

Nice and slow, see, dat's de way ta do it.
—Hold-up man to Fred Flinstone

Prints of the city, hard-edged minimalist influence on view in new AGYU show

By HENRY SUM
In the AGYU's current showing of prints by artist Gerd Winner, viewers are treated to a glimpse of the despair, death and decay existing in the modern industrial inner-city.

His prints represent the decaying, industrial sections of two large cities, New York and London. Winner concentrating on the tight, claustrophobic tenement buildings and sweatshops of Brooklyn and the Lower East Side. His prints are purposely composed to emphasize the demeaning clutter of these blighted death traps.

Winner deviates from a tradition of city painting by taking us through to some blind alleys we would rarely venture so. Far from being a country ramble, our route is continually steered and detoured by dark imposing walls, foreboding arches and demanding street signs that instruct one to "slow" or "turn." One becomes a pawn in a gritty, industrial maze, searching for that ever-concealed horizon.

Winner has successfully employed grainy photostencils in the silk-screen technique to convey the grimy soot-encrusted texture of the buildings. And with a narrow color range, these structures manage to display the patina that develops on them through age, one epoch layered over another. This show is in a sense a study of the life cycles of buildings, not only as

utilitarian structures but as autonomous entities facing the ravages of time. Those in the *Catfish Row* series are crossed with an "X" by the real-estate angels of death; uninhabited, dilapidated and awaiting demolition.

Through our encounter with these buildings we can trace their occupation and our desperate need to escape from them and their period. Winner reminds us of the illusion of permanence, his works effectively arresting the fleeting rays of sunlight which temporarily rest upon these battered hulks from a not too distant age.

Of vital interest to visual artists is the collection of the late Josef Albers' prints, *Homage to the Square*, also on view. The son of a house painter and former faculty member of the Bauhaus school, Albers devoted his life to the study of color. It is interesting to note that not only did Albers never mix his colors (he used pure color directly out of the tube), but his art was never intended to be scientific.

AGYU curator Michael Greenwood, who had the opportunity of meeting Albers at one time, says, "He was down to earth yet spiritual. He subscribed to the Medievalist idea of the artist/craftsman, but in relation to industrial society rather than the cathedral."

The prints are made up of a series of squares, usually a small square in the middle followed by two or three others surrounding it propor-



Catfish Row, one of a series of prints by Gerd Winner currently on display at AGYU.

tionately. Despite this fundamental pattern, they all vary in color and tonal value, each creating its own mood or 'singing its own song,' as Albers would have preferred.

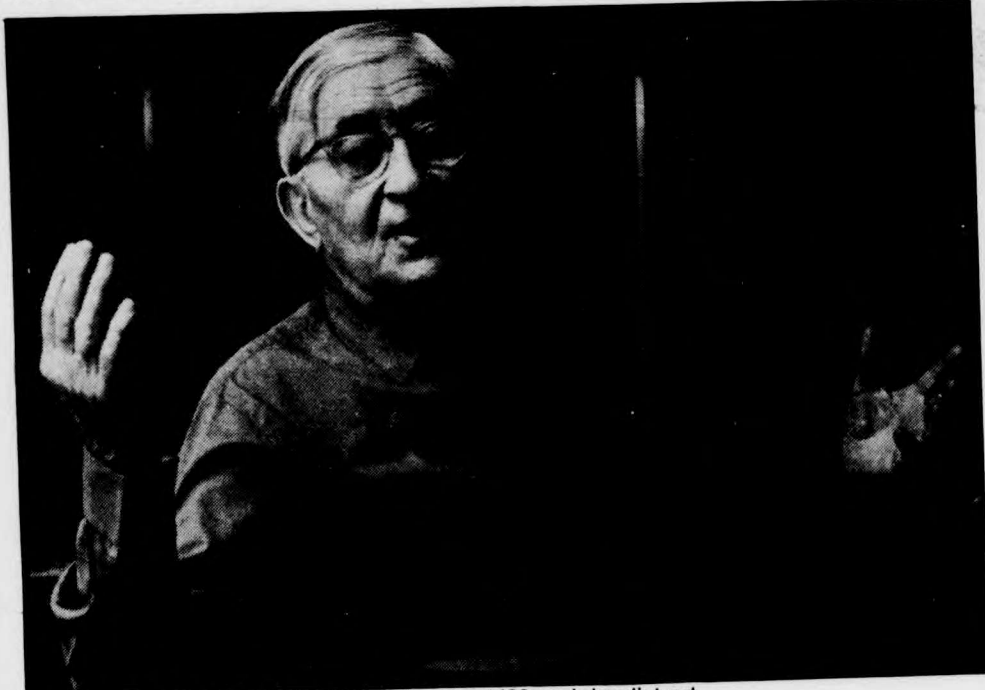
"He wasn't a sterile formalist in any way," Greenwood said. "These works were meant to move and elevate the spirit. They weren't just exercises in scientific color theory."

Having assumed that Albers was methodically categorizing a massive edition of rigorous color charts, it was enlightening to learn that

his approach was more poetic than first anticipated. Color, for Albers, was not an exact science.

Basically, it was instinct," says Greenwood. "Albers told me, 'When I put these colors together, it's just that I feel they're right, it's not some theory that tells me they are.'"

Judge the results of this instinct yourself in the works of an artist who exercised a decisive influence on the birth of Hard Edge and Minimal Art in the mid 1960s.



