



kama sutra theme

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--- The Sculpture of Ron Boise

by

Richard H. Grooms

Of all the "turned-on" and "tuned-in" sculptors I have ever met, Ron Boise is the ultimate wow! His was a rare talent combined of many ingredients. He was turned-on by "youth", and "doing his thing" consisted of making figurative sculpture from sheet metal reclaimed from wrecked cars. He used a cutting torch and welding outfit to fabricate this style.

The pictures of these sculptures originally to be included in this issue have been censored by Acme-Buckle printers. For those interested in seeing these Mr. Grooms will show them in a slide-lecture as part of the series, Science, Morality and Culture, Tuesday night, Feb. 6th, at 8:00 p.m., Ed-Arts 144.

CENSORED

DEATH GOES BETTER WITH COCA-COLA

Dave Godfrey
House of Anansi: Toronto
Available at Ivy's, \$1.95

Reviewed by Barbara Trottier

At the very beginning I should perhaps admit to an inexplicable prejudice against Canadian writing; as much as I have tried, my patriotism simply does not extend that far. There is something bleak and groping and ineffectual about our national literature that tends to bore and amuse me, rather than arouse my aesthetic interests. Centennial motivated scores of relative unknowns to churn out countless books lauding everything from our short hundred year history to the commonest weed being trampled by the one remaining buffalo. Pictorial essays were perhaps most abundant; only the lyrics fell short. Is there none of the good old Americanized nitty-gritty in Canada to write about? Everybody's talking as if we just got here. I feel that Canadian authors are behind, particularly as regards fiction. Are we afraid to crawl out from under the glorious mat of best sellers that blankets the United States? Why not "The Confessions of Chief Running Water" or "I Cooked for Pearson?" Why so self conscious, so exact, so sedate? Why am I mortally embarrassed when Hugh McLellan goes on trying, when French-Canadians begin to lyricize over Separatism, when Pierre Berton resorts to a cook book to keep his coffers brimming? You tell ME. Leonard Cohen escaped to the Mediterranean: maybe this is the ultimate answer — to regard the Canadian scene from a safe distance and hence to write about it more objectively.

A few words should be said about the book which I set out originally to review. It is imperative, often perceptive, but dull. I was waiting for my head to be turned: needless to say, nothing happened. Idiosyncratically, I was offended by the title, like an Arab who pilgrimages fifty miles on foot to find his favourite mosque decorated with fleur de lis and baroque cupids. Most of the stories touch on Viet Nam at least once; and are peopled with artists gone vacant on acid, draft dodgers and misshapen relationships. It's a present book and, aptly, not a pretty one. As the title indicates, each story involves some kind of death — physical, romantic, spiritual and artistic. Godfrey has some fairly good ideas, I think, but aside from the recurring theme, there is a certain lack of cohesion in his style, an intermittent dependency on allusion that detracts from the essential wholeness. They are quick, simple reading. And if the reader is intended to feel empty and eyeless, as in death; but has come, upon finishing, to regard death and killing and suffering as an integral mechanism of the total human condition — then, OK. As miserably as he puts it, Godfrey has indeed scored.

TAMING OF THE SHREW

At the McPherson Playhouse

Although a little disappointing as entertainment Bastion Theatre's production, "The Taming of the Shrew," is very interesting in its interpretation... A problem revolves around Kate, her rapid change of character, and the inability of a 20th Century audience to accept her last speech and its description of an ideal wife... According to this version, Kate was a shrew but not a totally bad tempered and humourless one. Instead of an absolutely wild woman being tamed into an unbelievably submissive slave, Karen Austin portrays a pouting, jealous and vindictive scold who learns that one can share authority and still have dignity.

Rather than learn to always give in to her husband, Kate learns how to handle him. By the end of the play she is in on Petruchio's joke. This interpretation works very well in the second half of the play; in the first it leaves Kate too indefinite: her raging lacks direction and purpose and so does not give Petruchio the problem to overcome that his lines demand.

Aside from the problem imposed by Kate's character the actors do well once they have warmed up. It is too bad it takes them so long. John Heath, Anthony Jenkins and Glenn MacDonald are exceptions to this remark. Slapstick and visual humour are used to advantage in this comedy. As the audience rarely catches the humour in the punning and language of the play gestures are most important.

Once the play does get moving it still lacks confidence, especially in scenes involving crowds. In the wedding scene they stand idly by instead of acting. Only in the final banquet scene does the crowd perform adequately.

Bastion has used a 17th Century French Canadian setting for this play. In the set itself little was gained by breaking away from traditional patterns. Costuming, however, was used most effectively, especially in the costumes of Petruchio and Grumio for the wedding. ● M.M.

erotic sculpture

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He is dead now, having succumbed to an overdose of drugs. Presumably LSD and "speed" or something like this in July, 1966, resulted in Boise's getting so sick he had to be flown to a hospital in Houston, Texas. He was dead before he arrived. He had just completed a successful show in California and had sold almost all his work, and was in the process of heading down to Mexico to enjoy his profit when he died.

