

VANGUARD

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Vanguard November 1984 Cover

Gallery-In-Transit
Edmonton Transit System
Edmonton
July 29 to August 25

The concept of the alternative art gallery is not a new one, and for many artists the idea of placing work in places other than galleries is a primary concern. Photographs can be matted, framed behind glass and hung — well spaced — in a quiet pristine gallery, or, as an alternative, they can be crowded together behind plastic, occupying space normally reserved for advertising on transit buses. As an alternative gallery a transit bus collects a much more diversified audience; both the regular riders and people who ride specifically to see photographs. The principal objective in this unconventional approach is that people will see the photographs for their own merits and not be confused by false pretences or an aura which a gallery situation often creates.

Douglas Clark is intrigued by alternative galleries and is, with the support of many corporate and government sponsors, the force behind the photography exhibition *Gallery-In-Transit*. In fact both the poster (a pop-out bus which can be folded and glued together) and a book of twenty-two photographs reproduced in post card format were produced by Clark to promote the exhibition. *Gallery-In-Transit* was comprised of three transit buses, each exhibiting approximately thirty photographs. Previous to its Edmonton run the exhibition was mounted in Winnipeg from June 28 to July 20, and there are negotiations underway for extensions of the tour. The ideas and motivations for *Gallery-In-Transit* are not entirely unique, as exhibitions of this nature have been done in a handful of major centres in North America during the past decade. (See *Photo-Communicative*, vol. 6, no. 2, summer, 1984.) Indeed, this year's exhibition is a take off from a one-bus, eleven-day tour Clark organized in Edmonton last summer.

Displayed in the *Gallery-In-Transit* buses were photographers' works from three western Canadian cities. None of the work was created specifically for the transit exhibition, thus maintaining the integrity of the bus as a gallery. From Vancouver, Henry Robideau's composite panoramic photographs, *Pancanadienne Gianthropological Survey*, complete with hand written text, filled an entire bus with both understated humour and ironic insight. This bus became within itself a tour of giant monuments of Canadian culture, from the immense Canada Goose in Wawa, Ontario to the towering office buildings in downtown Calgary.

In Advance of the Landing: Folk Concepts of Outer Space, by Douglas Curran of Edmonton, transformed a bus usually lined with advertisements into a journey of the thoughts and beliefs of people's expectations of outer space, as well as the rituals and artifacts created and maintained by them. Being surrounded by photo-



Henri Robideau, *Giant Toy Airplane Whirlygig, McKerrow Post Office and lawn shrine, McKerrow, Ontario* (1982), panoramic photograph, courtesy: the artist.

graphic images relaying the intensity of these people, who obviously do *believe*, creates a wonderment of what and whom our society is, as well as forming a new perspective on the advertisements which will inevitably return.

Installed on the third bus was a group exhibition produced by the *Winnipeg Photographers Group* curated by Henry Robideau, and including photographers Bruce Barr, Robert Barrow, Joanne Jackson Johnson, Michael Klein, Ernie Kroeger, James Lam, Glen Lehman and Peter Tittenberger. This exhibition seemed to be saying something about Winnipeg as a place, as a mix of urbanity and rural prairie, yet the works seemed weak. Perhaps, this was due to the small proportion of works per artist or because the imagery just doesn't have the maturity offered in the work found in the other two bus/galleries. This is not to say that some are without interest; Joanne Jackson Johnson's *Kildonan Park, January 1981* and Glen Lehman's *Untitled* (the 'orbit'), are intriguing enough to make one want to see more from these artists. Peter Tittenberger's photographs also created interest, if only in the form of perverse discussion in Winnipeg of the need for censorship of images of naked children frolicking under a lawn sprinkler.

However, the quality of work seems a moot point in comparison to the feat of having *Gallery-In-Transit* rolling, and in most perspectives it has been a highly successful venture. Certainly people on the commuter galleries seemed to enjoy the photographs more than mundane pantyhose advertisements. Reciprocally, the photographers gained a sense of satisfaction knowing that many non-gallery-goers may glimpse at their works, some may even see into them. Reactions somehow mandatory in galleries, those of looking (but not seeing) and the necessity of the right comment are limited on the bus/gallery where a less pressured atmosphere allows people freedom to examine the entire photographic exhibit, to look at one or two, to comment or not.

Abby Paulson