

HOOPER

by Gregory J. Larsen

Hooper is a little comment by Burt Reynolds on the forgotten man in just about every Hollywood film production. But in this case they're not forgotten at all. More specifically, they are what this film is all about. These individuals are the stuntmen.

This wild and different breed fear nothing of death but instead make a living by seeing just how close they can come to it. Hooper (Reynolds) is king of this bizarre business and indeed his professional rewards allow him to live like a king. But as with all kings, there's someone else who wants the throne.

Hooper has received the crown from the previous stunt king (Brian Keith) and the faction that's gunning for it now is the freshest of the newbreeds as portrayed by Jan-Michael Vincent. This flashy young cock takes Hooper on in a one to one competition of bettering and outdoing the other in the most spectacular of stunts. The problem is that Hooper is starting to hurt from all his years of self-abuse. The young newbreed doesn't even smoke or drink and is in peak physical shape. Who is to be the victor, what is to be the final stunt, and just how close will it bring them to death?

Sally Field is Hooper's girlfriend and she does look different without her Flying Nun disguise. She and Hooper live together, which is to mature into marriage when this competition is finally over. Her concern is whether or not her groom will live to fulfill his promise.

The final element is a stereo-typed film director (Robert Kline) as seen through the eyes of the stuntmen. This undesirable person wheels and deals with the lives of his stuntmen so that he can make his mark in the film industry. He regards them as being no different than any other piece of expendable setting. For his most recent film he wants the zenith of all stunts to be performed, but it's impossible, it can't be done. Typically he gets his way, and this is the stunt that will determine who is to be king.

It's a straightforward theme that is popular in current cinema. But the most entertaining aspect of this film is of course the magnanimous character of Reynolds. This is by no means his finest performance on screen but as anyone who has seen him before knows, his entertaining abilities are obvious. Through his usual humour and mannerisms this film does entertain. See a little bit of what happens behind the scenes in this Warner Brothers production of **Hooper**.



Perspectives

by William Dodge
Within and Beyond the Frame

What value does art have when it must increasingly rely on the tax-deductible charity of giant corporations?

Last Thursday night the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) held a public colloquium on the state of art. The discussion was led by a panel of artists from places as diverse as Los Angeles, Paris, New York City, and Montreal.

Dara Birnbaum, an artist from New York City, explained how individual artists there are being forced to form groups in order to receive government grants. She said

major art shows are being financed as tax write-offs by huge corporations like Exxon.

Several panelists expressed alarm at the amount of corporate patronage emerging in big art centres. As they see it, the forces in society that are most directly opposed to ideologies which art and artists uphold are now forming that art's basic support system.

Birnbaum responded emotionally to a suggestion that perhaps the quality of art being made now does not merit a support system.

Is it important, she asked, to justify the quality of art that is in process? Birnbaum compared art to a child. "When

you hastily judge or condemn the quality of a child's creativity, you only stunt its growth and development," she said.

Several artists on the panel had been connected with a loosely defined "Conceptual" art. Daniel Buren's presentation at NSCAD earlier in the week provides the clearest example of where "Conceptual" art has led.

Buren, an artist and theoretician from Paris, uses the motif of vertical stripes in his work as a kind of tool with which he shapes the viewer's perceptions.

How we see, what we see, how the surrounding elements and architecture of a situation absorb, define or alter the sign and its significance, all these questions were raised by his work.

With the help of slides and diagrams of a show he put together in 1976 at the Leo Castelli and John Weber galleries in New York City, Buren explained how his work attempts to bring attention to the limitations, both physical and metaphorical, imposed by the architecture of an art gallery.

Several huge geometric shapes composed of vertical stripes were extended through three floors on both the exterior front and interior walls of the building. A viewer could only discern the complete shape of a triangle or circle by moving up or down the three stories of the building.

"We can only again declare that the Museum makes its 'mark', imposes its 'frame' (physical and moral) on everything that is exhibited in it, in a deep and indelible way,"

states Buren in his theoretical work titled Position—Proposition.

Most of Thursday night's panelists agreed that artists cannot revert back to the figurative arts and ignore Buren's work without admitting their own work's ultimate subjection to an art system, seen in this restrictive gallery and museum context.

Montreal participants in the panel discussion said that "alternative" gallery spaces had failed to work. The spaces were created to give younger artists the exposure denied them by the art establishment. It was hoped that this exposure would help them develop and move out into the "art world."

Part of the problem is that Canada has never had a large art market or tradition of supportive, individual patrons and collectors. Our artists have relied on another giant corporation, the Federal Government.

Montreal panelists fear there is no place in the "art world" to accommodate the influx of younger artists who end up stagnating in the alternative gallery spaces.

Benjamin Buchloh, the present editor of NSCAD press, summed up the situation tersely: "The market is no longer the liberal, supportive, distributor of art products. It is imbued with political, social and economic restrictions."

No one could be more acutely aware of those restrictions and the devaluation of art (at a time when most people are alarmed by the state of the dollar) than the artist who must produce to survive and function as an artist.

in concert

Bruce Cockburn

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