

Entertainment

Dark mood rules at the B.F.A. show

B.F.A. Show
Scotia Place
till April 3rd

review by L.A. Trofymow

Most of the 1986 Bachelor of Fine Arts graduates seem a tense lot of pre-nuclear holocaust artists. Black, greys, and ochre dominate much of their work. They have experimented with media such as tar, oil, concrete, and scorched wood. Many figures and paintings are left "raw" - rough textures, crude shapes — so that a viewer necessarily notices the *materials* first, rather than the object or design. In one sense, such tension and rawness convey artistic and emotional energy (*I'm mad as hell and—*). It follows that such creative frustration must kick the sublime out of the fourth floor windows of Scotia Place and replace it with symbolic forms of decay and destruction.

Take "Silence" as an example of the tension of pre-nuclear holocaust art. The untrained eye sees only scorched posts, chains, and a pyramid of sticks set on the floor. The art alone does not speak to its audience. One must read the words provided: *And the sky became as dark as night...* (Mark Dylan Hyde's "improved" quotation of St. Matthew). The words supposedly transform the materials into symbolic, meaningful objects — a sacrificial fire, crucifixes at Calvary. This then is the common flaw in many works in the B.F.A. '86 show: so transfixed are they with their own matter, they become muted. The viewer confronts substances which alone express too few facets, ideas, or perspectives.

Fortunately, much of the sculpture present transcends this obsession with matter. For instance, Ochatta's "Half Torso" of welded steel; Brian Jenkins' steel nude; and Annlee Arntzen's untitled clay figure all move and speak through individual integrations of material, space, and form. There is no need to explain away such objects which readily allow their audience to see beyond their surface representations.

For some of the B.F.A. graduates, it is too easy to fall back to shit and death is everywhere: one imposes meaning onto the matter. "Weiner Logic" promotes such impositions. This messed media production incorporates melting margarine, wieners,

wine bottles, artificial flowers and tape. It is an unsuccessful experiment with unusual materials. The viewer gains no insight, even though the note attached prods *The canvas flower is wilted (and dead) before conception*. So much telling is so much blathering.

Thankfully, shit and death do not dominate the show. Also note familiar pieces from the recent Industrial Design show, and award-winning posters and letterheads which all demonstrate well Art Working In and Altering the Real World. There is also an unfortunate lack of photography, although "Flying Nude" and the used car salesmen series are tantalizing samples of black-and-white work.

In fact, the B.F.A. show's set-up is one of its most pleasing and innovative aspects. From the sleek Scotia Place plaza, one zips upward to the fourth floor and suddenly enters a huge space whose concrete floor turns black shoes into white. Such a grey, bare space reflects well the rawness of works displayed. The low floor mountings of paintings and sculptures provide a perspective other than eye level and complement the show's geography like islands in a sea.

But to the crux of this matter: do see the show. It will frustrate, tease and please you; it will disappoint, but it will not bore. What else can one do but appreciate the Bachelor of Fine Arts graduates of 1986, who have tried so hard.



(Above left): Woman sucking waves.
(Above): Dog day afternoon. Such is the fare at the B.F.A. show.

Photo Bruce Gardner

In search of our space brothers

by Suzanne Lundrigan

St. Paul, Alberta boasts a flying saucer landing pad. So far only Mother Theresa has "landed".

John Shepherd of Bellaire, Michigan has converted his grandparent's home into a UFO detecting station.

People around the world are waiting for contact from their "alien brothers".

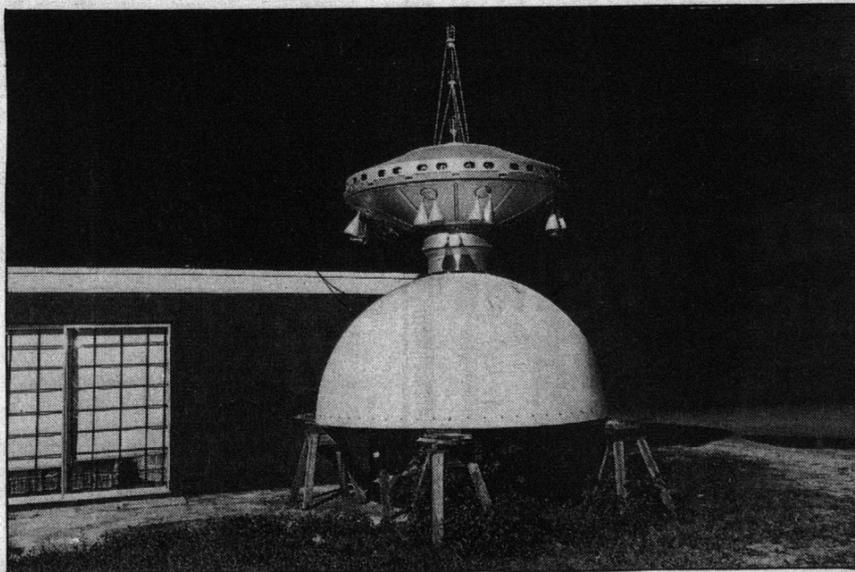
In his final year at Ryerson College, photographer Doug Curran, set out to study the myths and beliefs which surround outer space and its "inhabitants".

He loaded his camera, hammer, and carpenter's apron into the back of a Renault 16. Travelling across the States and Canada, Curran covered 125,000 miles photographing and interviewing people who are waiting for the space people to arrive.

Seven years later the project was completed and *In Advance of the Landing: Folk Concepts of Outer Space* was on the bookshelves.

Curran, a photographer since age fifteen, had originally planned for a picture book, but "to capture the breadth and content of the stories I was told, I realized that the photographs would have to be rooted into context."

Writing was a struggle for Curran. "I had never written beyond what went into letters, though people told me that I was a good



Preparing a welcome for our space brothers.

story teller. I strove to be objective. My goal was to present some part of my time accurately and objectively."

Interviewing came easily to Curran. "I approached the project with an open mind free of any preconceptions. I found that if I

expressed genuine interest in what they were doing people would be happy to talk to me about their beliefs," explained Curran.

Ruth Norman, head of the Unarian Educational Foundation, was one such individual. The Unarians are preparing Earth for the

arrival of a spaceship from intergalactic Confederation.

When Curran spoke to her, she told him, "...I can tell by the speech impediment and hesitancy in your voice that you were the captain of a pirate spaceship back at the time of the last civil war in the Orion Nebula and responsible for destroying hundreds of thousands of innocent lives."

Asked about this Curran smiles, "Sometimes after speaking to these people, I would feel sort of disoriented...usually I'd go home and have a little sleep."

As he travelled, Curran garnered support from the author of *The Right Stuff*, Tom Wolfe. "I was distributing postcards with my name and address on them explaining my project and asking people to contact me if they had information I might be interested in. Apparently Tom Wolfe picked up one of the cards and dropped me a note...we've been corresponding since." Wolfe wrote the foreword for Curran's book.

Curran explains that it was not his place to judge these people; rather "I wanted to record the reality of my time."

"*In Advance of the Landing: Folk Concepts of Outer Space* is a bid for tolerance. It reveals that humans still have a desire and capacity to dream. One might call this belief in outer space a mythology for empirical beings."