

MIRACLES OF E

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This story may be read as a reply to a paper by Philip Monk, entitled "Axes of Difference". The paper was delivered during a conference held in Toronto on 14 February 1984 and later published in the May issue of Vanguard magazine.

In it, Monk argued that one can read new Toronto art as a symmetry of motives, dividing along lines of gender. On the one hand, "decadent values alternating between idealist heroism and nihilistic despair" are being affirmed in the art of men (e.g., David Clarkson, Andy Patton, John Scott and Marc de Guerre). On the other, "an awareness of the structure and power of representation," leading to the possibility of resistance and action, is demonstrated in the art of women (e.g., Shirley Wintasalo, Shelagh Alexander, Janice Gurney, Joanne Tod).

Some of the artists cited by Monk, were included in Richard Rhodes' exhibition 1980/1/2/3/4 Toronto.

Philip Monk's argument was presented (inappropriately, to my mind) as a synchronic survey of artistic practices, with virtually no reference to the recent history of popular imagery, desire and cultural determination in Toronto. Having considered some aspects of that history, I am inclined to believe Monk was being quite optimistic about Toronto women artists, without justification.

Once I knew a man, the critic Isaac Steinway, and the knowing was in Toronto. I knew him in the city through a springtide season of my life, years ago, learning from that elder satyr how to play the pipes of our critics' trade, how to dance the uncertain dance of theory, desire and ecstasy according to the measures offered us by the city.

Much that we exchanged must remain secret, as is the way of teachers and students. But today gentle death eased Steinway's pain at last, and set me free to do this telling, which is my grieving, my offering of flowers and incense at the secluded sylvan altar, after the old custom of the critics mourning their dead.

Because I have studied all his utterances and printed words on Toronto's acts in art, I could now recite the public deeds of Steinway, letting that be his obituary. Or I could tell out his mental glory in the strong language of philosophy or the history of art. If I choose instead to cast my elegy in the weak language of story, it is because story is the vessel of wars, passions, enchantments, rages; and these are the things I have heard when I listened to Steinway's heart, and sought to salve his hidden wound.

So here is where the telling must start, which is not my story to be told, but his--it must start with this fragment of antique legend, which he taught me as an image of the true.

Like every city of the New World, Toronto is the dream of a vanquished Titan who fled westward from those ancient civil wars, beyond the Hesperides, even beyond the world-girdling Ocean, and who now lies buried and dreaming beneath the urban grid woven upon the land. In the physical, sensuous fabric of Toronto, Steinway beheld the Titan's raiment, his dream itself incarnate in streets and buildings, acts of habitation, even the facts of our eros and mind, and in the art conceived and brought forth within the city.

Steinway speculated that we who live in Toronto have no histories except those the sleeping Titan gives us from his endless dream, that fathomless treasury of histories. We are the fictions of his desire; so to know ourselves, and what we and artists make, is really to know the varieties and powers of the Titan's desiring.

As an example of what we can know, he mentioned the peculiar inclination of thoughtful Torontonians to discuss their city very seriously, and at length--a self-conscious activity he had not observed in the creative and intellectual circles of other cities. Continuing to spin his image, Steinway saw in the ceaseless cultural interrogations of Toronto critics and artists the Titan's desire to be recognized and awakened. But he warned me to resist the vast sleeper's will in this matter.

If I disobey Steinway now, telling out this story of Toronto, I do so because the hard story is what I finally learned during my long-past apprenticeship of intelligence and love, before I became a man and took the critic's vows. This story is what I must tell, and treasure, during the years until death comes to soothe my grief for my lost teacher, through whom I learned something of the city, and the Titan's mind, and something of the terrible things which flicker across his cold and burdened dream.

THE MACHINE

On a chilly, bleak afternoon in early spring, as we strolled along the harbour's edge and talked for the last time, Steinway turned to me abruptly and said: We must not imagine ourselves merely to be exegetes of the texts and art-works and histories Toronto gives us.

To be sure, we critics sometimes believe we read the works of art, and interpret them, and authorize them. To be sure, these things are among the things we do. But we must not forget that the art-works are reading us as well, revealing the heart that receives them.

MANUEL JAQUES

by John Bentley Mays

How hard we try to hide this act of penetration and revelation, he continued.

The critical writings we produce do two things, only one of which is readily apparent to the reader: the texts first press the reader's attention back toward the works of art, but also away from the critic's complicities, anxieties and hopes disclosed. Thus criticism, whatever else it may be in theory or practice, is secretly a decoy, attracting notice away from the wounded creatures we critics are. By becoming such a decoy, criticism becomes a perversion, an act of inevitable bad faith—an act of language deployed as sacrificial victim, atoning (by being perverted, made to lie) for the critic's sins of self-knowledge, of permitting his heart to be revealed and recognized.

In this obsessive attempt to direct attention away from the wounded body, back to the work, to forbid public view of the critic's bourgeois and rational body being violated, Steinway believed, criticism is born.

To illustrate his point, my teacher told me of a visit he once made to a museum of our disorders (which is language, and is what this text now becomes as you read it.)

Wandering in the museum's vast, labyrinthine galleries, he happened upon a strange Machine that abolished time and created meaning in time's place.

He inquired after the Machine's origin and nature, but the tall angel who guarded and tended it could tell him nothing. So he left with his questions, and the silent and unmoving Machine itself, and the unknowing which the Machine ceaselessly produces to replace time.

SEDUCTION

The Machine, he told me, had torn away the veil from the occulted history of Toronto art, and had also torn away the bandage from his wound.

Before the day in 1984 when he stood in the presence of the Machine, Steinway believed that the previous fifteen years of Toronto's creative vision had unfolded in the orderly, geneological manner described by the orthodox historians of the period.

In the beginning, in the mythic time of the 1960s, there was the vast, if not infinite, rectangular canvas stretched in Toronto, a blank female space summoning the love and energy of painters, inviting them to ecstasy. They approached, these men (for they belonged to the tribe of men who desired the bodies of women, and of art's spiritual women of Form). They embraced the mystic female terrain, and left there the abstract signs and gestures of their embrace and adoration.

Then, near the end of the 1960s, the embracing of the field was finally concluded, and there were no more new marks to make. So the body of the woman was dissected and her relics, those expanses of abstract beauty and souvenirs of encounter, were distributed into homes, museums, secret hoards.

Having no divinity equal to the canvas, in terms of seductive delight or authority, the generation of artists coming of age in the next decade sought sparer pleasures with new gods too small and stern to be adored, such as pure, disincarnate idea, and the sheer flux of words—only to discover that they, the artists themselves, much become the gods, grounds, thieves of fire and sources of their making.

Steinway recalled the heyday of that joyful blasphemy against Olympian abstract authority, recalling the spectacles of self-disclosure and self-analysis in the mortal and carnal art of performance, in the spectral, staring examinations of video, and in extravagant deeds of means mixed and impure.

