

ving this colour with such precise meaning perhaps too conveniently fits the curatorial premise. Are all things pink a reference to femininity? Knight's presentation of the life of an anonymous nun is seen to be "an allusion to the question of the patriarchal tendency to censor many female contributions to history". Does the artist as a seventeenth-century impostor/nun necessarily critique this situation? While the show quite legitimately calls for a feminist reading, some of Clay's critical requirements seem forced.

Women's issues are undeniably found within these works, but they are suggested rather than pronounced. They are concealed, like the shifting personae and personalities of the artists themselves. This deliberate concealing and revealing is interesting in itself, however, and significant to our understanding of the on-going struggle for definition and self-definition in women's art. The recognition of this perplexing condition is perhaps the real value of "Trigger".

Merike Talve

Grunt Or Artspeak
Charles H. Scott Gallery
Vancouver
June 5 to 29

Curators Glenn Alteen, Ellen Ramsay and Cate Rimmer included works by 16 artists representing three Vancouver galleries - Grunt, Or, and Artspeak. All three of the contributing galleries were established by artists for artists, reflective of self-help and sharing activities.

As an institutional venue with a prominent location, the Charles H. Scott Gallery extended access to a larger, more affluent and diverse audience than these galleries can draw to their own modest, out-of-the-way premises. The show displayed sensitivity to proportion, concern for a broad range of environmental issues (from investigations of volume to practical means of recycling waste), and a self-effacing sense of humour.

The exhibition space was divided into three sections with works representing each gallery grouped together. To represent the Or, Ellen Ramsay chose large works: constructions of steel, wood and concrete by David Congdon and Warren Murfitt, figurative paintings by Catharine Jones and an expansive Ektachrome triptych by Sheila Hall. The Or's own exhibit space - recently destroyed in a fire - was extremely small, four by six metres, and was used primarily for installations like those presented in this show. A single large construction placed in the Or Gallery took on a certain presence, and it was this strong sense of the physical that characterized Or exhibits. This feeling was missing at the Charles H. Scott Gallery: in contrast, works were crammed together in an arrangement that made it difficult for the viewer to focus on a particular piece.

In general terms the Or presentation drew attention to the solidity of environment and the processes of charting and traversing it. Sheila Hall's seascape, titled *Synchronicity*, comprises three enlarged close-ups of sand dunes and two smaller photographs of a coastal highway inserted in the central close-up on its diagonals. Imprints in the dunes suggest malleability, yet the ambiguity of these footprints and windmarks, and their structural prominence within the work, denote durability and make the road appear trivivial by contrast. The position of the two images of the road suggests a forking path and therefore implies choice. These suggestions are

made graciously so that conceptual consideration is invited but not demanded.

The same was true of the Artspeak exhibit. Established in 1986 by the Kootenay School of Writing as a centre for visual and language arts, Artspeak seeks to promote discourse between those disciplines. Readings by writers from the school were scheduled in conjunction with the exhibit, but surprisingly little reliance upon text was apparent in the visual presentation. Instead, literary aspects derived from the artists' interests in identity, identification by recording, and the presentation of sequential visual images. The strongest works of the show were to be found here: a three-part video, *Utopias in a Little Box* by Laura Lamb, and *The modern business hen has no time for family duties*, a four-part, mixed media panel by Doug Munday. Lamb filmed translucent substances such as glass and water moving through topographies of materials with domestic or feminine associations, such as sewing notions and fabric, perfume bottles and plastic wrap. Doug Munday's panel, made from various reproduction processes, graphic and photographic printing, contains images of hens and sore feet being soaked. Both the images and the image-making processes wryly link artistic and domestic issues of reproduction. Works by Lorna Brown, Reid Shier, Nancy Shaw, Deanna Ferguson, and Kathryn MacLeod were also shown. While most were mixed media, all of the works used photographic elements to suggest the photographic as the meeting point of language and visual arts, particularly regarding issues of identity.

The Grunt exhibit featured examples of work that has received considerable attention and favourable response in numerous exhibits at Grunt and its associate gallery, Pitt International, during the last year: junk assemblage and toy-like modelling. Although Glenn Alteen also selected paintings by Garry Ross and Hillary Wood, the most striking

works he presented were Bill Renzie's painted clay model of a massive public building, *Stalinistic Grandeur*, and assemblages by Daav MacNab and Gary Quimet made from used materials and discards, such as shards of glass, bits of wire, pipes, bent screens, scrap lumber, and broken appliances. Assemblage of this sort has historical precedent but remains relatively free of technical and critical expectations. Its present scope for aesthetic expression and socio-political satire is therefore broader than other visual arts and gives the viewer the wide range of emotional choice associated with music.

Moving through the antediluvian salvaging efforts of Grunt and back to the post-industrial, high-tech constructions presented by Or, the viewer could sense the strong commitment of these artists to place. Their artmaking engages the situational rather than the romantic, a characteristic that has become increasingly prominent in Vancouver art. Lack of meaningful institutional and provincial support and the inaccessibility of commercial galleries have turned these artists into survivalists. The greater community of this city, labouring under similar conditions, may find inspiration in this work. But in another important aspect, the creation and maintenance of alternative working spaces, this show failed to achieve its potential. A viewer unfamiliar with recent developments within the Vancouver art community, from the "October Show" of 1983 and the "Warehouse Show" of 1984 to the recent "Broken Muse" exhibit, would not appreciate why these galleries were established or their importance. The show lacked adequate histories of these galleries and the specific circumstances of the artistic community during their evolution. These histories would have established a clearer, more meaningful representation of the importance of Grunt, Or, and Artspeak.

Colleen Fee