

Siberry another David Byrne?

By SIOBHAN McRAE

"I like to go slowly, at my own pace. Being an overnight sensation doesn't appeal to me."

Siberry's musical career has conformed nicely to her ideal. Starting out on the folk music circuit, her first album was released in 1981 and gained a certain amount of attention. This year her new release, *No Borders Here*, has achieved national exposure. International recognition may soon follow as there is a strong possibility she will be picked up by an American label and get her work distributed south of the border. She hopes to have her next album out by May of 1985.

Siberry's songs cover a wide spectrum of moods and situations, from a waitress obsessed with her work (*The Waitress*) to a woman rejected by her self-centred lover (*You Don't Need*) to an amusing commentary on eager young businessmen (*Extra Executives*). While she doesn't intend to deliver an obvious message in her songs, social criticisms are there for those who want to look for them.

"I'm not political in an overt sense," Siberry said in an interview with the *Gazette*. "All my songs have a consistent philosophy, which is like personal politics . . . You have to be careful about confront-

ing people. If people think you're talking about someone else you can get your point across without putting up their defenses."

Siberry feels the Canadian music scene has improved over the last few years, thanks to the proliferation of "alternative" radio stations that promote some of the more original but less commercial Canadian talent.

"Just the fact that we've done so well is an indication that things have changed a bit. It's unbelievable that there was a huge portion of the Canadian music scene that was ignored by radio," she said. "With my first record I had trouble getting any airplay. I never expected the new album to be so popular. It's a matter of timing. People were ready for it. Markets can be developed, that's what I always say."

As part of her current nationwide tour Siberry is spending a week in Halifax, including a performance tomorrow night at Dal. She is aware that a large portion of her audience is made up of students.

"I think campus support is really important for bands like us."

Those who expect her concert to be a carbon copy of her record may be in for a surprise. She likes to play around with her songs, depending on her mood to decide any changes.

"It makes people realize that

songs are moving things. That's part of my freedom. I would hate to get trapped."

A video of the song *Mimi on the Beach* has just been released, although viewers should be warned that what they see may be a shortened version of the seven-minute original.

"We've run into problems because people view videos as promotional material rather than as works in themselves. It's a new medium and already they're impos-

ing restrictions."

Videos are a natural extension of Siberry's songs because of the strong visual aspect contained in many of them.

"When I get an idea it's visual in the first place, and then I turn it into a song."

The next album will be subtly different from the current release, as the band continues to develop its sound.

"We've learned a lot about arrangements in the last few years

and I want to keep moving in a more minimalistic direction . . . There may be some more unusual songs."

While Jane Siberry has inevitably been compared with a gamut of female artists, from Joni Mitchell to Laurie Anderson ("I wouldn't call her [Mitchell] a strong model for me. Our tastes are different."), she can still be pleasantly surprised.

"Somebody in New York compared me to a female David Byrne. I liked that." □

Ferguson's art: logic and values

Artist Gerald Ferguson exhibits a variety of works at the Dalhousie Art Gallery

By KIMBERLEY WHITCHURCH

value (val-yoo) *n.* 1. The desirability or worth of a thing; intrinsic worth; utility.

Gerald Ferguson offers thoughtful and often witty insights into the objective, relative and changing values of artwork. His third show at the Dalhousie Art Gallery, *Works 1978-1984*, opened Oct. 4.

The first thing you may notice on entering the gallery is two walls of single-colour paintings and prints. Plain colourfields have become so ubiquitous that the viewer usually dulls when confronted with yet another row of them. It's all like just so much visual muzak.

But take heart, and take a closer look. For example, the one second from the left in the series *Unlimited Edition Relief Prints*; it's the one the colour of Dijon mustard. The ink sits on and in the shiny fibres of the rice paper, revealing luminous, dimensional depths.

Somewhat less compelling are his *Maintenance Paintings*, although the premise given is clever: the "end-user" (buyer) is