He remembered the new perverse artists of those Toronto days—unnatural lovers of themselves, and of the sensual parodies—who went harvesting in

The Machine is an exhibition entitled *80/1/2/3/4 Toronto*, which was organized by Richard Rhodes for Mercer Union and exhibited there in March, 1984. This show featured the work of 15 advanced Toronto artists, most of whom launched their careers after 1977 in the artist-run centres of Queen Street West.

The notion of speaking of art exhibitions as industrial operations first came to me during a lecture by the Toronto critic and psychiatrist Jeanne Randolph. The address dealt with the relationship between the viewer's experience of certain art works and the schizophrenic's experience of "influencing machines."

Every exhibition can be understood as a meaning-creating Machine of the sort described here.

The names which appear in the margins below—but only those followed by (RR)—refer to artists whose works were featured in Richard Rhodes' exhibit, as reconstructed as cultural meanings in the mind of Steinway. The works as historical and material entities outside Steinway's reception of them do not exist for the narrator of this fiction.

That is, Steinway accepted the view that Toronto art has a history—any history. It does not, and did not. Toronto art is a sign of contradiction to all evolutionary paradigms of art history, because its chief characteristics are not gradualism and continuity, but discontinuity, violation, the painful fact to having always to start from nothing, with nothing.

Abstract Expressionism, whether in New York or Toronto, was the art of conservative, heterosexuals; genitality. All reactions (from Pop Art through General Idea) to the Ab-Ex statement have been the work of homosexuals, feminists, persons of blurred gender; anality.

The art history of the last 25 years is the history of opinions about the anus.

Naked Vito Acconci at A Space in the early 1970s, giving license to nakedness, vulnerability, *being known*. The attempts to make of video a transparent, staring eye, beholding and disclosing everything, in the early tapes of Lisa Steele, Colin Campbell, Tom Sherman, Marien Lewis. Sexual exhaustion and extravagance in the performances of Eric Metcalfe. Correspondence art, the Hummer Sisters.

the city's secret orchard of desire and forbidden acts, making their art from the harvest; who found their topics on the edges, in the banal happiness of suburbia, in childhood and in sexual awakening, and in the vast flow of medicated images which sculpt and constitute all our desires into vexed, iconic form.

And he remembered with special pleasure the wit of those days before the closing years of the 1970s, before the change that took place then, when artists stopped deploying the complex strategies of parody, perversity and appropriation as means of ripping away the veil from established power's absurdity--when artists, sadly, stopped resisting power's presumptions to total, inevitable reality.

AFFLICTION

When the change came to Toronto, around 1978, it seemed to come, not as a spring storm, but as a sudden, simple and invisible change in the density of air--something felt in the bones of Steinway, an insistent and ominous ache.

In the art of those coming of creative age in Toronto's Queen Street lofts and galleries during the season of the change, Steinway observed a pattern of solemn reversions.

The naked maker of the early 1970s, given to disclosure and the construction of a truth of the radically local, re-clothed himself in art's traditional stuff of history and general, moralizing stories. The sublime mortal technologies of performance and video were exchanged for the history-laden *beaux-arts* media of painting and sculpture, now being summoned from their graves.

But the solemnity and certainty of death were wanted by those young artists, not the ambiguities of carnival.

The artists in those days put aside the previous outrage and valour of sexual, artistic, intellectual parody, preferring instead to mimic the powerful, uniform conservatism of father, policeman, capitalist, and academic artist. Interest in the imagery mediated by advertising, magazines and television continued in fact, but changed in form, from critical, sensuous curiosity to a simpler fascination with the irresistible, inexorable force of imagery, shaping and deforming all desire.

Steinway felt a pall of sadness fall over the city, as the Titan's subversive and fantastic dreams of pleasure gave way to gloomy, fitful reverie.

My teacher was saddened by the loss of so much dangerous delight, but he tended to believe the conventional wisdom about the change: that what he saw in Toronto art was only one more example of a profound, international revulsion by the young against the previous artistic episode of material and formal experiment, risk and permission in art. An era of scarce resources had succeeded an era of ample ones. A period of inward immigration, painful solitudes, had replaced a period of centrifugal sexualities, sociabilities, and desires.

On the surface, anyway, this glib explanation held some appeal for Steinway.

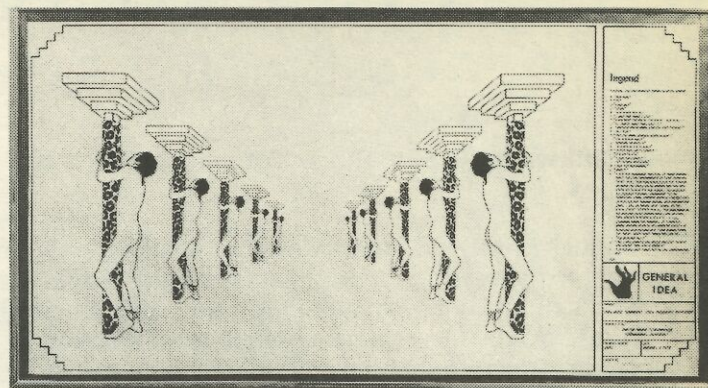
He knew that younger artists sometimes, though certainly not always, feel they must stand contrary to authoritative artists of the immediate past. And surely, the striking of the new apolitical, passive stances was made easier in the late 1970s, when the men in charge of the bourgeois nations decided once again that the rhetoric of hierarchal rigidities was more useful than the language of tolerance and mercy for the maintenance of their dominion.

It was plausible to Steinway that this political decision, which retuned all media in Toronto, and all instrumentalities of power and opinion, was generally sufficient cause to explain the shift from audacity to melancholy in Toronto's art.

Such was the quality of Steinway's disinterested meditation on the matter, which was of interest to him, but seemed remote from the sensual necessities of his own life, as lived in his specific body, and in the city of his birth and death.

Then one day on a visit to a museum of our disorder, he discovered the Machine, and was discovered by it.

General Idea, FILE Magazine; Rodney Werden.



General Idea. *The Dr. Brute Colonnade*, 1975, acetate print with hand painting mounted on craft paper, 23¾ x 45 in. Photo: courtesy Carmen Lamanna Gallery.

The new generation of artist-run exhibition centres included YYZ (1978), Mercer Union (1979), ChromaZone (1982).

