

La sculpture d'aujourd'hui Recent Sculpture in Toronto

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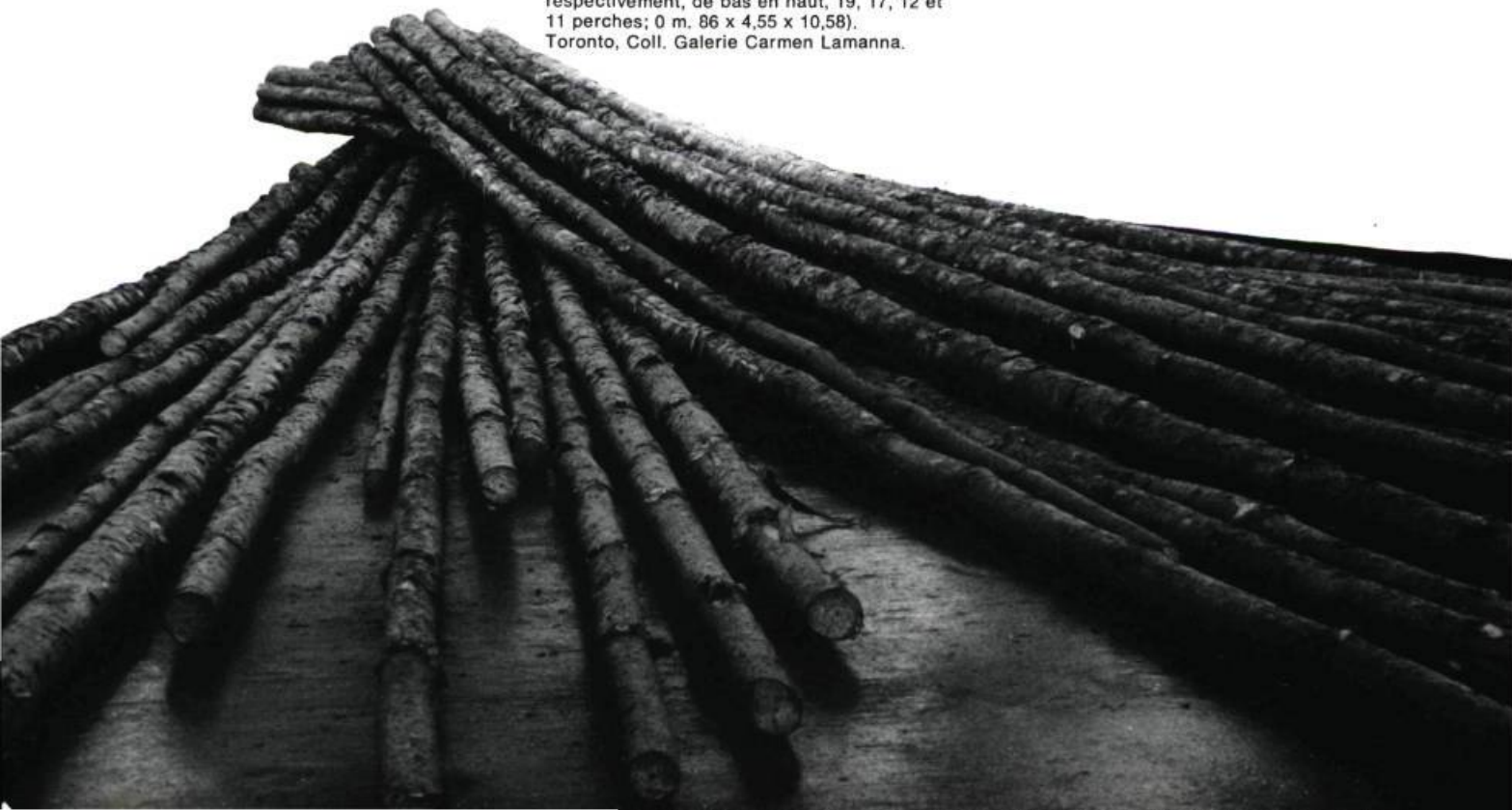
WALTER KLEPAC

1. Robin MACKENZIE

Long Vertical, 1974-1975.

Pin sylvestre (perches de différents diamètres, longues d'environ 9 à 12 mètres et disposées en quatre masses chevauchantes et comprenant respectivement, de bas en haut, 19, 17, 12 et 11 perches; 0 m. 86 x 4,55 x 10,58).

Toronto, Coll. Galerie Carmen Lamanna.



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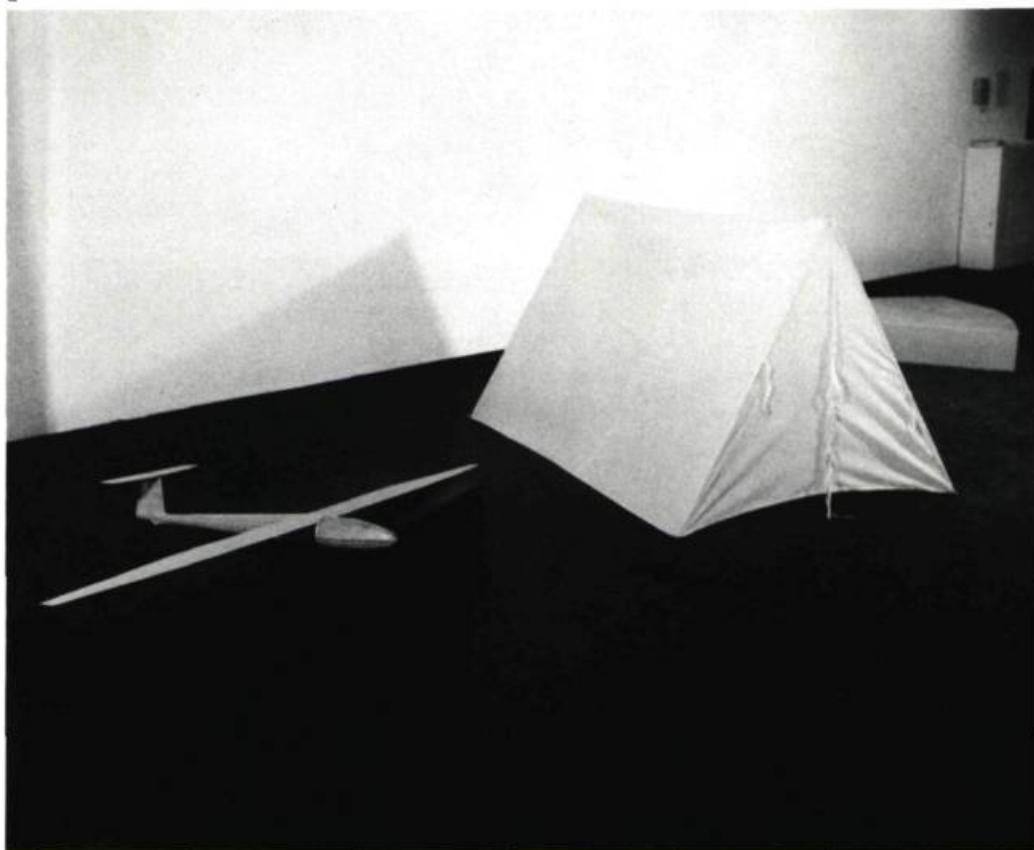
La sculpture — ou, pour mieux dire, l'art en trois dimensions — se porte qualitativement et quantitativement bien à Toronto, surtout chez les jeunes artistes de ces cinq ou dix dernières années. Assez paradoxalement, ce nouvel essor de vitalité, de grande diversité et même, dans quelques cas, de réelle originalité dans la sculpture de certains artistes, survient à une époque où plusieurs artistes des capitales de l'art, y compris New-York, traversent une période de doute et produisent des œuvres moins fortes.

