

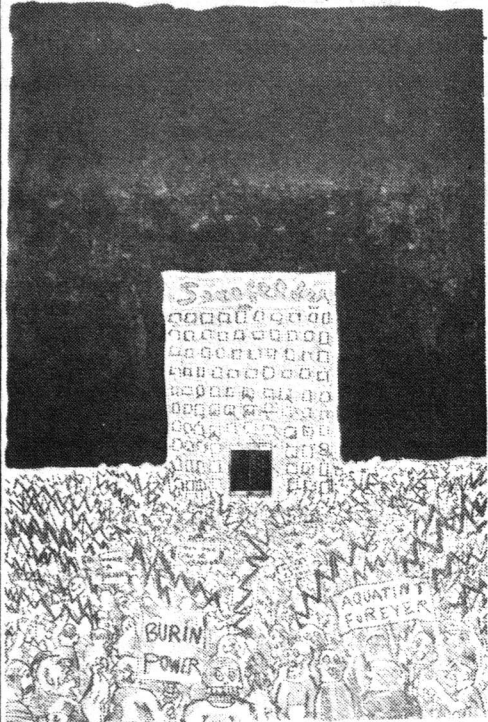
ARTS

Beware the Intaglio Goon Squad

by Marc Garvey

Introducing exhibits at the Students' Union Gallery with works by other artists usually sets the tone of, and provides some contrast to, the main show.

Two works by Jim Davies hang at



The intaglio goon squad storms the Bavarian Book Depository

the entrance to John Will's show. Both artists share a consistency of technique and an emphasis on social commentary. Will deals with engraving etching and lithography, Davies with acrylics. In the end, though, it's the differences between the two that are most interesting.

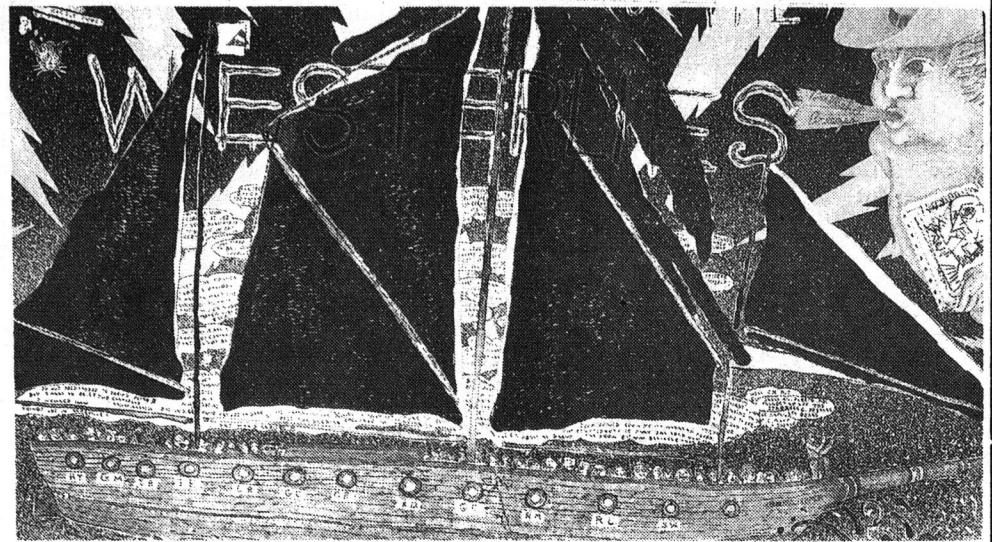
Will's work guides us through the fantasies, and struggles that are the daily life of an artist/academic. The irony and humour of Will's approach, which initially seems a bit disorienting, conceal a trap which the viewer is forced into.

Various compositional elements in Will's prints are layered over one another to construct a visual field that is tangled and sometimes confusing. Will mixes a combination of diverse elements with more traditional graphics and imagery, creating tensions that appear to be left unresolved.

Autobiographical references are crammed into these prints and they are often well-served by the artist's use of caricature and other narrative elements.

In most of Will's work formal considerations such as colour and scale are downplayed for the sake of the obscure references and humour. Ultimately, everything seems to convince the viewer that "things are not as they appear."

Will uses humour to relax his style; to protect him from a "high-art" approach to his material. But in many cases, rather than reinforcing his themes and technique, the overly personal nature of Will's material seems to rob it of impact.



Johns Will's The Legendary Ghost Ship Blue Chipper.

Placing the viewer in an uncertain or obstructed position is important to Will. All of the unknown caricatures and seemingly inconsequential references force the spectator into adopting the plight of Will's central characters (often Will himself). While the effect can be hilarious it's difficult to grasp any meaning from the multitude of elements contained in these prints. Herein lies the ambush. Will goes out of his way to entertain and confuse us, leaving us no alternative but to appreciate his work primarily for its visual merits. For example, the words on his prints are meant to be read, but also to be looked at for colour, texture, and so on.

Within this autobiographical maze, Will sets up a series of conflicting forces

that threaten a central character. Will juxtaposes the aesthetic with the commercial, spontaneity with brooding intellectualism, reality with fantasy. Similarly, images conflict with words, colour with spatial elements, the symbolic with the trivial.

The key to Will's consistency and his social parody in his reluctance to coerce or preach to his audience. Unfortunately it is also his major weakness.

