

ENTERTAINMENT

Photographic sculpture:

Helfand is master of the art

Heather Whyte

Fern Helfand is one of York University's more innovative and imaginative photographic artists. Using the "photographic sculpture", her technique is a combination of photographic images and trapunto which is a method of stuffing and quilting fabric. These photographic sculptures are photographs reproduced on light sensitized fabric, which are then sewn and quilted to create a multi-dimensional work of art.

Helfand's photographic sculptures, which have been shown in New York, Washington, and across Canada, have won her international recognition. As a former student of the York Studio Arts program, Helfand was influenced by photographer Jack Dale. Dale, currently teaching in the Visual Arts department, "encouraged me to adopt a free experimental approach to photography and sculpture." Helfand continued to experiment and develop her photographic sculptural style while completing a Masters

Degree in Fine Art at the University of Florida. Helfand, now teaching in York's Photographic Arts department, believes, "Toronto has a vital art scene which includes an exciting photographic community."

Having managed to break into the almost impregnable Toronto arts scene, Helfand will have her first major commercial exhibition at The Burton Gallery of Photographic Art, at the end of this month. The show, entitled "Repetitions" uses Repetition as the individual and connecting theme in all of her pieces. Helfand emphasizes that life is repetitive. She says "the rhythm and movement created by the repeated images are equivalent to the recurrent human relationships in life and the reactions of others to them."

Helfand uses the photographic image as her medium of expression for the situational and emotional relationships between people. "Relationships

and emotions are delicate things which are full of intense feelings," so Helfand contrasts soft colour in her sculptures, which express the warmth of human interaction, to the bold sexuality related by her images. The choice of the proper medium is important as she believes "the three dimensional medium is more real, as it is tactile in quality." The continuous movement of images on the sculptured fabric creates a soft and sensual impression of human interaction in some of her pieces, and the harsh effect of alienation in others.

Helfand states, "the viewers should create their own interpretations as they bring their own experiences into the meaning of the piece." She defines her own definitive statement as that which the viewer can experience individually and universally in her work. "If someone can react to one of my sculptures, then it is successful."



Fern Helfand's combination of fabric and photographer has made her a name in the Toronto arts scene.

Fern Helfand is also moving in a direction within her work. "I feel like I'm progressing, but I'm just beginning." The "Repetitions" show expresses Helfand's personal understanding of her experiences in form, design, imagery and thought. Her works are large scale renditions of the changes and feelings she experiences in life, reflecting the imagination and the emotion of

an artist, a woman and a human being.

"Repetitions" will be on exhibit in the Burton Gallery of Photographic Art, located at 508 Queen Street West. The exhibition will run from March 31 to May 1. Fern Helfand's photographic sculptures and collages are expressions of the human situation we experience every day, but seldom feel.

Steinberg slick and predictable



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the continental look of the pink tie on the pink shirt, Steinberg was able to exude a disarming, mischievous innocence that the audience could not resist. The only thing which the audience did become disenchanted with was the Global TC crew which was there to tape the two shows which will be edited and aired on Global TV later this year.

The ever-present loudspeaker voice which encouraged the audience to cheer after Steinberg had left the stage so that the crew could get some 'crowd reaction' shots and the sound man who urged the audience to its feet for a 'standing ovation' should have been the only people by whom

the crowd felt manipulated.

In what seemed to be a fit of hilarious improvisation, Steinberg pithily recounted the details of his act for a 'late comer'. When the same incident occurred during the second show, disappointment set in. What had seemed like spontaneous creativity was just another contrived, sure-fire gag.

Really it was this safeness and lack of spark which characterized the entire evening. The choice of material was tailor-made for the university crowd. Steinberg related his marijuana and university exam-writing experiences and, as the MC who opened the show promised, his language was unexpurgated and the sexual innuendos flew. But every step the comic took was on tried, oft-travelled ground.

Even a guest appearance by SCTV's John Candy, who arrived just in time to delight the second show crowd, was an exercise in controlled spontaneity. Candy's presence signalled an opportunity for improvisation which Steinberg ignored. Instead, he relied on his famous Booga-Booga shtick, featuring Steinberg as the deranged psychiatrist and Candy as his insecure, baffled patient.

For the uninitiated who attended the performances, the evening was probably both funny and entertaining. For those who have seen Steinberg before, the absence of new material made for a show that lacked surprises and was mediocre at best.

Life is an artful game

Linda Feesey

The York production of *Play Strindberg* Friedrich Duerrenmatt's interpretation of *The Dance of Death*, just finished its preview at Mac Hall in preparation for a run at the Palmerston Library, May 5 to 8.

Strindberg scholar Elizabeth Sprigge, footnotes *Dance of Death*, "How startlingly modern this play is, comparable with today's offbeat theatre with, for instance, certain of Eugene Ionesco's grotesque and wildly funny tragedies." Duerrenmatt has not realized the absurdity of Ionesco, but in *Play Strindberg*, he has fashioned a fertile black comedy that demystifies *The Dance of Death*.

