

arts

calendar

compiled by Kristy Gordon

Grab your camera and snap some photos for the **Photo Contest** in honour of **International Women's Day**. The Status of Women Office at York has organized an on-campus contest celebrating life at the university. The deadline is Feb 15. For more info call 736-5380.

The IDA Gallery (first floor fine arts building) presents a **Matrix Area Exhibition** featuring a selection of works by non-visual arts majors. The gallery is open weekdays 10-5pm.

On Feb 7 at 4pm in the Winters Senior Common Room, the Graduate Programme Colloquium with (UofT) professor George Sawa presents "**Emic and Etic and a Language Model in Medieval Baghdad.**"

Don't miss the Pre-Reading Week Mini-Jazz Bash, presented by the graduate programme in music, on Feb 8 at 6:30pm in the Winters Senior Common Room.

Atkinson College presents **Kevin Crossley-Holland**, well-known poet and writer for children. Crossley-Holland is renowned for his myths and legends and won the Carnegie Medal in 1985 for his ghost story *Storm*. This free event will take place in the Fellows' Lounge (004A Atkinson) on Feb 13 at 7:30pm. Phone 736-5727 for more info.

Winter Wraps, an exhibition of 58 photos by **Charlotte Lindgren** is at the Glendon Gallery (Glendon campus) until Feb 9. Lindgren's photos show her love of nature, delight in form and form's relationship to the environment. The gallery is open Mon-Fri 10-4pm, Thurs 6-9pm and Sun 1-4pm.

Does Anyone Work Here? commemorates the memory of **Ronn Wright's** father. This display of over 80 drawings, sculpture and paintings tackles grief, funeral rituals, religion and the afterlife. The exhibit runs until Feb 9 in the Samuel J. Zacks Gallery (109 Stong College).

Have you been to see *Diagnosis* yet? This display features work by **Marc De Guerre, Mark Lewis, Kiki Smith and Jana Sterbak** and focuses on the body and its corporeal existence. The exhibit runs in the AGYU (N145 Ross) until Feb 18 and is open Tues-Fri 10-4:30pm, Wed 10-8pm, and Sun 12-5pm.

On Feb 5 from 12-2pm in Studio I in the Fine Arts Building **William Lau** will hold a Dancers' Forum on *Chinese Folk Dance*. Lau is a graduate student from the dance department and is considered a specialist in Chinese dances. He has recently returned from the University of Hawaii where he received a scholarship to study Chinese minority dances.

If you want 16,000 pairs of eyes reading about your event, please bring your listing to the EXCAL office and drop it into the big manilla envelope on the arts board.

three strong performances



A scene from Tennessee Williams' play *Hello from Bertha*, by Tania Hewett

The confines of the one-room set does not detract from the moving dramas in *Three By Tenn*, three one-act

Lady of Larkspur Lotion directed by Hereward Pooley, *Hello From Bertha* directed by Sally Han and *Something Unspoken* directed by Peter Lloyd.

From the moment the lights went down the audience was immediately drawn into the anguish and desperation of the characters. In *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*, Margaret Lamarre, as the pathetic alcoholic in a roach-infested rooming house, communicates the fragile state of mind that comes with broken dreams.

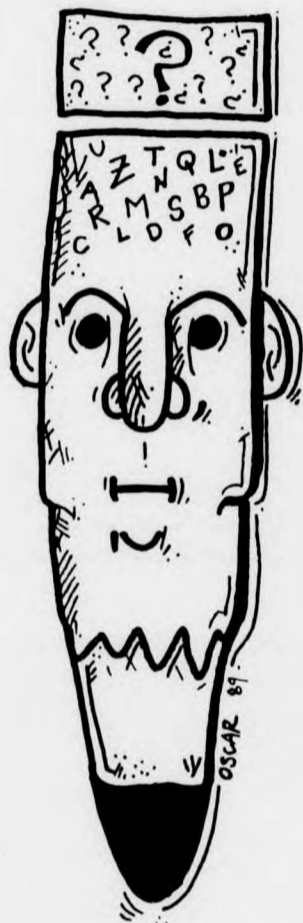
Denise Ryan's performance, as the down-and-out prostitute Bertha in *Hello From Bertha*, was honest to the point of making one uncomfortable. Throughout the play, I felt I was watching the mental and

physical decay of a human being.