Pour quelque raison que ce soit, ou bien à cause d'une indifférence innée ou implantée aux attitudes désespérées, ou bien parce qu'ils ont le sentiment d'être trop éloignés des grands centres pour être affectés par les constantes variations des modes sur le marché international de l'art, ou bien le besoin de suivre la dernière tendance de l'art, l'actuelle génération de sculpteurs torontois semble faire preuve d'assez d'indépendance et de confiance pour tirer profit de l'immense liberté accordée aux artistes d'aujourd'hui pour faire ce qu'ils veulent comme ils le veulent. Ils semblent surtout insister pour dire qu'indépendamment de sa forme finale, leur œuvre naît directement de poursuite libre et fermentée de leurs propres intérêts et préoccupations. Implicitement leur œuvre contient la conviction tacite qu'elle est pour eux-mêmes un instrument d'investigation destiné à préciser certaines de leur existence personnelle ainsi que de leur appartenance au monde contemporain. Assurément, c'est presque une question de hasard que la plupart de ces artistes aient choisi l'art en trois dimensions ou la sculpture comme moyen le plus apte et le plus satisfaisant pour témoigner, en tant que créateurs, des principales variations de perception et de sensibilité qui se sont manifestées depuis le début des années soixante-dix.

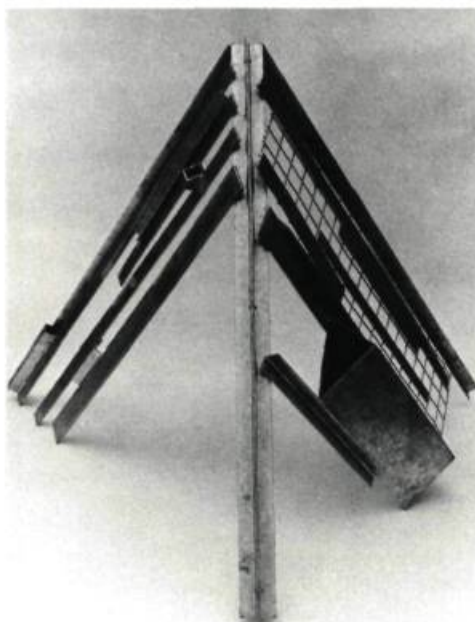
Alors, il n'est pas étonnant de constater que parmi les jeunes artistes les plus accomplis et les mieux considérés de Toronto qui travaillent en trois dimensions, seulement trois — David Rabinowitch, Royden Rabinowitch et André Fauteux — se considèrent d'authentiques sculpteurs; à la différence de leurs contemporains, ils définissent leur œuvre et leurs ambitions dans le cadre de l'évaluation de la sculpture moderne. Tous trois ont fait preuve d'une forte personnalité artistique et ils ont précisé certaines préoccupations personnelles dès le début de leur carrière, si bien qu'ils ont pu emprunter au vocabulaire formel et à la théorie des principaux styles de sculpture de notre époque sans crainte de n'être que des imitateurs.

Déjà reconnu par un nombre grandissant de critiques comme l'un des artistes contemporains les plus puissants et novateurs en Amérique du Nord, et peut-être le plus grand sculpteur de sa génération au Canada, David Rabinowitch a créé, à 33 ans, un ensemble d'œuvres qui oriente dans des directions nouvelles et

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2. Robin COLLYER
I'm Still a Young Man, 1973.
Trois éléments. De g. à dr.: 1. Masonite, 20 cm 3 x 158,7 x 113; 2. Monture d'aluminium et coton, 182 cm 2 x 96,5 x 114,3; 3. Acier laminé à froid, H.: 14 cm 2; Long.: 85 cm; Larg.: 186 cm 6; Base: 142 cm 2 x 20,3 x 45,7.
Toronto, Coll. Galerie Carmen Lamanna.