General stories: John Scott, David Clarkson. The history-laden media: Joanne Tod's paintings; the sculptures of David Clarkson, Robert Wiens. (RR)

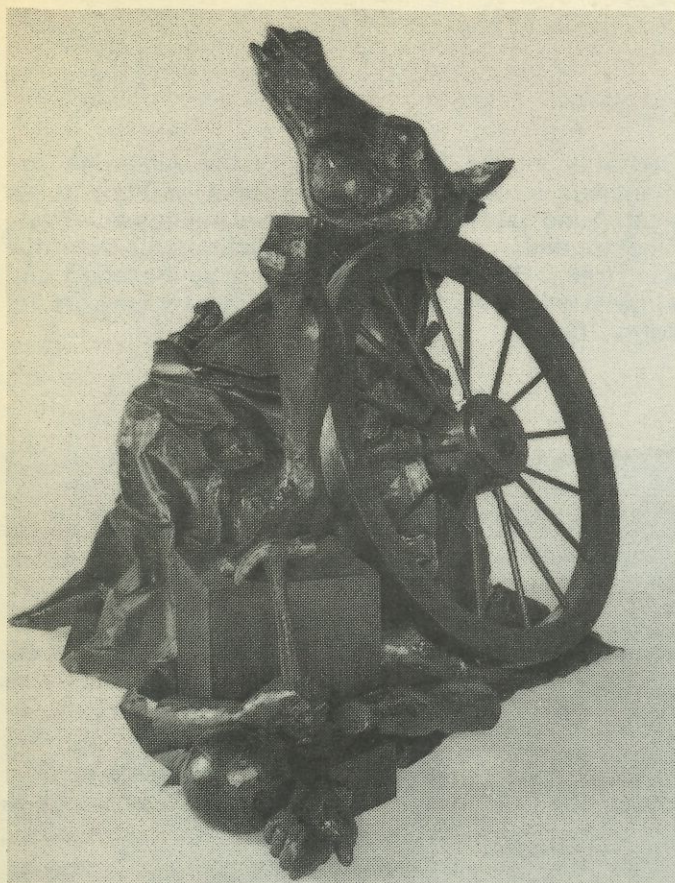
Media: Shelagh Alexander, Oliver Girling, Nancy Johnson, Joanne Tod. (RR)



Joanne Tod. *Deke Slayton Before Dinner Guests*, 1982, acrylic on canvas, 55 x 63 in. Photo: courtesy Carmen Lamanna Gallery.



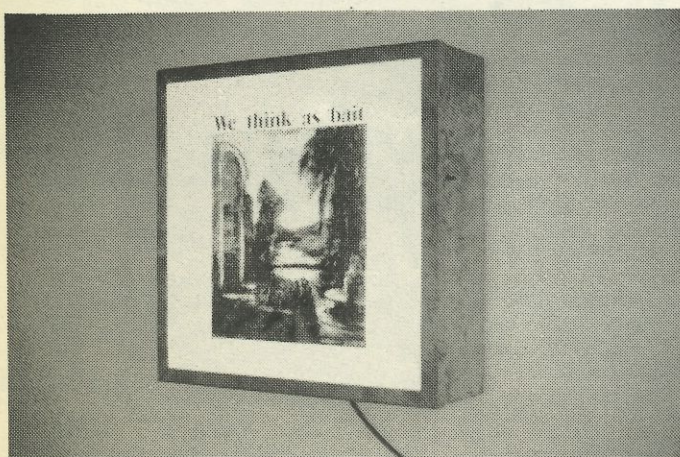
Oliver Girling. *Crocodile Tears*, 1982, acrylic on canvas. 55 x 155 in. Photo: courtesy the artist.



Robert Wiens. *History Looks Upon Itself*, 1983; copper on wood. Photo: courtesy the artist.

Vanquished futurity: Robert Wiens, Shelagh Alexander. **Assertive presences:** Stephen Menzies, Jaan Poldas. **Self-interpretation:** David Clarkson, Renee Van Halm, Jaan Poldas. **Cries for rescue:** John Scott, Nancy Johnson, John Brown. (RR)

Theory as tactic of avoidance, doomed to failure by the very power of art and the Machine in Toronto. In Toronto, theoretical discourse is always based on the philosophy of *somewhere else*, that is, some fiction of theoretical continuity borrowed from elsewhere and imposed on the fracturing, wounded artistic culture of Toronto; hence, a lie.



Andy Patton. *We Think As Bait*, 1981; fluorescent light box, 25 x 25 x 8 in. Photo: courtesy S.L. Simpson Gallery.

PENETRATION

The Machine, like criticism, was bound always to start with the work (*energma*, the product), the work (*ergon*, the deed or task done), the work itself (*ergasia*, the performance and practice of material existence).

At the beginning of its silent operation, the Machine received the time-bearing, time-bound objects made by artists in the five years between 1980 and 1984--things of time, detritus left continually on reality's beach by the receding tide of time, as visible evidence of that recession.

Receiving them into its spatial construction, the Machine then annihilated the time (or difference, or material/causal separations) in the works, by disallowing all ways of seeing the particular objects as individually intelligible objects, outside the embracing, trans-temporal emblem produced by the Machine.

Having thus stripped the things of time, the Machine filled the emptiness with unknowing and meaning (which are the same, as in criticism, as in in love), which surged forth from the Machine's heart in slow, intelligible pictures, to pierce the heart of the beholder, piercing even the heart of Steinway, beholding.

Until the moment he was penetrated by the Machine's silent and emblematic language, Steinway had maintained the critic's ritually chase detachment from art, and from the sadness that pressed forward from art-works, revealing hearts.

By telling himself that artists spoke, in their various contents, only of materials or of general human nature, he protected his soul from the truths artists figured forth in the *forms* (latent or conscious, unintended or intentional) of recent Toronto art: the vanquished futurity, the assertive presences finally asserting nothing; the self-interpretations circling in upon themselves in cycles of infinite regression; the cries for rescue from history's confused allures and gratifications; the agonies of witnessing Toronto's dire fashioning of us all into victims dreaming final, melancholy dreams in the city at evening.

But as the meanings pierced him, Steinway understood the Machine at last; and he understood his body, and the city, and the city's heart.

PRODUCTION

It was long after I left him, to make my living as a critic, that Steinway was pierced by the Machine. After that day, he looked at art no longer, wrote of it no more, but talked of it incessantly, obsessively.

When I learned of his distress, and went to him in his tiny apartment on Spadina Avenue, I found my old teacher secreted inside shrouds of abstract theory's strong language, that language of *somewhere else*, *anywhere else* other than Toronto. I found him wrapping himself for the grave, and yearning for that cold carnal transfiguration.

How could I have known what had suddenly been revealed to him? As a younger man, I had loved him, but so much had necessarily remained hidden from me. Yet love gave me access to some things which then I hardly understood, and now understand too well.

I watched Steinway move easily in the society of the Toronto art world, a tall and weathered man famous for his critical intelligence and independence of spirit, renowned as much for his sensual grasp of art's beauties as for his mental penetration of art's meanings. To other men, surely, Steinway must have appeared worldly, as driven by unknowing, as capable of bourgeois gratifications and productions as any other man.

But loving him taught me Steinway walked by public codes learned carefully, but never grasped confidently, since he could never find an established code or strategy which would enable him to fulfill his complex desires.

He often said that people in Toronto preferred sexuality to sex--the safe pleasure of performing alienated linguistic codes (expressed in codified lifestyles, routinized sexual performances, stereotyped social behaviour), instead of the proliferating pleasures revealed by the body's contradictory, continually surprising desires.