Ron travelled all over the U.S. and Europe in his modified studio bus — it was an old telephone company trouble-van adapted to his needs. It was complete with cot, sleeping bag, a place to make his sculpture and store it, a hi-fi set with several speakers and a small galley for meals. He had it painted with wild psychedelic colors and made the head lamps into eyes, the grill into a mouth, etc. He had such cryptic messages painted on the outside as "Jesus Loves Bread" and "Mother's Bread for Lovers."

The figures he made for the Kama Sutra series were conceived some time before the actual construction. He had taught himself sculpture and to my knowledge had never taken courses in sculpture, drawing, or any part. He learned about welding from his father's garage in Montana. But he never appeared as a rustic or hick. He was always a very beautiful flower person and quite urban in his outlook. He loved the desert and the warmth of the sun. Arizona, as time went on, became a favorite haunt of his, so while we lived near Phoenix, Ron would come through on his way, to and fro, about three times a year.

His sculpture was extremely sensual and the rendering of flesh and texture of the sheet metal made you forget they were scraps of metal at all. He had a sensitive line in his work that made all the metal personages seem to have a personality all their own. They became like real people, but without the idea they were portraits. His women all tended to be tall, thin, and with drooping breasts. His men also were thin and gangling, much like Ron himself.

In taking the copulation positions of the Kama Sutra, he arrived at a statement of sculptural form that transcends any love work in sculpture done previously, by even such classical masters as Rodin or Bernini. His was both a timeless rendition and still very much of our era.

The really amazing thing about the size and scale of the Kama Sutra figures is that they are so small — the largest is about one foot high. But the photos lie pleasantly and give us the impression they are life-size or perhaps larger. The fact that he could achieve such monumentality in groupings so small is no little tribute to his talent to make a great deal of so little.

I would like to quote the Zen Philosopher and poet Alan Watts in a blurb he wrote on Ron's show, for in it he hits the essence of the question of erotica and pornography and its relevance to Boise's concept:

"Ron Boise is a sculptor who is doing something which I call "pushing the line back" — in the same way as great modern writers, such as Henry Miller, D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce have been pushing the line back in literature. We haven't seen much of it in sculpture — or in painting.

Now, what do I mean by "pushing the line back"?

All culture is a game called: Where do we draw the line?

First of all, where is the line between you and me, between what is mine and what is yours, and then how far can we go with each other? How far will I let you touch me, up to where, to what depth? And how far will we go in intimacy?

Some people will drink from the same glass with pleasure, who'd be horrified to use the same toothbrush. And we are playing constant games with where do we draw the line, with what is "on-scene" and what is "off-scene" and what is "off-scene" or "obscene."

And the fascination of this game is: who can get away with what?

But you mustn't go too far. Here we see an extraordinary example of getting away with murder — but in a fantastically good way. But it's actually not getting away with murder; it's something much worse than that; it's getting away with love.

For murder is perfectly okay. You're allowed to see murder at any time — people strangled, throttled, and smashed in the face, on every TV screen. But love you may not see.

But here you can.

And in a way that is extraordinarily sensitive — such that, if you do draw the curtain aside,

depending on you, you can see — not obscenity, but sublimity.

Now I'm amazed by this sculpture.

For two reasons:

I believe — and some of you know this as a sort of joke — I believe there are four philosophical questions: (1) Who started it? (2) Are we going to make it? (3) Where are we going to put it? and (4) Who's going to clean up?

The last two are fundamentally important questions for our culture, because our culture is devoted to the conversion of the material world into rubbish — and a great deal of our products are rubbish when brand new. Therefore, "Who's going to clean up?" is a most important question.

Here we have an example of "cleaning up" of the most difficult order, because this is the conversion of junked cars into works of art. . . .

Here's a very serious problem; I don't know if you know about the problem of rust. It's one of the most grave ecological problems, because, when you throw away garbage it all goes back to nature and gets converted again into life, but rust doesn't go back to the mines and become metal again. Rust is simple and total waste.

What are we going to do eventually with all this waste? It's going to drive us off the earth — unless there are magicians around who can prevent rust from becoming pure rust and start once again the metal moving into the life stream where it can become useful.

That's exactly what's happened here.

And it has happened in a most extraordinary way because the artist has the ability to make something out of nothing in so many ways and senses.

It isn't only that it's the nothing of a junked car, but it's the nothing of indicating extreme solidity and vitality with the merest of surfaces.

This is done, I feel, with extraordinary effectiveness in these few particular erotic sculptures here — which are remarkable in two ways: Not only the way I've mentioned, of using surface to indicate extreme sensuous solidity, but also, that we very rarely have an opportunity to see the kind of art form except as graffiti in public conveniences. Very rarely, unless we are familiar with Hindu sculpture or Tibetan painting, can we see anything like this done with superb mastery.

So—for the rest, it is silence on my part, and beholding on yours . . ."

