

Modern art questions the validity of traditional art and society

"The students' union of the University of Alberta in Edmonton houses an art gallery with great potential." So begins the first communication from the students' union to the National Gallery of Canada at the opening of SUB in the fall of 1968.

Since then the gallery has become a cultural centre on campus. However, there is still much to be done before the gallery can become a relevant entity to students of all interests. The scope of the program must be expanded. It must operate under a philosophy which destroys the traditional elitism of art.

Art is socially relevant as a comment or perception by the artist of his time. Art talks about what society is or what it could be.

Today, art teaches people to see, and anything that accomplishes this end may be called art. As Ian Baxter says, "Anything can be a work of art if we have sensitivity to

it." And that can mean a Valentine's Day reading of erotic poetry, or a light show, or a photo exhibit on pollution or a display of theatre sets and costumes.

The difference between a perfectly operating machine and the synchronized movement of a ballet company lies in interpretation. The effect of experiencing the one may be

by Myra Davies
director, SUB gallery

as fulfilling for an individual as experiencing the other is for someone else.

The sensitivity with which we receive stimuli can be expanded indefinitely, and the capacity to understand artistic expression grows from the degree of ability of observation; i.e. reception of stimuli.

The aesthetic thought behind contemporary art works or projects brings art back to

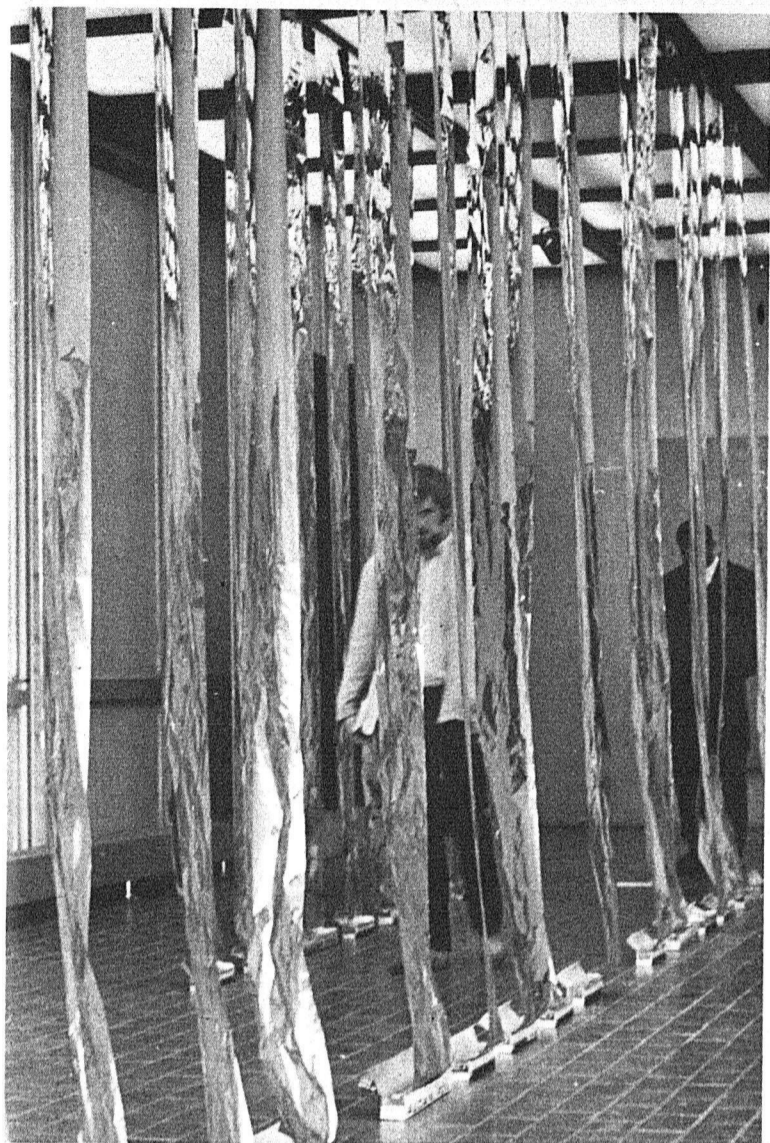
every man. No one has to buy from Norman Yates his aluminum foil corridor (shown in SUB Gallery in December): it is art that can be individually created after a trip to Safeway. Intended as experience, it cannot be owned. It does not exist until it is experienced. And there is no reason why it has to be called art.

You don't need a particularly sophisticated method of art appreciation, something perpetuated by the art snobs. You do need to lay aside protective cynicism and expose yourself to stimuli. Environmentalism questions structures of traditional art and suggests that art can be anything perceived by anyone at anytime.

