

lives, clients etc. Their statements and photographic portraits were mounted on the walls of their workplaces, a souvlaki bar and a bakery/tea shop. The result was far more sociological than conventionally *artistic* (the only pertinent visual consideration being a perfunctory neatness). McSherry's dislocation of his auteur status through the participation of interviewers, a translator, and the *self* definition of the subjects, all resulted in fundamentally undermining the assumptions of what constituted a site on the part of the other participants in the project. In fact one suspects that this comes anywhere near the aspiration expressed in the press release: "A broad public audience will be confronted with both the creative process from which it is traditionally excluded . . . In this way the project aims to encourage new audiences for alternative spaces and establish a wider public understanding of art." Noble sentiments, but one suspects that in this instance years of grant applications have led the author/s to exceed the credibility of even such an extravagantly hyperbolic writing form as the press notice. In any case, two out of six — not bad!

Bruce Russell

TORONTO

Locations is an idea whose time has come and gone. In its own proper time, its concept could be questioned. Now when no one respects the original concept and context in a new economy of art, it should be rigorously criticized to find what is left of *its* critique of the gallery/commodity system. Or it should be interred as an historical genre, abandoned to the ruins of its intervention and photographic documentation. On this occasion of *Locations*, its form is denied while its currency is played upon. Whether the Toronto *Locations* indicates a shift from site-specific work to public art, it is the former that has set the terms for what is exterior to the gallery. Placing gallery art outside does not make it public.

This is the first *Locations/National*, uniting locality to a chain of artists-run spaces from sea to sea, joining the specific to a notion of communication, as if site-specificity has not become contradictory enough here. It is the third *Locations* exhibition for Mercer Union, as site-specificity was an extension of its early post-minimalist direction. The work here is distant from any notion of site-specificity. It is located in name only, in the sense that one needs a map to get there; the work does not come out of the site.

The work in fact does not distance itself from the gallery at all, however far from it it might be. Inside and outside are blurred; the work outside the gallery is not only documented inside, it is added by similar pieces. This only proves that the work outside could as easily have been shown inside. In denying the conventions of site-specificity, the work also denies its own gallery conventions. It assumes that art can be located anywhere (its context does not have to be marked); that in a return to the image and figure it can communicate without conventions. This is its democratic gesture to the people. What constitutes public art? None of the work addresses that question and cannot under the conditions of art production it has accepted.

Was the notion "outside the gallery" ever possible even under the original claims of site-specific work? Clearly the answer is no, if we mean a pure outside uninflected by the inside. An ideal gallery context always travels with the work however far from the gallery. In this exhibition none of the work is site-specific in the original sense. We find no interest in the city as utopia or ruin. No work constructs itself from the urban

traces of a site. None of the work incorporates the reproducible systems of communication that are part of the city site. Instead it values the handmade and humanist.

In short, "New Image" paintings have been hung outside. Alan Glicksman painted panels in one site and moved them to another for installation. He incorporated waste fragments from the site in these naive panels. This is as much a studio convention (Cubism, Dadaism, Assemblage etc.) as the Picassoist distortions of the paintings, so-called representations of local inhabitants passersby would be hard pressed to identify.

Robert Youds' painting, *Ten Fingered Men* (*Monument to endangered neighbourhoods*), placed in an abandoned billboard at the edge of downtown commercial development is an attempt at an art with a message. Its sub-title says it all, because the vaguely referential work does not.

John Broere has chosen to inhabit a billboard structure as well, but he uses that physical structure as a ground for his image rather than as a frame for a painting. He has partly reduced a personal expression to a sign form: a black stick figure enmeshed in the grid structure. Its message is double-edged: the figure can be reversed to become a pair of scissors. The work, however, remains an expressive metaphor in the way that a cry is a sign that indicates need, but stylized in a work it becomes an individual expression, not

a common sign or shared symbol. Only a message value is lifted here as in Youds, advertising artist's intent, not questioning advertisement structures and functions.

The variously painted fetal and vegetal shapes of Dyan Marie's *Lust for Life/Swamp* are pretty things. Using them to recall primal terror and beauty, however, is pushing decoration past its limits. Placed on sterile white plaster walls inside the temporary entrance to the CN Tower, they might as well have been in an art gallery (where we do find their miniature cousins in Mercer Union). Only the number of people passing makes a difference between the mundane and the metaphorical, the site and the gallery.

Peter Blendell, whose site-specific work was in the first *Locations* exhibition, shows the passage this type of work has taken from the denotative to the connotative. This new work does not inscribe a site as much as overlay it; it does not simply denote it as an indexical mark but refers to other things around it: it is a circular asphalt "road" between an expressway, a viaduct and railway tracks. It too now has a message: "An image of destiny will be added to a neighbourhood which has now only destination."

