

Arts

Trying times for Joyce Wieland

By JENNIFER PARSONS

Given that Joyce Wieland is the first living Canadian woman to have had a show at the AGO, it is not surprising that her lecture on Tuesday in the Faculty Lounge in the Fine Arts building was both an inspiration and a cause for depression for the sixty people in attendance. The event was part of the continuing *Women in Art* lecture series.

Wieland said that her experience as a female artist has been trying. Not only is it difficult for women to get their work exhibited but, as Wieland pointed out, because of the predominant criticism that women's art is "too feminine," "painting like a woman is terrifying."

But Wieland has prevailed. "I'm just trying to take care of what's going on inside of me, trying to gain a kind of self-exploration," she said. This theme can be seen in her painting *Artists in Fire*, a self-portrait in which she is the artist and the male is the figure in the painting on the easel. As she explained to the audience, it is a kind of fantasy in which the situation has been reversed and "she has all the power."

Wieland realized there was a bias against women's art early in her career. In the late '60s she was doing large murals made out of fabrics. At

the opening of an exhibition featuring these quilted pieces she was interviewed by a reporter who wanted to know whether she really thought the quilts could be called art. Wieland laughs at this incident now, suggesting that "he was probably just jealous that people loved them."

Since then, Wieland has received an "Order of Canada" and has received worldwide critical acclaim. Even so, she doesn't think things have changed all that much. Her experiences with the AGO support her view. After waiting a year for an answer to her request to do a retrospective and after finally getting approval, she was met with a two week delay in a decision about whether or not she could bring in flowers for the exhibition. "It was hard for them to accept the idea of flowers. After all, the curator has to worry what society has to think."

Wieland finds and expresses great joy in her work and while she admits that "allowing ourselves to have pleasure (as an approach to making art) is still a no-no for women," we have to "have the liberation to say it's okay." Her advice is perseverance and said all one can do is keep working. "Never stop, that's all I can say."

Change of Heart

By MICHELLE SIMONS

Every band asserts the distinct personality of its members, and by listening to Change of Heart on October 19 in the Grad Lounge, the rule holds especially true for this band.

Comprised of Ian Blurton (vocals and guitar), Ron Duffy (drums) and Rob Taylor (bass), Change of Heart is a street-wise rock quartet turned trio, with the recent loss of Mike Armstrong (percussion) who has gone on to explore new scenes. Presented by Radio York (CHRY) and Mike Schiff, chairperson of the Grad Lounge, Change of Heart displayed puissance, in a nutshell.

According to Schiff, it wasn't a bad crowd for a Monday night concert, but their sheer lack of enthusiasm and mixed reactions during the first set was surprising. The crowd really wasn't fair to Change of Heart's energy and exuberance. Suffice it to say the drinkers left during the band's break, leaving behind the true music appreciators (those who had a pulse).

Into the second set, the crowd became much more energetic with

many bopping heads, tapping feet and rounds of applause that became endless, forcing a double encore from the group. If earlier in doubt, one could easily see from Change of Heart's ability to perform a classic ("Sunshine of your Love" by the Doors, for their 1st. encore) that the band really has immense talent. Blurton sings with a slightly painful yet angry voice, unfortunately his meaningful lyrics were lost because of the volume and the room's poor acoustics.

This electric, 5-year old band is not too aware, or for that matter concerned with its image. Duffy described the bands perception of itself as, "3 Shmo's playing music. We try not to get too caught up in that too much because you can distance yourself and not let anyone know who you really are."

With 2 albums and a video under their belt, Change of Heart look towards a September '88 release for their 3rd. album, with Armstrong accompanying them as a special guest. Furthermore, they've already completed 30 driving tours and 1 flying tour (to Vancouver). The band averages about 50 shows a year.

The trouble with Trotsky

By KEN KEOBKE

When Trotsky and Lenin set up the new government in an old Petrograd dance academy, their offices were at either end of a long corridor. After several weeks of running the length of the hall for endless meetings, Trotsky suggested to Lenin that it might serve the interests of the revolution if the two of them purchased and wore roller skates. Glasnost might have come a bit earlier had Trotsky, and not Stalin, become leader of the new republic.