It was a distinction Steinway understood well, since in all aspects of his life--intellectual, sensual, moral--he longed for the vulnerability of free

carnal desiring. Yet he found the effecting of desire could only come through the performance of codes, and so became a connoisseur of codes, while being unable to give his heart to any one of them, or to any one object of passion.

For in some long-past time, perhaps long before his erotic awakening, Steinway had been wounded in the sex. The piercing severed erotic hunger from the urgencies of mind, thus deforming his attempts at love into sentimentality and eclecticism, and his acts of eros into exercises of mere power.

He had known of the wound from the beginning, and had hidden it uneasily, as best he could, from me and from the world at large, and even from himself. He loved art, because it spoke to him of commitment, of existence without the wound. He became an art critic, because he could wrap himself in the authority of scribe, exegete and interpreter of texts and pictures; but also because he could then be near the truest icons of desiring. The struggles and hungers provoked by his hidden sensual wound made his writing a thing of radiance, and they drew me to Steinway's heart, as moth to flame.

Then one bleak afternoon early in Toronto's uncertain spring that year, as we walked together along the harbour's edge for the last time, Steinway left off his unhappy, obsessive monologue of theory, and told me what he had seen in the heart of the Machine, and in his own divided heart, which he now believed were really one heart, the Titan's, beating beneath the visible city's bosom.

THE CORPORATION

When he had first stood in the presence of the Machine, he had believed it to be merely an assemblage of art-works, those mute, visible signs from which each act of criticism must be launched.

Continuing his watch within this space of the Machine, he discovered that what he took to be art-works were only traces, fading after-images of the temporal work which the Machine had destroyed, so that its place could be taken by the meaning and the unknowing generated ceaselessly by the Machine.

Compelled by the shifting ground within the Machine's existence, Steinway looked deeper, past his memories of the works made over five years in Toronto, past the received meanings. Looking deeper into the Machine, and not yet aware that he was looking into his own heart, Steinway finally saw the Corporation.

The thing he saw, working deep inside the Machine (and the Titan's mind), the Corporation, abolished meaning and created time and nothingness in meaning's place.

In its loud operation, the Corporation received the city's things and sensuous bodies, laden with significance and meaning. Receiving them into its construction, it then annihilated the meaning (or intelligibility) in the bodies, by drowning them in the devastating temporal flow, by disallowing all ways of seeing them as evidence of meaning.

Having thus stripped meaning from the bodies, the Corporation filled the emptiness with the sheer bourgeois rationality and desolation of Toronto (which is an image of time itself), images of oppression surging forth from the Corporation's heart as slow, intelligible pictures, piercing even the heart of Steinway, beholding.

Until that moment, he had maintained the critic's ritual, necessary detachment from the sadness and resignation of the recent Toronto art subsumed in the workings of the Machine.

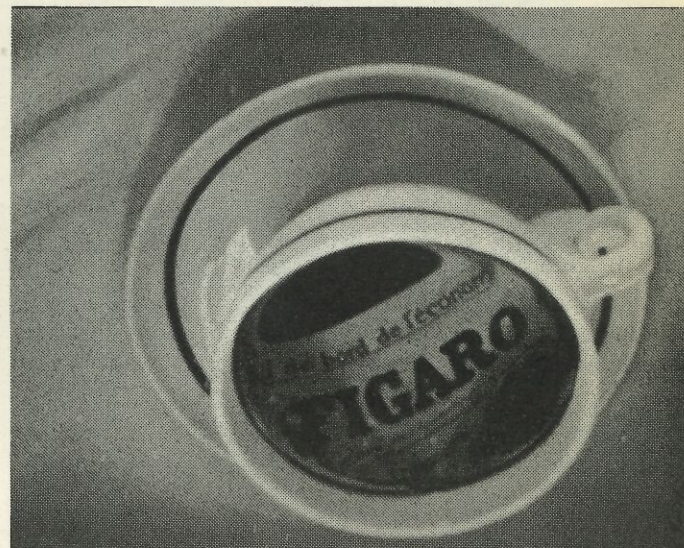
But suddenly the veil was drawn aside, and Steinway saw the Corporation inside the Machine, at the centre of recent Toronto art.

He saw the Corporation inside the city, and even in the Titan's mind and dream, being dreamed as the fate for Toronto and for all those within it.

And, most terrible, Steinway saw the same Corporation at work within his heart, ceaselessly keeping the hidden sensual wound open and fresh.

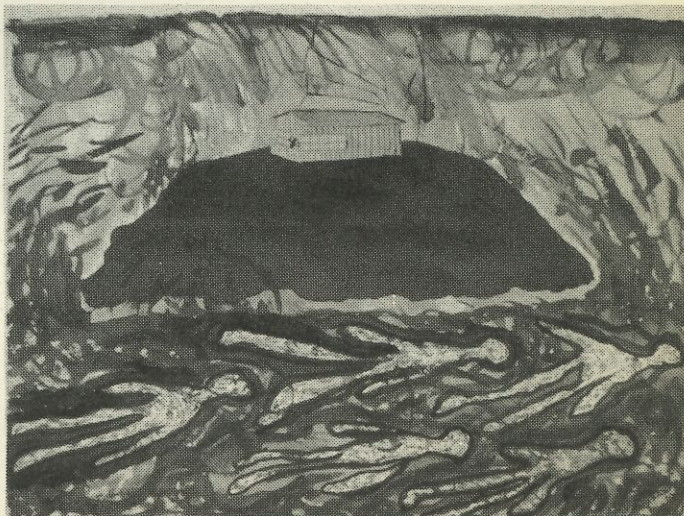
He had believed the psychiatrists when they told him his wound was a

Steinway as the Fisher King in the Arthurian romances, pierced through the thighs, waiting to be healed and set free. The Machine as successful Grail-Questor which asks the right questions, so sets the King free to die in peace; the narrator as the failed, unvirginal knight, working in the shadows for the Lord he cannot help.



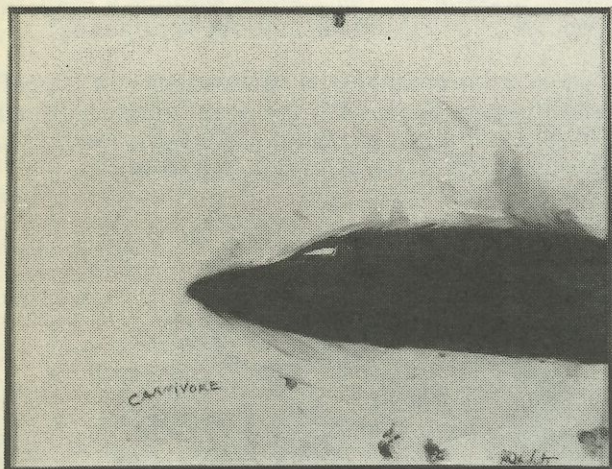
Will Gorlitz. Painting detail of installation *The Distant World*, 1983; wall paper, foreign newspaper clippings, photograph, paintings. Photo: courtesy the Sable-Castelli Gallery.

