

A glow from beyond in Masi's art

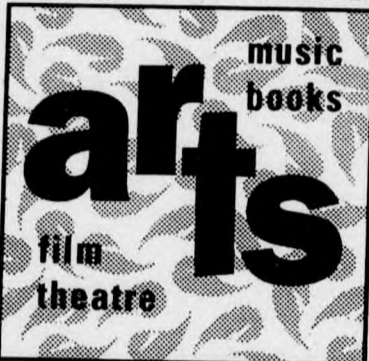
by Lilac Caña

The Student Centre Art Gallery at York is an excellent venue for new and upcoming visual artists to showcase their works. The latest is an exhibition by Fine Arts student Ida Masi called *Beyond Myself*.

In an exploration of the theme of personal growth, Masi manipulates the traditional oil-on-canvas technique by superimposing images created with an acrylic gel medium. The effect created is one of translucent



Ida Masi was beside herself at the opening of her show at the Student Centre art gallery. The three-panel painting is a symbolic self-portrait.



silhouettes with concentrated elements of light and colour.

One series of paintings which uses this innovative style distorts the images of Italian playing cards, using

Beyond Myself
The Student Centre Art Gallery
Opening Gala Tuesday Oct. 20
Showing from Oct. 19 to 30

them not so much as numbers in a game, but rather, to symbolize life experiences — such as Love, Death

and Birth.

Other works include a triptych which depicts the strengthening of an individual. By associating herself with the Venus figure in Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, Masi traces the progress from dependency to self-appreciation. The life-size scale of

these works invite the viewer to become a physical part of a charted experience.

Beyond Myself will be in exhibition at the Student Centre Art Gallery from Oct. 19 to Oct. 30, with an opening night gala on Tuesday, Oct. 20.

Play resurrects 'mecca for disenchanted youth'

by Harry Rudolfs

Rochdale College was a paradox.

According to whom you believe, the 18 story high-rise at the corner of St. George and Bloor was either the largest illicit drug warehouse in North America, a hedonistic paradise, an anarchist heaven and hell, or the front line and last stand of the counter-culture in Toronto from 1968-75.

At any rate, Rochdale was a bizarre experiment in restructuring societal values, and remains part of the skin of Toronto. It appears as a benign scar, a surgical graft that didn't quite take.

Friendly Spike Theatre bravely attempts to distill those seven years into a two hour multi-media stage production. An aging and disgruntled hippy, Henry (actor and writer Ken Innis), returns to the refurbished building in 1992—now the Senator David Croll apartments—and is assigned the same room that he had formerly occupied. He meets the ghost of his girlfriend, Lynda (Ruth Stackhouse), who had committed suicide 20 years earlier, and a myriad of other disembodied spirits who con-

tinue to haunt the building.

The action takes place in Henry's head. He banters with ethereal newspaper reporters who pay him a visit, blaming them for the bad rap that was pinned on Rochdale by the Toronto media. His former girlfriend appears, first naked and covered with body paint on a projected video screen, then she materializes and involves herself in Henry's memories. Stackhouse makes a pretty good shade and her musical solo is particularly engaging. Another poetry rap by musician Mark Johnson is particularly articulate.

If anything, Innis is guilty of taking too much on. The play was developed from a series of workshops and interviews with over 200 former residents. The writing gets a little thin towards the end, and straddles a few clichés. Of course, it's difficult to write about the 60's without succumbing—it was an era of clichés. Those values which were important then seem paticularly trite in the sophisticated 90's.

The difficulty of conveying the complex soul of Rochdale becomes

apparent when you realize very few things have been written about it. Friendly Spike does a credible job in portraying the spirit of those heady times by utilizing a sparse apartment setting and weaving in a series of vignettes and projections. An original and strong musical score performed by Mark Johnson solidifies the production.

Anyone walking by the building today would have trouble believing it was once a mecca for disenchanted youth, along with San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury or Vancouver's Gastown. In its heyday, the building housed up to 2,500 people at a time, even though it was built for only 850, and was home to draft dodgers, miscreants, deviants and the dispossessed, along with some of Toronto's more progressive elements. Coach House Press, Hassle Free Clinic, Karma Co-op, Reg Hartt all got their start there. A certain level of insanity reigned; consequently many residents were crazy. Both John Lennon and Timothy Leary made pilgrimages there.

Originally started as alternate residences for U. of T. students to counter the elitist image of Massey College, it quickly slipped into an anarchic live-in education experiment. Though never officially recognized as a college, the institution offered degrees. Thumbing their nose at the education system, a B.A. could be had for \$25, an M.A. for \$50 and Ph.D.'s could be had for \$100—not that dissimilar and certainly cheaper than the system at York.

