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SACKVILLE

I FINALLY FOUND SOMEONE WHO REALLY CARES

THE 8TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM OF PERFORMANCE ART

Owens Art Gallery, Struts Art Gallery, Faculty Media Art Centre 19 to 25 October 2003.

Thistle, hand

Object and Hip Hop Culture, also organizer of Mass Appeal: The Art are the core of the work. Audience city meets country. It is the collision of rural and urban life. The tide relationships between the borders\ntion/performance looked at the Outskirts. The audi­

Outskirts refers to that area where the Sackville area, having taught Franklin Sirmans, New York. Cran, Calgary; Kirsten Forkert, Vancouver; Robyn Moody, Leth­

Robert Pasquier and an installation art exhibition like Mass Appeal sees itself as a bridge between the elitist world of the art gallery and that of the street. I would question if Mass Appeal actually has mass appeal to peopleoulside the world of art galleries and university art departments, but if those who attended such exhibitions gained some insight into a subject like hip hop culture, then so much the better.

The problem with any idea of mass appeal in the arts, particularly visual art, is that art is usually with\n
the confines of an art gallery. In spite of many galleries’ noble efforts their exhibition spaces are still a foreign place for a lot of people. With that in mind Vancouver’s Kirsten Forkert took her performance work on the streets of Sackville. Street theatre has a long tradition much longer than the go­

vitational burnt areas. The piece raised questions about the fragility of cultural and informational heritage in a globalized highly tech­

nology world plagued by war and violence. Other winners were Roger Victor for his ingenious hybrid boat and tree painting Bateau et Arbre (2003) and Frédéric Avery for his triptych Terre Amerindienne. Moncton artist Georges Blanchadie won the newly established Prix Claude Roussel. Claude Roussel’s retrospective afforded locals and visitors the occasion to become better acquainted with the painting and sculpture of this veteran of the Acadian arts scene.

Outdoors near the main exhibition space, Jacques Newashish from Wemotaci in northern Quebec created a fascinating environmental interwove of natural materials and painting. Hand painted sticks arranged in groupings pointed to the heavens above. Other tree sections were intended to represent the four human races and native colours and there were spirit catchers in various places; a collection of natural elements expressed a wish for harmony with nature. At the opening of the event, Newashish had expressed his gratitude to the Acadian organizers for inviting a Native Amérindien from Quebec stating: "Mother Earth needs us. We should think of her." André Michel presented a package sculpture using natural forms and materials—posts with rocks perched on top all tied together with yellow cord. Armand Vaillancourt contributed a new work titled Le Crépuscule (Fin de Temps). The centrepiece of the assemblage/installation was a light green wooden boat that recalled the fish industry predominant in the region for centuries. Turned onto its side the boat spilled oyster shells onto the surrounding blue hillside and was in the process of eroding (like the ocean’s resources). Other found readymades that referenced the industrious history of Acadia’s people surrounded this piece and were illuminated at night by eight illuminated torches.

Inside the main building Edward “Ned” Albert Bear carved with butternut and horse hair masks for the public to see the process. Carlos Gomez demonstrated his drum making skills using bear grease. Red Cedar wood from British Columbia, and deer skin. Mario Cyr’s hybrid and imaginative art and his bingo events (winner takes a painting home) attracted people of all ages. Michel Martin, René Cyr, Nicole Haché, Tina Rose Bastien, Marcel Boudreau, Sylvie Marc, Georges Gagnon and Bernardo Rossato each added their unique and colourful artworks (and personali­

ties) to the events that ensued. Caraquet native Paul Ouellette’s brightly painted unicorns, ships and amazing objects were a total discovery for many. Even some neighbours had never seen his highly original artworks before! Charles LeGresley’s installation that was like a sanctuary made of bows and branches of ever­

green and cedar. Titled L’être éphémère (2003) LeGresley’s piece, which almost resembled a dancing figure in its entirety, won the Prix du Public for the event. We look forward to next year’s FAVA with great anticipation!

