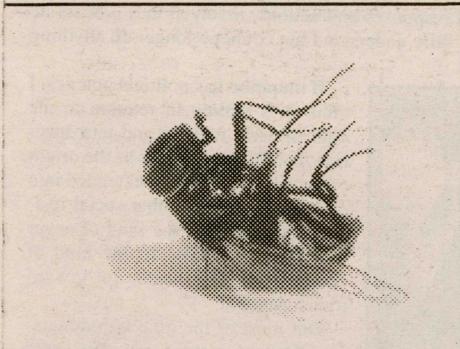




DEATH AND EXHAUSTION IN AN UTOPIC VACUUM

Laurel Woodcock's Game and Operetta

Western Front (303 East 8th Ave) To Dec 15



Amidst the hyperactivity of *Live*, the performance art festival currently sweeping across Vancouver, are Laurel Woodcock's video installation pieces *Game* and *Operetta*. Each video functions as an investigation of the performative act, specifically endurance, and the significance of the act's mediation through video.

Operetta consists of a looped video projection of a bottle fly in the throes of slow death accompanied by the famous speech of Hal, the personified computer in Stanley Kubrick's *2001 A Space Odyssey*, in the throes of its own disillusioning malfunction.

The melodrama of this piece is intentional, and the ridiculous sadness of either one is heightened exponentially by their coupling. The fly on the wall is viewed at over a thousand times its size, allowing us to appreciate its beautifully colored and exquisitely intricate insect body and consequently mourn the death of what is usually considered a pest. Within the intimate darkness of the gallery we become aware of the construct of melodrama being used as well as the manipulation of the unintentional performer (the fly).

Game is a piece that requires play. In order to understand the visual, a projection of a young woman's face performing repetitive and concentrated movements with her hands off screen, the viewer must wear the provided headphones. By being allowed to view only the girl's face we are forced to form an emotive connection with the performer. Exhaustion, joy, frustration all flicker over her features but are ultimately suppressed by her seemingly naive determination to continue. The scopophilic exploitation of her innocence (as a performer) becomes as pronounced as that of the fly in the adjacent room.

Both works contain the flavour of failed optimism and it is assumed that the audience will recognize this flavour. This assumption is part and parcel of post-modern culture, a goodbye gesture to the aspirations

of modernism five decades after its inception. The gaps between past, present and future are compressed and transformed through the process of examining how we have attempted in the past to predict the future, and how now in the year 2001 we are in a unique position to recognize that the future that was, is actually now.

Holly Ward

Passengers and Tour Guides

Installation by Kevin Rodgers and Derek Sullivan
Artspeak (233 Carrall) To November 24

The gist of this exhibition is that the artists have never been to Vancouver; their work is an installation that illustrates this idea. The artists have collected images and brochures, which they then digested into their musings about what the West Coast might be like. There is also a large, sparse drawing that is a convincingly naive rendering of this supposed coastal city. All buildings in the drawing are visible, laid bare to the viewer like Winnipeg when arriving by airplane. This suggests a perception that where the ocean meets the land it is as calm as a freshwater lake. Hand-written, convoluted, conversational text framed on the wall suggests dialogue that has been imagined in Vancouver or had taken place elsewhere but then spliced into the show to fill out the fiction of the work.

In the gallery, the exhibition constructs a bubble in which Vancouverites - who presumably do not think of Vancouver the same way that Rodgers and Sullivan do - are permitted to be transported instantly to a place where Vancouver isn't physical. It manifestly denies the street outside and the view from it of the North Shore mountains. The work is successful in that way; it does transport. This is superficially flattering and alienating at the same time.



By elaborating profusely and competently on the gimmick, Rodgers and Sullivan quietly unhinge it from a seriousness that may or may not be implicit in such an undertaking. This show is obviously meant to be divorced from any kind of heavy-handed concern

American Buffalo

by David Mamet

The Havana (1212 Commercial Drive) To Nov 11

American Buffalo, written in 1975, is one of David Mamet's earliest plays. There is little sign of immaturity in the writing however; it is a play that brilliantly exemplifies Mamet's trademark poetic portrayal of the vernacular, minimalist dialogue saturated with subtext, and most of all, characters flailing in a wasteland of society.