3. André FAUTEUX
Triangle #3, 1976.
Acier galvanisé; 152 cm 4 x 200,6 x 157,4.

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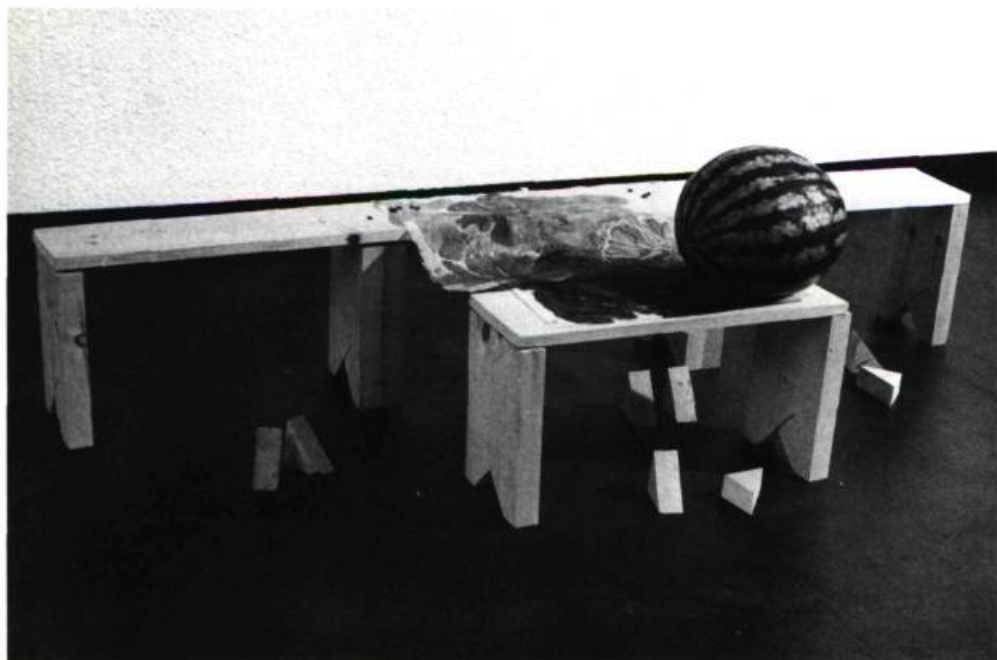
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significatives les solutions radicales données à la sculpture abstraite moderne par des artistes soi-disant minimalistes de la précédente décennie comme Donald Judd, Carl André et Robert Morris. Ces artistes, surtout Judd et André, ressentirent que l'inexorable matérialité et la présence obstinée de simples objets solides produisait chez le spectateur un sens de l'immédiateté et une vive clarté cognitive et émotive que celui-ci ne pouvait ni éviter ni élucider: dans ces conditions, la sculpture leur semblait être plus *réelle* parce que le spectateur était confronté avec une expérience directe plutôt qu'avec des relations formelles abstraites.

Les petits blocs d'acier écroui à froid, asymétriques et denses, que David Rabinowitch réalise en 1970-1971, témoignent de cette présence de la matière que les minimalistes recherchent sous forme de stricte concentration de matière pure. Ces petites œuvres, brillantes dès ses débuts, vont au delà de ce que les prédécesseurs américains de Rabinowitch ont pu faire, au moins selon deux points de vue: elles évitent leurs formes volumétriques et virtuellement idéales comme les cubes et les rhomboïdes, et, puisqu'elles rejettent l'échelle monumentale des minimalistes, elles évitent cette situation très spectaculaire où le spectateur est réduit à la dimension d'un nain à côté de l'œuvre. La grande perspicacité de Rabinowitch tient à ce que, dans de petites masses, il a nettement identifié les propriétés physiques essentielles du matériau utilisé et qu'il fait surgir de cette caractéristique d'autres aspects majeurs de sa sculpture. Notre impression de la lourdeur et de la densité de ces gros morceaux d'acier, épais et compacts, est si forte que nous tendons à considérer les surfaces de chaque pièce moins comme un côté que comme la limite extrême d'une masse discrète et palpable. A cause de cela, la forme d'une pièce donnée, qui semble délibérément arbitraire, est alors perçue comme quelque chose d'immuable et d'absolu. Assurément l'aspect *objet*, dans le sens d'une expérience aiguë et distincte de la matière par le spectateur, a rarement été démontrée avec une intensité et une clarté aussi convaincantes. Les petites sculptures de Rabinowitch suggèrent en même temps une nouvelle manière de considérer la verticalité. Dans la plupart des sculptures traditionnelles, l'élévation verticale introduit souvent inopinément une suggestion ambiguë de volume fermé; dans les petites masses, cependant, la hauteur est explicitement proportionnelle à l'épaisseur de la plaque d'acier. La verticalité, pourrait-on dire, est devenue fonction, pour le spectateur, de son impression d'une masse pure.

Dans la série subséquente de sculptures en masses planes, exposées pour la première fois à Toronto à la fin de 1972, David Rabinowitch substitue l'objet littéral adopté par les minimalistes comme modèle pour notre expérimentation des choses de l'univers et de la présence concrète et réelle des surfaces plates et



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massives de l'acier. Lorsque tous les aspects construits de la plaque (trous et coupes transversales) sont sans cesse visibles, ils créent constamment de nouvelles configurations, au fur et à mesure que le spectateur évolue autour de l'œuvre. Parce qu'une masse plane ne présente au spectateur qu'une simple vue d'ensemble et pas d'expériences diverses, ceci le force effectivement à se fier uniquement à ses propres observations. Mais, lorsque les sculptures par masses planes sont, au sens profond, des véhicules pour les apparences, elles ne prennent pas appui sur des ressemblances fortuites ou des trucs optiques.

Leur construction évoque en nous des sensations assez bien déterminées et elle transforme les particularités visuelles saillantes que nous reconnaissons immédiatement en une composante réelle et durable de notre répertoire perceptif. Alors, nous découvrons qu'il émane de certaines constructions une puissante sensation de corporéité lorsque nous marchons autour de l'œuvre et que nous voyons le transfert apparent d'une partie de la masse de l'œuvre à une autre partie. Cependant, d'autres œuvres fonctionnent à un niveau strictement cognitif et visuel, par exemple, lorsqu'on regarde en enfilade deux ou plusieurs trous de différents côtés, il nous semble voir des échelles de grandeur spécifique et contrastées. Dans ses œuvres les plus récentes, Rabinowitch recherche une plus grande unité et une cohésion de l'ensemble en n'introduisant dans une sculpture donnée qu'un certain nombre d'éléments construits qui appartiennent à des catégories bien déterminées. Ceci permet maintenant au spectateur de rattacher systématiquement une œuvre donnée à un certain type de sculpture. Ses *Constructions métriques (romanes)*, par exemple, utilisent un grand nombre d'ordres de grandeur comme autant de tentatives pour intégrer dans une même œuvre deux manières de voir différentes. On peut facilement dire, à propos de la série d'œuvres de David Rabinowitch en masses planes, que son langage sculptural est à la fois original et unique et que ses recherches sur la problématique de la perception des corps en trois dimensions demeure sans équivalent et sans précédent valable dans l'art contemporain.

