

Lucy R. Lippard in Montreal

Hedwidge Asselin

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Last fall, Lucy Lippard spent a day in Montreal. During that day she answered questions in an informal way at Powerhouse and later gave a more formal talk at Concordia. Well known by art historians, critics and contemporary art buffs, she is almost unknown to the public at large, and yet you would certainly enjoy her stimulating discourse for she avoids using an esoteric vocabulary. A direct, simple language translates her aesthetic emotions. She responds to art on a very personal level. Instead of seeing herself as an art critic, she prefers to be an art collaborator.

Born in New York, still living in New York, Lippard graduated from Smith College, has an MA from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. At the time she was studying for her MA she became involved with the issues of recent art. The first criticisms Lippard wrote were art-historically grounded and in a very formal analytical style. Looking back, they seem to her such a waste of time. Now, as she did at Concordia, she presents work with little or no comment and is using an open expository style. Broadening her contribution, she organized several exhibitions despite the reaction her controversial first one, "Eccentric Abstraction" got back in 1966. Her shows, varied in form and intent, are an attempt at an unwritten critical vehicle.

LUCY R. LIPPARD IN MONTREAL

HEDWIDGE ASSELIN

Speaking to the Powerhouse crowd, Lippard says that she has certain reservations about criticism. She can't think of any criticism that has ever stood up in the long run as a real parallel to the art. It is self-indulgence, worthwhile only to the writer and the artist. She also adds that art criticism has drifted far from emotional realities.

Talking about her political activities, Lippard describes herself as a socialist-feminist. She is irked by the fact that some people say she is no longer a feminist. She was thirty-three when she became one. She owes feminism an emotional identification, a social consciousness and a general political awareness. She now has seen seventeen years of women art and she simply sees more work she likes that's by women than by men. She no longer writes about art-as-art, leaving out personal knowledge and experience. The women's movement has allowed her to be much more exposed about her own feelings, more out front with emotional reaction to art.

Her talk at Concordia was a compendium of information on art and the new transcultural aspect of some of it. According to her, along side with Michel Topor whom she cites, Western culture destroys cultural democracy. We tend to dismiss other cultures because we are brought up in one culture, we know only one culture. Recalling the MOMA show on "Primitivism and art" she says that cubism and surrealism made superficial borrowing from other cultures. She goes on enunciating that only cultural authenticity is part of all good art. The slides shown were of works from artists of different extracts, some of Latino American background, most of them working in New York. They belong to a new trend exploring the roots of the world and sharing with others, making contact with other cultures, dismissing the difference between higher culture and lower culture as a distinction made by upper classes. Lippard, in this talk, compelled us with her intellectual curiosity and spirit of inquiry and provided with a new framework for viewing today's art.

Once, Judy Chicago told her: "Train young critics, otherwise you will be repeating yourself. And this is one thing one doesn't want to." Well, for our pleasure, Lippard is not repeating herself.