TORONTO TENDENCIES
SPRING '98

The Toronto gallery scene is attractive for both collectors and for Quebec artists who are increasingly exhibiting there. Toronto's Gallery District, bounded by King, Queen, Spadina and Richmond Streets, continues to flourish with a great concentration of private galleries, artist studio spaces, photography and printmaking facilities. The DeLeon White Gallery, 455 King St. W. is an eco-art exhibition space representing Montreal-based artists Doug Leve Kamen, Wynick Tuck, Moore, Ryerson and the headquarters of PADAQ (The Professional Art Dealers Association of Canada) and Toronto Photographers Workshop. April 30 to May 30, TPW presents photographers Carole Condé and Carl Beveridge in a three-narrative photo series depicting episodes of labour unrest in Canadian history: the demise of the Newfoundland Cod fishery; the 1946 Hamilton strike at Stelco; and recent resistance to the Ontario right wing conservative corporate agenda. Produced in consultation with the FFW, GAW and USWA, this exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with essay by Clive Robertson and a concurrent lecture May 7 at Ryerson Polytechnic by American photographer Allan Sekula, author of Against the Grain, subtitled «Dismal Science: Photography and Imaginary Economies», concerned with the social impact of industrial economies. Mercer Union, at 778 King St. W, continues to show groundbreaking work by new contemporary Canadian artists and the

Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation is open by appointment. The Open Studio artist-run centre at 468 King St. W, offers printmaking facilities and courses. At 401 Richmond St. W, arts facilities include A Space, Area Gallery, CARO and CARAC, Gallery 44 (contemporary photography), Gallery 401, the Women's Art Resource Centre and YYZ Artists Outlet and Publishers. From April 8 - May 23, YYZ presents photographs of Koh's Notes on contours - four projects on the poetry of commonplace objects in urban space (postcards, installation, video) and Su Nyudan Eight Men Called Eugene and other works (film and video). Gallery Moos relocated to Richmond St. at Bathurst, (Jean-Paul Riopelle's Toronto gallery) shows work by Josée Demarche this May. Galleries nearby include Susan Hobbs, Cold City artist-centre and S.L. Simpson, which recently presented Lauréonne Simmonds' erotic photographs as its final exhibition. Towards Harbourfront, at 20 Lower Spadina Rd., Galerie Côté Allard and the Centre francophone du Toronto métropolitain featured works by six Franco-Ontarian artists in Tous animaux/Common ground to April 30. The Power Plant at Harbourfront Centre celebrates its 10th anniversary with Threshold (April 3-June 14) curated by Louise Dom­pierre, a rollercoaster of contemporary art that includes a hall of mirrors by American Teresa Fernandez, Torontonians Ian Carr-Harris, Judith Schwartz and Lyla Iye, along with Japanese artist Masato Nakamura and German artist Mischa Kellb. Uptown the Art Gallery of Ontario exhibits the Courtauld Collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Art (June 10-September 20), Victorian Fairy Painting (June 25-Sept. 15) and Displacements, an exhibition by three internationally recognized sculptors: Columbian Doris Salcedo, Poland's Miroslaw Balka and British sculptress Rachel Whiteread (April 8 - July 26).

Toronto's near equivalent to Steenbrooke St. W. in Montreal, the Yorkville District, is an area where the establishment galleries increasingly successfully ply their trade. Mira Godard's recent shows by New York based Irish photographer Sean Scully and Joe Fafard's bronze and glass statues are case in point. This May, Tom Hopkins presents an exhibition of recent prints. The Edward Day Gallery represents David Pelletier at open a solo exhibit at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris in 1999. Situated next to the Four Seasons at 45 Avenue Rd., Gallery Teodora represents Montreal artists Trevor Goring and Denis Malo. Teodora Pic's ambitious spring offerings include Hugo Frenes' Surface and Symbol (April 4 - 16), followed by Carol Ruth's Still Lives (April 18-30) and Jim Seward's recent oils Alignement (May 2-15). A brief stroll from Yorkville brings you to Catherine Wijeged's last sense installation at the Institute of Contemporary Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum which runs to September 24th. The University of Toronto's Hart House Gallery, or to the Design Exchange Gallery at the TD Tower Building on Bloor St., where this April 25 through May a
group show, The Greening of Toronto, focuses on the urban environment. In nearby Foresthill, Lonsdale Gallery presents Ronald Boaks Discovered, paintings, collages, sculptures and prints incorporating photographic imagery and various found materials.

Art at Morrow. Wave Contemporary Art, Christopher Cutts and Olga Korper Gallery are situated on Morrow Avenue in an artist studio and residential district west of Toronto's downtown. The vast studio and gallery exhibition spaces accommodate large scale work in a wide range of media. Olga Korper's spring schedule includes solo shows by Stan Denniston (large scale photographic diptychs), Toronto sculptress Christine Davis' tunic shapes fashioned from chain mail (April 4-29), sculptor Reinhard Reitzenstein's bronze benches cast from grapevines (May 2-27), and Roland Poulin's dense wood, layered pigment and cast fossilized forms (May 30-July 11). Christopher Cutts presents Murray Favro's fabulistic and inventive machines and instruments May 2-27, functionless reproductions belonging to industrial production, functioning as vehicles for knowledge and imagination, and of which the joy and discovery of making these objects becomes the function of the work.


At McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Skol Fowler & Jim Logan address issues of representation from a feminist and First Nations perspective (May 8-25) and Goodridge Roberts Revealed highlights 116 works in still life, landscape and figurative work by this Quebec artist (until June 14). The Oakville Galleries exhibits Paul Nipp's Separation and Observation, implications of landscape curated by Martha Fleming, and Robert Fones Basket works & related objects.

Contact 98 May = Photography in Toronto co-organized by directors Stephen Bulger (Stephen Bulger Gallery), Linda Book (Lonsdale Gallery) and Darren Alexander (Tate-Alexander Gallery) is Toronto's 2nd annual photo festival (Canada's largest festival devoted to fine art photography) from May 1-30, consisting of over 90 photo exhibitions throughout Greater Toronto including the outrageously personal work of L.A. photographer Nan Goldin at the Jane Corkin Gallery and Carole Condé and Carl Beveridge's three part photo narrative depicting labour unrest in Canadian history at the Toronto Photographers' Workshop, at 80 Spadina. The Stephen Bulger Gallery, dedicated to young photographers' work, shows Bill Owens' Suburbia, Our kind of People & Working (I do it for the money) and Jock Sturges through May.

Carol Rath
Still Life no. 2, 1998
Acrylic on canvas
91.5 x 102 cm

Jane Corkin
Herb Ritts. Karen, Los Angeles, 1989
Gelatin silver print, 51 x 40.5 cm

Michael J. Molter
Catherine Widgery: Lost Sense

As a curatorial tribute to the lost sense of materials, Widgery's assemblages are Duchampian in disguise, like the antique bird cage with milkweed seedlings in it, that float and move ever so slightly if you breathe on them. Acted out in museums that segregate art from life, could not exist if art still had a collective or holistic purpose. Widgery's art suggests that whereas museum collections originally reaffirmed the course of history and civilization, exemplified the many permutations of many cultures, the museum object's cultural sources and contexts have now become interchangeable. We switch from one artifact to the next at will walking through the collections, as we switch channels on television. The sense is of immediate gratification, of incorporating the soul of one object, then another and so on ad infinitum.

As a mercurial tribute to the our nostalgia for the absolute, Widgery's Kafkaesque conflation of a bird's body with a whistle where its head should be recalls Joseph Cornell's dream-like box assemblages. The deer's head mounted on a wooden shield has had its antlers replaced by two worm boxing gloves looks defeated, not by hunters but by museology itself. One box of glass has dead butterflies that look like they're alive, flying around and alighting on a flute that hangs in space. The empty space within the container defers to the butterfly specimens' delicate elusive beauty. While the sleep of reason may produce monsters, the legacy of a civilization that bases its knowledge on evidence undoubtedly ends up with a surfeit of artifacts. Lost Sense ultimately instructs and enlightens us to the fact that "When museums were founded, cultures were violated and plundered in the course of amassing the objects for display. That may not happen anymore but we should recognize the arrogance that represents."

John K. Grande

Goodridge Roberts Revealed

McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg
Jan. 31 - June 14, 1998

Spanning some 50 years of Roberts' artistic production and including 117 canvases and drawings, Goodridge Roberts Revealed paints a portrait of Roberts as a highly complex artist, faithful above all to landscape painting or to his best, which was perhaps due to Webers's School of Paris background that Roberts would be so at ease with the aesthetic position of John Lyman in Montreal a decade later. Clement Greenberg, America's champion of Abstract Expressionism claimed Roberts to be the artist who "woke my interest in Canadian art in the first place" and for good reason. Goodridge Roberts had an incredible facility at painting a landscape subject while seeing it in an abstract, highly personal language of colour, contrasts, light and texture. Roberts produced some 3,000 paintings during his lifetime, some of which pale in comparison to his best, which were as subtle and "abstract" in their approach to figurative painting as the purist abstractionists. For their colouristic intensity and textural painterly atmospheres, where the painting supplanted the landscape, Roberts was something of an anomaly, typical of the 1960s.

Among the best works to be seen in this show are Laurentian Road No. 2 (1959) which recall Matisses's early paintings, and Gouffre River Baie-St.-Paul (1949) whose multiple shades of greens and blues communicate a self contained spiritual quality. Landscape with Oatfield (1959) has brushwork almost, but not quite, as frenetic as a Van Gogh. Roberts' Portrait of a Lady in a Green Hat (ca. 1936), his paintings of his wife Marian and Seated Boy (1942), whose dark outlines, sudden colours and classic pose recall Picasso's Rose period paintings, are also in this major retrospective show which will tour the Beaverbrook Art Gallery (20 Sept.-Nov. 1998), Musée du Québec (2 Dec. 1998 - 7 March, 1999), the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (April 1 -June 13, 1999) and the London Regional Art & Historical Museums (Sept. 4-Oct. 16, 1999).