Depuis le début de sa carrière, le vocabulaire sculptural d'André Fauteux a été essentiellement constructiviste, alors que son esthétique est exclusivement orientée vers la réalisation d'un effet décoratif et sensuel dans chaque œuvre. Au cours de ces deux dernières années, son œuvre a dépassé la retenue émotionnelle et la rigidité structurale qui souvent déparait ses premiers cadres d'acier ouverts et transformés. En dépit de leur forme compacte, les récentes *Pyramides* (1975-1976) sont plus séduisantes lorsqu'elles sont vues de près car le spectateur est alors pris dans une expansion latérale constante (de haut en bas) et une contraction des divers éléments ajoutés le long des côtés qui semblent l'attirer vers l'œuvre. Les rythmes dé-



4. Murray FAVRO
Van Gogh's Room, 1973-1974.
Construction en matières diverses; 257 cm x
363,7 x 363,7.
Toronto, Coll. Galerie Carmen Lamanna.

5. Mary JANITCH
Watermelon Bench 7, 1972-1973.
Bois, pastèque, graines de pastèque, encre et
aquarelle sur papier-calque; Dimensions extrêmes:
55 cm 3 x 185,4 x 17,7.

6. David RABINOWITCH
N6, 1971.
Acier laminé à chaud; 33 cm x 69,8 x 12,7.
Toronto, Coll. Galerie Carmen Lamanna.

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licats et subtilement agencés des *Pyramides* sont assurément d'essence non picturale parce qu'ils éveillent effectivement chez le spectateur une sensation soutenue de mouvement, grâce à l'espace physique et réel, bien que celui-ci soit peu profond. Cet effet d'enveloppe spatiale est brutalement contredit par un troisième côté, dégagé, qui révèle soudain tout le volume intérieur de la sculpture. Toutefois, la sculpture de Fauteux est du genre formaliste dont elle partage la principale limite: alors que ses sculptures sont d'élégants systèmes autonomes de plaisir sensuel hautement raffiné, elles ne mettent pas en cause et ne forcent pas nos attitudes non critiques concernant la perception et nos habitudes de voir.

L'énergie intellectuelle, inlassablement lucide, et la vive imagination de la sculpture de Royden Rabinowitch semble surgir d'un besoin personnel intense de créer des modèles concrets des conditions premières de notre connaissance du monde et, plus particulièrement, celles qui attestent la liaison fondamentale entre ce qui est extérieur et physique et ce qui est intérieur et psychique (ou mental). Chaque année, de 1969 à 1974, Royden Rabinowitch a créé un nouvel ensemble de sculptures qui tentait d'élucider un certain aspect de notre intuition commune du volume et de lui donner forme dans une construction à trois dimensions qui soit totalement évidente à première vue. Ainsi, un volume vide, un espace délimité, est une virtualité qui ne peut être connue qu'indirectement: son intérieur intangible doit être conçu intellectuellement, en termes de simples idées ou formes géométriques, et son extérieur en termes de forme de son contenant, ou bien du matériau dont serait fait sa surface externe. C'est aussi la *condition générale*, hautement illusoire, d'un très grand nombre d'objets matériels et chacun des modèles volumétriques de Royden, au cours de ces cinq années, est un *particulier* concret dont les caractéristiques réifient certains aspects universels saillants de cette condition. La forme conique de ses cônes de graisse bien connus (1970), comprime un grand nombre d'énoncés volumétriques s'ameuisant, depuis un cercle parfait jusqu'à un point, en une forme cohérente et unifiée. L'étonnante valeur tactile de la couche de graisse industrielle épaisse rejoint à la fois le raboteux (valeur primitive et presque sensuelle) et le lustré (surface polie, bien huilée).

Avec *Kharakorum* (1975), prototype de ses récentes œuvres, le travail de Royden Rabinowitch ne nous fournit plus des modèles pour notre connaissance du monde extérieur, mais se porte plutôt sur l'esprit réfléchissant sur la nature de ses activités et de ses propres limites. Cette différence de contenu se traduit par une profonde différence d'accessibilité parce que, si les œuvres antérieures de Rabinowitch révélaient leurs intentions profondes (c'est-à-dire leur raison d'être) dans leur apparence externe, les récentes sculptures, par leur complexité



7. Royden RABINOWITCH
Untitled 1975 #4, 1975.
Acier laminé à froid, bleu et huilé; 6 cm x
218,4 x 54,6.
Toronto, Coll. Galerie Carmen Lamanna.
(Phot. Henk Visser)

visuelle et structurale accrue, nous prive de la découverte de leurs principes premiers. Nous devons regarder au delà de l'unité compacte et luisante de ces œuvres et apprécier la valeur étrange et unique de chacune de ses composantes avant que nous puissions finalement percevoir la relation fondamentale entre le tout et ses parties, en tant que grande surface au son et ses développements. C'est à ce niveau que nous pouvons voir l'esprit accepter un ensemble de références et commencer à suivre ses mouvements (décisions esthétiques conscientes) à travers la dynamique interne de l'œuvre elle-même. Ce qui ajoute à leur intérêt et à la fascination qu'elles exercent sur nous c'est que leur assemblage fragile de minces feuilles d'acier, leur asymétrie nerveuse et leurs formes élégamment anguleuses semblent, de quelque manière, résumer avec force l'esprit des années soixante-dix.

Murray Favro et Robin Mackenzie sont deux artistes qui demeurent en dehors de Toronto et qui ne se rattachent décidément pas aux grands courants de la sculpture; depuis la fin des années soixante, ils ont régulièrement exposé à Toronto et ont apporté une contribution substantielle à l'art, tant au niveau local que canadien, par leurs recherches orientées bien au delà de la pratique courante de l'art et des canons régissant le goût et les styles. Ils ont fait ces contributions surtout par le remarquable exemple de leur recherche constante et opiniâtre, leurs œuvres originales (Favro) et leurs positions face à l'environnement et aux phénomènes naturels (Mackenzie) qui ont ni leur précédent, ni leur comparable dans l'art contemporain récent. L'aspect le plus déterminant et le plus important de l'art de Favro et de Mackenzie est que sa valeur en tant qu'art dépend entièrement du fait que le spectateur peut vérifier les contenus de cet art avec ses propres observations et réflexions. Assurément, sans cette corrélation entre certains domaines précis de l'expérience personnelle et l'œuvre elle-même, leur démarche serait incompréhensible. A la différence de la sculpture conventionnelle, il n'y a rien qui porte l'attention soit sur cette connection, soit sur le fait qu'elles sont des œuvres d'art à part entière, hormis pour leur sujet inusité, leur forte présence et leur troublante résonance.