Josef Albers, color pioneer who influenced '60s minimalist art

Atwood's last stand on desert island

By JOANNE CLARK
Margaret Atwood has never hesitated to portray men as weak, boring, immature, insensitive macho slobs, and her newest male character does nothing to indicate a change in direction.

Atwood read last Monday night at Harbourfront's fifth annual International Festival of Authors. This year's line-up included 24 writers from 16 countries, with appearances by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Raymond Carver, Alastair Reid and Susan Sontag.

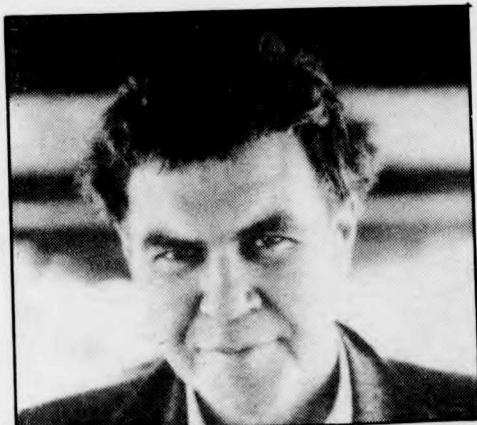
Atwood's reading was to be her final Toronto appearance this year. Best known for such novels as *The Edible Woman* and *Life Before Man*, Atwood is also an editor and critic, and has published two influential books of criticism, as well as 10 volumes of poetry.

Atwood read from a novel-in-progress, the tentatively-titled *Emma*. The passage described Emma's adventures on a small island with her archaeologist boyfriend Robbie. He is almost swept out to sea because he is not as adept as Emma at walking along a thin coral reef. He is clumsy and made to seem ridiculous. Emma, on the other hand, like Atwood, is sure-footed and direct.

Raymond Carver, well-known American author of three books of poetry, three collections of short stories, as well as *Fires: Essays, Poems, Stories*, read Friday evening to a capacity audience.

Carver's story "A Small Good Thing" received first prize in the 1983 O. Henry Prize Stories Collection, and last year he was also the recipient of the prestigious Mildred and Harold Strauss Living Award.

Carver read quickly with minimal intona-



Raymond Carver

tion. Like Atwood, his voice complimented the rhythm and pace of his work, in this case a short story entitled "Cathedral," the title piece from a 1983 collection of stories.

"Cathedral" is a story about a man's reaction to his wife's old friend coming to visit. The friend's blindness becomes an obsession, the man constantly referring to him throughout as "the blind man": the blind man in his house, in his living room, eating in his kitchen. At one point the man thinks, "A beard on a blind man. Too much, I say."

Carver's stories concern ordinary people with unusual outlooks or problems, and the conclusions to the stories are usually unexpected. Whether he is writing about a husband and wife's argument, a group of hunting buddies or a chance encounter, the dialogue is always down to earth, and the tone salty.

Carver is entirely convincing, on paper and in person.

Kinda Iggy, kinda Ian, kinda crazy, kinda now

By JENNIFER DUMPERT

Parts Found in Sea, a Toronto band with an uncompromising, raw sound, recently played Larry's Hideaway, and for the audience, they were well worth the trip.

Visually, lead singer Steve Cowal is their major asset, with his habit of hanging off the microphone looking strung out and depressed, much like Ian McCulloch of Echo and the Bunnymen, and then suddenly jumping around energetically and sneering like Iggy Pop.

Yet Cowal does not look like he's imitating Iggy or McCulloch, he just looks like he's seen a lot of other performers and incorporated it all into his stage personality.

Musically the band produces a dirty, almost raunchy sound, but with a raw immediacy that makes it work. More than once Cowal waved his microphone in front of the speaker, causing feedback that screamed back at the music, and at one point Frank Lippai was not playing but hitting his bass.

Steve Cowal and David Currie, both of whom were formerly with Children of Divorce, are given songwriting credit and appear to be the creative forces behind the band, but as Currie as quick to point out, Lippai and drummer Steve Biggs play an integral part in forming the band's distinct sound. "It's just coming out of us, everyone's got his own style just flowing into each other."

The band's lyrics, especially live, are difficult to understand, but Currie says this is

not going to change; not even to obtain commercial success.

"We're sincere, we're not just playing the market." This refusal to compromise is one of the striking features of the band's recently released second EP, which is self-titled. The EP is on the group's own label, Between Records, and was produced and financed independently by the band.

Though still uncommon, this independent route is becoming more and more popular, and has been followed to success by West Coast bands such as Images in Vogue, and British cult groups like Joy Division and New Order. Producing one's own album gives the artist a freedom that is attractive to young bands.

"We tried to stay as close to a live performance as we could," David Currie said of their latest release. "Our last album was too produced, we found we lost a lot."

The EP does generally give the feeling of a live performance. "Dancing House" and "Children" are the two most appealing cuts, probably because they best approximate the band's concert sound, but "Sisterly Kiss" and "Sexual Fantasy" are practically pop songs. The only problems with the EP are the lyrics, which are odd and difficult to understand. On "Dancing House" for instance, Cowal sings, "There were lesbians wearing chrome and plastic. They were part of a generation of searchers."

Still, some of the lyrics are obviously clever, although the only real standout is "Dr. Hotel," its strange, half-comic tone and paranoid subject matter enabling it to succeed where the other failed.