John K. Grande

Stephen Lack - American Dream

Galerie Bellefeuille, Montreal

No artist, it seems, has been so fascinated by the automobile as Stephen Lack has. A series of 20 car images in a single block and another 6-pack offer a parable of generic car styles and look strange packed together on canvas at the Galerie Bellefeuille. It's an auto enthusiast's dream or an ecologist's nightmare-take your 6-pack or leave it. The use of bright shocking colours - turquoise, yellow, white, blue, green, even Day-Glo in the straight on side views of a 62 Continental, a 61 Pink Cadillac, a white Eldorado Convertible, a Cunon DeSoto, the 67 Ferrari and Corvette are a homage to the demise of America's exuberant love affair with car design as an artform. As Lack states: "One of my epiphanies was at the General Motors pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair where there was a car like a Corvette that seemed to be floating in space. There..."
are only three things that can be called sculpture in the 20th century: the electric razor, the skyscraper and the car." The '51 Custom Mercedes, a '57 Chevy, a Hudson Deluxe, and a '56 Chrysler Lack paints personify America's post-War dream of future-topia with dashboards and details as spiky as a Pollock or De Kooning painting and with dragon-like fins and wings, smooth noses and extended lozenge-like lights as sexy as Marilyn Monroe.

Lack's paintings of the latest sports cars models - a red short wheel base Ferrari, a Turbo Porsche, or Hemi - are no longer Utopian or nostalgic but brutish, savage, remorseless symbols of macho power. They're Body Machine Morphs (all streamlined proportion and not a shred of decoration. David Cronenberg caught this perverse relation between speed, sensation and the bodily estrangement in his recent film Crash. Lack is no stranger to Cronenberg having appeared as an actor in Scanners and Dead Ringers. Stephen Lack: "My movie energy has been sublimated into my painting. Painting is a re-centring experience, film is disembodiment." Lack's Der Viper is auto body painting with a difference. This fast car is art, not 3-D metal and glass. Lack tells me he painted in the background in first, in solid swatches of colour. The Day-Glo image of the car body came last, spray painted it in a single gesture. "One of my fastest paintings of one of the fastest cars" he comments. The message is subtler than you might think. These cars are symbols of the American Dream but they look so savage, rapacious and estranged from the settings. And where are the people?

John K. Grande

SYMBOLIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS
By JEANNE RANDOLPH
(Edited by Steve Reinke)
An associate staff psychiatrist with the Toronto Hospital Program in Medical Psychiatry, Jeanne Randolph has lectured widely on the relation between art and psychoanalytic theory and collaborated with many Canadian artists to produce photo-text works, video and performance. Symbolization and its Discontents follows her previous publication Psychoanalysis and Synchronised Swimming and Other Writings on Art, published by YYZ in 1991. The latest collection includes Public Lectures: What Don't Women Want; Technology and the Meaningful Body, and Theoretical Essays: Sacred and Secular Performance; Psychoanalytic Reflections on Identity and Ritual; A City for Bachelors; Sculpture and the Philosophy of Modernism: A Reflection on the Reference to Technology in the work of Zvi Goldstein; Who am I? and Ficto-Criticism: Truth Disguised as a Lie; Sleepy Time Tales; Confessions and Proclamations; J, B, X, Y, and Dr. Jeanne Randolph: From Stan Denniston's "Personal Fictions"; and Fictions: Hurricane Watch and Understanding Media.

In Truth Disguised as a Lie, Randolph writes of her collaboration with Vera Frankel and their "manifesto" that circulated for years known as The Five Tenets. These are: Museum of the Revolution (Precept #1 Art Implicates Life), Toronto Life (Precept #2 The Relationship between Artwork and Citizen Implies a Public), A Fierce Miscreed (Precept #3 Art is Not the Opposite of Technology), Regulation Time (Precept #4 Interprets is Power), and finally Vested Interest (Precept #5 Freedom is Nourished in the Bosom of Remembrance), where left hand page texts complement photographs from Frankel's From the Transit Bar and other installations. One section recreates a fictional meeting between Vera Frankel and General H. T. Schwartzkopf during a flight from Toronto to Ottawa. Describing America's active psychological warfare program to Frankel he explains that the words maimed and kilted are military jargon for discredited and fired. Frankel concludes by replying "I will tell you - the heart of their commitment is their vested interest in remembrance." In the chapter Vérité Folk, illustrated by Nicole Johoceu, Randolph concludes: "Then we all agreed that it had been in an attempt to inspire hope that the Kleinians claimed we could ever make restitution for sadistic deeds, symbolic or literal."

Michael Molter