



Photo submitted

JUDITH BARRY'S *Model for Stage and Screen* (1987): A fog and light-filled, circular-room environment.

## The two solitudes

So few take advantage of extraordinary offerings on view in Presentation House's museum and gallery

Moodyville: *Milltown & Mystery*, at Presentation House Museum, 333 Chesterfield Ave., North Vancouver, until May 16. Judith Barry: *Projections at the Presentation House Art Gallery*, 333 Chesterfield Ave., North Vancouver until April 4.

**H**OW FORTUNATE we are to have a facility such as Presentation House on the North Shore!

And yet what a shame for Presentation House, and for us all, that so few who reside here are aware enough (or care) to take full



Ron Falcioni

### ART REVIEW

advantage of the benefits it bestows.

How disconcerting on a rainy Sunday afternoon to find it bereft of visitors as it so often is.

After all, where else does one find, contained beneath a single roof, an archive and museum

dedicated to the commemoration of local history on the one hand, and, on the other, a world-class contemporary art gallery dedicated to the celebration and dissemination of international photography and video art?

Consider, for a moment, the facility's current offerings.

Featured in the Museum until May 16 is *Moodyville: Milltown & Mystery*, a fascinating presentation focusing on a seminal period in the development of our own community.

It explores the milieu of sawmill owner Sewell Prescott Moody, who died tragically in the Straits of Juan de Fuca over a decade before the City of Vancouver was even incorporated in 1886.

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## ART Now

### Exhibits enhance each other

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In its fragmentary exploration of Burrard Inlet's first non-Indian community, this exhibit surveys the past with vintage photographs and sundry artifacts that, objectively considered, are as rare and esthetically interesting as any to be found upstairs or, for that matter, in any other art gallery in the city!

Transcribed to video, a succession of short documentaries on the logging industry in British Columbia are themselves valuable documents delineating the mannered esthetics of the different periods from which they derive.

Here, in the museum, we can appreciate at leisure the pre-Art Deco design esthetics of a 1920s Zebra stove polish bottle or the "ideal lace-trimmed tennis outfit" of a cultivated young woman of the mid-1880s.

We can marvel at the multifaceted cabinetry of a 1920s kitchen sideboard or wonder at the relative simplicity of a turn-of-the-century telephone switchboard.

It is a pity so few realize that the everyday artifacts of the past, however modest and unimposing, are also art and worthy of delight.

In effect, to visit the museum is to step into a time machine that transports us carelessly back to an era more naive but less complex than our own, an era tinged through the sheer exercise of curatorial sleight-of-hand with that nostalgia which is the very essence of the art of escape.

Meanwhile, installed in the art gallery upstairs is an exhibit that provides as extreme a contrast to that of the museum as one is ever likely to imagine.

Continuing until April 4 in Presentation House Gallery is "Projections," an exhibit by international installation artist Judith Barry, which features two very different works, both intent on exploring existentialist speculations on the phenomenon of the isolated self.

In the artist's 1991 work, *IMAGINATION, Dead Imagine*, we are

presented with a rear-projected four-screen video installation portraying a gargantuan androgynous head unself-consciously confined within a polished, high-tech, 10-foot cube.

This is a mesmerizing work in which the absolute isolation of the self is epitomized by metaphors of disembodiment, dissolution and death.

Like voyeurs at a lugubrious spectacle, we are witness to a sequence of increasingly disconcerting indignities calmly perpetrated on the anonymous and seemingly indifferent countenance.

Subjected to horrors over which it apparently commands neither awareness nor control, it becomes a metaphor for the universal finitude of the self, a metaphor that does little to spare the spectators reflected in its mirrored base.

In *Model for Stage and Screen*, the observer is invited to enter a minimalist environment (see photo) whose controlled sensory stimulation is supposed to induce

mildly autonomous hallucinations.

All this is scientifically (if pretentiously) substantiated by the findings of 19th-century scientist Jonathan Muller, no less!

According to Barry, "*Model for Stage and Screen* is a projection piece where the viewer becomes the projector."

Taken at face value, the experience is a unique one that, in the absence of mundane distractions, elicits and enhances a self-directed heightened sensitivity.

Unfortunately, Barry has felt compelled to extemporize on superfluous self-projected speculations about Orpheus, Oedipus and the ordering of myth and metaphor that, in view of the straightforward simplicity of the work itself, seem so contrived as to be downright preposterous.

Nonetheless, this installation, like *IMAGINATION, Dead Imagine*, is a valuable experience for those interested in availing themselves of the latest directions our current technology is imposing on art.

### THE VOICE OF NORTH AND WEST VANCOUVER