Of course,

theatre
Rochdale
Friendly Spike Theatre
Tarragon Extra Space
Until Oct. 18

even paradise has its down-side. The very effort to transcend duality creates its own polarity, and Rochdale was no exception. Organized crime, bikers and narcs took over the drug trade. The press' portrait of Rochdale as a den of flagrant drug use and sexual promiscuity attracted more kids from the suburbs. And there were suicides, bikers, crashers, the occasional murder, and speed freaks. There was so much energy and nothing to do with it. "All fucked up and no place to go."

When I first encountered the Rochdale experience—"Rochdale" as we affectionately called it—the building was slowly strangling itself. The graffiti had gotten worse, there were better drugs in the suburbs, and there was dog shit everywhere. The whole area was mean: Madison Ave. with its shoot outs and speeders; regular shakedowns by cops of young kids trying to score drugs on the surrounding streets; fat cops sitting in the lobby playing cards with the bikers, guard dogs who would bite your hand off if you touched them; crummy, unhealthy food in the Etherea natural foods restaurant at the base of the building.

Rochdale managed to put up a fight right to the end. As early as 1969, federal cabinet met to discuss how to close the building down. Nonetheless, the last residents managed to put up a fight until 1975 when they were evicted by police.

Rumour has it that some of the \$8 million owed to the C.M.H.C. was invested in land in B.C. and the Ottawa valley.

Hats off to Friendly Spike for attempting to bring to life a seminal part of Toronto's history. I'm puzzled how they managed to create the synthetic marijuana smell which, at times, filled the room. Nobody smokes pot any more, do they?

Rochdale plays at the Tarragon Extra Space until Oct. 18. Go see it, it's far out and freaky. It's too much, really.

Hits 'n' Bits

Around York

The Student Centre Art Gallery will show the one-man exhibition of Frances Yu. The work is entitled "figures & figures," constructed in the last school year and during the summer at York. He is interested in Rembrandt, Cezanne and Picasso's works, not because they are abstract, but because they get an intense quality of passion. He chose the title because "it is more general. It at least tells you that all the paintings deal with figures." It runs Oct. 5-16. — EA

An exhibition of paintings and prints by John Barron will be shown at the Samuel J. Zacks Art Gallery in Stong College, until Oct. 16. Born in New Seaham, England, Barron's work symbolizes his view of Christianity, demanding a living, personal relationship with God as opposed to other religions who acknowledge the reality of the spiritual as well as the physical. He encourages you to accept this position before you judge, knowing well enough of personal choice. — EA

Music

Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine rocked the Phoenix Theatre Sept. 24. Opener Railtech's lead singer sounds like an angry version of the B-52's lead singer. Carter, better known as Jim Bob and Fruit Bat, brought energy and spontaneity to the otherwise pre-programmed music. Jim Bob amazed the audience with his vocal variety, screaming like a banshee, then softly floating like a choir boy. Performing the hits "Sheriff Fatman" and "A Perfect Day To Drop The Bomb," the most surprising feature of the evening was their choice of covers as the encore. The duo performed The Smith's "Panic," the obligatory "Dream The Impossible Dream," and Pink Floyd's "Another Brick In The Wall." As a footnote, the crowd got Carter back on stage by chanting "You Fat Bastard," to which Jim Bob replied, "I bet you wouldn't say that to Wilson Phillips." — EG

The Spin/Fontana Tour stops in Toronto Oct. 22 at The Opera House with a great 'festival' lineup — Catherine Wheel, The House Of Love and Ocean Colour Scene. The Wheels are back for the third time this year, touring with The Soup Dragons and The Charlatans UK. Both bands were easily defeated by the Glasgow group's dynamic energy and melodic songs that leave the listener breathless. The House Of Love, whose album, *Bebe Rainbow*, was just released this past month, has had some lineup changes, but all seems fair for the band now. Newcomers Ocean Colour Scene is making waves on radio stations, including CHRY 105.5. Look for interviews with all three bands next issue. — EA

Blame it on **The Shamen** if you don't like the whole 'rave' effect in T.O. Their appearance in March this year brought the first warehouse style party with techno beats, smart drinks and a whole lotta love. If these guys can "Move Any Mountain," then they'll move you, too. Opening for the Oct. 27 show at RPM are **Utah Saints**. Fresh off their European tour, they broke through with "Something Good," complete with Kate Bush's "Cloudbusting" lyrics. Trivia time! Their video for

continued on page 17