Detaining Mr. Trotsky, now playing at Toronto Free Theatre, deals with Trotsky as a young political agitator on the eve of his return to Russia. America has just announced its intention to enter the war. Trotsky, after having been expelled from a half a dozen countries, is finally sailing from New York on his way to aid the revolution. On the basis of British intelligence reports, however, Trotsky was taken from the ship at Halifax as a suspected German spy. The real reason was that the British realized Trotsky would work for Russia's withdrawal from the war with Germany, allowing the Kaiser to concentrate all his military might against the Western front. Trotsky had to be detained.

Trotsky's travelling companion and the mother of his two sons (he had a wife and daughters in Russia) was placed with a Russian interpreter in Halifax, and Trotsky was hauled off to Amherst, a New Brunswick Prisoner of War camp. From the story of Trotsky's month in Canada, York professor Robert Fothergill has fashioned a play that relies little on fiction. Although some of the soldiers are composites, most of the main figures in the play are real and still remembered by locals in New Brunswick.

Among the characters is a monocled German Kapitän, Von Plambeck (Derek KeurVorst) who, unfortunately, bears too close a resemblance to Hogan's Heroes' Captain Klink. The Kapitän's rank, regardless of his politics, is respected by Colonel Morris (Graeme Campbell), the racist, bullying British head of the Amherst POW camp. Explaining his deference, Morris tells a confused Lieutenant Whitmore, "The authority of an officer supercedes nationality and principle."

Lieutenant Whitmore (Ross Manson), whose moral dilemmas about going to war present Trotsky with opportunities to explain his philosophies, is the agent of change in the play. His decisions and indecisions save a life and cause a death, and much of the play can be seen as background to his uncertainties about his impending trip to the trenches. The audience adds to their sympathy for Whitmore with the ironic knowledge of Trotsky's flawed predictions for change in Russia and the world peace.



DETOUR BEFORE MOSCOW: Karen Kenedy and Angelo Rizacos in a scene from Fothergill's *Detaining Mr. Trotsky*.

The play unfolds on a set in the form of a wood and wire cage, the natural brick walls of TFT rising high behind. Around the perimeter of the cage, the actors not needed in each scene sit, waiting in the dim light like memories. A mixture of effective techniques are used to invoke the period, including a tableau in the form of a war memorial, and a hilarious recitation of "Wouldn't It Be Great," an absurd recruitment poem Fothergill found in an early Halifax newspaper. Trotsky's month in Canada is recreated with drama, warmth and humour.

A moment of Thursday evening's performance deserves mention. The mechanical, ever-efficient secretary to Colonel Morris, Private Baxter (James D. Mitchell), was sitting at his desk doing paperwork. An audience member spoke out loud to a friend, breaking focus and diverting attention from the stage. Baxter raised his head, turned, officiously frowned, then resumed his reading—all in perfect character. It was brilliant, concise, and immediately returned the focus to the stage. It is the quality of acting, as much as the subject, that marks this production as one worth seeing.

BACKSTAGE

Excalibur's Ken Keobke spoke with Atkinson professor Dr. Robert Fothergill whose play *Detaining Mr. Trotsky* has just opened at Toronto Free Theatre.

EXCALIBUR: You've written a novel; why did you choose to do *Leon Trots-*

ky's internment in a New Brunswick POW camp as a play?

FOTHERGILL: I once was trying to write a short story, and found that I got bored with putting in the bits between the dialogue—I suppose that sounds trite, but I'd rather use a stage direction than say, "He leaned against the mantelpiece and looked at her meaningfully." In a play, everything must speak for itself and be contained within the text. I enjoyed working on the novel I wrote, but I think I would always like to work on plays, where everything must be said. There shouldn't even be a need for program notes. Also, I teach drama and a nice thing about plays is that they're short enough that you can actually expect students to read them.

EXCALIBUR: How did you begin writing this play?

FOTHERGILL: It started as a far more conventional documentary. It still hasn't lost many of its documentary qualities. Originally, it had scenes with Prime Minister Borden and I was trying to get Mackenzie King in there—he was Labour Minister at the time. It was packed with facts. And then I happened to read Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*, and thought, "Oh, what a boring play I'm writing!"—because it doesn't have any of that crazy, lunatic fun about it, but then I had to think, "Well, I'm not Stoppard and I don't want to write *that* play" and I knew I had to

cont'd on page 16

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