

Gay Art exhibits personal humour and pride

by Ken Burke

With most art exhibits by minority groups, the group is as much the feature as the art in the exhibit. **Art by Gay Men**, showing at the Centre for Art Tapes until December 4th, is no exception.

Just as it would be expected that an exhibit by Nova Scotia black artists would focus on being black in Nova Scotia, many of the works in **Art by Gay Men** focus strongly on gayness and what being gay means to the individual artists. The exhibit includes work by five Nova Scotia artists and three from outside Nova Scotia, ranging from the merely okay to the simply fantastic.

Arriving at the exhibit on the third floor, 1671 Argyle, most people will first notice the eight-foot pink penis standing upright near the far wall. Covered with various symbolic marks, graffiti, and photographs, the phallic Christmas tree is the work of Jim MacSwain, a co-organizer of the exhibit along with Robin Metcalfe.

According to Metcalfe, this is the first exhibit of its kind in the Atlantic. "There have been gay exhibits in the past, but this is the first by gay men," he said.

But back to the penis. Casting such a pathetically imposing presence over the room, the work took on the import of an icon, especially with the lipstick kisses, monopoly money, graffiti, and pornographic pictures adorning its surface. If an eight-foot penis can be described as subtle, MacSwain's construction came close. It definitely is subtle compared to a videotape prepared by MacSwain to accompany the penis.

In the video, MacSwain is seen in various disguises symbolizing different attitudes toward sexuality - a romantic, a clown, an athlete in bondage, a whore, and so on. The characters interact with the big pink thing and then leave their mark on it. There are some good points, but on the whole the message of the work is less trying without the emoting and sometimes unpredictable symbolism in the video.

The other works in the exhibit ran the gamut from sketches, paintings, pottery, stained glass, collage, xerography, poetry, masks, and other assorted objets d'art. Despite this seeming wide range, the exhibit really only attempted to touch all

the bases and give a wide sampling of works. It all fit comfortably into the fairly small exhibit room with certainly no duplications of effort.

A series of paintings and sketches by a Halifax artist (whose name is withheld because of possible persecution) were remarkable for their streaking, spiritual style coupled with angel motifs - all in an unselfconscious manner. There is a powerful sense of forbidden ecstasy to his work that should be seen by a larger audience than that present at the show's opening.

Robin Metcalfe provided several pieces of poetry as well as one of the more humorous pieces of the exhibit. Called "Hidden Footprints", the work takes two pages from the Hardy Boys book "The Missing Chums", points out several sequences and words, and lets the reader make up their own mind what hidden clues Franklin W. Dixon was attempting to give all-American youth in his yarns.

By far the most accomplished works of the exhibit (also the most entertaining) were those of Willyum Rowe and Evergon. Rowe and Evergon are both American artists working with collage. They also

