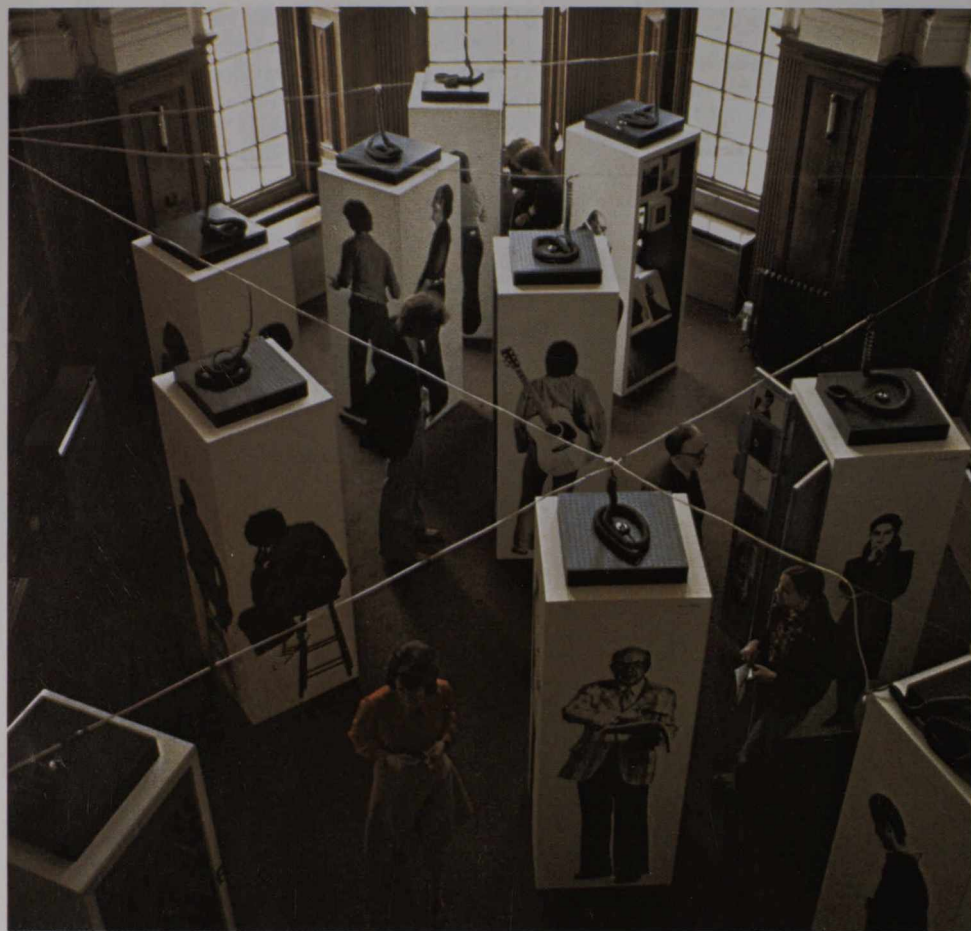


Almost meeting by Tardis

By Jenny Pearson



"We among others" is the title of an off-beat exhibition from the Canadian province of Ontario, recently seen at the Canada House Gallery in London and moved to the South Hill Park Arts Centre at Bracknell on April 19. Artists taking part present not just their work — there isn't room for much of that when 22 have to fit into one gallery — but themselves, encapsulated, as it were, by modern technology.

Upright boxes vaguely reminiscent of the Tardis in *Dr. Who*, each about the size of a telephone booth, with life-sized black-and-white representations of the subject on three of its four sides, mingle a little disconcertingly among the visitors who have come to see them.

On closer inspection, the effect is both eerie and intriguing. It is an updated version of the boxes children like to bury, containing pictures and relics of their everyday lives and interests, for posterity to dig up and deduce what sort of people they were. The atmosphere is science fiction. At the push of a button, one hears composer Robert Aitken's flute tracing an intricate composition while one inspects photographs of him at work on his music sheets. Margaret Atwood, the writer, is shown galumphing around with her children in gum boots: her push-button evokes a voice that could only belong to a poet from the north American continent, intoning soulfully that "In that country the animals have the faces of children" and "In the refrigerator, old food sickens."

No dancing

"You almost meet them — but not quite!" was the comment of Hugh Cronyn, an Ontario artist now settled in London, at the Canada House opening. The experience of almost meeting people who are in fact on the other side of the Atlantic is the most interesting thing about the show.

The manner of presentation reflects the subjects as much as the actual content. David Earle, choreographer and dancer, struggles to explain in words accompanied by photographs that he can only express himself by dancing: "When words are inadequate, people dance: words are inadequate for me most of the time!" One feels his predicament, but gets little impression of his dancing.

Frances Hyland, an actress, is more at home with words since they are central to her art: she gets quite carried away, describing how she was "chosen, selected by some force I do not understand." Confronted with her lighted mirror and greasepaints and the grey satin dress she wore as Blache in *Streetcar*, one gets the full flavour of the actress in the dressing room — self-projecting, too large for life and in need of the discipline of the stage, which puts together these raw materials and makes them into art. It is perhaps indicative of the spirit of the thing that the background to her self-dramatisation should be filled in with half-

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The exhibition 'We among others' at the South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell, photographed by Francis Dodds.

