

Canadian Artists in Exhibition

Art volume sacrifices text for pictorial glut

By ANNE CAMOZZI

A visual story stretching from sea to sea, paintings, prints, sculptures, drawings, conceptual, realistic, abstract.

Process art, lifestyle art, video art and performance art — you name it, and you've got it in the recently released book, *Canadian Artists in Exhibition*.

Canadian Artists can best be described as a general survey of recent work by living Canadian artists whose art was exhibited between June 1973 and June 1974. This volume is the second in a series from the Roundstone Council, a small, non-profit, independent operation that uses its profits only for future publications.

The book contains works by roughly 300 artists, who were selected from about 1,100 applications on the basis of successful reproductions, and differences in geography and age category.

Canadian Artists is generally well laid out, except for the few photographs that have been placed unnecessarily over the centrefold, and the reproductions are quite good. However, the book presents

too much in too few pages, and could have been much more selective.

The lack of any text at all, except for brief biographical details, may be refreshing to those already familiar with the material presented, but this deficiency seems to contradict some of Roundstone's objectives. According to the introduction, the book was to "alleviate the bewilderment and apprehensiveness on the part of the public towards current art trends."

Bob Burdett, who with Peter Newell forms the editorial team behind the book, told *Excalibur* that the lack of text was due partly to problems with the artists, but also to their desire for "the book itself to be an exhibition".

Nevertheless, although the need for the written word may be "a feeling taken from our culture," as Burdett says, this need still exists in the minds of most people.

Burdett described the book as "not being a collection of the best artists in the country, but representative of the current state of visual and plastic arts in Canada". With this function in mind, the book fares quite well, but if one is to question

the book, one should question the validity and viability of such an endeavour.

When flipping through the book, however, one can not help but be impressed by the task that has been taken on. Survey books can never satisfy everyone, and perhaps their greatest value (and certainly the greatest of this book) is their ability to awaken in the reader a new awareness and interest.

A book can never replace real exhibitions; but this book does allow us to see and gain an appreciation

for what's happening in art exhibitions across Canada.

The market for the book is quite high because there is something for everybody. One encounters Christopher Pratt's magic realism, David Gilhooly's fantastical Holy Warthog, and the real horror of Mark Prent's Electric Chair.

There are Christmas card centrefolds, Jane Martin's oils of fleshy, warty and colourful ladies with feet for their noses. There is a video of dancers, a mosquito sculpture by Paul Woodrow (a photograph of one

pair of very mosquito-bitten legs), chess pieces made from walnuts hinged with treasures inside, dancing acrylics, and a slippery, slimy painting of a sensuous tongue and painted lips.

At \$34.95 (the book costs \$21 to print and the bookstores take \$14) *Canadian Artists in Exhibition* is pretty harsh on a student's pocket-book; but if you have a chance, it's worth your while to go to your nearest friendly bookstore or library and flip through the pages of a stimulating visual story.

Marshall Delaney goes to the movies and collects his most readable thoughts

Marshall Delaney at the Movies

By Robert Fulford.

Peter Martin Associates, \$10 hardcover.

Reviewed by Warren Clements.

All collections of film criticism are fun to flip through, since the odds are that some topic will catch the reader's fancy.

One does, of course, take his chances with the critics. A collection of Pauline Kael reviews offers an enjoyable if often annoyingly long-winded view of popular film fare, while a Judith Crist volume drowns itself with a dreary, saccharine and trite succession of film synopses.

Robert Fulford, who wrote the pieces in his new book under the nom-de-plume of Marshall Delaney as Saturday Night's film critic, offers his criticism in the James Agee tradition, certainly a wise enough road to follow. He sits down in the cinema, reacts to the movie, and records his reactions with insights which may have escaped other viewers.

And because he obviously cares about the films, Fulford's comments are absorbing, often witty, and fun to read.

He plays his roles carefully. On one page he is the father taking his excited children to *The Great Race*. On the next he is the proud nationalist recalling that a Canadian ship captured James Coburn in *The President's Analyst*, and gleefully relating the Canadians' line, "You don't think we like being unimportant, do you?"

And he is the avid cinema-goer who tries not to laugh at a sneak preview of a drama because the director is in the crowd; the dutiful critic trying to make it through a weekend marathon of underground films at Cinecity; and the self-conscious rebel who rushes to see Myra Breckinridge because everybody says it's bad (predictably, he loves it).

A big plus is that he spends one-third of the 240-page book reviewing Canadian films, from the movies of Expo to Duddy Kravitz, including the ones we'd almost forgotten, like *A Fan's Notes*, and the ones we wish we could forget, like *Slipstream*.

The only minus is the fact that the hardcover edition costs \$10. With any luck, the paperback version should be issued in the near future; it's definitely worth looking for.


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