

Richard Hamilton - an impressive range of styles

The paintings and prints now on view in the York Art Gallery comprise the most striking show held there so far this year. The artist responsible for them, Richard Hamilton, has an impressive range of styles and subjects, and a genuine sense of humor. The prints are largely silkscreens, screenprints, and lithographs. Several of the prints began as photographs. These are perhaps the most striking of the prints, including Kent State 1970, My Marilyn and Bathers.

Hamilton's colors are always bright and attractive without entering the realm of garishness ruled by Warhol. The free catalogue which accompanies the exhibition is particularly informative since all the comments on the works are written by Hamilton himself. Hamilton writes more articulately than do many artists; his notes add a valuable dimension to one's appreciation of the artworks. He writes with regard to his offset lithograph *Swinging London* that "In the mainstream of Western painting (since the Greeks anyway) it has been taken for granted that a painting is to be experienced as a totality seen and understood all at once before its components are examined. Some twentieth-century artists questioned this premise. Certain works by Paul Klee make most sense when scanned as a poem or page in a comic book. . . The manner of apprehending as essentially visual work is often a concern of mine. My Marilyn requires to be read partially by cross referencing within the picture. . . *Swinging London* investigates the subject at the level of pure information."

Hamilton's prints and paintings are successful both as visually exciting designs and as expressions of the ideas which he attributes to them. The show closes Dec. 15 at the Gallery (N145) so catch it before it becomes invisible.



I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas, one of Richard Hamilton's work's on display in the York Art Gallery.

Perth County Conspiracy - don't buy their records

By BRIAN PEARL

Why does the Perth County Conspiracy NOT want you to buy their new album from Columbia Records? The answer to this and other of life's heavier questions could be searched for at Grumbles coffee-house last week at the Conspiracy played to full houses from Tuesday to Sunday night. A lot of students will remember the Conspiracy from the shows they gave and the college dinner they attended last year at York. Well, that particular version of the Conspiracy no longer exists. Cedric Smith left the group last spring, returning for a series of shows at the Bathurst Street United Church (with Thog) at Easter time. The tapes from one of those shows were grabbed up by Columbia and released last week as a two album set, and Richard Keelan said the Conspiracy weren't told about it.

When Smith left the Conspiracy, the readjustment problems were tremendous, and changes are still going on in the groups. For those of you who have never heard of the Perth County Conspiracy, a short history now commences. The year before last at the Mariposa Folk Festival on Toronto Island, a group of mystic gypsies with musical souls from Stratford in Perth County, where they live together on the farmlands, first made themselves known. The immediate result was a recording contract from Columbia Records. The issue from that union of pure folk ethos and pure capitalistic planning was the album *The Perth County Conspiracy (Does Not Exist)*. The album was something of a quiet raging success, turning up amid the Leonard Cohen and Moody Blues albums on better middle class bookshelves (somewhere near the stash) all across Ontario (a small but recently intensified market).

Perth County's mixture of folk-music, mantra chant and an appreciation of the mystic properties of marijuana, presented in a simple melodic and romantic harmonic mode, forms just the substance of their art. The very best of their talent lies in the form it takes. On the first album the songs were patterned together in movements, moments and meanings. The whole was greater than the sum of the parts. On the new album, called *The Perth County Conspiracy (Does Not*

Exist) Alive, the material is less programmed since it wasn't prepared for a recording but a show.

The album is on two discs, an unpleasant, unexpected surprise for the group which led Richard Keelan to brand his own work a "rip-off" and accuse Columbia of ripping the group off, too. He didn't go into the legal aspects of the recording contract they have (or had) with Columbia, but the fact of the second album's release without the knowledge of the Conspiracy would seem to show they have a two-year two-album contract that Columbia simply collected on when the time limit was passed on the second album and Perth County either couldn't or wouldn't deliver in a studio while Cedric Smith was splitting.

Keelan's mea culpa set aside, the new album is entertaining and still superior to a lot of music you could pay more for. Starting from Dylan's *You Ain't Goin' Nowhere* to the original theme song of the Conspiracy, *Uncle Jed*, the show is recorded in its entirety. For longstanding Perth County fans, the songs on the album are familiar and most welcome on record. Take a Look at the Light Side, *People Are Out of Tune* and the beautiful *Storie of Old* are songs Perth County have been singing two years but would not record. The album also includes two spoken bits, *Stratford People* (a great satire on the Strahtfard Shakespheerian Fyestival Theaetah) and *Hezekaiah*, the story of a black man lynched for his independence and honesty (told powerfully by Smith). The recording is good enough to satisfy all but the most sensitive ears and the only hang-up which may keep the album from the success it deserves, is the overpricing for a two-record set. The first album by Perth County was 49 minutes long and on one disc. The second is 52½ minutes and on two records. I don't know whether Columbia had a choice between one or two records or between cutting down the tapes and spoiling the continuity of the performance or leaving it alone and having to use two discs, but either way, Columbia is showing a lot of guts or a lot of nerve — and either way they make bread, ya'know.

But what about the Conspiracy today, with Smith gone and new directions and choices presenting themselves? One of the most in-

teresting new directions is the addition of a new member, Michael, (sorry, but I don't know the guy's last name) who has a beautiful smile and pure extrovert attitude towards audiences, besides a pop-star put-on proclivity. Mike has a fine voice, and backs up Keelan and Terry Jones with a weak guitar but lots of enthusiasm. But occasionally these days the Conspiracy will grab up and old, old pop tune, like *Your Love Keeps Liftin' Me*, and really does something beautiful with it, reaching the genuine feeling in the song and muting their satire of the original pop version to let the real beauty of the song shine through. And it was very beautiful. But I must admit that I miss the solid, hand-

some projection that Cedric Smith gave the Conspiracy. Keelan says that the split was peaceful, the result of Smith's desire to do something else. Whatever it is, I expect that Smith will re-emerge eventually with his personal art and not go unnoticed, because you really can't keep a good man down.

Meanwhile, my own weak advice about the album with the fourteen minute sides: If you have the first album, buying the second just about balances the bargain the first album really was, so that makes it worthwhile. But if you haven't heard the Perth County Conspiracy, buy the first album, *Does Not Exist*, and, if you like it, get the second. But besides the records, seeing the

Conspiracy live is one of the best experiences to be had in folk music in Ontario.

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