Certains artistes plus jeunes ont choisi d'aller plus loin sur la route de l'indépendance, en concentrant leurs énergies créatrices sur des problèmes purement subjectifs et personnels et ont cherché à donner une forme originale à leurs vues intimes. Les plus remarquables de ces jeunes artistes sont Robin Collyer, Mary Janitch, Stephen Cruise, Ian Carr-Harris, Colette Whiten et An Whitlock.

(Traduction de Gilles Rioux)

A GLANCE AT ART IN TORONTO

By Roald NASGAARD

In six short articles discussing, at most, some twenty artists, this issue of *Vie des Arts* can hardly claim to give comprehensive coverage to art in Toronto. That would be too formidable a task. Even where individual writers have attempted to range relatively widely across their respective subjects, they have found it more advisable to select according to some preconceived theme rather than risk the danger of merely making inventories. There will consequently be artists and areas of work, not discussed within the following pages, whose contribution to Toronto's artistic life is at least as important, if not more important than many others who are. I think it more useful, therefore, to read the present issue, not so much for who is in and for who is left out, but as a series of reports on current artistic activity in Toronto which attempt to convey something of the city's variety and its vitality.

The apparent need to introduce the issue with a disclaimer points to the difficulty of coming to terms with just what *is* the art of the city which believes itself, and no doubt is, the most important artistic centre in Canada. From Ontario's contribution to *Mosaicart* during the Olympics, one might suppose art in Toronto to be essentially abstract, as well as lyrical expressionist in accordance with Barrie Hale's definition of the "Toronto look" of the 1960s. *Forum 76*, at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, shortly later, however, presented a much more complex picture. Though repeating a number of artists from *Mosaicart*, *Forum 76* also added work not only by as diverse Torontonians as Michael Berman, Ian Carr-Harris, Louis de Niverville, General Idea, Michael Snow, and Colette Whiten; but also by such dissimilar non-resident artists as Paterson Ewen, Murray Favro, John Boyle and Greg Curnø who are equally identified with Toronto insofar as they primarily exhibit there.

What it adds up to is a mixed bag indeed, the heterogeneous aesthetic content of which is only further complicated by a gamut of other divergent points of view affecting the work, ranging from extreme regionalist and nationalist isolationism to a yearning for international dialogue and recognition, sought by keeping second studios in New York, or better yet, moving there. The diversification is further manifested by surveying the respective wares of the commercial or parallel galleries in Toronto whether they be David Mirvish or Sable-Castelli, Carmen Lamanna or Isaacs, Aggregation, A Space, C.E.A.C., ACT, etc., etc. Heterogeneity does not, of course, imply universal acceptance by all parties. Quite the contrary, battle lines can be sharply drawn.

But to describe the untidiness of the situation in Toronto is perhaps no more than to reiterate the problem of every large metropolitan centre in the western world, where since the beginning of the seventies a state of critical confusion has prevailed because a plurality of options has replaced the greater security of a single dominant thrust. Even so, I think it could be argued that the difficulty of getting a clear focus on Toronto has some deeper causes which are of a specific local kind. On the one hand, it is difficult to isolate in the history of art in Toronto any strong and continuous tradition, and on the

other, Toronto art has always been produced and patronized in a relatively uninformed critical atmosphere.

Not so long ago John Russell in the *New York Times* commented on how the older generation of artists in New York were making such strong new showings as to quite overshadow the exhibitions of their younger colleagues. In Toronto the situation would seem somewhat the reverse. There are major figures, Michael Snow or Jack Bush for example, who are featured here in separate articles, whose new work is awaited with considerable anticipation; or such solid workers as Gershon Iskowitz who are dependably productive. But otherwise the promise of Toronto's older generations, the Painters Eleven and their immediate adherents, is less certainly fulfilled. They were Toronto's first abstract painters and as a group have been credited with providing Canada with its third landmark period of art (succeeding the group of Seven and Les Automatistes). And it would be to falsify history to belittle the heroic stature of their achievement. Nevertheless their momentum seems to have run down all too quickly, and it is difficult to deny disappointment at the limitations of their legacy. The reputation of both Bush and Snow rests on work produced subsequent to their immediate affiliations with Painters Eleven, and unquestionably the current excitement in Toronto art is generated by artists under thirty-five. As a younger painter recently quipped to me about being an artist in Toronto: "There's lots of room at the top."

Nor does one readily discover among younger artists in Toronto, even in those painters who can be seen as perpetuating the lyrical expressionist "Toronto look", any particular sense either of debt to, or rebellion against their immediate teachers in the older generation. The latter may have taught them how to behave like artists, but about art they claim to have learned elsewhere, across the spectrum of current international art, or from the longer twentieth century tradition.

In the long run, a greater sense of historical coherence with Toronto art may well be discernible. But it could never attain the clarity that it does in Montreal where, without oversimplification, it is possible to trace out an internal organic development over the last three decades against which more recent activity can be measured. In Toronto, on the contrary, if a local movement has established itself with some strength, its legacy has tended to be short-lived and winds of change, especially from the south, have tended to deflect it beyond recognition.

In so far as this is true, Toronto has remained persistently provincial. It has been continually difficult for any "style" to strike strong, self-sustaining local roots because it has usually been adopted from outside at a relatively fully developed stage. Toronto artists, without having the understanding derived from participating in the formative steps of the imported style, have been without the preconditions to develop it meaningfully in new directions, except to fuss it up. Whether we like it or not, and though we may acknowledge it as a false premise to depend too much in one's art on external models, it is nevertheless what Toronto artists have done and perhaps inevitably had to do. Is there any other way of explaining the range of eclecticism in Toronto art of the 50s and 60s and the curious emptiness at the core of their work despite amazing technical virtuosity?

There is surely some validity to such an analysis. Yet on the whole how much do we really know about the art of those preceding decades? And that points to the second problem in focusing on Toronto art: the avoidance

over the years of seriously coming to terms with it critically.

