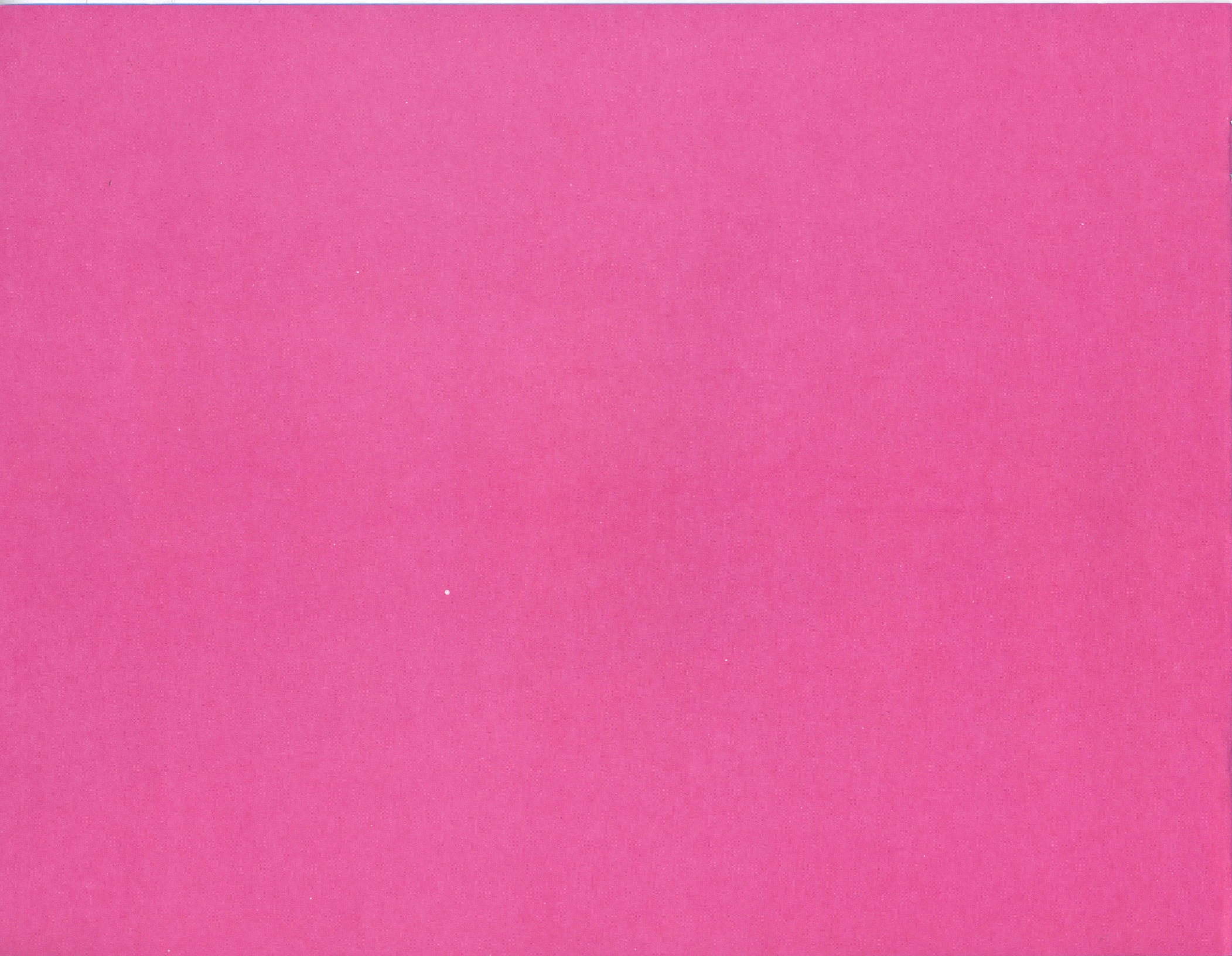


KEN LULEWICH

What About the 21st Century Canadian Nuclear Family?

