receptivity of tomorrow's readers.

•that PEN reconsider its membership criteria in order to include countries where the possibility of publication is non-existent, but where literature thrives.

•that PEN recognize the issue of language rights and allow the possible affiliate PEN groups, i.e., the indigenous people of Canada and all of the world to join it. These groups would have status and rights equal to any other PEN group.

•that PEN as a whole encourage publishers and publishing houses to seek out and distribute minority writers and literature outside the mainstream.

•that in all decisions affecting the the selection process of those attending PEN Congresses, Native, minority, and other writers who have been discriminated against be included. Also that at least 50 per cent of those invited be women, and that there be an inclusion of homosexual and lesbian writers.

The Next Generation means the future. It also means that our writing emerges at the end of the millennium and at the foreseeable end of natural resources on this planet, should we continue with our present rate of destruction.

Unless resources and power are re-distributed responsibly and with equity to all peoples, it becomes increasingly difficult to see how indigenous, minority and dispossessed peoples can survive with dignity in a truly humane manner.

That is why we feel it is more important than ever to operate from within Point 3 of PEN's charter. We feel we have to learn to live within our own limited resources and to respect and stand for each other in full human solidarity irrespective of culture, race or gender. We think this is the only possible avenue to save our common planet and our common spirit.

NEXT GENERATION PARTICIPANTS:

Chinua Achebe (Nigeria)
Arturo Arias (Guatemala)
Adriana Batista (Mexico)
Claude Beausoleil (Canada)
Dionne Brand (Canada)
Sky Gilbert (Canoda)
Alootook Ipellie (Canada)
Susan Johnson (Australia)
Mutabaruka (Jamaica)
Gichora Mwangi (Kenya)
Siphewe Ngwenya (South Africa)
Alicia Partnoy (Argentina)
Roma Potiki (New Zealand)
Judy Radul (Canada)
Luis Rodriguez (U.S.A.)
Paul Sayer (England)
Ruby Slipperjack (Canada)

video news

by Kim Tomczak

The Media Arts Section of the Canada Council has announced that David Poole has been hired as an arts officer in charge of workshops, distribution centres and exhibition projects. Mr. Poole is a welcome addition to the Media Arts Section. He brings a real knowledge of film, and to some extent, video distribution. Poole worked at the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre (CFMDC) in Toronto before moving to the Explorations Section of the Canada Council, where he has worked for the past several years. His knowledge of the inner workings of the Canada Council combined with a working knowledge of distribution should help to increase the Media Arts Section's effectiveness.

Grants, Grants, Grants. The Canada Council deadline for B Grants or Project Grants is April 1, 1990. For Video Production Grants, the deadline is April 15, 1990. For application forms and guidelines contact the Media Arts Section of the Canada Council, 99 Metcalfe Street, P.O. Box 1047, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V8 or call collect (613) 598-4365.

IMAGES 90, the third annual festival of independent film and video, is now accepting entries. This festival is fast becoming the most significant annual event for independent producers. The entry deadline is February 2, 1990. Recent film and video productions should be submitted on VHS and must be accompanied by a completed entry form. Entry forms are available from your local independent film or video centre or from Images 90, 67A Portland St, Suite 3, Toronto, M5V 2M9 or call (416) 971-8405.

Two important events showcasing the work of independent film and video producers of colour were held recently in New York and Vancouver. The first, Show the Right Thing: A National Conference on Multicultural Film and Video was held in September in NYC.
A conference directory and catalogue of films and video tapes is available from the New York State Council on the Arts, 915 Broadway, New York, N.Y., 10010. The second event, In Visible Colours, held in Vancouver in November, will be featured in the next issue of *FUSE*. They have also published an excellent catalogue full of information, photos and descriptions of the films and video tapes presented at this historic event. Contact Women in Focus, 849 Beatie St, Vancouver B.C., V6B 2M6 or call (604) 682-5848.

United Media Art Studies (UMAS) has been commissioning artists to produce video art for inclusion in their VHS format journal *DIDEROT*. "The Emperors New Clothes," the first release in the *DIDEROT* series, includes work by Fastwürms, Marc DeGuerre, Lilly Eng, Brian Scott and Doug Sigurdson & Suzanne Gillies. Issue no. 2, "Television and the Channels of Culture," includes work by Andrew J. Paterson, Jeanne Randolph, Christine Martin, Jack Brown, Michael Balser, Andrea Ward and Sean Cubitt. *DIDEROT* is available for purchase from UMAS, 28 Afton Ave, Toronto, M6J 1R8 or call (416) 536-2667.

The 8th Annual Screening of Trinity Square Video's collection is taking place on January 17, 1990. The screening will feature: *Why You, Why Anyone?* by Ric Amis, *Lament of the Sugar Bush Man* by Rhonda Abrams, *Night Visions* by Marusia Bociurkiw, *Fragments* by Paula Fairfield, *The Way to My Father's Village* by Richard Fung, *Katona* by Peter Gmehling, *Mold Grows on Baby* by Shalhevet Goldhar, *Get out of My Life* by Harriet Hume and Pat Jeffries, *A Short History of Water* by Gary Kibbins and *Absolute Zero* by Jeff Mann.

Shawna Dempsey & Janine Fuller in *Night Visions* by Marusia Bociurkiw.

short fuse

New Artist Space

CALGARY—The Second Story Art Society, which closed in August '89, has been reborn as TRUCK—an artist-run centre. The inaugural exhibition opened in the new 5800 square foot space at 1010 6th Avenue S.W. on November 17. The new space houses an 1100 square foot gallery space, an office and eight artist studios, ranging in size from 575 to 293 square feet. The gallery is seeking to broaden its programming and to that end will show not only "emerging" artists but a variety of artists with varying experience.

Artists for Bread

TORONTO—A new organization, Artists For Bread Not Circuses, has been formed to support the Bread Not Circuses Coalition (BNCC). The BNCC is a coalition of anti-poverty groups that has been focusing on the huge disparities between what the public needs—government action on homelessness, hunger and poverty—and what the public is getting: megaprojects and more megaprojects. Artists are encouraged to join and lend their support to the BNCC in the fight to save Toronto from becoming a city that only the wealthy can afford.

For more information, write:
Artists for Bread Not Circuses
c/o This Ain't the Rosedale Library
483 Church Street
Toronto M4Y 2C6

Otto's Arm's Length

National revenue minister Otto Jelinek has threatened to "tamper" with the Canada Council's arm's length funding policies. Speaking to the Milton, Ontario Chamber of Commerce on November 23, Jelinek said, "Some of these ridiculous grants are enough to make me bring up. Whether the arm's length funding policy is sacrosanct or not, we're going to tamper with it."

Citing examples from a National Citizens Coalition booklet that lists grant disbursements, Jelinek singled out award-winning gay theatre company Buddies in Bad Times. Jelinek stated that Buddies in Bad Times had received $60,000 to produce *Drag Queens on Trial*, "That's homosexuals I take it," he said.

The Toronto Theatre Alliance says that Jelinek misstated the level of funding Buddies in Bad Times receives from the Canada Council and has called for the Prime Minister to deny that his government is considering any such violation of the Canadian tradition of impartial funding of the arts.

While Culture Minister Marcel Masse tried to downplay Jelinek's remarks, characterizing them as part of a "freewheeling discussion," Jelinek told *The Toronto Star* that his comments were made in the context of a speech on the Goods and Services Tax and the need for more fiscal responsibility. "I ain't backing away from that one boy, because I believe very strongly that if the government has to be accountable—and we do—those granting agencies which use taxpayers' money must be accountable as well."

The Toronto Star (Dec. 5, 1989)

$ong & Dan¢e

TORONTO—The Ballet Opera House Corporation recently received a "significant boost" from the federal government in the form of a $4.5-million cheque. The funds, which represent one third of a three-party agreement between the federal and provincial governments and the private sector, are to assist with design and engineering work underway. Included in the November press release from the Ballet Opera House Corporation is a fact sheet which lists the cost (in 1988 dollars) at $230 million. "The creation of this facility heralds Canada's entry into the global family of world renowned ballet and opera houses," the release states, noting that, "presently Canada is the only one of the Group of Seven Developed Nations, and one of the few countries in the industrialized world, without a dedicated facility for opera or ballet."

Homes for the Homeless

TORONTO—StreetCity, a pilot project of the Homes First Society, is taking shape in an old warehouse on Front St. E. With a $15,000 short-term grant from the United Way and the labour of homeless people, StreetCity is building six permanent 12-bedroom homes inside the former post office truck depot. When completed in early 1990, StreetCity will provide 36 homeless people with a permanent place to stay.

Feminist Film Finalists

The finalists for the National Film Board Studio D's *Five Feminist Minutes* programme have been announced. The finalists will each be awarded $10,000 and provided with five rolls of 16mm colour film to complete a five-minute film offering a personal "word on women."

The response to the programme was overwhelming—the studio received 240 proposals from which the 17 finalists were chosen.