John K. Grande
CLAUD ROUSSEL INTERVIEWED BY JOHN K. GRANDE

From Folk to Avant Garde and back again

CLAUD ROUSSEL was born in 1930 at EDMUNDSTON.
NEW BRUNSWICK. He went on to study art from 1950 to 1956
AT L'ÉCOLE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE MONTRÉAL and was awarded
DIPLOMAS IN ART PROFESSORSHIP AND SCULPTURE. When he
returned to his native city, EDMUNDSTON, he became the first
ARTIST TO TEACH ART IN FRANCO-PHONE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE
PROVINCE. In 1959, he was appointed ASSISTANT CURATOR AT
THE BEAVERBROOK ART GALLERY IN FREDERICTON. In 1961,
he was awarded a CANADA COUNCIL SENIOR FELLOWSHIP
THAT PERMITTED HIM TO VISIT EUROPE AND WORK FULL-TIME ON
HIS ART WORK. In 1963, he became RESIDENT ARTIST AT
L'UNIVERSITÉ DE MONCTON and participated in the establishment
OF THE VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT, FOUNDED AN ART GALLERY,
AND WAS A PROFESSOR THERE FOR 29 YEARS.

Claude Roussel's art has always been accompanied by an intense and varied artistic production that includes permanent architectural and monumental art projects. His works are in the Olympic Sculpture Garden in Seoul, Korea (1988) and many other collections. During his career he has received various distinctions and medals: in 1964, the Allied Arts Medal from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada; in 1967, the Centennial Medal; in 1977, the Queen's Commemorative Medal; in 1982, the Ordre de la Pléiade Medal; in 1984, the Order of Canada and in 1992, the 125th Anniversary Medal of Canada; in November 1998. In December 1999, Claude Roussel was elected a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA).

J.G.: Claude, I believe you actually began carving at a very early age, before any schooling and many of your subjects came from nature.
C.R.: Horses, birds... The first thing I remember carving was an airplane. Before I did model airplanes I could not afford to buy them at 10 years old, so I carved the airplane. And from the airplane I went on to carve birds and became more refined. Between age 14 and 16, I carved many race horses. In this mini retrospective, I have 60 years of documented works and photographs.

J.G.: And Dr. Laporte was quite an inspiration.
C.R.: Yes. My parents were impressed by my ability to do things but Dr. Laporte was instrumental in encouraging me. When he came to our house in Edmundston, I was the oldest of a family of 15 so the doctor came fairly often and he saw the fish carving. Being a wood carver himself, when he saw my interest in art, he enrolled me in a correspondence course in taxidermy which led to mounting various species: fish, rabbit, grouse, deer heads, etc. It kept me close to the anatomy of things. The year after that I knew I should refine my technique in sculpture so I used illustrations of other nature artists and adapted them to carving. But of course gradually, I also felt the need for personal expression which led me to interpret historical and Indian legends.

J.G.: There is already a game going on with the compositional formats...
C.R.: Yes. I was discovering that the importance of art is to be able to create your own designs.

J.G.: Actually The Scalp (1949) which you did as early as 1947 shows an incredibly intricate capacity and technique in wood carving and this is before going to the École des Beaux-arts. When you were first working your influences, were they mainly church carving or what?
C.R.: Before doing religious work, I was interested in historical themes. Between naturalistic illustrations and Indian themes, it was mainly the picturesque inhabitant type of sculpture - the Bourgault style - but I always considered any theme a pretext to do something. I saw the works of the classical Greek and Renaissance sculptors in the encyclopaedia and was striving to be as good as them. I spent a whole winter carving a block of wood (Sculp) with very small crude tools, and managed to achieve fairly good results. Anatomy always interested me a lot.