Gallery 1.1.1.
School of Art
University of Manitoba



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Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada

October 26-November 19, 1986





If someone were to describe Ken Lulewich as an entertainer, they would be correct. One might also appropriately consider him a humanist who uses the language of the visual arts to commune with an audience via a spectacle of one sort or another. Lulewich cannot be classified as solely a painter, sculptor, or writer. Rather he is a multi-media personality. The metamorphosis of his own brand of expression combined with a varied range of experience can provide insight into the scope of Lulewich's production and into his recent installation, ***What About the 21st Century Canadian Nuclear Family?***

Lulewich's corner of experience rests in performance and multi-media art. His techniques in performance are fascinating in relation to ordinary daily encounters among people where the participants seem to be playing out roles more than being themselves. Everything in human behavior in today's society indicates that we perform our existence, especially our social existence. Lulewich's invention of another person, an alter ego called Pollyanna Piranha, is a response to this phenomenon. In the most generic sense, Pollyanna presents us with the issue of freedom within the human condition. Pollyanna is a self-proclaimed actress, a performer and poet—outrageous, egocentric, independent, and like her creator, a master of disguise. As her debut invitational postcard read:

In addition to being a celebrated actress and man-eater, I've made myself the unprecedented toast of Winnipeg Cafe Society. I want both the global mass media and the public to view me as the versatile, manipulative, conniving art goddess that I really am. I've a passion for caviar, designer originals and litigation...I pride myself on viewing this ugly, scheming world through rose-coloured glasses and the party is ALWAYS where I am, kids.

—the hilarious and macabre Pollyanna Piranha

The role that Lulewich plays as an artist seeks meaning in life and purpose in rejuvenating the social structure. With advanced media and communications, industry is dominating life and the disappearance of the private self with emphasis on the public self has become increasingly evident. Consequently, Lulewich's role as a performer or deliberator on the human condition cannot be separated from his writings, paintings, sculptures or installations. Lulewich is interested in dis-

course, dialectical systems, and ways of rephrasing and re-presenting human desires and necessities. Once we feel that we have categorized or come to terms with his work, the work suddenly takes a shift in meaning.

This is particularly pronounced in his writings that are ironical notations of the unexpected. For example in his recent project, a book titled ***Unassuming Geniuses***, the phrases possess the same colour and crudity that is characteristic of his paintings and sculptures:

I'd never want to move to China. The government has started their one child per couple policy. That's not for me. I don't want any children.

. . .

I've learned to trust my friends. After knowing them about five years, I'd be quite willing to lend any of them a dollar. People that I have known longer have stopped asking for loans about five years ago.

Similar to past performances, the book is based on a group of characters that are played by one person.

Through his art visually, theatrically and cinematically, Lulewich deals with issues in contemporary society. Celebration, paradox, puns, enigma, social conscience, technology and the alienation and polarization of people are all elements implied in his art through his own personal iconography.

In this installation, Lulewich offers a post-apocalyptic vision from elements drawn out of popular culture, and paves the way toward transcending the most guilt-ridden of all inheritances—childhood and family. Soothing, yet terrifying, ***What About the 21st Century Canadian Nuclear Family?*** focuses on coping with the conflict between a need to be fully aware of the state of things in turbulent times and a desire to reflect upon elements from our childhood.

Lulewich uses a spectacle of hysteric cosmology to impress upon the viewer a sense that something is wrong in society and with the family unit. Lulewich's earlier thinking in all aspects of his art pointed to a future issue that illustrates how strong an effect technology and consumerism has on contemporary life. The future, as Lulewich sees it, is always coming out of crisis in the most literal sense. Crisis means division,

and with division comes choice. For every path taken, a universe of pathways is left behind.

The future of the nuclear family has been a source of discussion for psychologists, sociologists, philosophers and statisticians. For Lulewich, it is more a concern than a seed for discussion. Lulewich poses the question literally and visually with an attitude that is ironic, satirical, witty and sardonic.