The Corporation, the mirror opposite of the Machine, is original sin; or it is an image of mankind constituted and organized as Nature, the terrible enemy of Culture and man. (Society is not our enemy. Or if it is, it is to the precise extent that it is not society, but Nature. The English Romantic opinion on Nature from Wordsworth to Charles Williams is wrong.)



Sandra Meigs. *Burning Island*, study for *The Maelstrom*, 1980, watercolor on paper, 29 x 39 cm. Photo: courtesy Ydessa Gallery.

Artists as exemplary victims, society as penetrating victimizer: Shelagh Alexander, John Brown, Oliver Girling, David Clarkson, Will Gorlitz, Nancy Johnson, Dyan Marie, Sandra Meigs, Stephen Menzies, Andy Patton, Jaan Poldas, John Scott, Renee van Halm, Joanne Tod, Robert Weins. (RR)



John Scott. *Carnivore #3*, 1983, graphite and varsol on paper, 18 x 24 in. Photo: courtesy the Carmen Lamanna Gallery.

All information here about the murder and slayers of Emanuel Jaques, and the aftermath, is based on news reports and features published in *The Globe and Mail* during 1977 and 1978.

That is, they met to become the Corporation, or Nature. They met to become natural, which is the first step toward horror and the destruction of the human.

So Karl Marx in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, where the reader will find the strong mythological paradigm which underpins this historical analysis of Emanuel Jaques' murder.

A line at the onset reads: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." To which Engels added this note in the 1888 edition: "That is, all *written* history."

The history of all texts, all sign-bearers (including art), is the history of class struggles. Textuality itself is the struggle of Nature against Culture, the Corporation against the Machine. The murderers of Emanuel Jaques were forced to replicate the class struggle because they chose to become a purely expressive phenomenon, or text.

private thing, to be lived with, denied, transcended by his effort alone.

But now he had seen in the recent art of Toronto, as given meaning by the Machine, evidence of the same dilemma as the one within his heart. In the art, he saw the public ascendance of doleful sentimentality; he saw artists portraying themselves insistently as ruined and violated victims, and society as omnipotent, penetrating, infinitely *knowing* victimizer, overwhelming everything with language.

Then came the further revelation, as he saw that the Corporation inside his body and inside the artists' younger bodies had also been at work in the public history of the city, in 1977, making more public and simple, and infinitely final, the structures of the Titan's eschatological dream, which in 1984 was still the cause of Steinway's unhealing wound, and the shaper of the art made in Toronto during the previous seven years.

SEDUCTION

My teacher believed the Corporation was the central unseen archetype of Toronto, with ectypes, or historical manifestations, emerging in every place, with the passage of time. But, to Steinway's mind, never had the Corporation incarnated itself so specifically or terribly as it had in 1977, subtly changing everything.

In that summary and revelatory instance of the Corporation's work, three young men were cast as executors of the dream:

Saul David Betesh was the adopted son of a prosperous suburban Toronto family, and at age 27 a construction worker.

Robert Wayne Kribs, 29, was a tall drifter and sometime lover of Betesh, who shared Betesh's interests in war games, Citizen Band radios, and sexual intercourse with boys.

Josef Woods, 27, believed he could kill pigeons at a distance with the components of microwave ovens, control the thoughts of others by means of harmonics and electronics, and was interested in hypnosis, fortune telling and Citizen Band radios.

(A fourth man, Werner Gruener, 29, existed on the fringes of the compact, but apparently took no part in its final production.)

The living icon of the Corporation had been coming into existence on occasion for some time, whenever these men came forth from their several dire solitudes and initiated a joint act to annihilate meaning and fill the vacuum with time, power and language.

Every action in their mechanistic scenario followed the structures of language; and especially the institutional rhetoric of the small and independent (and therefore pre-modern) capitalist company. (Steinway recalled that organizations formed for the production of sexual violence invariably assume the form of economic structures on the verge of displacement; hence, the feudalism of the Marquis de Sade's fantasies, in pre-revolutionary France.)

The organization of Betesh, Kribs and Woods was concerned, first, to abolish all relations with external authority and internal hierarchy. Like the pre-modern revolutionary bourgeoisie described by Marx, the organization allowed only an internal relationship of naked, radically democratic self-interest, and a relation with the outside world defined exclusively by cash payment and shameless exploitation.

It existed, however, to create nothing except itself, as a fiction of language. And because it set language as its eschatology and goal, the organization was thoroughly imbued with the fundamental strategic character of all language, its naturalness. Each act of the corporation had to be force into purely linguistic form; therefore that form partook of the radical naturalness of language. In the trio's small Yonge Street rooms, saturated by language, there could be no tolerance for anything except linguistic structures and acts, self-referential fulfillments of nature at every point.

Principally, the strategy of the organization involved the progressive elimination of the most cultural of all bourgeois culture's cultural productions--the individual bourgeois body as embodiment of social value and repository of meaning--and its replacement with a linguistic, sociological entity, definable purely as a object of power.

The men would initiate the scenario by hiring youths or boys encountered on the Yonge Street strip to pose for photographs, first clothed and later

nude, first alone, then engaged in sexual acts with the men. Here the group enacted its rhetorical fantasy of a small employer, creating a workforce whose structural reason for existence was to produce luxury consumer items (pornographic photographs).

In the second stage of the fantasy, the purpose of the exercise was revealed at last. The corporation had no real intention of producing anything except a radical instance of bourgeois culture, that is, the utter penetration and destruction of desire by power, leaving nothing but the will to dominate in the ruins of pleasure.

This was accomplished by pressing beyond what the boys were willing to do for money, and forcing them (at gun or knife-point) to submit to repeated, painful sexual acts until they refused to go farther. The refusal was usually overcome by tying the boys up, and raping them. They would then be given money, toys, alibis, and let go: thus would the revolt of the workers be concluded.

A crisis developed in the second cycle of the production in the spring of 1977, when a young man successfully resisted the scenario's enactment for six hours, even though tied up. The intended object of the trio's supreme subjectivity, that is, managed to keep humane meaning present within the situation so effectively that the strategy dictated by the language of power could not be brought to its conclusion. From that time on, the boys chosen for the workforce became progressively younger, more easily reduced, emptied of meaning and indwelt with mere time.

The use of ever younger boys seemed to work for some time. But like the scenario's first stage, the second had built into it a sensual (and also mass-cultural) paradox.

The revolt of the worker was necessary for the full enactment of the employer-fantasy, in a concluding act of brutal, absolute expropriation of everything from the economic relationship except power. But the very act of revolt re-introduced the discourse of those bourgeois meanings traditionally associated with revolt--rights and freedoms, integrity and the liberty of contradiction.