J.G.: Going to the École des Beaux-arts in Montreal in 1950 was a big step for someone coming from Acadia. Were there any other Acadians there at the time?
C.R.: Not at the same time, but two others came shortly after. There were a few who attended the school before me but they never had the courage to come back to Acadia. When I got there, I spent 6 years developing new techniques and practising creativity in clay modelling, sculpture, painting, drawings, etc. The teaching was still fairly traditional at the time. In painting, it was more far out. Alfred Pellet had already been there. The contemporary spirit I learned there stimulated me throughout my career.

J.G.: And who were your favourite teachers?
C.R.: I guess they were all important but Jacques Deionmanson, Louis Archambault, Julien Hébert, Armand Elliot, Sylvia Daoût and Maurice Raymond were very demanding and important to me. I still have quite a few drawings from the time, but all the major paintings and sculptures were kept by the school.

J.G.: We see you are absorbing a lot of contemporary influences but you were also making religious pieces.
C.R.: At the time, religious works were the only public art in demand. I paid my studies by working during vacations doing sculpture for twelve churches. I was the first one to do the entire decoration for the whole church including a Way of the Cross and an altar painting for the Church of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows in Edmundston from 1953-56. I won a prize in Montreal with the carving Immaculée Conception in 1954, and that was a break!

J.G.: In a sense didn't your Montreal's École des Beaux-arts education isolate you in your native Acadia community?
C.R.: They always thought that the art schools had spoiled me. They did not mind the narrative rigorous drawings and similar works, but the nudes were shocking to them.

J.G.: When you came back to Edmundston, you were jumping between commissions which were a financial necessity and a more avant-gardist expression or experimentation.
C.R.: At the same time I was doing works like the Haida tribute which was totally abstract. Living in Edmundston after my studies from 1956 to 1959 I made work for...
myself. I had a few requests for public sculptures that dealt with themes of communication and survival.

**J.G.:** There is a kind of cultural colonization that happens not only in the real world but in the art world. Adapting to the latest international trends in the 1950s and 1960s is one thing, but trying to deal with the hierarchy of that same art world while maintaining a regional identity as an Acadian must be difficult...

**C.R.:** I had a very traditional public, and the artists who expected a contemporary approach. I was always caught on this tight wire of trying to please both camps, while maintaining my identity, so I could do something more progressive. I had to be as sensitive to international trends as to my Acadian environment without being overly regionalist. I was aware of the protective acceptance of larger cities. Our art can be as meaningful and different from that of Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver.

**J.G.:** In those figurative, very realist scenes of miners and fishermen in Acadia you made, you experimented with new techniques such as sand on enamel and masonite.

**G.R.:** The theme of the fisherman was always very important to me. Sculpture is very rigid and demanding, but painting with sand and enamel was looser, more lyrical. I put the enamel in squeeze bottles, and drew free hand à la Jackson Pollock, with a controlled dripping. I used this technique from 1961 to 1966 and came back to it in 1996. In 1967, I worked a few years on geometric wood reliefs until 1970. Then I started a series called The Moon and its Effects - shaped canavs reliefs inspired by the moon expeditions with a sense of fantasy and sensuality.

**J.G.:** You were not afraid to treat social themes in your art. For instance, there is The Anxieties of the Fisherman and Chomeau (1971). This latter work experiments with polyester resin collaging newspaper articles documenting unemployment in Acadia.

**G.R.:** The unfortunate thing about all this is that I collected that documentation on the problems of this north eastern region of New Brunswick in 1971. Would you imagine it is still the same problem. It is like a singer who does a chanson engaged in the hope that it will help the situation.

**J.G.:** An even more powerful political series are the plastic works, serigraphs on vacuum formed ABS, like Who Will Take the Cutters? (1975). The latter piece deals with political and cultural isolation and depicts a series of chains that form enclosed circles around parts of a New Brunswick map...

**C.R.:** Even if I am not active in social and political movements, because of my natural sensivity to the human condition, social and political problems, I must react to unacceptable situations to help make people aware of them. From 1971 to 1979, I did many of these works in polyester resins and vacuum forming. This technique consist of heating and dropping serigraphed plastic sheets on a mold. The vacuum causes the form to fit the solid shapes underneath.