—(Evergreen Review, June, 1965, pp. 64-5)

Now that Boise is dead it is problematic as to what has happened to his sculpture. Perhaps his gallery contracts know; I doubt if his father or any remaining relatives have much interest in them. I wish that some museum or reputable institution that acknowledges the worth of an expression of today could be prevailed upon to purchase the entire series for future study. Ron Boise never expected to live a long life. He always talked as if he would die young, and he did. In his 33 years of life, which is exactly how long Christ had, too, Boise made a signal and lasting contribution to the art of sculpture and love and he lived his short life to the hilt in everything he did. No single epitaph could do him justice better than Watt's statement:

"Ron Boise is a sculptor who is doing something which I call 'pushing the line back.'"

Richard Grooms is an associate professor with the division of Art and Art History at the University of Victoria.

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why go?

TO PARKSVILLE IN MARCH?
 FOR A SYMPOSIUM?
 IT'S AWFULLY CHILLY UP
 THERE AND A LONG WAY
 FROM HOME
 AND THREE DAYS
 WITHOUT STUDYING?
 FORGET IT.

OK GRANTED.
 BUT PAT WATSON,
 FORMER HOST OF
 SEVEN DAYS, TOM BERGER —
 NDP-MLA FROM VANCOUVER,
 FATHER RATCHFORD, REV.
 WALLWORK, REPS FROM
 UVIC FACULTY AND
 ADMINISTRATION WILL BE
 THERE PLUS ABOUT 100
 STUDENTS LIKE YOU TO
 COLLECTIVELY BEAT THEIR
 BRAINS ON THE TOPIC
 ENTITLED "THE STUDENT,
 THE UNIVERSITY AND THE
 COMMUNITY."
 PRETTY HEADY STUFF.
 SO WILL BE THE LIQUID
 REFRESHMENT.
 EVERYONE WILL BE WARM
 AND REFRESHING.
 SO WILL BE THE POOL
 AND SAUNA BATHS.
 NOT A BAD WEEKEND
 FOR ONLY TEN DOLLARS.
 APPLY AT THE SUB QUICKLY
 BEFORE FEBRUARY 5.
 OH, ONE THING THOUGH:
 PLATO WON'T BE THERE.

Three Songs from the Kikuyu

by Marc Sarafian

I.

A third year the rain failed.
 I came from my home among the stones;
 Came across the water . . .
 The bougainvillia seemed so green.
 I asked the woman where I could find such green:
 One said, "Only among the stars."

She wore honey and the aromatic seed;
 In her I sensed the green, not of stars
 But of the grass where elephants die.
 Now the wind is so cold
 The spears decay in my hand
 And all is the termites of the air.

And somewhere down there—
 There is a road that leads to the Saraha.
 So I must go — I must
 Go, out through the hail and the constant rain
 And back towards the sun: there—there is
 No green to salivate the arid mind.

II.

At nights in her cool house of clay
 By the stream, my Suzanne
 Buries two ears in each gourd,
 And all the while her flesh condenses
 In pellucid drops of light.

In the rushes
 By the water's edge
 A bird with necklaces of beads
 And ornaments, waits for the stars;
 Then knots the reeds.

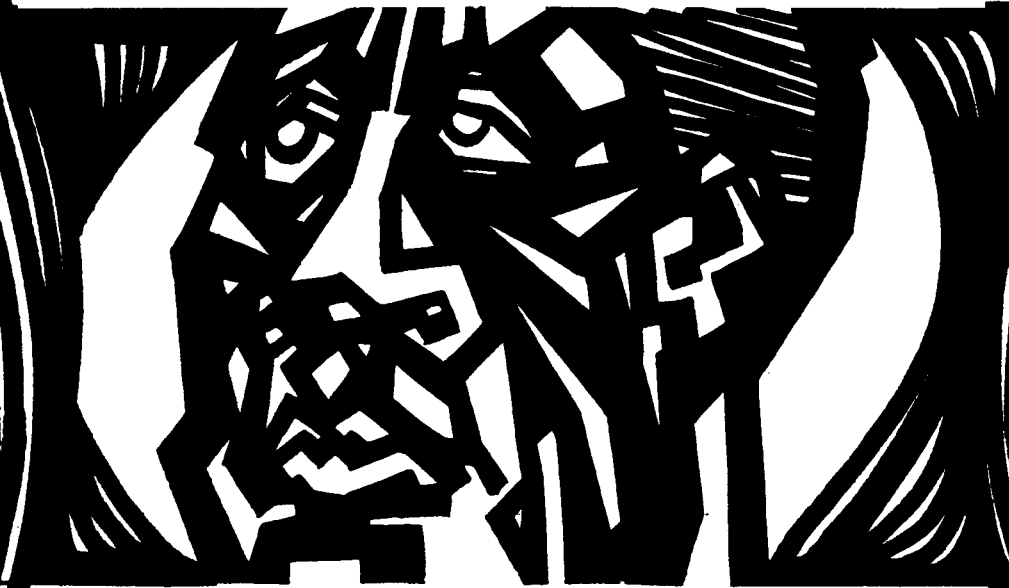
Each morning
 When I leave
 He gathers up her bones amongst the grasses
 And finds a house for her
 Of clay, down, by the different stream . . .

III.

Just possibly
 She will weep;
 She combs her hair.

Her two profiles search
 For a face. Her scented bones
 Cry out for stone:

A moment ago the doves came
 And joined them together
 With little chains of gold.



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