The only resolution of this dilemma--of every dilemma precipitated purely by the linguistic structures of sensual discourse--is premeditated murder. One can only experience pleasure as non-pleasure, or powerful language, if the object of desire is wholly undesirable; living, yet already dead; in revolt, but already reduced to fantastic, discursive non-entity.

AFFLICTION

On the afternoon of July 28, 1977, the organization recruited Emanuel Jaques, age 12, a child of impoverished Portuguese immigrants from the Azores, who worked as a shoe-shine boy on the body-rub strip of Yonge Street, south of Dundas Street.

In an apartment at 245 Yonge Street, over a body-rub parlour, Emanuel Jaques was first photographed clothed, then nude. When the boy was naked, the men asked him to pose while performing sex acts. He agreed to do so for \$20, and the sexual relations among the men and the boy continued for about two hours.

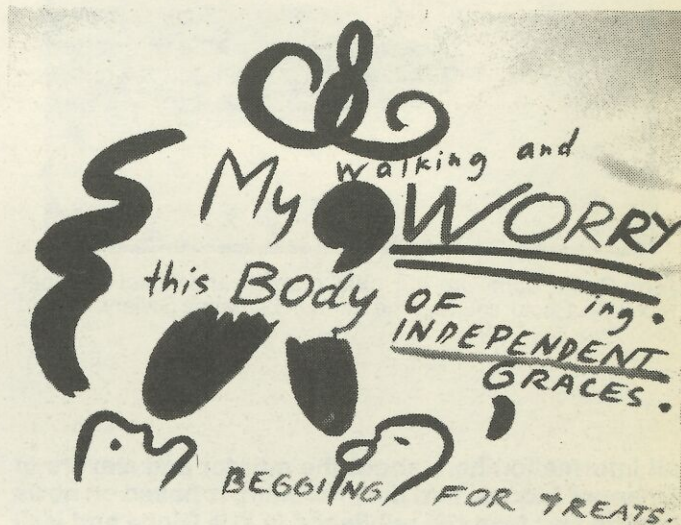
Next, Kribs attempted anal intercourse with Emanuel Jaques, precipitating the next cycle of the fantasy, or the revolt. When the boy fought back, he was tied up and raped.

The closed cycle of affliction, resistance, overcoming was then reinitiated. Emanuel Jaques was released for a moment, then re-tied. An attempt to subdue the boy with an injection of Valium was attempted, but the drug had no affect. When anal intercourse was tried again repeatedly, the boy continued to resist, the men continued to press for an end of resistance, and the fantastic cycle in which all the actors were now moving continued to become more and more intensely oriented toward strategic power, and away from any possibility of pleasure. The cycle came to an end when the final theoretical solution presented itself as the *inevitable and appropriate* product of the cycle itself, or mere Nature.

Betesh first tried to kill Emanuel Jaques by strangling him with a length of stretch cord. This procedure was not completed because the boy's would-be murderer found the sight of the boy's face revolting. The boy was finally drowned in a sink by Betesh and Kribs. His body was then put into a green

It should be clear that the necessary outcome of such culture is anti-culture, or Nature, or murder. See especially Roland Barthes illuminating remakes on the Marquis, in *Sade/Fourier/Loyala*. Barthes's book has influenced my thoughts throughout this passage.

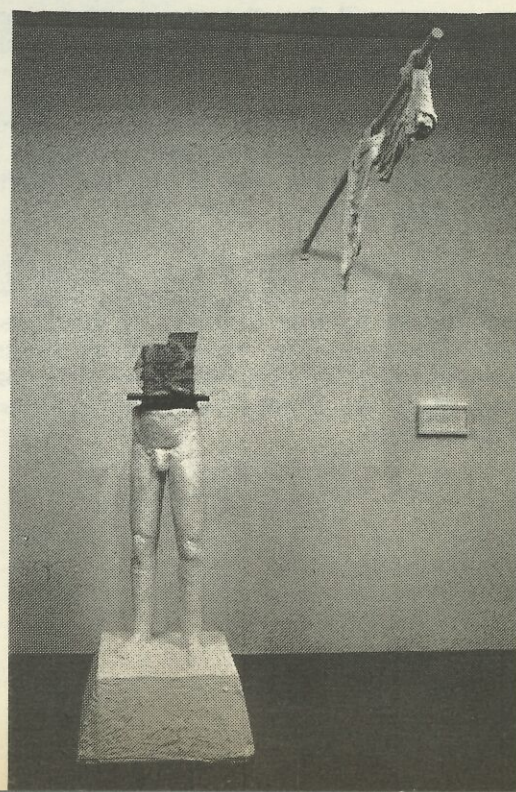
Beauty in cultural objects is necessarily and radically anti-bourgeois, because it inspires unnatural desire and invites unnatural pleasure. Ugliness is the preface to Nature, which is power, affliction and death.

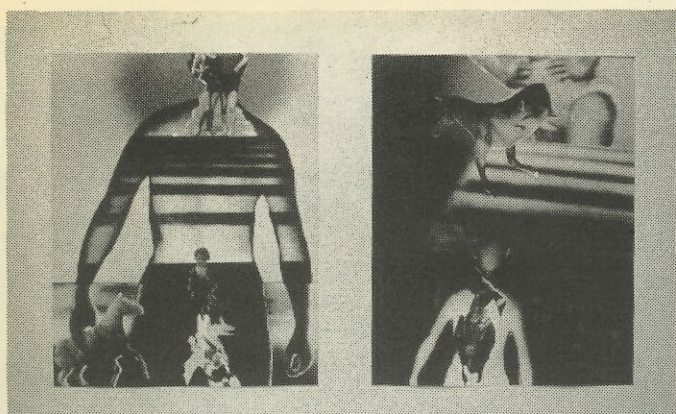


Nancy Johnson. *Body of Independent Graces*, 1983; quache on paper, 18 x 24 in. Photo: courtesy the artist.



Dyan Marie. *Woman In Labyrinth*, 1982; cast plaster, paint, 22 x 18 in. Photo: courtesy the artist.





Shelagh Alexander. Part 1--Panels #1 & #2, 1983; compilation photography. 40 x 50 in. Photo: courtesy Ydessa Gallery.

The narrator here reveals that he had been reading the first volume of Michel Foucault's projected *History of Sexuality*.



Renee Van Halm. Model Piece, 1983; oil on panel, 16 x 12 in. Photo: courtesy S.L. Simpson Gallery.

See Guy Hocquenghen, "Family, Capitalism, Anus," in *Semiotext(e)*, Vol. II, No. 3 (1977). Hocquenghen on the social organization of gratuitous pleasure: "With the formation of anus-groups, sublimation loses its hold; not even a crevice is left for the implantation of the guilty conscience."

◀ **David Clarkson. The Only Statue of a Man ..., 1983; plaster, wood, wire, brick; 8 x 10 x 5 ft. Photo: courtesy the artist.**

plastic garbage bag and discarded on the roof of the building.