Many contemporary artists are concerned with environment and man's relationship with it; making themselves and their environment felt by dropping things into it. N. E. Thing Co. is a group of Vancouver artists who claim anything — fields, buildings, stretches of forest — as their own projects, and give them either an ACT seal (aesthetically claimed thing) or an ART seal (aesthetically rejected thing). They are involved in exposing the disregarded. The special function of such artists has been to show that art does not reside in specific entities but in the perception of things.

Today it is impossible to define perimeters for the various arts. A fusion is taking place, sometimes successfully, other times not; but this is perhaps the most significant development in the arts of our time. It is a period of experimentation. As Lucy Lippard comments, "Performance media offers an extension rather than an alternative to visual arts."

The gallery must expand to take into account these new directions. It must become a centre for information, organization, and documentation of projects and events which take place wherever suitable. Aside from traditional art forms, the gallery might possibly try an exhibition of motorcycles, guerrilla theatre, technological art, musicians, or destructive art. Its program must encompass all that is deemed effective in carrying out the stimulation of people in such a way as to encourage in them an awareness of their environment. In so doing, people may become more discriminating and energetic in their demand for improvement to that environment.



—Norman Yates photo

THE SOUND OF A FOIL CORRIDOR
... individually created art

SU collection contains major art works

The decision to include an art gallery in the Students' Union Building was an important one for students and faculty alike. It was also very encouraging to me that the committee decided to form a permanent collection to complement the program of exhibitions.

One of the best works in the collection is a 1964 canvas by Regina artist Doug Morton called, "Centre." A large painting, it is a fine example of the bold, colorful, enamelled forms that seem to stem from the artist's expressed delight in nature. Morton was a member of the well-known "Regina Five" who came under the influence of important New York artists at Emma Lake in the early 1960s.

"Valentine" (near the information desk), painted in 1966 by Montreal artist Jacques Hurtubise is from the artist's "stencil series" in which he experimented with symmetrical positive and negative shapes. The juxtaposition of green and red alternating with white and pink is particularly effective. Another Montreal artist, Lise Gervais reveals a more expressionist treatment of the paint surface. "Verticales lestres de Songes" of 1965 and a smaller work "L'appel le plus joux vers pui plie" of 1964 are examples of this approach.

Roy Kiyooka's "The Bridge #4", 1964 (by the second-floor elevators), is an early use of the oval motif which has become somewhat of an identifying mark in his work. These strong geometric shapes enclosing at times, a variety of linear forms, are treated in an intellectual and contemplated way.

Vancouver artist Gordon Smith is represented in the collection by one of his optical works painted in 1966. This was part of a series of paintings and prints in which the artist explored the effects of bright colors combined with more organic, earth colors, and seems to relate back to his earlier preoccupation with landscape.

A little gem by Jacques de Tonnancour, "Les Falaises Englouties", 1967 illustrates the artist's delicate but lyrical treatment of surface through the use of monochromatic greys and blues.

"Equinox", a nail-sculpture by David Partridge in the music listening room is a good example of his unique use of an unusual material. The forest of nails rhythmically covering the wooden surface is consistent with the usual reference to landscape in Partridge's paintings and prints.

Ronald Spickett of Calgary is represented on the north wall of the cafeteria by two of

his "cowboy series." "Rider with a Rifle" and "Posse #3", both painted in 1966, are fine illustrations of his individual style. Spickett returned to figurative painting in 1963 after working as an expressionist in Jackson Pollock's manner and he retains from this earlier period a certain freedom and flow of line. A decided oriental influence was introduced after he visited Japan.

Two well-known Edmonton artists have works in the collection. Ernestine Tahedl-Ogilvie's paintings are char-

by W. Kirby
director, Edmonton gallery

acterized by a variety of textures created with the use of glazes, an obvious connection to stained-glass techniques. A recent canvas by Ihor Dmytruk, selected from his one-man show at the Students' Union Gallery, shows the artist at the height of his development. Subtle colors coupled with black and grey are characteristic of Dmytruk's recent work.

The staff of the art department of the university is represented by works of Jonathan Knowlton and Virgil Hammock. The works by Knowlton, "Tangerine Flaked

Baby" on the west wall of the theatre lobby and "Canvas without Name", are two of the best I have seen, and certainly are among the most original and successful of his many stylistic experiments. Virgil Hammock's "Painting in Four Panels," is a strong piece which was purchased to coincide with his one-man exhibition at the Students' Union. A thin vertical canvas is counter-balanced by three square ones, each a separate color. It has been hanging in the east stairwell of the building and holds the space very effectively.

To complete the collection, there are a number of excellent prints by such artists as S. V. Gersovitz, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Robert Savoie, Richard Lacroix and John Ihle. Ihle was on the staff of the art department last year and his exhibition at the gallery attests to his skill as a printmaker. "Red Circle to Half Power" is one of the prize pieces from the show.

I hope that this short discussion will serve to introduce the students' union permanent collection to the public and perhaps will also stimulate interest in the Students' Union Gallery. The support of both the faculty and the students is essential to the development of both the gallery and its collection.