**J.G.:** You were involved with CAR (Canadian Artist's Representation) early on, and helped improve the facilities for artists in the Moncton community.

**C.R.:** Along with Georges Goguen and Sister Eulalie Boudreau, starting 1971, we tried to apply the national CARFAC policies to Atlantic art galleries. The going was tough, but now these policies and the artists' status are accepted.

As for improving facilities for Acadian artists, that was my dream. I knew that in order to develop myself personally I had to go to Montreal. One of my goals was to try and make my passion for art available to other Acadian artists. Lord Beaverbrook actually hired me to be a link between the Acadian and English communities at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery from 1959 to 1963. I could have spent my whole career there, but I didn't. I was aware of the lack of visual art tradition brought on by our tumultuous Acadian history and devoted much of my energy in art education to sensitizing the public to art. It was a naive and Don Quichote-like approach, but looking at the present vitality of our arts scene, I think my contribution has paid off and I consider it as important as my own art production.

**J.G.:** You returned to the sand and enamel technique with new landscape works in the 1990s.

**C.R.:** When I retired, I bought a van. My first wife, Brigitte, passed away in 1988. In the early '90s with my second wife, Marie-Josée, we traveled quite a bit and went out to Western Canada and US. Seeing unusual landscapes and mountains, I felt the urge to come back to drawing. When she was driving I did quick sketches. Back at home, I enlarged them in transposing the composition and finally transposed them into a large format of enamel painting - the landscape theme is unlimited.

**J.G.:** Yes... Your recent work marks a return to traditional wood carving. The Observateur (1999) series have a figure who looks like an Alex Colville figure with binoculars in all his 3-D splendour staring straight at us. And then there are these carved and painted birds on wood pedestals. The carving recalls your beginnings working in taxidermy.

**C.R.:** At the beginning I was doing craft but now I am going farther than craft. I use the same natural beauty, but the large scale of each element also gives it an abstract feel.

**J.G.:** The presentationnal Observateur series is very contemporary. The format, the plinths, the carving and colour. These colourful carving enable you to bypass today's trends in art, while incorpo rating your knowledge of carved sculpture.
THE LAURENTIANS

THE LAURENTIANS
LA LIGNE DU NORD
CONTEMPORARY ART IN THE LAURENTIANS
Ville de Mont-Tremblant,
municipalities of Labelle and St-Faustin-Lac-Carré
Mont-Tremblant and the Domaine Saint-Bernard
August 7th-31st, 2003

La Ligne du nord saw the realization of permanent and ephemeral sculptures in the Laurentian mountains. As an initiative the project seemed visionary and is an inspiration for public and artists seeking to draw links between nature and contemporary culture. In St. Jovite Catharine Widgery created a mountain-like passage sculpture, Bill Vazan worked under the telecabin at Tremblant incising the rockface in one of the largest picto-megaliths at Sainte-Foy. Nils-Udo three kilometre train station. Even more remarkable was the contribution from German sculptor Nils-Udo three kilometer train station. Ingrid Koivukangas from British Columbia worked at an integration that involved applying birch bark to the exterior of over 60 trees and creating an earth sensitive directional piece. Jeanne Fabi's forest interior work involved treedehgh stretchers laden with cones. The seedlings were placed like patients in the army-like cos, as if a reminder of the fragility of nature, in an area undergoing monocultural planning and eco-touristic development. Dominique Valade has created a boat and archway sculpture for permanent installation on the Rivière Rouge near Labelle.