In these acts of the Corporation's historical icon, Steinway believed, the central and immensely complex horror of the Titan's dream disclosed itself, and became paradigmatic, and became the haunter of dreams for all those, including the artists, who would come of age after its disclosure in 1977. And he also saw in the public discourse of its disclosure an ending of dreams for those, like himself, who had lived long in Toronto.

PENETRATION

Before the crime's hugely-publicized disclosure and the subsequent trial of Betesh, Kribs, Woods and Gruener, Toronto (admiring itself, or fearing itself) had understood itself to be a zone of expanding permission, social experiment and mercy upon the sexualities which forever subvert the authority of the only legitimate sexual style.

In those days, I could only see these apparent permissions, these encouragements to express one's desires and declare one's sexuality, as merely another tactic of the city, organizing all of us into healthy, efficient images of itself. Sex stopped being prohibited, but it was not really permitted: only *sexualities*, the ritualized and politically determined performances of sex and power, were authorized within the city.

I was inclined to view this development as merely a new penetration by society's relentless social control into hitherto dark corners. But Steinway, a romantic, dismissed my wariness as a symptom of youth in these hard times, and thanked God that some dawn had broken over the grey city. That warm, false light, for all its falseness, made Steinway better able to live with his sensuous wound, by enabling him not to be ashamed to speak of it.

Similarly, the illusion of freedom (which was, like all freedom, a paradoxical outcome of language) had seemed to ease the fear and alienation felt by artists. Having no more power than ever, they nevertheless felt empowered to speak of themselves, and their bodies. Their art (which took the perverse, critical forms of video, performance, installation, works in mixed means) had been an art of liberty and criticism, of parody and ambitious appropriation and intense curiosity, and hence an art of proposed healing and reconciliation, if not of ethical or political seriousness.

Before the crime's disclosure, as well, the new discourse of unrepressed desire had legitimated (at least for some within the city) the opening of a place of darker, obsessive hungers. Steinway believed that territories of sexual fantasy's enactment should exist in every city. But my friend was appalled at how Toronto's territory, on Yonge Street south of Dundas Street, presented, not a pleasurable alternative to the degradations of poverty, erotic monotony and loneliness, but an intensification of those very enslavements. Yonge Street had become, not an alternative to the Corporation, but its enactment.

But Yonge Street, in Steinway's view, was not the whole zone of liberty, and could even be seen as a flagrant denial of what merciful light had dawned in Toronto.

In this opinion, he stood in the minority. Even before the notorious murder of Emanuel Jaques, the public sexual discourse had transformed Yonge Street from urban geography into a cultural symbol for all the city hated about its own becoming and future. It had become a mystical anus magically killing the city with filth. It was the exposed pleasurable anus, the hidden made public and desirable and available. It was the fetishistic anus, mystically poisoning the sex of the city, making sex ambiguous, unproductive, flamboyant, and infinitely dangerous to the ideals ceaselessly promoted by the central authorities of the sexual discourse, including state, media, police, advertising, psychiatrists and the churches.

PRODUCTION

The facts were that Emanuel Jaques, a poor immigrant boy, had been afflicted and killed by three cruel, sane men, who were later tried and sentenced for their crime.

But in the popular myth which grew up, hugely and immediately, around the event, the boy had been trapped and killed by the mystical anus of Yonge Street. People gathered in large demonstrations to demand that its geographical expression be cleaned up, as they put it. But, as all students

of myth know, evil is polymorphous, hardy, deep-rooted. The mystical anus could be lurking anywhere as a destroyer and subversive, so strong action was necessary, in all places, times and situations: calls and petitions for death to homosexuals, celebrants of the anus, were made even at the funeral of Emanuel Jaques.

Where before the sexual culture of the city had been tending toward ambiguity, suddenly everything became serious and clear. The performance of sexuality became a political act, a civic action undertaken either for or against the health of the body politic.

Once again, sex became discourse, the flesh became word, and sex was raised from the complexity of individual hope and decision to the level of simplified civil myth.

The dashed hopes of immigrants who came to Toronto seeking an affluent life, the anxieties of suburbanites witnessing in their children's confusion the end of the post-war suburban dream of rational modernity, the stress of a desire-driven bourgeois culture suddenly confronting a terrifying expression of the very relations of power and desire it fostered--such forces, Steinway said, gave the popular myth of Emanuel Jaques its primordial power and appeal as an instrument of cultural simplification. Above all, he said, the murder of Emanuel Jaques *simplified* things for those who were baffled and repelled by the new, polymorphous structure of meaning emerging in Toronto.

And in the wake of the historical simplification came what Steinway called the miracles of Emanuel Jaques.

The phrase was not his own. Shortly after the boy's death, a broadcaster popular among Toronto's Portuguese immigrants led a march of 15,000 protestors to the city hall, to demand the cleanup of Yonge Street and more power to the police. Like other speakers who would follow in the days and month to come, the broadcaster quickly fell into a strange Lenten language of mourning--at once grieving for a dead child, but also expressing gratitude for the permission to act forcefully which the death made possible.

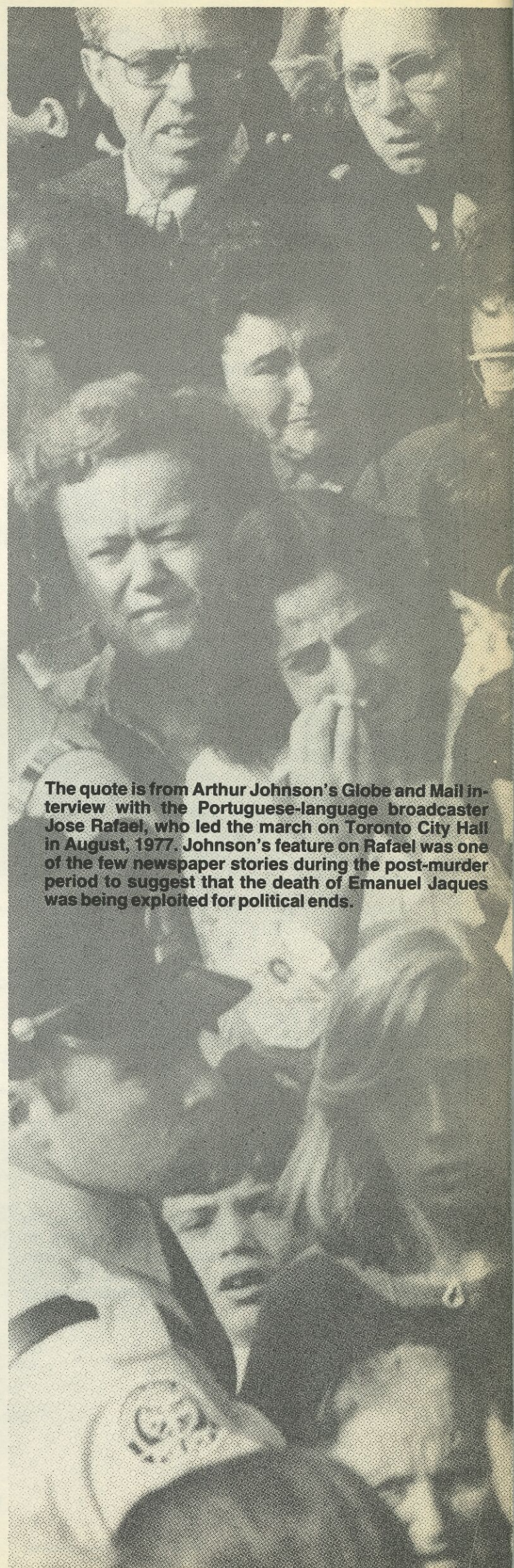
"The little boy Emanuel Jaques had accomplished the miracle of uniting all these Portuguese," said the broadcaster after the huge demonstration he had organized. "His sacrifice at the hand of assassins has accomplished the miracle of uniting the Portuguese community once more."