I have said that none of the artists dealt with the trace-structure associated with site-specific work. This is not exactly true. Although perhaps "trace" is too easy a coincidence here, Gordon Lebrecht pursues it without leaving the gallery.



John Broere, wooden stick figure in billboard at a Church Street location in Toronto, courtesy: Mercer Union, Toronto

CALGARY

His videotape *Outers* attempts to “deconstruct” the dialectic of primary site and secondary documentation, that is, the outside and the inside. Cancelling the primary site (with its myth of presence and origin), in a gesture eliding Derrida and Lacan, Lebrecht seems to give value to the documentary remainder. He has come too late. This was already accomplished “originally” with the first non-site gallery or magazine documentation of earthworks fifteen years ago. Cancelling here only restores an academic dialectic although Lebrecht’s flourish is to question that there is a *hors texte*. In short, this work is a reserved, at times almost embarrassed, Derrideanism as the voice on the tape almost falters in its endless appropriation of the supply of deconstructive signifiers. The narrative chain of the videotape has borrowed from the strategic field of Derrida’s texts without exceeding them. In crossing out the site, Lebrecht has not killed the Father. He remains within this text and thus has not broken from the idealizing presence of the art gallery. The most radical gesture in *Locations* restores the most traditional notion of the gallery.

Philip Monk

“Artists who are able and willing to go public,” was Sandy Tivy’s criterion for selecting an eclectic group for *Locations* in Calgary; but she also wanted to advertise the diversity of art, much of it hardly known, in the city. That all of the artists had something like a sense of humour would, she hoped, help to engage your average passer-by and bridge the chasm between ‘us’ and ‘art’. The trouble with this aim is that, given the expanses of Calgary and the diffuse scatter of the works, a high degree of motivation was required to seek them out — it is unlikely that most people would see more than two or three, even if they noticed them, on their usual ways through the city. But of course *Locations* also served to give the artists an opportunity to extend themselves, or at least to do what they might have done anyway in a different place and a different context. They generally showed a blithe unawareness of the issues of site-specific art and the notorious difficulties of the relationship between the work out there and the documentation back in the gallery. Does

this matter?

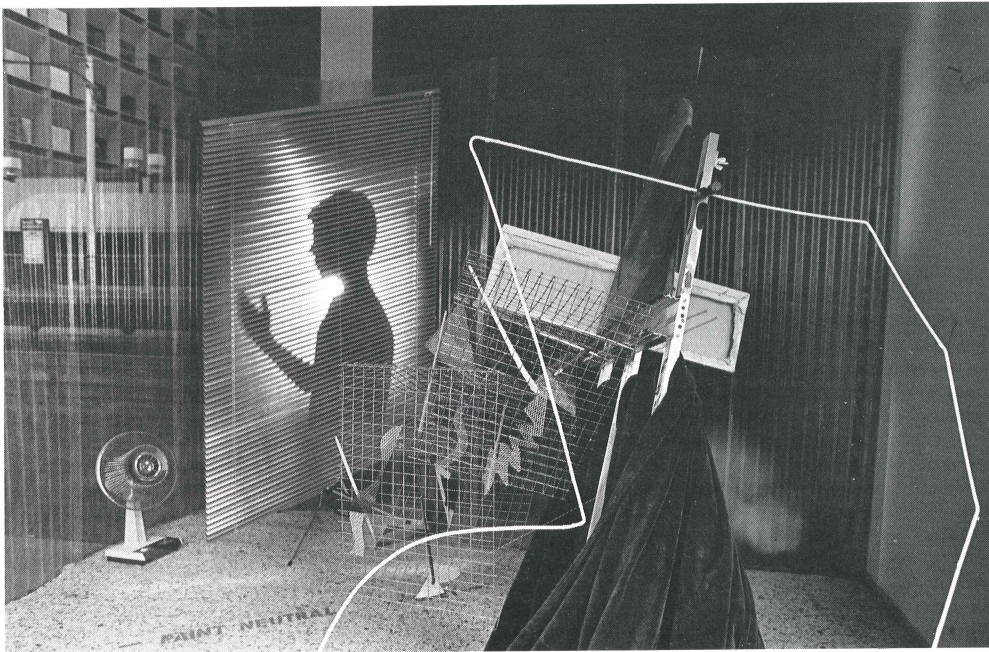
It is certainly one of the perennial features of the decentralised art situation. It is partly a matter of information, its quality and accessibility; but maybe decentralised is how people want it and the information does not mean much unless one is motivated enough to get it. This ‘problem’, by no means exclusive to Calgary, characterises are making here at present — not exactly cut-off but not on the cutting edge and not caring very much where that is. It characterised *Locations*, but, and this is often a concomitant, the whole effort induced perceptions still worth having, ideas still worth exploring, even though the cutting edge may have left them behind.

