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667-3821 or 3825 PRE-REGISTRATION IS ESSENTIAL

Endless confrontation for city artist

By Lydia Pawlenko

"For the artist, as the city declines, it becomes an endlessly renewable source of confrontation," said Gary Michael Dault, explaining the immediacy of the pictorial mind and the city. He noted that experiences such as seeking out natural grandeur in the wilderness have become "as remote as medieval literature."

The theme was "The City and the Camera." and the sight of photographermedia types and architects mingling with economists, geographers and planners at the 8th Annual York University Urban Studies Symposium last Friday, certainly reflected the interdisciplinary tone set by coordinator Nelson Wiseman.

The morning session featured an array of artistically inclined speakers involved with photography and film, who shared some fascinating insight through their papers and presentations in the context of the city.

Gary Dault, a CBC producer and Toronto Star critic, referred to the city as a human form, "a microcosm of a human body, with its arteries, heart... What photography does is the surreal capturing of those biological factors that really matter to us," he said. "Photographers see cities as great extensions of human furniture, of human needs presiding."

Large prints of city photographs taken by Walker Evans, Bernice Abbot and Robert Frank, were analyzed by Dault, a former humanities instructor, who has a talent for creatively wallowing and associating them with whatever came into his mind.

And thus graffitti became, "like the city's own handwriting ...the way that cities talk

He was an entrepreneur, a buffalo

hunter, a farmer, a military man. He was

called "the pride of the prairies." His dress

was flamboyant: buckskin pants and

moccasins topped off by tails and a top hat.

He was a halfbreed, a Metis, the forgotten

Canadian who disappeared some 100 years

On Tuesday afternoon, this man re-emerged on the plains of York to speak

before a small gathering in McLaughlin College. Gone were the tails and mocassins,

replaced by equally ostentatious accountrements that a Yorkville resident with

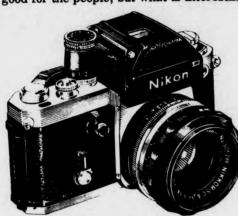
The man is Duke Redbird, poet, film

Saturday night fever might flaunt.

back to us." A picture of an old barbershop was acknowledged as an embodiment of human needs. "There's something moving in the way cities cry people's needs and

Dault expressed his fascination with "old. burnished cities that are dangerous and not good places to live, but are full of literary energy and pictorial energy."

His comment, "Toronto looks like it was all put together last night by a windowdresser with a staple gun," drew a few gasps from the gathered urbanists. He quickly tried to redeem himself by explaining that New York and Toronto became polar from the perspective of not what is good for the people, but what is interesting



to photograph. There is a difference between "the rational and the sensual." "I'm not talking about the city as a place

to live, but the city as a poetic device." Gerald Needham, a York visual arts professor; suggested that we tend to discount prints as artistic illustrations of the

Metis search for roots

and non-status Indian Association. Redbird

had returned to York, his alma mater, to

open a few pages of neglected Canadian

history and report on the Metis' attempts to

Redbird is currently researching a history

of the Metis which he hopes will solve the identity crisis among his people. Tuesday's

presentation was filmed to be a chapter in

"Our research is giving a clear picture of

the historical foundations upon which we

can view future development. We're

developing a profile of our people to en-

courage productive participation in con-

Redbird estimates 1,000,000 Canadians

He calls the Metis, the "only truly in-

digenous people of Canada, a mixture of

blood from European settlers and Indians

who originally migrated to North America

said that the sudden invisibility of the Metis

happened about the time of Louis Riel's

execution. "We were a part of history that

white men believed had been messily done

with." There was no employment, no social equality for Metis, so they hid behind their

white identity to survive. The federal

government claimed Metis land and gave it

Redbird credits the re-emergence of the

Metis to the social movements of the sixties,

the establishment of Indian land claims and

the ascension of Louis Riel in popular

The Metis were not included in land

treaties between the Indians and the federal

government, so have had to prepare their

One current land claim in dispute is a

reserve in the Fort Frances area of Ontario.

Originally the federal government agreed to

make it a halfbreed reserve. But later, when

they discovered that such a move could

create a precedent for the establishment of

Metis reserves across the country, the

decision was reversed. Metis represen-

tatives are now preparing and developing a

Redbird hopes that the accumulation of a Metis cultural heritage will be a moral argument for the creation of Metis reserves.