The installation consists of twelve wall relief sculptures in a gallery space: six located on one wall; the other six are directly opposite. The reliefs are vertical constructions of disposable diapers (Pampers) sandwiched between painted slats of wood. The wood has been painted, white, pink and blue. In the centre of the space, the artist has constructed a fence made of the same wooden boards as the wall reliefs. The fence is reminiscent of the stereotyped white picket fence commonly associated with the perfect home. The fence is painted blue, pink, white and black. Its purpose serves as a metaphor for the structure of the family unit. It encloses or surrounds an abstract vertical structure. This structure is also made of wood and is pink and blue. The irregular alterations of colour, and the fact that the gate to the fence is open yet collapsed contradicts the concept of containment bearing reference to disarray and release. The vertical structure within the area, although abstract, gives the appearance of a figure in motion. Diagonally opposite this 'figure' and outside the fence, stands another similar structure, abstract and static. These diametrically opposed entities are seen as products of the environment. By their opposing characteristics (inside/outside; motion/stationary), they cancel one another thus reaching a state of neutrality. This characteristic also relates to the formal structure of the installation. Lulewich's formalist approach in the work is contradicted through irregular elements and spacing. The use of materials such as diapers that are manufactured objects, and wood, an organic material, heightens the paradoxical impact. The dialectical situation is even more enhanced by the introductory wall panel or home plaque that reads:

GOD BLESS OUR STERILIZED MANSION
(EVEN WITHOUT THE SANDMAN'S HELP, LIFE IS ALL A
BAD DREAM FOR ME, TOO)

Our 24.3 girls won't need letters after their names
Our 28.6 boys won't go to war for white \$ and fame
They won't ever worry about being hurt and deceived
And they'll take all love received (yeah)

The survival of the truest integrative institution in society, the nuclear family, is the focus of the work. The family unit through history has undergone change. Its importance in the evolution of culture is crucial. The new world of tomorrow will be the result of forces that are traceable through all man's history—through struggles, accomplishments and changes. There is no tool in the arsenal of science that can match the clarifying power of evolution. Lulewich offers clues in the interpretation on the evolution of human society. He overhauls the concept of the family both past and future. The unit is seen here as a product of evolution and culture and is viewed as a closed system. To see man from the perspective of evolutionary theory is to see him and his culture as an organic whole, a living creation struggling for growth.

As a system, culture consists of three horizontal strata. At the bottom, lies the technological; at the top, the philosophical. In between lies the sociological stratum. The technological strata is the determinant of the cultural system. It becomes the guiding factor that influences the direction the sociological stratum will take. Lulewich does not offer any conclusions about the nuclear family in the 21st century, but he does provide clues to the answers.

Increasing urbanization, consumerism and present throw-away culture has affected the growth of the family. The thirty-six "diaper assemblages" that are also included in the exhibition attest to the media's effect on culture. The selection of objects in these 'sculptures' is based on the objects' common iconography. Taken from various sources—department stores, hardware stores, novelty shops, the objects vary from safety pins, erasers of Nancy and Sluggo, birthday balloons, hockey buttons, baby shoes, doll clothes and puzzles. The only manufactured object that remains consistent are the diapers upon which these objects are placed. The objects are chosen appropriately to the context of the work. By the careful grouping together of these visual elements, a presence is created

in which the objects are looked at as a unit. Each element in the composition contributes to and works on the next to create a unified spectrum of associations. The objects correspond to elements in daily existence especially associated with bringing up children or family life in general. Lulewich sees the expressive potential hidden in these humble everyday items and can comment in telling fashion on the relationship of art and contemporary culture.

Existing halfway between painting and sculpture, Lulewich makes an intellectual and personal statement in this work. He comments on contemporary artistic concerns at the same time satirizing conventional standards of beauty and taste. Paradoxical implications are inferred because of the formal properties of the objects' shape and colour and their pre-established connotations. These objects, as mass-produced items, have strong literary associations which he employs to make the final statement.