This was not the only instance of what Steinway would bitterly call the miracles of Emanuel Jaques, but, in his view, it was the exemplary instance, because of its extremity, simplicity and evasion--all of which would be replicated in subsequent miracles. It was being said that Toronto's Portuguese immigrants, degraded by the Toronto's unattainable bourgeois fantasies of mastery and security, frustrated by economic recession, had been somehow recreated as a community by the murder of the boy. This proposition especially grieved Steinway, since, in the murder room itself, the act of destruction had also been deployed as a means to unity--a final, desperate means of restoring corporate unity to a situation reduced to chaos by power's desolating ideology; a final means of unifying into parody of community those men whom the fantastic discourse of sexuality and power had transformed into centres of chaos.

Sexuality as obsessive discourse of power, the precariousness of bourgeois control, action saturated with the language of abstract desire, violent intervention as a sacrament of communion--these were key elements of the murder and the myth of it, and the first miracle in the presumed re-unification of the Portuguese, who were of course not restored to unity and hope at all.

And, as the myth was endlessly represented in the press, more miracles took place: the nearly instantaneous shutdown of the body-rub parlors on Yonge Street, new waves of police action against prostitution, pornography, and even artists' films, all indications of the newly vivid search for the mystical anus. Even much later, after the ending of raids on homosexual baths and the easing of the state's harassment of publications dealing with the forbidden, homosexuals and the homosexual press (no matter how well-behaved, how carefully tailored to fit respectable sexualities) continued to be regarded thoughtfully by the police, state and other authorities of the discussion.

But with each new spectacular or subtle reminder of difference, and with each new invocation of the name of the dead boy as pretext, the horror of



The quote is from Arthur Johnson's *Globe and Mail* interview with the Portuguese-language broadcaster Jose Rafael, who led the march on Toronto City Hall in August, 1977. Johnson's feature on Rafael was one of the few newspaper stories during the post-murder period to suggest that the death of Emanuel Jaques was being exploited for political ends.



The historical method used in this story was developed during conversations with C. Thomas McIntire, senior member in history at the Institute for Christian Studies and lecturer in the history of Christianity at Trinity College in the University of Toronto. Dr. McIntire cannot be held accountable, of course, for any logical or methodological errors appearing in the story I have written.

While preparing this text, I was given several opportunities to work through the ideas in public. I am especially grateful to these people and institutions for inviting me recently to lecture on the recent history of Toronto art: Concordia University in Montreal; Ian Carr-Harris, and the Ontario College of Art; the College Art Association; and the Art Committee of Hart House, the University of Toronto.

I am also thankful for conversations on this topic with Richard Rhodes, René Blouin, Alvin Balkind, Robert E. Brown, Will Gorlitz, Andy Fabo and Paul Moore.

the destroying anus was again broadcast to the public as warning, admonition and symbolic food of identity.

THE MACHINE

Steinway knew the factual re-telling of the death of Emanuel Jaques had been used as the ostensible justification for a few conspicuous police and civil actions, such as the suppression of the body-rub parlors on Yonge Street and the temporary banishment of open street prostitution. He also knew these actions had certainly made few permanent changes in the city's commerce desire, and they had effected perhaps no change whatever in the iron structures of poverty, suburban social decay, and desperate need which undergirded that commerce, and lay behind the death of Emanuel Jaques.

No, it was not the fact, but the myth wrought the permanent changes within the city. The myth created a popular, succinct legend of extreme forbidden passion and horrifying consequences. The myth subtly shaped a new environment of sexual opinion, in which homosexual behavior was not merely a preference, but an act of solidarity with the jailed murderers of Emanuel Jaques; in which heterosexual behaviour was not merely a choice, but a gesture of public support for the parents of Emanuel Jaques, and the boy's absent, helpless would-be rescuers on the night of the murder - the police.

All this he knew, and dreaded: for with each progressive politicizing of sex, with even that small death of Toronto's liberty, Steinway died a little.

But not before the day he stood in the presence of the Machine, and saw the Corporation in its heart, did Steinway come to believe that Emanuel Jaques' death in that ghastly mystery play of language, power and desire was not an event in past history only. It was also a rite replayed again and again in the production of art, as artists, the first artists to have come of age after the myth's genesis, continually performed in their work the transformations of the boy's last hours.

As we walked along the harbour's edge that cold, final spring afternoon, Steinway told me that he had seen in the Machine's meanings an insistent, inescapable allegory of the artist as victim--the boy himself, seduced, afflicted, penetrated, produced as mere object of the unimaginably powerful forces of modern society.

In the meanings of Toronto created by the Machine, Steinway saw the pervasive image of the artist which had emerged after the boy's death: artist as seduced child, deluded by the allures of glamour and freedom, lured by the contrived drives and discourses of advanced capitalist society into tightly enclosed rooms papered entirely with received, controlled imagery of desire.

He next recognized in this image the afflicted child, trapped in the rooms of false desire, and in the very powerlessness of art, unable to escape or deter the cruel, impersonal persecution of society.

And he saw these ruined selves being penetrated by the languages of the state and authority, even as they called out for language to save them; violated by self-interrogation, which they paradoxically, falsely believed would save them from final reduction to nothing at all.

But Steinway saw all these things in his own heart as well, and the fear of that vision drove him to take refuge in theory. His understanding was debased to abstract critical languages radically emptied of desire, because he could not bear to desire art any longer in Toronto; to austere philosophies, because he could not stand the critical surrender to art works, which only confirmed the brokenness of his heart, and which declared again the Titan's awful dream of alienation, being dreamed for and through us all. So I found him in his rooms, old priest being strangled by the snakes of theory, when I went to him in his last days.

Once I knew a man, the critic Steinway, and the knowing was in Toronto. I knew him in the city through a springtide season of my life, many years ago. Today, I let him go, unshriven of our common follies and yearnings, unhealed of the wound that made him brilliant and made him sad, and that at last made him welcome the drawing near of death. I have told his story. The telling has been my grieving, my offering of flowers and incense at the secluded sylvan altar, after the ancient custom of critics who mourn their beloved dead. ■