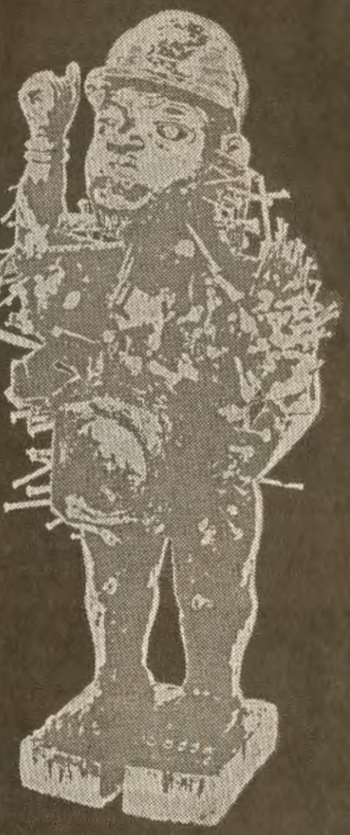
The finalists are:
Marie Baker (Regina), Kim Blain (Vancouver), Christene Brown (Toronto), Alison Burns (Montreal), Janis Cole (Toronto), Shawna Dempsey (Winnipeg), Anne Marie Fleming (Vancouver), Angele Gagnon (Aylmer, P.Q.), Gwendolyn (Toronto), Sook Yin Lee (Vancouver), Carol Kinahan & Helene Panaioti (Montreal), Mary Lewis (St. John's), Catherine Martin (Blind Bay, N.S.), Michelle Mohabeer (Toronto), Elaine Poin (Regina), Cathy Quinn & Frances Leeming (Montreal), Andrée Pelletier & Geneviève Lefèvre (Montreal).

Status Symbols

Federal New Democratic Party communications critic Ian Waddell announced on November 23 that he will introduce a private member's bill in 1990 to recognize the status of artists in Canada. The government has announced plans to draft similar legislation, and a sub-committee, formed on November 7, is to make recommendations in December. Currently, only Quebec has legislation on the status of the artist.

Waddell's proposals are based on the Canadian Artists Code produced by the Advisory Committee on The Status of the Artist in 1988. The proposals will deal with defining who is an artist, copyright issues, taxation, the status of artists as both employees and self-employed, and the establishment of a commission to give artists' associations official status, including collective bargaining rights.

The Globe & Mail (Nov. 24, 1989)



A power figure pierced with nails has a receptacle on it's stomach for holding magic substances, it was manipulated by the diviner for benevolent or malevolent purposes.

For close to 100 years an impressive collection of African artifacts has remained virtually unseen, gathering dust in the basement of the Royal Ontario Museum. In June of 1989 the ROM announced its plans to mount *Into the Heart of Africa*. Hazel A. da Breo looks at the issues surrounding this exhibition.

Royal Spoils

the museum confronts its colonial past

by Hazel A. Da Breo

African art has traditionally been created to worship gods, ancestors and heroes. It functions as a celebration of life acknowledging, understanding and praising human issues from birth through death. Deeply spiritual, the art is a timeless reminder of the profound and pure connection that Africans have developed with nature, their spirit and their fellow human beings. African sculpture reveals an entire spectrum of cultural phenomena.

Cap mask from the Cross River peoples in Nigeria, made of wood, animal skin and basketry. Collected before 1929. Photo courtesy ROM.

From Gabon, the smallest and least inhabited country in Central Africa, comes a sculpture of a male half-figure. It was used in the Bwiti cult to worship ancestors and to perform other rites relating to human fertility and collective survival. A male figure with nails from Angola/Zaire has a receptacle on his stomach for holding magic substances. Used as a fetish serving the whole village, it would be manipulated by the diviner for both benevolent and malevolent purposes. The head of a Gong from Zaire, carved in the image of an ancestor, would be beaten in a ceremony while an invocation of ancestors is sung. A palm fibre woven mat with embroidery stitches from Zaire is a statement in textile of the distinct symbolic meanings of design. It also speaks of the gentle habits and sharing between artists and communities in general.

In early June, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) announced that it would finally present to the public over 375 objects from a collection of African art that had remained in their basement for the last 100 years. *Into the Heart of Africa*, focusing on art from Central and West Africa, would open on November 16, 1989. It would be a spectacular exhibition.

While the exhibition will allow its audience the opportunity to experience unique art forms that are radically dissimilar from any others in history, African art has already indelibly affected Western civilization. Throughout history, African art has generously nourished many aesthetic and academic hungers. It achieved a kind of Renaissance in the early 1900s when the European avant-garde "discovered" the overwhelming purity and eloquence inherent in African sculptural form. Around 1907, Picasso and Braque, among others, disregarded the current European assumptions that the art was ugly because it did not conform to a Greek aesthetic or that it was unchristian and therefore to be shunned

A leaded brass plaque from Benin City. From the Edo people of Nigeria, made in the 17th century. Photo courtesy ROM

because it had been created by distant, strange savages. Picasso and his colleagues' interpretations of intuitive African imagery became the fantasy world of Cubism which later informed Surrealism. Through successive re-interpretations, African artifacts, removed from the darkness of Africa, gained credibility with Europeans as "real" art and literally changed the course of art history.

The formal impact of African culture on the West is now taken for granted. Having influenced modern art, the African aesthetic has also been incorporated into the haute couture designs of Yves Saint-Laurent, Giorgio Di Sant' Angelo and Oscar De La Renta, to name a few. Filmmakers have also taken advantage of Africa's natural beauty and human grandeur in movies like *The Gods Must be Crazy*, *Indiana Jones* and *Out of Africa*. Jazz and blues have their roots in African musical traditions as does the now popular World Beat music. The list of disciplines affected by African culture goes on. In short, as a source of creative inspiration, Africa is omnipresent, continually emerging in new Western forms.

Today, perspectives are being offered that did not exist before. Art Historians, Anthropologists, Ethnographers, Museologists and Africanists have all devoted themselves to the study of African art and culture.

Despite the wealth of information available on African history, there is a noted secondariness or outright exclusion from history texts and courses taught in primary and secondary schools as well as colleges and universities. Further, members of African Studies organizations are all too frequently regarded as less than full-fledged members of the Art History club. The wealth and majesty of the Ghanian-controlled gold trade of the 11th century, of the Kongolese King Nzinga Mvemba who spoke Latin and Portuguese and governed three million people in 1506, or of the magnificent empires of Kush, Ethiopia, Songhai, Mali and others have not received the historic recognition they are due. This situation, created by the written word, or lack of it, has erroneously characterized Africa as secondary and inferior to Europe.

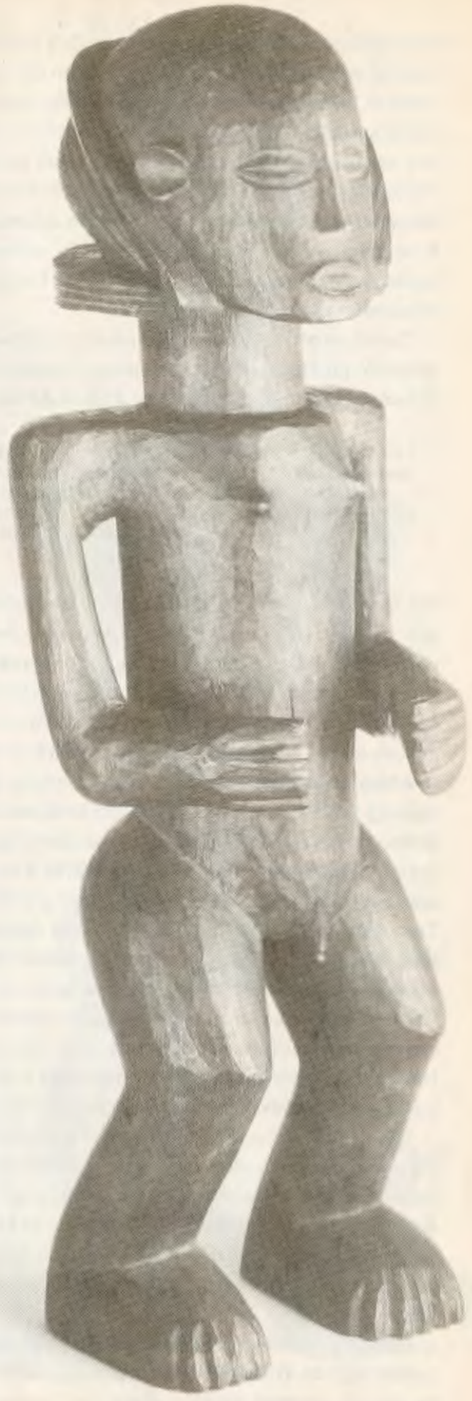
The handling of Africa's art objects and artifacts by Europe has served to reinforce this view. Thus, the presence of a large collection of these artifacts, stored for years at the ROM, unavoidably provoked controversy in Toronto's Black community. When the ROM announced last June that an exhibition of this collection was imminent they responded with a variety of emotions—more intense than any generated by previous ROM exhibitions. To understand their reactions, we must understand how, why and by whom the African art collection at the ROM was acquired. We must examine Africa as it was before those objects were acquired and the present situation in the diasporic African community.

> "What became of the black people of Sumer," the traveller asked the old man, "for ancient records show that the people of Sumer were black. What happened to them?" "Ah," the old man sighed, "they lost their history so they died."
>
> **Sumer Legend**

The historical primacy of Africa and its importance to modern day civilization is often forgotten or overlooked. The first documented civilization in the world was discovered on the Nile in North Africa, the land now commonly known as Egypt. The Ta-Seti were Black. They passed on fully developed political, social, religious and writing systems to Egypt's first recorded dynasty. Imhotep of the third dynasty is regarded as the first physician, and the medical textbooks of the period—one of which is now housed in the New York Academy of Medicine—indicate a mature civilization with a long history in medicine. The Greek father of history, Herodotus, acknowledged that he studied in Africa under teachers who had "thick lips, broad noses, woolly hair and . . . burnt skin."[1] The first religious creation myths originated with the Egyptian goddess Isis. Depictions of Isis holding her son Horus on her lap became the prototype of Christian Madonna and Child images.