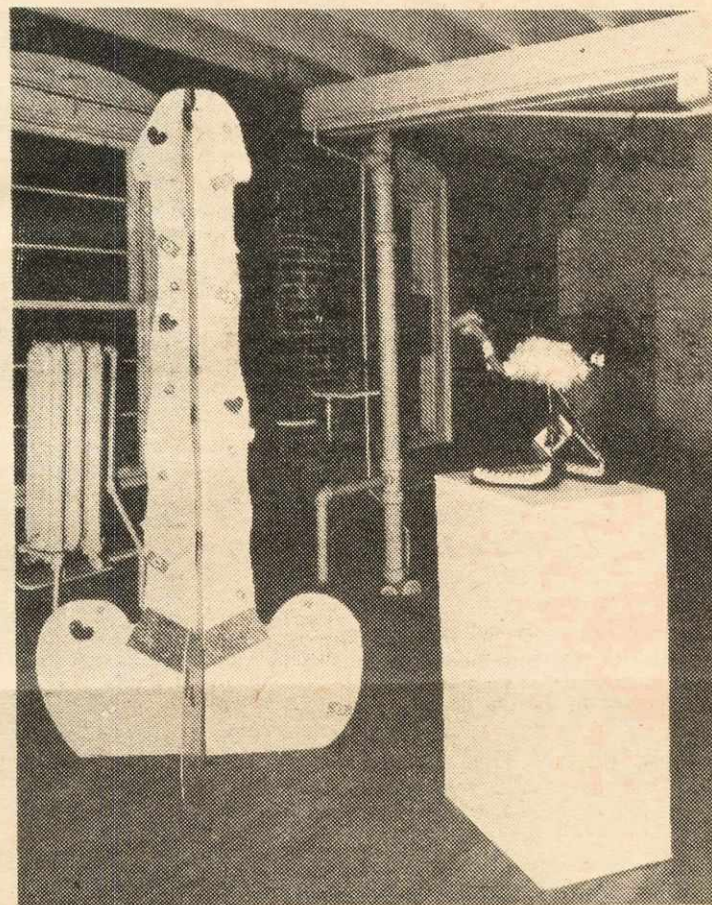
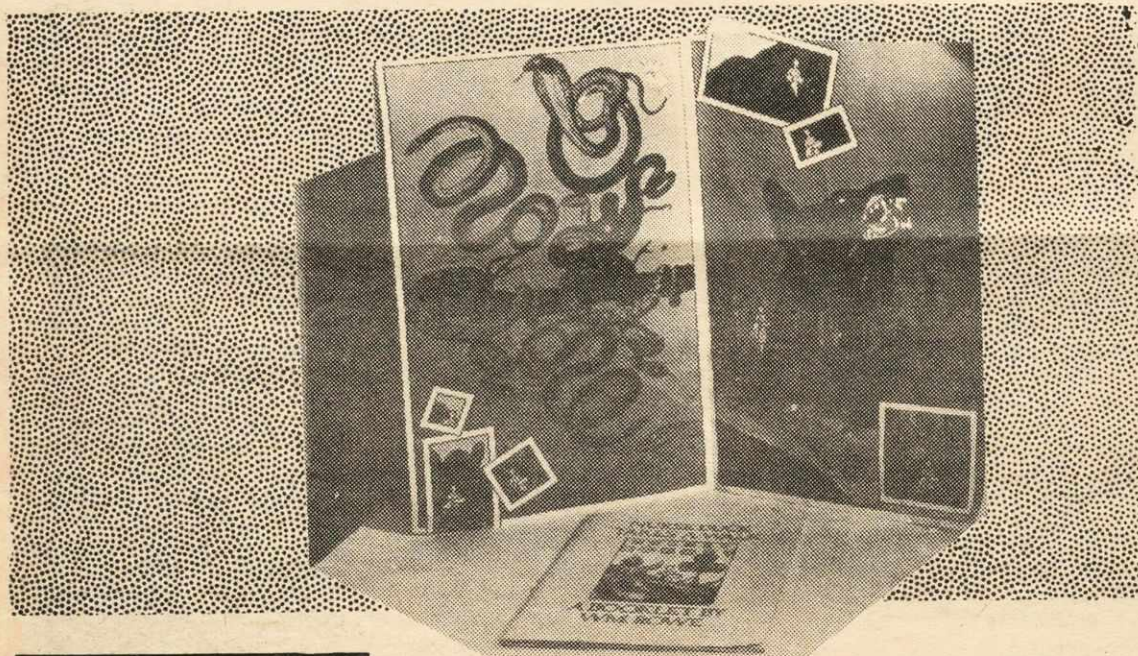
both have terrific senses of humour.

Evergon contributed three colour xerox prints to the show, and all three were memorable. His work combined the bizarre and the common in an oddly reassuring way - something like a cheerier version of Max Ernst.

But Willyum Rowe stole the show with his two "Nurse Duck" books. "Nurse Duck" is simply a graphic figure from a grade school text, not varying in design, but Rowe takes Nurse Duck through some very amazing adventures in

the world of collage. Rowe has the sort of imagination which can actually take you on trips to the "Garden of Eden" with Nurse Duck - and back again. The use of sharp colour in the "Garden of Eden" book is particularly enjoyable. Fun stuff, this.