Special edition

By JONATHAN PLYMOUTH

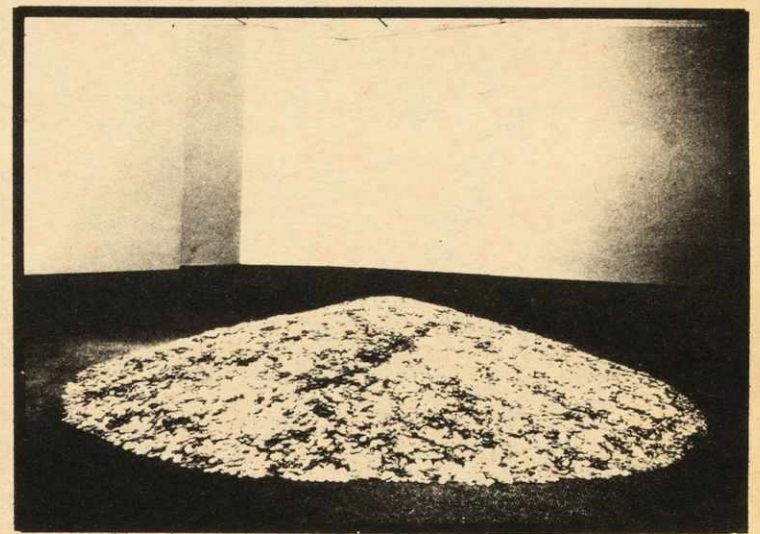
The Dalhousie *Gazette* will be running a special arts and expression issue Nov. 29.

All budding artists, poets, short story writers and photographers are invited to submit works by Nov. 22.

"It's going to be really neat," said *Gazette* arts editor Rick Janson. "Photos, graphics, words . . . ahhh, I can just see it now."

Janson said that all submitted works would be returned to the artists/writers after publication.

"We won't lose it, I promise," he said. □



1,000,000 Pennies 1980

responsible for the maintenance or repainting of the work.

Another series is *Landscapes and Seascapes*, which are minimal pencil tracings of popular Nova Scotian postcards. Each drawing is bevel-matted, with its name in Letraset on the board. Some of the boards are imperfectly cut, or the graphics misaligned, but in work this uniform such imperfections are almost welcome.

The armed couriers are shown wheeling a trolley covered with vacuum-sealed bags of pennies . . .

From these came three exciting collaborations with painter Gerard Collins. Ferguson projected postcards onto large canvasses and drew in the outlines with a felt-tip marker. These were then turned into marvellous oil gestures by Collins. They're running with colour and turpentine, lots of canvas showing through like the white of watercolour paper.

Much of Ferguson's retrospective work here deals with the changing values of paint and copper. A copper plate engraved with his name and the date is affixed to a large canvas, painted a smooth pale green—patiently waiting for the colours of the two materials to equalize. A work in newsprint and acrylic, *In Anticipation of Changing Values*, is another impeccable example of the artist's logic.

The highlight of the exhibition is the documentation of the installation *1,000,000 Pennies*, which

appeared in Calgary's Glenbow Museum Dec. '80. As the name implies, it's a heap of one million pennies, three tons of copper . . . that's ten thousand dollars' worth. The maquette for this piece is 1,000 pennies, looking very solemn on its Plexiglassed plinth. A huge colour photograph of the finished sculpture is glittering and hypnotic.

Over in the room with the opening night offerings of Brie and coffee are further documentations of *1,000,000 Pennies*, including a 40-minute videotape of its actual creation. The armed couriers are shown wheeling a trolley covered with vacuum-sealed bags of pennies, followed by cameramen. It's staggeringly funny.

Ferguson says the piece was made possible through a simple 60-day bank loan, and only ended up costing him "about \$75." When asked who had the monumental task of rolling up all those pennies to go back to the bank, he deadpans, "they have machines to do that."

The artist will be giving a noon lecture on Oct. 19 at the Gallery; bring along a lunch.

Critic Peggy Gale, who wrote the essay appearing in the exhibition catalogue, will be speaking on Ferguson's work at 8 p.m. on Oct. 29 at the Gallery.

This show is sharing the space with another retrospective entitled *Backgrounds: Ten Nova Scotian Women Artists*. This will be opening Thursday, Oct. 11 following Marge Piercey's lecture in the first of the Feminist Vision series.

Admission to all the lectures listed above is free.

Gerald Ferguson's exhibition continues until Nov. 11.



Ruhundwa Ruganda (left) and David Etheridge (right) perform in Enterprise Theatre's production of *The Island*, a play by Athol Fugard.

The Island is Robben Island, a prison and graveyard for African Nationalists who threaten the continued existence of the South African government's policy of apartheid. In the play, Winston is serving a life sentence for burning his passbook, while John is in for ten years. John's sentence is later commuted to three years, providing heightened emotional moments as he imagines the joys of freedom, and Winston projects in his mind the years he is to spend in confinement.

ENTERPRISE THEATRE, a Fredericton-based theatre company, presents *The Island* October 10, 11 & 12 (Wednesday, Thursday & Friday) at 8 p.m. in the Sir James Dunn Theatre, Dalhousie. Admission is \$3.00 for students and \$5.00 for non-students. Friday 12th is a double-bill day—*Master Harold and the Boys* will be performed after *The Island*, by the Halifax group, IDAFSA Theatre Company.