

CANADA

Lamanna at Lausanne

FOR THE PAST three seasons the Carmen Lamanna Gallery has been the avant-garde commercial gallery in Toronto that's mattered most. Other dealers — Isaacs, Moos, Jerrold Morris, David Mirvish, Dunkelman, Mazelow, Pascal, Pollock, Aggregation and most recently the Electric Gallery — have all, with varying frequency, introduced new artists or presented important new work by established ones. Lamanna's commitment has been almost perverse: in a city where even the market for familiar, accepted art can be tenuous, he has followed one difficult show with another, and has suffered the economic consequences.

So it was gratifying to find Lamanna selected to represent Canadian art for the first time in the third international 'Galerias Pilotes' exhibition at the Musée Cantonal in Lausanne this summer, going on to the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris in the fall.

Unfortunately Lamanna's choice of his own artists and their work is not infallible. He has put the emphasis, as usual, on the younger and lesser-known artists; so a 1966 shaped-canvas corner painting is included, even though its maker, young Jerry Santbergen, has at least temporarily abandoned the visual arts, while veterans Marcel Barbeau and Paterson Ewen, two of the strongest painters in the Lamanna group, have been left out. Ewen is long overdue for more widespread recognition. A recent painting, involving a continuous ribbon or stream of colour with edges drawn with hand-cut tape working its way through a solid field of responsive hue, would undoubtedly have been among the more impressive canvases at Lausanne.

Guido Molinari is well represented by a major painting, a brilliant drawing and several of his powerfully structured black-and-white geometric serigraphs. His big (81 in by 129 in.) horizontal canvases with six broad vertical bands are the finest of his characteristic works, and this 1968 painting called *Serial Vert-Bleu* is one of the subtlest and most satisfying of them. Green, grey and blue bands are qualified only by their serial placement, being affected by the edges of the canvas at either end, and/or by the bands beside them. The whole canvas integrates as an infinitely sensitive but rigorously logical colour field.

Another Lamanna artist who usually achieves this kind of formal dialectic is the young Toronto painter Milly Ristvedt. Unhappily, her painting in this show is

one of the few in which she does not succeed, largely because in this 1968-9 canvas called *Glide*, she substitutes a gradation of tonal values (in purple) for the chromatic contrasts she usually employs. Some unity of tension is established between the delicacy of her ever-slightly-streaked staining and the regularity of the horizontal bands of purple lengthening down her trapezoid canvas with its four-inch-deep stretcher, darkening in tone as they go, but her typical resonant colour harmonies are missed.

David Bolduc, also of Toronto, used to be a shaped-canvas colour painter, but in the past two years he has turned to essentially sculptural pieces, mostly in unpainted wood, for floors as well as walls. At Lausanne he was represented by *Martin I*, a 1969 wall piece of thin slats of wood regularly nailed together horizontally in the centre, vertically to left and right, with this rigid system of nail-heads and slats offset by the slightly differing hues of the wood, its knot-holes and grain. The panel — 6½ feet high by 13 feet long — is big enough to partially engulf peripheral vision and thus to structure the space it occupies, but it depends a little too heavily on predictable factors of its geometric construction and on the obvious contrast effects of the organic qualities of its material.

Wood is the medium for two other large pieces in Lamanna's exhibition, *Log* by Robin Mackenzie and *Basswood Tube* by David Rabinowitch. *Log* is just that, though Mackenzie is more interested in the process of its selection and transportation to the gallery than he is in the actual object. In Toronto it came from the southern Ontario farm at Claremont where Mackenzie lives, but the Lausanne example will be hauled from a Swiss forest. Stubbornly, for all Mackenzie's ecological-process sophistication, his *Log* persists in looking like what it is, a huge natural found object in an art gallery — hardly a revolutionary notion.

