

Entertainment

Wit and wisdom at Dotto show

Recent Works
Gerry Dotto
Latitude 53

review by Colleen Weber

Having seen only a few minor illustrations by Dotto in *The Bullet* and the *Visual Arts Newsletter*, I wasn't quite sure what to expect from a collection of some of his more recent prints and drawings. After all, who knows what may result when an artist is given the opportunity to abandon himself to the full intensity of his artistic visions: darkness may ensue.

I could be confronted with canvasses screaming with moribund images of contemporary society or perhaps I may be subjected to a visual emporium of personal insecurities drawn from the dregs of his artistic being. Certainly, I wasn't about to let the observation of a few "sanctioned" illustrations colour my opinion of what I just may find there.

I trembled slightly as I approached the top of the stairs, cleared the foyer, and stood in the antechamber of the gallery; there is always a sensation of apprehension and excitement as I am about to witness something new — unknown — for the first time, on the threshold of experience.

So, after a momentary lapse, I collected myself and took that final bold step into the main gallery: over the threshold and onward toward enlightenment. There, I was seized by a mixture of sensations: at first enraptured by the sheer beauty of Dotto's graphic designs, and then prompted to fits of laughter by the humour they so skillfully expressed.

Alberta-born artist Gerry Dotto is a highly accomplished graphic artist whose strength lies in his ability to produce bold, refined, two-dimensional designs, imbued with his own sparkling wit.

One is immediately captured by the lyrical expression of his humouristic drawings. This expression is achieved through a subtle

interplay of line, shape, and space. Often the "expression" of a work alone is enough to tickle your ribs.

Dotto's serigraph entitled *A Sailor That Can Almost Lick His Own Nose*, 1984 confronts the viewer with an immense head sporting a hysterical grin, wild flying tongue, and a number of rolling eyes. One can't help but be amused by this character who seems to be taking extreme pleasure in his own wise crack.

Essential to the humour of Dotto's work is the accompanying titles which take a poke at our social conscience. A good example of this is the hand-coloured serigraph entitled *Fruit of the Loon*, 1985. This work depicts a male torso caught in a familiar muscle builder's pose, with anchors on his chest and a ripe banana, where else, but on the front of his cotton briefs.

In other cases Dotto abandons the realm of current social trends and provides us with a slightly altered perception of everyday human affairs. *Ohn the Jon*, 1985 amuses us with an overhead look at one of the more contemplative moments of day to day life; man heeding nature's call.

Not all the works currently being displayed at Latitude 53 are in the humorous vein. Dotto's ink drawing, *Rhona's Life*, 1984 depicts a lovely stylized female nude; his use of tight curves and angular dramatic gestures imbues this figure with a distinct graceful air. It is in a work such as this that one can truly admire the artist's ability to create a two-dimensional design which is at once bold and refined.

Dotto's clean graphic style and infectious humour make his work highly suited to the media. I would like to see more of his work in local publications. However, in the meantime, may I suggest a ten minute jaunt over to the Latitude 53 Gallery located at 10920-88th Avenue. Gerry Dotto's recent collection demands to be seen, if only for the sheer enjoyment of it!



photo by Leif Stout

Fruit of the Loon, 1985 just one of many witty and whimsical works at Latitude 53.

Atwood's latest searingly accurate

The Handmaid's Tale
Margaret Atwood
Seal Books

review by Suzanne Lundrigan

The finest science fiction is firmly rooted in reality. The author identifies a distressing trend in society and then creates a world wherein this trend has become an all-pervasive reality. Rhetoric becomes reality with horrifying results.

Margaret Atwood does just this in her latest literary offering, *The Handmaid's Tale*. She creates a world wherein the Gerry Falwells of today have moved from the right wing fringes to occupy the seats of political power. It is a grisly sight and situation... for women in particular.

Recall right wing religious rhetoric as it pertains to women:

Thou shalt serve thy lord and master who is your husband.

Thou shalt not soil thyself with desire and lust.

Virginal shalt thou remain.

All the above and more holds true in the Republic of Gilead, a society ruled and organized by men. In this novel, women become the "second sex" in every sense of the word.

Women are defined by the role they play in the service of men. Hence, those women called Marthas, like their biblical namesakes, cook and clean. Those women called Wives tend gardens and preside over the dinner table with their husbands, and those women who are named Handmaids bear the children of their masters. Each group is assigned a

task, customs, and costumes. Thus divided and categorized, women are kept servile and ineffectual.

The least of the women's groups are the Handmaids. Made to wear flaming red costumes, Handmaids are reviled by all. They don't even have names. Rather, if they serve a man named Fred, they become Offred: not for the subjugated the dignity of a name.

The Handmaid's Tale is Offred's story. With chilling detachment she records her experience as Handmaid to Fred.

Hers is a gut-wrenching story. On a monthly basis, after rather grotesque rites, Offred offers her womb to Fred. She lies between Fred's Wives' legs as Fred engages in copulation, no, better, fertilization. Offred has become a womb, a bearer of children and nothing more.

The description of life-as-womb is searing, gripping, and terrifying. Offred remembers a time when women were independent creatures; hence, she is able to question the current regime whereas many of her sisters know no other existence. That the period Offred describes as the "old days" are, in fact, the early eighties makes the point all too clear... the tools of oppression are in place; should they fall into the wrong hands, terrible things will go on.

Atwood has outdone herself in this novel. The tale she tells is fascinating; the manner with which she tells it is breathtaking. Atwood weaves motif after motif into the central story line. The biblical allusions alone are motive-enough for a second reading.

As well, this story's proximity to current realities lends it a very frightening and fasci-

nating quality. Atwood has based herself in today's truths and stretched them to their furthest points. *The Handmaid's Tale* is absolutely mesmerizing in a dreadful kind of way.

An underlying theme in the novel is a post-1980 history of the women's movement. Offred's mother was very much a women's rights activist and Offred often reflects on her mother's activities... with none too little regret. All of this makes for delicious irony as well as serving as a warning to the reader. The world which Atwood portrays certainly

could exist if the wrong people were to obtain power.

The Handmaid's Tale is a must read. It is informative and gives one cause to ponder. Perhaps those right wing fanatics are more dangerous than anticipated. Perhaps we should remember the battle fought by our mothers and remain on our guards. No matter, should Gerry Falwell ever show his mug on my t.v., I'll be the first to shut him off and out.

Boogie baby boogie

Suburbs
Suburbs
A&M

review by Scott Gordon

Finally. Something from Minneapolis other than Prince and his clones. These five musicians have written and performed an album of eight tight, well-paced, extremely likeable songs. I'm not sure what a 'Beejtar' is, but it sure sounds good, and it belongs on this album.

Dance? Of course you can. From an all out boogie, to a rather slower all out boogie. Boogie, boogie. And that doesn't mean that Suburbs merely pulls all the dance music tricks and standards out of the bag, although they are evident, but rather they have formed a pseudo-distinctive sound for themselves that is sure to solidify and mature with more experience and more albums.

'Superlove' and 'No. 9' are my favourites, and the rest of the songs are great. Beej Chaney and Chan Poling share the vocal duties and they do their job with force and vigor. The musicianship is top-notch and the producing by Robert Brent is excellent.

I would say more and continue to rant and rave about this album, but I think I'll end this review by saying that this is an album to buy and a band to watch for. Now, I'm going to put the record on again, and relax and listen and enjoy.