The capture and destruction of Africa began with Alexander the Great in 333 B. C., who invaded Egypt and looted the Royal Library at Alexandria, carrying off a booty of scientific, philosophical and religious books. The colonization process was refueled in the 14th century when explorers from Spain, Portugal and Italy sailed away in search of land, gold and slaves. Later, in the 19th and 20th centuries, Canada joined Britain's military and religious pursuits there.

Africa has not only provided the Western world with artistic inspiration over the years but has, willingly or not, fulfilled a multitude of economic, scientific, social and cultural needs. Central to the success of the colonization process has been the manipulation of perception. That is, the way the colonizers saw themselves and the people they colonized, and equally the perception that the colonized had of themselves and their colonizers. During the colonization of Africa, therefore, what was documented and kept as much as what was deliberately omitted, have



Carved human wood figure from Zambia. Collected before 1910. Photo courtesy ROM

been critical to historical perspective. This perspective, coupled with the manner in which African art has been handled, has created a vision of Africa and her relationship to Europe that is largely incorrect and under which Africa and her people still labour. As one historian points out, "Europe appropriated to herself all the achievements of Africans but yet wrote her books to portray Africans in the most desultory and inhuman way . . . . By so doing, she hoped she would not only declare but prove Europeans to be superior to Africans."[2]

The effect of Cecil Rhodes's personal, publicized ideology on South Africa needs no discussion. Rhodes, who left Britain seeking the healing climate of South Africa, wrote:

> I contend that we are the first race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race . . . . I believe it to be my duty to God, to my Queen, and my country to paint the whole map of Africa red, red from the Cape to Cairo. That is my creed, my dream and my mission.[3]

The curator of the ROM exhibition, Dr. Jeanne Cannizzo, has said that *Into the Heart of Africa* will give some perspective to Canadian history as it was played out in Africa during the colonial years. The objects featured in the exhibition were collected by the imperialists, the military and the missionaries who were sent from Canada to Africa to assist Britain in its colonial efforts there in fighting against Africa and competing European armies. Between 1875 and 1923, Canadians donated a vast treasury of objects taken from Africa to the ROM. The objects represent what Canadians found interesting or valuable. The exhibition has been divided into four distinct sections. The first three, The Imperial, The Military and The Missionary deal with the art brought home by those people. The fourth section focuses on many facets of African life. Since the Missionary section contains a narrated lantern slide show entitled "In Livingstone's Footsteps," it is important to examine his role in African history.

David Livingstone, now a renowned colonial hero, was the missionary who most inspired the steady stream of Christians that travelled to Africa. A Licentiate of the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons in Glasgow, Livingstone sailed to Africa in 1840 hoping to be the first missionary to successfully bring the word of God into new, unknown lands.

Livingstone had a rough time in the land he had gone to shed light on. While he took it for granted that he would be warmly received, nothing of the sort happened. Because he was white, Africans believed him to be evil or inferior. The Ijebu of Nigeria, for instance, would have nothing to do with him. In fact, his only sincere convert was the chief of Bakwene, Sechele, whose son Livingstone had cured of dysentery. Livingstone continued preaching to handfuls of disinterested Africans throughout his life. The only people who did befriend him were the people he sought most to discredit—the Arab and Portuguese slave traders.

It is hard to imagine why Livingstone has come to be romanticized and glorified throughout history as he failed to put an end to the slave trade, or to establish any permanent missions. The fact that a surge of Christians dedicated themselves to following in his footsteps is quite baffling.

Thus, when exhibition brochures distributed by the ROM in June implied a view of Africa from Livingstone's eyes, this was, understandably, another point of provocation for the Black community. By now, they, like other Afro-Westerners, are painfully aware how the power of language, and of art, can be used.

When one begins to understand the historical precedents and the emotions surrounding such an exhibition, one begins to empathize with the Black community's apprehensions. Art that had been stolen from the ancestral land was about to be put on display. How would it be presented? Writing would herald and support the event; would it be factual? Would there be a balance of perspectives?

In speaking with Margo Welch, Head of Exhibitions at the ROM, I was able to determine the following sequence of events. When the ROM began preparations for *Into the Heart of Africa*, target audiences and special interest groups were identified. This is standard practice before any major exhibition. Before the launching of the recent baseball exhibition for instance, the target groups were Little League Teams, Blue Jays fans and sports enthusiasts in general. With an African exhibition, it was assumed that the Black community, and specifically the Afro-Canadian community would be interested. Art and cultural historians were also targeted.

"Previous to the exhibition the Black community had not been selected as a special target audience. They have been sort of a non-specialist audience. The ROM therefore recognized that they had little, if any, information on how to reach or service this audience," Welch explained.

It should be pointed out that the ROM has a large, spectacular gallery of Egyptian art. It is one of their most distinguished collections. Obviously, Egypt is perceived as separate from Africa and therefore not pertinent to the Black community. It is frightening that an institution like the ROM, cultural cathedral that it is, staffed by historians of the highest calibre, would allow such a dated misconception to take root.

In order to reach the Black community for the first time, then, Sandra Whiting was hired as Consultant in Publicity and Marketing. A decision was made to host a reception for the Black community on June 26th. While a reception is not necessarily given prior to an exhibition, in this instance it was deemed wise.

Following Whiting's appointment and prior to the reception, the above-mentioned brochure found its way to the public. Welch terms the ensuing problems "the brochure issue."

First, a complaint was launched by Jean Parchement, a teacher of race relations. Parchement had voiced her concerns with Mr. Harry Lala, Race Relations and Multiculturalism Advisor for the Toronto Board of Education. The complaint, eventually unanimously supported by other concerned members of the Black community, addressed the brochure's tired, stereotypical language, which subtly recalled the glory of the Imperial Age, the heroism of Livingstone and the "trophies of war" that, needless to say, are the artifacts that comprise the exhibition.

The issue was subsequently discussed between Whiting, Parchement, Welch, Cannizzo and the ROM's Head of Education. Two small focus groups were convened and set to meet after the reception to ascertain how widespread the negative reaction to the text was.

When the reception was held on June 28, several ROM staffers were present. They were warm and welcoming to the invitees (about 50) who showed up at the comfortable Member's Lounge. In this semi-formal setting, Guest Curator Dr. Jeanne Cannizzo and Dr. Lewis Levine, Associate Director of Exhibitions, explained the whys and wherefores of *Into the Heart of Africa*. While their speeches were eloquent, they were received dryly by those assembled. Dr. Levine, in particular, came off as patronizing and insensitive. The Black community was made to realize that the exhibition was a *fait accompli*. The ROM was not really seeking assistance or wanting input. It seemed the ROM was not relying on any parties outside of their establishment for anything other than approval and support.

Ivory human figure made by the Lega people of Zaire. Collected before 1926. Photo courtesy ROM

But those present from the Black community had issues they wanted to raise and when this avenue appeared shut, they were understandably upset. The community needed to have that anger acknowledged and some of its concerns dealt with. It is preposterous that African descendants now, in this context, would have to depend entirely on a Canadian museum for dissemination and interpretation of African art history. Would the exhibition have a balance between African and Western descriptions of function, meaning and the historical significance of the artifacts? What was the ulterior motive of the curator? Who was doing the planning, discussing, deciding and executing? Finally, to whom would the glory be given?

The cacophony of voices just barely managed to stay controlled. Accusations were none too subtly hurled, insults were barely disguised—swords were clearly drawn. Some speakers on the Black side of the fence raged incoherently. Others, over-compensating, waxed tedious with socio-politico-ethno-art-historical pontificating. A handful were concise, controlled and to the point. The Black community, they stated calmly, was thoroughly schooled in its own history. It knew what role Canada played during the imperial age. Therefore, they were very much aware of how the artifacts had been collected, and despite the late, late announcement that these objects were finally going to be unearthed again, they would do everything humanly or politically possible to ensure that their presentation to the public would be honest and not exploitative. Whether dispassionately or in full war regalia, the community was undergoing a collective seizure.

The ROM, by contrast, held onto its business suit for dear life and focused grimly on that handful of individuals. One had the impression that like the dinosaurs in their collection, the ROM Directors were clumsily lumbering through unfamiliar, unfriendly territory.

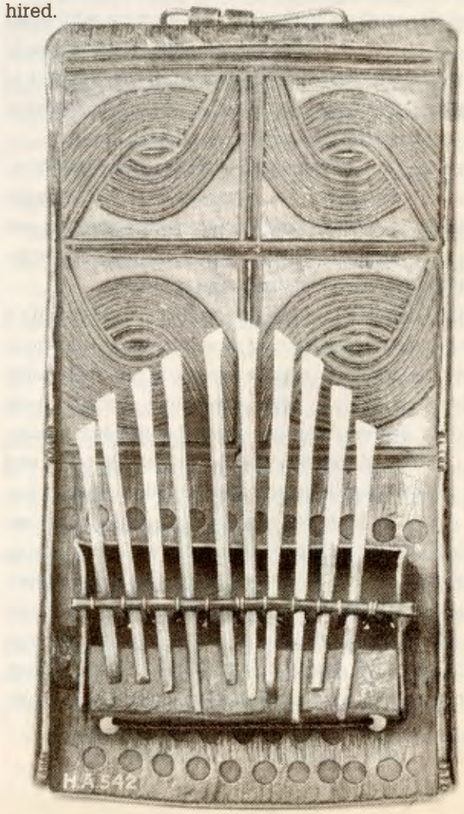
> The Europeans wanted gold and slaves, like everybody else. But at the same time they wanted statues put up to themselves as people who had done good things for the slaves. Being an intelligent and energetic people, and at the peak of their power, they could express both sides of their civilization; and they got the slaves and the statues.
>
> **V. S. Naipaul *Abandon the River***

After the reception, officials from the ROM met with the two focus groups. As Welch described it, "The focus groups went on much longer than scheduled. There was a lot of discussion and it was terrific for the ROM because there was a lot of information and it was the first time that that kind of communication had taken place. As a result of this, it became clear that we were not communicating what we wanted to say through the brochure . . . and it was in fact doing us a disservice."