What is remarkable about such an initiative is that it causes the public to reassess their relation to the Laurentian landscape in response to the artworks being created in situ. The Laurentians have never had a contemporary art event of this magnitude until this one. Co-ordinated and realized by Dominique Valade of the Centre des Arts contemporains du Québec à Montréal this event was a celebration of diversity—both cultural and natural—and merged nature and art in a truly contemporary way. Let's hope there will be more in the years to come! John K. Grande

MONTREAL

TOM HOPKINS
Galerie de Bellefeuille
1367, avenue Greene
Tel: 514-933-4406
Fax: 933-6553
art@debelleville.com
July 3-15th, 2003

Tom Hopkins' name carries a lot of weight in the local art circles and he has set free many a talented soul from his academic workshops. But it's not his knack for spotting a budding artist that has made his name famous, it was, and is, his own art. Hopkins' body of work is impressive and steady, with a predilection for heavily textured surfaces and mythological themes, and scattered amongst them, blossoming from time to time, marvelous delicate monotypes.

As fresh and powerful as Hopkins paintings were once upon a time, they seem to have lost some of their luster. Oddly, his new works shimmer with luminous light—one thread that weaves through his oeuvre—but it does not make up for the cumbersome rigidity of the forms and composition. The massive figures in Hopkins' mythical universe are laden with layers of paint, immobilized by weighty surfacing, frozen in awkwardly foreshortened movements. Drawing his themes from ancient lore is a lofty notion that somehow does not segue easily onto canvas.

Yes, there are figures bathed in light, and cypress-like trees with elegant, elongated trunks, strange cities looming on the horizon, but it is all lost in a cacophony of colour and texture. Hopkins wields his brush with gusto, and is at his best when lost in an abstracted layering of colour patches that take shape intuitively, revealing a world of its own, making rather than conjured by the intellect. There still is a lot of the magic of Hopkins in the latest exhibition of his works at Galerie de Bellefeuille, despite their ponderous bulk. It is in fact in that magma of paint that his greatest talent hides. Not in the contrived titles and fantastic imaginings, these are not up to Tom Hopkins' stature. He has the ability to infuse light into the pigment and then paint. It's a kind of alchemy that produces shimmering endless vistas that appear in many of his works.

The boat series continues, and it really shines in these canvases. The symbolic, stylized vessel hidden in the shadow of the foreground, leaves the stage for the dance of light that shapes the backdrop. This explosion of brilliance culminates on a horizon that recalls J. M. W. Turner's burning skies that glowed into abstraction. In these paintings, Hopkins streamlines his palette, reaching for bright ochre and yellow that fuse with light into a brilliant tapestry. The only accent is the flash of crimson red of the boat's prow as it sits quietly moored, half-hidden in darkness. While all that shine and glow seems overdone in the mythological works, in these paintings it is the theme itself.

A more contrived version of the boat symbol comprises a series of bowls whose contents reflect the alien environment that we see in so many of Hopkins' works. Spindly trees and geometric architectural structures surround this vessel, seemingly in adoration. The sky itself pours a golden light into it as if onto an altar, transforming an otherwise solid composition into a spectacle. Tom Hopkins' true mastery of the medium is still in full bloom in a series of Caballero paintings, featuring a distant horse and rider. Drawn from some ancient time, the image is wonderfully stylized, the giant trees and faraway walls sculpted with thick paint, giving the work the feel of a rough- textured mural. There is a wonderful fusion of all the elements that make Hopkins' works such a creative feat. Texture and light merge and mould another, the figurative melds into the abstract and the palette is symphony of colours. No ostentatious symbolism here, just pure art and the joy of painting.

Dorota Kosinska

Tom Hopkins
Sightline: Cantata, 2003
Huile sur lin
57" X 55"

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The shock scenario is alluded to, with unusual growth forms. The future will likely present such scenes. Terrene will travel to the P.E.I. and the Owens Art Gallery, Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Harcourt House in Edmonton, the University Art Gallery in Algonquin Park, and the A.G.O. for their dead. The group of Seven arose soon after Thomson's death perpetuating something of the excitement Thomson's art generated, and still generates, towards Canada's northlands, nature parks and wilderness areas than remain—now a lot further north than Algonquin Park.