Is it not a little disgraceful that both Bush and Snow have received more informed attention outside Canada than within? And yet how symptomatic that is of Toronto's hesitancy to really look closely at what the art itself has to say. It is easier to deal with the peripheral data, especially biography. Even the best opportunities are missed. When the time came to establish the proper grounding for the study of Toronto painting in the exhibition *Toronto Painting 1953-1965*, the organizers of the exhibition opted, in the catalogue, for a narrative chronicle devoid of art critical or art historical analysis. The oversight was of no slight importance. Because no historical context was explored, no visual analysis performed, no standards set, licence was again given to all those little surveys and retrospectives which have followed and which persist in perpetuating a tradition of promoting the artist as friend, or the artist as personality (often with his own collaboration) when what we so badly need is dispassionate and informed consideration of the work, its historical context, its sources, its specific character and meaning.

My tone is becoming increasingly crotchety. But in the light of the amount of art which Toronto produces or which otherwise passes through its galleries, we really must do better. The newspapers must rise above mere reportage in which all things are equal, and take an informed stand, whether or not it is one we individually will agree with. The magazines, glossy or little, must become less indulgent and less self-indulgent, and intervene more provocatively into daily artistic discussion.

The arts in Toronto in the second half of the seventies are nevertheless thriving. The atmosphere is more relaxed than it was formerly. With no apparent dominant thrust shaping new directions, there is more time to explore what has preceded and what goes on around one. It is less significant to be first, or to be a star at 30. It is a mark of when an artist matured if he continues to harp on that edge of originality in his newest work. To the younger artist that component of tradition which dominates even the most important new innovative work also counts for something. It is the basis, after all, on which studiously to establish the grounded-work for what should be a long evolving and fertile career. There is no shortage of optimism in Toronto, but how productive will be the promises of the generation to which this issue is primarily devoted? We, and the artists, will know that only from the work they produce.

RECENT SCULPTURE IN TORONTO

By Walter KLEPAC

Sculpture — or, to speak more accurately, three dimensional art in general — currently enjoys a vigorous and productive existence in Toronto, particularly among those artists who have come onto the scene within the past five to ten years. Paradoxically enough, this recent upsurge in vitality, wide-ranging diversity and, in a few cases, even genuine originality on the part of certain Toronto artists in the area of sculpture occurs at a time when many artists in other major art centres, including that of New York, have experienced an enervating loss of

conviction and sense of direction in their work.

For whatever the reason, whether out of an ingrained, constitutional indifference to the prevailing mood of desperation or because they believe themselves to be too removed from where the real action is to be affected by the constant fluctuations of taste within the international art markets, the present generation of Toronto artists seems to possess the requisite self-confidence and independence of mind to take advantage of the enormous latitude permitted to the making of art to-day and to go about their own business in their own way. Above all, they seem to insist that their work, regardless of the form it ultimately takes, evolve directly out of a free and intense pursuit of their personal interests and preoccupations. There is inherent in their work the tacit assumption that it serve as an instrument for investigating and clarifying certain specific aspects of their own existence and experience in the contemporary world. Indeed, it is almost a matter of coincidence that the majority of these artists just happened to find the three-dimensional or sculptural mode an especially effective and satisfying means for responding as creative individuals to the major shifts in sensibility and perception that have taken place in the 1970's thus far.

It is not surprising, therefore, that among the most accomplished and respected of the young Toronto artists working in three dimensions, only three, David Rabinowitch, Royden Rabinowitch and André Fauteux, consider themselves to be sculptors *per se*: unlike their contemporaries they *do* define their work and their ambitions within the context of the development of modern western sculpture. All three, however, had demonstrated strong artistic personalities and had determined definite areas of urgent personal concern at the outset of their careers so that they were able to selectively draw upon the formal conventions and theory underlying the major sculptural styles of the day without fear of merely imitating those styles.

Already recognized by a growing number of critics as one of the more compelling and innovative contemporary artists in North America to-day and quite possibly the most outstanding sculptor of his generation in Canada, David Rabinowitch at 33 has created a body of work that extends into important new directions the radical alternative to Modernist abstract sculpture developed in the previous decade by the so-called Minimal artists such as Donald Judd, Carl André and Robert Morris. These artists, particularly Judd and André, felt that the obdurate materiality and the obstinate presence of simple solid objects projected a vivid immediacy and a pungent emotional/cognitive clarity to the viewer which he could neither avoid or explain away: sculpture based on such conditions seemed to them to be more real for it forced the viewer to deal in terms of direct experience rather than in terms of abstract formal relations.

David Rabinowitch's small, dense, asymmetrical blocks of cold-rolled steel of 1970-1 manifest the material presence sought by the Minimalists in the form of sheer concentrations of pure matter. These brilliant early pieces go beyond anything done by Rabinowitch's American predecessors in at least two respects: they avoid the latter's use of volumetric, latently idealized forms such as cubes and rhomboids and, because they reject the Minimalist's dependency on large scale, they avoid the patently theatrical situation in which the viewer finds himself dwarfed by the work. Rabinowitch's unique insight in the small masses is that he has clearly identified the essential phy-

sical property of the material being used and makes it the source of the sculpture's other main characteristics. So prominent is our impression of the ponderous weight and density of these thick compact chunks of steel that we tend to regard the walls of each piece not so much as sides but as the outermost boundary of a discrete, palpable mass. Because of this, the deliberately arbitrary-looking shape of a given piece comes across to us as something immutable and absolute. Indeed, objecthood, in the sense of a vivid and distinct experience of matter on the part of the viewer, has rarely been articulated with such compelling clarity and intensity. At the same time, Rabinowitch's small sculptures also suggest a radical method for dealing with verticality. In most traditional sculpture vertical elevation often inadvertently introduces an ambiguous suggestion of an enclosed volume; in the small masses, however, height is explicitly equated with the thickness of the steel plate. Verticality, one could say, has been made a function of the viewer's impression of pure mass.