The brochure has now been rewritten, again by the Public Relations department but this time with the assistance of three readers from the Black community. In an article which appeared in *The Toronto Star* on August 12th, Ayanna Black reported that the ROM spent $25,000 reprinting the brochure.

Originally, the ROM scheduled a programme of events that would have involved the community more dynamically. In discussing the planned programming, the focus groups informed the ROM that, since it had no prior involvement with the community, it would be foolhardy of them to assume they knew best how to programme events that would be appreciated by them.

One positive result of this fiasco, apart from the rewording and reprinting of the brochure, was that a Programmes Officer from the Black community was hired by the ROM. The position was advertised in *Contrast* and subsequently Dr. Kasozi, an African with a doctorate in history was hired.



A Mbira (sometimes called a thumb piano because of the way it is played) from Angola. Collected between 1917 and 1920. Photo courtesy ROM

Amidst all this, one individual remained the epitome of self-assurance, firmly on track, upfront and above board.

Dr. Jeanne Cannizzo, curator of the (in)famous exhibition has made no attempt to apologize nor justify any aspect of history. For her, history is what it is. In her day to day dealings, Cannizzo holds herself responsible for the expertise her profession demands. A member of the African Studies Association for over fifteen years, Dr. Cannizzo is an ethnologist and university professor who did her field work in Sierra Leone in 1976. When she approached the ROM two years ago with a proposal to curate what would become *Into the Heart of Africa*, she was the first person to have proposed such an exhibition. A smaller exhibition of Central African artifacts, curated by Dr. Zdenka Volavkova, was displayed at York University in 1973. Up until then, the collection had only been made available to students and specialists from many fields for study and documentation.

Who and where are the Black Canadian or Ontarian experts in Black Art History? For that matter, who and where are the members of the Black community who go to museums to present our issues and work towards its democratization?

Of the 32,000 current members of the ROM (annual membership $50), it is impossible to determine how many are Black. However, out of any number of random visits to the Member's Lounge or the Research Library, the only Blacks encountered were a barman in the lounge and Chef Ahmed Mohamed. Wandering through the various public galleries, the café and gift shop, my experience has been that only roughly two per cent of the patrons are Black. The exceptions are the school groups that visit. Typically, these groups are multi-racial.

Ayanna Black in her August 12th article in *The Toronto Star* reported the shockingly disproportionate number of Black staff: less than 12 out of 470 permanent positions. When I enquired as to how many Blacks had actually applied for positions there, no figures were available. The number of Blacks who buy or subscribe to the ROM publication *Rotunda* is equally invisible. The "Travel Calendar" announces trips to Costa Rica in February for a field analysis of the rain forests and to Europe for a study of the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Belgium. Who has signed up to go?

In the Research Library, a librarian glows with praise for Dr. Cannizzo, who has been inundating the staff with information on Africa. When asked whether anyone was

Western Grassfields Prestige stool from Cameroon. Collected in 1915. Photo courtesy ROM

coming to read the books, she responded "Oh yes, all the tour guides are required to thoroughly familiarize themselves with the subject." "Are any of the tour guides Black?" I asked her. She coloured. "I don't think so because the tour guides are always selected from the group of volunteers here. And the people who volunteer are always white ladies. If they're Black this time, it would have been a special arrangement."

I find it a fair observation that not only has the Black community, for whatever reason, been anonymous to the ROM, but also that the ROM, until the events leading up to the exhibition, has been virtually non-existent to the Black community.

Wondering about the ROM's rapport with other communities, I went to to the press conference for the opening of the Samuel European Gallery on October 4th. A gentleman called Ernest Lionel Samuel was being thanked for his family's donation of one million dollars to the Gallery Development Fund.

The press release reads: "With this generous contribution, the Samuels continue their distinguished tradi-

tion of support and service to the museum. Ernest Samuel has been a member of the ROM's Board of Trustees since 1986. His wife . . . has been an active member of the ROM's Volunteer Committee for several years." Over the years, several generations of the family have been involved.
The point I am making is that the Black community, or any other community for that matter, will find its voice more effectively heard by organizations it has supported and served. The involvement by the Black community, however will never take the form of generous donations of African art, as we have none to donate. Furthermore, if we did have these objects to donate, we might prefer to donate them to an institution more oriented towards our own culture.

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

The objects that make up *Into the Heart of Africa* were not taken from Africa because their beauty was appreciated and coveted. They were not collected as one normally collects art. Instead, the art, which had profound symbolic, social and religious significance, was taken and used to undermine Africa's power. The military took weapons, merchants helped themselves to ivory, gold, crafts and items of royal regalia while the missionaries confiscated the idols, fetishes and other sacred objects. Collectively, they left nothing in Africa which struck them as valuable.

Dr. Cannizzo states that despite the negative concerns of how and why the collection exists, that ultimately she has designed the exhibition to uplift the public. Considering that approximately 375 pieces of this comfortingly familiar collection will be on display, one feels a joyous anticipation of the depth of spiritual impact certain to impart itself to viewers.

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

ENDNOTES

[1] Diop, Cheilch Anta, "The Cultural Contribution and Prospect of Africa" in *Présence Africaine*, 1956, p. 348.
[2] Cox, George O. : *African Empires and Civilizations*, African Heritage Studies Publishers, 1974, p. 8.
[3] Killingray, David: *A Plague of Europeans*, Penguin, 1973, p. 84.

Hazel A. Da Breo interviews Dr. Jeanne Cannizzo curator of *Into the Heart of Africa*

FUSE: *Why did you choose Anthropology as a field of study?*
Cannizzo: I wanted to understand how other societies solved the problems we all face as human beings. It seemed to me that a lot of the solutions in the society I came from weren't working . . . I wanted to see if other societies answered the same questions in a better way. I was intellectually attracted to the idea of alternative answers to similar questions. I also liked the idea of a job that interacted with people and had an element of travel and the experiencing of other cultures. I became an Africanist because I was attracted to the art, which I first saw in European museums. The kinds of questions that I asked about the art were not answered on the labels: where the art came from, who the people were, why they made the object, what it meant, how it changed over time, was the art significant. I couldn't answer all those questions without talking to people so I went to do field work.
FUSE: *Why did you choose to do field work in a town as opposed to a village?*
Cannizzo: Sierra Leone, in West Africa, is a town of about 40,000 people. Most of the people in our culture have no idea about the urbanization of Africa. Most anthropologists go to villages and study among rural people. I didn't want to do just the traditional world. I wanted to go and live in a town.
FUSE: *How were you received there? Were you a curiosity because you were white, a woman, and studying a foreign culture?*
Cannizzo: I was an oddity because I was white because there were not a lot of white people in Sierra Leone at that time. Most women there who were white, were missionaries so I was an oddity because I was not a missionary. It was obvious that I was not a missionary because—I hate to say it—but in those days I still smoked and I drank. They did not find it odd that I was studying their culture because in Sierra Leone it is normal and good to be interested in culture.
FUSE: *At the end of your stay there, did you find that some of your questions regarding human interaction had been answered?*
Cannizzo: The things that struck me most in that town were that in the face of all kinds of urban pressures some very traditional patterns continued. The very humane treatment of the elderly, people who were mentally ill and other dependent members of society—I was very struck by the treatment of those for example.
FUSE: *How did you come to be working for the ROM?*
Cannizzo: A little over two years ago, I heard a rumour at a conference I was at that the ROM had an ethnology collection and I was interested in doing something with it. I have studied museums for a long time from the outside. I wanted to see what it was like to generate a museum show. I am a specialist in the anthropology of art. Given that I have that expertise, there was no opportunity to treat the objects from the perspective of art and ethnography where the cultural functions and meaning are made plain. I think we've managed to treat the objects in both ways in the show. . .the standard anthropological as well as the aesthetic appeal.
FUSE: *How do you feel about the objects having been kept here for so long without being exhibited?*
Cannizzo: I will answer that question if you make sure to state that it is my personal opinion and not a ROM statement. I feel that it is imperative that if we have collections that they be on show. That is one of the justifications for ever collecting anything. If a collection exists and it's only in the storeroom, it's not, to me, fulfilling its potential. I'm an educator, a university professor so I'm very interested in public education. It seems to me that the public functions of the museum are very important, and to have a collection and have it only accessible to scholars is to not use it to its fullest potential. Given the conditions under which these objects were collected in the colonial period, it's even more important that we say, well, God, they're here now, what on earth positive can we do with them? It's important to say, yes, these objects were oftentimes collected under terrible circumstances but the positive thing that can be done with them lies in the realm of public education.
FUSE: *Since there is, perhaps, a distinction between your own point of view and the perspective of the ROM, whose perspective were you obliged to represent when you started working on the exhibition?*
Cannizzo: I was never instructed about perspective or anything like that. I went to the objects themselves for perspective and it became very clear that over the last 100 years the objects had not been collected with any perspective or research goal in mind. That is, it is a very accidental collection in the sense that it came through donations. It wasn't one person's vision. However, there is a historical perspective here that doesn't exist in most other African collections. Most art has been bought from dealers. This art was collected as representative of a certain phase in Canadian history. I wanted to use that perspective in some way. It does not reflect the African reality. Rather, it reflects what Europeans found exciting, or horrible, or bizarre in what they encountered—and they brought back these objects. There are some human stories here. Generally, it is held by Africans that museums, galleries and other public institutions have not dealt successfully with the colonial past. I thought that we had the opportunity to meet that demand, to acknowledge the process by which a lot of these artifacts had been collected. In summary, my thesis for the exhibition came out of these three things: what the objects really said and didn't say, the African demand that we acknowledge colonialism and the role of the practice in context of the collection and what anthropology says about the life history of objects and museology.
FUSE: *I understand this perspective of yours. However, there's definitely a Livingstone aura about the exhibition. There's been a lot of talk about him and the following in his footsteps. How do you, personally, view Livingstone?*
Cannizzo: Ah. "In Livingstone's Footsteps" is the name of a particular section of the exhibition. We have a missionary lantern slide show. We wanted to show the context of what missionaries thought they were doing. I have to say that I'm not a Christian. I don't find Christianity particularly appealing. I personally, and please if you quote this make sure you say it's personal . . . I don't believe in evangelical anything. We have tried to understand this path, what on earth the missionaries thought they were doing when they went there. And what they thought they were doing was following in Livingstone's footsteps. They read his journals and wanted to be like him. I can't believe that most of our visitors to the show will feel compelled to evangelize after the show. Just like the military section. I can't believe that most of the people won't be horrified by the Canadian participation in this history. Remember that until fairly recently, Canada was a part of the British Empire and participated fully in all aspects of it, including the negative ones. But a lot of younger Canadians are unaware of anything other than the modern, contemporary aspects of Canadian history rather than even the very recent past.
FUSE: *Now that the exhibition is well underway and the Black community has become involved through focus groups and programme planning; I'm wondering whether you've worked with anyone from the Black community or whether you work in seclusion?*
Cannizzo: There is not a large number of Black Canadians who are specialists in art. There is a wider issue in how museums choose curators but that's a policy thing. I understand that the responsibility for the generation of theoretical issues, and the intellectual content of all galleries and exhibitions, rests with the museums and their staff. I am speaking on a personal, rather than a policy level. I feel that the democratization of the museum is ongoing and inevitable, and I think that it's something the museum itself is interested in. I, particularly, am interested in making sure that the widest number of people come to the museum. It is undoubtedly true that the museum is still viewed as an elitist institution and it would be very good if we would work on that. I think that people often don't want to deal with difficult issues. They prefer the positive issues and ignore the negative ones, taking off along the path of least resistance. So I think that the widest number of issues in various formats should be introduced into the museum. I also think that the generation of scholarly aspects of the exhibition must be done by experts, however those experts are defined. For me it's not a race issue, it's a question of expertise. Scholarly issues should be left in the hands of scholars, whoever those scholars are. ■