Shirley J. Madill
Winnipeg, October, 1986

Footnote: All quotations are from *Unassuming Geniuses* by Ken Lulewich, Mustard Press, to be published in early 1987

Shirley Madill is Curator
of Contemporary Art
at the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

GOD BLESS OUR STERILIZED MANSION

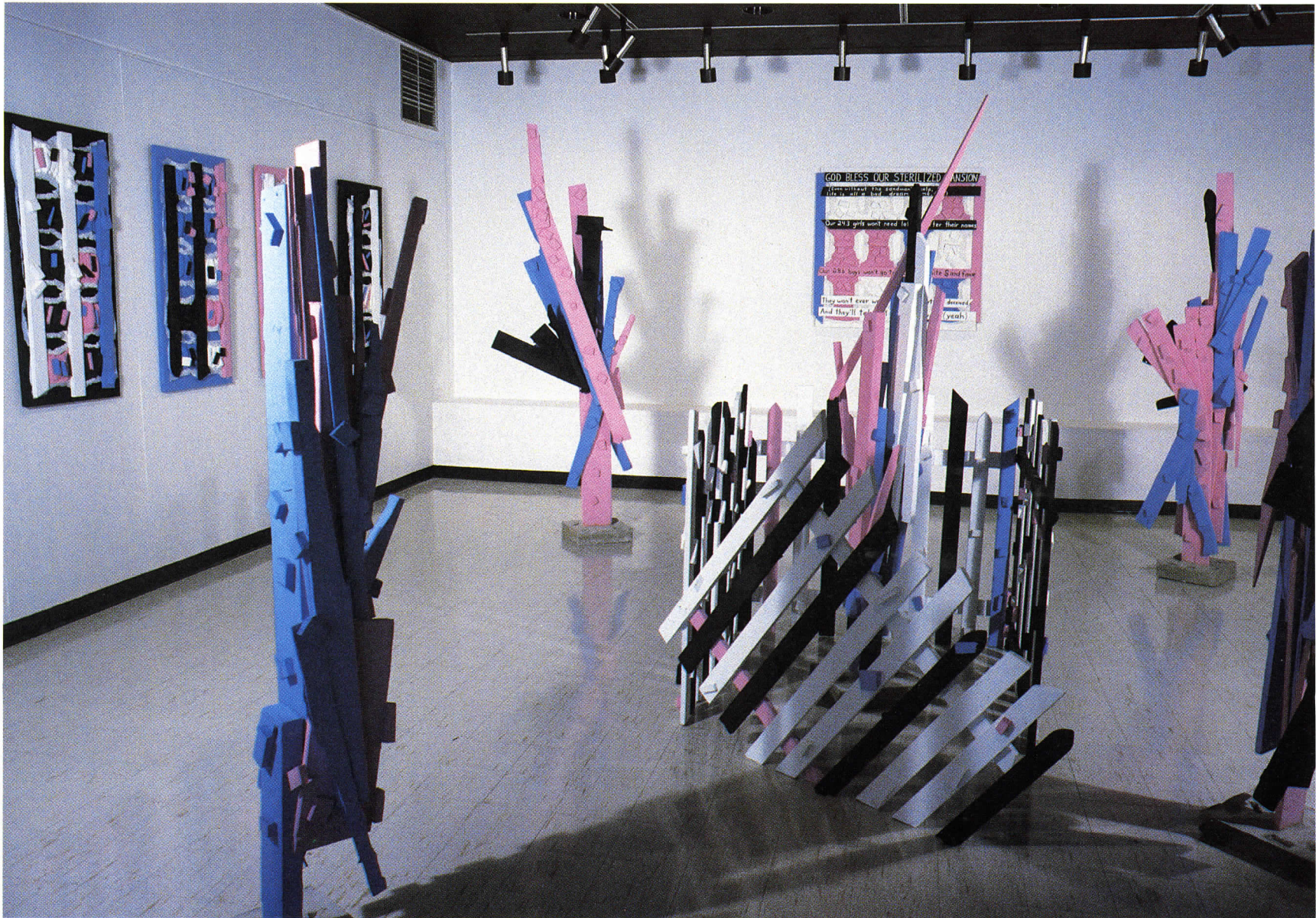
(Even without the sandman's help,
life is all a bad dream to me, too)

