

'60s conceptualism endures

By CATHI GRAHAM

Twenty years after they began showing their work, internationally acclaimed artists Robert Barry, Stanley Brown, Daniel Buren, and Lawrence Weiner are still causing controversy and stimulating audiences.

From *Concept to Context*, a group show of these artists, guest curated by David Bellman, opened at the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) last Wednesday. The hundred or so people who attended the opening were keen to discover the meaning of the conceptual work being shown.

So too were those who participated in a panel discussion which took place in the Fine Arts Building beforehand. This opportunity to interact with the artists set the tone for the show. As Robert Barry commented, "Art need not be something we look at," indicating that his work has more to do with ideas than objects.

The exhibition brings the multimedia installations of Barry, Brown, and Weiner — all of whom have shown together during the '60s — into a contemporary context. Working with a framework of non-figurative language, each artist brings back to life that conceptualism we thought had died with the mini-skirt.

"If someone uses language to make sculpture, shit hits the fan."

The pieces, which vary from last week's *Excalibur* centrespread to grey and white stripes pasted across Toronto, push the edges of art into the realm of everyday. These artists are trying to make us think.

As Weiner said, "If it's important to them, they'll remember it."

Bellman said, "Their artistic investigations take visual form at the moment between a concept and its context." Thus, the title of the show and thus, the site-specificity of the works.

This exhibition was made for us, the York University community. It can't function anywhere else, especially with titles such as "One Step2 Grafted onto a Wall at the Art Gallery of York University." This piece, just as Weiner's "The Level of Water" in *Excalibur*, is disposable. They are not meant to be saved,

Endgame is "transformed"

By NORI SYRIO POULOS

Endgame directed by Sharleen Grainger Samuel Beckett Theatre

Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, performed by a group of talented young actors on February 27 and March at (where else?) the Samuel Beckett Theatre, proved to be one of a kind.

The play drove a touching message to the hearts of its audience: we must not continue to treat our fellow man with hatred and resentment, but with love and understanding. Failing to do so, we will turn into blueprints of Hamm and Clov, the two principals characters of the play.

Director Sharleen Grainger made this one-scene play hold intrigue at all times. Valentine Gregory and Mikel Koven worked well as a team, portraying a life of misery and dismay no one could bear. David Langer's and Lawrence Shapiro's virtually flawless acting made it hard to believe this was their first performance.

Costume, lighting, and set design — although simple — assisted the actors in drawing the audience closer to their imaginary world.

framed, or sold — they are expressions of ideas.

What happens when you take an art object out of any historical context, out of the gallery and "into the street?"

"We are still trying to answer questions which came up in the mid-'50s."

Robert Barry, the artist who tied string around the trees in Central Square, said, "The work refers to a situation, it refers to the architecture around it."

It becomes about its location.

The curator also suggests that the work is about "non-figurative language." Weiner addressed this aspect of his own work by saying, "In 1989 we can accept sculpture made of light or sound, and we can accept that a dance really does exist. But if someone uses language to make sculpture, the shit hits the fan."

Work that functioned 20 years ago is still causing excitement — something Weiner said he can't figure out.

"It scares me. It really scares me. We are still trying to answer questions which came up in the mid-'50s."

Barry suggested that their conceptual pieces function by "how importance is attached to them now." Someone looking at a piece has to have a "need" for what it's about. He added that people who have some history of the work are likely to get more out of it.

The member of the panel audience asked about those people who understand conceptualism, who understand what the work is about but don't agree with its philosophy.

"They have no use for it," said Weiner.

A heckler in the crowd said that the work was "child-like" and that he could have done the same himself. The comment thrilled Weiner, who tackled it with glee.

"That's the point," he exclaimed, "but I thought of it first."

The most complete conceptual expression in the entire exhibition was Brown's. He didn't show up.

From *Concept to Context* runs at the AGYU, Ross Building N145 until April 16. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday 10-4:30, Wednesday 10-8, and Sunday 12-5.

ARTS CALENDAR

compiled by Howard Kaman

GALLERIES

The Art Gallery of York University presents *From Concept to Context*, featuring the works of Robert Barry, Stanley Brown, Daniel Buren and Lawrence Weiner. The show, curated by David Bellman, runs until April 16. Please call 736-5169 for more information.

A Drawing Show featuring the work of several students in the Visual Arts Departments will be running the IDA Gallery, in the Fine Arts Building, from March 6 to 10. FREE

The Maison De La Culture at Glendon College is presenting *Images of Francophone Africa*, a two week cultural event, until March 15. For more information, please call Jocelyn Benedek, the Artistic Director, at 487-6730.

DANCE

York University's Dance Department is presenting the Toronto debut of the York Dance Ensemble, March 17 and 18, at 8 pm. The show, which also includes Jose Limon's *A Choreographic Offering*, will take place in the Betty Oliphant Theatre in the R.A. Laidlaw Centre, 404 Jarvis St. Admission is \$12, students \$8, available through Ticketron: 872-1212.

LECTURES/SEMINARS

The Philosophy Department and the Philosophy Club of Glendon College are presenting University of Toronto professor, Jack Stevenson, in a lecture on *Quebec Language Laws: Individual vs. Group Rights*. Today, March 9, at 4:30 pm, in the Glendon College SCR.

Atkinson College is presenting two guest lectures this week as part of the *Third World Lecture Series*. Monday, March 13 at 7 pm, Sam Lanfranco will deliver a lecture entitled *Habitat for Humanity: Homes for All: Canada and the Third World*. Tuesday, March 14, at 8 pm, Hismani Bannerji will continue the series with a talk on *Reform, Gender and Class: Wife Burning in Colonial Bengal*. The lectures will take place in the Fellows' Lounge, Atkinson College.

Vanier College Council is pleased to present a seminar on *How to Find a Job and/or Career Direction*, with John Haines of the Career and Development Centre, on March 14, 4-6 pm, in room 120, Vanier College.

THEATRE

Stong College presents *Dramorama*, an evening of music and theatre benefiting the Metro Toronto Chapter of the Ontario Society for Autistic Citizens Children's Summer Day Camp, tomorrow, March 10. The show takes place in Stong College JCR, and begins at 7:30 pm. Tickets \$5.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Faculty of Administrative Studies Graduate and Undergraduate Business Councils presents a *Monte Carlo Casino Night* to benefit The Canadian Cancer Society, tomorrow (March 10), at 8 pm, Vanier Dining Hall. Tickets \$5. Licensed by LLBO

Visions: Imaging the Life, a multi-media production by York Visual Arts student Vytas Cuplinskas is being presented March 17-19 at St. Michael's College School, 1515 Bathurst St. Showtimes are: March 17, 18 at 8 pm and March 19 at 2 pm for more information, please call 537-7899.

FILM

Vanier College Council presents the final installment of its Stanley Kubrick Film Festival on Wed March 15, with *Paths of Glory* and *Full Metal Jacket*. The showings will take place in the Nat Taylor Cinema.

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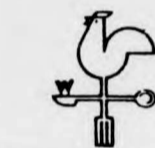
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