

25 YOUNG ARTISTS

FEBRUARY 17 - MARCH 1, 1986

OR GALLERY 1729 FRANKLIN STREET
CONVERTIBLE SHOWROOM 40 E. CORDOVA
VANCOUVER

25 Young Artists is a celebration of beginnings of adding to and altering a discourse. A choice of beginning originates as both a methodological and an intransitive position.

The necessity to redefine causal references, terms such as genesis and reflection, posits an association between the artwork and an external reference. This distinction is not narrowly deterministic, but is concerned with those affiliations closely aligned with historical divisions and the political homology (with few exceptions) of contemporary artistic production.

The questioning of context, the inclusion of specific codes and conventions (or historic and social dependencies), supports an inquiry into the shifting spaces of culture at large. As we know, with present day technics everything can be reproduced; to paraphrase Georg Lukács it is ultimately the artist's approach to reality that determines whether he/she produces a painting or a photograph, an articulate statement or a mute babbling. This relationship postulates an analogical consideration of the quantitative distribution of certain forms, and equally significant, questions the influences that new technical means have brought to not only the form but the very concept of art.

But beginnings are not only paradigmatic: they are practical in their integration of intent and method. Because these artists are young (twenty-five and under) there might exist an attempt to cite the effect of influences. My interest in beginnings is not to consider influences or continuities after possible apprenticeships have ended. It is a heuristic recognition of the possibilities inherent in the past which combine with conditions of the present, or a tautological definition of beginnings as manifest and obscure, affirmative and latent. The representations of form constitute principles of constraint but also support infinite resources that fulfill a positive renascent role. These conditions of production establish an ambiguous position: the desire to limit dependencies within the discipline and the necessity and commitment to begin within the only pragmatic position – inside the discourse.

An institutional dominance precludes any sustained, internal analysis of the inter-relationship of the conditions under which cultural production takes place. It is within this context that pluralism plays such an active role, and factors receptive to the routinization of art production can be identified. More specifically this questioning outlines the profusion of styles integrated with representation connected with the art market, and the quantity and type of art schools that can be linked to the "institutionalization" of art. But within these formal structures, the influences of a reciprocal identification of references, by artists and institution, outline an initiation that is essential for change:

There would have been no beginnings; instead, speech would proceed from me, while I stood in its path – a slender gap – the point of its possible disappearance...A good many people, I imagine, harbour a similar desire to find themselves, right from the outside, on the other side of discourse, without having to stand outside it, pondering its particular, fearsome and even devilish features. To this all too common feeling institutions have an ironic reply, for they solemnize beginnings, surrounding them with a circle of silent attention; in order that they can be distinguished from far off, they impose ritual forms upon them.¹

Excerpt from catalogue

It is these ritual forms that have become a system of containment in the visual arts. Both accommodation and repudiation become the habitually hopeful solution to this "slender gap."

The culture critic must likewise consider his/her intervention in cultural forms which attempt a specific vision of a discourse. Criticism intervenes in appropriation as well as codification. Without a substantial difference, criticism can no more divest itself of such association, a semblance of legitimation, than can the objects of its reference.

25 Young Artists is a selection of work by young artists from eight cities across Canada. The work, chosen by seven curators, includes variable interests and priorities. Grouping artists together bracketed by age can be problematic especially for those seeking thematic orientation through synchronic codes or a continuity of medium. It is the statements by the artists that provide notable support for such diversity. The artist's statements do more than accompany the work, they construct critical and receptive attitudes to support a plausible contemporaneity. These "beginnings" refer to particular individual concerns or experience (and in some instances an attempt to understand the meanings placed on experience), and a critical engagement or self-reflectiveness, within both methodology and subject matter, of those influences and practices that manifest as "ritual form".

Petra Rigby Watson
Curator

1. *Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p.215.

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