In the drawing room, the theatrical crossroads of humanity we find two might-have-beens, "I am a celebrated actress (Alice) and I am a celebrated military man of letters (Edgar) and the familiar

tawdry absurdity of a married couple "growing grey in honorable bondage. The two would-be cannibals are in the midst of nibbling each other's egos for hors d'oeuvres.

The overwhelming motif of *Play Strindberg* is the game: life is a game, competition is self-affirming, and coming out on top is life-affirming. To be an artful and cunning player is to be a gentleman and to be an unwilling player is to be scum. Good strategy is being able to enjoy dinner to the sounds of your wife's infidelity. From misery, absurdity, "a barrel-load of shit for the rose-bed".

Play Strindberg, with its cutting edge of truth, is a black comedy well worth viewing. Actors carried their roles and the result is exciting. Look forward to seeing the show at the Palmerston Library.

The Bard is spinning

Robyn Butt

Three senior York acting students have made it big (AUDIENCE CUE: laugh) downtown (laugh). Ric Sarabia, Stuart Hughes, and Walter Villa are paying dues as servants in Toronto Free Theatre's current production of *The Merchant of Venice*. This is called, presumably, a break (laugh OR cry). But its torturous to recall Sarabia in Sheperdian dementia, Hughes in sexual overdrive with Botticelli and Villa in senile janitorhood, and then have to observe their struggle here against functional one-liners and non-functional tight white gloves in this peep-hole version of a play that should probably no longer be done, or certainly not done straight.

Sarabia in particular — perhaps because he's got a constantly identifiable role as Portia's butler — manages to leave a mark, hinting at enough self-satisfied pomposity to earn laughs. And two other actors' battles rise to heroic proportions out of the calm: George Spardakos as Shylock is as energetic, eccentric and convincingly dignified as this character can ever be; and Tom McCamus as both Lancelot Gobbo and the suitor Prince of 14. *Excalibur* March 25, 1982.

Arragon rivets you with longing to see him in something he deserves.

But in general the production was bad and boring. Its hideous set is a geometric conglomeration of garish rust colored boxes surrounded by little flats full of purple water (the harbour of Venice). For reasons best known to the creators, this is arched by a few strings of hanging pots filled with white paper flowers, and peopled by languid fops in 1920's baggy whites. Even if lines were delivered as lines — rather than superfluous verbal caviar in which interest is precluded by ennui — the juxtaposition of Elizabethan poetry with gelled hair and canvas deck-chairs is simply ridiculous, although not quite ridiculous enough to be funny.

Death certificates go to director Edward Gilbert and designers Strasovec and Kinch. Just because the concept of fake reinterpretation via Bard in Time Warp was made fashionable at Stratford is no excuse for the present destruction by exhaustion: those who cared, on — or off-stage, were distinguished by embarrassment.

York hopefuls, be brave. It's a long haul up that flat path.

RADIO YORK

===== FEATURE ALBUMS =====
February

Album/Artist

- THE VOICE-Import ep/Ultravox
- JUJU/Stouxxee and the Banshees
- THE MINX/Belinda Metz
- CHARIOTS OF FIRE-soundtrack/Vangells
- SWINGS DIGITAL/The Hotel Orchestra
- MYSTICAL ADVENTURES/Jean-Luc Ponty
- debut/Icehouse
- COWBOYS AND GENTLEMEN/Poco

Rude is relevant

Robyn Butt

If you've tired of creaky, historically significant dramas, check out *Rude Noises* at Passe Muraille's Backspace. The subtitle (and subtext) is *For a Blank Generation* which, in intent at least, is reassuring; no heavy relevance, just relevance. Ostensibly it's the tale of best friends Denny (Matt Craven) and Eddy (Harry Phillips) who leave Scarborough for Metro to find Eddy's sister Brenda. Unbeknownst to them, Beehive (Karen Woolridge), the anorexic performance punk Eddy befriends, was once their girl. Beehive flirts with death and Eddy with relevance, violence and incest while Denny becomes a hooker to support them.

The play — which has a lot of subsidiary and often superfluous drop-outs hanging about as the chorus — comes down to great one-liners.

"Brain damage in children and anal cancer have not been irrevocably linked to additives." "The living dead and the walking wounded..." "How do you tell them apart?" "The living dead wear polyester."

Brad Fraser, 22-year-old writer/director, researched *Rude Noises* by interviewing kids on Yonge Street. Even if Fraser wasn't fresh from Alberta, this would have been a dubious method at best, smelling of opportunism. But Fraser is talented, and if the plot had better aim and more flesh this would be top-notch contemporary poetic theatre. The direction and acting, especially Woolridge, are good. As is: an engaging cacophony to fill a blank hour.