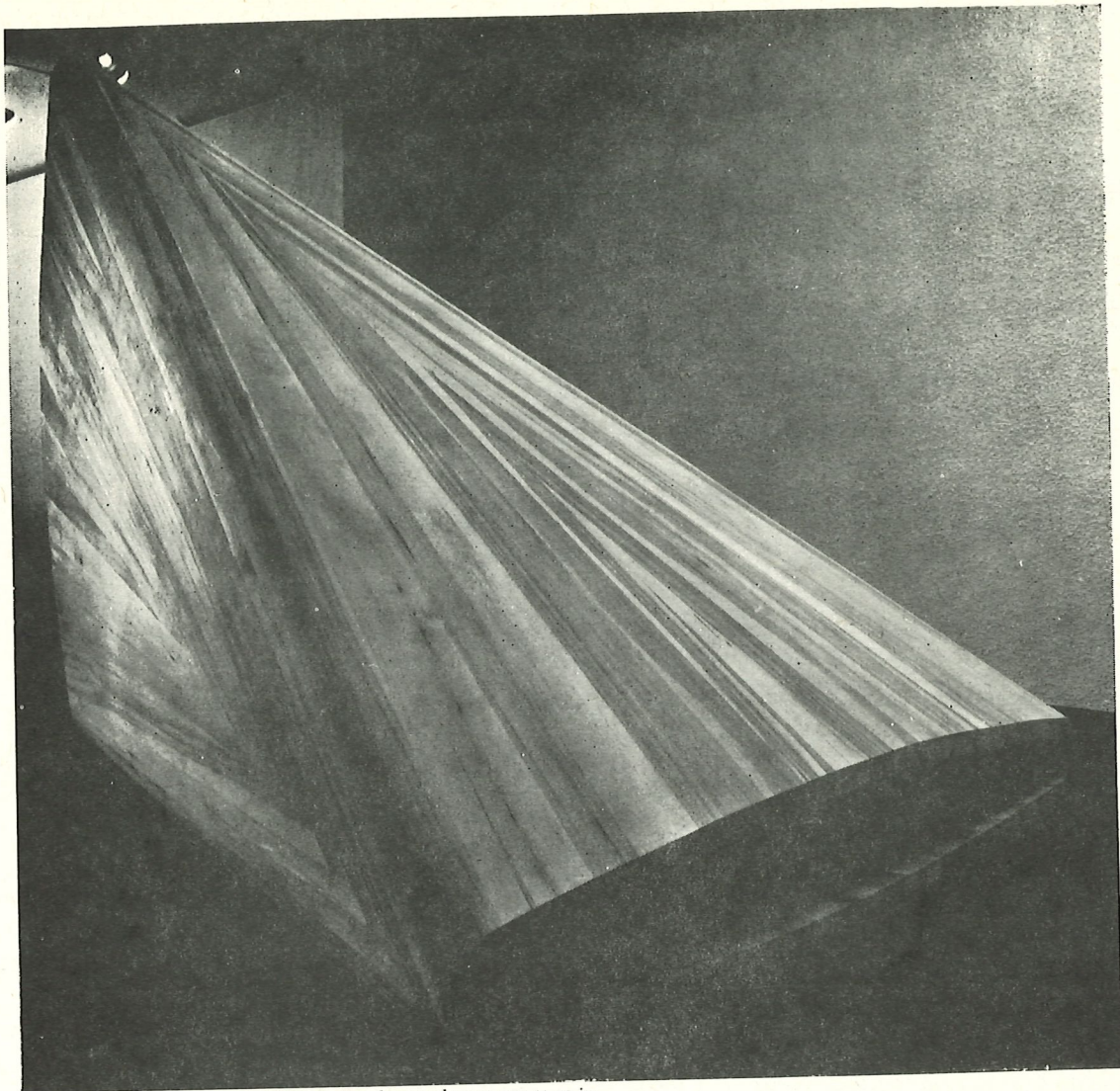
The 1969 *Basswood Tube* by David Rabinowitch on the other hand is one of the more important and genuinely original works of sculpture to be produced in Canada in the past few years. It is simply (!) a six-foot ellipse twisted through a 90-degree turn in a length of ten feet from a horizontal to a vertical position, fashioned for the young sculptor in laminated basswood by a master carpenter. The technological interest of this feat and the seductive appeal of

the basswood texture are incidental: Rabinowitch has done related tubes in steel and aluminium, and is really concerned with the strangely compelling mass that results from the passage of shape through space. In this sense his work is as traditional as a Michelangelo torso, though it's also as contemporary as a Donald Judd.