REVIEWS

Photo by Irene Grainger.

EXHIBITION

Pillow Talk

BED OF ROSES
Women's Sexual Imagery Project
A Space, Toronto
September 9 - October 7, 1989

by Leena Raudvee

Five years ago, when the Alter Eros Festival in Toronto put out a call for erotic images by women to create a positive alternative to pornography, the work submitted led one reviewer to argue that "Sexuality was presented only abstractly, symbolically or indirectly, and usually in political terms. How could a festival that failed to be explicit about sex work as erotica?" (Chris Bearchell, *The Body Politic*, July/August 1984). So I saw the sign "Some Sexually Explicit Material" at the entrance to the *Bed of Roses* exhibit not only as a reminder of the climate of sexual repression in Ontario, but also as a sign of the success of the project.

The Women's Sexual Imagery Project (WSIP) was formed in January 1987 to produce and display sexual imagery by and for women; *Bed of Roses* is the first exhibit of the images they have been producing for the past two years. The WSIP artists chose photography because it would entail a more explicit imagery and because it is the medium of mainstream pornography. *Bed of Roses* is a more direct attempt than the Alter Eros Festival to reclaim the representation of the female body and of women's sexuality.

The seven artists in the exhibition, both heterosexual and lesbian, represent a wide variety of approaches and practises to the production of sexual imagery including the political, romantic, voyeuristic and others. From discussion and their own explorations, photographing themselves and others, they realised how diverse their individual responses were. Nina Levitt, one of the artists in the exhibition pointed to this, writing in the catalogue to *Bed of Roses*: "... is an image of my own sexual experience erotic for others?"

Entering the exhibit, I was initially reluctant to be positioned as a voyeur in relation to the intimate and private nature of the work being shown. However, the work was well contextualized by the catalogue, which detailed the background issues and processes that the artists had been dealing with in the production of these images. This allowed me as a viewer to understand where the images were coming from and why they were being displayed. Although presented in a large gallery, open to the public, they retained a sense of intimacy and warmth associated with the sensual, the personal, and the private.

Issues of private and public were central to the content of the exhibit, particularly because the artists chose to use images of themselves and/or their lovers in their work, subverting the traditional camera/subject power differential. Of their work, Cyndra MacDowall and Kim Fullerton write in the catalogue, "Throughout the production process we experienced the stress of creating personal subject matter while under the scrutiny of each other and the camera."

Irene Grainger and Susie King found different ways of dealing with the intersection of private and public; Grainger presented a sequence of three large colour photos of a couple "making out" in the front seat of an old car, arousing in the viewer the memory of youthful desire and the pleasures of the forbidden.

Photos by Kim Fullerton & Cyndra MacDowall.

Susie King transformed a room adjacent to the main gallery into a private space for her slide show entitled "What I Really Want To Talk About . . . " Music, bedroom furnishings and dim lighting further separated this area, creating a specific context for the public to view the work. The large projected images slowly dissolved into one another to recreate the artist's fantasy of escaping from parental duties for a day, staying at home, naked, with her partner. They let desire build slowly, enjoying the anticipation of sex and being together as much as the act itself. Accompanied by an erotic story in the catalogue that paralleled the slides, this rich, sensual exhibit was a warm and loving depiction of the erotic and the sexual within a long-term relationship.

Photo by Nina Levitt.

Photo by Susie King.

Working collaboratively, Cyndra MacDowall and Kim Fullerton photographed "scenarios" with themselves as subjects. They presented the images (including photos taken from a video of themselves) arranged in several interconnected series. The images of caresses, kisses and smiles in the serial pieces carefully contextualized the six individual images of more explicit love-making. The authenticity and gentleness of the looks was engaging, particularly within the series, where a look was seen to appear, transform and disappear again.

Nina Levitt, unlike the others, placed herself behind the camera to try (as Levitt writes in the catalogue) to capture in the images of her lovers, "subtleties in look or gesture which convey sexual tension . . ." Although she may have succeeded, a number of the small B&W photos also strongly resembled male-produced images that objectify the female body; for

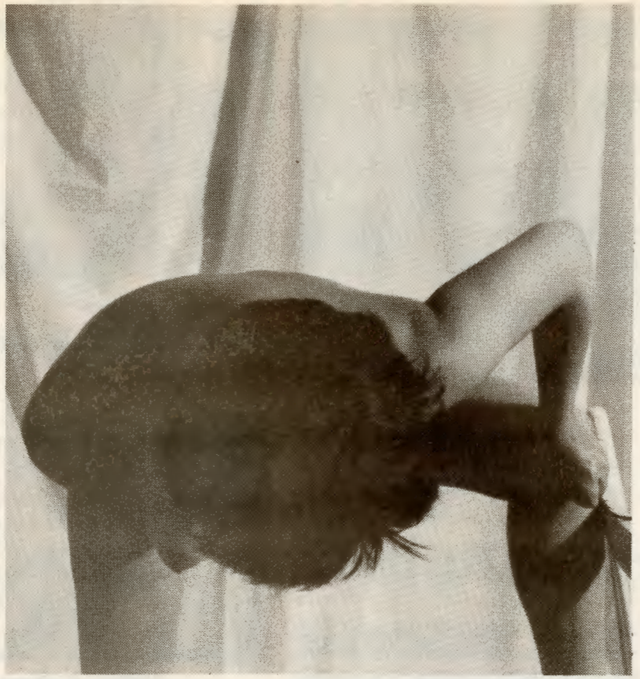


Photo by Carol Anna McBride.

me, this association acted as a barrier to the personal content. Levitt addressed this question in the catalogue and attempted to solve it by including herself in the images. But, for her, this introduced new problems regarding the erotic potential of including one's own image. Despite this, I found that one of the most powerful images in the series was a close-up of the artist, having just turned away from her lover to peer up at the camera with distrust.

The diversity in response became a consideration in the selection of images for *Bed of Roses*. On the one hand, WSIP had been trying to create images out of their own experience that were sexually arousing for themselves. But on the other hand, they were concerned about how the images would "read" when placed in the public forum.

Carol Anna McBride presented images of her private confrontation with the camera, the eye of the public, the voyeur, challenging its authority. She performs for it but she cannot come to terms with its mechanical, unfeeling gaze. Although I found this to be the least resolved piece in the exhibit, it was important because her mixture of complicity and defiance reminds us of how private our sexuality is and how vulnerable and exposed the artists were in exhibiting this material.

