

# arts

## Picture perfect forms

by Robert Currie

Photographs are flat; sculptures aren't. That's one way of summing up the traditional view of the relationship between photography and sculpture. Photo Sculpture at the Dalhousie Art gallery presents another view. Photo Sculpture is an exhibition by six Quebec artists who have created works which elude classification as entirely photography sculpture.

Alain Paiement's *Dead on Time/Planisphere 549°* explores the interplay between the two forms. Paiement photographed the clock tower of Montreal's Old Port from the inside, then constructed a nautilus shell-shaped sculpture from the enlarged photograph. But for this exhibition, the nautilus has been disassembled and displayed flat on the wall, its complex shape splayed out like the gores of a flattened globe.

And so the cycle is completed: the sculptural shape of the clock tower photographed, built into a sculpture, the sculpture re-flattened and displayed behind glass, much like a conventional photograph.

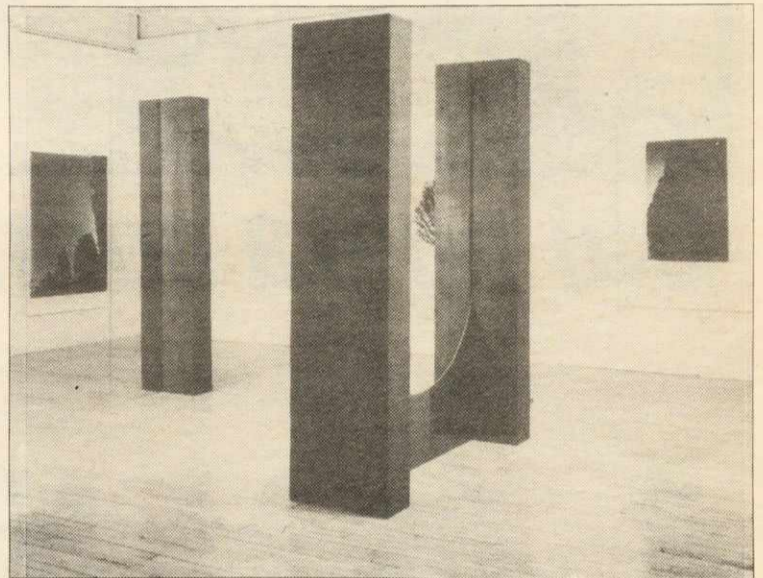
Another approach to the interplay between sculpture and photography in Patricia Altman's *regions instables*, an assemblage of photographic prints, slides, stereographs and the apparatus used to display them.

Instead of Paiement's orderly sequence of ironic reversals, Altman simultaneously presents photographs

Simpler, and ultimately less engaging, is Jocelyne Allouche's *Dérives noires contigues*. Here the relationship between photography and sculpture is relegated to coexistence. Large black and white silhouettes of trees line the walls; two sculptures, large architectural metal and glass structures are placed on the floor. The sculptures frame or obscure the photographs, but there is little of the play between elements of other contributions to the show. *Dérives noires contigues* is static and remote.

low, the three piles of newspapers, each with a man's shirt collar placed on top. Two glass vases, half filled with water, and at the pyramid's apex, a boot with a fur sole and wooden "leg" inside.

Bourassa recreates a "social pyramid" moving from formal, ceremonial structures to simple, individual icons, from cathedral to shoe. The photographs are obscured, refracted by the water in the glass, pasted into the shirt collars as unexpected labels



The sense of play and correspondence lacking in Allouche's work abounds in Sylvie Readman's *Les vertus cardinales*. As you approach, you see a round, vignettted photograph of a landscape. To your right, a massive colour print of a birdhouse, the colours saturated, the print almost grainless. Facing it, on the opposite wall, an equally large print of an open landscape. But this print is grainy, washed out, blurred. *Les vertus cardinales* creates its own perspective—inside looking out, outside looking in—creating an effect traditional sculpture would be hard pressed to create.

Most of the show's works approach the intersection of sculpture and photography from the side of photography. *Portraits du prince*, Guy Bourassa's assemblage is more sculptural. Four wooden models of ceremonial-looking buildings form the top row of an inverted pyramid. Be-

and obscured in the painted-over newspapers. Alongside the pyramid is a large metal disk of silhouette forms, with a focused spotlight casting a shadow on the wall behind, recalling the basic mechanism of photography, the projection of a image by focused light.

Tightly integrating photography and sculpture, Paul Lacerte's *Zephyrographe* is a streamlined slab, hanging from the gallery ceiling at the eye level. It has the feel of a 1960s-era rec room project, with its rhomboidal shape and wood grain veneer. Inside, visible through six viewpoints cut into the slab, are backlit

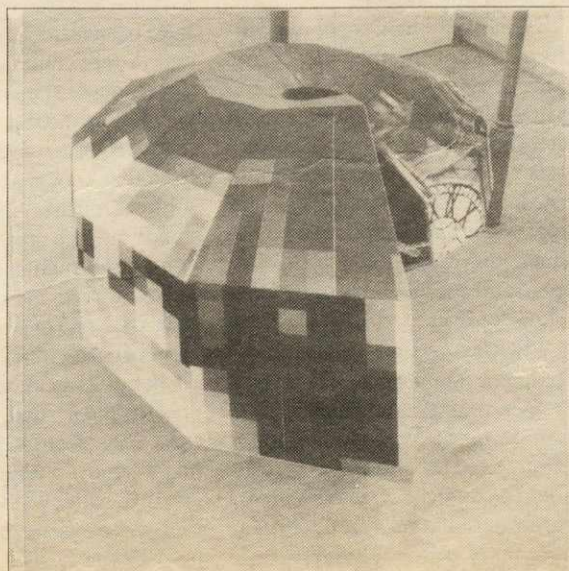
and sculptures of photographs."

photographs which swim in and out of focus, with a rhythm which resembles breathing. The effect is startling; the juxtaposition of the smooth, hard shape of the enclosure with the soft, organic look of the photographs within.

Photo Sculpture is not a perfect exhibition, nor is it a particularly accessible one. The documentation accompanying the works is generally unhelpful, and the works themselves often seem unaccessible. Photo Sculpture's concerns are theoretical and aesthetic, and thus challenging. But with a little effort, it is also ultimately rewarding.

Photo Sculpture continues until February 28.

Photo next: *Dead on Time, 1990*  
Sculpture by ALAIN PAIEMENT  
Photo above: *Dérives noires contigues, 1990*  
Sculpture by JOCELYNE ALLOUCHE



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