Our 24.3 girls won't need letters after their names

Our 28.6 boys won't go to war for white \$ and fame

They won't ever worry about being hurt and deceived

And they'll take all love received (yeah)





SELECTED BIOGRAPHY

KEN LULEWICH

born: Winnipeg, May 11, 1962

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Ace Art, Winnipeg, 1984

Ace Art, Winnipeg, 1985

Manitoba Legislative Building,
Pool Of The Black Star, Winnipeg, 1986

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Janet Ian Cameron Gallery, University of Manitoba, 1982

Fleet Gallery, Winnipeg, 1986

PERFORMANCES/READINGS

Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, 1985

Shared Stage, Royal Albert Hotel, Winnipeg, 1985

Ace Art, Winnipeg, 1986

WRITINGS

"Double Check And Then Snoop At Fame,"

Midcontinental, Winter 1985, p. 13.

"A Day In The Life Of An Artist,"

Class Act, May 1986, p.9.

"Pampers Series," Midcontinental, July 1986, p.28.

"Unassuming Geniuses," (unpublished) a forthcoming book of poems, prose, and visuals to be published by Mustard Press, Inc. in 1987

GRANTS

First Film Grant, Winnipeg Film Group, 1984

Manitoba Arts Council, Project Grant (Visual Arts), 1985

Canada Council, Project Grant (Visual Arts), 1986

Manitoba Arts Council, Short-Term Project Grant
(Visual Arts), 1986

EDUCATION

B.F.A. degree, University of Manitoba, School of Arts,
1984

—several courses in B.A. program, University of
Manitoba, Faculty of Arts (film studies major, art history
minor)

RELATED EXPERIENCE

—art instructor, City of Winnipeg, Parks and Recreation
Department, 1983-present

—art instructor, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Studio Programs,
1986

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

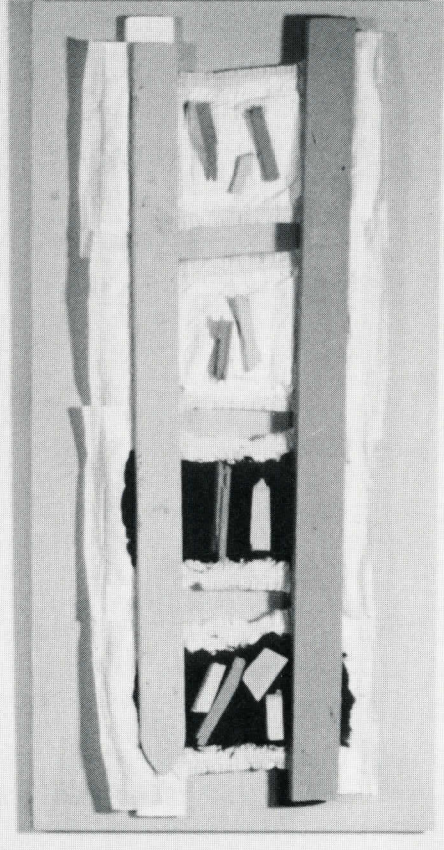
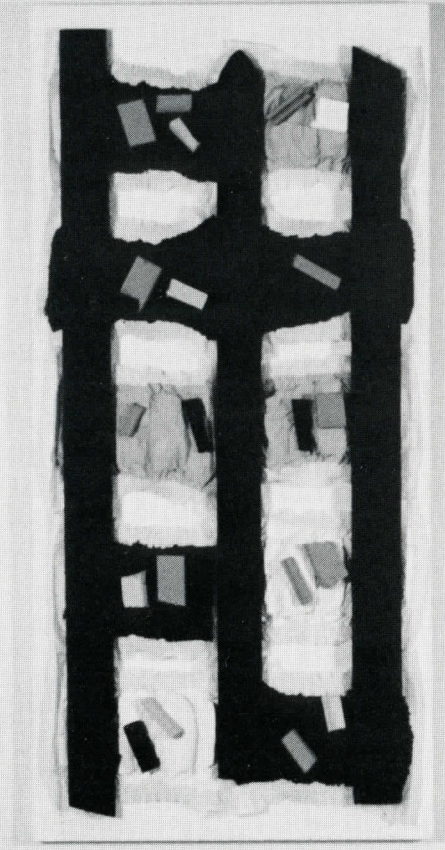
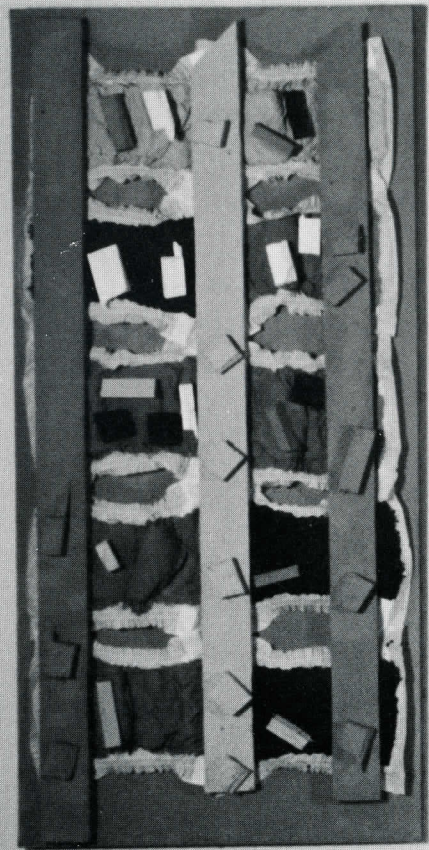
Winnipeg Free Press, March 8, 1985, p. 19