Jeffrey Burns is an artist whose advocacy for Indigenous rights and culture meets head on. His work explores natural diversity one might find in the environment under sea or on land. Burns's fabulistic constructed landscape and biomorphic details recall Hieronymus Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights," but are more inquisitive, and much less macabre. Whether in a seemingly innocent painting like "Garden" (1997) or more phantasmatic painterly constructions like Harbingen (1996-97) which depicts a nest-like appendage, and myriad growths, orifices and outgrowths, we are made aware that these scenes are not real, yet they display a kind of natural diversity one might find in some hidden micro-cosmic environments under sea or on land.

Twenty years after The Origin of Species first appeared in 1859, Darwin's theory of natural selection and evolution (transformation) had largely been accepted by the scientific community. Jeffrey Burns's paintings are anachronistic elements, using hybrid bioforms, and touch on themes of dystopia. In a still life painting like Untitled (1998) there are clues or cues to human civilization such as the button-like, and door knob-like objects that rest like archaeological discoveries adjacent to unusual growth forms. The future shock scenario is alluded to, with traces of the topsy-turvy effects of genetic manipulation, toxic transformation, pollution and evolution, of new landscape of species. It all takes place in a background noise of human intervention and speciﬁstic elasticity.

Nature and human culture impact on these painted landscape scenes. In Crater (1996), we see a mesh-like grid patterned substance that covers areas of this opening in the earth. The science fiction potential of such a scene is imaginative, comparable to Mark Tansey's paintings, but there is more speculation and ideation in Jeffrey Burns's subject matter. As Burns states: "It is important that I reveal evidence of past, present or future human civilizations in many of my paintings. I do not have a strong political stance. I seek to raise questions about technology as it is applied in land use, and in more recent works, medicine. I am cautiously optimistic that we are going to make progress in areas of human health and the environment, perhaps using the same technologies that have been responsible for some of the problems."

Catalysis (1995) reveals the two tendencies that have since become more pronounced in Burns's informational art. An early industrial building becomes the backdrop for various bizarre bioforms and two geodesic domes; a man with a stick pokes the ground. It is this push and pull, back and forth play with elements of nature and human culture, where the backdrop of transformation could suggest either disaster or potential evolution that keeps resurfacing and has become so pronounced in Burns's art. Selection (2002) presents a woman reaching out to clip a pod—a symbol of growth—that she has chosen. The proposition in the latter recent painting is more an afﬁrmation of humanity's potential to overcome, or at least circumvent with a degree of selective intelligence, situations and forces that have arisen from our manipulation of the physical environment.

Terrene, Burns's ﬁrst touring solo show on this planet demonstrates that painterliness is next to godliness... and raises questions about the state of contemporary culture. These are ingenious painterly projections of some future or well hidden micro-cosmic earth-based scenario. Terrene will travel to the Illingworth Kerr Gallery in Calgary, Harcourt House in Edmonton, the Confederation Centre Art Gallery in P.E.I. and the Owens Art Gallery in Sackville, New Brunswick.

John K. Grande

TORONTO

REBECCA BELMORE
THE NAMED AND THE UNNAMED
May 7–August 3, 2003

TOM THOMPSON
Art Gallery of Ontario
317 Dundas St. W.
www.ago.net
May 30–September 7, 2003

A canoe draped in black is a very poignant Canadian symbol. One need only think of the Tom Thomson legend—that he died in a canoe in Algonquin Park. The issue with The Great Water (2002) Belmore's black draped canoe sequence is solid, 3-D, and may not actually be about whether Tom Thomson was murdered or died naturally. It may actually be more of an introduction to the poignant and painful video sequence that follows. This video or that video, whichever way you want, is about a collective tragedy, the serial killing of women in Vancouver's skidrow district.