Drinking in bars comes second only to starving in garrets as a popular idea of what artists do and/or ought not to do. Calling the enterprise *Looking for Mr. Goodwill*, John Will attempted to spend his artist’s fee buying drinks for “anyone who will talk to me”, between the hours of 5 and 6 p.m., during the run of *Locations*, in a series of bars located on a spiral that centred on OCC and ended at the Banff Springs Hotel. The highway to Banff turned the spiral into a question mark. What he was doing, and why, were far from clear to Will; he saw them as open questions to which he might get some answers by doing it. He felt it was too open-ended, too unstructured to be a performance; but he did have in mind Vito Acconci’s piece in which he followed a stranger through the city for a day, and that other ephemeral spiral, Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty*. I gathered this over Pimms in Sir Daffy’s. He did not get a lot of company, in spite of plugs in the newspaper (“Drinking for art’s sake”, etc.) Perhaps drinking with artists, for free, is *dangerous*.

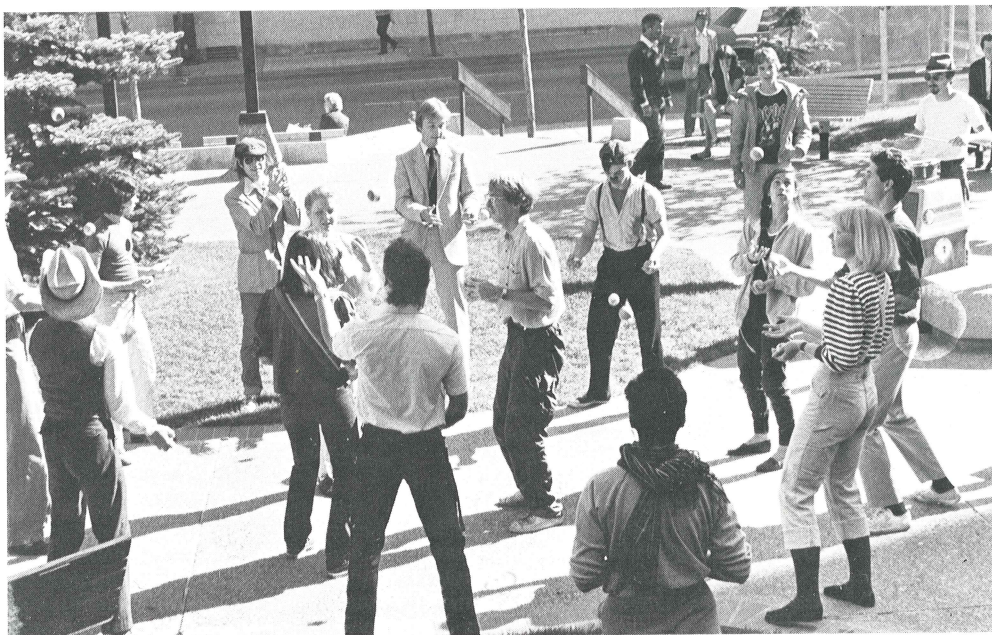
One could very well see *Drinking with Mr. Goodwill* as a nice post-modernist paradigm: the artist’s persona, public and private, on the line; art made out of other people’s perceptions of it; dependent on others for definition and context; with unassimilated references to other art and a sense of world-weary ennui. Will took refuge from some of the difficulties of his piece in the fact that, after all, he likes making objects. The arrangement of the polaroid snaps resulting from his bar-specific encounters, arranged like days on a calendar, with attendant captions, showed the same wry, dégage humour found in Will’s other art about the art world — collages, prints, paintings and video.

Chris Spindler’s contribution, the ‘curating’ of six art sites or themes around the city, the abandoned, the vacant, the overlooked, although chaotically unresolved, represented a brave attempt to sort out where the art resided — in the found sites, in his own efforts to find, curate and introduce people to them, or in the photographic documentation on the walls of the galleries across the country. These were issues fundamental to the idea of *Locations*. His engaging enthusiasm went some way to compensate for the fact that the N.E. Thing Co. and Smithson, to name but two, have been here before; and of course sites like this are still worth looking at, experiencing, and people still don’t.

No problems like this for George McFaul and Kirk Miles whose lovely, loony juggling, a self-justifying activity if ever there was one, enlivened the street life of Calgary, humdrum, tense, sometimes non-existent. But juggling is no less marvellous when used metaphorically, as McFaul and Miles did to good effect in a recent production by One Yellow Rabbit of *Juggler on a Drum*, about the public and private juggling act which was the life of Norman Bethune. After a few days on 8th Avenue, a pedestrian mall outside OCC, they hoped to train enough passers-by to three-ball juggle and do a simple pass to achieve a Human Juggle Sculpture. They almost succeeded and the metaphorical value was clear.



Brad Struble, *Artwall and Floor Ltd.* (1983), mixed media installation, courtesy: the artist



Kirk Mile and George McFaul, *Human Juggle Sculpture* (1983), Calgarian passersby, courtesy: the artists