Terry Constantino's work, "Right up my Alley," was a more exclusively cerebral approach to sexuality than the others. She juxtaposed images of two worlds: large colour photographs of graffitti-covered garage doors acted as symbols of the male, external realm, and small photographs of male and female naked bodies along with coloured fabric borders represented the female, interior world. These pieces dealt in a more remote and ideological way with the challenges posed by WSIP, which was to represent women's sexuality.

This was a strong show of honest and brave representations of our sexuality. It could have gone further, delved into some of the other sides of sexuality. It could have been more representative of race, age and body type. It could have been more passionate and vehement in its presentation.

But, the important thing is that it happened. It provoked much needed discussion around sexuality and representation, and it has laid the groundwork for others to continue.

"I see her cunt. It's wet. Is it hers or mine … I feel fluid."(Susie King, *Bed of Roses* catalogue). ■

Leena Raudvee is a Toronto-based performance artist.

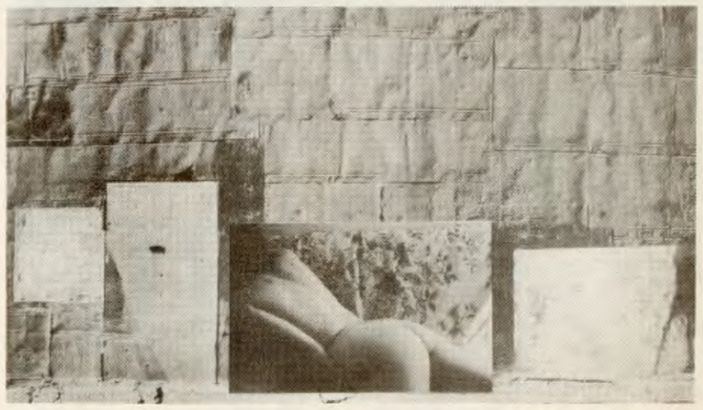


Photo by Terry Constantino.

PERFORMANCE

Some Enchanted Evening

MAD FOR BLISS

VERA FRENKEL
The Music Gallery, Toronto
September 5 - 9, 1989

by Andrew J. Paterson

The audience entering the Music Gallery was greeted by a cast of performers dressed as prison inmates with freshly painted feet. Then, to piano accompaniment, the performers recount fragments of stories (mostly related to pleasure, or the lack of it) which Toronto-based performance artist Vera Frenkel has collected over many years.

Mad for Bliss, Frenkel's latest performance, consists of three movements, subtitled "Some Enchanted Evening—or Other"; "Paradise, An Asylum"; and "Ceremony For The Millennium." As described in the programme notes, the performance "tracks the bliss effect through three related madnesses: Romance, Messianism and Consumerism, and reveals as their shared root, the invention of an Other (the Lover, the Leader and the Thing, respectively) to which meaning is attributed, and from which rescue is hoped for."

Centre stage, a slide projected piano bar logo is electronically modulated. It is flanked by a video monitor showing a multi-handed, polyrhythmic juggler. The juggler motif is pervasive in *Mad for Bliss*. At the beginning of the performance, the performers have defined characters but these begin to disappear as narratives are juggled, seemingly at random, among the performers. Thus, not only are narratives juggled, but also identities, thus fragmenting prescribed roles.

The Lover, the Leader or Messiah, and even the Thing call for singular, linear or complete narratives. Their fragmentation gives free rein to our tendency to polymorphism and paganism, which, in turn, give rise to a desire for a fixed narrative or ideology. The fixed ideology eventually takes the form of a slide-projected cargo plane, on the verge of landing on some enchanted evening in the Papua-New Guinea Highlands carrying goods from supernatural sources. This cargo cult motif, a special interest of Frenkel's over the last decade, becomes the central focus of *Mad For Bliss*'s third movement. Because the projection is from the the audience's point-of-view, it is consistent with a traditional entertainment audience's expectation and desire for a singular narrative which will rescue the natives or performers from fragmentation or confusion.

The cargo cult motif, as well as the neo-Brechtian theme song "Mad For Bliss," serve to introduce the centrepiece of the performance—a performed reading of excerpts from Milton Rokeach's book *The Three Christs of Ypsilanti*. The three Christs are male inmates at a Michigan mental health centre, not unlike Toronto's own Queen St. Mental Health Centre. The actors playing the inmates read their own selected text excerpts while the two female therapists bracket the excerpts, both visually and grammatically. The inmates play language games with one another as they try to establish that only one of them could possibly be Christ and that, therefore, the other two are deluded in their pretensions to being The Messiah. An evening in a mental health centre is presented as an occasion where the men can playfully juggle identities rather than have identities reinforced or forced onto them. The institution is presented as a place of recreation, rather than coercion. This second movement was, for me, the most unified section of the performance in terms of the use of the performers and the playing area.

The marketing of bliss has now created a plurality of pretenders to the posi-

Photo by David Hlynsky.

tion of Saviour, Lover or Thing. In order to successfully market one's bliss-inducing product, a naive belief in that product's infallibility, or divinity, can prove useful in the seduction of the public.

After the Christ games are over the inmates are indoctrinated in the voluntary slavery of romance by means of an elaborate tango lesson. (*Mad For Bliss* is fond of puns—"romance" playing on the french "roman" and "tango dancing" referring to tangle or entrapment.)

But the delirium of romance cannot be sustained because it is delirium, or a form of bliss, and the inmates slowly recover from their stupor. The juggler on the monitor is now a staggeringly slow metronome and the performers struggle to match their individual trains of thought to his rhythm. Deliverance is suggested by the renewed projection of the approaching cargo-plane. The image is accompanied by New Guinean natives' recollections of arriving cargo. Then for first and only time in *Mad For Bliss*, the writer/artist's voice is heard, announcing herself as a Messiah to the audience, the cargo-inspecting "natives" or performers and the casual shoppers of urban/suburban malls. (Frenkel's voiceover is, in fact, adapted from her contribution to Public Access's 1987-88 *Lunatic Of One Idea* video/audio installations at Square One Shopping Plaza in Mississauga.) While many audience members probably wouldn't recognize Frenkel's voice, many undoubtedly did and this recognition made the audience complicit in the "Ceremony For The Millennium," which, with the arrival of the cargo plane, becomes a theatrically transparent act of God.

The cargo goods are lowered onto the runway stage from the audience's point-of-view. According to Frenkel, if an audience is privy to the processes of "magic" acts such as this particular deliverance, then the magic is "communal" as opposed to "authoritative." The cargo is revealed to be both familiar and essential, with a surplus of radios and flashlights—

Photo by David Hlynsky.

appliances which tend to transmit and reveal fragmented, rather than complete or singular, texts and images. The performers react with a chant titled "All The Failed Enchantments" then drop into a chorus line and exit while chanting the phrase "complete abandon"—the concluding lyrics of the song "Mad For Bliss" which had been electronically skewed and lobotomized earlier. "Complete abandon" in this case refers to a complete abandonment of any faith in "others"—a renunciation of the tendency to situate one's fate in the hands of those who manufacture and market bliss. At the performance's conclusion the inmates/patients/performers wash the paint from their feet in a parody of baptism by immersion.

The employment of eight bodies, none of which are the writer/author's, is more typical of a dance/theatre hybrid than of a performance ritual. It is ironic that a troupe of skilled theatrical actors and dancers are directed to perform so that their natural fluidity of movement and interaction becomes mechanized. However, *Mad For Bliss* assaults any theatrical expectations an audience might bring to the piece with the same viciousness that it attacks narrative connections. In fact, Frenkel wages parallel wars with both narrative and spectacle. As a diatribe against linearity, all of the elements must play as much against each other as with each other. Although the sections of the performance that featured the three Christs and their therapists/choreographers were the most choreographed, I found them the most satisfying because they were about the struggles among individuals to control movement or narrative. During other sections it was sometimes difficult to tell whether the event was meant to be multi-focused or it simply became multi-focused because of Frenkel's distaste for simplistic narrative.

For a performance piece meant to be viewed in one sitting, *Mad For Bliss* is of epic length (80 minutes) and also of epic scale. It is the third performance curated by Cultural Desire Projects for the Music Gallery involving the featured artist's residency at the space for an extended pre-performance period. Such a residency allows for set construction, lighting and sound preparations as well as rehearsals with performers to a degree generally not possible for performance art in Toronto. These conditions allow for many advantages previously available only to site-specific theatre productions, and Cultural Desire Projects is to be commended for its initiative in setting up this programme.

Mad For Bliss proved to be an alternately exhilarating and exhausting, but generally enchanting, evening of performance and text. ■

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

FILM

Rise Up Sistren

OMEGA RISING:
WOMEN OF THE RASTAFARI
D. ELMINA DAVIS
The Euclid Theatre, Toronto
Sept. 21, 1989

by Michelle Mohabeer

O Jah, O Jah, Let the sisters walk with thee
O Jah, O Jah, Let us communicate with thee
In these times the struggles we see; Temptation,
Frustration, Desolation is haunting our king.

"Sisters Chant," Judy Mowatt

Black Woman, oh Black Woman like me you've struggled long, you've trod one of life's roughest roads to be someone to belong . . . don't give up pray for strength now, to you I dedicate my song . . . Free yourself now and help me sing my song . . . Black woman I know you've struggled long I feel your afflictions and to you I dedicate my song.

"Black Woman," Judy Mowatt

Omega Rising: Women of the Rastafari is as much a film about the position of Black women within the spiritual and political movement of Rastafari as it is about their struggles with sexism and cultural identity within the rasta culture. Produced by CEDDO, a Black film collective in Britain, and directed by D. Elmina Davis, *Omega Rising* represents a new wave of Black British cinema that endeavours to document and recontextualize various aspects of Black history and culture.

