Clark McDougall Mira Godard Toronto August 5 to 24

In 1937, at the age of 16, Clark McDougall was counselled "to avoid art school, and to keep on painting and working directly from nature." It appears that he followed this advice with the same steadfast sense of direction and dedication with which he approached each canvas.

The first impression of this exhibition is a good-natured surprise. Wow. and why isn't this work more widely recognized? The atmosphere is charged with passionate, lunatic energy, the special vitality of tension and release in balance. This state of equilibrium is the quality that lifts the work apart from its peer group.

Early I had fallen in love with The Group of Seven work, but I felt that they had gone part of the way." With admirable accuracy the standard Canadascape is poised on the plane between assimilation and manifestation, at the interface between the scene's virtual image, and the real image of the artist's projection and ultimately, the viewer's perception. This was accomplished by a carefully measured series of choices, a reductive process; attributes better accomplished by photographic means were eliminated systematically, without abandoning ship for pure abstraction. The resultant design was a scaffold firmly planted in representation to bear and control the subsequent orgy of "wild colour" as attention escaped the objective, and surrendered itself to imaginative, inner vision. This solid architecture is outstanding in contrast to the show downstairs. Colville's insipid (yes, insipid, no not mysteriously disturbing, but insipid) compositions suggest neither respect for, comprehension of, nor opposition to the discoveries and assertions of Moddernism. That the virtuosity of obsessional labour commands such attention and reward lays bare extant values, and boring allegiance to a puritan heritage. Refreshingly. McDougall's motives seem to have been detached from the ethic which values individuality for its own sake, novelty, fame and material fortune.

McDougall's hunger was less for recognition and reward than for stimulation, renewal and conscious contact a kind of Zen Heaven. His was a process not so much of making a picture from the view, or taking a picture of it, as it was engagement WITH the visual world.

His work traversed Impressionism. Post Impressionism and Fauvism as rites de passage, untroubled by the dismissal "it's been done". This chronology is clearly apparent in the exhibition's selection of paintings from 1950 to 1977. One can see the breakthrough in 1960 which leads to his signature style of black enamel and "acid colour". His brushstroke is mysteriously transformed from innocuous delineation, into a bold and utterly natural calligraphic hand. The image opens up and resonates, curiously prophetic of '60's psychedelia. The outlines, predominant in all of his



Clark McDougall, In Memory of Francis-Salt Creek Cemetery, North Yarmouth (1969), oil and black enamel on masonite, 91.4 x 121.9 cm, courtesy: Mira Godard Gallery,

painting, grow from maroon and violet sketches into blood clotted streaks, to mature as wrought iron figures in command of equal weight as planar shapes. Another element intrinsic to his style in all phases is the phallus. modular in every scale, mushrooming to penetrate flesh tones thinly disguised as sunset or brick. In Memory of Francis - Salt Creek Cemetary. N. Yarmouth, (1958) is Halloween in Fungusland: everything looks like something else, to say nothing of the ghoulish colour scheme. And one cannot resist a reference to Hitchcock's Psycho in contemplation of Mrs. Hillburn, Drayton, Ont. (1969).

The life of these picutres is in the sensual play of colour. A scene as dull as Talliot and Inkerman Streets, St. Thomas (1958), becomes richly emotional. A foreboding ochre winter coat's purple shadow and cobalt blue puddles chill in an implied, seasonally low sun. This is cheered with the promise of a Mediterranean turquoise and lavender sky.

However, a closer examination of these paintings dampens somewhat the giddy initial response. Over half are thrown completely off balance by overkill - either insignificant details in a scale irrelevant to the otherwise unified work, or weird experiments with peculiar geometric patches arbitrarily tacked on.

That such inspired imagery is so consistently foiled by trivial redundancy is lamentable and frustrating. Superficial as they are, these marks are inescapably inappropriate. Again and again they prevent the accomplishment of composed integrity. One almost wishes that McDougall had defied Romantic Purity, and not stayed away from art school. His strong sense of direction might have warded off "contamination", and these embellishments and mannerisms which so hinder the fine tuning of true mastery, might have been weeded out in educated critique.

From a distance, the work regains its original charm, a square-dance of colours and enhanced spaces. How Canadian to be thwarted by a sensibility not sophisticated enough for the contemporary arena, yet insufficiently naive for the primitive's redemption.

Catharine MacTavish

Jim Carrico Unit Pitt Gallery Vancouver September 12 to 24

What could be more Boring than Art? Possibly this show by J. Carrico at the Unit-Pitt which uses the aforementioned question for its title. If so, the tedium is largely intentional. This is not to say that it is excusable.

Promoted as "paintings and sarcasm" the show presents images executed in bright enamels, some on plywood and others on a substance called foam core. These are the paintings. They are sandwiched between large sheets of white paper (about 1.4 x 1 m) on which is a hand printed text in mock typewritten style. This is the sarcasm.

The paintings have been done through a process which Carrico calls one-shot. Despite all its verbosity on the paintings, the text provides no elaboration on what this process entails but it appears to be enamel sprayed through a series of stencils. Nor are the dimensions of the paintings given. Prices are given: \$49.99. \$99.99, \$149.99 and so on. Perhaps Carrico is making a not very clever statement on the commodity status of

On first examination the accompanying text seems no more than pure satire which reinforces the common idea that well-articulated aestheticism is only so much bafflegab engineered to impede the access of the masses to high culture, and subsequently that modern art itself is a lot of high-flown nonsense. It commences thus: "This exhibit is generated from a reflexive/ inclusive meta-semiology of post conceptual syntax jargonography where signs are texts, people are places. things are ideas and reviewers review the reviews they are reviewing. . . .

It is a concept which has be least as boring as that which light of because it is far n trenched in cliches than that seeks to attack. Carrico's effienjoy considerable favour he so many people prefer dismisarticulated intelligence as dul ity rather than going to the tifinding out what is being artic

This form of discourse als Carrico to go off on a number ingly erroneous tangents in guises of absurdity and satire. that, it periodically anticipate response and thereby attechannel that response, all between humour and "suggesinterpretation: ". . . the art use of 'sign' painters enamel pathologically clever or sim fused? His style reminds or very early works of many co rary artists, referred to by per can't think of more com names, as 'paint-by-numbers

Words to this effect occur out the text. Odious puns abology, references to a variety ods of art criticism, their te gies and possible viewer reranging from absurd to sup intellectual permeate it. Se cation contained in the text i from negative criticism: if t itself suggests the show is further negative critic

superfluous.

There is something quit ling about an exhibition context which implies an expecevery conceivable type of viponse from the most ignoramost educated. One only choose the response contain text which is best suited to I and therein lies his reward ion of what he sees is acknow by the artist in exchange for ing any genuine thought he n erwise give to what he see certain limits of course, beyo the viewer becomes an objecule, a pretentious intelleclong as the viewer confines ing to clearly demarcated ter may share in Carrico's joke while the text must remind th of his insignificance, that h way of seeing this work tha already been seen and presur the artist. You can dislike th that's been anticipated and even more boring. In short, bition is mounted on an authoritarianism masquer humour.

But what about the painti personally I wouldn't digra likening it to paint by nur seemed more evocative of directors of fine television like The Mod Squad thou, saw while on L.S.D. Shoc and reds, bright greens and bl inate reworked photograph: primarily from newspaps places like India and Japar coated tragedies depicting t ing children of third world train wrecks and homeless are the favoured subject ma This could be another attemp attention to the distortive -