

ARTS

I WRITE



MU

Pigs in Zen: Glendon Holography

The sound of one thumb sideways

by Alain Marsman

Incomplete. That's the word that best describes my reaction to the latest exhibition at the Glendon Gallery, a collection of selected holographic artwork. The presentation, entitled *Excerpts*, offers three montages by four Canadian artists: Claudette Abrams, Melissa Crenshaw, Sydney Dinsmore and Mary Harman.

The first installation I viewed was Abrams' *Reproduction*, a series of holographic pictures of various farm animals. These included a chicken, a goat, a calf and a pig, all frozen motionless, isolated, yet surprisingly lifelike. "The visual treatment is deliber-

ately clinical and detached — akin to the way livestock animals are treated by science, the industry and consumers."

This piece seemed to best fulfil the artist's intent; the static images were certainly sterile and "inanimate." Even so, on seeing the sequence of holograms, I wasn't immediately struck by them, being more appreciative of their detailed realism than any emotional or intellectual message.

The display entitled *Choice and Circumstance* (Crenshaw and Dinsmore) was the most visually satisfying. It presented an interesting textural study of a figure which shifts slightly as one moves from panel to panel. The

green light suffusing the visual space added a cool, marble-like air to the smooth subject, enhancing the deep, almost solid shadows and helping to sustain the illusion of movement.

The largest installation, Mary Harman's, impressed me the least. It consisted of three holograms, the middle one mounted in a dresser mirror, and accompanying pencil drawings. Once again, my first reaction was of a lack of strong visual impact, and of a bare, sterile arrangement of model houses, clay figurines and shapeless landscapes.

The holographic medium doesn't seem to be very expressive when it comes to colours or complex compositions, at least in this exhibit. Its strength (and weakness) lies in the three dimensional effect, allowing the artist to explore and manipulate spatial and textural relationships, yet rendering subjects in a static manner, as well as limiting the intricacy of a composition.

I somehow got the feeling that I had missed out on the full effect of the works, as if something more was present, but I couldn't recognise it. I was physically there, but didn't get an adequate "experience" of the displayed pieces.

This is a relatively new medium, for the audience especially, as not too many people have been exposed to holography in an artistic context (credit-card holograms don't count). Thus it would take some time and experience to learn how to fully appreciate the medium.



Untitled by Sydney Dinsmore (a hologram) from the series *Choice and Circumstance*

Most of holography's initial appeal is its novelty — being able to see the images from different angles in space. With a greater understanding of the artists' goals and concepts, I probably could have seen things from a different viewpoint (mentally as well as literally) — I wouldn't feel

incomplete.

If you're planning to take the trouble to visit the gallery at Glendon, it would be more worthwhile to meet the artists and attend a lecture-tour on Monday, October 1 at 12:00 pm.

The show runs until Oct. 2. For more information call 487-6721.

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