The women in *Omega Rising* redefine patriarchal assumptions of male/female mythology in rasta culture. *Omega Rising* speaks of women as the creator of all life. The film's title literally translates into "Goddess Rising;" and the women in the film adeptly communicate their own spiritual empowerment.

Omega Rising chronicles the historical and cultural origins of Rastafari with accounts from rasta women from Jamaica through to present day United Kingdom. Through their varying testimonies, the film illuminates the struggles of women entering the Rastafari movement; the parental and social pressures, the isolation and invisibility experienced by those who entered the movement in the early 1930s and 1940s. But the film also conveys the strength, unity, and pride of the contemporary rasta women's movement. Judy Mowatt represented a pivotal force in the empowerment of rasta women. Mowatt communicated to them with her music and through her presence; giving a voice to her sisters in struggle; "you have to know what you are and take a positive stance." Mowatt became a source of inspiration to the rasta women.

The strength of *Omega Rising* lies in its style. The film is structured around a multitude of voices and experiences, providing a means for rasta women to emerge and become visible. The film contextualizes their histories and struggles in relation to the history and development of the Rastafari movement through the use of stills, archival footage, interviews, and music. *Omega Rising* is a powerful tool for empowerment. ■

Michelle Mohabeer is a Toronto writer.

VIDEO

Scarlet Fever

THE WORLD IS SICK (SIC)
PINK PIMPERNEL

John Greyson
(Both Tapes 1989)
Distributed by V Tape

by Andrew Sorfleet

Recently, I attended a four-day conference at the Royal York Hotel—the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex (SSSS) entitled *Sexuality: Expanding the Boundaries*. As I had suspected, it was mostly occupied by business-suited "professionals," many of whom were there to deliver papers on their latest statistical research. A large proportion of the lectures that I attended, such as "Biological Explanation, Psychological Explanation, and *Tolerance* of Homosexuals"(my emphasis), "Forgotten and Invisible: The Plight of the Gay Adolescent," and "Children Raised by Homosexual Parents: Sexual Orientation, Mental and Sexual Health," though filled with good intentions, often failed to recognize their "subjects" as people from different social contexts with individual human experiences. Some of the papers outlined the necessity for such studies in a heterosexist society, like the one from "Children Raised by Homosexual Parents," where the results are useful in legal custody disputes involving gay parents. The purpose of the study though, "was to evaluate research on the sexual orientation of children raised by homosexual parents and review the data on the mental/psychosexual health of these children . . ."[1] Once again researchers had failed to recognize the heterosexism implicit in their own premise; in this case, that it would be intrinsically wrong to give custody to gay parents if there was any chance that this would increase the possibility of their children growing up gay.

The power held by educated, professional "experts," their intense lack of understanding of the notion of community-based work became more and more apparent to me as I drifted from symposium to symposium. I found myself intimidated by heavy credentials, frustrated, wanting to speak up. Bourgeois, white, educated researchers slapped each other on the back and congratulated each other on their work without ever consulting or even considering the communities their work affected.

I relate my experience at the SSSS convention because I wished I could have seen John Greyson's two most recent tapes there. After all, Greyson's tapes always excite me, and they would have broken the monotony of the strictly straight, sex-technique demo tapes in the Exhibitions Hall. Most important though, the tapes would have provided a stringent critique of both the objectives and formal structure of much of the work presented. By introducing notions of community-based work, the tapes would have exposed the various implicit "isms" often present in languages of "objective" analytical research. The many sex and AIDS educators attending the conference would have had a concrete example of working strategies for education on issues surrounding AIDS crises.

John Greyson's two new tapes, *Pink Pimpernel* and *The World is Sick (sic)*, premiered as a benefit screening for AIDS ACTION NOW! at the Euclid Theatre on October 18th. The house was packed and, as a community viewing, it made an appropriate opening. *The World is Sick (sic)*, an experimental documentary covering the 1989 International AIDS Conference in Montréal, opens with a disclaimer warning us that this is a "Toronto version" of events. This is followed with an intro from a report aired on *The Journal* covering the demands of persons living with AIDS (PLWAs) before we are introduced to a quasi-drag news reporter infatuated with famous scientists, who is covering, for us, this international event. *Pink Pimpernel* braids a series of interviews with community activists, short fictional narrative episodes, and safer-sex vignettes to discuss the problems around healthcare for PLWAs. Both tapes are relatively short (about a half hour each in length) and are well suited for educational use in either broadcast or classroom settings.

Yet Greyson's tapes are not likely to be distributed by the Ministry of Education for its compulsory AIDS education programme. By integrating innovative editing techniques, humour, catchy tunes and lyrics with political speeches and interviews with community activists, politicians and corporate profiteers, Greyson exposes the ideologies of the dominant class without appearing dogmatic.

Video still from *The World is Sick (sic)*.

In *The World is Sick (sic)* multinational representatives talk about the lucrative condom market and about gaining control of 2 per cent of the world market (some 40 million) for HIV antibody tests. While claiming that they wanted to help, they noted that although the AZT market is very small, their business has been commercially successful. The Beatles' "Give me money" plays in the background. This scenario is contrasted with activists from around the world discussing community work. One from Mainliners/Frontliners, an IV drug-users community group in the UK, explains that their project is completely staffed by IV drug-users because they are accepted and credible in their own community. Alfred Machela from the Soweto AIDS Project relates the effectiveness of using a more general STD (sexually transmitted disease) prevention approach because AIDS still isn't felt to be a problem among that larger Black community. And Valerie Scott assures us that prostitutes are not spreading the virus into the white middle-class ("if that were true all the politicians would have it"), but that they prevent AIDS because they are safe-sex pros and safe-sex educators. The tape also shows segments of the reading in different languages of the *Manifeste de Montréal* (a manifesto of demands by AIDS activists for government action); of AIDS activists storming the stage at the conference carrying signs which read "Silence = Death"; and of Tim McCaskell, the chair of AIDS ACTION NOW!, declaring the conference officially open. Again and again the message delivered by the tape was about PLWA self-empowerment movements and the need to refuse the authority of medical researchers who value advancing their careers more than saving people's lives. Greyson passes on a clear message: Act Up, Fight Back, Fight AIDS.

Some research can be utilized to activists' advantage however. At the SSSS Conference, Eleanor Tyndale, from the Department of Sociology at the University of Calgary, delivered a paper (entitled "Sexual Scripts and AIDS Prevention: Variation in Adherence to Safer-Sex Guidelines by Heterosexual Adolescents") on a survey conducted to determine "whether and how unmarried late adolescents are incorporating Safer-Sex Guidelines into their sexual practices."[2] The report concluded that the only real substantial way to increase safer-sex practices is to have adolescents' lives personally touched by AIDS. Increased knowledge of safer-sex practices and peer practice seemed to play only a nominal role. From this fact Tyndale deduced that more reliant safer-sex education might occur if adolescents could experience AIDS "vicariously," i.e., if students could meet PLWAs.

The results of this survey are significant to PLWAs and community activists. They affirm the belief that the best people to educate specific communities are people from within those communities and that experiential modes of education are the most resonant. These results also indirectly support demands by communities to control the representations made about them.

Pink Pimpernel exemplifies demands for self-representation through practice, playful parody and critique. The comical drama woven through the tape is of a "dandy" gay male couple's falling out as one partner becomes more interested in shopping and soap operas than activism, and the other partner becomes obsessed with discovering the identity of the "Pink Pimpernel," an elusive leader of an underground group which makes drug-runs to the US for treatments not available in Canada—in this case, DDI. Interviews with community activists explain the prevailing attitudes and problems around

procuring treatments for PLWAs. They talk about the establishment's emphasis on prevention and cure while it neglects the aspect of care-giving. They talk about hospital officials who won't sanction one central hospital for PLWAs (which would increase expertise), about the lack of doctors willing to work with PLWAs, and about the rise of a health-care movement rooted in a feminist critique of the health-care system.

Tim McCaskell describes the homophobic attitudes of officials who see the public as the "father knows best" family and gay communities as a "reservoir of infection," as something to be "drained." There are images of the protests at Bristol-Myers, an American multinational drug corporation which refused to release DDI under Canada's newly enacted (after much pressure from AIDS action groups) Emergency Drug Release Programme.

Greyson presents images of activist PLWAs which challenge the media construction of what people living with AIDS are supposed to look like. An interview with Michael Lynch details the problems around representation. He recounts an anecdote of a newspaper photographer who wants to take his picture inside, in the dark, and portray him as moody and sombre. In another segment, Lynch talks about the public perception of the "dandy," someone more concerned with his appearances than with mortality and social responsibility. Michael Lynch also tells us that all mourning is political, and not necessarily a private retreat.

Pink Pimpernel also contains a series of short vignettes of explicit safer-sex erotic scenes where, as in the one captioned "A Safer Querelle," safer-sex paraphernalia (condoms and water-based lube) become triggers for arousal. Sexy scenarios break down societal boundaries by depicting anonymous, inter-racial, multiple-partner, gay sex.

Community workers have discerned that explicit safer-sex, erotic imagery encourages safer-sex practices. If safer-sex imagery (which demonstrates affection and respect for one's partners) could be disentangled from the confusion concerning definitions of pornography, perhaps community-generated safer-sex images could be more widely used in safer-sex education. These images also challenge myths which imply that AIDS is some retribution for the "sexual revolution." Unfortunately, state education agencies perpetuate the interests of the controlling classes by discussing sexuality through traditional Christian and capitalist frameworks, emphasizing procreative monogamy.