In his continuing series of planar mass sculptures, first exhibited in Toronto at the end of 1972, David Rabinowitch substitutes the literal object adopted by the Minimalists as a paradigm for our encounter with things of the world, with the concrete, grounded presence of the massive flat planes of steel. While all of the constructions within a planar mass (i.e., drilled holes and cross sectional cuts) are visible at all times, they constantly form distinct new configurations as the viewer walks around the piece. Because a planar mass offers the viewer no gestalt or even a single general overview, it effectively forces him to rely entirely upon his own firsthand observations. But while the planar mass sculptures are, in a very deep sense, vehicles for appearances they by no means trade on random illusions or optical gimmicks. Their constructions evoke quite distinct feelings in us and set up salient visual incidents which we immediately recognize as a real and enduring part of our perceptual repertory. Thus we find that certain constructions elicit a strong bodily sense — as when in moving around a planar mass we perceive an apparent shift in the distribution of mass from one section of the piece to another. Other constructions, however, operate on a strictly cognitive/visual level, e.g., when aligning too or more distant holes from different views we seem to see scales of specific and contrasting magnitudes. In his most recent works Rabinowitch aims for a greater unity and overall coherence by including in a given piece only those constructed appearances which fall into selected well-defined categories. This now enables the viewer to systematically relate individual constructions according to type. His *Metrical (Romanesque) Constructions*, for example, explores a wide range of orders of scale as well as attempts to integrate two dissimilar viewing structures into the same work. One can fairly say of David Rabinowitch's planar mass series that his sculptural language is both original and unique and that his investigations of the problematics of the perception of body in three-dimensional space is without parallel or serious precedent in contemporary art.

From the beginning of his career, André Fauteux's sculptural methods have been basically constructivist while his aesthetic aims have been directed exclusively toward achieving a sensuous, decorative effect within each piece. His work of the past two years has outgrown the emotional constriction and the structural rigidity which often marred his early modified open steel frames. Despite their pronounced

compactness of form the recent Pyramid Sculptures (1975-6) are most engaging when seen at close range for it is then that the viewer becomes caught up in a constant lateral (up and down) expansion and contraction of the various accreted elements along the sides which seems to draw him around the piece. The Pyramids' delicate, subtly paced rhythms are decidedly non-pictorial in character for they effectively activate a heightened awareness in the viewer of movement through real, albeit shallow, physical space. This spatial envelope effect is dramatically counter-pointed by a third, uncluttered side which suddenly reveals the sculpture's full interior volume. Fauteux's sculpture, however is of the formalist persuasion and unfortunately shares its central limitation: while his pieces succeed as elegant, self-contained systems of highly refined sensory pleasure they do nothing to question or extend our uncritical assumptions about the nature of experience or accepted ways of seeing.

The relentlessly lucid intellectual energy and the sheer imaginative power of Royden Rabinowitch's sculpture seem to arise out of an intense personal need to create concrete models of the basic underlying conditions of our knowledge of the world, particularly those conditions which reflect the fundamental connection of the external and physical to the internal and psychic (or mental). Each year from 1969 to 1974, for example, Royden Rabinowitch produced a new group of sculptures which attempted to clarify a specific aspect of our common intuition of volume and to embody it in a unique, wholly self-evident three-dimensional construction. Literally an empty, bounded space, volume is a property which can be only known indirectly: its intangible interior area must be apprehended conceptually, in terms of simple geometric ideas or forms, and its exterior in terms of the shape of its container or the material of its outer surface. It is also a highly illusive, general condition of a vast assortment of material objects and each of Royden's volumetric models in this five year period is a concrete particular whose features reify certain salient universal aspects of this condition. The conic shape of his widely known grease cones (1970), for instance, compresses a multitude of volumetric states, tapering as it does from a full circle to a single point, into a coherent, unified form. The striking tactile quality of the coating of heavy industrial grease simultaneously encompasses both the gritty (a primitive, almost sensual substantiality) and the slick (a well-lubricated, fast surface).

With the prototypal *Kharakorom* (1975) to his latest pieces Royden Rabinowitch's work no longer provides models of our apprehension of the external world, but concerns itself instead with the mind reflecting upon the nature of its own workings and its built-in limitations. This difference in content is reflected in a pronounced difference in accessibility, for while all of Rabinowitch's earlier works revealed their underlying intension (i.e., what they were about) by their outward appearance, the latest sculptures with their greater visual and structural complexity frustrate our discovery of their first principles. We have to look beyond the sleek compact unity of these pieces and appreciate the unique and strange particularity of each of its individual components before we can finally perceive the basic relationship between the whole and its parts in terms of a major ground plane and its developments. It is at this level that we can see the mind accepting a basic set of references and proceed to follow its movements (conscious aesthetic decisions) in the internal dynamics of the sculpture itself. What

adds to their interest and fascination for us is that their brittle assemblages of thin steel plate and their nervous asymmetry and racy angular lines somehow seem to cogently sum up the dominant mood of the 1970's.

Murray Favro and Robin Mackenzie, two non-artist and decidedly non-mainstream artists who have exhibited regularly in Toronto since the late sixties, have contributed substantially to the expansion of both local and Canadian art into directions which lie well outside the established modes of art making and accepted canons of taste and style. They have made these contributions largely by the conspicuous example of their steadfast, single-minded pursuit of issues and eccentric constructions (Favro) and of attitudes towards the environment and natural phenomena (Mackenzie), which have no direct precedent or sanction in recent contemporary art. The most radical and important implication of the art of both Favro and Mackenzie is that its value as art entirely depends on the fact that the viewer can test its insights against his own observations and reflections. Indeed, without this correlation between some precise area of experience and the work itself their work would be incomprehensible. Unlike conventional sculpture, there is nothing to call attention to either this connection or to the fact that they are works of art at all apart from their unusually focused and authoritative presence and their disquieting resonance.

Certain younger artists have taken this independent course even further by concentrating their artistic energies on purely private and subjective matters and have sought to embody their essentially introspective insights in original formal relations. Most notable among such artists have been Robin Collyer, Mary Janitch, Stephen Cruise, Ian Carr-Harris, Colette Whiten and An Whitlock.

TORONTO VIDEO: LOOKING INWARD

By Peggy GALE

Television was patented in the twenties and went public in the early fifties, but small-format, portable, closed-circuit video has been taken up only in the last ten years. This "personal" use of the medium, while important and widespread to-day, still has an aura of mystery about it.

We can at once identify three broad areas of small-format video activity: social/political commentary, documentary recording, and art works. Toronto video involves all of these interests. But the city is best known in international video circles for the artists' use of the medium. Rather than wishing to be objective, some of this video looks inward, seeking a reality not evident on the surface of things. A kind of personal journalism, it probes the psyche through associations, memories, juxtapositions of facts and intuitions. Or, looking outward to the cultural context around us, other artists use video to probe into a world too often taken thoughtlessly at face value. In each case, the narrative element in the best of these works demands a special kind of involvement from the viewer.

