

neither Kiefer's conceptual complexity, mastery of mediums, nor ability to compel us to participate in his "representation," as if it arose from our own stream of consciousness, from our monologue with ourselves. Lawson offers us collective images falsely personalized through a kitschy use of paint, a facile art involving rundown notions of what it means to be artistically sophisticated and radically critical.

It seems that Lawson also has a provincial belief in the absolute power of the media. It is necessary for a would-be Old Testament type prophet to blame the evil state of the world and the unenlightened state of "the masses" on a single factor. That makes his task easier: negate it — show it up — and liberate the world. Lawson's painting is self-righteously moralistic in basics, if not truly moral or revolutionary. In *Past and Present* Carlyle spoke of the "grim inarticulate veracity" that is a hallmark of the English. The Scottish Lawson offers a more decorous version of that attitude, creating a more decorative art. He has a professional outsider's view of America, with a limited sense of its complexity, and especially of the critical forces which exist within it. His is a bowdlerized America, just as his expressionistic handling is bowdlerized, just as his view of the media is limited.

Lawson's pictures lack both historical specificity and painterly power. Unlike those by Kiefer, they lack the "speculative" completion "artistic" dialectic achieves by creating an individual point of view from which to articulate and criticize history and society. Yet even Lawson's "impersonality" is spurious, for his works do not visually communicate the categories that transcend and "contain" the individual. Lawson's work is doubly inadequate: it discloses neither the "higher" logic behind dominant representation nor the individual experience and perspective which necessitates a critical devaluation of it. Lawson only shows us how art can become media-like by plagiarizing looks, shorn of their power to convince. He has neither the analytic power nor artistic cunning to "remediate" the "representations" — allegations of reality — he thinks victimize our consciousness. Instead, he has, however unwittingly, created a stereotyped representation — a conventional allegation — of critical art, the latest simulacrum of it. This performs one critical service: it demonstrates how pervasive image hype is in our society, so pervasive that those who would criticize it end up celebrating it, unwittingly. In 1962 Daniel Boorstin warned us about the coming dominance of "image reality." In 1984 there is a glut of hyped images and celebrity art, to which Lawson has contributed, through no fault of his own. He is another victim of the social forces that want to pragmatize the avant-garde, as an indication of how really devoted it is to the world as it is.

Don Kuspit

Letters

Dear editor:

I must confess: I concede to Philip Monk's quite appropriate critique of my attempt to mimic certain Derridian gestures (*Vanguard*, February 1984), but only to the degree that — and he has my fullest apologies here — in setting myself up for a fall, I had anticipated it, had, to some extent, already written it.

Therefore, with all apologies aside, I would like to pass along these rather brief remarks.

As designer of the catalog for *Production/ReProduction*, I was not directly responsible for illustrating the covers. I had, in fact, proposed alternative solutions. Both images were submitted by the curator and were eventually employed with the consent of all those involved. Only then did I choose to incorporate a reading of the cover image (as the leading face of the exhibition) into my work, not so much to set a false pretext to the exhibition, but to introduce a prop upon which, somewhere down the line, I might stage a bit of theatrics: a follow-up, if you like.

Being always "on the mark" so to speak, Monk saw through my Derrida, my Blanchot, perhaps even my Kafka (since they announced themselves — to anyone with an ear for them — rather conspicuously.) And this was enough to chastise me — and rightly so — for predicating the work on the dicatates of a name or two. I take it, then, that my stylistic renditions were, in a word, Oedipal, i.e., I had been taken and possessed by the voice of that name, by the "truth" of the name "Derrida". If indeed I was, from the beginning, so obsessed with delivering that name (to you?) — in order perhaps to cash in on a trend — why would I run the risk of stringing up my entire production to that name, to its signature? What could possibly come of it for me? What could I have hoped to receive in return?

Perhaps only the opportunity to stage one more silly little scene. (Having invested in a staging of the master's discourse, I have apparently failed to master it, to extend or exceed it; I have only artfully mimed it, reproduced it. My "quotation", instead of displacing the authority of his words, merely re-stated them, re-reflected them. It would appear that I'm now, here, left with only one option, one scene):

But the curtain is up, and (to stay with the cover image) I have yet to learn my lesson. Having come into my own I'm now out on my own. I'm on stage: a stand-in for the master, a protégé who, in a stolen moment, attempts to give his master's lines... but my timing is off, or perhaps the tone is wrong... I'm about to fumble my delivery... There's only one thing to do (lest I lose it all)... As if on a cue from the wings, I throw the show... as if just for laughs, I fall flat on my face...