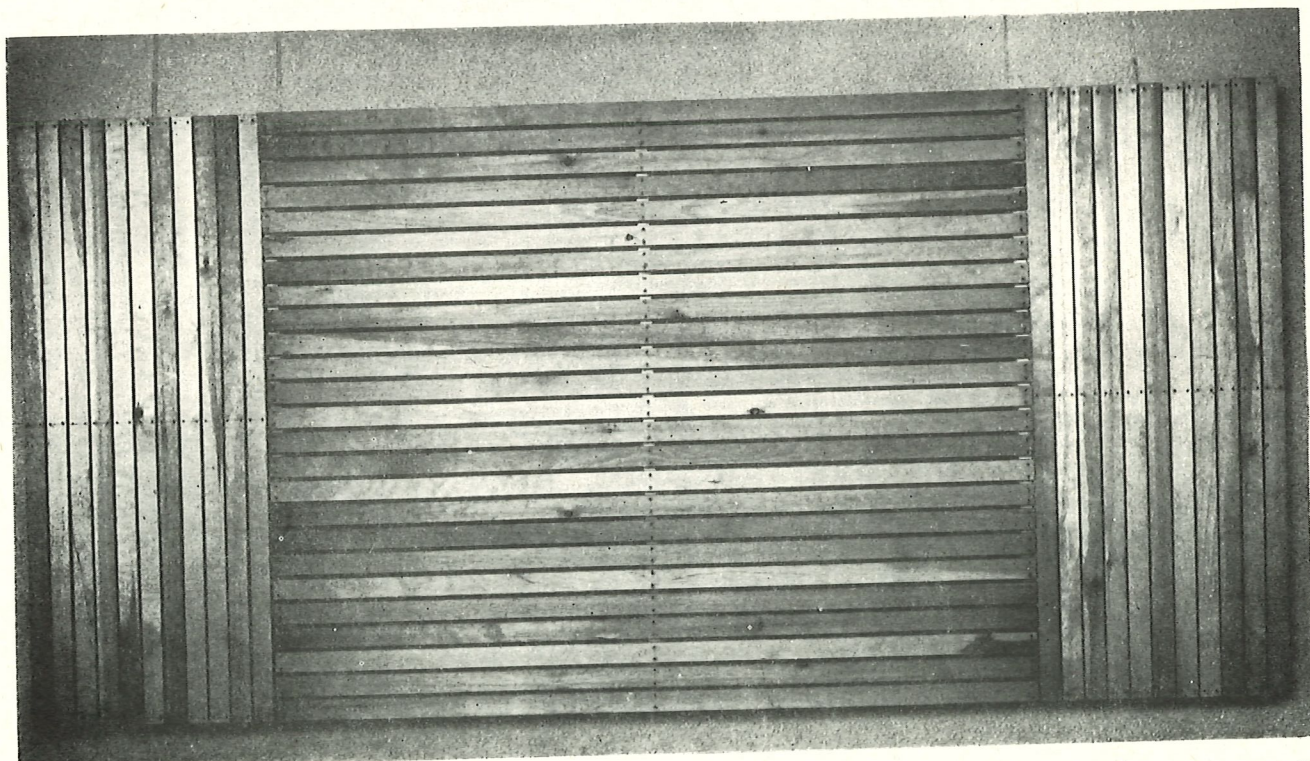
David's twin brother Royden Rabinowitch, who lives near him in London, Ontario, is also a sculptor who makes intensive, emotionally loaded forms by means of incisive solid geometry. His 1969 painted-steel floor sculpture in this exhibition, irreverently entitled *Joan's Apple Turnover*, is his *chef d'oeuvre* to date, and incorporates much of his prior development. It's a unified piece without seams, coated in raspberry red (despite the 'apple' of the title), that conjoins two cones at their circular end and completes their implication along one side with a semi-circular fin that slopes away from them to a knife edge. The cones can be seen as two points that expand continuously to a mutual circle, only half of which, due to the fin, can be seen, while the fin itself (which is conical in section) connects the same two end points with a half-circle in another dimension. And all this energy is integrated into a sleek but strangely disturbing organic shape on the floor.

Lamanna's show also includes a jungle-gym tangle of orange and green fibre-glass-coated steel links by sculptor Henry Saxe, a couple of modular plastic units by Jean Noel of the same city, a large circular shield over intestinal fibreglass forms by south-west Ontario artist Ed Zelenak, and a floor-distribution of steel mesh screens by Toronto's Karl Beveridge, whose work is beginning to show the effect of living in New York. And oh yes, inevitably, Iain Baxter's ubiquitous N.E. Thing Co. of Vancouver supplies a few products, including some photo-documents of Aesthetically Claimed and Aesthetically Rejected Things (ACTs and ART), a plan of the Lamanna gallery when Baxter reconstructed its interior in wood like a construction project, and a plaque that proclaims ALUMINUM (American spelling) in sans-serif aluminium letters. Baxter's points, such as they are, have long since been taken, but it seems impossible for Canadian art to be shown abroad in recent years with their tiresome reiteration.

BARRY LORD



David Rabinowitch Basswood Tube 1969 basswood 72 × 120 × 72 in



David Bolduc Martin I 1969 wood 78 × 156 in