Winnipeg Sun, February 17, 1986, p. 4

Newman, Roger, **"Half Light In The Rotunda",**

WESTERN REPORT, March 19, 1986, p. 53

Winnipeg Free Press, March 15, 1986, p. 27



WORKS IN EXHIBITION

Untitled Installation (1986)

- comprising 6 sculptures ranging from approximately 5 feet to 8 feet in height and fence structure
- occupying approximately 20 feet x 24 feet of floorspace in the center of the gallery

12 Untitled Reliefs (1986)

- each 2' x 4'
- wood (masonite, fence boards and fragments), disposable diapers, acrylic

Untitled Relief, with text (1986)

- approximately 3' x 3'
- wood (plywood, fence boards and fragments), disposable diapers, acrylic

36 works from "The Second Pampers Series" (1986)

- chosen from the series of 300 paintings
- approximately 8" x 14"
- disposable diapers, found objects, acrylic

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend many thanks to Shirley Madill for her frequent studio visits to see the show at its various stages of development. Her essay contained within the catalogue is a very intelligent and wonderful critique of my recent and past artistic work. My many thanks also to Gallery 1.1.1. staff members Dale Amundson and Grace Thomson for all their concern and assistance during the past year and for their continued support in my upcoming projects. I also appreciate the efforts of photographer Bob Talbot and those of catalogue designer Leo Simoens. Their work has created a high quality catalogue. I am grateful to have received the grant from the Canada Council earlier this year to produce the show.

There were many other people in my life and work who helped make the show a success, and I thank you all for your enthusiasm when I needed you the most. Everyone involved in this long project worked very hard and it shows. I will not forget your encouragement and belief in what I am doing because I often felt I should move onto something more important and challenging. But what else could I do?

I hope everyone who sees the show will enjoy it, realizing the sense of ease and fun I experienced while putting it together.

The financial assistance
of the Manitoba Arts Council
is gratefully acknowledged.

