

An interview with Jack Pollock

Artists "pressured" to perform at early age

By ANNE CAMOZZI and AGNES KRUCHIO

The sun played on silver and gold rotating statues and the expressive brown eyes of the man in front of us sparkled with delight.

Jack Pollock was sitting underneath some of his recent paintings in his main gallery on 356 Dundas Street East, the gallery that expresses the elegance and warmth that characterizes Pollock himself.

He had just closed a very successful show of his own acrylic paintings on paper at his new gallery in the Toronto Dominion Centre. His paintings maintain a joyfulness, but are not without the restrained, simplified lines that come from a thorough understanding of the medium.

Pollock, who has been in the gallery business for 20 years, possesses a sensitive air and a directness which puts one im-

mediately at ease. Whipping out his latest paintings (still rolled up), he rips them along the white cupboards, open and eager for a response, and obviously happy to be back at painting and exhibiting once again after a 10 year lapse.

A great part of that lapse is due to a serious accident in which Pollock injured his back. Since then he has had to make his work smaller and change from the strenuous activity of rolling the paint to applying it with brushes.

INTERVIEW

Excalibur: It's very frightening to think of the next step after school for students. Where does an art student coming out of school start?

Pollock: It's a very difficult situation for artists today. Society is youth-oriented, and this means that there is a false pressure to perform at an early age. As a matter of fact,

the worst thing that can happen to you when you're young is to exhibit and to be successful.

E: Could you expand on that?

P: Artists in their 20s don't know how to handle success. I've seen this happen again and again. In the late 50s and early 60s abstract expressionism was at a high; it was something that was easy for young people to pull off with success and receive accolades from the critics. However, a tremendous number of these people are not doing anything now.

E: Why is there this pressure to exhibit and perform?

P: There is a new concept at work these days, that it is necessary for an artist to make a living from his art. If you look at history, this has not been true of most artists.

In Toronto today there are about 15 artists, whom I respect, who make a living out of their art. Most of them teach, work in frameshops, or for example, Ziggy Blazej, (one of Canada's top kinetic artists, currently in the electric exhibit at York) drives a cab.

E: What about being economically secure and free to work?

CANADA COUNCIL

P: Take something like a Canada Council grant, which I feel is often misused. The artist is being given something for nothing, and therefore the money doesn't mean anything to him or her.

The Art Bank concept, by which works of art are purchased, is a much more logical solution. I wrote a brief to the government on Canada Council, stating it was just another form of welfare. It doesn't mean anything, and destroys the dignity of the receiver.

The money that we earn, even if only a small amount, is much more positive than money we get free.

E: Do you follow what is happening in the art schools in Toronto?

P: Yes, but only peripherally. Most art schools today follow the



Jack Pollock, relaxed in his gallery.

line of least resistance. They give people what they want, and not what they need.

I'm having a show for the first time in ten years, but I know how to paint and draw, and the basic elements of technique are almost inbred.

But then, I have a formal education in the technical disciplines from OCA.

Once you develop your technique, you can devote all your energies to a commitment to your own personal form of imagery. The difference

between a painter and a person who paints is that the painter has something to say and has the ability to transfer it onto canvas.

GREEK IMAGES

E: Where does the imagery in your recent show grow from?

P: Most of it comes from the time I spent in Greece and Israel last year.

There was a sense of white heat in the Mediterranean. Most people think of the Mediterranean as bright

Solid skits fill Kelp

By STEVE HAIN

Anyone for Kelp?, the latest offering at the Firehall's Second City, is a must for revue-goers — that is, if you haven't seen their first effort, Hello Dali.

Since their first production, the energetically crazy Gilda Radner has departed and has been replaced with Catherine O'Hara. She makes a valiant attempt to fill the gap created by Radner's absence; but once you have seen a part played to perfection, another person's interpretation is like last week's coffee. Close but no cigar.

Another disappointment was that the improvisations just weren't. It's too bad that the audience couldn't come up with any worthwhile suggestions, and that the company took it upon themselves to use material from a healthy segment of the first revue.

The atmosphere in the theatre has changed since the Dali revue. Gone is the four-page menu that offered humorous after-dinner specialties; the down-to-earth waitresses have been replaced by waifs who resemble something produced from a grotesque mold, but (thank God for small mercies), the audience's main

preoccupation was still with sex and not with the show.

But casting aside trivialities, the show was excellent. The sketches were varied and hilarious, dealing with such topics as pre-planned rape, mental illness and problems coming to light at a sex-clinic. The highlights of the evening were scenes that placed the Canadian mentality in its proper perspective and a skit dealing with two 'really close' high school chums running into each other years later.

The Firehall can be found on 70 Lombard Street, right next to the city morgue. Second City can be seen Monday through Thursday, with improvisations, at \$4 a head, and on weekends, without improvisations, at \$5 a head. For those who wish to make an evening of it, dinner and the show can be had for as little as \$11.

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