



"The Venus Suit", by Andrew O1, courtesy of Garnet Press.

are represented in her "shadow plays". In her last show at YYZ we saw the bitter realization of a love story, represented on the walls like a story board. Rae Johnson also made use of the third person narrative in her last show, which was accompanied by text about the adventures of Rachel. The images of Nancy Johnson, over the past year, have been accompanied by a series of poetic "misdemeanors". All of this is deeply introspective work, in which the invention of a "third person" protagonist functions as a distancing device; in all three cases there is a frank admission of neurosis. Art which is accompanied by text often denotes that there is a kind of therapy going on.

Art which is accompanied by text almost always incorporates with it a problem of linguistic psychology, a problem for which I.A. Richards once offered the descriptive term of "the pseudo-statement". Poetic propositions, although they look like statements are not to be judged by their truth or falsity, but only by their effect in releasing or organizing many impulses and attitudes. Many Toronto artists are skeptics, employing convictions as expressive material. Consider Daria Stermac's poster series, and the poetic moronics of the phrase "You Better Run, When We Dead Awaken", or Edward Lam's sadistic sage "Mr. Lam", or the *laissez-faire* of Marc Deguerre's conjunc-

tions of an apparently unrelated chunk of text to a group of photos (food for thought), or Cathy Daley's painted portraits that are accompanied by banal comments and snatches of conversation that are noteworthy because of their stupidity. This is art which has adopted "a bad attitude" in order to be morally superior to it. Daley's work involves a blatant recognition of the lie at its most degenerate and meaningless. On the other hand, David Buchan's piece "On the Rocks", which was also part of A Space's Public Address intelligently realizes the "power of the lie", particularly when it resembles advertising copy, and that it's not what you say, it's how you say it. Another artist whose work makes intelligent recognition of the pseudo-statement is Will Gorliz, who once superimposed an entire sequence of images upon an entire encyclopedia of rhetoric pertaining to the philosophy of art theory; this defacement constituted an act of rebellion against being subservient to these ideas. Andrew O1 is also an artist who recognizes that gestures toward authority are not necessarily gestures toward value, and with the installation of his "Venus Suit" down at Union Station, has picked up on the power of that most illustrious of disguises, the man's business suit, by undermining its "authority" with a crude realization of the Freudian myth at its most literal and blatant;

through this literal interpretation A01 also undermines the act of practically applying Freud's theory to a work of art, because the result is absurd.

The sculptural installations of Brian Scott derive their powerful subtext from the idea that there will always be "the continually wrong", and therefore he feels free to rewrite history by presenting it to us in the absurdest mode possible. "Christopher Columbus Headquarters", Brian Scott's outdoor mobile canvas "museum" exemplifies the work of an artist who has not only adopted the illustrious disguise of pioneer or explorer, but also that of the "archivist of the universe". Scott makes reference to as much theory and history as possible by deifying famous figures from history, such as Marx, Einstein, and even Martin Luther King in the kind of epic group portrait that functions as a narrative in a kind of time continuum of its own. Scott is not concerned with being accurate, only with creating - if only temporarily - a more perfect world. It is the inaccuracy of his fictions that lend to his work a sense of joy and spontaneity. A lack of joy or spontaneity is one of the burdens of memory, and Oscar Wilde accounted for this state of affairs in "The Decay of Lying" by stating:

"Many a young man starts in life with a natural gift for exaggeration which if nurtured in congenial and sympathetic surroundings, or by the imitation of the best models, might grow into something really great and wonderful. But as a rule he comes to nothing. He either falls into careless habits of accuracy, or takes to frequenting the society of the aged and well-informed. Both things are equally fatal to his imagination, as indeed they would be fatal to the imagination of anybody, and in a short time he develops a morbid and unhealthy faculty for truth telling...This is no isolated instance that we are giving. It is one example out of many; and if something cannot be done to change or at least modify, our monstrous worship of facts, Art will become sterile, and beauty will pass away from the land."

Well, art (with a capital A) has become sterile and beauty has passed away from the land, but that's all part of the new anti-aesthetic, which arrived well after Wilde's time. But still, I think it would be worthwhile to acknowledge this melodramatic statement of Wilde's in terms of the kind of energy and spirit that Toronto's artists could represent to the rest of the world. Although it is difficult to ignore the "continual wrong", I think it would be fatal to the imagination of an artist in any community to pay too much attention to the "continually superficial interpretations of his every word and step, his every sign of life."