In appealing to the government he says

the Metis are "walking a tightrope." The

funding for their historical and legal

research comes from the federal govern-

legal case against the government.

away to immigrant farmers.

mythology.

own unique case.

are Metis and 200,000 live in Ontario.

lay claim to land in Ontario.

the unfolding story of the Metis.

federation," he said.

city, in his slide presentation "Paris and London As Seen By Artists and Photographers in the Mid-Nineteenth Century." The artists referred to were printmakers and draftsmen in the nineteenth century, illustrators like Cruickshank, whose work was featured in Dickens' novels.

David Heath, who described himself as a 'camera poet", conducted a somewhat mystical journey through city streets, in his slide presentation "Beyond the Gates of

"My pictures are not of the city, but the city in form is its foundation. I have always seen it as a stage, and people in the streets as actors," he said.

Heath, a professor of photographic arts at Ryerson, created the slide show in 1969 after being inspired by Bob Dylan's song "Outside the Gates of Eden."

With a Nikon camera and a telephoto lense, he set out to capture faces of the city streets, "the isolation of a head as a quasiportrait without their knowledge of being embraced."

There was something almost disturbing about the tired, tense, defeated-looking human features that were flashed upon the

"People moving in a city are guided and directed by the structure of the city. The passing of a sense of promenade endows this crowd with soul. There is something in the city in its crawl and movement that takes something in the city away. But then, why do we need to dance through the streets?"

David Heath, together with the other speakers, exposed the city as a very

ment, so they must be careful not to em-

barass the government or risk losing the

"Excuse me. Have you ever heard of the

The Canadian Theatre Review - and if

you haven't don't feel alarmed: you're not

membership in that exclusive set called

But to the members of this set - the

vwrights, directors, designers, actors

and critics of theatre - the journal is of

vital importance. It is, perhaps, the only

journal in this country devoted to a serious

discussion of our drama and, with its first

issue this year, it celebrates its fifth an-

Five years - and in those five years it has

accomplished a lot. The journal has in-

creased its circulation from 600 to over

10,000. Its various issues have taken on a

wide variety of themes - from

homosexuality in the theatre, to obsenity, to

regionalism, to children's theatre. They

have published scripts (usually of

previously unproduced plays) by George

Ryga, John Herbert, John Palmer, Irving

Layton and Leonard Cohen. They will soon

And CTR Publications not only turns out a

quarterly journal, but various service

booklets and an anthology of plays as well.

They produce a yearbook, Canada On Stage.

which documents all the major productions

One review of the first yearbook stated:

"The only trouble with this volume is that it

didn't start 100 years sooner." CTR editor

Don Rubin agrees. "We have," he said, "lost 100 years of our history."

From 1974 onwards, however, Rubin has

made sure that our theatre has been cap-

tured for posterity. "To document, analyse and reflect Canadian theatre as it exists" —

this, he tells me, was one of the original

publish one by Michel Tremblay.

of the previous year.

objectives of CTR.

Canadian Theatre Review?"

"The Canadian what?"

"Theatre People".

money

relevant photographic subject. After all, as David Heath mentioned, we are long beyond the gates of Eden, at the point of no return.



By Greg Saville

Why is it that when a movie is shown about, around or even near Paris, there is an establishing shot of the Eiffel Tower a close up of a checkerboard tablecloth and accordian music immediately after the opening titles? Or, to bring this closer to home, how about the film shot in Toronto somewhere there will undoubtedly be a peek at the new City Hall. It never fails.

U. of T. lecturer Joe Metchuk calls this phenomenon "signifiers" and they're not only quite common in movies about, around or near a city, they're reflective of moviemakers conceptions about cities in general. Metchuk was speaking at the afternoon

session of the "City and the Camera" symposium presented by York's Urban Studies program last Friday. "I think the negative side of cities seems to be exaggerated in the cinema. What's

been presented in the past has been a lop-

Generally he believes the city has been seen as a symbol of decadence while the country represents the opposite. Take

Journal for thespians

the action take place? The saloon, with the drinking, gambling and fighting. What about the positive side of westerns you ask? Metchuk says even the good guys often come from outside the city, usually the

"But one must be careful in searching for the attitudes of society as pointed out in the cinema," he qualified, "because with over 6000 films a decade it's hard to discover those films which reflect true social at-

Film truly became a mass event as America urbanized. Irene Wittman, a York Environmental Studies graduate, outlined how movies moved into middle class areas in cities. The earlier style downtown Nichelodeons were renovated into classy movie theatres by the first World War and the cinema came of age along with urbanization in American cities.