This masterful play has been tackled by C-me Productions, and the event left me disappointed to say the least. Directed by Jesai Jayhmes, actors Peter Abrams, Marko Hohlbein and Donovan Cerminara work hard together to bring Mamet's text to life. It is not an easy task - Mametspeak, as it has become known, requires as much skill as Shakespeare or Beckett. The cast struggles with the play's style, resulting in overacting that drowns the skillfully scripted dialogue.

Abrams seems miscast in the role of the arrogant, street-wise Teach. In a dedicated and energetic performance he attempts, in vain, to build the character on smashing furniture, raising his voice and leaping about - impressively overcoming the constraints of the cramped Havana Theatre. Cerminara plays the young, dim-witted Bobby - his shyness however, is so exaggerated that most of his words are mumbled and then lost into his jacket collar. An air of calmness is added to the production by Hohlbein who plays the world-weary shop owner Donny. It is from Donny's junk shop that this play unravels. A local customer pays Don \$90 for an American Buffalo nickel. Don,

having to do with Canadian displacement or internal migration. However, were the show totally fluffy and not invested with time and consideration of images, as it appears to be, it would come off as unutterably and drily whimsical. Fine enough. But with all the creators' investment it doesn't get terribly critical. Their self-reflexivity seems to be a tool with which the artists can forego sincere emotional investment in place and retain a cool though self-mocking distance. It seems to be their joke on Vancouver.

Craig Stewart

The Yellow Diabolo

Access Gallery

On Friday November 2, culminating over four months of demolishing stereo cabinets, refrigerators, washing machines etc, The Yellow Diabolo wrestled, in a Gastown glare of studio lights, a nearly invincible rust coloured Camaro. When he started his stint as microphone wrestler, his opponents were pretty soft: chairs or other people who broke easily under his strong touch. But this latest match brought the Diabolo's art away from the realm of the WWF and several steps closer to the spectacle of Tiannamen Square. We were a very large boisterous crowd, including many drunks who later tried to join the fight, two city busses, and

feeling exploited by a coin savvy collector, sets his mind on retrieving his nickel and thus pursuing the possibility of further collectibles and potential wealth. Teach soon gets himself involved in the affair, uses his manipulation to oust Bobby from the plan, and farcically undertakes the plotting of this burglary. This may sound like the basis of a predictable small-time crook story, but it is not. Mamet creates a subtext that is far-reaching. The play portrays characters desperately searching for some significance within their empty existences, characters full of wise words to throw about, but devoid of the sensibility to live by them.

The set, created by Abrams, Hohlbein and Jason Conroy, appropriately resembles a window of one of the many junk shops you'll see walking down Main Street. The sound was poor, with too many cringe-worthy moments, such as the telephone failing to stop ringing after Don had answered it, and the sound effect of rain occasionally cutting out at the end of a loop. The noises of the Havana restaurant didn't help the atmosphere - the performance lacked the strength to overcome the competition of the chatting diners, telephones and blenders in the background.

It seems Jayhmes bit off more than he could chew with this undertaking. The production falls short of grasping the fundamental style of Mamet's play.

American Buffalo has a lot to say. This company too, has a lot to say it seems, but I ask myself, who is serving whom? Is the play a platform for the actors, or are the actors animators of the play? In this case, to the misfortune of the production, it appeared to be the former.

Mia Perry

some bewildered, righteously angry cops. While we stood around fighting in anticipation, he warmed up our brain-stems by pumping *Back in Black* through the same amplifier that would broadcast the sound of his soft flesh impacting the now retirement age shag-machine.

The first blow, only a few minutes behind schedule, was a flying elbow against the pliable roof, bringing cheers all around, and even an attempted wave. Then he went viciously at the open left hand door, trying unsuccessfully to pry it off with shoulder checks. The car was tougher than he expected, and as the battle ensued, and the microphones taped to his body were gradually torn away, we realized that the act had progressed far beyond the need for the microphones: the unamplified sound of his body slamming into metal was quite horrible enough. Then he brought out the 12" step-ladder, to torture or titillate us no one was sure. On his first graceful leap out of the high, autumn-tinted treeline, the Diabolo apparently forgot to use his limited stunt-man chops and landed with almost full force. Even fans of "The Faces of Death" went pale. Yes, we know who won the match, the car, but we also know who's gonna be back for more, after maybe 6 weeks of rest and 600 get well, cards.

Mathew Vine