Bonita Beach gave a powerful performance as the steel-willed woman who dominates her secretary in *Something Unspoken*. Beach was able to convey a sense of desperation and insecurity in her fight to maintain control of a women's club in a small southern town.

All performances were strong, taking the audience beyond the three walls of the one-room sets. In all three plays, the human condition is craftily portrayed. *Three By Tenn* does not disappoint and is definitely a must-see for supporters of community theatre. The Alumnae theatre is located at 70 Berkeley Street. For further information or tickets call 364-4170.

the writer's block



Ira Nayman is a York student with vast experience as a writer. Ira has written numerous newspaper columns as well as dabbling with CBC television and radio.

by Ira Nayman

After I had written about my short novel, a woman in one of my classes asked me, "How can you compare the way men and women experience sex? What can you know

about a woman's feelings?" I explained that I had spoken to a lot of women in my time, and that whatever empathy I had as an artist was used in incorporating what I had learned from them in my story. This answer satisfied the woman, but her question is valid: generally, should writers develop works centred on characters outside their direct experience?

In 1988, this controversy erupted at the Women's Press in Toronto: women of colour strongly objected to white women writing about their experiences. Last year, native artists protested the CBC's *Where the Spirit Lives*, a story about the forced education of native children in white schools during the 1930s. *Where the Spirit Lives* was written by Keith Ross Leckie, a white man.

How legitimate are these complaints?

In a perfect world, all races would be well-represented in the writing profession, with no discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual preference. The fact that white, heterosexual males still make up the largest number of writers in Canada indicates that we're far from that perfect world. Still, does this justify limiting certain writers to specific subjects?

I do not think so. Practically speaking, I do not believe it is even possible. Male writers pretty much have to have female characters in their fiction. Further, for writers from cities with large ethnic communities (Toronto and Montreal leap to mind), not having minority characters would be untruthful. I feel the issue should be whether

the characters and their communities are honestly and interestingly portrayed and whether the writer has been sensitive to the psychology of the people under their particular circumstances (a responsibility every writer has to her or his characters, as far as I'm concerned); the writer's background should not enter into it.

Critics of this standard seem to be of the opinion that, in the absence of other stories about them, minority writers will get more attention and, ultimately, more work. While this may be true in the long run (although that is arguable — anything is theoretically possible in the long run), it almost certainly isn't likely in the long run. An obvious result of limiting writers to certain characters would be the disappearance of minority images from the media altogether. I cannot believe this is what the critics want.

There are other consequences of limiting writers to characters of their own background. Are minority writers prepared to limit themselves to characters from their own minority? (Thomas Hurka, in the *Globe and Mail*, argued that underrepresented minority writers should be free to write about who they would, that only overrepresented writers should have limits put on them. I don't know — adding a double standard to self-censorship doesn't make his argument any more acceptable.)

Moreover, such limitations would make it impossible to portray one of the most interesting questions in modern Canadian society: how do different minority

groups relate to each other, and to the mainstream culture? This question, which seems so important to peaceful community relations, already gets too little attention.

(I should admit that I am not entirely neutral in this debate; I have written a story about native Canadians, and I like to develop complex female characters in my work. Whether or not I succeed in making these characters real is for others to decide, but my writing would definitely lose something if I were arbitrarily disallowed from writing about them.)

(On the other hand, being Jewish, I am sensitive to the portrayal of Jews in the media, particularly in stories written by non-Jews. I am as offended by easy Jewish stereotypes as anybody. But, I attribute it to a failure on the part of the writer and move on; I would never use any of the thoughtlessly unrealistic portrayals of Jews to argue that non-Jewish writers shouldn't write about us.)

I do believe in affirmative action for minority writers. More realistic representations of minority life can only help foster understanding between the groups that make-up Canadian society, and the people in the best position to do this are people who belong to the individual groups.

But, I also believe that society is best served by artists free to pursue their personal visions (just consider the societies in which they aren't).

It's not an easy call, but, when the talk turns to putting limits on writers, I have to disagree.