CREDITS

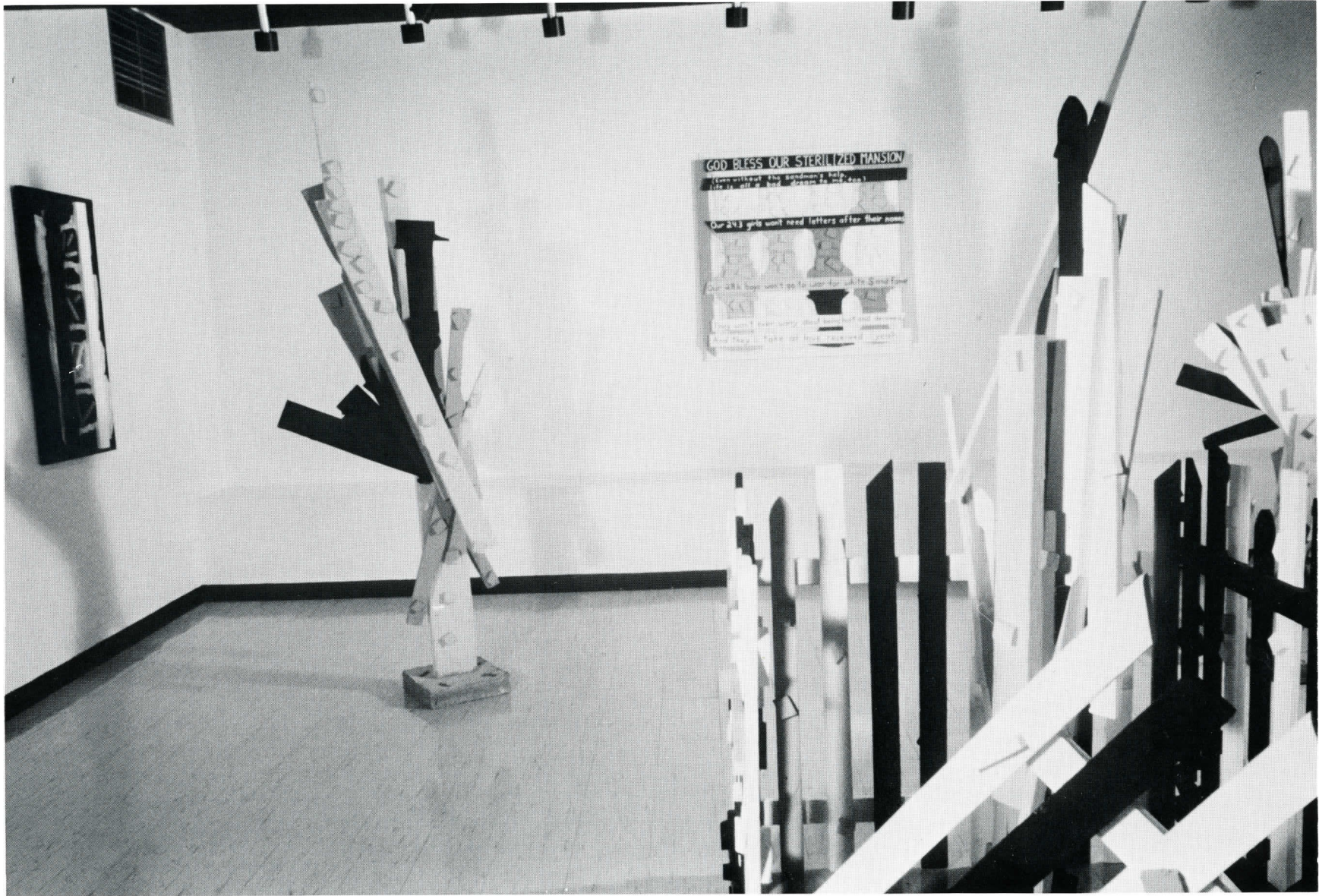
EXHIBITION CURATOR: Dale Amundson

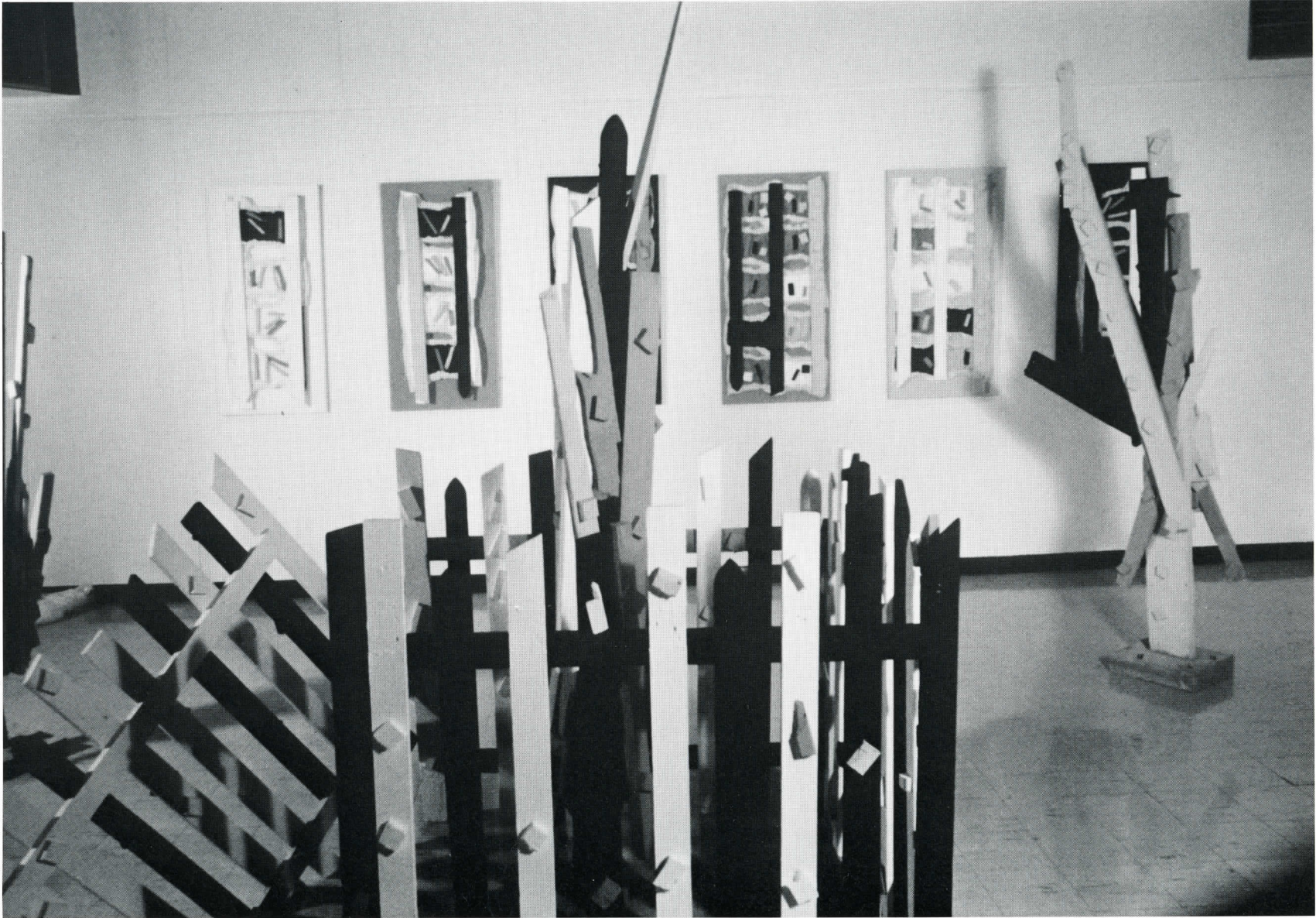
CATALOGUE ESSAY: Shirley Madill

PHOTOGRAPHY: Bob Talbot

CATALOGUE DESIGN: Leo Simoens

INSTALLATION TECHNICIAN: Tom Wood





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