

# ENTERTAINMENT

Toronto Free Theatre

## Making the Glendon scene with artist Robert Youd

George Free

On the evening of Jan. 7, I stumbled onto what seemed to be a party at the Glendon gallery. A woman approached me and gave me a glass of white wine. "The first one's free," she said. "If you want more they're 75 cents."

I had just walked in the gallery during an opening for artist Robert Youd's show, *Paper Lifestyle*.

With glass in hand, I looked at the first piece that caught my eye—an enormous, crudely-sketched picture of a hand holding a brandy snifter. "The imagery," as the introductory text stated, "appears on surfaces constructed of pine planks and is rendered there with pigmented wax, oil paint and oil stick." It wasn't your ordinary Woolco-brand painting. The planks were slapped together in a deliberately crude and ugly fashion. The colours were extremely garish. I continued observing this colourful work, alternately gazing at the glass in my hand, then back at the glass in the work. "Kind of obvious, isn't it?" I commented to a fellow spectator. Avoiding his disdainful look I moved on.

Winding my way through the noisy crowd, I entered the main area

of the exhibit. Around me were five or six images constructed in an equally crude and garish manner. Each piece was clearly part of an overall set, a typical suburban living room: a representation of a couch at one side, a 'rug' on the floor, a 'T.V.' in the corner, and a 'fireplace'. I could see that these were not isolated, framed paintings in a neutral gallery space. The 'frame' of the work was the gallery itself and I was in the middle of it—part of the work, not simply an uninvolved

viewer.

A candy pink and green T.V. with the words "Monkey, Monkey" flashing on its screen sat in the corner. T.V. as foolishness? Art as imitation? What kind of monkey business is this? Beside me stood a large, pseudo-classical female statue. What was a trophy from some obscure bowling league? With an arm raised to her forehead in a gesture of eternal exasperation, she seemed to shout, "Oh, my gawd, no!" I became catastrophically

disoriented. To my left, two severed limbs—a gigantic arm and leg—were attached to the wall. Their white and pink coloration indicated they were fresh from the freezer. Was this *Night of the Living Dead*? Perhaps this was suburbia after the Apocalypse! But the couch across the room looked inviting. The partial face of a man hangs superimposed over it with a cigarette. "Ahh, the good life!" Detecting my presence, a little dog jumps out barking. I back off, almost falling across the rug. An

enlarged wedding ring lies to one side. Did mommy and daddy have a fight? On the far wall, the fireplace with two large heads evokes *True Romance*. But the man has no eyes, and the woman is falling. I become intent on the fire which burns and crackles. I feel hot as the abstract, action-painting background of the work leaps out, in a mass of swirling garish colours. Was this schizophrenia? On the sterile walls, EXIT beckons. I could attempt an escape.

But this was too melodramatic. Despite their obvious crudeness, these paintings are pretty. The colours stylish, it's all in the latest trend—New Image, the famed return to Representation. Isn't this all just a bit boring? "Tres charmant, Robert, but what's next?" Ho hum. I turned to look out the gallery window: the campus grounds, beautiful Lawrence Park. Behind my back the paintings are laughing. They don't care either. After all, they've made the scene. —Blowing apart, they hang in suspension: rage boredom, violence, complacency, death, television, it all adds up. Turning back, I gaze abstractly at tiny bits of paint. With glazed eyes, it dances before me. Apparently the show continues to February 13.

## Calumet in a mellow mood

Howard Goldstein & Steven Hacker

Who says time spent in a university jazz programme is wasted time? Not composer/pianist Aaron Davis, a York graduate who feels it was a very useful experience. Davis returned last week with his own band to perform at an afternoon concert presented by Calumet College.

The band played a wide variety of original material composed by Davis. The pieces varied in style from African motifs to popish funk à la Crusaders. The highly accessible sounds allowed Davis and company to keep the audience in Calumet Common Room continually interested. Ron "I'm not a fag" Allen was particularly noteworthy for his sharp Garbarekian soprano work. Allen is perhaps best known for his membership in the fusion trio Strangeness Beauty in which Davis' drummer, Mike Sloski, also serves. Davis' band was rounded out by

Peter Follatt (guitar), Peter Bleakney (bass), and Rob Gusevs (keyboards).

According to Davis, the York Jazz programme was extremely important in his musical development. "When I came here, I hardly knew anything about jazz," says Davis whose musical diet until then had consisted of the Beatles and R&B artists like James Brown and Otis Redding. From teachers like Casey Sokol and John Gittins, Davis received a firm background in jazz. "I got a lot of inspiration here, while at the same time found it good for expanding my horizons" Davis' feelings about his York past are extremely positive. "On the whole the music programme is great."

It was at York that Davis first became acquainted with African music, which plays an integral role in many of his compositions. He began by giving his African pieces imaginary names but later reconsidered the ethics of this and

decided to enlist aid to get authentic titles. Davis feels strongly about this: "If you are going to use African music, you should give credit to that tradition. If a middle class white guy like me can help out by informing people, that's good."

In more practical matters, however, Davis finds that his eclectic compositions have caused him a "categorization problem" as he doesn't like to be billed as a 'fusion' musician. He believes it is the business/publicity aspects which are the main hindrance in playing professionally. The recent economic recession has not helped matters either, and with the closing down of many local clubs, potential venues for him to present his music are becoming scarce. "What we need is for a jazz musician in town to win the lottery."

If you can't see him live though, Aaron Davis' first album "Nouvelle Afrique" (on C-Note Records) will be released later this month.

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