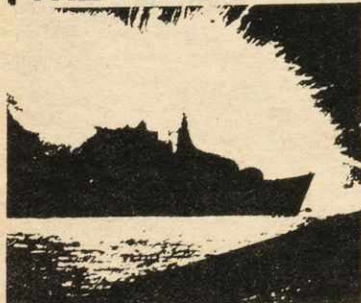
Hopefully this exhibit will pick up more publicity and attention soon so that it may not be the last of its kind here in Halifax. In the meanwhile, there's still time to see the exhibit and work against that possibility.



First ever gay men's art exhibit looks for your support downtown.

Falklands - trench warfare, April, 1982

WAR IN THE FALKLANDS THE FULL STORY



Book review
War in the Falklands
The Sunday Times of London
Insight Team
Fitzhenry and Whiteside
294 pages

by Geoff Martin

When I first examined the book **War in the Falklands**, recently published by Fitzhenry and Whiteside, I thought I was in for a superficial glance at the 'Falkland Crisis' writ-

ten by a bunch of Fleet Street copy rewriters.

If one was to judge the book by its dust-cover, this conclusion would be borne out. A spectacular photo of the sinking of the HMS Antelope adorns it. In fact, this picture is shown five more times throughout the book.

However, in reality the book provides a much better look at the conflict and the essential background than one is first led to expect. Written by the Sunday Times of London "Insight Team", which consists of three writers and twenty-five others, its 284 page text does not appear to be the rush job that in reality it was.

The book begins, not surprisingly, with the April 2, 1982 landing of the Argentinian forces on the Falklands, or 'Las Malvinas'. The text then plunges into the immediate diplomatic background of February, 1982, and then into the modern historical basis for the present dispute. To do this, a very

even-handed historical account of the 18th century British-Spanish competition for the Falklands, the British withdrawal of 1774, and the subsequent British takeover of 1831 are offered to put the conflict in the proper perspective.

It also provides a good deal of interesting information about the conditions in both Argentina and Britain which made pursuing a war beneficial to the respective governments, and to the surprise of the reader, there is only a very slight pro-British bias.

It was surprising to see descriptions of how gruesome the fighting actually was, rather than a book full of 'glory mongering' about the 'brave British fighting forces'. One of the many great quotes on the subject of "gutter fighting" came from Major Chris Keeble of the 2nd Parachute Battalion and really drove home the horrors:

"Our people are extremely aggressive. You have got to kill the enemy, you have got

to destroy that machine gun before he destroys you. When you fire antitank rockets into a trench, a lot of people die. If you have four people in a trench and a grenade comes in, then four people die. Every trench you attack, you destroy it. You jump in the trench and rake it with fire, and if you see an Argie, it's either him or you. There is no time to take people out and say 'Stand over there and be a good prisoner of war'. You deal with the trench, and then you head on."

Goose Green, the battle which afterwards all had admitted had no strategic military purpose, was described by Sergeant Ian Aird in these terms:

"When we storm a trench we go in fast. If the guy inside is alive and hasn't given up, then it is too bad, if he's armed. You don't have time

to play games."

Apparently, no one in a trench hit by an antitank rocket survived.... The bodies looked like "hunks of meat".

In general, the book provides a very detailed look at the operations of the war. There are no footnotes, so you have to take it all on faith, but it does provide plenty of detail on the naval action, and it tries to put a 'human face' on the war.

Finally, there is another quote on the realities of war from Major Keeble, which deals with the 'massacre' at School House during the Goose Green assault. At School House, a 'take no prisoners' mentality overwhelmed the British marines after three of their comrades were shot while approaching a trench that raised a white flag. "You have to appreciate, I suspect, that we had the white flag incident and they were not going to mess about trying to take surrenders anymore. They were going in very hard and I suspect there was very little mercy being shown there."