Regarding Monk's criticism of *Outers*, I again must concur with his analysis. From the very beginning, I felt it unlikely that any of the works to be presented would exceed the ideality of the gallery context: that due to concept and structure of the exhibition, notions regarding location would, in the end, coincide with and thus restore the most traditional notion of the gallery. My work was positioned as an index of this condition, i.e., an index of what had to be forgotten in order to stage such an exhibition.

Hence, its belatedness on at least two counts:

1. It was my intention to construct a tape similar in appearance to certain documentary tapes of the late 60's and early 70's whose production values often included a roving hand-held camera, and "endless" self-conscious voice-over, rough sound/picture edits, etc.

2. Since Monk located this work in relation to earth art, it would not be inappropriate to mention that the father, this time, was Robert Smithson. (Or to double

that name, Blanchot through Smithson). In fact, the project was conceived as a homage to the work of Smithson — to its failure as much as its success — and to Aldo Rossi — to his "house of the dead": the Sanctuary of the Modena Cemetery. I owe the structural alterity of the narration (the displaced figure of death as a suspended limit-point, an "arête de mort"), of course, to the couplet Blanchot/Derrida.

As for "cancelling" the site, i.e., the "Bayview Ghost": yes, it was cancelled, but not by a valuation of the document — which was meant to effect only a displacement of the "primary" site. Cancellation of this site had already occurred at the hands of a demolition team. I felt that, given the circumstances, any restitution to this act on my part, could come only in the form of a document, but one, as I have stated elsewhere, that would be "from the very outset, a failed document": a failure, not only in terms of the performance of an account or investigation, but as the site of a responsibility which had called for an engagement with what is exterior to the gallery.

Gordon Lebrecht
Toronto

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Vancouver Art Gallery

CONTINUING EXHIBITION

Emily Carr paintings and drawings from the permanent collection continue on view year round on the ground floor, west side. **British Historic Paintings** is an exhibition of 28 paintings by British artists from the 17th to 20th centuries culled from the permanent collection, continues until May 13.

Paul Klee, 61 works by Klee on loan from the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf, are on view on the west side of the second floor. Organized by VAG director, Luke Rombout, the exhibition continues until April 8.

Contemporary American Graphics is an exhibition of graphics by leading contemporary American artists and it will remain on view on the west side of the third floor until April 29. Thirty-six prints from the Gallery's permanent collection including those on extended loan from the J.Ron Longstaffe collection.

David Hockney, sixty-two works and two limited edition books from the Gallery's permanent collection comprise the print exhibition selected from the Gallery's permanent collection and those on extended loan from the J.Ron Longstaffe collection. The exhibition continues until April 29.

Art video français 1982-83 was guest curated by Teresa Wennberg and Patrick Prado of Grand Canal Video in Paris, the exhibition presents recent works by two "waves" of French video artists. The exhibition, organized by l'association française d'action artistique and La Médiathèque Centrale de Ministère des Relations Extérieures, is presented in Vancouver through the cooperation of the French Consulate. The exhibition continues until April 23.

Fourth Floor Sculpture is an exhibition of major sculptural works from the VAG's permanent collection, with works by George Segal, Robert Murray, Gary Lee Nova and Michael Heizer. The exhibition, which continues until May 27, was curated by Lorna Farrel-Ward.

NEW EXHIBITIONS

From the Heart, an exhibition of twentieth century carvings, paintings, furnishings and yard art which share the stage with more traditional nineteenth century hand-crafted decoys, molds, and quilts, will open April 13, 1984. Organized by the National Museum of Man, the exhibition illustrates the richness, variety and humanity of Canadian folk art. A fully illustrated exhibition catalogue in both French and English will accompany the exhibition. The exhibition opens on April 13 and continues until May 27, 1984.

Art and Photography is an exhibition featuring the work of ten local artists and photographers (Ron Arden, Jim Ball, Tom Burrows, Andy Keating, Roy Kiyooka, Marion Penner Bancroft, Chick Rice, Cheryl Sourkes, Ken Straiton and Ian Wallace) who approach the photographic medium in distinctive ways, including xerox, silk-screen on canvas, cyanotype, blueprint and silver print. Works of different intent (political, personal, poetic) are shown together in order to suggest how the world is made of reproduced images. The show opens on May 11 and continues until June 24.

Norie Sato is a Seattle artist who has established an international reputation through her work with videotapes and installation/sculpture since 1972. An exhibition of her videotapes curated by VAG curator Joanne Birnie-Danzker, opens on April 27 and continues until May 27.

LECTURES

John Chamberlain, the American sculptor, will present an illustrated lecture on his work at the VAG, April 11 at 7:30 pm. Mr. Chamberlain's work has been exhibited

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