Lisa Steele is one of the artists looking inward. She has been working with video for five years now; at 29, she has produced a body of work that is substantial, coherent, and subtly

provoking. Originating within, her work has a universal relevance and meaning.

Facing South (Spring 1975, 22 minutes) caps an important series of tapes and points the way to the materials of the work now in progress. Slow, measured, this piece charts planting and germination and flowering in her home-grown garden, while at the same time implying changes of a more personal and intimate nature. In *Facing South*, we catch the briefest glimpses of this interior world; for example, the camera pores carefully over stamens, pistils, new leaves of the plants around her, and then imperceptibly shifts to study a long slit, a little blurry, and surrounding hairs, as the voice-over commentary muses quietly "but here, seeing here is difficult. Even under magnification, the clitoris remains hidden between two folds of skin." The change is barely noticed; the context of this latter sequence is sexual only in the broadest sense. Woman (in this case Steele herself) has a being and a rôle within all the other life cycles of the natural world. Later in the same tape, when we see her biting off 14-day-old nasturtium leaves, or clipping them neatly with a knife for a nasturtium-leaf sandwich, we experience a vague disquiet: we had been convinced by now of nature's harmony, and it seems cannibal, unnatural, for Steele to consume these plants she had nurtured so carefully. Yet the narrative moves on. At the end of the pieces, Steele sits patiently in the sun, surrounded by her rooftop garden of herbs and flowers, and, after a long silence, her voice, impassive: "At noon, rising, locate the distance to view..." We are left waiting, as she is.

The tape is ostensibly all about plants. But the few non-vegetable images are so striking that the human issues raised are what remain in the memory. *Facing South* is an interior journey of discovery, and it is the interweaving of themes, the study of motive and response, that captures one's imagination. The tape is visually striking, the images are framed with the practised eye of a professional photographer, but it is the overt and implied content that confirms its hold upon the viewer.

The newest work (in progress, Summer 1976) builds this base. *G's Dream, I'm Having Trouble with My Heart, and 186,000 miles/second* are three portions of a projected seven-part series entitled "Waiting For Lancelot". *G's Dream* (12 minutes) considers an insect world, minute movements, with images of flies, ants, hugely delicate blades of grass. But single lines, striking in their beauty, refer to more intimate visions: "He tied me up and left me in the forest for dead. I dream... Love-lies-bleeding all around me. Hearts-ease all around me. Idle-love all around me. The wild pansy all around me." Suggestive, thoughtful, it is an evocation of a woman's heart in transition from love to life.

I'm Having Trouble with My Heart (9 minutes), while promising to continue this romantic interlude, chastens us abruptly. What we hear is a compact dissertation in biology: "During the next eight hours while you are lost in sleep, your heart beats about 36 thousand times. With each beat it pumps about two fluid ounces of blood. In less than a minute it moves your five quarts of blood completely through your body..." What we see are starkly compelling images: Lisa Steele in a white dress against grainy shadows, crescent moon passing in a stormy sky, knife against bare shoulder, a heart pulsing through finely-stretched skin.

Mortality. There is a strong sense here of the symbolic; we are told that when her heart was opened it showed five words grown into its muscled interior: voice, candle, wheat, hunted, carnival. Words chosen for their sound, but

words with nuance nevertheless. And the only response in the tape: "There is no cure."

Most recent of all, *186,000 miles/second* studies attractions between people: "This sex thing, you know, is really overrated. Even at the speed of light it still takes time." The connections made this time are very specific: a bee pokes about in a flower for pollen, a penis eases gently into a waiting vagina. In, out, in, out. There is no allegory here, we are considering the very roots of human response. There is no place for romance in this clear white light.

Each of these three tapes looks at a separate section of a woman's passage through life and involvement with others, and the style of the work varies with the mood and subject. Each tape interconnects, intercomments in both form and content, with the others, as a sort of Pilgrim's Progress. These tapes are "teaching" works; their message is personal and intimate, but at the same time deals with the broadest and most human of themes. It is this double level that involves both heart and mind in the viewer.

Colin Campbell's tapes spring from similar needs to explore and define interior realities. His early works (1972-1973)¹ were highly structured and of considerable formal beauty, clear-cut and pared to the bone. The issues were never as simple as their presentation indicated, however, offering an investigation of self as well as a strong visual statement. The more recent work amplifies this original economy of means with a narrative dialogue and gently softened, more complex images. All of the tapes from 1974, *Correspondence I and II, Love-life, This Is An Edit/This Is Real, I'm A Voyeur, Secrets, and California Myth/Reality* are autobiographical and questioning, incorporating either incidents from his life or friends' comments and letters. The seven tapes have a physical resemblance, all being montages of fixed-camera shots with voice-over narration; the tempo is languid, thoughtful, the tone introspective. Views through windows predominate.

Hindsight (Winter 1975, 22 minutes) is the culmination of these works. Texts from friends combine with Campbell's own writing to set a mood of suspense appropriate to the central incident: Campbell's discovery of his second sight, his personal Force. Once again we are looking through windows: stark cross-bars frame and focus attention as we see the artist silhouetted, spotlighted, or moving through shadows. The tonalities of softly overlapping greys on the monitor surface add to the mysterious quality of the script with its references to ghostly presences, the preparation of mummies, ritual tattoos, childhood flash-backs.

His newest work begins with the same aura. *Passage* (Summer 1976, 17 minutes) is beautiful, a montage of tall windows with gently billowing curtains, views of sunshine and shadows with intercuts showing the artist within this space, gazing pensively away from us or moving with a sense of abstract pattern on a sheeted surface. There is voice-over throughout, and a persistent bell-like music, as we are given a carefully-considered evaluation of character and personality, all in the third person: "He had been on the road for more than three decades. The more he had learned, the more his fear had increased... Approximate truth was his preference. Too much truth made one dishonest... He believed in the intangible. The intangible became his constant companion, and, eventually, his servant." It seems a summing-up, a clearing of sight lines.

Flight, completed in September 1976 (10 minutes), is very much a companion piece to *Passage*, detailing an ecstatic sexual expe-