On an average, in 1953, Americans saw 20 films per year compared with an average of four trips to the cinema last year. But, Metchuk says, the four films most people see each year now are the major advertised movies, which are usually reflective of the

Chaplin, says Metchuk, was one of many who's cinematic view of the city hinged on it's negative factors, but of late there has been a change. Films such as Deliverance, (which

depicts savagry in a rural setting with men who leave an urban setting to get away from "it all") and Outrageous (salvation and opportunity within the confines of New York) are examples of the reversal in this trend. Of course there are still films of the old genre such as Taxi Driver, ("...on every street and every city there's a nobody who wants to be a somebody..." as the promotion states.) and they still show what Metchuk calls "various negative urbane views" but it seems as though there is a brighter side to city life being reflected in many recent

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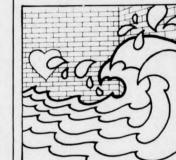


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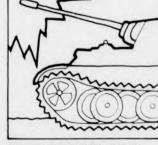
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in Brooklyn, Rubin originally set out to be an actor but changed his mind when he began writing for Showbusiness Newspaper After receiving his MA from Bridgeport University, and a stint as drama critic for the New Haven Register, he eventually

found his way to Toronto, encouraged by the Star's critic Nathan Cohen. "Nathan was like a father to me," said

Rubin. "He was generous, committed. He sweated integrity." One of the major things Cohen taught him, says Rubin, is that-Canadians, claims Rubin, tend to take

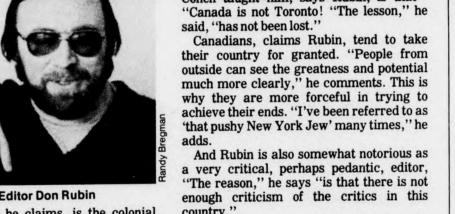
country.'

"There are many reviewers in this country, there are very few critics," he states. This has been very depressing. I'm hoping that as the level of our theatre develops the level of criticism will develop as well. The level of criticism doesn't lead the theatre, theatre leads the level of

CTR, he says, also comes in for its share of criticism. "We run a very thin line between the profession and the academic world and we have readers on all these sides that means we get complaints from all sides. The professionals think we're being too academic, the academics think we're too professional. The Canadians think we're too international, the internationalists think we're too Canadian.

"But as long as we have readers and as long as we have that kind of interest... then I think we're running the right line - right down the middle of those.

And keep running they hopefully will for many years to come.



"Until that attitude is changed," he states, "we cannot consider ourselves

the fact that we are still publishing — I think that's very important. I think in that sense we have succeeded. We have survived. We are five years old."

to Rubin. Years of fighting a stubborn mentality and an American domination have made him into a sort of theatrical guerilla. He talks about a contract with 100 Canadian embassies as "a major victory for us." "Since 1967," he tells me, "the battle

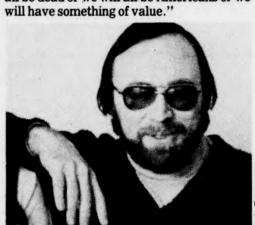
has been scaled uphill." It seems somewhat ironic but Rubin partially attributes his enthusiasm and aggressiveness to the fact that he was, until seven years ago, an American. Brought up

would be taken seriously. Has he suc-"Have we won?" he asks. "No, we haven't won. The battle is still being fought. The battle will continue to be fought for the next 50 to 100 years — at the end of which we will all be dead or we will all be Americans or we

But the most important aim, Rubin states,

was to make sure that Canadian theatre

in a minority. In fact, most York students I've queried during the past few weeks seemed blissfully unaware of its existence. Some actually, were aware of its existence - but had not read it (at least not often). Others - a small minority, alas - were both aware of its existence and had read it often, qualifying them, I suppose, for



CTR Editor Don Rubin

The obstacle, he claims, is the colonial mentality still prevalent in this country and our condescending attitude towards Canadian art.

successful, we cannot consider that we have won any sort of battle." "The fact that we are waging a battle and

The rhetoric of war obviously comes easy