This tragedy is the point of Rebecca Belmore's painful exposure/exhibition, and it is an intense, violent and very contemporary experience. She treats it thematically like a life cycle. The title of Belmore's performance/video shot in a vacant downtown Vancouver lot near where many of the slain women lived is The Named and the Unnamed (2002). We see Belmore tearing ﬂowers through her mouth and screaming the names of the murdered women—young, native and many prostitutes—at the top of her voice. One feels as alienated as the victims of that serial killer must have felt. One wonders why the larger social, economic and cultural causes of these collective tragedies never surface or are directly confronted... The anger and the absence is what we feel—probably that's the way the victims felt.

A First Nations artist whose allegiance to women's rights and the disenfranchised is most evident, Rebecca Belmore has a long track record and is a master of the contemporary installation. Whether installation is a technique, a style, or just an extension of reality, the chair floating on a cloud of white mater...
Ilan Sandler
DOUBLE STOREY
Toronto Sculpture Garden
135 King St. East
Until September 15

Chairs are prime design objects and we spend a lot of time in them. They are less often the subject of a major artwork. Ilan Sandler’s Double Storey is super-scale design furniture in an urban landscape; a very visible summer item/object on the King St. East strip. This is not an extraordinary sculpture object, but it is so basic and elemental as to catch our attention. We are reminded of American sculptor Claes Oldenburg’s oversized Pop art objects, or alternatively, European César’s huge thumb sculptures, but this Sandler piece is somehow ironic because it looks temporary, like an icon waiting to be pulled down or taken away, the way so much art in exhibitions, or promotional billboards can now be. Though it is so visual, this sculpture at least looks extraordinary sculpture object, but it is
Neither practical nor purely aesthetic, this is an impure purist design statement rendered in a city that thrives on modernist design.
John K. Grande

James Gillray
THE LAST LAUGH
Art Gallery of Ontario
317 Dundas St. W.
www.ago.net
To October 12th, 2003

Caricature is a popular art. Among the artists who caricatured the human condition with the popular medium of engraving in the early 19th century, James Gillray (1757-1815) ranked among the best. Thomas Rowlandson and George Cruikshank, likewise active at this time in England, and Henri Gerard-Fontallard, or Adrien-Pierre-François Godfrey from France were all artists who sought to present court, royal and political controversy in their engravings. The elite did not really suffer as a result of this, but they did get the message. Gillray and his early 19th century caricatures, now on view at the AGO, have their contemporary equivalents in Polon, Topor to name a few.

This superb exhibition of James Gillray’s satirical art reveals an artist who embodied what later became known as the “golden age” of British caricature at the end of the 18th century. Approximately 50 engravings ridicule royalty and political figures with a ribald and hilarious abandon. James Gillray lampoons the foibles of Georgian society... his engravings get the last laugh, even beyond the grave!
John K. Grande

REGINA
ROB BOS
CHANGING ROOM
Art Projects Gallery
September 1st – October 17, 2003

Art Projects is an artist-run gallery squeezed into a row of rundown stores in Regina’s inner city. Upon entering the storefront space to see Rob Bos’ exhibition Changing Room you are likely to wonder if you have stumbled into the wrong shop. The small but neatly renovated space is decorated with six business suits hung and a makeshift change room. It could be a tailor’s or second-hand clothes store. But a camera and tripod and dozens of photographs suggest something else.

Changing Room is a modest performative installation in which visitors try on suits, have their picture taken and added to the wall. They may even purchase the outfits ($25). With so little here, the viewer is persuaded to attend to details to discover what the work is about. All the same size and reflecting a similar utilitarian and look-around space and view around King St. East or the garden itself. Because it is so ordinary, Ilan Sandler’s sculpture presents a somewhat tried and true challenge to our usual notions of what art is or could be. Neither practical nor purely aesthetic, this is an impure purist design statement rendered in a city that thrives on modernist design.

