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LETTERS

cont'd from p. 4

review of a piece upon which I had worked in the *Excalibur* was akin to that of urinating on an electric fence.

This was mostly due to the lack of detail in Lauren Gillen's article (*Garbage: Holes in the Landscape* true to form) regarding the performance, the guarded air of superiority (I am certain Gillen could find plenty of places to use the word "artsy" in the arts section of any newspaper), and the liberal interjection of subjective comments — which, instead of demonstrating qualitative judgments (I'm not about to suggest that subjectively has no place in arts reviews) came across as an opportunity for smug intellectual lamproom and head-shaking stupidity.

The preceding is not meant to set the tone of this letter in its entirety, but merely to demonstrate that it is so easy to fill an article with colourful invective that even a Fine Arts student can do it. At the heart of my rebuttal lies my belief that if I, as an artist, am merely building sand castles, I should hope that the critics whom I encounter have working knowledge of sand and water.

In a paragraph which states "for any true artsy, it was an opportunity too good to resist: the chance to wallow in artistic self-indulgence..." Gillen casts aspersions not only upon the performance in question, but upon the creative integrity of the entire Faculty of Fine Arts. Another less prominent but equally disparaging comment was "artistic yet informative" (if Gillen feels spoon feeding to be more conducive to education than is incentive to creative reflection, I recommend a few hours of *60 Minutes*).

I believe also that Gillen has entered the realm of egocentric presumption by telling *Excalibur* readers what they were "supposed to get" out of the performance. Perhaps if we had such a critic at every arts performance at York all prospective audience members could be spared having to decide for themselves what it is that does give one cause for reflection.

I suspect that by this time readers are wondering why I haven't defended the actual content of the performance. There are several reasons for this, the least of which is the fact that Gillen wastes precious little ink criticizing the content herself. What is at issue here, in my humble undergrad opinion, is the fact that the *Excalibur* chose to print one review of *Holes in the Landscape*, and that that review was not only marginally inaccurate (the performance was the result of one week of rehearsal, not two) but inexcusably tainted by the critic's lack of experience with the medium.

I draw this conclusion from Gillen's apparent expectations from the performance. She suggests that the audience was due an explanation of "how we are treating not only our planet, but each other." I believe (and I cannot speak for Mr. Fortier or any of the performers or contributors in this respect) the performance hall is neither the place to go to find a single practical solution to the problems which face us, nor is it the place to go to escape from the latter (in the best of all possible worlds, of course.) I personally attempt to create art which offers points for consideration, ideally from a new perspective. Abstraction in art can serve as a catalyst, in this case, for the development/discovery of solutions to problems through introspection. Gillen demonstrates a lack of comprehension not only by passing off *Holes in the Landscape* as a "song and dance show," was an exclusive alternative to "taking some real action."

If, in future, the *Excalibur* maintains this standard of critical art reviews, I can hardly compare the thought of inviting your staff to future performances favourable to that of swallowing my own tongue.

Steve Castellano

Show review
"superficial"

To the Editor,

As a member of the audience at "Holes in the Landscape," I was amazed by Lauren Gillen's review of this work in the Feb. 2 issue. I was specifically concerned by the vagueness of her criticisms and her apparent lack of coherent criteria by which to judge the success of failure of interdisciplinary performance art.

What did she expect — perhaps a neat, tidy package of "information" (by which I suspect she means "facts") served palatably and without ambiguity? For that matter, what does Gillen expect of art in general? Like many others she probably prefers Glen Loates and Ken Danby to Marcel Duchamp and Georges Braque; Tchaikovsky's *Peter and the Wolf* to anything by Schoenberg or John Cage; something concrete and easily-labelled to something abstract and elusive.

Nowhere in her review could I detect any attempt (or ability) on her part to make an emotional, intuitive connection between the "flying garbage, yelling, screaming, tin can scrunching and hugging" and the theme of the work.

This is not to deny that there were flaws in Fortier's work — the pace was odd, to say the least, and several parts were so obscure as to be almost meaningless. Gillen, however, preferred writing a sophomoric sneer at "artsys" to penning a critical analysis of a work of art, which, like most art, requires its audience to make connections and come to emotional conclusions.