Venetian Queen and *Jewel Island*, the two pieces by Jim Davies that act as a visual preface to the exhibit appear to succeed where the Will prints fail. Davies style compliments his technique; Will's often does not. Will's accomplishments tend to be lost whereas Davies are difficult to avoid.

Classic comedy

by Carol Merod



Orgon attempts to reduce Dorine to silence in a scene from "Tartuffe."

Pierre Boker opened this season of the Theatre Francais d'Edmonton with a tribute to the "best beloved of French authors"; Moliere's *Tartuffe* is a delight. A "comedy of character," the theme of the play deals with religious hypocrisy, and Theatre Francais' production makes the most of the daringly provocative nature of the piece.

Notice

On November 10th, The Swedish Embassy in cooperation with the Departments of Comparative Literature and Germanic Languages will be hosting a visit by three Swedish writers to Campus. They will give a reading from their works and answer questions regarding Swedish Literature, particularly matters concerning the position of writers in Sweden. This last point should be of particular interest in view of the recent controversy which has divided Alberta writers. The reading will take place at 7:30 pm in lecture theatre 1 (HC-L1) of the Humanities Centre.

The play is presented in five acts composed of Alexandrine verse, a ballad-like stylisation of Old French. Much to their credit, the French-Canadian cast performed very well in this formalized comedy with a bit of experience. The few weak moments in the play should be easily remedied.

Andre Roy (Orgon) and Nicole Bonvelet (Dorine) both gave strong performances. While revealing the absurdities of social behavior that is central to the play, their comical repetitions and quick transitions from fury to playful badinage drew laughs throughout the evening. Reginal Begas as Tartuffe is the perfect hypocrite. His characterization of false mystical devotion fuelled by the viciousness of Tartuffe is superior, providing an excellent pivot upon which much of the play turns. Adele Fontaine as Elmire displays a profound strength in her presentation of the farcical nature of the etiquette and conventions of the day. All in all, the entire cast was very adept at displaying the charm and sophistication that one looks for in a Moliere play.

Moliere spent five years revising and rewriting *Tartuffe*, presenting appeals to the censors and fighting the violent outcry that greeted the play upon its release. In 1669 the ban against the play was revoked, and it was promptly heralded as a classic.

As with most classic drama the demands of production and staging are often complex. Director Pierre Boker's fine ear for dialogue and pervasive artistic sensibilities have added another page to the history of the play's sensational and enduring success.

The stage setting is simple but nonetheless creates and sustains, with the aid of excellent lighting, the atmosphere of a 16th century gentleman's home. Brightly colored costumes are well suited to the personalities of each character.

Constant movement and vivid expressions on the part of the players facilitate comprehension and easily captivate and retain the spectator's attention.

Theatre Francais production continues on weekends until November 9th at the Faculte St. Jean auditorium.

Fear of flying

by Jens Andersen
The Right Stuff
Tom Wolfe
Bantam, 1980

If you thrilled to Tom Wolfe as he expertly reduced Marshall McLuhan to the status of a clip-on tie or elegantly skewered the radical chic of New York society, you will be tickled to know that the dapper gentleman is still dissecting North American society with consummate skill.

This time around his subjects are the fighter and experimental plane pilots who became America's first astronauts. As usual he has caught them alive and wriggling; obsessively striving and competing to become Knights of the Right Stuff (i.e. nerve, cool and skill); rat-racing down life's fast lane with only occasional sermons from their Presbyterian compadre John Glenn; and sneering disdainfully at their doctors ("reflector heads"), psychiatrists (the modern and unusually bat-brained version of the chaplain), scientists ("Larry Lightbulbs"), the ever-pestilent press, and humanity in general. The result is exactly what history should be: a glimpse of salient individuals in salient events.

In one test the interviewer gave each candidate (for astronaut) a blank sheet of paper and asked him to study it and describe what he saw in it. There was no one right response in this sort of test, because it was designed to force the candidate to free-associate in order to see where his mind wandered. These test-wise pilots knew that the main thing was to stay on dry land and not go swimming.

But Conrad... well, the man is sitting across the table from Conrad and gives him a piece of paper and asks him to study it and tell him what he sees. Conrad stares at the piece of paper and then looks up at the man and says in a wary tone, as if he fears a trick, "But it's upside down."

Pete Conrad, in fact got so sick of one clipboard carrying shrink that he finally brought in his own clipboard and started taking notes on her while she interviewed him.

He also wrapped up his stool samples in red ribbons, and vehemently

complained about the many other humiliating medical tests which all the pilots hated. Perhaps as a result he flunked the astronaut competition.

The Right Stuff is just loaded with revealing incidents like these: the waiting wife interviews which the wives hated but coped with by concocting hilarious parodies, the tragicomic sufferings of space chimpanzees, the rivalries between NASA and the Air Force, the frenzies of public fear of Russian Cosmonauts and adulation of the national heroes, James Reston of the *New York Times* falling hook, line and fishing rod for the astronauts apple-pie image, and so forth.

H.L. Mencken once said that Henry James might have been a good novelist if, instead of sipping tea in English salons, he had gone to, say, Chicago and caught a whiff of the invigorating atmosphere of the stockyards. There are different salons today, where different stimulants are taken, and the literary *Wunderkinder* gather the raw material for their classics of self absorption. But outside there still exists the real world of stockyards, Air Force bases, cheap motels, heroes, bunglers and nonentities.

This is where a few people, Tom Wolfe included, make literature worth reading.