Caricature is a popular art. Among the artists who caricatured the human condition with the popular medium of engraving in the early 19th century, James Gillray (1757-1815) ranked among the best. Thomas Rowlandson and George Cruikshank, likewise active at this time in England, and Henri Gerard-Fontallard, or Adrien-Pierre-François Godfrey from France were all artists who sought to present court, royal and political controversy in their engravings. The elite did not really suffer as a result of this, but they did get the message. Gillray and his early 19th century caricatures now on view at the AGO have their contemporary equivalents in Polon, Topor to name a few.

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John K. Grande
here as so little of the man survives death. Perhaps after Beuys, this may be a celebration of the life of an Everyman. It can also be an expression of anxiety about being trapped to an average, even recyclable life. The artist has no need for his father's suits, and he is not, as an artist, filling his father's shoes. The exhibition shimmers with the possibility of both guilt and joy of not taking the path of one's father. Yet Bos uses the suits. They symbolize all the valuable/exchangeable baggage any son inherits.

Changing Room is an understated installation that coaxes the viewer into becoming a participant. He seduces us into dealing with feelings and a topic many of us would rather avoid. Bos has managed to make work about his father's death without being sentimental or even personal; he leaves these possibilities up to each viewer.

David Garneau

VANCOUVER

MASTERS TO HIPSTERS

DRAWING THE WORLD

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

June 28-September 21, 2003

For the Record: Drawing: Contemporary Life is an ambitious show that brings together international and Canadian artists' drawings. Unfortunately this all inclusive vacuum features a widely varying range and quality of work. When you mix quality international artists with earnest regionals, you end up with a show that has no focus, no unity, no intensity. More interesting, Drawing: The World: Masters to Hipsters presents a range of media, and also in house drawings. Elizabeth Mackenzie's repeated hazy image of a woman's face in Reunion (2002) is simple and plain--no more--no less. More definitive is Jack Shadbolt's Horrify Suite (1969-70) and the united William Kentridge drawing for the film Stereoscope (1999). This show suffers from the worst aspects of political correctness. By trying to serve too many masters it serves no one--not even a public.

John K. Grande

TOM THOMSON AND THE GROUP OF SEVEN


While many Canadian art books that attempt a survey of an era or movement suffer from an overly academic, or alternatively oversimplified overview, David Silcox's The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson gets the right balance between information and attention to the arte, Silcox's Tom Thomson: The Silence and the Storm co-authored with Harold Town was one of the most successful Canadian art books ever published, just as this popular and enduring Canadian art book will undoubtedly be.

Art books these days usually treat the paintings as fodder for discourse and lose the reader. David Silcox has the skill to imagine an audience and turn his visual experience into words for a general public. Silcox is one of the few Canadian art specialists to achieve that balance between visual description and real in depth understanding of the history he is addressing. He is not a superficial observer of past Canadian myths and he doesn't re-invent the Great Lone Land myth of the Group. Instead Silcox brings it all to life with 123 seldom seen paintings from private collections among the 369 full colour illustrations that are in this book.

Many of these newly published paintings sought out by Silcox from collections across Canada depict humans in a landscape--urban or rural. The proof is there--that the Group of Seven were a lot more contemporary than the myth they perpetrated particularly as they came into being in a post-Cubist era. Divided into ten sections The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson covers little known subjects like Gardens, Still Lifes, and Portraits, The First World War, and Cities, Towns and Villages. Edwin Holgate's Fisherman's Houses resembles American social realist Thomas Hart Benton's paintings, and A. Y. Jackson's colour animated Herring Cove, Nova Scotia (1919) is a truly freefrom advanced work of painterly realism for its era, for example. Some of the Lemoine Fitzgerald paintings look better than ever, while Fred Varley still shines through as the Group's mystical luminary. The industrial landscape is romanticized, as in Lawren Harris's Billboard (Jazz) (1920) and the Eaton Manufacturing Building (1911). The illustrations are excellent. This book offers some surprising and seldom seen perspectives on these artists output and we are better informed as a result. It is the most comprehensive book ever published on the Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven.

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