

# Images that look back in time

■ TEN YEARS LATER, Contemporary Art Gallery, to Dec. 20.

■ CAMERA WORKS, Or Gallery, to Dec. 20.

By ELIZABETH GODLEY

**M**ARIAN Penner Bancroft's four-part photograph, incorporating images from childhood past and present, makes an apt centerpiece for the Contemporary's current show, organized to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

Bancroft and the six other artists whose work is shown here were among literally hundreds of struggling unknowns who, back in the mid-70s, participated in a federal government make-work project and produced the 3,000-odd pieces of art now in collections held by the Contemporary and the City of Vancouver.

Since this show is, in a way, a glance backward, Bancroft's remembrances strike the right note, although her photograph was made this year and its concerns — childhood fears and war toys — are contemporary.

Another work that deals with issues of growing up, growing older and growing bigger is Liz Magor's wonderful five-part photo-collage.

The fascinating photographs of children — singles, twins, triplets and quadruplets — are reason enough to look at this piece.

But there are dozens of levels of meaning here, as Magor explores the changes wrought on human beings by time and living.

Two pieces by Robert Young — an assemblage made out of a wooden packing-crate and some fence pickets and a lovingly painted portrait of a packing crate — and one of Judy Williams' watery, mysterious paintings are the other highlights of this show.

Unless you're up on the past work and predilections of the Or Gallery's stable, its current show of work by 10 photographer-artists

bachrome, or that Ian Wallace's snapshot of himself reading at a table refers back to a sort of performance piece he did at the Or.

And you need to understand something of these artists' fascination with modern post-structuralist philosophy and the writing of the French thinker Jean Baudrillard, whose theories about *simulacra* inform Phillip McCrum's what-the-butler-saw peep-show.

According to a recent New Yorker article, Baudrillard's work is all the rage in art circles there.

In a nutshell, the philosopher says we live in a world of signs that have become detached from the real things they represent, thanks to the overwhelming power of advertising, TV and other media.

This turn of events, according to Baudrillard, means artists are hard put to produce art, but can only refer to it by mimicking previous art.

Although McCrum's peep-show can be enjoyed even if you don't know what he's on about — peer through the eye-piece and you can dimly make out six photographs of the artist, swathed in drapery and striking poses from old paintings — the artist has titled the piece *Simulacrum*, an obvious reference to Baudrillard.

Also worth a look are Stan Douglas's nifty boxed piano roll, accompanied by a photograph of the corresponding sheet music; and Don Gill's compilation of TV images of a bomb blast.