The Ontario Ministry of Education's AIDS education document, *Education about AIDS: Materials for Use in the Mandatory Health Education Units* outlines three approaches to AIDS education: the information approach (facts and figures); the living skills approach (values); and the case study approach. Guidelines for the "living skills approach" explain that, "Education around AIDS requires that attention be given to values and to the discussion of sex roles, equity, violence, the ethics of choice, and tolerance of individual and group differences in behaviour and belief."[3] These guidelines evidence the hypocrisy of a government which not only upholds repressive and discriminatory censorship policies, but also makes direct attempts to control community-directed health clinics through new legislation.[4] The Ministry of Education also removed all previous references to homosexuality from the final draft of the document.

AIDS education, as it would be defined and conducted by community groups is not reaching the classrooms. More and more we are witnessing the professionalization of AIDS education. There is an attempt to remove it from its grassroots. The "when-you-sleep-with-someone-you-sleep-with-all-their-past-sexual-partners" syndrome, which is still plastered all over Toronto subways, demonstrates that the government is continuing to emphasize reduction of partners as a way to reduce risk of infection, despite evidence proving otherwise. A paper presented at the SSSS conference entitled, "A Comparative Model of HIV Risk Reduction Strategies: Condom Use Versus Number of Partners," outlined the most recent study results which show that "having 500 sexual acts with 20 partners, while using condoms with a 10 per cent failure rate, entailed a lower risk of HIV infection than having those 500 acts with only one partner but not using condoms" and it concluded that "if one chooses between the two strategies, careful use of condoms is the more protective choice."[5] Governments will continue on their moralist, anti-sex campaigns and will disseminate dangerous information.[6] Community organizations will have to continue to fight to distribute relevant and accurate information.

With government agencies holding the purse strings for research grants, groups such as COMBAT (Communities Organizing Mutually to Battle AIDS Together)—an AIDS organization in the Black community of Toronto—which is requesting that the City gather AIDS statistics with regards to race will have to compete for research dollars which are now squandered on futile studies.[7]

In order to effect change, artists, as active members of their communities, have to be seen not as members of an elitist "art world" but as community cultural workers, educators and researchers. Their practices need to be community-based and specific.

In Toronto, in October 1988, John Greyson, A Space, and AIDS ACTION NOW! organized a week-long benefit video screening for AIDS Awareness Week in Toronto entitled, *Angry Initiatives, Defiant Strategies: Community Responses to AIDS*. Although it was an art fund-raiser (according to Douglas Crimp, "the most passive response of cultural practitioners to social crisis"[8]), it was also an innovative and specific educational response. So are Greyson's two new tapes.

Stills courtesy Vtape.

In an historical period, where video home entertainment is proving to be the latest technology in cultural colonization (the same Hollywood titles are available at your local Becker's from Saint John's to Vancouver), tapes like *Pink Pimpernel* illustrate techniques which apply and subvert narrative strategies. Greyson's use of the animated "Pink Panther" background with interviews occurring in the focal spot of the screen is both irritating and brilliant in its ability to simultaneously hold and disrupt the viewer's attention. While Greyson's personal ideolect may create interpretive problems for the novice viewer and feed into problematic notions of authorship, it also conflates critical form and content to create well-balanced political documents signalling possibilities for altering the conventions through which we watch television.

In a time when community culture is under attack, art practice has to be seen as specific educational response—education about representation from the different social, sexual, economic, geographical, racial, historical, political and gendered locations we, as artists, occupy. Video as art practice can resist the commodity status art object by operating in the realm of information. It can be an important tool in the struggle for community self-determination and self-definition. Work like John Greyson's, which speaks from a position of cultural specificity and provides a voice for a community, if located in a broader plurality of voices, can affect policies and information concerning "the AIDS crisis." In doing so, video can provide a powerful critique of, and resistance to, the hegemonic cultures of the dominant classes. To quote John Greyson, "AIDS is a war and demands that our responses be complex and critical. This is no time to be passively entertained. Remember, this is a war."[9] ■

Andrew Sorfleet is a queer 4th-year student at the Ontario College of Art.

Video stills from Pink Pimpernel.

ENDNOTES

[1] *Sexuality: Expanding the Boundaries*, The Society for the Scientific Study of Sex, 32nd Annual Meeting Programme. November 9-12, 1989.
[2] ibid
[3] Helen Lenskyj. "The Message of AIDS Education in Ontario Schools," *Rites* 5:9 (March 1989).
[4] On June 2nd, 1988, The Ontario legislature introduced the Independent Health Facilities Act, a bill which would provide global funding for health clinics but would also restrict their numbers. The bill would also require clinics to become licensed by the province. Licensing would be completely controlled by one Director, a Ministry of Health official. Clinics would have to meet government criteria, could have their licenses revoked at any time, and would lack an appeals process. District Health Councils (28 in the province) would assess needs and coordinate the licensing of clinics in their corresponding districts. Any community input on the needs for clinics would have to occur at this level. Currently, doctors can set up clinics, however, OHIP coverage does not generate enough revenue to maintain free-standing clinics, hence extra billing. If this bill is passed on November 22, 1989, the Ontario Government will proceed with the development of regulations to cover the operation of health clinics. This bill could have broad implications for the health-care movement. It would mean that the government would have the power to define the needs of communities and to restrict specific types of free-standing clinics such as clinics for PLWAs and abortion clinics.
[5] *Sexuality: Expanding the Boundaries*.
[6] The Yukon government distributed a pamphlet last year which neglected to mention that non-penetrative sex practice can be safe; suggested that *all* anal sex was dangerous and did not mention protected anal sex; and prioritized abstinence and maintaining one partner as methods of avoiding HIV infection. See Patrick Barnholden, "Sex Maligned in Yukon," *Rites* 5:7 (December 1988/January 1989). p. 4.
[7] *The Toronto Star* reported that a study was conducted through the University of Western Ontario last year to determine if "school classes on AIDS for students in Grades 7 and 8 are working to inform youngsters about the lethal disease." The study concluded that indeed students who were in classes on AIDS did know more information about AIDS than students that weren't in such classes. The newspaper also included the number of deaths from AIDS in Canada in its report. When this is considered relevant "news" to include with a research report on education and the words "lethal disease" are used you have to wonder what kind of AIDS education the students are receiving. See Marilyn Dunlop, "Students Who Take AIDS Class Better Informed, Study Finds." *The Toronto Star*, January 28, 1989. p. A5.
[8] Douglas Crimp. "AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism," *October* 7:43 (1987). p. 6.
[9] "Angry Initiatives Defiant Strategies: Challenging AIDS on Video," *Rites* 5:7 (December 1988/January 1989). p. 10.

VIDEO

Cut & Paced

RUMBLESPHINX

Robert Hamilton and David Clark
Distributed by V Tape
1987, 12 minutes

by Mary Anne Moser

For virtually the cost of a package of black felt markers, Robert Hamilton and David Clark have produced an international award-winning video.

Free paper and the pens got them started on *Rumblesphinx* when Clark was a summer student at the Banff Centre in 1986. Hamilton came down to pretend he, too, was a student, but just for a week. "We'd do the drawings first, then go for coffee and decide what we'd do with them," explained Clark at a recent screening of their work at EM/Media in Calgary.

The result? A video-like drawing. Actors in a cardboard set sipping coffee out of 2-D cups. It's almost like a children's tale, crisp and innovative. The picture is flat, but the plot thickens. Experimental narratives are Hamilton's forte. "Everything's about storytelling and fooling around with the medium." The tape begins with Hamilton sipping coffee in the cartoon-like set when he gets a call from Mr. Dream. He is invited to a slide show of Mr. Dream's trip to Egypt. "What can I bring?" he asks. "Just yourself," says Mr. Dream, and the matter-of-fact use of pat clichés begins. Off the nameless character goes, past the Dry Ice Café, past a burning airplane and a four-sided equilateral pyramid.

"This is more than I bargained for. But isn't life in general?" Hamilton's character muses, poker-faced throughout the videotape.

Undoubtedly, the prize finishings in video festivals around the world are more than Hamilton and Clark bargained for when they shot the footage for less than $20 in just over a week. Second place in the Tokyo Video Festival, first place at the Video Quebec International Festival of Young Filmmakers, and screenings in Warsaw, Helsinki and Colombia have followed.

They later admitted the tape did take a bit more than a week and $20 to make. Hamilton travelled to Montreal for several months of post-production, but the studio costs were covered.

Innovation has been the key to this tape's success. Perhaps Hamilton and Clark follow the words of their own character: "Mr. Dream always tries to make the best of things." Of course, flexibility is built right into the script, as the dream-like states seem to warrant. But discontinuity does not descend to self-indulgence. Disconnected thoughts are linked by layered themes of travel and exploration, much like its authors ventured during the process of its making.

"I never understand what [Mr. Dream] is saying. I just smile a lot," says Robert as Mr. Dream suddenly sticks his cardboard cup onto his glasses.

While some may see it as cute, the video is not too cute. While it is generally playful, the sound track and computer-enhanced imagery present, at times, an almost ominous atmosphere. Any resemblance to PeeWee's Playhouse is coincidental. PeeWee, after all, is more recent than *Rumblesphinx*. ■

Mary Anne Moser was born in the mountains at the Blairmore Hospital in Blairmore, Alberta.

Stills courtesy VTape.

Video still from *Rumblesphinx*.

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