

Art in America

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Report from Toronto & Montreal

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OUT OF TOWN
NEWS/ARTS



"Memorial for an unfortunate whale named Kandy": Michael Berman's *Self-Portrait—I (in the form of Beluga Spirit) cry tears of blood for the power man wields on the hierarchy of being*, to Nulijuk, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 8 by 16 feet. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

tween the artist and the spectator. The emphasis on these forms in Canada goes hand-in-hand with the development of parallel galleries, "underground" publications and mail art.

The whole phenomenon of an alternative system is not much more than five years old and, since the government is rather liberal in making travel funds available, the scene remains fluid. A-Space in Toronto is one of the oldest and best-funded of Canada's alternative galleries (this year it got

\$50,000 for video and performance alone). It opened to provide a free space for video and performance artists and now mounts programs five nights a week—and shows paintings only three or four times a year.⁷ Evidence of today's heavy artistic involvement in these art forms can be seen in a publication called *Art Metropole*, an offshoot of *File*. Listing video and performance activity in Canada, *Art Metropole* has doubled its size with every issue: #4 appeared this February.

My second category includes artists who aim to shift the direction of normal artistic response and turn away from the work of art as a manifestation of skill or esthetic value. Working with untraditional materials or forms, they see what they do as a means to the redefinition of extra-artistic experience. I take this category to include most of what, at an earlier stage, was called "Avant-Garde." Conceptual art belongs here, so does process art, most performances, some painting and sculpture. Betty Goodwin's poignant, heroic tarpaulins and Mark Prent's horrifying sculptural pieces are included, for example, as are Gar Smith's pretty poetic/visual images, Andrew Smith's sensuous, sometimes silly manufactures of paper and Michael Berman's memorial paintings for an unfortunate whale named Kandy.

Educated as an architect, Melvin Charney devotes himself to architectural consciousness-raising and the attempt to make architecture a less oppressive, more vital element in human affairs. His proposals for monuments are imaginative al-

Gershon Iskowitz: *Lisbeth's Painting*, 1973, 45 by 40 inches, oil on canvas. Private collection. (Photo Gallery Moos, Toronto.)

