

January in the University Club

By Lynne Saintonge

The first show of the new year at the University Club, "Monctonians", opened last Sunday the 5th. The work in this show was selected by Luc Charette, artist and director of the Galerie D'Art De L'Universite De Moncton (GAUM). In statements reported by Christian Sabat in "The Daily Gleaner" Charette refreshingly downplayed the importance of his curatorial role saying that ultimately it should be left to viewers to decide what they may consider "good and bad art".

The artists in the show are already well known to francophone audiences in New Brunswick. The selection of work is strong; it is apparently based on Charette's personal taste and spans approximately two generations of contemporary artists. For a public whose perspective extends beyond the boundaries of the local art scene there are no surprises in the selection of artists, indeed one senses the opportunities Charette enjoys as director of the GAUM. A position which certainly affords many occasions for contact with his peers.

Putting politics aside for the moment though I'd like to turn my attention to the heart of the matter - the art.

For university and local audiences less familiar with the artists shown, this is an excellent chance to see what people may be talking about. Sixteen artists represented by 30 works is a reasonable ratio and the work is well presented given the physical limitations of the University Club. The feeling is energetic while the coherence of the whole offers a reflective perspective.

Yvon Gallant's powerful imagery in "Souvenir de Mexique" and "Un gaddom de gros rhume" gives full expression to his technique and is some of the best work I've seen recently by this most original painter. A long time favourite, Romeo Savoie, is represented by a large, dark canvas: "MT Vert". It is a personal calligraphy of symbols meshed into a sensuous surface. Always an intuitive painter, Savoie has renewed and enriched his vocabulary through his studies and research in Montreal during the mid eighties. The work of Hermenegilde Chiasson, another well established and well rounded artist underlines the fact that, in my mind at least, he remains first and foremost a poet. His rambling, witty and touching piece "Autobiographie" is a delight. Claude Gauvin's photographic drawings will certainly impress, Nancy Morin's brilliantly hued paintings continue to explore the imagery of fable and myth; "The Snake Bites" and "The Snake Always Bites" were particularly interesting being less saccharine than some of her other works and Luc Charette's video piece "I want . . . so I am" brings technologically based art to the University Club for what may be the first time.

My list of artists and adjectives is somewhat arbitrary; my hope is to encourage viewers to see the show for themselves while bearing in mind the politics of inclusion inherent in any public presentation of art.

Finally I wish to address one point which was raised in The Gleaner and which I also consider important: Where are the lesser known and the younger artists? For all the controversy Charette can sometimes stir, sadly he has fallen short here. Saying that "opportunities to make an impact are rare for the younger artist" is stating the obvious. Since Charette is in the position to know about the work of a wide range of artists his speculations about rare opportunities sound disingenuous. Within the range of possibility before him Charette may have chosen to play it safe while appearing to be bold. A clever compromise but not one which passes close scrutiny.

Ultimately these political issues do not diminish the overall strength of his choices as the work asserts its power and stands in its own right. "Monctonians" is at the University Club, 3rd floor, Old Arts Building through January.

Happenings

The UNB Art Centre presents a lecture by Newfoundland artist David Blackwood at 12:30 pm on January 15, in conjunction with the display of a collection of his works beginning on January 5th. Blackwood is known both in Canada and abroad for his powerful etchings of outport life in Newfoundland as it was in years past. The exhibition will run through January 16. The Visiting Artist Programme is presented in cooperation with the Beaverbrook Art Gallery and Gallery Connexion. The lecture will be held in the Studio of the UNB Art Centre on campus (Memorial Hall). Admission is free and all are welcome. Bring your lunch. Also at the Art Centre this month are exhibitions by Craig Schneider (sixteen clay sculptures which incorporate found objects) entitled *Re-Emergence*, and R.M. Vaughan, entitled *Decorative Flair*, incorporating elements, textures, and effects gleaned from his observations of interior design and ornamentation. Both exhibitions represent the first solo presentations by these two artists and begin on January 19 and continue through February 12, at the Art Centre.

The public is invited to an opening and meet the artist on Sunday, January 12 at 2pm, with Fredericton artist Peggy Holt at the National Exhibition Centre. Peggy's *Journey* is an exhibition of fifteen paintings in acrylic and watercolor. Also opening at this event will be a presentation *Craft from Saskatchewan*, a collection of works from six master craftspeople, including jewelry, furniture, tapestries, wall hangings, and wooden bowls. George Fry will officiate, and the exhibits continue until March 1st, 1992. The National exhibition Centre is located at 503 Queen Street.

The Creative Arts Committee presents The Alexandria Trio, one of Canada's newest and most exciting chamber ensembles, as part of the UNB/STU Creative Arts Series. The concert, featuring works by Hayden, Beethoven, Manning and Brahms, will take place at Memorial Hall on the UNB campus on Thursday, January 16th, at 8pm. The Alexandria Trio's debut Atlantic tour is supported by Tour Sponsor Northern Telecom. Tickets are \$12/adult, \$10/senior and \$4/student and by subscription at the UNB Art Centre. Please phone 453-4623 for details.

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