By publishing superficial drivel like this "review," you merely increase any existing gap (real or perceived) between Fine Arts students (five departments, Ms. Gillen, not Faculties) and non-Fine Arts students.

Yours truly,
Nina Thompson

Art has "no
real Function"

Dear Editor:

I find it appalling that a university student, no less one in a position of some influence, holds such an archaic and mindless opinion of art as was expressed in "Artwork, an eyesore" (*Excalibur*, Feb. 2). Zammit, the author should not assume to speak for the majority.

Higher education should be, more than anything, a vehicle for better understanding through a learned approach and less a means to a purely vocational end. Sadly, more often than not, and clearly evident in Mr. Zammit's remarks about the sculpture fronting the Administrative Studies Bldg., true understanding is not always achieved.

His comments that "Sticky Wicket" (Mark Di Suvero, 1978) is "ugly" and causes "suffering" by its appearance, brings into question his views on the function of art itself which are fundamental to this issue. I take the liberty of inferring from his words that he is of the mistakenly common opinion that art must be aesthetically pleasing, conforming to some preconceived notion of beauty, and that therefore, the function of art is to serve the public as if it were wallpaper.

If one attempted to look a little closer, one would discover that art has no real function but to exist for its own sake, and that even to call it "art" is to define it in a limiting capacity.

Remember the old saying, "Beauty is in the eye of the be-

holder" and reflect it upon what Zammit arrogantly claims to be ugly, as if it can hold neither beauty nor meaning for someone else simply because it does not agree with his taste. No one has the right or superiority to demarcate beauty. Thus, taste has no bearing on its designation.

I suggest Mr. Zammit, and people with a similar judgement to his, examine a negative reaction to an *objet d'art* with a more careful eye, for as art has always been a reflection of the society that produces it, the reaction it elicits is its appeal and perhaps its statement, if it were to consciously contain one.

Mr. Zammit, upon viewing this artwork, felt an emotion, be it negative or not, that was strong enough to compel him to write about it. Maybe this response is exactly what the artist intended. Nonetheless, art is a free communicator and as American artist Larry Rivers once said, "Any art communicates what you're in the mood to receive."

Belinda Bruce

(Not an art expert, but one who at least thought about it)

CHRY letter
"disturbing"

Editor

Regarding Andrew Lee's letter "Why pay for CHRY" in the January 26, 1989 issue of *Excalibur*, I found several disturbing comments, however, the main thing that bothered me was his statement that the levy of \$4.50 per student is imposed on York students without choice.

Either Mr. Lee has a short memory, or is new to York and was unaware of the referendum held October 28, 1987, which was advertised in the very paper he writes to. The referendum was passed overwhelmingly by 89.2 per cent of the 646 voters who were concerned enough about the existence of CHRY to take the time and effort to vote.

Concerning our "eccentric tastes," I'll just point out that many of the groups now heard on commercial radio got exposure and airplay through alternative stations well before commercial stations would consider playing them. U2, Depeche Mode, Tracy Chapman, and R.E.M. are some recent examples.

Assuming he does not listen to the station, he is hardly in a position to criticise the music we play, although he assumes the obscurity of the music gives him this right. I would also like to assure him that almost every style of music finds its place over the airwaves, Funk, Jazz, Blues, etc. . . .

Alternative music for me is my escape from the mindless barrage of the corporate controlled music industry which spews out an endless flow of similar sounding love songs with a profit and marketing plan behind them, rather than the focus being on the music itself.

Concerning Mr. Lee's view that CHRY is not a "worthwhile undertaking" would surely be true in his case, although the 120+ unpaid volunteers and thousands of listeners and supporters, would disagree. CHRY allows student the opportunity to learn with "hands on" experience, the operation of a radio station for those who have the interest. It allows exposure for up-coming musicians and is a service to the York community through news and information programmes for half the price of an average record.

My advice to Mr. Lee is the next time you find yourself tired of hearing that Michael Jackson song for the fifth or sixth time that time that day, to tune us in. By the way, we are at 105.5 FM, in case you didn't know.

Rob Mack
CHRY DJ