

## GALLERIES

# Exhibit abounds with a messy vitality

Tricia Collins and Richard Milazzo came to town last week to bring word of what's happening on the New York art scene, which as we all know, is the most important in the world.

Collins and Milazzo, in case you haven't heard, are a pair of curators/critics who have gained a reputation for a series of exhibitions that survey the "new conceptual art" that they see emerging in the Big Apple.

The two have been together since 1982 and are publishers of *Effects: Magazine For New Art Theory* and American editors of the German art journal, *Kunstforum*.

Collins and Milazzo made their first foray to the Great White Snore last week to install their exhibition, *Ultrasurd*, at the S.L. Simpson Gallery (515 Queen St. W.) and to give a lecture on where the leading edge of art is right now.

If this highly enjoyable show is any indication, the art world is as busy as ever rediscovering its past. Of course, there's nothing new



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Art

about that, artists have mined art history for centuries. But this has now reached unprecedented levels; artists "appropriate" — to use the jargon of today — with gleeful abandon. During their talk Collins and Milazzo showed slides of contemporary paintings that are direct copies of existing works.

Nowadays, it seems New York artists are happily plundering the 1960s. Collins and Milazzo talked about "the return of opticality and of certain psychedelic notions."

Any doubts about the accuracy of these observations is quickly eliminated by a visit to the *Ultrasurd* show. It abounds with paintings that are clearly and profoundly influenced by Pop, Op,

color field and even by abstract expressionism.

In fact, the exhibition might have been intended as an essay — or perhaps a parody — on the various painting styles of the mid-20th century.

There is nothing dogmatic about their exhibition; in fact, it looks as though it was as much fun to assemble as it is to experience. Works like Calvin Brown untitled canvas refer directly to Op art. Using Day-Glo paints, he has created a piece that aspires to be three-dimensional. It is a loud and garish painting that doesn't appear to take itself too seriously.

A more elegant painting is Tyler Turkle's *The New Criterion*. Made of poured acrylics, it reminded me of the "paint-skins" the late Toronto artist, Masha Teitelbaum, was doing 20 or more years ago.

Sarah Charlesworth and Julie Wachtel are involved in a totally different kind of exploration. Both work figuratively and both are examining what Collins and Milazzo call "a culture/nature axis."

Coincidentally, both works contain tribal masks. Wachtel's untitled painting is a Pop-inspired juxtaposition of a mask with a silly-looking cartoon character wearing a dunce's cap.

Charlesworth's *Cibachrome*, titled *Green Mask*, is more restrained. The central image of a mask on a green background is bordered by leaves, beetles and carvings designed to emphasize the primitive, tropical environment of the mask-makers.

The exhibition covers a lot of ground and despite the curator's claims, it doesn't quite add up to a totally coherent statement. But then, why should it? One of the most refreshing aspects of the show is its messy vitality. If this exhibition had been organized by a Canadian it would have been neater and tidier and probably a lot less exciting.

The show continues until Oct. 15.

□ **Projecting Art:** Of all the art movements, none made the transition to film better than

surrealism. It was ideally suited to celluloid because it started with images of the real world and rearranged them in new, startling and often cruel ways.

Starting tonight, the Art Gallery of Ontario presents *Cruelty And Desire*, a new program of surrealist movies. Running Wednesdays and Fridays, it includes everything from the seminal Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali film, *Un Chien Andalou*, to the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup* and *Betty Boop* cartoons.

**The series runs to Nov. 28.**

The AGO has also arranged for Bruce Elder, one of Canada's best-known avant-garde filmmakers, to organize a presentation of experimental film from America, Japan, Germany and Canada. Included are works by Kenneth Anger, Michael Snow, Joyce Wieland and many others.

The films run Thursday evenings at 7 p.m. For more information on either series, call 977-0414, ext. 258, and check repertory movie listings on page D14.

